WHEN THE PERSONAL BECOMES PROBLEMATIC: THE ETHICS OF USING EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING METHODS*

ELIZABETH GRAUERHOLZ
Purdue University

STACEY COPENHAVER
Purdue University

Experiential methods—that is, methods that rely on students' own life experiences and often involve a high degree of self-disclosure—are becoming increasingly common in sociology courses that deal with difficult and controversial subjects such as gender, race, and sexuality. Yet these methods may be inappropriate and unethical, especially when students are expected to reveal very personal, even painful, information about themselves. The benefits and risks involved in using such methods are presented in this paper in a dialogue between an instructor and a student.

MANY OF THE TEACHING TACTICS DEVELoped over the past 10 years have emphasized an experiential approach to learning. Experiential teaching methods rely on students' own knowledge, experiences, and life events to enhance involvement, interest, and learning; they include such activities as writing journals or autobiographies about one's experiences, role-playing uncomfortable interactions, taking the role of a member of a different group, or speaking of personal topics in student discussion groups (see, e.g., Chesler and Zuniga 1991; Davis 1992; Grauerholz and Scuteri 1989; Phillips 1988; Roth 1985; Stewart 1993). Experiential methods often require a greater degree of personal disclosure than is required in more conventional methods such as essay examinations and research papers. When experiential methods are used in the classroom, students may be required to use their own personal experiences to make sense of new information and to share these insights with other students.

Although numerous articles have been written about the strategies themselves and how to implement them, the literature contains very little about the ethics of using such teaching methods (for two exceptions, see Phillips 1988 and Swartzlander, Pace, and Stamler 1993). The possible negative effects have been acknowledged only recently, but it is clear that some students encounter difficulties when they begin to relate the subject matter to their personal experiences (Swartzlander et al. 1993). For instance, Phillips (1988:289) notes that in her class on family violence, some students "appear to be frozen in their seats" or "cry." Konradi (1993) explores in depth the acute discomfort and resulting silence among students when the subject of sexual assault comes up. Such reactions suggest strongly that for some students, dealing with such personal topics raises difficult and painful issues and that these issues are not, perhaps cannot be, addressed adequately in the classroom.

In this paper, in an attempt to alert instructors to the potential benefits and risks of using such methods, we explore the rationale and the problems connected with using experiential methods. The paper grew out of an experience we encountered in a seminar titled "Gender Violence," in which the instructor (Grauerholz) and the student (Copenhaver) had differing opinions about the appropriateness of using such methods.

THE USE OF EXPERIENTIAL METHODS

Experiential methods have become popular in courses dealing with sensitive and controversial topics such as family violence, gender roles, or race and ethnic relations, where often a goal is "to bring together theory, research, personal experience, and practice in a way that is educational and empowering to students" (Yllo 1988:21). Certainly these exercises can be powerful and effective means of teaching by involving students per-

*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1993 meetings of the Midwest Sociological Association, held in Chicago.

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

sonally in the subject matter. In the process, students may come to understand more easily the connections between personal experiences and sociological phenomena; in other words, they become better able to develop their sociological imaginations. This kind of learning is virtually impossible to achieve through more conventional teaching methods.

In courses that delve into sensitive and personal issues, students often find it most difficult to deal with the issues on a personal *and* a sociological level. *Because* the topics are so personal, students are likely to have many psychological defenses in place. For instance, Kersti Yllo (1988:19) states that in her course on violence against women, students tend to psychologize and blame the victim, and "to discuss violence as something that happens to *other* women." Thus it is important to find ways to personalize the information for students, to make it real for them, and to help them understand that the distinctions between "us" and "them" are often quite blurred. Experiential methods can be especially useful for this purpose. Phillips (1988), who asks students to write journals in her course on family violence, explains that both unvictimized and victimized students benefit from these assignments: the former by realizing that violence entails a personal and private reality, the latter by seeing that they are not alone and that they are not to blame. "Both sets of students gain valuable insight from recognizing how the sociological imagination works and from attaining that viewpoint. They also come to understand how the personal is political" (Phillips 1988:292).

Experiential methods also can have a cathartic, transforming effect on students. Phillips (1988) suggests that dealing with personal issues such as family violence can be an outlet for some students as they come to redefine personal experiences (e.g., rape), find relief for their pain (through education), or become more activist. A similar response was noted by Yllo (1988:22): "Some [students] begin to deal with personal victimization which they had denied. Some develop a feminist consciousness which affects other aspects of their lives."

Another advantage to using such methods is that they reinforce the validity of personal experiences. Such learning is a central goal of pedagogy, especially feminist pedagogy. According to Lee, the goal of feminist education

> is a joining of affect and intellect where personal experience becomes the site for intellectual investigation and inquiry. The hope is to facilitate active learning where knowledge is relevant and useful, where classroom work is connected to the everyday experiences of students' lives, and where students are engaged and moving the learning process forward (1993:27).

Many instructors acknowledge that such experiences can be important educational tools. According to Phillips (1988:292), "it is a way to teach one another. Personal experience is especially useful if we point out common patterns among students' experiences, thus creating common bonds and fostering understanding."

Such methods can be powerful means of teaching students, especially about controversial or sensitive topics. At the same time, these methods entail problems, not the least of which are determining grades and maintaining the confidentiality of students' personal writings. (Even more unclear is how to grade class participation in which students reveal personal experiences or how to protect their confidentiality in these cases). Roth (1985:335) suggests that assignments be graded on a pass/fail basis, which allows students to receive the instructor's feedback but "free[s] students from the fear of how the instructor will analyze their questions, answers, and writing." Grauerholz and Scuteri (1989) suggest that journals be graded on the basis of the student's ability to incorporate reading assignments into the journal and according to skill of analysis from a sociological perspective. McKinney (1985) suggests the use of code numbers, not names, to protect students' anonymity. Atwater (1987) uses an anonymous student essay in her course on human sexuality. To receive credit, students type their names on a separate sheet of paper; as the assignment is collected, the names are placed in one envelope and the essays in another. The forms with names are then used to assign proper credit, but the essays themselves are not graded.

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Yet none of these solutions can resolve an inherent and more critical problem: we may be doing untold damage to our students by requiring or encouraging them to reveal difficult, perhaps traumatic, details of their lives in class assignments or classroom projects. Certainly some students benefit from these projects; others do not. How can this dilemma be resolved? How can we balance the need to personalize sociology and encourage students to develop their sociological imaginations with students' right not to be required to make inappropriate revelations?

Not all experiential methods pose the same degree of risk to students; some may be relatively nonproblematic. The potential for harm is always present, however, and is inherent in the method and subject matter. Although some topics are more likely than others to create tension, pain, even trauma for some students (specifically race, class, gender, sexuality, deviance, violence, death, and aging), even seemingly neutral topics can evoke discomfort. A colleague who teaches a course titled "Communities," for example, told about a (white) student who revealed in class discussion that her partner was African-American. She proceeded to talk about the pain she encountered with family and friends when her community and that of her partner merged. Not only did she feel some discomfort in recalling the conflicts, but her revelation about being involved in an interracial relationship may have been difficult because of the conservative climate in which she lives.

The fact is that if we encourage students to think about the connections between their personal lives and the world around them—a major goal of sociological teaching—we are putting some students at risk. Indeed, as Goldsmid and Wilson (1980:143) assert, "learning about the social world can be a threat." Thus the issues raised here apply not only to instructors of sensitive and controversial topics (although these issues should be particularly salient to such instructors), but also to instructors of seemingly neutral, noncontroversial topics who may be exposed to unexpected, painful revelations from their students.

The problems in using experiential methods became apparent to us, ironically, through our *experience* with using an experiential method, the autobiographical journal. In the next sections, a description of the method used and its ethical implications are presented in a dialogue between instructor and student. Even though this discussion focuses on one particular method—in this case, an autobiography—the concerns raised apply to a wide array of teaching strategies that currently are in use in sociology courses, both inside and outside the classroom.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL JOURNAL: THE INSTRUCTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Two years ago I taught a seminar on gender violence which examined theory and research concerning violence against women. Eighteen students were enrolled in the course; all but three were women. One of my main objectives was to help students see how violence against women is a sociological phenomenon, not a collection of random acts by psychotic individuals. Also, I hoped to heighten their awareness of the prevalence of violence in women's lives, including how violence has affected them personally, even if they perceived that they have not been victimized directly. For example, all women live with the fear of rape and modify their dress and behavior to avoid dangerous situations, but many women are not aware of how greatly their lives have been affected. To accomplish these objectives, I believed it was important to personalize the topic to some degree.

As one of the course requirements, I asked students to write an autobiographical journal in which they explored the impact of violence on their lives. (This method was developed by Diana Russell [1990], who teaches a course on violence against women.) I asked the students to consider how their lives—for example, the choices they had made in careers, or the way they felt about themselves—had been shaped by direct or indirect experiences with violence. I encouraged them to explore how their lives had been affected by indirect experiences with violence, such as exposure to violence in the media or in the general

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

climate of their workplace. One problem in using such a method, of course, is that some students find it easy to personalize such issues; they have intimate knowledge of such violence.

I did not learn that any student had problems with the assignment until after I had collected the autobiographies. Fortunately, three students felt comfortable enough to write notes to me, which they placed at the beginning of their autobiographies.[1] Two of these students made the following comments:

> (Student 1): Although I realize that this assignment might be valuable to some persons, I wanted to express some of the concerns that arose as I tried to prepare for and write the following paper. My first concern is not one aimed at you, but at the general context of the assignment. I know that you will hold confidential the content of our papers, but I am somewhat uneasy with the idea of individuals baring their personal experiences of violence to a professor....Additionally, I am unclear as to how an assignment of this nature can be assigned a letter grade; it seems impossible to "grade" persons' life experiences. Finally...I consider myself to be somewhat "hardened" by many of my life experiences and studies, yet this paper was difficult for me to begin and complete. Writing this paper caused me to wonder how other persons in the class are handling issues of violence which they were not previously aware of or might not have been ready to deal with, and what type of support will be available to them if they have problems in coping once they have finished putting their experiences down on paper.

> (Student 2): I had some considerable ethical difficulties writing this paper. I felt that in order to write a paper regarding the effects of violence upon my life it would be necessary to share the instances of violence. *Both* the violent instances and the effects of these instances are quite personal aspects of my life. As an instructor, you as an individual seem to attempt to alleviate some of the power differences within the class context. I appreciate this, yet somehow I cannot help but feel somewhat at a disadvantage when writing a paper such as this. I also have some difficulty knowing that you are going to *read* them and *grade* them. I have spent a lot of time worrying and stressing about this paper. I realize that I did not inform you of this prior to now and the reasoning behind this is that I wasn't sure if I was just being "ridiculous" or not. This week I went and talked to someone about my discomfort and they suggested that I let you know about it. They also alleviated my fears that I was overreacting.

> In a way I feel like writing this paper would probably be a good idea for some individuals, but for others who are not at a point where they feel they can investigate violence on a personal level, I worry that this assignment may bring up issues that they are unable to deal with or that it may bring up issues for the individual and then just drop them without the support to deal with those issues. I know for me personally, even after taking the previous [sexual coercion] class,[2] I felt somewhat exploited and exposed by this paper. I know I have written before about violence and coercion's effects upon me in journals (for the previous class) but at those times I felt like it was more of an option. I could instead focus primarily on the articles and my reaction to them if I preferred to do so.

> I realize that I do often share my personal experiences in class, yet in class I feel more of a choice to do so. In a paper such as this, I felt it would be dishonest to leave out my experiences, yet sharing them at times makes me uncomfortable. I have, however, attempted to be honest in my paper, although my discomfort may show through in the tone of the writing. This paper was the most comfortable paper I

[1] The student author, Copenhaver, was one of the three; the other two were undergraduates who graduated before this paper was conceived. We were successful in contacting Kyle Scott, one of those students; she allowed us to use her comments as well. We include some of the actual comments here, as well as Copenhaver's general analysis of the assignment.

[2] This class was taught by the same instructor and covered similar topics. In the class on sexual coercion, students were asked to write journals. To deal with issues of confidentiality, I asked them to indicate any parts that they preferred not to be read by paperclipping those pages. These pages then were skipped.

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

could write considering it has to be read by someone else.

Perhaps I should have anticipated some of these problems as expressed by my students. Yet I believe that my failure to do so says less about a lack of sensitivity than about a common outcome of the professor role: as "experts" and evaluators, instructors fall quite easily into the role of the "objective" professor. Students' reactions to this assignment were powerful reminders of how easily professors can distance themselves from their students' experiences; of how, as professors, we often do not hesitate to ask students to perform tasks that we would not be comfortable doing or would not even be able to do. Also, I realize more clearly now that instructors too often underestimate their possible power and impact on students. I suppose I thought naively that if anyone had a problem with any assignment, they would be able to talk about it with me and that we would work out a mutually agreeable solution. I realize now that this assumption is unrealistic in a relationship in which the power difference is as great as that between student and professor—no matter how nonauthoritarian the professor attempts to be.[3]

REACTIONS TO THE ASSIGNMENT: THE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

It was only while I was struggling with this assignment that I wrote the preface detailing the problematic aspects of such an exercise. When I took note of the assignment on the course syllabus, I did not anticipate any difficulties. Yet writing this paper was an uncomfortable and emotionally draining experience for me, even though I had already thought at length, before taking this course, about the events and issues raised in this assignment.

When I began to work on the assignment, I experienced trouble in sleeping, intense feelings of anxiety and anger, and frequent flashbacks of violent incidents. Considering my own difficulty in writing the paper, I began to wonder how other persons in the class were dealing with this assignment, and I talked with another student in the seminar (one of the other two students who provided written feedback to the instructor). This student stated that she spent a considerable amount of time worrying about the paper, and was having difficulties in revealing very personal aspects of her life. It was then that I reflected on the ethics and usefulness of this assignment as a teaching tool.

In my initial reflections, I identified and elaborated three ways in which the assignment illustrated potentially problematic power dynamics between the student and the teacher: control in dealing with sensitive or painful topics, the professor's power in possessing knowledge of students' personal experiences, and the grading of this assignment. I examined these problematic aspects in the way we examined gender violence in our seminar: as occurring in a system of societal power relations. In the study of gender violence, one must always be aware of differences in power, how these difrerences affect social interactions, and how they can be used as a means of social control, not necessarily with conscious intent or design (Stock 1991). I think it is particularly important to examine classroom exercises such as these in the same framework.

For some individuals this exercise may clarify the ways in which violence shapes and affects their lives, but many women already are acutely aware of that impact. Some women have dealt with these issues; others have not. Two potential difficulties can arise from requiring women to examine their personal experiences of violence.

First, for those women who have dealt with the impact of violence on their lives, it brings up the painful memories once again. Others, who have not yet dealt with this issue, are forced to do so. Although I see the importance of coming to terms with these issues, it

[3] From an instructor's perspective, the very act of writing this paper has also been an exercise in self-reflection about the nature of collaborative work with students. Although both authors agreed to the order of authorship on the basis of a variety of factors, there remain unanswered (perhaps unanswerable) questions about how power is played out between professors and students in the process of writing and researching. To what extent have the student's ideas been co-opted? Could the student really object to being second author? Can she critique and rewrite my ideas as freely as I do hers? Whose ideas survive when there is a clash of opinion?

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

is problematic that the student has no control of *when* to do so. This exercise may be especially troublesome because a survivor of gender violence already experienced a lack of control when the violence occurred and subsequently was robbed of control in dealing with these issues. Furthermore, after writing the autobiographical journal, the student may be left to struggle with difficult memories and feelings. This possibility raises a question: what type of support will be available to the students if they have problems in coping after they have finished putting their experiences on paper? For the instructor, the assignment is finished when grades are given and papers are handed back; for the student, this is not necessarily the case.

Second, by revealing this knowledge to the professor, the student is placed in a potentially vulnerable position. I was uneasy about the idea of students baring their personal experiences of violence to an instructor, while they had no information about the experiences of violence in the instructor's life. This one-sided process makes the power difference between student and instructor even greater: an individual in a position of power has personal knowledge of many others. Because of power relations between student and teacher, students also might find it difficult to challenge course assignments such as these. A student might hesitate to approach an instructor about an assignment for fear of being viewed as a "troublemaker." Some individuals might not want to challenge an assignment such as this for fear of being automatically identified as victims of violence.

Also, how might other variables, such as gender, race, and sexuality, further affect the power relations between student and professor? Would this paper be even more problematic if assigned by a male instructor? Other commentators on the ethics of personalized writing assignments have examined the distinct role that gender can play in these assignments. For example, Swartzlander et al. (1993:B2) point out that when a female student is required by a male instructor to write anything about her personal life, she is "surrendering even more control to someone who already has emotional and social power over her." Instructors could use knowledge about a student's past to identify the most vulnerable female students, or possibly could use such information to blackmail or sexually harass a student.

Finally, I have reservations about how an assignment such as this can be graded. Assigning a grade to a person's feelings and life experiences is difficult at best. Students may be unsure how much they must reveal to an instructor in order to receive credit for the assignment or to earn a satisfactory grade. Swartzlander et al. (1993) say many students believe that the highest grades are awarded to personal writing assignments about highly emotional events or those which display the most drama. Students with such perceptions may feel compelled to expose more of their personal lives than they might otherwise be willing to reveal. Furthermore, if grades are assigned on the basis of a student's ability to make the connections between personal and societal levels of violence, the issue of grading is problematic in terms of *the extent of the student's ability to bear making the connections.* For some students, making these connections may be too painful to express on paper.

The intent of this assignment—to use personal experience in order to see and understand more clearly the connections between personal and social phenomena—might empower some students as they gain knowledge of themselves and the social forces affecting their lives. Numerous ethical problems, however, also can arise in this exercise; such problems can leave some students feeling disempowered and once again victimized.

It is important to see how pervasive and how affecting gender violence can be; yet I do not necessarily agree with the notion that one must personalize it to see those connections. Doing so in this exercise creates the potential to take some degree of control from the students. Some students might feel revictimized; if this occurs, the exercise certainly has failed to empower them. Students should have the option to explore those connections in their personal lives, but should not be forced to do so.

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

FURTHER REFLECTIONS BY THE INSTRUCTOR AND THE STUDENT

In this section we reflect further about the usefulness of the assignment and about experiential methods generally, and suggest ways to minimize problems inherent in such methods. From the instructor's perspective, the autobiography—like all experiential teaching methods—can promote teaching objectives when such objectives include helping students to understand 1) how their personal lives have been shaped by social forces, 2) how similar their experiences are to those of others (this can be accomplished as students relate their own experiences to those expressed in class discussion by other students, or through course readings), and 3) how to give validity to their personal experiences. By reading these assignments, the instructor can gain insights into how well students are able to make connections between social and personal phenomena, and can be guided in determining what concepts need further development in class. The assignment also helps instructors understand students better and develop empathy for them, and assists in breaking down the boundaries typically imposed by the professor-student relationship.[4]

From a student's perspective, experiential assignments often have proved to be valuable exercises. Particular assignments have been instrumental in showing the connections between the personal and social forces in ways that other assignments or methods did not; these particular assignments did so without causing any trauma. As a graduate instructor who sometimes makes such assignments in an introductory women's studies course, I have received much positive feedback from the students on experiential assignments. The students have commented that (so far) they have found the particular assignments interesting, challenging, and useful. Many have commented that they have learned more about important concepts from certain assignments than from the course readings.

Since we have had this experience, we have given considerable thought to whether these advantages outweigh the risks inherent in using experiential methods, and to whether experiential methods should be omitted from all of our courses because all topics in sociology have the potential for creating trauma. We have concluded that although we may be able to spare some students pain by not requiring them to think and write about deeply felt issues, we would be doing them a disservice by avoiding such issues. Students can gain sociological perspective on these experiences and on their lives, and can feel more empowered—for example, they may feel less like victims and more like survivors. Also, for some topics, especially those which students initially perceive to be remote or irrelevant to their lives, autobiographies may be relatively nonproblematic and therefore a useful pedagogical technique. We suggest, however, that autobiographies may be inappropriate for certain particularly sensitive topics, especially those dealing with victimization, because such topics often are associated with victim blaming and shame.

Despite the topic and the type of experiential technique used, we believe that such methods require considerable planning and forethought. We recommend, first, that instructors clarify their teaching objectives and determine whether the exercise is really necessary or whether another, less invasive exercise could achieve the objectives equally well. The course objectives outlined above, for instance, could have been achieved through other alternatives such as writing about movies, biographies, novels, ethnographies, and so on.[5]

[4] Although this was not a stated objective, an anonymous reviewer of this paper pointed out that this kind of reflective exercise in fact may be part of the solution to the problem discussed in this paper, in which faculty members are unaware of the possible impact of their actions on students.

[5] Several movies or written accounts can be used to teach about the personal effects of gender violence. The movie *The Accused* and Judy Katz's (1984) *No Fairy Godmothers, No Magic Wands: The Healing Process after Rape* provide excellent accounts of the impact of rape on victims. The feature film *Thelma and Louise* also touches on this issue. Two movies, *The Burning Bed* and *Defending Our Lives*, deal with the issue of spousal abuse. Child sexual abuse is covered in Alice Walker's (1982) *The Color Purple* and in Maya Angelou's (1993) *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. It is more difficult to find materials documenting the impact of sexual har-

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Second, instructors should routinely "take the role of the other"—in this case, the student—to determine how such an assignment will be perceived. We encourage professors to engage in the same experiential exercises as their students and to share with the students the insights they acquire in this way; perhaps they could distribute their own writings to students in the course.

Third, instructors can encourage students to engage in an ongoing critical evaluation of the class and the assignments, as Konradi (1993) describes, in which students provide written feedback (perhaps anonymous) about the course. It would be best if students made this evaluation before undertaking the assignment, but they also could assess the impact and the usefulness of the assignment after completion. Instructors then would know which assignments were problematic. Of course, some assignments may not seem difficult at the outset (as was the case here), so instructors may not receive the important feedback until too late.

If assignments such as these are to be an option, instructors should take several precautions. First, they must try to earn students' trust (see Konradi 1993) and assure students that their writings will be held in strictest confidence. In addition, instructors must warn students that the assignment might be emotionally difficult. Specifically, in teaching about violence against women, they can prepare themselves and the students by anticipating several things. They must recognize that students may have difficulty with the subject material; it would be useful to give them a referral list of community and university agencies that deal with violence against women (Phillips 1988). Also, instructors must anticipate the range of reactions by students that may arise from using experiential methods. For example, few instructors are prepared to deal with a student's breaking down in class or in an office. For this reason, it would be especially useful for instructors to have crisis intervention training and rape counseling experience; these are available through most community crisis centers and rape hotlines.[6] Although we do not suggest that instructors take on the role of counselor, these types of training could be useful for an immediate response to a student in distress. Also, training in crisis intervention or rape counseling can heighten our awareness of students' problems. Such training can help to ensure that we do not overstep boundaries, and that we know when it is appropriate to refer students for professional counseling.

The autobiographical assignment and similar experiential activities also can be restructured to alleviate some of the distress they might cause to certain students. Students who are comfortable in carrying out the assignment should be allowed to do so. Students who are not comfortable, however, should be allowed to pursue alternative assignments. Instructors must allow students to change assignments after the students have begun them (and therefore must accept late submissions if necessary). The following alternatives are possible: writing assignments that are oriented to the future rather than to the past (Swartzlander et al. 1993); assignments in which students demonstrate, through analysis of a novel that deals with the issue, how the phenomenon under study (such as violence against women) is sociological; opportunities to provide a review of the literature (Russell 1990); or assignments in which students can design their own utopian society (Gondolf 1985). Thus students have a choice; that in itself can be empowering. Finally, the assignment should be structured so that students can submit them anonymously if they wish to do so (Atwater 1987; McKinney 1985). Granted, this choice of alternatives will place a greater burden on the instructor, and the benefits of

assment, but instructors may be able to use selections from *Sexual Harassment: Women Speak Out* (Sumrall and Taylor 1992). Sandra Cisneros's (1989) *The House on Mango Street* also explores this concern, along with child sexual abuse. Other materials include Brenner (1993), on being stalked; the documentary *Not a Love Story*, which deals with pornography; and the special issue of *Gender and Society* (December 1989), which contains a play and several poems related to sexual abuse.

[6] This idea was adapted from Ault's (1993) recommendation that all social science researchers should be trained in crisis intervention, self-defense, and assertiveness. Both authors received crisis intervention training from previous work at a battered women's shelter and/or a rape crisis hotline, and have found it helpful in dealing with students' concerns.

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

the assignment may be lost on those students who choose not to do the work for reasons other than too much personal involvement with the issue. These options are essential, however, in order to protect the students. If we are to teach about power structures and their influence on our lives, we must realize that the classroom is a setting, like many other settings, with unequal balances of power which can be potentially dangerous or threatening to the student.

REFERENCES

Angelou, Maya. 1993. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* New York: Bantam Books.

Atwater, Lynn. 1987. "The Anonymous Essay as Symbolic Interaction between Sexuality Professor and Student." *Teaching Sociology* 15:250–56.

Ault, Amber. 1993. "Inducing Trauma/Reducing Trauma: Implications for Conducting Qualitative Research with Survivors." Presented at meetings of the American Sociological Association, Miami.

Brenner, Claudia. 1993. "A Letter from Claudia Brenner." Pp. 426–27 in *Feminist Frontiers III,* edited by L. Richardson and V. Taylor. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Chesler, Mark A. and Ximena Zuniga. 1991. "Dealing with Prejudice and Conflict in the Classroom: The Pink Triangle Exercise." *Teaching Sociology* 19:173–81.

Cisneros, Sandra. 1989. *The House on Mango Street.* New York: Vintage Books.

Davis, Nancy J. 1992. "Teaching about Inequality: Student Resistance, Paralysis, and Rage." *Teaching Sociology* 20:232–38.

Gender & Society. 1989. (Special issue on violence against women.) 3:429–586.

Goldsmid, Charles A. and Everett K. Wilson. 1980. *Passing On Sociology: The Teaching of a Discipline.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Gondolf, Edward W. 1985. "Teaching about Utopian Societies: An Experiential Approach to Sociological Learning." *Teaching Sociology* 12:229–41.

Grauerholz, Elizabeth and Gina M. Scuteri. 1989. "Learning to Role-Take: A Teaching Technique to Enhance Awareness of the 'Other.'" *Teaching Sociology* 17:480–83.

Katz, Judy H. 1984. *No Fairy Godmothers, No Magic Wands: The Healing Process after Rape.* Saratoga, CA: R & E.

Konradi, Amanda. 1993. "Teaching about Sexual Assault: Problematic Silences and Solutions." *Teaching Sociology* 21:13–25.

Lee, Janet. 1993. "Teaching Gender Politics." *Teaching Sociology* 21:26–32.

McKinney, Kathleen. 1985. "Ethical Issues and Dilemmas in the Teaching of the Sociology of Human Sexuality." *Quarterly Journal of Ideology* 9:23–27.

Phillips, Brenda D. 1988. "Teaching about Family Violence to an At-Risk Population: Insights from Sociological and Feminist Perspectives." *Teaching Sociology* 16:289–93.

Roth, Robin L. 1985. "Learning about Gender through Writing." *Teaching Sociology* 12:325–38.

Russell, Diana E.H. 1990. "Violence against Women." Pp. 212–14 in *The Sociology of Sex and Gender: Syllabi and Instructional Materials,* edited by V. Powell. Washington, DC: ASA Teaching Resources Center.

Stewart, Brad J. 1993. "Reducing Negative Emotions in Race and Ethnic Relations Courses." Presented at meetings of the Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago.

Stock, Wendy E. 1991. "Feminist Explanations: Male Power, Hostility, and Sexual Coercion." Pp. 61–73 in *Sexual Coercion: A Sourcebook on Its Nature, Causes, and Prevention,* edited by E. Grauerholz and M. Koralewski. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Sumrall, Amber Coverdale and Dena Taylor, eds. 1992. *Sexual Harassment: Women Speak Out.* Freedom, CA: Crossing Press.

Swartzlander, Susan, Diana Pace, and Virginia Lee Stamler. 1993. "The Ethics of Requiring Students to Write about Their Personal Lives." *Chronicle of Higher Education,* February 17, pp. B1–B2.

Walker, Alice. 1982. *The Color Purple.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Yllo, Kersti. 1988. "Family Secrets: Teaching about Violence against Women." *Radical Teacher* 36:19–22.

Elizabeth Grauerholz is an associate professor of sociology at Purdue University. She teaches in the areas of marriage, family, and gender. Her research interests focus on violence against women. She is co-editor of *Sexual Coercion: A Sourcebook on Its Nature, Causes, and Prevention.* Address correspondence to the authors at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 1365 Stone Hall, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1365.

Stacey Copenhaver is a doctoral student in family and gender at Purdue University.

This content downloaded from 128.248.155.225 on Sun, 27 Dec 2015 13:13:29 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions