To Quote or To Paraphrase? – That is a Question

Upfront, APA prefers writers to paraphrase. This means you take what you have read, process it, and then re-write it in your own understanding. The only time a writer should use a direct quotation is when the phrase or passage is so profound that re-writing it will mess it up.

Let’s say you read this quotation: “Poverty and obesity are correlated”. This is a fact statement. It is straight forward and not profound. Paraphrase it.

i.e.

Smith and Horton (2014) have discovered a correlation between poverty and obesity.

Let’s say you read this quotation: “Poverty preys on children and devours their opportunity for exercise” Not profound, but flowery. Paraphrase it.

Smith and Horton (2014) have compared poverty to a hungry beast that eats up the time and opportunities children would have to exercise.

OR – just state what it means.

Smith and Horton (2014) noted that poverty prevents children from having opportunities to exercise.

Let’s say you read this quotation: “Poverty has become the 21st Century slaver, with uncertainty as the overseer” Dude! That is profound. I would keep it, but would integrate it into my own words.

i.e.

Smith and Horton (2014) have likened poverty to “the 21st Century slaver with uncertainty as the overseer” (p. 342).

Scholarly writing is not the ability to reprint others’ words. The danger in that is twofold. First, you may just ‘dump’ a quotation in that is disjointed from the fluency of your writing. Second, you are not demonstrating scholarly analysis and synthesis of what you have read. Paraphrasing is the way to go.