

What's Already Known? The Literature Review



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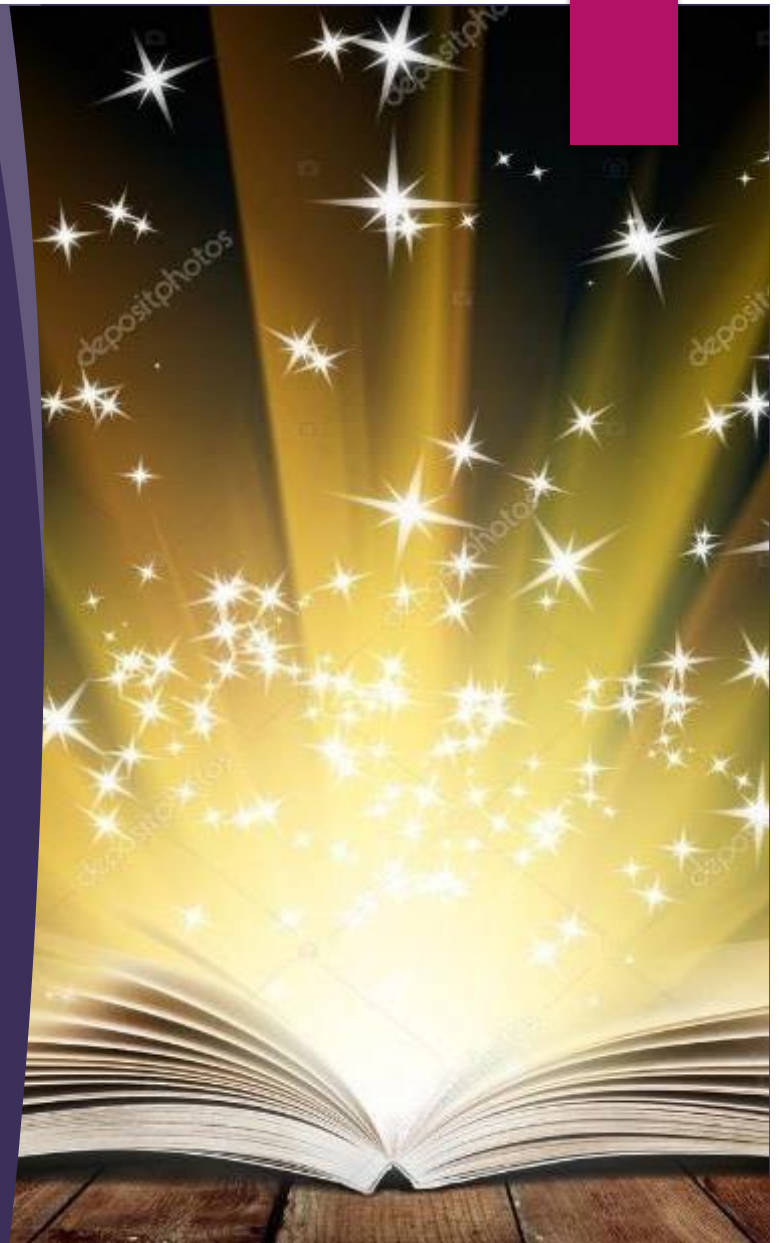
What to Look For

- ▶ Research is conducted at least twice in any study.
- ▶ The first time is when you review the scholarly literature on your question and find out what is already known on the subject.
- ▶ The second time is when you get your actual data—the statistics, surveys, experimental results, reports, or historical analysis that will let you assess your claims. It occurs much later in the process, after you've designed your entire study.



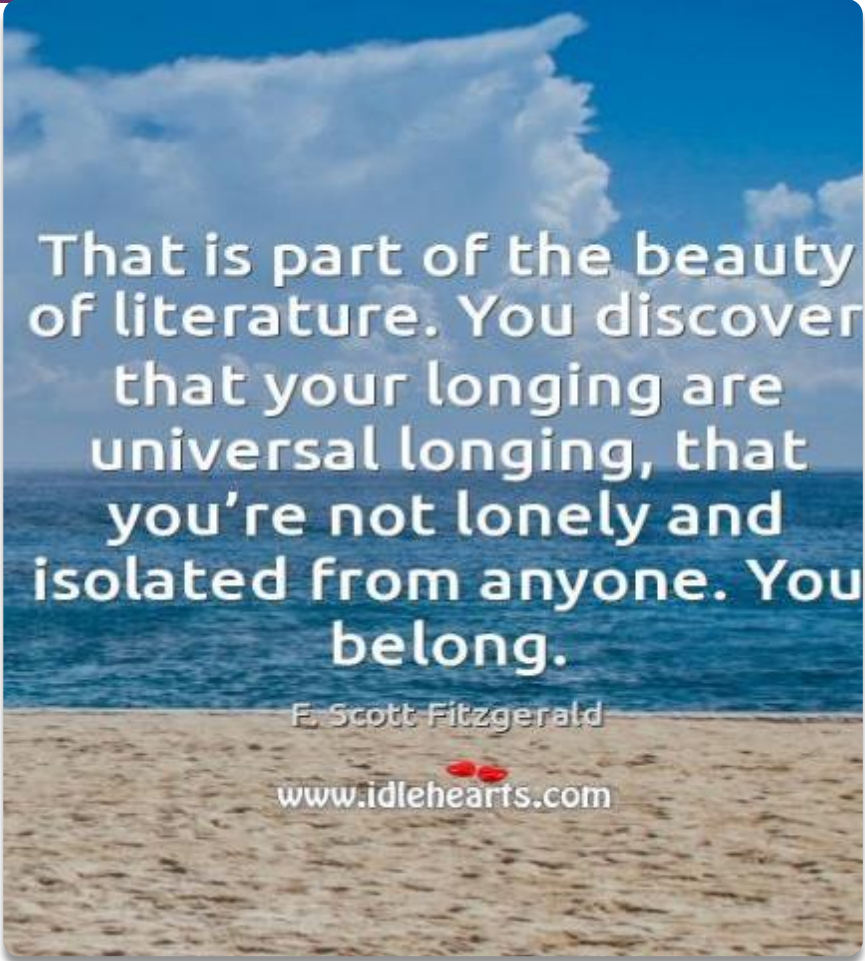
The Literature Review

- ▶ Conducting a literature review—and demonstrating you have done so by including it when you share your work—is required to have your work taken seriously by the research community.
- ▶ You need to understand what ideas are out there and their strengths and flaws before you can advance understanding of the world.
- ▶ If you don't do the literature review, then you don't even know whom you are challenging.



What You Will Learn From Research

- ▶ There are a number of practical things you can learn from reading the work of other scholars that will help you build your own study.
- ▶ Where mistakes were made and best practices that will help you build your research design.
- ▶ Common and accepted definitions for the concepts and variables you plan to use.
- ▶ Which concepts and variables are important in the first place.
- ▶ Which cases have been studied and which haven't—perhaps providing a clue for where you can make a contribution.
- ▶ Qualitative or quantitative methods are generally employed to study this question and what sources of data are out there.
- ▶ Unanswered research question or untested hypothesis that you can tackle.



That is part of the beauty
of literature. You discover
that your longing are
universal longing, that
you're not lonely and
isolated from anyone. You
belong.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

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More Of What Literature Tells Us

- ▶ The state of theory and practice in a particular area.
- ▶ Identification of the debates scholars have, the scope and limitations of existing theory, unexplored gaps of understanding, practical examples where policies and programs have or have not worked, and connections to other fields or areas of study.
- ▶ A thorough read of the literature is what starts many researchers on their projects; they see something that other scholars have missed or a way to resolve an existing debate, and that's their point of entry into the discussion.



How to Find the Sources You Need

- ▶ Scholarly sources are the key to any literature review.
- ▶ A scholarly source is a book or journal article that is written by an expert, is written for other scholars, and has undergone peer review.
- ▶ In other words, other experts have evaluated the work and deemed it worthy of publication, usually in a double-blind process, which means that neither the author nor the reviewers know the identities of those involved.
- ▶ The goal is to ensure that the work is evaluated based purely on merit.



Nonscholarly Sources

- ▶ Typically, nonscholarly sources are avoided in the literature review.
- ▶ A nonscholarly source is a book, article, or other source that has not undergone scholarly peer review.
- ▶ Examples would be a newspaper article, magazine, blog, social media post, or self-published book.
- ▶ Even if the author is an expert, if the source is not peer reviewed, it's not typically considered a scholarly source. Some of these sources can still be useful, but they are only rarely considered part of the literature.



Thank you!

▶ **Questions
and
Comments**

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