Agenda

• Research Writing Tips
  • Research Process (Recap)
  • Integration of Theory

• Thesis/Dissertation Layout (Recap)

• Citing Sources (Recap)

• Results/Findings & Discussion

• Abstract
  • Description
  • Writing Strategies
Research Writing Tips
The Academic's Narrative Arc

Exposition  Data  Exposition  Findings/Conclusions  Caveat

The seriously riveting data

"It's difficult to generalise..."

"Further research is needed..."

(Cheryl Brumley’s ‘Stepping out of the academic box’. Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, 2014)

(Brumley, 2014)
“Every story, even the driest, has a human face. Draw it well and put it on display, for to readers it is a mirror and a magnet”

(Flaherty, 2009, p. xv)
Your goals should as a researcher:
1. Identify the broad problem
2. Discover how others have explored the problem before you
3. Uncover the gaps that still exist
4. Develop a study that can investigate one of those gaps (micro problem)
Understand the Integration of Theory

Theories explain, predict, and help to understand phenomena (Abend, 2008).
Understand the Integration of Theory

- Theoretical Framework - Structure that can hold and support the research study

- Introduces and describes the theory
  - Explains why research problem exists within the confines of the theory

(Abend, 2008)
Selecting Appropriate Theory

- Use knowledge about theory to inform study
- Theory selection depends on:
  - Appropriateness
  - Ease of application
  - Explanatory power

(University of Southern California, 2019)
Why is Theory Integration Important

• *Strengthens the study by*:  
  o Connects the study to existing knowledge  
  o Provides the basis for hypotheses and research methods  
  o Allows to move from describing the phenomenon to generalizing about aspects of the phenomenon

(University of Southern California, 2019)
Why is Theory Integration Important

- **Strengthens the study by:**
  - Identifies limits to those generalizations
  - Identifies what key variables influence a phenomenon of interest
  - Allows for a focus on how key variables differ and in what conditions
  - Helps reader to evaluate the study critically

(University of Southern California, 2019)
Define and Operationalize: Key Terms & Variables

Define = What is meant by a word or concept in your study

Operationalize = Defining the measurement of a phenomenon that is not directly measurable
Research Writing Tips

• Remember that you are telling a story
• Identify your focal research area and narrow to your micro area
• Utilize theory to support your study
  o Theory explains, predicts, and helps to understand phenomena (Abend, 2008)
  o Define terms and operationalize key variables
Thesis/Dissertation Layout (Recap)
Designing Your Study

Start with Alignment

• Title
• Purpose
• Research Question(s)
• Hypothesis(es) (Quantitative)
• Synthesizing Question(s) (Qualitative)
Thesis/Dissertation Layout

Chapter 1
Introduction to the Study or Statement of the Problem

Chapter 2
Review of the Literature

Chapter 3
Methodology of the Study

Chapter 4
Results of the Study (quantitative)
Findings of the Study (qualitative)

Chapter 5
Discussion and Conclusions

(UMES theses and dissertation guide, 2015-2016)
Dissertation Layout - ORLD

Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Literature Review
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework (quantitative)
Conceptual Framework (qualitative)
Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology
Chapter 5: Results of the Study (quantitative)
Findings of the Study (qualitative)
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY
Keys to Success

Follow the guidance provided by UMES.

Follow guidance provided by your advisor and department.
Citing Sources
(Recap)
Citing Sources

• Cite work that contributed ideas, theories, or research to your manuscript
• Only cite work that is part of the manuscript
• Use work that both supports and diverges from your argument
• Be careful of undercitation and overcitation

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Citing Sources

• This is how you support your assertions
• Avoids plagiarism
• Lends credibility to your work
• Review APA (7th edition) – Chapter 8

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Results/Findings & Discussion (of thesis or dissertation)
Results/Findings Chapter

- This is where your data shines
- Report your data in a factual manner
- Be clear and concise
- Use formats typical of your field
Results/Findings Chapter

• Overview of Study

• Results of the Study (quantitative)
  • Demographic and/or descriptive analysis
  • Reliability and validity analyses
    • Instrument analysis, reliability analysis, assumption testing, validity testing
  • Hypothesis testing
    • Results should be relative to each hypothesis
Results/Findings Chapter

- Findings of the Study (qualitative)
  - Demographic and/or descriptive analysis (if applicable)
  - Findings relative to synthesizing questions
  - Findings relative to research question(s)

- Summary of Chapter
Discussion Chapter

- This is where your interpretation shines
- You “make sense” of the data
- Use literature to support your interpretation
- Address the “So What?”
Discussion Chapter

• Summary of the Study

• Discussion
  • Discuss the results/findings relative to the literature
  • Each hypothesis or synthesizing questions discussed relative to the literature
    • INTERPRET WHAT YOUR STUDY REVEALED!!!
Discussion Chapter

• Discussion
  • RQ(s) discussed relative to the literature
  • ADDRESSING what YOUR study indicated in comparison to what was known in your scientific field prior to your research
Discussion Chapter

• Limitations and Delimitations of the Study
• Significance of the Study
  • Scientific
    • Methodological and Theoretical
    • Practical Significance
• Relevance to Organizational Leadership (ORLD)
• Implications for Future Research
• Summary
• Conclusion
Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

• This chapter builds to answer this throughout
• Culmination comes with:
  • Significance
  • Practical Implications
  • Conclusion
Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

- MUST show that the data means something relative to other literature
  - Supports it
  - Refutes it
  - Builds upon current theory
  - Generates new theory
Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

Methodological Significance

How the study provides a unique methodological contribution?

Can other researchers use it?

Was it a novel approach?

Why did this methodological approach yield something new?
Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

Theoretical Significance

How the study provides a unique theoretical contribution?

Does it address gaps in previous theory?

Does it generate a new theory?

What can future studies now do with this theory that could not be done before?
Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

Practical Significance/Implications

What can practitioners do with these results/findings?

What does a non-expert do with this new knowledge?

How can this be applied outside of research?
Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

Conclusion

This is your final “punch.”

If someone only reads your conclusion (GASP), what do you want them to know?
Discussion Chapter - Conclusions

This is YOUR VOICE

What does your unique study contribute?

Why is it important?

How does it build upon / refute other research?

How does it build upon / refute theory?

What does the “non-expert” do with these findings?
Writing an Abstract
“An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the paper”

- American Psychological Association, 2020, p. 73
Why is an Abstract Important?

• Introduction to research/paper
• Summary of the body of work
• Editors may make decision on sending to reviewers based on abstract
• Reviewers first “judgement” of manuscript
• May be all someone “reads” of the paper
Components of an Abstract

1) General topic of study, specific topic of research, context and/or background information
   • 1 to 3 sentences

2) Central questions or statement of problem addressed in study
   • 1 sentence

(University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2020)
Components of an Abstract

3) What is known, what previous research provides
   • 1 to 2 sentences

4) Main reasons, rationale, and/or goals of research
   • Why is this important to address? (e.g. new topic, filling a gap, applying new methods, dispute in the literature)
   • 1 to 2 sentences

(University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2020)
Components of an Abstract

5) **Methods and research design** – Cover the research or analytical methods
   • 1 to 2 sentences

6) **Findings, results, or arguments**
   • 1 to 3 sentences

7) **Significance and implications of findings/study**

(University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2020)
Practice

Find an abstract from a published empirical research article.
Practice

• Identify:
  o General topic, specific topic, context and/or background information
  o Central questions/problem statement
  o What is known/previous research
  o Main reasons, rationale, goals of research
  o Methods & research design
  o Findings, results, arguments
  o Significance and implications
Qualities of a Good Abstract

1. Accurate
2. Nonevaluative
3. Coherent and Readable
4. Concise

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract - ACCURATE

• Reflects the purpose and contents of the paper

• If extends or replicates prior research, cite the work (author-date citation)

• **Bottom Line:**
  o Avoid overstating what the research/paper is about

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract - NONEVALUATIVE

• Report the work

• Avoid evaluating the contents
  o e.g. “In this ground-breaking research…”

• **Bottom Line:**
  o This is not the place for your feelings and sentiments on the paper

(American Psychological Association, 2020)

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA-NC
Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

• Clear language that is not overly specific to the field

• Use verbs, rather than noun equivalents
  o e.g. “investigated” rather than “an investigation of”

• Active voice, rather than passive
  o e.g. “we present results” rather than “results are presented”

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

• Present tense for conclusions drawn or results
  o e.g. “Authentic leadership impacts employee trust in XYZ”

• Past tense to describe how variables were manipulated or outcomes measured
  o E.g. “In this study, employee trust was A, B, and C.”

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Bottom Line

Use simple language and have someone outside your field of expertise read it before submission!!
Good Abstract – CONCISE

• Be brief

• Each sentence should provide maximum information

• Set-it up for success
  o Lead with a powerful sentence
  o Key points first

• Include 4 or 5 of the MOST IMPORTANT results or findings

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
Good Abstract – CONCISE

Bottom Line

Everything cannot be in the abstract, hit the highlights

Think about key words that will pull the article in searches

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

(American Psychological Association, 2020)
When to Write an Abstract

• After the paper is complete

• Remember this is a summary of the complete paper

• Exceptions
  o Abstract for paper proposal
  o Extended abstract (usually paper proposal or conference)
Abstract Writing Sources

• APA Manual (7th Edition) – Section 3.3
  o Walks through components
  o Details for empirical, replication, meta-analyses, literature review, theoretical, and methodological articles

• Journal abstracts
  o Look at journal guidelines

• UMES Guide to Preparation of Theses and Dissertations

• University of Wisconsin Writing Center
Final Abstract Thoughts

• Reader should understand “gist” of paper from abstract
• Usually you do not *cite* references
• Focus on what YOU studied and/or found
• **REMEMBER** – Often abstract is all people read of the paper

(University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2020)
YOUR ABSTRACT IS TOO LONG AND COMPLICATED! YOU NEED TO COMPLETELY RE-WRITE IT!

WHAT IS THIS CLAPTRAP? THE WORDS MAKE NO SENSE - AND THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM!

IT'S TOO TECHNICAL! YOU WON'T HAVE A RESEARCH CAREER IF YOU ONLY WRITE FOR YOUR NICHE!

YOU CALL THIS GARBAGE SCIENCE? THERE'S NOT ENOUGH DETAIL!

ARE YOU KIDDING ME WITH THIS?

HOW WILL YOUR PEERS RESPECT YOU WHEN YOU WRITE LIKE A CHILD?

ABSTRACT:

IF ONLY IT WERE THAT SIMPLE.

©2014 - The Upturned Microscope
Summary
Research Writing Tips

- Understand your broad research area
- Focus on micro problem
- Theory holds your research together
- Define and operationalize key terms and variables
Results/Findings and Discussion

• Results/Findings – where your data shines
• Discussion – where your voice shines
• Data and literature used for interpretations
Results/Findings and Discussion

• Address the “So What”
  • What does the study mean relative to the literature?
  • What does this study mean relative to theory?
  • How do we practically apply these findings?
  • How does future research build off this study?
Abstract

• Look at examples
• Read APA manual guidelines
• Be accurate, nonevaluative, coherent and readable, and concise
Abstract Should Contain (7 parts)

1. General topic, specific topic, context and/or background information
2. Central questions/problem statement
3. What is known/previous research
4. Main reasons, rationale, goals of research
5. Methods & research design
6. Findings, results, arguments
7. Significance and implications
References


