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THE ROLE OF THE INTRODUCTORY SOCIOLOGY COURSE ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS

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Abstract

As higher education accreditation agencies emphasize achievement of general education learning goals for undergraduate students, departments are increasingly required to identify and assess the contributions of their disciplines to achievement of these goals. This exploratory study conducted at a large urban university and its satellite campus seeks to identify students' perceptions of the contributions of the Introduction to Sociology course to the general education goals specified by a single university. This study also seeks to identify the most frequently used pedagogies used by introductory sociology instructors. Results indicate students perceive that Introduction to Sociology facilitates achievement of critical thinking skills, integration and application of knowledge, and understanding of society and culture. Results also indicate that lecture is a nearly ubiquitous teaching strategy. Students report instructors utilize in-class discussion frequently. Small group activities, writing assignments, videos, and online discussion were less frequently utilized.

IN THE PAST DECADE, regional accreditation associations have begun to require colleges and universities to clearly state goals for student learning in both the general education curriculum and in the major. (See for example, American Association of Colleges and Universities 2004; Council for Higher Education Accreditation 2003 & 2001.) Sentar (2001) notes that all regional accreditation agencies in the United States now mandate some form of academic outcomes assessment and some state legislatures and state-level higher education agencies have also mandated such assessments. As a result, sociologists are being forced to consider what general education learning goals are promoted at colleges and universities and how our discipline contributes to these goals. In particular, what does the introduction to sociology course contribute to the achievement of general education goals? The American Sociological Association Task Force on Sociology and General Education (Keith et al. 2006) was charged with developing models and rationales for the ways in which sociology courses contribute to general education requirements. The task force's report argued that sociology courses ought to play an important role in the achievement of general education goals.

In an American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) discussion paper, Schneider and Schoenberg (1998) argue that there is an emerging consensus around four learning goals. The first is a key emphasis on the "development of intellectual skills as opposed to encountering subject matter" (p. 6). Among these skills are oral expression, computer literacy, and critical thinking. A second learning goal is "understanding multiple modes of inquiry and knowledge" (p. 7) which Schneider and Schoenberg (1998) describe as the "emergent way of talking about the 'distribution requirements'" (p. 7) that have dominated general education programs in the past. The third learning goal is "developing societal, civic, and global knowledge" (p. 8). Schneider and Schoenberg (1998) suggest this goal springs from the traditional belief that an educated person should know about historical events that have helped to shape contemporary society and from the more recent emphasis on learning about cultures that are distinct from Western culture. Schneider and Schoenberg's (1998) final learning goal is labeled "concentration and integration of learning" (p. 8) which is, in essence, study in the major. For sociologists, a significant question is what does our discipline contribute to students' achievement of these general education goals? Additionally, because the introductory sociology course is the first, and often the only, sociology course students will take, what does the introductory sociology course contribute to the achievement of general education goals?

SOCIOLOGY AND LEARNING GOALS

Wagenaar (2004) argues that the sociology curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, ambiguity, complexity, analysis, and communication. Roberts (1986) stresses that sociology develops a deep understanding of the impact of social structures upon individuals and an awareness of the importance of symbols in understanding culture. Grauerholz and Bouma-Holtrop (2003) emphasize critical thinking through the development of the sociological imagination as a central learning outcome of the discipline.

The American Sociological Association, through publications such as *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major* (Eberts et al. 1991) and *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated* (McKinney et al. 2004), has extensively addressed goals for study in depth within the major. Until the Report of the Task Force on Sociology and General Education (Keith et al. 2006), however, relatively little was said about the contributions of sociology to general education goals. The task force identified seven general education learning outcomes to which sociology

contributes: quantitative literacy, knowledge of society, multiculturalism/diversity awareness and understanding, global awareness and understanding, critical thinking, civic engagement, communication, moral reasoning, and collaboration and teamwork. While the report does not place responsibility for achievement of these learning outcomes solely on the introductory sociology course, it does stress the importance of the introductory sociology course as the “pivotal link” between general education learning outcomes and learning outcomes for the sociology major. The introductory sociology course has the potential to contribute to achievement of each of the seven learning goals and thus to the goals of general education programs.

However, McGee (1994) and Sundgren (1994) each note the challenge of trying to introduce students to the discipline and set a foundation for future sociology courses for majors while simultaneously meeting the needs of non-majors who are taking the course only to meet a general education requirement. *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated* (McKinney et al. 2004) points out that introductory sociology courses are designed to “give an overall picture of the discipline” and to serve multiple purposes, including being a part of the general education curriculum (p. 10). The authors argue that departments need to recognize that students who are not sociology majors are the primary audience for the introductory sociology course (p. 11). Thus, if non-majors who are unlikely to take another sociology course are the primary audience, then it makes sense to investigate the contributions of the introductory sociology course to general goals.¹

Once we identify the general education goals and contributions of introductory sociology courses, we then need to identify the various pedagogical strategies used to assist students in achievement of these goals. Hutchings (1992) argues that to fulfill the promise of assessment—improved learning—we need to pay attention to how students learn as well as what they learn. Without such investigation, we lack guidance for improvement.

Schneider and Schoenberg (1998) argue that the content of a liberal education “implies the necessity for *emphasizing* some learning strategies and *reducing* the prevalence of others [italics in original]” (p. 7). Reformers call for a move from presentational approaches to teaching toward a focus on the student as learner (Schneider and Schoenberg 1998:9). In a similar vein, an American Association of Colleges and Universities (2003) report summarized, “...the traditional classroom lecture has been found wanting in study after study” (p. 15). These reformers call for an emphasis on hands-on, inquiry based learning strategies including collaborative inquiry, such as learning and problem solving in small group settings; experiential learning, including direct experience in field settings; service learning, which are direct experiences that seek to solve problems and improve quality of life; research or inquiry-based learning, which helps students learn to organize and deal with unstructured problems; and finally, integrative learning—generating links among previously unconnected areas (Schneider and Schoenberg 1998). But before seeking to change the prevalence of some strategies over others, we need to determine which strategies are most frequently used in introductory sociology courses. To date, there appears to be no national study of the frequency of which various instructional pedagogies are employed in introductory sociology or other sociology courses. Thus we do not know what strategies are being utilized how often or with what results. This exploratory study begins to fill that void by identifying the prevalence of various pedagogical strategies utilized in the introductory sociology course at a large urban university.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the fall 2003 semester at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and its satellite campus, Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus (IUPUC). IUPUI is a large urban, commuter university with approximately 28,000 students. IUPUC is a smaller commuter campus with approximately 1,800 students. In response to accreditors' calls for a focus on undergraduate learning goals and assessment of those goals, the IUPUI Faculty Council approved the "Principles of Undergraduate Learning" in 1998 as a set of general education goals that identify the "fundamental intellectual competence and cultural and ethical awareness" (Principles of Undergraduate Learning) which every undergraduate student at IUPUI and IUPUC should attain (see Table 1). One of the six goals, Intellectual, Depth, Breadth and Adaptiveness, focuses on gaining substantial knowledge in a single field of study or study in the major. Given this study centers on students enrolled in an introductory course, we felt it appropriate to eliminate this outcome from the study. Instead we chose to focus on students' perceptions of gains on the other five outcomes as a result of their participation in an introduction to sociology course.

Howery (2001) notes the importance of student input in the assessment process and stresses that assessment should flow from the institution's mission and goals. We chose to focus on students' perceptions of gains on learning goals in part because students' views of the benefits of introductory sociology courses have been neglected. While *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major* (Eberts et al. 1991) and *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated* (McKinney et al. 2004) offer the instructor's perspective of what sociology's learning goals should be, no one has asked students what general education goals they think they are achieving in introductory sociology. It may well be that what we think we are teaching and what students think they are learning does not coincide. A second reason for our decision to focus on student perceptions is that directly assessing students' progress on general education goals is a notoriously difficult task especially when you have nine instructors each with his or her own unique assessment methods in the course. Directly assessing student improvement by pre- and post-test assignment was not feasible in this case. While this approach presents clear limitations for our exploratory investigation, it provides a useful starting point for discussion of a more direct assessment of student learning as it relates to general education goals.

In the fall 2003 semester, 11 different instructors taught 18 sections of Introduction to Sociology at IUPUI and IUPUC. Two instructors declined our invitation to participate in the study. A third instructor agreed to allow his smaller section (45 students) participate in the study, but not to allow his large mass lecture section (over 150 students) of the course. As a result, 9 instructors (6 males, 3 females) teaching 15 sections of Introduction to Sociology agreed to participate in the study. One of the sections was a mass lecture section with over 160 students enrolled. All of the other sections had enrollments of 45 or fewer students.

We utilized two research methods: survey and observation. During the last three weeks of the semester, all students in attendance in the 15 sections of Introduction to Sociology (three instructors taught more than one section) were given a survey to assess students' perceptions of frequency of pedagogical strategies employed by the instructor and perceptions of gains made toward achievement of the five general education goals. A total of 441 students completed the survey.

One section of each of the nine instructors' introductory sociology courses was observed for four class meeting sessions. We spread our observations so that they occurred roughly once every four weeks throughout the semester. This gave us a chance to observe how classroom dynamics may have changed as the semester progressed. During our observations, we noted the pedagogies employed by the instructor, the amount and nature of student participation, and the general classroom activity. We observed a total of 36 class meetings with 1402 students in attendance. As Table 2 shows, the majority of students observed (71%) and who responded to the survey (72%) were female. A higher percentage of students in the survey were nontraditional students (age 25 or older) than were so identified by classroom observers (18 to 10%). Thus it is likely that we mistakenly categorized younger nontraditional students, those over age 24 by just a few years, as traditional students. Thus the true percentage of nontraditional students observed is probably higher than what is reported in Table 2. A large majority of the students were white (84%). Based on survey responses, over 80 percent of the students were freshmen or sophomores. Almost one quarter of respondents expected to earn an A in their Introduction to Sociology course and half expected a grade of B.

What did we expect to find? Given that the study of society is the content of sociology, we hypothesized that of the five general education goals examined, students would report the greatest gains on the fifth goal, Understanding Society and Culture. Because the Introduction to Sociology course helps students to begin to grasp the interconnectedness of individual experience and the structures of society (the sociological imagination), we expected that students would also report gains on the second general education goal, critical thinking. We hypothesized that we would see students reporting the least amount of growth on the first general education goal, Core Communication and Quantitative Skills, and the sixth goal, Values and Ethics. The breadth of the first goal—covering writing, reading, speaking, quantitative analysis, and information technology—demands an emphasis on a wide range of skills. While sociology as a discipline emphasizes quantitative literacy, we expected that particular emphasis to get lost among the other skills in the goal, as they are not directly addressed in introductory sociology. While values and ethics can be addressed in introductory sociology, we did not expect this goal to receive the same amount of coverage as Understanding Society and Culture or Critical Thinking. We expected that the student reported gains on the third general education goal, Integration and Application of Knowledge, would fall between these two extremes. Because an introduction to sociology course is a broad survey of the discipline, we expected that the most frequently used pedagogical strategy would be lecture. There were two reasons for this belief: first, instructors often perceive that lectures allow for greater coverage course material; second, because the course is an introduction to the discipline, some instructors may believe that students have relatively little to contribute to the class because of their lack of familiarity with the subject. We expected that other strategies, such as on-line discussions, would be used less frequently, particularly because of faculty members' relative lack of experience with technology.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Survey questions to measure students' perceptions of gains on the general education goals were selected from various IUPUI institutional research surveys and incorporated in the survey administered to the students in the 15 Introduction to Sociology courses. Six survey questions were used to measure students' perceptions of gains on the first general education goal, Core Communication and Quantitative Skills (see Table 3). Each question asked students to indicate their level of agreement with the statement "My Introduction to Sociology course has improved

my ability to” The six statements included (1) use Indiana University’s online course management system, Oncourse® (which is similar to commercially available course management systems like Blackboard® and WebCT®); (2) use the internet for educational purposes; (3) understand books and articles; (4) solve problems that are quantitative in nature; (5) understand a statistical report; and (6) speak clearly and effectively. As Table 3 indicates, mean scores ranged from 3.32 (use Oncourse®) to 2.65 (speak clearly and effectively). The combined mean score for the first general education goal (Core Communication and Quantitative Skills) measures was 3.03 on the five point scale with five being the high score.

Table 4 presents the eight survey items used to measure students’ perceptions of gains on the second general education goal, critical thinking. Again, each item began with the “My Introduction to Sociology course has improved my ability to” The eight items had mean scores ranging from 3.60 to 3.08. “Think critically and analytically” and “Evaluate other people’s ideas and proposed solutions” had the highest mean scores. “Solve challenging problems” had the lowest mean score among the eight items. The combined mean score for all critical thinking measures was 3.43 on the five point scale.

The five survey items utilized to assess students’ perceptions of gains on the third goal, Integration and Application of Knowledge, are presented in Table 5. The mean scores for each item ranged from 3.63 (“Apply what I learn in college to issues and problems I face in daily life”) to 3.27 (“Discuss complex problems with coworkers or other students to develop a better solution.”). The combined mean score for all Integration and Application of Knowledge measures was 3.44.

As noted above, we did not try to assess students’ perceptions of growth on the fourth university general education goal, Intellectual Depth, Breadth, and Adaptiveness, because it is a goal that is more appropriate for in-depth study within the major. Instead, we moved on to the fifth goal, Understanding Society and Culture. As Table 6 indicates, the mean score (3.80) on “See how my life is impacted by what is going on around the world” was considerably higher than the other measures. The other seven items range from 3.45 (“Learn from other students in general”) to 2.99 (“Deal with conflict among co-workers and friends”). The combined mean score for all eight Understanding Society and Culture items was 3.31.

The perceptions of gains on the final general education goal, Values and Ethics, were assessed with four survey items as presented in Table 7. Scores ranged from 3.32 (“Make informed judgments when faced with ethical dilemmas”) to 2.61 (“Better appreciate art and beauty”). The combined mean score for all measures was 3.15.

Table 8 shows the combined mean score for the five goals examined. Going into the study, we hypothesized students’ perceptions of gains on the “Understanding Society and Culture” goal would far outstrip student perceptions of gains on the other goals. However, our hypothesis proved to be incorrect. The highest mean scores were for “Integration and Application of Knowledge” (3.44) and “Critical Thinking” (3.43). “Understanding Society and Culture” was a close third (3.31). Perceived gains on “Values and Ethics” (3.15) and “Core Communication and Quantitative Skills” (3.03) had the lowest combined mean scores.

Frequency of Use of Pedagogical Strategies in Introduction to Sociology

Table 9 describes the various pedagogical strategies and the frequency with which they were employed by Introduction to Sociology instructors according to the students surveyed. Clearly, lecture was ubiquitous with over 88 percent of students reporting that their instructor utilized lecture “very often” and another 10 percent replying lecture was used “often.” Every instructor we observed utilized lecture for at least one third of the class period. In several cases, it was the only strategy utilized as no student spoke from the beginning of class to the end.

Instructors who utilized lecture for long stretches of time and then attempted to invite discussion by saying, “Are there any questions?” were almost invariably greeted with silence from the class. In one class session, an instructor had a very systematic lecture that he outlined using an overhead projector as he went along. He also interspersed humorous stories to illustrate concepts. However, despite this polished presentation many students seemed to disengage as several kept putting their heads down on their desks. Another student played Solitaire on her laptop while still others engaged in whispered side conversations. A second instructor used references to popular culture, most often major motion pictures, to illustrate concepts and break up the lecture with feedback from students who had seen the films. This strategy was much more successful at generating moments of discussion in the midst of lecture as students were willing to attempt to use sociological insights and concepts to analyze popular movies.

The second most frequent teaching strategy utilized was in-class discussion. About half the students surveyed (51.4%) reported that their instructors used in-class discussion “very often” and another 27 percent reported “often.” Based on our observations of class sessions, most class discussions were part of what we characterize as an interactive lecture wherein the instructor pauses occasionally for student input before moving on to the next point or to solicit comments and illustrations based on students’ experiences. For example, one instructor asked students to list the household chores they were responsible for as children, keeping a list on an overhead transparency according to students’ sex. She then used this information as a springboard into her lecture on gender role socialization. In another instance, an instructor described the results of a series of sociological studies that resulted in counterintuitive findings. After describing each one, he asked the class to speculate on the reasons why the results were not what were expected. In so doing, he challenged students to think critically about the research findings.

Each of the other four strategies was employed much less frequently than lecture and in-class discussion. Only 41 percent of students reported use of small group activities “very often” or “often”. Writing assignments were reported as being used “very often” or “often” by 43 percent of students. Roughly half of students (51.5%) reported their instructor used films or videos “very often” or “often.” Online discussion was the least frequently employed strategy with only 11 percent of students reporting it “very often” or “often” and 62 percent responding “never.”

Several instructors utilized small group activities during class time as an alternative to lecture. Typically students were given a question or questions to address in small groups and then report back to the class as a whole. The instructors used these reports to the larger group as a way of making key points rather than presenting the key points in a lecture. Video was typically used as a springboard for discussion as well. For example, one instructor used a video recording of an interview with Barbara Ehrenreich before asking the students to respond to their reading of an excerpt of *Nickel and Dimed* (2001).

CONCLUSION

The results of this case study on the role of the Introduction to Sociology course on students' perceptions of gains on general education goals are meant to be exploratory. Caution must be exercised against generalizations formed from a study of nine instructors' courses at single university. In addition, this is a study of students' perceptions of gains on general education learning goals rather than a study that directly assesses students' gains on general education goals through classroom assessment techniques such as exams or papers. The latter is a far more difficult and challenging undertaking. Students' perceptions are an important component of assessment of learning, but alone they present an incomplete picture. While this type of exploratory study can provide some useful starting points for discussion, systematic attempts to directly assess students' learning are necessary and may soon be required by accreditation agencies. Despite these limitations, this study provides some interesting fodder for consideration as we explore the role of introductory sociology courses in the achievement of general education goals.

First, "critical thinking" has been a buzz word in education for some time. Many disciplines and many instructors claim that their introductory courses serve to facilitate students' ability to think critically. This study presents evidence that, in students' perceptions, introductory sociology does, indeed, lead to gains in critical thinking ability. A comparison of critical thinking gains in introductory sociology with introductory courses in other disciplines in the arts and sciences and other professional fields would be ideal. However, this is a learning goal in which students in introductory sociology perceive they are making greater progress in comparison to certain other general education goals, such as values and ethics. While many disciplines claim they facilitate critical thinking, this study presents evidence, albeit limited by the nature of the study, that students perceive introductory sociology facilitates their critical thinking.

Second, this study suggests that students perceive introductory sociology has practical application to their lives and their experiences in society. Introductory sociology students find the course relevant to their lives. This is the sociological imagination at work. As students begin to see the connection between their personal experiences and social structures, they develop an understanding of the value of sociology for understanding their experience in society. Thus the students' report that Integration and Application of Knowledge is a general education goal which the introductory sociology course facilitates is likely referring to their development of a sociological imagination rather than the development of job related skills which the university description of the goal seems to imply (see Table 1).

Third, this study presents a starting point for determining which pedagogical strategies are utilized in introductory sociology courses. Clearly, lecture is still king (at least in this sample). But students also report frequent use of classroom discussion. In fact, based on students' survey responses, it would seem that faculty use a lot of different methods frequently. Based on our observations of class sessions, however interactive lecture structure was predominantly used. Faculty members spent the vast majority of class time lecturing with occasional pauses for student input via in-class discussion. At IUPUI and IUPUC, introductory sociology courses, like introductory history courses for example, tend to be larger than introductory courses in other Liberal Arts disciplines (for example, English and Communications). Again, lacking national data on class size in sociology courses and lacking comparative data across disciplines makes it

difficult to draw conclusions. Nonetheless, the predominance of lecture as a pedagogical strategy at this university may, in part, be a result of larger than average class size.

Finally, the results of this study may be helpful as departments seek to follow the recommendations laid out in *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated* (McKinney et al. 2004) and in the report of the *Task Force on Sociology and General Education* (Keith et al. 2006). As departments seek to clearly identify the mission, goals, and objectives of the sociology program and of the introductory course, they should keep in mind students' perceptions that introductory sociology facilitates critical thinking, integration and application of knowledge, and an understanding of society and culture. Likewise, the results of this study may be informative as sociology departments seek to identify and articulate the contributions of sociology to the general education goals of the institution as a whole.

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Tables:

Table 1. IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning

Principle	Definition	Outcomes
1. Core Communication and Quantitative Skills	The ability of students to write, read, speak and listen, perform quantitative analysis, and use information resources and technology—the foundation skills necessary for all IUPUI students to succeed.	This set of skills is demonstrated, respectively, by the ability (a) to express ideas and facts to others effectively in a variety of written formats, (b) to comprehend, interpret, and analyze texts, (c) to communicate orally in one-on-one and group settings, (d) to solve problems that are quantitative in nature, and (e) to make efficient use of information resources and technology for personal and professional needs.
2. Critical Thinking	The ability of students to analyze carefully and logically information and ideas from multiple perspectives.	This skill is demonstrated by the ability of students (a) to analyze complex issues and make informed decisions, (b) to synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions, (c) to evaluate the logic, validity, and relevance of data, (d) to solve challenging problems, and (e) to use knowledge and understanding in order to generate and explore new questions.
3. Integration and Application of Knowledge	The ability of students to use information and concepts from studies in multiple disciplines in their intellectual, professional, and community lives.	This skill is demonstrated by the ability of students to apply knowledge (a) to enhance their personal lives, (b) to meet professional standards and competencies, and (c) to further the goals of society.
4. Intellectual Depth, Breadth, and Adaptiveness	The ability of students to examine and organize disciplinary ways of knowing and to apply them to specific issues and problems.	(a) Intellectual depth describes the demonstration of substantial knowledge and understanding of at least one field of study; (b) intellectual breadth is demonstrated by the ability to compare and contrast approaches to knowledge in different disciplines; (c) adaptiveness is demonstrated by the ability to modify one's approach to an issue or problem based on the contexts and requirements of particular situations.
5. Understanding Society and Culture	The ability of students to recognize their own cultural traditions and to understand and appreciate the diversity of the human experience, both within the United States and internationally.	This skill is demonstrated by the ability (a) to compare and contrast the range of diversity and universality in human history, societies, and ways of life; (b) to analyze and understand the interconnectedness of global and local concerns; and (c) to operate with civility in a complex social world.
6. Values and Ethics	The ability of students to make judgments with respect to individual conduct, citizenship, and aesthetics.	A sense of values and ethics is demonstrated by the ability of students (a) to make informed and principled choices regarding conflicting situations in their personal and public lives and to foresee the consequences of these choices; and (b) to recognize the importance of aesthetics in their personal lives and to society.

Table 2. Student Characteristics Based on Observation and Survey Data

Observational Data	Student	Percentage
Gender	Female	71
	Male	29
Age	Traditional	90
	Nontraditional	10
Age/Gender	Traditional Female	63
	Traditional Male	26
	Nontraditional Female	8
	Nontraditional Male	3
Race	White	85
	Non-white	15
	N	1402
Survey Data	Student	Percentage
Gender	Female	72
	Male	28
Age	Traditional	82
	Nontraditional	18
Age/Gender	Traditional Female	59
	Traditional Male	23
	Nontraditional Female	13
	Nontraditional Male	5
Race	White	84
	Asian	2
	Black	11
	Hispanic	2
Class Standing	Freshman	47
	Sophomore	35
	Junior	13
	Senior	5
Expected Course Grade	A	24
	B	52
	C	21
	D	2
	F	1
		N

Table 3. Core Communication and Quantitative Skills*

My Introductory Sociology Course has improved my ability to: (5 = Very much; 4 = Quite a bit; 3 = Somewhat; 2 = Very little; 1 = Not at all)	Mean (SD)
Use Oncourse®.	3.32 (1.42)
Use the internet for educational purposes.	3.15 (1.41)
Understand books and articles.	3.14 (1.04)
Solve problems that are quantitative in nature.	2.96 (1.19)
Understand a statistical report.	2.91 (1.26)
Speak clearly and effectively.	2.65 (1.11)
Mean Score of all PUL 1 indicators	3.03

*The ability of students to write, read, speak and listen, perform quantitative analysis, and use information resources and technology—the foundation skills necessary for all IUPUI students to succeed.

Table 4. Critical Thinking*

My R100 Course has improved my ability to: (5 = Very much; 4 = Quite a bit; 3 = Somewhat; 2 = Very little; 1 = Not at all)	Mean (SD)
Think critically and analytically.	3.60 (1.10)
Evaluate other people's ideas and proposed solutions.	3.53 (1.10)
Think creatively about new ideas or new ways to improve things.	3.48 (1.13)
Combine information from a number of sources in order to arrive at a reasoned conclusion.	3.46 (1.11)
Systematically review and improve my own ideas about how to approach an issue or solve a problem.	3.43 (1.07)
Evaluate the logic, validity, and relevance of data.	3.41 (1.13)
Use information from a variety of sources when deciding what action to take.	3.35 (1.13)
Solve challenging problems.	3.08 (1.14)
Mean Score of all PUL 2 indicators	3.43

*The ability of students to analyze carefully and logically information and ideas from multiple perspectives.

Table 5. Integration and Application of Knowledge*

My R100 Course has improved my ability to: (5 = Very much; 4 = Quite a bit; 3 = Somewhat; 2 = Very little; 1 = Not at all)	Mean (SD)
Apply what I learn in college to issues and problems I face in daily life.	3.63 (1.13)
Learn independently (apart from my college classes).	3.44 (1.11)
Find new ways to use my skills and knowledge as I encounter new situations or new problems.	3.42 (1.13)
Apply my knowledge and learning to improve society.	3.40 (1.11)
Discuss complex problems with co-workers or other students to develop a better solution.	3.27 (1.15)
Mean Score of all PUL 3 indicators	3.44

*The ability of students to use information and concepts from studies in multiple disciplines in their intellectual, professional, and community lives.

Table 6. Understanding Society and Culture*

My R100 Course has improved my ability to: (5 = Very much; 4 = Quite a bit; 3 = Somewhat; 2 = Very little; 1 = Not at all)	Mean (SD)
See how my life is impacted by what is going on around the world.	3.80 (1.16)
Learn from other students in general.	3.45 (1.13)
Learn from students of different races, ethnicities, religions, or sexual orientations.	3.43 (1.21)
Work effectively with people of different races, ethnicities, religions or sexual orientations.	3.33 (1.19)
Communicate effectively with people who see things differently than I do.	3.32 (1.08)
Exercise my responsibilities as a citizen (e.g., voting, staying current with community and political issues).	3.04 (1.18)
Keep my composure in difficult situations.	3.00 (1.24)
Deal with conflict among co-workers and friends.	2.99 (1.16)
Mean Score of all PUL 5 indicators	3.31

*The ability of students to recognize their own cultural traditions and to understand and appreciate the diversity of the human experience, both within the United States and internationally.

Table 7. Values and Ethics*

My R100 Course has improved my ability to: (5 = Very much; 4 = Quite a bit; 3 = Somewhat; 2 = Very little; 1 = Not at all)	Mean (SD)
Make informed judgments when faced with ethical dilemmas.	3.32 (1.14)
Recognize the consequences of my actions when facing a conflict.	3.26 (1.18)
Make choices about my conduct based on thoughtful reasoning about what is appropriate.	3.25 (1.84)
Better appreciate art and beauty.	2.61 (1.31)
Mean Score of all PUL 6 indicators	3.15

*The ability of students to make judgments with respect to individual conduct, citizenship, and aesthetics.

Table 8. Mean Scores on Survey Measures of Impact of Introductory Sociology on the Undergraduate Learning Goals

Undergraduate Learning Goal (5 = Very much; 4 = Quite a bit; 3 = Somewhat; 2 = Very little; 1 = Not at all)	Mean (SD)
Core Communication and Quantitative Skills.	3.03 (.970)
Critical Thinking.	3.43 (.959)
Integration and Application of Knowledge.	3.44 (.967)
Understanding Society and Culture.	3.31 (.962)
Values and Ethics.	3.15 (1.083)

Table 9. Frequency of Pedagogical Strategies Employed in Introductory Sociology Courses

How frequently did your instructor use the following teaching methods?						N
	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
Lecture	88.7	10.0	1.4	0	0	442
In class discussion	51.4	27.4	14.9	5.4	.9	442
Small group activities	29.6	11.8	16.1	21.7	10.8	442
Writing assignments	19.5	23.8	32.3	21.7	2.7	437
Videos	17.3	34.2	35.1	5.9	7.5	439
Online discussion	6.7	4.1	10.1	17.2	61.9	436