

**Summary of the
Assessment Report for 2007-2008
of the
Sociology Program at IU Kokomo**

Each year sociology faculty selects various aspects of the program learning goals to assess. Sociology program goals were adapted by the IU Kokomo resident sociology faculty from the "Learning Goals for the Sociology Major" developed by the American Sociological Association Task Force on the Undergraduate Major (2004). (These goals are attached as Appendix A: Learning Goals for the Sociology Program in the full report.) In 2006, the IUK resident sociology faculty agreed the program assessment focus for the 2007-2008 academic year would be on Goal #2d (which relates to students' ability to integrate and apply sociological theory in their SOC S470 senior seminar papers). This course is required for all sociology majors, and is usually taken in the student's final year before graduation. This report summarizes the data collected relating to Goal #2d of our assessment plan only as these features and activities relate to the SOC S470 course in the spring 2007 semester. Goal #2d specifies two aspects of using theory (integration and application of theory) that faculty agree are important to the discipline of sociology and are important for students to learn before graduating with a bachelor degree majoring in sociology. Our interpretations of the findings suggest that overall students are doing an adequate job of applying and integrating theory in their senior seminar papers. Students' papers were read and scored by each of resident full-time faculty member and the average score for each component was computed. Averages for both components exceeded the benchmark score of 3.0. We provide some discussion of possible reasons for these findings. Results were discussed among the resident sociology faculty and we conclude that no significant changes in the program or in pedagogy are required but that we will continue to focus on this goal in the sociology curriculum and identify students who may need assistance learning how to apply or integrate theory early in the curriculum.

Assessment Report Sociology Program, 2007-2008

I. Brief Summary of the Sociology Program Assessment Plan

The IUK sociology program goals were adapted by the IUK resident sociology faculty from the "Learning Goals for the Sociology Major" developed by the American Sociological Association Task Force on the Undergraduate Major. These goals are attached as Appendix A: Learning Goals for the Sociology Program. In 2006, the IUK resident sociology faculty agreed the program assessment focus for the 2007-2008 academic year would be upon Goal #11 as it can be measured in the SOC S470 Senior Seminar course. This course is required for all sociology majors. Our assessment of SOC S470 will include collecting data from *all* students in enrolled in this course. This report describes the assessment activities which took place as result of analyzing the senior seminar papers which students wrote in the spring of 2007. This report summarizes the data collected relating to Goal #2 of our assessment plan only as these features and activities relate to the S470 project in spring 2007. Goal #2 specifies several aspects of theory in sociology that faculty members agree are important to sociology majors to learn. However, for this assessment activity we will focus only on part (d) of Goal #2. (See this goal highlighted below from Appendix A: Learning Goals for the Sociology Major.)

II. Assessment Methods

Program Goals/Artifacts & Objects/ and Performance Characteristics to be assessed in Academic Year 2007-2008

1. **Goal #2:** The role of theory in sociology, such that the student will be able to: (a) define theory and describe its role in building sociological knowledge; (b) compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations; (c) show how theories reflect the historical context of the times and cultures in which they were developed; and (d) describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.

As these program goals were not written expressly for the assessment process as defined by IU Kokomo, all of the components are not taught in any *one* course. Instead they are embedded in numerous courses that majors take. We have chosen therefore, to focus on Goal #2(d) as highlighted above which we will refer to as Outcome #1. It would not be possible to assess the other components of Goal #2 in this course, as they are not necessarily a part of this assignment or presented in all the papers given the specific assignment. Other artifacts from other courses will be necessary to assess components a-c that we may look at in a future plan/report.

III. Description of the Assessment Results

Average faculty evaluations of student papers are used to measure the extent to which students met the goal as defined by two components of Goal #2(d):

Outcome #1: Integrate and apply sociological theory in the required SOC S470 research paper

1. **Component #1:** Integrate theory as presented in the SOC S470 Senior Seminar paper including demonstrating the ability to identify concepts or propositions associated with sociological theories that are appropriate to and relevant to the research topic the student is exploring in the paper or to the research question the student is attempting to answer in the paper.

2. **Component #2:** Demonstrate the ability to apply theory in the SOC S470 paper including the ability to use theory to guide the development of the argument or conclusions made in the paper and/or to interpret the empirical research findings of their own qualitative investigation or that of other researchers cited in the paper's literature review with the purpose of better understanding the topic of study.

A. Outcome #1 Students will demonstrate their achievement of the "integration of theory" component of Outcome #1 by their development of a "theory section" in the required research paper they complete in the SOC S470 Senior Seminar and/or by their use of theory or theoretical concepts in the conclusion sections of their papers.

Artifacts/Objects: SOC S470 Senior Seminar Research Papers completed in stages throughout the 2007 spring semester were evaluated by each of the four resident sociology faculty members in the 2007 fall semester. The faculty used their professional judgment to assess the extent to which each student achieved the "integration of theory" component in the paper with one of five "Global Summary Indicators": (1) no or limited integration, (2) marginal integration, (3) adequate integration, (4) effective integration, (5) excellent integration. Faculty members also completed a checklist for each paper with comments that summarize the basis for the "Global Summary Indicator" they selected for each paper for Outcome #1, Component #1.

Performance Characteristics: An average score of "3" (for all SOC S470 students in the course) on the Global Summary Indicators as applied by the faculty to the theory section of the papers reviewed will represent an acceptable "benchmark" level of performance for Goal #2, Outcome #1, Component #1.

Outcome #1, Component#1 Results (The extent to which students demonstrated integration of theory in their SOC S470 papers.) The average of faculty assessments for each of the 11 papers was computed. We then averaged (for each of the averages on the 11 papers) across all papers. This score was 3.3. Note that raw scores ranged from 1 to 5 with 5 being highest level of integration and 1 the lowest. Our benchmark of 3.0 was met. This suggests that students on the average are able to demonstrate adequate theory integration within their senior papers. Moreover, individually only two of the 11 students did not meet the benchmark of an average score of faculty ratings of 3.0. Nine of the 11 students' average ratings were at or above the benchmark. (Individual average ratings ranged from 1.7 to 5.0.) This further substantiates that the majority of sociology majors taking this class have demonstrated that they can adequately integrate theory into their papers.

B. Outcome #1:, Component #2: Students demonstrated their achievement of the "application of theory" component of Outcome #1 by discussing the way (or ways) in which the theoretical features they have selected for inclusion in the paper helps focus and/or guide their research project. While this feature may not be located in a distinct and labeled section of the paper, it generally involved discussing either some "general predictions" derived from the theory that the research will investigate OR a discussion of the how the theoretical framework developed by the student will be used to help explore the "research topic" the student will investigate. It could also be indicated by the student's demonstration of the connections between theory or theoretical concepts and their explanation of the social reality that s/he investigated.

Artifacts/Objects: SOC S470 Senior Seminar Research Paper completed in stages throughout the 2007 Spring semester will be evaluated by each of the four resident sociology faculty members in the spring and summer semesters of 2008. The faculty used their professional judgment to assess the extent to which each student achieved the “application of theory” component in the paper with one of five “Global Summary Indicators”: (1) no or limited application, (2) marginal application, (3) adequate application, (4) effective application, (5) excellent application. Faculty members completed a checklist for each paper providing comments that summarize the basis for the “Global Summary Indicator” they selected for each paper for Outcome #1, Component #2.

Performance Characteristics: An average score of “3” (for all SOC S470 students in the course) on the Global Summary Indicators as applied by the faculty to the theory section of the papers reviewed will represent an acceptable “benchmark” level of performance for Goal #2, Outcome #1, Component #2.

Outcome#1, Component#2 Results: (The extent to which students demonstrated application of theory.) The average of faculty assessments for each of the 11 papers was computed. We then averaged (of averages for each of the 11 papers) across all papers. This score was 3.1. Note that raw scores ranged from 1 to 5 with 5 being highest level of integration and 1 the lowest. Our benchmark of 3.0 was met. This suggests that students on the average are able to demonstrate adequate average levels of the application of theory in their papers. With regard to this component, 7 students individually attained the benchmark as well. Four students did not (although two of the four were very close). The range of student average scores on this component as from 1.7 to 5.0. Overall, based on the average score for all students on this component as well as the individual student scores, we can conclude that students are able to demonstrate application of theory at an adequate level.

Faculty interpretation of Results

Our interpretation of these findings is that overall students generally are meeting our benchmarks and performing adequately on these components of Outcome #1. The range of faculty assessments of both components on individual student papers raises two issues: First is the issue of reliability of measurement between faculty members. On some student papers the faculty rating varied as much as 3.5 to 4.0 points. This suggests that, perhaps, faculty were not consistently measuring the components the same way in their individual assessments. Inter-rater reliability could be an issue here and may need to be considered in future faculty assessments. Secondly, the range of student scores within each component suggests that while most students can integrate and apply theory adequately, that at least 2 students did not appear to do so in their papers. While we have met a benchmark of 3.0, ideally faculty would like all students to be able to do this effectively. As such it may be helpful for faculty to attempt to identify and give special attention to such students who may be having difficulty with these tasks earlier in the curriculum.

IV. Using Assessment for Program Assessment

The results of this assessment report do not indicate any needed major changes in the program or in pedagogy. However, theory integration and application is a central and important skill for all sociology majors and identifying students having difficulty with this skill before they reach their senior seminar might be warranted by these data. Students who are not able to adequately integrate and apply theory should be given additional opportunities to practice these

skills. While we have met our benchmark, IU Kokomo Sociology faculty would like all students to be able to meet this goal at an adequate level or higher level. We will also consider the extent to which a 3.0 benchmark should be raised. We will consider these issues at future program meetings and develop strategies to identify and help students where needed.

VI. Dissemination of Results

The results of this report will be distributed to all full-time sociology faculty members and discussed at sociology program meetings. Sociology faculty members also discuss program goals in the senior seminar and solicit feedback about these goals from each graduating senior in a lengthy exit survey. The report will be made available on the IU Kokomo website in summary form with link to the entire report. Students, staff and interested members of the community will have access to this report. We will consider any comments or feedback that we receive for the improvement of this program.

Appendix A: Learning Goals for the Sociology Major

The sociology major should study, review, and *demonstrate understanding of the following:**

1. The discipline of sociology and its role in contributing to our understanding of social reality, such that the student will be able to: (a) describe how sociology differs from and is similar to other social sciences and give examples of these differences; (b) describe how sociology contributes to a liberal arts understanding of social reality; and (c) apply the sociological imagination, sociological principles, and concepts to her/his own life.
2. The role of theory in sociology, such that the student will be able to: (a) define theory and describe its role in building sociological knowledge; (b) compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations; (c) show how theories reflect the historical context of the times and cultures in which they were developed; and (d) describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.
3. The role of evidence and qualitative and quantitative methods in sociology, such that the student will be able to: (a) identify basic methodological approaches and describe the general role of methods in building sociological knowledge; (b) compare and contrast the basic methodological approaches for gathering data; (c) design a research study in an area of choice and explain why various decisions were made; and (d) critically assess a published research report and explain how the study could have been improved.
4. The technical skills involved in retrieving information and data from the Internet and using computers appropriately for data analysis. The major should also be able to do (social) scientific technical writing that accurately conveys data findings and to show an understanding and application of ethical practice as a sociologist.
5. Basic concepts in sociology and their fundamental theoretical interrelations, such that the student will be able to define, give examples, and demonstrate the relevance of culture; social change; socialization; stratification; social structure; institutions; and differentiations by race/ethnicity, gender, age, and class.
6. How culture and social institutions operate, such that the student will be able to: (a) show how institutions interlink in their effects on each other and on individuals; (b) demonstrate how social change factors such as population or urbanization affect social structures and individuals; (c) demonstrate how and social structure vary across time and place and the effects of such variations; and (d) identify examples of specific policy implications using reasoning about social-structural effects.
7. Reciprocal relationships between individuals and society, such that the student will be able to: (a) explain how the self develops sociologically; (b) demonstrate how social and cultural factors influence individual behavior and the self's development; (c) demonstrate how social interaction and the self influence society and social structure; and (d) distinguish sociological approaches to analyzing the self from psychological, economic, and other approaches.
8. The macro/micro distinction, such that the student will be able to: (a) compare and contrast theories at one level with those at another; (b) summarize some research documenting connections between the two; and (c) develop a list of research or analytical issues that should be pursued to more fully understand the connections between the two.
9. In depth at least two specialty areas within sociology, such that the student will be able to: (a) summarize basic questions and issues in the areas; (b) compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations and middle range theories in the areas; (c) show how sociology helps understand the area; (d) summarize current research in the areas; and (e) develop specific policy implications of research and theories in the areas.
10. The internal diversity of American society and its place in the international context, such that the student will be able to describe: (a) the significance of variations by race, class, gender, and age; and (b) will know how to appropriately generalize or resist generalizations across groups.

Two more generic goals that should be pursued in sociology are:

11. To think critically, such that the student will be able to: (a) move easily from recall analysis and application to synthesis and evaluation; (b) identify underlying (assumptions in particular theoretical orientations or arguments; (c) identify underlying assumptions in particular methodological approaches to an issue; (d) show how patterns of thought and knowledge are directly influenced by political-economic social structures; (e) present opposing viewpoints and alternative hypotheses on various issues; and (f) engage in teamwork where many or different viewpoints are presented.

12. To develop values, such that the student will see: (a) the utility of the sociological perspective as one of several perspectives on social reality; and (b) the importance of reducing the negative effects of social inequality.

*Demonstrate means that the student will be able to show or document appropriate mastery of the material and/or skills, and thus that this mastery can be assessed (with an exam, a presentation, by a portfolio, and so forth).

(Source: *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated: Meeting the Challenge of Teaching Sociology in the Twenty-First Century*. 2004. Kathleen McKinney, Carla B. Howery, Kerry J. Strand, Edward L. Kain, and Catherine White Berheide. "A Report of the ASA Task Force on the Undergraduate Major." American Sociological Association, 1307 New York Avenue NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C.)