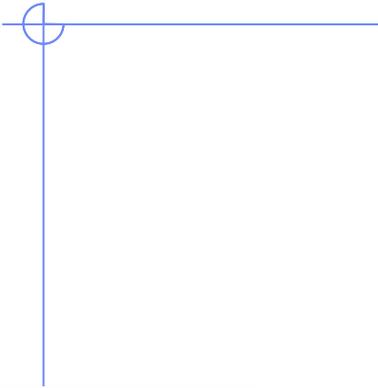


Qualitative Research

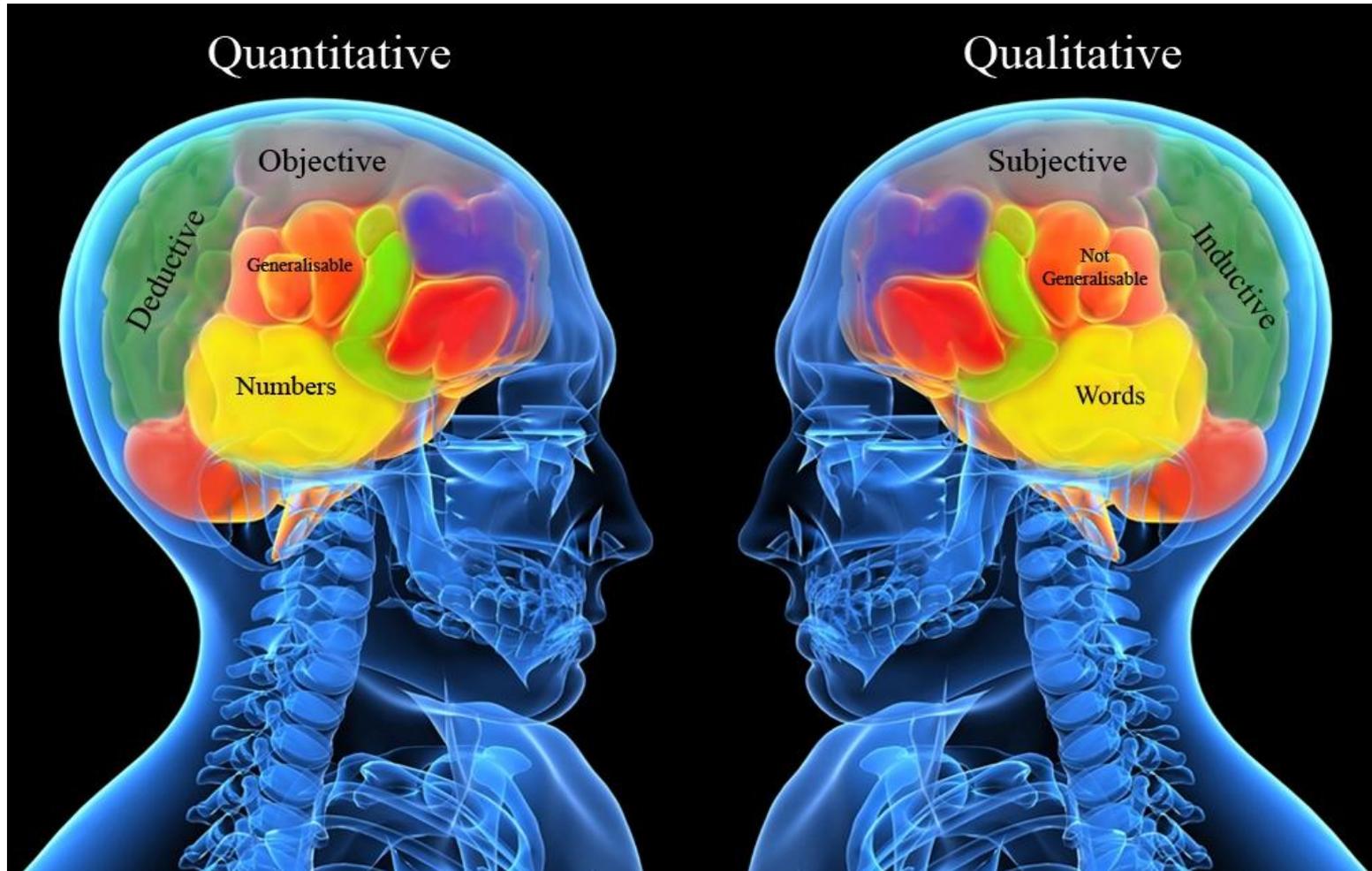


Prof Jan Nieuwenhuis

“You can learn a lot just by watching”

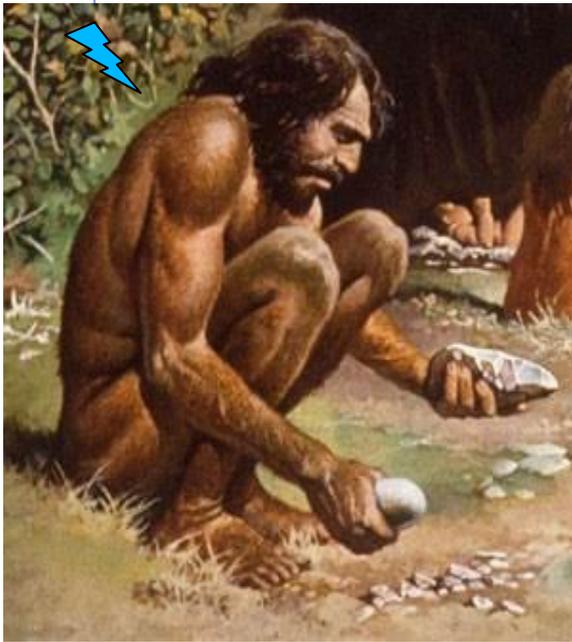


The turf war



The turf war

There are bands who go around gathering their data in a qualitative way, and there are others who carry out large-scale hunting expeditions with their surveys. Each band is rather autonomous with very few links, apart from occasional periods of warfare and sporadic raids on one another's cattle. (Scott cited in Thompson 2004: 23)



So the metaphor to explain the difference between the two is often claimed as:



Quantitative is like a trench –
Long and shallow



Qualitative is like a well-
Narrow but deep



POSITIVIST

INTERPRETIVE

Discovery of universal laws governing social world.	Discovery of how people make sense of their social worlds.
A fixed social reality exists that may be measured and described.	Many social realities exist due to varying human experience.
Human behaviour is both rational and predictable.	Human behaviour is context bound and variable.
Positivist science is capable of uncovering 'truth'.	Common sense provides insight into social realities.

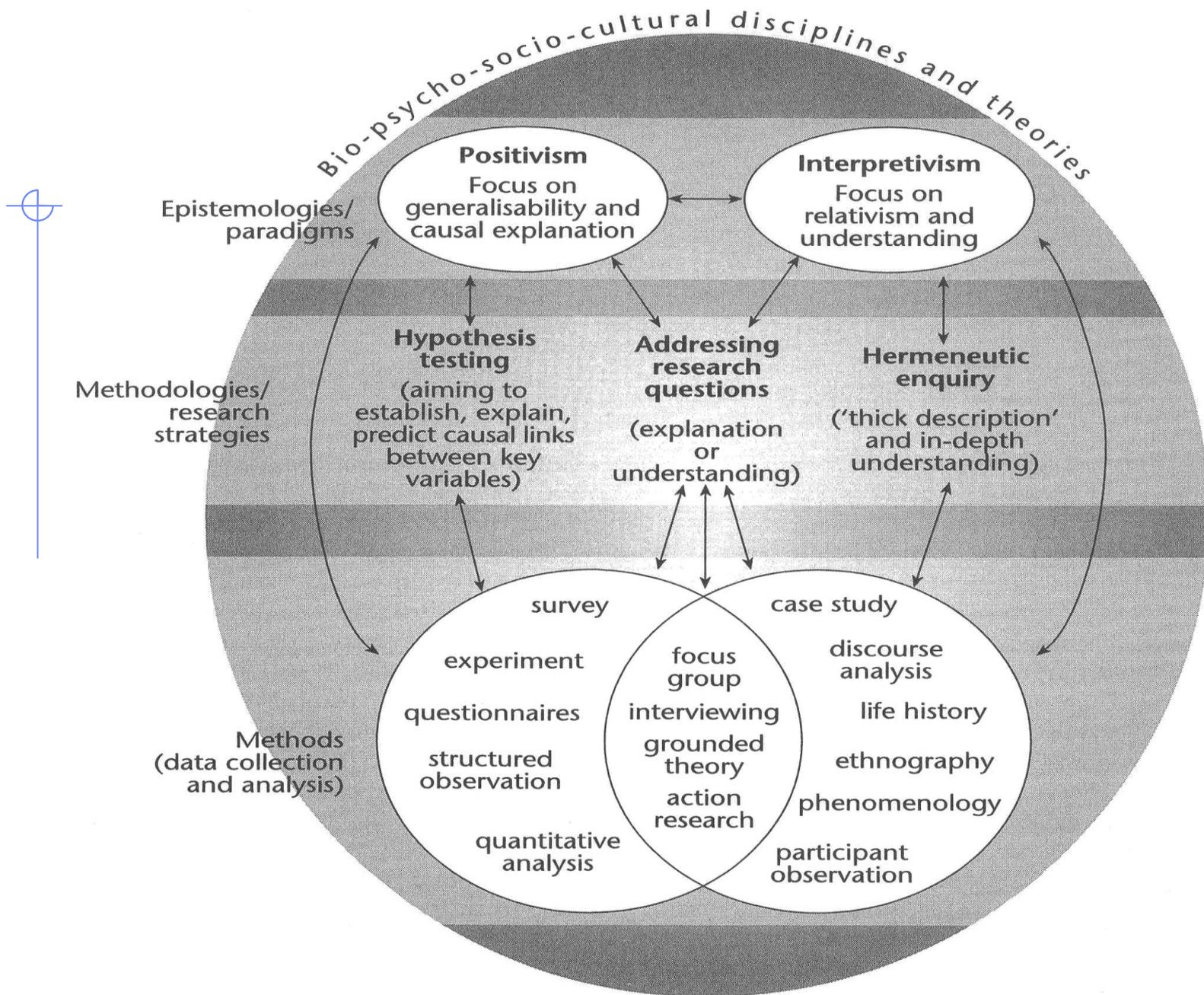


Figure 4 The methodological field

The fallacy of separation of qualitative and quantitative

False dualism (Pring, 2000) – one not a better science than the other – it is not a tug of war

False primacy (Brew, 2001) – no superior truth – approximation of truth

False certainty (Barnett, 2000) – super complexity

False expectations (Hammersley, 2002) – cannot produce final answers – open-ended





Table 1.2 Research Purposes

Exploratory^a	Descriptive	Explanatory
Seeks to investigate an underresearched aspect of social life	Seeks to richly describe an aspect of social life	Seeks to explain an aspect of social life

a. Some qualitative researchers refer to this as Discovery.

Table 2.2 Matching Research Questions and Purpose

<i>Purpose of the Study</i>	<i>General Research Questions</i>
Exploratory: To investigate little-understood phenomena To identify or discover important categories of meaning To generate hypotheses for further research	What is happening in this social program? What are the salient themes, patterns, or categories of meaning for participants? How are these patterns linked with one another?
Explanatory: To explain the patterns related to the phenomenon in question To identify plausible relationships shaping the phenomenon	What events, beliefs, attitudes, or policies shape this phenomenon? How do these forces interact to result in the phenomenon?
Descriptive: To document and describe the phenomenon of interest	What are the salient actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, and social structures and processes occurring in this phenomenon?
Emancipatory: To create opportunities and the will to engage in social action	How do participants problematize their circumstances and take positive social action?

Max Bergman (2011)

At first glance, it appears that they are indeed different paradigms as most authors in this vein even provide tables, which classify the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods on epistemological, ontological, and axiological grounds (e.g., Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Silverman, 2000; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). On closer inspection, however, it is difficult to sustain these differences because qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques do not necessitate a particular view of the nature of reality, privilege a specific research theme and how to research it, or determine the truth value of data or the relationship between researchers and their research subject.



Pragmatism as alternative paradigm

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition developed around the idea that the nature of knowledge, language, concepts, meaning, belief, and science—are all best viewed in terms of their practical uses

Pragmatism, is aimed at solving practical problems in the “real world” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, Rorty, 1999).

Pragmatism “anti-representational view of knowledge” - “aim at utility for us” (Rorty, 1999).

Pragmatism offers an alternative worldview to those of positivism/post-positivism and constructivism and focuses on the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Miller, 2006; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009)



Crafting a research design

Pragmatist approach

Start with the research question

Identify the most appropriate design

Identify data collection methods

Identify data analysis strategy

Paradigmatic approach

Formulate your ontological position

Formulate your epistemological point of departure

Decide on appropriate design

Select data gathering techniques

Determine data analysis strategy

Pragmatist (functionalist) research approach

Formulate the research question

Do intensive literature review

Identify appropriate theories that offer provisional answer to question

Identify questions for data collection from literature

Select appropriate data gathering techniques

Purposive sampling

Collect data

Analyze data using a-priori coding

Triangulate to determine if findings corroborate theory

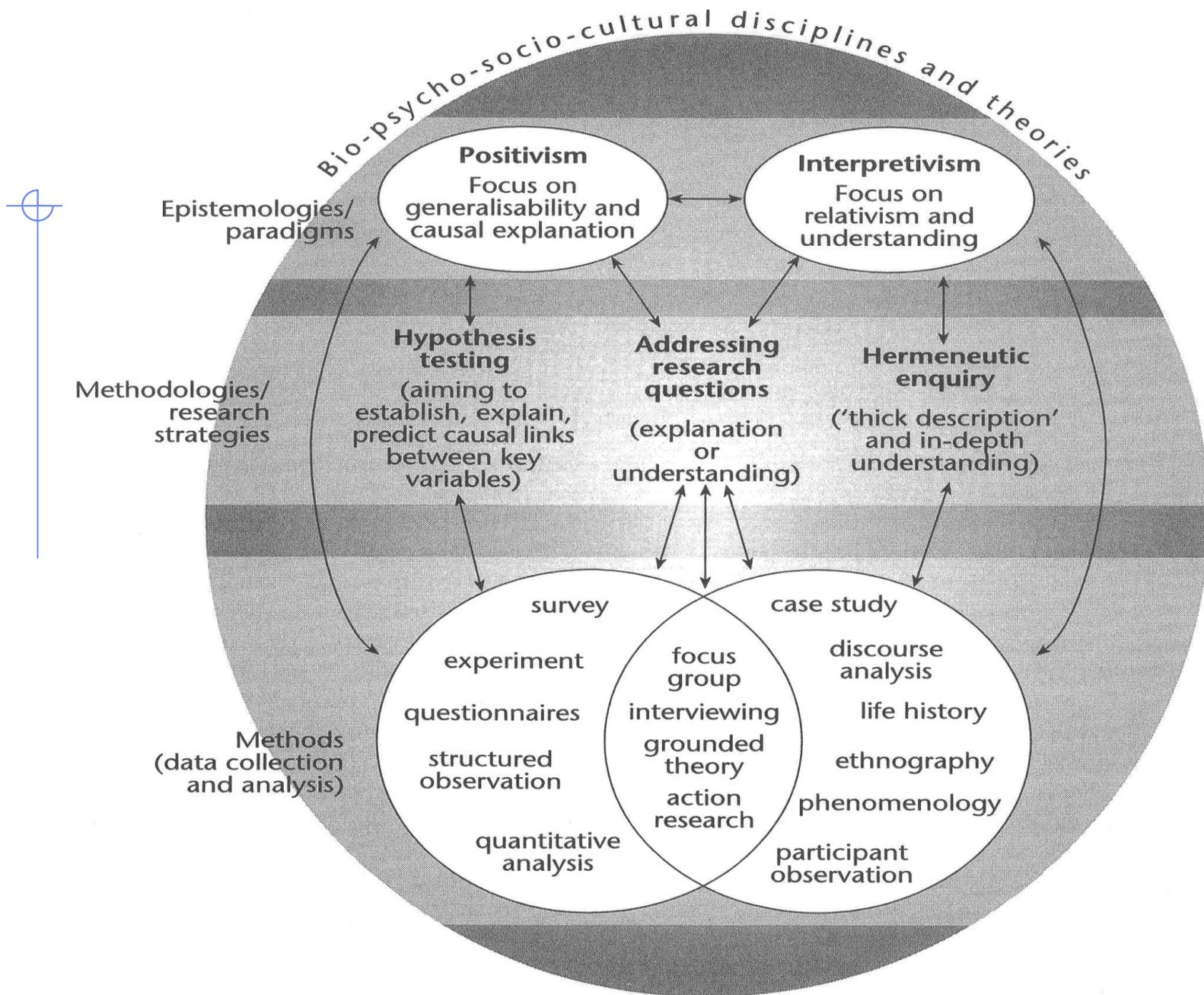
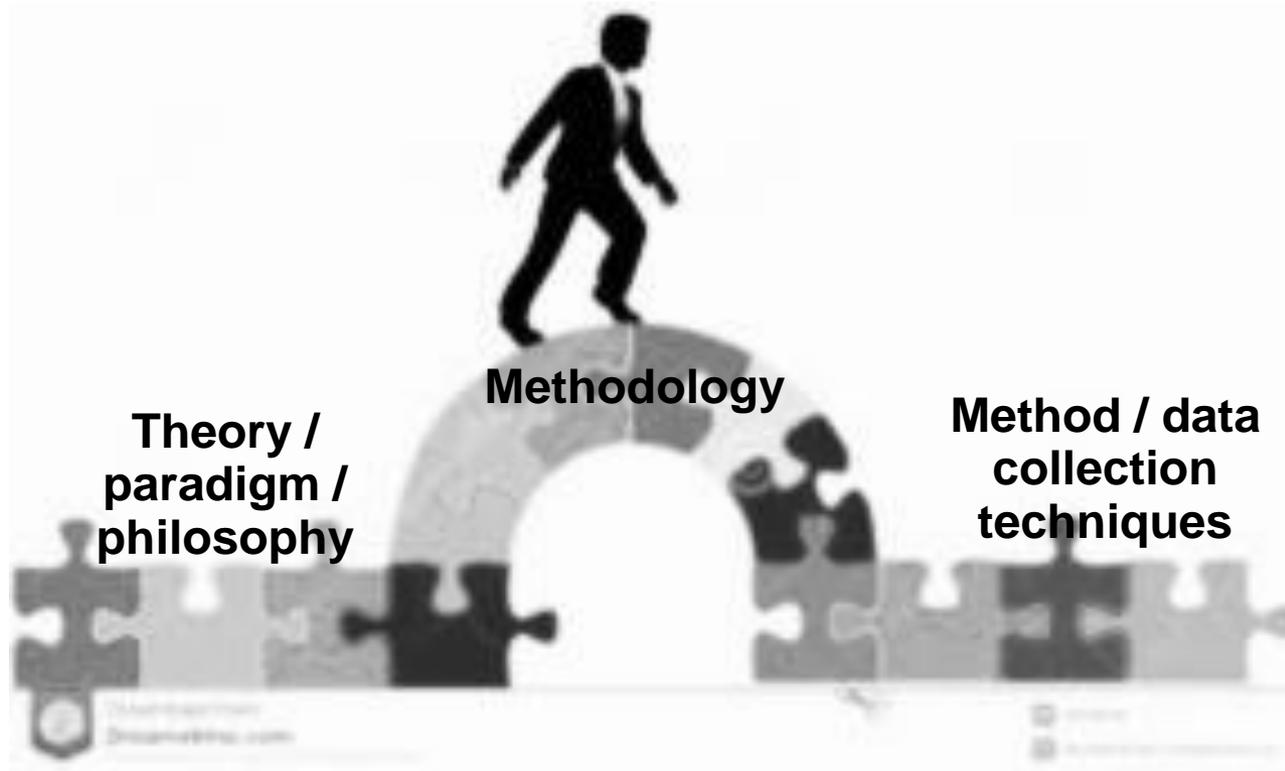


Figure 4 The methodological field

Methodology is the bridge that brings our philosophical standpoint (on ontology and epistemology) and method (perspective and tool) together



Van Maanen's view of what research is

fieldwork (enacting methods)	headwork	textwork
constructing representations of the objects of inquiry (methodically <i>producing</i> data) by...	thinking about...	producing texts, stories, narratives including, for example...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• listening to (and/or interrogating) informants• observing behaviours• examining historical records and traces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• methodological issues – theories, analyses, and criticisms of how research should proceed• epistemological issues – theories of knowledge (and their adequacy) and justificatory strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• testimonies to field work and head work• critiques and/or alternative readings of other texts



So what are we dealing with?

The crime scene analogy

Physical data +
Interview data +
Observational data
=
Evidence



Types of qualitative studies

Case studies (single, multiple, intrinsic, instrumental, collective)

Life history

Historical research

Ethnography (shared culture)

Auto-ethnography(own)

Ethnomethodology (conversations)

Clinical study

Feminist study (critical)

Biographies (their words)

Narrative design

Developmental case study

Phenomenological (lived experience)

Document analysis

Grounded theory

Evaluation (proactive, clarification, interactive, monitoring, impact)



THE QUALITATIVE TRADITIONS

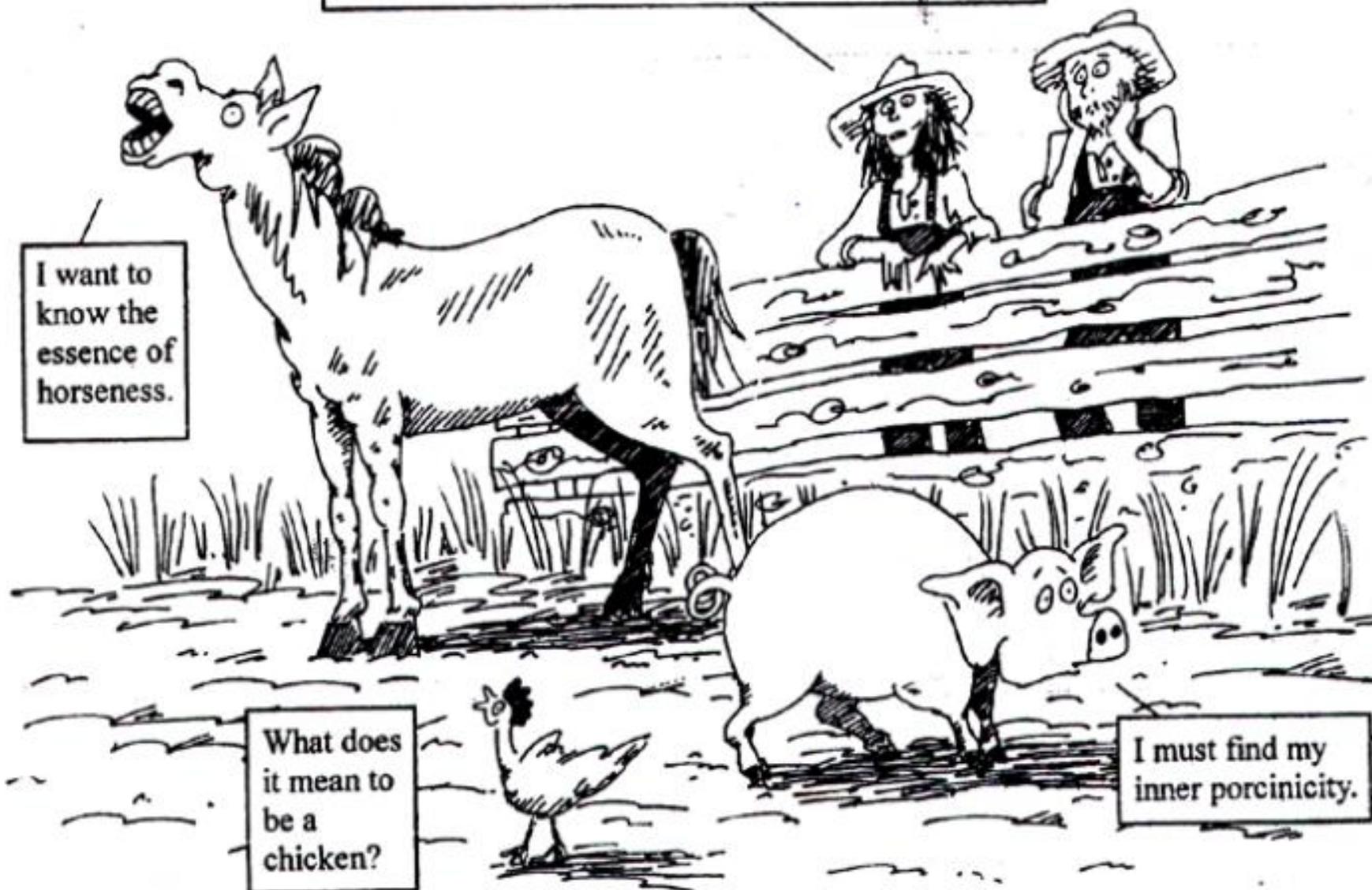
Dimensions	Narrative studies/research	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case study
Focus	Exploring the life of an individual	Understanding the essence of experiences about a phenomenon	Developing a theory grounded from data in the field	Describing and interpreting the cultural or social group	Developing and in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases
Data collection method	Primary interviews and documents	Long interviews with up to 10 people	Interviews with 20-30 individuals to "saturate" categories and detail a theory	Primarily observation and interviews with additional artefacts during extended time in the field (e.g. six months to a year)	Multiple sources, including documents, archival records, interviews, observations and physical artefacts
Data analysis strategy	Stories Epiphanies Historical content	Statements Meanings Meaning themes General description of the experience	Open coding Axial coding Selective coding Conditional matrix	Discussion Analysis Interpretation	Description Themes Assertions
Synthesis or reporting form	Detailed picture/description of an individual's life	Description of the "essence" of the experience	Theory or theoretical model	Description of the cultural behaviour of a group or an individual	In-depth description of the "case" or "cases"

Things jist ain't been the same 'round here since that re-search dude did those inter-views.

I want to know the essence of horseness.

What does it mean to be a chicken?

I must find my inner porcinity.



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5 axioms of qualitative research

- 1. Human life can be understood only from within.*
- 2. Social life is a distinctively human product.*
- 3. The human mind is the source or origin of meaning.*
- 4. Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world. (Interpretivism accepts that there are multiple realities).*
- 5. The social world does not 'exist' independently of human knowledge.*



Essential Characteristics of Qualitative Research

concerned with understanding a phenomenon

assumes multiple realities

data is in the form of rich verbal descriptions

researcher is immersed and in direct contact during the data collection

the data collection is highly interactive

data collection methodology evolves and is flexible; a “tentative” approach to the methodology

Essential Characteristics of Qualitative Research

emphasizes the holistic perspective

research is context sensitive

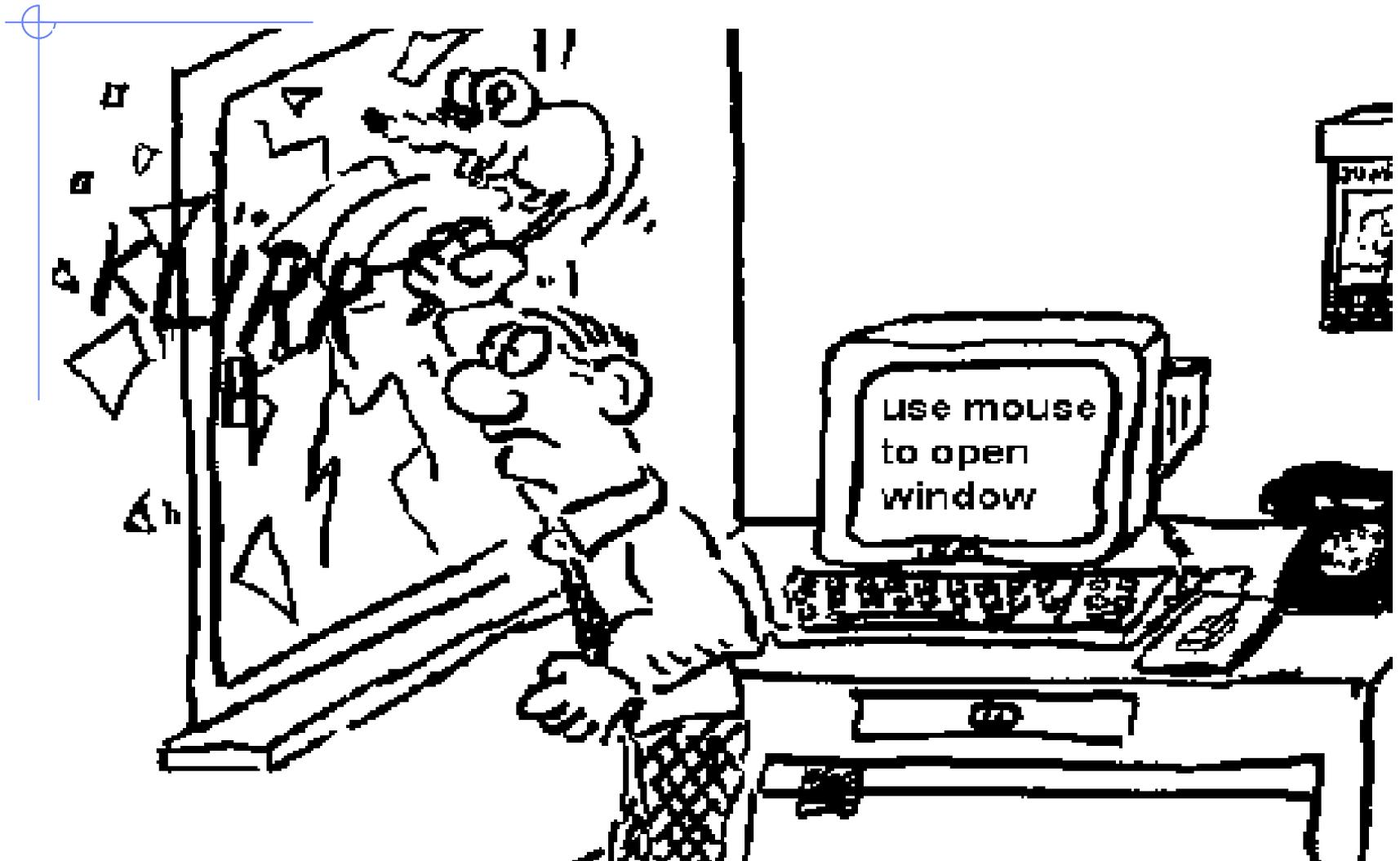
illuminate the invisibility of everyday life; “make the familiar strange”

construct meaning from the participant’s point of view (“informants” rather than “subjects”)

explores open questions rather than testing hypothesis

employs purposive sampling and “gate keepers”

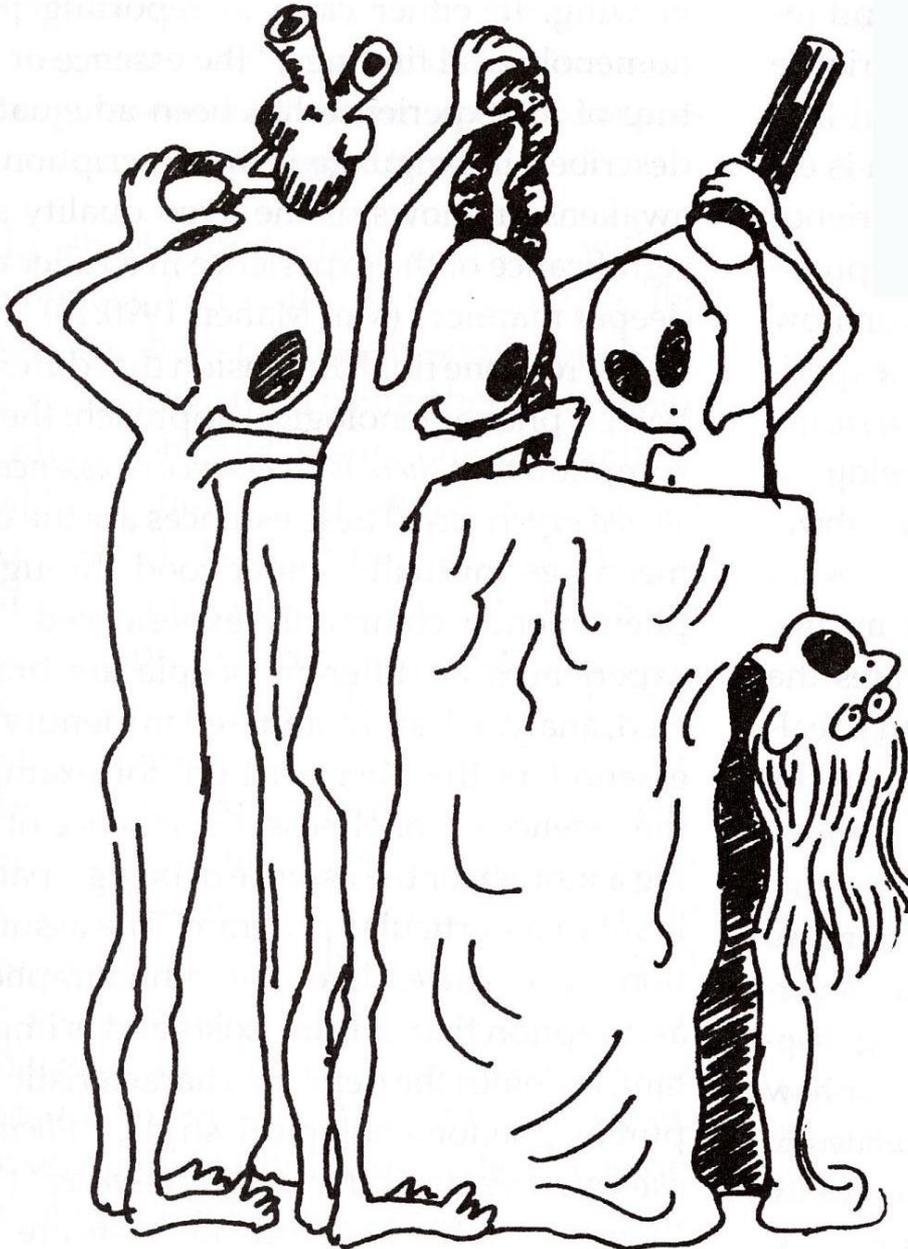
MAKING SENSE OF OTHERS' REALITY



Types of sampling methods

Type of sampling	Purpose	Example
Intensity sampling	To provide rich information from a few select cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but are not extreme cases	Interviewing survivors of date rape to learn more about how coerced sex affects women's sexuality
Deviant case sampling	To learn from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon in question	Interviewing men who do not beat their wives in a culture where wife abuse is culturally accepted
Stratified purposeful sampling	To illustrate characteristics of particular subgroups of interest; to facilitate comparisons	Interviewing different types of service provider (police, social workers, doctors, clergy) to compare their attitudes toward and treatment of abuse victims
Snowball or chain sampling (locate one or two key individuals, and then ask them to name other likely informants)	To facilitate the identification of hard-to-find cases	Finding commercial sex workers to interview about experiences of childhood sexual abuse by getting cases referred through friendship networks
Maximum variation sampling (purposely select a wide range of variation on dimensions of interest)	To document diverse variations; can help to identify common patterns that cut across variations	Researching variations in norms about the acceptability of wife beating by conducting focus groups: young urban women, old urban women, young rural men, old rural men, women who have been abused, women who have not experienced abuse
Convenience sampling (Select whoever is easiest, closest, etc.)	To save time, money and effort. Information collected generally has very low credibility	Forming focus groups based on who is available that day at the local community centre, rather than according to clear criteria
Criterion sampling	To investigate in depth a particular "type" of case; identify all sources of variation	Specifically interviewing only abused women who have left their partners within the last year in order to better understand the variety of factors that spur women to leave

Qualitative Research



Don't be a bull in a china shop – prefigure your data collection



Prefiguring

Analysis of qualitative data begins before it is collected.

It starts with:

1. Framing and posing a research question or problem
2. Knowing the theoretical positions available on the topic

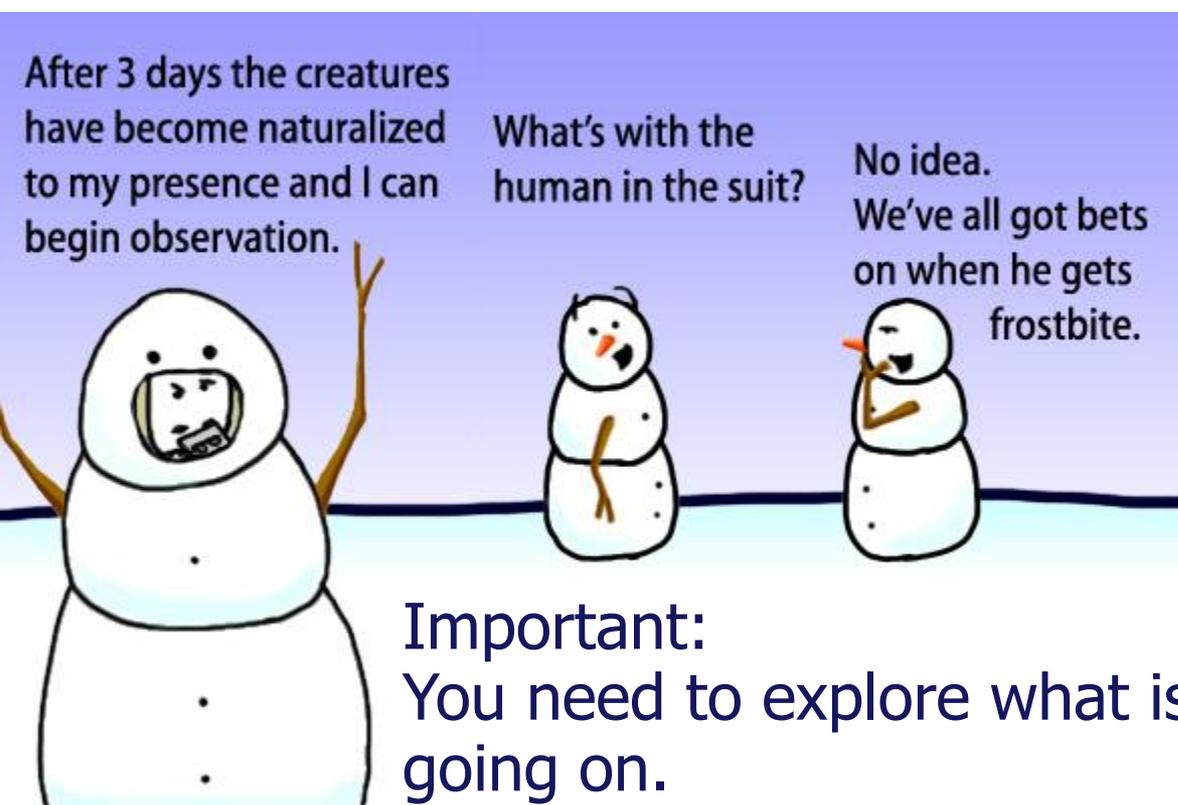
Finding the blind spots, gaps and omissions in literature

Knowing your own preconceptions and biases

Avoid the self-fulfilling research

Design in checks and balances to make sure research is believable, trustworthy and credible [Sandelowski 1986].

Make sure sampling is purposive



Important:

You need to explore what is going on *where* it is going on.

This often means building a close rapport with participants by staying close to the field in which they operate.

The more and longer you are immersed in field the better the depth of data

Size matters in qualitative research but in different ways (Cousins, 2013)

Two important objectives in data gathering

Saturation of data – sampling
– no new ideas / data emerge

Thick descriptions – “to make meaning clear”

Data collection as iterative process



Two Components: Description and Reflection

Description – thick descriptions of what actually takes place; non judgmental;

Reflection – the researcher's thoughts or ideas about the meaning of what was observed

How do I know that what I have observed was in fact what happened?

Member checking – verify our observations with those observed.

More than one observer observing

Triangulation – compare observations with other data collected.

the
POINT of VIEW

