The three Choices You Need to Make when Writing a Thesis

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Agenda

How to choose a topic?

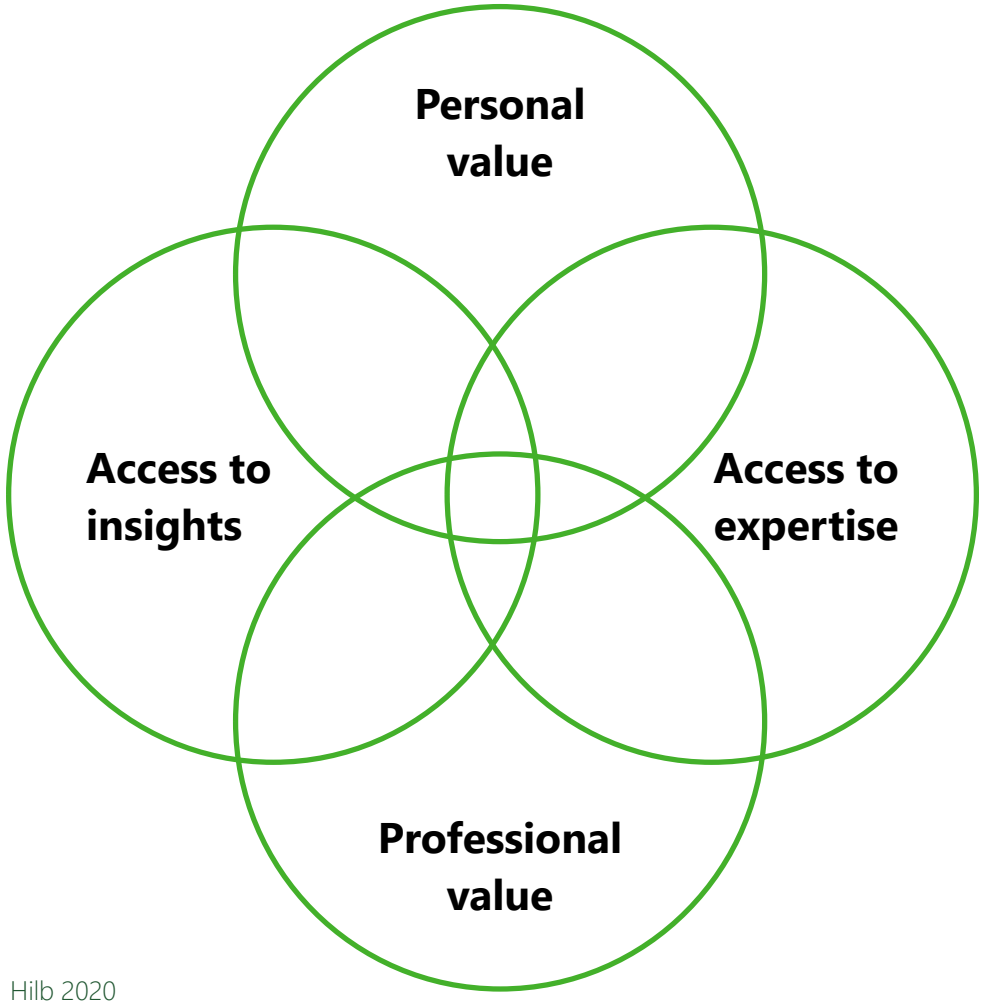
How to choose an interesting angle to the topic?

How to choose the right design for exploring the topic?

How to choose a topic?

Aspiration – choose an Ikigai (生き甲斐) topic

Reality – choose a value-adding topic



Hilb 2020

1. Personal value

What keeps me up at night?

What do I really like to explore further?

What topic is likely to be relevant for my personal development?

2. Professional value

How can I add most value to my company?

How can I utilize the project to explore a new venture idea?

How can I use the project to market my expertise?

3. Access to insights

What organizations do I have access to?

Which networks can I tap into to gain access?

What kind of data am I able to access?

4. Access to expertise

How can I best utilize the knowledge gained in the program?

How can I best tap into the expertise of my supervisor?

How can I best leverage the value of scientific analysis to address a practical challenge?

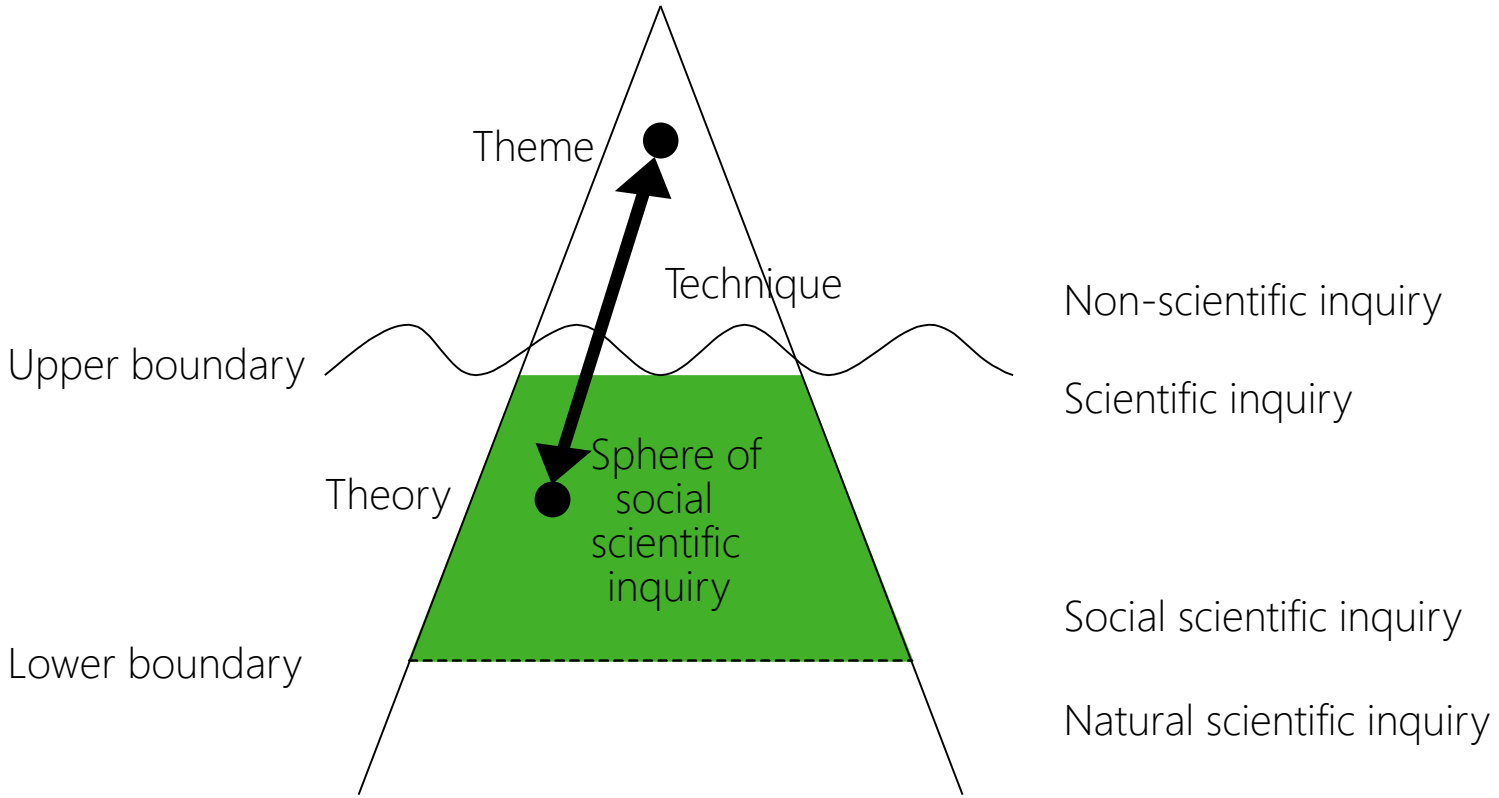
The role of research in bridging theory and practice

The opportunity of a scientific approach to address a business challenge

Academic philosophy

Relevance
Action
Application

Rigor
Thinking
Knowledge



Hilb 2001

Six stages of thinking and five stages of action

Rigor/Thinking: Knowledge Taxonomy

1. Remembering knowledge
2. Understanding knowledge
3. Applying knowledge
4. Analyzing knowledge
5. Evaluating knowledge
6. Creating knowledge

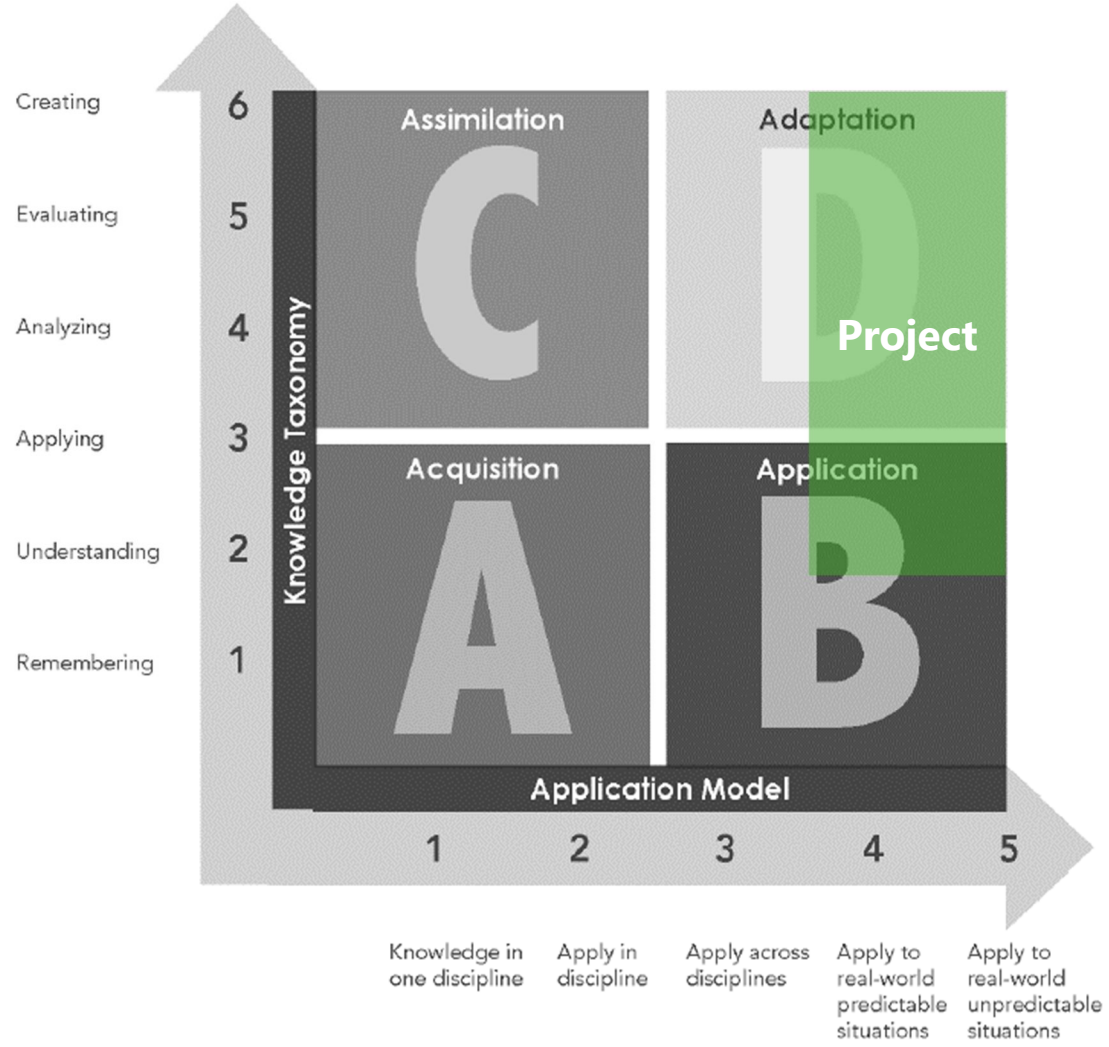
Relevance/Action: Application Model

1. Acquire knowledge in one discipline
2. Apply knowledge in one disciplines
3. Apply knowledge across disciplines
4. Apply knowledge to real-world predictable situations
5. Apply knowledge to real-world unpredictable situations

Daggett 2016

The relevance rigor matrix

Rigor
Thinking
Knowledge



Relevance
Action
Application

Daggett 2016

How to find an interesting angle to the topic?

That's Interesting!

That's Interesting!

Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology

MURRAY S. DAVIS

SUMMARY

QUESTION: How do theories which are generally considered *interesting* differ from theories which are generally considered *non-interesting*? ANSWER: Interesting theories are those which *deny* certain assumptions of their audience, while non-interesting theories are those which *affirm* certain assumptions of their audience. This answer was arrived at through the examination of a number of famous social, and especially sociological, theories. That examination also generated a systematic index of the variety of propositional forms which interesting and non-interesting theories may take. The fertility of this approach suggested a new field be established called the *Sociology of the Interesting*, which is intended to supplement the Sociology of Knowledge. This new field will be *phenomenologically* oriented in so far as it will focus on the movement of the audience's mind from one accepted theory to another. It will be *sociologically* oriented in so far as it will focus on the dissimilar base-line theories of the various sociological categories which compose the audience. In addition to its value in interpreting the social impact of theories, the Sociology of the Interesting can contribute to our understanding of both the common sense and scientific perspectives on reality.

Davis 1971

That's Interesting!

Try to be thought-provoking

"It has long been thought that a theorist is considered great because his theories are true, but this is false. A theorist is considered great, not because his theories are true, but because they are interesting."

Try to challenge the established truths

"An interesting proposition was always the negation of an accepted one."

Davis 1971

The characterization of a single phenomenon

1 Organization
what seems to be a disorganized (unstructured) phenomenon is in reality an organized (structured) phenomenon.
what seems to be an organized (structured) phenomenon is in reality a disorganized (unstructured) phenomenon.

2 Composition
What seem to be assorted heterogeneous phenomena are in reality composed of a single element.
What seems to be a single phenomenon is in reality composed of assorted heterogeneous elements.

3 Abstraction
What seems like an individual phenomenon is in reality a holistic phenomenon. (sociologizing)
What seems like a holistic phenomenon is in reality an individual phenomenon. (psychologizing)

Davis 1971

The characterization of a single phenomenon

4 Generalization
What seems to be a local phenomenon is in reality a general phenomenon.
What seems to be a general phenomenon is in reality a local phenomenon.

5 Stabilization
What seems to be a stable and unchanging phenomenon is in reality an unstable and changing phenomenon.
What seems to be an unstable and changing phenomenon is in reality a stable and unchanging phenomenon.

6 Function
What seems to be a phenomenon that functions ineffectively as a means for the attainment of an end is in reality a phenomenon that function effectively.
What seems to be a phenomenon that functions effectively as the means for the attainment the attainment of an end is in reality a phenomenon that functions ineffectively.

7 Evaluation
What seems to be a bad phenomenon is in reality a good phenomenon.
What seems to be a good phenomenon is in reality a bad phenomenon.

Davis 1971

The relations among multiple phenomena

1 Co-relation

What seem to be unrelated (independent) phenomena are in reality correlated (interdependent) phenomena.
What seem to be related (interdependent) phenomena are in reality uncorrelated (independent) phenomena.

2 Co-existence

What seem to be phenomena which can exist together are in reality phenomena which cannot exist together.
What seem to be phenomena which cannot exist together are in reality phenomena which can exist together.

3 Co-variation

What seems to be a positive co-variation between phenomena is in reality a negative co-variation between phenomena.
What seems to be a negative co-variation between phenomena is in reality a positive co-variation between phenomena.

Davis 1971

The relations among multiple phenomena

4 Opposition

What seem to be similar (nearly identical) phenomena are in reality opposite phenomena.
What seem to be opposite phenomena are in reality similar (nearly identical) phenomena.

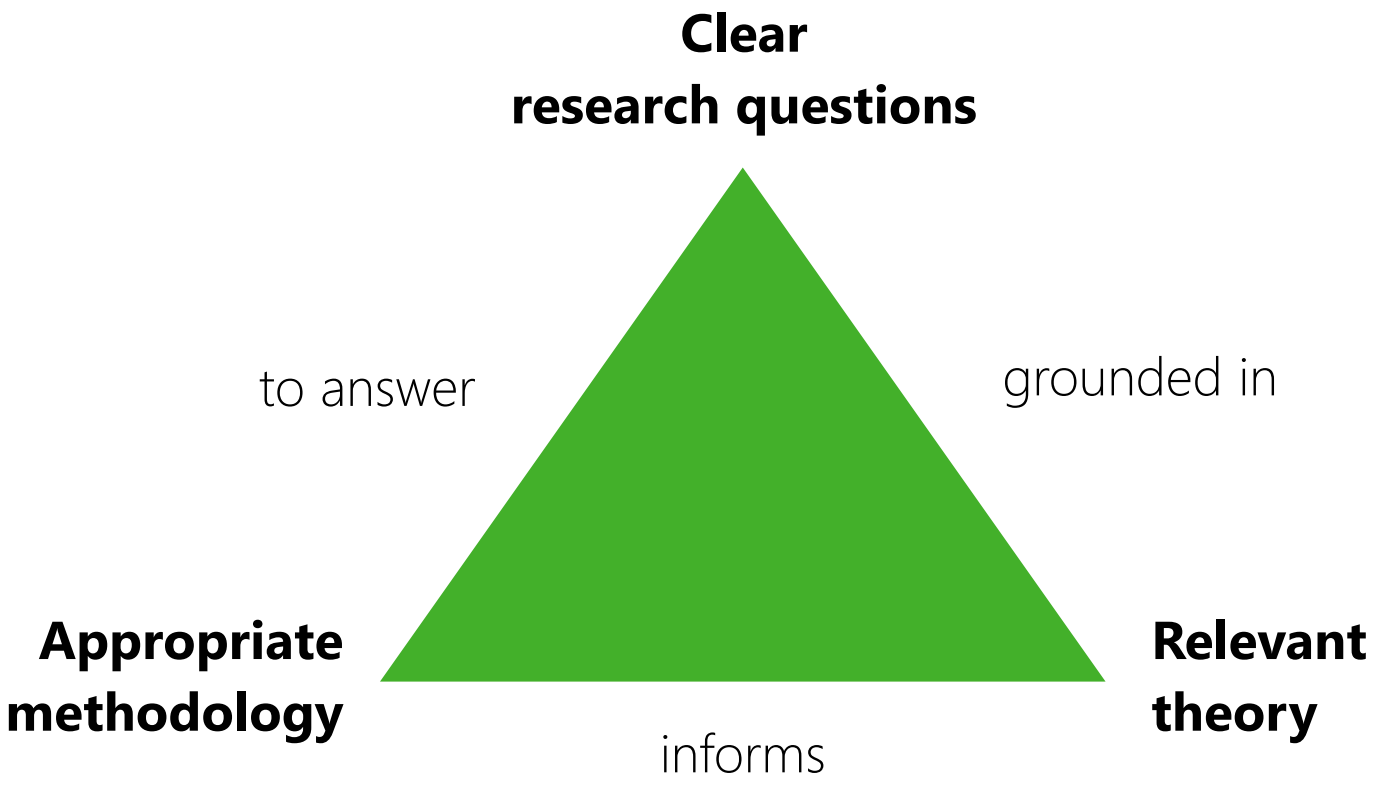
5 Causation

What seems to be the independent phenomenon (variable) in a causal relation is in reality the dependent phenomenon (variable).
What seems to be the dependent phenomenon (variable) in a causal relation is in reality the independent phenomenon (variable).

Davis 1971

How to choose the right design for exploring the topic?

The research design cycle



Riley and Martin

1. Research Questions

Choose as few research questions as possible.

Be as specific as possible.

Apply the rule of thumb: You should be able to answer your question in the conclusion section of your paper on one page.

2. Theories

Don’t be driven by theories but use them to build a strong case.

Explore multiple options of applicable theories.

Choose one or max. two theories as a foundation for your project.

2. Theories – there is a multitude of theories to choose from (sample: strategy)

	Design	Planning	Positioning	Entrepreneurial	Cognitive
Sources	P. Selznick (and perhaps earlier work, for example, by W.H. Newman), then K.R. Andrews.[a]	H.I. Ansoff.[b]	Purdue University work (D.E. Schendel, K.J. Hatten), then notably M.E. Porter.[c]	J.A. Schumpeter, A.H. Cole, and others in economics.[d]	H.A. Simon and J.G. March.[e]
Base Discipline	None (architecture as metaphor).	Some links to urban planning, systems theory, and cybernetics.	Economics (industrial organization) and military history.	None (although early writings come from economists).	Psychology (cognitive).
Champions	Case study teachers (especially at or from Harvard University), leadership aficionados — especially in the United States.	"Professional" managers, MBAs, staff experts (especially in finance), consultants, and government controllers — especially in France and the United States.	As in planning school, particularly analytical staff types, consulting "boutiques," and military writers — especially in the United States.	Popular business press, individualists, small business people everywhere, but most decidedly in Latin America and among overseas Chinese.	Those with a psychological bent — pessimists in one wing, optimists in the other.
Intended Message	Fit.	Formalize.	Analyze.	Envision.	Cope or create.
Realized Message	Think (strategy making as case study).	Program (rather than formulate).	Calculate (rather than create or commit).	Centralize (then hope).	Worry (being unable to cope in either case).
School Category	Prescriptive.	Prescriptive.	Prescriptive.	Descriptive (some prescriptive).	Descriptive.
Associated Homily	"Look before you leap."	"A stitch in time saves nine."	"Nothin' but the facts, ma'am."	"Take us to your leader."	"I'll see it when I believe it."

	Learning	Power	Cultural	Environmental	Configuration
Sources	C.E. Lindblom, R.M. Cyert and J.G. March, K.E. Weick, J.B. Quinn, and C.K. Prahalad and G. Hamel.[f]	G.T. Allison (micro), J. Pfeffer and G.R. Salancik, and W.G. Astley (macro).[g]	E. Rhenman and R. Normann in Sweden. No obvious source elsewhere.[h]	M.T. Hannan and J. Freeman. Contingency theorists (e.g., D.S. Pugh et al.).[i]	A.D. Chandler, McGill University group (H. Mintzberg, D. Miller, and others), R.E. Miles and C.C. Snow.[j]
Base Discipline	None (perhaps some peripheral links to learning theory in psychology and education). Chaos theory in mathematics.	Political science.	Anthropology.	Biology.	History.
Champions	People inclined to experimentation, ambiguity, adaptability — especially in Japan and Scandinavia.	People who like power, politics, and conspiracy — especially in France.	People who like the social, the spiritual, the collective — especially in Scandinavia and Japan.	Population ecologists, some organization theorists, splitters, and positivists in general — especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries.	Lumpers and integrators in general, as well as change agents. Configuration perhaps most popular in the Netherlands. Transformation most popular in the United States.
Intended Message	Learn.	Promote.	Coalesce.	React.	Integrate, transform.
Realized Message	Play (rather than pursue).	Hoard (rather than share).	Perpetuate (rather than change).	Capitulate (rather than confront).	Lump (rather than split, adapt).
School Category	Descriptive.	Descriptive.	Descriptive.	Descriptive.	Descriptive and prescriptive.
Associated Homily	"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."	"Look out for number one."	"An apple never falls far from the tree."	"It all depends."	"To everything there is a season. . . ."

Mintzberg and Lampel 1999

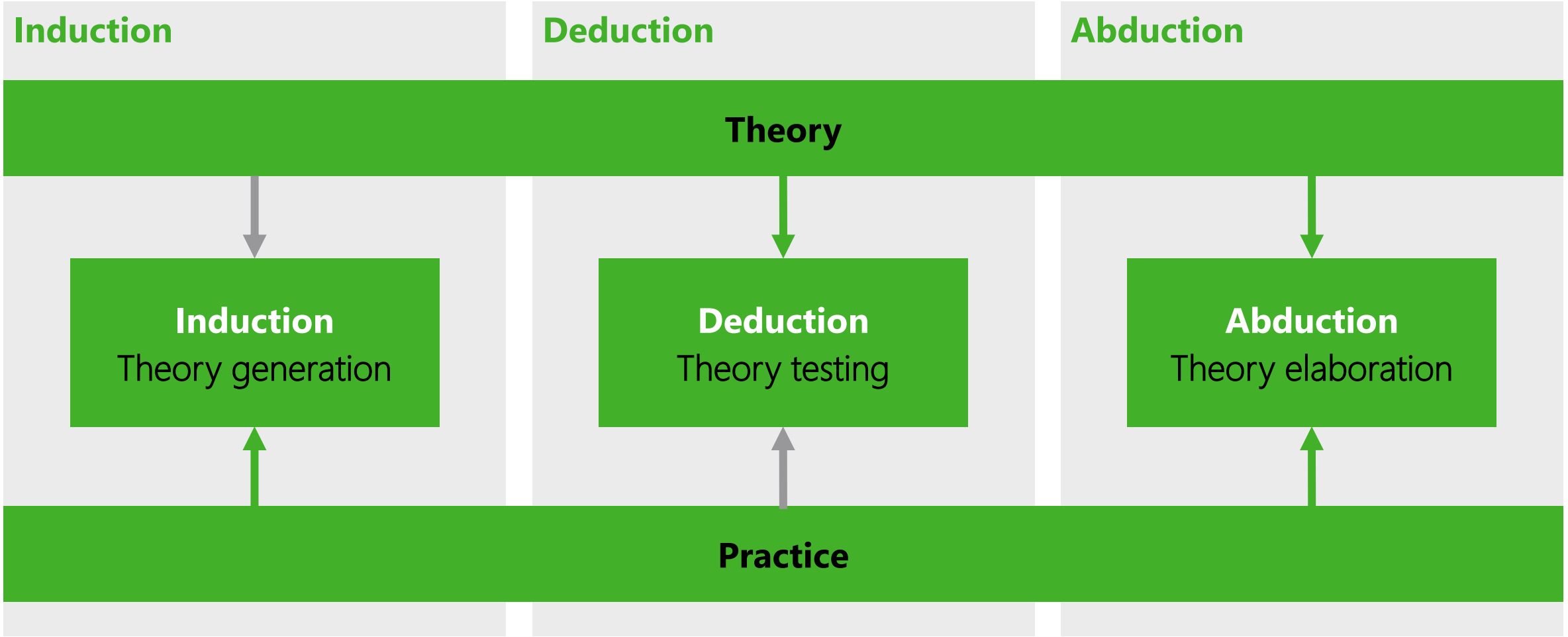
3. Methodology

Ensure that you overall approach, i.e. induction, deduction or abduction, is best suited to address your resarch questions.

Understand the implications of your choice in terms of choosing the appropriate methods.

Choose appropriate methods which are feasible and realistic to realize.

3. Methodology – choose your appraoch



3. Methodology – choose your approach Easter edition

Rule:
All the eggs in this nest are colored.

Case:
These eggs are from this nest.

Result:
These eggs are colored.

3. Methodology – choose your approach Easter edition

Induction

Case:
These eggs are from this nest.

Result:
These eggs are colored.

Rule:
All the eggs in this nest are colored.

Deduction

Rule:
All the eggs in this nest are colored.

Case:
All the eggs are from this nest.

Result:
These eggs are colored.

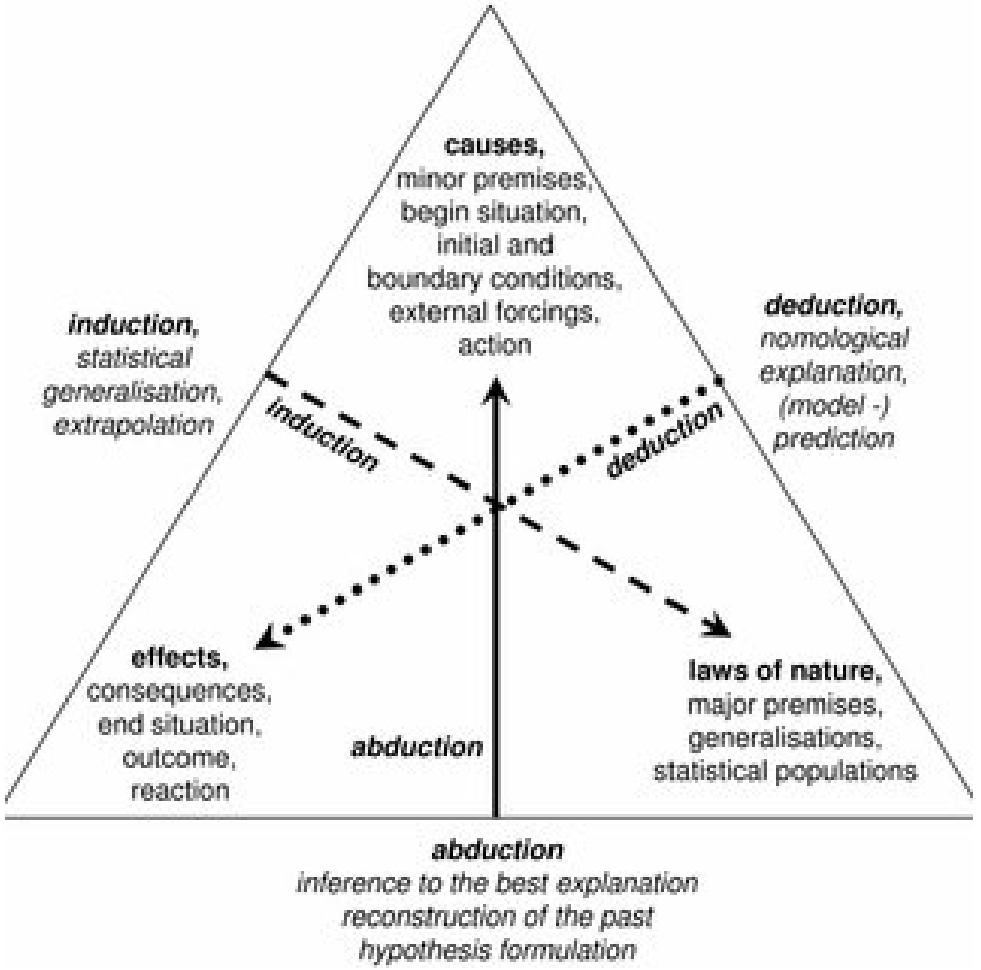
Abduction

Rule:
All the eggs in this nest are colored.

Result:
These eggs are colored.

Case:
These eggs are from this nest.

3. Methodology – the Peirce triangle



Peirce 1877

3. Methodology

Ensure that you overall approach, i.e. induction, deduction or abduction, is best suited to address your resarch questions.

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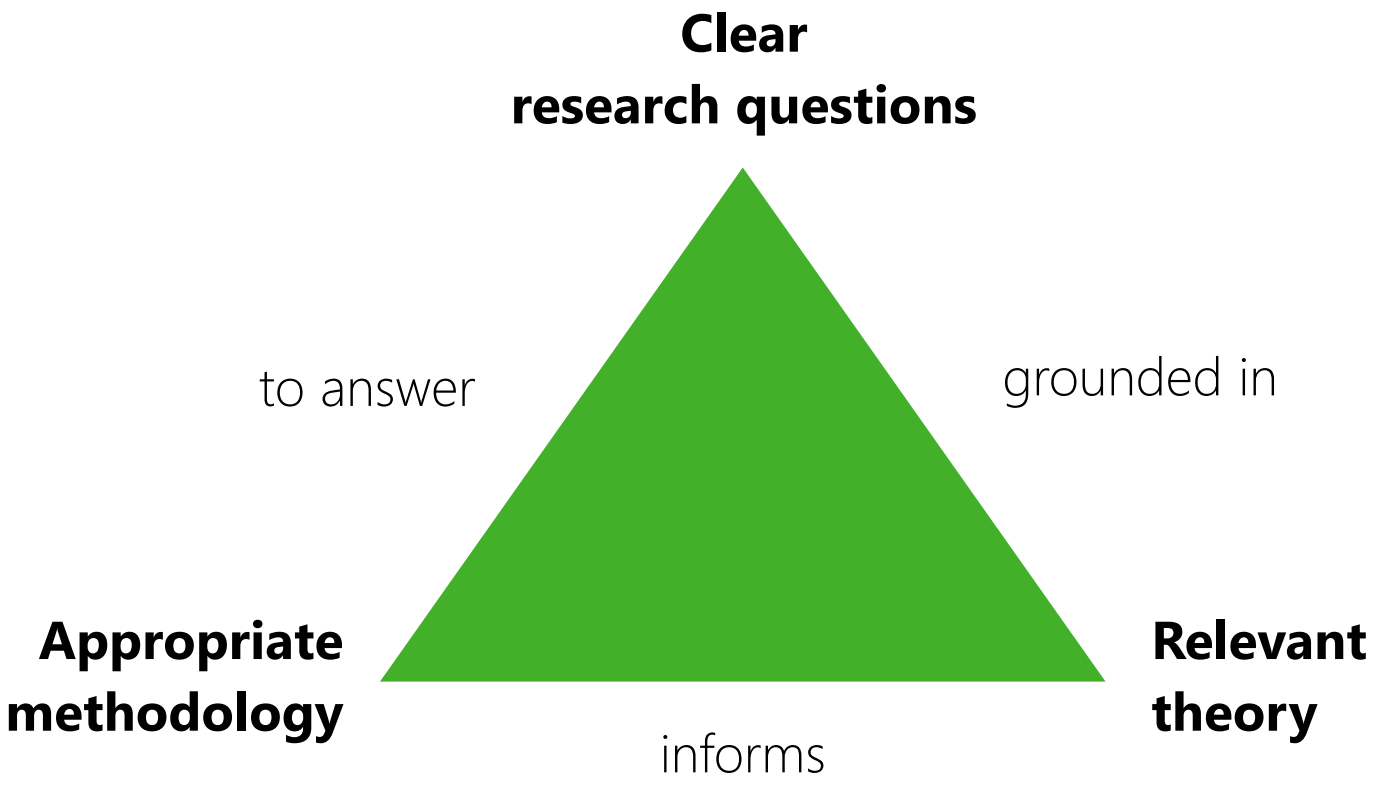
Choose appropriate methods which are feasible and realistic to realize.

3. Methdology – find the right methods

	Method	Strengths	Weaknesses	Use
Natural setting	Case studies	Natural settings Rich data	Time demanding Limited generalizability	Descriptions, explanations, developing hypothesis
	Field studies	Natural Settings Replicable	Difficult data collection Unknown sample bias	Studying current practice Evaluating new practices
	Action research	First hand experience Applying theory to practice	Ethics, bias, time Unknown generalizability	Generate hypothesis/theory Testing theories/hypothesis
Artificial setting	Laboratory experiments	Control of variables Replicable	Limited realism Unknown generalizability	Controlled experiments Theory/product testing
Environ-ment independ-ent setting	Survey research	Easy, low cost Can reduce sample bias	Context insensitive No variable manipulation	Collecting descriptive data from large samples
	Applied research	The goal is a product which may be evaluated	May need further design to make product general	Product development, testing hypothesis/concepts
	Basic research	No restrictions on solutions Solve new problems	Costly, time demanding May produce no solution	Theory building
	Normative writings	Insight into firsthand experience	Opinions may influence outcome	Descriptions of practice, building frameworks

Wynekoop and Conger 1990

To summarize – follow the research design cycle



Riley and Martin

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