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

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociological Literacy Framework Concepts</th>
<th>Framework for Information Literacy Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authority is Constructed and Contextual</strong></td>
<td>Evaluate based on information need and context, different types of authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Creation as a Process</strong></td>
<td>Different formats reflect varying messages and delivery methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Has Value</strong></td>
<td>As commodity, education, influence, understanding; role of legal and socio-economic interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research as Inquiry</strong></td>
<td>Iterative question asking, methods, analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scholarship as Conversation</strong></td>
<td>Sustained discourse, varied perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Searching as Strategic Exploration</strong></td>
<td>Iterative evaluation of range of sources, mental flexibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Sociological Eye Sociology as a distinctive discipline | • Social basis and construction of knowledge 
• “Truth is political” 
• Scientific knowledge vs. other ways of knowing |
| Sociological Structure The impact of social structures on human action | • Social roles may privilege some as authorities 
• Social institutions exert influence over what is considered valid or factual |
| Socialization The relationship between the self and society | • Ideologies impact accepted authorities 
• “Fake news” |
| Stratification The patterns and effects of social inequality | • Institutions with authority to produce knowledge recreate social inequalities 
• Certain forms of knowledge production are valued over others: e.g., low income students as lacking cultural capital, rather the institutional de-valuing of different cultures |
| Social Change and Social Reproduction How social phenomena replicate and change | • 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 
• 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 
• 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 |

| **Coercive Use** | Legal or physical force is used to prevent people from using their rights to access information; e.g., denying access to institutional databases or blocking websites |
| **Manipulation** | An intentional distortion of information to influence perceptions; e.g., spreading misinformation about a scientific study |
| **Characterization** | Over generalization of a group of people; e.g., labeling all scientists as biased |
| **Reduction** | Simplification of information to make it more understandable; e.g., oversimplifying the methods used in a research study |
| **Elaboration** | The opposite of reduction; adding details to make information more complex; e.g., adding context to a scientific study |
| **Amplification** | Increasing the perceived importance of an issue; e.g., spreading a rumor about a scientific discovery |
| **Relativization** | The opposite of absolutization; downplaying the importance of an issue; e.g., dismissing the importance of a scientific study |

| **Meaningful Use** | Information is used in a way that reflects its intended purpose; e.g., scientists using research findings to inform policy decisions |
| **Sustained Use** | Information is used repeatedly over time; e.g., scientists revisiting a scientific study to refine their hypotheses |
| **Critical Use** | Information is evaluated and used in a way that challenges existing beliefs; e.g., exposing inconsistencies in a scientific study |
| **Reframing** | Information is used in a way that changes its interpretation; e.g., redefining a scientific study as a tool for social justice |
| **Transformation** | Information is used in a way that fundamentally changes the context in which it is used; e.g., using a scientific study to call for a change in policy |

| **Scholarship** | The process of engaging with and contributing to an academic field; e.g., publishing research findings |
| **Plagiarism** | The act of using someone else’s work without attribution; e.g., copying a scientific study without citing the original source |

**Notes:**
- Iterative question asking: Asking questions in a cyclical manner to refine and deepen understanding.
- Expert knowledge is shaped by established scientific systems and processes: Knowledge is shaped by the norms and practices within a scientific community.
- Cultural contexts shapes perceptions of legitimate knowledge and questions: Cultural factors influence what is considered knowledge and valid inquiry.
- Participation in scholarly discourse relies on membership in communities of practice: Membership in academic communities is crucial for participating in scholarly discourse.
- Historical exclusion of subordinate social groups from scholarship: Social groups are systematically excluded from scholarly participation.
- Unequal access to literacy education: Access to educational materials is unevenly distributed based on social factors.

**Examples:**
- The medium is the message: The medium through which information is communicated is as important as the content of the information itself.
- Truth is political: The construction of truth is influenced by political and social factors.
- Deconstruct search engines as products of human engineering and bureaucracy: Search engines are not neutral tools; they are shaped by societal and economic factors.
- Search is a social behavior: Searching is not just an individual activity; it is influenced by social norms and structures.

**Principles:**
- Ownership of information systems impacts the processes of information creation and what information is made available.
- Ownership of information systems is concentrated; even where information is produced by individuals, it may be owned by private corporations.
- Expert knowledge is shaped by established scientific systems and processes.
- Scholarly conversations are shaped by institutional structures: higher education, research firms, publishers, libraries, and the WWW.
- Scholarly conversations reflect the interests of their creators.

**Implications:**
- The medium is the message: The medium through which information is communicated is as important as the content of the information itself.
- Social roles may privilege some as authorities: Social roles influence who is considered authoritative.
- Socialization: The relationship between the self and society. Ideologies impact accepted authorities. "Fake news".
- Modern society is characterized by a high degree of complexity and interconnectedness. The knowledge production and dissemination processes are influenced by social, economic, and political factors.
- The term "knowledge" is used to refer to a wide range of phenomena, including scientific knowledge, cultural knowledge, and personal experience.
- The construction of knowledge is a social process that involves the creation, validation, and dissemination of ideas and beliefs.
- Knowledge production is influenced by power dynamics, and the distribution of knowledge is often uneven.
- The consumption of knowledge is also a social process, influenced by factors such as education, cultural background, and social networks.

**Conclusion:**
- Sociological information literacy is essential for understanding the complex ways in which knowledge is produced, disseminated, and consumed in modern society.
- By developing an understanding of the sociological aspects of information literacy, individuals can become more effective in evaluating and utilizing information.
- The sociological framework provides a lens through which to view the broader social context of knowledge and its impact on society.

**Further Reading:**
- Sociology of Information Literacy: A Review of the Literature
- Sociological Perspectives on the Information Society
- The Sociology of Knowledge
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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.

**Approach:** The Sociological Information Literacy Framework

- Tool for identifying how to bring critical information literacy into the sociology 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.
- The Sociological Information Literacy Framework takes the form of a crosswalk between two guiding documents:
  1. Sociological Literacy Framework
  2. Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

**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

**Call for Peer Reviewers**

The draft Sociological Information Literacy Framework is currently under development by the Anthropology & Sociology Section (ANSS) of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) as part of the Framework Companion Documents program, and is overseen by the ACRL Information Literacy Frameworks and Standards Committee (https://acrl.libguides.com/ILFSC). In order to create a robust, meaningful, and collaborative document representing the expertise of both librarians and sociologists, ANSS-ACRL seeks to gather peer reviewer input from sociology instructors, especially those active in the ASA Section on Teaching & Learning. The initial peer review and revision process is expected to take place during the 2018-19 academic year.

Please fill out the form at https://tinyurl.com/socinfolitreviewerscall to indicate your interest in volunteering as a peer reviewer.