Module 7, Video 1: Building Tables to Summarize Literature

Greetings from my at-work office in historic John Dewey Hall. Complete with my at-work reading glasses.

This is an interesting chapter that presents some really great ideas on how you can use tables to make a literature review more readable. But in addition, the techniques that it covers can be used to build tables that may never make it into your final document. Instead, they would be organizational tools.

Also, I’m going to introduce you to the rubric you’ll use for your first and final drafts. It is an Excel-format workbook with multiple, linked sheets. If you’re not familiar with Excel—or any spreadsheet-type programs—then this will give you a chance to see how it works and get some provisional practice. That way, when it’s time to use it, it will be easy. This will be in one of the free-standing ‘screencast’ type presentations. Part of the reason I am doing this now, though, is that there are lots of times when Excel is the tool of choice for building tables.

I know that this video is now really short, but that way, the “how-to” screencast-type presentations can stand on their own.

Tables in APA-Format Documents: Basic Concepts

Tables, like figures, can be thought of as ways to present information in a graphic or semi-graphic format. As such, if you’re considering either—but I will focus on tables—then the first question is pretty basic as is implicit in this chapter’s Guideline 6, and the question is this: does this format make information easier to understand? If not, then don’t go to the work of making a table.

Galvan lays out the primary situations where tables are logical and helpful. And he gives some great examples from the literature. In his first 3 guidelines, he’s basically giving an inventory of these categories:

Definitions

Methods

Research Results

There may be other categories as well, and in the assignment that goes along with this unit, you’ll be analyzing a review article that you’ve already identified for your own project and looking for tables to then dissect and describe. As you do that, note how the table either does or does not conform to the rest of Galvan’s guidelines.

Guideline 8: Give each table a number and descriptive title.
This is essentially a matter of APA format and style. For that reason, I’d send you to a concise and authoritative web-based source of guidance. Where do you think that will be? Think, pause if you need to, then I’ll take us there.

If you said the Purdue OWL, then you’d be correct. Note also how Galvan’s advice largely conforms to what they have to say.