



A Practical Guide to Dissertation and Thesis Writing

Mark Stephan Felix and Ian Smith

A Practical Guide to Dissertation and Thesis Writing

A Practical Guide to Dissertation and Thesis Writing

By

Mark Stephan Felix and Ian Smith

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



A Practical Guide to Dissertation and Thesis Writing

By Mark Stephan Felix and Ian Smith

This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2019 by Mark Stephan Felix and Ian Smith

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-3681-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-3681-4

To my students, past, present and future – this one is for all of you.
—Mark Stephan Felix

To my beloved children, Andrew and Margot.
—Ian David Smith

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ix
Preface	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Chapter 1	1
Getting started: Topics, problems, definitions and making a good start	
Chapter 2	24
How do you choose a research topic?	
Chapter 3	41
Reading, reading, reading: Background to your literature review	
Chapter 4	53
Let's start with the big "so what?": Writing your introduction	
Chapter 5	74
Backing up your claims: Writing your literature review	
Chapter 6	92
What is research methodology?	
Chapter 7	127
Defending your proposal	
Chapter 8	137
Getting the fieldwork done	
Chapter 9	146
Sifting through the information: Your results or findings	
Chapter 10	161
Your voice: Presenting your discussion	

Chapter 11	178
The conclusion	
Chapter 12	186
Writing the abstract	
References	196
Index	200

FOREWORD

As far as forewords go, we'd like to keep it to a minimum. There are enough words in this book for you to read and there are enough words for you to ponder and digest as you walk through your PhD journey. Suffice to say, this book was born out of an intense passion to share, educate, guide and assist students.

We've walked the same journey you're about to embark on (or have already embarked on). Having learned much from that journey we'd like to shed a little light on the path that you're on. It's a privilege if you allow us to do so. We wish you the best of luck in this undertaking.

PREFACE

Writing a PhD dissertation or thesis is probably the most challenging task that a young scholar attempts to do. We have traveled this journey ourselves and helped numerous students to achieve their goal of successfully completing a PhD. If you are about to embark on your own journey, you will want to start at the beginning of this book and work your way through the chapters which are structured in the order of most dissertation guidelines at most universities. If, however, you have already begun your journey, feel free to go straight to the chapter that best represents where you have reached.

There is no formula for writing a dissertation. Each one is customized to suit the problem that is being researched, the particular university guidelines and the individual creativity of the student. It is your baby and you want it to be the best outcome that achieves your goal of becoming a freshly minted Doctor of Philosophy. We urge you to read our chapters with a critical mind, ever thoughtful that you are creating a unique piece of writing that will not only satisfy your examiners, but also your own standard of excellence.

Good luck from us both!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to say a hearty “thank you” to all the many people who have contributed to our book. There are too many to name, because they represent the combined talents of our teachers, students and friends who have helped us nurture this project through to its conclusion. Nevertheless, there are a few people who deserve special mention.

Firstly, Mark would like to acknowledge the stimulating support of his PhD supervisory team, Professor Dr. Ismail Baba, Associate Professor Dr. Sundramoorthy Pathmanathan and Associate Professor Dr. Azrina Husin of University Sains Malaysia. He would also thank his students in Mahidol University, KDU College Penang Campus and Sunway University. Since graduating, he has received unstinting support from his colleagues at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and the Department of Society and Health at Mahidol University for which he wishes express sincere gratitude. He would especially like to record his thanks to Dr. Juan Carlos Olmos Alcoy for his unwavering encouragement and Mr. Richard Bartley Dudrow for his generosity with resources and sound advice.

Ian would like to sincerely thank his Stanford University supervisors, Professors Lee Cronbach, Pauline Sears and Robert Hess, from whom he learned so much. He would also like to acknowledge the generous friendship of his friend and fellow Stanford student, Emeritus Professor Richard Shavelson. The many Thai colleagues at Burapha University and Mahidol University who have broadened his perspective on learning and living are also acknowledged. To his 15 Thai PhD students, he offers this work as the culmination of many hours of patient teaching and learning. Being a PhD advisor entails both teaching and learning on the part of the supervisor and he gives credit to his students for teaching him many things about Thai culture, as well as about their research topics.

We both thank the efforts of Cambridge Scholars Publishers for their careful efforts in ensuring that the editing and publishing process has been thorough and smooth.

In conclusion, we gratefully acknowledge the Thai people for teaching us tolerance, patience and love.

Mark Stephan Felix and Ian David Smith, June, 2019

CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED: TOPICS, PROBLEMS, DEFINITIONS AND MAKING A GOOD START

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this Chapter you will be able to:

- Use seven active steps to state the social science issue you wish to study for your dissertation/thesis as a research problem.
- Actively ask critical questions that will build a solid base for the development of your dissertation/thesis.
- Critically assess the significance of your research problem.
- Avoid common mistakes made by students when expressing their social science issue as a research problem.

If you are reading this, you have begun an academic adventure. We say “academic adventure” because there will be discovery, tense moments and a great reward at the end of the journey. We want also to congratulate you on beginning this academic adventure that so few want to begin and fewer still complete.

This book is more a “how-to-do-it” manual than a piece of scholarly, academic work. Both of us wish to guide and assist you in this endeavor based on our experiences as researchers and as teachers over many years. We are providing you with exercises, tips and tools that will make your journey smoother and help you to anticipate some of the issues you will encounter along the way. Thank you for allowing us to be part of your academic adventure.

What is a dissertation or a thesis?

Many academics and even more students like to use the terms “dissertation” and “thesis” to describe the research work they are doing to meet university requirements for being conferred a Masters or Doctoral degree. The fact is these terms are often interchangeable and their use depends upon the country, discipline, faculty and even the department of the university where a student is enrolled for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree (Mauch & Park, 2003; Pyrczak, 2016; Swales & Feak, 2012).

The first PhDs were awarded by German universities in the Nineteenth Century. In those days, a university’s Department of Philosophy included the teaching of science, social science and liberal arts, as well as the study of philosophy. This is the reason why the term “Doctor of Philosophy” is still applied across most disciplines for an advanced degree beyond the Masters degree.

A dissertation is a piece of original research, undertaken as a part of a program of study. In German and US universities, research training courses were introduced to prepare their students for undertaking research and the writing up of the research findings in the form of an extended report, and, if they successfully defended their dissertation before a committee of examiners, they were awarded the research Masters or PhD degree. Through this academic route, students take a series of courses in the social sciences or any field for a specified time, and then are given a block of time to complete a piece of research that is closely supervised by a committee of academics from their academic department. A student’s completion of a degree *via* a dissertation is dependent on grades from the classes, as well as the successful examination of the research by a committee of examiners.

In the British university tradition, on the other hand, a research degree by thesis requires no courses and the candidate does a lot of self-study to build a base of knowledge from the ground up on their own with occasional help from a supervisor. The degree is awarded solely on the quality of the original research, as reported in a thesis. This tradition has been eroded in recent years, as the knowledge explosion and complexity of the scientific methods employed to investigate many research topics have grown. Statistical knowledge, experimental knowledge and other forms of specialized knowledge are now considered so central to the study of many research topics that universities around the world are requiring certain coursework to be successfully completed before allowing their research Masters and PhD students to develop a research proposal and complete an

original research study for the award of the degree. Once their research topic and proposal have been approved by an academic committee, students develop their research ideas with the assistance and guidance of their supervisor. Their completion of the degree is totally dependent on the successful examination of the research thesis, often by expert examiners from other universities than the one where the student is enrolled. Usually, the examiners recommend changes, some minor and possibly major changes, to be made by the student before the thesis is acceptable for the award of the PhD degree.

Other differences between a dissertation and a thesis include its length, depth and breadth. In the British and German tradition, a thesis is longer in number of words, has deeper utilization of theoretical applications, as well as analysis, and is wider in its breadth of research and implications, than in the United States tradition. The difference in length is due to the candidate having to share with the examiners more details in the research (e.g., history of the field of research, background of the study, findings, interpretation of the findings and discussing the findings in greater detail in respect to theory and concepts). Differences in depth occur when thesis students are expected to express a deeper understanding of theories in their field of research, be able to grasp implications of the theories and to apply these theories to their area of research. The difference in breadth is because thesis students are expected to study more widely than dissertation students and are also expected to see wider implications of their field of research and to be able to make recommendations that have wider implications than dissertation students. In some theses, two original empirical studies may be necessary to propose and test a hypothesis.

However, both dissertations and theses are expected to meet the same standard of originality, approaching a new area of study and contributing significantly to the universal body of knowledge (Athanasou *et al.*, 2012). Originality is a key issue in both dissertation and thesis development and writing (Bailey, 2014; Ferguson, 2009). The ideas, the subject and the method of approaching a piece of research cannot be identical to another piece of research (especially published research) if it is to be acceptable to a committee of examiners. Identical research is considered to be a **replication** of previous research, or even worse, **plagiarism**, which is a serious offence in academia. By approaching an area of research with an open mind, and by doing the necessary background reading, your thesis or dissertation will contribute significantly to the body of universal knowledge - a vital part of being a scholar (Beglar & Murray, 2009; Biber & Gray, 2009; Murray, 2011).

So, you should study carefully the requirements of the university Masters or PhD program that you have enrolled in to ensure that you are clear about the criteria for the evaluation of your research and courses. Successful meeting of those criteria will allow you to graduate in the minimum time period permitted by the university's requirements. If you are confused about any of the requirements, please consult with the admissions administrators for university requirements and with your appointed supervisor for academic requirements.

So, what's the problem?

When we approach the social sciences as a whole, we see that the common denominator is people. Chances are very high that, as a student of the social sciences, you are concerned with issues that affect the everyday lives of people. For example, you may be concerned with the basic human rights of migrants, the health of sex workers or the political climate of a country that affects people who live on the margins of society. Asian culture places a lot of emphasis on the human values of community, sharing and harmony. We dare to say that seeking out answers to help others through studies in the social sciences is part of our culture.

However, a common pitfall in being so influenced by the Asian culture is that we tend to get emotional and passionate about the issues that are important to us. We do not use the terms “emotional” and “passionate” in a pejorative sense, as you need to be able to understand emotions and be passionate about your studies in order to complete your academic endeavor. But, being overly emotional or caught up in the passion of setting right social wrongs can cloud your judgment and objectivity when approaching the issue that you wish to deal with. What is important is to go to the heart of the problem and to understand the different facets and implications of the problem as a social scientist (Evans, Gruba & Zobel, 2011). Let us give you a scenario:

While eating your lunch in a park, you are approached by a beggar who asks you for some money. You give her or him a few coins and wonder why, in such a prosperous world, there are still people who go hungry. You become emotionally charged with the inequality and inequity that many people face. Your emotion fires you up and you declare that you want to study the issues surrounding hunger, and you rush into your supervisor's office declaring that you want to study hunger. You provide no further details. Your supervisor, hopefully, will look at you admiringly, state that

you are coming along well as a student and then ask you to think more about the social scientific value of studying hunger. You are stunned. You are angry. Most of all, you are confused. This supervisor of yours is supposed to immediately see that hunger is an important issue and that your research has great academic value. You give in to the internal monologue of what a decrepit, inhumane and (frankly) incompetent person your supervisor is. You stew in your indignation and begin thinking of looking for another supervisor, another department or another faculty. You may even go hard on yourself and think that perhaps you are not cut out for academic pursuits.

Now stop and take a deep breath. Your supervisor is merely doing her or his job. You have been all fired up by your encounter with the beggar and want to help those who are hungry. However, what you have missed out is the critical thought process that your supervisor needs to see in your academic work (Dunleavy, 2003; Gillet, Hammond & Martala, 2013). Ask yourself:

SO WHAT?

This is the hardest part, and will continue to be the hardest part of the rest of your dissertation and thesis writing. This will lead to you being able to problematize the issue you wish to study. “Problematize” means being able to state a problem that is researchable. Idealistic and altruistic reasons aside, any graduate or postgraduate student must problematize the issue they wish to study when asserting the significance of their area of research. Logic and reason should weigh more heavily than emotional responses (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

So, what do you do? Let’s take it step by step to give you a firm grounding for your dissertation or thesis writing.

Problematizing the issue that you are interested in studying¹

The first step in problematization is to identify the present characteristics of the issue you want to study. It is almost impossible for a

¹ Please note: While the authors have a basis in other texts for this suggested pattern of problematization, the suggestions put forward here are mainly from the experiences of the authors.

single thesis to address and answer all the characteristics of a problem. Ask yourself:

- Is hunger a huge problem in your home nation? If your answer is “Yes”, how do you judge it as being a huge problem? Do statistics in your country show that many of your fellow citizens go hungry each day? If the answer is “No”, do not think you have faced a dead-end in your questioning. There is the possibility that you may look at the issue of hunger within small, but specific populations in your nation.
- Is there statistical or empirical evidence to confirm that hunger is a condition faced by a significant number of your fellow citizens?
- If hunger is an issue, what are the national policies that are in place to curb hunger within the nation? Are there Government Organizations, Non-government Organizations or Civil Society Organizations that deal directly with the issue of hunger?

The second step in problematization is to identify the barriers and the positive characteristics of the issue:

- You need to read widely from several reliable sources in order to identify barriers in your home nation.
- Seek out information regarding food distribution policies, economic policies and social barriers that exacerbate and alleviate hunger in your home nation.
- It is important to be objective when weighing all positives and negatives that are involved in the issue. **Logic and reason** must take precedence over **emotion**.

The third step in problematization is to seek out the social scientific implications of the issue:

- If hunger is not curbed, what would be the implications for society? Would hunger lead to involvement in activities such as stealing, sex work or drug trafficking?
- If hunger is an issue, would physical, mental and emotional health be important social issues? How would deficiencies in this area affect the society you live in?
- If hunger is not curbed would it be an issue of economics, politics or education? Would it be an issue of socio-cultural factors or is hunger more an issue along the lines of ethnic divides?

The fourth step in problematization is pulling the relevant information from all these questions into a cohesive whole. Let us say, hypothetically, from each of the three steps you have been able to logically and justifiably state that:

1. Empirical evidence shows that “X” % of the population of your home nation lives along the margins of poverty. Poverty is defined in your home nation as any household where the cumulative income of all persons in the household is below “Y” amount, which is insufficient to provide for adequate food, housing, clothing and health. Empirical data shows that for these individuals, food and shelter are necessities that are not met on a daily basis. Empirical evidence also shows that “Z” % of those who fall below the poverty line beg in order to seek food and/or shelter. At present, the Government Organizations and Non-Government Organizations provide welfare for citizens who qualify for such aid, but Civil Society Organizations do not participate heavily in this exercise.
2. Policies show that food and provisions are distributed through various Government agencies and that Non-Government Organizations are co-opted into the effort. Few Civil Society Organizations in your home nation provide food for the hungry. Barriers to this food distribution include lack of transportation of food to rural areas, collection of food by individuals who are ineligible due to fraud and a lack of systems to track cases of fraud, and a growing number of the population who are falling below the poverty line. Objectively, efforts are made to curb hunger in your home nation, but demand for assistance is larger than the supply that is provided.
3. The implications, based on extensive reading, suggest that theft is a likely result of hunger. Statistics demonstrate that petty theft and burglaries have risen in your home nation progressively in the last five years. Past research also suggests that involvement in sex work may be an implication of hunger, and that physical, mental and emotional health is affected by hunger. Therefore, hunger has economic and socio-cultural dimensions.

As a consequence, you may problematize the issue of hunger by stating that hunger is a problem in your home nation and, despite attempts to curb hunger, it remains an issue that has yet to be solved. You should also state that, if the problem of hunger is not solved, it will have implications for society in the economic and socio-cultural dimensions. Social scientists

in many countries have studied hunger in terms of the larger issue of poverty and how to minimize it.

At this point you may be tempted to, once again, run into your supervisor's office with a look of smugness on your face. Please do not do this. We are far from over in this process of stating your problem in researchable terms. You have managed to problematize the issue, but there are several steps to putting forward a persuasive research argument that will gain the approval/support of your supervisor and will lead to a research proposal that is accepted by your committee (Becker, 2010).

Now stop, take a deep breath and ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are you interested in researching the economic or the socio-cultural dimensions of hunger? Do not think they are one and the same. It is important to choose one area and one area only. Otherwise, your supervisor may comment that he/she believes your topic is too broad.
2. What are socio-cultural and economic factors? How are socio-cultural and economic factors defined? Who has proposed these definitions? Have these definitions been accepted by the academic community? Please understand that your definitions of socio-cultural factors and economic factors need to be supported by the published work of other experts and researchers who have conducted **recent research** in this field.
3. Of the many socio-cultural and economic factors that you find, which one factor, when studied empirically, will give you an answer to the problem of hunger in your home nation? The answer to this question is crucial, as it will shape the entire direction of your research.

From these questions you will be able to choose one specific area of research, be able to further define your area of research and be able to pinpoint possible answers for the problem at hand.

It is not yet time to make that all-anticipated trip to your supervisor's office. You need to look at the issue you want to research through the structure of a **conceptual framework** and the lens of a **theoretical framework**.

A few quick words on conceptual frameworks and theoretical frameworks

A conceptual framework allows you to clearly define what you mean when you say “hunger”, “poverty” and “the hungry”. Remember that in the social sciences we throw around a lot of concepts that are very subjective. A strong conceptual framework will allow you to clearly **define** what you mean when you use such terms. A theoretical framework, on the other hand, will give you a lens through which you will analyze your findings on hunger and poverty, to explain your findings in terms of previous research and theories, and allow you to make a significant contribution to knowledge. These ideas will be discussed in more detail in future chapters.

Getting back to asking “So What?”: The significance of the research

It is time to take a step back and ask a series of questions that begin with “SO WHAT?”. **So what** if hunger is a problem in your home nation? **So what** if present Government Organizations and Non-Government Organizations work towards curbing hunger? **So what** if Civil Society Organizations are hardly involved in the same effort? **So what** if there are socio-cultural implications of hunger? **So what** is so different and ground-breaking about your research? **So what** if you have a conceptual framework and a theoretical framework?

The whole idea behind this line of questioning is to filter through the details to be able to clearly state the **significance** of the problem (Li & Vandermensbrugghe, 2011). Any piece of academic work must have strong significance to national, regional and universal knowledge. If it does not, then it is not worth pursuing (Fulwiler, 2002). So, spend time pondering the significance of the issue you wish to study.

Once you are convinced that your problem is significant, you may want to do one more check to ensure that you have avoided the following common *mistakes* made by students:

1. Proposing a **philosophical** problem instead of an **empirical** one. Please take note that in the social sciences we try to solve problems where the findings may be implemented through solid action, for example, through policy change, advocacy or recommendations to

a government organization that deals directly with the affected populations. Do not fall into the trap of philosophizing about a social problem, where the solution is a change in human values or social priorities. Rather, focus on a problem that needs **empirical research** to solve the problem and then recommend specific social changes based on your findings.

2. Proposing a topic that is too narrow or too broad in scope. For example, wanting to solve the issue of hunger in the whole of your home nation is too broad a scope, while wanting to solve the issue of hunger on one street in your home nation is too narrow a scope. Find a balance, where your academic endeavor has academic significance by approaching hunger within a well-populated town or city of your home nation.
3. Adding a new population to past research that has been conducted and considering it “new” and “original”. Let us say that you have found that hunger has been studied in your home nation. You have a lot of data from these past studies. Focusing your research on a new population of teenagers between the ages of 14 and 16 does not add significant new knowledge to the field. However, questioning what are the **health needs** of teenagers between the ages of 14 and 16 who face chronic hunger, questioning what are the **mental health needs** of teenagers between the ages of 14 and 16 who face chronic hunger, or questioning what are the **coping mechanisms** of teenagers between the ages of 14 and 16 who face chronic hunger may be new areas of research for you to pursue. The whole idea is to make your research original and to make a worthwhile contribution to solving the complex issue of poverty.
4. Adding on new variables to an old problem and presenting it as “new” or “original”. Again, let us say that, in the past, research has been done extensively on the area of poverty and the elderly in your home nation. Do not add on “with no children” to the variables of poverty and the elderly and pass it off as new research. Is there significance to that issue? If not, then it is best to leave it alone.
5. Repeating past research. Replicating past research is not original. If you are the researcher of the original research and you are doing longitudinal research then it is fine, but if you are replicating research by someone else, then it is not original work.
6. Proposing research where the problem has already been solved. This mistake speaks for itself – why bother solving a problem when it has already been solved?

Let us say that you have taken all these hints and tips to heart. You have gone through the processes we have described above and you are able to see the bigger picture of the issue you are interested in, you are able to problematize the issue, you have been able to find a focus for the issue and you have been able to avoid the common mistakes made by most students. Now is the time to pool together your logical thoughts and present them to your supervisor. Let us revisit the scenario again, but with many added changes.

Another look at the scenario

While eating your lunch in a park, you are approached by a beggar who asks you for some money. You give her or him a few coins and wonder why, in such a prosperous world, there are still people who go hungry. You stop. You take a deep breath and ask yourself "SO WHAT"? You take another deep breath. You challenge yourself to do intensive background research on the issue of hunger in your home nation. In other words, you begin to problematize the issue.

You scour academic journals, reports from international organizations like the World Health Organization and UNICEF for information. You talk to Officers in the relevant Ministry in your home nation. Your research shows that hunger is a problem in your home nation for 35% of the population. Your findings also show you that while Government Organizations work towards alleviating the issue, support from Non-Government Organizations and Civil Society Organizations is scarce. Statistically, you have also found that those who face daily hunger are those who have come from rural areas to find better employment opportunities in major cities in your home nation. You stop. Take a deep breath.

You remember that the second step in problematization is to seek out barriers to solving the issue. You discover that the barriers to alleviate hunger include lack of financial savings, lack of food distribution centers to the destitute and lack of volunteer personnel to ensure that the destitute receive the necessary food that they need. Also, you discover that the rate of unemployment has gone up in your home nation by 12% in the last three financial years.

You take the third step of problematization. You ask yourself what the implications of such barriers would be. You again turn to the necessary reading in academic journals and official reports to find out the effects of

hunger in urban areas. You discover that theft, turning to the sale of narcotics in order to make a living as well as narcotics use, coercion into sex work and damaged physical and mental well-being are some of the implications that have been found in other studies conducted in your home nation.

Next, you take the fourth step of problematization. You can now say, with the necessary evidence to back you up, that despite the state of prosperity of your home nation, 35% of your fellow countrymen go hungry and that the bulk of this percentage are those who travel from rural to urban areas to seek better employment opportunities. You can also say that despite the efforts of Governmental Organizations to alleviate this issue, there is a lack of assistance from other quarters. Barriers to feeding the hungry who come from rural areas to seek employment in urban areas include financial difficulties, a lack of employment opportunities, inadequate avenues for food distribution, as well as the necessary personnel to carry out the task. The implications of hunger have wide ranging social effects, such as narcotics, theft, sex work and psychological well-being.

Now stop and take a deep breath.

Your reading has shown you that there are many socio-cultural and economic factors that influence and impact hunger. Draw up a list of these socio-cultural and economic factors. Take your time when doing so. When you have finished this task, you look at these factors and ask yourself, which one of these factors do you think would be most interesting for you to study? Let us say, for example, you decide that you want to focus on socio-cultural factors that influence and impact hunger. These factors include educational qualifications, language proficiency, skill-sets, religion, ethnicity, geographic origin, materialism and consumerism. Again, for example, let us say you have found in your reading that there exists a cultural bias in your home nation against people of certain ethnicities. They may share your nationality, but be from a different ethnicity. Your reading shows that while hunger is uncommon in your ethnicity, it is common in other ethnicities in your home nation. Again, stop. Take a deep breath.

You deepen your reading and this time you specifically look for research done on hunger in a particular ethnicity in your home nation. You not only look in academic journals, but also in dissertations and thesis databases in your university. If your university has a national archive or database of dissertations and thesis, so much the better. If you find that another scholar has done the exact same research as you have had in mind,

you must drop the idea, as it will be merely a repetition or replication of previous research. However, if you search and find that no such research has been done then you have hit upon something significant.

Just to be sure, ask yourself "SO WHAT?". If you can honestly say that the research you have planned on ethnicities and hunger in your home nation will answer the question of why hunger is still an issue in your home nation, then you have taken the first and most challenging step towards completing a significant dissertation.

Now you make an appointment with your supervisor. You sit down with her or him and after the usual pleasantries you tell her or him that you would like to study the socio-cultural impact on the issue of poverty from the angle of ethnicity. You share with your supervisor that you have done the background work and that the issue of hunger affects 35% of the population of your country and the bulk of those who go hungry belong to a particular ethnicity in your home country. This hunger continues despite Government intervention. The people from this particular ethnicity come from rural areas of your country to more urban settings in search of employment opportunities but face hunger when they do so. The implication is that, although the people from this ethnicity come to urban settings to seek honest employment, due to the cultural bias against their ethnicity they face difficulties in seeking employment. In order to make ends meet and to stave off starvation, they are likely to turn to activities, such as theft, sex work or peddling narcotics. Based on the conceptual framework you have mapped out and also the theoretical framework you have decided upon, you would like to begin more intensive work in developing your idea into a working proposal that you can use for writing a dissertation or thesis. You ask for the help of your supervisor in developing this idea further, strengthening your basic argument, as well as your conceptual and theoretical frameworks of your topic. Finally, you ask your supervisor for help in refining a research question, research objectives and a research design that will assist you in providing an answer to the question of ethnicity on hunger in your home nation.

We will not draw this scenario out further by imagining what your supervisor's exact reaction will be, but when you compare the first scenario with the second scenario, what do you realize? Instead of going with an immediate emotional response, you took logical steps to research, problematize and scrutinize the issue at hand. You provided many details that are necessary to understanding the issue and problematizing it. You also realize that in order to fully understand the issue at hand you have to read

widely from different sources who are experts on this issue. Additionally, you have to start thinking like a social scientist, and not as a layperson. This is necessary in the social sciences, just as it is in many other disciplines. Please also understand that this process will take a lot of time. So be patient with yourself.

In Summary

What this book will help you do is to take those steps to refine your ideas into a cohesive whole for the completion of, first, your dissertation proposal and, then, your final dissertation or thesis. To assist you in this process, at the end of each Chapter there are exercises, as well as reflection and discussion activities to guide you along. Take your time to read each Chapter carefully. Do not rush. Trust us, anything worth accomplishing in academia takes time.

Exercise 1.1: Problematization of the Issue

Step 1: Identifying the important characteristics of the issue.

- Is the issue a problem in your home nation? Assess the current situation using statistics, available data and reports. Write down the main statistics/data/information you have found in the following box.

Box 1.1 Identifying the important characteristics of the issue

- Following that, write down the populations, sub-populations or communities who are potentially affected by the issue. Identify four of these populations, sub-populations or communities in the box below:

Box 1.2 Populations, sub-populations or communities who are potentially affected by the issue

- Identify the major stakeholders or groups of people involved in the issue that you wish to study. While six spaces are included below, identify as many as are relevant to the issue you wish to study.

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____
6.	_____

Box 1.3 Major stakeholders

Step 2: Identify the positive characteristics and barriers of the issue

- Identify three positive aspects of the issue. This will assist you in ensuring you do not research an issue that has already been thoroughly investigated or one that does not warrant further research, because it is trivial. Write these positive characteristics in Box 1.4 below.

•	Positive characteristic 1:	_____

•	Positive characteristic 2:	_____

•	Positive characteristic 3:	_____

Box 1.4 Positive characteristics

Identify what are the barriers that prevent the problem from being solved. Challenge yourself to identify at least three barriers to the solution of the problem. Then, identify in your opinion and the opinion of your supervisor, the main barrier to solving the problem. Please note that the main barrier may be a combination of all three of the barriers, but we would suggest you stick to one barrier to clearly define the scope of your research. Please use Box 1.5 below to assist you in this exercise.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barrier 1: <hr/><hr/>• Barrier 2: <hr/><hr/>• Barrier 3: <hr/><hr/>• Main Barrier: <hr/><hr/>
--

Box 1.5 Barriers

Step 3: Identify the social scientific implications of the issue.

- This area of writing requires you to be as specific as possible. This part of problematization of the issue may take you the longest time to complete, but it is well worth investing the necessary time.
- First, identify the implications of the issue from a general perspective.

- If the issue is not solved, what is the implication for society as a whole?

- Does the issue have mental, physical or emotional implications for society?

- Does the issue have an economic, political, educational, health or environmental implications for society?

Box 1.6 Social scientific implications of the issue

- Next, give an assessment of the issue with relevant implications if the issue is not studied and the relevant recommendations are not made.
- It is best to stick to one main assessment with two or three implications that are directly tied to the main implication. List these down based on the model provided in Box 1.7 below.

- Main assessment:

- Implication 1:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implication 2: <hr/> <hr/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implication 3: <hr/> <hr/>

Box 1.7 Assessment

Step 4: Pulling the information together.

- First, pull the information that you have written in Boxes 1.1 to 1.7 in the following order:

Box 1.1: Main statistics/data/background information of the problem

|

Box 1.2: The main populations, sub-populations or communities affected by the issue

|

Box 1.3: Main stakeholders of the issue

|

Box 1.4: Positive aspects of the present situation of the issue

|

Box 1.5: Main barriers to solving the issue

|

Box 1.6: Implications of the issue from a social science perspective

|

Box 1.7: Main assessment of the situations with relevant implications

- Next, ensure that there is continuity and flow in your writing. Check for the following:
 - That the problematization is written in the third person narrative. Please ensure you have not used first or second person narratives in your writing.
 - Consistency in terms of the tense in which the problematization is written.
 - Consistency of acronyms, terms, names of stakeholders and any other proper nouns that are used.
 - Correct punctuation is utilized (e.g., a question mark is used for all questions).
- To test the viability of the problematization of the issue that you have put forward above in Exercise 1.1, please do the Reflection exercise in Exercise 1.2 and the Discussion exercise in Exercise 1.3, as outlined in the following pages.

Exercise 1.2: Reflection on Problematization

Guided discussion is possibly one of the best strategies to use when preparing the problematization of the issue you wish to study. This is good on three different levels:

- First, it allows you to step outside of your “brain-space” to look objectively at the work you have produced in Exercise 1.1.
- Second, it allows your peers to give you feedback and an objective perspective of the problematization of your issue.
- Third, it allows you as the researcher to take into consideration your own ideas, as well as the ideas of your peers to make raise the quality of the problematization of the issue that you wish to study.

To assist you in this exercise, we would like to suggest you use the following reflection exercise:

1. Select three or four of your peers to form a panel to give you a critique of your problematization.
2. Share a copy of your completed work with this group of peers.
3. Ask your peers in the group the following questions:
 - a. Are the statistics/data/information you have in your problematization relevant to your research?
 - i. Are the statistics/data/information up to date?

- ii. Are the statistics/data/information connected to your particular area of research interest?
- b. Is the population/sub-population/community in your problematization directly affected by the issue?
 - i. Is there another population/sub-population/community that is more directly affected by the issue?
 - ii. Would changing the focus of the problematization to a population/sub-population/community that is more directly affected enrich the quality of the research?
- c. Are the major stakeholders identified in the problematization the relevant stakeholders for the issue to be researched?
 - i. Are there any other stakeholders that should be included?
 - ii. Are there any stakeholders that are listed that should be removed?
- d. Are the barriers that are identified legitimate and relevant to the issue that has been problematized?
 - i. Are there any other barriers that should be considered?
- e. Are the positive aspects of the issue relevant to the problematization of the issue?
 - i. Are there any other positive aspects of the issue that should be considered for the problematization of the issue?
- f. Has the social scientific aspect of the issue been fully explored?
 - i. Is there a standpoint of the issue that has not yet been explored?
 - ii. Would exploration of the issue from the unexplored standpoint create a more interesting piece of research?
- g. Assessment of the situation
 - i. Is the assessment of the situation clearly explained?
 - ii. Is the assessment of the situation objective and not blocked by personal bias?
 - iii. Is the assessment of the situation well researched?

- iv. Are the implications socially important?
 - v. Are the implications plausible?
 - vi. Are the implications relevant?
4. When the feedback and critique are offered by your peers, take detailed notes of their ideas and concerns of the problematization of the research. These notes will allow you to make the relevant changes to your problematization and address important gaps in your argument. As an added suggestion, you may use the Cornell University system of note taking. Examples of this are available online by typing “Cornell University system of note taking” into a search engine, such as Google.

Exercise 1.3: Discussion with supervisor

Your supervisor remains your most precious resource in the development of your research problem. In developing your problematization, it would be a good idea to be in constant touch with your supervisor to discuss ideas and thoughts that you have regarding your research. However, please be aware to respect the time restrictions in which your supervisor also has to work. Therefore, it is advisable to follow the suggested guidelines and questions that we would like to share with you for this exercise.

1. Send your supervisor a soft copy of your work.
2. Ask for a date, time and venue that is convenient to both you and your supervisor.
3. A guideline for questions to ask your supervisor should include:
 - a. Is the problematization plausible?
 - b. Is the problematization valid in terms of the data/statistics/information provided?
 - c. Is the problematization valid in terms of sources of the data/statistics/information provided?
 - d. Is the population/sub-population/community that is suggested as the sample for study a viable one or may another population/sub-population/community be considered?
 - e. Are the stakeholders identified viable stakeholders, or may others be considered?
 - f. Are the barriers to the solution of the problem well-identified or is more work required to strengthen the argument that these barriers pose?

- g. Are the positive aspects of the problem well-identified or are these not strong enough to carry a balanced argument of the issue?
 - h. Is the social scientific value of the problematization well established?
 - i. Is the assessment of the situation objective and balanced with evidence **for** and **against** your problematization of the issue?
 - j. Are the implications of the assessment strong enough a base for the research to stand on?
4. As in Exercise 1.2, write down the notes of your discussion with your supervisor. These notes will help you strengthen and refine the problematization of the issue you wish to study.

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

• Have you used the seven active steps in problematizing the social science issue you wish to study?	
• Have you asked the critical questions that will build a solid base for the development of your dissertation/thesis?	
• Have you critically assessed the significance of your research?	
• Are you familiar with the common mistakes made by students when problematizing a social science issue?	

CHAPTER 2

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A RESEARCH TOPIC?

Expected learning outcomes of this chapter

At the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Recognize examples that illustrate the uniqueness of each student's journey towards choosing and refining a research topic.
- Use a suggested skill in sharpening the focus of your research topic.

If you have made it this far, we will assume that you are very serious about pursuing the completion of a dissertation or thesis. We will now take the process a few steps back from the scenarios we shared with you in the preceding Chapter and address a basic issue in thesis and dissertation writing, that of selecting a topic of research for your dissertation or thesis.

Choosing a research topic is not as easy as one would think. As we illustrated in the two scenarios in Chapter 1, it can be a challenging exercise on its own. We would like to share a couple of actual case studies², where the confirmation of a research topic took students several months and several changes of heart.

Case Study 1

A graduate student from a neighboring country from where one of us is posted came into our office with the idea of studying childbirth issues in her home country. When questioned why this topic interested her, she responded that she was a healthcare professional in her home country and it was a topic that she was familiar with. When asked if there was an issue

² Names of individuals have been either changed or omitted in our examples. Sometimes the examples are an amalgamation of experiences. The reason for this is to protect the privacy of individuals and to drive home the point we are making.

regarding childbirth in her home country, she looked confused. She said that there was no issue with childbirth, only that she was interested in the topic. When told she had to be a bit more precise, and also to focus on a topic where there was a problem, she became rather agitated. However, she agreed to look deeper into the issue. The steps in problematizing an issue were shared with her before the appointment ended.

She came back some months later with the topic of adolescents who were forced to live on the streets of her home nation's capital city. She stated that this was a huge problem as the number of such youth was high and rising, and many of such youth had turned to selling drugs or their bodies to survive. This raised the rates of sexually transmitted infections, perpetration of violence and dependence on narcotics. She shared the reading that she had done to back-up her ideas, as well as the supporting statistics, and asked for some assistance in seeking for more reading to strengthen her problematization process.

She further clearly explained that, by focusing on just the issue of perpetration of violence, she would be able to assist in programs in her home nation to reduce such incidents. She saw her work as potentially giving an answer to a problem in her home society and helping her fellow citizens. In brief, she had problematized the issue and, therefore, was able to choose a research topic that was worth studying in a reasonable amount of time.

Case Study 2

Another student was very interested in the issue of HIV/AIDS and human sexuality. The challenge the student was having was a multitude of possibilities in terms of research areas and research topics. The student began with reading about the issue of the impact of HIV/AIDS policies in his home nation and if there was a problem based on the issue of human sexuality. He found that the area of human sexuality was severely understudied in his home nation. This discovery opened up the area of policy studies for the heterosexual population (spouses of HIV positive individuals), the transgender population (sex work, intravenous drug use, finances and psychosocial issues), the MSM (men who have sex with men) and gay population (outreach, success rates of outreach programs, issues of safer sex practices) and the injecting drug user (IDU) population (legal and security issues, rehabilitation and relapse, needle and syringe exchange

program successes and failures). Each issue was interesting to him and the more he read the more confused he became.

The student was advised to read more deeply into the issues that were closely related to HIV/AIDS and sexuality. He began to do so and found his interest rested on two main topics: HIV/AIDS and its social implications on the transgender population, and HIV/AIDS and why it was still so common among the gay male population. He was again guided to read more deeply and to identify which of the two topics he found both more interesting and having the potential to make a significant contribution to our knowledge about HIV/AIDS issues.

After a few months he returned for an appointment and shared his passion for being part of the solution to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in his home nation, which had led him to choose to study the HIV/AIDS epidemic from the perspective of its impact on the self-identification of gay men. He had read and found interesting the sociological aspect of identity formation, and wanted to research whether identity had a part to play in the rising rates of HIV infection among gay men in a small geographic region.

Again, he was guided to seek statistical and empirical support for his arguments, which in due time he was able to do. To cut a long story short, this young man was able to identify an acceptable research topic and has since completed his PhD. The point is that it took him several months to select his topic, and that is a typical time frame for making such an important decision.

Both the case studies we have described above are common among students pursuing a graduate research degree through dissertation or thesis. Either you are faced with not being certain of a research area or you have too many appealing choices. If only there were a happy medium, and if only this book would tell you: "This is the topic you should do your research in". Sadly, no such luck. There are no panaceas or easy answers in how to select a research topic. What we plan to do in this Chapter is to give you a guide on how to wade through the many choices of research topics and choose one that has significance and has meaning to you both personally and as a scholar.

An exercise on how to decide upon a topic

The following exercises are quite old school – meaning they require pieces of paper and a pen or pencil. No need for the use of a laptop, unless you wish to do it that way, or an expensive smart phone.

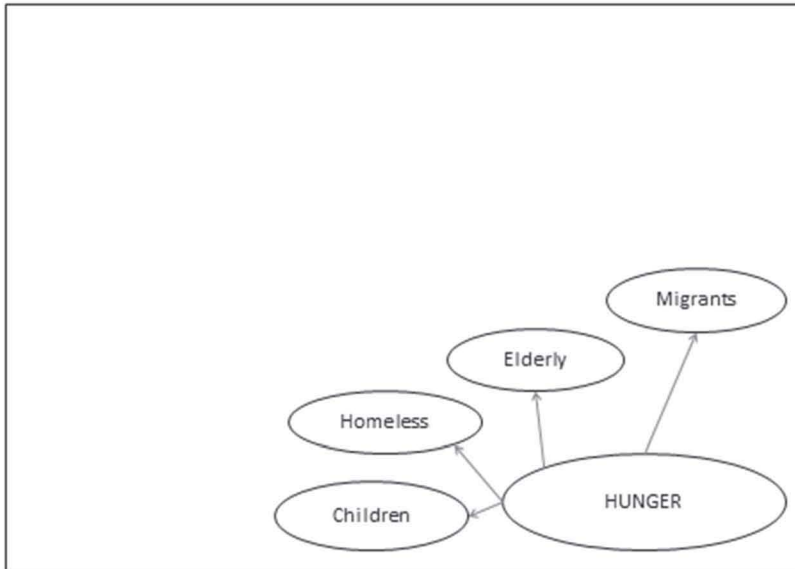
Step 1

First, let us use the same example from Chapter 1 and address the issue of hunger. Write the word “Hunger” on the bottom right hand corner of the piece of paper and draw a circle around it, like this:



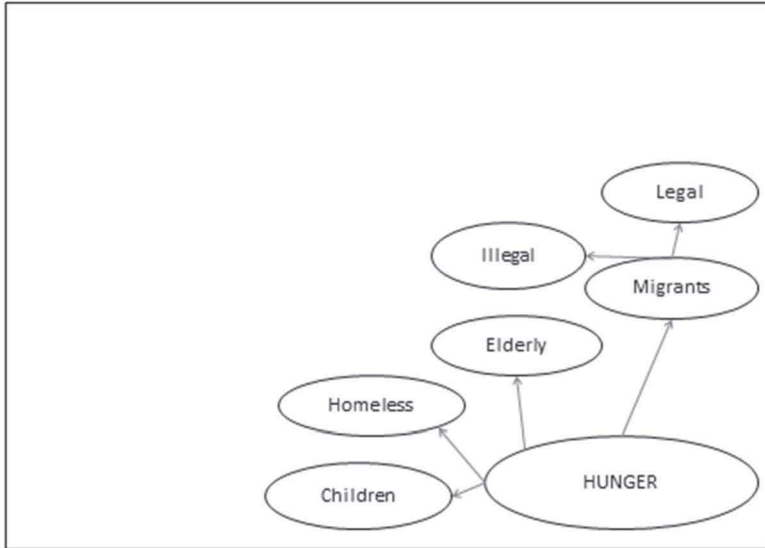
Step 2

Second, ask yourself “What are the key ideas about hunger that interest you?”. A good guideline is to come up with three or four ideas that interest you about hunger. As an example, let us say you are interested in hunger among populations, such as children, the homeless, the elderly and migrant workers. Please write out each of these on the piece of paper surrounding the circle with the word “hunger” in it. Then draw a line linking hunger with each of these areas of interest, like this:



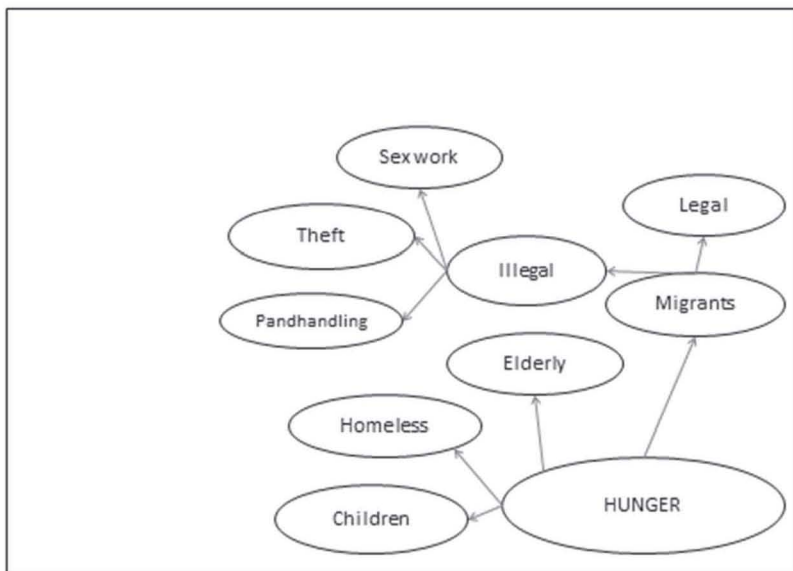
Step 3

Looking at the diagram above and analyzing the needs in your home nation, as well as past research already done in your home nation, you find that there is a real problem in hunger among migrant workers and that very little research has been done in this area. From your reading and analysis of academic articles and reliable reports, you know that migrant workers may be divided into two distinct categories: legal migrants and illegal migrants. Write each of these categories on the piece of paper and draw the requisite circles and arrows linking these categories to the population of migrants, like this:



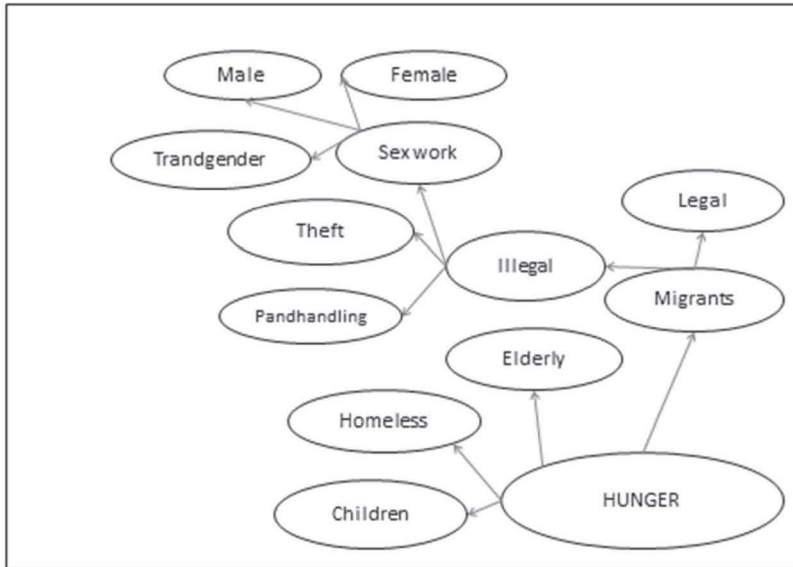
Step 4

Next, let us say that your home nation attracts migrant workers from various countries and they work in various sectors in your home nation. Examples of these include the construction industry, the domestic helper industry, the seafood industry and the service industry. However, careful study has also shown you that migrants, due to financial constraints, have resorted to vice in order to make ends meet. Examples could be begging, theft and sex work. Of these seven categories, you are more interested in the aspect of hunger that leads to vice among illegal migrant workers. Please add these three vices to the category of illegal migrant workers, like this:



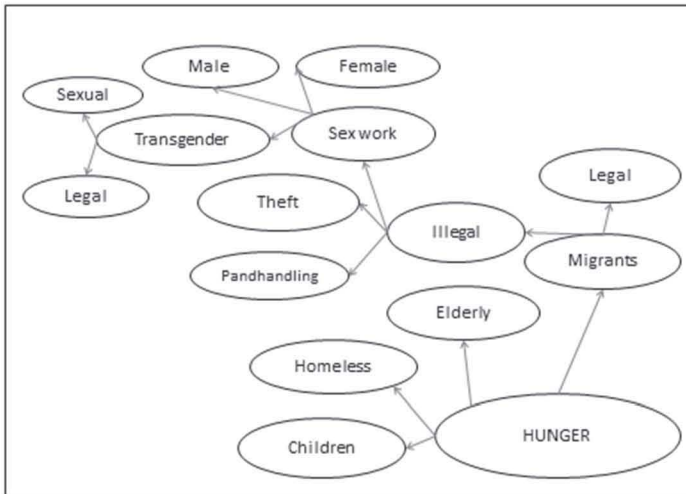
Step 5

Next, of the three vices, you find that you are interested in the involvement of illegal migrant workers in sex work. Let us cut out the gender bias and bear in mind that males, females and transgender persons may engage in the sex work industry. So, let us add those three identities to the possibilities.



Step 6

Next, looking at the whole diagram that you have drawn out, you ask yourself if being a hungry illegal migrant worker who is involved in sex work to make ends meet would take any risks during sex work? Also, would such an individual or group of individuals have run afoul of the law? Of the three groups, who would run the most risk both in terms of risky sexual behavior and confrontations with law enforcement? Let us say, for the sake of argument, that sex work is illegal in your home nation and that transgender individuals are outlawed due to legal restrictions. So, let us focus on transgender individuals and the risks they take when they engage in sex work. We can narrow these risks down to legal risks and risky sexual behavior. Please add them to the diagram, like this:



Step 7

For the sake of argument, let us say your reading has shown you that the legal risks in your home nation for transgender individuals include arrest, detention and deportation. But you are not sure at all if these three legal risks also include the risk of sexual abuse, unfair treatment, harassment and other forms of abuse. In fact, the current literature shows that there are no statistics or records of such abuse. Is this because there is no abuse or if transgender sex workers who are illegal immigrants in your home nation do not have a voice to share their traumatic experiences? Is this a problem of human rights, policies that do not assist transgender sex workers who are illegal migrants, or of fear of speaking out? Would it make a difference to the illegal migrants who are transgender and are involved in sex work if there were policies that assist them? Are there present policies that would assist them? What would happen to these individuals if there were no policies at present and if there were no policies in the future?

Let us stop there for now. As we have covered the topic of having an issue worth studying in Chapter One, there is no need to draw this process out any longer. However, if you look at the diagram, you may see that the initial topic you thought of was to solve the issue of hunger. It started with an interest in the issue of hunger and moved into other areas that were more specific.

Refining Your Topic

In refining your initial topic in order to make it researchable, you should be mindful of the following points:

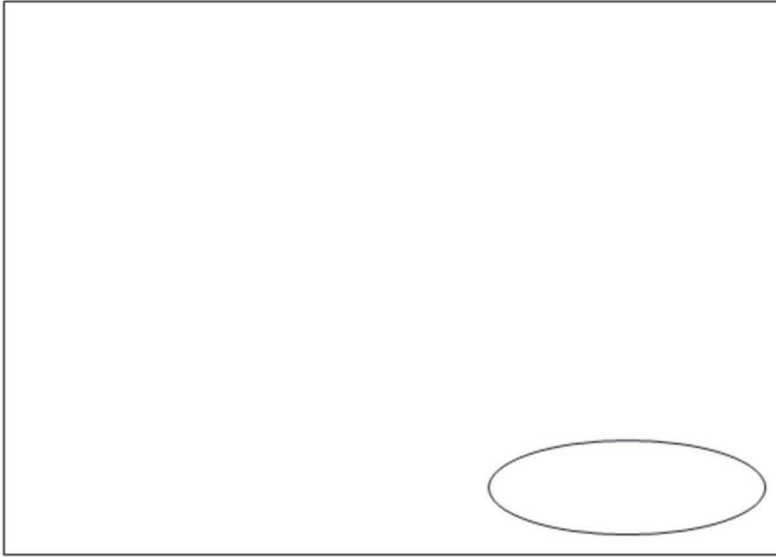
1. The steps we have shown you are very flexible. It all depends on where your interests in research lie.
2. Any one of the areas we used as an example may be explored further for possible research topics.
3. Any topic that is worthy of research must be in the form of a problem and solving it is the focus of your research.
4. You can expand the exercises given above in many ways or you can do the exercise many times until you find an area that is both of interest to you and that is worthy of academic research.

In Summary

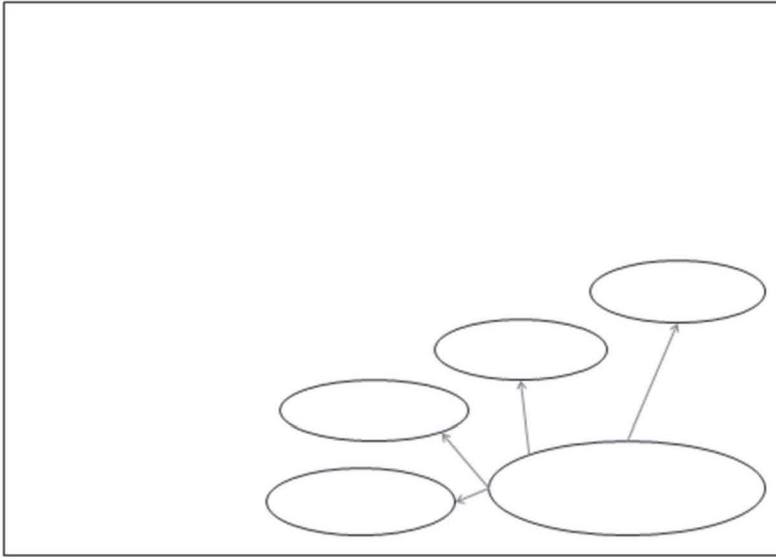
What we have hoped to accomplish in these first two Chapters is to show you that most academic endeavors are worth pursuing, but that the process of choosing a topic is not necessarily clear-cut nor is it too difficult if you have a method to make your topic researchable. Every author with a successfully completed dissertation or thesis that brought them to the finish-line of the academic journey will vouch for this. In the next Chapter, we will share with you our thoughts on another important part of preparing for your academic sojourn – reading in order to find out what research has already been done on your chosen topic.

Exercise 2.1: Choosing a Research Topic

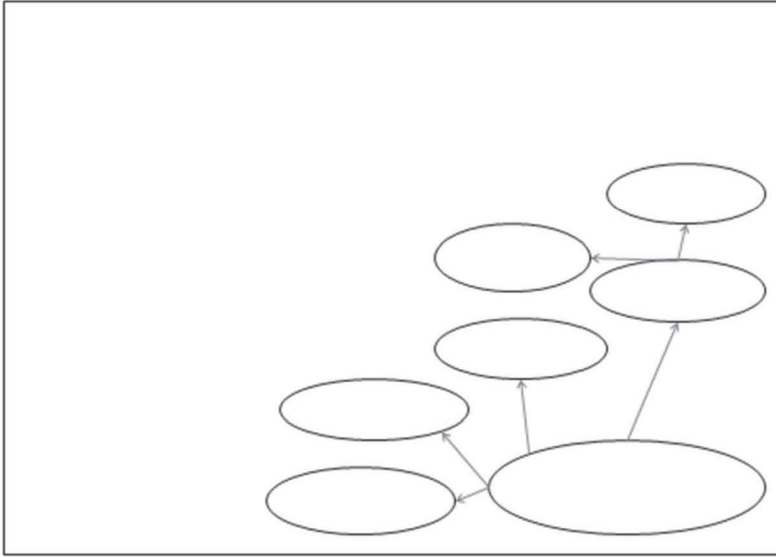
Step 1: Begin with the most general area or issue you wish to pursue for your dissertation and summarize it in a few words in the balloon in the lower right-hand corner.



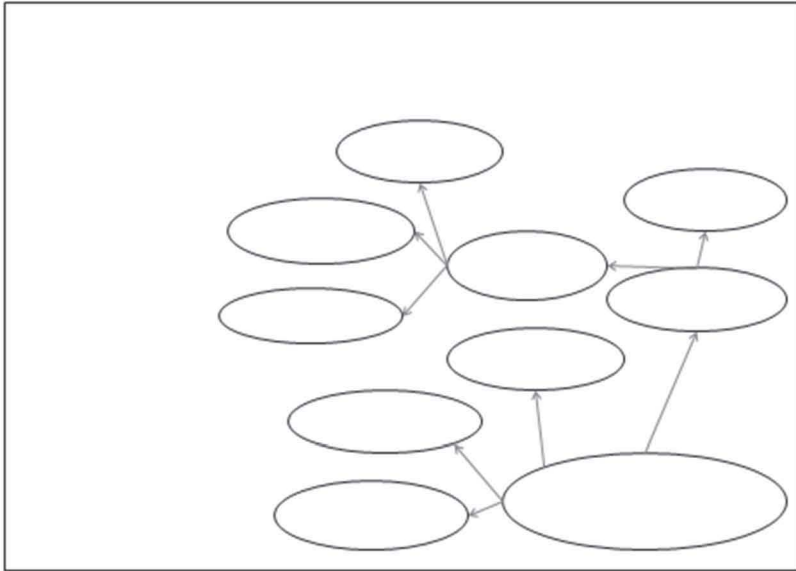
Step 2: Identify key ideas of the general area or issue that you wish to pursue for your dissertation. Try to identify 4 key areas and summarize them in the four balloons below.



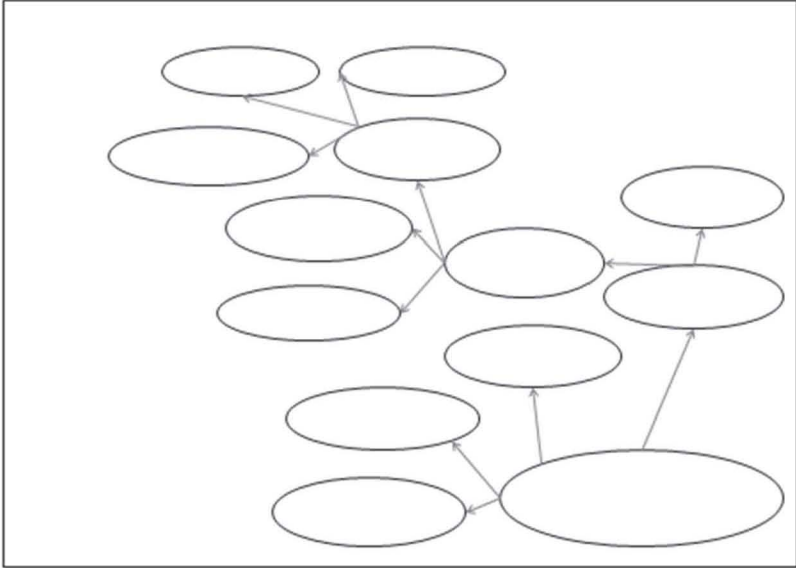
Step 3: From one of these key issues, choose two populations/sub-populations/communities that you would be interested to study within the context of your area of research interest. Write the key issue in the main balloon and then identify your populations in the smaller balloons.



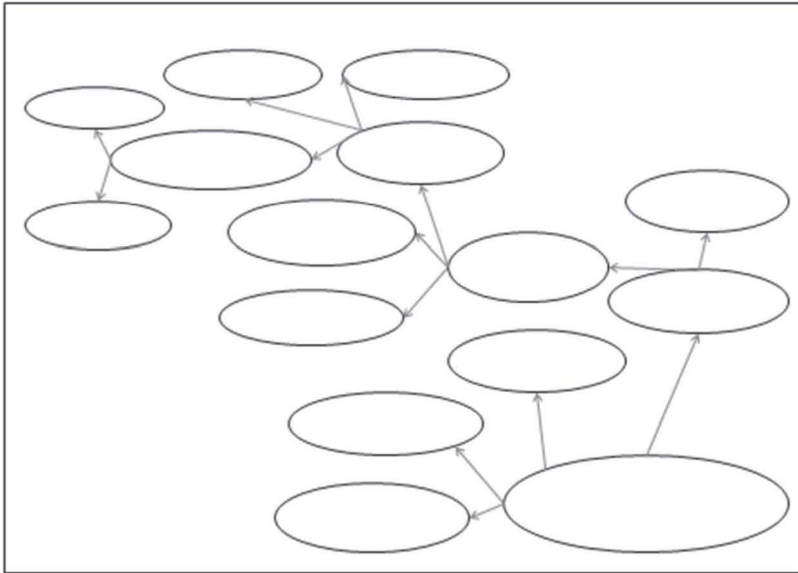
Step 4: Of these two populations/sub-populations/communities, choose one and identify issues that are unique to that population/sub-population/community. Try to come up with at least three issues. Write the population in the main balloon and the unique issues in the smaller balloons.



Step 5: Of these three issues above, what seems to be the most outstanding one to you? Choose this outstanding issue and begin to identify three key elements of this issue? Identify these three key elements in the smaller balloons.



Step 6: Of these three key elements, choose the one that has the most potential for being a unique research topic. From this element, redefine two sub-elements that interest you as well as being a unique research area.



Step 7: Choose which one of the two sub-elements most interests you and would be a unique research topic for your dissertation. Then retrace your steps from Step 7 to Step 1. Be critical of your own work and look for:

- Originality
- Importance
- Depth of ideas
- Applicability to the present situation of the issue/research area.

You may repeat this exercise as many times as you wish, until you are confident that you have found a research topic that meets both your interest and the approval of your supervisor.

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you become comfortable with the flexibility of the suggested exercise in choosing and refining your research topic?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you been able to further refine your ideas for your research topic?	

CHAPTER 3

READING, READING, READING: BACKGROUND TO YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW

Expected learning outcomes of this chapter

At the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Apply how reading spherically allows you to understand the existing literature in your chosen area more deeply.
- Think radically on how to approach the reading for your literature review.
- Avoid common mistakes in reading for a literature review.

Each nation has a set of symbols, called language, that inherently mean nothing, but are full of meaning. These symbols are strung together to form words. These words are then strung together to make a statement, ask a question, offer an answer or suggestion, express a feeling or imply a meaning. These ideas are printed in books, magazines, academic journals and online. We look at these symbols and make sense of them. It is called reading. No, we are not being sarcastic or funny (well, maybe just a little) in making this point. To any academic worth her or his salt, reading is necessary to gathering knowledge and knowing what are the recent developments in their chosen field of research (Denny & Tewksbury, 2013). Let us share with you some perspectives on reading and also give you some examples that illustrate what we mean.

Why read and why read extensively?

It gives you a broader perspective

Reading extensively allows you to understand the problem you wish to solve from many different perspectives (Webster & Watson, 2002). This skill gives you the added advantage of having a broad vision for your

research topic and it allows you to compare and contrast different views offered by various authors on the subject. To tell you why this helps you, let us share with you the following anecdote:

Li had come to Thailand to work towards a Masters degree in public health and was interested in the area of Tuberculosis. Each day she set herself the task of reading three journal articles on Tuberculosis. She read deeply on the policies of Tuberculosis, health services and health services delivery. The information she found in her reading about health services got her interested to read more about migrant workers who are prone to Tuberculosis infection. This led her to seek more reading material on female migrant workers and what makes them especially prone to Tuberculosis infection. Over time, she read more about other health issues faced by migrants, regional issues in health and other minorities in her home nation who faced different health issues. She later remarked to one of us that this broadened her scope of understanding of Tuberculosis and deepened the richness of her thesis.

It keeps you up-to-date

Reading gives you up-to-date or current information on your area of interest. One thing we would like to point out is that there are constant changes in the fields of social science. New findings are introduced with each new issue of the many journals printed in your field. The main point here is that, because of these new additions to our knowledge, you will have new information, and being out-of-date is lethal to any academic endeavor. Keeping up-to-date allows you to keep your research relevant (Denny & Tewksbury, 2013) and, therefore, to make a significant contribution to your field of social science.

You become aware of the evolution of the topic

When you read extensively you are able to see how the topic you are researching has evolved over the years. This evolution occurs, not only in terms of the research findings, but also in the usefulness of various theories in making predictions, differences in research design and the differences in findings between longitudinal studies, which test and retest the same subjects over a period of time, and one-off, cross-sectional studies. You will be looking for patterns of consistent findings, at the same time noting any inconsistent or even contradictory findings. For example, most studies in your field may have found a positive relationship between two variables, but some studies have reported no relationship or even a negative

relationship between those two variables. The reason this gives you an advantage is that it shows you how the area of study has grown and you are able to assess where the needs are for the areas of study you are interested in (Darren, 2015).

You do not plagiarize or replicate

Finally, when you read extensively you are in a more informed position to decide that your proposed study is not a repeat or replication of work that has been done before (Torraco, 2005). The two dangers of this situation are, first, you are accused of plagiarism or unacknowledged replication; and, second, you go halfway through your research before discovering that the research you are doing has been done before and in order to complete your studies, which require original research, you have to go back all the way to Square One and start your empirical study again.

You are able to identify a gap in the academic literature

Many universities may require you to sit for a Qualifying Examination. Part of this Qualifying Examination is to allow you to grandstand a little and show off that that you have successfully identified a gap in the academic literature that justifies the need for your dissertation as it will fill in this gap (Wee & Bannister, 2016). Reading the academic literature on your subject will help you in identifying the gap in the literature and being able to state categorically that your Masters or PhD work will add to the universal body of knowledge.

Reading spherically

Many dimensions to one issue

Reading spherically is not about reading about spheres or reading while you sit under a sphere-shaped lamp shade. Okay, lousy joke! But what we mean by reading spherically is reading about an issue that has many dimensions. For example, if you are interested in the issue of HIV/AIDS and do some reading into the topic you will find that the material on HIV/AIDS covers the actual epidemic, most at risk populations (MARPs), risk reduction, community and NGO involvement, epidemiology, death and dying, sexuality and gender, recent developments in vaccine trials, regional reports, and conference proceedings. This list is not exhaustive, but, for the sake of an example, let us go with this list. Please examine the following diagram:

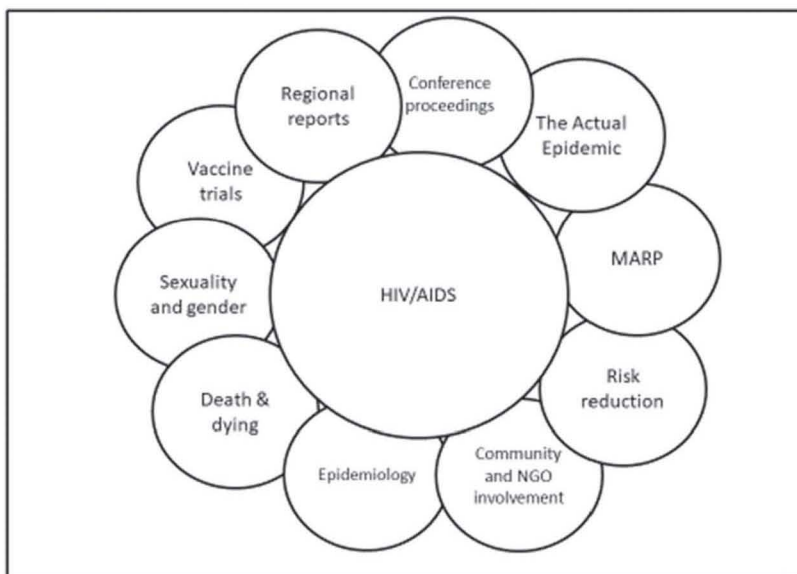


Diagram 3.1 Dimensions of Research on HIV/AIDS

As you can see, the dimensions are inter-related and they overlap. They also come from the same source, which is the topic of HIV/AIDS. By reading spherically, you are giving yourself the advantages of having a broader perspective, keeping yourself up-to-date with the latest research, awareness of the evolution of the topic and making an attempt not to replicate past research.

Many perspectives of one topic

Each issue has several perspectives. For example, the topic of HIV/AIDS has the vaccine development perspective, the clinical treatment perspective, and the social science perspective, to just name three. The diagram below illustrates this overlapping relationship:

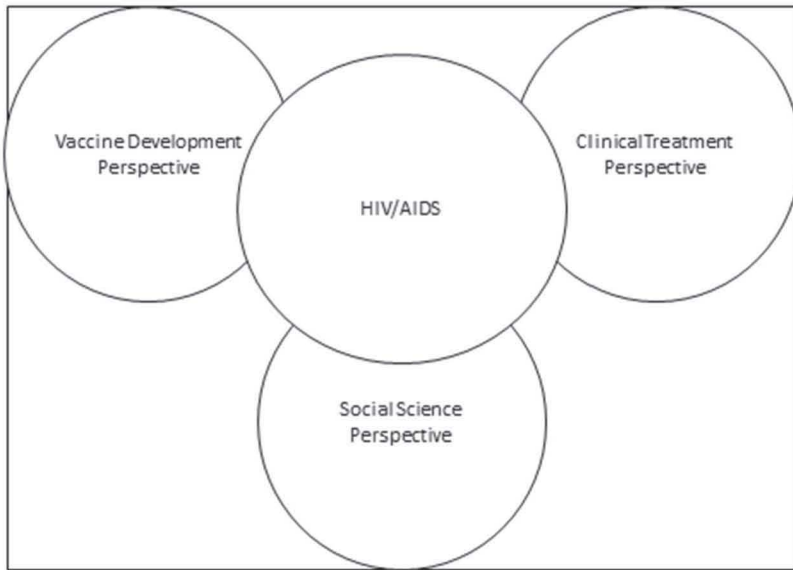


Diagram 3.2 Overlapping Perspectives on HIV/AIDS

As you go about your reading, be aware that different perspectives exist and, to be a well-rounded and knowledgeable scholar, you need to delve a little into reading these different perspectives. These perspectives may not be what you have your heart set on researching, but by doing so you will have a deeper and broader grasp of the material.

Think radically

When you are on an academic journey it is tempting to look for the obvious. However, an important skill of being a scholar is looking for the **not-so-obvious**. This is what leads to “Aha” moments and serendipitous events, when you have an insight that moves your research plans forward towards achieving your goal of making an original contribution to knowledge and completing your thesis or dissertation (Pare, Trudel, Jaana & Kitsious, 2015). True, when you reach the stage where you are analyzing your data and writing up your research findings you may come across an item or two that are obvious. But, as you are considering what to read for a research topic, it helps to look outside what is obviously present or conventional or traditional. We would like to share with you three thoughts to help you move in this direction.

Comparisons

When you look for comparisons to the information you find in your reading, be daring enough to look for completely contrary materials or opinions. Think of it this way: if all of scholars thought the same way then there would be no challenge in research. True, many scholars stand on the shoulders of other scholars who have researched this topic before them, but for each scholar who is a recognized icon or leader in her or his field there have been scholars with contrary opinions.

Arguments against current theory and practical views

All scholars fall back on theory sooner or later. If ever a peer of yours says that they are doing scholarly research without theory, it is your obligation to steer them towards having a theoretical underpinning for their work. However, while theory is the lynchpin of all scholarly work, there are always arguments against a theory or new developments in how these theories may be used as explanations or expanded. Be open to reading about these contrary arguments and new developments. It will stimulate your mind and also your imagination for your research.

Arguments against “common sense” views of a problem

As scholars, we like to think that we have common sense. We are rational, logical creatures who like to think that the best route of getting a problem solved is to approach it with common sense. For example, if illiteracy is a problem, then the answer is to get all the illiterate individuals to learn how to read; or if malaria is a problem, then the answer is to eradicate all infected female *Anopheles* mosquitoes; or if political dissidents are a problem then the answers might be to have punitive consequences for dissident political actions or to change the law. These answers are common sense and straightforward. However, as scholars, the onus is on us to challenge some of the common-sense views that are currently widely held about a problem. Common sense often helps us to identify the symptom of a problem, but, as scholars, we need to go to the cause of the problem in order to provide an answer. Common sense does not always work and needs to be challenged and empirically tested.

In Summary

In summary, reading extensively exposes you to many different dimensions, perspectives and views of a problem. For those of you planning (or already are in) an academic career, please realize that the reading never ends. Both of us authors have been academics for some years now, and we can honestly say that it is always exciting and rewarding when we come across a new idea, finding or theory in our fields, as a result of keeping up-to-date with reading.

Exercise 3.1. Reflection on potential scope of a literature review

As mentioned in the early part of this Chapter, reading spherically is important to gaining depth and breadth in your knowledge about the current research in the area of your topic. Utilizing the diagram below on reading spherically, please do the following exercise:

1. Place your main research area in the centre circle marked “1.”.

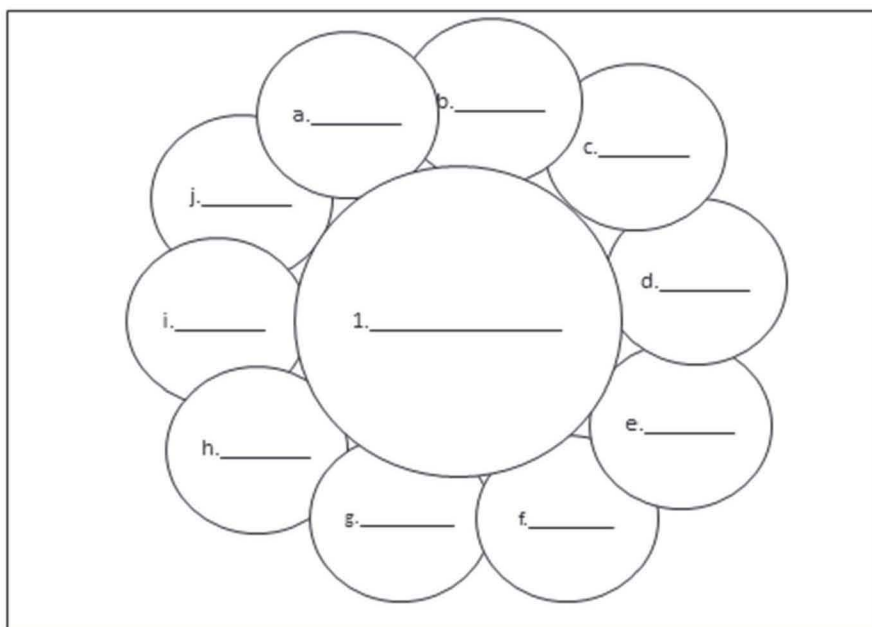


Diagram 3.3 Reading spherically

2. Begin reflecting on the areas of research that are interconnected with your main idea. Challenge yourself to think of ten different areas that are interconnected and list them down in order of importance in the list below.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

- f. _____
- g. _____
- h. _____
- i. _____
- j. _____

3. Write these interconnected areas in the circles marked “a” to “j”.
4. Reflect **critically** on the areas “a” to “j”. Is there any interconnected topic that you think is not so relevant upon reflection? Is there any interconnected topic that you think you should add to or subtract from the diagram upon reflection?
5. Remember to take your time with this process. There is usually a time limitation in which to complete your dissertation, but do not rush through this process, because this early stage of your reading on relevant topics is very important to determining the focus of your later research.
6. To continue, please do Exercise 3.2 below:

Exercise 3.2: Considering different perspectives of a research topic

In this Chapter, we spoke of looking at different perspectives of your research topic. This activity is aimed at your reflections about these different perspectives.

1. Begin by writing down your research topic in the central circle “A” in Diagram 3.4 below.
2. Then reflect on the possible perspectives from which you may view your research area. We would like to suggest that you consider three different perspectives. List down these three perspectives here:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

3. Write these perspectives in circles “A1”, “A2” and “A3” in Diagram 3.4.

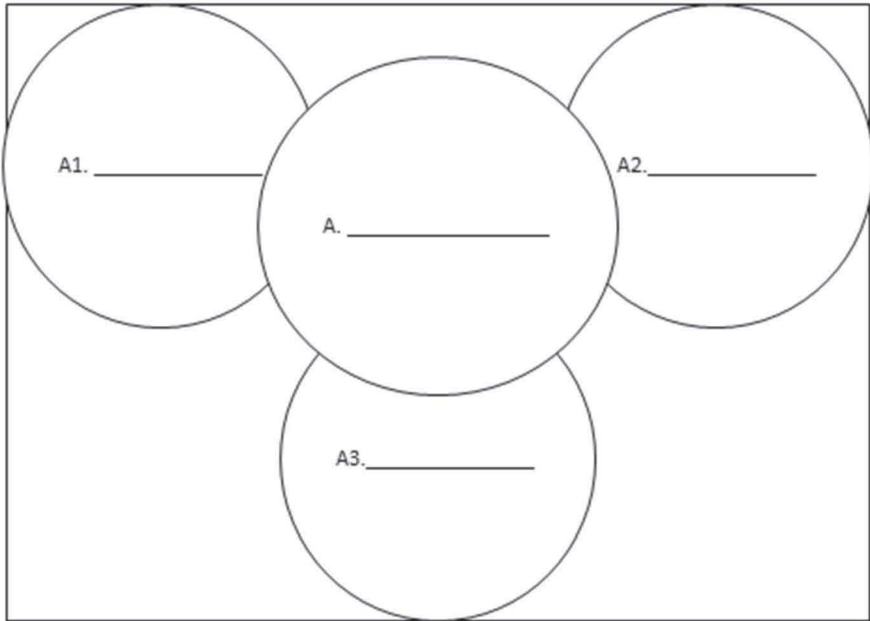


Diagram 3.4 Different perspectives for your research topic

4. Reflect on these perspectives. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - a. Which one of these perspectives would make my research different from previous research?
 - b. Which one of these perspectives would create new knowledge?
 - c. Is there a perspective I should replace with another perspective to make my research more interesting and valuable?
5. As you reflect upon these questions, please realize again that time is needed. Give yourself that time to think, consider, reconsider and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these perspectives.

Exercise 3.3: Discussion with your supervisor

Take your completed Diagram 3.3 and Diagram 3.4 to a meeting with your supervisor. Discuss with your supervisor the merits and challenges of each interconnected topic from Diagram 3.3 and the perspectives in Diagram 3.4. Your supervisor may advise you to add, subtract or to consider other interconnected topics for your literature review, as well as share with you other perspectives from which to view your research topic.

Suggested questions to ask your supervisor include:

- I. Have I missed out any relevant interconnected topics for my literature review?

- II. Are any of the interconnected topics listed for my literature review irrelevant or too ambitious to complete in the time period that I have been given to do my research?

- III. Could you please suggest any other relevant interconnected topics for my literature review?

IV. Of the three perspectives I have listed down in the diagram, which of the three in your opinion is the most likely to contribute new knowledge?

Please take notes as you have this discussion with your supervisor. We have provided some space above for you to do so.

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to identify four key reasons for a literature review?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to identify ten different dimensions to the social science issue you wish to study?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to identify the different perspectives of the topic you wish to study?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to make comparisons and arguments for and against the content of the material you have covered in your literature review?	

CHAPTER 4

LET'S START WITH THE BIG "SO WHAT?": WRITING YOUR INTRODUCTION

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this Chapter you will be able to:

- Identify the key elements of your Introduction.
- State clearly why you are interested in your research topic.
- Clearly state your Research Question(s), Research Objective(s) and Hypothesis(es).
- State clearly the contribution your dissertation will make to the universal body of knowledge.

In the first three Chapters of this book we have covered how to get started on writing a thesis or dissertation, how to map out a research topic and the importance of reading widely and deeply in your topic's field. In this Chapter, we would like to pull all the information we have shared with you from the last three chapters together to form a solid foundation for your research (Athanasou *et al.*, 2012; Joyner, Rouse & Glatthorn, 2018; Randolph, 2009; Roberts, 2010). This solid foundation will allow you to answer the critical questions that any scholar will have to deal with in doing research. This solid foundation includes a strong Introduction, a comprehensive Literature Review and an applicable Research Design for your study. In this Chapter, we will guide you through the writing of your Chapter 1, the Introduction, of your dissertation.

Writing Your Introduction

The key elements to include in your opening paragraph are:

Your research focus

State clearly what your research focus is. As you have seen in the last Chapter on reading extensively, any given topic in the social sciences may have several dimensions. If your research focus is on gender issues, you may want to begin by stating clearly that the research is about gender issues in a certain context or society. For example, one way of specifying your topic may be expressed as follows:

“The sexualization of women in the media has led to perceptions of women as objects (Citation A, Year; Citation B, Year). This objectification has been argued to lead to instances of rape and sexual molestation of women, mainly in urban areas (Citation C, Year; Citation D, Year; Citation E, Year).”

A statement on the present situation of the topic you are researching

Next, give a brief statement of the situation in your home nation, for example:

“Statistics show that in Urban Area A alone, the relevant authorities report that there were X number of reports of rape and sexual molestation, representing an increase of S% when compared with ten years ago. Urban Areas B and C collectively reported Y reports of rape and sexual molestation. Perpetrators of such crimes stated in their evidence in court that the media played a role in the way they chose and approached their victims (Citation F, Year; Citation G, Year; Citation H, Year; Citation I, Year).”

Give more details of the issue

The next step is to provide a detailed description of the situation where you share at least two perspectives of the situation you are researching. One way of expressing two opposing points of view on this topic is, for example:

“Statistics show that Urban Areas A, B and C collectively have reported that Z numbers of women have been raped or sexually molested. Of this total number, XX% reported to police that they had not dressed

provocatively. On the other hand, the perpetrators of these crimes reported that the way these victims dressed was similar or identical to the way women were dressed in the media, and that these women were asking for sexual attention (Citation J, Year; Citation K, Year; Citation L, Year). This finding suggests that the sexualization of women in the media has led to instances of rape and sexual molestation. On the other hand, Citation M (Year) found that the media do not have such a strong influence on the behaviors of media consumers. Furthermore, Citation N (Year), Citation O (Year) and Citation P (Year) argued that media consumption leads to behaviors that pertain only to consumerism and not sexual crime. While these two views are inconsistent, there is an urgent need for more research to determine if there exists a link between media consumption and criminal behavior."

If you can meet these requirements, you will have two or three paragraphs written for your introductory chapter. However, you are not done yet. The next section will deal with how you express and justify your interest in the field of interest. Although we have changed the subject in the examples below, we hope that the continuity of our presentation will be obvious.

Question: Why are you interested in this research problem?

State clearly why you are interested in this research problem

Give a clear statement of the problem that justifies the rationale of your research. Base this statement on the facts, figures and research findings reported by other scholars. Two examples of such statements are:

"Statistics and documented experiences (Citation Q, Year; Citation R, Year) of the aboriginal tribes of the nation found an absence of research in the area of sanitation. This research aims to fill in this gap in the available information on this issue. This will allow for the development of recommendations of policy changes aimed at increasing the provision of sanitation for the aboriginal tribes of the nation."

"Based on the findings of the extensive literature review to be presented in Chapter 2, the researcher concluded that the development of curricula that meet the needs of special-needs children does not take into consideration the separation anxiety from their parents faced by special-needs children. This indicates an urgent need for such research, as more special-needs children, who are displaying symptoms of separation anxiety,

are entering mainstream classes. This research aims at reducing the separation anxiety faced by special-needs children and offering recommendations that will ease their transition into mainstream education."

Tip: Avoid these mistakes

When stating your rationale for undertaking your research, you need to avoid moralizing on the issue. As we mentioned in the first Chapter, do your best not to become emotional about your issue of interest. While we respect that passion is necessary in scholarly endeavors, becoming emotional in your rationale statement works against you and will be questioned by your supervisor and the examining committee. Emotional arguments are inconsistent with the objective approach of scientific analysis of a research problem. An example of what you want to avoid is the following:

"Children are the most important part of any parent's life. If the child is sick, the parents would worry and this causes great amounts of pain and sadness. Imagine the pain of a parent now, if they have children who cannot get good sanitation in their remote village that is so far from civilization that the children are deprived of satellite television. Imagine how painful and sad this is. Anyone who cannot feel how sad this deprivation is would be so wrong and selfish. Worse still, any official who deprives these children of good sanitation should not be placed in a position of authority in public health. It is with such a passion and an interest to alleviate the sufferings and the pain of children and parents that this research will be done."

The issues with the above scenario include a lack of focus, a lack of relevant statistics and background data, use of emotional words and moralizing about what could be an important empirical study.

Sometimes, students and scholars choose a geographic region for their research for reasons of convenience, such as it is close to the university they are attending, it is their home city or home state, or simply because it is easily accessible. We would strongly urge you to avoid such justifications for the geographic region chosen for your subject, as they imply that your convenience is more important than the significance of the topic in your choice of sample.

Hypothesis

What is a hypothesis? In brief, a hypothesis is the presumptive basis for any academic argument. It is the prediction you are making for the relationship between your chosen variables. An example of the way you might express your hypothesis is as follows:

"Policies, laws and regulations are already in effect to deter students from plagiarizing other people's writing. However, many incidents of plagiarism are still being reported by many institutions of higher education. This indicates that policies, laws and regulations have not been enforced strongly enough. This research, then, focuses on the support needs of institutions of higher education in enforcing policies, laws and regulations on plagiarism from the Ministry of Higher Education. The hypothesis to be tested in this study is that there is a negative relationship between consistent enforcement of anti-plagiarism policies and the frequency of reported plagiarism. In other words, the more consistently the plagiarism regulations are enforced the lower the incidence of plagiarism by students in higher education institutions."

In the social science disciplines, the hypothesis is as important as it is in the pure and applied science disciplines (Kothari, 2004). It is important that you work closely with your supervisor or committee to develop your hypothesis or hypotheses. Please remember that developing a strong hypothesis or hypotheses is important to your success, and that development of a strong hypothesis or hypotheses is dependent on how extensive is your reading into the subject matter pertaining to your research topic. Your study will be building on past research, so that you need to know what hypotheses have been tested in past research. For your research to be accepted as being original, you need to test one or more new hypotheses.

Being Explicit: The research question

Universities, faculties, departments and supervisors will differ on which Chapter and where in the Chapter a research question should be presented. What we would like to suggest is that the earlier you present the research question, the earlier your examiners and readers will be able to identify the direction of your research. This approach will benefit you, because you have a point of reference that you can keep coming back to if you find yourself lost. Furthermore, the examiners are clearly informed from an early stage of your thesis or dissertation what is the research question that your research will attempt to answer.

The research question may be inductive (i.e., gathering as much relevant data as you can and then arriving at a generalization based on the data), deductive (i.e., giving an answer to a tested hypothesis or hypotheses based on regularities), abductive (i.e., here the researcher enters the social world of the subjects he or she is studying and how they give meaning to their lives) or retroductive (i.e., looking for the underlying reason for why a certain thing is done, or why lives are lived a certain way)^{3,4}. What is important is to state clearly the problem you are researching, the population and the sample you are utilizing for data collection, the geographic location you will be conducting your research in, how you aim to collect the data, the theoretical framework you will be using and whether you will be utilizing qualitative data, quantitative data or a combination of both types of data in a mixed-methods research design (Agee, 2009; Lipowski, 2008). These three types of research design will be elaborated upon in the next Chapter. The problem may take the form of a research question or the form of a statement. Please examine the following two examples:

Example 1

“Acceptance of vaccination remains an issue that is faced by many indigenous people in Country X. Although attempts have been made to implement vaccination programs involving the indigenous people of Country X, the main stumbling block remains the negative perceptions of the indigenous people towards vaccination. This research aims to analyze the sociological source of these negative perceptions, utilizing

³ For deeper explanations, we would like to suggest that you look to the work of Emeritus Professor Norman Blaikie from RMIT University, Australia.

⁴ Blaikie, N. (2009). *Designing Social Research: The logic of anticipation*, Cambridge: Polity.

phenomenological social construction of reality through the analysis of qualitative data."

Example 2

"The question remains, 'Why do the indigenous people of Country X have such negative perceptions of vaccination in a world where vaccination is accepted by most indigenous tribes?'. Could the reason be found in the way that indigenous people construct their beliefs of non-traditional medicine in their society? Would understanding their social of construction of reality via the use of phenomenological social construction of reality give an answer to this question? Ultimately, the two questions that this research aims to answer are: 'How are negative perceptions that block access to vaccination for indigenous people created and maintained?' and 'How may these negative perceptions be changed?'. "

Either way, you will have to write and re-write your research question(s) many times with the assistance of your supervisor or committee in order to define, refine and focus it (them). In our experience, there has not been a scholar who has achieved the perfect research question, nor has a precise research question been written on their first attempt. Be patient with yourself as you work through this process.

Being Explicit: The research objectives

The purpose of having research objectives is to further clarify your research question (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2010). They may be delivered in expanded bullet points. Please remember the following tips: First, be sure that the research objectives are consistent with the research question; second, do not have too many objectives, as this will cause you to become distracted or confused when you write; and third, when developing your research objectives, be as precise as possible. The benefits to you are twofold: First, when your examiners read your dissertation, the direction of your research is clear and it becomes evident that you know your field very well; and, second, you can always refer to it to guide yourself when you develop and write your Literature Review, Research Design, Research Instrument(s), Data Analysis Techniques and Recommendations.

Let us use the research question we have proposed in the previous section to develop research objectives. The research rationale and question are: *"Acceptance of vaccination remains an issue that is faced by many indigenous people in Country X. Although attempts have been made to*

connect the indigenous people of Country X with vaccination, the main stumbling block remains the negative perceptions of the indigenous people towards vaccination. This research aims to analyze the sociological source of these negative perceptions utilizing phenomenological social construction of reality through the analysis of qualitative data". Three plausible research objectives could be:

- To identify the sociological source of specific negative perceptions of the indigenous people against vaccination through the analysis of qualitative data;
- To analyze how these negative perceptions are socially constructed *via* the perspective of phenomenology; and
- To offer recommendations based on the findings to enact policy change and social intervention in order to increase the acceptance of vaccination among indigenous people.

This list of objectives is by no means exhaustive. It does, however, show you how you can specify what your objectives are for the readers of your dissertation.

Significance of the Problem

The first question we posed in this book was "So What?". We will use it many more times before the end of the book, but for this section, it is a vital question. Your justification of how your research is significant is the lynchpin of getting your research proposal approved, your dissertation accepted and, most importantly, the respect of your peers for your research. Do this well and you will have successfully cleared this hurdle. It is not a good idea just to state in your writing that the research is significant. You have to show your readers your academic prowess and **how** your research is significant and original (Kothari, 2004). Please let us share with you a few ideas and guidelines for expressing in writing how your research is significant.

Practical contribution

When writing the significance of the problem in your dissertation, do show how your research makes a contribution to your field of choice. If we retain the examples used in the sections on Research Question and Research Objectives, you could say:

"The main practical contribution of this research is to make vaccination more acceptable to the indigenous people of Country X. This is significant as, at present, the indigenous people of Country X, who make up 9% of the population and who are eligible for vaccination that would lower mortality and illness, do not utilize this preventative healthcare procedure. Therefore, from a practical contribution standpoint, this research would make further inroads into the acceptance of vaccination by the indigenous people of Country X and lower the incidence of preventable diseases."

Theoretical contribution

Share with your examiners and readers what are the theoretical contributions of your research. While this is less evident in empirical research, you may have the opportunity (if your research and you are so inclined) to show how your research makes more effective use of a particular theoretical perspective. For example, as mentioned in the previous sections, you would like to use phenomenology as a theoretical perspective, you may state that institutionalization as understood in phenomenology is limiting. Your research would show significantly how institutionalization can be also used to explain how negative perceptions of vaccination have been institutionalized as a form of cultural preservation. You may phrase it like this:

"Additionally, this research will significantly show how negative perceptions of vaccination have been institutionalized within the culture of the indigenous people of Country X as a form of cultural preservation."

Or

"The theoretical contribution of this research is to show how negative perceptions of vaccination within the culture of the indigenous people of Country X are a form of cultural preservation vis-à-vis institutionalization, as propounded by the theoretical approach of phenomenology".

How will this significance be of benefit to others?

In addition to achieving your academic goal of graduating with a research degree, it helps as well to show how the significance of your research will do more than give you an academic qualification. For example, the research above shows how it will assist both the indigenous population, as well as healthcare practitioners, to lower the incidence of communicable

diseases in their communities. This is an important, and often overlooked, element in the social sciences. Suggestions to add this to your significance could be:

“By creating more positive institutionalization and acceptance of vaccination among the indigenous people of Country X, mortality rates may be reduced within this community. This research, while not a piece of medical research per se, will bring benefits to the indigenous people, as well as to the medical practitioners who wish to assist them.”

Or

“While the aim of this research is to analyze the socially constructed apprehension of the indigenous people towards vaccination, a significant contribution may also be attached to how the findings of the research will bring the benefits of better healthcare and lowered mortality rates to the indigenous people, as well as assist healthcare professionals with recommendations in bringing more acceptable messages of vaccination to the indigenous people.”

Bridging

At this juncture, we would like to make the following important point. Part of writing a good dissertation is good **writing**. This means having a smooth flow of meaning as you move from one sentence to the next, from one paragraph to the next, from one section to the next and from one Chapter to the next (Swales & Feak, 2004). Choppy, disjointed, haphazard and slapdash writing is not acceptable in academic writing, nor is writing that looks like a copy-and-paste job.

Please read the following two paragraphs:

1. *“Past research shows that the elderly who are victims of strokes do not have good support systems. Family does not care. Challenges are constant in the areas of physio-therapy and daily living. Problems also arise in re-aculturating into society.”*
2. *“Past research in the area of elderly victims of stroke suggests that this population faces several challenges in terms of disease management. The first challenge that elderly victims of stroke face is the level of care that is provided for them by immediate family members. The second challenge that elderly victims of stroke face*

is in the area of physiotherapy, where gaining passage and access to rehabilitative care is dependent on several different factors. These factors are tied into the third challenge, which is the issue of daily living and the ability to operate as independent individuals. The third challenge is connected to the fourth challenge that elderly stroke victims face: how they acculturate into society as individuals who are not perceived as incapacitated."

When you compare both of the paragraphs, which do you think has better flow? This flow is what has to be apparent as you move from one sentence to the next, from one paragraph to the next, from one section to the next and from one Chapter to the next. Clearly, the second paragraph flows more easily than the first, which consists of a series of unrelated statements.

Taking a Step Back

As you write your dissertation, take the time to step back and be critical, not only of the **content** of your writing, but also of the **writing** itself. Be a little tough with yourself to lift the standard of your writing, but also be kind and forgiving. It is all a process of the steps you take in completing your dissertation, and part and parcel of academic writing, which is a balance between these two elements.

In Summary

Your first Chapter, Introduction, will vary in length, depending on your topic, your writing, the expectations of your supervisor and the rules and regulations of your university, expressed in written documents that you need to access, either online or in written form in faculty handbooks. Some guidelines are more specific than others and sometimes students are expected to include a fixed list of sub-headings in their Introduction. Other guidelines are more open and you should consult other students' theses or dissertations, as recommended by your supervisor. They will be helpful for the structure of your Introduction, but you need to supply your own content, based on your reading, deep understanding of your chosen topic and advice from your supervisor. Be open to criticism, suggestions and the rules and regulations you are expected to follow. Be willing to be flexible, and to accept criticism without being broken by it. Resilience is one of the qualities you will need to develop in completing your thesis or dissertation.

Exercise 4.1 Writing your Introduction

We would like to take you through a step-by-step process to writing your introductory Chapter, based on the information we have shared with you in this Chapter. Take these exercises and questions posed to you step-by-step. Do not be tempted to skip or avoid any of the steps, as there needs to be continuity or flow in your writing. We provide you with tips and suggestions at each step of the process.

Step 1. Write down your research focus. This is the opening paragraph of your Introduction.

- Tip 1: Be factual and avoid emotional words, exaggerations and personal opinions. Keep to the facts and be careful to avoid mentioning your own or others' opinions.
- Tip 2: Support each statement you make in your research focus with citations or references that are appropriate, correct and from reliable sources.
- Tip 3: Summarize the opening paragraph.

Write the opening paragraph in the box below. Follow the examples and guidelines we provide.

1. Opening Statement (e.g., Poverty remains a social issue that plagues pockets of society.)

_____ (insert appropriate citations).

2. Defining the Research Focus of the dissertation (e.g., This research focuses on the issue of poverty that is experienced by the population of street children who live in the City of X.)

_____ (insert appropriate citations).

3. First Definitive Statement (e.g., While there are various issues, such as health and education, that affect street children, the issue of malnutrition is one that has not received wide research coverage.)

(insert appropriate citations).

4. Second Definitive Statement (e.g., Additionally, malnutrition is not an issue that is closely related to urban living and, therefore, has not received as much attention from an academic perspective.)

(insert appropriate citations).

5. Summary of Opening Statement (e.g., Summarize the information you have included in the paragraph.)

Box 4.1. Opening paragraph of Chapter 1: Introduction

Read the content that you have written in the boxes above. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the content factual?
- Is there good connectivity between sentences?
- Is the research focus clearly explained?

Step 2. Statement on the current situation of your research topic.

- Tip 1: Bridge the opening paragraph with this paragraph. Note that bridging is necessary when you move from one paragraph to the next.
- Tip 2: The use of statistics that are current from reports and other reliable sources should be used to strengthen the Introduction at this point.
- Tip 3: Be sure to give a balanced range of facts when writing. This is necessary to give your dissertation objectivity.
- Tip 4: Be sure to give correct citations.

1. Statistics/data 1 (e.g., Factors that make the issue problematic)

(insert appropriate citations).

2. Statistics/data 2 (e.g., Factors that make the issue problematic)

(insert appropriate citations).

3. Statistics/data 3 (e.g., Factors that lessen the problems in the issue)

(insert appropriate citations).

4. Statistics/data 4 (e.g., Factors that lessen the problems in the issue)

_____ (insert appropriate citations).

Box 4.2. Facts that support the current situation or problem

Step 3. State clearly why you are interested in this research topic

- Tip 1: Do not use the first-person narrative (i.e., I, Me, My). Use only the third person narrative.
- Tip 2: Do not state that your research is valid just because you are interested in it. You must show an academic reason for your research.
- Tip 3: Do not state that your research is valid because you are a native of the geographic region where the issue is. This shows a lack of objectivity.

1.	Clearly state the issue that is being studied (e.g., Poverty, sanitation, health issues, disease or education. This is dependent on what your research focus is).

_____	(insert appropriate citations).
2.	Clearly state what the gap in the present body of knowledge is (e.g., There has been no link found between sanitation and poor academic performance).

_____	(insert appropriate citations).
3.	Clearly state the benefits of the research to the academic community (e.g., The research will provide recommendations

beneficial to policy advocacy for marginalized indigenous populations).

 _____ (insert appropriate citations).

Box 4.3. Rationale for conducting your research study

Step 4. Clearly state your hypothesis

- Tip 1: Present your hypothesis in the form of an argument.
- Tip 2: Remain factual and give a balanced opinion.
- Tip 3: Avoid sweeping statements such as “will”, “must” and “definitely”, as well as phrases such as “will confirm”, “must be done” and “will definitely solve the issue”.

1. Present the data/statistics of the present situation on the issue (e.g., Present policies support the prevention of sale of cigarettes to minors).

2. Present the issue again (e.g., The issue of underage smoking still exists despite these policies).

3. The hypothesis you wish to test (e.g., Policies that prevent the sale of cigarettes to minors make cigarette smoking more attractive to minors).

Box 4.4. Issues that need to be considered in stating and testing hypotheses

Step 5. Writing your Research Question(s)

- Tip 1: The research question has to be in the form of a question; therefore, a good rule of thumb is to phrase the Research Question as a question and not a statement.
- Tip 2: Clearly state the problem you are researching.
- Tip 3: Briefly state the population and the sample, the geographic location of your research, how the data will be collected, the Theoretical Framework you will be using, and whether your data will be qualitative, quantitative or a mix of both methodologies.

1. Begin with an opening statement (e.g., This research is primarily interested in health issues in metropolitan areas, specifically how health affects productivity).

2. Write the research question using "Who", "What", "Where", "Why", "When" and "How".

3. State the information that is mentioned in Tip 3 above.

Box 4.5. Issues in writing your research question(s)

Step 6. Writing your Research Objectives

- Tip 1: Remember that research objectives are meant to refine your research question(s). Be sure not to diverge from your research question.
- Tip 2: If you are unsure if your research objective is correct, refer to your research question(s).

1. Write down your first Research Objective.

2. Write down your second Research Objective.

3. Write down your third Research Objective.

4. Write down your fourth Research Objective.

Box 4.6. Issues in writing your research objectives

Step 7. Write the Significance of the Problem

- Tip 1: Focus on the practical and/or theoretical contribution that your research will deliver.
- Tip 2: Remember to avoid sweeping statements, such as sentences that include "will", "must" and "definitely", as well as phrases such as "will confirm", "must be done" and "will definitely solve the issue".

1. Write down the practical and/or theoretical contribution of the research.

2. Explain how this contribution will benefit society.

Box 4.7 Issues in writing the significance of the problem

Step 8. Review

It is essential as you write that you review the work that you have written. The reasons for this include:

- It allows you to assess if you have been clear in your writing or if you have made your writing too complicated.
- It allows you to assess if you made your explanations clear, or if they need more detail.
- It allows you to assess if you have connected each section well, or if you need to work on bridging sections of the chapter together more coherently.
- It allows you to review your work for spelling and grammatical mistakes, as well as consistency of using acronyms and names.

A suggested strategy of reviewing your writing is:

1. Please read each section from Step 1 to Step 7 in one continuous flow.
2. Ask yourself the following questions as you read what you have written:
 - a. Does the opening paragraph clearly indicate what the focus of the research will be?
 - b. Is the section on the present situation objective?
 - c. Are the topic of the study, the gap in information and benefits of the study clearly stated?
 - d. Is the hypothesis clear of sweeping statements and is it clearly explained in enough detail?
 - e. Are all of the necessary elements covered in the Research Question?
 - f. Do the Research Objectives refine the Research Question?
 - g. Is the significance of the problem clear in how it contributes practically, theoretically and to society?
3. Make the necessary corrections to your summarizing paragraph(s).
4. Take your time when reviewing. Be confident of your work, but also critical enough so that you are able to produce writing that is clear, objective and easily understandable.

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

• Are you able to identify the different parts of the Introduction to your dissertation/thesis?	
• Are you able to utilize the eight steps suggested in the exercises to write the Introduction to your dissertation/thesis?	
• Are you able to critically assess your Research Question(s), Research Objective(s) and Hypothesis(es)?	

CHAPTER 5

BACKING UP YOUR CLAIMS: WRITING YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this Chapter you will be able to:

- Approach writing your Literature Review from investigative and argumentative perspectives.
- Shape the arguments for your dissertation/thesis.
- Categorize information in a systematic and organized manner.

A short while ago a very promising student came up to one of us and proudly announced that he had taken our advice of reading, understanding and taking notes of a minimum of one academic journal article a day for a period of three months. The student then happily said he now knew a lot more about his area of research. He also cheekily asked the question “SO WHAT?”. We both enjoy having good rapport with our students and enjoy such light-hearted banter. The question from the student, however, raised an interesting point: You now have considerable additional knowledge from all of your extensive reading on your dissertation topic – so what do you do with it?

In this Chapter we would like to share with you a basic guide to writing your Literature Review. We begin with four vital points:

- In this technological age, we may be tempted to use the “copy” and “paste” functions available to us on all computers. We would like to strongly advise you against using these functions, as it can lead to accusations of plagiarism if what is copied and pasted is not acknowledged and referenced appropriately. Plagiarism may lead to your thesis or dissertation being rejected as unacceptable by your examining committee.

- A Literature Review is not a collection of facts, figures and findings mashed together on pages in an incoherent manner. Furthermore, it is not a series of studies being reported one after another with no linking sentences or theme to connect them. The latter is called an **anthology**. In fact, a literature review is an elegant piece of writing that supports with evidence and justifies the rationale for your research.
- Literature Reviews that stand out and satisfy examiners require great amounts of thought, editing, revisions and strong references. Please do not expect your first draft of any one of your Chapters, including the Literature Review, to be the final and only draft that you will write.
- As you do the necessary reading for your Literature Review, you may want to start taking notes of each article you read and backing up electronic copies of the journal articles. If you are using hard copies of articles, make a copy for yourself and file it accordingly. This will save you a lot of time when you come to the stage of referencing your work, as you will have the article on file, rather than having to search for it again online or in the library, which may take up your valuable time when you have many other tasks to complete.

Please keep these four points in mind as we discuss the format and content of a Literature Review.

What is a Literature Review?

Students may find the idea of writing a Literature Review to be daunting. This is because of the amount of reading required and the prospect of analyzing the main concepts and synthesizing the major findings of previous research studies. Supervisors and academic committees will urge students to read, read and read some more. We endorse this advice strongly, because the strength of a Literature Review rests on the amount and quality of up-to-date and relevant information you have at your fingertips (Baumeister, 2013). You may then shape this information into a compelling Literature Review that supports your research question(s) and research objectives, justifies the thrust of your research and communicates a problem that is relevant and significant (Torraco, 2005).

A Literature Review, therefore, is the synthesis of the solid evidence that you present to your examiners and readers to support the validity and

significance of your research (Feak & Swales, 2009). There are no easy ways to cut corners in seeking out relevant information and the necessary reading, analyzing and synthesizing what you have read must be done before you begin writing your Literature Review. Keeping up to date is necessary, as changes occur at a fast pace in the social sciences. You may approach your Literature Review with these three suggested steps: **1) thinking like an investigator; 2) bringing together evidence for an argument; and 3) shaping your Literature Review to support your research.** We will share with you how to complete these steps in the next three sub-sections of this Chapter.

Thinking like an investigator

What does an investigator do? Basically, an investigator seeks out the relevant information to put together a strong case for a point of view. As you read your materials, you will notice, first, that particular findings and results have a specific significance for your research. Second, other findings and results may not have a direct significance for your research, but may support the argument for the research. Third, some reading will produce absolutely nothing in relation to your research. So, when you come across relevant findings and results, such as in the first two categories, you may begin to piece them together to form a strong case for your research. Keep the information you find that falls into the third category as a reference for future research you may want to do.

Thinking like an investigator helps you continuously to be curious to find something new or to prove a point. You also need to mention evidence that does not support, indeed, contradicts your viewpoint in order to demonstrate that you are **balanced** in the investigation of your research problem. Once you have found an interesting piece of evidence, you use it to strengthen your case.

Bringing together an argument

To put together a strong case, you need to bring the evidence together to show a comprehensive picture of the current situation of research evidence in your chosen field. This comprehensive picture takes into consideration all of the evidence that you have found, including evidence that both supports and does not support your research question. This step demonstrates that you possess **objectivity** as a scholar and that your arguments take into account both the positive and negative evidence for your position on the topic. When you bring together all of the facts,

generalizations and theories you have gathered from your reading, you have to use it to form an argument that is academically interesting. The example below summarizes what we mean by a balanced argument based on the available evidence:

While scholars A, B and C state that sexual harassment is linked directly to cultural perceptions of masculinity, scholars X, Y and Z disagree and state that sexual harassment arises out of cultural perceptions of power and economic viability. While both sets of scholars disagree, all the research cited above suggests that there is more than one dimension to the study of sexual harassment. Therefore, the idea of research on sexual harassment from a multidimensional standpoint is important to social scientists. Furthermore, this multidimensional approach will be adopted in this research study.

Shaping your Literature Review to support your research

You have done your investigatory work and brought together an argument. Now, the question arises: “SO WHAT?”. The next step is shaping your Literature Review to support your research findings. This means, not only using the findings that support your viewpoint and acknowledging the evidence that does not support it, but it also means not taking a **biased** view of the information you have gathered and, instead, choosing only the information that supports your research; and it does **not** mean manipulating the writing of other scholars to support your research. Biased writing misrepresents the evidence to support a particular viewpoint. What it does mean is that you have to present an objective and balanced view of the relevant literature to create a strong background and firm foundation for your research.

How do you go about writing a balanced review of literature? We would like to give you five suggestions on how to go about this process:

Suggestion #1: Categorization of information

First, categorize your information. Take a **macro** or “big picture” view of all the information you have gathered and categorize this information. For example, if your research area involves the issue of poor nutrition within your home nation, you could possibly sort the gathered information you may have found into the categories of definitions of nutrition, sub-populations who gain enough nutrition, sub-populations that do not gain enough nutrition, impacts of poor nutrition, benefits of good

nutrition and causes of poor nutrition. Also, in each category, you would have sub-categories; for example, several specific benefits of good nutrition.

Once you have completed this task, you will clearly see that your categorization allows you to arrange the information you have found in a logical way to support your research findings. This is done by arranging the information in a systematic way, so that it moves from generalities to the finer details. You have basically taken the information you have gained in preparing for your Literature Review and filtered it through a sifting funnel to sharpen your argument.

This means, for example, that you move from definitions of nutrition (and its sub-categories), to benefits of good nutrition (and its sub-categories), to causes of poor nutrition (and its sub-categories), and finally to the impacts of poor nutrition (and its sub-categories). You may then choose to show comparative differences in the health of national sub-populations that gain enough nutrition (and sub-categories) and sub-populations that do not gain enough nutrition (and sub-categories). Please examine diagram 5.1 below to see what we mean:

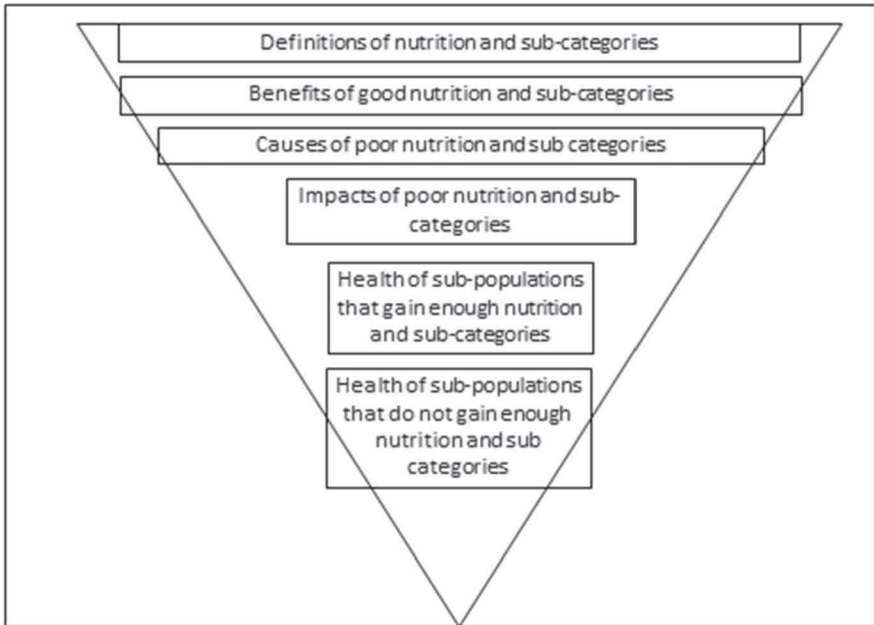


Diagram 5.1. The scope of a Literature Review on the impacts of nutrition on various populations

Suggestion #2: Strive for continuity and connectivity between sections, sub-sections and paragraphs

Continuity and connectivity in your writing are greatly appreciated by your examiners and future readers of your Literature Review. This point is true for your entire dissertation or thesis. As we have mentioned before, bridging sentences in your writing are important to aid this continuity and connectivity. Often, the Literature Review is the longest section of a dissertation and making it an enjoyable read is your responsibility as an author. This means read, re-read and re-read again your writing to make sure there is a good flow of concepts, findings and discussion of different arguments in your writing.

Suggestion #3: Be sure that the information that you have used in your Literature Review is based on facts that are cited and referenced

The writing process for a Literature Review may be an intense one. It may take a lot of time and is going to require a lot of concentration, logic and reasoning skill on your part. As you move forward on this part of your dissertation process, you may get carried away and forget that proper citation and referencing are an essential part of justifying your arguments.

Each statement that is based on the research, findings, writing or report of another scholar must be cited correctly. To fail to do so is considered to be an example of plagiarism. If you cite the research of other scholars correctly and concisely, you will have written a Literature Review that is considered academically acceptable.

While **opinion** does count in scholarly work, **fact** is a much stronger indicator of evidence-based writing and is more respected by your examiners. Keep your Literature Review grounded in recently reported facts, instead of conjecture, suggestion or facts that are outdated. This will ensure that the Literature Review in your dissertation is judged as a work of good academic standing.

Suggestion #4: Write brief summaries at the end of each section

Following this suggestion carries with it several benefits for your Literature Review. First, it allows both you and your reader the opportunity to review your work and focus on the important points. Second, it offers both you and your reader a clear way to digest the information you have just shared. Third, it acts as a bridge to the next section of the Literature Review. Fourth, it crystallizes your thoughts in the writing process. Fifth, it allows you to check your own writing to make sure you are on the right track. These five benefits contribute to making your Literature Review a document that will impress your supervisor and, ultimately, the examining committee, because they are able to see clearly the connections between the sections.

Suggestion #5: Concluding the Literature Review

In the conclusion of your Literature Review, it is a good idea to briefly review the major findings of the most relevant research and how they support the research study on which your dissertation is based. This is a crucial point, as the next Chapter focuses on Research Methodology, where you need to tell your reader WHAT your research is about and the evidence

that it rests on before you move on to discuss HOW you will conduct your research.

A few other tips

First, do not use value-charged or emotional language in your writing. Try to avoid making statements, such as: “*The negative view of Author X shows how lously the situation is managed*”. By using the words “negative” and “lously”, you are presenting your personal bias in your writing. We would like to suggest that this statement may simply be expressed as: “*The view presented by Author X suggests the present management focus of the situation*”.

Second, remember that writing a good dissertation is like good storytelling. That means you have to write in a way that captures the attention and imagination of your reader, whether that reader is an examiner or a future student. So, take your time to review your writing and ask yourself the question, “Does it really tell the story that I want to relate in a way that makes reading it interesting?”. If it does not, take a deep breath and re-write the section or chapter, so that your work becomes the best that it can possibly be, both from a communication perspective and a perspective that is scientifically balanced.

Third, if you are unsure as to how to write a strong Literature Review, the best approach is to seek out the literature reviews in highly respected journals, such as the **Review of Educational Research**, **Sociological Review** or **Psychological Review**. Examples from these three respected journals will help provide you with you a strong guide and also show you the level of quality writing that is expected by your supervisor and examining committee.

In this Chapter, we have outlined the steps in writing a Review of Literature that will gain the approval of your supervisor and examining committee. Follow these steps and you will demonstrate the skills to communicate your knowledge of the latest and most authoritative research and theory in the field of your chosen topic.

Exercise 5.1 Categorization of information

The focus of this exercise is to assist you in categorizing the information you have found in the Review of Literature that you have completed. Let us assume you find five main sections of information and each of these five main sections has three sub-sections. Please look at the box below. We have given you space to write out brief descriptions for these five sections and each of the three sub-sections. Use this exercise to assist you in organizing the information from your review of the literature into clear categories.

1. Main section 1

Sub-section 1.1

Sub-section 1.2

Sub-section 1.3

2. Main section 2

Sub-section 2.1

Sub-section 2.2

Sub-section 2.3

3. Main section 3

Sub-section 3.1

Sub-section 3.2

Sub-section 3.3

4. Main section 4

Sub-section 4.1

Sub-section 4.2

Sub-section 4.3

5. Main section 5

Sub-section 5.1

Sub-section 5.2

Sub-section 5.3

Box 5.1 Categories and sub-categories of a Review of Literature

Note: You may even have a sub-section or two that has sub-sections under them. Remember that writing the Literature Review is NOT confined to a specific formula. Use the tools we are giving you with flexibility to meet the unique needs of your dissertation.

Exercise 5.2 Strive for continuity

As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, continuity is essential in your Literature Review. We would like to suggest the following tips:

- Tip 1: When ending a main section and moving to a sub-section, you may want to use the following sentences:
 - “This section of the Literature Review will move next to the second of three sub-sections.”
 - “In order that this section of the Literature Review be fully explained, the Chapter now moves into the first of three sub-sections.”
- Tip 2: When beginning a new section or sub-section, you may want to consider using the following sentences:
 - “This section/sub-section of the Literature Review will cover the issue of _____.”
 - “As mentioned in the last section/sub-section, this part of the Literature Review focuses on _____.”
 - “This section of the Literature Review is divided into three sub-sections for clarity. These three sections will now be discussed in further detail.”

Please look at the following paragraphs. Decide which of the sentences above may be used to give the statements continuity. There is no correct or incorrect answer. What we would like you to do is to become familiar with using these sentences to give continuity to your writing.

1. Therefore, nutrition, and the lack of it, was a vital missing element of consideration in the development of street children.

This sub-section of the Literature Review dealt directly with the issue of poverty among the transgender community.

2.	“ _____

	_____ . The first of
	these three subsections focused on the need for water
	conservation among indigenous populations.”
3.	“ _____

	_____ . These three subsections are wind erosion, water
	erosion and soil erosion.”

Box 5.2 Examples of sentences that increase the continuity of a Review of Literature

Exercise 5.3 Writing a brief summary at the end of each section.

Writing a brief summary for each section of the Literature Review helps create continuity. We would like to suggest the following tips in writing a summary for each section of the Literature Review.

- Tip 1: Gather the main ideas of each section.
- Tip 2: Reflect on what they mean as a grouping of information.
- Tip 3: Paraphrase your thoughts on how these main ideas contribute to the dissertation.

Below, we would like to offer an exercise that will build your skills in writing summaries for sections of your Literature Review.

1. Write a general statement about what the section of the Literature Review covered.

2. List down the main ideas of the section.

3. Paraphrase your ideas on how these main ideas contribute to the dissertation.

Box 5.3 Writing a summary

Exercise 5.4 Writing a conclusion for the Literature Review

In Exercise 5.3 you gained the experience of writing a brief summary for each section of your Literature Review. In writing your conclusion to your Literature Review, you will use these same skills again, but with a slightly wider coverage.

- Tip 1: Remember that you are writing a conclusion for your entire Literature Review. Therefore, be inclusive of the main points of the sections, as well as the subsections.
- Tip 2: Remain factual.
- Tip 3: Point out how the Literature Review supports your research question(s) and research objectives.
- Tip 4: Bridge the chapter on the Literature Review to the next chapter on research design.

The following exercise will assist you in developing your own skills in writing a conclusion for your Literature Review.

1. Present an overall view of the information that was found in the Literature Review.

2. Highlight five to seven main ideas found in the literature that was reviewed, as well as what each of these five to seven main points indicates in the context of the research question(s).

3. Assert how these suggestions/indications support the research question(s).

4. Build a bridge between the Literature Review Chapter with the Chapter on the Research Methodology of the dissertation. State clearly how the literature that was reviewed and the research methodology will answer the research question(s) and the research objective(s), as well as testing the hypothesis(es) of the research.

Box 5.4 The overall conclusion to the Literature Review chapter

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to approach writing your Literature Review from investigative and argumentative perspectives?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to shape arguments for your dissertation/thesis?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to categorize information in a systematic and organized manner?	

CHAPTER 6

WHAT IS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY?

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Identify and select justifiable choices for the decisions you make in your Research Methodology.
- Select and justify elements in your Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Framework.
- Select and justify choices for the population, sample, sampling methods, parameters, research tools, data evaluation tools and data storage for your research.

We hope that you have now understood the message that your research has to be **unique** or different from other pieces of research. As each scholar is different, so is their individual research. We may argue over a viewpoint, have differing views over a theory or academic guru and we may disagree on the balance of research findings. That is what makes doing research so exciting.

Equally exciting is that no two pieces of research are identical, unless of course they are done repeatedly as part of a longitudinal study with the same sample. Even in this case the two studies are separated in time. As variables are different for each piece of research, as are geographic location and samples, it is important to keep in mind that the research design you create provides the answers you are looking for to your research question(s).

There may be an argument over the use of the terms “research methodology” and “research design”. We will try to clarify the differences between the two terms.

“Research Methodology” *versus* “Research Design”

Most scientific researchers use the term “research methodology” to describe their study’s sample, procedures and the research tools that they use to collect their data, to minimize the risks of tainting their data during its collection and to ensure the scientific validity of their study. While this is also true of the social sciences, the methods used in the social sciences are more geared towards understanding the issues faced by populations or sub-populations of people, as opposed to natural phenomena which may be constant around the world. “Methodology” may also mean whether the research will be conducted inductively, retroductively, deductively or abductively, as we explained in Chapter 4. We encourage you, to have long discussions with your supervisor and research committee to help you to decide on the best methodology to enable you to answer your research questions.

“Research design” presents an array of choices for scholars. These choices should be made in accordance with answering the research question(s) and meeting the objectives of the research. These choices can only be made once a scholar has come to their precise research question(s) and clear research objectives. For example, choices in collecting data from a sample may be done **qualitatively**, **quantitatively**, or by collecting a combination of qualitative and quantitative data (i.e., a **mixed methods** approach). Whether you choose to collect qualitative or quantitative data depends on whether the sample you are collecting data from is easily contactable, available and willing to give you the data you are seeking. More importantly, your choice of research design depends upon the research question(s) you intend to answer. Some fields are well researched and previous studies have suggested that there is a need for more precise quantitative or numerical data to answer your question. In quantitative research, the research design is based on the researcher’s decision to use one or more control groups, as well as a post-test and/or a pre-test to control for the influence of variables that are not being examined. There are many textbooks which explore the issues of quantitative research design in greater detail (e.g., Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Kerlinger and Lee, 1999). On the other hand, some fields of research are less well researched and you are breaking new ground by asking a research question which requires you to collect qualitative or preliminary data before you are ready to collect more precise quantitative data. Another reason for collecting qualitative data is that you want to investigate a case study of a person, school or other

organization in depth without the need to make generalizations from this one case.

Equally important in all research, whether in the social sciences or natural sciences, is the interaction between the **dependent variable** and **independent variables**. This perspective is known as positivism. Briefly, the dependent variable is the outcome that you want to measure, whereas the independent variable is the factor you want to manipulate in order to test whether it has an effect on the outcome or dependent variable. Or you may choose to take an interpretivist view of the research data where you want to seek the lived experience of individuals and again, excellent books are available by other authors, such as Creswell (2014) and Creswell & Creswell (2017), on this issue. We would like to encourage you to read up on research methodology extensively to better understand the distinction between dependent variables and independent variables, as well as the positivist and interpretivist perspectives.

From our experience, social science scholars adopting a qualitative approach to their research prefer to use the term “Research Design” as opposed to “Methodology”. However, whichever one you choose is dependent on you, your supervisor and the requirements of your department, faculty and university. Play by the rules on this one. For the purpose of this book, we will go with the term “research design” (Blaikie, 2007, 2009; Creswell, 1996; Neumann, 2013).

Putting Together a Research Design

Think of research design as a jigsaw puzzle. You have to find all the right pieces and place them in their correct position in order to complete the picture. Similarly, any research design has several elements that have to fit correctly and well together in order to present a complete picture of how your research will be carried out. We would like to map out for you these elements and then give you an example of how these would fit together to answer your research question(s).

Qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods or meta-analysis?

A qualitative research design is defined by providing the answer to the research question through the recorded use of narratives, experiences, discourse, content analysis or the spoken word. While some scholars and critics would claim that qualitative research is more **subjective** than quantitative research, it often provides the foundation for quantitative

research. Furthermore, qualitative researchers argue that, not only is a subjective approach beneficial in gaining the acceptance of the participants in their research study, but also that complete **objectivity** is impossible in the social sciences. Qualitative data are often gathered through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews (KII) or interaction with and observation of the sample in the cases of anthropological or ethnographic studies. Qualitative research sample sizes vary based on the availability of the population, but often data are gathered until the point of data saturation is reached, meaning that no new information is forthcoming from additional interviewees. Often, qualitative research is utilized when the population is difficult to identify, or the participants are afraid of being identified or face stigmatization/social ostracism if they are identified (Berg, Lune & Lune, 2004; Maxwell, 2012; Lewis, 2015; Ritchie, Lewis, Nichol & Ormston, 2013).

Quantitative research is defined as empirical research that provides answers to the research questions by utilizing numbers and statistical analyses of those numbers. Many researchers prefer quantitative research designs, as numbers appear to be more objective and less prone to questioning, either by examiners or publishers of academic journals. Nevertheless, you should be aware of the common statistical saying, **“Garbage in, garbage out”**, meaning that if the data collected are of poor quality, then the results will be useless. Data are usually gathered through a structured questionnaire, either assisted or independently administered, or some other form of systematic observation. Quantitative research in the social sciences typically requires a large sample (anywhere between 500 to 1,000 or even more subjects) to validate the data; therefore, the population from which the sample is drawn has to be easily identifiable and contactable. Please consult any textbook on statistics in the social sciences to obtain the formula for calculating the appropriate sample size for your study (Neuman, 2013).

A meta-analysis in the social sciences may be undertaken when both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered to answer the research question. A meta-analysis is a **secondary** analysis of the findings of previous research studies which are regarded as examples of **primary** research. It usually involves looking for trends in the research findings of hundreds of studies. Both qualitative and quantitative data are compared and contrasted, so that a more definitive answer to the research question may be achieved.

Finally, based on your research questions, a qualitative research study may be conducted first, with the quantitative study to follow, or *vice versa*, in a mixed methods research design. Discuss with your supervisor and/or academic committee which step to take first, so that your research questions are answered completely (Morse, 2003; Brannen, 2017)

Pre-experimental, quasi-experimental and experimental research designs for quantitative research

In the field of quantitative research designs, there is a basic distinction between three types of designs: Pre-experimental, experimental and quasi-experimental research designs. A brief definition and example of each of these three designs appear below:

1. A **Pre-experimental Research Design** is often employed by a researcher who claims it to be a true experiment, but this type of research design fails to meet the criteria of a true experiment. One example of a pre-experimental design is the **one-group pre-test – post-test design**, which lacks a control group to test whether it is really the independent variable that makes a difference to the outcome or dependent variable. A practical example is the teacher who wants to know whether her new curriculum is making a difference to her students' achievement. So, she tries it out with her class, giving them an achievement pre-test before implementing the curriculum and again immediately after the curriculum. She finds a significant improvement in her students' achievement in their post-test scores when compared with their pre-test achievement scores. She concludes that her new curriculum has made a difference in their school achievement. Unfortunately, it may be her enthusiasm for the new curriculum that is making the difference to her students' achievement, rather than the new curriculum itself. Her new curriculum needs to be implemented by many teachers before it can be concluded that it is an improvement on previous curricula and the achievement outcomes compared with other students who undertake the traditional curriculum.
2. A **Quasi-experimental Research Design** tries to overcome the problems of not being able to randomly assign students to the experimental and control groups by **matching** two groups of students, so that they are as similar as possible on the pre-test before administering the independent variable or treatment. The treatment in our example above is the new curriculum and the teacher may try it out with a class of matched students, based on

their previous achievement in this subject. She gives her traditional curriculum to the second, matched class, and records whether there is a significant achievement post-test difference between the two classes after teaching them their respective curriculum. This type of research design is an improvement over a pre-experimental design and is useful when it is impossible to randomly allocate students to the new and old curriculum. Most school principals would not allow students to be randomly allocated to classes, but they may allow the ability-grouping matching process to go ahead in order for the post-test comparisons to be made between the two classes. If there is a significant difference between the two groups, whose pre-test achievement scores are not significantly different, then this is **suggestive** evidence in favour of the new curriculum's achievement advantage over the traditional curriculum. Nevertheless, the relative improvement of the experimental group over the control group would need to be repeated over many classrooms in diverse communities before a positive conclusion as to its achievement advantage is proclaimed. In addition to this achievement advantage, it would have to be checked whether time and other resource advantages are also achieved by the new curriculum.

3. An **Experimental Research Design** uses the process of **random allocation** of students to the control group and the experimental group to minimize the chances that pre-existing differences between the two groups make a difference to the effect of the independent variable or treatment on the dependent variable. A typical true experiment in the area of curriculum reform would be for multiple classes to be taught the new or old curriculum. The students have been randomly allocated into classes that are randomly allocated to those teachers who teach the new or traditional curriculum to their class in order to learn whether the new curriculum is superior to the old one in terms of increased student achievement in the field of the curriculum. So long as it is just as efficient, or even more efficient, than the traditional curriculum in terms of its use of resources, such as time and materials costs, then this is strong evidence that the new curriculum is an improvement over the traditional curriculum and, therefore, should be seriously considered to be implemented.

It is important for you to be aware of these distinctions before you decide which type of **quantitative research design** is most appropriate for answering your research question (Creswell, 1996).

Significance, Research Question, Research Objectives, Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

We have already discussed significance, research question and research objectives in Chapter 4. The reason we raise them again here is that there is the possibility that your supervisor and/or academic committee may want you to place these elements in your Chapter on research design, or may want you to reiterate these topics briefly in order to re-accustom the reader with your earlier Chapter. Please discuss this in greater detail with your supervisor and/or research committee and also check with the guidelines for dissertation writing of your faculty and university.

We want to remind you of the necessity of including your theoretical framework and conceptual framework that are crucial for any dissertation. We again provide the following brief explanations for both concepts below:

A **theoretical framework** is a theory or a combination of theories through which your data will be interpreted. The theoretical framework is the element that sets a dissertation apart from a report. In order to develop a strong theoretical framework, you will have to read extensively about the theories in your area of research, as well as have several discussions with your supervisor.

A **conceptual framework** defines and explains the concepts that you will use in your dissertation. This is necessary, as you cannot expect everyone to understand a concept the same way you do. You will need to make clear if there are varying definitions of the major concepts you will be researching and give a reasoned choice of how you will be defining your major concepts in your thesis or dissertation. Additionally, you need to read intensively to understand what a concept means. An example we would like to give is the concept of “poverty”. What does “poverty” mean? Many authors and scholars have defined poverty differently. It is your task as a researcher to read the work of these authors and scholars, to choose elements from each of these definitions or to merge these definitions into a working concept for your conceptual framework.

Sampling

Getting the right people to respond to your research instrument(s) is vital. Without these data you will not move any further in your research. In the social sciences, the individual who provides you with data is called a participant or respondent, while the group of people who provide you with data are called the sample. You may get your data through four main routes: **random sampling**, **purposive sampling**, utilizing the **snowball technique** or **stratified sampling**.

Random sampling is the preferred method when your research question is applicable to most members of the population you are interested in studying. You may want to generalize or apply your findings from the sample from whom you collect your data to other samples of the same population. Often a survey or questionnaire is used (more on this point in the section on research tools) to gather the data. The use of random sampling is possible when you have a smaller range of parameters or variables to consider. For example, if you are doing a piece of research about the relationship between school attendance rate in the education system of your home nation and its impact on national language use or the literacy level, you will find that random sampling is easy to conduct and will give you the most accurate overall picture needed to answer your research question. You could use a table of random numbers to select a sample that is representative of the general population of school students. Random sampling does **not** mean that you stand in a mall or on the street and approach a certain number of people to request them to answer your questionnaire. This is an example of haphazard or convenience sampling, rather than random sampling. This is the approach generally taken by journalists who want a quick reaction to their research question. The responses they receive may be highly unrepresentative of the general population. Their report may mislead the viewing public about the issue being dealt with on the evening TV news or in newspapers. This may be one example of “fake news”.

However, if your research question can be answered only from data from a select population you may want to use **purposive sampling**. Purposive sampling is often used in qualitative research when the individuals needed to provide the data meet strict criteria. An example of purposive sampling is if your research is attempting to understand the psychological impact of illegal abortions on teenage females. This cuts down your sample size as you have: 1) basically cut down the general population of women to a select few; 2) not all teenage females have had an abortion, illegal or otherwise; 3) few of the teenage females who have had

an illegal abortion may be willing to talk about it for fear of repercussions from their family or from other members of society; 4) it would be difficult to contact them, as they are not easily identifiable; and 5) you would have to go through the steps of informed consent and other pre-data collection steps before you can begin collecting the data. Purposive sampling is acceptable when you can justify a good reason for it, such as one of the five above reasons.

The **snowball technique** is most often applied when you need specific data sets and you get them through a network of people who are able to give you a recommendation to approach the next respondent or create a network for you where you can make contact with the next participant. Again, you will be working with strict parameters for eligibility. Perhaps your research question is based on the topic of recovering alcoholics. As this is a somewhat sensitive issue in the Asian culture, recovering alcoholics may not be so eager to be identified. You may need to make the right contacts to get in touch with one recovering alcoholic to be your first respondent and then ask him or her to get in touch with other recovering alcoholics to ask if any of them would be willing to be a participant in your research study. The number of respondents then grows from that initial contact.

Stratified sampling is most common when you are doing a comparative piece of research. It allows you to gain data from people of specified different backgrounds and then compare their answers to the same situation. Let us say, for example, that your home nation has just implemented a value added tax (VAT) or an equivalent tax, such as a goods and services tax (GST). You may want to seek out how people from different socio-economic strata of society cope with this addition to their expenses. You may want to then gather data (either qualitatively or quantitatively) from respondents who may be classified into upper income, middle income, and lower income groups. The data they provide you with will answer your research question from a comparative standpoint.

On the point of sample size, it depends on the route you choose to take. If you are taking the quantitative route, check the mathematical formula you are using to determine the exact number of respondents you need in order for the formula to give you a reliable and valid result (Neuman, 2013). If you are using qualitative research to answer your research question, you may have to interview the same respondent more than once and the number of participants in your sample depends on when you hit the point of data saturation. As we stated earlier in this Chapter, data saturation

means you are learning nothing more that is new from your respondents and are quite certain that adding more numbers of respondents will not gain you any new information.

As you can see, how you go about choosing your sample of respondents is entirely up to your research question. Have a discussion with your supervisor and/or academic committee to decide the most appropriate path for your research (Blaikie, 2009).

Common parameters or variables in social science research

Interacting with people in social science research is what makes the field so interesting, the more so as you prepare your research design and challenge yourself to map out the parameters of eligibility of your respondents. In this section we will share with you some common parameters or criteria of eligibility in social science research. This list is by no means comprehensive, but it will give you an idea of what are the basics to start looking out for.

Age parameter: If you are looking for respondents who are teenagers, then your age parameter would be between thirteen and nineteen. If you are looking for respondents who are young adults then that age range may be wider. If you are looking for middle-aged respondents, be sure to define what you mean by “middle-age” in your proposal and also be extra sensitive when referring to the respondent as middle aged when you collect data from them. The one critical ethical element that you must be doubly sure of in this parameter is the legal age of consent to participate in research. If the age of consent in your home nation is eighteen and you are doing your research on teenagers who are younger than eighteen, then formal consent from a parent or guardian is necessary.

Educational parameters: Education is a popular area of research and sometimes it is closely tied in with other variables, such as employment. State clearly what are the parameters of education. Should your respondents at least have a high school diploma, or, minimally, an undergraduate degree? If you are researching issues in higher education you may want to have respondents who, at a minimum, possess a Masters degree. Or conversely, would your respondents only have had completed an elementary education as their highest educational qualification if you are focusing on job eligibility? Again, specify the detailed parameters or criteria for sample selection, based on your research question and be able to justify the reason(s) for this choice.

Parameters based on physical conditions: Is your interest in cultural perceptions of people with disabilities or the education of children who have special needs? Define and explain this variable clearly and in detail in your writing. Do not assume that you do not have to specify the precise definition if you are writing a dissertation on persons with disabilities and your supervisor is an expert in the area of people with disabilities. Explain clearly what extent of physical or mental disabilities would qualify someone or their family/caregivers to be a respondent.

Parameters based on financial conditions: What sort of financial conditions would make a person an eligible participant? Would they have to be unemployed? A self-made millionaire? A retiree who is living on a pension? Again, your decision to select or not to select someone for your sample is based on your research question, and be sure to clearly outline the parameter in a transparent way, so that any researcher who wants to replicate or build on your research has no doubts as to how you defined your parameters or variables.

Parameters based on religious or political affiliations: Part of the beauty of the Asian region is its great diversity of religious practices. However, it is important to note that religions have restrictions placed on their adherents. You must be sensitive to this when you are defining this variable. If your research has to do with converts to a particular religion, you need to be specific with this criterion. Should your respondents be part of any particular political party or have any specific political affiliation that would give you the data you need to answer your research question? Consider both of these issues carefully and sensitively when you decide on your parameters. Be sure of your categorization. For example, a “priest” is not the same as a “pastor” or a “monk” in various religions.

Parameters based on cultural/ethnic/gender identity: Cultural identity, ethnic identity and increasingly gender identity are popular topics for research. When you write out your parameters be sure to be specific. For example, a man who has sex with men (MSM) does not fall into the category of gay men, but a gay man does fall into the category of men who have sex with men (MSM). Additionally, a transvestite does not fall into the same category as a transgender person.

Geographic parameters: You need to consider this parameter if your problem is specific to a location. In fact, it is essential to state a geographic location, as without it you may steer away from the focus of your problem. For example, if your research is on dengue fever in urban

areas, you may run the risk of going into semi-rural areas to look for respondents and data. If you are focusing on the criminal behavior of street gangs, it would be important to state that you are focusing on a geographic area where these gangs operate. Should your research be focused on disaster relief, you may decide on a specific location that has recently experienced a devastating flood, earthquake or typhoon. Finally, geographic parameters may be also delineated by profession or employment, for example, sex work or farming.

Research Tools

Your research tool will be scrutinized by your supervisor and examining committee for its applicability or relevance to answering your research question(s). It may be a survey, a questionnaire, a list of interview questions or a combination of any of these three instruments, depending on the research study you are conducting. We would like to suggest three things to do when developing your research tools.

First, refer to your research question and research objectives often when developing your research tool(s). It will have to be a valid measure of the variable you want to measure in order to answer your research questions. Of course, you may adopt the research tool of another successful scholar, and this happens often in academic endeavors. But, try to challenge yourself to develop your own tool if there is no suitable instrument available, as this adds to your growth as a scholar.

Second, try your research tool or instrument out in a pilot study. It is best to test out your research instrument with a small group of respondents who meet your criteria of eligibility. They will be the best judge of the feasibility of your research tool and you will be able to judge the effectiveness of the research tool based on their answers or responses, especially if you interview them as to their interpretation of the meaning of your questions. This allows you to re-shape, modify and change questions that do not serve the purpose of your research.

Third, realize that you will go through several drafts of the research tool before coming up with the final draft to be used. As you go through this process, seek the advice of your supervisor and/or your academic committee. Having the input of more experienced individuals will assist you in the development of your research tool. Full details of your research tool or instrument will be required to be submitted to your institution's ethics committee for approval before you administer it, so that you will need to

include a copy in your ethics application, together with any **validity** and **reliability** data you have collected for your research tool. This process is relatively simple if the research tool has been used with samples that are similar to your own, but may require you to collect valid and reliable data from a sample similar to the one you intend to use in your study to demonstrate that your instrument is a valid and reliable one for your research purposes.

If, however, after discussions with your supervisor and/or academic committee, you have come to the decision to use the research tool of another author, be sure to acknowledge that you are doing so. Also, be able to justify why you have made this choice and how it will answer your research question and meet your research objectives.

Data evaluation tool

What is the tool you will use to analyze your data? Will you be employing statistical software, such as the widely used computer-based Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), or will you be using a content analysis matrix? Be clear on this point, as it will help you focus and also be sure you have a means of analyzing your data. The rule of thumb here is to ask the questions: "Which data evaluation tool will help me best analyze my data, provide the answer to my research question, and cause the least margin of error?". Once you can be sure of these answers then you have found your data evaluation tool.

Data storage

This is a sensitive issue, as often in the social sciences we deal with the private lives of people and their personal experience. You should show how their privacy and security will be maintained, as well as how the confidentiality of the information they have shared will be kept. You may choose to use encryption, secure online data storage or the old-fashioned lock-and-key method to store their data. Whatever your options and whatever the advice from your supervisor and/or academic committee, do remember to mention it in your dissertation proposal, your ethics application and in the dissertation itself.

Ethical Review

What is the purpose of an ethical review? Basically, an ethical review board or ethical review committee makes sure that you are not

contravening any ethical standards (whether universal or particular to your university) in your research. These ethical standards have to do with the rights, privacy, security and confidentiality of information shared by the respondents. Often, an ethical review board or ethical review committee will make sure that your means of gaining signed and informed consent from your respondents is sound. This takes the shape of a consent form. You may access a standard example from the body that oversees graduate studies of your university.

Another purpose of an ethical review is to meet university requirements. Universities will do this as a matter of quality assurance. To meet these requirements, you may have to revise your consent form or tackle any other constructive criticism that is given to you in the ethical review.

Finally, having an ethical review serves you well as a scholar, as you may use some of the data you have collected to write research papers for publication. This is an important process, as all academic journals of high ranking require an ethical approval process to be carried out on any research to make it publishable and you would already have passed this hurdle. Remember that no data may be collected until the ethical review process is complete and approved by your university's ethical review committee.

Putting it all together

As promised at the start of this Chapter, we will now outline an example of how you put together a research design. For this, the example we are going to use is comparative perceptions of the harm of cigarette smoking between smokers and non-smokers. The research objectives are to analyze different perceptions of smoking tobacco between smokers and non-smokers and to identify biased perceptions of tobacco smoking and harm between these two groups. The significance of the problem is that there is an increasing incidence of cardio-pulmonary diseases, emphysema and oral-pharyngeal diseases occurring within the productive portion of the population and your research would assist in demystifying the perceptions of harm of smoking tobacco through policy advocacy based on the evidence gained from the perceptions of smokers.

You then have two populations to obtain data from here: smokers and non-smokers. Two important points: whether you will be conducting a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods or meta-analysis research study; and what characteristics qualify a potential respondent to be a smoker and

what characteristics qualify someone as a non-smoker. You may state your research problem as follows:

As non-smokers and smokers of tobacco are easily identifiable and easily reached for data collection, this research will use a quantitative research design to gain quantifiable data from potential respondents via the use of a self-administered questionnaire. Equal numbers of both non-smokers and smokers of tobacco will be utilized for this research to gain both a balanced amount of potentially differing data, as well as meeting the criteria for use of quantitative formula X. As the research objectives point towards analyzing different and biased perceptions of the harm of tobacco smoking, qualitative research will also be utilized to gain in-depth data on the perceptions of the harm of smoking tobacco between smokers and non-smokers of tobacco. Comparison of the quantitative data and the qualitative data will enable a mixed methods study of the perceptions of harm that may be confirmatory or non-confirmatory of smoking tobacco.

Non-smokers will be defined as individuals who have not smoked tobacco in their lives. This definition is gained from the literature on the works of Author A (Year), Author B (Year) and Author C (Year). Smokers will be defined as individuals who have smoked tobacco products for more than three months, as research has found that, statistically, after three months of smoking tobacco an individual has developed an addiction to the nicotine produced in cigarette smoking (Author D, Year; Author E, Year; Author F, Year). Smokers who have stopped smoking will not be considered eligible for this research, based on the abovementioned definitions.

Next, note down the sampling method that you will be utilizing. Looking at your research question, you may use random sampling to collect your quantitative data. After all, you may want to generalize your findings from your sample to the population of smokers and non-smokers in your home nation. However, please remember that you will also be utilizing in-depth data for your comparative meta-analysis research. So, you need to specify how you will gain these samples.

Random sampling will be utilized for the quantitative portion of the research, whereas purposive sampling, as well as the snowball technique, will be utilized for the qualitative portion of data collection.

Note down all the parameters you want to use. First, let us say your home nation forbids the selling of tobacco to those below the age of 18, so parameter one is smokers and non-smokers above 18 years of age. Second,

your research does not factor in the level of education in the perceived biases, so note that respondents of different education levels will be eligible to participate in your research. Third, parameters of physical conditions take into consideration if the respondent is already a smoker or not, and, as either one category would fit into your research, you could say that the physical parameter is both smokers and non-smokers of tobacco. Financial parameter would not be considered, as it has no bearing on the research. This is also true of religious and political affiliations, cultural identity, ethnic identity and gender identity. In terms of the geographic parameter you may want to qualify your research by stating that it will be conducted in a city where the number of smokers of tobacco is high and also where reported cardio-pulmonary diseases, emphysema and oral-pharyngeal incidents are high.

Now, you can write it down as follows:

Eligibility for respondents to participate in the quantitative portion of the research would be smokers and non-smokers of tobacco who are above the legal age of 18. Respondents must self-identify as being either a smoker or non-smoker, but not an ex-smoker. No educational level parameter will be considered in the eligibility of respondents. No financial, ethnic, cultural identity, gender identity, religious or political parameters are specified for eligibility to participate in this study. Participants need to reside in the city of P and not be a visitor, tourist or transient person in the city.

Participants of the qualitative part of the research will meet identical selection criteria with the addition of being willing to allocate time to participate three times in a 2-hour long Focus Group Discussion.

Next, state the research tools and data evaluation tools you will be using. You may choose to place them under different sub-headings, if that is the advice of your supervisor and/or academic committee.

Quantitative data will be collected using a questionnaire that contains 30 questions graded on a five-point Likert scale (i.e., responses on a scale from "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Undecided", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree"). The questions in the questionnaire are based on the perception of harm of smoking tobacco. The full questionnaire may be viewed in Appendix A. The qualitative part of data collection will be based on a semi-structured interview with a selected group of volunteers from the original sample. The questions for the semi-structured interview are included in Appendix B.

An important point: Please remember to identify and include any appendices that you have noted in the text of your dissertation.

Now you should state how the data will be evaluated and stored.

All quantitative data will be analyzed using mathematical formula XYZ in keeping with the focus of the research question. Analysis will focus on the perceived bias between smokers and non-smokers on tobacco smoking. An X% of numerical value will be sought for confirming the perception of harm of smoking tobacco among smokers and non-smokers of tobacco. Qualitative data will be audio recorded and transcribed into written text. The written text will be analyzed using a content analysis matrix for perceptual bias, as based on the writing of Author G (Year).

All data from the self-administered survey will be stored in the computer of the researcher and will be encrypted for protection with a secure password. After three months, all hard copies of the survey will be destroyed for security reasons. All personal information of respondents in the Focus Group Discussion will be protected through the use of pseudonyms chosen by the respondents themselves. The pseudonym should have no direct identification with their personal identity. All contact information of the participants in the Focus Group Discussion will be stored and encrypted. All written contact information will be destroyed three months after the completion of the research study.

Next, mention the review of the ethics committee or ethics board of your committee. Include the date when it was approved by the ethics committee or board and also that your consent form, appearing as Appendix C, was approved by the ethics board or ethics committee. Additionally, you may add that all respondents signed the consent form and were allowed to discontinue as a participant in the research study if they chose to do so. This point is standard for most (if not all) consent forms.

Approval for this research was received by the Ethics Committee of University ABC on the 19th of May 2015; this includes the consent for the use of the consent form which is attached as Appendix C. All participants in the Focus Group Discussion will be asked to sign the consent form as informed consent to participate in the research and will be notified that they may choose to leave the research at any time.

Strive for smooth transitions between all these elements of research design. The example above that we have shared with you is by no

means exhaustive. As we said at the beginning of this Chapter, each research study is unique and you will go through the process of drafting and re-drafting the research methodology after many discussions and reviews with your supervisor and/or academic committee. After your dissertation proposal has been approved by your academic committee and the research study has been carried out, you will need to change the tense of your research proposal from **future tense** to **past tense** in the final dissertation.

Tips for navigating the potential potholes

Make it a point to proofread your work continuously. Read and re-read your work to make sure you have not missed an important point or that you have not made a typing error. When you believe you have not made any mistakes, take the extra measure of asking a peer, friend, spouse or partner to read your work. A fresh pair of eyes will assist you in maintaining quality in your work. While a friend or partner's comments on your writing may be useful in a general way, a peer who is also a student in your field will be more helpful if they give constructive comments on your technical writing.

Another common mistake is becoming excited about a research design because it seems flawless. However, if the design does not match your research question, research objectives or sample, then it would cause you difficulties with your supervisor and examining committee. Be critical of your own research design.

Please be aware that your research design has to be consistent with your research question, research objectives, theoretical framework and conceptual framework. If the research design does not fit well with the other parts of your dissertation writing, then you will need to re-evaluate and re-work your research design.

It is good to have strict selection criteria for your sample, as well as a clearly delineated geographic location. But, do not have sampling parameters that are too restrictive or too vague as this will not lead you far down the research path. Also, a geographic location that is not representative of your population or research area would not give you the answer you need to your research question if you want to generalize your results from the sample you have chosen to a general population of similar people.

Most importantly, do not try to bypass the ethics committee or ethics board of your university and begin your fieldwork without their

approval. This is a **no-no** in dissertation writing. We could tell you a couple of disaster stories on this theme, but we will hold back and, instead, emphasize the importance of getting the approval of the ethics committee or ethics board of your university to give credibility and integrity to your research.

In Summary

In conclusion, in this Chapter we have focused on the importance, indeed the necessity, of your choosing a clear and precise research design for your research study. Your research design translates your research question(s) and research objectives into the type of empirical study that will allow you, not only to answer your research question(s), but also to make an original contribution to our knowledge in your field of research.

3. Write a statement that forms a bridge between the paragraph 2 above and the next paragraph in your Methodology chapter.

“ _____

_____”

Box 6.1 Ways of expressing your focus on answering the Research Question(s) and Objectives

Step 2. State the study’s research approach: quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods or meta-analysis. Write this in the box below.

1. “The research will employ a _____ research methodology.

2. Provide two reasons to justify this choice.

a. _____

b. _____

Box 6.2 Stating and justifying your choice of research methodology

Step 3. If the research is a quantitative one, state clearly if it is pre-experimental research, quasi-experimental research or experimental research. Write this in the box below.

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. "This research will employ a _____ research design.2. Provide two reasons for this choice.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. _____ _____ _____ _____b. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Box 6.3 Stating a quantitative research design

Step 4. Reiterate the significance of the problem.

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The purposes of choosing this type of design will be to answer the Research Question(s) and to demonstrate that this is a significant problem whose solution will make an important contribution to our knowledge of _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Box 6.4 Reiterate the significance of the problem

Step 5. State the Theoretical Framework you are using and justify your choice of theories.

1. State the theory or theories that are used in the Theoretical Framework.

(add appropriate citations).

2. Provide three justifications for this choice of theory or theories. These justifications should explain how the theories will be used to interpret the data, be tied into the research of the dissertation and how the theories will provide depth to the analysis of the data.

- a.

- b.

- c.

Box 6.5 Theoretical rationale of the study

Step 6. Explain the Conceptual Framework that the research will utilize.

1. Name, define and explain the first concept.

(add citations)

2. Name, define and explain the second concept.

(add citations)

3. Name, define and explain the third concept.

(add citations)

4. Name, define and explain the fourth concept.

(add citations)

5. Explain how these concepts are connected with each other.

3. State the sample size that will be used.

4. Provide two justifications for the sample size that will be used.

a.

b.

Box 6.7 Steps in choosing a sample

Step 8. List and justify the parameters used for the research. These are called the independent variables in quantitative research designs.

1. Age (in years)

2. Provide two justifications for age of the sample.

a.

b.

3. Education (highest qualification)

4. Provide two justifications for the educational level of the sample.

a.

b.

5. Physical conditions (if applicable to the research)

6. Provide two justifications for the physical conditions of the sample.

a.

b.

7. Financial considerations of the sample (if applicable to your research)

8. Provide two justifications for any financial considerations of the sample.

a.

b.

9. Religious and/or political affiliations of the sample.

10. Provide two justifications for the religious and/or political affiliations of the sample.

a. _____

b. _____

11. Culture/ethnicity/gender identity of the sample.

12. Provide two justifications for the culture/ethnicity/gender identity of the sample.

a. _____

b. _____

Note: These parameters are dependent on the research questions to be answered.

Box 6.8 The parameters or independent variables of the study

Step 9. Research Tool(s)

1. State the type of Research Tool(s) or test instruments to be used for the research.

2. Provide the necessary details of each Research Tool(s). We have provided space for three necessary details below.

- a.

- b.

- c.

3. Provide two justifications for the use of the Research Tool(s)

- a.

- b.

Note: You may expand on the number of necessary details here, based on your research study.

Box 6.9 Stating and justifying your choice of Research Tool(s)

10. Data Evaluation Tool(s).

1. State the type of Data Evaluation Tool(s) used for the research.

2. Provide the necessary details of the Data Evaluation Tool(s). We have provided space for three necessary details below.

a.

b.

c.

3. Provide two justifications for the use of the Data Evaluation Tool(s).

a.

- b. _____

Note: You may expand on the number of necessary details based on the research.

Box 6.10 Stating and justifying your choice of Data Evaluation Tool(s)

11. Data storage

1. State how the data of the research was stored.

2. Explain why this type of data storage was used.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

Note: You may expand on the number of necessary details based on the research.

Box 6.11 Data storage details

12. State clearly that the research received the approval of the Ethics Committee of the university. State also that a copy of the approval letter may be found in the Appendix of the dissertation.

1. “The research received the approval of the Ethics Committee of Y University _____ on the _____ (date).
2. A copy of the approval letter may be found in Appendix _____.
3. State any additional information that is important to verify the approval of the Ethics Committee of the university for the research.

Box 6.12 Ethics approval

Exercise 6.2 Reflection

Reflect on the Research Methodology that you have created. Ask yourself the following questions:

- a. Will this Research Methodology allow me to answer the Research Question(s)?
- b. Will this Research Methodology achieve the Research Objectives?
- c. Is there a better choice of Research Methodology? Would this better choice add to the quality of the research?
- d. Is the Theoretical Framework appropriate for the research? Would a different Theoretical Framework add to the quality of the research?
- e. Is the Conceptual Framework constructed and explained clearly? How may the Conceptual Framework be made stronger?
- f. Is the sample chosen appropriate? Would a change of sample result in better quality data?
- g. Is the sample size large enough? Should a larger or smaller sample size be considered?
- h. Have the parameters of the research been clearly defined? Are there parameters that should be added or subtracted to raise the quality of the data?
- i. Is/are the Research Tool(s) appropriate for gathering the data needed to answer the Research Question? Would a different Research tool(s) be more effective?
- j. Is/are the Data Evaluation Tool(s) appropriate for analysis of the data? Would a different Data Evaluation Tool(s) be more effective?
- k. Is the data storage method secure enough? How can the level of security be raised for data storage?

Exercise 6.3 Discussion

Discuss with your Supervisor the strengths and weaknesses of your Research Methodology. Be open to feedback, changes and amendments. Ask your supervisor:

- a. If your Research Methodology is strong enough?
- b. If your Research Methodology can be made better?
- c. If your Research Methodology is appropriate to your research question?

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

• Are you able to identify and justify your decisions for your Research Methodology?	
• Are you able to select and justify elements in your Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Framework?	
• Are you able to select and justify choices for the population, sample, sampling methods, parameters, research tool(s), data evaluation tool(s) and data storage for your research?	

CHAPTER 7

DEFENDING YOUR PROPOSAL

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Recognize different strategies to prepare for your proposal defence.
- Manage questions and criticisms of your research proposal.

We admit that the last Chapter was a complex one. The good news is that this Chapter will not be such heavy reading. In fact, it consists mainly of tips to assist you in preparing for the defense of your dissertation proposal. A quick note: you may be wondering where this term “dissertation proposal defense” has come from. Basically, your dissertation proposal is comprised of the first three chapters of your dissertation: the Introduction, the Literature Review and the Research Methodology/Research Design of your study.

Your proposal will have to be submitted to your academic committee in order to go through the due process of your formally defending your proposal in front of an audience. Universities vary in terms of the audience that is allowed to attend your dissertation proposal defense. Some universities open a defense to the general public. Others restrict it to the academic staff and students of the faculty. Others make it smaller and keep it to the members of your academic committee.

Proposals are judged based on the strength of the arguments put forth in the Introduction, the truthfulness, depth and justification provided in the Literature Review and the appropriateness and validity of the Research Design. In a nutshell, it means that you have identified a significant problem that needs an answer, provided strong justification based on the findings and theories put forward by past scholars and have

designed the research so that it will give you the answer(s) to the problem you are attempting to solve.

We will assume that you have already written your Introduction, Review of Literature and Research Design chapters. We will also assume that you have written several drafts of these three Chapters, that you and your supervisor and/or academic committee have had detailed discussions about your work, that you have caught the loopholes in your basic arguments and amended these loopholes accordingly, and that you are confident in the work you have produced. With these assumptions in mind, we would like to share with you the following guidelines.

Ask your adviser/supervisor to review your proposal before you submit it in order to receive general comments about its readiness for submission

It is fair to say that we go into social science research with some assumptions. Do not, however, assume that your proposal is ready for submission before you get the green light from your supervisor. This is a matter of simple professional courtesy and also of common sense. It is simple professional courtesy, because your supervisor has guided you and should be given the due respect of being consulted before you take this next step in your academic journey. It is common sense, because, frankly, at this point in your academic journey your supervisor can gauge better than you your readiness to defend your dissertation proposal, as well as the quality of your proposal. Do not jump the gun. Take a deep breath and check with your supervisor that you are ready to pull the trigger.

Bureaucracy

In all universities there is bureaucratic red tape involved in preparing for a dissertation proposal defense. The bureaucratic process may take time. As excited (or apprehensive) as you may be about defending your dissertation proposal, it is good to be patient. Do what you have to do in terms of preparing documents, getting the necessary signatures and making any necessary logistical arrangements. This will most likely include submission of a number of hard copies or soft copies of your proposal to the right department, getting your supervisor and/or members of your academic committee to sign forms, stating that you are ready to defend your proposal and, in the case of some universities, paying a fee for this part of your academic journey. A good rule of thumb is to find out what are the proper

channels to follow and just go with the flow. Fighting bureaucracy is a losing battle. A university administrator, whose job it is to arrange these meetings, will inform you of a date, time and venue for your proposal defense.

It is also good to find out what are the requirements for your dissertation proposal defense. Do you need to prepare a PowerPoint slide presentation of your work? What is the amount of time allotted for the presentation? What will be the time allotment for the actual process of defending your proposal? Ask your supervisor as many questions that come to your mind. Leave nothing to chance. Never assume what the defense is going to be like. If possible, attend the dissertation proposal defense of as many other students, especially in your field, as you can. This will give you a better idea of what to expect at your proposal defense meeting. If the proposal defense meeting is restricted to the student and his/her academic committee, then ask as many students who have completed their proposal defense as possible in order to “pick their brains” to find out what happened and what questions they were asked by the academic committee.

Preparing copies of your proposal

Very briefly, watch out for spelling errors, as well as grammatical errors, as you prepare copies of your dissertation proposal. While most writing software is good, these computer programs are not infallible. You may want to say “country”, but may have mis-typed in “count”, and the software will not detect that this is a mistake. Proofread your proposal until you are sure it is as mistake free as possible. Ask a trusted colleague/peer to read it for an independent assessment.

One of the wonderful things about growing up in Asia is that you possibly speak not just one language, but maybe two or three. Remember that sometimes the same word in the English language is used in your other languages, but with a different spelling. One of us made that mistake and it was an embarrassment at the dissertation proposal defense. We are not going to tell you which one of us, but we think you can guess.

Compose at least ten possible questions that you may be asked

This is a good strategy to use in your preparation. **Put yourself in the shoes of your audience.** What will they possibly not understand? What will they most likely question? What would the obvious questions be? What points are they most likely to ask you to elaborate? Tips on how to manage questions that we can share with you are:

- Look for the obvious questions. Prepare your answers to be straightforward and concise. This will demonstrate to your audience that you have a solid grip on your work.
- Be objective about your work and step out of your comfort zone. Look at your work from the standpoint of an outsider. What will not be clear to you if you were looking at the dissertation proposal for the first time? Ask these questions and prepare answers that will clearly explain to your audience the thrust of your research.
- Face it for what it is, and question your justifications. Audience members will be critical and raise arguments against your work. Remember that this is not a personal attack on you, it is just part of the process. Your examining committee members need to be reassured that you have considered all the important research studies on your topic, and other possible research designs to answer your research question(s). Critique and argue against your own work. Then prepare answers that will lay to rest any possible argument against your dissertation proposal. If you have not considered the implications of one question, be honest to admit that you have not thought of this point, but that you would welcome any suggestions on how to improve your proposal or study.

It would be impossible to gauge exactly what will be the questions your audience will direct at you. That is why you will also need to mentally prepare yourself for the dissertation proposal defense.

Mental preparation

The day before your dissertation proposal defense, take some time out for yourself. Take a walk or engage in some form of physical activity. Whatever you choose to engage in, make it an activity that calms your mind. Look at it this way: you have already submitted your work. You cannot

change anything now. Be at peace with that. Get a good night's sleep and be refreshed and mentally prepared to defend your proposal.

Criticism and suggestions

After you have presented your dissertation proposal you need to have with you three things: a tablet or paper to write on, a pen and a thick skin. As the questions come to you from your audience you will find many useful suggestions and additions to strengthen your research. Write these down and take the time later to seriously consider these suggestions. One useful strategy is to ask a friend in the same field or a student peer to attend your oral defense in order to write down notes and questions asked of you for later inspection. Sometimes, you are so busy thinking of an appropriate answer to a question that you may miss an important aspect of it. To be able to go back later and check these notes may make your writing up of the changes recommended by your examining committee a lot easier. Criticism will also be part of the barrage of questions you will face. These criticisms are not personal, but they will hurt your professional ego. You will need to be thick skinned enough to face these criticisms, not take them personally, be professional to give a reasoned response and not take anything to heart. Most importantly, keep calm and write notes to yourself about the important points of your answer to a particular question. You might also want to write down suggestions made by individual members of your examining committee for later consideration.

The most valuable lessons you can take from the criticism and suggestions offered to you at your dissertation proposal defense is one of humility, and also the advice that your supervisor will give you in shaping and solidifying your ideas for your research. Take all the suggestions and criticism, couple them with the guidance of your supervisor and proceed to the next step of your academic journey (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Grant & Tomal, 2012; Roberts, 2010).

Exercise 7.1 Discussion with your supervisor

It is a good idea to set up an appointment with your supervisor a month before your proposal defense. This gives you time to make changes and amendments based on the feedback and critique of your supervisor. During this discussion, ask your supervisor the following suggested questions:

1. Is the statement of the problem in the Research Proposal strong enough to warrant the research?
2. Is the direction of the Research Question stated clearly enough?
3. Do the Research Objectives further refine and clarify the Research Question?
4. Have all the elements of the Conceptual Framework been clearly explained, cited and referenced?
5. Do all the elements of the Conceptual Framework connect well with each other?
6. Is the Theoretical Framework presented clearly?
7. Is the Theoretical Framework appropriate for the research?
8. Are all the sources of the Conceptual Framework cited and referenced correctly?
9. Does the information gathered in the Literature Review support the problem statement?
10. Is the Literature Review organized cohesively?
11. Are there any sections of the Literature Review that require more information and references to support your argument?
12. Are all the sources in the Literature Review cited and referenced correctly?
13. Is the choice of research methodology appropriate for the research?
14. Is the sampling method appropriate for the research?
15. Are there other variables that need to be considered?
16. Is the Research Design compatible with the Research Question and Research Objectives?

Take a lot of notes in your discussion with your supervisor, and make the necessary changes.

Exercise 7.2 Composing seven possible questions to be asked at the Proposal Defense.

As mentioned in the Chapter, preparation of possible questions will help you prepare for questioning at your proposal defense. The following exercise will assist you in this process. Please read the question, reflect, and compose **three** potential answers to the question. The reason we ask you to compose three possible answers is because you need to consider several alternative answers before you decide on which one answers the question most clearly and appropriately.

1. What are the main concepts used in the research and why were these concepts chosen?

- i.

- ii.

- iii.

2. What other choices of theories could have been used for the Theoretical Framework, and why did you not use these other theories?

- i.

- ii.

iii.

3. Is the sample chosen the only population that is affected by the issue?

i.

ii.

iii.

4. What are the relevant and justifiable reasons for choosing this topic of research?

i.

ii.

iii.

5. What are the expected outcomes and recommendations from this research?

i.

ii.

iii.

6. What is the gap in information that this research would fill?

i.

ii.

iii.

7. What new knowledge will this research contribute to this field or discipline?

i.

ii.

iii.

Box 7.1 Seven possible proposal oral defense questions and your answers to them

You may notice that the questions get progressively more challenging to answer, but we have ordered them this way to ease you into the process. Please do not rush through the process. Take your time and this will bring a lot of benefit to you.

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

<div>• Are you able to utilize different strategies to prepare for your proposal defense?</div>	
<div>• Are you able prepare and manage questions for your proposal defense?</div>	
<div>• Are you able to manage criticism and use the criticism to make your research proposal stronger?</div>	

CHAPTER 8

GETTING THE FIELDWORK DONE

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Deal with common issues in data collection.
- Plan the logistics of your data collection.
- Build rapport with your participants.
- Prepare a checklist for your data collection.

Data collecting can be the most challenging part of your academic journey towards completing a dissertation. It is also one of the most rewarding and uplifting parts of the journey. In this concise Chapter, we will not go into any anecdotes, neither will we take a stern tone. What we would like to do is to simply point out a few things that will make this part of the academic journey more valuable for you.

Data collection

You will be flushed with excitement as you begin your fieldwork. We would like to share a few thoughts on how to get through this exciting part of your academic journey successfully and professionally.

Focus

As you collect your data, especially qualitative data, it can be easy to get very excited about your findings and to go off on a tangent that is not directly related to answering your research question. In order to avoid this happening to you, you need to stay aware of what is happening in your interaction with your participants. When in doubt, go back to your research question, and then the individual questions in your research tool to give yourself that focus. If you are collecting your data quantitatively in, for example, a survey questionnaire, then, as you interact with your participants,

you need to give them the space to answer the questions as they would want to and not influence them by saying anything that may prejudice their choice(s).

Dealing with distractions

Secondly, distractions will emerge during your data collection. Be aware of these distractions and do not get swallowed up by them or allow them to divert you. A common type of distraction is becoming emotionally involved with the participants as they share with you their experiences, and this is especially true in qualitative research. Another common distraction is finding yourself reacting negatively to the responses from the participants, because they disagree with your prediction. In both cases, you need to practice **reflexivity**. Reflexivity is a mixture of professionalism, objectivity and detachment from your participants. This does not mean you are aloof or distant from your participants. Rather, you retain your rapport (more on this concept later in this Chapter) with the participant, but do not respond emotionally to their responses. Reflexivity also means not biasing the responses you get with your own views, expectations or personal feelings.

Integrity of data

With your data collection you should also maintain integrity with your sample and the information/data that you are collecting. It is often tempting when you are going through the data collection process to bypass a parameter or two. Let us say your sample is drawn from the population of 1st year college students and one of your participants brings along a friend who is a 2nd year college student to the interview. It would be tempting to include the 2nd year college student in your sample. It could also be a case of your participant giving you ambivalent answers and you being tempted to interpret the data to fit your research assumptions. In either case, we would like to suggest very strongly that you follow through with your data collection with the highest standards of honesty and integrity. In case your “detours” are found out by your supervisor or examining committee, it would be a disaster for you. If these “detours” are not found out, you would always question the validity of your own work. Take that pressure off yourself and maintain the highest standards of academic rigor throughout your academic journey.

Logistics

Collecting your data successfully requires professional coordination of resources, efficient organization and time management skills. Having the positive attitude of understanding that people will be sharing with you the precious commodity of their time and of realizing that you have time limitations will also assist you in this part of your academic journey. You can make the most of the time and resources you have by thorough planning of the logistics of your data collection. Here are some tips:

Pre-plan travel logistics

If you have to travel any distance to get to your fieldwork site, take into consideration travel time, as well as possible traffic problems. Do factor in travel delays, cancelled flights, trains and buses into your timing. If you are travelling within your own city/town of residence to collect your data, be sure to make allowances for any delay in travel. If you have to stay for an extended period of time, be sure you have your accommodation pre-booked, or if you are being hosted it would be a simple courtesy to send your host a polite reminder a week before your arrival.

Pre-plan sites for surveys

If you are utilizing a survey as a research tool and plan to be in a public place to distribute these surveys and collect them after being completed, be sure to pre-plan the site. Just a thought: if your research has to do with the spending behaviors of teenage schoolgirls' post-implementation of a value added tax (VAT), you would be most likely looking for them to fill out a survey in a shopping mall. The most likely time when this sample of respondents would be at a mall would be after school hours or on the weekends. It would be futile to be in a shopping mall at 10am on a Wednesday morning and expect to complete a lot of surveys.

Make appointments

If you intend to conduct one-on-one interviews or focus group discussions you would do well to make an appointment and stick to the appointment. Change the appointment only if it is unavoidable for you or if the participant requests a postponement. Share with your participant your contact information and request that they share theirs with you in case either of you needs to change an appointment day or time.

Punctuality is essential when keeping appointments, as it gives your participants confidence in your reliability. Nevertheless, be on the cautious side and plan to arrive at least fifteen minutes before the appointed time. This allows you a little “wriggle room” for timing and also time to make your own preparations. If you have told the participant that the survey, interview or focus group discussion will take an hour, be sure to manage your time so that you meet this time requirement. It would be unprofessional to extend the time as your participants may have other appointments. If the survey, interview or focus group discussion runs over the time specified and you still have a lot of questions to ask, request for a second round of questioning from the participants. Do your best to be professional and not assume that the participants are so engrossed in your work that their personal time is yours for the taking. Be professional, be respectful and be aware of the time you are using for your data collection.

Get security clearance

By security here we mean both your safety and the safety requirements of the venue where you are collecting your data. Let us say your research is on sex workers and you need to interview sex workers in their workplace. You would do well to have a letter from your university/faculty/department to state clearly that you are a scholar collecting data for a dissertation. This will help you avoid any legal entanglements if law enforcement officers show up at the venue. You do not want to be arrested due to a misunderstanding of your intentions.

Public places are great for collecting survey information, but if you step into private property, such as a shopping mall, a supermarket or any other privately-owned venue, you should get security clearance and permission from the owner to collect your data there. A simple phone call to begin the process would be great, followed by a request in writing and then waiting for a response in writing, approving your request. If they do not approve your request, do not nag them for permission. You may have to re-negotiate with your supervisor a change in the venue to collect your data.

Building Rapport

Simply put, “rapport” is building a connection of trust and openness with the people who are the participants in your research study. It is also the ability to put another person at ease and to open up lines of communication. In the process of collecting your fieldwork data you will need the cooperation of your participants, as well as the gatekeepers to your

participants. Without rapport you will find it difficult to obtain permission to meet with participants, to collect completed surveys at public places and to have your participants give you accurate and honest information. On the other hand, if you successfully build rapport with your participants and their gatekeepers, you will find that you are able to gain insight and information that will not only answer your research question, but also take your findings to a higher level to explain the relationships between your variables (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007).

Please look at these two examples:

Example A: You rush into the home of your participant. You introduce yourself as a student of University XYZ. You fire off the questions in your research tool. You collect the data and you leave.

Example B: You allow yourself to be introduced to your participant by a gatekeeper. You greet your participant politely, with a genuine smile and warmth. You ask for permission to enter the home of your participant. You follow the Asian cultural value of removing your shoes before you enter the home. You respectfully ask if you may sit down. If you are offered something to drink, whether you choose to accept or decline, do so respectfully. Introduce yourself by name and the name of the university you are studying at. Tell your participant a little bit about yourself, for example, the name of the city/town/province you are from and ask your participant where they are from; share with them a commonality like your appreciation for the culinary specialties of the city/town/province that the participant is living in and ask if they also enjoy such food; perhaps you may also share with your participant some views about the weather. The point of this introduction is to create a sense of commonality that will thin the barriers that stand between you and your participant. Take a little time to do so, maybe five to ten minutes. When you feel a certain sense of comfort from your participant, introduce the topic of your research and ask if they have any questions about your research. Answer their questions and only begin asking the questions in your research tool when you have received their signed consent forms.

Between the two examples above, which one do you think will yield more information that is open and accurate? We would go with Example B, because it illustrates the importance of building rapport between the researcher and his/her participants. The key points in building rapport are approaching your respondent with respect and humility, building on commonalities and reducing any apprehension that the respondent may

have. Also, remember that you may have to make more than one visit to get all the information you need, so create a bond of trust that will allow you to make these subsequent visits.

Equipment

It may seem like common sense, but be sure to have a notebook (electronic, as well as the old-fashioned one) with you, as well as pens/pencils that are in working condition, so that you may take a lot of notes easily during fieldwork. If you are using a recording device make sure the battery is fully charged and that you bring along the battery charger. Also, be sure to ask the participant for permission to record conversations before switching your recorder on. If you have surveys to give out, be sure that you also have clipboards and enough pens/pencils for the use of your participants. Increasingly, surveys are being administered electronically. So, make sure that your computer/tablet is fully charged before you leave home and that you can access the survey quickly for each participant to complete.

We have mentioned some basic equipment above. Your research may require more equipment or detailed use of the equipment. A good rule of thumb to have is create a checklist and go down that list to make sure you have every piece of equipment you need before embarking on your fieldwork.

Necessary paperwork

You will obviously need to bring enough copies of your consent forms, as well as your research tool (whether it be a survey, a questionnaire or your list of structured or semi-structured interview questions). Participants may ask to see a form of identification from you, so bring a copy of your ID, student ID or passport. We have been in the position where the participant has asked to see a copy of the research approval letter from the university's ethics committee, so it is a good idea to bring a certified copy of the official letter.

A quick hint

Whether your research is qualitative or quantitative it is a good idea to keep a diary or a log book of every day that is spent in the field in order to aid your memory of the events that occurred. It is also a good idea to go

over your diary entries as soon as possible after the interview or data collection is finished, in order to remind you of any unplanned event that occurred, any question asked by your participants or notes that you jotted down to highlight any quote that may be useful to include in your Results Chapter. For example, it may have been something that your participant said in an interview that you would like to use to illustrate a significant finding.

In Summary

Your fieldwork or data collection phase of your research is an extremely important part of your research and writing for your dissertation. Not only are you gathering evidence that may or may not support your predictions and/or hypotheses, but you may also chance upon some unexpected findings that enrich your dissertation with an original contribution to our knowledge of your field. This possibility makes this an exciting event to keep yourself mindful of the unexpected, as well as the opportunity to gather evidence to confirm your initial hunches.

Exercise 8.1 Fieldwork checklist

We would like to suggest that you examine and use the following checklist as you prepare for your fieldwork. You may add or subtract items as needed for your fieldwork.

1. Ethics approval received?
☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Planning of travel logistics completed?
☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Planning of fieldwork site completed?
☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Appointments confirmed?
☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Security clearance received?
☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Necessary paperwork?
☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Equipment
 - i. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - ii. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - iii. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - iv. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - v. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - vi. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - vii. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - viii. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - ix. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No
 - x. _____
☐ Yes ☐ No

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you better prepared to deal with common issues in data collection?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to plan the logistics of your data collection?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to utilize skills in communication in building rapport with your respondents/participants?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to prepare a quick checklist for your data collection?	

CHAPTER 9

SIFTING THROUGH THE INFORMATION: YOUR RESULTS OR FINDINGS

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Utilize your Research Question and Research Objectives as the guideline for your data analysis.
- Sift through, organize and structure your Findings systematically.
- Present unexpected findings.

Reaching the point where you have all the data you need to answer your research question is a huge relief. At this point in your journey, you are now ready to analyze your data and answer your research question, assuming that you have done a thorough job of getting all the necessary data you need. Before you proceed, it is a good idea to take stock of your data to make sure you have: (a) the necessary amount of clean and relevant data, if you are approaching your research question from a quantitative perspective; (b) reached the point of data saturation, if you are approaching your research from a qualitative perspective; and (c) have answers to all of your questions from all your participants, whether you are approaching your research question from a quantitative or qualitative perspective. If you are satisfied that you have been thorough with your data collection, then you may proceed to the next step: data analysis.

Analyzing quantitative data

As mentioned in Chapter 6, quantitative research is based on the analysis of numbers according to a statistical/mathematical formula. You should then crunch your numbers (meaning putting the collected data through the statistical formula) and base your analysis on the results of

applying the pre-set statistical formula. This pre-set statistical formula is the data analysis tool that you have chosen and stated in your Research Design Chapter. The numbers you get at the end of the analysis will show whether or not there is a statistical significance to the questions you have asked in your research tool. The statistical significance of these questions will partly answer your research question. The other question you have to answer is: “Are my results contributing to a **practical** significance?” (Blaikie, 2003). For example, in a study of educational achievement, the girls in the sample have scored, on average, three points higher than the boys. This difference may be a statistically significant result, but is it of practical usefulness to their teachers? You will need to refer to previous research on your topic, as well as advice from your supervisor in order to answer this question.

Analyzing qualitative data

Qualitative data is steeped in richness of meaning and experience (Gibbs, 2018). If you have set out to audio-record the experience of your participants through focus group discussions, key participant interviews or one-on-one interviews, you would then have the task of transcribing all of these recordings. In terms of time consumption, you would need approximately three hours of transcribing for every one hour of audio-recorded interview. This estimate is based on our experience. Once you have transcribed your data you may begin your analysis, using the data analysis tool you have chosen. Is it a content analysis? Is it a qualitative data matrix? Or have you chosen to use software packages, such as SPSS™, and have pre-coded responses before you began your data collection process? Be thorough in your analysis and be prepared to justify your choice of analytic technique. Is it the most appropriate way of analyzing your data in order to answer your research question?

Guidelines for data analysis

In the vast quantity of data that you have collected, you may become lost as to how you should approach presenting your data analysis. We would like to offer some guidelines as to how to make your data presentation engaging and well-organized.

What is the compass?

When you are overwhelmed with so much data that are compelling, the most effective way of selecting the data for inclusion and presentation

in the Results Chapter is to go back to your research question and research objectives. The research question and research objectives are your compass. Which data answer your research question and meet your research objectives? Which data are extraneous or less relevant? With your research question and research objectives as the compass you can be selective of the findings that you present. However, academic work requires objectivity and in this selection process you must be able to present a balanced view. By including the data that contradict the thrust of your research, you present an objective view and earn yourself the distinction of being an objective scholar. Your examining committee will also be impressed!

Organizing your findings

You have a lot of data to deal with now. The next guideline we would offer is to organize your data carefully and clearly, and the following guidelines will assist you in this process:

1. **Clean up your data.** Take a metaphorical broom and clean out anything that does not immediately answer your research question or meet your research objectives. Be critical and remove any of your own emotional responses to the data. Remove questions that are repetitive, unless they were placed there in order to get a sequential standard of responses from your participants. Do away with data that are compelling, but would be better saved for a separate research paper. Cleaning up will give you a clearer view of your data and allow you to write a focused Results Chapter.
2. **Categorize your data.**
 - a. You may choose to categorize your data thematically. This simply means if a great number of your respondents in a quantitative study have answered “education” as the best means to combat poverty, then “education” is one category; or if your respondents in a qualitative study of perceptions of sex work have responded by saying it has a negative impact on the societal view of women in your home nation, then the negative perception is a category. While these may seem to be a majority *versus* minority response, it thematically shows where the bulk of responses are.

- b. You may also categorize your data from high to low priority in terms of the research question and research objectives that you have laid out in your Research Design Chapter. High priority means that you should present this finding first and in great detail. Medium priority means you can present this finding next and in not so much detail. Low priority means you may choose to present this finding last and with little detail. Again, priority is given to data that answer your research question and meet your research objectives.
 - c. Interesting and unexpected findings will also crop up in your data collection. *We will deal with this issue in more detail at the end of this Chapter.*
3. **Systematically present your findings.** After you have cleaned up and categorized your data, go back to your research question and your research objectives. Use these as a compass to give a general answer to the research question. For example:

The research findings on the perceptions of society of sex workers both supported and partially rejected the hypothesis presented by the researcher. In general, the results showed that, while respondents perceive sex workers as part of the issue of vice in the nation, they also accept that they are unable to effectively understand all the issues that push young men and women into sex work.

Next, move to the key findings of your research that answer your research question and meet your research objectives. Present these concisely and accurately, as this will immediately engage your examiners and readers in the significance of your research work. For example:

The data show that while society perceives sex workers as a key element that exacerbates vice in the city (coefficient of XYZ1), theft and homicide are viewed as contributing more to the issue of vice in the city (coefficient of XYZ2 and XYZ3). Additionally, the data show that while sex work is negatively perceived as a co-issue with other forms of vice, such as extortion and human trafficking (coefficient XYZ4 and coefficient XYZ5), it is accepted as part of the socio-cultural norms of the home nation (coefficient XYZ6).

Then, systematically state how your research findings answer your first research objective, then your second, then your third and so forth. For example:

The first research objective was aimed at analyzing the perceptions of society at large of sex workers in the city. The analysis of the data demonstrates that society views sex workers as part of the vice issue in the city. The analysis also shows that while sex workers aid in the growing rate of vice in the city, sex workers are seen as part of the problem and not the source of vice. Deeper analysis of the data also shows that, as sex workers are not the source of the vice in the city, they are deemed as either a symptom or a by-product of the present level of vice in the city.

You then continue with the other research objectives, of course in far more detail and with far more evidence than we have given in the example above.

At the end of the Chapter on your research findings you can make a point of summarizing the key findings of your research again.

4. **Include diagrams, tables and charts.** Diagrams, tables and charts are important visual stimuli to highlight your findings. They give the reader a concise summary of the important aspects of your data. Very simply, follow the rules of the writing style you are using (e.g., APA, MLA, Cambridge, Harvard) when you present diagrams, tables and charts. Each writing style has rules about how these may be presented. To avoid unnecessary revisions, stick to the rules. It is most important that you refer to these diagrams, tables and charts in the text of your Results Chapter and point out to the reader what are the significant features of that diagram, table or chart. We have observed too many students who simply include this feature without highlighting the specific detail of the diagram, table or chart and how it contributes to their findings.

A couple of points to note at this juncture: First, the structure or sections of your Chapter on Research Findings will be the result of continuous discussions with your supervisor and/or academic committee, based on the merit of the findings in your data collection. Flexibility and patience will go a long way in assisting you in this part of the process. Second, revisions are inevitable in the dissertation writing process. Take this in your stride and be disciplined about getting the revisions done. Do not be harsh and berate yourself unnecessarily.

Unexpected findings

A quick note on unexpected findings: sometimes it is almost serendipitous (i.e., seemingly by chance) that you stumble across findings that are extraordinary in your fieldwork; sometimes the findings are completely unexpected. Include serendipitous and unexpected findings into the categorization and systematic presentation of your findings, if they are pertinent to answering your research question and meeting your research objectives. If they are not pertinent to answering your research question or meeting the research objectives you have identified, you may put them down under a separate heading, such as “Unexpected Findings”, if you consider that they are relevant to your area of research. Discuss this possibility with your supervisor and/or academic committee.

In Summary

In this Chapter we have outlined the key features of presenting your findings, both major and minor, in a way that engages the interest of your dissertation readers (Swales & Feake, 2004). Remember to keep in focus at all times the importance of answering your research question and meeting your research objectives. The structure of your Results Chapter will vary according to your faculty guidelines and your supervisor’s advice, but you have the final say in how you will communicate the original contribution to knowledge that you have made in your research study.

Exercise 9.1 Systematically presenting the Research Findings

As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, Research Findings need to be presented systematically in order to include all your main and unexpected results and to impress your examiners. The exercises below will assist you in developing skills to present your Findings systematically.

- Tip 1: Always refer to the facts in your Findings. Do not give a personal opinion on these facts.
- Tip 2: Constantly re-check your Findings for confirmation that they are an accurate representation of your data.

Step 1. Begin with an introduction.

1. State what the Main Findings of the research are.

2. State briefly the Findings that answer the Research Question(s) and meet the Research Objectives.

3. State briefly the Findings that are unexpected.

Box 9.1 Introduction to presenting your main and unexpected Research Findings

Step 2. Categorization of Findings into Main Findings and Sub-Findings.

- Tip 1: State only the Findings. Your interpretation and opinion will be voiced later, in the Discussion Chapter.
- Tip 2: Use your skills in categorizing information. You learned these skills in Exercises 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.
- Tip 3: Include as much detail as possible of the Findings that are relevant to answering the research question(s) and meeting the research objectives. Please remember not to put every piece of data that you have found in your research into your Findings Chapter, especially if it is not significant. The only exception to this rule is that you must mention a non-significant Finding after testing one of your hypotheses.
- Note: This exercise will be based on five Main Findings and with each Finding having three Sub-Findings.

1. Main Finding 1

Sub-Finding 1.1

Sub-Finding 1.2

Sub-Finding 1.3

2. Main Finding 2

Sub-Finding 2.1

Sub-Finding 2.2

Sub-Finding 2.3

3. Main Finding 3

Sub-Finding 3.1

Sub-Finding 3.2

Sub-Finding 3.3

4. Main Finding 4

Sub-Finding 4.1

Sub-Finding 4.2	

Box 9.2 Categorization of five Main Findings and Sub-Findings

Step 3. Report any unexpected Findings.

- Tip 1: Focus on the unexpected Findings that are important.
- Tip 2: Do not place any irrelevant data in this section.
- NOTE: The exercise below is based on two unexpected Findings with each having a Sub-Finding.

1. Unexpected Finding 1

2. Sub-Finding 1.1

3. Unexpected Finding 2

4. Sub-Finding 2.1

Box 9.3 Categorization of Unexpected Findings and Sub-Findings

Step 4. Writing a conclusion for the Findings Chapter.

- Tip 1: Remember that you are writing a conclusion for your Findings. Therefore, be inclusive of the main Findings, as well as the Sub-Findings.
- Tip 2: Bridge the chapter on the Findings to the Discussion Chapter.
- Tip 3: Remain factual. Do not provide your opinion until the next chapter which is Discussion.
- NOTE: You have learned these skills already in Exercise 5.4.

1. Give an overall review of the Main Findings and Sub-Findings of the research.

2. Highlight the main ideas of the Findings that are directly related to answering the Research Question(s).

3. Highlight how the Findings meet the Research Objectives of the dissertation.

[illegible]

4. Build a bridge between the chapter on the Findings with the Discussion Chapter of the dissertation.

[illegible]

Box 9.4 Conclusion for the Findings Chapter

Exercise 9.2 Reflection

1. Reflect on your Findings and make any necessary changes to this Chapter. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - a. Does the arrangement of the categorization of the Findings answer the Research Question(s)?
 - b. Does the arrangement of the categorization of the Findings achieve the Research Objectives?
 - c. Are any of the Findings reported unnecessary in terms of answering the Research Question(s) and achieving the Research Objectives?
 - d. Are there any Findings that are missing from the text?

Exercise 9.3 Discussion

Discuss with your supervisor the following issues:

- a. Does the arrangement of the categorization of the Findings answer the Research Question(s) clearly?
- b. Does the arrangement of the categorization of the Findings achieve the Research Objectives?
- c. Further advice and feedback to raise the quality of the Findings Chapter.

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

• Are you able to utilize your Research Question and Research Objectives as a guideline in analyzing your data?	
• Are you able to sift through your Findings systematically?	
• Are you able to organize your Findings systematically?	
• Are you able to structure your Findings systematically?	
• Are you able to present unexpected findings?	

CHAPTER 10

YOUR VOICE: PRESENTING YOUR DISCUSSION

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this Chapter you will be able to:

- Synthesize your data/findings.
- State the implications of your findings in terms of theoretical, policy and practical implications.
- State the recommendations of your research based on your data findings.
- Clearly state and write out the limitations of your research.
- Provide suggestions for future research based on your Findings.

The Discussion section of your dissertation is the Chapter where you can speak truly from your own voice and share with your readers your thoughts, interpretations of your data analysis and supported opinions on the topic you have researched. For many scholars it is the most liberating Chapter to write, because, while you have certain boundaries to work within, this is also when your scholarly aptitude truly comes to the fore. How do you go about this? Let us guide you through these steps.

Synthesizing the Data

Picture this. All of the information you have in your Introduction Chapter, and your Literature Review Chapter, the information you have stated in your Research Design Chapter and in your Results Chapter are the different ingredients to make a cake. The Discussion Chapter is where you combine all these ingredients to present a delicious end-result. There are several parts to this delicious end-result. Let us take it step-by-step.

What do the findings mean through the lens of the theoretical framework?

Your findings have a certain meaning. For example, you may have found that 60% of migrant workers in your home nation are infected with malaria. On its own, this result is interesting, but, within a dissertation what does it mean when viewed through the lens of your theoretical framework? Let us say that you are studying malaria among migrants through the theoretical lens of medical anthropology. How do the findings on the percentage of migrant workers in your home nation who are infected with malaria have a deeper meaning when viewed through the lens of medical anthropology?

A more detailed example we can share with you is one where a student was studying the habit of betel-nut chewing in her home country. Her fieldwork showed that 90% of men who were from the lower-income strata of her home nation chewed betel-nut and this practice potentially led to their getting oral cancer. However, she made the findings have a deeper meaning when she argued her points using gender theories of masculinity, and that betel-nut chewing was part of the cultural structure of masculinity in her home nation, and that, in trying to meet the cultural definitions of masculinity, these men were placing themselves at higher risk of contracting oral cancer. She then moved on to argue that if cultural definitions of masculinity could be co-opted into policy and education materials to state that masculine men had the power to quit betel-nut chewing, there would be a greater chance of success in reducing oral cancer in her home nation.

Discussing your findings through the theoretical lens that you have chosen for your research is vital for your dissertation to differentiate itself from other dissertations and research reports. It will take a lot of work on your part to analyze, reflect and write up your findings through your theoretical lens. However, it is necessary to do so. This is the foundation of postgraduate research.

How do the data answer the research question and meet the research objectives?

As you write your Discussion Chapter, ask yourself if your discussion or **interpretation** of your findings has answered your research question. If it has not, then you have to go back to reanalyze your data and view them through the theoretical lens you have chosen. It is not uncommon for initial drafts of the Discussion Chapter to go off on a tangent or to diverge from the initial mission set by the research question. Ask also if you

have met your research objectives or has your discussion of your research findings diverged from the research objectives?

Work closely with your supervisor and/or academic committee to ensure that your Discussion has answered the research question and met the research objectives. It may go through several drafts, but, as we mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, if you keep referring to your research question and research objectives and use these as your compass you will maintain your focus on the target.

What are the implications of your findings?

Implications may be divided into theoretical, policy and practical implications.

- i) **Theoretical implications:** It is time again to ask yourself again the question “So What?”. The answers you discover from asking yourself this question will help you to develop the implications of your findings, as viewed through your theoretical framework. Take your time in this analysis, as the deeper and more focused you become with the implications of your findings, the more valuable your dissertation becomes. Based on the above example of research on betel-nut chewing, the following theoretical implication may be drawn:

The theory of masculinity-femininity predicts that if “masculinity” is redefined for this nation in terms of resistance to betel-nut chewing, then it will result in a drastic reduction in the rate of oral cancer among men.

- ii) **Policy implications:** If you have conducted your dissertation research on condom use among HIV sero-discordant heterosexual couples and found that condom use has reduced the rate of infection to the HIV-partner, it would be a shallow waste to merely state that the findings imply that condom use is successful in reducing the HIV infection rate. You could take the analysis of the implications deeper to state:

The data indicate that condom use among HIV sero-discordant heterosexual couples has led to a significant decrease of HIV infection to the HIV-negative partner. The implications of this finding include not only that condom use successfully reduces HIV infection, but also that the

nation's policies on family planning need to be re-evaluated to include HIV education and testing among heterosexual couples who are sexually active. The findings also imply that future HIV education in the nation should focus, not only on most at-risk populations (MARPs), but also on populations that have been deemed low-risk in the past.

- iii) **Practical implications:** An excellent example of a practical implication of the research on family planning is the following:

In Thailand, the former Health Minister Meechai overcame the public's reluctance to discuss condom use for family planning purposes by making it a light-hearted issue and handing out condoms of different colors. You may suggest a practical implication for your nation if your findings indicate that using condoms regularly will reduce the HIV infection rate.

Has(ve) your hypothesis(es) been confirmed or has(ve) your hypothesis(es) not been confirmed?

In this section you should be able to state clearly if the hypothesis(es) you presented before conducting your empirical research has(ve) been confirmed or supported by your data or not confirmed based on the Findings of the research. You should also clearly show how the findings either confirm or reject your hypothesis(es). Also, how have the Findings changed your view of the hypothesis(es), suggesting that more factors should be taken into consideration when conducting research in this area? Furthermore, are there factors that could have been removed from the initial hypothesis(es) and are there implications for the testing of additional hypothesis(es) in future research?

Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

After you have shared the bulk of your discussion as viewed through the theoretical framework, ensured that you have answered your research question and met your research objectives, and have discussed the implications, it is time to make your recommendations, discuss the limitations of your research study, and propose ideas for future research based on your findings. This section of the book will shed some light on these three parts of the dissertation.

Recommendations

Recommendations should be based on the positives that you have found in your findings, gaps in information found, and also the discussion or interpretation of your findings using the theoretical framework. Again, it would be easy to go off on a tangent because of your passion for the subject matter. Keep yourself grounded by constantly referring to your research question, research objectives and to the key findings arising from your data collection and analysis.

In the social sciences, recommendations are usually made in the areas of theory, policy and practice. Your findings and discussion could have implications for the theory you have used as your theoretical framework. It is rare, but every now and then it happens. You may want to argue that theories of masculinity now have to take into consideration the constant barrage of media images that show a more gentle type of man who is still considered masculine and desirable. Your recommendations on policy may be that community-service activities be accepted towards graduation requirements at the college level. Based on your findings you may find that in practice, needle and syringe exchange programs among injecting drug users may be made more efficient through the implementation of drop-in centers in both urban and semi-urban areas. Avoidance of placing drop-in centers in rural areas would be based on evidence that rural attitudes are generally more conservative, so that rural drop-in centers would be less likely to be utilized. Whatever your recommendations may be, it is necessary to stay grounded and make your recommendations workable and feasible.

Some universities may require you to write the recommendations in full paragraphs. Others will allow you to make quick, concise bullet points for your recommendations. Either way, check with the expectations of the university you are registered at and write your recommendations accordingly. We would like to offer examples of both ways in which recommendations can be written.

Full paragraph:

Based on the finding that most teenagers who run away from home have no immediate venue to seek shelter, a recommendation would be to advocate for funding from the Ministry of Women and Children to set up halfway homes to house runaway teenagers. This would assist in stemming

the involvement of runaway teenagers in crime or of being drawn into vice, such as sex work, in order to survive.

Bullet point:

- *To advocate for funds from the Ministry of Women and Children to set up halfway homes to provide shelter to runaway teens.*

Whichever way your recommendations are expressed, it is essential to be clear and concise.

Limitations

In this section, you share with your examiners and readers the limitations you faced when you were conducting your research. Please note, that limitations are not the same as parameters. Parameters were the boundaries you set when you began your research. Limitations were the hurdles, hindrances and challenges you faced when conducting your research.

Did you face difficulty in locating your respondents, because they were so marginalized that they hid themselves so well? Was it difficult to pin down a meeting time with a particular key participant, because she/he was so busy that appointments kept being re-scheduled? Did you meet resistance from your respondents because they were reluctant to share personal and sensitive information? Were legal issues, law enforcement or internal corporate rules a limitation in gathering your data?

Share these experiences in your dissertation. This section on Limitations of your study will add more depth and dimensions to your dissertation, as well as act as an indicator for future scholars of the types of limitations they may expect should they choose to conduct a research project that is similar to yours. An example of writing a limitation is:

The researcher faced the limitation of legal issues in viewing the way that chemotherapy drugs were administered to cancer victims, as this was considered a breach of medical confidentiality. The data, then, are dependent on the self-reported experiences of the respondents of their experience of undergoing chemotherapy and not the direct observation of the researcher, as was initially planned in the research design.

Some students are reluctant to be **frank** or open in discussing the limitations of their study, because they believe that it will reveal weaknesses

in their findings. We urge you to ignore this possibility, because your examining committee will reward your frankness as evidence of honesty and insight, rather than weakness. If you do not mention an obvious limitation, it may well be picked up by a member of your examining committee who will ask you an embarrassing question in your final oral examination.

Future research

Based on your findings and discussion, make four or five plausible and thoughtful suggestions for future research. Again, ground yourself in your findings and your discussion. A good rule of thumb to follow is to suggest future research where there is a dearth of information or data or to suggest future research that is based on a need.

For example, if you have completed your research on addiction to the internet among young adults who are employed in entry-level positions and its impact on their work performance in urban areas of your home nation, you may want to expand on this point based on your findings and discussion. Possible future research could be the impact of addiction to the internet on the family dimension of young adults; internet addiction and impact on romantic relationships among young adults; or internet addiction and impact on effective social interaction among young adults.

Be creative with your ideas, but balance your creativity with judicious amounts of prudence. You may choose to list down future research in both depth and breadth, but shy away from making suggestions for future research by simply switching sub-populations and locations. Question yourself on the value of your future research and keep yourself to high standards. An example of writing out future research could be:

The data indicate that addiction to the internet among young adults is part of the culture of modernization and globalization. Future research on the topic of internet addiction would be to seek the psychological impact of the immediate gratification on young adults in other spheres of their lives. This potentially includes immediate gratification in their social interaction within their immediate peer group who also self-identify as addicted to the internet and immediate gratification, compared with their immediate peer group who do not self-identify as addicted to the internet.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter, it is your voice that counts. Balance that with being grounded and your Discussion Chapter

will be a good experience in academic writing for you. A well-written Discussion Chapter also moves smoothly to the Conclusion of your dissertation, which is the final Chapter.

Exercise 10.1 Findings and the Theoretical Framework

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Findings have to be interpreted by using the Theoretical Framework you chose in order to be worthy of a dissertation. The exercise below will assist you in developing the skill of being able to perform such an interpretation.

Step 1. State the Main Findings

1.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
----	-------------------------------

Box 10.1 Statement of the Main Findings**Step 2. State the interpretation of the Findings using the Theoretical Framework**

2.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
----	-------------------------------------

Box 10.2 Statement of your interpretation of the Findings using the Theoretical Framework

Step 3. State your opinion or your standpoint on this interpretation of the Finding using the Theoretical Framework.

3.	_____

Box 10.3 Statement of your opinion of this interpretation

Step 4. How does this Finding compare to or contrast with the findings of other researchers in this field of study? Does this Finding agree or disagree with the finding of other researchers? Please do note that you may have a Finding that may be compared to or contrast with the findings of more than one researcher. You may show as much of this comparison and contrast as necessary to answer your research question and to achieve your research objectives. Provide the answer in Box 10.4 below.

4.	_____

Box 10.4 Comparison and contrast of the Finding with the work of other researchers

Step 5. How does this interpretation and opinion of the Finding answer the Research Question? Write down your thoughts on this point.

5.	_____

Box 10.5 How the interpretation and your opinion answer the Research Question

Step 6. What does this interpretation and opinion of the Finding imply for the significance of your research topic, meaning, what are the implications of your research? Write down your thoughts on this point.

6.	_____

Box 10.6 Implications for the significance of your research topic

Step 7. Has(ve) your hypothesis(es) been confirmed or has(ve) your hypothesis(es) not been confirmed?

7.	_____

Step 8. Join Steps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 together, and you have written one main point for your Discussion chapter. You will see this clearly by doing the following exercise: Take what you have written in Steps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 and place them in the box below.

1.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
2.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
3.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
4.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
5.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
6.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

7. _____

Box 10.6 Steps in writing your Discussion chapter

Step 9. Repeat this process for each of the main discussion points to be made for the Discussion chapter.

Exercise 10.2 Recommendations

Step 1. Reflect on the Findings of the research.

Step 2. Answer the following questions:

1. Based on the research Findings and the interpretation of the Findings, what changes may be made to present government or private policy to provide a solution to the issue?

2. Based on the research Findings and the interpretation of the Findings, what changes may be made for the sample to provide a solution to the issue?

3. Based on the research Findings and the interpretation of the Findings, what changes may be made for the general public/society to provide a solution to the issue?

4. Based on the research Findings and the interpretation of the Findings, what changes may be made by non-governmental organizations to provide a solution to the issue?

5. Based on the research Findings and the interpretation of the Findings, what changes may be made by governmental institutions to provide a solution to the issue?

Box 10.7 Types of implications of your research Findings

Step 3. List down each of these thoughts and ideas in the Recommendations section of the Discussion Chapter.

Step 4. Review these recommendations to ensure that they are based on your dissertation's Findings and not over-generalized from your sample.

Step 5. Check your writing for correct spelling and grammar.

Exercise 10.3 Limitations

Step 1. Reflect and remember the challenges you faced while collecting your data.

Step 2. List down these limitations.

Step 3. Explain the limitations using the suggested format below. This format will allow you to fully explain the limitation.

<p>1. What was the limitation?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>2. What challenges did the limitation cause to the research?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>3. What would be the suggestion to eradicate or remove this limitation for future research?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Box 10.8 Limitations of your research

Step 4. Repeat Steps 1, 2 and 3 for each limitation on your list.

Exercise 10.4 Findings and Future Research

- Tip 1: Base your suggestions for future research on the Findings of your dissertation. This will ensure you stay focused.

Step 1. Write a list of ideas of future research based on the Findings of your dissertation. Use the box below as a guide.

Idea 1.

Idea 2.

Idea 3.

Idea 4.

Idea 5.

Idea 6.

Note: The number of ideas is a guide. You may exceed six ideas if you have more ideas.

Box 10.9 Suggestions for future research based on your Findings

Step 2. List these ideas in order of importance.

Step 3. Review this list and reflect if these ideas are based on the Findings in your dissertation to avoid being told by your examiners that the suggestions for future research are not connected to your dissertation's findings.

A quick check

• Are you able to write about your Findings and Theoretical Framework?	
• Are you able to write about your Recommendations?	
• Are you able to write about your Limitations?	
• Are you able to write about your Findings and Future Research?	

CHAPTER 11

THE CONCLUSION

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this Chapter you will be able to:

- Provide a brief summary of the research process and the Findings.
- Share your opinion on whether or not the Theoretical Framework used for the research may be challenged.
- Share the implications of your Findings on a particular field of research.
- Write the final remarks for your dissertation/thesis.

As hard as it may be to imagine it, if you are reading this book at the beginning of your academic journey to a dissertation, you will at some point in the near future be writing the conclusion to your dissertation. It will be both an exhilarating and a sad moment: Exhilarating, as you are about to achieve something great; sad, because you are saying goodbye to something that has been such a huge part of your life for the past few years. However, it is necessary to write a conclusion and we would like to share with you some points aimed at improving your final Chapter.

Begin by providing a brief summary of the process and the Findings

It is a good idea at the beginning of your Conclusion Chapter, once again, to tell your examiners and readers of the social scientific process you have gone through and the key findings of your research. Provide the salient points, but do not let the conclusion become long-winded or rambling. For example:

The researcher set out at the beginning of this academic endeavor to identify key barriers to doctor-patient communication that deter more effective use of health services. The key findings of this research demonstrated that joint-decision making, fuller consultation and rapport between doctor and patient were greatly valued by patients; whereas compliance to treatment plans was most valued by doctors. This discrepancy in the needs and values of both groups hindered more effective use of available health services in the greater urban areas of the nation.

You will have to expand the conclusion in greater detail based on your research. Take the process of writing your dissertation as one of adding and, then, subtracting relevant information, and then adding and subtracting relevant information again. A great deal of editing happens throughout the writing of your dissertation, and the conclusion is no exception. You may then join the introductory paragraphs summarizing your research process and major findings, such as the paragraph written above, with the next section on the theoretical framework.

Your view on whether the Theoretical Framework may or may not be challenged based on the Findings

Perhaps the Theoretical Framework you have used for your research is on intergroup communication. You may next want to share your views on how the Theoretical Framework has worked for or against the research question you have dealt with in your research. For example:

Intergroup communication, as explained by Theory ABC and Authors XYZ (year 1, year 2, year 3), notes that, as long as differences in self-perception in terms of status and authority create power differentials between groups, communications would lean towards the more powerful. This denotes that, as the less powerful group, patients would not be in the position to ask for discussion on joint decision making and fuller consultation. The power differential in intergroup communications also solidifies the position of doctors on compliance to treatment plans and does not place an emphasis on more open communication channels. In this, intergroup communication theory has to make more provision for study in power differentials between groups in order to make a more significant contribution to doctor-patient relationships and doctor-patient communication.

Be precise, but brief, as you have already gone into much more depth about the theoretical implications of your findings in the Discussion Chapter.

Implications of the findings for your field of research

The major implications of the findings should be repeated briefly in the conclusion. For example:

The findings, therefore, imply that the quality of doctor-patient communication is neither satisfactory, nor does it meet the needs of either one of the groups. Furthermore, it implies that despite good health services offered to all patients through present policies, the utilization of these health services is impaired due to a lack of communication effectiveness between doctors and patients.

Final remarks

Final remarks should also be made as a means to tie the final knot of the writing. For example:

This dissertation research began with the aim of answering the question of how doctor-patient communications influence the quality of the relationship and the outcomes for patients. The major finding of the research was that there was a discrepancy between the doctor's values and needs and those of their patients. This is a highly significant contribution to knowledge, because it means that public health services are not being delivered in as effective a way as they could be. Optimal communications between doctors and their patients would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health services in this important area of public spending. It is intended that the recommendations proposed in this research study will assist in improving the present situation.

Remember that the conclusion is not a separate part of your dissertation, nor is it an afterthought. You need to work diligently through this part of the process and write several drafts that will be discussed with and critiqued by your supervisor and/or academic committee.

References and citations

Various styles are used for referencing and citation in academia. You may use a style based on the personal choice of your supervisor and/or academic committee, or you may have a style that is mandated by your department, faculty or university. Three main points we would like to share regarding references and citations, no matter what style you choose to use:

- Remain consistent in your style of referencing and citations. This is an expectation of professionalism within academia. We could go into horror stories of inconsistent referencing and citation, but we shall demur on this point. We do not want to scare any of our readers.
- If you have a citation in your text, please make sure the work is referenced. If you have a piece of work listed in your reference list, please be sure to use it as a citation in your written text. If you use software to keep track of your citations and references, such as the widely used EndNote program, there may be a glitch and there could be some inconsistencies between what is cited and what is referenced. Nothing is better than a thorough proofreading of your work. The proofreading may be done by you, a peer or a paid service. In any case, be sure that consistency is there.
- Double check the spelling of names of authors, years of publication and names of publications. This will allow both you and readers of your dissertation to easily seek out this reference on databases in the future.

Exercise 11.1 Writing the Conclusion

Remember that the Conclusion is the way to wrap up your dissertation. Do not rush through the process of writing your Conclusion.

- Tip 1: Stay focused and do not be distracted to write a conclusion that is not directly related to your dissertation.
- Tip 2: Review your work for flow of ideas, language and consistency.

The following exercises will assist you in writing the Conclusion to the dissertation.

Step 1. Summarize the main steps that you have used in the dissertation, from your statement of the problem, to deciding on an appropriate Research Methodology, and to conducting your fieldwork.

1.	_____

Box 11.1 Statement of the steps taken in the research process

Step 2. State the Main Findings of your research.

2.	

Box 11.2 Statement of the Main Findings

Step 3. State whether the Theoretical Framework has been challenged by your findings or if it has remained the same in your opinion.

3.	

Box 11.3 Statement of the effect of the Findings on the Theoretical Framework

Step 4. State the implications of your dissertation on the discipline of the social sciences that your dissertation focused on.

4.	

Box 11.4 Statement of the implications of your research

Step 5. State the final remarks you would like to make regarding the entire dissertation. Focus on the facts of the dissertation and not your personal feelings.

5.	

Box 11.5 Statement of final remarks

Step 6. Review your work. Re-write the Conclusion if you feel it can be better expressed.

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to provide a brief summary of the research process and Findings?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to share your opinion on whether or not the Theoretical Framework used for the research may be challenged?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to share the implications of your Findings on your field of research?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you able to write the final remarks for your dissertation/thesis?	

CHAPTER 12

WRITING THE ABSTRACT

Expected learning outcomes of this Chapter

At the end of this Chapter you will be able to:

- Identify the five parts of a simple approach to abstract writing.
- Write a simple yet straightforward abstract for your dissertation/thesis.

Hold on. There is one more part of the dissertation that requires writing. Yes, somewhat of an anti-climax, but it is an integral and necessary part of completing your dissertation.

An abstract is a brief summary of your entire dissertation. That is why we have kept this Chapter until the very end. You need to have all of the information from the background of your study right up to the recommendations in order to write your abstract well. The challenge will be the maximum number of words allowed for the abstract. Universities may limit the number of words used in an abstract anywhere from 350 words to 500 words for dissertations. Academic journals and conferences will also impose their own word limit which may be as low as 100-200 words, so that you need to be aware of this guideline as well.

The abstract serves as both a calling card and a marketing tool for other scholars, academic journal editors and conference organizers to take notice of your work. Good abstract writing is necessary for both your dissertation, as well as future scholarly articles that you will write for submission to academic journals or conferences. A reader should be able to quickly read the abstract and be able to understand all of the necessary details of your research. Keeping the abstract short, sweet and concise is, therefore, vital.

We would like to share with you the most commonly used format for abstract writing. This format has five parts: (1) Background/Introduction, (2) Research design/Methodology, (3) Findings/Results, (4) Recommendations and (5) Conclusion. Each part serves a specific purpose and we will break it down for you below. Please note, the example below is just a hypothetical case, as are all of the examples we have used in this book (with the exception of the anecdotes of our experiences working with postgraduate students). It does not reflect either one of our views on the matter nor is it based on an actual research study. It is just an example and should not be taken seriously as a piece of research evidence.

Background/Introduction

Give a concise summary of the background of the research. Leave out unnecessary and flowery language and focus on the essence of the background. In order to illustrate this point, let us say that your research is on crimes, such as rape and sexual harassment allegedly caused by the way women are dressed and portrayed in the media, as well as the messages that the media send out that women who dress a certain way are inviting a sex crime. The purpose of your research is to lower sex crimes committed against women through policy advocacy for media change and social education. You could then write your Background/Introduction as:

The perpetration of sexual crime is linked to gendered portrayals of women's attire in the media. However, detractors of this position believe that media portrayals are not responsible for the perpetration of such crimes. This research study questions the validity of these gendered portrayals from the perspective of feminism.

Remember, keep it short, sweet and to the point.

Research Methodology/Research Design

Share with the reader of your abstract a very concise and summarized version of your Research Methodology/Research Design. For example:

A total of twenty participants were interviewed in-depth. All participants met the criteria of being male, above the age of 21, convicted of a sexual crime against women and were presently incarcerated. All participants were interviewed three times, with each interview taking a

minimum of two hours. All data were coded and analyzed using SPSS. All results were verified using a content analysis matrix.

Again, make it concise and as short as possible.

Findings/Results

What are the key findings of your research? Ask yourself this question and list them one-by-one. After you have done this, write them out in the form of well-structured sentences that capture the main messages of your findings. For example, if the main findings are:

- The participants committed their sex crimes in a planned fashion and were not swayed by media portrayals of women.
- The participants did not watch television or movies, but often downloaded provocative materials available online through their laptops or smart phones.
- The participants believed that women, no matter how they dressed were prey for them.
- The participants did not feel remorse for their crimes, and believed that they would repeat the crime if given a chance.

You could then write your findings/results as:

The findings demonstrated that sex crimes were planned and were not based on media portrayals of women in traditional media, although portrayals of women in “new media” were often viewed by the participants. The misogyny of these participants showed that feminism as a construct has no meaning for perpetrators of sex crimes against women. The analysis of the findings also demonstrated that the participants were likely to repeat their crimes upon their release from incarceration.

Remember to write up your Results in the past tense, because you are reporting a study that has been conducted.

Recommendations

This is where you give a summary of your recommendations. Let us say that you have a total of ten recommendations offered in your dissertation. Do not list all ten of the recommendations. Instead, distill them

into main ideas and write out short and concise sentences on these main ideas. For example:

Advocates for women's safety and rights should widen their net to include the new media and advocacy should be aimed at relevant ministries that work with both women's groups and centers of incarceration. Efforts at re-education and sensitization of inmates who are incarcerated for sex crimes should be handled by prison authorities and other relevant ministries. Additionally, a public service should be offered to educate women on self-defense, legal rights and legal procedures to report a sex crime.

Three sentences would be a good guideline to follow when writing your recommendations in the abstract, depending upon the word limit guidelines.

Conclusion

Keep your conclusion to one sentence. A good idea would be to mention future research as a conclusion in the context of a dissertation. For example:

Future research may include longitudinal studies of changing the perception of women among male perpetrators of sex crimes, immediate mental health needs of male perpetrators of sex crimes and gender differences in sex crimes.

Another option for a conclusion would be to share the limitations and how future research on the topic could avoid these limitations. For example:

Lack of good translation of the native language of participants hampered deeper probing of the issues surrounding incarceration of perpetrators of sex crimes. Future research would include questions written in the native language of respondents and the engagement of professional translation services.

We would like to caution against moralizing the issue in any part of your dissertation, but often the trap lies in the conclusion of the abstract. Avoid statements such as:

Perpetrators of sex crimes are a blight on society and sex crimes are a manifestation of men's inhumanity to women.

Or

Sex crimes occur due to a decline in public morality that is preyed upon by media companies seeking to make a profit.

The above two statements may be acceptable if you want to use them in a personal context. However, in a social scientific or academic dissertation, journal article or conference paper, it is better to err on the side of prudence and avoid moralizing statements.

In the context of an academic paper that is submitted for publication, a conclusion may or may not be necessary depending on the publication. We have seen abstracts both with and without conclusions. A good hint would be to examine past dissertations at your university for abstracts that are clear, concise and well written. Another good hint is to look at papers published in the academic journal you are aiming to publish in and examine what is the standard format used.

One final thought

And there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. We have dealt with most of the issues that arise when students are researching and writing their dissertation, from choosing a topic, deciding on a theoretical position for their research study, writing their Introduction and Review of Literature, choosing a Research Methodology/Research Design, choosing research questions, research objectives and instruments, collecting and analyzing your data and writing up the Findings, and finally your Discussion and Conclusion. Whether you are reading this book before you begin your academic journey toward a dissertation or are halfway through the dissertation process, we hope that this book has helped you in your writing process. Thank you for the privilege of walking you through this academic journey.

Exercise 12.1 Writing the different sections of an abstract

As we mentioned in this Chapter, abstract writing is an important calling card when submitting articles for publication and also to give readers a quick summary of the content of the dissertation. We would like to propose the following five exercises to assist you in the process.

Step 1. Write the background of the research

- Tip 1: Use concise language.
- Tip 2: Stay focused on the issue.
- Tip 3: Use the information from the problem statement, research question(s) and research objectives of the dissertation.

1. Background

Box 12.1 Statement of the background of the research

Step 2. Write the research methodology that was used.

- Tip 1: Use concise language and key words.
- Tip 2: Important information to include is research methodology, sample, research tool, data evaluation tool and parameters.

2. Research Methodology

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Box 12.2 Statement of the Research Methodology

Step 3. Report the main findings

- Tip 1: Use sentences that are short and concise.
- Tip 2: Explain only details that are original and important for the field of the research.

3. Findings/Results
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Box 12.3 Statement of the main Findings

Step 4. State the recommendations based on the main findings.

- Tip 1: Check that your recommendations are connected directly to your main findings.
- Tip 2: Use concise language.

4. Recommendations.
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Box 12.4 Statement of recommendations

Step 5. Writing the conclusion.

- Tip 1: Keep the conclusion to one sentence.
- Tip 2: Look at the opening statement in the Abstract's introduction. Tie the content of the concluding sentence to the opening statement in the introductory statement of the Abstract.
- Tip 3: Use concise language.

5. Conclusion.

Box 12.5 Statement of the conclusion

Exercise 12.2: Putting the Abstract together

Step 1. Take Steps 1 to 5 in Exercise 12.1 including the headings "Background", "Research Design", "Main Findings", "Recommendations" and "Conclusions". State them down in the order of Steps 1 to 5 in the box below. Do not include the words "Steps" or the numbers.

A quick check

Answer the questions below and tick the box when you believe you can answer the questions affirmatively.

• Are you able to write a Background/Introduction to an Abstract?	
• Are you able to write to explain the Research Methodology/Research Design of the research?	
• Are you able to clearly and concisely share your Findings?	
• Are you able to explain your Recommendations concisely?	
• Are you able to write your Conclusion?	

REFERENCES

- Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: a reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(4), 431-447.
- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of management review*, 36(2), 247-271.
- Athanasou, J. A., Di Fabio, A., Elias, M. J., Ferreira, R., Gitchel, W. D., Jansen, J. D., & Mpofu, E. (2012). *Complete your thesis or dissertation successfully: practical guidelines*. Juta.
- Bailey, S. (2014). *Academic writing: A handbook for international students*. Routledge.
- Baumeister, R. F. (2013). Writing a literature review. In *The Portable Mentor* (pp. 119-132). Springer, New York, NY.
- Becker, H. S. (2010). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. ReadHowYouWant. com.
- Beelmann, A. (2006). Review of Systematic reviews in the social sciences. *A practical guide* (Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 244). Hogrefe & Huber Publishers.
- Beglar, D., & Murray, N. L. (2009). Inside track: writing dissertations and theses.
- Bell, J. (2014). *Doing Your Research Project: A guide for first-time researchers*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Berg, B. L., Lune, H., & Lune, H. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (Vol. 5). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Biber, D., & Gray, B. (2010). Challenging stereotypes about academic writing: Complexity, elaboration, explicitness. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 9(1), 2-20.
- Blaxter, L. (2010). *How to research*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Blaikie, N. (2003). *Analyzing quantitative data: From description to explanation*. Sage.
- Blaikie, N. (2007). *Approaches to social enquiry: Advancing knowledge*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Blaikie, N. (2009). *Designing social research*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C., & Kagee, A. (2006). *Fundamentals of social research methods: An African perspective*. Juta and Company Ltd.

- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2012). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: a road map from beginning to end: a road map from beginning to end*. Sage.
- Brannen, J. (2017). *Mixing methods: Qualitative and quantitative research*. Routledge.
- Collins, A., Joseph, D., & Bielaczyc, K. (2004). Design research: Theoretical and methodological issues. *The Journal of the learning sciences*, 13(1), 15-42.
- Cottrell, R., & McKenzie, J. F. (2010). *Health Promotion & Education Research Methods: Using the Five Chapter Thesis/Dissertation Model*. Jones & Bartlett Publishers.
- Creswell, J. W. (1996). Research design. *Qualitative and Quantitative Approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Daren, L. (2015). How to write a literature review. *Australian Midwifery News*, 15(4), 31.
- Denney, A. S., & Tewksbury, R. (2013). How to write a literature review. *Journal of criminal justice education*, 24(2), 218-234.
- Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2007). Doing sensitive research: what challenges do qualitative researchers face? *Qualitative research*, 7(3), 327-353.
- Dunleavy, P. (2003). *Authoring a PhD: How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Evans, D., Gruba, P., & Zobel, J. (2011). *How to write a better thesis*. Melbourne Univ. Publishing.
- Feak, C. B., & Swales, J. M. (2009). *Telling a research story: Writing a literature review*. University of Michigan Press.
- Ferguson, T. (2009). The 'write' skills and more: A thesis writing group for doctoral students. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 33(2), 285-297.
- Fulwiler, T. (2002). *College writing: A personal approach to academic writing*. Heinemann, 88 Post Road West, PO Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881.
- Gibbs, G. R. (2018). *Analyzing qualitative data* (Vol. 6). Sage.
- Gillett, A., Hammond, A., & Martala, M. (2013). *Inside track to successful academic writing*. Pearson UK.
- Grant, C., & Tomal, D. R. (2013). *How to finish and defend your dissertation: Strategies to complete the professional practice doctorate*. R&L Education.

- Hart, C. (2005). *Doing your masters dissertation*. Sage.
- Joyner, R. L., Rouse, W. A., & Glatthorn, A. A. (2018). *Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: A step-by-step guide*. Corwin Press.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Age International.
- Lewis, S. (2015). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *Health promotion practice*, 16(4), 473-475.
- Li, L. Y., & Vandermensbrugghe, J. (2011). Supporting the thesis writing process of international research students through an ongoing writing group. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 48(2), 195-205.
- Lipowski, E. E. (2008). Developing great research questions. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, 65(17), 1667-1670.
- Lunenburg, F. C., & Irby, B. J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Corwin press.
- Lyons, P., & Doueck, H. J. (2010). *The dissertation: From beginning to end*. Oxford University Press.
- Mauch, J., & Park, N. (2003). *Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: A handbook for students and faculty*. CRC Press.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Sage publications.
- Meyers, A. (2014). *Longman Academic Writing Series: Essays to Research Papers*. Pearson Education, Incorporated.
- Morse, J. M. (2003). Principles of mixed methods and multimethod research design. *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*, 1, 189-208.
- Murray, R. (2011). *How to write a thesis*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Neuman, W. L. (2013). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Pearson education.
- Paré, G., Trudel, M. C., Jaana, M., & Kitsiou, S. (2015). Synthesizing information systems knowledge: A typology of literature reviews. *Information & Management*, 52(2), 183-199.
- Pyrzczak, F. (2016). *Writing empirical research reports: A basic guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences*. Routledge.
- Randolph, J. J. (2009). A guide to writing the dissertation literature review. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 14(13), 1-13.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. sage.

- Roberts, C. M. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation*. Corwin Press.
- Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2014). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Sage Publications.
- Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2004). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (Vol. 1). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (3rd ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples. *Human resource development review*, 4(3), 356-367.
- Webster, J., & Watson, R. T. (2002). Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a literature review. *MIS quarterly*, xiii-xxiii.
- Wee, B. V., & Banister, D. (2016). How to write a literature review paper?. *Transport Reviews*, 36(2), 278-288.

INDEX

- Abstract 186 187, 189 191, 193 - 195
- Analysis 3, 28, 56, 9 60, 94 96, 104 106, 108, 112, 114, 125, 146 147, 150, 161, 163, 166, 183.
- Analyzing 28, 46, 75 76, 106, 146 147, 150, 160, 190.
- Bridging 62, 66, 76, 79.
- Citation 54 56, 64 68, 80, 114 115, 180.
- Conceptual framework 9, 13, 93, 98, 109, 115 116, 125 126, 132
- Conclusion 158, 168, 178 180, 182, 184, 187, 189, 193, 195
- Data collection 58, 99, 106 107, 138 140, 142 143, 145 147, 149 150, 165.
- Data evaluation tool 92, 104, 106, 122 123, 125 126, 191.
- Defense 127, 129 133, 136, 189.
- Discussion 20, 22, 23, 51 52, 79, 93, 95, 98, 101.
- Dissertation 1 3, 5, 13 14, 23, 24, 26, 33 34, 39, 43, 45, 49, 53, 58 60, 62 64, 66, 73 74, 79 81, 85, 88, 90 91, 98, 102, 104, 107, 109, 114, 124, 127 131, 137, 140, 143, 150 151, 159, 161 164, 166, 168 169, 174, 176, 177 182, 184 186, 188 191.
- Empirical 3, 6, 7 8, 10, 26, 43, 46, 56, 61, 95, 110, 164.
- Ethics 103, 108 110, 124, 142, 144.
- Experimental research design 96 - 97
- Fieldwork 109, 137, 139 140, 142 144, 151, 162, 182.
- Findings 1, 3, 9 11, 42, 45, 55, 60, 62, 75 80, 92, 95, 99, 106, 127, 137, 141, 143, 146 153, 157 165, 167, 169 170, 173 174, 176 180, 183, 185, 187 188, 190 193, 195.
- Future research 76, 161, 164, 167, 175 177, 189.
- Gap 43, 55, 67, 72, 135, 165.
- Hypotheses 57 58, 69, 143, 153.
- Hypothesis 3, 53, 7 58, 68 69, 72 73, 90, 149, 164, 171.
- Implications 3 4, 6 9, 12, 17 19, 22 23, 26, 130, 161, 163 165, 171, 174, 178, 180, 184 185.
- Interpretation 3, 103, 153, 161 162, 165, 169 171, 173 174.
- Limitations 139, 161, 164, 166, 175, 177, 189.
- Literature review 41, 48, 51 53, 55, 59, 74 81, 86, 88, 91, 127, 132, 161.
- Mixed methods 93 94, 105 106.
- Plagiarism 3, 43, 57, 74, 80.
- Population 6, 7, 10 11, 13, 15, 19, 21 22, 25 28, 35 36, 43, 58, 61 62, 64, 68 69, 77 79, 81, 92 93, 95, 99, 105 106, 109, 126, 134, 138, 164.
- Pre-experimental research design 96 97, 113.
- Problematize 5, 8, 11, 14, 21, 25.
- Problematization 5 7, 11 12, 15, 17, 21 23, 25.
- Purposive sampling 99, 106.

- Quasi-experimental research design 96.
- Random sampling 99, 106.
- Rapport 74, 137 138, 140 142, 145, 179.
- Recommendations 3, 10, 18, 55 56, 59 60, 62, 67, 135, 161, 164 166, 173 174, 177, 180, 186 189, 192 193, 195.
- References 64, 75, 132, 181.
- Reflexivity 138.
- Replication 3, 13, 43.
- Research argument 8.
- Research design 13, 44, 53, 58 59, 89, 92 98, 101, 105 106, 108 110, 113, 117, 127 128, 130, 132, 147, 149, 163, 166, 187, 190, 193, 195.
- Research methodology 80, 90, 92 94, 108 109, 111 112, 125 127, 132, 182, 187, 190 192, 195.
- Research objectives 15, 53, 59 60, 70 73, 75, 89 90, 93, 98, 103 106, 109 111, 125, 132, 144, 148 153, 159 160, 162 165, 170 190.
- Research problem 1, 22, 55 56, 76, 105.
- Research tools 92 93, 99, 103, 107.
- Research question 13, 53, 58 60, 69 70, 72 73, 75 76, 89 90, 92, 104, 106, 108 113, 120, 125 126, 130, 132, 137, 141, 146 149, 151 153, 158, 160, 162 165, 170 171, 179, 190 191.
- Sample 22, 56, 58, 69, 90, 93, 95, 99 104, 106 107, 109, 116, 120, 125 126, 134, 138 139, 147, 173 174, 191.
- Scope 10, 17, 42, 48, 79.
- Significance 1, 5, 9 10, 23, 26, 56, 60 62, 71 72, 76, 98, 105, 113, 147, 149, 171.
- Snowball technique 99 100, 106, 116.
- Social sciences 1 2, 4, 9 10, 14, 19, 23, 42, 44, 52, 54, 57, 62, 76, 93 95, 98, 101, 104, 128, 165, 184.
- Statistics 6 7, 15, 19 22, 25, 32, 54 56, 66, 68, 95.
- Statistical 2, 6, 11, 26, 95, 104, 106, 144, 147.
- Stratified sampling 99 100.
- Supervisor 2 5, 8 9, 11, 13 17, 22 23, 39, 51 52, 56 59, 63, 75, 80 81, 93 94, 96, 98, 101 104, 107, 109, 111, 126, 128 129, 131 132, 138, 140, 147, 150- 151, 160, 163, 180 181.
- Survey 99, 103, 108, 139 142.
- Synthesizing 75 76, 161.
- Theoretical framework 9, 13, 58, 69, 92, 98, 109, 114, 125 126, 132 133, 162 165, 169 170, 177 179, 183, 185.
- Theoretical implications 163, 180.
- Thesis 1 3, 5, 13 14, 23 24, 26, 42, 45, 53, 58, 63, 73, 74 75, 79, 91, 98, 178, 185 186.
- Topic 1 3, 8, 10, 13, 24 27, 32 34, 38 40, 42 46, 48 54, 56 57, 63, 66 67, 72, 76, 81, 98, 100, 130, 134, 141, 147, 161, 171, 189 190.
- Qualitative 58 60, 93 96, 99 100, 106 108, 122, 137 138, 142, 146 148.
- Quantitative 58, 69, 93 97, 100, 105 108, 112 113, 117, 137, 142, 146.
- Questionnaire 95, 99, 103, 106 107, 137, 142.
- Unexpected findings 143, 146, 149, 151, 157, 160.
- Variables 10, 42 43, 57, 92 94, 99, 101 102, 117, 120, 132, 141.