

# Reviewing literature

# Why do we review literature?

## Background

- All (?) scientific articles
- Dispositions
- Theses
- Dissertations
- Policy development
- Funding proposals...

## Lit review articles

... The heading gives this one away.

# Where do we start...?

We have learned about searching and where to find articles, but what comes next?

**Identify – organize – summarise**

# Where do we start...?

## Identify -

- Identify themes – common and contrasting
- Identify what you need to know
  - What information can you use to shape/improve your study
  - Methods, lessons learned, other literature, limitations, conclusions
- Identify what your readers will need to know

# Where do we start...?

## Organise –

- Find organization methods that work for you...
  - Prioritise most important to least important
  - Tree diagrams / mind mapping
  - Colour coding themes
  - Pros & cons

# Where do we start...?

## Organise –

- Take notes
  - What about your study does this article address?
  - Is it from your field or from outside? What is the significance of this?
  - What is the article type? Are you taking from a review or original study?
  - .... Something else? What is helpful to you?

<https://patthomson.net/2012/03/03/doing-your-literature-review-taking-notes/>

# Where do we start...?

## Summarise –

- Link findings, approaches, theories, etc.
  - Were common claims made? Contrasting claims?
  - Similar methods?
  - Are the theories being applied the same? Are they applied the same way?

# Starting writing...

**We will focus on lit reviews for introductions/background of other works. Lit review articles can benefit from this thinking, too.**

# Starting writing...

## Keep in mind your goals...

- Your lit review should **help to structure** your introduction.
- Introduction should:
  - Position your work in the field
  - Argue that your work is necessary (in light of knowledge gaps, policy, social good, etc.)
  - Support your approach
  - Present your goals
  - Present a compelling story

# A compelling story

## **There is always a story**

- Peak reader interest
- Show relevance
- Present challenges/obstacles/problems
- Present solutions, and why they are insufficient
- Present your solution, and why it is appropriate
- State your research goals.

# Some tips...

## Ok... but what do I actually put on paper...

- Trouble starting your sentences? Try a phrasebank:  
<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk>

## Avoid the “laundry list”

- Don't just say which authors said what. That's not a lit review, that's a list. Connect common threads, link arguments and results, contrast findings. Synthesize! <https://patthomson.net/2017/09/11/avoiding-the-laundry-list-literature-review/>

# Some tips...

## **Think of the paragraph, not just the sentence.**

- What is the topic of the paragraph? Which arguments support that topic? What is the conclusion of those arguments?

# Assignment 4: your lit review

Write a 3- to 5-page review of literature relevant to your topic.

- This could be formatted as a mini review article (charts and figures ONLY if critical to your review; these do not count towards the page limit); OR
- an introduction to a disposition or dissertation
- Include an informative title
- Include in-text citations and a well-formatted references section
- Include your name and the assignment number.
- Submit a Word or PDF file
- Due Nov 10 @ 17h via e-mail or the online classroom.

# Resources

- <https://patthomson.net/2020/09/28/litreview-defining-its-your-take/>
- <https://patthomson.net/2012/03/03/doing-your-literature-review-taking-notes/>
- <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk>
- <https://patthomson.net/2017/09/11/avoiding-the-laundry-list-literature-review/>