

Book Review: Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review: A Multimodal and Cultural Approach by Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Rebecca Frels

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2016/08/26/book-review-seven-steps-to-a-comprehensive-literature-review-a-multimodal-and-cult

8/26/2016

In *Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review: A Multimodal and Cultural Approach*, Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Rebecca Frels offer a new guide on how to produce a comprehensive literature review through seven key steps that incorporate rigour, validity and reliability. Ana Raquel Nunes recommends this helpful, well-informed and well-organised book to those undertaking literature reviews as well as those reflecting on research methodologies more broadly.

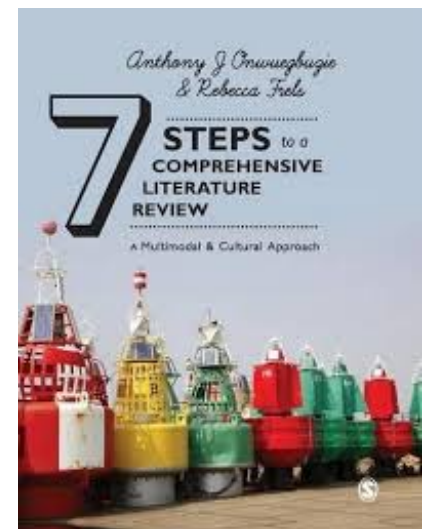
Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review: A Multimodal and Cultural Approach. Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Rebecca Frels. Sage. 2016.

Find this book: 

Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review: A Multimodal and Cultural Approach, by Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Rebecca Frels, offers a straightforward guide on how to conduct literature reviews, and is the successor to Onwuegbuzie's numerous previous works on qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research. The book is a source of in-depth understanding of the role that literature reviews play within the research process and its practices, and is a substantive contribution to social, behavioural and health sciences research. It aims at incorporating rigour, validity and reliability when conducting literature reviews and presents seven steps on how to achieve this.

According to the authors, literature reviews should be *systematic*, defined 'as a set of rigorous routines, documentation of such routines, and the way the literature reviewer negotiates particular biases throughout these routines' (10). The authors acknowledge that this definition differs from the definitions of systematic literature reviews used in the health sciences. Instead, this book defines a comprehensive literature review (CLR) as an integrative review, being the combination of narrative review (i.e. theoretical, historical, general and methodological reviews) and systematic review (i.e. meta-analysis, meta-summary, rapid review and meta-synthesis).

Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review purposefully addresses CLR as 'a methodological, culturally progressive approach involving the practice of documenting the process of inquiry into the current state of knowledge about a selected topic' (18). Additionally, the authors' approach to the CLR takes into account the researcher's philosophical stance, research methods and practices which, when combined, create a framework for collecting, analysing and evaluating the information that will form the basis for conducting a literature review. The book thus presents five types of information – MODES: namely, Media; Observation(s); Documents; Experts(s); and Secondary Sources – that help the researcher in their journey through the literature review landscape, which in the end will produce either a separate output or inform primary research within a bigger research project.



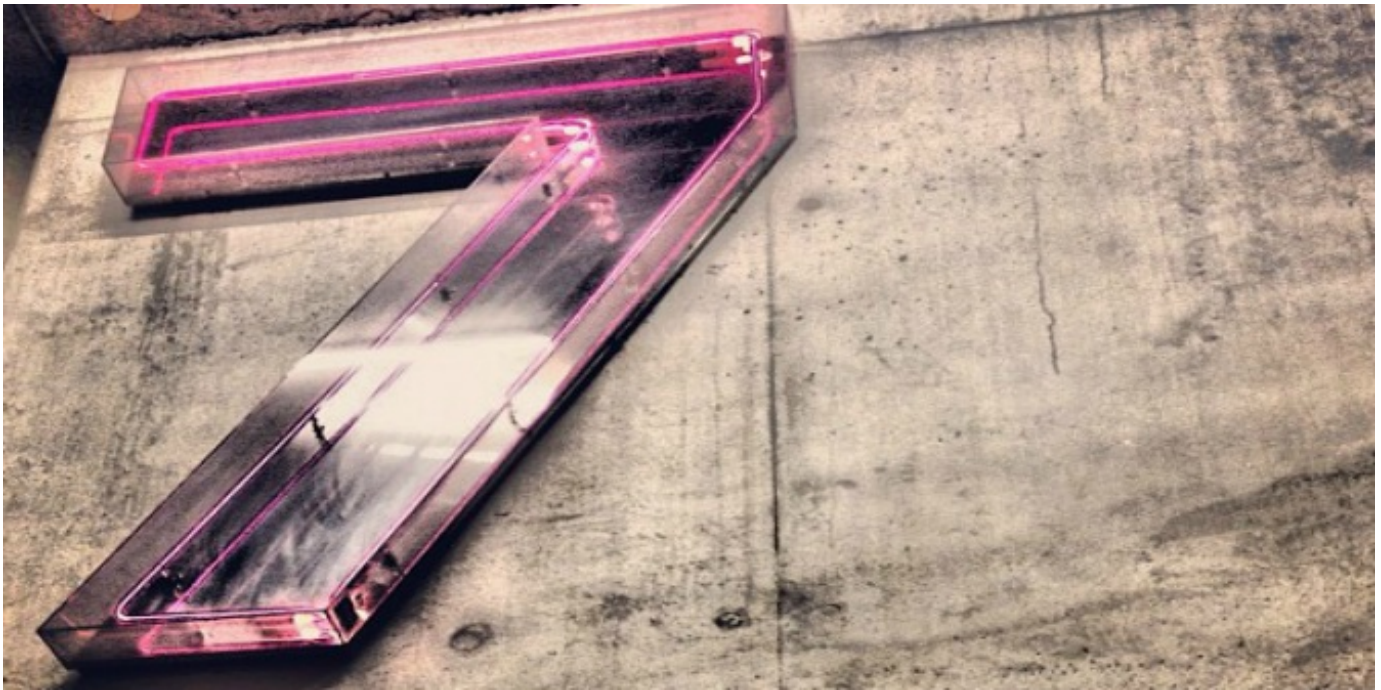


Image Credit: (Ines Hegedus-Garcia CC BY 2.0)

Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review is an effective tool for an iterative process denoting a structured and chronological approach to conducting literature reviews. The book covers a range of research topics and practical examples arising from the authors' own research including education, counselling and health systems research. Through these, the authors report an in-depth model characterised by a series of qualitative, quantitative and mixed research approaches, methods and techniques used to collect, analyse and evaluate data/information for the creation of new knowledge.

As its title suggests, the book is organised around seven sequential steps within three phases: the Exploration Phase includes Steps 1-5 (Exploring Beliefs and Topics; Initiating the Search; Storing and Organising Information; Selecting/Deselecting Information; and Expanding the Search (MODES)); the Interpretation Phase includes Step 6 (Analysing and Synthesising Information); and the Communication Phase includes Step 7 (Presenting the CLR Report). As the argument of the book develops, the differences between traditional literature reviews and the CLR become evident as the seven steps are unveiled. Traditional literature reviews are encapsulated within Steps 1-4, whilst a CLR goes further through the addition of Steps 5-7.

One of the steps that was of particular interest to me was Step 6 on analysing and synthesising information. The book advances research methodology knowledge and practice on the different elements of empirical data and how both qualitative and quantitative information can be analysed and synthesised to inform a CLR. In Step 6, the authors go to great lengths to explain and exemplify how users can perform qualitative and quantitative data analyses of information, as well as the level of integration that can be achieved when doing mixed methods analyses. Additionally, the authors explore the nature of data analysis and identify three levels or layers that need to be taken into consideration: namely, the research approach (e.g. grounded theory); the research method (e.g. measures if regression); and the research technique (e.g. content analysis) used. This is found to be essential as data analysis is considered to be a product of the research method used, which in turn is linked to the research approach.

Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review is not merely intended for those conducting a literature review, but it also works as a research methodology book as it addresses an extensive number of research methodologies, methods and techniques. The book offers a theoretically and practically informed discussion of increased integration

of research processes, practices and products, raising important quality standards assurances necessary for a CLR, but also for research more generally. This is a very well-organised book which cleverly and effectively uses tables, figures and boxes throughout to illustrate and help contextualise detailed examples of the different steps involved in conducting a literature review.

Accordingly, readers seeking a tool or a guide on conducting literature reviews will find this a very helpful book. It will also be of use to a broader readership interested in research methodology more generally as it encompasses the different research traditions (qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods) as well as the stages of the research process (the research problem, the literature review, research design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation and report writing). For the reasons above, it will appeal widely to students, academics and practitioners interested in conducting literature reviews within the social, behavioural and health sciences. It is suitable for different levels of experience in conducting literature reviews and doing research in general. Furthermore, this is a book that should be at-hand and used as a guide each time one decides to conduct a piece of research that includes a literature review as it will provide new ideas and directions depending on the topic and disciplinary perspective.

Dr Ana Raquel Nunes is a Research Fellow in the Division of Health Sciences at the Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, and a Research Methodologist and Adviser for the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Research Design Service (RDS). She is an interdisciplinary and mixed methods researcher working at the interface between public health, environmental science and social science. Her active interests include human vulnerability, resilience and adaptation to stresses and threats (e.g. climate change), housing and health, and fuel poverty. You can find more about her research [here](#).

Note: This review gives the views of the author, and not the position of the LSE Review of Books blog, or of the London School of Economics.

- Copyright 2013 LSE Review of Books