

WHAT CAN I DO WITH A SOCIOLOGY DEGREE?

SKILLS AND CAREERS: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH SKILLS

Sociologists use quantitative research skills to conduct systematic empirical investigations of social phenomena using statistical methods. *Quantitative research comprises those studies in which data are expressed in terms of numbers.* The objective of quantitative research in sociology is to gather rigorous data and to use those numerical data to characterize the dimensions of an issue or the extent of a problem (this could include, for instance, the collection of statistical data on rates of obesity and poverty in neighborhoods or states and the calculation of the correlation of the two phenomena) and, often, to use those data to develop or test hypotheses about the roots of the problem at hand.

In Chapter 7, we saw a broad spectrum of quantitative data; such a spectrum is key to both academic studies and policy making on issues such as poverty, wealth and income inequality, and postindustrial changes in the labor market. We cited data collected by the U.S. government to measure household incomes and to establish the dimensions of the division of aggregate income across quintiles of earners. We also looked at data collected by the Pew Research Center on the gaps in net worth between Whites, Blacks, and Latinos. As you advance in your sociological studies, you will have the opportunity to become familiar with quantitative data on important sociological issues and to see how these data are used in analyses—and you will have the opportunity to learn how to do quantitative sociology. For example, you might learn to measure and compare trends in income differences by race, ethnicity, and gender or to assess the significance of variables such as neighborhood unemployment, educational attainment, and median income as predictors of neighborhood street crime.

Knowledge of quantitative methods is a valuable skill in today's job market. Learning quantitative methods of research, which is an important part of a sociological education,



prepares you to do a wide variety of *job tasks*, including survey development, questionnaire design, market research, brand health tracking, and financial quantitative modeling and analysis. These kinds of tasks are commonly part of the *job descriptions* of, among others, market research analysts, marketing specialists, social science research assistants, clinical research coordinators, criminal justice and law enforcement teachers, financial quantitative analysts, markets quantitative analysts, and statistical research analysts. These are jobs that can be found in a variety of *occupational fields*, including education, marketing, criminal justice, health and medicine, business and management, finance, and social science research.

THINK ABOUT CAREERS

► Social statistics are used in a broad variety of analyses of the social world, and researchers often use quantitative methods to study relationships between different sociological variables. How do you think the job tasks of people who use quantitative data in occupational fields such as marketing, health, criminal justice, and business might be similar to and different from what quantitative sociologists do?