

Styling and structuring the literature review

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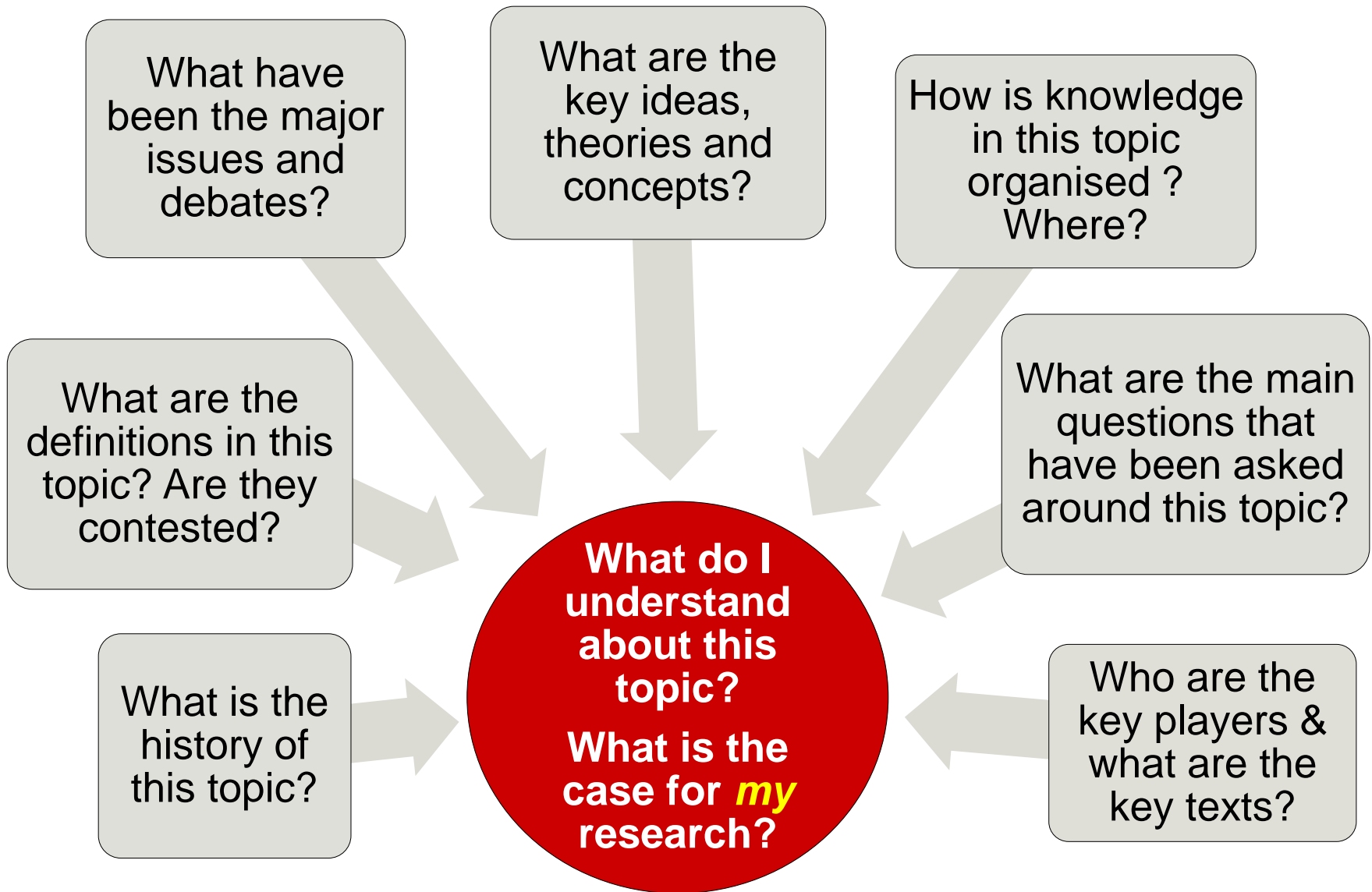
This session:

- **The purpose of a literature review**
- **Writing work as identity work**
- **Finding your voice**
- **Structuring a literature review**

Why do we engage with the literature?

- To understand the body of knowledge around our research topic
- To identify what's missing in that body of knowledge
- Therefore, to provide a warrant for our research
- To give a theoretical underpinning for our research
- To show the validity of our research questions/ problems, research design, specific methodology and goals
- To show how our results add to the body of knowledge.

One purpose of a literature review in postgraduate research is bound up in these questions:



Your identity as a scholar:

There are two parts to writing your thesis

➤ **The text work:**

Knowing the conventions and textual practices (how the writing works – structures and sub-structures)

➤ **The identity work:**

Developing your stance towards the literature

‘Identity’ is complex and constantly evolving. It includes your socio-cultural background and your scholarly background.

Kamler, B. & Thomson, P. (2006). *Helping doctoral students write: pedagogies for supervision*. Milton Park: Routledge.

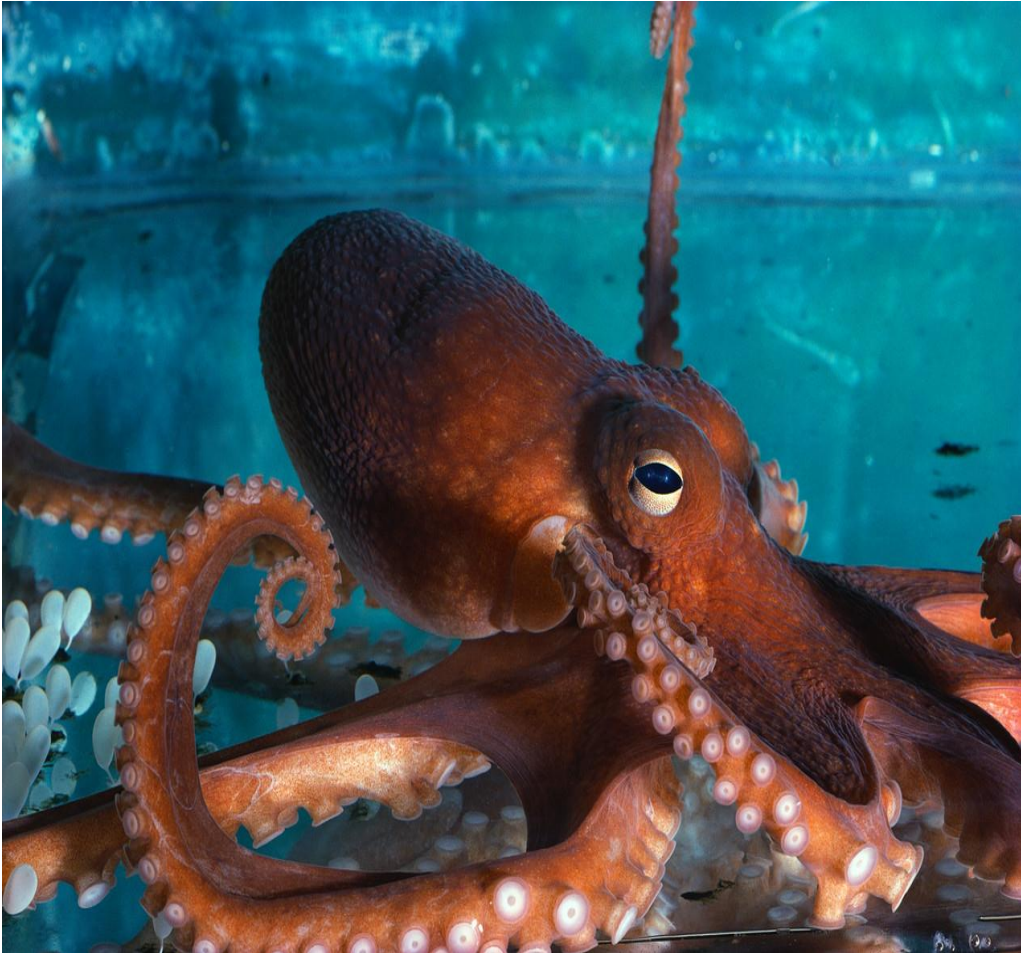
Writing is identity work

“...there is a lack of recognition of the intensity of identity work involved at this site of text production. We would go so far as to say that literature reviews are *the* quintessential site of identity work, where the novice researcher enters what we call occupied territory – with all the immanent danger and quiet dread that this metaphor implies – including possible ambushes, barbed wire fences, and unknown academics who patrol the boundaries of already occupied territories.”

(Kamler & Thomson, p. 29)

What is your metaphor?

Writing a literature review is like.....



...persuading (selected arms of) an octopus into a glass (Kamler & Thomson, 2006)

...taking minutes?



...being part of a conversation?



...hosting a dinner party

Smyth in Kamler & Thomson (2006)



Your literature review is like inviting guests for dinner.

You are the host.

- It is familiar territory, company and conversation.
- You've chosen the guests – only a limited number;
 - Some are people you have known a long time and who are very important to you.
 - Some are new and exciting and have lots of ideas you want to explore more. There may be some lively debate.
- You have planned the menu and cooked the food.
- It's your night!

Take a “*hands on hips*” position:



- You need to take a position that is ***friendly but strong***: be prepared to extend your authority on the subject but not be too aggressive
- You need to be clear about where ***you*** stand in the field of your work.

How to achieve a 'hands on hips' stance:

- *Take charge!!*
- Make **your** ideas and arguments central, not each researcher or each piece of literature.
- Frame discussion as debate, and group and oppose researchers who agree with a contention with those who don't.
- Lead the reader through the story relevant to your study by showing the different positions in the field.
- Develop 'a healthy degree of appreciation and criticality' (Kamler & Thomson, 2006, p. 43).

Syntactic borrowing

Borrowing and fleshing out a sentence skeleton is a good way to practise positioning yourself authoritatively within your academic community through writing.

1. The study builds on and contributes to work in.....
2. Although studies inhave examined, there has not been an.....
3. As such, this study provides additional insight into.....
4. The analytic focus on..... Contributes to the body of knowledge by.....
5. This study analyses.....in the context of.....
6. Although numerous studies (.....) have identified....., little analytic attention has been paid to.....
7. I address this issue by demonstrating

(Kamler and Thomson, 2006, p. 57)

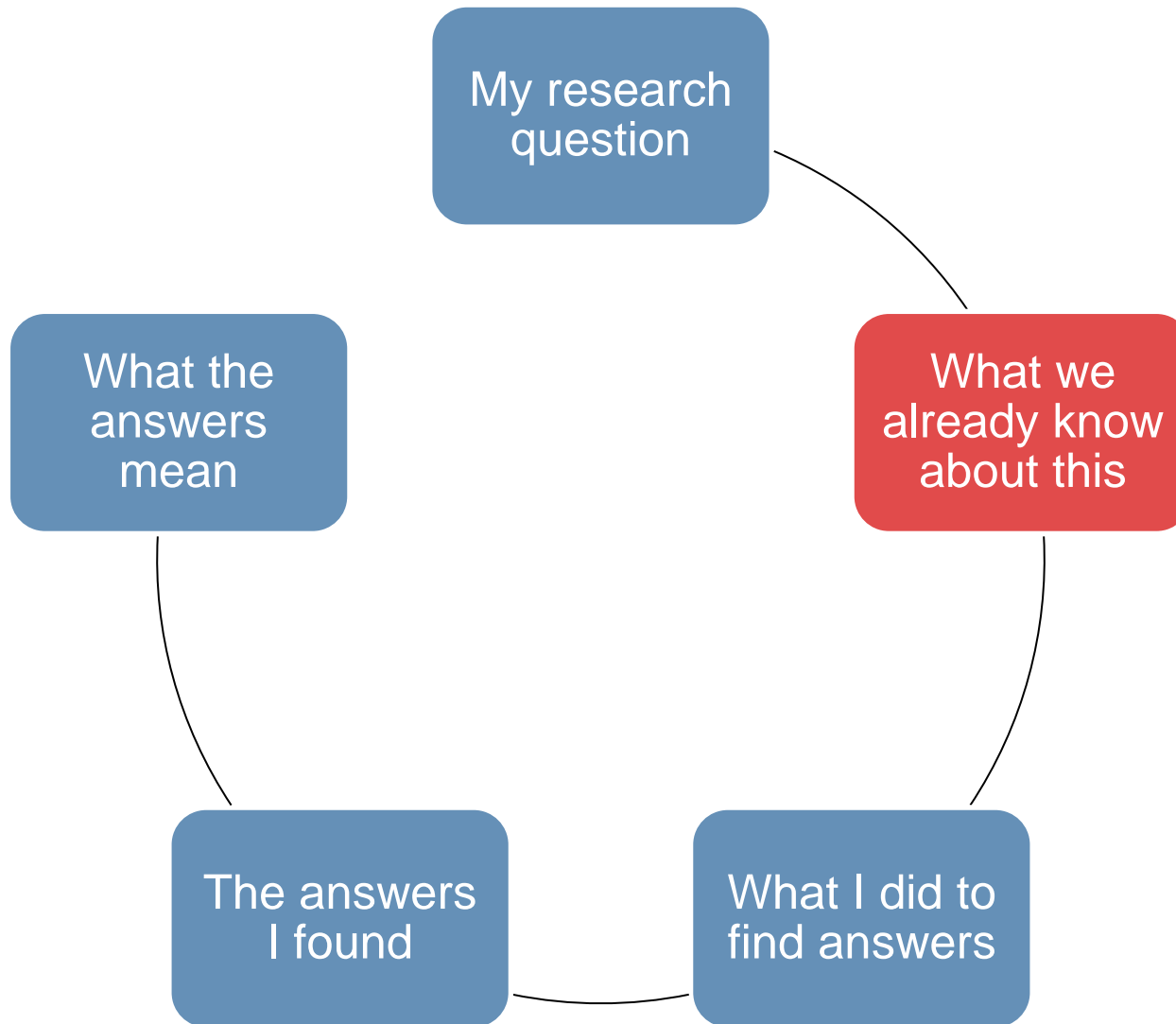
A basic literature review



A better literature review: Finding *your voice* amongst the literature



Where it fits into the story of your research:



But...

The literature will be used *throughout* your thesis, particularly:

- in providing a rationale for the study in the introduction
- in justifying your methodology
- in linking your discussion back to past research.

Further...

- the bit you call your 'lit. review' may not be 1 chapter – it could be 2 chapters or more.
- it may not be a discrete chapter, but distributed among other thematically-based chapters.

The building blocks and the gap – the case for *your* research



Structure of the literature review 1

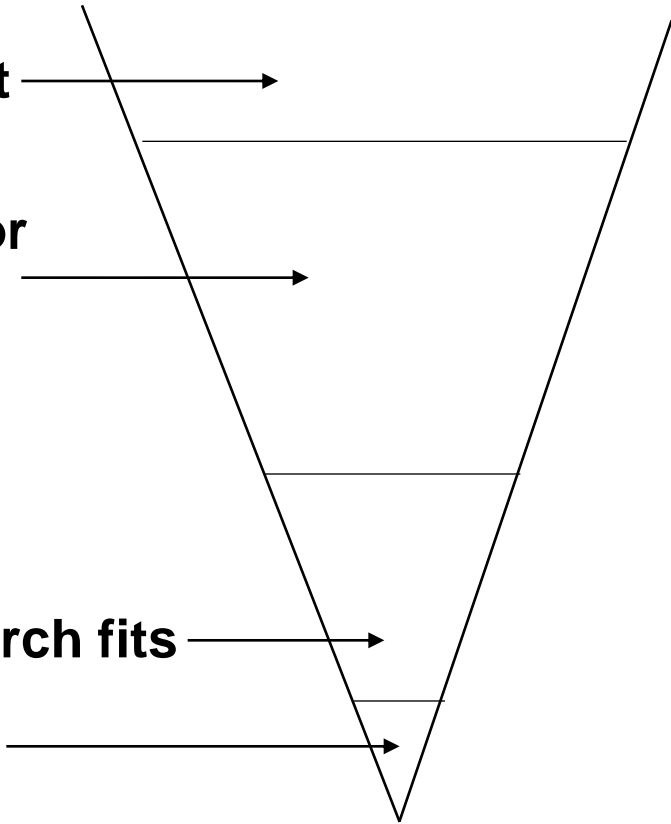
Introduce the problem and context

Highlight the development of major concepts, influential studies etc.

Focus on areas of agreement, modification of design, tensions and inadequacies, narrowing the focus to studies closest to your own

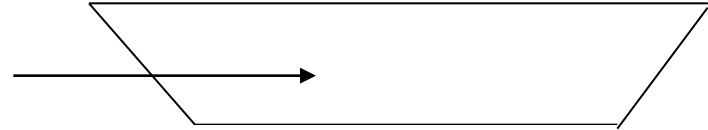
Identify the GAP where your research fits

Sum up and link to your research



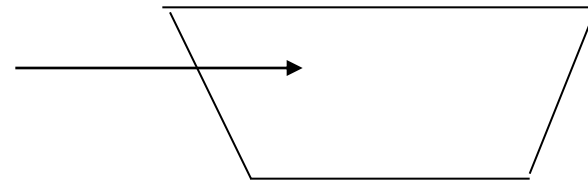
Structure of the literature review - 2

Introduce the problem and context



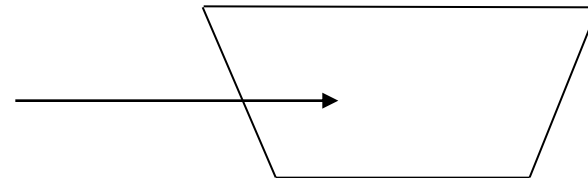
1st theme

Focus on areas of agreement, tensions and inadequacies, narrowing the focus to studies closest to your own.



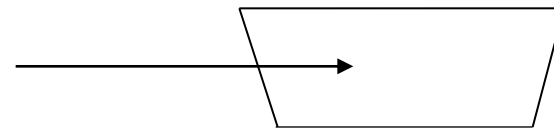
2nd theme

Focus on areas of agreement, tensions and inadequacies, narrowing the focus to studies closest to your own.

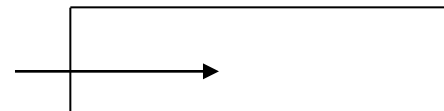


3rd theme

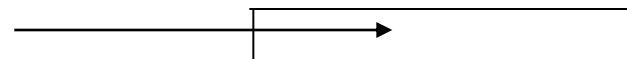
etc. etc.



Identify the GAP where your research fits



Sum up, linking to your research

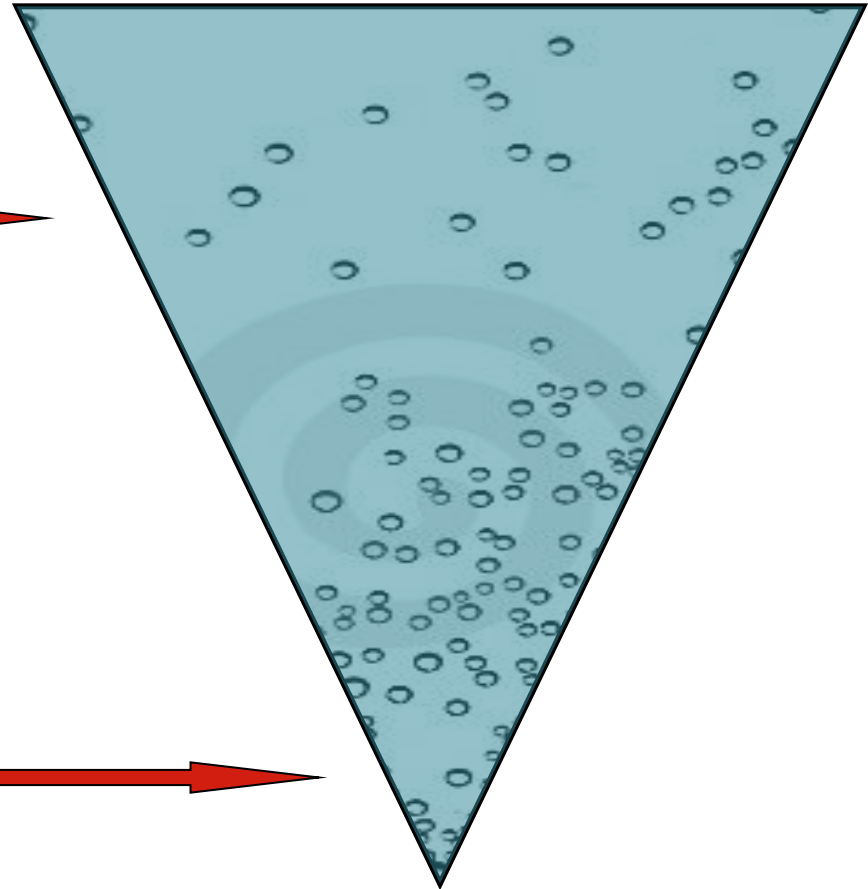


Conceptual structure of the literature review

Fewer concepts and a less intensive focus



More conceptually dense with greater intensity of focus



Introduction to a literature review chapter in a 'traditional' thesis:

- Situate your research within a general context in the literature by defining and identifying the general topic or issue.

- **Generally** point out:
 - gaps in the literature
 - trends
 - themes
 - areas of dissent or controversy

- Outline the organisation of the body of the literature review, and maybe indicate the scope.

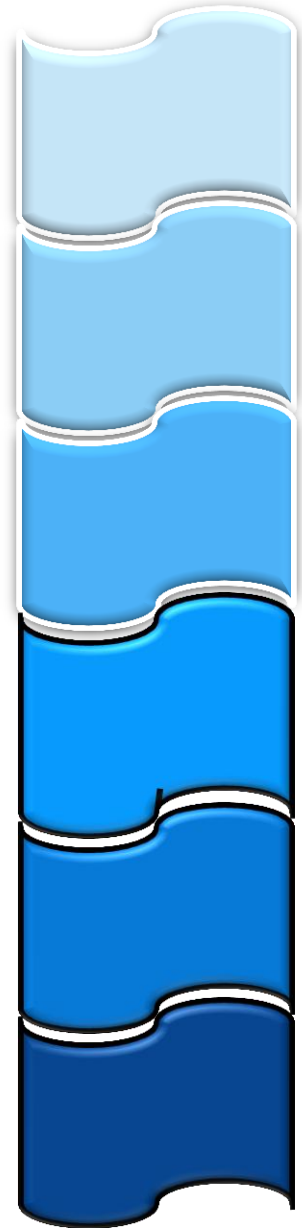
Lit. Review body



From chaotic...



...to organised



Lit. Review body

Paragraph 1

Jones (2003) argues that.....
..... **He** also states that.....
..... However, **he** believes that
.....etc.

Paragraph 2

In a recent article, **Yang** (2009) outlined a new method of .
.....and found.....
..... **She** also found.....
.....etc.

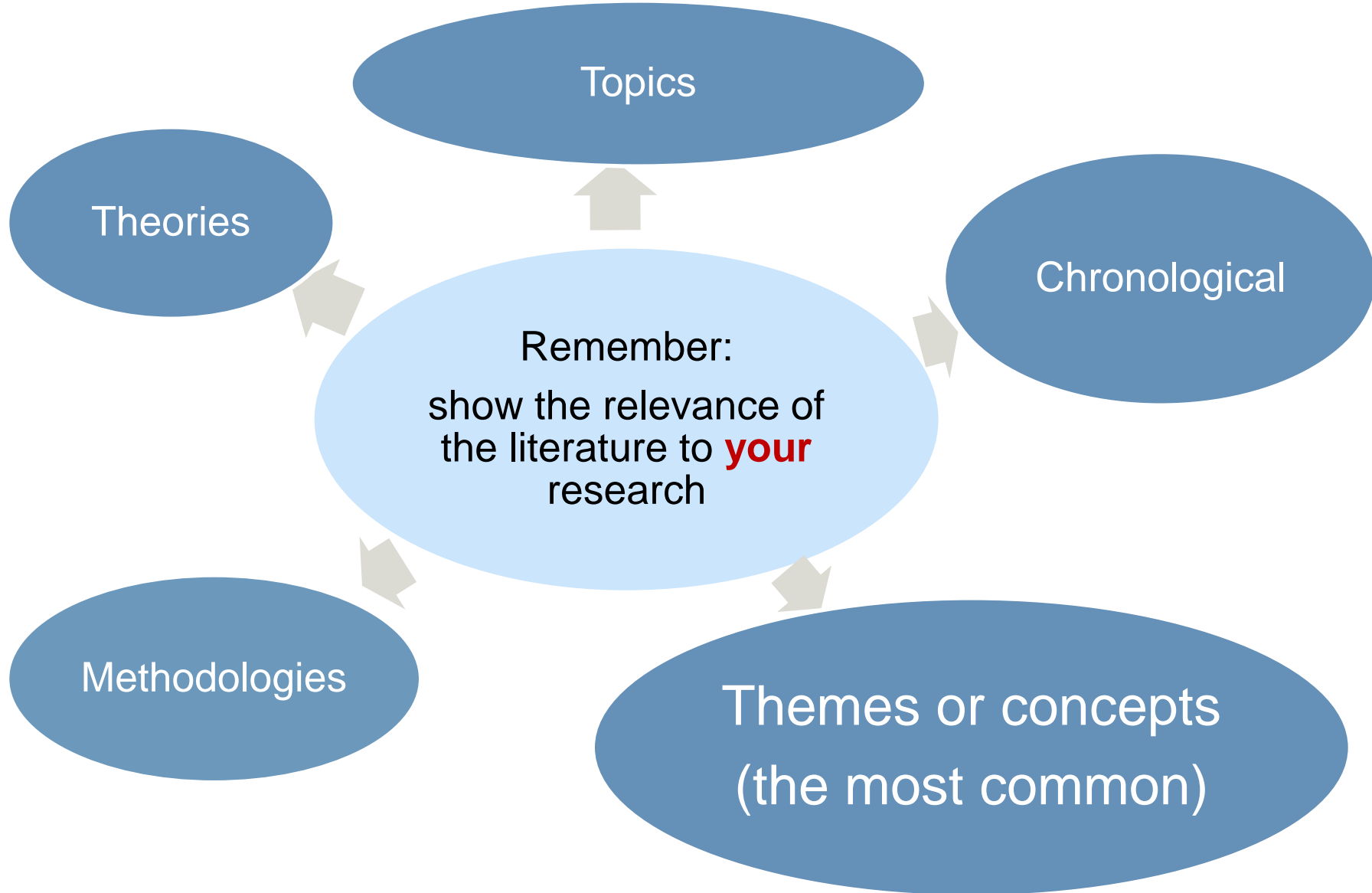
Paragraph 3

Smith(2007) argues that.....
..... **She** also states that.....
and that.....etc.

Paragraph 4

Davis (2005) experimented with.....and found.....
.....
... **He** also found that.....

Possible structures for the lit. review body



Simple literature review using two topics:

Research topic: Forecasting urban residential water demand

| | | |
|------------|--------------------------------------|----|
| CHAPTER 2: | LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 10 |
| 2.1 | End Use Models..... | 11 |
| 2.2 | Residential Water Demand Models..... | 25 |
| 2.3 | Summary..... | 33 |

Source:

Gato, S. (2006) *Forecasting urban residential water demand*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Retrieved from <http://adt.lib.rmit.edu.au/adt/uploads/approved/adt-VIT20070202.113452/public/02whole.pdf>

Chronological literature review example:

Research topic:

Macroeconomic reform of the building and development process: The development and outcomes of building regulation reform in Australia 1990-2003

CHAPTER 2

| | |
|--|-----------|
| BUILDING REGULATION: AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT | 29 |
| 2.0 Constitutional setting | 29 |
| 2.1 Basic concepts underlying building regulation | 30 |
| 2.2 Antecedents of building regulation in English law | 32 |
| 2.3 Building regulation in Australia: Settlement to federation | 35 |
| 2.4 Development of building regulation in post-federation NSW and Victoria | 46 |
| 2.5 Development of building regulation after World War II | 50 |

Source:

Wallace, G. (2006). *Macroeconomic reform of the building and development process: The development and outcomes of building regulation reform in Australia 1990-2003* Unpublished PhD thesis. Retrieved March 25, 2010, from <http://adt.lib.rmit.edu.au/adt/public/adt-VIT20070205.123414/>

Literature review organised around theories (2 lit. chapters)

Research topic: 'One fundamental value': Work for the Dole participants' views about mutual obligation

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 2 From entitlement to contract: Theories of conditional income support | 23 |
| <i>Citizenship and welfare rights</i> | 24 |
| <i>Market liberalism</i> | 27 |
| <i>New paternalism</i> | 29 |
| <i>Communitarianism</i> | 33 |
| <i>'The Third Way'</i> | 35 |
| <i>Policy change</i> | 37 |
| 3 The debate over mutual obligation and Work for the Dole | 41 |
| <i>The Job Network</i> | 41 |
| <i>Mutual obligation and Work for the Dole</i> | 44 |
| <i>Rationales for mutual obligation</i> | 47 |
| <i>Critiques of mutual obligation</i> | 53 |
| <i>Community views about unemployment</i> | 62 |
| <i>Community views about mutual obligation</i> | 70 |

Source:

Sawyer, H. (2005). 'One fundamental value': Work for the Dole participants' views about mutual obligation. Unpublished PhD thesis. Retrieved from <http://adt.lib.rmit.edu.au/adt/uploads/approved/adt-VIT20060926.093507/public/01front.pdf>

Literature review organised around methodologies:

Research topic: *The effectiveness of interventions in children with ADHD*

Chapter 2

Literature Review

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 2.1 | <i>Introduction</i> | 19 |
| 2.2 | <i>Key qualitative research</i> | 21 |
| 2.2.1 | <i>ADHD in children</i> | 22 |
| 2.2.2 | <i>Interventions</i> | 26 |
| 2.3 | <i>Key quantitative research</i> | 29 |
| 2.3.1 | <i>ADHD in children</i> | 30 |
| 2.3.2 | <i>Interventions</i> | 35 |
| 2.4 | <i>Meta-analysis of the literature on intervention in ADHD</i> | 39 |
| 2.5 | <i>Summary</i> | 46 |

Literature review organised around themes:

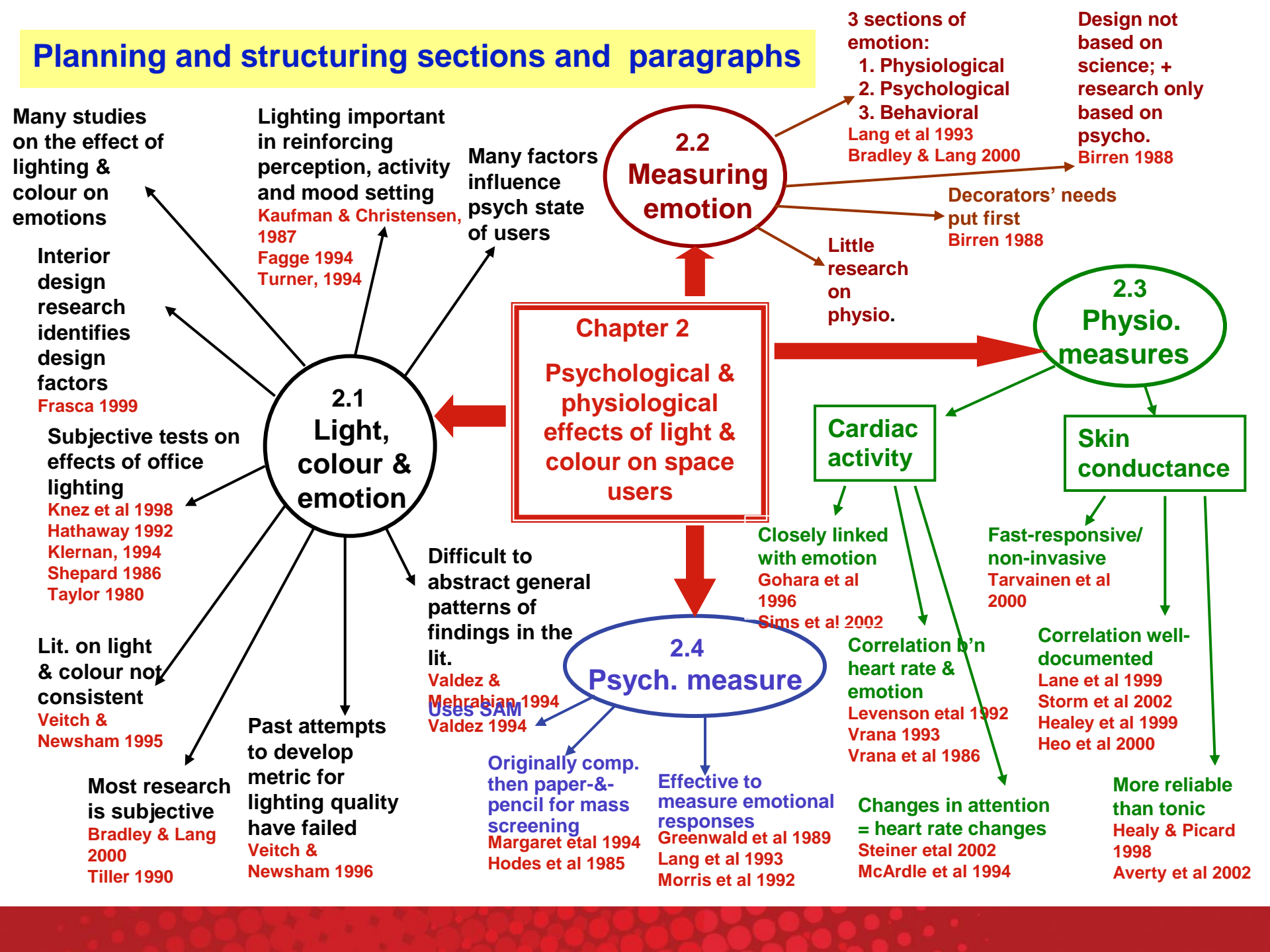
Research topic: *The role of Information and Communication Technologies in Knowledge Management: From Enabler to Facilitator*

| | | |
|------------------|---|----|
| CHAPTER 2 | Literature Review | |
| 2.1 | Introduction | 23 |
| 2.2 | The complexity of knowledge | 25 |
| 2.3 | Knowledge management theory and practice | 31 |
| 2.4 | ICT in knowledge management | 40 |
| 2.5 | Issues and concerns for effective knowledge management | 45 |
| 2.6 | Concluding remarks | 47 |

Source:

Song, H. (2007). *The role of Information and Communication Technologies in Knowledge Management: From Enabler to Facilitator*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Retrieved March 25, 2010, from <http://adt.lib.rmit.edu.au/adt/public/adt-VIT20080521.150600/>

Planning and structuring sections and paragraphs



Conclusion or summary

- Summarise the major contributions
- Point out inconsistencies and gaps
- Relate to your research question or problem

Common mistakes:

- Writing a summary of each article one by one, paragraph, by paragraph, without integrating the material.
- Writing a history of the field, rather than identifying the major issues/debates.
- Not having a clearly thought-out structure.

Other traps:

➤ Trying to read everything

You could read forever. You need to **select** the most useful and relevant research for your specific topic area and to highlight the major issues.

➤ Reading but not writing

Reading more is often an excuse to avoid writing. Map out the areas you need to cover and try to write these as you go so it doesn't become too overwhelming a task.

➤ Not keeping adequate bibliographical information

This can be a very time-consuming mistake! Write down the bibliographic details you'll need for your reference list **every** time you photocopy from a book or journal, print from the internet or write notes from a text.

References:

Ivanic, R. (1998). *Writing and identity: the discursive construction of identity in academic writing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Kamler, B. & Thomson, P. (2006). *Helping doctoral students write: pedagogies for supervision*. Milton Park: Routledge.

Zamel, V. & Spack, R. (1998). *Negotiating academic literacies: Teaching and learning across languages and cultures*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.