Literature Review

A literature review is a collection of key sources on a topic to discuss those sources in conversation with each other (also called *synthesis*). A literature review's <u>main purpose</u> is to summarize and synthesize existing literature for your audience so they can understand the topic without having to read all of the sources in your bibliography; they are also useful for introducing how your own research contributes to the research that has already been done in your field.

There are a number of different situations where you might write a literature review, each with slightly different expectations since different disciplines have field-specific expectations for what a literature review is and does. You should always look at examples from your own discipline or talk to your professors to be sure you understand your discipline's conventions.

There are **three rhetorical moves** in a literature review: Establishing a Territory, Establishing a Niche, and Occupying a Niche. *(These moves are often referred to as the CARS Model).*

Establishing a Territory
- Provide necessary context for the research about to be discussed.
- Determine what has already been said about the issue.
- Establish importance or need for research.

Establishing a Niche
- Identify your claim and your contribution to the conversation.
    - This can be done through counterclaiming, indicating a gap in existing research, question-raising, or continuing a tradition

Occupying a Niche
- Methods & Methodology
- Carries into Results, Discussion, & Conclusion

Lit reviews can take many different organizational patterns depending on what you are trying to accomplish with the review. Here are some examples:

- <u>Chronological</u>: The simplest approach is to trace the development of the topic over time, which helps familiarize the audience with the topic. If you choose this strategy, be careful to avoid simply listing and summarizing sources in order. Try to analyze the patterns, turning points, and key debates that have shaped the direction of the field. Give your interpretation of how and why certain developments occurred.

- <u>Thematic</u>: If you have found some recurring central themes that you will continue working with throughout your piece, you can organize your literature review into subsections that address different aspects of the topic. For example, if you are reviewing literature about women and religion, key themes can include the role of women in churches and the religious attitude towards women.

- <u>Methodological</u>: If you draw your sources from different disciplines or fields that use a variety of research methods, you can compare the results and conclusions that emerge from different approaches. For example:
    - Qualitative versus quantitative research
    - Empirical versus theoretical scholarship

- Divide the research by sociological, historical, or cultural sources
- Theoretical: In many humanities articles, the literature review is the foundation for the theoretical framework. You can use it to discuss various theories, models, and definitions of key concepts. You can argue for the relevance of a specific theoretical approach or combine various theorical concepts to create a framework for your research.

The Round-Table Analogy

Since literature reviews describe sources "in conversation with one another," it can be useful to think of a lit review as a transcription of an actual, verbal conversation. Imagine all your sources are sitting in a round table (you're there too!) and are speaking to one another. Who speaks first? Who responds? Are they interrupting one another? Are they arguing? Are they agreeing with one another? How would you describe their tone? When do you interject with your own opinions? These kinds of questions can help you organize your sources and begin to synthesize their relationship with one another. Describe what they articles are saying (summarize) and then analyze how they talk to one another (synthesize).

Summarizing	Synthesizing
Restating the key points of a single source	Combining the key points from multiple sources to create a new understanding by identifying patterns, gaps, and connections between them

To write a conversation, think of your sentences as dialogue tags and use **Author-First Language** by combining the authors name + a verb.

Henry Jenkins describes . . .

Here is a list of useful verbs to use for Author-First Language:

acknowledges	collects	looks at
addresses	compares	makes the case that
adds	concludes	persuades
admits	confirms	praises
advocates	considers	presents
affirms	demonstrates	provides
agrees	depicts	puts forward
aims	describes	questions
analyzes	determines	reflects
applies	develops	reveals
argues	disagrees	shows
asks	disregards	specifies
asserts	emphasizes	states
believes	examines	suggests
categorizes	explains	summarizes
challenges	explores	uncovers
cites	illustrates	urges
clarifies	investigates	verifies

Sample Literature Review (APA)

Fan studies began to take form in response to the rise in fan activities in the 70s-90s. One of the most influential works in fan studies is considered to be Henry Jenkins' (1992) *Textual Poachers*, as it dives into the culture of television fans and their engagement with popular culture. This book was revolutionary within the world of fan studies as it coined the term "participatory culture" that would be used by scholars in the field for decades (Jenkins, 1992). This term describes how fans not only consume media, but how they actively contribute and shape it through fanfiction, fan art, and other forms of fan expression like video making (Jenkins, 1992). This argues that fans play a critical role in constructing the meaning within media that often challenges the earlier ideas of authorship and audience passivity (Jenkins, 1992). Hellekson and Busse (2014) consider Jenkins (1992) and the other scholars at this time to be "the first wave" of fan studies where the focus is on reconstructing audience consumption from one that is more active rather than the earlier assumption of passivity (pp. 79–80).

Within the same wave came the influential model of mass media communication, also known as the "encoding/decoding model of communication," created by cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall (1973). This model explores the relationship between how mass media outlets encode ideologies in their creations and how fans decode (interpret) those ideologies (Hall, 1973). Clemons (2019) provides a simplified example for this framework:

> For example, to tell a love story, media producers must know the common ways we have all agreed to represent love and what kinds of love are appropriate to represent on screen. Both the producers and their audiences should share that same set of codes for what love looks like: not just the plot of a love story, but the way characters look, color use, eye line matches, and patterns of editing are all part of how we encode "love story," and the repeated use of these sets of codes across stacks of media texts tells us what is normal and natural. (p.258)

That is to say, fans must accept what mass media outlets encode in their creations in order to decode them:

> We must accept not only that women have traditionally been equated with the domestic sphere in media texts, for example, but we must also accept that such an equation can, in fact, be determined *for* us by those corporations without our input… Only once they [fans] are initially dominated by the production systems encoding of the dominant culture can fans choose to or reenable themselves to critique the messages they are receiving. (Clemons, 2019, p. 259; p. 262)

Hellekson and Busse (2014) divide fans into two categories based on how they decode canon material (mass media creations): affirmative fans and transformative fans (2014, pp. 3–4). The affirmational fans decode the canon text in predictable ways, accept its messages, and collect artifacts related to the text (Hellekson & Busse,

2014, p. 3). These fans interpret the canon text and do not read against the grain, but still find ways to "expand the canon text in ways that do not challenge the specific ideologies that are encoded in the original text" (Clemons, 2019, p. 260). On the other hand, the transformative fans critique, explore, and adapt the canon text; they often resist the authoritative ideologies (Clemons, 2019, p. 260). I aim to use these categories in my research to see precisely what aspects of disability fans choose to affirm or transform in their decoding process.

An example of a transformative fan reaction would be fanfiction creation. Friess' (2021) work in "Fanfiction as: Searching for Significance in the Academic realm" took on the daunting task of defining fanfiction as a work of fiction written by a fan that uses elements from an already existing form of media to create their own stories (p. 4). She notes the "deceptively simple" definition to not deter one from acknowledging the complexities of the creative works (Friess, 2021, p. 4). Fanfiction often gets a bad rap for being plagiaristic. However, this notion negates what Friess (2021) calls the "fundamental basis" of fanfiction: "authors are not merely copying, pasting, and then publishing the words of the source material. Fanfiction is these fans' reaction to the source work, grown out of love, frustration, anger, hope, and more" (p. 15). Fanfiction writers can use fanfiction as a space to explore a character's tragic death, write more of their favorite character dynamics, or correct a frustrating plot point in the canon material; fanfiction is inextricably intertwined with the emotion and vulnerability of the author. The stereotype of plagiaristic actions comes from the outdated belief that in order to participate in mass or popular culture, one must completely adopt the authoritative source's thoughts and opinions without critical reflection (Friess, 2021, p. 2). However, the very foundation of participatory culture is not at all the passive, mindless consumption that this idea believes it to be—something Jenkins (1992) and Hall (1973) strived to explain decades prior. Fandom becomes less of adoration for the text or its creators, and instead, it becomes what readers *do* with the text (Clemons, 2019, p. 260).

Halls (1973) model, along with Jenkin's (1992) term, would both be used by fan studies scholars for many years to come. Some such scholars were Friess (2021), Clemons (2019), Raw (2019), and Hellekson and Busse (2014) who sought to deepen our understanding of fanfiction practices. Friess (2021), Clemons (2019), and Raw (2019) would be considered by Hellekson and Busse (2014) to be a part of the "second wave" of fan studies literature where the focus dives into more specific analyses rather than broader assumptions (p. 80-81). The current wave of fan studies, the "third wave," focuses on both the individual motivations/gratifications of fandom as well as the wider social structures that fandom is tied to (Clemons, 2019, p. 250). This research project would fit neatly into the third wave since I aim to understand why fans engage with the media, how/why they decode certain aspects of disability, and how it all relates to the broader structures outlined by mass media outlets.

As fan studies scholars diverted their attention towards understanding the relationship between fanfiction and identities such as sexual orientation, gender, and race/ethnicity, *The Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* urged such scholars to consider the ignored link between fanfiction and disability (The Canadian Journal of Disability Studies Association, 2019). From this movement came a new volume exploring "Disability and/in/through Fanfiction" which included the works done by Clemons (2019) Newman-Stille (2019) and Raw (2019) that aimed to connect the evolving fan studies rhetorics to the already established disability rhetorics

(The Canadian Journal of Disability Studies Association, 2019). This is precisely where my work aims to align as well.

Clemons' (2019) work aligns very closely with Hall's (1973) encoding/decoding model. To relate the fan studies terms "encoding" and "decoding" to disability rhetorics, Clemons (2019) makes the claim that we should choose instead to view these terms for what they truly are: enabling and disabling (p. 265). Mass media narratives train us in the ability to mindlessly accept the ideologies presented where they often "disable bodies through their socially constructed ideas of what normal bodies look like and what acts those bodies are naturally capable of performing" (Clemons, 2019, p. 266). Producers discourage working against these codes and resisting the stereotypes mass media typically portrays by villainizing those who create transformative ideas (Clemons, 2019, p. 266). The very act of producing transformative fanfictions contribute to the ongoing fight to decode the ableist perceptions of disabled communities. Fanfiction, therefore, "returns symbolic agency to fans, letting them constitute new versions of the canon text that is then legitimized by the fan community" (Clemons, 2019, p. 274). In reaction to this statement, Friess (2021) states that fans often transform the dominant narrative that disables bodies into beautifully empowering ones through unique storytelling (p. 37). Through resistant and transformative storytelling (decoding), fanfiction works to normalize disabled lives, people, and communities (Friess, 2021, p. 37).

The normalization of disability is a common theme throughout these works as Friess (2021) calls upon Raw's (2019) work in "Normalizing Disability: Tagging and Disability Identity Construction through Marvel Cinematic Universe Fanfiction" to advance the above point (p. 23). Raw's (2019) article examines how the tagging system in a popular fanfiction site Archive Of Our Own intersects with disability discourse. Within disability history, labeling has been seen as largely negative, but when labeling intersects with fanfiction, the opposite reigns true:

> Labeling and classification in disability communities are often associated with medicalization, stereotyping, and erasure of individuality, while tagging in fanfiction provides a communicative framework between authors and readers. These differences in functions of labeling and tagging provide the foundation that enables tagging in fanfiction to function inclusively as a normalizing force, despite the problematic role of labeling in disability communities. (p. 186)

The tagging system's intention is not to stereotype the disability, but rather, to allow someone to find all the fanfiction works that discuss a particular disability or works in which a character is disabled in some way. Raw's (2019) study showcases that "the application of disability-related tags to fanfiction demonstrates an attempt to normalize disability in the fanfiction community as part of a normal life experience" (p. 188). This normalization proves to be beneficial as fanfiction "enables those who have been traditionally coded as disabled to work within the communication system and tell different stories" (Clemons, 2019, p. 274) in which disabled readers are able to see themselves.

These positive portrayals can then spread for others to read and experience: "The identity that they construct becomes the identity that potential readers consume and, as the identity becomes part of the conventions of what and when to tag, reproduce in their own work" (Raw, 2019, p. 213). Fans with disabilities can communicate and connect with other disabled fans through these transformative works (Friess, 2021, p. 39).

This representation in fanfiction creates a community built on the normalizing portrayals and representation of disability that is denied to these writers in mainstream media (Friess, 2021, p. 39). I would interject with the notion that fanfiction is a viable avenue for mass media outlets to study in order to see what precisely fans affirm/transform (enjoy/disprove of). This could clue us into what exactly fans deem as responsible and normalizing disability representation so that mass media outlets can adjust to recreate such dynamics. This could continue the communication system between consumer and producer, encoding and decoding, to continue pushing for more authentic, positive, and responsible representation of disability by centering fan perspectives. This notion is central to this research's exigence.

Nonetheless, Clemons (2021) and Newman-Stille (2019) both note the potential for fanfiction to be just as harmful as it is beneficial for the disabled community. Both state that fanfiction has the ability to replicate the patterns of oppression upon disabled characters that mass media indulges under the guise of authentic representation (Clemons, 2021, pp. 275–76; Newman-Stille, 2019, p. 89). Both note that disability is often used as a means to create emotional and physical vulnerability in a character in order to fabricate emotional intimacy between characters by using the popular "Hurt/Comfort" tag (Clemons, 2021, pp. 275–276; Newman-Stille, 2019). This often paints disability as a plot device (Clemons, 2021, p. 249; Raw, 2019, pp. 196–197) and a "weakness" (Newman-Stille, 2019, p. 84), something we often criticize mass media for, but not fanfiction. Newman-Stille (2019) also criticizes fanfiction for often problematically writing disability as something that will be magically solved in a narrative "through the discovery of a cure" (p. 85).

Newman-Stille (2019) then goes on to explain the necessity for a "reframing" of disability within fanfiction to become more authentic and liberating by resisting this medical model rhetoric through the exploration of more social rhetorics: "There would need to be a shift in thinking away from the idea of the person as disabled and toward critical attention to the social and physical barriers that serve to make the world a disabling environment" (pp. 91–92). Newman-Stille (2019) then makes note that in order to use fanfiction as a liberating act, it must be rooted in the advocacy for the rights of disabled individuals (p. 92). This bleeds into what Stein, L, et al (2014) calls "fan activism", or the ability of fans to promote social and political change (p. 65). But as Stein, L, et al (2014) notes, fan activism must come from within an already established fan culture and must seamlessly weave into the practices fans already participate in (p.65). This is precisely what I aim to make tangible through my own work; that by taking the time to deconstruct the rhetoric behind disabled representation—in mass media AND fanfiction—and by truly critiquing what it is we as writers and readers are affirming/transforming, only then can we advocate for change.

The intersection of these three works within this volume of *The Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* lies within the importance of transformative works such as fanfiction to criticize the existing disability representation in mainstream media; this is done by creating authentic disability representation that normalizes disabilities rather than feeding into the stereotypical perceptions that continuously marginalizes these communities.