



# Conducting A Literature Review

## Chapter Outline

- 4.1 What is a literature review
- 4.2 Synthesizing literature
- 4.3 Writing the literature review

By: Jennifer Capriles  
Christi Ferrer  
Phyllis Mensah



## Literature Review and the Literature Review Basics

- Grand proposals, advocacy briefs, and evidence - based practice rely on a review of the literature
- The term implies a survey of factual or nonfiction books, articles and other documents published on a particular subject
- Comprehensive background of the literature within the interest of topic area
- All literature reviews, whether they focus qualitative or quantitative data, will at some point introduce the topic and define its key terms



## Common Literature review errors

- Accepting another's researcher's findings as valid without evaluating methodology and data
- Dedicating insufficient time to literature searching
- Simply reporting isolated statistical results
- Rely too heavily on secondary sources
- Overusing quotations from sources



# How to write a Literature Review





## 4.2 Synthesizing the findings

- Begin by making an outline to summarize all your findings
- Find common themes in your articles
- You should copy and paste any fact or argument you may deem important to your research
- Make sure to note where you found the information in your outline so you don't forget where you found it
- When all is done, group all the facts that you found into categories

---

## 4.3 Writing the Literature Review



- First, make sure to organize everything before you begin writing the literature review.
- Make sure you have your outline ready to follow.
- Ask yourself the following questions:
  - How will my literature review be organized?
  - What section headings will I be using?
  - How do the various studies relate to each other?
  - What contributions do they make to the field?
  - • What are the limitations of a study/where are the gaps in the research?
  - • And finally, but most importantly, how does my own research fit into what has already been done?
- Be ready to start writing!

---

# Steps to follow:



1. **Problem Statement:** it establishes why your topic is a social problem worth studying. It also pulls your reader into the literature review. “What’s the problem and solution?” Some of the questions you can ask yourself to help you write your literature review are:

- Why is this an important problem to study?
- How many people are affected by the problem?
- How does this problem impact other social issues or target populations relevant to social work?
- Why is your target population an important one to study?

---

## 2. The Structure of a literature review:

- **Problem statement:**
  - Establish the importance of the topic
  - Number and type of people affected
  - Seriousness of the impact
  - Physical, psychological, economic, social consequences of the problem
- **Introduction**
  - Definitions of key terms
  - Important arguments you will make
  - Overview of the organization of the rest of the review
- **Body of the review**
  - Topic 1
    - **Supporting evidence**
  - Topic 2
    - **Supporting evidence**
  - Topic 3
    - **Supporting evidence**
- **Conclusion**
  - Implications
  - Specific suggestions for future research
  - How your research topic adds to the literature

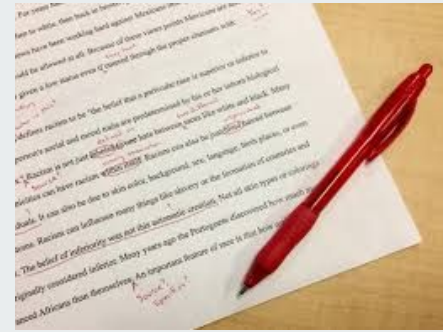




### 3. Editing your literature review:

- Re-read your paper.
- Make sure you pointed out all of your important points that reflect your problem statement.
- “If you want to emphasize the generally accepted understanding of a phenomenon, then of course you should discuss various studies that have demonstrated it. However, if there are other studies that have found contradictory findings, you should discuss them, too.”
- As you are editing, keep in mind these questions adapted from Green (2012):

- Content: Have I clearly stated the main idea or purpose of the paper and address all the issues? Is the thesis or focus clearly presented and appropriate for the reader?
- Organization: How well is it structured? Is the organization spelled out for the reader and easy to follow?
- Flow: Is there a logical flow from section to section, paragraph to paragraph, sentence to sentence? Are there transitions between and within paragraphs that link ideas together?
- Development: Have I validated the main idea with supporting material? Are supporting data sufficient? Does the conclusion match the introduction?
- Form: Are there any APA style issues, redundancy, problematic wording and terminology (always know the definition of any word you use!), flawed sentence constructions and selection, spelling, and punctuation?



---

# The End:

I hope you guys learned a lot from this chapter and I know we are all ready to write a literature review!

