

# Good practices for developing a literature review

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*Dena'inaq etnen'ag' gbeshtnu cb'q'u yesbdu. (Dena'ina)*

*I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina. (English)*

-Translated by Joel Isaak and Sondra Shaginoff-Stuart

# Objectives

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- Explain why we do literature reviews
- Differentiate between types of literature reviews
- Share good practices for literature searches
- Share good practices for organizing sources, thoughts, and drafts
- Writing the review, synthesizing the literature

Burning questions?

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# Disclaimer

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- Conducting and writing literature reviews is difficult!
  - There is not one standard format for writing them
  - Rabbit holes abound if you are new to the topic of interest
- Behavioral science bend

# What's literature?

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- Materials exploring a particular topic
- Journal articles, book chapters, authored books
- Can include “non-academic” sources at times (e.g., government policy)

# Literature reviews: What and so what?

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- What?
  - A means of demonstrating what is known about a particular area(s)/topic(s) in a scientific context
- So what?
  - Situates or contextualizes an empirical study
  - Provides rationale for conducting a study
  - Provides a (comprehensive) statement about the current state of the science on a particular topic (stand-alone literature reviews)

# What a literature search can yield

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- What is the main topic/area?
  - Major variables of interest (and how they are measured)
- How common is the phenomenon of interest (prevalence)
- What do we already know?
- What don't we know (Rationale)?
- What has already been done?
  - *How* have things been done?
- What hasn't been done?
  - "Gaps in the literature"

# Types of articles and publications

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- Peer-reviewed journals
  - Empirical (i.e., has a method section)
  - Literature reviews (as stand-alone articles, book chapters; e.g. psychological bulletin)
    - Meta analyses
- Edited book
- Authored book



# Types of literature reviews

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- Background (in empirical research)
  - Empirical journal articles
  - (most) Theses and dissertations
  - A note about bias (due to selectivity and time and space constraints)

# Types of literature reviews

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- Stand-alone literature reviews
  - Systematic reviews
    - The literature review *is* the study; exhaustive
    - Comprehensive search of relevant literature
  - Meta analyses
    - Quantitative analysis of existing literature (effect sizes)

- Gerontology and Aging
- Government Information
- Grants and Scholarships
- Health Sciences
- History
- Human Services
- Journalism / Public Communications
- Justice / Criminology
- Languages
- Law and Legal Studies
- Linguistics
- Literature & Literary Studies
- Logistics
- Mathematics / Applied Statistics
- Medical Assisting
- Medical Laboratory Science
- Military Science
- Music
- News Sources
- Nursing
- Occupation Information
- Occupational Safety and Health
- Occupational Therapy
- Pharmacy Technology
- Philosophy
- Physical Therapy / PTA
- Physics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Public Administration
- Public Health
- Radiologic Technology / Medical Imaging
- Reference Resources
- Religious Studies

# Finding

- Many disciplines have area-specific databases, such as:
  - PsycInfo
  - Pubmed
  - Academic search premier
- Where?
  - Libraries

- Accounting
- Agriculture
- Alaska & Polar Regions
- Alaska Native Studies
- Alaskan Business Research
- Anthropology
- Applied Technologies Leadership & Apprenticeship Technologies
- Architectural and Engineering Technology
- Art
- Astronomy
- Auto & Diesel Technology
- Aviation History
- Aviation Technology
- Biographies
- Biological Sciences
- Business
- Chemistry
- Communication and Speech
- Company Information
- Computer Science
- Construction Management
- Cost of Living Information
- Creative Writing & Literary Arts
- Culinary Arts
- Dental Assisting / Dental Hygiene
- Dietetics and Nutrition
- Disability Studies
- Economics
- Education
- Educational Leadership
- Engineering
- Environmental Studies
- Fire and Emergency Services
- Geography
- Geology
- Gerontology and Aging
- Government Information

# Searching for literature: Tips

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- Know your search terms, keywords, and their synonyms
  - Refine, narrow searches and try a few times
  - Take notes!
  - Example: Depression (347, 514 results)
  - Adding “Indigenous” (515 results)
- Nuances of searching
  - Adolescents vs. adolescence vs. Adolescen\*
  - Social justice (43,704) vs. “Social Justice” (14,710)
- Keep a “Home” version of your search (i.e., “open in new tab”)
- Try to get a manageable number of articles
  - How many is that?!

# Searching for literature: Tips

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- Best searches ever
  - Reference sections of the most relevant articles
  - Articles that cite that study!
  - Theses and dissertations

# Organizing your sources

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- Refworks, endnote
- Folders, file naming
  - (Lead) author name, year, keywords



# Writing

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- Annotated bibliographies
  - Article/chapter-specific summaries
  - Can be useful for folding into the paper
  - Help make ties to other articles
  - Multi-citation sentence



# Writing: The funnel

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- Social support
- Types of support
- The importance of perception
- Provision of support
- Ties to other behavioral health variables

# Writing: Organizing

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- By theme (Hint: look at other articles' organizing principles)
  - Favored
- By variable
- By study

# Synthesizing

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- Bigger takeaways from the literature, not one article alone
- *This* is the hard part

# General tips/reminders

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- Outlines (Baron, N.D.)
  - Statement of the problem
  - Significance of the study
  - Research question
  - Definition of terms

# General tips/reminders

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- Tips: Know your audience
  - Papers for school have guidelines (including theses and dissertations)
  - Journals have guidelines/limits
- The best way to be a better writer is to read
- Writing is rewriting!

# Further reading/resources

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- Hempel, S. (2019). *Conducting your literature review*. Washington, D.C.: American psychological association.
- Garrard, J. (2017). *Health Sciences Literature Review Made Easy: The Matrix Method*. Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning
- Library guides (most on public-facing websites)
- Reference librarians!!!
- Yes, Google, too

# Thank you!

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- Questions and discussion
  - Contact: [smorgan@alaskapacific.edu](mailto:smorgan@alaskapacific.edu)