

- 4.6** Think about the last assignment you undertook for your course. In undertaking this assignment, were you predominantly inductive, deductive or abductive? Discuss your thoughts with a friend who also undertook this assignment.
- 4.7** Agree with a friend to watch the same television documentary.
- To what extent is the documentary inductive, deductive or abductive in its use of data?
 - Is the documentary based on positivist, critical realist, interpretivist, postmodernist or pragmatist assumptions?
 - Do not forget to make notes regarding your reasons for your answers to each of these questions and to discuss your answers with your friend.



Progressing your research project

Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy (HARP)*

HARP is a reflexive tool that has been designed by Bristow and Saunders to help you explore your research philosophy. It is just a starting point for enabling you to ask yourself more refined questions about how you see research. It will not provide you with a definitive answer to the question 'What is my research philosophy?' Rather it will give you an indication as to where your views are similar to and different from those of five major philosophical traditions

discussed in this chapter. Do not be surprised if your views are similar to more than one tradition. Such potential tensions are an ideal opportunity to inquire into and examine your beliefs further.

HARP consists of six sections each comprising five statements (a total of 30 statements). Each section considers one aspect of philosophical beliefs (ontology, epistemology, axiology, purpose of research, meaningfulness of data and structure/agency). Each statement epitomises a particular research philosophy's position in relation to that particular aspect. By indicating your agreement or disagreement with each statement you can discover your similarities and differences with different aspects of each research philosophy. Following the completion of HARP, refer to the scoring key to calculate your score and interpret your answer.

HARP Statements

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements below. There are no wrong answers.							
Your views on the nature of reality (ontology)							
1	Organisations are real, just like physical objects.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Events in organisations are caused by deeper, underlying mechanisms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	The social world we inhabit is a world of multiple meanings, interpretations and realities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	'Organisation' is not a solid and static thing but a flux of collective processes and practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	'Real' aspects of organisations are those that impact on organisational practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Progressing your research project (continued)

Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy (HARP)

HARP Statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements below. There are no wrong answers.							
Your views on knowledge and what constitutes acceptable knowledge (epistemology)							
6	Organisational research should provide scientific, objective, accurate and valid explanations of how the organisational world really works.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Theories and concepts never offer completely certain knowledge, but researchers can use rational thought to decide which theories and concepts are better than others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Concepts and theories are too simplistic to capture the full richness of the world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	What generally counts as 'real', 'true' and 'valid' is determined by politically dominant points of view.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Acceptable knowledge is that which enables things to be done successfully.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your views on the role of values in research (axiology)							
11	Researchers' values and beliefs must be excluded from the research.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Researchers must try to be as objective and realistic as they can.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Researchers' values and beliefs are key to their interpretations of the social world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Researchers should openly and critically discuss their own values and beliefs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Research shapes and is shaped by what the researcher believes and doubts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your views on the purpose of research							
16	The purpose of research is to discover facts and regularities, and predict future events.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	The purpose of organisational research is to offer an explanation of how and why organisations and societies are structured.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	The purpose of research is to create new understandings that allow people to see the world in new ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	The purpose of research is to examine and question the power relations that sustain conventional thinking and practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	The purpose of research is to solve problems and improve future practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

HARP Statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements below. There are no wrong answers.							
Your views on what constitutes meaningful data							
21	Things that cannot be measured have no meaning for the purposes of research.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	Organisational theories and findings should be evaluated in terms of their explanatory power of the causes of organisational behaviour.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	To be meaningful, research must include participants' own interpretations of their experiences, as well as researchers' interpretations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	Absences and silences in the world around us are at least as important as what is prominent and obvious.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	Meaning emerges out of our practical, experimental and critical engagement with the world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your views on the nature of structure and agency							
26	Human behaviour is determined by natural forces.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	People's choices and actions are always limited by the social norms, rules and traditions in which they are located.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	Individuals' meaning-making is always specific to their experiences, culture and history.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29	Structure, order and form are human constructions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	People can use routines and customs creatively to instigate innovation and change.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Now please complete the scoring key below.

Your answer scores

Give yourself the points as indicated below for each answer within each philosophical tradition. The different philosophies are represented by specific questions in the HARP as indicated below. Fill each philosophy table with your answer scores, then total up the numbers for each philosophy. (For your reference, in the tables below, the letters in brackets indicate whether the question tests your agreement with the ontological, epistemological, axiological, purpose of research, meaningfulness of data and structure and agency aspects of research philosophy.)

Each answer you gave is given a number of points as shown in the table below:

Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	2	1	-1	-2	-3





Progressing your research project (continued)

Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy (HARP)

Positivism: Questions 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26

Question	1 (ontology)	6 (epistemology)	11 (axiology)	16 (purpose)	21 (data)	26 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Critical Realism: Questions 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27

Question	2 (ontology)	7 (epistemology)	12 (axiology)	17 (purpose)	22 (data)	27 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Interpretivism: Questions 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28

Question	3 (ontology)	8 (epistemology)	13 (axiology)	18 (purpose)	23 (data)	28 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Postmodernism: Questions 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29

Question	4 (ontology)	9 (epistemology)	14 (axiology)	19 (purpose)	24 (data)	29 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Pragmatism: Questions 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30

Question	5 (ontology)	10 (epistemology)	15 (axiology)	20 (purpose)	25 (data)	30 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Reflection

Now, for the first of what will almost certainly be many philosophical reflections, consider the following questions regarding how you scored yourself.

- 1 Do you have an outright philosophical winner? Or do you have a close contention between two or more philosophies?
- 2 Why do you think this is?
- 3 Which philosophy do you disagree with the most?
- 4 Why do you think this is?