RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

# There is a standard format for all research papers.

The structure of the research paper reflects the profound relationship between theory and fact. Facts do not speak for themselves. As Marvin Harris (Cultural Materialism 1979) observed, “facts are always unreliable without theories that guide their collection and that distinguish between superficial and significant appearances.” On the other hand, theories without facts are meaningless.

The premise of science is the authority of experiment and observation over reason, ideology, and intuition. It’s worth stressing that the evaluation of your paper will never be determined by whether or not your hypotheses are verified. It is important to remember that a hypothesis supported by the data does not mean that it is true as there conceivably are an infinite number of other theories that lead to the same prediction. Similarly, failure of support does not necessarily mean that your hypothesis is wrong: it may hold true in some populations, you may have incorrectly measured your theory’s concepts; your sampling may be flawed, etc.

Research Paper Format in APA or ASA style, so is the title page. Below is an example of a perfect title page:

# Title Page

The first page of your research paper is the title page. While all of the pages of your research paper will be formatted. Title “ Underage Drinking” Running head: Underage Drinking ; College Student’s Perceptions about Underage Drinking, Student, Course AJ 319 Research Methods, Section number, Day of course, College, Professor M. Reid

# Abstract

An abstract is a one paragraph summary of your research project. Write your abstract after the rest of your paper is written. After all, how can you summarize something that is not yet written? Economy of words is important throughout any paper, but especially in an abstract. However, use complete sentences and do not sacrifice readability for brevity. You can keep it concise by working sentences so that they serve more than one purpose. Remember, an abstract is one paragraph. And remember, you are using APA or ASA format.

Consider the following elements in your one paragraph abstract.

Purpose of the study – hypothesis, overall question, objective

. Be concise

. As a summary of work done, it is always written in the past tense and 3rd person

. An abstract should stand on its own and not refer to any other part of the paper

. Focus on summarizing results – limit background information to a sentence or two

. Spelling and format count

# Introduction

Statement of the Problem/Hypothesis/Topic-

In this section you are introducing your research paper and explaining what your topic/problem/hypothesis is. Your opening paragraph will be introductory and you will want to make sure you explain what your hypothesis or research is. You will also want to describe precisely what you, the researcher intends to prove or demonstrate from your research and why.

The introduction is also the section where you need to define terms or words specific to your research question. For example, if you are doing your research paper on video games and violence in adolescent male children, then you might need to explain what the different types of video games are and how they are played and with what game system/equipment, etc. You may also need to explain or define the historical background behind your research project; an example would be capital punishment. Or you may consider using a rich illustration of the phenomenon you are studying. Remember, a research paper is neither an essay nor a journalistic feature story. All assertions of fact must be documented. Be careful of any generalizations that you make. And strive to be value-free in your inquiry. A social science research paper is not an editorial piece where one espouses one’s own beliefs; it is a research

process!!!!!!! And it should/Could be around 10-15 pages in length.

# Review of the literature

A literature review is used to show that you have read, evaluated, and comprehended the published research on a particular topic. A literature review is structured to show your professor that you understand the work that has been done about your topic. To say it in another way, the literature review provides information about the research already conducted in this area. It is meant to set the stage for your own research. Using previous research, you will describe the phenomenon you want to study and what previous research tells us about it.

A literature review discusses published information in a particular subject area utilizing the process of summary and synthesis. A summary is a recap of the important information of the source, but a synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling of that information. For your literature review, you will use at least 5 scholarly articles/sources.

What are scholarly sources? That simply means that you will want to use research that goes through an academic review process. Scholarly journals are also called academic, peer-reviewed, or refereed journals. Strictly speaking, peer-reviewed (also called refereed) journals refer only to those scholarly journals that submit articles to several other scholars, experts, or academics (peers) in the field for review and comment. These reviewers must agree that the article represents properly conducted original research or writing before it can be published.

Scholarly journal articles often have an abstract, a descriptive summary of the article contents, before the main text of the article. Scholarly journals generally have a sober, serious look. They often contain many graphs and charts but few glossy pages or exciting pictures. Scholarly journals always cite their sources in the form of footnotes or bibliographies. These bibliographies are generally lengthy and cite other scholarly writings. Articles are written by a scholar in the field or by someone who has done research in the field. The affiliations of the authors are listed, usually at the bottom of the first page or at the end of the article. The main purpose of a scholarly journal is to report on original research or experimentation in order to make such information available to the rest of the scholarly world.

Many scholarly journals, though by no means all, are published by a specific professional organization.

MAKE SURE YOUR 5 SOURCES ARE SCHOLARLY!!!!!

# Method

For this section you need to describe how you administered your instrument/survey, when and how, and to how many, and in what form.

For example: In researching the topic “college students perception of video games and violence”, a 50-question survey was administered in AJ 319 – Research and Statistics in Criminal Justice on Wednesday, May 9, 2012. 65 students completed the survey which asked a variety of questions regarding the topic. The surveys were administered anonymously.

Should/Could be 1 page in length

# Design

Attach a copy of the survey instrument that you administered to your population (50 people at least). Behind that, attach another copy of your survey instrument with an explanation, after each question or several questions of the same type, explaining why you asked the questions you did and what you were hoping to learn or understand by asking that/those question(s).

Your survey instrument shall contain at least 15 questions. You must also use all of the following types of questions at least once in your survey instrument:

Dichotomous Questions - When a question has two possible responses, we consider it dichotomous. Surveys often use dichotomous questions that ask for a Yes/No, True/False or Agree/Disagree response.

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/Assets/images/quesdich.gif>

Nominal Questions - We can also classify questions in terms of their level of measurement. For instance, we might measure occupation using a nominal question. Here, the number next to each response has no meaning except as a placeholder for that response. The choice of a "2" for a lawyer and a "1" for a truck driver is arbitrary -- from the numbering system used we can't infer that a lawyer is "twice" something more that a truck driver is. <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/Assets/images/quesnom.gif>

Likert Scale – is when we construct survey questions that attempt to measure on an interval level. One of the most common of these types is the traditional 1-to-5 rating (or 1-to-7, or 1-to-9, etc.). Here we see how we might ask an opinion question on a 1-to-5 bipolar scale (it's called bipolar because there is a neutral point and the two ends of the scale are at opposite positions of the opinion):

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/Assets/images/quesint1.gif>

Semantic Differential – is another type of interval question. Here the respondent is assessed on a set of bipolar adjective pairs using a 5-point rating scale:

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/Assets/images/quesint2.gif>

Guttmann Scale – is another type of interval level measurement. Here the respondent checks each item with which they agree. The items themselves are constructed so that they are cumulative -- if you agree to one, you probably agree to all of the ones above it in the list

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/Assets/images/quesint3.gif>

Filter or Contingency Questions - Sometimes you have to ask the respondent one question in order to determine if they are qualified or experienced enough to answer a subsequent one. For instance, you may want to ask one question if the respondent has ever smoked marijuana and a different question if they have not. In this case you would have to construct a filter or contingency question to determine whether they've ever smoked marijuana:

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/Assets/images/quesfilt.gif>

# Analysis & Findings

In this section your goal is to analyze the responses to your surveys. When you analyze the responses you are required to do more than just report back how many people answered yes to a question or how many people answered no to another question. The goal is to try to reach conclusions that extend beyond the immediate data alone. Feel free to make judgments about the probabilities you observe between different groups such as male versus female, ages difference, religious differences, etc. Or, maybe your analysis and findings will reveal that you should have asked a question that you didn’t think of? Make sure you include this in your narrative. It is okay torealize something after the fact.

How to display your data

One way to display your survey results is to use tables, graphs or pie charts. Below are examples:

Responses to the variable EUTHANASIA revealed that individuals were more than twice as likely to agree as oppose to disagree. Interestingly, although numerous professional books and journal articles on the subject detail considerable ambiguities and numerous moral shades of gray and only 5 percent of the public admitted not knowing where they stand on the issue.

# References

YOU ARE USING APA or ASA FORMAT TO CONSTRUCT YOUR RESEARCH PAPER Each of the sections above is separate. Do not let the sections run into each other