

Introduction to Sociology Project

The goal of this project is to get you thinking sociologically. It would be very helpful for you to read C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination. There is a chapter from this book on the website for your perusal. It's also a good idea to understand the three sociological perspectives. This is the area where students have the most difficulty. Remember, sociology is a science, albeit a soft science. Conclusions drawn sociologically are based on data, just as the conclusions in physics or chemistry are based on data.

You can use whatever method you want to create this project. The only restriction I have is that I do not want a term paper. If you use the steps below as an outline and address about one step every week this project should not be a lot of work.

Step 1: Choose an issue that you believe is sociologically significant

Hint: This should be an issue that is meaningful to you.

Step 2: Gather information from the mainstream media on this issue.

Hint: You'll want to get examples from the media for your project

Step 3: Gather research about this issue

A. Gather **quantitative** data on your issue

B. Gather **qualitative** data on your issue

Hint: Here you'll want to avoid the media and stick to academic sources like journals or books

Step 4: Use the sociological imagination to describe your issue

A. How is this issue both a **personal** and a **public** matter?

B. How is this issue historically significant and historically specific?

Step 5: Use the three sociological perspectives to analyze your issue

C. **Structural Functionalism:** In what ways does your issue relate to social stability and instability?

D. **Conflict Perspective:** In what ways does your issue relate to power, status and access to resources?

E. **Interactionism:** In what ways is your issue a product of rational choice and symbolic interaction?

Hint: The research you find is probably from one or more of these perspectives. Use that to help you. I'm not looking for concrete examples here. I'm looking to see if you understand the four perspectives.

Step 6: Use at least one sociological theory to explain your issue.

A. Why is this theory the best to explain the phenomenon you are studying?

Step 7: Explain how this issue is socially meaningful

A. How does culture make this issue meaningful

Hint: Remember, culture is the product of language, Symbols, Values and norms

B. How do our belief systems influence this issue?

C. How does this issue influence our belief systems?

Step 6: Explain how society makes this issue real

- A. How are we socialized to respond to this issue?
- B. How does the media and education deal with this issue?
 - a. How is the media version of this issue different from the research?

Step 7: Explain how this issue impacts and is impacted by **social stratification** and **inequality**?

- A. Which social groups are most impacted by this issue? Why?

Step 8: Explain how this issue is a matter of **normative** and/or **deviant** behavior?

Mr. Andoscia's advice

Students who score the best on this project do the following things:

1. **They come to class.** In class I go over all of the elements above. Coming to class gives you the ability to ask me questions relevant to your issue and to get clarification on some of the more abstract concepts of sociology.
2. **They start immediately.** If you look at the syllabus you will notice that each step corresponds to a week's lecture (except step 4 which is reinforced throughout the semester). If you take each step about week at a time this project is not long and difficult. If you wait until the week before it is due you are going to run into problems.
3. **They address each step.** There may be things in your particular issue that you are having difficulty fitting in to some of the elements above. If you find that you cannot address one of the elements above then explain why you think that is in your project, do not skip the step. I need to see that you understand these topics. *Hint: You can almost always address each step with your topic; you just have to stretch your mind a little. I've seen very very few instances in which an element above could not be addressed*
4. **They ask questions.** You can use me as a resource. You can ask questions during class. Chances are that there are other students in the class who have the same question as you and I don't have a problem using class time to answer your question. I also have no problem staying after class to talk to you and I always answer e-mails that are sent to me. In fact e-mail is a great way to get the explanations that you need as it is written down for you and you don't have to worry about forgetting.