INTRODUCTION:

It was cold, windy and even a little wet. I was desperately short of sleep not just due to the fact that it was 6am and I had been up since 6 the previous morning but it had been a long week, with lots of late nights. On top of this I was feeling slightly unethical; you see I was a still a little intoxicated although this was rapidly developing into a nasty hang over. To compound my sense of deprivation I was also feeling intimidated - even the most confident of us can at times find it difficult to approach complete strangers to ask them to fill out a form / survey or do an interview.

Tired - not just because by them I had been up for over 24 hrs - or that it had been a big week but because I had traipsed around for the previous three days hassling people and handing out flyers and by that stage the group travellers that I had been with for the three days before were well and truly over my questions - my probing and pleas for their insights - they were trying hard to enjoy their holiday and I was quickly going from a point of interest to a tiresome bore!

The last 24 hours have given my travelling companions some respite - I had found 'fresh blood' amongst the hills and valleys. That very morning I had talked to a range of people from all walks of life - different ages, genders, political beliefs - some were interested, some I could not claw my self away from - others did not care - some were down right rude, others did not want to be woken up, some asked if they would get paid for filling out my survey, others were more interested in if I had any beer or rum left - but for a lot of people I was interrupting some sacred and important to them - and to be honest I was a little resentful of it myself - I was working - missing out on the very thing I was asking these people about - and I could not but help to feel like I was intruding on their personal space, not just in the general sense either - it's a rather weird experience to stand in a grave yard and ask complete stranger how they feel! - things that we do for social research.

I'll come back to this later.

PREPARING THE PIP

I was asked to talk to you today about 'Preparing the PIP' and I chose to interpret this as preparing for submission - concentrating on the social research side of things. Please keep in mind that these are my opinions - although I consulted with colleagues and fellow markers they are mine alone and thus all my fault if I stuff it up or get it wrong.

You can probably guess from the hand outs that I have distributed what I am
initially going to talk about - Academic Referencing: an area in the PIP that I believe is in critical need of addressing - so a double whammy in the spot before lunch - as I am going to talk to you about a topic that is generally regarded as 'boring' and guaranteed to send just about anyone to sleep - so I will try and be brief and get to the point.

In this area there has been a general improvement in pips over last few years but this is an area I see as lacking. Firstly let's look at what the marking guidelines for the PIP state in relation to research methodologies and referencing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Effectively applies social and cultural research methodologies and makes informed judgements on the usefulness, validity and bias of information that contributed to the PIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>Applies social and cultural research methodologies and makes appropriate judgements on the usefulness, validity and bias of information that contributed to the PIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-18</td>
<td>Uses social and cultural research methodologies and makes some judgements on the usefulness, validity and/or bias of information that contributed to the PIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Uses at least one social and cultural research methodology and makes some judgements on the usefulness, validity and/or bias of information that may have contributed to the PIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Uses at least one social and cultural research methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Emphasis added by author - see BOS website for a full copy of the marking criteria)

As you can see you have to 'use' research methodologies even to get 1 mark. As for 'usefulness, validity and/or bias of information' students have to make judgements to make the 7-12 mark band or above - so it is obvious that these are essential areas for the PIP.

To achieve 'judgements' on 'usefulness, validity and/or bias of information' students must use appropriate referencing. Furthermore the completion of their 'Resource List' in an appropriate manner, especially the annotations, goes a long way to achieving this criterion. Students however must engage with their source material and discuss their research in critical terms when writing their central material. They need to demonstrate that they can critically reflect on difference techniques of acquiring information as well as their specific usefulness / bias for their project.

Referencing is also critical for a number of other reasons - namely academic rigour, ethics and plagiarism - (see handouts / UNSW's Learning Centre's website http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/plag.html ). If we are serious in asking these students to do social research then they must uses references, if nothing else to distinguish to the examiner what elements of the PIP is their social research (primary material) and what is not. (The rise of the internet and students 'slabbing' large segments from this medium and dropping them into their Pips has been a cause for concern for a number of years now)

This should not be seen just in the broader sense of research but in specific
cases e.g. the - APPROPRIATE USE OF TABLES. This cannot be achieved if there is no reference to the source be it from a text, the ABS or another source.

WHAT TO USE AND HOW TO GET THEM (students) TO DO SO

Here is were a large part of my handouts come in i.e. details of the footnoting and APA system as well as some small tasks that I have used and found very helpful for students.

What I cannot emphasise enough is the need to teach this material in class and get students to apply it to their PIP and research tasks in general. I highly recommend that students get used to using it in preliminary course for practise.

While there are a few different systems to choose from students and staff should not mix systems. Pick one and stick to it. There is no model prescribed in syllabus but I would suggest adopting the APA/Harvard (in text referencing) system (See handout). It is one of the most widely used systems and more appropriate to the style of subject material being covered (sociology, social ecology, anthropology etc). Footnoting is something more for us archaic historians and also I think the APA/Harvard is easier to teach students (less rules). See UNSW's Learning Centre's website http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/olib.html#7

There is a need however to get across to students that a footnote or a reference does not absolve them from plagiarism. E.g. they cannot simply 'slab' material and provide a reference to make it legitimate - that is still plagiarism - (see handout / http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/plag.html) Referencing is practical for all levels of students.

Some General Comments on the Resource List and Research Material

- **Resource list(RL):** Annotations must be there and done well.
- **PRIMARY RESOURCE METHODOLOGIES** must be included in the RL and annotated as well.

- **Use of websites** - This is problematic. It is not acceptable to rely on them in academic circles / universities. It should be the same for the PIP. There are of course exceptions to this rule. Websites that are 'reliable' i.e. have the backing of a recognised institution, government body or university. E.g. Australian Council of Social Services Website, Australian Bureau of Statistics, online Journal of Australian War Memorial. The key thing when assessing websites is to consider who has control of the information being posted. Are they reliable?

  To often students are getting information off a website that is not subject to editorial or quality control.

  Further to this to many R.L's I have seen in recent years having nothing but website and no proper discussion (if any) in their annotations about the nature of these sources. This is completely unacceptable. There is no substitute (yet) for archival research. Book, Journals, Newspapers etc and it is poor research skills / technique to rely upon one medium of information, especially when that medium is the web.

  RL's must be laid out using the correct format- All of the relevant bibliographic material MUST be included- e.g. journals, magazines
etc, what volume, date, number, articles did they use? It is useless for a student to state that they have used the Sydney Morning Herald or Time Magazine without providing when, which issue etc.

**R.L to methodologies - here I want to talk in general terms about my observations of PIP's**

We talk often about integration of research material and I believe that there has been great improvements in this area, but to often students still produce chapters in PIP's for different methodologies - this is **not an effective means of using data**. It's no different to getting 5 books from the library and writing a separate chapter on each one. Furthermore this means that there can be little or no analysis or comparison.

Further from this we need more **integration of methodologies**, i.e.

- mutually supporting of each other - interviews, survey's, observations etc that overlap in what they are attempting to achieve - not I have 3 focus questions and I'll use a different methodology on each!

Need for a thematic based approach/organisation based around issues and ideas, not organised around primary research. This comes into students planning their PIP in detail, in advance.

Still a high number of students are overstretching themselves by trying to do too many methodologies. How many then? Well how long is a piece of string? - however just about all students use secondary research then they should look at focusing on a couple of methodologies - to often they are doing 4,5,6 and not doing them well or comprehensively.

No use putting the blank copies or **outlines of questionnaires** or interview questions **in the appendix** - the **BOS has directed** that these are not part of the PIP - they do not have to be read. These are important however and as such we should get the students to integrate this material into their central material, e.g. when discussing the results of their interviews they could included a discussion of the questions that they asked and what they were hoping to achieve and then a discussion of the outcomes of their interviews. - **we must address this ASAP** - it has become a habit amongst us to tell students to include them in an appendix - (I think this is a failing of the syllabus and needs to be addressed but in the absence of this we have to work with what we've got!)

There is only one format for the PIP and one only. No video tapes or CD-Rom's are to be included, they cannot and will not be marked, its just a waste of the students time and effort.

**Death by graphs**, especially with primary methodologies - try to encourage students to avoid this - the amount of pie charts that are 100% (yes or no) that I have seen is amazing, every year we have enough of these at marking to start our own outlet store for Shakespeare's pies!

**Furthermore graphs need analysis**. They don't mean anything without analysis and comparison - not just analysis in themselves but also in relation to secondary research and other methodologies. If they are used they MUST be referred to in the text.
Observations of some particular methodologies:

An increasing number of students are using personal reflection (PR) -

- I think that this is excellent and by and large the majority of them are applying it correctly, but there are a few areas where some students are having difficulty. The most obvious is that a PR must be your own! Some students are passing off the stories of other people that they have gathered through surveys or interviews as personal reflection! - the other issue is the use of personal reflection as grandstanding (often amongst lesser ability students). It is not a vehicle to put forward personal political viewpoints but rather a chance to reflect on the students feelings, beliefs etc in a critical manner - to reflection on how this has influenced their 'take on things' and also a reflection of what has influenced their perspective - and how this might have changed.

- Another methodology on the increase is in the use of focus groups - great (see above) however they need to be a genuine cross section of the community or area of study - they should seek to discover a variety of perspectives - they need to be a directed & informed discussion group - not them and their mates sitting around at lunch time crapping on! - issues of bias laden focus groups etc need to be considered & discussed - results should not (as for all methodologies) be taken at face value

- Use of observation and participant observation - ethics questions! They are not often considered - who are you allowed to observe when does this breach ethics? e.g. small children and parental permission etc. (student protection in some cases, observing drug use etc - parties, friends, criminal activity, duty of care etc)

- Content Analysis - still not secondary research and never will be - students need to be better informed about this research methodology! Some great examples of its use are out there by students - e.g. looking at media coverage in local newspapers over a set period of time and compared the % of coverage given to local female and male sports to provide a comparison. Also undertaken in a cross-media perspective (newspaper and local TV news) - also types of sports represented and their coverage to look at this aspect / influence on the results

- a review of tennis - argued much more in terms of gender = prize money at Aust open - looked at exposure and endorsement & sponsorship

- could use it for Media portrayal through images used to represent male and female sports stars e.g. Tamsin Lewis's Olympic scandal in the media over posing for FHM V Thorpedo, posing for 'Black and White' magazine issue etc.

Back to my research experience in the beginning!

Where am I? Who can guess? (I was at Gallipoli for Anzac Day 2004 asking people to fill in questionnaires about their experience as 'pilgrims' to Australia's battlefields)

In the course of this project - being run by Associate Professor Bruce Scates at UNSW we have:
collected over 1000 questionnaires, over a number of years
changed slightly after piloting
one of the positives has been the website and the flyers - students are so much better than us at this technology - work with it if they have the skill - but not as effective as taking names and contact details (emails esp) and following up the research to clarify material, probe deeper or just get them to fill one out.
all have problems

Like all questionnaires we had people not answering the questions nor understanding them;

one women who has a split personality - filled out two - one as a returned service person and one as not.

some very brief - longest over 18 pages, and besides answers we got poems, songs and stories. We had a few total miss understandings, nowhere more clearly expressed than when it comes to issues of gender and war. Of course, the survey had to have a gender question. Like all the questions in the survey it sets the scene in the hope of evoking both memory and response. It reads

'The overwhelming majority of Australia's war dead were men. Gender identity (like national identity) is a theme of many epitaphs: they did their duty not just as soldiers but as men. How did you respond to this appeal to manhood? Can you say how it affected you as a woman or as a man?'

Well, it was fortunate Bruce put that question right at the very end of the survey. "I don't believe in gender", a retired Major General wrote to me, "and I'm not sure what this question is getting at [young man]. If you're suggesting that women should have been sent to the Front, either you don't understand the nature of trench warfare or you don't understand women!"

Of course, we were suggesting no such thing. For all the furore at what was called 'a politically correct question' Bruce doesn't regret its inclusion, if only because it revealed in number of different ways, the vulnerability of men.

But what am I getting at with my story except my detailing my own failings as a researcher, the problems that we all face with completing research and the sheer stupidity of one retired Major General?

Just a reminder: That in the end it is a big ask for a 16 /17 year student to put themselves 'out there' to complete a PIP and social research. We should, while striving to improve the quality of their work and striving to push them to the limit, take time to remember every now and then how hard it is for us - the professionals to do such tasks let alone year 12 students. If anything my experience on the Gallipoli Peninsula has left me in many ways in awe of those who can do it so well and produce so many of the great PIPs I get to read each year.