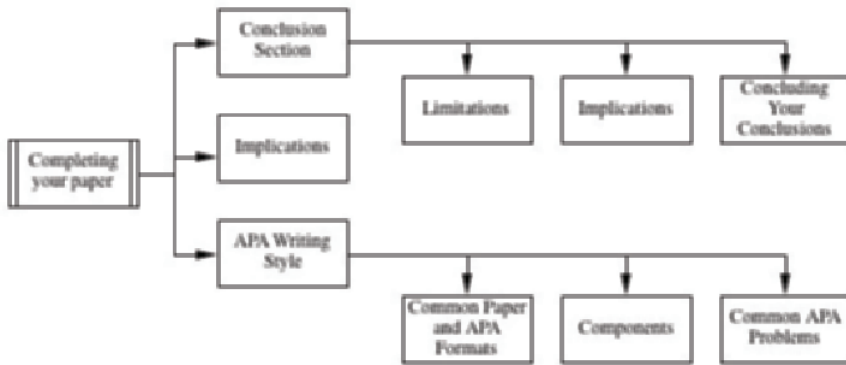


## CHAPTER 11

# CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND WRITING IN APA STYLE



## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 11 provides the details for wrapping up the paper. It discusses writing a conclusion, discussion, and implications—the “so what” and “what’s next” portions of the paper. It also re-addresses the issues of limitations and generalizability. The chapter concludes with a review of writing in APA style.

## INTRODUCTION

At the start of this text, we compared educational research to a road trip. Keeping with that analogy, by the time you reach Chapter 5 of your paper, your vacation is done. A friend is asking how your vacation was, and Chapter 5 is your response. You remind her of where you went and you share the highlights. Assuming your friend has also been to that locale, you might compare what you liked and didn’t like. You may talk about what you would do again or differently if you went back and where you hope to go on your next trip. Similarly, for your research journey, your conclusions/implications chapter would cover:

- a restatement of your research problem with your conclusion. Succinctly, what did you learn regarding your problem;
- a discussion of what you found and how it compares to what others have found;
- a listing of the limitations of your study (including generalizability);
- the importance of your study results—what do these mean for you and others; how will they affect your practice; what additional questions were raised.

Think back to the original questions of analysis (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2005): what is important in the data, why, and what can be learned from it? Those questions guide your conclusion. “If we can really understand the problem, the answer will come out of it, because the answer is not separate from the problem” (Krishnamurti, 1963, p. 120). Let’s see how we construct this “journey’s end.”

## CONCLUSION SECTION

Start Chapter 5 with your problem statement. Then summarize the major findings of your research. Include an interpretation of your findings. If you conducted a quantitative study, answer your research question. If you took a qualitative route, recap the main assertions in your study. If you used both methodologies, answer your quantitative questions and summarize the findings from your qualitative analysis. When possible, your quantitative findings should be used to support your qualitative findings. This summary should be tightly coupled with the results section of your paper. When you are writing this section have your results section open in front of you and be sure you are only talking about things you have stated in the results. You will have a chance later in the conclusions section to talk more broadly about your study. For now, the reader of your report should be able to draw connecting lines from the methods section through the results and to the specific conclusions you are stating.

Our work never stands on its own. We are always contributing to the larger knowledge about our topics. Here is the point in your report where you go back to what you found in the literature review and compare it to what you found in your study. How does your work fit into the larger body of work on this topic? How do your findings compare with what other studies have found? As you discuss your results in light of others, cite the studies. For example, you may say,

“The literature reviewed revealed some common themes which were, in turn, supported by the results of my survey. The literature indicates a need to develop a sense of community within our schools in order to provide stability in a world that is changing so quickly...The results of this study indicate that teachers who share students and space feel supported in their work and have built strong relationships in their learning community...” (Reprinted with permission of Carolyn Carmeron)

“The data from the students’ surveys support Lyle’s (1999) findings about what both high and low achieving students believe about group work.” (Reprinted with permission of Sheryl Nash)

If your findings are dissimilar to other studies, can you think of any reasons why this discrepancy may have occurred? Were there differences in samples or methodologies that might have led to different results? Include your thoughts on this as well in your comparison. For instance,

“Generally, males have been found to possess more positive attitudes toward science than females (Kyle et al., 1986; Simpson & Oliver, 1985). This finding did not appear to be the case with this sample. Perhaps, because of the emphasis