How To Do a Literature Review

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First and foremost!

DON'T PANIC!!

Photo credit: Nevermindtheend on Flickr
So… have you ever heard...

“What does the literature show us?”
“Connect your ideas to the literature.”
“Survey the literature on the topic.”
A literature review answers those questions!

➔ What is “the literature” anyway?
➔ What is a literature review?
➔ What are the different kinds of reviews?
Think of the literature as a network

As you work to make sense of and explain it, you will:

➔ Find the core research
➔ Find who the experts are
➔ Find the most common methods
➔ Find the gaps
We’ll talk about the process...

It’s iterative!
Not a straight-line!
And how you can synthesize what you find...
The literature you have found is grouped into concepts, synthesized and presented to the reader.
Let’s get started!

➔ Today we’ll focus on the INTEGRATIVE review, the most common type in the social sciences.

➔ Other types are:
  ♦ Argumentative; Historical; Methodological; Theoretical

NOTE: Be sure you are clear on expectations such as how many sources to use, what formats, the organization of the review (headings, etc.) and length

Typology from USC Literature Review Guide
Choose and narrow your topic

→ Do some exploration before committing! It can be frustrating if there’s too little information on your topic

→ But the narrower the topic can be, the easier the review process

→ Pick a topic of interest

→ Pick a topic with an obvious need for further research (if your literature review relates to a research agenda)
Keep these questions in mind...

➔ What are the main debates in the field concerning my topic?
➔ What are the key ways in which scholarship on my topic has evolved in the past several years (or decades)?
➔ What hypotheses might the established literature suggest for my particular research question?
➔ How have other scholars attempted to answer my research question? In what ways is our knowledge still incomplete?
➔ What are the most important findings about my topic or question?

Source: Rebekah Massengill, Writing Sociology, Princeton University, p. 19.
Find models!

- Annual Review of Sociology (and other Annual Review publications)
- Sociological Abstracts (filter for literature reviews)
- Oxford Bibliographies Online: Sociology
- ProQuest Dissertations
- Seminal articles on your topic
Annual Review of Sociology:

(Easiest to link from here)
Sociological Abstracts:
Find literature on your topic!

https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/soc
Evaluate sources

➔ Are they current? Free from bias? Published in peer reviewed journals or other reliable sources?

➔ Are they relevant to your topic and significant in their field?

➔ Do they present solutions (and how do those compare between papers)?

➔ Do they have a theoretical basis?

➔ Do they illuminate trends in the field?
Determine the main concepts (buckets)

➔ What themes or issues tie the papers/groups of papers together?

➔ How do the main concepts illuminate your topic?

➔ Once you have the concepts outlined, how can you synthesize them into a coherent whole?

➔ (Remember, you will most likely read many more papers than you use-- don’t try to fit in a paper that is out of scope!!)
## Synthesis/Integration (notetaking!!)

You will thank yourself if you develop a method/use a tool in advance that gives you material that’s easy to synthesize!

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>F</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Research Question/s</td>
<td>Time Period of Study</td>
<td>Who Was Studied?</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Citation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kiser, Tammy and Hulton, Linda</td>
<td>Case study, administrative records, survey. Donabedian Evaluation Model</td>
<td>The purpose of this project is to describe the development, implementation, and evaluation of a creative model of health care for the homeless, Suiitcase Clinics, using principles of CSBR and share lessons learned.</td>
<td>2014-2017?</td>
<td>Homeless persons in a mid-Atlantic state</td>
<td>Sample of known HHSC clients who were high Emergency Department (ED) utilizers demonstrated reduced cost to the hospital due to receiving care through the Suiitcase Clinic. 60% of the HHSC clients surveyed indicated that the HHSC kept them from going to the ED.</td>
<td>Kiser, T., &amp; Hulton, L. (2018). Addressing Health Care Needs in the Homeless Population: A New Approach Using Participatory Action Research. SAGE Open, 8(3), 2158244018789750. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018789750">https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018789750</a></td>
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<td>Taken from: UC Berkeley Libraries, Social Welfare Research Guide</td>
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DO:

➔ Use evidence (the citations you’ve gathered!)
➔ Be selective and focused
➔ Use quotes sparingly, but…
➔ Use caution when paraphrasing!
➔ Don’t just repeat, synthesize
➔ Pay attention to which authors and themes appear again and again
DON’T

→ Use sources that don’t relate to your research question
→ Fail to assess what are the most relevant sources
→ Accept another researcher’s work without critical analysis
→ Forget to describe the process you used to find the literature (which databases, etc.)
→ Omit literature that supports alternative viewpoints
CITATION TRACKING!

Check the references contained in any paper that seems relevant to your topic (backward citation)--are there items there you can use? Which authors are consistently represented?

Then, use Google Scholar or Web of Science (a paid database through the library) to see which authors in turn cited a relevant paper you have found (forward citation)--though this can be tough for very new papers.
More on notetaking and citation management

➔ Consider using a note taking tool!
  ◆ Zotfile, Evernote, Excel/Word, GoogleDocs or GoogleKeep

➔ Consider using citation management software!
  ◆ Zotero, Mendeley, EndNote (and more)
achievement, it inhibits academic investment and weakens academic achievement. Simply put, students who are highly motivated and capable (attributes more common at higher SES levels) create a learning-oriented peer culture (Jencks and Mayer 1990; Rumberger and Palardy 2005; Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969).

For about 20 years following the release of the Coleman Report, the literature reported that school effects were relatively small in comparison to family effects, and therefore “schools are not an effective agent for the redistribution of societal resources” (Halliman 1988:255; see also Hanushek 1989). This pessimistic view of schools began to change with the rise of the accountability and standards movement to improve schools (Schneider and Keesler 2007). Reanalysis of earlier studies suggested a more consistently positive relationship between school resources and student achievement (Greenwald, Hedges, and Laine 1996) and found that teacher quality, in particular, was a major input into student learning (see also Murdie 1983).

The renewed focus on schools’ impact on learning has not obscured attention to the central conclusion of the Coleman Report that “the social composition of the student body is more highly related to achievement, independent of the student’s own social background, than is any school factor” (Coleman 1966:325). Far more than was historically appreciated, estimation of peer effects is challenging (Angrist and Pischke 2008) because of non-random selection and unmeasured confounding variables (e.g., teacher quality) that affect student outcomes. The most per-

cohorts (e.g., of gender or race composition) for the same school and grade (Gould, Lavy, and Paweraman 2009; Hoxby 2000), although these studies have not looked at peer effects related to socioeconomic characteristics. The magnitude of estimated effects is not large (about .15 standard deviations), but it is about the same as some of the most believable estimates of teacher effects, whether for academic, social, or behavioral outcomes (Jennings and DiPrete 2010; Rockoff 2004). Meanwhile, recent studies whose primary estimation strategies control for observable potential confounders have found a similar effect size on test scores (Crosnoe 2009; Rumberger and Palardy 2005).

SCHOOL CONTEXT AND THE GENDER GAP IN EDUCATION
The original focus on school effects developed out of a concern for equality of educational opportunity by social class and race. Now that a growing gender gap in educational attainment has emerged, it is natural to ask whether schools also affect gender inequality, and if so, what are the mechanisms by which this occurs. Starting in the 1970s and early 1980s (Spender 1982; Stanworth 1984), ethnographic studies documented girls’ and boys’ gendered behavior at school as well as the different ways that teachers treat girls and boys. Although overt discrimination against girls in the classroom has declined over the past three decades, recent studies suggest that boys still verbally dominate the classroom (Jovanovic and King 1998; Sadker and Zittleman 2009).
Resources

UC Berkeley: Writing for Sociology (also Princeton University’s similar piece)

North Carolina State University video-- Literature Reviews: An Overview...

Everyday Sociology: How (and Why) to Write a Literature Review

UNC Chapel Hill Writing Center: Literature Reviews

USC Libraries--Organizing Your Social Sciences Research

And, UC Berkeley Sociology LibGuide Lit Reviews page!
Questions?

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