Guidelines for Literature/Review Proposal

DUE APRIL 9, 2008

<u>Introduction</u>

The introduction to the literature review/proposal orients the reader to the problem under study and has three parts. First, you need to provide a statement of the problem. This statement sets out the general reasons that the research area is important. You might indicate the prevalence of the problem, its relevance or cost, its importance to theory, the relative absence of knowledge, some contradictory research, etc. Prevalence statistics, knowledge gaps, contradictory research, the need for theory testing, presence of puzzling anomalies, etc. help to make your case here. Secondary sources (books, chapters, review articles) or tertiary sources (newspapers, magazine articles) can be helpful in making a general case for research in his area. However, do not rely on tertiary sources to make your case. I expect you will use a majority of primary sources with a limited (small) number of secondary/tertiary sources. The second section of the Introduction sets out the purpose of the proposed study. This can be brief and simply clarifies how your proposed study will address the problem you have identified. The third part of the Introduction is a statement of the research question (or hypotheses). Write your research question according to the guidelines for good research questions discussed in class. Parts one and two set the stage for the research question.

Recommended length: 1 - 2 pages

<u>Review of Literature</u>

The written review of literature (also called Background) presents an argument that justifies your choice of topic and the way you have chosen to address it. Begin the review with the most general aspects of your topic and gradually narrow it until it implies your research questions or hypotheses. Define any specialized terms as you introduce them. Provide the general context for the proposed study. This can be done in terms of a general overview of the field, with a description of a classic study or studies, on the basis of history of the field, grounded in a theory to be tested, or with other context setting methods.

Critically evaluate the current research in the field to provide specific reasons why your proposed study will make a contribution to the literature. This has two related parts. First, you want to show some deficiency in the literature. This may involve (a) some weakness in previously used methods, (b) builds on or extends previous research, and/or (c) shows how new knowledge will help theoretically or practically. Second, on the basis of your critique of the existing literature, show why your proposed study is the best way to investigate the question. As you review studies, discuss the specific limitations in the internal and/or external validity. Describe what needs to be done differentially to improve on the body of knowledge (e.g., better instruments, more representative sampling, ruling out alternative explanations, etc.). This provides the specific basis for the importance of your study.

If you are proposing a quantitative study, give the rational for the hypotheses you are proposing. Very briefly summarize the main points of the review. The task is to determine what general conclusions do or do not follow from the literature you reviewed. Consider the weight of the evidence for specific and general conclusions. If the majority of studies support the same or similar conclusions, it can be drawn more confidently than if the evidence is mixed. When there is mixed

evidence, be sure to qualify your conclusions as appropriate. A good way to know if you have succeeded here is that the reader should be able to guess your hypotheses based on this section. If you are proposing a qualitative study, provide a similar summary that suggests the importance of the foreshadowed problems in which you are interested.

State your hypotheses clearly. If your literature review/proposal suggests directional hypotheses, write them this way. If the literature is ambiguous, write them as non-directional hypotheses. If you are proposing a qualitative study, list the foreshadowed problems to which you would attend in the research.

Recommended length: 3 – 6 pages

Methods Section

Write a brief methods section in which you describe four characteristics in four subsections about your proposed study. The first subsection (Subjects) describes the population from which you plan to sample and all relevant sampling considerations. The second subsection (Design) should describe the general research design you plan to use: Experimental, ex post facto, correlational, participant-observer, historical, etc. Include a statement suggesting which data analysis method you would propose (e.g., ANOVA, multiple regression, grounded theory, etc.). Make sure that your design is consistent with your stated research question and hypotheses. For example, if you are interested in exploring group differences or experimental effects, the research question and hypotheses should be written in the language of contrast. If you are interested in exploring some phenomenon in significant depth using qualitative methods, your research should be stated consistently with that approach. The third subsection (Measures) of the Methods should describe all dependent (outcome) measures you plan on studying and any available psychometric information pertaining to their reliability and validity. Fourth subsection (Procedure) spells out the actual steps you will take to conduct your study.

Recommended length: 1 - 3 pages

Style

Use the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.) as a guide for the style, organization, quotations, citations, and references. You should include a title page and an abstract, double space the paper throughout, use one-inch margins and follow correct table/figure structure.

Organize your review into logical sections. Keep the length of a sections under four pages if possible. If you need to, subdivide long sections with subheadings. Dividing the paper assists the reader in following the steps of your argument. The headings reflect the basic organizational plan of the paper. The *Publications Manual* provides directions on which types of heading to use depending on how many levels of heading you have. Your outline (Assignment #7) is a good model for determining the number of heading levels you have. The roman numerals in an outline are the highest level, followed by capitalized letters, Arabic numerals, and lower case letters. An outline that has all of these levels would suggest four levels of headings in the paper.

Scientific writing focuses on documentation and verification. When you make an assertion of fact or a statement of theory, you should document that claim with a citation from the literature. Do not be excessively repetitive if it can be clearly understood that several statements follow from a given source.

You must include at least 10 original reports of research studies (primary sources) in your literature review/proposal. A good review will likely contain more references, but this is a minimum. You may cite books and chapters on your topic (secondary sources), but these citations are in addition to the primary sources.

Again you must follow the *Publications Manual* as the reference for content and style. If you have never written a proposal or data based research paper before, please familiarize yourself with sections 1.06 - 1.09 and 2.01 – 2.12.

Your proposal/literature review should have the following components:
        Title Page   (on a separate page)
        Abstract   (on its own page, limit 150 words)
        Paper Body:
                Introduction:
                        Statement of the Problem
                        Purpose with research question(s) or hypotheses
                        Literature Review
                Methods:
                        Subjects
                        Design
                        Measures
                        Procedure
        References   (begins on a new page)

Grading Criteria

The literature review will be graded according to the criteria described below. Each of the items summarized in the attached grading form will receive a rating score from **0 (unacceptable) to 10 (excellent)**.

Refer to the supplemental text listed in the course syllabus for additional information.

Galvan, J., L. (2004). *Writing Literature Reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences*, (2nd ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

EMR 6400   Fundamentals of EMR

LITERATURE REVIEW/PROPOSAL GRADING FORM

Student Name: _____

Scoring Criteria   0 = Unacceptable, 10 = Excellent

Title page	
Abstract	
Introduction	
Statement of the problem	
Purpose of the study Research questions/hypotheses	
Review of literature	
Context of the review & problem rational	
Critical evaluation of cited literature	
Description of how this proposed study adds to the literature	

Justification and rationale for
     research questions or
     hypotheses, do they logically
     follow the problem	

Citations in text (number, age & style)	
Methods	
Subjects	
Design	
Measures	
Procedure	
References	
Overall writing, grammar and APA Style	