

HISTORIOGRAPHY INTRODUCTION

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Opening paragraph: Staking out the field or subfield of analysis. Here, Prell succinctly states that she will be analyzing a new direction in the field of American Jewish history: the study of capitalism and the economy. This also acts as her hook, which draws the reader into a “transformation” that has occurred in the field. By analyzing this “transformation,” she is implicitly showing that her essay is relevant and timely to a new direction in the field.

Why this field has developed. Prell here states that scholars have found the economic “turn” in American Jewish history to be “a more rigorous approach to historical scholarship.” She identifies the previous status of the field (a focus on “culture and identity”) and introduces the issue that recent scholars have tried to fix. She concludes her opening paragraph a compelling argument: that there has been “a sea change” in the field.

More analysis of the field, as needed. While Prell chooses to introduce the scholarship she will analyze at the start of her body paragraphs, this could be a place to list the books and articles this essay will examine.

Transition sentence leading into focused topic of this historiographic paper. Using the new field of American Jewish economic history as her backdrop, Prell transitions into her thesis paragraph by suggesting there needs to be “a careful and systematic appraisal” of this scholarship. In doing so, she both legitimizes the value of the field, teases that there is an intervention to be made, and draws the reader into what will soon be her main claim in this essay.

The topic of the historiography. What is the theme of the historiography? What will the analysis in the body of this essay help to clarify? What are you clarifying about the field? Prell’s thesis statement definitively states that this economic turn in American Jewish history has overlooked the role of women.

Why is this topic important? Prell uses the rest of this paragraph to overview exactly *why* her intervention is important. First, she elaborates on the erasure of women in American Jewish economic history, remarking that they only appear “a bit players.” She then analyzes the consequences of this problem: Through this erasure, scholars are overlooking “how gender and economy are intertwined.” She concludes by elaborating on this point.

A transformation in American Jewish history has appeared in the changing tide of scholarship devoted to the study of capitalism and economy. Scholars of American Jewish history find in the study of ethnic economic niches, kinship ties and capital, and global Jewish networks and flows of resources, among other topics, a more rigorous approach to historical scholarship. Setting aside culture and identity, issues that many of them argue have sent the field in the wrong direction, they navigate a sea change for historians.

As welcome and productive as this scholarship is, its consequences require a careful and systematic appraisal. Simply put, virtually all scholars writing in the vein of the economic turn in American Jewish history have marginalized or simply erased women as subjects and actors in history.

When women appear on the historical stage, they are primarily there as bit players who are present to illustrate larger principles, which are cut off from understanding how gender and economy are intertwined. Understanding this connection has transformed our understanding of society. Feminist scholars’ hard-won battles integrated women into historical narratives as actors capable of agency. In addition, they centered gender within analytic frameworks that are increasingly disappearing as historians focus on markets, lending practice and credit in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Moving forward. After the introduction, begin to analyze the scholarship in the field that corroborates the thesis. In this case, Prell will examine the scholarship within the “economic turn” in American Jewish history, and demonstrate how these studies “have marginalized or simply erased women as subjects and actors in history.”

Purpose:

The discussion section contains the interpretation of your project's results and situates the implications of your findings within the larger literature. To do this effectively, discussion sections in academic papers often use a similar structure in their first paragraph. While some writers deviate from this structure, we present the most common elements below.

The goal of the first paragraph is to remind the reader of the purpose of your study, your results, and the most important implications of your findings. If your reader has just finished reading the results section, this summary reminds them of the broader context of your work. As many people often read papers out of order, it also serves to orient the reader who may have skipped or skimmed the introduction, methods, or results. In this way, the first paragraph should communicate the most important information about your work, almost like an abstract. It also foreshadows the structure of the discussion section. This foreshadowing will take shape differently depending on how you decide to organize your findings, but it may indicate that your organization will parallel the order of your research questions, objectives, or hypotheses, as described in the Introduction. Instead, you may suggest that you will structure the section to highlight the most impactful or surprising results. However you decide to structure the section, it will help the reader understand and mentally organize your findings if you provide some information on the organization of the following text. Next, you will begin the detailed interpretation of the results, typically starting with the second paragraph.

Structure:

Provide brief context - The opening sentence of the first paragraph provides a concise overview of the impetus for the study. This is an optional transition sentence before you summarize your key findings.

Restate the original research question - This is another optional transition sentence before you summarize your key findings. While you can begin your Discussion section with the key findings, this can often feel too abrupt. Briefly contextualizing the study and restating the research questions are both ways to ease this transition. Don't spend more than 2-3 sentences on this set-up. Here, the author also provides additional methodological details.

Answer to the research question - This should be a direct answer to the primary research question posed in the Introduction. In this paper, the research question asked, "whether household drinking water in the city of Montevideo, Uruguay, is associated with children's PbB and urine Pb (PbU) levels." It's important to use clear signals to indicate that you are summarizing the primary finding. For example, this sentence begins with, "The analysis found..." Other options include, "Our results suggest that..." or "Our findings show that..." Your level of confidence in the strength of your findings should inform your word choice.

Summary of secondary analysis - The secondary results should follow the primary results. In this study, the authors also aimed to, "...determine the extent to which the water content of Fe or Zn contributes to the association between water and blood/urine Pb concentrations."

Interpretation of finding - This sentence provides a mechanistic explanation for the observed results. The authors provide several citations to support this mechanism, thus contextualizing their findings within existing literature.