



Whom do you want to study?

Selection of participants is vitally important to your research planning.

Initially informs your research questions.

May also prompt you to reconsider, refine, or formulate your research questions.

Target Population

- Group you are interested in studying

Pianists who run

College piano students who run

College piano students who run marathons

College piano students who have run at
least 3 marathons in the last 5 years

Sample

- Subset of the population you wish to study
- Your participants
- Do your best to ensure that your sample represents the population of interest.



Sample Size?

- “The bigger the better.”
- However, consider
 - Size of target population
 - Time to recruit
 - Cost of recruiting
 - Availability of participants
 - Time to test
 - Statistical procedures used to analyze data

- **RANDOM:** Randomly select from list of all pianist-runners who have agreed to participate in your study.
- **SYSTEMATIC:** Select every tenth individual from pianist-runners list.
- **STRATIFIED RANDOM:** Divide list into grad and undergrad pianist-runners and then randomly select participants from each sub-list.
- **CONVENIENCE:** Email survey to **ALL** on pianist-runners list and await responses.
- **SNOWBALL:** Have pianist-runners forward survey link to other pianist-runners.

Some Sampling Approaches

Example 1

“I have been conducting interviews revolving around the methods in which piano teachers of different backgrounds instruct regarding technique.

...there have been vastly different conceptions of what the word technique is, and what it means to "teach technique". This has large implications in a variety of ways, which makes me interested in exploring it more.

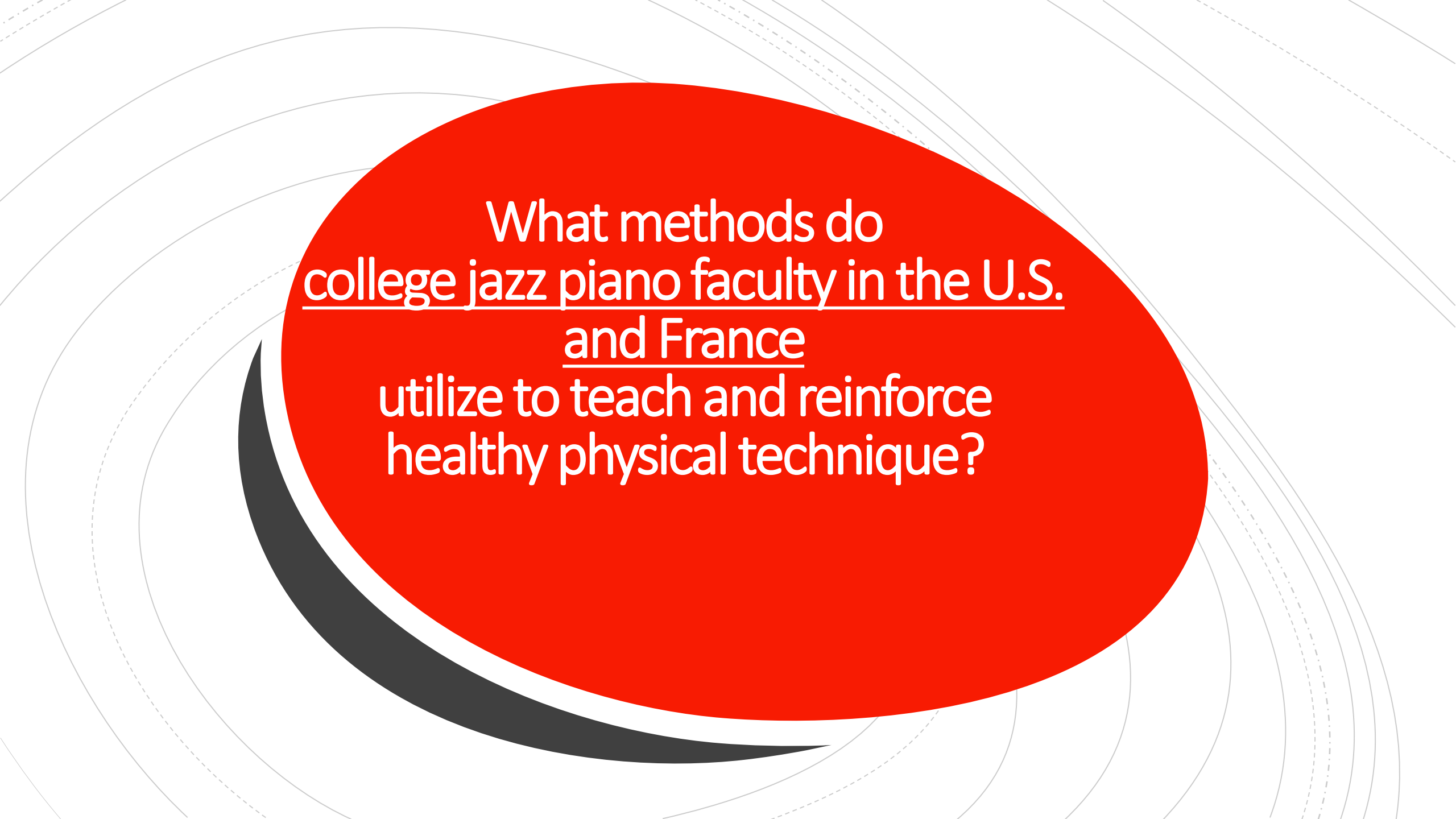
I have interviewed 5 teachers with a variety of backgrounds. To continue this research, the interviews could be replicated on a larger scale, or catered to a different demographic (comparing to teachers with graduate research in the field, etc.)”

The background features several sets of curved lines in the top-left and bottom-right corners. Some lines are solid and light gray, while others are dashed and light gray, creating a sense of motion and depth.


Refine Definition of Target Population

PIANO TEACHERS OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS

- Independent teachers or college faculty members?
- Classical or jazz?
- Level of education?
- Country/region of origin/employment/study?



What methods do
college jazz piano faculty in the U.S.
and France
utilize to teach and reinforce
healthy physical technique?



What terminology do American
and Russian piano instructors
use to address physical
technique in beginning child
pianists?

Example 2

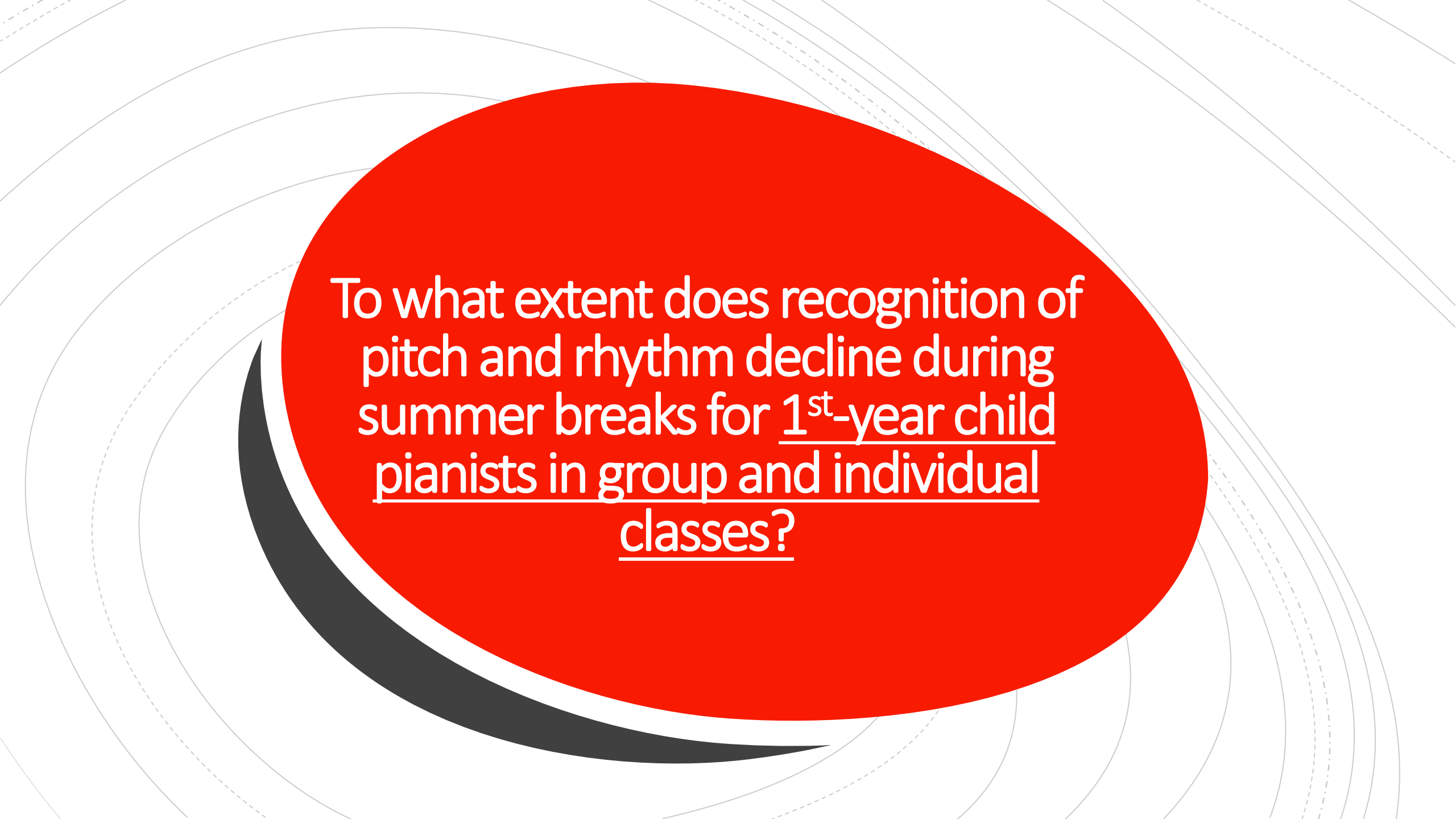
“I would love to explore the concept of "summer atrophy" as it relates to the summer-long break many beginning piano students (and/or their parents) elect to take. Which concepts (rhythms/counting, note recognition, keyboard topography) are most easily lost when not reinforced weekly, and how can structuring lesson plans attempt to mitigate this loss for those students who don't have lessons for two or three months?

If this topic is too broad, would it be instructive and/or useful to direct applied research toward only one of the aforementioned concepts (rhythms/counting, note recognition, keyboard topography)?”

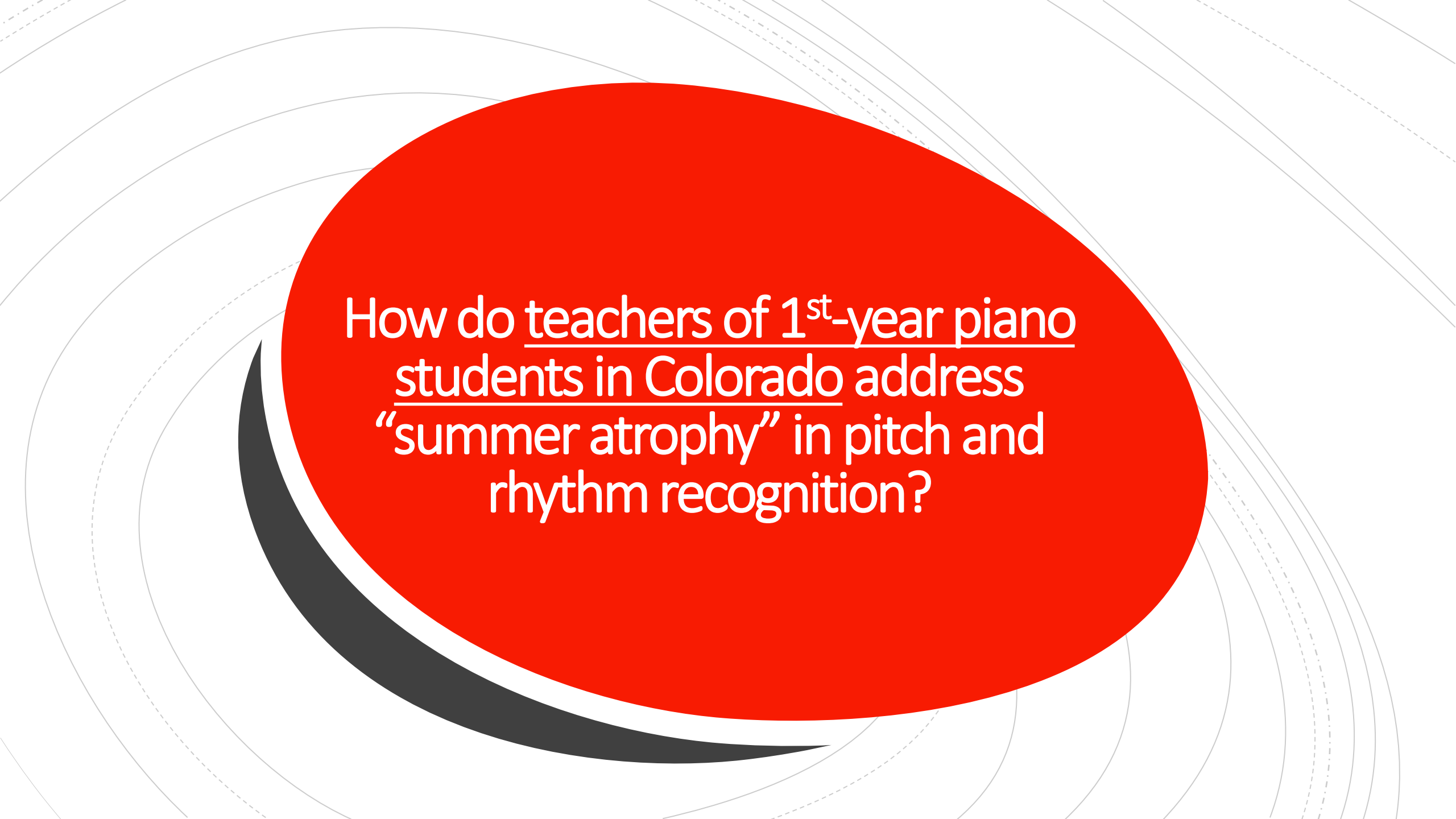
Refine Definition of Target Population

POPULATION

- Beginning students?
 - Age?
 - Length of study?
 - Lesson format (Individual vs. group)?
- Parents?
- Teachers?



To what extent does recognition of pitch and rhythm decline during summer breaks for 1st-year child pianists in group and individual classes?



How do teachers of 1st-year piano students in Colorado address “summer atrophy” in pitch and rhythm recognition?

Summary

- **Define with clarity your target population.**
- **Use a sample when population is too large to study.**
- **Consider sampling technique in relation to research goals.**
- **Make conclusions and generalizations with great care.**