

Sociology Genre Guide for Tutors



Sociology writing involves the use of evidence, theories, and prior research to support an overarching conclusion about a social structure. The many forms that sociological documents can assume make this genre unique in the social sciences. This genre guide describes the four main types of documents that tutors will most frequently encounter, some major sociological theories that often frame these works, and tutoring tips specific to this genre.

Literature Review

- **Goal:** To compile information from existing literature on a particular topic. This genre often focuses on a particular sociological theory and illustrates examples of this theory in society.
- **Necessary components:** Variety of sources on the topic of interest, thorough description of theory, and application of theory to the writer's self or to society.
- **Tutor tips:** These works may not be argumentative, and that is acceptable! However, some tutees may modify or extend existing theories in an argumentative fashion. In either case, discourage overreliance on quotes and look for a narrative arc.

Theory

- **Goal:** To illustrate the subtleties of a sociological theory by providing applications of the theory in real world contexts.
- **Necessary components:** Detailed definitions of the theories used, the historical evolution of the theories, and applications of theories to research or real world examples.
- **Tutor tips:** The tutor should defer to the tutee on content issues. However, the tutor can help with logical links and make sure that the tutee is not overextending their theory beyond specific examples. Beginning writers in sociology often mistakenly stray toward overgeneralization.

Personal Narrative

- **Goal:** To show how sociological processes affect everyday life, particularly on the level of the individual.
- **Necessary components:** Definition of sociological imagination, application of sociological imagination, justification of why it applies to their narrative. Definition on back.
- **Tutor tips:** These papers will often look and read like an analytical essay, so the tutor should be able to use most standard editing/tutoring conventions in these papers.

Research

- **Goal:** To provide qualitative or quantitative evidence to support a thesis or hypothesis.
- **Necessary components:** Rigid structure including abstract, introduction, methods, and results/discussion. Evidence can originate from a qualitative or quantitative source. See ASA style guide.
- **Tutor tips:** The introduction and discussion are likely most accessible to the tutor. The tutor should use nondirective tutoring in the methods and results sections because they are entrenched in conventions specific to sociology.

Major theories and concepts

- Structural functionalism: a macro-level theory asserting that individual structures in society (e.g. government, industry, media) are important and necessary for a functional society.
- Conflict theory: a macro-level theory that assumes the existence of a fundamental tension between “haves” and “have nots.” This conflict between competing interests is the driving force behind societal change.
- Symbolic interactionism: a micro-level theory that views society as the product of everyday social interactions and describes how people use symbols to create meaning.
- Sociological imagination: the ability to connect aspects of an individual’s life to seemingly impersonal and remote historical forces.



Tutor tips for any sociology paper

1. Request that the tutee thoroughly explains their guiding question at the beginning of the session.
2. Defer to the student’s knowledge of sociology conventions and assignment expectations.
3. Look for an hourglass organization—the paper should begin with large themes, move into specific research, and then draw more general (but focused) conclusions.
4. Check for focus by confirming that all writing links back to the overall guiding question.
5. Encourage straightforward language.
6. Remove broad overgeneralizations.
7. Confirm with the tutee that the evidence logically supports the derived conclusion without overextending the data.
8. Verify that the tutee included their motivation for writing the paper.
9. Discourage clear-cut conclusions. The writer should always consider other perspectives, examine gray areas, and incorporate conflicting data into their argument.
10. Verify that all data and evidence is explained. Students often assume the reader will know how the data supports their argument without explaining it.

Two Kicks Forward, One Kick Back: A Content Analysis of Media Discourses on the 1999 Women's World Cup Soccer Championship

By: Neal Christopherson, Michelle Janning, and Eileen Diaz
McConnell

[Media messages about the role of women in sport and society are communicated to millions of people via television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. These are venues in which the mixed messages directed toward women, and the structure of those messages, can be analyzed, thus contributing to scholarship in gender and sports. In a discussion of media coverage of the 1996 Olympics, Andrews (1998) articulated that media portrayal of sporting events contained the “complex illusion of gender equality and emancipation” (p. 11).] This also happened with the coverage of the 1999 Women's World Cup, and is central to our argument...

Successful introduction to broad topic that narrows down into specifics. Also references past work.

In general, contradictions in media coverage serve to support preexisting gender ideologies, and perhaps even represent an attempt to make the strange, but increasingly common, figure of the female athlete more familiar to an audience. [Our hypothesis is that media coverage of the 1999 Women's World Cup will present these subjective and contradictory gender images, and the structure of this presentation will lend insight into the popularity of the event.]

The hypothesis presents the evidence, how the information will be analyzed, and the desired outcome.

In the following analysis, we examine contradictions in newspaper coverage of the 1999 Women's World Cup. [Our research seeks to answer three basic questions.] First, did the media present contradictory images and messages about gender, specifically regarding women's role in sport? [We hypothesize that the answer to this first question will be affirmative, and that all three contradictions discussed above will be evident.] Second, what was the specific structure of those contradictions?

Anchor sentence provides organization. Explanation of expectations and links back to previous information.

Further analysis revealed that media coverage of the Women's World Cup reflected the contradictions surrounding women in American society, [as nearly 35% of the articles contained at least one contradiction. Table 3 presents the frequency of occurrence for the three contradictory images of women of interest in this study. The nature and effects of these contradictions will be discussed in-depth in the following sections.]

Table 3 Percentage of Articles Reflecting Contradictions

Contradiction	Percentage of total articles (<i>N</i> = 576)*
Feminine versus masculine terms	19.3% (111)
Sex/Body versus motherhood/family	7.8% (45)
Positive comment on status of women versus feminine terms/negative status	29.4% (169)
Total articles with contradictions	34.4% (198)

*Actual counts in parentheses.

[Past research] has suggested that the contradictions are problematic if the "feminine" experience is devalued. [Our research] suggests that the contradictory images of femininity in women's soccer actually place value on the specifically female experience. Sometimes the success of these women as role models was due to the fact that they maintained elements of femininity at the same time they prevailed in athleticism. [The question remains,] however, whether this is a positive or negative message for young girls and about women in society.

Data seamlessly integrated into discussion with clear reference to associated table. The concluding sentence frames the upcoming argument.

Cited statistic readily observed in the referenced table.

Clear signposts that orients the research and suggests future research areas.