

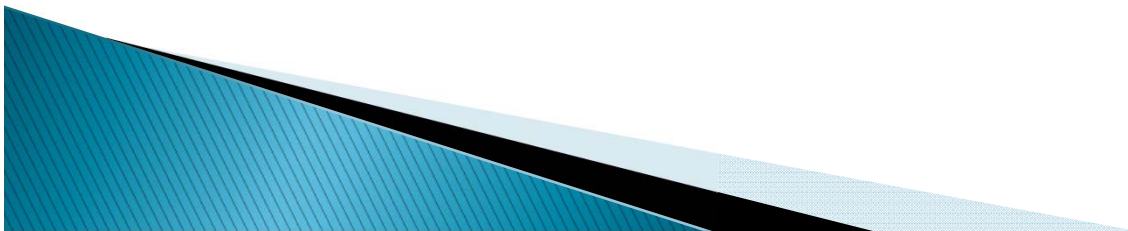
Research Paradigms
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A Secret about Science

- ▶ We never really know anything!
- ▶ Therefore, we have THEORIES



Theories

- ▶ Get us *closer* to the truth
- ▶ Set of propositions that explain the relationships among phenomena
- ▶ Theory and practice tightly coupled
- ▶ Examples of *management theories*



Paradigms

- ▶ A model or frames of reference through which to observe and understand.
- ▶ “Refers to the progress of scientific practice based on people’s philosophies and assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge”
- ▶ Paradigms offer a framework comprising an accepted set of theories, methods, and ways of defining data
- ▶ “Patterns happen.”
- ▶ Logical explanations are what theories seek to provide.
 1. Theories prevent our being taken in by flukes.
 2. Theories makes sense of observed patterns.
 3. Theories shape and direct research efforts.

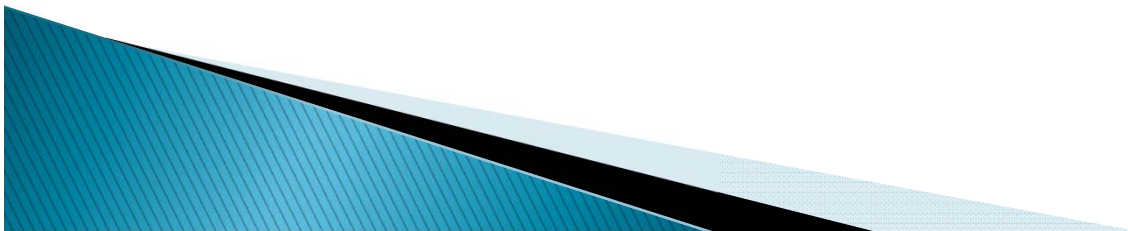


Some Social Science Paradigms

- ▶ When we recognize that we are operating within a paradigm, two benefits accrue.
 1. We can better understand seemingly bizarre views and actions of others who are operating under different paradigms.
 2. We can profit from stepping outside of our paradigm.



- ▶ Paradigms play a fundamental role in science.
- ▶ Paradigms are neither true nor false.



- ▶ **Macrotheory** – A theory aimed at understanding the “big picture” of institutions, whole societies, and the interactions among societies.
 - Examples: class struggles, international relations, and interrelations between social institutions

- ▶ **Microtheory** – A theory aimed at understanding social life on the intimate level of individuals and their interactions.
 - Examples: dating behavior, jury deliberations, student–faculty interactions

- ▶ **Mesotheory** – Referencing an intermediate level between macro and micro: studying organizations, communities, and social categories.



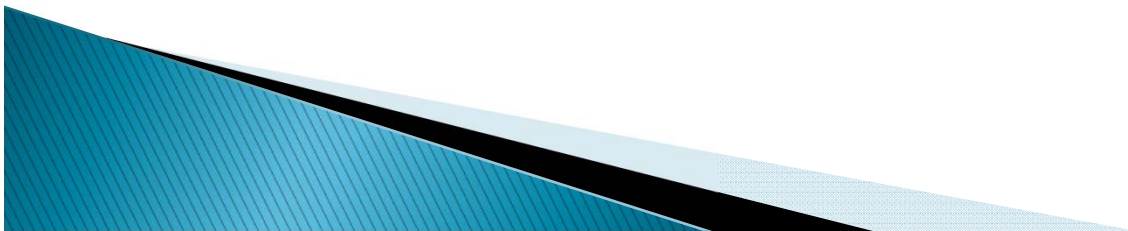
Paradigms differ along three dimensions:

- ▶ Ontology – nature of reality
- ▶ Epistemology – nature of the relationship between researcher and what can be known
- ▶ Methodology – practice of research



Methodology

- ▶ “The theory of how research should be undertaken, including the theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon which research is based and the implications of these for the method or methods adopted.”



The Philosophical Position....

	Positivism	Intrepretivism
Ontology: what is the nature of reality?	Reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher	Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by the participants
Epistemology: What is valid knowledge?	Researcher is independent from that being researched	Researcher interacts with that being researched
Axiology: Role of values	Value free and un-biased	Value-laden and biased
RESEARCH STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-sectional studies • Experimental studies • Longitudinal studies • Surveys • Etc... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Research • Case Studies • Ethnography • Grounded Theory • Hermeneutics, etc...

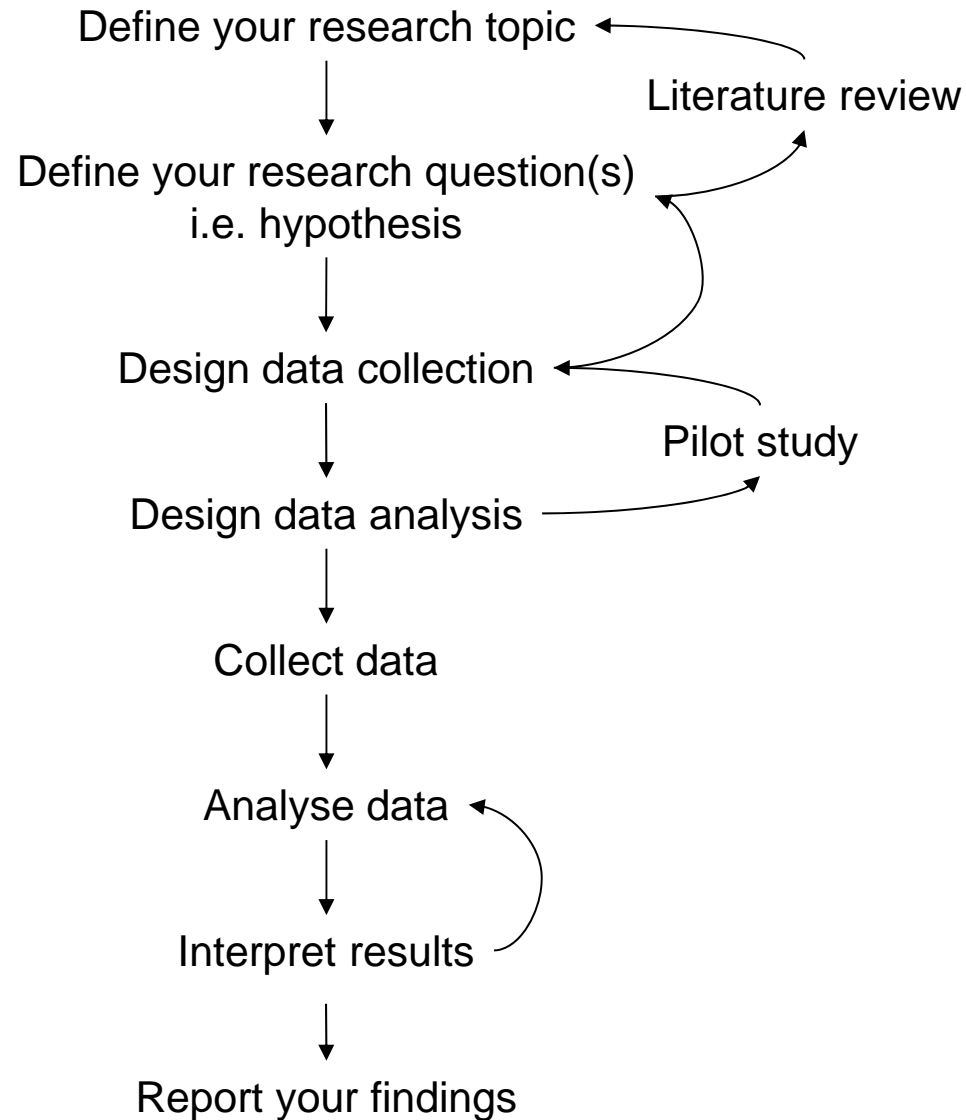
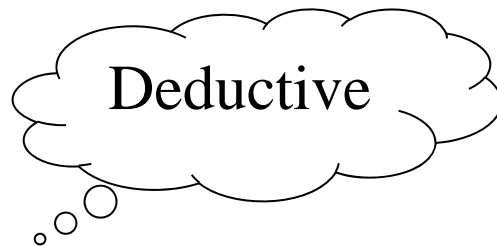
Features of research paradigms

Positivistic paradigm	Interpretive paradigm
Tends to produce quantitative data	Tends to produce qualitative data
Uses large samples	Uses small samples
Concerned with hypothesis testing	Concerned with generating theories
Data is highly specific and precise	Data is rich and subjective
The location is artificial	The location is natural
Reliability is high	Reliability is low
Validity is low	Validity is high
Generalises from sample to population	Generalises from one setting to another

The 'scientific' method

- ▶ A generally accepted set of procedures for developing and testing theories
- ▶ An idealised model to arrive at “the truth” through:
 - Objective observation
 - Measurement
 - Careful and accurate analysis of data
 - Minimising pre-conceptions about how the world works
- ▶ What paradigm are we in here?

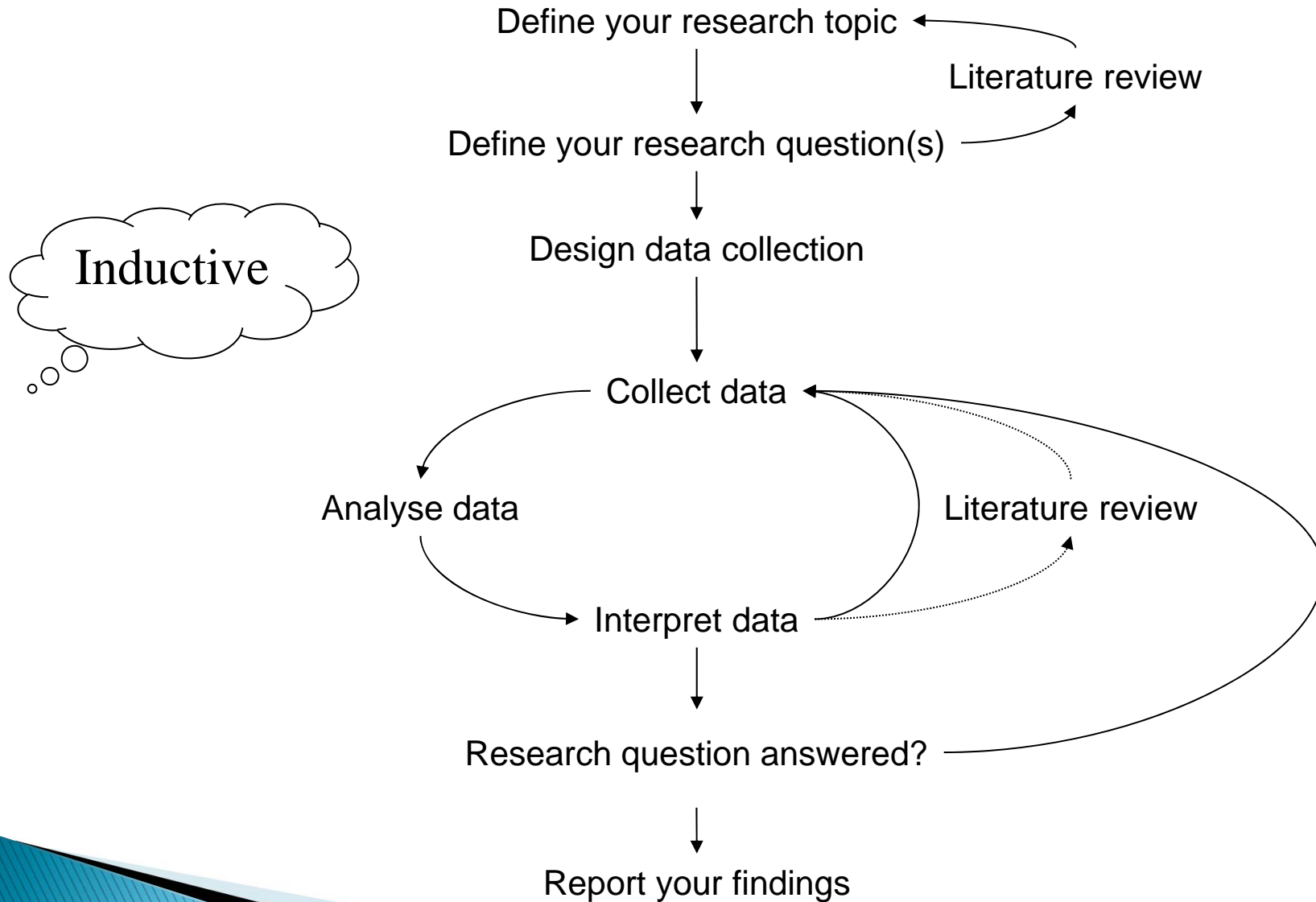
The Positivistic approach



The Interpretive approach

- ▶ A generally accepted set of procedures for collecting information about the world
- ▶ An idealised model to arrive at “the data” through:
 - Subjective observation
 - Being led by the data (ie. induction)
 - Trying to overcome biases about the situation
 - Avoiding conceptual frameworks or instruments that might influence what is observed

The Interpretive approach



Deductive and Inductive Research

Deduction emphasises

- scientific principles
- moving from theory to data
- the need to explain causal relationships between variables
- the collection of quantitative data
- the application of controls to ensure validity of data
- the operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition
- a highly structured approach
- researcher independence of what is being researched
- the necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions

Induction emphasises

- gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events
- a close understanding of the research context
- the collection of qualitative data
- a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses
- a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process
- less concern with the need to generalise

Comparing approaches

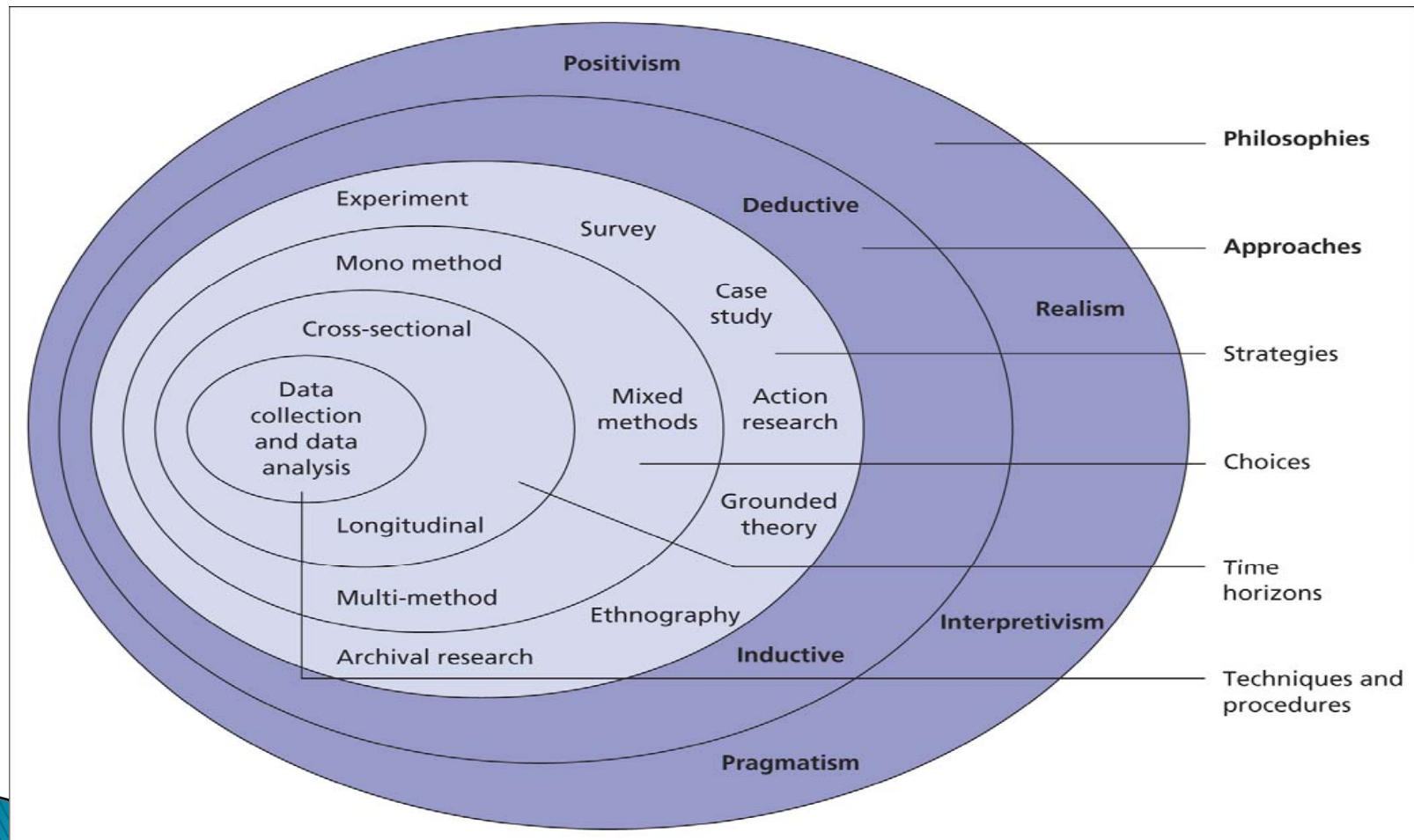
Characteristic	Positivism	Intepretive
Questions that can be answered	What? How much?	Why? How?
Associated methods	Survey, Experiment	Direct observation, Interviews, Participant observation
Data type	Predominantly numbers	Predominantly words
Finding	Measure	Meaning

Why does the approach matter?

Whether you take a scientific (positivistic) or phenomenological approach will influence:

- ▶ What research questions you ask
- ▶ What methods you use to collect your data
- ▶ What type of data you collect
- ▶ What techniques you use to analyse your data

Underlying Issues of Data Collection and Analysis (Saunders et. al, 2008)



Assumptions

QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
Social facts have an objective reality	Reality is socially constructed
Variables can be identified and relationships measured	Variables are complex, interwoven & difficult to measure
Etic (Outsider's point of view)	Emic (Insider's point of view)

Purpose

QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
Generalisability (nomothetic)	Contextualisation (idiographic)
Prediction	Interpretation
Causal explanation	Understanding actors' perspectives

Approach/Process

Begin with hypothesis, theories (deductive)	Ends with hypothesis, theories (inductive)
Static design	Emergent design
Use formal instruments	Researcher as instrument
Experimentation	Naturalistic
Generalisation leading to prediction & explanation	Patterns, theories developed for understanding
Many cases, subjects	Few cases, participants
Statistical analyses	Thematic, discourse analyses.
Abstract, technical language	Descriptive write-up

Researcher's Role

QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
Detachment & impartiality	Personal involvement & partiality
Objective Outsider	Subjective Insider



- ✦ Qualitative and quantitative approaches are different ways of thinking about and doing research

HOWEVER,

- ✦ The skilled researcher can successfully combine approaches.

- ✦ Different approaches allow us to understand and know different things about the world around us.

