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Writing An Introduction for a Research Paper

PSYC 308
Spring 2024

What is the Introduction?

- Part literature review
- Part rationale for the study(ies)
- Part rationale for the hypotheses

....According to the APA

- Includes a scholarly review of relevant literature
- Defines the purpose of study
- Reviews theoretical implications
- Defines variables
- Lists statement of hypotheses and their rationales
- *Note:* Although other sections of a paper are headed by their descriptive title (e.g., Method, Results) the introduction is headed by the title. Its location identifies it as such.

Step 1: Literature Search

- Start here -
 - <https://library.ubalt.edu/>
 - Back up resource: <https://scholar.google.com/>
- *Example keywords:* Love behaviors, Attitudes about love, Types of love, Frequency of giving and receiving love, Self-perception (Attractiveness) and love, Academic achievement level and love, Subject/demographic variables: sex, age differences in love

Step 2: Store Articles

- Open source tool to help you manage and store your research articles:
 - <https://www.zotero.org/>
- Google Drive is always a good place to store docs.
 - No more losing documents!
 - <https://www.google.com/drive/>

Step 3: Annotate Articles

- Always annotate your sources!
- Include:
 - Citation
 - Purpose of study
 - Theory/background
 - Rationale for hypotheses
 - Brief summary of the methodology
 - Most important results
 - Relevance to your work*

Step 4: Begin Writing Your Introduction

- Final list of sources does not need to be exhaustive, but should include the majority of any relevant work.
- When including an article with several studies, discuss how they are similar and how they differ.
- Knowing **why** you are describing a particular study will help you:
 - Know what articles to include in the review
 - Know where to place the article in the review
 - Know what to highlight about the article in the review

Step 4.1: Write Rationale for the Study

- The most challenging for writers!
- Rationale: “I just have a hunch” is not acceptable...
- Articulate the purpose of the study conducted.
 - **Why** is our study an important research issue?

Step 4.2: State Your Research Question(s)

- What question is your research attempting to answer?
- What question guides your research?
 - The “actual question” will not necessarily show up in your work, but it underlies everything
 - “Does parental divorce affect sons more negatively than daughters?”
 - “Does cognitive behavioral therapy help with PTSD?”
 - “Does fear of death lead to generalized anxiety?”
- Name a research question that might be guiding the studies you found.
- Use your research question to ascertain how your cited studies are relevant to your work.

Step 4.3: List Your Hypotheses

- Articulate two hypotheses you expect we will find in our study.
- Usually in the form of a prediction.
- When no direction is predicted: frame as a “research question”
 - Comparing two kinds of support group with no expectation that one will be better than the other
 - An attempt to explain how they differ before searching for the mechanism

Step 4.4: Explain the Study Variables

- Define your variables and the operationalization of those variables in your study.

Tip: Organization of the Literature Review

- What is the organizational plan to the articles you found?
 - **Pro Tip:** Create an outline of what you want to write before you begin to write.
- Do not create a grocery list of articles. For example:
 - Jones (2009) found... then 50 Cent (2012) found... then Eyssell (2014) found...
- You want synthesis! Integrate the articles to articulate your point.

Tip: The First Paragraph

- Sets the work in context.
- Tells the reader what you will be telling the reader
- Provides a roadmap.

Tip: Examples for The First Sentence

- Provides a statement of a long-studied problem
- Explains how this subject is something that has not been studied, but should be
- Provide a definition
- Statement of a well-known phenomenon
- Alarming but little known statistic



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