

SOC497/L: SOCIOLOGY RESEARCH METHODS

## Reading & Writing (& recoding):

Organizing Previous Research

## Finding Research

- ◆ Using the Library
  - That ship may be sailing, as a physical place?
  - But *use the library website! And librarians!*
- ◆ Using the Internet
  - Searches
  - READ it – NOT just the abstract!
- ◆ Using sources themselves
  - Recursive/Rabbit hole
  - Follow footnotes/bibliographies
  - Familiarity as measure of expertise

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard

8

## Journals, Articles, & Authors

- ◆ What *is* a journal?
  - Think of a **journal** as a regular (monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly), hardcopy (like, on paper) magazine, but all about scholarship, on a topic or in some subdiscipline.
    - All are online now, some entirely so, but that model helps. These aren't websites, per se. They aren't blogs. They're serialized content following a structured release timeline.
  - Each *issue* has maybe 4-10 separate articles, somewhat like book chapters, written by separate authors.
  - All of the issues in a year make a *volume*.
- ◆ Attributions and behaviors.
  - Don't confuse journal, article, and author
    - You haven't read an entire journal (you almost certainly never will), and you should attribute verbs (such as "said" or "wrote") to authors – articles and journals don't write themselves

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard

5

## Search Sites

- ◆ Google okay, Google Scholar better – but in the Settings, click CSUN so you get local results
- ◆ Even better is the [library.csun.edu](http://library.csun.edu) website, though the "One" search ain't the *one* you want – dig deeper!
- ◆ Library home > databases > subjects; dropdown > sociology

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard

9

## Boundaries on Sources

- ◆ Academic /Scholarly works – journals, govt reports, etc.
  - Not (usually) newspapers, "web pages", blogs, encyclopedias
  - If nonscholarly, only one or two and must justify
- ◆ Mostly articles, maybe a few books; don't use if not read!
- ◆ Not necessarily Sociology
  - Other disciplines: Psych, Anthro, Poli Sci, History, Educ, Bus., ...
  - Probably not Philosophy, English, Math...
  - DV or IV should be sociological (e.g. not nutrition & education?)
- ◆ Warning: don't cite if you haven't seen the full text
  - Don't put anything in biblio not referenced in paper
  - It's a list of *referenced sources*, not of all related documents
  - If it's in your bib but not in the lib, be able to explain how/why

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard

6

## Library Resources

- ◆ Subject Guide
  - <http://library.csun.edu/Guides/Sociology1> > Journals & Databases
- ◆ Databases by Subject > Sociology
  - <http://library.calstate.edu/northridge/databases/subject/sociology>
- ◆ Eric Garcia – librarian/presentation
  - Contact info @ <http://library.csun.edu/Guides/Sociology1>

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard

10

## Search Terms

- ◆ Operators – and, or, not, parens, “”, -
- ◆ Try alternate terms
- ◆ May need to narrow, or broaden
- ◆ Synonyms & correlates (e.g. lockdown vs quarantine, pandemic vs COVID)
- ◆ Sources in sources – internal citations
  - Parentheses, footnotes, endnotes
  - Required for one of your HW2 sources!!

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 11

## General Writing Guidelines

- ◆ Questions to always ask before writing anything:
  - Who is your audience?
  - What is the form and length of the report
  - What is the aim of the report?
- ◆ Organization:
  - Overview, prev lit, study design, analysis, conclusions
  - Throughout, clear purpose (e.g. research question, hypothesis)
- ◆ For this class, remember:
  - Learning the *scientific process*, not the substantive areas
  - But deal w/ substantive area in a way that illustrates acumen

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 17

## Tips from Dr. Eric Garcia

- ◆ If use Google scholar, hit the hamburger, pick Settings, and set Library choices – search for CSUN
- ◆ In database (Proquest etc), use and, or, & parentheses
- ◆ Peer reviewed
- ◆ Pay to publish
- ◆ Abstract vs paper
- ◆ Don't fear page count – long may be good!

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 12

## Journal Article Structure

- ◆ Treat as a model
  - But make choices appropriate to your project (headings etc)
- ◆ 10-20pp? 8-12 if very strong? But too short/long = weak
  - Include tables organized well, in tight sections ☺
  - Could be 40-50 if done sloppily and not careful w/ output ☺
- ◆ Sections tie together
  - 1<sup>st</sup> & last sentences/paragraphs of consecutive section “connect”
  - Subheadings ID those sections & form a logical structure
  - Most follow a convention (lit/methods/data/etc) but is a *choice*
- ◆ Look at other journal articles to get a sense of structure
  - Will soon provide outline to give basic ideas, calm your worries, and give you some guidance in advancing your work
  - But generally: say what you're going to say, say how you're going to say it, say it, and then say what you said

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 18

## Results Goal


- ◆ Multiply source target by 3-4?
  - EGarcia says x2, so that you can select.
  - EGodard suggests another x2, if your topic is nice and specific (remember: bivariate hypothesis!)

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 13

## How to “Do” Intros (part of HW2)

- ◆ Previewing what you've done and what you'll say
- ◆ **What are you doing, in 2-3 pp**
  - State problem - Set the stage - Frame your discussion
- ◆ **Why you're studying that**
  - Why it's important to study
  - Rationale for why anyone would want to know what you're going to tell them
  - Moral/practical concerns interesting – but what's the *scientific* impetus?
  - Goal = inferential comparison (explanation, not description or exploration)
- ◆ **What others have studied**
  - Don't get carried away (Lit Review is next section)
- ◆ **Research design**
  - Description of study, inc. time, unit, focus, modality, etc.
  - Not too much detail - just general (types of data, types of analysis)
- ◆ **Variables and Hypotheses**
  - hypo must have IV and DV (variation in each)


SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 19



## Data/Methods Section (HW7)

- ◆ 3-5 pages? But not flexible w/r/t content:
  - Certain things *you* need to discuss, that *have* to be there
- ◆ Your basic research plan, in detail
  - Describe data and procedures (eg NORC's GSS) completely
  - Build on your lit review and intro
- ◆ Description of dataset & how assembled (originally and/or for you)
  - where you got it, who collected it and how, what sampling used, etc.
  - summarize dataset/sample demographically (see szafraan A)
  - inc data transformations (recodes, indices, etc)
- ◆ Define variables and their role(s)
  - how conceptualized & operationalized (both tie to lit, probably)
  - give hypotheses, explicitly - list them - may have > 1
- ◆ Inc. summary data description
  - MUST have a table with: freqs, means, std devs, correlations
- ◆ estimation technique(s) - crosstabs, means tables, regression, etc.


SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 20



## A Primer on Literature Reviews

- ◆ "The Library Part" - 3-5 pages? 8-15?
  - Length depends on field, topic, expertise, purpose, audience, etc.
  - Core Q: What have other scientists said about what you're addressing?
- ◆ Resembles most papers you've written
  - Read about the issue, ID what others have found and how they did it, critique
- ◆ But goes beyond typical essay/paper
  - Cohesive - *not* a annotated list, about every article
  - Selective - everything should contribute to *your specific Qs and study*
  - Purposeful - some contribution to field/discipline
  - Clarity - basic argument that makes sense of sources
  - Puts order to sources - synthesis, inc. grouping


SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 23



## Results/Analysis - *not* same as data!

- ◆ 2-6 pages, possibly *many* more (!), but keep it tight
- ◆ Outcomes and interpretations
  - Actually answer the questions you've posed and set up
- ◆ Describe process you went through to test your hypos
  - Max detail but still be readable.
  - Be truthful about your problems and mistakes.
- ◆ Inc. tables describing data and what you've done to it
  - not just cut and pasted - integrate professionally!
- ◆ Interpret results
  - how did hypotheses fare?
  - negative or nonsupportive findings still count!
    - Maybe even MORE interesting, esp if violate expectations of lit


SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 21



## Six Platforms for Lit Reviews

- ◆ Hypothesis IDed but not studied
- ◆ You suspect that an accepted hypo is false
- ◆ One side of a controversy
- ◆ Illuminate or evaluated unquestioned assumptions
- ◆ Topic overlooked
- ◆ Reapply theory or evidence from elsewhere to solve some existing but apparently unrelated problem


SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 24



## Conclusions: How to End It

- ◆ 2-5 pages - 1 *not* sufficient, 2 seems weak
- ◆ Discuss your findings
  - were you right about your expectations?
  - if it didn't work out, why not?
- ◆ Results agree w/ what others have found?
  - Were others right, or does your work challenge theirs?
- ◆ Full circle to intro
- ◆ Tie more broadly to field/discipline (further?)
- ◆ Evaluate your design
  - What would you do differently?
  - Future research: should others followup? how?
  - Do your findings have any policy implications?


SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 22



## Lab Continuity..

- ◆ Last SPSS lab: Computing
  - Combined multiple variables into a new one
  - New variable is a *computation* from old ones
- ◆ Next SPSS lab: Recoding
  - Reorganizing the values for *one* variable
  - Changing the *coding* for a variable

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 26



## Lab Exercise (group/data)

- ◆ Demonstration
  - Show recoding in SPSS – four equal groups, by (SAT?)
- ◆ Assignment
  - Group the cases into 3 equal groups based on in-state tuition:
    - Least expensive 3<sup>rd</sup>, most expensive 3<sup>rd</sup>, & middle 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ◆ Steps
  - Open the dataset (**right-click!**)
  - Find the variable for in-state tuition
  - Recode into three groups of equal size
  - Request a histogram (ANALYZE-DESC-FREQ > Charts > Histo)
  - Print & add your names (in either order)

SOC497 @ CSUN w/ Ellis Godard 28