De-constructing Articles

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Previous Experience

• How many people did a research master’s or bachelor’s degree?
• How many people did that degree in the same area as they are pursuing for their PhD?
  – E.g. Marketing, Accounting, Finance/Economics, Information Systems, MOBHR, Management Sciences
Concerns about Language

• There are two main ways that language in articles can be confounding...
  – First, many in the program are not native English speakers, but are going to be expected to complete the same number of readings at the same rate
  – Second, there are a lot of specialized terms, methods, procedures, and approaches which are going to be new
    • Make a list of unknown terms and definitions – you will probably come across them a lot
    • E.g. “artifacts”, “antecedent” vs. “consequence”, “a priori”, “parochial”, “prescient”, “normative”, etc.

• Ask the class professor to clarify terms or concepts if you are unsure of the meaning – others may have the same question but are too shy to ask
Example Article

• Let’s look at an empirical article from the OB area on Organizational Trust:
  – I picked this article because I read it very early on during my PhD program and had never read it before
What is your process?

• What part of the article do you start with?
  – Abstract
  – Introduction
  – Conclusion
  – Results/Findings
  – Discussion
  – Methods
  – Analysis
  – Measures
  – Tables and Figures

• Everyone has their own process
Analysis for Classes

• Some professors give you a structure to follow when analyzing and summarizing an article:
  
  – Example from class:
    
    • Summarize the article
    • Positive aspects
    • Negative aspects
    • Future research suggestions
    • Assessment
Analysis for Classes

• Future research
  – When asked to comment or suggest future research ideas, do not copy and paste ideas from the article unless asked to do so by your professor
  – Take time to think about the implications of the article, how it relates to your own research, and what is missing in the current literature
  – This can be very helpful when coming up with ideas for your term papers!!
Analysis for Classes

• Others will ask you to answer specific questions related to the article:
  – Example from class:
    • What did the authors mean when they said [...]?
    • How did the authors define concept ABC?
    • What are the potential contributions of finding XYZ?
    • Etc.
Other Recommendations

• When I talked with other students in the program, these were some of the points they mentioned:
  – Do not say there are not enough tables or illustrations – the professors do no appreciate this
  – Create a database of the theories, concepts, and measures that you see frequently
  – Read articles and attend workshops on how to review and critique articles:

• Keep your articles from class because you will need most of them for your comprehensive exams – and keep them organized!
Where did I go wrong?

• The first time I read and analyzed this article I made some mistakes which I noted when I had to re-read it for my comprehensive exam preparation
  – I reviewed it at too high of a level to be useful
  – I was too picky about non-research related concerns (e.g. formatting, presentation, readability, interest, etc.)
Where others went wrong

• Other students also gave me input on this issue, and here is what they said:
  – Read all of the assigned articles for each class even if you are short on time – the class will be more interesting and easier to follow along and participate in the discussion
  – If you are assigned one or two of the weekly readings, you should still know the other articles in case a professor asks you a question
Analysis for Comprehensive Exams

• Those methods may be good to get you started, but what do you need to know when studying for comps?
  – It depends on the structure of the exam and the types of questions being asked
  – Each area has a slightly different approach, so if possible, look at previous questions
  – Ask people in your area how and what they studied
Analysis for Comprehensive Exams

• However, there are some suggestions which may be useful to think about ahead of time:
  – What are the key theories used in the article?
  – What are the main findings or contributions the authors are presenting?
  – Which measures or scales are being used?
  – How does this topic relate to my own area of research?

• Know the key articles in your field
  – Your supervisor and professors may highlight these in class, so you should take note
What I found the second time...

• I look for definitions, theories, and findings first, then I consider some of the other concepts or nuances of the article
  – I wanted to know what the model looked like, and which hypotheses were supported
• There is a lot of information that either I remembered from my previous reading or was similar to information in other articles – this I could skim over the second time
• Statistics make a lot more sense now
  – Interpreting the correlation table
  – Understanding the significance of the beta values
What others have found

• The article journal is as important as the authors and researchers that wrote it
  – Know which journals are top in your area
  – Understand what the impact factor means, and what it is for key journals

• There are seminars and workshops available in DSB and McMaster which help with using resources for citations such as RefWorks, Mendeley, End Note, etc.

• If this is a completely new area of research for you, read an introductory textbook
Analysis for Research Purposes

• A totally different approach may be used when considering using an article for your own research:
  – Which definitions relate to my area of research?
  – What other articles or concepts are related to this particular article?
  – How reputable are the researchers and what kind of journal is this article from?
  – What type of analysis did they conduct?
    • Empirical, meta-analysis, theory construction, literature review, conceptual paper, research proposal
    • Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods
Your peers are here to help

• If you have a question, feel free to ask students in your area, students from other areas, your professors, and your supervisor

• Sometimes it is just easier and quicker to ask someone who has already been through the process
Questions?