

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: Sociology

SUBMITTED BY: Janine DeWitt

DATE: August 2016

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED:

The data and documents for this report will be stored on a CANVAS site created by the Sociology Department.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program description from the course catalog:

The sociology program at Marymount challenges students to consider global issues of diversity, inequality, and social justice by taking an analytical approach to understand social life. Through applied coursework, research, and community-based learning, students develop career skills as well as an appreciation for the value of community engagement. Students address social injustice locally and globally by applying analytical skills developed throughout the program. Applied theory and research methods are woven throughout the coursework. The culminating senior experience provides students with the opportunity to gain practical experience in real-world settings. The Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology at Marymount University provides students with a global perspective and cultural competence, preparing them for success in multiple career paths. Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to:

- apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing,
- apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue,
- demonstrate an understanding of the value of diverse perspectives for achieving social justice when working in community engagement settings such as the internship, and
- demonstrate effective presentation skills within the discipline.

List all of the program’s learning outcomes:

Current Learning Outcomes	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year	Year of Next Planned Assessment
#1. Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing.	2013-2014*	Yes	2018-2019
#2. Apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue.	N/A	Yes	2018-2019
#3. Demonstrate an understanding of the value of diverse perspectives for achieving social justice when working in community engagement settings such as the internship.	N/A	No	2016-2017
#4. Demonstrate effective presentation skills within the discipline.	2013-2014*	No	2016-2017

* = These are the current outcomes, which were revised after the last assessment report. Those with an asterisk are similar to outcomes measured in 2013-2014.

Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan:

The sociology major is focused on addressing inequality and achieving justice in a world of diversity and difference. All required courses in the major contribute to this departmental focus (i.e., Working for Justice, Working for Change; Social Justice; Addressing Injustice: Research Methods. In addition, electives explore aspects of diversity or inequality (i.e., Gender Inequality; Global Inequality and Community Development). In the Strategic Program Evaluation process, on April 30th 2016, The Dean’s Council recommended to APBP that the Sociology program be moved from “needs improvement” to “boutique” status.

Sociology coursework and departmental engagement with other academic units (Student Affairs, Center for Global Education) contribute to the campus-wide achievement of the following core values outlined in the strategic plan:

- ❖ Diversity –The Marymount community welcomes and values all individuals and recognizes diversity as a source of strength.
- ❖ Respect –The Marymount community maintains and promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect, cooperation, and civility.
- ❖ Service – The members of the Marymount community actively seek to serve others and advance social justice.

Because of our thematic focus of addressing inequality and achieving justice we contribute to the University Strategic Plan in the following ways:

Strategic Plan Action Item	Sociology program response
Maximize academic impact of internship, service and international experiences	Recent curricular revisions strengthened the learning continuum by adding an introductory level course (Working for Justice, Working for Change) and aligning capstone courses (Community Engagement, Senior Practicum).
Develop strategies for expanding online education opportunities that promote student-faculty connections in appropriate courses and programs.	Globally networked learning, SOC 131 online.
Ensure curricular offerings at the undergraduate and graduate levels include global perspective	Curricular revisions aligned program focus with university mission. The majority of our course offerings now include global perspective. Our faculty offer Global Classrooms with the Center for Global Education regularly (i.e. The Netherlands, France, El Salvador).
Intentionally and strategically incorporate the global experience into student life	Working with the Center for Global Education, we initiated Global Dialogue Series (NPR’s Armando Trull); Dr. Bakker serves as faculty sponsor for Dreamer’s Student Club.
Expand local partnerships and internships with a global focus	Internships with Tenants & Workers United; Northern Virginia Family Services; Separated Children’s Seeking Asylum Service’s under The Education and Training Board Dublin (Ireland); Local partnership with the Bonder & Amanda Johnson Community Development Corporation
Create long-term partnerships with international organizations to serve as hubs for global exchange programs	Globally networked learning partnerships: Hanze University of Applied Science, ITESO University.
Develop strategies to increase Marymount engagement with other community organizations throughout the national capital region	With Bonder and Amanda Johnson CDC, conducting a needs assessment in the Nauck community of Arlington; with CGE & Arlington Sister Cities program campus dialogue with Aachen exchange students.

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment:

A culture of continuous improvement requires that departmental faculty engage in conversations about the connection between the sociology curriculum and student progress through that curriculum for the purpose of developing a shared understanding of the best strategies that can contribute to this connection. Our initial question was -- *How well does our program support sociology majors toward the goal of achieving the intended program learning outcomes?* In our last report, we planned to shift our focus from a single point of assessment (senior research report) to more comprehensive program assessment across levels of the program. This shift is a long-term process toward which we continue making progress.

Description of the assessment process: Two areas were identified for evaluation: apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing (Outcome #1), and apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue (Outcome #2). We assessed student products from the Senior Practicum as our direct measure of these learning outcomes - the Senior Research Report. Indirect measures include the following two sources of information: 1) results of the *Graduating Student Survey*, which is administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness; and 2) focus groups conducted by the Associate Dean in the School of Education and Human Services conducted with students who were completing the Senior Practicum. The two full-time faculty members and a post-doctoral teaching fellow were involved in creating and applying the evaluation rubric to evaluate student work. The same two full-time faculty members and a second post-doctoral teaching fellow were involved in analyzing the results reported in this document.

Strengths: All faculty in the program are involved in the assessment process. In addition to the full-time faculty and teaching fellows we initiated program improvement conversations with adjunct faculty by looking at the program's foundation course – SOC 131 Principles of Sociology. Over the last two years we convened all instructors of this course in an effort to standardize course content and sync the course with the latest disciplinary recommendations. We added a common assignment so that we could compare student progress across sections of the course. Last year we brought all sections of the course together for a culminating event (Sociology Innovation Lab) that emphasizes how sociology can inform social action. The conversations that were initiated in the context of SOC 131 have led to a reflection on the program overall as well as specific curricular improvements such as the addition of a 200-level course focused on the inquiry learning in the context of exploring career opportunities (Working for Justice, Working for Change).

Challenges: Our department includes 2 full-time faculty, 1 post-doctoral teaching fellow, and 4-5 adjuncts per semester. With the exception of the 2 full time faculty, different faculty members have participated in these continuous improvement conversations over the period of review, making it difficult to build a common foundation of understanding from which to implement change. Although staff turnover poses a challenge, we continue having program improvement conversations. We are committed to achieving a departmental culture that expects the coordination of efforts among those who are teaching sociology courses as well as the constant reflection on student accomplishment. The shared meaning generated from these assessment conversations will be the key to our program moving forward successfully.

Our data also reflects university level retention challenges -- not all students who complete our program began with us as freshman and not all students who begin with us complete the program. For example, as of Spring 2013 there were 12 Sociology majors. Of that group, 5 graduated, 1 transferred and graduated from Marymount's Liberal Studies program, 1 student is on continuing registration and scheduled to graduate this semester, but 5 of the students are no longer at the university. During the period covered by this report the students in the Sociology program transferred into the program -- 90% of the sociology majors who graduated over the last two years were transfer students (Attachment B). We anticipate this percentage of transfer students could change depending on university trends in the overall number of transfer students at Marymount and as we strengthen outreach efforts with students at the

freshmen and sophomore levels. Similarly, not all students who begin our program complete the program. There are fewer students in the 2015-2016 senior experience cohort than would be anticipated based on those who entered the program. Anecdotal information from our students offers a snapshot of some challenges faced by undergraduates at Marymount. For example, of those students who entered in the program in the last two years, 4 transferred to the Liberal Studies program in order to reduce the number of credits needed to graduate, 1 left the university to enroll in a local public institution to reduce tuition expenses, 1 left for another private university for personal reasons, and another 6 left the university for unexplained reasons. One of our current majors is on temporary leave from the university to save money for tuition.

This report examines a period of transition. In many ways program assessment at this point in time is premature and our analysis underscores the need for further investigation before making recommendations for planned improvements. Over the last several years we have made quite a few curricular changes, responding to university initiatives as well as our changing student population. The requirements for the current sociology program were initiated in the Fall of 2013, reducing the overall number of credits in the major from 51 to 33, and establishing a distinctive program identity that is tied to the university mission. Since that time, the program has continued evolving --we added electives that further distinguish our program and respond to student needs. For this reason, the data evaluated in this report reflect a program that is no longer existent and must be interpreted within this context of transition.

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

We revised our learning outcomes in 2014 based on suggestions by the Assessment Committee. We continue making curricular adjustments to our program as a result of interim assessment efforts (i.e. Senior Focus Groups, anecdotal information during advising). The chart below outlines most of these changes:

Outcomes targeted	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome #1 Apply a sociological imagination to global issue • Outcome #5 Demonstrate proficiency in written communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Coordinate SOC 131 full-time and adjunct faculty to identify the introductory level sociological concepts to be covered in SOC 131. ✓ Pilot a common writing assignment in all sections of SOC 131. ✓ Develop a rubric for evaluating success and an assessment procedure for reviewing assignments. 	<p>The planned improvement concentrated efforts on the introduction of the “sociological imagination” (term coined by C. Wright Mills) in SOC 131. For the last two years we coordinated a common assignment and rubric across all sections of the course so that we could compare student progress. We held a workshop with SOC 131 full-time and adjunct instructors, sharing experiences again at the end of the semester. Student work products were used in subsequent semesters during the course workshop so new faculty had a sense of the range work they could expect. We also added a common final exam event, highlighting how</p>

		sociologists apply a sociological imagination examine a global issue such as climate change.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome # 2 Apply relevant research method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Full-time faculty will review syllabi, align course learning outcomes for the inquiry sequence and identify assignments appropriate for assessment of Outcome #2. 	<p>A review of inquiry courses (Social Justice; Addressing Injustice: Qualitative Methods; Addressing Injustice: Quantitative Methods) indicated that the curriculum prepared students to conduct academic research rather than gain practice based skills that could lead to a broad range of career paths. Our students do not aspire to become academic sociologists, so we re-aligned the curriculum by adding a new 200 level practice-oriented inquiry course (Working for Justice, Working for Change). At the same time we reduced the number of required methods courses from 2 (Quantitative and Qualitative) to 1 (Research Methods).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome #1 Apply a sociological imagination to global issue • Outcome #5 Demonstrate proficiency in written & oral communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Full-time faculty will review syllabi, align course learning outcomes and revise program outcome #5 on written communication to address writing in the discipline. – Identify product to measure oral communication. ✓ Written products will be collected in SOC 495 to assess Outcomes #1 & #5. 	<p>We revised learning outcomes #1 & #5 to read: <i>Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing.</i> Senior research projects were collected to evaluate this outcome. In the coming year, we plan to add an oral communication assignment to the senior practicum as well as identify other courses for introducing and practicing speaking and presentation skills.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome #3 Analyze diversity in promoting social justice • Outcome #4 Demonstrate appreciation for the value of diverse perspectives for achieving social justice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Full-time faculty will revise the program outcomes using ASA and AACU materials as benchmarks, review syllabi, align course learning outcomes and identify assignments appropriate for assessment purposes. 	<p>These outcomes were not evaluated in this review cycle, however we did revise the outcomes to be measurable in terms of experiential learning settings: <i>“Demonstrate an understanding of the value of diverse perspectives for achieving social justice when working in community engagement settings such as the internship.”</i></p> <p>We decided that our efforts would be more productively directed toward curriculum revisions</p>

		<p>rather than toward identifying possible assignments for assessment. In addition, last spring, the American Sociological Association and the Social Science Research Council released a report, titled "Measuring college learning in sociology." We plan to reference this document moving forward.</p>
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Provide a response to last year's University Assessment Committee review of the program's learning assessment report:

The following feedback was received from the Assessment Committee Recommendations received in Fall 2014:

- ✓ Review outcome #5 (writing) to be more specific to the discipline of sociology.
- ✓ Revise outcomes to ensure consistency in reporting. Reporting should report on results of assessment of current year's outcomes, e.g. a 2013-2014 report should report on the results of 2013-2014 outcomes.
- ✓ Note from Planning and Institutional Effectiveness: There are some discrepancies between the information in your assessment report and Marymount's course catalog. Please note that changes to outcomes should be made in a timely manner so that outcomes can be listed accurately in the course catalog. Any changes made to outcomes for 2015-2016 need to be included in the 2015-2016 course catalog, and outcomes for 2014-2015 assessment should match what is currently in the course catalog. If the catalog description for 2014-2015 is inaccurate, please send corrections to PIE by January 30, 2015. If your unit will be making changes to outcomes for 2015-2016, please send those to PIE by January 30 as well, so that the catalog information can be verified prior to printing.

Based on the Assessment Committee's recommendations, we revised the learning outcome for written communication to be more specific to the discipline (applying a sociological imagination to global issues). We made sure that the MU catalog copy matched the most recent version of learning outcomes. Note: Learning outcomes changed after the Assessment Report and the associated Assessment Committee response in 2014. The current report examines the new outcomes that were put in place at that time. Therefore, the learning outcomes in this report apply to the period of review but differ from the text that appears in the last report or in the Assessment Committee recommendations.

Outcomes Assessment 2015-2016

Learning Outcome 1: Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing.

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.	Performance Standard Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.	Data Collection Discuss the data collected and student population	Analysis 1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.
<p>Direct measure: Senior Papers Three faculty members evaluated 10 Senior Research Projects, which were completed in the SOC 495 Senior Practicum. This outcome was assessed using the following two dimensions of the evaluation rubric:</p> <p>a) Sociological imagination: Issue/problem is described and analyzed by considering the interaction of social forces, structural constraints, social context, and/or human agency.</p> <p>b) Effective writing: Information is effectively integrated, interpreted, and evaluated in support of a coherent thesis.</p>	<p>An acceptable level of student performance is a rating of 3.00/5.00, with a majority of students earning a rating of 3.00 or above on the sociological imagination and effective writing criteria.</p>	<p>All 10 research reports completed in Senior Practicum during the review period were evaluated. These reports were written in SOC 495 Senior Practicum – the course was offered twice during the evaluation period (6 for 2014-2015 & 4 for 2015-2016).</p>	<p>1) Analysis process: Sociology program faculty evaluated the Senior research reports using a custom designed rubric that was developed through group discussion (Attachment A). Before the rating process occurred, all papers were de-identified and made available electronically. All faculty reviewed each paper independently. Two raters discussed the three criteria: sociological imagination, written communication and research methodology, relative to each paper. After discussion, these 2 raters independently assigned a numerical value to each criteria on the rubric for each individual paper. Rater 3 evaluated the papers without conversation. We learned that the conversations shared during the evaluation process were very valuable for the purpose of strengthening the program and we plan to continue this type of collaboration when conducting assessment in the future.</p> <p>2) Findings (see Attachment B) a) Sociological imagination: 90% acceptable rating 40% (4/10 projects) were rated a 4 or 5/5 (Issue/problem is described and analyzed by considering the interaction of social forces, structural constraints, social context, and/or human agency.) 50% (5/10 projects) were rated a 3/5 (Issue/problem is described with some reference to social forces, structural constraints, social context, and/or human agency.)</p>

			<p>10% (1/10 project) was rated 2/5 which is below acceptable</p> <p>b) Effective writing: 60% acceptable rating 30% (3/10 projects) were rated a 4/5 30% (3/10 projects) were rated a 3/5 (Contains some integration, interpretation, or evaluation of information in support a thesis) 40% (4/10 projects) were rated 2/5, which is below acceptable.</p>
<p>Indirect Measure: Senior Focus Groups At the end of the Senior Practicum course, the Associate Dean conducted a focus group with the seniors in Spring 2015 and Spring 2016 (See Attachment C). Responses from all questions where relevant are included.</p>	<p>An acceptable level is that students are able to articulate what they have learned and that students identify a positive relationship between their program experience and their learning.</p>	<p>The Associate Dean convened both focus groups with a total of nine students contributing. The 2015 focus group for 2015 included 5 students and for 2016 4 students.</p>	<p>Students expressed an appreciation for their ability to apply and communicate a sociological perspective: [The program asks] <i>...several things of you like stepping out of your own biases and see(ing) things from your own perspective, asking you to do field work, and you will have to do research and volunteer. You will improve your writing skills. The professors will guide you through it. [Students] will see the world a little bit different from a sociological perspective.</i>; <i>"I learned a lot when hearing other people's perspectives. I learned a lot about my beliefs and become able to voice them..."</i>; <i>"It's ok to have different viewpoints. Sociology majors just want to save the world. Talking and listening is how to start with a common ground. Agree to disagree. You can learn so much from differences. The differences in our world are the secret of the beauty."</i></p> <p>Quite a few students mentioned the writing components of the program. While some felt well prepared, other students indicated they would have enjoyed less writing or different kinds of writing experiences. <i>"The classes had a lot, reading and writing intensive experiences..."</i>; <i>"I know different types of writing styles."</i>; <i>"more diverse writing assignments would be good. One student did not feel prepared to write professionally. We need a creative writing for SOC and a professional writing class is needed. The advisors need to tell you that certain courses are</i></p>

			<i>writing intensive. English classes teach you different ways of writing than SOC."</i>
<p>Indirect Measure: Graduating Senior Surveys are administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Survey questions analyzed– Evaluation of Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply knowledge and skills to new situations - Develop a coherent written argument 	<p>An acceptable level is for a majority of responding students to register “good” or “excellent” responses.</p>	<p>There were 6 respondents for AY 2014-15 and 4 respondents for AY 2015 – 16. Not all respondents answered all survey questions therefore results will be reported as % of those responding.</p>	<p><u>Apply knowledge to new situations</u> 2014-15: 60% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding. 2015 -16:100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.</p> <p><u>Develop coherent written argument</u> 2014 -15: 40% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding 2015-16: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 3 students responding.</p>

Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

We were pleased to see that on the direct measure of this outcome, 90% of the senior projects successfully communicated a sociological perspective effectively in writing. The senior research papers examined issues in terms of the interaction of social forces, structural constraints, social context, or human agency. The direct measures for writing were not quite as high, with 60% receiving an acceptable rating. Of note is that some international students experienced an additional challenge of expressing complex sociological ideas in their second language, however, other international students did not find written communication in a second language as challenging. With 1 exception, the cumulative ratings for research projects were higher for those students with the fewest number of transfer credits (Attachment B. 2014 – 2016 Research Report Scores listed by number of transfer credits). Given the transitional nature of the program, we are unsure of how to interpret this finding.

On the indirect measures, many students indicated they felt comfortable applying their sociological knowledge to new situations and had multiple opportunities to develop writing skills. But most rewarding for the program is the high value students place on the sociological knowledge they gained while at Marymount:

- *“Being a sociology major taught me to be a better person and look at the world in a different way.”*
- *“Every course had a different aspect of [global inequality, diversity, and social justice]. I saw students in my classes have some eye-opening experiences right beside me. We learned so much about culture and diversity in all the classes that it also made me appreciate my own culture.”*
- *“Before I came to Marymount I didn’t have an understanding of the world as I do now. I couldn’t have gotten a better experience.”*

Responses regarding writing on the indirect measures were more mixed, varying by cohort: the majority of students in the first cohort did feel prepared, and 100% of those responding in the second cohort felt prepared. These indirect measures do not necessarily correspond to performance on the direct measures. Regardless, we plan to continue stressing writing skills across our curriculum.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

One program strength is that all student projects applied a sociological perspective and highly value the educational experience received. An opportunity for improvement is to further strengthen writing skills for all students.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

Students suggested we increase the number of electives, as they would like “(m)ore group discussions on SOC addressing social justice, topics in human rights, addressing injustice and advocacy.” In response we’ve added a new course SOC 251 Working for Justice, Working for Change to be offered in Spring 2017. The course is intended to introduce students to a range of career opportunities available in a variety of organizations as well as the inquiry learning process. We will also evaluate the feasibility of increasing the number of writing-intensive electives offered. In addition, we will discuss ways we might scaffold the writing objectives across course levels, particularly in conjunction with development of critical reasoning and inquiry skills.

Learning Outcome 2: Apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.	Performance Standard Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.	Data Collection Discuss the data collected and student population	Analysis 1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.
Direct measure: Senior Papers Three faculty members evaluated 10 Senior Research Projects, which were completed in the SOC 495 Senior Practicum. This outcome was assessed using the following dimensions on the evaluation rubric: 1. Appropriate research method is identified and	An acceptable level of student performance is a rating of 3.00/5.00, with a majority of students earning a rating of 3.00 or above on the research method and/or analysis criteria.	All 10 student research reports written in SOC 495 were evaluated. These reports were written in SOC 495 Senior Practicum – the course was offered twice during the evaluation period (6- 2014-2015 & 4 -2015-2016).	1) Same analysis process as above. 2) Appropriate research methods: 40% acceptable rating 30% (3/10) of student projects were rated 4/5 10% (1/10) of student projects were rated 3/5 50% (5/10) of student projects were rated 2/5 10% (1/20) of student projects were rated 1 /5

<p>applied systematically to collect and effectively analyze empirical data.</p>			
<p>Indirect Measure: Senior Focus Groups At the end of the Senior Practicum course, the Associate Dean conducted a focus group with the seniors in Spring 2015 and Spring 2016 (See Attachment C) – Responses from all questions are included where relevant.</p>	<p>An acceptable level is that students are able to articulate what they have learned and that a majority of student comments identify a positive relationship between their program experience and their learning.</p>	<p>The Associate Dean convened both focus groups with a total of nine students contributing. The 2015 focus group for 2015 included 5 students and the group in 2016 included 4 students.</p>	<p>Both groups of students mentioned research. The first cohort of students focused on general preparation as well as some of the citation practices associated with conducting library research. Students are required to use the American Sociological Association citation format, not APA but one student seemed to prefer APA format: <i>“The department has prepared me to do research and write research questions.”; “The field studies improved my writing. All the classes for SOC should have APA style. In the CTL, the tutors took SOC courses and know APA format. ...I went to the library to do APA. No one knew it there. TAs could help with APA format if it is still required and for content.”</i></p> <p>Students in the second cohort (2015-16) expressed an appreciation for the value of the research skills gained, but indicated that they wished they were exposed to research methods earlier in their program: <i>“Research skills were really developed in [Senior] seminar. We learned about creating our own research and collect our own data.”; “All agreed on qualitative methods, especially the interview and survey assignments.”; “Quantitative methods class was really hard but ...so good. And it is too much in one semester. It is too much and so useful. If you want to get your master’s or PhD then you need it. It should not be at the end of the studies. We should have it earlier. You can’t be strong enough in the quantitative methods in one semester.”</i></p>
<p>Indirect Measure: Graduating Senior Surveys are administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Survey questions analyzed:</p>	<p>An acceptable level is for a majority of responding students to register “good” or “excellent” responses.</p>	<p>There were 6 respondents for AY 2014-15 and 4 respondents for AY 2015 – 16. Not all respondents answered all survey questions therefore</p>	<p><u>Conduct research to support position</u> 2014 -15: 40% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p>

<p>Evaluation of preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct research to support position - Use quantitative/qualitative techniques in your professional field - Solve problems in your field using your knowledge and skills 		<p>results will be reported as % of those responding.</p>	<p>2015-16: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 3 students responding. <u>Use quantitative/qualitative techniques in field</u> 2014 -15: 60% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, With 5 students responding. 2015-16: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.</p> <p><u>Solve problems in field using knowledge & skills</u> 2014 -15: 60% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding. 2015-16: 75% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.</p>
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Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

The cohorts of students in this report took a two course methods sequence (SOC 351, SOC 352), yet only 40% of the final research projects were rated acceptable regarding identification and systematic application of a research method and effective analysis of empirical data. In contrast, on the indirect measures, a majority of students expressed confidence using quantitative and qualitative methods in the field as well as in their preparation for solving problems in the field using the knowledge and skills of the discipline. Students in the 2015 focus group felt confident in their ability to formulate a research question, whereas 2016 group expressed feeling confident in creating a research project and then collecting data. The 2016 group also saw value in developing one research project that involved writing over the course of a semester.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

The data suggest that the old program required we strengthen coverage of research methods – particularly the ability to systematically apply an appropriate research method and collect original data. In the interim, we have integrated an inquiry component in SOC 131, the introductory level course, although it should be noted that most of the students in these cohorts transferred in SOC 131. When evaluating our program, we noted a mismatch between the specific methods that were covered in required courses (i.e. interviews, surveys, focus groups) and the methods that students selected when completing their Senior Practicum project (i.e. content analysis). In part, the selection of a research method for the senior seminar project was constrained by the short duration of the project, and avoidance of securing IRB approval given a lack of lead time. In addition, the 2-course methods sequence proved problematic for transfer student entering mid-year or who may have a significant number of credits. As a result, some students completed their second methods course at the same time as taking their senior practicum, which may have been why some students mention this sequencing mismatch as “too much” in the focus groups.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

We revised the research methods sequence, requiring one course that focuses on the basic process of empirical testing. We also can identify major electives that reinforce research skills in some of these courses. Familiarity with the scientific method is problematic for some students who are in need of additional exposure. We will review which inquiry skills are introduced at specific points in the program, with attention to the skills that are introduced in residency requirement courses. This should ensure that we are able to strengthen research skills for transfer students as well as those who begin our program at Marymount.