**ACADEMIC ARTICLE TEMPLATE:**

These are the parts of a social science journal article. Almost every article has these parts somewhere. This template is followed most closely by disciplines, sub-fields, and schools with theoretical orientations that borrow most from scientific models and post-positivist epistemology. These fields also tend to follow a typical order that is shown below. However, the parts are often present, more or less explicitly in the works of authors who adhere to more interpretivist and critical orientations.

1. **INTRODUCTION: PROBLEM/PURPOSE STATEMENT**

This section comes at the beginning of your study proposal. It provides the context and rationale for your study. Stated another way, the introduction establishes the problem and provides a brief justification for the study that follows.

An effective introduction often takes a funnel form by starting with a larger policy, practice or theoretical issue. It then points to some gap in what is known about that issue and tells how this paper will address that gap. A less common, more descriptive (journalistic AND ethnographic) alternative is to start by describing some attention grabbing event in the setting studied, illustrating how that is part of a larger problem to be studied and then goes on to tell how the paper will address the problem. Rather than going from general to specific, this second option goes from specific to general to specific.

Typically, explicit research questions are introduced as part of the introduction.[[1]](#footnote-1) Often the introduction foreshadows the conclusion and tells something about the setting and methods as well. It may also include definitional information for key terms in your study.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW.

This section establishes what is already known about your area of inquiry and how this informs your study design. The literature should open with a paragraph that outlines the structure of the literature and creates a rationale for the bodies of literature you include. Typically a literature review covers 3-5 borad areas of research. The literature in each research area is synthesized. escribes how the study builds on and extends beyond past research. It synthesizes--rather than summarizes--what has gone before in order to identify both strengths and gaps in the field, show how others have defined key concepts, sometimes describe how others have measured/studied important issues, and/or sometimes describe and support a conceptual framework to guide the study.

1. RESEARCH METHODS.

This section describes how the study was done. It is crucial to researchers using more positivist approaches who seek to describe primarily through method and is important to all schools of research. It typically addresses the following topics to help the reader see the strengths of the design while being candid about flaws and weaknesses.

* 1. The theoretical orientation to the research methods--e.g., phenomenological or grounded theory.
  2. The research setting.
  3. The study design including:
     1. Any samples (schools, teachers and or students within schools etc.) and how they were selected.
     2. Methods for collecting data.
     3. Methods for analyzing data, including strategies to ensure validity, such as triangulating and member checking.
  4. The role of the researcher, especially with regard to data collection.
  5. Possible sources of researcher bias.

If this is a study of a special program or school, the methods section may start out with a description of that program (or school). Note: The methods section may not explicitly state study limitations, but methods should be presented frankly enough so the reasonably sophisticated reader can tell what they are.

1. FINDINGS. This is where the author presents the data, both the descriptive material and analysis of data. Description and analysis can be organized in a variety of ways. Sometimes the emphasis is on providing a picture of the setting and the action with occasional reference to larger implications--e.g., narrative and ethnographic studies. Sometimes, the emphasis is on providing a theory with illustrations from the data collected, as in much grounded theory research. It may or may not be explicitly organized around research questions or a set of conceptual categories. In a qualitative study, this will be the longest section of the article.
2. CONCLUSION. This is where the author summarizes findings and engages in any interpretation of the data. The conclusion will always summarize main findings. It will typically address some or all of the following issues as well:
   1. Theoretical implications
   2. Practice or policy implications
   3. Issues for further research
   4. Limitations of the study

1. Research questions may also be introduced at the end of the literature review. Some articles dispense with research questions entirely, but by the end of the literature review, the reader should know what issues the article is studying. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)