

# **WRITING YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

*In 8 days*



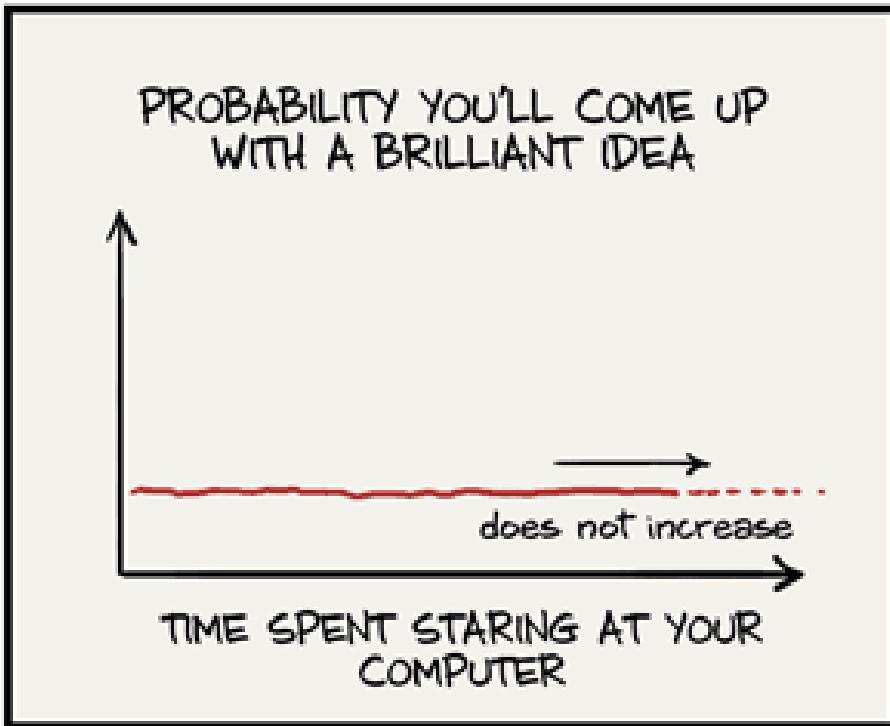
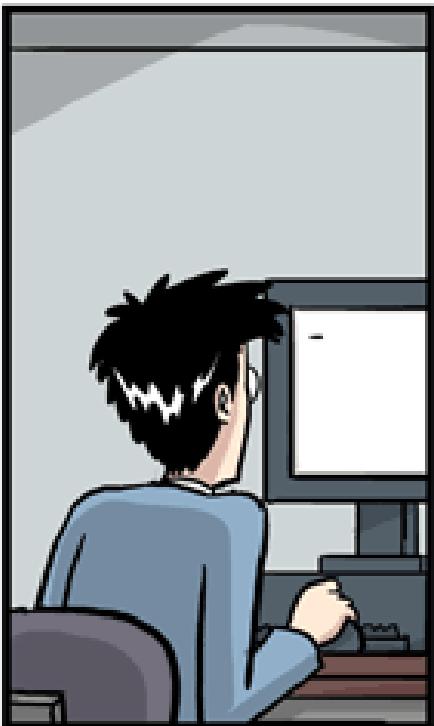
# HELLO!

**Course facilitator:**

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# Before we start...

- Know your **department's preferred proposal** format.
- Define your audience:** who will read your proposal? What should the reader get from your proposal?
- Ensure that you have an **overview of literature** related to your topic – the proposal should show that you have read and considered work that has been done in the field.

# But what if I don't have a topic yet?

- What are you interested in?
- Is there a 'problem' in your area of study that you would like to address or know more about?
- Once you have a broad area of interest, look at literature in that area:
  - Authors often suggest areas for future research in the discussion or conclusion section of research articles.

What has other researchers done in the area under study?

What will be your study's focus?

Why is your study important?

## Unpacking your research topic

What type of data do you need to answer your research question?

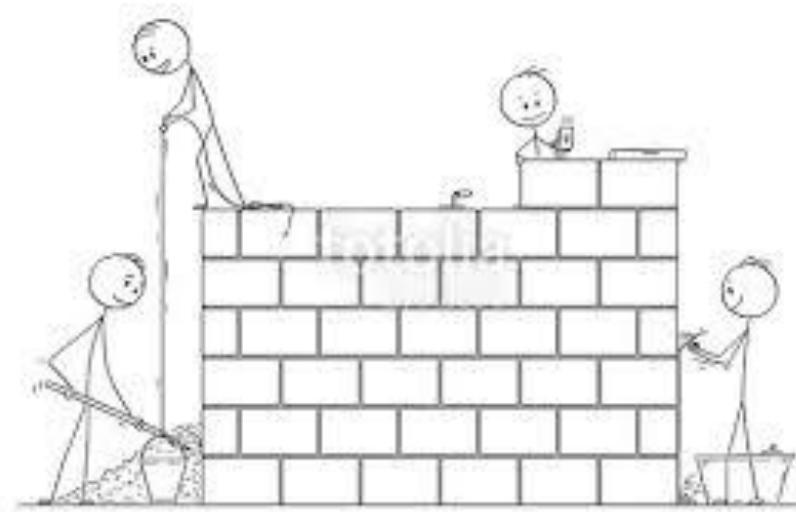
Where and how will you get the data needed to answer your research question?

# Develop a concept map

- A visual representation of your understanding of your topic.
- A concept map is a good way to organise your ideas as you delve deeper into your topic area.
- Where to start?
  - A good place to start is with the central topic or idea.
  - From the central topic you then start to break the idea into subtopics – remember, it is YOUR map.

# Research proposal sections

- Introduction
- Problem statement
- Aim and objectives
- Preliminary literature review
- Research methodology
- Ethical considerations



Ready? Get yourself strapped in!



Writing your  
*INTRODUCTION*



## Where to start?

- This is often the **deciding section**: go on reading or not?
- In this section you are '**pitching your idea**' – you have to convince the reader that your study is important.
- Often written later in the proposal process, **BUT!** Don't put it aside till the end.
- Start with an outline for the introduction and add notes to this section as you work on other sections.



# Questions to answer in your introduction

What is the central research problem?

What is the context?

Why is this research important?

How will your study investigate the problem?



# **What is the central research problem?**

- What exactly are you going to look at?
- What - or who - are involved?

Grab a friend and describe your study in 30 seconds – this usually helps to get to the core of your research problem.

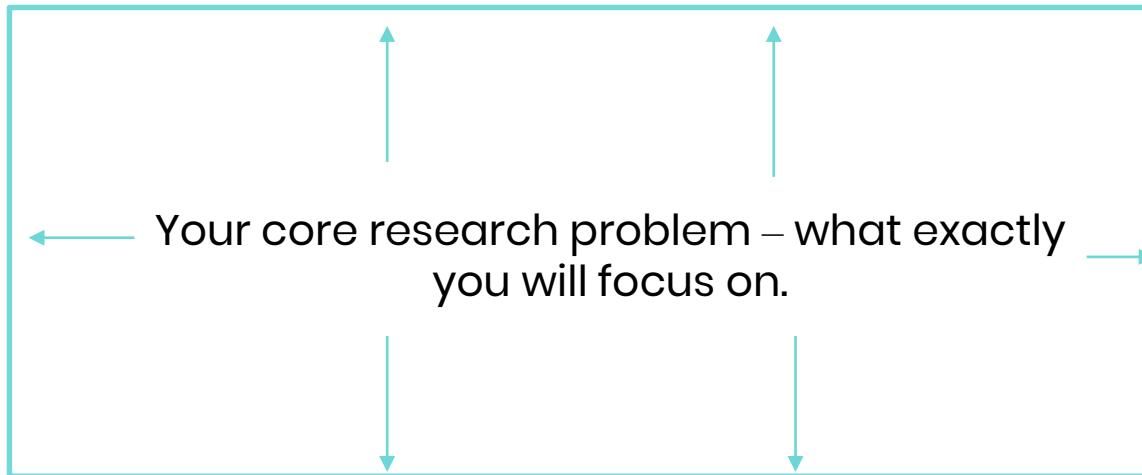




And?  
Was it easy to describe your study?

Remember to write down additional questions that came up in the exercise. Also, jot down new ideas that may have surfaced.

# Delineating your study



Interesting ideas and concepts in the  
literature that is not directly related to your  
study.

# **What is your research context?**

- Is your research at the cutting edge of your field?
- Are you looking into a previously researched area, but using a new approach?
- What is the historical backdrop to your study?
- Who are the key players in the field? Does their research findings support your hypothesis?



## But WHY?

- Why is this important research?
- What is the significance of your study?
- Why should the reader care about the outcomes of the proposed study?
- Use facts, but apply your passion for the proposed study.

# How will your study investigate the topic?

- ❑ Clarify how the study will be conducted.
- ❑ Written once your research question and have identified your research methodology.

## ❑ Example:

The study will utilise a case study design with legitimacy theory as lens to explore inter-organisational conflict within the transnational SFD funding – nonprofit inter-organisational relationship. Research will be guided by the following research question: How is inter-organisational conflict within transnational SFD funding–nonprofit partnerships addressed and managed?



**Use the Step #3 worksheet to write an  
outline of your introduction**

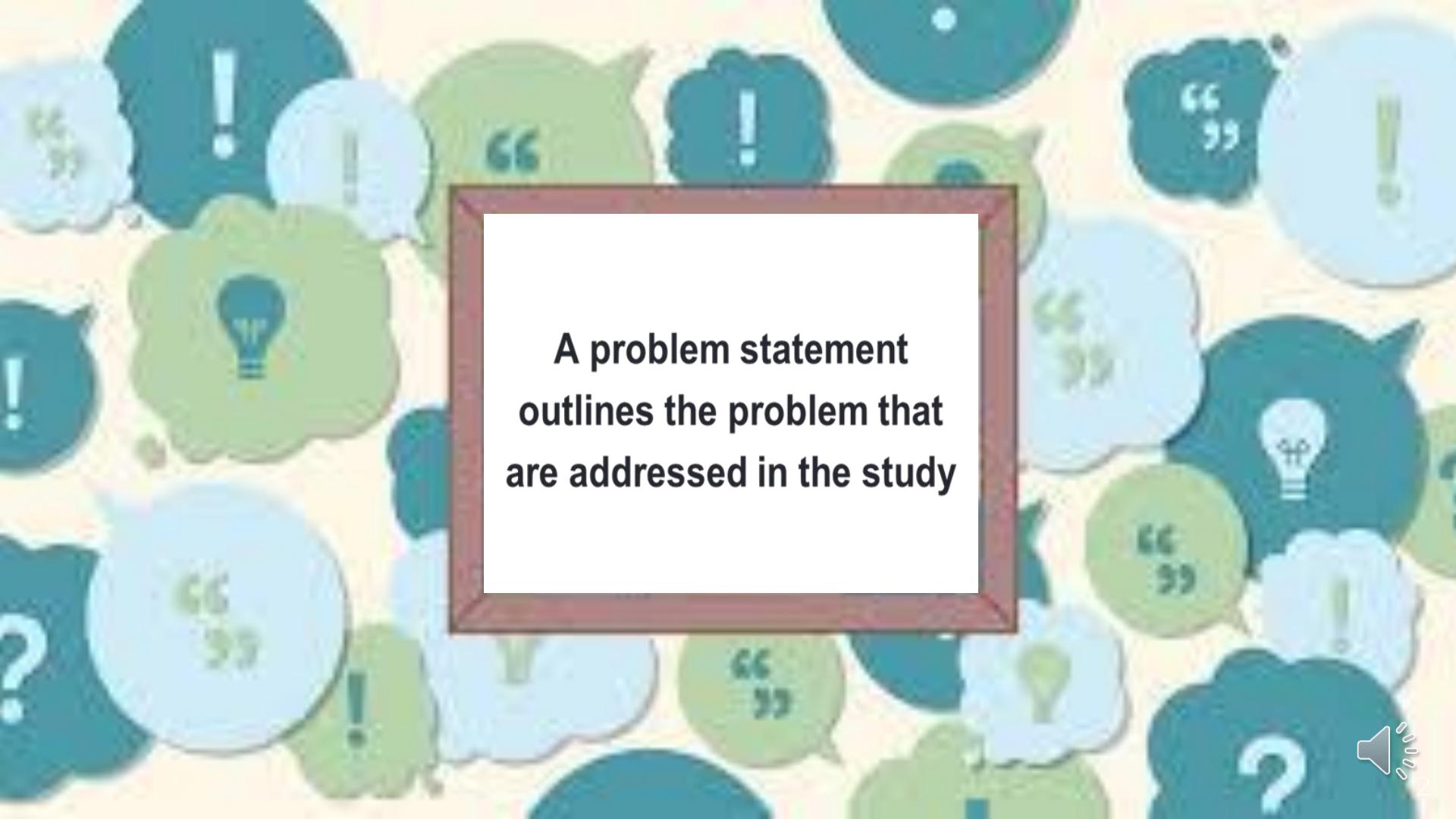


**Now onwards! To the problem statement..**



# Writing your... *Problem statement*





A problem statement  
outlines the problem that  
are addressed in the study



# We engage in research in order to solve a problem

Your problem statement specify the problem that you are trying to solve by outlining :

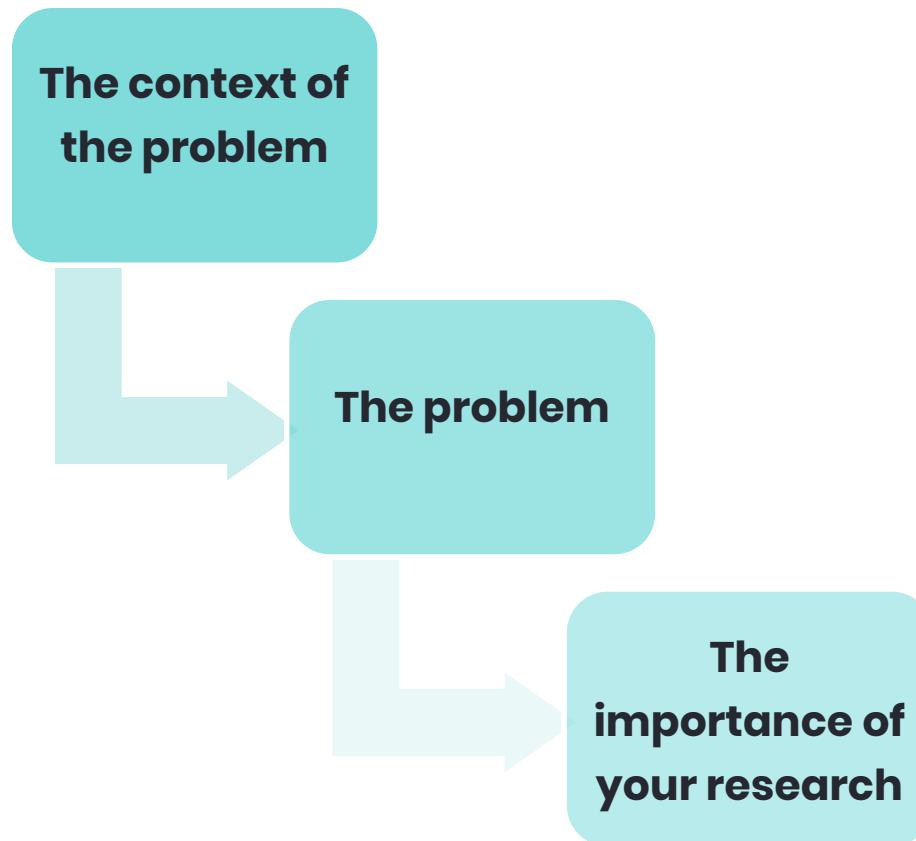
- i. The context of the problem
- ii. The problem
- iii. The reason why your research is important

## **A problem statement should:**

- Have a clear structure;
- Convince the reader of the need for the study;
- Illustrate how the planned research will contribute to the existing body of research;
- Be able to stand on its own.

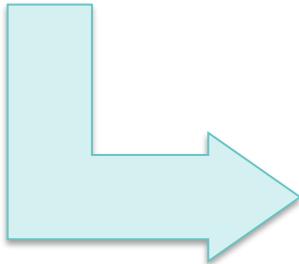


## **Written in three parts:**

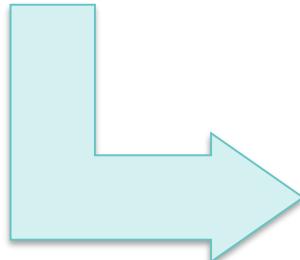


## **Let's apply this to your study...**

**The context of your problem: what do we know about the problem?**



**What is the problem? What will happen if we do not address this problem?**



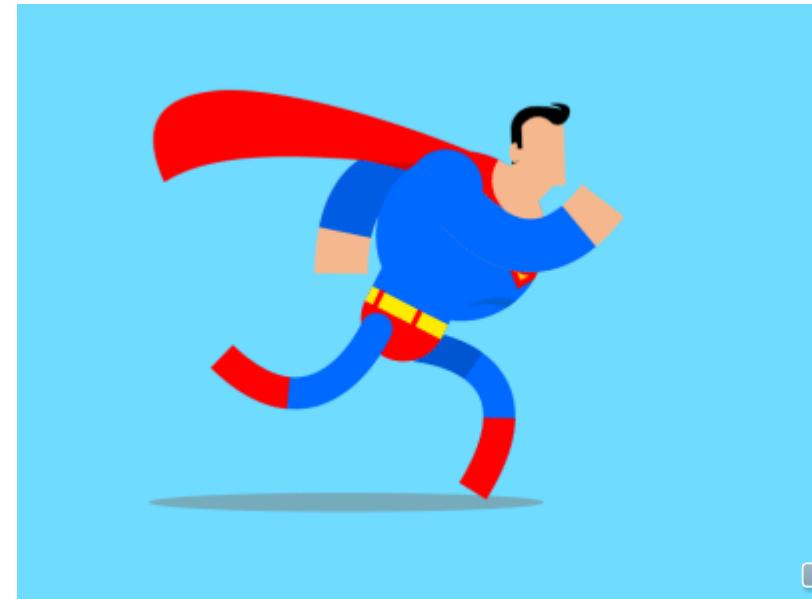
**Why is it important that we know more about it? How will your research allow others to know more about this?**

## **Before you start writing your problem statement, consider the following:**

- What are you looking at? And Why?
- What has other researchers done in this field?
- Who are the stakeholders in the field that you are interested in?

Outline **WHY** this study is important and **WHAT** your research will contribute.

**Let's move on to writing  
your study's research  
question, aim and  
objectives**



# Writing your... *Question, aims and objectives*



# **Why do you need a research question, an aim and research objectives?**

- Called ‘the golden thread’
- Define the focus and scope of your research
- Keep you on track



## Your research question

- Provided in your research proposal and answered at the end of your study.
- Methodology is influenced by the research question:
  - Exploratory questions: qualitative methodology.
  - Relationship testing or comparative questions: quantitative methodology.
  - Two questions, e.g. exploratory and comparative: mixed methodology.
- Grounded in reality.

# Research question examples: quantitative research

- Descriptive questions:** What is the graduation rate of Masters students enrolled in a distance education course?
- Comparative questions:** What is the **effect** of cooperative learning techniques on the academic achievement of middle school students?
- Relationship questions: What is the relationship between parental educational levels and levels of school attendance among middle school students?



# Research question examples: qualitative research

- Open-ended and non-directional.
- Focused on the why and how of things, but can also start with what:
  - How does a servant leadership style impact on employee wellbeing?
  - What are the attitudes of elderly people with Dementia towards the daily use of assistive technologies?

# **Write your research question**

# **Aims versus objectives?**

## **Research aim**

- Sets out what you want to achieve by the end of your research project – the intention of the research;
- Broader than objectives.

## **Research objectives**

- More specific than the research aim;
- It explains how you will achieve your research aim – the steps you will take to achieve your goal
- Defines measurable outcomes.



# Aims to Objectives

## **Aim: What is the purpose of the project?**

To build a two-story house in Melbourne, Australia by 2024.

## **Objectives: How will I achieve this aim?**

- To organise financing that will cover the costs for the project.
- To purchase a piece of land suitable for a two-story property in January – March 2022.
- To appoint a building contractor.
- To decide on a design for the house.
- To develop a timeline for completion of the house.

# Research question



## Research aim



Objective

Objective

Objective

# What role does sport play in the integration of refugee and migrant youth in Victoria, Australia?



To understand the role that sport plays in the integration of refugee and migrant youth in Victoria



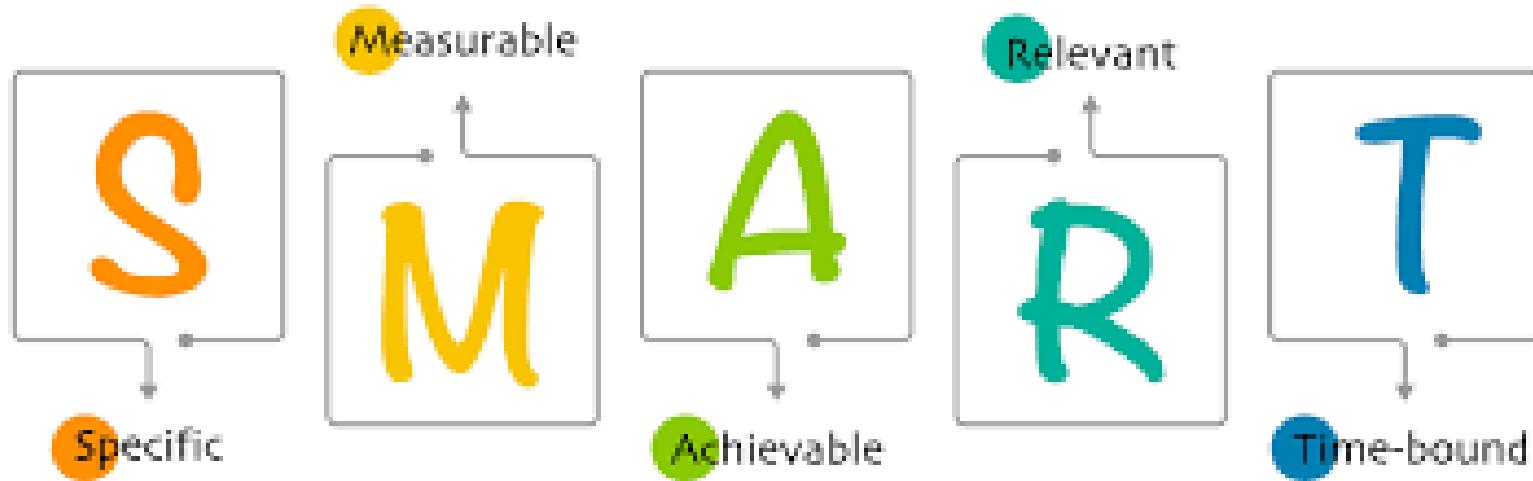
To identify sport opportunities available to refugee and migrant youth in Victoria

To explore challenges to sport participation as experienced by refugee and migrant youth in Victoria

To make recommendations to community sport clubs on how to include refugee and migrant youth in Victoria



# SMART objectives



**Use Step #5 worksheet to write your  
research aim and objectives**

Let's now turn our attention to the preliminary literature review



# Writing your *Preliminary literature review*





GET ALL THE  
INFORMATION YOU CAN,  
WE'LL THINK OF A  
USE FOR IT LATER.



## What is a literature review?

- ❑ A critical analysis of published resources on a topic.
- ❑ Your theoretical framework must provide an overview of work that is and has been done in your topic area.
- ❑ A literature review must summarise, evaluate and compare published work in an academic field.

## Where to start?

- Start by understanding your topic – identify keywords.
- Keyword search: Google Scholar/ EBSCO Host/ database in your study area
- Related articles.
- Save articles according to author and dates.



# Identifying search keywords

- Start with your research question:

What role does **sport** play in the  
**integration** of **refugee and migrant**  
**youth** in Victoria, Australia?



# Organising literature

- Start an electronic library: e.g. Mendeley or Endnote.
- Decide on a system to save research documents – stick to it.
- Use Excel to keep track of literature.

## **Using Atlas ti or Nvivo to review literature**

- Find out whether you have access to an Atlas ti or NVivo licence from your university.
- Download Atlas ti from <https://atlasti.com/free-trial-version/> and add your university licence.
- Upload your documents and save it as a project.



# Organising literature

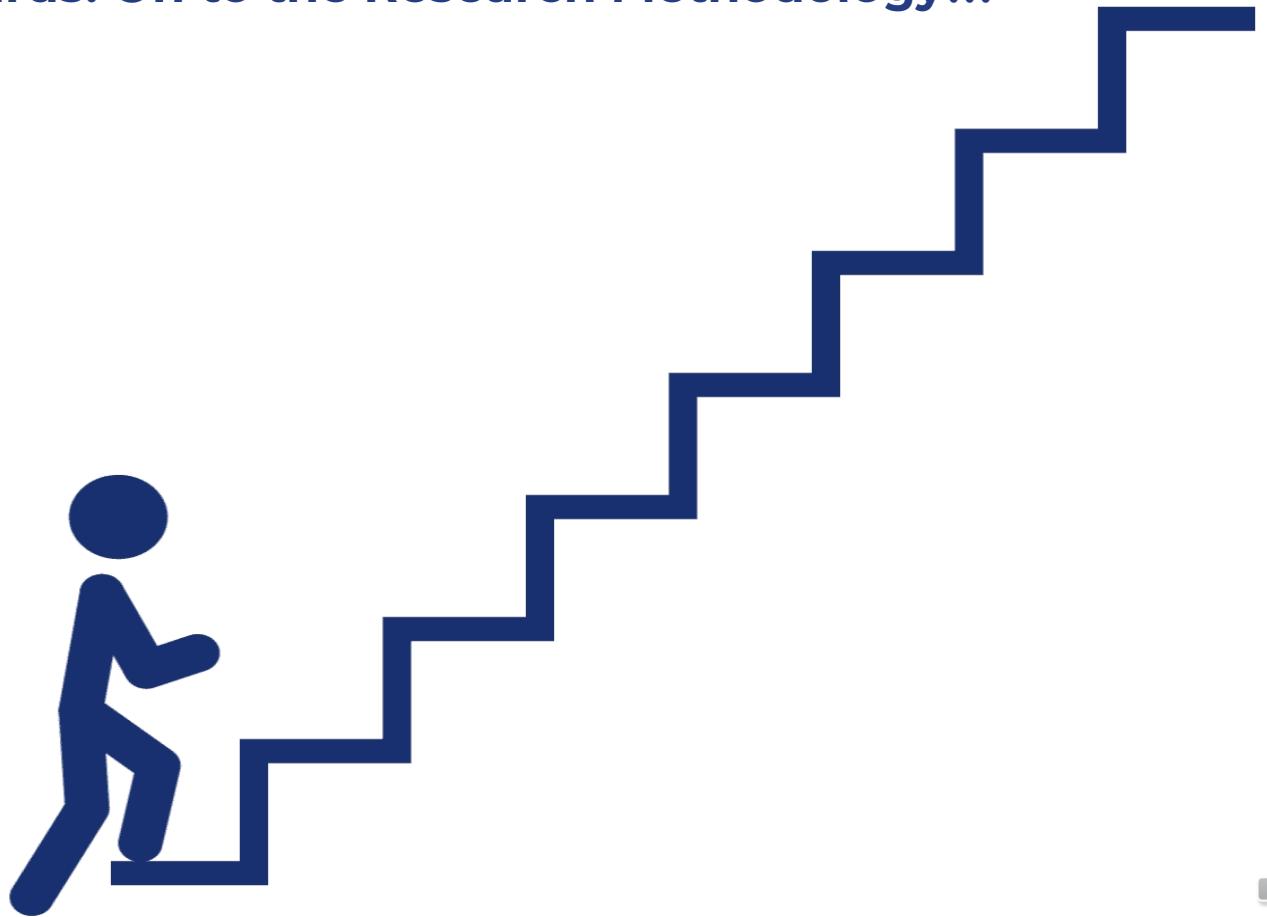
- Literature can be organised thematically or chronologically.
- Use a concept map to link research articles to concepts (Step #2 worksheet).
- Ideally, separate themes should be discussed in a chronological manner to describe how research in the field has evolved over time and to highlight the progress in the field.
- The review should include a comparison and contrast of different studies.

# Use your concept map to identify themes

- Decide on how you want to present your literature.
- Use your concept map as guide to which authors to include under each theme.
- Do not overload each paragraph.
- Add a heading to the start of each paragraph summarising the paragraph content.

**Use your concept map to write your preliminary literature review outline**

**Onwards and upwards! On to the Research Methodology...**



# Writing your... *Research Methodology*



MOMENTS OF TRUTH

QUANT STUDY?

NO WAY, TOO  
EXPENSIVE  
AND TAKES  
TOO LONG

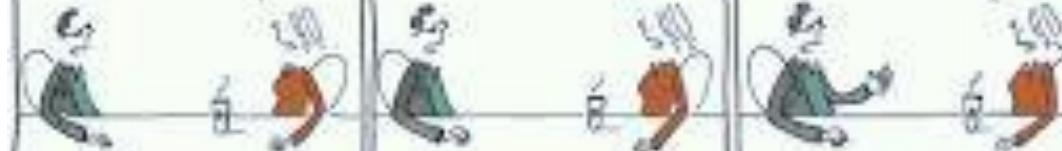
FOCUS GROUPS?

NOPE, TOO  
EASILY SWAYED  
BY STRONG  
PERSONALITIES

by Tom Fishburne

FINE, WHAT THEN?

MONITORING  
SOCIAL MEDIA  
CHATTER AND  
CHERRYPICKING  
QUOTES WE LIKE



LIBERATING CONSUMER INTELLIGENCE. EMPOWERING MARKETERS. **MOTISTA**

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# Decisions around research methodology

- ❑ Research design:
  - ✓ Quantitative, Qualitative or Mixed Methodology
- ❑ Research population:
  - ✓ Research sample?
  - ✓ Sampling method?
- ❑ Data collection: HOW will data be collected?
- ❑ Data analysis: HOW will data collected be analysed?

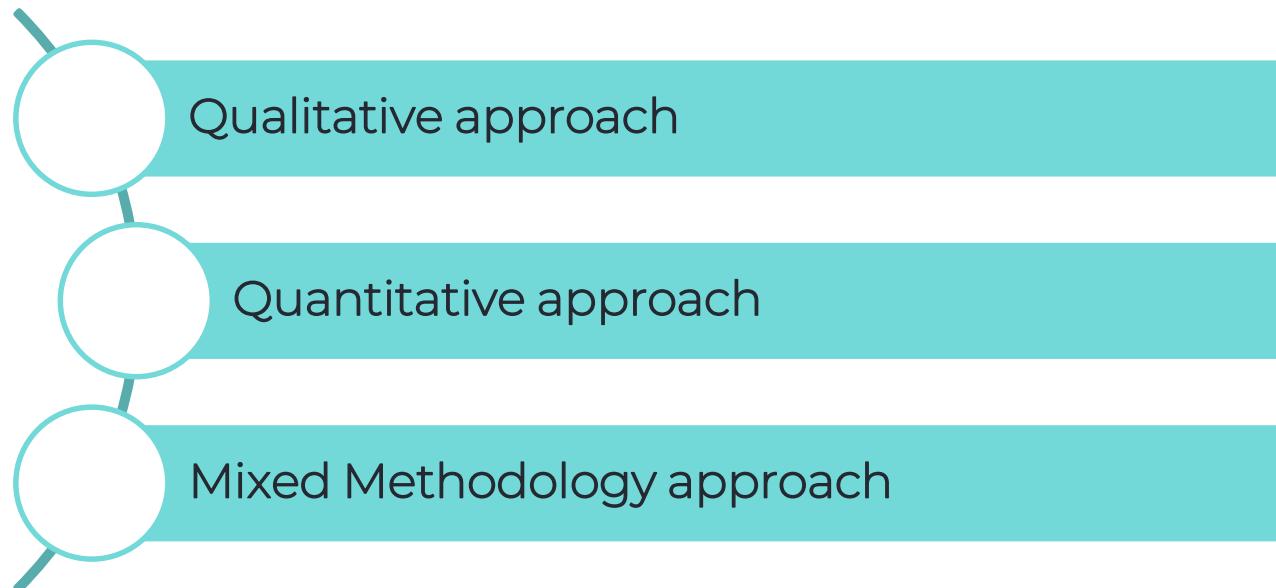
## Research design?

- Your research design is the '**recipe**' for your study
- The design you select refers to **broad assumptions** made by the selection of a research approach.
- Your decision furthermore depends on your selected paradigm.



# **But how do you select the right research method?**

- First understand the options available:



# **What is the difference?**

## **Qualitative**

Interpretive paradigm.

Deals with words and textual data. Data is analysed to find inherent themes and meanings.

## **Quantitative**

Positivist paradigm  
Produces numerical data. Quantitative research therefore involves statistical analysis.

## **Mixed methods**

A combination of quantitative and qualitative data with one process informing the other.



# Research sample

## ❑ Qualitative:

- Small, purposeful
  - ✓ Non-probability sampling
  - ✓ Purposeful sampling
  - ✓ Convenience sampling

## ❑ Quantitative:

- Large, random
  - ✓ Probability sampling
    - Simple random sampling
    - Stratified random sampling
    - Cluster sampling
    - Systematic sampling



# Data collection and analysis

## Qualitative

### *Data collection:*

- Interviews/ semi-structured interviews
- Focus groups
- Documentary data
- Observation

### *Data analysis:*

- Content and thematic analysis
- Narrative analysis

## Quantitative

### *Data collection:*

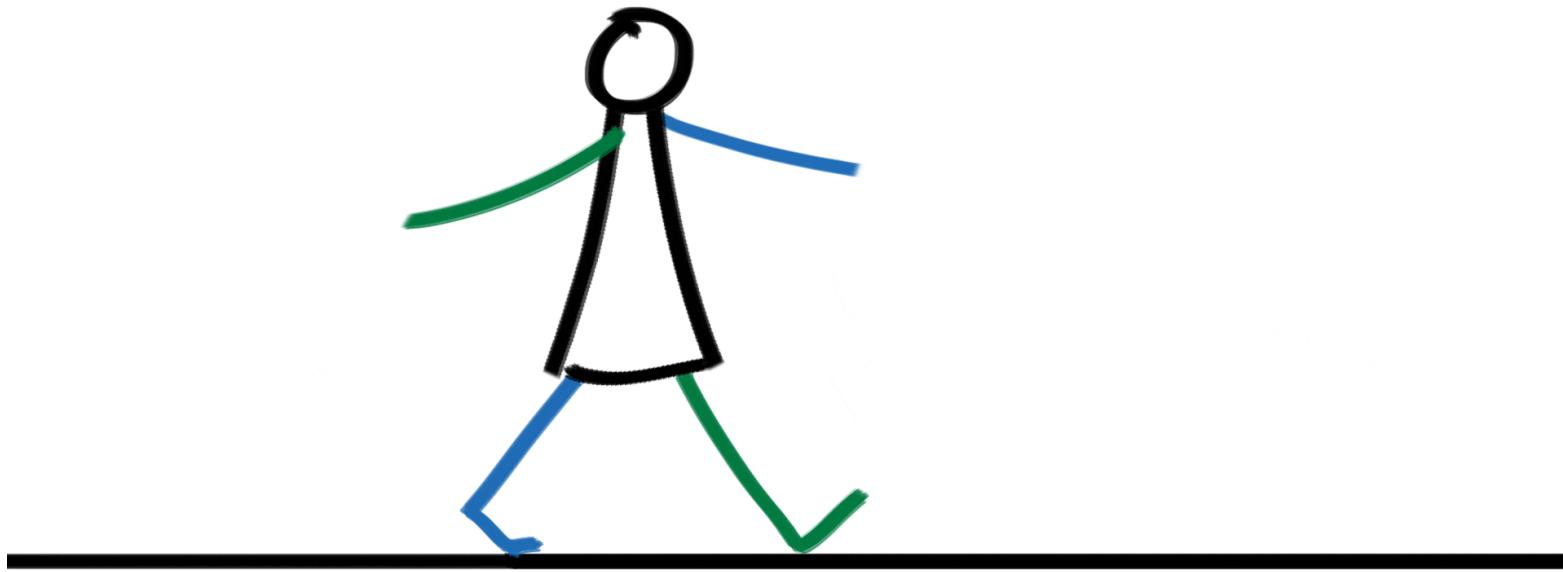
- Questionnaires
- Scales
- Tests
- Checklists

### *Data analysis:*

- Statistical analysis methods



# Onwards to ethical considerations!



**Last but not least...**

*Ethical considerations*



Sigh...

So what I hear you  
saying is you'll pay  
me to get cured -  
I'm in !!

INFORMED  
CONSENT



# Ethics?

- ❑ The ethical conduct of researchers came under the spotlight in the 1940's – 1950's.
- ❑ Experimentation on war prisoners and prisoners.
- ❑ 1930's experimentation on Aboriginal Australians.
- ❑ Ethical practices in research involve more than just listing a set of guidelines – it is a guideline for conduct.

## Ethical considerations

- Voluntary participation
- No harm or risk to participant
- Informed consent & Assent
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- Storage of data



# Ethical considerations

## Voluntary participation

Research participants should never be forced to participate in research. Participants should also be allowed to terminate participation even if they gave consent.

## Anonymity

Anonymity is guaranteed when the participant's identity is not known to either the researchers or the readers of the research. It CANNOT be guaranteed in qualitative research.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality can be guaranteed when a researcher is able to identify a participant's identity but has put measures in place to not make the identity public.



## **No harm or risk to participants**

Harm include possible psychological harm. The researcher must be aware of any possible sensitive issues that may trigger negative emotions.

## **Informed consent**

Informed consent confirms the participant's voluntary participation. It furthermore confirms that participants have been informed of all possible risks involved in participating in the research.

## **Assent**

Similar to consent, but applicable to participants under the age of 18 years. Research protocol must be explained in a way that participants will understand what participation entails.



# Deception

- Providing false, misleading or incomplete information to participants.
- Making promises that will not be delivered on.
- Importance of briefing and debriefing.



**Think about your problem statement,  
research aim and objectives. Which of  
the ethical considerations are  
applicable to research?**

**It is now time to turn your attention to putting all the components of your proposal together**



## Texts to consult

- Babbie, E. R. (2015). *The practice of social research*. Nelson Education.
- Creswell, J. W., & Tashakkori, A. (2007). Differing perspectives on mixed methods research.
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in mixed methods research. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4, 269-284.
- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). *Research ethics for social scientists*. Sage.
- Oliver, P. (2010). *The student's guide to research ethics*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

# Final considerations



**“Success is not final; failure is not fatal: it  
is the courage to continue that counts”**

**- Winston S. Churchill**



## **Adding all the elements together**

- You have now developed the elements needed for your research proposal;
- Use Step#3 - 7 documents;
- Ensure that you follow your university and department's instructions for the outline of your proposal
- Rewrite content into paragraphs.

## **Remember to add your reference list**

- Do not forget to add your reference list at the end of your proposal.
- Make sure that you are using the referencing format as preferred by your department.

## **Tools to help you throughout your study**

- A handy tool to see your PhD thesis on one page:

<https://www.thephdproofreaders.com/download-your-phd-writing-template/>

- Designing your research timeline:

<https://www.teamgantt.com/free-gantt-chart-excel-template>



**Thank you for following this course!**

