

LITERATURE REVIEW

PURPOSE

- It provides a framework for establishing the importance of your study
- Benchmark for comparing the results of your study to other findings
- Presents results of other studies that are closely related to your study – comparative and contrasting studies are appropriate here.
- Relates your study to the larger ongoing discussion in the literature
- Demonstrates how your study fills in gaps in the literature or extends the work of prior studies

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Adapted from Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

ORGANIZING YOUR LIT REVIEW & YOUR SEARCH

- Consider designing a map of relevant issues in your study--demonstrate the relationships between the issues
 - Concept Map
 - Visual relationships between key concepts

- Create an outline of your argument and then use it as a framework for the literature search

- Quantitative researcher may chose to organize literature review by:
 - Review of independent variables
 - Review of dependent variables
 - Review of scholarly literature that relates dependent and independent variables

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PRIORITIZING MATERIAL FOR YOUR LITERATURE SEARCH

- Journal articles in peer reviewed (juried) journals especially those that describe specific research projects. The research may be quantitative and qualitative depending on the nature of your project.
- Monographs or Books
- Conference Papers/Proceedings- particularly for areas that are new or not well represented in the research literature.
- Using the search engines AND digging in the stacks
- Using the abstracts to decide if a particular article will actually be helpful to you
- Using MAJOR AND MINOR keyword descriptors to find most relevant research

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HOW TO SUCCINCTLY SUMMARIZE **SOURCES**

FOR RESEARCH ARTICLES:

- State the problem being addressed
- Central purpose and concept of study
- Sample, population, subjects
- Highlight KEY results
- Point out methodological limitations if any
- Implications for areas of further study

FOR ESSAYS, NON-EMPIRICAL WORK AND/OR RESEARCH SYNTHESIS:

- Briefly articulate problem being addressed
- Identify primary theme of the piece
- Highlight major conclusions related to theme
- Specify practical application of research outcomes
- Critique methods, logic of argument if necessary

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IMPORTANT DO's AND DON'T's

- Do create a cogent, thoughtful argument about the importance of your research
- Do use the literature that gives your ideas a foundation to stand on
- Do include contradictory ideas— but also remember to seek out means of countering those ideas.
- Do organize your literature review so that there is smooth transition between various studies cited.
- Do demonstrate the relationships between the works you are citing.
- Do cite everything correctly—be overly cautious if you need to
- Don't use a study simply because you have it—does it serve a purpose?
- Don't simply summarize one study after another without demonstrating a connection or transition between issues/ findings

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- Don't create an Annotated Bibliography or Book report—this is a literature review
- Don't forget to proof read for grammar and spelling errors

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