HOW TO DO A LITERATURE REVIEW (AND OTHER HELPFUL TIPS)

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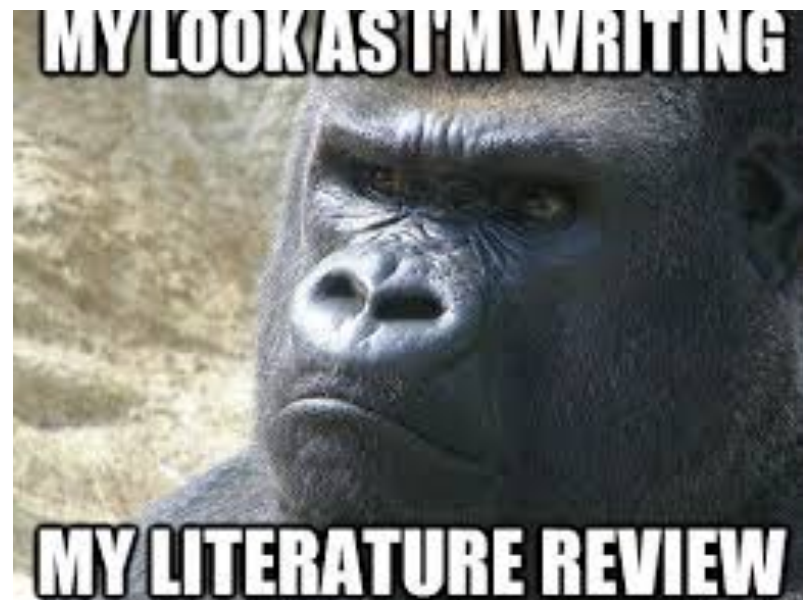
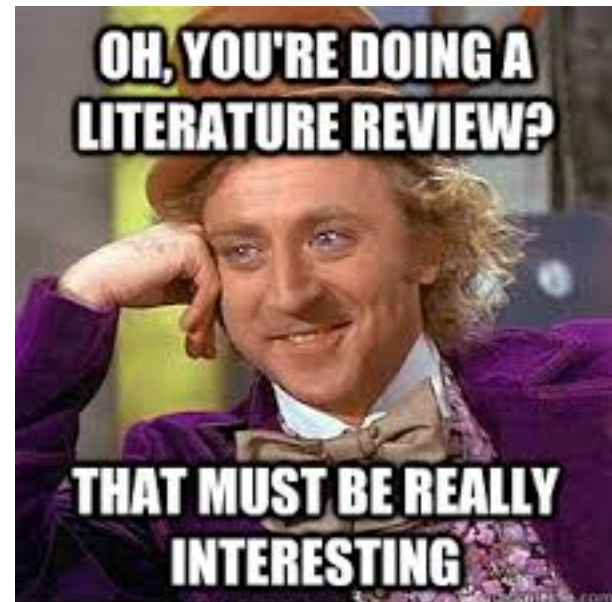THE GRADUATE CENTER

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

LITERATURE REVIEWS IN MEME FORM…MYTHS?

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FIRST…

- Know the requirements/expectations…
    - PhD Dissertation
    - MA/BA Thesis
    - Review Paper
    - Manuscript
    - Advisor/Instructor's expectations

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF A SCIENTIFIC MANUSCRIPT
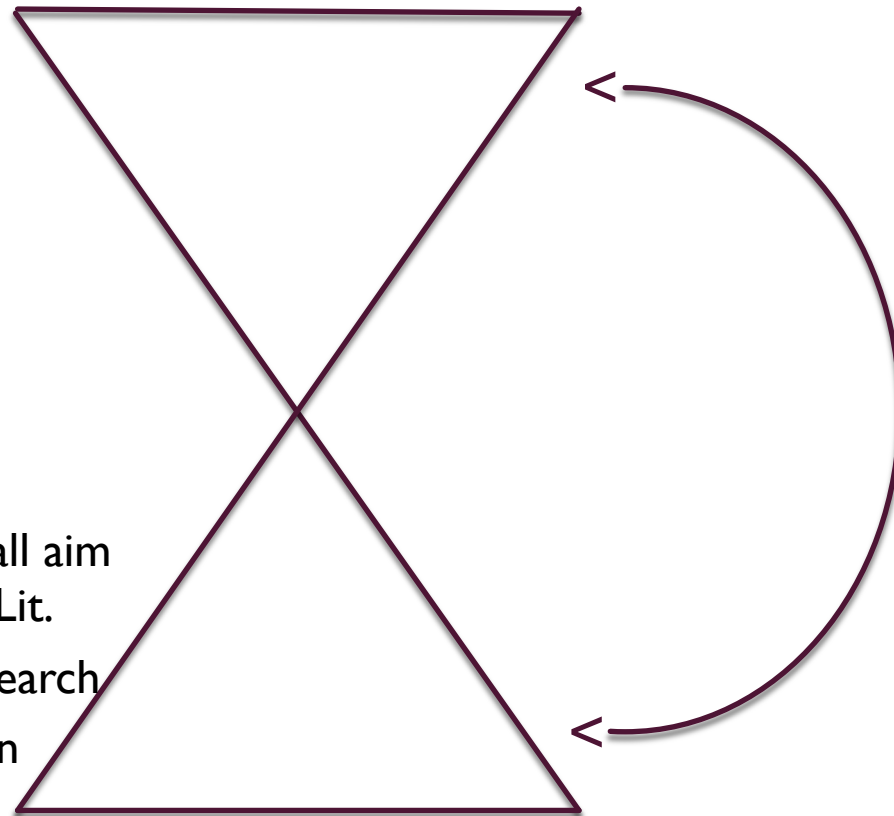
Introduction

Literature Review

Present Study

Methods

Results

Discussion
- -Re-introduce the overall aim
- -Couch results-> Prior Lit.

- -Limitations/Future Research

- -Implications/Conclusion

OUTLINE

- Goal of a Literature Review

- Finding Sources

- Reading the Literature/Annotating

- When To Stop Your Literature Review

- Writing Your Literature Review

  - Analyze

  - Synthesize

- Writing Your Study Overview

- Hypotheses or Specific Questions

- Your North Stars!

- Putting it all together

  - Theoretical Model

  - Observational Procedure

  - Analytic Procedure

  - Research Question!

GOAL OF LITERATURE REVIEW

TO PROVIDE A STATE-OF-THE-ART OVERVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

DEMONSTRATE WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

DEMONSTRATE WHAT WE STILL DO NOT KNOW (I.E., A GAP IN THE LITERATURE).

STATE HOW YOUR STUDY WILL FILL THIS GAP IN THE LITERATURE

FINDING SOURCES: INDEX SEARCHING

- Experiment with terms to adjust the range of your searches. Vary:
    - Filters (author, title, abstract, keyword, subject, source, date)
    - Specificity and number of terms (AND and OR operators)
    - Databases
- Scan abstracts for:
    - Empirical findings that shed light on your questions
    - Discussions that contribute to your theory of the phenomenon
    - Designs, measures, or procedures that you may use in your study
    - Analytic methods that you may use with your data.
- Reverse search for authors, journals, terms, etc. that you encounter in your searches

FINDING SOURCES: CONSULTATIONS

By and large: use PsychINFO and/or Google Scholar

Seek advice about important sources from:

- Your Advisor(s)

- Faculty with relevant expertise

- Peers and other students with relevant expertise

- Your research lab

- Yourself – the literature that actually inspires you and your work is the most important to integrate and cite.

FINDING SOURCES: REVIEWS AND REFERENCES

Follow the literature trails outlined in related:

- Literature reviews

- Review articles

- Reference sections

- Always use original sources

  - Peer reviewed articles

READING LITERATURE

- Read and think about the theory, methods, and findings of closely related, highly influential, or particularly good research.

- Learn to skim some repetitive elements of reports that are a part of a particular research tradition

- Learn to selectively read research that is distantly related to your topic

ANNOTATING

- Reference everything – create a running of list of APA style references; create a system and stick to it.

- Summarize your sources– the length of your summary should be proportional to the importance of the source (anywhere from one word, to several paragraphs)

- Include in your notes direct (and properly referenced) quotes, graphs, tables, etc. that you think you will use in your review.

- Start organizing your sources from the beginning (by theme, author, time period, etc.)

KNOWING WHEN TO STOP

- Coverage – when you have *adequately* represented a set of *relevant* literatures (using exemplar reviews as a guide), nested by ranges of relevance (more coverage for more closely related work)

- Saturation – when you start to encounter few, if any, new relevant sources

- Contribution – when you understand exactly how you are contributing to (extending, amending, enriching) an existing literature (or multiple literatures)

- Note: There is no specified length to a literature review

WRITING: LITERATURE REVIEW

Tell a story – by analyzing and synthesizing relevant existing research and theory – whose inevitable conclusion is that your study is an important contribution to a specific literature.

HOW DO YOU ANALYZE THE RESEARCH?

- Organize and integrate it under a clear, coherent theoretical framework:

  - Create an outline and the framework will evolve and emerge as you modify it in light of the existing research (diagramming can be helpful)

  - Try to succinctly express what is generally true ("what we know") of your phenomenon

  - Evaluate and critique existing literature from a particular perspective

HOW DO YOU SYNTHESIZE THE INFORMATION?

- Start with your destination: be clear about why your study is important:

    - Are there important unexamined features of your phenomenon that your research will help us understand?

    - Are there problems or limitations in the existing research that your project will address?

    - Does your research address an important phenomenon that has never been studied?

    - Are you employing a new approach to research in your area, one that promises to teach us something new about your phenomenon?

HOW DO YOU SYNTHESIZE THE INFORMATION?

- Organize studies into bodies of research and into general themes
  - Think about how different studies relate to each other and try to characterize the general conclusions (or limitations) of a whole body of research. Possible groupings:
    - The same author or group of authors
    - Written in the same time period
    - Published in the same journal*
    - Employ similar methods or theoretical orientations
    - Construct the problem in similar ways
    - Draw similar conclusions
  - Continually group, compare, and contrast bodies of research and characterize general themes that emerge

HOW DO YOU SYNTHESIZE THE INFORMATION?

- Build a narrative that leads to your conclusion:

    - Create an organic order for your analyses – in terms of the changes in a field over time, or in terms of the elements in your model of the phenomenon, etc.

    - Direct your analysis towards your primary conclusion – the importance of your study

    - Most authors start with the general relevant literature, narrowing to the specific topic and eventually concluding with a description of the current study

STUDY OVERVIEW

- Summarize and synthesize the literature review and connect it to your questions.

    - Make a very *clear* statement of your research question (describe and justify the theoretical background, the observational procedure, and the analytic procedure of the proposed study)

    - By making *direct* reference to your literature review, you must *demonstrate* that your question

        - (a) has not been previously answered, and

        - (b) is worth answering.

- Clearly state your hypotheses or specific questions

HYPOTHESES OR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- For experimental, or related, designs, hypotheses are sentences that predict the relationship between two or more variables (derived directly from the research question). Hypotheses should directly relate to, and refer to, your literature review.

- For more idiographic (qualitative) designs, you may not have a hypothesis. You will provide the specific empirical questions that your analysis will be attempting to answer. These should also directly relate to your literature review.

YOUR NORTH STARS…

- **Logic**
  - **Sentences, paragraphs, and sections naturally build off each other**
- **Coherence**
  - **Connect ideas within each sentence, paragraph and the paper as a whole**
- **Clarity**
  - **Write clearly, specifically and concretely**
- Your literature review should logically flow and be coherent
- At the end of the day, you are attempting to *communicate* the research to the reader
  - **<u>Make it as easy as possible for them!</u>**

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

DEVELOPING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

THEORETICAL MODEL

*Theoretical model – w*hat is my theory about the nature and/or function(s) of my phenomena of interest?

I expect to find _____ because _____.

or

I want to understand _____ because _____.

I expect to find **that CEOs will show more psychopathic traits than their employees** because research on successful psychopathy suggests that in highly competitive environments, psychopathic traits confer a competitive advantage.

I want to understand **the unique verbal and gestural characteristics of deception in children** because existing research and theory on deception detection is based exclusively on adult deception and so we know very little about how to detect deception in children.

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OBSERVATIONAL PROCEDURE

Observational procedure – How can I concretely examine the specific qualities and/or predictions entailed by my theory?

I will collect data to answer my question by _____ because _____.

I will collect data to answer my question by **administering anonymous surveys to samples (all including company executives) from 30 publicly traded companies** because well-validated psychopathy measures have been developed and scaled self-report measures allow for standardized comparisons between large groups of individuals.

I will collect data to answer my question by video recording a diverse sample of children who will be asked to talk with an adult confederate concerning subjects about which children have been shown to frequently lie because we have no systematic empirical data on the speech or gesture patterns involved in children's lying and open-ended conversation will provide instances of spontaneous deception from which such data can be extracted.

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ANALYTIC PROCEDURE

Analytic procedure – How can I organize and analyze my observations in order to draw reasonable and convincing conclusions about my theory and the phenomenon of interest?

I will analyze my data by _____ because _____.

I will analyze my data by **using NHST to compare average differences between executives and employees on psychopathic traits** because **NHST is a disciplinary standard for estimating the likelihood that group differences are due to chance**.

I will analyze my data by **using grounded theory to identify and organize verbal and gestural patterns involved in children's lying** because **grounded theory is a disciplinary standard for developing descriptive theory via inductive analysis of multi-modal qualitative data**.

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RESEARCH QUESTION #1

The body of **research on successful psychopathy suggests that psychopathic traits confer a competitive advantage in highly competitive environments.** The corporate world is one such environment and positions within its hierarchy are a clear indicator of success. In the current study, we therefore predicted that, in **an anonymous survey administered to samples (all including company executives) from 30 publicly traded companies, CEOs would show more psychopathic traits than would their employees.** We tested this prediction by comparing **average differences between executives and employees on psychopathic traits** assessed through **well-validated psychopathy measures.**

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

Given that **existing research and theory on deception detection is based exclusively on adult deception, we know very little about how to detect deception in children.** We are thus in particular need of research that focuses on **the unique verbal and gestural characteristics of deception in children**. To that end, we have, in the current study, conducted **grounded theory** analyses on **video recordings** from **a diverse sample of children.** These children **were asked to talk with an adult confederate concerning subjects about which children have been shown to frequently lie.** Our aim was to develop a corpus of **systematic empirical data on the speech or gesture patterns involved in children's lying** and our assumption was that **open-ended conversation would provide instances of spontaneous deception from which such data could be extracted**.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Give yourself adequate time
- Plan and stay organized, both in terms of time and materials
- No such thing as an initial "perfect sentence."
  - Just start writing
- Writing is re-writing
- Have others read your literature review (and other documents).
- Do not lose the forest for the trees
  - Establish what has been done and what makes your study worth doing (as it relates to prior research)
- Be patient and stay true to your north stars of writing:
  - Logic, coherence, and clarity

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

ANY QUESTIONS?