



Williams College ECON 460:
Women, Work, and the World Economy

Methods Monday 5: Reviewing the Literature

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Outline

- A map of the economics literature
- Synthesizing the literature
- Citation practices

Questions You Should Try to Answer

1. What work have economists done on this topic? Recent work? Seminal work?
 - ▶ You don't want to duplicate work that has already been done
 - ▶ You want to build on the existing literature to the extent possible
2. What methods, data sets do economists use when studying this topic?
 - ▶ Can you use an existing research design with new data?
 - ▶ Can you use existing data with a new or modified research design?
3. What are the conclusions of the economic literature on this topic?
4. Do economists disagree about this topic? What are the main points of view?

Types of (Economic) Literature

An economist's hierarchy of academic literature:

1. Peer-reviewed economics journals
2. Peer-reviewed journals from other academic disciplines (the math-ier, the better)
3. Academic press books ("scholarly monographs" and edited volumes by economists)
4. Academic press books in other fields
5. All other sources

Economists are snobby and status-obsessed, and we look down on (most) other fields

- Just because something is published doesn't mean economists take it seriously
- You want to find research that economists will recognize as contributing to the literature

Peer-Reviewed Economics Journals

1. **Top 5:** *American Economic Review* (AER), *Econometrica*, *Journal of Political Economy* (JPE), *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (QJE), *Review of Economic Studies* (REStud)
2. **Other top general interest journals:** *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* (AEJ: Applied), *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* (AEJ: Policy), *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* (AEJ: Macro), *Economic Journal* (EJ), *Journal of the European Economic Association* (JEEA), *Review of Economics and Statistics* (REStat)
3. **Top field journals:** *Journal of Development Economics* (JDE), *Journal of Economic Growth*, *Journal of Human Resources* (JHR), *Journal of Labor Economics* (JoLE), *Journal of International Economics* (JIE), *Journal of Public Economics* (JPubE)
4. **Other:** *Journal of Economic Literature* (JEL), *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (JEP), *Annual Review of Economics*

When in doubt about a journal's status, google **REPEC journal rankings**

Peer-Reviewed Journals in Economics-Adjacent Fields

1. **Science-y journals:**

Science (lots of economics articles), *Nature*, *Lancet*, *JAMA*, *BMJ*

2. **Finance:**

Journal of Finance, *Review of Financial Studies*

3. **Political Science:**

American Journal of Political Science (AJPS), *American Political Science Review* (APSR)

4. **Other economics-adjacent:**

Demography, *Management Science*

In general, you want at least half of your sources to be coming from these journals or other economics journals that appear in about the top 100-200 spots in the REPEC journal ranking

How to Find Sources

- For topics covered in the syllabus, start with references listed there
 - ▶ Do those authors have any other papers on the same topic?
 - ▶ What papers are cited by the paper on the syllabus?
 - ▶ What papers cite the paper on the syllabus (use google scholar)?
- First figure out **who** works on a particular topic, then find their work
 - ▶ Most economists post their papers on their websites (working papers vs. publications)
 - ▶ Published papers can be found through jstor, the Williams Libraries, google scholar
 - ▶ All else equal (which it never is), newer papers in better journals are “better”
- For topics not covered in the syllabus, you can start by asking me for a tip

Working Papers

- Economists circulate their research in **working paper** format for many years
 - ▶ Economics journals are notoriously slow, especially since covid
 - ▶ Economics papers are long, not too much danger someone will scoop you
 - ▶ Journal review process is not double-blind
- To know the state of the literature, you need to find the working papers
 - ▶ This is why you need to focus on finding people as much as published papers
 - ▶ Working papers are more likely to be on the methodological frontier (they're newer)
 - ▶ When you see “unpublished working paper” or “mimeo” it does not mean a paper is bad
- Harder to judge quality of a working paper than a journal publication

Summary: A Map of the Economics Literature

- Economists are huge snobs who look down our noses at everyone
 - ▶ Papers in other fields are not as good as economics papers
 - ▶ Papers in lower-ranked journals are not as good as papers in better-ranked journals
 - ▶ The last two statements are often false, but the first one is very true
- When reviewing the literature, you need to find:
 - ▶ The seminal papers on the topic (almost always in top journals)
 - ▶ The people working on the topic (now), and their current working papers
- Far more important to find a handful of relevant papers than 100 tangential ones

Reviewing the Literature: What to Do

- Step #1: read the papers
 - ▶ What are the precise questions that have been asked? What are the levers?
 - ▶ What data sets have researchers used, and in which contexts?
 - ▶ What are the main findings?
- Step #2: figure out how the papers fit together to form “the literature”
 - ▶ What are the broad conclusions from the existing evidence? Where are the evidence gaps?
 - ▶ Are their disagreements or differing schools of thought?
 - ▶ Do diverging views come from different contexts/data sources or methodologies, or are researchers using similar data to arrive at different conclusions (a “food fight”)
- Annotated bibliography vs. a literature review in an empirical paper

Citation Practices

- From the AEA website (<https://www.aeaweb.org/journals/pandp/style-guide>):
 - ▶ Text citations and reference list entries should follow author-date style (see Chicago Manual of Style). Each text citation should have a corresponding entry in the list of references.
 - ▶ Williams libraries guide to CMOS-style in-text citations:
<https://libguides.williams.edu/citing/chicago-author-date#s-lg-box-21699945>
 - ▶ Williams libraries guide to CMOS-style reference lists:
<https://libguides.williams.edu/citing/chicago-author-date#s-lg-box-21699946>
 - ▶ Data sources and registered studies used in the research must be included in the reference list. See Reference List Entries for Datasets and Registered Studies.
 - ▶ Text citations with one to three authors should include all author names; for more than three authors, list only the name of the first author followed by “et al.”
 - ▶ Reference list entries with one to ten authors should include all author names; for eleven or more authors, list the first seven, followed by a comma and “et al.”

Citing Journal Articles

Listing references in the bibliography:

Botticini, Maristella. 1999. “A Loveless Economy? Intergenerational Altruism and the Marriage Market in a Tuscan Town, 1415-1436.” *Journal of Economic History*, 59(1): 104–21.

Dekker, Marleen, and Hans Hoogeveen. 2002. “Bridewealth and Household Security in Rural Zimbabwe.” *Journal of African Economics*, 11(1): 114–45.

Rao, Vijayendra. 1993. “The Rising Price of Husbands: A Hedonic Analysis of Dowry Increases in Rural India.” *Journal of Political Economy*, 101(4): 666–677.

Source: Anderson (2007)

Citing Data Sets

Listing data sources in the bibliography:

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2000–2010. Current Employment Statistics: Colorado, Total Nonfarm, Seasonally adjusted - SMS080000000000000001. Washington, DC: United States Department of Labor. <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost?sm+08> (accessed February 9, 2011).

Leiss, Amelia. 1999. Arms Transfers to Developing Countries, 1945–1968. Distributed by Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, Ann Arbor, MI. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR05404>.

Patnaik, Ankita. 2019. Data for: "Reserving Time for Daddy: The Consequences of Fathers? Quotas." Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/703115>.

Romer, Christina D., and David H. Romer. 2010. Data and Code for: "The Macroeconomic Effects of Tax Changes: Estimates Based on a New Measure of Fiscal Shocks." Nashville, TN: American Economic Association; distributed by Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, Ann Arbor, MI. <https://doi.org/10.3886/E112357V1>.

Source: <https://www.aeaweb.org/journals/data/references>

Cite Responsibly

Please, please do not violate the honor code!

- Place direct quotes of more than five words in quotation marks (include an in-text citation)
- Place a note indicating the source of any figure or graph that you include in any document (unless you have produced the figure yourself from raw data)
- Err on the side of citing sources for semi-obvious claims/statements
 - ▶ No: France is in Europe.
 - ▶ Yes: France won the World Cup in 2018 (FIFA 2024).
- Be generous: cite all work that is similar to yours
- Cite all of your references in your bibliography or reference list

The End!