

**Wisconsin Teaching Fellowship 2006-07  
SOTL Project Abstract**

**What do students learn from an interview/analysis assignment?**

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For my SOTL project, I chose to assess the impact of an interview/analysis combination assignment on students' learning experience in Introduction to Sociology. For this assignment, each student interviews a person who is at least 15 years older than them, reports the findings in writing, and analyzes the findings using sociological concepts. I gave this assignment at the end of the semester in Spring 2007, as a way to assess students' understanding of basic sociological concepts and their ability to apply them to a new situation. This assignment aimed also to encourage students to link between classroom knowledge and experiences outside the classroom. In addition, I conjectured that this assignment promotes dialogic learning of the Other and more complex view of diversity.

Data are collected from three reflection worksheets students filled at different stages of their assignment: pre-interview, post-interview, and post-analysis. In each worksheet, students answered to five questions in a few sentences to a paragraph. These questions were meant to capture their learning experiences, although in retrospect the validity of these questions is questionable. This project was approved by our campus IRB.

While all 26 students in the class were asked to fill in these worksheets as part of their graded assignment, I analyzed data from 18 students who had signed the informed consent form. While the sample is somewhat biased against male students, the analysis generated some interesting insights about students' worldview and the impact of sociological knowledge when applied to the rather intimate realm of their lives. This analysis also made me value the pedagogy for "significance learning" explicated by L. Dee Fink (2003). The analysis however made me realize two serious weaknesses in this assignment and possibly in the course design: the inadequate analysis of social (but not just personal) differences and the lacking skills to articulate the link between concepts and observations. I hope to use these findings in reviewing and redesigning this course in the near future.