Pitcher's Name	Richard O'Quinn	FoR category	Management	Date Completed	21 OCT 16
(A) Working Title	Leadership Practices in Strategic Decision Making				
(B) Basic Research Question	How do leaders practice strategic decision making?				
(C) Key paper(s)	Cabantous, L., & Gond, J. P. (2011). Rational decision making as performative praxis: explaining rationality's éternel retour. *Organization Science*, *22*(3), 573-586. Nutt, P. C., & Wilson, D. C. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of decision making* (Vol. 6). John Wiley & Sons. Sandberg, J., & Tsoukas, H. (2011). Grasping the logic of practice: Theorizing through practical rationality. *Academy of Management Review*, *36*(2), 338-360.				
(D) Motivation/Puzzle	Each day leaders make millions of strategic decisions with grave consequences at stake. Education programs, capital investments, research and development, and tax schemes are some examples. Climate change, peace and security issues, and humanitarian and health crises are significant others. A crucial question then, for dealing with complex strategic decision challenges effectively, is what constitutes the practice of strategic decision making? Despite management scholars having devoted considerable research on strategic decision making (SDM) over several decades, we still have a poor understanding of how leaders actually make strategic decisions in practice, whether they are good or bad.				
THREE	**Three** core aspects of any empirical research project i.e. the "**ID**io**Ts**" guide				
(E) Idea?	For decades, SDM research has been conducted using a scientific rationality perspective. Scientific rationality assumes the basic epistemological stance that human knowledge is made up of subject-object relationships. While this framework has produced useful insights into SDM, it has fragmented the field and failed to produce a coherent overall theory of SDM. Since SDM is inherently a socially constructed process, this study pursues a practical rationality framework to study SDM to best capture a comprehensive picture of how leaders actually conduct SDM in practice.				
(F) Data?	This is a qualitative study aiming to better understand how leaders practice SDM and from this understanding, how we might improve SDM processes in organizations. I plan to interview and observe senior leaders such as chief executive officers, managing directors, general managers or equivalents, as well as analyse documents relating SDM processes in various types of organizations to gather data on a broad range of leader experiences. Participants will include approximately 20-30 senior leaders (CEOs, MDs, GMs, or equivalent) from various public and private organizations in Australia, the United States, and potentially the United Kingdom, as well as veteran and currently serving US military personnel. Based on demographic estimates, the participants will include approximately 50% males and females with an average age of 50 (ranging from 30 to 70). Participants will be selected based on their current or previous leadership roles requiring SDM. The researcher will initiate contact directly from personal contacts or from referrals. Participation will be requested via email, phone conversation, personal meeting, or combination thereof.				
(G) Tools?	This is a phenomenographic study conducted using recorded individual interviews and participant observation of 20-30 senior leaders and others who participated in or witnessed SDM processes in organizations. During phase one, I propose to study chief executive officer or equivalent leaders of organizations. I plan to sample leaders facing a variety of strategic contexts, with short to long-term based outcomes to determine how these different contexts may affect SDM. I also plan to study leaders from public and private sectors and different cultural backgrounds to gain a better understanding how SDM differs among diverse circumstances. Specifically, I propose to study seven to ten leaders from each sector of technology, mining, and military to gain a wide set of				

	variations of practice in SDM. I will also attempt to study leaders with experience in both good and bad outcomes resulting from their SDM. This strategy may not only provide insights on what not to do, but may also aid in triangulation of practices. Each interview should last 1-2 hours to best gather information from each senior leader or process participant. The study aims to also observe senior leaders during multiple decision making sessions as well as interview others involved in the process in order to triangulate and gather additional data. For phase two, I plan to choose individuals who best represent different understandings of SDM (perhaps one in each sector) and then conduct participant observation around these individuals. This is to develop a deeper understanding of individual leaders as strategic decision makers and a broader understanding of contexts surrounding SDM. Sampling for phase two should ideally include representative cases of each understanding. I will select 6-8 participants and observe them for 2-3 hours at a time on different occasions over four to five weeks. Research may also include the analysis of documents related to leader strategic decision making.
TWO	**Two** key questions
(H) What's New?	This use of a practical rationality perspective rather than the normative scientific rationality perspective is new in this research.
(I) So What?	SDM is a human social construct and thus scientific rationality is inadequate for analysing it. A practice perspective of analysis, focused on human social aspects of SDM from the outset can help us better understand how leaders understand SDM and enact its complex processes in a range of environments and circumstances. Our unit of analysis thus goes from individual factors contributing to SDM to combinations and interrelations of those factors in SDM. Understanding the interrelation of factors and not just the factors themselves will help us know what is important in SDM and how we might improve it.
ONE	**One** bottom line
(J) Contribution?	This research aims to create a new, comprehensive integrated theory of SDM.
(K) Other Considerations	**Collaboration** with leaders and their organizations is required to gain insight into the phenomenon of SDM. **Target Journals** are the *Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Management,* and *Journal of Behavioural Decision Making* **Risk:** The greatest risk to this project is the **scope** and complexity of the field of research in SDM. Because of the fragmented nature of many decades of research, creating a comprehensive integrated theory for SDM is ambitious. **Ethical clearance** has been attained.