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## *Sociological Roles Relating to Business, Industry, and Work*

Sociologists with an M.A. or Ph.D. combine their advanced training in research methods, statistics, and theory with a substantive focus in such specialties as organizational sociology, sociology of work and occupations, sociology of labor, or medical sociology. They follow three major career paths that often overlap:

- *Teaching in college or university settings*
- *Working in corporate and industrial organizations*
- *Consulting to business and industry*

### ***Practitioner Roles***

- *Organizational Researcher in Industry, Government, or other Service Organization*
- *Divisional Staff Position*
- *Independent Consultant*
- *Trainer or Field Employee*
- *Manager*
- *Owner*

In *applied settings*, sociology practitioners work in research departments in corporations and participate in organizational analysis and development. They engage in research and strategic planning in corporate departments of human resources, industrial relations, public relations, and marketing. Some are supervisors, managers, and directors of large organizations. Others establish their own consulting and research companies or serve as staff researchers in private research firms and think tanks.

The practitioner's life is appealing to those who like the challenge of applying knowledge to everyday problems, and seeing immediate outcomes of their work.

Monetary rewards are usually generous, especially at the top of the career ladder. Opportunities for decision-making increase as one's responsibility and experiences broaden. Practitioners often adhere to an established work schedule, work cooperatively as part of a team, and work in bureaucracies. They blend research skills and substantive area knowledge into a powerful combination.

## *Academic Roles*

- Teacher and Trainer
- Academic Researcher
- Academic Consultant
- Mediator and/or Arbitrator

In academic settings, sociologists teach in colleges and universities and contribute to research and scholarship on theory, work, occupations, labor relations, or organizations. Many serve as consultants to organizations and businesses.

As part of the academic role, sociologists may conduct research in multinational corporations, factories, banks, retail stores, government agencies, hospitals, restaurants, nursing homes, and countless other settings. Their findings may influence how the business world works.

Academic sociologists conduct training programs and contract research for business and organizations; they propose and evaluate various personnel and industrial relations programs. Some professors are labor relations experts who serve as mediators of work disputes.

**For further information, please contact:**

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## **THE SOCIOLOGY MAJOR**

*As Preparation for Careers in Business and Organizations*



### **A Valuable Preparation**

A degree in sociology is an excellent spring board for entering the world of business, industry, and organizations. The sociological perspective is crucial for working in today's multiethnic and multinational business environment.

An ***undergraduate sociology major*** provides valuable insights into social factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, education, and social class that affect work and how organizations operate.

An ***advanced degree*** specializing in the sociology of work, occupations, labor, and organizations can lead to teaching, research, and applied roles.

Many applied fields are grounded in sociological theories and concepts. Sociological research influences the way we think about work and organizational life, and enables us to discover new knowledge. Sociology is a valuable preparation for careers in modern organizational settings.

## Prospects for the B.A./B.S. Sociology Major

Students who graduate with a B.A. or B.S. in sociology and enter the job market directly will find themselves competing with other liberal arts students, but with an advantage—knowledge of key social factors and a firm grasp on research design and methods. The advantage of the B.A. sociology program provides breadth and the potential for adaptability.

Although few occupations include “sociologist” in their title at the bachelor’s level, the sociological perspective is excellent preparation for a wide variety of occupations. You should look for an entry-level job, gain experience through internships, and watch for opportunities for specialized training or advanced education.

If you are approaching graduation (or have recently graduated) and are seeking a job in the business world, focus on general areas of interest that motivate you. Sociology majors who are interested in organizational theory gravitate toward organizational planning, development, and training. Those who study the sociology of work and occupation may pursue careers in human resources management (personnel) and industrial relations. Students who especially enjoy research design, statistics, and data analysis seek positions in marketing, public relations, and organizational research. Courses in economic and political sociology, cultural diversity, racial and ethnic relations, and social conflict can lead to positions in international business.

Regardless of your career path, the breadth of your preparation as a liberal arts major is very important.

Suggested courses include:

### Core Courses

- Introductory Sociology
- Social Problems
- Social Psychology
- Social Statistics
- Research Methods

### More Specialized Sociology Courses

- Industrial Sociology
- Sociology of Work
- Sociology of Occupation and Professions
- Sociology of Organizations/Bureaucracy
- Sociology of Race Relations/Cultural Diversity
- Sociology of Sex and Gender
- Labor (or Industrial) Relations
- Industrial Psychology
- Personnel Management
- Public Speaking
- Business and Technical Writing

## The Employer’s Perspective

Corporate Interviewers are looking for applicants who display purpose and commitment to their future occupation. This does not mean that B.A. graduates will be hired as industrial sociologists, but that applicants may be considered for junior positions in corporate research, human resources, management, sales, or public relations.

Interviewers will seek to determine if applicants can easily adapt to organizational life in the private sector. In particular, this means the ability to work well with others as part of a team. Employers value graduates who have a keen understanding of the impact of cultural, racial, and gender diversity in the workplace, and who comprehend the global nature of business and industry.

During the job search, B.A./B.S. sociology graduates should stress their work and internship experience, analytical skills, oral and written communication skills, computer literacy, and knowledge of statistics and research design.

Those who are determined to succeed will be at an advantage. Ambition, drive, and competition are positive words in the world of business and organizations.

## Tips for the Job Search

- Acquire a broad educational background
- Gain experience through jobs, internships, and volunteer work
- Obtain skills in public speaking, writing, and computer applications
- Focus on an area that interests you (for example human resources, industrial relations, management, marketing, public relations, or sales) and learn as much as you can before applying to positions.

## Prospects for the MA/PHD Sociology Graduate

Doctoral programs in sociology prepare graduates for careers in teaching/research positions in colleges and universities (*academic settings*) and for research/program development careers in business, industry, and organizations (*applied settings*).

An academic career usually requires both a Master’s and a Ph.D. degree. To be successful, you should like teaching and research. A flexible schedule and varied set of activities are advantages of the academic work life. Opportunities for academic administration provide another career avenue.

Those with advanced sociology degrees can compete for positions in corporations, think tanks, and agencies that focus on research; statistical analysis; program development, management, analysis, and evaluation; corporate planning and restructuring; and many other fields. They can also work collaboratively or independently as contract researchers and organizational consultants.

An advanced degree is crucial for working inside business, industry, and organizations as a consulting sociologist. For more responsible positions, it is worth combining M.A. level training with work experiences. In the business world, people are evaluated primarily in terms of their experience, professional performance, motivation, drive, and ability to learn new skills.

Sociology graduates may wish to obtain an M.B.A. (Master’s of Business Administration) in order to enhance starting salaries and lifetime earnings. Graduate education in sociology provides additional training in advanced quantitative and qualitative analysis and development, labor/industrial relations, industrial psychology, marketing, economics, and public relations round out the graduate program.

Research competence acquired in graduate school broadens employment opportunities, as does in-depth knowledge of substantive areas in sociology.

