

## Literature Review and Proposal Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to engage in the sort of writing that is the basis for literature reviews, research proposals (both of which are common types of "term paper assignments") and the introductions of research reports. While this assignment is somewhat rudimentary, it does have the major elements of this type of writing: 1) the ability to read and critique a research article, 2) the ability to integrate the information from two articles (the premise is that if you can do this for two articles in this assignment you will be able to do so for more articles in later assignments), 3) the ability to propose a piece of "new" research that is related to the research you reviewed, and 4) the ability to present these using the APA style and format.

The assignment is based on the two articles you have been given, and has four parts, each of which can be accomplished in a **single well-written paragraph**: 1) A critique of the "first article, 2) A critique of the "second article", 3) An "integration" of the information in the two articles and 4) a proposal of an original research project that is drawn from the critique and integration of the two articles.

### Critiquing Each Article

This is very similar to what we did during the in-class research critique activity (the specific things to include are listed on the Grading Sheet). The challenge is to coordinate the information from each article and to compose it into a well-structured summary paragraph, while striking a proper balance between completeness and brevity. Careful reading of the introductions of the articles you have been given is a good way to see examples of this type of writing.

### Integrating the Two Articles

The "Integrating" of the two articles is often the hardest part of this assignment. The idea is to help the reader understand why you have told them about each of the articles by tying the two articles together. The three major components of this kind of integration are: 1) telling the similarities between the articles (focusing more on the procedures used and results obtained than on the purposes of the two studies); 2) telling the differences between the articles (especially when procedural differences may have produced the differences in the results); and 3) telling what we learn when we consider the information from these two studies taken together that we didn't know from reading either one of them in isolation.

### Proposing a New Research Project

The description of the proposed research project will include, a) the purpose of the proposed research, b) the **specific** research question or research hypothesis, c) the sample that will be used (description and number), d) research materials (stimuli, apparatus, psychological tests, etc.) and procedures (what the participants will do that will produce the data) that will be used.

While there is no "formula" for combining the information from two studies into a novel research idea, there are a few basic approaches that can lead to new research ideas, such as...

- Extending a research finding to **another population**. Example -- you critique two articles that demonstrate there is a relationship between locus of control (a measure of the extent to which a person believes that "internal" versus "external" forces control their lives) and consistency of contraceptive use in college-aged students, and propose a study of whether these two constructs are related in high school students. (An obvious variation on this is to critique two articles that deal with two populations and propose research involving a third.) This approach won't get you many points on this assignment -- see the Grading Sheet.
- Extending a research finding to **another situation**. Example -- you critique two articles that demonstrate the utility of a treatment in one situation (say, inpatient therapy) and propose a study of whether this same technique can profitably be applied in a different situation (say, outpatient therapy). This also won't get you all the possible points, though a careful and clever argument about why a certain situation or application is particularly worthy of study will get you more than the minimum.
- **Explicit comparison** of two procedures/techniques/treatments that have each been compared to some control, but not to each other. Example -- "first article" demonstrates that cognitive-behavioral technique "A" for social anxiety works better than a control treatment, the "second article" demonstrates that cognitive-behavioral technique "B" also works better than a control, and you propose a direct comparison of techniques "A" and "B".
- **Resolving apparent contradictions** is another good basis for proposed research. Sometimes two articles that seem to be contradicting each other aren't really comparable, because of differences in the population, materials, or procedures that were used. For example: The "first article" finds a relationship between locus of control (using

Rotter's I-E scale) and consistency of contraceptive use (measured as a self-report of the % sexual encounters when contraceptive was used) in college students. However, a "second article" reports finding no relationship between locus of control (using Hareleson's controlling forces index) and consistency of contraceptive use (measured as whether or not they used a contraceptive each time they have had sex) in high school students. You would note that there are three differences between these studies (the population used, the measure of locus of control, the measure of contraceptive consistency) and propose a study that uses all four measures in both populations. This approach isn't always available -- there has to be a contradiction, and it has to have gone unnoticed (except by you).

- Perhaps the most common basis for proposing new research (and the one that will get you the most points on this assignment) is to **combine two findings to predict a third**. For example: The "first article" reports a relationship between how well people can interpret body language (e.g., that folks tend to lean towards a speaker who is saying something in which they are interested but to lean away from one who is not) and how well they enjoy conversations with strangers. The "second article" reports that many socially anxious people say they don't like starting conversations with people they don't know well, because they don't enjoy the conversations. Combining these two findings, you propose research to test the hypothesis that teaching socially anxious people how to more accurately interpret body language will lead them to better enjoy conversations with people they don't know.

**Remember -- this is the sort of writing (summarizing, integrating & proposing) that you are likely to be doing not only during the rest of this semester, but in most of your other Psychology classes. Now's the time to learn how to do it well !!**

### **How Do I Learn to Write This Way???**

A good way to learn how to organize research findings to produce ideas for new research is to read the introductions of other's research reports carefully. These usually "tell a story" about the history of research in an area, including how previous researchers have combined various findings to create new ideas. The introduction will also give you an example of how the author combined the ideas of others to produce the idea for the article that you are reading.

### **There's Lots of Help with this Assignment !!**

Besides this set of instructions, there are four handouts that will help you with the assignment: 1) There is a "grading sheet that tells how the points for this assignment will be awarded. Read it carefully and **be sure to include all parts that are worth points!** 2) Last week you looked at a handout that showed the parts and format of a literature review write-up of this type. 3) Last week you also looked at a handout telling how to format citations in text and reference citations in APA style. 4) Finally, there is a handout that shows examples of a "poorer" and a "better" write-up of this type. Both are write-ups that start with the two articles and the questions that were part of Design Critique #1 (what you did in class today) and then organize the answers to these questions in to a formal APA style literature review. The first example is sort of a compilation of "mistakes" commonly made on this exercise -- this version would barely receive a "C". The second example is much better -- fewer mistakes, better writing, etc, -- this version would receive an "A".

So, you should review the handouts on general APA style and citations, compare the "Poore" and "much improved" versions of the write-up of today's Design Critique and follow the Grading Sheet to be sure you have all the right stuff in the right place.