B.S. in Sociology Assessment

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Report date: July, 2011

The Bachelor of Science in Sociology is housed within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. This degree includes general education requirements as well as core requirements in sociology and anthropology. Program assessment for the sociology degree necessarily includes general education requirements, core requirements in sociology and anthropology, and advanced course requirements in the discipline. The BS-Sociology was approved Spring 2011 and will be introduced in Fall 2011. As such, we will work to ensure that students transitioning to the new degree from the previous interdisciplinary concentration will continue to be able to meet the learning objectives of the sociology program and campus. Assessment is a process of continual reflection and growth, and as such, assessment for this degree will continue to develop.

What follows is the overall program assessment plan for the BS in Sociology degree. Special attention has been focused on course-based assessment of program learning objectives. Assessment, as I understand it, encompasses interconnected layers: course-based assessment of course outcomes -- which are connected to degree program objectives—which are connected to campus learning objectives—which are connected to the mission of the campus. Ultimately, we want to assure that a student earning a degree in sociology has the opportunity to meet the program and campus learning objectives. As this assessment plan has developed over the years, layers of assessment have been added. Our focus this past year was to develop measurable outcomes for the identified learning objectives for sociology. One additional learning objective was added to reflect a more global perspective.
Program Assessment Plan
Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Science Degree

The Bachelor of Science in Sociology degree program is assessed in four principle ways: 1) the BSS B-490 capstone course, 2) exit interviews, 3) graduate tracking, 4) course-based assessment of program learning objectives, and 5) Course mapping of learning outcomes.

1. The BSS B-490 Capstone Course. Students graduating with a BS in Sociology are required to develop a “capstone” project in conjunction with completion of BSS B490(Senior Seminar). These projects in the Senior Seminar “capstone” course are assessed by faculty instructing the course to ascertain the extent to which they included evidence of program learning objectives. Students should demonstrate:
   • Depth of knowledge in their major concentration (sociology/anthropology)
   • Breadth of knowledge within sociology and anthropology. Specifically, the students should demonstrate the ability to show intersection and distinctions between sociology and anthropology as well as integrate the disciplines into analysis of their capstone project topic.
   • Written communication appropriate for senior level (demonstrated in the capstone project and other course assigned work), appropriate use of citation style in written work (demonstrated in the capstone project), oral communication (demonstrated in the public presentation of capstone project, student led class discussion, and other course assigned work), and communication through technology (demonstrated in their “power-point” presentation and other course assigned work such as on-line discussions).
   • Ability to evaluate and assess quantitative and/or qualitative research sources and empirical data (demonstrated in the capstone project and class led discussions).
   • Critical thinking (demonstrated in the capstone projects, class discussions, and other assigned coursework).
   • Awareness of issues, conditions, power relations, and social problems facing diverse populations at both the structural and/or interactional levels (demonstrated in the capstone project, class discussions and other assigned coursework).
   • Awareness of ethical responsibility in social science research and the dissemination of that research (demonstrated by proper citation in the capstone project) and awareness of ethical salience in social, psychological and political issues.
Recommendation: This course has for many years served as a key site for assessment of the BSBS interdisciplinary program and will continue to serve the new B.S. in Sociology degree. The following recommendations are made:

- The continued use of the course with enhanced evaluation and assessment.
- Continued practice of retention of the final project papers (with the names removed) and the creation of a rubric for assessing the above stated objectives.
- Distribution of a survey to faculty in attendance at the student presentation for assessment of communication objectives as well as depth and breadth.
- Standardized reporting from faculty teaching the course on student accomplishment of the learning objectives.
- Creation of embedded assessment tools.

2. Exit Interviews. Focused exit-interviews are conducted by BSS faculty with the students completing the B490 course. Students are asked to reflect on and respond to questions (distributed the week before) regarding their understanding of their own achievement of certain program objectives. The students then break off into discipline areas for unit exit conversations which include assessment of the concentration (i.e. strengths and weakness of the concentration).

Recommendation:

- Record the conversations of the combined BSBS program and have them transcribed. The transcribed notes would then be distributed to all BSS faculty.
- Continue the practice of interviews.
- Establish a sub-committee to review the comments and make recommendations for potential changes.

In Spring 2011 an open forum discussion was held with the students of the BSS-B490 Senior Seminar class. The following questions were asked:

I. Answer these questions in regards to the entire degree and the Behavioral and Social Science major.

To what extent have your courses in the BSS program met the seven learning objectives?
Breadth—learning across disciplines
Depth—learning in your chosen concentration
Communication—ability to articulate ideas in written format, oral presentation, and through technology.
Computation—ability to understand statistical analysis in its research application.
Diversity—ability to understand hierarchies of power and appreciate differences in cultural background.
Ethics—ability to understand and weigh moral and ethical decisions.
Critical thinking—ability to develop informed opinions, to comprehend, formulate, and critically evaluate ideas, and to identify problems and find solutions to those problems.

Give an examples of each and discuss specific courses that facilitated and enhanced those objectives.

How is your knowledge of the behavioral and social sciences different after completing the degree program than it might have been if you had taken only the typical distribution requirements in the behavioral and social sciences for other degree programs?

With respect to the campus learning objectives, what have we done well in this program and what could we do differently or better?

What advice would you give to new students to the program?

How would you describe the Behavioral Social Science degree to a prospective employer or graduate school representative? What would you tell them you have gained?

The discussion was tape recorded but has yet to be transcribed.

Sociology Exit Interview – Spring 2011

Sociology Concentration students (3) were additionally asked a series of questions pertaining specifically to their experience in the sociology component of the degree. Three students (represented by the numbers 1-3 below) were asked to respond to the following questions:

I. Answer these questions in regards to the entire sociology concentration.

To what extent have your courses in sociology met the seven learning objectives? Give examples of each and discuss specific courses that facilitated and enhanced those objectives.

Breadth—learning across theoretical perspectives and social issues

1. I felt like my all sociology courses did this, especially society and the individual, global society, social change and queer studies.
2. Sociology in general I think achieves this, so even going back to just the introduction classes. Being able to understand that there are multiple perspectives and how you view the world varies depending on your perspective and your experience is key.

3. I thought that this was done very well. Social theory was great for learning about all the different perspectives and Social Inequality and also the Deviance course covered social issues thoroughly.

Depth—learning in sociology concentration

1. Social Theory and again, really all other sociology courses

2. Social theory I think really helped to get into the depth of sociology by looking more closely at each theorist and their backgrounds.

3. Depth was as good as can be expected for a one semester course. You obviously don’t ever have enough time to completely cover an issue but the classes served as a great foundation in learning about these topics

Communication—ability to articulate ideas in written format, oral presentation, and through technology.

1. All sociology courses had papers. Research methods included the use of technology. Global society, social inequality used oral presentations.

2. Having to constantly write papers even the small ones in every class helps to achieve the written goals. Working with peers and presenting ideals like in family sociology we had discussion panels which helps to build confidence in expressing your ideals. We also had to present articles and discuss them in Senior Sem and Deviant Behavior. In Social Change we had to work actually develop an ideal to help facilitate change on campus and present that idea to class. Sr Sem of course we had numerous ways to communicate ideals. All these exercises help build this confidence in this and gives practice.

3. This was developed pretty thoroughly in the courses that I took. In almost every sociology class (Soc 100, Social theory, Social Inequality, Deviance etc) I took there were weekly reflections to write. I also enjoyed Soc 254 (Independent Study) because it was my first chance to try and write a paper on research I had collected.

Computation—ability to understand statistical analysis in its research application.

1. Research methods

2. Well research methods and stats were obvious classes to achieve this but classes that helped to support these were the computer classes with them, also Sr Sem, qualitative
research. Reading academic journals and making sense of them helps to achieve these goals and all our classes asked for some type of a research project.

3. I don’t think I really learned this in my sociology classes, other than when we would look at studies and I would try to understand what the numbers were saying in the research. I developed this ability mostly in PSY K 300 and Methods

Diversity—ability to understand hierarchies of power and appreciate differences in cultural background.

1. Social Change, Global Society, Gender (forgot the full course name), Queer studies

2. Deviant behavior is a class that really stands out for this one. Showing how it matters who is the one who is defining what is criminal and what isn’t.

3. I thought the diversity issues covered in the curriculum were great. Queer identities and communities was one of my favorite courses, and social change and social inequality exposed me to issues of diversity that I had no idea about.

Ethics—ability to understand and weigh moral and ethical decisions.

1. Social inequality and Social change

2. Social change helped with meeting this objective. Denise did a great job at saying each choice we made would have a consequence and someone or something would happen as a result of a decision or change that was made.

3. Ethics were addressed in the courses that I took in sociology. We often talked about whether something really was right or wrong or whether it just went against what society had deemed as “normal behavior”.

Critical thinking—ability to develop informed opinions, to comprehend, formulate, and critically evaluate ideas, and to identify problems and find solutions to those problems.

1. All sociology classes, especially social change, society and the individual, global society, Gender studies

3. Critical thinking was a part of every sociology class that I took. The issues brought up in these classes are rarely ones that are simple to solve or even to fully understand what side you stand on. I thought sociology of the family and deviance were classes in which I really had to try and understand why I felt the way that I did about certain issues.
How is your knowledge of sociology different after completing the concentration program than it might have been if you had taken only the typical distribution requirements in the behavioral and social sciences for other degree programs (for example, just intro)?

1. I feel that because of the diversity I’ve been exposed to, I’m able to understand behavior better. Instead of thinking that something is the way it is, “just because”, I’m able not only to see how social interaction has shaped their behavior, but also how institutional structures may have either limited or advanced them.

3. I think that it is impossible to fully understand what sociology is all about when just taking an intro course. Granted, it might have sparked my interest, but without all the different courses I’ve taken and all the diverse issues I’ve studied, I’d never really understand what sociology is all about.

With respect to the campus learning objectives, what have we done well in this concentration and what could we do differently or better?

1. I feel like all objectives were met. Although, I would have liked to take an extra course about research. I struggled a little in qualitative because it was an independent study. Even though I dislike group work, I like a classroom setting. Because it was online, independent study, I procrastinated a lot and didn’t exercise my full effort. More about ethics may be useful as well.

2. Sociology works at meeting all the objectives and having this background helps to obtain them. Probably critical thinking would be the strengths while depth in the subject might need some attention. Not really sure how to gain depth though without jeopardizing in meeting some of the other objectives.

3. Communication has been an area where I feel my sociology classes have improved my abilities. I hate public speaking, but after being forced to speak my opinion in order to receive a good grade, I’m much better at it. I guess if anything needed to be improved it would be computation. I don’t think we covered that a lot in the sociology classes themselves.

What courses in sociology would you have liked to have taken?

1. I would have liked to take a course which specifically focused on race. A course on sexuality would have been interesting as well.

2. Honestly I feel like I could have taken many more courses in Sociology. I was heavy on electives and wish I would have taken advantage of more courses in sociology and not some of the electives I took. A political sociology course or if something focusing on education and sociology was offered would be great.

3. Race and ethnic relations, some kind of class on women (I didn’t get around to taking any of them)
Besides coursework in sociology, what other learning opportunities would you have liked to have been able to participate?

1. More speakers, or attending a conference. Sociology club would have been good as well.

2. I would have liked to engage in some type of ASA conference. I think the interaction with other sociologist professionals could have been a valuable learning experience. Maybe work on a collaborative research project with other students or instructors to present at such an event (although the stress level might have been through the roof). Also have some type of community project or service would have been great.

3. It might have been fun to take what I learned in my sociology classes and share that with the community, maybe by raising awareness of issues or giving talks to local high school kids about diversity issues, particularly the schools that are like the one I went to which are 99.9% Caucasian.

What advice would you give to new students to the concentration?

1. Do not fall behind on reading. If you are feeling stressed out or overwhelmed, visit your advisor and talk to your instructor. Take time writing papers.

2. Make sure to talk with your advisor often and to listen to them. Try to do some type of summer research getting a grant and working with the IRB. To study under different instructors to gain different perspectives. Don’t be afraid now to think about what to do after college and work to gain some experience now at it. And finally, take time to pause and take it all in.

3. You’ve made an excellent choice by selecting sociology. If you come in with an open mind and a willingness to challenge your own deeply held beliefs, you’ll get a lot of this major.

4. **Graduate Surveys.** We periodically and informally track program graduates who have either entered the workforce or graduate school.

   Recommendation:
   a. Create a formal system for tracking and surveying former graduates from the BSBS program and the B.S. in Sociology program.
   b. Develop a schedule for dissemination of survey.
c. Create a sub-committee to review the survey results and make recommendations for potential changes. (As this degree is being administratively discontinued, no further action may be warranted.)

Sociology did not send out any survey this past academic year.

5. **Course-Based Assessment of Program Learning Objectives.** All faculty and adjuncts are advised and encouraged to participate in the assessment of learning in one of their courses.

Recommendation:
- a. Direct assessment of the learning objectives is to be encouraged and facilitated by the development of tools, rubrics, and embedded mechanisms for assessment. These direct measures would added to the indirect mechanisms already in place.
- b. All three programs are to work on further defining the learning outcomes expected from a graduate in each of the degree programs.
- c. Development of tools and rubrics for assessment (drawn from the defined learning outcomes intended).
- d. The creation of embedded mechanisms to assess the learning outcomes.
- e. Create a sub-committee to review and summarize the reports from faculty and adjuncts in order to make recommendations for potential changes. (As this degree is being administratively discontinued, no further action may be warranted.)

In Fall 2010 I was asked to assess two campus learning objectives: critical thinking in Introduction to Sociology and ethical awareness in Deviant Behavior and Social Control. I was to select an assignment for each class and randomly choose five student examples to assess using a provided rubric. For Introduction to Sociology I used the final paper assignment to assess critical thinking. I have routinely been asked to assess critical thinking in this class and have always used the final paper for that assignment. I realize now that in the past I was only asked to assess the first part of critical thinking (Comprehends, formulates, and critically evaluates problems or questions). The second part regarding solutions was not assigned. I received the request for assessment this semester after the class began and after my syllabus with all of the assignments for the course had already been identified. I did not want to add an additional
component to the final paper to meet the second part of the learning objective. I tell my students at the beginning of the course that all required assignments are listed in the syllabus to allow them to work ahead if desired. As a result, the assessment evaluation really only addresses the first part. I did note that some students offered solutions—even though it was not a requirement. That is reflected in the five samples randomly chosen. I plan to add a component to the final paper in the future that requires solutions. Of the five student examples, three students exhibited mastery level in their comprehension and critical evaluation and two exhibited developing level. I was originally assigned to assess ethical awareness in WOST W200 for Fall 2010. I instead assess this learning objective in SOC S320 Deviant Behavior and Social Control. I had to substitute an assignment in S320 and this gave me an opportunity to assess ethical awareness. The moral and ethical issues surrounding our justice system is regularly discussed in the course so it seemed appropriate to conduct the assessment in S320. I would have had to add an assignment in W200 to fulfill the assessment. I tell my students at the beginning of the course that all required assignments are listed in the syllabus to allow them to work ahead if desired. Since I had to replace an assignment in SOC S320 this seemed a good solution. I asked the students to address the following two questions: In a fair, just society what would a justice system look like? Is our justice system ethical? Why or Why not?

All five students examples demonstrated mastery (rating a 5 or a six) in the recognition, comprehension, and critical evaluation of competing or conflicting values and moral or ethical issues. All five student examples also demonstrated mastery (rating a 5 or a six) in demonstration of clear understanding of personal cultural values. As this is a 300 level course, the results are not surprising.

I was on sabbatical in Spring 2011 and as such I did not teach nor conduct assessment.

Course Mapping of Sociology Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The Sociology Degree has two principle foci: Social Inequality and Human Agency. Students graduating with this degree should be able to demonstrate the following outcomes tied to the five key learning objectives:
1.  **An understanding of how social inequalities, ethical choices, and hierarchies of difference and power are created and maintained in social, interactional, and structural arrangements in societies.**

Measurable Outcomes
- a. Describe and differentiate social class (race/ethnicity; gender; sexual identification) structure in the United States.
- b. Examine and compare one’s own social class (race/ethnicity; gender; sexual identification) experience and life chances with others in differing social class (race/ethnicity; gender; sexual identification) positions.
- c. Describe and evaluate moral and ethical issues surrounding social inequality.
- d. Examine and analyze hierarchies of difference and power.
- e. Examine and analyze how hierarchies of difference and power are created, maintained and perpetuated in society.
- f. Critically evaluate the ethics of social inequality—clarifying personal and cultural values as they relate to ethical choices.
- g. Propose personal, interactional, cultural, and structural solutions to create a more equitable social world.

2.  **An ability to critically differentiate and apply dominant theoretical frames of analysis to substantive structural, cultural, and interactional issues.**

Measurable Outcomes
- a. Describe and differentiate the three dominant theoretical perspectives in Sociology: Functional/Order; Conflict; Symbolic Interactionist.
- b. Identify and explain key principles of each perspective.
- c. Correctly apply and relate each perspective to substantive structural, cultural, and interactional issues.
- d. Critically analyze and evaluate the value of each theoretical perspective.
- e. Determine which theoretical perspective holds the most currency—explanative power for oneself.

3.  **An understanding of the relationship between social structure, human agency, and culture and how both individual and collective action affect social change.**

Measurable Outcomes
- a. Describe, explain, and provide examples of social structure, human agency, and culture.
- b. Describe, explain, and provide examples of individual and collective action to affect social change.
- c. Examine and analyze the relationship between social structure, human agency, and culture.
- d. Identify, compare theories of social change.
- e. Examine how one can work individually and collectively for positive social change.
f. Demonstrate familiarity with proposed principles upon which a 
    compassionate, ethical, just, and sustainable global society could be built.
g. Propose, devise and support a plan for social change of a substantive issue.

4. **Development of a sociological imagination**—the ability to see how social forces 
    affect private lives.

**Measurable Outcomes**

a. Describe and explain the concept of sociological imagination.
b. Examine and rank how social forces (such as social class, race/ethnicity, 
    gender, and sexual identification) have personally affected their own lives.
c. Critically assess how one’s own social position/location, relative to dominant 
    or peripheral standing, affects life chances and experiences.
d. Critically assess how social forces affect life chances and experiences across 
    social position and location.
e. Demonstrate the ability to connect sociological concepts, as well as methods 
    and theory to the history and evolution of the social world.
f. Determine, measure, visualize and critique the impact of the rapid rise of 
    globalization in the creation of global society.

5. **An ability to recognize and relate themselves, their culture and nation within a 
    global context.**

**Measurable Outcomes**

a. Identify, distinguish and provide examples of cultural differences across the 
    globe.
b. Identify the role and impact of the primary institutions and policies that propel 
    economic globalization, and by extension the growth of an interdependent 
    global society.
c. Examine the social, economic, political, and power placement of the United 
    States relative to other nations.
d. Examine how one’s own life is affected by global changes and challenges, and 
    vice versa how global change and the challenges of global change itself arise 
    and is shaped by individual and collective choice.
e. Examine the complexity of the evolving inter-relationship between local and 
    global society that shapes relationships and conflicting rights, between 
    consumers and producers, private owners and the “commons,” corporations 
    and people.
f. Analyze and critique global outcomes and issues such as global development, 
    global poverty, global disease, global crime, multiculturalism, global 
    warming.
g. Critically evaluate the ethics of global inequality—clarifying personal and 
    cultural values as they relate to ethical choices.
h. Analyze, critique and examine the role of global change agents such as 
    international non-governmental organizations, The United Nations, The
World Trade Organization, National Governments, and Global Social Movements in fostering the global world.

6. **An ability to understand and apply research and computational skills.**

   **Measurable Outcomes**
   
   a. Explain, illustrate, and/or distinguish between multiple research methodological approaches.
   
   b. Apply quantitative and qualitative information and procedures to contexts outside the classroom.
   
   c. Explain and demonstrate research ethics as applied to human subjects.
   
   d. Analyze and appropriately relate differing methodologies to theoretical paradigms (epistemology and ontology).
   
   e. Organize and apply techniques, rules, and models to analyze and solve problems using data.
   
   f. Demonstrate skills to appropriately interpret quantitative and computational data.
   
   g. Develop research hypotheses, questions and instruments in a way that demonstrates sound, ethical research practice.
   
   h. Evaluate and critique research presentation, methodology, and data.

7. **An ability to express one’s self clearly, completely, and accurately through a variety of formats including writing, speaking and technology.**

   **Measurable Outcomes**
   
   a. Demonstrate proper grammar, structure, and citation in written work.
   
   b. Demonstrate clear and proficient communication in oral presentation.
   
   c. Demonstrate effective use of technology utilizing the internet for research and communication and graphic presentation.
   
   d. Design and effectively utilize Powerpoint for communication.

Campus learning objectives of diversity and ethics are embedded within the above learning outcomes.

See Included spreadsheet.

Now that the outcomes have been identified and mapped across the sociology courses, the next step is to design and embed assignments and rubrics to measure the outcomes in each of our courses. That task will begin in Fall 2012. Additionally, sociology learning outcomes will be identified in course syllabi for each of our courses.