Student Learning in the Social Sciences

Harold Washington College Assessment Committee

Fall 2012

CITY COLLEGES of CHICAGO
Harold Washington
Education that Works

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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the methodology, key findings, and recommendations from the Social Science Assessment undertaken by Harold Washington College Assessment Committee (HWCAC) in the fall semester of 2010. Exactly 977 students completed the survey during assessment week of fall 2010 and provided data allowing us to: identify student learning around social science outcomes; make comparisons about the student sample and the HWC student population of the time; and explore affective data with regard to social sciences and all other disciplines within our general education curriculum.

The report explains our student learning outcomes for the social sciences and the subsequent assessment process. It reflects in detail on the tool design and the methodological decisions associated with this. The piloting process is outlined and includes the implementation and grading process that was originally created for this assessment. A number of implementation challenges were associated with this college-wide assessment relating to both human and technical capacity issues and these are explained and explored.

Data were gathered during Assessment Week in fall 2010 and the details of student and faculty participation are specified. These data are then presented to compare relevant demographic details of our student sample against the general HWC student population of the time.

The data on learning outcomes and in the affective realm is then presented and discussed. The report concludes with recommendations for improving student learning outcomes in the social sciences at Harold Washington College.

The intention of the report is to stimulate evidence-based changes at the classroom, discipline, department, and institutional level and to impact positive improvement in student learning with regard to the social sciences, a core element of our general education curriculum.

DEFINING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

As has been the protocol in the past, the HWCAC began with the first step of the assessment cycle by defining our student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the general education objective aimed at the social sciences. The General Education Objective for students reads:

"To understand cultures, institutions, and patterns of human behavior and the application of the scientific method to their study."
(2008-2010 HWC Catalogue, page 146)

To establish the SLOs for the general education objective specified above, a subcommittee of the HWCAC dedicated to the social science assessment process began by determining the fundamental questions we would hope our students could easily and comprehensively answer after completing their 9 credit-hour social science general education requirement to earn an Associate's Degree. The following questions guided our construction of the SLOs:

a. What are the social sciences? (Goal: To identify and describe all the social science disciplines)
b. Why study the social sciences? (Goal: To explain the interdisciplinary approach of the social sciences to understanding and investigating the "ecology of humanity" in society)
c. How are the social sciences studied and researched? (Goal: To define the steps of the scientific method and distinguish between the types, techniques, and application of research designs)
d. Articulate knowledge and understanding of Social Science terminology (Goal: To demonstrate comprehension of the social sciences, orally and written, with the use of technology)

Our use of the term, "ecology of humanity" includes such social phenomenon as: human groupings, interactions, culture, social institutions, behavior, forces and changes from the micro to macro scales. In December of 2009, the following Student Learning Outcomes were formally adopted by the HWCAC:

"Upon completion of the general education requirements in Social Science, the student will be able to:

1. Explain in oral and written form, and through the use of technology, the interdisciplinary approach of the seven social sciences toward investigating society.
2. Apply the scientific method using relevant research designs.
3. Formulate questions and evaluate theories, concepts and philosophies about social phenomenon.
4. Explain and defend one's own position and arguments about social issues as applied to the personal pursuit of a quality life."

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of Chao Lu, Matthew Williams, Todd Heldt, Jeffrey Swigart, Charles McSweeney, Jennifer Asimow, Chris Kabir (Research & Planning), Vincent Wiggins (OIT), and Chris Sabino, who worked on the subcommittee specifically charged with this aspect of our assessment process.

ASSESSMENT TOOL DESIGN

Using the approved SLOs, the social science subcommittee of the HWCAC searched for an assessment tool either currently being sold on the market or being utilized by another institution of higher education that would assess one or more of the agreed SLOs. Areas of research included investigating professional organizations affiliated with each of the social science disciplines as well as The National Social Science Association, brokerage firms selling assessment materials, internet searches, and literature reviews. Through our research endeavors, we discovered that a tool for collectively assessing all of the social science disciplines did not exist. Many discipline-specific assessment tools were accessible and adopted by many colleges and universities, but none could effectively measure one or more of the SLO's created nor make comparisons amongst the seven distinct social science disciplines we offer as part of our general education curriculum at Harold Washington College. This situation left the HWCAC with the challenge of creating our own tool specifically tailored to these needs. This is a challenge we have encountered before and primarily derives from the key faculty-driven process of student learning outcome definition. In our seven-college system, each college is independently accredited and as such, key faculty on each campus rightly defines SLOs at this level. This makes the use of standardized tools or tools that have a more general applicability across diverse campuses and student bodies, more complex and less likely.

The HWCAC welcomed this challenge, for it allowed the opportunity to create an assessment tool tailor-made to assess one or more of our SLOs. After much discussion, the sub-committee recognized that our SLOs varied in complexity, requiring different levels of thinking and reasoning. Because of this, the subcommittee members chose to create an assessment tool that specifically addressed what we considered to be our most fundamental student learning outcome:

> 1) Explain in oral and written form, and through the use of technology, the interdisciplinary approach of the seven social sciences toward investigating society.

Obviously, students must be able to distinguish between the social sciences, but at the same time acknowledge the similarities and dependencies they have on each other in efforts for understanding the interdisciplinary approach to studying social phenomena. Therefore, our first assessment of the social sciences would focus on this more foundational aspect, and other aspects of our SLOs for the social sciences would need to be the focus of future assessments for our general education curriculum. HWCAC has a 7-year cyclical timetable that identifies when general education disciplines are to be assessed.

As the subcommittee progressed in our discussion of what we wanted to accomplish with the assessment tool, we felt strongly that students should also gain, (through their graduation requirement of 9 credits of social science coursework), a more solid

appreciation for the value and relevancy of the social sciences to their everyday personal lives.

We supported the inclusion of a section of question items that assessed comfort level with the social sciences. The HWCAC has a history of collecting a range of affective data, and our two previous assessments in quantitative reasoning and the natural sciences had demonstrated a significant relationship between student perceptions of learning, other aspects of affective data, and their actual learning outcomes. This section of our assessment tool has been utilized by other HWCAC self-designed tools, and gives us the opportunity to make comparisons over time between the strength of comfort students report among all of our general education disciplines.

The third and final section of our assessment tool was also designed to identify students' differential appreciation for the distinct social science disciplines. The subcommittee hypothesized that if students highly valued the social sciences, then they would easily identify how the social sciences impact their own personal lives. Hence, the subcommittee felt that a third section of questioning on our self-designed assessment tool also lays the groundwork for assessing our fourth SLO, which reads:

> 4) Explain and defend one's own position and arguments about social issues as applied to the personal pursuit of a quality life.

The HWCAC recognizes that assessment research shows that mixed assessments (direct and indirect) can often be more informative than those that are strictly direct or indirect. With respect to the open-ended and narrative questions in the first and third section of questions on our tool, the HWCAC sub-committee all agreed that cognitive competency of the social sciences required critical thinking, since the disciplines are heavily theory-based rather than factual-based. This required that students demonstrate their capacity to be independent thinkers and feel confident in defending their positions and opinions. As such, the open-ended questions were crucial to providing insight into student thinking and capacities in these areas. In summary, the subsequent assessment tool was as follows:

Part One – Differentiating Between the Social Sciences

Nine small, invented dialogues between social scientists, each created to be representative conversations within a specific discipline. Students were given multiple-choice responses for all seven disciplines for each question from which to identify each conversation. There were two representative dialogues each for Sociology and History, intended to ensure students had to read all scenarios and could not simply work their way through the choices in a simple elimination process. All of the dialogues were pseudo-conversations about President Obama and key political issues of the time.

Part Two – Demographic and Affective Responses

Nine multiple-choice questions about student demographic identifiers, their social science academic history, and other data, were used to identify their specific academic journey in general. This was followed by twelve questions asking students to identify their comfort level with each social science discipline and other general education disciplines. The general education areas identified in this section have been used in a number of our assessments, thus allowing us some comparative data across very different assessments. There were then eleven questions about student understanding of the usefulness and nature of social science learning. For these questions students were asked to respond using a simple 4-point Likert-like scale indicating strong agreement through strong disagreement. These questions were designed to uncover the value that students attached to their social science learning.

Part Three – Written Narrative Responses

In this final section of the assessment tool, students were provided with a fictional scenario of a social phenomenon and asked to examine it through the eyes of three different self-selected social scientists. One selection was from the behavioral social sciences (psychology, sociology, or anthropology), another from the non-behavioral social sciences (economics, history, political science, or geography). The third choice of social scientist standpoint and discipline was a free selection from all seven disciplines, designed for students to show some breadth in their social science knowledge across these disciplines. In each of these three different discipline choices students were asked the same three core questions:

1) List the concepts or characteristics revealed in the scenario that would be of the most interest to the social scientist you have chosen.
2) Explain how an investigation of those concepts/characteristics might contribute to establishing social stability and control.
3) Explain how an investigation of those concepts/characteristics might affect your personal quality of life.

Additionally, they were asked that their explanations were to consist of 4-6 sentences and include key terms and concepts that are frequently associated within the chosen discipline. These questions were designed to register increasing complexity and understanding of the social sciences. We were particularly interested in how students made sense of their learning and could integrate and synthesize this into their lives outside of college using higher-level learning. The theoretical framework which influenced this tool design was the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes, or SOLO, framework (Biggs and Collis, 1982 and 1999[1]).

[1] Biggs, J. B. and Collis, K. (1982) *Evaluating the Quality of Learning: the SOLO taxonomy*. New York, Academic Press and Biggs, J. B. (1999) *Teaching for quality learning at university*. Berkshire, U.K. Open University Press.

The entire assessment tool was designed to reside on Blackboard and would be completed by students in a proctored computer lab or at large by accessing the assessment tool through their own Blackboard page. This would be the first fully electronic assessment we had undertaken.

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to full official implementation of the social science assessment, as per our usual process, we piloted the assessment tool and the on-line delivery process. This was thought especially important since this was the very first time we had stepped away from the traditional "paper and pencil" approach to data gathering from students. HWCAC made the decision to create the online format for the assessment using Blackboard as our platform, since this was the dominant institutional electronic learning platform in use across the campus. This decision required considerable specialized support, not only in the construction of the assessment tool, but also in the strategy surrounding the logistics of having students complete the assessment. Ephrem Rabin (Blackboard Specialist) and Christopher Kabir (Research & Planning) played instrumental roles in the construction of the Blackboard version of our self-designed assessment tool. The Assessment Committee believed that using Blackboard and automating the assessment would allow for greater ease and efficiency of collecting and analyzing data and be more of a convenient delivery mode for students. In fact, the use of Blackboard offered the opportunity to considerably cut down on human resources required to tabulate results from student assessments. Our tool design had many multiple choice options which would automatically be processed through Blackboard, giving us access to fairly instant results from these areas of the survey.

The HWCAC generated an email to faculty asking for volunteers to administer the Social Science Pilot Assessment. Five faculty members were chosen, representing six class sections during the summer semester of 2010. Three sections held class in a computer lab in efforts to complete the on-line assessment, two sections were instructed to log into Blackboard during a specified time period of 3 days and complete the assessment at their convenience, and one instructor delivered the pilot assessment in hard copy (paper format) during class time. In total, the pilot yielded 110 completed assessments that were appropriately completed for analysis.

The pilot study generated valuable insight for improvements needed. To ensure that this would occur, a specific question was added to the survey instrument in its pilot format, so that students could provide feedback to HWCAC in response to taking the pilot assessment. The question read as follows:

"52: **Thank you for participating in this PILOT assessment.** The HWC Assessment Committee is eager to know your thoughts and reaction to the assessment. Is there something we can do to improve it? Did you experience any difficulty in completing it? Your reactions and opinions are appreciated. In the Fall 2010 semester, the assessment will be *officially* administered."

Nearly 60% of the students offered a comment in response to this request for specific pilot feedback. In most cases, their answers provided valuable feedback that resulted in our rewording, restructuring, and removing parts of the original assessment. In some cases students contributed comments that expressed their concern about social science knowledge and their desire to gain a more in-depth knowledge of the social sciences. The HWCAC found these comments particularly inviting and encouraging.

Below is a list of the major changes generated from the pilot assessment process:

1. The directions for Part III were reworded and expanded to include more specificity on the expectations for answering the questions in Part III and on the grading criteria that would be used to judge the quality of answers. This was designed to give explicit details to students about what was expected in response to these questions. It also expressly followed best practices by showing students explicitly how grading judgments would be made.

2. A few technical errors in the Blackboard construction were remedied.

3. The length of the assessment was altered. Asking students in Part III to use the lens of three different and specific social scientists was considered too much and made for a daunting and lengthy assessment that risked student fatigue, especially since the core questions were repeated identically for each of the three self-selected social scientist lenses. HWCAC cut this section down to two responses, thus making a considerable reduction in the length of the tool and the demands on student respondents. Some on the committee felt this was still a very lengthy assessment tool, but our choice of trying to assess across the range of the seven social sciences made it difficult not to ask students to directly demonstrate their social science skills in more than one discipline. The requirement for a third examination was eliminated and the final section of the assessment tool, post-pilot, asked students to look at the hypothetical scenario through the eyes of a behaviorist social scientist (anthropologist, psychologist, or sociologist) and secondly, a non-behaviorist (historian, economist, political scientist, or geographer).

The full, finalized Social Science Assessment tool, in its paper format equivalent, is presented in the Appendix (Appendix 1).

Our pilot learning focused heavily on methodological and practical issues. As stated above, we also asked a specific feedback question from students and we received interesting feedback, which is presented in full the Appendix (2). Beyond the process data offered by

students, the social science findings, the demographic and affective data themselves were not analyzed in any systematic ways.

ASSESSMENT WEEK: FULL IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to the Social Science Assessment being administered during Assessment Week in the fall of 2010 (November 8th through November 13th), a number of key decisions were made in advance of data gathering, which would turn out to be fortuitous in the light of some of the technical difficulties we encountered in using Blackboard as our assessment platform. Two key decisions were:

- To enter the potential 1,200 student volunteers into separate Blackboard classes earmarked by the day of the week, thus separating out each daily data set. It was not known whether Blackboard could handle such larger class sizes that would constitute the full sample size. Our large target meant that on each day of the assessment, up to 300 prospective student respondents had to be manually entered into specific "Assessment Classes" so that they would appear on student Blackboard pages. Beyond the large amount of administrative time to practically prepare the site, this was a large untested technological risk. We tried to minimize this by breaking the respondent pool into daily cohorts.

- To print hard copies of the assessment tool, in preparation for any internet failures or other unforeseen technical difficulties during designated assessment time periods. With a room full of student volunteers, we would not want to waste their efforts or time. We also needed to ensure we made adequate accommodations for students with disabilities. These included braille and large print versions of the survey tool.

The HWCAC set the goal of assessing 10% of our currently registered students. This equated to a target population of 1,000 faculty volunteered students in class sections. To secure a representative sample, we solicited the participation of all faculty to volunteer their class sections, which required them bringing their students to a pre-scheduled assessment room (a pre-prepared section of room 404, the main computer lab on campus) where the on-line assessment would be proctored. In some cases, members of the Assessment Committee reached out to specific instructors who were teaching either 100 or 200 level courses. The reason for this was to ensure that our sample population would consist of beginning (1st semester) and advanced (4th semester) students, as well as high academic and lower academic students. This initial attempt to create a representative sample resulted in securing 12.3% of our student population as volunteered by their teaching faculty.

For the first time in the history of the HWCAC, we also offered students and faculty the option of completing the assessment in an un-proctored setting. Since the assessment tool was hosted online using Blackboard, faculty could volunteer student sections and allow them to complete this at will from any location during assessment week by logging on to Blackboard and following the specific instructions online. This also allowed us to schedule more student respondents without physically overbooking our 75 reserved spaces in the main computer room during Assessment Week. Additionally, this meant we could schedule volunteered sections to complete the assessment with faculty in other rooms on campus with computer access, increasing our potential capacity beyond the time and space limitations of the main computer lab. A small number of faculty added the completion of the Social Science Assessment into their grading profile of their courses in the fall, thus encouraging student participation. We encouraged this, since we believed we would easily be able to track actual student participation using Blackboard data and return this completion activity data to instructors who specifically requested it as part of their course grading profile.

Considerable planning and faculty engagement was involved in the data collection during the fall 2010 Assessment Week. Aside from the forty faculty who volunteered their classes for the assessment process, HWC Assessment Committee members proctored the computer room for over forty hours during Assessment Week.

Planned and volunteered participation data from Assessment Week is shown in Table One.

Table 1

Assessment Room 404 - Scheduled Student and Faculty Participation		
Monday, November 8th, 2010		
13 sections involving 12 faculty	Maximum Students = 342	@ 70% = **239**
Tuesday, November 9th, 2010		
13 sections involving 13 faculty	Maximum Students = 330	@ 70% = **231**
Wednesday, November 10th, 2010		
10 sections involving 9 faculty	Maximum Students = 289	@ 70% = **202**
Thursday, November 11th, 2010		
5 sections involving 5 faculty	Maximum Students = 118	@ 70% = **83**
Friday, November 12th, 2010		
1 section involving 1 faculty	Maximum Students = 21	@ 70% = **15**
Saturday, November 13th, 2010		
1 section involving 1 faculty	Maximum Students = 30	@ 70% = **21**

At-home and at any time Assessments		
7 sections involving 5 faculty	Maximum Students = 222	@ 70% = **155**
In-class assessments – not 404		
4 sections involving 4 faculty	Maximum Students = 94	@ 70% = **66**
Planned Student/Faculty involvement in Assessment Week		
40 faculty volunteering a potential 1,446 student respondents		
Student attendance estimated at 70% of volunteered class roster = 1,012 students 70% of full class volunteer roster		

Historically, the HWCAC has found that when anticipating a student participation rate for assessments, we can usually count on a 70% participation rate from the faculty-volunteered student totals. Typically, this is due to normal attrition rates in classroom attendance, among many other conditions. In the case of this assessment process, 977 students completed assessments, representing a 67.5% of the original potential student participants based on faculty volunteerism. This figure just missed the target through the absence of a few volunteered sections on the first day of Assessment Week. Faculty had many reminders, but a few required a physical reminder during their teaching time. This was only an issue on the first day of Assessment Week, though more challenges were encountered.

Blackboard did not prove to be a useful platform on which to host this assessment. We are unclear of a number of issues related to our first full online assessment process. Some of this is about our specific technical expertise in designing assessments within this system, some about our own human capacity to manage a complex online data system. There are also questions about how much the platform hinders student participation, patience, and responsiveness. In summary, key issues generated during Assessment Week and not encountered before the pilot were as follows:

1) Unreliable internet access and slow response time in Blackboard, which led to considerable student frustration with the process and exerted an unknown influence on data.
2) Unreliable internet access and slow response time in Blackboard, which led to the abandonment of the online tool and rapid distribution of paper copies of the assessment tool.
3) Complex initial access to the tool through Blackboard that required seven clicks before the assessment could actually begin.
4) A Blackboard error that deleted a full day's data – the work of some 287 students – the largest daily set of respondents. This reduced our effective response rate from

11.87% of our student population to 8.3% of our student population of 8,023 in the fall semester of 2010.

5) Extensive administrative support time to enter numerous paper survey responses into the electronic database.

Our learning from these unexpected issues will be discussed in the conclusions of this report.

GRADING LOGISTICS AND RESOURCES

The HWCAC designed a complex and detailed grading plan to rate the narrative elements of students responses to Part Three of the survey, which were the questions with written extrapolations on two self-selected social science disciplines. This involved 10 faculty members recruited specifically for this task. Some were HWCAC members and some were from the Social Science Department. This ensured that there were enough graders to handle all the student data, that we had a broad diversity of social science expertise in our grading pool, and that the HWCAC was broadening engagement with more faculty that those who were regular committee members.

A grader training protocol was established, alongside a grading rubric (see Appendix 3). Our plan was to have both a non-social scientist and a social science faculty member grade each answer. As per our well-established practice over many years, special assignment forms were completed to allow faculty to undertake all of this additional work. These were approved by HWC administration but were not approved at District. This was unusual, since this was the major strategy we had used for many years to get large amounts of data graded, faculty buy-in, and reward for additional college-wide assessment work.

We adapted to this new and surprising reality and took all of the grading tasks back within the HWCAC membership, instituting a new scaled down plan for progressing the assessment. Thanks and apologies were passed to our additional Social Science faculty grading volunteers. Assessment results were easily retrieved for Part I and Part II through Blackboard reporting capabilities. We did manage to obtain additional funding support for four graders, all of whom were Assessment Committee members. Appendix 4 contains the articulation of need for institutional support for these large scale college-wide grading tasks that are labor intensive. This presents a strong case for stipends for this college-wide assessment work.

Priority to serve as graders was given to Assessment Committee members first. Four individuals were identified: Lynnel Kiely, Charles McSweeney, Matthew Williams, and Jeffrey Swigart. Non-social science faculty (Swigart and McSweeney) were paired up with

social science faculty (Williams and Kiely, respectively) in efforts to establish internal validity in the grading process. HWCAC graders also attended a 60-minute inter-rater reliability training to support strong differentiation between the social science disciplines and to communally practice use of the grading rubric. Based on the quantity of assessment completed, graders were expected to devote 20 hours to actual evaluation endeavors. This equated to an average of 33 readings of questions per hour, entering scores electronically for a total of 666 readings. Completion of the grading process was originally targeted for May 13, 2011. During the grading process, evaluators were asked to attend a scheduled Assessment Committee meeting to discuss the progress of their evaluation endeavors and voice any concerns.

The inter-rater reliability training had four distinct segments, all designed to strengthen communal understanding of the social sciences and judging written textual cues to determine a grade within our rubric. Firstly, a 16-page packet was created and distributed to all graders that provided a narrative description of the seven social sciences. The material was extracted from a social science textbook manuscript written by Social Science Professors Lynnel Kiely and Laura Chambers. The intent in distributing and examining the document was to better educate the graders on the key terms and concepts affiliated with each social science discipline.

Secondly, twenty minutes were devoted to examining the grading rubric for clarity and ease of use. Reliability was specifically built through individual an, eventually, a common ground for scoring was established.

As a final reliability check, the four evaluators teamed up in their respective pairs, and each were given four additional narrative responses from Part III of the pilot to grade. This time, the scoring was done privately. Eventually, all the scores from each evaluator were revealed and discussed once again. Efforts were made to select Pilot Assessment responses that represented all seven disciplines. A detailed breakdown of the allocation of grading tasks is presented in Appendix 5.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Our collection of demographic data from our student respondent pool primarily serves as a check of representativeness of our assessment sample and allows for simple comparisons between the HWC credit taking course student body as a whole and those faculty volunteered students who contributed data to this specific assessment sample.

In Fall 2010, there were 8,023 credit students registered at Harold Washington College. The eventual and usable sample of students taking the Social Science assessment was 666,

which was 8.3% of the student population at the time. Below are tables showing comparisons between students taking the assessment and HWC students overall by gender, age, race/ethnicity, and full-time versus part-time. While the sample of students taking the assessment was statistically representative of HWC students overall, there are some slight demographic differences in the student profile. Full-time students were over-represented in the sample of students taking the assessment, which makes sense because these students were on campus more often and thus had a much stronger probability of being in a class in which their instructor had asked them to take part in the assessment. As can be seen below, this sample was consistent with the overall demographics of the college. The slight discrepancies are most likely due to the increased categorical options on our demographic section of the assessment tool.

Table 2 – Sample versus Population: Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity			
Students Taking the Assessment		***HWC Credit Overall***	
Black/ African American	32.13%	Black/ African American	38%
Hispanic/ Latino	29.73%	Hispanic/ Latino	30%
White	16.37%	White	18%
Asian	9.61%	Asian	11%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0.45%	American Indian/ Alaska Native	<1%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.30%		
Multi-Racial/ Multi-Ethnic	6.76%		
Blank	4.65%		

The HWC demographic categories of the time were driven by federal reporting obligations, since the time of our Diversity Assessment in 2005, HWCAC has used a more expanded inclusive list of race and ethnicity designations. In chart form the relatively close match of our assessment sample is clearly visible.

Chart 1 – Sample versus Population: Race and Ethnicity

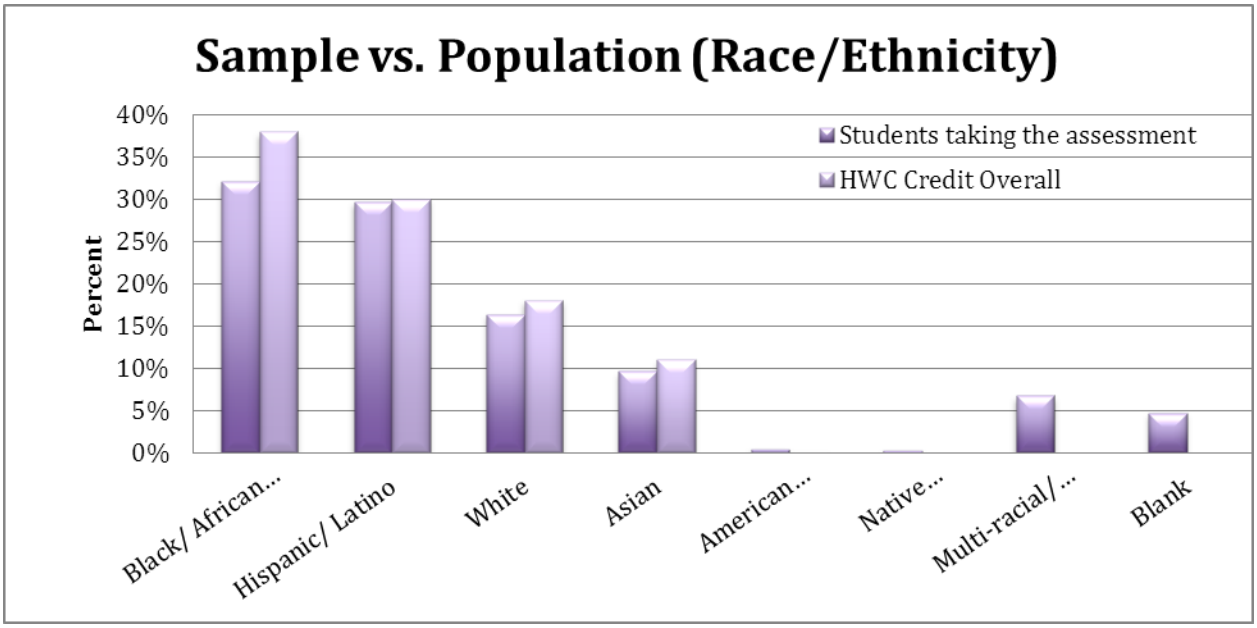


Table 3 – Sample versus Population: Age

Age			
Students taking the assessment		***HWC Credit Overall***	
20 or under	30.03%	20 or under	35%
21-25	38.29%	21-30	46%
26-40	20.87%	31-39	10%
41-60	7.06%	40 or over	10%
61 or over	0.45%		
Blank	3.30%		

There is also a reasonable match with regard to the ages of our sample respondents and the age break down of HWC students at the time of the data collection. Again, an indicator that this sample, despite the smaller than anticipated size, was indeed a reasonable match for our general student population at the time. This is closeness can be seen in Chart 2.

Chart 2 – Sample versus Population: Age

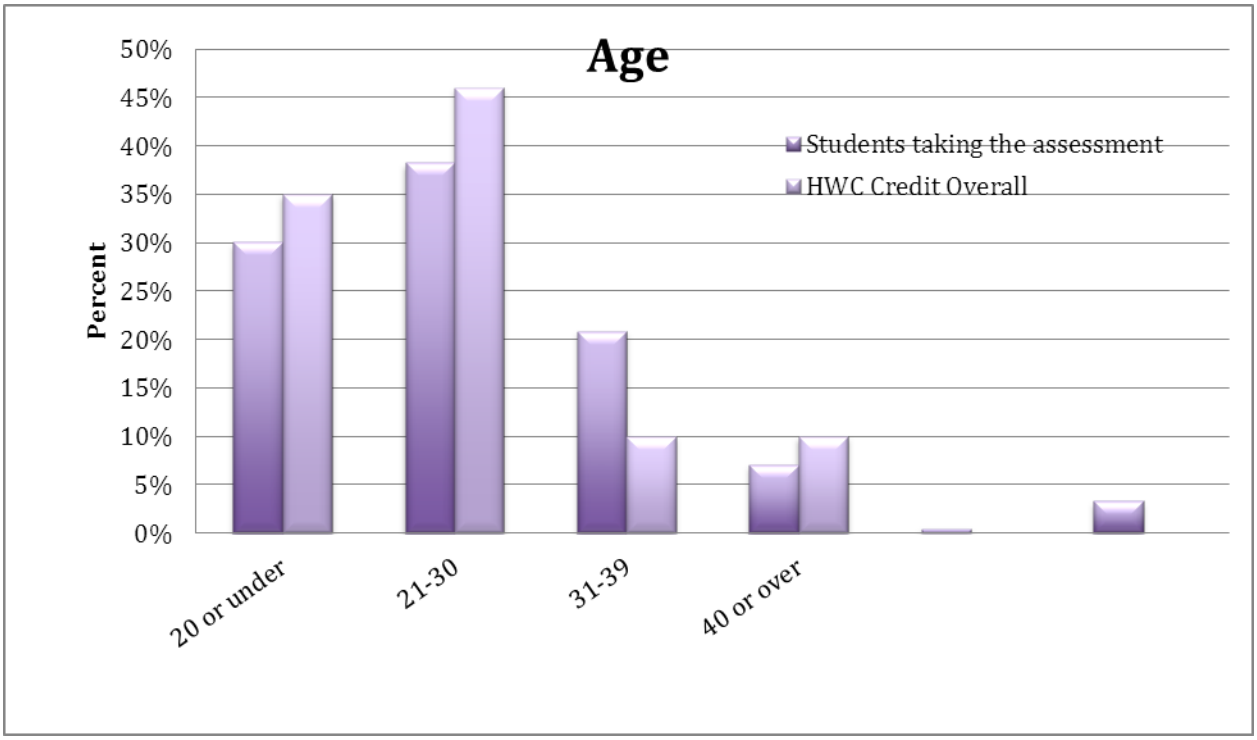


Table 4 – Sample versus Population: Gender

Gender			
Students taking the assessment		*HWC Credit Overall*	
Male	35.59%	Male	40%
Female	60.81%	Female	60%
Blank	3.60%		

Chart 3 – Sample versus Population: Gender

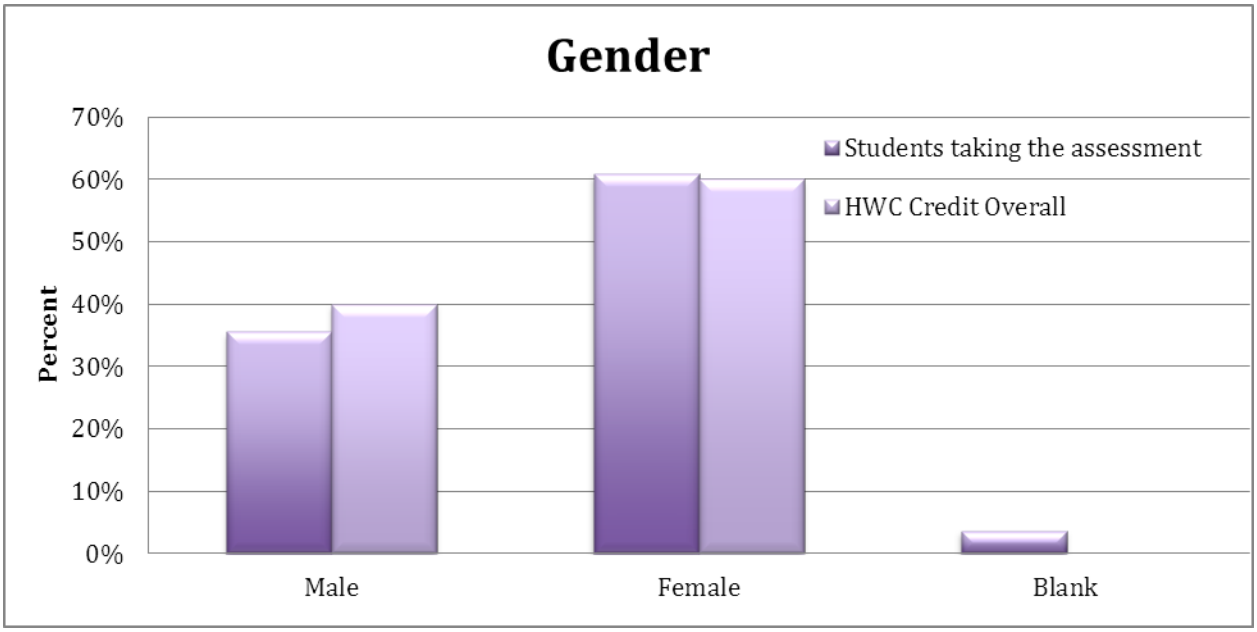
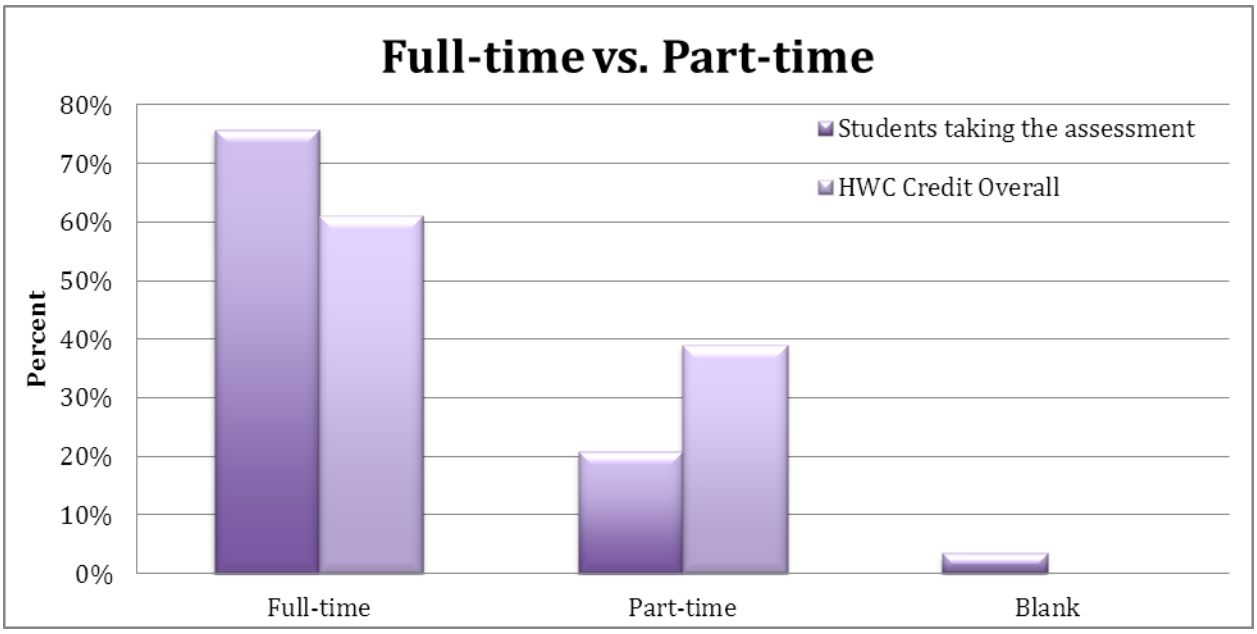


Table 5 – Sample versus Population: Full-time and Part-time Students

Full time student versus part-time students			
Students taking the assessment		*HWC Credit Overall*	
Full-time	75.83%	Full-time	61%
Part-time	20.72%	Part-time	39%
Blank	3.45%	Blank	

Chart 4 – Sample versus Population: Full-time and Part-time Students



THE SOCIAL SCIENCE CONTEXT

Our key findings about Social Sciences and student learning outcomes at Harold Washington College also need to be placed in the context of social science class offerings and student registrations for these classes. Social science faculty themselves may be well-aware of discipline strength in terms of class sections offered and student recruitment numbers. Faculty in general will be aware of the nine credit-hour requirement of social science courses for successful student graduation.

This provides the all-important social sciences context in which our students demonstrate their capabilities. We looked at Social Science 101, Social Science 102, Social Science 105, Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Geography, History, and Political Science classes. Data were gathered from a three-year span up to and including the fall semester of 2010, when the Social Science assessment occurred. Our intention was to see the scale and scope of the social sciences at HWC, which could help frame the specific assessment findings. We are grateful to the HWC Registrar for providing us with these data.

We collected summary data from the following semester registrations: Summer 2008, Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Summer 2009, Fall 2009, Spring 2010, Summer 2010, and Fall 2010. We have included a separate table of registration data for Center for Distance Learning (CDL) students registered through Harold Washington College for these exact same semesters. For further analytical purposes in this report it is not possible for us to distinguish between Center for Distance Learning HWC students and on-campus registered students. We know that a small number of CDL sections were involved in both the pilot and the full data gathering process during Assessment Week. We offered an "un-proctored" and "at a distance" opportunity for faculty and their class sections to complete the assessment online during the specified time. These student respondents were a very small subset of our sample currently too complex for us to differentiate. We do not know if CDL-registered students were also part of the on-campus cohorts of students brought to the assessment room by their faculty. With too many unexplored and unknown aspects of the CDL impact our primarily campus driven data collection process, it makes sense to expect these students to be least likely to be on campus and contributing data through our student sample. While this may not be a fully accurate assumption about Center for Distance Learning registrations and student cohorts, we have yet to devise a methodology that specifically includes them *in* our data collection process. This is an issue we will return to in our conclusions, since these students are an important and increasing part of our profile. We are well aware that the new criteria for accreditation specifically require that institutions can assess learning whenever and wherever it takes place. As discussed in the conclusions, this requires a more sophisticated design of assessment processes and

probably much more sophisticated technical capabilities than we had at our disposal in 2010.

After totaling eight semester registrations for ***on campus*** social science courses, Table 6 below shows the cumulative pattern. It must be noted that registrations can include duplicated students, so this cannot be used to represent unduplicated student numbers.

Table 6 – Social Science Sections and Registrations on Campus

	Subject	Class Sections Offered	Average Class Size	Total Registrations	Social Science Percent
1	History	134	27	3,554	24.5%
2	Psychology	101	29	2,931	20.2%
3	Social Science I	87	30	2,568	17.7%
4	Social Science II	52	31	1,622	11.2%
5	Economics	35	32	1,116	7.7%
6	Political Science	32	27	859	5.9%
7	Sociology	26	32	827	5.7%
8	Anthropology	26	28	725	5%
9	Geography	8	21	170	1.2%
10	Social Science 105	6	20	121	0.8%
				14,493	**100%**

If these categories are re-ordered to total social science course registrations and compared to the seven separate disciplines, the following pattern emerges:

Table 7 – Social Science Discipline 'strength' on campus

	Subject	Class Sections Offered	Average Class Size	Total Registrations	Social Science Percent
1	Social Sciences	145	27	4,311	29.7%
2	History	134	27	3,554	24.5%
3	Psychology	101	29	2,931	20.2%
4	Economics	35	32	1,116	7.7%
5	Political Science	32	27	859	5.9%
6	Sociology	26	32	827	5.7%
7	Anthropology	26	28	725	5%
8	Geography	8	21	170	1.2%
				14,493	**100%**

After totaling eight semester registrations for ***CDL*** social science courses, Table 8 below shows the cumulative pattern. It must be noted that registrations can include duplicated students, so this cannot be used to represent unduplicated student numbers.

Table 8 – Social Science Sections and Registrations CDL

	Subject	Class Sections Offered	Average Class Size	Total CDL Registrations	Social Science Percent
1	History	69	13	919	31.8%
2	Psychology	27	15	409	14.2%
3	Sociology	16	22	354	12.3%
4	Economics	26	11	297	10.3%
5	Social Science I	18	15	265	9.0%
6	Geography	12	17	208	7.2%
7	Social Science II	8	20	157	5.4%
8	Anthropology	11	13	144	5.0%
9	Political Science	11	12	136	5.0%
10	Social Science 105	0	0	0	0%
				2,889	**100%**

If these categories are re-ordered to total ***CDL*** social science course registrations and compared to the seven separate disciplines, the following pattern emerges:

Table 9 – Social Science Discipline 'strength' CDL

	Subject	Class Sections Offered	Average Class Size	Total Campus Registrations	Social Science Percent
1	History	69	13	919	31.8%
2	Social Sciences	26	18	422	14.4%
3	Psychology	27	15	409	14.2%
4	Sociology	16	22	354	12.3%
5	Economics	26	11	297	10.3%
6	Geography	12	17	208	7.2%
7	Anthropology	11	13	144	5.0%
8	Political Science	11	12	136	5.0%
				2,889	**100%**

Using these registration statistics to look at the overall profile of the social sciences provide by Harold Washington College, the general survey courses of the Social Sciences dominate registrations with 4,733 separate registrations over this eight-semester timespan. They still dominate even if we remove the more specialized Social Science 105 from on-campus registrations. This dominance is followed by History, then Psychology registrations. Of all the distinct disciplines represented by these data, Geography registrations are by far the smallest. Perhaps, the more intriguing aspect of this registration data is the large drop in average class sizes from on-campus sections to CDL sections. While clearly not an assessment finding per se, this will be discussed in the conclusions of this report. Equivalency of student learning outcomes should be expected regardless of the learning mode, and this conversation is complicated by significant changes in the size of classes shown through these data.

PART ONE FINDINGS: IDENTIFYING SOCIAL SCIENCE DIALOGUES

Part one of the assessment tool presented nine separate dialogues between social scientists and asked students to correctly identify the distinct social science discipline embedded within the dialogue. Dialogues were written to contain language, concepts, and dominant themes considered to be representative of each discipline. Our belief was that students with a strong knowledge of a discipline would be able to identify these discipline-specific cues and select the appropriate choice from all seven on the discipline labels on offer in the multiple-choice response section for each question. The seven social science disciplines

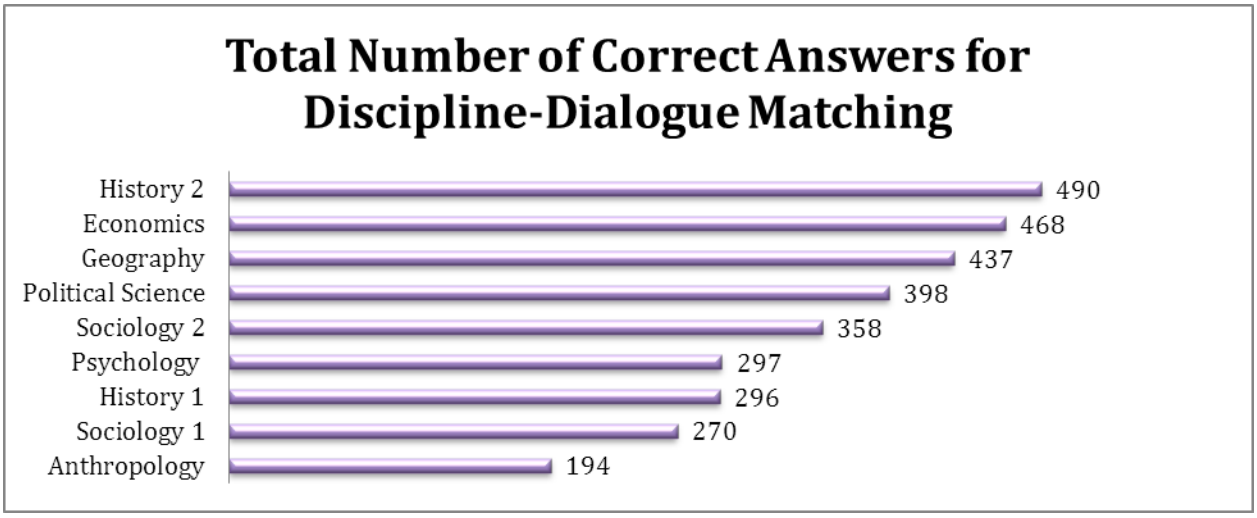
were displayed in alphabetical order and for each question students were instructed to make only one choice for each dialogue. There were nine separate dialogues, two each for history and sociology. The nine discipline dialogue questions were as follows:

Table 10 – Discipline Dialogue Question Allocation

Question One	Psychology	Question Six	Sociology 1
Question Two	Economics	Question Seven	Anthropology
Question Three	Geography	Question Eight	Sociology 2
Question Four	History 1	Question Nine	History 2
Question Five	Political Science		

The rates of correct student responses for each of these discipline dialogues are shown in Chart 5. As can be seen, the two sociology and history pseudo-dialogues did not receive the same level of recognition from this student sample. This will be discussed in the conclusions of this report.

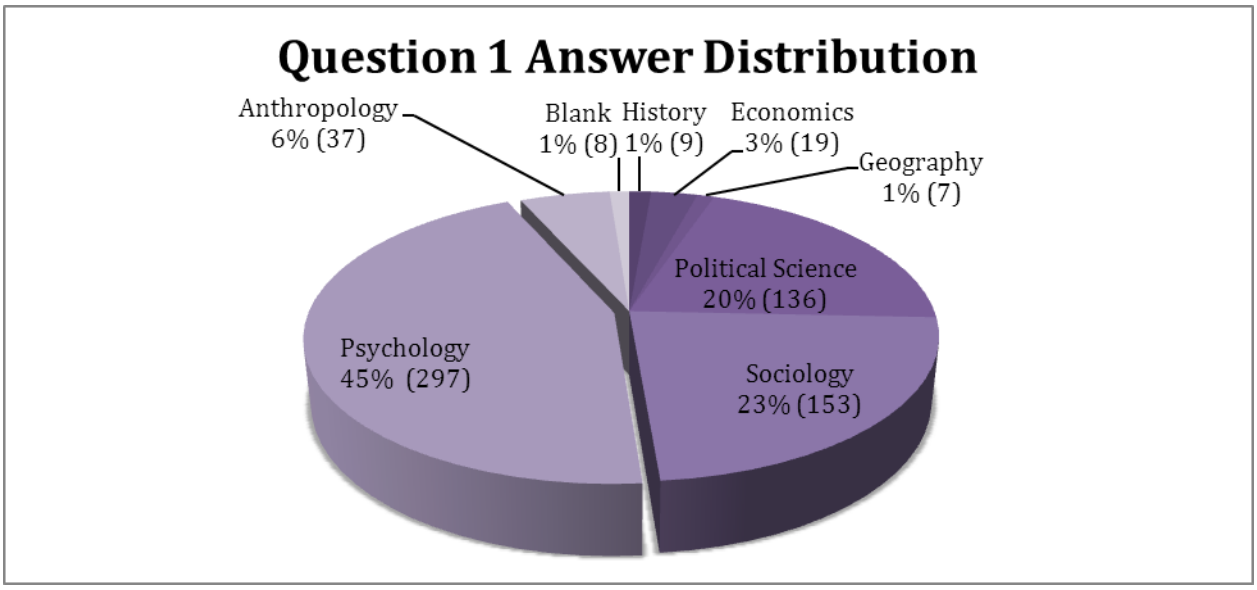
Chart 5 – Correct Answers Matching Discipline Dialogues



Question One Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **"Psychology"** Chart 6 below shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample, including blank responses. Of those selecting a discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **45%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of a psychological dialogue.

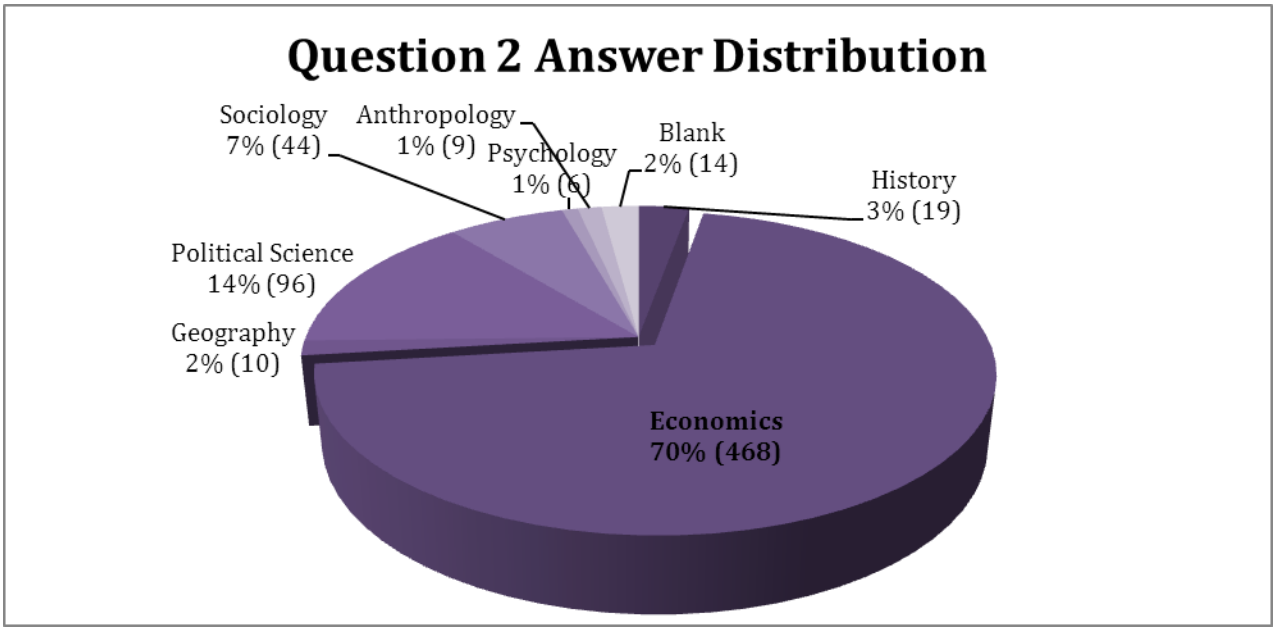
Chart 6 – Psychology Dialogue Correct Answers



Question Two Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **"Economics"** and Chart 7 below shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample, including blank responses. Of those selecting a discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **72%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of an economics dialogue.

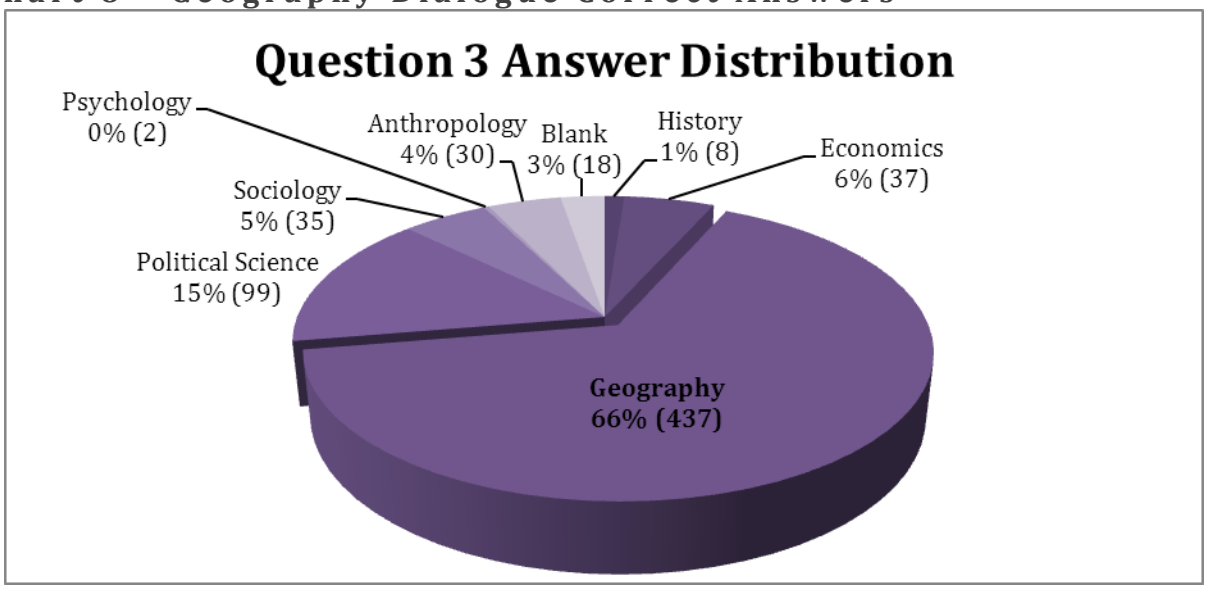
Chart 7 – Economics Dialogue Correct Answers



Question Three Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **"Geography"** and Chart 8 below shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample, including blank responses. Of those selecting a discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **67%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of a geographic dialogue.

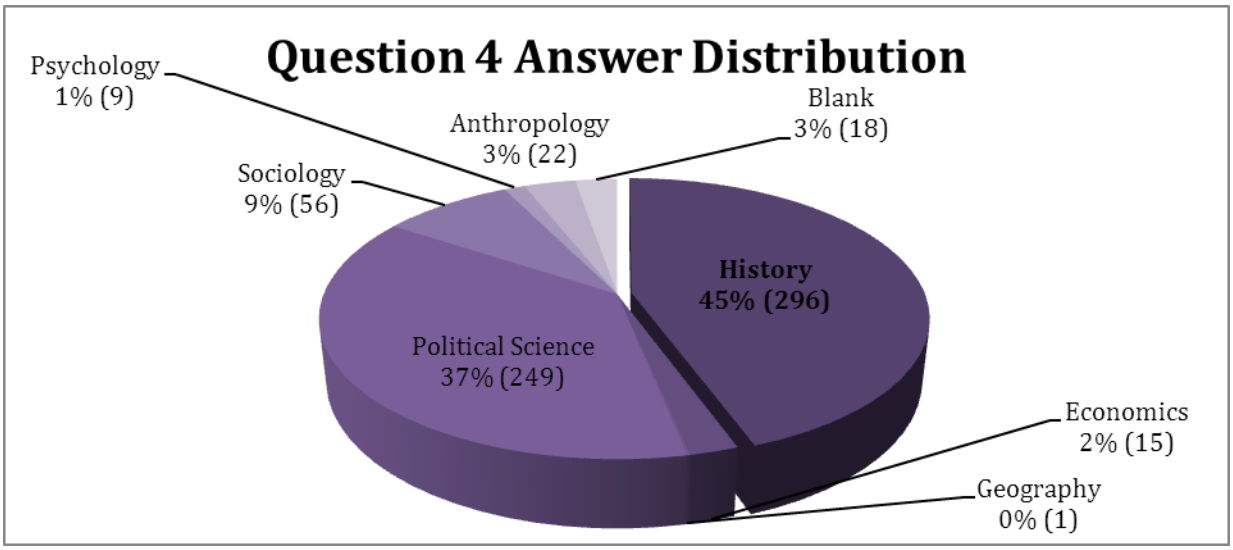
Chart 8 – Geography Dialogue Correct Answers



Question Four Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **"History"** and Chart 9 shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample, including blank responses. Of those selecting a discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **46%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of an historical dialogue.

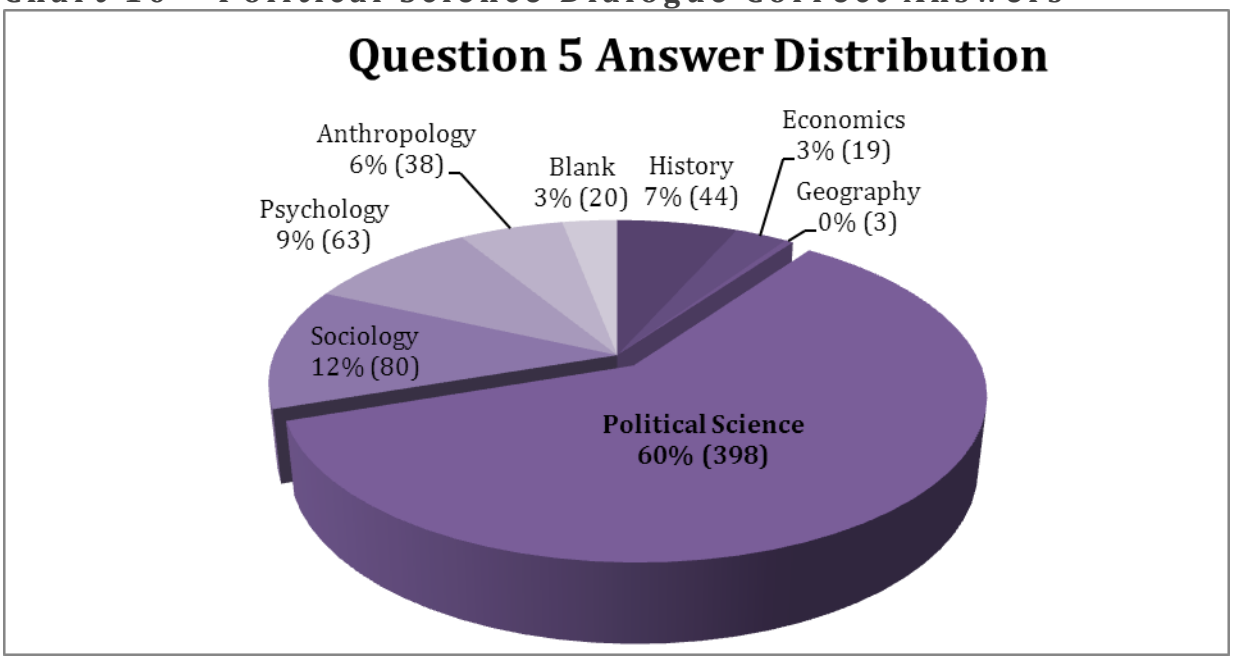
Chart 9 – History Dialogue One Correct Answers



Question Five Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **"Political Science"** and Chart 10 shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample, including blank responses. Of those selecting a discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **62%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of a political science dialogue.

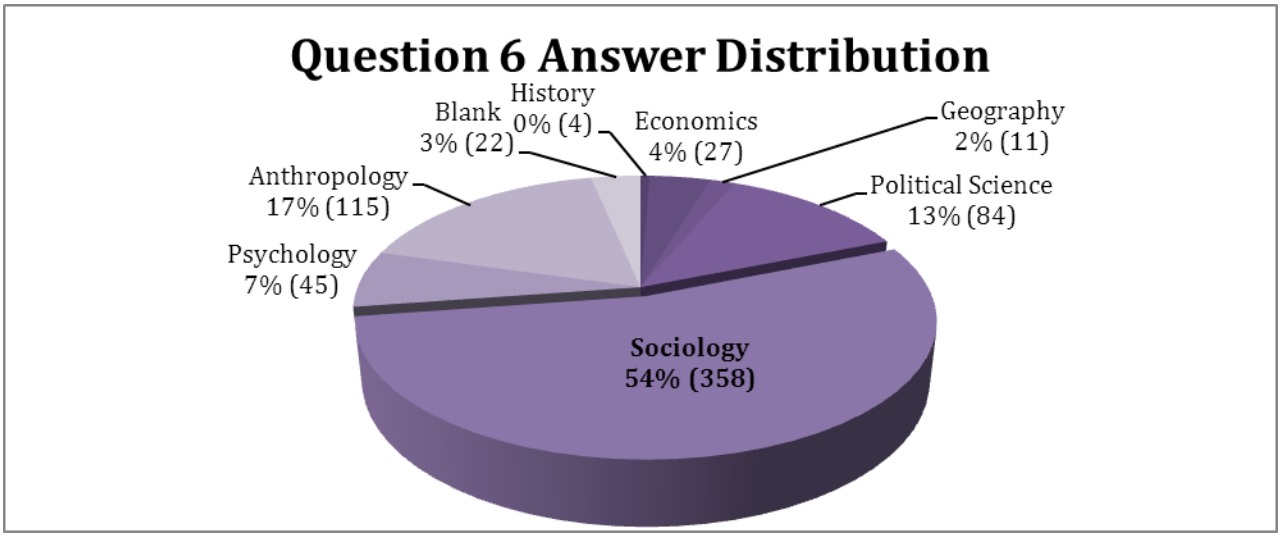
Chart 10 – Political Science Dialogue Correct Answers



Question Six Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **'Sociology'** and Chart 11 shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample including blank responses. Of those selecting a discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **56%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of a sociological dialogue.

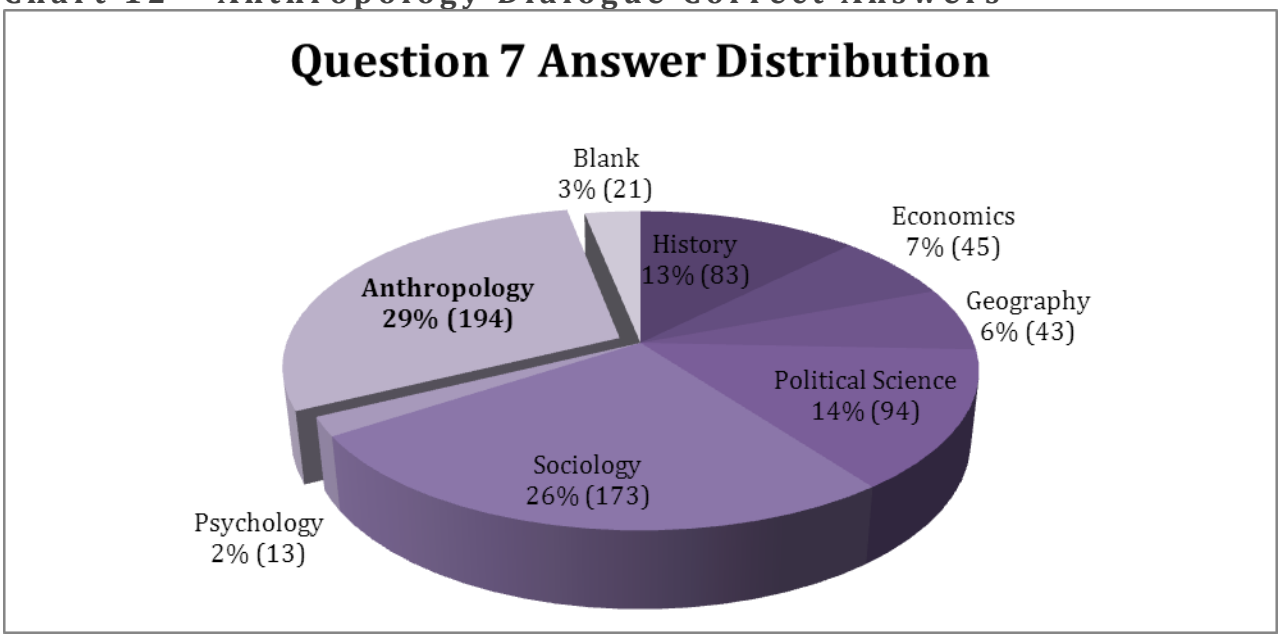
Chart 11– Sociology Dialogue One Correct Answers



Question Seven Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **"Anthropology"** and Chart 12 shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample, including blank responses. Of those selecting a discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **30%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of an anthropological dialogue.

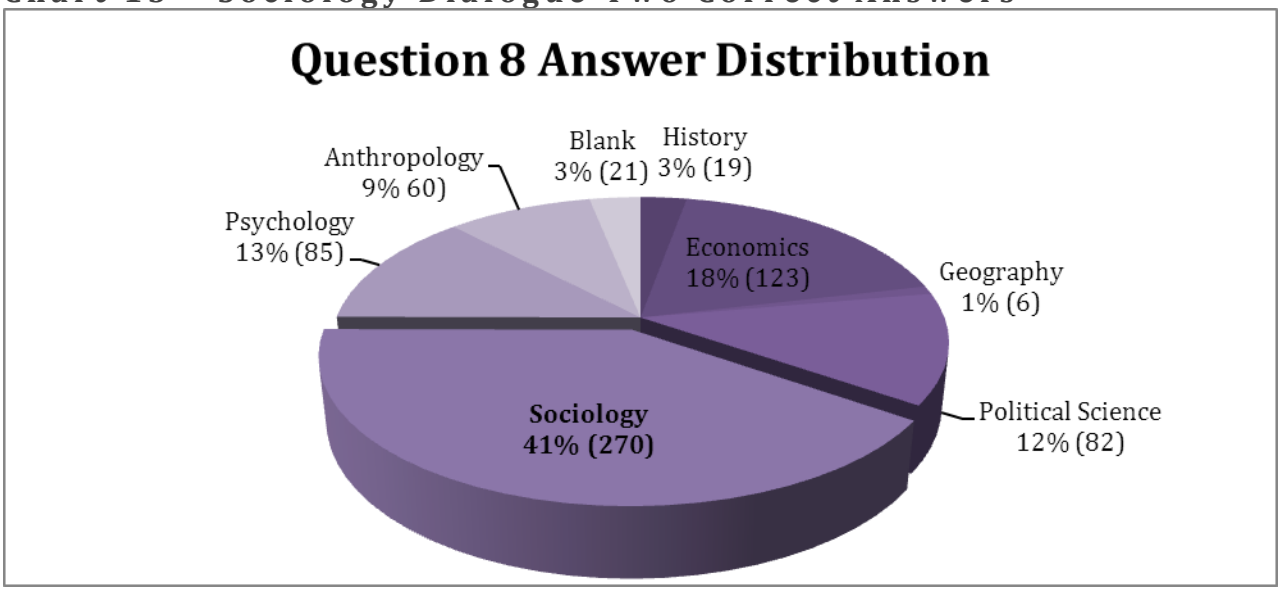
Chart 12 – Anthropology Dialogue Correct Answers



Question Eight Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **"Sociology"** and Chart 13 shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample including blank responses. Of those selecting a discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **42%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of a sociological dialogue.

Chart 13 – Sociology Dialogue Two Correct Answers

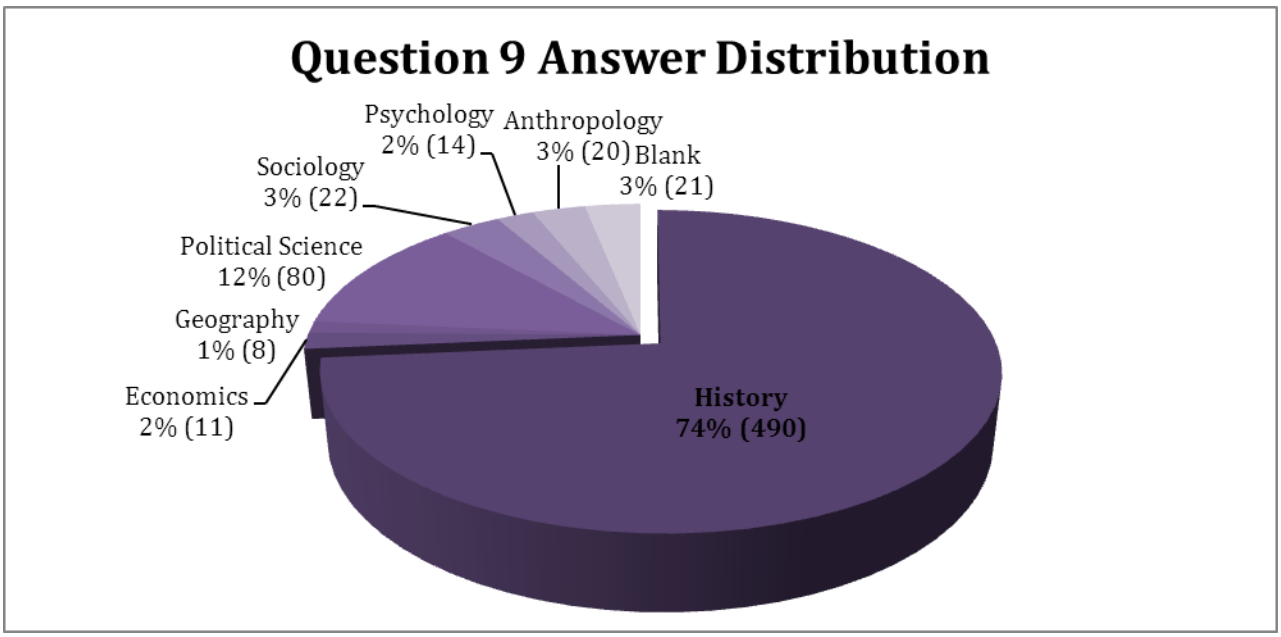


Question Nine Answer Distribution

The correct answer for this dialogue was **"History"** and Chart 14 shows the distribution of student answers throughout the full sample including blank responses. Of those selecting a

discipline answer, this represents a correct response rate of **76%** for identifying the language, constructs, and themes of a historical dialogue.

Chart 14 – History Dialogue Two Correct Answers



Discussion

In this first section of the assessment tool, recognition and the identification of discipline specific words, concepts and frames of reference were the key. The above findings should also be located within two key contexts: 1) student self-reported progress through their social science requirements for graduation and 2) the HWC social science course and student registration background data already discussed in this report. For this comparison the two history and two sociology dialogues and student responses are kept separate. These two repeat discipline dialogues suggest that this section of the assessment tool did not fatigue these students (since later dialogues did better) and that there may have been some construct validity issues within some of these dialogues.

In simple strength of correct recognition by these students the following pattern is established:

1) History dialogue (2) correct identification by 76% of sample - 9th question
2) Economics dialogue – correct identification by 72% of sample - 2nd question
3) Geography dialogue – correct identification by 67% of sample – 3rd question
4) Political Science dialogue – correct identification by 62% of sample – 5th question
5) Sociology dialogue (1) – correct identification by 56% of sample – 6th question
6) History dialogue (1) – correct identifications by 46% of sample – 4th question
7) Psychology dialogue – correct identification by 45% of sample – 1st question
8) Sociology dialogue (2) – correct identification by 42% of sample – 8th question
9) Anthropology – correct identification by 30% of sample – 7th question

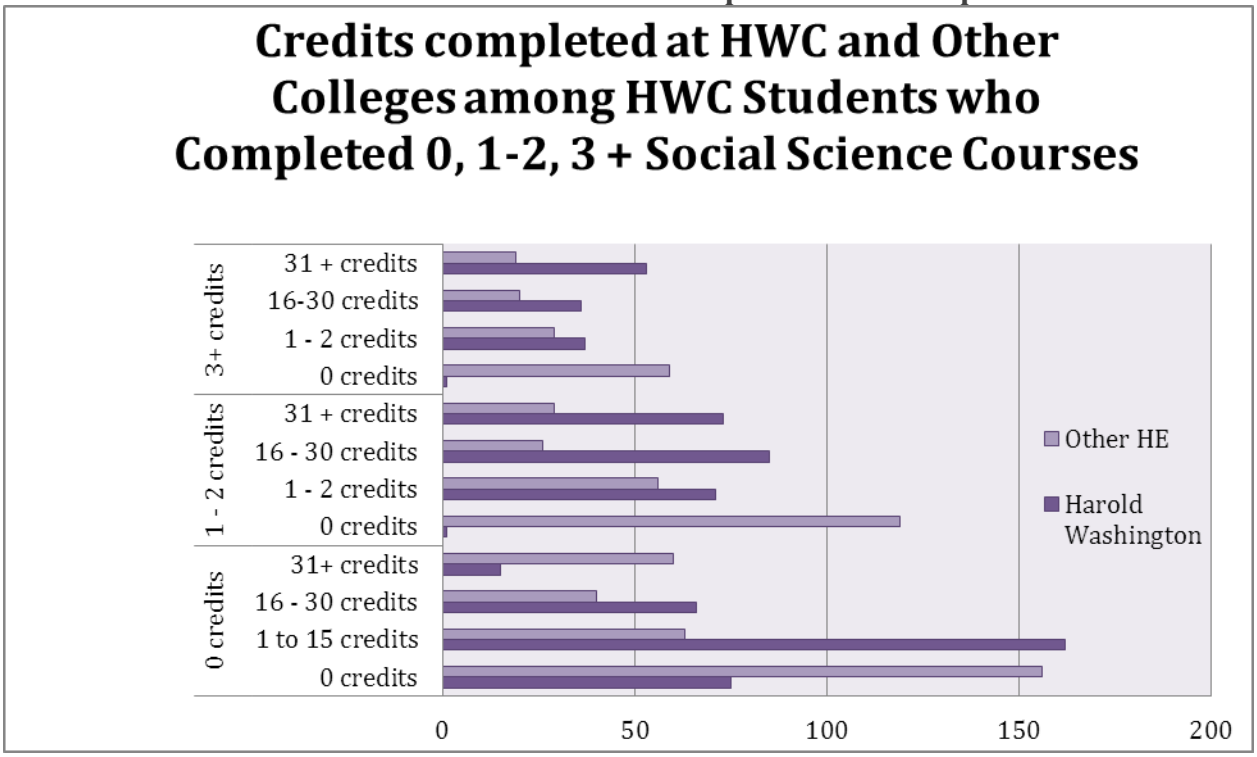
If we measure the strength of 'presence' of these disciplines in the student body over the past eight semesters (both on campus and CDL) using student registrations and sections offered within the disciplines, the following pattern emerges:

1) Social Sciences (General Survey Courses and American Social Issues)
2) History
3) Psychology
4) Economics
5) Sociology
6) Political Science
7) Anthropology
8) Geography

Using this technique it would seem these students do very well at identifying the language, concepts and frames of reference for such social science disciplines as Economics, Geography and Political Science. Geography does exceptionally well here while History recognition really underperforms in one question relative to its subject dominance. The same could be said of Psychology recognition. We did not collect data on the relative balance between each of the social science disciplines as they are covered in standard survey social science courses. It may be that the specific discipline expertise of individual faculty exerts some role in the relative balance of the social science disciplines that students encounter in these most dominant courses. This is beyond the scope of this research and a clear area of discussion and reflection amongst Social Science faculty. Perhaps, the most important question derived from the complexity of these findings moving forward is to ascertain the balance of disciplines contained within survey social science courses and if this indeed plays any role in the relative discipline recognition skills by these students.

We also collected data from the sample with regard to the student journey both in general and with specific regard to the social sciences.

Chart 15 – Social Science Credit Completion Comparison



It has been our practice to use self-reported course completion data as a reasonable measure of student progress and, consequently, expected capabilities. More traditional university freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior frames of reference may not be the best fit for our context. We do not, as yet, collect adequate data on our 'roundabout' of student trajectories; the interrupted journeys; the dually enrolled students; and, changed academic and career plans as students progress through their college career.

Our student journey categorizations have remained constant over the past five college wide assessments, and are:

1) 0 courses successfully completed
2) 1 to 15 courses successfully completed
3) 16 to 30 courses successfully completed
4) 30+ courses successfully completed

We also wanted to identify student progress through social science courses, to see if it was possible to make a relationship between social science course completion and increasing strength in student social science capabilities and these student learning outcomes.

Since our students are required to pass nine credits in the social sciences to complete their general education requirements we also used analytical categorizations for social science course completion in this assessment that registered number of courses taken from zero through to more than three. We also gathered data in our usual distinction between Harold Washington College courses and courses taken at other institutions of higher education. This categorization, in the past has shown that student learning outcomes from our courses have been equivalent to courses received elsewhere. All of these data are student self

reports and we, as yet, have found no way of using our PeopleSoft system to generate similar kinds of useful assessment data patterns.

If we compare the number of Social Science courses successfully completed at HWC and elsewhere with regard to the accuracy of identifying social science discipline dialogues – Part One questions, we find the following:

Table 11 – Social Sciences Courses Passed and Answer Accuracy Comparison

Social Science Courses Passed			
At HWC		**At Other Colleges**	
Courses	*Part 1 Accuracy*	*Courses*	*Part 1 Accuracy*
0	52.05%	0	53.38%
1	53.66%	1	46.06%
1-2	60.80%	1-2	53.97%
2	54.28%	2	58.48%
3+	58.70%	3+	65.29%

This data suggest a "peaking" of learning for our students at one or two social science courses and a slight drop of their accuracy in identifying social science dialogues after three or more courses. However, this is difficult to determine due to the fact that students who took one or two classes had options to choose from. This language has been tightened in upcoming questionnaires to avoid ambiguity. It also suggests that student capabilities in this regard are equivalent in students after taking only two social science courses elsewhere. Students' social science language, terms, and frames of reference recognition is strongest after three or more social science courses completed at other higher education institutions. However, this numerical difference is not significant in any way because of the very small numbers of students in this category.

PART TWO FINIDINGS: COMFORT WITH SOCIAL SCIENCE AND GENERAL EDUCATION DISCIPLINES

In our most recent assessment of quantitative reasoning, we found a significant relationship between student comfort level with mathematics and actual direct math competence. We have consistently asked our students to record their comfort levels with a range of disciplines throughout our general education curriculum.

Students were asked to identify their comfort in twelve different disciplines and the seven specific disciplines within the social sciences on a scale of 0 to 3. The following key was used:

Highly Uncomfortable = 0
Uncomfortable = 1

Comfortable = 2
Highly Comfortable = 3

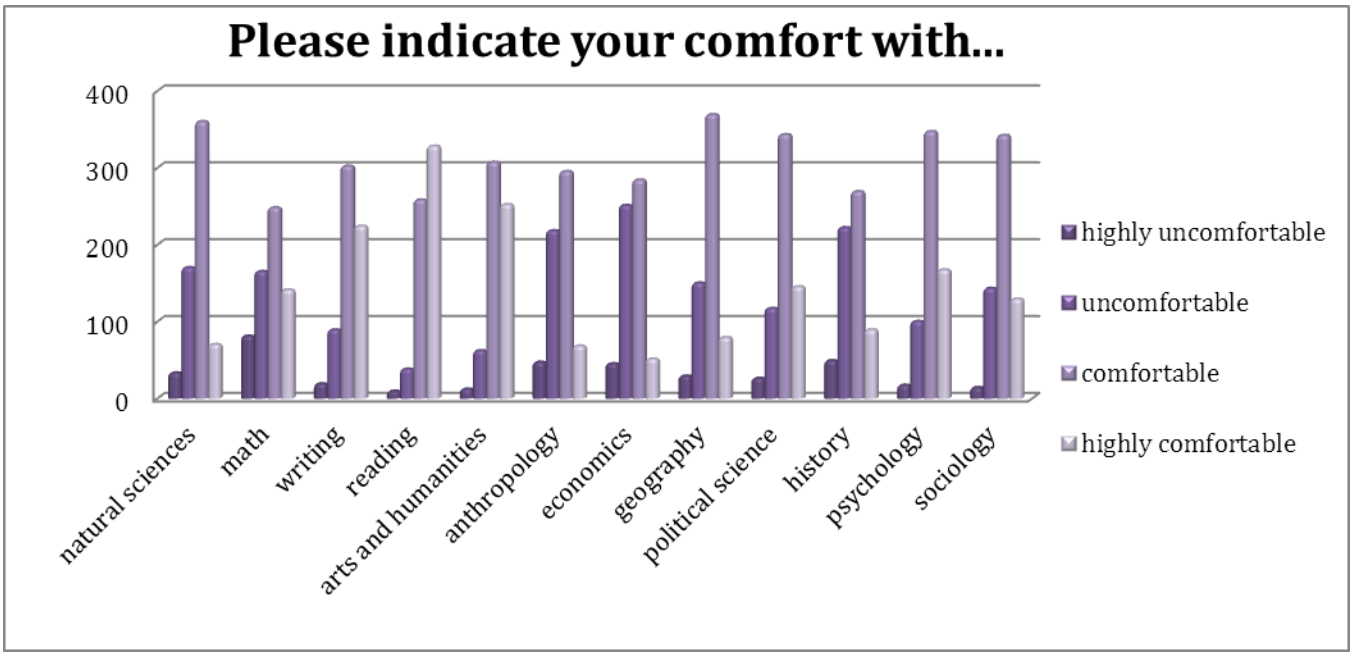
The findings from this 2010 student cohort are shown in Table 12 below:

Table 12 – 2010 Student Assessment Sample Discipline Comfort Scores

Student Comfort in Social Sciences	Mean (on a scale from 0-3)	Student Comfort in Non-Social Sciences	Mean (on a scale from 0-3)
Psychology	2.05	Natural Sciences	1.74
Sociology	1.93	Mathematics	1.71
Anthropology	1.61	Writing	2.15
Economics	1.54	Reading	2.43
Geography	1.79	Arts & Humanities	2.26
History	1.96		
Political Science	1.63		

The average comfort level for the social sciences was 1.79. This was slightly higher than mathematics and the natural sciences, but not as high as reading, writing, and the humanities. The distributions of these ratings were as follows:

Chart 16 – 2010 Student Assessment Sample Discipline Comfort Distribution



By adding highly uncomfortable and uncomfortable categorizations and doing the same for the comfortable and high comfortable categories, students rank their ease and unease for general education disciplines in the following order of strength:

Table 13 – Student Comfort General Education Discipline Rankings

Comfort	Discomfort
1. Reading	1. Math
2. Arts and Humanities	2. Natural Sciences
3. Writing	3. Writing
4. Natural Sciences	4. Arts and Humanities
5. Math	5. Reading

Using the same technique for the specific social sciences, the following pattern emerges:

Table 14 – Student Comfort Social Science Discipline Rankings

Comfort	Discomfort
1. Psychology	1. Economics
2. Political Science	2. History
3. Sociology	3. Anthropology
4. Geography	4. Geography
5. Anthropology	5. Sociology
6. History	6. Political Science
7. Economics	7. Psychology

For these students, in general education and in social science disciplines, a reliable pattern emerges with regard to comfort. It is not possible to say how much this pattern represents our specific student culture and how much it reflects the dominant cultural patterns that surround our students.

However, these findings support our previous findings with regard to our students and mathematics. Perhaps the natural sciences also receive this level of discomfort because of their mathematical connections. The strength of positive regard for Psychology is not surprising, since it has such a strong presence through registration numbers. This is a considerable contrast with the self-reported unease with History, despite its dominance of class sections and student numbers over the eight-semester span of offerings we collected for this analysis. History may dominate in the sheer numbers of students and classes, but students in our sample were less comfortable with History than with all the other Social Science disciplines, with the exception of Economics. Again, perhaps, an important link to the discomfort of mathematics for our students. This sits in strong contrast with the highest correct recognition rate for one of our History dialogues.

It is also helpful to use our assessment body of knowledge in this area to compare comfort levels reported in this student cohort to previous assessment findings in other general education areas of investigation. The following table shows comparative data from our 2009 Quantitative Reasoning assessment:

Table 15 – Student General Education Comfort Comparisons 2009 and 2011

Student Comfort	Mathematics 2009	Social Science 2010	Percent Change
Natural Sciences	1.76	1.74	-1.32%
Mathematics	1.72	1.71	-0.71%
Writing	2.14	2.15	0.39%
Reading	2.35	2.43	3.09%
Arts & Humanities	2.13	2.26	5.79%

When comparing the comfort levels in a specific discipline with the reported comfort levels from the quantitative reasoning assessment in 2009, we see excellent agreement. This attests to both the validity and reliability of self-reported comfort levels of students at Harold Washington College.

PART TWO FINDINGS: UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE AND UTILITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE LEARNING

Students were asked eleven affective questions to ascertain their appreciation of and value placed in the social sciences. These questions also sought to illuminate the kinds of approaches to learning they felt relevant to being successful in the social sciences and whether they believed social science skills were relevant to other areas of their lives. The questions were worded in such a way that agreement meant positive, deeper, and more complex attitudes towards social science. The answers were coded using the following scale:

- Strongly Agree: 3
- Agree: 2
- Disagree: 1
- Strongly Disagree: 0

The findings are presented in Table 16 showing the mean scores out of 3 for each question, in order from highest to lowest. In these data, our students identify a complex understanding of the social sciences, the kind of learning it involves, and a relevance of this learning to their everyday lives. The only question response receiving an average score below "agreement" was about how social science learning can be used to learn other things in college. It is possible to see from these lowest-ranking items that our students see social science learning most beneficial when they related it to the wider world, learning in general, and everyday life. It also suggest they are much less positive about using their

social science learning to look within themselves or find individual applicability for the social sciences.

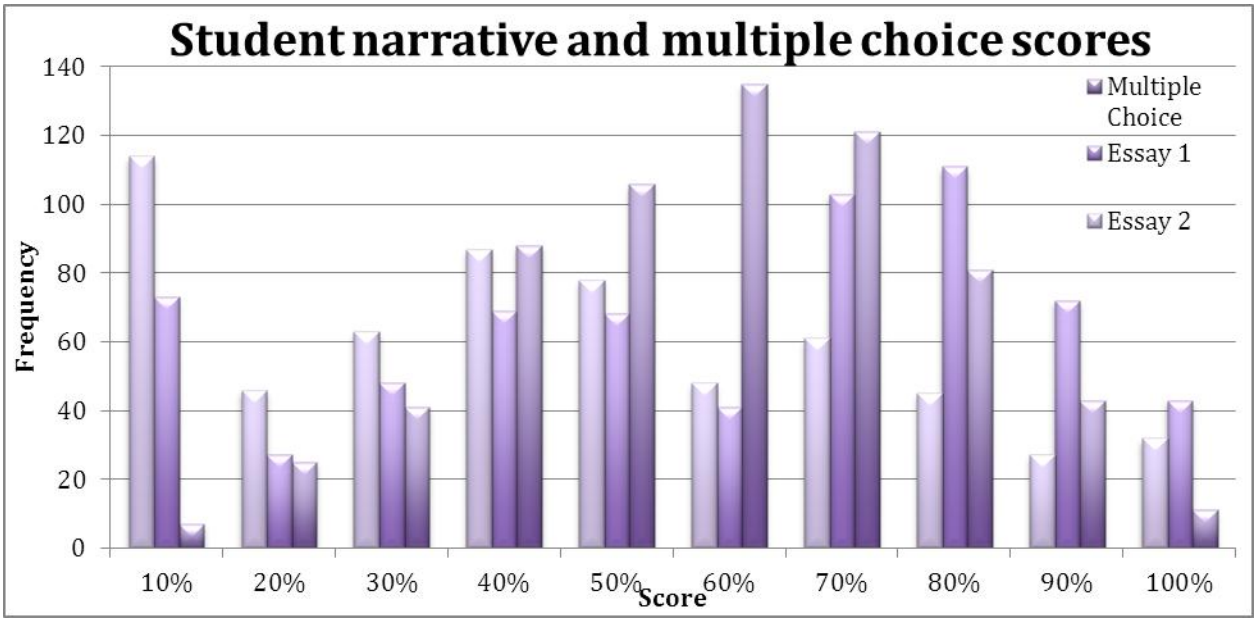
Table 16 – Understanding Learning in the Social Sciences

Question	Mean (on a scale from 0-3)
There may be more than one correct interpretation of a real life phenomenon.	2.42
Learning the social sciences involves more than simply memorizing (e.g. dates, facts, theories, formulas, etc.)	2.42
Social Science raises interesting new questions about the world.	2.42
There are often many ways to look at a social phenomenon.	2.41
Social Science helps me understand the world around me.	2.33
The social sciences are useful not only to people who do specialized work but also to everyday life.	2.27
For me, social science involves exploration, investigation or experimentation.	2.23
I need a good understanding of the social sciences to achieve my career goals.	2.09
The social sciences allow me to be creative and discover things for myself.	2.09
Thinking like a social scientist helps me make intelligent decisions about my life.	2.00
Social Science has been an important tool to help me learn other subjects.	1.96

FINIDINGS: MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS COMPARED TO NARRATIVE DATA

In Chart 17, Part One multiple-choice answers are compared to the Part Three narrative question answers where students were asked to select two different social science disciplines and write more in-depth explorations of their meaning and utility.

Chart 17 – Comparison of Results: Discipline Identification and Narrative Answers



The mean accuracy for the nine question multiple-choice section was a 53.97%, with 7 students leaving this section blank. The essays were not graded with the 0 to 100 percent grade scale, but were assigned a value from 0 to 3. Linearly scaling this scale to 0-100 percent where a 0 is 0% and 3 is a 100%, the mean score was a 53.35%, with 10 students leaving this section blank. Although the mean of these two sections are extremely close, the distributions are significantly different. The grade distribution for Part One, the multiple-choice section, is unimodal, meaning it has a global maximum with adjacent columns decreasing as they deviate further from the mean. However, the distribution for Part Three, the narrative answers, are bimodal, meaning there are two distinct local maximums in the distribution. This anomaly is most likely due to the course grading metrics of only four possible values for the narratives. However, the similarity in values lends credence to the validity of these assessments.

Furthermore, the second narrative had a mean score of 40.77%, with 64 students leaving it blank. This second narrative was a repetition of the first narrative question with a second student-selected social science discipline. Since there was no additional difficulty in this essay, the reason for the decreased performance is almost certainly due to testing fatigue. In further assessments of the student population, this should be taken into consideration. Limiting the amount of questions and placing the assessment portion before the demographics should lead to more reliable data. This data would seem to confirm that the overall assessment tool was too long and by the time students were asked to select a non-behavioral science discipline and demonstrate their skilled use through reflection, application, and analysis, they were fatigued. This strong decrease in responses and increase in blank data for the final three questions on this instrument suggest that in this

narrative section, we can be less confident about our detailed exploration of the non-behavioral sciences.

FINIDINGS: COMPARING COMFORT LEVELS, SOCIAL SCIENCE SELECTION FOR NARRATIVE WRITING AND NUMBER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE COURSES COMPLETED

In this analysis we compared what discipline the students choose for the narratives compared with their comfort in that discipline. The first two tables here focus on the behavioral social sciences and use student responses for their first choice of discipline on which they were asked to write extended narrative responses. The first column in the table is the discipline they chose to write about for the first narrative. The mean column is the mean comfort value (0-3) for that discipline in the sample. The columns 0-3 and NA are the percent of students that answered the narrative with the specific comfort levels. NA indicates that those students did not answer the comfort question. For example, 3.33% of the students both chose to write about the narrative from a psychological perspective that had a comfort level of 1 in Psychology. The totals for both the rows and columns are the sums for their respective column or row.

Table 17 – Behavioral Sciences Discipline Choices and Comfort Levels

Discipline Chosen	Comfort in discipline						Totals
	Mean	0	1	2	3	NA	
Psychology	2.05	0.95%	3.33%	12.20%	8.72%	0.16%	25.36%
Sociology	1.93	0.79%	6.50%	19.49%	7.92%	0.32%	35.02%
Anthropology	1.61	1.74%	10.30%	19.18%	7.45%	0.95%	39.62%
Totals	-	3.49%	20.13%	50.87%	24.09%	1.43%	100.00%

At first glance, there does not seem to be any correlation between the narrative the student chose and the comfort in that specific discipline. 50.87% of the student body wrote in a narrative they felt comfortable in versus 24.09% a narrative they felt very comfortable in. Furthermore, the majority of the students wrote in a narrative that on average they felt the least comfortable in. However, these statistical aggregates are skewed by the non-uniform distribution of comfort levels our students report in the social science disciplines. Or 25% of the student population did have a comfort level of 0, 25% a comfort level of 1, 25% a comfort level of 2, and 25% a comfort level of 3.

To account for this non-uniformity we normalized these values by dividing the percentage of students that feel comfortable in that discipline. Thus applying more weight to the values that were under-represented. Normalizing the data by this technique gives us more

appropriate values to compare. From the example above, 3.33% of the students both chose to write about the narrative from a psychology perspective that had a comfort level of 1 in psychology. However, 15.17% of the students self identified with a comfort level of 1 in the survey. So, the normalized value would be 3.33% * (100% / 15.17%) = 21.95% of these of students chose the psychology narrative.

Table 18 – Behavioral Sciences Discipline Choices and Normalized Comfort Levels

Discipline Chosen	Normalized comfort in discipline					
	Mean	0	1	2	3	NA
Psychology	2.05	35.18%	21.95%	23.35%	34.35%	3.52%
Sociology	1.93	35.18%	30.05%	37.85%	39.98%	6.60%
Anthropology	1.61	24.19%	31.18%	43.15%	71.89%	19.19%

After normalizing the data, a clear trend can be seen across these behavioral social science disciplines. The more comfortable a student self-identifies with a discipline, the more likely they are to write in that narrative. Students gravitated to the discipline they feel the most comfortable with. The only anomaly in this graph is at comfort level 0, and this is explained by the small sample, on average less than 5, of students in that category.

A similar analysis was done for the second narrative where students were asked to select a non-behavioral social science discipline and examine the narrative through the eyes of a scientist within their chosen discipline. Again, the result showed, after normalizing the data, a clear trend in students choosing a discipline in which they were most comfortable.

Table 19 – Non-Behavioral Sciences Discipline Choices and Comfort Levels

Discipline Chosen	Comfort in discipline						Totals
	Mean	0	1	2	3	NA	
Economics	1.54	1.68%	6.04%	12.25%	3.36%	0.50%	23.32%
Geography	1.79	0.34%	4.70%	13.42%	4.19%	0.50%	22.65%
History	1.96	1.17%	6.88%	20.97%	11.07%	0.34%	40.10%
Political Science	1.63	0.84%	4.03%	6.21%	2.85%	0.17%	13.93%
Totals	-	4.03%	21.64%	52.85%	21.48%	1.51%	100.00%

Table 20 – Non-Behavioral Sciences Discipline Choices and Normalized Comfort

Discipline Chosen	Normalized comfort in discipline					
	Mean	0	1	2	3	NA
Economics	1.54	24.29%	15.90%	28.62%	42.98%	11.17%
Geography	1.79	7.45%	20.72%	24.03%	34.92%	10.16%
History	1.96	28.97%	38.83%	40.49%	50.17%	7.71%

Political Science	1.63	11.17%	12.03%	15.26%	21.11%	3.49%

Trends between classes taken and the discipline chosen for the narrative were also examined. Similar to the previous analysis, the percentage of students who took a course in the discipline they wrote about was tallied. For example, 6.5% of the students took a class in psychology and chose to write the narrative through the eyes of a psychologist. The results for the first behavioral social science narrative are recorded below:

Table 21 – Narrative One Social Science Choice and Comfort Level Comparison

Discipline Chosen	Comfort	Course Taken		Totals
		No	Yes	
Psychology	2.05	18.86%	6.50%	25.36%
Sociology	1.93	29.95%	5.07%	35.02%
Anthropology	1.61	33.60%	6.02%	39.62%
Totals	-	82.41%	17.59%	100.00%

Again, we do not immediately see any immediate trends or informative results from this analysis. However, delving deeper into this data revealed similar nuances as with comfort levels. This type of analysis is only relevant if there is an even number of students both taking and not taking these courses. Since this is not the case, the results must be normalized to account for these non-uniformities. Implementing a similar technique as with the previous analysis results in the following data:

Table 22 – Narrative One Social Science Choice and Comfort Level Comparison Normalized

Discipline Chosen	Comfort	Normalized Course Taken	
		No	Yes
Psychology	2.05	23.79%	31.36%
Sociology	1.93	34.22%	40.69%
Anthropology	1.61	36.44%	77.13%

With this normalization factor we again see a clear trend. The students that took one of these courses were statistically more likely (with an average p-value of .0028) to write the narrative from that discipline's perspective. Anthropology was particularly strong in this respect. This same trend was seen for the second non-behavioral social science narrative. Here, we may see also the relative strength of History against the other disciplines.

Table 23 – Narrative Two Social Science Choice and Comfort Level Comparison

Discipline Chosen	Comfort	Course Taken		Totals
		No	Yes	
Economics	1.54	21.16%	2.31%	23.47%

Geography	1.79	21.32%	1.49%	22.81%
History	1.96	28.76%	11.07%	39.83%
Political Science	1.63	11.57%	2.31%	13.88%
Totals	-	82.81%	17.19%	100.00%

Table 24 – Narrative Two Social Science Choice and Comfort Level Comparison

Discipline Chosen	Comfort	Normalized Course Taken	
		No	Yes
Economics	1.54	22.62%	35.84%
Geography	1.79	22.15%	39.63%
History	1.96	38.00%	45.53%
Political Science	1.63	12.80%	24.08%

We have used students' self-reported comfort levels as an important affective measure in a number of assessments and we have found useful significance between levels of comfort and actual competence in the subject under investigation. In these findings, we can clearly see that both comfort and taking a class in a specific discipline clearly influenced student choice when deciding to demonstrate their specific direct skills in the social sciences. In fact, students that both feel more comfortable with or have take class in a specific social science were statistically more likely to write the narrative through that discipline's perspective.

FINDINGS: CAPTURING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE LEARNING

Regardless of where students completed social science course requirements, we were unable to find any differences in this sample of students, their stage in academic journey (0 to 15 credits, 16 – 30 credits, 31 + credits) and their strength of performance in direct demonstrations of competencies in the social sciences.

However, when we drilled down in this data, we were able to identify differences and correlations across different social science disciplines and student ability to correctly identify Part One discipline dialogues through recognition of embedded key terms, concepts, and frames of reference. As can be seen our students do improve as they take more social science courses with us. Social science knowledge, as represented by the recognition and categorization of key terms, concepts, and frames of reference, (evidenced by Part One dialogue correct responses), trends progressively stronger as more courses are taken. Again, this trend is difficult to understand more fully due to the ambiguity in the questionnaire with regard to the option of 1-2 courses.

Table 25 – Social Science Courses Completed and Part One Answer Accuracy

Social Science Courses Successfully Completed			
At Harold Washington College		**At Other Higher Education Institutions**	
Courses	*Part 1 Accuracy*	*Courses*	*Part 1 Accuracy*
0	52.05%	0	53.38%
1	53.66%	1	46.06%
1-2	60.80%	1-2	53.97%
2	54.28%	2	58.48%
3+	58.70%	3+	65.29%

Table 26 – Part One Answer Accuracy and Social Science Discipline Correlations

Correlation				
Discipline	*HWC Credit*	*Other Credit*	*HWC SS Credit*	*Other SS Credit*
Psychology	0.066	0.027	0.106	0.107
Economics	0.013	0.083	0.055	0.067
Geography	0.037	0.043	0.086	0.046
History	0.021	0.058	0.02	0.043
Political Science	0.095	0.062	0.164	0.136
Sociology	0.006	0.054	0.016	0.142
Anthropology	0.072	0.133	0.137	0.138
Sociology	0.119	0.063	0.098	0.112
History	0.081	0.092	0.129	0.157
Total	**0.124**	**0.147**	**0.196**	**0.23**

Correlation Key	No Correlation	Very low correlation	Low correlation

Although these correlations are low, considered "weak correlations" for analysis in social sciences, it is important to understand what can and cannot be correctly analyzed. However, these correlation increase to .179 for HWC courses and .21 for other college courses when looking at the aggregate data. This indicates that with a larger sample of students, a stronger correlation could be determined. Asking only a single question about a specific social science discipline and then comparing that to a sample where only a handful of students have taken a course in that discipline does not yield a large enough sample to glean any usable results. Therefore, it is invalid to claim that these results demonstrate a weak correlation between performance on the assessment and the number of social science courses taken.

In fact, when one begins to look at the aggregate performance on the assessment, the correlations start to increase. However, this analysis is again hampered by how the social science curriculum is laid out and by the preferences of our students to take social science survey courses that cover several social science disciplines. However, this analysis does show, social science courses, as represented by completed courses, have a statistically significant correlation (with p-values of .43) to students' ability to identify discipline-specific terms, concepts, and frames of reference when compared to all credit courses. It also shows no significant difference in performance when compared to credit courses taken outside of Harold Washington College.

When we analyze the graded Part Three narrative responses from our assessment tool, the strength of these more complex answers also show correlation with the number of Social Science courses completed.

Table 27 – Part Three Narrative Answers and Social Science Course Completion Correlations

Correlation				
Discipline	*HWC Credit*	*Other Credit*	*HWC SS Credit*	*Other SS Credit*
Narrative 1	0.134	0.097	0.252	0.136
Narrative 2	0.11	0.046	0.149	0.067

Correlation Key	No Correlation	Very low correlation	Low correlation

Here we see that the non-behavioral social sciences out perform the behavioral social sciences when students are asked to reflect and extrapolate on a scenario. However, this was the second narrative question, so student fatigue and the increase in the no-response rate certainly influenced this finding.

CONCLUSIONS

The social sciences form an important element of our general education curriculum and contribute to at least 16% of a student's degree graduation requirement. For some students, the social sciences form considerably more than this. In selecting which of the social sciences to pursue, HWC students have considerable choice and latitude about the specific courses they take to meet the Social Science requirements of their degree. However, the general education social science student learning outcomes remain the same for all students.

Regardless of different student journeys, the data presented here demonstrate that recognition of the distinct aspects of each of our seven social science disciplines is strong in

economics, geography, political science, and history. Over 50% of this student sample recognized these discipline dialogues as presented in our tool. Discipline recognition was under 50% of our sample for sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Interestingly, psychology has a very strong presence in student registration on campus and through CDL. It is also evident, that in all disciplines, dialogue recognition is strengthened as students progress through the social science requirements of their program. We did not find that our students' social science discipline recognition was significantly better if they had taken their social science courses at other institutions of higher education. This equivalency finding is exceptionally positive if we take into account what we know about our students and their educational capital upon entering Harold Washington College.

In sheer scale of offerings and student numbers, social science survey courses dominate but it is not clear how much integrative force these courses play across the seven social science disciplines investigated in this college-wide assessment. Certainly, history and psychology faculty constitute the majority of full-time faculty. It is not known the discipline-specific identifications of adjunct faculty, and this likely influences discipline strength in a multi-disciplinary department such as Social Sciences.

These students value their social science learning and see it has utility in understanding the outside world. This is also demonstrated by students in their evaluative responses in the pilot of this college-wide assessment. From these assessment data, it seems that our students are less certain that their social science learning can be used in a future career or has a utility in their other college courses. It is not possible to say if this effect is because students predominantly see much of the social sciences as the study of "others", "cultures" and "structures" as opposed to the study of "self" or perhaps "self in relation to others".

These students understand that social science learning is complex and not dependent on a simplistic factual recall of retained knowledge. They know that social science learning is "deep" learning. It is significant that our students understand that the social sciences are complex. However, the evidence here suggests that students may compartmentalize their social science learning, not an uncommon characteristic within our system of discreet courses and credit-hour accounting.

The social sciences disciplines, (within the general education curriculum requirement of 9-credit-hours), offer students a strong range of choices by which to meet their graduation requirement. These data suggest that our students make use of this variety of choices to match their interests and this selective study influences their capability to recognize and respond using language, concepts, and frames of reference from within their social science learning. It is not clear whether the choice and range of distinct social sciences at HWC contribute to or constrain an integrative approach to understanding the human condition.

This range of student choice within the nine credit-hour general education graduation requirements should help students pursue their specific interests. This is important because we see correlations between self-identified comfort and actual performance. It would be helpful for social science faculty to articulate whether this broad choice of social science disciplines contributes to the limited parameters of more generalized and applicable social science knowledge identified in this data. It is certainly important for all faculty to address whether they can help HWC students make connections between what is learned in the social sciences to other college subjects or elements of degree programs. Something, this sample of students found difficulty doing.

There are also two issues that arise from this assessment, which while seemingly tangential and outside the charge of HWCAC, are pertinent questions that do speak to student learning outcomes in the Social Sciences. One of these is the discipline-specific specialization of our teaching faculty. Our assessment findings in the social sciences lead us to pose the following questions:

1. Does teaching faculty discipline expertise change the nature of general social science survey courses?
2. With such a multivariate and broad discipline as the Social Sciences, in what ways is it possible to homogenize student learning outcomes in the same catalogue courses when they are taught by a diverse faculty with such a broad disciplinary expertise?
3. Are there unintended consequences derived from faculty discipline expertise that impact general student learning outcomes for social science survey courses?

The second key issue that arises from the data presented here speaks to a subject beloved of educators: the role that class size plays in student learning. There is nothing in our outcome findings that speaks to this issue, but it is clear from the data presented that CDL social science courses have significantly smaller average class sizes than those that are taught in the more traditional face-to-face format. There are two contextual factors that make this conversation important within our assessment purview.

Our future accreditation success will rest on an assessment program that speaks to student learning outcomes "anywhere and anytime" and so CDL student learning outcomes, and thus students taking CDL courses registered through HWC, must become an important and integrated part of our assessment procedures. Equivalent student learning outcomes will be expected regardless of the mode of instruction: face-to-face, hybrid, at-a-distance, and through CDL or campus-based electronic media.

4. Is it fair to expect equivalency in outcomes, when clearly there are large differences consistently in the size of *inputs* in one specific delivery mode?

The expansion of teaching and learning, beyond the walls of our traditional classroom contexts, has also begun to present us with methodological assessment challenges that we will continue to encounter with creativity and responsiveness. In our first full attempt at a campus-wide electronic assessment we were stretched in unexpected ways.

We were constrained by a number of human and technical capacity issues. Blackboard was not a suitable platform on which to base a college-wide assessment. We also gained a new understanding that survey complexity and length are key issues regardless of how that survey is accessed by respondents. Designing short, simple electronic surveys that still produce a depth and complexity of data to be useful for our purposes is an area in which we will continue to learn.

As we move sensibly towards greener technologies for college-wide assessments, we will need to continuously work on increasing our technical capabilities to collect, manage, and analyze assessment data and findings. Educational technology is notoriously behind other consumer products.

5. As we increase our technological capacities how can we be responsive to a student body that contains both those with much higher expectations and technical expertise than our methodologies can offer, *and* those for whom technological capacity is at a minimum?

HWCAC is developing an increasing capability to manage and analyze complex assessments with considerable amounts quantitative data. We are very appreciative of our increased faculty capacity to work in this way. This is certainly improved with considerable data analysis support from our institutional research office. This is very important in sustaining a culture of assessment that can meet a range of requirements within our own institution and beyond. We are becoming increasingly complex in our assessment expertise and it is significant that this collegial capacity is being developed in an active partnership with administration and its research resources.

We continue to build our cumulative body of assessment knowledge. The findings of our Social Science Assessment, and the questions they pose are intended to widen and deepen dialogue across our campus with regard to student learning outcomes in the social sciences. Perhaps, just as important, is our intention to consistently be a catalyst for change, when change is required, so we can improve learning for all our students. This can only happen when evidence and dialogue influence a range of levers for change. While a lengthy report may appear to be somewhat summative, our intention is to use it as a formative contribution to support the diversity of social sciences at Harold Washington College. It is our continued intention to partner with faculty and administration to continuously impact student learning outcomes and thus subsequent improved student success.

APPENDIX 1

General Education Assessment Social Sciences Fall 2010

In efforts to continue assessing Harold Washington College's General Education Goals, the HWC Assessment Committee created this assessment tool. It is designed to measure specific student learning outcomes for the Social Sciences. The assessment contains three parts.

Part I includes matching social science disciplines to related terms and concepts as presented in hypothetical conversations. Part II includes demographic questions to determine whether the sample of students who take this assessment are a representative sample of the student body at large in order to check the reliability of the data obtained. Secondly, Part II asks you to comment on your interests, values, and opinions related to the social sciences. There are no right or wrong answers for this section, only your opinions, so please be honest. Part III asks you to examine how two different social scientists might differ in their approach to studying a specific social phenomena.

Please take your time to complete this assessment; there is no time limit. You will not be graded on this assessment, but your responses will be collected and analyzed in aggregate form and the statistical findings will be made available to the HWC community. Therefore, applying your honesty and a serious attitude toward completing this assessment is appreciated.

PART I. Differentiating Between the Social Sciences

Below you will find nine fabricated casual conversations between two social scientists (SS). The social scientists in each conversation work within the same social science discipline. Your task is to identify the **key terms** and **concepts** addressed in each conversation and select the social science discipline that is most closely represented. **Only ONE discipline should be chosen for EACH conversation.**

Question 1

SS1: I saw Obama on television last night, and he appeared quite composed considering the stressful situation he's facing.
SS2: What do you think is responsible for his high level of self-composure? Do you think he learned it through his strong family upbringing or at law school?
SS1: Obviously, he has a high degree of emotional intelligence, which I think is an innate personality trait.
SS2: I wonder how much of his cool can be attributed to his enculturation in Indonesia and Hawaii.
SS1: It would be good if it would rub off on the rest of Washington DC. It seems like a lot of politicians could use help dealing with stress!

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Question 2

SS1: President Obama is such a fine example of a humanitarian. I was amazed at the amount of support he committed to Haiti after the earthquake. But I'm concerned that resources spent there are resources that could be better used in America.

SS2: I think your concern is legitimate. We are currently in the worst recession since the Great Depression, so our physical capital is not expanding. Even if it is a moral imperative, shouldn't our government base its decisions on the discretionary budget?

SS1: I agree. I think the President should concentrate on domestic issues, such as unemployment, especially in areas where people have suffered the greatest hardship.

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Question 3

SS1 The hardest aspect of being the President must be dealing with so many conflicting state issues.

SS2 I know! How can one devise a national environmental policy that considers the needs and issues of all 50 states? Just take the different political attitudes that California and Alaska have on alternative energy.

SS1 It's true. California is densely populated and characterized by major conurbations. Its citizens have been trying to proactively address their pollution problem through progressive alternative energy policies with the goal to reduce greenhouse gases in their atmosphere. At the same time, Alaska is largely rural with a tundra climate and has major oil reserves which they are willing to extract to improve their trade surplus. Last summer, my team was in Alaska fieldsketching drillable oil fields, recording geologic information relative to natural resource supply, and developing virtual maps of industrial development.

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Question 4

SS1 Many people who voted for Barack Obama expected him to initiate much more liberal policies that he actually has. He has retained several Bush-era appointees, and he has continued many Bush-era policies related to the War on Terror relatively unchanged.

SS2 That is true. He has not been nearly as liberal as many people expected. It would be fascinating to see how Americans in 2110 would view his record as compared to George W. Bush. They would read about how similar both presidents were in some ways, but future generations would also see great differences between them. Obama put moderates on the Supreme Court, and he initiated health care reform. Bush did neither of those things.

SS3 Perhaps people will find him closer to JFK. I think there are a number of parallels to consider, such as their comparable oratory styles.

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Question 5

SS1 It's hard to tell whether Obama will be a strong president. He's certainly not a diehard Democrat given his willingness to compromise so much to bring Republicans to the table.

SS2 I am not sure if that should be considered a weakness. As the head of the executive branch, he has to find a way to balance the legislature while moving his ideas forward.

SS1 I have not seen the polls yet, but I think all these compromises will be seen as weakness and lack of conviction.

SS2 We'll have to agree to disagree. I think Obama's strength will be to work around party lines, especially given how far the country has shifted to the right in the last 40 years.

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Question 6

SS1 I am hoping to see Obama's experience as a community organizer inform his presidential decisions. He should understand better than most how groups of people with something in common can be organized to affect change in public policy.

SS2 I agree. It is important to be able to understand how the different groups have different needs regarding policy, and Obama can hopefully use this understanding to work for policies that appropriately balance the needs of different groups.

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Question 7

SS1 When do you anticipate the Obama administration taking on the challenge of immigration reform? It's about time that our archaic immigration laws conform to a modern idea of cultural relativism. They desperately need to be aligned with the level of globalization we are experiencing.

SS2 I agree. If more funding were provided to expand our efforts in ethnographic research, then the US would be better prepared to implement evidence-based policies, even in the area of linguistics. This is especially important now because of our fast changing culture and demographics. After all, just look at our current President!

SS1 I can't believe it took so long to have a president of African-American descent.

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Question 8

SS1 I think it's terrific that President Obama has his extended family living in the White House. I imagine his mother-in-law provides great support to the First Lady as well as to the Obama children. It would be nice to think that the President's commitment to family values might inspire all Americans to place greater emphasis on their own parenting and family dynamics.

SS2 Sure, but how do you think his policies will reflect his family values?

SS1 Well, with the creation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, he's placed a greater focus on the living standards of middle-class working families across America.

SS2 I suppose you are correct. If the bill expands educational opportunities and provides more affordable health care, it can only be a boon to families everywhere.

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Question 9

SS1 Last year, people were saying that Barack Obama's election was going to bring real change to the country, but his goals have been met with bitter resistance. How do you think future generations will view this administration's effectiveness?

SS2 I don't have a crystal ball, but many presidents who confronted great difficulties have been viewed more favorably in later years. For example, Abraham Lincoln faced a huge amount of political opposition even from members of his own cabinet. Many people doubted whether he would be elected to a second term in 1864. The popular perception of him now, however, is that he was one of America's most important presidents.

Completely fill in one choice only:

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology

Part II: Demographic and Affective Responses

Please fill in marks like this: ● *not like this:* ⊘ ⊗

Question 10

Please indicate the total number of college level credit hours earned **at Harold Washington College** with a grade of C or better.

O 0 O 1-15 O 16-30 O 31+

Question 11

Please indicate the total number of college level credit hours earned **at OTHER colleges** with a grade of C or better.

O 0 O 1-15 O 16-30 O 31+

Question 12

Not including this semester, how many **social science courses** have you successfully completed **at Harold Washington College**?

O 0 O 1-2 O 3+

Question 13

Not including this semester, how many **social science courses** have you successfully completed **at OTHER colleges**?

O 0 O 1-2 O 3+

Question 14

In which of the social sciences have you taken a college class (*at HWC or elsewhere*). *Select all that apply*

O Anthropology O Economics O Geography O History
O Political Science O Psychology O Sociology
O Social Science 101 or 102 (or an equivalent course taken elsewhere)

Question 15

Please indicate your gender:

O Female O Male

Question 16

Please indicate your race and/or ethnicity:

O Black/African American O Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander O White
O Asian O American Indian/Alaska Native O Hispanic/Latino
O Multi-Racial/Multi-Ethnic

Question 17

Please indicate your age:

O 20 or under O 21-25 O 26-40 O 41-60 O 61 or over

Question 18
Please indicate your current academic status:

O Full time O Part time

The following questions ask you about your interests, values, and opinions related to Social Science. Please mark ONE answer for each question by filling the bubble completely.

Please indicate your comfort level with:	**Highly Comfortable**	**Comfortable**	**Uncomfortable**	**Highly Uncomfortable**
19. The Natural Sciences.	O	O	O	O
20. Math.	O	O	O	O
21. Writing.	O	O	O	O
22. Reading.	O	O	O	O
23. Arts and Humanities.	O	O	O	O
24. Anthropology.	O	O	O	O
25. Economics.	O	O	O	O
26. Geography.	O	O	O	O
27. History.	O	O	O	O
28. Political science.	O	O	O	O
29. Psychology.	O	O	O	O
30. Sociology.	O	O	O	O

Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Be as honest as possible. There are no correct answers.

Please mark ONE answer for each question by filling the bubble completely.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Question 31 Social Science helps me understand the world around me.	O	O	O	O
Question 32 There are often many ways to look at a social phenomenon.	O	O	O	O
Question 33 For me, social science involves exploration, investigation, or experimentation.	O	O	O	O
Question 34 I need a good understanding of the Social Sciences to achieve my career goals.	O	O	O	O
Question 35 Social Science has been an important tool to help me learn other subjects.	O	O	O	O
Question 36 The social sciences allow me to be creative and discover things for myself.	O	O	O	O
Question 37 Thinking like a social scientist helps me make intelligent decisions about my life.	O	O	O	O
Question 38 Social Science is useful not only to people who do specialized work but also to everyday life.	O	O	O	O

Question 39 There may be more than one correct interpretation of a real life phenomenon.	O	O	O	O
Question 40 Learning the social sciences involves more than simply memorizing (e.g. dates, facts, theories, formulas, etc.).	O	O	O	O
Question 41 Social Science raises interesting new questions about the world.	O	O	O	O

Part III – Looking through the Lens of a Social Scientist

Social Scientists play a critical investigative role in understanding the relationship between social phenomena (e.g. current events) and society's quality of life. A key research task of the social scientist is to ask critical questions that will more clearly define, describe and explain the phenomena. Their questioning initiates scientific research that results in theories and practices that ultimately contribute toward social control and stability.

Instructions:

Your task in Part III is to examine through the lens of the Social Scientist the social phenomena of the discovery of a cure for cancer. Before reading the fictional scenario below, review in your mind, the focus and emphasis of each of the 7 social science disciplines. As you read the scenario, consider the discovery's social implications and determine how social scientists might differently research the situation based on their specific discipline. *Note: you may find it helpful to underline phrases or make notes as you read through the scenario.*

After reading the scenario you are asked to:

(A.) Choose a specific type of social scientist to reference,

(B.) List the concepts or characteristics revealed in the scenario that would be of most interest to the social scientist you've chosen,

(C.) Explain how an investigation of those concepts/characteristics might contribute to establishing social ability and control, and

(D.) Explain how an investigation of those concepts/characteristics might affect your personal quality of life.

Note: Your explanation in parts C and D should consist of 4-6 sentences each. Be specific and thorough in order to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the discipline.

Evaluation: The following rubric will be used to evaluate the accuracy and strength of your response in parts B, C and D. The ratings are as follows:

- **Strong** (lists *MULTIPLE* use of accurate and detailed concepts or characteristics of the discipline with *excellent clarity*; and accounts with *100% accuracy* their relevancy toward maintaining social control/stability AND a quality of life)
- **Fair/Moderate** (lists *MULTIPLE* use of accurate and detailed concepts or characteristics of the discipline with *moderate clarity*; and accounts with *limited accuracy* their relevancy toward maintaining social control/stability AND a quality of life)
- **Weak** (Identifies *ONLY ONE* accurate concept or characteristic of the discipline; and accounts with *questionable clarity* its relevancy toward maintaining social control/stability AND a quality of life)
- **Incorrect application** (application of concepts and/or characteristics is inaccurate)
- **Unclear response** – cannot be determined
- **Unanswered --** no response

SCENARIO:

In the Amazon River Basin, a tribe known as the Unagawa lived in complete isolation from the modern world for over a century. Missionary groups, concerned with the preservation of indigenous societies, eventually became successful in making routine visits to the tribal community in efforts to study their culture to ensure the safety and security of the Unagawa society. Groups of medical personnel and social scientists studied such things as the Unagawa communication and language patterns, their social institutions, diet and nutrition.

During one particular expedition, a team of missionaries stumbled upon a group of rare trees growing amongst the Unagawa's sacred burial ground. The trees produced an unusual sap. After having the sap collected and analyzed, a team of North American scientists eventually speculated that the chemical makeup of the sap appears to hold a cure for certain kinds of cancer.

Naturally, the news of this discovery spread globally. It created a commodity that every member of the medical and political community wanted control over. For the Unagawa people, however, the discovery brought much unwelcomed attention. Their special sap-filled trees were an integral part of the Unagawa culture, and therefore, regardless of the value of the trees to others, they were disinclined to exploit them as a resource.

Across the globe, politicians made speeches either calling for respect for the indigenous peoples of the world or demanding that they be removed from their land so that the world may benefit from the trees. The sensational rhetoric made the situation very volatile. Mercenaries, aware of the trees' potential value, staged raids on the land, leading to extensive bloodshed. The Unagawa people have resisted discussion because the raids have created a climate of distrust.

Due to the considerable international tension, the United Nations has established a team of social scientists to make recommendations as to how the situation should be handled. In doing so, the social scientists must ask critical questions that will elicit clear and accurate data.

The Behavioral Social Sciences

Look through the lens of an **anthropologist, psychologist OR sociologist.**

42. Choose only one discipline from these behavioral sciences:

Completely fill in one choice only:

○ Anthropologist ○ Psychologist ○ Sociologist

43. Looking through the lens of the social scientist you chose above, what concepts or characteristics of the Unagawa scenario would he or she most likely investigate?

44. Explain how the results of that investigation might **contribute to social stability and control.** NOTE: Your explanation should consist of 4-6 sentences. Include key terms and concepts that are frequently associated with the discipline.

45. Explain how the concepts/characteristics might **affect your personal quality of life**. NOTE: Your explanation should consist of 4-6 sentences. Include key terms and concepts that are frequently associated with the discipline.

The Non-Behavioral Social Sciences

Look through the lens of an **economist, geographer, historian OR political scientist**.

46. Choose only one discipline from these non- behavioral sciences:

Completely fill in one choice only:

○ Economist ○ Geographer ○ Historian ○ Political Scientist

47. What characteristics or aspects of the Unagawa scenario described above might he or she most likely investigate? (list them here)

48. Explain how the results of that investigation might **contribute to social stability and control**. NOTE: Your explanation should consist of 4-6 sentences. Include key terms and concepts that are frequently associated with the discipline.

49. Explain how the concepts/characteristics might **affect your personal quality of life**. NOTE: Your explanation should consist of 4-6 sentences. Include key terms and concepts that are frequently associated with the discipline.

This concludes the Social Science Assessment. Thank you from the Harold Washington College Assessment Committee.

APPENDIX 2

Feedback Question: #52 on the Pilot Study

It read as follows:

"52: Thank you for participating in this PILOT assessment. The HWC Assessment Committee is eager to know your thoughts and reaction to the assessment. Is there something we can do to improve it? Did you experience any difficulty in completing it? Your reactions and opinions are appreciated. In the Fall 2010 semester, the assessment will be *officially* administered.

The responses included:

- I thought the assessment was fairly easy to follow. Having to save each question was a little annoying though.
- I was unsatisfied with my Social Science 102 course; therefore I am left with a lack of knowledge on the specific disciplines. Overall, I felt that it is too long.
- This is a good assessment. I've only taken 4 social science courses in my school career including high school. I'm currently taking sociology and psychology at HWC and I've previously taken anthropology and history. The assessment made me think hard about the distinctions among the different types of social sciences. I don't have any suggestions for improvements at this time.
- This was an interesting assessment. I think it was difficult to complete the week of finals as well as the fact that I hadn't had any of those courses for several years.
- I thought the assessment was pretty thorough. It was a bit longer than I expected but these questions and situations really got me thinking quite a bit. It was good.
- It was a bit too long.
- The assessment was good with asking the right questions but some technicalities need to be looked into.
- I have yet to take up any of the courses that were mentioned in the assessment. To know and understand such subjects, I'll have to take them up as a course. The assessment was rather challenging being that I have no knowledge of the topics that were discussed.
- Everything went well.
- I think it is a complicated assessment because most of the aspects and concepts are interrelated between disciplines; therefore it is a little difficult to clarify specific information. Overall Social Science is a very interesting and a broad subject.
- Item c of part 3 of this assessment is difficult to answer because the situation is rather ambiguous. I felt the scenario lacked specifics and consequently took long to analyze for three different perspectives. I would rather analyze a current event for the

perspective on of my two different social scientist compared to a hypothetical situation from the perspective of three social scientists.

- There were questions that required more than one answer but only I was only able to like one.
- Some things were difficult because it has been a while since I learned some of them.
- It was ok; I'd like to take this again, now I know what to do.
- I enjoyed the section on determining what kind of scientists were having the conversation based on the content of the conversation. I had difficulty with last section and seeing through the lenses of different scientists. It was hard trying to view that and put an opinion on it. I had plenty of difficulty because I am unsure of what each science really deals with or mean.
- It was hard to be able to identify which dialogue belonged to which social science. In a lot of cases they can overlap or the student may not have taken all of them to be able to identify which is which To have to respond to the same situation in different ways using different methods was challenging because when someone analyzes something they usually take everything into account.
- I think the assessment was well put together and easy to complete, but because I have never taken any science classes in college and science is not one of my good/favorite subject, I really couldn't relate to it.
- I am still practicing my English. With this test there were a lot of things I didn't understand at all. The short investigation essay was interesting, but the questions were somewhat complicated.
- The fact that a politician was used in all the questions for the first section made it extremely difficult for me to complete. My first response was always to choose political science
- Part III was also a little hard to understand and complete for me personally.
- The scenario itself was very powerful and getting to answer questions as myself but with a different view was fun and somewhat insightful.
- There was difficulty in recalling terms that I haven't used in years but nonetheless interesting.
- The last part of the assessment was really hard for me. I have not completed any Social Science course yet, so it was hard for me to look through social scientists lens given a particular situation.
- I had a lot of problems completing it because I am very weak in the field of social science. Some suggestions for improvement might be explaining the fields so that the participants have a better grasp of the material at hand and also making it shorter.
- The PILOT was fairly good. The concept of it not being tied was good, but it was long. It made me not really want to do it. Other than that, it was worded perfectly and understandable

- None. I loved it.
- Due to the fact that I have never looked deeply into Social Science I did find it difficult to complete the test. I do feel that maybe if I had taken more classes on the issue than I would have had a clearer understanding of what was being asked of me.
- I think that it is a pretty good assessment, kind of long and had to do more than expected though.
- The length of this assessment was so much that due to limited time I was not able to complete it in full. My apologies.
- I thought the assessment was organized well, I found the essay portion a bit difficult to follow. I suggest maybe including examples or rephrasing the questions.
- Overall the assessment is well equipped for an audience that has taken several social science classes under their belt.
- I am just not as well versed as I would like to be in the areas of this study, so I most likely sound ignorant with my responses. This assessment has shown me that I need to get in touch with these areas to better understand and be able to interpret the things.
- Interesting test.

29 students left question 52 unanswered.

Appendix 3

Rubric for Part III Item B, Questions #43 and #47

Rubric for Part III, Item B: Questions #43 & #47 **Identifying Key Terms and Concepts**		
WEAK = 1 POINT	**FAIR/MODERATE = 2 POINTS**	**STRONG = 3 POINTS**
• Identifies *only 1* accurate term/concept • Response is extremely vague, general, and unspecific.	• Identifies *1 or more* accurate terms/concepts • Response offers little or no explanation or elaboration	• Identifies *1 or more* accurate terms/concepts • Response demonstrates excellent clarity and understanding of the discipline

Rubric for Part III, Item C: Questions #44 & #48 **Identifying Relevance to Social Control/Stability**		
WEAK = 1 POINT	**FAIR/MODERATE = 2 POINTS**	**STRONG = 3 POINTS**
• Accurate response • Answers with *questionable clarity*	• Accurate response • Demonstrates *moderate clarity* • *Limited elaboration*	• Accurate response • Demonstrates 100% clarity • *Sufficient* elaboration

Rubric for Part III, Item D: Questions #45 & #48 **Identifying Relevance to One's Personal Quality of Life**		
WEAK = 1 POINT	**FAIR/MODERATE = 2 POINTS**	**STRONG = 3 POINTS**
• Accurate response • Answers with *questionable clarity*	• Accurate response • Demonstrates *moderate clarity* • *Limited elaboration*	• Accurate response • Demonstrates 100% clarity • *Sufficient* elaboration

APPENDIX 4

Articulation of Need for Institutional Support for Grading Tasks
Harold Washington College Assessment Committee – Social Sciences Special Assignments Spring 2011

This document provides a specific and detailed rationale for the Special Assignment requests for social science graders from the Assessment Committee at Harold Washington College. There are 10 requests for Assessment Committee members and other faculty to receive a stipend for additional work to be completed before the end of spring semester.

Harold Washington College Assessment Committee (HWCAC) is approaching the end of its first full cycle of assessment with regard to all seven of the general education goals and their concomitant student learning outcomes. Our general education curricula and regular college-wide assessments support us in consistently focusing on improving student learning outcomes and thus college success. What students learn; how they know, show and share their knowledge and skills, are the vital keys to both college success and success in the world of work.

In 2003, HWCAC was re-invigorated with the appointment of a new Vice President for Academic Affairs and has maintained continued success in the utilization of a broad diversity of assessment tools, including:

- Externally created and paid for tools;
- Externally created and at-no-cost tools;
- Adapted external at-no-cost tools;
- Mixed tools combing elements of permission-granted external tools and self-created elements; and,
- Internally created tools fully contextualized to HWC.

The decision to create our own assessment tool is frequently driven by three key conditions. Firstly, a search of available tools from other academic institutions has yielded very limited results. Secondly, potential assessment tools are restricted in validity because of our specific student body and large urban context. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, external assessment tools do not collect enough data that match our specific and institutionally defined student learning outcomes.

The HWCAC's Social Science Assessment used a self-created electronic assessment tool which gathered demographic, quantitative and qualitative data from almost 700

students during Assessment Week of fall 2010. The questionnaire design gathered important data through three distinct sections and methodologies designed to link specifically to our HWCAC student learning outcomes for the social sciences.

The first section of the questionnaire used nine multiple-choice questions asking students to identify and differentiate between the different social sciences by recognizing key terms and concepts demonstrated in a written pseudo-conversation between social scientists. The second section of our questionnaire contained nine multiple-choice demographic, education level and academic status questions. Since the full questionnaire was managed through Blackboard, both these sections will require no additional staff or faculty time in grading and analyzing data.

Indeed, the results of these elements of our Social Science Assessment are ready for faculty analysis and initial internal dissemination. HWCAC is already working on how we begin analyzing, writing and sharing what can be learned from these initial and quantitatively framed questions. For example, we already know how well our students identify the seven different social sciences and the relative familiarity our students have with specific social science disciplines.

The third and final section of our Social Science Assessment tool asked students to demonstrate more complex skills such as application, analysis and synthesis. The special assignment requests refer specifically to the substantive and time-consuming work required in analyzing these data. There were six specific questions in this element of the assessment which require additional time in grading to ascertain the level of student capabilities with regard to our student learning outcomes. We have 4,000 narrative answers in excel spreadsheets that require trained graders to judge the value of these responses and thus convert these qualitative data into quantitative, to ease the analysis and dissemination of findings.

Qualitative data are important in any assessment profile as they give a depth of student response and allow for the demonstration of competencies in significantly different ways. These qualitative data will deepen our understanding of student capabilities and help us look at their real skills through seeing their social science knowledge in action; as applied to key social issues, their own lives and experiences. Qualitative data require more intense and supported time to process and analyze, and thus these special assignments to speed this process so that we can begin to present findings as soon as possible. Different assessments require different levels of institutional investment. It seems sensible that more algorithmic disciplines and outcomes lend themselves to quantitative approaches and thus require less time invested in data processing and analysis. Our experience has been that more heuristic disciplines and

outcomes require additional resources for processing and analysis; human capacities are irreplaceable in this regard and assessing narrative data is crucial to our understanding.

The 4,000 narrative responses will be graded with a rubric using a 5-point scale in which categoric distinctions are primarily made through embedded use of the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes taxonomy (SOLO) created by Biggs and Collis[i]. This learning outcome taxonomy categorizes student responses as they shift in both complexity and connectedness through five distinct levels. HWAC will provide specific training to all the raters in SOLO, the utilization of the rubric, and discipline specific guidance relevant to our social science outcomes. This training is essential to support a level of inter-rater reliability and can be seen as a significant professional development opportunity for those taking part. This training may have broader implications, should other campuses wish to utilize our assessment tools and methodology.

Beyond this initial preparation for the grading task, HWAC social science graders will also be required to meet a second time to share progress and to communally critique each other's work on data decisions and challenges. Each of the 4,000 narrative student answers will be graded twice by the HWCAC grading team, thus improving reliability.

There is, rightly, a renewed emphasis on increasing the number of community college students who exit with a recognized credential and an outcome that has value both in the marketplace and as a contributing member of society. HWCAC supports this focus and engages in systematic research to unpack the detailed specifics of learning with regard to our general education curriculum. Successfully exiting HWC degree and transfer students have awards which are primarily made up of general education courses. Success in our range of general education courses is central to any final exit award. Our assessment program helps faculty, staff and students identify specific changes we can implement to improve student learning outcomes leading to student success. It is a data-driven process in which detail, time and additional resources make a huge difference to the quality, speed and utility of our findings. HWCAC has a long history of success in which methodological, analytical and practical decisions have had impact within our institution.

Finding the strengths and the gaps in HWC student capabilities with regard to the social sciences, of course, has implications across our seven-college system. Whilst, as far as we know, we have no comparative City College data with regard to social sciences, our findings can establish both a framework and an agenda for system-wide dialogue about general education social science outcomes and core issues that are best

addressed in a multi-campus format. It is certainly a fair critique to note that the general education assessment programs of each campus operate somewhat within college-bound silos and that our institutional knowledge could be improved when our seven campuses create data sharing and dialogue strategies that transcend the boundaries of our current institutional geography. Special assignments help us move more quickly with data and reach critical points of potential collaboration in ways which speed organically generated change strategies.

Mike Heathfield

[1] Biggs, J. B. and Collis, K. (1982) *Evaluating the Quality of Learning: the SOLO taxonomy*. New York, Academic Press and Biggs, J. B. (1999) *Teaching for quality learning at university*. Berkshire, U.K. Open University Press.

APPENDIX 5

Detailed Breakdown of the Allocation of Grading Tasks

Social Science Assessment

666 questions

Team #1: Charles and Lynnel

Responsible for student responses 1-333

Charles: Evaluates #43 and #47 for students 1-166 (Key Concepts and Characteristics)
Lynnel: Evaluates #43 and #47 for students 167-333 (Key Concepts and Characteristics)

Charles: Evaluates #44/#45 and #48/#49 for students 1-333
Lynnel: Evaluates #44/#45 and #48/#49 for students 1-333

Team #2: Jeffrey and Matthew

Responsible for student responses 334-666

Jeffrey: Evaluates #43 and #47 for students 334-500 (Key Concepts and Characteristics)
Matthew: Evaluates #43 and #47 for students 501-666 (Key Concepts and Characteristics)

Jeffrey: Evaluates #44/#45 and #48/#49 for students 334-666
Matthew: Evaluates #44/#45 and #48/#49 for students 334-666

Instructions:
Evaluate your responses as indicated above using the given rubric. Enter your scores on the electronic excel sheet. Save the spreadsheet and forward it to Lynnel when completed.