

Designing Criminological Research

Tuesday 27th September 2016



Aims of this course

- Understand the nature of social (criminological) research
- Formulate original research questions
- Select suitable research designs
- Develop dissertation ideas
- Critically engage with high level methodology
- Gain more from the reading

Format of this course

- 6 x lectures
 - Core reading/ watching before lecture
 - Lecture as overview of concepts
 - Do exercises
- 2 x practical sessions
 - Developing your ideas
 - Troubleshooting workshop

Assessment

- Research proposal (ideally for your dissertation)
- 3,500 words
 - Review of literature (will cover methods in course)
 - Project proposal
 - Secondary data analysis

Assessment

- A typical proposal includes
 - a clearly thought out research question,
 - (brief) literature review
 - hypotheses, and well-articulated concepts.
 - the research design (data collection and analyses),
 - issues around data quality and
 - ethical issues.

Why do research?

?????

A person in a dark suit and tie is holding a smartphone in their right hand. The phone screen displays a news article with the word "CURRENT" visible at the top. The background is dark.

Why do research?

Why do research? – Curiosity

For example,

Vaughn, M. S., Del Carmen, R. V., Perfecto, M., & Charand, K. X. (2004). Journals in criminal justice and criminology: An updated and expanded guide for authors. Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 15(1), 61-192.

is a descriptive paper that summarizes the mission, philosophy, and editorial policies of a selection of journals in criminal justice and criminology.

Why do research?



7-22-1994

19:31:03:08

HELP! HELP!
POLICE!

Why do research? – Social problems

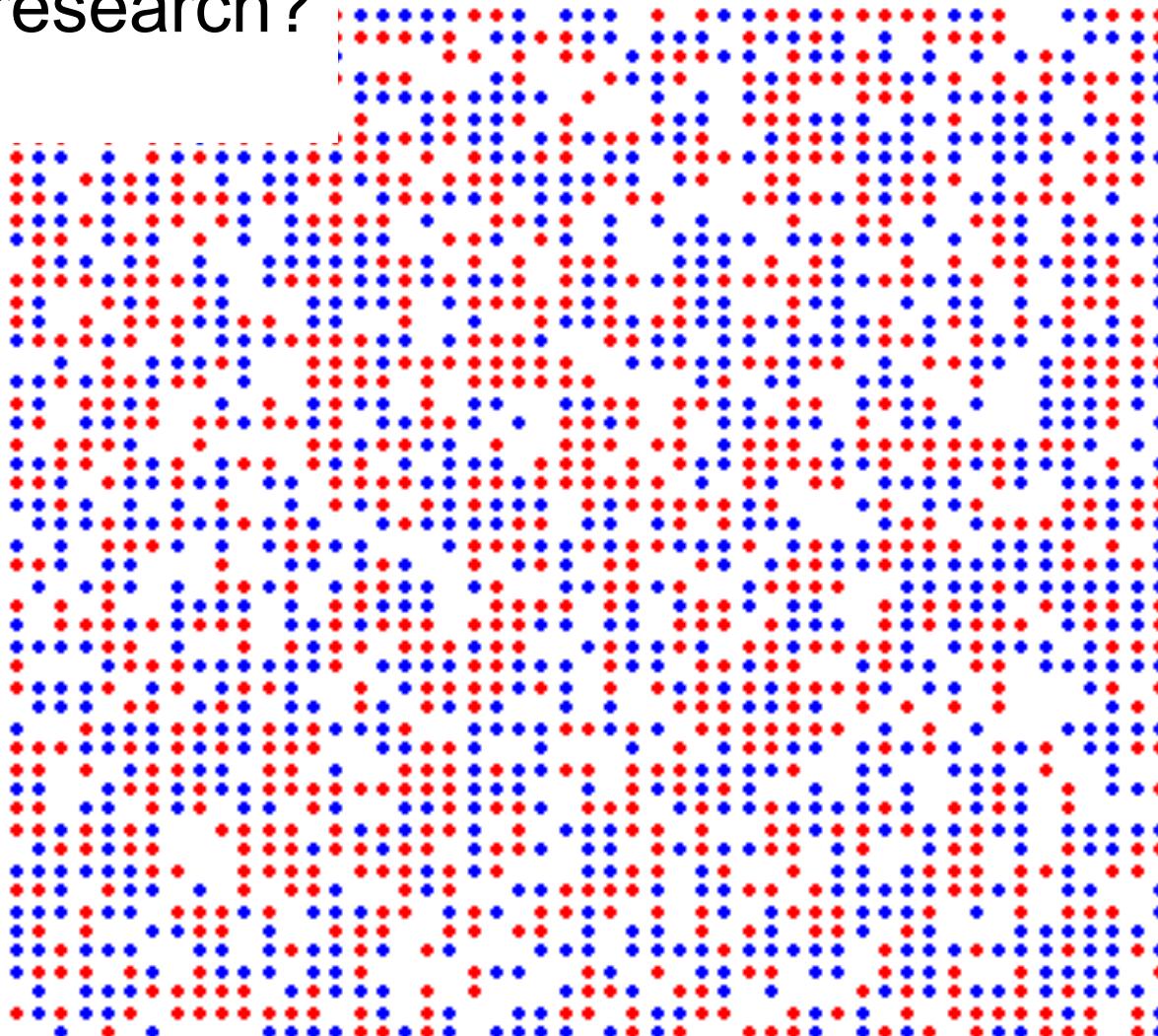
For example,

Research into the use of sobriety checkpoints shows that they help to reduce alcohol related injuries and crashes.

(see: <http://whatworks.college.police.uk/toolkit/Pages/Intervention.aspx?InterventionID=7>)

Step 1

Why do research?



Why do research? – Theory Testing

For example,

*Farrell, G. (2013). Five tests for a theory of the crime drop.
Crime Science, 2(1), 1.*

Uses research to test hypotheses about what is causing the crime drop.

How can we approach research?

?????

How to approach research?

Paradigms

- Dictate what and how to research
- ‘Normal’ science
- Overturned by paradigm shift

Further reading: Kuhn, T. S. (2012). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago press. Chicago

What is research?

?????

What is research?

“Process of enquiry and discovery achieved by generating and analyzing evidence, evaluating and interpreting findings, and drawing robust conclusions”

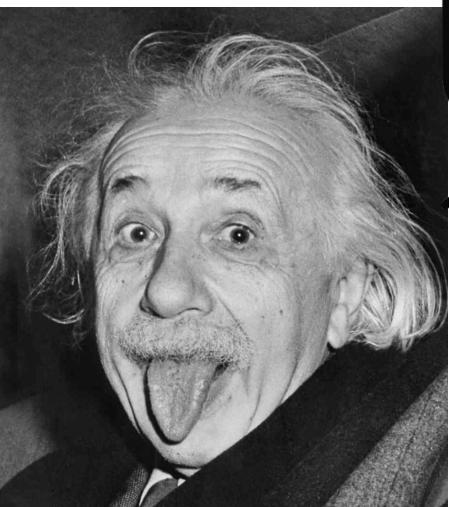
(Kitchin & Tate, 2000)

What is research?

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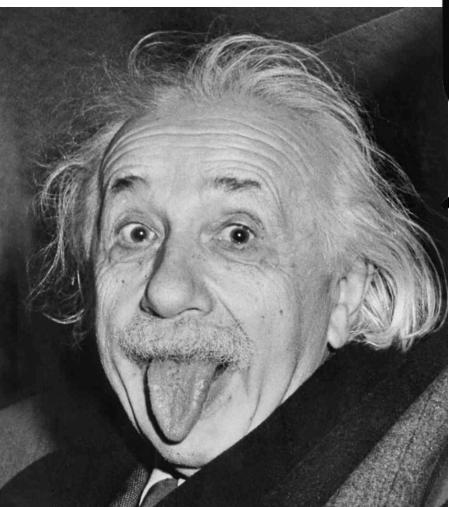
“If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?”



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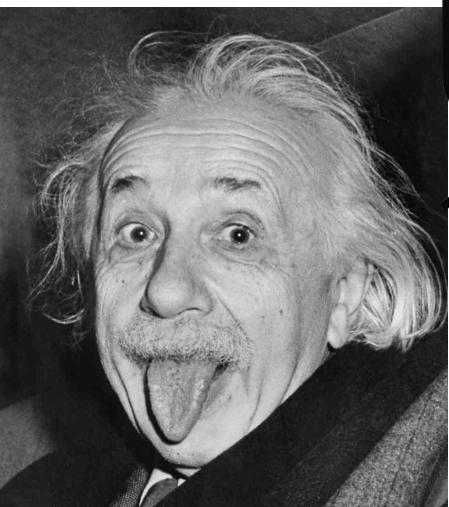
“What is research, but a blind date with knowledge.”

William Harvey

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What is research?

Research is the conscientious study of an issue, problem, or subject (Dantzker, 2006)

What makes research scientific?

Good research, be it qualitative or quantitative, must follow four principles in design

1. Goal is inference
2. Procedures are public
3. Conclusions are uncertain
4. Content is the method

(King et al 1994)

Goal is inference

- Make descriptive or explanatory inferences
- Based on empirical information
- Descriptive inference
 - Using observations to learn about other unobserved facts
- Causal inference
 - Learning about causal effects from data

Procedures are public

- Methods for collecting and analysing data are
 - explicit,
 - codified, and
 - public
- Method and logic for inferences must be explicit
- Reliability can be assessed

Conclusions are uncertain

- Data is uncertain so conclusions can't be certain
- Need to address uncertainty
- Discuss limitations of knowledge and insight

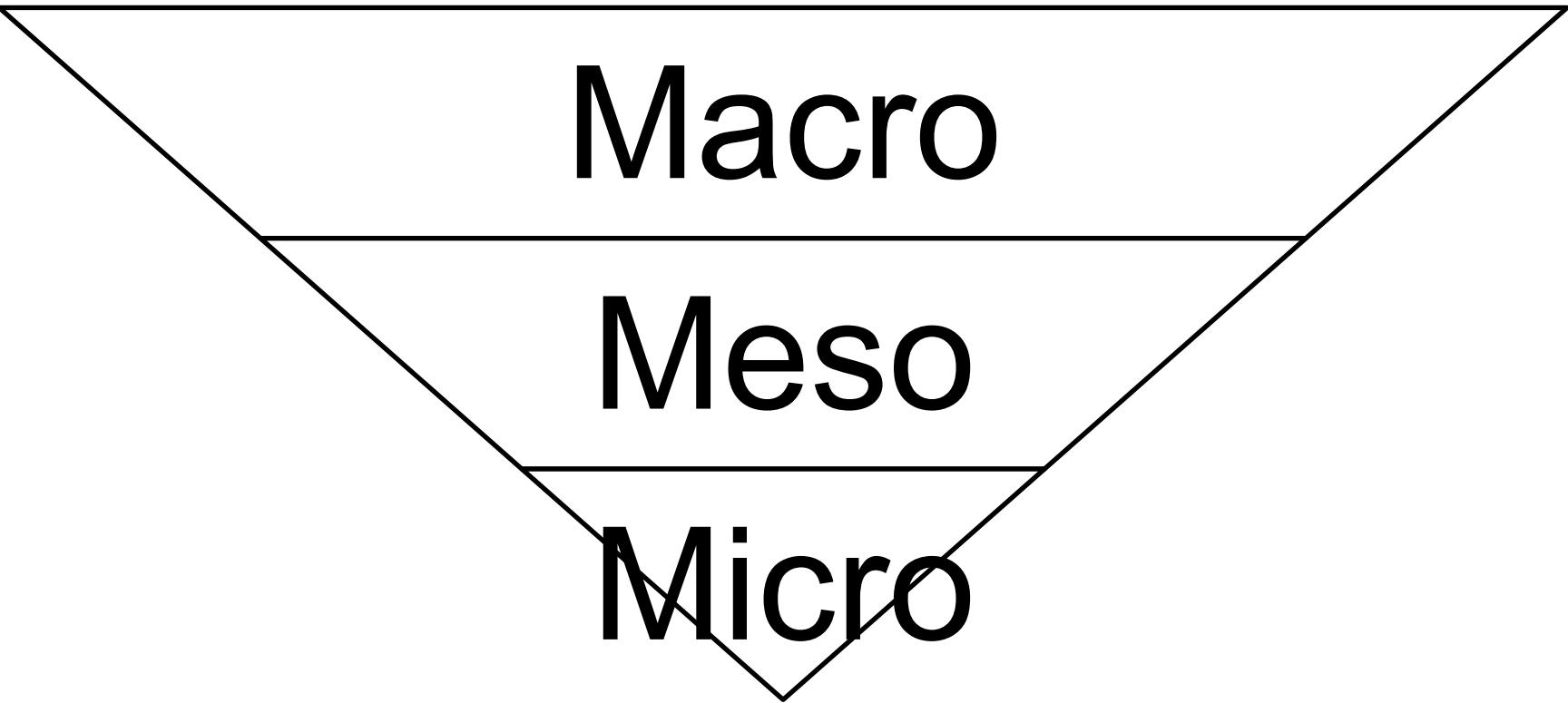
Content is the method

- The “science” part is the method & rules, not subject matter
- Adhere to a set of rules for inference
- But topic can be anything



PLEASE
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THE GRASS

Levels of inquiry

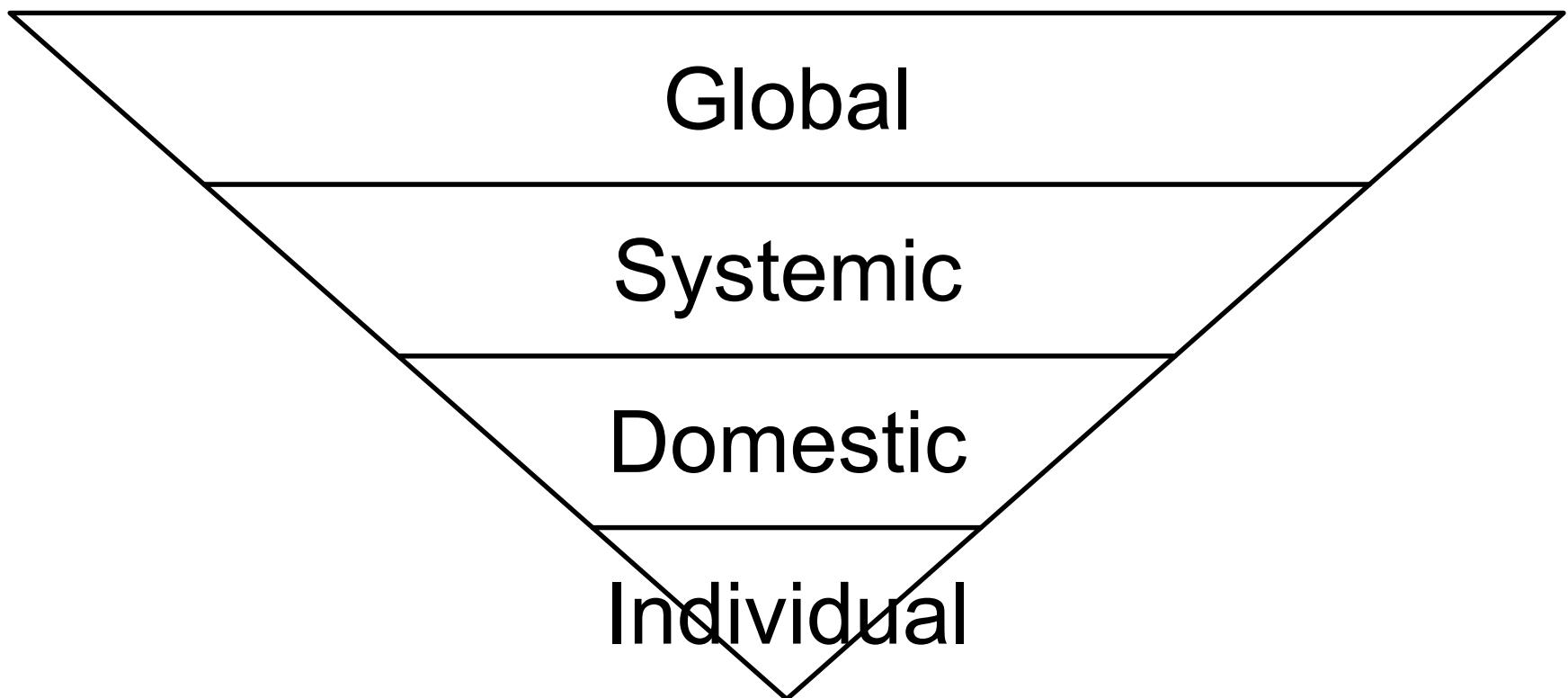


Macro

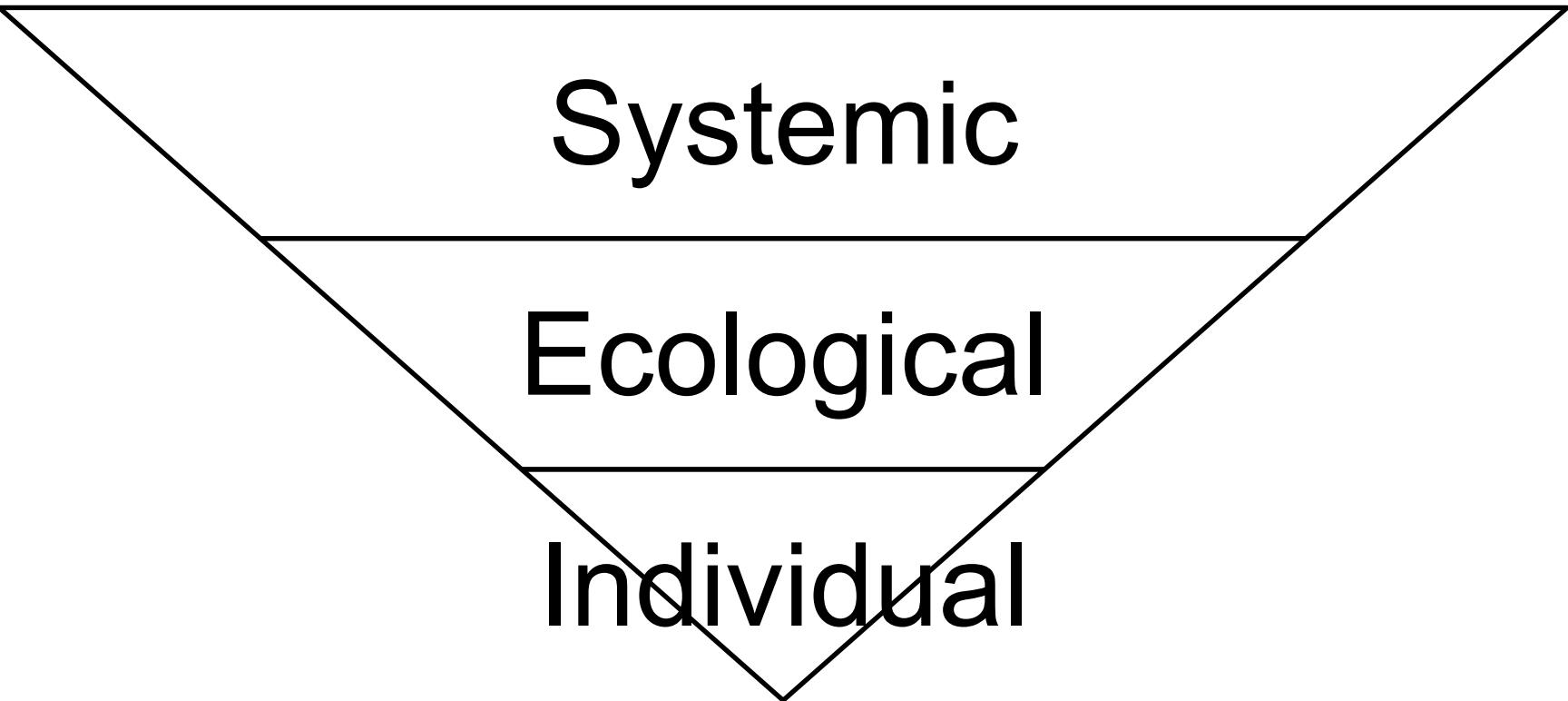
Meso

Micro

Levels of inquiry



Levels of inquiry



Systemic

Ecological

Individual

Micro examples?

- Street segment
- Within-day fluctuation
- Individual actors/ decision makers

Meso examples?

- Neighbourhood
- Schools
- Community groups

Macro examples?

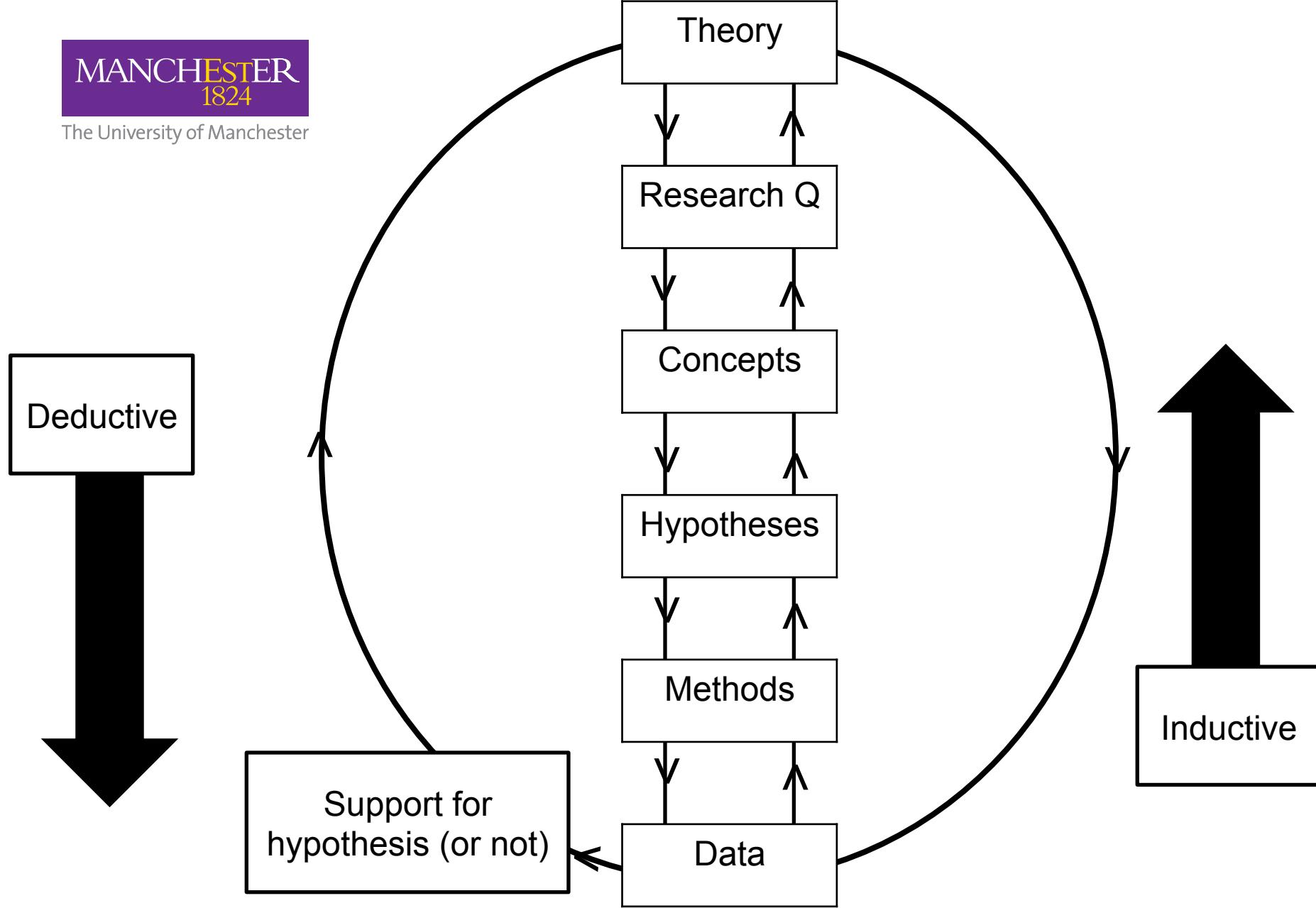
- National and international trends
- Change over years
- Interaction of large systems



The University of Manchester

How to do research?

?????



Theory

- Conceptual basis for understanding, analyzing, and designing ways to investigate relationships within social systems.
- Predicts events in a broad, general context
- Usually extensively tested and is generally accepted among scholars

Theories?

- Eg: Crime pattern theory

(see Brantingham, P., & Brantingham, P. (2008). 5. Crime pattern theory. Environmental criminology and crime analysis, 78.)

Research Question

- A question that is “researchable” (or “investigateable”)
- Doesn’t necessarily require collection of new evidence – can ask Q from existing literature that challenges it in some way
- More on research Q later...

Research Questions?

- Eg: What is the effect of limited awareness space on juvenile offenders?

Concepts

- Labels that scholars need to communicate
- What you need to measure to answer Qs
- Joined to theories
- Concept formation comes *before* measurement
- Establish what is of interest and what is *not*
- If theory ambiguous, might grow concepts from empirical material eg: with grounded theory

Concepts?

- Eg: Awareness Space
- Offender
- Youth

Hypothesis

- A specific, testable prediction about what you expect to happen in your study
- A specific prediction about a specified set of circumstances
- A speculative guess that has yet to be tested

Hypothesis?

- Eg:
- Juveniles have smaller activity space than adults
- Juveniles will offend closer to home than adults

Methods

- different ways of generating and analyzing data about that social world

Methods?

- Eg:
- Quantitative:
 - Analysis of Crime Statistics
- Qualitative:
 - Focus groups

Inductive v Deductive

- Deductive approach: start with theory, test with data
- Inductive approach: generation of new theory emerging from the data

Inductive v. Deductive?

- Finds clues
- Draws conclusions
- Creates theories

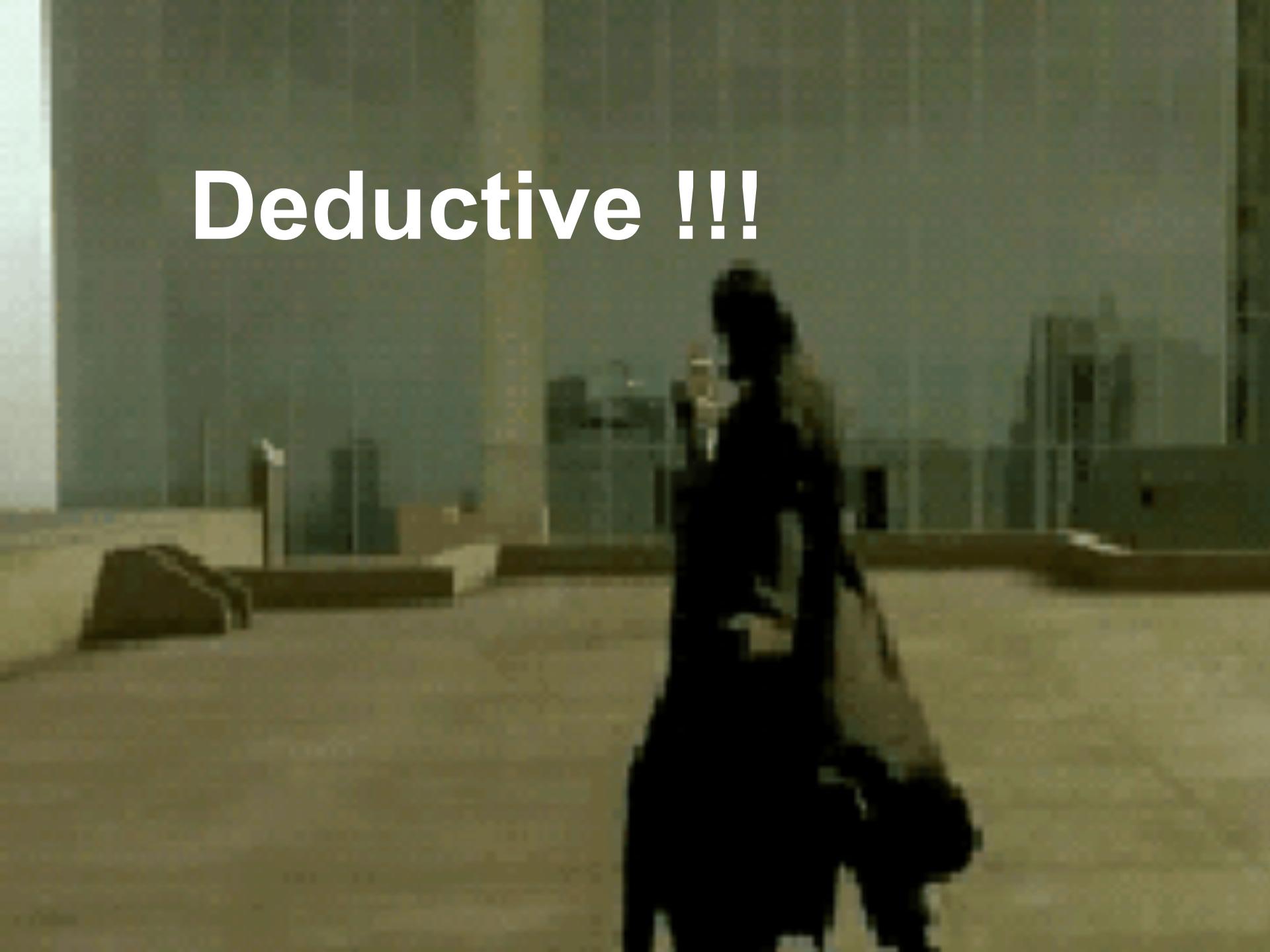
Inductive !!!



Inductive v. Deductive?

- Thinks Neo is the one
- Subjects him to tests
- Draws conclusions

Deductive !!!



Homework

Browse through past ESRC funded research (

<http://researchcatalogue.esrc.ac.uk/search/search-page.aspx?q=crime>)

Select one and look for:

- Level of inquiry
- Theory
- Hypothesis
- Method proposed
- Inductive or deductive