

SOCG200 · INTRO METHODS/EPISTEMOLOGY
INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH DESIGN
Fall 2023 · Monday 9:00-11:50 PM · In Person SSB 414

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Regular Office Hours: MW 12:00-1:00
Or on Zoom (or in person) by appointment
My Zoom link: <https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/5581794498>

Welcome to sociology! The purpose of graduate school is to transform you from an excellent student into a brilliant researcher, from someone who consumes existing ideas and knowledge intelligently into this other you who produces new ideas and knowledge that fit into the wide conversation we call the discipline of sociology. Notice that we already know that you are an excellent student, a smart consumer. We take that for granted. This seminar gets you started to move beyond that. I will introduce you to some of the fundamental issues researchers encounter in practicing their craft, issues that you will likely wrestle with once you begin to *do and produce* social science.

Sociology is a wide discipline that includes a multitude of very different styles of research. These styles range from cultural analysis, ethnography, and archival research to statistical investigation, mathematical modeling, and machine learning. One of sociology's great advantages is precisely this eclecticism of approaches that lets the discipline follow questions wherever they lead without being constrained by the blind spots of a particular methodology. Most but not all sociologists, of course, specialize in certain methodological styles, but good ones are always conversant with research relevant to their substantive interest, even if those findings were generated by approaches different from their own.

Our aims in this course are, first, to discover general principles of good research practice that may apply to sociology, -- and really, all social science -- regardless of method, and second, to discover general principles that will help us choose appropriate methods for our particular research purposes. We will approach both aims by emphasizing the link between ideas and evidence. We will focus on a few methods that enjoy professional legitimacy and that are in the most common use in the discipline of sociology, but we will also take a look at some new methods that are currently emerging.

Good research generates novel, interesting ideas that can be supported by empirical evidence collected and presented in a systematic way. Accordingly, the research process is often separated analytically into two parts that, in practice, are intimately intertwined: the context of *discovery* and the context of *justification*. *Discovery* is coming up with ideas: questions, puzzles, and explanations. For most of us, this is the truly exciting part of sociology. This is when we learn new things, get surprised and gain novel insights. There are very few courses that deal directly with the method of discovery, that teach you how to *come up with* ideas. This course will do that. *Justification*, on the other hand, is to show that those ideas are supported by empirical evidence. It is about how to *convince* your scientific peers (and yourself as a sociologist) that your ideas are credible and possibly correct. Most methods courses are about justification. In this course, we learn how to connect discovery and justification successfully, because that is the secret of good research.

EXPECTATIONS: BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE READINGS

Our seminars will focus on the discussion of the required readings. *Come prepared to discuss the required readings.* This is another way to say: do the readings ahead of the discussion.

Several of the required readings are books: I have not ordered them at the bookstore, as it is my experience that students can often get better deals online. Several of them are articles and book chapters. Those plus one book, Goffman's *On the Run*, are available through Perusall. **YOU HAVE TO READ EVERYTHING ON PERUSALL, EXCEPT THE BOOKS.**

What is Perusall?

Perusall:

Perusall is an app that allows us to read texts together. Perusall is now integrated with Canvas.

The way this works is that I put up all the Required Readings you find on the syllabus onto Perusall with my comments and questions. You read the articles/chapters, and answer the questions, pose your own questions, and make your own comments in Perusall. These annotations will be shared with the entire class.

Books will not be on Perusall, you have to get the books yourself.

The required readings include (a) texts *about* method, which make arguments about how particular methods can or should be used, and (b) *research exemplars*, which illustrate common research problems and particular methodological solutions to those problems. I chose research exemplars that are relatively recent; that are typical of a certain method; and that are highly regarded by many scholars in the discipline. The last criterion does not mean they are above critique. What it means is that they are worth the time to criticize carefully. None of them should be dismissed lightly.

Think of this reading list not as the end of your education in research design, but as the beginning. The recommended readings are provided to help you dig deeper into the topic covered that week. I encourage you to read at least some of them.

While everyone will participate in seminar discussions, each week there will be two or three *facilitators*. You have to sign up for two seminars as facilitator (you may sign up for more than two if you wish), each time paired with someone else. The facilitators *must meet* once before class, at least for half an hour, to discuss the readings and identify interesting issues. At class, the facilitators will help me to facilitate the discussion.

You will also have six *small tasks* related to the topics we discuss to be completed *before* the class where the task is listed. Submit each through Canvas by midnight Sunday. These tasks are very simple in order to make you reflect on essential challenges their types pose for research.

EXPECTATIONS: GET IN THE PRACTICE OF WRITING AND REVISING

“I never understand anything until I have written about it.” Horace Walpole (1717-1797)

“How do I know what I think until I see what I say?” E.M. Foster (1879-1970)

The course will emphasize the practice of writing and revision both as a tool of developing ideas and as a means of communicating about what you have discovered. We will pay attention to the research exemplars that we read as works of writing in a particular *genre*. We will have four **written assignments** due throughout the quarter. Each assignment will be building toward your final paper and include the revision of the previous assignment.

One of the hardest things about writing is to get a feel for your audience. When I am writing this text, I know that my audience is you, and even though we have not yet met, after these years, I have a strong sense of what first-year sociology graduate students are like, what they want to find out and what I need to communicate. So, writing this is easy. I just have to anticipate your questions and decide whether or how to answer them. Those who write well and write a lot have a special sense of their readers. As a researcher, you write for your peers, and to be a successful scholar, you have to develop a deep understanding not just of your subject of inquiry but also of your readers. You can start with imagining the mockup of a smart, knowledgeable, kind but skeptical reader, with coffee cup in one hand, but your graduate education will flesh out this all-important fictitious figure in much more detail.

Revision is central to the life of a practicing social scientist. Most published social science that you read have been revised many, many times prior to publication. Top journals almost never accept articles without revision. Learning how to solicit advice and revise effectively is as important to the practice of social science as many of the other skills emphasized in methods classes. There is a *special symposium on the art of revision in sociology* in the journal [Sociologica 2022, 16/1](#). I recommend that you take a look at it. The short pieces are written in a very accessible style by leading sociologists. (At the end of the syllabus, I will give you some more articles on the art of writing articles.)

Over the course of the quarter, you will be expected to *have at least two one-on-one meetings with the Sociology Department Writing Tutor (Yasemin Taskin Alp)* to discuss your writing practice. **You will have to see her before the first draft is due on October 23.** Please don't wait until the last minute! **You will also have to see her in the second part of November to talk about the 3rd draft and the final paper. Those are due on November 27 and December 12, respectively.** You are encouraged to see her before the second paper is due. If you do that, do it a week in advance of the due date of **November 13.** The point of this course requirement is to create an opportunity for you to reflect on your writing practice in the presence of a skilled consultant.

You will *complete three written assignments during the quarter, plus a final writing assignment* that revises them into a research proposal. The proposal will be on a topic that most interests you at this time, but before you take your topic and run, you have to consult with me to make sure you are running in the right direction.

SO PLEASE COME AND SEE ME DURING THE FIRST WEEK TO DISCUSS YOUR TOPIC. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT (IN PERSON OR ON ZOOM).

The details of the assignments will be discussed at more length in class. All submissions are electronic through Canvas Turnitin. In brief, the assignments are these:

1. Frame a research question. Pose a research question, and explain *briefly* why it is theoretically important, and why previous studies have not yet settled it satisfactorily. Why should we care? (c. 3 pp.) Due to instructor on **October 23.**

2. *Describe your case selection.* Identify your cases and the rationale for choosing them or your sampling frame (if appropriate) and the method you will use to sample from that frame. Explain your design in light of your research question. Why is the proposed research the best way to answer your question? (c. additional 3-4 pp.) Due to instructor on **November 13**.

3. *Describe your methods of observing and recording data.* Explain how these methods answer your research question, and how they follow, complement, or improve upon other methods that have been used to answer your question. In what ways is your method the best way for your project? (c. additional 3 pp.). Due to the instructor on or before **November 27**.

4. *Final paper.* Revise and assemble the pieces into a coherent research proposal that frames a question and a plan to answer it. Due to the instructor on or before **December 12**.

You will not be expected to complete a research project of your own for this course. Ten weeks is too short. You will be expected to write a research proposal as your final paper. This is no artificial exercise: it should be a design for a study that you actually could (and, I hope, will) carry out this year and next. I will urge you to think of your job in graduate school as doing research, and to think of coursework as a means to that end— rather than thinking of research as a means to satisfy course requirements, which is precisely ass-backwards.

To practice writing a good research proposal is itself an important part of your professional training. The preparation of a written research proposal is the first step in a good research project. Such proposals, even when they are read by no one in particular, help us guide our own work in the relatively unsupervised research occupations that employ us. The initial written research proposal often provides the skeleton of the final research report. (Your dissertation prospectus is a research plan/proposal.) The use of research proposals to enlist collaborators and funders is a useful skill to acquire in graduate education, and it is an essential part of the professional life of many, perhaps most, working sociologists.

RECAP:

Weekly Readings – Perusall plus books (highlighted)

Six Small Tasks – written and brought to class

Three Assignments – consult with Writing Tutor, submit through Canvas

Final Research Proposal – submit through Canvas

The syllabus will be up on Canvas and also on my website

<http://www.akosronatas.com/courses.html>

Whenever there are slides, they will be up on Canvas after the class where they were shown.

To access library material from off campus, you will have to use the campus VPN. Here is the information you need:

<https://blink.ucsd.edu/technology/network/connections/off-campus/remote-desktop/index.html>

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

1. Questions and puzzles (10/2)

All research in sociology begins with some observation, hunches, insights that must be turned into a **research question**. A research question is a tool to guide your decisions. It is also a rhetorical device characteristic of the most common genres of sociological writing; research articles, for example, often begin with a question or puzzle of some kind. But the questions that guide our research at the beginning are sometimes different from those that we present in writing when we are trying to help others make sense of our research at the end. Getting to a research question is not easy. **Discovery** or theorizing are necessary to arrive at a good, interesting, and productive research question. We will consider where research questions and puzzles come from, how they work as tools for guiding research, and how they work as rhetorical devices for communicating about research results.

Required Readings:

Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery. Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. Norton (One copy is on Reserve at the Geisel Library)

Swedberg, Richard. 2014. *The Art of Social Theory*. Princeton University Press (e-book available from JSTOR in PDF)

Mears, Ashley. 2017. "Puzzling in Sociology: On Doing and Undoing Sociological Puzzles." *Sociological Theory* 35 (2): 138-146.

Healy, Kieran. 2017. "Fuck Nuance." *Sociological Theory* 35 (2): 118-127.

Recommended:

Becker, Howard. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade. How to Think About Your Research While Doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Lave, Charles A. and James G. March. 1993. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. Chapters 1,2. New York: University Press of America

Abend, Gabriel. (2008). The meaning of 'theory'. *Sociological theory*, 26(2), 173-199.

Davis, Murray S. 1971. That's interesting! Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of the social sciences*, 1(2), 309-344.

Godart, Frederic, Seong, Sorah and Phillips, Damon J. 2020. The sociology of creativity: Elements, structures, and audiences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46, pp.489-510.

Lazarsfeld, Paul F. 1949. The American soldier—an expository review. *Public opinion quarterly*, 13(3), pp.377-404.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FIRST CLASS:

Please do the required readings, especially Abbott and the two articles. Before you read Abbott, write down the research project you are interested in developing in this class. Apply any three heuristic gambits Abbott describes to your project. We will discuss those in class.

2. What are the researcher's obligations? (10/9)

*Sociology is a profession with an ethical code, and we have additional **ethical** obligations as members of the university community, as legal persons, and as moral human beings. Many of us would explain our motivations to do research by referring to some moral or ethical purpose. Many*

of the most profound controversies in our discipline concern real or perceived conflicts among ethical norms. It is a good idea to give some careful thought to your own ethical commitments at the beginning of your research career.

Required Readings:

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run. Fugitive Life in an American City*. Picador (e-book is available online through library)

Lubet, Steven. 2015. "Ethics on the Run." *The New Rambler*.

Goffman, Alice. A Reply to Professor Lubet's Critique.

Alex Kotlowitz. 2014. "Deep Cover. Alice Goffman's On the Run." *The New York Times*, June 28.

Rios, Victor. 2015. Review of On the Run, *AJS*

Cohen, Philip N. 2017. Review of On the Run. *Social Forces*

Burawoy, Michael. 2019. Empiricism and Its Fallacies. *Context*
American Sociological Association. [*Code of Ethics*](#).

Recommended:

UC San Diego Research Ethics Program, "[Resources for Research Ethics Education: Topics](#)." Web site.

Lubet, Steven. 2018. *Interrogating ethnography: Why evidence matters*. Oxford University Press

The Goode Affair

Goode, E. (2002). Sexual involvement and social research in a fat civil rights organization. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25(4), 501-534.

Bell, S. E. (2002). Sexualizing research: response to Erich Goode. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25(4), 535-539.

Saguy, Abigail C. 2002. Sex, inequality, and ethnography: Response to Erich Goode. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25(4), pp.549-556.

The Weitzman Affair

Peterson, Richard R. "A re-evaluation of the economic consequences of divorce." *American Sociological Review* (1996): 528-536.

Weitzman, Lenore J. "The economic consequences of divorce are still unequal: Comment on Peterson." *American Sociological Review* 61.3 (1996): 537.

Peterson, Richard R. "Statistical errors, faulty conclusions, misguided policy: reply to Weitzman." *American Sociological Review* 61.3 (1996): 539.

Lee, Felicia R. 1996. "Influential Study on Divorce's Impact Is Said to Be Flawed." *New York Times* May 9 <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/09/garden/influential-study-on-divorce-s-impact-is-said-to-be-flawed.html>

The Milton Rokeach Affair

Rokeach, Milton. *The three Christs of Ypsilanti*. New York Review of Books, 2011. (Originally published in 1964)

Podcast. Three Christs of Ypsilanti. <https://soundcloud.com/snapjudgment/the-three-christs-of-ypsilanti>

The Cyril Burt Affair

Hearnshaw, Leslie Spencer. 1981. *Cyril Burt: Psychologist*. Vintage.

Mackintosh, N. J. (Ed.). (1995). *Cyril Burt: Fraud or framed?* Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198523369.001.0001>

The Sokal and Bogdanoff Hoaxes

Sokal, Alan. 1996. Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity. *Social Text* #46/47, pp. 217-252 (spring/summer)

https://physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/transgress_v2/transgress_v2_singlefile.html

Sokal, Alan D., ed. *The Sokal hoax: The sham that shook the academy*. U of Nebraska Press, 2000.

Sokal, Alan, and Jean Bricmont. *Fashionable nonsense: Postmodern intellectuals' abuse of science*. Macmillan, 1999.

Butler, Delcan. 2002. Theses spark twin dilemma for physicists. *Nature* 420, 5; doi:10.1038/420005a

The Bogdanoff Affair. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bogdanov_affair

Collins, Harry. 2008. 'The Meaning of Hoaxes', pp 000-000 in Massimo Mazzotti, (ed) *Knowledge as Social Order: Rethinking the Sociology of Barry Barnes*, London: Ashgate <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/78173/1/wrkpaper-100.pdf>

COMMENTS:

This week the readings are organized around controversies or scandals. The Required Readings are about one particular controversy, the Recommended Readings are organized into scandals. Scandals are ethical controversies that provide superb openings to scrutinize ethical norms we often take for granted. The scandals uncover and articulate the ethical norms claimed to have been violated. They also serve as cautionary tales, enforcing those norms.

3. Research Design: The uses of comparison (10/16)

*Most research projects in sociology—perhaps all of them—involve learning from observation by using **comparison** of some kind. But what sorts of things are compared, to what ends, by means of what analytic techniques? We will discuss several different ways of using comparison, such as its use for analogical inspiration, for causal inference, for analytic clarification, or simply for revealing that things could be otherwise than they are.*

Required Readings:

Krippner, Greta R., and Daniel Hirschman. 2022. "The person of the category: the pricing of risk and the politics of classification in insurance and credit." *Theory and Society* 51/5: 685-727

Mahoney, James. 2004. "Comparative-historical methodology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 81-101.

Emigh, Rebecca J. 1997. The Power of Negative Thinking: The Use of Negative Case Methodology in the Development of Sociological Theory. *Theory and Society*, 26/5:649-684

Morgan, Stephen L., and Christopher Winship. 2015. *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research*. Second edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3-76).

Recommended:

Rona-Tas, Akos and Alya Guseva. 2014. *Plastic Money. Plastic Money: Constructing Markets for Credit Cards in Eight Postcommunist Countries*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press (e-book is available online through library)

- Ermakoff, Ivan. 2019. Causality and history: Modes of causal investigation in historical social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45, pp.581-606.
- Campbell, Donald T. and Cook, Thomas D. 1979. *Quasi-experimentation*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Ragin, Charles. 2014. *The Comparative Method Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, With a New Introduction. Berkeley: California University Press
- Simmons, Erica S., and Nicholas Rush Smith eds. 2021. *Rethinking Comparison. Innovative Methods for Qualitative Political Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bartlett, Lesley, and Frances Vavrus. 2017. *Rethinking Case Study Research. A Comparative Approach*. London: Routledge

Small Task #1.

Find an interesting *external* comparison for the subject you want to investigate. Complete the following sentence: [My topic] is like [an entirely different thing]. Then give a one sentence explanation pointing out the similarities.

E.g., your subject is immigration. Immigration is like marriage. Both involve a long-term, deep, and comprehensive commitment, usually done at an early age.

Find an interesting *internal* comparison for the subject you want to investigate. Explain in a sentence why this is an interesting comparison.

E.g., your subject is immigration. I want to compare refugees and economic migrants. Their motivation to migrate may result in different life trajectories in their new country.

4. Sampling and generalization (10/23) - FIRST PAPER IS DUE You submit it through Canvas.

*The social world we want to know about exceeds our individual experience. We often think of our experiences and observations as **examples** of other, more abstract, or general concepts or regularities. How do we determine which sorts of more general conclusions our specific experiences of observation can support? And if we can choose in advance what to observe, what logic should guide our choices to make it possible for us to draw the sorts of general conclusions reaching beyond our observations we want to be able to draw? We will discuss several different logics or rationales for case selection.*

Required Readings:

- Small, Mario Luis. 2009. “How Many Cases Do I Need?’ On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research.” *Ethnography* 10(1): 5-38.
- Lucas, Samuel Roundfield. 2016. “Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Probability and Nonprobability Moments in Experiment, Interview, Archival, Administrative, and Ethnographic Data Collection.” *Socius* 2: 1-24.
- Viterna, Jocelyn. 2006. “Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded: Explaining Women’s Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army.” *American Journal of Sociology* 112(1): 1-45.

Recommended:

- Lucas, Samuel Roundfield. 2014. “Beyond the Existence Proof: Ontological Conditions, Epistemological Implications, and In-Depth Interview Research.” *Quality and Quantity* 48: 387-408.

- Kalton, Graham. 1983. *Introduction to Survey Sampling*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Magnani, Robert, Keith Sabin, Tobi Saidel, and Douglas Heckathorn. 2005. "[Review of Sampling Hard-to-Reach and Hidden Populations for HIV Surveillance](#)." *AIDS* 19 (suppl.2): S67-S72.
- Moser, C.A. "Quota Sampling." 1952. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (General)*. 115(3): 411-23.
- Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: MacMillan.

Small Task #2

Take your calendar. If you haven't yet, mark the days when you have classes in the Fall. The quarter is ten weeks and two extra days in September. You will have 72, some with and some without classes. (Your population of days.) What is the ratio of the days *with* classes in the Fall? Say, you have only T and Th classes. That is 2×10 plus 1 (Sept 28) minus Thanksgiving (Thursday), or 20 days out of 72. So, 27.8% (your parameter). If you have MWF classes, you have 3×10 plus 1 (Sept 29) minus Veterans Day and Thanksgiving (Friday). 29 out of 72 or 40.3%.

Now take a random sample of 10 days from your calendar. (Your sample.) What is the ratio of the days with classes in your sample (statistic)?

This is how you do it:

Take two one-dollar bills. (It doesn't matter what denomination.) On each you will find an 8-digit number. Take the first two digits on the first bill. If it is more than 72 discard it, if not, find the day in your calendar corresponding to that number. Then move to the second and third digit and do the same. Once you are done with seventh and eighth digit, take the second bill and start again until you got your 10 days. (If you get the same number more than once, take the same day more than once.)

E.g., the number on the first bill is 38440125. You will be looking for the 38th day on your calendar starting with September 28, 2023. The next is 84. You discard it. The next is 44, so you find your 44th day. The next is 40 and so on.

Take those 10 days. What percentage of those are days with classes?

5. Asking questions (10/30)

*For the next several weeks we will consider techniques of gathering information or data. Why not just ask people who know? Many lay people used to identify social science with survey research. But surveys are merely a special form of interview research, just one way of gathering information about the social world by **asking** people questions. We will consider some exemplary interview studies. Our interest is in what is gained and what is lost by the decision to use this particular technique and its different versions. How much and under what conditions can we believe what people tell us? It may be instructive to compare the insights yielded by interview methods to the insights yielded by ethnographic fieldwork.*

Required Readings:

Binder, Amy J., Daniel B. Davis, and Nick Bloom. 2016. "Career Funneling: How Elite Students

- Learn to Define and Desire ‘Prestigious’ Jobs.” *Sociology of Education* 89 (1):20-39.
- Bell, Joyce M., and Douglas Hartmann. "Diversity in everyday discourse: The cultural ambiguities and consequences of “happy talk”." *American Sociological Review* 72.6 (2007): 895-914.
- Jerolmack, Colin and Shamus Khan. 2014. “[Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy](#).” *Sociological Methods and Research* 43(2): 178-209.
- Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Dykema, Jennifer. 2020. Advances in the science of asking questions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46, pp.37-60.

Recommended:

- Lareau, Annette. 2021. *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up*. University of Chicago Press. (This is an excellent and very practical book by one of the great ethnographers. It covers not just interviews but also ethnography, so I could have listed it for next week as well.)
- Rivera, Lauren. 2012. “Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms.” *American Sociological Review*. 77 (6): 999-1022.
- Weiss, Robert. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Science of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.
- Converse, Jean M., and Stanley Presser. 1986. *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications. (This is one of the classic books on survey questionnaire design from the hey-days of survey research.)
- Tourengeau, Roger. 2004.” [Survey Research and Societal Change](#).” *Annual Review of Psychology*
- Couper, Mick P. "New developments in survey data collection." *Annual Review of Sociology* 43 (2017): 121-145.
- Small, Mario L. and Cook, Jenna M. 2021. Using Interviews to Understand Why: Challenges and Strategies in the Study of Motivated Action. *Sociological Methods & Research*, p.0049124121995552.

Small Task #3

Ask a friend what s/he had for dinner ten days ago. Also ask what s/he remembers of that day. What did you learn about memory, recall and the reliability of responses? How would you go about answering these questions?

6. Observing people – gathering data (11/6)

*Sociologists use many different types of data from personal observations and surveys to digital footprint and genetic information. Today we will discuss an exemplar of **ethnographic** research and we will consider what survey research can add to personal observations.*

Required Readings:

Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted. Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Crown Books (e-book available online through library)

Desmond, Matthew, and Adam Travis. 2018. “Political Consequences of Survival Strategies among the Urban Poor.” *American Sociological Review*, 83/5:869–896

Recommended:

Katz, Jack. 2015. “[Situational Evidence: Strategies for Causal Reasoning from Observational Field](#)

Notes.” *Sociological Methods and Research* 44(1): 108-144.

Abramson, C. M., & Dohan, D. (2015). Beyond text: Using arrays to represent and analyze ethnographic data. *Sociological methodology*, 45(1), 272-319.

Small, Mario Luis and Jessica McCrory Calarco. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy. A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. Oakland, CA: University of California University Press

Small Task #4

In a few sentences, describe our seminar room SSB 414. You can even come to the room if you need to refresh your memory, just make sure you have time to write it up.

7. New types of data (11/13) - SECOND PAPER DUE

*In recent years new forms of data became **available** for sociologists. Technology has opened up enormous troves of information. Digital technology makes directly accessible many social phenomena for research, often in high volume and great detail. Genetic data becomes available for inclusion into our understanding of social processes. These new forms raise new questions about research ethics, design, generalization, and the role of human observations in research. We will see three examples of new research taking advantage of new type of data.*

Required Readings:

Cheng, Mengjie, Daniel Scott Smith, Xiang Ren, Hancheng Cao, Sanne Smith, and Daniel A. McFarland. 2023. "How New Ideas Diffuse in Science." *American Sociological Review* 88, no. 3 (2023): 522-561.

Browning, Christopher R., et al. 2021. "Neighborhoods, Activity Spaces, and the Span of Adolescent Exposures." *American Sociological Review* 86.2: 201-233.

Herd, Pamela, Jeremy Freese, Kamil Sicinski, Benjamin W. Domingue, Kathleen Mullan Harris, Caiping Wei, and Robert M. Hauser. "Genes, gender inequality, and educational attainment." *American Sociological Review* 84, no. 6 (2019): 1069-1098.

Recommended:

Conley, Dalton, and Jason Fletcher. 2017. *The Genome Factor*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press

Salganik, Matthew J. 2017. *Bit by Bit. Social Research in the Digital Age*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press

Alex Pentland. 2014. *Social Physics. How Social Networks Can Make Us Smarter*. New York: Penguin

DiMaggio, Paul. 2015. Adapting computational text analysis to social science (and vice versa). *Big Data & Society*, 2(2), 2053951715602908.

Edelmann, A., Wolff, T., Montagne, D. and Bail, C.A., 2020. Computational social science and sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46, pp.61-81.

Christopher A. Bail, Taylor W. Brown, and Marcus Mann. 2017. "Channeling Hearts and Minds: Advocacy Organizations, Cognitive-Emotional Currents, and Public Conversation." *American Sociological Review*, 82(6) 1188–1213

Evans, James and Foster, Jacob G. 2019. Computation and the sociological imagination. *Contexts*, 18(4), pp.10-15.

Flores, Rene D. 2017. Do anti-immigrant laws shape public sentiment? A study of Arizona's SB

- 1070 using Twitter data. *American Journal of Sociology*, 123(2), pp.333-384.
- Molina, Mario and Garip, Filiz. 2019. Machine learning for sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45, pp.27-45.
- Liu, Hexua, 2018. "Social and Genetic Pathways in Multigenerational Transmission of Educational Attainment." *American Sociological Review*, 2018, Vol. 83(2) 278–304

COMMENTS:

The use of genetic factors in sociological analysis has been controversial. Yet the connection between the body and social processes cannot be discounted and the complex interaction between biological and social forces should not be ignored just because of the difficult history of genetics in social research. Yet this topic will loop us back to our discussion on research ethics in Week 2. Big data raises a different set of ethical issues often connected to surveillance, privacy, and control.

8. Classifying things (11/20)

*What do we do with recorded observations—data—once we have them? Whatever else we do, we have to analyze them, and analysis may require us to typify or **classify** the observations that we have recorded. We will consider the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of classifying data by reading exemplars together with some methodological statements.*

Required Readings:

- Epstein, Lee, and Andrew Martin. 2005. "Coding Variables." *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement* 1: 321-7.
- Biernacki, Richard. 2014. "Humanist Interpretation versus Coding Text Samples." *Qualitative Sociology* 37: 173-189.
- Rona-Tas, Akos, Antoine Cornuejols, Sandrine Blanchemanche, Antonin Duroy, and Christine Martin. 2019. "Enlisting Supervised Machine Learning in Mapping Scientific Uncertainty Expressed in Food Risk Analysis." *Sociological Methods & Research*, 1-34
- Lee, Monica, and John Levi Martin. 2015. "Coding, Counting, and Cultural Cartography." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 3 (1): 1-33.
- Pfeffer, Carla. 2014. "I Don't Like Passing as a Straight Woman: Queer Negotiations of Identity and Social Group Membership." *American Journal of Sociology* 120 (1): 1-44.

Recommended:

- Grimmer, Justin, Margaret E. Roberts, and Brandon M. Stewart. 2022. *Text as Data: New Framework for Machine Learning and the Social Sciences*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press
- Campbell, John L., Charles Quincy, Jordan Osserman, and Ove K. Pedersen. 2013. "[Coding In-Depth Semistructured Interviews: Problems of Unitization and Intercoder Reliability and Agreement.](#)" *Sociological Methods and Research* 42 (3): 294-320.
- Abramson, Corey M., and Dan Dohan. 2015. "[Beyond Text: Using Arrays to Represent and Analyze Ethnographic Data.](#)" *Sociological Methodology* 0081175015578740, first published on April 17, 2015, as doi:10.1177/0081175015578740
- Hepzibah V. Strmic-Pawl, Brandon A. Jackson, and Steve Garner. 2018. "[Race Counts: Racial and Ethnic Data on the U.S. Census and the Implications for Tracking Inequality.](#)" *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, Vol. 4(1) 1–13

Fourcade, Marion and Kieran Healy. 2017. "[Classification Situations. Life Chances in the Neoliberal Era.](#)" *Historical Social Research*, 42/1: 23-51

Small Task #5

How would you classify pants (trousers) people wear? How would you classify music people listen to?

COMMENTS:

You will notice that earlier exemplars (for instance, Cheng et al 2023) heavily rely on classifications. Classification seems like only a tool of research but as Krippner 2017 on credit demonstrated, classifying is also a common social practice and a form of exercising power. Fourcade and Healey 2017 develop this point.

9. Measuring averages (11/27) – THIRD PAPER DUE

*Sociologists are sometimes interested in measuring what is **typical** of a social group or aggregate, and sometimes interested in measuring inequalities within or among groups, even countries. We'll familiarize ourselves with basic measurement jargon of the social sciences and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of some common approaches to measurement. We will look at an exemplar and pay special attention to how it measures complex concepts.*

Required Readings:

Wilkinson, Richard, and Kate Pickett. 2010. *The Spirit Level. Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. New York: Bloomsbury Press

Stevens, S. S. 1946. "On the Theory of Scales of Measurement." *Science* 103 (2684):677-80.

Bannigan, Katrina, and Roger Watson. 2009. "[Reliability and Validity in a Nutshell.](#)" *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 18 (23): 3237-43.

Recommended:

Brady, David. 2003. "Rethinking the Sociological Measurement of Poverty." *Social Forces*. 81 (3): 715-51.

Kalmijn, Wim and Ruut Veenhoven. 2005. "Measuring Inequality of Happiness in Nations." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 6: 357-96.

Mennicken, Andrea and Espeland, Wendy N. 2019. What's new with numbers? Sociological approaches to the study of quantification. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45, pp.223-245.

Mijs, Jonathan J. B. 2021. The paradox of inequality: Income inequality and belief in meritocracy go hand in hand. *Socio-Economic Review*, 19(1), pp.7-35.

Harford, Tim. 2021. *The Data Detective: Ten Easy Rules to Make Sense of Statistics*. Penguin.

Small Task #6

We are almost at the end of this class. Although, I hope that all of you have learned a lot, probably not all of you learned the same amount. How would you measure who learned more and who learned less in SOCG 200?

10. Organizing ideas, literature, and data – thinking WITH things (and people) (12/4)

In the research process you gather a large number of ideas, literature, and data. Keeping tabs on what

you have accumulated is an important and difficult task. Organizing what you collected is not just for making it easier to remember and find things in your files or memory but also to make discoveries by spotting new connections among the pieces.

*I want to impress on you that your mind can **be extended**, and you are not limited to what is inside your skull.*

We will discuss a few tricks, first and foremost visualization, and I will show you NVIVO, one of the many software products that are designed to organize unstructured information.

Here is an introductory video for NVIVO:

Short one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnBBJDW4RhI>

Longer one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mS4lWyHuWg>

Recommended:

Healy, Kieran, and James Moody. "Data visualization in sociology." *Annual review of sociology* 40 (2014): 105-128.

Clark, Andy, and David Chalmers. "The extended mind." *analysis* 58.1 (1998): 7-19.

Paul, Anne Murphy. 2021. *The Extended Mind: The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

FINAL PAPER DUE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12

SOME ADDITIONAL READINGS:

Alvesson, M. & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating Research Questions Through Problematization. *Academy of Management Review*, 36: 247-271.

Balmer, Andrew and Anne Murcott. 2017. *The Craft of Writing in Sociology. Developing the argument in undergraduate essays and dissertations*. Manchester University Press

Barley, Stephen R. (2006) When I Write My Masterpiece: Thoughts On What Makes A Paper Interesting. *Academy of Management Journal* 49(1): 16-20.

Becker, Howard S. 2008. *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. University of Chicago Press.

Calarco, Jessica McCrory. *A field guide to grad school: Uncovering the hidden curriculum*. Princeton University Press, 2020.

Zinsser, William. 2006. *On Writing Well* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Harper Collins