

# **FORMULATING A PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Social Work Research

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## CLASS AGENDA

- Check-in: how's everyone doing?
- Overview of key concepts
- Facilitated discussion
- Next steps...



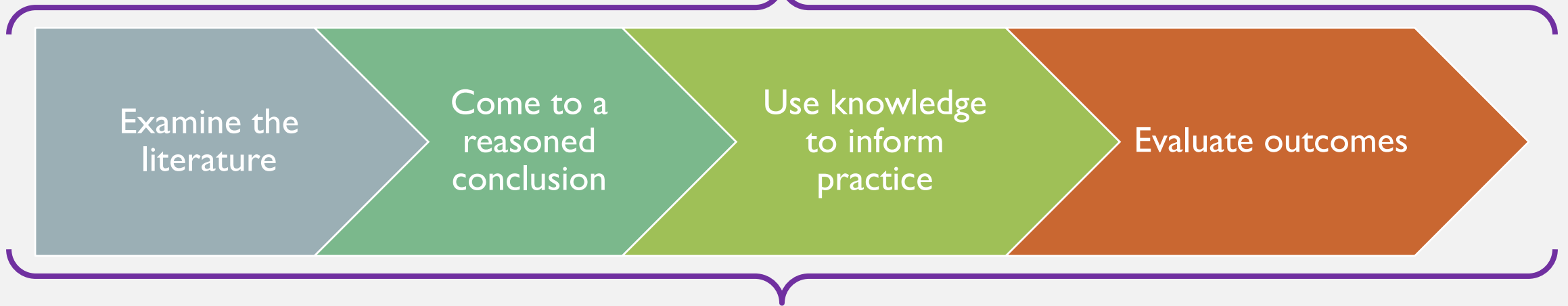
Image by Austin Oswald

# HOW ARE YOU?

**ANY ISSUES, CONCERNS,  
CELEBRATIONS, QUESTIONS,  
PROVOCATIONS, DESIRES THAT  
WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?**

# EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Reflection



Practice Wisdom

EBP involves making decisions on how to help clients based on the best available evidence using critical thinking to examine the literature, client, self, and context to inform interventions.



**Table 3.1 Questions worth asking while reading research reports**

<b>Report section</b>	<b>Questions worth asking</b>
Abstract	What are the key findings? How were those findings reached? What framework does the researcher employ?
Acknowledgments	Who are this study's major stakeholders? Who provided feedback? Who provided support in the form of funding or other resources?
Problem statement (introduction)	How does the author frame their research focus? What other possible ways of framing the problem exist? Why might the author have chosen this particular way of framing the problem?
Literature review (introduction)	How selective does the researcher appear to have been in identifying relevant literature to discuss? Does the review of literature appear appropriately extensive? Does the researcher provide a critical review?
Sample (methods)	Where was the data collected? Did the researcher collect their own data or use someone else's data? What population is the study trying to make claims about, and does the sample represent that population well? What are the sample's major strengths and major weaknesses?
Data collection (methods)	How were the data collected? What do you know about the relative strengths and weaknesses of the method employed? What other methods of data collection might have been employed, and why was this particular method employed? What do you know about the data collection strategy and instruments (e.g., questions asked, locations observed)? What <i>don't</i> you know about the data collection strategy and instruments?
Data analysis (methods)	How were the data analyzed? Is there enough information provided for you to feel confident that the proper analytic procedures were employed accurately?
Results	What are the study's major findings? Are findings linked back to previously described research questions, objectives, hypotheses, and literature? Are sufficient amounts of data (e.g., quotes and observations in qualitative work, statistics in quantitative work) provided in order to support conclusions drawn? Are tables readable?
Discussion/conclusion	Does the author generalize to some population beyond her/his/their sample? How are these claims presented? Are claims made supported by data provided in the results section (e.g., supporting quotes, statistical significance)? Have limitations of the study been fully disclosed and adequately addressed? Are implications sufficiently explored?

ANATOMY OF A  
RESEARCH ARTICLE

# CRAFTING A PROBLEM STATEMENT



**Context:** Where does it occur? Who does it affect? What attempts have been made to solve the problem?



**Relevance (so what?):** What will happen if the problem is not solved? Who will feel the consequences? Does the problem have wider relevance in other contexts? Implication for Social Work?



**Objectives:** State the aims/objectives and methods

# PURPOSE STATEMENT

Indicate why you want to do the study and what you intend to accomplish in a sentence or two

Use words like “purpose,” “intent,” or “objective”

State the methodology and research design

Include information about the central phenomenon, participants, research site, and independent/dependent variables (if quant)

***The purpose of this research study is to critically examine dominant paradigms of age-friendly communities using an intersectional, anti-oppressive lens to expose who matters and who benefits from these initiatives. To achieve this goal, I will analyze public records on NYC's age-friendly strategic plan authored by the Office of the Mayor of NYC, NYC Council, and The New York Academy of Medicine from 2007 through 2021.***



# CONCEPT MAPPING

A brainstorming tool to develop a research topic that results in a visual representation of what you know about a topic and its related parts.

## **Steps:**

1. Start with a central topic
2. Branch out from central idea to show how the main topic can be broken down into subtopics
3. Each subtopic can also be broken down into even more subtopics

# THE GRAND CHALLENGES

## Individual and family wellbeing

- Ensure healthy development for youth; Close the health gap; Build healthy relationships; Advance long and productive lives

## Stronger social fabric

- Eradicate social isolation; End homelessness; Create social responses to a changing environment; Harness technology for social good

## Just society

- Eliminate racism; Promote smart decarceration; Build financial capability and assets for all; Reduce extreme economic inequality; Achieve equal opportunity and justice

# FACILITATED DISCUSSION



[Image](#) by Volodymyr Hryshchenko via Unsplash, shared under the Unsplash license.

## NEXT WEEK

Session	Date	Topic	Assignments Due
5	10/6	Literature Review: How to collect, analyze, and write up a review of the relevant literature	
6	10/13	Ethics, power & privilege of human subjects	<b>CITI training</b>