

Reading & Writing Social Research

Topic Paper Feedback

- Variables are the things you measure
- Question should be answerable & within a reasonable scope
- APA Citations
- Things, stuff, really, sometimes, pretty bad, etc.
- Typos, proofreading, and reading aloud

Social Research

- Finding Literature
 - What is a Literature review?
 - Where do I get “literature”?
- Reading Social Research
 - What’s important?
- Writing
 - Who am I writing for?
 - How long should it be?
 - What am I trying to say?
 - How do I organize my research proposal?
 - How do I cite and reference things?

14 Literature, Arts and Social Sciences

Interdisciplinary Comparative Advantage

CHANDRA MOHAN

INTRODUCTION

Studies in literature normally involve two processes, one determined by a centripetal spirit and the other by a centrifugal one. In the first instance, scholars prefer to study literature as an entity in itself, as a single, coherent, self-contained, self-existent art. They choose to study a literary work within the frontiers of a single, self-sufficient national language. Such centripetal approaches not only tend to deny literature its freedom to cross international borders, both artistically and intellectually, but also restrict it from intersecting with other forms of art and knowledge. The second approach to a literary study is powered by a centrifugal spirit. For instance, under the aegis of Comparative Literature, the study of letters has become progressively more interdisciplinary as well as inter-literary. Through this important development in modern scholarship, literature is being restored to its pristine position as a central cognitive resource in society as its most faithful and comprehensive interpreter. It is an art yet more than art, for literature extends outside itself to forms of human experience beyond disciplinary boundaries, making it evident that the rigid separation of disciplines by myopic specialisations can in the long run lead only to counterproductive and paralysing isolation (Barricelli & Gibaldi iv).

213

University Publishing Online, hosted by Cambridge University Press © 2011

Literature Review: Finding Literature



- Any research project starts with a review of the literature
 - What has already been written?
 - What is already known?
- Lit reviews are conducted by identifying KEY TERMS in order to find published articles about past research on your topic
 - Key terms: **Variables**, Population, Concept, Type of research
 - Snowball sampling : identify one good article and look at their references
 - **You will have try different combination of key terms to get the most closely related articles to your research topic**

Finding Literature

- Use John Jay library resources to find peer-reviewed journal articles (literature)
- You will need to find 8-10 articles on your research topic
 - At least 5 need to be from peer-reviewed articles
 - Should be about research studies conducted on your topic
- **Ask yourself: What is my topic? What are the key concepts/variables?**
 - What key terms do I need to search to find relevant research?



Assessing the Literature

- When looking through articles:
 - Is it on my topic? OR Is it closely related?
 - **Do I need to narrow my focus? (make topic more specific)**
 - **What are the exact details about my topic that I could research?**
 - Do I need to change my key terms to get better results and more relevant articles?
- When an article looks good:
 - Is it an empirical research study?
 - Does it reflect the kind of research I might want to do?
 - Does it cover a topic, method, population, that I want to study?
 - Does it appear to be from a reputable journal?

Using the Literature

- Keep track of the articles you plan to use!
 - Keep a list – title, date, author
 - Print out or save the PDFs you want to use for lit review



Reading a Journal Article

- **Abstract**
 - Very Brief overview of research article
- **Introduction**
 - What is the background and history of the topic?
 - What other studies have been done?
 - Theoretical Orientation: where are the researchers “coming from”?
 - Is there a lit review or references to other articles?
 - What is the research question?
- **Section Headers**
 - Pay attention to section headers: shows how article is structured

Reading a Journal Article

- **METHODS** – Pay attention!
 - What type of methods did they use?
 - Who is the sample?
 - What tools are they using?
- **Analysis**
 - What was the data collected?
 - Quantitative? Stats?
 - Qualitative? What type?
 - How did researchers analyze it?
- **Conclusion**
 - What did researchers find?
 - How do their findings related to their original research question?
 - Did the authors write about limitations of the study?

Internet and Google Searching

- When collecting articles/sources/references for academic research:



- Google **Scholar** is the one of the *only* ways to search for reputable academic literature online
 - Can search for specific types of literature online using Google searches but must be careful & critical
- Academic sources found using Google can include:
 - Annual Reports: City, State governments, companies
 - White Papers: Organization reports
 - Research Institute reports
 - Databases: NYPD crime rates

Evaluating Internet Sources

- **Is the information/site official?**
 - Is it a government/organization site?
 - Is it a university research site?
 - Is it a research institute site?
- **Who is the author of the source or page?**
 - Are they reputable? Are they knowledgeable on the topic?
- **Is the site biased?**
 - Does the website cite their own information?
 - Where are they getting their facts? Are there references?
 - Do they clearly explain what they did to get their information?
- **Is the site and it's information/data up-to-date?**
- **Does this data match with other reports, articles, and sources?**
- Any online source must also must be cited in APA format.

Writing Social Research

- Writing Style:
 - Professional
 - Coherent
 - Accessible
- Things to consider:
 - Audience
 - Form and Length
 - Aim/Purpose
- Your Lit Review and Research Proposal
 - Organization
 - Voice
 - Citations

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”? “Thing”?
 - Use of words
- **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

Writing: things to consider

- **Audience**
 - Who are you writing for?
 - Writing should be professional, coherent, and accessible
 - Write for other students, professors, employers
- **Form and Length**
 - Should always consider: where will this paper be going?
 - Is it too short? Too long?
- **Aim/Purpose**
 - Exploration of a topic and literature
 - Description of research method
 - Ethical Considerations

Citations (and Plagiarism)

- APA Style and format – See [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#)
- Correct in-text citations

“The stereotypes that we learn not only justify prejudice and discrimination but also can produce the behavior depicted in the stereotype” (Henslin, 2001).

OR

James Henslin (2001) suggests that, “The stereotypes that we learn not only justify prejudice and discrimination but also can produce the behavior depicted in the stereotype.”

- No direct quotations that are longer than three lines
- Do not string quotes together without putting them in context with your own words connecting the ideas.
- Cite other people’s IDEAS & FINDINGS

Many analysts have noted how stereotypes may produce the behavior they depict (Henslin, 2001).