

SOC 332: Methods of Inquiry

1. ASSIGNMENT

Write a literature review using at least 5 articles of original research.

2. WHAT IS A REFEREED JOURNAL ARTICLE?

A journal covers new developments in scientific, scholarly and professional topics and has articles which are based on qualitative and quantitative research; therefore, journal articles typically supplement a lack of advertising and photographs with graphs and charts of data. Journal articles are generally more in-depth and unbiased than articles from newspapers and magazines, which tend to cover news and current events, and journal articles almost universally cite references, where newspapers often deliberately do not identify their sources. There are several qualities that help identify journals:

1. The word *journal* is in the title:

For example, *The American Journal of Nursing*

2. The journal is affiliated with an organization or association:

For example, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*

3. The title is unfamiliar:

For example, *The Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*

4. Journals are generally not available at bookstores or grocery stores:

For example, not one of the three examples above is available at a newsstand

3. SEARCHING FUNDAMENTALS

There are two ways to search for information: to search by word and to search by idea. To search by word is called keyword searching -- keyword just means important word. In keyword searching you determine your search terms; you have greater flexibility but you must try multiple searches using different spellings and synonyms in order to match all the variations authors could use. Consequently, you will get results not related to your idea. Alternatively, to search by idea is called subject searching. Subject searching is very organized and uses only librarian-determined terms; you find your terms -- usually called Subject Headings or Descriptors -- and you search for them. Try using this procedure:

1. Perform a keyword search using important terms that define your topic
2. Find a good result and look at its Subject Heading
3. Perform a subject search using the Subject Heading you found.

4. MAKE A MENU OF YOUR SEARCH TERMS

Term 1

race
racial
ethnic
ethnicity

AND

Term 2

poverty
income
class
socioeconomic

AND

Term 3

academic achievement
school success

Use 'OR'
between
synonyms

Use 'AND' between terms

For example:

race or racial or ethnic or ethnicity

AND poverty or income or class or socioeconomic

AND academic achievement or school success

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5. SEARCHING TIPS

- Think before you type. Really. Take a minute and think: it will make all the difference
- Avoid just typing in your research question, like “effect of race and poverty on school success”
- Synonyms: search for all the different words used to express one idea by using 'OR' between synonyms. For example, 'race or racial or african-american or african american or afro-american or black or negro'
- Remember: you're trying to find the words authors used, so you must search all word variations, including synonyms and spelling variations, like pluralizations and English spellings, like behaviour
- Use words from good articles to get ideas for other search terms
- When searching in library databases start by doing title searches or abstract searches
- Search using fewer terms because the more you put in the less you get back

6. USING DATABASES TO IDENTIFY ARTICLES

- Sociological Abstracts -- Abstracts of journal articles, monographs, conference papers and dissertations in sociology, the social sciences and related disciplines, from 1960 to the present
- Social Services Abstracts -- Abstracts of dissertations, book reviews & articles from 1,400 serials in social work, human services, social welfare, social policy, & community development
- ERIC -- Abstracts of articles and reports on education

7. USING SOURCES TO LOCATE JOURNALS

- 360 Link / List of E-journals -- An online list of journals available through our databases
- List of Print Journals -- The guide to what we own in print
- Academic Search Premier -- Full-text coverage of over 3,600 peer-reviewed journals
- ProQuest -- Full-text coverage of articles originally from magazines, newspapers, and journals
- JSTOR -- An archive of core scholarly journals starting with first issues from the 19th century
- ScienceDirect -- Full-text journal articles in science, technology, and medicine

8. ASA CITATION STYLE

ASA Style Guide: In the Ready Reference collection: REF HM 586 .A54 1997

Make A Citation Web Site: <http://citation.sunyit.edu>

9. VARIABLES

Some variables are difficult to operationalize, for example, race and sexual orientation. We will discuss in class sources useful in defining and measuring such variables.