

BM7043

Research Methods

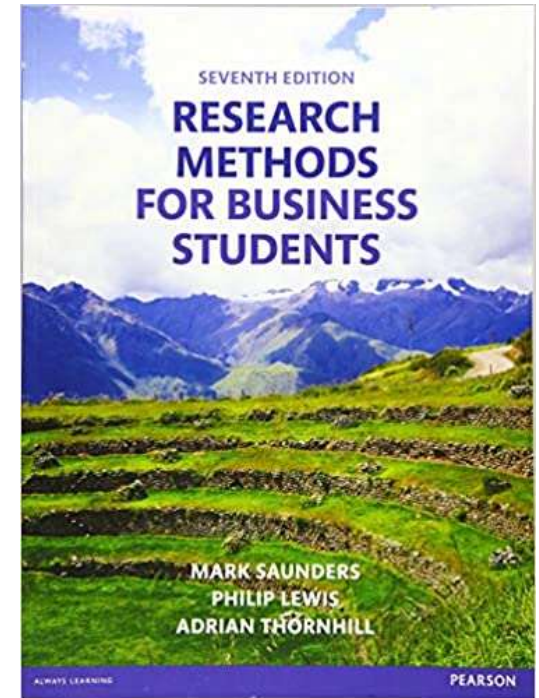
Week 1 Lecture

- 1. introduction to the module**
- 2. research philosophies and approaches**

Core reading materials

Course text:

- **Saunders, M., P. Lewis and A. Thornhill (2015) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Seventh Edition. Pearson.**
- **Other suggested readings for lectures and tutorials.**



**Available
as an
ebook from
the Library**

Assessment

- **Research proposal (100%)**
- **3,500 words**
- **This assessment is designed to prepare you for your 60-credit third-semester module.**
- **You have the option to choose from three types of proposals:**
- **dissertation proposal,**
- **consultancy proposal,**
- **or work placement proposal**
- **The final choice should be made in consultation with your project supervisor, who will be assigned to you in Week 5**

Cheating and Plagiarism

students are reminded of the University's rules on cheating and plagiarism and should not expect to be treated leniently if these are broken



Any questions about the
course structure and content?

Lecture 1

Research Philosophies

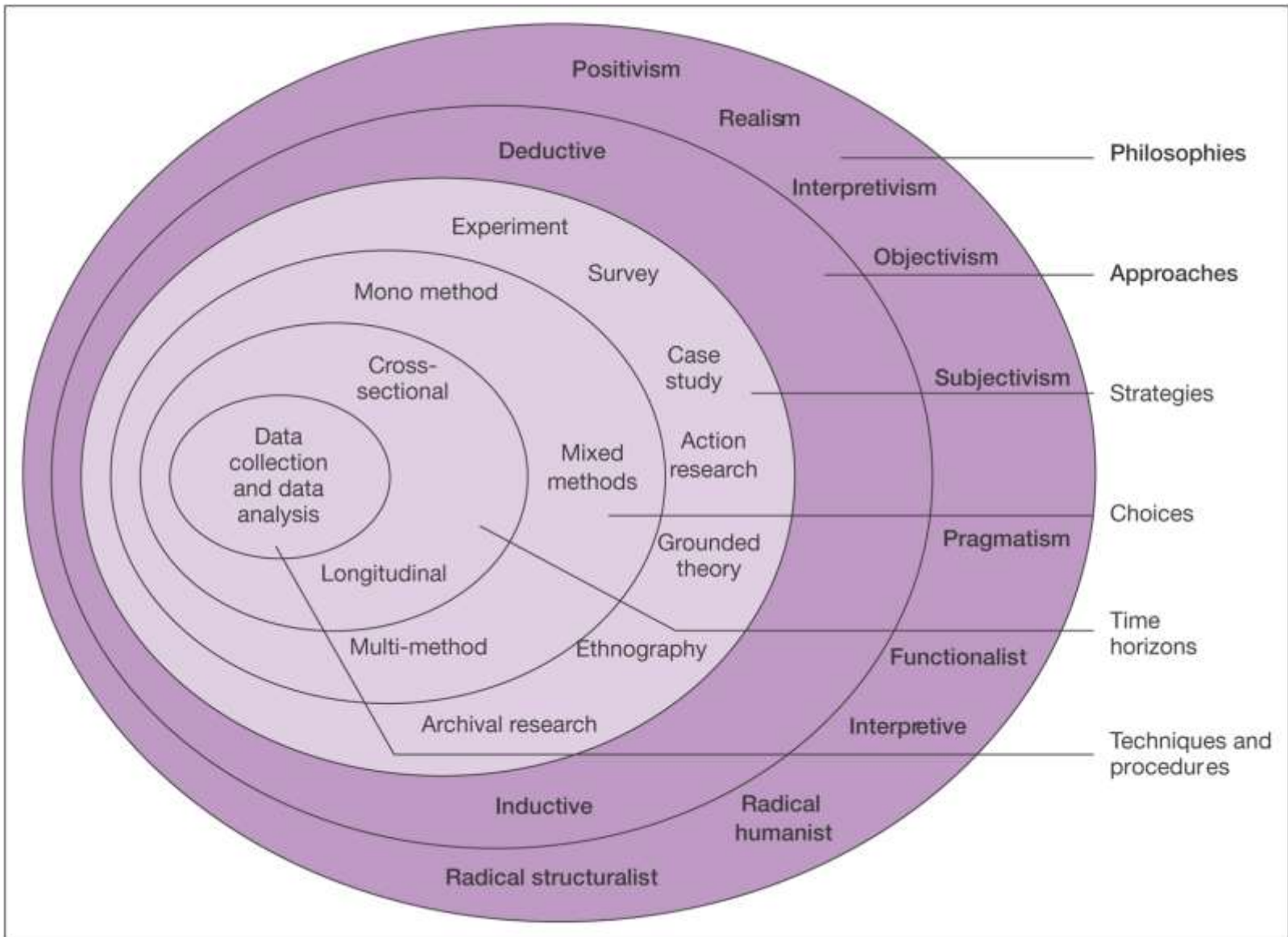


Figure 4.1 The research 'onion'

Source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2006

What is 'Business Research Methods' about?

- **research philosophies:** broader ideas about the nature of reality and how we can come to know this reality
- **research approaches:** what we believe is the best way of finding out about reality
- **research strategies**
- **research choices**
- **research time horizons**
- **research techniques and procedures**

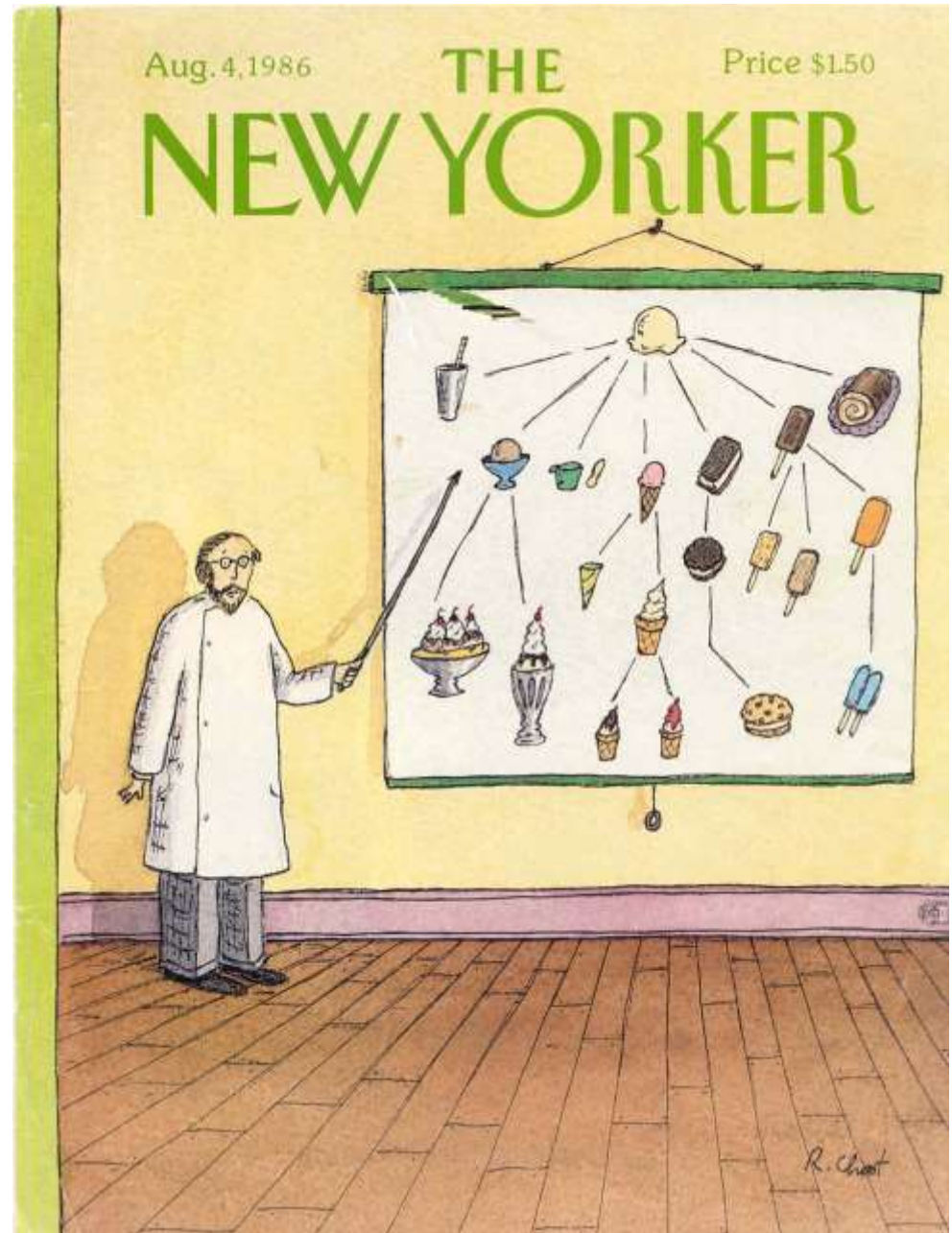
“Did you enjoy this class session?”

Research philosophies

- **what kind of knowledge (ontology) are you generating in your research and how are you generating it (epistemology)**
- **what assumptions are you making about the world and the nature of reality (ontology), and the relationship between knowledge and the process by which it is developed (epistemology)**
- **what assumptions are you making about the knowledge production process and the extent to which any research or knowledge is value-free (axiology)**

Ontology

Ontology concerns our assumptions about the nature of reality.

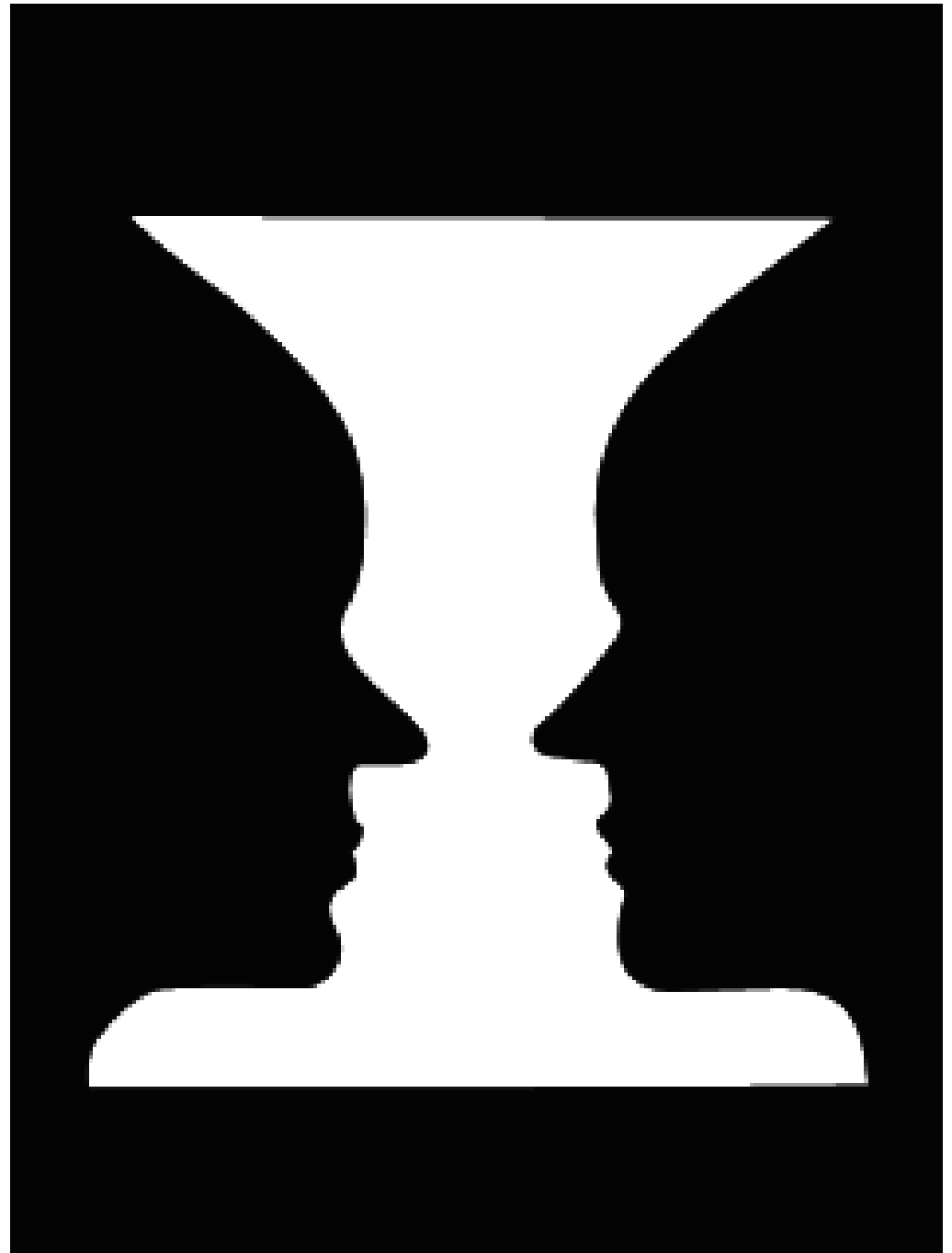


Ontology

Two main ontological positions

1. **objectivism/ realism:** the social world is objective, out there, independent of us who perceive it
2. **subjectivism/ idealism/ constructionism:** the social world is *constructed* by us - constructions are built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors

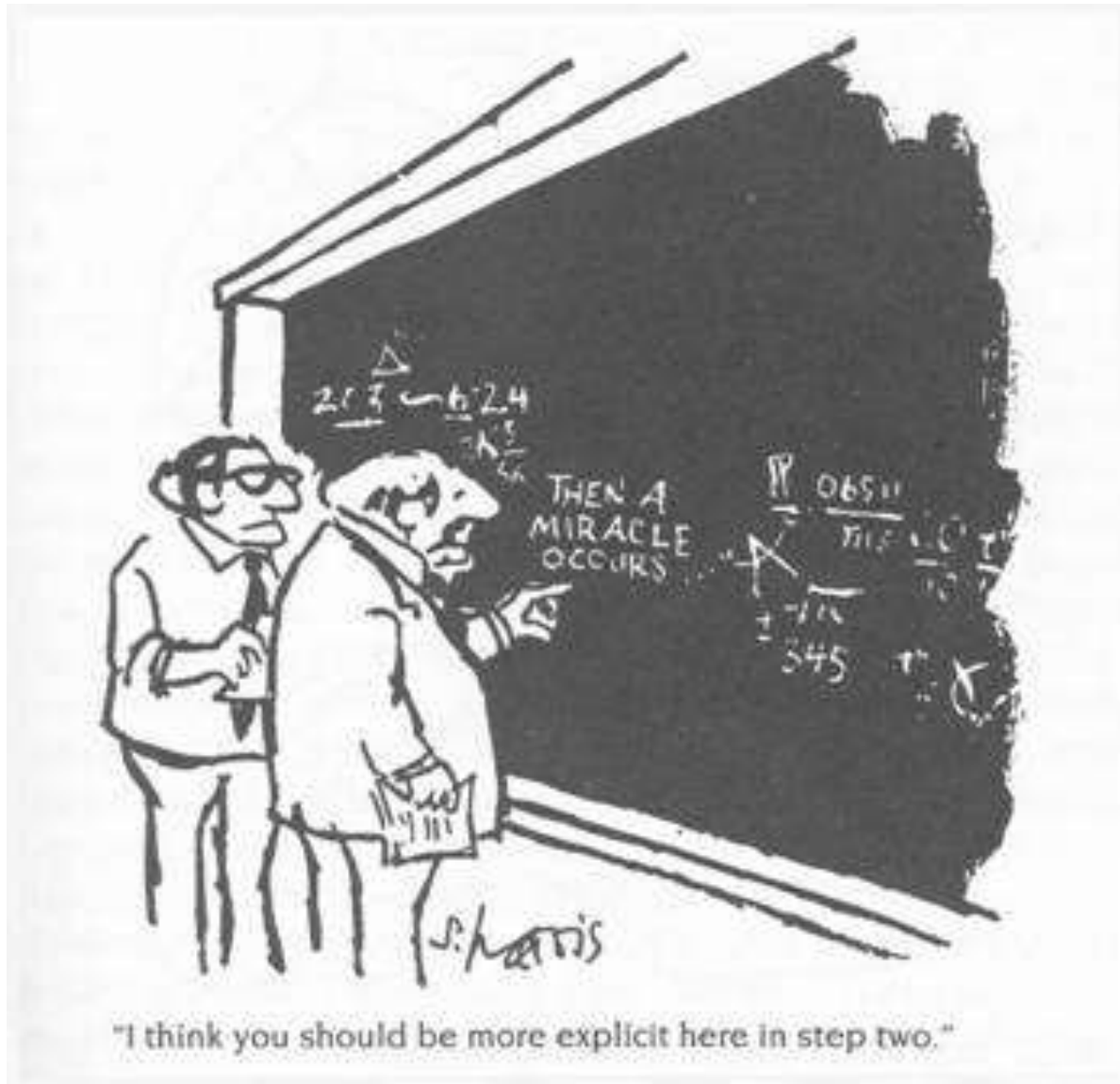
What can
you see?





What can
you see?

Epistemology



**Epistemology
means
theory of
knowledge,
or how it is
we can know
anything
about the
world.**

Positivism

Positivism is the application of empiricist natural science to the study of society

- **reality is unitary and can only be understood through the scientific approach**
- **research is conducted in a value-free way: the researcher is independent of the data that are collected**
- **the researcher is detached and neither influences nor is influenced by the research**

Interpretivism

- **interpretivism argues that people and institutions are different from material objects and the natural world**
- **people are ‘social actors’ who interpret their everyday social roles in accordance with the meanings they give to these roles**
- **the goal of research is to understand the subjective meanings and reality of social actors in order to make sense of their motives, actions and intentions in a meaningful way**

Axiology



axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies judgements about values

- ***how do values impact on research?***

Values

different views on the influence and role of values in research:

- **strive for objectivity**
- **acknowledge your subjectivity through a 'reflexive' approach**

reflexivity: *recognise and acknowledge that research cannot be 'objective' and value-free; being self-reflective about how our values influence the research process and products*

Research Philosophies

3 major ways of thinking about research philosophies

- **ontology**
 - **objectivism/realism**
 - **subjectivism/idealism/
constructionism**
- **epistemology**
 - **positivism**
 - **interpretivism**
 - **pragmatism**
- **axiology**

Research approaches

Research approaches

- **this refers to the relationship between theory and data**
- **deductive approach: a theory and hypotheses are put forward and tested**
- **inductive approach: theory is developed as a result of collecting data**
- **deduction is often allied to positivism and induction to interpretivism although in practice this distinction is blurred**

Deduction emphasises

- scientific principles
- moving from theory to data
- explaining causal relationships between variables
- collection of quantitative data
- applications of controls to ensure validity of data
- operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition
- highly structured approach
- researcher independence
- large samples to allow generalisation

Induction emphasises

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

Quantitative and qualitative research

- most obvious **difference** between the 2 approaches is that 1 quantifies (emphasis on numbers) and the other does not (emphasis on words)
- epistemological foundations: qualitative and quantitative approaches are often associated with **contrasting** positions on epistemology, ontology, and the connection between theory and data.

Qualitative and quantitative research

	Quantitative (quantification)	Qualitative (words)
Relationship between theory and data	Deductive Testing of theory	Inductive Generation of theory
Epistemology	Natural science model Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	Objectivism	Constructionism/ Subjectivism

Research design

Research design

Research design = general plan of how to answer research questions

- 1. clearly define your research questions**
- 2. set out clear research objectives derived from your research questions**
- 3. specify data sources - consider constraints (access; time; location; money)**
- 4. consider ethical issues**

Research Design

- **purpose of research**
- **research strategies**
 - **experiment**
 - **survey**
 - **case study**
 - **action research**
 - **grounded theory**
 - **ethnography**
 - **archival research**

- **research choices**
- **time horizons**
- **research credibility**

The purpose of research

research tends to fall into 1 of the following categories:

- **explanatory**
- **descriptive**
- **exploratory**

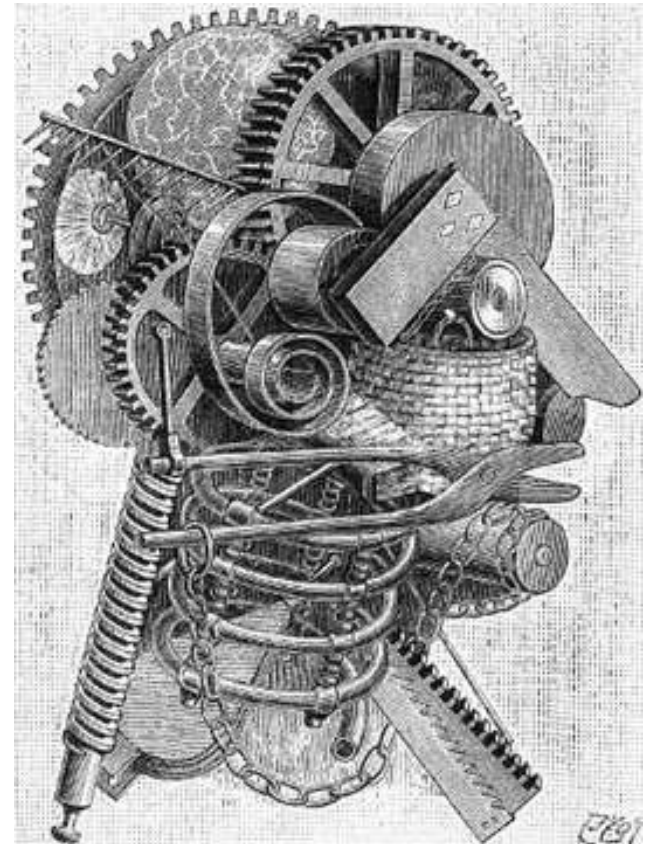


A piece of research can be more than 1 of these and can change over time

Research strategies

Research strategies are different ways of gathering information or collecting data:

- experiment
- survey
- case study
- action research
- grounded theory
- ethnography
- archival research



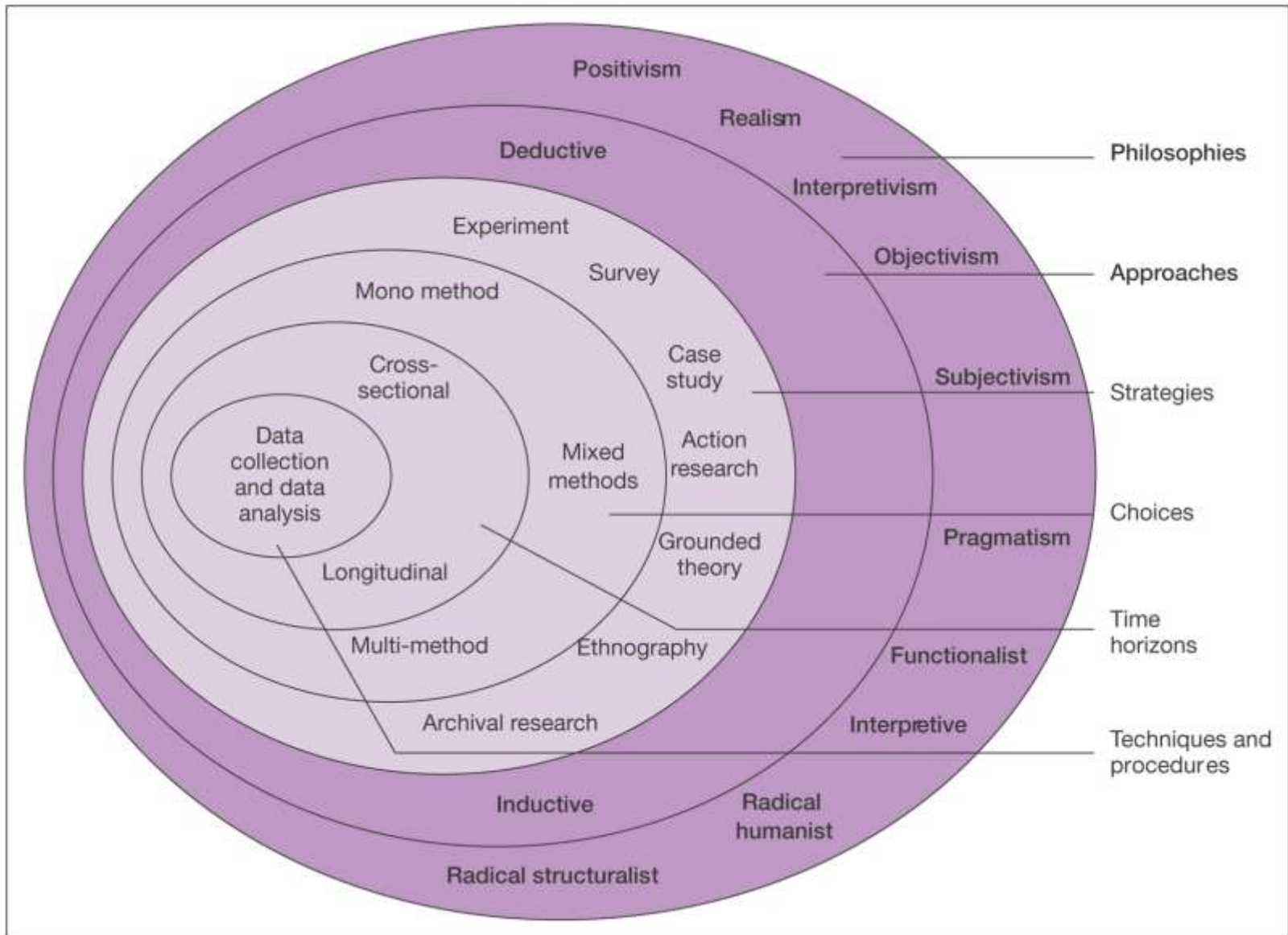


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Summary

- **Research philosophies**
 - **Ontology/Epistemology**
 - **Objectivist/Subjectivist**
- **Research approaches**
 - **Deductive/Inductive**
 - **Quantitative/Qualitative**
- **Research design**
 - **Purpose**
 - **Strategies (methods)**

Further reading

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015)

Research Methods for Business Students

- **Chapter 4: Understanding research philosophies and approaches to theory development (pp. 122-161)**
- **Chapter 5: Formulating the research design (pp. 162-221)**