PSCI2300 The Study of Politics

Literature Review

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February 24, 2011
Conducting a Literature Review

- Scientific study is a cumulative activity.
- It is important to spend some time reading what others have written about a subject.
- Why? – new “discoveries” stem mostly from previous work.
Selecting a Research Topic

- **Sources of your research topic?**

  - Your life experiences and activities
  - Newspapers or magazines
  - Class readings, lectures, discussions
  - Previous studies
  - Data
  - etc, etc.
• Subject – people’s support for government health care
• Preliminary question: What is the percent of people who support and oppose it?
• Research question: Why do some people support government health care and others do not? Who supports it?
• Hypothesis – Ideology affects people’s attitudes toward health care issues.
Why Conduct a Literature Review?

To see what has and has not been investigated:

- What has been done
  - Analysis of public opinion polls on attitudes toward social welfare.

- What has not been done
  - No systematic research regarding public opinion on health care.
Why Conduct a Literature Review?

To find a relevant theory for your research interest:

- Literature review helps identify theories that explain the phenomenon of interest.
- You can extend the theory on public support for social welfare to the study of public opinion on government health care.
Why Conduct a Literature Review?

To identify potential relationships between concepts and to identify competing hypotheses

- Individual opinion about government health care could be affected by other factors.
- It is important to look for confounding factors.
- The effect of income?
- The effect of education?
Why Conduct a Literature Review?

To learn how others defined and measured key concepts

- What is ideology?
- Nominal measure, ordinal measure, or interval measure?
Why Conduct a Literature Review?

To identify data sources that other researchers have used

- Which survey data did other scholars use?
How to Conduct a Literature Review

- Check the library catalog (UNT library has wonderful electronic resources!)
- Internet – general search engines
- Internet – electronic database maintained by institutions
- Skim the contents of a few professional journals
- Text books
Examples

- University Library
  http://www.library.unt.edu/

- General search engines
  http://www.google.com/
  http://scholar.google.com/

- Academic journals
  http://www.jstor.org/

- Data sources
  http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/

- Link to others
  CQ Press: http://psrm.cqpress.com/
  US Census Bureau: http://www.census.gov/