

Intros and Conclusions: How we Finish and What we Started

Graduate Student Writing Workshop

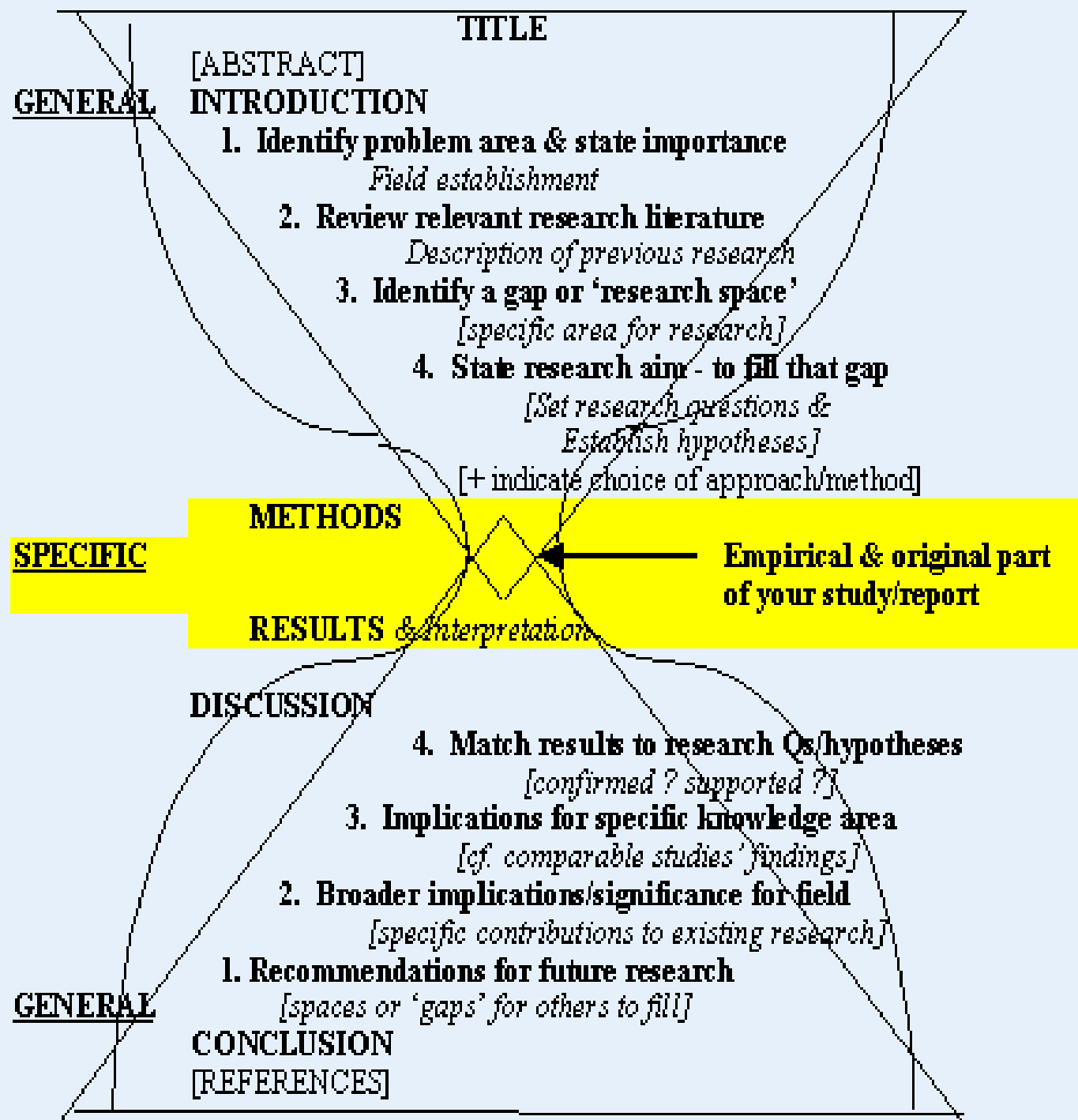
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Topics for Today

- Thinking about the Structure of a Paper
- Function of the Introduction
 - Some effective strategies
 - Some less effective introductions
- Function of the Conclusions
 - Some effective strategies
 - Some less ineffective strategies

Thinking about the structure of a paper



Function of the Introduction

- To get the reader interested
 - You never get a second chance to make a first impression
- To introduce the topic of the paper
 - It provides a roadmap of information as to what the topic is, why it's important and how you plan to proceed

Some Effective Strategies

- What is the question you're trying to answer?
- How broad should the opening be?
- Write the introduction last or recognize if you write it first it's tentative.
- Use some attention grabbers

Some Strategies cont'd.

- Open with an Attention Grabber
 - An intriguing example
 - A provocative quote
 - A puzzling scenario
 - A vivid and perhaps unexpected anecdote
 - A thought provoking question

Some Strategies Cont'd.

- Pay attention to your first sentence
- Be straightforward and confident
- Evaluate your draft of your intro

Some Less Effective Strategies

- Just filler
- Restating the question
- Webster's Dictionary definition
- "Dawn of man" introduction
- Book report introduction

Conclusions

- Function of the Conclusion: Summary, Closure and Discovery
 - To signal the end of your paper
 - To wrap up various points of your paper
 - To tell the reader why “it” matters
 - To push ideas forward

Some Effective Strategies

- Ask yourself “So what?”
- Return to the theme of the introduction
- Include a provocative insight
- Propose something more
- Point to broader implications
 - ... but keep it somewhat focused

Some Less Effective Strategies

- The “That’s my story and that’s that” conclusion
- The “Sherlock Holmes” conclusion
- The “America the Beautiful/I am Woman/We shall Overcome” conclusion
- The “Grab Bag” conclusion

Questions?