

Foundations of Qualitative Research

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- Qualitative research is establishing itself in the **social sciences and in psychology**.
 - **Why** people behave the way they do
 - **How** opinions and attitudes are formed
 - **How** people are affected by the events that go on around them
 - **How and why** cultures have developed in the way they have
 - **What** is the meaning of some experience

What is it?

- Investigating participants opinions, behaviors, and experiences from their point of view.
- How individuals and groups *view and understand* the world and *construct meaning* out of their *experience*.

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- Qualitative research is an intellectual, creative, and rigorous craft that the practitioner not only learns but also develops.
 - Ongoing **interplay** between theory and methods, researcher and researched.

Qualitative versus Quantitative

- Quantitative science → hard
- Qualitative science → Soft
- Example: Body Image
- Qualitative researchers are concerned with text and words as apposed to numbers.

Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Research

- Quantitative-based on *manipulation and control*, results verified by sense data (by the researcher)
- Qualitative-based on insights and understandings about individual perception of events (by the subjects)

Qualitative Methods of Data Collection

- Mapping
- In-depth and semi-structured interview
- Focus Group Discussion
- Participant Observation
- Social Artifact Content Analysis

Qualitative Research Methodologies

- Grounded Theory
- Phenomenology
- Ethnography
- Participatory Action Research

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- *Quantitative research-rich, real and valid data, hard, replicable and reliable data, **deductive**, theory testing approach, whereas:*

Qualitative research

- In-depth descriptions of people or events
- Researcher focuses on patterns and themes, rather than the testing of hypotheses
- **Inductive** approach - open to new ideas and theories
- Not as well circumscribed as quantitative and more difficult for novice

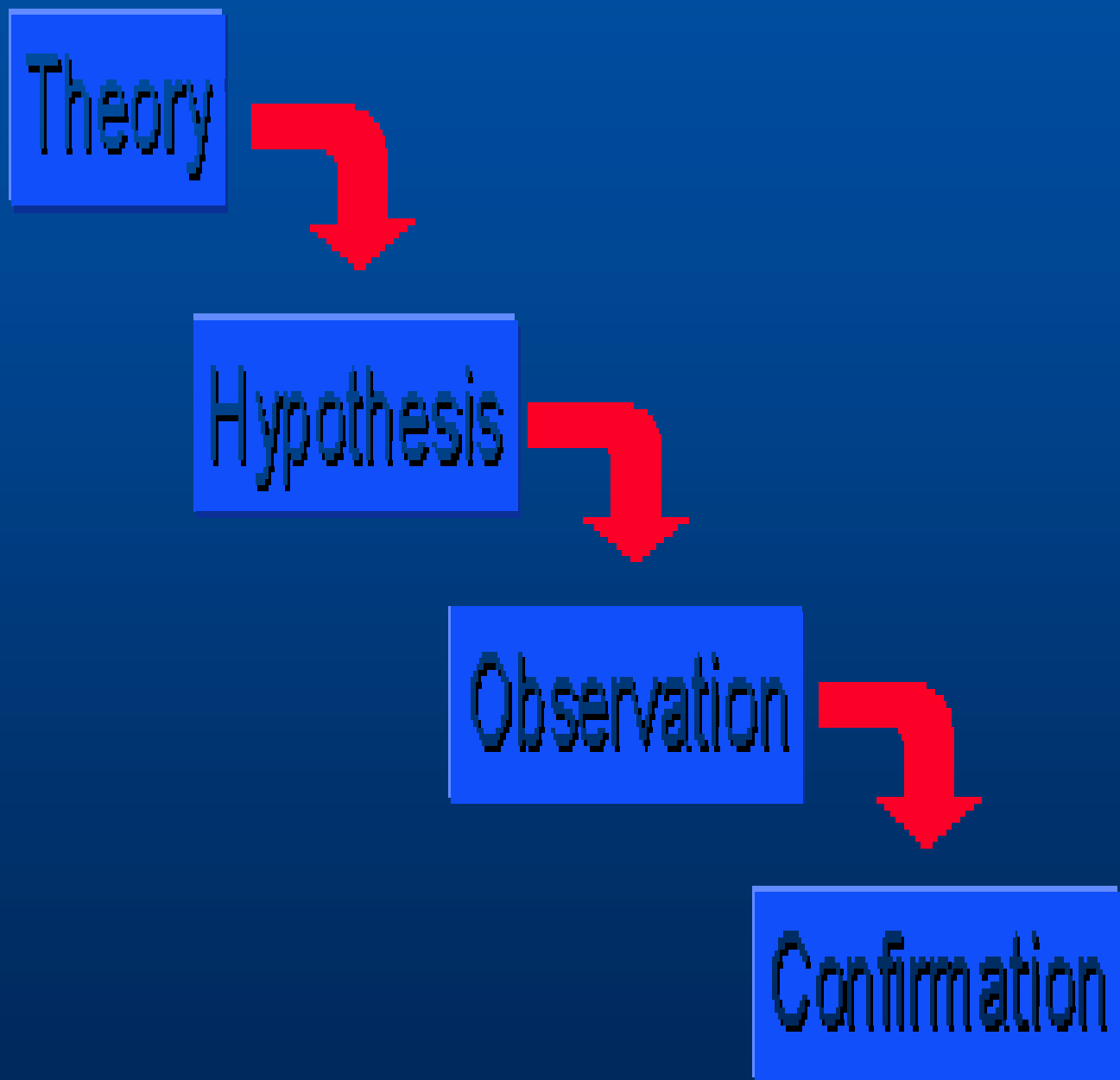
Deductive and Inductive Thinking

- In logic, we often refer to the two broad methods of reasoning as the *deductive* and *inductive* approaches

Deductive reasoning

- Deductive reasoning works from the more general to the more specific. Sometimes this is informally called a "top-down" approach. This ultimately leads us to be able to test the hypotheses with specific data - a *confirmation* (or not) of our original theories.

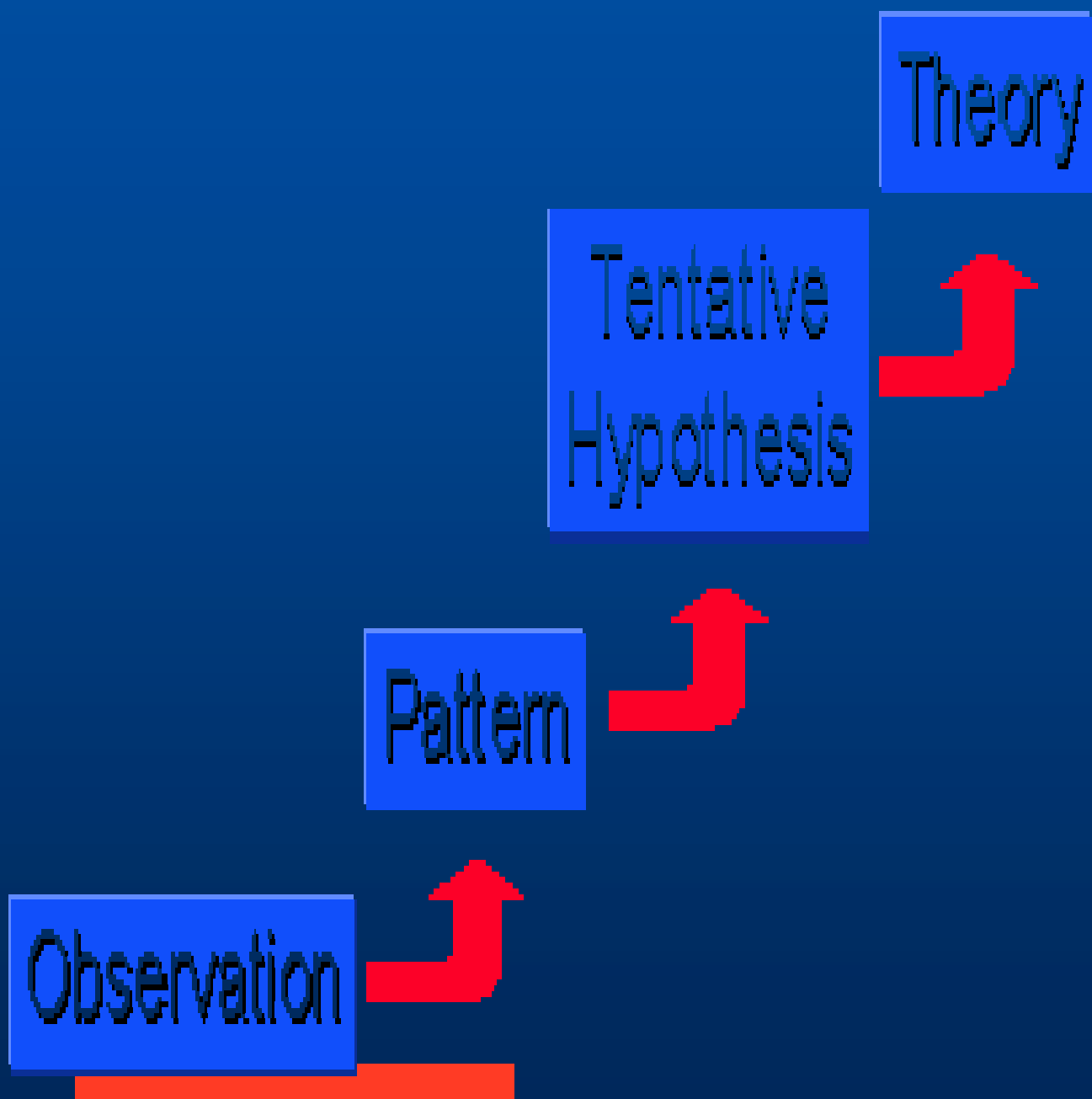
Deductive reasoning



Inductive reasoning

- Inductive reasoning works the other way, moving from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories. Informally, we sometimes call this a "bottom up" approach. In inductive reasoning, we begin with specific observations and measures, begin to detect patterns and regularities, formulate some tentative hypotheses that we can explore, and finally end up developing some general conclusions or theories.

Inductive reasoning





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- Inductive reasoning, by its very nature, is more open-ended and exploratory, especially at the beginning. Deductive reasoning is more narrow in nature and is concerned with testing or confirming hypotheses.

Positivism & Objectivity

- Positivism holds that there is a knowable reality that exists independent of the research process.
- Causal relationship between variables exist and can even be identified, proven, and explained.
- Positivism places the researcher and the researched, or knower and what is knowable, on different planes within the research process.

Objectivity

- Positivist epistemology assumes that there is an objective reality “out there” which can be explained by objective value free researchers through the use of objective replicable methods.

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- The value of the qualitative research is not based on whether it is replicable, but rather on how it adds to our substantive knowledge on particular subject.
 - Hard  Soft
 - Representative 
Constructed

- **Qualitative**
Quantitative

- Subjective

Objective

- Holistic
Reductionism

- Phenomenological

Scientific

- Anti positivist

Positivist

- Descriptive
Experimental

- Naturalistic
unnatural

- Inductive

Deductive

What is the primary research question?
What part of social reality do I want to get at?

- A **quantitative** approach is suited to answering the research questions as you have framed them.
- **Quantitative** approaches are useful for identifying potential causal relationships.

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- Most quantitative data techniques are **data condensers**.
 - Qualitative methods are best understood as **data enhancers**.

When should you use a Qualitative Research Design?

- Exploratory research where the relevant variables are not known
- Uncovering the tacit aspects of organizational life
- Building a rich description of situation
- Exploratory and descriptive
- Uncovering the process behind the outcomes

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- WHY
 - WHAT
 - HOW

Qualitative Research Methods

- Often poorly described and lack prescriptive procedures
- Researchers often adapt techniques, rather than adhere to the recommended protocols
- Considered to be “soft” and less sophisticated than quantitative research.