

HOW TO WRITE A LITERATURE REVIEW

Graduate Student Writing Workshop

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- Parts of a literature review
- An example of the parts
- Common mistakes in writing literature reviews
- Lit review exercise from Zorn and Campbell (2006)
- Other topics? Concerns?

Parts of a Literature Review

- Introduction
 - What is the purpose of the lit review (guided by the research question)
- Organized themes
 - There should be some logic and structure to the review in terms of how you walk the reader through different topics
- Explanations and evaluations of themes
 - Describe and explain the patterns of conclusions in the literature
- Conclusions
 - What is a reasonable conclusion from your review? What's missing? What still needs to be done?

An Example

- Introduction
 - Research question
 - Purpose of the lit review
 - The overarching framework
- Sample of the lit review text
 - Literature review themes organized by core concepts
 - Research related to each concept is synthesized and evaluated
 - Theory and findings used to generate hypotheses
- “Conclusions”
 - Overarching summary of predominant patterns
 - Gaps in the literature

Common Mistakes

- Inadequate Introduction
- Inadequate Coverage of Evidence
- Lack of Integration
- Lack of Critical Appraisal
- Blurring Assertion and Proof
- Selective Review of Evidence
- Focusing on the Researchers Rather than the Research
- Stopping at the Present

Lit review exercise (Zorn & Campbell, 2006)

- Using 4 abstracts of research articles, students were asked to write a brief lit review of about 2 to 4 paragraph. They were asked to focus on the key elements of a lit review and synthesize the findings of the four articles. The goal is to find out what the literature says about patterns of upward communication.
- Let's read the 4 abstracts
- Think about what the “big picture” conclusions that you would draw about patterns of upward communication
- We'll go through the 2 lit reviews together

Other lit review questions?



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Upcoming Workshops

- **November 21, 2013: Intros and Conclusions: How We Finish & What We Started**
- Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. The introduction is where you make your first impression to the reader and the conclusion is your last word on the subject. We'll look at some strategies for writing effective introductions and conclusions.
- **December 5, 2013: Writing Abstracts: Getting Ready for CSA and SSSP**
- Everybody knows that abstracts are short, but what is the essential information that should be included? Sometimes journals or conferences specify key components and sometimes not. In this session, we will discuss how to write abstracts for papers and conferences, how to do so if you've already written the paper and how to do so if you haven't. We'll also offer peer review of students' abstracts that have been drafted for submission to the upcoming CSA and SSSP conferences.