

SHORT PAPER #3

A Methodological Critique of **Social Scientific** Research Reported in the Popular News Media (Newspapers and Magazines)

SOCIOLOGY 350/ SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

First, make a photocopy of the article that you will be criticizing in this short paper and attach it to your completed paper.

Second, state the principal research findings that are cited in this article. Be sure that the study cited is **social scientific** in nature. In other words, avoid biological, medical, geographical, chemical, and those sorts of research studies.

Third, describe exactly how the data used in this report was gathered. If it reports sample findings, state what kind of sampling methodology was employed. For example, was it a national probability sample or was it some kind of a convenience or volunteer sample? If this information is not provided discuss what type of sampling was probably used and **why** you think that the article failed to identify the type of sampling used.

Fourth, evaluate how confident you are in the validity of the research findings that are reported. Explain **why** you either are or aren't persuaded by the study findings. Identify any flaws in the scientific methodology that either appear obvious or simply are concerns you have given whatever information was given in the article.

Fifth, why do you think it is that journalists pay so little attention to issues of proper research methodology? In short, do you think that journalists are simply uninformed (i.e., they don't know anything about sound research methodology) or are they unethical (i.e., they don't really care, so long as the story is "a grabber" and sells)?

Sixth and last, do you anticipate that **over the next twenty years** or so, the quality of reporting social scientific findings in the popular presses will improve, stay the same, or reach new lows? Briefly explain **why** you take the view that you do and state how confident you are in your prediction.

These papers are due in class one week from today. Your paper should be about two typewritten double-spaced pages in length.