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RECENT SOCIOLOGY ALUMNI: WOULD THEY MAJOR AGAIN?

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The major fields chosen by undergraduates are thought to help determine their life courses including future income, job satisfaction, civic participation, and world views. Deciding on a major can be an agonizing decision for undergraduate students who worry that they will make the wrong choice. As a result, 80 percent of undergraduates switch majors at least once, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (cited in *Borderzine* (2013)). There is a wide array of information available on the Internet as to how to choose a major, the utility of specific majors and their influence on future careers. Sociology is not

listed among the top 10 most useful college majors by the Princeton Review (2014) or by *College Confidential* (2011). Recent research from the Georgetown Public Policy Institute (Carnevale and Cheah 2013) on the earnings of college majors shows that sociology majors are not among the top income earners after graduation. Yet, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012)), while the bachelors' degrees conferred in 2012 increased by 81 percent since 1985 (from 987,823 to 1,719,046), during the same period, sociology degrees conferred increased

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by 152 percent (from 12,165 to 30,602). Thus, during this period, sociology had a greater than average increase in the number of majors during this period.

In contrast to the abundance of information on why students should select a particular major, there is limited information on whether recent alumni would choose the same major again, and if so, what factors lead to this decision. The answer to this question can provide information on the reputation of the major that can be used for purposes of recruiting new students and informing university administrators. This research brief examines the factors that led recent sociology graduates to agree that, in retrospect, they definitely would choose to major in sociology again, one and a half years after graduation. To set a high bar, we choose to focus on those who definitely would major rather than collapsing them with those who would probably major again.

Asked “If you had to do it all over again, would you choose sociology as your undergraduate major field of study?” half of the respondents said they “definitely” would choose sociology again, while another one-quarter said they “probably” would. The choice to definitely major again was made during a period of post-recession high unemployment rates, increasing tuition costs, and emphasis on vocational majors and high student debt, with an average of \$29,400 for students, regardless of major (Senter, Spalter-Roth, Van Vooren forthcoming). Further, choices as to whether alumni would major again occurred during a time that has been referred to as “a period of confusion” in which students make “tentative transitions” to adulthood (Arum and Roksa 2014). Given poor economic conditions and post-graduation confusion, we might not expect many alumni to agree that they would major again in sociology—a non-vocational major. The findings presented here cast doubt on the assumption that these conditions would result in a loss of sociology undergraduate majors. The remainder of the brief examines why this is not the case. We compare the

willingness to major again between those who went into the workforce directly and those who went to graduate school.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data for this brief come from the third wave of the Bachelor’s and Beyond project, funded by the National Science Foundation, which followed a cohort of sociology majors from their senior year in 2012 to their post-graduate year of 2014. The purpose of the survey was to track pre and post graduate lives of sociology majors, including the human and social capital they gained and used during the survey period. The webpage for the project, “Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates”, can be found at: http://www.asanet.org/research/bacc_survey/jobs_for_sociology_majors.cfm. The website includes the IRB application, the three waves of questionnaires, information about sample recruitment, response rates, weighting, study findings, and the resulting research briefs. The first wave of the project was administered during the spring of 2012 to senior sociology majors from 160 colleges/universities. Completed surveys were returned from 2,695 majors (a 37 percent response rate). The second wave of the study was administered between mid-December 2012 and the end of January 2013, with a total response rate of just over 41 percent of those who had previously answered (1,108 completed surveys). The third wave of the survey was administered between November 2013 and January 2014, approximately 18 months after students’ baccalaureate graduation. Third wave surveys were returned from 911 respondents or 33.8 percent of the original total number of respondents.²

WHY DID STUDENTS MAJOR IN SOCIOLOGY?

Why did the large majority of sociology graduates say

² Because fewer men and fewer minorities answered the third wave of the study, the results may be skewed.

After my first sociology course, I was hooked. I was into studying society and how social changes affect us. Sociology offers so many different ways to understand how society works, and it helps us have a greater understanding of why certain things happen in society.

Sociology was a major where I was encouraged to go wherever my mind would take me. I was given the tools to test my ideas and discover actual data to support my theories.

I had a genuine interest in understanding my own social location in the world.

I chose sociology because I felt that sociology would give me the most freedom to explore multiple career paths. As a rising city planner, I am able to see how my understandings of socio-economic disparities operate in an urban context. I know that in the future I will be able to effectively create solutions in local distressed communities.

Definitely working with diverse populations...I work with a very diverse group of people from people that are just very very poor, African American, Hispanic, white. I work with a huge variety of people and a lot of my sociology classes focused on what challenges and barriers are faced by those individuals and having taken those classes, it really gave me a better understanding of what I'd be dealing with when I began working with them.

Well one of our goals in recruiting is to recruit a diverse student body and so understanding the history and cause and effect of race in the United States, well in the world, is a big concept that I don't think I would have gotten necessarily in another major. ... I took a great class in gender roles, so that comes into play. I mean it's not direct but it's key to what I do.

they would major again, and what explains this response, especially during a period of higher unemployment, greater student debt, and greater concern about the commercial value of majors? We start with comments from graduates as to why they were “hooked” by the major.³

The top reasons for majoring indicated a strong interest in the substantive content of the discipline, according to findings from the first wave of the survey. Senior majors were excited about sociology concepts: for example, how to apply their sociological imagination in order to understand how individuals function in different socioeconomic situations and to understand how society changes. Nearly all respondents chose the major because the concepts interested them. Further, almost 90 percent of respondents chose their major after enjoying their first sociological course (Senter, Van Vooren, and Spalter-Roth 2013). During their senior year about half of the respondents majored in sociology because they had heard good things about the sociology department at their school, showing the importance of reputation. However, along with a strong interest in content, a sizeable minority also recognized that the sociology major has vocational aspects. They agreed that the major could provide them with research skills and prepare them for desired jobs or for graduate or professional school (Spalter-Roth, Van Vooren, and Senter 2013).

WHAT WERE SOCIOLOGY ALUMNI DOING 1 ½ YEARS AFTER GRADUATION?

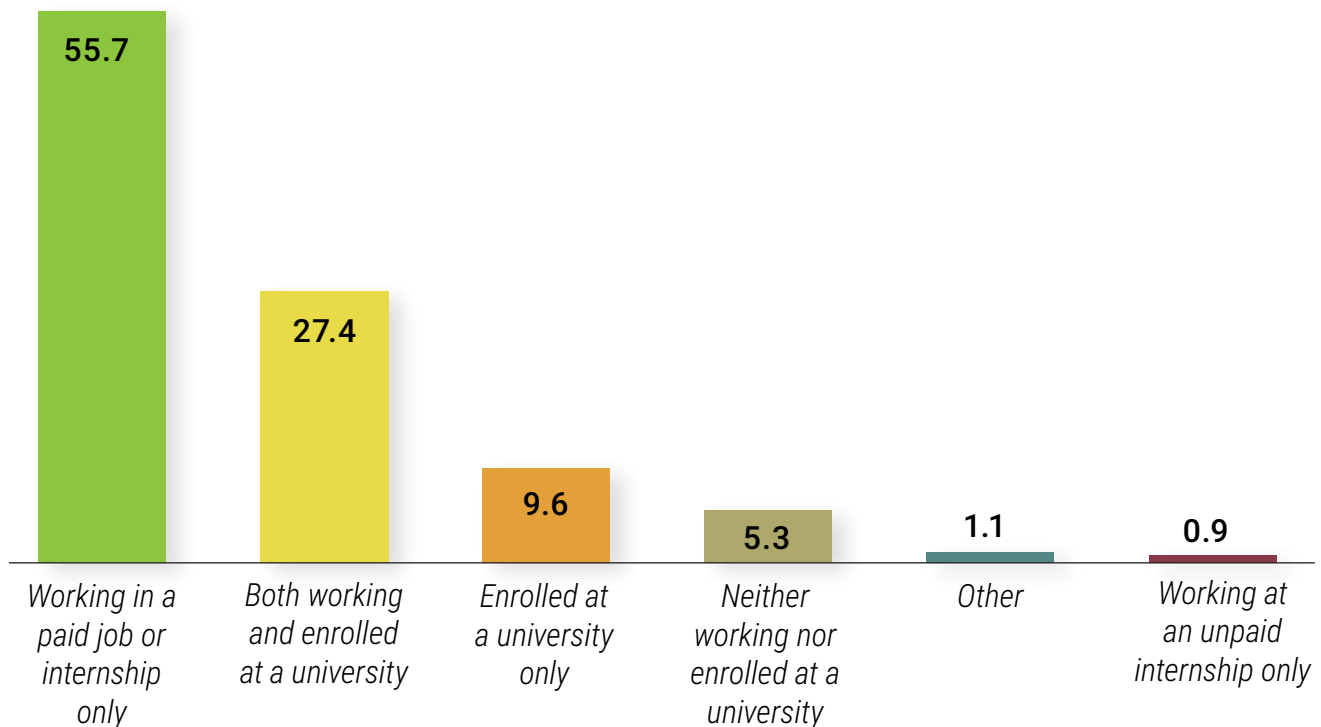
We asked former majors, “As of the week of November 4, 2013 were you working, enrolled in school, both or neither?” We found that more than half (55.7 percent) of respondents were working, with an additional quar-

³ Quotes are from *21st Century Careers with an Undergraduate Degree in Sociology* (2nd edition) American Sociological Association, and relevant research briefs from the Bachelor's and Beyond Surveys (see http://www.asanet.org/research/bacc_survey/bachelor-sandbeyond.cfm).

FIGURE 1

What Are They Doing? School, Working, or Both

(percentage in each post-graduate activity)



SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Wave III.*

ter (27.4 percent) both working and attending school. Thus, more than 80 percent of graduates were in the workforce.⁴ Fewer than 10 percent were enrolled in graduate or professional school and not working (Figure 1). Only about 6 percent were not in the labor force or in school, suggesting a relatively low unemployment rate. This rate compares to an overall unemployment rate of 6.8 percent for the class of 2007, regardless of major, prior to the Great Recession (see the National Center for Education Statistics Baccalaureate and

Beyond Survey). However, recall that there was a 33.8 percent follow-up response rate among all the original respondents to the survey and those who were unemployed may have been more likely not to respond to the last wave of the survey.

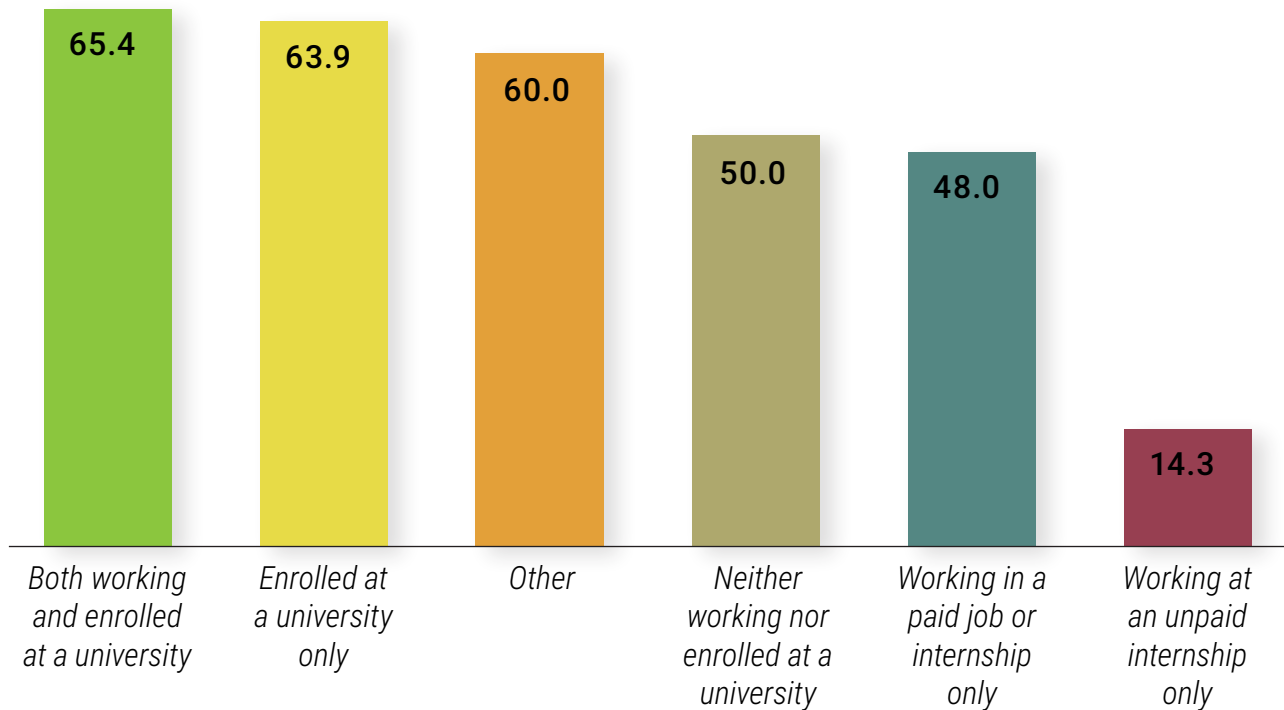
As we found with the class of 2005 (Spalter-Roth and Van Vooren 2008), more sociology majors went directly into the labor market than had originally planned. In addition, as Figure 1 shows, going on to graduate

⁴ We included those who were working and going to school in the workforce only if they reported that employment was their primary activity.

FIGURE 2

Definitely Would Major Again by Job and Education Status

(percentage in each post-graduate activity)



SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Wave III.*

school does not necessarily mean that respondents did not enter the job market, since 27.4 percent reported doing both. These findings suggest that a curriculum oriented primarily to students intending to go to graduate school directly may not be broad enough, since the majority of students are going to search for paid employment and in the workforce after graduation.

WHO IS DEFINITELY MORE LIKELY TO MAJOR AGAIN?

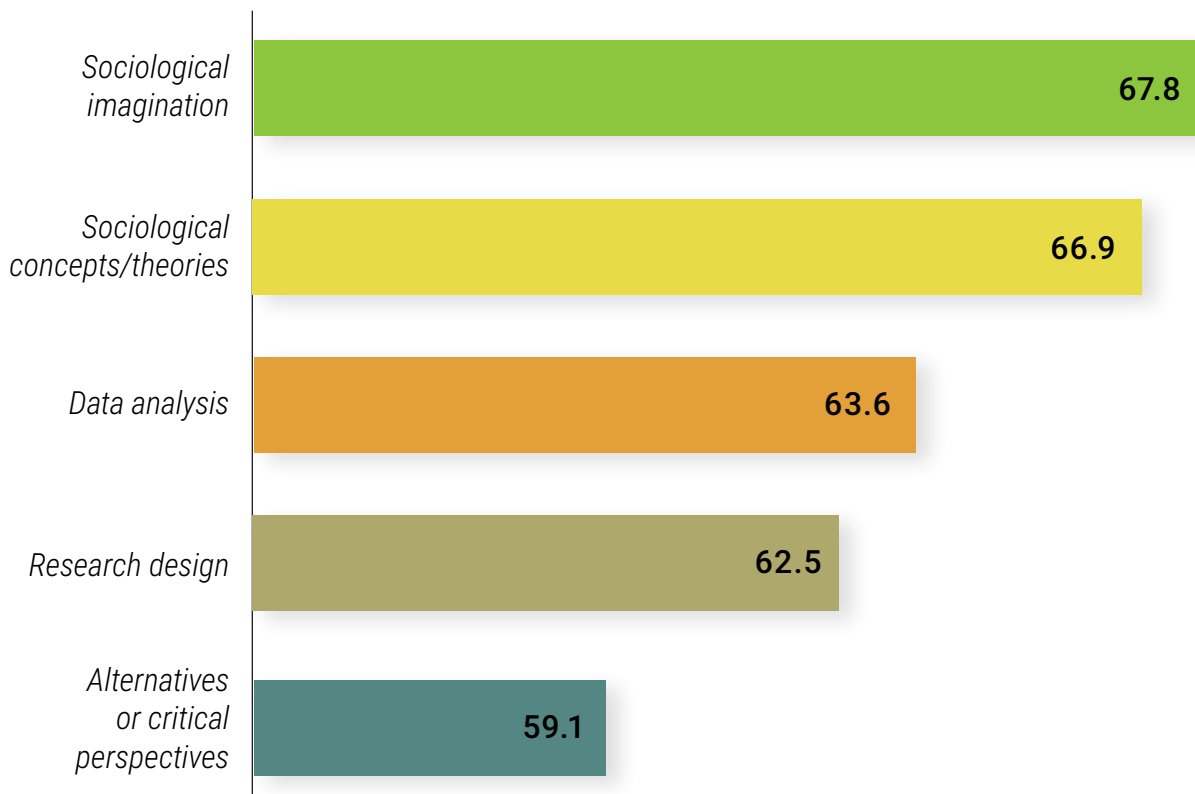
We would expect that the post-college transition

would affect respondents' views about whether they think they would major in sociology if they had to do it over again. Overall, just over half (54.3 percent) said they definitely would major again. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who reported that this by their status one and a half years after graduation. The alumni most likely to agree that they definitely would major again were those who were both working and enrolled at a university (65.4 percent), closely followed by those who were enrolled at a university but not working (63.9 percent). Just under half (48.0 percent) of those in the labor force but not in graduate school agreed that they definitely would major again.

FIGURE 3

Top 5 Skills Helpful in Job that Leads to Definite Willingness to Major Again

(in percentages)



SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

In a previous brief on student satisfaction we found that senior majors who acquired the knowledge and skills expected of sociology graduates were more satisfied with their sociology program than students who had less well-developed knowledge and skill levels (Senter et al. 2012). Here we find that sociology graduates who strongly agreed that sociological concepts helped them in their post graduate activities (working or graduate school) more often reported that they definitely would major again.

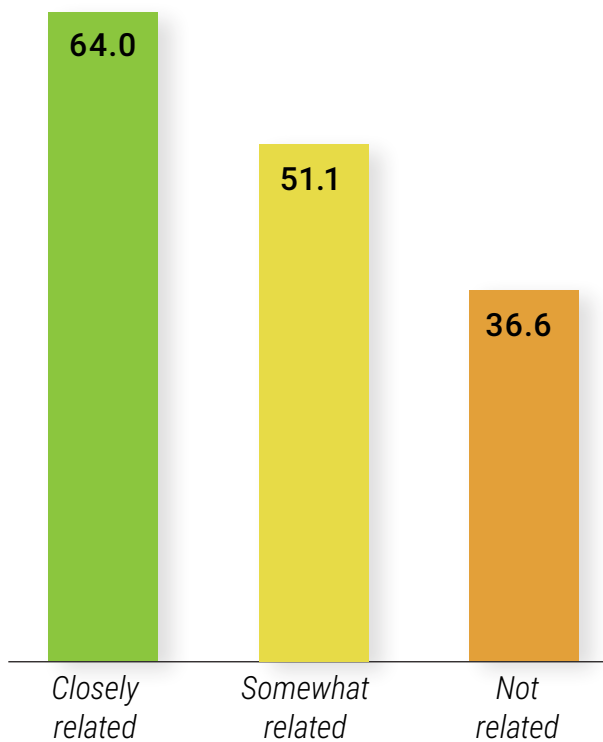
IN THE WORKFORCE

In the following analysis of those in the workforce, we include the 2012 respondents who reported that they were both working and in graduate school, but regarded employment as their primary activity. Those respondents who strongly agreed that the sociological skills and concepts they learned as undergraduate majors helped them on their current jobs were more

FIGURE 4

Jobs Closely Related to Sociology by Whether They Definitely Would Major Again

(in percentages)



SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

likely to say that they would major again than those who did not use these skills and concepts. Between half and two-thirds of graduates who strongly agreed that research and conceptual skills were helpful on their job said they definitely would major again. For example, nearly 70 percent who reported that having a sociological imagination helped them with their job claimed that they definitely would major again (see Figure 3.) This method for analyzing the individual's

place in society is at the core of sociology and using it seems to result in high levels of satisfaction with the major. An almost equal percentage of respondents who strongly agreed that sociological concepts were helpful also reported that they definitely would major again. Close to two thirds of respondents who reported that using methodological skills such as data analysis and research design helped them on the job agreed that they definitely would major again. These findings suggest that the fundamental concepts and skills that sociologists need to master are sources of satisfaction in terms of the willingness to definitely major again.

Holding a job that reflects what former majors learned as sociology undergraduates is likewise related to whether they would choose the sociology major again. Respondents were specifically asked whether their jobs were close to what they had learned in their sociology programs. Almost two-thirds (64.0 percent) of those who responded that their jobs were closely related to sociology definitely would major again (see Figure 4).

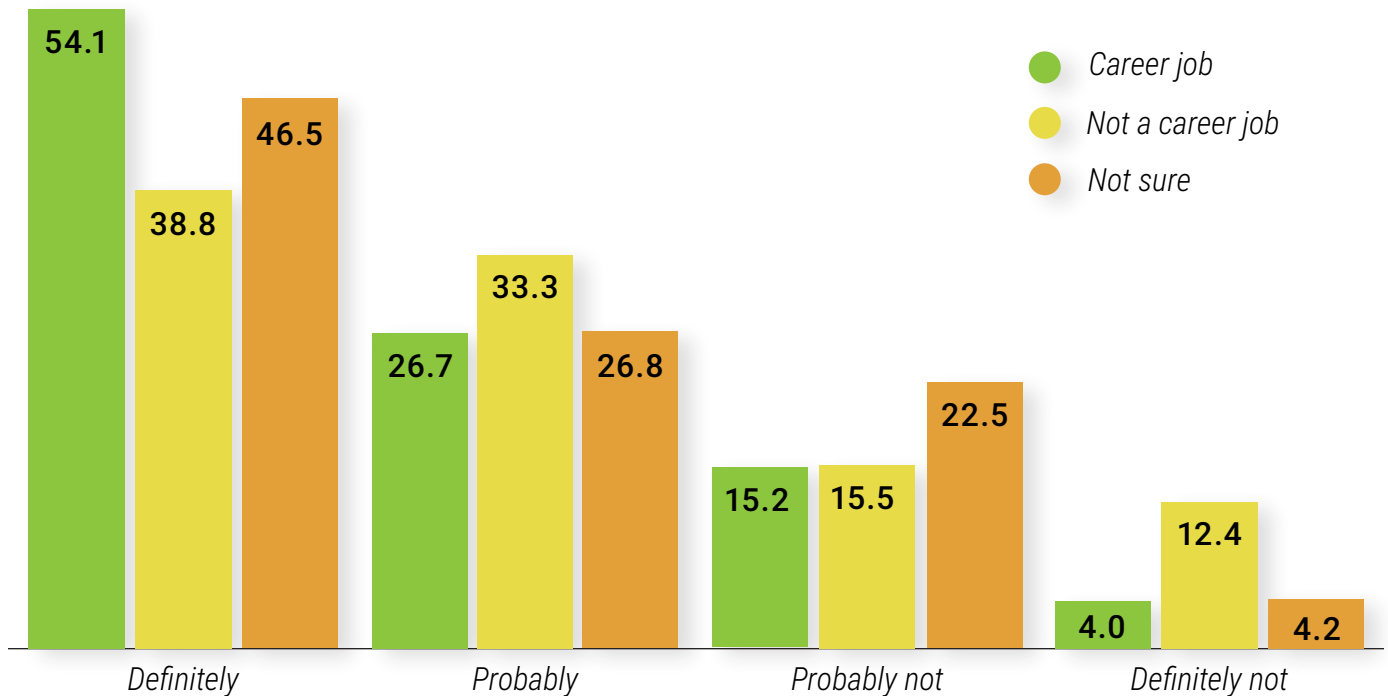
>> Career Jobs

In a previous research brief, based on Wave II data, we found that about 58.9 percent of respondents agreed that they had “career-level jobs” (Spalter-Roth, Van Vooren, Kisielewski and Senter 2013). In the next few years, graduates can expect to continue to be promoted, gain higher salaries, more responsibility, and more autonomy (Senter, Spalter-Roth, and Van Vooren forthcoming 2015). Using Wave III data, we examined those who perceived that they had a career-level job by their occupational category and found that social science researchers, managers, social service workers, teachers and librarians agreed that they held career type jobs that could take them where they wanted to be five years. In contrast, those in sales, clerical, and service occupations were substantially less likely to agree that their jobs could be considered the beginning of their career. For example, 90 percent of social researchers said they held career-type jobs compared to 26.5 percent of service workers (Senter et al. forthcoming 2015).

FIGURE 5

Willingness to Major Again by Type of Job

(in percents)



SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

We found significant differences between those who said that they had career-level jobs and those who did in terms of whether they definitely would major again (Figure 5). More than half (54.1 percent) of those respondents who held career jobs agreed. In contrast, less than 40 percent who did not think they held a career-level position definitely would major again. Still, this figure even suggests that more than one third of those who did not consider themselves to be in a career-level job, would major again.

>> Activities and Ties

As noted, less than half of the class of 2012 sociology majors who were in the workforce and not enrolled in further education responded that they definitely would major in sociology if they had it to do over again (Figure 2). We examined whether a series of activities and circumstances would increase their desire to take this path again. Table 1 compares the desire to major again for those who participated in an activity versus those who did not (only those activities where the differences are statistically significant were included in the table). Working with a faculty member doing independent

TABLE 1

Activities That Lead to Willingness to Major Again

(percentage of those in the workforce)

definitely major in sociology again

| | |
|--|------|
| Participated in internship* | 51.9 |
| Did not participate in internship | 46.1 |
| Worked as an advocate in a group* | 56.2 |
| Did not work as an advocate in a group | 41.9 |
| Participated in independent study* | 58.7 |
| Did not participate in Independent study | 42.8 |
| Received mentoring** | 54.4 |
| Did not receive mentoring | 36.9 |
| AKD member* | 57.4 |
| Not AKD member | 46.2 |

*Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

**Significant at the $p < 0.01$ level

SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

studies significantly increased their reported willingness to major again by more than 15 percentage points (from 42.8 to 58.7 percent). Working with a group that supports a cause also significantly increased their reported willingness to major again, suggesting that even those former majors who go directly into the work force are interested in changing society. Receiving mentoring advice from a faculty member likewise significantly increased the reported willingness to major again, while the failure to have this experience resulted in less enthusiasm for doing so.

In a previous brief we examined the types of ties that were most useful for respondents obtaining a career-type position—weak ties, strong ties, and no ties (Spalter-Roth et al. 2013). We found that what sociologists refer to as “weak ties,” for example acquaintances or secondary relationships rather than close friends or primary relationships (Granovetter 1973) including faculty members, internship directors, career service counselors, and former employers, were a better resource for student job searches than were “strong ties” or no (absent) ties. Strong ties included close primary relationships such as friends and family members, and no (or absent) ties, included search engines, help wanted ads, and unsolicited resumes that entailed no relationship.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS FOR THOSE IN THE WORKFORCE

We have examined the individual factors that affected whether a respondent definitely would major again, including using the skills and concepts they learned, using faculty members and other weak ties during their job search, participating in out-of-class activities, and finding career level positions that are close to what they learned as sociology majors. These factors were significantly related to the desire to major again in the cross-tabulation analysis. Next, we looked at which of these factors remained significant when we examined them relative to one another and in combination with other factors.

For this purpose we conducted a logistic regression analysis (see Appendix 1 for the full regression). Although the regression is significant, the percentage of the variance explained was small (17 percent).

>> Variables and Scales

In this analysis we treated the willingness to major again as a binary dependent variable, with one category including only those who responded that they definitely would major again and the other including those who would probably, probably not, and definitely not major again. We are specifically interested in what predicts the strongest category (definitely would major again). In order to reduce the number of independent variables in the equation, we conducted factor analyses on several of the variable sets, including the conceptual and methodological skills that were helpful on the job, out of classroom activities, and resources used in the job search. The analysis resulted in a number of scales that replaced individual variables to be used in the regression models.

Skills that were helpful on the job resulted in two scales: the first was composed of the “concepts” (i.e. sociological imagination, concepts and theories, diversity, etc.) that respondents found helpful on the job and the second composed of data analysis and research design, which we labeled “research methods.” Activities that respondents participated in scaled into four types. We refer to the first as “practical activities,” consisting of internships, advocacy groups, service learning projects, and volunteering in the community. We refer to the second as “scholarly activities,” which included honors programs, independent study, Alpha Kappa Delta (the International sociology honor society) and other sociology clubs, and attendance at national or local sociology meetings. We refer to the third cluster as “career activities” that included seeing career advisors, job fairs, and leadership development. The fourth cluster included study groups and group projects, which we refer to as “group activities.”

Finally, resources that respondents used for information about jobs scaled reflecting the types of ties we

found to be significant in previous analyses (Spalter-Roth et al. 2013): weak ties, including internships, faculty mentoring, capstone courses, and career services; strong ties, including family, friends, and employers or colleagues; and no ties, including employment agencies, social media, and unsolicited resumes. In addition, we included gender, race, ethnicity, parents’ level of education, and type of baccalaureate institution respondents attended (based on Carnegie codes) were used as independent variables in the multivariate analysis.

>> Concepts and Methods

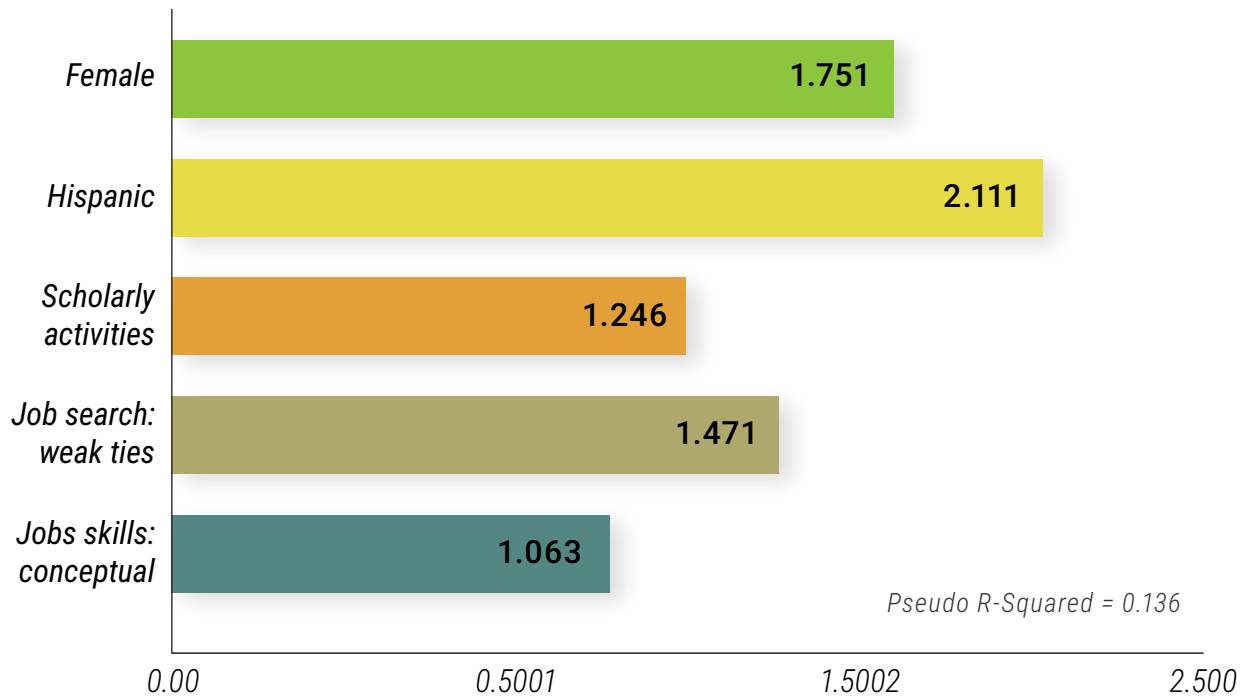
In the full regression model (Appendix I), we found that conceptual skills that were reported to be helpful on the job were significant and increased the likelihood of desiring to definitely major again. In contrast, the use of research methods (data analysis and research design) was not significant. This finding showed, once again, the importance of sociological concepts in respondents’ lives. In the first wave of the study, conducted when majors were seniors, we found that 97.2 percent of majors responding to the survey answered that the concepts taught in sociology classes were an important reason for majoring, making it the number one reason among respondents (Spalter-Roth and Van Vooren 2012). One and a half years later, using these concepts on the job was a significant reason for predicting a willingness to major again, controlling for other factors.

>> Gender and Ethnicity

Demographic variables such as race and gender were significant but parents’ education level was not. Specifically, women were nearly twice as likely to desire to major again compared to men, and Hispanics were more than twice as likely to desire to major again when compared to whites. This was not true for African-Americans who were not significantly more likely to major again. It should be noted that the number of cases of alumni of color were small, and low response rates could have skewed the findings.

FIGURE 6

Odds Ratios¹ Predicting Definite Willingness to Major Again for Those in the Workforce



¹ Odds ratio represents the odds that an outcome will occur given a particular exposure, compared to the odds of the outcome occurring in the absence of that exposure.

SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

>> Activities and Ties

Over the course of this project we have examined the role of extra-curricular or out-of class activities, some practical and some scholarly, including everything from internships to working with faculty members. In a previous brief we noted that almost all students participated in at least one such activity, with an average of seven out of 15 per student (Spalter-Roth et al 2013).

We found that involvement with what we referred to as “scholarly activities” were significantly related to the

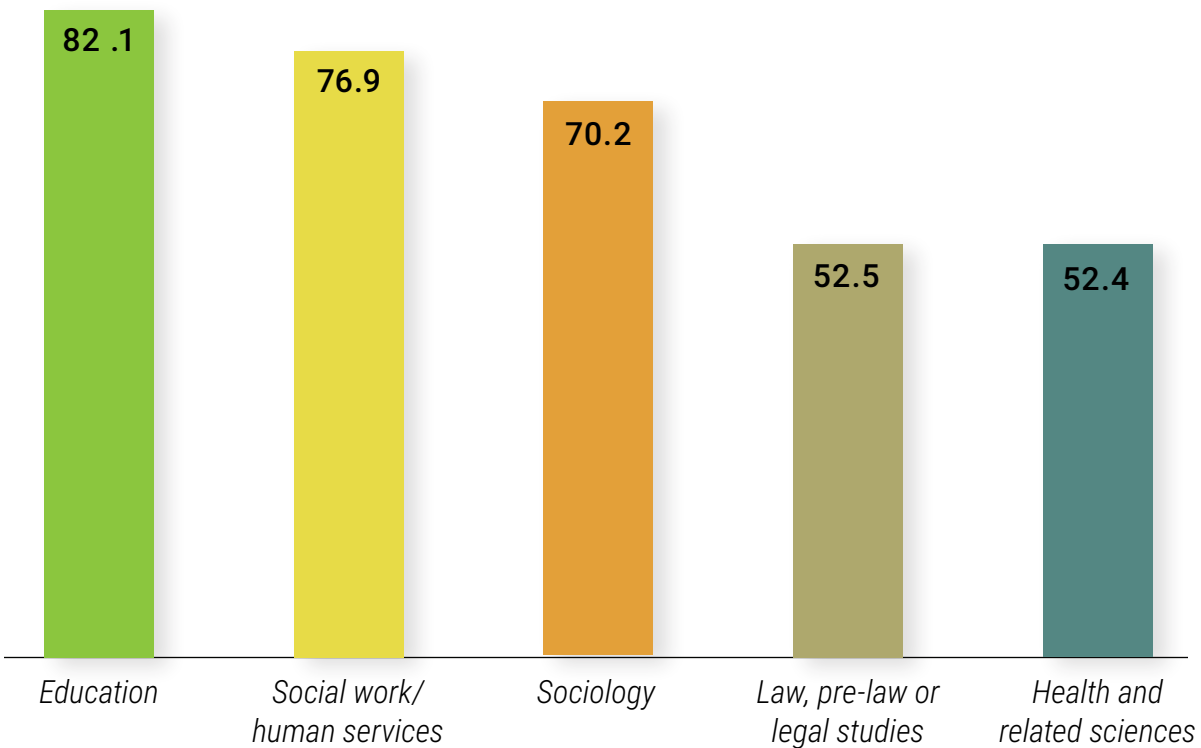
desire to major again, but practical activities, career activities, and group activities were not. In other research briefs we suggested that practical and career activities helped graduates find jobs that were close to what they learned in sociology, but in this brief, we find that it is the scholarly activities that affect the desire to major again, even though these respondents were in the workforce rather than in graduate school.

In a previous brief (Spalter-Roth et al 2013) we found that weak ties were a preferable source of job search information. Here we find that it is also the only significant type of tie that encourages respondents to want to

FIGURE 7

Would Definitely Major Again by Type of Graduate Program

(in percents)



SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

major again, most likely because this type of tie is the best pathway to a post-graduation job.

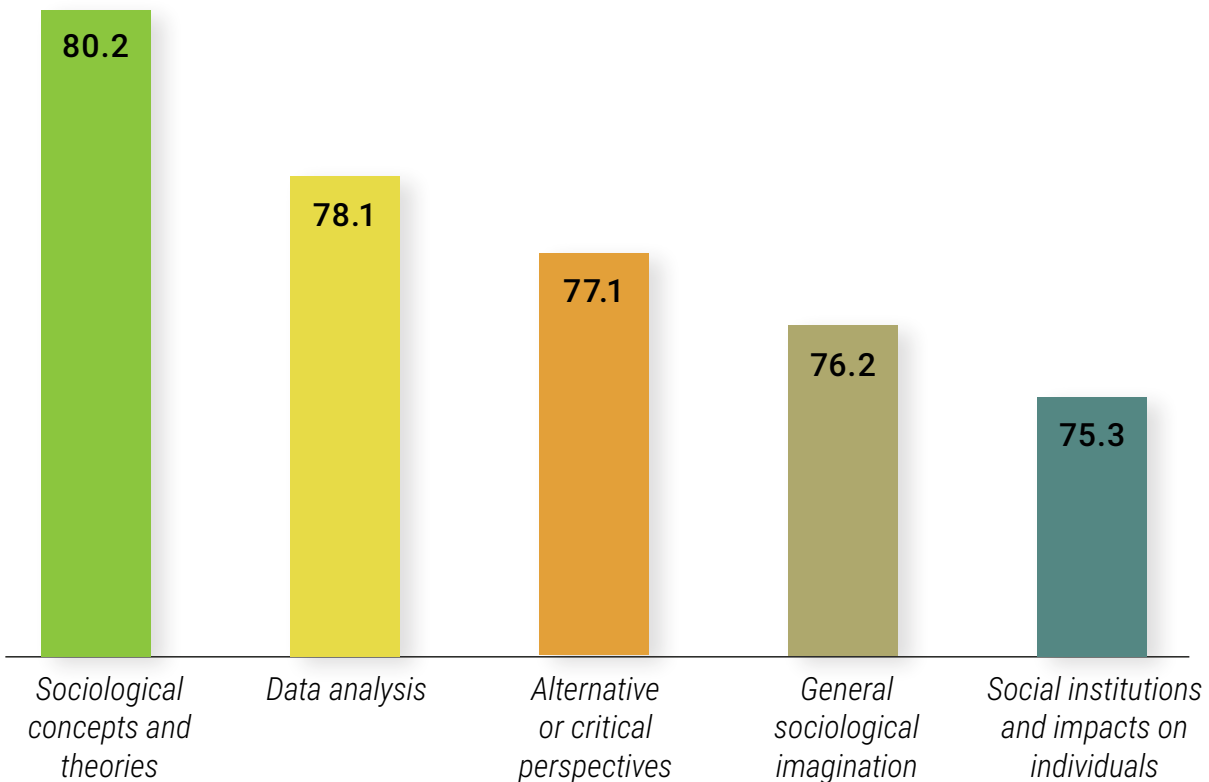
Although we saw that those who perceived that they held career-level positions were significantly more likely to respond that they definitely would major again compared to those who did not perceive that they held this type of position, this variable is not significant in the regression analysis.

>> Reduced Model

Figure 6 shows the reduced model for those in the labor force, including only those variables that proved significant in the full model. In this reduced model five variables remained significant. These were gender, which nearly doubled the likelihood of agreeing definitely that they would decide to major again, and labeling oneself as Hispanic which likewise more than doubled the likelihood of definitely the desire to major again. The three remaining factors of significance were the use of weak ties in the job search, involvement in

FIGURE 8

Percent of Graduate Students Who Would Definitely Major Again, by Skills Helpful in Graduate School



SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

scholarly activities, and strong agreement that using sociological concepts helped them in their job.

IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

We have seen that those sociology alumni in graduate school, as well as those who combined graduate school with paid jobs, were more likely to respond that they definitely would major again compared to those in the workforce (almost two-thirds compared to fewer than a half. See Figure 2). Those who reported going on to graduate school chose a wide variety of disciplines

including business management and administrative services, language and linguistics, political science and public administration, and communications or journalism. Given this wide array, no graduate school programs had anything close to a majority of respondents. Sociology was the most frequently reported graduate school program, but only 10.0 percent of respondents in graduate school were in this field. Close behind sociology, 8.6 percent of these respondents were getting degrees in social work or human services. Of the other top five majors, 5.0 percent responded that they were in education, with 4.6 percent in law, and 2.4

TABLE 2

Activities that Lead to Willingness to Definitely Major in Sociology Again

(percentage of those in graduate school)

| | <i>definitely major in sociology again</i> |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| AKD member* | 76.3 |
| Not AKD member | 63.4 |
| Participated in a study group* | 69.2 |
| Did not participate in a study group | 62.2 |

*Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

percent in health professions and related sciences. Of the 300 respondents in graduate school, these percentages accounted for only 30 percent of the total, while the remaining 70 percent were in at least 35 different programs.

Which graduate school programs appeared to fit with the sociology major such that graduates definitely would definitely follow this path again? It should be noted that the numbers in each category are very small and should be interpreted with caution. About 70 percent of those pursuing sociology graduate degrees agreed that they definitely would major again, once again suggesting a close fit between the undergradu-

ate and graduate curriculums in sociology. More than three quarters (76.9 percent) of respondents in social work programs (within joint sociology departments) responded that they definitely would major in sociology, given the choice (see Figure 7). There may be a close link between what they learned as undergraduate sociology majors and what they learn in social work graduate programs. The surprise is that those sociology graduates in graduate education programs, probably to get teacher training, were the most likely to claim definitely that they would major again, although it is not clear how close the fit is between these two disciplines. We suggest that those who would major in sociology again were more likely to specialize in areas such as socio-cultural foundations of education rather than curriculum theory and development.

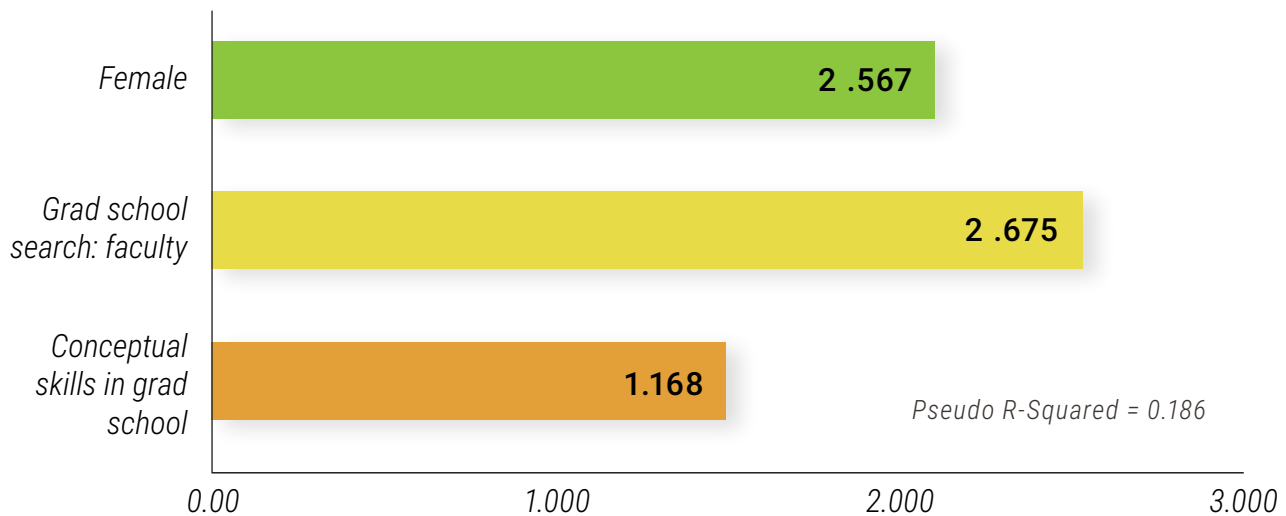
About half of those in the remaining top two graduate fields (law and health professions) reported that they definitely would major in sociology again, a significantly lower than those in the top three graduate fields. Perhaps the skills learned while they were undergraduate majors were less helpful to them than in the other fields. Here again, the numbers are very small.

>> Skills

Recall that respondents who were in graduate school one and one-half years after they earned their baccalaureate degree in sociology were significantly more likely to respond that they definitely would major again compared to those who went directly into the workforce. Some of this difference might be explained by the fit between the skills that they were using in their graduate programs compared to those used in the workforce. More than three-quarters of those who agreed that using a sociological imagination was helpful in graduate schools reported that they definitely would major again. A slightly higher percentage of those who reported using data analysis skills (78.1 percent) learned as an undergraduate, closely followed by those who strongly agreed that using alternative or critical perspectives was helpful, definitely would major again.

FIGURE 9

Odds Ratios¹ Predicting Definite Willingness to Major Again for those in Graduate School



¹ Odds ratio represents the odds that an outcome will occur given a particular exposure, compared to the odds of the outcome occurring in the absence of that exposure

SOURCE: American Sociological Association. *Social Capital, Organizational Capital, and the Job Market for New Sociology Graduates, 2012, Waves I, II, and III.*

>> Activities

For those who were attending graduate school, there were fewer activities that would significantly increase the willingness to major again compared to those who went directly into the workforce (see Table 2). The first was participation in AKD, whose purpose is to “seek to acknowledge and promote excellence in the scholarship in the study of sociology, the research of social problems, and such other social and intellectual activities as will lead to improvement in the human condition” (see “About Alpha Kappa Delta at <http://alphakappadelta.org/About.html>). Those who reported participating in AKD may have been better students since they applied and were accepted into this honorary society. They were more likely to report that they

definitely would major again compared to those who did not participate in this activity (76.3 percent versus 63.4 percent).

Of those graduate students who reported working with other sociology majors in study groups as undergraduates were more likely to report that they would major again compared to those who did not study in this fashion, with a difference of about 7 percentage points (69.2 percent versus 62.2 percent). We were surprised to find that working in study groups was a significant factor in the decision to attend graduate school, but working with a faculty member in an independent study was not.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

As with those independent variables used in the workforce regression, factor analysis was used to see if the skills respondents found helpful in graduate school and resources used to apply to graduate school would scale (the same activity scales were used as these variables applied to everyone). Here again, we found that the following concepts scaled (sociological concepts and theories, sociological imagination, diversity, groups and teams, social institutions, social problems, and alternative/critical perspectives) as well as the research skills (research design and data). Efforts to create a scale containing the resources that former majors used to aid them in getting into graduate school did not scale. Using faculty as a resource for graduate school information was the only significant variable in our cross tabulation analysis of resources used for graduate school search, so this was entered into the regression as an independent variable (see Appendix 2 for the full regression model).

This regression analysis contains the same demographic variables as were used in the workforce regression, including gender, race and ethnic categories, parents' educational levels, and the type of undergraduate institution, with the addition of the type of graduate institution they were attending. Here again, the regression analysis was significant, and the amount of variance explained was higher (27 percent) than the variance explained in the regression for those in the workforce. Aside from gender, none of the other demographic variables were significant.

In our cross tabulation analysis, we found that those who participated in scholarly or practical activities such as internships, independent study, or belonging to AKD were significantly more likely to respond that they definitely would major again. None of these types of activities were significant in the regression analysis, however, when other factors were taken into account (see Figure 9). The use of faculty as a resource of information about applying to graduate school was significant.

>> Reduced Model

Only those variables that were significant in the cross tabulation analysis were included in the reduced regression analysis. The variables in this model (Figure 9) that were significant for predicting whether graduate students who were sociology undergraduate students definitely would major again included gender, use of faculty members in their search for graduate school, and use of sociological concepts in graduate school. All three remained significant, with women more than twice as likely to desire to major again than men and, those who used faculty members in their search for graduate school more than twice as likely to desire to major again compared to those who did not call on this resource. Lastly, the use of sociological concepts in graduate also significantly increased the likelihood of desiring to major again.

CONCLUSIONS

In spite of questions of its utility and income-earning potential, sociology has a positive reputation among its graduates. Of all those former majors that responded to the survey, we learned that more than three-quarters "definitely" or "probably" would major in sociology again, with half saying "definitely" and one-quarter saying "probably". This is especially true of those who go on to graduate school one and a half years after graduation, perhaps because they did better as undergraduates. The definite willingness to major again can affect the reputation of the discipline, the ability to recruit new majors and to convince administrators of the major's worth. Students recruited into sociology by its positive reputation may benefit from talking with those who definitely would major again. About half of the respondents in the total sample majored in sociology because they had heard good things about the sociology department at their school. The willingness to major again occurred during a phase that has been referred to as "a period of confusion" in which students make "tentative transitions" (Arum and Roksa 2014). Using the skills and concepts beyond their undergraduate program significantly increased the likelihood of that they would major

again. Use of sociological concepts, the very concepts that encouraged them to major as undergraduates, remained key in their desire to major again for both those who went into the workforce directly and those who went on the graduate school. Undergraduates major in sociology because they are intrigued by the sociological imagination (highest for those who were employed and fourth for those who went to graduate school) and other sociological concepts and theories. If they used these concepts after graduation on the job or in graduate school they were likely to agree that they definitely would major again.

Those who attended graduate school or both attended graduate school and were in the paid workforce were more likely than those who went directly into the workforce and did not attend graduate school to respond that they definitely would major again. Nonetheless, those who were in the workforce and had participated in scholarly activities as undergraduate majors were significantly more likely to report that they definitely would major again. These findings suggest that the fundamental concepts and skills sociologists need to master are sources of satisfaction and utility. They suggest that faculty members should be attentive to the quality of teaching and the clarity of conceptual explanations in introductory sociology courses. Attentiveness to teaching concepts and methods may increase the percentage of majors going on to sociology graduate school. Likewise those who obtained career-level jobs after graduation were also more likely to major again, suggesting that faculty need to be concerned with providing students with resources that will help them obtain such positions. Faculty members and other “weak ties” are better sources for career-level jobs than are family members, friends, or online sources. Faculty members are also significant sources for graduate school search. This finding suggests that specific forms of social capital, such as aid from faculty members, are particularly helpful for majors and increase their willingness to major in sociology again.

Finally, women are significantly more likely than men to state their willingness to major again. There are

many potential explanations for this situation. The centrality of gender in the sociological core, the relatively high percentage of women in the discipline, and its connection with careers that are predominately female, are just a few possible explanations. We are unclear as to why the growing numbers of Hispanics majors in the discipline were significantly more likely to be willing to major again, if they were in the workforce.

Overall, we suggest that these findings show general satisfaction with the major and ways to increase this satisfaction, despite recession, high debt, and encouragement to pursue more vocationally oriented majors.

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APPENDIX 1

**Coefficients from Logistic Regression on Predicting
Majoring Again for those in the Workforce**

| | S.E. | Exp(B) | | S.E. | Exp(B) |
|--------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Gender: Female* | 0.262 | 1.799* | Activities | | |
| Race | | | <i>Practical</i> | 0.088 | 1.008 |
| <i>Black/African American</i> | 0.418 | 1.391 | <i>Scholarly*</i> | 0.098 | 1.252* |
| <i>Hispanic*</i> | 0.336 | 2.267* | <i>Career</i> | 0.102 | 0.866 |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i> | 0.471 | 0.861 | <i>Groups</i> | 0.196 | 1.203 |
| <i>Multiracial or other</i> | 0.314 | 1.388 | Job Search | | |
| Mother's Education | | | <i>Weak Ties*</i> | 0.130 | 1.441* |
| <i>High school or less</i> | 0.315 | 1.044 | <i>No Ties</i> | 0.099 | 0.989 |
| <i>Assoc., Nursing, some college</i> | 0.298 | 1.342 | <i>Strong Ties</i> | 0.124 | 1.164 |
| <i>Graduate degree</i> | 0.306 | 1.374 | Skills on the Job | | |
| Father's Education | | | <i>Conceptual*</i> | 0.020 | 1.045* |
| <i>High school or less</i> | 0.322 | 1.056 | <i>Research</i> | 0.058 | 1.085 |
| <i>Assoc., Nursing, some college</i> | 0.317 | 1.216 | Career Job | 0.229 | 1.083 |
| <i>Graduate degree</i> | 0.304 | 0.555 | | | |
| Carnegie | | | | | |
| <i>Doctoral</i> | 0.303 | 0.747 | | | |
| <i>Master's</i> | 0.328 | 0.911 | Constant | 0.604 | 0.129 |

Number of Observations: 575

Pseudo R-Squared = 0.173

Comparison Categories: Gender: Male, Race: White, Mother/Father Education: College Degree, Carnegie: Baccalaureate

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

APPENDIX 2

**Coefficients from Logistic Regression on Predicting
Majoring Again for those in Graduate School**

| | S.E. | Exp(B) | | S.E. | Exp(B) |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|-------------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Gender: Female* | 0.446 | 2.273* | Carnegie: Graduate school | | |
| Race | | | Master's | 0.443 | 1.036 |
| Black/African American | 0.71 | 1.780 | Other (Baccalaureate, Law, Medical) | 0.590 | 2.271 |
| Hispanic | 0.622 | 1.020 | Activities | | |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 0.745 | 0.706 | Practical | 0.147 | 0.879 |
| Multiracial or other | 0.484 | 0.661 | Scholarly | 0.143 | 1.152 |
| Mother's Education | | | Career | 0.185 | 1.206 |
| High school or less | 0.577 | 0.708 | Groups | 0.331 | 0.957 |
| Assoc., Nursing, some college | 0.515 | 0.696 | Grad. School Search: Soc. Faculty** | 0.354 | 3.016** |
| Graduate degree | 0.485 | 0.578 | Skills in Graduate School | | |
| Father's Education | | | Research | 0.094 | 1.173 |
| High school or less | 0.577 | 0.927 | Conceptual *** | 0.051 | 1.187*** |
| Assoc., Nursing, Some College | 0.538 | 0.482 | | | |
| Graduate degree | 0.482 | 0.603 | | | |
| Carnegie: Undergraduate | | | | | |
| Doctoral | 0.642 | 1.221 | | | |
| Master's | 0.677 | 1.311 | Constant | 1.287 | 0.034 |

Number of Observations: 2 .64

Pseudo R-Squared = 0.272

Comparison Categories: Gender: Male, Race: White, Mother/Father Education: College Degree, Carnegie: Undergrad: Baccalaureate; Carnegie: Grad school: Research/Doctoral

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05



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