



MY 498  
Capstone Project Seminar

# **Reviewing the Literature and Research Ethics**

25 November 2018



Department of  
Methodology

# Topics today

## Literature

- What is research literature
- Finding literature
- Reading literature
- Summarising the literature: the literature review

## Research ethics - practicalities

# **PART I: LITERATURE AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

# The literature review

- The job of the lit review is to:
  - enable you to situate the contribution of your own work to existing research
  - explain what has been done before, and how it has been done, and what has been found out
  - construct and present your narrative of what the key themes and structures of the previous literature are (a good lit review can be very influential in shaping perceptions of this)
- Important also in a social data science environment

# Three typical uses of lit review

1. Establish the problem, e.g.
  - statements about real-world importance (these could be also from non-academic sources, e.g. media or government statements)
  - basic facts (e.g. description of the subject area for the less informed reader, descriptive statistics etc.)
2. Social scientific status of the problem:  
definitions of concepts, theoretical frameworks that have been used, open questions/debates
3. Summarize empirical studies and their findings  
(usually the biggest part)

# (Potential) content of lit review

1. Description of gaps in knowledge, areas of dispute or uncertainty...
2. General patterns in findings
3. Analysis of conflicting findings → basis for exploring explanations for discrepancies
4. Definition of your terminology (with attention to [inter-]disciplinary variants)
5. Summary of key methodological debates

# Training/resources available via LSE

- Library:
  - Various ‘[Information skills and resources](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/learning-support/training)’ workshops (<http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/learning-support/training>)
  - “Library companion for students” available on Moodle
- LSE Life on Moodle: some similar topics

# Types of research literature

In (very) rough order of prestige (which also varies by discipline):

1. Articles in refereed academic journals Hard and prestigious. High rejection rate.  
Journal rankings (top 30)
2. Books More much calm, no much hard time. The marker is the press (Cambridge, Oxford, ...)
3. Chapters in edited books Not very prestigious. (a moment of weakness) Ok, but NOT the main  
source of your literature in your project
4. Governmental (etc.) research reports
5. Academic technical reports (working papers, discussion papers etc.), i.e. “unpublished reports”
6. Conference papers (in conference proceedings)
  - (In some fields, e.g. in computer science-oriented data science, these are much higher up the list) (works in progress for social sciences and statistics)
7. Blog posts and newspaper articles



# How to find research literature?

- Google Scholar Very good as a first point of call it's good but you need to look somewhere else, there are some things it does not pick up.
- General and specialized academic journals
- Bibliographic databases, e.g. IBSS (via ProQuest) and ISI Web of Science This is what people used before Google Scholar
- Library catalogues ([LSE](#), [ULRLS](#) [esp. [Senate House](#)], [British Library](#)...)
- Course syllabus (with reading lists)
- Ways to search:
  - by keyword, author, year etc. German names with umlaut,
  - N.B. spelling differences, synonyms, locations, parameters (e.g. social class or working class)...

# How to find research literature?

- Following trail of citations from literature you have already found (call it A)
  - **backwards:** previous literature cited in A
    - Journal special issues and edited volumes especially useful
  - **forwards:** who has subsequently cited A
    - Journal webpages (as well as Google Scholar) now make this very easy
- “Related articles” and author profiles on Google Scholar
- How to identify importance or credibility? Citation count as a rough proxy

Incredible: 1000  
Good: 200  
Medium: 23  
Bad: 1-4

# Reading the literature

- Start reading early, and keep reading It's a process.  
Emulate the good writing! (as a model of clarity)
- Reading enough for your dissertation takes time, and it is more pleasant to spread that over a longer period
- This also gets you socialised into the structure and (peculiar) style of academic writing
  - Which is what you will need to use yourself
  - Feel free to learn from the best readings and to emulate (and modify) their style where appropriate
- Be smart as you read:
  - Stop reading when article is not relevant to you
  - Not necessary to read in linear order

# Summarising the literature to yourself

- Make notes as you go along, so that you won't need to revisit every article later on
  - You can use reference management software
- For example, summarise the main points (that are relevant to your work) of an article in a paragraph or two as soon as you finish reading it
- Include (a few!) key quotes if especially relevant (incl. page numbers for citing)
  - Most plagiarism errors are due to poor reference management!
- Also write down the bibliographic information (author, title, year, volume, page numbers, DOI etc.) of each piece when you read it.

Read and then reach a critical outline

Have a rough idea and then make the Intro.

Then Make the titles, put the notes in the text --> Then fill the gaps and the notes with the draft of the paper.

# Reference management

- Many existing options:
  - Microsoft Endnote
    - Available on LSE PCs and Remote Desktop. Plays well with Microsoft Word
  - Mendeley, Papers
    - PDF management system.
  - BibTex and BibDesk
    - If you're using latex or markdown to write your capstone project
  - Many others
- You can export from Google Scholar directly

# Citations and referencing

- See examples in literature you read for how to cite literature and format the bibliography
- Lots of different referencing styles – use an appropriate one and be **consistent**
- Read the LSE policy on plagiarism, what it is and how to avoid it!!

(<https://info.lse.ac.uk/Staff/Divisions/Academic-Registrars-Division/Teaching-Quality-Assurance-and-Review-Office/Assets/Documents/Calendar/RegulationsAssessmentOffences-Plagiarism.pdf>)

# Uncovering the big picture

- Research literature on a given topic is not a pile of isolated pieces, but one or more networks of connected works
- As you read, you will start seeing the outline of these networks become clearer to you, and later readings then fitting into it
- Having as good an understanding as possible of this big picture should be the aim of your reading

# Uncovering the big picture

- Bear in mind that some parts of the literature agree and build on each other, others disagree (and perhaps debate) – are there different camps?
- Sometimes there are several apparently unconnected literatures on the same topic, which is also interesting
- Some writings are pivotal, some peripheral
- Bear in mind the chronological evolution of the literature: What had author X read when she was writing paper B?



# The literature review

- This is where you explain that big picture to others
- LR is **not** a list, i.e. it is not just a collection of those paragraphs on individual writings that you wrote for your own use, as raw material for the review
- Instead, it is an independent piece of writing, with a clear structure and a coherent narrative imposed on it by you

# Central and peripheral topics

- Some areas need to be touched upon but are not central to your work, e.g.
  - work on the same topic but using a different theoretical approach than yours
  - same topic but in different cultures, times etc.
  - your methodology or data etc. applied to different (but somewhat related) topics
- For such areas, use summary references (e.g. lit reviews) which the reader can use to find out more if she wants to

# Central and peripheral topics

- For areas that are central to your work, need to be as comprehensive as possible
  - aim: a reader who knows the literature very well should be able to concur that you have covered all obviously relevant material
- You should read and cite all such relevant publications (i.e. other people's reviews are not sufficient), but still summarise and synthesise them in your review (i.e. not discuss every one individually)
- Those publications that are the most important to your work should be described individually
- Obviously the line between central and peripheral is not always clear, so judgement calls are needed

(this is slightly detailed)

# Acknowledge priority

- Authors who did something first should be acknowledged as such
  - otherwise collective memory is gradually lost
- Follow the chain of ideas to the beginning, and cite also the original publications
  - i.e. for your central topics it is not OK to cite just the most recent publications, even if these also summarise (and cite) earlier ones

# Reviewing methods

- Methodology and data sources
  - very basic methods do not need references (e.g. quant methods: up to MY452 level)
  - for standard methods used in standard ways, references to text books are OK
  - if you use unusual methods or usual methods in unusual ways, or want to make specific points, refer to original sources
  - for secondary data, sources where reader can find out more details about the data collection etc.
- These are typically referenced later, not in the lit review section
  - But if substance of study is methodological then inclusion in LR may be appropriate

# Examples

- Existing studies:
  - lit review sections of any research papers
  - whole articles / book chapters that are primarily reviews
- For good examples of this, see papers in the journals *Annual Review of ZZZ* They tell you the literature review of a given subject!
  - For example, try Smith, S. (2010). Race and Trust. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 453-475; and Earle, T. C. (2010). Trust in Risk Management: A Model-Based Review of Empirical Research. *Risk Analysis*, 30, 541-574.
- Also introductions to edited volumes
- Check capstone examples for inspiration!

# **PART II: RESEARCH ETHICS - PRACTICALITIES**

# Doing Ethical Research

- Social science research ethics are an issue in any research where there is
  - Personally identifiable data about human subjects, living or recently deceased;
  - Contact with or involvement of human participants
- Researchers have responsibilities to:
  - Participants;
  - Colleagues and wider academic community;
  - Own health and wellbeing;
  - Institutions that employ them or where they study;
  - Funders;
  - Society at large.



# Basic ethical principles in social science research (Belmont Report, 1979)

- Respect for persons
  - Treating people as autonomous agents and protecting those with diminished autonomy
  - Enforcement: informed consent
- Beneficence
  - Minimizing possible harms and maximizing benefits
    - E.g avoid deception, maintain confidentiality
- Justice
  - Distributing benefits and risks of research fairly
    - E.g. disclose conflicts of interest, algorithmic bias

You can read ethical documents for TSE, Talk to the "Ethical Officer" of the department. Not social data!

# 1<sup>st</sup> Project Plan: a provisional statement of intent (1-2 pages – due Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 2020, 4pm)

- Working title
- Key words – 2 on concepts, 2 on methods, 1 on field
- Abstract: what is the relevant literature? What is your ‘angle’ or ‘perspective’ and how does this ‘add value’? (100 words)
- Research question(s) and/or research aims
- Methodology: what is the research design? What data analytic methods will you use?
- Data sources *Be detailed.*
- Contingency plan
- Time schedule for completing project milestones
- Preferred supervisor – list 3 Methodology staff, ranked, and list who else the project has been discussed with to date
- **Attach completed LSE Research Ethics Review**

# LSE research ethics checklist

- Policy, checklist and questionnaire available via [LSE website](https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/research/research-policy/research-ethics) (<https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/research/research-policy/research-ethics>); see “Annex B - Research ethics review” form
- Must be submitted with first project plan
  - Everyone: The checklist and self-certification (Parts I and II)
  - If needed: Also Part III (questionnaire)

Any questions?