HOW TO WRITE A LITERATURE REVIEW

Graduate Student Writing Workshop
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Not to be confused with a book review, a literature review surveys scholarly articles, books and other sources (e.g. dissertations, conference proceedings) relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of each work. The purpose of a literature review is to offer an overview of significant literature published on a topic.

GOALS OF LITERATURE REVIEWS

There are several different goals that literature reviewers may be trying to accomplish, and it is helpful to have one's goal clearly in mind while writing.

- **Theory development:** the literature review is used to provide the context for describing, elaborating, and evaluating a new theory or developing a theory by integrating the material reviewed.
- **Theory evaluation:** the existing literature provides the data for assessing the merits of existing conceptualizations.
- **Survey of the state of knowledge on a particular topic:** provides a useful overview and integration of an area.
- **Problem identification:** the review reveals problems, weaknesses, contradictions or controversies in a particular area.
- **Historical account:** a review of the development of theory and research in an area.

Adapted from Baumeister, R.F., and M.R. Leary (1997). Writing Narrative Literature Reviews. Review of General Psychology, 1(3):311-320.

USES AND PURPOSES OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review may constitute an essential chapter of a thesis or dissertation, or may be a self-contained review of writings on a subject (such as a journal article). In either case, its purpose is to:

- Place each work in the context of its contribution to the understanding of the subject under review
- Describe the relationship of each work to the others under consideration
- Identify new ways to interpret, and shed light on any gaps in, previous research
- Resolve conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies
- Identify areas of prior scholarship to prevent duplication of effort
- Point the way forward for further research
- Place one's original work (in the case of theses or dissertations) in the context of existing literature
- The literature review itself, however, does not present new primary scholarship or findings

STEPS TO PREPARE A LITERATURE REVIEW

Preparation of a literature review may be divided into four broad stages:

1. **Define your topic:** you must define your topic and components of your topic
2. **Search for materials:** use search tools (such as the library catalogue, databases, bibliographies) to find materials about your topic
3. **Evaluate what you have found:** read and evaluate what you have found in order to determine which material makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the topic
4. **Analysis and interpretation:** provide a discussion of the findings and conclusions of the pertinent literature

EVALUATING MATERIAL FOR A LITERATURE REVIEW

In assessing each piece, consideration should be given to:

- **Provenance:** What are the author's credentials and where is it published? Are the author's arguments supported by evidence (e.g. primary historical material, case studies, narratives, statistics, recent scientific findings)? Is the piece published in a reputable source (e.g., peer reviewed journal, unknown journal source, popular press)?

- **Objectivity:** Is the author's perspective even-handed or prejudicial? Is contrary data considered or is certain pertinent information ignored to prove the author's point?
- **Persuasiveness:** Which of the author's theses and/or data are most/least convincing?
- **Value:** Are the author's arguments and conclusions convincing? Does the work ultimately contribute in any significant way to an understanding of the subject?

PARTS OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review should include:

1. An introduction that provides an overview of the focus and objectives of the review, along with a thesis statement
2. A set of themes that categorize and make sense of the sources reviewed and develop the thesis (e.g., sources that support a particular position, those opposed, and those offering alternative views)
3. Explanation and evaluation of conclusions reached by key sources, and explanation of how they converge and diverge from the conclusions reached by other sources
4. Conclusions, reasonable speculations, and gaps that emerge after considering the sources as a whole.

Adapted from How to Write a Literature Review originally created by Kenneth Lyons, McHenry Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

COMMON MISTAKES IN WRITING LITERATURE REVIEWS

There are several common mistakes that authors may make when undertaking major reviews of the literature, some of which include:

- **Inadequate Introduction:** Be sure to incorporate the key theoretical points or integrative theoretical framework early in the literature review by presenting the overall theoretical framework up front and using the remainder of the literature review to flesh it out.
- **Inadequate Coverage of Evidence:** Be sure to describe studies methods and specific results, not just their conclusions (e.g., "X causes Y (reference)" does not convey enough information, rather "In a sample of A, method B showed result C (reference), offering support for the view that X causes Y").
- **Lack of Integration:** Be sure to explicitly explain how the procedures and observations of the various studies fit together and relate to the overall theoretical framework.
- **Lack of Critical Appraisal:** Be sure to indicate how strong or how weak the overall evidence is for each main point of your literature review – this can be done by providing critiques of groups of studies rather than commenting on each study individually as many studies on the same topic may be subject to similar flaws and criticisms and finally provide a summary as to how strong the evidence is.
- **Blurring Assertion and Proof:** Be sure to distinguish between assertion and evidence, or what you or others *argue* versus what you or others *find*.
- **Selective Review of Evidence:** Be sure to include counterexamples or domains of evidence that may contradict the main conclusions and patterns in the literature to provide a balanced and unbiased review of the relevant literature. Sometimes important exceptions to the general patterns may help to identify moderators or boundaries of a theory.
- **Focusing on the Researchers Rather than the Research:** Be sure to focus on the patterns of findings and ideas more so than a specific researcher – a rule of thumb is confine authors' names to parentheses.
- **Stopping at the Present:** Be sure to point out unresolved issues and questions, and what needs to be done in future research, perhaps identifying issues that your study will address.

Adapted from Baumeister, R.F., and M.R. Leary (1997). Writing Narrative Literature Reviews. Review of General Psychology, 1(3):311-320.

SOME HELPFUL ARTICLES

Baumeister, R.F., and M.R. Leary (1997). Writing Narrative Literature Reviews. *Review of General Psychology,* 1(3):311-320.

Narrative literature reviews serve a vital scientific function, but few resources help people learn to write them. As compared with empirical reports, literature reviews can tackle broader and more abstract questions, can engage in more post hoc theorizing without the danger of capitalizing on chance, can make a stronger case for a null-hypothesis conclusion, and can appreciate and use methodological diversity better. Also, literature reviews can draw any of 4 conclusions: The hypothesis is correct, it has not been conclusively established but is the currently best guess, it is false, or the evidence permits no conclusion. Common mistakes of authors of literature review manuscripts are described.

Boote, D.N., and P. Beile (2005). Scholars before Researchers: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review Research Preparation. *Educational Researcher*, 34(6):3-15.
A thorough, sophisticated literature review is the foundation and inspiration for substantial, useful research. The complex nature of education research demands such thorough, sophisticated reviews. Although doctoral education is a key means for improving education research, the literature has given short shrift to the dissertation literature review. This article suggests criteria to evaluate the quality of dissertation literature reviews and reports a study that examined dissertations at three universities. Acquiring the skills and knowledge required to be education scholars, able to analyze and synthesize the research in a field of specialization, should be the focal, integrative activity of predissertation doctoral education. Such scholarship is a prerequisite for increased methodological sophistication and for improving the usefulness of education research.

Cooper, H., and A.C. Koenka (2012). The Overview of Reviews: Unique Challenges and Opportunities When Research Syntheses are the Principal Elements of New Integrative Scholarship. *American Psychologist*, 67(6): 446-462.
In the past two decades, a new form of scholarship has appeared in which researchers present an overview of previously conducted research syntheses on the same topic. In these efforts, research syntheses are the principal units of evidence. Overviews of reviews introduce unique problems that require unique solutions. This article describes what methods overviewers have developed or have adopted from other forms of scholarship. These methods concern how to (a) define the broader problem space of an overview, (b) conduct literature searches that specifically look for research syntheses, (c) address the overlap in evidence in related reviews, (d) evaluate the quality of both primary research and research syntheses, (e) integrate the outcomes of research syntheses, especially when they produce discordant results, (f) conduct a second-order meta-analysis, and (g) present findings. The limitations of overviews are also discussed, especially with regard to the age of the included evidence.

Granello, D.H. (2001). Promoting Cognitive Complexity in Graduate Written Work: Using Bloom's Taxonomy as a Pedagogical Tool to Improve Literature Reviews. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 40:292-307.
The article applies Bloom's (B. S. Bloom, M. D. Engelhart, F. J. Furst, W. H. Hill, & D. R. Krathwohl, 1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain to the process of graduate-level writing in counselor education. Bloom's Taxonomy is provided as a mechanism to help students develop and demonstrate cognitive complexity when writing comprehensive literature reviews. The article outlines common assumptions held by students operating at each level of the Taxonomy, typical organizational structure and content of papers at each level of the Taxonomy, and tips to move writing to more cognitively advanced levels.

Torraco, R.J. (2005). Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(3):356-367.
The integrative literature review is a distinctive form of research that generates new knowledge about the topic reviewed. Little guidance is available on how to write an integrative literature review. This article discusses how to organize and write an integrative literature review and cites examples of published integrative literature reviews that illustrate how this type of research has made substantive contributions to the knowledge base of human resource development.

Zorn, T., and N. Campbell (2006). Improving the Writing of Literature Reviews Through a Literature Integration Exercise. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 69(2):172-183.
We briefly discuss the importance of literature reviews, the key problems that students experience, and some guidelines for writing carefully synthesized reviews of the literature. These are the same points that we typically cover in a brief lecture to students on how to do literature reviews. Then, we present an exercise that we developed for teaching the practice of writing literature reviews. The exercise involves integrating four pieces of research into a coherent synthesis of the literature, then providing students with examples that demonstrate the key features of well-written literature reviews.

AN IN-CLASS LITERATURE REVIEW EXERCISE (ZORN AND CAMPBELL, 2006)
Refer to pages 178-182 of the article that follows, which we'll discuss in the workshop.

IMPROVING THE WRITING OF LITERATURE REVIEWS THROUGH A LITERATURE INTEGRATION EXERCISE

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STUDENTS ARE OFTEN required to write literature reviews in advanced business communication courses, especially as part of a research project. Likewise, in the workplace, business communicators may need to review the literature in analyzing a problem or proposing a solution. However, instructors often find that even students who otherwise write well are not able to write good literature reviews. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate a method for teaching students some of the key techniques for writing literature reviews—particularly the challenge of synthesizing multiple sources of information into a coherent analysis of the literature.

A recent publication in this journal (Nienhaus, 2004) provided a useful set of guidelines for helping students improve their citation performance. Other published works have provided useful advice on search strategies (e.g., McGuire, 1981; Spears, 1983; Suchan & Snow, 1981). Although it has been argued that "perhaps the most difficult part of [producing a literature review] lies in the final step, that of synthesizing the information selected and critiqued" (Parker et al., 1998), very little guidance is available on how to synthesize effectively.

As a genre, the literature review is more typically associated with academic articles, dissertations, and theses (Rowley & Slack, 2004) and has not received the attention it deserves in the business communication discipline. A search through the past two and a half decades of this journal and the *Journal of Business Communication* turns

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up no article that addresses the writing of literature reviews in any depth. Business communication textbooks generally point out, in the unit on proposals and reports, the need to review relevant literature but do not provide sufficient explanation, let alone exercises, on how to present the information effectively. Therefore, this article focuses primarily on that aspect of producing a literature review.

First, we briefly discuss the importance of literature reviews, the key problems that students experience, and some guidelines for writing carefully synthesized reviews of the literature. These are the same points that we typically cover in a brief lecture to students on how to do literature reviews. Then, we present an exercise that we developed for teaching the practice of writing literature reviews. The exercise involves integrating four pieces of research into a coherent synthesis of the literature, then providing students with examples that demonstrate the key features of well-written literature reviews.

WHY CONDUCT A LITERATURE REVIEW?

While the answer to the question, "Why conduct a literature review?" may seem obvious to business communication teachers, to students a literature review often seems like just another academic requirement—something they are required to do for their courses but that has little relevance to their future work (unless they intend a career in academia). However, literature reviews have many potential benefits both in and beyond the university setting. They often support a research proposal or report, but they are also conducted to synthesize information for other purposes (Parker et al., 1998).

First, literature reviews are indeed important for scholarly research within the university setting. They can be a source of ideas, research questions, and hunches to explore. That is, through finding exemplars of well-executed research, interesting ideas that are not particularly well executed, or gaps in the body of knowledge in a discipline, we can identify possibilities for future research. Literature reviews also help scholars avoid "reinventing the wheel" by enabling them to build on what others have done. Finally, literature reviews help researchers develop an argument for their study by demonstrating that they are extending existing knowledge—building on what is already out there and filling gaps that exist. Thus, if students are to write research reports effectively in their university studies, they must master the writing of literature reviews.

Second, and often more impressive to students as a justification, literature reviews have multiple real-world applications. For example, they can be sources of tools or solutions to organizational problems. The first author often tells students how he first learned the practical value of literature reviews when he was a training and development specialist for a private company. His boss at the time often reviewed, or required him to review, the literature as a means of identifying key strategies or principles to include in their corporate training programs. Literature reviews not only provided useful content for the programs, but they also gave the training programs a sense of credibility and currency because the trainers were able to cite recent research to support their recommendations for management practice.

Literature reviews can also inform decisions or support proposals or conclusions with credible evidence. This point is of particular relevance to business communication courses, where proposal and report writing is commonly a major component of the syllabus. Literature reviews synthesize what is known about an issue or practice. An alumna of our school, who is now a highly successful consultant, frequently gives presentations in our classes in which she explains how her recommendations to organizations typically begin with a review of the research literature. Thus, it is easy for students to imagine themselves as consultants making a recommendation to a client along these lines: "Given Computech's situation, research suggests that the most successful strategy is likely to be . . ."

COMMON PROBLEMS IN LITERATURE REVIEWS

Of course, for literature reviews to achieve these goals, they must be based on a thorough search and provide a clear, focused synthesis of the literature. Yet a number of common problems may lead literature reviews to fail.

Although our focus is primarily on the writing of literature reviews, it is important to acknowledge that a key problem may be that the search is not systematic or comprehensive enough. As a result, the literature reviewed may be too narrow, scattered, or out of date. The search may also focus on the wrong sources, for example, relying on textbooks and popular press articles at the expense of scholarly sources.

Regarding problems in the writing itself, first, reviews often lack a clear sense of purpose. Students sometimes mistakenly assume that the goal of the literature review is simply to cite or describe as many sources as possible relevant to the topic. One result may be that they assume the goal is to string together a series of quotes from the literature reviewed. Another result may be what we call the "he said/she said" problem; that is, the writer tells us what each source says but does not convey the relationships among the sources. It is the writer's job to synthesize, or make sense of, the literature. Simply describing or quoting the literature may be adequate, but in doing so the writer loses the argument as well as his or her own voice. Instead, the writer should have a clear objective, usually that of synthesizing the literature that responds to a specific research question or objective. Similarly, he or she should have a clear audience in mind. A clear audience and objective can help avoid some of the other problems typically associated with a review.

Second, writers may assume too much reader familiarity with literature—for example, by not defining jargon or key terms or by not explaining key assumptions. A related problem is that of failing to distinguish fact from opinion. Some sources reviewed will be based on empirical research, and others will be opinion pieces or conceptual articles. However, phrases like "Smith *said*" or "Smith *concluded that*" do not clearly indicate the basis of the conclusions or arguments reached in the source cited. At other times, the writer may use phrases that suggest an empirical basis for the source's conclusions (e.g., "Smith *found that…*"). Such phrasing is appropriate if that is the case, but not if the source is simply someone's opinion.

Third, a problem that may occur is that the writer may assert generalizations that are not sufficiently supported by the literature cited. As a result, the reader is not convinced of the writer's conclusions.

Finally, poor organization or structure is a final writing problem that detracts from the effectiveness of literature reviews. Poor structure can make the argument or logic of the synthesis difficult for the reader to comprehend.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WELL-WRITTEN LITERATURE REVIEWS

To a large extent, the features that characterize effective writing in general also characterize effective literature reviews. Therefore, we will focus on those aspects of writing that are unique to literature reviews or are particularly problematic.

Literature reviews should include the following main components (UC–Santa Cruz, 2003):

1. An introduction that provides an overview of the focus and objectives of the review, along with a thesis statement
2. A set of themes that categorize and make sense of the sources reviewed and develop the thesis (e.g., sources that support a particular position, those opposed, and those offering alternative views)
3. Explanation and evaluation of conclusions reached by key sources, and explanation of how they converge and diverge from the conclusions reached by other sources
4. Conclusions, reasonable speculations, and gaps that emerge after considering the sources as a whole

The introduction should articulate a clear and appropriate focus for the literature review. Like any good research project, a literature review should be guided by a specific objective or, better yet, a question to be answered. This will not only guide the search strategy for the literature review, but it should also guide the writing. Most parts of the written literature review—the introduction, the major headings, and the conclusion—can often be derived from this question. For example, imagine that the overall question driving an applied research project is, "How do employees perceive that communication about the restructuring at Computech has influenced morale?" This can be easily converted into an appropriate question for the literature review such as, "How does communication about restructuring influence morale?" A guiding research question encourages development of a thesis statement that responds to the question. Given the example question above, the thesis statement for the literature review might be something like, "The literature suggests that communication about restructuring appears to influence morale in three primary ways."

Students may derive the set of themes from the key elements of the research question or from the thesis statement. The themes may then serve as the major headings for the body of the literature review. To continue with the example just mentioned, the major themes might be the various means by which communication about restructuring affects morale, or they might be (a) the ways organizations typically communicate about restructuring (or major changes generally), (b) the demonstrated effects of communication on morale, and (c) the features of communication known to affect morale.

Within the discussion of major themes, the writer should focus on explaining and evaluating conclusions reached by key sources. It is critical that in doing so, the writer integrate and synthesize rather than just summarize—and this applies to individual paragraphs as well as the overall literature review. So the writer should explain the common or divergent conclusions reached by two or more sources and any issues of concern in evaluating their claims—for example, controversial issues or questionable methods. Consider this example from a recent published article:

> Empirical studies of service encounters, relationships, and pseudorelationships have found that customers are more satisfied with their experience in service relationships than service encounters or pseudorelationships [three sources cited]. Specifically, . . . (Koermer, 2005, p. 249)

In one sentence, the author synthesized the main findings from three studies, and then in subsequent sentences, he went on to explain the points of convergence and divergence. This is much more effective than devoting each paragraph to explaining the findings from one study, then leaving the reader to do his or her own synthesis—which, unfortunately, is what we see in too many literature reviews.

It is also important that the explanations are accurate and clear in describing research reviewed. Writers need to keep in mind that the reader usually has not read the original reports; therefore, they need to provide adequate information so the reader can have confidence in the conclusions reached. In some cases—especially when the conclusion reached is critical to the overall thesis—this may require providing a summary of the evidence presented in the original source, for example, "Based on a survey of 213 human resource managers in large U.S. companies, Smith found that a slight majority had changed their policies in the past two years." Quotes should be used sparingly, but brief excerpts add credibility and clarity when they make a point particularly well.

Synthesizing the literature amounts to constructing an argument about the conclusions reached, questions or concerns about these conclusions, and the gaps that remain. Thus, the features of good argumentative writing should be prominent. Particularly important is clear paragraph structure. This includes topic sentences that make claims and also indicate the logical flow of the argument, for example, through connecting phrases such as "similarly" or "in addition" or "in contrast." The remaining sentences in the paragraph should clarify, elaborate, and substantiate the topic sentence.

The end result of the literature review should be a coherent set of answers to the question. That does not mean that the review should reach stronger conclusions than are warranted by the research reviewed. But it does mean that in concluding the review, the writer should summarize the answers to the research question as clearly as the literature allows. The writer can also speculate from the literature, as long as the speculations are clearly labeled as such, and can (and should) identify important gaps in knowledge. Thus, the writer should identify the important questions that remain to be answered in future research. The gaps identified may provide the justification for a larger study of which the literature review is a part.

Finally, the writer should pay careful attention to the tone of his or her writing. The tone should be respectful of the studies reviewed, not condescending or dismissive, which novice writers sometimes are guilty of. Additionally, it is important that the writer's voice remain foregrounded and not lost behind a series of quotes. Even though the literature review summarizes the work of others, the thesis presented in the literature review, as well as the support for it, is that of the writer.

AN IN-CLASS LITERATURE REVIEW EXERCISE

Presenting explanations such as those provided so far in this article is helpful, but students also need the experience of writing literature reviews and getting feedback on them to do them well and improve their skill. Unfortunately, doing a substantial literature review requires many hours of work, so it is difficult to develop the skills needed in the classroom. However, we suggest the following mini–literature review exercise to develop some of the writing skills needed. The exercise involves giving students several abstracts of articles that are all on the same topic (Krone, 1992; Waldron, 1991; Waldron & Hunt, 1992; Waldron, Hunt, & Dsilva, 1993). Appendix A contains a set of four abstracts from articles focusing on upward influence. Any set of articles on a common theme would do for the exercise. However, these four have a similar topical focus and research approach, so that students can easily see how the content of one relates to the others. Therefore, they can focus their energy on the writing task rather than trying to figure out how the articles relate to each other.

Typically, before students do the exercise, we present a brief lecture covering the ideas discussed above. Then we provide the students with the following instructions:

> In this handout are the abstracts of four research articles, all on a similar set of topics. Your goal is to use the principles just discussed to write a brief literature review—about 2-4 paragraphs. In particular, focus on

> incorporating the key elements outlined in the lecture and synthesizing the findings of the four articles. Assume that your audience is the manager of corporate training, who has asked you to find out what the research says about patterns of upward communication.

Usually, students work individually. Sometimes, however, we allow them to work in pairs, especially if it is not an advanced class. And if there is time, we ask several of them to write their reviews on transparencies to share with the class. After discussing the best features of each, we give students a handout that has two sample solutions—one that is generally well written but not very well synthesized and one that is much better synthesized (see Appendix B). We use the "Comments" feature on Microsoft Word to point to particular elements of the two answers that relate to the problems identified and the characteristics of good literature reviews discussed in the minilecture. If time permits, we ask students to look back at their initial attempts and compare them to the model answer. They are encouraged to look for opportunities where they might incorporate the lessons learned from the exercise.

Although the experience of synthesizing four abstracts is far less complex than that of a typical literature review, the exercise enables the instructor to focus on some of the most challenging writing problems. It can be used as a stand-alone activity to develop students' skills in gathering, synthesizing, and reporting information in well-defined scenarios, to develop skills important to business communication courses, or as a preliminary step in proposal or report writing. In either case, the exercise brings literature reviews into focus and provides students with not only a better understanding of their purpose and usefulness but also guidance on how to write them effectively. The features presented in the model answer also make useful points of reference for the instructor when the students' own literature reviews are later evaluated.

APPENDIX A
Four Abstracts of Research Articles on Upward Influence

Waldron, V. R. (1991). Achieving communication goals in superior-subordinate relationships: The multi-functionality of upward maintenance tactics. *Communication Monographs, 58*(3), 289-306.

Maintenance of the supervisory relationship is arguably the most important of the communication objectives pursued by subordinates. Maintenance communication creates the context in which other goal-oriented messages are constructed by the subordinate and evaluated by the supervisor. In this study, an inductive procedure was used to identify upward maintenance tactics reportedly used by subordinates. Subsequent factor analysis using a sample of 518 working adults yielded four maintenance tactic types; Personal, Contractual, Regulative, and Direct. Supervisory relationship quality influenced reported tactic use: Subordinates participating in leadership exchanges (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) scored higher on the Personal, Contractual, and Directness factors. Subordinates in supervisory exchanges scored higher on the Regulative factor. Results are interpreted as evidence that in high quality supervisory relationships, upward maintenance tactics may be multi-functional, simultaneously preserving relational stability and the capacity for negotiation and change. The results both confirm and extend previous research on leader-member exchange by specifying how subordinate communication contributes to exchange quality.

Waldron, V., Hunt, M. D., & Dsilva, M. (1993). Towards a threat management model of upward communication: A study of influence and maintenance tactics in the leader-member dyad. *Communication Studies, 44*(3-4), 254-272.

This paper presents a descriptive model of factors affecting subordinates' use of upward influence tactics. The model is based on the notion that enduring patterns of relationship maintenance tactics used by subordinates both reinforce and gradually alter perceptions of leader-member exchange quality. These relational perceptions are primary considerations when subordinates assess threats and subsequently make tactic choices during influence episodes (and other potentially risky encounters). Context factors, including influence goals, are thought to magnify or mute the threat associated with a given episode. A study of 194 working adults explored several model components. The data support the conclusion that upward influence tactic choice is most influenced by the quality of the relationship between a leader and his/her subordinates.

Krone, K. J. (1992). A comparison of organizational, structural, and relationship effects on subordinates' upward influence choices. *Communication Quarterly, 40*(1), 1-15.

This research examined the extent to which organizational membership, centralization of authority and subordinates' perceptions of supervisory relationship quality affect how frequently they report using different types of tactics in their upward influence attempts. Participants from five different organizations were surveyed. A typology of upward influence tactics was created based on the extent to which (1) the means employed to attempt influence are open or closed, and (2) the desired outcomes are openly expressed or left undisclosed. The resulting dependent variable consisted of three types of tactics: open upward influence, strategic upward influence, and political upward influence. MANOVA results indicated that while organizational membership, centralization of authority and leader-member exchange all significantly affect upward influence tactic choices, organizational membership explains more variance than do the other two independent variables.

Waldron, V. R., & Hunt, M. D. (1992). Hierarchical level, length, and quality of supervisory relationship as predictors of subordinates' use of maintenance tactics. *Communication Reports, 5*(2), 82-89.

Maintenance of the supervisory relationship is perhaps the most important communication objective pursued by subordinates. This study examined variations in the maintenance tactics used by 511 working adults as a function of three relational variables that include (a) position of the relationship in the organizational hierarchy, (b) length of the relationship, and (c) relationship quality. Results indicated that subordinates who have hierarchical position power reported more Direct maintenance tactic use than did lowest level subordinates. Length of the relationship had no effect on maintenance tactic choice. Subordinates in high quality relationships reported more extensive use of Personal and Contractual tactics. Regulative tactics were used by subordinates in lower quality relationships.

Appendix B

Literature Review Exercise: Sample Syntheses

(Version A: A pretty good descriptive summary, but not really synthesized! Too little attempt to integrate findings)

Upward Communication

Waldron (1991) surveyed 518 working adults; he identified four types of tactics used by employees to maintain their relationships with supervisors: "personal, contractual, regulative, and direct" (p. xx). The quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships influenced the type of tactic most likely to be used, with those involved in *leadership* exchanges using multiple tactic types and those involved in *supervisory* exchanges primarily using regulative tactics. Similarly, Waldron and Hunt (1992) studied the upward maintenance tactics of 511 working adults; they found that subordinates in relatively high power positions were most likely to use direct maintenance tactics. Also, they found that employees in high quality supervisor-subordinate relationships used personal and contractual tactics and those in lower quality relationships used regulative tactics.

Comment: Notice that no overview or purpose statement. The implied purpose seems to be to describe findings in the literature.

Comment: The writer has assumed too much reader familiarity with the literature. These terms should be defined.

Krone (1992) studied the influence tactics used by members of five organizations. She found that the biggest predictor of tactic choice was organizational membership; that is, the organization to which one belonged influenced the choice of tactic significantly. Two other factors that affected influence tactic choice were the degree to which they participated in decisions and the quality of their relationships with supervisors. Waldron, Hunt, & Dsilva's (1993) study of 194 working adults found that employees' perceptions of their relationships with supervisors are the major factor that determines their choice of upward influence tactics. Other factors, such as the employees' influence goals, also make a difference.

Comment: Here's the "He said/She said problem. Krone's work is described without any link to the preceding paragraph.

Comment: Note that there's no conclusion to provide a sense of structure or synthesis.

(Version B: Much better! Synthesized to make sense of the literature! Note that "components" in the comments refer to the main components of literature reviews listed in the section "Characteristics of Well Written Literature Reviews".)

Upward Communication

Research on upward communication in organizations has focused on maintenance tactics and influence tactics used, and what factors influence employees to choose particular tactics. Maintenance tactics are those tactics used by employees to maintain positive relationships with their supervisors. Influence tactics are those used to influence or persuade supervisors. While a number of factors have been investigated, the one that stands out as having the greatest impact on employees' upward communication tactics is the relationship they have with supervisors.

Two studies investigated the maintenance tactics used by subordinates (Waldron , 1991; Waldron & Hunt, 1992). Both involved surveys of more than 500 working adults. In the first study, Waldron (1991) identified four types of tactics: "personal, contractual, regulative, and direct" (p. xx). Both studies found that the quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships influenced the type of tactic most likely to be used. Those involved in high quality relationships used multiple tactic types, especially personal and contractual tactics, whereas those involved in lower quality relationships primarily used only regulative tactics. Additionally, Waldron and Hunt (1992) found that subordinates in relatively high power positions were most likely to use direct maintenance tactics.

Other research has investigated why employees choose particular influence tactics with supervisors. Krone (1992), in her study of employees at five organizations, found that the major influence on the choice of tactics subordinates made was organizational membership. That is, apparently organizational culture influenced members to prefer particular ways of influencing supervisors. On the other hand, Waldron, Hunt, and Dsilva's (1993) study of 194 working adults found that employees' perceptions of their relationships with supervisors are the major factor that determines their choice of upward influence tactics. Krone, too, found this factor to be influential, but not as influential as organizational membership. Two other factors found to determine the choice of upward influence tactics were degree to which employees participated in decisions (Krone, 1992) and employees' influence goals (Waldron et al., 1992).

From this body of research, it seems clear that an employee's relationship with his or her supervisor matters quite a bit in the kinds of communication used with that supervisor. While this shouldn't be surprising, it does emphasize how important developing solid supervisor-subordinate relationships can be. Additionally, Krone's (1992) research suggests that more research should be done to investigate the influence of organizational culture on upward communication.

Comment: Here's the topic sentence for the introductory paragraph (Component #1), which also provides an overview of the topic of the review.

Comment: The 2nd and 3rd sentences in the paragraph develop the topic sentence, in this case by defining key terms. These terms also represent major themes identified in the sources reviewed (Component #2).

Comment: The last sentence in the introductory paragraph presents the thesis statement for the review (Component #1).

Comment: The topic sentence announces the 1st theme (Component #2). The theme is developed further in the following sentences.

Comment: Conclusions reached by key sources for the 1st theme are presented (Component #3). Note how two studies with important similarities are discussed together. Note also how we get enough information to know what sort of data the findings are based on.

Comment: The rest of the paragraph explains the conclusions (Component #3).

Comment: The topic sentence announces the 2nd theme (Component #2). Note, again, that it states a claim integrating the two studies described in the paragraph. Also, the phrase "Other research" signals a transition from—and connection to—the previous paragraph.

Comment: The phrase "On the other hand" signals a divergence from the conclusion reached by Krone (Component #3).

Comment: This sentence notes a point of convergence as well as divergence (Component #3)

Comment: The topic sentence sums up conclusions that have been clearly established (Component #4). Note how it relates back to the thesis statement.

Comment: The rest of the paragraph discusses the implications of the above conclusions (Component #4).

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