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**21st Century Careers
with an Undergraduate Degree
in Sociology**

21st Century Careers

With an Undergraduate Degree in
Sociology

American Sociological Association
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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.

Action Box:

Watch
‘Did You Know?’ (4:55)
on www.YouTube.com.
This brief film documents the exponential change in our global society.

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 45.¹

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 workplace 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. Job postings frequently state that only applicants with one, two, or even three years of work experience will be considered. Many soon-to-be graduates lament, “How can I get experience if I can’t get a job?” 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 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 ethnical 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 foods and medicines; using technology to invade people’s privacy; and polluting poor communities to make profits. Because the 21st century will bring 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, they study 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.

Your life as a composition

Finding the meaningful thread that connects the 10 different jobs you probably will hold before you are 45 cannot be a passive process. To build you own 21st century career you will need to use all your creativity and innovation. From your first year in college you will need to think carefully about your own talents, preferences, and career goals; find ways to take advantage of opportunities to learn both inside and outside the classroom; and start building a resume that will help you stand out in today’s competitive work place.

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.

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 systematic observation, in-depth interviews and ethnography, conversational analysis, content analysis of both written and visual documents, survey research, and statistical analysis. The results of sociological investigations help in the development of new theories and inform social policy, programs, and laws.

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 your 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 look at Table 3 and compare those findings to the conceptual abilities and skills that employers said they valued in a recent survey.

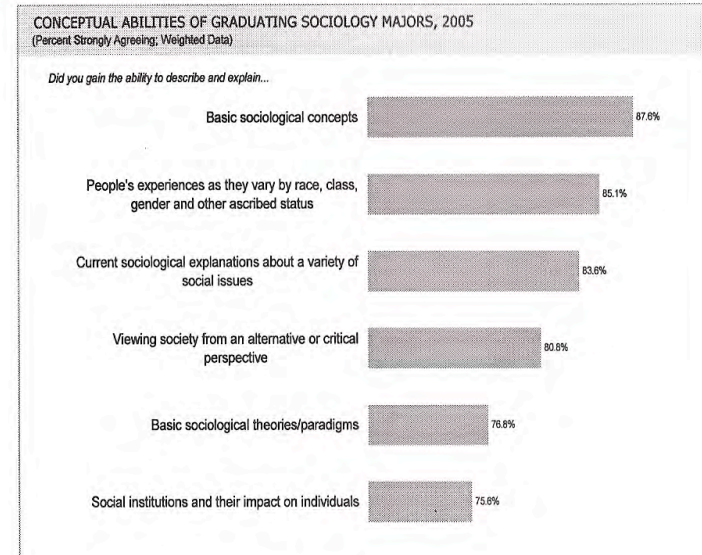
In 2005 the Research Department of the American Sociological Association—under the direction of Roberta Spalter-Roth—began a longitudinal study of seniors who were majoring in sociology. The study is often referred to as the *“What Can I Do with a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology Study.”* Funded by the National Science Foundation, the goal of the study was to learn about sociology graduates and their career paths. The sociology majors in the sample have been 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.

Ninety-five percent of the students in the first phase of the study said they decided to major in sociology because they found the concepts interesting. 78 percent said they decided to major in sociology because they enjoyed their first course, 63 percent said they wanted to understand social forces and individual relationships, 38 percent want to change society, and 40 percent wanted to major in sociology to better understand their own lives. In other words, students were fascinated by sociological concepts and saw those concepts as relevant to their own life and goals. They were 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.³

Six conceptual abilities of sociology majors

As Table 1 below illustrates, the *“What Can I Do with a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology”* survey respondents felt confident of their ability to describe and explain a broad array of sociological concepts, including how people’s experiences differ by race, class, gender, and age. The majors also felt confident of their ability to examine society from a critical or alternative perspective, to discuss social issues and sociological explanations for them, and to describe social institutions and their impact on individuals.

Table 1

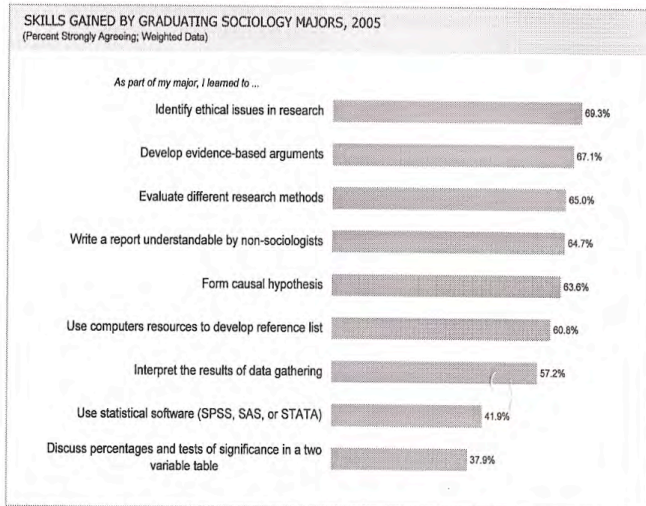


Source: ASA, Research and Development Department, *What Can I do with a Bachelor's in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology*, Spring, 2005.

Eight skills of graduating sociology majors

The graduating seniors were also asked about the research skills they learned as part of their sociology majors. As you can see in Table 2, sixty percent or more of the respondents strongly agreed that they could identify ethical issues in research, develop evidence-based arguments, evaluate different research methods, write reports for non-academic audiences, form casual hypothesis, use electronic resources to develop reference lists, and interpret the results of data gathering. A smaller proportion of the respondents were confident of their ability to use statistical packages such as SPSS, SAS, or STATA, and to discuss two-variable tables and tests of significance.

Table 2



Source: ASA, Research and Development Department, *What Can I do with a Bachelor in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology*, Spring, 2005.

Table 3

Percentage of Employers Who Want Colleges to "Place More Emphasis" on Essential Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World	
• Science and technology	82%
• Global issues	72%*
• The role of the United States in the world	60%
• Cultural values and traditions (U.S./global)	53%*
Intellectual and Practical Skills	
• Teamwork skills in diverse groups	76%*
• Critical thinking and analytic reasoning	73%
• Written and oral communication	73%
• Information literacy	70%
• Creativity and innovation	70%
• Complex problem solving	64%
• Quantitative reasoning	60%
Personal and Social Responsibility	
• Intercultural competence (teamwork in diverse groups)	76%*
• Intercultural knowledge (global issues)	72%*
• Ethics and values	56%
• Cultural values/traditions—U.S./global	53%*
Integrative Learning	
• Applied knowledge in real-world settings	73%

Note: These findings are taken from a survey of employers commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and conducted by Peter D. Hart Associates in November and December 2006. For a full report on the survey and its complete findings, see www.aacu.org/leap.

Sociology teaches the skills employers want

In 2006 the American Association of Colleges and Universities conducted a survey to identify the essential aptitudes and skills employers wanted college graduates to gain during their studies.

Look over Table 3 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 to have strong

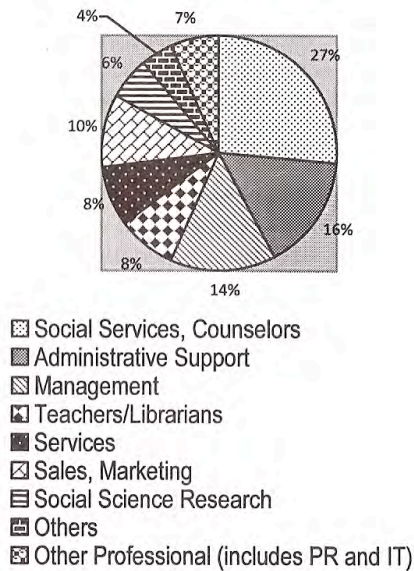
science and technology skills that draw on critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and creativity and innovation. But they also want their employees to be able to use those skills with a multi-cultural, global understanding. They want their employees to have strong written and oral communication skills, be able to work effectively in diverse groups, and to have a deep sense of personal and social responsibility. Studying sociology will help you develop the skills and aptitudes 21st century employers want.

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 second wave of *“What Can I Do with a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology”* recent graduates were asked about the kinds of jobs they held as of December 2006, just 18 months after graduation. Of those students surveyed, more than 80 percent were employed. Figure 1 examines the occupational categories of these students’ *first jobs* after graduation. Keep in mind that after a few years of job experience, these same students are likely move up on the organizational charts.

Figure 1: Occupational Categories for Sociology Graduates' First Jobs



Source: ASA, *What Can I Do with a Bachelors Degree in Sociology?* Wave II, 2007.

Social services, counselors

27 percent of the graduates were working in social services and counseling positions. They had a wide range of job titles, including: a case worker for abused and neglected children; a director for the Meals on Wheels program; a forensic interviewer for a child advocacy center; a Medicaid eligibility coordinator; and an advocate for victims of domestic violence.

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 postsecondary education."⁴

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 know how to work respectfully and effectively with people from diverse racial, ethnic, and class groups.

Social Service Job Listing **CASE MANAGER**

Description: 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...

Job requirements: A bachelor's degree in sociology... excellent interpersonal and organizational skills.

Administrative support

16 percent of the recent graduates who responded to the survey were working in some form of administrative support. Their jobs were located in a wide range of office settings, including: a paralegal in a court house, an immigration specialist for a large company, an office manager, and a scheduler in the office of a State Representative.

Administrative support positions are the classic entry-level job. In non-profit organizations these jobs are 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 and specific workplace knowledge they need to become competitive for more advanced positions. Remember, 21st century careers have many steps.

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.”⁵

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.

Administrative management

Sociology graduates who were working in administrative management positions coordinated programs; ran government contracts; oversaw quality assurance operations and customer satisfaction in small manufacturing firms; and worked in human resources related to hiring, training, conflict negotiation, and ensuring equal opportunity for employees. They comprised 14 percent of the survey respondents.

Opportunities in administrative management are expected to grow by about 12 percent between 2006 and 2016.⁶ As can be seen from the range of jobs the sociology graduates listed, these positions are found in a diverse range of organizations from insurance companies to computer manufacturers to government offices.

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.”⁷

Administrative Management
Job Listing

PROGRAM MANAGER

Description: Leading provider of security solutions seeks manager to oversee community-based supervision and in-person reporting program as part of a contract with the Department of Homeland Security.

Job requirements: Bachelor’s Degree in sociology... Experience in law enforcement or case management a plus. We are looking for a professional with a strong sense of ethics...

Teachers, librarians

About eight percent of the respondents to the follow up survey of sociology graduates were working as teachers or librarians. Some had combined their studies in sociology with a teaching certificate program and were working in the public schools. Others were working in private schools, were members of AmeriCorps, or were teaching English in schools abroad.

Services

Another eight percent of the graduates in the survey were employed in jobs that were categorized within “Services.” In many cases, those jobs were in the subcategory of protective services—including titles such as crime scene technician, police officer, and probation officer.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, opportunities for working in protective services is expected to have an average level of growth overall, with many opportunities at the level of local law enforcement but more competition for positions at the State and Federal levels.

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. But sales and marketing jobs also exist in the non-profit sector—an example can be seen in the job posting on this page. The 10 percent of survey respondents who were working in this category designed and executed marketing plans, conducted

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...

marketing research, ran capital campaigns, and wrote commercial copy for radio.⁸

Social science researchers

Only 6 percent of the respondents to the survey of sociology majors were working as social science researchers. Yet in a recent 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.⁹ Perhaps the disparity between the number of postings for entry-level jobs in social science research and the number of sociology graduates working in this area has to do with a mistaken impression that only people with a PhD can do research. In reality, there is wide range of research-related employment opportunities for students at the BA level. Remember that quantitative literacy was a key skill that employers said the 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 do plan to go on to graduate school.

Social Science Research Job Listing **RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

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

Job 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.

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 *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 local food bank as well as 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 describe how she collected and analyzed data during her internship, and could describe how sociology was a science that make use of both quantitative and qualitative data and could provide valuable 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.¹⁰

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. 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






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?

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, a website funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, explains it this way: “Self-assessment is a way to learn more about yourself: what you like, what you don't like, and how you tend to react to certain situations. Learning about yourself is the first step in finding a good career fit.”

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 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.¹¹ 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.”¹² 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

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?






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

 **CollegeGrad.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

Go on informational interviews

After you have identified an employment sector that interests you (such as business, non-profit associations, social services, social science research, or government) it can be helpful to go on several informational interviews. 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 you professors, family members, friends, your 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 carefully 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 multidisciplinary approach. 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.

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.

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.¹³ By doing the research you will gain information you can use to 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 with there and what 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 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. But 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 from the “*What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology*” study (see Tables 1 and 2 in the section of this booklet entitled “What is Sociology?”). Recent graduates from sociology programs who listed those skills on their resume and talked about them during job interviews were significantly more likely to report using their skills in the workplace, seeing their work as closely related to their studies in sociology, and

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 got their jobs, and what advice they have for current majors.

having high levels of job satisfaction. This was true even for respondents who did not feel completely confident about their skills when they graduated!

<p style="text-align: center;">Jane T. Student 123 Main Street, University Town, ST 12345 123-456-7891 (cell) jtstudent@gmail.com</p> <p><u>Objective:</u> To obtain a research assistant position using strong data analysis, teamwork, and communication skills.</p> <p><u>Education:</u> Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, expected May 2012</p> <p><u>Capabilities and Skills:</u></p> <p><u>Work and Volunteer Experience:</u></p> <p><u>Senior Research Project:</u></p> <p><u>Relevant Coursework:</u></p> <p><u>Extracurricular and Leadership Experience</u></p>
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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, with 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 want to potential employers.
- ❖ Make sure your cell phone voice mail message is 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.¹⁴

BA & Beyond Respondents’ Graduate Fields of Study

Field of Study	Percent
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%

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 for 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.

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 ASA web site: www.asanet.org

“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 on the ASA web page.

“Navigating the Major”

Also available as a free PDF download on the ASA web page, *Navigating the Major* is a guide for undergraduates that covers course selection, research and internships, careers, graduate school and much more.

“The Guide to Graduate Departments”

Available in the ASA 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 website for the exact deadline.

Student membership

You can become a student member of the ASA for as little as \$44 (this price includes a subscription to *Contexts* magazine). As a student member you will receive the Association newsletter, *Footnotes*, a monthly email alert called "Member News and Notes" and a wide variety of other benefits and discounts. 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 web site also includes an extensive list of links to websites that will help you as you explore career options. Look under either "Resources" or "Careers" on the ASA website to access this list of resources.

References and notes

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⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Spalter-Roth, Roberta and Nicole Van Vooren. 2008. *What Are They Doing with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology?* American Sociological Association, Washington DC.

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¹⁰ Spalter-Roth, Roberta and Nicole Van Vooren. 2008.

¹¹ Zimmerman, Bandura, Martinez-Ponz. 1992. "Self-Motivation for Academic Attainment: The Role of Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Personal Goal Setting." *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Autumn): 663-676

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