evidence must be logically connected to the thesis so that you can make the statement (either in your head or in the paper) "If the evidence is true, the thesis is true." Many student papers (and some professional papers) falter here, presenting interesting and important evidence in narrative form, or in a controlled study, or sometimes through reasoned reflection, but then drawing a conclusion that is less than warranted by the evidence presented. So be sure to put aside the actual paper and think through the first three items on the checklist presented in Part III: "What is my thesis? Does my thesis remain evident and central throughout the paper? Have I supported my thesis with adequate evidence?"

Finally, the structure of the paper should reflect the logical connection of the evidence to the thesis. It is the writer's job, not the reader's, to draw the connections between evidence and conclusions and to show how the paper logically proceeds. Thus the paper's introduction, transitions, and conclusions are essential, not just incidental, parts of the paper. The *introduction* should state the question that is being answered and specify the plan for answering it. As the paper unfolds, provide guideposts for the reader telling where the paper has gone and where it is going. These *transitions* indicate how sentences, paragraphs, and sections logically fit together. Transitions can be accomplished by including transitional words and phrases, such as "on the other hand" and "furthermore." (See Chapter 2 for a list of transitions.) Or they can be stated in sentences: "The last section discussed Durkheim's basic presuppositions; this section will show how those presuppositions influenced his theory of religion." A common writing error is the *non sequitur*, a Latin phrase for sentences or paragraphs that have no apparent connection. This often results from a connection that is in the writer's mind but that she or he fails to demonstrate to the reader. A *conclusion* should remind readers where they have been and why you think the thesis has been demonstrated. Try to summarize the paper without repeating specific sentences. This is also the appropriate place to reflect upon the larger implications of your thesis—to answer the question "So what?" But it is not appropriate to present new evidence in the conclusion.

LOGICAL FALLACIES

Logical fallacies are errors in reasoning. Even if facts are accurate, errors in logic can lead writers to inappropriate conclusions, often with the best of intentions. Try not to make any of the following typical errors:

ad hominem (attacking the person, not the issue), for example, "They believe that they [animals] have 'inherent moral rights.' Some of the people who most vigorously support animal rights are cruel to their own family members."

begging the question (circular reasoning), for example, "Because they have nowhere to stay, the homeless must live on the streets."

either/or (also called "false dilemma"), for example, "If school reforms in the last several decades have not created high-quality education for everyone, it is time for school vouchers."

false analogy (assuming that because people or objects share one characteristic, they share all characteristics), for example, "Many Americans hire private investigators to spy for them and gain information about someone else. Just as the CIA violated the rights of citizens in poor countries around the world, private investigators violate the rights of anyone they spy on."

false cause (also called *post hoc, ergo propter hoc,* assuming that just because one thing happened after another, it is caused by the first event), for example, "After people lost respect for government authority in the 1960s, violent crime rose all across the country."

hasty generalization (also called "sweeping generalization"), for example, "Americans will never accept a single-payer medical insurance system."

non sequitur (making no apparent logical connection), for example, "If other stress factors lead to the weakening of their willpower causing binge eating, all of the diet centers have counseling sessions."

reverse reasoning (confusing cause for effect), for example, "The more knowledge teenagers have about sex, the more likely they are to engage in premarital sexual activities."

slippery slope (inaccurately predicting a causal chain), for example, "If human cloning research is permitted, the next steps will be designer human beings and then the elimination of handicaps, and end with the killing of people who aren't perfect or whom we don't like."

spurious causation (treating things with a common cause as though they cause each other), for example, "Poor people with bad nutrition commit more violent crime than those with healthy diets."

For a fuller description of logical errors, see David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historial Thought* (1970. New York: Harper & Row). Even though written specifically for historians, it is very useful for all writers.

TWO FORMATS OF LOGIC AND STRUCTURE

We suggest here two formats of logic and structure that are common in sociology papers. There are, of course, other formats that may be appropriate for specific assignments. If the paper assignment does not specify an explicit format requirement, it is often helpful to talk over your format ideas with the instructor.