



Carleton
UNIVERSITY

Demystifying Literature Review

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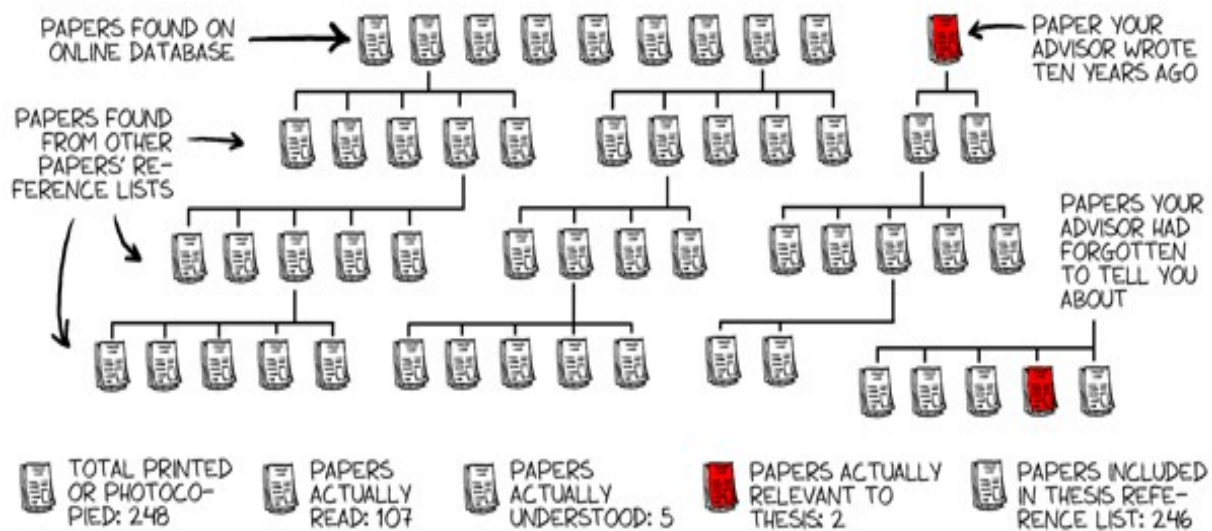
Literature Review

REFERENCES

MAKING SURE NO ONE HAS ALREADY WRITTEN YOUR THESIS

phd.stanford.edu

JORGE CHAM © STANFORD DAILY



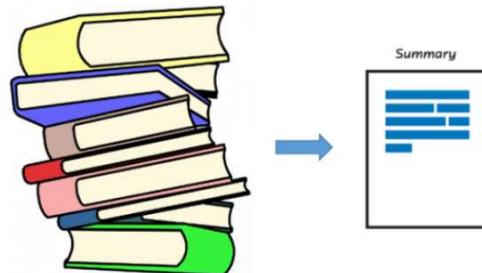
Introduction



- **Who am I** – researcher and faculty with 6 years of experience supervising graduate students.
- **Rationale** – topic barely covered in graduate classes, assumed to be learnt by doing and causing lots of pains with many bad reviews produced in dissertations and theses.
- **Intended audience** – graduate students.
- **Focus** – literature review for theses or dissertation in social sciences, based on experience in education.

What is a literature review?

- A critical, evaluative summary
 - of relevant articles
 - on a specific topic or several closely related topics
 - using a systematic approach



What is the value of literature review for a graduate student?



- To develop expertise in a field.
- To identify the main contributors and seminal works in the field.
- To understand what is already known not to reinvent the wheel.
- To learn about unproductive pathways explored not to repeat the same mistakes.
- To see potential areas for contribution.

What are the purposes of literature review?

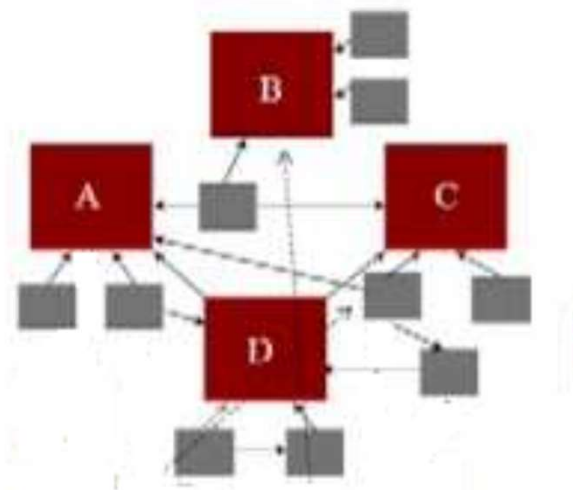
- Overview of prior research
policy drivers, historical development, main disputes and contributors, main themes and problems, key theories, core methods, explored contexts
- Identification of gaps in prior research
topical, theoretical, methodological, empirical
- Explaining how your study fills the gap
- Justifying the choice of design, methods and approaches
- Generation of hypotheses



What is literature in a scholarly paper?

- Scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles
- Edited Books and monographs
- Dissertations
- Conference papers and papers in progress
- Reference guides (for theories and methods)
- Policies and policy reports (for contextualization)
- Internal organizational reports (use sparingly and only for contextualization)

Literature as an ever evolving network...



How much literature to review?



Cycle 1: Lots of literature superficially to understand what is the topic and problem that you want to focus on (ABSTRACTS)

Cycle 2: Less literature more deeply to narrow down the topic to research questions and exact focus of the study (SKIMMING FULL TEXTS and LIT REVIEWS)

Cycle 3: Relatively small amount of literature very similar to your study, which studies the same topic and problem (IN DEPTH)

How to search for literature?



- Look for prior meta-analysis and lit reviews
- Focus on articles that do something like what you want to do
- Identify keywords used in these meta-analyses/lit review papers and the papers you find very similar to yours
- Use the keywords to find more literature
- Look through the reference list of the relevant papers and lit review papers
- Look through the papers, which cite the relevant papers and lit review papers
- Pay attention to most cited papers and authors on the topic
- Search for work of the authors and works citing the articles
- For theories – look at encyclopedic/reference books in your field, look in related disciplines

What to look for in the literature?



- Theories and frameworks
- Main arguments and disputes
- Key authors and seminal work
- Definitions of key concepts
- Relevant statistics
- Sampling approaches (types, number and types of participants)
- Geographic location of the site
- Level of analysis (individual, organizational/communal/group, national, international)
- Methodological approaches
- Instruments you can borrow
- Hypotheses tested
- Main themes
- Key Findings
- Limitations and recommendations for future research
- Relations among papers
- Journals where papers on the topic are published

How to keep track of observations on the literature?

1. Bibliographic cards 2. Literature review table



TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PAPER WILL BE WRITTEN IN HEADER. (Calibri Body 20 FONT SIZE)

YEAR	AUTHOR	COUNTRY	OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION	DATA	Methodology	CONCLUSION/ Result
Year of the research paper will be written in this section. e.g. 31 Dec, 2015.	Names of the Authors of research papers will be written here. e.g. Bilal Shehzad Khan.	Country of the author will be written here. e.g. Pakistan	Objectives of the research paper will be clarified comprehensively in this part.	Contribution of the research paper is identified in this column. The goal of your contribution statement should be to provide a clear and concise focal point for your paper.	Data, taken in research paper, will be written here. Time period of data e.g. from 2010-15 and data type i.e. Primary or secondary data will be explained here.	Methodology of the research paper will be stated precisely in this column. e.g. linear regression, T-test, ANOVA etc.	A conclusion is the last paragraph in your research paper, or the last part in any other type of presentation. A conclusion is like the final chord in a song. It makes the listener feel that the piece is complete and well done.

If you want to further explain the literature review, you can enlighten it here. Don't beat about the bush. This paragraph should be short, specific and precise. No pointless thoughts and statements should be included. (16 Font size)

For better page and table adjustment, set the page in following way: Font > Calibri 16 Font size, Orientation > Landscape, Page Size > Legal.

3. Qualitative analysis software - NVIVO

How to organize a literature review table?

Title	Author	Year	Journal	Country	Theories	Sample	Method	Findings
"An analysis of freshman experiences in a North American public university"	Hew, A.	1991	Studies in Higher Education	US	Engagement Theory, Adjustment Theory	48 college freshman at a US public university in the Midwest	Semi-structured interviews, focus groups	Main factors of drop-out: A,B,C Main actors influencing engagement: A, B, C

How to identify gaps using the table?

Title	Author	Year	Country	Method
A	Max I.	1995	USA	qualitative
B	Yeh B.	1997	USA	qualitative
C	Max I.	1999	USA	qualitative
D	Primrose M.	2005	UK	qualitative
E	Bank M.	2010	UK	quantitative

1. Few studies conducted recently.
2. No studies conducted in non-Western world.
3. Few studies using quantitative approaches.

Which literature should be included in the written lit review?



- Most relevant to your research questions (almost answering your questions in the past)
- Most relevant to your research approach and method
- Most relevant to your geographic region and level of analysis
- Most recent (last 5 years)
- Most influential
- Published in the journal your target for future publications
- Published by authors, who publish in the journal you target
- Top authors in the field

How to structure literature review in writing?



- Historical development of ideas and approaches
- Thematic
- Theoretical approaches
- Increasing methodological complexity
- Regions covered in research
- Study-by-study

But always leading to an evaluative summary stating the gap in various respects!

Sample paragraphs of literature review: historical

- During the early stages of the development of literature in international higher education, many studies focused on cultural adjustment (Author 1; Author 2; Author 3). These studies frequently used cultural curve concept (Author 1; Author 4) to analyze the adjustment of mobile individuals – expats (Author 5; Author 2), international students (Author 3; Author 6) and faculty (Author 1), refugees (Author 3), and immigrants (Author 8). These studies used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, where the use of cultural adjustment instruments and survey approaches prevailed. Most of the studies also focused on the experiences of Westerners relocating for jobs and studies to non-Western countries. The main findings of the studies were....
- During 1960s-1970s, more studies started to....

Sample paragraphs of literature review: thematic

- The literature has identified a variety of factors influencing students' first year experience in higher education. One of the factors is the extent of interaction of students with faculty, their adviser in particular. Prior studies conducted on students in Western universities (Author 1; Author 2; Author 3; Author 5) found that faculty are important to students because they provide information about program expectations and college life. In addition, some papers reveal that interaction during office hours is more important than interaction in class (Author 1; Author 2). Several characteristics of a faculty were found particularly important as mediators of college transition experiences, such as gender (Author 3), experience (Author 1), rank (Author 3)....
- Another factor, which was explored in previous studies was...

Sample paragraphs of literature review: theoretical approaches

- **One of the theories** explaining student college adjustment is Engagement Theory (Author 1; Author 2; Author 3). This theory explains students' adjustment in terms of success of student integration to college community and academic life. What this theory view as most important in adjustment is whether a student feels a part of the community and whether they develop proper connections with the university community (Author 4). These theories were tested with lots of empirical studies (Author 1; Author 5,). Some of the studies provided support to the idea that integration is important (Author 6; Author 2), while others found that integration is not important (Author 7). Most of the studies were quantitative and were conducted in Western contexts.
- **Another theory**, which is commonly used...

Sample paragraphs of literature review: increasing methodological complexity

- Authors (1978) used **a linear regression** to test whether gender of a faculty influences students' perceptions of a faculty performance. They **used such variables as** experience, discipline, rank, and ethnicity as controls. They found a strong positive relationship between....However, their study failed to take into consideration the influence of such moderating variables as....
- To address the problem with Authors (1978) model, Author 1 (1981) **introduced an additional variable** and conducted an empirical test of the model using data from..... They found that... However, they failed to control for multicollinearity....

Sample paragraphs of literature review: regions

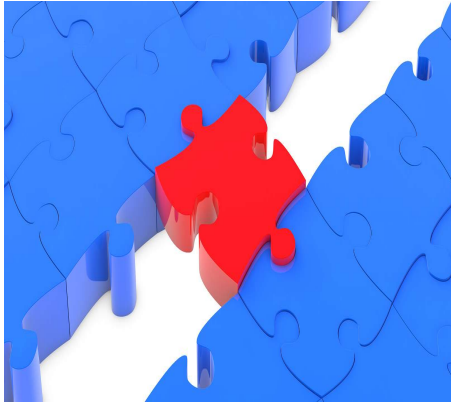
- Many studies on international faculty relocation motivations were conducted in [North America](#) to explain the reasons for relocation of immigrant faculty from the South (Author 1; Author 2....). These studies used push and pull model (Author 3) to enlist the motivations of international faculty. According to this model, there are two types of factors, which may influence faculty motivations....These studies found that the main motivators are salary level (Author 1), opportunities to experience a foreign culture (Author 2).....
- We are aware of only several studies, which explored the motivations of international faculty relocating to [the global South](#).....

Sample paragraphs of literature review: study by study

- [Authors \(1978\)](#) used a sample of 56 college freshman in a public university in the U.S. Midwest to explore the students' engagement experiences. From a series of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with the students, the authors found that.....Framed by Engagement Theory (Author, 1976), this study provided evidence for the idea that.....The evidence for....was not conclusive. The main limitation of the study was.....
- [Authors \(1979\)](#) used a sample....

This approach is least preferable, but is possible as a way to describe studies within subsections or when research on a topic is in nascent stages.

How a gap is stated in the literature review?

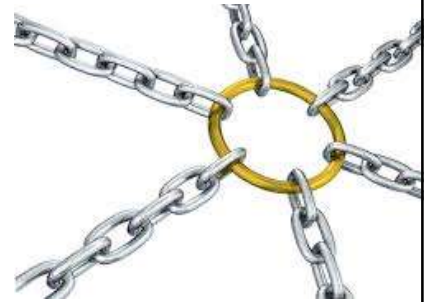


- Failing theories
- Disconnect in theories
- Topics not given sufficient attention
- Populations not covered
- Regions not covered
- Methods not used
- Problems not raised

How gap is stated in the literature review: example

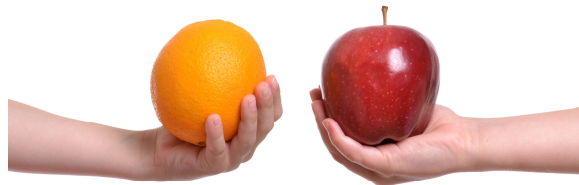
- As should be clear from the review of the literature, most of the prior studies use human capital theory to frame the studies. Some studies use social capital theory, while **cultural capital theory has not been sufficiently utilized in prior studies**. In addition to that, there is **a lack of empirical research conducted in non-Western context**, especially in post-Soviet countries. While lots of attention is paid to socialization of faculty, **little attention has been paid so far to the analysis of the experiences of college students**. Moreover, while such factors as motivation, integration, and attitude were confirmed with a substantial number of studies, **the orientation to success has not been sufficiently explored**. Finally, **little use has been made so far of qualitative approaches**, which allow to gain contextual and in-depth understanding of the phenomena. Therefore, this qualitative case study, which will explore the role of orientation to success in the experiences of Kazakhstani students as can be explained by the theory of cultural capital may help to fill several gaps in the prior literature thus making theoretical, empirical, and methodological contribution.

Where in a research paper literature is used?



- Introduction, problem background (policy literature)
- Literature review (statement of the gap)
- Methods (justification)
- Discussion (framing findings with the prior literature, linking to prior literature – same one you reviewed)

How does literature review differ between articles and theses/dissertations?



- Depth
- Coverage (years)
- Location (introduction vs. literature review section)
- Relevance to the journal



Questions?
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