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#### ABSTRACT

Career experiences of bachelor's degree graduates in sociology at Winona State University (Minnesota) from Spring 1969 to Summer 1979 are documented. A total of 263 from the 416 graduates responded to questions concerning background information, employment experiences immediately following graduation, present employment circumstances, and the relationship between their academic experience and career development. Approximately 80 percent entered the work force in a wide variety of occupations relatively soon after graduation. Personal contact was the most frequently mentioned source of information for the job; only a small percentage used the university placement office. Most graduates expected their degree to be related to specific types of employment. Social service, clerical, and office occupations were predominately filled by female graduates while males were more likely to be employed in administrative positions. A comparison of present job status to first job, however, revealed a tendency for females to move into administrative positions. Most graduates rated their internship as valuable. Overall, general satisfaction with the curriculum was indicated by the fact that more than 7 out of 10 respondents offered positive statements about the curricular features of their major. Most respondents stressed that greater emphasis should be placed on career counseling and academic advising and that academic content of courses should be integrated with potential career choices. (KC)

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MIDWEST SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY MEETING DES MOINES, IOWA 1982

Careers and Curriculum: A Ten-Year Survey of Choices and Changes for Sociology Majors in the 1970's

The survey results presented in this paper focus on the career experiences of B.A./B.S. sociology graduates during the decade of the 1970's. Seen as a period when the job market for college graduates was becoming less and less favorable, a major goal of this study was to try to monitor the career choices and changes experienced by sociology graduates from Winona State University between Spring, 1969 and Summer, 1979. During this time, curricular changes were also made, at least in part, with an eye toward changing job market conditions. Thus, this paper is also an attempt to examine what impact, if any, these changes may have had on our graduates.

Descriptions of the job outlook for liberal arts graduates were the subject of many gloomy media accounts during the 1970's. In general, these accounts created the impression that these graduates were entering the job market with several strikes against them. They were seen, for example, as victims of an unfortunate demographic situation brought about by previously high birth rates which were believed to be at least partly responsible for the observation that, at mid-decade, 13 percent of those aged twenty to twenty-four were unemployed while national unemployment averaged 7.5 percent (Pace, 1980 p. 93). The situation was also viewed as having been further compounded by economic recession and job market shifts which were considered especially acute for college graduates with liberal arts majors because they had majored in areas not directly related to an occupation,

Since the bachelor's degree in sociology is usually considered more of a liberal arts field than a vocational field, growing interest has been demonstrated since the middle 1970's in the career experiences of sociology majors. At Winona State University, this interest took the form of an initial survey of undergraduate majors during 1975-76. The findings of that survey seemed to suggest several ways graduates could be more adequately prepared for careers at the bachelor's degree level. Some of these pointed to a need for curricular adjustments while others seemed to call for additional efforts on the part of the faculty (Stevens and Todd, 1977).

Our initial survey findings were similar in many respects to those obtained in other comparable surveys and our recommendations also touched on concerns expressed by others with regard to tinkering with the curriculum. For example, the finding that the vast majority of our graduates entered the

work force soon after graduation (81 percent within the first seven months) is quite similar to findings reported by others (Lutz, 1979) as was our finding that many of those not accepting immediate employment after graduation had difficulty in finding employment related to their academic training (Green, et.al., 1980). Many of the open ended responses obtained from respondents in the original Winona State survey also closely resembled those obtained in the 1976 survey by Green, et.al., (1980) and revealed a perceived need for more "practical" or immediately "relevant" courses as well as greater assistance in identifying relevant jobs.

One of the possible departmental responses to such concerns would be to modify the curriculum in the direction of making it more applied and courses more immediately relevant. Indeed, this was discussed in an earlier paper (Stevens and Todd, 1977) and was to an extent carried out in subsequent curricular changes made at Winona State University. Green, et.al. (1980), however, have urged caution in making the curriculum less rigorous or more "practical" and have pointed out that there is little "hard" evidence to show that employers are unwilling to employ traditional liberal arts undergraduates and at least one survey of service-oriented agencies (Harris, 1974) has revealed continued strong interest in the traditional academic sociology The same study concluded that it would be impractical to design specific academic programs for the purposes of meeting specific agency needs. Others (Karcher and Karcher, 1979), however, after conducting agency surveys in 1975 and 1978/79, have reported indications for a combination of both the academic and the practical approach while also noting a need for continued evaluation of undergraduate sociology programs in order to better ensure the marketability of undergraduate majors. Campbell, et.al. (1977) have issued a plea for curricular experimentation after noting that, while the curriculum is a major element in the educational process, it has also been one of the most neglected elements.

Concerning ways sociology departments might better help their graduates in preparing for and finding suitable careers, various helpful suggestions have been offered. Mary Lees (1977) has suggested "applied career exploration" through one or more systematically developed approaches such as volunteer experience in human service agencies, field placements in various settings, and in-service training on research projects within the department itself. Charlotte Vaughen (1979) has called attention to the need for more information concerning the range of employment opportunities open to sociology majors. Evidence of the extent to which undergraduate curricula have become more career oriented seems reflected in the finding that more than half (56.9 percent) of 520 U.S. sociology departments with over 1,000 majors were found to have internship programs (Satariano and Rogers, 1979).

More aggressive marketing of sociology to new groups and organizations has also been suggested along with placing a greater emphasis on developing research skills (Brown, 1979). At least one study produced some evidence



of this in the discovery that B.A. sociology majors also having training in business, testing, statistics, research, and program evaluation had good employment prospects in a survey of manufacturing firms employing over 100 people (Reiser and Maiolo, 1979). When examining career alternatives for B.A. sociology majors, Wilkinson (1977) has similarly stressed that these graduates must be prepared for a job market likely to require special skills. Among the skills noted as most likely to yield the widest career options are knowledge of research methods, statistics and computers. Wilkinson has also called attention to the importance of career choices being congruent with training and experience to offset unrealistic expectations, disappointment and job seeking frustration.

Given the observation that sociology majors are likely to be women with vocational goals (Zelan, 1974), the changing occupational opportunities for women during the 1970's are also of interest. The 1975-76 survey of Winond State graduates revealed a clear disparity in the earnings of male and female respondents. Not only were male earnings higher, but males were also found to be occupationally and geographically more mobile than their female classmates. While some of this income differential could be traced to the tendency for some of the female respondents to be in . occupations where wages have historically been low (e.g., office and clerical positions), there is other evidence that females are also at a disadvantage in fields such as social work. A survey of MSW graduates in the early 1970's, for example, found large and significant differences between male and female salaries even when such factors as job tenure, marital status, and part-time employment were controlled (Williams, et.al., 1974). The same study found that men held more administrative positions, that the income gap increased with time since graduation, and that single females were as likely to suffer salary-wise as married women.

### THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

In order to describe the career choices of WSU sociology graduates in light of the changes and challenges they may have experienced during the last decade, a cross-sectional survey of the entire population of sociology majors graduating between Spring, 1969, and Summer, 1979, was attempted. Although these students may have concentrated in one of several options during this period, all, with the exception of eleven Paralegal: Sociology Option majors, would have received their degree in Sociology.

The total number of graduates for the period in question was 416. Using a computerized list of names and addresses from the Alumni Office, a pretested questionnaire consisting of both open and closed ended questions was sent to each of the graduates. A total of 263 (63%) responded with answers to questions concerning background information, employment experiences immediately following graduation, present employment circumstances, and aspects of their academic experience at WSU which they considered helpful and/or not helpful in their career development. Four separate mailings over a five-month périod (January to May, 1980) were conducted to obtain the

final response rate of 63-percent. Although no significant differences were noted between the 263 respondents and the actual population (N=416) in terms of selected characteristics, our inability to adequately compare the respondents with the actual population led to a decision to simply "designate" the respondent group as the "population" and confine our analysis exclusively to descriptive statistics.

### **RESULTS**

### Description of Respondents

A profile of the respondent group (N=263) reveals that approximately 66 percent (N=173) were female, while 34 percent (N $\neq$ 90) were male. Sixtyfour percent (N=169) were married, 30 percent (N=78) were single, and the remaining 6 percent (N=15) were either separated, widowed or divorced.

The median age at the time of graduation was 22 with ages ranging from 20 to 54. General Sociology was the most frequently reported first major with 64.5 percent (N=170) of all respondents. This reflects the fact that at W.S.U. the Sociology major did not become specialized into professional (occupational) tracks such as Social Work or Criminal Justice until 1976-77. Social work was the second most frequently listed first major with 18.3 percent (N=48), followed by Social Science (Sociology Option), Paralegal (Sociology Option) and Criminal Justice.

Psychology was the most popular second major with approximately 23 percent (N=61). Psychology was also the most frequently selected minor with 35 percent (N=92). Thus, 58 percent (N=153) of the respondents either double majored in sociology and psychology or selected psychology as a minor.

Approximately 23 percent (N=60) of all respondents went on to graduate school. Of those attending graduate school, 45 percent (N=27) had completed graduate degrees at the time of the survey. The most frequently reported area of concentration in graduate school was psychology/counseling with 38.3 percent (N=23) of all graduate students. Other areas of graduate study included Law (13%), Social Work or Corrections (13%) and Education (12%). Open-ended responses concerning how adequately their undergraduate education had prepared the respondents for graduate school were generally favorable (81 percent responded positively). The research methods and statistics courses were often mentioned specifically as providing very adequate preparation, although several believed even more in these areas would be desirable. A need for more practical experience at the undergraduate level as a means for grounding the theory at the graduate level was also suggested.

### Employment History

Sixty-two percent (N=163) of all respondents accepted employment immediately



following graduation. Of the approximate 38 percent (N=99) not accepting immediate employment, the four most common reasons cited were: nothing available in the field (21%), didn't seek immediate employment (18%), continuing education (13%), and nothing available (12%).

Seventy-one respondents provided information about the length of time they were unemployed following graduation. Of these, 69 percent (49 of 71) indicated they accepted employment within seven months as seen in Table 1 below. No great differences appear to exist by sex in terms of length of time unemployed.

Table 1
TIME UNEMPLOYED AFTER GRADUATION BY SEX

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	
0-3 Months 4-7 Months 8-11 Months 1 Year, Less than 2 2 Years, Less than 3 3 or more Years	23.8% (5) 38.1% (8) 4.8% (1) 14.3% (3) 14.3% (3) 4.8% (1) 100.0% (21)	34.0% (17) 38.0% (19) 12.0% (6) 12.0% (6) 4.0% (2) 0.0% (0) 100.0% (50)	

Table 2 presents data concerning how respondents became aware of their first job following graduation.

Table 2 SOURCE OF FIRST JOB

Source	· <u>f</u>	· _ %
Personal contact	103	42.0
Newspaper or other advertising	47	19.2
Employment agency	27	11.0
Placement office	16	6.5
Departmental sources	10	4.1
Other	42	17.1
	245	99.9

Consistently over the ten-year period, graduates reported personal contacts as the most important source of information leading to first employment while the efforts of the placement office and sociology department were noted considerably less frequently.

In response to another item on whether the placement office was helpful in finding employment, 14.8 percent (N=39) said "yes," 74.9 percent (N=197) said "no," and 10.3 percent (N=27) did not respond. Open-ended responses to this item indicated that most chose not to use placement services for a variety of reasons. Some examples include: "Didn't know it existed,"



"I did not request assistance," and "Was pretty much just for placing teachers." The vast majority simply chose not to use the service. A need to increase awareness of Placement Office services was observed in earlier research also and these findings do represent a slight percentage increase in usage.

A different questionnaire item also explored the helpfulness of the Sociology Department in finding employment. In response to this item, 18.6 percent (N=49) said the Department was helpful, 71.1 percent (N=187) said it was not and 28.9 percent (N=76) did not respond. Written explanations further clarified the respondents' answers. While most indicated in the closed-ended question that the Sociology Department was not helpful in finding employment, apparently the respondents interpreted that to mean actually locating and securing their first job. Most of the eighty open-ended responses were favorable concerning the Departmental faculty providing helpful hints for interviewing; resume writing, Civil Service testing, aiding in identifying personal. strengths and weaknesses, and providing encouragement and support. Others, however, indicated they were not aware of or had not considered the Department as a possible source of help.

While departmental and placement office efforts are appropriate and necessary, it seems even more evident that student advising should alert majors to the importance of cultivating relationships with potential employers, perhaps in conjunction with volunteer experiences, field placements or internships.

Factors which influenced the decision to accept one's first job following graduation were also examined. Table 3 below shows that obtaining a job relevant to one's academic training and the geographical location of the job rank ahead of considerations such as financial benefits, location of spouse, and opportunity for advancement.

Table 3
RANKING OF FACTORS AFFECTING DECISION TO ACCEPT FIRST JOB

		,	•			
Rank	Academic Training	Geographical Location	Financial Benefits	Spouse's Location	Opportunity for Advancement	<u>Other</u>
Rank 1st	65	54	42	28	. 13	45
	(34.6%)	(26.7%)	(22.7%)	(23.3%)	(8.0%)	(49.5%)
2nd	. 29	83	42	21	. 23	6
	(15.4%)	(41.1%)	(22.7%)	(17.5%)	(14.2%)	(6.6%)·
3rd	27 -	41	51	20	. 39	11
	(14.4%)	(20.3%)	(27.6%)	(16,7%)	(24.1%)	(12.1%)
4th	33	21	32	17	47	5
	(17.6%)	(10.4%)	(17.3%)	(14.2%)	(29.0%)	(5.5%)
5th .	31	3	15	24	36	5
~	(16.5%)	(1.5%)	(8.1%)	(20,0%)	(22.2%)	(5.5%)
бth	3	, 0	3	10 .	4	19
70741	(1.6%)	(0.0%)	(1.6%)	(8.3%)	(2.5%)	(20.1%)
TOTAL	,-	202	185	120	162	91
	(75 N.R.)	(61 N.R.)	(78 N.R.)	(143 N.R.)	(101 N.R.)	(172 N.R.)

One could speculate that after laboring for four years in college, a student may be expecting a payoff in terms of a job that is closely related to his/her training and is less concerned with, or aware of, the more long-range issues of financial benefits and advancement. It might also be reasoned that sociology majors are a self-selected group who are cipate obtaining a job they enjoy rather than, one which pays immediate or significant financial or advancement rewards.

Table 4 presents data concerning whether the respondent's first job was part-time or full-time.

Table 4
SEX BY FIRST JOB BEING PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME

	<u>Male</u> '	<u>Female</u>
Job Status	•	,
Part-time · '	7	21
Full-time	(8.4%) <b>76</b>	(13.6%) 133
<del></del>	(91.6%)	(86.4%)
TOTALS	83	154
**	(100.0%)	(100.0%)

As may be seen, fully 88 percent (209 of 237) of the respondents indicated their first jobs were full-time; 12 percent (28 of 237) reported accepting part-time employment for their first job following graduation. Although the difference is not great, it may be seen that a larger percentage of females are employed part-time.

The types of first employment (both full and part-time) have been categorized and appear in Table 5.

Table 5
SEX.BY TYPE OF FIRST JOB

Job Type	· · · ·	<u>lale</u>	Sex Female
Social Service Administrative Office and clerical Service Occupations Sales Occupations Education Other (construction,	15 22 5 9 7 4	18.3 26.8 6.1 11.0 8.5 4.9	7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7
transportation, technical, repair, health, communications) TOTALS,	20 82	24.4 100.0	. 14 8.8 160 100.1

N = 242 of 263

N.R. = 2



One may note concentrations of both males and females in the Social Service and Administrative categories along with a concentration of females in Office and Clerical positions as well as in Education.

The annual salaries received by the respondents for first full-time employment are presented below in Table 6.

Table 6
FIRST FULL-TIME JOB INCOME BY SEX

•		•	Se	x	3
Income		Ņ	lale .	<del></del>	male
•		f	%	f_	<del></del> %
<b>≤</b> 4,999		2.	2.6	20	15.3
5,000-6,999		10	13.2	37	28.2
7,000-8,999	`;	28 '	36.8	39	29.8
9,000-10,999		17	22.4	•21	16.0
11,000-12,999		9	11.8	10	7.6.
<u>≥13,000</u>		10	13.2	4	3.1
TOTALS		76	100.0	131 .	100.0

As may be seen, there is a considerable difference by sex in terms of entry level salaries. While about 16 percent (N=12) of the males earned less than \$7,000, fully 43.5 percent (N=57) of the females earned that amount.

The larger percentage of men in higher income categories may perhaps be accounted for by the larger proportion of males in Administrative and Other occupational categories. Women tend to be more concentrated in Social Service, Office and Clerical, and Education categories which are traditionally not highly paid positions, especially at the entry level.

Data were also examined, although not presented here, on first job income by sex by year graduated. The analysis revealed no substantial change in first income by sex or year graduated, although patterns in the data were difficult to detect given the low number of frequencies in each cell (See Appendix A).

Table 7 below summarizes data concerning whether the respondents' first job was the kind of work they expected at the time of graduation.

.Table 7
WAS YOUR FIRST JOB FOLLOWING GRADUATION
WHAT YOU EXPECTED AT THE TIME YOU GRADUATED?

•	_ f	%
Yes	116	44.1
No	121	46.0
No response TOTALS	26	9 <b>.9</b>
TOTALS	263	100.0



These responses were also analyzed by year of graduation. The data revealed no clear pattern showing whether more recent graduates were any more or less likely to obtain first employment consistent with their expectations.

The respondents were asked to explain themselves further if they had answered that their first job was not what they expected at the time they graduated. Their responses were, as expected, wide ranging and therefore difficult to categorize. Many indicated they simply didn't know what to expect. As one graduate put it, "I think my expectations were idealistic." Such expectations as these may be related to the lack of life experience that the student exposes him/herself to or that he/she is provided with through their academic experience.

Other respondents who had obtained employment in the human service field apparently still did not expect to do the specific type of work they were doing despite the fact that it was in their field. One respondent put it this way, "I wanted a case worker position; the job market was tight so I settled for the Mental Health position im Texas." And another of our graduates said, "I hadn't planned on working with MR [mentally retarded] individuals; I had planned on working for social services as a SW [social worker]." Apparently, at least for several respondents, one's first job expectations are not met unless one obtains employment in precisely the type of position that one first set out to secure.

Still other respondents had prepared and anticipated employment in one field and found themselves in a wholly different one. "I wanted to pursue a career in alcoholic rehabilitation--ended up in an investment office environment," was one graduate's observation. And, of course, we heard from one sardonic soul who said, "Lumber does not seem to relate to the social work field." The match between academic training, student career expectations and the reality following graduation seems clearly to be an issue that needs to be addressed explicitly at some point during the student's academic career.

The sizeable percentage (46%) whose expectations were not met raise some questions about the assumed sophistication of graduating seniors in terms of career plans and expectations. Do emerging graduates have a defineable set of expectations about their careers? If they do, to what extent are they realistic expectations? If they do not, what role does or should the faculty, the department and the university play in helping to define and/or clarify these expectations?

Information was also gathered about the respondents' present job circumstances. Table 8 presents categorized data on the type of job presently held by sex (See Appendix C for Present Job Titles).

Table 8
PRESENT JOB STATUS BY SEX

•	<u>-Ma</u>	le Se		nale
Social Service Administrative	. 13 26	16.7 33.3	50 30	34.7 20.8
Office and Clerical Service	5 10 .	6.4	720 17	13.9
Sales Other	· 9	11.5 ° 19.2	<sup>5</sup> <sub>22</sub> .	3. <b>5</b> 1 <b>5.3</b>
TOTALS	78	99.9	144	100.0

N = 222/263 N.R. = 41

Comparing Table 8 with Table 5, one may observe that the Social Service and Administrative categories continue to be the most frequently entered occupational categories with the same differences by sex noted in the Social Service category (more females in social service than males). Contrary to Table 5, however, a considerably greater number and percentage of females are now employed in Administrative type jobs and a somewhat smaller number in the Office and Clerical category. No apparent changes among males are noted in terms of their distribution across the occupational categories listed.

Table 9 shows the annual earnings of respondents in present full-time jobs by sex.

Table 9
PRESENT FULL-TIME JOB INCOME BY SEX

Income		<u> </u>	<u>ex</u> _ `	
- TICOME	ŧ,	WIE ,	<u> </u>	male _
<b>≤</b> 4,999	. 0	/-	*	<del>- 7</del>
<b>5,000-6,999</b>	ĭ	1.3	7	5.8
7,000-8,999	4	5.1	23	19.2
9,000-10,999	, 8	10.1	9	. 7.5
11,000-12,999	J 8	10.1	32	26.7
13,000-14,999	12	15.2	19	15.8
15,000-16,999	9	11.4	14	11.7
17,000-18,999	11	13.,9	7	5.8
19,000-20,999	6.	7.6	2.	1.7
21,000-22,999	9	11.4	4.	3.3
23,000-24,999	2	2.5	2	1.7
<u>≥25,000</u> TOTALS	9	11.4	0	0
IUINE2	79	100.0	120	100.0

As seen in the above table, the incomes for both males and females have improved markedly over their entry level salaries (see Table 6 as a comparison). However, similar to the pattern observed with first job

incomes, males are eatning more than females. The median income category for males is \$15,000-16,999, while for females it is \$11,000-12,999. This is a difference of \$4,000 between the midpoints of the two income intervals.

Further analysis of present income by sex by year graduated showed, as would be expected, that earlier graduates are earning more than more recent graduates. Although incomes increased, differences in incomes by sex over the ten-year period were found to persist (See Appendix B).

Some respondents, mostly females, were presently working part-time. Table 10 below shows part-time and full-time employment by sex.

Table 10
PRESENT JOB PART OR FULL-TIME BY SEX

Job Status	Ma	<u>le</u>	· <u>Sex</u> F	ema 1 e
Part-time Full-time	- <del>f</del> - <del>1</del> 3 - 79	3.7 96.3	<u>f</u> 23 122	15.9 84.1
TOTALS	82	100.0	45 [رنب	100.0
•	N' = 227	N	.R. = 36	•

As the above table shows, females are employed part-time with greater frequency than males in this population. Overall, 11.4 percent (26 of 227) were employed part-time and 88.6 percent (201 of 227) were employed full-time at the time of the survey.

Finally, regarding present job circumstances, information was gathered about whether the respondent was doing the kind of work he/she expected at the time of graduation. Table 11 reveals a pattern similar to that seen earlier in Table 7.

Table 11

ARE YOU PRESENTLY IN THE KIND OF WORK YOU EXPECTED
AT THE\*TIME YOU GRADUATED?

••	<u>f</u> .	
Yes	99	37.6
No . '	140	53.2
No response TOTALS	24	9.1
TOTALS	263	99.9

Again, in the open-ended comments that followed, a large number and percentage of graduates indicated they were in positions they did not expect to be in at the time of graduation. It is noteworthy to observe

that an even greater number of the respondents believe this way about their present job than was true for their first job experience. Explanations are speculative but the data suggest that much more emphasis needs to be placed on efforts to facilitate greater clarification of career goals for a great many undergraduate majors.

### The Relationship of Academic Preparation to Work Experience

A final area of study concerned the relationship of certain features of the respondent's academic preparation to work experiences. One issue concerns the role of internships as desireable preparation for employment.

Of those studied, 63.9 percent (N=168) completed an internship as part of their degree, 34.2 percent (N=90) did not, and 1.9 percent (N=5) did not respond. The W.S.U. Sociology Department made a full-time (40 hours per week for one academic quarter) internship a part of the required curriculum for majors concentrating in Social Work and Criminal Justice beginning with the 1976-77 academic catalog.

More importantly, when asked whether they found their internship to be beneficial to their work experience since graduation, 79 percent (131 of 166) of those responding said "yes" while 21 percent (35 of 166) said "no." Although it is hardly startling to learn that most believe their internship to be beneficial to their work, it is nevertheless informative to know which parts of the academic experience are evaluated most favorably.

Respondents were also asked to explain their answers to this question in more detail. Of the 135 written responses to this item, 88.8 percent (N=120) were positive statements about the value of internships. Some of the more common themes emerging from these favorable responses were that the internship was directly related to present employment, that the experience provided general but nonetheless useful background, that it provided an avenue for employment, that it helped focus one's career goals, that it helped to develop professional and other interpersonal skills, and that it was a good source of contacts. Eleven graduates (8.2%) with negative statements about their internships indicated that their internship experiences did not relate to subsequent work experiences.

Another issue of interest was whether graduates in tally become employed in an occupational area related to their choice of major. Table 12 presents data relevant to this issue.



Table 12 FIRST JOB CATEGORY BY FIRST MAJOR

	First Major					*
First job Category		Soc S.W.	Soc C.J.	Soc C.C.	S.S Soc.	Paral Soc.
Office	23 (14.8%)	4	(30/04)	0	1	-3
Admin.	25	(8.5%)	(18.2%)	(0.0%)	(7.1%) · 2	(27.3%) . 6
Service	(16.1%) 13	(6.4%)	(36,4%) 4	(0.0%) 1	_ (14.3%) 3	(54.5%) <sub>1</sub>
Sales	(8.4%)	(6.4%) -2	(36.4%) <sub>.</sub> 0	(25.0%) 1	(21.4%) 3	(9.1%)
Social	(5.8%) × 3 46	(4.3%) 26	(0.0%) I	(25.0%) 2	(21.4%) ,	(0,0%)
Service	(29.7%)	(55.3%)	(9.1%)	(50.0%)	(28.6%)	(9.1%)
Other	39 <sup>.</sup> (25.2%)	' 9 (19.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 -	(7.24)	0
TOTALS	155 (100.0%)	47 (100.0%)	(99.9%)	(0.0%) 4 (100.0%)	(7.1%) 14 (100.0%)	(0.0%) 11 (99.9%)

The above table shows that for each category of majors there is considerable diversity in first employment job categories. A large number and percentage of General Sociology and Social Work majors go into social service work. "Office/Clerical," "Administrative," and "Other" occupational groupings also contain large numbers of General Sociology majors. No other clear patterns appear evident.

Thus, it might be concluded that while a student's major does influence the occupation in which he/she is first employed, there is also a considerable amount of variation (opportunity) in occupational categories not usually thought of as "traditional" areas of employment for sociology majors. The stereotype of social work as the primary employment area or, failing that, sales work, seems inaccurate, uninformed and unwarranted on the basis of what this data suggests.

A third issue that was explored focused on the identification of sociology courses that respondents thought were most and least valuable in their work experiences. As perhaps should have been anticipated, the data obtained proved difficult to interpret since almost every course was identified as both "most valuable" and "least valuable" by different groups. Also, the risk of the data being more of measure of the popularity of a course than its usefulness is a real one and contributes to the difficulty in making confident interpretations and conclusions.

Nevertheless, courses viewed as either most or least valuable were categorized to facilitate interpretation. Table 13 below presents data concerning courses deemed most valuable to the respondent's work experience.



Table 13
COURSE CATEGORIES DEEMED MOST VALUABLE TO WORK EXPERIENCE

	f	oy.
Theory, Methods,	<del></del>	
Statistics courses	19	7.2
Social Work courses	21	. –
Criminal Justice courses		8.0
General Sociology electives	- 12	4.6
Two or more of above	47	17.9
ing of mote of 900A6		
categories .	71	27.0
Miscellaneous	18	6.8
No Response	75	28.5
TOTALS	<del>-, 000</del>	
,	<b>~ 203</b>	100.0

As may be seen, while the category of "General Sociology Electives" was seen by approximately 18 percent (N=47) as being most valuable, the majority selected either two or more of the categories listed or did not respond. Clearly, this categorization was not as helpful as had been hoped.

Perhaps the most useful, or at least most interesting, information pertaining to courses deemed most valuable came from the open-ended statements themselves. There were several statements that reflected a belief that the sociology courses taken were of little or no use in relation to their work experiences. Statements such as the following are illustrative: "As far as my work experiences go, my sociology classes have not proved useful. I am not in a field where I have to rely on a sociology background," or, "In the type of work I've been doing, I haven't had much opportunity to use many at all."

The majority of respondents, however, (71.5%, N=188) made positive statements about various courses or specific features of their academic major. Perhaps the most common themes distilled from the variety of positive comments had to do with how the sociology major (be it liberal or career track) benefited them by providing a general understanding of social life that was useful in a variety of work settings, or by providing specific education and skills training in a particular career track (social work or criminal justice). The following comment illustrates the first of these themes:

I have trouble picking the most valuable [course] because they all had value. Although I didn't seek employment in the field, I do work in a field where you deal a lot with people. Classes on the family, crime, law and human behavior in general have helped me to better understand the people I have worked with.

The second theme emerges from a person who pursued a particular career track in his sociology degree. The respondent stated:



Since much of my work is with law enforcement persons, the criminology and juvenile delinquency courses have been most helpful. Theory and Method helps with the deluge of statistics, and [the] social work courses come back to me during my contacts with many kinds of people.

Table 14 presents data from respondents on the courses they deemed least valuable to their work experiences.

Table 14 COURSE CATEGORIES DEEMED LEAST VALUABLE TO WORK EXPERIENCE

Theory, Methods,	<u>f</u>	
Statistics courses -	43	16.3
Social Work courses	11	4.2
Criminal Justice courses	- 11	4.2
General Sociology electives	39	14.8
Two or more of above	_	. ^
categories	11	4.2
Miscellaneous \	5	1.9
No response	142	54.0
TOTALS	·263	100.0

It is important to note the large number of nonrespondents to this question (142 of 263 or 54%). Consequently, we are cautious about the meaning of these findings.

Taking the results at face value, however, it appears that 46 percent (N=121) of the respondents felt one or more courses to be of little value to their work experiences. The two course categories that stood out in this regard were the Theory, Methods, and Statistics sequence (N=43 or 16.3%) and General Sociology Electives (N=39 or 14.8%).

The open ended explanations were less helpful for curriculum revision purposes because respondents most often simply indicated that a particular course was not valuable because it did not relate to their work. No insight was gained about why such courses were of little value. Typical of the responses here were ones like, "Most definitely that research and theory class (I can't recall the exact title). The one with that awful, long project we had to do!"

This questionnairs item also tended to produce a set of quite strongly worded responses about courses deemed least valuable. Given the large number of nonrespondents, it seems reasonable to speculate that those responding were graduates with very clear and negative attitudes about certain courses. It remains unclear whether such attitudes were the result of a particular course actually having little value in their work or for themselves personally, or resulted from certain courses (especially the theory, research methods and statistics courses) being more demanding and therefore perhaps less popular.



At face value, however, it appears that for a large minority of our graduates, the courses in theory, research methods and statistics as well as certain general sociology electives are considered to be of little value in the work-a-day world. Perhaps what is indicated is that more emphasis needs to be placed on making these courses more clearly relevant to a broader range of students: It is also important to note once again that a much higher number and percentage of the graduates (N=188 or 71.5%) identified courses as "most valuable" than identified courses as "least valuable" (N=121 or 46%). This is interpreted here to mean that more graduates consider their coursework as beneficial in their work and to themselves than consider their coursework to be of little or no benefit.

A final area of interest examined in this study focused on the suggestions of our graduates concerning ways the Sociology Department could improve its course offerings and career planning efforts. Major themes were again developed based on the open ended responses, and then each response was categorized in order to facilitate interpretation. These are summarized in Table 15.

# Table 15 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING COURSE OFFERINGS OR CAREER PLANNING EFFORTS

<u>Theme</u>	f	
Emphasize career counseling along with academic advising	52	3
Incorporating field experience (volunteer work, internships, tours) throughout one's academic career in one's major	44	ų.
More specialized (narrow), practical, skill-oriented type courses	37	<i>;</i>
Bring in outside speakers (experts) who world in field to speak in classes	12	
More experiential learning along with the theory introduced in courses	10	•
Encourage atudents to take complimentary courses outside sociology (e.g., writing, speaking, psychology, economics, business, etc.)	, o	
Miscellaneous	69	· ·

Virtually all of the themes (and supporting comments) center around the perception that courses and career planning efforts should reflect a career emphasis. The desire for experiential learning and practical skill oriented courses that are grounded in the real world comes through clearly.



### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Several points seem evident from the findings presented in this paper. Some of these pertain to the nature of the labor market open to B.A./B.S. Sociology graduates while others have to do with the training needs of those who enter that market.

Perhaps the most noteworthy finding of this study is the discovery that during the last decade approximately four out of every five of the respondents entered the work force in a wide variety of occupations and professions relatively soon after graduation. Their perceptions of their academic preparation for employment along with the nature and type of employment available to them suggest several implications for undergraduate programs.

It is also important to point out, however, that some twenty-three percent of the graduates surveyed went on to graduate school; and nearly half of these had completed graduate degrees at the time of this survey. Overall, these respondents indicated they were very well prepared for graduate study even though they often did their graduate work in areas other than sociology. They specifically mentioned such courses as research methods and statistics as helpful in their graduate study while also expressing the view that more practical experience at the undergraduate level would have been beneficial as well.

Although the vast majority sought and found jobs during the last decade, several reported difficulty in finding employment related to their major. While two-thirds of these graduates were female, there is little evidence that sex was related to the length of time it took to find first employment after graduation.

The manner in which respondents learned of their first job remained fairly constant over the decade with personal contacts being the most frequently mentioned source of information leading to first employment. There was a slight tendency for recent graduates to mention the University Placement Office and Departmental Sources more frequently but these percentages remained small. Increased, though informal, efforts on the part of several faculty members and stepped-up activity by the Placement Office to serve the Liberal Arts major may account for this observation. However, there is clearly room for much fibre to be done in this area. In addition to whatever steps might be taken, it seems vital for students to be made aware of the importance of personal contacts with respect to employment. Among the implications of this finding may be a need to explore ways of structuring opportunities for such contacts into the curriculum.

Since finding a job related to one's academic training was found to rank ahead of any other single factor in deciding to accept their first job, it seems important to recognize that sociology graduates expect their degree to be related to certain specific types of employment. An indication that these same graduates may not have a very adequate picture of the employment opportunities available to them is the finding that close to half reported that neither their first job nor their present job

was what they expected to be doing upon graduation. In order to minimize unrealistic expectations and job seeking frustration, much more information about career options and training requirements needs to be obtained and communicated to undergraduate students.

Although sex was not found to be related to the length of time from graduation to first employment, it was clearly related to both first and present job income; and there was little evidence that this pattern had changed much over time. While concentrations of both males and females were found in social service and administrative positions, social service along with office and clerical occupations were predominantly female while males were more likely to be found in administrative positions. The data do seem to show, however, a tendency for females to move into administrative positions as reflected by a comparison of their present job status with first job. Thus, while sex role stereotypes with respect to career choices may not have changed as much as some might think during the last decade, it also seems important to point out that sex may have declined somewhat as an obstacle to career mobility.

When examining the curriculum, one feature which stood out in our data was the importance of the internship. Nearly two-thirds of all respondents were found to have taken an internship, and most of these evaluated their experience favorably. The major reasons for this favorable response, as far as could be determined from open ended comments, seem to be related either to the immediate relevance of the internship to their present employment or to its usefulness in developing professional and interpersonal skills, focusing career goals, and providing a source of personal Interestingly, the relatively small number (8%) of respondents. making negative statements about their internships also did so mainly in regard to their work experience. It could not be determined from our data whether this may have been because the internship itself was inadequate or because these were among the many respondents who found themselves working in fields they had not expected to be in earlier as students. In any case, it seems clear that the internship is one component of the sociology curriculum which does pretty much what it was intended to do. Although it could be argued that it should not be used for career exploration, it nonetheless seems to be a very appropriate and beneficial requirement for students with an applied orientation (e.g., Social Work and Criminal Justice) as well as a potentially valuable elective for the General Sociology major. The fact that it was also considered helpful in clarifying career goals seems to suggest a need to provide some type of field experience explicitly for this purpose earlier in a student's academic career.

The picture was found to be much less clear for other courses in the curriculum. Virtually every course was identified as both "most valuable" and "least valuable" by some of the respondents relative to their work experience. Overall, general satisfaction with the curriculum seems indicated by the fact that more than seven out of every ten respondents offered positive statements about the curricular features of their major.



As previously noted, these statements tend to reveal satisfaction with both the liberal arts features of the curriculum and/or with its applied career oriented dimensions. Gourses in theory, research methods, and statistics were likely to be among the ones identified by a large minority of the respondents as being "least valuable" in their work experience. The implications of this are difficult to assess since other (though fewer) respondents in similar careers rated these same courses as "most valuable" and existing literature suggests that these are likely to be among the very courses providing skills yielding the widest career options.

There are implications in our findings for departments such as our own which train students at the bachelor's degree level only. Seen in light of our other findings, the various suggestions offered by former students themselves as summarized in Table 15 deserve to be considered seriously in that they reflect the challenges encountered by sociology majors entering the changing job market of the past decade.

The finding that so many of these graduates entered such diverse areas of employment relatively soon after graduation provides an indication that a sociology major can be both flexible and marketable. The additional observation that graduates in the late 70's fared no worse than earlier graduates seems to provide evidence that the sociology major has perhaps not been as adversely affected by the diminishing job market as other liberal arts areas. With this in mind, the following suggestions seem pertinent:

- Undergraduate sociology majors need to be made aware of these findings and the range of opportunities available to them.
- 2. Greater emphasis should be placed on career counseling and academic advising in order to help assess career expectations and make them congruent with training and experience.
- 3. In curriculum matters, it would appear prudent that we face up to the fact that students expect their coursework to be relevant to jobs at the end of their academic career. This does not, however, seem to call for a radical revision of the traditional curruculum-perhaps only greater attention needs to be given to integrating the academic content of existing courses with potential career choices.

The extent to which curricular changes in the 1980s should be influenced by the career choices of sociology graduates in the 1970s is open to discussion. It seems likely, however, that sociology majors will continue to expect their undergraduate degree to be relevant to future careers.

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Present Job (1980) N=225

IBM

Job Title Health Facilities Evaluator Administrative Specialist Resident Claim Representative G.L. Bookkeeper--NCR Operator Licensing Worker Construction Worker Coordinator, Environmental Activities NSP Research Associate Purchasing Agent & Inspector Family Planning Clinic Asst. Director of Soc. Serv. Youth Bureau Director Wai tress Teacher Counselor & Child Care Worker Senior Child Care Case Worker Fire Paramedic Nutrition Director Project Director Coordinator Medical Soc. Worker Bookkeeper Financial Asst. Supervisor Marketing specialist Messenger (Page) Sales & Stock Dir. of Human Resources Budget Analyst (GS-7) Coordinator of Staples Tri-County Dental Program Staff Nurse Manager (Security) Teacher Self-employed Day Care Ins. Agent Medical Soc. Worker Training & Dev. Specialist Mental Health Counselor Head Nurse Ins. Underwriting Supervisor Loan Processor Title I Aide . Parole Agent Clinical Social Worker

Sales Engineer

Employer/Agency Minn. Dept. of Health

St. Paul Co., Inc. Bank of America Olmsted Cnty. Dept. of Social Services Peterson Blacktopping Upper Great Plains Transportation Regal Modular Homes Family Tree Pine Haven, Inc. Ontario County Zach's Winona Heights Academy

Hiawatha Children Home Mower Cnty. Welfare Chicago Fire Dept. SEMCAC Coulee Region Family Planning Ctr., Inc. Delmark, Inc. West Sub Hospital Gentleman's Quarters Dakota County Econ. Assist. IDS, Inc. Assembly/Sargeant at Arms Dana's MGIC Fed. Govt. Dept. of Navy Staples Public Schools

Winona Cnty. Public Health Nursing Northwestern Memorial Hospital Mesa Pub. Schools

Self-employed Abbott-Northwestern Hospital Cntr. of Continuing Education Mid-America Publishing Riveredge Hospital Veteran's Hospital. Marsh & McLennan Midland Mortgage Co. K-m schools State of Minnesota Mental Health Clinic Children's Hlth. Ctr. Cherry Burrell

Job Title Graduate. Assist. Police Officer Sales Rep. Soc. Rehab. Counselor Program Analyst & Devl. . Houseparent Part-time labor Med. So. Worker Social Worker Realtor ·Teacher Voc. Rehab. Counselor Soc. Worker Vocational Rehab. Counselor Dispatcher Volunteer Co-ordinator Social Worker Child Care Counselor Resident Service Director Trooper-Law Enforcement Case Aide Worker Secretary Social Worker Social Worker Social Worker II Active Records Analyst Staff Assist. Social Worker Insurance Underwriter Teacher Assist. Reg. Factory Worker Counseldr. Student Psychiatric Co-Therapist Voc. Rehab. Counseling Associate Director Drummer Fin. Assist. Spec. Co-director/Jail Program director PB4 Admitting, Data Receiving Cashier Police Officer Insurance Coordinator Child Protection Social Worker Misc. Probation Officer Youth Minister Field Counselor Personnel Officer Medical Social Worker Personnel Supervisor No Job Title Reported Comm. Correct Aide

Employer/Agency
Northern Ill. Univ.
City of Mound
Schmid, Randolph, Mass
DVR
Semcac
Univ. of S. D.
Riverside Group Home

St. Joe's Hospital Olmsted County Realty World Public Schools Pleasant Hill Care Center State of Minnesota IBM->. Adopt-A-Grandparent Children's Aid Society . Minn. Sheriffs Boys' Ranch Cokato Manor, Inc. State Highway Patrol Winona Marriage & Family Counseling Univ. of Minnesota Dodge City Dept. of Social Services Buffalo County Day Activity Center Waseca County Social Service United Methodist Board of Pensions U. S. Senate ~Semcac John H. Crowther Whiting School System Winona Industries Group Homes/Winona Law School Mayo Clinic State Service for the Blind Minn.-Wisc. Boundary Area Commission Short Notice Band Winona Co. Social Services Sanctuary, Inc./Winona Co. L. E. C. Comm. Mem. Hosp. Mesa Police Department Stanley Miller & Assoc. Wabasha Co. DSS Southern Minn. Sugar Court Services St. Francis Church Semcac Minn. Dept. of Transportation Lutheran Hospital c A.T. & T. Semcac

Rămsey County Juvenile Detention Center

## BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Job Title Resident Director · Outreach Fuel WorkerI Drug & Alcohol Abuse Program Specialist Command Admin. Assist. Social Worker I Account Manager Social Worker Teacher Dept. Manager No Job Title Given Child Care Worker Cust. Serv. Mgr. Elem. Teacher Psychometrist Counselor Counselor Caseworker Electronics Tech. Head Nurse Cook Principal, Consulting, Firm .R.N. Civil Service Test Examiner Child Care Counselor II Housing Supervisor . Deputy Jailer Inventory Control Teacher/Coordinator (Spec. Ed) Teacher P. O. I. Store Manager Teller #1 Sales Person Underwriter No Job Title Given Director of Social Services Regional Editor Social Worker Laborer Bartender Police School Liaison Prog. Director Manager Social Worker Computer Input Operator Part-time bookkeeper Clerk Financial Aide Counselor Salesman Programmer/Analyst Office Clerk/Sales Clerk Bookkeeper/Sec. Corrections YETP Field Counselor

Employer/Agency Eckerd Wilderness Foundation NEIA Com. Action Department of Human Services

Fed. Govt. Houston County Social Services : General Foods Corp. Home of Good Shepard N YMCA Donaldson's St. Paul Post Office St. Joseph's Home For Children Memorex Osseo, MN Zumbro Valley Hental Health Center ST. Ann's Residence Group Homes of Winona Winona Co. Social Services Lake Center Industry ST. Mary's Hospital Blue Moon Self Winona County Sheriff Fairview Southdale Hospital U. S. Govt.. Minn. Sheriff's Ranches, Inc. Semcac Winona County Sheriff's Department GMC Truck Center Rochester Public Schools Yonkers' Board of Education Washington County Court Services Wallins West Hormel Credit Union Penney's Lewis-Thompson Agency Municipal Court Crystal Care Center Mankato Free Press Ramsey Nursing Home Brunkow Hardwood Theo's Pub Wabasha Sheriff TSC (Tractor Supply Co.) ST. Therese Hospital Northern City National Bank Cherokee Bank Republic Airlines **UW-LaCrosse** Larson & Quinn Olmsted County Courthouse J. C. Penney McCune--Dickinson Ins. Olmsted County Sheriff Semcac

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Job Title Probation & Parole Agent Nursing Assist. Volunteer Service Coordinator Check-out Assist. Manager Senior Citizen Director School Psychologist Sales Leader (Shaklle) Electronic Assembly Teacher Energy Crisis Assistance Supervisor Communications/Receptionist Assist. Credit Manager Food Service Superivisor Attorney Customer Service Rep. Cook Program Coordinator EMR Senior High Teacher Nutritionist Assistant Salesman Owner Secretary Safety Coordinator Service Center Rep. (Cashier Clerk) Program Director Employment Counselor Quality Control Inspector Office Manager Personnel Management Specialist Personnel Director-Community/Home Care Serv. Prog. Dept. Assist./Acctng. Dept. Counselor Correctional Service Officer in Max. Security Prison for Criminally Insane Indust. Engineering Mgr. Secretary--Office Manager \* Social Worker, Child Protection Counselor LSW (Foster Care) Houseparent Adjuster Acct. Mgr. Estate Planning Consultant Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Voc. Rehab. Counselor

Paralegal
Systems Coordinator
Marketing Mgmt. Trainee
Child Care Counselor
Claim Representative

Employer/Agency L. State of Wisconsin St. John's Hospital Winona County Dept. of Social Services LaCrosse K-Mart City of <u>Nin</u>ona Fale-Ettrick-Trempealeau School District Self EMD Tech. Pipestone Day Care Center None Given Lend Lease Camera Art Comm. Mem. Hospital Department of Revenue Richfield Bank & Trust Sambos MBW on Center Albert Lea Public Schools Citizens Action Commission Gerard Reality Spiess Stained & Leaded Glass IBM City of Allentown Hennepin County Fin. Div. State of Minnesota Peck, Inc. Ptototype Prod. & Machin Veterans Admin. (Med. Ctr.) Manufacturing Business

ORC Industries United Bldg. Centers Group Homes of Winona Arizona State Dept. of Corrections

Crenlo, Inc. Pat's Carpet Winona Cty, Social Services Regional Youth & Fam. Services DARE Family Services Monroe Cty. Shelter Care GAB Business Services Lake Ctr. Industries Western Life Ins. Co. Mayo Clinic. Louisiana Off. of Human Development Div. of Voc. Rehab. Geno Courier (None given) Nobile Chemical Crisis Homes Aetna Casualty

Job Title Claims Adjuster Liability Claims Examiner Legal Assistant Criminal Investigator Child Care Worker Commercial Prop. Underwriter Social Worker Paralegal-Probate Law Living Unit Counselor Houseparent Couns. Medical Social Worker Investigator Emergency Staff Wkr. Marketing Manager Correctional Counselor Assist. Unit Manager 💌 Social Work Conciliation Court Paralegal Para legal Field Counselor No Job title given

Employer/Agency Sentry Ins. Carriers Ins. Co. Doherty, Rumble & Butler Mpls. City Attorney L'Chaim Shelter Caum & Forster Ins. Marinuka Manor Nursing Home Schlagel, Legler, Nelson & Rosenblad Laura Baker School Home Away Mayo Clinic Minn. Attorney General Riverside Group Home Coven America Stillwater Prison Lincoln Correctional Ctr. Olmsted Cty. Clerks Office Olson, Trapp & Safronoff SENCAC, Inc. Ability Building Ctr.