THE LITERATURE REVIEW

This document is organized into four sections including:

1) An explanation of the final assignment
2) An explanation of what is a research question and a literature review
3) A step by step guide for how to conduct a literature review
4) Very brief examples of literature reviews

1. FINAL ASSIGNMENT EXPLANATION

The final assignment for SOC6003H is a stand-alone literature review on a topic within the broad field of non-citizenship as laid out in the first two weeks of class. The assignment has three components including:

- A research problematic that identifies the research topic and its importance as well as research question(s) that can be answered (1 page)
- A review of the literature (8 pages)
- A preliminary discussion of research methods appropriate to conduct the research (1 page)

We will work on the different pieces of the final assignment throughout the semester. You will be expected to discuss, present and hand-in work-in-progress for feedback from the instructor and your student colleagues.

Calendar: Working towards a Stand-Alone Literature Review

Steps	Item with description	Due date
1	1-2 page research topic and tentative research questions	February 10
2	List of 10 excellent sources with some annotations reflecting an active reading process. You will use more than 10 but this is to get you started	February 24
3	Point form outline of literature review. You might be connecting pieces of the outline to specific citations at this point.	March 16
4	Second draft of 1-page research topic and research questions	March 23
5	First draft of literature review	March 30
6	First draft concept map, graded separately	March 30
7	Final assignment due	April 6

Grading Scheme:
The literature review is worth 30% of your final grade. The grade is broken down into three pieces:

- Completing the seven steps (5%). This is an all or nothing. If you skip a step you will get zero for this component of the assignment.

- Reflection on formative feedback (5%). Please use the Literature Review worksheet to reflect on the impact of formative feedback received during the term. The question is always how has formative feedback changed your thinking on some piece, focus, part of your literature view. Submit this worksheet as part of the final paper.
- The final literature review (20%)

2. WHAT IS A RESEARCH QUESITON AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Research topic and question(s) – 1 page or approximately 250 words

The research process often begins with the presentation of a topic and a research question(s) that you would like to answer. Briefly:
- Your research topic should be clearly specified and the relevant field bounded
- Your research question should have the capacity to generate complex results. Avoid questions with "yes" or "no" answers.
- Your question should have the capacity to surprise. If you already know the answer or have a pretty good idea of what your research will find, then you don't need to do the study.
- Your research question needs to be answerable. Is your question(s) clearly and specifically enough stated that you would be able to recognize an answer when you have it?

Suggested resource: http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/introduction/researchproblem

Literature Review ~ 8 pages or approximately 2000 words

In order to identify what other research has addressed your research question and to find out what is already known about it, you need to conduct a literature review. A literature review is an overview of previous research on the chosen topic. It identifies and describes and sometimes analyzes related research that has already been done and summarizes the state of knowledge about the topic. Writing a properly structured literature review is an extremely important component in the research process and is a very important skill.

There are different types of literature reviews and they play different roles in the research process. Your goal for this course is simply to state and evaluate what exists. It is not to generate new knowledge or a new perspective or 'take' on an existing field. Your review should capture contributions with regards to theory and concepts, methodology and methods, evidence and findings. The review is not a summary of types of findings. A literature review can be broad making tentative links across fields, publications, or more specific and narrow. This depends in part on how much you are able to specify your research problematic, topic and questions and on the state of the field.

There are different ways to organize a literature review. The review can be chronological, tracking advancements in field; it can be geographical by covering existing literature on different regions; or according ot key debates and/or methods of study. It is up to you to choose an approach that is appropriate to your research field. The review should be succinct and well organized.

It is helpful to think of the Literature Review as an exercise that has a purpose in your own understanding and training and a parallel purpose for other readers. The literature review should demonstrate your knowledge of a topic, introduce the novice reader and update the expert reader on the literature. The review should be a helpful review for readers who are already familiar with the topic and an essential background for readers who are new to the topic. When the reader completes reading of the literature review, she or he should be able to say, "I now know what previous research has learned about this topic."

As the architect of the literature review, the process of producing the document should build your understanding and expertise on a topic provide. Briefly, it should hopefully allow you to think about and begin to answer some of these questions:
  • How your research topic and question(s) fit into the broader, sociological understanding of the topic.
  • How your topic and questions fits into a tradition. In other words, it will help you understand your intellectual genealogy including the concepts and methods you have inherited.
  • The **purpose** is to position your work not as Unique (Ie no one else has done this before) but as a topic within a field, to recognize the degrees of distance and overlap with the extant literature. To acknowledge what exists, to raise problematic in relation to what exists and situate yr research question within it

Goal -- Lit review should tell us: What are key works or 'classics' in the field? What are key splits or debates?

Goal – the lit review should be able to tell us: What methods of inquiry, measures, instruments, and ways of recording data exist? You may want to consider how do particular methods generate certain kinds of findings (and not others)?

3. **STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW**

- Step 1: Allocate reasonable and doable segments of time for each step in the literature review. Set up a work plan and calendar for the different tasks required for the literature review.

- Step 2: Search for literature

Conduct a comprehensive bibliographic search of books and articles in your area. Don't just sit at your desk. Move around. Make an appointment with the reference librarian. Explore: Identify 1 or 2 relevant books and go wander through that section of the library bookshelves. Look forward: search dissertation abstracts, search for research grant funding announcements (e.g. SSHRC, NSF, etc.) to see what is upcoming. Use Google scholar to map the field (i.e. Who is citing whom, what is cited a lot). Read the abstracts online and download and/or print those articles that pertain to your area of research. Identify the books in the library that are relevant and check them out. Set a specific time frame for how long you will search. It should not take more than two or three dedicated time sessions.

- Step 3: Active Reading of Sources

Use step-one and step-two of the active reading strategy as posted on BB to review materials. In sum, look for these five things:

1. Claims, conclusions, and findings about the constructs you are investigating
2. Definitions of terms
3. Calls for follow-up studies relevant to your project
4. Gaps you notice in the literature
5. Disagreement about the constructs you are investigating

When you find any of these five things, type the relevant excerpt directly into a Word document. Don't summarize, as summarizing takes longer than simply typing the excerpt. Make sure to note the name of the author and the page number following each excerpt. Do this for each article and book that you have in your stack of literature. When you are done, print out your excerpts.

- Step 4: Code the literature

Use software, concept mapping, use hardware (a table) – do whatever works for you. Get out a pair of scissors (real or metaphorical) and cut each excerpt out. Now, sort the pieces of paper into similar topics. Figure out what the main themes. Place each excerpt into a themed pile. Make sure each note goes into a pile. If there are excerpts that you can't figure out where they belong, separate those and go over them again at the end to see if you need new categories. When you finish, place each stack of notes into an envelope labeled with the name of the theme.

- Step 5: Begin to Write Your Literature Review

Choose any section of your conceptual schema to begin with. You can begin anywhere, because you already know the order. Find the envelope with the excerpts in them and lay them on the table in front of you. Figure out a mini-conceptual schema based on that theme by grouping together those excerpts that say the same thing. Use that mini-conceptual schema to write up your literature review based on the excerpts that you have in front of you. Don't forget to include the citations as you write, so as not to lose track of who said what. Repeat this for each section of your literature review.

Once you complete these steps, you will have a complete draft of your literature review.

4. EXAMPLES OF LITERATURE REVIEWS

This documented is adapted from different sources including:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FK6Lsl1tcm0
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiDHOr3NHRA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2d7y_r65HU
http://getalifephd.blogspot.ca/2011/10/writing-literature-review-six-steps-to.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2d7y_r65HU

Example #1: A Brief Section of a Literature Review (Lin and Dembo 2008)
The first example presented is from a research article (Lin and Dembo 2008:35) that sought to explain why some juveniles use illegal drugs and others do not. One of the theories being used by the authors is social control theory. The following section is part of the literature review that discusses previous research findings on the role of this theory in predicting juvenile drug use.

Hirschi's (1969) social control theory argued that adolescents who had no strong bond to conventional social institutions were more likely to commit delinquency. Many empirical studies that follow Hirschi's theory found general support that juveniles who have strong social bonds are engaged in fewer delinquent acts (Agnew 1985; Costello and Vowell 1999; Erickson, Crosboe, and Dornbush 2000; Hindelang 1973; Hirschi 1969; Junger-Tas 1992; Sampson and Laub 1993; Thornberry et al. 1991). Some studies that specially employed social control theory to explain juvenile drug use have also found support for this theory (Ellickson et al. 1999; Krohn et al. 1983; Marcos et al. 1986; Wiatrowski, Griswold, and Roberts 1981). By reviewing these studies, one can find that during the adolescent period (12-17), family and school play influential roles in influencing youngsters' behavior. Whereas a defective family bond increases the probability of youthful drug use or juvenile delinquency (Denton and Kampfe 1994; Wells and Rankin 1991; Rankin and Kern 1994; Radosevich et al. 1980), students who have a weak school bond also have a higher risk of drug use (Ahlgren et al. 1982; Bauman 1984; Radosevich et al. 1980; Tec 1972).

Notice especially the following: (1) the thorough overview of previous research, (2) the large number of previous research studies referenced, (3) the succinct and well-organized writing style, and (4) the manner in which previous studies are cited.

Reference: Lin, Wen-Hsu and Richard Dembo. 2008. "An Integrated Model of Juvenile Drug Use: A Cross-Demographic Groups Study." *Western Criminology Review* 9(2): 33-51.

Example #2: A Brief Section of a Literature Review (Rogoeczi 2008)

The second example is from a research article (Rogoeczi 2008) that examines whether living in crowded conditions has the same or a different effect on women and men. The following section is part of the literature review that discusses previous research findings on the effect of lack of space in a room on aggressive actions by women and men. Note that the section comments on the fact that not all previous research is consistent. This sometimes is the case and is important to note.

Experimental research varying room size reveals a relatively consistent pattern of gender differences, with more aggressive responses to limited space found among males than those observed among women (Baum and Koman 1976; Epstein and Karlin 1975; Freedman et al. 1972; Mackintosh, Saegert, and West 1975; Stokols et al. 1973). Studies examining the effects of density on children also report sex differences in response to density, with boys displaying heightened aggression (Loo 1972, 1978). Research on gender differences in withdrawal has produced more mixed findings (e.g., Loo 1978). Still other research finds no evidence of sex differences in discomfort as a result of crowding (Aiello, Epstein, and Karlin 1975; Baum and Valins 1977) or in the impact of crowding (Evans et al. 2000). Several longitudinal studies of the impact of household crowding on psychological distress among college students reveal no differential effect by gender (Evans and Lepore 1993; Lepore, Evans, and Schneider 1991). However Karlin, Epstein, and Aiello (1978) report more physical and psychological effects among crowded women than men.

Once again, notice the following: (1) the thorough overview of previous research, (2) the large number of previous research studies referenced, (3) the succinct and well-organized writing style, and (4) the manner in which previous studies are cited.

Reference: Regoeczi, Wendy C. 2008. "Crowding in Context: An Examination of the Differential Responses of Men and Women to High-Density Living Environments." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 49(5): 254-268.

Example #3: An Extended Section of a Literature Review (Durkin, Wolfe, and Clark 2005).

Durkin, Keith F., Timothy W. Wolfe, and Gregory A. Clark. 2005. "College Students and Binge Drinking: An Evaluation of Social Learning Theory." *Sociological Spectrum* 25(3): 255-272.

As an example of an extended section of a literature review, an article by Keith Durkin, Timothy Wolfe, and Gregory Clark (2005: 256-261) in *Sociological Spectrum* is used. The research examines the ability of social learning theory to explain binge drinking by college students.

Introduction

Research Purpose

The abuse of alcohol by college students has been the focus of considerable concern for several decades. However, one specific pattern of alcohol consumption, known as binge drinking, has recently received a tremendous amount of attention from the media, college personnel, healthcare professionals and researchers in the behavioral sciences. Binge drinking involves the consumption of large quantities of alcohol in a single drinking episode. A number of researchers have operationally defined binge drinking as the consumption of five or more alcoholic drinks in a single setting (Alva 1998; Borsari and Carey 1999; Haines and Spear 1996; Hensley 2001; Ichiyama and Kruse 1998; Jones et al. 2001; Meilman, Leichliter, and Presley 1999; Nezlek, Pilkington, and Bilbro 1994; Page, Scanlan, and Gilbert 1999; Shulenberg et al. 1996). Research has indicated that this behavior is a prevalent phenomenon on college campuses nationwide. For instance, a 1993 survey of 17,592 students from 140 colleges and universities, which was conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, found that 44% of students reported they had engaged in binge drinking during the previous two weeks (Weschler et al. 1994). Subsequent studies conducted in 1997, 1999, and 2001 produced nearly identical results (Weschler et al. 2002).

There is a growing consensus that binge drinking constitutes a very serious threat to the well being of many of today's college students. In fact, binge drinking has been characterized as the foremost public health hazard facing college students (Weschler et al. 1995). Research has indicated that compared to other college students, binge drinkers are more likely to experience negative consequences as a result of consuming alcoholic beverages. These include blackouts, hangovers, missing class because of drinking, falling behind in their studies, doing something that they later regretted, arguing with friends, getting involved in physical fights, and getting into trouble with the police (Weschler et al. 1994; Weschler et al. 2000). The most recent research suggests that many of these aforementioned negative consequences are on the rise nationally (Weschler et al. 2002). Binge drinking is also related to engaging in high-risk sexual behaviors, thus putting these students in danger of contracting sexually transmitted diseases or having an unplanned pregnancy (Ichiyama and Kruse 1998; Meilman 1993; Smith and Brown 1998). Moreover, recent research has found that students who report getting drunk frequently have significantly higher odds of being victims of assault than their peers (Hensley 2001; Mustaine and Tewsbury 2000). Furthermore, it is estimated that more than half of the young adults who binge drink on a daily basis exhibit indicators of alcohol abuse or dependency (Shulenberg et al. 1996). Finally, the tragic alcohol-related deaths of students at several colleges and universities highlight the potentially fatal consequences of this activity (Jones et al. 2001; Vicary and Karshin 2002).

Research has further revealed that the negative consequences of binge drinking are not limited to the students who participate in this behavior. This activity also has an adverse impact on other members of the university community. The concepts of "secondary binge effects" (Weschler et al. 1994; Weschler et al. 1995) and "secondhand effects" (Weschler et al. 2002) have emerged in the literature to describe the problems that are the direct result of other students' binge drinking. Some of these secondary binge effects include being verbally insulted or abused, being physically assaulted, having one's property

damaged, experiencing unwelcome sexual advances, and having sleep or studying disturbed because of the conduct of intoxicated students. The recent alcohol-related riots on a number of campuses and neighboring communities are also examples of these secondary consequences (Vicary and Karshin 2002). Neighbors living near campuses frequently report a lower quality of life as a result of student binge drinking because of noise disturbances, litter, drunkenness, vandalism, vomiting, and urination (Weschler 2002).

Although a number of recent studies have sought to identify factors that are associated with binge drinking by college students (Alva 1998; Ichiyama and Kruse 1998; Page et al. 1999; Turrisi 1999; Weschler, et al. 1995), research that applies the various sociological perspectives, particularly theories of deviant behavior to this phenomenon is particularly limited. For instance, Durkin, Wolfe, and Clark (1999) applied social bond theory to the binge drinking behavior of undergraduate students at one private college. Also, Workman (2001) conducted an ethnographic study at one university to examine the social construction and communication of norms about excessive drinking among fraternity members. The relative absence of sociological research on binge drinking is an extremely significant oversight. Given the fact that sociological theories of deviance typically have a strong explanatory value, the current undertaking can make an important contribution to understanding this problematic behavior. The purpose of the current undertaking is to apply one of the leading sociological explanations of deviant behavior, social learning theory (Akers 1985, 2000), to binge drinking by college students.

Once again, notice the following: (1) the thorough overview of previous research, (2) the large number of previous research studies referenced, (3) the succinct and well-organized writing style, and (4) the manner in which previous studies are cited. In addition, notice how the authors use the last paragraph to explain the need for a sociological study of binge drinking.

More Helpful References

Galvan, Jose L. 2009. *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences.* 4th ed. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing. (This source provides a detailed step-by-step process of conducting and writing a literature review.)

Johnson, William A., Richard P. Rettig, Gregory M. Scott, and Stephen M. Garrison. 2008. *The Sociology Student Writer's Manual.* 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Pan, M. Ling. 2008. *Preparing Literature Reviews: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* 3rd Ed. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

Machi, Lawrence A. and Brenda T. McEvoy. 2008. *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.