

LIBERAL LEARNING AND THE SOCIOLOGY MAJOR UPDATED:

**Meeting the Challenge of Teaching Sociology
in the Twenty-First Century**

by

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A Report of the ASA Task Force on the Undergraduate Major

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The previous version of *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major* (Eberts, Paul, Carla B. Howery, Catherine White Berheide, Kathleen Crittenden, Robert Davis, Zelda Gamson, and Theodore C. Wagenaar. 1990. *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association) was completed in conjunction with the Association of American Colleges national review of arts and sciences majors.

This document was presented to the ASA Council at its meeting on August 18, 2004, and Council unanimously passed the following motion:

“To accept the final report of the Task Force on the Undergraduate Major, to disseminate the report to departments for their information, and to thank the members of the Task Force for their hard work.”

On the cover, the nautilus’ spiraled inner chambers represent the stages of growth, and development, the unfolding of knowledge, with each stage in growth depending on previous learning, yet ever expanding.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of a major Association of American Colleges (AAC)¹ project, the American Sociological Association (ASA) appointed a Task Force in 1989² to assess current practices and make recommendations on the undergraduate major in sociology. After examining college catalogues and surveying sociology majors, the Task Force considered the challenges sociology departments face given the wide range of specialties in our field and various paths students take to the major. The Task Force concentrated on the goal of achieving study in depth through four levels of courses that present the sociological perspective. The AAC noted, quite accurately, that the requirements for completing the major in many departments was not a well-considered, sequenced mastery of skills and knowledge, but, instead, just an accumulation of credits within a discipline. They chose the term “study in depth” to emphasize the importance of sequenced mastery in a major field. In 1990, ASA Council endorsed the report from the first Task Force and published it as *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major* (Eberts et al. 1990).

The report emphasized that sociology curricula tend to be organized like a “Ferris wheel” for which introductory sociology provides the only ticket necessary to “ride”. As an alternative to this model, the Task Force recommended organizing the sociology curriculum into four levels.

In 2001, ASA Council appointed a second Task Force to update and expand upon the original report and its recommendations. The second Task Force found that though some departments have made great strides toward sequencing within the major, there is still more work to do to enhance the vitality and increase the coherence of sociology programs nationwide. Building upon the original *Liberal Learning* report, the second Task Force³ focused on the challenges to achieving study in depth within the diverse settings in which sociology programs operate. This updated report draws on the growing literature on learning in higher education and includes recommendations for best practices to strengthen sociology programs even further.

¹ The AAC has since become the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU).

² The members of the first Task Force include: Catherine White Berheide, Skidmore College; Kathleen Crittenden, University of Illinois-Chicago; Robert Davis, North Carolina A & T University; Paul B. Eberts, Cornell University; Zelda Gamson, University of Massachusetts-Boston; Carla B. Howery, ASA; Theodore C. Wagenaar, Miami University.

³ The second Task Force members are: Catherine White Berheide, Skidmore College, chair; Robert Crutchfield, University of Washington, Council liaison; Celestino Fernandez, University of Arizona; Lyle Hallowell, Nassau Community College; Carla B. Howery, ASA; Edward L. Kain, Southwestern University; Kathleen McKinney, Illinois State University; Kerry J. Strand, Hood College. The Task Force also thanks Jean Beaman, ASA; Victoria Hougham, ASA; Claire Renzetti, St. Joseph’s University, J. Russell Willis, Grambling University, and Maria Bryant, Charles County College, for their involvement.

The second Task Force offers the following 16 recommendations⁴:

Recommendation 1: Departments should develop a mission statement, goals, and learning objectives for their sociology program and make them public, especially to students.

Recommendation 2: Departments should gauge the needs and interests of their students, and department goals and practices should, in part, reflect and respond to these needs and interests as well as to the mission of the institution.

Recommendation 3: Departments should require introductory sociology and a capstone course in sociology as well as coursework in sociological theory, research methods, and statistics for the sociology major.

Recommendation 4: Departments should infuse the empirical base of sociology throughout the curriculum, giving students exposure to research opportunities across several methodological traditions, providing repeated experiences in posing sociological questions, developing theoretical explanations, and bringing data to bear on them.

Recommendation 5: Departments should structure the curriculum of required major courses and substantive elective courses to have at least four levels with appropriate prerequisites. At each succeeding level, courses should increase in both depth and integration in the major while providing multiple opportunities for students to develop higher order thinking skills and to improve their written and oral communication skills.

Recommendation 6: Within this four-level model, departments should also structure the curriculum to include one (or more) content area or substantive sequences which cut across two or more levels of the curriculum. Departments should design sequences to develop students' skills in empirical and theoretical analysis along with their knowledge about one or more specialty areas within sociology.

Recommendation 7: Departments should structure the curriculum to develop students' sociological literacy by ensuring that they take substantive courses at the heart of the discipline as well as across the breadth of the field.

Recommendation 8: Departments should structure the curriculum to underscore the centrality of race, class, and gender in society and in sociological analysis.

Recommendation 9: Departments should structure the curriculum to increase students' exposure to multicultural, cross-cultural, and cross-national content relevant to sociology.

⁴ The original report included 13 recommendations, almost all of which have been retained, even though some have been subsumed within a broader recommendation in this document.

Recommendation 10: Departments should structure the curriculum to recognize explicitly the intellectual connections between sociology and other fields by designing activities to help students integrate their educational experiences across disciplines.

Recommendation 11: Departments should encourage diverse pedagogies, including active learning experiences, to increase student engagement in the discipline.

Recommendation 12: Departments should offer community and classroom-based learning experiences that develop students' critical thinking skills and prepare them for lives of civic engagement.

Recommendation 13: Departments should offer and encourage student involvement in out-of-class (co- and extra-curricular) learning opportunities.

Recommendation 14: Departments should develop effective advising and mentoring programs for majors.

Recommendation 15: Departments should promote faculty development and an institutional culture that rewards scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 16: Departments should assess the sociology program on a regular basis using multiple sources of data, including data on student learning.

PREFACE

The American Sociological Association (ASA) Executive Office often receives calls from institutions asking for guidelines with which they can build, evaluate, and improve sociology programs. The ASA has never developed a single set of criteria because it recognizes the diversity within the discipline as well as the variety of contexts in which sociology is taught. At the same time, the Academic and Professional Affairs Program has worked to promote effective teaching, to provide materials and training, and to offer an outstanding journal, *Teaching Sociology*, as a way to help departments meet their own goals.⁵ The academic climate, however, has changed: Administratively mandated reviews of departments have increased as have formal assessment initiatives using national, discipline-based criteria. This updated report provides guidelines that sociology departments will find useful when engaging in curricular change, undergoing a review, developing an assessment plan, hiring new faculty, redistributing resources, or entering into any other process requiring systematic consideration of the sociology program.

The ASA and the Association of American Colleges (AAC) jointly appointed a Task Force in Sociology in spring 1989 to examine how the sociology major achieves study in depth. The ASA Council appointed a second Task Force in 2001 to update and expand upon the original report. This updated report synthesizes the work of both Task Forces. It reviews the role of sociology in liberal education, and then makes 16 specific recommendations. The recommendations are not prescriptive; instead, they provide guidance. We recognize the diversity of departments in size, budget, geographic location, mission, student demographics, and many other factors, including the fact that not all sociology programs have a departmental status. We hope departments will give this report serious attention. Reviewing the recommendations should continue the process begun by the first document of enhancing the vitality and increasing the coherence of sociology programs nationwide.

This updated report is the continuation of an on-going process of reflection and improvement within our discipline. As departments work through the recommendations and develop their action plans, the current Task Force, the ASA Academic and Professional Affairs Program, and the ASA Department Resources Group⁶ stand ready to help. In addition, many state and regional meetings, as well as the ASA Annual Meeting, feature sessions on pedagogy and curriculum change. Moreover, the ASA journal, *Teaching Sociology*, published articles about the earlier report, its implications, and examples from departments undertaking curricular change in response to it (e.g., Kain 1999; Powers 2000; Schwartz 1990; Sherohman 1997; Wagenaar 1993). We expect it will publish similar articles in response to this updated version.

⁵ For more information about the Academic and Professional Affairs Program, see Appendix 1.

⁶ The Departmental Resources Group is a network of consultants, selected, trained, and used by the ASA to help departments with program reviews and teaching workshops. Departments may contact Carla B. Howery at the ASA Executive Office to request a list of consultants for such purposes.

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LIBERAL LEARNING AND THE SOCIOLOGY MAJOR UPDATED: Meeting the Challenge of Teaching Sociology in the Twenty-First Century

Colleges and universities strive to provide an intellectually liberating education for their students. Sociology contributes to liberal education by unfettering the mind. Peter Berger (Berger and Kellner 1981) describes sociology as a way of seeing, of seeing through things, and of going beyond the ordinary. Selvin and Wilson (1980) concur that sociology opens

the mind's door to the deceptively familiar world of social arrangements. It prompts us to question the customary. It encourages us to entertain alternatives.... We get a truer view of social reality as sociology reveals the complexity of cause and effect in human affairs—the likelihood of causes other than we had supposed, and effects that may be far different from what we had in mind.... Does fear of demotion or unemployment or loss of pay drive people to work? Or to evade work more artfully? Do feelings of awe, fear, and reverence give rise to religion? Or is it religion that elicits these emotions? (p. 16-17)

Of course, a major form of debunking is empirical inquiry, where questions such as those Selvin and Wilson pose are asked and answers are scientifically pursued. Sociological “debunking” is necessary because things are not always as they appear. Some of our students’ resistance to sociological insights occurs precisely because the discipline challenges their taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of the world.

The best thing sociology can do for undergraduate students, whether majors or not, is to teach them to learn effectively so that they can keep up with rapid changes in society, particularly in knowledge, and live meaningful, engaged, and productive lives. If we can achieve this goal and their on-going learning is based on a template of understanding the importance of social structure and culture—the sociological perspective—then we will have succeeded in providing an education worth having and in producing citizens and workers who will be of continuing value to their communities and employers.

STUDY IN DEPTH IN SOCIOLOGY

Although the nature of a liberal education continues to generate considerable debate (see AAC 1998; Astin 1997; DeVries 1987; Gamson 1984; Shulman 1997), a liberal education requires students to undertake study in depth in a specific discipline. An earlier Association of American Colleges report concludes that study in depth involves at least the following (see AAC 1985: 28ff):

- Comprehension of a complex structure of knowledge;
- Achievement of critical sophistication through sequential learning

experiences (which cannot be reached merely by cumulative exposure to more and more subject matter);

- Abilities and skills required to undertake independent work; and
- Development of and disposition to undertake new learning in order to serve themselves and their society as citizens.

In sociology and other social sciences, study in depth as part of a liberal education will also include experience with (see AAC 1985, p. 28ff.):

- A central core of method and theory;
- A range of topics and variety of analytic tools; and
- A crucial interplay between continuous observation and a developing, articulated theoretical base.

The Task Force defines study in depth within the sociology major as the development of a coherent and mature conception of sociology as a scholarly endeavor that involves the interplay of empirical and theoretical analysis of a wide range of topics. Study in depth implies a process of intellectual development where students become increasingly independent participants in the discourse of the sociological community.

While the original recommendations from the 1990 report are largely unchanged, the Task Force's 16 recommendations for achieving study in depth include a few new recommendations as well as a renewed emphasis on some of the old ones. Furthermore, while some of the previous recommendations have been combined or subsumed under others, Task Force members recognize there is some overlap among the recommendations. We also recognize that no one policy, practice, or approach will work for all sociology programs at all institutions. For example, we discuss a variety of challenges to achieving study in depth in sociology that arise out of the diversity of institutional contexts within which sociology is taught (i.e., mission, size, resources), the fact that some departments house more than one discipline, and the issues surrounding serving substantial numbers of transfer students. Although there may not be, nor is the Task Force advocating, a one-size-fits-all approach, clearly there are best practices from which most programs can benefit. The following recommendations should improve the quality of the sociology major at any institution.

BEST PRACTICES FOR ACHIEVING STUDY IN DEPTH IN SOCIOLOGY

Recommendation 1: Departments should develop a mission statement, goals, and learning objectives for their sociology program and make them public, especially to students.

Faculty in sociology departments should develop and publish mission statements, goals, and learning objectives for their programs collectively, taking into account the institution's mission, relevant strategic plans, and student characteristics. We recognize that departments differ in missions, goals, student characteristics,

resources, and size (see later sections of this report). These differences need to be specifically built into departmental discussions of goals and rationales. Articulation agreements, for example, will shape the goals for the sociology curriculum at two-year institutions. In joint departments combining sociology with fields such as anthropology, criminology, or social work, sociology programs need to think about the implications that being part of a multidisciplinary unit have on their mission and goals. Once adopted, the mission, goals, and learning objectives of the department should be widely disseminated using a variety of venues, including syllabi for courses in the department, department websites, student or program handbooks and orientation sessions, and campus advisors.

The first Task Force drafted a set of departmental goals as a model (see Appendix 2).⁷ Some departments have adopted these goals as is; some have modified them sometimes only slightly; others have developed their own, often with many areas of congruity with the first Task Force's model (see Appendix 7 for an example). Whether a department adopts the goals in Appendix 2, modifies them, or develops its own, the department needs to phrase the goals in terms of observable behavior. Each goal should specify what students should be able to do and should identify the outcomes that students would demonstrate to faculty, who can then assess whether the goal has been achieved. We strongly encourage departments to think in terms of behavioral outcomes rather than lofty, immeasurable goals.⁸

Recommendation 2: Departments should gauge the needs and interests of their students, and department goals and practices should, in part, reflect and respond to these needs and interests as well as to the mission of the institution.

During the past decade, higher education has experienced dramatic changes in the composition of the student body, and all indications are that it will continue to become increasingly diverse along various dimensions—perhaps most notably in ethnic composition (greater percentage of people of color), age (the average age has increased), sex (more females than males at the undergraduate level), and prior preparation and experiences. The greater diversity of the student body has real consequences for individual sociology classes as well as overall sociology programs.

Demographic changes in the student body and in society in general have at least one implication for the teaching of sociology: effective teaching is more difficult because of the increased range of preparation and experience of our students. Students come to college in varying stages of intellectual readiness, skill development, and commitment to higher education and its requirements. While these demographic shifts have changed higher education as a whole, they have special salience for sociologists. We are expected to be at the forefront of responses to these changes because we study them. Additionally, compared to most fields, sociology attracts a more diverse set of students, especially

⁷ See Wagenaar (1991) for a fuller discussion of these goals.

⁸ The first Task Force reviewed the goal statements of the few departments that had them, but did not find a set that was measurable. Note that the department's goals serve as the foundation for assessment. Increasingly today, departments not only have goals, they have measurable goals. See Appendix 7.

underrepresented minorities, the financially disadvantaged, and women. Both homogeneity and heterogeneity of the student body present challenges that departments need to take into account as they make decisions about their curriculum and pedagogy (see Chin, Berheide, and Rome 2002; Pence and Fields 1999).

Other types of variability among students that effective departments will take into account as they examine the sociology major include the following: the proportion of students who are transfer students and where they are transferring from; whether students tend to be full or part time; differences in student learning styles; the adequacy of student preparation for college work; and variations in student needs and interests. Some students intend to go directly to work, others to go to graduate school first; some are interested in human services, others in criminal justice, and others in demographic research positions.

What sociology departments deliver to our students, and how we deliver it, is contingent, in part, on the types of students that sociology serves, which varies greatly from institution to institution. Departments should be wary of making assumptions about students. For instance, if a large number of students are transfers, departments should not assume that they are not as prepared to do advanced work as other students. Similarly, departments should avoid the assumption that students from community colleges are less well prepared. Instead of misjudging the needs of different types of students, departments should carefully gather data to assess students' current level of knowledge and preparation, and educational needs, and then they should tailor the major to best address their students' strengths and weaknesses.

Strategies to consider include the following:

- Pretesting students so faculty have a sense of the need for remediation;
- Training students to serve as tutors and as peer mentors;
- Referring students to a campus learning center for basic skill development;
- Requiring a minimum grade, typically a C, in introduction to sociology and the other core courses; allowing repeats when appropriate;
- Offering study skills and success sessions, perhaps through a sociology club;
- Providing optional high challenge opportunities to reach stronger students and all students willing to take these opportunities;
- Rewarding instructors for diverse pedagogies focusing on learning; and
- Asking for feedback from students at various points in the program via focus groups and exit interviews.

To inform planning, departments should use data on students available at the institutional level such as the following:

- Admissions data;
- Data on transfer students;

- Local institutional surveys from the institutional research or assessment office; and
- National institutional surveys (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement, Student Experiences Questionnaire, and Cooperative Institutional Research Program) from the institutional research or assessment office.

Some universities have institutional research or assessment offices that can provide data on students. Sometimes it is helpful to develop a profile of how sociology majors are, or are not, different from the general student body. Reviewing the university-level general education requirements and the requirements of specific programs (e.g., nursing, social work) may reveal paths of student enrollments into sociology courses. For example, nurses are often required to take a family course in sociology. A research methods course in sociology may be a requirement for several other majors. Identifying these paths helps departments know more about the students in its courses.

At the department level, faculty can analyze data such as descriptive information on majors and minors gathered for advising, assessment, program reviews, or other purposes. Finally, individual instructors should be encouraged to collect, share, and use data about students collected at the classroom level (e.g., pretests or attitude surveys). Such data could include responses to course pretests (background knowledge probes) and information obtained using other classroom assessment techniques (CATs).⁹ To be most effective, faculty, including sociologists, need to know their students better.

In sum, sociology majors vary widely in demographic background, attitudes and interests, academic preparation, motivation, and experience. These “input” factors affect both teaching and student learning and should be considered when designing curriculum, courses, and co-curricular activities. Information about majors and minors should be routinely gathered, interpreted, and applied in making decisions at the course, program, and department levels. Faculty members (and appropriate staff) should discuss information about students and the implications of that information. For example, information about the background of students could lead to the creation of a new, required course; could alter the pedagogical strategy used in another course; could reinforce the notion that remedial opportunities need to be provided; or, conversely, could uncover the need for more intellectually challenging opportunities for students with strong academic skills.

Recommendation 3: Departments should require introductory sociology and a capstone course in sociology as well as coursework in sociological theory, research methods, and statistics for the sociology major.

An analysis of undergraduate catalogues 10 years ago demonstrated that most programs require an introductory course, one or more methods and statistics

⁹ See Stark, Shaw, and Lowther (1989) for a course-specific student goals inventory; see also Angelo and Cross (1993) for CATs.

courses, and one or more theory courses for the sociology major (Eberts et al. 1990). The ASA's (2003) survey of sociology programs in 2000-2001 verifies that the mean number of statistics, methods, and theory courses required for the sociology major is one each. The point at which students are encouraged or required to take these courses, however, extends from the sophomore to the senior year. In addition, since the earlier version of this report that was published a decade ago, the number of departments that require a capstone course has risen, although many departments still do not offer one.

Some departments combine statistics and methods into a single required course. Some offer separate courses in quantitative and qualitative methods (possibly including statistics in the quantitative methods course); some give students the option to take one or the other of the methods courses; some require one and make the other optional; and some require students take both. Still other departments require statistics as a separate course while making students take both quantitative and qualitative methods, either in a combined course or as two separate courses. Finally, some departments rely on the mathematics department to deliver statistics courses for their sociology students.

Similarly, some departments require a single theory course, usually covering either both classical and contemporary sociological theory or only classical theory. Some offer separate courses in classical and contemporary sociological theory, some give students the option to take one or the other, some require one and make the other optional, and some require students take both. The decision concerning how many statistics, methods, and theory courses to offer, which ones to require, the level at which to offer them, and whether to sequence them should be based on mission and learning objectives, number of students and faculty as well as the needs and interests of the majors.

The Task Force recommends that these required courses be offered earlier rather than later in the sociology major so that advanced courses can be taught at a level that assumes that the students have had a foundation in methods, statistics, and theory. If a department decides to sequence them, then it has to decide the order in which they must be taken. Some departments require that students take research methods before taking statistics, while others require statistics before methods. Neither approach is inherently better than the other is. Recommendation 5 discusses in detail the issue of levels and sequencing for these and other courses.

The Association of American Colleges report, *The Challenge of Connecting Learning* (1991a), and those in the companion volume, *Reports from the Fields* (1991b), note that study in depth requires an integrative capstone experience. In sociology, capstone courses tend to fit into one of the following types:¹⁰

- A research seminar in which students are exposed to additional work in methods and theory while pulling all their previous coursework in sociology—statistics, methods, theory, and substantive fields—together

¹⁰ See Wagenaar (2001) for further discussion of capstone courses in sociology.

into a piece of scholarship. Students may gather original data during the capstone, use data collected as part of an individual or group research project in their research methods and statistics courses, or work with an existing data set such as the General Social Survey.

- An internship seminar in which students connect their sociological education, including methods and theory, to their internship experience.
- An overview seminar in which students survey the field through various reading and writing assignments that integrate, critique, and apply sociology and that focuses on methods and theory as well as substantive area(s). This type of course is sometimes used to help students prepare for a comprehensive examination (oral or written, a nationally normed standardized test or a locally designed one) that the department uses to assess learning in the sociology major.
- A topical seminar in which the faculty member designates a substantive topic for the course. Students integrate their coursework in statistics, methods, theory, and substantive fields through working on a project in that topical area.

While the capstone can take a variety of forms, graduating seniors benefit from building a learning community as they discuss the common issues arising from independent projects or internships. Therefore, the capstone should involve a seminar experience in addition to whatever independent work might be required of senior majors. Thus, the capstone course should be a regular, credit-bearing seminar, listed in the catalogue, and should carry credit for student and faculty workloads. Second, the capstone experience should emphasize pulling the disparate pieces of the sociology major together rather than pursuing a narrow specialty, as might occur in a special topics course. This is a danger of adopting the topical seminar approach to a capstone. Students may concentrate on certain monographs or write on a specific topic, but their work should bring all their preparation in the major to bear on the topic at hand. Third, as part of the capstone, students should write a senior paper, such as a thesis, or complete some other kind of professional “product” (e.g., a videotape or photo display). Further, because it needs to integrate their major, both methods and theory should be completed before students are allowed to take the capstone course. Departments might also want to consider imposing certain grade requirements in the required courses (methods, theory, statistics) before allowing students to take the capstone. Finally, the capstone should be required of all majors.

While the number of programs requiring a capstone has increased significantly over the past decade, many departments still do not have a capstone experience for the major. Kain (1999) found that of the 36 colleges and universities with sociology majors he studied, only one-fifth required a capstone course and only half of those involve research training that builds on earlier coursework in methods and statistics. Such a capstone is a critical ending point for a major carefully constructed to expose students to the discrete aspects of sociology as a discipline, to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their in-depth knowledge of the field, and to support a community of learners.

The capstone course is important in sociology because students often have not

been moving through the curriculum in the major as a cohort¹¹. The capstone helps solidify their sense of themselves as belonging to a group of sociology majors. In addition, it may be the last place in the curriculum or co-curriculum where formal or informal discussions of sociology-related careers or graduate school might occur. No matter what the configuration of a department, at a minimum an introductory course, sociological theory course, statistics and methodology course, and a capstone course should form the spine of the sociology major.

Recommendation 4: Departments should infuse the empirical base of sociology throughout the curriculum, giving students exposure to research opportunities across several methodological traditions, providing repeated experiences in posing sociological questions, developing theoretical explanations, and bringing data to bear on them.

Sociologists generally agree that the sociological perspective incorporates three central aspects: (1) the preeminence of social structures and their influences as well as micro and macro-level social processes; (2) the value of empirical analysis; and (3) the link, in C. Wright Mills' (1959) terms, between private troubles and public issues, between individual experience and larger social forces. The curriculum in the major should offer multiple experiences by using the sociological perspective to link students' lives to larger social processes, in building and testing theory, and in collecting and evaluating data. Education in sociology depends on empirical as well as theoretical analyses, and the sociological perspective grows from active learning experiences in both. Sociology, then, must be viewed as a "lab science"—some of its courses require appropriate technology, facilities, and small class size akin to science laboratories to allow students to engage in both quantitative and qualitative research.

Departments need to infuse the empirical base of sociology into all courses at the appropriate level of sophistication and use primary and secondary data to give students research opportunities across several methodological traditions. Infusing research training throughout the undergraduate sociology curriculum is a challenge for sociology, as it is for other disciplines. For the past decade, the ASA has recommended that departments offer a more extensive, developmental sequence of research training, rather than simply relying on a required research methods or statistics course (see Appendix 10). Beginning with the publication of the original version of *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major* (Eberts et al. 1990), the ASA has recommended scientific literacy as a key curricular goal that needs to pervade the major "early and often." These beliefs and recommendations fit clearly in with the trend of providing multiple, integrated opportunities for undergraduates to engage in research experiences in higher education (Boyer 1998; Tagg 2003).

¹¹A cohort refers to a group of students who progress through the program, more or less, on the same timetable. The overlap of the same people taking many of the same courses is a plus both for intellectual development and social integration.

Depending on the goals of the department, the Task Force recommends that every student in the major do the following:

- Read original monographs and critically comment on them;
- Read professional articles that use different research methods and critically comment on them;
- Access reference materials relevant to sociology in the library and on the Web;
- Analyze, adapt, or create a sociological model or “theory;”
- Develop and write a research proposal;
- Participate in a research project using primary or secondary data;
- Write a major paper using sociological concepts;
- Rewrite that paper for at least one other audience: a community group, a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece, or a letter to a legislator;
- Critically analyze mass media or other nonsociological representations of the world;
- Make an oral presentation; and
- Prepare a resume effectively presenting his or her sociological skills.¹²

Recommendation 5: Departments should structure the curriculum of required major courses and substantive elective courses to have at least four levels with appropriate prerequisites. At each succeeding level, courses should increase in both depth and integration in the major while providing multiple opportunities for students to develop higher order thinking skills and to improve their written and oral communication skills.

Sociology programs seem to sequence fewer courses than our sister disciplines do. The original report suggested that current curriculum practices in many departments showed a “Ferris wheel” model. Anyone, freshman to senior, who gets the “ticket” to ride by completing the introductory sociology course successfully can hop on the sociology Ferris wheel curriculum at any point. Sometimes students can get into upper-level sociology courses without even having taken an introductory course. The courses required for the major (usually methods, statistics, and theory) often have only a single prerequisite, the introductory course, and rarely are students expected to take these required courses in any order. Such practices, while seeming to maximize enrollments, work against the achievement of study in depth.

This pattern has changed a bit in the decade since the publication of *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major* (Eberts et al. 1990). The addition of a capstone experience adds one level of sequencing. As a result, more programs today have at least three levels in their curriculum — an introductory course, the required core of statistics, methods, and theory (and perhaps a substantive course or two), and a capstone experience in the senior year.

¹² The ASA has an extensive set of career materials, including sample resumes for BA-level students. See www.asanet.org. See also Appendix 8 for a collective resume for sociology majors.

The sociology major has developed what can be characterized as a spine structure with introduction to sociology at the base of the spine; the capstone at the top; and theory, methods, and statistics placed somewhere along the spine.¹³ Substantive courses in sociology radiate off the spine at various places depending on how many prerequisites, if any, they have. Some programs have introduced one or more special “tracks” within the major that might involve certain sequences of courses (See Recommendation 6).

In addition, some departments have added an *advanced* introductory course, which is required for majors near the bottom of the spine, just above the standard introduction to sociology. This advanced introductory course serves as a “bridge” to the other core required courses, particularly in programs serving large numbers of transfer students who have taken introductory sociology at another institution. Given that few students declare a sociology major as freshman, those who declare later also benefit from an advanced introductory refresher course covering the field. This course marks the gateway to the major.

Promoting Study in Depth by Getting Off the Ferris Wheel and Developing a Strong Spine: The Four-Level Sequence

We suggest that a strong curriculum requires at least four levels of courses within this spine structure to complete a rigorous sociology major.

The first level. The first level consists of sociology courses with no prerequisites. These first-level classes include introductory courses as well as courses that are of general interest to the student body but do not serve as a foundation for further work in sociology. Introductory courses¹⁴ are distinguished from these other level-one courses because they are designed to give an overall picture of the discipline, including basic questions asked, typical answers to the questions, and key concepts. The introductory course usually serves multiple purposes and constituencies, including being a part of general education requirements, serving as a prerequisite for additional sociology courses, and being a requirement for other majors.

For the prerequisite system to function properly, faculty teaching the introductory course must agree to facilitate student learning of whatever core content the department has defined as the minimum foundation for further coursework in sociology. This way any faculty teaching intermediate and advanced courses can assume that students have had the opportunity to learn, at an introductory level,

¹³ See Appendix 4 for a visual representation of the four level spine approach. Appendix 5 shows one model of sequencing for the methods-statistic courses. Appendix 6 depicts the case where an advanced introductory course integrates transfer students.

¹⁴ For simplicity, we speak of one introductory course although we should phrase it as introductory course(s). Some departments offer specialized introductory courses as the entry course or the means to meet general education requirements. For example, one department offers Introductory Sociology, Introductory Social Psychology, and Introductory Demography as three entry options to the field. Many departments offer Introductory Sociology and Social Problems. In principle, any beginning level sociology course may serve as a satisfactory prerequisite for the second tier of courses as long as it fulfills the learning objectives the department has deemed necessary for further coursework in sociology.

the concepts, methods, and theories of sociology. Similarly, departments need to insure that any two-year schools that routinely send students to do advanced work in their department know what the department expects students to have learned in introductory sociology courses.

At the same time, most students do not take sociology in high school¹⁵ and most students in introductory sociology at the college level never take another sociology course. Consequently, the introductory course in college is most students' only exposure to the field of sociology, and, therefore, departments need to recognize that the nonmajor is the primary audience for the introductory course.

The Task Force recognizes the difficulty and importance of teaching introductory sociology. We recommend that departments do the following:

- Put experienced, strong teachers in the introductory course, whether senior or junior faculty. Graduate students and part-time, temporary instructors should be used as infrequently as possible to teach this vital course. When graduate students and part-time instructors do teach it, they should receive teacher training and peer reviews. If possible, they should meet with a full-time faculty member to talk about the goals of the course, and they should use a common, skeletal syllabus to insure coverage of key concepts.
- Introduce students to both theory and method in a way that gives students at least an elementary exposure to the research process.
- Focus on understanding society and its interrelated parts more than describing the intricacies of the discipline. Introductory courses should be less encyclopedic or fact and name oriented. Instead, faculty should identify the powerful ideas and empirical generalizations that explain society.
- Model “sociological thinking,” preferably through active learning. Show students that sociology is a creative process (McKinney, Beck, and Heyl 2001). In every introductory course, students should be asked to read some original sociological writing, do some writing (even short answers), and should create and/or evaluate a piece of sociological work.
- Consider teaching introductory sociology as a “laboratory course”, with arrangements comparable to natural science labs where some small group experience is involved (e.g., discussion groups or other experiences involving interaction among students) especially for courses taught in a mass class setting. Departments should negotiate with administrators to bring down class sizes, preferably to fewer than 40 students.

Teaching Sociology is full of articles documenting best pedagogical practices in introductory sociology. Other resources are part of the ASA Teaching Resources Center (see <http://www.asanet.org/pubs/tchgres.html>).

¹⁵ ASA is working to develop a high school Advanced Placement course. To the extent these efforts succeed (and the work will take many years), in the future, some high school students would enter college having taken a course equivalent to introductory sociology.

The second level. The second level in the sociology curriculum includes: (a) required courses in basic sociological skills (statistics, methods, and theory); and (b) substantive courses (e.g., sociology of the family, social stratification) designed to provide a breadth of knowledge without assuming prior exposure to research training or sociological theory. These courses generally have only introductory sociology as a prerequisite, though in some departments the advanced introduction to sociology or bridge course may also be a prerequisite.

Most departments require at least two skills courses, methods and statistics. Here is where one important sequencing decision can be made. The Task Force does not recommend that methods precede statistics or vice versa, but we strongly recommend that the department decide on a sequence and stick to it. Then faculty can build on knowledge gained in the prior course in the latter one, thereby ensuring not only a greater exposure to sociology, but also a greater depth in that exposure.

The Task Force recommends that departments offer or require the theory and methods courses earlier rather than later in the major (i.e., late sophomore or early junior year rather than late junior or senior year). While almost every undergraduate program in sociology requires at least two courses in methods and statistics, these courses generally are taken later in a student's college career, sometimes in the senior year, perhaps due to some students declaring the sociology major late or perhaps because of some students' general unease with quantitative material. Transfer students and late-declaring majors frequently end up taking these level-two courses in the junior or even senior year.

Majors need to have completed both the required theory and methods courses before they can take the capstone course in their senior year. Faculty members need to think about what works best in their program while still providing a coherent sociology major. The exact placement of these required courses will depend upon the department in which the major is located. At small, residential liberal arts campuses, for example, it may be easier to require these courses in the sophomore and/or junior year. In contrast, departments at larger institutions with a significant number of transfer students, particularly from community colleges, may find it necessary to place theory, statistics, and methods courses in the third level and to require a second level "advanced" introductory course for majors (See Appendix 6). This sequence ensures that students are adequately prepared for theory, methods, and statistics at the third level and the capstone at the fourth. The advanced introductory course can give students early opportunities to think sociologically, learn about sociology as a profession, develop research ideas, and create a community of learners among the majors (Beaman 2004).

In thinking about placement of courses at various levels of the curriculum, departments also need to consider whether the sociology program is offering courses required by other programs such as nursing, women's studies, social work, and general education. Courses in some subfields of sociology enroll a large percentage of nonmajors, who take the courses either as an elective or to meet the requirements for another major or interdisciplinary program. In joint departments,

such decisions should take into account the needs of the other fields (such as anthropology, criminal justice, or social work) while meeting the goals of the sociology program.

The third level. The third level consists of advanced courses that develop greater breadth and depth in sociology. These courses require a background in social research methods, theory, or a substantive area. Third-level courses ask students to apply and develop the analytical skills they have acquired at Level 2 at the same time that they are increasing their sociological knowledge base. Level 2 courses are firm prerequisites for these upper-division courses. Few departments currently offer many “third-level” courses—that is, courses other than the capstone—that require more than an introductory course as a prerequisite. This lack of third-level courses is due, primarily, to late entry into the major, large numbers of transfer students, limited resources, and heavy service obligations to general education and other programs. The Task Force urges departments to take seriously the basic distinction between Level 2 and Level 3 courses and to build on the prerequisites of methods/statistics, theory, and prior, substantive courses.

Students in these Level 3 courses are mostly majors and minors. Nonmajors, even when taking a level-three course to meet a requirement in another discipline should not be allowed in advanced-topics courses unless they meet the prerequisites. Sociology majors have earned the right to expect to take Level 3 courses that are challenging and where professors and students do not have to take the time to review basic sociological concepts and ideas for nonmajors who lack the prerequisites.

When students have taken an overlapping set of courses, they have the raw material to integrate what they have learned. Students see new connections, ask more sophisticated questions and compare and contrast sociological knowledge with material from other fields.

Finally, decisions about lower- and upper-division courses need to consider carefully issues related to transfer students. In particular, departments are advised to establish, maintain, and nurture contacts with “sending” and “receiving” institutions that provide or receive significant numbers of transfers into or out of their program. Transfer students are best served by courses that are defined as lower division in both the two-year institutions and the four-year institutions that they attend.

The fourth level. The fourth level consists of one or more capstone courses in which students integrate the diverse elements of the major into a coherent and mature conception of sociology as an approach to inquiry and to life. Some departments offer other fourth-level courses that require completion of almost all the requirements for the major before they can be taken. Internships (optional or required), independent studies, theses, honors seminars, career or proseminars, research assistantships, or special topics seminars typically do not constitute a

capstone experience.¹⁶ As noted in the discussion of Recommendation 3, to be a capstone a course should require students to integrate their substantive work in sociology with their required courses, particularly research methods and sociological theory.

Recommendation 6: Within this four-level model, departments should also structure the curriculum to include one (or more) content area or substantive sequences which cut across two or more levels of the curriculum. Departments should design sequences to develop students' skills in empirical and theoretical analysis along with their knowledge about one or more specialty areas within sociology.

Sequencing is important to develop intellectual sophistication in core, required courses as well as for groups of courses making up substantive specialties. Sociologists, therefore, should consider students' intellectual stages when organizing and numbering courses, and deciding what is taught and how. The stages of intellectual development differ slightly in various taxonomies, but most tend to agree that intellectual growth occurs in stages from simple and concrete to integrative and abstract.¹⁷ Therefore, regardless of the specific stages, or quibbles about any one taxonomy, sociologists should keep the following developmental principles in mind.

In some taxonomies, a first stage involves remembering facts and simple descriptive concepts, which have fairly clear right and wrong answers. This material often is tested with multiple-choice questions. A second stage asks for comparisons of one situation with another, the beginning of comparative analysis. At a more advanced (third) stage, students move from comparisons to identification of underlying variables. By showing how variables relate to each other, and offering their interpretation, students begin the process of theory building. At a fourth stage, students move toward evaluating and synthesizing various kinds of pertinent theories and comparing them.

For instance, students might contrast the works of Karl Marx and Max Weber on the nature of class and power. In sociology, causal analysis draws on different theoretical sources for major explanatory variables; thus, synthesis and evaluation of theories are essential for study in depth in sociology. Application of knowledge and skills to novel situations and material is also a more advanced stage in some models.

For example, although there is no intrinsic basis for deciding whether sociology of the family precedes or follows social psychology in the departmental curriculum, such a decision can be based on departmental preferences concerning the level of difficulty of these courses. More advanced courses should build on and integrate prior work, and these courses should demand more of the student in terms of

¹⁶ If students can enroll in these courses having taken little or no prior sociology, then they are not fourth level courses.

¹⁷ See Baxter Magolda (2001), Geertsen (2003), Nelson (1999), Roberts (1986), and Shulman (2002) for discussions of the similarities and differences.

intellectual sophistication by, for example, including a greater emphasis on sociological theory or by emphasizing more sophisticated research skills. Sometimes practical matters weigh heavily in decisions about course levels and numbering. One department, for example, decided to offer a marriage and the family course first, because it was a pivotal service course for other majors.

Similarly, a department can offer substantive sequences such as in Social Psychology, which might begin with a Level 1 or 2 basic social psychology course but also include a Level 2 or 3 course in small groups and a Level 3 seminar on self and identity.

Rather than have a single model of course sequences to achieve this increasingly deep knowledge, sociology departments can examine their offerings and create one or more mini-sequences of courses, as the examples below suggest.

- Requiring an increasing sophistication in reading, empirical research, and theoretical analysis (see Recommendation 4). At Southwestern University, for example, the four-level curriculum focuses upon developing more complex research skills as students progress through the major.¹⁸ At Santa Clara University, the developmental curriculum builds skills aimed at having graduates who are effective “problem-solvers in and through organizations” (Powers 2000:42).
- Moving from courses central to sociology to ones that are more specialized and less central (though equally sociological). For example, a course on social stratification might be offered or required early in the major. More specialized courses, such as environmental sociology or the sociology of emotions might be upper-division electives.
- Moving from courses aimed at non-majors to those aimed at majors. This principle might lead to offering environmental sociology as a lower-division course and social stratification as an upper-division one—precisely the opposite outcome from what occurs by invoking the preceding principle.
- Moving along a track or concentration of courses in one area (e.g., criminology, gerontology, medical sociology) that progresses from introductory materials to more advanced work. For example, a basic social psychology course could be offered as a lower-division course and be the prerequisite for an advanced, upper-division social psychology course, such as the sociology of emotions.
- Moving from micro-level phenomenon to macro-level units of analysis, or vice versa.
- Moving from social institutions (e.g., family, education) to social processes (e.g., urbanization, change), or vice versa.
- Following a theme or set of themes. For example, a department could identify specific sociological themes, group substantive courses within a theme, and require students to take courses within one or more groups in

¹⁸ See Appendix 9 and Kain (1999) for a detailed description of these cumulative skills.

a prescribed order.¹⁹ For example, a department could have consensus and conflict as a theme and group courses on deviance, criminology, social change in an order that requires deeper engagement with the material at each step.

To summarize, we encourage departments to organize courses into a four-level curriculum with different course numbers and prerequisites at each level. This includes offering at least a few courses at the third level to meet the needs of majors. The course-numbering system should reflect the increasing demands placed on sociology students. That is, as students progress through the major, they should have more experiences with active learning, oral and written communication, the application of learning from one context to another, original research, data analysis, theoretical analysis, and synthesizing material that they learned in prior courses.

Departments should monitor courses and the entire program for the proportions of material at various stages of intellectual development, ranging from the lowest levels of description and memorization to the highest levels of critical thinking and independent inquiry. Using student feedback (in course evaluations, exit interviews, or focus groups), faculty can identify which courses move too slowly or are too easy or hard. Such responses may signal sequencing problems. Careful examination of syllabi and discussion among faculty can reveal inconsistencies between numbering, prerequisites, sequencing, and difficulty of material.

As a start, the numbering and prerequisite systems need to make sense to students, parents, advisors, and colleagues in other disciplines who read the catalogue. While it seems obvious that lower-division courses should offer preparation in both content and skill for upper-division courses, our examination of course descriptions and syllabi shows that they often fail to consistently apply this principle.

In addition to course difficulty as the basis for sequencing, variables related to student cognitive development, including integrated learning and certain interpersonal interactions, need to be considered. Thus, other recommendations in this report relate to intellectual development. If a department has focused on fostering students' intellectual development, then students are likely to encounter multiple opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills whether in written or oral work or in other active-learning pedagogical approaches such as community-based learning, service learning, and problem-based learning (see Recommendations 11 and 12).

Departments should structure their curriculum to reflect their sequencing decisions accurately, and they should make this structure and sequencing visible to students. All sociology courses should be properly located in the four-level sequence outlined in this report. The fact that many students commit themselves to the sociology major late in their undergraduate career limits the time they have to meet requirements, especially sequenced ones. Thus, department faculty must

¹⁹ See Chafetz (1980) for an example.

sequence programs and impose requirements that students can realistically complete. Students who declare the sociology major late may have to add a semester or two to their education to fulfill all the requirements in the proper sequence.

Recommendation 7: Departments should structure the curriculum to develop students' sociological literacy by ensuring that they take substantive courses at the heart of the discipline as well as across the breadth of the field.

Sociology programs vary widely in the substantive courses offered. Departments should consider which substantive courses, if any, to require. Some require a particular substantive course, such as social stratification, while some require that students choose one course from one or more sets of courses, such as one microsociology and one macrosociology course. We recommend requiring enough courses to insure that it is possible for students to achieve study in depth and still enjoy a breadth of coursework without creating too onerous a set of requirements. However, sociology majors, including those declaring late or transferring in, must meet the prerequisites for any required substantive courses, particularly those designed to provide depth.

Research on the major, in general, and on the content of introduction to sociology, in particular, shows disagreement about what should be taught as the canon of the discipline (Wagenaar 2004).²⁰ Without some agreement on the key or central topics, faculty, departments, and the discipline will be unable to develop and sustain coherent programs. Sociology is characterized by pluralism in theoretical and methodological approaches, in substantive specializations, and in units of analysis (from small groups through organizations to whole societies). The resulting diversity limits consensus on what is important for sociology students to know.

Departments face practical considerations in deciding which courses to offer. Some departments have only one or two sociologists who cannot possibly cover all core areas. All faculty have specialty interests and enjoy teaching courses in those areas. These courses usually generate considerable faculty excitement and student engagement. They have a place in the curriculum at any level, such as a freshman seminar to introduce sociology through the study of sports, team-taught with a faculty member from physical education; or an advanced specialty seminar on sociology of friendship. The Task Force encourages departments to look at their full menu of offerings and to make sure that core areas such as social stratification, social psychology, deviance and social control and so forth are well represented and are sequenced in a logical place in the curriculum. Offering a more specialized course, such as "Sociology of Food," while having no basic courses such as stratification, seems ill advised.

Despite pluralism and disagreement, there are some points of consensus among sociology departments. First, most sociologists agree on the crucial role of

²⁰ Theodore Wagenaar (2004) surveyed faculty about the core areas of sociological knowledge and found considerable diversity.

different types of social structures—institutions, organizations, even stable communication patterns—in understanding and influencing human behavior. Second, most sociologists agree on the importance of microlevel processes and interactions that foster the development and growth of the “self.” Third, sociologists see the value of empirical evidence gathered through a variety of research methods. Course content and major requirements tend to reflect these points of agreement. Thus, departments can reach consensus on core knowledge areas and a rational approach to sequencing within them.

Recommendation 8: Departments should structure the curriculum to underscore the centrality of race, class, and gender in society and in sociological analysis.

Inequality is at the heart of the discipline of sociology. Scholarship on race, class, and gender, therefore, should be infused across the curriculum from the introductory courses on up to the capstone course. When preparing their classes, faculty must ask themselves Margaret Andersen’s question: “Does the syllabus teach that all group experience is grounded in race, class, and gender, or is one group generalized while all others are particularized?” (Andersen 1988:131). Inclusive materials—work that considers nonwhite, nonmale, non-middle-class persons—can give voice to the experiences of all the students in the class (Chin et al. 2002). Where classes are homogeneous, such readings open students’ eyes to new realities (e.g., Pence and Fields 1999). Sociology courses, therefore, should introduce students to a more sophisticated sociological understanding of the production and reproduction of difference (c.f. Arnold 1995; Hunter and Nettles 1999).

From an early special issue dedicated to building on a decade of experience teaching about sex and gender (Berheide and Segal 1985) to the July 2004 issue that opens with an article documenting the continued invisibility of women in classical theory courses (Thomas and Kukulian 2004), *Teaching Sociology* provides a wealth of material exploring effective approaches to teaching about race, class, and gender (e.g., Cannon 1990; Chow et al. 2003; Jakubowski 2001). *Teaching Sociology* focuses on how to teach these issues not only in courses on gender (e.g., Hunter and Nettles 1999) and race (e.g., Wahl et al. 2000) but in other parts of the sociology curriculum as well, such as introductory sociology (e.g., Fritschner 2001) and social psychology (e.g., Heikes 1999). One way to incorporate both active learning and multicultural content in a course would be to arrange service-learning projects in ethnic communities (e.g., Marullo 1998; Myers-Lipton 2002). For example, a student could undertake a service-learning project in an organization that serves an ethnic community different from the student’s. Another approach would be to create cooperative/collaborative-learning groups that are multicultural. In short, students should encounter gender, class, and race as key explanations for social phenomena in a wide variety of sociology classes.

Recommendation 9: Departments should structure the curriculum to increase students' exposure to multicultural, cross-cultural, and cross-national content relevant to sociology.

The logic behind Recommendation 8 extends to this recommendation as well. Given the central content of sociology and the reality of the world in which our students live and work, sociology faculty should include issues pertaining to globalization and multiculturalism in most, if not all, of our courses (not just in a course on race and ethnicity or on globalization). Students learn about differences in cultures by reviewing comparative material. Contrasts with their own experience make them more aware of the world they take for granted and help to reduce ethnocentrism.

Sociology departments can infuse global approaches into their program as well as promote connections to other cultures in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Offering courses with a cross-cultural approach;
- Offering courses on particular geographic areas;
- Including readings about and by those from other nations;
- Inviting international lecturers;
- Encouraging students to take advantage of relevant co-curricular activities offered by international students of community groups such as international festivals or multicultural food fairs.
- Encouraging students to take elective courses in other departments with a global or cross-cultural focus;
- Recommending students take a foreign language; and
- Encouraging study abroad.

Joint departments with anthropology can accentuate shared themes, such as culture, the environment, immigration and globalization.

Recommendation 10: Departments should structure the curriculum to recognize explicitly the intellectual connections between sociology and other fields by designing activities to help students integrate their educational experiences across disciplines.

One goal of a liberal education is for students to recognize intellectual connections among disciplines. As the boundaries between academic disciplines blur, exposing sociology majors to related disciplines and to interdisciplinary connections seems more appropriate. If a department is a joint one, then, every effort should be made to have integrated courses. As resources permit, sociology departments can become involved in interdisciplinary programs and model the kind of intellectual connections they want students to make.

Sociology programs can use several strategies for achieving stronger interdisciplinary connections. First, instructors can integrate material from other fields by comparing methods, theories, and findings of different disciplines in

course readings, presentations, discussions, and assignments. Faculty also can encourage students to attend scholarly presentations or other co-curricular events related to other disciplines.

Second, faculty in joint departments may consider requiring particular courses from the paired discipline(s) for majors in sociology. The most common example occurs when joint departments of sociology and anthropology require sociology majors to take an introductory anthropology course and anthropology majors to take an introductory sociology course.

Third, departments, through careful advising, can encourage students to take “connected” courses in other departments, including professional ones such as business, education, and social work. This approach requires that sociology faculty have some knowledge about courses in other departments so they know where there is some consistency in the learning objectives between these courses and sociology courses. Course recommendations should be based on the complementarities of the “connected course” to sociology in conjunction with the student’s specialty and/or goals. While all sociologists might agree that it is generally valuable to take psychology courses, for example, the sociology advisor should know which specific course topics, instructors, and pedagogies highlight the similarities and differences between sociology and psychology.

Fourth, completing a minor, or even a second major, in another field provides an opportunity for connectedness, especially if faculty encourage students to identify the links between the fields.

Fifth, some campuses offer learning communities, including residential facilities, emphasizing interdisciplinary themes. Others offer freshman year experiences, paired courses, and other meaningful ways to build bridges across fields.

Finally, departments can encourage students and faculty to take part in interdisciplinary programs—such as women’s studies, ethnic studies, environmental studies, gerontology, and global studies—which explicitly combine sociology with other disciplines. Faculty members in sociology should be involved in such programs in formal (e.g., teaching or co-teaching a course; collaborative research, etc.) or informal (e.g., advise the student group, attend open presentations, etc.) ways.

Recommendation 11: Departments should encourage diverse pedagogies, including active learning experiences, to increase student engagement in the discipline.

One of the most important changes that began in the 1990s is the shift from a traditional teaching model that places the professor at the center to a learning paradigm that places the student at the center. This change, although by no means complete or uncontested, is likely to continue to gain momentum. Faculty members are expected to modify their role by being more of a “facilitator of learning” (a “coach” or “guide”), which assumes a greater equality between the

professor and student, instead of a “provider of knowledge” (the “filler of empty vessels”), which assumes that the professor has all or most of the knowledge and students have little or none.

This paradigm shift, from teaching to learning, has important consequences for the curriculum, particularly for how it is delivered. Research in higher education confirms that students retain more if they are actively engaged in the process of learning. Thus, while the large, mass-lecture format has a place, such passive formats should be modified to include more inquiry through small-group exercises, case studies, discussion, simulations, critiques, and the like.²¹ Most institutions have faculty development resources, often a teaching center, to assist in creating these engaging opportunities. The pedagogical strategies listed below are just two among many that help students more actively engage in learning, but, at the same time, it is essential to consider specific learning objectives and types of students when selecting pedagogical strategies.

Cooperative/collaborative learning. Cooperative/collaborative learning requires positive interdependence, individual accountability, interpersonal skills, and face-to-face interaction and processing among students within a small group. Research has shown that cooperative/collaborative learners often outperform competitive/individualistic learners (Rogers and Johnson, n.d.). Also, cooperative/collaborative learning results in higher reasoning, more frequent generation of new ideas and solutions, and an improved ability to transfer what is learned from one situation to another. Given the interest of our discipline in groups (from small ones to entire societies) and the abstract, complex nature of much of our content, cooperative/collaborative learning provides a successful way of structuring some learning activities in many, if not all, sociology courses.

Problem-based learning. Problem-based learning (PBL) also promotes active learning and can be used at a variety of levels in courses, programs, or curricula. PBL is student centered; it uses small student groups, instructors act as facilitators, learning is self-directed by students, and the problem provides the structure of the learning experience and promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Boud and Feletti 2001). Problem-based learning appears quite appropriate for our discipline as it is especially useful for connecting class work to paid work, giving relevance to content, improving team-work skills, and promoting critical thinking. Faculty members provide students with a limited amount of information about the problem. Students work in groups with the faculty member as a guide who helps them determine what information they have and what information they do not have and need. Next, the students gather and analyze this information and work together toward a solution. For example, sociologists might use this method to design an appropriate sociological research study for a community agency or to suggest research-based social policy.

²¹ *Teaching Sociology* has published many articles containing examples of how to implement these suggestions.

Recommendation 12: Departments should offer community and classroom-based learning experiences that develop students' critical thinking skills and prepare them for lives of civic engagement.

The goal of educating students for democratic citizenship, long a staple of college and university mission statements, is now widely seen as a fundamental goal of liberal education in the twenty-first century (AAC&U 2002). Using carefully designed community- and classroom-based learning experiences, sociology programs can help students translate sociological understanding into knowledge and skills that equip them to become active, responsible citizens and effective decision-makers in the public domain. Such knowledge and skills include:

- A critical understanding of the social, political, and economic roots of contemporary social problems;
- The ability to assess the impact of social programs and policies;
- An understanding of strategies for effective social and political action, including community organizing, public information, and political strategizing;
- Leadership skills;
- The ability to work collaboratively, especially with people different from oneself; and
- Sensitivity to injustice and inequity.

Community-based learning. Community-based learning (CBL) refers to any pedagogical strategy that involves the community as a partner in the learning process. Some forms of community-based learning, such as field trips and internships, have been around a long time. Mooney and Edwards (2001) developed a hierarchy of types of CBL and identified learning benefits associated with each. Their work, as well as a growing body of literature on CBL, reveals that the “highest order” curricular benefits of a credit-bearing CBL program occur when it involves ongoing structured reflection, links the experience to course material in a clear and systematic way, meets community-identified needs, and encourages students to develop and use their skills and knowledge to work for social change.

Service learning. More recently, service learning has become a popular form of CBL that is especially appealing for its potential contributions to civic learning. Service learning is a structured, practical experience in which reflection is critical to learning. Service learning brings together faculty, students, and communities to address real issues and results in service to the community, and it can be a powerful learning experience for students. Community-based research—collaborating with community groups and agencies on research projects that address community-identified needs—is an especially effective form of advocacy-oriented service-learning that has particular value to sociology as a strategy for teaching social-research methods (Calderon 2003; Strand 2000; Strand et al. 2003). In the process of providing needed community service, students learn new knowledge and skills that contribute to their education and that enable them to apply classroom knowledge to real world settings.

Service learning has particular value to teaching and learning in sociology. When students connect classroom materials with the “real world” of the community, they can test sociological concepts firsthand, gain experience with social worlds and social problems that they might not otherwise encounter, and acquire some sense of the many ways that sociological understanding can be applied to solve problems and alleviate oppressive social conditions. A well-designed service learning experience reinforces the values of social justice and imparts knowledge and skills that students need to engage in critical analysis and social action (Ostrow, Hesser, and Enos 1999).

Various national studies (e.g., Eyler, Giles, and Braxton 1997; Myers-Lipton 2002; Ostrow et al. 1999; Zlotkowski 1998) conclude that service learning improves academic achievement, advances learning of course content, and has a positive impact on students’ personal, social, and cognitive development (Eyler and Giles 1999). Finally, service learning helps develop civic involvement.

Classroom-based civic education. Knowledge and skills connected with civic leadership also can be developed by means of nonexperiential, classroom-based teaching strategies and course content. These can be built into the curriculum in different ways, such as:

- Assigning readings that make clear and compelling connections between sociological knowledge and real world problems—as well as strategies for addressing them;
- Requiring that students in a substantive sociology course critically assess a social program or policy aimed at alleviating some social problem or condition—such as poverty, joblessness, racial discrimination, gender inequality, or lack of access to health care—that they have studied;
- Giving students practice in “taking sociology public” by writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper; developing a political platform; writing an *amicus* brief, a grant proposal, or an op-ed piece for the *New York Times* on a topic that is inspired and informed by what they have learned in a sociology course;
- Studying social movements or movement organizations dedicated to achieving social justice and social change; and
- Bringing speakers from the community—social activists, politicians, agency staff, community organizers—who are working to achieve social change.

Recommendation 13: Departments should offer and encourage student involvement in out-of-class (co- and extra-curricular) learning opportunities.

Research indicates that two critical factors for promoting development and academic achievement for undergraduates are student involvement and high effort at academic tasks (e.g., Astin 1984, 1993; Baxter Magolda 2001; Kuh 1993, 1995; McKinney et al. 2004; McKinney, Saxe, and Cobb 1998; Pascarella and Terenzini

1991). Student involvement and integration are often measured by the frequency of academic and social interactions with faculty members, participation in student organizations, integration into the major program, and participation in research projects. Thus, one key to involvement and integration are co- and extra-curricular, out-of-class learning opportunities.

These experiences involve what we know to be good pedagogical practice as they are authentic, encourage student-faculty interaction, fit the learning mode of knowledge as constructed, involve active rather than passive learning, increase time on task, and can be collaborative (Chickering and Gamson 1987). These opportunities also provide additional ways for faculty to mentor students, to serve as role-models for students, and to socialize students into our discipline and the world of work. As noted above, such experiences may also increase student exposure to other cultures. These co- and extra-curricular activities also supplement any service learning or community-based learning opportunities that are built into the curriculum.

Traditionally, sociology has tried to draw undergraduates into the discipline through departmental clubs, the sociology honorary society Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD), colloquia, and other special events. Developing a professional identity as a sociologist is important for students at the undergraduate level as well as for those seeking advanced degrees. Departments should work to integrate the curriculum with the co-curriculum by, for example, initiating a project with the sociology club or by requiring attendance at a research talk. Alternatives include:

- Have students work as interns within the department;
- Sponsor a departmental award;
- Help students enter national competitions;
- Coauthor papers with students; and
- Encourage the professional development of students through attendance at and participation in professional meetings. Some departments bring students to professional meetings, usually regional or state, and debrief with them about what they have learned. The ASA Honors Program brings 80 students to the ASA Annual Meeting. The Nebraska Sociological Association, as another example, runs an annual meeting that gives undergraduate students in state colleges the opportunity to present and discuss one another's papers. (see Appendix 10 and footnote 39 for another example from the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez.)

All these experiences give students significant learning opportunities and the sense that they are part of a professional community.

Sociology departments would do well to explore ways to facilitate student peer groups both in and outside of the classroom. The fact that higher levels of intellectual functioning are best taught through discussion techniques attests to the influence of this type of intellectual community (Goldsmid and Wilson 1980). An important pedagogical tool for students' intellectual development rests on the sociological principle that ideas derive from social-network integration. Student

peer groups are social networks that faculty should identify, understand, generate, and facilitate to help enable students' intellectual growth in sociology. When students have common experiences, know each other and their professors, and have contact outside the classroom, they respond to each other's ideas more constructively. In other words, they enter a community of discourse. The use of small groups of students to solve problems and to work out exercises has become common in sociology courses (see Rau and Heyl 1990). Because of the constraints on levels in and sequencing of the sociology major, it is especially important that departments create conditions that foster a socio-intellectual community among students and faculty.

As more students enroll part-time and commute from jobs and families, however, and as faculty are pressed in their own work lives, these extracurricular activities are more difficult to arrange. In response, we should consider innovative out-of-class learning opportunities that are virtual, on the weekends, and/or involve students' families or jobs.

Recommendation 14: Departments should develop effective advising and mentoring programs for majors.

Effective advising is essential to a strong sociology program (Howery 1991; McMillian and McKinney 1986). Models for delivering effective advising at the department or program level include the use of faculty advisors, professional advisors, peer advisors (undergraduate or graduate students), on-line advising programs, or some combination thereof. Which model is appropriate for a given department depends, primarily, on institutional context, departmental context, resources, and faculty training.

Advising may have many goals including developing career and education plans, clarifying institutional and department requirements, helping students make decisions and meet personal goals, and providing information and resources related to careers and graduate school. Some of these goals may be especially important for advising sociology majors due to the somewhat less obvious connections between an undergraduate degree in sociology and career goals, as compared to applied or professional majors. The ASA Code of Ethics stresses the importance of helping students with job placement and fostering their involvement in the department and the community of discourse. Departments might develop handbooks about the department and the field, standard packets of career materials, and sample resumes.²² Some departments offer a one-credit optional course on careers and job searches for their majors, while others fold this information into the introductory bridge course and/or the capstone course.

Even in a department using professional advisors, faculty should be explicitly and continually involved in advising issues related to the curriculum, working with students outside of class, and preparing students for careers and/or graduate school. As a result, faculty should know about theory/research on student

²² See Appendix 8 for a collective resume.

development, institution and curricular information at multiple levels, knowledge of the discipline, awareness of career opportunities, and interpersonal/communication skills.

Sociology departments should also make efforts to mentor all students. Research shows that a meaningful relationship between a faculty member and a student is one of the key factors in student success as such relationships can promote involvement in academic life. Mentoring is one process for building such a relationship. These relationships generally develop over time, often growing out of some other type of relationship (such as teacher-student relationship in a class). Mentoring involves assisting the development of a student's values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to a given area, position, or set of goals. Mentoring can be both formal and informal. Formal mentoring programs have a clear structure, explicit roles for mentors and mentees, and even written procedures (e.g., how people are paired, how often people should meet, an assessment component).²³

Mentoring programs for undergraduate majors may be used for all majors or for targeted groups (e.g., minority students, women students). One of the most fruitful contexts for mentoring is while undertaking collaborative research; this finding is particularly important for minority students who may fall through the cracks in seeking or fully using mentors (e.g., Berheide 2002; Scisney-Matlock and Matlock 2001). As a result, implementation of Recommendation 4 on research training may be interrelated with a department's mentoring goals. Depending on the goals of the mentoring program and the department context, mentoring may be done by trained faculty, graduate students, or successful undergraduate peers.

In either formal or informal mentoring, training or preparation of both parties is essential, as are clear goals for the mentee. Training should deal with ethical issues such as abuse of power, sexual harassment, and privacy. Mentoring skills include the following: active listening, establishing goals, modeling, building trust, teaching appropriate values and norms, providing useful feedback, having a positive but realistic perspective, developing strengths, providing social support, maintaining and sharing useful networks, partnering on opportunities, and sharing knowledge of the organization. On a regular basis, advising and mentoring programs should be assessed and improved, including obtaining student input about these programs.

Recommendation 15: Departments should promote faculty development and an institutional culture that rewards scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Approaching teaching as a scholarly endeavor is a critical way to improve teaching and student learning in sociology. Scholarly teaching refers to performing our role as teacher in a way similar to how we approach our other scholarly work, such as research. That is, scholarly teachers read the literature on teaching and learning in higher education and their discipline, engage in

²³ The Appendix of Wunsch (1994) provides a useful checklist for a formal mentoring program.

classroom assessment and research, discuss and share ideas about teaching and learning with colleagues, engage in faculty development opportunities related to teaching, and reflect on their teaching and learning experiences. The next step beyond scholarly teaching is to conduct scholarship on teaching and learning (Cross and Steadman 1996; Howery 2002; Hutchings and Shulman 1999; McKinney 2004; Phillips 2000).

The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is the systematic study or investigation of teaching and learning, usually in one's discipline, that is made public through presentation or publication. In sociology, we have over 30 years of SoTL work accumulated in *Teaching Sociology* and other outlets. There are sessions at the ASA and regional sociology meetings in which SoTL work can be presented. SoTL can help us in efforts such as assessment of learning, curricular reform, encouraging innovation in teaching, and program review. Sociology departments should encourage and reward scholarly teaching and SoTL, and find ways to use the insight gained from SoTL to improve teaching and learning in sociology.

Recommendation 16: Departments should assess the sociology program on a regular basis using multiple sources of data, including data on student learning.

Throughout the 1990s, varied constituencies called for greater accountability in higher education. Both legislative bodies (state and federal) and the general public have made accountability an issue in all dimensions of the functioning of colleges and universities, from faculty workload to the costs of maintaining the facilities. In addition, regional organizations that accredit institutions of higher education now require outcomes assessment—the careful measurement of student learning in terms of the department's stated goals. Regardless of external interest or pressure, outcomes assessment is a good educational practice.

Outcomes assessment (e.g., Hohm and Johnson 2001; Weiss et al. 2002) is the process of collecting and interpreting direct and indirect data about student learning for the purpose of finding out how well sociology courses, programs, and pedagogy are helping students meet the goals and objectives that have been set. Classroom assessment, on the other hand, involves using a variety of techniques to gain formative information about student learning in a particular course during a given semester (Angelo and Cross 1993).

All assessment should be learning-centered: that is, the ultimate purpose of such assessment is to enhance student learning. Ultimately, the measure of the success of our teaching, our curricula, and our programs lies in what students have gained. Thus, student-learning outcomes are the major source of data. What we are assessing, however, are not individual students but rather our courses, programs and curricula by using aggregate data and measures directly and clearly linked to program goals.²⁴

²⁴ For a sample assessment plan, see Appendix 7.

Assessment plans require three main components: (1) a statement of program mission or curricular goals; (2) a set of measurable, performance-focused learning outcomes based on the objectives of the curriculum and our teaching; and (3) a roster of various methods and measures to assess our success in achieving those objectives. As sociologists, the nature of what we teach seems to demand that we resist efforts to measure outcomes simply through performance on a multiple-choice test (Berheide 2001). Standardized tests may be too narrow a means to assess whether students have become better writers, thinkers, and learners. The challenge is to figure out what exactly it is that we want our students to learn and then to figure out how to assess what our students learn meaningfully.

Good assessment uses multiple methods and measures, often including authentic and course-embedded sources of data. These could include portfolios, focus groups, exit interviews, pre- and post-tests, questionnaires, a review of senior theses, alumni surveys, and more.

Graduate training equips sociologists well to design and implement effective assessment of programs and classes. Assessment is of no real value, however, unless we also “close the loop” —that is, whether we apply what we learn from our assessment efforts to make course, pedagogical, and curricular changes aimed at enhancing student learning. Assessment is continual and ongoing.

Conclusion

To implement these 16 recommendations, sociologists will need increased dialogue on what is central to the discipline in terms of concepts, perspectives and skills, and what is nonessential. It may be necessary to become more detailed. That is, a policy suggestion that calls for a methods course presumes agreement on what that methods course does or should cover. Whatever the department’s structure, sociology programs should infuse courses at the four levels of their curricula with repeated and sequenced experiences in writing, research, application and policy, community-based activities, interdisciplinarity, as well as issues of gender, race, class, and globalization. Departments should develop connections among courses in the major to use knowledge and skills from one course in another and to build on the work of one course in others. One way to accomplish this is to develop assignments with multiple parts that are completed in different courses. For example, students could develop a research proposal in a research methods class and carry out the project in a capstone course. An assignment in one course, thus, can be the starting point for another course. Faculty must work together, developing shared learning objectives that are connected to multiple courses and are shown to students. Faculty who teach the capstone course could talk to students in the introductory course about the senior experience, or senior majors could present their capstone projects to students in the research methods course. Additionally, departments should consider having students keep portfolios, perhaps electronically, starting with work from their introductory course and continuing through the capstone course. This student portfolio then can be used to build their resume. Portfolios could also be used for assessment purposes.

The recommendations and suggested strategies above stem from the original Task Force report, the knowledge and experience of Task Force members, and the literature on teaching and learning in Sociology and higher education more generally. A recent project (funded by a Carnegie Scholar Award) on beliefs of sociology majors about how they learn sociology supports many of the recommendations and specific strategies noted under the recommendations in this report. Listening to the voices of these students, McKinney (2005:12) found that students believed five types of connections were critical to their learning of our discipline. These connections, that plug students into learning, include the following:

1. *To the Discipline* via student engagement and interest in sociology;
2. *Interpersonal* via collaboration with others (especially faculty and peers), forming relationships, and having various relevant interactions;
3. *Among Related Ideas or Skills* via strategies of review and repetition in routine study situations;
4. *To Student Lives and the Real World* via active tasks and experiences in and out of class involving application and relevance; and
5. *Across Courses* via integration of courses and content, retention of learned skills and materials, and reflection.

The Task Force members encourage colleagues to engage in additional research, assessment and scholarship of teaching and learning, to confirm the value of, and elaborate upon, our recommendations for student learning.

ACHIEVING STUDY IN DEPTH UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

To emphasize what should be done to enhance study in depth in sociology, we began with 16 recommendations. Implementation of the 16 recommendations for study in depth in sociology may involve additional issues for departments in different contexts. This section, although not comprehensive, discusses several common departmental variations, including joint departments, large numbers of transfer students, staffing realities, and variations in institutional mission and size. All of these factors may require adaptation of these recommendations for study in depth. The Task Force asserts, however, that the basic “spine structure” of the curriculum and the recommendations in this report can and should apply to all sociology departments.

Achieving Study in Depth in Multidisciplinary Divisions and Joint Departments

In contrast to many other liberal arts disciplines, sociology is often located within a department or academic unit that includes other disciplines. In 2000, slightly more than half (57%) of 795 departments that offer only undergraduate degrees in sociology were in a setting other than a stand-alone sociology department (ASA 2003). Fully ten percent are in general academic units in social sciences. The two most common departmental combinations are sociology and anthropology (22%)

and sociology and social work (7%). Another 10 percent are in departments with criminal justice, psychology, or some combination of anthropology, social work, and criminal justice. The remaining 8 percent are in behavioral science or social and behavioral science units. In all of these multidisciplinary units, sociology's disciplinary autonomy and integrity may be lost. Where traditional scholarly disciplines are housed together, resource scarcity and relative power may be modest problems. Where sociology joins with more vocationally oriented programs, such as criminal justice and social work, agreement on fundamental curricula may be a challenge. Sociology's emphases on theory, methods, and critical awareness may conflict with emphases on application and professional training.

To the extent that other disciplines or programs are present in a department, faculty will need to take heed of them when designing the sociology major. Merely coexisting within the same administrative unit results in a lost opportunity. That said, we should be wary of letting the presence of these programs determine what or how sociology is offered. Following Recommendation 10, sociologists should build intellectual bridges in both their teaching and their research to the other disciplines housed in their department while honoring the intellectual differences among those disciplines. While reasonable coordination with kindred programs is a benefit to students and to the department as a whole, it is important that our discipline maintain its integrity. Thus, the best practices outlined in the recommendations *still* apply to sociology programs in multidisciplinary units.

Joint sociology and anthropology programs . Historically, anthropology and sociology have often been housed in the same department, and that set-up persists at some institutions today, particularly smaller ones. Anthropology traditionally consists of four fields (cultural anthropology, archaeology, biological anthropology, and linguistics). Joint sociology and anthropology departments typically emphasize cultural anthropology as the subfield most closely allied intellectually, and therefore most easily integrated, with sociology.

Some colleges and universities lack sufficient staff to offer separate sociology and anthropology majors, and so the best option may be to develop a combined sociology-anthropology major, an explicit anthropology track, or a concentration within the sociology major. Some joint departments offer a combined sociology-anthropology major in addition to separate sociology and anthropology majors. The disadvantage of a combined major is that students obtain less depth in the two disciplines. The advantage is that students benefit from a genuinely multidisciplinary exploration of culture and society. A major in sociology-anthropology allows students to benefit from the strengths of both disciplines and to receive a comparative understanding of the United States and other societies. Such a major provides excellent preparation for meeting the challenges created by living in our rapidly changing global economy.

Typically a combined sociology-anthropology major would at minimum require students to take introductory sociology, introductory cultural anthropology, a geographic area course in anthropology, research methods and statistics, a theory

course, and a capstone seminar. The latter three courses could be in either discipline or in interdisciplinary courses exploring both sociological and anthropological traditions. The required and elective courses in the combined major should be divided in such a way that students complete about half their coursework in sociology and half in anthropology. The structure of this combined major, then, follows the spine model of a sociology major, even though some of the core courses (theory, methods and statistics, and capstone) may be taken in anthropology or in an interdisciplinary course.

Given that the methods-statistics and theory courses are core, then departments need to decide how to offer courses that fit the particular combined major they have. If student numbers and staffing permit, separate courses can be offered for each track. More often, joint departments are small and must offer one set of core courses. In these cases, it is important to have core learning objectives and core material to cover vetted by the department. For example, a methods course will need to cover more field methods and ethnographic techniques than might be the case in a stand-alone sociology program. A statistics course might include examples from archeology to make it more relevant to the anthropology-oriented students. A department might require a methods course for all students, but only statistics for the sociology majors (in which case the sequence of those courses would have methods coming first).

Substituting the theory course in sociology for a theory course in anthropology or vice versa is a pragmatic choice when there are not enough faculty to staff separate courses in both disciplines. It may be ill advised, though, unless the course includes some coverage of both anthropological and sociological theory beyond the grand theorists of the nineteenth century (e.g., Marx and Durkheim) whom both disciplines study. Joint departments must decide what the goals of the theory requirement in anthropology and sociology are and whether those goals can be met in a combined anthropology and sociology theory course.

In addition to the capstone models outlined under Recommendation 3, joint departments have the opportunity to develop a capstone course that would challenge their majors to see the commonalities and differences in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. Alternatively, separate capstone seminars would provide a strong culminating experience for each group of students while creating community among those sharing the same disciplinary focus.

Joint departments must be careful, though, that they do not blur the legitimate intellectual differences between sociology and anthropology. Specifically, anthropology faculty should only teach anthropology courses and sociologists should only teach sociology, unless they have graduate degrees in both fields (e.g., a faculty member with an MA in anthropology and a Ph.D. in sociology). Second, sociology and anthropology courses should have separate designations in the catalogue and on transcripts. Third, sociology majors who do substantial coursework in anthropology should receive transcripts that note that they have

completed an anthropology track/concentration or a sociology-anthropology major to distinguish them from sociology majors who did all their coursework in sociology.

Joint sociology and criminal justice programs. A growing number of sociology departments offer coursework in criminal justice. In fact, in some cases, the number of students interested in criminal justice may be substantially greater than the number interested in sociology. Indeed, a department can face both sets of student demands. How does a department offer a strong sociological foundation to students who primarily wish to pursue careers in law enforcement and whose course interests may be very different from those of traditional sociology majors? Graduates hired by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies will attend training academies where they will study law enforcement techniques, evidence collection, and similar “practice-oriented” topics. Their undergraduate education, therefore, should focus on teaching them to think critically and analytically, develop an understanding of human behavior and diverse cultures, and communicate well both orally and in writing; all of these skills are key features of study in depth in sociology.

When a criminal justice program is housed with sociology, all criminal justice students, whether sociology majors with a concentration, track, or minor in criminal justice or criminal justice majors, should follow the spine model and be required to take the core courses for a sociology major—introductory, theory, methods and statistics, and a capstone. The department could allow criminal justice students to fulfill their theory requirement with a course on theories of crime instead of classical or contemporary sociological theory, which traditional sociology majors would take. Similarly, their projects in research methods and in the capstone experience could focus on criminal justice topics.

For electives, they could be steered toward taking Social Problems, Deviance, Criminology, Juvenile Justice, and the like. Other electives can provide them with the opportunity to explore specialized, upper-division topics in crime and criminal justice such as Violence in Intimate Relationships or Organized Crime. Although students may complain that they would like to have courses on law enforcement, any criminal justice major housed in a sociology department should maintain a solid foundation in the sociological study of crime and justice. Such a major will equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for entering law enforcement and other criminal justice careers. In short, no matter how a department or academic unit is structured, and no matter what other programs exist at the institution, the spine, the basic core of courses —introductory sociology, statistics, methods, theory, and a capstone —are essential to the completion of a sociology major.

Joint sociology and social work programs. Similarly, some undergraduate sociology programs experience strain between the sociological interests of the faculty and a wish by many students for baccalaureate social work training. These departments face a dilemma similar to the one faced by departments with large numbers of students interested in criminal justice. A social work sequence can

address this tension. This solution, however, is not entirely satisfactory to students who want a recognized social work credential.

There are at least two reasons to approach this issue cautiously: first, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and state education departments may have a stringent set of requirements that departments must meet before they may offer an accredited BSW. Second, sociology faculty may resist the additional responsibility of training social workers. Many different factors bear on the decision to establish or keep social work in sociology departments, including the mission of the college or university, the needs and interests of students, the number of majors, differing state requirements regarding licensing and curricula, and, of course, the goals and mission of the sociology program.

Joint departments are more common in small colleges than in large universities, which are more often able to support social work as a separate department or school. When social work is a freestanding major in a joint department, it is usually accredited by the CSWE, although some departments have a freestanding non-accredited major in social work (which might be called human services or some other name). The social work curriculum, even when it is not an accredited program or major, should be modeled as much as possible on the CSWE recommendations and requirements. Other possible configurations include: (1) a combined major in sociology and social work, which might take the form of a track or concentration within or attached to the sociology major, or (2) a separate minor in social work.

If a department already offers enough social work courses, it could bundle them together into a social work track or concentration within the sociology major or as a social work minor open to students majoring in any discipline. Indeed, some sociology majors at some schools take enough social work courses as part of their sociology major to have, in effect, a de facto combined sociology-social work major. Instead of falling into this bad practice unintentionally, departments should deliberately decide how to meet their students' desire for preparation for careers in social work without diluting the sociology major.

Another approach is to develop a combined sociology/social work (or human services) major. Such a major would build on the existing sociology major while recognizing the legitimate differences between the two fields. A joint sociology-social work major would follow the spine model. At minimum, it would require students to take the core courses for a sociology major (introductory sociology, statistics, methods, theory, and a capstone) and the core courses for a social work major (Introduction to Social Work, Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Policy, Social Work Practice, and a field placement that has social work practice methods as a prerequisite and would serve as a capstone for the combined major).

To ensure and enhance the benefits of joint sociology/social work programs for study in depth in sociology, departments can focus on strategies to:

- Encourage and support all kinds of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary curricular initiatives and activities. However, departments should preserve the integrity of the sociology major by retaining a clear distinction between the disciplines. Social work/human services courses—except those that are cross-listed with sociology because they have substantial sociology content—should not count as sociology courses, should not be taught by sociologists, and should not have a sociology prefix. Departments should be very cautious about allowing social work courses, even Introduction to Social Work, to count towards the sociology major, lest the sociology major cease to be such.
- Encourage and support a range of extracurricular, out-of-classroom activities that involve faculty members and students from both disciplines—including social activities and traditions that are department-based, not discipline-specific. Many of the core values of contemporary social work—social and economic justice, diversity, social change, and human dignity—resonate nicely with what much of sociology is about. The two disciplines can bring complementary perspectives to a whole range of topics: child welfare, poverty, racism, gender stratification, inequality, violence, family issues, global inequality, aging, social policy, and so on.

In short, the Task Force asserts that joint programs can and do work. Sometimes they are administrative necessities (with potential for intellectual synergy). These programs, however, are no different from solo sociology departments in the need for collectively set goals, a curriculum to achieve those goals, and a curricular spine. Professional programs, such as criminal justice and social work—with special attention paid to the latter since it has a credentialing body—still should have the same sociology core even though the electives will differ due to the applied focus of the program.

Non-liberal arts tracks or concentrations. Sociology departments that have service tracks or concentrations in social work, criminal justice, secondary education, and other more vocationally oriented programs face similar issues in achieving study in depth. Because the traditional liberal arts degree is not designed for direct occupational application, vocationally oriented students increasingly favor tracks with such promise. As these become more popular relative to liberal arts majors, the problem becomes one of the 'tail-wagging-the-dog', specifically in the form of sacrificing liberal arts principles to sustain enrollment in sociology. For departments with emphases in applied and clinical sociology, the Commission on Accreditation of Applied and Clinical Sociology programs (<http://www.sociologycommission.org/>) provides curriculum guidelines. Serving the needs and interests of vocationally oriented students while retaining the traditional liberal arts core in the sociology major may be an on-going tension in both stand-alone and joint sociology departments.

In many quarters, liberal education and the associated disciplines are considered a luxury rather than the critical foundation of an undergraduate education. In the context of this trend, it is often difficult to justify liberal arts majors, including, and in some cases particularly, a sociology major. As a result, we need to consider the practical dimensions of the sociology major (e.g., communication, research, and analytical skills). To ignore the trend away from liberal education and toward what are viewed as more practical majors will not serve either students or society well. Making sociology more vocationally relevant without sacrificing the heart of the discipline is critical in this regard. Thus, as Recommendation 12 indicates, departments have a responsibility to provide sociology majors with some career preparation as well as information about how the sociological imagination and sociological skills in thinking, researching, and writing are practical.

Following Recommendation 10, some sociology departments have worked closely with other departments on campus to show vocational *relevance* without the pitfalls of adding vocational courses to the department. Through careful assessment of courses offered across campus and assiduous advising, sociology departments can suggest specific courses in other departments for students interested in careers in areas such as environmental studies, leisure and recreation, human relations, human resources, or hospitality industries. The sociology department retains “the spine” of core courses and electives while linking with other departments to offer students the opportunity to take more vocationally oriented courses.

Students are well served by sociology as a liberal arts major in today’s job market, where job turnover (voluntary and not) is more frequent and the rapidity of new information in any job requires intellectual agility and flexibility. Employers prefer the well-trained, analytic, critical thinking graduate that sociology can prepare (Useem 1989).

Achieving Study in Depth for Transfer Students

For the greater part of the past century, with the exception of students who started their post-secondary education at community colleges and then transferred to four-year institutions, the majority of students began and completed their higher education at one institution. During the 1990s and into the current century, a significant and growing number of students broke this well-worn pattern. From all indications, this trend is likely to continue and even to expand in the foreseeable future. College and university policies and practices, the sheer number of higher education institutions, and technology have greatly facilitated student mobility. It has now become common practice for students to change schools (often more than once), to enroll simultaneously in two or more colleges or universities, and to stop for some period of time (sometimes several years) before continuing, perhaps even at a different school.

The long-standing pattern of transferring from a community college to a four-year school and the more recent “swirl” of students in and out of multiple four-year institutions means that the single institution may no longer be the appropriate unit

of analysis for examining the sociology major. Increasing student mobility among different institutions makes coherence in the major difficult, because such coherence requires inter-institutional cooperation and coordination. Yet, most institutions go it alone, devising and revising curricula as they please with little consultation with other institutions or constituencies.

In many institutions, the majority of sociology majors are community college or lateral transfers. This creates significant problems including transfer equivalency of upper division substantive courses, adequate preparation for the capstone, the placement of theory and methods in program sequence, and other general issues of course sequencing. Here again, solutions will require inter-institutional collaboration, particularly between community colleges and the four-year schools to whom they send large numbers of students. More public discussion of department goals, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment across institutions at professional meetings, in publications, and especially through articulation agreements is essential.²⁵

Many states have legislatively mandated articulation, sometimes including specific course equivalency agreements for general education, the major, or both. The most progressive institutions are asking groups of faculty to develop articulation policy and to assist in monitoring effectiveness. The development of a defined core for each general education component is part of this activity in some states. Sociologists should take every opportunity to monitor and, where possible, to participate in these policy discussions lest we find ourselves with no choices to make. Departments in public institutions need to find out whether their state has a mandatory articulation policy and whether a receiving institution has a policy or pattern. Sociologists within a state should consider convening at the state sociological society meeting, if possible, to talk about these issues.

The implications of widespread student mobility for specific components and levels of the sociology program are many and varied. How, for example, should a particular department handle credits earned at other colleges and universities perhaps with varied missions (e.g., from community colleges to research universities)? What courses, if any, must students take in the department in which they complete their sociology degree? Clearly, a policy that requires students to take all major courses in the degree-granting department is both unrealistic and unfair (and for public institutions would likely attract the wrath of state legislatures). A policy about which courses must be completed in the degree-granting department is one that needs to be considered thoughtfully. With the exception of introductory sociology, we recommend that core required courses in the major (theory, statistics, methods, and the capstone) and a reasonable number of upper division/advanced substantive courses should be taken in the degree-granting department. Exceptions should be made only after careful review of the

²⁵ The ASA Task Force on Articulation of Two and Four-Year Programs has recently reported on this problem with respect to transfer articulation. See Zingraff (2002) for a fuller discussion of the articulation of two- and four-year sociology programs. The report is on the ASA website at www.asanet.org.

syllabi from the other institution or a student product from the course taken at the other institution.

Failure to develop smooth paths to allow our students to move from feeder institutions to destination institutions has the potential to undermine their educational experience. When an established relationship exists between a receiving school and a small, discreet number of feeder schools, smooth articulation of credits and content is easier to achieve. But in any case, conversations between four-year institutions and community colleges are important and should address the following issues:

- Who should teach core courses,
- What prefixes are on the course numbers,
- What are the names of the courses,
- How to count transferring courses as electives only,
- Whether such courses can be counted toward the sociology degree (especially if the transferring classes are in other fields such as anthropology or social work), and
- Which courses are upper division and which are lower division.

Two-year institutions need to know what courses are defined as lower-level courses at the institutions to which their students transfer. This has implications for transfer of credits and the coherence of the major at both the two-year “sender” schools and the four-year “receiver” schools.

Transfer equivalency. Community college courses are lower division by definition and courses in the major are heavily upper division. Future sociology majors may lose transfer credit for taking a substantive course, such as criminology, at a community college because it is an upper-division course at the four-year school to which they transfer. The course may be counted for general credit, but not toward the major.

Theory, methods, and statistics. The recommendation that theory as well as methods and statistics be taught as early as the sophomore year poses problems for students who complete their sophomore years at community colleges (see Recommendations 3 and 5). Except for a statistics course taught in mathematics, most community colleges are unlikely to want to teach these courses and four-year schools are unlikely to want to transfer credit for these core courses for the community college student. Therefore, schools that serve substantial percentages of sociology majors transferring in from community colleges may be forced to teach statistics, methods, and theory early in the junior year.

Sequencing. Sequencing courses in terms of the four levels in the sociology major creates difficulties for the two-year transfer student (as well as the late declaring major), making the idea of sequencing seem impossible for departments that serve substantial numbers of transfers, particularly with regard to transfer equivalency and taking theory, methods, and statistics earlier. Program continuity and cohort bonding are also difficult for students who are not full-time, who commute, who

spend little time outside class on the campus, or who move back and forth between college and work. A program designed to move students together through a coherent sequence assumes equivalence in starting point and pace of movement. When these assumptions are not met, as is frequently the case, departments experience problems with those students as well as in the integration of cohorts and effective course scheduling.

As the number and interconnectedness of sequencing increases, the prospects for transfer students to complete a sociology major on time diminish. Sequencing complicates the timing not only for the student attempting to complete the program but also for departments' course schedules. Very large departments might be able to offer courses frequently enough, but many cannot. Transfer students might face the prospect of entering in their junior year and having to complete prerequisites that needed to be taken as sophomores in order to graduate in four years. Some departments have a "second" or advanced introductory course at the junior level to bring all the transfer students to a common beginning before they start the theory-methods-statistics sequence (See Beaman 2004 for examples).

Both sending and receiving programs need more information on students, their movement patterns, and other characteristics. Sociology departments, therefore, should collect data on students and program patterns to determine patterns of transfer, major choice, and the like (see Recommendation 2). Then when designing their sociology curriculum, both two-year and four-year schools should consider articulation and transfer concerns with appropriate attention to both diversity of goals and contexts, and the "spine" of the Sociology curriculum.

Achieving Study in Depth at Diverse Institutions

Issues related to transfer students are only one of many challenges when attempting to achieve study in depth at diverse institutions.

Institutional mission and characteristics. Historically, institutions with diverse missions (e.g., public, private, non-profit, for-profit, two-year, four-year, graduate degree-granting, commuter, residential, liberal arts, comprehensive, research, faith-based, single-sex, historically Black, Hispanic-serving, etc.) have offered higher education in the United States. During the past twenty years, but particularly during the last ten, we have experienced greater diversification in types of post-secondary educational institutions. This diversification has implications for the undergraduate major in sociology, particularly in light of the increase in student mobility.

Institutional mission, as determined by tradition, governments, or governing bodies (such as boards of trustees), sets the stage for the types of students with whom we work, the resources available to us, and the alternative demands placed on our time and energies. It affects what we have to do to provide a strong sociology major. Two very important dimensions of institutional mission that a department faculty should consider when thinking about the sociology major are: (1) the degree to which the institution is subject to external coordination or

oversight, and (2) the degree to which the institution needs to articulate with other colleges or universities (see Wright et al. 2004).

In addition, an undergraduate program located within a graduate-degree conferring department may pose special challenges and opportunities. How does quality undergraduate education happen when the institutional reward structure emphasizes individual faculty's research careers? Yet those same faculty, and their research projects, are tremendous assets for undergraduates. The appropriate role of graduate students as teaching assistants and solo instructors must be carefully charted.

Institutions differ by more than their missions. They also differ in their size, a factor that must be considered when departments are designing or revising the major. The size of the student body presents both opportunities and obstacles for departments. For example, faculties at smaller schools may find it easier to know their students well and to coordinate with colleagues, but they may also have a more difficult time offering a diversity of courses and experiences for students. Departments in larger schools will have a more varied pool of both instructors and students from which to draw, but they may find it more difficult to deliver intimate learning experiences, particularly with regard to the capstone course.

Institutions also differ by location. Colleges and universities in urban settings have significant opportunities for service learning, student research, and community involvement. These benefits also exist in rural settings, but low density may make it more difficult to find placements for students, particularly when a department has a large number of majors.

Department mission and characteristics. Furthermore, a department's mission also shapes the context in which sociologists teach. Rarely would the faculty determine sociology's mission without being influenced by the local administration, external oversight boards, the priorities and strengths of the institution overall, or tradition. Important aspects of the department mission that affect the undergraduate major include: the presence of a graduate program, the department's responsibility as a "service" department, involvement in or connections with interdisciplinary programs, and, as already discussed in detail above, related programs or disciplines within the same department.

Differences between the department's mission and the institution's mission can lead to direct conflict about implementation and/or resource allocation and can limit study in depth. Sociologists must take a proactive role in shaping departmental and institutional missions to sustain the prospects for study in depth.

The presence of a graduate program is important because resources must be committed to that enterprise, perhaps reducing that which is available to the undergraduate major. At the same time, graduate students are valuable resources. They can enhance the undergraduate program by serving as teaching assistants or instructors and by providing opportunities for undergraduates to serve as research assistants. (Credit can be given for work with graduate students along the lines of

research teams in chemistry or physics.) Graduate students can be involved with undergraduates in AKD, serve as role models, and, in some cases, can be mentors for undergraduates.

In many, perhaps most institutions, sociology departments play an important service function. We provide “distribution” credits for college liberal arts requirements, and frequently other majors send their students to our departments for methods, statistics, or substantive courses. The degree to which we function as a service department will affect our ability to be innovative in the sociology major. The more we are expected to serve external constituencies, the fewer degrees of freedom a department will have. Even so, sociologists should think about how best to deliver a strong major to students interested in the discipline.

In some cases, departments will be connected to and involved in the support and delivery of interdisciplinary programs on campus such as Women’s Studies or Leadership Studies. This involvement will often include sociology faculty teaching in these programs, offering seats in sociology classes for students in these programs, and co-sponsoring speakers or other events. Thus, department resources are expended outside the undergraduate major. Yet, there are positive effects to such involvement including a variety of integrated learning opportunities for sociology students.

Some programs have a surfeit of riches—literally hundreds of majors—while others suffer from a lack of majors. Too many can undermine programs as surely as too few. Study in depth, especially the research and capstone components, presupposes small numbers of students per section. Very large programs would need to schedule so many sections per year that other aspects of the program may falter. On the other hand, if programs do not schedule a sufficient number of sections, sections may be too large to permit the achievement of study in depth. Access to the additional resources needed to offer these in-depth experiences to large numbers of students may be unlikely or insufficient. So that the crush of numbers does not eliminate these educational enhancements, large programs may require creative alternatives that enable in-depth experience. These alternatives may include the use of student mentors, graduate student/undergraduate teams, virtual discussions and laboratories, and lectures with labs instead of small sections.

A program with *few* majors will have problems offering enough courses, both the required courses plus substantive electives, to offer a coherent and rigorous sociology major. Course offerings may be driven by demands of nonmajors thereby reducing the likelihood that courses that provide in-depth experiences for majors can be offered. Yet, smaller programs must reallocate resources or obtain additional resources to offer at least a minimum of courses that provide these experiences for their majors.

Instructional technology and the physical environment. Instructional technology (IT) is spreading rapidly in higher education as colleges and universities actively promote its use in the teaching/learning process (e.g., Chickering and Ehrmann

1996; Horton 2000). In addition to videotapes, overhead projectors, and other more conventional forms of instructional technologies, IT has expanded to include email, asynchronous (web-based distance learning) courses, computer-equipped classrooms, class list serves, electronic bulletin boards, chat rooms, web-based instruction, course web pages, PowerPoint presentations, Instructive Television, and, in sociology, the use of statistical software that allows for the presentation and analysis of quantitative data.

Instructional technologies, though, are inherently neither positive nor negative; rather, their value—as that of any teaching tool—has to do with their contributions to student learning. Sociologists need to ensure that the instructional technologies we employ are used wisely; that they encourage active learning; that they are equally accessible to all students; that they reduce, rather than increase, distance between faculty and students and among students; and, most importantly, that they enhance rather than undermine student learning. Effectiveness in meeting learning goals should always be the primary consideration in using IT.

The physical environment also has implications for student learning. How we teach and how students learn are linked, in part, to the space in which we interact. Two types of space are important for effective learner-centered education: (1) classrooms that are conducive to nonlecture modes of teaching, and (2) spaces in which collaboration and informal exchange can take place. Classrooms that are appropriate for seminars, rooms with moveable chairs and tables (for small group work and exercises), and classrooms that include technology (e.g., computer connections, video equipment) should be available for sociology courses. Departments also need access to computer labs that are equipped for instruction (e.g., with projection capability so that an instructor's monitor or output can be displayed to students working in the lab).

Adequate nonclassroom space, including lounges, is also essential to foster learning communities. These spaces are necessary to facilitate faculty/student, student/student, and faculty/faculty informal interactions. Departments should strive to develop noninstructional computer labs for students, as they can benefit from informal interactions in the lab with their colleagues.

Administrations have long recognized the need for research space for faculty in some disciplines, notably the “hard” sciences. While the work of few sociologists necessitates the research space of our colleagues in physics or chemistry, the increasingly collaborative nature of social science research does require space in addition to traditional offices. Faculty members need offices large enough to work collaboratively with small groups of students. They also need space near their offices for research assistants (traditionally graduate research assistants, but increasingly undergraduate assistants as well). Thus, providing space for sociological research will have the collateral benefits of increasing the capacity of sociology departments to offer significant research opportunities to undergraduate students and of increasing faculty-student interaction outside of class.

Achieving Study in Depth Given Staffing Realities

Fewer full-time faculty. During the past decade, colleges and universities have decreased the proportion of full-time faculty to students while increasing that of part-time instructors. This change has consequences for the major as it relates to who is in charge of the curriculum and who is teaching specific courses. It is much more difficult, although not impossible, to develop a coherent sociology major if part-time instructors teach a substantial proportion of a department's classes. Fiscal pressures that lead to increased use of part-time instructors will diminish faculty capacity to meet the in- and out-of-class requirements for study in depth. Departments should make every effort to limit the use of part-time instructors, though such instructors should be treated as, and be expected to act as fully involved members of the faculty. For example, when departments complete their own matrix of courses and course goals using Appendix 3, adjunct instructors can use a skeletal syllabus that speaks to the goals for the courses they teach. With ample room for the instructors' creative professional judgment, the syllabus aids coherence in the curriculum.

Lack of diversity among faculty. While the student body has become significantly more diverse, particularly in terms of race, gender, and age, the diversity and composition of the faculty has not changed as dramatically.²⁶ To ensure diversity in faculties, recruitment and retention programs should be designed to attract women and minorities. Despite the general progress made toward increasing minority and women faculty, there is a critical shortage of black, American Indian, and Hispanic faculty in sociology departments. Relatively few non-Asian-American minorities complete graduate sociology programs (ASA 2003). One of the goals of the Minority Opportunities through School Transformation (MOST) program (see Appendix 10), funded by the Ford Foundation, has been to increase the number of students of color who pursue graduate degrees in sociology (Levine et al. 2002). See the ASA website for some ideas on conducting effective faculty searches.

Ideally, a department would have some balance in terms of faculty ages (so that retirements do not decimate a department all at once) and rank. This diversity by age and Ph.D. cohort will ensure that students become acquainted with the range of perspectives in the discipline, including both more recent and more established ones.

If the department has in place a good long-range planning document, then retirements might be phased in. Members of the department can discuss how new hires build the program, rather than being almost "rote" replacements for the departing person.

²⁶See the 2004 Report of the ASA's Committee on the Status of Women in Sociology: (<http://www.asanet.org/governance/CWSWFinalRpt.pdf>)

Department Oversight

Ethical responsibilities. The revised ASA Code of Ethics, (www.asanet.org/members/ecoderev.html) includes substantial attention to the ethical responsibilities of our teaching roles. Departments should ensure that only faculty with expertise in a given area teach in that area. For example, without significant faculty development efforts, those without advanced sociology degrees should not teach sociology courses. Likewise, sociologists should not teach anthropology or social work courses, unless they have advanced degrees in those fields as well as in sociology.

In addition, new pedagogical approaches can subject students and faculty to risks that are unfamiliar and that we are ill prepared to handle, such as the movement out of the safety of classrooms and into the community as well as the active involvement of undergraduates in research with human subjects. Faculty, departments, and institutions must take a proactive role in recognizing, preparing for, and minimizing these risks. Some basic strategies include open discussion of possible risks by all parties involved, meeting with and obtaining advice from institutional legal council, reading and applying relevant literature in this area, inquiring about and learning from the experiences of those at other schools, following available and appropriate guidelines from professional organizations, and creating written agreements for certain activities.

Teaching as a private activity. Faculty members typically operate as loners in the classroom as well as in course planning. Minimal sharing precludes the open, collegial environment necessary to develop and implement a coherent program. Some faculty claim academic freedom as a rationale for refusing to take into account departmental mission, program, or disciplinary needs. Indeed, the long tradition of individually crafted courses stimulates a positive diversity in course content and pedagogical approach. However, it also can lead to a lack of cooperation that is necessary to achieve coherence in courses and curricula. A strong sociology curriculum requires that faculty members are willing to collaborate and to sacrifice absolute control over their individual courses as well as over the overall curriculum.

In sum, then, teaching and the curriculum must become community property (Shulman 1993). Some ways to foster a more collaborative and coherent approach to the overall sociology curriculum include:

- Holding regular teaching brown bag sessions, teaching circles, and department retreats;
- Publishing a department newsletter;
- Involving all faculty in assessment and curricular reform;
- Encouraging and supporting involvement in local, regional, and national teaching conferences;
- Seeing to it that the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is recognized and encouraged; and
- Offering rewards to faculty who engage in collaborative curricular work.

Once teaching is community property, then teaching (and curriculum work) must be seen as *professional* work and given weight in promotion and tenure decisions. As with all other professional work, teaching is evaluated by peers (as well as students) and the products of teaching (e.g., textbooks, new courses) as well as the process of teaching (e.g., new techniques and good advising) advance the study of sociology. (See Boyer 1990 and the work of the American Association for Higher Education on Faculty Roles and Rewards). If institutional reward systems and pressures toward nonteaching activity undermine the time and attention essential for good teaching, curriculum design, assessment, and careful advising, all of which are necessary to achieve the coherence required for study in depth, then action on this report's recommendations will be compromised.

ENGAGING THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON STUDY IN DEPTH

Broad-based best practices: There is a wealth of research, theory, and practical ideas on important approaches to teaching and learning in higher education should inform discussions about, and choices made for, the sociology major and curricular or pedagogical reforms. Three of these are briefly discussed here: learning-centered instruction, deep learning, and best practices.

First, "learning-centered" instruction (e.g., Barr and Tagg 1995; Tagg 2003) is an approach that can guide teaching and curricular reform. With such an approach, the impact on student learning is the key variable in all course, department, and institutional decisions. From this perspective, we must consider, for example, student variables and diversity, the impact of the environment on learning, learning styles, and the scaffolding for learning. Covering the content is not the important objective in this paradigm; rather, it is nurturing student learning.

Second, sociology faculty should consider ways to promote deep learning in the major. Deep learning is learning for understanding. Some of the characteristics of a deep learning approach include the following:

- Relates ideas or previous knowledge and experience;
- Relates previous knowledge to new knowledge;
- Relates knowledge from different courses;
- Relates theoretical ideas to everyday experience;
- Relates and distinguishes evidence and argument;
- Organizes and structures content into a coherent whole; and
- Emphasis is internal, from within the student²⁷
(Atherton 2002; Marton and Saljo 1976)

Deep learning clearly implies increasing integration among topics, courses, and out-of-class experiences.

²⁷ For more examples see <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/~jamesa/learning/deepsurf.htm>.

Finally, best practices in undergraduate education have been proposed based on a review of decades of research on learning in higher education. According to Chickering and Gamson (1987), instructional best practices include

- Encourage student-faculty contact;
- Encourage cooperation among students;
- Encourage active learning;
- Give prompt feedback;
- Emphasize time on task;
- Communicate high expectations; and
- Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

Perhaps unlike any other prior period, during the past 15 or so years, much attention has been focused on higher education. This attention has emerged from various quarters, including legislative (most importantly and keenly from state and federal bodies), parents (usually associated with concerns for costs and “timely” graduation), business and other employment sectors (issues of relevance of degrees, e.g., skills preparation), and the general public (costs and accountability). The higher education community, as a whole, and individual institutions, in particular, have had to respond to issues ranging from the role of athletics to the quality of education, from the costs of education to the relevancy of a liberal education, from the role of affirmative action to that of distance learning, from faculty workload to the problem of binge drinking among undergraduates.

The intense attention to higher education is nationwide but has regional and state-specific policy components. In many cases, nonfaculty constituencies are increasingly influencing academic matters. Given the role of higher education in modern society, particularly its relationship to access to professional employment (or almost any type of employment, for that matter), and the ever-growing interest in and demand for lifelong learning, higher education will continue to occupy the attention both of the general public and of specific constituents, ranging from legislators to alumni. While both the higher education community as a whole and individual institutions have had to respond to external forces (often by explaining what they do and why, and sometimes by changing programs, processes, and activities), they have also had to deal with numerous internal concerns, ranging from facilities to grade inflation. Thus, it is likely that new issues, both major and minor, will emerge and old ones will be revisited (hopefully in new ways). Sociology faculty need to consider these trends, along with any that may emerge in the future, as we examine what we do in the major.

Relevant national projects: On the national level, there are changes in higher education that bode well for the success of this report’s recommendations. Hook your department, faculty, and students to the coattails of social movements such as these:

- The Scholarship Reconsidered “movement” begun with the book by Ernest Boyer (1990) of the same name, where scholarship is defined in four domains, including the scholarship of teaching; and the SoTL

movement initiated by the Carnegie Foundation and the American Association of Higher Education.

- Work on Faculty Roles and Rewards, largely led by the American Association for Higher Education (see www.aahe.org), which advances the Scholarship Reconsidered approach into new ways to measure the quality of a broader variety of professional work.
- Paying greater attention to the important role of the chair and the importance of departments as meaningful decision-making units that function with a collective mission. The chair must engage in academic leadership (see Lucas 1994 and 2000 and Wergin 1994). Individual faculty must make some sacrifices (e.g., not teaching courses individuals want to teach) for the sake of the collective enterprise.
- Committing to the assessment of student learning not just as an administrative obligation, but as part of professional self regulation and commitment to our students.

To the extent possible, sociologists can talk with campus-wide colleagues about who is interested and involved in these national agendas. In many cases, the Dean will support involvement in higher education associations. Sociologists are well-suited to make substantive contributions on each of these agendas.

HOW DEPARTMENTS CAN USE THIS REPORT

Departments will have to consider many factors in deciding how to best use this report. For example, what strategy will work best given the department culture? Is a total revamping of the program needed or is discussion of specific areas and issues more useful? Are numerous full faculty retreats or meetings the best approach? Perhaps using a new or existing committee structure is better. Other options include getting the process started with a program review (though this work should be an ongoing process) or using assessment data to facilitate the discussion and changes. Seek the assistance of respected colleagues and leaders in the department. In some cases, colleagues with experience and expertise from other departments or units, such as the teaching center, can be helpful. Consider bringing in an outside expert, such as an ASA Department Resource Group member, to assist with the process (see Appendix 1).

The Task Force recommends that inclusivity and shared governance guide this process. Involving all faculty, advisors, and student representatives to varying degrees is important. Departments should make use of existing and, if needed, new channels of communication (face-to-face and virtual) to keep everyone up-to-date and allow continuous feedback; draw on the existing literature cited in this report as well as in our discipline and higher education more generally; and take a scholarly approach to this work.

Early in the process, there should be some agreement on the goals for using this report. What outcomes do you hope to achieve? What time frame do you have? Think creatively about a range of options such as new programs, courses, co- and

extra-curricular opportunities, changes in physical space, and innovative pedagogies. Determine the relationship of any changes to faculty workload and rewards. Of course, a balance must be struck between the ideal and a realistic appraisal of resources (e.g., staff time, operating budget, technology). Keep the focus on the improvement of student learning.

Here is a set of questions (not an exhaustive list) to launch your discussions:

- Who are our students? What is the transfer pattern, if any, from other institutions? What students and how many students do we serve from other programs and departments?
- What is the regional job market like for most of our students who will leave with a sociology BA? What have employers indicated they are looking for?
- What are our department goals? How do they fit with the current state of the discipline and with our institution's mission? [Use Appendix 2 as a guide]
- What are our behavioral learning objectives for our students? [See Appendices 7 and 9 for examples]
- What is our list of core concepts and core readings for the major?
- What is our curriculum "spine" or core?
- How coherent and well sequenced is our curriculum? Where might we introduce mini-sequences? How can we insure the prerequisites are met?
- What do we need to move, add, or delete in our curriculum and co-curriculum?
- Where are our goals "located" in the curriculum and co-curriculum? [Use Appendix 3 as a guide.]
- Some of the goals speak to skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, teamwork, and computer skills. How do we know that our students are getting training and feedback about these skills in a developmental way?
- Where, and in what ways, are we promoting the best practices for undergraduate education from the higher education literature?
- What are our assessment measures of what students have learned? [Use Appendix 7 as a guide.]

- What have we learned about our program from placement of graduates and from alumni feedback?
- What is our current department demographic (and skill set) in terms of faculty? What are our needs in the next five years?

We recommend that departments set aside several months of periodic meetings to go over parts of the report, discuss the recommendations, and check the fit with current practices at their school. When they find discrepancies between the report's recommendations and their practices, departments should work on making changes suitable for their setting. At a minimum, they should offer a strong rationale for continuing "business as usual."

The process should begin with zero-based curriculum planning. This exercise means relinquishing "ownership" of courses by the individuals who frequently or always teach them. Put aside course numbers for the sake of discussion. Begin by setting departmental goals and then work to identify which courses (current or new) fit those goals. Each course's inclusion in the curriculum and its number should be justified using departmental goals. Who teaches the courses should be the last decision made.

Appendix 3 provides a template for working through this process of zero-based curriculum planning. Across the top of the grid are the goals upon which the department has decided. Along the left hand side are courses required of all majors (from the spine of the curriculum) as well as electives that are taken by 50 percent or more of majors in the department or program.

If a department proceeds through this process, it will develop a conscious division of labor. Course assignments will not be based on precedent or course "ownership" but on who is interested in enhancing a particular portion of the curriculum. Individuals retain intellectual freedom to select materials and pedagogy but do so in coordination with departmental goals, sequencing decisions, and best practices. This approach to curriculum revision requires continuous departmental discussion.

Whether done by committee and discussed/approved by the department or done by the whole department, the regular review of the undergraduate curriculum is a valuable exercise for the department. It should strengthen individual courses and the whole undergraduate major in sociology.

Appendix 1

THE ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL AFFAIRS PROGRAM

The ASA Academic and Professional Affairs Program (APAP) advances the place of sociology in colleges and universities; strengthens departments and their programs; engenders effective communication and collaboration with sociology departments; and encourages the best practices in education, training, and teaching. It provides services for those engaged in the teaching and practice of sociology. The services include Department Affiliates, Chair and Director of Graduate Study Conferences as well as teaching, career, and professional publications. APAP oversees publications and resources that support teaching excellence in sociology.

APAP's Teaching Resources Center (TRC) distributes and produces various publications, including career materials, brochures, syllabi sets, and other teaching manuals. TRC, based in the national office, provides leadership, publications, and resources that support excellence in teaching sociology. Charles A. Goldsmid started TRC in 1976; it was initially housed in the Carnegie Library at Oberlin College. With the approval of ASA Council, the TRC became an ongoing function of the ASA Executive Office in August 1978. In March 1980, it became a major component of the ASA Academic and Professional Affairs Program. The TRC is responsible for the following: (1) continuously developing a diversified line of materials useful in teaching sociology courses; (2) providing these materials at reasonable cost to the profession; (3) making their availability known through the media of the profession, teaching workshops, and professional meetings; and (4) responding to inquiries regarding the teaching of sociology. The ASA Teaching Resources Center was established through the efforts of the ASA Projects on Teaching Undergraduate Sociology; producers of the teaching resources materials; the Lilly Endowment, Inc.; the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE); Oberlin College; and ASA Council. A list of the teaching and academic materials available for purchase can be found at <http://www.asanet.org/pubs/tchgres.html>.

The APAP's Department Resources Group (DRG) provides a cadre of trained consultants who make departmental visits to assist with reviews, evaluations, curriculum building, and program development. The DRG is a network of over 50 consultants who are available for departmental visits or teaching workshops. DRG sociologists go through an intensive training program focusing on conducting program reviews and helping others to strengthen the sociology curriculum or their teaching skills. As trained outside visitors, DRG consultants bring a fresh and informed perspective to departments undergoing review and/or self-evaluation. Some DRG consultants are prepared to help departments improve the quality of services they provide to undergraduate students, bolster faculty development efforts, develop outcomes assessment procedures, or revamp the major. Consultants are matched to departmental needs. Departments are expected to provide DRG visitors with a reasonable honorarium and to cover travel-related

expenses. DRG consultants also participate in state and regional sociological society sessions on teaching, departmental development and leadership, or curriculum development. The consultants also conduct teaching seminars and workshops on campuses by invitation. Teaching workshops and seminars are also routinely held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting and with regional sociology meetings.

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Other activities and groups within ASA dovetail with APAP to maximize support for sociology faculty and departments seeking to build strong sociology programs.

The ASA Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology focuses on education in sociology, and working to enhance the scholarship of teaching and learning in sociology. The Section publishes a newsletter and offers a full program of sessions and roundtables on Section Day during the ASA Annual Meeting. ASA members may join this section on their dues renewal notice. Contact sections@asanet.org for the most up-to-date information on the Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology.

Teaching Sociology, an ASA quarterly journal, showcases scholarly and practical articles on teaching concerns. ASA members may select this publication on their dues renewal notice. Nonmembers and institutions may also subscribe, by contacting membership@asanet.org. For queries on submitting a manuscript, contact Dr. Elizabeth Grauerholz, Department of Sociology, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 49707, <http://www.lemoyne.edu/ts/tsmain.html>.

Appendix 2

LEARNING GOALS FOR THE SOCIOLOGY MAJOR²⁸

The sociology major should study, review, and *demonstrate*²⁹ understanding of the following:

1. The discipline of sociology and its role in contributing to our understanding of social reality, such that the student will be able to: (a) describe how sociology differs from and is similar to other social sciences and to give examples of these differences; (b) describe how sociology contributes to a liberal arts understanding of social reality; and (c) apply the sociological imagination, sociological principles, and concepts to her/his own life.
2. The role of theory in sociology, such that the student will be able to: (a) define theory and describe its role in building sociological knowledge; (b) compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations; (c) show how theories reflect the historical context of the times and cultures in which they were developed; and (d) describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.
3. The role of evidence and qualitative and quantitative methods in sociology, such that the student will be able to: (a) identify basic methodological approaches and describe the general role of methods in building sociological knowledge; (b) compare and contrast the basic methodological approaches for gathering data; (c) design a research study in an area of choice and explain why various decisions were made; and (d) critically assess a published research report and explain how the study could have been improved.
4. The technical skills involved in retrieving information and data from the Internet and using computers appropriately for data analysis. The major should also be able to do (social) scientific technical writing that accurately conveys data findings and to show an understanding and application of principles of ethical practice as a sociologist.
5. Basic concepts in sociology and their fundamental theoretical interrelations, such that the student will be able to define, give examples, and demonstrate the relevance of culture; social change; socialization; stratification; social structure; institutions; and differentiations by race/ethnicity, gender, age, and class.

²⁸ These goals for the sociology major were developed by the original Task Force and have not been modified. While departments should feel free to adopt them as is, they should also feel free to revise them as appropriate for their mission and their student body today or to develop their own. These goals are meant only to provide a model; they are not prescriptive.

²⁹ “Demonstrate” means that the student will be able to show or document appropriate mastery of the material and/or skills, and thus that this mastery can be assessed (with an exam, a presentation, by a portfolio, and so forth).

6. How culture and social structure operate, such that the student will be able to: (a) show how institutions interlink in their effects on each other and on individuals; (b) demonstrate how social change factors such as population or urbanization affect social structures and individuals; (c) demonstrate how culture and social structure vary across time and place and the effect is of such variations; and (d) identify examples of specific policy implications using reasoning about social-structural effects.

7. Reciprocal relationships between individuals and society, such that the student will be able to: (a) explain how the self develops sociologically; (b) demonstrate how societal and structural factors influence individual behavior and the self's development; (c) demonstrate how social interaction and the self influences society and social structure; and (d) distinguish sociological approaches to analyzing the self from psychological, economic, and other approaches.

8. The macro/micro distinction, such that the student will be able to: (a) compare and contrast theories at one level with those at another; (b) summarize some research documenting connections between the two; and (c) develop a list of research or analytical issues that should be pursued to more fully understand the connections between the two.

9. In depth at least two specialty areas within sociology, such that the student will be able to: (a) summarize basic questions and issues in the areas; (b) compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations and middle range theories in the areas; (c) show how sociology helps understand the area; (d) summarize current research in the areas; and (e) develop specific policy implications of research and theories in the areas.

10. The internal diversity of American society and its place in the international context, such that the student will be able to describe: (a) the significance of variations by race, class, gender, and age; and (b) will know how to appropriately generalize or resist generalizations across groups.

Two more generic goals that should be pursued in sociology are:

11. To think critically, such that the student will be able to: (a) move easily from recall analysis and application to synthesis and evaluation; (b) identify underlying assumptions in particular theoretical orientations or arguments; (c) identify underlying assumptions in particular methodological approaches to an issue; (d) show how patterns of thought and knowledge are directly influenced by political-economic social structures; (e) present opposing viewpoints and alternative hypotheses on various issues; and (f) engage in teamwork where many or different viewpoints are presented.

12. To develop values, such that the student will see: (a) the utility of the sociological perspective as one of several perspectives on social reality; and (b) the importance of reducing the negative effects of social inequality.

Appendix 3

ZERO-BASED CURRICULUM PLANNING: DEPARTMENT GOALS AND WHERE THEY OCCUR

Whatever the set of goals the department advances, those goals need to be met through the courses that are required and regularly offered in the major. This exercise asks the department to make a check mark under each goal next to the courses where the goal is addressed. The key expectation is that any given goal will be met in at least TWO courses.

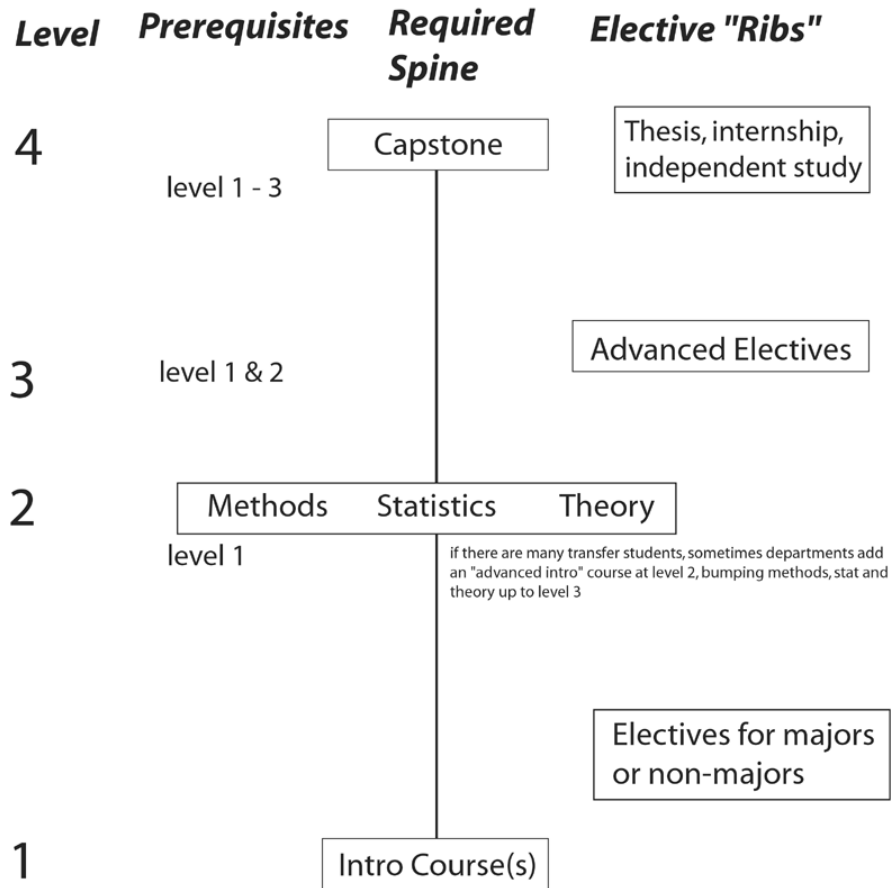
	GOALS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
REQUIRED COURSES ³⁰										
Social Theory										
Research Methods										
Methods II or Statistics										
Capstone Course										
Other Required Course										
ELECTIVES TAKEN BY 50%										
OR MORE OF MAJORS ³¹										
OTHER ELECTIVES										

³⁰ For this exercise, the department should divide its course offerings listed in the catalog into the required courses, those that most majors take, and then the rest. Only anchor goals and key experiences in the first two groups.

³¹ The department should analyze the transcripts of graduating majors to identify any courses taken by at least half of them.

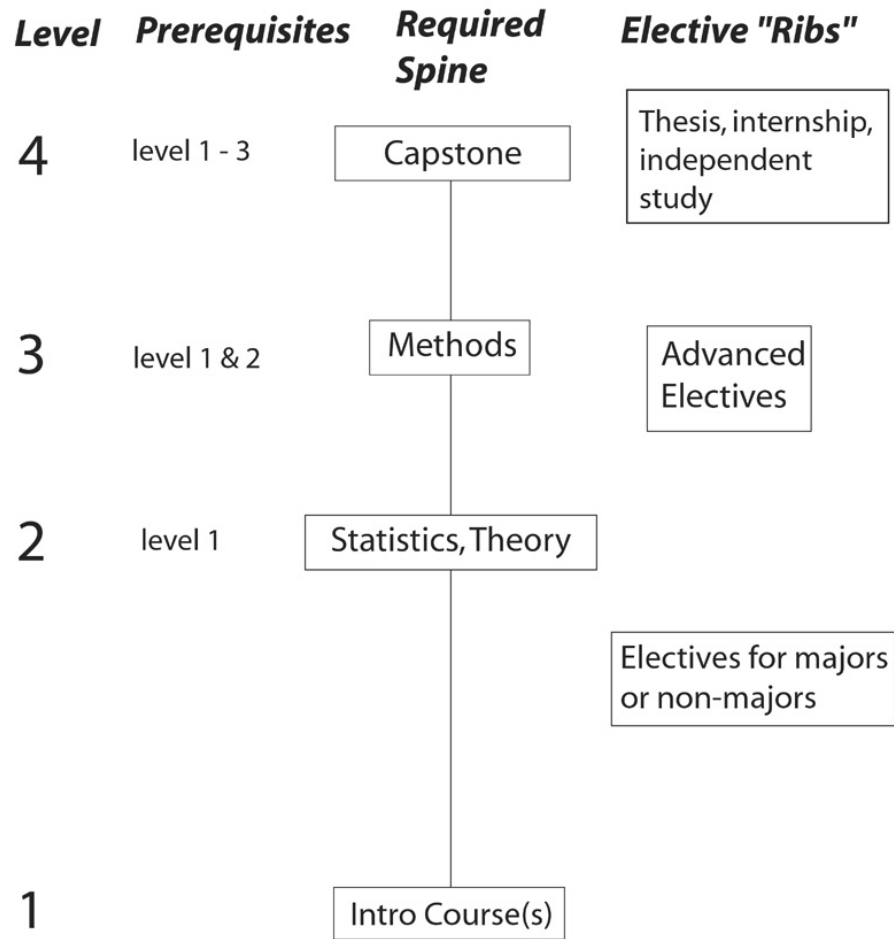
Appendix 4

SOCIOLOGY MAJOR STRUCTURE



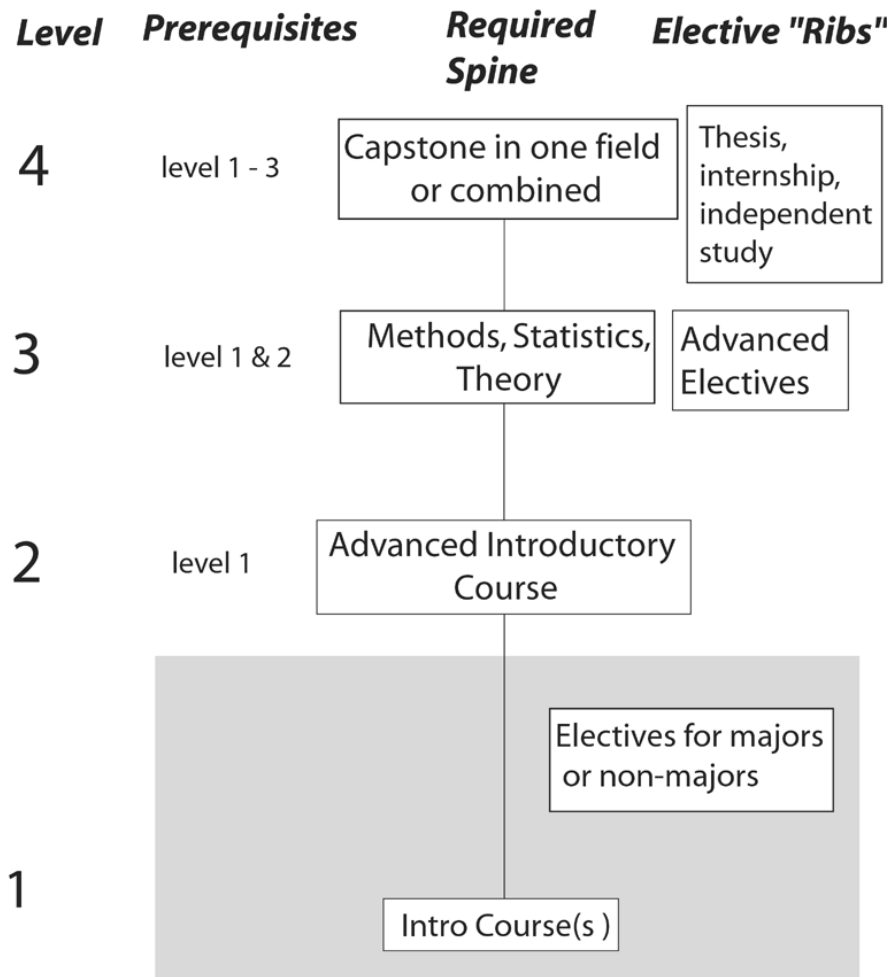
Appendix 5

SOCIOLOGY MAJOR WITH STATISTICS AND METHODS SEQUENCE



Appendix 6

SOCIOLOGY MAJOR WITH AN ADVANCED INTRODUCTORY COURSE



Shaded segment may be courses taken at
other institutions and transferred in to the major.

Appendix 7

ASSESSMENT PLAN

ROANOKE COLLEGE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

As noted in the discussion of Recommendation 16, assessment plans have at least three major components: (1) a mission statement, (2) a set of measurable learning outcomes that are linked to the mission statement, and (3) a series of multiple measures and methods for determining the level of success in attaining those learning goals.

In addition to these three basic components, the assessment process involves taking information from the various measures of assessment and feeding that back into the system for improvement. This is typically done through the use of an Assessment Grid.

This Appendix provides one sample of an assessment plan with these four parts. As with other materials in the appendices, it is not designed to be prescriptive. Rather, it is intended as a model to help departments in their ongoing discussions about the undergraduate major in sociology. Note that this sample assessment plan begins with a statement of purpose clearly linked to the institutional purpose, in this case that of a liberal arts institution.

Statement of Purpose

The Sociology Department at Roanoke College offers a program of study designed to complement and strengthen a broad liberal arts education. Through the introduction to sociology course (which fulfills one of the social scientific reasoning requirements of the general education program) and through the sociology major and minor, students acquire knowledge and skills related to sociological thought, methodology, and contributions.

Students majoring in sociology acquire a broad understanding of the discipline with special emphasis on the sociological perspective, social theory, social research methods, and data analysis. Students develop abilities to explain the important influence of culture, social structure, and social processes on human behavior; to recognize continuing sources of social inequality; and to develop an awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity. Within the curriculum, students develop skills in writing, oral presentation, critical thinking, and use of the computer in the acquisition and analysis of information and data. Students are encouraged to engage in active learning in the classroom and in the community.

The Department seeks to provide a challenging and well-rounded education that will serve as a solid foundation for students who pursue professional or graduate studies or who embark on a career after earning their baccalaureate degree.

Goals and Outcomes Objectives³²

The Department of Sociology is committed to the following goals and outcomes objectives for students graduating with a sociology major.

Goal #1: Students graduating with a sociology major are able to articulate the sociological perspective on human behavior.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) An ability to express the contribution of sociology to understanding social reality
- (2) An ability to describe how sociology is similar to and different from other social sciences

Goal #2: Students graduating with a sociology major are able to articulate the role of theory in sociology.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) An ability to describe the role of theory in building sociological knowledge
- (2) An ability to compare and contrast theoretical orientations
- (3) An ability to apply sociological theories to areas of social reality

Goal #3: Students graduating with a sociology major are able to articulate the role of social research methods in sociology.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) An ability to describe the role of research methods in building sociological knowledge
- (2) An ability to compare and contrast methods of social research
- (3) An ability to design and carry out a social research project

Goal #4: Students graduating with a sociology major are able to articulate the role of data analysis in sociology.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) An ability to describe the role of data analysis in building sociological knowledge
- (2) An ability to compare and contrast techniques for analyzing data
- (2) An ability to use data analysis techniques to answer social questions

³² This is one example of a department that developed its own goals for the sociology major.

- (4) An ability to use the computer in the acquisition and analysis of information and data

Goal #5: Students graduating with a major in sociology are able to define and illustrate key sociological concepts.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) An ability to define and illustrate the following sociological concepts: culture, social structure, social inequality, and cultural diversity
- (2) An ability to describe cultural diversity in the United States and in the world and having an appreciation for it

Goal #6: Students graduating with a major in sociology are able to summarize basic knowledge, questions, and issues in substantive areas of sociology.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) An ability to summarize existing knowledge, current questions, and important issues in at least three substantive areas of sociology
- (2) An ability to describe and explain continuing sources of social inequality

Goal #7: Students graduating with a major in sociology are able to communicate effectively about sociology.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) An ability to express ideas in a clear and coherent manner in writing
- (3) An ability to express ideas in a clear and coherent manner in oral presentation
- (3) An ability to demonstrate effective critical thinking skills

Goal #8: Students graduating with a major in sociology are well prepared for education and employment.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) Admission to an appropriate graduate or professional school for those interested in continuing their education
- (2) Successful completion of graduate or professional education for

- matriculants in those programs
- (3) Judgment by graduates in the labor force that the sociology program prepared them well for their life and work responsibilities

Goal #9: Students who fulfill the social scientific reasoning distribution requirement with introduction to sociology should acquire an understanding of how the science of sociology produces knowledge about society, social interaction, and human behavior.

Outcomes Objectives:

- (1) An ability to describe and to apply the sociological perspective to understanding society, social interaction, and human behavior.
- (2) An ability to describe the processes by which sociologists study society, social interaction, and human behavior.

Assessment Mechanisms³³

The assessment procedures used by the Department of Sociology are designed to provide information that can be used to make improvements in the program that enhance student learning.

A. From Current Students

Evaluation of Student Performance in Core Courses. The Department constantly evaluates student performance in the four core courses of the sociology major: social theory, research methods, data analysis, and seminar (a senior capstone course). In all of these courses, examinations, exercises, and assignments are focused on achieving specific outcomes objectives. Two examples are: (1) The research methods course requires students to construct a questionnaire and to articulate the strengths and weaknesses of survey research as a data collection technique, and (2) The data analysis course requires students to use the computer (and SPSS software) to analyze survey research data.

Senior Capstone Course. Special attention is given to performance in the capstone course because it includes projects that require students to integrate material learned in the other three core courses and because it includes individual research projects that require students to apply research and oral presentation skills learned throughout the sociology curriculum.

B. From Graduating Seniors

³³ These assessment mechanisms are from one sample department's assessment plan. There are many other alternative assessment techniques, including focus groups, exit interviews, pre-post tests across the major, and portfolios.

The Senior Exit Survey. The Department evaluates responses given to the Senior Exit Survey, which is administered by the Career Services Office to every graduating senior. One component of the survey relates to general institutional goals, and one component contains items specific to each department. The items on the sociology section directly correspond to the Department's outcomes objectives. Responses to these items enable an assessment of the extent to which students perceive that they have achieved the learning objectives. A section on employment and graduate school plans assists in the monitoring of career goals, employment, and acceptance into graduate and professional programs. The completed surveys (without identification) are sent to the Chair after the semester is over and are reviewed by all members of the Department.

C. From Alumni

General Alumni Surveys. The Department evaluates responses given to surveys, which are mailed by the Office of Institutional Research to all students one year and six years after graduation. Until recently, these surveys contained questions related only to institutional goals. Now, the surveys also contain items submitted by each major program. Though these items are more general than those found on the Senior Exit Survey, they enable a longer range assessment of students' perceptions regarding the extent to which particular objectives have been met.

Targeted Sociology Alumni Surveys. The Department evaluates responses given to surveys, which are mailed by the Department to specific groups of sociology alumni (e.g., students who have entered graduate or professional studies programs). These surveys are useful in assessing the extent to which specific outcomes objectives are being met (e.g., whether or not students think they were well prepared for graduate education).

D. From External Reviewers and Institutional Data

Program Evaluation. Every five years, the Sociology Department participates in a program review, which is conducted by faculty members in other disciplines and by external sociology reviewers. This review includes a comprehensive departmental self-study, an intensive review by sociologists at other institutions, and recommendations made by the faculty panel to the Department. These observations and recommendations are considered by members of the Department and become the basis for program changes.

Departmental Annual Report. In January of each year, the Chair submits an Annual Report to the Vice President-Dean of the College. The required components of the Annual Report are standard across all departments. The Report includes an assessment of the progress that has been met in reaching the Department's annual goals; an overview of the teaching effectiveness, professional growth, and professional service of Department members; special

learning opportunities afforded to students; student evaluations and grade distributions in courses; and an assessment by the Chair of the major accomplishments of the previous year and areas on which the Department will focus in the coming year.

Monitoring of Student Background and Academic Performance. Throughout the year, the Department monitors a variety of student performance indicators including the quality of students entering the major, department grades, performance on-campus (e.g., Summer Scholar selections and Student Research Symposium participation) and off-campus (e.g., ASA Honors Program selections and professional conference participation) competitions, and participation in community internships, independent studies, and department honors projects, and success in admission to and performance in graduate and professional schools.

The Use of an Assessment Grid

Once a department has developed the first three items (a statement of purpose, a clear set of goals and outcomes objectives, and a set of assessment mechanisms) these are typically put into practice using an Assessment Grid. A sample of such a grid can be found on page 64.

The first column of the grid lists the relevant section from the statement of purpose. The second column lists the intended outcomes that are to be evaluated in that particular year. Column three indicates both the methods of assessment and the criteria for success or failure in meeting the objectives.

An Annual Assessment Plan. These first three columns are completed at the beginning of each assessment year. Column four, which lists the assessment results, is completed when the data have been collected for those particular items. Upon completion of the yearly assessment plan, a fifth column is added to the assessment grid. This column indicates how the information will be fed back into the system to improve the quality of student learning. At many institutions, the completed grid (with all five columns) becomes part of the department annual report.

In the example on page 65, virtually all of the assessment results indicate success. The department may decide that they are satisfied with the results on these particular learning outcomes. Alternatively, they may decide to “raise the bar” in these areas in an attempt to improve the program. In either case, the fifth column in the grid would indicate the department’s response—and how they plan to change the program in response to the results.

On one of the six indicators (the second measure for one of the outcomes in the second row—“speaking effectively”), student responses concerning how well sociology courses helped them improve their oral presentations fell below the criteria for success. The department would need to discuss how they might address this with changes in the structure of the curriculum.

In the early stages of developing an assessment plan with the annual assessment grid, departments often feel that the task is too daunting. It must be kept in mind that you do not assess all aspects of the program each year. Indeed, departments should choose a small number of items to examine in the annual assessment plan. If a change is made in the curriculum to address a weakness, it does not make sense to assess this item for another several years. The department needs to allow full cohorts to progress through the program, once it has been revised, before they measure the same outcome again. Only after the change(s) has been in place for a full cohort to experience it can you evaluate whether or not this change has been successful in improving student learning on that particular outcome.

Assessment of the Sociology Program, 1998-99

Purpose Statement	Intended Outcomes	Assessment Methods/Criteria	Assessment Results
Comprehensive introduction to the discipline with special emphasis on the sociological perspective, social theory, social research methods, and data analysis	<p>Can describe the role of research methods in building sociological knowledge</p> <p>Can compare and contrast methods of social research</p> <p>Can design and carry out a social research project</p>	<p>Evaluation of performance in the research methods course on a survey research project; at least 80% of students can carry out a social research project at a B- or better level.</p> <p>Evaluation of responses to target items on the Senior Exit Survey; at least 80% of respondents report having a good understanding of research methods.</p>	<p>86.5% of students enrolled in research methods in fall, 1998 earned a grade of B- or higher on the research methods project. The primary factor in students scoring lower was failure to follow instructions.</p> <p>100% of respondents strongly agreed (64.9%) or agreed (35.1%) that they have "a clear understanding of the role of research methods in building sociological knowledge."</p>
The sociology curriculum is designed to provide students with opportunities to develop effective skills in writing, oral presentation, and critical thinking; to use the computer in the acquisition and analysis of information and data; and to engage in active learning in the classroom and in the community.	To be able to express ideas in a clear and coherent manner by writing clearly, speaking effectively, and thinking critically.	<p>Evaluation of student performance on oral presentation of research project in capstone course; at least 80% of students receive a B- or better grade on the oral presentation section.</p> <p>Evaluation of responses to target items on the Senior Exit Survey; at least 80% report that their sociology courses helped them to become better at orally presenting information.</p>	<p>93.3% of students enrolled in the capstone course in spring, 1999 earned a grade of B- or higher on the oral presentation component of the course.</p> <p>67.5% of respondents strongly agreed (21.6%) or agreed (45.9%) that their sociology courses helped them "to become better at orally presenting information."</p>

<p>The Department offers a comprehensive introduction to the discipline of sociology with special emphasis on the sociological perspective, social theory, social research methods, and data analysis.</p>	<p>To be able to articulate the sociological perspective on human behavior, such that the student express the contribution of sociology to understanding social reality and to describe how sociology is similar to and different from other social sciences.</p>	<p>Evaluation of essay question administered to sociology majors enrolled in the senior capstone course; at least 80% accurately convey sociological perspective.</p> <p>Evaluation of responses to target items on the Senior Exit Survey; at least 80% of respondents report having a good understanding of the sociological perspective.</p>	<p>83.3% of students enrolled in the capstone course in spring, 1999 answered the essay in a manner that conveyed understanding of the sociological perspective.</p> <p>95.6% of respondents strongly agreed (62.2%) or agreed (32.4%) that they have "a clear understanding of the sociological perspective on human behavior."</p>
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Appendix 8

THE COLLECTIVE RESUME

Creating a collective resume is one strategy a department can use to sharpen its goals and check the alignment of courses with those goals. To create one, a department begins by asking themselves what would the resume of an average student who successfully completes the sociology major look like, absent the very personal experiences s/he had? After writing this resume, can you be reasonably sure that the student could honestly put his/her name on the top? The collective resume also can be used as a road map for students, in effect telling them that they will gradually fill in this resume as they successfully complete the department's courses and requirements..

The Collective Resume based on one prepared by the *Sociology Department, University of Illinois-Chicago*

The student who earns a BA in sociology is a liberal arts graduate with a plus. The broad education our graduates receive gives them the tools to be creative, flexible problem-solvers. In their studies, we emphasize communication skills and the ability to think critically about complex problems. In addition, as sociology graduates, they are sophisticated about contemporary urban society, with its complexity and rapid change. Also, they have specialized skills that have proven their practical value in a variety of work settings.

- I. Things our graduates are doing for various employers:
 - A. Aiding in management decisions
 - 1. clarifying managerial questions
 - 2. translating these into solvable research questions
 - 3. evaluating the types of information needed to solve a problem
 - 4. gathering and organizing available information, including from the internet
 - a. conducting information gathering interviews
 - b. assembling statistics and interpreting them
 - 5. recognizing and describing the limitations of available data
 - 6. designing research procedures for gathering new evidence
 - 7. estimating costs of research
 - B. Evaluating problems or potential problems in work units
 - 1. gathering information about human work problems such as turnover, absenteeism, or low productivity
 - 2. diagnosing reasons for these problems
 - C. Assessing the interests of different constituencies in a community or organization; suggesting strategies for accommodating these interests with minimal conflict
- II. Areas of knowledge with which our graduates are familiar:
 - A. Statistics and computer skills
 - 1. descriptive statistics, measures of correlation, tabular and graphic presentation, hypothesis testing, estimation procedures

2. multiple regression, analysis of variance and covariance, causal modeling
 3. creation and editing of computer data files : their use for computing statistics and the reporting of them; text editing and management
- B. Research methods
1. sampling, measurement, research design, questionnaire and interview techniques, systematic observation techniques, use of personal records and documents
 2. applied research approaches such as needs assessment, evaluation research, basic focus group methods, and analysis of secondary data
- C. Population and human ecology
1. use of population data, theoretical aspects of population, population measures, life tables, projections
 2. spatial distribution of population characteristics and their change over time
 3. use of census data, including analysis of the 2000 census
- D. Organizational analysis
1. analysis of roles, attitudes, motives, and needs
 2. goal analysis
 3. communication processes and networks
 4. diagnosis of informal organizational structure and its effects on goals
 5. analysis of change in a complex organization
- III. Substantive concentrations that graduates may select:
- A. Sociology of Health and Illness
 - B. Law and Society
 - C. Sociology of Work
 - D. Sociology of Life Cycle
 - E. Social Policy and Administration
 - F. Social Psychology
- IV. Comments:

This collective resume provides a general listing of skills and areas of knowledge taught in our department. Not every student masters all of these. In considering a student, ask him/her which of these are areas of special strength, and also ask our faculty. In letters of reference, we will be happy, upon request, to indicate a particular student's extent of mastery of particular areas.

Appendix 9

AN EXAMPLE OF A CUMULATIVE CURRICULUM

FOCUSING ON RESEARCH TRAINING

The Sociology Department at Southwestern University, Georgetown, TX, has designed its curriculum with a set of research competencies in mind. For a full discussion, see Kain (1999). The learning goals are linked to different levels in the sociology curriculum.

The sociology curriculum is designed to develop a series of skills in students. These skills are cumulative and begin with those developed in the introductory courses. The skills are developed and expanded in second- and third-level courses and culminate in the capstone experience of a seminar course and the senior oral examination.

Introductory Courses in Sociology

By the end of an introductory sociology course, students should be able to:

- (1) Have a working familiarity with the list of concepts and terms in the Department Handbook, found online at <http://www.southwestern.edu/academic/depts/socanthro/>
- (2) Identify and find sociology journals in the library and on the Web;
- (3) Conduct an electronic search of the journals on a topic of interest;
- (4) Evaluate and critique a published article; decipher the important material in a research article purpose/methods/findings, begin to distinguish between anecdotal information and sociological research as ways of knowing;
- (5) Identify the major paradigms in sociology
- (6) Demonstrate critical-thinking skills in which they formulate their own understanding of American society, how it works, and how it is shaped by issues of power and privilege;
- (7) Develop an appreciation for the impact of race, class, and gender upon social life;
- (8) Demonstrate skills in finding sociological resources on the Web; and
- (9) Illustrate their understanding and appreciation of the sociological imagination and demonstrate skills in asking sociological questions.

Second-level Courses

Second-level courses, as listed in the college catalogue, include two types of courses. The first set includes those that are required of all majors: Research Methods and Sociological Theory or Anthropological Theory. The second set (Conformity, Deviance and Identity, Gender Relations and Sexuality, Families in

Society, Sociology of Sport, and Chicago:1893-1933 Studies in Urban Sociology) includes courses that tend to serve a broad audience of both majors and nonmajors. These courses develop the following skills:

- (1) Producing and evaluating a literature on a particular subject;
- (2) Developing oral presentations on sociological research that some of the students in the class have not read (i.e., developing skills in communicating basic research material);
- (3) Formulating a hypothesis and proposing a method for testing it;
- (4) Honing skills in asking sociological questions;
- (5) Applying the concepts and the major paradigms of sociology to a specific area of a specific field;
- (6) Learning more specific concepts relevant to sub areas (methods, theory, conformity/deviance/identity, gender relations and sexuality, family, and sociology of sport);
- (7) Movement toward synthesis of terms/concepts/theories; and
- (8) Exploring the impact of race, class, and gender upon specific areas of social life; developing awareness of the intersections of race, class, and gender.

Third-level Courses

Third-level courses in the sociology curriculum are primarily for majors, minors, or other students who have particular interest in the discipline. As noted in the college catalogue, in general, students should have taken at least two other courses in sociology and anthropology before enrolling in these courses. Some of them may require the skills acquired in Research Methods.

In these third-level courses, students will:

- (1) Continue to develop the ability to collect and analyze data on sociological topics, with the ultimate goal of having the ability to use SPSS on the GSS to do simple analyses in different topic areas;
- (2) Develop a more sophisticated ability to do a literature review and connect it to research;
- (3) Develop oral presentations, including their own research, and continue to apply theory and develop a more sophisticated understanding of the role of the fundamental sociological variables of gender, race, and class in developing an expanded vision of how societal structures operate and shape lives.

Capstone

The final level of skill development in the sociology curriculum comes with the capstone course. In this course, students each work on their own individual projects and develop skills that allow them to:

- (1) Devise and carry out an individual research project;
- (2) Report the results of that research in relation to the existing body of knowledge;
- (3) Listen to the reports of others and provide constructive criticism in a

community of scholars;

- (4) Cultivate an ability to reflect upon their experiences and synthesize the material from all of their sociology courses, including the central importance of the intersecting impact of race, class, and gender; and
- (5) Hone their skills at writing-up their research in a final report.

Appendix 10

PROMOTING STUDY IN DEPTH THROUGH UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH IN SOCIOLOGY

One key difference between this report and its predecessor is the increased emphasis on undergraduate research training. The ASA has led two projects that bear on research training for undergraduates. The first, called MOST (Minority Opportunities through School Transformation), involved 11 departments working on changes in their (1) curriculum, (2) climate, (3) mentoring, (4) pipeline, and (5) research training.³⁴ The project, funded by the Ford Foundation, was an eight-year effort to work with departments, rather than focusing on enrichment or remediation opportunities for minority students. Over the course of the project each department involved developed its own plans for working on the five areas noted above.

In terms of research training, the MOST project sought to develop the research skills of all students and to engage them in empirical work on the subjects of race, class, and gender. As students learned more about research and became more excited about designing projects, undertaking research, and analyzing and presenting findings, they became more engaged in the discipline. Examples of the approaches of the MOST departments are presented at the end of this appendix.

The second project was titled “Integrating Data Analysis (IDA)”³⁵ and was completed in April 2005. The National Science Foundation (NSF) Program in Course, Curriculum, and Laboratory Improvement (CCLI) awarded ASA and the University of Michigan over \$900,000 for a collaborative project to work with faculty in 12 sociology departments to introduce scientific reasoning and data analysis skills into the undergraduate curriculum. At least half the faculty in each department is involved in the project to ensure that research experiences infuse the entire sociology curriculum. Exposing students in the lower division curriculum to empirical material and discussing its meaning will reduce the problem of research training coming late in the major and seeming disconnected from what they have previously learned.

The IDA project addressed the “scientific literacy” gap for undergraduate students in sociology in two ways: first, this project incorporated scientific reasoning into the curriculum in ways that reach all students. Rather than work with individual faculty on course improvements, this project centered on departments making a collective commitment to infuse data analysis into lower division courses. This pervasive shift in the curriculum should ensure that students experience the hands-on excitement of scientific discovery, ideally in developmentally sequenced ways. Second, this project made data from the 2000 Census available to more users and departments, extending both the use of Social Science Data Analysis Network

³⁴ For a complete report on MOST, see Levine et al. (2002).

³⁵ It is equally important to integrate theory throughout the sociology curriculum. Students can no more learn theory from a single course or two than they can learn how to do research or how to write in one course.

(SSDAN) curriculum materials and their impact on undergraduate student learning in the social and behavioral sciences. Students learned factual lessons from the data as well as how to use the Census as a data source for addressing a wide range of questions (See Frey and First 2002).

Both of these projects spoke to some problems in the generic undergraduate sociology curriculum and major, summarized below. Departments could meet and discuss the extent to which the challenges and obstacles are present in their department and institution.

Current Challenges and Obstacles to Research Training

Issues with/for departments:

- Ownership of courses (and resistance to change by faculty), such that infusion of research material is blocked
- Use of adjuncts (or graduate students), particularly in lower division courses, which may mean less consistency in what is taught
- Getting departmental cooperation on collective goals for research training
- Some/many faculty do not have a research agenda, **or** one that fits with students or undergraduate students in particular
- Lack of resources related to research: computers, data sets, lab help

Issues with/for students:

- Math anxiety or general resistance to empirical/quantitative work
- Increasing number of transfer students (from four-year as well as two-year schools) making it hard to have a set of developmental goals for research (or anything else)
- Students do not go through the program in cohorts, making it hard to have a learning community

Issues with/for the field of sociology:

- Late declaring major -- short time to fit everything in
- Lots of nonmajors in courses with majors, making it hard to have increasing rigor when a high proportion of students are “beginners”
- Homogenization: relatively little original work read in early courses, especially if textbooks are used, making it hard to model the process of quantitative reasoning

All of these factors lead to a disconnection from what precedes and follows research methods courses.

Social Science Inquiry: Early and Often

Below are some lessons from sociology departments that participated in MOST or IDA projects. The ASA office can provide contact information for the campuses noted below in parentheses.

- Sequenced courses, even paired courses, help deepen and reinforce learning
- Early exposure to mode of scientific thinking/critical thinking is important to resolve the disconnect between the lower- and upper-division curriculum

- Curriculum tiers (Southwestern University—See Appendix 9) ensure orderly and repeated exposure of key research material and skills
- Modules added to regular courses—e.g., on writing, research, computers (University of California- Santa Barbara)³⁶—give additional exposure to research skills
- Link sociology research courses to university/college requirements in quantitative reasoning (Berea College)
- Offer an upper level introductory course with a research component to bring transfers up to date with department expectations (Cleveland State)
- Use a common skeletal syllabus with shared research modules in introductory sociology courses, especially when taught by adjunct faculty (CUNY- Lehman)
- Anchor research in other nonresearch, but required courses—e.g., a course on race and ethnicity
- Transform internships, service learning, and independent study into *research* experiences (Pitzer College³⁷) or community action research (Augusta State University)³⁸
- Encourage students to undertake original research in capstone courses (Grinnell College, Penn State University, and University of Texas-El Paso)
- Sponsor student research institutes (University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez³⁹, University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

³⁶ University of California-Santa Barbara, with over 800 majors, provides courses in research methods, independent study options, and service learning opportunities. More intensive research training is afforded through two additional curricular options. First, several upper division courses (e.g., conversational analysis) have a second course offered the next quarter that pursues research in this field in depth. Students may take the first without the second, of course, but those who want to understand the research behind the topic better can sign up for the second course. Second, the department offers a three quarter-long research practicum where students of color undertake independent projects. The students meet collectively as a course, which provides both teaching credit for the faculty member and a sounding board for the students engaged in these projects.

³⁷ At Pitzer College, the department has built service learning with a research focus into several courses. The department has an on-going relationship with the farm workers union to send students to work with farm workers and to document working conditions. In both the Augusta and Pitzer examples, students of color have been particularly attracted to these experiences. They may come from these communities or identify with these communities, and may serve the role of “expert” in the research team.

³⁸ At Augusta State University, the students come primarily from the local community and many are “non-traditional.” How can these students, with active family and work lives, engage in research? Every semester, one or more of the courses (e.g., family, criminology) includes community action research with a community group. At the end of the semester, the class presents a report about the project, with community representatives coming to campus. Students in these courses have helped a local church that was displaced from its location near a toxic waste dump, performed a needs assessment for elderly residents in a poor neighborhood, and worked with a teenage drop-in center. Having members of the community (e.g., police, social service agencies) on campus has led to better town-gown understanding as well.

³⁹ The sociologists at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez host an annual undergraduate research symposium with 100 student papers (including students from the mainland). Students run all aspects of the conference, including selecting the papers. One benefit of the conference is sharing undergraduate social science research with colleagues and administrators from physical science and engineering who routinely attend.

Sample Goals for Undergraduate Research Training

1. Illustrate the connections between sociological theory and research with FIVE examples of the work of others and one from your own work.
2. Contrast sociological methodology to other ways of learning about the social world.
3. Describe the logic of cause and effect between variables, and state the conditions necessary for correlation and for causation.
4. Indicate how controls are used to detect spurious or causal relationships among variables across several examples.
5. Identify the advantages and limitations of laboratory and field experiments. Develop a research design for a hypothetical or actual study.
6. Describe the Hawthorne effect, interviewer effects, and other ways in which social science research can be affected by how it is done and who does it.
7. Distinguish between a population and a sample, and explain the connection between them. Specify ways to ensure that a sample is representative. Draw a sample for a hypothetical or actual research study.
8. Contrast the uses of questionnaires, structured interviews, and unstructured interviews; identify three errors to avoid making when wording questions. Draft a questionnaire or interview schedule for a hypothetical or actual research study.
9. Describe the research uses of case studies and participant versus detached observation. Draft a research proposal using one of these methods for a hypothetical or actual study.
10. State the advantages and possible pitfalls of observational research. Describe those using a sociological study you have read.
11. Describe five types of ethical dilemmas sociologists frequently face in their research and the Code of Ethics that guides their decision-making.
12. Be able to describe, in your own words, the findings in a basic table of at least three variables, using at least three statistical measures.
13. Successfully complete the departmental book on library retrieval of journal articles in sociology, books in sociology, and abstracts—in print and electronically. Access at least one data set electronically and retrieve secondary data, print or electronic, to address a hypothetical or actual research question.
14. Using a problem posed by a community group, develop a low cost research

design to address their issue in a timely way, including relevant citations to the literature and explication of sociological concepts, statement of hypotheses, and at least two sociological methodologies.

15. Read five sociological monographs using different research approaches and provide a critique.

Appendix 3 provided an exercise that can be used in zero-based curriculum planning. Following a parallel process, if a department wants to integrate research goals across the curriculum, they can develop a matrix for that purpose. Courses would be listed down the left hand side. Research goals can be listed on the horizontal axis across the top. As a department, the matrix can be filled in, indicating where each research goal will be addressed. As in Appendix 3, it makes sense that each goal should be addressed in more than one place in the curriculum.

Using this exercise can help departments think about how research skills can be cumulative. This may allow faculty who teach upper-level courses to assume certain types of research skills, experiences, and knowledge when students have completed prerequisite courses earlier in the “spine” of the sociology curriculum.”

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