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# Hansen's Heuristic Hexagon.



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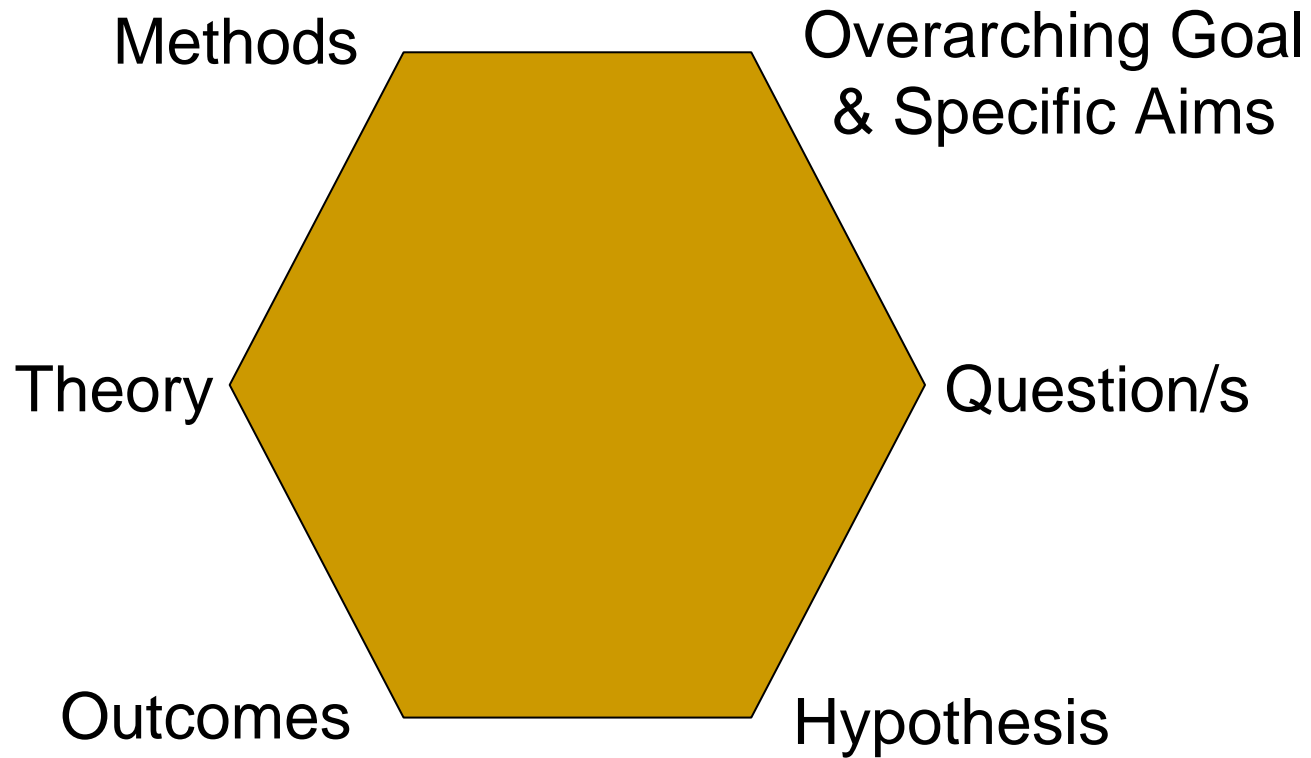
# What's this about?

- Anyone wanting to develop a research proposal inevitably has to focus their thinking about a range of specific elements. For instance:
  - What's the research project about and why are you going to do it anyway? And how well placed are you able to undertake all the work that will be expected of you?
  - What do you really, really, really want to do, and why, and how will you proceed?
  - What's the purpose and how do you know it's worthwhile, ethical and even achievable?
- And so on...

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# What's this about?

- There are lots of questions like these and this short slide show presents a simple way forward for developing your thinking;
- It accompanies a blog I recently wrote which can be found on [www.woodhillpark.com](http://www.woodhillpark.com) along with lots of other useful stuff;
- The blog is called Oops, the forgetory, but not the memory, works fine, so here, belatedly, is a model on how to think about your thesis topic!



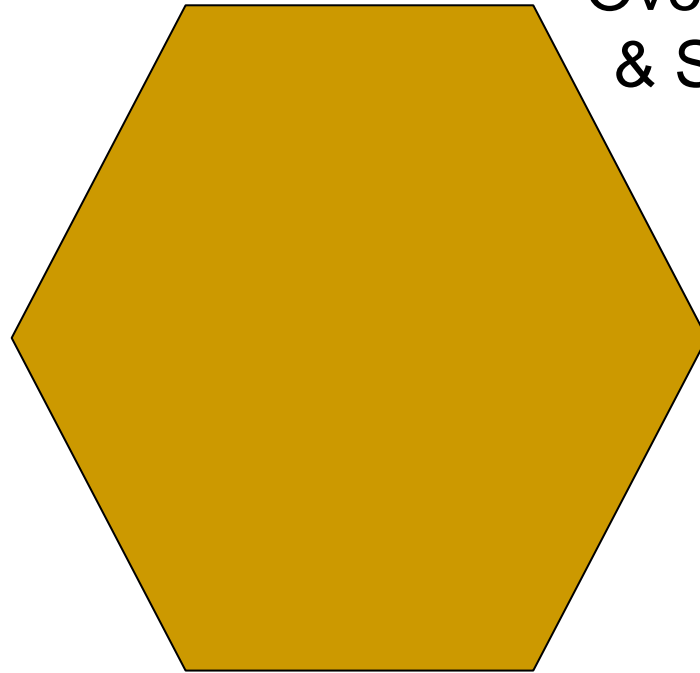
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# When using this model, you can begin at any point

- This model has six parts which isn't really surprising considering it's a hexagon;
- You can traverse the hexagon in pretty well any sequence you like; just make sure your thinking about each element is clear;
- Remember, you're unlikely to develop thoughts about methods before you've generated goals and research questions;
- Let's go through the six points...

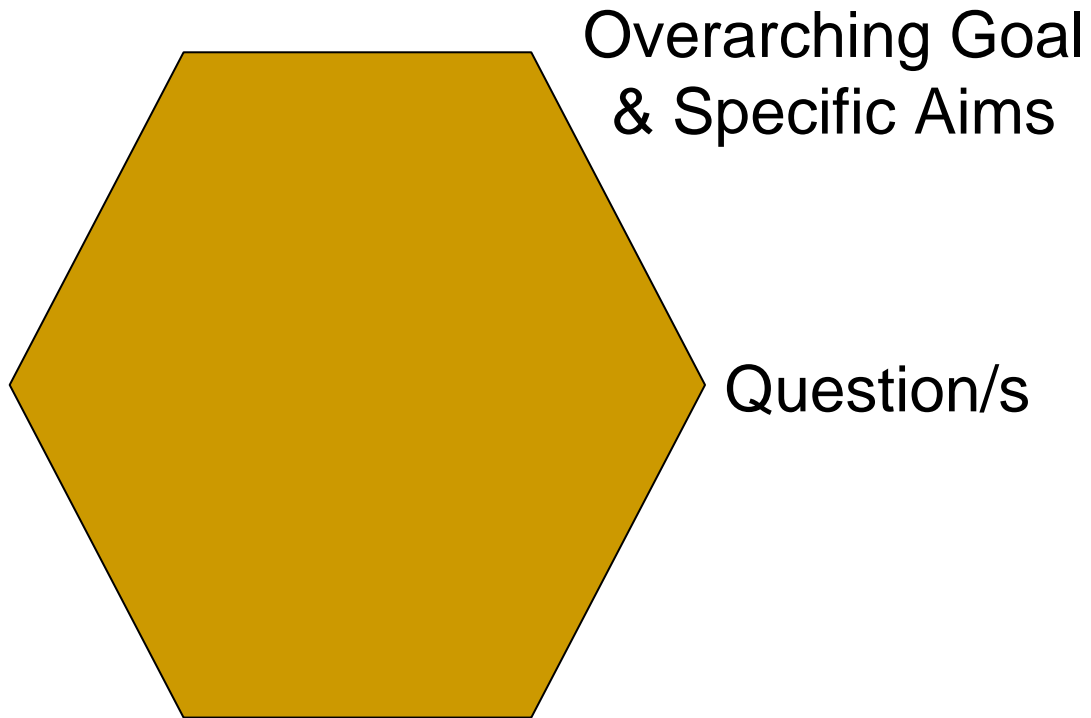
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## Overarching Goal & Specific Aims



# Goals/Aims/Objectives

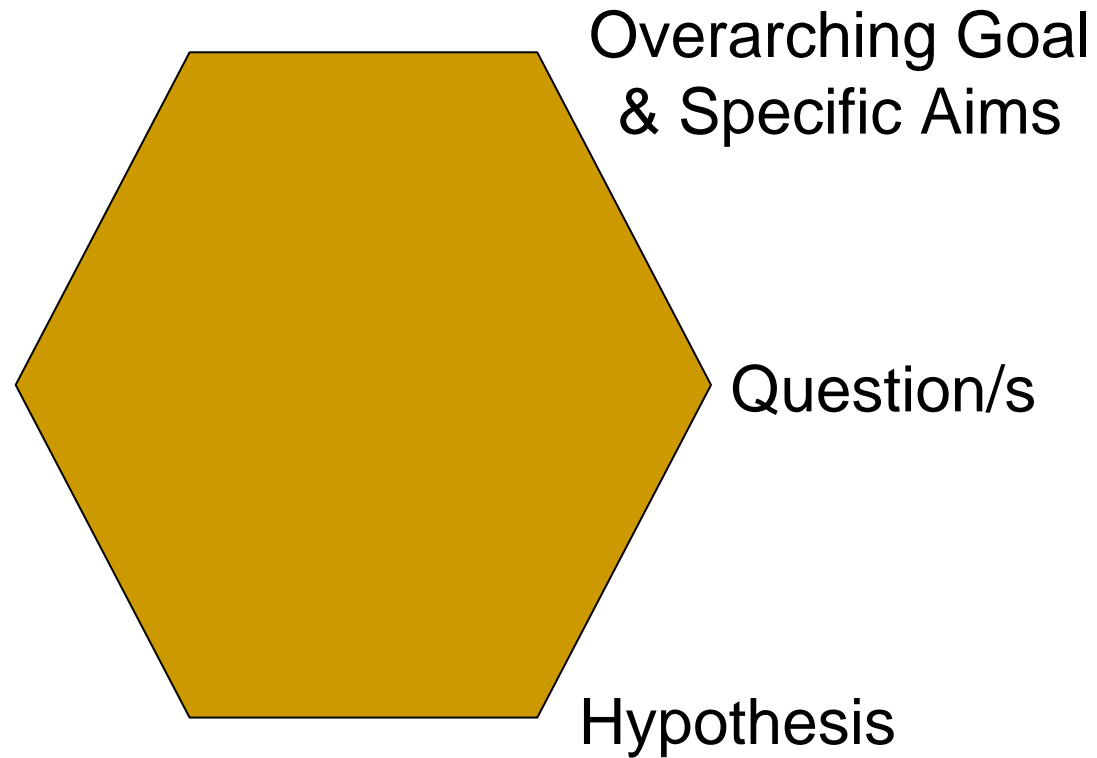
- Your research has to have an overall purpose so let's call the overall reason for doing it a *Goal*;
  - Some more specific aims or objectives are bound to buttress your overarching goal. (Whatever the terminology is that you use, your specific intentions needs to be clearly put);
- Remember that Goals and Aims begin with the word 'To ... (conduct a process or achieve an action or complete a task)';
- Objectives invariably inform methods and outcomes.





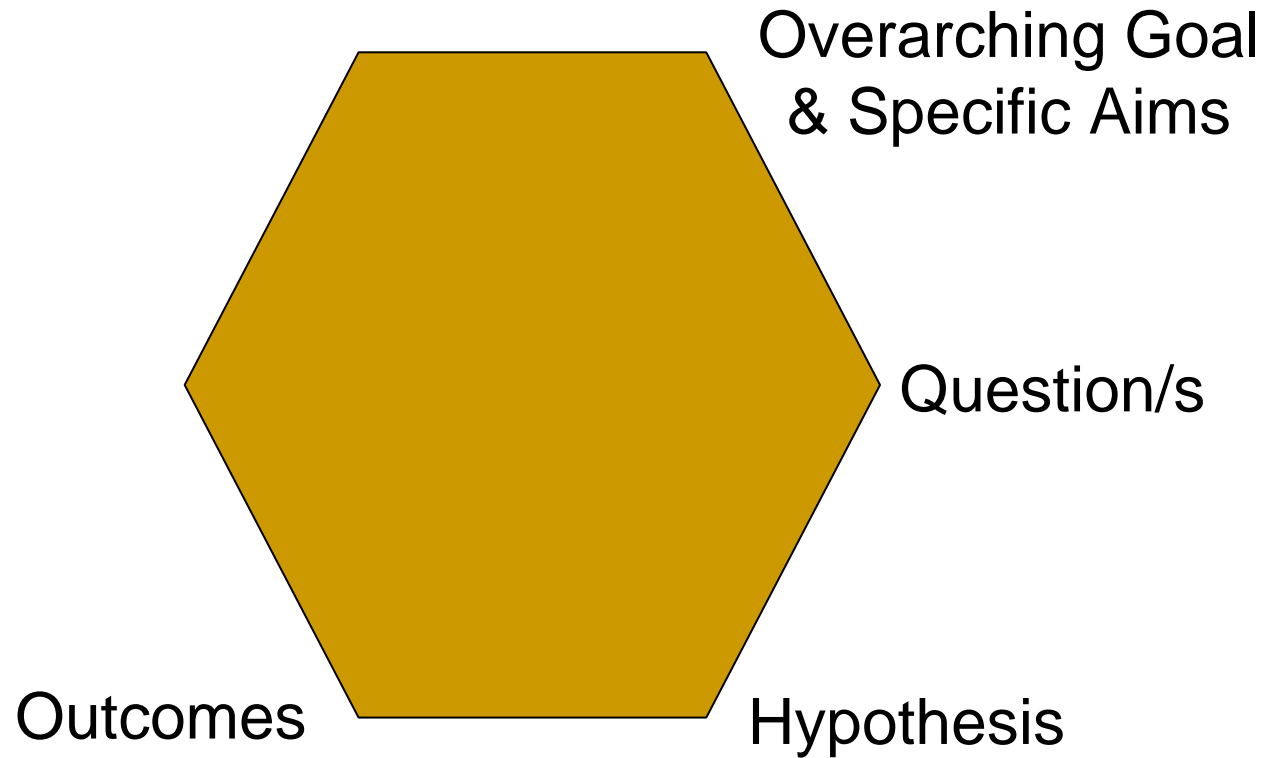
# Question/s

- All research can be framed as one or more questions. What is the overarching question that pertains to your research?
- Remember that questions can be simple (*what* and *why* questions) or can be *compound* (e.g. who did, what, when, with whom and why);
- Developing precise questions which really get to the nub of what you're investigating is a challenging exercise.



# Hypothesis/es

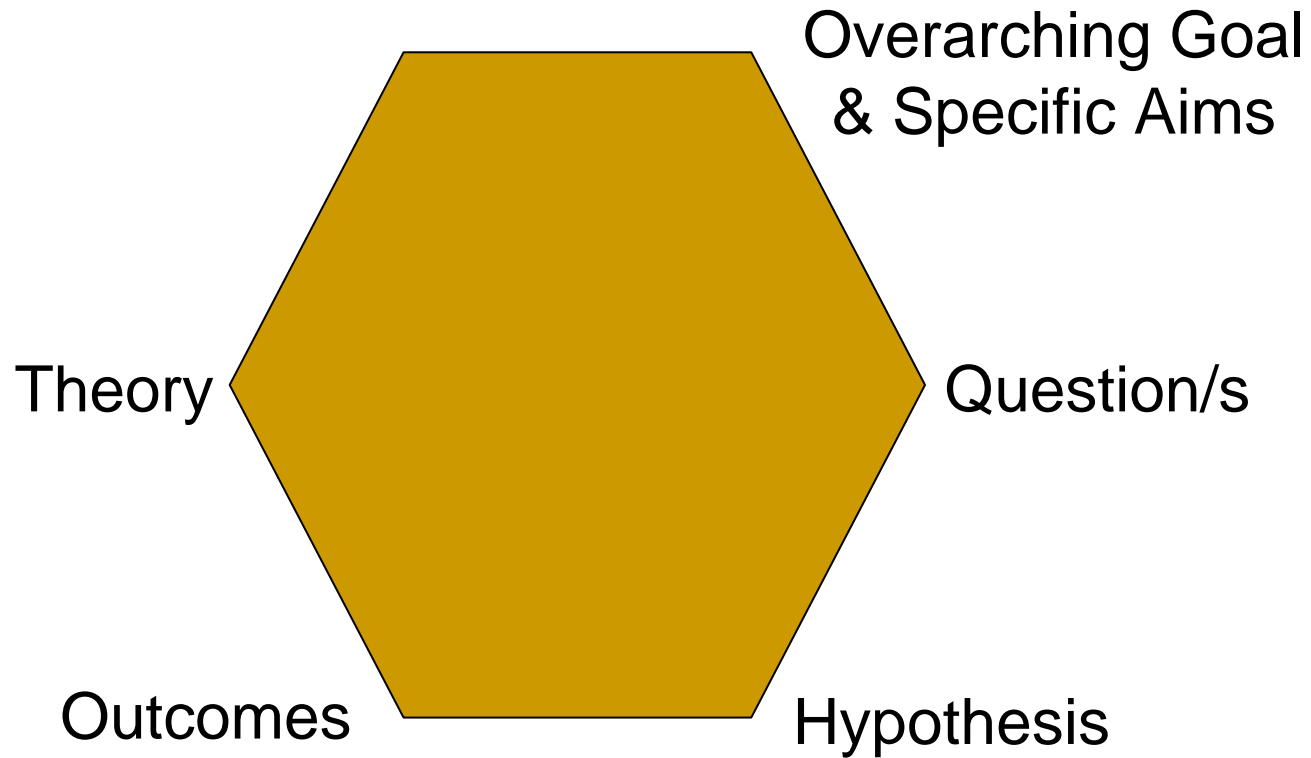
- A hypothesis articulates a testable proposition, i.e. that which can either be proven (a *hypothesis*) or disproven (a *null hypothesis*);
- Formulating one or more hypotheses sharpens your focus on what it is you want to prove or disprove in your investigation;
- A hypothesis always begins with the word ‘*That* (something is the case, or is not the case)’;
- If a proposition can be neither proven nor disproven, we’ve entered the realm of metaphysics – a story for another time.



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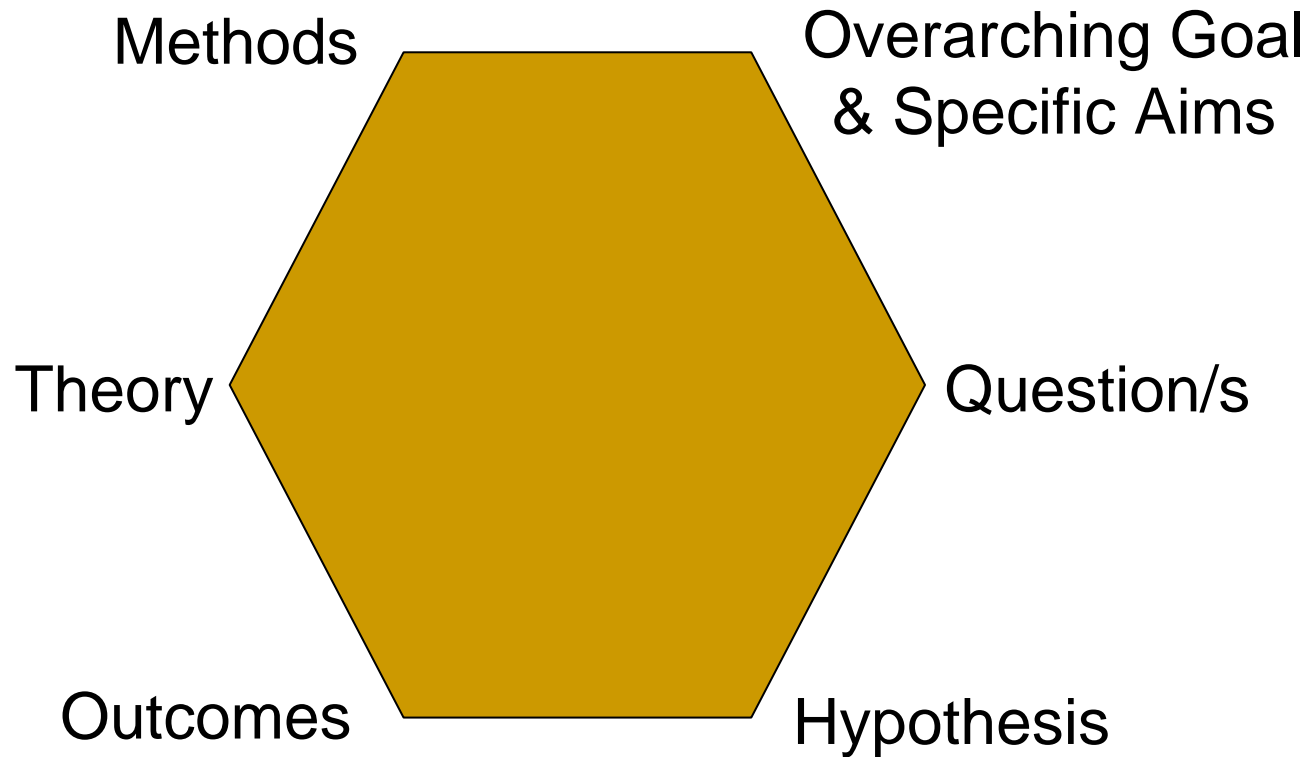
# Outcome/s

- When all of your research has been completed, what will you have achieved?
- There can be more than one achievement and they're called *outcomes*;
- Outcomes can be intended (*manifest*) or unintended (*latent*) and should, ideally, reflect the Goals & Aims you've specified for your research.



# Theory

- Theory is the hallmark, the very essence of research – without theory you really can't have meaningful research;
- What theory/theories pertain to your research? You need to identify them and understand their relevance (their validity) to your project;
- Remember theory can work top-down (*deductive*) or be bottom-up (*inductive*). Click <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/dedind.php> for more on this.





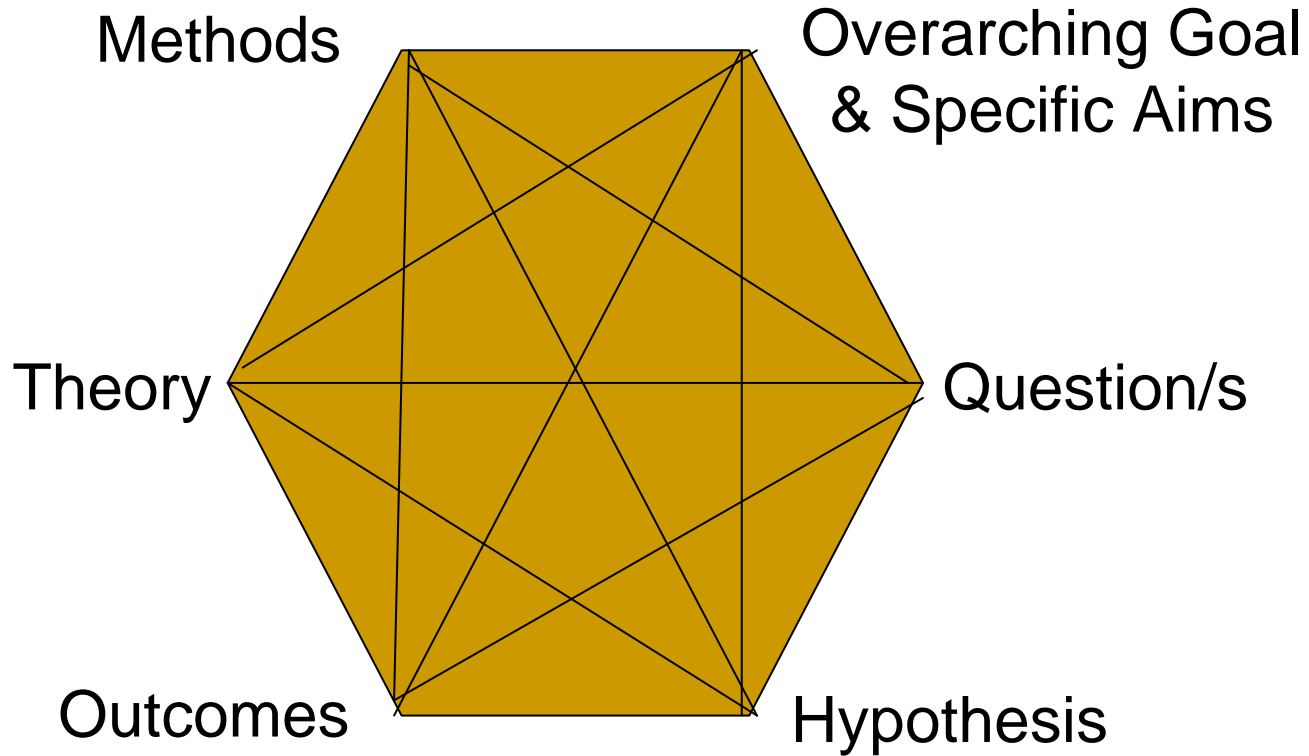
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# Methods

- Methods refer to research procedures (whereas methodology is about the rationale/justification for those procedures);
- Once your goals/aims are apparent, your method or methods should become obvious (but remember about ethics);
- Methods can be quantitative (QN) or qualitative (QL) or a blend of both (mixed methods);
- Click <http://www.woodhillpark.com/categories/Free-Academic-Resources/Research-Resources/> to learn more about how best to understand research.

# Tying it all together

- Each of these dimensions interact – that is – each point of the hexagon informs, and is informed by, each other point of the hexagon;
- You can and should, therefore, address each single dimension in tandem with thinking about each of the other dimensions;
- Your sequence for giving thoughtful attention to each dimension is over to you but you're unlikely to deal with methods first.



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# Further information and comments

- Please don't hesitate to use this resource and also, feel free to look at the other morsels we've made available on the Woodhill Park Research Retreat website [www.woodhillpark.com](http://www.woodhillpark.com);
- Please, also, tell others about the materials you've accessed – they're freely available for communities of researchers to use. For more communication contact:

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