

# Literature Review and Writing in Psychology

# Outline

- Literature Review
  - PsychInfo
  - Google Scholar
  - Citations in the textbook, articles
  - Top journals
- Citation management software
- Writing
  - Content
  - Style
  - Sections of the paper

# Literature review

- Before you even start researching your paper, make sure you are clear on the nature of the assignment
- Ideas for topics can come from anywhere
  - Something that interested you in class
  - Something you read or heard about outside of class
  - A personal experience
  - Flipping through a textbook or a journal and looking for something interesting

# Literature review

- PsychInfo is a searchable database of articles published in psychology journals
- Allows you to limit findings based on the characteristics of the article (age of participants, humans/animals, review/research, specific journals, etc)
- PsychInfo demo

# Literature review

- Google Scholar is Google's attempt to index all academic articles
- Compared to PsychInfo it is very easy to use, but **lots** more garbage is mixed in with useful results
- Often has direct access to journal articles (even when you're not logged into the UO library)
- Google Scholar demo

# Literature review

- To find other articles on a topic, one useful method is to work backwards or forwards from a single article (or even a mention in the textbook)
- If you find an interesting citation in the reference section, search directly for that journal on the library main page
- That article might yield other interesting citations and so on
- PsychInfo and Google Scholar both let you search for articles that *have cited* an article

# Literature review

- If you are looking for an idea for a topic, or have a general sense of what you are interested in writing about, search one of the top journals in the field:
  - Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
  - Journal of Personality
  - Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
  - Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin

Burgard, D.E. (2001). Journals of the Century in Psychology. *The Serials Librarian*, 39, 41-56.

# Literature review

- Citation management software
  - Mendelay, RefWorks, BibTex, etc
  - Google Scholar?
- Make sure to proofread your citations before you hand in your paper (you are responsible for any mistakes the software makes)

# Literature review

- Finding articles is only the first step
  - Read the abstract (summary) to ensure that the study is useful for your paper; if not, discard it
  - **Read the paper** thoroughly for understanding (we can tell when you have only read the first page of an article)
  - Pay special attention to limitations or weaknesses of the study (the authors might mention a few)
  - Carefully consider how this article will fit into your paper
  - You might need to find cited articles if they refer to methods from a previous study

# Literature review

- There is a tendency in social psychology to publish multiple experiments in a single article
  - When describing one experiment from an article that contains several, make sure it is clear to the reader which experiment you are referring to
- Use textbooks and especially lecture notes **as little as possible** (max two or three times in a paper)
  - This is the one time that professors do not like to see their name in print
- Non-academic material can be used to illustrate a point, but should not be used as evidence to support your argument

# “As cited in”

- It is acceptable to use “as cited by” if you do not have access to the original source
- Format (note, this is not an appropriate use of as cited in): “Almost all humans are highly social, suggesting a strong biological basis for this tendency (Spoor & Williams, 2007, as cited in Baron et al, 2011).”
  - In the reference section, you then list both sources
- Useful for:
  - Very old papers
  - Foreign language journals
  - Obscure journals
- If you simply did not seek out the original article, this tells the reader about how you approached the paper (we will check)
- On the other hand, if you cite an article without reading it...

# Writing

- Academic writing is persuasive writing
- You are using the paper to convince the reader:
  - That you have put time and effort into your paper
  - That you have knowledge of the topic
  - That you understand the topic
  - That you can think critically about the topic
  - That a specific point of view is true (sometimes)
- Central and peripheral routes to persuasion

# Writing

- Central route (Content)
  - Good choice of research
  - Good descriptions of research
  - Logical reasoning, good critical thought
  - Follows assignment
- Peripheral route (Style)
  - Good grammar, spelling, and writing style
  - Easy to read (Hartley, Sotito, & Pennebaker, 2002)
  - APA style
  - Engaging and interesting
  - Easily understood statistical analysis (Smith et al, 2000)

# Writing – define terms

- Not enough - “High scores on Scale 4 of the MMPI were found to be related to lower response to persuasion.”
- Overkill - “The MMPI is an objective measure of personality and emotional functioning that includes 10 clinical scales and a number of validity scales. It was originally created in Minnesota in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and has since undergone several revisions. High scores on Scale 4 of this measure were found to be related to lower response to persuasion”.
- Much better - “High scores on Scale 4 of the MMPI, an objective measure of personality and emotional functioning, were found to be related to lower response to persuasion.”

# Introduction

- Capture the reader's attention: Why is the topic important?
  - A personal anecdote *might* be acceptable here
  - Case studies, statistics on prevalence, discussion of societal costs
- Explicitly and clearly state what you are going to write about in your paper
  - Short and to the point
  - “This paper will discuss...”
  - If the reader gets to page 5 and thinks to herself “this comes out of the blue”, there is something wrong with your introduction
- If a reader reads the introduction and conclusion before reading the rest of the paper, there should be no surprises

# Introduction

- “This paper will examine the differences in anxiety in children and adults in several key areas. First, in order to understand the differences, we will discuss the causes of anxiety disorders, as well as incidence and prevalence in both populations. Next, we will discuss the differences in the effects of anxiety on the individual - specifically, how it affects the individual’s family and peer relationships. From there, we will also discuss how comorbid depression may affect children differently than adults. A comparison of medical versus psychological interventions for children will also be examined. Lastly, we will conclude with a discussion on the stigma of a diagnosis of anxiety disorder in children.”
- What is right with this introduction?
- What is wrong with this introduction?

# Body of the paper

- It helps to have a clear idea of what you are going to write/argue before you start
- Any logical organization is usually fine
  - General findings followed by specific results
  - Specific results followed by general applications
  - Older studies followed by newer studies
- Having a logical rationale for the order of your studies makes it easier for you and the reader to draw connections between articles

# Original Thought - OK

- As a university student, you are **expected** to do more than repeat the conclusions of others
- "Further research should examine..."
- "The discrepancy between these two findings is puzzling..."
- "The results of this study contrast with the predictions of the theory"
- "These results were found using a convenience sample of boys, and it would be interesting to see whether the findings apply more generally..."
- "These findings are readily applicable in daily life. For example, the common experience of..."
- "The study continued to prove that all the negative thoughts the depressed individual holds takes up too much room in their mind and does not make room for any new thought to be had (Krames & MacDonald, 1985). Now compare this to academic success. A student's ability to have long-term and short-term memory is pertinent to learning. Therefore, students with MDD might have a more difficult time remembering things unless immediately written down or handed to them as notes."

# Original Thought – Not OK

- "I found this topic really interesting because my sister has a friend who..."
- "Of these two competing theories, I like Theory X the best because it provides more hope to patients."
- "I personally don't know anyone who has experienced this..."
- "This paper is totally wrong and it is amazing that someone was allowed to run it."

# Conclusion

- Summarize (don't just repeat) the information provided earlier in the paper
- Novel insights or conclusions are appropriate, but if they are referring to a specific study they probably should go in the body of the paper
  - In other words, if all your “original thought” material is in the conclusion, there is something amiss
- There should be no new findings presented in the conclusion

# References

- Most articles are accessed online, but this is not important as long as we know the journal, volume, and page number
- For peer reviewed scientific articles, do not tell me where online you retrieved it from
- You DO need to provide the url when you cite a website ([www.schizophrenia.com](http://www.schizophrenia.com))

# References

- There must be complete agreement between your paper and the reference section
  - Everything cited in the paper needs to be listed in the references
  - Everything in the reference section needs to be cited somewhere in the paper
- If not, how does the reader know where the ideas came from?

# Plagiarism

- “To plagiarize is to borrow someone else’s words or ideas without mentioning his/her name and/or without using quotation marks”
- Most often is unintentional, but we have to take off marks regardless of intent
- **Cite all sources**
- If you do not cite an idea, it is assumed to be either your own or general knowledge
  - If neither is true, this could be plagiarism
- In each paragraph that uses a source, there needs to be a citation
- Changing words by replacing them with synonyms is unacceptable