

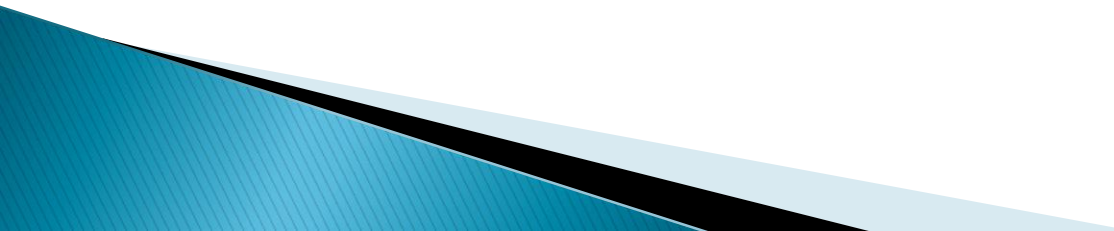
# Literature Reviews

## The Basics

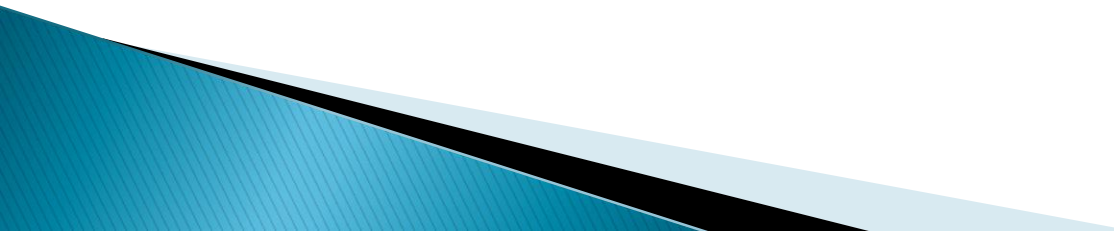
UCSB McNair Scholars Program

# Definition(s)

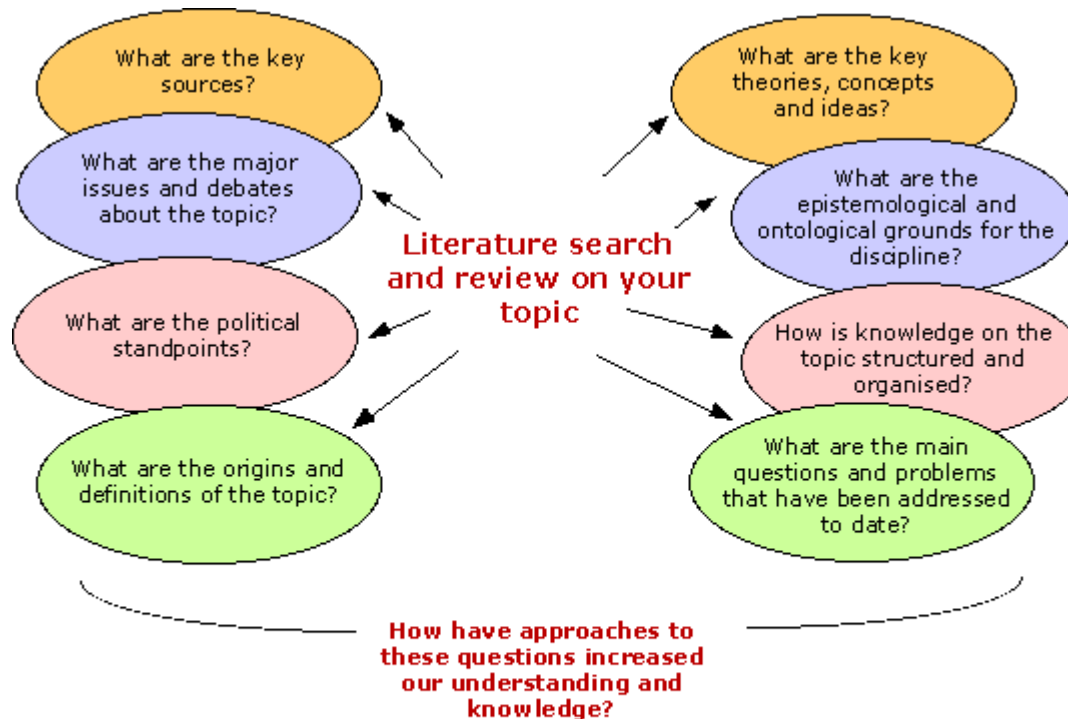
A literature review is:

- ▶ A “re-view” or look again at the scholarship on a particular topic
  - ▶ A discussion of published scholarly work on a topic or in a research area
  - ▶ An organized way to summarize, synthesize, make connections between and present literature on a topic
- 

# Dr. E's Definition

- ▶ A bibliographic conversation between/among scholarly work on a topic
  - ▶ With the added benefit of helping you situate yourself in the conversation
- 


# Purpose



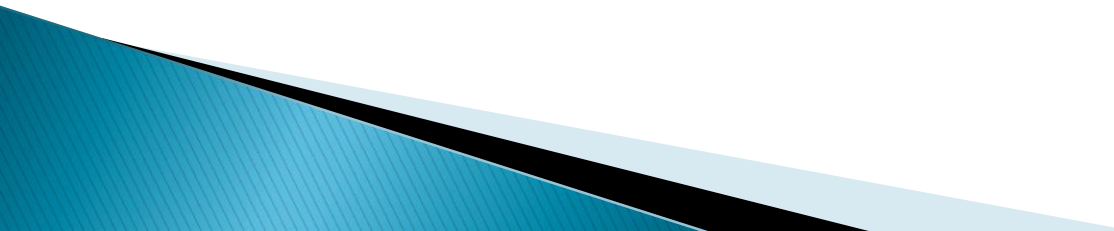
Some of the questions the review of the literature can answer

Adapted from Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination*. London, Sage, p. 14.  
Source: The Learning Centre UNSW <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au>

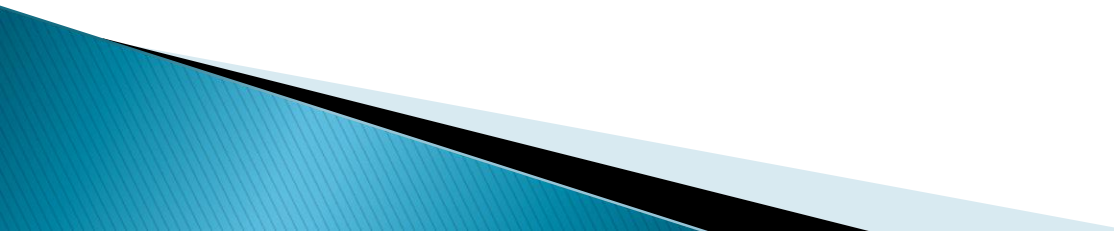
# Benefits of a Literature Review

- ▶ Provides guide to the literature on a topic
  - ▶ Offers overview of previous work on a topic
  - ▶ Enlarges your scope of knowledge about a topic
  - ▶ Let's you demonstrate command of the literature in your field
  - ▶ Offers opportunity to conduct critical appraisal
  - ▶ Challenges your critical and analytical skills (how carefully have you selected sources)
- 

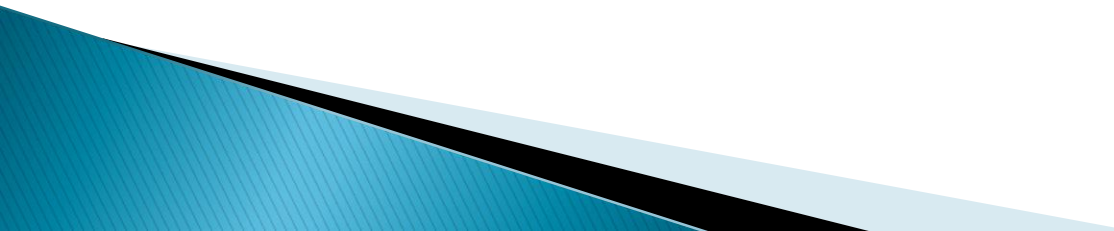
# Some of what it is not

- ▶ Final reference list/bibliography for your paper
  - ▶ A descriptive list of materials on your topic
  - ▶ A synopsis
  - ▶ A new contribution to scholarship/research
- 

# A successful literature review should

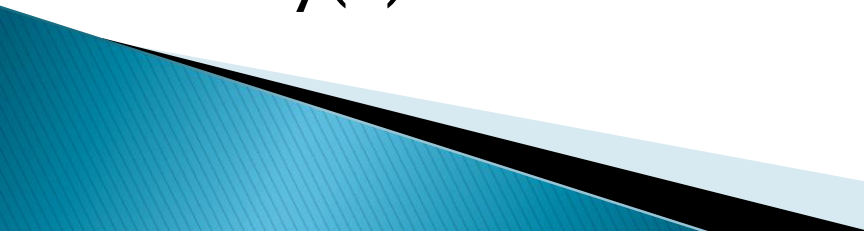
- ▶ Be organized around and directly related to your research question
  - ▶ Synthesize results into what is/what is not known about the topic
  - ▶ Identify areas of controversy/disagreement in the literature
  - ▶ Help you identify/formulate questions that need further investigation
- 

# And should contain


- ▶ Overview of subject, issue, theory under consideration – in other words, what's the topic?
  - ▶ Explanation of how works cited relate to each other
  - ▶ Thoughts about which sources work best in terms of argument, opinions, contributions to research
- 



# Assessment/Evaluation

- ▶ What are the author's credentials?
  - ▶ How well does he/she/they support argument?
  - ▶ Is the author's perspective objective? Even-handed? Prejudicial?
  - ▶ How persuasive is his/her/their thesis or argument?
  - ▶ How do you assess the value of the author's conclusions?
  - ▶ Is the work helpful to you – and in what way(s)?
- 

# Before you begin:

- ▶ Review the assignment carefully
  - ▶ Refine/narrow your topic
  - ▶ Determine whether you want or need to include historic as well as current research
  - ▶ Be selective
  - ▶ Don't ignore sources focused on methodology
  - ▶ Think about organization and how you want to present the sources, especially how best to make connections between/among sources
- 

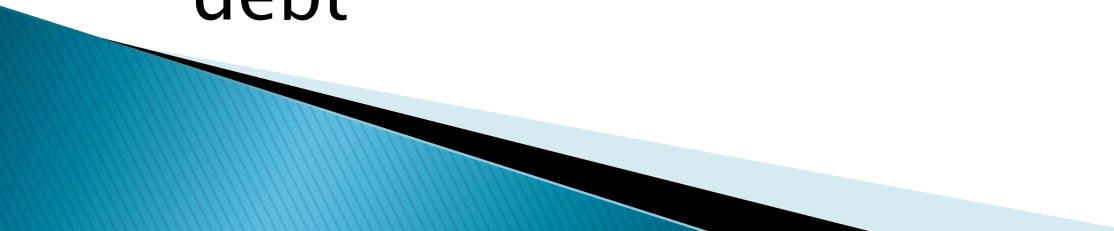
# Not Everyone/Every Discipline...

- ▶ One size does not fit all
- ▶ But...one concept might
  
- ▶ Different disciplines, different needs – but all scholarship owes some debt to what came before

# So...

- ▶ It might have a different look
- ▶ It might have a different “label”
- ▶ It might not be called out “as such” in your dissertation or other academic writing
- ▶ It might feel weird to do

But...(repeating myself):

- ❖ All scholarship owes some debt to what came before
  - ❖ Literature reviews are one way to repay that debt
- 

# Literature Review Tutorial (interactive)

- ▶ Libraries of Adelphi University. Conducting a Literature Review in Education and the Social Sciences
- ▶ <http://libraries.adelphi.edu/research/tutorials/EdLitReview/content/>

# Thanks to the good folks at the following institutions:

- [University of California, Santa Cruz Library. Write a Literature Review](#)
  - [The Writing Center. University of Wisconsin, Madison](#)
- 