



## Library Essentials

### Some Ways to Use Sources

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Librarians

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**How do we use sources in our writing? When done correctly, books and papers can be incorporated into our research papers to strengthen our overall presentation of a topic.**

**Sources may be quoted, or summarized, and used to reinforce ideas and provide credible backing. The use of sources should show the evolution of an idea substantiated and swayed by the sources you as the writer have assembled. Sources should never be planted in a paper without explanation or thought. Everything in a paper connects and as the creator of the document, you must explicitly show the effectiveness of sources and why they belong in your work.**

**Using examples from two books below, we illustrate some ways you can use sources.**

**The first book, *Cultural Materialism*, was written by now deceased anthropologist Marvin Harris. This is an academic book, and was written for scholars in his field. His use of sources reflects this. Harris has a conversation with his sources. Alternatively tearing them apart, agreeing with them and pitting them against one another. He uses his sources to move his work along.**

**Harris, M. (1979) *Cultural Materialism*. New York: Random House**

**The second book, *Defending Beef*, on the other hand, is a non-fiction book written for the casual reader. This is a heavily researched work with a different audience in mind. Thus sources are used throughout the work for a different purpose. Nicolette Niman uses her sources to reinforce her arguments and provide credible sources for points made. Everything is used to support the perspective she is presenting to the reader.**

**Niman, N.H. (2014) *Defending Beef The Case for Sustainable Meat Production*. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing**

### 1. Direct Quotes

**The most familiar way sources are used in papers is through direct quotes. Direct quotes should only ever add validity to a point you make, such as quoting a renowned voice in the field or be so amazing summarizing the idea of the quote would not do it justice. For example:**

I agree with Maxwell's evaluation of the importance of coherent aim-oriented paradigms as a criterion of science. As Maxwell says (1974b:294) "Without some kind of agreed aim or blueprint for a science, one hardly has a science at all. It is only when some kind of choice of blueprint has been made that one can have any idea of the kind of theory one is seeking to develop, and the kind of rules that ought to govern the acceptance and rejection of theories." The time is ripe, therefore, to replace the inchoate and unconscious paradigms under whose most anthropologists conduct their research .... That is why I have written this book (p. 25-6).

**Harris introduces his direct quote by stating his agreement with it, inserts a quote that speaks to his vision for his body of work, and then explains the quotes significance, and its connection to his work.**

To assert as Alvin Gouldner (1970: 103) does, that “objectivity is the compensation men offer themselves when their capacity to love has been crippled”, is to deny that truth can be both the object and means of expressing love. To erect a barrier between truth and love is to wantonly degrade and limit human nature. There are many, but not enough, for whom objectivity is the path that leads to both (p. 341).

**Niman writes to convince readers on the necessity of meat not just as a food source but as an environmental necessity as well. Niman uses this direct quote to illustrate her argument of land management.**

In his book *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*, earth and space sciences professor David Montgomery also highlights the importance of active land management by early peoples around the globe. “Long before the last glacial advance, people around the world burned forest patches to maintain forage for game or to favor edible plants. Shaping their world to suit their needs, our hunting and gathering ancestors were not passive inhabitants of the landscape”\*\*(p. 21).

## **2. Reinforcement**

**Sources function as credible authorities that substantiate points made. Here’s Harris:**

Sociobiologists do not deny that most human social responses are socially learned and therefore not directly under genetic control. Wilson (1977:133) has made this point without equivocation: “The evidence is strong that almost but probably not quite all differences among cultures are based on learning and socialization rather than on genes.” .... Thus few if any sociobiologists are interested in linking variants in human social behavior to the variable frequencies with which genes occur in different human populations (p. 126).

To prove his point that structure “specifies” or dominates infrastructure, Sahlins argues that there is no other way to explain the fact that “primitive” economies are chronically underproductive:

The main run of them, agricultural as well as preagricultural, seem not to realize their own economic capacities. Labor power is underused, technological means are not fully engaged, natural resources are left untapped. (1972:41), (p. 239).

**Credible sources can show the legitimacy of an argument made and lend credibility to the overall research. Here’s Niman:**

The very existence of grazing areas supplies essential habitat to wildlife. Pollinators, which are essential to both wild ecosystems and the human food system, are a good example. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, over 75 percent of flowering plants - including apples, almonds, and squashes - need an animal pollinator\*\* (p. 99).

### 3. Conversing

**Sources also show the evolution of an idea and the conversation occurring to move the idea forward. This is most evident when we use sources in relation to each other and our research work. Here's Harris:**

As Marx put it: "No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed" (1970 [1859]:21). Why should one expect this to be true?

I believe the demographic factors help to explain the historic expansion of productive forces. Hence, necessity arises for speaking of a "mode of reproduction" ... (p. 66).

Following suggestions by Morgan and Engels, plausible materialist theories of the origins of matrilocality have emphasized the increased significance of women's labor .... This approach, however, has too many factual and logical flaws (Sanday, 1973). Horticultural societies are five times more likely to be patrilineal than matrilineal (Murdock, 1967), (p. 96).

Dalton's (1974:559) accusation that "exploitation and surplus are prejudicial words used by some social scientists (perhaps unintentionally) to condemn only those systems of social stratification they dislike and disapprove of" certainly cannot be answered by accusing him of creating theories "to justify the advanced of the enlightened at the expense of the wretched of the earth" (Eric Wolf in Dalton 1972:411). Dalton has challenged Marxists to come up with a cross culturally valid definition of exploitation and surplus. They have failed utterly to comply (p. 238).

### 5. Counter Perspective

**Part of showing the conversation occurring between sources is showing how the views expressed in the readings may have disagreed with or changed your own opinion on a topic. Or how you disagree with views expressed.**

The weakness of Popper's falsificationist criterion can be seen in his own tendency to present highly improbable theories such as: "I assert our own free world is by far the best society that has come into existence in the course of human history" (Popper, 1965:369). Indeed it is impossible to understand Popper's demarcation proposal or the attention it has received without placing it in the context of his political-economical beliefs and his active opposition to Marxist theory and practice (p. 18).

Alexander Alland (1975:67) has defended Mary Douglas and challenged my explanation on the ground that "taboos for nonuse" are ecologically superfluous, meaning that if pigs were an impractical source of meat, there would be no need for tabooing them (p. 194).

**Niman takes the time to show the counter argument as made by an authoritative, credible figure, offering another perspective on the topic.**

"The global demand for meat is rising; confined pig and poultry operations have a lower climate change impact than cattle; thus the world food supply should move away from grazing animals and towards industrial poultry and pork."\*\* Even before its release, the report's lead author, Henning Steinfeld, a German agriculture economist, was on record making precisely this argument.\*\* I've personally met Steinfeld twice: once when he visited our California ranch and once on a panel at a livestock convention in Bonn, Germany. From our direct conversations, as well from listening to him present his views at the conference, it was clear Steinfeld favored just such an approach. (p. 17)

## 6. Summarizing

**Effective use of sources does not always mean direct quotes. Sometimes the most effective use of a source is summarising - saying in your own words - the general idea of a source and integrating the principles discovered into your research.**

As Michael Harner (1970) has shown, among pre-state societies, the greater the intensity of agricultural production (measured by decline in dependence upon hunting), the greater the likelihood of unilineal descent groups (p. 95).

Under primitive forms of redistribution, the redistributor depended on the generosity of the primary producers; in the advanced chiefdoms, the primary producers were already dependent on the generosity of the redistributors (Sahlins, 1960) (p. 101).

**Summarizing what sources say reinforces the credibility of your point and is often the most effective way to use sources in your work. Here's Niman:**

The Soil Association's review concludes that soils would achieve "high carbon gains" from conversion to organic agriculture. The 39 studies showed that farming that includes the use of animal manures, crop rotations, cover cropping, and composting results in greater soil carbon\*\* (p. 26).

In her recent book *Cows Save the Planet*, author Judith Schwartz examines the work of soil specialists like Dr. Lal and ranch practitioners, making a credible and compelling case that carbon sequestration triggered by well-managed grazing could be part of an effective strategy to combat climate change (p. 33).

## 7. IBID. – Using the Same Source More than Once in the Same Paper

**The use of 'IBID' in academic writing refers to sources previously cited. All bibliographic data has already been given.**

Rodney Needham (1971:lxix) urged those who "with their insidious talk ... have presented a sorry and deteriorating exhibition from a subject that is supposed to be a learned discipline" to "seriously apply themselves to the comprehension of the ethnographic evidence - work before talk" (ibid.:lxxx). The proper assignment, however, is to think before one works (p. 177).

At least 20,000 captives were immolated in four days at the dedication of the main Aztec temple in 1487, and by the beginning of the sixteenth century at least 15,000 to 20,000 people were being eaten per year in Tenochtitlan, the Aztec temple (Harner, 1977:119). Since the skulls of the victims in Tenochtitlan were placed on display racks after the brains were taken out and eaten, it was possible for the members of Hernando Cortes's expedition to make a precise count of one category of victims. They found that the rack contained 136,000 heads, but they were unable to count another group of victims whose heads were added to two tall towers made entirely of crania and jawbones (ibid.:122) (p. 334).