



2022-2023 GROW Workshop Series

Framing Research Questions

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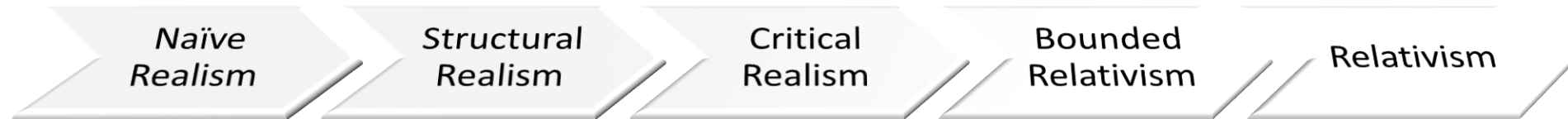




Ontology

- Philosophical study that focuses on identifying and understanding the kinds of things that exist in our known world
- Addresses the question... what is reality?
- Ontology is the starting point of all research
- It is important for all researchers to be mindful of their ontological persuasion before engaging in research activities

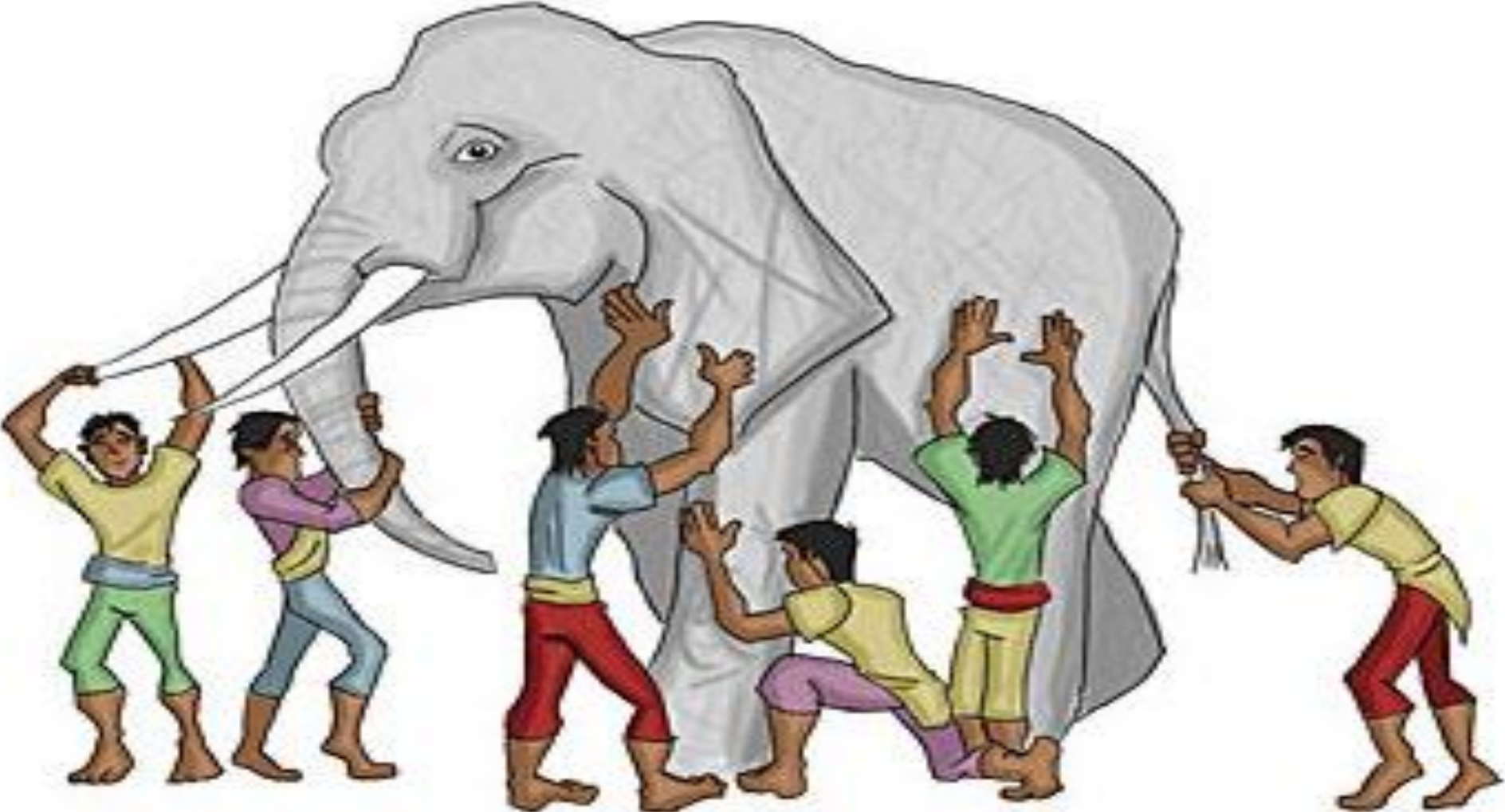
Ontological Persuasions



WHAT IS

TRUTH?

The Blind Men and the Elephant



Epistemology

- Branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge and understanding
- Used to differentiate between true (**adequate**) knowledge and false (**inadequate**) knowledge
- Key epistemological questions:
 - What is knowledge?
 - What is the nature of knowledge?
 - Is our knowledge valid?

[] TRUE

[] FALSE



Why Framing is Important?

- Framing a clear research question is a critical part of the research design process

Theoretical and Empirical
Antecedents

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graph TD; A[Theoretical and Empirical Antecedents] --> B[Research Question]; B --> C[Research Design];
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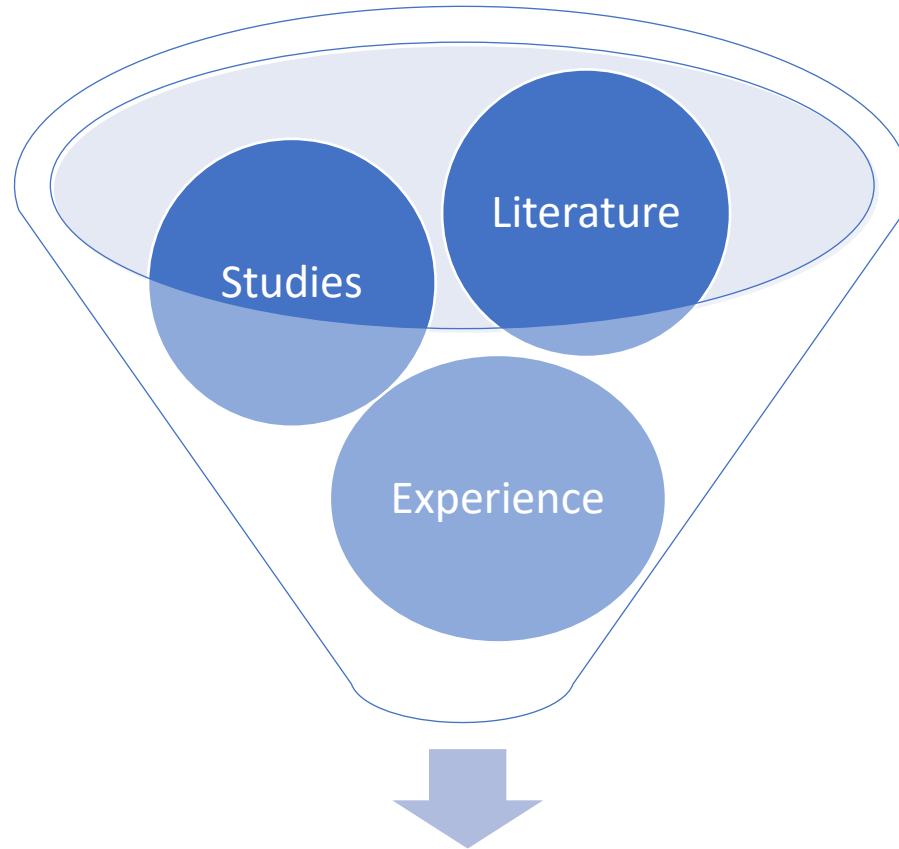
Research Question

Research Design

What Are Research Questions?

- A research question helps researchers define what they hope to learn when they conduct a study
- Research questions establish which part of the (previously identified) problem a study will try to solve for the reader/audience
- Developing research questions is an essential element of both quantitative and qualitative research designs

Research Question Origins



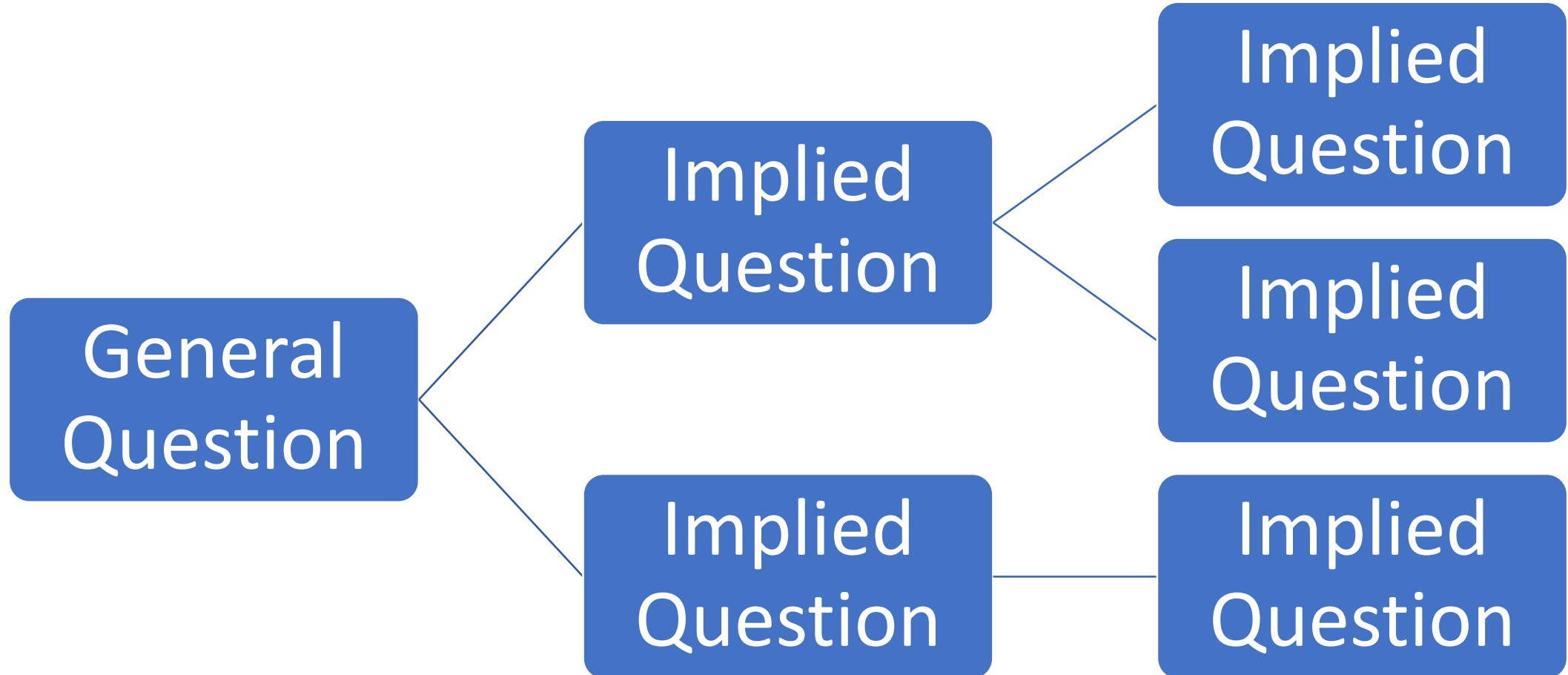
Information Gaps



Types of Research Questions (General)

- **Descriptive** – studies designed to simply describe what is going on or what exists
- **Relational** – studies designed to look at the relationships between two or more variables
- **Causal** – studies designed to determine whether one or more variables cause or affect one or more outcome variables

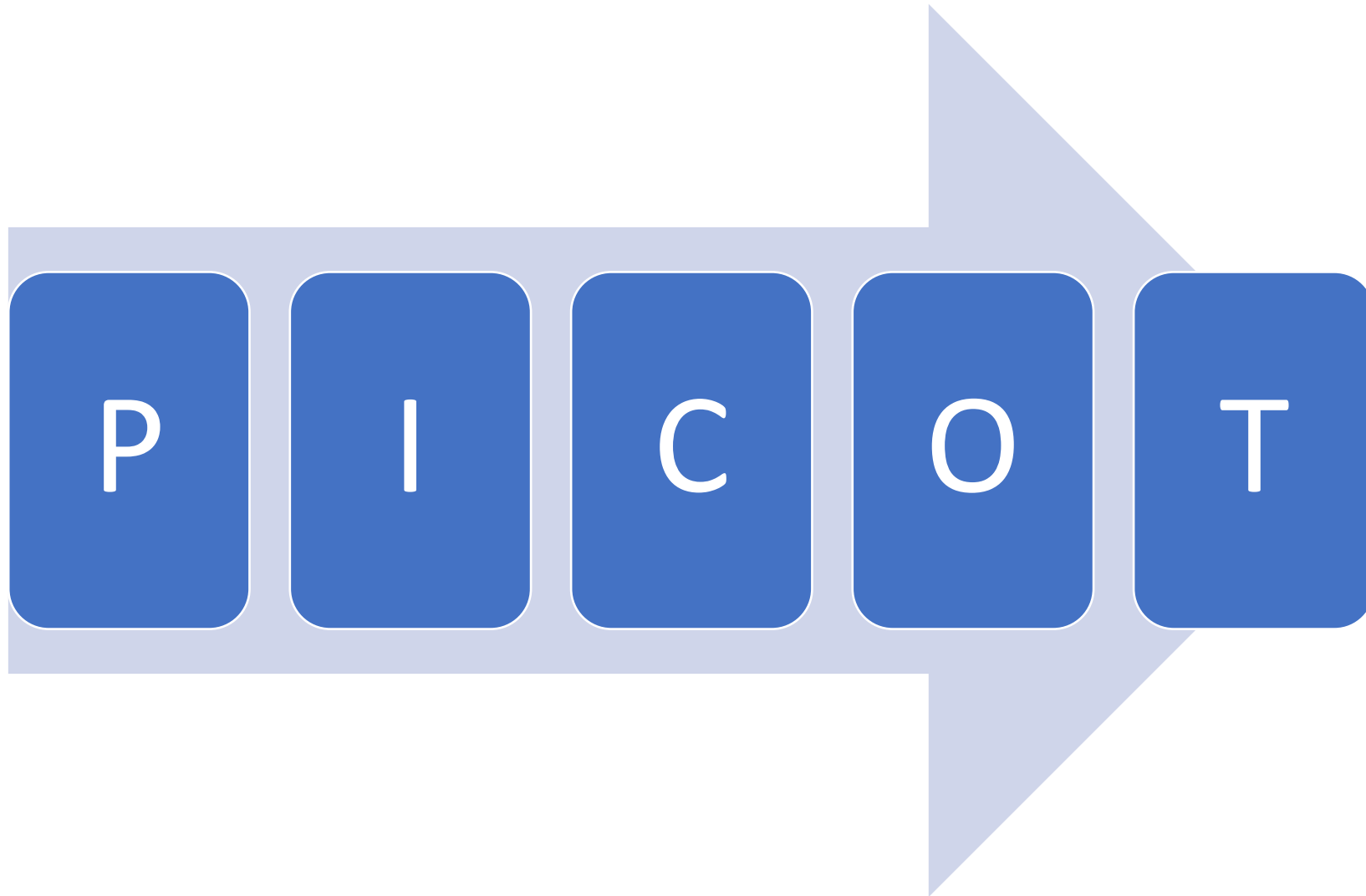
Research Question Hierarchy



Types of Research Questions (Implied)

- Descriptive – Existence
- Descriptive – Classification
- Descriptive – Comparative
- Relational – Composition
- Relational – Simple Interaction
- Causality
- Causality – Comparative
- Causality – Comparative Interaction

Framing Quantitative Research Questions



Framing Qualitative Research Questions

1. If I could discover the meaning of one person's lived experience, I would ask _____ (individual) about _____.
2. If I could discover the shared lived experiences of one quality or phenomenon in others, I would want to know about _____.
3. If I could experience a different culture by living/observing it, I would choose to experience _____.
4. If I could discover what occurred and was experienced in a single lived event, that event would be _____.
5. If I could discover a theory for a single phenomenon of living as shared by others, I would choose to discover the theory of _____.

What Makes a Good Research Question?

F

Feasible

I

Interesting

N

Novel

E

Ethical

R

Relevant

M

Manageable

A

Appropriate

P

Publishable

S

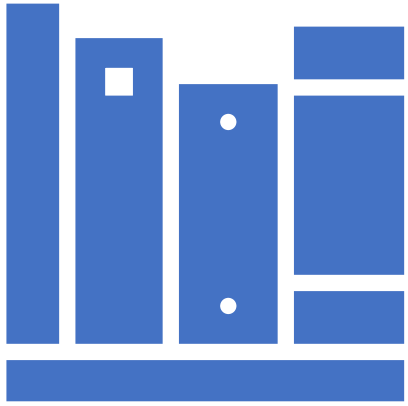
Systematic

Addressing Problems and Challenges

Problem	Solution
Too broad	Include fewer variables, narrow the question
Not enough participants	Expand inclusion criteria, modify exclusion criteria, add other recruitment sources
Requires methodology you do not have training on	Collaborate with others, seek educational opportunities
Too expensive	Use fewer participants, low/no cost measures, fewer follow-ups or data collection periods
Not interesting/relevant	Consult with mentors, peers, re-engage with the literature

Research Question Writing Considerations

- Reference the population to whom your results will be generalized
- Make research questions as specific as possible
- Avoid using words or terms that do not substantively add to the meaning of the stated question
- Focus on what will be studied – avoid discussing implications
- Name the variables/constructs in the order they occur or will be measured in your study design
- Avoid using words such as **signficiant** and **prove** in research questions
- More than a “yes” or “no” response



Check with Your Advisor/Chair

Every discipline is slightly different *and* doctoral committees may have specific recommendations