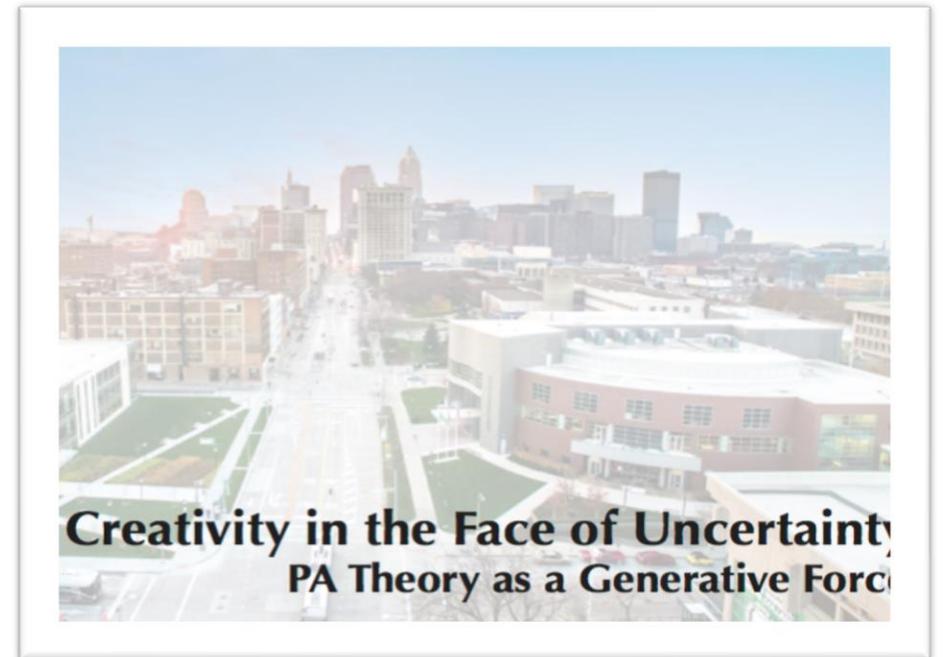


# Pragmatism and Public Administration Research Methodology

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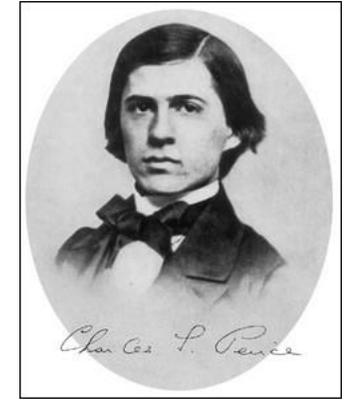
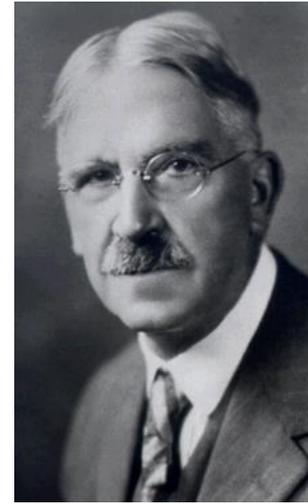




We Argue:

Philosophical pragmatism provides a robust basis for research methodology in PA

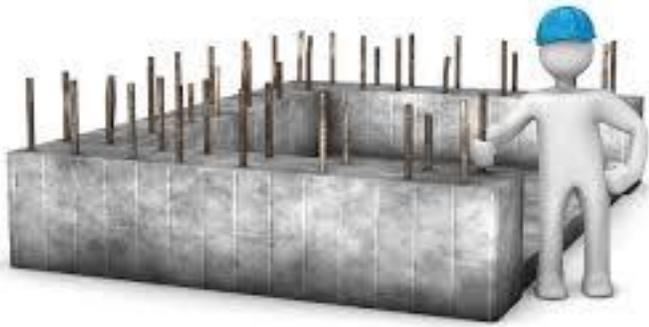
John Dewey



C. S. Peirce

## Focus:

- Problems of the public
- Connection between theory and practice
- Logic of Inquiry >>>>> resolution of public problems



Simultaneously  
objective and subjective

1980s- 1990s  
Dismal status of  
dissertation  
research in PA



“Courses and textbooks on research methods deal mostly w/ methodism And fail to .. Address philosophy of science”

Missing:

- Causal Relationships
- Connection to theory
- Research design
- Clear purpose

PA research “requires a type of **practical reasoning** that justifies the method and purpose.”

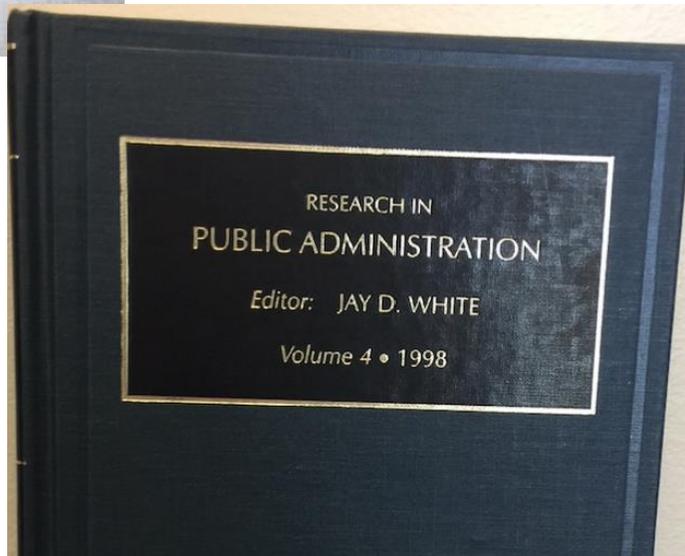
J. White (1986)



Guy Adams

J. White

1994



- Mindless empiricism
- Research question ignored
- Missing explicit framework
- Theoretical Wasteland



NASPAA

Weak

- Lit Reviews
- Conceptual Frameworks



Mumble, mumble

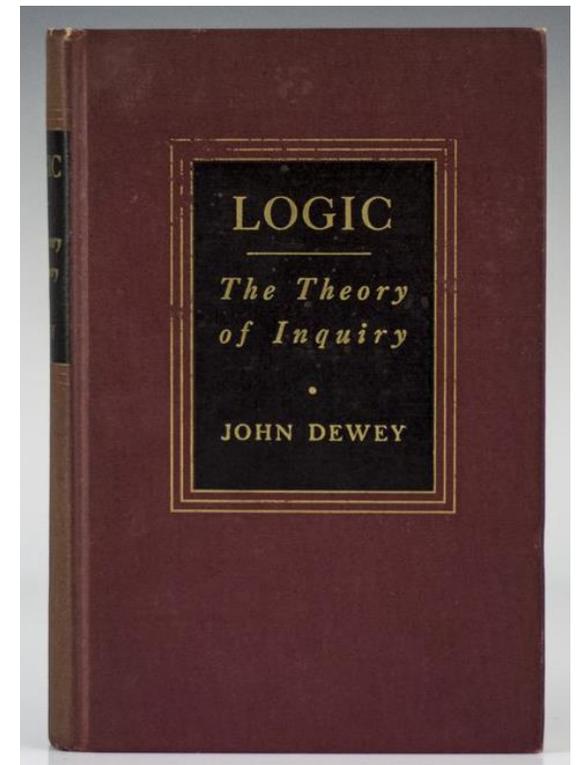
Admit

-- I did not know the answer



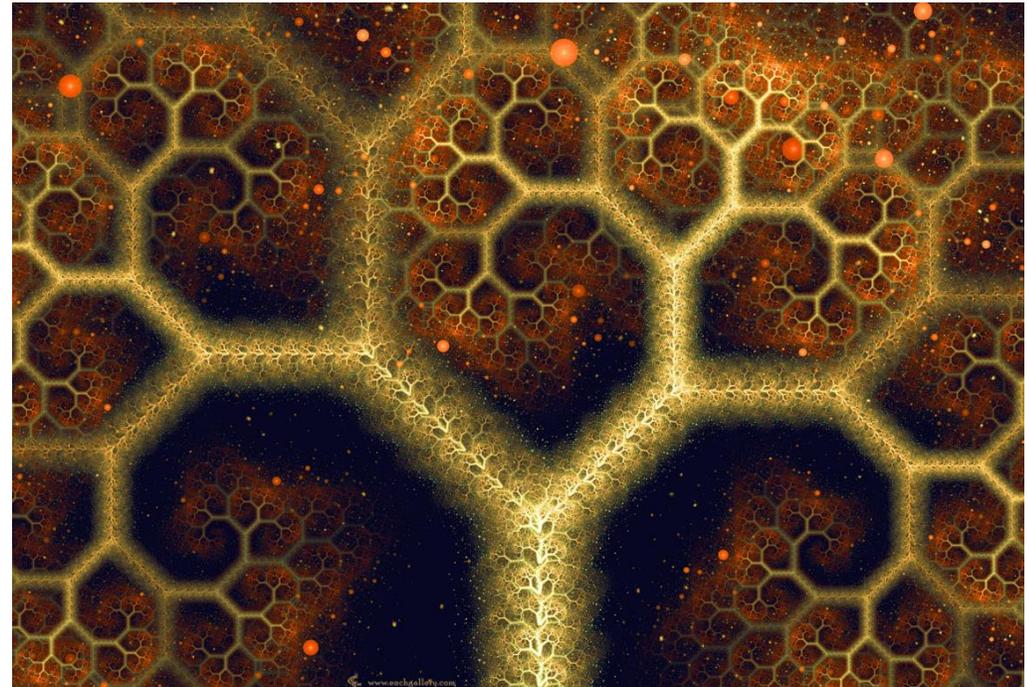
# Pragmatism

1. Problematic Situation – relevancy to practice
2. Experimental notion of inquiry
  - unify logic & experience >> theory
3. Focus construction of tools resolve conceptual & empirical issues
4. Theory and method pluralism
5. Community of Inquiry
6. Process of inquiry – surprise, fallible, provisional



# Problematic Situation

- Public Administrators always facing problems
- Independent of scale



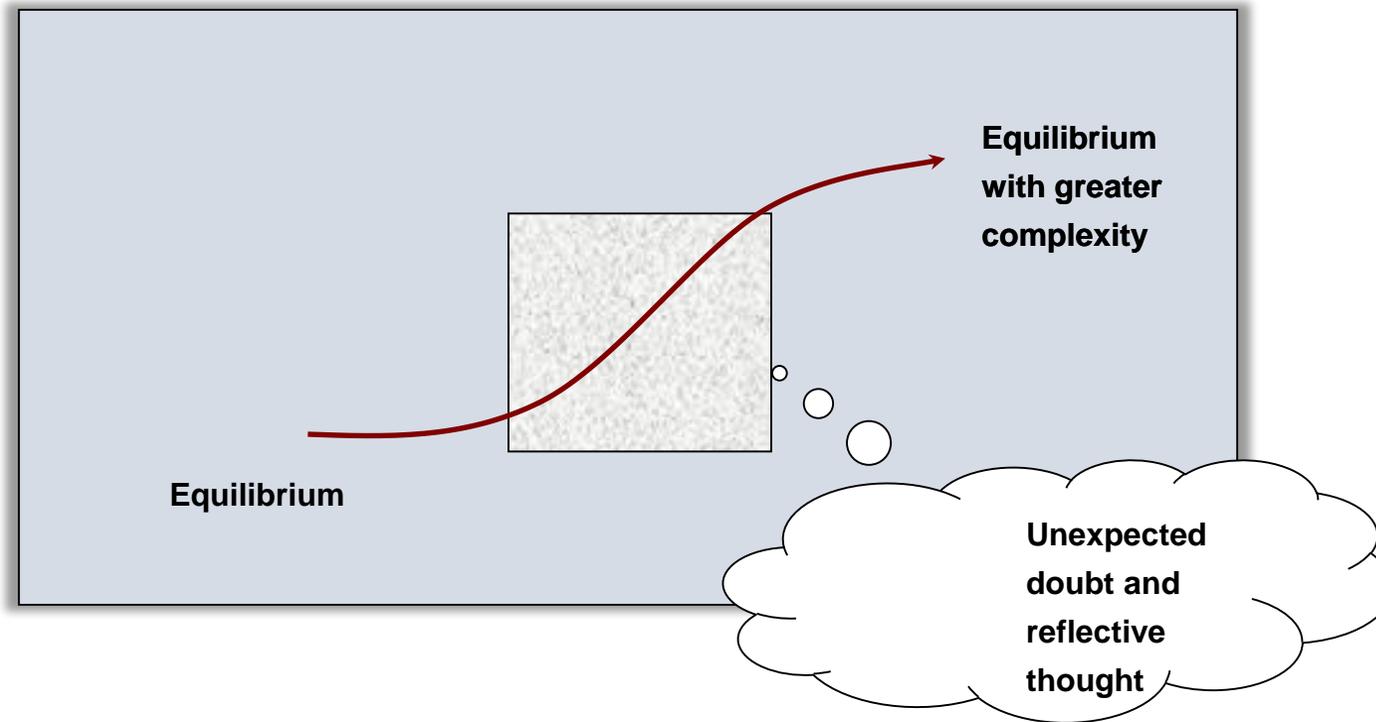
Fractal

# Inquiry is

the controlled or directed  
**transformation** of an **indeterminate situation** into  
one that is so determinant in its  
constituent distinctions and relations to convert  
the elements of the original situation  
into a **unified whole**. (Dewey, 1938, 104)



As scholar confronts the unexpected while doing the reading- confusion-doubt



- Primary Experience  
Habits honed to skill  
(writing, computer, library  
statistical...)
- Secondary Experience  
Creative insights to use skills  
(often overlooked in methods  
courses)



Emphasizes  
*Doing & Making*

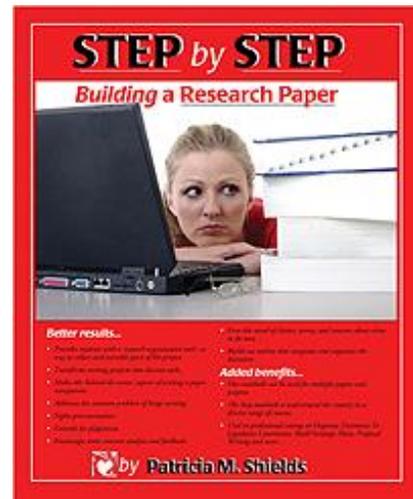
# Tools of Inquiry

Transforms writing a paper into organizing a project



## Organizing

- Materials
- Time
- Ideas



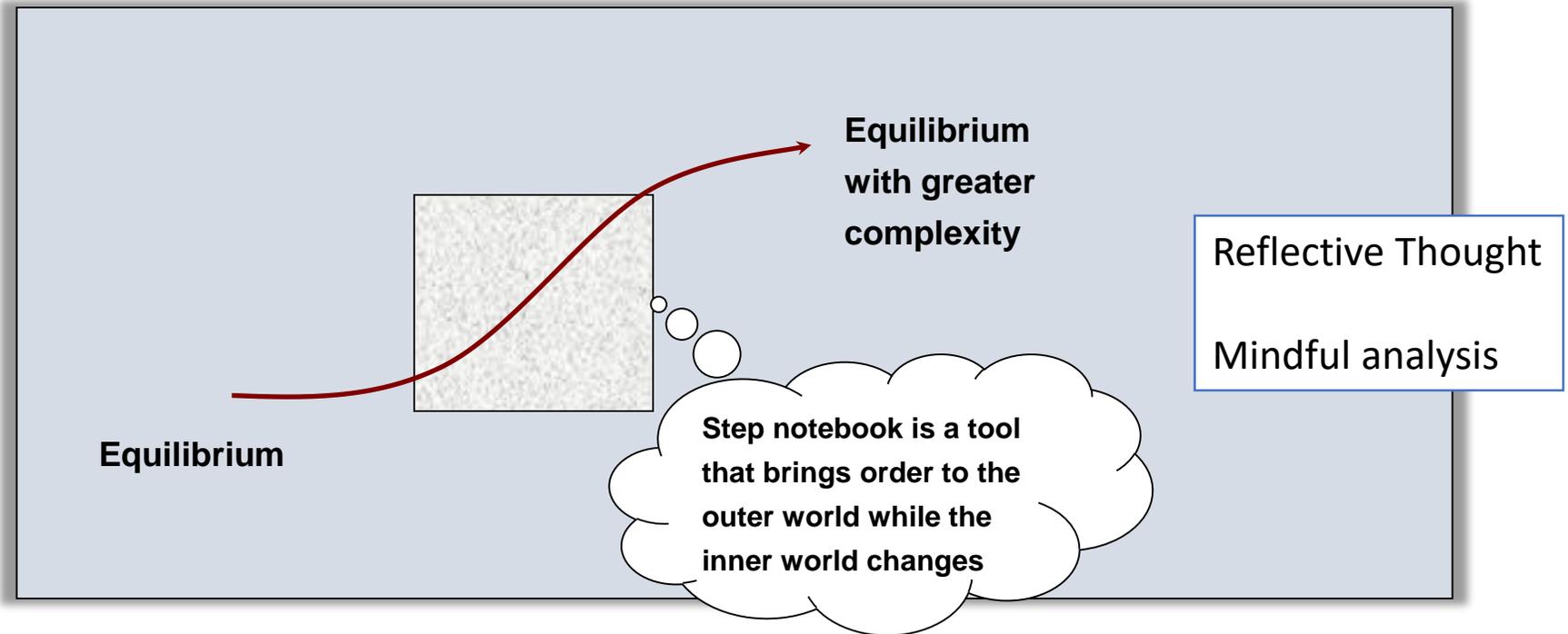
Primary experience

Build:

- Organizing skills (stuff & ideas)
- Reading comprehension
- Writing skills
- Critical thinking skills

**Making and Doing**

# Notebook is a tool to manage the 'doubt and confusion' stage



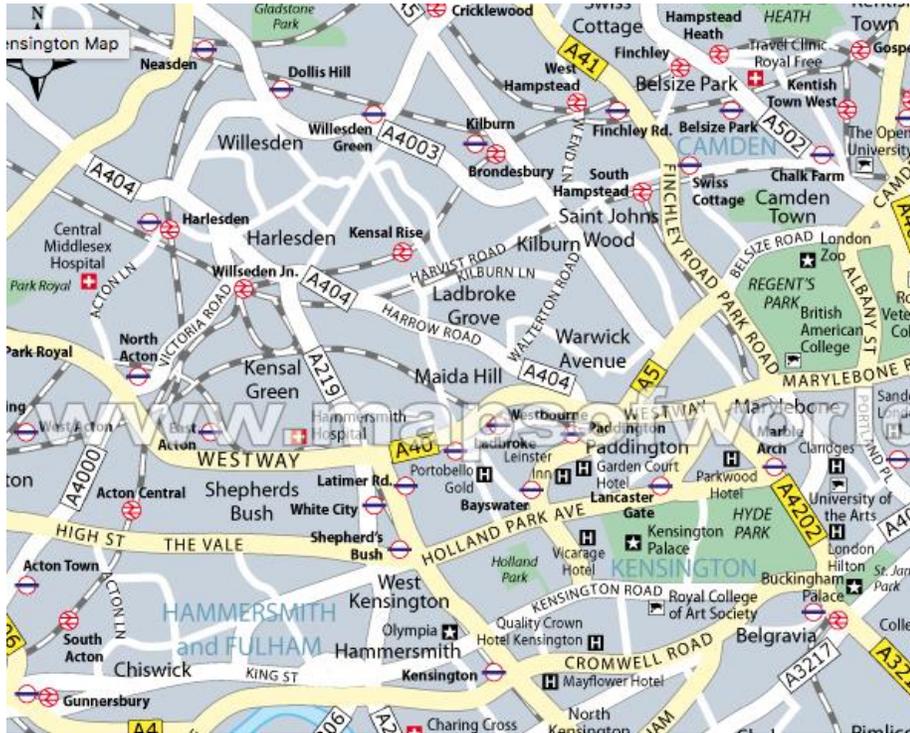
Comfortable with  
Confusion

Secondary Experience

– Surprise, connections, reflection

*Transformations of Inquiry*

# Theory as tool - Map



Theory helps

- Navigate a problem
- Achieve purpose

# Theory pluralism



Theories connected to

- Resolving problem
- Achieving purpose.



## Blinded to their Confusion



Mumble, mumble

**Dr. Shields:**  
**What is a**  
**Conceptual Framework ?**

Admit

-- I did not know the answer



BEGAN  
Earl Babbie's  
*Practice of Social Research*



John Dewey

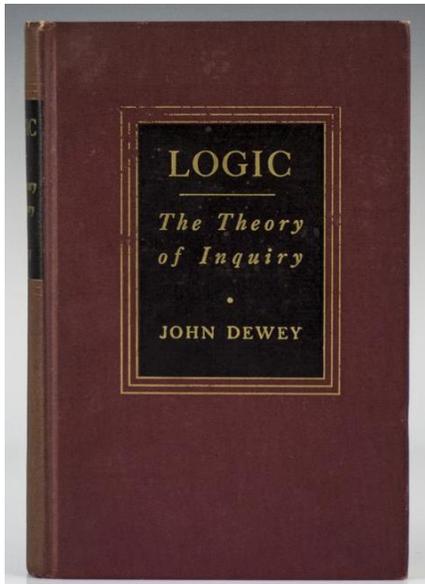
## Three Research Purposes

**Exploration**  
**Description**  
**Explanation**

**Description - Categories**  
**Explanation - Hypotheses**  
**Exploration**    ??????

Working  
Hypotheses

Use literature to build frameworks



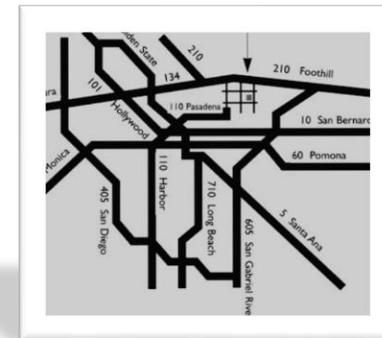
# Pairing purpose and framework

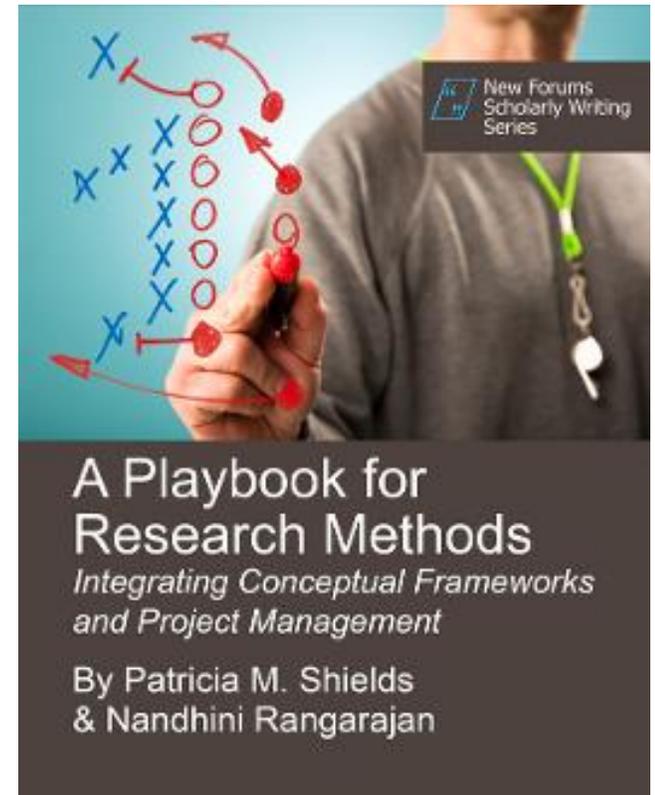
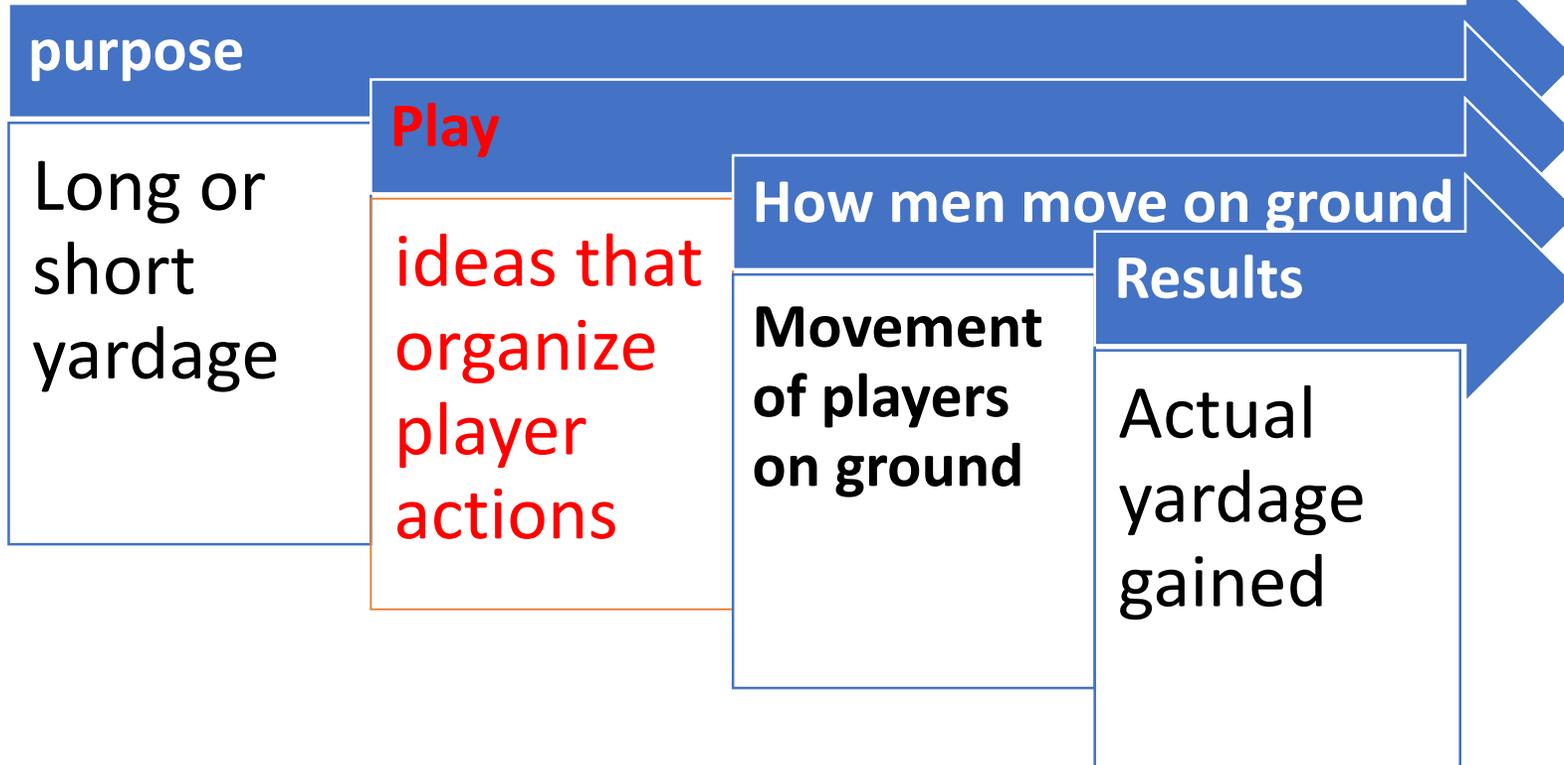
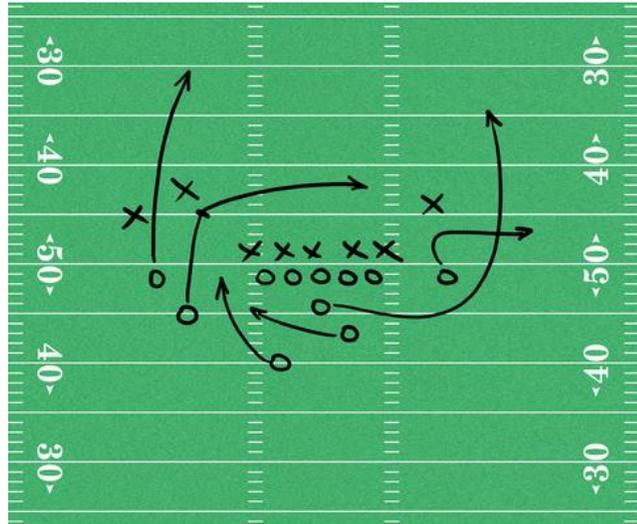
## Research Purposes

1. Exploration
2. Description
3. Gauging
4. Decision Making
5. Explanation/  
Prediction

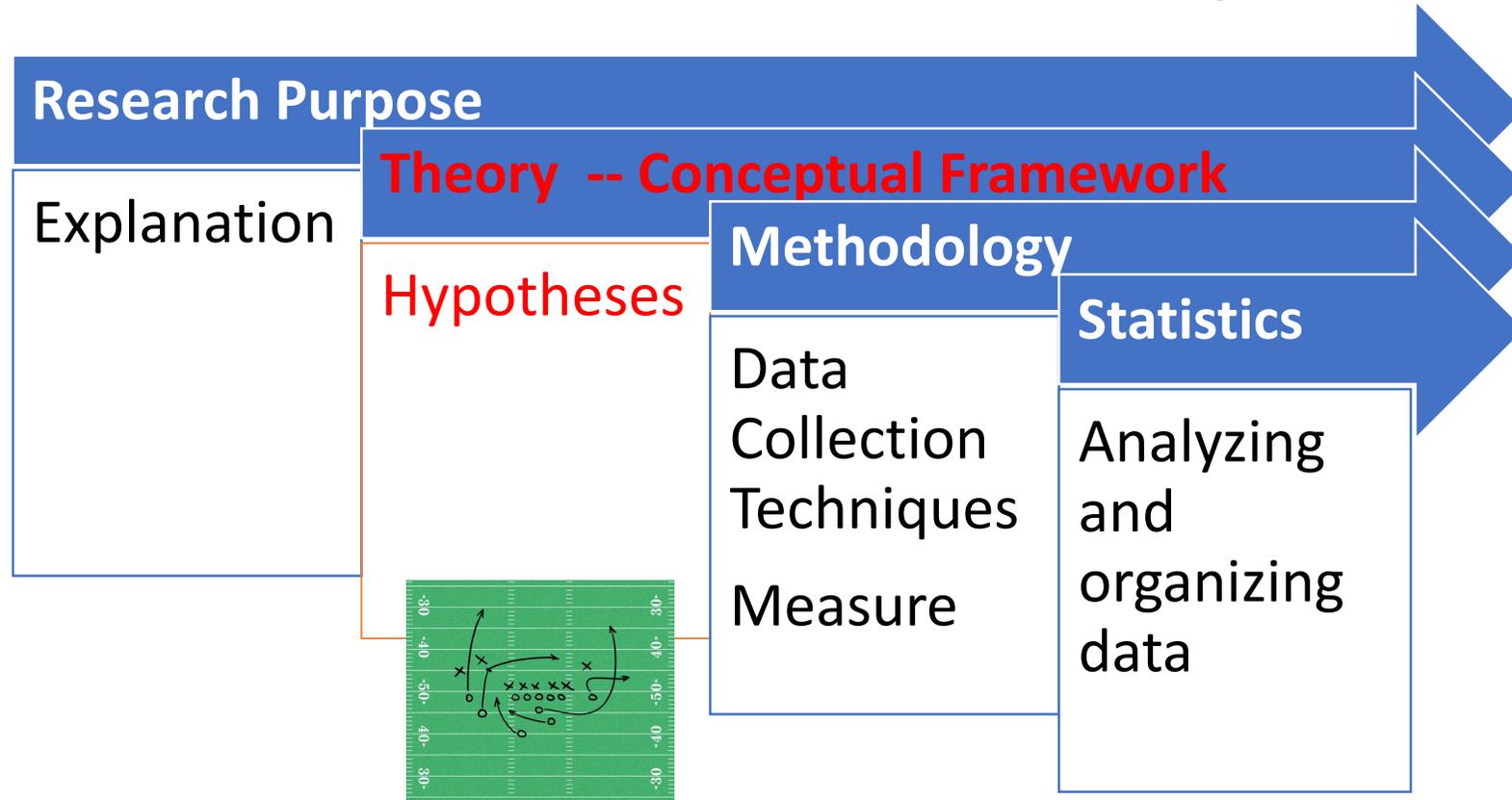
## Conceptual Frameworks

1. Working Hypotheses
2. Descriptive Categories
3. Practical Ideal Type
4. Models of Operations  
Research
5. Formal Hypotheses





# Research Process Taking into account Traditional Research notions of Theory



Conceptual framework – close to the data theory

Combines  
Quantitative and Qualitative  
data collection and  
Data analysis techniques



Table 5.2. Linking Purpose, Framework, and Methods

Research purpose	Conceptual framework	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
Explanation	Formal Hypotheses	Usually quantitative, experimental and quasi experimental design, time series analysis, survey, existing data analysis	T-statistics, correlation, chi-square, analysis of variance, simple and multiple regression, structural equation modeling
Description	Categories	Survey research and content analysis most common	Simple descriptive statistics: Mean median, mode frequency distribution, percentages, chi square, network analysis
Exploration	Working Hypotheses  Pillar Questions	Usually qualitative techniques: case study field research, structured interviews, direct observation, focus groups, document/archival record analysis, geographic information system data, narrative analysis	Qualitative evidence may not be statistical. But, since exploratory anything goes. Any type of statistics is possible
Gauging	Practical Ideal Type	Usually qualitative case study (document analysis, structured interviews, archival records, direct observation)	Usually qualitative evidence Sometimes simple descriptive statistics
Decision making	Models of Operations Research (broadly defined)	Cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis, linear programming, decision tree, economic base analysis, etc.	Quantitative techniques of operations research, simulation: agent-based modeling, systems dynamics

# Basic Frameworks -- Like Middle School Football



- Different Frameworks
- Grounded Theory –  
Develop frameworks after data collection

# Experiences with Students

Academia.edu



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# Pragmatic Methodology



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