

# Research Questions Workshop

13 March 2024



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# Introducing ourselves

Different approaches to research

# Nigel's introduction

My approach is informed by substantive interests, particularly in housing, race and migration. When you start to think about your research, I would suggest you identify

- The focus of your research
- Who the research subjects are
- The theoretical and policy framework if applicable
- Then broadly follow the research cycle

# Jools' Introduction

BA in linguistics in California and Spain

Msc in Philosophy, Psychology and Language in Scotland

PhD in Complex Adaptive Systems in Netherlands

Now Computational Social Science with UK Data Service

I use computational methods to address:

- new social science research questions or
- old social science research questions in new ways

# Jools' iterative research cycle

1. Identify the problem
2. Explore the problem
3. Formalise the concepts
4. Collect data, implement software, verify
5. Experiment and analyse data
6. Discussions and conclusions
7. Communicate, publish, present
8. Share, document and validate

# What topics are you developing questions for?

Effectiveness of business-support policy

Monitoring and Evaluation in Sport for Development

Mental Health, Nursing, Social Work

Orangutan terrestrial behaviour

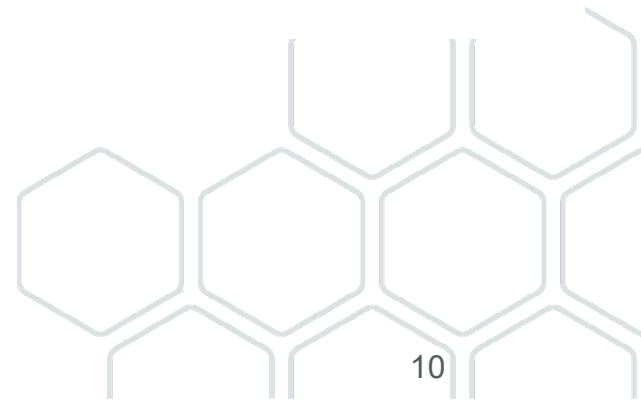
sexuality and disability

Loneliness

doctoral education

touch/haptic techs and museum learning experience

Gender equality in academia

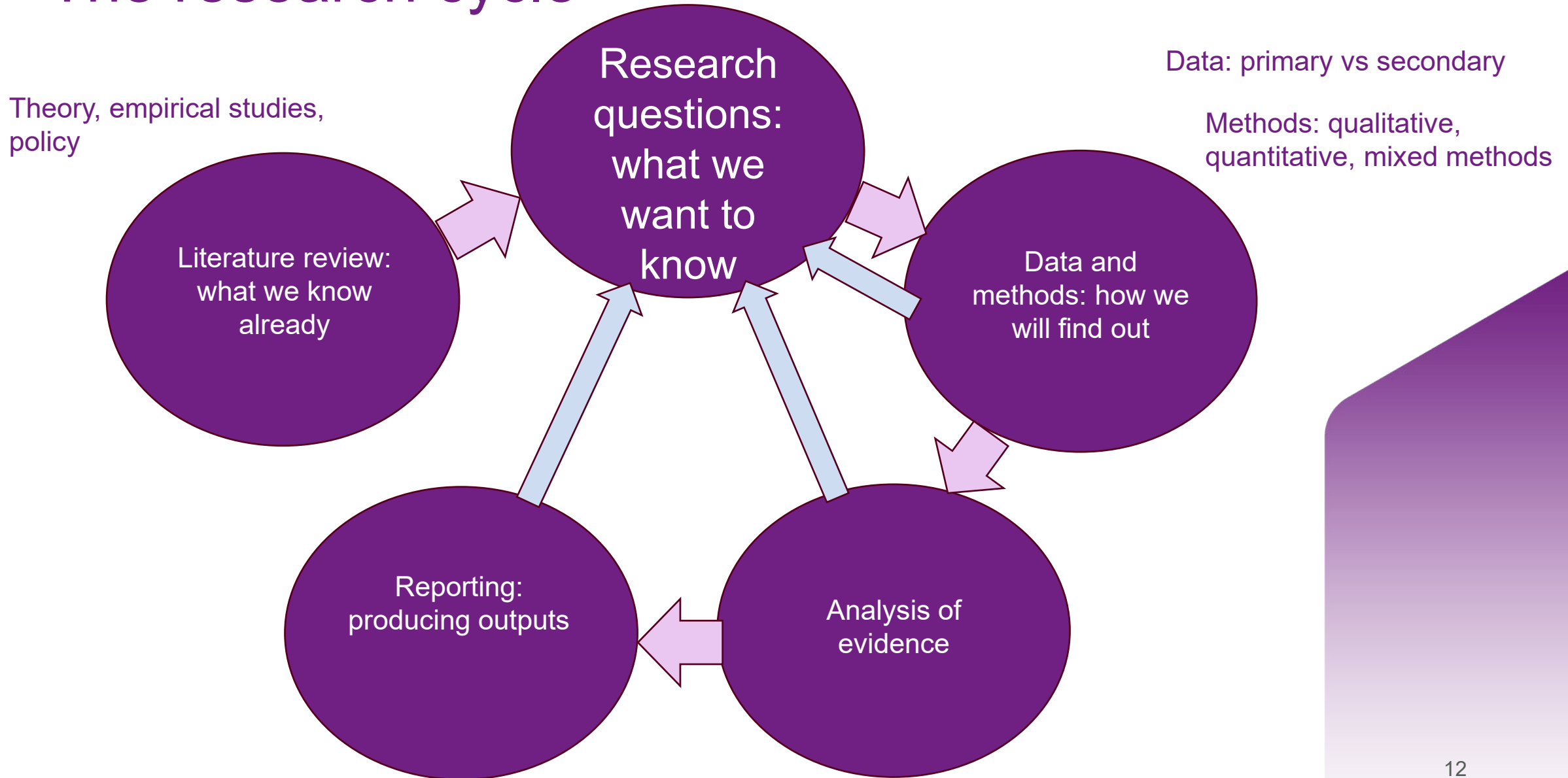


# Research questions in place

In the research cycle with some examples



# The research cycle



# From description to action

## EVENS ethnic inequalities (descriptive analysis)

What would a racially just society look like?

How close is Britain to being a racially just society?

Has the COVID-19 pandemic taken Britain further away from racial justice and ethnic equality

## Objective 1 – Knowing Manchester Better (descriptive to action)

We will work together with Manchester's citizens and our partners in the public and voluntary sectors to improve the quality of the information we have about Manchester's diverse communities. This will strengthen our understanding of our people and will help us to support 'community cohesion', where people from different backgrounds get on well together in the local area, and treat each other with respect and consideration. We will engage with our citizens to build strong, trusting relationships which will help us to develop policies and commission services that meet everyone's needs.

# Mixing methods to answer different questions

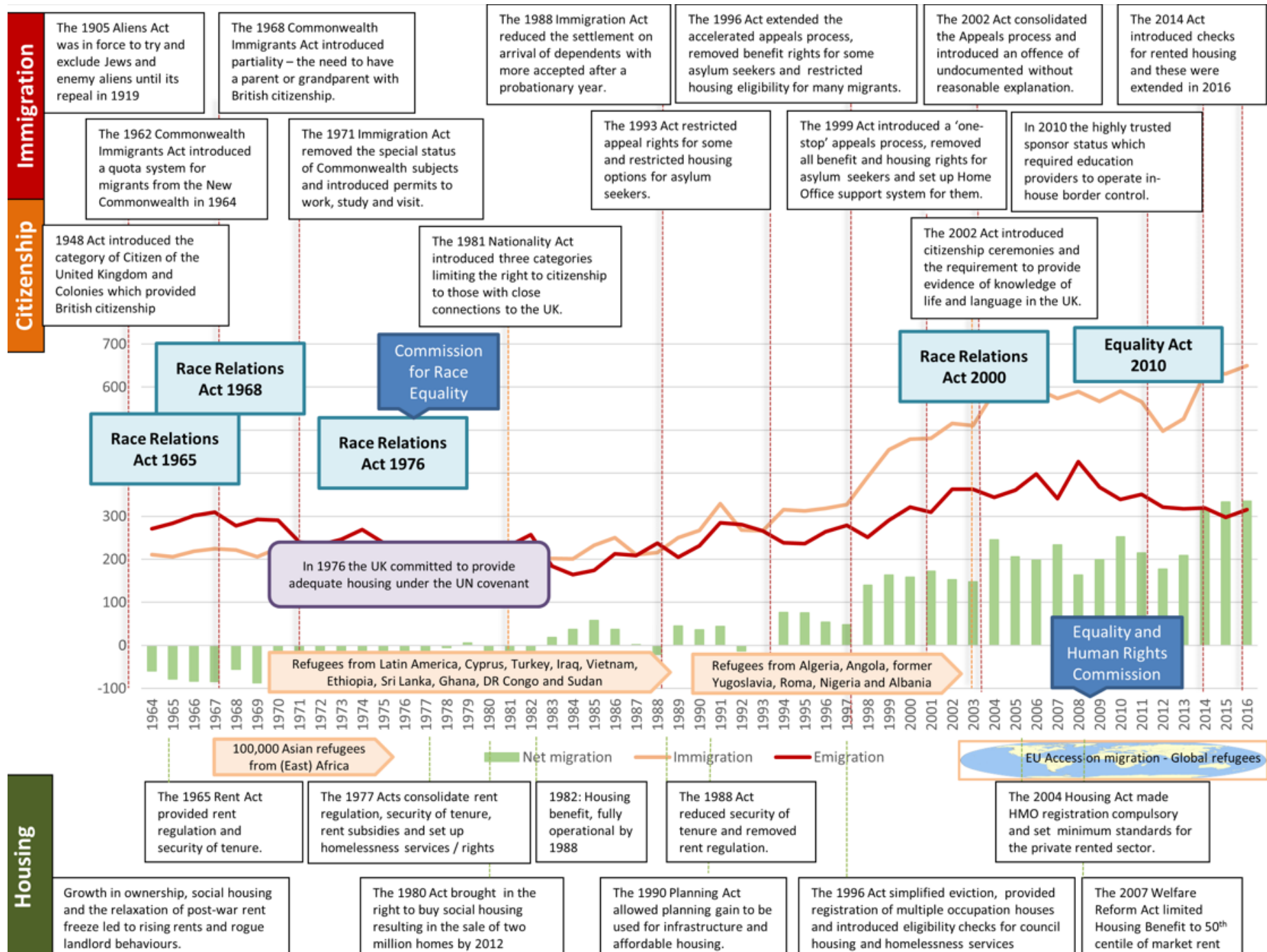
This paper aims to identify housing disadvantages faced by migrants and ethnic minorities; the legal, policy and market forces that shape them; how they have developed over time; how they are manifest nationally and locally; and how they are being responded to locally by those concerned with mitigating them.

... to provide a foundation to inform future research and policy and to engage with local actors to develop ways of overcoming migrant housing disadvantage and challenging discrimination

It used historical policy analysis, statistical analysis of census microdata and a facilitated workshop with key stakeholders to develop.

Lukes, S, de Noronha, N and Finney, N (2018). Slippery discrimination: a review of the drivers of migrant and minority housing disadvantage. *Journal of Ethnic and Minority Studies*, 45:17, 3188 – 3206.

# Migration and Legal changes

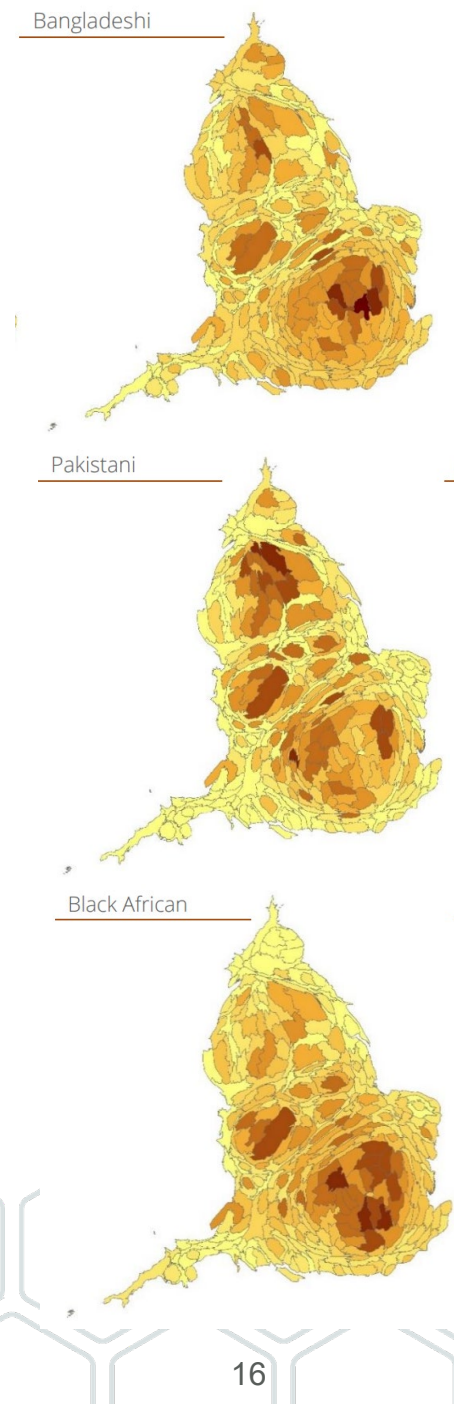


# Influencing policy

Thinking about what the future will look like (forecasting) on behalf of the Race Equality Foundation and the Housing Learning and Improvement Network. The briefing:

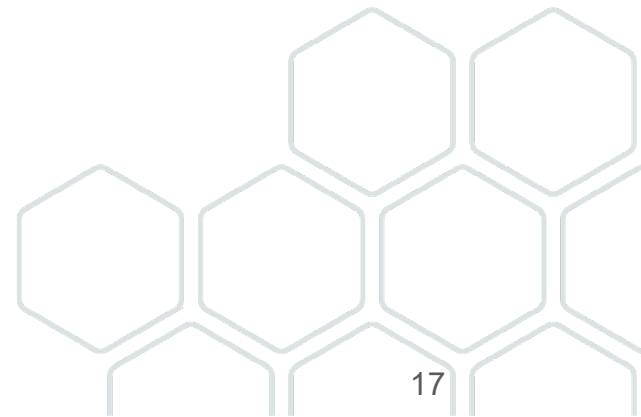
- explores the demographic profile of the larger ethnic groups who are likely to contribute to the growth of the minority population
- identifies housing deprivation of ethnic groups by age and explores the factors that contribute to the higher levels of housing deprivation experienced by minority groups
- identifies the usage of care and residential homes by ethnic group and discusses future demand
- discusses the geographical concentrations of ethnic groups and the different demands this is likely to place on local services.

[New briefing on housing for black and minority ethnic older people - Race Equality Foundation Nigel de Noronha, 2019](#)



# Other types of research

- *Empirical – with hypotheses and null hypotheses*
- *Causative*
- *Longitudinal*
- *...*



# What methods are you using/planning to use?

Mixed methods



Ethnography, interviews, focus groups



Qualitative methods – interviews, doc analysis



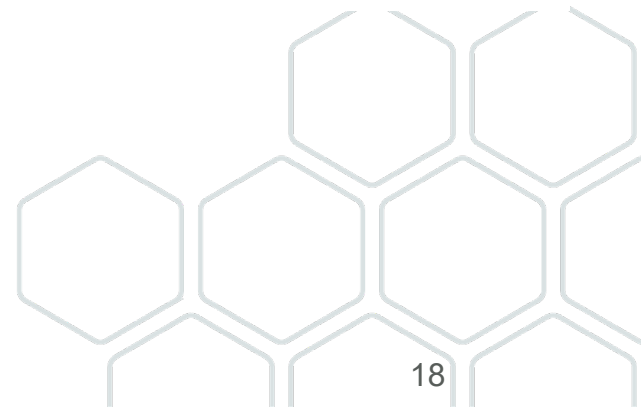
Sensory Ethnography, interviews, focus group discussions



Arts-based methods such as drawing method



Instrumental qualitative case study



# Developing research questions

Some guidance on clarity, focus and conciseness



# Research question requirements

**Clear – straightforward grammar, language appropriate for audience, sensible**

**Focussed – matches the time, resources and data to which the researcher has access**

**Concise – expressed in the fewest words needed**

# Clear

**How should social networking sites address the harm they cause?**

This question doesn't:

- Specify which (types of) social networking sites
- Specify what kind of harm is meant or who is harmed
- Support or prove the extent of that harm

It's ambiguous, leaving too much room for interpretation.

# Clearer

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**What action should Facebook take to prevent vulnerable users from exposure to extremist propaganda?**

# Focussed

## **What effect have anti-climate change innovations had?**

This can be narrowed by specifying:

- Effect – what is to be measured and how?
- Scope – what are the space & time boundaries to consider?
- Detail – what is the level of observation?

The lack of focus means it is unlikely to be answerable in a single project – maybe not even a single career.

# More Focussed

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**What effect have UK government green grants had on heat pump installations since 2008?**

# Concise

**What measurable difference can be seen in pre- and post-Covid academic lockdown testing outcomes of human individuals between the ages of 13 and 19 when those individuals are domiciled within the country of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?**

This is overly "academic", making it wordy and hard to follow.

## More Concise

**What measurable difference can be seen in pre- and post-Covid academic lockdown testing outcomes of human individuals between the ages of 13 and 19 when those individuals are domiciled within the country of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?**

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**What differences can be measured between pre- and post-Covid student test scores for UK residents aged 13 to 19?**

# Research question - desirable features

**Novel** – should address a question/problem that is not yet fully or sufficiently addressed

**Arguable** – not answerable with a simple repetition of facts

**Objective** – should not rely on "good", "bad", similar judgement words

**Appropriate** – question and answer should match time and resources



# Breakout sessions

Your chance to practice with example problems