How to do the Literature Review & Methodology Sections

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Outline for a standard research paper

- Abstract
- Introduction (including Relevance & Significance of Study)
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Results / Outcomes
- Discussion / Analysis
- The Way Forward / Agenda
What is a literature review?

- A body of text that reviews the current state of knowledge on a particular topic, and highlights major issues, concepts, methodologies, theories and themes within the relevant scholarship.

- It is an important part of any academic research paper. Through it, you identify the gap in the literature your research aims to fill and thus your own niche within the scholarship.

- It provides the foundation for your research paper, supporting the new insight(s) that you contribute.
The purpose of the literature review

- To **summarize** and **synthesize** existing work on a particular topic
- To show **relationships** between texts, theories, concepts, etc. relevant to a particular topic.
- To demonstrate how the existing work **relates** to your own work
Guiding questions for a literature review

- What do ‘we’ already know about this topic?
  - Who are some of the key scholars writing on this topic, and what are the central texts?
  - What key concepts have been presented on this topic and how are they related?
  - What are the existing theories surrounding the key concepts?
  - What are the ongoing debates or conversations on this topic?

- What are the inconsistencies and shortcomings in our present knowledge?
- Why study this topic further and what contribution should the present study make?
Approach your literature review as if you are organizing, facilitating, moderating and chairing a conference on the theme of your IP. (Later you will be giving a ‘key-note address’ of your own! 😊 )

While the focus of a literature review is to summarize and synthesize the arguments and ideas of others, you must ensure that your own voice is prominent (it helps to think of yourself as the discussant at a panel presentation).
How to write a good literature review

- Remember that the literature review is an ongoing conversation, not merely a summary of other research on your topic.

- Summarize only the important points that are directly relevant to your topic, and show connections between different texts and themes.

- Use direct quotes sparingly but be careful when paraphrasing not to accidentally plagiarize.
  - Paraphrase: Write it in Your Own Words
    http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/
How to write a good literature review

- Organize the review so that you lead the reader to understand the topic better and how YOU will contribute to scholarship on this issue.
- Construct a working thesis statement that argues for a particular perspective on the material (argument-driven).
- Be explicit about YOUR position
- Use the literature as evidence to demonstrate why more research needs to be done
Where does the literature come from?

- See handouts from IED/CIE Workshop *Approaching Research in International and Transcultural Studies* (on program website)
- Consider both academic and gray literature
  - scholarly journals
  - books
  - theses/dissertations
  - talks/conferences
  - policy documents, reports from agencies/organizations
  - legislation, census reports, official records
  - newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts
  - etc.
What are possible traps?

- Reading too much/not enough
- Going into too much detail or going off on a tangent (*Remember: interesting is not necessarily important!*)
- Too much summary, not enough synthesis
- Using dated sources
- Too many direct quotes
- Not maintaining bibliographic information, improper citation, accidental plagiarism
Finding more help

- Look at your course syllabi
- Find models in your class readings
- Search out samples online
- Go to workshops or seek out private tutoring at the Graduate Writing Center: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/writingcenter/
  - Writing a Literature Review, October 23rd at 9:30 AM, Location TBA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Research Aims/ Questions</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Findings/Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norton Pierce (1995, 2000)</td>
<td>Postructural feminist theory, Bourdieu and linguistic capital</td>
<td>How are opportunities for immigrant women to practice English socially structured outside of the classroom? How do immigrant women respond to and act upon these social structures to create, use, or resist opportunities to practice English?</td>
<td><strong>Data Collection:</strong> Draws from the work of educational researchers in cultural studies, feminist research and critical ethnography. Longitudinal (one year) case study of the language learning experiences of 5 immigrant women in Canada: Poland (2), Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, and Peru. Diary study was a major source of data collection—participants kept records of their social interactions with Anglophone Canadians and of their language learning experiences at home, in workplace, and community. Administered two detailed questionnaires before and after study. Conducted personal and group interviews with participants of study. Also conducted home visits. <strong>Data Analysis:</strong> Analysis of diary entries, field notes, questionnaire responses, and interview transcripts. Cross-collation of data based on site of language use: home, workplace, and community. Focus on changes in women’s experiences over time.</td>
<td>Findings suggest that learners investment in language learning is an investment in identities. Compared and contrasted experiences of younger participants and older participants.</td>
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</tbody>
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Resources on Literature Reviews

- Annotated example of a literature review:
  - [http://faculty.mwsu.edu/psychology/Laura.Spiller/Experimental/sample_apa_style_litreview.pdf](http://faculty.mwsu.edu/psychology/Laura.Spiller/Experimental/sample_apa_style_litreview.pdf)
- Tips on writing your literature review:
  - [http://library.ucsc.edu/help/howto/write-a-literature-review](http://library.ucsc.edu/help/howto/write-a-literature-review)
  - [http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review)
- Purdue University Online Writing Lab
  - [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/)
- George Mason University Writing Resources
  - [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources.php](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources.php)
- Writing Guides: University of Kansas Writing Center
  - [http://www.writing.ku.edu/~writing/guides/](http://www.writing.ku.edu/~writing/guides/)
Examples of literature reviews

- **Knowledges of adult literacy: surveying for competitiveness**  
  Richard Darville  
  [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(99)00029-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(99)00029-2)

- **Educating the teacher educator—a Ugandan case study**  
  Margo C. O'Sullivan  
  [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2009.12.005](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2009.12.005)

- **A Comparative Analysis of Preschool Education in Korea and England**  
  *Comparative Education Volume 39 No. 4 November 2003 pp. 479–491*  
  Young-Ihm Kwon  

  Debora Hinderliter Ortloff and Christopher J. Frey  
Even creative IPs employ methods! Talk to your advisor about whether or not you need a methodology section. *(If writing a literature review as the whole IP, you might replace the methodology section with a conceptual framework section where you describe the lens you will be using to analyze the literature. Again, discuss this with your advisor).*
Elements of a methodology section

- Overview of research design
- Sampling: participant/case/site selection
- Data collection methods (including rationale)
- Procedural ethics
- Ensuring trustworthiness/validity/reliability of results and findings
- Data analysis procedures
- Role of researcher
- Challenges, obstacles & limitations
Writing a good methodology section

- Justify the **scope** of the study
- Keep the methodology section **clear, concise and organized**, using subheadings as necessary/appropriate
- Provide a **strong rationale** for your choice of research methods and refer to research methodology literature where applicable
- Briefly describe **procedural ethics** and how you will ensure the **trustworthiness** of your results
Be sure to describe your **data analysis process**. Remember: even for qualitative data you will need to demonstrate how you developed codes, categories, etc. and how you went on to analyze your data.

- Particularly for a more qualitative study, include a reflection on your **role as researcher**.

- Describe some of the obstacles/challenges you faced and how you overcame them, and include a reflection on the **limitations** of your study.
## Match methods to research questions

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<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you want to learn by doing this study?</td>
<td>How do you plan to collect your data, and what data will you collect?</td>
<td>What strategies and techniques will you use to make sense of your data?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you going to explore?</td>
<td>How will these data enable you to answer your research questions?</td>
<td>Why have you chosen these? Indicate the kinds of analyses you plan to do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are possible traps?

- Going overboard and providing extraneous details throughout
- Not providing sufficient rationale
- Forgetting to explain the limitations of the study
- Framing the limitations of the study in too negative a light
Connecting the methodology section to the IP

- **In the Introduction**
  - After introducing your research problem and objectives, introduce your methodology in answering “how will my objectives be achieved?”

- **In the Literature Review**
  - Your literature review should include previous work relating to your methodology, where relevant, in order to identify, clarify, and validate your choice of methods.
Connecting the methodology section to the IP

- **In the Results/Analysis/Discussion**
  - You cannot talk about your results separately from your methods. Compare results from your research with others. Consider how other methods may have changed your results.

- **In the Conclusions/Way Forward**
  - What are the shortcomings of the research or methodology? What else needs to be done?
You will write most of your methodology section in the **past tense** (*the research has already been conducted*)

However, you will write about theory in the **present tense** (“Ethnographic coding *was chosen* as one research method because it is *considered*…”)

You should use the **present tense** to talk about the IP (“Graph 2 *shows* that…” because Graph 2 will not change, it will always stay the same in your IP)
Resources on Research Methodology

GENERAL:


DATA COLLECTION METHODS:


ETHICS AND TRUSTWORTHINESS:


DATA ANALYSIS:

Upcoming Workshop

- IP Workshop 4: Literature Review Exchange & Discussing your Findings
  Thursday November 4th @ 6:30pm
  Location TBA
In Pairs or Groups of 3 (15 min)

- Share with your partner(s) something on which you would like their feedback:
  - IP outline
  - Your strategy for approaching the literature review
  - Your research questions, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures.
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to present and receive feedback.