

5

Bringing the Audience Up to Speed With Literature Reviews

Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time, or even the third time. Remember this in moments of despair. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it is hard.

—WILLIAM ZINSSER, ON WRITING WELL: THE CLASSIC GUIDE TO WRITING NONFICTION

The last chapter ended with information about plagiarism and how to avoid it. Focusing now on the positive, you need the skills and abilities to be able to research a paper, extract key notes, draw conclusions, analyze and synthesize, and so forth. Collegiate writing assignments are precisely designed to aid in the development of all those skills, not merely to create a “paper.” In this chapter, I discuss literature reviews and term papers.

LITERATURE REVIEWS PROVIDE STORY CONTEXT

Literature is a fairly generic term that can be used in a number of contexts. First, a student could write a literature review (or lit review, or review of the literature). This entails an integrated synopsis or summary of some aspect of the psychological literature related to a variable or behavior of interest. In addition, the literature review is often a key component of the Introduction section of a research paper or a lab report. Furthermore, depending on how your instructor defines it, a review of the literature could be a key component of a term paper. Given the importance of reviewing the literature and the many variations of it that appear in scientific writing, it is worthwhile to spend some time discussing how to write a literature review.

A literature review is meant to do just that—review the existing literature relevant to the topic you are studying. A review article is intended to be broad—that is, a comprehensive review of the published literature in a particular area, providing the reader a chance to describe what is known and to determine what is next.

Eisenberg (2000) described four common types of review articles—those that (a) generate new knowledge, (b) test a theory, (c) integrate theories, and (d) develop and evaluate a new theory.

However, a more common type of literature review is one that is embedded in a larger paper, such as a research paper. A literature review accomplishes much more than just summarizing the literature (University of Melbourne, n.d.); for instance, a literature review provides a historical overview of the topic, presents earlier theories, and also provides background on the purpose of the review (i.e., point of view). A well-written literature review helps the reader understand disagreements and debates about the topic in context and also identifies gaps, omissions, and unanswered questions in previous work. Finally, a literature review highlights exemplary or seminal studies in a research area, identifies patterns or trends in the literature, and—very important for students—demonstrates your knowledge and skill. This chapter describes the process of reviewing the literature, which requires the writer to integrate all the scientific writing concepts and skills mentioned so far.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR WRITING LITERATURE REVIEWS

Galvan (2006) offered a comprehensive set of writing instructions for literature reviews. You begin by identifying the broad problem area (e.g., landfills are filling at an exponential rate) but avoid global statements (e.g., recycling is important). Early in the review, indicate why the topic being reviewed is important—if you don't convince the reader that the topic is important, then why should they bother reading the review? Distinguish between research findings (such as journal articles) and other sources of information (such as the opinions of politicians or popular media reports), and be sure to identify a classic or landmark study as such. Sometimes you'll hear these types of studies referred to as *seminal studies*, and the ability to point this out makes you a savvy researcher. You also provide a great service to your reader when you can identify why a particular study is important.

If you are commenting on the timeliness of a topic, you will want to be specific in describing the time frame; this gives the reader some context and explains why it is an important detail. If there are other literature reviews relevant to your topic, be sure to mention them, even if you are not discussing those other reviews in detail. Be careful about making statements such as "No studies have ever been conducted on this topic." You cannot be certain of that statement—many studies have been conducted by researchers and never been

published, and a major reason for nonpublication is that no significant results were found. Or maybe there are studies about that topic available, but they are not published in the English language, or not indexed in the databases that you searched. What would be better to say is this: "To my knowledge, there are no published studies available on this topic."

Avoid long lists of nonspecific references. Sometimes students (and experienced researchers) want to either (a) show off their scholarly work by citing every study they reviewed, whether it is relevant or not, or (b) conserve space by citing multiple studies at the end of a sentence or paragraph. There is no exact number of studies that should be cited in a literature review—the goal is to provide a thorough overview of the topic being studied, and that could require any number of studies, depending on the context, the instructor, the type of assignment, and so on. If the results of previous studies are inconsistent or vary widely, cite them separately. This actually helps lay the foundation for the later parts of your Introduction section, in which you describe a conflict or gap in the literature, that is, an unresolved question to be answered. Identifying inconsistencies in the literature helps emphasize the need for your work.

REASSEMBLING PIECES OF THE STORY: SYNTHESIS

The analysis, synthesis, and evaluation components of the literature review are all key. Using the notecard method, you will have already analyzed each of the articles you think should be included in your review. That analysis is important, but not enough. You must then synthesize the main ideas presented in the literature with a critical, evaluative viewpoint. This is a skill that everyone has to work at to acquire, and just like any skill, it takes time and practice.

Based on an idea from Reaves (2004), I created the materials in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 to demonstrate the importance of synthesis. In Figure 5.1, analysis and extraction have been completed, and a summary of each study outcome has been generated, but the product looks more like book report summaries than an integrated review of the literature. It looks as if the author picked up a stack of idea notecards from each source and wrote an individual paragraph about each. Although analysis is present, there is no synthesis. Synthesis means seeking out underlying themes to see connections across studies, not just analyzing differences between them. Figure 5.2 demonstrates a smoother, synthesized review of the literature that was adapted from Landrum, Gurung, and Amsel (2019). Notice that the text is much shorter, and also notice how references about a particular theme have been grouped together. The intellectual benefit of a well-written literature review is that the author has completed this complex task of analysis–synthesis–evaluation for you and thus provided a rich context for understanding the complexity of a particular psychological idea.

FIGURE 5.1. Sample Literature Review on Introductory Psychology Courses, Without Synthesis (continues)

The introductory psychology course is an important course to teach, and a great deal of research has been conducted about this course over time. In thinking about what chapters should be taught in the course, Welten and Wight (1992) did extensive work to help understand the typical teaching model used by examining the evolution of introductory psychology textbooks.

A different approach was taken by other researchers to examine what is taught in introductory psychology at a more granular level. Quereshi and Sackett (1977) conducted a survey in introductory psychology instructors and asked them about the desirable features of an introductory psychology textbook in hopes of developing an aid or rubric in helping instructors select textbooks.

When Quereshi (1993) examined the contents of 60 introductory psychology textbooks in a 7-year span compared to 52 textbooks published in the following 10-year span, the more recent introductory psychology textbooks were longer, more comprehensive, and judged to be more readable.

In an attempt to identify, understand, and update those core concepts in introductory psychology, Zechmeister and Zechmeister (2000) examined the glossaries of 10 introductory psychology textbooks and identified 2,505 different concepts and terms across all books. However, only 64 items appeared in all 10 glossaries, and half of all the items (2,505 items) appeared in only one glossary/textbook.

How the course is organized is only one method of examining the introductory psychology course in American psychology. Batsell et al. (2016) studied the efficacy of the testing effect in an introductory psychology classroom and found that quiz performance was enhanced compared to a control group.

Another interesting study was performed by Cathey, Visio, Whisenhunt, Hudson and Shoptaugh (2016) when they offered study skills training sessions at the midterm examination point in their large enrollment introductory psychology course. Students who self-selected into the training sessions had lower pre-session exam scores, and by the end of the semester these pre-existing differences were eliminated compared to a control group.

FIGURE 5.1. Sample Literature Review on Introductory Psychology Courses, Without Synthesis (continued)

What is the effect of implementing team-based learning across multiple sections using multiple instructors? When Travis, Hudson, Hendricks-Lepp, Street, and Weidenbenner (2016) did this in introductory psychology courses using common midterm and final exams and common mid-semester and end-of-semester student satisfaction surveys, they report that team-based learning is more effective than lecture when contributing to learning with no decrement in student satisfaction scores.

FIGURE 5.2. Sample Literature Review on Introductory Psychology Courses, With Synthesis

For many educators, the ultimate utility of the accumulation of evidence derived from research about the introductory psychology course revolves around teaching and learning; this is plain but not so simple. Discussions about and research concerning the content of what should be covered in the introductory psychology course have been ongoing for some time (Weiten & Wight, 1992), and have led to the recent emergence of the common core model for the course. For instance, there have been numerous efforts to identify core concepts in the introductory psychology course (Quereshi, 1993; Quereshi & Sackett, 1977; Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2000). A host of other approaches, however, reinforce the importance and prevalence in the practical teaching and learning aspects of introductory psychology. For example, researchers have examined the role of quizzing in introductory psychology (Batsell et al., 2016), studied helping students improve study skills for a midterm exam (Cathey et al., 2016), and examined how to teach the introductory course using team-based learning (Travis et al., 2016).

ORGANIZING A LITERATURE REVIEW

Depending on the course, instructor, and assignment, you may be asked to write a stand-alone literature review paper, as described previously. However, a more common type of literature review may be embedded in a larger paper, such as a research paper. This type of literature review might be for a research methods or experimental design class. In this case, the literature review is actually part of the Introduction section, which is part of a larger manuscript.

In the following paragraphs, I present the instructions that I give to students when I assign a literature review as part of the Introduction section of a research paper. Depending on the assignment, you may be asked to follow a similar set of instructions. Generally, your literature review will be organized like this: (a) introduce the topic and the research question, stating why both are important; (b) narrow the research question or studies to be discussed; (c) provide a brief outline or synopsis of the paper; (d) describe the studies in some detail; (e) compare and evaluate studies; and (f) discuss the implications of the studies (University of Washington, 2017). Although I have customized my instructions over the years, they originally came from an earlier edition of Bordens and Abbott (2004).

Introduce the Topic

Introduce the reader to the issue in the first paragraph by defining or identifying the general topic. Convince the reader that this is an important issue. Perhaps it affects a large number of people or is an essential component of daily life. Try to impress upon the reader why this topic is so important that it warrants the effort and resources necessary to conduct research. Kendall et al. (2000) offered specific ideas for the opening paragraph, such as

- asking a rhetorical question that helps readers think about how they feel about an issue
- sharing an everyday experience that is common to many individuals
- using an analogy that grabs the reader's attention in an interesting fashion
- providing a striking statistical fact that surprises the reader and makes them intrigued to learn more
- alluding to a historical event that still has relevance in the present day and is worthy of continued study
- alerting the reader to an under-studied area or newly emerging area in psychology where new research efforts are warranted.

Review the Literature

Review the available literature on the topic. If there are studies related specifically to your topic, present them here. If there are no specific studies, broaden your review of the literature to include related areas. Show that you have done your scholarly homework, and provide a context for your study. Point out overall trends in the published literature about this topic, using analysis, synthesis, and your idea notecards or Google Sheets. Group the research studies and other types of literature according to common threads such as qualitative versus quantitative, objectives, methodology, and so forth. Discuss the general outcomes of each study and not the methodological details, unless those details are vital to your study.

Identify the Problem or Gap in Knowledge

Within this context, identify a problem or area in which the knowledge is incomplete. This becomes your statement of the problem to be addressed by your research. You have reviewed the literature and discovered a gap—an unresolved problem or issue. (If this were a TV or movie script, it would be setting up the conflict between the main characters.) The goal of your study is to fill that gap (resolve the conflict). Explain why your study is important within the context of previous studies and the unanswered question.

State Your Purpose

Provide a clear statement of purpose for the current study. Be specific about the problem you are going to solve. Tell why this study is necessary to fill this gap in the research. In fact, it is often a good idea to signal this by including a sentence that begins “The purpose of my study is to. . . .”

Preview the Study (“Coming Attractions”)

Next, give a brief overview of the methodology that will be used to address the knowledge gap. This should be just a snapshot of the participants, materials, and basic procedure used in the study.

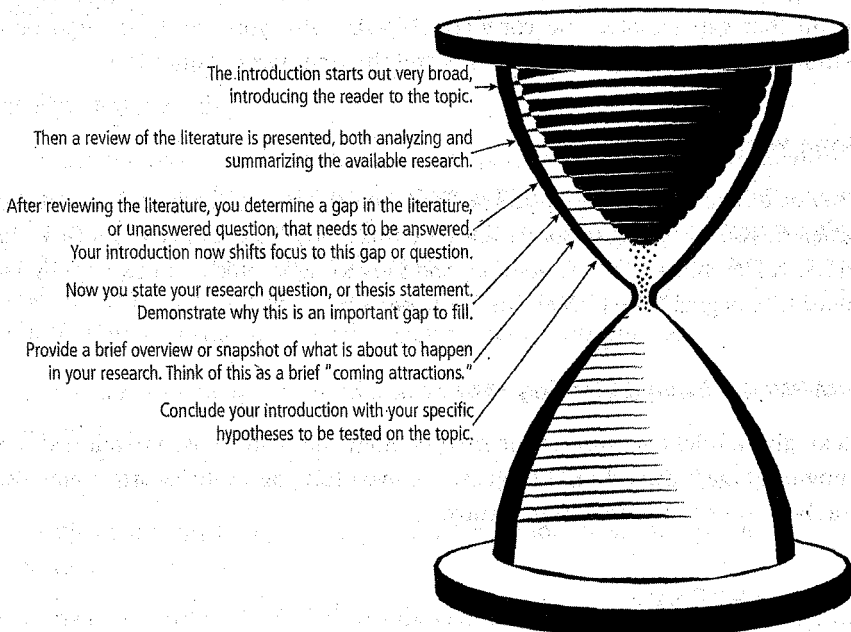
Narrow Your Focus

What do you expect to happen? If you are writing a broad literature review, your paper will likely end with conclusions and recommendations for future researchers. However, if you are conducting a research project, you can conclude your Introduction section with the expected outcomes of the specific hypotheses to be tested. Develop your working hypotheses on the basis of your expectations and your review of the literature. Be as

specific as possible. Well-written hypotheses actually provide guidance later as you determine the statistical approach you will take in analyzing your results. Good science requires that hypotheses be testable—your wording is essential here. A good hypothesis is also clearly related to the statement of purpose (described previously) and helps the researcher design an interesting study, regardless of whether the hypothesis is rejected or fails to be rejected.

The Introduction is just the first part of a research paper (I address all the major parts of the research paper in Chapter 6). A common analogy for a research paper is an hourglass, in which the Introduction makes up most of the top half (see Figure 5.3). As you can see, both the hourglass and the Introduction section start very broad and then become more narrow and focused. After narrowing, there will again be a broadening of approach in the Discussion section.

FIGURE 5.3. Hourglass Model



SAMPLE LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I present an actual first draft of a literature review written by one of my students, Izzy (I have used this work, and her name, with Izzy's permission). When I say actual first draft, I should qualify that. Izzy is a very good student and a very good writer, and she agreed to share this work with me for this book. However, there are not that many errors in her first rough draft, which is, of course, a tribute to her work. Thus, you will see three variations presented: an original rough draft (Figure 5.4); this rough draft marked the way I would have marked it (Figure 5.5); and the final draft (Figure 5.6).

First look at Figure 5.4, then look at Figure 5.5 with my editing marks. This is an interesting exercise in a number of ways. First, editing is often subjective; I made suggestions to Izzy's paper that I thought would improve it. These weren't errors, *per se*, but stylistic suggestions. Second, another faculty member (or you, for that matter) might mark this paper quite differently than I did. I probably let some things go that others would not. For instance, the last part of the Introduction uses the future tense. This was okay with me because during the class, students wrote their Introduction sections before they had conducted their study. Now look at the finished product in Figure 5.6.

If you closely compare the edited draft with the final draft, you will note that Izzy did not make all the corrections I suggested, which is fine. She also corrected some items I did not point out. This constant revising and editing is all part of the process of scientific writing in psychology.

How did Izzy do with respect to the criteria from Galvan (2006) I presented earlier? In looking at the first draft of Izzy's Introduction, it's well organized. Izzy did plenty of background research on the topic, and when she was enrolled in the course in fall 2018, most of her reference citations were current and up-to-date. She made the effort to thoroughly explain her ideas and back up those ideas with citations from previous work, which is why her efforts earned distinguished marks. But please note that it is not included here as an example of a perfect paper. The three manuscripts presented here are intended to demonstrate the value of writing and receiving comments on a first draft, as well as the improvements that can be made in one's writing (in a relatively short amount of time) for the final draft. In the next chapter, the story we started with the literature review will be continued in the context of a complete research paper.

FIGURE 5.4. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Rough Draft (continues)

The Effects of Social Media Use on Depression

A compelling statistic that is not overly surprising is that more than 70 percent of youth and young adults who use the Internet use social media sites (Davila, et al., 2012). Social media sites and social networking sites, or SNS, range from colloquial use to professional use, as well as contemporary designs to platforms meant for professional networking. Common platforms used for studies include Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. LinkedIn is the most commonly used professional social networking site (Jones, Colditz, Sidani, Lin, Terry, & Primack, 2016). Similarly, about 90 percent of 13-29 year olds (of Internet users in the U.S.) have at least one social networking site (Cavazos-Rehg, Krauss, Sowles, Connolly, Rosas, Bharadwaj, Grocza, & Bierut., 2017). With the rise of social media and SNS, many researchers show interest in possible psychological problems that may also arise with the decrease of face-to-face communication, particularly in the pervasiveness of depression.

A review of literature demonstrates the prevalence of depression, as well as the possible relationships between depression and the use of social media. According to one study, participants who used LinkedIn at a minimum of once per week had significantly greater chances of increased depression in comparison to the participants who did not use LinkedIn (Jones, et al., 2016). Depressive symptoms appear in non-professional platforms as well. For instance, another group of researchers discussed the most popular observed theme from a sample of 2,739 depression-related posts on Tumblr, and these themes found were: self-loathing, loneliness/feeling unloved, and self-harm and/or scars from self-harm (Cavazos-Rehg, et al., 2017). Similarly, Twitter users expressing dissatisfaction more commonly use swear words to convey negative emotion, anger, sadness, and sexuality than other users. (Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). On another note, if you search for the terms "depressed," "suicide," "self-mutilation," or "cutting," Tumblr will first send you to a screen with suggestions for seeking help (Cavazos-Rehg, et al., 2017). Researchers from each

FIGURE 5.4. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Rough Draft (continued)

of these studies emphasize the significance of depression existing across social media platforms, both professional and entertainment-based. The real question behind the compilation of all this research asks to what extent depression exists and if there is an actual relationship between usage of social media and increased depressive symptoms.

Many researchers believe in the existence of a connection between depression and the use of social media or SNS; however, uncertainty still remains due to the varying topics of research in this field, which tend to lead to inconsistent or incomparable results. Researchers in this field, for example, analyze the number of virtual friends an individual has, as well as the types of posts that are most common within platforms, in an attempt to reduce the number of variables that might contribute to a possible relationship. Another group of researchers took a more specific approach to interactions online, and examined more than merely the association between time spent on social media and depression, but also took into consideration the quality of interactions the participants engaged in. The authors of this study found that corumination, or the act of talking about problems with friends in a negative and repetitive way, can actually predict increases in depressive symptoms (Davila, et al., 2012). Finding connections between quality of interactions and frequency of depressive symptoms expands the dimensions in which social media possibly affects individuals, and leads to development of more theories.

Other psychologists consider the number of followers (i.e., friends on Facebook, followers on Instagram) an individual has on social media sites. Researchers found that "...the average time spent on Instagram correlated positively with depressive symptoms, trait anxiety, social comparison orientation, physical appearance anxiety, and body image disturbance" (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018, p. 6). The idea that social media, in this case Instagram, affects more than just depressive symptoms, but also affects an individual's self-image and body image leads to more questions about exactly

FIGURE 5.4. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Rough Draft (continued)

how much of our lives can be affected by social media. Similarly, researchers from a separate study who also analyzed number of followers found that number of followers correlated positively with depression and trait anxiety. These researchers found a negative correlation between number of followers and self-esteem (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018). The results are inconsistent, as the higher the number of followers actually correlates with a lower level of self-esteem. Number of followers is one way to analyze the effect of social media on its users; even so, research on the content of posts suggests another outlet for depressive symptoms.

More experts in social media insist that content of posts, or status updates, should be a priority in identifying important components of social media or the individual that add to the intensity of depressive symptoms. One researcher analyzed the specific types of status updates on Facebook. According to this research, there are three note-worthy forms of “status updates” on Facebook: updates that reveal low negative self-esteem, self-promoting updates, and self-important/narrow-minded posts (Blease, 2015). Analyzing depression from this angle becomes possible after establishing criteria behind each type of status update. Another important variable needing to be defined is the scientific term for happiness, referred to as Subjective well-being, or SWB. The presence of positive emotions, the absence of negative emotions, and life satisfaction of the individual determine SWB (Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). By measuring SWB, researchers effectively evaluate the overall mood or possible prevalence of depressive symptoms. Equally as important, self-esteem can be described as “the evaluative component of the self—the degree to which one prizes, values, approves or likes oneself” (Pantic, 2014, p. 653). Types of posts, SWB, and self-esteem are all components that define how an individual sees himself or herself, and ultimately predict levels of depressive moods within social media sites.

FIGURE 5.4. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Rough Draft (continued)

Many researchers interested in the relationship between social media use and depression, as well as other psychological disorders, have performed studies in an effort to find a correlation; however, results vary drastically. Some researchers found that the presence of increased communication or increased number “friends,” positively affect mood. These such studies posit that the absence of face-to-face interactions may make it easier to interact with other people, particularly for shy individuals or persons who often feel lonely (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2016), which explains, to an extent, the conflicting results across studies. Conversely, other researchers find the opposite: that increased use of social networking negatively affects young adults’ abilities to interact face to face and demonstrate more depressive symptoms. On a similar note, research analyzing body image and gender in comparison to social media use also demonstrates high levels of depressive symptoms. Strubel, Petrie, and Pookulnagara in their 2018 study defined social media as having become a form of sociocultural channel that transits body-centric information more than previous media outlets. Prior to social media and SNS, there were limited ways for individuals’ body-image and self-esteem to be influenced. Social media and SNS are a newly developed, *highly effective* form of reinforcing hegemonic norms, particularly those that reiterate the ideal body image for both men and women. The authors of this study focused on the body dissatisfaction women have when they compare themselves to the ideal bodies represented consistently across social media platforms. The authors explain that the internalization of such ideals may lead to negative emotions, such as shame, guilt, anger, and sadness among these women.

However varying or contradicting prior results may be, a consistent thread weaves across all studies: social media use and SNS use significantly impact individual mood. In order to fill the knowledge gap, I examine the relationship between possible existing depression and the use of social media, without emphasis on specific depressive symptoms or direct analysis of number

FIGURE 5.4. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Rough Draft (continued)

of followers. The purpose of my study is to determine if there is a relationship between depression and the use of social media.

To research the possible relationship between depression and social media use, a sample of undergraduate students participated in a survey. The sample was taken from Introduction to Psychology students at Boise State University, and participants responded to compilation of several research surveys. To measure possible correlations, evaluative questions concerning the presence of depressive symptoms, as well as questions measuring the amount of media use, were presented in survey form.

Upon review of previous literature and research performed regarding social media, SNS, and various levels or types of depressive symptoms on individuals, I expect that this study will reproduce the most typical results found so far. The more an individual uses social media, regardless of the platform, the more that individual will experience increased levels of depression. I hypothesize, first, that there will be a positive correlation between depression and the use of social media. Second, I hypothesize that the platform through which an individual accesses social media or SNS will not matter; the quantifiable amount of use will be the predictor of depressive symptoms and level of depression.

Note. From course literature review by Izzy Riley, 2018. Copyright 2018 by Izzy Riley. Printed with permission.

FIGURE 5.5. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, With Instructor Edits (continues)

The Effects of Social Media Use on Depression

A compelling statistic that is not overly surprising is that more than 70 percent of youth and young adults who use the Internet use social media sites (Davila, et al., 2012). Social media sites and social networking sites (or SNS) range from colloquial use to professional use, as well as contemporary designs to platforms meant for professional networking. Common platforms used for studies include Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. LinkedIn is the most commonly used professional social networking site (Jones et al., Golditz, Sidani, Lin, Terry, & Primaek, 2016). Similarly, about 90 percent of 13- to 29-year-olds (of Internet users in the U.S.) have at least one social networking site (Cavazos-Rehg, Krauss, Sowles, Connolly, Rosas, Bhargawa, Groza, & Bierut, et al., 2017). With the rise of social media and SNS, many researchers show interest in possible psychological problems that may also arise with the decrease of face-to-face communication, particularly in the pervasiveness of depression.

A review of literature demonstrates the prevalence of depression, as well as the possible relationships between depression and the use of social media. According to one study researcher, participants who used LinkedIn at a minimum of once per week had significantly greater chances of increased depression in comparison to the participants who did not use LinkedIn (Jones, et al., 2016). Depressive symptoms appear in non-professional online platforms as well. For instance, another group of researchers discussed the most popular observed theme from a sample of 2,739 depression-related posts on Tumblr, and these themes found were: self-loathing, loneliness/feeling unloved, and self-harm and/or scars from self-harm (Cavazos-Rehg, et al., 2017). Similarly, Twitter users expressing dissatisfaction more commonly use swear words to convey negative emotion, anger, sadness, and sexuality than other users: (Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). On another note, if you search for the terms "depressed," "suicide," "self-mutilation," or "cutting," Tumblr will first send you to a screen with suggestions for seeking help (Cavazos-Rehg, et al., 2017). Researchers from each of these studies emphasize the significance of depression existing across social media platforms, both professional and entertainment-based. The real question behind the compilation of all this research asks to what extent depression exists and if there is an actual relationship between usage of social media and increased depressive symptoms.

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Comment: But what is the urgent problem? Yes, many people use the Internet. But this first paragraph does not signal to me the key issue that is about to be addressed in this research. By the end of the paragraph, I should have a good sense of what's coming.

Comment: This is the pathetic fallacy error—literature cannot demonstrate.

Comment: Awkward phrasing: did you mean to write "and these themes were found"?

Comment: This is a nice summary, except for the pathetic fallacy error—the question cannot ask.

FIGURE 5.5. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, With Instructor Edits (continued)

Many researchers believe in the existence of a connection between depression and the use of social media or SNS; however, uncertainty still remains due to the varying topics of research in this field, which tend to lead to inconsistent or incomparable results. Researchers in this field, for example, analyze the number of virtual friends an individual has, as well as the types of posts that are most common within platforms, in an attempt to reduce the number of variables that might contribute to a possible relationship. Another group of researchers took a more specific approach to interactions online, and examined more than merely the association between time spent on social media and depression, but also took into consideration the quality of interactions the participants engaged in. The authors of this study found that corumination, or the act of talking about problems with friends in a negative and repetitive way, can actually predict increases in depressive symptoms (Davila et al., 2012). Finding connections between quality of interactions and frequency of depressive symptoms expands the dimensions in which social media possibly affects individuals, and leads to development of more theories.

Comment: Either use the entire phrase or the acronym, but do not use both.

Comment: Nice; you are setting up the gap, the conflict.

Comment: It looks like this word is spelled with a hyphen, such as co-rumination.

Comment: This section mentioned one group of researchers, then another group of researchers, but there is only one citation, so there seems to be a citation missing.

Other psychologists consider the number of followers (i.e., friends on Facebook, followers on Instagram) an individual has on social media sites. Researchers found that "...the average time spent on Instagram correlated positively with depressive symptoms, trait anxiety, social comparison orientation, physical appearance anxiety, and body image disturbance" (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018, p. 6). The idea that social media, in this case Instagram, affects more than just depressive symptoms, but also affects an individual's self-image and body image, leads to more questions about exactly how much of our lives can be affected by social media. Similarly, researchers from a separate study who also analyzed number of followers found that number of followers correlated positively with depression and trait anxiety. These researchers found a negative correlation between number of followers and self-esteem (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018). The results are inconsistent, as the higher the number of followers actually correlates with a lower level of self-esteem. Number of followers is one way to analyze the effect of social media on its users; even so, research on the content of posts suggests another outlet for depressive symptoms.

Comment: You have fallen into the habit of always citing your authors at the end of the sentence. You can also open the sentence with the researcher's names; this will provide some variety to your sentence structures.

Comment: Pathetic fallacy error; research does not suggest.

More experts in social media insist that content of posts, or status updates, should be a priority in identifying important components of social

FIGURE 5.5. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, With Instructor Edits (continued)

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Many researchers are interested in the relationship between social media use and depression, as well as other psychological disorders, and they have performed studies in an effort to find a correlation; however, results vary drastically. Some researchers found that the presence of increased communication or increased number "friends," positively affect mood. These such studies posit that the absence of face-to-face interactions may make it easier to interact with other people, particularly for shy individuals or persons who often feel lonely (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2016), which explains, to an extent, the conflicting results across studies. Conversely, other researchers find the opposite: that increased use of social networking negatively affects young adults' abilities to interact face to face and demonstrate more depressive symptoms. On a similar note, research analyzing body image and gender in comparison to social media use also demonstrates high levels of depressive symptoms. Strubel, et al., Petrie, and Poole-Winipala in their 2018 study defined social media as having become a form of sociocultural channel that transmits body-centric information more than previous media outlets. Prior to social media and SNS, there were limited ways for individuals' body-image and self-esteem to be influenced. Social media and SNS are a newly developed, *highly*

Comment: Just as an example.

Comment: Pathetic fallacy error – a study cannot posit.

Comment: Be sure to clearly cite the researchers who found the opposite finding – was it Strubel?

Comment: Pathetic fallacy error – research does not analyze.

Comment: Good variety in sentence structure!

FIGURE 5.5. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, With Instructor Edits (continued)

effective form of reinforcing hegemonic norms, particularly those that reiterate the ideal body image for both men and women. They ~~authors of this study~~ focused on the body dissatisfaction women have when they compare themselves to the ideal bodies represented consistently across social media platforms, ~~and they~~. ~~The authors explained~~ that the internalization of such ideals may lead to negative emotions, such as shame, guilt, anger, and sadness among these women.

However varying or contradicting prior results may be, a consistent thread weaves across all studies: social media use and SNS use significantly impact individual mood. In order to fill the knowledge gap, I will examine the relationship between possible existing depression and the use of social media, without emphasis on specific depressive symptoms or direct analysis of number of followers. The purpose of my study is to determine if there is a relationship between depression and the use of social media.

To research the possible relationship between depression and social media use, a sample of undergraduate students will participated in an online survey. The sample ~~will be~~ ~~was taken from~~ ~~introductory~~ ~~ion to~~ ~~Psychology~~ ~~students at Boise State University, and participants responded to completion of several research surveys from a large Western university. To measure possible correlations, evaluative questions concerning the presence of depressive symptoms, as well as questions measuring the amount of media use, were presented in survey form.~~

Upon review of previous literature and research performed regarding social media, SNS, and various levels or types of depressive symptoms on individuals, ~~I expect that this study will reproduce the most typical results found so far.~~ The more an individual uses social media, regardless of the platform, the more that individual will experience increased levels of depression. I hypothesize, first, that there will be a positive correlation between depression and the use of social media. Second, ~~I hypothesize that the platform through which an individual accesses social media or SNS will not matter; the quantifiable amount of use will be the predictor of depressive symptoms and level of depression.~~

Comment: Pathetic fallacy error -- the study does not produce. What does this sentence add?

Comment: You are predicting the null hypothesis here (which might occur). However, try to make a directional prediction.

FIGURE 5.6. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Final Draft (continues)

1

The Effects of Social Media Use on Depression

More than 70% of youth and young adults who use the internet use social media sites (Davila et al., 2012). Social media sites and social networking sites (SNS) range from colloquial use to professional use, as well as contemporary designs to platforms meant for professional networking. Common platforms used for studies include Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. LinkedIn is the most commonly used professional social networking site (Jones et al., 2016). Similarly, about 90% of 13- to 29-year-olds (of internet users in the U.S.) have at least one social networking site (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2017). With the rise of social media and SNS, many researchers show interest in possible psychological problems that may also arise with the decrease of face-to-face communication, particularly in the pervasiveness of depression. With so many people in the up-and-coming generation using the internet and social media, there is bound to be significantly less interaction that is commonly attributed to a healthy lifestyle (i.e., face-to-face social interactions, outdoor time, etc.). It is necessary to understand whether there is a significant relationship between these factors and social media in order to better prepare for possible negative side effects of the rapidly growing use of social media.

Through a review of literature, I investigated the prevalence of depression, as well as the possible relationships between depression and the use of social media. According to one researcher, participants who used LinkedIn at a minimum of once per week had significantly greater chances of increased depression in comparison to the participants who did not use LinkedIn (Jones et al., 2016). Depressive symptoms appear in nonprofessional online platforms as well. For instance, another group of researchers discussed the most popular observed theme from a sample of 2,739 depression-related posts on Tumblr, and these themes were found: self-loathing, loneliness/feeling unloved, and self-harm and/or scars from self-harm (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2017). Similarly, Twitter users expressing dissatisfaction more commonly use swear

FIGURE 5.6. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Final Draft (continued)

2

words to convey negative emotion, anger, sadness, and sexuality than other users (Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). On another note, if you search for the terms "depressed," "suicide," "self-mutilation," or "cutting," Tumblr will first send you to a screen with suggestions for seeking help (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2017). Researchers from each of these studies emphasize the significance of depression existing across social media platforms, both professional and entertainment-based. The real question behind the compilation of all this research is to what extent depression exists, and is there an actual relationship between usage of social media and increased depressive symptoms?

Many researchers believe in the existence of a connection between depression and the use of social media; however, uncertainty still remains due to the varying topics of research in this field, which tend to lead to inconsistent or incomparable results. Researchers in this field, for example, analyzed the number of virtual friends an individual has (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018), as well as the types of posts that are most common within platforms (Blease, 2015), in an attempt to reduce the number of variables that might contribute to a possible relationship. Another group of researchers (Davila et al., 2012) took a more specific approach to interactions online, and examined more than merely the association between time spent on social media and depression, but also took into consideration the quality of interactions the participants engaged in. The authors of this study found that corumination, or the act of talking about problems with friends in a negative and repetitive way, can actually predict increases in depressive symptoms (Davila et al., 2012). Finding connections between quality of interactions and frequency of depressive symptoms expands the dimensions in which social media possibly affects individuals, and leads to development of more theories.

Other psychologists consider the number of followers (i.e., friends on Facebook, followers on Instagram) an individual has on social media sites. Researchers found that "...the average time spent on Instagram correlated

FIGURE 5.6. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Final Draft (continued)

3

positively with depressive symptoms, trait anxiety, social comparison orientation, physical appearance anxiety, and body image disturbance" (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018, p. 6). The idea that social media, in this case Instagram, affects more than just depressive symptoms, but also affects an individual's self-image and body image, leads to more questions about exactly how much of our lives can be affected by social media. Similarly, Sherlock and Wagstaff (2018) analyzed number of followers and concluded that number of followers correlated positively with depression and trait anxiety. These researchers reported a negative correlation between number of followers and self-esteem. The results are inconsistent; as the higher the number of followers actually correlates with a lower level of self-esteem. Number of followers is one way to analyze the effect of social media on its users; even so, researchers investigating the content of posts suggest that there may be other causes for depressive symptoms in users.

More experts in social media insist that content of posts, or status updates, should be a priority in identifying important components of social media or the individual that add to the intensity of depressive symptoms. Bleasdale (2015) analyzed the specific types of status updates on Facebook. According to this research, there are three note-worthy forms of "status updates" on Facebook: updates that reveal low negative self-esteem, self-promoting updates, and self-important/narrow-minded posts. Analyzing depression from this angle becomes possible after establishing criteria behind each type of status update. Another important variable needing to be defined is the scientific term for happiness, referred to as subjective well-being, or SWB. The presence of positive emotions, the absence of negative emotions, and life satisfaction of the individual determine SWB (Yang & Srinivasan, 2016). By measuring SWB, researchers effectively evaluate the overall mood or possible prevalence of depressive symptoms. Equally as important, self-esteem can be described as "the evaluative component of the self—the degree to which one prizes, values,

FIGURE 5.6. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Final Draft (continued)

4

approves or likes oneself" (Pantic, 2014, p. 653). Types of posts, SWB, and self-esteem are all components that define how an individual sees himself or herself, and ultimately predict levels of depressive moods within social media sites.

Many researchers are interested in the relationship between social media use and depression, as well as other psychological disorders, and they have performed studies in an effort to find a correlation. Results vary drastically. Some researchers investigated the presence of increased communication or increased number of "friends," and the resulting effect on mood. Brailovskaia and Margraf (2016) posit that the absence of face-to-face interactions may make it easier to interact with other people, particularly for shy individuals, which explains to an extent the conflicting results across studies. On a similar note, researchers analyzing body image and gender in comparison to social media use also reported high levels of depressive symptoms (Strubel et al., 2018). These authors defined social media as having become a form of sociocultural channel that transits body-centric information more than previous media outlets. Prior to social media and social networking sites, there were limited ways for individuals' body-image and self-esteem to be influenced. Social media and social networking sites are a newly developed, *highly effective* form of reinforcing hegemonic norms, particularly those that reiterate the ideal body image for both men and women. The authors focused on the body dissatisfaction women have when they compare themselves to the ideal bodies represented consistently across social media platforms, and they explained that the internalization of such ideals may lead to negative emotions, such as shame, guilt, anger, and sadness among these women.

However varying or contradicting prior results may be, a consistent thread weaves across all studies: social media use significantly impacts mood. In order to fill the knowledge gap, I will examine the relationship between possible existing depression and the use of social media, without emphasis on specific depressive symptoms or direct analysis of number of followers. The purpose of

FIGURE 5.6. Sample Literature Review on Social Media Effects, Final Draft (continued)

5

my study is to determine if there is a relationship between depression and the use of social media.

To research the possible relationship between depression and social media use, a sample of undergraduate students will participate in an online survey. The sample will be introductory psychology students from a large Western university.

I expect that the more an individual uses social media, regardless of the platform, the more that individual will experience increased levels of depression. I hypothesize that there is a positive correlation between depression and the use of social media. I also hypothesize that the platform through which an individual accesses social media or social networking does not matter; the quantifiable amount of use is the predictor of depressive symptoms and level of depression.

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