METHODS & RESULTS

FOR SOCIOLOGY SENIOR THESES

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AGENDA

1. methods chapter

2. results chapters

3. workshop example

4. writing metaphors

Thesis Outline

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. **Methods**
4. **Results Chapters** (1-3 chapters)
5. Discussion & Conclusion

I. METHODS CHAPTER

METHODS: FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

- "The goal for this section is to explain to your reader what you did—both how you collected data and how you analyzed them. You can separate this into two separate chapters if you would like. Generally, this section is 10-15 pages."

"A Guide to Writing a Senior Thesis in Sociology." 2015. Department of Sociology, Harvard University. 43-44.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE METHODS CHAPTER?

1. To explain your **operationalization of sociological concepts** to answer your research question

2. To give the reader information sufficient for **evaluating** and even **replicating your analysis**

Question & Literature → Methods & Data → Results & Discussion

Ley, Christy. "Writing Your Thesis Methods and Results." Senior Thesis Tutorial. 15 November 2013.

JUSTIFY YOUR APPROACH

1. How do you **operationalize** abstract sociological concepts and theories?

   - *e.g. define independent and dependent variables in advance*

2. What method did you use to **measure** the social world?

   - *e.g. interviews, ethnography, surveys*

3. What is your **data?**

   - *e.g. X interviews, Y field notes, Z documents*

Ley, Christy. "Writing Your Thesis Methods and Results." Senior Thesis Tutorial. 15 November 2013.

WHERE DID YOUR DATA COME FROM?

Interviews

- sample description *e.g. "women between 25-40"*

- sample recruitment *e.g. email, cold-calls, snowballing, random selection*

- instrument(s) *e.g. interview guide, survey*

Ethnography/Observation

- field site selection, description & access *e.g. frequency of visits, role at field site*

- field note practice(s) *e.g. audio recording, writing, photographing*

Documents/Text

- define corpus and sub-samples *e.g. "10% of documents randomly sampled from X archive"*

Ley, Christy. "Writing Your Thesis Methods and Results." Senior Thesis Tutorial. 15 November 2013.

HOW DID YOU ANALYZE THE DATA?

- review practices *e.g. memoing, transcribing*

- data format *e.g. transcriptions, field notes, OCR text, pdf documents*

- coding method *e.g. qualitative coding, Atlas.ti, open coding*

- units of analysis *e.g. frequency per sentence/paragraph/response/document*

II. RESULTS CHAPTERS

RESULTS: FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

- "The number of results chapters you write should be driven by the number of sub- questions you ask, the number of methods you use, or an inductive division that arises from the findings. Generally, students write 1-3 results chapters, each 15-20 pages long. In each results chapter, you should tell your reader what you found! Here, you are describing the findings, but offering limited interpretation. The bigger picture interpretation occurs in the discussion section. You should organize the results section by identifying

"A Guide to Writing a Senior Thesis in Sociology." 2015. Department of Sociology, Harvard University. p45-51.

RESULTS CHAPTER FORMAT: QUALITATIVE APPROACHES

- restate sub-question

- reprise any relevant literature and theory

- briefly review data & methods used

- explain analysis methods used

- provide an **overview** of the findings

- present **details, examples, and anecdotes** from your findings – thematically!

- put the findings in **context** for your project

PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW

- first, **present "raw" findings** to provide an overview

  - summary statistics

  - table with breakdown of overall coding results

	Women	Men
Structural Explanations	18	5
Cultural Explanations	7	20

Favorite Fruits

30%

20%

50%

■ citrus ■ stone fruit ■ melons
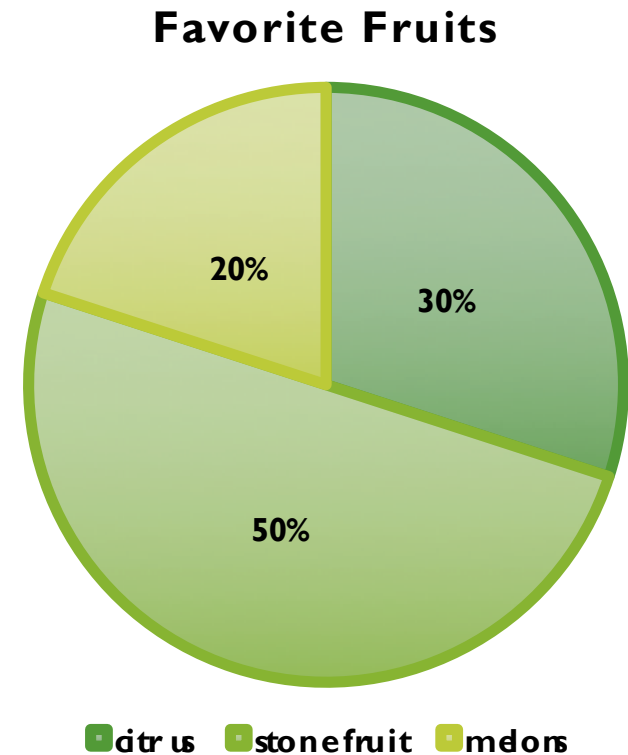
PRESENT DETAILS THEMATICALLY

- then, **systematically explain your findings**
  - create thematic subheadings to describe trends
  - provide details, anecdotes, illustrations, block quotes
  - discuss exceptions or anomalies to each category

Results: Gendered Explanations for Poverty

1. **Cultural Explanations**
   1. Women
   2. Men
2. **Structural Explanations**
   1. Women
   2. Men

Results: Favorite Fruits

1. Intro
2. Findings Overview
3. **Citrus**
4. **Stone Fruit**
5. **Melons**
6. Discussion

PUT YOUR FINDINGS IN CONTEXT

- finally, **relate your findings back to the context of your project**

  - do the findings suggest a particular answer to your sub-question?

  - do the findings support or contradict existing literature?

  - how can you explain these results?

  "In keeping with most previous findings, this study suggests that **women favor structural explanations for poverty while men tend towards cultural explanations**. However, a new contribution of this study is to explain this difference not through gender, but through the latent factor of **interest in penguins**.

"These findings suggest that **citrus are the most popular kind of fruit**, reportedly because of the "pulpy burst" enjoyed by many participants in the study."

III. WORKSHOP EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE: HARRY POTTER

Thesis Research Question: What are J.K. Rowling's most important ideas about society?

Results Chapter Focus: Stratification systems

Truesdale, Beth. " Writing a sociology essay: four genre customs nobody tells you." Sociology Departmental Writing Fellow. Spring 2016.

EXAMINE THE DATA

Initial Thoughts:

- Rowling describes some wizards from old wizarding families who call themselves "pure bloods" and look down on other wizards who have non-magic parents.

- Some wizards who have non-magic parents get ahead by developing academic skills or exceptional wizarding skills.

- *however… these are not arguments!*

Formulate an Argument:

- There are two competing types of stratification systems in Rowling's novels.

- The first type of stratification system ranks people by ancestry status ("mudbloods" vs "purebloods" and Muggles vs wizards). The second is meritocratic and ranks people by their wizarding skills or academic achievements.

Truesdale, Beth. " Writing a sociology essay: four genre customs nobody tells you." Sociology Departmental Writing Fellow. Spring 2016.

STRUCTURE THE CHAPTER

Introduction

- Re-introduce sub-question, literature review, methods and data

Supporting Theme I: Ancestry Status

- Who uses this system, with examples & exceptions
- System subtypes (mudbloods vs purebloods, Muggles vs wizards)
- What readers are encouraged to think about it, with examples & exceptions

Supporting Theme II: Meritocracy

- Who uses this system, with examples & exceptions
- System subtypes (academic prowess, practical skills, bravery)
- What readers are encouraged to think about it, with examples & exceptions

Conclusion

- Discuss the themes in the context of the sub-question & literature

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BEHIND THE SCENES: PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

What does the evidence tell you?

When Dumbledore awards points after the children encounter Quirrell, he recognizes Hermione's intellectual problem-solving under pressure, the "best chess game that Hogwarts has seen for many a year" played by Ron, and Harry's skill and bravery in fighting Voldemort. Importantly, he also recognizes Neville's bravery in trying to stop Ron, Harry, and Hermione, saying, "It requires great bravery to stand up to our enemies, but even more to stand up to our friends."

Is there any supporting evidence?

The points awarded for the House Cup show what types of skills and behavior help individuals and groups get ahead under this system. Academic prowess, wizarding skills, and bravery are all prized.

Does the evidence point towards a larger trend?

Thus, Dumbledore and other "good" characters use the meritocratic stratification system.

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STRENGTHEN YOUR ARGUMENT

Topic sentence states the main argument:

Elaborate and clarify the topic sentence:

Provide evidence, details, quotes as support:

The "good" characters in *Harry Potter* use a meritocratic stratification system.

The points awarded for the House Cup show what types of skills and behavior help individuals and groups get ahead under this system. Academic prowess, wizarding skills, and bravery are all prized.

For instance, when Dumbledore awards points after the children encounter Quirrell, he recognizes Hermione's intellectual problem-solving under pressure, the "best chess game that Hogwarts has seen for many a year" played by Ron, and Harry's skill and bravery in fighting Voldemort. Importantly, he also recognizes Neville's bravery in trying to stop Ron, Harry, and Hermione, saying, "It requires great bravery to stand up to our enemies, but even more to stand up to our friends."

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TAKEAWAY

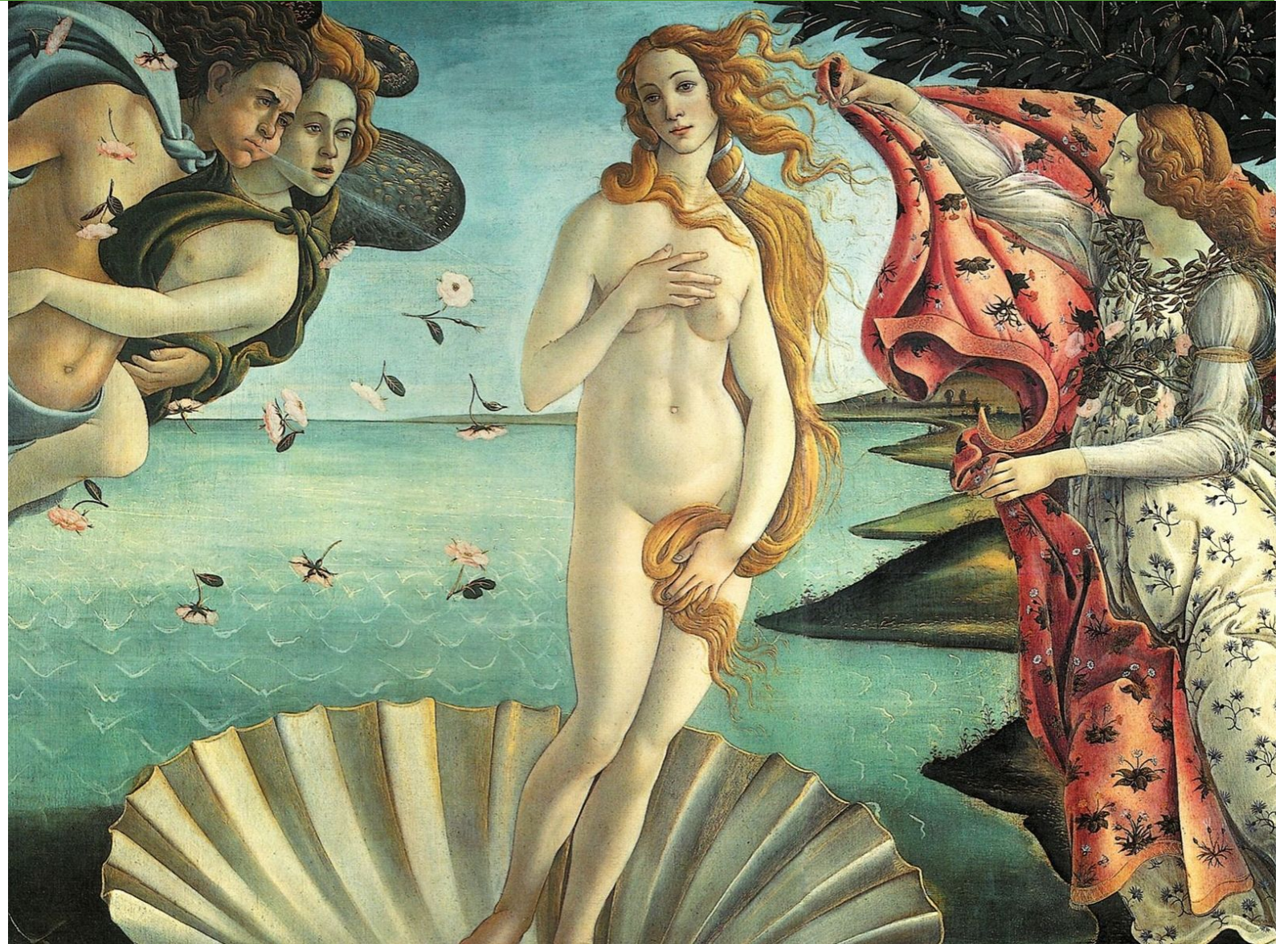**You may develop ideas very differently than you end up arguing them!**
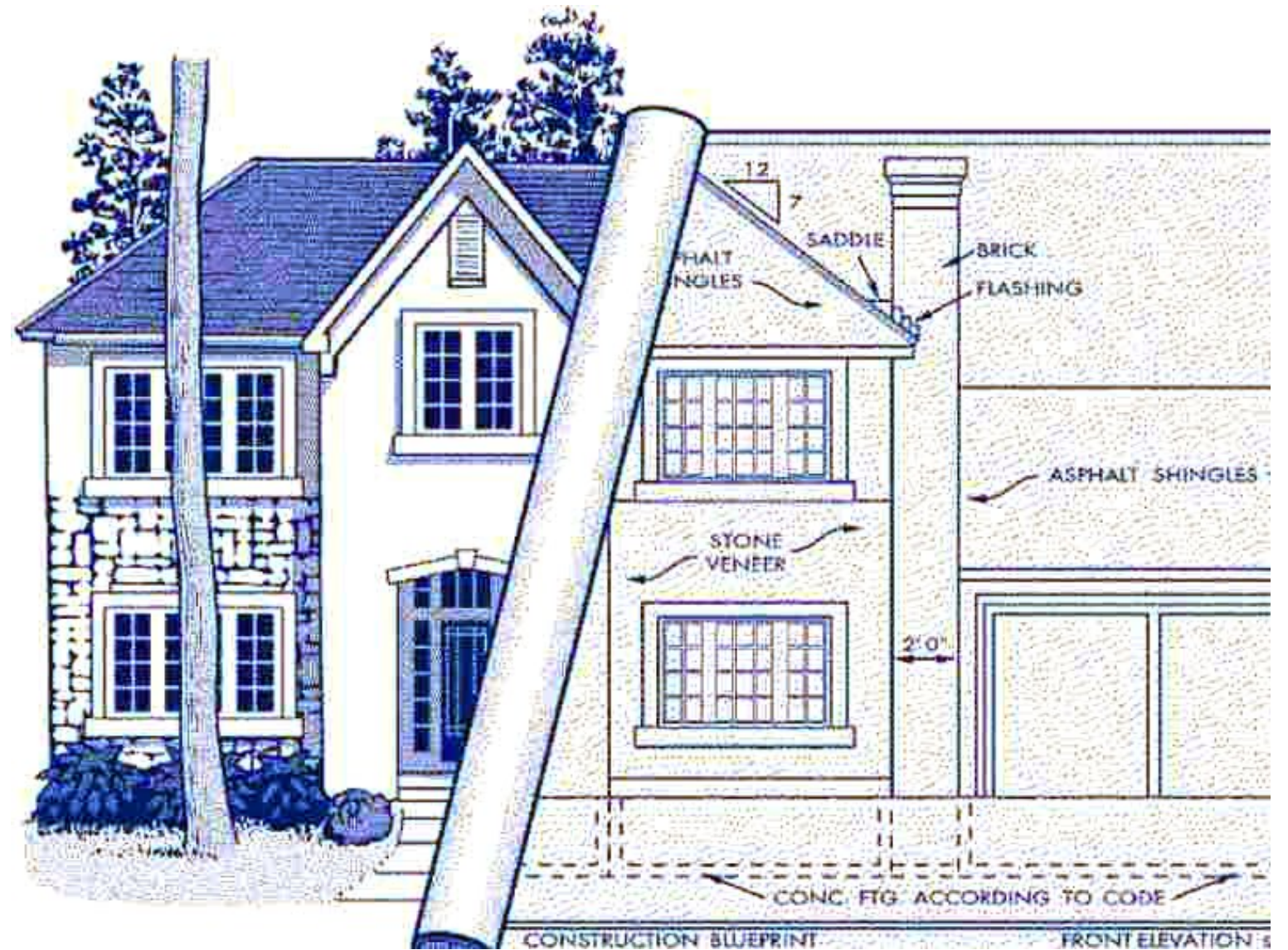
- development ≠ argument

IV. METAPHORS FOR WRITING

GOOD WRITING IS **NOT** "BORN" FULLY FORMED

Botticelli, "The Birth of Venus" (1486)

OUTLINES ARE **NOT** BLUEPRINTS

PAPERS MAY **NOT** HAVE PREDICTABLE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

WRITING IS **ITERATIVE**

Round 1   Round 2   Round 3   Round 4   Round 5

BE AN INTERIOR DESIGNER: **PLACE YOUR BIG PIECES** FIRST AND FURNISH AROUND THEM

AIM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND **COURSE CORRECT**

TAKE BREAKS
AND GET
PERSPECTIVE

INCORPORATE **EMERGENT** IDEAS

QUESTIONS?

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