Using Background Information to Explore a Topic

Finding background information on a topic helps develop more complex research questions. How?
Builds a base of knowledge  |  Helps formulate additional questions to investigate  |  Leads to additional resources

What resources help me find background information?
Reference sources: dictionaries and encyclopedias that give factual information (definitions, dates, statistics). These sources are published, credible resources written by scholars!

Assignment
1. First, write YOUR tentative research question(s) below. What do you want to find out more about?

2. Watch Video: Picking a Topic Is Research! https://youtu.be/Q0B3Gjlu-1o

3. The video provides a sample topic in varying degrees of specificity. Bridezilla (too narrow); Reality TV (too broad); Wedding based reality TV (happy medium). Think of keywords that express your topic in NARROW and BROAD ways and write them below. If you can’t think of many, that’s OK; go to the next page, search the resources as directed, and keep adding to the list below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NARROW</th>
<th>BROAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridezilla</td>
<td>Reality TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>Reproductive rights</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Using the NARROW and BROAD terms you brainstormed on page 1, conduct searches in at least TWO of these online reference resources found on the BACKGROUND tab (see directions above).

Circle the ones you chose below.
- CREDO Reference – over 800 multidisciplinary reference sources
- OXFORD Reference Online – focused on humanities and social sciences
- SAGE e-Reference – focused on humanities and social sciences

5. What KEYWORDS did you search? Try several searches!

6. Scroll through your search results. Some entries may be short (definitions), some longer (chapters). Longer entries can provide CONTEXT about your topic. For example, searching “bridezilla” produced this entry on “Wedding Industry” from the Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Family Studies. “Wedding industry” is a BROADER concept that could be searched in additional resources. If YOU find additional BROADER and NARROWER terms, write them under your brainstorms on page 1.

7. What NEW words and concepts did you discover and want to investigate?

8. Many encyclopedias provide a BIBLIOGRAPHY or FURTHER READING at the end. Look at the end of reference entries you found and write ONE CITATION below that may be helpful to your research. (Note: write down an item that from the bibliography of the encyclopedia, NOT a citation for the encyclopedia.)

9. Reflect in 2-3 sentences: What is the next step in your research?

First, go to the GP Research Guide: https://library.monmouthcollege.edu/GP
Click on the BACKGROUND tab on this guide.

Bring a copy of this completed worksheet to class.