



**SHERIDAN**  
INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

# RS292 Research Methods

*Selecting and Planning Research  
Proposals*

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Lecturer: Dr Maya Krayneva

Textbook: Gray, D. (2018). *Doing research in the real world*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

# Climate Setter

- As a child, what did you want to be when you grow up?
- What was your favourite toy as a child?



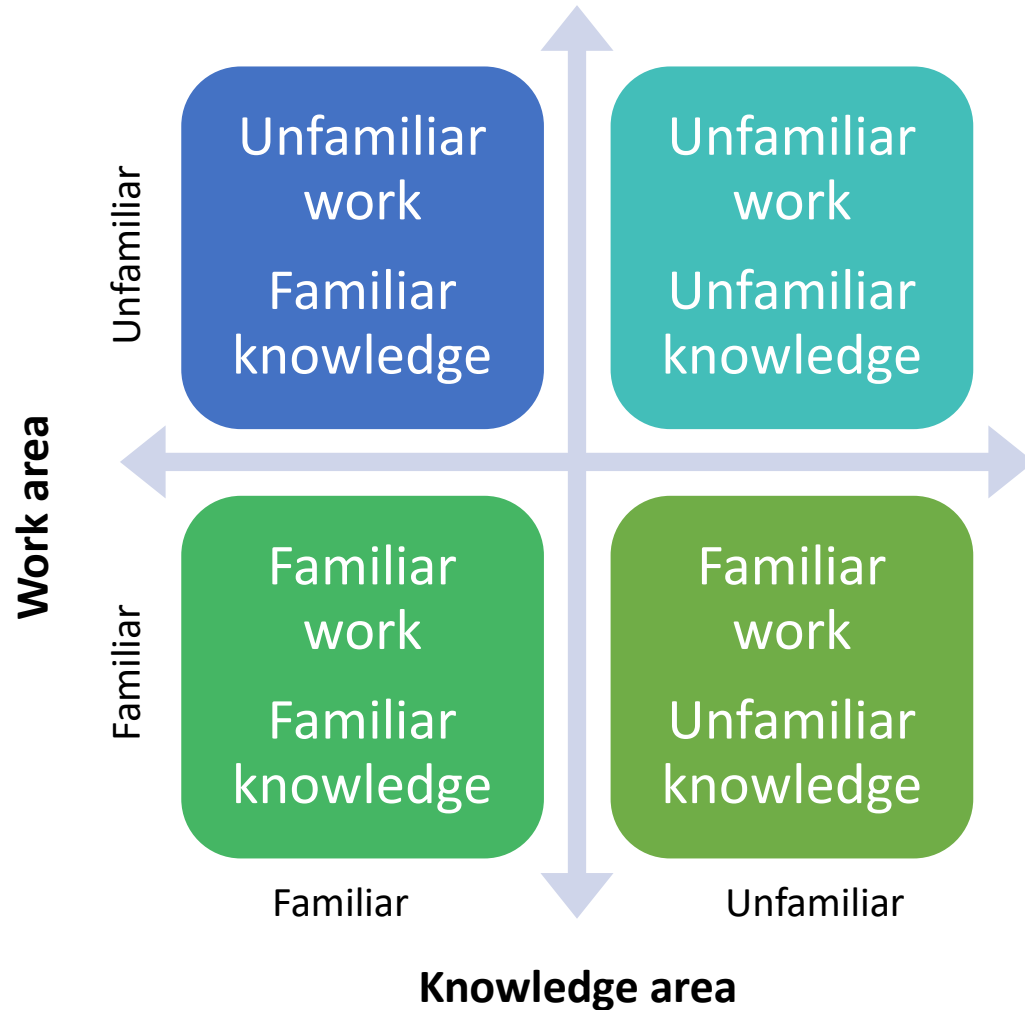
# Research Topic

Sources of ideas = literature, surroundings, experiences (directly from the workplace or business setting)

Emerging topic is the best as you have a 'well' to draw from



# Consider your capabilities and experience



# Selecting a Research Topic

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A 'good' topic will . . .

- interest you (you need to be committed)
- give you free rein to maximise self-development
- holds future career benefits/relevance (link your research topic to your career goals)



# Selecting a Research Topic

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A 'good' topic will . . .

- **add value** to the organization: innovative, provoking, and original projects (versus 're-ploughing' old ground)
- meet academic/workplace requirements



# Generating Ideas



**Table 3.1** Techniques for generating and refining research ideas

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**Rational thinking**

Examining your own strengths and weaknesses  
Looking at past projects  
Searching the literature  
Gaining ideas through discussion

**Creative thinking**

Brainstorming  
Exploring personal preferences using past projects  
Relevance trees  
Keeping a notebook of ideas  
SWOT analysis

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Source: Adapted from Saunders et al., 2012

# Topics to Avoid

- ✘ Too big or too trivial
- ✘ Too technical
- ✘ Lacking in resource materials and people
- ✘ Dependent on the completion of another project
- ✘ Unethical



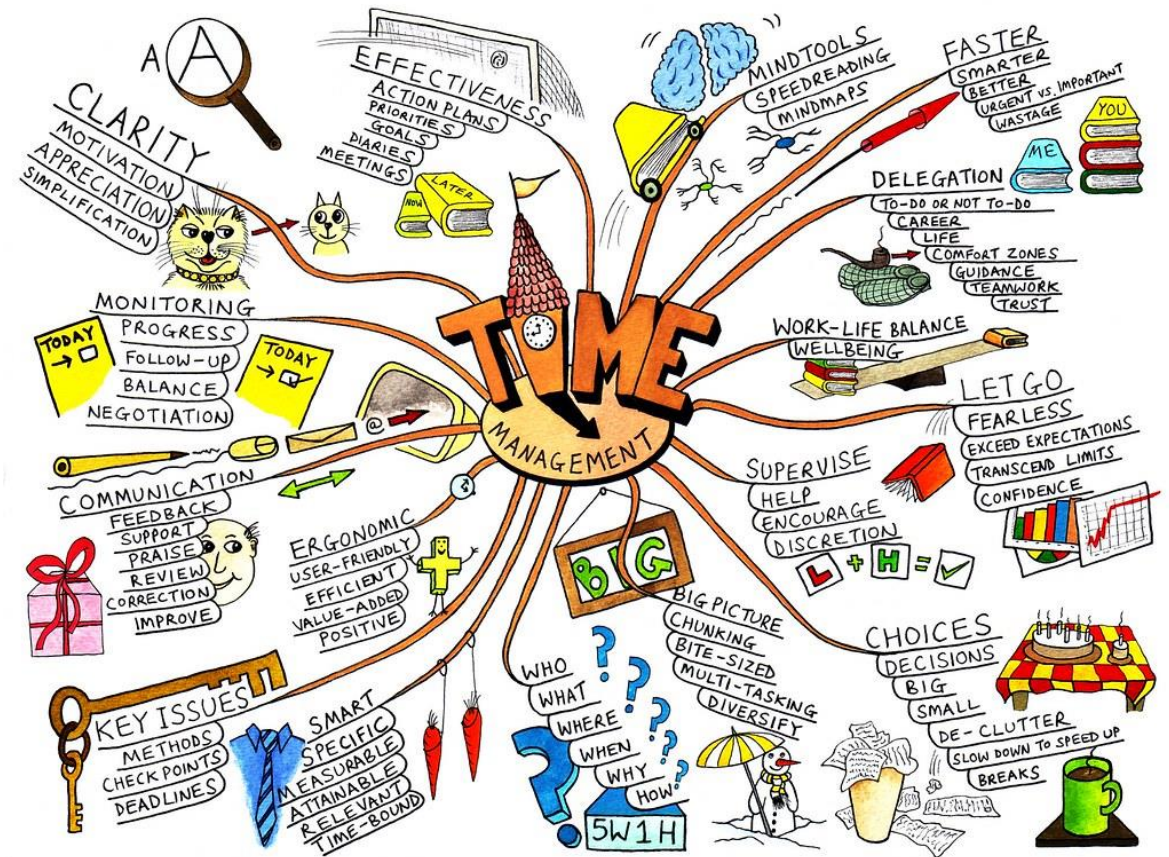
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# Activity: Peer Interviews

Image source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chrismyers/2018/02/23/how-to-find-your-ikigai-and-transform-your-outlook-on-life-and-business/?sh=60d3f5572ed4>

# Organising your ideas

Develop a mindmap of your intended research topic



Choose a provisional topic  
(narrowing the focus)

**Topic**

# Overview Research Proposal

(textbook, p. 54)

Table 3.2 Typical structure for an academic proposal

Section	Contents
Working title	Describes the breadth and depth of the topic and gives an indication of the methodology to be used (e.g. case study, evaluation, etc.).
Introduction (abstract)	A summary of the research topic, describing the core problems or issues, the gaps in the current research and how this research will address them.
Aims	General statements on intent and direction of the research.
Objectives	Clear and measurable statements of intended outcomes.
Justification	Rationale for the research with reference to gaps in current knowledge, and potential application of results.
Review of the literature	Describes the history of the topic and key literature sources; illustrates major issues and refines focus to indicate research questions (qualitative research) or hypotheses (quantitative research).
Research questions and hypotheses	Describes the key research questions, expressed in measurable terms, plus hypotheses (if needed).
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research design: inductive or deductive; quantitative or qualitative (or mixed methods). Choice of research strategy (e.g. experiment, survey, case study, interviews, observations, etc.). Justification for how this strategy addresses the research questions.</li> <li>2. Approaches to sampling (random or non-random) and justification for sampling design selected. Description of how the sample will be selected.</li> <li>3. Approaches to data gathering: survey, case study, interviews, focus groups, etc. Benefits and potential drawbacks of using the approach(es) selected. Details of how the approach will be used in the current study including how instruments will be designed and administered/distributed.</li> <li>4. Approaches to data analysis (for quantitative designs, which statistical tests; for qualitative which analysis methods, e.g. content analysis, thematic analysis, etc.).</li> <li>5. Quality in data analysis: approaches to ensuring validity and reliability of findings, or for qualitative studies credibility, authenticity and transferability.</li> </ol>
Work schedule	A timetable for completing the research indicating tasks and time scales.
References	Bibliography of works cited in the proposal.
Limitations	An acknowledgement of the potential limitations of the research, including the quality and representativeness of samples.
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire, interview schedule, etc.</p> <p>Appendix 2. Ethical waiver form and information on project supplied to respondents/interviewees including Participant Consent Form.</p> <p>Appendix 3. Costs involved (travel, voice recorder, mailing, telephone calls).</p>



# Review of the Literature

To advance collective knowledge, a researcher has to understand what has gone before:

- Describe **history** of the topic (theories, arguments, controversies)
- Illustrate major **issues** (inconsistencies, gaps) worth further investigation (which is justifying your project)

→ refine the **focus** of your research so that it leads to one research question

# Systematic or Scoping review

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- **systematic** review: a focused primary question
- **scoping** review: a more general question



**Figure 3.4** Linking the literature and methodology via research questions

# Searching the Literature

Lizelle – our amazing librarian

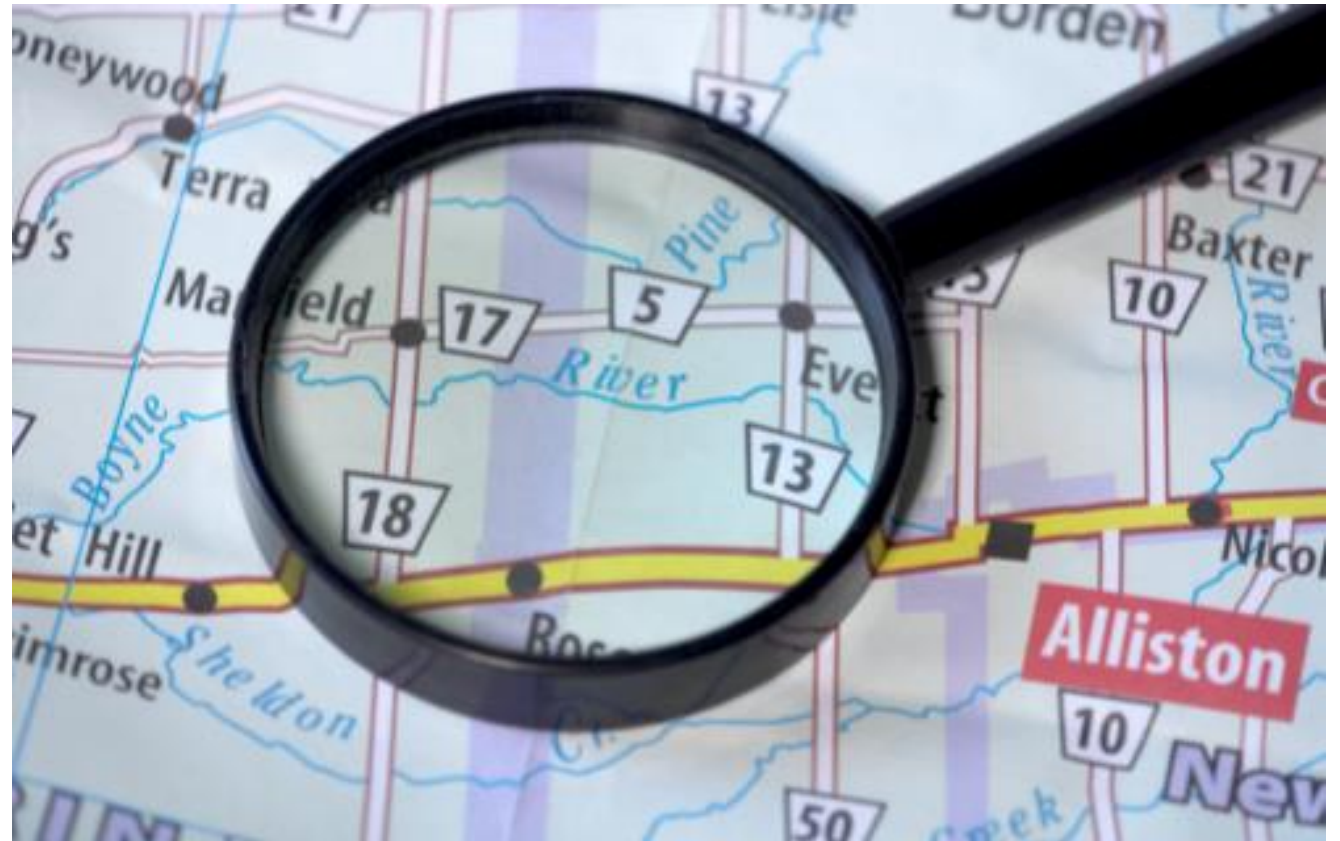


# Research question(s) and Hypotheses

Connection between the literature reviewed and the research study that follows is the formulation of research questions and/or hypotheses

Research question help:

- **Define** an investigation
- Establish **boundaries**
- Provide **direction**





# Examples of research questions

Question	Type	Comments
What changes in workplace alcohol consumption have taken place over the last 10 years?	Descriptive	The research could explore changes in aggregate alcohol consumption levels and/or changing levels <b>across</b> different business sectors or professional groups
Do high levels of alcohol consumption lead to absenteeism at work?	Explanatory	Seeks to explore a <b>relationship between variables</b> (alcohol consumption and absenteeism). It also suggests a direct relationship – that high levels of alcohol consumption lead to higher levels of absenteeism.
Why is alcohol consumption at work on the increase?	Explanatory	A question that seeks to <b>identify factors behind a phenomenon</b>
What is the scale and cause of alcohol abuse amongst older employees?	Explanatory	A question which seeks to <b>identify themes</b> when little is currently known about the subject
What is the impact of rising alcohol consumption on workplace performance/accidents?	Interpretative	Seeks to <b>uncover</b> people's views and perspectives.

## Hypothesis

Appropriate for quantitative studies where existing theories and knowledge are used to make **predictions** about a relationship between variables (the predictions are the hypothesis)

i.e. research question is in a testable format





Activity: (Attempt to) formulate your research question(s) and hypothesis

# Research aim

What are you hoping to achieve through your research?

❖ General statement



# Research objectives

❖ Clear statements



# Methodology

- Sets out and justifies the methodological approach
- Tightly related to the research question

The most scrutinized and evaluated section by academics → requires greatest attention to detail and accuracy



# Research Methodology

Quantitative, qualitative, or both

Influences choice of data gathering methods and approaches to data analysis



**Table 3.4** Typical research methodologies associated with quantitative and qualitative approaches

<b>Quantitative approaches</b>	<b>Qualitative approaches</b>
Experiment	Case study
Quasi-experiment	Ethnographic study
Correlational survey	Phenomenological study
Longitudinal study	Grounded theory
Action research	Action research
Evaluation	Evaluation
	Heuristic inquiry

# Sampling strategies

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State in clear terms exactly how and with whom the research is to be conducted

- **Size** of the sample
- **Composition** of the sample
- How the sample will be **chosen**



Random-probability sampling (selection approach by which each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected)

versus

Non-probability sampling (most likely your project)

# Data collection instruments

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## Quantitative approach:

- questionnaires
- standardized measuring instruments (e.g. psychometric tests)
- observation schedules that count the number of times an event or activity occurs



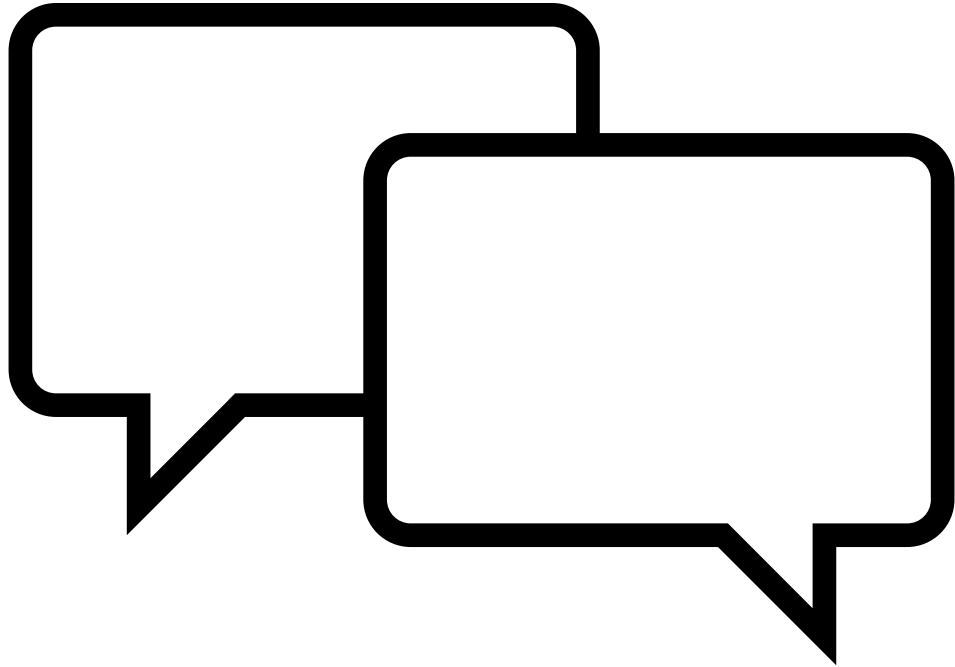
# Data collection instruments

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## Qualitative approach:

- Interviews
- Questionnaires (open-ended)
- Observation schedules
- Documents
- Journals
- Diaries
- Non-written material such as photography and video recordings





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Activity: Interview each other on qualitative and quantitative preferences

# Data collection instruments

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Use an already developed instrument or develop your own (more likely that qualitative researchers will construct their own instrument)

Describe:

- If using your own instrument, how the instrument was constructed and validated?
- How the instrument is going to be used (e.g. for face to face, distributed by post, delivered online via the Internet)?
- Where will the interviews take place?
- Will the interviews be recorded?



# Data analysis

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**Quantitative data:** **statistical** techniques

**Qualitative data:**

- grounded theory
- template analysis (identify **emerging themes** and organize them meaningfully)
- content analysis (examine **patterns in communication**)
- discourse analysis (study of written or **spoken language in a social context**)

# Ethical considerations

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Voluntarily participations

Privacy

Confidentiality

Anonymity

Secure storage of data



# References

Use the APA referencing guide

[http://canvas.sheridan.edu.au/courses/530/files/42103?module\\_item\\_id=24140](http://canvas.sheridan.edu.au/courses/530/files/42103?module_item_id=24140)



# Limitations

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Identify and be honest about the weaknesses and limitations of your own research

e.g. inability to control study design factors, low sample sizes (small sample size usually generate results that require further investigation)



# Related (supplementary) material

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Letters of support

Collaboration agreements

Instructions to subjects and participants

Consent forms

Questionnaires

Supplementary bibliographies

Ethics approvals



# Homework



READ TEXTBOOK CHAPTER 5



START IDENTIFYING SOURCES FOR YOUR  
RESEARCH TOPIC, INCLUDING SOME  
ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLES



TOPIC NEXT WEEK:  
LITERATURE REVIEW

# Overview Sheridan Research Report (2<sup>nd</sup> year)

- Assignment Cover Page (having the title of the research project, your name, your student number and submission date)
- Contents Page
- Abstract
- Introduction (including the **research question(s), aim, objectives and justification** of the study)
- Literature review
- Methodology (including **participants, sampling methods, ethical considerations, data collection instruments and data analysis method**)
- Research findings
- Summary and conclusion (including key findings, **recommendations, implications** that could be drawn from your findings, **limitations** of the study and suggestions for further research)
- Personal Reflection (what you have learnt through undertaking this assignment)
- References

# Overview Sheridan Research Report (3<sup>rd</sup> year)

Research Project Rubric for Final Written Report	
Category/ Grade	High Distinction (80-100%)
Abstract 5	Highly relevant and detailed
Introduction 10	Highly developed <b>research topic; research question/s</b> clearly defined with detailed links to problem or situation
Literature Review 15	All-inclusive breadth of reading; strong evidence of <b>engagement with debates</b> in the literature
Methodology 10	Topic is thoroughly investigated; highly <b>appropriate method</b> employed with high level of research ethics evidenced
Ethical Behaviour 5	Strong evidence of ability to model <b>ethical</b> behaviour, personal integrity and respect for others in a research environment; demonstrates profound insight into consequences of potential unethical behaviour
Findings (data collection) 10 and Discussion (data analysis) 15	Findings are comprehensive. Discussion is <b>insightful</b> and comprehensive, extensive <b>links made to the literature</b>
Conclusions 10	Conclusions are insightful and comprehensive. Considerable implications for practice/further research
Referencing (APA style) 5	Comprehensive list of relevant literature (minimum of 25 references apart from those on the reading list)
Appendices 5	Highly relevant and detailed
Writing Conventions 10	Highly developed