The Literature as Source Evidence: From Search to Appraisal

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Core Competency Video / Contracting With the Client to Select an Evidence-Based Therapy
Case Study / Community Practice: Organizing Social Work in the Republic of Armenia, Part I

Core Competencies in This Chapter (Check marks indicate which competencies are demonstrated)

- Professional Identity
- Ethical Practice
- Critical Thinking
- Diversity in Practice
- Human Rights and Justice
- Research Based Practice
- Human Behavior
- Policy Practice
- Practice Contexts
- Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate
INTRODUCTION

Mastering the literature review process, which includes the search for and evaluation of evidence, is a formative task of the consummate social work professional. The nature and quality of the evidence social workers use in their decision-making process has tremendous implications for the quality of life for the individuals, families, and communities they serve. This chapter reviews the literature review process for practice and research purposes from the initial stages of identifying a topic to finding, understanding, and evaluating the literature. As reviewed in this chapter, the term literature review may refer to different parts of the literature review process or product, such as: (a) the actual search for scholarly literature, (2) the completed literature review paper or article that is a comprehensive review of a body of literature, or (c) the subsection of a research study entitled “literature review” that commonly proceeds the methods section. This chapter is designed to assist social workers to further develop the skills that foster career-long learning and critical thinking, particularly in the use of practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and the use of research evidence to inform practice.

The Seven Tier Appraise Information Review (STAIR) consists of the following seven steps: (a) question, (b) find, (c) read, (d) appraise, (e) synthesize, (f) write, and (g) share/action and assists with the literature review process.

CASE EXAMPLES

- Jo Ann is a social worker who works as a clinician at a community mental health agency located in the rural Midwest. Recently, she was assigned a case of a 70-year-old Caucasian female named Kasha who emigrated from Russia to the United States about 12 months before. Her client is fluent in English and Russian and is seeking help for major depression. Jo Ann has no prior practice experience working with older adults of Russian descent. Her plan before seeing her client is to consult the scholarly literature for information about effective assessment and intervention strategies with this population.

- Jamal is an assistant director for a New York City agency that serves at-risk youth. He oversees the agency’s research and evaluation unit. He works collaboratively with staff practitioners whose case records comprise much of the agency’s program evaluation data. The agency wants to add a new program component for an evidence-based after-school arts program. Jamal and his team of researchers and practitioners plan to conduct a comprehensive review of the literature for best practices in an after-school arts program for urban youth. Based on this information, Jamal and his team will decide whether to develop or adopt an after-school program that best meets the needs of their clientele.

- Wanda is a social work researcher and professor at a southeastern U.S. university. Her area of research interest is trauma assessment among incarcerated juveniles. Before designing her study, she plans to conduct a comprehensive literature review to identify a gap from which she can build new knowledge that can help develop or improve trauma-informed assessment and interventions for these youth.
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PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE CONTEXTS

In the previous case examples, Jo Ann, Jamal, and Wanda have practice contexts and purposes for consulting the scholarly literature. The scholarly literature is often composed of journal articles and books written by experts in the field. Their research roles and/or activities vary from those of consumer, collaborator, and/or producer of research knowledge. Their purposes vary from a social work practitioner consulting the literature for information for practice to a social work researcher consulting the literature to generate new knowledge to apply to practice.

Jo Ann’s professional practice context in a mental health services agency where she is a clinician suggests she will consult the literature as a consumer of research knowledge. Her major purpose for reviewing the literature is to educate herself about interventions most useful to help her client. Jamal, on the other hand, is as an administrator of the youth serving agency’s research and evaluation unit. His central research role is as a collaborator. Jamal works in tandem with his frontline practice staff involved in the data collection. His purpose is to review the arts-based after-school program evaluation literature and to use this information to develop or choose a program that best suits his clientele. In contrast, Wanda’s practice context is a university where she is an academic researcher and a producer of research knowledge. She will use the information derived from her review to design a research study that builds upon the existing literature on trauma assessment among youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The findings from her study can generate new data about these youth’s assessment and services needs and improvement of response.

Figure 5.1
The Literature Review as an Ongoing Part of the Research Process
Regardless of the differences in the practice contexts, all three of these social work professionals have one task in common: to review the scholarly literature. In fact, the initial and ongoing consultation with the literature is an essential component of effective practice and research as illustrated in Figure 5.1. This ongoing consultation of the literature will enable them to use the most recent theoretical and empirical evidence to implement and monitor their practice and research agendas.

EMPIRICAL LITERACY FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

The commitment to producing empirically literate social workers, that is, social workers who use observable evidence to guide their practice decision making, is underscored by the social work profession’s national and international organizations, which include the Council on Social Work Education, the National Association of Social Workers, and the International Federation of Social Workers. In fact, social work practitioners’ proficiency in “empirical literacy” is one of the essential pillars of effective social work practice, along with the ongoing use of supervision and consultation in the field.

The CSWE (2008) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards stipulates that social work professionals develop as one of their ten core competencies the ability to engage in research-informed practice as well as practice-informed research. This two-way “evidence” street enables practitioners the flexibility of using their professional judgment to weigh empirical evidence with evidence from the field to make the informed practice decisions that promote clients’ self-determination, well-being, and empowerment.

Perhaps the two core social work values and ethical principles that practitioners’ active pursuit of knowledge taps are those of integrity and competence (IFSW, 2004; NASW, 1999). According to both the IFSW and NASW Ethical Codes, social workers should practice with integrity by acting honestly and responsibly and by developing and maintaining the required competence and skills to do their job effectively. Practitioners who are proficient in supplementing their knowledge and skills base with the scholarly literature to guide practice decision making are directly tapping these core social work values and ethical principles.

As reviewed in chapter 2, the NASW Code of Ethics standard about social workers’ ethical responsibilities to the profession specifically targets the ongoing use of the social work research knowledge and skills as a core practice behavior (NASW, 1999). Section 5.02 (c) stipulates that practitioners should actively incorporate evaluation and research in practice by keeping abreast of social work knowledge, critically appraising it, and fully incorporating evaluation and research evidence in professional practice. Adhering to this standard places social workers—guided by the most up to date practice information—in a position to serve clients.

THE SCHOLARLY LITERATURE AND PEER REVIEW PROCESS

When social workers search for the best quality evidence, they mainly draw resources from a large body of scholarly literature. The term scholarly literature most often refers to the writings of academics and researchers who are...
experts in their field. These individuals are often affiliated with higher education institutions, such as colleges and universities, research institutes, or centers.

Scholarly literature goes through a rigorous selection process before it is published in peer-reviewed journals. The process from submission of the manuscript to publication of a journal article often is as follows: Researchers submit manuscripts to journal editors who send the submitted articles through a peer review process. This means that a scholar’s work is reviewed by a group of other peers who are experts in that area. The peer reviewers often suggest revisions that would strengthen the manuscript and often determine whether to accept or reject the article for publication with or without revision. If accepted, it would appear as a journal article in the peer-reviewed journal to which it was submitted. Some journals relevant to social work that cover diverse areas of research, education, and practice include Social Work, Social Work Research, Social Service Review, Research in Social Work Practice, Clinical Social Work, Journal of Community Practice, Journal of Social Work Education, and the Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work.

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Understandably, mastering the literature review process is a formative task of most social work students’ education. So what is exactly meant by a literature review? As reviewed earlier, the term literature review may refer to different parts of the literature review process or the product itself, such as: (a) the actual search for scholarly literature, (b) the completed literature review paper or article that is a comprehensive review of a body of literature, or (3) the subsection of a research study entitled “literature review” that commonly proceeds the methods section. All in all, the literature review process ranges from the initial stages of a project from finding the literature to the final written product and is an important professional developmental task.

The Literature Review as a Search

The literature review as a search generally refers to a systematic investigation of available library and electronic resources of published works in a topic area, such as trauma assessment among youth in the juvenile justice system. The published works searched may include peer-reviewed journals, books, dissertations, and other related materials. The literature review search process is an initial and ongoing process that allows for social workers during the course of a practice intervention or research project to inform their practice decisions. The nuts and bolts of how to locate this literature will be reviewed later in this chapter.

The Literature Review as a Product

Social workers’ interest in being more systematic with literature reviews rose in the early 1970s in response to a growing crisis in the field related to practice effectiveness. As noted in chapter 2, Fischer's (1973) “Is Casework Effective?”
in the journal *Social Work* publicly voiced this concern. In response, the profession has widely adopted the practice of conducting more systematic literature review efforts to synthesize the literature, including content analysis, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses.

These types of reviews are a growing staple of social work practice as their research base expands. The information garnered from these types of reviews, especially systematic reviews, can provide practitioners and policy makers with needed information on a pressing issue, and can inform social policy and social intervention with research findings. As a result of the growing body of research and the demand for professional accountability for their effectiveness, the need for rigorous reviews has significantly grown.

**Literature Review**

When students first begin research, one of their most common assignments is to conduct a literature review and write a narrative literature review paper. A literature review is described as

> "The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic 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 and how it is being investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed." (Hart, 1998, p. 13)

In general, a literature review can refer to the written paper or “product” that integrates the information found during the search process. Jamal’s literature review of the best practices in arts-based after-school programming for urban youth is an example of the product of a literature review. The literature review generally involves mostly a qualitative process and partially structured to unstructured methods. The process involves reading the studies and seeking patterns and themes and/or comparisons across studies in major findings and/or methods used (Videka-Sherman, 1995).

**Content Analysis**

Although definitions have varied, *content analysis* generally refers to a “systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 5). Content analysis can be done on text documents, such as journals, or visual images, such as photographs. A coding scheme is developed to extract information from articles that may involve the frequency counts of how often certain words or images appear, or trends and patterns across the literature (Berg, 2004; Neuendort, 2002).

**Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses**

Systematic review and meta-analysis studies are another important method commonly used to examine the literature. According to Littell, Corcoran, and Pillai (2008), systematic reviews and meta-analyses are complementary approaches to synthesize research in a particular area. Littell and colleagues describe the aims of a systematic review to “comprehensively locate and synthesize research that bears on a particular question, using organized, transparent, and replicable procedures at each step in the process” (p. 4). A systematic review, which follows a carefully planned procedure, is important because
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it reduces biases and errors, which can accumulate based on biases from the original studies, publication, dissemination, and review methods.

The aims of the review, central concepts under investigation, and the methods used to complete the review are clearly specified in advance. Careful documentation of the decision-making steps is accurately recorded. Published systematic reviews include the details of the methods in order for readers to replicate the study and/or evaluate the methods (Littell, Corcoran, & Pillai, 2008). However, it is important to note that systematic reviews are different from meta-analyses unless a meta-analysis is embedded in a systematic review.

In contrast, a meta-analysis studies an area and applies a set of “statistical methods combining quantitative results from multiple studies to produce an overall summary of empirical knowledge on a topic” (Littell et al., 2008, p. 1). A meta-analysis is a systematic review of the literature that statistically combines the results of several studies that share a common research hypothesis. Meta-analyses are particularly important because they are classified as the top of the evidence-based hierarchy as “best evidence” for practitioners to consult to help inform their work (Rubin & Babbie, 2010).

A meta-analysis is situated at the top of the evidence-based hierarchy because it uses statistical analyses of the effect sizes of multiple studies’ results to enable the researcher to draw conclusions. Meta-analysis papers are available for review at the Campbell Collaboration: http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/ and at the Cochrane Collaboration: http://www.cochrane.org/ websites.

For example, Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, and Buehler (2002) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the impact of the “Scared Straight” prison visitation program on deterring delinquent youths from further delinquent activity and found unexpected results about the intervention’s effectiveness. These researchers selected for their meta-analyses only studies that used random or quasi-randomly assignment, had a treatment and no-treatment control group, and used at least one follow-up delinquency outcome measure. Opposite of what was expected, the researchers found that the “Scared Straight” program was more likely to have an adverse effect and increased delinquency, as opposed to reducing delinquency among youth that attended the program. The abstract and full-text article is available online at http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab002796.html.

The Literature Review as an Assignment

The literature review is often an inevitable part of every social work student’s assignments, especially in a social work research course. Generally completed over the course of one or two semesters, the literature review assignment requires that students go through the process of identifying a topic, conducting a library literature search, organizing and synthesizing the literature, and then summarizing their findings. If the literature review is conducted as background for a research study, practice, or program evaluation project, it also requires that social work students craft research questions and/or hypotheses based on the literature review, develop an evaluation or research design, carry out the project (with university or agency IRB approval), and then summarize the final report. Hence, successfully navigating the literature review process is an essential formative step in social work professionals’ path toward integrating research knowledge and skills with practice.
THE LITERATURE REVIEW EXPERIENCE

Despite this seemingly straightforward literature review task, evidence suggests students often go through a complex array of thoughts, feelings, and actions about the literature review of an information search process (Kracker, 2002; Kuhlthau, 2005; Maschi et al., 2007). The library science profession offers a theory that describes students’ common experiences while conducting a literature search for research papers (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1999; Kracker, 2002; Kuhlthau, 2005). For students who are preparing to conduct a literature review, it might be helpful to be aware of the common thoughts, feelings, and actions that occur while preparing and writing a research report.

The Information Search Process

Carol Kuhlthau (2005) proposed the Information Search Process (ISP) theory of a six-stage process that describes the dynamic process of students’ emotions, cognitions, and behaviors from the start of the library information search process to the conclusion of the final paper. As shown in Figure 5.2, a progression of thoughts (cognition), feelings (affect), and actions (physical) is commonly associated with the six steps in the process model, which are (a) initiation, (b) selection, (c) exploration, (d) formulation, (e) collection, and (f) presentation.

Stage One: Initiation

In stage one, initiation, most students begin to realize that they have a need for information, such as a need to choose a topic for the research paper. At this stage, for students who do not know much about a topic or how to search the literature, having feelings of anxiety, confusion, uncertainty, and doubt is quite common. Yet at the same time, these thoughts and feelings have a motivating...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Initiation</th>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>Exploration</th>
<th>Formulation</th>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Confusion/frustration/doubt</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Sense of direction/confidence</td>
<td>Satisfaction or disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td>vague</td>
<td>focused</td>
<td></td>
<td>increased interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>seeking relevant information, exploring</td>
<td>seeking pertinent information, documenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
effect on students to take action and begin the search. Therefore, if you are a student and feel anxious, confused, or doubtful about conducting a literature review, rest assured, this experience is quite common among other students and does not have to immobilize you from moving forward with your project.

Stage Two: Selection
In stage two, selection, the majority of students no longer feel anxious or uncertain after having identified or selected a broad topic area for their project (e.g., older adults). In fact, during this stage, students often begin to feel more hopeful and positive. They also commonly engage in actions, such as consulting with others, including professors, agency supervisors, researchers, or librarians about their topics and the search process (Kuhlthau, 2005). Therefore, if you are a student engaged in a research project, the selection of a topic is an important milestone that is often accompanied by positive thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Stage Three: Exploration
In stage three, exploration, students often narrow their broad topic to a more specific research paper topic (e.g., cognitive behavioral treatment for older adult women with depression). Students at this stage often learn enough information about a topic to feel a sense of mastery over the material, take concrete actions, such as locating and reading relevant information, and even begin to organize the information gathered for their research paper, though there also might be a return of confusion, uncertainty, doubt, and feeling overwhelmed. Therefore, if you are a student at this stage in the search process, do not be alarmed by negative emotions or thoughts; it is a common and temporary part of the process. If you stay focused on the content of what you have learned, you can begin to make important links and compare the content that was most recently read to content read in the past (Kuhlthau, 2005).

Stage Four: Formulation
Stage four, formulation, represents a pivotal turning point in the student's information search process. At this stage, students achieve focus because they significantly narrow their topic even further. This stage is often characterized by students having bouts of sudden or gradual insight, and confidence and clarity of thought while feelings of uncertainty diminish. Therefore, if you are a student, this stage often makes the earlier more “uncomfortable” stages of the process well worth it.

Stage Five: Collection
In stage five, collection, students feel a strong sense of direction and confidence. Students at this stage seek relevant information and have an increased interest in their topic. Therefore, if you are a student at this stage, you can search the literature for any important information that you might have overlooked in your initial search or need for the final paper assignment.

Stage Six: Presentation
In stage six, presentation, students present or write a paper using the information gathered, documenting their work in the form of a written paper or presentation. During this final stage, students may often either feel satisfied or
disappointed about their work. Feelings of satisfaction generally result when students perceive their research and writing process went smoothly. At this final stage, students often are more focused, they have increased interest, and feel a sense of mastery over the material learned. In contrast, students may feel disappointed if they are not satisfied with their search process or if their final papers do not meet their expectations (Kuhlthau, 2005). Therefore, if you are a student at this final stage, evaluate your feelings of satisfaction or disappointment and identify ways to maximize strengths and overcome obstacles to incorporate in future literature search projects.

Empirical Validation
The Kuhlthau’s (2005) Information Search Process also has been empirically validated. More than two decades of empirical research on the ISP Model suggests that students’ initial feelings of confusion and anxiety at the start of the research assignment (i.e., during the initiation and selection stages) commonly transform to confidence, competence, and satisfaction at project completion and search closure (Kuhlthau, 2005; Kuhlthau & Tama, 2001). Similarly, initial vague thoughts about what and how to research often become more focused as the project progresses and certain action strategies are used (Kuhlthau, 2005). The longitudinal validation of the ISP Model has been conducted with diverse samples, such as high school and college students, legal professionals, and public library users (Kuhlthau, 1983, 1988, 1993; Kuhlthau & Tama, 2001; Kuhlthau, Turock, George, & Belvin, 1990).

Social Work Students and the Research Process
As shown in Figure 5.3, a similar process to the ISP Model has been found among social work students engaged in research coursework (Maschi et al., 2007; Maschi, Probst, & Bradley, 2009). Using a sample of 111 BSW and MSW social work research students and qualitative data collected at two time points, Maschi et al. (2009) examined students’ thoughts, feelings, and actions about the research process. They found that for many students their initial feelings of anxiety transformed to greater confidence, increased knowledge and skills, and appreciation of the value of research for social work practice.

More specifically, the findings revealed that although most students did not begin the research project with positive attitudes, look forward to the assignment as a learning experience, or feel excited about a particular topic, the majority of them gave positive comments (59%) toward the end of the process. Approximately 15% of the students connected positive feelings to specific points in the process: selecting a topic, particularly one of personal interest; gathering relevant information and seeing the ideas come together and start to make sense. Thirteen individuals noted that the process became easier as time progressed, and eight individuals noted that the experience was not as bad as they had expected. As illustrated in the following students’ quotations, when the task began to seem less overwhelming and more manageable, students’ confidence increased.

Picking a topic of personal interest helped me look forward to doing it.
When I began to organize my thoughts, the task became more concrete for me.
Drawing an outline/map made the task more manageable and eased my anxiety.
# Figure 5.3

A Matrix Model of Social Work Students and the Research Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breaking process into steps</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Feedback clear and thorough explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing tools/tips</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Had vision of whole</td>
<td>Valuation of topic</td>
<td>Focus on task at hand Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Made a plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organized tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of past experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Peers learning environment</td>
<td>Other professors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.3**
Continued
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Breaking it into doable steps, planning how I would accomplish each one, made me more focused and thus less stressed. You must deal with it in small doses so as not to allow your head to explode.

By the end of the research process, some students who initially felt positive or negative about research reported the following positive feelings: relief and reduction of stress with completion of the project, greater comfort and confidence in their ability to do research, increased knowledge, a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, and a general sense of enjoyment.

Similar to Kuhlthau’s ISP Model, this study also found that it was common for social work research students to experience a dynamic process of thoughts, feelings, and actions about conducting a literature search and writing a research report. Activities that assisted in successfully navigating the process included managing anxiety and self-defeating thoughts, seeking peer and instructor support, and breaking the research tasks into manageable steps.

THE STAIR MODEL FOR CONDUCTING LITERATURE REVIEWS

To optimize the successful navigation of the literature review process, we offer the Seven Tier Appraise Information Review to help guide social workers from the initial information search to literature appraisal to the sharing of their findings. As illustrated in Figure 5.4, STAIR consists of the following seven steps: (a) question, (b) find, (c) read, (d) appraise, (e) synthesize, (f) write, and (g) share/action. The three vignettes for Kashka, Jamal, and Tiffany presented are incorporated in the discussion that follows.

Step One: Question

In the first step, question, the social worker formulates a guiding review question. The social worker does this before conducting a literature search to help focus the review. For example, if the issue is child maltreatment or substance...
abuse, a broad guiding review question might be, “What does the scholarly literature report about child maltreatment?” or “What does the scholarly literature report about substance abuse?”

The information search can be further narrowed in three key ways: (a) content area, (b) developmental stage of the population, and (c) characteristic of the population or setting. The first way to classify literature is by content areas, which may include: (a) risk or protective factors, (b) consequences, and (c) assessment or intervention (see Figure 5.5).

For example, for child maltreatment, subsections of this body of literature examine risk or protective factors for child maltreatment (e.g., poverty, parental substance use, and social support), its consequences (e.g., mental health or behavioral problems), and assessment and interventions (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder assessment and trauma-focused cognitive behavioral treatment). The second central way is to further subclassify the literature by the developmental stage of the population to be studied, for example: (a) children, (b) adolescents, (c) adults, and (d) older adults. The third central way is to subclassify the literature by the characteristics of the setting or population (e.g., foster care, juvenile justice, or immigration status). Figure 5.6 illustrates these categories.

The information search will be shaped based on its intended applied practice or research needs. For example, Tiffany, a social worker, needs to locate literature that targets evidence-based interventions for child maltreatment for a Latina 12-year-old in foster care with a history of physical abuse. She narrows her search to the child maltreatment intervention literature among the population of Latina children in foster care. Focusing her question will assist her in locating the most relevant materials.

Table 5.1 offers guiding review questions to assist social workers with the initial steps of the literature review process. The guiding review template question is: What does the scholarly literature report about [problem/issue and/or interventions] among [target population or a client system]? An example of a guiding review question might be What does the scholarly literature report about risk factors for child maltreatment among adolescents in the juvenile justice system?

**Positionality**

The guiding review question will vary based on the context and whether your review is planned for practice evaluation or research purposes. In other words, is the information sought to guide practice with a specific client in mind?
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Figure 5.6
Common Content Areas and Characteristics Found in the Scholarly Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Areas</th>
<th>Population Age Group</th>
<th>Population or Setting Characteristics (Examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk or Protective Factors</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Child Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>Juvenile Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Older Adults</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Example Broad Topic Areas: Child Maltreatment or Substance Abuse*

*Guided Review Question Template: What does the empirical literature report about [problem/issue/ and/or interventions] among [target population-or for a client system]?

Table 5.1  Examples of “Guided” Questions to Focus the Literature Review Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Template question</th>
<th>Risk factors or protective factors</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does the scholarly literature report about _______ and (for) _______ (among ________)?</td>
<td>What does the scholarly literature report about risk factors for child maltreatment among children? What does the scholarly literature report about risk (or protective factors) for substance abuse among adolescents?</td>
<td>What does the scholarly literature report about the short- and long-term mental health consequences of spousal loss among older adult women?</td>
<td>What does the scholarly literature report about the most effective assessment tools for identifying PTSD among youth in the juvenile justice system?</td>
<td>What does the scholarly literature report about the most effective interventions for treating trauma symptoms of an 18-year-old Latino male sexual assault victim?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Or is it for the purpose of generating new knowledge for social work practice? It is helpful to know before conducting the information review whether it is for practice or research purposes. It is also beneficial to clearly understand the practice context to make the most relevant decisions.

The Practice Position
The guiding review question for a specific client or client system is practice based. See Table 5.2 for the Evidenced-Based Practice steps. The first three steps that guide the literature review process include (a) formulate a practice-based question, (b) search for evidence, and (c) evaluate the quality of the evidence.

Step 1, formulating a practice-based question, follows the guiding review question format. For example, Jo Ann needs to locate literature about evidence-based interventions for depression for a 70-year-old Caucasian female who emigrated from Russia to the United States 1 year ago. An example of a broad guiding review question is, “What does the scholarly literature report about depression treatment for older women?” Because Jo Ann is searching for a specific issue (e.g., depression) and population (e.g., older adult women and Russian immigrants), her search can be limited for her specific practice needs. Limiting her guiding review question will assist her in locating the most relevant materials to help this specific client. However, if she does not initially find relevant information, she will need to broaden her search to include more general key word search terms, such as depression treatment and/or older adults.

Similarly, Jamal’s evaluation project also will have a narrow guided review question. His guiding review questions might be, What does the scholarly literature report about arts-based after-school programs for adolescent youth (between ages 12 and 17) in urban areas? From the literature he locates, he will be able to identify evidence-based arts programs that have been used with similar populations.

The Research Position
The purpose of seeking information for research is primarily to generate new knowledge that can be used to develop or improve social work practice, policy, or research. A broad review of the literature must be conducted to identify the gaps and plan and implement new studies to fill these gaps. To conduct a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.2 Evidence-Based Practice Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-Based Practice Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 Formulate a practice-based question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 Search for evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 Evaluate the quality of relevant studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4 Select and implement an intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5 Monitor progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6 Evaluate outcomes and document results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Evidence-Based Research Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Formulate a Research-Based Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Search for Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Identify Gaps in the Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Generate Study Research Questions That Fill a Gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Select One or More Feasible Research Question(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Design and Implement the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Share and Document the Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.7
Evidence-Based Research Steps

literature review for research purposes, a library search worksheet can assist with the literature search. (See Figure 5.7.)

This guiding review question is refined as the search progresses, often until the gaps in the literature are found from which a new study can be designed. For Wanda, a social work researcher, the initial guided review question (Step 1) was “what does the scholarly literature report about trauma assessment among youth in the juvenile justice system?”

This initial question guided her literature search and became refined as Wanda isolated a gap in the area of trauma assessment among juvenile justice-involved youth. Specifically, her search revealed that a fair amount of published information is available about youth who have histories of child maltreatment in the juvenile justice system. However, there was a dearth of information about witnessing violence and/or other life event stressors experienced among this population. This identified gap influenced Wanda’s choice to design a research study to gather data to fill this information gap.

Step Two: Find

In the second step, find, literature search is underway. The types of literature that can be consulted can be a range of information sources that are considered more credible than others, with journals from professional peer-reviewed
articles high on the hierarchy. The more common sources of published scholarly knowledge include

- Professional peer-review journals (electronic or hard copy)
- Governmental or professional websites, such as those of governmental agencies and/or research institutes
- Academic books
- Research reports and monographs
- Conference proceedings and presentations

Other Information Sources
Other sources of information about a particular content area may include experts in the field, including agency supervisors and academic researchers. Librarians, professors, and peers can be a good reference with regard to the information search process. These sources can help social workers generate practice-based research knowledge that can be used to improve provision of services or refine policies.

Peer-Reviewed Journals
Articles from peer-reviewed journals are an important staple of the literature search. As explained previously, peer-reviewed articles undergo a rigorous review process. Generally, they can be considered a reliable source, although the quality of the journal or articles may vary. Many journals are available in print or electronic form and are available at university or community libraries or by subscription.

Online or electronic database searches Libraries provide access to electronic databases and indexes. The commonly used electronic databases among social workers include Academic Search Premier, Social Work Abstracts, ProQuest, SocioFile, PsychInfo, MEDLINE, and ScienceDirect. Google Scholar is an Internet search engine available to the general public. These databases or indexes generally are search engines that provide basic and advanced search features to locate key research resources.

The electronic search The guiding review question is helpful to focus on the initial online search, particularly identifying the key word search terms used. For example, Wanda used her guiding review question to choose key words: “What does the scholarly literature report about trauma assessment among youth in the juvenile justice system?” Her central content area is trauma assessment among the population of youth in the juvenile justice system. Using the advanced search option, the three content or population areas that form the basis of her review are trauma assessment, youth, and juvenile justice. These terms also will be the key word search terms for her initial review (see Figure 5.8).

The “and/or” search option Similar to a Boolean search, options such as and or or help to narrow or broaden a search. For example, using and narrows a search so that it must combine all the key words, such as trauma assessment AND youth AND juvenile justice. Conversely, or broadens the scope of the search to include any article that matches any of the search terms, for example: trauma assessment OR youth OR juvenile justice selects articles that match any of those key word search terms.

Additional search options As shown in Figure 5.9, additional advanced search options help modify the search results. For example, key words can be used to search full text, author, article title, and journal name. The Academic
Figure 5.8
Using Keywords Search Terms

Guiding Review Question: What does the scholarly literature report about trauma assessment among youth in the juvenile justice system?

Figure 5.9
EBSCO HOST Search Engine Example


Search Complete/EBSCO host database has other special features in advanced search options in which searches can be limited to include only peer-reviewed articles or limited by the year of publication.
Most university and community libraries offer assistance, including tutorials, on how to use the electronic databases and other library resources. If you are not familiar with these services, contact your library and attend an information session or request a library tour.

**Documenting the search**  It is often important to track the steps involved in the review process. It is particularly important if your literature review is composed of a systematic review or meta-analysis that the methods section used can be evaluated or replicated by others. As noted earlier, the question may be modified as the search is refined. Table 5.3 shows the Library Search Worksheet that documents the search process.

Many electronic documents also have a digital object identifier, which uniquely identifies an electronic document (e.g., doi: 10.1177/1087057106289725). The digital object identifier has metadata in the electronic document, including a URL where the document can be located.

### Table 5.3  Library Search Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Directions:** Document the search process of scholarly journal articles.

**The literature search**
1. General topic of interest:
2. Problem (and/or treatment) under investigation:
3. Population under investigation:
4. Date(s) of search:
5. Guiding review question for literature search:
6. Name of library (and location) where search was conducted:
7. What online database(s) was/were searched?
8. What special limiters were used in your search? (e.g., year limits, peer-reviewed articles only):
9. Was a basic or advanced search option used?
10. What key word search terms were used? And in what combinations?
11. How many “hits” did you receive in the initial search?
12. How did you expand or narrow the search?

**Selection criteria for sample of articles**
13. Is your sample of articles scholarly research studies?
14. What was your decision-making process for including or excluding articles from your sample?
15. Other important notes that other students or research would need to know to replicate your search:
16. List the APA references for articles:
Saving the search documents  Articles should be saved as a PDF (as opposed to the HTML version) and downloaded so that the tables and figures also are printed with the article.

Electronic copies of the articles should also be saved using a systematic labeling system. For example, saving each article by the last name of the first author and year of publication can also be useful. All articles can also be saved in a project folder. If hard copies of the articles are printed, they too can be organized in alphabetical order by the last name of the first author and publication year. (Note, if hard copies are made, be sure to copy the entire articles, including the references.). Additionally, bibliographic software, such as EndNote or Refworks, can be used to manage your references.

In Wanda’s case, she labeled her electronic literature review folder: “trauma assessment, youth, and juvenile justice literature” and saved the articles in her documents folder. She labeled each article within that folder by the last name of the first author and year of publication. When she began to review her articles, she easily located specific articles for her review. She also used the Endnote bibliographic software to store her growing library of references of peer-reviewed journals, books, book chapters, research reports, including monographs and conference presentations.

Step Three: Read

In the third step, read, the researcher selects and reads the relevant journals and other materials available. Identifying the journal article types is particularly important if the goal of the information search is to find peer-reviewed empirical articles (e.g., research studies) in a specific topic area (e.g., trauma assessment, youth, and juvenile justice).

As shown in Table 5.4, two central distinctions exist between peer-reviewed empirical journals and those that are not. As illustrated in Figure 5.10, the articles that meet the criteria for peer-reviewed empirical studies are published in peer-reviewed journals and, at a minimum, include the purpose of the study, study methods, findings, and a conclusion or implications sections (American Psychological Association [APA], 2009; Holosko, 2005). A more detailed description is provided in Step Four—Appraise. Figure 5.10 provides an overview of the different sections of a research report.

Articles that are not research studies may include literature reviews, critiques, books, reviews, and editorials and may not include all of the aforementioned sections. This type of article can be classified as a nonempirical article. Table 5.4 provides a checklist for distinguishing peer-reviewed empirical journals from other types of nonempirical articles.

More than one read rule  Once the sample of journals has been selected, we recommend applying “the more than one read rule.” In fact, seasoned scholars often recommend reading the article more than once if the goal is to understand and critically analyze it (Asmundson, Norton, & Stein, 2002; Holosko, 2005; Oleson & Arkin, 1996). However, these same scholars vary in their suggestions for how to accomplish this.
Table 5.4  Checklist for Identifying Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Journal Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check Below if Condition Was Met</th>
<th>Essential Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer reviewed</td>
<td>The article was published in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study justification</td>
<td>The article includes an introduction that identifies a rationale or reason for the study being conducted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study purpose</td>
<td>The article has an introduction that clearly states the purpose of the study. It can be in the form of a purpose statement, research question(s), and/or hypothesis(es).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>The article’s method section specifies the sampling strategies, variables and measures, and data collection procedures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>The article’s results section provides a narrative description of the study results. If a quantitative study, it will include statistical analysis and often results in tables and/or graphs. Qualitative results include the use of narrative quotes. Mixed methods includes a combination of both.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>The article includes a discussion of the findings, which should include one or more of the following: conclusion, implications, future research directions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>The article includes a list of references that are cited in the body of the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not a peer-reviewed article</td>
<td>A literature review article provides an overview of a body of literature and types of research methods. It can be in the form of a summary and/or analysis of the literature.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Articles that critique theories, methods, laws, programs, policies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiques</td>
<td>An often short article that provides the review of a book that is of interest to the journal readership.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review</td>
<td>An article published as an editorial piece by an editor or by a reader as a letter to the editor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorials</td>
<td>Other types of articles not identified above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Review Recommendation

We recommend first screening the article by reviewing the title and the abstract to determine if the article meets the criteria (or is relevant) for being included in the review. If relevant, a more detailed initial review should be conducted that includes reading the introduction, the methods, and the discussion sections that review the major findings and implications for practice and policy. The purpose of the initial reading is to comprehend the essential contents as opposed to critiquing them. After the initial reading, write a short summary (300 words or less) to test your comprehension. Paraphrasing or
summarizing the article’s content helps prepare for a more in-depth critical reading and analysis. Table 5.5 provides a worksheet to complete this article paraphrasing and summary task.

More Recommendations
Asmundson, Norton, and Stein (2000) recommend a similar multistep review process: First, carefully read the entire article and refrain from critiquing it or making notes. Second, take a short break (one or two days) from reading the article and review other relevant review material or books (This break can be used to become more familiar with other works in your topic area). Third,
carefully reread the article to determine the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the research design and overall report.

In contrast, Oleson and Arkin (1996) recommend two slightly different methods for reviewing a journal. The first method is to read the abstract and the first paragraph of introduction and discussion sections followed by a general scan of the other article sections. The alternative method is to first read the abstract and the first sentence of every paragraph.

**Choose a Method that Works**

Because there are different options for reviewing articles, choose the strategy that works best for you. In general, the review of journals should result in general understanding of their contents including the study purpose, methods, major findings, and practice and/or policy implications. The in-depth review of the article should result in an increased ability to compare and appraise the contents of the article with research standards and report writing, which is reviewed in the next section.

**Step Four: Appraise**

Once a clear and succinct summary is written, the next step is to critically review the article contents. In the fourth step, *appraise*, the article should be reviewed to assess how well it meets the criteria for a sound research study and written report. Social workers must be able to critically evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of research studies and understand their implications before they consider adapting the study methods or practice recommendations.

**The Research Report**

It is also essential that students are able to understand the content and structure of the research report and identify and understand the objectives of the different report sections. Clearly understanding what is expected in a research
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Table 5.6  
Critiquing Research Report Worksheet

Student’s Name: 
Date Completed: 
List APA Reference for Article or Book Critiqued: 

Directions: Provide your evaluation of the quality (from poor = 1 to excellent = 5). If you believe an item is not applicable to this research article, mark it “not applicable” (N/A). Be prepared to explain your ratings. Add up each response for a total quality score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholarly Journal Article Rating Scale</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The title accurately reflects the article content.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The abstract provides an overview (e.g., purpose, methods, findings, implications).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The introduction underscores the purpose and significance of the study.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The research purpose, question, or hypothesis is clearly stated.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The literature review provides a background to study variables.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Research ethics and human subjects protections are adequately addressed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sampling methods are sound and have sampled targeted population.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Relevant demographics (e.g., age, gender, race or ethnicity) are described.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Measures chosen for the study variables are reliable and valid.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Data collection procedures are adequately detailed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The results present data for research questions or hypotheses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. There is a discussion of implications for practice or policy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Study limitations are specified by the author(s).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Future research directions are provided.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total quality score (add numbers 1–14): ________

As shown in Figure 5.10, the common parts of a research report include the title, abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion sections. The report should clearly lead the reader to why the particular study was conducted (i.e., introduction), how it was done (i.e., methods), what results were found (i.e., findings), and how the findings improve practice, policy, or research in this area (i.e., discussion). The different parts of the research report are briefly outlined next. For a more in-depth review, refer to Publication Manual of the APA (2009) publication manual or see Bem (2000).
The Literature as Source Evidence: From Search to Appraisal

**Title**  The *Publication Manual of the APA* (2009) guidelines state that the title must accurately reflect the contents and contain no more than 12 words. Social workers who review an article should verify whether the article meets these criteria.

**Abstract**  The abstract should provide a brief overview of the article. The abstract is often the featured part of the article that is available for review when you search online databases and indexes. If the abstract is for a research study, it should, at a minimum, provide the purpose of the study, the methods, major findings, and practice or policy implications. It also should contain no more than 120 words. Social workers should verify whether the abstract meets these criteria.

**Introduction**  The introduction of the article “sets the stage” for the population and/or problem issue under investigation. The introduction should provide a background to the central issues and identify the gaps in knowledge that the current study was designed to fill. It should clearly state a purpose for the current study and introduce the research questions and/or hypothesis(es) of the study. The study rationale and the significance of the study for practice, policy, and/or research clearly should be clearly delineated. Reviewers should evaluate the article as to how well these criteria are met.

Social workers should use the following questions to assess the introduction section:

- Do the research questions (or hypotheses) for the study seem important?
- Does the purpose of the study follow logically from the background of the literature and its current gaps?
- Do the study research questions or hypotheses make a new contribution to the literature?
- Does the study have important practice, research, or policy implications?

**Literature Review**  The literature review section is sometimes combined with the introduction section or presented as its own section. At a minimum, the literature review section provides a background to the central concepts or variables under investigation and their relationship (e.g., depression, older adults, and mental health treatment). For example, Wanda’s literature review would surely include what is known about trauma assessment among youth in the juvenile justice system. Social workers should use the following questions to assess the literature review section:

- Does the literature review include the central concepts or variables under investigation and their relationship?
- Does the literature review section give a clear understanding of the available literature for this topic?
- Is there a logical connection to prior literature, and why the current study is being conducted?

**Methods**  The method section describes the steps that were taken to answer the research question or hypotheses. At a minimum it describes who the study participants were, how they were recruited, what measures were used, and how participants were assessed. Although the names of the subsections of the methods section will vary, common categories may include research design, sample description, variables and measures, study procedures, and...
Chapter 5

data analysis. This section should be detailed enough so that anyone reading
the section would have sufficient information to replicate the study.

The methods section should be evaluated as to how appropriate it is for
answering the study's research questions or hypotheses. These questions
might include the following:

- Did the sample selection, measures, data collection, and analysis seem
  appropriate based on the purpose of the study?
- If the study tested a causal hypothesis, did it use an experimental
design?
- Was the sample representative of the general population from which it
  was drawn?
- Were the measures reliable and valid?
- Was there any evidence of bias in the study procedures?

Results The results section explains the type of analysis used and the re-
sults obtained. A quantitative analysis generally includes tables of statistical
results or numeric data and narrative results. In contrast, a qualitative analy-
sis generally contains verbatim quotes or narrative data. In short, the results
section should assess to what extent the statistical procedures were valid or
accurate.

Discussion The discussion section has certain objectives, which include
(a) reviewing major findings, (b) comparing the results with prior literature,
(c) discussing the implications for findings for practice and/or policy, (d) address-
ing methodological limitations of current study, (e) outlining future directions
for research, and (f) ending with concluding remarks. This section does not
provide subheaders, so this section must be carefully reviewed for its organi-
zation and content.

The reviewer should assess to what extent the article provides:

- an overview of the major findings,
- a comparison of the current findings compared with the prior
  literature,
- implications of the findings for practice and policy,
- the current study's methodological limitations,
- future research directions,
- a conclusion.

References The references section should list only works that are cited
in the text. The study should cite the most recent publications available
at the time the article was published. The reviewer should assess the fol-
lowing:

- Do all works cited appear in the reference list?
- Do the majority of references fall within 5 years of the article's
  publication date?

The review is not meant to be exhaustive but to help familiarize students
with the types of questions that can be asked when assessing a published re-
search study. Table 5.6 shows a worksheet that social workers can use to cri-
tique a preliminary research report. Steps Five to Seven (synthesize, write, and
share, respectively) will be reviewed in chapter 12.
Internet Resources for Evidenced-Based Research and Evaluation

As noted earlier, a number of online resources are also a repository for research, including meta-analyses of evidence-based practices. Some of the more well-known resources are the Campbell Collaboration (http://www.campbellcollaboration.org), Cochran Collaboration (http://www.cochrane.org), and Information for Practice (IP) (http://www.nyu.edu/socialwork/ip).

The Campbell Collaboration’s (C2) website and international research network focus on health care and provide information to help people make well-informed decisions by preparing, maintaining, and disseminating systematic reviews in education, crime and justice, and social welfare. The Information for Practice website provides information to help social service professionals throughout the world conveniently maintain an awareness of news regarding the profession and emerging scholarship, including meta-analyses in various practice areas. Other useful websites that provide data from reliable sources are reviewed next. However, a cautionary note for social work students is to carefully discern Internet sites that provide scholarly and rigorous research from those that do not.

Internet Resources: Governmental Agencies and Research Institutes

Another reliable and useful Internet resource is the websites of governmental or research institutes, for example, the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families (http://www.acf.hhs.gov) houses the Child Maltreatment Report (available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm07). According to the USDHHS (2008) report, approximately 794,000 children were substantiated victims of abuse or neglect in 2007. The majority (60%) of them experienced neglect, followed by physical abuse (11%), sexual abuse (7.6%), and psychological maltreatment (4.2%).

General population statistics for the United States are also available at sites such as the U.S. Census Bureau (http://www.census.gov). The Child Information Gateway (http://www.childwelfare.gov) provides information related to children and families in the areas such as child welfare, child abuse and neglect, foster care, and adoption. The National Institute of Mental Health (http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml) provides information on mental health and treatment and publications that include “Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General” (http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/home.html).


Table 5.7 is a worksheet for gathering population statistics or problem overview. The literature search can continue through the final writing stage.
Chapter 5

Online Resources for Evidence-Based Practices and Reviews

A list of resources for evidence-based practices and reviews also can be found on the web and includes:

- American Psychological Association (empirically supported treatment):
- OJJDP Prevention Model Programs Guide:
  http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/cognitive_behavioral_treatment_prevention.htm
- SAMHSA National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs & Practices:
  http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/
- University of Michigan Library Links:
  http://www.lib.umich.edu/libraries
  http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/

SUMMARY

This chapter looked at the literature review process. This chapter was designed to demystify this process and to help facilitate the use of empirical literature as an essential part of a social worker's career-long learning. Learning how to do a good literature review gives social workers the ability to distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge. The commitment to producing
empirically literate social workers, that is, social workers who use observable evidence to guide their practice decision making, is underscored by the social work profession’s national and international organizations, especially as it relates to the social work values of integrity and competence.

Mastering the literature review process, that is the search for and evaluation of evidence, is a formative task of every consummate social work professional. The term *literature review* may refer to different parts of the literature review process or product, such as (a) the actual search for scholarly literature, (b) the completed literature review paper or article that is comprehensive review of a body of literature, or (c) the subsection of a research study entitled “literature review” that commonly proceeds the methods section. Practitioners can gain information to broaden their knowledge and skills base and be able to demonstrate their synthesis and analysis of the literature through oral and written communication.

Carol Kuhlthau’s (2005) Information Search Process theory, which is a six-stage process theory, was reviewed. The theory describes the dynamic process of students’ emotions, cognitions, and behaviors from the start of the library information search process to the conclusion of the final paper. A progression of thoughts (cognition), feelings (affect), and actions (physical) are commonly associated with the six steps in the process, which are: (a) initiation, (b) selection, (c) exploration, (d) formulation, (e) collection, and (f) presentation.

To optimize the successful navigation of the literature review and writing process, we offered the Seven Tier Appraise Information Review (STAIR). It consists of the following seven steps: (a) question, (b) find, (c) read, (d) appraise, (e) synthesize, (f) write, and (g) share. In chapter 12, students will learn how to write the literature review and research report. Using these steps can help social workers conduct the literature review assignment efficiently.
Log onto www.mysocialworklab.com and answer the following questions. (If you did not receive an access code to MySocialWorkLab with this text and wish to purchase access online, please visit www.mysocialworklab.com.)

1. Watch the research based practice video “Contracting With the Client to Select an Evidence-Based Therapy.” After listening to the commentary, describe how the social worker used the seven steps of the STAIR model presented in the chapter.

2. Read the MySocialWork Library case study “Community Practice: Organizing Social Work in the Republic of Armenia, Part I.” As the research assistant, your task is to do the literature review. Using the first two steps of the STAIR model (question, share), identify a guiding review question and steps you took (or would take) to complete the literature search.

PRACTICE TEST  The following questions will test your knowledge of the content found within this chapter. For additional assessment, including licensing-exam type questions on applying chapter content to practice, visit MySocialWorkLab.

1. The term literature review does not describe which of the following?
   a. The peer review process
   b. The literature review section of a journal article
   c. An article that is a comprehensive review of a topic area
   d. A systematic investigation of publications in a topic area

2. What is the least reliable source of information listed below?
   a. Professional peer-reviewed journals
   b. Publications of governmental research institutes
   c. Newspaper articles
   d. Academic books

3. A social worker who combines quantitative results with multiple studies for an overall empirical summary conducts what type of study?
   a. Survey descriptive
   b. Meta-analysis
   c. Macro-analysis
   d. Exploratory

4. Appraising an empirical journal article generally refers to:
   a. Thorough read and notetaking of the article
   b. Systematic steps taken to locate reliable information
   c. Sound research study and written report assessment
   d. Quoting the article’s content

5. Briefly describe one strategy that you would use in appraising the quality of a research report.

ASSESS YOUR COMPETENCE  Use the scale below to rate your current level of achievement on the following concepts or skills associated with each competency presented in the chapter:

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<th>I can accurately describe the concept or skill</th>
<th>I can consistently identify the concept or skill when observing and analyzing practice activities</th>
<th>I can competently implement the concept or skill in my own practice</th>
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______ can conduct a library search of the scholarly journal literature.
______ can conduct a literature review for purposes of a research or practice context.
______ can apply research findings for use in a practice or research context.
______ can assess or appraise the quality of the research design and written research report.