Organizing and Integrating Sources[1]

Once you have read and analyzed your sources, paying close attention to the relationships among sources and between each source and your research, you are ready to begin the most difficult part of drafting a literature review: deciding how to organize the information you have accumulated. Because your task is to provide readers with a roadmap that leads to the value of your proposed research (your claim), you will need to organize your literature review in order to achieve this purpose. This means that organizing your literature review according to themes, methodologies, and/or underlying concepts is generally more effective than presenting each source one by one.

Common Organizational Patterns

<u>Topical</u>
Characteristics: This approach breaks the field into a number of subfields, subject areas, or approaches, and discusses them one by one, sometimes with critiques of each. Most useful for organizing a large body of literature that does not have one or two studies that stand out as most important or a clear chronological development.
Typical Language: Three important areas of this field have received attention: A, B, and C. A has been approached from two perspectives…The most important developments in terms of B have been…C has also been an important area of study in this field.

<u>Distant to Close</u>
Characteristics: This is a variation of topical organization; studies are organized in terms of their relevance to the current study. This approach starts by describing studies with general similarities and ends with studies most relevant to the specific topic. Most useful for reviews of methodologies or models.
Typical Language: Method/model M (slightly similar to current research) addresses…Drawing upon method/model N (more similar to current research) can help…This study applies the procedure used in method O (most similar to current research) to…

<u>Debate</u>
Characteristics: Also a topical organization, with a chronological element. This organization emphasizes various strands of research in which proponents of various models openly criticize one another. Most useful when clear opposing positions are present in the literature.
Typical Language: There have been two (three, four, etc.) distinct approaches to this problem. The first model posits…The second model argues that the first model is wrong for three reasons. Instead, the second model claims…

<u>Chronological</u>
Characteristics: This approach lists studies in terms of chronological development; it is most useful when a field shows clear development over time, either linear progression of thinking or a linear progression that is interrupted by a paradigm shift.
Typical Language: This subject was first studied by X, who found…In (date), Y modified/extended/contradicted X's work by …Today, research by Z represents the current state of the field.

---

[1] Adapted from Penn State University's "Literature Review Packet Summer 2018", available at https://gwc.psu.edu/resources/#Latest_Edition_Strategies_for_Writing_Literature_Reviews

Example: *Which organizational pattern does the writer use?*

Research suggests that a number of variables may impact a graduate student's ability to produce an effective literature review. Three important aspects of this topic have received extended critical attention: (1) length of time students spend on writing literature reviews, (2) the amount of revisions typically required by thesis advisors, and (3) the extent to which highlighters help or hinder the review process. What has not been considered, however, is the extent to which prior knowledge of the conventions of the given discipline impacts the writer's ability to produce an effective literature review.

The first of these subjects, the length of time students spend on writing literature reviews, has been studied both in terms of total time and in terms of time spent reading as considered separately from the time spent writing. In terms of total time, Horowitz (2009) found that the average number of hours spent on a literature review is 22.6 hours. This is very close to the finding of Smith (1998), who in a study of Harvard Divinity school graduates found an average time of 21.8 hours. … (writer might go on to link this information to his or her current research by demonstrating that further research needs to be done in order to determine whether the number of hours spent was influenced by a student's level of experience writing in the discipline)

The second major issue in this field, the amount of revision typically required by thesis advisors, has received more complete study. Downs (1980), Thomas (1999), and Hyperion (2004) have concluded that advisors always require at least two drafts of a literature review. In terms of the high end of the spectrum, these studies vary in their findings. Downs found a maximum of 10 drafts, and Thomas found a maximum of 14, while the highest number of revisions required of any single student in Hyperion's study was 274. These studies have all been challenged by Xie's 2009 study, which determined that advisors in social science fields require on average two more revisions than advisors in engineering or biological sciences, with some engineering advisors requiring only one revisions. … (writer might go on to link this information to his or her current research by demonstrating the need for further research into levels of mentorship offered to students unfamiliar with writing conventions in the discipline)

The third major issue in the field…

Integration: Balancing Summary and Analysis

After determining which general pattern of organization best fits your purposes, you can begin to draft each section. Keep in mind that your task is to integrate sources in a way that offers analysis, not mere summary. If your sections read as isolated units cataloging individual sources, you have not synthesized information.

Example

In the following example, the writers refer to several sources when making a point. The short paragraph both summarizes and synthesizes, i.e. the authors recapitulate important features of Hamilton's study, but then synthesize it by rephrasing the study's significance and relating it to their own work.

However, other studies have shown that even gender-neutral antecedents are more likely to produce masculine images than feminine ones (Gastil, 1990). Hamilton (1988) asked students to complete sentences that required them to fill in pronouns that agreed with gender-neutral antecedents such as "writer," "pedestrian," and "persons." The students were asked to describe any image they had when writing the sentence. Hamilton found that people imagined 3.3 men to each woman in the masculine "generic" condition and 1.5 men per woman in the unbiased condition. Thus while ambient sexism accounted for some of the masculine bias, sexist language amplified the effect.[2]

<u>Example</u>: *Which version is a more effective synthesis of information and why?*

(1)
In Gretel Ehrlich's essay, "About Men," she is more interested in describing a particular type of man—a cowboy—than men in general. Contrary to social stereotypes of a "macho, trigger-happy man," she describes cowboys as sensitive and humorous, and gives examples to back up her assertions. Her own appreciation for this often misunderstood type of life-style leads her to argue that these men are "androgynous at the core" (2004): men who are rugged, powerful, and courageous—as well as sensitive, generous, and ultimately vulnerable.

Dave Barry, on the other hand, is much less romantic in his approach to describing men. In his essay "Guys vs. Men," Barry humorously categorizes the majority of the male gender as "guys" or "men." Although most of the essay is spent describing what it means to be a guy, he does briefly define men as those who take their manhood seriously, which results in "stupid behavior patterns that can produce unfortunate results such as violent crimes, war, spitting, and ice hockey." (361). He defines "guys" as being much more laid back, interested in technology simply because it is technology (or "neat stuff" as he calls it), enjoying pointless challenges, having difficulty maintaining a rigid moral code and communicating intimate feelings. He seems to assume that this kind of "guy-ness" is pretty widespread in American society.

Where Barry treats the concept of masculinity humorously, Paul Theroux's treatment of masculinity is serious, with wide-reaching implications. For him the American version of manhood involves a lack of feeling and critical thinking, requiring men to be stupid, aggressive, and misogynistic. It is, he writes, "essentially right-wing, puritanical, cowardly, neurotic, and fueled largely by a fear of women" (539).

(2)
In the wake of the various feminist movements of the twentieth century in America, we have become increasingly aware of what it means to be a woman, and the ways in which societal expectations shape the expression of femininity. What such discussion often leave out—or at least gloss over—is a corresponding critical examination of what societal expectations are for men, and what the implications of these expectations may be. A brief comparison of three vastly different essays—Gretel Ehrlich's "About Men," Dave Barry's "Guys vs. Men," and Paul Theroux's "Being a Man"—offers us a useful framework for thinking about the social construction of masculinity, particularly in terms of its limitations.

Underlying all three essays is a sense of masculinity as a prescriptive—and limiting. All three acknowledge, at least tacitly, that society often valorizes masculinity as aggressive, unfeeling, and powerful. Although Barry glosses over manhood on his way to defining "guys," he acknowledges that masculine behavior "can produce unfortunate results such as violent crime, war, spitting, and ice hockey" (361). Ehrlich acknowledges the negative limits of manhood by taking pains to establish the androgyny (primarily through proofs of emotional sensitivity and vulnerability) of what is typically considered one

[2] Source: Erika Falk and Jordan Mills, "Why Sexist Language Affects Persuasion: The Role of Homophily, Intended Audience, and Offense," Women and Language (1996), 19: 36-43.

of the most “manly” occupations—the cowboy. Theroux, of the three authors, is the most explicit about the negative limits of masculinity, and the ways that expectations about masculine behavior damage our society—both by the resulting misogyny and by the limits masculinity puts on cultural and emotional expression of men.

<u>Example</u>: *What are the strengths of this example? Any weaknesses?*

Sex and Adolescent Peer Acceptance[3]

The importance of peer status for adolescent development and informal school organization has prompted generations of researchers to identify the criteria underlying teenage popularity. Coleman (1961), in his seminal work Adolescent Society, found that social class background, athletics, physical attractiveness, and material possessions (e.g., cars, expensive clothes) were important symbols for teenage peer acceptance, providing their possessors with valued access to the leading crowds. Developmental research also suggests that prosocial behaviors and individual characteristics—such as cooperativeness, kindness, honesty, leadership, intelligence, and self-confidence—are positively associated with children’s popularity across a wide variety of social settings (Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt 1990; Newcomb, Bukowski, and Pattee 1993). For the most part, the criteria for adolescent popularity operate in the same directions for both girls and boys, even if some characteristics or activities—such as attractiveness, athletics, or physical aggression—may have stronger associations with peer status for one gender than the other (Coleman 1961; LaFontana and Cillessen 2002; Steffensmeier and Allan 1996). Sexual behaviors may provide an exception to this pattern. According to the sexual double standard, the social consequences of early romantic and sexual experiences differ substantially by gender. Gender-specific norms govern the appropriate number of sex partners, the conditions under which it is acceptable to engage in sexual activity (e.g., on a “first-date”, prior to marriage, in a non-committal relationship, etc.), and the appropriate motives for sexual behavior (e.g., a man may have sex without affection, whereas a women can only have sex when she is in love). If women and men are evaluated differently for engaging in the same sexual behaviors, then male sexual permissiveness would be tolerated, or even praised, while female permissiveness would lead to damaged reputations and “spoiled” identities (Goffman 1963).

Although gendered norms of appropriate sexual conduct have existed for centuries (e.g., the harsh penalties historically associated with female infidelity [see Wolf 1997]), it is a debatable claim that strong sexual double standards persist in contemporary, post-sexual revolution, U.S. society (Risman and Schwartz 2002). Shifts in sexual norms may result in a single standard of sexual conduct that is applied to both men and women (Marks and Fraley 2005). Accordingly, negative perceptions of sexual permissiveness may lower the social desirability of a sexual actor regardless of his or her gender.

Tests of a modern sexual double standard remain inconclusive and contested. We first review this research, paying particular attention to modern adolescent peer contexts and potential gender differences in sexual norm enforcement. We also consider sociodemographic variations in the double standard, such that gender and socioeconomic background may combine nonadditively with sexual experiences to affect adolescent peer acceptance. Finally, we discuss those individual and social characteristics that may moderate or make spurious any link between sexual behavior and peer status.

---

[3] Source: Derek A. Kreager and Jeremy Staff. "The Sexual Double Standard and Adolescent Peer Acceptance," Social Psychology Quarterly (2009), 72: 143-164.