

The Review of the Literature

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A thorough, sophisticated, and extensive literature review is the foundation and inspiration for substantial contributory research. The complex nature of scholarly research requires a thorough and critical review of studies related to the problem you will solve. Acquiring the skills and knowledge required to be a scholar, includes the ability to analyze and synthesize the research in a field of specialization. Such scholarship is a prerequisite for making a significant contribution in your field or to your profession. It is important to drill down information, looking for the most current and most relevant information.

A literature review is **not** an annotated bibliography or a simple description of major theories and concepts. A literature review is **not** about everything written on the topic; the scope and bounds of the review need to be logical and delineated (Boote & Beile, 2004).

A Review of the literature:

LEADS

- 1 c L ays the foundation for the study.
- 2 c E lucidates the problem.
- 1 c A nalyzes why your study is appropriate.
- 1 c D escribes why your study is capable of solving the problem.
- 1 c S hows studies similar to yours.

The Literature/Research Review Chapter puts your research into a set with other studies and documents that have dealt with comparable issues. It gives you the knowledge to become an expert in the area that you are investigating. A

thorough review of the literature also safeguards against undertaking a study that may have already been conducted, may not be feasible to do, or might not be of much value when set against what needs to be researched in a particular field.

Although there is no set rule on “how many” sources you need to consult for your dissertation, most chefs tend to review between 80 and 150 studies and or programs that are related to their topic, and most Literature/Research Review’s constitute about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the written research paper. These numbers will vary depending on:

1. How unique your study is.
2. How far back in time you choose to go.
3. How you define the “related” topics.

Just as there are restaurants that only serve soup and salad as a meal, the research/ literature review itself could be your study.

In the Research/Literature Review Chapter you will slowly illuminate on how careful you were in preparing your exemplary *meal* and how familiar you are with the previous works that have been done in this area. As your readers *nibble* on the information you adeptly *dish out*, you can unveil in this Chapter why you chose your *main course*, why you decided to *serve the meal* the way you did, and why the *utensils* you chose were appropriate for this type of *feast*.

Keep in mind that every reference should clearly relate to your study. Most universities require that most of the citations come from recent peer-reviewed journals that publish refereed articles. A refereed article is an article which has been carefully reviewed and scrutinized by scholars or experts in the research topic of the article who are not members of the editorial staff or board. In many cases one or more external readers have subjected the article to a blind review process. Germinal works related to the topic are also important to lay the foundation for what came from these works.

Evaluating a source can begin even before you have the source in hand. You can initially appraise a source by first examining the bibliographic citation- a written description of a book, journal article, essay, or some other published material. Bibliographic citations characteristically have three main components: author, title, and publication information. These components can help you determine the usefulness of this source for your paper.

Recipe for Appraising an Author

1. What are the author's credentials—educational background, past writings, or experience—in this area? Is the book or article written on a topic in the author's area of expertise?
2. Have you seen the author's name cited in other sources or bibliographies? Other scholars cite respected authors frequently. For this reason, always note those names that appear in many different sources.
3. Is the author associated with an institution or organization? What are the basic values or goals of the organization or institution?

Check the Date of Publication

1. When was the source published? This date is often located on the face of the title page below the name of the publisher. If it is not there, look for the copyright date on the reverse of the title page. On Web pages, the date of the last revision is usually at the bottom of the home page, sometimes every page.
2. Is the source current or out-of-date for your topic? Topic areas of continuing and rapid development, such as technology, demand more current information. On the other hand, topics in the arts often require material that was written many years ago.

Check the Edition or Revision

Is this a first edition of this publication or not? Further editions indicate a source has been revised and updated to reflect changes in knowledge, include omissions, and harmonize with its intended reader's needs. Also, many printings

or editions may indicate that the work has become a standard source in the area and is reliable.

Check the Publisher

If a university press publishes the source, it is likely to be scholarly. Although the fact that the publisher is reputable does not necessarily guarantee quality, it does show that the publisher may have high regard for the source being published.

Check the Title of Journal

Is this a scholarly or a popular journal? This distinction is important because it indicates different levels of complexity in conveying ideas. If you need help in determining the type of journal, you may wish to check your journal title in the latest edition of Katz's *Magazines for Libraries* (Uri's Ref Z 6941 .K21 1995) for a brief evaluative description. Your university could help you gain access to this source.

Keyword searching is a powerful and flexible way to find books, periodicals, and other materials. A keyword search looks for any word or combination of words in the author, title, and subject fields of databases. Keyword searches use connectors to search for two or more words in specific ways. The three most useful connectors are AND, OR, and ADJ. AND specifies that both words must appear somewhere in the document, thus **NARROWING** your search. OR specifies that either word may appear in the record, ADJ specifies that the words must be adjacent and in the same order, thus guaranteeing that the words are searched **AS A PHRASE**. This can also be accomplished using quotation marks: "child psychology" works the same as child adj psychology.

The questions below can be used to describe and assess the merits of previous studies, and could be included when writing the Literature/ Research Review in your research paper. It is unlikely that any one study will provide the answers to all these questions, but the questions can serve as a guideline for critical reviews.

1. What was done? Was it effective?
2. When did this take place? What was the accepted belief at this time?
3. Where did this study or event take place?
4. Who was involved?
5. What methodologies were used? Were they appropriate?
6. What were the limitations? How were these limitations addressed?
7. What type of instruments was used?
8. What was the sample and population studied?
9. What did this add to the knowledge or solution of the problem?
10. What recommendations were made?
11. Who was affected by this study or program?
12. What are the similarities between this study and your study?
13. Was this an appropriate means of dealing with the problem?
14. How does this study relate to your study?
15. How does this study relate to other similar studies?

A literature review functions as a means of conceptualizing, justifying, implementing, and interpreting a research investigation. Without a literature review it is impossible for others to ascertain the significance of your study and how it will contribute to the knowledge base of a field.

1. As you examine articles, textbooks, speeches, video presentations, web pages, pod casts, documentaries, etc. that are related to your topic and the problem you are investigating, determine which of the questions delineated were addressed and which should have been addressed. Elaborate on other issues that the materials dealt with related to your problem or topic.
2. Make sure you write down key words that are closely related to your research before you begin a search.

3. Remember to write down the following information, if applicable, after you have examined a source:
 - a. Author, publisher, city of publisher, copyright date, title, page number, name of periodical, date, volume number, quotes you plan to use, page number of quotes.
 - b. Good sources to help you evaluate the research can be found at:
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Evaluation.html>
<http://edresearch.org/pare/getvn.asp?v=6&n=13>
<http://www.lib.umich.edu/ugl/research/evaluation/>
<http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill26.htm>
<http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill20.html>

A sample Introduction to a literature review:

This chapter presents the theoretical literature on achievement motivation that served as the foundation for the study. The chapter begins with a historical review of empirical studies that examined the foundation and development of achievement goal theory from its earliest form in the 1950s through the present. The next section explores the complex aspects of achievement goal theory, introducing and examining the primary orientations of mastery goal orientation and performance goal orientation and their impact on academic achievement and intrinsic motivation. Also, the chapter examines the on-going debate in the achievement motivation literature regarding the adaptive and maladaptive qualities of performance goals. Finally, the chapter examines the classroom implications of achievement goal theory and concludes with a developmental perspective of achievement goals.

A sample Summary for the literature review:

Summary

As demonstrated in the foregoing literature review, Dweck (1986) and Nicholls' (1984) models of achievement goal orientation laid the foundation for much of the research that has been conducted over the last 15-20 years in the realm of achievement motivation (Harackiewicz et al., 1998; Pintrich, 2000). These models are useful for understanding how attitudes relate to behavior in achievement situations. The above review has offered a historical review literature that lead to the development and refinement of achievement goal theory.

Also examined was the current debate in the literature regarding which types of achievement goals promote optimal motivation. While a number of theorists endorsed a mastery goal perspective, focusing on the adaptive consequences of mastery goals and the maladaptive consequences of performance goals (Ames, 1992; Meece et al., 1988), others endorsed a multiple goal perspective in which both mastery and performance goals can be beneficial (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001; Covington, 2000; Harackiewicz et al., 1998). Finally, the literature review addressed the impact of achievement goals in the classroom and offered a developmental perspective of achievement goals, thereby disclosing a gap in the literature concerning student age and achievement goal orientation at the collegiate level. This study addressed this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between achievement goal orientation and student age in physician assistant students.

A sample Literature Review Table

Table 1
Summary of Searched Literature

Searched categories	Scholarly journals	Dissertations	Books
Values (includes congruency)	234	39	21
Values & team performance	9	20	7
Leadership (includes styles, behavior, etc.)	251	585	62
Leadership styles and team performance	103	5	11
Leader-member exchange (LMX)	96	111	26
Transformational leadership	423	689	268
Rokeach & values	132	99	47
Teams (include functional/dysfunctional)	11	435	28

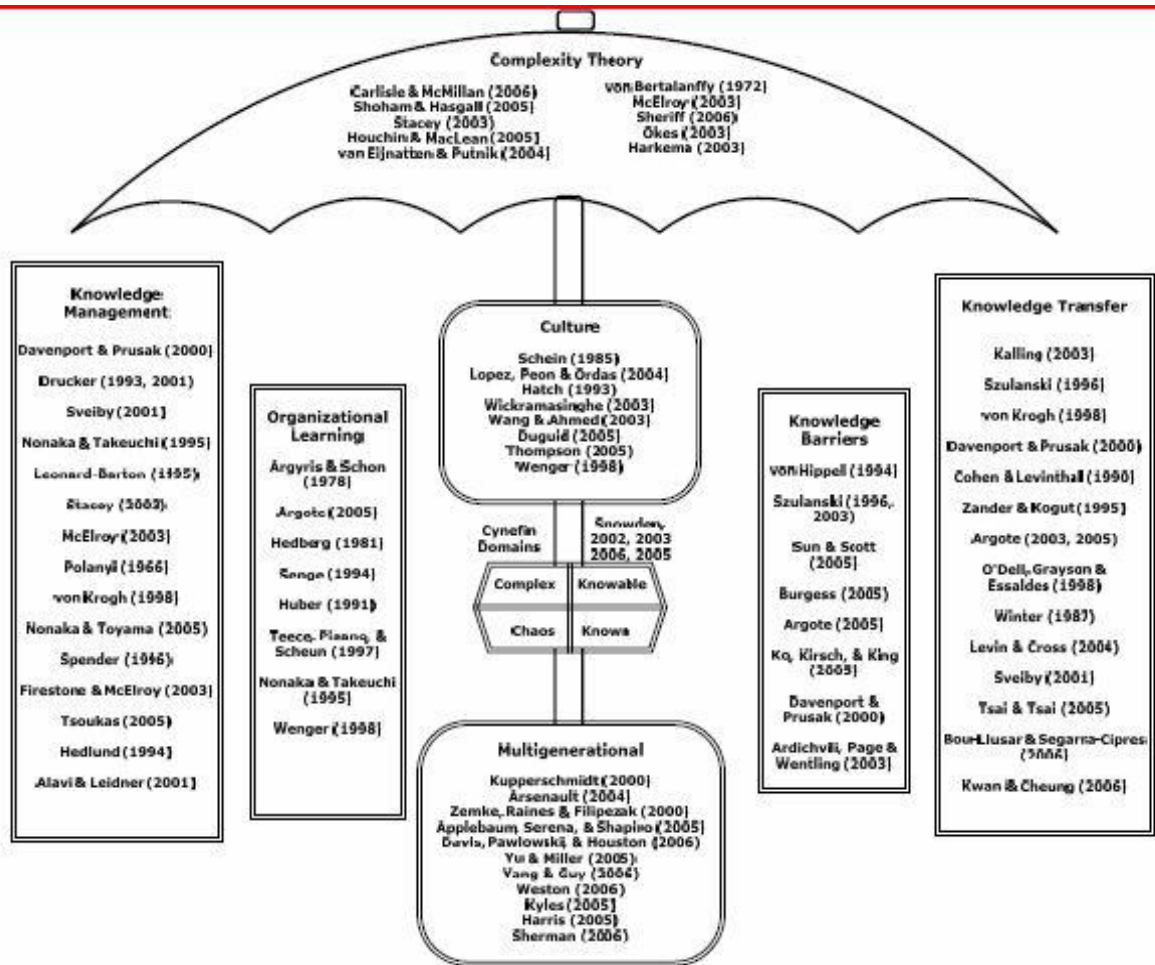


Figure 2. Graphical representation of key themes within the literature review.

Source: McNichols, 2008, p. 27

LITERATURE REVIEW CHECKLIST	Average of 40-60 pages	√
1. Introductory paragraph briefly reviews the problem under investigation and the purpose of the study. A brief overview of the chapter is also included.		
2. There is a clearly labeled section that documents the data bases searched, the key terms used in the search, and how many articles from each source (journals/dissertations/books) were reviewed.		
<p>Some universities require a chart that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Each topic covered in the literature review. B. A subheading called current (within 5 years of the study's expected completion) and the number of sources that fit this category. B. A subheading called historical or germinal works that are less current, and the number of sources that fit this category. C. A subheading on sources discussing methodology and the number of sources that fit this category. <p>(Check with your dissertation chair).</p>		
4. The major significant historical and germinal studies related to the problem are included.		
5. The major current theories related to the problem are included.		
6. The major variables related to the study (if quantitative) are included.		
7. Opposing views are presented and analyzed.		
8. Discussion has depth and presents an analysis of the literature rather than a listing of quotations and citations. Discussion relates a logical understanding of why a citation is included.		
9. The review is an integrated, critical essay on the most relevant and current published knowledge on the topic, along with the most germinal studies related to the topic and problem.		
10. The review is organized around major ideas or themes.		
11. The summary includes a concise review of the contents of the chapter and a transition to the methodological chapter.		

References

- Boote, D.N., & Beile, P. (2004, April). The quality of dissertation literature reviews: A missing link in research preparation. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
- McNichols, D. (2008). *Tacit Knowledge: An Examination of Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer within an Aerospace Engineering Community*, p. 27.
- Simon, M. K. (2011). *Dissertation and scholarly research: Recipes for success* (2011 ed.). Seattle, WA: Dissertation Success, LLC.
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