

2018-08-12

# Find and Cite Three-to-Five Sources: Applying the Sociological Imagination to Critical Information Literacy

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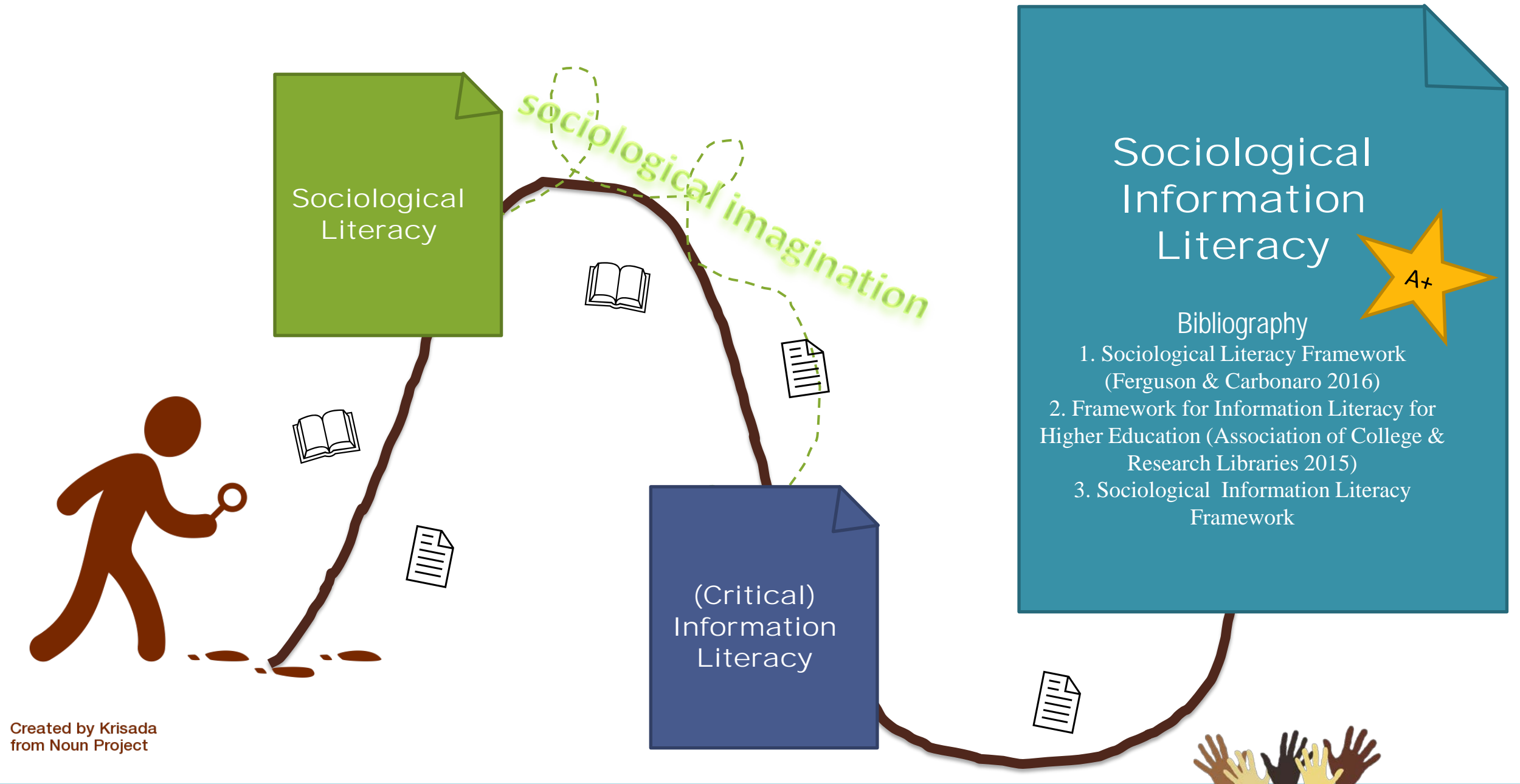
**Challenge:** Do you ever ask students to complete an assignment that includes a bibliography requirement? Literature research and writing is an opportunity to apply the sociological imagination to both the paper topic *and* to the process of discovering and selecting the information sources that will inform student work. However, this is often a missed opportunity: either information discovery is seen as ancillary to the assignment and not discussed, or library instruction may not meaningfully integrate sociological concepts from your course curriculum.

**Approach:** The *Sociological Information Literacy Framework*

- Tool for identifying how to bring *critical information literacy* into the classroom
  - Reflectively locate, understand, and use information in support of lifelong learning goals for developing informed citizens with higher-order thinking skills

- *Sociological Information Literacy* is an understanding of how information and scholarship are created, published, disseminated, and used by individuals and organizations that is informed by sociological thinking and scholarship.
- Next Steps:** Peer review, revision, and putting it into practice!
- Review and endorsement of the Sociological Information Literacy Framework by the Association of College & Research Libraries and the American Sociological Association
  - Making meaningful connections between sociological and information literacy will provide a foundation to enrich instructor-librarian collaboration in the classroom and strengthen overall student learning.

Engage with us!  
 Call for Peer Reviewers



## Sociological Information Literacy Framework (Draft)

Author: Sociology Subgroup, Instruction & Information Literacy Committee, Anthropology & Sociology Section, Association of College & Research Libraries

Sociological Literacy Framework Concepts	Framework for Information Literacy Concepts					
	Authority Is Constructed and Contextual Evaluate based on information need and context, different types of authorities.	Information Creation as a Process Different formats reflect varying messages and delivery methods.	Information Has Value As commodity, education, influence, understanding; role of legal and socio-economic interests	Research as Inquiry Iterative question asking, methods, analysis	Scholarship as Conversation Sustained discourse, varied perspectives	Searching as Strategic Exploration Iterative evaluation of range of sources, mental flexibility
<b>Sociological Eye</b> Sociology as a distinctive discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social basis and construction of knowledge</li> <li>• “Truth is political”</li> <li>• Scientific knowledge vs. other ways of knowing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “the medium is the message”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commodity: economic/financial structures support/constrain info production</li> <li>• Means for education: varying access, promotion of “correct” information</li> <li>• Means to influence: role and impact of propaganda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask questions like a sociologist</li> <li>• Social assumptions vs. scientific evidence</li> <li>• Verification process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social context of scholarly discourse; (a) who is an expert in a field, (b) where the boundaries of a field lie, and (c) what can be said within these boundaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deconstruct search engines as products of human engineering and bureaucracy</li> <li>• Search is a social behavior</li> <li>• Knowledge is <i>not</i> easy</li> </ul>
<b>Social Structure</b> The impact of social structures on human action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social roles may privilege some as authorities</li> <li>• Social institutions exert influence over what is considered valid or factual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership of information systems impacts the processes of information creation and what information is made available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership of information systems is concentrated; even where information is produced by individuals, it may be owned by private corporations (e.g., on social media platforms, transfer of copyright agreements)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert knowledge is shaped by established scientific systems and processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarly conversations are shaped by institutional structures: higher education, research firms, publishers, libraries, archives, and the WWW</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search engines as gatekeepers to information</li> <li>• Algorithms reflect the interests of their creators</li> </ul>
<b>Socialization</b> The relationship between the self and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideologies impact accepted authorities</li> <li>• “Fake news”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media as performative work</li> <li>• Trusted formats and sources vary by culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of information as expressions of self and social belonging is monetized and monitored (e.g., social media)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural contexts shapes perceptions of legitimate knowledge and questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in scholarly discourse relies on membership in communities of practice</li> <li>• Citation practices, plagiarism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of relevance are shaped by social position</li> <li>• Cultural bias impacts design of search engines and classification systems</li> </ul>
<b>Stratification</b> The patterns and effects of social inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions with authority to produce knowledge recreate social inequalities</li> <li>• Certain forms of knowledge production are valued over others: e.g., low income students as <i>lacking</i> cultural capital, rather the institutional de-valuing of different cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socioeconomic status impacts ability to participate as a producer of information, or to access information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Profitable” research outputs receive more value and resources</li> <li>• Corporate control and limits on information distribution and participation</li> <li>• Commodification of personal information (i.e., surveillance capitalism) and privacy ramifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Particular methods of scientific inquiry are privileged as creating “neutral” knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical exclusion of subordinated social groups from scholarship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unequal access to literacy education</li> <li>• Development of expert search strategies is a skill that takes education and experience</li> </ul>
<b>Social Change and Social Reproduction</b> How social phenomena replicate and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific authority comes from approval by educational institutions; Academic success requires acceptance of certain “truths” about the social and natural world; Through young scholars, these “truths” persist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certain kinds of knowledge are reproduced; because scientists use existing theories for hypothesis building, methodological design, and interpretation, they will often fail to see what does not fit into these theories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social movements may be aided by social media, but the terms of use and algorithms that impact what information is seen are set by private ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every day, scientists encounter phenomena that cannot be explained by existing theories: often, these anomalies are ignored or avoided through a focus on certain methodologies over others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are trained in certain disciplines; While these disciplines may address similar problems, they remain distinct and the conversations within them siloed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The terms scholars use in search depend on the conventions of their discipline; It is more difficult to find and read scholarship outside the discipline in which one is trained</li> </ul>