



**UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY**

Graduate Success Week— Strategies for Writing Literature Reviews

Mariann Howell, BA, Academic Strategist

T.A. Pattinson, PhD, Writing Tutor

Writing Support Services

Student Success Centre

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Learning Goals

- **Purpose of the first half of today's presentation?**
 - To help you organize and complete a literature review
 - To identify key problems students encounter while writing a review of the literature
 - To practice writing sections of the literature review using sentence templates

What Is a Literature Review?

- A literature review:
 - Is organized around
 - A research question
 - Summarizes and analyzes research
 - Tells “the story” of the research
 - Takes part in an informed “conversation”

Why Write a Literature Review?

- **What's been to done to date?**
 - Scope
 - Relevance
- Identify unbiased and valid studies, while articulating their usefulness to your project.
- Locate gaps in the scholarship.

Getting Started

Article	Notes
<p>VanBergeijk, E., Klin, A., & Volkmar, F. (2008). Supporting More Able Students on the Autism Spectrum: College and Beyond. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i>, 38(7), 1359–1370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-007-0524-8</p>	<p>Search Criteria: Autism, College, University, Accommodation</p> <p>Notes: Really good, very thorough point by point descriptions of “how to do” university for ASD. Doesn’t take a ton of UDL into consideration, but this article is cited by several other sources I’ve already looked at.</p>

Reading Critically

- Immerse yourself in the literature.
- Read for depth of understanding.
- **Ask:**
 - Is your topic well-researched?
 - Why is there not much material about your topic?
 - Why did researchers choose this theory and/or method?

Types of Literature Reviews

- **Three major types of literature reviews:**
 - Themes (thematic review)
 - Methodological (methodological review)
 - Chronological (chronological review)
- All types can be used in an Integrative Literature Review

Literature Review: Identifying Gaps

- The majority of studies have overlooked *<issue>*.
 - The portion of the structural health monitoring process that has received the least attention in recent reviews is the development of statistical models to enhance the SHM process. Almost none of the hundreds of studies summarized in [2, 3] make use of any statistical methods to assess if the changes in the selected features used to identify damaged systems are statistically significant.
- Sohn, H., Farrar, C. R., Hemez, F., & Czarnecki, J. (2001). *A review of structural health monitoring literature*. Cambridge, MA: Department of Civil Engineering.

Research's
focus

Types of Literature Reviews

- **Common issues with literature reviews?**
 - Does not include a clear, organizational principle
 - Becomes a descriptive list
 - Every paragraph starts with an author

Literature Reviews: Not a “Shopping List”

- Manage your material.
- **Create an outline:**
 - Use headings and subheadings
 - Use tables for comparison and summarizing

Literature Reviews: Not a “Shopping List”

- Think about connections and transitions.
- Topics should relate to each other and support the main organizational principle—your literature review is not a shopping list .
 - Do not simply write: “Smith says this...; Jones says this...; etc.”

Structures & Differences

**Sources
are separated** →

**Credibility
and relevance** →

Annotated bibliographies

examine each source
separately based on
relationship to topic.

Bratcher, W. E. (1982). The influence of the family on career selection: A family systems perspective. *Personnel & Guidance Journal*, 61(2), 87.

This paper investigates the influence of career choices through four family intertwining concepts: control, currency, curiosity, and compassion. Bratcher (1982) argues that immigrants from a harsh political climate develop forward thinking as a coping mechanism. This is similar to Zambianchi and Bitti's argument (2014) that shows how "Social well-being showed positive correlations with proactive coping strategies, future oriented time perspective, expression of positive emotions and regulation of negative emotions, divergent thinking, open communication with parents" (p. 10). In terms of non-linear thinking or what Bratcher (1982) refers to as circular thinking.

Structures & Differences

**Describes
trends/differences** →

**Identifies
gaps in the literature** →

Literature reviews

establish a relationship
between sources with regards
to a specific topic or problem.

A vast majority of the papers on coping mechanisms within immigrant families focus on the concept of circular thinking (Zambianchi & Bitti, 2014; Bratcher, 1982). While circular thinking is important to the development of the model of intervention, this methodology fails to address the cultural barriers that immigrants face when integrating within a new community. Much of the research focuses around Bratcher's 1982 article and has not been updated for current trends of globalization. In fact, the main issue with developing a coherent model of integration is the outdated methods that current literature, such as Zambianchi and Bitti's 2014 study, rely on.

Literature Review Structure

Annotated Bibliography

Source A

Source B

Source C

Source D

Source E

Turn into
Literature Review?

Introduction Paragraph

1. Overview of Topic
2. States Problem
3. Research Question
4. Significant Sources

Body Paragraph #1

Topic Sentence
Sources A & C

Body Paragraph #2

Topic Sentence
Sources B & D

Body Paragraph #3

Topic Sentence
Sources E

- Short summary of Sources A & C.
- Synthesis and elaboration as related to topic/problem

Literature Review Mistakes

- **Mistake #1:**
- The literature review is not aligned to a research question.

Mistake #1: Organizational Principles

- A literature review of <#> relevant articles published between <yr> and <yr> identified <#> categories relevant to <topic>.
- The major foci of the literature are <topic>.

Mistake #1: Organizational Principles

Research's
focus

- **The focus** of most of our research has centred primarily on reviewing the stereotypes that reign over what is gender appropriate eating behaviour in terms of what and how much one eats, as well as the attempts that individuals take to manage their identity by conforming to cultural expectations, **for example Cohen and Adler, 1992; Coley and Burgess, 2003; Fagerli and Wandel, 1999; Mooney and Lorenz, 1997 and Vartanian et al., 2007**. By reviewing the literature related to gender appropriate food consumption, and its relationship to the formation and management of self-identity and subsequent food consumption behaviours which support this desired identity, **we formed a framework for our theory in practice investigation** (Warde, 2005).

Purpose

- Palmer, A. J., & Yoshimura, G. J. (1984). Munchausen syndrome by proxy. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 23(4), 503-508.

Mistake #1: Trends in the Literature

- The vast majority of the papers addressed <*subject*>.
- There is a developing consensus by many researchers on <**A**>.

Mistake #1: Trends in the Literature

Summary of consistent results



- This paper will explore this case in detail, utilizing primary clinical data on both parent and child. The relationship between parental psychodynamics and the genesis of the syndrome will be explored.
- In those cases reported in the literature, the earliest age a child presented with factitious illness by proxy was 8 weeks (Rogers et al., 1976.) and the oldest, 11 years (Herzberg and Wolff, 1972). In several cases, the children first came to the attention of physicians during infancy or the 2nd year of life, but the diagnosis of factitious cause was not made for several years. Of the 24 reported cases, 12 were boys and 12 girls. The presenting problems included: “diabetes melitus” and

- Palmer, A. J., & Yoshimura, G. J. (1984). Munchausen syndrome by proxy. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 23(4), 503-508.

Literature Review Mistakes

- **Mistake #2:**
- The literature review lacks a substantive critical appraisal.

Literature Review Mistake #2

- **When reading, consider the following:**
 - Is the author's problem/issue clearly defined? Is its significance clearly established?
 - Could the problem have been approached more effectively from another perspective?
 - Has the author evaluated relevant literature? Does the author include literature that disagrees with his or her argument?
 - How accurate and valid are the measurements? Do the conclusions validly support the main argument/thesis?
 - What are the project's strengths and limitations?

(Procter & Taylor, 2018)

Mistake #2: Critical Appraisal

- *<Author>* overlooked the fact that ** contributes to *<C>*.
- *<Author>* illustrated a common argument in this area; however *<Author>* disagreed and pointed to the research that showed *<D>*.

Mistake #2: Critical Appraisal

Conflicting results

- One example of a perceptual difficulty is the widespread belief held by general education teachers that they are not equipped with the necessary skills to teach children with special needs (Forlin, Keen, & Barrett, 2008). Scott, Vitale, and Masten (1998) contended that a deficit in instructional strategy knowledge may not be the problem, but instead teachers may require training to see how known strategies can be used to support the learning of students with special needs.

- Abawi, L., & Oliver, M. (2013). Shared pedagogical understandings: Schoolwide inclusion practices supporting learner needs. *Improving Schools*, 16(2), 159-174.

Mistake #2: Argumentation Strategy

Toulmin's Method

Claim

- Thesis or topic sentences

Evidence

- Support: research, statistics, textual evidence, etc.

Warrant

- Bridge evidence and claim through analysis and synthesis

Mistake #2: Argumentation Strategy

- Interest in health education has been rising because there is increasing evidence that many of the most serious problems of health are associated with specific behaviors and lifestyles. Government statistics reveal that ‘Every day in England heart disease and stroke kill nearly 550 people; every day 370 die from cancer; every day 26 perish in accidents, many of them on our roads’ (Bottomley, 1993, p. 2). Many of these deaths are premature and could be prevented if individuals changed their behavior, especially if they stopped smoking, altered their diet or gave up driving.
- Norton, L. (1998). Health promotion or health education. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28(6), 1269-1275.

Mistake #2: Argumentation Strategy



CLAIM



EVIDENCE



WARRANT

- Interest in health education has been rising because there is increasing evidence that many of the most serious problems of health are associated with specific behaviors and lifestyles. Government statistics reveal that 'Every day in England heart disease and stroke kill nearly 550 people; every day 370 die from cancer; every day 26 perish in accidents, many of them on our roads' (Bottomley, 1993, p. 2). Many of these deaths are premature and could be prevented if individuals changed their behavior, especially if they stopped smoking, altered their diet or gave up driving.

- Warrants give the argument direction and cohesion.
- Norton, L. (1998). Health promotion or health education. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28(6), 1269-1275.

Literature Review Mistakes

- **Mistake #3:**
- The literature review lacks transitional logic.

Mistake #3: Transition

- A related body of scholarship examined/measured <*E*>.
- Other authors take a different stance. For example, <*Author*>.

Mistake #3: Transition

- Adapting an explanation by Bauer (1984, 1986), Ellis & Young (1990) have suggested that the Capgras syndrome represented a ‘mirror state’ of prosopagnosia in that the ventral route from the visual centres to the temporal lobes may be preserved (so as to allow overt, conscious face ‘recognition’), but the dorsal visual route responsible for giving the face its emotional significance is damaged. Perhaps the only way the patient can make sense of the absence of this emotional arousal is to form the belief that the person he is looking at is an imposter.

**Transition
into your
argument**



- This explanation leaves two questions unanswered, however. First, why is the phenomenon specific to close relatives? One possibility is that only with one’s parents or spouse does one expect a glow of arousal, and

- Hirstein, W., & Ramachandran, V. S. (1997). Capgras Syndrome: A novel probe for understanding the neural representation of the identity and familiarity of persons. *Proceedings: Biological Sciences*, 264(1380), 437-444.

Mistake #3: Consensus

- In a similar vein, <Author> argued that <F>.
- As opposed to <Author>, <Author> acknowledged that <G>.

Mistake #3: Consensus

Identifying consensus in the literature

- Much of the literature emphasizes a number of shared key factors that translate into school culture. These factors, such as values, beliefs, norms and ways of thinking and working that form the patterns of practice, can be relied upon to inform thinking and action (Heckman, 1993; Stolp & Smith, 1994). It is the expectations that fall out of these that form the ‘assumptions [which] are tacit, unconsciously taken for granted, rarely considered or talked about, and accepted as true and non-negotiable’ (Tagiuri, 1968, p. 185).
- Abawi, L., & Oliver, M. (2013). Shared pedagogical understandings: Schoolwide inclusion practices supporting learner needs. *Improving Schools*, 16(2), 159-174.

Signal Phrases

- Words that explicitly reference the author/s of a text to demonstrate the indebtedness of your ideas (analysis, interpretation, review, etc.).

Signal Phrases

- **When would you use them?**
 - Directly quoting an author's specific text
 - **Paraphrasing an author's ideas:**
 - To put someone else's ideas into your own words, which includes new kinds of sentence structures and phrases/terms to communicate what you think an author means
 - To ascribe the same level of detail or description to your paraphrase that authors give to their ideas

Signal Phrases: Examples

- “According to [Author]...”
- “[Author] states that...”
- “While [Author] is correct about...”
- “[Authors] disagree with the literature because...”
- “Our findings correspond with the results generated by [Authors]...”

- <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Transitions

- “Words and/or phrases that create connections between ideas in sentences and paragraphs. Furthermore, they signal that a writer is shifting between ideas, and establish coherent linkages between and within sentences and paragraphs.”
 - <https://ucalgary.ca/live-uc-ucalgary-site/sites/default/files/teams/9/using-transitions-writing-strategies.pdf>

- **When would you use them?**
 - Introducing new information
 - Providing examples
 - Summarizing and concluding
 - Showing time and/or location
 - Clarifying ideas
 - Showing linkages between ideas—comparing & contrasting

Transitions: Examples

- **Introducing new information:**
 - Additionally, moreover, also, first, second, third, particularly
- **Providing examples:**
 - For example, for instance, to demonstrate, to explain further, specifically.
- **Summarizing and concluding:**
 - Thus, finally, therefore, in summary, accordingly
- **Showing time and/or location:**
 - During, meanwhile, concurrently; beyond, between, further on
- **Clarifying ideas:**
 - In other words, put another way
- **Showing linkages between ideas—comparing & contrasting:**
 - Because, for this reason, as a result; however, nevertheless, on the contrary

Part 1 Summary

- “A literature review of _____#_____ relevant articles published between _____yr_____ and _____yr_____ identified _____ [categories/themes/methods/relevant] to _____ [topic]: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.”

Part 1 Summary

- “A literature review of **19** relevant articles published between **2008** and **2018** identified **3 methods of implementation** to support students with autism in post-secondary education: **mentoring**, **peer partnership**, and **transition support**, which are intervention programs that were found to bolster the social aspects of post-secondary experience.”

Learning Goals (Part 2)

- **What are the purposes of literature reviews?**
 - To engage critically with your field or discipline
 - To analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate scholarly bodies of work
 - To develop professional research skills
 - To identify potential teaching modules
 - To test the novelty of your research project and the validity of your research question
 - Etc.

Learning Goals (Part 2)

- “In this session, participants will learn critical reading and writing strategies as they prepare to write theses, candidacy exams, or dissertations. After attending this session, participants will know how to ask better research questions, how to adapt projects to internal and external changes, and how to make necessary editorial decisions when meeting deadlines.”

Learning Goals (Part 2)

- On the micro-level, what is involved in the process of writing literature reviews (as a content of academic labour)?
- On the macro-level, what is involved in the process of writing literature reviews (as a form of academic labour)?

Learning Goals (Part 2)

- **Asking better research questions?**
 - Know how to justify your choices.
- **Adapting projects to internal and external changes?**
 - Prepare for both the expected and the unexpected.
- **Making necessary editorial decisions when meeting deadlines?**
 - Avoid “falling down the rabbit hole” of reading and writing.

Asking Better Research Questions

- **The process of writing literature reviews should be a foundational skill that is learned, developed, and honed when doing graduate studies.**

Asking Better Research Questions

- **Why is writing literature reviews so difficult?**
 - New school, new program, and new courses
 - Have not decided on your research project or question(s)
 - Have not chosen a supervisor or committee members
 - Changed your research project or question(s)
 - Changed your supervisor or committee members
 - Having an interdisciplinary research project

Asking Better Research Questions

- **What can you do to start writing your literature review?**

Asking Better Research Questions

- **Outline** your project—“What do I want to do?”
- **Situate** your project within your field or discipline.
- **Connect** your project to authors, theories, methods, and studies that already deal with your research topic/question.
- **Focus** your project on items that are missing, unexplored, and underdeveloped in your field: questions, problems, assumptions, gaps, niches, etc.

Asking Better Research Questions

- **How can you write your literature review?**
 - Thematically;
 - Methodologically;
 - Chronologically;
 - In some combination of these organizing principles.

Asking Better Research Questions

- **What is important about these organizing principles?**
 - Do not simply write a survey or census about what literature exists; talk about why it is important, why it works, why it fails, and what you are doing with your research to build upon this knowledge.
 - More specifically, in terms of doing something different, what are you bringing to your field?

Asking Better Research Questions

- **Why is it important to outline, situate, connect, and focus your literature review vis-à-vis your field or discipline?**
- Graduate school research often involves justifying your choices to people when you choose your research content, theory, method, case study, experiments, etc.

Asking Better Research Questions

■ Examples:

- “Why did you choose subject H and not subject I?”
- “Can you say more about how subjects J and K prove your thesis/hypothesis/aim?”
- “Subject L appears as an oversight in your research. Explain why you have not mentioned this.”
- “Subject M is a new, exciting area of research in our field. How does your work relate to it?”

Asking Better Research Questions

- When would justifying your choices be important?
 - **When writing and/or defending:**
 - A funding application
 - A project proposal
 - A thesis defence
 - A candidacy exam
 - A dissertation defence
 - Etc.

Asking Better Research Questions

- All good research is done by standing on the shoulders of others, figuratively speaking; no one works in an intellectual vacuum.

Asking Better Research Questions

- If you know the discourses of your field, the key debates related to your research project, the differences between various methodologies, the notable authors who have also dealt with your research question, and why all of these are important...
- **Then you will be able to ask better questions that are specific, actionable, relevant to your field and research project, and that will be answered in a timely fashion.**

Adapting Projects to Changes

- Literature reviews take time to do. However, it is difficult to find the time to do all the necessary steps—researching, reading, writing, revising, etc.—to make your work as comprehensive, coherent, and evaluative as possible.

Adapting Projects to Changes

- Over the course of 1-3 years (i.e. master's degree) or 4-7 years (i.e. doctoral degree), your work will undergo several changes.
- If your work has not changed over a period of time, you should ask yourself why this is the case.

Adapting Projects to Changes

- **Internal (expected) changes?**
 - Shift in focus after coursework/candidacy exams
 - Addition and/or subtraction of committee members
 - The supervisor-graduate student relationship
 - Feedback over time—supervisor, committee members, conferences, peer review, etc.
 - New literature emerges

Adapting Projects to Changes

- **External (unexpected) changes?**
 - The supervisor-graduate student relationship
 - Teaching vs. researching balances
 - Work vs. life balances
 - Personal life changes
 - Illness and burnout
 - Cost of standards of living

Adapting Projects to Changes

- To prepare for any expected and/or unexpected changes that will ultimately impact the writing of your literature review, maintain a clear, consistent, and precise dialogue with your supervisor, your committee, and your department/program.

Adapting Projects to Changes

- **Why is maintaining a dialogue important?**
 - To set up timelines and expectations
 - To meet deadlines
 - To minimize the amount of work you need to do
 - To reduce the amount of stress that comes with internal and/or external changes that impact your project
 - To better articulate and pivot your work to the broader academic job market (and beyond)

Making Necessary Editorial Decisions

- **What does it mean to “fall down the rabbit hole” of reading and writing vis-à-vis literature reviews?**
- Students will continue to research, read, write, and work on their literature reviews to the degree that:
 - They do not finish them on time
 - They do not submit their chapters to their supervisors
 - They end up falling behind on other graduate work that needs to be done

Making Necessary Editorial Decisions

- **Why do students “fall down the rabbit hole” when working on their literature reviews?**
 - Lack of writing experience
 - Self-perceptions of imposter syndrome
 - Unfocused research project and/or research question
 - Unclear expectations from your supervisor and/or committee members
 - The ‘infinite regress’ of finding more sources
 - Etc.

Making Necessary Editorial Decisions

- **How can students avoid “falling down the rabbit hole” during the literature review-writing process?**

Making Necessary Editorial Decisions

- **Deadlines:** Faculty of Graduate Studies, department/program, supervisor, personal, etc.
- **Page Counts:** Genres of writing—proposal, exam, thesis, dissertation, etc.
- **Clarity, Focus, Concision:** Which contents either satisfy or fail to satisfy your research project and question(s)
- **Benchmarks:** When your work is “good enough” to submit

Making Necessary Editorial Decisions

- **You cannot read and write about everything.**
- Your literature review is a kind of “snapshot” of a moment in time that captures what the academic conversation was focused on given your respective fields, research projects, and research questions.
- If you want to say more, then save that work for the next paper, project, degree, or research position.

Making Necessary Editorial Decisions

- Read your writing aloud.
- Print your writing out.
- Consult writing guides.
- Have someone else read your work.
 - Friend, classmate, tutor, committee member, supervisor.

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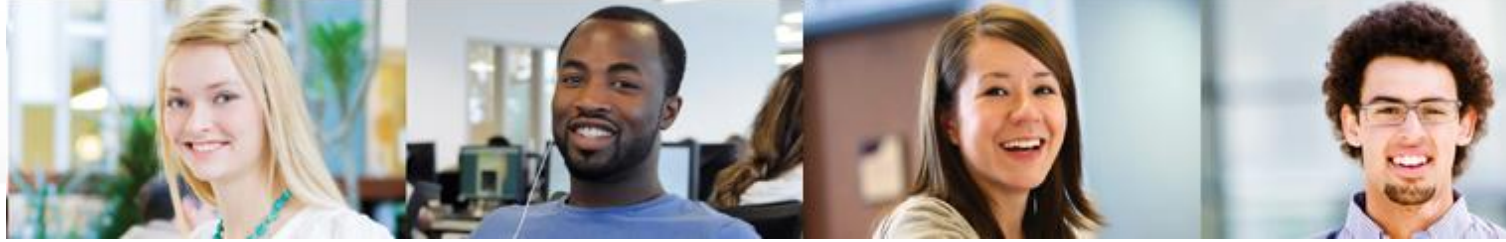
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