

## CONDUCTING A LITERATURE REVIEW (I)

Amílcar Moreira

11/02/2025, 18:00-19:30

FRANCESINHAS 2, Room 2.02

## In the previous class...

- Sources of inspiration for choosing your topic
- Conducting an exploratory bibliographic search
- Writing an annotated bibliography
- Referencing rules

## Today...

**We aim to introduce students to the Literature Review as a key stage in the development of a research project.**

## **At the end of this class, you should be able to:**

- **Understand what a Literature Review is expected to achieve;**
- **Understand the difference between a Literature Review as a stand-alone study and as chapter in a paper/thesis;**
- **Understand how the Literature Review connects with the other parts of the thesis (Introduction, Methodology, Discussion, Conclusion);**
- **Know what are the most common Research Gaps and their role in the Literature Review process;**
- **Understand the difference between conducting a Review of the Literature and writing a Literature Review;**
- **Know what are the different alternatives for structuring a Literature Review.**

## ACTIVITY: #1



**Whiteboard**

in Microsoft Teams

**2:00**

**WHO:** Individual

**WHAT:** What is the purpose of a Literature Review?

**WHERE:** MsTeams Whiteboard in 'RMMP-MIRS S08 (TP)'

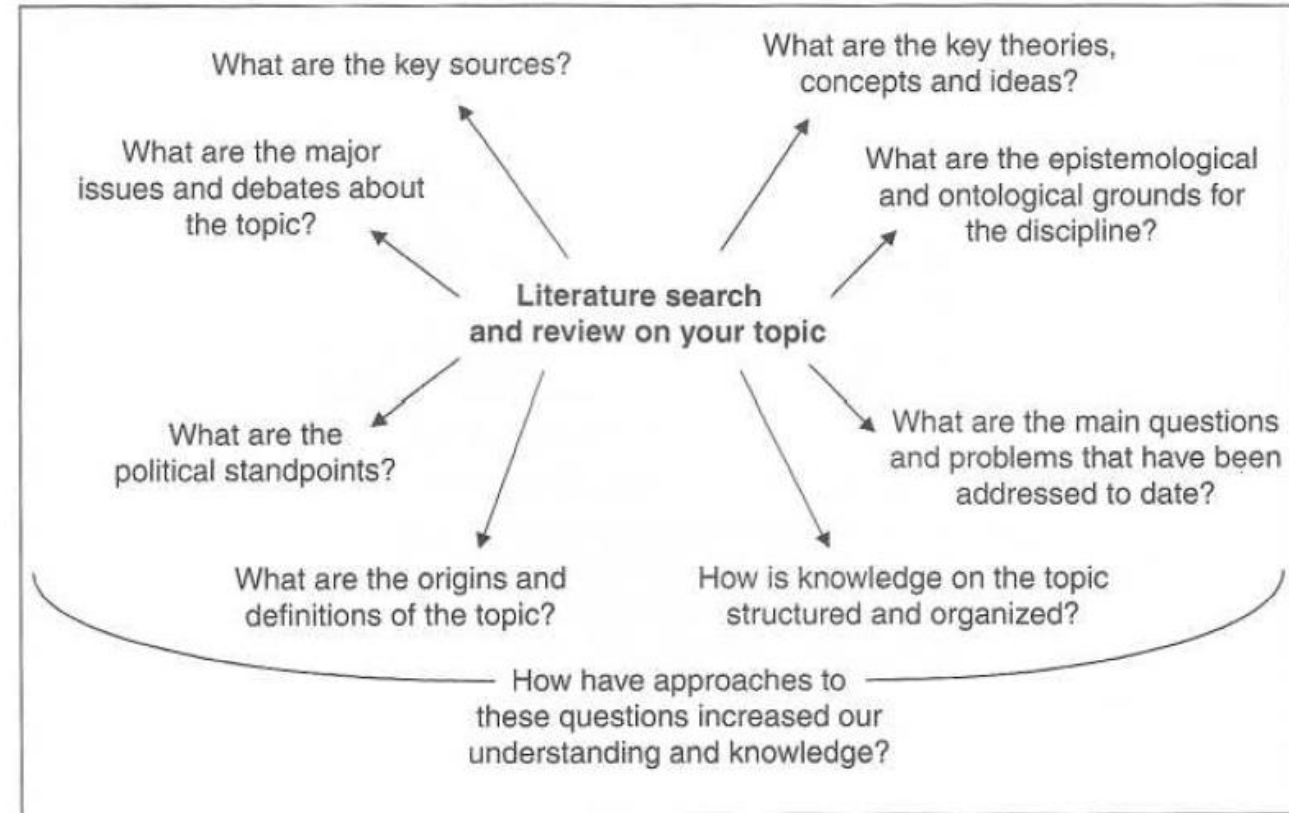
**HOW LONG:** 2 Minutes

## What is a Literature Review?

- A literature review is a systematic examination of the scholarly literature about a given topic (Efron & Ravid, 2019: 2)
- In general, a literature review has two key elements (Knopf & McMenemy, 2008: 100):
  - Summarizes the findings or claims that have emerged from prior research on a given subject;
  - Evaluates how accurate and complete the existing knowledge (*what's right, what's wrong, what's inconclusive, and what's missing*).

## What is the Purpose/Function a Literature Review?

- Typically, a Literature Review can fulfil a number of purposes...



## The purpose/function of a Literature Review depends on whether:

- It constitutes a stand-alone study.
- It's embedded..
  - In a Research Proposal;
  - In a Scientific Work (Article, Book, Thesis, Dissertation).



## The Literature Review as a ‘stand-alone’ study:

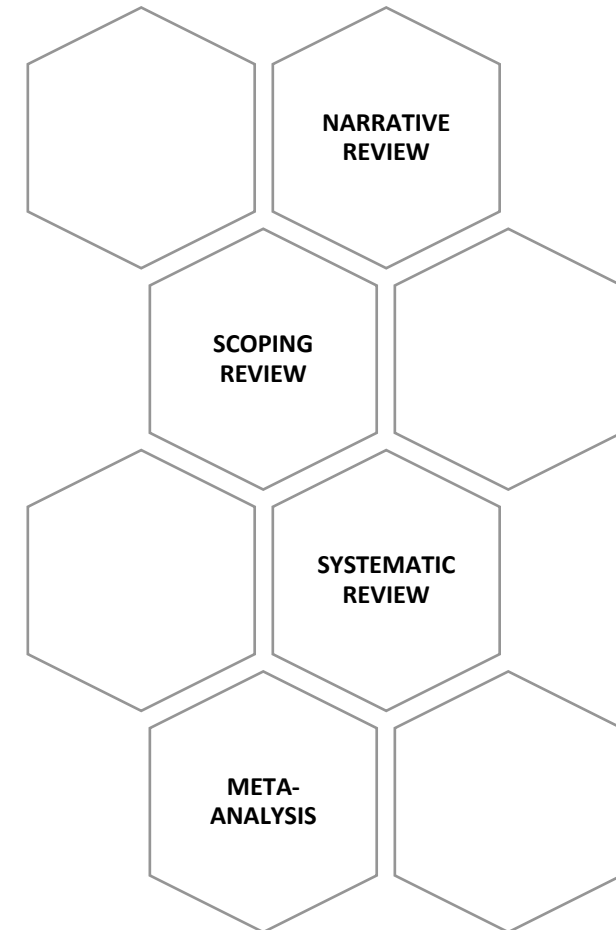
- **Primary goal:** Ascertain the current ‘state of the art’ on a particular subject or problem.
- **There is a lot of diversity in the field!**

Table 1 Typology source documents

Typology	Number of review types included
Barnett-Page and Thomas (2009)	9
Booth (2015)	17
Booth et al. (2016a)	22
Cook, Nichols, Webb, Fuller and Richards (2017)	9
Dixon-Woods, Agarwal, Jones, Young and Sutton (2005)	11
Grant and Booth (2009)	14
Hannes and Lockwood (2011)	6
Kastner et al. (2012)	25
Kastner, Antony, Soobiah, Straus and Tricco (2016)	12
Munn, Stern, Aromataris, Lockwood and Jordan (2018)	10
Paré, Trudel, Jaana and Kitsiou (2015)	9
Tricco, Tetzlaff and Moher (2011)	8
Tricco et al. (2016c)	25
Tricco et al. (2018)	5
Whittemore, Chao, Jang, Minges and Park (2014)	9

## The Literature Review as a **'stand-alone' study:**

- But some types are more common than others.



## The Literature Review as ...

### part of a **Research Proposal**:

- **Primary goal:** Provide an overview of existing scholarship in order to explain how the proposed research will add to or alter the existing body of knowledge.

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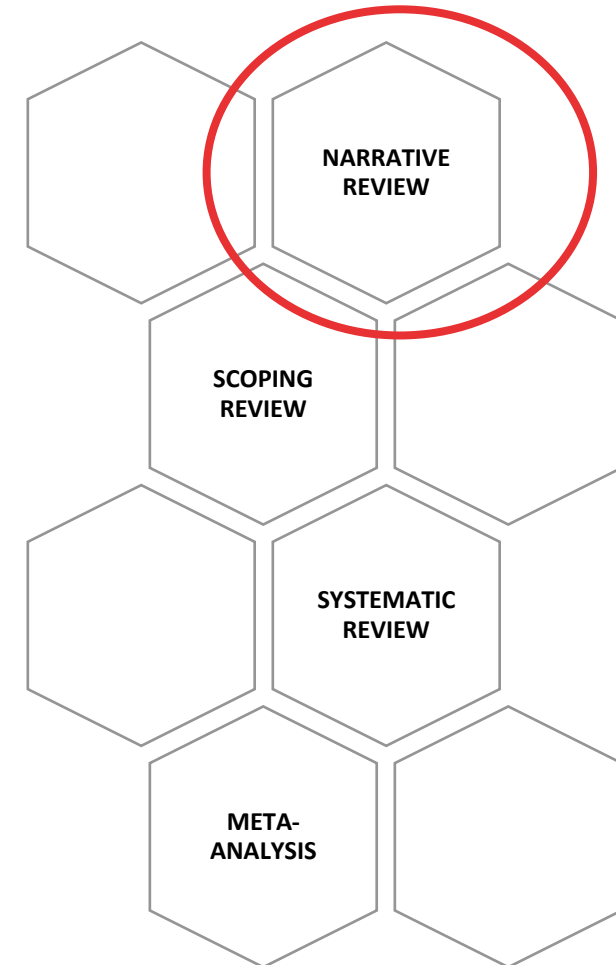
- **Primary goal:** Provide an overview of existing scholarship in order to explain how the proposed research will add to or alter the existing body of knowledge

## The Literature Review as ...

### part of a **Scientific Work**:

- **Primary goal:** Show how the findings/conclusions relate to the prior knowledge/evidence on the subject.

When seen as **part of a Scientific Work**, the Literature Review is closer to the model of the **'Narrative Review'**.



## In what way the Literature Review relates with the other parts of your Dissertation?

### **GOALS OF A LITERATURE REVIEW:**

- Situate the topic within a contemporary context;
- Establish the significance of the topic;
- Clarify and define key concepts in the literature;
- Identify gaps in existing research;
- Identify and contrast key theoretical standpoints in the literature;
- Identify and critically assess the main methodological approaches in the field;
- Identify methodological approaches that may help in designing the data collection and analysis strategies;
- Identify key empirical findings;

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METHODOLOGY

FINDINGS

DISCUSSION

CONCLUSION

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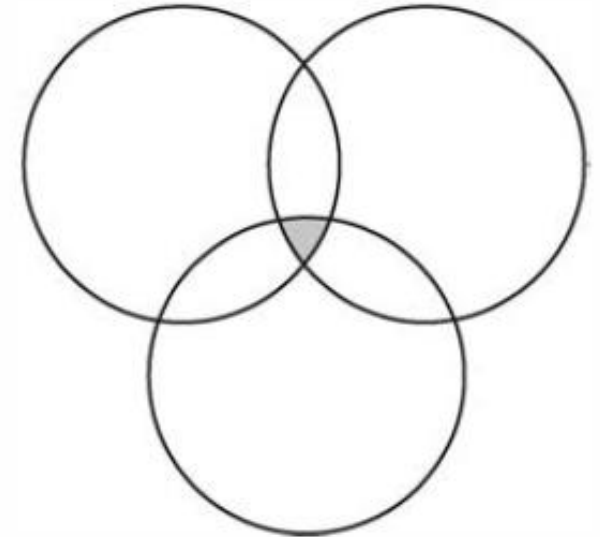
FINDINGS

DISCUSSION

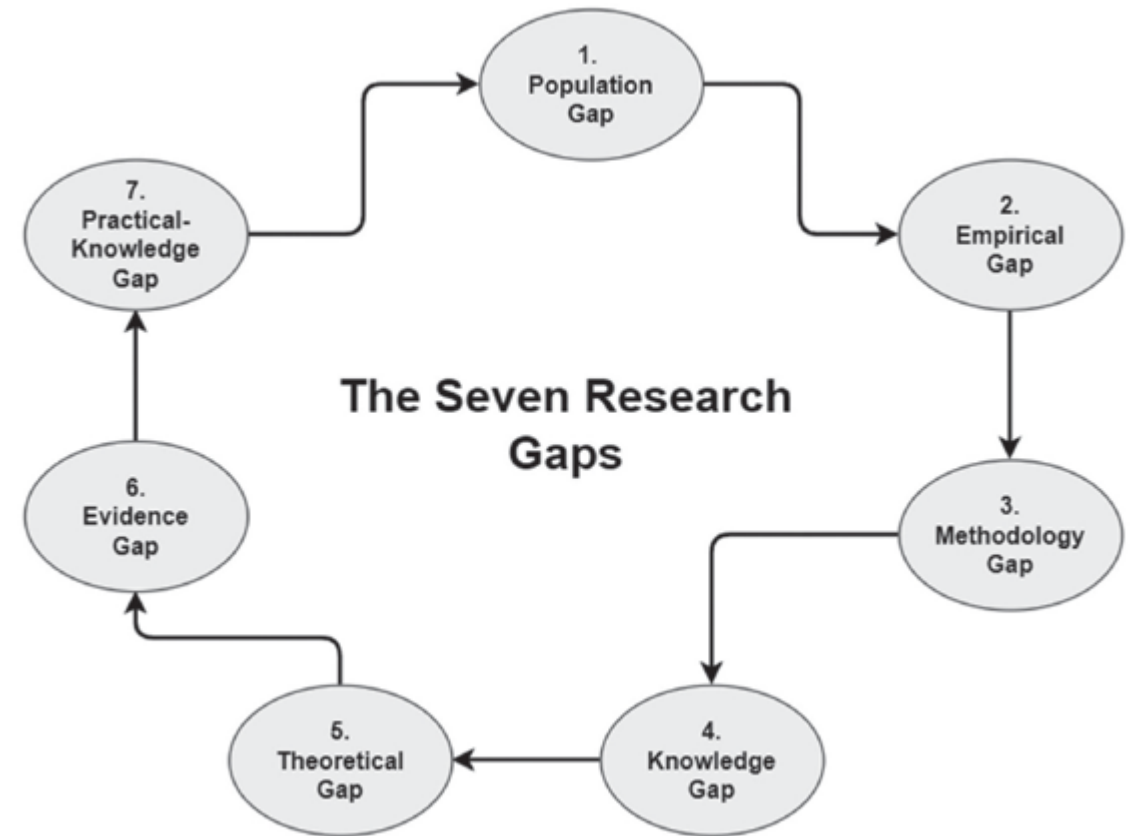
CONCLUSION

## Judging the Evidence

- **When evaluating the literature there are things you will want to be looking out for:**
  - **Areas of (near) Consensus** - Represent the “conventional wisdom” about a subject among experts;
  - **Areas of Disagreement/Debate** - These areas of debate usually give rise to the alternative “camps” or “schools of thought” in the literature;
  - **Gaps** - Gaps in knowledge might involve questions no one has tried to answer, perspectives no one has considered, or bodies of information that no one has attempted to collect or to analyze.



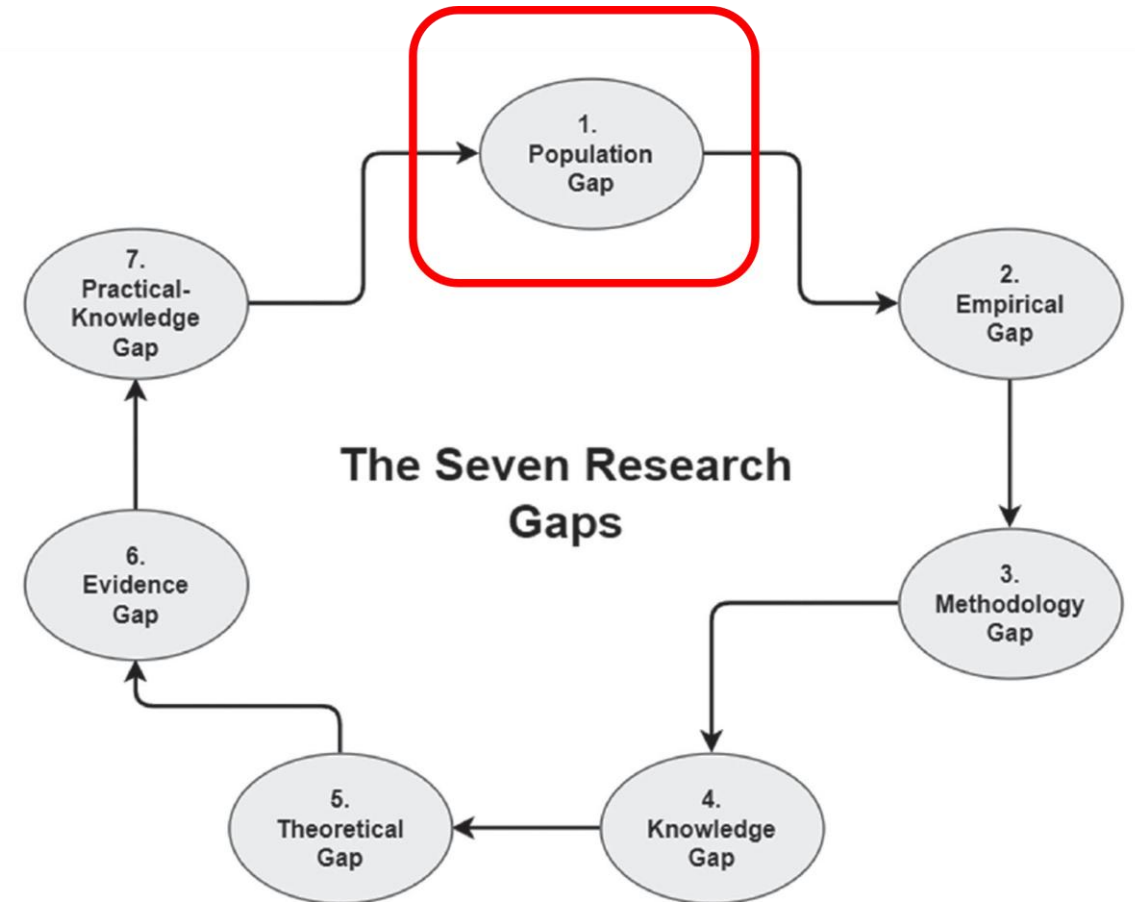
## Most common Research Gaps



## Research Gaps:

### Population Gap

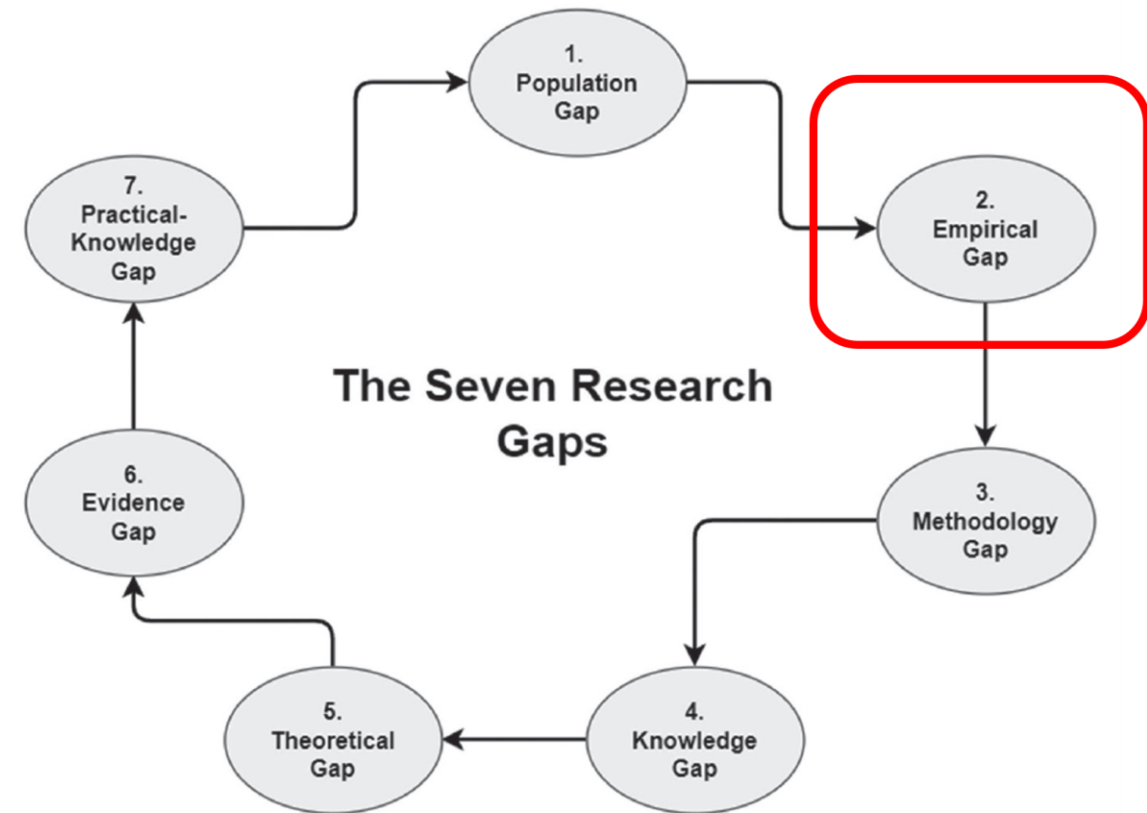
- **Population/group (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, age, etc.) is underrepresented or not adequately represented in previous research.**



## Research Gaps:

### Empirical Gap

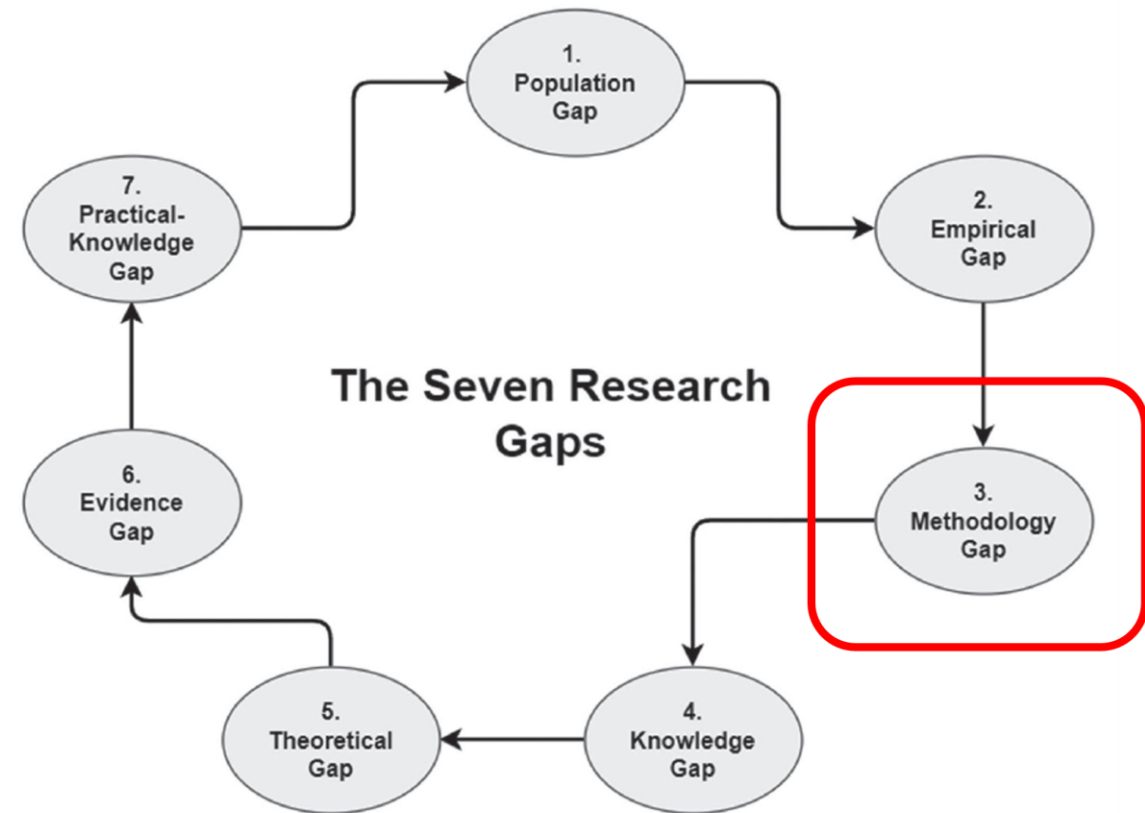
- **Research results or hypotheses that need to be empirically verified/further investigated.**



## Research Gaps:

### Methodology Gap

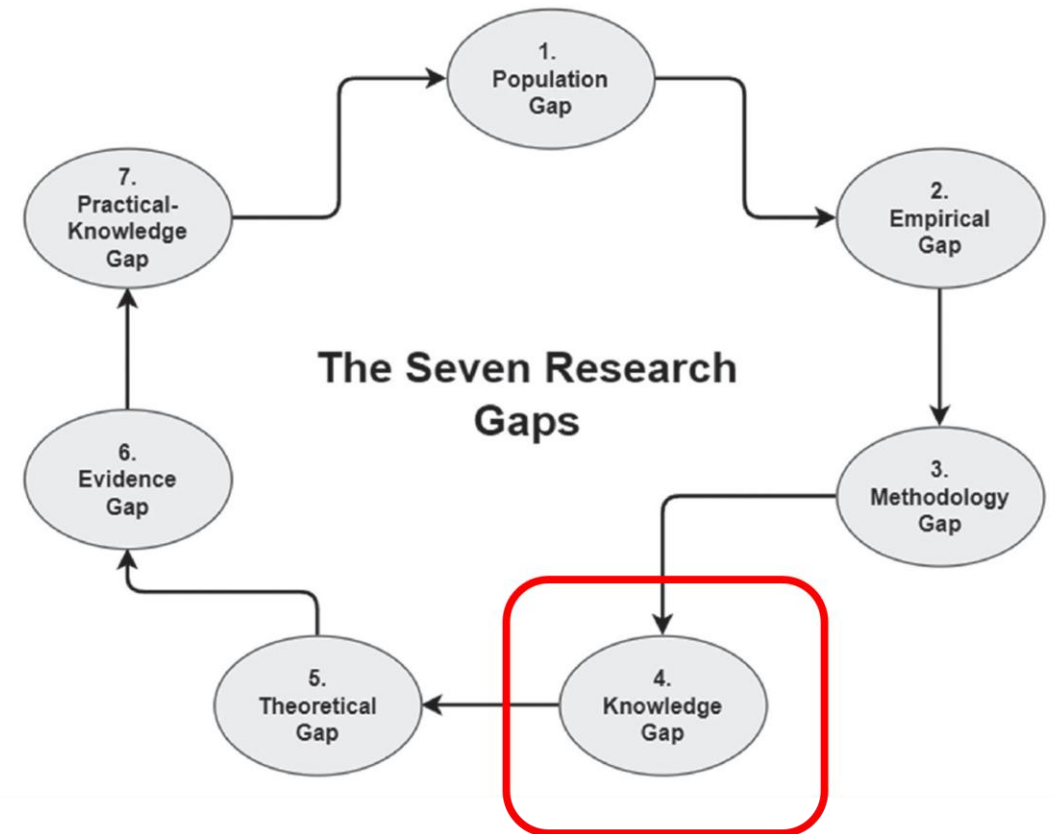
- There is an overdependence on a particular methodological approach.
- Introducing new methodological approaches can help to reinforce/contradict existing results or even generate new facts.



## Research Gaps:

### Knowledge Gap

- There is no evidence on the topic.

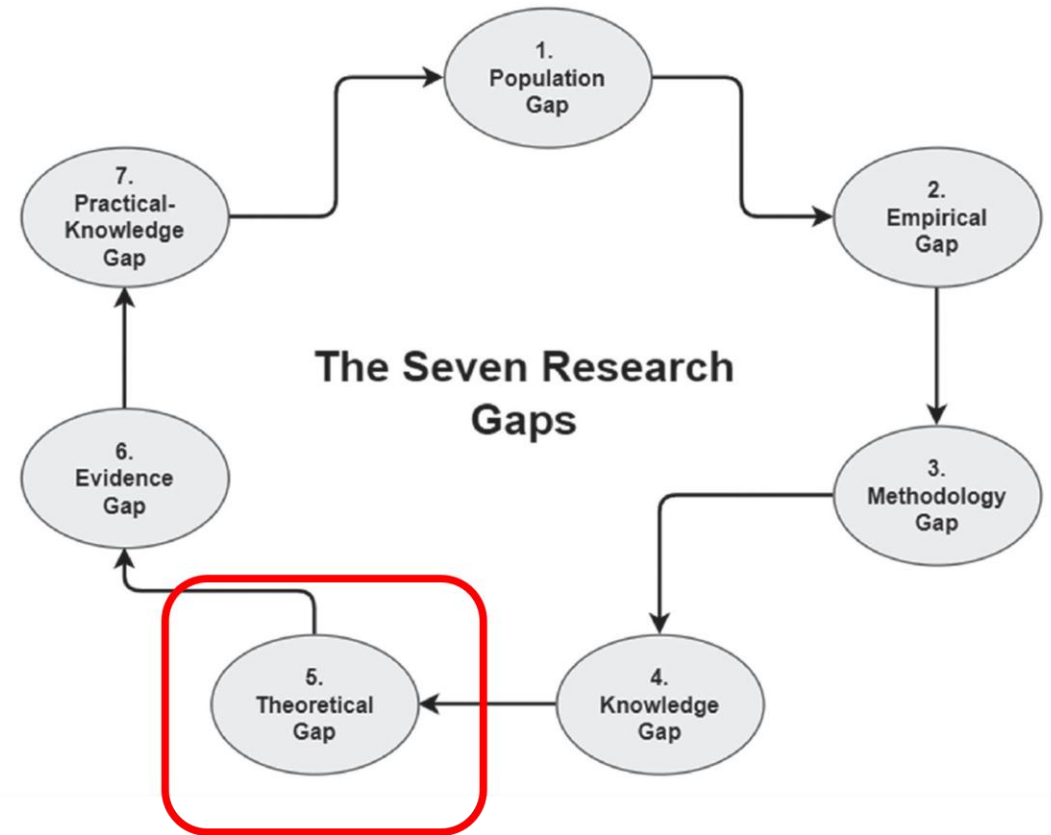




## Research Gaps:

### Theoretical Gap

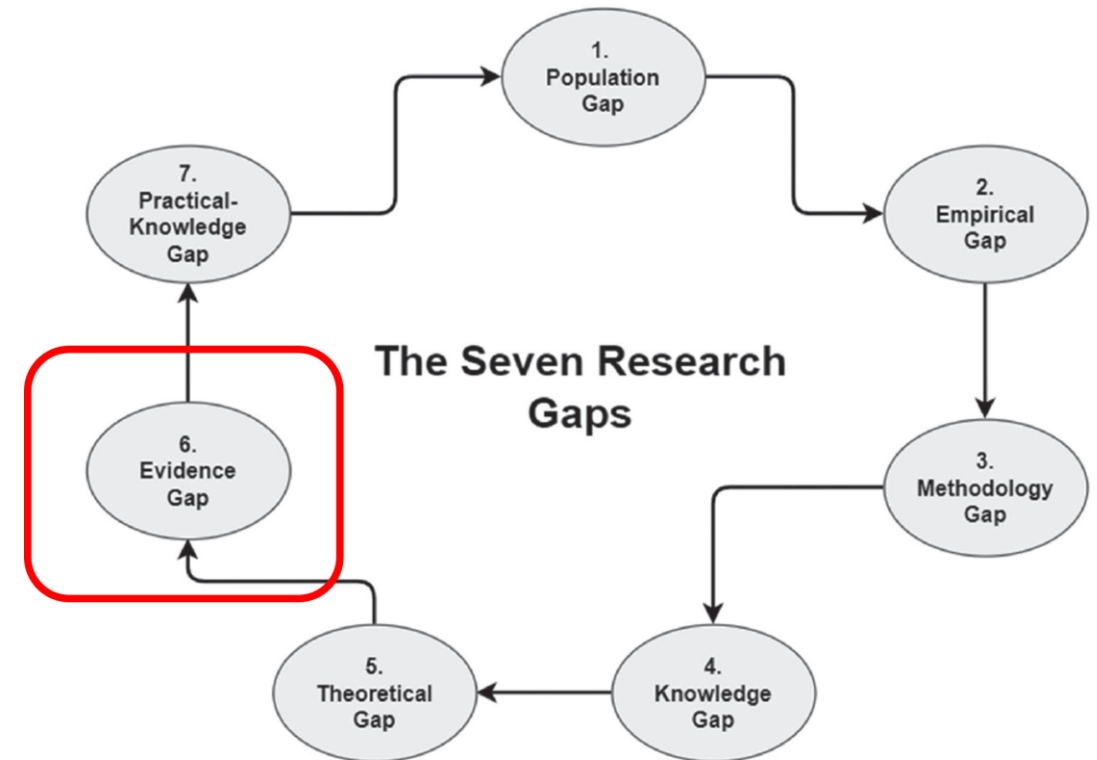
- **Lack of theory or theoretical framework on the topic.**



## Research Gaps:

### Evidence Gap

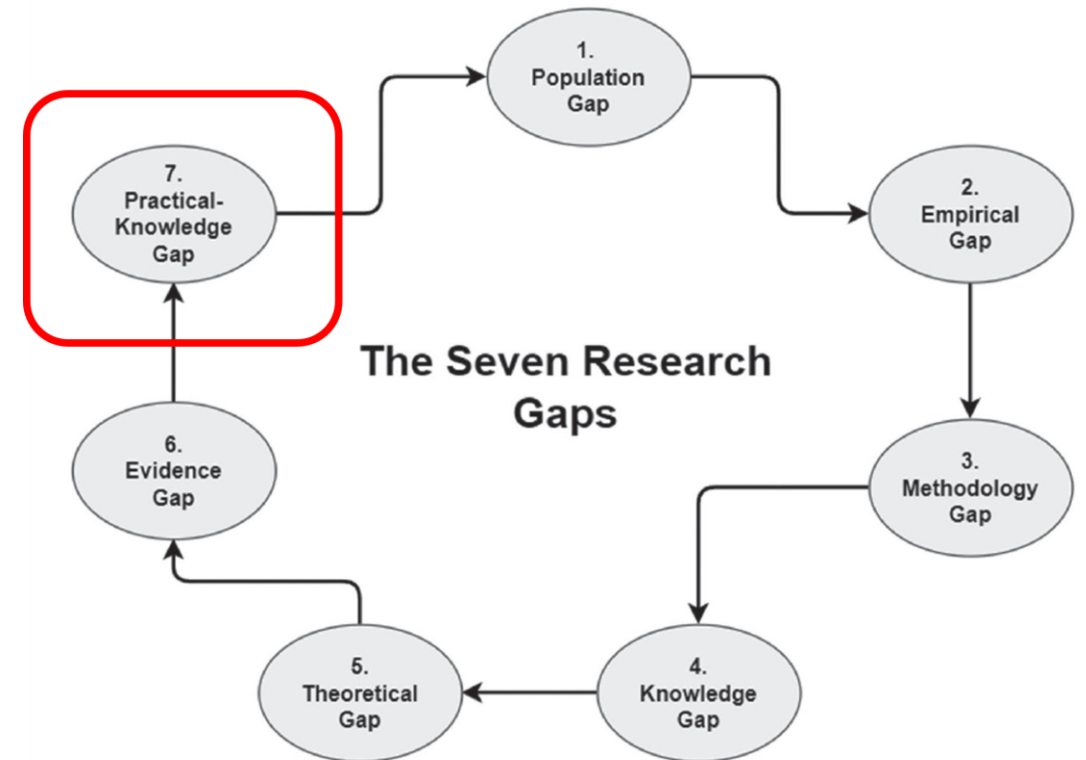
- **Contradictory evidence in the literature on the topic.**



## Research Gaps:

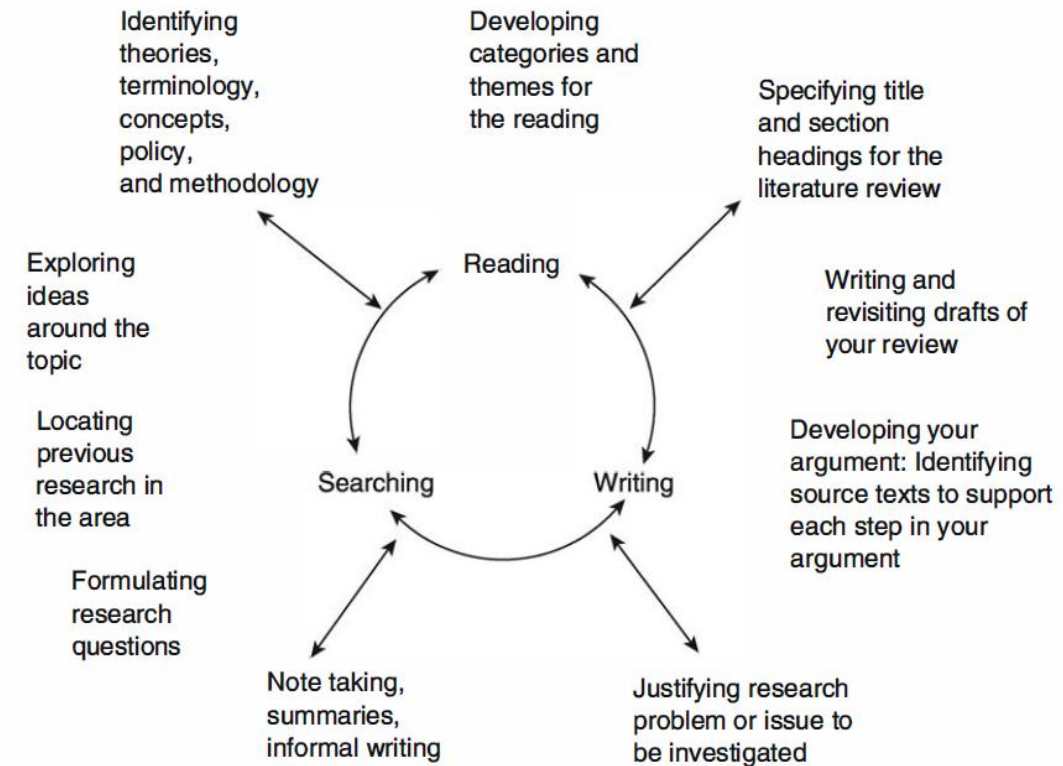
### Practical-Knowledge Gap

- **Professional behavior or practices diverge from the evidence or are not covered by the existing research.**



## From Reviewing the Literature to writing the Literature Review

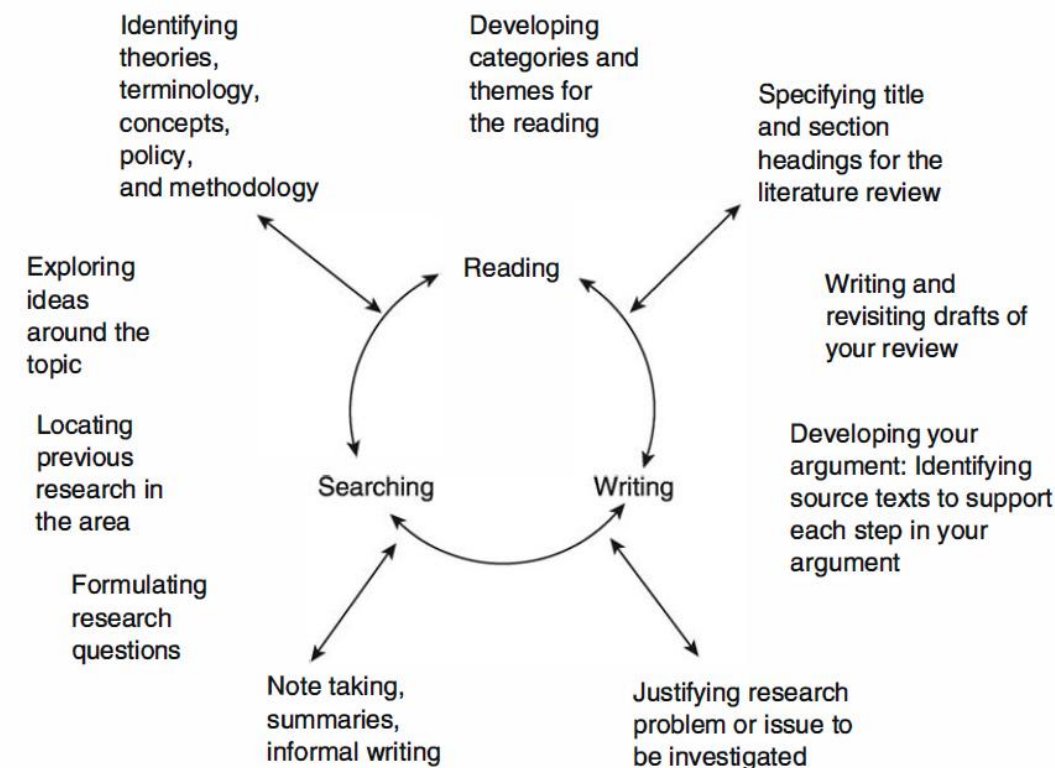
- **Building a Literature Review is not a linear process.**
- **In fact, this is an iterative process that involves the search, reading, reviewing of data and writing;**
- **This makes the decision on what how the Literature Review will be structured particularly hard!**



Source: Ridley, 2012: 99.

## From Reviewing the Literature to writing the Literature Review

- **The decision on the structure must take in consideration a variety of factors:**
  - **The degree of development of the field (nr. of publications);**
  - **The nature of the evidence (qualitative vs. quantitative);**
  - **If the focus is on theoretical issues or on**
  - **The (type of) Gap that the paper wishes to explore;**



Source: Ridley, 2012: 99.

## From Reviewing the Literature to writing the Literature Review

- **Effron & Ravid (2019) identify four typical strategies for organising the structure of the Literature Review:**
  - **Thematic Outline;**
  - **Chronological Outline;**
  - **Outline separating the theoretical from the empirical;**
  - **Theoretical to methodological outline.**

## From Reviewing the Literature to writing the Literature Review

- **Thematic Outline**
  - **Most common approach;**
  - **Literature is presented by reference to a set of key themes on the topic;**
  - **Each theme may integrate both theoretical empirical evidence.**

### BOX 7.2. An Example of Thematic Outline Organization

- I. Different perceptions of assessment in history
- II. Summative assessment (theories, research, and practice)
- III. Formative assessment (theories, research, and practice)
- IV. Assessment by systems
- V. Assessment by teachers
- VI. Assessment by students

## From Reviewing the Literature to writing the Literature Review

- **Chronological Outline**
  - **Suitable for subjects that have changed over time;**
  - **Themes/topics are organised in chronological order.**
  - **Explore chronologically the progress of theories, emergence of policies, development of research methods, or changes in practices.**

### BOX 7.3. An Example of Chronological Outline Organization

- I. Cold War in school—The impact of Russia launching Sputnik (1957)
- II. The Civil Rights Movement—Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1967)
- III. Nation at Risk—Expanding the federal role (1983)
- IV. No Child Left Behind—The children who were left behind (2002)
- V. Common Core: Opportunities, challenges, risks (2010s)
- VI. Reforming No Child Left Behind—Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)
- VII. Reflections: The expanding role of government in enforcing accountability and standardization.



## From Reviewing the Literature to writing the Literature Review

- **‘Separation of the Theoretical from the Empirical’ Outline**
  - **Suitable if the topic under analysis involves both theoretical and empirical dimensions;**
  - **First focuses on theoretical and conceptual aspects of the literature;**
  - **Second part focuses on empirical evidence (quantitative and/or qualitative), its methodological aspects, and the key findings.**

### BOX 7.4. An Example of Separation-of-the-Theoretical-from-the-Empirical Outline Organization

- I. Defining culture and its role in relationships
- II. Multicultural competency theory
- III. The implications of multicultural competency theory for the counseling field
- IV. Self-awareness among novice counselors-in-training of the role of multicultural competency in counseling
- V. Critical analysis of the methods currently practiced to develop multicultural competency in counseling programs
- VI. Research-based recommendations for developing multicultural competencies for counselors

## From Reviewing the Literature to writing the Literature Review

- **‘Theoretical to Methodological’ Outline**
  - Suitable if the literature on the topic is mostly theoretical;
  - First part is a theoretical discussion on conceptual frameworks and the schools of thought underpinning your subject;
  - Second part consists of an exploration of a research approach that complements the identified theories discussed in the first part and may lead to your research question.

### BOX 7.5. An Example of Theoretical-to-Methodological Outline Organization

- I. Feminism and cultural hegemony
- II. Evolution of thought toward feminist theory
- III. Transnational feminist theory
- IV. Summary of thoughts
- V. The power of stories that matter: A feminist perspective
- VI. Narrative as a research design

## Task: #2



**WHO:** Individual

**WHAT:** PPT referencing, using Harvard system:

1 Journal Article;

1 Book;

1 Edited Book;

1 Book Chapter;

1 Report (ex. European Commission);

1 Working Paper/Policy Brief;

1 Online Dataset.

**WHERE:** Ms Teams

**SUBMISSION:** 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 23:59.

# MASTERS PROJECT



Choose topic, think about supervisor. Ask coordination and lecturers (we are also available to help)

Enroll: request delay from 'set' date 15 March to 15 October.

More information on how to proceed coming from the coordination

Write TFM

Submit TFM

Ongoing

15/10

2/4

Aquila

