

c h a p t e r

F O U R

The General Research Paper Based on Library or Internet Data

A general research paper based on library or Internet data requires you to consult these data for two purposes: first, to refine the question that you will address in your paper (if a specific question hasn't already been assigned); and, second, to collect the information that you will use to support your paper's thesis. This information can be found both in print on paper and online electronically. Both kinds are increasingly interchangeable. The daily editions of the *New York Times*, for instance, originally emerge on paper but can also be read simultaneously online at the *New York Times* Web site. Then they are archived in libraries on microfiche or microfilm. *CSA Sociological Abstracts*, a reference source published in annual printed volumes generally shelved in the reference section in libraries, is also available in a computerized version on the Internet if your library has a license. Many scholarly articles published in professional journals that are shelved in library periodical rooms or library stacks can also be retrieved electronically through online library catalogs and read on screen. Not only are the boundaries among these different media increasingly blurred, but our Information Age presents us with mountains of data.

Students often feel overwhelmed by so much information. For example, the student who was assigned a research paper on the topic of single-parent families began by entering "single-parent family" in her college's online library catalog and found references to 102 books, while the search engine *Google Book Search* returned over 3,433 entries. (A search for journal articles on this same topic using the library's subscription to the electronic database *CSA Sociological Abstracts* yielded 1,239 additional sources, while the search engine *Google Scholar* produced 24,100 hits.) To make matters worse, the research process, although in principle straightforward—determine what information you need, search for it, locate it, and record it—is rarely so simple. Instead, it is usually more a matter of lucky, imaginative guesses about keyword search terms and persistence in following clues to potentially good sources down branching paths. These branching paths will sometimes turn into frus-

trating dead ends after much wasted time, but they also can change and enrich your understanding of the question addressed in your paper and what is involved in answering it. Finding your own path enables you to make your paper uniquely your own.

Several strategies and techniques can help you with this general research process: determining where to start, searching efficiently for potential sources with keywords, evaluating the quality of potential sources, and keeping track of your sources. We will present these techniques in roughly sequential order, but the research process is inevitably messy. Once you are immersed in your topic, you must expect to have to circle back in order to search for and locate additional sources. You will evaluate their usefulness with criteria that will change and become more refined as you become more expert. You should resist any temptation to begin a general research project by starting to read through a mountain of hundreds, if not thousands, of available sources. Instead, begin by spending some time and thought on developing a good question and on preparing a record-keeping system.

BEFORE YOU START: CHOOSING A TOPIC

You often start a library research project not knowing much about your topic. How, then, do you begin to develop a good question?

First, you must select a general subject area—an area that is relevant to the concerns of your course and of interest to you. One way to find a topic is to skim your syllabus and course readings. Be sure to consider the entire syllabus, since a topic that will be discussed later in the course might be the basis for a good research question. Your instructor can help at this stage by letting you know if your topic is too broad or too far afield.

Next, even before searching the online library catalog or the Internet, construct some provisional questions. For example, let's say you want to study the feminist movement in the United States. Ask yourself why this topic interests you. Your personal interest in a subject not only motivates you during the research and writing process; it can also guide you to ask a good question. Also ask yourself what specific aspect of the subject you want to investigate for this particular class assignment and what specifically you want to know about it. In the case of feminism, for example, you may want to focus your research on differences in wages ("Are women's wages lower than men's?"), on power differences ("What determines the relative power of men and women inside families?"), or on ways people learn to fill the gender roles expected of them ("How are males and females socialized to enact sex-role stereotypes in their daily lives?").

Remember to maintain a sociological perspective on the subject. The examples given in the previous paragraph are sociologically relevant because they are concerned with differences between groups of people (men and women) and because they focus on patterned relationships in the social

world. A review of Chapter I will help stimulate the sociological imagination you need to ask a good question.

DETERMINING YOUR FIRST SOURCE(S)

Quality, not quantity, is what counts in a good research paper. Finding *enough* sources is usually easy, given the problem of information overload. Finding the *right* sources can be a challenge. Should you start with a newspaper, a professional journal or magazine article, a general or specialized encyclopedia article, a government Web site, a book, or what? If you have an appropriate destination in mind, you are more likely to have a successful journey and to avoid detours and dead ends. Planning your *initial search* for the best sources involves several factors: *how recent* the information that you need is, *how much you already know* about the topic, and the *type of general research paper that's been assigned*. A general research paper can have different objectives such as: (1) *summarizing* the scholarly literature on a topic, (2) *comparing and contrasting* the opinions of sociologists and the general public about a long-term social problem, (3) *applying sociological theories and concepts* to current events, or (4) *analyzing sociohistorical change* by examining magazine and newspaper archives.

Different sources contain information from authors with varying degrees of professional expertise. Here is an example illustrating how the student researching the topic of the single-parent family would look in different sources for different kinds of information.

Newspaper: immediately newsworthy current events and local coverage; for example, City Council budget provisions for day care or stories about single parents on welfare. Most newspapers now have Web sites, though many charge for displaying items in their archives.

Magazine: recent current affairs and enduring popular topics; for example, a cover story on the state of marriage in the United States or a profile ranking Fortune 500 companies with the best day care programs. While most magazines have Web sites, many do not post the full content of their paper editions.

Journal: scholarly research results of specialists' studies conducted in the last few years; for example, case studies of economic and educational prospects of children growing up in single-parent homes. Most scholarly journals have electronic editions, though you may need to access them through a university computer or they may require that your browsing program have a university proxy setting. Your library can tell you how to set that up.

Book: in-depth coverage of a topic or collections of scholarly articles compiled over the last few years; for example, a history of family struc-

ture in the United States or a long-term study of single-parent families in Canada.

Encyclopedia: the big picture of what is known about a topic; for example, ways in which parents influence the social development of children or the forms of family organization in different cultures. There are general encyclopedias online, such as Wikipedia, but they should be used cautiously and cannot substitute for more serious academic scholarship.

Internet: spans the range above; for example, information obtained from instantaneous chat room discussions for single parents to archived statistical government information from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

These sources represent layers of information processed over time. Consider, then, which layer you will probably need most, especially at the beginning of your search. For example, a student researching the legalization of same-sex marriage would need to rely on newspapers, magazines, and the Internet in order to read up on recent developments in the Hawaii and Vermont legislatures. A student investigating the disappearance of the gift economy in South Pacific societies would consult books and scholarly journal articles. Aiming in the right direction will make finding what you need more likely.

Consider, too, how much you know about your topic. If you don't know much, you may need to begin with an overview in a general or specialized encyclopedia, either online or in print. If you have already been studying the topic in class and are therefore able to understand the details, you may want to begin with a recent professional journal article.

A sociological principle can also guide you in your selection of sources: there are strong relationships between the quality of the information and the social setting of the source. Some journals and magazines, some book publishers, and some authors are more reliable than others. Most students would intuitively know that tabloid magazines are not appropriate for college research papers (unless they were the topic being researched), but they are an extreme example. In general, we can identify a few guidelines for choosing reliable sources:

- ✦ Academic journals are more reliable than popular magazines. Some academic journals, such as *American Sociological Review*, may be difficult for undergraduates to read, especially the articles with complex statistics. But you can get the gist of such articles and consult the bibliographic references at the ends of the articles. Although popular magazines should not be excluded altogether, you should be cautious of their contents.
- ✦ University presses (such as the Cambridge University Press or the Harvard University Press) are generally less likely to print poorly researched books than are commercial presses (such as Doubleday Books or Penguin Books). For commercially published books, those written by academics are usually

more reliable than those written by journalists. Again, the point is not to ignore books by journalists, but to approach them with a critical eye.

- ✦ Articles and books that carefully cite their sources of information are generally more reliable than those that don't. While some students find a heavily footnoted article or book daunting, carefully cited references provide the reader with the means to follow up on the author's assertions.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF LIBRARY AND INTERNET SOURCES

Once you feel ready to consult some sources, consider whether to begin with those available through the library (either in print or electronically) or those available exclusively through the Internet. Some students may be tempted by the convenience and familiarity of the Internet to rely solely on it, ignoring the rich resources that may be available only on paper in the college or university library. The Internet may be easier and in some ways better to use, but it may also be worse! Library sources are subjected to quality control and professional review by librarians, while information available exclusively through the Internet can be useless and misleading. Library sources are also available over any time period, while Web sites often only make recent information available.

One of the principles students learn in college that they often are not taught in high school is that all knowledge is not created equal. Some sources of knowledge are much more reliable than others. The print and electronic information made available through a library usually is trustworthy. Professional librarians have judged it worth the cost of storing the print sources or of acquiring the electronic sources. Information available exclusively through the Internet is different and more challenging. Some information obtained from the Internet is excellent, but much of it is undependable. At first glance it may look authoritative, but further scrutiny reveals it to be incomplete, commercially or otherwise biased, out of date, or just wrong. Or, at first glance, Internet information may not itself look worthwhile, yet may include links to other valuable data. How can you determine the value of a potential research source? Where exactly should you look in a source for features that determine its quality? What specific features of a source reveal its worth and allow you to evaluate its usefulness?

✦ CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING WEB PAGES

Clearly, filtering out useful from useless information on the Internet is essential. We recommend applying the following five criteria for assessing Web pages:

1. Credibility of Local Origin. Where does the information come from? Before you link to a WWW data source, check its electronic address (its uniform

resource locator or URL). If the address includes the abbreviation *edu* or *gov* (which identifies its association with an educational institution or government agency), you may find more reliable information there than if the source's URL has the abbreviation *org* (organization) or *com* (commercial). Other less common abbreviations, such as *net*, also exist. On some search engines, such as *Google*, you can specify the domain by adding "site:edu" or "site:gov" (without the quotation marks) after your initial keyword. For example, if you were looking for government Web sites with information about single parents, you could search "single parent* site:gov" (without quotation marks).

Examples

<http://www.census.gov/>	(the U.S. Census Bureau)
<http://www.soc.qc.edu/>	(the Sociology Department at Queens College, CUNY)
<http://www.aclu-sc.org/>	(American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California)
<http://www.singleparentcentral.com/>	(A resource site for single parents)

We are *not* suggesting that organizational or commercial Web sites are automatically inferior. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, for instance, provides texts of legislation, starting with the Bill of Rights, and updates about the progress of pending legislative initiatives from the organization's liberal point of view. Similarly, Single Parent Central offers a broad variety of books and articles about being a single parent, though most are written to be useful to single parents rather than being scholarly studies. It also includes "quick facts" on single-parent families, mostly taken from government sources. However, you should be aware of any source's origin and judge its reliability.

2. Accountability. Is there an author or sponsor identified on the Web page, with an e-mail link? Is there a link on the page back to its "home"? Useful sources provide this information about their data.

3. Timeliness. When was the Web page last updated? Is the information still accurate? Online information quickly becomes obsolete.

4. Scope and Coverage. Does the information on the Web page seem well researched? Are useful links embedded in the page? How does the online information compare with what you have found on paper? Are the graphics worth the time it takes to download them? Be a thoughtful consumer of online information and beware of electronic junk mail.

5. Reputation. Is the Web site sponsored by or linked by an organization you know to be reputable? Ask your instructor, teaching assistant, or librarian about sources you are not sure of.

SEARCHING ONLINE INFORMATION WITH BOOLEAN OPERATORS AND KEYWORDS

Most colleges and universities have an online library catalog as well as subscriptions to electronic databases (such as *CSA Sociological Abstracts*) needed to search for scholarly publications. Whether you are using the online library catalog, a library-sponsored electronic database, or the Internet, you will search electronically for sources for your research paper. Many searches can be based on single keywords, but students will generally want to use more than one word so that they can be more specific. Using electronic search engines through the library or on the Internet both require a basic knowledge of what is known as *Boolean logic*, the rules for combining words in a search. Although different reference sources use somewhat different terms, the principles are the same. Boolean operators are logical relationships between the words being searched. Most undergraduates use only three Boolean operators when they search online sources: OR, AND, and NOT. These Boolean operators allow you to use a computer to search for data sources tailored specifically to your own topic.

Online library catalogs and electronic databases as well as the Internet allow you to combine concepts using Boolean operators and to search for them simultaneously. For example, the University of California has over 100,000 books on the subject of Los Angeles, 11,970 books on mental illness, and 4,253 books on homelessness, but it has only three books in its collection about all these subjects combined: mental illness among the homeless in Los Angeles.

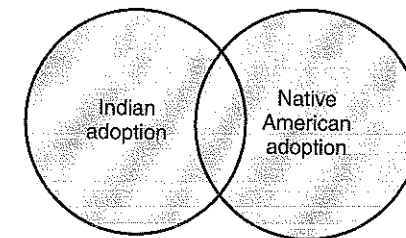
To search online sources available through the library or on the Internet, you must know exactly what terms to look for, such as keywords, words in titles, authors' names, Library of Congress subject headings, or descriptors. In this example, the online library catalog found these three books by looking for words in titles (*mental illness, homelessness, Los Angeles*). Second, you can enlarge or shrink the scope of the search by using the Boolean operators OR, AND, or NOT. In this example, the online library catalog search combined title words with AND (*mental illness AND homelessness AND Los Angeles*). Usually when you put several words in a search, the computer implicitly is treating them as though they had AND between them. If you entered "mental illness homelessness Los Angeles" it would return only sources that included "mental" AND "illness" AND "homelessness" AND "Los" AND "Angeles." You would not want the computer to treat this search as though the terms were linked by OR. That would give you all hits about any illness, all homelessness, and everything about Los Angeles, not a very useful collection.

You are probably already familiar with using two categories to find library information: (1) authors' names and (2) the subjects they have written about.

Online searching provides you with the opportunity to search with at least two more categories: (3) titles of sources, as in the example specified previously, and (4) keywords associated with sources. Online library catalogs and many other academic search engines such as *CSA Sociological Abstracts*, unlike general search engines such as *Web Google*, require that you search in specific fields. Searching on "Durkheim" in an author field would give you books written by Durkheim, while entering "Durkheim" in the subject or title fields would return books about him. Some will have spaces for any keyword. If you put "Durkheim" in a general keyword field, it will return both books by him and books about him.

Technically, a keyword is a word that may be located in the title of the source, or in the Library of Congress subject heading for the source, or even in the abstract of the source if that database provides abstracts. For example, an online search in a library catalog for articles, combining the keywords *mental illness, homelessness, and Los Angeles* with the Boolean operator AND, found this electronic library resource titled "An Assessment of Mental Health Needs Among Homeless People in Central Los Angeles" published by the USC Keck School of Medicine (Figure 4-1). The keyword *mental illness* appears only in the article's note. A search by title words alone would not have found it. Although not all databases use keywords, keywords are particularly useful, and we recommend that you start an online search with them.

In contrast, the Boolean operator OR *enlarges* a search. As shown in the following diagram, a search for online data sources about the controversy over tribal rights in Indian adoption should use the term *Indian adoption* with the Boolean operator OR plus the term *Native American adoption* (that is, *Indian adoption OR Native American adoption*).



Boolean operators can also be combined. For instance, the student looking specifically for online information about Indian adoption in California could search with this command:

Indian adoption OR Native American adoption AND California

The problem with this search is that it would include sources about adoptions involving people from India in California. Luckily this can be fixed with the

Figure 4-1 SAMPLE OF INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM AN ONLINE LIBRARY CATALOG.

Melvyl The Catalog of the University of California Libraries

[Sign In](#) (optional)
[Quit Help](#)
[Article Database & E-journal Lists](#)
[Other Catalogs](#)
[Basic Search](#) [Advanced](#) [Command](#) [Browse](#) [Most Recent Search](#) [Previous](#)
[Searches](#) [Saved Items](#)

Search results: 3 Item(s) [Modify Search](#) Display: Full [MARC](#)
[Print](#) [Email](#) [Save](#) [Save Across Sessions](#) [Request](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#)

Item 1 of 3 Total
[Return to Search Results List](#)

Title An assessment of mental health needs among homeless people in central Los Angeles [electronic resource].

Publisher Los Angeles, Calif.: Division of Community Health, USC Keck School of Medicine, 2004.

Note Title from PDF title page (viewed May 31, 2005).

Note Includes bibliographical references.

Note This report offers an "in-depth view of the mental health needs of the homeless in central Los Angeles and the system that is designed to provide for their care." The report presents an overview of mental illness and homelessness; explores the current mental health service capacity in downtown Los Angeles; identifies barriers and gaps; and presents conclusions and recommendations.

Language English

Subject [Homeless persons -- Mental health services -- California -- Los Angeles.](#)
[Homeless persons -- Mental health -- California -- Los Angeles.](#)
[Homeless persons -- California -- Los Angeles.](#)
[Homeless Persons -- Los Angeles.](#)
[Mental Health Services -- Los Angeles.](#)
[Mental Disorders -- Los Angeles.](#)
[Health Services Accessibility -- Los Angeles.](#)

Added Entry [Keck School of Medicine.](#)

Format Book
 Computer file
 Online

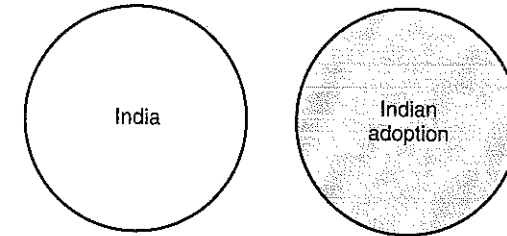
Library [UC Los Angeles](#) [All](#)

Library	Call Number	Availability	Notes
UC Los Angeles		Available online	
Online	HV4506.L67	Circ status	Online access

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced](#) [Command](#) [Browse](#) [Most Recent Search](#) [Previous](#)
[Searches](#) [Saved Items](#)
[Comments and feedback](#)
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NOT operator. NOT (sometimes designated with a minus sign) is especially useful if you are searching for a word that has a common meaning you want to exclude or is often found with another word you want to exclude. For example, if you were studying adoption among Native Americans, you might want to use the keyword *Indian* without getting all the hits for people in India. You could enter *Indian adoption NOT India* or *Indian adoption - India*, depending on which search engine you are using.



USING A TRUNCATION SYMBOL

A useful technique when using Boolean operators is to introduce a *truncation symbol*. Although different databases use different truncation symbols, the most common of these symbols are # and *. A truncation symbol stands for letters in a word, such that *adopt#* would stand for *adoption*, *adoptive*, *adopting*, as well as *adopt*. So, too, *legal** could stand for *legality* or *legalization*. The computer searches for any word beginning with the letters up to the truncation symbol. To be sure of finding all the potential good, relevant data sources, the student searching for online information about Indian adoption should use a truncation symbol; in the case of the University of California's online library catalog it is a #:

Indian adopt# OR Native American adopt#

USING THE LIBRARY TO REVIEW THE SOCIOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Begin your work in the library by getting an overview of the sociological research that has already been conducted on your question. (The following section on locating references will help you do this.) This overview of research published in books and journal articles is called "a review of the literature." ("Literature" in this sense, of course, has nothing to do with fiction and poetry.) "Reviewing the literature" in sociology involves discovering

whether scholarly research has been published on the question you tentatively have in mind, how the question was formulated, and what answers have been suggested.

Reviewing the literature will help you in two important and interrelated ways. First, a review of the literature helps you to refine your question. How has the question been framed before? Has more than one plausible answer been suggested as a result of empirical or theoretical research? As you fine-tune your question, remember that you must be able to find sufficient evidence to support the answer you will propose, and that it must be specific enough to be researchable within the time frame of your assignment. Second, reviewing the literature helps you to identify those books and journal articles that contain reports of research into the question you will address in your paper. The quality of your paper will depend on how thoroughly you locate such research; it is the "data" you will use to support your thesis. Once you locate relevant books and articles, you will take in-depth notes on them.

USING THE LIBRARY TO LOCATE SPECIALIZED SOCIOLOGICAL REFERENCES

While many students are tempted to complete research papers entirely in the comfort of their home or workspace, it is important to visit the college or university library since not all sources are available in electronic form, at least not yet. The key to the library is the reference section, where you can get help from reference librarians. Reference librarians are there to answer your questions and to help you find the most appropriate books, articles, journals, and abstracts for your project.

If your course textbooks include lists of "Recommended Readings," often located at the ends of chapters, you can start with those references, choosing suggested books and articles that seem most appropriate. Start with the most recently published sources because they include references to earlier works.

Be aware that, for a college research paper, unlike most papers for high school, you will be expected to consult articles in specialized professional journals. (An annotated list of select journals and other resources used by sociologists is given later in this chapter.)

In addition to any references you find in your textbooks, you should begin your research with the following six library resources on which sociology students rely:

- ◆ Specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias, and review articles
- ◆ Online library catalog
- ◆ Journals often used by sociologists (print and electronic versions)
- ◆ *CSA Sociological Abstracts* (electronic version)
- ◆ *Social Sciences Citation Index* (electronic version)
- ◆ Other computerized bibliographic sources

SPECIALIZED DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS

These references explain key terms and concepts, and provide background information on the life and times of key historical figures:

Johnson, Allan G. 2000. *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Ritzer, George. 2006. *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Boston, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Some sources on the Internet include:

Sociology Dictionary <<http://www.webref.org/sociology/sociology.htm>>

Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences <<http://socialsciencedictionary.nelson.com/ssd/SocialDict.jsp>>

The advantage of beginning with specialized dictionaries or encyclopedias is that they can give you a quick overview of a subject. However, they are often not the most up-to-date sources.

If you know something about the topic, a better starting point may be a review article published in the *Annual Review of Sociology*. These articles are written by experts in various sociological specialties on recent developments in their fields, allowing readers to learn about the state of the art on a variety of topics. Each article includes an extensive bibliography on the topic, so the articles are valuable both as a summary of recent scholarship and as a source for finding books and articles on your topic. It can be found in paper versions in college libraries or online at <<http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/loi/soc>>, though like many of the other most useful sources, the Web site is restricted, so you need to access it through your library or with a college proxy.

ONLINE LIBRARY CATALOG

Use the online library catalog to find suitable books. The books are organized according to author's name, title, and subject. Finding information by searching the catalog by author and title is relatively straightforward. But if you look for books by subject and don't find any information, it may be because the subject you are looking under is not an official subject category. For example, if your paper is on the implications of regulating handguns, and if you search the online library catalog using the subject "Handguns" or "Handgun Control," you will not find anything. "Handguns" and "Handgun Control" are not official topics. In this case, you must consult a special reference book to find official topics, called "subject headings." This special reference book, a large, red multivolume set called *The Library of Congress Subject Headings*, is usually at the reference desk. For example, if you look up "Handguns" in *The Library of Congress Subject Headings*, you will find this instruction: "See Pistols." If you look up "Handgun Control" in *The Library of Congress Subject Headings*, you will find "See Gun Control." You will also be told that "Works on legal aspects of

gun control are entered under 'Firearms—Law and legislation.' Finding books by subject often requires this kind of detective work in order to find the right subject heading (for example, "Firearms—Law and legislation").

However, when searching electronically, you can usually find books by searching for terms you think are in the title and then looking at the subject keyword. For example, when you search for books with the word "handgun" in the title, you will find that the subject keyword is "pistols." You can then search using the subject heading "pistols" to find books, regardless of whether the word "handgun" is included in the title. Many online library catalogs are designed so that the term in the subject field is a link to a list of all books within that topic.

JOURNALS OFTEN USED BY SOCIOLOGISTS

Scholars rely on journal articles, as well as books, to keep up with new research and professional opinion. But journals aren't a trade secret. Undergraduates, as apprentice scholars, can also use journal articles. Most college libraries have a quiet, convenient place where current issues of major journals are kept before they are bound and shelved, like other books, in the main sections of the library. We recommend that you find this reading area, often called "Current Periodicals," and browse through some of the journals in the following list. This experience will give you a dramatic sense of the discipline's ongoing research tradition, which is only hinted at in textbooks. It may also trigger some ideas about possible topics for your future papers. Although the articles in these journals are intended primarily for a trained scholarly audience, rather than the general public, and sometimes employ sophisticated statistical techniques, you will find many articles easily accessible to undergraduates.

The following list of periodicals related to sociology is not exhaustive. For more references to specialized journals and governmental sources, ask your reference librarian.

American Journal of Sociology Published bimonthly by the University of Chicago Press, this influential journal includes theoretical and research articles, book reviews, and commentaries on articles published previously. <<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/AJS/home.html>>

American Sociological Review Published bimonthly by the American Sociological Association (ASA), this review covers diverse areas of sociology, often with a statistical and empirical orientation. A cumulative index appears every three years. <<http://www2.asanet.org/journals/asr/>>

City and Community Published quarterly by the ASA Section on Community and Urban Sociology, this journal publishes theoretical and empirical articles about communities and places, both urban and rural. <<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=1535-6841&site=1>>

Contemporary Sociology Published bimonthly by the ASA, its special feature is to review books, journals, articles, and films that cover a wide range of areas, such as historical and comparative sociology, social psychology, gender, education, and stratification. The review essays are especially useful for learning

about new publications and sociologists' evaluations of them. <<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Contemporary+Sociology&name=Homepage>>

Contexts This non-technical magazine published quarterly by the ASA covers timely sociological ideas and research about society and social behavior. <<http://www.contextsmagazine.org/>>

Criminology Published quarterly, this interdisciplinary journal emphasizes research in the social and behavioral sciences about crime and deviant behavior, and presents articles on the theoretical and historical components of crime, law, and criminal justice. <<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/crim>>

Demography This interdisciplinary journal, published quarterly by the Population Association of America, includes research studies on developing countries as well as developed countries. <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/dem/>>

Gender and Society Published quarterly, this interdisciplinary journal is sponsored by Sociologists for Women in Society. It aims to advance the study of gender, as well as racial, ethnic, cultural, and national diversity. <<http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdDesc.nav?prodId=Journal200793>>

Journal of Aging Studies This quarterly publication highlights innovative research approaches, critiques of existing theory, and empirical work related to age and aging. <http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/620198/description#description>

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography Published quarterly, this journal presents ethnographic studies based on qualitative interviewing and participant observation. <<http://jce.sagepub.com/>>

Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences The social science edition of this journal is published bimonthly by the Gerontological Society of America. This interdisciplinary journal seeks to promote the scientific study of aging and the life course. <<http://psychsoc.gerontologyjournals.org/>>

Journal of Health and Social Behavior Published quarterly by the ASA, this journal uses a sociological perspective in understanding health-related issues; for example, organizational aspects of hospitals or class characteristics of sufferers from various illnesses. <<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/asoca/jhsb;jsessionid=d09q75k4gsi4.alice>>

Journal of Marriage and the Family Published quarterly by the National Council on Family Relations, this journal covers such diverse research areas as family planning, family structure, theories of the family, and cross-cultural studies on fertility. Each issue also features a book review section. <<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0022-2445>>

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology Published monthly by the American Psychological Association (APA), this journal is divided into sections on attitudes and social cognition, interpersonal relations and group processes, and personality processes and individual differences. <<http://www.apa.org/journals/psp/>>

Qualitative Sociology This quarterly journal publishes research based on qualitative research methods, such as interviewing, participant observation, ethnography, historical analysis, and content analysis. <<http://springerlink.metapress.com/link.asp?id=105337>>

Sex Roles: A Journal of Research Published bimonthly, this journal presents empirical and theoretical examinations of the underlying processes of gender role socialization. <<http://www.springerlink.com/link.asp?id=101600>>

Social Forces Published quarterly, this international journal for social research and methodology is associated with the Southern Sociological Society. It presents articles on such topics as mobility, class, ethnicity, gender, and education. Each issue includes book reviews. <<http://socialforces.unc.edu/>>

Social Problems Published five times yearly, this is the official journal of the Society for the Study of Social Problems. <<http://www.ucpress.edu/journals/sp/>>

Social Psychology Quarterly Published quarterly by the ASA, this journal covers empirical and theoretical studies related to social interaction, socialization, labeling, conformity, and attitudes. <http://www.asanet.org/cs/social_psychology_quarterly>

Sociological Forum This official journal of the Eastern Sociological Society, published quarterly, contains articles that link subfields of sociology to other disciplines. <<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0884-8971&site=1>>

Sociological Inquiry Published quarterly for the chapters of Alpha Kappa Delta (the undergraduate sociology honors society), it covers a wide range of sociological topics. <<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0038-0245>>

Sociological Methodology Published annually by ASA, this journal covers qualitative and quantitative methodological issues in the field of sociology. <<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0081-1750&site=1>>

Sociological Perspectives The purpose of this quarterly journal, which is sponsored by the Pacific Sociological Association, is to advance research and theory in sociology and related disciplines. <<http://www.ucpress.edu/journals/sop/>>

Sociological Theory A quarterly publication of the ASA, this journal is devoted to discussions of new and old sociological theories, theory construction, and theory synthesis. The journal also includes a section for debate and comment on recent theoretical controversies. <<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0735-2751&site=1>>

Sociology of Education Published quarterly by the ASA, this journal contains papers on human social development as well as on relations among educational institutions. <<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Sociology+of+Education&name=Homepage>>

Symbolic Interaction Published quarterly by the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, this specialized journal presents empirical and theoretical articles that take a symbolic interactionist perspective. <<http://ucpress.edu/journals/si/>>

The Sociological Quarterly Sponsored by the Midwest Sociological Society, this journal presents research on recent theoretical, methodological, and empirical developments in the field of sociology. <<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0038-0253&site=1>>

CSA SOCIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS

Although you could search for articles by going to the Web site of each journal, this method is not efficient. Further, many of these sites charge a fee to access journal articles. A more efficient and inexpensive way to search for journal articles related to sociological topics is to take advantage of your library's subscription to the academic database *CSA Sociological Abstracts*.

This database includes articles in several thousand sociology journals, with brief descriptions of the articles' contents. Published both as a set of annual volumes and as a computerized database, *CSA Sociological Abstracts* includes references to sociological publications since 1952 and is by far the best resource for finding sociological articles. However, use of this database and others like it (see below) is restricted to colleges and universities that have purchased a subscription. Therefore, to access these databases, you must use the computers at your college or university library or log in from a remote access site using your library's proxy server. Ask your librarian if your library has a subscription to the online version of *CSA Sociological Abstracts* and, if it has, whether you can access this database from home or another location using a library proxy server.

CSA Sociological Abstracts gives more than bibliographic information. It also provides abstracts of articles published in major sociological journals. (An abstract is a summary of an article.) Learning to use *CSA Sociological Abstracts* will save you much time, since these summaries will allow you to decide whether the sources themselves are relevant to your topic. In this way you can weed out some without having to locate and read them. You can get more information at <<http://www.csa.com/factsheets/socioabs-set-c.php>> but will need to access it through a university computer or proxy server.

To use the library's electronic version of *CSA Sociological Abstracts*, check first with your instructor or librarian. We cannot tell you exactly what syntax you will need to use because there are different software "shells" for accessing the computerized version. However, your instructor or librarian can help you get started. Figure 4.2 presents search results from the CSA Illumina platform.

If you searched with the keyword "Firearms," you would find that there are 443 items (at the time of this writing), more or less with the most recent items given first. Figure 4-2 shows the search results. Notice the tabs indicating that of the 443 items, 326 are journal articles (260 of which are from peer-reviewed journals), 25 are from conferences, and 8 are from books. Notice also that for each article listed, the database provides several links, some of which provide you with the full text of the article (entry 1), the full list of references for the article (entry 2), or other articles that cite the current article (entry 3).

For all items listed, there is a link telling you how to find the publication online or in the library. If you click the "View Record" link or the title of an entry, you obtain more in-depth information. (Note that some software shells will show only some fields unless you ask for a complete display; others will allow you to select which fields you want displayed.)

After you check the boxes for the items you are interested in, save the information to a storage device, print it, or e-mail it to yourself; otherwise, make a note of the author(s), title, year of publication, and journal, and paraphrase the abstract in your own words.

Figure 4-2 SEARCH RESULTS FROM COMPUTERIZED VERSION OF CSA SOCIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS.

The screenshot shows the CSA Illumina search results page. The search term is 'firearms', and 443 results were found. The page lists four search results, each with a checkbox, title, author(s), journal information, and a brief abstract. The first result is 'Early onset offending & later violent & gun outcomes in a contemporary youth cohort' by McCuskey, Cynthia Perez, McCuskey, John D., Szymon, Timothy S., published in the Journal of Criminal Justice, vol. 34, no. 5, pp. 531-541, Sept-Oct 2006. The second result is 'Retrospective Accounts of Violent Events by Gun Offenders' by Fogelbin, Mark, Stretesky, Paul R., Umithan, N. Prabha, Vener, Gervy, published in Deviant Behavior, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 479-501, July-Aug 2006. The third result is 'Reducing Homicide through a "Lever-Pulling" Strategy' by McGarrell, Edmund F., Chemak, Steven, Wilson, Jeremy M., Corsaro, Nicholas, published in Justice Quarterly, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 214-231, June 2006. The fourth result is 'Asian Gang Homicides and Weapons: Criminalistics and Criminology' by Lopez, O.A., published in Ethnicities, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 15-29, June 2006.

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SOCIAL SCIENCES CITATION INDEX

Like *CSA Sociological Abstracts*, this valuable source of bibliographic information comes both in printed annual editions and as an electronic database. *Social Sciences Citation Index* identifies the references that authors cite in their articles (hence, the word "citation" in its title). This feature allows scholars to trace the interconnected network of a research tradition and see which scholars' work influenced which other scholars by clicking on the "cited references" or the "times cited" links. Figure 4-3 reveals that the article by Lizotte and Bordua published in the leading sociological journal *American Sociological Review* was cited by other scholars 64 times.

Figure 4-3 SEARCH RESULTS FROM COMPUTERIZED VERSION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES CITATION INDEX.

The screenshot shows the ISI Web of Knowledge search results page. The search term is 'Firearms Ownership for Sport and Protection - 2 Divergent Models'. The page displays the full record for this article, including the title, author(s) (Lizotte AJ, Bordua DJ), source (American Sociological Review 45 (2): 229-244 1980), document type (Article), language (English), cited references (29), and times cited (64). The page also includes navigation links for 'Record 13 of 16 (Set #6)' and 'SUMMARY'.

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Providing information about citations was once the unique purview of *Social Sciences Citation Index*. However, now other electronic databases, such as *CSA Sociological Abstracts* and *Google Scholar* (see below), also include this type of information, although less comprehensively.

OTHER COMPUTERIZED BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Your library may have other computerized bibliographies like *CSA Sociological Abstracts*, but in other academic disciplines, such as PSYCHINFO (the computerized version of *Psychological Abstracts*), ECONLIT (the computerized version of *Economic Abstracts*), and ERIC (the Educational Resources Information Center, a national information system sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education that collects educational documents and makes them available to teachers, administrators, students, and other researchers). You can also consult computerized bibliographies on a variety of particular topics, such as the Chicano Database, PAIS (the Public Affairs Information Service), and Population Index on the Internet. Ask your librarian which of these are available at your college or university and for help on how to use them. They can be very useful for finding books and articles on the topic of your paper.

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

In addition to the specifically sociological or social science sources, there are several excellent general sources with information about scholarly work in all disciplines including humanities and sciences. These are available at most university libraries and through their Web sites. Most are restricted, so you will need to use a university computer or proxy.

JSTOR

JSTOR enables you to download from academic journals articles that are between one to five years old. This includes the most academically respectable journals in many disciplines but not very many specialty journals.

LEXISNEXIS

LexisNexis is a very extensive data set of news, legal, government, and medical sources. It includes an extensive library on public opinion polls, which is very useful for sociology papers.

PROQUEST DIGITAL DISSERTATIONS

This site has information on doctoral dissertations from 1861 to the present, with abstracts since 1980. Doctoral dissertations are especially useful for very detailed or esoteric information. If you have enough lead time, paper copies

can be ordered. Dissertations are also in the library at the university where they were written.

WORLDCAT

WorldCat is a very useful catalog of books, Web resources, and other material worldwide. It includes citations for books, journals, manuscripts, maps, music scores, sound recordings, films, computer files, newspapers, slides, and videotapes in a variety of languages.

MELVYL

Melvyl, the catalog system for the University of California library, has a facility called SearchLight that links you to specialized search engines in many disciplines, including *CSA Sociological Abstracts*. When you get the results in SearchLight, if the number is underlined, click on the number, not on the name of the resource. <<http://melvyl.cdlib.org>>

GOOGLE SCHOLAR AND GOOGLE BOOK SEARCH

Google Scholar <<http://scholar.google.com/>> and *Google Book Search* <http://books.google.com/books?q=&btnG=Search+Books&as_brr=0> work like basic *Google* but return articles and books on the topic rather than Web sites. Many of the items listed are links to the articles or books themselves, though some may be restricted and require access from a library or university proxy. They are much more reliable than results from the regular *Google* search engine because they are confined to academic research. They are two of the most powerful and convenient general search engines for academic research. A search on "single-parent families" in *Google Scholar*, for example, returned almost 15,000 hits when the "Recent articles" option was selected (Figure 4-4 shows the first page of the response) and over 18,000 hits when the "All articles" option was selected (not shown). *Google Book Search* located nearly 4,000 books (not shown).

Like other electronic academic databases listed above, for each reference listed, *Google Scholar* tells you how many scholarly books and articles have cited it. You click on that link to see exactly what those books and articles are, a valuable way to learn both how it has been received and find more recent references on similar topics. Many of the hits can be accessed directly. The link for "Library Search," seen here on the fifth entry, takes you to a site where you can enter your zip code and it will list libraries close to you that have the item (in this case a book).

OTHER GENERAL SEARCH ENGINES

While many students begin a search with general search engines such as *Google*, *Yahoo!*, or *Alta Vista*, we recommend that you try these after you have tried the more scholarly and specialized resources unless you are specifically looking for journalistic articles. As we emphasized above, these search en-

Figure 4-4 **GOOGLE SCHOLAR RESULTS FOR "SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES."**

Google Scholar [Web](#) [Images](#) [Video](#) [News](#) [Maps](#) [more »](#)
 [Advanced Search](#) [Scholar Preferences](#) [Scholar Help](#)

Scholar [All articles](#) [Recent articles](#) Results 1 - 10 of about 14,900 for **single-parent families** (0.24 seconds)

All Results
[G Brody](#)
[W Manning](#)
[D Ellwood](#)
[C Jencks](#)
[K Lamb](#)

Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married, and Single-Parent Families
 - group of 7 »
 WD Manning, KA Lamb - Journal of Marriage and Family, 2003 - Blackwell Synergy
 ... experience economic situations that are better than those of children in single-parent families (eg, greater parental education and family earnings), but ...
[Cited by 20](#) - [Related Articles](#) - [Web Search](#) - [BL Direct](#)

Gender, and Parental Involvement on the Academic Achievement of Adolescents in Single Parent Families
 SM Lee, J Kushner, SM Cho - Sex Roles, 2007 - Springer
 ... have combined single-mother and single-father families into the one category of single parent families without delineating whether the family is headed by a ...
[Related Articles](#) - [Web Search](#)

The Spread of Single-Parent Families - group of 2 »
 DT Ellwood, C Jencks - To appear in Daniel Patrick Moynihan, 2004 - ksgnotes1.harvard.edu
 ... variation in the spread of nonmarital births, divorce, and single-parent families. ...
 Invoking these innovations to explain changes in family patterns during the ...
[Related Articles](#) - [View as HTML](#) - [Web Search](#)

The uneven spread of single-parent families: What do we know
 D Ellwood, C Jencks - Where do we look for answers, 2004
[Cited by 2](#) - [Related Articles](#) - [Web Search](#)

How Can I Support Single Parent Families and Their Child to be Successful in School
 A Lynch - 2006 - Hamline University
[Web Search](#) - [Library Search](#)

An Analysis of Children's Literature Portraying Single Parent Families
 ME Sullivan - 2004 - Bowling Green State University
[Web Search](#) - [Library Search](#)

Income, family characteristics, and physical violence toward children
 - group of 3 »
 LM Berger - Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal, 2005 - eric.ed.gov
 ... Results: In both single-parent and two-parent families, depression, maternal alcohol consumption, and history of family violence affect children's ...
[Cited by 8](#) - [Related Articles](#) - [Cached](#) - [Web Search](#)

Biracial Individuals from Single Parent Homes: Why Racial Fluidity May Vary with Family Structure
 AA Smedley - 2004 - Harvard University

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gines have no quality controls and return the useful as well as the useless, the reliable as well as the shoddy.

Figure 4-5 shows the results of a search for "single-parent families" using *Google Web*. First, notice that instead of the 14,900 hits for recent articles on *Google Scholar*, itself a rather unmanageable number, on regular *Google*, there were more than one million hits, more than anyone could read in a lifetime. This page also demonstrates some of the kinds of sites returned. The first site is a list of interesting but undocumented facts about single parenting. There is

Figure 4-5 **GOOGLE WEB RESULTS FOR "SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES."**

Google [Web](#) [Images](#) [Video](#) [News](#) [Maps](#) [more »](#)
 [Advanced Search](#) [Preferences](#)

Web Results 1 - 10 of about 1,240,000 for **single-parent families** (0.11 seconds)

PWP - Facts About Single Parent Families
 58% of single parent male families and 49% of single parent female families own or are buying their homes. - The proportion of custodial parents in ...
[www.parentswithoutpartners.org/Support1.htm](#) - 10k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Growing Up In Single Parent Families. HYG-5291-95
 Single parents and their children constitute a rapidly increasing population. More recently, single fathers, unwed teenage mothers, other singl...
[ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5291.html](#) - 7k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Being a Single Parent
 While different than a nuclear family, single-parent families have their own ... Single parent families become more interdependent, finding that working ...
[www.matlife.com/Applications/Corporate/WPS/CDA/PageGenerator/0_4132_P988_00.html](#) - 33k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Single parent - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
 Many factors influence how children develop in single-parent families: ... [3] About 1 out of 4 families with dependent children are single-parent families. ...
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single_parent](#) - 25k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Single-parent families
 Single-parent families in today's society have their share of daily struggles and long-term disadvantages. The issues of expensive day care, ...
[www.pineforge.com/newman2studyfamilies/essays/single_parent.htm](#) - 11k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Single-Parent Families
 Census Bureau projections indicate that at least one-half of all American children will spend part of their growing years in a single-parent family. 1 This ...
[www.joe.org/joe/1986winter/rb2.html](#) - 6k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Jacqueline Kirby, M.S.
 Ninety percent of single-parent families are headed by females. ... The rate of poverty is even higher in African-American single-parent families. ...
[hec.osu.edu/familia/bulletin/volume.1/bullart1.htm](#) - 11k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Montana State University Extension Service
 Research shows that successful single-parent families have the following ... The same characteristics that make single-parent families strong are found in ...

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no way to know how reliable or unreliable any of the information may be. The second one is an academic source, a fact sheet from Ohio State University Extension. "Being a Single Parent" is a Web site sponsored by a commercial insurance company. While probably reliable information, the reader would want to remain mindful that the sponsor has a business interest in the topic.

Skipping down, the next to the last document is an academic paper by a scholar. It is probably dependable, but there is no way to know if it has been peer reviewed, that is, reviewed by other scholars. Although this search could have led to useful sources, it would have been much more efficient and reliable to use the university library, specifically sociological search engines like *CSA Sociological Abstracts*, or *Google Scholar*.

However, the Internet can be an excellent source of data. The demographic data on the U. S. Census Bureau's Web site <<http://www.census.gov>> provide a good example of a valuable source. This site, sponsored by the U. S. Department of Commerce, provides information about all kinds of population issues in various graphic and tabular formats: maps and statistics. The Census site also provides downloadable software for census and survey processing, and access to Census Bureau online roundtables, which are forums where the public can read and then post follow-up comments. So, too, the capacity of the search engine *Google* <<http://www.google.com/ig/usgov>> to identify specialized U. S. Government Web sites can provide up-to-date government information that would be much harder to locate elsewhere, if at all.

Other links that give you access to data that you can download but require some knowledge of quantitative techniques, though it may be as elementary as reading a cross-tabulation table, include:

General Social Survey (GSS) Resources (programs and data may be downloaded; surveys are available for the years 1972–1998; a searchable index of papers utilizing GSS data includes full citations and short abstracts). For an introduction to the data set and how to use it, see their Web site <<http://webapp.icpsr.umich.edu/GSS/>>

FEDSTATS This is a portal to 70 federal, state, and local government agencies that collect and report statistics. <<http://www.fedstats.gov/>>

The Gallup Poll Results of public opinion polls on a broad variety of topics. <<http://www.galluppoll.com/>>

SETTING UP A RECORD-KEEPING SYSTEM

Whether you record information in a word processor, on paper, or index cards, the principles are the same. Keep track of where information comes from. Record the information in your own words. Keep your records organized so you can synthesize it and use it effectively.

A record-keeping system will keep you from feeling as if you are drowning in a sea of information and will enable you later on to create a formal bibliography for your paper. (See "References and Bibliographies," pages 56–59.)

We recommend bibliographic software. If you obtained articles through online databases like *CSA Sociological Abstracts*, you can use *Ref Works* to put your bibliography or reference section together. *Ref Works*, like other bibliographic software, allows you to choose the formatting style you would like to use, such as that of the American Sociological Association, or the American Psychological Association, etc.

If your library's shell for *CSA Sociological Abstracts* does not include bibliographic software such as *Ref Works*, and you do not own such software, you may use an index card system, one index card for each source. Put bibliographical details on cards as you go along. Have some blank index cards always with you. Then, when you come across the details about a promising source, in the library or on the Internet, you can record these details on an index card:

Author: all authors of the source, with only the first author's surname and first name in inverted order

Title: article, chapter, book, Web site

Facts of publication:

For journals: journal name in full, date of publication, volume number, issue number, inclusive pages

For books: city and state of publication, publisher's name, publication date

For a Web site: URL, sponsoring organization if named, date of publication, date of access

Of course, you can also open a special computer file for this information, but you may not always have your laptop or a storage device with you when you come across a likely source. Later, you can simply arrange your cards in alphabetical order by author and keyboard the reference page (or bibliography, if required) for your paper. Recording this information is especially important for online sources that you cut and paste into your own files of notes. Recording this information will enable you to reconstruct it later when you may no longer know what the original source was or have access to it.

TAKING NOTES

✦ Taking notes is one of the most challenging and personal parts of the writing process. Especially in the early stages, a student may not know exactly what the paper's main argument will be. There is the fear of neglecting to record information you will need and the danger that you will become bogged down in recording sources that will have no relevance to the final paper. There is no single correct way to take notes, but there are some general principles.

① First, always keep in mind the question you are addressing, the answer that you expect to offer, and alternative answers that you will be arguing against. Ask what answer the book or article might offer, what information is available to support your answer (or make you rethink your answer) or rebut other answers, and why sources on the topic might be addressing some other answer. Some people prefer to take a lot of notes when first reading; others prefer to take note of general points and a reminder of what is in the source so that they can go back later and take more detailed notes later. In either case, it is important to make a note of keywords or topics they can find

quickly, perhaps at the top of the document or page. These might include any keynotes in the source that you used to find the book or article or your own terms that you might use to organize your paper. For example, if you are writing about homelessness and expect to organize the paper into sections on causes, effects, and solutions, you might use those terms in your subject headings. Having subject headings will make it much easier to organize your notes when you sit down to write.

② Second, summarize the book or article in your own words. When taking notes, the biggest temptation is to copy information word for word. Not only is this very inefficient, but you are less likely to really comprehend the material unless you put it in your own words. And it very easily slides to plagiarism, the theft of other people's words and ideas. Even if it is inadvertent, it is a serious scholarly offense. Cutting and pasting is very tempting when you are reading things on the Internet and taking notes in a word processor. It should be done very selectively when you think you might actually quote the material. Otherwise, read the material, switch back to the word processor, and write the information in your words.

③ Third, as mentioned above, pay attention to the forest as well as the trees, making note of the main points of what you are reading as well as the specific pieces of information. The main points are usually summarized in a book or article's opening and closing sections.

④ Fourth, read with an eye toward other things you have read. Can you see patterns or debates in a field? For example, some work on homelessness focuses on the characteristics of the homeless themselves, emphasizing substance abuse, mental illness, or family background. Others emphasize the structural forces, such as housing costs, lack of services, or welfare reform. Alternatively you may notice that some articles use quantitative methods and others use qualitative methods. It is especially important if you notice that some books or articles explicitly disagree with others. After reading a few pieces, you should begin to see patterns.

⑤ Finally, write your own reactions as you take notes. This can be a positive comment like "A very valuable source," an observation about the relation to other sources, such as "A useful rebuttal to Garcia," or a more extensive analysis that might be text for the paper itself. Some people like to mark their own reactions with a symbol such as an asterisk (*).

Many students find that once they begin the research process they quickly accumulate piles of photocopies and printouts. Because such copying is expensive, you will want to be selective and not reproduce everything on your topic. While you look over the material to check its usefulness, you can also

use the following strategy for sorting out important information from material that is irrelevant. It will not take much more time, and will help you manage the information and clarify your plans. (Don't forget to record the bibliographical details about your photocopies or printed-out sources.)

You are probably already in the habit of underlining or highlighting important statements when you read your textbooks. You can do the same thing with copied source material. You will find this process more helpful if you have at hand pens in several different colors, one for each of various subheadings. As you scan the copy, you can key a particular color to a particular subheading. For example, the student researching single-parent families used one color for statistical data, another for information about legal resources and regulations, and still another for information about children in such families. The result may be a page that resembles a rainbow, but you will have separated the subheadings visually. Write your color-coding key on something you can locate readily. (One suggestion is to write this key on the back of the bibliography card you've made for this photocopied source.)

As you read and highlight, take advantage of having your own copy to write notes in the margins. Jot down your responses to this reading. These annotations may be as brief as a subheading, or they might contain a brief summary of your opinion or a reminder to yourself for later. Unlike many of the notes that you take in a textual analysis (see pages 119–126), which attempt to outline and restate the text's main argument, the notes that you take in a research project are carefully selected to become evidence in your own paper. As C. Wright Mills explains in "On Intellectual Craftsmanship," his appendix to *The Sociological Imagination* ([1959] 2000):

* rather than read entire books, you will very often read parts of many books from the point of view of some particular theme or topic in which you are interested. . . . Therefore, you will take notes which do not fairly represent the books you read. You are using this particular idea, this particular fact, for the realization of your own projects. (P. 199)

Of course, Mills is not saying that your notes can be inaccurate or that they can misrepresent the original author. He is suggesting that the note-taking purpose is different. For more information, review "Taking Two Kinds of Notes," in Chapter 3, pages 45–46.

In addition to your notes, be sure to write the author's name or the title of the article somewhere on the page you have highlighted and annotated. You will already have collected the full set of bibliographic information in one location, but this shorthand on the photocopy will enable you to match up the

two. Doing this will mean that you will not have to keep the entire article if you are only using a page from it.

If you decide to highlight and annotate a great deal of photocopied material, you will eventually end up with many loose pieces of paper that seem to have no organization. Two techniques can solve this problem. They may seem to involve a lot of reshuffling and arranging and labeling, but they are part of a logical, as well as a logistical, process. It is closely related to the other techniques of outlining described on pages 32–33. Shuffling your pages will automatically help you to think about your topic and its various problematic aspects, one or more of which will be possible directions for you to develop. Indeed, as Mills explains, this “re-arranging” process is “one way to invite [the sociological] imagination. . . . You simply dump out heretofore disconnected folders, mixing up their contents, and then resort them” (p. 212).

1. If you have a number of photocopies and printouts that contain information about one subheading (for instance, the effects of recent welfare legislation on single mothers), you can group these copies together alphabetically by author or by the first letter of the title and put them into a folder labeled with that subheading.
2. If you have a number of photocopies or printouts that contain information about two or more subheadings, you can at least alphabetize the pages by author or the first letter of the title. On the label of the folder, you should write the subheadings contained inside. You will know automatically that a folder with two or more subheadings is arranged alphabetically.

Again, we want to emphasize the value of Mills’s advice that writers play around with their files, rearranging them and developing new file headings. This leads to new insights about your question. For example, your files on divorce might originally have been labeled “strain of modern life,” “financial stress,” “disagreement over raising children,” and “adultery.” But when you read through the files, you may find that the material clumps together in categories like “class differences,” “attitudes toward women’s roles,” “legal changes,” and “demographic change.” At this point in the research process, not only will you better understand the significance of your collected data, but you will also be better prepared to organize your paper. For more information on various techniques of outlining your first draft, see pages 32–35 in Chapter 2.

A SAMPLE STUDENT PAPER

The following sample general research paper on country music was written by Mayank Chawla for an undergraduate course in sociology. She supports her thesis with information she obtained from library books, journal articles, and a few newspaper articles. Mayank’s paper follows a variation of the three-part essay format as discussed in Chapter 1.

OUR COMMENTS

Mayank should have included a title page because her paper is more than five pages in length (see Part 3 for how to prepare a title page). She should have also included the date she turned in the paper.

Mayank opens with a personal observation but quickly, in paragraph two, connects it to sociological issues, telling us about the conventional wisdom in the literature and how she is adding to it. Sociology is a way to learn new things about society we didn't know and to see in a new way things that are very familiar to us. She does the latter, taking a very common observation—that country music is “white” music—and seeks to understand how this is so. As such, her paper answers the question, “What exactly is the connection between country music and white identity?” Her paper answers this question by explaining how country music, which she argues is “for and by white people,” necessarily expresses various social, political, and economic relationships.

This paragraph tries to say too many things, talking about authenticity, narrative, musical features of country music, the similarities to other genres, and its relationship to its audiences.

Mayank Chawla
Professor Roy

WHITE NOISE: COUNTRY MUSIC AND WHITE IDENTITY

The first thought that struck me was that it looked like Hitler's fantasy: a dozen happy, patriotic, rosy-checked, innocent, light-haired, blue-eyed, *white* children. At the least, I expected a token, light-skinned (most likely biracial) black girl (or two), sprinkled among the white kids. In the midst of public controversy over the lack of representation of people of color in the media, I recently saw a KZLA commercial that seemed suspiciously white and strategically patriotic, mentioning the word “American” multiple times in the advertisement. I dismissed my thought as racially hypersensitive, until I found other friends randomly pointing out the obvious whiteness of the advertisement.

Studies of race and music have exhaustively focused on people of color and their music in an institutionally racist society. In this paper, I invert the scholarly lens of observation to examine the presence of white identity in what we commonly hold as the quintessential music of white America: country music. Sociologically, historically, and politically, I explore how we have come to associate country music with whiteness, and the overall validity of this correlation. Most authors of extensive scholarly studies on country music are long-time country fans; their bias is reflected in a generally inadequate treatment of race and country music. Any mention of correlation between whiteness and country music is dismissed, justified, or minimized. In this paper, I argue that there exists a strong relationship between country music and whiteness. Although I am not personally a fan of country music, I do not seek to vilify the genre and its fans, but rather, to examine it as both a product and agent of white identity.

Masked behind a façade of “authenticity,” country music, like all genres, is fabricated (Peterson 1997), making any essentialist characterization of country music difficult. However, a few general characteristics pervade all or most country music. A “storytellers medium,” country songs have a strong sense of narratives, like mini, musical soap operas. The songs generally have simple chord structures, regular rhythm,

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This paragraph expresses two separate ideas. It tells us both something about the audiences and about an exception to the generalization that country music is white music. Accordingly, it should be split up into two paragraphs. At the least, the references to Charlie Pride, one of the few African American country music performers, would be better later in the paper, as a qualification to its main argument.

Following the *ASA Style Guide* (2007), Mayank does not capitalize the words "black" or "white" when designating racial groups but does capitalize the names of racial and ethnic groups that represent geographical locations (e.g., African American). She also capitalizes references to regions of the United States (e.g., South).

One of Mayank's themes is the historical process by which country music became associated with whiteness. She might have offered the reader a signpost that this section is about historical background. Offering an apparent paradox is a very effective device for getting the reader's attention. The fact that country music has strong roots in African American music is the kind of anomaly that begs for sociological explanation.

and small melodic range. This simple musical structure highlights the narrative lyrics of country songs (Peterson and McLaurin 1992). Folk and pop songs, however, often possess the same elements, but do not fall within the genre of country music. Country music is not simply a genre defined by essential musical characteristics, but rather a reflection of the people and region from which it originated and the nation that consumes it.

"Participants in country music culture behave something like a vast extended family at an endless church supper in a rural American small town" (Ellison 1995:xvii). Country is a genre defined by the performers who produce it and the loyal fans who consume it. The audience is strikingly homogeneous: almost exclusively white, Christian, middle-aged, Republican, working class, and Southern (Danker 1991). The few blacks that enjoy country music generally grew up in the South. The performers are overwhelmingly white and 80% were born in the South (McLaurin 1992). Most of the country music studies I encountered are quick to mention Charlie Pride, the first and only successful black country singer. He came to the country music stage in 1961 and performed at the Grand Ole Opry in 1967 (Lawler 1996). As Barbara Ching points out, "Pride may well have suffered greatly from hard times, but the character he presents to the world is an unquestionably successful one who suffers no incurable unease" (Ching 2001:31). Pride's non-confrontational demeanor allowed for his incorporation into country music. He regularly ameliorated tension at his concerts by opening with some version of "I guess you're surprised to see me comin' out here wearin' this permanent tan and singing country music" (Ching 2001:31). Although Pride achieved moderate success in country music, no other black performer to date has achieved similar success. Pride himself once said, "I don't think of myself as the Jackie Robinson of country music . . . I'm just trying to be myself" (Lawler 1996:109). As a black man, Charlie Pride's break into the white genre was a unique exception, not the norm (Lawler 1996).

Paradoxically, country music, a supposedly authentically white genre, has its roots in African American musical forms. In fact, Bill C. Malone, the eminent country music scholar, argues that black or (blackface) musicians dominated music in the South, and it was not until later that rural white music gained prominence in the South (Malone 1993). Black (and

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The detailed examples (names of artists and the titles of their songs) are very effective. Good writing is specific.

She completes telling us about the apparent paradox the paper is addressing and begins the explanation by telling us that the white connotations of country music are not accidental. *Creating Country Music* will be one of her main sources of information, so it is useful for her to cite it by title in the text. She also tells us in this paragraph who the actors were. The white connotations of country music did not just happen but were the result of actions by specific people. But the transition into the paragraph that begins "Poor rural whites" could be made smoother. The text jumps from a statement that record company executives shaped the music's identity to a discussion of the racial dynamics of poor rural white people.

blackface) minstrelsy had a profound influence on country music. Malone argues that minstrel songs, like "Old Zip Coon," "Away Down on the Old Plantation," and "Dixie" (Malone 1993) "lost their original 'Negro' connotations as they became part of the repertoire of country music" (Malone 2002). Prominent country singers like Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills, and Roy Acuff even worked as blackface performers early in their career (Tosches 1985). In fact, in 1953, the year before the landmark desegregation of public schools, the Grand Ole Opry's number-one tent show starred Jamup and Honey, two blackface performers (Malone 1993).

Blues and jazz, decidedly African American musical forms, have also had a penetrable influence on country music. Many major white country music performers were influenced and inspired by black blues and jazz musicians and their instruments. Richard A. Peterson, a prominent country music scholar, points out that although Jimmie Rodgers (Malone 1968) has a clearly white Southern twang, blues and jazz dominate in his music (Peterson 1997). The fiddle and the banjo, landmark instruments of rural white Southern music, were actually used by Southern blacks before being taken up by Southern whites (Malone 1968). In fact, white country performers have commonly used the phrase "nigger picking" to refer to the most complex guitar styles in country music (Malone 1968). As Malone (1968) points out, "[a]lthough Negro songs and styles have moved freely into white country music, Negroes have not" (p. 27). Paradoxically, black influence has been completely ignored in the "pure" white genre of country music, even by country artists who were inspired by black musicians. The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville fails to acknowledge any of the black performers who originated the style for which many early white country stars were famous (Peterson 1992). Country music has co-opted black musical forms and disseminated them as "purely white."

Connotations of country music as a white genre are not accidental. In *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*, Peterson (1997) details the deliberate separation of white and black music in the South, as a strategic decision by record company executives. Industry competition led to segregated markets for country music. In the 1920's, Okey Record Company specifically marketed country music to poor whites. The opposite of "hillbilly music" was "race music," the wide range of music created by

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Although Mayank has been careful with her citations, here she forgets to include the page number for this quote.

The discussion of the movement of country music from rural areas into cities seems to jump ahead of the story. If Mayank had thought about the major point of the two paragraphs on this page, she might have realized the transition was a bit awkward. Even though the last sentence of the paragraph that ends "a venue of expression for poor white identity" and the first sentence of the next paragraph seem to flow smoothly, the overall theme of the two paragraphs could be more logical.

and marketed to blacks (Green 1965). Country music did not accidentally or coincidentally evolve into a white genre; it was deliberately crafted and institutionalized as an assertion of (rural) white identity.

Poor rural whites have historically suffered class oppression at the hands of upper middle class whites. Because of this oppression, poor whites (including European immigrants) have repeatedly appealed to claims of whiteness to elevate their condition and avoid being equated with blacks. Eighteenth century rural songs, including "I'd rather be a nigger an' plow ol' Beack,/Dan a white hill-billy wid a long red neck" and "Oh poor olde hillbilly, oh, where do you stand,/while the Dark Tobacco Planters Association is forming its clan?" illustrate the fear of poor whites (Green 1965). This attitude continued into the twentieth century. The lyrics of Merle Haggard's song "I'm a White Boy," written in 1975, say "I'm proud and white. Daddy's name wasn't Willie Woodrow; I wasn't born in no ghetto" (Tosches 1985). After the Civil War, poor whites felt threatened by newfound black freedom (Peterson 1992). Minstrel shows, says whiteness scholar David Wellman (1997), "reassured white men who they were not: not black, not slave, not gay" (p. 312). Rural whites had a personal, social, and political interest in distancing themselves from blacks and identifying as white (Roediger 1994). Country music provided a vehicle for defending this interest. In asserting their whiteness, poor rural whites maintained a sense of working class pride. Throughout time, country music has reflected white working class woes. From sharecroppers to factory workers to truck drivers, country music has provided a venue of expression for poor white identity (Peterson 1991).

Country music originated in a region rooted in a rural economy and rural identity. The inherently conservative rural nature of country music protects white identity in the face of urban threats. Country music was constructed and marketed as a rural (white) music opposite urban (black) genres of blues and jazz. The rural nature of country music has adapted, retaining its increasing urbanization. Where rural people and cowboys once dominated the country music scene, truck drivers, or "eighteen-wheel cowboys" (Gregory 1989:242) epitomize the modern country music man. "Rural music did not die when it moved into the cities; it merely adapted itself to changed conditions." Rural settings symbolize "pure,"

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When Mayank quotes journalist Bruce Feiler, she makes a point of explaining that he wrote in the *New York Times*. Is identifying the *New York Times* useful for the reader to understand the point of the quotation? Possibly, because the *New York Times* is a national newspaper and reflects a journalist's opinion for a national audience. But a journalist usually is not as credible a source of evidence as a scholar, for example, David Wellman, the whiteness scholar quoted in the previous paragraph. Moreover, the citation should say "(as cited in Ware and Back 1992:266)" so that the reader does not think that Ware and Back are the authors of this quotation.

The paragraph above about the Southern heritage would have fit better before she began to talk about the shift from rural to urban contexts. Also, because she has already described her main thesis as paradoxical, using "paradoxically" again to describe a secondary point of the paper weakens the effect. But the larger point is effective. Here she is elaborating on the theme introduced earlier that country music grew out of Southern white culture. Elaboration of a basic point is one of the more challenging tasks of writing this sort of paper. To get legitimate length without repeating yourself, ask and then answer the questions taught in journalism classes: "Who, Where, How, When, Why, Which, What?" This paragraph provides details answering the questions "How," "Which," and "Why": Q. How does country music present itself as quintessentially American? A. By presenting itself as anti-foreign. Q. Which songs illustrate this anti-foreign quality? A. Patriotic anti-Japanese and anti-commie songs. Q. Why do these songs illustrate this quality? A. They reflect poor whites' desires to enter mainstream white American society.

wholesome white identity, while urban settings represent change, moral degeneration, and the infestation of non-whites. In fact, Bruce Feiler wrote in a *New York Times* article, "[Country music] has become the de facto sound track of white flight" (Ware and Back 1992:266). In a nation moving towards urbanization, country music has glorified rural arrested development, and consequently, preservation of white purity (Malone 1968).

Country music represents the ideology of the white South—an ideology rooted in slavery and segregation. Southern pride continues to be a strong force in country music. For example, "most country music continues to be produced in Nashville, the capital city of a former Confederate state" (McLaurin 1992:24). Country songs throughout time repeatedly allude to a sense of place, often mentioning names of specific Southern towns, cities, and states. Historian Tom Connely calls country music "The great modern expression of the Lost Cause mentality" (McLaurin 1992:15). "Lost Cause mentality" implies that white Southerners have an inferiority complex, due to the defeat of the Confederate army, and continue to hold a renewed sense of pride in the (Confederate) South. Country music is, hence, a manifestation of this renewed white Southern pride.

Paradoxically, country music is intensely patriotic, given that Southerners once wanted to secede from the Union (McLaurin 1992). In fact, Southern pride in the courage of Confederate fighters lends itself well to a virulent American patriotism (McLaurin 1992). The dualism inherent in country music has easily translated into pro-American sentiment. In repeatedly presenting itself as the quintessential American genre, country music is anti-foreign. During World War II, a good number of patriotic country songs contained a "get the dirty little Jap" type of racism. Similarly, in the era of McCarthy and the Cold War, patriotic, anti-commie songs were popular, including, "They Locked God Outside the Iron Curtain," "The Red That We Want is the Red We've Got in the Old Red, White, and Blue," and "Korea, Here We Come" (DiMaggio, Peterson, and Esco 1972:45). The strongly anti-foreign, patriotic nature of country music reflects poor whites' desires to enter mainstream white American society. As McLaurin notes, "Since the Civil War and Reconstruction, Southerners have struggled to remove the stigma and prove themselves truly loyal Americans" (McLaurin 1992:28).

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Like much recent sociological writing, here she is introducing gender dynamics to complement the analysis of race. Yet this paragraph is too brief to be very convincing. The sentence "Masculine obligation to the family is not simply a personal, but a *racial* obligation" is an excellent insight but needs more evidence than provided here. This is one of the tough decisions that writers must face—to make an important point that skeptical readers may not swallow, to add even more to a fairly long paper, or to omit a point that most readers would not miss if it were not included. There is no correct answer that everyone would agree on. She then returns to the theme of gender at the bottom of the page.

Note how Mayank provides a smooth transition from the end of this paragraph to the beginning of the next paragraph, echoing the concepts in each ("... national image of country as an authentic, purely white genre" and "The 'pure' white image of country music").

Mayank should have included the page number for this quote.

White patriarchy is a central focus of country music. Country music constructs white masculinity as the "gendered and racialized obligation to paternal protection of the white family" (Lipsitz 1998:75). Implicit in Southern notions of white masculinity is an obsession with the protection of white womanhood. Historically, white Southerners have viewed white women as innocent and vulnerable to the predatory tendencies of black men. Masculine obligation to the family is not simply a personal, but a *racial* obligation. As a product of a region where white womanhood is sanctified, country music is racially patriarchal.

Epitomized as a "pure" and "authentic" white form, country music has been widely used by white supremacist groups. A well-distributed 1925 poster of famous fiddler John Carson shows Carson standing in front of a KKK sign, at the Mountain City, Tennessee Old Time Fiddling Contest, sponsored by the KKK (Peterson 1997). During the Korean War, white supremacist groups distributed underground racist country recordings, like "Move Them Niggers North," "Kajun Klu Klux Klan," and "Nigger, Nigger," by the Coon Hunters, which talked about tarring and feathering Martin Luther King Jr. (Malone 1968). Some of these recordings were sold over the counter at an Atlanta F. W. Woolworth until 1967 (Peterson 1992). The appeal of country music to white supremacist groups was due to the national image of country as an authentic, purely white genre.

The "pure" white image of country music developed as the nation became interested in finding and reclaiming a pure, untainted white male identity. This search for an authentic white identity propagated the "widely shared belief that the Appalachia preserved the nation's genes, culture and values of the original white settlers" (Campbell 1999). The nation was obsessed with recovering untainted "Anglo-Saxon" roots and the Appalachia seemed like a treasure-chest. There was a widely-held belief that the West was America's last frontier. This fear of the vanishing frontier coincided with a fear of the feminization and weakening of the pure, rugged, individualistic white man (Slotkin 1992). Hence, began the nation's glorification of the American cowboy.

Rugged, courageous, violent, and white, the singing cowboy became an American idol and sex symbol. Hollywood played a crucial role in the romanticization of America's cowboy past and the national popularization of

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Once again, it is important to include page numbers for any quote.

Having discussed race and gender, the paper now addresses class. Many readers would have appreciated an explicit signpost that reflected the order and movement of major ideas in her outline. A clear signal phrase or transitional sentence would have helped the reader understand that the paper is now going to talk about class, perhaps a statement like "This rugged white Western singing cowboy, like his fans, is a marginalized member of a distinctive poor white culture."

country music (Malone 1968). America's most famous singing cowboy, Gene Autry, symbolized white America's obsession with reclaiming what it perceived as vanishing white male hegemony and red-blooded Americanism (Horsman 1997). As Gavin James Campbell notes in his dissertation, "The perceived loss of mastery over African Americans, women, lower class whites, and the fear that urban life had feminized white men to the point of helplessness . . . made both the mountaineer and the old-time fiddler more attractive than ever" (Campbell 1999). Nineteenth-century complications of race-relations propagated the nation's nostalgia for simpler times in a "racially-pure mountain South in which blacks simply vanished" (Campbell 1999). The theme of "ethnic pluralism" in the 1960's gave whites further permission to glorify and romanticize our white Western cowboy past (Gregory 1989). Country singers gladly accepted and played into stereotypes of the rugged singing cowboy (Malone 1993).

Country music's current conservative, right-wing leanings are ironic, given the initial populist leanings of the genre (Malone 2002). The "hillbilly" was once the white counterpart of the black "sambo" (Peterson 1992). The development of a distinct poor white culture was in fact prompted by marginalization. Shunned by mainstream white society, poor Southern whites clustered in neighborhoods and developed and maintained a distinct identity and culture (McLaurin 1992). With its strongly conservative leanings, country music continued to express the concerns of the urban white working man through the 1970's and 1980's. Johnny Paycheck's "Take This Job and Shove It!" gained popularity in the early 1970's, while Dolly Parton's "9 to 5" described working class concerns of the 1980's. Today, a major theme in country music is the working truck driver (Peterson 1992).

Country music swung towards the right when folk music broke away from the genre. Country music, as the music of the "common man," was at some point used by left-wing radicals and reformers to challenge capitalism (Malone 1968). Consequently, urban folk music broke off from country music. While country music is inherently conservative and sought to preserve the status quo, folk music advocated change and criticized the status quo. As Jennifer Lawler astutely points out, "folk and country had the same heritage . . . the split was political." While the music remained similar the message was radically different, to the point where "soon fans of one

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Mayank's paper is well organized. The beginning of almost every paragraph tracks a new main idea that is then developed with explanation and examples.

Note the use of ellipses (. . .) to indicate one or more words deleted from a quotation. For more information about the use of ellipses, see Chapter 3.

Stating that Jimmy Carter, a democrat, also liked country music weakens Mayank's argument that only right-wing politicians supported this music genre.

could not very easily be fans of the other" (Lawler 1996:23). Folk music has a strong protest element, while anti-protest themes pervade country music. While folk represented left-wing progressives, country came to represent right-wing conservatives.

From the 1960's, country music and the neo-conservative right-wing had a mutually reinforcing relationship. Right-wing politicians adopted country music for political ends, and country artists willingly catered to the right-wing to bolster their popularity. Gregory interestingly notes, "northern blue-collar constituencies which thirty years before had been at the very heart of New Deal liberalism were changing political coloration . . . Threatened by the civil rights agenda of liberal democrats...they were moving towards a politics of racial and patriotic conservatism" (Gregory 1989:242). Racist Alabama governor George Wallace adopted country music to the point where every Wallace rally incorporated country music (Malone 2002). Wallace's overwhelming appeal to the country music community reflects the genre's interest in protecting white privilege. Threatened by the counterculture of the 1960's, right-wing politicians gained an even broader conservative following by the 1970's. Richard Nixon called Merle Haggard's conservative song, "Okie from Muskogee," the "true voice of the silent American majority" (McLaurin 1992). Jimmy Carter publicly showed an affinity for country. Both Ronald Reagan and George Bush used Lee Greenwood's popular "God Bless the U.S.A." in their second presidential campaigns (Ellison 1995). In the late 1980's, George Bush proclaimed country music to be his favorite (Malone 2002). In fact, Naomi Judd and Tanya Tucker performed at the Republican convention where Bush was nominated. Late in the campaign, Bush sprinkled campaign speeches with phrases from country song lyrics.

The new right's objective was to dismantle political gains of the Civil Rights movement. Since it could not explicitly reverse these gains, it had to rearticulate their goals in the context of asserting a positive white identity and wholesome American values, like "defense of traditional values, opposition to 'big government' and patriotic, [religious] and militaristic themes" (Omi and Winant 1994:124). The close relationship between a neo-conservative agenda and the country music community, although paradoxical, is not difficult to see. The values that the new right defended

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One of the methodological challenges of interpretive analysis is how to make a case that a cultural form connotes a meaning when there is no explicit reference. Here Mayank makes a case that country music expresses a white identity even though it never mentions whiteness. This is the conclusion her paper has been building up to, so the discussion on page 109 is becoming more abstract, relating to the broader social dynamics of how race works. And here she offers her own opinion more explicitly. The reader would have intuited her general attitude toward the white identity in country music, but at the end of this paragraph she says outright that "Country music, as a symbol of an authentic white America, has troubling implications for our nation's future."

Note the punctuation in this paragraph for the two main ways of integrating quotations correctly into a sentence:

1. a phrase with a signal verb plus comma: As Richard Dyer astutely notes, "White power . . ."
2. a signal verb with a "that" clause and no comma: Ian Haney-Lopez explains that "celebrating whiteness . . ."

aligned almost perfectly with the country music community, and both groups had a strong interest in reinforcing the existing racial hierarchy. As Malone (1998) suggests, "the national mood of conservatism may have inspired a rediscovery of the mythic South as a region of contentment, stability, and bucolic values" (p. 117).

Although country music reinforces white identity, it manages to do so without explicit references to white racial identity. Ironically, in a genre shaped by race relations, explicit mentions of race are virtually absent in country music. Country music is not called "white" music, but it is called purely and authentically "American." As Richard Dyer astutely notes, "White power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (Lipsitz, 1998:1). Transparency is a key component of white power. Transparency allows white identity to be neutral, universal identity, when it is really white identity. However, "the assumption that white people are just people, which is not far off from saying that white people are people whereas other colors are something else" (Dyer 1997:2). Country music's assertion of *white* American identity is unnecessarily redundant, since "American" is generally short for "white American." The assertion of a white identity can be problematic, even in the midst of ethnic pluralism. Ian Haney-Lopez (1992) explains that "celebrating whiteness even with the best of antiracist intentions, seems likely only to entrench the status quo of racial beliefs" (p. 72). Country music, as a symbol of an authentic white America, has troubling implications for our nation's future.

Once the "language of a subculture" (Gregory 1989), country music has penetrated the mainstream. The proliferation of country artists in popular American culture continues to intensify. Country performers, like LeAnn Rimes, Shania Twain, and Faith Hill have enormous success crossing over into popular music, while retaining loyal country followers. Country music has transformed from the music of "plainfolk Americanism" (Gregory 1989) into the music of mainstream materialism. The positive aspect of the mainstreaming of country music is that it brings a more diverse audience to the genre. The aforementioned artists have a larger proportion of non-white fans than artists before them. Played repeatedly on mainstream popular radio stations, people of color have been exposed and warmed up to country music. The negative facet of country mainstreaming is that it popularizes a

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Here she qualifies her indictment of country music, noting there are voices of dissent from within country music, adding a measure of optimism to an otherwise highly critical paper.

"Finally" is a helpful signpost to the end of a list. Mayank uses many skillful transitional expressions throughout her paper, for example, "consequently," "however," "in fact."

genre, reinforcing white identity. "In the video age country and western has become the last oasis of white American values" (Ware and Back 1992:266). Country mainstreaming may imply the further mainstreaming of white identity.

Despite the strong correlation between country music and whiteness, several popular country music artists have been able to criticize and push the boundaries of the genre. Johnny Cash, who has recorded over a thousand country songs since 1955, has publicly defended the rights of convicts, Native Americans, illiterate people, and people of color. To show his identification with marginalized people, Cash almost always appeared wearing black (Danker 1992). In his song, "Man in Black," he says he "will wear black until the world is in better shape and he can wear colors" (Lawler 1996:140). Cash's popular "Six White Horses" describes his grief over the killings of Jesus, the Kennedy brothers, and Martin Luther King Jr. (DiMaggio, Peterson, and Esco 1972). Lawler (1996) points out that he "managed to appeal to the rugged individualism dear to the country music fan's heart, as well as maintain a sense of justice and compassion that led him to protest many conditions and situations in America" (p. 140).

Garth Brooks, one of the most popular modern country performers, has spoken explicitly about the environment, domestic violence, famine, civil rights, date rape, and LGBT issues. He has managed to redefine conservative country music ideology, without abandoning the country community. He once said,

"I think the Republicans' big problem is that they believe family values are June and Walt and 2.3 children. To me it means laughing, being able to dream . . . if a set of parents are black and white, or two people of the same sex, or if one man or one woman acts as the parents, that the children grow up happy and healthy: that's what family values are" (Ellison 1995:259).

The statement sums up Brooks' challenge to traditional, white, patriarchal, and heterosexist country music values. He has managed to extend the boundaries of country music, without abandoning the genre all together.

Finally, k. d. lang, the first publicly lesbian country music star, poses the largest challenge to country music. Although she has not been

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She finishes with a summary. Most instructors would probably prefer a fuller recap, reviewing the general points she made throughout.

widely accepted by conventional country fans, her presence and in-your-face image force country music to confront and question its conservative nature. She challenged country music ideas about white female performers in the genre. Lang has, in fact, acknowledged that country music is a white genre that alienated many people of color. Rather than being a puppet to the country music community, Lang has redefined country music. For example, she once taped a PETA promotional spot saying, "meat stinks, and if you knew how meat was made, you'd probably lose your lunch," to the chagrin of country fans in cattle country. Although she directly challenged the conservative nature of country music, her confrontational approach has alienated the traditional country music audience (Lawler 1996:69-70).

Country music is white noise, literally. In this paper, I have outlined the social, political, and economic relationship between country music and white identity. Country music is music for and by white people. Massive societal upheaval and progress in the past century has been unable to penetrate country music, keeping the genre, its performers and its audience exclusively white. Country music is white noise, figuratively. Whiteness is omnipresent, but never explicit, in country music. It remains in the background, presenting itself as a race-free form, when it, in fact, reinforces white pride and existing racial hierarchies. As I stated earlier, I do not seek to vilify country music, nor do I advocate the complete annihilation of the genre. Rather, I encourage critical dialogue about country music's relationship to race, in hopes that further understanding will shape and open the future course of country music into a genre that truly represents the American people.

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Mayank includes a Reference section in her paper as opposed to a Bibliography (see Chapter 3 for the difference). Following the guidelines in Chapter 3, she places the heading at the left-hand margin, types it in all capital letters, and triple-spaces between the heading and the first source listed. Consistent with the *ASA Style Guide (2007)*, she starts the reference section on a new page and double-spaces the sources.

According to the *ASA Style Guide (2007)*, with the exception of New York, both the city and the state of the publisher should be included.

Here Mayank includes the state but not the city of the source. Both the city and the state of the source should be included.

Both the volume number and the issue number should be included in the References for a journal article.

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- [Note: To save space, only half of Mayank's references are reproduced here.]