Choosing Your Research Project/Topic

What type of cook (researcher) are you?

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Most of us have our own unique style of inquiry. Some styles embody the traditional norms of science while others exemplify nontraditional norms. There is no one right or wrong way to investigate a problem per se, but if you have a very strong research style, you might find it frustrating to work on a project that is designed for a different type of researcher. A dissertation topic should be an original contribution to scholarly research that fills a void in the literature and extends prior knowledge. A dissertation or thesis can replicate a study in a different environment or time or develop a new theory. Regardless of its intent, you should find a project that you are passionate (or extremely interested) about working diligently on.

Note: It is important to keep in mind that in doing research there is room for the daring, speculative, inventive spirit who creates new theories or tries bold, imaginative experiments, as well as for the cautious, critical spirit who examines theories searchingly or for those who will patiently design experiments requiring complete attention to detail. There are researchers who prefer the precision of mathematics and those who prefer the color of words; those who prefer to deal with human beings and human problems and others who prefer to work with computers or microscopes. However, according to Goldstein and Goldstein in their book *How We Know* (1985), "for all there should be the same goal—the joy and excitement of discovery and the same outcome—knowledge."

On the Cutting Board that follows you will find a typology of major ways in which people make inquiries, adapted from Mitroff and Kilmann's *Methodological Approaches to Social Science* (1978).

Answer each question and record your answers in the spaces provided. This will give you an opportunity to discover what method(s) of doing research would work well for you.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Although there are many different ways to classify types of scientific thinking, C. G. Jung's classification has been chosen because it takes into account both affect (feeling) and cognition (thinking).

Cutting Board

Read each statement below and indicate on the accompanying Likert-type scale how strongly you agree with each declaration.

Note: This activity is **not** designed to serve as a model for survey design. It is instead intended to help give you get a *taste* of a variety of research methodologies that fit your research style and enable you to solve the problem you pose. This survey is based on Mitroff and Kilman's (1978, 1983) typologies of research and uses a 4-point Likert-type scale. The questions are intentionally complex and force a commitment to one view rather than allowing for a neutral view or a no opinion option.

T: To truly understand the AIDS epidemic, one must ascertain the truth about AIDS. A researcher must look at the data, make recommendations for further study based on these findings, and not base conclusions on information obtained through subjective means or anecdotal stories that rely too heavily on his or her personal feelings.

disagree totally			agree totally	
1	2	3	4	T = ____

F: To truly understand the AIDS epidemic, one must look at the individuals afflicted with the disease and note the similarities and differences that exist between those tormented with AIDS. Recommendations for further study should be based on the immediate needs of those individuals as well as how the researcher feels he or she could best be personally involved.

disagree totally			agree totally	
1	2	3	4	F = ____

S: To deal with environmental problems, one should look at the methods available and determine the most practical way to solve these problems now and not spend the time on some vague plan in the unspecified future.

disagree totally			agree totally	
1	2	3	4	S = ____

I: To deal with environmental problems, one should look at all the possibilities that exist now and, more important, could exist and take a broad, long-range view of the situation. A quick fix to the problem should be avoided.

disagree totally			agree totally	
1	2	3	4	I = ____

To discover your research typology:

1. Enter your T, F, I, and S numbers in the spaces provided.
2. Fill in the table by computing the sums of T + I in cell I,

   T + S in cell II, S + F in cell III, and I + F in cell IV.

3. Your research style(s) is (are) the cell(s) with the largest

   sum.

4. Underline the style(s) with the largest sum.

	T-value: ____	***F-value: ___***
I-value: ___	***I.***	***IV.***
S-value: ___	***II.***	***III.***

I. Conceptual Theorist II. Analytical Scientist
III. Particular Humanist IV. Conceptual Humanist

What follows is a description of the archetype associated with each of the research styles above. See if the research style (s) you have underlined suits your style of inquiry.

I. Conceptual Theorist. This type of researcher believes in TOE, i.e., the Theory of Everything. A conceptual theorist is holistic and imaginative. He or she believes in multiple causations and the development of a coherent testable framework through large-scale correlation. Science holds a definite privilege in this type of thinking but it is not the only way that a conceptual theorist views a problem. Motto: Intellectual conflict is an important characteristic of research and should not be dismissed. Such conflict is vital to the development of both methods and theories. The following methodologies would likely appeal to a conceptual theorist: correlational studies, factor analyses, descriptive research, repertory grid analysis, Q-methodology, and Delphi study.

II. Analytical Scientist. This type of researcher prefers exactness, precision, and unambiguous situations. Science is also paramount and exact in this type of thinking. The analytical scientist sees science as ruled by nature. The ideal experiment is one where all the variables are controlled. Motto: In order to label something a scientific theory, it must be cast into a logical form so that, given the proper antecedent conditions (X,A), one can make the valid deduction (Y). Otherwise (according to the analytical science view) it is nonscientific. The following methodologies would likely appeal to an analytical scientist: experimental design, quasi-experimental design, semiotics, trend analysis, design-based research, regression-discontinuity design, and retrospective record review.

III. Particular Humanist. This type of researcher prefers personal knowledge to rational knowledge. Science is not privileged in this type of thinking and is subordinate to other disciplines such as poetry and literature. The particular humanist believes that humans are too complex to study as a whole. Motto: It is absurd to think that science has remained immune to outside influences. The challenge is to develop a methodology that does justice not only to the humanity of the participants studied but to the researcher as well. Only a person who is passionately involved in his or her

research can make a difference. The following methodologies would likely appeal to a particular humanist: case study, appreciative inquiry, action research, semiology, phenomenology, grounded theory, critical incident technique, and hermeneutics.

IV. Conceptual Humanist. This type of researcher prefers holistic knowledge. Science has no special privilege in this type of thinking. Knowledge exists only to better humanity. To further understand humanity, a conceptual humanist believes that one must study human behavior from many points of view and constantly develop new approaches to improve human life based on these observations. Motto: The question is not, "Is storytelling science?" but "Can science be used for the betterment of humanity?" The following methodologies would likely appeal to a conceptual humanist: grounded theory, phenomenology, evaluative case study, causal-comparative research, historical research, appreciative inquiry, content analysis, Delphi method.

Note: If you found this test effective and have the luxury of selecting your own faculty advisor(s), you might want to determine what type of researcher(s) they are. Offer to conduct this test with potential advisors to see if you have compatible research styles.

Below are research topics that would likely appeal to the people with archetypes described above who wish to conduct an investigation of the relationship between smoking and health. Note: Smoking is the leading cause of statistics☺ . Read each research topic and see if the research topic described for your archetype appeals to you.

If asked to choose a research topic on smoking and health, where funding is not a concern, the following topics would be of interest to:

I. Conceptual Theorist: Determine the correlation between smoking and diseases, smoking and personality types, why people smoke, and as many multiple correlations as one can ascertain between smoking and other factors.

II. Analytical Scientist: Determine definitively if cigarette smoking causes cancer. Simulate smoking in laboratory animals and determine if cancer is caused.

III. Particular Humanist: Study a smoker and determine why this person started smoking and any ill effects attributed to smoking. Have cancer patients who have smoked keep a diary and study their feelings and concerns.

IV. Conceptual Humanist. Survey ex-smokers and determine the most effective ways each person was able to stop smoking. Use this information to develop a program to help people stop smoking.

Choosing Your Research Method: A Glossary

There are many types of research methods and designs. The list below can be helpful in choosing a research method that can help you solve the problem you are investigating and answer your research questions. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it can be helpful to understand and appreciate the variety of research methods available. Further elaboration on some of these methods will come later in this text. If you have any questions about, or need further information about, any of these very basic descriptions of research, you should do a Web search and learn more about the method. Once you select a methodology, you need to obtain a germinal text on the method. Such texts provide a *cookbook* that a dissertation *chef* will consult frequently during each stage of the *meal* preparation.

Look over this list and put a check (✓) next to methods that seem appealing, an × next to ones that seem unappealing, and a dash (-) next to ones that you have no opinion about. You need to make a decision about the methodology that would work best for your study. Finding a methodology that works for you is a major milestone in the research process. You may also want to check out http://tinyurl.com/3xf6ljx for further guidance.

- **Action research**: This methodology is based on a grass-roots problem negotiated between the researcher and the researched. It is known by many other names, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, and contextural action research, but all are variations on a theme. Usually a members of a group identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and, if not completely satisfied, try again. Thus, there is a dual commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction. Accomplishing this twin goal requires the active collaboration of researcher and client, and thus it stresses the importance of colearning as a primary aspect of the research process (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996).
- **Appreciative inquiry**: This is a form of action research that attempts to help groups, organizations, and communities create new, generative images for themselves based on an affirmative understanding of their past. Working from a socio-rationalist theory of change (Barrett, Thomas, & Hocevar, 1995; Bushe, 1995; Cooperrider, 1990; Gergen, 1990), these new images are expected to lead to developmental changes in the systems in which they are created.
- **Case study research**: Here the background, programs, current conditions, and environmental interactions of one or more classrooms, communities, schools, or institutions are observed, recorded, and analyzed in an attempt to find patterns of internal and external influences. Case

study research generally answers one or more questions that begin with "how" or "why." The questions are targeted to a limited number of events or conditions and their interrelationships. Because case study research generates a large amount of data from multiple sources, systematic organization of the data is important to prevent the researcher from becoming overwhelmed by the amount of data and to prevent the researcher from losing sight of the original research purpose and questions. The case study method can be used to build upon theory, to produce new theory, to dispute or challenge theory, to explain a situation, to provide a basis to apply solutions to situations, or to explore or describe an object or phenomenon. The advantages of the case study method are its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations and its public accessibility through written reports. Case study results relate directly to the common reader's everyday experience and can facilitate an understanding of complex real-life situations.

- **Causal-comparative research**: Here the objective is to identify causal relationships among variables that cannot be manipulated. Variables that cannot be changed normally are variables such as sex, origin of birth, and ethnicity. Causal research is used to determine whether variables cause or affect one or more outcome variables. This study involves no direct manipulation. However, controversy exists as to whether the name causal is appropriate and if a relationship is found it could likely be the result of the operation of a third variable. To learn more check out: **http://tinyurl.com/3vxuxgz.**
- **Content analysis**: Here the researcher quantifies and analyzes the presence, meanings, and relationships of words and concepts and then makes inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Klaus Krippendorff (1980) defined content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or data) to a context of their use." That is, it refers to methods for inferring meaning from the text. Content analysis involves computer programs used to help analyze textual materials, such as presidential speeches, government documents, party platforms, newspaper editorials, professional publications, and so on. By analyzing words and texts rather than numbers, content analysis fits in the qualitative paradigm. Texts can be defined broadly as books, book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theater, informal conversation, or really any occurrence of communicative language (Weber, 1990). Babbie (1998) described the method as unobtrusive. Researchers often attempt to uncover the validity of commonly held views by looking at the artifacts that report on those views. Babbie discussed a feminist researcher that looked at a group of classic children's stories for the role stereotyping of girls looking for a Prince Charming character. The researcher compared the characters in a variety of stories and

noted similarities and differences in the portrayal of young women in the stories. Content analysis lends itself to the genre of political or social change research intent on promoting a particular point of view. Therein lay its strengths and weaknesses. For more information check out http://tinyurl.com/33p274k.

- **Correlational research**: Here the researcher collects data to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. When there is a particular situation and an outcome is consistently occurring in that situation, causation might be suspected. Correlation is more of a descriptive aspect of the events that appear to be taking place concurrently. Causation must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. According to Heckerman and Breese (1996), the designs for this kind of a research are founded on the Bayesian assumption that reality is best described as a network of interacting and mutually causal relationships. Everything affects—and is affected by—everything else. This web of relationships in not necessarily linear, as assumed in experimental research.
- **Critical incident technique** (CIT): CIT had its origins in the 1950s when researchers started to focus studies on human behavior and quantifying it. Founded by John C. Flanagan in 1954, CIT supports the theory that there must be a clearly demarcated event for it to be considered a critical incident. If a detailed account of an event cannot be obtained, the incident is thrown out because the incident itself is the basic unit of analysis.
- **Delphi research**: Here the focus is future oriented. The Delphi technique was originally used to target future problems and foresee solutions. The method involves utilizing the knowledge of experts, combining it, and redistributing it. The study opens up doors and forces new thought processes to emerge. It also allows for respondents to see how closely they responded to other experts in their field and to justify their train of thought (McPhillip, 1997; Lindstone & Turoff, 1975).
- **Descriptive research**: This does not fit neatly into the definition of either quantitative or qualitative research methodologies, but instead can utilize elements of both, often within the same study. Descriptive research is the study of phenomenon "as it is" without making any "changes or modifications" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 191). Unlike experimental research, there is no treatment that is manipulated or controlled by the researcher. This research method is not used to determine "cause and effect" relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 191). Types of descriptive research include correlational studies, developmental studies, and observation studies. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizing, tabulating, depicting, and describing the data collected. Here the researcher will describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest accurately and within a contextual

framework. A descriptive study tries to discover answers to the questions who, what, when, where, and sometimes how. The researcher attempts to describe or define a topic, often by creating a profile of a group of problems, people, or events. The descriptive study is popular in business research because of its versatility across disciplines (Cooper & Schindler, 2002).

- **Design-based research or decision analysis**: Here the practitioner and researcher models merge to produce meaningful change in the context of practices. It is a way to link process to outcomes in a particular setting. Researchers in the decision analysis field have often encountered difficulties in transforming theoretical ideas into practical decision support tools.
- **Ethnographic**: Here the researcher looks at an entire group—more specifically, a group that shares a common culture—in depth. The researcher studies the group in its natural setting for a lengthy period of time, often several months or even several years. The focus of investigation is on the everyday behaviors (e.g., interactions, language, rituals) of the people in the group, with intent to identify cultural norms, beliefs, social structures, and other cultural patterns. Ethnography has it roots in the fields of anthropology and sociology. Present-day practitioners conduct ethnographies in organizations and communities of all kinds. According to Agar (1996), ethnographers can study schooling, public health, rural and urban development, consumers and consumer goods, and any human arena. While particularly suited to exploratory research, ethnography draws on a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, moving from *learning* to *testing* while research problems, perspectives, and theories emerge and shift.
- **Evaluation research**: Here research is undertaken to determine the effectiveness or impact of a social program or intervention and whether a program or curriculum followed the prescribed procedures and achieved the stated outcomes, sometimes referred to as summative evaluation research. Five main areas to evaluate are outcomes, process, costs, comparisons, and generalizability: http://tinyurl.com/2k7n25.
- **Experimental research**: Here one or more variables are manipulated and the results analyzed in a scientific manner. A major strength of this methodology, gained from random assignment of participants, is its internal validity: One can be more *certain* about attributing a cause to the independent variables. A major weakness is external threats to validity: It is inappropriate to generalize beyond the results of the experiment. A good primer for educational experimental research can be found at http://tinyurl.com/6z5kxwb.
- **Factor analysis**: Here the researcher uses a statistical approach to analyze interrelationships among a large number of variables and explain these variables in terms of their common underlying dimensions (factors). The information contained in the number of original variables is condensed to a smaller set of dimensions (factors) with a minimum loss of information

- **Grounded theory**: Here the researcher seeks to generate a theory that explains a process or action. The researcher would use this design for developing theories through primary interviewing, developing patterns or themes, and composing a visual that describe this theory. Creswell (2002) says in this way the theory is *grounded* in the data from the participants. The researcher can then develop hypothesis and predictions about the experiences of individuals. Creswell (2002) warned that the researcher must be careful about making a premature commitment to a set of analytical categories. There are three general designs in grounded theory: systematic, emerging, and constructivist (Creswell, 2005). The systematic design by Strauss and Corbin (1998) represents the most rigorous type of grounded theory because it uses specific data analysis steps. The emerging design by Glaser (1992) stresses letting a theory emerge from the data rather than forcing data into a systematic model. The constructivist design by Charmaz (2000) focuses on using "views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies" (Creswell, 2005, p. 402) rather than facts and observable acts. In their classic text *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss (1967) described what they believe to be the primary goal of qualitative research: the generation of theory, rather than theory testing or mere description. According to this view, theory is not a "perfected product" but an "ever-developing entity" or process (p. 32). Glaser and Strauss claimed that one of the requisite properties of grounded theory is that it be "sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse situations within the substantive area" (p. 237). What differentiates grounded theory from most other research methods is that it is explicitly emergent. The grounded theory researcher sets out to discover what theory accounts for the research situation as it is, grounded in the data. In this respect it is like action research: the aim is to understand the research situation. The aim, as Glaser in particular states it, is to discover the theory implicit in the data.
- **Hermeneutic research**: Here activities and things are seen as a text, and studied for what they mean, what they mean to those involved in them, and what they mean to others. Historically, hermeneutics has been associated with the interpretation of biblical texts and encompasses the attempt to explore and identify the process of understanding (Babbie, 1998). Hermeneutics emphasizes the sociocultural and historic influences on inquiry. According to Thompson (1990), hermeneutics was "derived from the Greek verb, hermeneueuein, 'to interpret,' and from the noun, hermeneia, or 'interpretation'" (p. 230). In the social sciences, this looks like research into the metacognitve realm—a participant interprets his or her life by some process that a hermeneuticist attempts to discover.

  The process of hermeneutic research analysis involves continuous researching into the understanding of human phenomena, which creates new questions, which result in new

understanding, which then creates new questions. This process is called the hermeneutic circle. The final step in hermeneutic inquiry analysis can be visualized as a network of overlapping circles representing related experiences and different contexts of the human phenomena under investigation.

As is the case in phenomenological research, the number of participants necessary for this type of research will vary depending on the nature of the study and the data collected along the way. Researchers usually continue to engage in interviews with participants until they believe they have reached a point of data saturation, in which a clearer understanding of the experience will likely not be found through further discussion with participants.

A hermeneutic researcher may be interested in how teachers adopt technology in their classrooms. A teacher may claim that there is no time to learn the computer. Through probing and observation the researcher may uncover that fear of failure is actually the root cause limiting the teacher's use of the technology. The researcher reconsiders time as an obstacle and begins to look at how the teacher reconciles the interaction with the computer and the lessening of the fear of the unknown with time to spend learning the skills. The hermeneutic researcher attempts to discover the processes needed to move beyond denials and claims.

- **Historical research**: Here the life activities of an organization or person are related, with insights about their significance and meanings being explicated. Both quantitative and qualitative variables can be used in the collection of historical information. For more on historical research check out http://tinyurl.com/38uvj94
- **Meta-analysis research**: Here data are collected from several studies on a similar area to find patterns and formulate principles whose goal is to guide future organizational decisions and actions. http://tinyurl.com/35js764
- **Narrative research**: Here the researcher focuses on the study of a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories and reporting individual experiences. The researcher retells stories reported by individuals and focuses on events or activities so they can be analyzed for categories or themes. Creswell (2002) identified the following for strengths and weakness.
    - Strengths – Establish a close bond with the participants. Can bring a participant's voice to the forefront.
    - Weakness – Might tell the researcher's story and not the participant's. The gain the researcher might get could be at the expense of the participant.
- **Needs assessment**: A needs assessment is the first step for any institution or organization considering the development of a new program, product, or treatment. Institutions and organizations must establish the existence of a market demand for their program, product, or

treatment. If one exists, they must determine the market demography and the potential audience's specific needs. A Needs Assessment is a systematic process of asking questions, comparing answers, and making informed decisions about what to do next. The information gathered is used for a specific purpose -- to improve a situation.

- **Phenomenography**: This is an empirical research tradition designed to answer questions about thinking and learning, especially in the context of educational research. It is concerned with the relationships that people have with the world around them. The word *phenomenography* has Greek etymological roots. It is derived from the words *phainonmenon* (appearance) and *graphein* (description). Thus, *phenomenography* is a "description of appearances" (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997).
- **Phenomenology**: Here the meaning of an experience is narrated using story and description. Phenomenology is an attempt by qualitative researchers to "discover participants' lived experiences and how they make sense of them" (Babbie, 1998, p. 281). Phenomenologists focus on persons who have shared the same experiences and on eliciting commonalities and shared meanings. For example, a researcher might want to know how the voters of Palm Beach County, Florida, viewed the controversy surrounding the presidential election of 2000. The election was a specific event and the voters might have a variety of responses that can be analyzed for common threads. The research is very personal, and the results are written more as stories than as principles, yet the researcher stays somewhat detached. Any way the participant can describe their lived phenomenal experience can be used to gather data in a phenomenological study. The primary means of data collection is usually through interviews to gather the participants' descriptions of their experience, however, the participants' written or oral self-report, or even their aesthetic expressions (e.g. art, narratives, or poetry) can be used to understand their lived experiences around a phenomenon. These expression methods are particularly helpful when working with children.

Note: Qualitative researchers tend to use the term *transferability* rather than *generalizability* (Rubin, 2007). Rubin posited that findings from qualitative studies can be transferable to a particular group (small or large) versus generalizing the finding to a population. Hence, a good qualitative study provides a large quantity of information that helps the reader decide the applicability of the finding to their specific need or practice.

- **Quasi-experimental**: When a true experimental design is not available to a researcher for various reasons, e.g., where intact groups are already formed, when treatment cannot be withheld from a group, or when no appropriate control or comparison groups are available, the researcher can use a quasi-experimental design. As in the case of the true experimental design, quasi-experiments

involve the manipulation of one or more independent variables and the measurement of a dependent variable. There are three major categories of quasi-experimental design: the nonequivalent-groups designs, cohort designs, and time-series designs (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

- **Q-Method**: This method was first developed in the 1930s by British physicist-psychologist William Stephenson. It is the systematic study of subjectivity. According to Stephenson (1953), the goal of Q-method is to uncover different patterns of thought. Studies using Q-method typically use small sample sizes. The results of these studies are less influenced by low response rates compared with the results of survey studies. The qualitative methods of Q-method allow participants to express their subjective opinions and the quantitative methods of Q-method use factor analytic data reduction and induction to provide insights into opinion formation as well as to generate testable hypotheses. Q-method research emphasizes the qualitative how and why people think the way they do. http://www.qmethod.org/about.php.
- **Regression-discontinuity design** (RD): Here the researcher determines whether a program or treatment is effective. In RD designs, participants are assigned to a program or comparison groups solely on the basis of a cutoff score on a preprogram measure. Thus the RD design is distinguished from randomized experiments (or randomized clinical trials) and from other quasi-experimental strategies by its unique method of assignment. RD is most appropriate when a researcher wishes to target a program or treatment to those who most need or deserve it. http://tinyurl.com/293nm6v
- **Retrospective record review**: Here the researcher analyzes a treatment from data that have already been collected. A data source must be identified that contains information on those who were exposed to an intervention or condition and those who were not. The data source must contain information on the outcomes of interest in both groups. Comparisons can then be made on the association of particular outcomes with exposure to the intervention of interest. It is important that the two groups share similar demographic or risk factors that could influence the occurrence of a targeted outcome.
- **Semiology**: Here the researcher studies the meaning of symbols. Taken in its broadest sense, it deals with the systems of meaning through which a culture is manifested. The language may be verbal visual, etc., and transmitted through symbols, colors, graphic styles, etc. From a semiotic point of view any social behavior or practice has multiple interpretations. For example, semiologist portend that nobody merely talks. Every speech-act displays a complex of messages through the gesture, accent, clothing, posture, facial expression, social context, etc., above, behind, beneath, beside and even at odds with what words are actually spoken. Similarly, everything around us systematically communicates something meaningful to us, and is

contextual. Supporters believe that semiology has great promise to model several aspects of human thought and action. http://tinyurl.com/27evesx

- **Situational analysis**. A postmodern approach to grounded theory is known as Situational Analysis. Proponents of this method, led by Adele Clarke, seek to rid Grounded Theory of its remaining positivism by examining situations as a whole--their discourses, social worlds, environments and the like--rather than dealing with isolated variables or cause-effect attributions. To analyze data, situational mapping is seen as more important than narratives, which imply an uninvolved researcher removed from what is being researched. Clarke contends that visual maps can reveal complex interconnections in ways that narratives cannot. These maps are not truths in some universal or ultimate sense. Instead they are heuristic devices to illustrate relationships and potential relationships. In heuristic studies, the researcher tends to be more intimately connected to the study than in other types of research. For more information, check out: http://www.situationalanalysis.com.
- **Trend analysis research**: Here the researcher attempts to predict or forecast the future direction of organizational activities. It is a form of regression analysis used to discover linear and nonlinear relationships. The trend analysis module allows the researcher to plot aggregated response data over time. This is especially valuable when conducting a long-running survey and the researcher would like to measure differences in perception and responses over time. http://www.questionpro.com/trend/
- **True Experimental research:** Here the researcher structures the research situation by creating a true experiment that isolates the variable of interest and controls for other confounding examples. Experimental design is the "gold standard" approach for testing a particular treatment or procedure, and is often used in psychological or medical research. http://tinyurl.com/3x8utm4.

Check out http://socialresearchmethods.net/ for more information on choosing a research method.

Cutting Board

1. Which of these studies appealed the most to you?
   _____
2. Which appealed the least to you?
   _____
3. Did you approve of the study defined for your archetype? ___ Explain:
   _____

4. Which three methodologies appeal to you the most?
   _____
   Why?_____
5. Which three methodologies appeal the least to you? _____
   Why? _____

Keep this knowledge in mind when you select your dissertation topic. Check out http://tinyurl.com/2vkamsn for more suggestions on choosing a topic to research.

Classify Yourself Professionally

Now that you have an idea about your research style, it is important that you take this opportunity to objectively classify yourself within your profession. Choosing a project that will sustain your enthusiasm, help you remain dedicated, and enable you to complete it in a reasonable amount of time requires an *ample serving* of knowing who you are professionally, what attracted you to your discipline, and what *nourishes* your interest in your profession.

By using a process in which you will be going from a broad to a narrow perspective, you will be able to discern a researchable project that you are capable of pursuing with vigor. Be aware, however, that once you are immersed in your research, you might decide to change or modify your focus. Be assured that each time you modify your study you are more knowledgeable and have fewer obstacles to overcome. One excellent way to find a topic is to network with other researchers around the globe. With the Internet this can be easily accomplished by joining e-mail discussion lists. A review of the literature often reveals a topic worthy of researching. Also, most dissertations have a section called Recommendations for Future Research. This could be another excellent way to find THE problem you wish to work on.