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Sociological Research Methodology: An Introductory Cross-Sectional-Study for Jordanian Entry-Level Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

This article is intended as an introductory cross-sectional-study of works on social research writing. It is meant for those interested in social research writing of all levels, generally speaking, but for Jordanian entry-level undergraduate students in particular. It covers the scientific method of social inquiry, including questions of how to formulate a research problem, how to gather references and how to actually write research, keeping in mind that research is a *circular* rather than *linear* process. It is the hope of the author that Jordanian entry-level undergraduate students especially will find the works summarized in this article, in addition to the research tools they discuss, useful. Moreover, this study is intended as a contribution to the subject of sociological research methodology as a whole.

Key words: Sociology; Research methodology; Introductory; Jordanian entry-level undergraduates

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INTRODUCTION

A persistent problem encountered with college professors in Jordan and Jordanian entry-level undergraduate students is lack of knowledge as to the steps necessary to take in order to successfully write social research.

This is particularly the case in the field of sociology. The following article is meant to speak to this problem, which is indeed a research problem *in itself*, too often ignored in Jordanian educational institutions and in dire need of being addressed. Though its main target audience includes all those interested in engaging in social research writing, it is the author's hope that Jordanian entry-level undergraduate students will exceptionally benefit. Therefore, a comparative study of the works on social research writing the author sees as best in the field will be covered, segmented in a manner which will address the following issues: overview of the research process; components of research; conducting research; the debate between qualitative and quantitative research; case studies; research methods; data collection and analysis; philosophy of science.

2. RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

This introductory cross-sectional-study conducted a comparative summary of works on social research writing in order to provide a broad synopsis of what the author finds to be the best works in the field. Generally speaking, it is intended for all levels of those interested in social research writing. However, it is specifically designed for Jordanian entry-level undergraduate students. It covers the following topics: the scientific method of social inquiry, including questions of how to formulate a research problem, how to gather references and how to actually write up research, keeping in mind that research is a *circular* rather than *linear* process.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Overview of the Research Process

In the *Craft of Research*, Williams, Colomb and Booth (2003) discuss the importance of research to every field

imaginable- how research “stands behind every new technology, product, or scientific discovery- and most of the old ones...[making it] the world’s biggest industry” (2003, p.9). They add that research serves as “the source of most of what we all believe,” for without which, “we would be locked in the opinions of the moment, either prisoners of what we alone experience or dupes to everything we hear” (2003, pp.9-10). The authors stress the practical uses of research application in noting how trustworthy, reliable research can help us make well-informed decisions that sometimes effect major aspects of our lives; for example, with the Enron example of how investors made a poor choice in supporting the company when “deceptive bookkeeping [and] faked research was exposed” (2003, p.11).

This leads us to the question: what is research? Research in its simplest terms entails “[the gathering of] information to answer a question that solves a problem” (2003, p.10). By giving us examples of everyday problem solving that involves basic research, the authors move on to emphasize the importance of doing research in writing. Writing up research causes us to serve as a link within an intellectual (and perhaps historical) chain by requiring us to rely on previous scholars for credible information and giving us the opportunity to serve as scholars of today for researchers of tomorrow.

The authors discuss three main reasons for writing up research; the first reason mentioned is that research in writing helps researchers to remember what they are writing *as they are writing* rather than trying to collect all the data to be used in the project before writing anything and then dealing with the pressure of getting everything out at once or, even worse, “misremembering” information (2003, p.12). Writing up research also helps researchers to better understand their own thoughts and perhaps opens doors to discover ideas that were not fully matured beforehand:

When you arrange and rearrange the results of your research in new ways, you discover new connections, contrasts, complications, and implications. Even if you could hold in mind everything you found, you would need help to line up arguments that pull in different directions, plot out complicated relationships, sort out disagreements among experts...Writing supports thinking not just by helping you understand better what you have found, but by helping you find in it larger patterns of meaning. (2003, pp.12-13)

Lastly, the authors emphasize writing as a means to gain perspective. Introverted thinking is not the same as the outward expression. Thoughts are given life when “[they get] out of your head and onto paper, where you can see them in the clearer light of print, a light that is always brighter and usually less flattering” (2003, p.13). The authors point out that formatting standards within this *rhetorical community* (2003, p.14) serve as norms among researchers that are “traditional forms and plans [that are] more than empty vessels into which you pour

your findings. Those forms have evolved to help writers see their ideas in the brighter light of their readers’ expectations and understanding” (2003, p.14). Also, in terms of readers’ expectations, writing within a framework that is understood and complies with the general expectations of the academic community better serves to answer anticipated questions; also, it becomes easier for readers to see that not only are you putting forth your own idea or addressing a research question perhaps similar to their own, but you have tested and perhaps rejected other researchers’ previous analyses- which makes the researcher more trustworthy and authoritative in the eyes of his/her readers.

The authors move on to discuss the importance of understanding and defining the roles of both the author and reader in writing a research report. To do so properly, one casts the reader a particular role that fits his/her level of knowledge on the subject at hand without either intimidating the reader to the point that they feel unqualified and shy away or feel that they possess a higher level of knowledge than the one at which the author speaks to them. For example, the authors use two “excerpts” from an imaginary author’s discussion of cardiac irregularity; the first excerpt is written articulately from an expert-level position that seems difficult to grasp for someone unknowledgeable about the subject, whereas the second excerpt contains very plain language that describes the issue of cardiac irregularity to the “average person” who possesses no real -let alone expert- knowledge of the subject in a clear manner (2003, p.18).

The authors also discuss the various roles of the researcher in relation to the aim of the study he/she is conducting. In doing so, they describe “pure” versus “applied” research - the former being conceptual research more prevalent in the academic community that has no practical goal (at hand, at least) other than discussing and perhaps finding solutions to a research question at hand within a particular discipline, maybe even within a discipline’s subfield. Applied research, on the other hand, is not conceptual but practical, perhaps such as those used for consultant work (2003, p.21). In the end, they argue, “you offer your readers a social contract: *I’ll do my part if you do yours.*” (2003, p.22).

Also important is the authors’ discussion of their own experience in writing the *Craft of Research*, in outlining how they did their group work. Indeed, they spend a substantial amount on discussing how beneficial it can be to work in groups, noting various aspects that cannot be experienced in single-study; for example, the anticipation of reader’s expectations and questions (2003, p.26), the opportunity to discuss the project’s “elevator story” (2003, p.27), the delegation of the role of moderator (2003, p.28), and the different ways in which work can be divided and revised among various members of the group. They noted the need to respectfully acknowledge and even benefit from differences among various group members; for

example, each member might be specialized in a certain subtopic pertinent to the general framework of the study.

3.2. Components of Research

Williams, Colomb and Booth often discuss research as a centuries-old conversation among scholars, a *rhetorical community*- almost in the sense of a subculture with a group of norms of its own (such as its own standard formatting expectations). Once again, they mention this phenomena in order to emphasize the fact that researchers not only have to earn their right to be a part of this community, but they are responsible for contributing in its “ongoing conversation between writers and readers” (2003, p.40). This is pertinent all the more because here they emphasize not just what the roles of researcher and reader entail but how a proper understanding of these roles reveal insight into the expectations of the reader, the way in which we write, and even more specifically, the systematic manner in which we constantly dissect our work as it is *in-progress* to meet the seemingly pressing needs of the research community. Here, emphasis is placed on the fact that research at an advanced level is more than just a project through which we can answer questions of our own; at an advanced level, research possesses a *selfless* component - that is, it is meant not just to quench our intellectual thirst but to solve the problems of others, which can be practical and/or conceptual. The authors write,

[Y]our readers expect you to do more than just mound up and report data; they expect you to report it in a way that continues the ongoing conversation between writers and readers that creates a community of researchers. To do that, you must select from all the data you find just those data that support an answer to a question that solves a problem your readers think need solving...at some point, you have to decide whether the answer to your private question is also significant to others: To a teacher, colleagues, other researchers, or even to a public whose lives your research could change. At that point, you aim not just to answer a question, but to pose and solve a problem that others think is worth solving (2003, pp.40-41).

Indeed, similar to a news reporter, who is responsible for disseminating and oftentimes interpreting information for the public, its audience of readers, researchers have just the same, if not a greater, responsibility to not only conduct research by deploying trustworthy and reliable methods but also by respecting readers enough not to waste their time with a regurgitation of useless data that, by itself, conveys no central aim or addresses no real problem within its relative field. After all, “[r]eaders of research don’t want just information; they want the answer to a *question worth asking*” (2003, p.45). And this concept of a “*question worth asking*” leads us to the systematic breakdown of research as a useful tool of inquiry. First, in order to be able to think of what it means to propose or begin to answer a research question, we must understand the importance of choosing a topic that is relevant to the problem we seek to address throughout our work. A

research topic must be relevant, seek to address a question not only aimed at satisfying our own inquiry, be clear, and not either too vague to specifically address or too narrow not to find enough information on. In the authors’ words,

“[a] research topic is an interest defined narrowly enough for you to imagine becoming a local expert on it. That doesn’t mean that you already know a lot about it or that you will have to learn more about it than your professor has. You just want to know more than you do now” (2003, p.41).

The authors move on to discuss the importance of finding a topic that truly interests the research in order to avoid treating the project as a mundane activity, stressing the essential element of commitment to the quality of work (Ibid). They do so with an understanding that the very researchers of their book are comprised of readers at various levels of experience in writing; so they give basic guidelines for beginning research assignments before moving on to the subject of advanced research that addresses a problem with due justice. The authors then consider the essential difference between a practical problem and a conceptual one. A *research problem* is not the same as a practical problem such as the ones we face daily but rather one that seeks to fill a void in a certain intellectual practice, helps to pass the cloud over a concept that could be the missing link to a puzzle we seek to solve. Indeed, in order to understand what a research problem is, we must do so against the background of this dichotomy; though the two are not mutually exclusive, each has its own differing aim at the end. The authors write,

[a] *practical* problem is caused by some condition in the world, from e-mail spam to terrorism, that makes us unhappy because it costs us time, money, respect, security, pain, even our lives, [whereas] a *research* problem is motivated not by palpable unhappiness, but by incomplete knowledge or flawed understanding. (2003, p.59).

Once again, here we see a re-emphasis on the research problem as a tool not only for discovering new knowledge but also re-contributing to the scholarly art. One must make strong mention, in discussing the role research plays in academia as a whole, of a main aspect that separates advanced research from basic beginner’s research (aside from the *statement of purpose*, which entails the *because* of the question) in order: that is, beyond allowing a topic to guide our research questions in aims of searching for solutions to our problems, breaking our problems down in order to narrow our answers toward a specific aim for contributing to our relative discipline in general and our specific audience of readers; in other words, considering the *significance of our study*. The authors provide “a three-step formula for doing so, beginning with the question “So what?”...“Why should this question also grab my readers? What makes it worth asking?” (2003, p.49). This formula, aside from the first two basic steps of deciding on a topic and research question, entails discussing how addressing a specific research problem will contribute relevantly to the

needs of the discipline as a whole as well as of its unique community of readers.

3.3. Conducting Research

In her article, *Three Puzzles in Search of a Researcher*, Zinnes (1980) discusses the problem of the demand for theory in relation to a lack thereof, or the problem of finding a substantial means for filling the gap between theory and the demand for it. Motivated by a conference at the University of South Carolina on “The Future of the International Studies Association and International Studies” and a dinner discussion with its opening speaker, a colleague of hers, Jim Rosenau (1980, p.317), she provides an innovative approach to meeting the demand for theory- not by relying simply on posing research questions but by viewing research as a method through which we are forced to produce theory in order to describe underlying causes of disassembly pieces of a picture we “anticipated” would be clear.

In order to describe her concept of “puzzlement,” Zinnes uses a simple example of how when riding her bicycle to school one day, she noticed a sold-sign having been placed above a for-sale sign on a house’s front lawn. Later on, she realized that the sold-sign had been gone. This “puzzled” her because it conflicted with her expectations of the real-estate market worked, leaving her to try to draw up various explanations she could use to make sense of this predicament. She writes, “These contrasting observations do not fit into my normal conception of the real estate market, so I am pressed to make sense out of them. There are two ingredients here: (a) my observations contain information, I know something when I begin my storytelling; (b) I am forced to tell a story because the information does not fit into a preconceived pattern. These factors describe a puzzle: pieces of information, the belief that the pieces fit together into a meaningful picture-but the inability to fit the pieces together initially” (1980, p.316). She uses this simple example in application to research in general but with specific attention to international relations, continuing:

When we attempt to understand international phenomena, we typically do not have these ingredients. We ask broad, open-ended questions. We do not use pieces of information, and we do not see our problem as problems in fitting the pieces together. Perhaps if we thought in terms of puzzles-not general questions-we would think theoretically more naturally. (1980, p.316)

She moves on to illustrate the concept of puzzlement by doing cross-sectional-studies over three areas of IR, involving namely: “dyadic interaction, the relationship between national attributes and conflict behavior, and systemic structure and war” (1980, p.317). In examining the first puzzle, Zinnes attempts to identify the basic relationships of states before times of crises, i.e. how they interact, how much, on what bases, who acts first, what the nature of each reaction is, etc. She proposed three various models:

- a) the first within the framework that “the behavior that each directed towards the other is only a function of what each did previously...essentially say[ing] that nations do *not* interact in precrisis periods.” (1980, p.319)
- b) the second “propos[ing] that each nation’s directed behavior toward the other was a direct function of the behavior received from the opponent...that a nation’s behavior in precrisis periods is solely a consequence of the behavior of the other nation, that nations *act and react* as stimulus-response mechanisms.”
- c) and the third, “that the directed behaviors of nations in precrisis periods might be a function both of what a nation did previously and what the opponent did previously.” (1980, pp.319-320)

An example she uses to illustrate how our idea of how international relations work in a precrisis context differ from the evidenced results of her analyses includes the literal miscommunication that occurs between two states with regard to warnings and protests, and each state ignoring the warnings and protests of the other by some mishap that takes place along the line of communication. Here, it is not the action of one state that leads to the reaction of the other, but the action of the self-same state that leads to an escalation within its own actions and thereby affects another.

Each nation’s *own* previous behavior is making it madder and madder *at the opponent*. It is almost as if each nation were having its own private temper tantrum. Finally, each nation gets so worked up over its own past actions that one of the nations takes a “punch” at the other-and so we have a crisis. (1980, p.322)

This is just one of the examples that she provides to illustrate how evidence as accumulated especially through cross-sectional research can contrast with our anticipated understanding and lead to the force of theory in order to satisfy intellectual discrepancies incurred thereby. Zinnes continues in her cross-sectional analyses by aligning this evidence (no pun intended) with arms-race analyses and test-ban negotiations before moving on to her second puzzle.

Zinnes’ second and third case-studies are intimately related, involving international violence and the war-proneness of nations. Here, she studies the polarization of nations by giving specific attention to whether bipolar or multipolar international situations are more prone to produce war and, if so, whether this is due to specific attributes, the amounts of states present, or the question of borders’ effects on state relations, and even the question of whether or not domestic unrest has a hand in contributing to war proneness. Drawing such conclusions as “a large number of studies all seem to contradict out initial belief that there are attributes of nations that make them more war prone” in light of the fact that “[t]here is yet another set of studies that would seem to confirm our initial suspicion and clash with the

results already seen [i.e. that nations that are war-prone possess certain attributes],” Zinnes illustrates her idea of a puzzle within the framework of international relations-how research analyses can sometimes leave us with empirically contradictory answers in relation to theoretical propositions that attempt to explain international behavior.

Buttolph and Richard (2003) give an overview of various studies, the methods they include, and the aims they seek to achieve within the framework of non-experimental designs, which they

[characterize by] at least one of the following: presence of a single group, lack of researcher control over the assignment of subjects to control and experimental groups, lack of researcher control over the application of the independent variable, or inability of researcher to measure the dependent variable before and after exposure to the independent variable occurs. (2003, p.133)

The first design they look at is the “time series design,” wherein dependent variables are observed pre-independent variable and post-independent variable in order to note possible correlative effects (2003, p.133). The authors give various examples of this design, including “the impact of sobriety checks on alcohol-related traffic accidents in states by examining the number of such accidents for several years before and after the introduction of the checks” (2003, p.134). Here, we are able to observe how the dependent variables (alcohol-related traffic accidents) are affected by the dependent variable (sobriety-checks) over a period of time, though the authors do point out to the possibility of other attributable factors.

A design the use of which is particularly important to sociologists includes a “cross-sectional design,” where “measurements of the independent and dependent variables are taken at the same point in time...[which] has the virtues of allowing observation of phenomena in more natural, realistic settings” (2003, pp.138-139). This design might be of particular interest to sociology because it allows for the controlling of variables which might, uncontrolled, affect the validity of the research as a whole. In dealing with sociological phenomena, this is particularly important, given the prevalence of unobservable yet pertinent data that must be acknowledged for thorough research to be carried out properly. Indeed, the authors write, “With a cross-sectional design, we typically employ data analysis techniques to control for variables that may affect both the independent and dependent variables” (2003, p.139); they illustrate this strategy through examples such as the ‘attitudes toward busing’ survey, where “racial intolerance, political conservatism, and self-interest in the busing issue” played an unexpected role in the research results (2003, p.139).

3.4. The Debate Between Quantitative and Qualitative Research

In his article, *Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics*, James Mahoney (2007) discusses the renewed

emphasis on qualitative methodology within the field of comparative politics. Comparing the recent “outpouring of new work” (4) with early 1990s criticisms of qualitative methodology as a “last-resort” (2007, p.3), he examines qualitative methodology in terms of theory proposition and testing (2007, p.4). Qualitative methodology in comparative politics, he argues, differs from qualitative methodology in any other branch because it does not follow a strict analytical pattern such as the “Lakotosian research program” (2007, p.5). Rather, qualitative methodology in comparative politics focuses more on causal approaches in analyzing politics (2007, p.5).

Mahoney emphasizes the fact that students of comparative politics, given that they “color outside of the lines,” do not benefit much from quantitative approaches right off hand in setting up testable hypotheses and determining propositions (2007, p.5). He writes,

“[Q]ualitative methodology offers concrete tools for framing research questions and formulating testable hypotheses. It also provides tools for conceptualization, measurement, and case selection. Taken together, these sources of leverage help make qualitative methodology the site of much of the most exciting theory development in comparative politics. (2007, p.5)

In *Content Analysis*, Breuning discusses the benefits of content analysis particularly for political science. Given that political science deals much with analyses of leader motivation (2) through speeches, verbal and/or visual communication, content analysis serves as a handy tool for researchers. Breuning compares content analysis with survey research in terms of expense, replicability, and ease (3); moreover, content analysis, she writes in reference to Bryman, “lends itself to study trends over long stretches of time” (3). Breuning warns against limiting content analysis to the label of a coding system, tactfully dealing with Babbi’s description (that “content analysis [is] ‘essentially a coding operation’ [2]) by writing, “Although this is accurate, it also sells content analysis short as a method for analyzing the content of communications” (2). Different methods of content analysis exist. Breuning, similar to Mahoney, contributes significantly to the field of methodology by delimiting research methods in showing that, especially for political science, there need not be a strict dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Rather, each method can compliment the other.

3.5. Case Studies

In *Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method*, Lijphart (1971) makes use of Giovanni Sartori’s dichotomy of “overconscious” and “unconscious” thinkers within comparative politics- “unconscious” thinkers being those “unaware of and not guided by the logic and methods of empirical science, although perhaps well versed in quantitative research techniques” and overconscious thinkers being those “whose standards of method and theory are drawn from the physical

paradigmatic sciences” (1971, p.682). He does so within the framework of the comparative method’s potential and limitations (1971, p.682).

Moreover, he describes the comparative method in a sense neither too broad (see Laswell and Almond’s “arguments of redundancy”, 1971, p.682) nor too narrow (see Eisenstadt’s strictly cross-sectional debate, 1971, p.682); the comparative method, according to Lijphart, is simply “one of the basic scientific methods, not the scientific method” (1971, p.682). More importantly, Lijphart discusses the comparative method in relation to connecting empirical evidence among variables rather than simply a form of measurement (1971, p.683), as a “strategy” rather than just a “tactical aid to research” (1971, p.683).

Describing science as a “generalizing activity” (1971, p.691), Lijphart discusses the importance of the case study in relation to the comparative method (1971, p.691) within the framework of the Eckstein and the Norwegian case (1971, p.693). He concludes with a call to “capitalize on the inherent strengths” of both methods (1971, p.693).

3.6. Research Methods

Situating the philosophical importance of language in relation to ontology, Gadamer writes,

“Language is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world. Hence we always have in view the pronouncements of the sciences, which are fixed in nonverbal signs. And our task is to reconnect the objective world of technology, which the sciences place at our disposal and discretion, with those fundamental orders of our being that are neither arbitrary nor manipulable by us, but rather simply demand our respect” (Linge, pp.3-4).

Noting the Protestant roots of hermeneutics, he illustrates the concept within the framework of aesthetic alienation and the alienation of historical consciousness (4). In discussing the role of human judgment in ascribing value to aesthetic forms, he writes: “What we reject has nothing to say to us- or we reject it because it has nothing to say to us” (4). One finds in his discussion, however, a contradiction: namely, that he implores human judgment to aesthetically ascertain artistic forms or objects but at the same time argues the impossibility of acceptance of rejection once those same forms have drawn us to them through their magnetism: “Is it not true that when a work of art has seized us it no longer leaves us the freedom to push it away from us once again and to accept or reject it on our own terms?” (4). Gadamer undermines the role of the subconscious in unconsciously willing to accept or reject relative forms of beauty.

3.7. Data Collection and Analysis

Buttolph and Richard (2001) discuss three main research methods available to political scientists: interviewing, document analysis, and observation. Beginning with a brief overview of the advantages and disadvantages

of each, the authors focused on “the factors of validity, reactivity, population coverage, cost, and availability” (2001, p.220). In doing so, they noted that validity can be one of the most important consideration in method choice; using the ‘crime rate’ example, the authors discussed how a researcher might find some government documents biased or unrevealing (at least comprehensively), and may need to substitute or supplement other methods such as interviewing in order to gain valid data. Also, reactivity can be affected according to whether or not participants are aware that they are being observed, or researched, and if so, whether or not they know how resultant data will be used. Sample issues could come into play if a researcher does not select a comprehensive population to be studied, some research might be more costly than others (take, for example, the need, at times, to employ research assistants to carry out survey questionnaires, etc.), and some information might be more available than others.

The authors shift their focus to direct and indirect observation, emphasizing the ethical implications involved in fieldwork. They use examples such as the research of Ruth Horowitz and the Chicano gang subculture to describe how a researcher can be a non-group-member participant (2001, p.221), and the research of William Rathje’s garbage study to discuss arguably intrusive indirect observation. They conclude with Carole Johnson’s helpful list of ethical considerations with regard to undertaking fieldwork.

3.8. Philosophy of Science

In *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, Brady and Collier discuss the continuance of the debate in social science over qualitative and quantitative research, or, what they call “rival claims about the ‘science’ in social science” (1). Citing King, Keohane and Verba’s (hereafter, KKV) *Designing Social Inquiry* (1994), they discuss the “quantitative template” that “serves as a foundation for the desired scientific form of qualitative methods” (1). They contrast KKV’s position with that of David A. Freedman - the latter arguing against the rigidity of “quantitative models”. Freedman, according to Brady and Collier, used the subject of epidemiology to argue that “qualitative analysis is indeed a ‘type of scientific inquiry’” (2). Brady and Collier emphasize that though their work deals with the operationalization of concepts, it mainly revolves around causal inference (3).

KKV discuss the basics of *research design*, i.e. “how to pose questions and fashion scholarly research to make valid descriptive and causal inferences” (1994, p.3). Similar to Brady and Collier, they seek to find a middle ground between qualitative and quantitative research - or, more precisely, to emphasize their compatibility. They argue,

The two traditions appear quite different; indeed they sometimes seem to be at war. Our view is that these differences are mainly ones of style and specific technique. The same underlying logic

provides the framework for each research approach. This logic tends to be explicated and formalized clearly in discussions of quantitative research methods. But the same logic of inference underlies the best qualitative research, and all qualitative and quantitative researchers would benefit by more explicit attention to this logic in the course of designing research. (1994, p.3)

KKV provide a historical synopsis of the “great debate” in social science between qualitative and quantitative research, arguing that it is only an illusion in the end, and that both methods rely on the same logic. Acknowledging that there is no perfect model of research, they provide a theoretic framework for systematic inference, arguing that research that falls outside of these boundaries be justified. They write, “We seek not dogma, but disciplined thought” (1994, p.7).

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to systematically provide an overview of some of what the author sees as the best work in the field of social research writing. It has aimed at clarifying the importance of writing within a framework by covering all important aspects of a research project, especially useful for Jordanian entry-level undergraduate students. Indeed, it maintains that in order to properly understand how the “statement of purpose” and “research problem” of a research project are the “two hearts of scientific research,” it is necessary to discuss the importance of writing within a framework that constitutes the general norms of the international academic community.

Williams, Colomb, and Booth point out that formatting standards within this *rhetorical community* serve as norms among researchers that are “traditional forms and plans [that are] more than empty vessels into which you pour your findings. Those forms have evolved to help writers see their ideas in the brighter light of their readers’ expectations and understanding” (2003, p.14). Also, in terms of readers’ expectations, writing within a framework that is understood and complies with the general expectations of the academic community better serves

to answer anticipated questions; it becomes easier for readers to see that not only are you putting forth your own ideas or addressing a research question perhaps similar to their own, but you have tested and perhaps rejected other researchers’ previous analyses—which makes you, as a researcher, more trustworthy and authoritative in the eyes of your readers. Indeed, given such an emphasis on the importance of writing research within a generally acceptable framework, it comes as no surprise two concepts, the “statement of purpose” and “research problem” are so crucial—to the point that they are indispensably thought of as the “two hearts of scientific research”. Moreover, these important guidelines must be discussed in terms of the discursive nature of research, i.e. within the context of research being a historical conversation. Writing up research therefore causes us to serve as a link within an intellectual and historical chain by requiring us to rely on previous scholars for credible information and giving us the opportunity to serve as scholars of today for the researchers of tomorrow.

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