

Professional Philosophy

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Like many of my generation, I got into sociology because I wanted to change the world, and I thought sociology could help me. And I still do. More than anything else, I define myself as a sociological practitioner -- one who uses sociological investigation and sociological understanding to make effective changes in groups, organizations, and communities.

In addition to original research on urban and community development, plant closings, social theory, and student use of textbooks, I consult with a number of local community groups and I design and conduct workshops on teaching, curriculum development, and conflict resolution. These workshops have been delivered locally, regionally, and nationally.

For me, teaching is a form of sociological practice. In each of the courses I teach I strive to help students acquire the skills that will enable them to be effective social actors and informed citizens in a democratic society. My teaching style is informal and interactive. I particularly enjoy teaching at an urban university like IPFW (I've been here since 1979) because of the mix of traditional and nontraditional college students and their diversity in terms of age, gender, race and ethnicity, and social class.

I have certificates in community mediation and mediation training. I am a founding member of Common Ground, Inc., Fort Wayne's volunteer community dispute resolution service, and served as its president for five years. I have participated in mediations in schools, organizations, and among neighbors. I have taught mediation and conflict resolution techniques to elementary and middle schoolers, college students, neighborhood leaders, human service providers, and professional sociologists.