IP Skills and Sharing Workshop III:
Literature review exchange and discussing your findings

Goals

- Explore what it means to present and discuss your findings
- Exchange IP drafts for peer review

Discussing your findings

The skill in writing a successful paper is in moving backwards and forwards between others' research and your own research, making it clear:

- which has been done by other people
- which has been done by you
- how they complement each other

- Presenting and analyzing your findings allows you to keep telling the story that you started in your literature review.
  - The discussion/analysis section is where you add your own voice to the existing and ongoing dialogue between scholars and practitioners in your field.

- Presenting results can take different formats depending on your research question (or main argument) and the nature of your data.
  - Not all papers use statistics, but YES, even literature reviews and curriculum design projects have a theoretical argument and data that requires analysis!

- In all cases, the presentation and analysis of data should have a logical organization that reflects the aim/argument/research question of the paper, as well as its theoretical framework and methodology.
  - Make sure to connect your findings to the problematic of the paper.
  - Also be sure to connect your findings to the themes of the literature review and other work that has been done in the field. Point out agreements and disagreements.

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1 Much of this text comes from the websites of the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students, the Learning Support center of Monash University, and the Online Writing Lab of Purdue University.
What might this look like?

- Remind the reader of the research question.
- Describe the data sample in detail.
- Outline your process.
- Highlight important trends and findings.
- Draw conclusions based on your research question.

Other tips:

- Don’t assume that the reader will make the logical associations you do. Be very clear.
- Emphasize why your interpretation is correct.
- Acknowledge strengths and weaknesses of your approach.
- Use headings, subheadings, and other forms of signposting to make your discussion easy for the reader to follow.

**Reviewing a literature review**

Now we will take a look at the drafts you have brought with you. These are exercises that you can do yourself, or that you can do to help other people.

We are concerned with the following questions when looking at a literature review.

- What is its underlying structure?
- Is it organized in a way that makes it easy for the reader to follow the argument?
- Are there clear themes, concepts, or sections that that can be mirrored in the Discussion section?
- If not, how might you change this?
Exercises

Exercise for each author:

1. Read through the paper. In the margin, write down the main idea of each paragraph.
2. If there isn’t one concise idea, then mark down how the paragraph could be split or expanded into more than one idea.
3. Read the main ideas in order, and determine if they are in a logical order that helps build your argument. If not, how would you re-arrange them?
4. Consider whether there are steps missing in the argument. Add those onto the paper.

Reviewer exercise and discussion:

1. Exchange papers with a colleague so that each of you becomes a peer reviewer for another student.
2. In your pair, decide which paper you will start with.
3. Read together through the list of main ideas.
4. Discuss whether the organization of the literature review makes sense to the reviewer. Does it match the argument? If not, how would the reviewer change it?
5. Can the reviewer suggest sources that might be helpful to the author?
6. Switch papers, and go through the same process!

Finally, please exchange email addresses so that you have someone with whom you can share drafts!

Need more help organizing your paper?

- Make an appointment with the Peer Advisor (arnstein@tc.edu)

Need more writing help?

- Make an appointment at the TC Graduate Writing Center (http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/writingcenter/)