

# Research & Abstract Writing Workshop

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UMES Writing Workshop

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April 17, 2020

# Agenda

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- Abstract
  - Description
  - Writing Strategies
- Citing Sources
  - Key Points
  - APA
- Research Writing (Review)



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# Writing an Abstract

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“An *abstract* is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the paper”

- American Psychological Association, 2020, p. 73



# Why is an Abstract Important?

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- Introduction to research/paper
- Summary of the body of work
- Editors may make decision on sending to reviewers based on abstract
- Reviewers first “judgement” of manuscript
- May be all someone “reads” of the paper

# Components of an Abstract

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- 1) General topic of study, specific topic of research, context and/or background information**
  - 1 to 3 sentences
- 2) Central questions or statement of problem addressed in study**
  - 1 sentence

# Components of an Abstract

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**3) What is known**, what previous research provides

- 1 to 2 sentences

**4) Main reasons, rationale, and/or goals** of research

- Why is this important to address? (e.g. new topic, filling a gap, applying new methods, dispute in the literature)
- 1 to 2 sentences

# Components of an Abstract

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**5) Methods and research design** – Cover the research or analytical methods

- 1 to 2 sentences

**6) Findings, results, or arguments**

- 1 to 3 sentences

**7) Significance and implications of findings/study**

# Practice

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Find an abstract from a published empirical research article.



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# Practice

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- Identify:
  - General topic, specific topic, context and/or background information
  - Central questions/problem statement
  - What is known/previous research
  - Main reasons, rationale, goals of research
  - Methods & research design
  - Findings, results, arguments
  - Significance and implications

# Qualities of a Good Abstract

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1. Accurate
2. Nonevaluative
3. Coherent and Readable
4. Concise



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# Good Abstract - ACCURATE

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- Reflects the purpose and contents of the paper
- If extends or replicates prior research, cite the work (author-date citation)
- ***Bottom Line:***
  - Avoid overstating what the research/paper is about



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# Good Abstract - NONEVALUATIVE

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- Report the work
- Avoid evaluating the contents
  - e.g. “In this ground-breaking research...”
- ***Bottom Line:***
  - This is not the place for your feelings and sentiments on the paper



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# Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

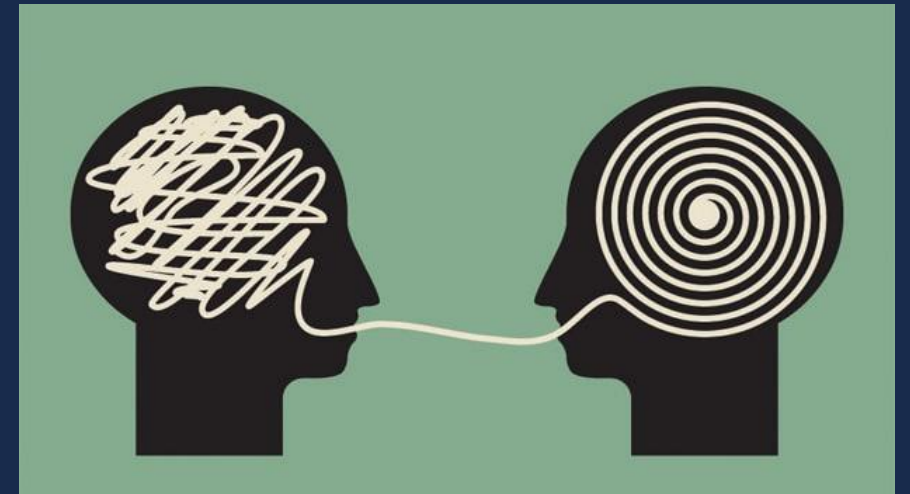
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- Clear language that is not overly specific to the field
- Use verbs, rather than noun equivalents
  - e.g. “investigated” rather than “an investigation of”
- Active voice, rather than passive
  - e.g. “we present results” rather than “results are presented”

# Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

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- Present tense for conclusions drawn or results
  - e.g. “Authentic leadership impacts employee trust in XYZ”
- Past tense to describe how variables were manipulated or outcomes measured
  - E.g. “In this study, employee trust was A, B, and C.”



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# Good Abstract – COHERENT and READABLE

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## *Bottom Line*

Use simple language and have someone outside your field of expertise read it before submission!!



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(American Psychological Association, 2020)

# Good Abstract – CONCISE

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- Be brief
- Each sentence should provide maximum information
- Set-it up for success
  - Lead with a powerful sentence
  - Key points first
- Include 4 or 5 of the MOST IMPORTANT results or findings

# Good Abstract – CONCISE

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## *Bottom Line*

Everything cannot be in the abstract, hit the highlights

Think about key words that will pull the article in searches

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(American Psychological Association, 2020)

# Practice

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Evaluate the abstract.

Is it (1) accurate, (2) nonevaluative, (3) coherent and readable, (4) concise?



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# When to Write an Abstract

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- After the paper is complete
- Remember this is a summary of the complete paper
- Exceptions
  - Abstract for paper proposal
  - Extended abstract (usually paper proposal or conference)



# Abstract Writing Sources

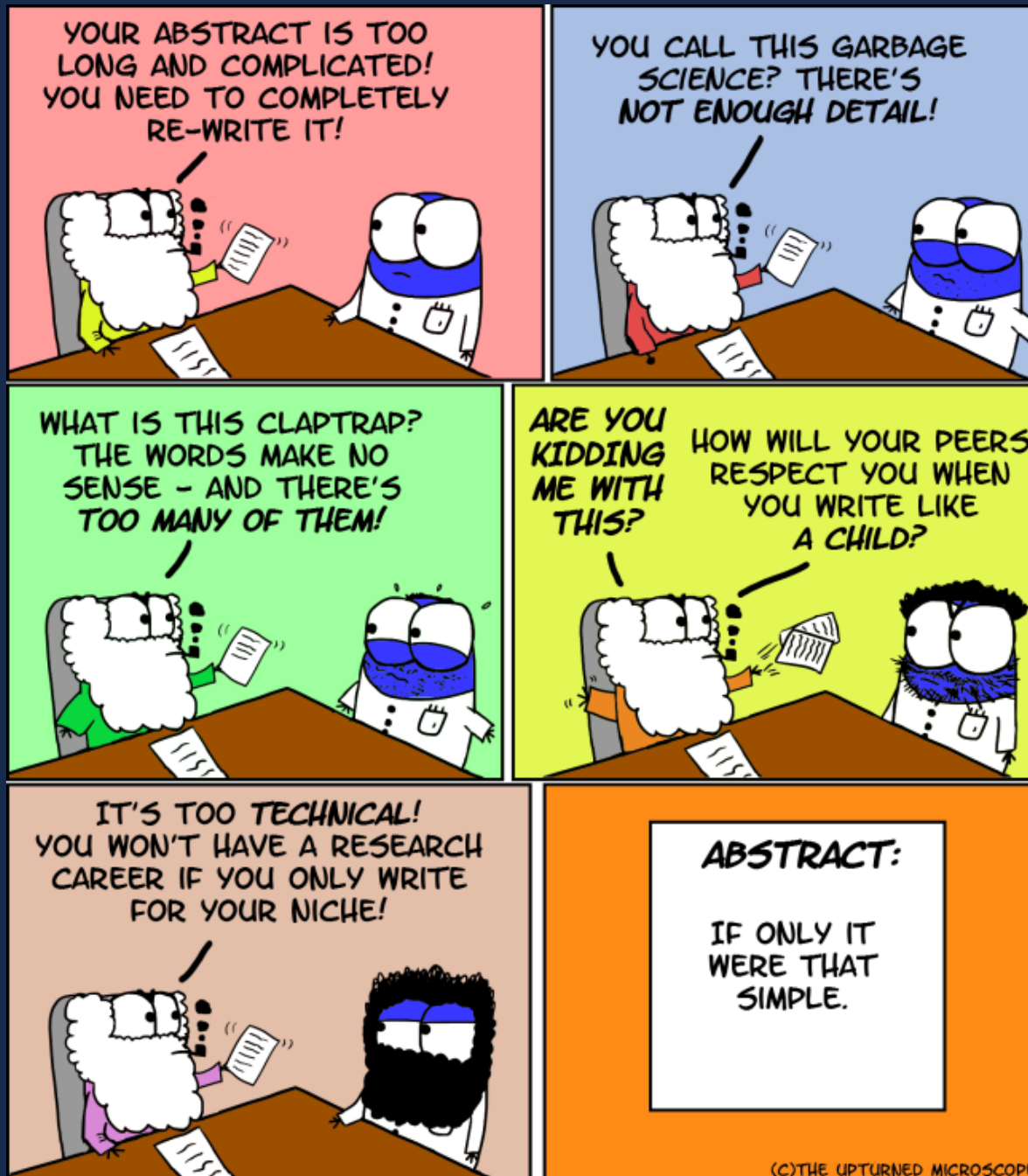
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- APA Manual (7<sup>th</sup> Edition) – Section 3.3
  - Walks through components
  - Details for empirical, replication, meta-analyses, literature review, theoretical, and methodological articles
- Journal abstracts
  - Look at journal guidelines
- UMES Guide to Preparation of Theses and Dissertations
- University of Wisconsin Writing Center

# Final Abstract Thoughts

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- Reader should understand “gist” of paper from abstract
- Usually you do not *cite* references
- Focus on what YOU studied and/or found
- ***REMEMBER*** – Often abstract is all people read of the paper



# Citing Sources

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# Citing Sources

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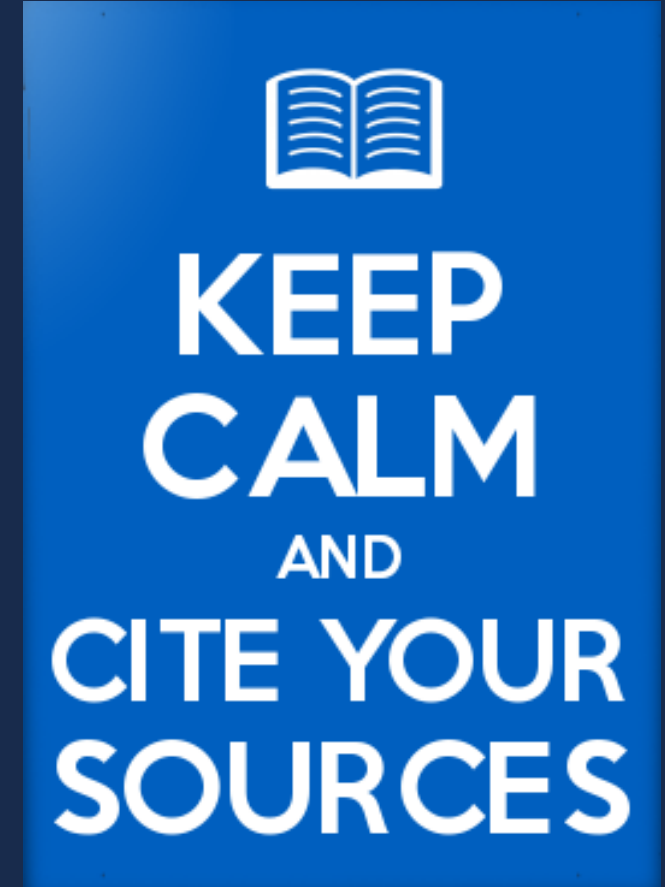
“Cite the work of individuals whose ideas, theories, or research have directly influenced your work.”

- American Psychological Association, 2020, p. 253

# Citing Sources

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- Only cite work that:
  - You read and ideas that are incorporated!!
- Use work that both supports and diverges from your argument
  - This builds a better foundation for your research



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# Citing Sources

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- Cite **PRIMARY** sources
  - Try to avoid citing sources that are cited in another article
  - Go to the source
  - Ensures accuracy of information
- Credit ideas to sources in building **YOUR** theories and arguments



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# Citing Sources

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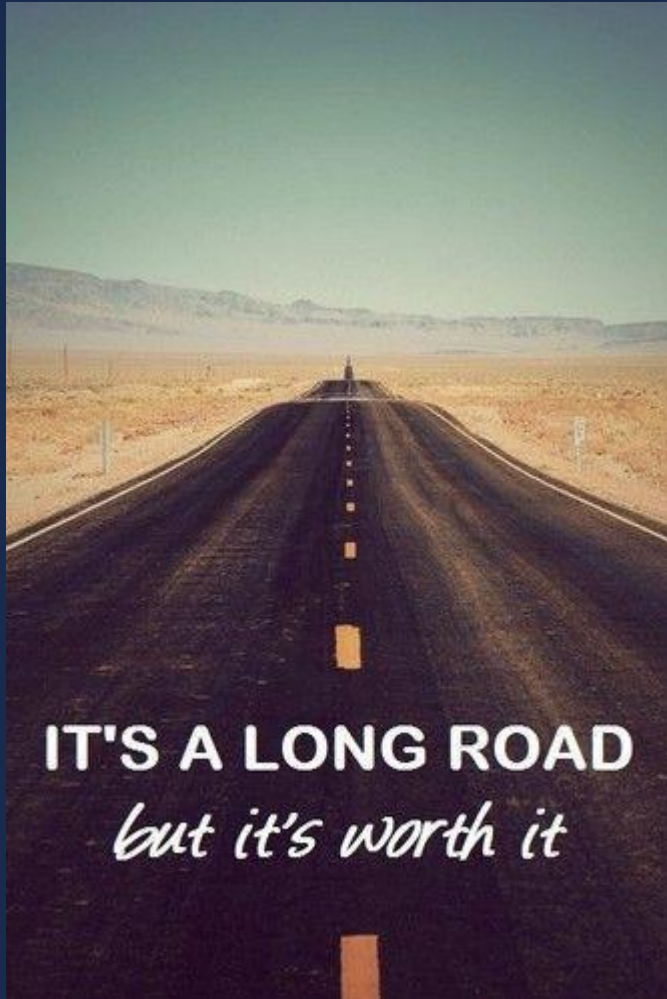
- Use a combination of paraphrasing and direct quotations
- Paraphrase
  - Either use a parenthetical or narrative citation
    - ***Parenthetical*** – End of paraphrased sentence
      - “Cats in space turn blue (Smith, 2020).”
    - ***Narrative*** – In-text in beginning of sentence
      - “Smith (2020) indicated that cats in space turn blue.”

# Citing Sources – Direct Quotations

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- Short Quotations (less than 40 words)
  - Appears within the paragraph
  - Enclosed in quotation marks
- Two formatting options:
  - Author name, date, and page number of reference follows the quotation
    - “Quotation” (Smith, 2020, p. 106).
  - Author and date precedes the quotation, followed by quotation, then page number of the reference
    - Smith (2020) stated, “quotation” (p. 106).

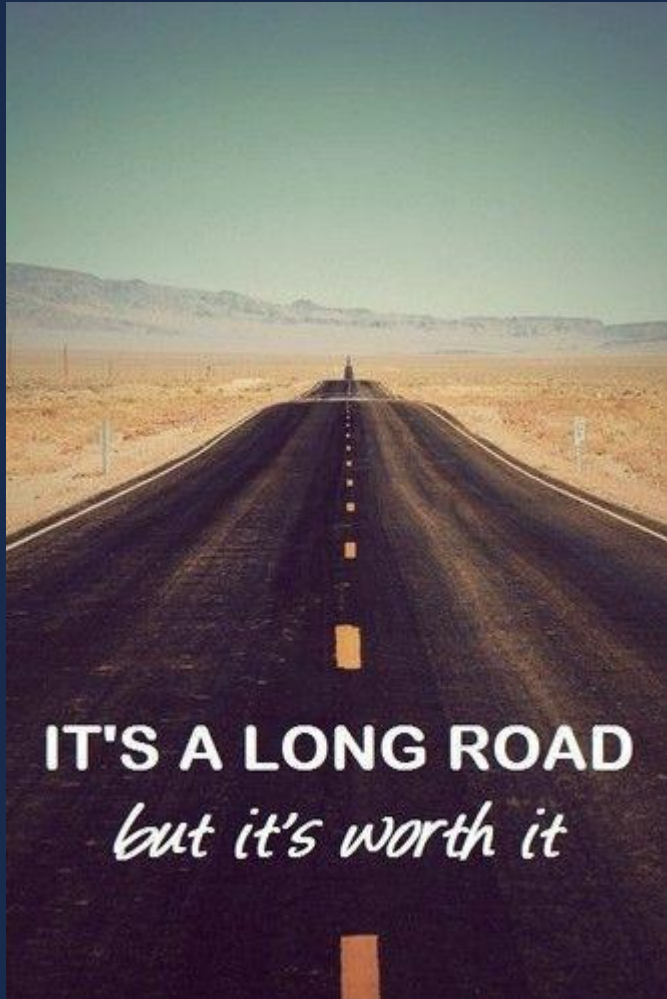
# Citing Sources – Direct Quotations



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- Long Quotations (40 words or more)
  - Display as a freestanding block of text
  - Omit quotation marks
  - Start on a new line
  - Indent block half an inch from left margin
    - Same position as new paragraph

# Citing Sources – Direct Quotations



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- Long Quotations (40 words or more)
  - Quotation block is double spaced
  - Cite the author(s), year, and page number at end of quotation *after the final punctuation mark*
- Unless author and year cited before the quotation, then just page number

# Citing Sources – Direct Quotations

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## **Long Quotations Example (40 words or more)**

According to Edmondson and McManus (2007),

To advance management theory, a growing number of scholars are engaging in field research, studying real people, real problems, and real organizations. Although the potential relevance of field research is motivating, the research journey can be messy and inefficient, fraught with logistical hurdles and unexpected events. (p. 1155)

# Citing Sources

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- Avoid undercitation
  - This can lead to plagiarism or self-plagiarism
- Avoid overcitation
  - Distracting and unnecessary
  - You DO NOT need to repeat the same citation every sentence
    - As long as source/topic has not changed

# Citing Sources – Avoiding Overcitation

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***Within the same paragraph***, when the name of the author is part of the narrative, you ***do not*** need to include the year in subsequent NONPARENTHETICAL references.

- As long as the study cannot be confused with other studies
- ***NOTE:***
  - Any initial citation in subsequent paragraphs needs the author and year
  - Parenthetical citations need to have both name and year within the same paragraph.

# Citing Sources – The Bottom Line

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- This is how you support your assertions
- Avoids plagiarism
- Lends credibility to your work
- Review APA (7<sup>th</sup> edition) – Chapter 8



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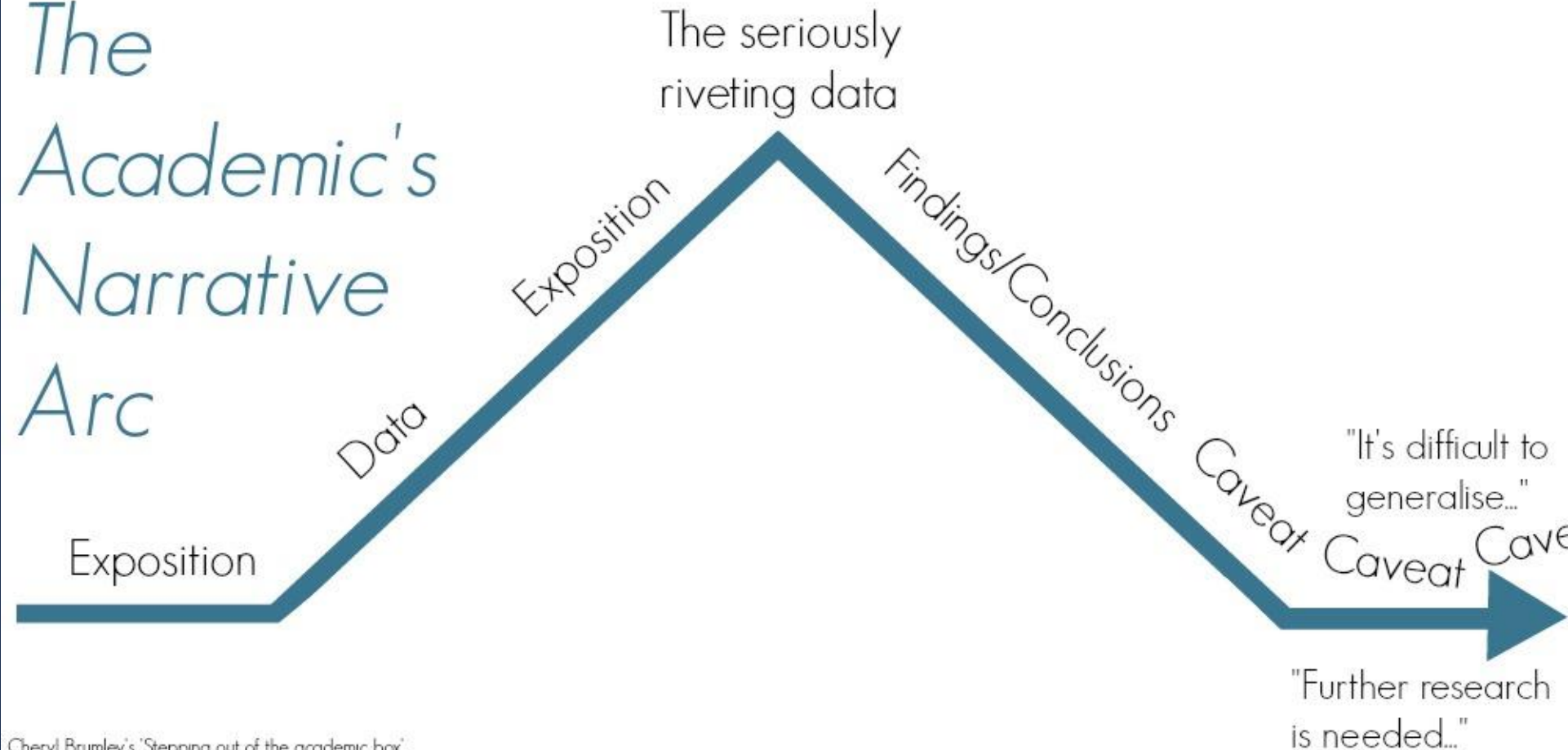


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# Research: Tips & Tricks

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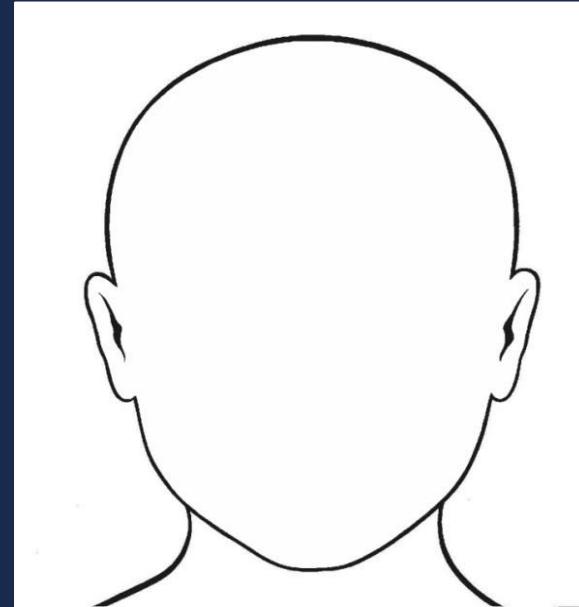
# The Academic's Narrative Arc



Cheryl Brumley's 'Stepping out of the academic box',  
Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, 2014

“Every story, even the driest,  
has a human face. Draw it well  
and put it on display, for to  
readers it is a mirror and a  
magnet”

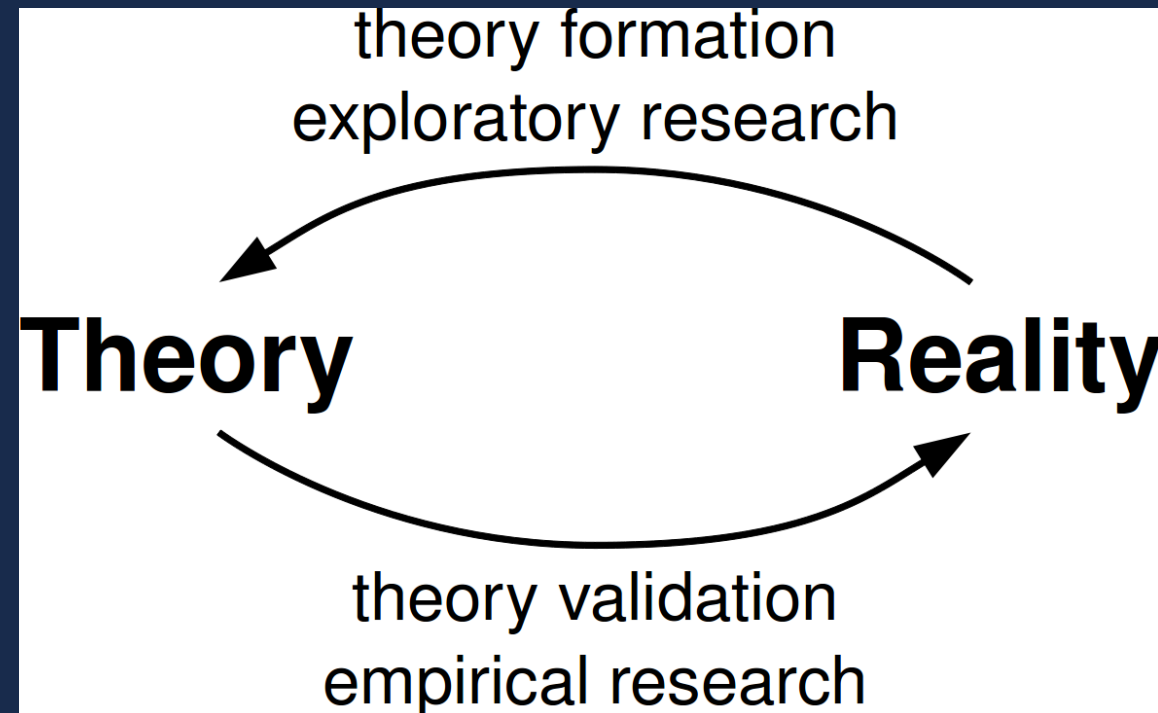
(Flaherty, 2009, p. xv)



# Understand the Integration of Theory

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Theories explain, predict, and help to understand phenomena (Abend, 2008).



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# Understand the Integration of Theory

- Theoretical Framework - Structure that can hold and support the research study
- Introduces and describes the theory
  - Explains why research problem exists within the confines of the theory



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# Selecting Appropriate Theory

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- Use knowledge about theory to inform study
- Theory selection depends on:
  - Appropriateness
  - Ease of application
  - Explanatory power



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# Why is Theory Integration Important

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- ***Strengthens the study by:***
  - Connects the study to existing knowledge
  - Provides the basis for hypotheses and research methods
  - Allows to move from describing the phenomenon to generalizing about aspects of the phenomenon

# Why is Theory Integration Important

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- ***Strengthens the study by:***
  - Identifies limits to those generalizations
  - Identifies what key variables influence a phenomenon of interest
  - Allows for a focus on how key variables differ and in what conditions
  - Helps reader to evaluate the study critically

# Final Thoughts

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# Abstract

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- Look at examples
- Read APA manual guidelines
- Be accurate, nonevaluative, coherent and readable, and concise



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# Abstract Should Contain (7 parts)

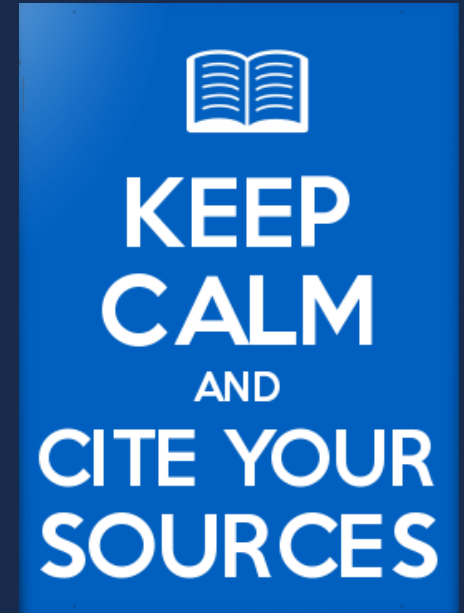
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1. General topic, specific topic, context and/or background information
2. Central questions/problem statement
3. What is known/previous research
4. Main reasons, rationale, goals of research
5. Methods & research design
6. Findings, results, arguments
7. Significance and implications

# Citing Sources

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- Cite work that contributed ideas, theories, or research to your manuscript
- Only cite work that is part of the manuscript
- Use work that both supports and diverges from your argument
- Be careful of undercitation and overcitation



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# Research Writing

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- Remember that you are telling a story
- Utilize theory to support your study
  - Theory explains, predicts, and helps to understand phenomena (Abend, 2008)



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