**Literature Review Grid[[1]](#footnote-2)**

The lit review grid is designed to help you see commonalities in your research. Ideally, the lit review grid should help you created a literature review outline that is synthesized based on concepts, NOT just a summary of the articles you have read. Your literature review notes will help you fill in the grid, which is designed to help you see patterns rather than as a comprehensive summary of what you have read. The lit review grid can also remind you to focus your research; you dependent variables for each article should be similar, otherwise the articles are not really speaking to each other about a common concept. Below is a description of each column of the grid. Each row should be a separate source.

1. Bibliographic information – This information should be a brief reference; it is not necessary to put the complete citation here. Author and year might be sufficient; it never hurts to add a shortened title.

2. Phenomena Studied – What is the research question? What concept is the author trying to understand? The answer to these questions is the dependent variable.

3. Independent Variables – These columns represent the different explanations that the author tests to explain the dependent variable. These explanations/variables are derived from the literature review. Occasionally the author will introduce a variable of their own. Each variable should be in its own column. Once your grid is complete, you should be able to see where the overlap is between the articles you have read.

4. Method – This column can be a summary of the reading notes worksheet section – it is useful to see whether most of the research on your topic uses a specific type of method – might create an opening for examining the variables using a different approach.

5. Data – This column can also be a summary of the reading notes worksheet section – again, it is useful to see what kinds of data has been collected – you may have ideas for a different potential source.

6. Findings – This will help you in the assessment portion of the literature review – are there points of consensus in the literature, or do scholars disagree?

7. Notes – You can put information here that seems like it might be important, but you aren’t yet sure why yet. Trust your instincts – if you never end up going back to it, it didn’t hurt to make a note at the time.

1. Peter Rocco Yacobucci, “Introducing the Literature Grid: Helping Undergraduates Consistently Produce Quality Literature Reviews” *APSA 2012 Teaching & Learning Conference Paper*. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1997681> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)