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SWK 340: Exercise 2. Writing the Literature Review for your Research Proposal

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SWK 340 Exercise 2: Writing the Literature Review for your Research Proposal

Purpose: This assignment is an opportunity for you to combine the information you have compiled on your research topic into a cohesive narrative. The literature review is an organized way of presenting background information about the variables in your research question.

Instructions: For this assignment you will revise your problem statement, research question and hypothesis (from Exercise 1) and write your literature review section of the research proposal. Your literature review should describe what is currently known about the target population and variables in your research question using peer-reviewed articles to support the facts you provide. Define any relationships between the variables or other influences and any key terms or theories on your topic. End this section by describing any gaps in knowledge or controversies about your topic and variables that are important to understand.

For the literature review follow the outline provided here:

On the page following your title page, start by describing the problem you want to research based on your problem statement from Exercise 1. This will be your introduction paragraph to the literature review. APA does not use an actual heading for this paragraph.

Literature Review

Next, write your literature review. It will take about 4-5 pages to write a good review of the literature. Your narrative will describe what you have learned about your variables and research topic clearly and succinctly. Cite the research article information you have collected and use subheadings to help sort the information into topical areas (See Hint below here on organizing literature review topics).

Your goal is to paraphrase and synthesize information from your compiled sources to make a clear statement about the information. Use quotes very sparingly for definitions perhaps but never for statistics. Reserve quotes for when someone says something so well you couldn't possibly phrase it differently. Include only the relevant aspects of the study and leave out unnecessary details. Avoid first-person like language like "I" and "we" to maintain objectivity.

You should address the following in your review of the literature:

- Describe what is currently known about your target research population from the literature and what is important to know about each variable in your research question.
- Describe all of the information from the literature that is important to know about the relationship between the variables in your research question and any other variables or social forces that might influence the variables in your research question.
- Define key terms and explain theories that are important for understanding your topic. This may include several sub-headings.
- Identify consistent findings across studies.
- Identify gaps and controversies in the literature.
- End the literature review by summarizing the key points and tying it into why your research proposal is important and needed by social workers.

Research Question & Hypothesis

After summarizing your literature review and stating why your research study is essential, add a brief paragraph describing your research question and hypothesis. Use the ideas from Exercise 1 including making any revisions based on feedback from your instructor on the assignment.

Assignment Submission: Submit your paper through the assignment link on Blackboard by the due date listed in the Course Schedule. Be sure to include an [APA formatted reference page and title page](#). Every reference you list should be used in the narrative at some point as an [in-text citation](#). You should have a minimum of six (6) sources listed on your reference page.

Writing Hint: [Four Ways to Outline a Literature Review](#)

The Purdue OWL website shared these examples of topical organization for your literature review. There are more examples in your textbook in Chapter 4.

Thematic: This is one of the most common methods. If you have found some recurring central themes that you will continue working with throughout your piece, you can organize your literature review into subsections that address different aspects of the topic. For example, if you are reviewing literature about women and religion, key themes can include the role of women in churches and the religious attitude towards women.

Chronological: The simplest approach is to trace the development of the topic over time, which helps familiarize the audience with the topic (for instance if you are introducing something that is not commonly known in your field). If you choose this strategy, be careful to avoid simply listing and summarizing sources in order. Try to analyze the patterns, turning points, and key debates that have shaped the direction of the field. Give your interpretation of how and why certain developments occurred (as mentioned previously, this may not be appropriate in your discipline — check with a teacher or mentor if you're unsure).

Methodological: If you draw your sources from different disciplines or fields that use a variety of research methods, you can compare the results and conclusions that emerge from different approaches. For example:

- Qualitative versus quantitative research
- Empirical versus theoretical scholarship
- Divide the research by sociological, historical, or cultural sources

Theoretical: In many humanities articles, the literature review is the foundation for the theoretical framework. You can use it to discuss various theories, models, and definitions of key concepts. You can argue for the relevance of a specific theoretical approach or combine various theoretical concepts to create a framework for your research.