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# Spring Semester 2017 – Literature Reviews

**Curriculum-aligned**

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# What is a Literature Review?

- a survey of literature on a particular subject or area of interest
- a discussion of which researchers in the discipline agree or disagree with each other and why

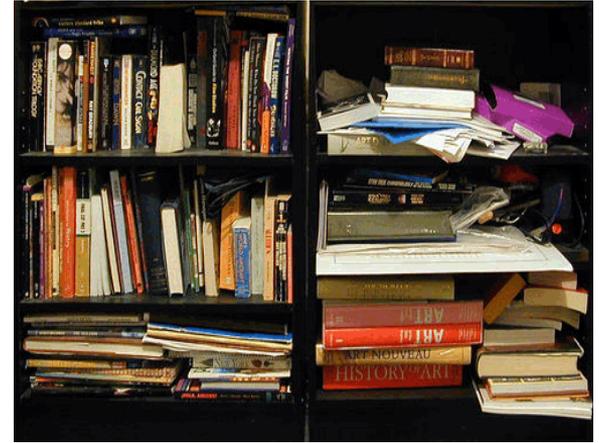


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# What a literature review is not

It is not a disorganised repetition of all you have read.

It is not just a summary of previous research.



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## But a literature review is:

- a point of departure for a research project or thesis
- background information on the area of research
- an organised, critical discussion or review of relevant literature



# What does a literature review do?

- It *showcases* how you understand and assess relevant literature
- It *positions* your research in relation to *current debates* on the topic
- It *provides rationale* for your research by pointing to a *gap* in the literature



# HAS234 → Literature review instructions

- Research literature on a topic that is relevant to social work.
- Bring the material together to form a literature review.

THEN the next step is →

- With this in mind design a research project using methods appropriate to the field of research.
- Develop a research proposal.



# Things you need to find out

- what literature is available on the subject
- what the main areas of research are
- who the prominent researchers are
- what the current and possible future research questions are



# Things you need to do



**Check the instructions carefully - are you asked to**

- provide an overview of the topic?
- survey current or past research?
- compare theories, methods or models?
- draw conclusions about current knowledge on the topic?

**Read, take notes & categorise**

by concepts, methods, theories, philosophical differences/similarities, chronological order

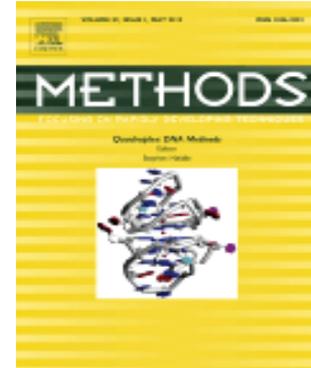
**Outline**

the main ideas to organize the review



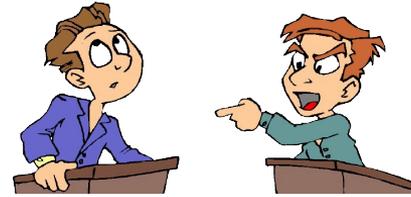
# Ask questions to help you choose research literature

- What specific research question does my literature review define?
- Is this literature review about theory, methods or policy?
- Is it about quantitative or qualitative methods?
- Is it about the effectiveness of methods?



# More questions to help you choose literature

- What is the scope?
- How can I be sure to only use relevant materials?
- Have I critically evaluated the literature?
- Do I understand
  - the controversies or disagreements in previous and present research?
  - the methodological/theoretical flaws in previous research?
- Can I see gaps that my research can fill?



# Show the reader a clear evaluation

- Be clear in organising information & how you discuss it.
- Clarify differences or similarities in the literature.
- Group earlier methodological differences in the research.
- Group similarities in methodology, policy or theory.
- Present each point in a new paragraph with a topic sentence.
- State the current and possible future research questions.



# Some different ways to organise the information

- Chronological: according to historical or developmental context.
- Classical: Discuss the major significant writings.
- Topical: Create sections based on topics or conceptual ideas.
- Start with a broad perspective and become more specific.



# Make your focus appropriate for the topic

Focus on what has  
been found out  
earlier, e.g. concepts

OR

Focus on who  
did the  
research, e.g  
the researchers

Image caption



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# Critically examine the literature

- Link it to your question. Show how it supports or extends knowledge.
- Highlight strengths, weaknesses or omissions.
- Critique the research.
- Use evaluative language
- Demonstrate your perspectives in relation to your question.



# State your perspective

State your theoretical position clearly.

Link your critical evaluations to this position.



Use language that shows

→ your perspective

→ the perspectives of the writers you review

Language for degree of certainty:

*may, it is necessary, it is probable, it is possible...*

Language for attitude:

*perceptive, passionate*

*argues, proposes, suggests*

Language for emphasis

*must, should, necessitates,...*



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# Contents

Use **HEADINGS** and **SUBHEADINGS** where needed. Add references

## INTRODUCTION

-Topic

-Background

-Outline of main  
points

-Publications

-Aim

## BODY

3-5 main points

Discuss each point in a  
paragraph / section

## CONCLUSION

Summary

Evaluation

Assess  
achievements &  
shortcomings



# Introduction

## Topic Sentence

Orient the reader to the overall topic.

## Background

Provide brief background on the topic, e.g.  
a key word /  
historical context /

## Outline main points

Let the reader know how the review will be organised.

## Publications

What are the main publications?

## Background

What is your aim?



# Body

**3 to 5 main points**

**Discuss each point  
in a paragraph**

## **BODY PARAGRAPH**

**Topic sentence on main point**

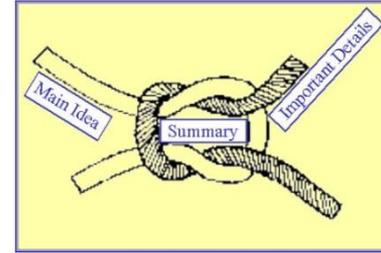
**Background to the problem**

**For each main point overview of:  
approaches &  
relevant researchers**



# Conclusion

- Summarise your points & your evaluation of research
- Highlight the achievements & shortcomings of current research



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