

The Soc 300 Companion

**A Guide to Writing Your Sociology JP
Research Proposal**

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Introduction

Congratulations! As you begin to read this booklet, you are initiating the process of conducting original research worthy of fulfilling the university's junior paper requirement. This handbook is designed to help you do just that: together with your professor and preceptors for Soc 300, it will lead you through the steps of the fall semester that prepare you to continue the process of independent research together with your departmental advisor in the spring semester. You can think of Soc 300 (as well as this handbook) as a how-to manual that prepares you to move from the course into a relationship with the advisor who will supervise the continuation of the research you begin this fall.

This handbook offers important information particular to the sociology department, but it also points you to other important and useful resources available throughout the university. Also keep in mind that the most important resources for you in the JP process are your professors and preceptors: talking with these people early and often is one of the best ways to ensure smooth sailing in your independent research. Independent research need not be isolating – in fact, academic scholarship is an activity that can only be practiced in community. Everyone in the university – ranging from its most senior tenured professors to graduate student preceptors – looks to their colleagues and collaborators for help and guidance in their research activities. Writing your JP is simply the next step in the process of becoming a member of this academic community – a process inaugurated with your freshman year Writing Seminar, and fulfilled with the completion your senior thesis.

How to Use this Book

Soc 300 takes place in the fall term and is designed to teach you the core methods of research and investigation appropriate to sociology. In conjunction with this training in social science methodology, the course also helps you to establish an essential foundation for the research and writing that you will conduct independently (in consultation with your JP advisor) in the spring. Ideally, you will conclude Soc 300 – in which the course professor and preceptors are your central guides – and move on to a closer working relationship with your JP advisor for the remainder of the year. You can think of Soc 300 as a kind of boot camp that prepares you for this new partnership: when you conclude Soc 300 you should have a number of pieces of your JP already in place, which will ultimately make your working relationships with your advisor more fruitful and productive for both of you. Think of Soc 300 as a course that intends to help you prepare a research proposal that contains all of the following pieces:

1. A research question
2. A statement of why your research question is important
3. A review of relevant literature
4. A proposed body of data suitable for analysis
5. A statement of the methods you intend to use for this analysis
6. A preliminary statement of what your project's potential contribution will be (if appropriate, including results from a pilot study)
7. A bibliography

Accordingly, this booklet has seven chapters arranged around each of these items. In the process of taking you through each of these elements, this handbook will also cover other important logistical issues that you will be discussing in your precepts as well, such as suggestions for different places you can find data, negotiating IRB approval issues, and protecting yourself against plagiarism. This book also contains an appendix that lists other helpful information as well as multiple resources within the University community that you can also use for assistance with various stages of this process.

If you attend carefully to each of these seven items, you will find that the JP process will be challenging, but not at all overwhelming. Soc 300 will give you all of the tools you need to move into the spring semester ready to conduct your JP research and write a paper that truly contributes to the field of sociology.

Chapter 1: The Research Question

Of all the pieces of your JP, this is probably the most important – and perhaps the most challenging. You probably chose to major in sociology because you are interested in the social world and above all the kinds of questions that interest sociologists: questions about social inequality, the nature and functions of social groups and organizations, large-scale changes in collective and national identities, and the subtle habits and cues that shape people’s interactions with one another – and this only scratches the surface! The challenge for many student sociologists, then, is settling on a topic and finding a research question that is of an appropriate scope for analysis in a paper of approximately 35 or 40 pages. This chapter discusses some strategies for settling upon a research question for your JP.

The Muddy Process of Research

In an ideal world, the process of finding your research question would go something like this:

1. Read lots of books and realize that famous sociologists have neglected a simple, but crucial research question that demands an answer.
2. Find data that offers an answer to this research question.
3. Analyze your newly discovered data, and thus provide an answer to this captivating and important research question.

In reality, of course, social research rarely works in exactly this way (although it would be nice – and a lot easier – if it did!) Instead, the process of arriving at a research question, for students and seasoned researchers alike, often looks more like this:

1. Start thinking about a topic that interests you.
2. Brainstorm lists of questions that might be worth investigating in social research.
3. Consult books and articles about this topic to see what other researchers have found; return to #2 and revise your questions.
4. Find a data source (or sources) on your topic of interest, and think about the concrete questions raised by this data and how they correspond (or not) to what you’ve found in #3.
5. Go back to #2 . . .

And you get the idea. In fact, to even number these steps seems futile, since this process is one in which the student researcher is doing a number of things at one time – brainstorming, reading, and testing the waters in thinking about how real-world data might inform the kinds of questions you are asking.

To illustrate what this muddier version of research might look like in practice, think about a potential JP on the broad topic of the experiences of well-educated women in the professional workplace. You might be interested in a number of questions about this topic, for example:

- How do women make decisions about investing in work vs. investing in children?

- What difference do workplace rules and policies make in whether or not women choose to stay home after having children or continue to invest in their careers?
- How does women's compensation in professional work situations compare to that of men?
- Do women born since 1965 look different in their career decisions than women born between 1945 and 1965?
- When well-educated women drop out of the labor market after having children, what reasons do they give for this decision?

In working towards a more focused research question, you would want to do some reading around this issue, focusing on sociological articles and books (in other words “the literature”) about women in the labor market, work/family issues, and workplace policies and procedures. As we'll discuss in Chapter 3, you'll want to take lots of notes in your literature review about what other scholars consider unanswered questions or places where published studies and findings do not agree. This will help to refine your research question significantly.

You would also want to think about some potential data sources that would answer these questions. For instance, if your main question of interest is about women's pay in professional workplace situations, you would probably want to look at a quantitative dataset that you would analyze using the methods of statistics, such as the U.S. Census or the Current Population Study (CPS), two publicly available datasets available from locations we'll discuss in Chapter 4. If what you're really interested in are the reasons why people do things, or what people have to say about their own experiences (such as why well educated, professional women choose to leave the labor market in order to stay home with young children), then you could gather your own data for your JP by interviewing people in the form of a qualitative sample. We will also discuss this further in Chapter 4. Although this strategy may sound daunting, it's not as hard as it sounds. In this particular example, you might find that you could interview a sample of women who are playing with their children at the fountain outside of the Woodrow Wilson School building.

In either scenario, your research questions will be developed through a process of brainstorming, consulting the literature, and generating ideas in consultation with an identifiable data source. What you are looking for, in essence, are holes in existing research: what do we still need to know about the topic that interests you, and how could you help to answer them in your independent research?

Troubleshooting

We all know that it happens: along the way to finding your research question, you make a wrong turn, get stuck, or have a hard time getting started. In the remainder of this chapter we will discuss some common problems in this process and some strategies you can use to overcome them.

1. Can't find a topic.

The Problem: This is everyone's worst nightmare. You can't decide what you're really interested in or keep coming up with reasons why the ideas that you have won't be feasible. Or maybe you keep on changing topics – you spend the first part of the semester planning to research segregated

housing but then decide, after fall break, that you want to switch to something about politics and the media.

Strategies: First of all, don't beat yourself up: we've all done this to some extent. But you must intervene early and allow yourself to do the hard work of brainstorming your way out of the muddy waters of confusion. In many cases, being reluctant to choose a topic or to settle on one idea out of many is a reflection of our underlying perfectionism – when we can't immediately find a topic that seems “perfect” and thus exciting, worthwhile, and manageable, we give up and move on to another idea. We perfectionists get more and more panicked as time ticks by and we realize that we haven't really gotten started.

The best medicine here is to think about what you are really, truly interested in. Most of what interests us as sociologists often comes from our own experience – even Weber admitted as much in his essays found in his classic book *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. With that in mind, sit down with pen and paper in hand and brainstorm as many questions as you can think of about a particular topic that really and truly interest you. If you like, do this for a couple of topics and then compare the lists. If something on a list makes your eyes glisten, go for it! Even better, make an appointment with your professor or preceptor and take your lists to the meeting to discuss your potential ideas.

2. *You have a hard time moving from topic to research question.*

The Problem: You've got some great ideas about broad topics – the significance of the internet in social inequality, or the effect of a family member's incarceration on children – but you're having trouble arriving at a concrete research question.

Strategies: Booth, Colomb, and Williams talk about this very issue in their great book *The Craft of Research* (University of Chicago Press, 3rd Ed, 2008). They offer a number of strategies for resolving this issue, which mostly involve breaking your topic down into smaller pieces that allow you to arrive at a focused research question. They focus on the importance of asking smaller analytical questions that focus on the *how* and *why* of research rather than the more descriptive questions of *who*, *what*, *when*, or *where*.

Some of the strategies that Booth et. al suggest include:

I. **Breaking your topic down into parts and asking questions about how those parts are related.**

Specifically, ask yourself what smaller parts make up your topic, and then think about either how those parts of your topic relate, or how your topic is a part of a larger system. For example:

TOPIC	PARTS
The internet and social inequality	Access to computers in rural/urban areas Technological literacy and training Computer availability in schools, libraries, etc. by neighborhood Computer use by sociodemographic groups (age, race, ethnicity, language, etc.) Federal funding for technological initiatives
Incarceration and children	Different effects of incarceration of mother, father, sibling, etc. Effects of incarceration on family income Effects of incarceration on emotional well-being Rates of incarceration among blacks vs. whites Length of incarceration and influence on kids Frequency of/access to visitation for family members

When you break your topic down into smaller parts, more focused research questions become apparent. For example, thinking about the different parts of incarceration and its effect on families suggests a number of more detailed, manageable research questions. For example, instead of asking “How does incarceration affect children” you might ask “How does frequency of prison visitation affect family stability during incarceration?”

II. Put your topic into historical context

For our particular examples here, we could think about how internet access or computer use has changed over time for different social groups, or about how incarceration is a factor in neighborhood stability over time. What research questions does that help us generate (for example, “How has the mass incarceration of black males affected the significance of motherhood in poor, urban neighborhoods?”)

III. Compare and Contrast

Think about how your topic is a snapshot that compares to a larger picture – how does computer and internet use contribute to the urban/rural divide in the present day United States? Or think about how instances of your topic are like or unlike something else – how is incarceration similar to or different from losing a parent to death or divorce?

3. *You find that someone else has asked – and answered – exactly your questions.*

The Problem: You find, well into your research and literature review, that another scholar or

scholars have explored exactly the same question that you are pursuing and thus fear you will have to start over in your JP work.

Strategies: How you handle this depends on how soon you discover the overlap between other scholarly work and your own, developing research questions. If you find this early on in your literature review, you can easily adjust your question slightly to think about how the work you've discovered can actually strengthen your research. For example, does the work you've found suggest some unanswered questions that your research can address? Does it propose a theoretical framework that you can build off of, or further refine or substantiate? Or perhaps the other research bases its conclusions off of slightly different data than the data you are considering using – in this case your contribution can be to help build even further support for a particular claim (or perhaps show us how that claim should be refined or adjusted slightly based on new findings from your analysis). In any case, this isn't necessarily terrible news – remember that scholarship is the work of an academic community, and to discover that your questions are already being investigated should affirm for you that you are asking analytical questions that others in the academic community deem important and valuable.

If you discover this overlap well into your research, the way you respond may be slightly different. The Princeton handbook "Writing a J.P." covers this scenario on p. 10:

But what if you have the terrible luck to come across the relevant work toward the end of writing your JP? Even if this is the case, all is not lost. There's nothing "wrong" with rediscovering something worthwhile (assuming you've made a responsible effort to find out what has been written on your topic and that you acknowledge earlier work on your topic when you discover it) . . . Emphasize the differences while acknowledging the overlap between your ideas and the earlier work. You can also take material that has been dealt with by other authors and see where you can extend it. You may be able to use the older work as a jumping-off point for ideas that are genuinely original. What you must not do is ignore the earlier book or article and pretend you haven't read it

In any case, remember that "original" research need not be groundbreaking. Rather, the process of scientific research is one of building collective knowledge slowly, brick by brick. You should also, of course, use your professors and preceptors to help you think about how your research can integrate existing sources into an original research question.

Chapter 2: Defining the Importance of Your Research

As you continue to work on developing your research question you will have to be thinking about an important, related question: why your proposed research question is important. In other words, so what? You may be terribly interested how in evangelical and Jewish students interrelate on the Princeton campus, but unless you can give us a concise statement of why this research question matters for the larger enterprise of sociology your research proposal will be incomplete.

Defining a Motive

In the Writing Seminar you took as a freshman, you probably talked about this aspect of academic writing using the term *motive*. Gordon Harvey of Harvard University has defined motive as

*the intellectual context that you establish for your topic and thesis at the start of your essay, in order to suggest why someone, besides your instructor, might want to read an essay on this topic or need to hear your particular thesis argued—why your thesis isn't just obvious to all, why other people might hold other theses (that you think are wrong)*¹.

Put another way, the “so what?” part of your research proposal needs to explain to anyone reading your research exactly why they should spend their time doing so. Your paper’s motive tells us exactly what you are contributing, even in a small way, to a body of knowledge in the social sciences, and why that research matters in the first place. Motive is different than your actual findings – although those are important too. Motive establishes your work as part of an ongoing conversation in the academic community, and as such tends to take one of the following forms, regardless of academic discipline:

1. The truth isn't what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. The knowledge on the topic has heretofore been limited.
3. There's a mystery or puzzle or question here that needs answering.
4. Published views of the matter conflict.
5. We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
6. This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting.
7. There's an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining.
8. The standard opinion(s) need challenging or qualifying.²

All good academics wrestle with the question of motive in their writing. Consider some of the following examples:

From Douglas S. Massey, Andrew b. Gross, and Kumiko Shibuya. (1994). “Migration, Segregation, and the Geographic Concentration of Poverty.” *American Sociological Review* 59: 425-445:

Despite mounting evidence of the deleterious consequences of concentrated poverty, there is substantial disagreement about its causes. Generally, three hypotheses have been advanced . . . These three hypothesized causal mechanisms – net middle class out-migration, net downward

¹ See “Elements of an Academic Essay” by Gordon Harvey, available at www.princeton.edu/writing/elements.doc

² Kerry Walk, “Motivating Moves,” The Writing Program, Princeton University

social mobility, and racial residential segregation – are not mutually exclusive, of course. It is quite possible, even likely, that all three operate to some extent to influence the class composition of specific neighborhoods. The relevant issues for social scientists is which hypothesis is empirically most important in accounting for the geographical concentration of black poverty, not which one is ultimately “correct.” Because relevant data are scarce, however, research on this issue has been limited, particularly with respect to class-selective migration, and most of the evidence marshaled to date has been indirect (pp. 426-427).

Here, Massey and colleagues make at least two motivating moves: they point out that sociologists do not agree about the causes of growing concentration of poverty (motive #4), and instead generally argue for three different hypotheses, which may or may not be mutually exclusive. Second, the authors here argue that the research to date on this topic has been limited by the availability of suitable data (motive #2).

From Michael Hout and Claude S. Fischer. (2002). Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations.” *American Sociological Review* 67: 165-190:

The minority of American adults who claim no religious preference doubled from 7 percent in 1991, its level for almost 20 years, to an unprecedented 14 percent in 1998. This trend is likely to surprise the many researchers who have described Americans as especially religious (e.g., Caplow 1985; Inglehart and Baker 2000), those who included religiosity as part of “American exceptionalism” (e.g., Greeley 1991; Lipset 1996), and the many observers who thought the 1990s were a time when religion was ascendant in the United States (e.g., Kohut et al. 2000). For the preference for no religion to double in less than a decade is not only a startlingly rapid social change in its own right but also a challenge to these widely held impressions of American culture. . . . We seek to explain why American adults became increasingly likely to express no religious preference as the 1990s unfolded (p. 165).

In this influential article, Hout and Fischer set out to explain the puzzle (motive #3) of why more Americans list “none” as their expressed religious preference while also explaining why this seemingly tangential matter is actually important: it is “a challenge” to other “widely held impressions of American culture” (motive #8).

From Stanley Lieberson and Eleanor O. Bell. (1992). “Children’s First Names: An Empirical Study of Social Taste.” *American Journal of Sociology* 98: 511-554:

Why do specific tastes take the form that they do? Obviously there is no simple answer to this question, if only because many idiosyncratic personal experiences affect individual choices. Nevertheless, in advanced industrialized societies, most expressions of taste and fashion are affected by formal organizations that have a stake in the outcome and are dedicated to influencing such tastes. . . . Sociologists in the United States rarely study first names despite their distinctive theoretical potential and despite the existence of excellent large-scale data sets as well as obvious opportunities for surveys and field studies (exceptions include Miller [1927], Rossi [1965], Taylor [1974], Lieberson [1984], and Alford [1988]). Yet, the first names given to children provide a rare opportunity to study tastes in an exceptionally rigorous and systematic way that is relatively free of organized efforts to determine the outcome.

Finally, Liebersson and Bell motivate their innovative study of children's names not based on the intrinsic interest of this topic, but by presenting it as an excellent case study of the larger processes by which "specific tastes take the form that they do" (motive #5). In introducing two rival explanations as well – people's tastes are just a result of their personal preferences, as contrasted to the idea that tastes are the result of the influence of organizations that seek to influence these preferences – the authors also suggest that a tension exists between these two rival explanations, and that using data on children's first names can help to better explain the inner workings of tastes as they develop over time (motive #7).

Motive in Student Research

Looking at these three examples, it should be clear that not only does all academic work offer some statement of motive, but that really outstanding work has multiple motives (you might even argue that many of the motivating moves listed above are really just variations on the same thing). The good news here is that once you find your research question, you can continue to think about that question in dialogue with the suggested motivating moves above to think about how your JP makes use of at least one of these motives.

How do you get there? Note that in all of the examples above, the authors cite literature from their fields in situating their research question in a larger body of study and research. Research papers that are well-motivated always do so in dialogue with a larger literature, situating their research in an area that others clearly care about and have worked to better understand and define. As you work to motivate your research question, remember that one of the best uses of your time is to think about how your research question can inform and be informed by the scholarly writing on your topic. How does your question help to adjudicate between competing explanations? Contribute to our knowledge? Illustrate a larger process or phenomena?

A final note: remember that not only do you need to be clear about how your research matters, you must make this clear to the reader! Take nothing for granted: spell it out for your audience. Determining just who that audience is – beyond your professors and preceptors – is the subject of the next section.

Chapter 3: The Literature Review

As you probably already know, researchers in all disciplines refer to the secondary sources in their discipline as “the literature.” Referring to scholarly articles and books in this manner only reinforces the importance of the written word and the cumulative efforts of scholars of all stripes to advance our shared knowledge and understanding of various subject matters. The world of “the literature” exists to inform every aspect of that collective enterprise: scholars (and book and journal editors and reviewers!) have taken untold amounts of time and resources to share with others what they’ve found in their research. Consulting this literature is absolutely essential in the early stages of your JP research.

As you consult the literature on the topic or topics you are considering for your JP, you will want to do so with specific goals and specific techniques. Below, we will consider four main questions: 1) How to find sources, 2) What you want to know, 3) How to record what you learn, and 4) Writing your literature review

Finding Sources

For books and journal articles, the first place you will want to start is . . . the library! And as tempted as you will be to use Google (or even Google Scholar, or Google Books), there is a reason that the Princeton University library spends a ton of money to have access to dozens of electronic catalogues and databases: they are better than what anyone can get for free on the internet. The scholarly journal articles you will want to access for your JP, for example, will not be available in full text version on the web. You can, however, access them easily (and for free!) from any computer on campus – and if you’re away from campus there are ways to access them as well via your net id and the library website (see the library website link for “Connecting from Off campus” for instructions).

1. Electronic Databases

For journal articles, the best place to start for sociology will be what the library calls “core Resources” for Sociology, which is located at <http://library.princeton.edu/catalogs/articles.php?subjectID=65> . You can also access this page easily by visiting the Library home page -> Articles and Databases (on the left under “Books, Articles, and More”)-> then selecting “Sociology” from the pull down menu for “Subject Lists and Databases.” This page also contains a link to the Library’s Sociology Research Guide: <http://www.princeton.edu/~sbwhite/sociwebb.html>.

Most of these databases listed in these guides will contain full text versions of sociology’s most important journals. You can pick the database with the interface you feel most comfortable with, and of course you can talk with the library’s Sociology librarian, Susan Bennett White, about how to find the resources you need for your topic. Her contact information is also listed in the Appendix to this handbook: sbwhite@princeton.edu, or 609-258-4814.

2. The Library Catalogue

You will find books in Princeton’s library by visiting <http://catalog.princeton.edu/>. On one hand this seems pretty obvious, but it’s worth emphasizing: you will actually have to go and find hard copies of books in the Firestone (or Stokes) library stacks for your JP! Google books and ebrary do contain some titles, but most of the titles digitized in these electronic formats are skewed toward

older works in the humanities. Social science research – most of which is concerned with current phenomena, and thus are likely to still be in print – are usually only included sporadically and not in full text form. Getting the hard copy is useful for additional research, as discussed below.

3. “Shoe-leather Detective Work”

A final strategy that you may find useful for finding sources could be called simply “Shoe-leather” detective work, and presents another reason why finding hard copies of books is essential for your research. Look in any academic volume and you will find some section of Acknowledgements in which the author thanks the colleagues who have read all or portions of her work. Remember that academic work is a collaborative enterprise, so these people mentioned in a book’s acknowledgements will not simply be the author’s friends and buddies (although they may well be), they will be other scholars whose research addresses similar topics and issues. You can also find paperback copies of books that will have blurbs by other scholars praising the author’s work: find these people in the library catalogue, and see if their work also informs your topic. Likewise, look at the bibliography to books that you find especially useful for your topic – these will, of course, be relevant for your own research.

You can use this same strategy by simply looking up citations in journal articles that you find concerning your topic. A great resource for this are the articles published in *Annual Reviews of Sociology* (www.annualreviews.org). The articles prepared for this annual volume are intended to exhaustively summarize the state of a particular field of research in sociology, and your first stop on the road to conducting a thorough literature review should be to look up your topic and find related articles in this publication. The citations listed as works cited will be important to cull through as well.

What You Want to Know

When you go to this literature, you must have some principle goals in mind or else you will find yourself overwhelmed with information. Your first impulse might be to try to summarize every source that you read in condensed form – their use of other sources, data, findings, and so on. A better way to use your time is to think *first* about how you need to use these sources, and particularly about how you might use them in better conceptualizing your research question.

Keep in mind that scholars cite sources at a variety of levels, ranging from larger, big-picture points to smaller, more detail-oriented information. In a well-written research proposal, you will probably want to do some combination of these things. Put another way, you will probably end up citing some sources as “forests” and others as “trees” – the forests offer broad, general points while the trees focus on more specific information.

For example, the recent book *Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality in Everyday Life* by Mario Small (Oxford University Press, 2009) could be cited in any of the following ways:

1. Very Broad: Distills the research to its most general, central point

Example: “Recent research by Small (2009) indicates that individuals’ social networks are shaped in important ways by the organizations they interact with on a daily basis.”

2. Mid-Level: Describes some of the book's more specific findings from its focus case study

Example: "Small (2009) shows that child care centers help create network ties for the mothers who use them – for example, by offering referrals to other organizations and helping mothers form relationships with other center patrons."

3. Very Specific: Cites specific, technical information or findings from the book's investigations

Example: "In his recent book, Small finds that almost 90% of government-funded child care centers have a formal parents' organization (2009: 81)."

Each of these references to Small's work could build on this source to make a larger argument, but not all will be useful in every case. Of course, you won't know how you might use sources until you are further along in your research process, so it's a good idea to take strategic notes in your reading that you can refer to later when you actually write your literature review.

You will therefore want to take careful notes along the way. You should take care to take a few notes about every source you consult that describe its broad contribution, and at least a few mid-level notes about the sources that are most closely related to your research topic. Very specific findings (as in the third example) will likely be the least useful, so you will probably not need to take such detailed notes in your early review of the literature. As your research question becomes more focused, you can always return to your sources for this kind of very specific data, if it is needed.

Some other strategies that can be useful in your note-taking are to think about the following three questions as you read and record what you find in your literature review:

1. What are they asking?

At the very beginning of your research, you will want to consult your sources with the goal of finding out what questions other scholars are asking about your topic. If you're interested in the social organization of poor neighborhoods, for example, you will likely find that researchers interested in this topic ask a range of questions: how are poor neighborhoods affected by deinstitutionalization? Are poor neighborhoods really devoid of organizations and institutions? What is the role of social capital (and its decline) in racially segregated areas? What kinds of social organization emerge to fill to gaps left by formal institutions? You will begin to get a sense of a more focused research question as you get deeper into the literature on your topic and see the different pieces (recall the discussion of developing a research question in Chapter 1) of the topic and how they are related.

2. What are they finding?

Since social science is about the cumulative process of understanding and theorizing the social world, a second goal in your literature review will be to note patterns in the literature about your topic. Remember that finding places where the published literature disagrees – or even contradicts itself – is a great place to situate your research question (and your motive!) Returning again to the subject of poor neighborhoods, you will probably find in your literature review that most scholars of urban poverty believe that neighborhood factors mediate the influence of poverty to some extent, but disagree (or have yet to reach consensus) about the relative importance of the exact

mechanisms – for instance, what matters most for poor neighborhoods: disorganized family structures, poverty, poor schools, deinstitutionalization, incarceration? Or how do these different factors interact to create cumulative disadvantage for poor populations?

3. How do they know?

Finally, in your literature review, keep close tabs on how the scholars studying your topic reach the conclusions that they do. Do they draw conclusions based on large-scale survey data? On interviews with a small sample of respondents? Ethnographic observations? A combination of these methods? Likewise, give some thought to ways in which different methods can supplement findings from existing studies.

Keeping Track of What You Read and Avoiding Plagiarism

The final task in your literature review – before you write it up, that is – is keeping track of what you read. Ultimately, how you do this is a personal preference, but it is essential that you develop some kind of note-taking system as you undertake your JP. You may prefer to take notes in a Word document, to keep track of notes in a citation management software program, such as RefWorks or Endnote, or to take handwritten notes in a centralized location, such as a spiral notebook devoted entirely to your JP research.

Whatever your strategy, you will find in the course of writing your JP that you can't rely on scrawling a few notes on a hardcopy printout of an article – in order to develop your thinking sufficiently to write an adequate literature review you will need to take notes in an organized way. This will save you time later – when you go to write up your literature review (see the final section in this chapter), you will find that much of the work is already done. If you don't take notes while you're reading, you'll find you have to do much of the work over again when it comes time to write the review for your proposal.

In fact, you can get a head start on this part of the process by actually writing *about* what you're reading in your review of relevant literature. You accomplish two things by doing this: one, you take notes on the source you're reviewing, and two, you clarify and develop your thinking about that source by being in conversation with it through your own writing. This will also help your JP because writing is a critical part of the research process. In fact, it's a mistake to think of research and writing as being two separate processes: people who write every day tend to be more productive in their research and, not surprisingly, their writing as well.

Aside from helping you to be more productive and efficient, taking careful notes on what you've read is important for another, more serious reason: it helps protect you against plagiarism. At this point in your academic career, you know well what the definition of plagiarism is (the use of a source without proper acknowledgement) and its consequences at the university (severe – typically suspension for a year). As you begin working on your JP, it is absolutely critical that you distinguish your ideas from the work of others, and careful notetaking is a vital part of this process. You may find it helpful to paraphrase as you take notes in order to avoid accidentally citing verbatim from a source in a later document. Or you may prefer to take notes by selecting a few key quotes from a source (and noting them as such) and then writing about them in your own words.

Whatever strategy you chose, careful note taking is essential. You might not set out to plagiarize in your JP, but could do so inadvertently through sloppiness, fatigue, or sheer laziness in your study habits.

Keep in mind that the University does not take intent or motive into account when evaluating allegations of plagiarism; according to *Academic Integrity at Princeton*, “Ignorance of academic regulations or the excuse of sloppy or rushed work does not constitute an acceptable defense against the charge of plagiarism.”³

Using Sources and Writing Your Literature Review

Now that you’re well along the way to reviewing the relevant literature on your topic, you will want to organize your literature review in a way appropriate to your particular topic and research question. Since you will probably feel as though you’ve become an expert on your topic, you may feel tempted to display every single fruit of your labors by regurgitating every single piece of information you gleaned in the course of weeks of library research.

You should resist this temptation! This is one of the sad truths of scholarship: much of what we do does not every see the light of day. You may have reviewed two dozen articles before you found four that really informed your research question. Perhaps you changed or adjusted your question midway through your literature review as you found that much of what you’d been reading was irrelevant, or concerned a topic that was already well-studied. It is only natural that you would want to get some credit for all of this hard work.

But even if it is ultimately not useful to cite or discuss all of these sources, the time you put into reading them was still essential because you could not have arrived at a worthwhile research question without surveying the literature in the field to discern where your contribution could be most valuable. The way to show the fruits of your labor is to write a well organized and pointed literature review that explains just how your research question fits into the established literature in its field in sociology, and promises the reader that your research will contribute something worthwhile.

In organizing your literature review, it’s a good idea to revisit the motivating moves discussed in Chapter 2, and to give some thought to how your research speaks to at least one (or more) of these motives. Is there a conflict in the literature that your research can address? A gaping hole in existing scholarship that your work will fill? Or perhaps your JP will argue that we can understand a larger phenomenon through your analysis of a smaller case study. Whatever the contribution, your literature review should make clear the state of the field on this topic and exactly how your research will improve it.

As you draft your literature review, you might find it helpful to use some of these questions to help and organize your notes into larger themes, or as a jumping off point for organizing your larger literature review:

- What are the main debates in the field concerning my topic?
- What are the key ways in which scholarship on my topic has evolved in the past several years (or decades)?
- What hypotheses might the established literature suggest for my particular research question?
- How have other scholars attempted to answer my research question? In what ways is our knowledge still incomplete?
- What are the most important findings about my topic or question?

³ Available at <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/08/sources/>

Unfortunately, there is no clear-cut formula to writing a good literature review, but all good literature reviews share the common feature of *reviewing literature for a purpose*, which is to motivate the investigation of a new research question. This is why you will want to resist the urge to summarize and report on all that you've found – your task in the JP is to use the sources you've found to place your research question in a larger context of significance. In effect, your literature review creates an academic home – and thus, an audience – for your research.

Chapter 4: Finding Data

As you may know already (or will soon learn in SOC 300), data in the social sciences is divided into two broad categories: *qualitative* and *quantitative* data. Put simply, qualitative data consists of data measured primarily in words, while quantitative data measures data as numerical values. If you will be using *qualitative* methods in your JP, you will most likely need to collect your own data for your JP – be it through observation, interviewing a relevant sample, or analyzing text materials through the methods of content analysis. Depending on the nature of your research, you may need to file an application with the University’s Institutional Review Panel for approval of research using human subjects. You can find more information on the process of securing IRP approval in the Appendix to this guide.

The methods used by sociologists to analyze *quantitative* data generally involve statistical analyses, through the use of computer software such as STATA or SPSS. If you want to use statistical methods in your Sociology JP, you should plan to take SOC 301 during the Fall semester, concurrent with SOC 300. You will also need to find a dataset suitable for analyzing your research question. Although this may sound difficult, you will find that there are innumerable datasets made available to you at Princeton, and many more that are available in the public domain. Depending on your interest, faculty at Princeton may also have access to data collected through their own research that you may receive permission to use for your independent research.

Either *quantitative* or *qualitative* research is acceptable for a JP project, so you should think of “data” in very broad terms. Here are some examples of appropriate data for your JP:

- Questionnaires or surveys (large or small scale; representative samples or not);
- Census information or quarterly surveys by the government on the entire nation;
- Formal or informal interviews (structured or unstructured);
- Discussions in focus groups;
- Participant observations (observe and participate at the same time in some settings);
- Just hanging out and observing (without participating in the activities);
- Observation of behaviors in a control (experimental) setting;
- Organizational records of some groups, organizations, or corporations;
- Printed media (newspapers, magazines, web blogs, etc.)
- Government documents (congressional reports, Supreme Court rulings, etc.);
- Photos or any visual images;
- Manuscripts, personal letters, or any documents in historical archives;
- Geographic information from directories, census, etc. (Princeton GIS center has a lot)
- and more!

Many of the items in the list above are data that you can collect yourself – particularly the qualitative data discussed above. However, if you are going to use quantitative data – specifically, an existing collection of numerical data – you will want to peruse the rest of this chapter for useful information about the University’s Data and Statistical Services department, as well as links to existing data consortiums and collections.

Data and Statistical Services

Princeton has an office of Data and Statistical Services (located on the A floor of Firestone Library, inside of the Social Science Reference Center). This office employs people whose entire job concerns helping members of the Princeton University community find and analyze quantitative data. They are there to help you, and you should make full use of their services if you want to write a quantitative JP.

You can get a good idea of the wide range of data that are available to you as a Princeton student by visiting their website at <http://dss.princeton.edu> (a specific list of data by subject can be accessed at <http://dss.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/dataresources/guides.cgi>). This web page offers access to collections of data that have been collected by other researchers, and which are now available to the public (or at least, the public affiliated with institutions of higher learning) at no charge to you, as a student. If you choose to analyze one of these data sources, you will need to do so in its original form – in other words, you won't be able to make claims based on this data as it is reported in another scholarly article or book; you will need to download it and analyze it yourself in a computer program such as STATA or SPSS.

Your SOC 301 course will certainly help to prepare you to do this; you can also turn to the DSS librarians for help. They have drop in hours which are listed on <http://dss.princeton.edu/usingdata/lab.html>. See also the Appendix to this guide for a list of important contacts for help finding data in different subject areas such as demography, economics and finance, politics, and public policy.

Other Sources of Quantitative Data

Another terrific source of data at Princeton can be found just two floors upstairs in Wallace Hall, housed in the Office of Population Research (OPR). Princeton's faculty members regularly conduct cutting-edge research on issues including migration and development, higher education opportunities, fertility, welfare and poverty, and cultural market construction. You can view a list of the data which is publicly available through OPR by visiting their website at <http://opr.princeton.edu/archive/>; you can also check out data pertaining to Latin America and immigration by visiting the Center for Migration and Development's data collections at <http://cmd.princeton.edu/data.shtml>.

On one hand, the fact that data is publicly available means that the lead investigators have analyzed many aspects of the dataset and probably published numerous articles and books based on this analysis. However, this doesn't mean that the data can't be used to make other scholarly contributions! Spending some time reading through the publications based on these data will give you an idea of how the data might be used to answer additional questions not addressed by these scholars. You should also request to meet with some of the lead investigators to discuss with them some possible areas of research suitable for your JP.

As a Princeton student you may also be able to conduct research for your JP on data that is not yet publicly available – this would mean consulting a faculty member about projects currently underway and receiving permission to explore certain questions using data from their projects. To get a better idea of what Princeton faculty are currently up to, visit <http://opr.princeton.edu/research/>.

If you see a project described on this website that sounds like it might fit your JP interests, by all means email the faculty member(s) associated with it and ask if you could meet with them to discuss their project and the possibility of working on a small part of the data for your JP. Depending on limitations of time and the structure of the particular projects, this may not always be possible – but it is completely appropriate that you ask to discuss the opportunity! The worst that can happen is that the professor will politely decline due to time constraints or the limitations imposed on the project by its funders or other collaborators. The best that could happen is that your JP could analyze data not currently available to the wider scholarly community! But you won't know unless you ask.

Links to Other Data Consortia and Data Collections

What follows here are a list of places that house numerous data collections, as well as the links to a few popular data sets. Keep in mind that you should also contact DSS or a faculty member who may share an interest in your research topic and ask for more advice on locating an appropriate data set.

ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium For Political and Social Research)

<http://www.icpsr.com/>

Tons of data set are available for you for free. Type a particular topic in the “search” field. You will find a listing of available data set (usually surveys) related to the topic. To download the data you must sign up (free in charge). To find out the content of the data set, read the summary and codebooks.

ASA (American Sociological Association)

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Research+and+Stats&name=Available+Data+Sources>

ASA is the national association for sociologists in the U.S. This web address will lead you to a list of most popular data sets used by professional sociologists.

Digital Map and Geospatial Information Center at Princeton

<http://www.princeton.edu/~geolib/gis/index.html>

This center is located in the Lewis Library (Ivy Lane and Washington Road). If you are interested in analyzing the spatial relations of social processes, you should check this center out. Staff can show you available data, and they can teach you how to use ArcGIS, a program to analyze spatial data and make maps.

National Center for Education Statistics

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/IAED/studies.html>

Tons of data on education, schools, students. Need to sign up, but data are free.

The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA)

<http://www.thearda.com/>

Tons of data on religion. Free download, some with no need to sign up. The National Congregations Study (a Panel Dataset) is part of this archive.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

<http://www.bls.gov/data/>

Data on employment, unemployment, productivity, inflation, time use, etc.

US Department of Agriculture

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/>

Data about food, agricultural production, rural communities, and the environment.

Department of Energy

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/>

Energy statistics, data on the environment

Bureau of Justice Statistics

<http://www.ojp.gov/bjs/dtdata.htm>

Data on crime, arrests, correction, etc.

Popular Data Sets**GSS (General Social Survey)**

<http://www.norc.org/GSS+Website/>

GSS has been conducting (almost) annual survey of several thousand American adults since 1972. The data set is very good for research of attitudes toward public issues and all kinds of social activities. Because the survey asks more or less consistent questions, you can also compare patterns over time. Each year a module is also devoted to a specific topic (environment, popular culture, religion, national identity, social inequality, etc.). Download the data is free, but DSS has the data too.

ANES (American National Election Studies)

<http://www.electionstudies.org/>

One of the most popular data set for political scientists, ANES produces data on voting, public opinion, and political participation.

ADDHEALTH (The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health)

<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth>

AddHealth data concern issues of health, risk behaviors, attitudes, sexuality, families and schools of more than 10,000 adolescents. The dataset consists of several waves, following the same individual over time—thus a good opportunity to see changes in individual lives.

PSID (Panel Study of Income Dynamics)

<http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/>

PSID follows 9,000 families over 30 years. It concerns mostly on the issues of income, consumption, economic inequality, and health. Many social scientists also use PSID to study marriage, family formation, and other social behaviors over time.

WLS (The Wisconsin Longitudinal Study)

<http://www.disc.wisc.edu/>

WLS is a 43 year-old study of the social and economic life course among 10,000 men and women who graduated from Wisconsin high schools in 1957, and who have been followed up at ages 25, 36, and 53-54. Issues concerned include youthful and adult aspirations, schooling, military service, family formation, labor market experience, and social participation.

US Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov/>

Census data are usually about the entire U.S. For selected topics, the Census Bureau conduct regular survey (based on a sample of the entire population). In this census website one can usually download summarize tables on the distribution of age, race, sex, residence, marriage, occupation. These tables can be divided by states. All in all, these tables are already prepared for you, so you just to print them out. Since you don't have much control over summarized tables, they can be limiting. If you want to do independent analysis on the original census data, you need to access to the "microdata"—which are the data before they aggregate into summarized tables. You can use Data Ferret to retrieve data:

http://www.thedataweb.org/what_ferrett.html

Current Population Survey (CPS)

<http://www.census.gov/cps/>

CPS is similar to the census, but it is a monthly survey on a sample of 50,000 household rather than the entire population of the U.S. It has a "table creator" so that you can create your own table by age, sex, race, occupation, education, etc.: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstc/cps_table_creator.html

Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE)

<http://www.bls.gov/cex/>

Conducted annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, this is a good data set for anyone interested in how people spend their money. Respondents not only answer questionnaires but also keep a diary on the spending behavior.

Chapter 5: Methods

As you will learn in the course of Soc 300, sociologists use a variety of methods in their research. In fact, Soc 300 is first and foremost a methods course – the JP is merely the final product that grows out of your introduction to sociological methods in this course, and your use of them in independent research. As a student, all of these methods are available to you as you conduct the original research required by your JP. The methods you use in your JP will depend on three things: the research question you select, your own individual preferences, and the constraints of time and resources.

First, the research question you select will largely determine the methods you will use in your JP – or at the very least, make some methods less appropriate and others more so. As discussed in the previous chapter, the main methodological distinction in the social sciences comes between *quantitative* and *qualitative* methods. If you use quantitative analysis you will almost certainly be using the methods of statistics to analyze a publicly-available dataset for your JP. Conversely, qualitative data analysis includes methods such as content analysis, interviews, and ethnographic research. Sociologists also use experimental methods, which may be either qualitative or quantitative in terms of the data collected and subsequently analyzed.

Since learning about and understanding sociological methods is at the heart of SOC 300, a full discussion of methods in this handbook would be redundant. However, sociologists rarely talk much about the process of *writing* about methods – and this step is critical in the process of writing about your research. This chapter is designed to help you improve the ways in which you write about your methods in your JP proposal.

Writing about Methods

To some extent, how sociologists write about their methods is common across all forms of methodological inquiry. Regardless of their means of analysis, sociologists must do the following things:

1. Describe your sample of data, and explain how it was constructed
2. Define variables, means of measurement, and any hypotheses you have
3. Describe the methods by which you will analyze this data

How you do these three things will depend somewhat on your methodological approach. Below we will look at examples of each task from the published literature.

1. Describing a sample

At a minimum, you must tell your reader exactly what data you are analyzing in your JP, and how you arrived at that data. If you are using a quantitative data set, you must tell us what the survey is, when it was conducted, and how many respondents it includes. If you are engaging in qualitative research, you must tell us how you gathered your data – if you interviewed a group of individuals, you must tell us how you found them (Did you ask for referrals from friends? Approach strangers on the street?) If you conducted ethnographic fieldwork for your pilot study you will need to describe your research setting to the reader. Accordingly, your readers will want (and deserve) to know how

your sampling procedures may affect your findings – if you interviewed Princeton students about their tastes in music, for example, you will need to explain in your proposal why Princeton students are worthy of investigation, and how they may be different (or perhaps atypical) as compared to other college students.

Some Examples

Here are some examples of how sociologists describe their sample in the published literature:

Example 1: A Qualitative Sample

From Ali M. Ahmed. (2009) “Are Religious People More Prosocial? A Quasi-Experimental Study with *Madrrasah* Pupils in a Rural Community in India” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48: 368-374:

A total of 102 men participated in the experiment, which was conducted in March 2006 in a small town called Nowganwan in Uttar Pradesh in India. Forty-two were students in religion and theology, imams-in-training, recruited from two madrasah's (religious Muslim schools) and 60 were students in the social sciences recruited from the local men's college. (For the sake of simplicity I will from now on refer to the imam students as religious students and to the other students as nonreligious students.) The average age of both the religious and nonreligious students was 17 years. The students were informed about the study in regular classes. Those who wished to participate in the study signed up on a list that was circulated in the class (p. 369).

Here the author tells us several useful things: that the study compares two groups of students (religious and non-religious), the number included in each group, and where and how the subjects were recruited. The author also tells us that the groups are comparable in some important ways: they are of roughly the same age, and were identified through identical sampling methods (the study was publicized in educational settings, encouraging voluntary participation.)

Example 2: A Quantitative Sample

From Richard J. Petts (2009). “Family and Religious characteristics’ influence on Delinquency Trajectories from Adolescence to Young Adulthood.” *American Sociological Review* 74: 465-483:

The data for this study are taken from the child and Young Adult Sample of the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79). Original respondents of the NLSY79 were between the ages of 14 and 21 years old in 1979, and Black and Hispanic respondents were oversampled. For the child and young adult sample, information was collected from each child of the female survey respondents age 10 years and older biennially since 1988. In addition, a young adult survey was administered to children age 15 year and older biennially since 1994. To construct the sample for this study, I first pool data from 1988 through 2004 according to the youths’ age.

I then restrict the sample to youths interviewed at least once in early adolescence (ages 10 to 14), resulting in a sample size of 6,693 (p. 470).

This second example is very detailed, but tells us some important things about the author's sample. First, the author explains that this is a smaller subset of a large, well-known data set (the NLSY79) but that the author is analyzing only the responses of the *children* of female respondents, and only those children who were interviewed at least one time when between the ages of 10 and 14 at the time of the survey.

Regardless of whether you are writing about a sample of individuals that you have collected (as in the first example) or a large, publically available dataset (as in the second), you must describe your sample by telling your readers how many people are included in your sample (or the number of documents or other sources of evidence in content analysis), how they were selected, and when the data were collected. In qualitative analyses, you generally need to say a bit more about how people were recruited for the study. When appropriate, you should do some theorizing about how your methods of recruitment might influence your conclusions – in effect, you must address the issue of how *generalizable* your findings are.

2. Define Variables, Means of Measurement, and Hypotheses

If you are writing about quantitative data that you analyze statistically, the task of defining your variables is a bit more straightforward, as you must make these decisions clearly at the beginning of your analysis. Consider the following examples.

Example 1: A Quantitative Analysis

From David M. Harding, (2009). "Violence, Older Peers, and the Socialization of Adolescent Boys in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods." *American Sociological Review* 74: 445-464.

For older peers to play a role in the differential socialization of adolescents in poor neighborhoods, such adolescents must experience greater interaction with them. I investigate whether this is the case using nationally representative data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS). In the first follow-up, conducted two years after 8th grade respondents were sampled, adolescent were asked about the ages of the "people with whom you spend most of your time." I use responses to this question in conjunction with the respondent's age to construct an indicator for whether the respondent spends most of his time with individuals who are older than him but under age 26.

Here, Harding explains how he is constructing a key variable in his analysis: whether or not respondents report that they spend most of their time with older peers. He explains that he uses respondents' answer to this question (the age of their main companions) along with the respondent's age to determine whether or not the respondent spend a considerable amount of time with older individuals.

In qualitative research, defining variables can be a bit more complex, but is no less important. The key to describing measurement in qualitative research is to make clear to the reader the kinds of decisions you likely had to make early on in your analysis about what to code in your data, and about how to code it. Consider the following example, from a qualitative analysis of the Turkish sermons:

Example 2: Content Analysis

From James Gibbon (2008). "God is great, God is good: Teaching god concepts in Turkish Islamic sermons". *Poetics* 36: 389-403

Sermons were coded using TAMS Analyzer, a Macintosh application similar to ATLAS.ti. Codes were applied at the sentence level to all text that appeared in the body of the sermons, including scripture. [...] Attribute codes were assigned when a sentence contained a declarative statement about God or implied an attribute by describing an action performed by God (e.g., the sentence "God created the world" was coded CREATOR). Actions were coded as attributes only in cases where the action exceeded normal human capability or corresponded to a trait mentioned elsewhere in a declarative sentence. This rule prevented me from having to decide arbitrarily whether prosaic sentences like "God stated. . ." or "God considers. . ." revealed character traits or not (p. 394).

Here, the writer explains several things: the level of analysis at which he applied the codes (the sentence level), and how he made key decisions, such as a prayer's designation of certain character traits to God – likewise, he how he dealt with ambiguous cases.

Regardless of your methodological approach, if you have any specific hypotheses you should state them somewhere in this discussion. Note that a hypothesis does not always need to be a formal statement, but can also take the form of a statement of what you expect to find, given what you know from your literature review and your general expectations about your data.

3. Describe Your Methods of Analysis

This is an instance in which quantitative analysis is a bit more straightforward: if you are analyzing the relationship between religious affiliation and years of education, for example, you will simply tell your reader that you analyze this relationship with a certain form of statistical modeling, such as Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression.

Explaining your methods of analysis in qualitative work can be a bit more complicated, largely because these analyses often proceed more inductively, seeking to draw larger conclusions based on a smaller subset of data. In these instances, what is most important is that you explain to your reader how you proceed with your investigation, and the how this is an appropriate strategy given your research question and its larger significance.

Ann Swidler does this very well in the Methodological Appendix of her influential book *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (University of Chicago Press, 2001):

*I was less interested in **what** people thought than in what resources they had available to **think with**, and how they mobilized those resources. Thus the interview was open-ended, both in the sense that the questions were unstructured and that I probed what people told me, following up on what they said, asking about its meaning, and trying to determine its ramifications for other things they thought. Thus, while I always covered the basic questions in the interview, often more than once, I also pursued topics of interest to the interviewee, trying to find out how she or he really mobilized her ideas to address different kinds of issues.*

I was especially interested in the ways cultural traditions penetrate and shape experience. Thus I asked people to describe their experience and considered how they organized that experience and what kinds of cultural meanings guided it. To understand more deeply how people used ideas, I often responded to statements of general principles (“Honesty is the most important thing in a marriage”) by asking for examples, to clarify what grounded the principle’s meaning. When people talked in specifics, I often asked for a generalization, to see how they might extend the construction they made of the concrete case (p. 221)

Swidler goes on to include the interview guide used in her data collection, but some of the most important aspects of her method are summarized here: since she is interested in how people may use culture strategically – and even in contradictory ways – her methods of analysis involve asking respondents to think deeply about their ideas, probing them to come to think about the relationship between their specific statements and larger, general principles. She makes clear that what she’s interested in is not necessarily what people say but the range of resources that they draw upon to say it.

A Final Point

While the manner in which you write about your methods will vary somewhat according to your methods, your topic, and your specific method of analysis, it’s a good idea to err on the side of reporting too much information about your research than reporting too little. You can also include key methodological information – such as your interview guide, or descriptive statistics of respondents – in the appendix to your research proposal if you fear that this information will eat up too much of the body of your research proposal (see the suggested outline for your research paper in the next chapter).

Chapter 6: Findings

Your JP will ultimately analyze evidence and interpret the results, or findings, in order to answer the research question you posed at the beginning of your project. Your Soc 300 research proposal may also require you to discuss the preliminary results from a pilot study. Whether analyzing preliminary findings or the actual data for your JP, this chapter discusses key aspects of writing a sociological research paper, particularly citing and interpreting evidence.

A Typical Research Paper

A typical research paper in sociology will generally take the following form, with headings that correspond each of the following items:

I. Introduction

Introduce your topic, your research question, and say something about its importance

II. Literature Review

Cite and discuss the larger scholarly literature that informs your research question, placing that research question in a larger context of academic research.

III. Methods and Data

Describe your sample, research setting, construction of variables, key methodological decisions, etc. Also explain how you intend to analyze this data (in other words, the methods you plan to be using in your JP)

IV. Preliminary Results

Cite evidence from your pilot study, and interpret in a preliminary way (in other words, what larger conclusions does this suggest, or how do these findings affect the research you will plan to do for your JP)

V. Discussion

Sum up for the reader what some of the most important findings are from this study, key trends you observe, or other broad points. You can also discuss here some of the limitations of your study, as well as some of the future goals for research that you may pursue in your JP.

VI. Conclusion

Reiterate the main points of your study, how they address your research question, and what other related questions sociologists might want to study.

VII. Bibliography or Works Cited

Either list all of the works you cite in the proposal (for a Works Cited page) or the works you cite plus other scholarly sources that inform your topic (for a Bibliography)

VIII. Appendix (Optional)

Include here a statement of survey questions, interview guide, etc.

In writing up your research results and discussion, the logistics of how you do so will depend somewhat on whether you are using qualitative or quantitative methods. But regardless of your methodological approach, your discussion of your findings will do the following things: cite evidence, discuss the interpretation of that evidence, and make some form of a larger claim based on that interpretation of evidence.

Citing and Interpreting Evidence

Regardless of discipline, a research paper is built around the original analysis of a set of data. As the researcher, you will have access to the entire body of that data, but you will not be able to report it in its entirety to your reader. Nor would your reader want you to! Your job as the researcher is to spend time analyzing the evidence you have collected, in whatever method you have chosen, to build a larger claim that can be evaluated by your readers. In order for the reader to evaluate that claim, however, you will need to cite evidence to support it so that your readers can decide for themselves if your argument is convincing.

The chart below shows some of the different forms of evidence that sociologists use, depending on method:

Method	Evidence	Format of Presentation
Statistical Analysis	Numerical: Frequencies, Percentages regression coefficients	Tables; numbers also discussed in text
Interviews	Quotes from respondents Frequencies (depending on size of sample)	Quoted in text; may also use tables, esp. for descriptive statistics
Ethnographic Observation	Field notes, descriptions of events	Described in text
Content Analysis	Frequencies (numerical), but also quotes from documents	Tables; numbers and quotes also discussed in text

Regardless of your method, you will need to write up your results section with the goal of using the evidence you have assembled to help answer the research question you have posed at the beginning of your proposal. If you are writing about interviews or ethnographic/participant observation, then you will need to cite actual quotes from your interviews or field notes as evidence in your paper. If you are conducting statistical analysis of a survey, or using content analysis that also produces numerical data about the frequency of certain variables or patterns, then you will want to first create tables that report this numerical information, and then discuss the numbers in those tables as the evidence in the body of your paper.

Regardless of the kind of evidence that you cite, you will need to be sure to *interpret* that evidence for

the reader. Interpreting the evidence means, at a minimum, telling the reader what larger significance we should take away from the citation. Let's take a look at a couple of examples.

From Baker, Wayne. (2005). *America's Crisis of Values*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 96:

In 1981, 47% of Americans said, "Most people can be trusted." This increased slightly to 50 percent in 1990 and fell to only 36 percent in 1995 and 2000. This generally downward trend mirrors the findings of other opinion polls, such as the National Election Studies and General Social Survey. In general, levels of interpersonal trust do not differ by moral visions, as shown in figure 3.8.

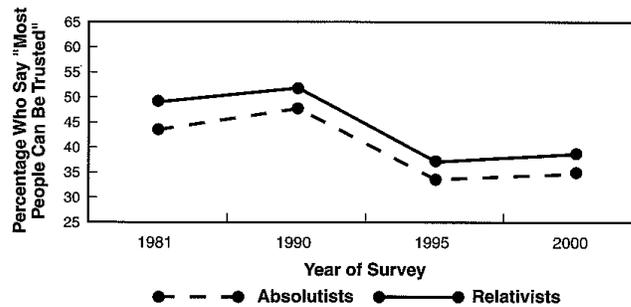


Figure 3.8. Percentage of Americans who say "most people can be trusted," by moral visions, by year.

Source: World Values Surveys 1981, 1990, 1995, and 2000.

Note several important things here about the manner in which Baker discusses and interprets the above figure in the text: he calls the reader's attention to the most important patterns in this chart, and uses numbers to do so (translating the dots on the graph into numerical frequencies – e.g. "50 percent" and "36 percent"). He also references the figure in the text by name. The figure also has a number of good characteristics – The vertical axis displays the question wording that is the outcome variable here, and the horizontal axis is clearly labeled. The Figure itself also has a label, and lists the source of the data used.

When citing qualitative evidence in the body of your text, you have a number of choices. You can quote extended portions of field notes or interviews (including your own questions and the respondents' answers), and you can also bring respondents' quotes into your paragraphs if the interviewee's statements make a particular quote in a compelling way. What's essential is that your discussion of the results includes your own voice in linking together the evidence to make a broader claim! At this point in your research you may not know what that finding is, but you can make some headway by thinking about the different themes or patterns that emerged in the course of your research, and writing about how those patterns help to answer your research question.

For instance, considering the following paper analyzing retail workers and their relational attitudes on the job:

From Massengill, Rebekah Peeples. (2009). "'The Money is Just Immaterial': Relationality on the Retail Shop Floor." *Research in the Sociology of Work* 18:185-206:

Lauren invoked a relational lens to describe a conflict with her former boss at a large department store. After describing a quibble with her manager over scheduling, Lauren's narrative quickly moved from a description of the problem (Lauren didn't know when she was supposed to come to work) to an evaluation of her supervisor: "If she was wrong, she could never see it or admit it. She was convinced she gave me a schedule – it turned out that another lady had had the schedule and didn't give it to me, so I knew that I was in the right and she was just very difficult to work for. No one had liked her there." Lauren shortly added:

L: [She was] probably the most difficult person I've ever worked for.

R: You mentioned this story about not giving you the schedule – what made her so difficult?

L: Her attitude, her expectations... I guess she just assumed... like I said, she was right regardless of if you had proof that she wasn't. Just her whole attitude.. just very abrasive, just expecting you to make mistakes. Just... just a very high strung, abrasive, negative person.

Even though the alleged grievance concerned information and organization – Lauren did not receive a prompt schedule of her work hours – the terms in which she criticized her colleague were relational: she was deficient in "her whole attitude" in being an "abrasive" and "negative person." Lauren further underscored this relational criteria when she emphasized her negative appraisal of the manager by adding that "No one had liked her there."

Note that this qualitative analysis spends a good bit more time citing the evidence – an extended quote from the interview interspersed with several other quotations in the body of the paper – and then the analysis leads to the larger claim that the worker's main conflict with the manager was not about the schedule, but about the manager's poor relational skills. The point of this piece of evidence is to show that even when the employee's complaint was about something technical – receiving the work schedule late – the respondent moved very quickly to criticize the supervisor's lack of relational ethic.

Making Larger Claims

Ultimately, your JP will interpret a series of pieces of evidence to build to a larger claim that will answer the research question you posed at the beginning. You may not know what this larger claim is until very late in the writing process – so you should certainly keep writing drafts until you arrive at your larger point! But you can also help this process along through some techniques proposed by Booth and colleagues in *The Craft of Research*.

Booth et al suggest that student writers use a process called “storyboarding” to help identify larger claims in independent research. The way this process works is to use several pieces of paper to write down the claims you wish to make, and the evidence you have to support them. Putting each claim on a separate piece of paper means that it’s easy to move them around organizationally, and to look at them all at once for a visual representation of what your argument is becoming. A storyboard on three pages might look like this:

Claim 1:	Claim 2:	Claim 3:
Evidence:	Evidence:	Evidence:

The benefit of this strategy is that you can make an infinite list of claims, see how much evidence you have for each one, and then think strategically about how you can synthesize those claims into a larger argument in your JP. You can also look to see if there are some claims that have more evidence than others – perhaps you have enough evidence to support one central claim in your paper. Or maybe some claims that you thought would be really important don’t have enough evidence, and something else is turning out to be a centerpiece of your argument.

The other strength of this strategy is that it forces you to think about your claims in conjunction with the evidence you have to support them. Regardless of the source of that evidence – e.g. numbers, quotes, field notes, etc. – you must have evidence to support your claims! If you have a hunch that a certain claim is valid, but have no evidence, you can investigate this in future research when you continue your JP work in the spring. And you can certainly mention this in the text – and be thinking all the while about the kind of data you will need to find in order to support that claim.

Chapter 7: Bibliography

Last but certainly not least, all academic writing must include a Bibliography or Works Cited page. What's the difference? A Bibliography would include both the works you cite in your research proposal, as well as other relevant works that you consulted (or plan to consult) in your research but may not have cited directly in your proposal. A Works Cited page is restricted to scholarly work that you cite in your paper.

AJS Format

Sociologists use varied citation formats in their writing depending on the particular style of citation requested by the academic journal in which their work is published. For the purposes of this course, however, you will use the format required by the *American Journal of Sociology* (AJS). What follows are some examples of how you would cite different kinds of scholarly sources.

Note that all of the following examples contain the same key information: all authors, the title of the work, where it was published, and for academic journals, the journal volume number (note that in AJS format you need not list the journal issue).

An article with one author:

Gibbon, James. 2008. "God is great, God is good: Teaching god concepts in Turkish Islamic sermons." *Poetics* 36: 389-400.

An article with multiple authors:

Small, Mario Luis, Erin M. Jacobs, and Rebekah Peeples Massengill. 2008. "Why Organizational Ties Matter for Neighborhood Effects: A Study of Resource Access through Childcare Centers." *Social Forces* 87: 387-414.

[Note: In AJS format, the convention is to cite the first author as Last Name, First Name, followed by the subsequent authors as First Name Last Name, as in the above example. Follow this format for other coauthored books, edited books and chapters, and conference presentations, etc.]

A book:

Cohen, Lizabeth. 2003. *A Consumer's Republic: The politics of mass consumption in postwar America*. New York: Vintage Books.

A book section or chapter from an edited volume:

Moreton, Bethany E. 2006. "It came from Bentonville: the Agrarian origins of Wal-Mart culture." Pp. 57-82 in *Wal-Mart : the face of twenty-first century capitalism*, edited by Nelson Lichtenstein. New York: New Press.

An unpublished or “working paper”:

Bertrand, Marianne, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2002. “Are Emily and Brendan More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination.” Working paper, University of Chicago.

A newspaper article:

Slevin, Peter. 2000. “Life after Prison: Lack of Services Has High Price.” *Washington Post*, April 24.

A Government report:

Hakken, Jon. 1979. *Discrimination against Chicanos in the Dallas Rental Housing Market: An Experimental Extension of the Housing Market Practices Survey*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A web or electronic document:

Creamer, Robert. 2009. “If Congress Fails to Pass the Obama Health Care Plan.” *The Huffington Post*, July 15. Retrieved on July 15, 2009 from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-creamer/history-shows-that-democr_b_233056.html.

[Note: Electronic or internet documents can be confusing, particularly because the conventions for citing them are still evolving. However, it is important that your citation include the same components used in a standard text citation: the source’s author, date, title, and where it was published (or posted – as in the hosting organization on the web). In addition, your citations for electronic documents should also include the date you accessed it, and the web link.

If the page does not have any discernible date, you should use the abbreviation “n.d.” (for “no date”) in the parentheses to indicate this. In any case however, you must include the date accessed in order to account for the fact that web postings change, are removed, altered, or deleted.]

A web or electronic document with a corporate or organizational author:

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2002. “Local Area Unemployment Statistics.” Accessed March 1, 2003. <http://www.bls.gov/lan/home.htm>

Frequently Asked Questions

Of course, even with this guide (and other resources on citing scholarly literature) you will have questions about situations in which the appropriate action is not clear-cut, such as the following:

How do I cite a web page in the text? Should I do so as a parenthetical citation in the text, or as a footnote?

AJS citation format gives authors the option of citing web pages as a footnote in the body of the text – in fact, the journal states that it “prefers” authors to do this because “this allows authors to

explain their use of the source, including date accessed.” Whatever your decision, the important thing to remember is to cite these electronic sources just as carefully as you do the books and articles you find on the shelves of the Firestone library.

Do I need to cite the electronic resource I used to find a journal article – for example, a database like ProQuest or JSTOR?

You’ve probably heard conflicting advice on this question – you’ve been told that you should cite the electronic database you used to find a journal, but probably notice that scholars’ published work rarely does so in a Works Cited page. Here’s the bottom line: if you accessed the article via ProQuest and viewed it as a pdf file (in other words, the same image of the page that would have appeared in a hard copy of the journal) then you do not need to reference ProQuest or give an internet link in your citation. However, if you accessed the journal article as an html file (in other words, no pagination, as a continuous stream of text) then you should cite the database and give an access date plus the web link in your citation.

The reason for this is that small errors can occur in preparing document text for publication in html, thus it is important to be accurate and cite the article in the format in which you read it. This also means that if you cite directly from an article in html format (in the form of a direct quotation), you should give the paragraph number in the parenthetical citation instead of a page number. For example: (Smith 2009, para 23).

I found a really useful article by reading another scholar’s work. Do I need to cite both sources?

You should cite both sources in your Bibliography or Works Cited page. In your actual text, you can handle this by citing the source that most clearly informs your own research, while also noting the place in the other source in which you found it. For example: (Slevin 2000; see also Pager 2003: 498).

I read an article that quotes directly from another source, and I’d like to use the same quote in my paper. Do I really need to look up the quoted source, or can I just cite the article in which I found it?

So let’s say you found Mario Small’s quotation of William Whyte (1943) on p. 5-6 of *Villa Victoria* really informative, and you’d like to quote that in your research proposal (e.g. “It is customary for the sociologist to study the slum district in terms of ‘social disorganization’ . . .”). Since you didn’t find or read Whyte independently, you will need to cite both sources in your Works Cited page – and the intellectually honest thing to do is to actually go to the library and look up the Whyte quote yourself (after all, you will want to be sure that you cite the original source accurately as well).

In the text, you should note both sources in the parenthetical citation. For example: (Whyte 1943: viii, as quoted in Small 2004: 5-6). Then list both sources in your Works Cited page.

For More Information

Of course, you may encounter many other kinds of documents in the course of your research and have questions about how to cite them in AJS format. You may also consult the “Instructions for Authors” page at the AJS website: <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/page/ajs/instruct.html>, and also peruse published articles in the journal to see how other researchers have handled ambiguous situations.

Appendix: Other Helpful Information

The Institutional Review Panel (IRP)

All universities have an internal body that is responsible for making sure that research on human subjects is ethical and takes adequate care to protect the confidentiality of the subjects involved in the research. This means that you will need to get approval from Princeton's Institutional Review Panel (<http://www.princeton.edu/orpa/irb.htm>) in order to conduct research that involves interviewing human subjects in the form of personal interviews or survey responses administered by you.

A flow chart designed to help you figure out if you need to file an application with the IRP can be found here: <http://www.princeton.edu/~orpa1/memos/IRPflowchart.pdf>. However, a quick summary of the IRB policy is reprinted here for your convenience:

*Proposed research including journalistic interviews, oral histories, biographical profiles, or other forms of nonfiction narratives, normally does not fall within the jurisdiction of the IRP. In these cases, the individuals being interviewed understand that they are being quoted, and have every expectation that their views will be made known. The interviewees are advised of their right to remain anonymous, to have their remarks printed without attribution, or kept 'off the record'. If the interviewee is directly quoted, they are allowed to read or hear the quotations attributed to them. The interviewee will also be advised of any publication plans for the project. Most projects from Humanities meet the above criteria; therefore they **do not** qualify for the IRP review, and do not need to submit their project to the IRP for approval.*

Projects that can be defined as a systematic investigation which includes research development, testing and evaluation, designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge, including; surveys, questionnaire studies, or examinations of existing data, do fall within the jurisdiction of the IRP.

To put this into plain English, let's consider a hypothetical example. Suppose you are interested in the ways in which high school teachers interact with at-risk students. You might want to interview teachers or school principals on this topic, and could do so in two ways:

The first way would involve interviewing teachers as informants, which would mean essentially approaching them in the same way that journalists would their subjects: you want to speak with them in order to get information about a particular problem, and the subjects understand from the start that you are using them for this purpose and that you will quote them in your research. You will plan to get back in touch with them before you make your findings public in order to confirm that you have quoted them correctly, and advise them that they don't have to be quoted by name if they do not wish to. Although the person is being interviewed, the subject is an aspect of the educational process – at risk students and their experience in the school system. This form of research **does not need** IRP approval.

But you might also pursue this research question and your interviews in a slightly different way. You might really be interested in *teachers'* experience of this interaction, and wish to talk with educators about their own experiences with at-risk students and how they have personally handled situations with this population, as well as their own feelings about those interactions. In this case, your research

subject is slightly different – the activities and experiences of the individuals themselves. If you are interviewing teachers in this way (the subject being their own person and personal experience), with the goal of making inferences about a larger population of research subjects (the larger population of teachers of at-risk students), then this research **must be approved** by the IRP and you will need to take steps to preserve their confidentiality and secure their consent prior to the research.

Why the difference? In the first example you are using human subjects to get background information about a specific topic, in the second example case you are gathering information about these human subjects themselves. In that case, the IRP must approve your research.

Students often ask questions about whether or not they need to file an application with the IRP in order to do ethnographic research, or participant/non-participant observation in a public setting. The answer is generally yes – you do need to file an application if you are going to be observing human behavior and making inferences based on those observations. You will not need to gain participant consent in this setting – if you don't actually talk with people and ask them questions, they won't know that they are actually the subjects of research. However, this makes the IRP process even more important: you must be prepared to describe the goals and benefits of your research, and the steps you will take to ensure the privacy of your research subjects in this setting. And if you plan to do a combination of field observations and interviews, then you will definitely need to file an IRP application.

Which IRP Form to File: Questionnaire A or Questionnaire B?

As if the IRP process were not already significantly confusing, even when you realize that you must file for approval with the IRP you may not be sure whether or not you need to file Questionnaire A (the longer, standard form) or Questionnaire B (a shorter form for certain categories of research deemed “exempt”.) You can read the full list of exempt forms of research here:

<http://www.princeton.edu/~orpa1/memos/exemptcriteria.pdf>. However, in general, these exemptions cover certain kinds of research in educational settings, and research with human subjects (including interviews and surveys) that will not cover “sensitive” material and do not present any risk of disclosing respondents’ confidentiality. For example, if you plan to survey people randomly, without recording their names, this sort of research is likely exempt for IRP purposes (meaning that you can submit that short Questionnaire B form). If you are going to interview respondents and keep a record of their real names, or collect information about them that might potentially render them identifiable and thus jeopardize their confidentiality, then you will need to complete the longer form, Questionnaire A. If you aren't sure which form you should file, you should talk with your professor and preceptors for advice – and when in doubt, it is probably safer to file Questionnaire A. If you file Questionnaire B and the committee decides your research is not exempt, you will lose time and have to submit a new form and wait for the committee's next convening.

The IRP meets once a month; consult their website (<http://www.princeton.edu/orpa/irb.htm>) for an updated schedule of meetings. You will need to stay on top of these dates in order to submit your application soon enough to give you adequate time to collect your data and analyze it for your JP in the

spring semester. Your IRP application will also require the signature of an advisor, and require you to say a good bit about your research project and prepare relevant documentation for your research, such as a proposed interview questionnaire and consent form for your respondents. In other words: don't wait until the last minute! You should plan to give your advisor all of these materials when you ask for his or her signature on the application – allowing two weeks before the IRP's submittal deadline for your advisor to review your application is a good idea.

Finally, the good news: you do NOT need to file an application with the IRP in order to gather data for the pilot research project required for your SOC 300 research proposal. The data you gather for this project will NOT be used in your JP and is instead designed to help you refine your research questions and research project design. However, the findings from your pilot project should refine your questionnaire or other interview/survey instrument, and ultimately inform your application with the IRP in that way.

On final point: regardless of any final IRP application you **do** need to complete the IRP training certification online, by visiting <http://phrpnihtraining.com/users/login/php>. Check your syllabus for when this is due in class; typically you will need to submit your certificate to your preceptor by the week after fall break.

Helpful University Resources and Departments

Princeton University contains a myriad of resources designed to help you with your independent research. The rest of this Appendix details some of the departments, people, and additional reading you might find helpful as you work on your JP – both during the fall semester in SOC 300, and beyond.

The Writing Center

www.princeton.edu/writing/appt

Located in Whitman College, The Writing Center offers student writers free one-on-one conferences with experienced fellow writers trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. The Writing Center is one of Princeton's most popular academic resources, holding over 3,000 appointments each year. Juniors and seniors working on independent research may also arrange extended appointments with a Writing Center Fellow in sociology or neighboring discipline. To get started, visit the Writing Center's website at www.princeton.edu/writing/appt. Writing Center Fellows also hold drop-in hours Sunday through Thursday evenings during the semester. Enter through South Baker Hall.

Academic Support at Princeton (ASAP)

www.princeton.edu/asap

Academic Support at Princeton (ASAP) is an online portal to the many academic support services available to Princeton undergraduates. Through ASAP, you can access subject tutoring, study halls, writing conferences, workshops on academic skills, library assistance, and more.

Data and Statistical Services (DSS)

<http://dss.princeton.edu>

DSS maintains a sizable repository of data files available to you for analysis, with the added bonus of consultants who are available to meet with you during the data lab's drop in hours to give you specific advice about data, analysis, and statistical modeling appropriate for your research question. You may also email DSS for assistance at data@princeton.edu. Find out about drop in hours at the data lab (located in the Social Science Reference Center on the A floor of Firestone) by visiting <http://dss.princeton.edu/usingdata/lab.html>. Keep in mind that the lab can get very busy between February and April as juniors and seniors hunker down on their JPs and Senior Theses, so making contact early on is recommended!

The JP Handbook

http://web.princeton.edu/sites/writing/Writing_Center/Handouts/JP%20Handbook.pdf

Written for Princeton students in all disciplines, this useful book covers many of the issues you will confront in writing your JP, including managing your time, developing an argument, using outlines, and checklists for use throughout the semester. You will have probably received a hard copy of this booklet early in your junior year, but you can also pick up a copy in the Writing Center or access it via pdf at the above link.

Useful People and Contacts

It goes without saying that some of the most important people for your JP research include the professor leading SOC 300, its preceptors, and the department advisor who is assigned to mentor your research. However, many other people throughout the university community are here to help as well.

In particular, the library employs reference librarians in particular subject areas who are particularly knowledgeable about the larger literatures in their subject area, and in many cases (such as Economics and Finance) have extended familiarity with data collections that might be useful to you in your JP analysis. To connect with any of these specialists, simply email them *from your Princeton email account!* Your Sociology JP may take you into literatures that overlap with a neighboring discipline – such as African-American Studies, Psychology, or Religion. The librarians in those subject areas will be a great resource for your research. Use them!

ANTHROPOLOGY

Belcher, Emily M.

belcher@princeton.edu

609-258-2964
Firestone B-12-P

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

Belcher, Emily M.
belcher@princeton.edu
609-258-2964
Firestone B-12-P

DATA AND STATISTICAL SERVICES

Bordelon, Bobray J.
bordelon@princeton.edu
609-258-3211
Firestone A-8-J-1

Furuichi, Alexis
furuichi@princeton.edu
609-258-6053
A-13-J

Torres-Reyna, Oscar
otorres@princeton.edu
609-258-6051
A-9-H-1

ECONOMICS & FINANCE

Bordelon, Bobray J.
bordelon@princeton.edu
609-258-3211
Firestone A-8-J-1

Hines, Todd
thines@princeton.edu
609-258-4459
Stokes Library

EDUCATION

Broch, Elana M.
ebroch@princeton.edu
609-258-5517
Stokes Library

HEALTH ECONOMICS**Bordelon, Bobray J.**bordelon@princeton.edu

609-258-3211

Firestone A-8-J-1

PUBLIC POLICY & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**Pressman-Levy, Nancy**pressman@princeton.edu

609-258-4782

Stokes Library

POLITICS**George, Mary W.**mwgeorge@princeton.edu

609-258-3254

Firestone A-12-J-1

PSYCHOLOGY**Adams, Steven**smadams@princeton.edu

609-258-5484 / 609-258-6084

Lewis Library / Green Hall

SPORTS**Hines, Todd**thines@princeton.edu

609-258-4459

Stokes Library

RELIGION**Bivens-Tatum, Wayne**rbivens@princeton.edu

609-258-6367

C-17E-1 Firestone Library

UNITED STATES DOCUMENTS

Hollander, David A.

dholland@princeton.edu

609-258-5316

A-15-J-2

WOMEN & GENDER STUDIES

Belcher, Emily M.

belcher@princeton.edu

609-258-2964

Firestone B-12-P

For Further Reading

George, Mary. 2008. *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Study Needs to Know*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

If you're looking for more guidance on the murky world of library research – particularly advice on the best way to use internet resources – this is a terrific book written by one of Princeton's own reference librarians. The book also has a number of helpful checklists regarding timelines in the research process, and ways to make the most use of your professors and advisors.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research* (3rd Edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This is an outstanding book for academic researchers of all disciplines, and is written with the undergraduate student in mind. The authors take you through all of the steps of finding a research question, to organizing your writing and preparing your final research paper. The book also has some useful sections on using charts and figures, and communicating evidence visually in the forms of graphs and tables.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This book is a classic for sociologists conducting ethnographic research, and contrary to what its title would suggest, the book actually covers most aspects of ethnographic research, from the actual techniques of taking notes in the field, to writing them up and analyzing them in a written report. The book's final chapter, "Writing an Ethnography" presents some particularly useful techniques for transforming the ideas and theories inherent in ethnographic field notes into a written report for a larger audience. If your JP uses ethnographic methods, you will want to consult this book.

Weiss, Robert W. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.

Weiss' book discusses the theory, logic, and logistics of interviewing respondents in qualitative research. Not only does this volume offer a number of useful strategies for soliciting good data from your respondents, the book also includes a chapter on writing about interview data which discusses technical issues such as which quotes to select and how to quote respondents effectively. A must for students writing a JP based on interviews.

Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Writing for Social Scientists is an outstanding book that speaks to undergraduate students and seasoned professors alike about the dilemmas of academic writing and concrete strategies for overcoming them. Notable here are chapters about getting started writing "One Right Way" and preparing a literature review ("Terrorized by the Literature"). Most importantly, Becker here makes two important points: one, that writing should not be a private process, and two, that sociologists must write clearly.

Becker, Howard S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This methodological book has five chapters that deal with different aspects of the research process, though not chronologically. Becker's writing is entertaining, clear, and thoughtful, and above all, offers advice to sociological researchers about helpful strategies (what he terms "tricks") for social research that probe for deeper, unconventional, even surprising findings.