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# Writing the Critical Article (i.e. Literature) Review

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SOC1-4086

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## The literature review serves several important functions

- Situates your subject area within a larger field/question/lit.
- Ensures that you are not "reinventing the wheel".
- Gives credit to those who have laid the groundwork for your research.
- Demonstrates your knowledge of the research problem.
- Demonstrates your understanding of the theoretical and research issues related to your research question.
- Shows your ability to critically evaluate relevant literature information.
- Indicates your ability to integrate and synthesize the existing literature.
- Provides new theoretical insights or develops a new model as the conceptual framework for your research.
- Convinces your reader that your proposed research will make a significant and substantial contribution to the literature (i.e., resolving an important theoretical issue or filling a major gap in the literature).

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Before I begin, here's why you need to know how to write a lit review:

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# Ontario Government Job Postings

.... Or 'why you need to learn to read and analyze critically, write a proposal and conduct secondary research

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FRANÇAIS

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Job advertisements for positions that have been designated bilingual will be provided in both English and French on the website. Positions that are not designated bilingual are not translated and are displayed in English only on both the English and French versions of the website.

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## Job Ad

**Ministry:** Ministry of Community and Social Services  
**Division:** Policy Research and Analysis Branch  
**Position Title:** RESEARCH ADVISOR  
**Duration:** 1 Permanent  
**Location:** 80 Grosvenor Street, 3rd Floor Hepburn Block, Toronto, M7A 1E9, Toronto Region  
**Compensation Group:** AMAPCEO  
**Salary:** \$73,689.00 - \$95,724.00 per annum  
**Position Status:** Open  
**Job Code:** 20PEC - Ecomcs Stat Ama Unit PEC20  
**Schedule:** 6  
**Category:** Policy and Analysis  
**Job ID:** 25583

Do you have excellent research and program evaluation skills? Do you have the ability to think strategically and develop innovative solutions? If so, the Ministry of Community and Social Services has an exciting role for you as Research Advisor.

You will: develop and implement a comprehensive social policy research program that address program-specific, cross-cutting and strategic policy issues; identify research needs; engage in research and program evaluation activities that support policy development and program management.

**Qualifications:** advanced quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation skills including research design, sampling, data capture, data analysis, data interpretation, questionnaire design, survey development; advanced logic modeling and outcome identification skills; analytical skills and judgment to develop performance measures, evaluate program effectiveness and develop innovative solutions; superior knowledge of research mobilization methods including research synthesis and research translation to make research and information accessible and useful to the ministry; excellent project management, leadership, team building skills and ability to manage deadlines and competing priorities; strategic orientation and superior conceptual skills to develop new approaches to address problems and challenges; excellent organizational, problem-solving, communication, consulting, negotiating and mentoring skills; strong interpersonal, relationship building, oral and written communication and presentation skills; understanding of policy development and ability to work within the government's decision making and approval processes; advanced skills in application software (e.g. Word, Outlook, Excel, Visio, etc.).

**Posting Date:** Friday, March 19, 2010

**Closing Date:** Tuesday, April 06, 2010

Applications must be received by the end of the closing date with the Job ID number quoted.

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## Job Ad

**Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
**Division:** Health System Information Management and Investment Division  
**Position Title:** METHODOLOGIST  
**Duration:** 1 Permanent  
**Location:** 1075 Bay Street, Toronto, M5S 2B1, Toronto Region  
**Compensation Group:** AMAPCEO  
**Salary:** \$66,845.00 - \$82,640.00 per annum  
**Position Status:** Open  
**Job Code:** 18PEC - Ecomcs Stat Ama Unit PEC18  
**Schedule:** 6  
**Category:** Finance and Economics  
**Job ID:** 25262

Bring your strong analytical and statistical skills to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Health Analytics Branch, where you will provide consultative advice, research and analysis for the development of standard methodologies in support of Ontario's health system strategy.

In this role, you will: provide consultative advice for the research and analysis of standard analytic methodologies and information management analytic standards; provide research and advice in the definition and establishment of performance indicators, targets, benchmarks and models in support of the health system evidence-based decision making; lead the development of standard relational methods for data representation used in forecasting and modelling; conduct environmental scans and research of new and emerging ministry strategies and initiatives; assist in the development and delivery of health analytics education and training strategies.

**Qualifications:** Knowledge of the theories, concepts, methods, and measures in one or more of the following specialized areas: health economics, statistics, biostatistics, and mathematical modeling; knowledge of leading analytical methods, performance indicators, statistical and training techniques, and trends in health analytics and health planning; knowledge of Ontario's health system strategy, government and ministry's directions and priorities related to health system operations; knowledge of availability, uses, strengths and weaknesses of administrative and population health databases and statistical software, and proficiency in office software applications; demonstrated commitment to organizational learning to renew knowledge and seek opportunities to address complex and/or ambiguous situations; strong system thinking, consultative, communications, relationship management and partnership building skills.

**Posting Date:** Monday, March 08, 2010

**Closing Date:** Monday, March 22, 2010

Applications must be received by the end of the closing date with the Job ID number quoted.

**Apply online**

**Location:** 900 Bay Street, 12th Floor Mowat, Toronto, M7A 1L2, Toronto Region  
**Compensation Group:** Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario  
**Salary:** \$72,003.00 - \$93,346.00 per annum  
**Posting Status:** Open  
**Job Code:** 20APA - Prog Analysis Ams Unit APA20  
**Schedule:** 6  
**Category:** Policy and Analysis  
**Job ID:** 32637

The Ministry of Education's Parent Engagement Office, Inclusive Education Branch seeks a high performing, results-oriented bilingual Senior Policy Advisor to coordinate and facilitate the development and implementation of policy frameworks, program delivery and outreach to the francophone community.

**You will:**

- lead the development and implementation of provincial policies, guidelines and initiatives to increase parent involvement in education
- lead strategic planning, research, impact assessments
- develop strategic accountability frameworks, outcome measurement
- assess local, regional and provincial issues and provide key policy advice
- draft policy, briefing, materials and cabinet submissions and lead consultations with community and stakeholders

**What we are looking for: Mandatory**

- Proficiency in English as well as proficiency in French at the superior level

**Technical knowledge**

- You have knowledge of Ontario's education sector, including relevant legislation, organizational structure, school board operations and school councils
- You have knowledge of equity and inclusive education, principles and structures
- You have knowledge of program/policy analysis and development theories, principles and research tools
- You have knowledge of the Francophone community to provide policy advice with respect to the planning, delivery and evaluation of Parent Engagement Policy and lead consultations involving Francophone stakeholders

**Strategic operational planning, leadership and project management skills**

- You have issues management skills to identify and analyze unique issues, design strategies and develop policy solutions
- You have project management and leadership skills to direct staff on policy development projects, plan and manage deadlines and competing priorities

**Communication, consultation and negotiation skills**

- You have communication, presentation and negotiation skills to prepare recommendations, detailed policy frameworks, speeches and briefing papers
- You have consultative skills to promote effective liaisons with other ministry programs and stakeholders and provide key policy advice to committees, sub-committees, and the ADM/Minister/Deputy Minister Offices

**Posting Date:** Thursday, January 6, 2011



**Job ID:** 32637

The Ministry of Education's Parent Engagement Office, Inclusive Education Branch seeks a high performing, results-oriented bilingual Senior Policy Advisor to coordinate and facilitate the development and implementation of policy frameworks, program delivery and outreach to the francophone community.

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**Posting Date:** Thursday, January 6, 2011

Knowledge of the organization, operating and accounting systems of a wide variety of funded social assistance programs and the principles and practices of financial accounting. Knowledge of Ministry programs and municipal, provincial, federal and aboriginal government organizations. Knowledge of other programs that impact on social assistance, such as Employment Insurance, GAINS, Old Age Security. A working knowledge of sound management practices. Sound knowledge of a range of automated systems such as SDMT, CWT, CIMS, Schooley Mitchell, etc. to access, interpret and reconcile program data. Sound knowledge of the PRO Automated Database to complete file review tools, request and produce reports, enter Recommendations and site responses, etc.

### **Skills:**

Excellent verbal and written communication skills: to explain procedures, legislation; provide advice, recommendations, action plans and consultation to municipalities, agencies, and First Nations with tact and diplomacy; to provide training to a variety of agencies; to write complex audit reports and recommendations. Well developed analytical skills; to examine and evaluate claims and operating practices of agencies and to determine intent and compliance with legislation, policies and guidelines; to analyze data and identify problem areas, decide on representative case samples. Excellent communication and diplomatic skills in conducting staff interviews to complete operational/director's monitoring reviews by examining various aspects of program delivery issues and procedures.

Organizational skills to set priorities and organize work load for timely completion of reviews and reports. Mathematical skills sufficient to verify costs in claims, analyse financial data in municipal /First Nation ledgers, journals and in related computer systems and computer skills to input and access data.

Ability to travel within Northern Region (Class "G" drivers license) to conduct reviews, sometimes in remote isolated and fly in areas.

### **Freedom of Action:**

Position works under minimal supervision, referring contentious issues, possible frauds, administrative errors, interpretation difficulties regarding written/new policies and their application to Manager/Program Supervisors.



View



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Print



Return to

**Organization:** Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities  
**Division:** Student Financial Assistance Branch  
**Position Title:** RESEARCH POLICY ANALYST  
**Job Term:** 1 Temporary - 12 Months with the possibility of extension  
**Location:** 900 Bay St., Toronto, Toronto, M7A 1L2, Toronto Region  
**Compensation Group:** Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario  
**Salary:** \$64,606.00 - \$78,345.00 per annum  
**Posting Status:** Open  
**Job Code:** 17PEC - Ecomcs Stat Ama Unit PEC17  
**Schedule:** 6  
**Category:** Policy and Analysis  
**Job ID:** 33279

Join the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to assist in implementing high profile post-secondary education initiatives related to student financial assistance in its Student Financial Assistance Branch.

You will:

- undertake research and analysis in support of Ontario's student assistance programs
- conduct financial and policy analysis
- administer and support the delivery of student assistance programs
- measure performance and outcomes
- conduct research, including inter-jurisdictional comparisons
- manage large data sets

**What we are looking for:**

Technical Skills and Knowledge:

- demonstrated experience and skills in policy and program analysis and development
- knowledge of public administration, finance, or related discipline
- knowledge of research techniques including quantitative and qualitative research methods
- ability to review and analyze policies, procedures and project proposals and formulate options for change

Communication and Interpersonal Skills:

- strong oral and written communication skills to summarize and present complex research data and findings, prepare briefing materials and reports for senior management
- interpersonal skills to work productively as part of a multi-disciplinary team

Other Skills:

## Job Specification

**Position Title:** RESEARCH POLICY ANALYST  
**Job Code:** AMAPCEO - Ecomcs Stat Ama Unit PEC17, 17PEC  
**Job ID:** 33279

### Purpose of Position:

To provide research, analytical, and consultation/liaison services, and to prepare a range of policy and program information and communications in support of branch policy and program development.

### Duties/Responsibilities:

#### 1. Policy Research and Analysis:

- Researches and collects various sources of information (e.g., legislation, regulations, policies and programs in other jurisdictions, environmental scans, surveys) to support policy and program development, and participates in Unit policy/program projects as assigned.
- Under guidance, prepares a range of draft analyses, and policy/program reports, such as options papers, briefing notes, House Book Notes, contentious issues reports, and briefing materials for use by senior management.
- Prepares draft materials for inclusion to Cabinet submissions and other decision documents on new or revised branch/ministry policy and programs for review by manger and other senior management.
- Conducts policy analysis and research with an emphasis on gathering, analyzing and evaluating research reports and information from sources relating to student support.

#### 2. Stakeholder Consultation and Liaison:

- Liaises with other branches/ministries to discuss research and exchange information, and responds to inquiries from other ministries, levels of government, community groups, agencies and the public.
- In a team context, supports policy and program consultations, including liaising with stakeholders to obtain input/feedback on policy /program initiatives. Identifies issues, including stakeholder concerns, and prepares summaries of findings for senior staff.
- Responding to stakeholder/public inquiries regarding legislation, regulations, policies and proposed policies and initiatives by preparing draft correspondence.

#### 3. Briefings and Information:

- Prepares draft correspondence in response to public inquiries regarding legislation, regulations, policies and proposed policies and initiatives.
- Prepares correspondence, information, presentations, and question and answer packages and materials to communicate policy/program changes, and to support branch, division and ministry communication activities.

### Knowledge:

Knowledge and understanding of the Ontario`s student support system. Knowledge of program and policy development principles and government decision-making processes to be able to prepare policy options regarding new or revised branch policies and programs. Good understanding of social issues and organization and programs in community and social services; relevant legislation; regulations; and

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# On to writing a critical article review:

- In order to read/understand academic articles in any discipline, you must recognize the **four major elements** that are found in almost all academic articles:
    - Goal
    - Thesis
    - Controlling Statement
    - Conclusion
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# HOW TO READ CRITICALLY

- Hunt down and identify these in the margins of your readings ...in whatever subject you're taking.
  - Indicate them within the text as you find them throughout your readings.
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- A **goal** is a general statement of an author's purpose in writing the article (distinct from a thesis).
  - A **goal** is optional. Not all articles state a goal, but many do.
  - Sometimes a **goal** is signaled by the author (e.g.: “the purpose of this article is to convince the reader that ...”)
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# THE GOAL

- Keep in mind that most of our readings are actually short excerpts from larger texts.
  - You won't necessarily find a goal statement in every article.
  - Be careful. Sometimes goals also **DOUBLE** as thesis statements.
  
  - Here are some goal 'statements' from our Course Reader:
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- “I shall examine three of the main questions that have animated the discipline since its origins in the nineteenth century ...”
  - Robert J. Brym, “Foundations of Sociological Theory.” p. 14.
-

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- “This chapter analyzes the place of nursing within within the social relations of capitalist society, drawing out some implications for the consciousness and action of nurses as primarily female workers.”
  - Warburton and Carroll, “Class and Gender in Nursing.” p. 364.
-

- 
- “The purpose of this chapter is, by way of introduction, to outline these paradigms and discuss their policy implications...”
  - B. Singh Bolaria, “Sociology, Medicine, Health, and Illness: An Overview.” p.1.
-

- 
- Some goals may be declared **negatively**:
  - “In this book **I am not concerned with** attention as a psychological need per se, **but rather with** the social conditions that affect how much attention people seek to gain and determine how much different people receive.”
  - Charles Derber, “Every Man for Himself, Every Woman for Herself.” p. 10.
-

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- **This Goal followed a thesis statement, so watch out:**
  - “I want to examine these dynamics in this essay which I titled “Stupidity ‘Deconstructed’” in order to connect with construction workers *and* to express my irritation toward postmodernists who consistently use the term (Kadi: 40).”
  - “Stupidity ‘Deconstructed.’” Joanna Kadi. p. 40
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# The Thesis Statement

1. *may state the article's **purpose** (like a goal)*
  2. declares the **main idea** of the article
  - \*3. is a **proposition**, **not** a question or topic
  - \*4. is an **assertion** or a statement of a position.
  - \*5. often contains an author's **hypothesis**
  6. **requires support** (the evidence in a controlling statement)
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# The Thesis Statement

- In general, look for the author's **thesis statement** early in an article, book or chapter.
  - Note the structure of a sentence will provide you with clues as to goals, thesis, controlling statement, and conclusion.
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# The Thesis Statement

- **Topic:** Diefenbaker and the Cuban Missile Crisis
  - **Question:** What were the results of Diefenbaker's response to the Cuban Missile Crisis?
  - **Thesis:** Diefenbaker's indecisiveness during the Cuban Missile Crisis not only damaged his chances of reelection, but also hurt Canada's image abroad.
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# The Thesis Statement

- “As I will argue in some detail, class relations are everywhere, but they never exist in “pure” form; that is, they always combine with other social relations ...”
  - “Does Class Matter?” Wallace Clement. p. 175.
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# The Thesis Statement

- “I am recalling these stories to point out that the official approach to terrorism is rather complicated, but not without characteristics. To begin with, terrorists change. The terrorist of yesterday is the hero of today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today. In a constantly changing world of images, we have to keep our heads straight to know what terrorism is and what [it] is not.”
  - “Straight Talk on Terrorism.” Eqbal Ahmad, p. 47.
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# The Thesis Statement

- Here's a thesis statement from Joanna Kadi's article "Stupidity 'Deconstructed'":
  - Note that it appears prior to the goal:
  - "So much energy goes into the social lie that poor people are stupid; capitalism needs a basic rationalization to explain why things happen the way they do... (Kadi: 39-40)."
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# THE CONTROLLING STATEMENT

- A **controlling statement** provides the support or evidence that backs up a thesis statement. It is the:
    - chief idea that helps to make and/or support the author's point(s)
    - It's important and identifiable because it underscores, provides evidence for, and/or clearly states or lists the major idea(s) in a book or article.
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# THE CONTROLLING STATEMENT

- ... is generally accompanied by a number of secondary **sub-controlling statements** that further support (fortify) the (main) controlling statement.
  - These are simply lesser facts.
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# THE CONTROLLING STATEMENT

- **Controlling** and **sub-controlling** statements are important because they help to "make" or "prove" the author's thesis.
  - Think of these as the "Big Facts" or the "**Big Idea.**"
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# THE CONTROLLING STATEMENT

- Coakley provides us with evidence of the position or assertion in his thesis statement. Here is one of his **controlling statements**:
  - “Furthermore, sport offers a unique context for the study of social processes and relationships. Sport teams provide ideal settings for studying group interaction and the inner workings of large organizations. The public nature of sport activities and events allows easy access to information on a variety of questions related to the sociological understanding of behaviour. These are all good reasons for sociologists to be interested in studying sport (13).”
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# THE CONTROLLING STATEMENT

- “Patriarchy, **we will argue**, needs a state society for its very existence”
  - Lee and Daly. “Man’s Domination and Woman’s Oppression.” p. 41.
  - In isolation this sounds like a thesis, but it’s really a **controlling statement** because of its **placement** in the article.
  - Context is important ...
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# THE **C**ONTROLLING **S**TATEMENT

- The **CS** may also ‘cap’ a series of facts:
  - “Thus, the chain of events that starts when someone is labeled a criminal for some initial offense, can end up as a kind of invisible prison in its own right.”
  - Randall Collins, “The Normalcy of Crime.” p. 99.
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# THE CONCLUSION

- The conclusion **summarizes the author's position** and usually includes a restatement of the thesis or hypothesis.
  - Sometimes the conclusion is obviously telegraphed to the reader. For example, a sentence that begins: "In summary.." or "I conclude that.." is easy to identify.
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# THE CONCLUSION

- You should be able to piece the basics of an article together by finding the **thesis statement** and the **conclusion**, which will often **echo** each other.
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# THE CONCLUSION

- “In this chapter we have indicated how class and gender relations provide the broad framework in which contemporary struggles of nurses can be understood...”
  - Warburton and Carroll. “Class and Gender in Nursing. p. 371.
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# THE CONCLUSION

- Note that especially in 'critical' sociology the conclusion will often give the reader a **SOCIAL MISSION** or leave you with a series of provocative questions.
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# THE CONCLUSION

- “In these times of resurgent ethnic conflicts, the world desperately needs cross-cultural understanding. Like charity, successful cross-cultural communication should begin at home.”
  - Deborah Tannen. “Sex, Lies and Conversation.” p. 248.
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# THE CONCLUSION

- “Though systemic change takes many decades, there are pressing concerns for me and I imagine for some others like me if we raise our daily consciousness on the perquisites (‘perks’) of being light skinned. What will we do with such knowledge?”
  - “... it is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader basis.”
  - Peggy McIntosh. “White Privilege.” p. 4.
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## ■ **LAST WORD:**

- **Goal, thesis, controlling statement, conclusion** are general rules and may vary from article to article.
  - Sometime they'll be missing in action.
  - Sometimes you'll find multiples of these in an article.
  - You have to exercise some judgement and rationalize your choice in your essay.
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## ■ LAST WORD:

- Once you've identified the 4 parts of an article, this is the last question you might ask yourself:
  - What's the author's sociological paradigm?
  - Structural functionalism, social conflict, symbolic interactionism, feminism, postmodernism...
  - (you might also identify their ontological & epistemological approach)
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# Clement and Miles (1994)

- **Organization**
  - Clement and Miles: Canadian
  - Time period: 1994 - economic recession, globalization, etc.
  - Citations: Olin Wright, G.A. Cohen, Raymond Williams, Michael Mann, E.P. Thompson, Goldthorpe, Poulantzas, Braverman, Esping-Anderson, Giddens, Hartmann, etc.
  - Most are Marxists. Some Weberians, Feminists, PoMo.
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# Clement and Miles (1994)

- **Organization - Section subheads:**
  - *Why Study Classes?*
  - *Alternative Approaches to the Study of Classes*
  - *Organizing Industrial Capitalism*
  - *The Heart of the Matter*
  - *Operationalizing Class*
  - *Origins: Historical Residues of Industrial Capitalism*
-

# Clement and Miles (1994)

- **Goal:**
- “Ours is a study of national differences in social relations of production, not a study of class formation, social, political, demographic, or otherwise. It is the variable character of class relations in the second sense that provides the starting point of our analysis: the particular forms and organization of the social relations of production in five advanced capitalist economies in the latter part of the twentieth century (1994: 8).”

# Clement and Miles (1994)

- **Thesis and Approach:**
- “The data collected (surveys)...”
- “We take as our problematic relations of domination characteristics of both class *and* gender relations, distinguishing our approach from ... Wright (1994:9).”
- “Our questions are *about* national differences in the organization of production relations -- whether they exist and, if so, how to account for these differences (1994:9).”

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# Clement and Miles (1994)

- **(sub) Thesis:**
  - “...the economic structure of industrial capitalism acquired a social form derived not merely from a logic based on the imperative of capital accumulation -- the logic of the market; it also incorporated social forms derived from the patriarchal household (6).”
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# Clement and Miles (1994)

- **Introductory Questions:**
  - “classes exist and have real effects” (3)
  - John Porter’s (1965) *The Vertical Mosaic*
  - Now: decline in economic growth (vs. 1965)
  - “... doubtful that N. Americans are more receptive to class-based analyses...several reasons for this attitude (1994: 3).”
  - They cover these reasons...
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# Clement and Miles (1994)

- Reason #1: Class are not labels, class is mediated by race, gender, nationality; is experienced differently (4)
  - Reason #2: Class relations obscured in capitalist society...institutional separation between state + economy. Relations of ruling (= relations of *effective* power) dominate.
  - Western capitalism also = democracy (confusing); property rights paramount but obscured.
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- **Controlling Statement:**

- “How, whether and why people attach either symbolic or causal significance to class relation is a subject with a long and contentious history ... whether these relations are perceived as significant is not what determines either the existence of these relations or their analytical importance. ... The fact of this power and its significance, did not depend on whether or not the larger population was aware of or understood its exercise (1994:5).”
-

# Clement and Miles (1994)

- **Subcontrolling Statements:**
- History: male/female power regulated in patriarchal household.
- Household used to be site of economic activity (since eroded).
- Gendering of class relations has 'infected' the industrial economy.
- "The subordination of women in the household was reproduced in the relations of power and authority of the capitalist firm (6)."

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# Clement and Miles (1994)

- **Conclusion:**
  - Suggests alternative approaches to studying class
    - popular parlance (lifestyle)
    - neo-Marxism (production-based)
    - neo-Weberians (income, work situation)
    - Little agreement over what constitutes class
    - Dahrendorf, Parkin, Carchedi\*, Poulantzas, Wright, EP Thompson, etc.
-

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## Most students' literature reviews suffer from the following problems

- Lacking organization and structure.
  - Lacking focus, unity and coherence.
  - No sense of where in the canon you are.
  - Being repetitive and verbose.
  - Failing to cite influential papers.
  - Failing to keep up with recent developments.
  - Failing to critically evaluate cited papers.
  - Citing irrelevant or trivial references.
-