

**Doctoral Writing for a KAM**  
**Selecting Topics, References, and Research**  
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As long as you are focusing on theorists or theories that are worthy of study, the most important thing is that you analyze the theories and draw your own conclusions. It is not very important to stick with the few suggestions that are given in the KAM description. Those are meant to be ideas to help you to start thinking, and you can think of them as "points of departure." You are encouraged to think creatively within the general topic of a KAM. Remember that each KAM covers a HUGE amount of material, and so you can't cover it all anyway. Pick something within that major area. For example, "human development" covers so much material that you couldn't do it justice in a lifetime, let alone in a KAM. That is why I tell students to be specific. Don't write a learning agreement that says that you will be studying "human development," and that essentially copies the KAM description. It is too general. Pick a topic within human development. For example, consider the following topics: how people make decisions, the social and sexual development of teenage girls, the effects of trauma on rational decision making, the value of personal education on success in white collar jobs...these are all possible topics within KAM 2. Notice that they might fit within psychology, management, or health and human services. You need to pick something that relates to your interests, but is about as specific as one of these topics. All of these topics are still plenty broad enough to write a KAM on. From there, pick specific theories or "theorists" for the Breadth, recent journal articles for the Depth, etc.

The one requirement about your choices is that the theorists are major enough to be worthy of doctoral level study. For example, you could not pick a theorist who has written nothing but a couple of magazine articles. You need to pick people who have come up with theories that have enough "meat" that you have something to analyze. This usually means that the theorists should have written a major book or seminal paper or papers. However, there are always exceptions, so you have to look at this on a case by case basis. Your mentor is the best person to help you decide whether a theory you are considering is worthy of study. A good test is to write a one page letter to your mentor (I guess that is me in this case :) ) justifying why the theory is worthy of study. If you can do that, you probably have picked something that is worthy. If you can't think of a page of reasons why the theory is major enough to be worthy of study, then you may not have enough to work with. Think about the really major theorists in this light. You would have no trouble writing a one page letter arguing that Maslow, Freud, Diamond, Kahneman & Tversky, etc. are worthy of study.

Primary sources are sources written by the theorists themselves. For example, if you are studying Maslow, then the Breadth should focus on works written by Maslow himself. These are primary sources. Secondary sources are others writing about a primary source. For example, if John Smith wrote a book about Maslow's hierarchy theory, then John Smith's book is a secondary source. Secondary sources may be used sparingly, but you have to be careful. You should *\*not\** use Smith's book to talk about what Maslow said. If you want to talk about what Maslow said or thought, quote Maslow's work

directly (you can generally find the references you need in Smith's reference section if you happened upon something of Maslow's that you want to quote but don't have). Secondary sources like Smith can be used to \*comment\* on Maslow's work, but not to talk about what Maslow actually did. For example, if Smith wrote about the value of a particular part of Maslow's work, then you could quote Smith when referring to the value of that aspect of Maslow's work. From the standpoint of the value of Maslow's work, Smith is a primary source. Smith is a secondary source only if you are using him to paraphrase Maslow's work.

Using secondary sources is a bit like playing the game "telephone." It is dangerous, because the message can easily get misinterpreted and misquoted along the way. You don't want to quote Smith quoting Maslow, because Smith may not have interpreted Maslow correctly, and now you are interpreting Smith interpreting Maslow. Read the original work unless it is impossible to do so. If it is impossible to obtain the original work (e.g., the original is in Russian and has not been translated), then you cite as follows:

blah blah blah (Marx, 1963, as cited in Smith, 1996).

Notice that you actually have to specify that it is a secondary source. Any time you do this, you should justify the reason for this in an "offline" note to your mentor or assessor. This note should not be put into the KAM itself, but perhaps sent as an email when you realize that you have to use a secondary source. Your mentor/assessor may suggest a way to obtain the work, or may even suggest another way to get around the secondary source. It would be rare to see more than a couple of these citations in a whole KAM. Zero secondary citations are best.

The number of sources will vary greatly depending on the topic of your KAM. A good rule of thumb is 5 to 7 books for the Breadth, and 15 to 40 articles for the Depth. Fifteen articles would be an absolute minimum for the Depth, since you need 15 articles for your annotations. Good KAMS generally have at least 20 or 25 references. However, these are just rules of thumb. Students often find that they need at least a few articles to supplement their books in the Breadth, and a few books to supplement their articles in the Depth. You will usually find something in one of your Breadth books that leads you to the reference section. That will lead you to another book or a journal article, which may lead you to other materials. This is one way to build some of your references (but not all of them...it is usually eventually either circular or a dead end, and you are very likely to miss some important sources if this is all you do). Don't shy away from using the reference sections of your sources. They are your best friend, and a great way to find really good material. If you like a particular source, then find the references that the author used. They are also likely to be good.

The bottom line is that you need as many references as you need. That is not very satisfying, but it is interesting that most students just \*know\* when they are finished. You will realize you are done when everything you see is stuff you've seen before, or says essentially the same thing as sources you've already seen. The material will start to

get repetitive, and then you'll know you are finished finding your sources. This is another reason why you need to pick a sufficiently specific topic. You don't want to have forty thousand possible sources, and you also need more than four sources. It is a happy medium, and you can usually tell when you have a specific enough topic because you will find a couple of hundred (or a few hundred) possible references, which will eventually get whittled down to 30 or 40.