Developing 'Feminist Archival Sensibility' in a PhD ~~Literature Review~~

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Abstract:
This article explores the connections between ontology, epistemology and methodology in the literature review of a PhD in the social sciences. It asks whether and how early-career researchers develop literature review methodologies that are appropriate for the type of research project they intend. By juxtaposing systematic reviews with a more inductive method that integrates 'feminist archival sensibility' this article explores the implications of methodological choice for the wider philosophical framing of a thesis or dissertation. Although this article is intended for post-graduate students and early career researchers, supervisors may also be interested in the issues raised and the potential implications for doctoral pedagogy.

How do I begin a literature review?
This is a question that every post-graduate researcher must answer when they begin their project. For researchers new to a field of study, it is a particularly pressing question. Without pre-existing knowledge of the empirical, philosophical or methodological literature, or an understanding of the typical literature review processes, the start of a postgraduate project can feel quite daunting. It is also full of possibilities. Undertaking a literature review imbues postgraduate researchers with knowledge about the field of research, and can, without conscious awareness, induct us into prevailing paradigms of knowledge (re)production (Oakley, 1999). As we read, attend seminars and supervision sessions, we are simultaneously learning about our chosen field and being shaped by its norms, values and cultures. Knowing about these paradigms before beginning a project has the potential to create spaces for reflection and experimentation.

Undertaking a literature review is a methodological process, yet it is rarely approached as one. Instead, a literature review is viewed as a first step, a-methodological or a process that leads to uncovering the tools that will be used in the empirical part of a dissertation or thesis (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2017). In the title of this article, the strike-through in the term '~~literature review~~' follows Heidegger's strategic philosophical device, 'sous rature'(1), which suggests a word or phrase is somehow inadequate, but cannot be completely disregarded. Its use in this article is to provoke readers to question their assumptions about the nature of a literature review and the extent to which it can or should be methodologically distinct from any empirical element. This article will juxtapose two methodological approaches to literature reviews that draw on different ontological

and epistemological foundations: systematic review and 'feminist archival sensibility'. The aim is to provide post-graduate researchers with some methodological tools to orientate themselves at the start of their research project.

Ontology, Epistemology and Literature Reviews

This article begins with a discussion of ontology and epistemology to trace how differences in our understanding of what reality 'is', and how we can come to know reality, affect the theoretical and methodological approach we might take to a literature review. Although research on the relationships between ontology, epistemology and methodology is not new, rarely is it discussed in relation to a literature review process. Failure to take an early interest in these philosophical foundations can cause a literature review to become methodologically adrift or bracketed from the rest of the research design, even though it is one of the foundational pillars of any project.

Figure 1: Ontology, Epistemology and Paradigms in Social Science

Paradigm	Ontology (What is reality?)	Epistemology (How can I know reality?)
Positivism	There is a single reality/truth that can be deduced	With reliable/valid research tools it is possible to know reality/truth
Constructivism /Interpretivism	Reality is created and sustained by individuals/groups. There is no single reality that can be deduced	At best, the knowledge of reality may be partial. Reality needs to be interpreted
Relativism /Subjectivism	Reality is what individuals/groups perceive it to be	All knowledge is a matter of perspective
Critical Realism	Reality exists independent of individuals/groups	Knowledge of reality is only ever partial and is shaped by 'real' but unobservable events.

(Adapted from Robson, 2011: 13-21)

Figure 1 provides an overview of frequently cited paradigms within the social sciences. Although presented as if there are clear ontological and epistemological differences between them, at times these differences do become blurred. For the purposes of this article, these differences will be used heuristically to support postgraduate researchers to better understand the implications for making methodological decisions.

There are numerous reasons for why different ontologies and epistemologies are deployed in social science research. This choice may be guided by the type of research questions asked, and as Ann Oakley (1999) points out, it is equally likely that a researcher's assumptions or the fashions and expectations of a particular field, funder, or supervisor can also shape this decision. For a dissertation or thesis, it is important that the methods chosen are suitable for the research question(s) and underpinned by a consistent approach to ontology and epistemology throughout the research design. However, while books on research methods are likely to make distinctions about the suitability of methods connected to each paradigm it is often assumed that the literature review is separate from or outside of ontology.

With the lack of attention to literature reviews as a part of a methodological process, some common assumptions have prevailed. In 'Real World Research', one of the most highly cited books on social science research[1] a literature review is defined as a process of 'systematically identifying, locating and analysing documents containing information related to the research problem […] documents can include articles, abstracts, reviews, monographs, dissertations, books, other research reports and electronic media.' (Robson, 2011: 51).

Robson also specifies five points that define the 'purpose' of a literature review:

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1. *Exposes main gaps in knowledge and identifies principal areas of dispute and uncertainty.*
2. *Helps identify general patterns to findings from multiple examples of research in the same area.*
3. *Juxtaposes studies with apparent conflicting findings to help explore explanations for discrepancies.*
4. *Helps define your terminology or identify variations in definitions used by researchers or practitioners.*
5. *Helps to identify appropriate research methodologies and instruments (e.g. interview schedules, validated tests and scales).*

Robson, 2011: 52

Robson's introduction to literature reviews positions it as a first step in a research process. He lists the appropriate documents that should be searched and provides a blue-print for the ground to be covered, typically involving periods of surveying and searching interspersed with moments of synthesis and analysis. By immersing oneself in the process of undertaking a literature review, an expectation is conveyed that a researcher becomes more familiar with the field, enough to identify 'gaps' and 'patterns' and 'conflicting findings' and make judgements about 'appropriate methodologies and instruments' (Robson, 2011: 52). Although other texts may have more inclusive lists of the type of documents that might be included, Robson's book mirrors the general consensus when it comes to defining what a literature review is and the principles it should follow (e.g. Cohen et al, 2013; Neuman, 2013; Cresswell & Cresswell, 2017). When this general consensus is read with ontological and epistemological questions in mind an implicit assumption emerges that the reality of a problem can be deduced from a literature review, provided the right documents have been included and reviewed. In this one-size fits all approach to literature reviews, positivist assumptions about reality and theories of knowledge appear to prevail.

Much has been written about the paradigm wars of the 1980s (Gage, 1989) which saw interpretivist and subjectivist social science research challenge the post-enlightenment interest in 'scientific' knowledge. Although the validity and reliability of many qualitative approaches have since gained traction, the beliefs, values and techniques involved in methods of reviewing literature have, until recently, remained untouched. In recent years, the already positivist leaning of literature review techniques are becoming more rigidly defined and even codified. This is particularly evident in the growing use of systematic literature review methods, originally used to establish the efficacy of medical interventions, and now gaining attention in education, international development and other areas of social research (Higgins & Green, 2005). Systematic reviews certainly have their uses, and while they may be appropriate for aggregating quantitative data from randomised control trials they are not compatible with all research questions and research designs.

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[1] This book is now in its 4th edition and according to Google Scholar has been cited nearly 20,000 times.

The remainder of this article has two aims. The first is to examine the ontological and epistemological assumptions implicit in systematic literature review processes and to question the implications of applying systematic techniques to research that is otherwise aligned with constructivist and subjectivist paradigms. The main body of this paper will then work with the concept of 'feminist archival sensibility', initially designed as a research method in archival research, to develop an alternative methodological approach when reviewing literature.

Systematic Literature Reviews in the Social Sciences

Originally established to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of evidence in healthcare, systematic literature reviews have increasingly been used in education and wider social policy research over the last twenty years. They became more embedded in the social sciences as a result of work conducted by Ann Oakley and colleagues at the Social Science Research Unit (SSRU) in the 1990s, whose mission was to develop evidence-informed public policy in the social sciences (Oliver, et al. 2005). Writing about their growth in international development, Mallett et al. (2012) have put their rise in use down to growing pressures for accountability from donors and identifying 'what works' rather than what might be interesting or simply not known. They also point to shifting ideas about what represents 'value for money' when it comes to cost-effectiveness and 'evidence-informed policymaking' (p.445). Whether this is a response to the increased focus on research 'impact', the marketization of data or the sheer volume of knowledge output remains unclear, yet seeking robust evidence to support global, national and local policy decisions is not new. However, surges in the popularity of systematic reviews have seen the boundaries on their intended use increasingly pushed. Perhaps most contentious has been the application of systematic review methods to qualitative data derived from different methods, contexts and theoretical frameworks (Lipsey and Wilson, 2001; Cooper, et al. 2009). This has led to some confusion and heated debate about the limits of this type of approach to literature review in the social sciences. The following section of this article unpicks the key tenants of systematic reviews to understand when and how they might be usefully employed by postgraduate researchers. It also questions the ontological and epistemological borders of this methodology.
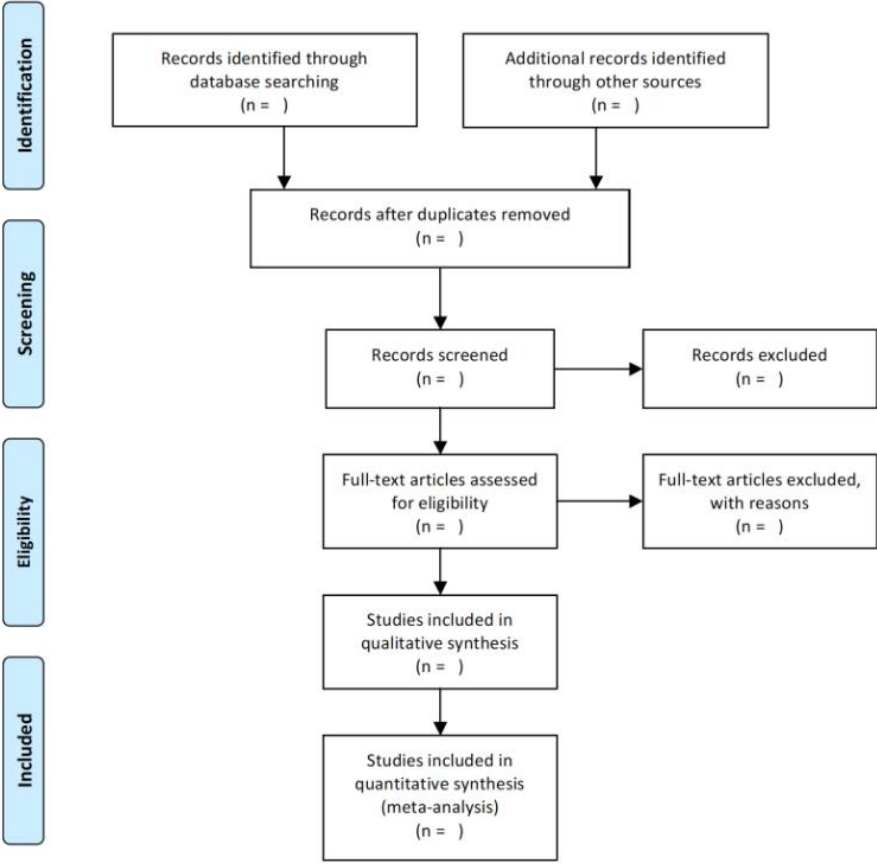
Systematic literature reviews are characterised as being objective, logical, transparent and replicable (Gough, et al. 2017). According to the Cochrane Review[2], their purpose is to 'identify, appraise and synthesise *all* the empirical evidence that meets pre-specified eligibility criteria to answer a given research question' (Cochrane, 2017: 1.2.1, emphasis added). This marks an interesting conceptual move in systematic review methodology, whereby the available literature becomes a dataset in its own right and the primary object of enquiry. The deductive methodological approach to a systematic review, commonly referred to as a protocol, serves as a roadmap that specifies the objects, methods and analytical framework of the review. Guidelines, an extensive checklist and a linear flow diagram (Figure 2) contained within the 'Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses' (PRISMA) statement support researchers to critically assess any potential field of study. Typically, this begins with formulating a research question and checking Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR) and the Campbell Library to make sure that a review on this topic does not already exist.

Identifying an appropriate research question before a systematic review begins can be a particular challenge for postgraduate researchers since this requires substantial a priori knowledge. However, once the originality of the question has been established the deductive nature of the methodology

defines the series of steps that the researcher should take. One of the first steps is to identify appropriate search terms and key words associated with the topic, and academic databases where knowledge about the topic is likely to be stored. Gough et al., (2017) recommend that this part of the process can involve the help of a specialist subject librarian who may also help develop a Boolean search strategy across a range of databases. Each database search combines different words and phrases to identify studies relevant to the research question and the results of each search are recorded. Due to the amount of potential literature, searches are usually confined to titles and abstracts, the assumption being that researchers will write titles and abstracts that accurately reflect the content of their full text article.

In keeping with realist ontology, the researcher in a systematic review is instrumentalised and believed capable of making objective decisions. For example, they are expected to formulate a list of unbiased inclusion/exclusion criteria based upon the topic, definitions of key concepts, variables, research design, number of participants in a study and time frame (Gough et al. 2017). The researcher must then screen the identified articles against the pre-determined inclusion/exclusion criteria and critically assess them for quality, sometimes termed 'risk of bias'.

Figure 2: PRISMA Flow Diagram

(PRISMA, 2009)

Once eligible studies have been identified, PRISMA provide guidelines on how to synthesise articles using meta-analysis and how write the review of literature. To this end, systematic reviews acknowledge and make transparent the different methods required for searching vs writing in a literature review.

Although originally concerned with the meta-analysis of quantitative empirical evidence, more recently researchers have begun to attempt systematic reviews of qualitative studies. While the challenges of synthesising quantitative data using meta-analysis have been written about extensively (Lipsey and Wilson, 2001; Cooper, et al. 2009), less is known about the ontological and epistemological dilemmas of qualitative synthesis (Britten, 2002).

The methods of quantitative meta-analysis cannot be directly transferred to qualitative research for both pragmatic and epistemological reasons. Unlike systematic reviews of quantitative research that use statistical meta-analysis to synthesise results, those attempting qualitative reviews must develop alternative methods of searching, synthesis and data presentation. Noblit and Hare (1988) sought to address this concern by developing a new qualitative form of systematic review, which they called 'meta-ethnography'. Meta-ethnography defines the field of study as the body of academic literature on any given topic and instead of the data coming from observations, interviews or other ethnographic methods; it is derived from the available qualitative studies. Noblit and Hare (1988) define seven steps in a meta-ethnography: 'Getting Started', 'Deciding Relevance', 'Reading the Studies', 'Determining Relationships', 'Translation', 'Synthesising Translations', and 'Expressing Synthesis'. Their aim was to systematise a method that would go beyond a narrative literature review and include a degree of conceptual innovation based on published findings rather than primary data (Britten et al., 2002). Unlike the case survey method proposed by Yin (2011) or Denzin's multiple exemplar approach (2001), meta-ethnography was intended to mirror the ontological framing of the studies it aims to synthesise. It does this by treating the original interpretations and explanations by researchers in the primary studies as data in the meta-ethnography. Synthesis is broken down into 'reciprocal synthesis' whereby data is directly comparable, 'refutational synthesis' in which data may be oppositional, or taken together to form 'line of argument'. While the transparency around different forms of synthesis is useful heuristically, the emphasis on the synthesis of results excludes the contextual significance, subjectivity and relativism of the original data.

Mallett, et al. (2012) articulate a belief that 'adhering to core systematic review principles - rigor, transparency and replicability - can improve the quality and strength of more traditional literature reviews' (p.447). They point to the potential for systematic reviews to expose researchers to research they might not already be familiar with and in doing so they can disrupt the researcher's bias and citation practices that privilege more frequently cited studies over others. Furthermore, Gough and Elbourne (2002) suggest that they draw attention to how research is done, rather than just the results and point to the importance of methodological transparency.

The difference between a systematic literature review and a more traditional narrative literature review is the use of an explicit methodology. The literature in a systematic review becomes both the object and the subject of a study; however, while this methodology provides transparency and guidance on both the process and the production of a literature review, it is restrictive in its ontological and epistemological framing. Perhaps most limiting is what is assumed to be valid knowledge worthy of synthesising and the lack of attention to the role of the researcher in the production of that knowledge. Even with the inclusion of so-called 'grey literature' in systematic

reviews, what makes these articles 'grey' is that they are not found in academic databases, usually because they have been commissioned by an external funding body (e.g. The World Bank) or government department (e.g. Department for International Development). The next section of this paper examines an alternative methodological approach to searching and writing that works with the more nebulous concept of 'the archive' rather than a knowable and fully searchable body of published academic literature. It implicates the researcher in the co-construction of the literature review, both as a process and a summative expression, and introduces potential avenues for including material and affective dimensions of social science research.

Archivist's Note:
Prior to beginning my PhD, I worked as a research officer on three systematic reviews of international education policy. I witnessed first-hand the frustrations of working with this methodology, particularly when it came to the analysis of quality studies and synthesis of qualitative research. As an early career researcher, I also found a degree of comfort in the systematising of the literature review process and the seemingly black and white inclusion/exclusion criteria. I would later find that designing search strategies for systematic reviews would provide me with a valuable skill-set to take into my PhD. For instance, I learnt which databases were most useful, about the importance of key words, how to design complex Boolean searches and useful hints and tips for organising potentially relevant literature. When it came to undertake a literature review for my own PhD, I began by using this systematic approach.

Approximately 6 months into my research, I attended a global international development conference. At this four-day conference there was an exhibition arena where hundreds of international non-governmental organisations, private sector companies and governments had set up stalls to promote their projects. On my way back from the conference, I had a suitcase full of leaflets, policy documents, advertising pamphlets and all manner of other documents that seemed useful for my research. On the one hand, it was clear to me that these documents would all be useful for my literature review and on the other hand I began to wonder if instead I should treat the conference as a site of data collection. The line between literature review and data collection had become blurred.

Developing 'Feminist Archival Sensibility' in a PhD ~~*Literature Review*~~

In their book *The Archive Project: Archival Research in the Social Sciences*, Niamh Moore, Andrea Salter, Liz Stanley and Maria Tamboukou develop 'feminist archival sensibility' as a methodological approach to archival research in the social sciences. This section of the paper examines the possibilities for applying this fresh approach to a PhD ~~literature review~~. It specifically asks what 'feminist archival sensibility' might mean for the way we conceptualise 'the archive', appropriate literature, where we might find it, the role of the researcher, how a literature review should be undertaken, how to write a literature review and its relationship to the rest of a thesis?

In everyday parlance, distinctions are made between definitions of a repository, a library and an archive. Typically, libraries and archives are both types of repositories where records, data or artefacts are stored digitally and/or materially but differ in the types of record they hold and their use. On the one hand, a library is defined as repository that is intended for public use, allowing items to be borrowed and temporarily removed by a service user. A library also tends to collect and make accessible published material that is available in more than one place. In contrast, an archive traditionally deals with primary records, rare published materials and unpublished

documents. Subsequently there may be little or no general circulation of archival materials and their access is more strictly monitored.

Like the definitions offered above, Moore et al. (2017) explain that 'feminist archival sensibility' remains grounded in the notion that 'an archive is a repository of some kind' (2017: 1). Although the authors invite us to challenge the idea that there is a 'property or characteristic inherent in some kinds of materials' that make them worthy of being included in an archive (2017: 19), the exemplar archives cited throughout their book tend to be traditionally historical 'community archives' (2017: 171). Therefore, even though we are invited to think about how different media (videos, images and styles of text) can and should be part of an archive, there is little empirical evidence in this volume to disrupt the idea of an archive as comprised of purely primary and/or unpublished materials. That said, Moore et al, (2017) do provide the conceptual tools to make this disruption possible, and it is to them that this article now turns.

In 'feminist archival sensibility' the archive exists as a material place that contains a collection of artefacts, however, it is neither a fixed entity or entirely knowable. Instead, Moore et al. (2017) describe how our knowledge of the archive is simultaneously real and partial and the result of an always changing assemblage of discourses, bodies, artefacts and relationships. Such a conceptual move requires a shift away from purely positivist ontological and epistemological foundations, yet does not do away with them entirely. In addition, 'feminist archive sensibility' does not turn exclusively towards relativistic approaches. Instead, Moore et al., (2017) draw on Karen Barad's neologism 'ethico-onto-epistem-ology', which points to the inseparability of ontology and epistemology in the practices of knowledge production. Barad argues that the production of knowledge is a constant intra-action between human (e.g. the researcher, the archivist, the author) and non-human phenomena (the text, the artefact, the building) and is coupled with an 'ethics of entanglement' (2011: 150) which reveals a political imperative that we, as early career researchers, cannot ignore. For Barad, and 'feminist archival sensibility', if we acknowledge that we are a part of the world then we cannot claim to be innocent bystanders or freely capable of observing it:

> Knowing is a distributed practice that includes the larger material arrangement. To the extent that humans participate in scientific or other practices of knowing, they do so as part of the larger material configuration of the world and its ongoing open-ended articulation." […] "Knowing is a direct material engagement, a practice of intra-acting with the world as part of the world in its dynamic material configuring, its ongoing articulation. The entangled practices of knowing and being are material practices.
>
> (Barad, 2007: 379)

For the purpose of this article, therefore, we might imagine the archive as an assemblage of human and non-human inter-actions that we and our research projects are always already a part of, even before we begin a literature review. In her article on space/time/matter in archival research, Tamboukou (2014) describes these inter-actions as 'the entanglements of meaning and matter' between the researcher, the documents and artefacts, and wider assemblage of economic, social and political processes. For postgraduate students who are starting a literature review, 'feminist archival sensibility' requires us to take stock of what we already know and how we have come to know it and the ethics of what we seek to create. What if a postgraduate thesis or dissertation was conceptualised as an archival project?
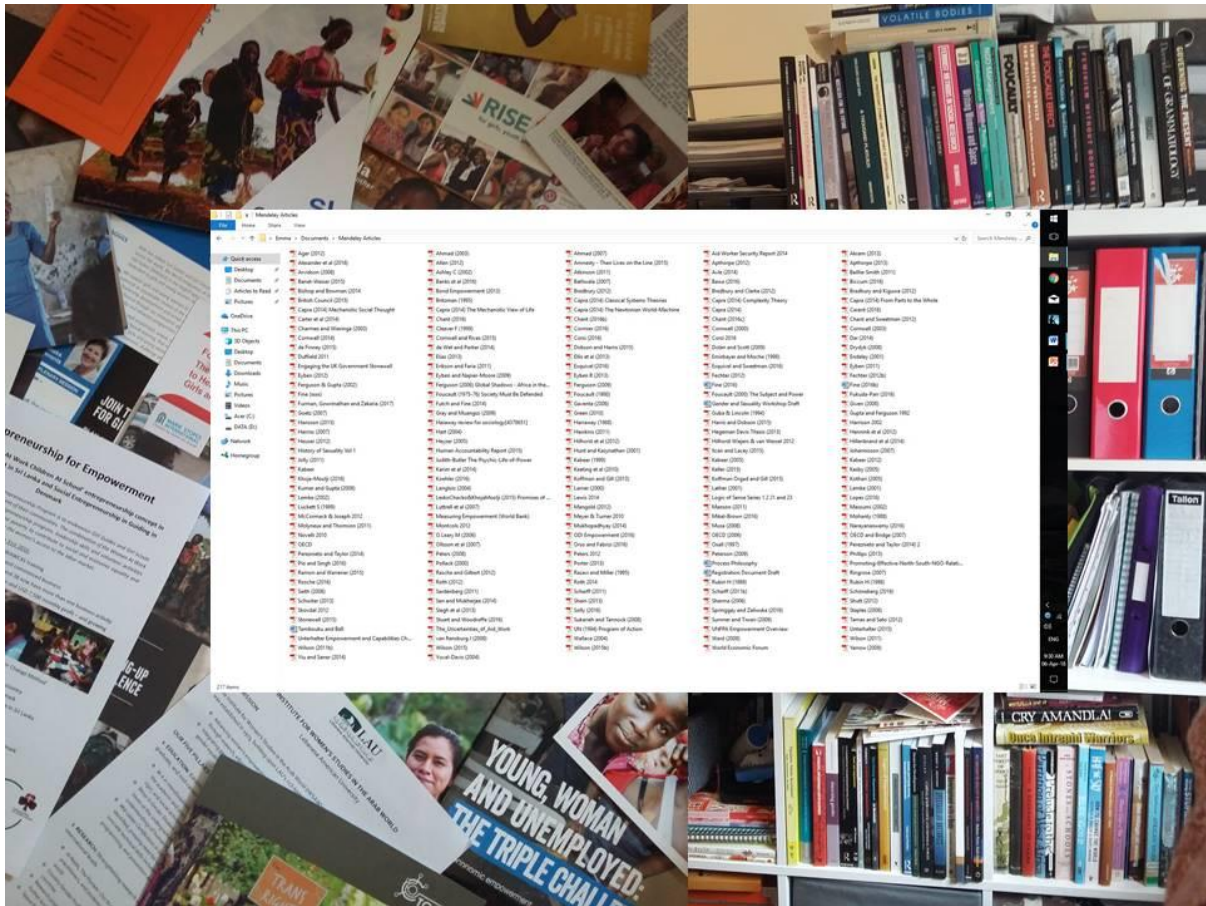
Defining and Locating 'Appropriate' Literature

Systematic reviews set pre-determined limits to what counts as acceptable literature, where literature is likely to be found and how it should be interpreted. They also provide clear expositions on what to do, when, and how. Feminist archival sensibility does not deny the usefulness of developing strategic approaches so that a researcher may identify gaps and discontinuities; however, it does reject the possibility that a complete collection of literature on any given topic exists within an academic archive. Furthermore, while an academic archive may exist in a building or online, the boundaries between the academic archive and the wider world are porous. This porosity comes about because the writer, the archivist and the researcher all exist outside of the archive and are influenced by the wider assemblage of economic, social and political processes. If we decide to take these entanglements seriously when undertaking a literature review and reject the notion of an archive that is materially or discursively bounded, then we must understand that the archive of our research is something that comes into being as a dynamic and open-ended articulation.

From this perspective, decisions by researchers, archivists and others 'establish the possibility of what can be said' (Foucault, 1972/1980: 12), 'the order of things' (Foucault, 1970/2001) and subsequently what can be known, and we are reminded that research and the wider archive of material on a topic is not written, archived or read in a vacuum. When it comes to the information and data that exist within the academic archive, feminist archival sensibility suggests that we may only see fragments or 'traces' of knowledge rather than a full representation of reality itself. Steedman eloquently captured this sentiment when she said, 'You find nothing in the archive but stories caught half way through' (2001: 45).

In this alternative ethico-onto-epistem-ology of the archive, there exists an invitation to extend our ~~literature reviews~~ beyond the academic archive and to include a range of texts, media and interlocutors that are part of a wider dispositive[3] (Foucault, 1972/1980: 194-228). Subsequently, feminist archival sensibility requires a rejection of a 'bibliographic approach to archival matters' in favour of a more genealogical approach which aims to pinpoint interconnections and processes of production (Moore et al. 2017: 19). Therefore, feminist archival sensibility collapses the boundaries between reviewing literature and writing a literature review and implies a significant role for the researcher.

Archivist's Note:
Figure 3: Literature review or archive? A combination of three images of my PhD archive

The Sensibility of the Researcher as Ethnographer

Ethnographic methods and perspectives have been used across the range of ontological and epistemological traditions in the social sciences. For instance, meta-ethnography, employed in qualitative systematic reviews strongly echoes the classical tradition of social anthropology. Grounded in positivist ontology, meta-ethnography provides an objective study of the available literature whereby the researcher/ethnographer is omniscient and is interested in producing a detailed and accurate report on the studies in question using closely edited quotations. Importantly, the researcher is solely responsible for the accurate interpretation of the available literature and is unencumbered from any predispositions or exterior forces. Poststructural ethnography, on the other hand, challenges the authority implied in social anthropologic inquiries described above. According to Britzman (1995: 230), poststructural ethnography specifically contests the authority of empiricism, the authority of language, and the authority of reading or understanding.

In feminist archival sensibility, the researcher straddles the ethico-onto-epistemological position and grapples with the teleology of 'the real'. Researchers are part critical feminist ethnographers, taking steps to address material and discursive power relations in the archive while also working between the margins of claims to truth and claims to textuality (Delany, 1991: 28). Tamboukou (2017) is clear that sticking with this struggle of 'the real' vs 'the subjective' is important and that we should resist the temptation to nihilism. She argues instead, 'it is the traces and what can be understood from [the researcher's entanglements in the archive] that archival research should be

about if it is to have value as a methodological approach' (p. 174).   Moore et al., (2017: 171) consequently draw attention to the 'blurry line […] involving the collector/ archivist/ researcher/ writer/ reader'.

Archivist's Note:
I think I became interested in the PhD as an archival project via ethnography. Near to the beginning of my PhD, I had a conversation with a friend and colleague about my project and what I thought I hoped to achieve. After about 10 minutes, she stopped me and said, 'it sounds like you are planning an ethnography of a concept'. There was something that rang true in her statement and I subsequently began to think about what this idea would mean for defining a field of study, the boundaries of the field and my role as an ethnographer. At this point, I hadn't been able to overcome my own assumptions about the separation between academic literature and empirical research, but as I carried out a genealogical exploration of my concept, I was beginning to find more and more cross-over between academics, policy-makers and practice. In the end, it became impossible to think of academics and academic literature existing outside of my field of study or having some god-like overview of the field – aware of, but separate from it.

We might imagine, therefore, a postgraduate researcher entangled with/in the archive of their thesis.   In researching and writing a thesis, the researcher is invited to uncover and engage with the 'ethics of [their] entanglement' (Barad, 2011, p. 150) at every stage. Key to engaging with this ethics is the notion of 'sensibility'. Therefore, feminist archival *sensibility* encourages us to make 'visible and audible – the sight and noise of working in the archive' and take note of how we respond to emotional and aesthetic encounters in 'the black box' (Stanley, 2017: 66).

As researchers undertaking post-graduate qualifications within institutional settings, we cannot claim to be neutral and objective figures given that we have a vested interest in the positive outcome of our research. We might therefore consider making 'visible and audible' the institutional restrictions, norms and values that work with and against us to create the conditions of possibility for our research project (Moore et al, 2017: 160). Funding, research training, fieldwork bursaries, supervisors and colleagues, library access, and departmental histories all influence our research sensibility.

Writing a ~~Literature Review~~

In Discipline and Punish, Foucault (1977/1995) describes power as diffuse and acting through people and institutions. He demonstrates this argument by analysing the ways that the human sciences produce and sustain certain forms of knowledge as acceptable, while marking others as dangerous or illegitimate. Subsequently, what becomes known as acceptable knowledge is the product of disciplinary practices which Foucault named, 'power/knowledge'. The archive of available literature is riven with power/knowledge relations and formations that implicate the researcher as archivist/activist and require us to adopt a critical approach to both researching and (re)writing our own research archive.

Archivist's Note:
I found recognising my PhD as an archival project to be liberating and generative move. Becoming an archivist allowed me to see my role as a researcher as a political position; it provided a critical perspective on the decisions I was making about the texts and artefacts to include/exclude, cataloguing them and re-writing/citing them in my own academic text. It also provided the tools to make these decisions explicit whereby conducting a literature review became a methodological and ethical process.

Liz Stanley takes up this critical approach by encouraging researches to be explicit about what happens 'inside the back box' of the archive (2017: 33-67) and include details of the activities that are rarely spoken or written about. For instance, this may provoke researchers to reconsider material and discursive conventions, such as the reproduction of so-called canonical texts in a literature review and encourage us to think carefully about the effects of our own citation practices. In her book, 'Why Stories Matter', Claire Hemmings examines the stories that feminist scholars have told about the past (2011). She argues that, "feminist theorists need to pay attention to the amenability of our own stories, narrative constructs, and grammatical forms to discursive uses of gender and feminism we might otherwise wish to disentangle ourselves from if history is not simply to repeat itself' (Hemmings, 2011: 2). The answer, according to Hemmings does not lie in 'corrective' storytelling and trying to bring forth what has been left out of the archive, but to bring into question the very politics and reasoning that 'sustain one version of history as more true than another, despite the fact that we know that history is more complicated than the stories we tell about it (Hemmings, 2011: 15-16). Hemmings offers an alternative practice of citation, 're-citation', whereby a text is read via a text that cites it, which she exercises by offering a re-reading of Monique Wittig via Judith Butler's Gender Trouble.

Once we ground the entirety of a thesis ontologically, we must ask, to what extent is a ~~literature review~~ epistemologically separate from data collection? As this paper has demonstrated so far, both systematic reviews and feminist archival sensibility treat the literature in a ~~literature review~~ as data which require a methodological approach. When we write a thesis or dissertation, we write the archive of our research.

Conclusion

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine, which is the main danger
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> Foucault, (1984: 343)

Irrespective of the ontological and epistemological paradigm, this article has challenged the idea that we can effectively, and in good conscience, undertake a literature review without first developing an awareness of methodological approaches. The aim was to support early career researchers to think critically about the methodological choices we make before embarking on a literature review and what these choices may mean for the overall conceptual framing of a thesis or dissertation. Systematic reviews provide clear and coherent strategies for beginning a review, selecting appropriate literature and synthesising it to identify what works as well as gaps in our knowledge. However, they fail to address the role of the researcher, the effect of social, political and economic processes that have shaped the literature in question and can only be used to answer deductive research questions. Their attachment to quantitative and qualitative meta-analytical techniques gives an insight into the importance of transparency when synthesising literature and attempts to account for the role of the researcher by mitigating bias. Even though bias may suggest

that a researcher has the potential to negatively interfere with a research process, it also assumes that the research process and body of knowledge is otherwise unaffected by external factors.

By juxtaposing systematic reviews with an exploration of feminist archival sensibility, this article has tried to reimagine a PhD literature review. Feminist archival sensibility enables a more inductive approach to undertaking a literature review which requires the researcher to move between the realities of different documents and artefacts, the wider assemblage of economic, social and political processes while retaining an awareness of our own entanglements. It does this by conceiving of a postgraduate thesis or dissertation as an archival project where we are both archivists and researchers. In a research project, we decide on our collection of artefacts, how they are catalogued and where they are stored. Although we are constrained by what is available to us, we have agency to look beyond the conventions of institutional academic literature and practices. We also enter into our archive as researchers to analyse, synthesise and re-narrate. That is not to say that we are entirely free agents as either archivists or researchers. One way we can navigate our dual roles is to cultivate feminist archival sensibility, to ensure that we do not fall for what Haraway describes as, 'a god trick' (1988: 581) and allow ourselves to believe that we can see everywhere from nowhere. Feminist archival sensibility combines ethics and methodology to plant way markers for when we enter the archive so that we remember there may not be a single right or wrong way to go about a research project, but that each decision we make is potentially 'dangerous' and contains traces of possibility.

Notes
1. Unlike Derrida's use of the concept which marks the absence of a presence, Heidegger uses 'sous rature' or under erasure to demonstrate an inarticulable presence.
2. Cochrane Review is a global independent network of researchers responsible for upholding the quality of systematic reviews in healthcare and related areas.
3. Foucault describes a dispositif as 'A thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions–in short, the said as much as the unsaid.'

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