

Research in Psychology I
Research Proposal Guide, Part I

Title: How to Write a Research Paper Introduction Without Developing an Overwhelming
and Compulsive Urge to Kill

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I. Introduction:

1. Thesis Statement : A sentence or paragraph that introduces the variables (concepts) of interest and provides the theoretical and/or applied reasons that we would expect to find a relationship between the variables that are being studied.

e.g. “The present study investigates further the biological predictors of individual differences in intense fear of small woodland creatures. A variety of mental health and medical service workers have noted the continuous demand for improved treatments for patients suffering from the ill effects of excessive exposure to small woodland creatures. However, relatively little attention has been directed toward identifying variables relevant to the prevention of this fur related phobia. Preliminary studies have focused on the biological correlates of intense feelings about animals. The present study extends this line of research.”

2. Literature Review :

a) present a brief history of the field of study, including definitions of major terms and concepts and what they have been used to demonstrate or explain. Assume that the reader has some knowledge of the topic so a complete review is unnecessary. Be brief, but not too brief.
b) present the pertinent general findings of important studies.

- do so topically; present the major topics, relevant to your topic, that have been addressed by different studies that you have read.
- if two or more studies report the same relationship between the variables you are interested in, then describe them together. Be sure to address any relevant differences between these studies as well.

e.g., “Phobic reactions triggered by the presence of cute cuddly stimuli have been noted both in the lab and in clinical settings (Watson & Rainer, 1917; George & Man in the Yellow Hat, 1960; Tennessee & Chumly, 1971; for review see Sniffy, 2001). Though, not all investigations have focused specifically on cute woodland creatures these studies have consistently demonstrated that small fur bearing stimuli can elicit behavioral avoidance (Captain & Kangaroo, 1977; Tigger & Piglet, 1934), extreme negative emotionality (Watson & Rainer, 1917; Scooby & Shaggy, 1975), and anxiety/panic attacks (Garison & Hat, 2000).

Several studies have found that the size of one’s spleen is associated with feelings of hostility toward and attraction to small woodland creatures (Aspelmeier, 2001; Smokey & Bear, 1997; Rocky & Bullwinkle, 1974; McKay, Garison, & Hat, 2000). McKay et al. (2000) also included emotional responses to barnyard animals (i.e. potbellied-pigs and chickens) in their measure of hostility and attraction.”

- point out any areas in the literature that you feel are being neglected.
 - If you are using a new and different manipulation, predictor, or dependent variable emphasize this in your review of the earlier work.
 - e.g. “Though several studies have addressed the spleen and fur fear relationship, relatively little attention has been directed at identifying the role that the hepatic (liver) and pancreatic secretions play in determining one’s fears regarding members of lower species.
 - If you are using a new method to address an old issue, emphasize how previous methodology is lacking.

- e.g. “Almost all investigations of fur fear to date have made use of self-reports to assess the extent of fur related phobias (see Eric, Kenney, Kyle, & Stan, 1998, for review). The weakness of such reports have been widely documented in other areas of social and behavioral science research and include problems of defensiveness, social desirability effects, and response sets. Such criticisms call into question the validity of the conclusions drawn from fur phobia research. Clearly there is an urgent need for research validating previous findings using other methodologies (e.g., behavioral observations).”

-Try to point out the logical continuity between previous research and the study that you are proposing.

3. Present Study’s Rational : i.e. what does your study do that no other study to date has done.

- e.g. “The present study addresses the dearth of focused research on hepatic and pancreatic processes in small furry animal related phobia and attempts to include behavioral assessments of small furry animal phobia to supplement self-report measures”

a) Describe the operationalization of the variables of interest

- Independent Variable - “The present study will focus on nocturnal bile and insulin output”

- Dependent Variable - “Small furry animal phobia will be assessed using both behavioral and self-report assessments in a laboratory setting”

b) Describe design of study:

- Especially if the study’s design is unusual or complicated, you will want to give an overview of the how the problem will be investigated.

e.g., “The design of the present study is a combination of a correlational and quasi-experimental designs.”

c) State the Research Hypothesis:

- In the context of your operationalization of the variables of interest, state **what** results you expect to find and **Why** you expect to find them.

“Because of the role that bile and insulin play in hippocampal regulation of latent libidinal motivation, it is expected that greater hepatic and pancreatic output would be associated with more negative attitudes toward small furry animals, including more negative ratings of interactions with small furry animals and a greater likelihood of avoiding interactions with small furry animals. Further, because of the unconscious, automatic and compulsive nature of the expression of latent libidinal drives, it is expected that high levels of hepatic and pancreatic secretions will be associated with overt expressions of hostile behaviors directed toward a variety of stimulus approximating small woodland creatures (i.e., photos and cartoon pictures of small woodland creatures).”