

Sociology Department

ASSESSMENT REPORT ACADEMIC YEAR 2017 – 2018

LOGISTICS & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

Evelyn Rodriguez, Chair of Sociology Department

2. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor program.

No

Mission Statement:

In the Department of Sociology, students learn to apply sociological frameworks to their everyday lives and to "real world" social problems. They will critically examine social patterns and inequalities and will develop sociological perspectives to become engaged participants in this globalized world. Our program equips students with the tools to challenge interlocking systems of oppression and privilege and build just societies as advocates, policymakers, activists, and scholars.

3. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2017? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current PLOs below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.

No

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

1. Sociology majors should be able to analyze critically social practices, structures, and inequalities, such that the student will be able to:
 - a. Define, give examples of, and use meaningfully at least six of the following: culture; status; role; norms; deviance; social structure; social class; social mobility; social change; socialization; stratification; institutions; race; social class; ethnic group; gender.

- b. Identify both macrosociological and microsociological aspects of social life, and discuss examples of these from at least one substantive area of sociology; and describe at least two “intersections” of structural inequalities.
 - c. Describe inequalities at the regional, international, and/or global levels of analysis.
 2. Sociology majors should be able to discuss, differentiate, and apply major sociological theories, frameworks and traditions, such that the student will be able to:
 - a. Describe, compare, and contrast basic theoretical orientations, such as functionalism, conflict theories, and interactionism.
 - b. Describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.
 3. Sociology majors should be able to formulate, conduct, and communicate independent social research, such that the student will be able to:
 - a. Describe, compare, and contrast basic methodological approaches for gathering sociological data, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.
 - b. Design, implement, and convey data findings in writing for a research study in an area of choice and explain why various decisions were made, including sampling, variables, measures, methods of data collection, and data analysis.
 - c. Use computerized and online databases to find published sociological research and critically assess a published research report in an area of choice.
 4. Sociology majors should be able to connect sociological analysis to practical social action, such that the student will be able to:
 - a. Explain the implications for the practical action of sociological theory and research in an area of choice.
 - b. Develop a sociologically informed action plan in an area of choice.
 - c. Conduct at least twenty-five hours of service or activist work in an area of choice, and explain what they have experienced from a sociological framework.
4. **Which particular Program Learning Outcome(s) did you assess for the academic year 2017-2018?**

PLO 3a

At the end of our 2016-2017, we shared in our Assessment Report that we would design measurement tools more aptly suited for the task of assessing our students understanding of research logic and methods. The Assessment Committee designed a standardized assessment tool that was used within our Research Methods classes. It specifically addressed PLO 3a (“Describe, compare, and contrast basic methodological approaches for gathering sociological data, including both quantitative and qualitative methods”).

METHODOLOGY

5. **Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s).**

The department Assessment Committee developed an ungraded assignment to assess student mastery of PLO 3a. Students were presented with a handout describing four research projects

and asked to identify various aspects of the methodology involved in each case (research question, type of method, variables, unit of analysis, sampling method, quantitative vs. qualitative data, and obtrusive vs. unobtrusive research). Based upon lessons learned from our assessment process last year, we modified our assessment assignment. Our Research Methods instructor administered the assessment at the end of the course in order to track student progress. See Appendix A.

RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

6. What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise?

In each of the areas of knowledge measured by the assessment tool our students are meeting and/or exceeding our desired learning outcomes. (Note: 13 students completed the assignment) Our student sample demonstrated strengths in *identifying research methods* (11/13 meeting or exceeding expectation) and *distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative data* (13/13 meeting or exceeding expectation). Our data show mixed results in the following areas: *identifying research questions* (8 students met expectations while 5 need improvement), *variables* (8 met, 5 need improvement), and *sampling method* (11 exceeded or met, and 2 need improvement), as well as *distinguishing between obtrusive and unobtrusive researcher roles* (6 exceeded, 3 met, and 4 need improvement). Finally, we identified the follow areas of improvement: *identifying units of analysis* (7 students met expectations, 2 need improvement, and 4 performed below expectations). See following tables for results.

Identify Research Questions

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
2016-2017 (n=19)	10%	58%	16%	16%
2017-2018 (n=13)	0	62%	38%	0

Identify Research Methods

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
2016-2017 (n=19)	26%	58%	16%	0
2017-2018 (n=13)	15%	85%	0	0

Identify Variables

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
2016-2017 (n=19)	0	58%	32%	10%
2017-2018 (n=13)	0	62%	38%	0

Identify Units of Analysis

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
2016-2017 (n=19)	0	53%	16%	31%
2017-2018 (n=13)	0	54%	15%	31%

Identify Sampling Method

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
2016-2017 (n=19)	0	79%	21%	0
2017-2018 (n=13)	31%	54%	15%	0

Distinguish Qualitative from Quantitative Data

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
2016-2017 (n=19)	0	95%	5%	0
2017-2018 (n=13)	62%	38%	0	0

Distinguish obtrusive from unobtrusive researcher role

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Below Expectations
2016-2017 (n=19)	26%	48%	26%	0
2017-2018 (n=13)	46%	23%	31%	0

CLOSING THE LOOP

- Based on your results, what changes/modifications are you planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome? This section could also address more long-term planning that your department/program is considering and does not require that any changes need to be implemented in the next academic year itself.

We are confident in the effectiveness of the current assessment instrument, which we slightly modified from last year. Based on results, we are most concerned with two aspects of methodology: 1) identifying units of analysis and 2) obtrusive vs. unobtrusive research. This is an improvement over last year where we identified four aspects of methodology in need of improvement.

We continue to believe that Research Methods instructors should continuously refer to these concepts and related vocabulary throughout their courses, even when students are doing more inductively-driven research and/or using qualitative methods. This includes consistently using specific vocabulary throughout the semester (e.g., some students earned partial credit here for using “people” rather than “individuals”). Additionally, instructors need to encourage students to identify these specific features in their own research projects, as well as for the examples used to teach about and demonstrate different methods.

It continues to concern us that a fair number of students in the sample (most of whom, at the time, were at 3rd year status), struggled with these concepts/vocabulary. Based on this, we will continue to recommend that these concepts/vocabulary be reinforced throughout the sociology curriculum, through frequent application to other scholars’ research and by students having the opportunity to design and conduct their own original research in other sociology courses.

The department met and will focus on student writing during the next assessment cycle.

- 8. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2016-2017, submitted in October 2017)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in this report?**

Based upon the feedback on our last assessment report, no significant changes were suggested or required. As a result, we built upon the work we did last year to continue to track our students’ learning and growth in key areas that have been a concern for us.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any rubrics used for assessment, relevant tables, charts and figures should be included here)

Appendix A: Assessment Exercise & Rubric

Identifying and Evaluating Research Methods

(adapted from D. Burlington, “The Four Sources of Evidence,” *ASA/TRAILS*, 2012)

Project A: Dr. Cheney researches culture and social movements, specifically how social movements generate social change by challenging commonly-held values. In order to study this process, she focused on an organization, Vegan World Network, which attempts to persuade community members to forgo the use of animal products for food or clothing. Since no previous research had been conducted on a group of this type, Dr. Cheney decided to attend the group’s monthly meeting. During the meeting she introduced herself, her research project, and asked permission to observe the group during meetings, protests, and other activities, which she was granted. After 6 months of observation Dr. Cheney began to ask group members a series of open-ended questions about their eating habits, political goals, and biographical history.

	What is the <i>research question</i> for this specific study?	Which <i>method(s)</i> is being used (ethnography, experiment, survey, qualitative interviews, archival research, secondary analysis, etc.)?	What <i>variables</i> are being studied? Please identify <i>independent</i> and <i>dependent</i> variables.	1) What <i>unit of analysis</i> did the researcher use? 2) And what was their - <i>sampling method</i> (probability or non-probability)?	What <i>type of data</i> (quantitative or qualitative) did the research yield?	Did the researcher assume an <i>obtrusive</i> or <i>unobtrusive</i> role?
Project A	Acceptable answers: How do social change organizations shape individual values & behaviors? How does an organization (Vegan World Network) attempt to generate a particular social change (getting people to forgo use of animal products for food or clothing)? How does	Ethnography <i>and</i> qualitative interviews	Acceptable answers: Challenges to commonly-held values; generation of social change Attempts to get people to forgo use of animal products Exploratory study; variables are emergent. I: Participation in Vegan World Network D: Members’ eating habits and political	Acceptable answers (1): Organization/group (organized activities) Individuals (eating habits, political goals, biographical histories) Exceptional answer: details both. Acceptable answer (2): Non-probability	Qualitative	Obtrusive

	<p>participation in a social change organization (Vegan World Network) affect members' eating habits and/or political goals?</p> <p>Exceptional answer: Lists social <i>organization</i>, instead of more general social <i>movement</i></p>		<p>goals</p> <p><i>Quantification:</i> 0.5pts = identifies some, but not all, variables</p> <p>0.75pts = accurately identifies all variables, but does not distinguish between DV and IV; distinguishes between DV and IV but missing variables</p> <p>1pt (Exceptional answer): Explains that study is exploratory and inductive, but also includes relationship between variables in the interview portion; accurately identifies all variables <i>and</i> distinguishes between DV and IV</p>			
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Project B: Dr. Hernandez researches the impact of media on society. Previous research indicates that people exposed to advertisements are impacted by them in significant ways. In order to test this, he randomly places volunteers in one of two identical computer labs. In the first lab, the volunteers are shown Saturday morning cartoons and then asked about which mayoral candidate they would be most likely to vote for. In the second lab, the volunteers are shown a series of political advertisements for the upcoming election and then asked the same series of questions about which mayoral candidate they would be most likely to vote for. Afterwards, Dr. Hernandez compiles the answers of each group and compares them against each other.

	What is the <i>research question</i> for this specific study?	Which <i>method(s)</i> is being used (ethnography, experiment, survey, qualitative interviews, archival research, secondary analysis, etc.)?	What <i>variables</i> are being studied? Please identify <i>independent</i> and <i>dependent</i> variables.	1) What <i>unit of analysis</i> did the researcher use? 2) And what was their <i>sampling method</i> (probability or non-probability)?	What <i>type of data</i> (quantitative or qualitative) did the research yield?	Did the researcher assume an <i>obtrusive</i> or <i>unobtrusive</i> role?
Project B	<p>Acceptable answers:</p> <p>Does exposure to political advertisements affect people's choices of whom to vote for? How do political advertisements impact voting behavior?</p> <p>Exceptional answer: Lists <i>political</i> ads and attitudes/<i>voting behavior</i>, instead of more general <i>media</i> and <i>society</i></p>	Experiment <i>and</i> focus groups	<p>Acceptable answers: Exposure to televised political advertisements; likely voting choices</p> <p>I: Political advertisements D: Choice of mayoral candidate</p> <p><i>Quantification:</i> 0.5pts = identifies some, but not all, variables</p> <p>0.75pts = accurately identifies all variables, but does not distinguish between DV and IV; distinguishes between DV and IV but missing variables</p> <p>1pt (Exceptional answer): Accurately identifies all variables <i>and</i> distinguishes between DV and IV</p>	<p>1) Individuals</p> <p>2) Acceptable answers: Non-probability</p>	Acceptable answers: Qualitative	Obtrusive

Project C: Dr. Asamoah studies the relationship between religion and politics. Findings from her mentor’s research suggested that strength of religious beliefs were the most significant predictor of support for public policy. In order to assess this finding she constructs a series of close-ended questions that gathered basic demographic information, level of religious commitment, political ideology, and support for recently proposed government policy. These questionnaires were then mailed to randomly selected individuals around the country. After the questionnaires were returned and tallied, they were analyzed.

	What is the <i>research question</i> for this specific study?	Which <i>method(s)</i> is being used (ethnography, experiment, survey, qualitative interviews, archival research, secondary analysis, etc.)?	What <i>variables</i> are being studied? Please identify <i>independent</i> and <i>dependent</i> variables.	1) What <i>unit of analysis</i> did the researcher use? 2) And what was their <i>sampling method</i> (probability or non-probability)?	What <i>type of data</i> (quantitative or qualitative) did the research yield?	Did the researcher assume an <i>obtrusive or unobtrusive</i> role?
Project C	<p>Acceptable answers:</p> <p>Does the strength of religious beliefs predict strength of support for public policy initiatives?</p> <p>How does religiosity affect support for public policy?</p> <p>Exceptional answer: Lists <i>religiosity/strength of religious beliefs</i>, instead of more general <i>religion</i></p>	Survey	<p>Acceptable answers: Level of religious commitment, political ideology, and support for recently proposed government policy</p> <p>I: Demographic info, level of religiosity, and political ideology D: Support for gov’t policy</p> <p><i>Quantification:</i> 0.5pts = identifies some, but not all, variables 0.75pts = accurately identifies all variables, but does not distinguish between DV and IV; distinguishes between DV and IV but missing variables 1pt (Exceptional answer): Accurately identifies all variables <i>and</i> distinguishes between DV and IV</p>	<p>1) Individuals 2) Probability</p>	Quantitative	Obtrusive

Project D: Dr. Kagawa researches patterns of incarceration over time. Previous theoretical writing on the subject suggests that punishment levels reflect changes in economic prosperity and labor market conditions, with incarceration rates rising during periods of declining economic prosperity. He begins by collecting statistics on economic prosperity (such as unemployment rates and GDP) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Next, he collects figures on incarceration from the Bureau of Justice. Using computer-assisted software he then checks the statistical correlation between the economic measures and imprisonment.

	What is the <i>research question</i> for this specific study?	Which <i>method(s)</i> is being used (ethnography, experiment, survey, qualitative interviews, archival research, secondary analysis, etc.)?	What <i>variables</i> are being studied? Please identify <i>independent</i> and <i>dependent</i> variables.	1) What <i>unit of analysis</i> did the researcher use? 2) And what was their <i>sampling method</i> (probability or non-probability)?	What <i>type of data</i> (quantitative or qualitative) did the research yield?	Did the researcher assume an <i>obtrusive or unobtrusive</i> role?
Project D	<p>Acceptable answers:</p> <p>Does economic prosperity (e.g., lower unemployment rates, higher GP) positively affect incarceration rates?</p> <p>How does the state of the economy affect incarceration rates?</p>	Secondary analysis of existing statistics	<p>Acceptable answers:</p> <p>Economic prosperity (as measured by unemployment rates and GDP); incarceration rates:</p> <p>I: Unemployment rates and GDP D: Incarceration rates</p> <p>Exceptional answer distinguishes independent and dependent variables.</p> <p><i>Quantification:</i> 0.5pts = identifies some, but not all, variables 0.75pts = accurately identifies all variables, but does not distinguish between DV and IV; distinguishes between DV and IV but missing variables 1pt (Exceptional answer): Accurately identifies all variables <i>and</i> distinguishes between DV and IV</p>	<p>1) Acceptable answers:</p> <p>Individual (employment and incarceration rates) OR group/society/nation (national level rates of incarceration, employment, prosperity).</p> <p>Exceptional answer includes and explains both individual and group/society/nation.</p> <p>2) Probability</p>	Quantitative	Unobtrusive

Appendix B: Assessment Data

	Exceeds Expectations (4) Fully achieves outcome in all 4 cases.	Meets Expectations (3) Fully achieves outcome in 2.5-3.5 cases.	Needs Improvement (2) Fully achieves outcome in 1-2 cases.	Below Expectations (1) Fully achieves outcome in 0-.0.5 cases.
Identify research questions.		1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13 8	2, 3, 9, 10, 11 5	
Identify research methods.	4, 12 2	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 11		
Identify variables.		1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13 8	3, 5, 9, 10, 12 5	
Identify units of analysis.		3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12 7	8, 13 2	1, 2, 6, 7 4
Identify sampling method.	1, 7, 10, 12 4	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13 7	2, 9 2	
Distinguish qualitative from quantitative data.	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13 8	2, 6, 8, 10, 11 5		
Distinguish obtrusive from unobtrusive researcher role.	3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13 6	6, 9, 10 3	1, 2, 5, 7 4	

Appendix C: Raw Data

	Research Questions	Research Methods	Variables	Units of Analysis	Sampling Method	Qual or Quant	Obtrusive or Unobtrusive
1A	1	0.5	0.75	0	1	1	0
1B	1	0.5	1	0	1	1	0
1C	0.5	1	0.5	0	1	1	0
1D	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
2A	0.5	1	1	0.5	0	1	0
2B	0.75	0.5	0.5	0	1	0	1
2C	0.5	1	0.5	0	0	1	0
2D	0	1	0.5	0	0	1	1
3A	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	1
3B	0.25	0.5	0.5	1	1	1	1
3C	0.5	1	0.75	1	1	1	1
3D	0	1	0.5	0	0	1	1
4A	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	1
4B	0.25	1	0.25	1	1	1	1
4C	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4D	0.75	1	0.75	0.5	0	1	1
5A	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	1	0
5B	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	1	1	0
5C	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	1	1	0
5D	0.5	1	1	0.5	1	1	1
6A	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	0	1	1
6B	1	1	0.25	0	1	0	0
6C	0.5	0.5	0.75	0	1	1	1
6D	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
7A	1	1	0.75	0	1	1	0
7B	0.5	0.5	1	0	1	1	0
7C	0.5	1	0.75	0	1	1	0
7D	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
8A	1	1	0.25	0.5	1	1	1
8B	0.5	0.5	0.75	0.5	1	0	1
8C	0.5	1	0.75	0.5	1	1	1
8D	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
9A	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	0	1	1
9B	0.25	0.5	0.25	1	0	1	1
9C	0.5	1	0	1	1	1	0
9D	0	1	0.25	0	0	1	1
10A	0.5	1	0.25	0.5	1	1	1
10B	0.25	0.5	0.5	1	1	0	0
10C	0.5	1	0.5	1	1	1	1
10D	0.25	1	0.5	0	1	1	1
11A	0.5	1	0.75	0.5	0.5	1	1
11B	0.25	0.5	0.5	1	1	0	1
11C	0.5	0.5	0.75	1	1	1	1
11D	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1
12A	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
12B	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1
12C	0.5	1	0.75	1	1	1	1
12D	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1
13A	0.5	1	0.25	0.5	0	1	1
13B	0	0.5	1	0	1	1	1
13C	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
13D	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1