

SOCIOLOGY 207

SOCIAL RESEARCH METHODS

Fall Semester, 2006
10TWTThF
Maxey 203

Professor Keith Farrington
Maxey 114
509-527-5203 (Office)
509-522-2722 (Home)
farrinmk@whitman.edu (e-mail)

Course Description: A course designed to introduce the student to the procedures by which sociologists gather, analyze and interpret factual information about the social world. Topics to be covered in this course include the part which social research plays in the larger discipline of sociology, the relationships between sociological theory and social research, research design, measurement and the operationalization of concepts, probabilistic sampling, observational data-gathering procedures, survey research, the use of secondary source materials, and experimentation. Required of sociology majors; open to students in other social science disciplines with consent of instructor.

Texts and Assigned Readings: The texts which we will be using in this class are the following:

Earl R. Babbie – 2007 – The Practice of Social Research, 11th edition

Bruce L. Berg – 2007– Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, 6th edition

Janet Saltzman Chafetz – 1978 – A Primer on the Construction and Testing of Theories in Sociology

Jose L. Galvan – 2006 – Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, 3rd edition

William A. Johnson, Jr., Richard P. Rettig, Gregory M. Scott, and Stephen M. Garrison – 2005 – The Sociology Student Writer's Manual, 5th edition

In addition to these textbook readings, you will also be required to read a selection of articles at the reserve desk in the library, and to read and use several in-class handouts addressing specific research procedures. You will be provided with copies of these handouts as they become necessary.

Topics, Readings, and Assignments: This class will meet according to the schedule presented on the following pages. Students will be expected to have read the assigned class readings by, and to hand in class assignments on, the dates indicated in the class schedule. We will try to stay on the schedule presented here; however, in the event that we do fall behind somewhat over the course of the semester, students should note that they are responsible for all assigned readings, regardless of whether we have specifically covered a particular topic in class. As indicated in the college Class Schedule and Catalog Supplement, this class is scheduled to meet four, rather than three, times weekly. Because of the “extra” class meeting which this schedule affords us, students should note that we will not attempt to reschedule class meetings which are missed due to illness (on the part of me or someone else in my family) or my absence from campus to participate in college business or to attend professional meetings, unless those missed classes become excessive in number. It is strongly recommended that all students in this class

for Sociological Methodology” [Library Reserve Desk]
Cook and Fonow – “Knowledge and Women’s Interests: Issues of Epistemology and Methodology in Feminist Sociological Research” [Library Reserve Desk]

Assignments Due: None

Thursday 9/7

Different Perspectives on the Scientific Status of Sociology

Reading: Fuchs – “Three Sociological Epistemologies” [Library Reserve Desk]
Collins – “Sociology: Proscience or Anti-Science?” [Library Reserve Desk]

Assignments Due: Assignment #1 [Word-Processing Assignment]

Friday 9/8

Sociological Theory and Social Research

Reading: Babbie pgs. 30-59

Assignments Due: None

Tuesday 9/12

Explanation in the Social Sciences

Reading: Chafetz pgs. 1-32

Assignments Due: None

Wednesday 9/13

The Components of Sociological Theory

Reading: Chafetz pgs. 33-62

Assignments Due: None

Thursday 9/14

Techniques of Theory Construction

Reading: Chafetz pgs. 63-90

Assignments Due: Assignment #2 [Analysis of Theory Assignment]

Friday 9/15

Putting Theories to Empirical Test

Reading: Chafetz pgs. 91-132

Assignments Due: None

ASA Style Guide, by Romelia Salinas (In-Class Handout)
A Quick Style Guide for Students Writing Sociology Papers (In-Class Handout)

Assignments Due: None

Thursday 9/28

Ethical and Political Considerations in Social Research

Reading: Babbie pgs. 60-83

Berg pgs. 53-88

The American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (In-Class Handout)

Assignments Due: None

Friday 9/29

Research Design: Developing a General Research Strategy

Reading: Babbie pgs. 84-119

Johnson et al. pgs. 147-154

Assignments Due: Assignment #3 [Development of Theory Assignment]

Tuesday 10/3

The Process of Operationalization: Measuring Sociological Concepts (I)

Reading: Babbie pgs. 120-151

Assignments Due: None

Wednesday 10/4

The Process of Operationalization: Measuring Sociological Concepts (II)

Reading: None

Assignments Due: None

Thursday 10/5

Reliability, Validity, and Measurement Error

Reading: None

Assignments Due: Assignment #4 [Sociological Bibliography Assignment]

Friday 10/6

Indexes and Scales: Composite Measures of Sociological Concepts

Readings: Babbie pgs. 152-178

Assignments Due: None

Tuesday 10/10	October Break!!! No Class Today!!!
Wednesday 10/11	<p>Selecting Units of Analysis: Populations and Samples</p> <p>Reading: Babbie pgs. 179-217</p> <p>Assignments Due: Assignment #5 [Review of the Literature Assignment]</p> <p>Please note that Wednesday, October 11, is the last day on which you can withdraw from Sociology 207 without notice of this withdrawal becoming a permanent part of your college transcript. If, for any reason, you wish to withdraw from this course, be sure to do so by this date</p>
Thursday 10/12	<p>The Logic of Probabilistic Sampling</p> <p>Reading: None</p> <p>Assignments Due: None</p>
Friday 10/13	<p>Drawing Random Samples</p> <p>Reading: Babbie pgs. A18-A19; A23; A24-29 RANDESAMP (In-Class Handout) "How Large A Sample Should a Researcher Select?" (In-Class Handout)</p> <p>Assignments Due: None</p>
Tuesday 10/17	<p>Variations on the Simple Random Sample</p> <p>Reading: None</p> <p>Assignments Due: Assignment #6 [Operational Definition Assignment]</p>
Wednesday 10/18	<p>Techniques of Gathering Sociological Data</p> <p>Reading: None</p> <p>Assignments Due: None</p>
Thursday 10/19	<p>The Logic of Experimental Analysis</p> <p>Reading: Babbie pgs. 218-242</p> <p>Assignments Due: None</p>

Friday 10/20 Types of Experimental Design
Reading: None
Assignments Due: Assignment #7 [Composite Measure Assignment]

Tuesday 10/24 Field and Natural Experiments
Reading: None
Assignments Due: None

Wednesday 10/25 The Direct Observation of Behavior
Reading: Babbie pgs. 285-317
Assignments Due: None

Thursday 10/26 The General Logic Behind Qualitative Research
Reading: Berg pgs. 1-18
Assignments Due: None

Friday 10/27 Planning and Carrying Out Qualitative Research
Reading: Berg pgs. 19-52
Assignments Due: None

Tuesday 10/31 Ethnographic Field Research
Reading: Berg pgs. 171-221
Assignments Due: None

Wednesday 11/1 Sociological Case Studies
Reading: Berg pgs. 283-302
Assignments Due: Assignment #8 [Selection of Sample Assignment]

- Thursday 11/2 Sociological Biographies and Oral Histories
- Reading: Berg pgs. 264-282
- Assignments Due: None
- Friday 11/3 Gathering Qualitative Data via Interview
- Reading: Berg pgs. 89-143
- Assignments Due: None
- Please note that Friday, November 3, is the last day on which you can withdraw from Sociology 207 without a grade of F, or register to take the course P-D-F. If you wish to utilize either of these options, be sure to do so by this date.
- Tuesday 11/7 Focus Groups and Other Group Interview Methodologies
- Reading: Berg pgs. 144-170
- Assignments Due: None
- Wednesday 11/8 Special Procedures for Collecting Qualitative Data From Select Populations
- Reading: Devault - "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis" [Library Reserve Desk]
Mandell - "The Least-Adult Role in Studying Children" [Library Reserve Desk]
- Assignments Due: None
- Thursday 11/9 Techniques of Qualitative Data Analysis
- Reading: Babbie pgs. 377-403
- Assignments Due: None
- Friday 11/10 Ethnomethodology and the Sociology of Everyday Life
- Reading: Adler, Adler and Fontana - "Everyday Life Sociology" [Library Reserve Desk]
Maynard and Clayman - "The Diversity of Ethnomethodology" [Library Reserve Desk]
- Assignments Due: Assignment #9 [Experimental Design Assignment]

Tuesday 11/14	The Basic Logic of Social Survey Research Reading: Babbie pgs. 243-284 Assignments Due: None
Wednesday 11/15	Different Types of Social Survey Reading: None Assignments Due: None
Thursday 11/16	Constructing and Distributing a Survey Instrument Reading: Babbie pgs. A8-A17 Assignments Due: Assignment #10 [Observation of Behavior Assignment]
Friday 11/17	Secondary Source Materials Reading: Berg pgs. 239-263 Assignments Due: None
Saturday 11/18 through Sunday 11/26	Thanksgiving Vacation!!! No Social Research this Week!!!
Tuesday 11/28	Content Analysis Reading: Berg pgs. 303-339 Assignments Due: Assignment #11 [Interview Assignment]
Wednesday 11/29	Finding and Using Existing Statistics Reading: Babbie pgs. 318-347 Assignments Due: None Please note that this class will meet in Penrose Library (or in some other place of the Reference Librarian's choosing)

- Thursday 11/30 Comparative, Cross-Cultural and Longitudinal Research
- Reading: Neuman – “Historical-Comparative Research” [pgs. 381-417 in William Lawrence Neuman’s Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 3rd edition, at the Library Reserve Desk]
- Assignments Due: None
- Friday 12/1 Applied Research: Practical Applications of Social Research Methods (I)
- Reading: Sullivan - “Applied Research Techniques” and “Ethics, Objectivity, and Social Policy” [pgs. 139-166 and 167-197 in Thomas J. Sullivan’s Applied Sociology: Research and Critical Thinking, at the Library Reserve Desk]
- Assignments Due: Assignment #12 [Social Survey Assignment]
- Tuesday 12/5 Applied Research: Practical Applications of Social Research Methods (II)
- Reading: Berg pgs. 222-238
- Assignments Due: Assignment #13 [Content Analysis Assignment]
- Wednesday 12/6 Evaluation Research
- Reading: Babbie pgs. 348-373
- Assignments Due: None
- Thursday 12/7 Writing and Submitting the Final Research Report (I)
- Reading: Berg pgs. 340-366
Galvan pgs. 99-116
- Assignments Due: Assignment #14 [Existing Statistics Assignment]
- Friday 12/8 Writing and Submitting the Final Research Report (II)
- Reading: Johnson et al. pgs. 13-78
Babbie pgs. G1-G12
- Assignments Due: None
- Wednesday 12/13 *****Final Exam (@ 9:00 a.m.)*****

Grades: The final grades in this course will be determined as follows: (a) a series of “10-minute quizzes” which will be given at various times over the course of the entire semester, (b) the final exam, and (c) the student’s performance on the various assigned projects will each be worth 33 1/3% of the final grade. Final grades will be assigned according to the following format:

96.67	100.00	A+
93.34	96.66	A
90.00	93.33	A-
86.67	89.99	B+
83.34	86.66	B
80.00	83.33	B-
76.67	79.99	C+
73.34	76.66	C
70.00	73.33	C-
66.67	69.99	D+
66.34	66.66	D
60.00	66.33	D-
0.00	59.99	F

Students should note that there are no provisions for makeup work or extra credit in this course. This means that doing the best work possible on each individual exam and assigned project is especially important, since points lost on any particular assignment cannot be regained elsewhere. Students should also note that I make an effort to grade each assignment for each student as carefully and as thoroughly as possible. This requires considerable time on my part, and it generally means that I am not able to return exams and assigned projects as quickly as either you or I would like. I assure you that I will return each assignment to the class as soon as I have finished grading it, and your patience and understanding on this matter will be greatly appreciated.

“Ten-Minute Quizzes”: Students should come to class each day prepared to take a short quiz on the assigned readings for that and the previous day, and the class material that was discussed in the past several class meetings. On those days that quizzes are actually given, students will have a total of ten minutes to answer the quiz question(s) which they are given. The student’s total grade on the quizzes given over the course of the entire semester will constitute one third of the student’s final grade.

Exams: There will be a final exam in this course, on the date indicated in the class schedule. The specific format of this exam will be discussed in class prior to the exam date. To give you an idea of what past exams in this course have been like, I have placed notebooks containing copies of old exams on reserve in the library. Students should be sure to note that the exams in this course will be based upon both class lectures and assigned reading, regardless of whether we have specifically discussed a particular reading in class.

Assigned Projects: As you will note in the class schedule, there are a number of assigned projects in this class this semester. Each of these assignments is described in considerable detail on subsequent pages of this syllabus; in addition, each of the assignments will be discussed in class, and students are encouraged to ask questions about them at that time. Students should note that these assigned projects

must be handed in at or before the class meeting on the date indicated in the class schedule. Late assignments will be penalized a minimum of two full letter grades.

Class Attendance : I will not take roll in this class, and the regularity of your attendance is, in large measure, up to you. However, because of the difficulty of much of the material which we will be covering and the pace at which we will be moving, it is strongly recommended that students attend class as frequently as possible. Moreover, students should note that they will be responsible on exams for all material covered in class meetings, regardless of whether or not they were present for a particular class. They should also note that not being in class will not be seen as an acceptable excuse for not handing in an assigned project on time.

Office Hours: My offices are located in Maxey 114 and Library 317, and my regularly-scheduled office hours this semester are as follows:

Monday	11:00 – 11:50 a.m. (in Library 317)
Tuesday	11:00 – 11:50 a.m. (in Maxey 114)
Wednesday	11:00 – 11:50 a.m. (in Maxey 114)
Thursday	11:00 – 11:50 a.m. (in Maxey 114)
Friday	11:00 – 11:50 a.m. (in Library 317)

I will do my best to honor these office hours whenever possible. In the event that a college committee meeting or some other kind of official obligation causes me to miss a regularly-scheduled office hour, students should feel free to call me at home at their earliest convenience to talk with me. Also, if my regularly-scheduled office hours are inconvenient for you and you wish to schedule an appointment for some other time, please do not hesitate to do so. One of my most important obligations as a teacher at a school like Whitman is to meet individually with students in need of assistance, and you should not hesitate to ask me to schedule a meeting with you whenever you believe it to be necessary.

Assignment #1

Word-Processing Assignment

Due Date: Thursday, September 7

It is your good fortune that the first of the many assignments to which you will be subjected in this course is quite short and easy, which should make us all very happy. What I would like you to do in this assignment is to demonstrate to me, in a thoroughly convincing fashion, that you suffer no symptoms whatsoever of computer-phobia. You can accomplish this very nicely by using (a) the electronic mail (e-mail) and (b) the Microsoft Word word-processing software which resides within Whitman's friendly microcomputers to write me a short letter, telling me a little bit about yourself, and why/how you have come to find yourself in Sociology 207, of all places. Said another way, I want you to write and save as a MicroSoft Word file the letter in question, and then send that file to me, by the due date indicated above, as an e-mail attachment. If all goes as it is supposed to, I will then be able to download your assignment at my convenience, read it, and give it the very high grade which it will almost certainly deserve.

Since the primary purpose of this assignment is to insure that you have become familiar with the frustrations and peculiarities of using the computer to do things that human beings previously managed to do quite nicely by hand or on a typewriter, this letter doesn't have to be terribly long (although it can be, if you feel that it may be to your ultimate benefit to try to impress me with a long description of your many virtues and talents). Please note, however, that it should be relatively free of mistakes, since accuracy in typing becomes a matter of practical necessity when using computers to do social research.

That's all there is to this assignment . . . Only thirteen more to go!!!

Assignment #2

Analysis of Theory Assignment

Due Date: Thursday, September 14

Most of you have already taken (or will be taking shortly) Professor Bogard's excellent course, "History of Sociological Theory," so this assignment should be a piece of cake. What I would like you to do in it is to select a theory in the field of Sociology (or Anthropology or Psychology or History or Political Science or Economics or Biology, if one of these fields happens to be your major), and then analyze this theory for me, with regard to the elements of sociological theory which we have discussed in this class. Since I am sure that you will want to impress me as a theorist extraordinaire, you will probably want to do the following with the theory which you have selected:

- (1) First, tell me whose theory this is, and what essentially it is a theory of -- i.e., what exactly is the social phenonemon (or phenomena) which is being explained?
- (2) Next, identify
 - (a) the basic assumptions which appear to underlie this theory, and
 - (b) the basic concepts which are contained within this theory.
- (3) Then, express this theory in a formalized, propositional format, using as many propositions as you feel are necessary to adequately present it in its entirety.
- (4) Finally, identify any concepts within these propositions which take the form of variables, being sure to present them in a manner which clearly reflects their variable quality. And, if any of these variables seem to you to be either "independent" or "dependent" in nature, you might as well go on to indicate this to me as well, taking special care to explain the basis upon which you made this distinction.

Please do not feel the need to "pad" this assignment for me" – I can assure you that if you are able to do what I have asked here in a minimum of time and space, we will both be very happy. Also, to help me protect the small amount of vision and sanity that I presently have left, I would greatly appreciate it if these assignments were typed and double-spaced (or written out extremely neatly).

Assignment #3

Development of Theory Assignment

Due Date: Friday, September 29

In the previous assignment, you were asked to find and analyze a theory in the social sciences which had previously been formulated and proposed by some famous social theorist. But everybody – even Professor Farrington – knows that it is more fun to have something of your own than to have to use something which belongs to someone else. Therefore, in this assignment, I would like you to become a social theorist, and develop a creative and unique sociological theory of your own.

In formulating this theory, it will probably be a very good idea to keep the following "suggestions" in mind:

- (a) I would like your theory to consist of no fewer than three hypothesized bivariate relationships [although it may contain as many additional propositions – bivariate or not – as you would like].
- (b) These propositions should somehow fit together into an interrelated and somewhat meaningful whole.
- (c) This theory should be such that it would be possible for you to gather the data necessary to test it on or near the Whitman campus, should you ever be asked to do so.

Once you have developed a theory with which you are personally satisfied, and which you are fairly certain will impress the local scientific community, I would like you to do the following, to hand in for my inspection:

- (1) Tell me, in general terms, what it is that your theory is saying – i.e., what is it explaining, and how is it explaining it?
- (2) Explain to me why, in your opinion, it is legitimate to consider what you have created a viable scientific theory.
- (3) Identify the variables in your theory, and, using a properly-constructed and visually lucid flow diagram, indicate the various linkages (causal and otherwise) which you see as existing between these variables.
- (4) Present your theory in propositional format, explicitly identifying the three (or more) basic hypotheses which you will be investigating over the course of the semester.

It is very important to bear in mind that the theory which you come up with in this assignment will be the basis of several subsequent assignments in this course for the remainder of the semester. Therefore, I strongly recommend that you (a) put a good deal of thought into what you are doing here, (b) select a topic in which you are personally and genuinely interested, and (c) come to me with any questions or

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Assignment #3 [Continued]

problems that you encounter in working on this assignment. I also suggest that, since it may take me a while to read, grade and return this assignment, you make yourself a xeroxed copy, for your own use in preparing subsequent assignments. Finally, I would greatly appreciate it if these assignments were typed and double-spaced (or written out extremely neatly).

Assignment #4

Sociological Bibliography Assignment

Due Date: Thursday, October 5

Any conscientious and well-trained social researcher who is about to embark upon the study of a topic in the social sciences will begin his/her investigation by conducting a relatively thorough "review of the literature" relevant to that topic. This means that the researcher will become aware of and read as much as possible of what other social scientists working in the same area have theorized and/or discovered in their own investigations. This aspect of social research is extremely important, as it helps the researcher to become generally familiar with the topic in question, and to shape and guide his/her investigation in interesting and potentially fruitful directions.

In this assignment, then, I would like you to become familiar with this important element of the social research process, by conducting a review of the literature for the topic about which you chose to develop a sociological theory in the previous assignment. This will entail the following:

- (1) Using the library resources described in the presentation by the Reference Librarians and the assigned readings, become as aware as possible of the general literature which presently exists relating to your topic.
- (2) From this literature, select (a) three journal articles, (b) one book or book chapter, and (c) one internet website which you feel to be particularly relevant to your general topic, and/or to the specific way in which you have chosen to approach that topic in your theory. [Note: For your print sources to be of maximum value to you in the next assignment, when you will actually have to use them, it is important that they be available to you in Penrose Library or elsewhere on campus].
- (3) Indicate to me exactly how and where you located each of these sources.
- (4) Present these sources to me as though they were the "Reference" section of a sociological journal article written on your topic. In doing so, please note that it is my expectation that this reference section will conform exactly to the approved bibliographic format of the American Sociological Association (as that format is presented and discussed in our various readings on this topic), and that I will reward any major departures from this format with a significantly lowered grade on this assignment. [Note: For any students in this class who are not sociology majors, it will be acceptable to me for you to substitute the citation and bibliographic format of your own major discipline for that of sociology in this assignment, provided that you explicitly indicate to me exactly what that format is].

That's all . . . see you in the library.

Assignment #5

Review of the Literature Assignment

Due Date: Wednesday, October 11

In the previous assignment, you began conducting a review of the literature, by looking into and familiarizing yourself with some of the books and articles which other social scientists have written on the general topic about which you have proposed a theory. However, the importance of your review of the literature doesn't end here; rather, researchers typically go on to include as part of their own research report a brief summary of the literature review which they carried out in preparation for their investigation. Doing this provides the general benefit of quickly "educating" those encountering the researcher's work as to what has been done in this area in the past, and thus putting into a broader scientific context the particular project which this researcher has just completed.

With this in mind, I would like you to try your hand here at preparing such a review of the literature, in which you do the following:

- (1) Briefly describe or otherwise introduce the topic with which your theory deals,
- (2) Present a brief summary of what the sources which you cited in the previous assignment had to say about this topic, and
- (3) Close your review with a discussion which either (a) somehow summarizes, or draws out and integrates together, the major points which you found to be true in your investigation of the literature, and/or (b) relates the findings from your review in some way back to the theory which you yourself developed back in Assignment #3.
- (4) Attach a "References" section, which contains either the sociological bibliography which you handed in to me in the previous assignment, or a revised version of that bibliography [If, on reflection, some (or all) of the articles, books, book chapters, or websites which you included in your bibliography back in Assignment #4 no longer appear to be all that relevant to the topic that you are working with, you may feel free to substitute other sources for these, provided that your review ultimately winds up citing and using no fewer than a total of five references. In any event, regardless of whether or not your list of sources has changed from what you presented in the previous assignment, I would very much appreciate your attaching to this assignment a complete and properly-formatted reference page, clearly indicating those sources that you did use in writing this review].

In this assignment, then, you are, in effect, writing for me the first several pages of a professional journal article, in pretty much the same way that such articles are written by social scientists for their peers. For this reason, I would encourage you, in preparing this assignment, to look carefully at the articles which you are reviewing, to familiarize yourself with the basic format which they have used in presenting and discussing the literature of others, so that you might yourself make effective use of this format in your own review. In a similar vein, you might wish to take a look at the appropriate readings in Babbie and Galvan (as indicated in the syllabus), since they discuss the whole issue of literature reviews in some

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Assignment #5 [Continued]

detail.

I would imagine that you will be able to satisfactorily deal with this assignment in 3-5 typed and double-spaced pages.

Assignment #6

Operational Definition Assignment

Due Date: Tuesday, October 17

This assignment is intended to provide you with the opportunity to convincingly demonstrate to me that you know all that there is to know about the important process of operationalizing sociological concepts. To accomplish this, it will be necessary for you to do the following:

- (1) Select no fewer (but hopefully not a whole lot more) than five variables contained within or otherwise relating to the theory which you developed back in Assignment #3.
- (2) For each of these five variables, provide me with a good, clear nominal (i.e., conceptual) definition of the concept to which it refers.
- (3) Next, give me an operational definition for each of these five concepts, identifying as precisely as you believe to be necessary the specific way(s) in which you might actually go about observing and measuring the social phenomenon in question, so as to allow you to test both (a) the adequacy of your specific theory, and (b) your general abilities as a social researcher.
- (4) Finally, for each of these variables, indicate at which level of measurement (i.e., nominal, ordinal, or interval/ratio) you have operationalized the concept in question.

As always, I would greatly appreciate it if these assignments were typed and double-spaced (or written out extremely neatly). Also, since it may take me a while to grade and return this project to you, I suggest that you make yourself a xeroxed copy of what you hand in to me, for use in subsequent assignments.

Now, go forth into the world and operationalize!!!

Assignment #7

Composite Measure Assignment

Due Date: Friday, October 20

We have recently talked in class at some length about the process by which social scientists develop composite measures to operationalize abstract and/or multi-dimensional concepts. Realizing that you would feel cheated if you were not given the opportunity to actually participate in this process yourselves, I have constructed an assignment with just that goal in mind.

Specifically, I would like you to do the following in this assignment:

- (1) First, select a concept which is already contained within or which is generally relevant to the sociological theory which you developed back in Assignment #3. Once you have selected such a concept, please provide me with a good, clear conceptual (i.e., theoretical) definition of it.
- (2) Then, use any of the procedures for constructing indexes or scales discussed in class and in Chapter 6 of the Babbie text -- e.g., the additive index, the Likert scale, the semantic differential, the Bogardus social distance scale, the Thurstone scale, the Guttman scale, etc. -- to provide a convincing and creative operationalization of this concept. In presenting to me whatever you eventually come up with here, please be sure to include all of the information necessary to insure a complete and correct operational definition of the variable in question.

Once again, I would greatly appreciate it if these assignments were typed and double-spaced (or written out extremely neatly). And, since we are probably at that point in the semester at which I am starting to become overwhelmed by the masses of paperwork which are finding their way onto my desk, I would strongly recommend that you make yourself a xeroxed copy of what you hand in to me, for your own use in subsequent assignments.

Assignment #8

Selection of Sample Assignment

Due Date: Wednesday, November 1

With every assignment, we've been moving closer to that point at which you could actually put the sociological theory which you developed earlier in the semester to the empirical test, by collecting and analyzing data collected from and reflecting important information about how real people go about the business of living their lives. And, for reasons which we have been discussing in class recently, it is very important that the researcher take some care in deciding exactly who these people (or other social units) will be, and how they will be selected. Most typically, researchers are unable to study all of the units of analysis with whom their research is concerned; however, this is seldom problematic, since they can instead draw a (hopefully) representative "sample" from these units of analysis, and then generalize the results which they obtain back to the larger "population."

Although limitations on time and resources will unfortunately prevent us from going through this process of actually collecting empirical data from a representative sample of a relevant population, I do at least want you to get a feel for how this process works. With this in mind, I would like you to do the following in this assignment:

- (1) Tell me what the general population is to which you ultimately wish to be able to generalize the results of your study, and briefly indicate why, in your opinion, such generalizability would be relevant to the testing of the general theory with which you have been working in this class the past several weeks.
- (2) Identify for me a working population at Whitman, or in the Walla Walla area more generally, which seems to you to successfully lend itself to the empirical test of your theory, and tell me why you believe this population to be appropriate in this regard.
- (3) Tell me how large you feel your sample should be, and indicate how and why you arrived at this particular sample size.
- (4) Devise a sampling methodology which you feel would allow you to generate a representative sample of the size specified above from your population, and -- briefly, but clearly and completely -- describe this methodology to me.
- (5) Use this methodology to actually select the sample which you have described above, and present me with a list of the individual cases contained within this sample. [Note: I realize that there may be an occasional project in this class for which it is not really possible to actually draw a sample from a specified population in the manner described above. If you find yourself in such a situation, please be sure to at least indicate to me, in very precise and detailed terms, exactly how you would go about drawing a sample from the population which you have selected, were you to have unlimited time and resources to do so.]
- (6) Finally, identify and briefly discuss any factors of either a biased or a random nature which

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Assignment #8 [Continued]

might operate to somehow threaten the overall representativeness of your sample, and tell me what, if anything, you were able to do in this sampling design to eliminate, control for or minimize these factors.

The list of specific cases in your sample which you hand in can take any form, as long as it is reasonably neat and legible. However, I would appreciate your discussions of the other points raised above being typed and double-spaced (or written out extremely neatly).

Assignment #9

Experimental Design Assignment

Due Date: Friday, November 10

During the past week or so, we have spent a fair amount of time discussing the basic logic behind and specific strategies of experimentation, as a means of gathering sociological and social psychological data. In this assignment, I would like you to demonstrate to me just how well all of this material has sunk in, as I want you to design (but not actually go out and conduct) an experiment, which could, with a greater expenditure of time and effort than either you or I see as necessary or desirable at this point in the semester, be done on or near the Whitman campus.

The general format and specific procedures which you use in your hypothetical experiment will, of course, vary in accordance with your personal taste, and the substantive topic with which you are concerned [and please note that this experiment does not have to be on the same topic that you have dealt with earlier in Assignments #3 (Development of Theory Assignment), #5 (Review of the Literature Assignment), and #6 (Operational Definition Assignment) . . . although it certainly can be, if that is your desire]. However, I do expect that any experiment designed for and described in this assignment, regardless of the specific topic with which it deals, will demonstrate the use of a number of the things that have recently been addressed in class discussions and readings.

In your typewritten and double-spaced (or written out extremely neatly) discussion of your experimental design, please be sure to specifically mention the following:

- (a) the hypothesis and/or general research topic that you are investigating,
- (b) the specific descriptive features of your experiment -- e.g., who will be studied, where they will be studied, the task or activity that will be involved, etc.,
- (c) the specific elements of your study which serve to distinguish it as a true experiment per se, and
- (d) the various threats to "internal" and "external validity" that might be expected to rear their ugly heads in an experiment of this type, and steps which you might reasonably take to minimize or eliminate these.

Any written report which adequately addresses each of these points is long enough.

Assignment #10

Observation of Behavior Assignment

Due Date: Thursday, November 16

It has been suggested that sociologists, given their scientific orientation and professional training, seem to work well in small groups. To test the validity of this dubious hypothesis, here's what we're going to do in this assignment. First, I will divide the members of this class into several such groups, each of which will be comprised of a number of other students who are presently as confused and misguided as yourself.

Then, it will be the responsibility of each of these groups to devise and carry out a technically flawless and sociologically relevant observational study. What your group observes, and how you observe it, are matters of individual choice, to be determined by the members of your group. However, please note that, regardless of the general focus of and specific methodology employed by any particular group, I will be most concerned to see whether these conform to the basic principles of observational research, as these principles have been discussed in class and assigned readings.

Finally, I would like each group to submit to me a research report (i.e., one report for each group), which addresses -- among other things -- the following questions:

- (1) What were the general goals or objectives of your observational study -- i.e., what were you observing, and why?
- (2) What were the specific research hypotheses which your study sought to investigate?
- (3) What specific observational procedures did you use, and why did you choose them?
- (4) What results did you obtain? Did these results support, or fail to support, your hypotheses?
- (5) What are the general implications -- either/both scientific and/or practical -- of your results?

I would expect that these observational studies could be described quite nicely in a report of 3-5 typewritten, double-spaced pages.

Assignment #11

Interview Assignment

Due Date: Tuesday, November 28

Sociology students are reputed to rank especially high in interpersonal competence, and it is the purpose of this assignment to provide you with the opportunity to put this desirable quality to good use – and for class credit yet. What I would like you to do in it is the following:

- (1) Select an individual (preferably someone who you don't really know all that well) who is willing to be interviewed by you.
- (2) In a tape-recorded interview of approximately 5-10 minutes duration, find out something of sociological relevance relating to this person's early family background and experiences.
- (3) In writing, summarize the general results of your interview, and propose a hypothesis which seems to arise out of or to be suggested by it, which might reasonably be tested on a larger and more representative sample of individuals at some point in the future.
- (4) Briefly discuss any methodological limitations of or problems in both/either the overall method which you utilized in this assignment and/or the specific data which you received from your respondent.

Who exactly you choose to hassle (er . . . I mean, interview), what you choose to ask this unfortunate individual, and how exactly you elect to conduct your interview is pretty much up to you. However, please note my expectation that your interview will clearly reflect the basic principles of in-depth, relatively unstructured interviewing discussed both in class, and in the Babbie and Berg readings.

In order for me to evaluate and grade this initial foray into the wonderful world of interviewing, please be sure to hand in both (a) the actual tape (cassettes only, please) of the interview itself, and (b) your answers to Questions 3 and 4 above, in typed and double-spaced format (or written out extremely neatly).

Finally, please note that the Sociology Department has a small number of cassette tape recorders available for just this purpose. Please see me if you would like to check one out for a few hours.

Assignment #12

Social Survey Assignment

Due Date: Friday, December 1

For years, at Whitman and elsewhere, you have doubtlessly been bombarded with a variety of social surveys, asking you everything from why you decided to pledge a particular fraternity or sorority to what kind of toothpaste you like best. Now, it is finally time for you to turn the tables and grab the offensive, because this assignment provides you with the opportunity to design a small survey instrument of your own.

Since I am a firm believer in saving my students work (so that they will have more time to do the work that I am going to assign them in the future), I would like this survey instrument to utilize and build upon all of the fine effort that you have been putting into this class all semester long. That is to say, I would like it to relate very specifically to the theory which you developed way back in Assignment #3. In practical terms, this means the following:

- (1) On a separate sheet of paper (i.e., not as part of the survey instrument itself), briefly present your theory in its original form, or as it has been modified over the course of the semester. Please be especially sure to present both (a) a complete list of all of the variables which are contained within the most recent version of your theory, and (b) at least three bivariate relational hypotheses which are contained within (and presumably central to) this theory.
- (2) Also on this separate sheet of paper, identify no fewer than three separate "control variables," each of which which might be reasonably expected to somehow relate to (and possibly confound) the hypotheses generated by your theory.
- (3) Produce and hand in for my inspection a polished and professional-looking survey instrument, which would allow you (were I to actually require you to administer it and analyze the resulting data -- something which I am not going to do) to test the validity of these three hypotheses (and determine the possible effects of the control variables which you have identified), by operationalizing and collecting the data relevant to all of the variables specified above.

For many of you (the lucky ones), most of the work required to successfully construct the survey instrument which I am requesting here has already been done in conjunction with such earlier assignments as Assignment #3 (Development of Theory Assignment), Assignment #6 (Operational Definition Assignment), and Assignment #7 (Composite Measure Assignment). For others of you (the not-so-lucky ones), somewhat more additional work may be required. For all of you, however, the bottom line is that I want to receive copies of survey instruments which operationalize all of the elements of -- and hence which would allow you to determine the overall adequacy of -- the social theories with which you have been working all semester.

This survey instrument can be designed as either an interview or a questionnaire, depending upon such factors as your topic, your sample, and your personal taste and style. My only real concern in this regard

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Assignment #12 [Continued]

is that, although your survey is going to be relatively short as such things go, it should definitely be carefully constructed and methodologically flawless, reflecting the various issues and concerns relating to social survey analysis which have been discussed in class and in the Babbie text.

All that you have to submit to me, then, in order to receive a (hopefully good) grade on this assignment are (a) a copy of your survey instrument (in final, ready-to-administer form) and (b) a brief statement (typed and double-spaced, or written out extremely neatly) addressing Points #1 and 2 above.

Assignment #13

Content Analysis Assignment

Due Date: Tuesday, December 5

What I would like you to do in this assignment is to convincingly demonstrate to me that you have learned at least a little bit about the valuable procedure for the analysis of secondary source material commonly known within the social sciences as "content analysis." This can be accomplished, relatively easily and painlessly, by doing the following:

- (1) First, formulate and present a plausible and sociologically relevant hypothesis – of either a descriptive or explanatory nature – which might be tested using such secondary source materials as magazine articles, fictional stories, newspaper editorials, personal letters, television programs, commercial films, popular songs, political speeches, advertisements, etc.
- (2) Then, explain to me in some detail exactly how you might go about operationalizing the specific variables which would be necessary, if you were to actually go out and conduct a study to investigate the validity of this hypothesis (which, I am happy to inform you, you will not have to do). You should, however, be sure to indicate the following:
 - (a) The source of your data – i.e., the specific type(s) of secondary source material which you would be examining.
 - (b) The specific operational definitions for each of your concepts – i.e., the specific procedures by which you would observe and classify your data into the various categories of your variable(s), as you have conceptualized them.
 - (c) In very general terms, what would have to be demonstrated by your data in order to provide support for your hypothesis.

Please feel free to present the information which I have requested above in as brief a form as possible, provided that you have in fact done all that I have asked of you. And, once again, rest assured that you don't have to worry about actually going out and conducting the kind of study which you are describing here . . . rather, I am simply interested in making sure that you know what you would have to do, if you were to sometime be called upon to carry out such a research project. Finally, as has been the case all semester, I would appreciate it if you would be sure that this assignment is typed and double-spaced (or written out extremely neatly)

Assignment #14

Existing Statistics Assignment

Due Date: Thursday, December 7

Well, we've finally made it to the end of the semester, as this is the last of the many fun assignments to which I will subject you in conjunction with Sociology 207. Yay!!! However, before you become too excited about seeing that faint glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, let's see exactly what I have in store for you here, in my parting shot.

In this assignment, I would like you to convince yourself (and me, as well) just how valuable existing statistics can be to the social researcher who is not able to go out and collect original data of his/her own, by doing the following:

- (1) Using the various resources described to you by the Penrose Reference Librarian(s) last week, find a piece of statistical information which seems to lend itself to the operationalization of an important sociological property, for any five of the following social institutions in American society.

- The family institution
- The economic institution
- The political institution
- The criminal justice institution
- The social welfare institution
- The medical/health care institution
- The religious institution
- The educational institution
- The military institution
- The recreational institution

Please note that each piece of data which you select for this assignment should lend itself to collection on a (a) year-by-year, (b) city-by-city, (c) state-by-state, or (d) country-by-country basis, for no fewer than 10 separate units of analysis (e.g., ten separate years, ten separate cities, ten separate states, or ten separate nations). These units of analysis do not have to be the same for all of the five pieces of information which you select (although they certainly can be, if that is your wish).

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Assignment #14 [Continued]

(2) For each of these pieces of institutional data, please tell me the following:

- (a) Exactly what the statistical information in question is (i.e., what exactly does it represent, contain or describe?).
- (b) Exactly (and very specifically) where this statistical information can be (and was by you) found in the library.
- (c) How/where/by whom this information appears to have been originally collected.
- (d) How this information might be used to operationalize a sociological variable of some usefulness or importance in social research.
- (e) What the units of analysis are that you would be comparing in using this statistical information in the manner being suggested here.

To eliminate any possibility of unfortunate (at least, for you) misunderstanding as you embark upon this assignment, please note that you do not have to present any actual data to me to give me what I am looking for here; all that I want to know is what form this data takes, where it can be found, and what you would be able to do with it.

That's about all there is to this assignment, except for one last thing; since variety is indeed the spice of life, I ask that no source (i.e., no single reference title) be used more than twice in gathering the five pieces of information requested here. And, as always, I ask that these assignments be typed and double-spaced (or written out extremely neatly).

Once you have done all of the above to your (and, hopefully, to my) satisfaction, you will be officially finished with the many assignments which together give Sociology 207 the fine reputation which it enjoys today. You are to be congratulated for making it to the end of what has been a long and sometimes arduous journey.

See you at the final exam.