A satellite map of North America, showing the United States, Canada, and parts of Mexico. The map is oriented with North at the top. The text is overlaid on the map, primarily in the central and eastern regions.

How to Conduct a Literature Review: An example

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The “So What” Question

- These “so what” questions are too often neglected. They should be brought to the forefront:
- Why are you studying this topic?
- Who cares?
- Why does our work matter?

Social Science Research

- The focus of this slideshow is on the first two sections of a standard research paper structure:
- Research topic
- Literature review
- Theoretical model
- Research design
- Case study/studies
- Conclusion

Research topic

- This slideshow will use the Bank of Canada as an example for how to conduct a literature review. This is just one way of going about a review. It's not the only way!



So What?

- First ask, why your research topic matters:
- The Bank argues that their current policy is “the best monetary policy regime for reducing the probability that asset-price bubbles will develop in the first place” (cited in Lavoie and Seccareccia, 2009).
- Yet a massive asset-price bubble developed in 2007, causing the biggest global economic crisis since the Great Depression. Current policy can therefore be brought into question.

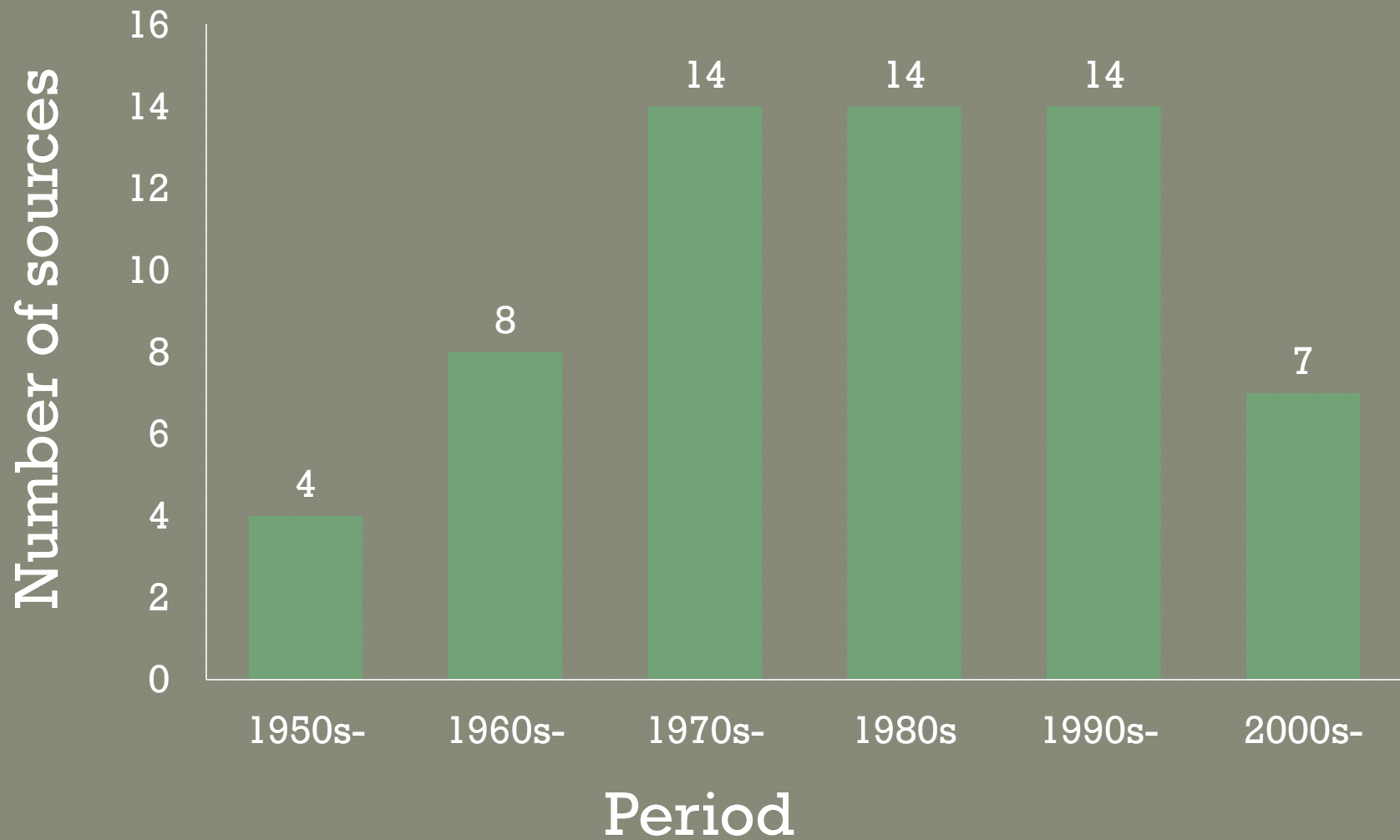
Literature Review

1. Identify research topic as precisely as possible;
2. Collect academic literature about your topic;
3. Identify trends and gaps in the literature.

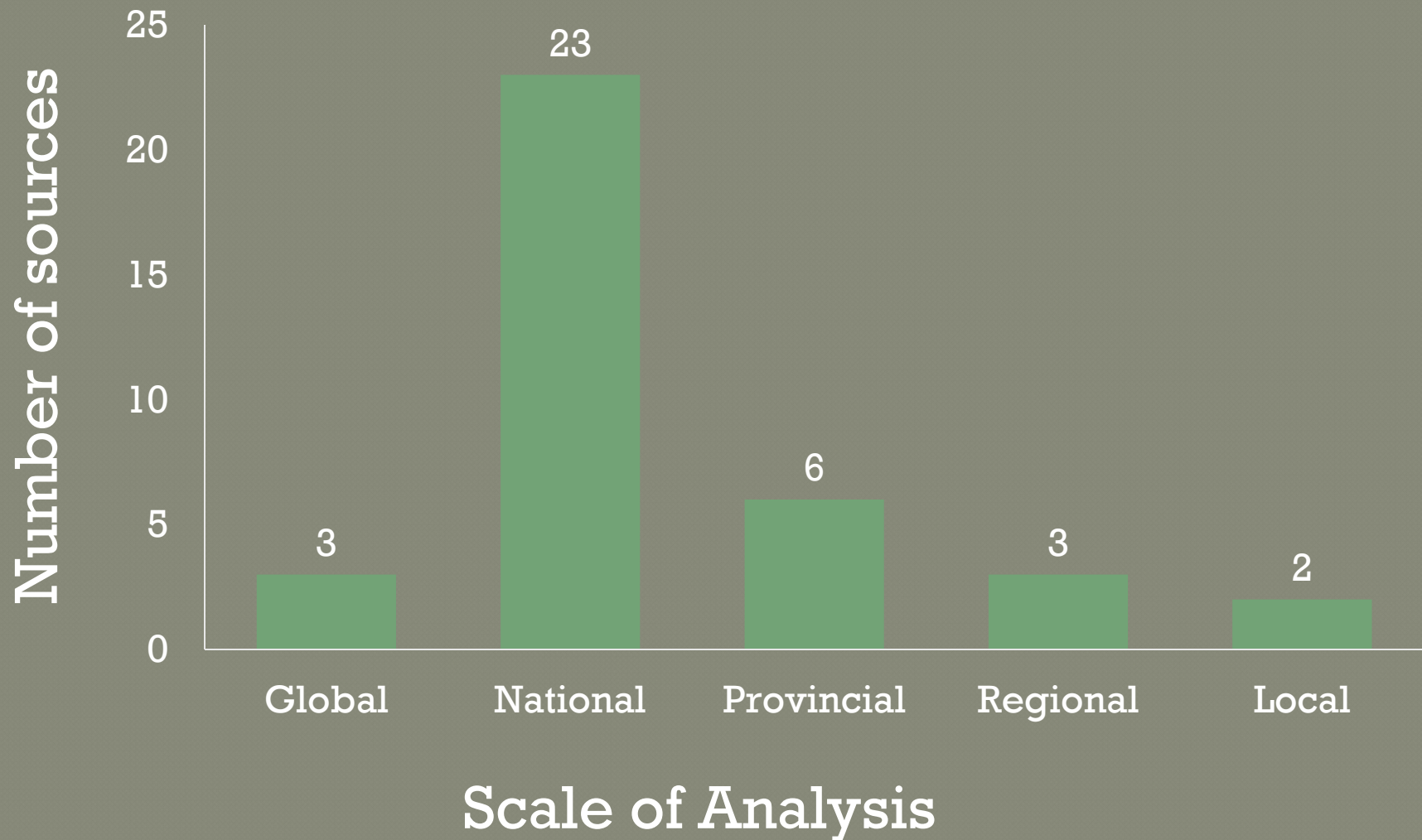
Trends and gaps

- I looked at three trends in the literature drawing upon a very small sample of the literature:
 1. Timeframe examined;
 2. Geographic scale;
 3. Theoretical approach.
- This sample is too small for meaningful findings, but it gives a sense of what you can do with a larger sample size.

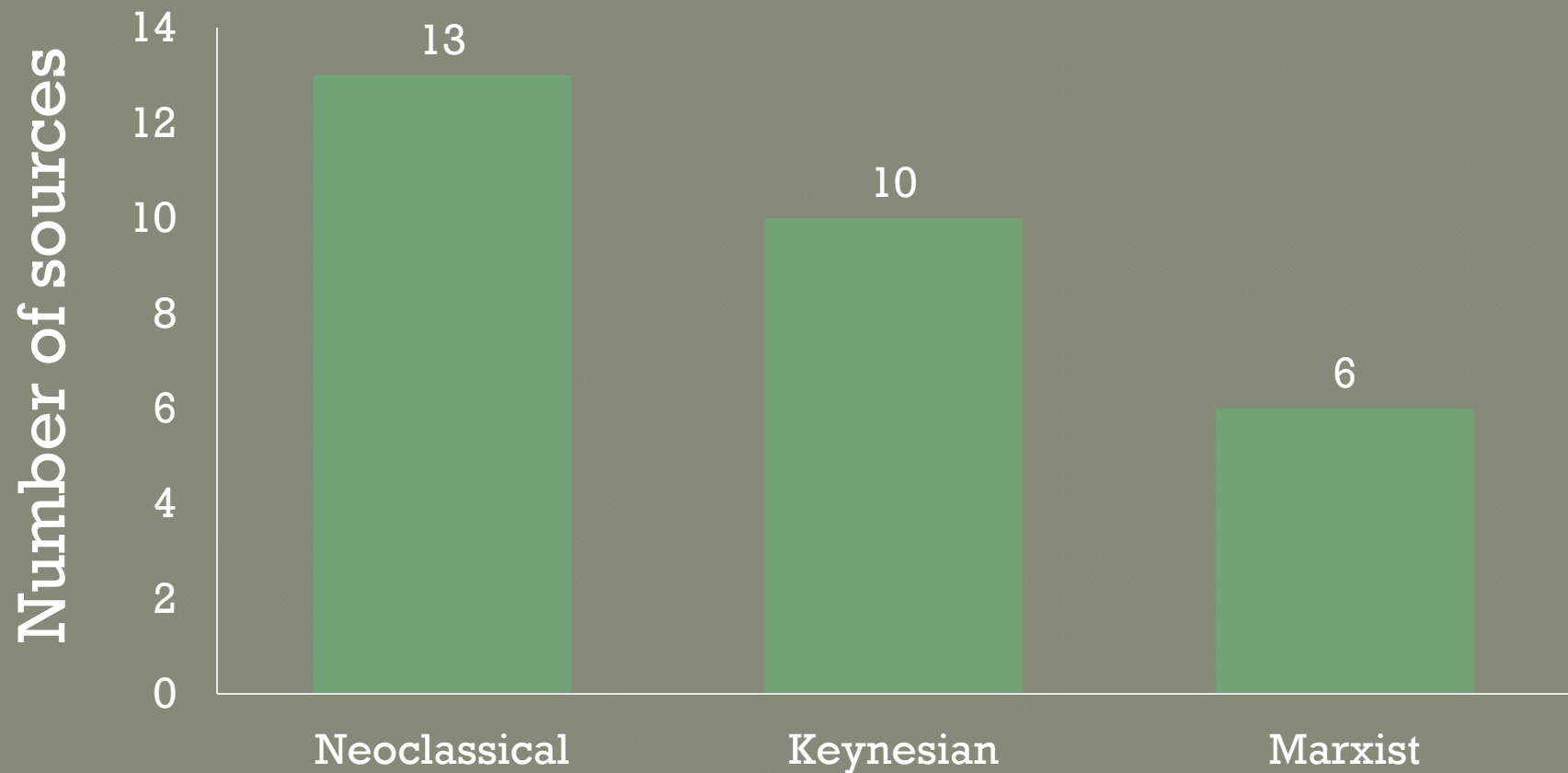
Period examined in the literature



Geographic scale examined



Theoretical approach



Theoretical approach

Trends & Gaps

- Studies concentrate the 1970s and 1990s, to the neglect of earlier and more recent periods;
- The nation-state is overwhelmingly treated as the main unit of analysis, to neglect of the global and the local;
- There is a shortage of Marxist studies.

Research questions

- A few potential research questions emerge based on these gaps in the literature:
- How did the Bank of Canada develop, historically?
- What are the geographic implications of monetary policy (from local to global)?
- What can Marxist theory tell us about monetary policy?

The “So What” Question

- As you narrow your research question, be sure to return to your “so what” questions:
- Why are we doing this?
- Who cares?
- Why does our work matter?

Additional sources

- Cooper, Harris M. *Synthesizing Research: a Guide for Literature Reviews*. SAGE, 1998.
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Thank you!

Questions, comments?

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