Assignment 2: Article Summary

Purpose
The purpose of this assignment is to continue narrowing down your research questions, critically engage published research on your topic, and prepare to write your literature review.

Submission Expectations
This assignment is closely connected to your literature review and I have included a description of literature reviews as an appendix to the assignment. The assignment requires that you make the following submission. Below you will find a fuller description of the assignment expectations.

- **Article Summaries**: You should submit four article summaries in a single document. This document may be single- or double-spaced, should be in 12 point font with numbered pages. Submit this to Moodle. You must also provide me with either a hard copy or digital copy of the four articles you are summarizing. Turn these in during class, by email, or embed a link in your Moodle submission.

Article Summaries
You should have six-to-ten peer-reviewed articles cited in your literature review. Choose four of those articles and, in your own words, write a summary of the most important parts of each article. You must either submit a hardcopy of your four articles or a link to a digital copy.

- Each summary should begin with the citation for that article.
- State the purpose of the journal article (i.e., hypothesis or research question)
- What type of research design was used?
  - Was it qualitative, quantitative, survey, evaluative, single-subject?
  - When was the data collected (they should be within the last 10 years)?
- What are the IV’s and DV’s? If it is not an explanatory study, identify/name the variables.
  - How were the variables defined?
  - How were the variables measured?
- What type of sampling method did the authors use?
  - From what group did they get their sample?
  - How many people participated in the study?
  - What type of people were they?
- What were the study’s findings?
- What were the study problems or limitations? What did you see? Which ones did the authors mention?
Rubric

I provide these rubrics at the beginning of the semester. I reserve the privilege of making reasonable changes to these rubrics within a reasonable timeframe before the assignment is due. If any changes are made to the rubric I will communicate them clearly before the assignment is due.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Summary</th>
<th>Scale-1 (6 pts.)</th>
<th>Scale-2 (8)</th>
<th>Scale-3 (10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose (15%)</td>
<td>Purpose of article is not identified in one or more articles.</td>
<td>Clear effort to describe the purpose of the articles.</td>
<td>Description of purpose includes discussion of hypotheses and/or research questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design (15)</td>
<td>Design is not identified in one or more articles.</td>
<td>Design is named with limited discussion.</td>
<td>Clear identification and discussion of design features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables (25)</td>
<td>Variables are not identified in one or more articles</td>
<td>Clear effort to identify main variables.</td>
<td>Variables are identified and discussion includes reference to kinds of variables and measurement strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling (25)</td>
<td>Sample and population are not addressed in one or more articles.</td>
<td>Clear effort to name sampling procedure.</td>
<td>Clear discussion of sampling procedure and descriptions of populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find/Limits (10)</td>
<td>Findings and limitations are not addressed in one or more articles.</td>
<td>Clear effort to identify findings and limitations.</td>
<td>Discussion of findings and limitations is directed towards development of your own project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (10)</td>
<td>More than 3 spelling or grammar errors and/or Missing sections of the paper and/or Incorrectly formatted and/or missing references</td>
<td>2 spelling errors or 2 grammar errors. Main sections of the paper are all present. References are present but some other formatting issues.</td>
<td>No spelling errors. No grammar errors. Well formatted references.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A: Writing a Literature Review for a Quantitative Research Proposal

Writing a literature review for a quantitative proposal is similar to other library research papers you have written in terms of style and voice but the goals of the literature review in a research proposal are different. The goal of a literature review in this context is to synthesize the literature regarding some subject and to demonstrate the need for the research you are proposing. The goal is to bring together what is “known” to researchers about your topic in a way that sets up the “need” for your specific research. A good literature review does not simply list studies; it organizes the previous studies, summarizes past findings, and identifies specific research needs.

There are three basic parts to doing a literature review. The first is to collect information on your topic. The second is to organize the information. The third is writing the literature review.

Collect Information
For this assignment, you need to identify 6 academic sources from peer reviewed journals. Your sources must be research articles. That means that they should have a methods sections and report findings from research that the authors conducted. If you need help finding these sources please contact me.

Organizing Your Information
Organization is the key to a good literature review. Rather than reporting on each article, your task is to summarize patterns of findings in the literature. For example, if several articles have found that X causes Y, don’t summarize each article, just make the substantive point (X causes Y) and cite all the articles. Organization is key to being able to make this kind of synthesis.

Note Cards
Note cards are one way to keep track of your information. On the front side of the card cite the source using the full APA or ASA format. On the back of the card record some notes about the publication. You should be reading intentionally and taking notes intentionally. The question to ask yourself is, what is note-worthy? Below I have listed some suggestions of the kinds of questions you should be noting. These are also questions that should help to synthesize (that means organize, group, summarize) the research on your topic. These questions are only a guide. You will not need to address ALL of these questions in your literature review.

What is your dependent variable or topic of interest?
How has your dependent variable been conceptualized and how has it been studied? In other words, how do researchers define the dependent variable and how do they measure it? Some research is done to test theoretically informed hypotheses, while other research is designed to explore relationships. Either way, most research has some basic questions about why something varies: Why do some adolescents use drugs while others do not? Why do some couples get divorced and others do not? The dependent variables in the examples above are (in order): adolescent drug use; divorce.

The first thing you should consider is what is the current status of the dependent variable? How many adolescents are reported to have used drugs? Have these rates increased lately? Answers to these kinds of questions will be useful for describing the context and framing your problem statement.

What are the theories used to explain the dependent variable?
This is sometimes the most difficult part but is very important. Sometimes the authors will explicitly cite a particular theory like “labeling theory” or “modernization theory.” Other times the theory will be more closely tied to the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. For example, one group of researchers argues that level of education is the best predictor of homophobia and another group argues that religiosity is the best predictor.
What populations have been studied?
When reading through the literature, it is important to make a note of just who was studied. If you are studying adolescents you’ll want to make sure that you locate theories and research on appropriate age groups. This doesn’t mean that research on adults (or any other population) is not useful, but you do need to think about how relationships differ across groups of people. Varying populations is one of the most common reasons for doing additional research on a topic. If researchers have been studying primarily urban populations, you might want to study more rural settings. You might want to see if theories developed on adult populations work for teens. But remember, you want to think logically about this. Why might you expect relationships to vary across regions or age groups?

How have variables been measured?
Another reason for doing research is that you have a new way of looking at your variable(s) of interest. Previous research may focus on attitudes about something (say divorce), and you want to look at a related behavior (whether or not couples actually divorce). Another example, let’s say you want to understand why adolescents drink alcohol. There are many ways you can operationalize alcohol use. One way is to know whether or not adolescents have “ever tried” alcohol. Another is “how many times” in the past week or month or year someone has consumed alcohol. Still another way to explore alcohol use is to know “how many drinks are consumed on one occasion?” You must first decide specifically what you want to research (maybe you did this in answering question number one), and then be attentive to how the concept has been measured in previous research.

This will also be true for your independent variables. Let’s say you want to see how the division of household labor affects the level of satisfaction that a person has with her/his partner. You will find research that measures the division of household labor by asking: “Who does more— you or your partner?” Other research elicits direct time estimates of domestic activity (“how many hours per week spent in cleaning,” for example). The first measure will allow a general test of the hypothesis: A person is happier when tasks are shared. The direct time estimates will allow for a couple of assessments. One is the issue of just how much time someone spends doing housework. The more time spent, the more unhappy. But combining estimates of both partners time allows for a more specific test of the first hypothesis: The greater the inequity, the more unhappy a person is. The point is that how variables are measured can lead to the testing of very different hypotheses. You’ll want to be aware of variation in measurement in the literature you read.

Have things changed over time?
You may already have addressed this question in answering number one above. You may notice that adolescent alcohol use has actually declined, while use of other drugs has increased. This could lead you to doing additional research to understand and explain why this has occurred.

What’s new in your research?
As you read through the literature and think about the questions above, you will start to notice differences between what you intended to do and what has been done. Some of those differences may actually lead you to change your plans. But other differences are what make your research unique or different. They may be small, such as doing your research on a local community instead of a regional one. Or you may be operationalizing some of your variables differently. But small or large, these variations make valuable contributions to the literature.
A reference table is another way to keep track of your information and to help you organize it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Quantitative Studies</th>
<th>Citations</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Main hypothesis</th>
<th>Main dependent variable</th>
<th>Main independent variable(s)</th>
<th>Specific units in the study</th>
<th>Main results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(authors last name and the date)</td>
<td>Miller 2012</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>What is it and how was it measured?</td>
<td>What is it and how was it measured?</td>
<td>For example, 90 undergraduate females. Or, a random sample of 2,000 adults.</td>
<td>As briefly as possible state the most relevant conclusion of the study for your proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing the Literature Review

Once you have done your research and organized your material you are ready to write the literature review. For an example of a good literature review see page 45 in Faulkner and Faulkner (2008), which is available on Moodle. You might also review Neuman 2011 Ch. 5 p. 143, also available through Moodle.

You should end your literature review with a formal statement of your research question or questions. Your research questions should follow logically from your literature review. In other words, your literature review should have persuaded the reader that your research questions are good ones. Research questions are important and you should craft them carefully. Below I have provided another example from Neuman of bad and good research questions.

### Examples of Bad and Good Research Questions

#### Bad Research Questions
- Not Empirically Testable, Nonscientific Questions
  - Should abortion be legal?
  - Is it right to have capital punishment?
- General Topics, Not Research Questions
  - Treatment of alcohol and drug abuse
  - Sexuality and aging
- Set of Variables, Not Questions
  - Capital punishment and racial discrimination
  - Urban decay and gangs
- Too Vague, Ambiguous
  - Do police affect delinquency?
  - What can be done to prevent child abuse?
- Need to Be Still More Specific
  - Has the incidence of child abuse risen?
  - How does poverty affect children?
  - What problems do children who grow up in poverty experience that others do not?

#### Good Research Questions
- Explanatory Questions
  - Has the actual incidence of child abuse changed in Wisconsin in the past 10 years?
  - Descriptive Questions
    - Is child abuse, violent or sexual, more common in families that have experienced a divorce than in intact, never-divorced families?
    - Are the children raised in poverty households more likely to have medical, learning, and social-emotional adjustment difficulties than nonpoverty children?
- Exploratory Questions
  - Does the emotional instability created by experiencing a divorce increase the chances that divorced parents will physically abuse their children?
  - Is a lack of sufficient funds for preventive treatment a major cause of more serious medical problems among children raised in families in poverty?