Conceptual Foundations of LIS Research

LIS 570 - Research Assessment & Design

Agenda

Research Paradigms

- Ontology

- Epistemology

- Methods

Dominant Paradigms in LIS

- Positivism

- Constructivism / Subjectivism

- And more…

Research Paradigm

- **Paradigm** - Group of people that share a worldview - generally about what the world consists of and what is valid

- **Research Paradigm** - Group of researchers that agree about what constitutes reality and how we gain valid or true knowledge of reality

  - Same methods, same journals, same professional identities, etc.

Kristen Uroda for NPR - Read this amazing story here https://www.npr.org/2020/02/28/810035026/short-wave-celebrates-black-excellence-in-science

Ontology

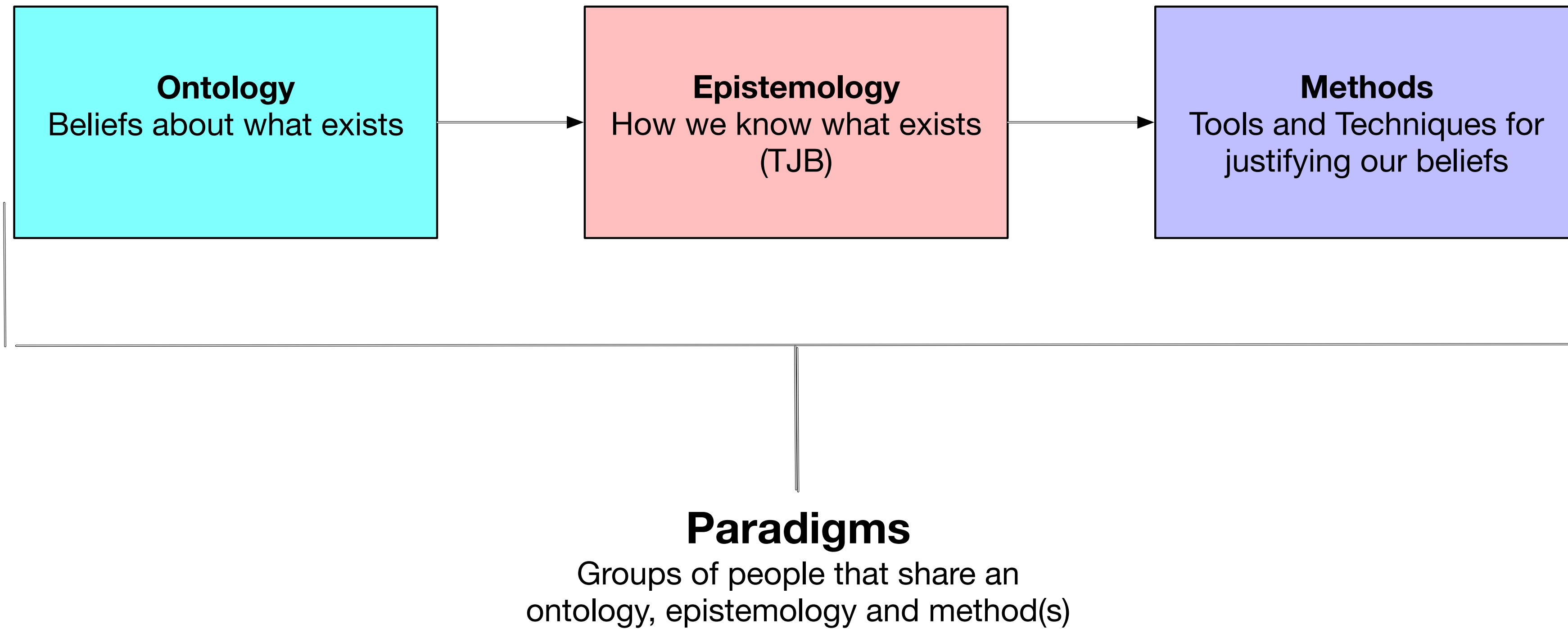- **What** constitutes reality? (Or, what is valid within a paradigm of knowledge)

Epistemology + Methods

- **How** we know what we know

- Knowledge = True + Justified + Beliefs

    - Believe something is the case; Justified in our belief; The belief turns out to be true

- In social science research we try to gather justification for our beliefs using systematic **methods** of data collection and analysis

- Epistemology and methodology are tightly linked

Putting it all together

- Survey (Yes / No judgements) to collect data

- Two variables were used to analyze our results: Structure and Ingredients.

- Is a hot dog a sandwich?

    - It depends on the ontology of our paradigm!

    - There is no correct or wrong answer - but there is unclear or unsupported reasoning (e.g. "It just is!")

Dominant paradigms in Information Science

Research Paradigm	Ontology Reality	Epistemology Knowledge	Methods Tools + Techniques
Positivism	There is one and only one reality / truth	Reality can be measured or inferred through logic	Surveys, data scraping, statistics (usually quant)
Constructivism	Multiple truths each of which is socially constructed	Reality is interpreted and used to give meaning(s) to events, behaviors, etc.	Surveys, observation, interviews, archival analysis (usually qual)