# Identifying a potential topic

* Think about the last three to five non-fiction books you have bought for yourself, for pleasure (i.e., not textbooks you had to buy). What, if anything, is the common theme?
* Within your circle of friends, are you considered to be an expert for a particular topic?
* Think about the range of topics that get you talking at a party, or at an evening with friends. Which topics keep coming up because people know you are interested in them, or because you find that discussions on other topics naturally lead back to this one?
* Is there a topic that friends and family associate with you? You can tell if they keep sending you links, tag you on Facebook, or include you in mentions on Twitter. Or perhaps you have a separate group or list for people who write or post or blog on a particular topic – which is it?
* If you leaf through a newspaper or magazine, which kind of article catches your eye?
* Which papers or studies have you read in frustration, wondering how the authors could have missed [important factor]?
* Which findings have you come across that made you wonder whether they applied to [region] or [culture]?
* Which studies or areas of interest do you know of where major parameters have changed dramatically recently, i.e. studies about social ties between adolescents but conducted before online social networks had been conceived; pre-2001 (pre-9/11) attitude studies relating to public perception of terrorism and terrorists, etc.
* Which recent major shifts in technology, politics, public policy etc. do you know of where you feel their implications or consequences are not sufficiently researched yet?