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:

    – Mayer, R.C., & Gavin, M.B. (2005). Trust in management and performance: Who minds the shop while the employees watch the boss? *Academy of Management Journal*. 48, 874-888.

    – 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:
    - Campion, M. A. (1993). ARTICLE REVIEW CHECKLIST: A CRITERION CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING RESEARCH ARTICLES IN APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY1. *Personnel Psychology*, *46*(3), 705-718.
- 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?