

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS TO THE INSTRUCTORS

We designed the book of active learning exercises and this accompanying instructor's manual with you and your students in mind. We selected exercises that would be appropriate for you to use in an Introductory Sociology class, as well as in a variety of other Sociology courses. They are designed to give your students the chance to explore in-depth some of the most important ideas in the discipline. Because these exercises provide students with "hands-on" experience investigating empirical and theoretical questions related to your class, you will be increasing the learning that takes place in your course. Research shows that anytime we actually get to *do* something, we understand it better. An old Chinese proverb puts it this way:

"I hear, and I forget.

I see, and I remember.

I *do*, and I understand."

The students gain another benefit of doing things and exploring, in that during the process they uncover new things and become engaged with what they are learning. Sociology has a long history of uncovering patterns in the social world of which most people are not aware because they are embedded in the patterns. These exercises will help your students "see" the patterns and social processes themselves. We fully expect that these activities will not only help the students to do well in your Sociology classes, but also open up to them new ways of seeing the social world.

Why should you have your students purchase the book of exercises? Requiring the book for your course will allow you to infuse active learning through out the course and increase the amount of time your students are spending with sociological material. We know that time on task is one of the key variables associated with student learning. The exercises can be used in a variety of ways: as in-class exercises, as out-of-class required homework, and as out-of-class optional or extra-credit work to challenge strong students and help those students having difficulty. Some of the exercises can be accomplished alone; others involve team-work. You might grade them; you might simply give credit or no credit. You can encourage students to do some exercises simply for the sake of learning. Even in large classes, you can involve your students in active, hands-on work with sociological ideas using the student book. Each exercise in the student book comes with detailed instructions (though we leave grading issues up to you!) and a tear-out work sheet for ease of submission and grading. The book is reasonably priced as well.

We engaged in a nation-wide search for Sociology instructors who had developed active learning exercises for their own classes. These instructors submitted their most effective assignments, and we selected this set to cover the major topics in Sociology. As you look over the exercises in the student book, you will see that the author of each exercise has written a rationale for the assignment that includes what learning goal s/he had in mind when devising the project. Next comes instructions to the student, and lastly, ideas about

how you might go about grading the students' efforts in this exercise. You, of course, will decide just how the exercises will be integrated into your course.

This book, though, is written just for you. Here the authors of the exercises have written to you about their experiences with the exercise, including how it developed to further specific learning goals and how the current instructions to students facilitate the assignment. They give suggestions for grading the students' work and indicate an effective time allotment for the exercise. They also share their experiences with how students respond, and they give advice on ways to avoid potential pitfalls in the activities.

We have selected a variety of types of assignments: some can be done individually, some in small groups, some will take place over many weeks, and some can be done during class time. Although most of the exercises are designed to further students' substantive understanding, we have included a set of exercises at the end of the book dedicated to issues of process in your class. These suggest ways of empowering students and creating an active learning community in the class. You can choose the topics and the types of assignments that will best fit with your course plan. One way of having your students actively engaged with your course on a regular basis would be to have them purchase the student workbook and to use many of the exercises both in and out of class. This will allow you and your students to benefit from the teaching experiences of the originators of these exercises. The students will, then, have in their hands all the instructions for the exercises, as well as the perforated worksheets for each exercise you select, which the students can work on, tear out, and turn in, if you wish.

To assist you in selecting when to assign, or how to use, these assignment with your students, we have created an "assignment characteristic chart" located after the Table of Contents. In this chart, we have categorized the assignments on a number of characteristics including the following: time needed to complete the exercise, in- or out-of-class status, and individual or group status.

As you think about ways to use these assignments and as you begin to construct your syllabus, please take a look at the assignments in the final section of the book. This section is titled, Course Structure and Process. These assignments serve a variety of possible functions including the following: involving your students in helping to design the course syllabus, improving and assessing the quality of group work in general, and facilitating discussion, presentations, and debates. Thus, you may wish to consider these as you outline your objectives and plan your course.

We encourage you to read the short descriptions of each exercise that we have included in the full Table of Contents in the student book. They will give you a quick overview of the activity and the primary question or problem being addressed in each assignment. Please feel free to reach us through Pine Forge Press, if you have questions or comments for us. We wish you well in guiding your students on these explorations of Sociology.

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