

# CHAPTER 1

## A WORLD OF PROBLEMS

### Introduction

Why a book on using sociology to solve problems? As applied sociologists, we are convinced that using sociology can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of life. Undoubtedly, you are increasing your awareness of the value of the sociological perspective to view the world around you. But, at the same time, you may have shared a similar reaction with others who have said: "It's fascinating stuff, but what can I do with it?" Using this book as a resource, we think that you will be able to move from the fascinating to the functional, from the philosophical to the practical.

Applied sociologists tend to look at things in different ways than the more traditional sociologists. All sociologists are trained to do research, much of it basic. Basic research is testing a theory to validate, improve or reject it. Classic theorist, Emile Durkheim encouraged the application of knowledge to real problems. So when he wrote Suicide, he may well have been personally concerned about the problem of suicide itself. In the minds of contemporary theorists, however, but his primary interest in the book appears to be a test of a theory. From a basic research view, he was interested in using data on suicide in Europe to test a theory concerning integration in society. In basic scientific research, whether in sociology, psychology, biology or chemistry the "theory" is the problem. That is, what we want to know is whether the theoretical road map is an accurate one.

This can be good news and bad news. Sociologists are trained and rewarded for understanding and expanding theories of society. Theories are important and good theories make good practice possible. How can one act effectively on something if he or she does not know how it works? So the "good news" is that basic research in sociology is important and should be fully utilized and developed. On the other hand, many sociologists who teach the

discipline (and, therefore, many of the students who learn sociology) follow a basic research perspective. Traditionally, students who become sociology majors are often confined to this approach. The “bad” news is that they end up "cloning" the perspective and the basic research philosophy perpetuates itself. The "bad news" gets even worse when students attempt to take their sociology out of the basic setting and use it only to end up disappearing (they do not call themselves sociologists anymore and do not identify with the field) and, most importantly, do not end up feeding back important information which might have an impact on improving sociology. Even worse, some sociologists who apply their skills in business or government actually may be berated by mainstream sociologists.

Let's look at Emile Durkheim's Suicide another way. Suppose we view suicide as a real world problem. Our concern is to do something about this problem: to understand and change the social forces which create this horrible situation which ends a person's life. A client, such as a group of parents or a board of education may ask the question: "Why is this happening to our children?" As sociologists how do we go about identifying and understanding factors that cause the problem and how do we develop programs to help solve the problem? If we start out with this approach, the emphasis on what an applied sociologist is different from a basic researcher.

How is it different? Let's look at three ways it's different. First, concern for the real world problem is the focus of our attention. Applied sociologists passionately want to know how to *address and find solutions* for the suicide problem. Applying sociological skills and expertise to improve conditions is first and foremost and validating theories of suicide, while very important, is secondary. Second, applied sociologists draw on the skills, tools and methods of sociology as resources that can be immediately applied. When a problem exists, there is usually little or no time to conduct a research project on the validity of the tool or process itself. The best tools must be selected and they must be executed.

We do not want to use shoddy methods. Nor are we immediately interested in adding fuel to the fire of an academic debate about whether qualitative or quantitative methods are the most academically pure. Instead, we are more interested in using the best tools that fit the situation. This might mean key informant interviews in one situation, focus groups in another, or survey research in, yet, another. Likewise, to the applied sociologist, sociological concepts and theories are tools which may be drawn upon to improve our ability to grasp a real world problem.

Finally, basic researchers often find themselves narrowing their focus on a single specialty. This makes sense, sociology is a broad discipline. Testing theories concerning specialty areas like criminology or demography, for example, requires that you know as much as you can about the concepts and models in those areas. This is not to say that an applied sociologist can not be a specialist; but he or she is often likely to benefit from broadening the tool kit. This means learning as many new tools as possible, enhancing divergent rather than convergent thinking and looking for creative ways to rigorously use the tools.

Let's take another real life example. Some years ago the police in a suburban county were confronted with a series of dreadful murders of local gas station attendants. The police asked for help in determining the nature of these crimes. Their interest was not on theories of homicide or validating theories of criminology. They simply wanted to know how they could address this real world problem. Social science research was employed to assist. The key factor here was the emphasis and the response. Tools were brought to bear on the situation to solve a problem facing the community. Theories of suicide or crime were not neglected. Instead they were actually tested in a real life situation; not to test their validity, but to apply their information to resolve a problem. As important as using the tools is reporting the outcome so that other can apply similar strategies in related situations when they arise. There needs to be a "tension" between theory and practice. If the theories do not work in real settings, basic researchers need to get "back to the drawing board."

## What Can Sociology Add?

Most applied sociologists love what we do! The sociological perspective is a very effective orientation to use in a multitude of social situations and events. However, real world problems are humbling in that applying what we know may be exhilaratingly comprehensive in one setting and embarrassingly inadequate in others. In a world of problems and problem solvers, we are better off to ask: "What can sociology **ADD** to understanding and solving the problem?" What perspective and methods can we use to better impact a situation? Just what do sociologists bring to the table that can be used in dealing with and solving a problem? There are at least two answers to this question: perspectives and tools. Let's look at each.

There are countless pages in sociology texts devoted to the notion of the "sociological perspective." This perspective is a view of the world that looks at social statics (structures) and social dynamics (processes). When we look at social life, we begin to see **interactions not persons**. Sociology is grounded in the belief that "action-between" or "action-among" persons produces the state of being in which we live. Let's look at an example. Suppose you're an independent consultant trying to enhance organizational development by using your sociological expertise. The local fire chief hires you and starts his conversation by saying: "People aren't what they used to be. They do not honor volunteering for their city or country anymore. The country is going to the dogs... people simply aren't as good as they were. Nobody will volunteer for the fire department."

This view is known as "blaming the person"; that is, bad people added up equal a bad society. As a sociologist you will want to look at the chief's assessment a little differently. Sociologists are more likely to ask a variety of questions about the ways people in the society respond to this situation. For example, you will want to know what the current role sets look like for persons who are likely volunteer? What groups of people are the most likely to volunteer? How is this role of firefighter currently defined? What is expected of volunteers in

this role? Are there traditional sets of role expectations that make it impossible for some people to actually volunteer as firefighters? Sociologists will want to evaluate the answers to these and other questions and then develop some reasons as to why people don't volunteer to be firefighters.

This leads us to a second unique view. Sociologists are constantly looking at situations. For most of us it is difficult to sort out individual behavior and emotions from the situations that caused them. This is a role normally played by psychologists. However, there are very few situations in which any one of us operates in a vacuum, that is totally alone. We are almost always in a collective situation, whether it is real or perceived. Here's what we mean. For years a local department store maintained a set of escalators which were located in the middle of the store. When a shopper entered the store and wanted to go to the second level, the escalators were in clear site. No doubt an architect had positioned them so there would be not confusion as to how you "get upstairs." The situation made sense until you got to the actual escalators themselves. We would expect to go to the right. Unfortunately, if you tried the right-hand escalators in this store you might be surprised to find that right escalator stairs were going down. Clearly, a small inconvenience; yet, more than likely the reasoning behind putting the up escalator on the left, nearest the incoming door, was to improve the efficiency of system. How efficient is a "situation" laid out this way? This was a situation laid out in contrast to a cultural definition. This would have been very acceptable to a European, but very confusing to an American. This produces deviance, surprise and perhaps a personal or psychological response. Thus, "**real social situations**" are causes that impact on human choices, outcomes. We practice applied sociology when we look at the nature of social situations.

Perceived situations are often as "real" as the one described above. For the most part we all live in "Disneyworld!" Well, not exactly, but at least in "Fantasyland." We make up our worlds and, then, we live in them. As cognitive creatures we can bring into our social reality just about anybody we want: people long dead, people currently living who we know or do not know, and people yet to exist. Here's an example. For years two of the authors have worked

with grieving persons. Our goal was not to provide therapy but to understand how grievors understood and, hence, dealt with their reality (you can see immediately how this becomes "applied sociology"). In self-help groups, grievors would discuss their lives and the worlds in which they had and were currently living now that someone important had died. Death is a powerful force in revealing the existence and nature of the social fabric in which we live. Grief is the intersection of highly personal and unique human emotions with the socially created world in which we live. Grievors often have encounters with persons who have died ...not just through dreams but perceived social rituals...flowers on one's birthday, finding a stuffed toy, "running into" somebody that "looked just like Dad." We become sensitive to the fact that we are tied into a socially defined self that is a "two-way" street. We "make it up" and "it is made up" for us by others, then, we live in that world, that situation, that is "in the making." As Berger and Luckmann say, we live within an ever-changing "social product."

### **Defining An Applied Problem: How Do You Know One When You See One?**

Defining problems is central to sociology. Unfortunately, it has been glossed over too often. When we are looking at an applied problem we need to review at least three things: (1) type of problem, (2) level of analysis and (3) possible sociological perspectives. Let's take these in turn.

If a real world situation is viewed as a problem it usually is for one of three reasons. First, the situation (and, hence, the interactions produced by the situation) is a discrepancy between the real and the ideal. Here's an example. A small business owner may lament that she can't "keep up with orders for her company's accounting software." No matter how hard her employees seem to work, they can't get enough orders out the door. As an applied sociologist you could help here by viewing this situation as a discrepancy between the **social system** she has in place to fill orders and the volume of demand (the needs). We might just need to add more

people, but the solution might involve "restructuring," that is, reorganizing the situation or, of course, changing demand. Notice how no one is blamed for the situation?

Another way to look at a problem is to view a situation as a clash of values between two or more groups. Not surprisingly, labor-management conflicts are common examples of this type of problem, but such a problem might be more subtle. For example, in a large company a value clash may emerge from the "technological purity" values of the engineering department and the "get it out the door, deliver it on time" values of the sales department. The solutions are usually of two kinds here. One type of solution is to create a "**synthesis**:" some new way to value the situation, some constructed "common ground" to deal with the contrary views. Another approach would be view some level of conflict as healthy because the presence of conflict may suggest some underlying issue that needs resolution.

Finally, a problem may exist simply because a group of persons has been able to get people to collectively define a situation that way. If this sounds circular (that is, "it is because it is"), do not worry. We have had poverty, crime and hunger with us for a long time, but our society doesn't always define them as problems. The solution may be in the defining or redefining the situation.

Certainly, a situation which is all three of these ( a discrepancy between real and ideal, a value clash and something defined as a problem) has vast credibility within a group. While discrepancies often produce value clashes and/or become defined as problems, this just isn't always the case. To adequately understand the problem, we may need to look at it in all of these ways... and, perhaps, in ways never understood before.

It's important here to try to determine the problem and reach a consensus between you and your client. This is essential. If you and your client are superficially agreeing (both "nodding your heads in the same direction," but do not have a "clue!") you're in for big trouble. Here's why. First, you'll study the wrong thing. This produces wasted time and effort, not to mention lost resources. Secondly, you may produce possible tension between you and your client. You both may honestly claim that you agreed on the problem, only to find that you are

later accused of studying the "wrong thing." Anger, anxiety and embarrassment are all part of this outcome. It doesn't do much good to blame your client at that point. Remember, it's up to you to understand what the client means when he or she says there is a problem.

We like to think of problem definition as a "**social construction of reality**" (Berger and Luckman, 1968). We know it's jargon, but it's good jargon! Look at the words. "**Social**" ...more than one person, so we are working on something shared here; "**construction**"... creating or making, so you and your clients are jointly making something; "**reality**" ... a thing, a place. By creating this "thing" we agree on as a problem and getting consensus on how we define it, we are on the way to some good sociological sailing. "Clients" are the people who we are "working for." Their understanding of the problem may span a broad spectrum from no understanding at all to complete and thorough understanding. The fact remains that your reality and theirs cannot be separate. You begin to realize that problem definition is just plain hard work. It demands clear communication; often iterative, that is, talking about the situation "over and over." If you're working with a group of clients this can require skills in group discussion and team problem identification.

### **Levels of Social Organization: Where's the Problem?**

When we ask "where is the problem?" a sociologist not only thinks about location in time and space, but also considers its place in social space. Sociologists' responsibility lies with human interaction on a broad spectrum - from the person, to the group (families, communities, organizations), to the society (cultures, institutions, the global village)! That's a fair amount of social ground to cover. We work at a "**micro**" (persons, selves), "**meso**" groups and communities, and "**macro**" (societies and cultures) levels. To understand a problem we need to locate it at one of these levels. At the same time, we must avoid the arrogance of forgetting our colleagues in other fields who look at humans at the **suborganic** level, like psychologists and biologists; and those who carve out pieces of the social condition, like economists and political

scientists. They all have something important to say and their unique interpretations of situations are needed.

In order to make sense of a problem, finding its **level** is important. But, where a problem "surfaces," is very likely to have both "within" layer and "among" layer characteristics. For example, the local elementary school begins to report unusual rates of absenteeism due to an outbreak of measles. The problem initially is a **micro** level one in the sense that children interact person-to-person and pass illnesses from one to another. Clearly, solving this problem would require some **micro** level interventions. This intervention works "within" a level of social organization. Are there **meso** and **macro** problems? At first glance we are not sure. But, in an applied view we'll want to look. What is this school's rate of infection in comparison to others around it? Others similar to it? Now, we are thinking about **meso** level, groups: schools.

How effective have local health systems been in vaccinating children for measles? Has social class had an impact on the vaccination of children? Again, **meso**. Finally, have federal cutbacks in health care or the introduction of a new federal system to distribute vaccination had some impact here (**macro**)? The problem surfaces among individuals, within a **micro** layer of social organization, but we can trace it to **meso** and **macro** levels as well. And, trace it we must. That's part of the "sociologist's burden." As a discipline we are "holistic," we look at the "whole thing."

### **Tools of the Trade**

Once a problem is identified and defined, applied sociologists need to do something about it. Sociological practitioners may be asked to work with problems for a variety of reasons, to know about it by researching it, on one hand, to "fix it" by intervention on the other hand. Regardless, we need tools. These tools usually fall in two groups: conceptual tools (concepts and theories, ways to know a problem) and methodological tools (ways to actively engage and/or research the problem). Let's look at each of these.

In most sociology programs, theory courses are separated from methods courses. This suggests that there is a distinction between "thinking" and "doing." Often we get the impression

that theories fall in the "wake-me-when-it's-over" category: memorize it, forget it and then, get on to the real action part - methods. Applied sociologists may have learned their theories and methods this way, but they do not have the luxury of separating them when they're addressing an applied problem. *How can you begin to solve a problem in a **social system**, when you do not have the foggiest idea of how that system works?* For applied sociologists there are tools and, then, there are MORE tools! Taking this approach how can theories be used as tools?

A wide variety of theories exist in sociology. But, there are at least three that currently stand out in the field: functionalism (or the systems paradigm as Babbie calls it), conflict, and interactionism. For the applied sociologist the key ingredient is how they are applied. They can be used one at a time or all at once. Here's an example.

A local church may be seen as a system. The roles and statuses (minister, members of the congregation, church trustees, the lay leaders) may be seen as interdependent at a **micro** level. At a **meso** level the religious education committee is interdependent with the church facilities committee. They both are dependent on the finance committee. The church as a whole is dependent on the community in which it is located. All in all, we see the church as a social phenomenon of interdependent, perhaps, interlocking parts. The church is a **structure**. Remember that **norms** (rules) are the building blocks of **structures**. When these organized blocks comprise some temporary formation which people can attach themselves to, we get **structures**. We link **structures** as individuals through roles. **Structure** depends on agreement that the rules exist and that they are legitimate. All the **structures**, whether **micro**, **meso** or **macro** exist because they serve some function. In fact, the shape of the parts, even how the **structures** are organized, are based on the purpose they serve for people on one hand, and for other **structures** and social forces on the other. The system works toward some sort of equilibrium between need and **structures** in an evolving balancing act.

O.K. that's one view. Now, let's look at it from another perspective. We can see the church as a collection of centers of power. The committees in the church as well as the roles and statuses, and the people who maintain them have vested, established, interests in maintaining these positions or groups. Layers emerge in the church based on "false consciousness," a belief that the powerful will remain that way and that there is little anyone can do to rectify this imbalance prevails. The powerful groups, pretty much "get what they want." In order for change to occur a "consciousness of exploitation" followed by conflict must occur. The result will be a **synthesis**, something new, not necessarily like that which went before.

Finally, the church is a **collective definition of reality** shared by a group of people. It's not only a religious belief system that many people share, but also, it is set of ways of living and seeing the world. In this sense, the roles, beliefs and values as well as the way people do things are part of corporate culture. Sacred symbols, rituals and roles are all maintained by definition and maintenance of these definitions in everything from church school to the church bazaar. Change comes from the redefinition of reality.

None of us want you to stop with our rather basic views of the applications of these theories to a social situation. Studying theory is a life-long pursuit. But, now, let's just see what happens when the church has a problem. Suppose the church is faced with a problem of whether it should invest in a larger building. Church leaders come to you because, as a sociologist you should have some insights into these things! Using sociological theory can be extremely valuable in moving toward sizing up the problem, even if you know very little about churches or religion in general. Which of the three should you use? Use all three! Here's how.

First, view the church as a **social system** that processes people. It has an internal **structure**, both social and physical, for doing this. Furthermore, it is part of a larger **social system (meso)** in the area it serves and in the society (**macro**) in which it resides. What is the nature of the current system? What are its parts? How are they organized? What needs are currently served? How well does the church currently process people and serve needs? This list

of questions emerges immediately if you view the church as a system. So, as you can see, the church is a system (consensus theory).

At the same time, start looking for the church "power centers:" groups of people and **structures** that tend to control church resources, people and activity. Sometimes these will not be obvious. For example, you expect the church clergy to be powerful, but the true power may reside in a long-time church benefactor who has been making contributions to the church's well-being for years. This person may not be so obvious. So, the church is a collection of persons with power and vested interests (conflict theory).

Simultaneously, the church's existence is based on formal and informal ways of life. Decision-making processes, ways dealing with problems and who should be involved in those problems are based on the corporate culture of the church. At the same time, the religious faith supported by the church membership sets the tone for church activity. You need to understand this unique way of seeing the world to the best of your ability. You may not agree with it, but if you are to solve the problem you must understand it. So, the church is a corporate culture with a set of shared symbols (interaction theory).

By now, the point is clear: use all your tools! This is true for two reasons. First, by methodically working through the situation using each perspective you provide a more comprehensive view of the situation, you're less likely to miss something. Secondly, you're less likely to be surprised. The minute you focus on a systems perspective only, powerful people will pop up. Likewise, the minute you understand the symbolic world of the church, **social system** force (changing demographics for example) may emerge.

Now let's turn our attention to the methodological tools. The "tool-selection" process has at least five steps. First, **revisit the problem**. We can't emphasize enough the importance of knowing the nature of the problem. Second, select a methodological tool or tools that fit the

problem, not the other way around! You may develop a "pet" process (for example, sociologists are known for their use of surveys, so "everything gets" surveyed) but this can develop a "one size fits all" approach. Simply stated one tool is too confining. In applied work, your goal is to expand your tool kit. You want to master as many tools as you can. Your goal is to use tools that give the best reliable and valid information possible. We arbitrarily break these into two groups: process tools and research tools.

Thirdly, apply the tools to the problem. Makes sense, but this may be very revealing. Suppose the tools are inadequate for the problem? Suppose you plan to assist a local hospital that wants to know if it has an "image" problem in the community. You figure a sample survey of the community makes sense (tool #1). But, suppose you find out that certain groups in the community have concerns with the hospital's emergency services. Your survey "radar" picked up the problem as a "blip on the screen." But, how will you know what this means? Plan some focus groups (tool #2) in preparation for this. When you bring your results to the board of directors at the hospital, a reasonable question might be "What should we do to improve this situation?" If your clients trust you, they will likely ask. You might not know much about community hospitals, but you can respect the knowledge your clients have and, perhaps, lead them in a brainstorming session (tool #3), which might include nominal group technique (tool #4).

Fourth, if the tool doesn't work, try another one. This suggests two things. First, you should not become dependent on one method. Versatility and ingenuity are central in applied work. Secondly, learn as many tools from as many sources as possible. This is life-long learning and it makes applied work a craft. Start with the tools you have and grow in every way possible.

Fifth, and finally, don't be afraid to admit that you don't know how to do something. This will send you to a "quick study" on one hand, or a colleague who has this skill (and, please remember that this does not need to be a sociologist) on the other. You may need assistance, and you should not be afraid to get it. You'll be able to find references to skills books and references which will help to "do each" of the tools. We listed many of the tools in an annotated list with some examples of procedures in Appendix II so you can get started now. For some of the tools we've outlined the process in "cookbook" fashion. For others we've provided citations for references that will be very helpful. You may want to make some of them part of your tool kit.

You **normally** can't get all of these tools in a standard academic sociology curriculum. So get outside sociology and look around. Sociologists do not have a "corner on the market" for tools. Applied sociologists must constantly be on the alert for new tools and, then, learn them and incorporate them in their tool kit. Market researchers, economists, psychologists, anthropologists and human resource and organizational development professionals are just a few of the fields that can provide great tools. Remember, you can't fully learn these tools unless you use them! It will be absolutely essential that you "wrestle" with some of the tools. Try them out in a "safe" environment, like a training site or classroom. Then, practice, practice, practice.

### **What Follows: Organization of Chapters**

Each of the following chapters is set up so you can work from a sociological idea, a **concept**, to actually applying the idea in an applied setting. We'll go beyond the concepts to outline the expected **actions** you'll need to take and, then, the **outcomes** that you can expect. In addition to being a textbook that you might use in most classes on applied sociology, we'd like

this to be a tool kit that you'll plan to keep with you as you practice your profession. So in each chapter you'll find several useful ingredients for now and the future. Specifically, you'll find:

- 1) **An Action Title.** We are serious. The titles should do two things: inspire you to act and, of course, serve as a recipe heading in an applied "cookbook." We hope these chapters get "dog-eared" as you use them over the years.
- 2) **Sociological Key Concepts.** Remember, we think concepts are tools. It's difficult to learn all the tools at once. Furthermore, it's a rare situation that doesn't call for far more of the concepts than we will introduce in each chapter. For ease of learning, we'll just introduce a key concepts at a time, define them and then put them to work! We hope that when you're finished you'll be able to put them all together.
- 3) **Sociologist as Expert.** This includes a brief discussion of why sociologists have the unique expertise and skills to study and provide solutions to the problem.
- 4) **Research Tools:** In each chapter we'll introduce you to several tools that you could use to "get hold of" a problem of the kinds that you might find in this chapter. We hope you'll be putting these in your tool kit, and that the kit will only expand: the more tools, properly understood, the better off you are.
- 5) **Presentation Tools:** Why collect information if you can't convey what you've found to your client? In an applied situation your clients may come from a variety of backgrounds, education levels and cultures. Writing research reports might be useful in some situations, but in many others they could be down right offensive! At worst they would be offensive and useless!! We'll try to provide examples of a variety of tools for presenting information as we travel across the chapters.

- 6) **Case & Solution.** In each chapter we'll provide a case. This will be some real life situation in which applied sociology could be used. We, of course, will ask you to use the tools we've presented in the chapter (and perhaps elsewhere) to the case. We'll do the same and, then, we'll ask you to compare.
- 7) **Exercise.** Finally, we want you to get into the field and "do something." So, each chapter will include exercises. The exercise will work three ways. First, it will be yet another tool that you can use in an applied setting. Secondly, you'll get a chance to see that talking sociology and applying sociology vary widely in their "degrees of difficulty." Finally, the results of your exercises should be kept in a portfolio. We are convinced that many of these exercises will make you more employable, certainly more versatile in problem solving.

## **Exercise**

### Part A

One of the most difficult tasks in the research act is clearly determining the problem which is to be researched. In this exercise you must deal with this task.

Instructions:

- 1) **CLIENT SELECTION.** Select a person who might find an applied research project valuable. Such persons will probably be in managerial roles in their respective organizations. Some examples would be-
- o Business- department or division managers, personnel managers, market research managers, product research and development managers, long-range planning/forecasting personnel, etc.

- o Government- department or divisions heads in city, state or local government (all major departments apply...do not forget police and fire)
- o Religion- local clergy, regional managers (bishops, local denominational personnel), lay governing boards, etc.
- o Non-profit organizations- boards of directors from everything from youth sports leagues "body-parts" organizations! Do not forget neighborhood associations.
- o Education- principals, PTA/PTO, school board managers/members, college deans or academic department heads, teachers, etc.
- o Political- political party leaders, local politicians and organizers, others...

Of course, this is an incomplete list. Use your imagination. You might find that selecting a client poses some difficulty. Consult local directories of non-profit organizations, business directories from the Chamber of Commerce, the telephone book for churches and political parties. Of course, the internet can be a helpful resource here also. Volunteer organizations particularly have needs, and you can make an extraordinary contribution to these clients.

After you have selected a client schedule a one-hour session with this person. Explain in advance that you are doing this as part of a class.

2) CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW SESSION. Interview your client.x. Strive to determine -

- What are the general research needs of this person? Try to develop a priority list of categories of research needs. Which of these needs reflects an evaluation project?
- o What is the specific program which the client wishes researched? What are the program goals? What are the measurable objectives? Get your client to identify the successful outcomes.

Then,

o Draw a specific statement of the evaluation need and verbally make a rough verbal presentation of your estimation of what you think the need might be. Seek clarification. Sometimes this may be aided by saying: "When the research is over, the report written what specifically do you want to know about (state research topic)? What do you really want researched?"

3) WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT.

Provide the following written items for this class:

1) Write a "thank you" business letter to your client. In the second paragraph of the letter, outline the research questions in a statement which resembles this- "My interpretation of our discuss of your evaluation research needs revealed the following research questions:

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NO MORE THAN ONE PAGE!

2) Send the original to your client, provide a copy for class review.