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21st Century Careers with an Undergraduate Degree in Sociology

2nd Edition

Sociology prepares
you to live in a
changing world and
change the world
you live in.

Sean Conner, BA in Sociology

21st Century Careers with an Undergraduate Degree in Sociology

2nd Edition

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Mastering the Sociological Imagination



Fred Postello
BS, MA and PhD in Sociology
President, LeMoyne College

Studying sociology causes you to be analytic and reflective about structure and culture, to be sensitive about what's behind what you are seeing. It helps develop critical thinking skills with a knowledge base that provides insights that you would otherwise not have.

Once you've mastered the sociological imagination you're armed with a powerful perspective that allows you to be detached in analyzing social phenomena, and to do so with the kind of depth and skill set that you can only develop with rigorous social scientific training.

If you have the opportunity to do research with a mentor it will help you focus your sociological eye. It becomes part of you, an analytic, insightful way to view and interact with the world.

I would encourage students who are considering sociology. We live in a time when there is a lot of pressure to study disciplines that seem to have a more direct translation into a job, but we know that people shift jobs many times in their lifetimes and what sociology does is prepare graduates for a changing world.

Sociology is a central part of who I am and what I do.

An Undergraduate Degree in Sociology is a Good Stepping Stone to the Future



Sushama Tilakaratne
BA and MA in Sociology
Research Associate

As a research associate, I support a wide range of projects by doing project management, survey development, data collection (using telephone and web-based systems), database management, and report preparation.

My research methods and quantitative analysis classes were especially useful as I learned how to conceptualize and approach problems. In these classes I learned to collect data, clean data, and conduct data analysis using descriptive statistics and document analysis, as well as writing up findings. I have also taken several multi-disciplinary courses in survey methodology,

multivariate analysis, social epidemiology, and medical sociology.

An undergraduate degree in sociology is a good stepping stone to many future avenues, especially with a solid foundation in statistical analysis, and qualitative and quantitative research methods. There are many entry-level research assistant positions for graduates looking to gain experience in the research industry before pursuing a graduate degree in law, public health, health administration, public policy, or sociology.

What is a 21st Century Career?

The 21st century labor market is fast-changing, increasingly global, and technology-driven. Many of the jobs you will be applying for after graduating from college did not exist when your parents began their careers.

The skills you need to succeed in the 21st century include: creativity, innovation, critical thinking, analytic problem-solving, communication, collaboration, multi-cultural and global understandings, strong math and science skills, and excellent written expression.

21st century careers are also marked by constant change, increasing diversity, and heightened educational requirements.

Change

21st century careers include many different places of employment, often in completely different market sectors. While in the past, employees often stayed with a company for their entire career, you will probably have more than 10 different jobs before you turn 40.¹

Increasing diversity

21st century careers take place in an increasingly diverse global society. Being able to work effectively with people from different cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities has become a basic work-place requirement.

Educational levels

As the labor market in the United States moves from an industrial model to a service model, the educational requirements for employment are increasing. For advancement in many jobs you will need a Masters Degree or even a PhD. That said, one year after graduation, the vast majority of sociology majors are not in graduate school, they are in the work force.² Whether you decide to

Action Box

Watch 'Did You Know? 3.0' (4:59)
This brief video documents the exponential change in our global society.

YouD

go to graduate school or not, thinking carefully about how you will use your *undergraduate* degree as the starting point for your career is essential. Remember, most people have many different jobs during their careers- your challenge right now is to prepare yourself to get your first job after graduation.

Ethics and social responsibility

Situations of rapid social change bring both opportunities and danger. The news is full of stories of workplace failures to abide by social norms and ethical standards, such as hiring new populations of immigrants at below minimum wage to work in unsafe conditions; failing to follow safety standards and, as a result, producing contaminated food and medicines; using technology to invade people's privacy; and polluting poor communities to make profits. Because the 21st century is characterized by rapid change and an increasingly global community, successful 21st century careers will depend on having a firm ethical base for decision making, and a strong sense of the interconnectedness of all communities.

Sociology and the 21st century career

The good news for sociology majors is that your studies are uniquely suited to help you develop the skills you need for a successful 21st century career: Sociologists study social change, diverse communities and their interactions, and they use scientific methods to find empirical answers to complex social questions. Studying sociology can help

you foster your creativity, innovation, critical thinking, analytic problem solving and communication skills. Sociology will challenge you to see the world through the lens of different cultures and communities and give you opportunities to collaborate with others in developing multi-cultural and global understandings. Sociological methods can help you build strong math and science skills. Preparing papers about social problems, and the theories and evidence that can help us solve them, will foster the strong writing and presentation skills you need to succeed.

Daniel Little, Chancellor of the University of Michigan-Dearborn, says sociology "provides a foundation for better understanding and engaging with the globalizing world our young people will need to navigate and lead. It provides students with the intellectual tools needed to make sense of the shifting and conflictual social world we live in, and this in turn permits them to contribute to solutions for the most difficult social problems that we face."³

Your life as a composition

Finding the meaningful thread that connects the 10 different jobs you probably will hold before you are 40 cannot be a passive process. To build your own 21st century career you will need to use all your creativity and innovation. Now is the perfect time to start thinking about your talents, interests and career goals and how, combined with your degree, they can help you be competitive in today's job market.

This small booklet is designed to help you start the process of building your own 21st century career. It focuses on sociology majors who are thinking about their first, entry-level jobs after graduation. It is organized around six central questions:

- *What is a 21st century career?*
- *What is sociology?*
- *Where do recent sociology graduates work?*
- *What can I do to start my career now?*
- *And what about graduate school?*
- *How can the American Sociological Association help?*

Throughout the book you will find *Action Boxes* that suggest ways you can get involved in composing your sociological career-starting today. There are also examples of actual job postings for entry-level jobs in a variety of employment sectors where sociological skills are valued.

For this new edition, we've also added a series of Career Profiles to give you a chance to see how real people who majored in sociology are using their sociological knowledge and skills in the workplace. About half the Career Profiles feature people who have a Bachelor's degree alone. The other half of the Career Profiles feature people who have also completed a Masters Degree, and in one case, a PhD.

CAREER PROFILE

Be Prepared to Live in a Changing World, and Change the World You Live In



Sean Conner
BA In Sociology
Director of Operations

I work with a non-profit animal advocacy group. My role includes coordinating the work of local and national volunteers to expose cruelty to animals in factory farms and promote vegetarian eating as a way to build a kinder world.

Sociology teaches us that for all social and environmental justice issues, the activist must thoroughly understand the mechanisms that contribute to inequality and perpetuate a lack of compassion, and then strive to develop approaches which best lay bare these issues and attitudes in a manner most likely to drive change in others. Every public speaking engagement or conversation about factory farming requires me to use my

sociological imagination to identify the perceptions of my audience and what unique factors may be influencing them, then work creatively to challenge those perceptions while empowering them to make more compassionate choices.

I would say to anyone interested in sociology, do not be discouraged by all the social problems you will inevitably identify, but rather, be grateful for how well-prepared you will be to both change the world you live in and live in a changing world.

Understanding Different Viewpoints Makes You More Valuable to Any Team



Lindsay Riddle
BA in Sociology
High School Teacher

I currently teach sociology, psychology, US Government, and US History at the high school level. My tasks include lesson planning, instructing, grading, and classroom management. I also sponsor the Student Council. Though challenging, I find something satisfying about my job nearly every day.

I use my background in sociology on a daily basis. My understanding of different cultures, family structures, and religions and how they influence worldviews and values helps me communicate with my students and make the content relevant to them. This approach encourages open

discussions and dialogues with many viewpoints, even when we are discussing controversial topics.

No matter what our chosen field, we are bound to encounter people who see things from a different perspective. Being able to understand those viewpoints makes you better at communicating and more valuable to any team in any profession.

Apply the Textbook Concepts Outside the Classroom



Joe Pate
BA in Sociology
MA in Negotiation, Conflict Resolution, and Peace Building
Senior Immediate Response Advocate

I respond to the scene of domestic disputes, along with law enforcement, where I provide crisis management, counseling, and legal information, as well as referrals for community agencies and resources. I also provide services to victims of sexual assault and conduct trainings with law enforcement officers.

Cultural norms may discourage victims from reporting abuse. If they do speak out, they may be shunned or suffer further violence. Socioeconomic status also comes into play. Poor victims often have no means to get lawyers or therapists, or safe housing. They often lack transportation and do not have the skills to obtain self-sustaining employ-

ment. None of us exist in a bubble of self-determinacy; our choices and environment are often a result of social factors. Realizing this is the first step to building a better society.

For current students my advice is to get engaged: talk to professors, participate, and look for research and internship opportunities. Sociology is a discipline that implores us to take the concepts from the textbook and apply them outside the classroom.

What is Sociology?

Sociology is the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. Sociologists investigate the structure of groups, organizations, and societies and how people interact within these contexts. Since all human behavior is social, the subject matter of sociology ranges from the intimate family to the hostile mob; from organized crime to religious traditions; from the divisions of race, gender and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture.

While the humanities and the arts also frequently examine and reflect on the social world, sociology is distinct because it is a social science. It uses theoretical frameworks and scientific methods of research to investigate the social world and test hypotheses with empirical data. Sociological methods include survey research and statistical analysis, focus groups, in-depth interviews and ethnography, conversational analysis, and content analysis of both written and visual documents. The results of sociological analysis

are used in product development, marketing, customer service appraisals, and the development of social policies, programs, and laws. Non-profit organizations and foundations use the results of sociological analysis to better understand social problems and to work for positive social change.

How can studying sociology help your career?

Sociologists use data to answer questions about the social world. In the next few pages you will find data that will help answer the question "how can studying sociology help my career?" Tables 1 and 2 list the conceptual abilities and skills that real sociology majors said they gained as part of their studies. You can then compare those findings to the skills that employers said they valued in a recent survey, which is summarized in the box titled "It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success."

In 2005 the Research Department of the American Sociological Association -under the direction of

Roberta Spalter-Roth -began a longitudinal study of seniors who were majoring in sociology. The study is often referred to as the *Bachelors and Beyond* study. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the goal of the study was to learn about sociology graduates and their career paths. The sociology majors in the sample were surveyed three times: once during their senior year, again 1½ years after graduation and a third time in the Spring of 2009. 1,777 students participated in the first phase of the study, 778 graduates participated in the second phase and 354 participated in the third phase.

In 2012 the Research Department began to study a new cohort of graduating seniors for a study called *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates*. 2,695 senior sociology majors from 160 departments around the country participated in the first phase of this survey; seven months after graduation 1,108 of them participated in the second phase. The findings described in this booklet are drawn from both the 2005 and 2012 studies.

Why do students major in sociology?

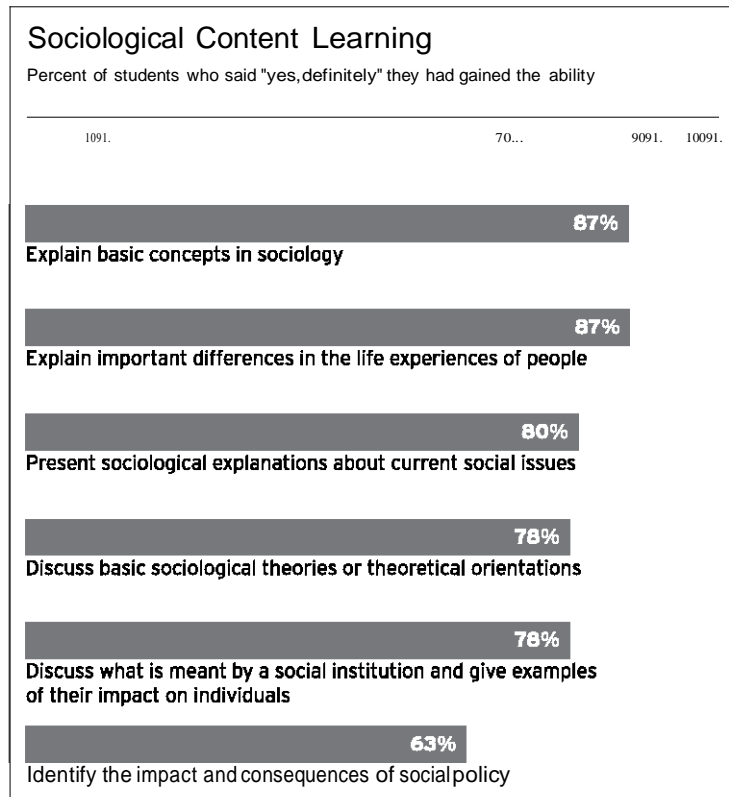
Ninety-seven percent of the graduating seniors who responded to the 2012 study said they decided to major in sociology because they found the concepts interesting. They wanted to understand individuals within social forces (90 percent), and to better

understand their own lives (17 percent). Using that knowledge, they wanted to work to change society for the better (16 percent). The majority of survey respondents also majored in sociology for job preparation (64 percent), research preparation (60 percent), and graduate school preparation (54 percent).⁴ In other words, students were fascinated by sociological concepts and saw those concepts as relevant to their own life and goals. They were also passionate about sociology. This is important because research has repeatedly shown that feeling personally connected to your work is a key element in career success and satisfaction.⁵

Sociological content learning. As Table 1 illustrates, 17 percent of the 2012 graduating senior respondents felt confident of their ability to describe and explain a broad array of sociological concepts, including how people's experiences differ depending on their social context. The majors also felt confident of their ability to present sociological explanations about current social issues, and to describe sociological theories. They also understood what social institutions are, and how they impact individuals' lives. Well over half of the majors were also confident about their ability to analyze social policies, including their impacts and consequences.

Each of these areas of content learning is highly relevant to today's complex global economy, and can be thoughtfully woven into cover

TABLE



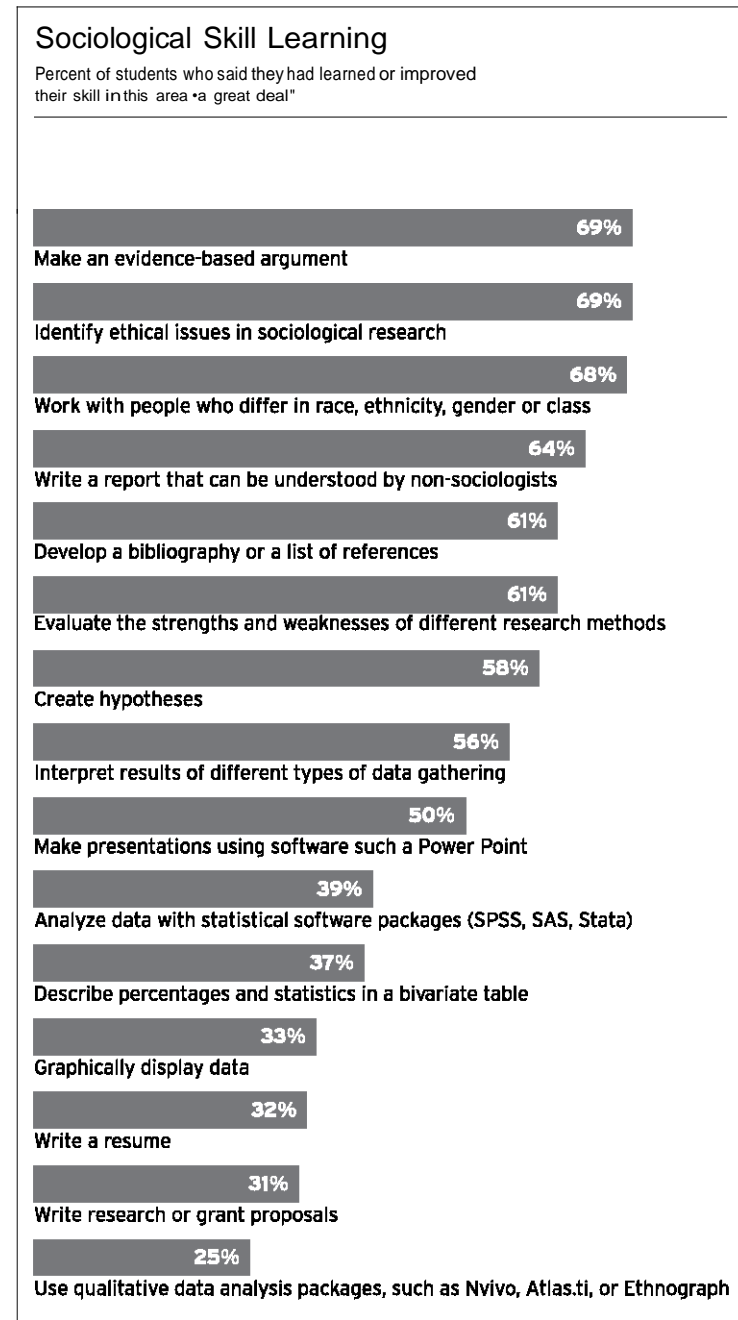
Source: ASA. Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates Survey, 2012.

letters and resumes to help employers understand how sociological concepts and theories can be applicable to their organizations.

Sociological skill learning
The graduating seniors were also asked about the research skills they learned as part of their sociology major. More specifically, they were asked, "Please select the extent to which you believe you learned or improved each skill." The response categories were "a great deal" to "very little."

As you can see in Table 2, sixty percent or more of the respondents felt they had learned "a great deal" about making an evidence-based argument, identifying ethical issues in sociological research, writing reports for lay audiences, developing bibliographies, and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of research methods. Half of the graduating seniors said they had learned a great deal about creating hypotheses, interpreting results of different data gathering, and making Power Point presentations.

TABLE 2



Source: ASA. Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates Survey, 2012.

Forty percent or less of the graduating seniors chose the highest response category, "a great deal," when describing the extent to which they learned how to analyze quantitative data, describe percentages and statistics in a bivariate table, graphically display data, write a resume, write a research or grant proposal, or use qualitative analysis packages. Amanda Makulec (Career Profile p.29) acknowledges that "research methods and statistics may seem frightening" to some students. "But the power of sociology is the ability to apply a scientific approach to studying population level behaviors and outcomes, which is fascinating. So learn the methods and stats, and one day you'll find them to be your most powerful allies."

Sociology teaches the skills employers want

In 2013 the American Association of Colleges and Universities commissioned Hart Research Associates to conduct a survey to identify the essential aptitudes and skills that employers -including private sector and non-profit organizations -wanted college graduates to gain during their studies.⁶

Look over the summary of findings (see box) from the employer survey and notice how frequently the concepts and skills that sociology majors said they learned in Tables 1 and 2 correspond directly to the essential learning outcomes employers valued. 21st century employers want students who have innovative ideas and can work to

develop new solutions to complex problems. They want new employees to have strong critical thinking and communication skills. They also valued ethical judgment, the ability to work in diverse teams, and openness to continuous learning. Importantly, they also thought students should have more opportunities to apply their learning in real-world settings, and to conduct research and do evidence-based analysis. Studying sociology will help you develop the skills and aptitudes 21st century employers want.

It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success

Data From an Online Survey of Employers Conducted on Behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Excerpts from the Summary of Key Findings.

Innovation a Priority

- Nearly all employers surveyed (95 percent) say they give hiring preference to college graduates with skills that will enable them to contribute to innovation in the workplace.
- 92 percent agree that "innovation is essential" to their organization's continued success.

Cross-Cutting Capacities vs. Choice of Undergraduate Major

- Nearly all those surveyed (93 percent) say that "a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more *important* than [a candidate's] undergraduate major."
- More than 9 in 10 of those surveyed say it is important that those they hire demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity, intercultural skills, and the capacity for continued new learning.
- More than 75% of employers say they want *more emphasis* on 5 key areas including: critical thinking, complex problem-solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.
- Employers endorse several educational practices as potentially helpful in preparing college students for workplace success. These include practices that require students to a) conduct research and use evidence-based analysis; b) gain in-depth knowledge in the major and analytic, problem solving and communication skills; and c) apply their learning in real-world settings.

Companies Want to Hire Creative Problem Solvers



Steve Ressler
BA and MA in Sociology
Founder and CEO, Govloop.com

The company I founded is an online community for public servants. The heart of the problem we are trying to solve is "how to get public sector employees to connect, share, and engage in an online community." Every day we must use our sociological imaginations and think about the social constructions that affect participation. For example: how do social norms prevent public collaboration? We must consider social factors and barriers when deciding how to tailor incentives to facilitate conversations. We also think critically about how to present problems in order to avoid the bystander effect and instead encourage action.

The most important skills that one can get from studying sociology are the ability to critically solve problems and present solutions and arguments. Sociology provided a framework that helped me understand problems using both theory and qualitative and quantitative methods. It forced me to present my understanding and analysis of arguments using compelling data and facts.

Companies want to hire creative problem solvers that can help find solutions to the rapidly evolving challenges of the 21st century.

I Help People Figure Out Their Lives



Alexis Mesko
BA and MA in Sociology
Probation Officer

I am responsible for providing closely structured supervision of offenders at several sites, preparing and presenting court testimony, and evaluating offender progress.

I learned early on that whatever work I ended up doing, it needed to be meaningful. Sometimes people make mistakes and need a little help to get re-socialized and on the right track. As a probation officer, I have access to ample resources and can utilize them to help different offenders depending on their needs. Probation is the last step before prison and I want to do whatever I can to keep someone from going to prison.

Sociology has made me aware of all the things that can impact an individual's life, including race, class, gender, ethnic background, etc. I use this knowledge to navigate different treatment routes for an individual. For example, sometimes a person's spirituality is really important to them and being able to recognize that and understand what motivates them can help me get them to successfully complete probation.

Sociology can be challenging, but the harder it is, the more you get out of it. This discipline changed my life. I use my degree everyday at work.

Where Do Recent Sociology Graduates Work?

If you are like most students, you will need to find a job right after you graduate. Graduate school may be a long-term goal, but starting payments on school loans is often an immediate reality. So what kind of a job can you get with an undergraduate degree in sociology? As a sociology major, you would probably like to see some data, not just read reassuring statements, about the value of a broad liberal arts education in general, or a sociology major in particular. This section of the booklet does just that — providing information about the actual jobs sociology majors like you held shortly after graduation.

In the 2012 *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates Survey*, recent graduates were asked about the kinds of jobs they held just seven months after graduation. Figure 1 examines the occupational categories of these students' first jobs after graduation. Keep in mind that after a few years of job experience and in some cases, the addition of a Masters

Degree, these same students are likely to move up on the organizational charts. For that reason, the Career Profiles that are found throughout this booklet include profiles of sociology graduates who went on to get an MA in sociology or another discipline, in addition to profiles of graduates who are building their careers on the basis of their bachelors degree alone.

Social services, counselors
23 percent of the 2012 graduates were working in social services and

SOCIAL SERVICES: COUNSELORS

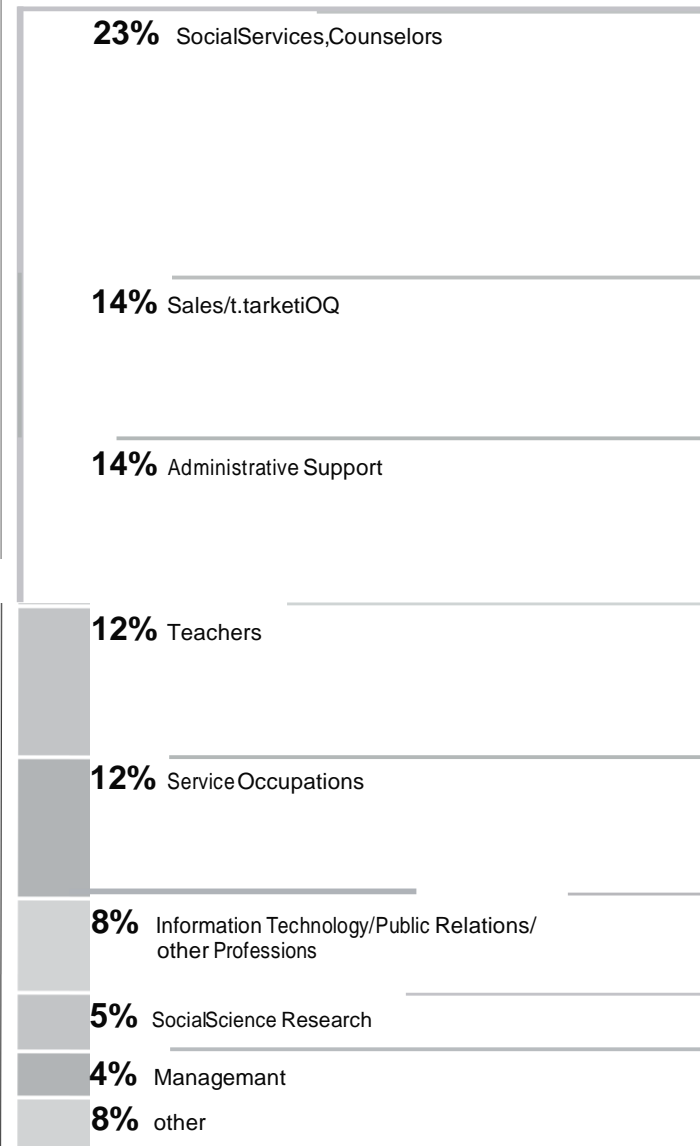
Case Manager

DESCRIPTION: A leading mental health services provider seeks full-time Intensive Case Manager to monitor clients and coordinate planning and access to community services for housing, education, vocation, socialization, benefits and finances.

REQUIREMENTS: A bachelor's degree in sociology with excellent interpersonal and organizational skills.

FIGURE 1

Occupational Categories for Sociology Graduates' First Jobs



counseling positions. Graduates working in social services may have a wide range of job titles, including: case worker for abused and neglected children; director for the Meals on Wheels program; forensic interviewer for a child advocacy center; Medicaid eligibility coordinator. Joe Pat (Career Profile p.6) is an advocate for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "employment of social and human service assistants is expected to grow by nearly 34 percent through 2016. Job prospects are expected to be excellent, particularly for applicants with the appropriate post-secondary education."⁷

To be successful in social service jobs, employees need to have a deep understanding of the social factors that contribute to poverty, illness, and unemployment. They must understand how social institutions impact individuals and how to work respectfully and effectively with people from diverse racial, ethnic, and class groups.

Sales, marketing
Customers are a social group that is influenced by all of the factors that sociologists study, such as gender, race, class, culture, and age. Sales and marketing jobs can provide ample opportunities to apply the insights of sociology to the world of business. Sales and marketing jobs also exist in the non-profit sector. An example can be seen in the job posting on this page. Sociology

SALES/MARKETING JOB LISTING

Marketing Assistant

DESCRIPTION Organization creates free fundraising platforms for sports and music fans to raise critically needed funds for respected charities and foundations. Marketing assistant creates creative content, tracks marketing efforts, and conducts market research.

JOB REQUIREMENTS Bachelor's Degree, strong analytic, interpersonal, verbal and written skills, passion for social change...

graduates working in this category may be designing and executing marketing plans, conducting marketing research, running capital campaigns, or writing commercial copy for radio.⁸ As a Marketing Consultant, Andrew Caber (Career Profile p.30) uses his sociological skills to analyze customer decision-making patterns for his clients.

Administrative support
Administrative support positions are the classic entry-level job. In non-profit organizations these jobs often have the title "Program Assistant." By taking advantage of the opportunities and contacts that an entry-level administrative support job can provide, sociology graduates can get the experience, contacts and specific work-place knowledge they need to become competitive for more advanced positions. Remember, 21st century careers have many steps.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT JOB LISTING

Program Assistant

DESCRIPTION National Social science non-profit provides grants to support African American, Latino, and Native American scholars and those committed to this goal. Program Assistant works with staff to administer grants, organize seminars, workshops and conferences.

JOB REQUIREMENTS Social science bachelor's degree... superior organizational skills, attention to detail, strong interpersonal and communication skills, ability to meet competing deadlines.

14 percent of the recent graduates who responded to the 2012 survey were working in some form of administrative support. These jobs may be located in a wide range of office settings, including: a paralegal in a courthouse, an immigration specialist for a large company, an office manager; and a scheduler in the office of a State Representative.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook points out that all organizations need skilled administrative support staff in order to be successful, and that they are employed in every sector of the economy. It also states that "when evaluating candidates for these jobs, supervisors look for strong teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, and communication skills, as well as determination, loyalty, poise, and confidence."⁹

Teachers

In both 2006 and 2012 about twelve percent of the respondents to the survey of sociology graduates were working as teachers. Some had combined their studies in sociology with teaching certificate programs and were working in public schools. Others were working in private schools, were members of AmeriCorps, or were teaching English in schools abroad. Lindsay Riddle (Career Profile p.7) finds that she uses her background in sociology on a daily basis in her role as a high school teacher.

Service occupations

In 2012, twelve percent of the recent graduates were employed in jobs that were categorized within "Services." These jobs may fall within the subcategory of protective services — such as crime scene technician, police officer, and probation officer. Alexis Mesko (Career Profile p.16), works as a probation officer and draws on her understanding of the impact of race, ethnicity, class and gender on individuals' lives as she works to find the best treatment plans for the offenders she supervises. Jessica Lightfoot (Career Profile p.22), considers the cultural context in which crimes take place in order to better investigate financial fraud as an Intelligence Research Specialist.

Information technology/ public relations/ other professionals
21st century organizations need to effectively communicate their mission and the ways they are

Trust Your Instincts; Learn to Market Your Skills



Karina Havrilla
BA in Sociology
Graduate Program Coordinator

In my current position as Graduate Coordinator I track the progress of doctoral students and oversee the application and admission process. I particularly enjoy interacting with the students. I also enjoy working to improve the department and program for future cohorts.

Research methodology, data analysis, and writing have been the most helpful skills in my current job. For example, during my first year I worked with the Graduate Director to re-design our Graduate Outcomes Assessment evaluation tools. We discussed what our program's goals were, what the benchmarks should be, and the best methods

for evaluation. I created the first draft of the new evaluation forms that faculty and students complete at different stages of the program. Once the final draft was approved by the faculty and the administration, we then collect the data and submit a report to the Graduate School on how well our program is doing.

My advice to future sociology students would be to trust your instincts and don't listen to those who don't understand the discipline's many applications. Sociology provides you with many useful skills, you just have to learn how to market them and apply them to your career.

I Need to Understand the Culture Where a Crime Took Place



Jessica Lightfoot
BA in Sociology
Intelligence Research Specialist

I am responsible for investigating financial fraud, including money laundering, embezzlement and terrorist financing. No two cases are the same, which keeps things interesting. I also feel good knowing that I'm keeping our country a bit safer.

I often try to understand the culture where a crime took place, the norms of the person or the business where it happened. Learning how people's contexts – including their cultures – influence the way they think can help me predict a person's response.

As part of my concentration in criminology I took a class where we would visit different places in the criminal justice system every week, including the courts, homeless shelters, prisons (both juvenile and adult), and police stations. By meeting people in so many different work settings, I saw where I could contribute. I found my current job through that class.

My advice is to do as many internships as possible. I took part in three, and that helped me identify my interests, as well as my strengths and weaknesses. Also, develop a good working relationship with your academic advisor.

working to advance that mission. The stakeholders who need to receive that information may include customers, clients, investors, members, volunteers, the media, government officials and regulators. People working in Information Technology and Public Relations help create and maintain a positive public image for their organizations. Web sites and social media play a central role in public relations. Eight percent of the 2012 graduates were working in this area. One survey respondent wrote, "I work as a Public Affairs Program Assistant in an office that focuses on human trafficking. I provide research, public diplomacy, and program support for the public engagement team of my office." Another described his work as "coordinator for a small state agency (work includes administrative support, public policy, public/government relations, and event planning)." According to the Bureau of Labor statistics, work in this area is expected to grow through 2020 because organizations need to "maintain their public image in a high-information age and with the growth of social media." ¹⁰

Social science researchers Only 5 percent of the 2012 respondents were working as social science researchers. Yet in a comparison of internet job searches at three popular on-line job banks, the terms 'research' and 'data' produced the largest number of entry-level job postings. Perhaps the disparity between the number of postings for entry-level jobs in

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH..JOB LISTING

Research Assistant

DESCRIPTION International Consulting Corporation working with government and industry to develop solutions to energy, climate change, and public policy problems. Research assistant helps collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, reviews literatures, and interacts with government and commercial clients.

..1aa REQUIREMENTS A bachelor's degree in related field, minimum GPA of 3.0, excellent written and oral communication, computer skills, detail orientation, ability to work under strict deadlines.

social science research and the number of sociology graduates who say they are working in this area has to do with a mistaken impression that only people with a PhD can do research. In reality, there are a wide range of research-related employment opportunities for students at the Bachelor's level. Remember that the ability to conduct research and empirical analysis was a key skill that employers said they valued in the AAC&U survey cited earlier in this booklet. An additional advantage of this kind of work is that it provides excellent preparation for individuals who plan to go on to graduate school. To learn more about careers in social science research, read Shushama Tilakaratne's Career Profile (p.2) as well as Emily Larson's (p.25).

Management

Sociology graduates in management positions may have many different responsibilities, such as: coordinating programs; running government contracts; providing oversight for quality assurance operations and customer satisfaction; working in human resources related to hiring, training, and conflict negotiation; and ensuring equal opportunity for employees. Karina Havrilla (Career Profile p. 21) works as the Graduate Coordinator at a major university, where she regularly uses her research methods, data analysis and writing skills. She says, "My advice to future sociology students would be to trust your instincts and don't listen to those who don't understand the discipline's many applications. Sociology provides you with many useful skills, you just have to learn how to market them and apply them to your career."

Opportunities in administrative management are expected to grow by about 15 percent between 2010 and 2020.¹² Being an effective administrative services manager requires "good leadership and communication skills and to be able to establish effective working relationships with many different people, ranging from managers, supervisors, and professionals, to clerks and blue-collar workers. They should be analytical, detail-oriented, flexible, and decisive. They must be able to coordinate several activities at once, quickly analyze and resolve specific problems, and cope with deadlines." ¹³

When Congress Asks Questions, We Help Provide Answers



Emily Larson
BA in Sociology, MA in
Public Policy
Senior Analyst, Government
Accountability Office

In my position as a Senior Analyst at the Government Accountability Office, I assist in investigations regarding federal government spending. When congress asks questions, I am responsible for leading projects that will provide the answers. including research design, data collection, and data analysis. I gain a great sense of satisfaction when I see our reports quoted in the media, or by a member of congress.

Armed with a sociological imagination, I am able to address public policy issues through many lenses and viewpoints. From there, I am able to tell a story and make recommendations for

improvements that are non-partisan, independent, and fully supported by facts.

Medical sociology was my favorite course in college. It challenged me to view the medical system from a variety of perspectives, including allopathic western doctors, alternative medical providers, low-income patients, and immigrant and non-English speaking patients. This class opened the door for me, and long after helped me view other social issues from a variety of viewpoints. which ultimately led me to a path of success in my current position.

Immerse Yourself in Internships



Marcus Pruitt
BA in Sociology
County Employee, Graduate
Student

Currently, I work in the travel and tourism sector of county government. Interacting with people from many different places is one thing I particularly enjoy. I am also a graduate student and a graduate research assistant. My sociology background has greatly aided my graduate school pursuits. My training in how to use the current literature, methodology, and data analysis has helped me transition into a better researcher.

My advice? Immerse yourself in internships and as much research as possible. There are many opportunities both stateside and in other countries for students. I have been able to apply my skills at a non-profit organization as both an intern and a volunteer.

As a Ronald E. McNair alum (mcnairscholars.com). I cannot express how important and beneficial their summer research program has been for me. Summer research provides you with the opportunity to work closely in the discipline and area of your choosing; you are also surrounded by likeminded individuals who provide encouragement and support.

What Can I Do to Start My Career Now?

The first thing you can do on your path to a successful 21st century career is simply recognize that you have to start preparing *now*.

Imagine it is May, and two students who majored in sociology are about to graduate. Although they both think they would like to go to graduate school in a year or two, for now they are looking for jobs. One of them just wrote his first resume, and struggled to find anything to put under "work and volunteer experience." He also put off taking the statistics and research methods classes required for his major until the very end of his studies, and does not feel confident of his ability to use SPSS or any other statistical software- so he did not say anything about data analysis or statistics on his resume. In a recent job interview he said that studying sociology taught him a lot about people.

The other student wrote her first resume during her freshman year, did volunteer work in a homeless shelter for two years, and completed an internship at a local food bank where she collected and analyzed

data about the clients who came to a local food bank and the donations the food bank received. As part of her internship she created SPSS files and was able to demonstrate that there was a mismatch between the months when the food bank had the most clients and the months when the food bank received the most donations. Her data helped the food bank get additional grant money from their state. Her current resume, which prominently lists her social science research skills, also lists a link to her electronic portfolio, which includes the PowerPoint presentation she did for the staff at the food bank at the end of her internship, as well as examples of her written work. In her recent job interview she was able to explain how she collected and analyzed data during her internship. She also could effectively define sociology as a science that makes use of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide insights on effective responses to social problems.

It is not hard to figure out which student is going to have an easier

time finding a job. Although the story of these two students is fictional, the lesson behind their story is supported by data. The results of the second wave of the "*What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology*" study indicate that graduating seniors who included their research skills on their resume, and talked about those skills in job interviews, were far more likely to get jobs that related to their studies in sociology and more likely to be satisfied with the jobs they got..

The good news for you is that reading this booklet can be your first step in positioning yourself to be more like the second student in the fictional scenario. You can follow Marcus Pruitt's advice (Career Profile p. 26) and "Immerse yourself in internships and as much research as possible."

Get to know yourself- what are your goals?

Success is not a one-size-fits-all concept, nor is the definition of a good job universal. Working in a large city in a fast-paced, high-paying, government job may be one student's dream-come-true.

Action Box

Take two (or three) of the self-assessments found at CareerOneStop.org and compare and contrast what they tell you. How are the results similar? How are they different? What new insights about yourself do they offer?

Another student's perfect job may be coordinating social services in a rural health clinic that serves a small farming community. If these two students participated in a reality TV program that made them switch places, those 'good jobs' instantly would be transformed into terrible jobs -without changing anything about the jobs themselves.

So spend some time thinking carefully about who you are, where you want to go, and what you want to do. CareerOneStop.org has links to five different assessment tools that you can explore:

- The [Skills Profiler](#) identifies skills and matches them to jobs.
- O*NET's [Ability Profiler](#) matches strengths with occupations.
- O*NET's [Interest Profiler](#) identifies broad interest areas.
- O*NET's [Work Importance Locator](#) identifies job features that are important to you.
- [Employability Checkup](#) provides a snapshot of your employability.

Start looking for your first job-now

Even if you are in your first or second year of college, you can start looking for your first job. If you are further along in your studies, it's not too late to get started. Browsing job listings can help you clarify your goals for your first job after graduation, and help you define what you need to do to achieve

Data is Almost a New Form of Currency



Amanda Makulec
 BA in Sociology,
 MA in Public Health
 International Public Health
 Consultant

My responsibilities in my current position at a public health consulting firm vary widely from project to project which makes my job really interesting. I work in the international division monitoring and evaluating maternal and child health programs.

In today's economy, where data is almost a new form of currency, cultivating a strong understanding of research methods and at the very least basic data analysis skills will be respected by potential future employers. Understanding research methods also cultivates a certain form of analytic thinking that can be applied to various problems and challenges, no matter where your career goes. I've also found that strong writing skills are exceptionally valuable,

particularly the ability to write about and share technical information with lay audiences in an easy-to-understand way.

To those who are considering sociology, research methods and statistics may seem frightening. But the power of sociology is the ability to apply a scientific approach to studying population level behaviors and outcomes, which is fascinating. So learn the methods and stats, and one day you'll find them to be your most powerful allies.

I feel like my work has purpose. I also love that no two days are the same, keeping me on my toes and giving me opportunities to work with many different people.

The Most Important Skill I Learned is Critical Thinking



Andrew Cober BA in
 Sociology Marketing
 Consultant

I am a Senior Solutions Consultant for a strategic communications research and consulting firm. Our focus is on understanding human decision-making through primary research that lends measurable value to the enterprises and clients we serve. Over the course of a year I may develop strategic research initiatives for clients ranging from your local electric or natural gas utility, to a leading digital technology manufacturer, to a children's hospital, to an agricultural trade association, to a pest control company.

In sociology, we are often measuring social change in years, or decades. In my work, which focuses on communications and

consumer outreach, we get to see the impact of our research in a much shorter timeframe. It's very rewarding.

Without hesitation I would say the most important skill I learned through studying sociology that has translated directly into my current job is critical thinking. Clients and employers are looking for individuals who can process information, dissect it and recognize both the stated and latent meanings there. With information increasing exponentially and information delivery channels fundamentally reshaping how we "learn" and what we "know" about the world, critical thinking skills are vitally important.

those goals. Research has shown that people who set clear and specific goals are far more likely to achieve them than people who have only good intentions. This is also true for grades—students who are self-motivated and set high goals for themselves were more likely to achieve good grades.¹⁵ The same is also true for career success. Setting clearly defined and challenging goals leads to greater success in the workplace than vaguely conceptualized efforts to “do my best.” Don’t worry if your goals change over time—most people’s do. However, creating a goal now and starting to work toward it will be far more useful and productive than waiting until you have perfect clarity.

Here are some on-line job banks you can use to start your job hunt:

- **Idealist.org.** This site lists jobs in non-profit organizations all over the world. The site also lists internship and volunteer opportunities.

- **CareerOneStop.org.** This site has links to all 50 states’ job banks.

- **USAJobs.gov.** This is the Federal government’s job bank and includes jobs in all federal agencies and offices across the United States. Begin by searching for “Form EI-23” in any internet browser. This document lists federal job titles by college major. Then go to USAjobs.gov and click on “advanced search.” Scroll down to the pay grade fields and enter “5-7.” This will ensure that you are looking for entry-level postings. From there you can search

Action Box

Find three entry-level job postings that interest you. Then answer the following questions:

- 1 What employment sectors are they in? What populations do they serve?
- 2 What are the requirements for the job?
- 3 What could you do in the next few years to build a resume that would make you an outstanding candidate for that job?

using the job titles listed under ‘sociology’ on Form EI-23, or try a broader key word search.

- **ColleQeGrad.com.** This site specializes in entry-level jobs, although it includes listings for many advanced positions as well.

In your searches, especially in large national-level job banks, layering search terms can be helpful. Start with a search terms that reflect your current level of experience:

- **BA or BS** • Entry level

Then add your sociological skills:

- Sociology • Research
- Social science • Diversity
- Data • Statistics

If you get too many listings, add an occupational category or market sector.

- Program assistant
- Human resources
- Research assistant
- Non profit
- Government
- Marketing

Develop your professional network

While internet searches can be helpful for clarifying your career goals and identifying additional knowledge or experience you need in order to achieve those goals, they are not a particularly effective way of finding a professional job. In examining the data from the 2012 study of sociology graduates, the factors that were most highly associated with obtaining a career-level job after graduation were consulting with faculty members, participating in capstone seminars and career workshops in the department, and talking with internship advisors and former employers. Through activities like these students meet potential employers, learn about job openings, and can submit applications that are far more likely to result in career-level employment. Graduates who only looked for jobs on the internet or the newspaper were far less likely to obtain career-level employment after graduation.¹⁷ In keeping with this, Marcus Pruitt (Career Profile p. 26) says, “Immerse yourself in internships and as much research as possible.” Jessica Lightfoot agrees (Career Profile p. 22) and adds, “Develop a good working relationship with your academic advisor.”

Go on Informational Interviews

In order to build your professional network, you need to meet people who are working in the employment sector that interests you (such as business, non-profit associations, social services, social science research, or government). Informational interviews can be very helpful in this regard. An informational interview is just a conversation with someone who is working in an occupation that you would like to explore. One of the major differences between a job interview and an informational interview is that in an informational interview you will be asking most of the questions.

So how do you get an informational interview? The first step is to locate someone working in your area of interest and ask them for a brief (20-30 minute) informational interview. Your college or university’s career center and alumni center may be able to direct you to individuals you can contact. In addition, ask the people in your social network if they know someone you can contact. Your social network includes your professors, family members, friends, neighbors, and the people where you are a volunteer or intern. The Internet also can be a wonderful way to search for businesses or non-profit organizations in the occupational area you want to explore. Once you have located an organization, look for the unit within that organization that fits your interests best. Then find the name of the person who supervises that unit or department. Write that

person a letter introducing yourself and explaining that you are requesting a brief informational interview because you would like to learn more about the opportunities and requirements for working in their field or organization. Follow up with a phone call about a week later.

Once you have an informational interview scheduled, follow some simple guidelines to make the interview successful:

- Limit the interview to 30 minutes.
- Dress professionally.
- Bring your resume.
- Ask the person you are meeting with about their career path. How did they get their job? What do they like about it? What does it take to succeed in their field?
- Ask what qualities they look for when hiring entry level employees.
- Write a note to thank the person for sharing their knowledge and expertise with you.

Create a coherent course plan

There is more than one way to complete the requirements for graduation at your college. By thinking carefully about your goals in advance, you can choose topics for class projects, elective courses, and additional minors or second majors that will help you reach your career goals.

Once you have identified a market

sector or population that you hope to work with after graduation, you can amplify the power of your sociology major by taking a multi-disciplinary approach. Consider a double major or a minor in criminal justice, economics, psychology, social work, business management, international relations, a second language, graphic design, education, computer science, marketing, natural resources, or human services. There are endless possibilities- the key is to think about how your choice will advance your career goals. Employment analysts predict that the most successful people in the 21st century will be those who have been exposed to a wide variety of disciplines and have taken the time to study in some depth outside their field.

Work with your advisor to develop an integrated set of courses. You can bolster your employability by using your elective hours to take extra methods and statistics courses, or upper-level courses and independent studies in sociology (or another discipline) that focus on the market sector, population, or issues where you hope to build your career.

Writing research papers that apply to the market sector or population you hope to work with is useful as well.¹⁸ By doing the research you will gain information which you can use in interviews for internships and employment, and the paper itself will become a tailor-made writing sample to include with your job applications.

Do an Internship and volunteer

Internships offer invaluable experience that can bring to life the sociological concepts and theories you study in books and the classroom. You can sample potential careers, build your resume, and learn new skills during a well-chosen internship experience. Many agencies and institutions offer internships and most colleges will provide college credits for internships. Data from the *"What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology"* study indicate that participating in activities such as internships, community volunteer projects, and service learning programs significantly increases the likelihood of being employed in jobs that reflect the skills and concepts learned as a sociology major.

A wide range of internships are available to sociology students in the for-profit, non-profit, and government sectors both in the United States and abroad. Start looking for your summer internship at least six months in advance. Winter break is often a great time to start looking for an internship. Use the same networks you used to get informational interviews to help locate informal internship opportunities. Internship opportunities also can be located through the internet. When you contact organizations about internship opportunities, be prepared to explain why you want to do an internship there and what personal qualities and sociological skills you would bring to the organization. Ask if you can send your resume and cover letter. Cast a

wide net- the more organizations you contact, the better your chances of getting an internship.

Although volunteer work is less formal than an internship, it can help you build a winning resume. In addition, long-term volunteer experience can help counter-balance limited work experience, especially if the volunteer work was in the same market sector where you eventually hope to work.

Regardless of whether you are considering doing a formal internship, taking a service learning class, or independently volunteering, with careful planning your activities can work together to build a coherent set of experiences that will apply to your career goals and help your resume stand out in the crowd.

Join the sociology club- or start one

Taking leadership roles in the sociology club will help build your resume and give you an opportunity to demonstrate your organizational skills. Lead a service project for the club, become a club officer, or start a sociology club if your department does not have one.

A sociology club can be combined with a chapter of Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD), The International Sociology Honor Society. AKD's website www.alphakappadelta.org explains the criteria for membership, as well as how to start a chapter if your school does not have one. Membership in AKD will help strengthen your resume, and also give you an

Action Box

Get the Sociology Club to organize a panel presentation of sociology alumni. Ask them to talk about their work, what they do, how they found their jobs, and what advice they have for current majors. If alumni no longer live in the area, ask them to present through video Skype.

automatic pay increase if you get a job with the federal government.

Create your core resume Think of your resume as a core document that you will build over time. As you gain new experiences

and skills, add them to your resume. Each time you apply for a job, you will edit your core resume and write a unique cover letter tailored to that position. Start building your core resume now, even if you just declared your major. As you start, you will probably notice that some areas of your resume are "thin." Those will become the areas that you can spend time bolstering before you graduate.

When you are writing your core resume, review the sociological concepts and skills shown in Tables 1 and 2 of the section of this booklet entitled "What is Sociology?" Recent graduates from sociology programs who listed those skills on

.Jane T. Student

123 Main Street, University Town, ST 12345
123-456-7891 (cell)
jtstudent@gmail.com

Objective:

To obtain a research assistant position using strong data analysis, teamwork, and communication skills.

Education:

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, expected May 2018.

capabilities and Skills:

Work end Volunteer Experience:

Senior Research Project:

Relevant Coursework:

Extracurricular and Leadership Experience:

their resume- and talked about them during job interviews- were significantly more likely to report using their skills in the workplace. They also viewed their work as closely related to their studies in sociology and had high levels of job satisfaction. This was true even for respondents who did not feel completely confident about their skills when they graduated!¹⁹

Jane T. Student's partially completed resume can give you some ideas for sections to include in your own resume.

Resumes should be one page, error-free, and highlight your full range experiences and skills. They should be printed on plain white or off-white paper in black ink with a simple clear font.

Here are a few additional guidelines to keep in mind when writing resumes and cover letters:

- Use an email address that includes your name and is professional. 'dropoutjoe@hotmail.com' probably does not send the message you intend.
- Make sure your cell phone and home phone voice mail messages are also professional.
- If you are sending a resume via email, turn it into a PDF first. This will prevent the formatting from being corrupted in the file transfer process.
- If you are sending a cover letter

via email, create an electronic version of your signature to include. Another option is to print your letter, sign it, and then scan it to an electronic file. Either way, convert your letter to PDF format and send it as an attachment. This will make sure that it is received as a professional, polished example of your work.

- For both your resume and cover letter, make sure that they are free of spelling and grammar errors. Slowly proof read them yourself, and then ask someone who is an excellent writer to proof them again. Many employers immediately discard cover letters or resumes with errors.

What about Graduate School?

An undergraduate major in sociology provides an excellent foundation for graduate study in a wide range of fields. 18 months after graduation, 35 percent of the individuals who responded to the second wave of the *"What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology"* study were enrolled in graduate school. Among those, the largest single group (22 percent) was composed of students studying sociology at the graduate level. The remaining individuals primarily were using the skills and

concepts they learned in sociology to pursue professional or applied degrees.²⁰

By using SPSS scaling techniques, the ASA researchers were able to identify factors that predicted respondents' successful entry into graduate school. If your goal is graduate school, their findings provide a number of pointers.

- Focus on doing well in your sociology course work. A high GPA is particularly important for students who hope to pursue a PhD in sociology.

- Join the Alpha Kappa Delta International Sociology Honor Society.

- Attend, and consider doing a poster presentation, at the annual meetings of state, regional, or national sociology associations. Some of these include:

- American Sociological Association (ASA)

- Association of Black Sociologists (ABS)
- Eastern Sociological Society (ESS)
- Mid-South Sociological Association (MSSA)
- North Central Sociological Association (NCSA)
- Pacific Sociological Association (PSA)
- Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS)
- Southern Sociological Society (SSS)
- Southwestern Sociological Society (MSS)

- List your sociological skills on your graduate school application.
- For students interested in entering a master's program, seek out on-the-job training activities, including internships and volunteer opportunities.
- For students interested in entering a PhD program in sociology, seek out professors who are willing to become mentors and allow you to assist on research projects.

In short, if your goal is graduate school, your undergraduate studies in sociology are an excellent place to start. The respondents in *"What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology"* study strongly agreed that their sociology major provided good preparation for graduate and professional school.

BA & Beyond Respondents' Graduate Fields of Study	
<i>Field of Study</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Sociology	22%
Social Work	17%
Education	11%
Law	11%
other Social Sciences	9%
Psychology/Counseling	9%
Engineering	7%
Business/Management	5%
Public Policy/Affairs	4%
other	5%
Total	100%

How Can the American Sociological Association Help?

According to its mission statement, the American Sociological Association is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to advancing sociology as a scientific discipline and profession serving the common good. There are numerous ways the ASA can help you as you compose your sociological career. Listed below are just a few of the many resources that can be found on the Student Resources page of the ASA website. To get there, go to www.asanet.org, click on Teaching & Learning, and then click on Students: Undergraduate. Even more useful material can be found by clicking on the Student Resources link in the left side column on that page.

"The Student Sociologist"

This is a newsletter for students and their departments. It is produced by the ASA Student Forum and is available as a free PDF download.

"Navigating the Major" Also available as a free PDF download on the Student Resources page of the ASA website, *Navigating the Major* is a guide for undergradu-

ates that covers course selection, research and internships, careers, graduate school and much more.

"The Guide to Graduate Departments"

Available in the ASA on-line bookstore, the Guide to Graduate Departments is published every year and provides information on graduate programs in sociology and is indexed in a variety of ways, including program emphasis.

The ASA Honors Program This program is a wonderful opportunity for sociology majors to come to the Annual Meeting, meet other students, and learn more about the profession. The ASA Annual Meeting occurs in August each year; the deadline for applying for the Honors Program is on or around February 1st. Check the Student Resources page on the ASA website for the exact deadline.

Student membership You can become a student member of the ASA for as little as \$50 (this price includes a subscription to an ASA journal of your choice). As a

student member you will receive the Association newsletter, *Footnotes*, a monthly email alert called "Member News and Notes." You will also automatically become a member of the ASA Student Forum which provides resources for undergraduate and graduate students and helps develop networks among student members. The Student Forum publishes a regular newsletter which includes information and opportunities relevant to students and departments. Listed on your resume or graduate school application, membership in the ASA also demonstrates a professional level of interest in sociology.

Additional career resources

The ASA website also includes an extensive list of links to websites that will help you as you explore career options. The Student Resources page on the ASA website is once again the place to look (<http://www.asanet.org/students/students.cfm>) <http://www.asanet.org/students/students.cfm>)

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observed

*Do social networking
how*

*Can deviant behavior contribute
to positive social change?*

In the era of cancer, why do people still smoke cigarettes?

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