

Annotated Capstone Subgenres The Evidence Section

Overview

You've introduced your readers to your Capstone's purpose and scope, you've reviewed the literature surrounding your topic, and you have described the methodolog(y)(ies) you will use to collect and analyze relevant data. It's now time to present your findings to your readers in the Evidence section.

Of course, you will have used various types of evidence to support your claims all throughout the Capstone. The Evidence (or Results) section, however, is where you provide your readers with the evidence you've collected, following the guidelines you've established in the Methodology section, to answer the research question or address the policy problem that is at the core of your project. This could include both *qualitative* evidence, such as responses to interview questions and surveys, as well as the results of *quantitative* analyses. You want to present your evidence in an organized way. You may wish to consolidate your results into charts, tables, or graphs and then discuss trends, patterns, and individual points of interest. If using statistics, you can discuss the percentages that are significant and describe the statistical analyses you ran.

In addition to presenting the evidence you've gathered, it is important to explain to your readers your interpretation of the data, and why this evidence is meaningful to your project. As Thomas Main points out in his "Elements of the Capstone Thesis": "be clear about what your evidence is supposed to prove, and how what it proves relates to your claim." Sometimes, particularly in highly quantitative studies, the presentation of the evidence/results is kept separate from a more detailed discussion of the implications of the evidence, which is given its own "Discussion" section. Talk with your Capstone professor about whether this division might be a useful organizational structure for your specific Capstone.

While the Evidence section can't be finalized until you have all the results of your research, keep track of your findings as you go along. In addition, prewriting steps such as annotating your data can allow you to see trends and patterns and help you to organize your results when it comes time to draft this section.

Below are excerpts from the Evidence sections of two Capstones (the first dealing with qualitative evidence, the second quantitative) annotated to highlight key moves made by the writers.

Annotated Model Capstones: Evidence

Excerpt #1: “Bronx Students Left Behind: The Implementation of the Small School Movement in Bronx High Schools.”

Teacher views of Administration’s Effectiveness

A common theme that emerged in interviews was a frustration with the inability of host school administration to influence the process. In terms of organizational climate and health, administrative indicators exhibited a decrease according to teachers. Teachers interviewed emphasized the importance of leadership in the success or demise of the school. Teachers described principals not supportive of the small schools in the building as “forced to retire,” while those large school principals that were supportive of the small school implementation as “puppets.” It was clear that none of the teachers felt as though their principals had influence in the Region offices. This contributed to the teachers’ perception of the host school as vulnerable to outside stakeholders and illustrated the top-down nature of the reform as it related to the host schools.

Another common theme among those interviewed was the lack of downward communication. This was perceived at two levels by the teachers interviewed. First, they felt as though teachers were given little information from the host school administration regarding the implementation. One teacher outlined the information that was disseminated, “First we were told that there would be academies within the school that would focus on the kids. Then the first one became a separate school. The information was piecemeal, and they were not completely forthcoming.” Another teacher also received information on the potential benefits of small schools, asserting, “They said that small schools are better for the kids, everyone knows everyone’s name, things like that,” but that information about how they would be placed or implemented was not given. As the process unfolded, the teachers interviewed did not find improved communication, and verification of or commitment to information did not happen, according to one teacher. Without communication in a changing environment such as these schools, rumors became the primary source of information for some teachers, demonstrating the lack of transparency in the implementation, at least on the school level.

The writer begins by indicating the type of evidence being discussed: Interviews with teachers.

This writer found thematic patterns in their evidence (« frustration with the inability of host school administrators to influence the process »; « lack of downward communication ») and has used these themes to organize their discussion of the evidence.

This first paragraph summarizes, in a few sentences, major trends within the interviews. As readers, we are led to see further patterns in the evidence.

The writer ends the paragraph by stating what they want us to take away from their findings.

The writer introduces the second theme to emerge from their evidence.

Again, the writer notes patterns (the « two levels » perceived by teachers) within the theme of « lack of downward communication. »

Here the writer quotes directly from teacher interviews to illustrate vividly the « lack of downward communication. »

Again, the writer ends the paragraph by discussing the implications of the evidence. Here they demonstrate how lack of downward communication led to negative outcomes.

Except #2: “Face-to-Face Education: Will it Increase Buy-In and Vigilance in a Hospital?”

From the Results section:

The results confirmed the hypothesis that face-to-face education with weekly feedback and audit would lead to increase compliance with the UCB (Urinary Catheter Maintenance Bundle), taking other influencing factors into consideration. Compliance significantly improved with the UCB across every area of the study (see Table 2 for weekly compliance with each element, Q1 through Q12). The final PPS resulted in compliance greater than 70% with every item of the UCB and only three items below 80% compliance. It is the expectation of Hospital A that compliance should be 100% in all units and with all aspects of the UCB, but the results do show a dramatic improvement over a short period of time.

Only one element of the UCB, maintaining the drainage tubing free of kinks, showed a negative average percent change in compliance over the course of this study from the baseline. All other elements showed improvement or perfect compliance throughout the study. Despite these results, compliance with the UCB elements pertaining to labeling and documentation remain at unacceptably low levels in certain units. Although improvement was evident there is still a lot more that can be achieved. [...]

From the Discussion section:

To better understand the data, a discussion of the UCB items as well as the particular nature of the clinical areas is necessary. [...]

Q11 assessed whether the nurse documented that they had educated the patient about the urinary catheter and infection prevention issues. Early in the study it was recognized that the nurses had been unaware that this education should be documented or that it was even a requirement to educate the patient on this issue at all. Q11 compliance did not exceed 60% until the final 2 weeks of the study when the majority of staff had been educated. Perhaps one reason for persistently low compliance was a further misunderstanding about the proper documenting protocol. If the patient was not alert or had a family member present, the nurse clearly could not educate. However, they should have documented this scenario. These instances seemed to go undocumented still throughout the study and were then marked as noncompliant. [...]

The writer begins by connecting their evidence to the central research question of their Capstone. Vivid and specific language is used to describe trends in the data: « significantly improved » ; « dramatic improvement over a short period of time ».

The writer summarizes the quantitative evidence and invites the reader to read the results in table form.

The writer continues to summarize the overall results shown on Table 2, which gives an overview of the elements that were tracked weekly during the study.

Here the writer points to the single outlier in their data.

The writer points out an important trend in the evidence.

The writer begins to discuss the deeper implications of their findings.

The writer indicates that they will dive deeper and provide further context for understanding the numbers. This writer has chosen to separate a more generalized overview of the evidence in the Results section from a detailed exploration of individual data points in the Discussion section.

Here the writer suggests a reason for the low compliance percentage attributed to this element. The writer uses « hedging » language here (« perhaps »). The writer is not certain of this explanation of the numbers, but their inside knowledge of the study makes it a logical claim to argue.

The writer again uses « hedging » language (« seemed ») while at the same time posing a plausible explanation for the low compliance.

Useful templates and phrases for the Evidence section

“A common theme/trend/pattern that emerged in the interviews/surveys/data is...”

“One thing that clearly stands out from the data is...”

“The results confirm/prove that...” (For use when the evidence strongly supports your claim)

“These findings suggest that...” (For use when the evidence is less conclusive but plausibly supports your claim)

“To better understand the data, a discussion of _____ is necessary.”

Further resources

“Academic Phrasebank,” University of Manchester, <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>, (see especially “[Being cautious](#),” “[Describing trends](#),” “[Describing quantities](#)”).

“Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: 7. Results,” USC Libraries Research Guides, <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/results>

“Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: 8. Discussion,” USC Libraries Research Guides, <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/discussion>

“Qualitative Writing: A Student Guide to Writing with Data,” Bernard L. Schwartz Communication Institute, <https://blogs.baruch.cuny.edu/blsci/files/2022/07/QuantativeWriting.pdf>