Writing Literature Reviews and Abstracts

Scholarly articles and essays written for the graduate-level criminal justice course often require writing abstracts and literature reviews. Professors who teach undergraduate courses may require a literature review as well. The literature review is a summary of what the literature says about a specific topic (Purdue Online Writing Lab [OWL], 2018d). It is not an annotated bibliography that links together several abstracts. Rather, the review is written in a narrative style using sources to support the author’s ideas on a research topic, theory, previous methodologies, and gaps in the literature. An abstract is a brief and concise summary of a larger written or digital document, a recording, or other work. Students and researchers often include an abstract at the beginning of a research paper or project report as a brief and informative overview of the content, methodology, and results presented in the document to help readers decide if they want to read the entire document.

It is essential for a writer to understand the topic, theoretical perspectives, problems in researching the topic, and major controversies in the topic area of any research project (Adams, Khan, Raeside, & White, 2007). Reading as much of the available literature as possible is the only way to do this. As Ridley (2008) noted, “The literature review is where you identify the theories and previous research which have influenced your choice of research topic and the methodology you are choosing to adopt” (p. 2).

Identifying and Narrowing a Research Topic

Researcher interests in topics may stem from professional exposure to programs, policies, or procedures as well as personal experiences with a particular action or activity. For example, a person who was subjected to child abuse as a youth may now be interested in studying the impact of child abuse on college attendance. He or she may want to investigate the number of formerly abused youth who attended and successfully completed a 4-year degree in colleges in the southern states. Another researcher may have professional experience with the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program and be interested in researching the amount of drug use and exposure those who attended the program during 6th grade have in Grades 9 to 12. The interest in this subject may allow for an exploration of the success of the DARE program in deterring drug use in a geographical location.

If the subject for a research paper is not provided by the teacher, students may find that they are overwhelmed by their interest in many topics. The fundamental step, here, is to identify one broad subject and then to restrict the
interest in that subject to a narrowly defined issue. One should ask, “What is it about that subject that I want to know?” Once the researcher has identified what he or she wants to know, the researcher can frame the project from a scholarly perspective. As identified in Table 3.1, any subject can be investigated from a scholarly perspective if the topic is clearly identified.

Identifying what a researcher wants to know may be easier said than done, however. To do so, the researcher may need to employ several techniques prior to even beginning the research project. The researcher may wish to speak to others, like teachers, friends, or family, to brainstorm the idea and discuss the possible questions he or she may face while researching the topic. The researcher may want to talk to those involved in the activity or action that he or she is interested in. The researcher may want to do a review of the literature found in the library or in Internet searches to see what others have identified as interesting about a subject and what others have found in data analysis with respect to the subject (Lester & Lester, 2005). Using a general search engine, such as Google, is a good way to start researching a topic since it will return the most results. For example, a simple Internet search using the keyword “police body cameras” returns more than 79,000,000 results. Students and researchers, however, cannot effectively evaluate such a volume of search results in the hope of finding the most appropriate data for their study. Once the topic has been identified through a general search, it can be refined by using more specific search terms and an appropriate database. This will reduce the search results significantly, so that students and researchers can more easily identify and evaluate proper sources. Searches can also be limited by using databases and search parameters, which are discussed later in this chapter. Specifying a range of publication dates (e.g., the past 3–5 years) will also limit a search.

### Table 3.1  Examples of Scholarly Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Narrowed Topic/Scholarly Perspective</th>
<th>Possible Research Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Example 1  
A student is interested in the design of police cars and the equipment located in the cars | Ergonomics of the police vehicle and the head, neck, shoulder, and hip room provided to officers once technology is incorporated into a police car | Ergonomics and technology in a police vehicle and their physical impact on police officers |
| Example 2  
A student is interested in drug courts | The recidivism rate of adult offenders who attended and completed drug court programs | A quantitative assessment of the recidivism rate of adult offenders who complete drug court programs |
| Example 3  
A student is interested in fake news | The number of fake news stories published on social media in a specific period of time | How widespread are fake news stories on social media? An analysis of fake news stories from 2018 to 2020 |
A sample search using the EBSCOhost Law and Political Science database reduces the results for “police body cameras” to a more manageable 670 returns. Refining the search to include “privacy” further reduces the results to 38 sources. Although Appendix A is comprehensive, it still remains too broad for a typical literature review (see page 140 for Appendix A). Example 3.1 illustrates seven possible refined topics.

### Example 3.1 Possible Topic Areas With Reference Numbers From Appendix A

1. Police wearable video devices  
   38, 26, 21, 34, 33, 1, 30, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
2. Privacy concerns  
   2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 16, 24, 23, 26, 27, 29, 31, 37
3. Impact of police cameras  
   1, 3, 7, 9, 13, 18, 30
4. Understanding police video camera use  
   1, 5, 6, 7, 12, 18, 20, 21, 22
5. Accountability  
   3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 18, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32
6. Evidence  
   1, 19, 21, 27, 33, 35
7. Legal implications  
   1, 3, 10, 11, 17, 22, 32

### Exercise 3.1

Practice narrowing a research topic. Select a broad topic, and conduct a library and Internet search. Start with a general search engine (e.g., Google). Then, using the techniques described in this chapter, narrow the topic several times. Continue the process until a manageable number of sources is reached.

Reading source material will increase the student’s knowledge in the topic area and lead to other potential source material. Reading source material will also reveal the theoretical perspectives used to identify the type of data needed to answer the research questions (Adams et al., 2007). Additionally, problems with researching the topic area may be identified when reading the literature. For example, Jacobs (1999) observed that no official data exist on criminal offenses committed by police officers. With this knowledge derived from the literature, scholars interested in researching this
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No matter what method is used to narrow the topic, the researcher, ultimately, will need to identify his or her own personal biases about the subject before choosing to begin the research. Because personal biases can influence data-gathering and data analysis processes, the researcher needs to know that he or she can be objective when researching the topic. In other words, the researcher needs to remain distanced from what he or she is studying so that the findings are based on what was studied and not on the researcher's personality, bias, past experiences, or opinions (Payne & Payne, 2004).

Locating Sources

The Internet is an important resource and should be a part of your research plan. With just a few keystrokes, a seemingly endless collection of information can be located. With just a few keystrokes, search engines scan millions of webpages (Hacker, 2006) and return a seemingly limitless amount of information. Students and scholars should be familiar with the various methods available to locate sources and limit the returns to those most relevant to their study. General search techniques are discussed in Chapter 7. This section focuses on locating source material for criminal justice students and scholars.

Using Criminal Justice Databases

Criminal justice databases focus on issues related to crime, law enforcement, prisons and jails, probation and parole, juvenile justice, and the courts. The information located in these databases comes from journals, books, government reports, and private institutional reports. Use these and other related databases when researching a criminal justice topic.

Some databases charge a subscription fee and are not as straightforward to access as general search engines. Most college libraries and some public libraries subscribe to databases that provide unlimited access to scholarly resources not otherwise available on the Internet (Hacker, 2006). Databases like ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and LexisNexis fall into this category. Check the library website, or ask a librarian about how to access these sites. Additional research resources are included in Chapter 6, “The Academic Research Paper.”

1. National Criminal Justice Reference Service (https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/AbstractDB/AbstractDBSearch.aspx): This free database, operated by the Office of Justice Programs, provides mostly abstracts but also some full-length access for criminal justice topics, with links to data collections and other government programs.

2. National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/content/NACJD/index.html): This archive contains links to more than 2,700 studies of criminal justice data, which can be downloaded for secondary analysis.
3. **Bureau of Justice Statistics** (https://www.bjs.gov/): The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) collects, analyzes, publishes, and disseminates information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government. Primary data are available for download.


5. **Criminal Justice Abstracts**: Access through EBSCOHost via an institution or local library. Criminal Justice Abstracts is a database for criminal justice and criminology research. It provides cover-to-cover indexing and abstracts for hundreds of journals covering all related subjects, including forensic sciences, corrections, policing, and criminal law and investigation.

6. **JSTOR** (https://www.jstor.org): JSTOR is a subscription research platform that provides access to millions of journal articles, books, and other primary sources. Students can often access JSTOR through their institution's library.

7. **Other criminal justice databases** (http://libguides.umflint.edu/c.php?g=428962&p=3263967): Students can find an extensive listing of criminal justice databases compiled by the University of Michigan.

### Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary sources include research, publications, reports, interviews, and other original material (Schiffhorst & Schell, 1991). Secondary sources are created with the support of primary sources. Primary sources give a truer sense of the topic than any secondary source could provide (Bombaro, 2012). Collecting data from a primary source, though, can be challenging.

Obtaining primary source data requires conducting individual or focus group interviews, completing survey research, or observing participant behavior, and the process can be both costly and time-consuming. Some primary source data collected by researchers are available on criminal justice databases. For example, a student researching family violence might consult a BJS report. The report is a primary source since it is based on crime statistics collected and analyzed by the BJS and this information is essential to understanding the issue. Students should “locate and use as many primary sources as possible” (Schiffhorst & Schell, 1991, p. 336).

Secondary sources rely on interpreting primary or other secondary sources to support or counter the author’s thesis. These include books, scholarly articles, and other documents authored by someone who did not conduct original research or experience the event firsthand (Brown, 2014). Students should evaluate secondary sources carefully for credibility. Companies and organizations often fund research with the intent of a predetermined outcome. Information about evaluating sources is included later in this chapter.
Locate a scholarly article on a topic that interests you. Does the author use primary data or secondary data?

**Exercise 3.2**

Using Secondary Sources to Locate Primary Sources

Students can benefit from the work of authors who have studied and published criminal justice research on topics similar to theirs. When a source is located, students should carefully read the reference section, paying particular attention to titles that appear to be closely related to their topic. The bibliographic information should be added to the Working Bibliography. Using the author's name and the title of the work, search one of the earlier described databases until the source is located. It is always best to locate a full-text copy of the source. Students can read the full details of the work and evaluate its usefulness to their research essay.

Choose one of the articles found in Exercise 3.1. In the References, find a prominent author or article previously not identified in the exercise. Conduct a search, and locate the article. Repeat the process several times, each time locating new articles or authors. How many new articles or authors did you find? How can adding this information to a paper improve the writer's credibility and the quality of the final paper?

**Exercise 3.3**

Identifying Classic Studies

It is important to identify the classic studies in a topic area. Classic or landmark studies are those that “change the way we think about criminal justice topics, generated considerable amount of other research, and have had a major influence on the operation of the criminal justice system” (Thistlethwaite & Wooldredge, 2010, p. xix). Our knowledge of the criminal justice system is based on these studies, and they provide a rich foundation for students and researchers to understand the context of future criminal justice research (Thistlethwaite & Wooldredge, 2010).

Be alert for certain keywords that identify classic studies, such as classic, foundational, famous, definitive, groundbreaking, or seminal. The following examples demonstrate how a keyword can identify a classic study:

1. “This landmark experiment found that traditional routine patrol in marked police cars does not appear to affect the level of crime” (National Police Foundation, 2016).
2. “This view was supported by the findings of the pioneering Minneapolis, Minnesota domestic violence arrest experiment (also called the Minneapolis Spouse Abuse Experiment), the first controlled experiment in the use of arrest for any offense, which found a substantial specific deterrent effect in a sample of 314 cases” (Sherman, Schmidt, Rogan, & Smith, 1992, p. 138).

3. “The major studies examining the issue of patrol-unit numbers have attempted to discern differences between solo patrols and two-officer patrols regarding the type of activities undertaken, the quantity of tasks completed within a given unit of time (e.g., one shift period), response time, and the quality of the task resolution” (Wilson & Brewer, 1992, p. 444).

4. “These emergent perspectives played an important role in legitimating the decision of many academic criminologists and juridical policymakers to declare rehabilitation fully bankrupt. Most noteworthy was Robert Martinson’s (1974:25) conclusion that ‘the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism’” (Andrews et al., 1990, p. 370).

5. “Few ideas have become more influential than ‘broken windows’” (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004, p. 319).

Pre-reading Source Material

Pre-reading is a strategy successful students and scholars often use to help them focus and concentrate on important material in a text. In source material, researchers hope to discover information that will expand their knowledge of the topic, guide their choice of research methodology, inform their current study, and lead to other instructive source studies. Pre-reading includes listing keywords and concepts, identifying successful and unsuccessful study methodologies, and learning about findings that may be valuable to the student’s research. Given the quantity of potential sources found in a search, students should quickly and efficiently determine if the identified source material is useful to their study. This can be done by scanning the source material. Since social science research is written in a specific format, students can focus on several easily located areas of a source paper before reading the entire text. Special focus should be given to these key areas in any research paper:

1. The title
2. The abstract and/or introduction
3. The first two or three sentences of each bolded heading and subheading
4. The first two or three sentences of other subheadings
5. Any tables, graphs, charts, or data presented in a labeled and titled box
6. The methodologies used
   a. The sample/population
   b. The sampling method
   c. Whether quantitative or qualitative
   d. The method of analysis
   e. Methodological strengths and weaknesses

7. The findings

8. The discussion section
   a. Limitations

9. The bibliography or references section

Evaluating Sources

All source material should be evaluated thoroughly since anyone can post information to the Web. Not using a plausible source can discredit an essay and the writer. According to Kirszner and Mandell (2011), students should ask four questions when evaluating sources:

1. Is the source respected? Peer-reviewed, scholarly articles are valued much more than general readership articles. Likewise, a major news publication, like The Wall Street Journal or The New York Times, is considered a more dependable source than an independent newspaper.

2. Is the source reliable? Reliable sources depend on factual, documented information that supports the thesis. In a reliable source, the author will include source citations that can be checked for accuracy.

3. Is the source current? Current sources provide information relevant to the topic. There is no standard for how old a publication might be yet still remain current. A technology article could be outdated in a year or less, while information on community policing from the 1980s might be current.

4. Is the author of the source credible? What other publications has the author written, and have they been cited by other researchers? Is the author employed by a company or foundation that suggests a particular bias?

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**Exercise 3.4**

Evaluate a source used in a previous exercise. Is the source respected, reliable, current, and credible? Based on the evaluation, could the source be used in a research paper?
Organizing the Review

The literature review should follow a general organization principle of at least three elements: (1) an introduction section; (2) the body section, containing the discussion of sources; and (3) a conclusion or recommendations section (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2019).

Previous studies may have a qualitative or quantitative design, and this design affects the organization of the literature review. According to Denney and Tewksbury (2013), reviews of qualitative studies focus on important themes and how the research question was studied previously. Literature reviews for quantitative studies discuss the previous literature, specific variables, and the analytic methods used. They focus on the research methods—both what has been used in previous studies and new methods that represent advances in research design. The review may also be organized chronologically to demonstrate improvements in research methods or technology, or thematically to focus sections of the review on specific topics (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2019).

Writing the Review

As with any writing project, the literature review deserves the author’s best effort and writing skills. The review is written in a narrative format, in the past tense, and in complete sentences that are grammatically correct and devoid of punctuation and spelling errors. Source citations follow standard American Psychological Association format for both in-text and bibliographic references. The review should be written for a general audience, without slang or jargon. Example 3.2 is an example of a literature review. Since Example 3.2 is a writing sample, references are not included in the list.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2019) Writing Center recommends the following guidelines for writing a literature review:

1. **Use evidence:** Support the interpretation of the source with other sources to demonstrate validity.
2. **Be selective:** Use only the most important points that focus on methodology, themes, or chronology.
3. **Use quotations sparingly:** Some short quotes are acceptable, but the review does not lend itself to an in-depth analysis or detailed quoting of the source.
4. **Avoid summarizing the source:** Sources should be used to convey and support the writer’s ideas. Sources should not be used as the sole text of the review.
5. **Paraphrase accurately:** Represent the source material accurately, and refer to the source when discussing information that is not your original idea. Avoid plagiarism.
What Is a Literature Review?

A literature review is an analysis of significant sources to support the writer's ideas on a research topic, theory, previous methodologies, and gaps in the literature. Important reasons for writing a literature review include demonstrating the author's knowledge of the topic and previously written studies, establishing the writer's study within the framework of prior research, and establishing the need for the writer's study. Students and researchers should keep in mind several key elements when writing the review.

1. **Pre-read the material for efficiency:** Using pre-reading strategies, students and researchers should identify the most timely sources. Timeliness refers to the article's relevance to the writer's topic, not the date when the source was written. Source articles written within the past 10 years are accepted by most professors as timely, but studies written even 50 or more years ago can be considered timely. For example, the president's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice report, written in 1967, could be considered timely today for studies on juvenile delinquency, police management, community-based corrections, and strategies of crime control. Similarly, August Vollmer, considered the father of American policing, wrote *The Police and Modern Society: Plain Talk Based on Practical Experience* in 1936. The text can still be purchased today and is considered by many as a foundational work in policing. Although using outdated source material may be beneficial in a historical context, including material in a literature review that is not considered timely and relevant can be evidence of poor research skills.

2. **Organize the review:** Students should organize the literature review to help readers understand the important topics identified in previous studies. The literature review can be organized based on the research methodology, theory, chronology, or theme of earlier works. Reviews organized according to research methodology should focus on the use of qualitative or quantitative methods. Quantitative studies are based on statistical analytical methods, while qualitative studies focus on themes identified by the researcher.

3. **Analyze, don't summarize:** A common mistake in writing literature reviews is to simply summarize earlier works. A summary provides no more information to the reader than if the reader had read the article firsthand. The analysis provided in a literature review should assure the reader that previous studies employed appropriate methodologies, identified methodological flaws or limitations that affected the findings, and communicated significant study findings that supported
the research hypotheses of earlier studies. A good analysis demonstrates the need for additional study and allows students to frame their study in such a way that it builds on and adds to the previous scholarship.

4. Use evidence to support claims: In a literature review, claims made by the writer must be supported by evidence from previous studies. Scholarly research is based on knowledge, and the process of analyzing earlier works and writing a literature review demonstrates a student’s understanding of the topic. Declarative statements and claims of fact should be supported by source material that is cited so that readers can verify the information presented in the paper.

5. Identify theory: Many researchers frame their research within the context of criminological or other social science theory. Prominent criminology theories include anomie, strain, social learning, social disorganization, labeling, rational choice, and others. The analysis of source material should identify the theoretical perspectives and their relevance to the current study.

6. Identify previous research methodologies: A well-written literature review seeks to identify research methodologies that have been used successfully in the past as well as those that demonstrated limited effectiveness. Doing so demonstrates the writer’s knowledge of research methods. It also supports the use of a past design in the student’s current study or justifies the need for applying an alternative methodology.

7. Identify gaps in the literature: A foundational purpose of a literature review is to justify the need for the current study. The literature review does this by acknowledging the existing knowledge on a topic and identifying an area that would expand or improve on this body of knowledge.

8. Acknowledge dissenting views: In rhetorical terms, a research study is an argumentative paper. The writer proposes a thesis and offers evidence in support. Acknowledging dissenting views does several things: It demonstrates that the writer is not one-sided and has considered alternatives before reaching a conclusion (Harvey, 1999).

The literature review is a critical piece of a research project. Reading the available literature will improve students’ knowledge of the topic and may allow them to speak to topic experts. Perhaps most rewarding, though, is the feeling of inclusion derived from the connection between other scholars’ work and your own. As noted by Adams et al. (2007), writing the literature review introduces students to an academic community as someone “who can speak and write with confidence and authority on a specific research problem” (p. 39). A sample literature review is provided in Example 3.2.
Example 3.2  Sample Literature Review

Accreditation in Police Agencies: Does External Quality Assurance Reduce Citizen Complaints?

**CALEA and Professionalism**

The concept of professionalism in policing can be traced to the early 19th century, when visionaries like August Vollmer and Orlando Wilson led the movement toward police professionalism. Vollmer is recognized as the principal author of the professional model of policing, which includes a deep involvement in the community (Carte & Carte, 1975), and in 1921, he was named president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (2014)—one of CALEA’s four founding organizations. When he was chief of the Chicago Police Department, Wilson implemented his model of police management, which emphasized organization autonomy, efficiency, and accountability (Hassell et al., 2003; Kelling & Wycoff, 2001). Both men contributed to a foundation for professionalism in policing, and on its establishment, CALEA’s goals included establishing standards designed to increase agency professionalism.

Several studies recognize CALEA’s contribution in promoting professional law enforcement (Baker, 1995; Bizzack, 1993; Crowder, 1998; Langer, 1995). Specifically, Baker (1995) notes that the differences brought about through the credentialing process clearly differentiate CALEA agencies from their nonaccredited peers; Cheurprakobkit (1996) suggests that accreditation is the benchmark of professionalism; Falzarano (1999) writes that accreditation represents the first step in establishing law enforcement professionalism; McCabe and Fajardo (2001) conclude that accreditation is an avenue to achieving professionalism in law enforcement; Trautman (1988) includes accreditation as a characteristic of law enforcement professionalism; and Langer (1995) suggests that accreditation allows an agency to demonstrate that it is a professional organization. These studies suggest that by complying with CALEA’s 480 standards accredited agencies go about the business of the profession in clearly identifiable and measurable ways that set them apart from nonaccredited agencies.

**Citizen Complaints**

In 2008, about 40 million people aged 16 years or older had at least one face-to-face contact with the police (Eith & Durose, 2011). While the vast majority of citizens (89.7%) felt that the police acted properly, 574,000 reported that the police threatened or used force against them, and 417,000 (1.4%) reported that they felt the force was excessive (Eith & Durose, 2011). Although the number of police–citizen contacts has steadily declined, the percentage of complaints related to the use of excessive force has remained constant at about 1.5% since 2002 (Eith & Durose, 2011).

There are many factors that influence complaints filed against police officers, but most often they result from street-level actions on the part of individual officers (Christensen, 2001; Dauler & Romano, 1993; Vaughn et al., 2001). Research suggests that a White, male officer under the age of 30 years, with less than 5 years’ experience, and assigned to uniform patrol is most likely to generate complaints (Johnson, 1998; Steven et al., 2001). There is some evidence that the number of complaints is tied to officer productivity, since officers who make more arrests and issue more citations generate more complaints (Brandl et al., 2001, Hassell & Archbold, 2010; Lersch, 2002). Eith and Durose (2011) reported that most of those who experienced police force felt that the amount of force used was excessive.
(76%) or that the police acted improperly (84%). Many of these incidents involved the police making threats or shouting, but 83% of excessive force incidents involved physical force (pushing, hitting, kicking, use of a chemical agent, or use of an electronic control device) (Eith & Durose, 2011). Forty percent of the recipients of force were arrested, and 19% were injured during the incident, while 14% reported that they had filed a complaint against the police (Eith & Durose, 2011).

Hickman (2006) found that in 2002 the nation’s police agencies had received 26,000 citizen complaints alleging excessive use of force by police officers. Durose, Schmitt, and Langan (2005) recorded complaints filed not only with the officer’s employing agency but also with a civilian complaint review board, the local prosecutor, the court, or another government agency and found that a total of 101,600 complaints were filed against officers for excessive use of force. Hickman (2006) reported that about 8% of complaints of excessive use of force are substantiated, which is less than the substantiation rate for other types of complaints (Griswold, 1994).

The interpretation of these numbers, however, is complex and prone to both underreporting and overreporting (Lersch, 1999). Some citizens may define misconduct more broadly than agency policy, and others may be dissatisfied with the officer’s conduct or the outcome of an investigation (Lersch, 1999). Some studies suggest that low complaint rates may alternately indicate confidence and trust in an agency (Adams, 1995) or the presence of intake processes that discourage citizens from filing complaints (Pate et al., 1993). Some may lack confidence in the agency, find the process intimidating, or wish to not draw attention to their criminal past (Lersch, 1999). A high number of sustained complaints, however, may suggest misconduct. Other studies suggest that race and socioeconomic status determine the number of complaints. African Americans are overrepresented in the volume of complaints filed (Kessler, 1999), but this may be due to a large number of force incidents occurring in minority and poor neighborhoods (Adams, 1995). Still others file frivolous complaints in an effort to have charges dropped (Lersch, 1998) or to leverage the courts (Adams, 1995).

While the LEMAS data do not include the previously mentioned dimensions, they include the following additional factors that may influence the rate at which complaints are filed and their outcome. A number of studies suggest that agencies that make improvements in the complaint process, such as accepting complaints by phone, increasing the number of locations where a complaint may be filed, or involving citizens in the complaint review process, experience a higher volume of complaints but sustain fewer claims of malpractice (Adams, 1995; Kessler, 1999; Walker & Bumphus, 1992; Worrall, 2002). Worrall (2002) examined the impact of four organizational factors on the frequency of complaints: (1) trained internal affairs investigators, (2) external citizen review, (3) operating an early-warning system, and (4) electronic complaint databases; they found operating an early-warning system significant. CALEA (2013a) standards require that agencies operate an early-warning system as a means of identifying potential problem employees. Hickman (2006) reported that the involvement of a citizen complaint review board, the use of an internal affairs unit, the use of an early-warning system, the use of computerized files to record complaints, and the presence of collective bargaining increased the rate of citizen complaints. Police union contracts, however, have been reported to inhibit the investigation of misconduct (Walker, 2006). Because of these larger global issues, complaint numbers
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must be viewed holistically rather than simply examining the number of complaints.

The Lack of CALEA Diffusion

Obtaining accredited status is a process in which very few agencies choose to participate. Since its creation almost 35 years ago, CALEA has awarded accredited status to just 623 U.S. state, local, and national law enforcement agencies—a mere 3% of the nation’s 18,000 policing agencies and a number that has remained static for the past 10 years. Stated another way, 97% of police managers have chosen not to participate in a voluntary process that can be arduous, costly, and labor intensive (Baker, 1995; Carter & Sapp, 1994; Cheurprakobkit, 1996; Falzarano, 1999; McCabe & Fajardo, 2001).

Most of the nation’s largest agencies are noticeably missing from CALEA’s membership. The nation’s six largest police departments are not accredited, and of the 10 largest agencies, 8 are not accredited. By size, these nonaccredited agencies include New York City P.D., Chicago P.D., Los Angeles P.D., Philadelphia P.D., Houston P.D., Washington D.C. Metro Police, Dallas P.D., and Detroit P.D. Of the nation’s 10 largest sheriff’s offices, only 1 agency (Broward County, Florida, Sheriff’s Office) is accredited. The level of participation begs the questions whether accreditation works and what tangible benefits it provides to law enforcement, citizens, and public managers.

Assessing the Impact of CALEA Accreditation

Studies evaluating the impact of CALEA voluntary credentialing are mixed. In their analysis, McCabe and Fajardo (2001) identified several differences between accredited and nonaccredited agencies, including in field training hours, minimum education requirements for starting officers, policies for drug testing sworn applicants, the operation of a drug unit, and the operation of a child abuse unit. Accredited agencies were more likely to use polygraph exams and pre-employment drug testing (Baker, 1995). CALEA accredited agencies are most often located in the South and are less likely to have unions (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001). Bizzack (1993) suggested that accredited agencies experience increased calls for service, crime clearance rates, and community confidence and have fewer citizen complaints.

But Carter and Sapp (1994) observed that the chiefs of nonaccredited agencies are uncertain about the value of accreditation, and Sykes (1994) reported that CALEA accreditation fails to considerably change an agency. Skolnick and Fyfe (1994) added that most CALEA standards lack substantive content, requiring only that the agency have a policy but leaving the content details to the agency. Cordner and Williams (1998) suggested that accreditation standards emphasize process over outcome and have little impact on the quality and nature of the services delivered. Recent studies examining outcome measures have suggested that accreditation has no impact on operational effectiveness (Teodoro & Hughes, 2012), case clearance rates (Doerner & Doerner, 2012), reducing incidents involving the use of force (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001), and the frequency or severity of lawsuits (Hougland & Mesloh, 2005).

The current study seeks to expand on previous studies that identified the key characteristics of CALEA accredited agencies (Baker, 1995; Bizzack, 1993; Cheurprakobkit, 1996; Crowder, 1998; Langer, 1995). Specifically, Bizzack (1993) surveyed 325 CALEA accredited agencies and identified decreased citizen complaints as one such characteristic. Using the data provided in the 2007 LEMAS survey, we attempt to determine the influence of CALEA accreditation on the volume of citizen complaints regarding the use of force, and on the outcome of the complaint investigations, from a national sample of state and local law enforcement agencies.
We distinguish CALEA accreditation for several reasons. First, as the first national accrediting body, CALEA stands as the model for law enforcement accreditation. Its four founding bodies offer its standards a level of legitimacy unparalleled in state programs. Second, at least some state programs predominately replicate CALEA standards, while others are entirely distinct. Florida’s process, for example, duplicates CALEA standards, with the exception of 81 standards (Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc., 2014). Other state programs are completely different from CALEA. Washington's program, for example, was created in 1976—3 years before CALEA was formed. Its standards are based mostly on state and federal law (Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, 2014). An analysis including state agencies, then, would likely either (a) include processes that are highly correlated or (b) muddy the findings with a number of accredited agencies complying with dissimilar standards.


Writing an Abstract

An abstract is a brief and concise summary of a larger written or digital document, a recording, or other work. The abstract is written when a research project is completed. Students and researchers often include an abstract at the beginning of a research paper or project as a brief introduction to the project. It is written in the past tense in one paragraph of no more than 300 words, although the type of abstract may require more or fewer words. The purpose of an abstract is to provide the reader with a brief and informative overview of the content, methodology, and results contained in the document and to help readers decide if they want to read the entire document. It is important for students and researchers to write a complete and thorough abstract since it may be the only section of the paper or article read by others.

Types of Abstracts

An abstract can be written by a student evaluating research for use in a paper or by researchers summarizing their own study. The following general types of abstracts are typically used for academic papers, conference presentations, and publications.

Critical Abstract

A critical abstract evaluates a work's benefit to another study. In addition to including the purpose, methods, and results, a critical abstract includes an analysis of the work. Professors sometimes assign a critical abstract so that students have a record of their research and its benefit to the student's paper. Due to the analysis included in the critical abstract, this abstract is typically about 400 words (University of Southern California Libraries, 2019).
Descriptive Abstract

A descriptive abstract briefly summarizes the information found in a work. It does not evaluate the work in any way. It does include the purpose, methods, and scope of the report but not the results, conclusions, and recommendations (Purdue OWL, n.d.). Descriptive abstracts are typically just 100, or fewer, words in length (University of Southern California Libraries, 2019). The reader must decide if the subject is interesting enough or of sufficient value to read the entire report.

Informative Abstract

The informative abstract embodies the entire work. It includes all the information found in a descriptive abstract, but it also contains a discussion of the results, implications, and recommendations of the study. Informative abstracts are written by researchers to help readers decide if they should read the entire study. This abstract is typically about 250 to 300 words long (University of Southern California Libraries, 2019).

Writing Style

Students and researchers should follow the basic concepts for writing well when writing an abstract. Write in complete sentences, using specific words and concepts from the full document. Address the main points of the document, and write in the active voice. Write in a general style so that readers not familiar with the topic can easily understand the abstract. Avoid using jargon and acronyms since the abstract does not provide sufficient space to explain their meaning. Samples of abstracts are provided in Examples 3.3 and 3.4.

Abstract Elements

Like any piece of writing, a well-written abstract is organized to help the reader understand its content. A well-written abstract includes six elements (adapted from ERIC, n.d.; University of Southern California Libraries, 2019):

1. **Purpose**: Describes the objective and hypothesis of the document
2. **Methods**: Describes the research design, data, and analysis methods
3. **Results**: Describes the findings of the analysis
4. **Interpretations**: Provides a brief summary of the reader’s understanding of the work
5. **Implications**: Suggests how the results will have an impact on the literature or on policy and makes suggestions for future studies
6. **Additional materials**: Identifies tables, graphs, and other materials included in the full document
Example 3.3  Sample Quantitative Abstract

Accreditation in Police Agencies: Does External Quality Assurance Reduce Citizen Complaints?

Accreditation suggests that an organization has met standards of quality through extensive self-study and external review. This study examines the influence of Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) accreditation on citizen complaints. The authors identified the accredited status of the law enforcement agencies included in the 2007 LEMAS report as CALEA accredited or nonaccredited, resulting in a final sample size for this study of 628 agencies (CALEA accredited = 314, nonaccredited = 314).

The study uses an experimental design and a negative binomial regression. The findings suggest that no difference exists between CALEA-accredited agencies and nonaccredited agencies in (a) the total number of complaints received and (b) the number of sustained citizen complaints. The study suggests that CALEA accreditation has no impact on the volume of citizen complaints an agency may receive or the investigatory outcome of those complaints, and provides insight for future citizen complaint research.


Example 3.4  Sample Qualitative Abstract

Consolidation of Local Government Agencies: Does Florida’s Fiscal Crisis Merit Merging Law Enforcement Agencies?

The traditional model of municipal, county, and state government has led to duplication and inefficiencies of police services. In many areas, the delivery of police services is duplicated by city, county, and state agencies that often perform similar or identical functions. Many agencies are considering consolidation as a means of reducing costs. This study examines the historical effectiveness of consolidating local law enforcement agencies and suggests three policy alternatives.

A consolidated government is one in which local governing entities formally create a single government entity that assumes responsibility for both city and county. In counties that support numerous police departments and a sheriff’s office, proponents of consolidation suggest that it makes good fiscal sense to operate one law enforcement agency rather than a multitude of independent agencies that all perform essentially the same police function.

Consolidation efforts have been implemented in Florida. Most notable of these efforts are the Miami and Jacksonville models. Alternatively, many large agencies have implemented a scaled-down version of consolidation, sometimes called regionalization, by providing contract services to smaller communities within their jurisdiction. Other, smaller agencies have entered partnerships to share facilities and resources. The goal of each of these programs was to reduce cost, eliminate wasteful duplication of services, and improve efficiencies.

Consolidation of local law enforcement agencies has seen mixed reviews. Empirical studies have consistently failed to find economies of scale due to such consolidation. Policy implications include standardized pay, pensions, uniforms, firearms, vehicles, and other equipment.

Source: Author created.
CHAPTER SUMMARY

Writing literature reviews and abstracts is an important part of writing college research assignments and peer-reviewed articles. A literature review is a summary of what the literature says about a specific topic (Purdue OWL, 2018d), and an abstract is a summary of any work. A well-written literature review demonstrates the writer’s knowledge of the topic, establishes the need for the research, and justifies the research methodology. This chapter discusses the writing process and key elements of a literature review. The purpose of an abstract is to provide the reader with a brief and informative overview of the content, methodology, and results contained in the document and to help readers decide if they want to read the entire document. It is important for students and researchers to write a complete and thorough abstract since it may be the only section of the paper or article read by others.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. In what ways should a literature review establish the need for a research project? Why is it important for the literature review to do this?
2. How can a writer address the gaps in the literature identified in a literature review?
3. How can a writer establish the need for a research methodology used in a research paper or peer-reviewed article?
4. What is the purpose of an abstract, and how does it encourage the reader to read the full paper?