

Feldman KA (1971). Using the work of others: some observations on reviewing and integrating. *Sociology of Education* 44:86-102.

Key passages

Using the Work of Others: Some Observations on Reviewing and Integrating

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Large-scale review and integration of existing theory and research may be considered a type of research in its own right—one using a characteristic set of research techniques. This paper offers an analysis of the methodology and the importance of reviews and integrations by discussing the procedures, problems, functions, and values of this type of research.

THERE ARE MANY ways for a social scientist to work. Large-scale review and integration of existing theory and research in some bounded area is one such way. Systematically reviewing and integrating what is nominally called the “literature” of a field may be considered a type of research in its own right—one using a characteristic set of research techniques and methods. Yet there is little formal or systematic analysis of either the methodology or the importance of this type of research. One suspects that there is a heavy degree of lip-service involved in the commitment to integrations. Indeed, half-hearted commitment in this area might account in part for the relatively unimpressive degree of cumulative knowledge in many of the fields of the behavioral sciences.

With regard to sociology, it is unfortunately all too easy to agree with the assertion by Reiss (1969:151) that sociologists fail “to focus their research and scholarship on a limited set of problems with the objective of deliberately cumulating knowledge in that area.” One reason that reviews and integrations can be so useful is that they deliberately aim at cumulating knowledge in an area. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance of reviews and integrations by discussing the procedures, problems, functions, and values of this type of research.

