

reflected appraisals

We perceive ourselves as we believe others perceive us

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rankings eighth is enough

Sociology is the 8th best profession in the United States, according to a report in *The Wall Street Journal*. It ranks just behind such professions as mathematician, actuary, and historian.

The report details a ranking developed by job website CareerCast.com, which took into consideration five factors: environment, income, employment outlook, physical demands, and stress. Sociology, with its minimal physical demands, steady employment, and comfortable indoor accommodations, was a natural pick for the top 10.

The *Journal* also interviewed sociologist Mark Nord, who works for the Department of Agriculture. Nord agreed with CareerCast.com that the job of a sociologist is often well-compensated and safe, but added he also finds it satisfying to know his research is instrumental in assisting policymakers find solutions to social problems.

The worst profession on the list? Lumberjack.

legislating sociology: you know it when you see it

A dust-up in the Georgia legislature put sociology at the center of a controversy—and in reports by CNN, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and *Inside Higher Ed*.

Georgia state legislators looking to make up for a state budget deficit targeted the salaries of two sociology professors for their allegedly useless and disgusting expertise.

Sociologists Mindy Stompler and Kirk Elifson took a public tongue-lashing when Rep. Calvin Hill came across a

Georgia State University media guide that named them as experts in oral sex and male prostitution, respectively.

Hill, misreading the guide as a course catalog, responded with a strongly worded email to his supporters about the filth being taught in state universities. He also expressed outrage at the thought of courses in queer theory, and suggested eliminating such courses might be one way to solve the state's budget crisis.

Stompler and Elifson's expertise in such lurid subjects hardly suggests their courses encourage students to head out to the nearest brothel. In fact, Georgia legislators realized as much when the two professors testified in defense of their research. They garnered praise from the officials and prompted the politicians to back off their criticism, according to the *Journal-Constitution*.

happiness spreads like the flu

Medical sociologist Nicholas A. Christakis and political scientist James Fowler have gained international attention for their work on how happiness spreads through social groups.

The innovative study followed nearly 5,000 people for 60 years and determined, among other findings, that happy family members living in the same house or close by also increases your chances of happiness and that living near a happy close friend does so by 25 percent.

Your toxic co-workers, though, don't affect your own happiness, the study also (thankfully) found.

People a few degrees removed from you can also make you happy. "If your friend's friend's friend becomes happy, that has a bigger impact on you being happy than putting an extra \$5,000 in

your pocket," Fowler said.

News outlets in Australia, India, Canada, Britain, and the United States reported on the study. *The Guardian* celebrated the work for its implication that feelings of well-being and happiness are often linked to better health, and the comedy news show *The Colbert Report* even highlighted the study.

size it's all in the family

Heralded as a vital contribution to our understanding of the effects of family lifestyle and genes, new sociological research on obesity among American teenagers caught the attention of *Reuters* and *U.S. News & World Report*.



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The family that plays together weighs together.

Sociologist Molly A. Martin found an important connection between obesity in parents and their children. She suggests family obesity is the result of both social and genetic factors.

"Weight runs in families, but it's not just because of genetics. What we do together, how we spend our time together, what we eat and how we organize ourselves as family matters," Martin told *U.S. News & World Report*.

News reports highlighted two factors more influential than genetics: whether or not the families missed meals and the amount of time spent watching television or playing video games.