

PMCb1002 - Academic Writing

Autumn 2023, Class 2 of 6

Types of writing, working with sources, research questions

Types of writing: research proposals

- Structured, formal document that explains:
 1. **What** you plan to research (research topic)
- Example: An investigation into the factors which impact female British Generation Y voters' likelihood to recommend a specific political party
- Covers: what is being investigated, who it involves, and what the context is
- Can also include research aims and objectives of your research

Types of writing: research proposals

2. **Why** it's worth researching (justification)
 - Why is your topic original? What makes it unique?
 - Does it fill a current gap in the literature?
 - Why is your research important?
 - Example: It is helpful for political parties to know how they could reach more women voters through word of mouth, a valuable form of recommendation

Types of writing: research proposals

3. **How** you plan to research it (methodology)

- Is your research methodology appropriate given your research aims?
- Is it manageable given your constraints, such as time or finances?
 - Qualitative or quantitative?
 - How is the data collected and analyzed?
 - What are some potential limitations?

Types of writing: research proposals

- The goal is to convince your audience that your research is suitable and manageable
 - It should have:
 - Strong introduction and background to the topic
 - Literature review that covers existing research
 - Overview of research methodology
- Discussion regarding practicalities, such as timelines, limitations, biases, etc

Types of writing: book reviews

- Can be found in academic journals
 - 800 to 1 200 words
- The editors will sometimes tell you what to focus on and what the review should contain. For example, do a comparison with other books, write a brief overview, tackle the topic of political assumptions
- Evaluates the book's content, sets the work in a larger context, identifies strengths/weaknesses

Types of writing: case studies

- “The detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events” – Levy, 2008
 - Lijphart’s 1971 categories of atheoretical, interpretive, hypothesis-generating, theory-confirming, theory-informing, and deviant case studies

Types of writing: ideographic case studies

- Idiographic case studies: describe, explain, interpret, and/or understand a single case as an end in itself rather than as a vehicle for developing broader theoretical generalizations
- Inductive case studies: very descriptive and lack an explicit theoretical framework. Often take the form of “total history,” which assumes that everything is connected to everything else and aims to explain all aspects of a case and their interconnections
 - Also known as descriptive or atheoretical

Types of writing: ideographic case studies

- Theory-guided case studies: also aim to explain/interpret a single historical event rather than to generalize beyond the data
 - In comparison to inductive case studies, they are explicitly structured by a well-developed conceptual framework that focuses on some theoretically-specified aspects of reality and neglects others
- Examples: efforts by political scientists to explain the origins of WW1, the end of the Cold War, as well as realist, Marxist, and feminist historical analyses

Types of writing: hypothesis-generating case studies

- Hypothesis-generating case studies: aim to generalize beyond the data
- Examine one or more cases to develop a general theoretical proposition
- Contribute to the *process* of theory-construction rather than to theory itself

Types of writing: hypothesis-testing case studies

- Most/least likely case designs
- Assesses the plausibility of a hypothesis by using sample data
 - Various research methods – interviews, experiments, questionnaire, etc

Types of writing: abstracts

- Short summary of a longer work with key points
 - Usually about 200-250 words
- Presents the methodology, research question, and the key findings
- It lets the reader decide if they will read the full paper

Working with sources: primary and secondary sources

- Primary sources: offers first-hand evidence and information
 - Data collected yourself through interviews, surveys, or experiments, government documents, legal texts.
 - Social media posts, newspaper articles (history), speeches
 - Physical objects; artwork, photos, letters, diaries
- Secondary sources: have already interpreted and analyzed information from primary sources
 - Journal articles, academic books, reviews, textbooks, documentary

Working with sources: how to search for information

- Search engines for academic articles: [Google Scholar](#), [JSTOR](#), [Scopus](#), [Web of Science](#), [FSS Library e-Resources](#)
- Access these search engines through your Masaryk University account
- Familiarize yourself with your topic and determine keywords/terms to find the information you want

Working with sources: how to read sources

- The abstract will provide a good overview of the article
 - Be critical:
 - Distinction between facts and opinions?
 - What evidence is being used?
 - What are the findings and conclusions?
- Skimming? Read the first and last sentences of each paragraph, or the introduction and the conclusion

Working with sources: how to annotate

- Notes are essential to remember what you've read – great for studying
 - Accurate, clear, concise
 - My preferred method:
 1. Highlighting key points and later re-writing them in a review document
 2. Headings with subpoints
 - Highlight/underline main information
 - You can make tables, diagrams, word clouds
- You should be able to concisely summarize the reading

Working with sources: how to do a literature review

- What is a literature review?
 - An overview of previously published works on a topic
- It demonstrates your knowledge and understanding of your topic, particularly how the works related to each other
 - It is time-consuming but it is the foundation of your research

Working with sources: how to do a literature review

1. Narrow your topic – we will discuss this soon
2. Identify the literature to develop an understanding
(will go from broad to narrow)
3. Critical analysis of the literature
 - Major themes, relationships between articles (check the references), **gaps** in the literature
4. Develop a research question

Working with sources: how to do a literature review

In an article, this section can be titled:

- Literature review
 - Theoretical background
 - Current state of knowledge
-
- It brings together all the existing, relevant knowledge for your paper
 - Divide your literature review section into paragraphs that present themes, trends, relevant theories
 - You must synthesize the published material, but also evaluate it in regard to your research question

Working with sources: how to do a literature review

Literature Review	Annotated Bibliography
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Draws together multiple sources to examine where they agree and disagree- Helps identify gaps in the literature<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Essay format- Relate the findings of the sources to the research question	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Summary and evaluation of each source on an individual basis- Annotated bibliographies help develop literature reviews- Can be used as a reference point to help paint the bigger picture in the literature review

How to develop a research question

- Identify a subject area
 - Carry out preliminary research
- Focus on a precise issue within your broader topic
 - Make sure your question hasn't already been answered (but the topic can be the same)
 - You can also develop sub-questions
- How will you answer this question? We will look at this in during class 4

Final paper topics

- What are some topics in which you are interested?
- Are you interested in: a region of the world? A phenomenon? A historical period? A historical figure? A relationship between two actors? A political theory?
- Questions about some already existing ideas?