ABSTRACT ESSENTIALS

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WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT?

DEFINITION

- **Adjective: an idea that is not concrete**
- **Verb: to extract**
- **Noun: a summary**

WHY WRITE ABSTRACTS?

PEOPLE ARE BUSY!

- **Researchers, academics, and conference organizers are busy**

- **Reading a whole paper is a time investment**

ABSTRACTS SAVE TIME

- **Abstracts help academics approve a submission without reading the entire thing**

- **They can also help researchers decide if a paper is relevant to read later**

WHAT MAKES AN ABSTRACT?

PARTS OF AN ABSTRACT

Research Question

Background & Importance

Methodology

Findings

Keywords

RESEARCH QUESTION/PROBLEM

- **Get straight to the point!**
- **First sentence should state research question/problem**
- **Does not have the be in the form of a question**
- **Key is to be immediately clear about direction of your research**

EXAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTION/PROBLEM

Although research has been done showing that dysphoria correlates with an increased amount of mood congruent false memories in both dysphoric participants and negative mood induced participants, no research prior to this study has examined ==how inducing a negative mood in dysphoric participants affects mood congruent false memories.==

BACKGROUND

- **Where does current research stand?**

- **What gaps exist in the current research?**

- **What foundation are you building on?**

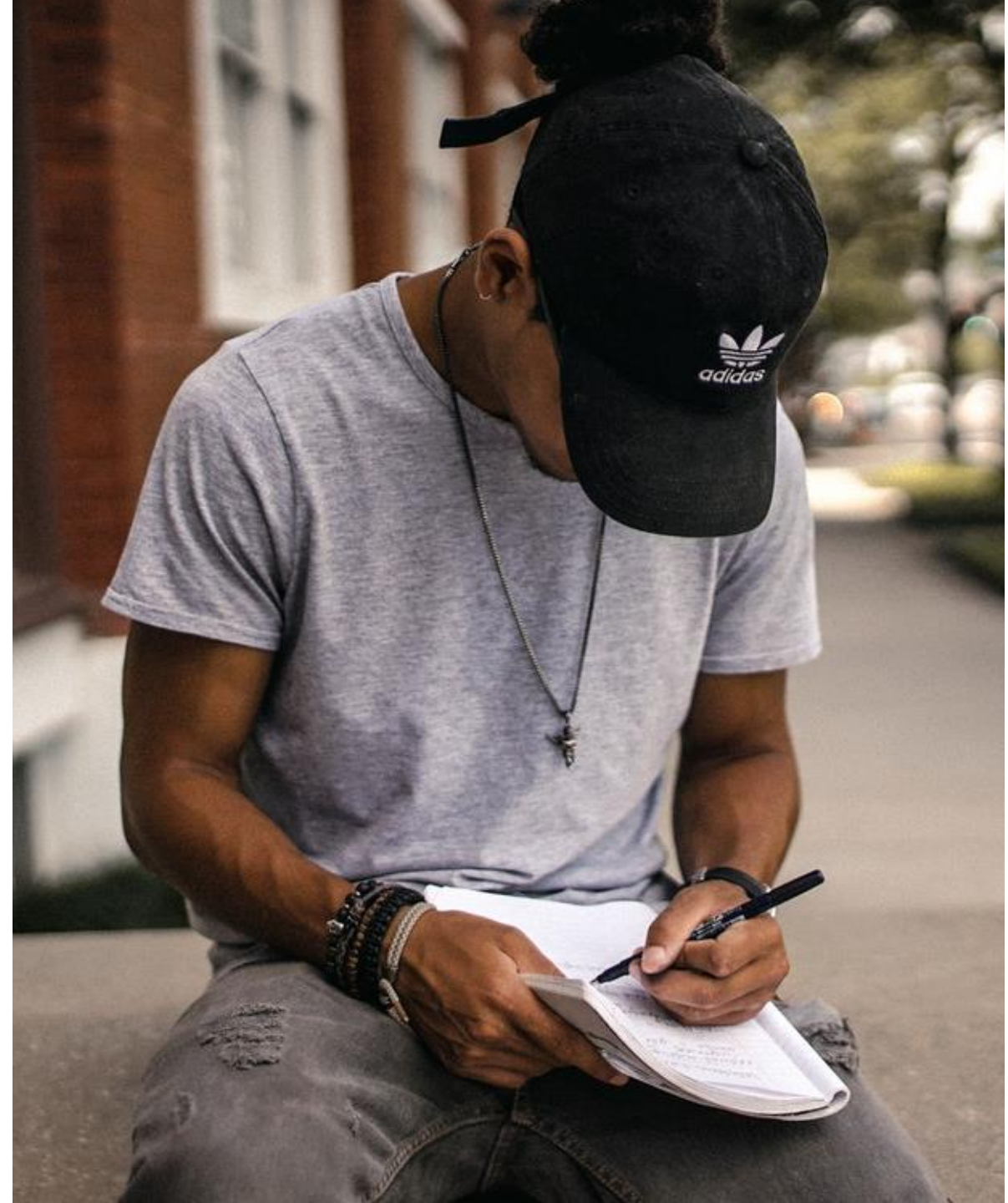- **What are the benefits of filling the gaps in research?**

IMPORTANCE

- **Explain how you will fill those gaps**

- **What is it that you seek to accomplish?**

- **Background and Importance often overlap significantly (and sometimes overlap with Research Question)**

EXAMPLE BACKGROUND

Although research has been done showing that dysphoria correlates with an increased amount of mood congruent false memories in both dysphoric participants and negative mood induced participants, no research prior to this study has examined how inducing a negative mood in dysphoric participants affects mood congruent false memories.

METHODOLOGY

- **Not just what you will prove but *how* you will prove it**

- **Can include methodological and/or theoretical approaches**

- **Quantitative? Qualitative?**

- **Case study? Correlation?**

METHODOLOGY

- **Why this methodology? What are its benefits?**

- **What variables and why?**

- **Usually the longest part of your abstract**

- **Value of your conclusions hinges on credible methodology**

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A METHOD?

METHODOLOGY

- **You don't have to conduct a study with participants to have a methodology!**

- **Wrote a literature review? That's a method!**

- **May also discuss a theoretical approach, theorists, and benefits of these choices**

THEORY

A lens to examine an idea

- **Social work: resilience or strength-based approach**

- **Nursing: descriptive, explanatory, predictive**

- **Education: special education, multiliteracies**

- **Literature: reader-response, post-colonial**

LITERATURE REVIEWS

- An abstract doesn't have to be for a work of original research

- Collecting the work of other scholars is still a method, even if you do not necessarily draw a new conclusion

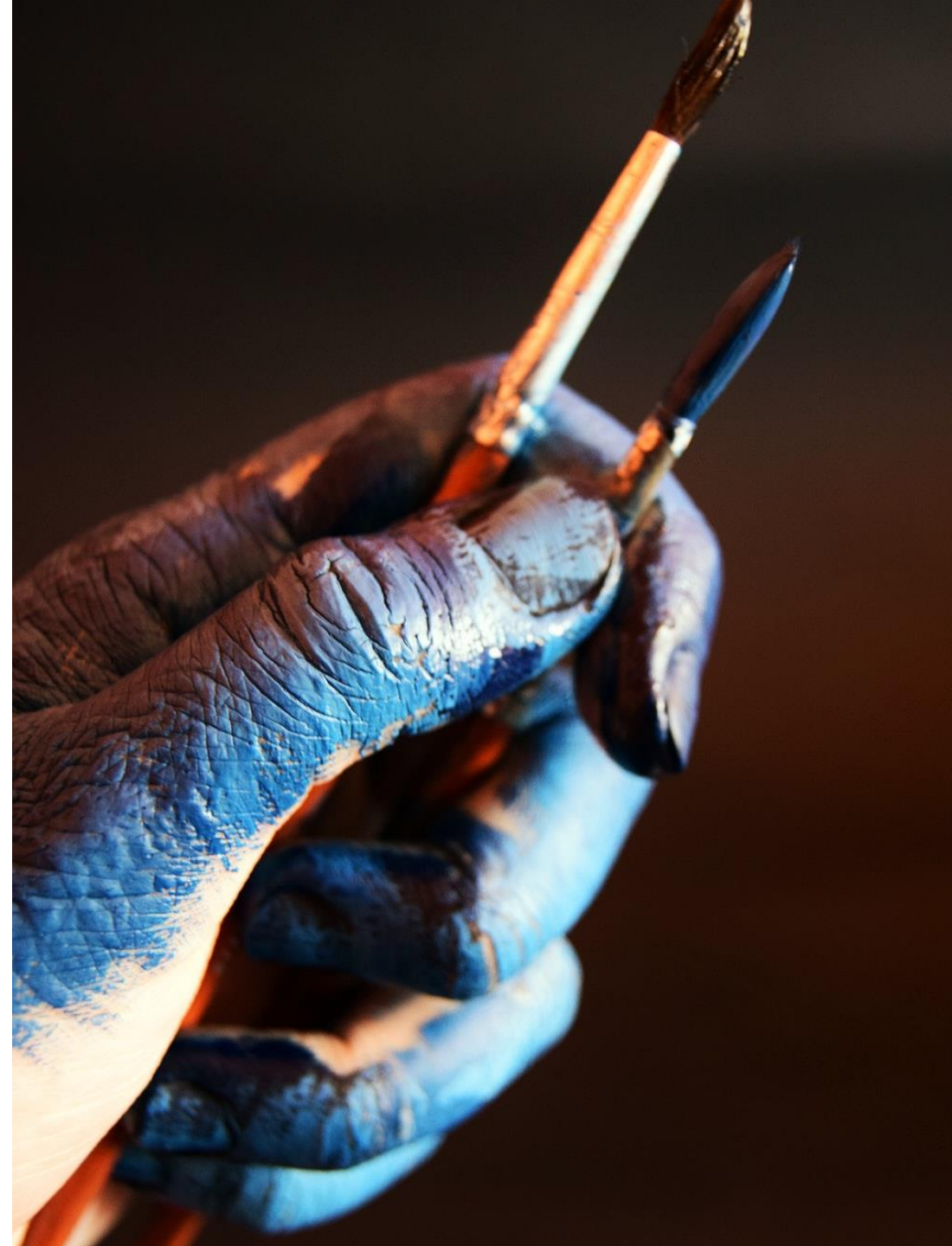- Follow the same steps, noting any conclusions you may have drawn

BUT I'M NOT DONE!

- **Research in progress? Don't worry!**

- **UWillDiscover accepts abstracts for work in progress**

- **Preliminary results? Be clear on scope and be frank**

- **Projected results? Again, be clear these are not final**

ARTIST'S STATEMENTS

- Similar to abstracts in function and structure
- Tend to be more personal
- Main theme or idea of work?
- Relate to previous practice?
- Why make this art?
- Influences?
- Expected/intended reactions?
- Technique, theory, or method (and why!)

ARTIST'S STATEMENTS

- **NOT your personal biography as an artist**

- **May include autobiographical elements**

- **An artist may have different statements for different works or collections of works within their practice**

- **May use first-person pronoun 'I.'**

EXAMPLE METHOD

One hundred undergraduate participants viewed lists of depression-relevant, neutral and positive words that they were asked to recognize later among lure words. Participants were grouped as dysphoric, mid-dysphoric, or non-dysphoric as determined by BDI-II scores. This study hypothesized that dysphoric participants induced into a negative mood would have a greater number of mood congruent false memories than all of the other groups. A 2 x2 x3 x 3 – way mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Mood Induction (positive, negative), Gender (male, female), and Group (dysphoric, mid-dysphoric, non-dysphoric control participants) as between-subject variables and Word Type (depression-relevant, neutral, positive) as a within-subject variable and correlation analyses were used to examine the depression relevant false memory results.

FINDINGS

- **Spoil the ending!**
- **What were the results?**
- **What is the importance of these results?**
- **Most important part of your abstract**
- **Reinforce implications of your results / how vital they are**

EXAMPLE FINDINGS

Correlation analyses revealed that dysphoria is related to an increased amount of mood congruent false memories (r = .22; p< .04). The results of this study add to previous research in the field of depression and memory on a small scale. Further research in the area is needed for a more complete understanding of how memory functions in dysphoric individuals, and may be used to augment or create treatment techniques.

KEYWORDS

- **Help highlight relevance of your work and make it easier to find/categorize**

- **Think of them like hashtags on a tweet or Instagram post**

- **4-6 keywords is usually a good range**

HIGHLIGHTER ACTIVITY

BONUS TIPS

KEEP IT SHORT!

- **Most abstracts are under 250 words**
- **Combine sections to save space**
- **Check the requirements of your particular conference / journal / assignment**

CHECK RESTRICTIONS

- **Length of paper?**
- **Citation style? Chicago? APA? MLA? IEEE?**
- **Topic and keywords?**
- **Any other restrictions in the call for papers or assignment instructions**
- **Make a checklist!**

THINK ABOUT AUDIENCE

- **Who is reading the paper/watching the presentation?**

- **Multidisciplinary audience or someone familiar with your field?**

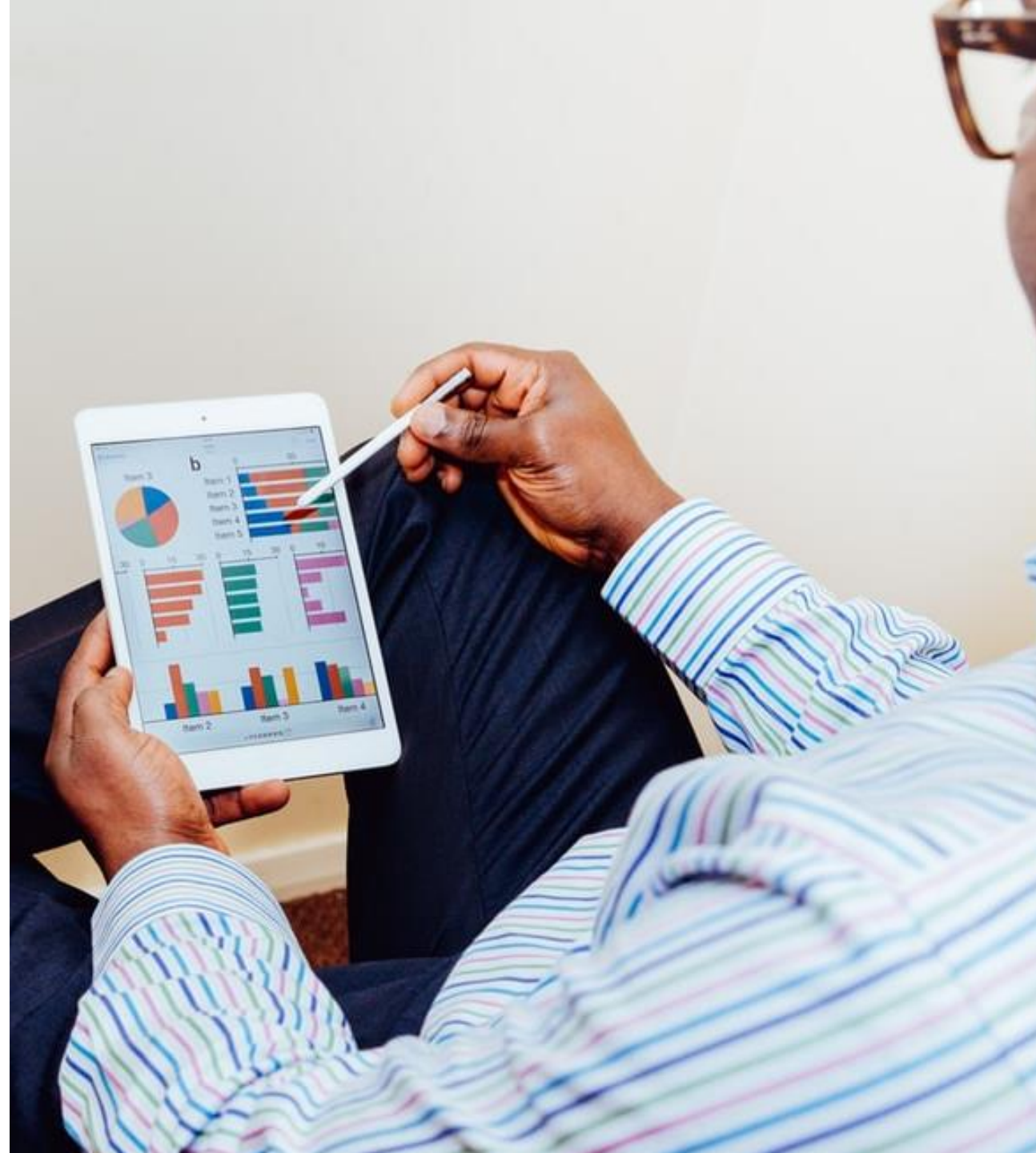- **Avoid jargon when possible depending on audience**

CONSIDER IMPARTIALITY

- **Don't overstate the importance of your work**

- **If there are limitations, be frank about them**

- **Discuss work in the context of an ongoing discourse and continuing research**
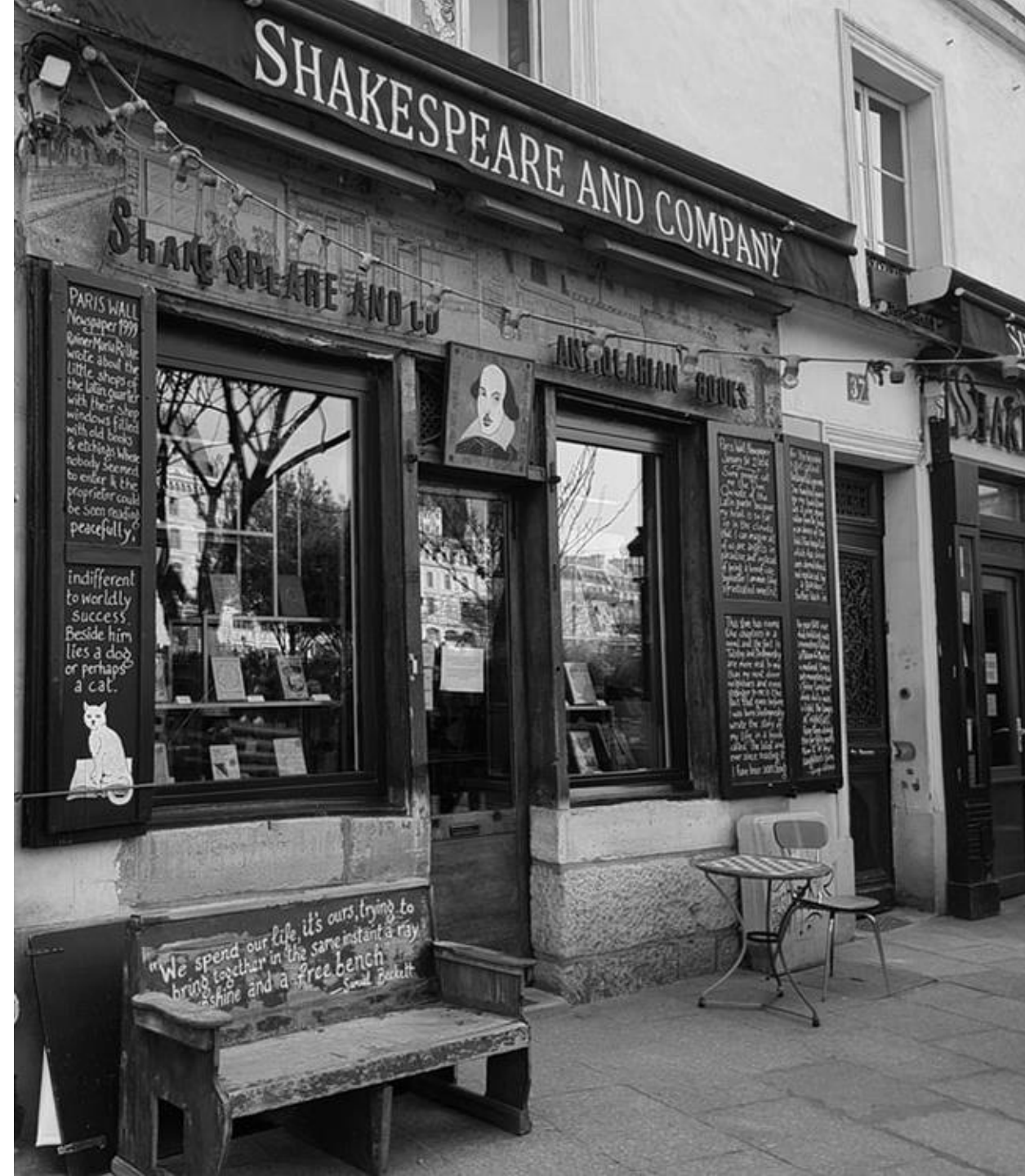
AVOID CITING & REFERENCING

- **Save citing and referencing for body of your paper**

- **Abstracts should be fairly general**

- **Avoid specific stats & graphs**

AVOID INITIALIZATIONS & LESSER-KNOWN NAMES

- Generally stay away from abbreviations unless for very well-known organizations (NASA, FBI, etc.)
- Only mention recognizable people, not lesser-known researchers (discipline specific)

FINAL THOUGHTS

- **Following these steps and tips will help you clearly communicate the main points of your work**

- **When researching, be on the lookout for what makes a strong abstract!**

QUESTIONS?

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https://urca.msu.edu/abstract-samples

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