Reviewing the Literature

Objectives:

* To understand the purpose of a literature review
* To identify excellent examples of a literature review
* To describe the key areas of literature to review for your thesis
* To begin to identify themes and gaps

Preparation for conducting your literature review

Reading/viewing:

* Required Reading

Crafting a Literature Review

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/SPA/CurrentStudents/academicresources/Documents/Lit%20Review%20Updated_2014.pdf>

* Required viewing

Writing a Literature Review  
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=lwjM94g9T_w>

* Optional (yet strongly recommended) viewing

Section III Putting it Together  
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=zZIawWFjlBM>

Section IV Literature Review Samples   
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=zeAxwGT5QsM&feature=youtu.be>

Key terms:

Theory, literature review, literature, themes

1. Overview

A literature review is an essay or chapter that surveys, summarizes, links, and analyzes scholarly research (a.k.a., literature) in a given field.

* **Surveys**: An overview of sub-topics within a topic
* **Summarizes**: What the literature presents
* **Links**: How the literature relates or does not
* **Analyses**: Quality/state of literature, comparisons/contrasts

A literature review has multiple functions:

1. to demonstrate your familiarity with/understanding of a body of research as a whole
2. to contextualize your research in relation to what has already been studied
3. justifying your research by noting what has already been written and pointing out gaps

2. Preparation for lit review: Key sources, journals, and scholars

Activity 1: Finding literature reviews & literature

Using Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.com.au/> and the Law and Justice databases <http://libguides.library.qut.edu.au/az.php?s=80222&t=2459>,

identify at least two excellent literature reviews (NOT meta-analyses or systematic reviews, these are different) closely related to your topic. You can use the search term: [your topic] literature review.

The journal *Aggression and Violent Behavior* <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/aggression-and-violent-behavior> (available via the library) is a review journal, meaning it only publishes literature reviews. It is a good source of literature reviews in crime and justice. Use the ‘search in this journal’ box on the journal home page to find relevant articles.

Read your selected lit reviews carefully.

**­­­­­­­­­­­­List the full citations for the lit reviews you found here in APA 7 style and print them out and bring them to the meeting with your supervisor(s)**

1.

2.

Activity 2: Key Journals, books, and authors

Sometimes students are told that they should only look at the last few years of research. This is not accurate. While you should refer to the latest available prevalence or incidence data from reliable sources and laws, older research is sometimes the best or only source on a specific topic. A PhD student is expected to be familiar with the development of the field, especially key findings, methods, and debates.

Based on your preliminary literature search and careful reading of the literature reviews above, identify important journals and book series that are published in or cited a lot as well as foundational (important early/the first and/or the latest good) books related to your topic. List them below.

Identify three important journals in your area.

1.

2.

3.

Identify 3 of the most important scholars in your area

1.

2.

3.

Identify three of the most important books

1.

2.

3.

Activity 3: Key areas of literature to review

Literature reviews cover the essential background information relevant to your thesis.

This includes a general historical perspective on the landscape of the literature as a whole and identification of key research findings/themes in 1-3 closely related areas of research to your project.

For example, a thesis on transgender domestic violence and service seeking might review: general domestic violence research, research on service utilization by domestic violence victims, and research on all types of violence and transgender people.

Identify the main areas of literature you will need to review for your honours thesis below.

1.

2.

3.

Activity 4: Key findings/themes/debates/theories

Based on the literature you have read so far,

1. What key findings have you identified in the research?
2. What gaps have you identified?
3. What are the main theories/ways of explaining your topic in the research?
4. What is one central key debate in your area? Is there a methodological, theoretical, or analytical debate? Who is arguing with whom? What is the debate about?

3. Meeting activities

We will discuss the activities above in the meeting. Make sure to print out your examples of good literature reviews and bring them to the meeting.

4. Follow up

After the meeting, outline your literature review including the main areas to review, key findings, debates, and definitions.