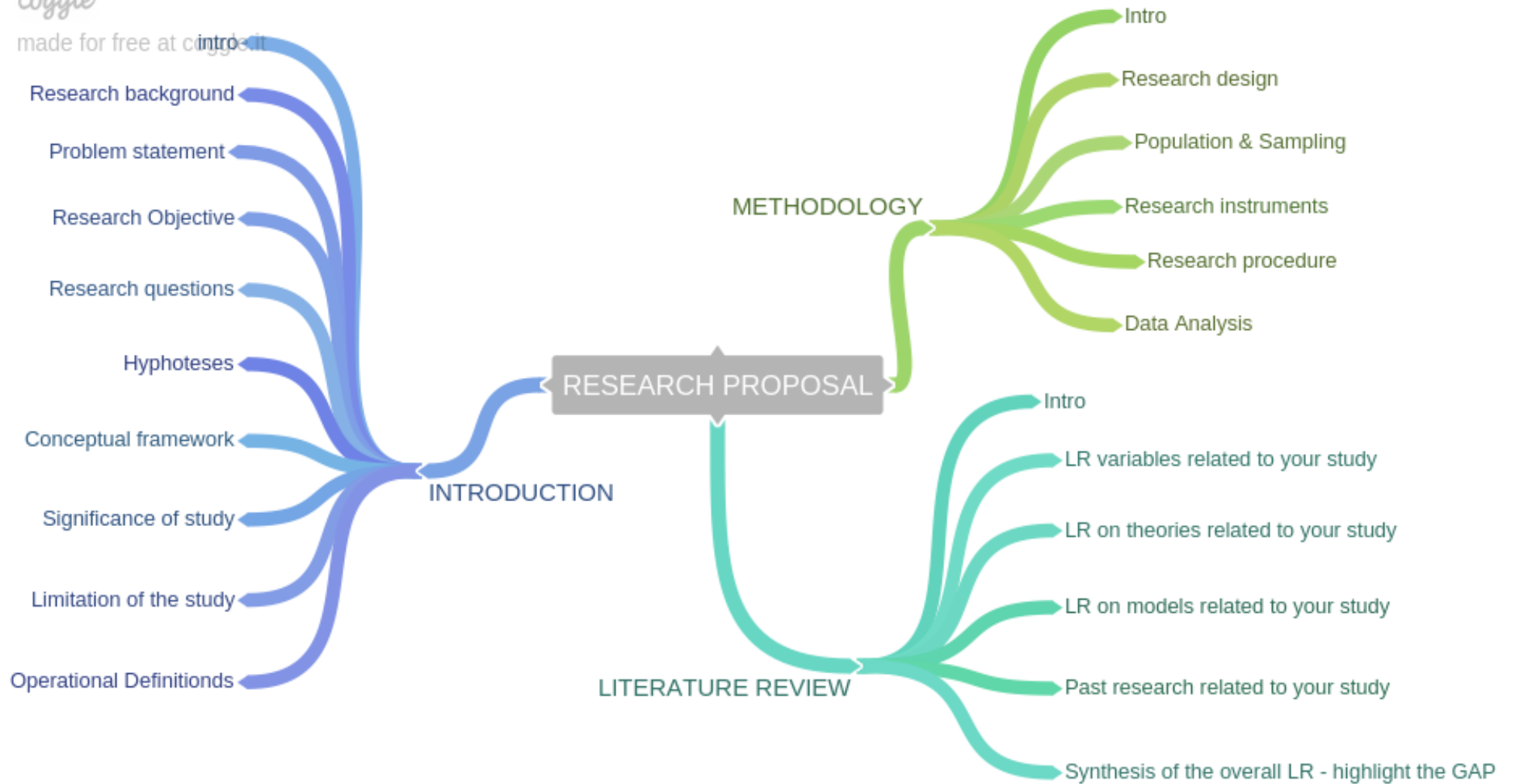# PROPOSAL DEFENSE MECHANISM FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS:

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE RESEARCH PROPOSAL
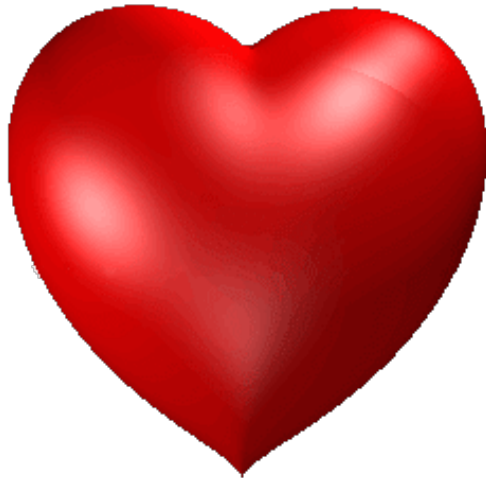
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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION
- intro
- Research background
- Problem statement
- Research Objective
- Research questions
- Hyphoteses
- Conceptual framework
- Significance of study
- Limitation of the study
- Operational Definitionds

METHODOLOGY
- Intro
- Research design
- Population & Sampling
- Research instruments
- Research procedure
- Data Analysis

LITERATURE REVIEW
- Intro
- LR variables related to your study
- LR on theories related to your study
- LR on models related to your study
- Past research related to your study
- Synthesis of the overall LR - highlight the GAP

RESEARCH PROBLEM

'A well defined and a structured research problem is the heart of the research project'

RESEARCH GAP

- Gaps in the research where you can suggest ways forward or theories of your own.
- Areas where the research is incomplete.

RESEARCH GAP

Identifying gaps in the literature shows that you understand the topic and suggesting new work, shows you have the potential for further study and independent research.

HOW TO BUILD RESEARCH PROBLEM & GAP?

Identify a **'Practical Problem'**
e.g.:

'Let's take the example of Safe Driving Habits in Sri Lanka. This is because, some drivers consume liquor before driving, they don't know how to park even though a separate parking slot has been given, they use to throw trash out of the car window, some do not obey driving rules, traffic lights etc.'

* Having a puzzle you can simply convert the scenario into a research problem

HOW TO BUILD RESEARCH PROBLEM & GAP?

Form a **'Research Gap'**
(now you need to have 'practical problem' and contradiction in literature')

e.g.: *"Current global economic crisis seems to be especially hard for large companies. Therefore, SMEs are facing strong expectations for their role to be key players when economies will be recovering from the present global recession. Previous research has also widely investigated the firms' characteristics creating profitability.* **However***, the results obtained are inconclusive or even contradictory. Consequently, many researchers have concluded that more research is needed in that area"* (Soininen et al., 2012, p. 614)

* inconclusive or even contradictory with regard to the characteristics creating profitability in SMEs

Another example of problem statement

One process, however, that has been neglected in second language research is that of vocabulary building (Carter, 1987; Levenston, 1979; Meara, 1980, 1983). It is true that a number of significant studies have recently been done on how second language learners infer word meanings from context (Faerch, Haastrup and Phillipson, 1984), **but the question of how those inferences help towards building up a native-like vocabulary has rarely been considered**. *Consequently, we have little basis, other than our own experience of what works, from which to develop an approach to the teaching and learning of words.*

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES/QUESTIONS

1. Is the research question something I/others care about? Is it arguable?
2. Is the research question a new spin on an old idea, or does it solve a problem?
3. Is it too broad or too narrow?
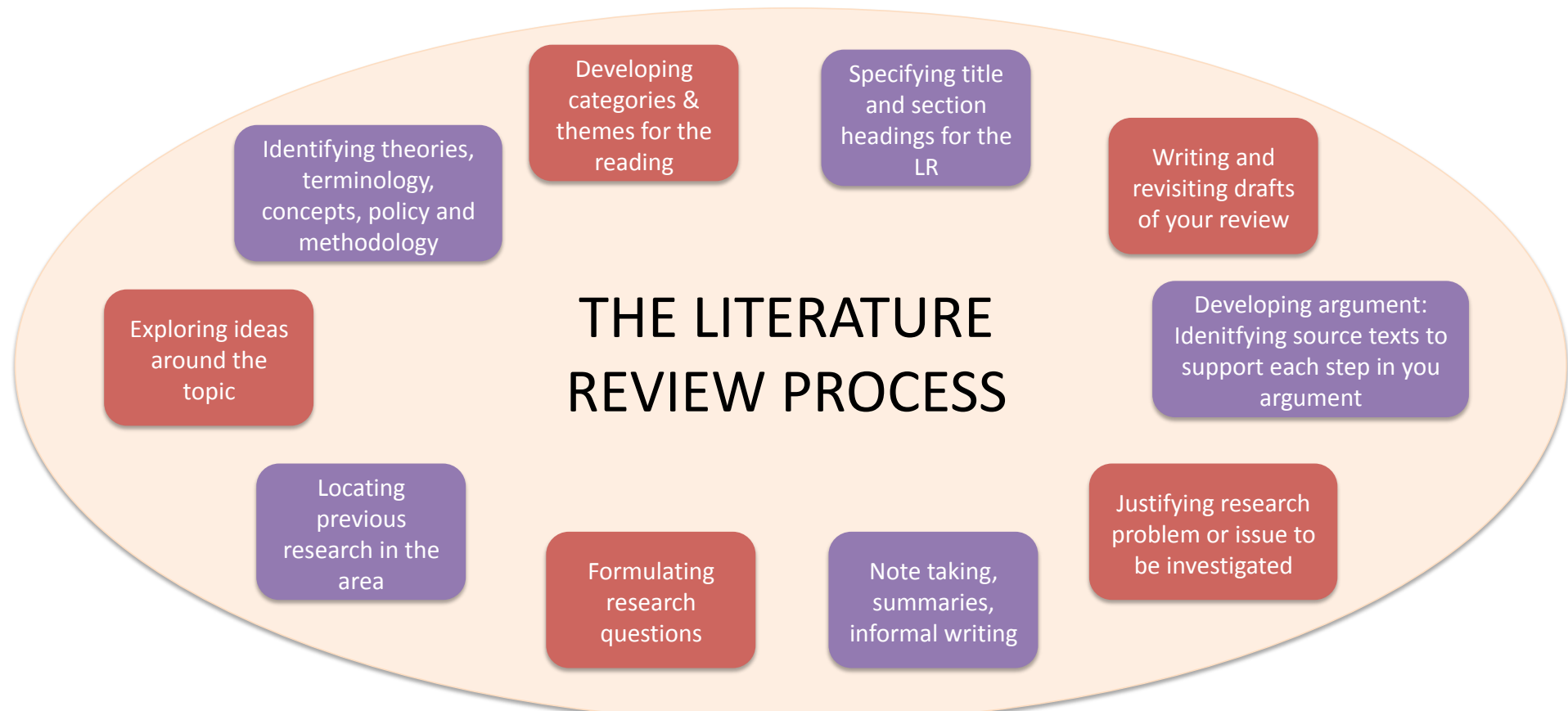4. Is the research question researchable within the given time frame and location?

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Extensive reference to related research and theory in your field

- It is where you identify the theories and previous research (which have influenced your choice of research topic and the methodology your are choosing to adopt)

-

PURPOSES OF DOING LR

- Identify the field and context of your research

- identify the approach to the research and the methodology

- identify types of data needed

- gain a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the field

- avoid duplicating previous work (ensure the originality of your work – an essential prerequisite for PhD research!)

THE LITERATURE
REVIEW PROCESS

Developing categories & themes for the reading

Specifying title and section headings for the LR

Identifying theories, terminology, concepts, policy and methodology

Writing and revisiting drafts of your review

Exploring ideas around the topic

Developing argument: Idenitfying source texts to support each step in you argument

Locating previous research in the area

Justifying research problem or issue to be investigated

Formulating research questions

Note taking, summaries, informal writing

A 'good' literature review…..	A 'poor' literature review is…..
….. is a synthesis of available research	…..an annotated bibliography
….. is a critical evaluation	….. confined to description
….. has appropriate breadth and depth	….. narrow and shallow
….. has clarity and conciseness	….. confusing and longwinded
….. uses rigorous and consistent methods	….. constructed in an arbitrary way

METHODOLOGY
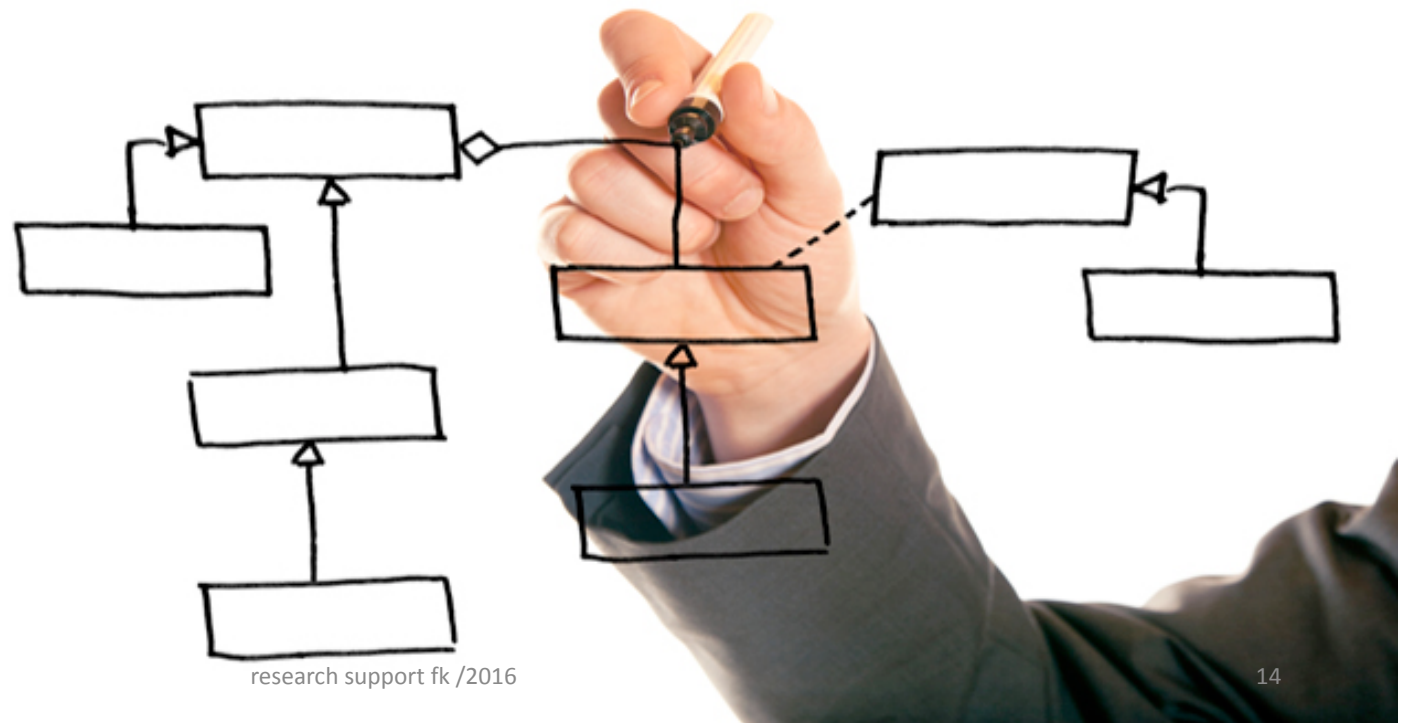
METHODOLOGY

Considerations prior to identifying research methodology:

Your epistemological stance

Type of data to answer your research questions

EPISTIMOLOGICAL STANCE

An epistemological issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline.
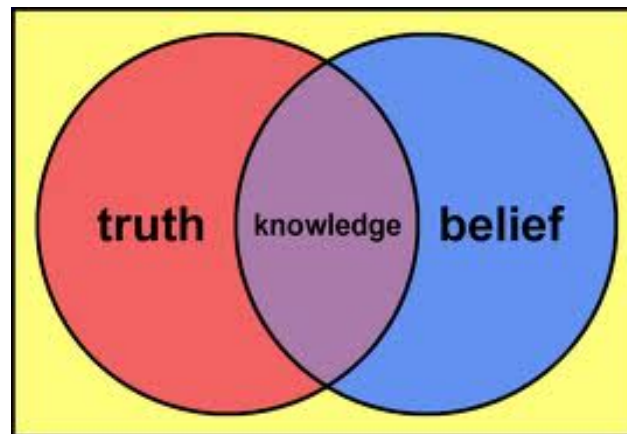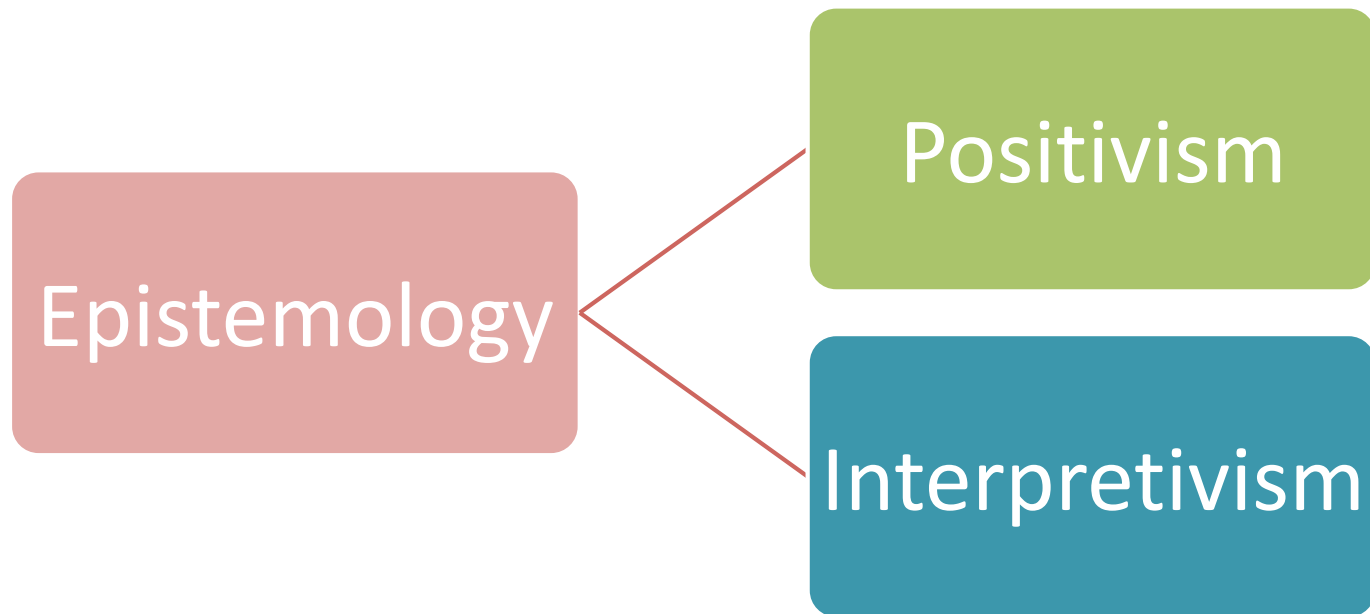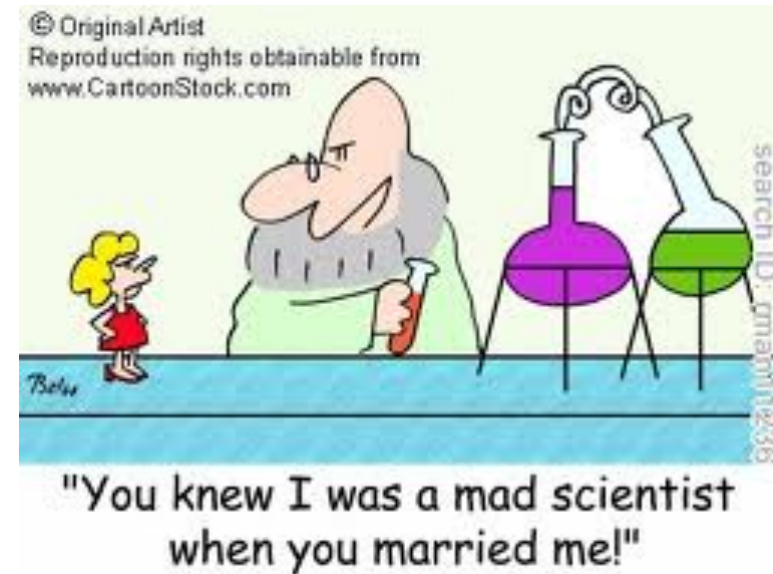
POSITIVISM

- Advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social sciences
- The purpose of theory is to generate hyphotheses that can be tested and that will allow explanations of laws to be assessed (deductivism)

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"You knew I was a mad scientist when you married me!"

INTERPRETIVISM

- Emphasize on the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order (respect the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action)

- Multiple realities – what true for you might not be true to others

COMMON CONTRASTS BETWEEN QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (Bryman, 2004)

Quantitative	Qualitative
Numbers	Words
Points of view of researcher	Points of view of participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalization	Contextual understanding
Hard, reliable data	Rich, deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial settings	Natural settings

CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

(Merriam, 1998)

Point of comparison	Qualitative	Quantitative
Focus of research	Quality (nature, essence)	Quantity (how much, how many)
Philosophical roots	Phenomenology, interpretivism	Positivism, objectivism
Associated phrases	Fieldwork, ethnographic, naturalistic, grounded, constructivist	Experimental, empirical, statistical
Goal of investigation	Understanding, description, discovery, meaning	Prediction, control, description, hypothesis testing
Design characteristics	Flexible, emergent, evolving	Predetermined, structured
Sample	Small, non-random, purposeful	Large, random, representative
Data collection	Researcher as primary instrument, interviews, observations, documents	Inanimate instruments (scales, tests, surveys, questionnaires)
Mode of analysis	Inductive (by researcher)	Deductive (by statistical methods)
Findings	Comprehensive, holistic, expansive , richly descriptive	Precise, numerical

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

- Participants are determined by you research method.

- In quantitative research – you need certain number of sample that are representative of the population

- In qualitative research – no certain number of participants are required
  * saturation of data

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

-Questionnaire

-Interview

-Observation

-Documents

-Etc

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE PROPOSAL DEFENSE:

1. What is the problem you are studying?
2. Why is it important?
3. What results have you achieved so far and why to they matter?
4. How is this substantially different from prior work?
5. What do you need to do to complete your work?

REMEMBER SMART

S pecific
M easurable
A chievable
R ealistic
T ime-Bound