

- Last week
 - Course logistics
 - Introduction:
 - Why research methods?
 - What is theory?
 - What is research?
 - How do we begin to move from one to the other?
 - Deductive and Inductive approaches

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- Today
- Finish Chapter 1:
 - Look at what influences the type of research we do and the questions we ask
 - Epistemological and ontological positions
 - Qualitative vs. Quantitative research
 - The place of politics, values and practical considerations in guiding choice of research
- Move onto chapter 2
 - Once we have a research question, how do we choose a research design?

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Epistemological Positions

- ***Epistemology***:
- branch of philosophy that is directed toward theories of the sources, nature, and limits of knowledge
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- In the social sciences:
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Positivism

- Social scientists typically use the **same methods** of inquiry that are used in the natural sciences.
- **Empiricism**:
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Introduction

- As a social science:
- Importance of careful “EMPIRICISM”!!
- -> observation key to scientific research, not mere speculation or “opinion”



"WHEN MEXICO SENDS ITS PEOPLE, THEY'RE NOT SENDING THEIR BEST. THEY'RE SENDING PEOPLE THAT HAVE LOTS OF PROBLEMS. THEY'RE BRINGING DRUGS. THEY'RE BRINGING CRIME. THEY'RE RAPISTS."

Donald Trump
President, U.S.A.

This is certainly **"not based on "scientific empiricism".."**

In contrast, let us consider
some careful empirical research

NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES

WHY ARE IMMIGRANTS' INCARCERATION RATES SO LOW? EVIDENCE ON
SELECTIVE IMMIGRATION, DETERRENCE, AND DEPORTATION

Kristin F. Butcher
Anne Morrison Piehl

Working Paper 13229
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w13229>

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Researcher on labor and health economics, with a focus on immigration issues.

My research has two main strands: the impact of immigration on the United States and the causes of childhood obesity in this country. My work encompasses the impact of immigration on labor market outcomes for U.S. natives, as well as the impact of immigration on crime in the United States. My work on childhood obesity examines links between school policies and children's health. Other research includes evaluating the impact of various higher education programs on student outcomes.

My teaching and research complement one another nicely. My research relies on rigorous analyses of data. I also teach an upper-level class on immigration that surveys the modern, mostly empirical, literature on immigration.



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Positivism

- Science should be **value-free (objective)**:
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- Intersubjectivity?

Positivism

- There is a clear difference between **scientific statements** and **normative statements**.
- **Normative vs scientific statements?**

Epistemological Positions: **Interpretivism**

- Studying people and social life is fundamentally different than subject matter in the natural sciences
- Hence:
- Why?

Epistemological Positions: **Interpretivism**

- The “interpretivist’s argument:

Epistemological Positions

- What is knowledge?
 -
- Critique of Positivism
 -
- Critique of Interpretivism
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Ontological Positions

- **Ontology?**
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- A major issue here:
- Debate:
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Ontological Positions

- **Objectivist:**
- **Constructionist ('hard'):**
- **3rd alternative:**
- **Constructionist ('soft'):**
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- E.g. We are interested in studying “joblessness” in a
- community among prime working aged adults (25-54 years): London Ontario).
- The “objectivist” might set use a set of questionnaires asking people about their experience with employment (e.g. Labour Force Survey)
- Employment status (working or not working)
- Reason for not working (temporary layoff, disability, access to child care, etc.)
- Data on Job Vacancies
- Highly structured data collection on behavior/characteristics of those being studied
- He then goes back to the office and make sense of what was collected & recorded

Problem: Are there important “perceptions, values, attitudes toward jobless” that are central to understanding what’s going on which we miss with such an “objective” approach to studying the problem?

- The “constructionist” (soft) might take an alternative approach:
- The priority might be to obtain “detailed interviews” with a more limited number of residents, possibly obtaining many distinct interpretations as to the scale and nature of joblessness in London
- The constructionist might begin by examining public perceptions on joblessness
- he/she might gather detailed information on public “perceptions”
- Why do you think people aren’t working? What is your experience with “joblessness”?
- Problem:
- If we focus exclusively on “perceptions” of joblessness with a smaller number of participants, we might miss the broader picture
- What of the broader context? What is actually happening in terms of the supply and demand for labour independent of these perceptions?

- ***Deductive*** and ***Inductive*** research
- ***Positivist*** and ***Interpretivist*** approaches to knowledge
- ***Objectivist*** and ***Constructionist*** views of social reality
- Can group them to distinguish between ***Quantitative*** and ***Qualitative*** methodologies

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General Orientations: Quantitative and Qualitative Research

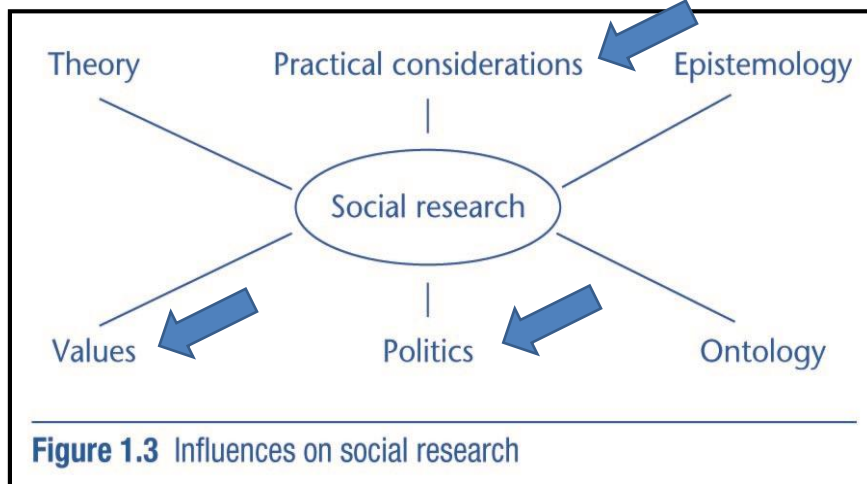
- Quantitative:

Qualitative research:

Table 1.1 Fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Role of theory in research	Mainly deductive; testing of theory	Mainly inductive; generation of theory
Epistemological orientation	Natural science model; positivism	Interpretivism
Ontological orientation	Objectivism	Constructionism

Influences on the Conduct of Social Research



- Values:
 - Personal beliefs and morals, feelings, preconceptions
 - Can we be value-free in social research? Should we be?
1. Classical positivists:
 2. Social research cannot be completely value-free
 3. Value-laden research can be good

Politics

- Researchers sometimes '**take sides**'
- **Funding:**
- **Research findings:**

Practical Considerations

Characteristics of Good Research Questions:

- Should be *researchable*
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- Should have:

Research Designs

- What is a **research design**?
 - A framework for the collection and analysis of data (experiments; cross sectional studies, longitudinal studies, case studies).
 - Both quantitative and/or qualitative research designs
 - Nature of the research question usually important to choice of design
 - Research ethics are important!

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Choice of Design

- The type of design chosen depends on the kind of explanation sought.
- Different traditions:
- ***Nomothetic*** vs ***Ideographic explanations***

Nomothetic Designs

- Attributions of cause and effect, expressed in terms of *broad generalizations*
 -
- Cause and effect –

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Ideographic Designs

- A rich description of a person or group
- Cause and effect relations are focused on interpretation and meaning
 - Ex. *“Chrissy’ is often very jealous of her siblings economic success which results in considerable hostility. Her relatively cold shouldered approach contrasts with their warm enthusiasm for affection, causing them to perceive her as at a distance only’. This perception of “relative deprivation” has an impact on her self-esteem and health, as she expresses sentiments of failure, poor treatment, etc ...*
 - Usually meant to apply only to the person/people/group actually under study

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Criteria for Evaluating Social Research

- In choosing a research design, 3 main types criteria need to be considered
 1. Reliability
 2. Replicability
 3. Validity

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Criteria for Evaluating Social Research

- ***Reliability:***

- Reliability
- Example:
- Measurement of BMI?
- Most national surveys:
- Persons are asked to report their weight and height
- A reliable measure would be “using the exact same set of questions” over time..
- Note:
- A measurement technique might be “highly reliable” but still problematic..
- Reliability is all about being “consistent” in terms of how we measure something

Note: A reliable measure is not always accurate.

Consider the use of a bathroom scale..

Consistently you obtain the following measurements:

145, 144, 146, 146, 144, 146, 144 -> report on an interview that you weigh 145

But what if your scale was biased, and systematically weighted you 10 pounds light..

You have a “reliable” but “biased” measurement of your weight, right?
This can happen in social research..

Criteria for Evaluating Social Research

- *Replicability*,

Validity:

- 3 main types of validity to look at today
 1. Measurement
 2. Internal
 3. External

1. Measurement (construct) validity:

NOTE: return to our BMI example:

- self reporting weight and height

A reliable measurement would imply a consistent set of questions used over time..

But alternatively??

Rather than asking persons their weight and height, we have a research assistant record with scale and measuring tape?

Both might be “equally reliable, but the latter would be more “valid”!!!

2. Internal validity:

—

Did the study establish that lone parenthood has an impact on child outcomes (e.g. behavioral problems)? Could behavioral problems be influenced by something other than family structure?

- **3. External validity:**

Can the findings be generalized beyond the people or cases studied?

For **Qualitative** methods only:

- Criterion of **Trustworthiness**
 - 1. Credibility:**
 - 2. Transferability:**
 - 3. Dependability:**
 - 4. Confirmability:**