

## Academic Writing and Citation Handout for Sociology Students – R. Pires

You are encouraged to submit rough drafts of your assignments to the instructor for feedback at [rpires@valleycollege.edu](mailto:rpires@valleycollege.edu) and to seek clarification when you have questions. When completing assignments, always read the instructions thoroughly. Writing is a skill and just as with any skill, practice makes perfect. Don't get discouraged!

**Format** – whether you're writing a discussion response, short answer, essay, or term paper, academic writing requires that you organize your thoughts clearly to the reader including differentiating between your own thoughts and those of others in the form of citations. This is an example of a citation: (Jones, 2013, p. 20). When a citation is placed after or within a sentence, (not at the end of a paragraph), the reader is able to distinguish which sentences *within* a paragraph are the writer's own work and which sentences *within* the paragraph are paraphrased or direct quotes from an outside source such as a textbook, instructor lecture, video, or website, etc.

**Defense** – you're expected to express your own personal viewpoints, opinions, or experiences and then defend your thinking with scholarly sources. Scholarly sources are used as evidence to justify your thinking and include work by discipline experts (i.e. sociologists). In this class you will mainly use the textbook as a scholarly source to validate your views and experiences. In college it is not acceptable to only write summaries. Think of academic writing as weaving a basket. Each strand is interwoven with other strands including your **personal thinking** about the **topic** supported by **evidence from scholarly sources** such as a textbook. Defending your thinking with evidence through the use of citations is the foundation of critical thinking.

**Citations** – when presenting or referring to someone else's work you as the writer **must** give credit to the other author(s) or source(s) in the form of a citation at the end of the sentence or incorporated within the sentence itself and placed in a parenthesis for example like this: (Jones, 2013, p. 20). The reader must be able to distinguish between your own thinking and information that came from elsewhere. Even when you use your own words to summarize (paraphrase) another source instead of a direct quote – you must still provide a citation to let the reader know that this not your original thought(s).

This is an example how you will format citations from our required textbook. This example follows the APA short citation style.

If you have the 11<sup>th</sup> edition then citations are formatted this way: (Henslin, 2015, p. 202).

If you have the 10<sup>th</sup> edition then citations are formatted this way: (Henslin, 2013, p. 202).

**Spelling and Grammar** - written work with spelling and grammatical errors is confusing to read. Errors may be seen by others as a reflection of the writer's lack of seriousness or professionalism. It is like showing up in flip flops to a formal event. You should always spell and grammar check your work by using *spell check* in your computer's word document.

**Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty** – is work directly copied or summarized from elsewhere such as textbook, article, website, video, instructor lecture, or another student's work without giving credit in the form of a citation. Citations are incorporated within the body of the writing and NOT just at the end of the assignment or at the end of a paragraph. A Works Cited page at the end of an assignment are expanded citations allowing the reader to look up the scholarly sources cited.

**Other Scholarly Sources** – even though in this class you will be using the textbook as the main scholarly source to defend your thinking, you should be aware of other popular scholarly sources. These include research papers found in scientific journals, and professional websites such as those ending in .gov and .edu. These are examples of scholarly works because they are written by experts and researchers in particular fields.

Most newspaper and magazine articles are **not** considered scholarly because they are written by journalists who are not discipline experts such as scientists. Websites ending in .com are commercial websites and Wikipedia (anyone can post on Wiki) is not considered scholarly or academic but rather a source of general information.

*The Writing Center located on campus or online has tutors and workshops available to assist you in more detail (www.valleycollege.edu – click on Student Services).*

Go to the following website to learn about APA citation style:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>

For this class you're required to use the APA short citation format which looks like the examples below. Remember that when you summarize or paraphrase work from another source, you have to cite. Also remember that when you copy directly from another source, you also have to put the copied work in "quotation marks" and provide the citation. In the examples below, note that the sentence period is placed after the actual citation itself. Also note that each of the three APA citation examples below include the author, copyright year, and page number.

### **Short quotations**

If you are directly quoting from a work, you will need to include the author, year of publication, and the page number for the reference (preceded by "p."). Introduce the quotation with a signal phrase that includes the author's last name followed by the date of publication in parentheses.

According to Jones (1998), "Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time" (p. 199).

Jones (1998) found "students often had difficulty using APA style" (p. 199); what implications does this have for teachers?

If the author is not named in a signal phrase, place the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number in parentheses after the quotation.

She stated, "Students often had difficulty using APA style" (Jones, 1998, p. 199), but she did not offer an explanation as to why.

## Example of Academic Writing

The following is an example of academic writing. The footnotes are included for explanation purposes only.

*In one paragraph, discuss the link between the selection of marriage partners and social class.*

It has been shown that one's choice of a marriage partner is related to his/her social class. [1]  
"Most people marry others of their own socioeconomic status and of the same or similar education background" (Strong, 2012, p. 287). [2]

One of the reasons may be that there are approximately 60% of women in the workforce (www.bls.gov). [3]

The workplace may be a contributor to attracting people of similar socioeconomic and education backgrounds. [4]

Still, people with the same social class status may share similar values and lifestyles (Henslin, 2011, p. 202) resulting from their upbringing and therefore be more comfortable in relating to their intimate partner. [5]

This might include having similar conflict resolution styles, spending habits, and interests. [6]

So while romantic love is a cultural value in the United States (Henslin, 2011, p. 102); social class may have just as much of an influence on the selection of marriage partners as love. [7]

In my opinion sexual attraction is important but it may be that since people of similar social class backgrounds interact in similar social environments, sexual attraction might follow social class rather than vice versa as the mass media likes us to believe when it shows people of different economic backgrounds falling in love. [8]

- [1] Introduction statement will be supported by personal viewpoints and scholarly sources.
- [2] Sentence was **directly copied** from a textbook (scholarly source) to support and defend introduction statement and therefore needs to be placed in **quotes and cited**.
- [3] **Summary of information** from scholarly source and therefore **needs a citation**.
- [4] Personal **opinion** based on the information from previously cited scholarly source(s).
- [5] Author is using information from textbook to defend and support one's own thoughts so **the part that came from the scholarly source needs to be cited**.
- [6] Author's **own thoughts** based on information from earlier cited scholarly source.
- [7] The author is referring to information from text and therefore a citation is needed. The second part of the sentence is the author's own thinking.
- [8] Conclusion written in author's own thinking about the topic.

Works Cited Page - Optional for our class since we will all be working from the same sources.

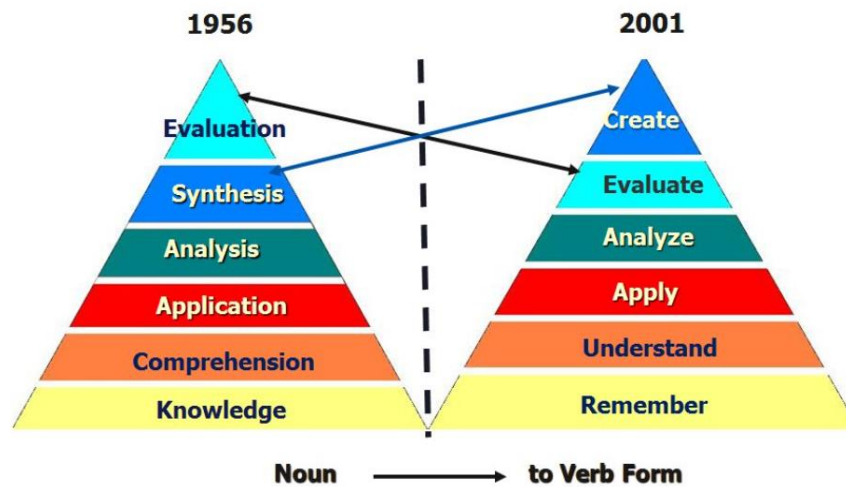
Bureau of Labor Statistics: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

Henslin, J. (2011). Essentials of sociology. 9th Ed. Pearson Publishers.

Strong, B., DeVault, C., and Cohen, F.C. (2012). The Marriage and Family Experience. 10<sup>th</sup> Ed. Cengage Learning.

## Bloom's Taxonomy and Learning Domains – Critical Thinking Handout – R. Pires

Education in the United States is based on *Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains* created by Bloom in 1956 and revised in 2001 by Anderson and Krathwol (Source: thesecondprinciple.com).



Curriculum in grades K-12 revolves around **comprehension** and **knowledge**. Depending on the quality of your high school education, and to prepare students for college, high school teachers begin to expose students to **application** and **analysis** skills. This level of learning takes place during the first two years of college in your general education transfer level 100 and 200 level courses, such as this course. You're still engaged in understanding theories, and key terms and your **comprehension** is assessed for example through multiple choice exams, but written assignments require you to practice using critical thinking skills through **analysis** and **application**.

Students who transfer to a four year university to earn a bachelor's degree focus on specific courses within their major and these courses are no longer as much about comprehension but require students to **evaluate** and **synthesize** different sources to practice developing new ideas. Evaluation usually occurs through the examination of strengths and weaknesses of original scientific research studies and original writings by discipline experts. Students write papers in which scholarly sources are put together (synthesis) and used as evidence to reach conclusions (evaluate).

Students who continue with their education into graduate school (masters and doctorate degrees) now use their analysis, evaluation, and synthesis skills to **create** new knowledge. This takes place through the student conducting their own scientific research studies with the guidance of professors who now act less as teachers and more as mentors. In order to be awarded a graduate degree, students must present and defend their research (referred to as *thesis* or *project* for master's degree and *dissertation* for doctorate degree/Phd).

So as you can see, learning takes places from the most basic level of comprehension, to the highest level via the creation of new knowledge. Original knowledge cannot be created without the scaffolding of synthesis, evaluation, application, and comprehension skills.

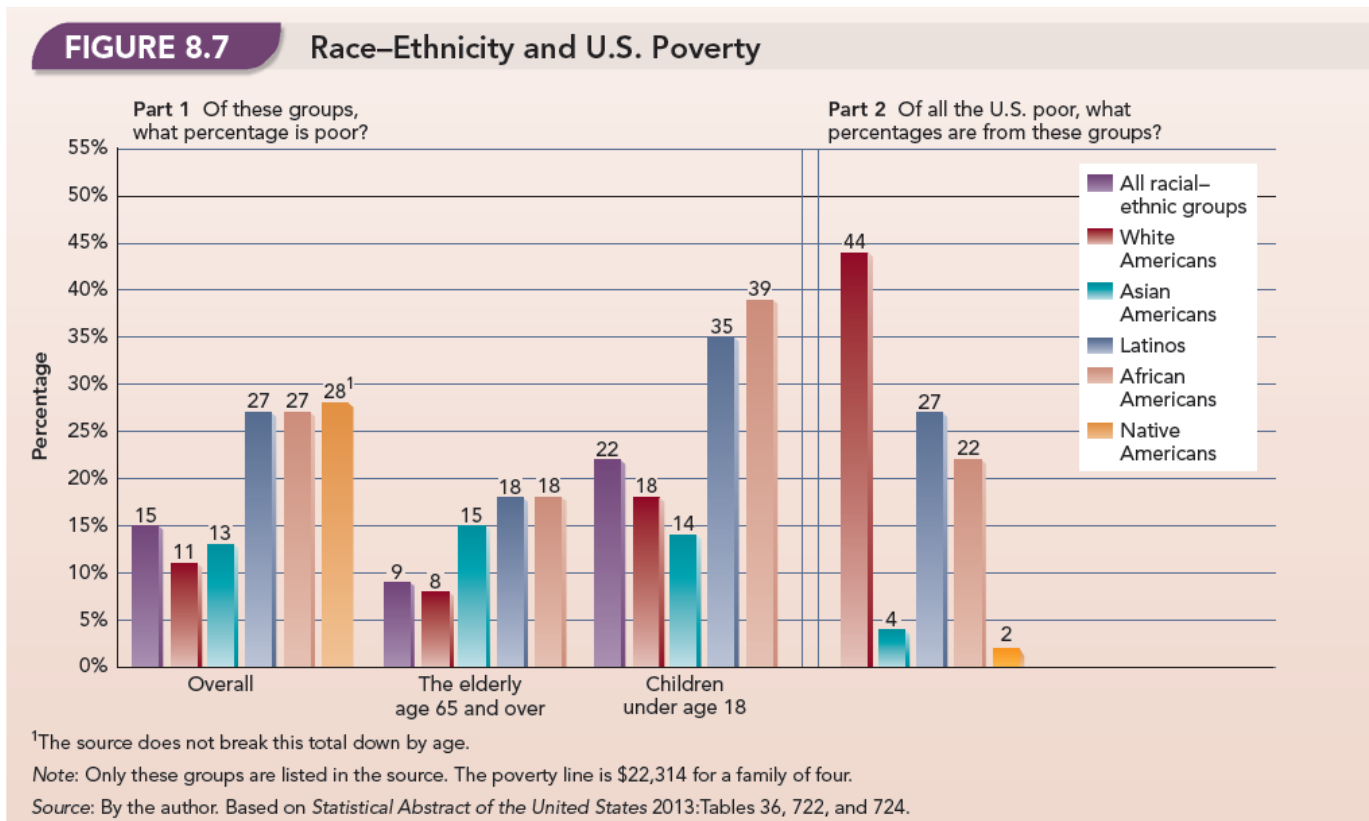
Course syllabi include course objectives. Each course objective begins with a Bloom Taxonomy verb. This will give you an idea of the skill set and level of learning that will take place in the course.

Since SOC 100 is a college level course, you are therefore required to develop higher level critical thinking skills through various written assignments.

## Interpreting Data Handout – R. Pires

Sociology is a scientific discipline and sociologists rely on different types of data to understand social life. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines data as “factual information (as measurements or statistics) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation” (www.merriam-webster.com).

Throughout the semester, we will examine statistical data such as poverty, crime, employment, and graduation rates (percentages) to **analyze** social life by **applying** different sociological theories (explanations) and key sociological concepts and terms to help us reach conclusions. When analyzing data, sociologists often compare different demographic groups. Statistical data can however be presented in different ways which can confuse beginning sociology students. Examine Figure 8.7:



Source: Henslin, 2015, p. 242

Part 1 of the above figure shows that 11% of white Americans are poor when compared to the poverty rates (percentages) of other ethnic groups but Part 2 shows that of all ethnic groups, 44% are white Americans. This can be misleading if one does not understand the different ways data can be presented.

Let’s say we’re studying unemployment data in different states. For simplicity, we’re going to keep population numbers small.

City	Population	Unemployed Numbers	Unemployment Rate
Los Angeles	10,000	1,000	10%
San Bernardino	1,000	100	10%
Colton	100	10	10%

You can see that since Los Angeles has a larger population, it also has the most unemployed people. However when we control for population differences by dividing the number of unemployed by the total population in each city, then we see that all three cities have the same unemployment rate (percentage) of 10%. However if we add up all of the unemployed people in all three cities (1,110), we can conclude that 90% of all these unemployed people come from Los Angeles (1,000 unemployed Los Angelenos divided by 1,110 total unemployed people = 90%).

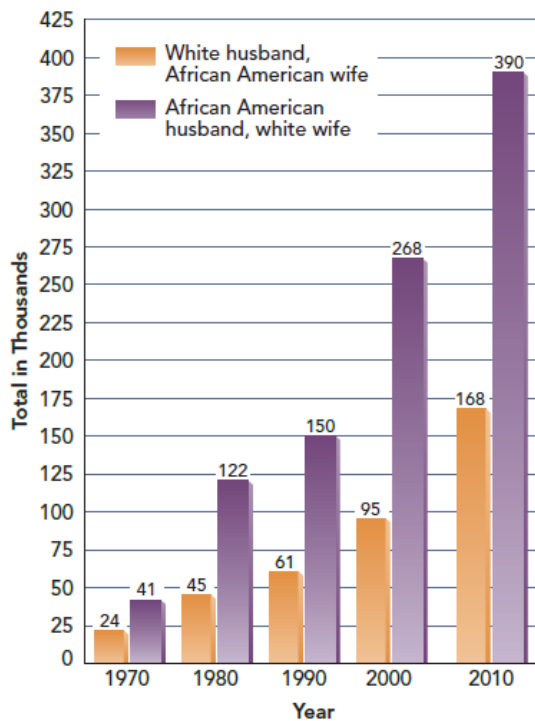
So back to the Figure 8.7. Since white Americans are the largest racial-ethnic population group in the United States, there is going to be more white poor as a percentage (part 2). But when we control for population differences among the different racial-ethnic groups, we see that white Americans have the lowest percentage of poverty (part 1).

Most of the time it is more meaningful for sociologists to control for population differences in order to make conclusions. So in Figure 8.7 part 1 we can read the data this way:

- For every 100 Native Americans, 28 or 28% were poor in 2013.
- For every 100 African Americans, 27 or 27% were poor in 2013.
- For every 100 Latinos, 27 or 27% were poor in 2013.
- For every 100 Asian Americans, 13 or 13% were poor in 2013.
- For every 100 White Americans, 11 or 11% were poor in 2013.
- For every 100 Americans, 15 or 15% were poor in 2013.

Another way data can be presented is to examine total numbers which is usually presented in thousands such as in Figure 12.3 below.

**FIGURE 12.3** Marriages between Whites and African Americans:  
The Race–Ethnicity of the Husbands and Wives



Source: (Henslin, 2015, p. 376)

Source: By the author. Based on Statistical Abstract of the United States 1990:Table 53; 2013:Table 60.