Brenau University
Psychology Department
Thesis Components Checklist

Overview of Thesis

Component	Description/Purpose	Comments/Feedback
Abstract	Summary of study in 150-200 words	
Chapter 1- Introduction	The problem is identified here. Sets the context for the study. Explains what we know and don't know about the topic(s) of interest. Written in funnel format.	
Chapter 2- Literature Review	Provides a scholarly review of the literature in an organized and effective manner. Lays out what we "know" and "don't know" about the problem. Provides specific hypotheses. Written in funnel format.	
Chapter 3- Methods	Describes the methodology in detail. Includes participants, measures and procedures (process for data collection).	*Note: Chapters 1-3 should be completed before the thesis proposal.
Chapter 4- Results	Presents the results of the analyses without giving opinions about the findings.	
Chapter 5- Discussion	Interprets the findings presented in chapter 4 discussing their meaning and significance. This involves integration across findings and integration of finding, theories, and implications.	

Chapter 1 Checklist
Introduction

Component	Description/Purpose	Comments/Feedback

Introduction	Section begins a new page and is titled:
	
	        Chapter One
	        Introduction
	        Title of Paper
	
	Start new page with title of your paper (first letter of each word capitalized) *Note: It is advised that Chapter 1 be written AFTER Chapter 2 is written and reviewed by your thesis chair. Chapter 1 is a brief overview of Chapter 2.	

	Opening paragraph is engaging Opening paragraph establishes context	
	There is a movement from more general opening paragraph(s) to narrower more specific areas and variables of interest (Funnel shape).	
	Transition sentences/ideas connect one paragraph or section to the next	
	Theoretical framework in which the study is lodged/anchored is clear in terms of what literature base, what models or frames of reference we are dealing with	
	We get a general sense of what we do know about the topic; provide general sense of what is to come in Chapter 2 and potential benefits of the study *note: some references will be used in the introduction, but you won't get into the details of the individual studies.	
	It becomes evident what we don't know about the topic	
Problem statement	Summarizes material presented above	
	All components of the problem are accounted for in the problem statement	

	The "gap" is clearly identified	
Purpose	Brief acknowledgement of purpose of this thesis/paper with core idea (variables/constructs) that will be investigated in the study.	

Chapter 2 Checklist
Literature Review

Component	Description/Purpose	Comments/Feedback

Introduction	• Start new page titled:
	
	    Chapter Two
	
	    Literature Review
	    Title of Your Paper
	• Opening paragraph should be broad and general but should clearly begin to identify that there is a problem (e.g., statistics, prevalence rates, etc.)	

Body of Review	• Headings might be used for each of the major sections (discuss with thesis chair), but headings cannot replace good transition sentences	
	• Subheadings are used only if there are two or more subtopics under a main heading (discuss with chair)	
	• Logical ordering of literature review topics (usually general to specific) • Good transitions from each paragraph to the next to help reader follow the logical ordering	
	• Literature is reviewed in an orderly fashion: by chronology; by broad to specific topic; and/or organized by concepts or themes	
	• Each section/subsection is ended with studies most closely related to this study	

	• Literature is synthesized, grouped, and summarized by the major point that the writer is trying to make. The first sentence of each paragraph should introduce the point/claim. The rest of the sentences within the paragraph should provide data from the literature to support the point. Typically in providing information from studies, the writer would include information about the sample size, age range, and gender breakdown of the sample. *Note: is it usually not appropriate to start a paragraph with a particular study. Start the paragraph with the point that the writer wants to make.	
	• If sections are large uses internal summaries for those sections	
Summary of literature review	• Restates and summarizes what we know about a topic and what we do not know about the topic • Summarizes what other studies have recommended for future research (hopefully this is in the ballpark of your study) • Identifies problem/gap in literature • Indicates how the current study fills the identified gap/problem • Clearly presents hypotheses (in future or present tense for proposal; past tense for defense). Hypotheses should NOT include the specific measures being used to operationalize the variables or the specific statistical analyses that will be used. Hypotheses are about constructs, not measures (unless the study is a study of the psychometric properties of an assessment instrument).	

| Writing (most critical in this section) | • Transitions from one section to the next are smooth and logical
• Writing is engaging and we get a sense of "where your literature review will lead us" (i.e. to what we don't know and will lead us to the idea that your study is worthy of being done)
• The opening sentence of each paragraph tells the claim of the paragraph; sentences within the paragraph clearly support the first sentence | |

Chapter 3 Checklist
Methodology

Component	Description/Purpose	Comments/Feedback
Methodology overview	Start new page titled: Chapter Three **Method** Includes three subsections: **Participants, Measures, Procedure**	
Participants	• Includes information about participants. This includes basic demographic information so that the reader (and authors or other studies who might be comparing their studies to yours) knows who is in your sample • Include number of participants, age range (mean and standard deviation), gender breakdown, ethnic breakdown, sometimes SES breakdown, sometimes marital status breakdown • Include other information that is relevant to your study (e.g. if you are studying college students, their classifications may be important as well as a host of other things like if they are in a sorority/fraternity, major, etc.). • In proposal stage, this section should be written in terms of what you expect to have (e.g., It is expected that 50 women and 25 men will participate in this study). • After the study is done, this section is written in past tense (There were 49 female and 27 male participants in the study).	
Measures	• Include one or more paragraphs describing each measure used in your study and a statement about how it will be used to measure a specific construct in the current study. (In the proposal stage, this statement is written in present or future tense; in defense state, this statement is written in past tense). Information provided should include: description of measure (what was item designed to measure, number and format of items, how measure is administered, how measure is scored and interpreted [including range of scores and what scores mean, subscales and what they mean, norms, etc. when available], reliability and validity of measures	

Pilot study	• If a pilot study is/was done describe the purpose of the pilot and how these results were/will be used. Did the pilot study make you alter your methods?	
Procedures	• Describe sampling methods and your rationale for sampling • Describe inclusion/ exclusion criteria for your sample • Describe (briefly) how you will insure human subjects protection • Provide steps that will be (for proposal) or were (for defense) followed for study and data collection, including amount of time involved (e.g., the researcher met with ten-member groups of participants on a weekly basis for a ten-week period. Each group included that same members each week, and each group meeting lasted for one hour. Immediately after each group hour was complete, all participants were asked to complete the Beck Depression Inventory…).	
Proposed Data analysis	Describe how data will be manipulated to answer questions Discuss statistics you will use, and the benchmarks (e.g. p=.05) you will use to determine if your findings are significant *include this section in proposal but not in defense version of thesis	

Chapter 4 Checklist
Results

Component	Description/Purpose	Comments/Feedback
Review purpose of the study	• Start new page titled: 　　Chapter Four 　　**Results** • Re-state the purpose of the study (might include a restatement of hypotheses) • Often includes three subsections (discuss with thesis chair): **Preliminary Results, Hypothesis Tests, Exploratory Analyses**	
Preliminary Results	• Provide means and standard deviations of scores on continuous measures and related to any cutoffs of categorizations from manual (e.g., On the BDI, the average score was 25 (SD 3.8). Ten participants fell in the severely depressed range (scores over ?), 24 fell in the moderately depressed range (scores between ? and ?), 21 fell in the mildly depressed range (scores between ? and ?), and 8 fell in the "not depressed" range (scores below ?). • Compare descriptive data from current study to normative data when possible (e.g., on average, the current sample exhibited greater levels of depression than a normative sample of college students (M=?, SD=?). • Provide frequencies and percentages of folks in different categories for categorical data and compare to normative data when possible.	
Hypothesis Tests	• Restate each hypothesis and indicate what statistical analysis was used for each (may need to explain why a particular analysis was used). • State whether results were significant or not significant and provide required statistical data (see APA manual). • State whether results supported or did not support your hypothesis • Ex: In order to test the hypothesis that severity of trauma would be related to severity of depression, a correlational analysis was conducted. Results were significant ($r=.403$, $p<.01$). Results	

	indicated that participants with higher levels of trauma tended to be more depressed. Results supported the hypothesis. • When using measures with multiple scales or subscales, it is often helpful to report results in table format (follow APA guidelines for tables). Do not use tables for information reported in text. Tables provide additional information (not the same information that was already reported).	
Exploratory Analyses	• Report results from <u>relevant</u> exploratory analyses indicating why each why run. Often, the critical thinking and generation of alternative explanations for your results (that you will discuss in the discussion section) will help you determine what exploratory analyses you need to do. (For example, you might wonder whether it's possible that the reason that trauma and depression are correlated is actually just a by-product of gender… women tend to be more depressed and women tend to experience more trauma. So… you would run exploratory analyses looking at the difference in severity of trauma across males and females as well as the difference in depression across males and females. And/or, you might run a regression analysis predicting depression from trauma while controlling for gender). • This is NOT a place to report all analyses that you ran. Report only those analyses that will help you explain the results of your hypothesis tests and/or those that provide new/interesting information for future studies to follow up on.	

Chapter 5 Checklist
Discussion

Component	Description/Purpose	Comments/Feedback
Summarize results	Start new page titled: Chapter Five **Discussion** • Restate the purpose of the study and the results of the study • Were these results as expected? Where hypothesis supported or not supported? • Were there surprises in the results? • Answers the "So What?" question	

Interpret the results	• What do the results means as related to the hypotheses? The literature? The theoretical base? Were there any confounds? What are the alternative explanations for your findings? For the relationships that were significant, why were they significant? For those that were not significant, why not? (you should think critically here and come up with multiple possible explanations. Then try to explain each theoretically and rule out any that can be ruled out… this is where exploratory analyses may come in handy). INTEGRATE across findings and explain the findings as a whole.
	• What do your findings mean?
	    o For your population/ sample?
	    o For your discipline/ body of knowledge
	    o How are your findings similar/different from findings of prior studies? Why are they similar or different?	

Limitations & Strengths	• Discuss limitations of this study • Did problems with research implementation hinder your results? • Any power issues? • Any instrumentation issues • Review all threats to internal, external, construct, and statistical conclusion validity and discuss any that you encountered. Also discuss how (if) those were dealt with and	

	what implications they have for your results • Strengths of study… how/why is this study better than others?	

Implications	• What is the significance of your findings?
	    o To your field (and to the literature in the field)
	    o To your consumers
	    o Other therapists?
	    o Other researchers?
	    o How will this study inform practice in your field? What should people do differently as a result of these findings?
	    o Answer the "so what" question … why should people care what your results are?	

Recommendations	• What should be done next?
	    o Recommend other populations?
	    o Alternate research design?
	    o Alternate instrumentation?
	    o Answers the "what next" question	

Conclusion is effective	• Concludes and wraps up the document effectively	

Table of Contents Checklist

Component	Description/Purpose	Comments/Feedback
Major heading	One heading for each chapter	
Headings	• Headings and subheadings are organized exactly as they are in the document • Page numbers in table of contents agree with pages on which these headings appear	

Format

Component	Description/Purpose	Comments/Feedback
Introductory Pages	See document posted on graduate student Canvas cite	
APA format	All references in text should also be cited in reference list (and vice versa) In body of paper, use "&" for citations in parenthesis; use "and" for citations in text	
	Reference list in alphabetical order by last name of first author. See publication manual for specific format of references For direct quotes, include the page number in the citation (Arceneaux & Johnson, year, p. 4). If you are quoting from an electronic source that does not have page numbers, include the paragraph number rather than the page #	
	Citations in text: if 1 or 2 authors, always cite both; if 3-5 authors, cite all authors the first time you cite; afterwards use first author's last name followed by "et al."; if >5 authors, use first author's last name followed by "et al." every time you cite	