

Business Research Methods

What is a literature review?

Dr Matteo Molinari

**First, a reminder upon the nature and purposes of
“research”...**

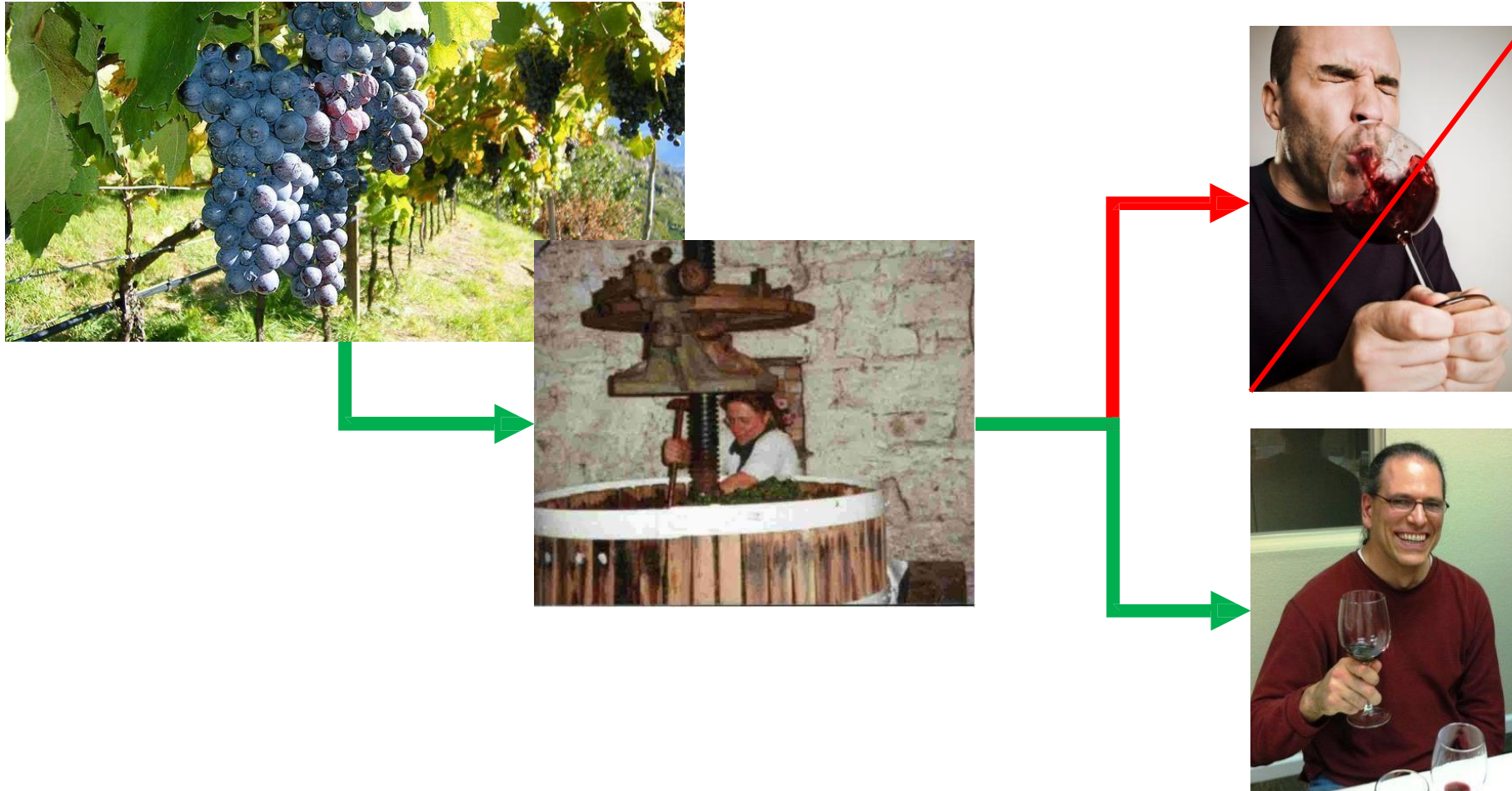
The background of the slide is a photograph of a verdant mountain slope. Two waterfalls are visible: one in the upper right and another in the lower left. The terrain is covered in dense green vegetation, with some rocky patches exposed. The overall scene is bright and natural.

reSEARCH:

**Something new,
original**

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It'll be some work... but for good outcomes



Questions you may want to ask yourself before start

- ✓ Did I read the assessment brief? Meaning – read.
- X Did some academic already write something very similar? If yes, give up your research question and start again.
- ✓ Does my research question hint at searching for something novel?
- ✓ Is my research question connected to something journals or scholars have been debating recently?
- ✓ Are there reasonable rich data and reports publicly available for my topic and for the chosen case example? OR
- ✓ Is this research question accessible for data collection? Will there be any business organisation that is likely to support me?

- To understand what theory is and what scholarly literature is.
- To understand the utility of literature and how to review it.
- To understand the process of selecting and critically reviewing suitable literature for the capstone project.

Definition of 'theory' (excerpt) Merriam-Webster Dictionary

- A plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles offered to explain phenomena.
- A hypothetical set of facts, principles, or circumstances.
- A body of theorems presenting a concise systematic view of a subject
- The general or abstract principles of a body of fact.
- The analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another

To distil valid principles, generalisation of context

To arrive at justified hypotheses for the sake of testing those

To make valid statements about causalities

- Dissertation sets merely emphasis on **theory** contribution
- **Time** and Word count is limited – so you can't 'have it all'
- Consultancy Report sets merely emphasis on novel practices / impact upon the professions
- Dissertation still needs empirical analysis, i.e. data collection from real businesses
- Consultancy Reports still needs a conceptual grounding, hence a certain extent of review of academic literature

What is literature review?

- Works
- Your field/ topic

- Relevant literature
- Capture main points
- Major concepts
- Reviewing

What literature do I look for?

1. Start with your argument= your personal view of your research problem
2. Then relate your argument with a mainstream business discipline (marketing, accounting, business strategy, HRM, etc.)
3. Refine your related discipline by focusing on a specific topic or theme of research within your chosen discipline (*e.g.* discipline= business strategy, topic= small business growth & development)

Where do you start searching?

Search only in 'top tier' journals for high-impact articles =
ABS 4* journals with high citations: In Business & Management
studies: mostly US journals captured in Web of Science but not
Google Scholar (which includes non-original sources)

Where do you start searching?

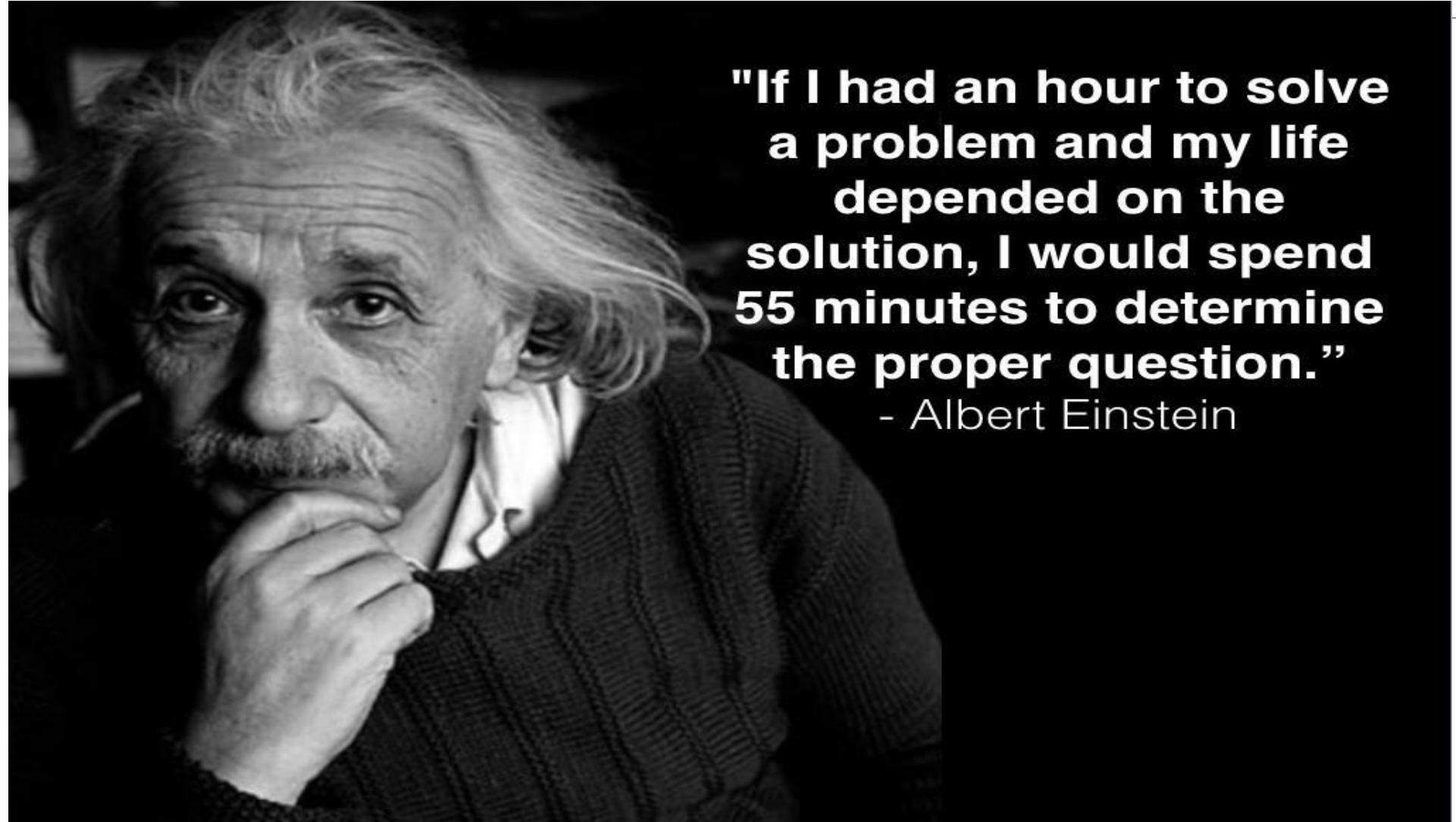
Check Association of Business Schools (ABS) 2014 list to verify journal quality: <http://charteredabs.org/academic-journal-guide-2015-view/>

Articles in 3/4* journals will yield more than enough quality literature for most Masters Dissertations, though others could be used

Do not try to impress your examiners by including obscure literature.

How to identify the 'right' literature and topic

1. Reflect upon the discipline of your interest (i.e. 'Marketing') and start readings top journals.
2. Try to find debates / communities / themes that seem to interest you most (i.e. Consumer Behaviour as a Marketing topic).
3. Develop a research question.
4. Search literature specifically for your question, using key words and following guidance by review articles and research discipline's handbooks.
5. Refine your research question, to eliminate aspects that have already been too much covered by publications.
6. Reflect how, when and via what resources you will be able to a) collect data or b) create a novel dataset from public sources.
7. If you can't, refine your research question once more.



Source: <https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/why-is-it-important-to-get-our-questions-right-7e15c5fbe5f5>

1. Collect
2. Analyse
3. Arrange
4. Summarise

1. Be organised
2. Main contextual features
3. Methods used in prior studies
4. Theories

1. Planning the review – mapping the field of study (see e.g.s of Venn diagrams, trees & mind maps)
 2. Identifying & evaluating studies – systematic analysis of established field
 3. Extracting & synthesising data – use tables to summarise the arguments and methodologies
 4. Critiquing the methods used in prior studies – try to find a good example of the method you will use
 5. Reporting – writing up your literature review
- * Link with your assessment

Venn diagram of literature on strategic investment appraisal behaviour

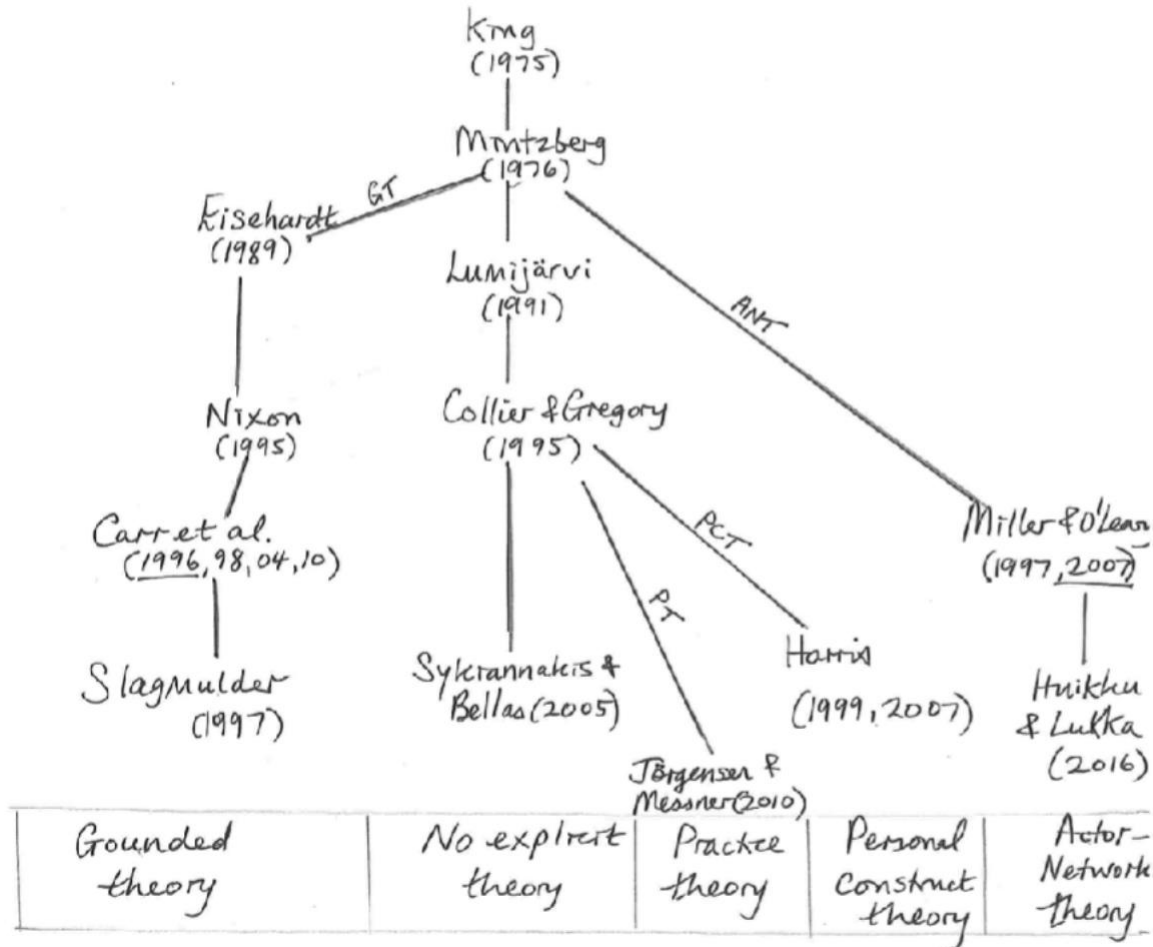


Use appropriate tools for mapping exiting knowledge:

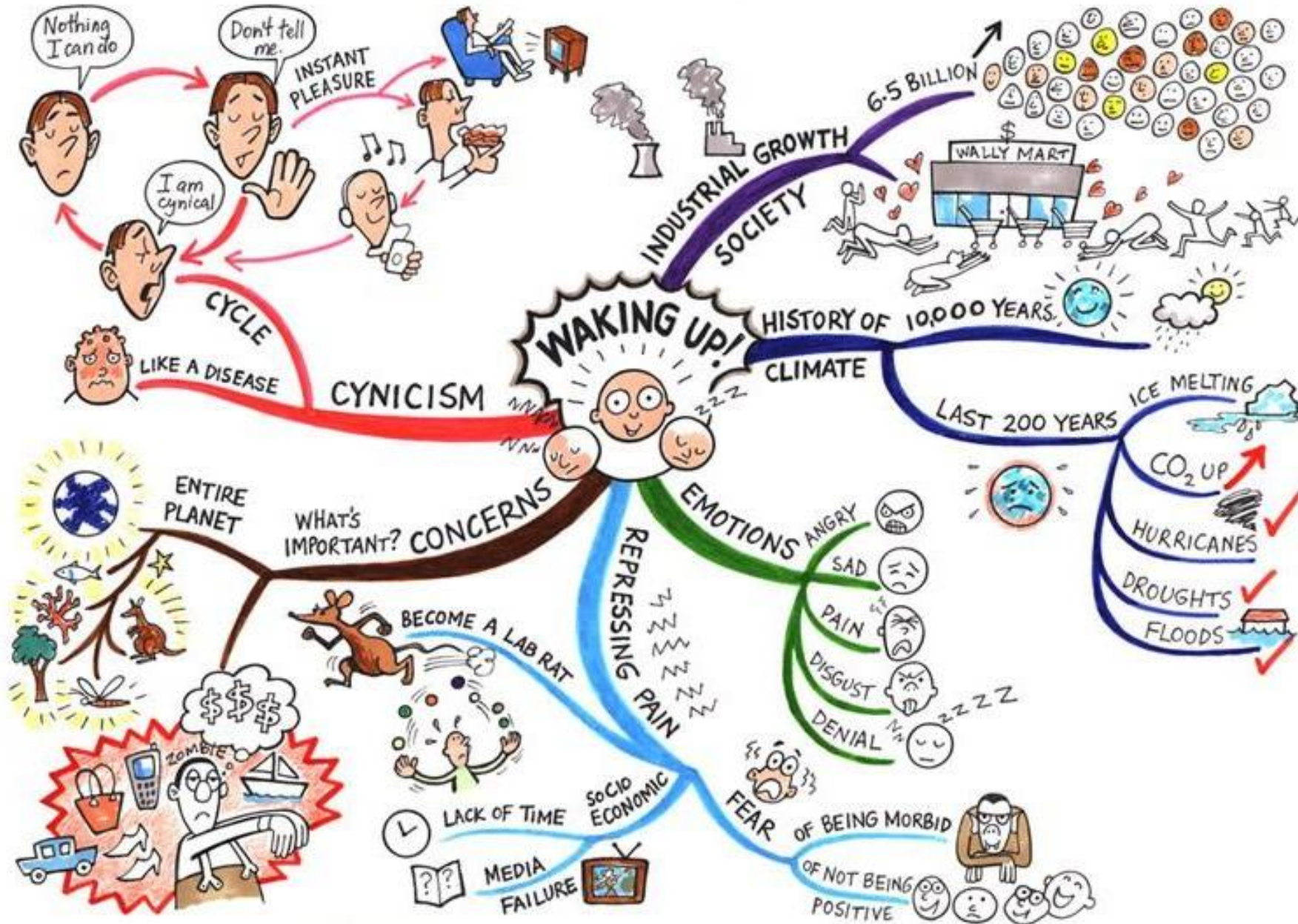
E.g. Family tree of a discourse or research

SIDM case studies

Example of family tree using Harris et al. (2016).



E.g. Mindmap



Above all, know your chosen literature

Synthesize prior research & suggest how issues=> opportunity for saying something novel & interesting

- Locke & Golden-Biddle (1997) suggest you should think of prior research as ...

- 1) Incomplete (needs further development)
- 2) Incommensurable (literature overlooks important perspective/s and/or is wrong)

3) Inadequate (literature omits important views of phenomenon or needs clarification)

- Framing – **Choices of selection & “salience”**: You choose your gap & argue coherently about its salience (importance) for your audience

- *Requirements of a literature review*
- *Theory*
- *How to review*