



Literature Review Workshop



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Purpose of the Literature Review

- ▶ “A substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research.” – Boote and Beile, 2005
- ▶ “you join[ing] the conversation –first by listening to what is being said and then formulating a comment designed to advance the dialogue.” – Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008



What a Literature Review IS

- ▶ Develops your understanding of the literature in a field of study
- ▶ A synthesis
- ▶ A critical analysis and narrative
- ▶ Current (and historical if necessary)
- ▶ Defined by a guiding concept



What a Literature Review CAN BE

- ▶ Part of a larger research study (like a thesis or dissertation), the literature review...
 - ▶ Sets the broad context of the study
 - ▶ Sets the scope of the study
 - ▶ Justifies the scope and context of the study
 - ▶ Establishes the theoretical framework
 - ▶ Justifies the methodology of the study
 - ▶ Makes an argument



What a Literature Review CAN BE

- ▶ A standalone assignment for a class
- ▶ Part of the introduction to a paper for a class or a journal article
- ▶ A full article published in an academic journal
- ▶ Basic or advanced



What a Literature Review is NOT

- ▶ It is not an annotated bibliography
- ▶ It is not just a descriptive list
- ▶ It is not a basic summative report of what you've read on the topic – you need to be saying something



What a Literature Review Must Do

- ▶ Be **ORGANIZED** around your thesis statement or research question(s)
- ▶ **SYNTHESIZE** results into a summary of what is known and not known on your topic
- ▶ Identify areas of **CONTROVERSY**
- ▶ Formulate questions for **FURTHER RESEARCH**

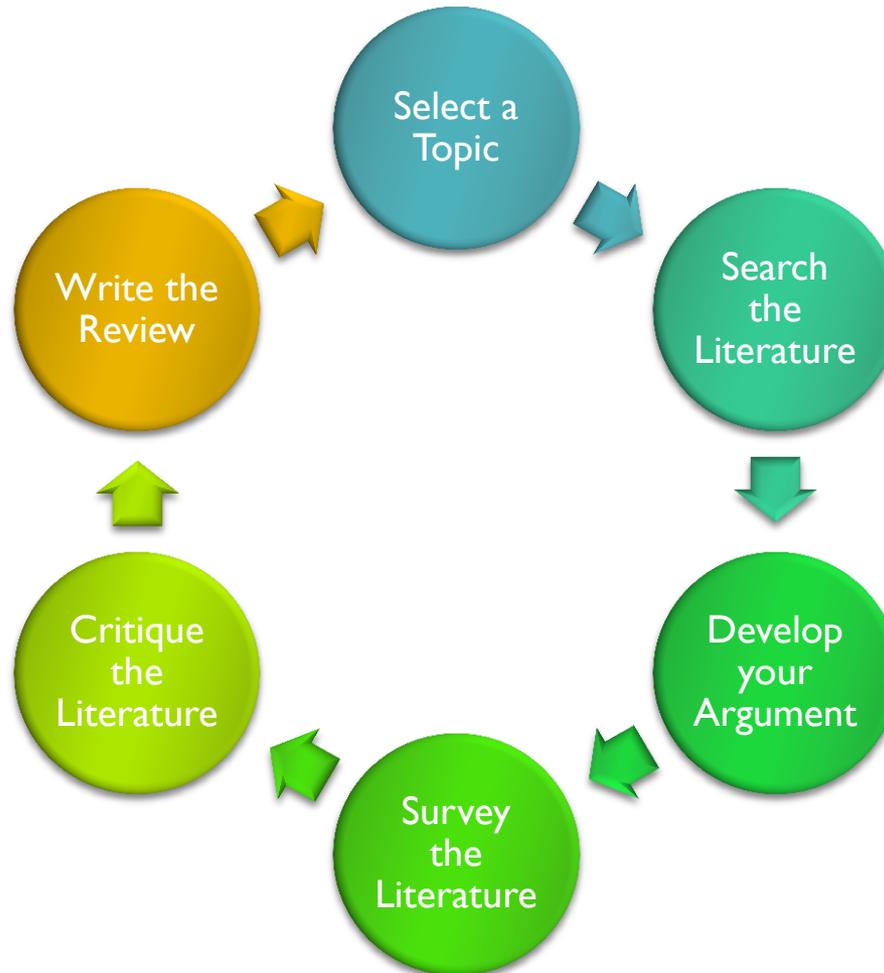


A Few Considerations

- ▶ If your literature review is part of an original research study, read about your chosen methodology to determine when you should review the literature
 - ▶ For some methods, the literature should be reviewed before, during, or after data collection



The Literature Review Process



From *The Literature Review* (2009) by Machi and McEvoy





Select a Topic

- ▶ Read your assignment carefully!
 - ▶ Ask for clarification from professor
- ▶ Talk over your ideas with someone
- ▶ Scan academic journals
- ▶ Read professional blogs and listservs
- ▶ Look for Research Agendas on professional association websites
- ▶ Focus your topic





Search the Literature

- ▶ **Types of sources that can be included:**
 - ▶ Books, Articles, Abstracts, Reviews, Dissertations and theses, Research reports, Websites, Films, Etc.
- ▶ Identify the most important / useful databases for your discipline
- ▶ Develop an understanding of the academic terminology for your field of study
- ▶ Determine time frame





Search the Literature

- ▶ Look for empirical and theoretical literature
- ▶ Include primary and secondary sources
- ▶ Identify classic or seminal studies
- ▶ Identify important authors who are contributing to the development of your topic
- ▶ Use a system to organize and manage material
 - ▶ From the very beginning
 - ▶ RefWorks or other bibliographic management software
- ▶ Graduate Research and RefWorks Workshops available at UNT Libraries!





Develop your Argument

- ▶ This step is a planning step – you will develop these arguments in the next two steps: surveying and critiquing the literature
- ▶ “you must build a case for what is known about your topic and determine how this knowledge addresses the research question.” – Machi and McEvoy, 2009
- ▶ Develop two types of arguments:
 - ▶ Argument of discovery – develop findings that present the current state of knowledge about your research interest
 - ▶ Argument of advocacy – analyze and critique the knowledge gained from developing the argument of discovery to answer the research question





Develop your Argument

- ▶ Analyze the claims within the literature to develop your arguments
- ▶ Claim – the argument’s declaration or assertion
- ▶ Evidence – data that define and support the claim
- ▶ Types of claims
 - ▶ Fact
 - ▶ Worth
 - ▶ Policy
 - ▶ Concept
 - ▶ Interpretation
- ▶ You must present all sides of a question; your argument must be balanced





Survey and Critique the Literature

- ▶ Develops the discovery argument and the advocacy argument
- ▶ Answers the questions:
 - ▶ “What do we know about the subject of our study?”
 - ▶ “Based on what we know, what conclusions can we draw about the research question?”
- ▶ Critically assess each piece of literature you have gathered to analyze its content
- ▶ You need to be:
 - ▶ Methodical
 - ▶ Systematic
 - ▶ Rigorous
 - ▶ Consistent





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Survey and Critique the Literature

▶ Stage I: Skim and Read

- ▶ Skim first – note topic, structure, general reasoning, data, and bibliographical references
- ▶ Go back and skim the prefaced and introduction, trying to identify main ideas contained in the work
- ▶ Identify key parts of the article or key chapters in books





Survey and Critique the Literature

- ▶ **Stage 2: Highlight and Extract Key Elements**
 - ▶ Trying to understand historical context and current state
 - ▶ Identify themes, trends, patterns
 - ▶ Also looking for gaps and anomalies
 - ▶ Key questions to ask of the literature:
 - ▶ What are the origins and definitions of the topic?
 - ▶ What are the key theories, concepts, and ideas?
 - ▶ What are the major debates, arguments, and issues?
 - ▶ What are the key questions and problems that have been addressed to date?
 - ▶ Are there any important issues that have been insufficiently addressed to date?





Survey and Critique the Literature

- ▶ When analyzing research studies, must also identify some of the key elements that all research studies should include:
 - ▶ Problem
 - ▶ Purpose
 - ▶ Research questions
 - ▶ Sample
 - ▶ Methodology
 - ▶ Key findings
 - ▶ Conclusions
 - ▶ Recommendations





Write the Review

- ▶ Use the results of your analysis and critique of the literature to develop the organization of your review
- ▶ Develop a detailed outline
 - ▶ Identify the themes and/or patterns that have emerged
 - ▶ Translate these into headings and subheadings
 - ▶ Be sure your outline is logical
- ▶ Be selective with the literature you include





Write the Review

- ▶ Synthesis synthesis synthesis!
- ▶ Reorganize and reassemble all of the separate pieces and details to create an integrated whole
- ▶ Make connections between and among ideas and concepts
- ▶ Never present a chain of isolated summaries of previous studies
- ▶ The synthesis needs to build a knowledge base AND extend new lines of thinking
- ▶ Remember – this is your entry into the conversation





Write the Review

- ▶ Writing a literature review is a creative activity
- ▶ “An imaginative approach to searching and reviewing the literature includes having a broad view of the topic; being open to new ideas, methods, and arguments; ‘playing’ with different ideas to see whether you can make new linkages; and following ideas to see where they might lead.” – Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008



References

- ▶ Bloomberg, L.D. and M.Volpe (2008). Completing your Qualitative Dissertation:A Roadmap from Beginning to End. Los Angeles: Sage
- ▶ Machi, L.E. and B.T. McEvoy (2009).The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success.Thousand Oaks: Corwin Sage.
- ▶ For handouts and workshop information:
<http://www.library.unt.edu/library-instruction/library-workshops/literature-review/>

