

# What are they Doing with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology?

## DATA BRIEF ON CURRENT JOBS

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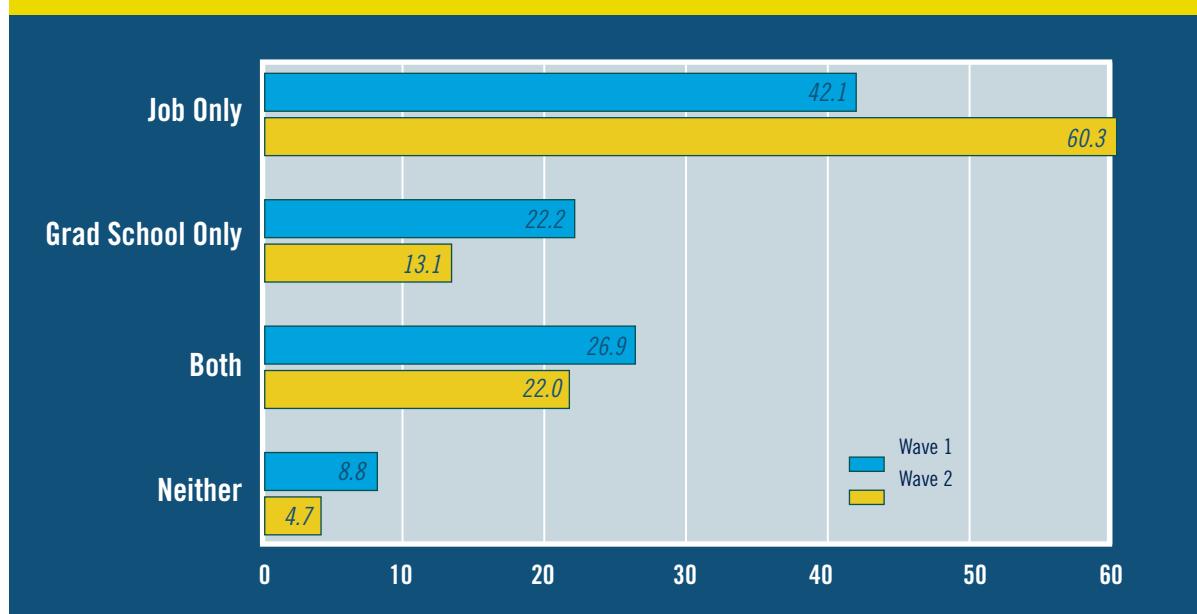
In AY 2005 the American Sociological Association's Research and Development Department surveyed a sample of close to 1,800 seniors to find out their satisfaction with the sociology major and their future plans for work, graduate school, or both. Early in 2007 we resurveyed the class of 2005 to find out what they were doing with their bachelor's degree since graduation.<sup>1</sup> This Data Brief, the first in a series of downloadable publications from the second wave of the survey, provides information on the post-graduate activities of graduates, the kinds of

jobs they held as of December 2006, their satisfaction with these jobs, and the changes in their overall satisfaction with the sociology major.

Figure 1 compares the 2005 responses of senior majors as to their future plans with their 2007 reports as to what they actually were doing. The figure shows that in 2005, 40 percent of respondents planned to work and not attend graduate school after they obtained their

<sup>1</sup>The response rate for the second wave of the survey was 44 percent or 778 graduates.

FIGURE 1: MORE SOCIOLOGY BACHELOR'S RECEPENTS ARE WORKING,  
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE AT TIME 1 VS. STATUS AT TIME 2  
(in Percents)



Source: ASA Research and Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology? Wave I and Wave II*

baccalaureate degree. By 2007, nearly 60 percent reported working and not attending graduate school, a 30 percent increase from their pre-graduation plans. While 20 percent of seniors planned on exclusively attending graduate school (primarily for education, criminology and sociology), just over 10 percent were enrolled in a graduate program in December 2006 (a few reported having completed a graduate program). The percentage of those who planned to both work and attend graduate school simultaneously decreased slightly. Since the overwhelming majority of 2005 sociology majors are working exclusively or while in graduate school, we turn to the type of jobs they held, their satisfaction with these jobs, and their overall satisfaction with the sociology major one and a half to two years after graduating.

### OCCUPATIONAL BREAKDOWN

Table 1 shows the occupations in which these recent graduates were employed, based on their own self-categorization. The table compares those who held full-time jobs, those who held part-time jobs, and those who held internships (the latter two categories were more likely to be in graduate school than those with full-time jobs). About one-quarter of the full-time workers were employed in social service and counseling occupations, most likely in non-profit organizations. As can be seen from the list of specific job descriptions in Appendix 1 Table 2, graduates deal with social problems that they explored as part of their sociology major. They

About two-thirds of those who said their jobs were closely related to what they had learned as sociology majors were very satisfied with their jobs.

provided services for victims of abuse and ill-fortune including neglected children, battered women, adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system, food-stamp and Medicaid eligible families, poor families in need of energy assistance, and disaster victims.

The next largest job categories of full-time workers provided administrative support and management skills in a wide variety of organizations. These sociology graduates are most likely to be employed in for-profit organizations or in state or local government. The administrative support workers manage or assist in the running of on-site information technology systems such as troubleshooting a variety of issues that popup with computers, printers, and Blackberries. They are employed to run office accounting systems, client filing systems, and employee training. Those classifying themselves as managers work in human resource departments recruiting, staffing, and training company employees. For example, one graduate worked as a resource coordinator for the Federal

**TABLE 1: OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES OF SOCIOLOGY BACCALAUREATES BY JOB STATUS**

OCCUPATION	INTERNSHIP	PART-TIME (>35 Hours)	FULL TIME (35 hours or more)
Social Services, Counselors, Psychologists	54.8%	17.5%	26.5%
Clerical/administrative support	4.8%	12.5%	15.8%
Management	2.4%	5.8%	14.4%
Teachers, Librarians	4.8%	18.3%	8.1%
Services	0%	18.3%	8.3%
Sales, Marketing	0%	10.8%	10.1%
Social Science, Researchers	23.8%	12.5%	5.7%
Others	7.1%	2.5%	4.4%
Other Professionals (includes PR and IT)	2.4%	1.7%	6.8%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Source: ASA Research and Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology? Wave I and Wave II*

Emergency Management Agency. Typical job descriptions include providing financial analysis, workforce planning, quality assurance, and employee evaluation.

A smaller percentage of full-time workers are employed in sales and marketing for information technology hardware and software firms. They design and execute marketing plans, do marketing research, run capital campaigns, and write creative copy. Additional occupations of full-time workers include teachers and librarians employed in the education sector, and as police officers, crime scene investigators and parole officers in the criminal justice system. One member of the class of 2005 was employed in a food service occupation as a pastry chef.

Among the smallest full-time occupational category are those employed as social science

researchers, suggesting that 2005 graduates did not receive enough training in research methods, computer applications, and statistics as part of their undergraduate major to obtain positions in the science workforce.

To compensate for this lack of training some members of the class of 2005 went on to graduate school and obtained internships as social science researchers (almost one-quarter of those interns were in training to learn additional social science and research skills). Still, more than half of all interns were employed in social service and counseling occupations, perhaps reflecting a goal stated in 2005 to bring about change by addressing social problems (see *What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology? Phase 1* [http://www.asanet.org/galleries/Research/ASAChartBook\\_0117w1.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/galleries/Research/ASAChartBook_0117w1.pdf)).

## WHAT ARE THEY DOING WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY?

Part-time workers (categorized as those working fewer than 35 hours per week) were more likely than full-time workers or interns to be employed in a wide array of jobs such as teachers or librarians, service workers, social service workers, social science researchers, administrative support positions, and sales and marketing positions. Almost half of those who worked part time while also attending graduate school were found in either service positions or as social science researchers.

### JOB SATISFACTION

About half of the 2005 class were very satisfied with the jobs they held in 2007 and another 42 percent were somewhat satisfied. However, a majority of graduates also reported

that their jobs were not closely related to their sociology degree. Respondents noted that there were few jobs labeled "sociologist" and that they had not been helped by career counselors at their schools to know for what jobs sociology majors qualified and what skills they should emphasize in their job search (less than 20 percent of sociology majors reported in 2005 that they were very satisfied with career counseling). Figure 2 shows that former majors were likely to be more satisfied with jobs that allowed them to employ sociological concepts, theories or paradigms that provided an understanding of social problems and social structure. Almost 70 percent of those who reported that their jobs were closely related to what they had learned as sociology majors were very satisfied with their jobs. Only about half of those who described their jobs as somewhat

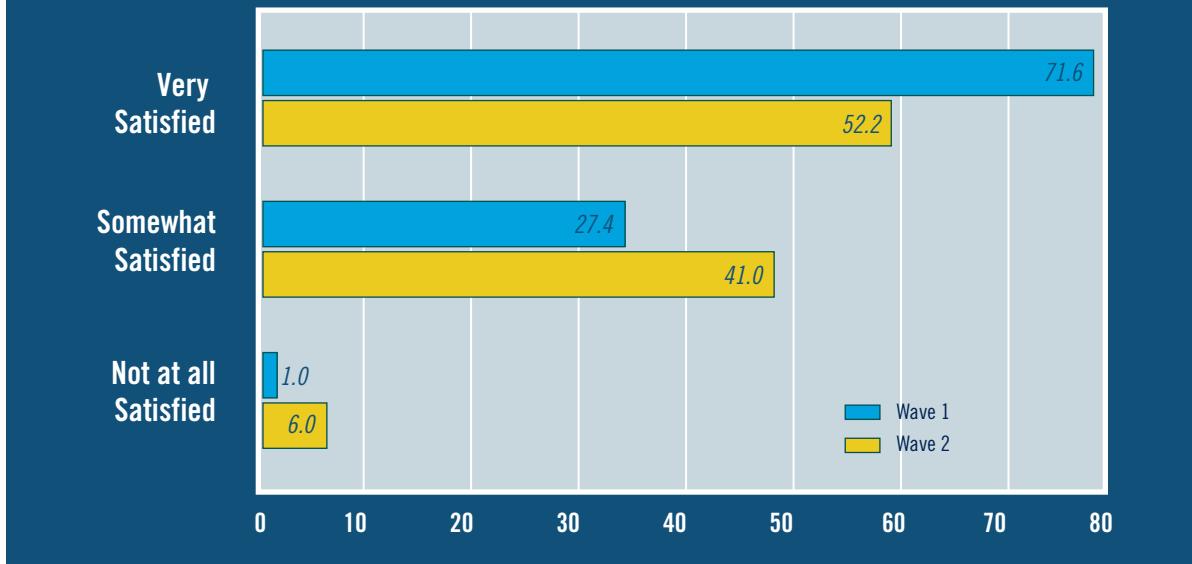
**FIGURE 2: OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE SOCIOLOGY MAJOR BY RELATION TO JOB  
(in Percents)**



Source: ASA Research and Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology? Wave I and Wave II*

\*For each level of relation to job, the satisfaction measures add to 100%.

**FIGURE 3: SATISFACTION WITH THE SOCIOLOGY MAJOR AS A SENIOR AND A 1-2 YEARS LATER  
(in Percents)**



Source: ASA Research and Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology? Wave I and Wave II*

\*In Wave II there was a category, "Somewhat Dissatisfied" that is included in "Not at all Satisfied" in this figure

related to what they had learned as sociology majors were very satisfied with their jobs. In contrast only about 35 percent of those who reported that their jobs were not related to sociology were very satisfied with these jobs.

### OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE SOCIOLOGY MAJOR

In 2005 more than three quarters of majors said that they were very satisfied with their choice of sociology as a major. Figure 3 shows that as of 2007 respondents who were very satisfied declined to less than 60 percent. We suggest that a major reason for the decline is the percent of respondents who had not found jobs that employed the concepts, theories, and methods that they had learned as undergraduates.

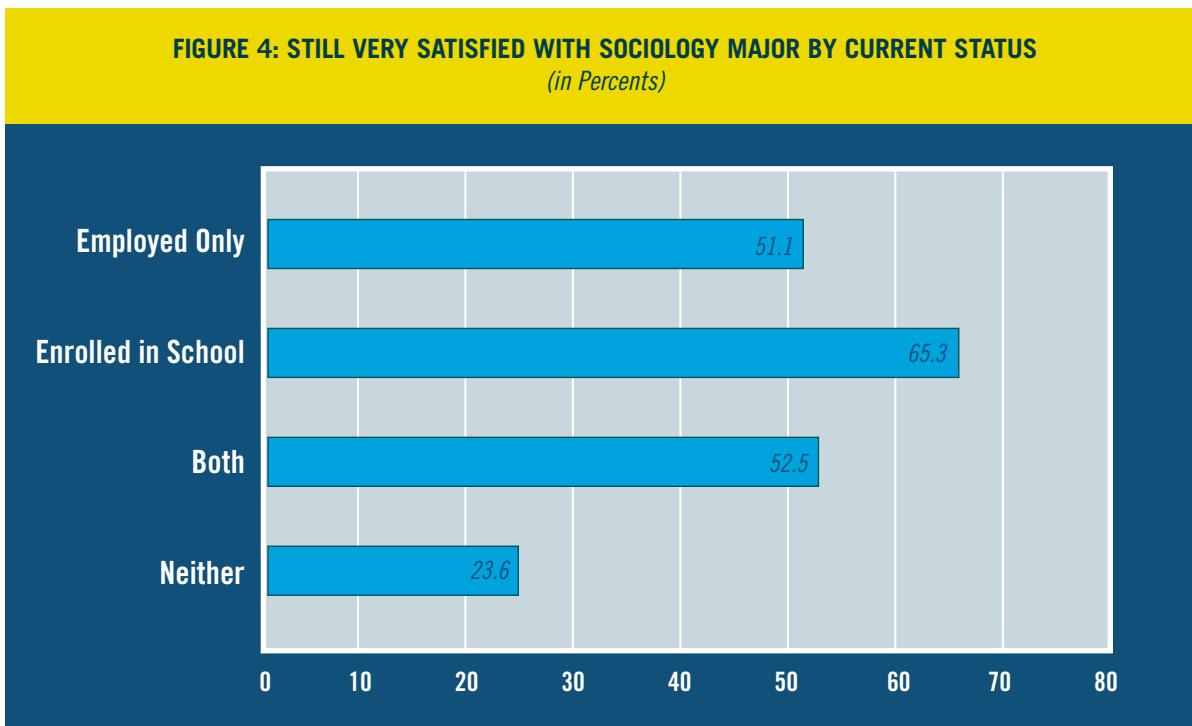
Figure 4 shows that those enrolled in graduate school alone were the group most satisfied with majoring in sociology while those employed but not in graduate schools are substantially less happy with their sociology major than when they were seniors in college. Not surprisingly, those who were neither employed nor attending graduate school during the survey week were the least satisfied with their choice of the sociology major.

### CONCLUSIONS

Since almost 60 percent of sociology baccalaureates are working and another 20 percent are working and going to graduate school, majors need to be counseled as to the kinds of jobs that they can reasonably expect to

## WHAT ARE THEY DOING WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY?

**FIGURE 4: STILL VERY SATISFIED WITH SOCIOLOGY MAJOR BY CURRENT STATUS**  
(in Percents)



Source: ASA Research and Development Department, *What Can I Do With a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology? Wave I and Wave II*

\*Will not equal to 100% because only "Very Satisfied" are included

obtain (especially without methodological skills) and the skills they need to list on their resumes. To increase the likelihood that majors obtain employment that is closely related to their major, it is especially important that faculty provide students with access to local labor market data, such as the regional data

and contacts provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/eag/home.htm> and <http://www.bls.gov/bls/regncon.htm>). This may be especially important if career counseling offices are not aware of the skills that are part of sociological training and few jobs are labeled as “sociologists.” ■

## APPENDIX

### *Table 2*

# What are they doing with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology?

#### JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CATEGORY 1:

#### **SOCIAL SERVICES, COUNSELORS**

- I am an academic mentor through Americorps. I work in a high school classroom with a student body made up of adolescents of varying ages currently involved in the juvenile justice system. I support the students in the classroom by helping them improve academically.
- Specifically, I am an ongoing caseworker for abused and neglected children, which means I deal with cases that get open for services [placement, counseling, truancy prevention, etc.].
- I am the Director of client services for a meals-on-wheels program. My job duties include client intake interviews with elderly/homebound individuals and ongoing case management of client base of 175+.
- I am a contract Forensic Interviewer for a child advocacy center. I interview children for a child abuse investigation. I went through training specifically for this position.
- I determine the eligibility of families for food stamps, Medicaid, and daycare programs.
- I am the funds coordinator hired post-Katrina. I do volunteer coordination, benefit execution and logistics, in-take of individuals, businesses, and groups, looking for assistance, tracked donations, and handle social service referrals.
- I work for a not-for-profit organization, which specializes in creating and managing service-learning programs for young people.
- I work for the Home Energy Assistance Target Program. This is a program designed to help individuals in the community who meet standards of poverty with an annual payment to help with their heating expenses over the winter months.
- I am a Migrant Recruiter. I contact and interview families involved in agriculturally related seasonal/temporary work and provided referrals and

resources to address needs of families and students.

- I provide threshold case management to HIV+ individuals in need of medical care. I oversee the HIV Outreach team and ensure appropriate HIV education sessions are provided throughout the organizations transitional shelter housing.
- I work with victims of domestic violence, specifically educating and transporting victims; providing court advocacy, one-on-one sessions, and crisis calls; and handle annual government reporting and budgeting.

#### JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CATEGORY 2:

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

- I am a paralegal. I research, summarize medical records and depositions, and also handle filing at the courthouse.
- I am an onsite manager of Information Technology. I report to a contracted IT consultant on all matters relating to our network and technology. Mainly, I troubleshoot a variety of issues that pop up with computers, printers, Blackberrys, etc.
- I am an immigration specialist for a large company. I write petitions for people to receive their H1Bs and green cards.
- I work as a marketing assistant and customer service representative for a company.
- I maintain client files, collect client statistics, and edit the program's website.
- I manage the office, including Accounts Payables, Account Receivables, Human Resources, Maintenance Contract Proposals, Training, Customer Relations
- I manage the schedule of a State Representative. I research policy and legislation options, organize town hall events, and assisting constituents in accessing state government.
- I provide support for school coordinators over a five county area.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CATEGORY 3:  
**MANAGEMENT**

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- I handle employment and labor relations, ensuring equal employment opportunity, conflict negotiation, etc. My job functions include recruitment and staffing; classification; employee grievance and appeals; disciplinary actions; workers compensation; benefits; and training and development.
- I handle a government contract for the State Department to plan interagency intelligence conferences. I also plan all the lecture programs for the general public about international topics.
- I am the Director of Marketing and Admissions at a Residential Treatment Center.
- I work in a branch of the NIMS Integration Center with FEMA called Resource Planning and Coordination. I specifically work coordinating efforts with different entities [state, local, tribal...]
- I provide management and financial analysis. The work involves forecasting and tracking revenue for large multimillion dollar efforts, as well as labor relations.
- I provide personnel functions including hiring, training, and employee evaluation. I oversee the supervisory staff and design and maintain the personnel database.
- I am the Quality Assurance manager, and am responsible for assuring that the quality of the products meet customer specification, ensure that the measurements being taken were right and that the plant was in compliance with government regulations.
- I do workforce planning and data analysis for an agency.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CATEGORY 4:  
**TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS**

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- I teach Conversational English and American Studies classes at a Secondary School in Southeastern Ukraine.
- I am a full-time AmeriCorps member working in an alternative charter school for 18-21 year old high school drop-outs. I teach a service learning course on how to use hip-hop and other art forms as advocacy tools for community change.
- I teach Family & Consumer Science [formerly called Home Economics].

- I am a library administrator in private university.
- I am a 7th and 8th grade social studies teacher in a middle school in a large urban city.
- I provide reference, research, and database searching services.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CATEGORY 5:  
**SERVICES**

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- I am a Crime Scene Technician.
- I am a police officer in a large urban city, assigned to patrol division.
- I am a probation/parole officer in a city. My job duties include supervising and counseling offenders regarding their probation/parole requirements as ordered by the court.
- I manage a ski school front line sales office for a major ski resort.
- I am a Pastry Chef.
- I am a police officer. My job duties include patrolling, traffic control, fire and medical emergencies, crime abatement, surveillance, public awareness, warrant service, court witness, DUI enforcement, crime scene investigation, death notification, and accident scene investigation.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CATEGORY 6:  
**SALES, MARKETING**

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- I work in the business development of technology hardware and professional services. This includes client sales, marketing, consulting, project management, contracts.
- I assist with the planning and development of marketing strategies for my organization, which includes executing the marketing plan, developing an E-commerce website, executing email marketing campaigns, developing promotional materials, and executing a quarterly Direct Mail campaign.
- I am a Marketing Consultant for a Broadcasting company. I consult medium to small businesses on marketing decisions, create commercial and promotional schedules, and write creative commercial copy to air on one of their radio stations.
- I created a kick-off event for a capital campaign for my employer as well as developed a program for

managing volunteers and interns. My overall work involves the stewardship of donors and the creation of marketing materials.

- I work in admissions. I interviewed students and started them in programs that they were interested in.
- I work as a real estate consultant. I specialize in helping people all over the country invest in real estate creatively. I also manage a team of 10 real estate consultants and am responsible for making sure they are training the company's clients effectively

#### JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CATEGORY 7: **SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCHERS**

- I assist research investigators in conducting longitudinal studies of human aggression including: Refining and documenting interview procedures to be used in studies; organizing and scheduling interviews, conducting interviews, and compiling and refining measures.
- I am a homeless advocate. I lobby, gather data on the homeless, provide technical assistance for service providers, coordinate and help write grants, and perform administrative tasks.
- I conduct program evaluation of an after-school arts program at two sites. This research assistantship is part of the living wage/stipend I receive for my graduate work in the doctoral program in Social Work and Sociology
- I research climate change policies in several western states and write memos about the policies and legislation. I research [and write] the legal holdings of First Nations [Canadians Native American].
- I use statistical software [specifically MPLUS] to run SEM analyses of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey -Birth Cohort [ECLSB] to explore the relationships between household food insecurity during infancy and later obesity.
- I work for a non-profit prison ministry. Within the ministry, I care for infants of incarcerated mothers, while also acting as a case manager for the mothers.
- I research current transportation issues including managing lanes concepts, equity in tolling, and other issues related to high occupancy toll lane implementation. I also write summaries and reports for meetings and literature. In addition, I attend interagency meetings.

- I am a statistician in the Fertility and Family Statistics Branch of the US Census Bureau.
- I work as a research associate at a consulting firm to philanthropic organizations. I support Analysts and Senior Analysts in program mapping/logic modeling, survey design, analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, and in conducting online research.

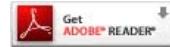
#### JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CATEGORY 10: **OTHER PROFESSIONALS (INCLUDING PR AND IT)**

- I am an Assistant Editor for a magazine. I write and research feature stories, coordinate photo spreads, and hire and manage freelance writers.
- I am a Help Desk Technician specializing in Desktop Support and Break/Fix Support. My basic job functions include responding to internal customer support needs and troubleshooting incident requests.
- I am the Head Womens Lacrosse Coach at Wesley College. My duties include recruiting potential student athletes, monitoring the academic progress of student-athletes, budgeting, scheduling and running practices, and any and all day-to-day activites.
- I fundraise and plan special events that benefit a pediatric cancer center [which is part of a larger not-for-profit childrens hospital]. I also plan special events for the patients of the hospital.
- I am the Director of Alumni Relations and am in charge of memberships, managing the USC Sumter Alumni Council, writing articles, planning alumni events, raising money, and maintaining the database.
- I maintain PC and Mac computers. Specific job duties include data entry using microsoft office programs, website design, creating brochures and flyers, and using audio and video equipment.
- My work is basically coordinating existing environmental justice programs and consulting with governmental agencies to influence public policy.
- I am an Army Transportation Corp Platoon Leader.
- I am the intelligence officer for an aviation unit and have 3 analysts that work for me.
- I work with the university to get students more civically engaged through curricular and co-curricular experiences in the community. The overall goal is to address the needs of low-income K-12 students in the area.



The following are links to research briefs and reports produced by the ASA's Department of Research and Development for dissemination in a variety of venues and concerning topics of interest to the discipline and profession. These briefs can be located at [http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/leftnav/research\\_and\\_stats/briefs\\_and\\_articles/briefs\\_and\\_articles](http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/leftnav/research_and_stats/briefs_and_articles/briefs_and_articles)

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TITLE	YEAR	FORMAT
<a href="#">The Health of Sociology: Statistical Fact Sheets, 2007</a>	2007	PDF 
<a href="#">Sociology and Other Social Science Salary Increases: Past, Present, and Future</a>	2007	PDF 
<a href="#">Race and Ethnicity in the Sociology Pipeline</a>	2007	PDF 
<a href="#">Beyond the Ivory Tower: Professionalism, Skills Match, and Job Satisfaction in Sociology (PowerPoint™ slide show)</a>	2007	PPT 
<a href="#">What Sociologists Know About the Acceptance and Diffusion of Innovation: The Case of Engineering Education</a>	2007	PDF 
<a href="#">Resources or Rewards? The Distribution of Work-Family Policies</a>	2006	PDF 
<a href="#">Profile of 2005 ASA Membership</a>	2006	PDF 
<a href="#">"What Can I Do with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology?" A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology—First Glances: What Do They Know and Where Are They Going?</a>	2006	PDF 
<a href="#">Race, Ethnicity &amp; American Labor Market</a>	2005	PDF 
<a href="#">Race, Ethnicity &amp; Health of Americans</a>	2005	PDF 
<a href="#">The Best Time to Have a Baby: Institutional Resources and Family Strategies Among Early Career Sociologists</a>	2004	PDF 
<a href="#">Academic Relations: The Use of Supplementary Faculty</a>	2004	PDF 
<a href="#">Have Faculty Salaries Peaked? Sociology Wage Growth Flat in Constant Dollars</a>	2004	PDF 
<a href="#">Are Sociology Departments Downsizing?</a>	2004	PDF 
<a href="#">Sociology Salary Trends</a>	2002	PDF 
<a href="#">How Does Your Department Compare? A Peer Analysis from the AY 2000-2001 Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Sociology</a>	2003	PDF 
<a href="#">Graduate Department Vitality: Changes Continue in the Right Direction</a>	2001	PDF 
<a href="#">Minorities at Three Stages in the Sociology Pipeline</a>	2001	PDF 
<a href="#">The Pipeline for Faculty of Color in Sociology</a>	2001	PDF 
<a href="#">Profile of the 2001 ASA Membership</a>	2001	PDF 
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<a href="#">Gender in the Early Stages of the Sociological Career</a>	2000	PDF 
<a href="#">New Doctorates in Sociology: Professions Inside and Outside the Academy</a>	2000	PDF 
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<a href="#">Indicating an Improved Market for Sociologists</a>	1998	PDF 
<a href="#">Update 1: After the Fall: Growth Trends Continue</a>		PDF 
<a href="#">Update 2: BA Growth Trend: Sociology Overtakes Economics</a>		PDF 