

Thesis and Dissertation Writing Workshop Part II

UMES Graduate School Workshop

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Agenda

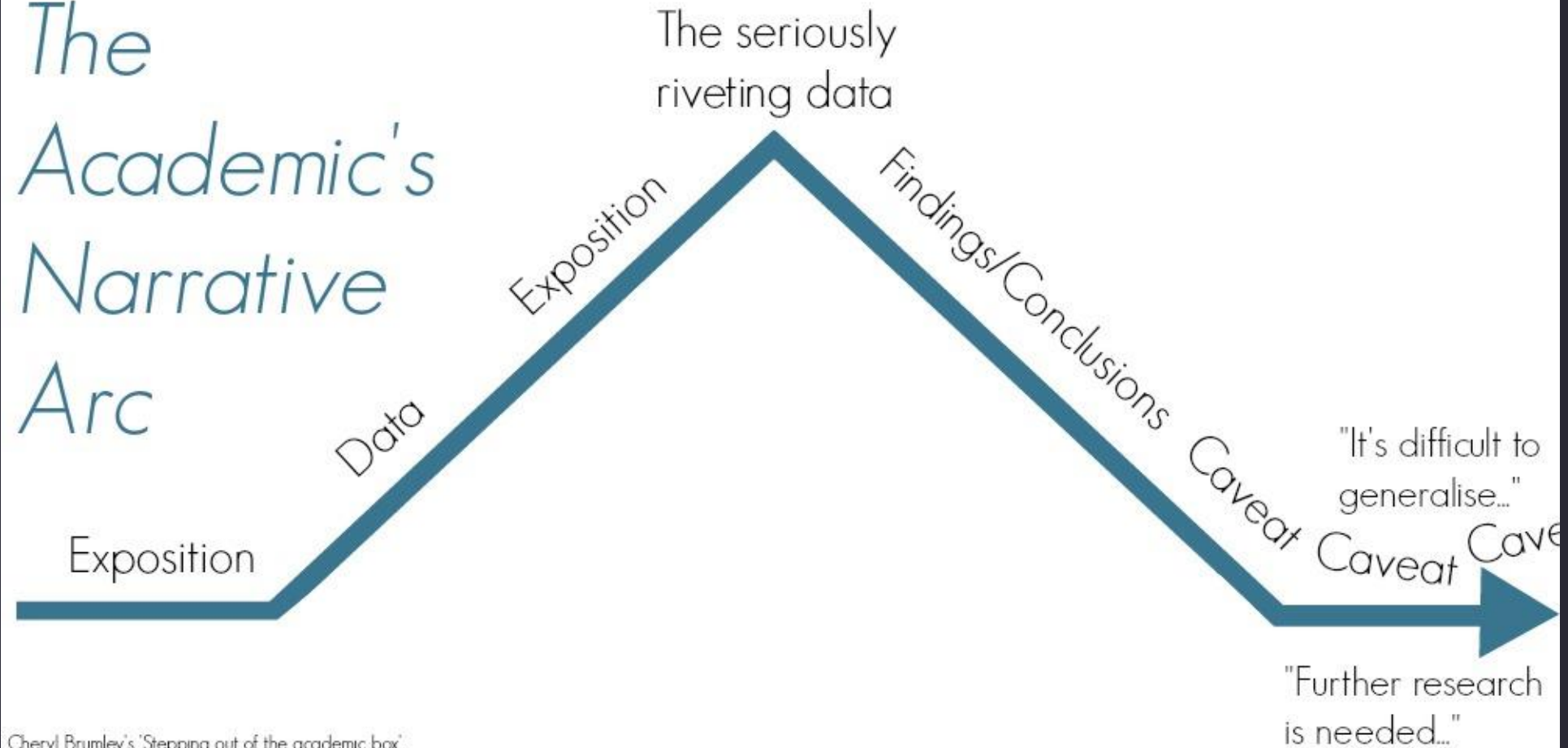
- Research Writing Tips
 - Research Process (Recap)
 - Integration of Theory
- Thesis/Dissertation Layout (Recap)
- Citing Sources (Recap)
- Results/Findings & Discussion
- Abstract
 - Description
 - Writing Strategies



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Research Writing Tips

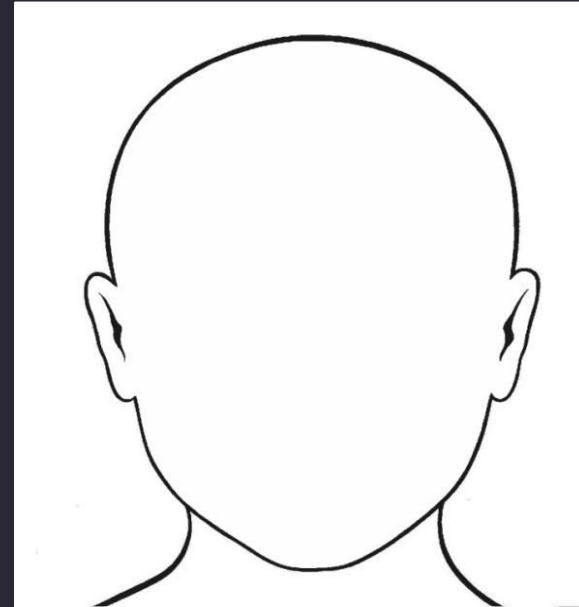
The Academic's Narrative Arc



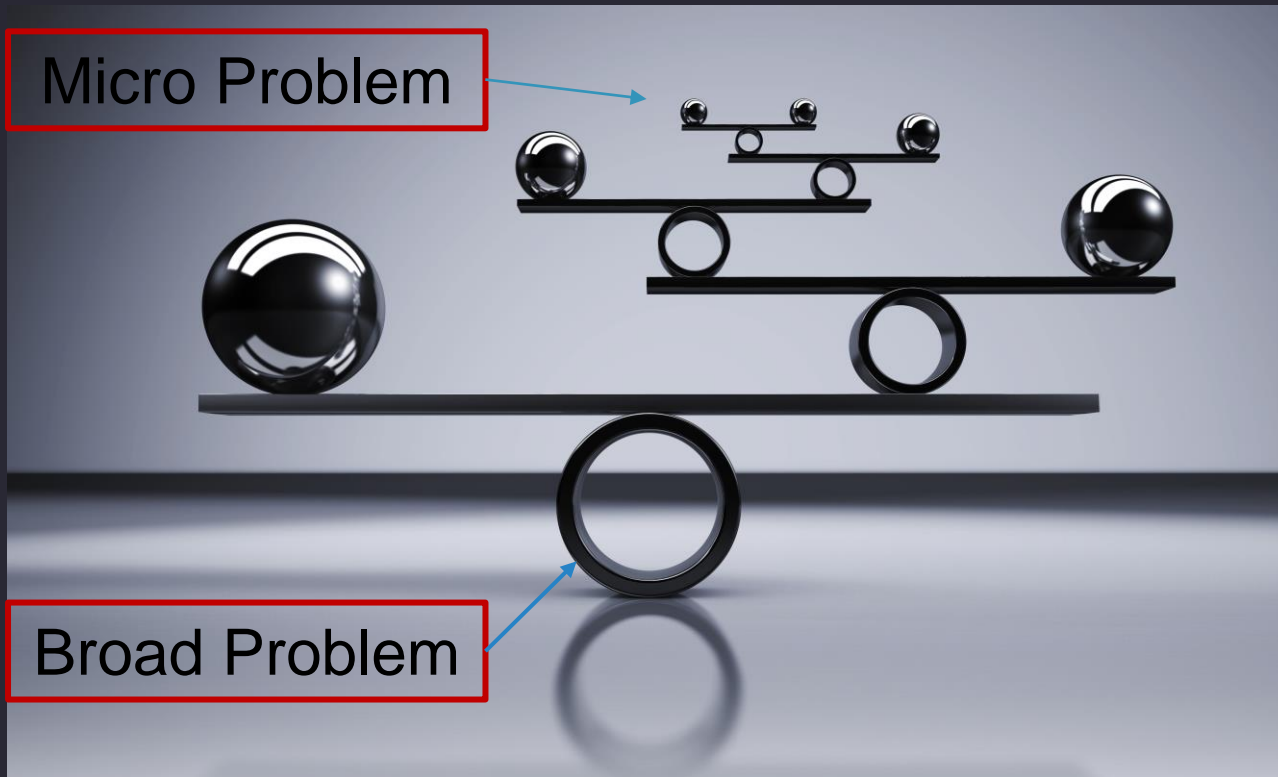
Cheryl Brumley's 'Stepping out of the academic box',
Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, 2014

“Every story, even the driest,
has a human face. Draw it well
and put it on display, for to
readers it is a mirror and a
magnet”

(Flaherty, 2009, p. xv)



Research Writing Process

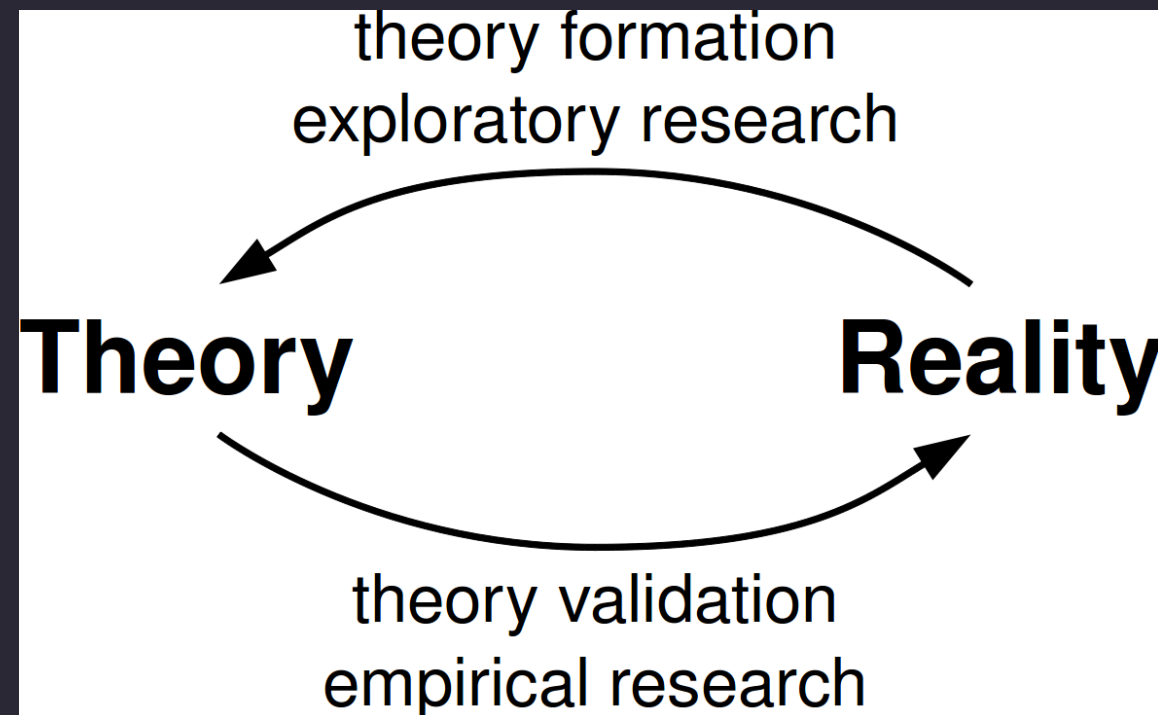


Your goals should as a researcher:

1. Identify the broad problem
2. Discover how others have explored the problem before you
3. Uncover the gaps that still exist
4. Develop a study that can investigate one of those gaps (micro problem)

Understand the Integration of Theory

Theories explain, predict, and help to understand phenomena (Abend, 2008).



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Understand the Integration of Theory

- Theoretical Framework - Structure that can hold and support the research study
- Introduces and describes the theory
 - Explains why research problem exists within the confines of the theory



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Selecting Appropriate Theory

- Use knowledge about theory to inform study
- Theory selection depends on:
 - Appropriateness
 - Ease of application
 - Explanatory power



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Why is Theory Integration Important

- ***Strengthens the study by:***
 - Connects the study to existing knowledge
 - Provides the basis for hypotheses and research methods
 - Allows to move from describing the phenomenon to generalizing about aspects of the phenomenon

Why is Theory Integration Important

- ***Strengthens the study by:***
 - Identifies limits to those generalizations
 - Identifies what key variables influence a phenomenon of interest
 - Allows for a focus on how key variables differ and in what conditions
 - Helps reader to evaluate the study critically

Define and Operationalize: Key Terms & Variables

**Define =
What is meant by a
word or concept in
your study**

**Operationalize =
Defining the
measurement of a
phenomenon that is not
directly measurable**

Research Writing Tips

- Remember that you are telling a story
- Identify your focal research area and narrow to your micro area
- Utilize theory to support your study
 - Theory explains, predicts, and helps to understand phenomena (Abend, 2008)
 - Define terms and operationalize key variables



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Thesis/Dissertation Layout (Recap)

Designing Your Study

Start with Alignment

- **Title**
- **Purpose**
- **Research Question(s)**
- Hypothesis(es)
(Quantitative)
- Synthesizing Question(s)
(Qualitative)

Thesis/Dissertation Layout



Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study or
Statement of the Problem



Chapter 2

Review of the Literature



Chapter 3

Methodology of the Study



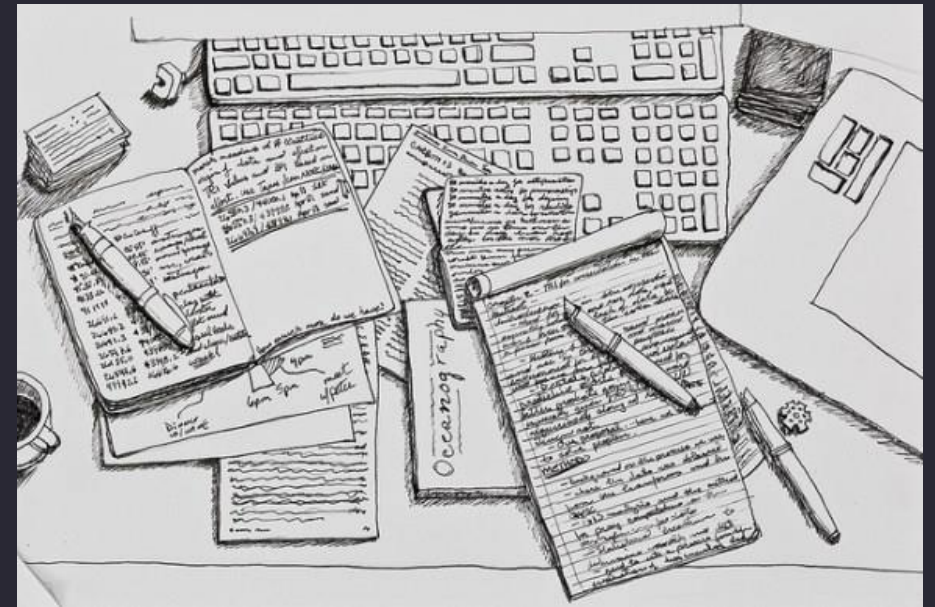
Chapter 4

Results of the Study (quantitative)
Findings of the Study (qualitative)



Chapter 5

Discussion and
Conclusions



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Dissertation Layout - ORLD



Chapter 1

Introduction



Chapter 2

Literature Review



Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework (quantitative)
Conceptual Framework (qualitative)



Chapter 4

Research Design and Methodology



Chapter 5

Results of the Study (quantitative)
Findings of the Study (qualitative)



Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusions



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Keys to Success

Follow the guidance provided by UMES.

Follow guidance provided by your advisor and department.

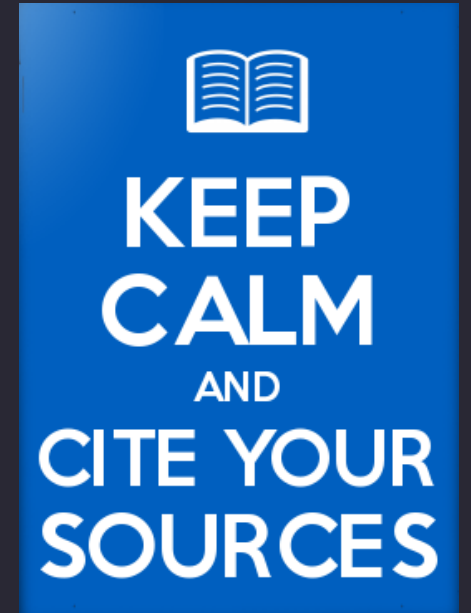


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Citing Sources (Recap)

Citing Sources

- Cite work that contributed ideas, theories, or research to your manuscript
- Only cite work that is part of the manuscript
- Use work that both supports and diverges from your argument
- Be careful of undercitation and overcitation



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Citing Sources

- This is how you support your assertions
- Avoids plagiarism
- Lends credibility to your work
- Review APA (7th edition) – Chapter 8



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Results/Findings & Discussion (of thesis or dissertation)

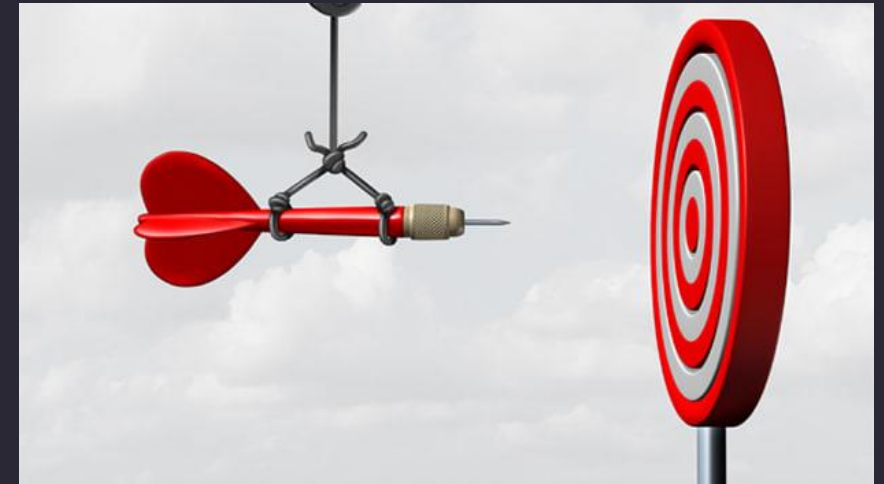
Results/Findings Chapter



- This is where **your data** shines
- Report your data in a factual manner
- Be clear and concise
- Use formats typical of your field

Results/Findings Chapter

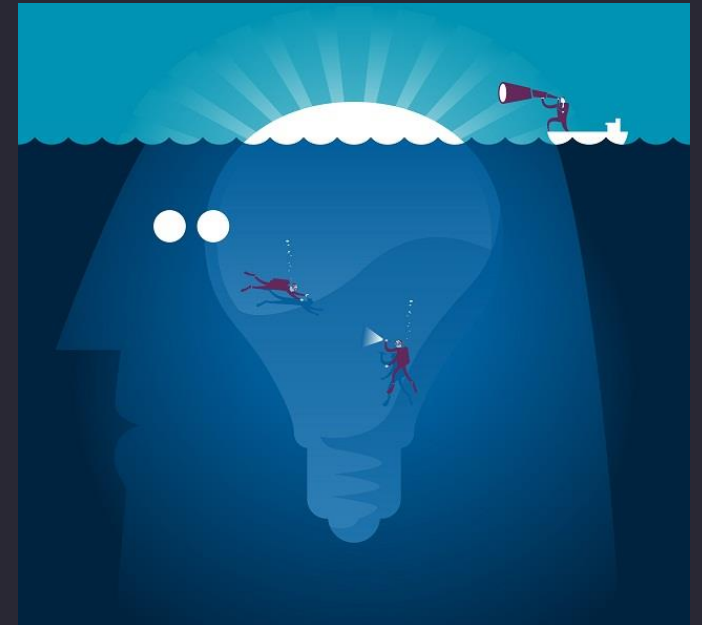
- Overview of Study
- Results of the Study (quantitative)
 - Demographic and/or descriptive analysis
 - Reliability and validity analyses
 - Instrument analysis, reliability analysis, assumption testing, validity testing
 - Hypothesis testing
 - Results should be relative to each hypothesis



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Results/Findings Chapter

- Findings of the Study (qualitative)
 - Demographic and/or descriptive analysis (if applicable)
 - Findings relative to synthesizing questions
 - Findings relative to research question(s)
- Summary of Chapter



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Discussion Chapter

- This is where **your interpretation** shines
- You “make sense” of the data
- Use literature to support your interpretation
- Address the “So What?”



Discussion Chapter

- Summary of the Study
- Discussion
 - Discuss the results/findings relative to the literature
 - Each hypothesis or synthesizing questions discussed relative to the literature
 - INTERPRET WHAT YOUR STUDY REVEALED!!!

Discussion Chapter

- Discussion
 - RQ(s) discussed relative to the literature
 - ADDRESSING what ***YOUR*** study indicated in comparison to what was known in your scientific field prior to your research

Discussion Chapter

- Limitations and Delimitations of the Study
- Significance of the Study
 - Scientific
 - Methodological and Theoretical
 - Practical Significance
- Relevance to Organizational Leadership (ORLD)
- Implications for Future Research
- Summary
- Conclusion

Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

- This chapter builds to answer this throughout
- Culmination comes with:
 - Significance
 - Practical Implications
 - Conclusion



Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?



- MUST show that the data means something relative to other literature
 - Supports it
 - Refutes it
 - Builds upon current theory
 - Generates new theory

Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?



Methodological Significance

How the study provides a unique methodological contribution?

Can other researchers use it?

Was it a novel approach?

Why did this methodological approach yield something new?

Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

Theoretical Significance

How the study provides a unique theoretical contribution?

Does it address gaps in previous theory?

Does it generate a new theory?

What can future studies now do with this theory that could not be done before?



So
What?

Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

Practical Significance/Implications



What can practitioners do with these results/findings?

What does a non-expert do with this new knowledge?

How can this be applied outside of research?

Discussion Chapter – the SO WHAT?

Conclusion

This is your final “punch.”

If someone only reads your conclusion (GASP), what do you want them to know?



So
What?

Discussion Chapter - Conclusions

This is YOUR VOICE

What does your unique study contribute?

Why is it important?

How does it build upon / refute other research?

How does it build upon / refute theory?

What does the “non-expert” do with these findings?



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Writing an Abstract

“An *abstract* is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the paper”

- American Psychological Association, 2020, p. 73



Why is an Abstract Important?

- Introduction to research/paper
- Summary of the body of work
- Editors may make decision on sending to reviewers based on abstract
- Reviewers first “judgement” of manuscript
- May be all someone “reads” of the paper

Components of an Abstract

- 1) **General topic** of study, **specific topic** of research, **context** and/or **background information**
 - 1 to 3 sentences
- 2) **Central questions** or statement of problem addressed in study
 - 1 sentence

Components of an Abstract

3) What is known, what previous research provides

- 1 to 2 sentences

4) Main reasons, rationale, and/or goals of research

- Why is this important to address? (e.g. new topic, filling a gap, applying new methods, dispute in the literature)
- 1 to 2 sentences

Components of an Abstract

5) Methods and research design – Cover the research or analytical methods

- 1 to 2 sentences

6) Findings, results, or arguments

- 1 to 3 sentences

7) Significance and implications of findings/study

Practice

Find an abstract from a published empirical research article.



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Practice

- Identify:
 - General topic, specific topic, context and/or background information
 - Central questions/problem statement
 - What is known/previous research
 - Main reasons, rationale, goals of research
 - Methods & research design
 - Findings, results, arguments
 - Significance and implications

Qualities of a Good Abstract

1. Accurate
2. Nonevaluative
3. Coherent and Readable
4. Concise



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Good Abstract - ACCURATE

- Reflects the purpose and contents of the paper
- If extends or replicates prior research, cite the work (author-date citation)
- ***Bottom Line:***
 - Avoid overstating what the research/paper is about



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Good Abstract - NONEVALUATIVE

- Report the work
- Avoid evaluating the contents
 - e.g. “In this ground-breaking research...”
- ***Bottom Line:***
 - This is not the place for your feelings and sentiments on the paper



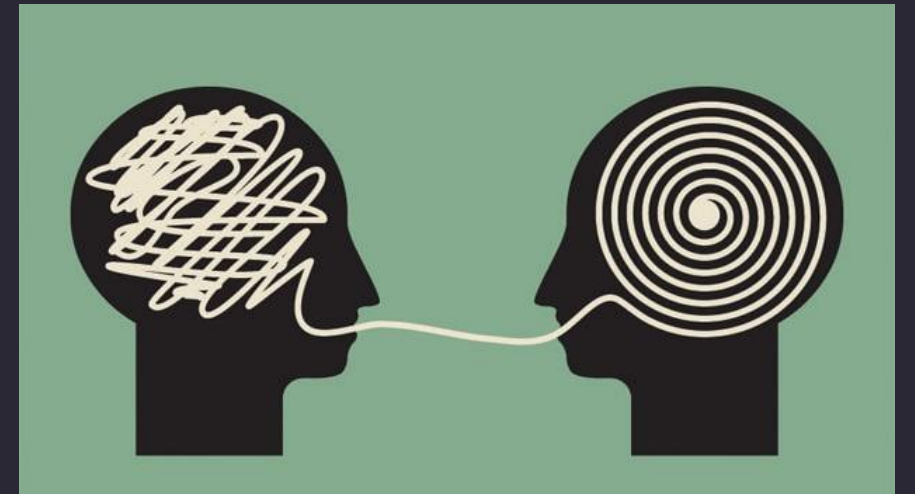
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Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

- Clear language that is not overly specific to the field
- Use verbs, rather than noun equivalents
 - e.g. “investigated” rather than “an investigation of”
- Active voice, rather than passive
 - e.g. “we present results” rather than “results are presented”

Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

- Present tense for conclusions drawn or results
 - e.g. “Authentic leadership impacts employee trust in XYZ”
- Past tense to describe how variables were manipulated or outcomes measured
 - E.g. “In this study, employee trust was A, B, and C.”



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Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

Bottom Line

Use simple language and have someone outside your field of expertise read it before submission!!



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(American Psychological Association, 2020)

Good Abstract – CONCISE

- Be brief
- Each sentence should provide maximum information
- Set-it up for success
 - Lead with a powerful sentence
 - Key points first
- Include 4 or 5 of the MOST IMPORTANT results or findings

Good Abstract – CONCISE



Bottom Line

Everything cannot be in the abstract, hit the highlights

Think about key words that will pull the article in searches

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(American Psychological Association, 2020)

When to Write an Abstract

- After the paper is complete
- Remember this is a summary of the complete paper
- Exceptions
 - Abstract for paper proposal
 - Extended abstract (usually paper proposal or conference)

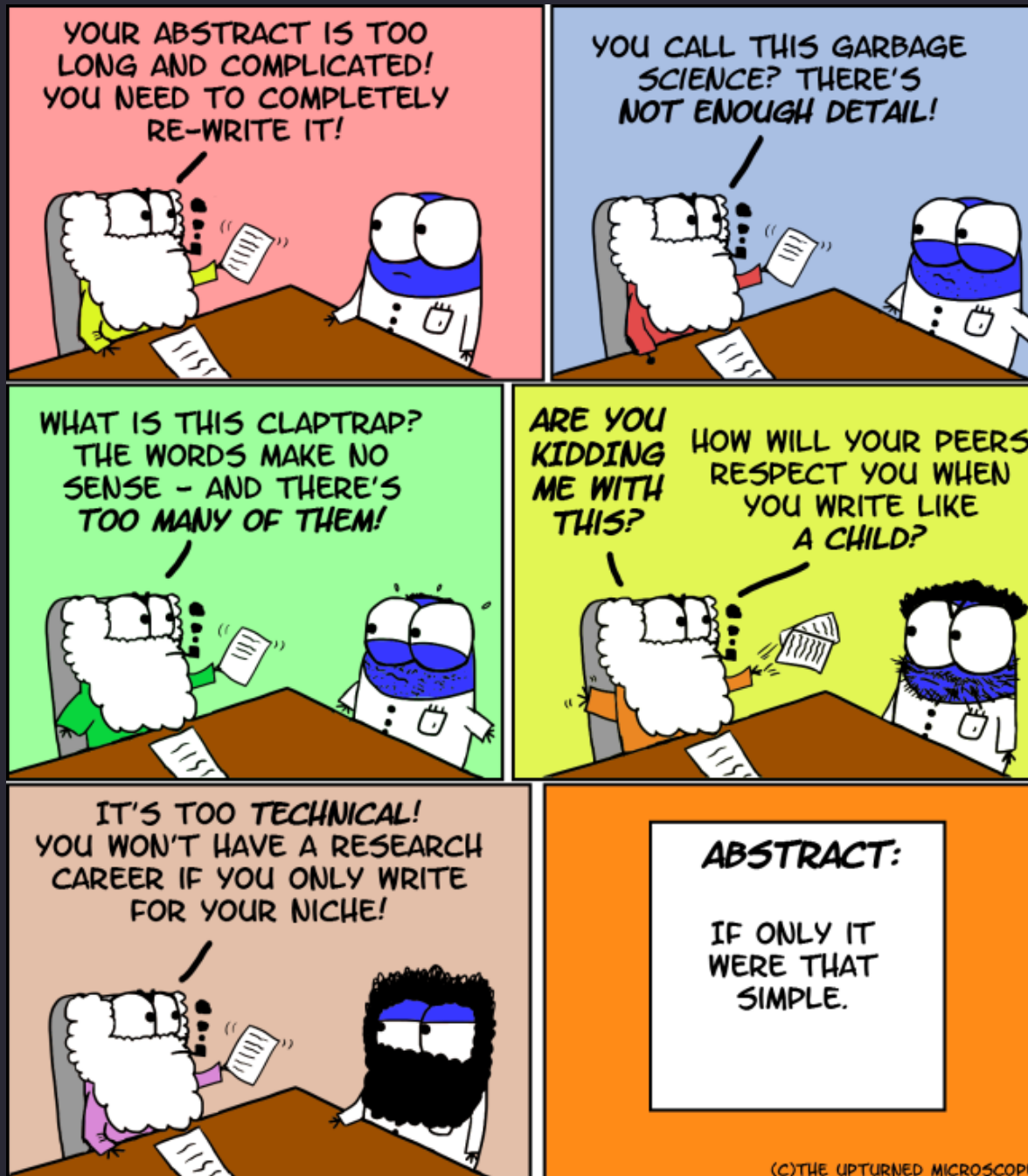


Abstract Writing Sources

- APA Manual (7th Edition) – Section 3.3
 - Walks through components
 - Details for empirical, replication, meta-analyses, literature review, theoretical, and methodological articles
- Journal abstracts
 - Look at journal guidelines
- UMES Guide to Preparation of Theses and Dissertations
- University of Wisconsin Writing Center

Final Abstract Thoughts

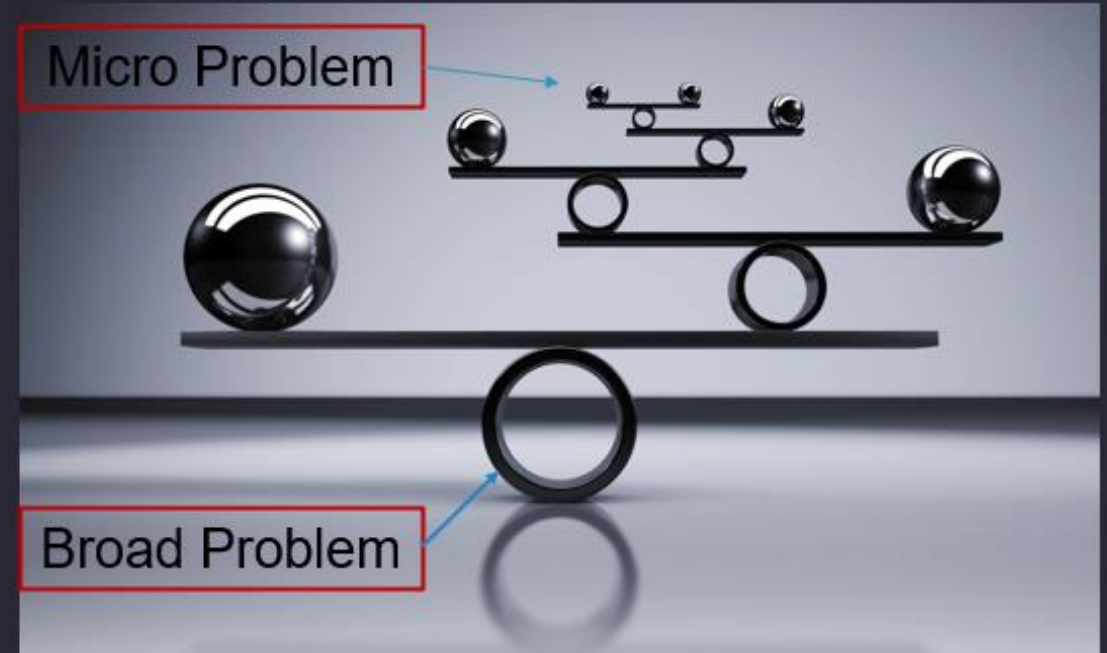
- Reader should understand “gist” of paper from abstract
- Usually you do not *cite* references
- Focus on what YOU studied and/or found
- ***REMEMBER*** – Often abstract is all people read of the paper



Summary

Research Writing Tips

- Understand your broad research area
- Focus on micro problem
- Theory holds your research together
- Define and operationalize key terms and variables



Results/Findings and Discussion

- Results/Findings – where your data shines
- Discussion – where your voice shines
- Data and literature used for interpretations



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Results/Findings and Discussion



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- Address the “So What”
 - What does the study mean relative to the literature?
 - What does this study mean relative to theory?
 - How do we practically apply these findings?
 - How does future research build off this study?

Abstract

- Look at examples
- Read APA manual guidelines
- Be accurate, nonevaluative, coherent and readable, and concise



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Abstract Should Contain (7 parts)

1. General topic, specific topic, context and/or background information
2. Central questions/problem statement
3. What is known/previous research
4. Main reasons, rationale, goals of research
5. Methods & research design
6. Findings, results, arguments
7. Significance and implications



References

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