

## Soc. H487-Assignment 1-Article Abstract

Due 1/15/08

The purpose of this assignment is for you to read a research article and write a short (2 page) abstract that concisely summarizes the main points of the article. By writing an abstract you will develop the critical reading skills necessary for evaluating previous literature on your topic of interest (identifying an article's main points and strengths and weaknesses). Abstracts can also be very useful for summarizing an article for research or for later reference. The skill that an abstract develops-presenting a large amount of information in a short and concise format-can be useful in a variety of situations.

The most effective strategy is to develop a standardized format for preparing an abstract. Not only will a standardized format make abstracts more accessible at a later date, but it also speeds up the process of writing an abstract. By adopting a format with specific sections, you will be assured that the major points of the text are included in the abstract.

Although I recommend writing an abstract for the sources you will incorporate into your proposal, for this assignment I am asking you all to write an abstract for the same article. This article can be found on in the course packet. Note that this assignment will also serve to familiarize you more with an important element of strikes, social protest.

Cress, Daniel M. and David A. Snow. 1996. "Mobilization at the Margins: Resources, Benefactors, and the Viability of Homeless Social Movement Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 61: 1089-1109.

### Suggested Abstract Format

- I. Citation** The reference should be in some standardized format (American Sociological Association) so that you can easily find the article again, if necessary.
- II. Problem** This includes the research question the article seeks to address, the rationale for the study (testing a theory, weakness of previous literature), and the major hypothesis that is being examined (this is often implicit).
- III. Design and Sampling** This should include a description of the important characteristics of the population that is being studied (you will need to identify the unit of analysis), as well as the sampling strategy used to select cases for observation. Also, you should describe the methods of gathering data. In practice, this section will often overlap with the next section, which examines the measuring devices used.
- IV. Measuring Devices and their Precision** Describe the tests or measures used to collect important variables during the course of the data collection (questions on surveys, for example). Is anything said about their reliability or validity?
- V. Results** The actual findings of the research.

**VI. Interpretation** Describe how the author interprets the findings from the study. This can include either the specific answers to the research question or the theoretical and practical conclusions from the research as a whole.

**VII. Criticisms and Notes** Here you include any critical comments you may have about the article as well as any ideas that come to mind after reading it (possibilities for future research, for example). Be sure to include this separate from the rest of the abstract so you do not confuse your original thoughts with those of the author.

In general, the best procedure in preparing an abstract is to read the article through quickly to get an idea of its general content; then read more thoroughly making notes; then reorganize the notes and write the abstract.