Writing in the Field of Sociology Study Sheet

Goals for this Study Sheet

This study sheet is going to highlight some various ideas and methods that should be used when approaching a sociology paper. The goal of writing most sociology papers is convey information as there are ways of structuring, relaying, and developing information that are unique to writing a paper in this specific field. If you’ve just been assigned an essay on a complex topic and need help getting started, this is the study sheet for you!

What Are Sociology Paper About?

Simply put, for this kind of paper, you are going to be researching a topic or topics, looking at data and various studies, then explaining it in a comprehensible way. Sociological papers differ from literary, philosophy, history, etc. papers in multiple ways. In fact, this field is often looked down upon as a science because much of it is based on developing theory. It is also seen as a new science relative to its counterparts. This however, fails to recognize that the same methods that go into proving a hypothesis in physics, chemistry or biology can be used in sociology. Though the data may contain more variables and be more challenging to quantify, the results shown when data and statistics are used correctly shouldn’t be discounted. In sociology there is very little room for opinion. Studying people and the systems they create to help us better understand of the world is important. It is necessary for social progress, helping the disenfranchised and bettering humanity. Such an important topic of study should only be approached with tested scientific methods. This leads into our first point and the first step you should take.

Developing a Hypothesis/Question/Claim
This portion is important to developing a thesis. Which is to say that you will be identifying a problem, question, or debated topic. Once you do that you are most likely going to either develop your own hypothesis or find one that has already been proposed by another sociologist. Often you will have to look for ways that two or more variable relate to each other, and consider why that may be the case.

Example: Are aspects of social background, class, gender, age or ethnicity a predictor of poverty?

Research

Once you have your topic, it’s time to research. There are two essential types of sociological evidence:

- Quantitative data are based on surveys, censuses, and statistics. These provide large numbers of data points, which is particularly useful for studying large-scale social processes, such as income inequality, population changes, changes in social attitudes, etc.

- Qualitative data, comes from participant observation, in-depth interviews, data and texts, as well as from the researcher’s own impressions and reactions. Qualitative research gives insight into the way people actively construct and find meaning in their world.

All research, of course, must be peer reviewed and cited to hold any weight as a source.

Construction

When it comes to the writing portion of a sociology paper you might be using analysis, rhetoric or argument to address your topic. Regardless of the method you are working with it’s vital to be presenting your evidence in a clear and concise fashion. Try to avoid bogging down your paper with information that isn’t relevant. The most time consuming and challenging part of sociology papers is finding reliable data that pertains directly to your chosen topic. If you have been thorough in your research and gathered
enough reliable sources, the writing will be the easiest part. Once you have reached the end of your paper and everything is in order, it’s time to conclude. Your conclusion should not be reiterating all of your research. Instead, it should offer final information that helps tie the already presented material together. Think of it as a way to help reinforce ideas, rather than a way to restate.

**In Conclusion**

Writing about sociological concepts can be challenging because of how vast and diverse the field is. Most of the concepts that you will be writing about have already been addressed and researched. This is good news for you because you have a near infinite amount of information that you can use as evidence in your writing. By choosing a topic, doing the research, and writing the paper, you take control over a vital part of your own education. What you learn in the process, if you do it conscientiously, is far greater than what shows up in the paper or what is reflected in the grade.