

Integrative Reviews in 4 Steps:



Curated by
Michael J. Battistone, Line Kemeyou, & Lara Varpio

01. Define the Phenomenon

- Identify and define the context, or phenomenon of interest
- The phenomenon of interest could be rooted in practical knowledge (e.g., empathy, well-being, medical error)
- The phenomenon of interest could be something that has yet to be deeply explored in health professions education (e.g., training and experiences of shame)
- Clearly define the scope of the topic - what the review is about and what it is not about
- Defining the scope requires a nuanced understanding of the theories available in the literature



02. Create the Team

- A research librarian or information specialist can be helpful in planning, conducting, and describing literature searches
- Collaborators should include scientists or scholars with knowledge of the phenomenon of interest and/ or expertise in analyzing theory
- A transdisciplinary approach is likely required
- Enlisting the support of scholars who are comfortable wrestling with abstract notions is strongly recommended
- Consult with colleagues early and often to help inform understanding of phenomenon, premises central to theories' explanatory power, and contemporary conceptualizations



03. Explore and Analyze the Literature

- The literature search need not be all-inclusive; a convincing rationale for the scope of the review must be communicated
- Databases and search terms; secondary search strategies to include non-peer reviewed articles must be presented as part of the methods
- Exploring the literature requires deep readings in order to make logical connections and the premises of the theory
- Study each theory in terms of correspondence (i.e., simplicity and clarity), coherence (i.e., logical flow and aesthetics), and pragmatics (i.e., effectiveness as a guide)



04. Integrate the Theory

- Theoretical integration is the process of communicating knowledge developed through the review's critical investigation of included theories
- Graphic representations of new ideas or clarifications of existing phenomena can help communicate these ideas effectively
- The review should be directive: pointing out what work is still needed
- The review should provide specific next steps for researchers who would like to contribute to future efforts in the area

