

Writing like an Anthropologist

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The Senior Thesis: a transition from student writing to (almost) professional writing

Rhetorical roles:

Who you are as a writer: A new professional adding to the scholarly conversation

Who the intended readers are: Write to interested professionals, not just teachers

What your purpose is: To communicate to professionals, to add to the conversation

How do you enter the professional conversation intelligently? How do you avoid being rude or naïve?

- Show your knowledge of recent professional conversations. Connect your ideas to what has been said (written about) before. The Literature Review, what other professionals have said, serves this function.
- Know and use genre conventions: the way professionals communicate. Use the accepted “rules” of the conversation (format, referencing, etc.).
- Take responsibility for accuracy and clarity.

Writing like a professional includes what you say, how you say it, knowing why you say it.

Thesis Structure in Anthropology

- **Introduction:**
 - Topic
 - context
 - research question
 - purpose or objectives
 - significance,
 - preview of the organization (what each chapter includes)
 - May also include the literature review and methodology
- **Literature Review:**
- **Methodology:**
 - Your process of analyzing the problem and your perspective
 - research setting
 - Informants
 - methods of gathering data
 - personal reactions and biases
- **Substantive Chapters:** by topic related to your data and research objectives
- **Conclusion:**
 - Summarize major findings or highlight the most important findings.
 - May discuss implications of the research or suggestions for future research
- **Appendices:** interview schedules, questionnaires, etc.
- **Bibliography:** all written sources consulted during research in alphabetical order

Reading Professional Articles (like an anthropologist and like a writer):

Introductions to research articles: Academic introductions usually present a **problem-solution structure**. They set up a problem (or gap in knowledge), and then propose a solution. They seek to persuade readers with reasoning and evidence. And they always situate themselves within previous studies done.

- Articles often start with background on the general topic area, referring in some way to the academic “conversation” on this topic that this article will add to.
- They identify the problem or question the article will address (or the gap in knowledge).
- They state the purpose of the article. What claim is the author making? What is the author’s argument?
- They state or suggest why this question/problem/claim is significant.
- They may provide an overview of the article by summarizing its argument.
- They may discuss method or theoretical framework.
- They may state the conclusion, the claim being put forth.

Swales’ **Create a Research Space (CARS) Model** for introductions to academic papers:

1. Establish a territory/refer to what is already known: show the importance of the area, assert the importance of a claim, make general statements about the topic, and/or review the literature
2. Establish a niche: assert a counter-claim, indicate a gap, raise questions, indicate a limitation of previous work, or continue a tradition
3. Occupy the niche: state the goal of the current study, announce the research purpose, announce the main findings, and/or indicate the structure of the text that follows.

Topic
Significance
Previous work/studies
Research question/Purpose or claim
Preview of the organization

Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight

Clifford Geertz
(excerpts from *Interpretation of Cultures*, 1977)

The Raid

Early in April of 1958, my wife and I arrived, malarial and diffident, in a Balinese village we intended, as anthropologists, to study. A small place, about five hundred people, and relatively remote, it was its own world. We were intruders, professional ones, and the villagers dealt with us as Balinese seem always to deal with people not part of their life who yet press themselves upon them: as though we were not there. For them, and to a degree for ourselves, we were nonpersons, specters, invisible men....

Of Cocks and Men

Bali, mainly because it is Bali, is a well-studied place. Its mythology, art, ritual, social organization, patterns of child rearing, forms of law, even styles of trance, have all been microscopically examined for traces of that elusive substance Jane Belo called "The Balinese Temper."² But, aside from a few passing remarks, the cockfight has barely been noticed, although as a popular obsession of consuming power it is at least as important a revelation of what being a Balinese "is really like" as these more celebrated phenomena.³ As much of America surfaces in a ball park, on a golf links, at a race track, or around a poker table, much of Bali surfaces in a cock ring. For it is only apparently cocks that are fighting there. Actually, it is men....

Playing with Fire

Bentham's concept of "deep play" is found in his *The Theory of Legislation*.¹⁹ By it he means play in which the stakes are so high that it is, from his utilitarian standpoint...

Consider, then, as support of the general thesis that the cockfight, and especially the deep cockfight, is fundamentally a dramatization of status concerns, the following facts, which to avoid extended ethnographic description I will simply pronounce to be facts—though the concrete evidence—examples, statements, and numbers that could be brought to bear in support of them is both extensive and unmistakable:

² Jane Belo, "The Balinese Temper," in Jane Belo, ed., *Traditional Balinese Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); originally published in 1959), pp. 85-110.

³ The best discussion of cockfighting is again Bateson and Mead's (*Balinese Character*, pp.24-25, 140), but it, too, is general and abbreviated.

The Process of Writing a Thesis: Beginnings

The **research question**: Explore it thoroughly.

What's the key issue?

What broader context is this question/problem a part of?

Analyze the problem/question: What are the sub-problems or related issues?

Why is it significant? Are there any consequences of not answering the question/solving the problem? What will your study contribute?

These questions are answered in the introduction.

To start: Talk it out. Write it in note form. Diagram the problem and its parts. Write.

The **research literature**: Explore it thoroughly as well.

What studies have been done relevant to your question?

Find ones that are relevant. Summarize the key findings. Read according to the structure of the article. Note the following for each.

- What's the research question?
- What's the significance of the question?
- What method is used?
- What data is examined?
- What are the findings?
- What are the conclusions/limitations?
- How does it relate to your research question/ study?

Strategy: Use point form to note these. *Read a section--Look up and say it--Write it.*

After you have done this for a number of articles, try to *organize* the studies, grouping them in some way that makes sense for your research question: usually by topic or issue, sometimes by method or setting or findings.

Use the research literature to create an annotated bibliography, which is a preparatory step for both the literature review and the bibliography.

Smart Strategies for Writing:

- Start simple. But start with a plan in mind. Aim for clarity.
- Begin writing in whatever way you find easiest: notes, brainstorm, sketching a diagram of the ideas, talking it out, whatever works for you. Just START.
- Write small sections to get started: summaries of articles, for example, or an explanation of the problem. Get feedback along the way.
- Read your paper aloud to hear the sound of it. Have others read it or listen to it so that you find out what's clear and what isn't.

Annotated Bibliography

A preparatory step

An annotated bibliography is a list of references to journals, articles, books or documents. Each reference is followed by an annotation, a brief paragraph (3-6 sentences) summarizing the key ideas that are relevant to your thesis (research question, methodology, model, data, findings, conclusions) as well as commenting on how it is related to other sources annotated and to your own research question. An evaluative comment on limitations of the study may be appropriate as well. The comments will not normally be included in the literature review. Preparing an annotated bibliography helps you write the literature review, making it easier to move beyond mere summary to synthesis.

The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers. 15th ed. 2003. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This is a 956 page tome that tells you more than the ordinary person would ever want to know about formatting a book for publication. The chapters on documentation explain how to do bibliographies. Web citations are still not fully integrated even in this 2003 edition. One would expect that Turabian will soon follow with an updated version of her briefer book.

Goldschneider, F.K., L. J. Waite, and C. Witsberger. 1996. Nonfamily living and the erosion of traditional family orientations among young adults. *American Sociological Review* 51, no.4: 541-554.

The authors use data from the national Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams, cited below, shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living.

The Literature Review

A Literature Review explains what previous studies have said about your research question/problem. Providing this shows readers that you know what has already been discussed about the topic and that you have started from that previously established knowledge in formulating your own question. This helps give you credibility as a writer and researcher. The literature review also informs readers what knowledge and ideas are known on your topic, as seen in a critical manner by you.

Much more than just a list of studies or a set of summaries, a good literature review is a synthesis, a critical analysis, of what is known and not known on your topic. It is an argument, your argument, leading readers to understand why your research study is needed and why it follows from, builds upon, or contests the work of other scholars. A key purpose of the literature review is to support and explain your choices for your study.

The “moves” of a good Literature Review:

- Write it as an argument for what professionals need to understand (your research question) based on what is known from other scholarly work on the topic.
- Organize it by issue, topic, or theme, ones related to your own research question.
- Introduce each study by author’s name with citation of the publication year (no titles of articles).
- Briefly summarize key ideas that relate to your question/problem from each study. Also include limitations or problems with the studies. What doesn’t a study answer well?
- Identify areas of controversy in the literature or questions that need further research.
- End by pointing to your own question as one left unanswered—and one that needs to be addressed.

Preparing the literature review should help you define your own thesis, problem or research question. Think of it as a paper in itself, one with its own introduction and conclusion. What question, problem or concept does your selection of studies illustrate? What relationships among the studies do you want to highlight? How do these studies relate to your own?

Writing a Literature Review

The purpose of a literature review is to summarize and synthesize the arguments, studies, and ideas of others on a particular topic. It summarizes the sources of information that relate to your research topic. It also synthesizes these sources of information, organizing them in a manner that is meaningful. You may also evaluate the sources, indicating, for example, ways that sources may differ from your research question or be lacking.

The process of surveying the literature, selecting the most relevant studies, and composing a coherent literature review serves several purposes.

- It helps you to understand better what is already known about your topic, areas of agreement and disagreement, how researchers have investigated questions similar to your own, and what is known versus where there is a gap in the knowledge.
- It establishes credibility for you as a researcher by showing your familiarity with prior research in an area. It shows the relevance of your question.
- It sets up a context, gives background to readers, even argues for your research study.

Planning to write the literature review:

1. Clarify the requirements of your search:
 - How many sources should you include?
 - What types of sources are needed? What journals are recommended?
 - How current should the sources be?
2. Check out literature reviews in senior theses from previous years in Anthropology in Schaffer Library. This will help you get a sense of what the review should look and sound like and of ways to organize it and integrate it within your thesis. From the Schaffer Library homepage, select Catalogs and then Thesis.
3. Begin your literature search. If the search yields too many sources, you may need to narrow it. If your search yields too few sources, consider alternative search terms. Reading titles of articles in your search may give you ideas of the types of questions being studied—a possible way to organize your literature review. You want sufficient sources but also a manageable range of sources to read and select from in order to survey the literature on a topic. Remember, one good source will often lead to others, so check the bibliographies of your key sources.
4. Summarize the key and relevant ideas from sources in your own words. Annotate the ideas and note how they might relate to your own research question or to other sources. This step makes it much easier to write the literature review in your own voice.

Writing the literature review:

In some ways the literature review is like a mini-paper within your larger thesis. Think about the way you will focus and structure this mini-paper. Once you have selected your sources, consider the ideas that the sources represent. Find a focus that ties them all together, and look at ways in which they might be organized to present a coherent survey that relates to your topic or research question. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Do the sources all represent the same theme or issue or different ones?
- Do they all use the same methodology or different ones?
- Do they present one finding or viewpoint or different ones?

- Are they based on the same theoretical perspective or different ones?
- Do they reveal a single trend or more than one trend?

Seeing these patterns will help you choose an appropriate organization for your literature review.

- Write your focus: Write a thesis-like statement that encompasses all of your sources. What perspective do the sources you have chosen represent?
- Decide on an organizational pattern for presenting the sources: What approach is the most effective way to present your sources? What are the main topics? What order should you use? The following are some of the options to consider.
 - Thematic: Order your sources by topic, issue, or viewpoint. Within a theme or topic, sources may or may not be organized chronologically.
 - Methodological: Order your sources according to the methods used by the researcher.
 - Trend: Order your sources by date of publication (chronologically) if that order demonstrates an important trend.

Other sections you might include in your literature review:

- Current Situation: Sometimes information on this may be needed to help readers understand the topic or focus of the literature review.
- History: Chronological trends of the field or the literature that may be necessary to understand the literature review.
- Methods and/or Standards: The criteria used to select or limit the sources in your literature review (e.g., only articles after a certain date, only articles looking at adults, etc.).

Begin writing:

Here's how one section of your literature review might be introduced:

However, other studies have shown that even gender-neutral job classifications are more likely to attract men than women (Owens 1997). Roberts (2000) analyzed data from....

- Use sources as evidence to make your point—just as in any other academic paper.
- Be selective. Highlight only key sources and key points in each source, selecting information related to the focus of the literature review and your research question.
- Summarize and synthesize the sources. Highlight important features of a study, but also synthesize by relating the significance of the study to your own topic.
- Write in your own voice. Although you are presenting the ideas of others, your voice should dominate. Use your own words to summarize and evaluate sources.
- Paraphrase with caution. Make sure you are accurately representing the information from sources when summarizing. Identify the authors' ideas clearly so that readers can distinguish their ideas from your own comments on the studies.
- Use quotes only to emphasize a point that the author states in a particularly powerful way. Most of the review should be written in your own words.

Revise and edit

Put your literature review aside for a day or two. Then re-read it, preferably aloud, to hear whether the ideas and the language you use reflect your intentions. If proofreading and editing are difficult for you, visit the Writing Center in Schaffer Library, Room 227, where a tutor will work with you to proofread your paper.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Few systematic studies of the social organization of artisan, trader, and entertainer minorities have been carried out: Piasere's work on the Rom in Italy is an important exception (94-98)

....

European and North American Groups

....

South Asian Groups

How different is the social organization of South Asian groups? As mentioned

Dispute Settlement and Fighting

Artisan, trader, and entertainer minorities lack formal political leaders and....

Assembly as a Form of Social Organization

Researchers working with diverse artisan, trader, and entertainer populations in

WOMEN

Several researchers have examined the role women play in the societies under review—their economic resources, political power, and utilization of cultural symbols and ritual...

INTERACTION WITH OUTSIDERS

Most studies of interaction between artisan, trader, and entertainer minorities and their surrounding host populations have examined specific activities such as begging (21)....

Separation

Some form of social separation from outsiders is fundamental to the preservation of the....

Stigmatization

Stigmatization is also a major force in defining and maintaining separation between....

ASSIMILATION POLICIES

In the last 30 years many governments and private agencies have become involved in assimilation programs....

THE FUTURE

Artisan, trader, and entertainer minorities have existed for centuries but have become the objects of serious study only recently.... Why are they unalienated despite the “handicaps” of illiteracy, discrimination, and stigmatization? Artisan, trader, and entertainer minorities are resourceful and robust communities whose continued existence and success points to stimulating and fundamental questions about what constitutes social “deviance” and about alienation and cultural pluralism.

Literature Cited

GROUPS THAT DON'T WANT IN: GYPSIES AND OTHER ARTISAN, TRADER, AND ENTERTAINER MINORITIES

Sharon Bohn Gmelch

Ann. Rev. Anthropol. 1986 15:307-30.

Focus of This Review

What follows is a selective review of this growing literature and an examination of some of the issues I consider important. What, if anything, do artisan, trader, and entertainer minorities have in common? Do they share a particular type of economic organization? Do they have distinctive social organization? What is it that has made researchers want to categorize them together? So little is known about these groups, especially beyond the specialists who work with them, that I think it is appropriate in this review to adopt the widest frame of reference. I shall discuss, therefore, both nomadic and sedentary groups as well as European, North American, and Asian groups despite some important differences among them.

I have limited the review primarily to anthropological works published in English. I have excluded many unpublished dissertations: 40 have been written on Gypsy populations in the United States alone (M. Salo, S. Salo, personal communication). I have also slighted the work of my French, Spanish, Italian, Genoan, and Balkan language-speaking colleagues, especially those who publish only in these languages; however, many articles and books cited here will provide references to these non-English works.

Toward a Working Label

A number of labels have been proposed as a first step toward categorizing and identify...

The difficulty in using nomadism as the diagnostic feature of these groups raises two unresolved issues. First, what is the true role of nomadism within these groups? How central is it to their economic adaptation, and how important is it in the creation and maintenance of group identity? Second, what roles do these social groups play within complex societies?

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

Most discussions of the economic organization of these groups have been couched in the idiom of ecology.² They are said to exploit "social resources" (46, 91, 117) or a "human resource base" (8, 104), that is, individual customers and client communities in the host society.....

Marginality and the Demand for Services

Artisan, trader, and entertainer minorities are typically regarded as marginal, as....

Scavenging

Scavenging is an important economic activity that is often overlooked by researchers;....

The Organization of Work

Household income is produced by all family members—men and women, young and....

"Cleverness" and Impression Management

Numerous writers have examined the adept role-playing and impression-management....

Giving Sorrow New Words: Shifting Politics of Bereavement in a Papua New Guinea Village

KAREN J. BRISON

ETHOS 26 (4):363-386, 1998

This article explores the creation of new roles for local men among the Kwanga of the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea through the formulation of a new way to grieve....

I situate these ideas within the context of masculine identity in Papua New Guinea. I argue that while, on the surface, it appears in many areas of Papua New Guinea that gender roles have been destabilized in ways that improve the position of women, among the Kwanga it is primarily men who are in the position to redefine local ideas about person, emotion, and morality in such a way as to formulate more positive roles for themselves.

Culture, Emotion, and Suffering

A large body of literature argues that emotional expression and experience are not determined solely by individual personality and biography; instead, people are born into worlds with established ways of experiencing and expressing emotion that are, in turn, linked to larger systems of political relations (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1986; Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990; Bailey 1983; Feld 1982; Kirkpatrick and White 1985; Lutz 1988; Myers 1979, 1986, 1988; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Schieffelin 1976, 1985a, 1985b). Abu-Lughod (1986), for instance, argues that there are two distinct "discourses of sentiment" that mold emotional expression and experience in matters of romantic love among the Bedouin of Egypt.

Abu-Lughod (1986:256-257) stresses that neither discourse of sentiment is more "real" than the other in terms of arising from individual personality and feeling; instead, both are conventional rhetorics that individuals learn in the course of growing up.... Thus, Abu-Lughod argues, one must investigate emotions as constituted "in discourse or situated speech practices"... to explore "the close involvement of emotion talk with issues of sociability and power" (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990:1,2).

Although cultural discourses of sentiment often support existing relations of power, these discourses are continually renegotiated as they are used in daily life. Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990:7-10) suggest that there are "multiple, shifting, and contested meanings possible in emotional utterances and interchanges" (1990:11)....

In this article, I examine the shifting politics of emotional expression in Kwanga funerals. I discuss the capacity of personal suffering to catalyze reflection of discourses of sentiment under conditions in which assumptions about personhood and polity have been called into question by exposure to new conditions and ideologies.... Thus, Samuel's suffering led him to craft a life narrative that both made sense of his pain and restored him to a sense of competence.

Tuzin also suggests that Samuel's vision created new kinds of shared religious views for other Ilahitans....

In some ways, however, Samuel is an unusual case. The reflection prompted by suffering does not always penetrate deeply into cultural assumptions.... Because Kaluli culture offers individuals the means to cope with their loss, suffering does not necessarily provoke reflection on cultural assumptions about selfhood or emotion.

It is also not clear that all individuals have the ability to question tacit cultural assumptions when conventional ways of dealing with pain no longer work for them (see Brison 1995a; ...). This case and similar ones suggest that some people do not have the capacity to innovate on tacit local scripts even if those scripts no longer work for them.

Here I suggest that two features of George's situation allowed him to come to innovative ways to conceptualize his identity and manage his pain. First, I argue that the Kwanga...

Within Papua New Guinea many scholars have also commented on rural people's ability to creatively work with a colonial ideology portraying New Guineans as savages....

But, second, I argue that Kwanga culture put men in a better position than women to formulate new kinds of personhood by positioning them to take an active stance on their problems even though exposure to dominant outside ideologies had destabilized masculine roles....

Examples of Literature Reviews in Anthropology: A senior thesis

The following excerpt is from page 25 of the senior thesis of Kyla Ruth Rudnick, 2004: “A Sense of Passion: Environmental Activism in Tasmania.” The thesis focuses on exploring the passion that motivates environmental activists. This excerpt provides background on the history of conservation of the environment in the government.

In 1919 the first Conservator of the Forests, a state government position, was appointed to forester Llewellyn Irby. The name “conservator” expressed the influence of the “forest conservancy” movement (Cubit 1996:11). The Conservator of the Forests eventually evolved into today’s Forestry Tasmania (Forestry Tasmania 2002a). In fact, the governmental sector of forestry in Tasmania has used three different names: from 1921 to 1946 it went by the Forestry Department, from 1946 to 1994 they went by the Forestry Commission, and since it has gone by Forestry Tasmania (Cubit 1996:iii). The year after the Conservator of the Forests position was created, the Tasmanian Parliament passed the Forestry Act 1920, which was developed by Irby (Cubit 1996:11). According to the forest industry today,

The Act gave the expression to the principles central to the forest conservancy movement of conservation, protection and controlled utilization of the State’s forests. Under the Act, a Forestry Department was created, headed by the Conservator of the Forests, and responsible for all matters of forest policy.... (Cubit 1996:11)

An early draft of a student’s literature review. IT NEEDS REVISION! Based on what you know about a good literature, what should this writer revise?

Nutrition education is now being considered the new public health in Australia. John Coveney and Patricia Carter, 1999, address the idea of nutrition education and the need to redefine healthy food choices in their article *The Art and Science of Public Health Nutrition: From Theory to Practice in South Australia*. In the past the authors identify that healthy food was defined in relation to the nutrient content of the food. This definition must include food safety and the ability of the environment to keep up with the demands of a growing population and a changing food choices and developments. Public health is a new phenomenon but has developed very quickly in a short time and therefore attention must be paid to these areas hence the importance of my study. As Coveney and Carter said:

“We will use the term ‘art’ to refer to the approaches used by practitioners to fashion their products, and the term ‘science’ to describe nutritional concepts which these approaches attempt to convey. We therefore define the ‘art and the science of public health nutrition’ as the processes used and the contents of programs promoting nutritional wellbeing and public health” (Coveney & Carter, 1999).

These authors are concerned with what affects a consumer’s food choice. They want to understand the type of participation it takes and the learning experiences encountered in understanding good health. However, they identify the lack of research on the connection between SES and this nutrition education. As with my study, SES is thought to have a direct correlation to health because of different social environments and their relative effects on behaviors. This article does however identify that strategies usually do not target lower socioeconomic classes and therefore the education is not reaching these people. The reasoning that the authors provide include the lessened ability of these people to access ‘health promotion messages, healthy foods, money to spend on food, and having different food preferences when compared to the higher SES groups.’