

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research
Methods

Fall 2015

YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW (+FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL)

1. Title Page

2. Abstract

3. Introduction (1-2 pages)

- Topic overview and research question

4. Literature Review (2-3 pages)

5. Methods (3-5 pages)

- Re-state and briefly discuss research question and hypothesis
- Discuss Conceptualization & Operationalization of research variables
- Describe methodology

6. Conclusion and Ethical Considerations (1page):

- Explain how data and methods address research question
- Conclude with how research may answer question
- Discuss how research could avoid ethical issues

7. References

LIT REVIEW: 3 SECTIONS

(Title Page + Abstract)

1. Introduction (1-2 pages)

- Topic overview
- Research question
- (Hypothesis)

2. Literature Review (2-3 pages)

- Description and summary of literature articles
- Why they are relevant
- Gaps in literature
- What your research would add

3. Need for further research -AKA your study (1-2 Paragraphs)

- Make a case about why your research is necessary
- State Research Question again

ABSTRACT

- Short (~200 words) paragraph before your paper
- Summarizes topic, lit review, question, methods, and findings
- Abstract for lit review assignment will only need 2-3 sentences on topic, literature, and question

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

- Introduce the topic of investigation
- Establish its importance and context
- Indicate the researcher's perspective on the problem
- State purpose of research
- Introduction is integrated with the literature review

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

- Write a topic outline of what will be covered
 - Should include background information about topic & problem
- Start out with the broad topic and become more specific, ending with research purpose and question
- Give specific reasons for the importance of the topic

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC EXAMPLE

- Poor eating habits and inactive lifestyles that begin during childhood can lead to numerous health problems, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1997).
- Tactic: Point out the *percentage or group* of people who are affected by the problem you are studying
- Introduction to topic should put the topic in context
 - You should be describing where it fits in the larger world
 - Should point out what is important about it
 - Avoid using the word “**society**”

INTRODUCTION: THE OPENING

- **Main goal: introduce the topic of your investigation**
 - Get reader interested in your study
 - Help reader place the detailed research review into a larger context
- **There are several ways you can start off your paper**
 - Rhetorical question
 - Everyday experience
 - Striking statistic/fact
 - Historical fact

RHETORICAL QUESTION

- Open with a rhetorical question – one that does not require an answer
 - automatically engages the reader
 - sets him or her in the right framework
 - personalizes it
- Prompts the reader to ask, “What do I think about this subject?”
- Examples:
 - What would you do if you were placed in solitary confinement?
 - Do you encounter police on your walk home every night?



EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE



- Demonstrate the relevance of the research topic by comparing it to common experience
- Example:
 - Opening paragraph from a study published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*
 - Examined the nature of differences among people in their experience of personal anxious arousal on behalf of another person in a distressing situation
- “Imagine an evening “on the town” in which an audience is exposed to a theatrical misfortune - an unprepared understudy. As anyone who has been in such a situation knows, there will be large differences in the behavior of the ticket holders. Some will demand a refund, whereas others will feel sorry and work themselves into an anxious seat! What are the relevant personality characteristics that are associated with these different reaction?”

STRIKING STATISTIC/FACT

- Using an unusual fact compels the reader to rethink his or her views about the subject.
 - The fact conveys the gravity of the topic and the ramification of future study.
- Be careful not to overload with numbers
- Example
 - “From 1973 through 1993, the number of people incarcerated in state and federal prisons in the United States increased 446%. During that period, the rate of increase among female offenders (846%) was almost twice that males (435%) (Meguire & Pastore, 1995).”



HISTORICAL FACT

- This can be used in articles where the purpose is to describe the development of the topic of research over time
- Provide a fact about the history of your topic and how it has come to be today
- For example, “Since 2002 the United States has had the highest incarceration rate in the world. The United States maintains an incarceration rate that is 5 times higher than any other nation. Typically, incarcerated individuals are undereducated and from minority populations. Specifically, black men are 6 times more likely to be incarcerated than any other individual. (Bureau of Justice Statistics).”

SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

- Should be presented in a coherent, integrated fashion that links findings together **around some central argument**
- Should contain:
 - Relevant Studies
 - Citations & Information about studies
 - Integrated summaries
 - Transition phrases and sentences
 - NO direct quotes (or very few)

INCLUDING RELEVANT FEATURES OF STUDIES

- When describing each reference or studies
 - Address the features that pertain to your topic
 - What is important about this article?
 - Why is this article helpful for your own research?
 - What are the methods and findings
- Review the literature with your study in mind



CITING STUDIES: IN-TEXT VS. PARENTHETICAL CITATIONS

- Two ways of citing studies
 - Within-text citations
 - Parenthetical
- Within-text citations
 - Hurson (2015) conducted a study to examine sustainable lifestyles.
 - Primarily be reserved for studies that you plan to describe in specific detail or studies that are especially pivotal to your argument
- Parenthetical
 - Only for presenting a brief summary of findings
 - Sustainable lifestyles have been associated with specific behaviors such as recycling (Zeftel, 2008), composting (Hurson, 2011), and reducing consumption (Hughes, 2014).

LIT REVIEW IS AN ESSAY NOT A LIST

- Organize by topic—not the findings of individual researchers
- Research reports with similar findings or methodologies may be cited together
- Make sure to organize the material for the reader by indicating how the individual citations relate to one another
 - Like Hurson's research on composting practices, (2011) Hughes (2014) also found that individuals engage in specific behaviors to change their lifestyle. Hughes' study focused on...
- Include any trends you are observing in the published literature on your topic

AVOID DIRECT QUOTES



- Avoid using direct quotes
 - Only if author's exact works makes a SIGNIFICANT contribution to the clarity or quality of your paper
- Task in writing the literature review is to read critically, synthesize, and integrate a large body of literature
- Must try to simplify and describe this literature for your audience IN YOUR OWN WORDS
 - Frequent quotations may disrupt the flow of the review
 - Does not display that you understand the material
- Quotations often bog the paper down in details that are not essential

QUALITY OF PAST RESEARCH

- Readers will assume that the research being cited is reasonably sound unless the writer states otherwise.
- If you can, it is desirable to point out major weaknesses in previous studies
- If a study is especially strong methodologically, consider mentioning why it is strong

TRANSITION PHRASES AND SENTENCES

- Studies should be described in detail
- Must create a coherent narrative/story



FROM LIT REVIEW TO METHODS: TRANSITIONING TO YOUR STUDY

- The third segment provides a transition from previous research to the present study
 - Specifically states the purpose and rationale for your study
- Include:
 - Transition sentences or paragraph
 - The potential implications of the study
 - Your research questions
 - Definitions of variables/constructs



POINT OUT GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

- It is important to show where your research fits into the larger literature body
- Need to write how your study connects to other studies
 - What gap is it filling? What new areas is it looking at?
- Unless you are conducting a strict replication of a previous study, you should point out how your study will differ from previously published research



SECTION 3: THE NEED AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR STUDY

- State how the present study will add to, clarify, argue against, or otherwise advance what previous studies have reported
- Need to state what gap your study fills and why it is important that this research is done
- Your literature review can point out the flaws, issues, or theories that you are proposing to address or remedy, so this statement should flow naturally from a thoughtfully written review



RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

- Should re-state your research question.
- Can, if desired, state a hypotheses phrased in the future tense (e.g., I hypothesize or I expect)
- If doing Qualitative research with no set hypothesis, should say what you will be focusing on
 - Are you looking for themes? Factors? To emerge from the data?
- Somewhere in this section: present operational definitions



TYPES OF DEFINITIONS

- In the intro: conceptual definitions should be specific
 - Acceptable to cite a definition previously offered by an expert
- Conceptual Definitions
 - Resemble dictionary definitions that refer to general concepts (constructs), are often presented in the introduction.
- Operational Definitions
 - Define traits (constructs) in concrete, step-by-step physical terms, are usually presented in the methods section.

WRITING STYLE

■ Professional

- Writing, not speaking*
 - *But should read paper aloud to make sure it makes sense...
- No slang, abbreviations, typos!
- Correct words/synonyms

■ Coherent

- Complete sentences
- Subject/verb agreement
- Who is “society”?
- Use of words: effect/affect, impact, cause, in which/that

■ Accessible

- For professors, employers, and lay (regular) people
- Anyone should be able to read your paper and understand it but it should also be a good example of your best writing

