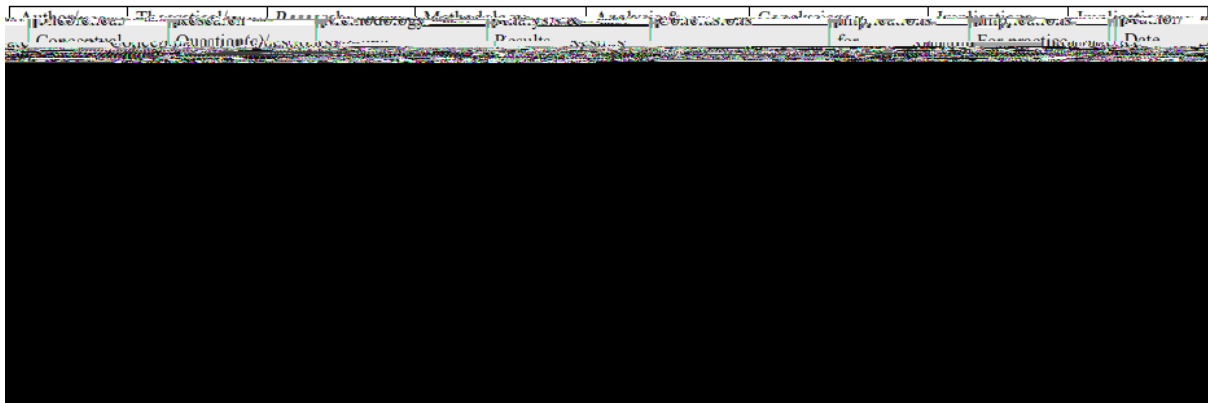## THE MATRIX METHOD FOR LITERATURE REVIEWS

What is the Matrix Method, and why should I use it?

A reading matrix allows you to take notes on key readings in a way that allows you to easily see similarities or differences across the literature. You can look for similarities and differences in themes, research outcomes, methodology, or any other category you prefer. A matrix can help you completely scope the literature on a research topic. When you complete your search, organise the literature by date; this allows you to easily see change over time.

Figure 1.

Example of a Reading Matrix

Note. Sourced from Walden University

Organize your sources

If you are reviewing changes in the research over time you can put the references in chronological order. It is easy to do this in Word or Excel. If you are looking for themes, you can group into common frameworks.

You may change the categories you record in the matrix depending on what you are looking for, but you should always include the first three column headings (Author/date, Framework, Hypothesis) as these are key information.

Synthesising the literature

Once you have completed reading the literature you will need to synthesise the information. A synthesis means to combine the key findings, arguments, conclusions from the literature into a clearly understandable discussion.

One method to do this is to briefly describe how you did the research, which databases you used, what your search string was, and so on. In the next paragraph, called the Discussion, you introduce the key areas you reviewed. This could be themes, or the methods of research performed and so on. To do this read down the relevant column and describe what has occurred in the literature over time.

If you have gaps in your knowledge, go back to the relevant text and read in more detail.