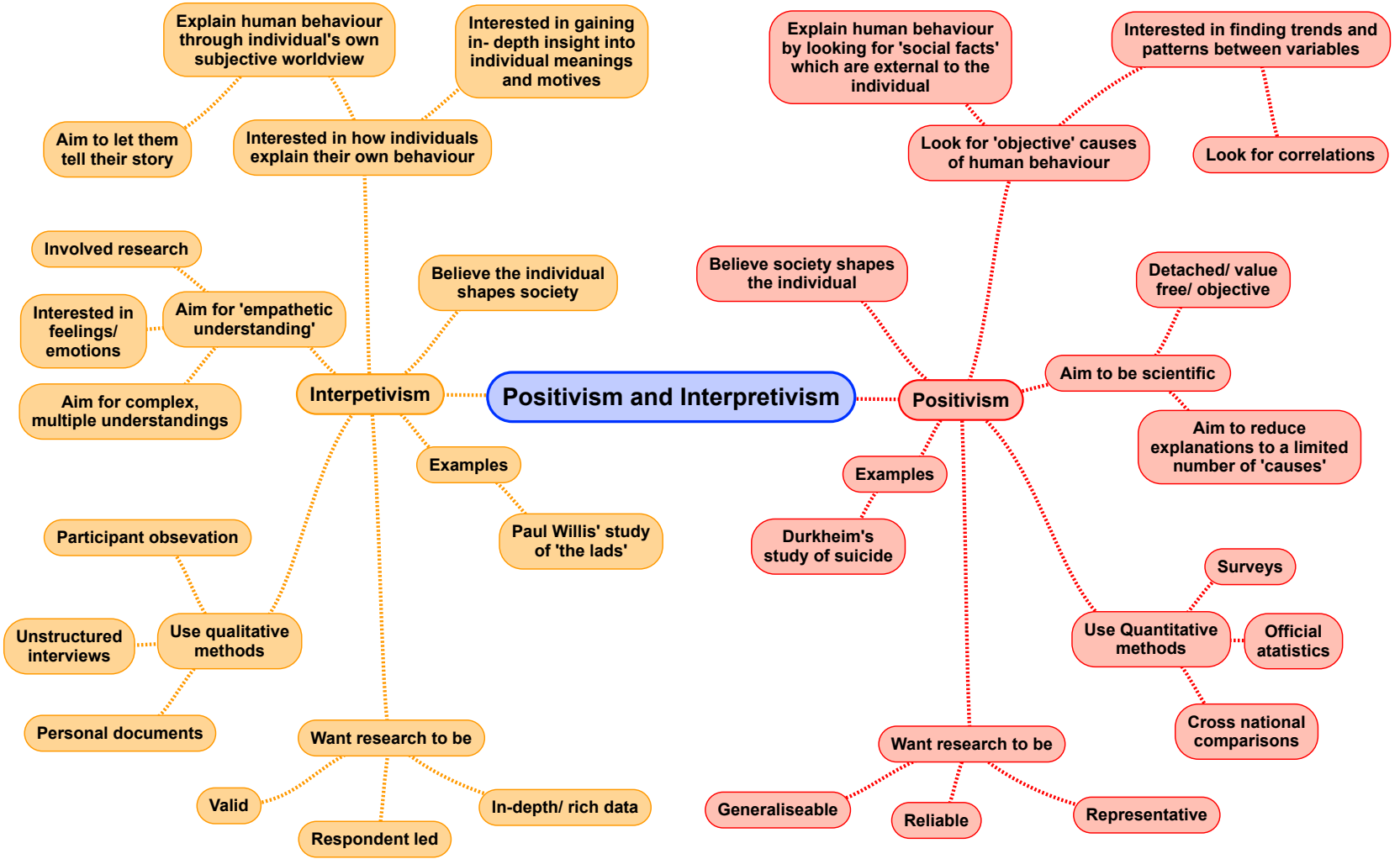
Positivism and Interpretivism
Interpetivism
Explain human behaviour through individual's own subjective worldview
Interested in gaining in- depth insight into individual meanings and motives
Aim to let them tell their story
Interested in how individuals explain their own behaviour
Involved research
Interested in feelings/ emotions
Aim for 'empathetic understanding'
Aim for complex, multiple understandings
Believe the individual shapes society
Examples
Paul Willis' study of 'the lads'
Participant obsevation
Unstructured interviews
Use qualitative methods
Personal documents
Want research to be
Valid
Respondent led
In-depth/ rich data
Positivism
Explain human behaviour by looking for 'social facts' which are external to the individual
Interested in finding trends and patterns between variables
Look for 'objective' causes of human behaviour
Look for correlations
Believe society shapes the individual
Detached/ value free/ objective
Aim to be scientific
Aim to reduce explanations to a limited number of 'causes'
Examples
Durkheim's study of suicide
Surveys
Use Quantitative methods
Official atatistics
Cross national comparisons
Want research to be
Generaliseable
Reliable
Representative