

# WRITING THE LITERATURE REVIEW

**A Practical  
Guide**

Sara Efrat Efron | Ruth Ravid

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THE GUILFORD PRESS  
New York      London

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370 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1200, New York, NY 10001  
www.guilford.com

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Printed in the United States of America

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Last digit is print number: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-4625-3689-4 (paperback)  
ISBN 978-1-4625-3690-0 (hardcover)

## CHAPTER 2

# Different Orientations to a Literature Review

It is often assumed that there is only one way of conducting a literature review, and the instructions for completing the process are frequently presented as a mechanistic endeavor. However, a literature review is a form of research (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011). Therefore, like any research, it is influenced by the researchers' perspectives and their beliefs and assumptions about knowledge and how it is acquired (Lukenchuk, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Writing a literature review, asserts Hart (1998), means selecting documents "which contain information, ideas, data, and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfill certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic" (p. 13). Moreover, like any research analysis, the way these selected documents are analyzed does "not emerge out of thin air. [It] is informed by, and extends out of particular sensibilities" (Holstein & Gubium, 2012, p. 5). You need to be cognizant of your own "particular sensibilities" and their implicit and explicit influence on your perception of research and on the way you review the research of others in your field.

As you start planning your literature review, consider the different approaches to research and the methodologies that would fit your review purpose best. Becoming aware of the different perspectives for reviewing the literature, the assumptions that undergird them, and the methodological stances that they present, will assist you in making conscious decisions as you design your own work and consider different choices along the way.

In this chapter, we explore the three major approaches to research and their conceptual assumptions. These approaches are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. We then examine the continuum of orientations to the literature

review, which range from a systematic review to traditional–narrative review and hermeneutic–phenomenological review. We end with Cooper’s (1988) taxonomy of literature reviews, which will assist you in conceptualizing your own style.

One of the main purposes for conducting a literature review is to engage in the creation of knowledge (Lukenchuk, 2013). This engagement requires that the writer of the literature review has mastered two kinds of knowledge: (1) a comprehensive knowledge of what is currently known about the subject area and (2) knowledge of skills and techniques involved in effectively finding, critically analyzing, and thoughtfully synthesizing information on the research topic.

But what do we mean by *knowledge*? What constitutes knowledge and what is the best way to obtain it? There are competing philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge in the social and human sciences and different understandings of how it is acquired (Maxwell, 2013). These assumptions are reflected in the different alternative approaches to research that are frequently identified as quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research.

In the following section we briefly describe each of these three research orientations. We highlight the conceptualization of knowledge held by those who follow each approach, their understanding of the reality of the social world, their perceptions of the purpose of research, their role as researchers, and the research process (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2006).

## RESEARCH ORIENTATIONS: QUANTITATIVE, QUALITATIVE, AND MIXED METHODS

### Quantitative Research

Quantitative researchers apply perspectives and methodologies commonly used to study natural science in their pursuit of knowledge in the social and human sciences. Following the natural science model, quantitative researchers believe that knowledge can be acquired through unbiased inquiry. The knowledge gained is cumulative, objective, and universal. It is based on observable evidence that is measurable, testable, and value-free.

From the point of view of these researchers, there is an independent social world that is relatively consistent across time and settings. From this perspective, the social reality consists of objectively defined facts that can be discovered and systematically verified.

The purpose of scientific inquiry, according to quantitative researchers, is to seek generalities and rules in the social arena, identify causes that bring about changes, and explain the outcomes of these changes. Being able to predict future outcomes based on the study’s findings is another key component of quantitative research. To minimize bias in a quantitative study, the researcher must assume a neutral and objective stance and use rigorous standards of validity and reliability.

Knowledge about the rules that govern individuals' behaviors and shape society can be gained through scientific methods that include experiments, measurements, and quantitative statistical procedures. When reporting findings, the researcher provides a detailed description of the research procedures to let other researchers replicate the study in different settings using similar interventions in order to gain standardized solutions (Wieman, 2007, 2014).

(For additional explanation about quantitative research, please refer to Black, 1999; Creswell, 2018; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2006; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011; Slavin, 2007; Yu, 2006.)

## **Qualitative Research**

The essential difference between quantitative and qualitative research is their contrasting definition of "knowledge." For qualitative researchers, knowledge is socially constructed by the subjective meanings that people assign to their reality. From this perspective, the social reality is experienced differently by individuals and communities depending on their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds. Knowledge is, therefore, multiple, subjective, situational, value-laden, and tentative. The purpose of research is not to explain the social world but rather to understand it from the perspective of the participants. Rich descriptions of the social environment through the eyes of the people in the setting allow a deeper understanding of the complexities involved.

To achieve a holistic understanding of the setting, qualitative researchers, in contrast to the "detached" quantitative observer, become immersed in the setting being studied. Recognizing that everything researchers observe is filtered through their own subjective interpretations, they approach their inquiry with an awareness of their personal history, values, and beliefs, and consider how these influence their study.

The research is done mostly through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings are presented in rich and detailed narrative highlighting patterns and categories that emerge through text and image analysis.

(For additional information about qualitative research, please refer to Berg & Lune, 2011; Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lichtman, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016.)

## **Mixed-Methods Research**

The third approach to research—mixed methods—is based on yet another alternative knowledge claim. This approach recognizes the different beliefs and assumptions of quantitative as well as qualitative research and respects and accepts the values of both perspectives. Rather than being committed to any one philosophical



conception of knowledge, from the point of view of the mixed-methods researcher, the emphasis is placed on the practical stance of what works best in conducting the study and answering the research question at hand.

Mixed-methods researchers, therefore, are open to a pluralistic approach and have the freedom of selecting the procedures and techniques of research from among multiple methods. They may assign more weight to quantitative or qualitative methods within a particular study to reflect the focus of their research question. They may assume an objective or subjective stance or both depending on the question they are investigating. Similarly, their findings may be represented in narrative and numerical formats and highlight different aspects of the issue being investigated in ways that complement each other.

(For additional explanation about mixed methods research, please refer to Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Hesse-Biber, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010.)

Table 2.1 (p. 19) compares quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches to research according to the following categories: conception of knowledge, the nature of reality, research purpose, researcher role, and research process.

## APPROACHES TO A LITERATURE REVIEW: SYSTEMATIC, TRADITIONAL–NARRATIVE, AND HERMENEUTIC–PHENOMENOLOGICAL

Although there are different ways to approach the writing of the literature review (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016), we focus on the way literature is reviewed as a reflection of the three approaches to research discussed above: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. In this book, therefore, we present the types of literature reviews on a continuum from a scientific–quantitative framework, represented in systematic reviews, on one end to an interpretive–qualitative framework, exemplified in a hermeneutic–phenomenological review, on the other end of the continuum. Between these two opposing types of literature reviews stands the traditional–narrative review that integrates different research approaches.

In the following section, we provide a short description of each of these types of review: systematic, traditional–narrative, and hermeneutic–phenomenological. We describe each in terms of its purpose, the perspective of the reviewer, the style of searching the literature, and the process of analyzing the review.

### Systematic Review

Systematic review is a scientific approach to reviewing the literature that is highly structured and protocol-driven. Proponents of this style of review claim that it is unbiased, systematic, rigorous, and replicable. The purpose of the systematic review is to answer a well-focused and specific question that is formulated prior

TABLE 2.1. Comparison of Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed-Methods Approaches to Research

	Quantitative research	Qualitative research	Mixed-methods research
<b>Conception of knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Objective, universal, and independent of the observer</li> <li>■ Achieved through unbiased inquiry</li> <li>■ Based on observable evidence and measurable, testable, and value-free facts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Interpreted through subjective meanings assigned to experiences</li> <li>■ Multiple, subjective, situational, tentative, and value-laden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is not involved in philosophical debates and does not emphasize the significance of how knowledge is conceived</li> <li>■ The focus is pragmatic and practical</li> </ul>
<b>The nature of reality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Independent of the observer</li> <li>■ Relatively consistent across time and settings</li> <li>■ Can be discovered and systematically verified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The social reality is experienced differently by individuals and communities depending on their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Different beliefs and assumptions about reality are recognized and opposing perceptions are accepted on equal ground</li> <li>■ The emphasis is on practicality rather than a commitment to any philosophical conception of reality.</li> </ul>
<b>Research purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Gaining knowledge about the rules that govern individual behavior and shape society</li> <li>■ Seeking generalities and rules in the social arena</li> <li>■ Identifying causes that bring about changes and explaining the outcomes of these changes</li> <li>■ Finding uniform and credible interventions and standardized solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Understanding how individuals and groups perceive their diverse realities</li> <li>■ Understanding particular individuals and settings holistically</li> <li>■ Becoming aware of complexities involved in particular behaviors and situations</li> <li>■ Allowing solutions for problems and ideas for change to emerge from the perspectives of those involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recognizing that a study may have multiple objectives</li> <li>■ Understanding that answering the research question is the central purpose of a study</li> <li>■ Valuing and embracing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research</li> <li>■ Solutions for the problems and ideas for change are based on their contributions</li> </ul>
<b>Researcher's role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Avoids bias by maintaining a detached and objective stance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Immersing oneself in the settings being studied and being reflexive about subjectivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Assumes an objective or subjective stance or both depending on the purpose of the inquiry</li> </ul>
<b>Research process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Following strict procedures that can be replicated</li> <li>■ Using scientific methods of experiment, measurement, and statistical analysis</li> <li>■ Presenting the study's statistical findings in numerical formats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Creating rich, detailed descriptions of social environments and individuals' behaviors gained from participant observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis</li> <li>■ Identifying patterns and categories through text and image analysis.</li> <li>■ Presenting the findings in rich and "thick" narrative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Maintaining openness to pluralistic approach to research and embracing both quantitative and qualitative methods. Assigning more weight, as needed, to either approach to reflect the focus of their question.</li> <li>■ Selecting appropriate data analysis procedures for their particular research questions</li> <li>■ Presenting findings in both narrative and numerical formats</li> </ul>



to undertaking the library search (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). The focus of the question is often on testing theories and hypotheses about causalities and outcomes. The researcher conducts a rigorous and comprehensive search in order to identify all possible and relevant studies on the topic under investigation. The search is based on a strict and explicit protocol appraising and synthesizing empirical evidence reported in individual studies (Jesson et al., 2011). The writer of the systematic review is required to be neutral and objective in order to minimize biases and errors. Predetermined exclusion and inclusion criteria are formulated to ensure that the information gained from the sources is accurate and impartial and that well-defined methods are used to evaluate the findings of each study. In their writing, systematic review researchers appraise and synthesize empirical evidence reported in individual studies in order to reach conclusive answers to the research question. Although a systematic review may include some qualitative research, most reviews of this type are quantitative and use statistical data (Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2012; Higgins & Green, 2008).

The systematic review has been developed in the medicine and health care disciplines for the purpose of conducting biomedical research. Since then, it has spread to other disciplinary fields that emphasize evidence-based decision making, such as policy and education (Battany-Saltikov, 2012).

To illustrate this type of review, Box 2.1 is an excerpt from a systematic review study on primary prevention strategies for sexual violence perpetration (DeGue et al., 2014).

### **BOX 2.1. An Example of a Systematic Literature Review**

Studies were eligible for inclusion if they examined the effectiveness of primary prevention strategies for sexual violence perpetration and were published in print or online between January 1985 . . . and May 2012. Journal articles, book chapters, and reports from government agencies or other institutions were included. Efforts were made to gather unpublished manuscripts, conference presentations, theses, and dissertations (see above). Because the focus of this review is to summarize the evidence base for the primary prevention of sexual violence perpetration, this review did not include studies that exclusively examined secondary and tertiary prevention approaches (e.g., treatment or recidivism prevention), strategies targeting victimization prevention (i.e., risk reduction), or etiological research. In order to avoid double-counting studies, existing reviews and meta-analyses of interventions for sexual violence prevention were excluded.

*Source:* DeGue et al. (2014).

### **Traditional–Narrative Review**

Between the systematic review and the hermeneutic–phenomenological review stands the traditional narrative review. This style of review remains the most common method among students and researchers in social sciences and education (Jesson et al., 2011) and is at the center of this book. Traditional narrative review draws from a variety of academic disciplines and includes diverse research methods, qualitative, quantitative, and theoretical studies. This type of review surveys the state of knowledge in a specific subject area and offers a comprehensive background for understanding that particular topic. It critically summarizes theories, examines studies, and investigates methods used in existing research. The reviewer gathers a broad spectrum of the literature written about the topic and synthesizes it into a coherent interpretation that highlights the main issues, trends, complexities, and controversies that are at the center of it (Jesson et al., 2011). The author may also identify a potential direction for future research, problems that need to be explored, or possible applications for practice.

The traditional narrative review typically starts with a statement of the problem or declares the question around which the discussion evolves; this question is often broad and may evolve or reformulate more precisely during the review process. At times, the researcher may not end the review with specific answers, but rather offer a coherent understanding of how the topic is conceptualized within the current literature. This understanding may lead to the identification of a more specific research question for the study to be undertaken.

The search of sources for the review may be extensive, although there is no attempt to locate all of the relevant literature. In this type of review, the criteria for the search methods and selection and the strategies for data analysis are usually not offered. This has brought criticism from proponents of the more systematic and scientific approaches. Those critics claim that the traditional narrative reviewers may be subjective and their arguments biased (Jesson et al., 2011; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

On the other hand, the distinctive pluralistic nature of traditional narrative reviews may be their source of strength. This pluralistic style of review allows for a combination of theoretical and empirical studies, draws from a variety of academic disciplines, and includes diverse research approaches. The result is a cohesive and fuller understanding of the current state of knowledge on the topic at hand.

To represent this type of review, Box 2.2 (p. 22) is an example of traditional narrative review on the topic of mentoring in education and academic organizations, written by Alexandra, one of our doctoral students.

### BOX 2.2. An Example of a Traditional–Narrative Literature Review

Educational and academic organizations have become increasingly interested in developing their teaching faculty, and mentoring has become one of the major tools in achieving this goal. This has led to a surge in mentoring research and an increase in the number of formal mentoring programs implemented in these organizations (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Efron, Winter, and Bressman (2013) highlight the importance of four elements in building successful relationships between mentors and mentees: collaboration, dialogue, sensitive feedback, and a sense of trust and acceptance.

Chapter two of the dissertation, the literature review, provides a survey of qualitative and quantitative research, as well as theoretical work on mentoring. In the review, I trace the evolution of mentoring programs in the United States in K–12 and postsecondary education; examine approaches to mentoring in research; explore the nature of relationships between the mentors and the mentees; and consider the impact of culture, race, and gender on mentoring relationships. The review draws upon research from a diverse body of disciplines, including interpersonal relationships, adult education, adult professional development, educational administration, and organizational studies.

### Hermeneutic–Phenomenological Review

Hermeneutic–phenomenological review draws from hermeneutic and phenomenological philosophies as a theory for exploring the meaning of text and as a method for interpreting scholarly text (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010, 2014). The literature is not perceived as a presentation of authoritative truth but rather as providing an opportunity for a “conversational partnership” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 76). This conversation is among scholars and thinkers, and the writer of the review is a participant who is engaged in the dialogue, asking questions and pointing out problematic assumptions. According to Smythe and Spence (2012), the purpose of the literature review is to provoke thinking among the writers and the readers. It aims at “viewing afresh” the text (p. 14) and finding in it new meanings. The writers of a hermeneutic–phenomenological literature review are aware that their engagement with the text lacks objectivity (or a neutral stance) and acknowledge that they project their own personal experiences and social and cultural background onto their interpretation of the text.

The sources for the literature review are mostly theoretical and philosophical texts and qualitative studies, as well as works of art, poetry, and other forms of media. The hermeneutic–phenomenological literature search is not a linear process but recursive and circular. The researcher starts the review cycle by proposing a

broad question or focus. This is followed by the identification of relevant literature and immersion in these sources. Being exposed to the literature leads to finding new meanings in the topic and refining the original question. Thus, the ongoing conversation with the text is extended and broadened as more sources become part of the dialogue (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010, 2014). The search process, therefore, goes hand in hand with the reading of the literature, and it continues until the writer feels that a saturation point is achieved. This review process is defined by hermeneutic–phenomenological researchers as the *hermeneutic circle*, which creates a fusion of understanding between each individual source and the whole, between and among the different authors, and between the readers and the text being read (Gadamer, 1982).

To demonstrate this type of review, Box 2.3 shows an example of a hermeneutic–phenomenological literature review on the seminal work of Hannah Arendt, a major 20th-century social scientist (Efron, 2015).

### BOX 2.3. An Example of a Hermeneutic–Phenomenological Literature Review

In my reflections on Hannah Arendt's work, I followed the tradition of hermeneutics inquiry assertion that understanding is gained through inter-subjective interactions, where the writer's interpretations are part of a larger conversation where different voices "are acting and speaking directly to one another" (Arendt, 1998/1958, p. 183). Through the dialogical character of Gadamer's (1982) hermeneutics approach, I interpret Arendt's work in the context of her contemporary European thinkers, as well as current philosophers, theorists, and curricular writers, thus creating a Hermeneutic Circle. In the Hermeneutic Circle, according to Gadamer, "fusion of horizons" is created as points of view of thinkers from different backgrounds enter into conversations with each other and with the writer.

Recognizing the limitation of theory in relation to educational practice, the orientation of the paper is practical hermeneutics in the sense that my interpretation of Arendt's writing reflects on and responds to current experience in the field of education. Hermeneutics "can lead not only to understanding but also to personal growth and social progress" (Slattery, 2006, p. 129). My goal in writing the review follows Bontekoe's (1996, as cited in von Zweck, Paterson, & Pentland, 2008, p. 119) suggestion that hermeneutic interpretation of the literature "forms the basis for grasping that which still remains to be understood." The literature review allows the reader to engage in the Hermeneutic Circle and examine Arendt's perspective on agency, plurality, thinking and thoughtlessness, judging and moral public-space in the context of the current accountability and standardization environment in education.

Source: Efron (2015).

## Comparing Systematic, Traditional–Narrative, and Hermeneutic–Phenomenological Reviews

Table 2.2 (p. 25) presents a comparison of the three types of review according to the following categories: general description, purpose, review's questions, writer's role, preferred sources, and search and selection methods.

There are other types of literature reviews used by researchers. These include meta-analysis, rapid review, scoping review, state-of-the-art review, critical interpretation synthesis, and meta-synthesis. A short description of these types of review with an example for each can be found in Appendix 2A.

## COOPER'S TAXONOMY OF LITERATURE REVIEWS

Are you a bit confused by the different approaches to literature reviews and their different options, purposes, and techniques? Our suggestion is that you consider each of these options and then find your own path. Focus on your particular purposes in writing the literature review and the goals you aim to achieve. As you contemplate the kind of literature review you would like write and begin planning your work, you may find Cooper's (1988) classical *Taxonomy of Literature Reviews* helpful in planning your work.

According to Cooper, there are six characteristics that distinguish different kinds of reviews: (1) the *focus* of the review, (2) the *goals* of the review, (3) the *perspective* of the writer, (4) the envisioned *coverage* of the review, (5) the review's *organization*, and (6) the intended *audience*. The characteristics are further divided into categories. We briefly describe each of these characteristics and their categories, and conclude with a series of questions you may ask yourself as you plan your literature review. We draw our description from Cooper (1988) as well as from Randolph (2009), who further expanded the explanations.

### Focus

According to Cooper (1988), the focus of most research studies conducted in social sciences, policy, and education centers on one or more of these four categories:

1. *Research outcomes* center on the findings of studies and the conclusions drawn from them. These conclusions allow the writer to establish the need for further research on the topic. For example, Ali, a student from Nigeria, studies literature about the topic of water shortage and implications for health, agriculture, and economy, as well as aggression among nations over water accessibility. Based on his review, he is proposing to conduct research on projects in other countries that were able to overcome similar situations.

**TABLE 2.2. Comparison of Systematic, Traditional–Narrative, and Hermeneutic–Phenomenological Reviews**

	<b>Systematic review</b>	<b>Traditional narrative review</b>	<b>Hermeneutic–phenomenological review</b>
<b>General description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Scientific, highly structured, and protocol driven</li> <li>■ Claims to be unbiased, rigorous, and replicable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Draws from a variety of academic disciplines</li> <li>■ Includes diverse research methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Explores creatively the meaning of text</li> <li>■ Perceives the review as a conversation among thinkers and researchers, as well as the review writer</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Aims to answer a well-focused and specific question that is formulated prior to undertaking the library search</li> <li>■ Tests a hypothesis through appraisal and synthesis of empirical evidence in individual studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offers a comprehensive background of a topic</li> <li>■ Critically summarizes theories, studies, and methods used in existing research</li> <li>■ Provides a rationale for the research to be undertaken</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provokes the writer's and readers' thinking</li> <li>■ Aims at viewing the texts afresh and finds new meanings</li> </ul>
<b>Review's questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Questions formulated prior to undertaking the research</li> <li>■ The focus is on testing theories and hypotheses about causality and outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Questions evolve or reformulate during the review process</li> <li>■ Questions that guide the review are often broad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Questions are expected to be refined or change their focus with the writer's immersion in the texts</li> <li>■ Questions are broad and often conceptual or philosophical</li> </ul>
<b>Writer's role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Writer is neutral and objective in order to minimize bias and error</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Writer does not assume an objective stance</li> <li>■ At times, this approach is criticized for being biased because criteria for selection of sources are not offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Writer is aware that engagement with the text lacks objectivity</li> <li>■ Writer acknowledges that personal experiences are projected into the meanings found in the texts</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Most sources are quantitative and use statistical data, although a limited number of qualitative research studies may also be used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Includes both theoretical and empirical studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mostly theoretical and philosophical texts and qualitative studies; also works of art, poetry, and other forms of media</li> </ul>
<b>Search</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Exhaustive and comprehensive search based on explicit and strict protocol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The search may be extensive but does not attempt to locate all relevant literature</li> <li>■ Criteria for search methods are seldom offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Search for sources is not a linear process but recursive and circular</li> </ul>
<b>Selection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Predetermined exclusion and inclusion criteria are developed to evaluate the validity and credibility of the findings reported in each study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Criteria for selection of sources are not explicitly presented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Criteria for the selection of sources are not presented</li> <li>■ Sources selected are those that can contribute to the "dialogue" among the authors reviewed</li> </ul>

2. *Research methods* highlight the strategies of data collection, analysis, and interpretation involved in the different studies and the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen methodology. This kind of review writing may be used as a rationale for the writer's own research by showing that previous studies were methodologically flawed or need further expansion. For example, Jose, who is researching ways to reduce violent confrontation between police and minority groups, found that most past studies were conducted using statistical and report data. Jose believes that there are not enough studies where police officers and youth get together to discuss openly their perception of their relationship and how to improve it. Jose decided to conduct a series of focus group interviews on this sensitive topic.

3. *Research theories* highlight the existing theories that shape the writer's research topic and the relationships between them. This focus may lead to advancing a new theory or justifying the writer's choice of a particular theory to guide his or her investigation. For example, Paul, an art museum educator, is planning to study the impact of the educational programs offered at the museum on the participants. He explores how perceptions of aesthetics have changed over time from Greek philosophers to postmodern views.

4. *Research practices and applications* center on how a certain theory may apply in practice, or how a certain intervention may be carried out within a certain setting. Using the knowledge he obtained from his literature review on aesthetics, Paul designs an art appreciation program for college students and evaluates its impact on their perception of the role of the arts in their lives.

Cooper (1988) emphasizes that these areas of interest are not mutually exclusive and most reviewers will employ two or more foci with varying degrees of attention. For example, in your review you may start by describing a theory and then examine empirical studies that test this theory, and end your review by looking at the implication of the theories and the studies' conclusions for your own practice.

## Goals

What are the goals of the literature review and what is the writer trying to accomplish? This is the second characteristic of literature reviews highlighted by Cooper (1988). The most common goal for writing a literature review is to present a holistic picture of the current state of knowledge on a research topic. This goal is achieved by synthesizing past and current literature and highlighting different theoretical approaches as well as relevant studies.

Another goal that may drive the writer of the literature review is to use a critical lens when analyzing and evaluating previous literature, theories, and research in a particular subject area. This goal will lead the writer to highlight flaws in the



current arguments and perspectives, or in the way past research was conducted, and offer an alternative approach that will be investigated in the proposed study.

When you think about your own goal in writing the review, you may have several goals that complement each other. For example, you may synthesize the studies done in the field of your research topic and then criticize specific aspects or identify problematic issues that you intend to tackle in your own study.

## Perspective

Perspective is the third characteristic, according to the taxonomy of literature reviews. This characteristic is centered on the author's approach to research, subjective orientation, and biases. As you write your literature review, contemplate the following: (1) Do you see your role as an objective and neutral presenter of the literature, or do you see yourself as a subjective participant in a scholarly conversation? and (2) Are you a critical recipient of knowledge constructed by others, or are you a creative interpreter who shares his or her personal insight on the literature? For example, when you write about feminism, are you objectively presenting the perspectives of different writers on the meaning of feminism, or are you offering your own reflections on the different theories you describe?

Your perspective may also be influenced by your inclination to adopt a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approach for your study. Each of these approaches, as discussed above, represents a unique world view about the purpose of research and the role of the researcher. While quantitative researchers tend to avoid bias by maintaining a detached and objective stance toward their topic, qualitative researchers tend to immerse themselves in their inquiry and willingly recognize their own subjectivity and bias. Mixed-methods researchers accept both objective and subjective stances depending on their particular research question.

You may want to ask yourself the following: What is your perspective on your role as a researcher and a reviewer? With which of the approaches to research described above do you identify the most? Self-knowledge and awareness of your own inclinations is essential for your literature review experience. As Maxwell (2013) thoughtfully stated, working within a research perspective that does not fit one's own point of view and beliefs is like doing physically demanding work wearing clothes that do not fit, and consequently feeling uncomfortable throughout the process.

## Coverage

The next characteristic of the taxonomy is the level of coverage in the literature review and how comprehensive it should be. According to Boote and Beile (2005), the decision about what to include and what to exclude in the review process is "probably the most distinct aspect of literature reviewing" (p. 7). Cooper (1988) distinguishes between four possible approaches to coverage:

1. A writer of an *exhaustive review* intends to consider every source relevant to the topic.
2. A writer of an *exhaustive with selective citation review* sets the boundary of what references will be reviewed according to defined criteria (e.g., age group, location, or method of research).
3. A third option is a *representative review*, where the author chooses sources that are representative or typical of similar publications in a particular field. The author often presents a rationale for making his or her choice by demonstrating how the chosen work is illustrative of many others.
4. The fourth coverage option is a *central review* where the writer purposefully focuses on seminal works that are essential for understanding the topic area.

The first two categories are usually preferred by reviewers of scientific–quantitative frameworks, like systematic review or meta-analysis, and the last two are typically employed by traditional–narrative or hermeneutic–phenomenological writers. Boote and Beile (2005) recommend that whatever coverage choice you make, you should convince your readers that your rationale regarding the level of review coverage of the literature has been done carefully, thoughtfully, and purposefully.

## Organization

Organization of the literature review is the fifth characteristic outlined by Cooper (1988). Writers who choose to use a *historical* format usually employ an analysis of the literature within a historical context. It provides an explanation and evaluates the implications of an idea, a policy, or a methodology within a context of the historical forces that shaped it. Such a review is typically organized chronologically. A *theoretical* format is focused on existing theories or proposes a conceptualization of a new theory regarding a particular phenomenon. Such a format offers ways of comparing the validity, consistency, and breadth of existing theories and evaluating their strengths and flaws. Another common organization is the *methodological* format, which centers on research design methods, procedures, and the results of empirical studies that have been conducted in a particular subject area.

As suggested in other characteristics of literature review described in Cooper's taxonomy (1988), you may combine different organizational formats according to your particular needs. For example, suppose your study involves the topic of ways to successfully integrate immigrants into American society. You may start by providing a historical overview of the attitudes of governmental institutions toward immigrants since the middle of the 19th century. Next, you can focus on theories that underlie different immigration policies. Finally, you can end your review by

comparing the methodologies of different studies that have been conducted on this issue.

## **Audience**

The last characteristic of the taxonomy of literature reviews asks the writer to consider his or her audience. As you begin writing your review, consider who you are writing for. If you are writing a thesis or dissertation, you may want to take into account your professor's guidelines or the expectations of your thesis or dissertation committee. If you are writing your literature review as part of a grant proposal, you should be cognizant of the criteria that will be used to evaluate your proposal. Alternatively, if the literature review is part of an article you are submitting for publication, follow the manuscript guidelines for the journals where you would like the article to be published. In addition, keep in mind the audience that will benefit from the information contained in your review. For example, are they practitioners in the field, policymakers, the general public, workplace colleagues, or members of the scholarly community?

Table 2.3 (p. 30) presents the six characteristics of literature reviews and their categories, as well as questions that may help you make your choices as you undertake the task of writing your literature review.

Although it is important to consider the characteristics of focus, goals, perspectives, coverage, organization, and audience for your literature review, do not forget to use your imagination and creative spirit when you write your review. Lukenchuk (2013) emphasizes the role and value of imagination in any research project. She describes the role of imagination in constructing one's research as the "gateway into the known and unknown, the mysterious spark that instigates our thinking and desire to pursue daring projects. Imaginative thinking frees us from the constraints of prescriptive rules and standards that dictate how to conduct a research project" (p. 85). According to Hart (1998), in a literature review the meaning of imaginative attitude in practice is as follows:

Having a broad view of a topic, being open to ideas regardless of how or where they originated; questioning and scrutinizing ideas, methods and arguments regardless of who proposed them; playing with different ideas in order to see if links can be made, following ideas to see where they might lead. (p. 30)

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

In this chapter you have gained information about the different research orientations, approaches to literature review, the different characteristics of literature review, as well as an awareness of the value of imagination in writing the review.

**TABLE 2.3. Cooper's Taxonomy for Choosing the Type of Literature Review**

Characteristics	Categories	Questions to ask yourself
<b>Focus of the review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Research outcomes</li> <li>■ Research methods</li> <li>■ Research theories</li> <li>■ Research practices or applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is the focus of your literature review?</li> <li>■ Do you have more than one focus? If yes, what are they? In what order are you planning to discuss them?</li> </ul>
<b>Goal of the literature review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Holistic picture of the current state of knowledge on the research topic</li> <li>■ Critical lenses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is the goal of your review?</li> <li>■ How will you achieve this goal?</li> <li>■ If you have several goals, how do they relate to each other?</li> </ul>
<b>Perspective on research and on the literature review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is your role as the literature review author?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Do you see your role as a literature review author as a:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> neutral and objective presenter?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> subjective participant in a conversation?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> critical evaluator?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> creative interpreter?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other?</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Explain your choice of role.</li> <li>■ What research approach best reflects your perspective and why?</li> <li>■ Will you use a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approach?</li> </ul>
<b>Coverage and scope of the literature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Exhaustive</li> <li>■ Exhaustive with selective citation</li> <li>■ Representative</li> <li>■ Central</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is your preferred level of literature coverage?</li> <li>■ What are your reasons for choosing this particular approach to coverage?</li> </ul>
<b>Organization of the narrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Historical</li> <li>■ Theoretical</li> <li>■ Methodological</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How do you plan to organize your review:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Historical?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Theoretical?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Methodological?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Intended audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Professors or dissertation committee faculty</li> <li>■ Private or public grant committees</li> <li>■ Publishers</li> <li>■ Practitioners in the field</li> <li>■ Policymakers</li> <li>■ Workplace colleagues</li> <li>■ Scholarly community</li> <li>■ General public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Who is the major audience for your literature review?</li> <li>■ How will your audience affect the way you write the review?</li> </ul>

*Note.* Adapted from Cooper (1988, p. 109) and Randolph (2009, p. 3).

Now you are ready to choose the topic of your review and the research question that will become your focus. These are the first steps in the exciting literature review journey. Bon voyage!

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. Three of the most common approaches to research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods.
2. *Quantitative* researchers believe that knowledge is cumulative, objective, and universal, and is based on observable evidence that is measurable, testable, and value-free. This kind of research uses scientific methods of experiment, measurement, and statistical procedures.
3. *Qualitative* researchers believe that knowledge is socially constructed by the subjective meanings that people assign to their reality. They are immersed in the study being conducted and carry out the research through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis; the findings are presented in a rich and detailed narrative.
4. *Mixed-methods* researchers recognize the different beliefs and assumptions of quantitative as well as qualitative research and select procedures and techniques according to the question at the center of their study.
5. Three types of literature reviews are discussed: systematic, traditional–narrative, and hermeneutic–phenomenological.
6. *Systematic review* is a scientific approach to reviewing the literature that is highly structured and protocol driven. The research question is formulated prior to undertaking the search for sources, and the researcher uses predetermined exclusion and inclusion criteria in selecting the sources.
7. *Traditional–narrative* review draws from a variety of academic disciplines and includes diverse research methods. The question at the center of the review is often broad and may evolve during the review process and in the interpretation of the sources. The writer highlights the main issues, trends, complexities, and controversies.
8. *Hermeneutic–phenomenological review* is focused on the interpretation of the meaning of texts to provoke thinking and to examine the text with fresh eyes. The writer, who acknowledges an inherent subjectivity and positionality, starts with a broad research question that evolves as new meanings are discovered while reading sources.
9. Cooper lists six characteristics that distinguish different kinds of reviews: (a) the *focus* of the review, (b) the *goals* of the review, (c) the *perspective* of the writer, (d) the envisioned *coverage* of the review, (e) the review's *organization*, and (f) the intended *audience*.

## APPENDIX 2A

In Chapter 2, we presented three major types of literature review and placed them on a continuum ranging from scientific–systematic on one end to interpretive–qualitative on the other end, with practical–mixed in the center. In this appendix, we highlight six examples of literature reviews that represent the different points on this continuum. The scientific–systematic approach is represented by meta-analysis and rapid reviews; conceptual and integrative literature reviews represent the practical–mixed approach; and critical interpretation syntheses and meta-synthesis are examples of an interpretive–qualitative approach.

### EXAMPLES OF SCIENTIFIC–SYSTEMATIC TYPES OF LITERATURE REVIEWS

#### Meta-Analysis

*Meta-analysis* is a form of systematic review that statistically combines findings from a large body of individual quantitative studies to arrive at conclusions and detect patterns of causal relationship among the variables being studied. By combining studies that look at the same questions, meta-analysis review serves as a tool for increasing sample size and thus certainty in cause-and-effect conclusions. Criteria for assessing the quality of the individual studies are strictly followed, and the findings are analyzed using standardized statistical procedures. All of these methods enhance the validity and reliability of the review's conclusions, increase precision, and reduce random errors. (For more information on meta-analysis see Card, 2011; Cooper, 2010; Cooper, Hedges, & Valentine, 2009; Makambi, 2012; Ringquist, 2013.)

Box 2A.1 (p. 33) is an excerpt from a meta-analysis study by Pallini, Baiocco, Schneider, Madigan, and Atkinson (2014) on the topic of early child–parent attachment and peer relations.

#### Rapid Review

*Rapid review* synthesizes evidence for advocating for policy, educational decision making, or time-sensitive health-practice choices. In comparison to systematic reviews, rapid review is conducted in a shorter time frame by using methods to accelerate and streamline the review process. While not using as much rigor and not attempting to find all of the sources on the topic at hand, the reviewer searches and critically appraises evidence from mostly quantitative studies and from studies that summarize a large body of research on the topic. Rapid review may also lay the groundwork for a more extensive systematic review in the future (Ganann, Ciliska, & Thomas, 2010). (For more information about rapid reviews see Ganann et al., 2010; Harker & Kleijnen, 2012.)

Box 2A.2 (p. 33) shows an example of a rapid review of the Greek Research and Development System that was prepared by RAND Europe for the Greek Ministry of Education (Grant, Ling, Potoglou, & Culley, 2011).

**BOX 2A.1. An Example of a Meta-Analysis Review Study**

To generate samples comparable with the 2001 meta-analysis, we used the same keywords in searching PSYCINFO, PUBMED and ProQuest Dissertations. We also scanned the references of articles retrieved and contacted researchers working in this area. Our search included studies available between 1999 and 2012. Inclusion/exclusion criteria were identical to those used in the 2001 meta-analysis: original data, measure of attachment to a parent other than self-report, collected before the child reached age 18, include a quantitative measure of children's peer relations other than self-report, feature assessment of attachment and peer relations, include data on securely and insecurely attached participants or a continuous measure of attachment, written in English or another language understood by our research team (French, Italian, Spanish). These criteria resulted in inclusion of 44 studies with 8,505 participants. Each study was coded for the following: a) attachment measure (e.g., Strange Situation, Q-sort); b) attachment figure (e.g., father, mother); c) dimension(s) of peer relations (e.g., peer-directed aggression, friendship, prosociality); d) source of information about peer relations (e.g., observation, peer report, teacher report); e) degree of familiarity (peers or friends); f) gender of child; g) mean age of participants when attachment and h) peer relations were measured; i) time between the measurement of attachment and peer relations; j) specific subject characteristics (e.g., diagnosed atypical behavior, low SES, parents divorced); k) country; l) publication date; and m) dissemination (i.e., journal article, thesis, book). Agreement on coding and application of inclusion/exclusion criteria was established by having the second author corate; agreement between first and second authors was 94%.

*Source:* Pallini, Baiocco, Schneider, Madigan, and Atkinson (2014).

**BOX 2A.2. An Example of a Rapid Review Study**

This documented briefing presents the findings of a rapid review of the Greek Research and Development (R&D) system. In considering future options for reform, and within the context of a wider strategy to enhance research and innovation in Greece, in March 2011 the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning, and Religious Affairs (hereafter the Ministry of Education) requested proposals for a review of the Greek research system. By necessity, the review was prepared over a short, four-month period (April–July 2011) so that it could feed into forthcoming policy decisions. For this reason we had to proceed quickly, and to ensure timely completion we focused our review on publicly funded Research Centres (RCs) under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Research and Technology.

*Source:* Grant, Ling, Potoglou, and Culley (2011, p. 1).



## EXAMPLES OF PRACTICAL–MIXED-METHODS TYPES OF LITERATURE REVIEWS |||||

### Conceptual Review

*Conceptual review* offers a conceptual framework for the topic of study. The author of this type of review surveys the literature on the subject in order to identify and analyze the concepts involved. For example, the author may critically discuss the ways in which the topic was conceptualized in the literature, how such conceptualizations are reflected in the empirical studies that were conducted, and the implications of these conceptualizations. Often, the review writer creates a conceptual map that reflects the literature and highlights the representative authors in each area of this map. The organization of the discussion is mostly determined by these conceptual areas. The author may also organize the review around a guiding theory or around a set of competing models that conceptualize the topic. (For further information about conceptual review, see Jarret & Ollendick, 2008; Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009.)

An example of a conceptual review can be found in Box 2A.3, an article written by Tan (2014) on human capital theory.

### Integrative Review

*Integrative review* offers a critical analysis of existing literature by carefully examining the main ideas of a topic of interest and deconstructing it into its basic elements. Integrative reviews usually address two kinds of topics: mature topics with multiple empirical and theoretical literature and new or emerging topics. In the case of the former, the review author critiques and synthesizes representative literature in a way that results in new understanding of the phenomenon. By comparison, the writer of an integrative literature review addresses a new topic by offering a preliminary conceptualization of the topic, such as new models or a new perspective on the issue.

#### BOX 2A.3. An Example of a Conceptual Literature Review

The aims of this article are twofold. The first aim is to provide a clear understanding of HCT (Human Capital Theory) and its roots. To achieve this, we will go back to the philosophical origin of the theory and discuss the school of thought from which HCT takes its intellectual nutrition. To understand the roles of education in HCT, it is necessary to trace back the basic assumptions of this intellectual tradition on human beings. The second aim is to provide a comprehensive and accessible road map to those who wish to have a broad understanding of the theory and its impacts. With this article it is hoped that the reader will have the opportunity to review the major criticisms and different dimensions of the theory in a single article (Tan, 2014, p. 411).

*Source:* Tan (2014, p. 411).

The strength of an integrative review is its distinctive and rigorous methodology. It uses detailed search strategies, draws data from diverse studies, allows for the inclusion of multiple methodological approaches, and combines data from theoretical and empirical studies. (For more information, see Cooper, 1998; Torraco, 2005; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005.) As an example of this type of review, we quote from Park's (2010) article (Box 2A.4).

## EXAMPLES OF INTERPRETIVE–QUALITATIVE TYPES OF REVIEW

### Meta-Synthesis Review

*Meta-synthesis review* interprets findings from a group of similar qualitative studies for the purpose of transforming the findings from individual studies into an explanatory theory, a model, or a new conceptualization of a phenomenon. The different sources “talk” with each other as the reviewer juxtaposes different studies and identifies patterns and theoretical connections across them. The goal is not to come up with conclusions but rather reach a tentative theoretical or conceptual level of understanding. Additionally, the emphasis is not on evaluating the quality of the findings but rather on exploring their significance to the field. Personal reflection of the literature review writers is encouraged. (For more information, see Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Lockwood & Pearson, 2013; Silverman, 2015; Walsh & Downe, 2005.) As an example of a meta-synthesis we present the thesis work of Sara, one of our master's-level students (Box 2A.5, p. 36).

### BOX 2A.4. An Example of an Integrative Literature Review

Drawing on current theories, the author first presents an integrated model of meaning making. This model distinguishes between the constructs of global and situational meaning and between “meaning-making efforts” and “meaning made,” and it elaborates subconstructs within these constructs. Using this model, the author reviews the empirical research regarding meaning in the context of adjustment to stressful events, outlining what has been established to date and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of current empirical work. Results suggest that theory on meaning and meaning making has developed apace, but empirical research has failed to keep up with these developments, creating a significant gap between the rich but abstract theories and empirical tests of them. Given current empirical findings, some aspects of the meaning-making model appear to be well supported but others are not, and the quality of meaning-making efforts and meanings made may be at least as important as their quantity. This article concludes with specific suggestions for future research.

*Source:* Park (2010, p. 257).

### BOX 2A.5. An Example of a Meta-Synthesis Literature Review

I have used the meta-synthesis review in order to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness among the young and its impact on their mental and emotional health. This type of review uses rigorous qualitative methods to synthesize and interpret qualitative studies for the purpose of constructing greater meaning (Erwin, Brotherson, & Summers, 2011). The qualitative studies enable an exposure to nuances and textured milieu, in all its richness and thick descriptions (Silverman, 2015). The use of qualitative findings is essential for “developing valid and culturally sensitive instruments and effective participant-centered interventions” (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007, p. 5). Through the synthesis of common themes, metaphors, and phrases (Noblit & Haren, 1988), a conceptualization of the meaning of being a homeless child has been constructed. Thus, the goal of meta-synthesis literature review “to produce a new and integrative interpretation of findings that is more substantive than those resulting from individual investigations” (Finfgeld, 2003, p. 894) has been achieved.

### Critical Interpretation Synthesis Review

*Critical interpretation synthesis review* is rooted in the tradition of qualitative research and is oriented mostly toward generating theory. This type of review embraces all kinds of studies from theoretical conceptualization studies to empirical research that draws from qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods investigations. The analysis and synthesis of the reviewed studies are based on qualitative methods. The review is an iterative, repetitive process, and the review questions emerge and are reshaped throughout the process. Although the subjectivity of the reviewer is acknowledged as a given, the review’s procedures are emphasized and the criticism is directed toward procedural mistakes found in primary studies that are included in the review. Writers who adopt this type of review often analyze conceptual similarities and differences identified in the literature, question the taken-for-granted assumptions on problem definition, and examine the political, social, and cultural influences on the choice of proposed solutions. (For more information, see Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Booth et al., 2016; Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Gough, 2007; Silverman, 2015.)

An example of a critical interpretation synthesis review can be found in an unpublished literature review written by Janice, a doctoral student in curriculum studies (Box 2A.6, p. 37).

**BOX 2A.6. An Example of a Critical Interpretation Synthesis Review**

Since the report of Joseph Mayer-Rice in 1912 (Alan, 1984), the quality of students' learning experience in school and their academic success has been connected to the quality of their teachers. Today, in the environment of accountability and standardization policies, this connection is narrowed to measure teachers' input and test students output. As a principal of a high poverty urban elementary school for 14 years, I've never wavered in my belief that teachers are the most critical factor in accelerating student achievement. I have experienced the effects of the waves of school reform aimed to improve our educational system and have seen the impact on teachers' professional identity, emotional experience, and commitment.

A critical interpretation synthesis review approach was utilized to critically appraise and synthesize the literature on educational reforms and their impact on changing teachers' practice, beliefs about teaching, and professional identity. In this study, I will briefly trace how the images of teachers were conceived and have changed throughout history. Next, I will examine the political, social, and ideological influences on these images. I will then explore the implications of these images on teachers' own professional identity and willingness to incorporate reform-oriented practices in their classroom. Analysis of qualitative studies that explore these issues from the teachers' perspectives are presented. We end with a discussion about the irreconcilable tensions, silences, and a sense of becoming victims of the current blame-games in education.