

# Mapping the Literature: The Literature Matrix

By Jim Goes and Marilyn K. Simon

Includes excerpts from Simon & Goes (2013), *Dissertation and Scholarly Research: Recipes for Success*. Seattle, WA: Dissertation Success LLC

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The hallmark of a strong, thorough, and sophisticated literature review is a well-organized presentation of the breadth and depth of the important literature on a problem or topic. Dissertation committees and other readers want to understand the scope and organization of topics that support your review. They also look for depth of inquiry into the literature, and how your research will fit with and extend current understanding of the problem or topic.

One important tool to help communicate the breadth and depth of your review is to use a visual *Chart of Research* or *Literature Matrix*. This matrix is usually organized around major content or topical themes of the literature on one dimension, and the types and numbers of source references consulted and used on the second dimension. Two examples from completed dissertations are provided below.

Such a matrix helps to provide readers not only a sense of the scope and depth of the review, but visually communicates at a glance the variety of sources in your review and the rigor of the process by which the broader literature is selected and focused on the specific topics or themes of your research. Additionally, a literature matrix facilitates development of a strong, comprehensive summary of the literature review. Headings and subheadings in the review should be consistent with chart of research, providing structure to the review and helping readers to navigate the various elements of the literature.

A literature matrix is a powerful tool to provide readers confidence that you have carefully and thoughtfully chosen the appropriate literature to reference, and connects your review to the larger literature and the rest of the dissertation proposal.

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Example 1 – A Study on Feminism and Gender Bias in Recruiting Executives

*Chart of Research*

Key terms searched	Books	Scholarly Journals	Secondary Sources	Reviewed	Used
Feminism, gender, leadership, CEO, bias, stereotypes	420	7	0	37	8
Gender stereotypes, bias, perceptions, leadership	1,425	327	112	186	55
Gender, power, women, leadership, stereotype, bias	5,215	171	6	57	20
Gender, recruiters, candidate, stereotype, bias	333	8	0	34	18
Gender, women, leadership behaviors, traits, personality	111	38	0	30	19
Gender, women, leadership, CEO, stereotype, bias	587	12	1	40	33
Gender, women, networks, networking, stereotype, bias	1,270	11	0	21	5
Gender, women, organizational communication, stereotype	4,705	198	2	98	8
Gender, women, organizational culture, leadership, stereotype	4,261	136	5	41	27
Gender, women, leader effectiveness, stereotype	4,947	103	2	101	15
Stereotype development, threat, activation	1,425	43	0	73	21
Systems thinking, theory	2,707	895	43	41	10
Women, labor, government, legal, law, stereotypes, bias, glass ceiling	2,070	18	0	15	8
<b>TOTAL SOURCES</b>	<b>32,291</b>	<b>1,982</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>263</b>

## Example 2 – A Study on Managed Medicare Plans

### *Chart of Research (Referenced)*

Area of research	Scholarly		Doctoral	Government	Other
	Books	journals	dissertations	reports	reports
Medicare		73(18)	24(0)	54(20)	33(3)
Medicare managed care		28(23)	16(1)	11(6)	22(0)
Medicare Advantage		8(5)		22(3)	24(6)
Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003		14(6)		12(1)	14(1)
CAHPS		31(4)	3(0)	6(5)	2(2)
Customer satisfaction		18(12)			
Consumer satisfaction		9(5)			
Patient satisfaction		24(10)	3(3)		1(0)
Health care quality		15(4)	1(1)	3(0)	3(0)
Customer-driven health care		19(6)	1(1)		
Likert-type surveys	2(2)	4(4)			
Total	2(2)	243(97)	46(7)	103(35)	97(12)

Related resources:

**Conducting a Literature Review**

**Critical Review by Coutts**

**Boote and Beile: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review in Research Preparation**