

## Strategies Students Can Use for Finding Jobs That Are Close to Sociology

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Students need to prepare for the future as they pursue their undergraduate major in sociology. The decisions that they make prior to graduation affect their success in finding an interesting job that incorporates the skills and concepts students learn in sociology. According to a four-year research project conducted by the American Sociological Association, *What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology?*,<sup>1</sup> if students plan to find a job directly after graduation, they should participate in internships, engage in community activities, take part in service learning programs, gain leadership training skills, and attend job fairs. Students should identify the sociological skills that they have, list them on a résumé, and discuss them during job interviews. Research on former majors tells us that students are more likely to use their sociological skills and knowledge on the job if they follow these steps. And, the result will be greater job satisfaction.

### **Closeness of Jobs to Sociology Training.**

Those majors who strongly agree that their job is closely related to what they learned as part of the sociology major report high satisfaction with the job (almost 70 percent). In contrast, only about 35 percent of those who report that their jobs were not related to sociology indicated that

they were very satisfied. This finding suggests the importance of preparing and searching for jobs that do incorporate sociological concepts and research skills.

### **Increasing the Chances of Using Job Skills and Job Satisfaction**

As we see from the figure below, there are two main pathways to job satisfaction. The first is a strategy of articulating skills as part of a job search and the second is gaining the contacts and practice in using sociology skills and concepts outside of the classroom.

### **Communicating Skills Helps**

Those who can communicate their sociological skills to potential employers are more likely to use them on the job, regardless of occupation. For example, about 70 percent of majors strongly agree that they can evaluate different research methods before applying them. Of these majors, fewer than 30 percent list this skill on their résumés. Of the majors who did list this skill on their résumé, about one third discusses this skill at job interviews. For those who use this strategy, more than 80 percent report using the skill on the job. Contrast this finding to the more than 70 percent who do not list this skill on their résumé. These majors are unlikely to discuss the skill with a potential employer (only 20 percent do). Perhaps this skill is irrelevant to the job they were pursuing, or perhaps not, but the outcome of not communicating the skill is that only one quarter of those who strongly agreed that they had learned to evaluate different research methods

<sup>1</sup> These findings come from a longitudinal survey conducted by the American Sociological Association's Research and Development Department of almost 1,800 seniors in 2005. Early in 2007 we re-surveyed the class of 2005 to find out what they were doing with their bachelor's degree since graduation. Almost 800 former majors responded to the second survey. All the publications from this study can be found at [http://www.asanet.org/research/bacc\\_survey.cfm#briefs](http://www.asanet.org/research/bacc_survey.cfm#briefs).

before applying them ended up using it on the job.

### Out of Classroom Activities Help

Another pathway to finding a job that is close to sociology is through participating in out-of-classroom activities, especially on-the-job training and networking activities. These activities include internships, community activities, leadership training, service learning, and job fairs. All undergraduate majors benefit from these activities, although students whose parents have a college degree or more may have less need to participate in these activities. This is because with higher education comes contacts, situational knowledge, and strategies for professional job searches and employment that can be passed on to their children. But for students whose parents have less education, participating in job training

and networking activities can be an alternate route to contacts, situational knowledge and strategies for job search.

Participating in on-the-job training activities increases almost three times the probability that students obtain a job that they thought was close to sociology. We find that for respondents whose mothers have less than a baccalaureate degree participating in on-the-job training activities does substitute for a parent's potential lack of job contacts and other social capital. Students should concentrate on mastering the many skills and knowledge that the sociology major provides. They should become involved in related activities, learn how to apply what they learn in sociology in work settings, and begin preparing for a career. Faculty members can help by providing guidance for career preparation.

Figure 1: Job Satisfaction

