**Sample Literature Reviews**

Below I provide you with two literature reviews excerpted from published articles.  They can be a bit technical, but they provide you with a sense of what a literature review should look like.

Note that in each case, the literature review begins with *a short introduction* that provides background on the topic and the sources covered.  Also, the sources discussed are arranged into *paragraphs* that focus on one aspect or another of the topic.  The discussion of the various sources is *organized logically*.  Sources aren’t introduced randomly, one by one.  They’re *grouped together*.  All the sources that deal with similar ideas or information are in the same paragraph.  Sometimes, a particularly important or interesting source gets a paragraph to itself, but more typically, sources are dealt with in groups according to their subject matter or methodology.

In terms of *evaluating the sources*, note that the literature reviews focus on one area of overall weakness in the sources they cover.  Each source isn’t evaluated separately.  The strengths and weaknesses enumerated in the reviews are primarily the strengths and weaknesses of the literature as a whole.  What is evaluated isn’t individual sources so much as the whole collection of sources, taken together.  The *claim* in a literature review isn’t that “Source X is/is not a good source” but that “the research on Topic X is/is not good and complete research.”

So, as you consider and prepare your literature review, you will need to think about what criteria you should use to evaluate the literature on your topic collectively.  What claim can you make about the weakness(es) of the literature on your topic?  Where is the published research on your topic inadequate or incomplete?  What hasn’t been researched thoroughly yet?  What still needs corroboration or verification?  Where is there an overall need for more research?

What the literature reviews below lack (because they’re all excerpted from longer articles) is a *conclusion*.  Your literature review should end with a brief conclusion that draws everything together and restates your main claim.

Like the examples below, you will need a *references page* at the end of your literature review (preferably in APA or CBE style).  Unlike the examples below, however, your references page won’t be so long.  The lists of references below include all the sources used in the two articles (not just the sources used in the literature reviews that I excerpted from the articles).  Since you’re writing only a literature review (not an entire scholarly article), your list of references will be considerably shorter.  I included the complete lists of references below to give you some sense of how to document various kinds of sources.

**From “Can Small-City Downtowns Remain Viable? A National Study of Development Issues and Strategies,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65 (1999), 270-284:**

Downtowns play a critical role in the health of most freestanding small cities in the United States. The downtown constitutes a sizable share of a city's tax base--often more than any other district in the city--as well as the site for major public investments over the years. Given that most downtowns are situated where the city originated and contain many of the oldest and most recognizable buildings, they also embody the heritage of a community. For generations the downtown has served as the traditional gathering place for parades, festivals, celebrations, and other community events. And perhaps most importantly, the very identity of a small city is intertwined with the image projected by its downtown, to an even greater extent than holds true for a large city. Taken together, these factors clearly demonstrate that the downtown represents the heart and soul of most small cities.

Despite this importance, most of the professional and scholarly literature on downtown development has neglected small cities. Frieden and Sagalyn's (1999) widely cited book Downtown, Inc. concentrates on large-scale projects in Seattle, Boston, St. Paul, and San Diego, while Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998) profile Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego in their book on downtown design. Almost all the examples provided in Whyte (1988), Abbott (1993), and Robertson (1995) are from large cities, and Brooks and Young (1993) use New Orleans as their case study. The Downtown Development Handbook (McBee, 1992), considered by many to be the bible of downtown development, is heavily dependent on projects in large cities to illustrate key points. Articles addressing a particular downtown development strategy such as retailing (Robertson, 1997; Sawicki, 1989), stadiums (Noll & Zimbalist, 1997; Rosentraub, Swindell, Pryzbylski, & Mullins, 1994), pedestrianization (Byers, 1998; Robertson, 1993), and open space (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1993; Mozingo, 1989) all emphasize large cities as well. The professional magazine Urban Land has published numerous articles on downtown development in recent years, most of which feature a single large city (e.g., Holt, 1998; Howland, 1998; Lockwood, 1996)....

The scant literature on small-city downtowns does include a few noteworthy items. Francaviglia's Main Street Revisited (1996) provides an excellent overview of the origin and evolution of downtown street patterns and architecture and how these relate to today's image of "main street." While much of his discussion is relevant to cities of 25,000 to 50,000 population, the primary emphasis is on even smaller towns. Kenyon's (1989) study of 21 small cities in Georgia ranging in population from 3,000 to 43,000 demonstrates how the social and community significance of downtowns has exceeded the more traditional commercial function. Finally, the National Main Street Center has produced two useful volumes (1988; Dane, 1997). The earlier work reports on a national survey of downtown development in which nearly half the cities surveyed had less than 50,000 population.  The latter volume contains four-page profiles of 44 successful downtown development initiatives across the country; 41 of these profiles feature cities with less than 50,000 population, including 12 in the 25,000 to 50,000 range. The remainder of the professional literature on small-city downtowns tends to be nonanalytical and descriptive, and presents development efforts in one downtown (e.g., Means, 1997; Meek, 1995; Ryder & Gray, 1988; Seachord, 1997; Suchman, 1998)....

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**From Vaughan Dickson and Tony Myatt, “The Determinants of Provincial Minimum Wages in Canada,” *Journal of Labor Research* 23 (2002), 57-68:**

In the last few years, prompted largely by the work of Card and Kruger (1995), numerous articles on the employment effects of minimum wage legislation have appeared. This renewed interest in how minimum wages affect employment leads naturally to another question: What factors determine the minimum wage? Despite the ubiquity of minimum wage legislation, this question has received surprisingly little attention. One reason may be that in the U.S. the minimum wage is legislated at the federal rather than at the state level of government. Since this federal wage changes only occasionally, most U.S. studies have been limited to cross-sectional studies that focus on how the characteristics of the states, and the party affiliation of legislators, influence the vote on proposed changes in the federal minimum wage (Silberman and Durbin, 1970; Kau and Rubin, 1978; Bloch, 1980; Seltzer, 1995).[1] However, as pointed out by Baker et al. (1999), Canada offers some unique advantages for minimum wage studies: Since the Canadian minimum wage is under provincial, not federal jurisdiction, there has been substantial variation in the level and timing of changes in the wage across provinces, thus providing the opportunity to explore a relatively rich panel data set. To date, only one... study (Blais et al., 1989) has investigated the determinants of provincial minimum wages using a pooled data set extending across eight years (1975 to 1982) and nine provinces....

As noted, U.S. studies have usually been cross sectional and have examined what variables influenced congressional voting for increases in the federal minimum wage.[3] For example, Bloch (1993) related state wage levels and proportions of unionized employees to votes by senators to amend the 1977 and 1989 Federal Labor Standards Act and thereby increase the minimum wage. For each year he found only the union variable increased the probability of an in-favor vote - and only for Republicans, since Democrats almost universally support minimum wage increases. An earlier contribution is Silberman and Durden (1976) who examined congressmen's votes for the 1973 amendment to increase the minimum wage. Using variables for each congressional district, they found larger political contributions by unions and larger proportions of low-income families increased the probability of an affirmative vote, while larger campaign contributions from small business and larger proportions of teen-age workers reduced the probability. Kau and Rubin (1978) expanded Silberman and Durden's analysis to five separate cross sections covering five legislated increases in the federal minimum wage between 1949 and 1974. They found that higher state wages and a measure of the congressperson's liberalism were always positively and significantly associated with votes for, while percentage of blacks in the state was negatively related, but not significant, in all the cross sections. Unionization in the state's work force and political party of the legislator were never significant; the latter result probably occurred because northern and southern Democrats typically voted on opposite sides.

More recently, Seltzer (1995) explored support in both the House and Senate for the 1938 introduction of the federal minimum wage law. He found variables representing small business and low-wage workers decreased support for the bill, while ideology (liberals for, conservatives against) was also important. To anticipate future problems, Seltzer emphasized that not only are some variables inevitably theoretically ambiguous (a low-wage worker may rationally support or oppose minimum wage increases depending on whether job loss is expected), but also the coefficients on some variables must be interpreted cautiously. For example, should the coefficient for a variable measuring teen workers in the labor force be interpreted as their demand for higher wages, or does the coefficient better reflect the demands of well-organized firms that disproportionally hire younger workers?

In contrast to the U.S., Canada presents a better opportunity to study variations in minimum wages across jurisdictions and time, so it is perhaps surprising that the only study, to our knowledge, that examines Canadian minimum wage determination is Blais et al. (1989). They related the minimum wage, measured as the minimum wage divided by the average manufacturing wage, to the percentages of union workers, women, and 15 to 19-year-olds in the labor force, the current year unemployment rate, the inflation rate, the percentage of employment in small firms (less than 20 employees), and a "convergence" variable that measures average manufacturing wages in a province divided by average wages in Canada. This model was tested with ordinary least squares for a pooled sample covering nine provinces for the years 1975 to 1982, with no fixed effects for provinces or years. All variables had negative coefficients that were significant at the 5 percent level, except for the union variable which was, unexpectedly, negative and insignificant....

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