



Aalto University  
School of Arts, Design  
and Architecture

# Doing Research in Art and Media

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# Research Essentials

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# The purpose of research

...is to learn what has never been known before; to ask a significant question for which no conclusive answer has previously been found; and, by collecting and interpreting relevant data, to find an answer to that question.

Leedy & Ormrod

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DEFINING A RESEARCH PROBLEM

FORMULATING A RESEARCH STATEMENT

FORMING A RESEARCH QUESTION

REVIEWING RELATED LITERATURE

CHOOSING A RESEARCH APPROACH

WRITING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL/PLAN

CONDUCTING RESEARCH

WRITING A THESIS

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DEFINING A RESEARCH PROBLEM

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## Defining a research problem

The aim of the research process is to find “the answer” to the research problem

- finding a **conclusive answer**

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## Defining a research problem

- the research problem should aim to address a **specific question**
- the question should lead to **new knowledge** in the field of study
- this could be a new way of thinking, new applications of knowledge, or further areas of research

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## Defining a research problem

- important to **avoid** defining **certain types** of research problems
  - those that only lead to self-learning, and do not lead to any new knowledge in the field
  - those that only lead to "yes" and "no" answers
  - those that do not ask the question "why?" or "how?"

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# Defining a research problem

It is also important to find a problem that is interesting, intriguing, motivating... and often challenging!

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DEFINING A RESEARCH PROBLEM

FORMULATING A RESEARCH STATEMENT

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# Formulating a research statement

A research statement is “carefully phrased and represents a single goal of the total research effort”

Leedy & Ormrod

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# Formulating a research statement

- it specifies the aims and objectives of the research
- it should be clear and understandable to even non-experts
- it should consider the limitations and scope of the research
- it may be necessary to divide the research into several sub-parts

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DEFINING A RESEARCH PROBLEM

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FORMING A RESEARCH QUESTION

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## Forming a research question

A **research question** is formed based on the **research statement**, particularly when it is **not possible to "guess"** the answer

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## Forming a research hypothesis

Sometimes it is possible to form a hypothesis based on “a logical supposition, a reasonable guess, an educated conjecture”

Leedy & Ormrod

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## Forming a research hypothesis

- it provides a tentative answer to the research question
- it can direct research thinking and effort towards the answer
- it must be supported or not supported by the research data
- if not supported by the data, it may lead to new a hypothesis

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## Forming a research question or hypothesis

- questions are more useful for **qualitative research** methods
- hypotheses are more useful for **quantitative research** methods
- either way, the research often starts with one or the other
- the aim is **to answer** a question, **or prove/disprove** a hypothesis

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DEFINING A RESEARCH PROBLEM

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REVIEWING RELATED LITERATURE

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## Reviewing related literature

The aim of the literature review is to provide a theoretical basis for the research

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## Reviewing related literature

- covers the state of knowledge in the area of research
- identifies areas that need further research
  - referred to as the knowledge gap
- justifies the need for the proposed research question
- it is more than just a summary of existing research

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## Reviewing related literature

The main point to bear in mind is that a review should **provide the reader with a picture**, albeit limited in a short project, of the state of knowledge and of major questions in the subject.

Judith Bell

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## Reviewing related literature

It involves **questioning assumptions**, **querying claims made** for which no evidence has been provided, **considering the findings** of one researcher **compared** to those of others and **evaluating**.

Judith Bell

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## The literature review checklist

**1:** Evidence of reading will always be required in any research.

*Though in a small study, it may not be necessary to produce a full literature review.*

**2:** Researchers collect many facts but then must select, organize and classify findings into a coherent pattern.

*The aim is to produce a critical review, not a list of everything you have read.*

**3:** Your framework will not only provide a map of how the research will be conducted and analysed but it will also give you ideas about a structure for your review.

*It will help you to draw together and summarize facts and findings.*

**4:** Literature reviews should be succinct and, as far as is possible in a small study, should give a picture of the state of knowledge and of major questions in your topic area.

*If you have been able to classify your reading into groups, categories or under headings, writing your review will be relatively straightforward.*

Judith Bell

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# Choosing a research approach

All research requires deciding on the appropriate **methodology** and **methods** to use

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# methodology

1. a. a **body of methods**, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline: a particular procedure or **set of procedures**
2. a. the analysis of the **principles or procedures** of inquiry in a particular field

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## method

1. a. a procedure or process for attaining an object: such as
  1. a systematic procedure, technique, or mode of inquiry employed by or proper to a particular discipline or art
  2. ...
- b. ...
2. a. a discipline that deals with the principles and techniques of scientific inquiry

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## Methodologies and methods

A methodology is a collection (toolkit) of different methods (tools) suitable for a particular type of research approach

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# Methodologies

Methodologies are different **approaches** used for research  
– e.g. ethnography, historical research, etc.

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# Methods

Methods are different **techniques** used for research  
– e.g. questionnaire, interview, observation, etc.

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# Choosing a research approach

There are many different research methodologies, each with their own suitable collection of methods

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## RESEARCH IN ART & DESIGN

### PROCESS OF CREATIVITY

study of people

QUALITATIVE

QUANTITATIVE

APPLIED

### CREATIVE OUTPUT OR ARTEFACT

study of things

QUALITATIVE

QUANTITATIVE

APPLIED

VISUAL

### IMPACT OF ARTEFACTS

study of people

QUALITATIVE

QUANTITATIVE

VISUAL

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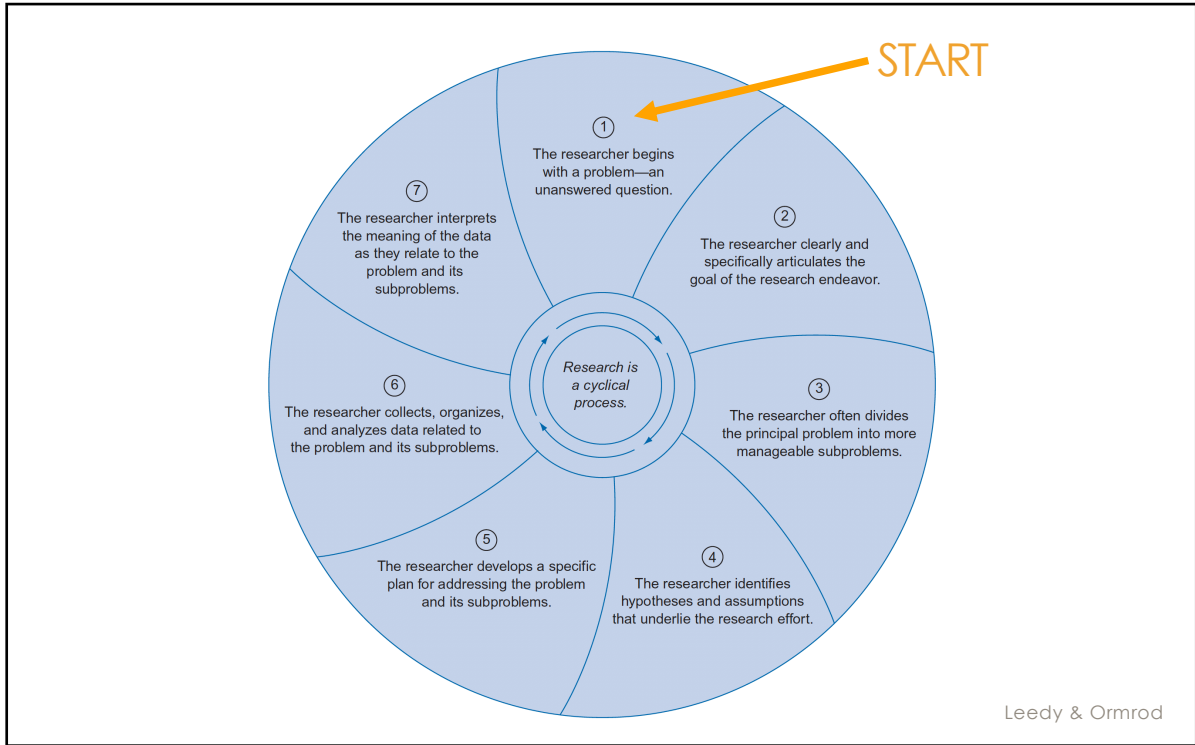
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