Using Concept Maps to Organize Reviews of Literature

For CAUSE Research Clusters

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Goals of a Literature Review

• Getting familiar with research and best practices in area of interest
• Extracting salient findings that seem interesting/important to the area of interest.
• Synthesizing salient findings
• Constructing a written document that presents the synthesis to provide:
  – relevant background for those interested
  – an argument for a proposed research study (gaps in research, research methods, populations of interest)
What is a “concept” map?

- A diagram to represent relationships among concepts or topics.
  - Concept map — structure of how different ideas are related through linking phrases.
  - Topic map— structure of how different topics are related and indicates how/where/when those topics occur
  - Mind map- radial hierarchical or tree branch organization to help understand one central idea.
Concept Map showing linking phrases

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concept_mapping
Topic map showing associations and occurrences

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topic_map
Mind map showing branches from central idea

Creating a Map of Literature

• NOT creating a mapping of the relationship among certain statistical concepts.
INSTEAD.....
• Extracting salient findings or “big ideas” from individual articles
• Thinking about how those big ideas or findings are related
• Documenting how certain articles contribute to the big ideas
Green- main topics
Pink- Empirically based studies (qualitative, teaching experiments, interviews, etc)
Blue- Quantitative studies
Yellow- Theoretical studies/Literature reviews
- Numbers represent a label for individual articles
Easy-to-Use Mapping Tools

• Free
  – Cmap http://cmap.ihmc.us/conceptmap.html
  – Xmind http://www.xmind.net/
  – Vue http://vue.tufts.edu/index.cfm

• Cheap
  – Inspiration—used in K-12 education. Free 30 day trial http://www.inspiration.com/Freetrial

• Collaborative Mapping
  – Draw tools in Google Docs—allow for multiple simultaneous editors
  – Browser-based Mind42 http://www.mind42.com
  – Webspiration Beta http://www.mywebspiration.com