

## UH Mānoa Undergraduate Exit Survey Pre-Test Spring 2014

### Sociology

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Students self-reported high levels of confidence in multiple dimensions relating to conducting sociological research, understanding and incorporating sociological theory, and in communicating their findings in both written and oral formats.
- These results indicate—from a student self-assessment perspective—that there is a good match between the expected learning outcomes articulated by the Sociology Department (see below) and the confidence that students have in their abilities as they exit the program.

#### SUMMARY OF STUDENT'S RESPONSES

##### Sociological Theory

- 78% of students (18/23) reported that theory was included in most (5-9 courses) or all of their major courses
- 83% (19/23) reported that they were very or fairly confident in their ability to apply theory to everyday life situations (39%, 9 students, were very confident)

##### Research Methods

- 26% of students (6/23) reported that research methods were included in most (5-9 courses) or all of their major courses.
- 87% (20/23) said that they were very or fairly confident in their ability to design a research project (61%, 14 students, were very confident)
- 78% (18/23) said they were very or fairly confident in their ability to implement a research project (43%, 10 students, were very confident)
- 74% (17/23) said they were very or fairly confident in their ability to incorporate theory into their research project (52%, 12 students, were very confident)

##### Written Communication

- 100% (23/23) of the students reported that most (5-9 courses) or all of their major courses included written assignments.
- 87% of students (20/23) reported that they were very or fairly confident in their ability to write reflection and response papers (78%, 18 students, were very confident)
- 83% of students (19/23) said they were very or fairly confident in their ability to write literature reviews and research papers (61%, 14 students, were very confident)

##### Oral Communication

- 10% of the students (2/20) reported that oral presentations were required in most (5-9 courses) or all of their major courses.
- 100% of the students (20/20) reported that they were very or fairly confident in their ability to articulate their thoughts orally in class (65%, 13 students, were very confident)
- 100% of the students (20/20) reported that they were very or fairly confident in their ability to present research findings orally (60%, 12 students) were very confident)
- 90% (18/20) said they were very or fairly confident in their ability to make a formal presentation (55%, 11 students, were very confident)

### UH MĀNOA SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

- 1) Students will be able to utilize sociological theories to understand aspects of the social world.
- 2) Students will be able to collect and report relevant data, findings, or information.
- 3) Students will be able to analyze and interpret data, findings, or information.
- 4) Students will have clear and effective verbal and written communication skills.

### INTRODUCTION

The UH Mānoa Undergraduate Exit Survey that was pre-tested in Spring 2014 consisted of 31 questions concerning undergraduate student experiences of the UH Mānoa Sociology Program. The survey was composed and analyzed by the advising staff of the UH Mānoa Sociology Program using Qualtrics, a social science survey software program.

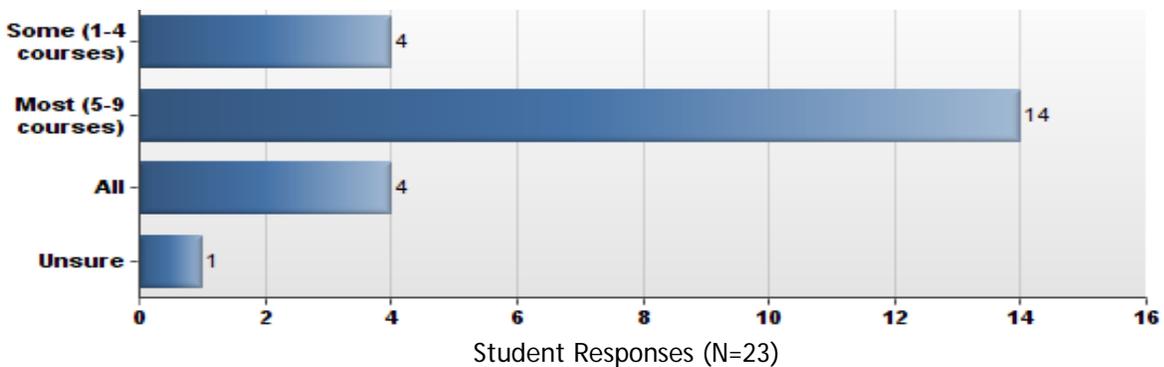
Each area of the undergraduate Sociology Program was covered to assess student confidence in their abilities in sociology focus areas and in general education focus areas. Students who had petitioned to graduate in Spring and Summer 2014 (n=82) were asked to complete the survey. There were 23 respondents to the survey, which was a response rate of 28%.

The results of the 12 questions that were directly related to the Sociology Program SLOs are analyzed below.

### SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

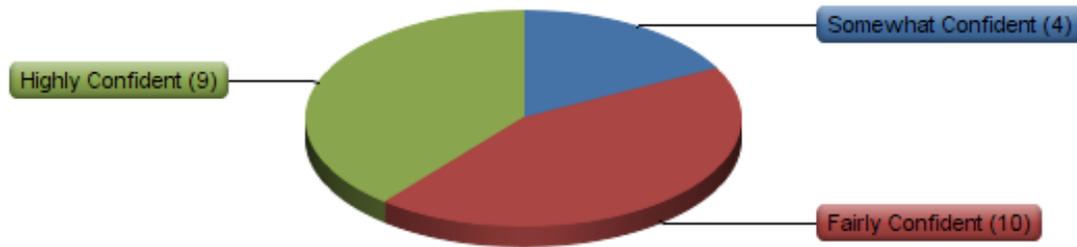
#### Q1: In how many of your Sociology courses did you study sociological theories?

No students indicated they had taken a course that failed to include sociological theory.



#### Q2. How confident are you in your ability to apply sociological theories to everyday life situations?

Students self-reported a high level of confidence in their ability to apply sociological theories to everyday life situations. No student indicated they had “no confidence” in this area. Although these are self-reported assessments, they indicate that students believe they are reaching a level of high confidence in using the sociological theories they have learned in the program, aligning with SLO #1: Students will be able to utilize sociological theories to understand aspects of the social world.



Number of Student Responses in Parentheses (N=23)

### Q3. What can the Sociology Department do to help students improve their knowledge of and ability to apply sociological theories?

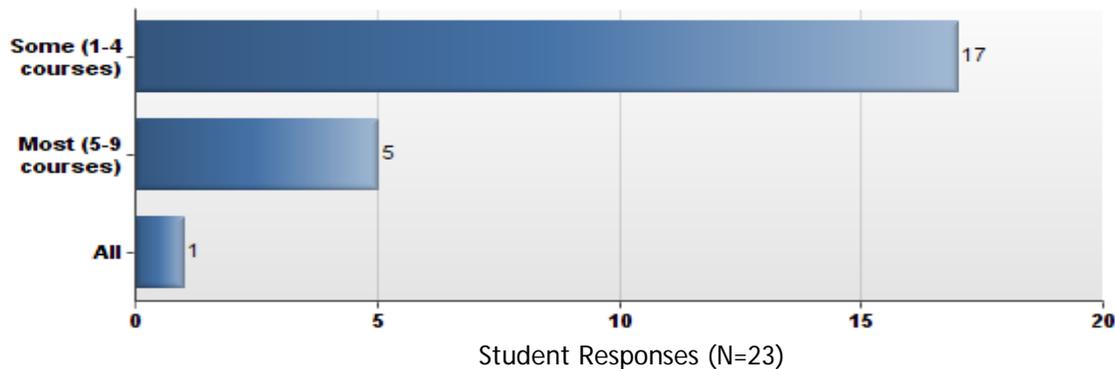
Eighteen students offered responses to this open-ended question, eleven of which offered suggestions for improvement.

- There were nine comments from students who felt their knowledge of theory and ability to apply theory would be improved if classroom theory instruction was more related to personal experience (two comments), to current events (three comments), to student research projects (three comments) and to homework assignments (one comment).
- Two students suggested improvements in instruction related to particular courses they had taken.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Q4. In how many of your sociology courses did you study research methods?

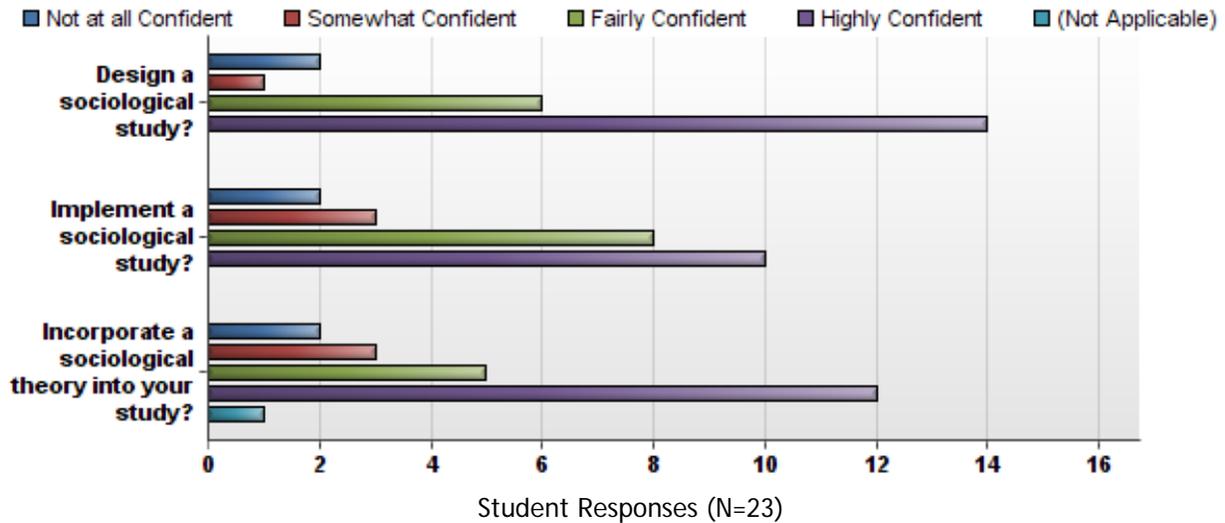
All students indicated they had taken at least one course that included a sociological research method.



### Q5. How confident are you in your ability to:

- Design a sociological study?
- Implement a sociological study?
- Incorporate a sociological theory into your study?

As evidenced by the following table, students self-reported high levels of confidence in their abilities to design and implement a study, and to incorporate a sociological theory into their studies. These results suggest that students who have completed the undergraduate program in the Sociology Department have achieved a level of mastery in the first three Department SLOs.



**Q6. What can the Sociology Department do to help students improve their ability to conduct sociological research?**

All 23 students answered this open-ended question, with 11 offering suggestions for improvement.

- Five students asked for more research projects, with one suggesting more experience in the real world.
- Three students asked for sociological research to be prioritized across the curriculum. For example, one student suggested: “Perhaps implement more electives as some [students] desire to be researchers.”
- Two students asked for additional resources to be made available for students wishing to conduct sociological research. One student requested some real-world research experience.
- One student suggested improvement in instruction related to a particular course.

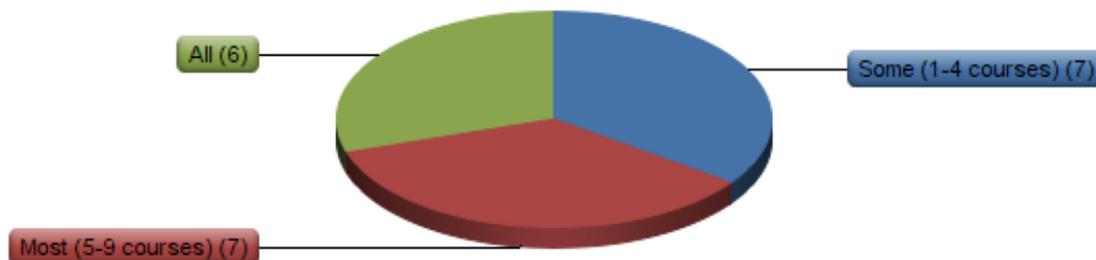
**COMMUNICATIONS: WRITTEN**

**Q19. In how many of your Sociology courses did you have written assignments?**

Of the 21 students who answered this question, 10 indicated they had written assignments in most courses (between 5 and 9 courses) and 11 students indicated that all of their sociology courses included written assignments.

**Q20. Approximately how many of your Sociology courses required term papers?**

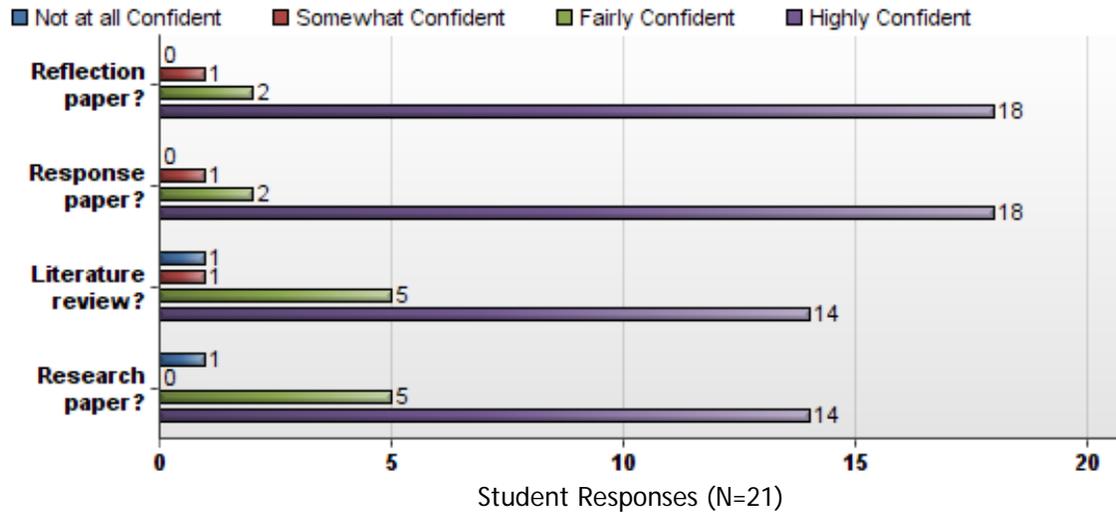
Twenty students answered this question. Of all the students who responded, none indicated they had taken a sociology course that did not require a term paper.



Number of Student Responses in Parentheses (N=20)

**Q22. How confident are you in your ability to write the following types of papers?**

Twenty-one students answered this question related to multiple types of sociology papers. In general students self-reported high levels of confidence in writing papers, with students marginally less confident in their ability to write literature reviews and research papers.



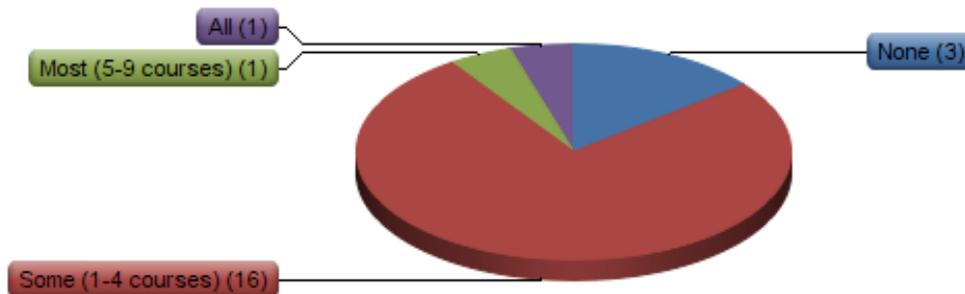
**Q23. What can the Sociology department do to help students improve their writing skills?**

Fourteen students offered responses to this open-ended question, with 10 comments offering suggestions for improvement.

- Seven students asked for sociology-specific writing support, such as writing tutors, increased office hours, or the practice of submitting multiple drafts so that feedback can be given by instructors and classmates prior to the final submission.
- Three students asked for more critical grading and increased feedback on papers.

**COMMUNICATIONS: ORAL**

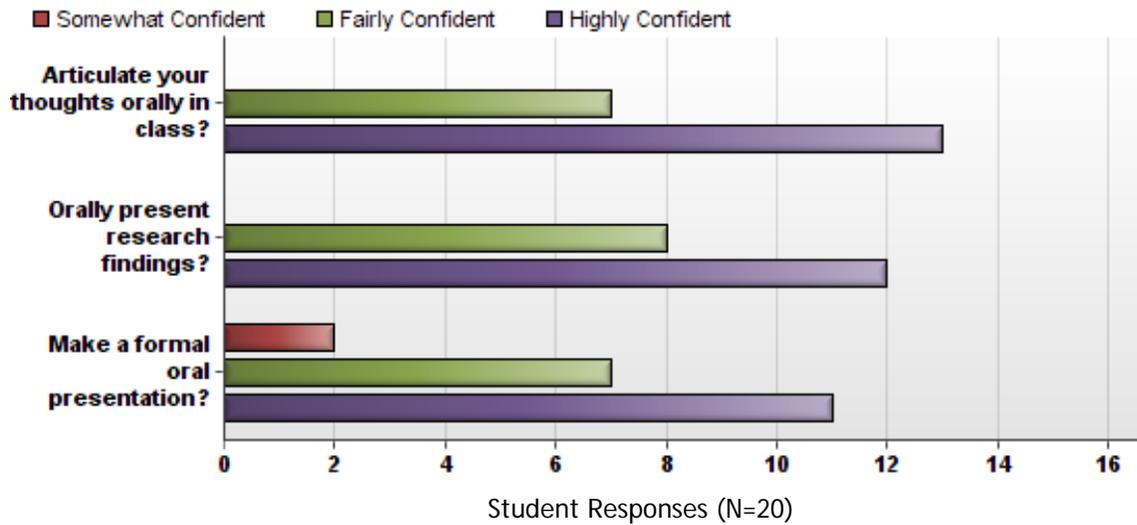
**Q24. In how many of your Sociology courses did you have oral presentations?**



Number of Student Responses in Parentheses (N=21)

**Q25. How confident are you in your ability to: Articulate your thoughts orally in class?; Orally present research findings?; Make a formal oral presentation?**

Twenty students self-reported on their abilities across multiple dimensions of making an oral presentation. No students rated their abilities at “Not at all Confident.”



### Q26. What can the Sociology department do to help students develop confidence in their ability to do oral presentations?

Twelve students offered responses to this open-ended question, six of which were suggestions for improvement. In addition, one student expressed appreciation as noted below.

- Two students suggested that the Sociology Department offer more classes with an oral communication focus designation, with one student commenting that it “was pretty sad that I had to go outside of my major to find an OC.”
- Two students asked that more classes require oral presentations.
- One student suggested group presentations.
- One student asked that there be a class specific to presenting social science research, noting “it is an important skill to have.”
- One student complimented the Department on doing “an amazing job of making me more comfortable speaking both in class and outside of class.”

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While students self-reported high levels of confidence in multiple dimensions relating to conducting sociological research, understanding and incorporating sociological theory, and in communicating their findings in both written and oral formats, the results indicate that the Sociology Department could make some programmatic changes that would improve the learning outcomes for our students. The areas that are weakest, in terms of the percentage of courses that include the skills that are addressed in our Student Learning Outcomes, are research methods and oral communication.

Only 26% of students reported that research methods were included in most or all of their major courses. That percentage can be increased. While students reported high levels of confidence in their research abilities, the broader inclusion of research methods in our courses could increase those percentages. Based on students' recommendations, more research assignments should be included in our courses. (See the summary of students' recommendations under Question 6, page 4.)

Only 10% of students reported that oral presentations were required in most or all of their major courses. That percentage can also be increased. Students had least confidence in their ability to make formal presentations and present their research findings orally. It is notable that some students suggested that more classes should require oral presentations and help students master the presentation of sociological research. (See the summary of students' recommendations under Question 26, page 6.)

If Sociology courses incorporated more research requirements *and* required students to formally present the results of their research orally, both of our weakest areas, in terms of the percentage of courses that help students to obtain mastery in these areas, would be strengthened at the same time.

While all of the students reported that written assignments were included in most or all of their major courses, they also had recommendations for improving their writing skills. All of the students who made recommendations for improvements suggested that more feedback on their written work would be helpful. (See the summary of students' recommendations under Question 23, page 5.)

The results of the exit survey will be shared at Departmental meetings, with the goal of making programmatic changes to help our students obtain mastery in all of the areas addressed by our Student Learning Outcomes.