

Abstracts

G. A. Reynolds

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Abstract

abstract

Contents

1	Pragmatism and Survey Research	3
2	A Critique of the Theory of Cognitive Interviewing	3
3	Mensuration without Representation	3
4	Deflating Validity	3
4.1	Validity, Reliability, Error	3
4.2	RCT and Self-validation	4
4.3	Deflation	5
5	The Deontic Scorekeeping Model of Discursive Practice and Survey Research	5
6	A Quality Assurance Model for Survey Research	6
7	Causality and the Space of Reasons	6
8	Vocabularies	6
9	Conflation of Causal and Logical Relations	6
10	Fact-Value	6
11	Word-World	7
12	Hypothetical Entities	7
13	Personal v. Subpersonal	8

14 Spaces	8
14.1 Natural space of causes	8
14.2 Discursive space of reasons	8
15 Notes	8
15.1 Evolution	8
15.2 Verum Factum	9
15.3 Rational Evidence	9
15.4 Misc	10
15.5 Erotetic Discursive Practice	10
15.6 Replication	10
15.7 Myths and Mythologies	11
15.8 Dopes	11
Appendices	12
A Bibliography	12

List of Figures

1 Pragmatism and Survey Research

Abstract

2 A Critique of the Theory of Cognitive Interviewing

Abstract

3 Mensuration without Representation

Abstract

Measurement pragmatism. No representation needed.

4 Deflating Validity

Abstract

Semantic and metaphysical deflationism works as well for validity as it does for truth and reference.

Remark 1 *Deflationism seems to depend essentially on some form of expressivism. Or maybe they amount to the same thing?*

4.1 Validity, Reliability, Error

Remark 2 *What is the point of worrying about validity? Is it something in the world that we are trying to discover? Then we're trying to find "the right description of the world" (Putnam). Or is it a concept, so that validity talk is about conceptual analysis and definition?*

Or: we try to find the right description, and validity talk is part of how we decide that we have found it.

Remark 3 *Why do psychometricians and the like worry so about validity?*

Hypothesis: when they say "validity", what they're really interested in is scientific legitimacy. Effectively, to say that a test (etc.) is valid is to say that it is in fact scientific. That's the practical import of the concept of validity for them.

Unpack this. Expose the assumptions and implications.

key concepts:

- validity treated as a special kind of property - of what?
- constructs
- (latent) variables
- indicators

“validity” as code for:

- legitimacy
- vindication
- credibility
- proof (good premises + valid inference)

Remark 4 *On the idea that validity something (a property, etc.) that we look for in scientific theories in order to distinguish good ones from bad: see Putnam on fact/value distinction. We use value judgments - simplicity, parsimony, etc. - in every aspect of science (thought), esp. in weeding out bad theories. For there is no external or objective criterion of acceptability for theories to which we can appeal, nor is there any such criterion that does not involve value judgments.*

Remark 5 *So along with the fact/value distinction, and the analytic/synthetic distinction, the internal/external distinction also collapses? Or do we just exclude the notion of external? No; we need to retain the idea of an external world that is independent of us and to which some of our judgments are answerable. We don't get to just make stuff up and call it true (correct) for at least some of our claims. There is no external absolute authority that can decide for us which theories are true, or rather which we should endorse, but that does not mean there is no external world that is authoritative for some of our sayings. But isn't that trying to have it both ways? How can our theories answer to the world if we cannot appeal to the world or some other external authority to sort them out? See Brandom.*

Related issue: what counts as evidence? How do we decide? What are we doing when we decide that something counts as strong (weak) evidence in support of a theory? What are the criteria of adequacy for an account of evidence?

4.2 RCT and Self-validation

See Cartwright on RCT as self-validating. This seems to mean that RCTs are valid by construction.

This nicely parallels industrial QA notions of guaranteeing quality by designing a production process that prevents defects.

What's the logic here? Is self-validation really possible? How can a process validate itself - isn't the very idea inherently circular? Or rather, don't we land in a regress? After all, if the idea is to specify a process that yields validity, how do we know that that process is itself valid?

4.3 Deflation

How can we get out of this mess? One way is to deflate the notion of validity, just deny that it is a substantive property. When we claim that a result is valid etc. what we are really saying is that we endorse it, approve of it, etc. It's an expressive device. Compare the semantic deflationist's idea that calling something true amounts to endorsing or approving of it.

So if we discard the notion of validity (since it does no real work), don't we find ourselves lacking something essential? Well, we just need a vocabulary that allows us to say explicitly the sorts of things we find it useful to be able to express with respect to a study or qx technique. For example: credibility, utility, legitimacy, vindication, justification, etc.

Remark 6 *The notion of validity seems to be connected to the problem of deciding which theories we should endorse. What are the criteria of adequacy for any notion (or theory) of validity? Or: what are the requirements that should be met by any purported explanation of validity? Both particular cases and the general idea. Tarski gives us something like this for logical validity; what about "validity" as the term is used by psychometricians, test theorists, etc.?*

Contrast: claims of validity for a case, v. explanation of what validity is.

The objection will no doubt be that we need some kind of standard, which is just to say that we want to measure this something (validity, credibility, whatever). Implicit in all this is the notion that there is some "objective" fact of the matter to which our study/technique/etc. is answerable. A study is valid iff - what? If it meets some definite "objective" criteria. Methodological criteria, conditions of validity, etc. In the psychometrics and testing tradition this appeal to external authority is expressed as something along the lines of "measures what it purports to measure". Which is only meaningful insofar as a) there is actually something there to measure, and b) it is in fact susceptible to measurement.

And usually this is expressed in statistical terms. But that dog won't hunt either - you cannot get to validity via statistics. All you can do is measure central tendencies and variance - not enough to establish validity, which is a substantive notion. (analysis elsewhere).

To say that sth is valid is just to say that it is admirable (Peirce?), or perhaps that it is virtuous, that it has the virtues we prize.

5 The Deontic Scorekeeping Model of Discursive Practice and Survey Research

Abstract

Why the deontic scorekeeping model is preferable to others, esp. the cognitive model.

Remark 7 *It's a model of discursive, that is rational, practice. Contrast this with most models on offer which tend to focus on subpersonal processes; hence the prevalence of talk about "the survey process", the "response process", etc.*

6 A Quality Assurance Model for Survey Research

Abstract

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7 Causality and the Space of Reasons

Abstract

abstract

Abell, [“Narrative Explanation”](#)

Crane and Brewer, [“Mental Causation”](#)

Gross, [“A Pragmatist Theory of Social Mechanisms”](#)

Jackson, [“Mental Causation”](#)

Lowe, [“The Causal Autonomy of the Mental”](#)

Lowe, [“Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and the Problem of Mental Causation”](#)

C. MacDonald and G. MacDonald, [“Mental Causes and Explanation of Action”](#)

Menzies and Price, [“Causation as a Secondary Quality”](#)

Morris, [“Causes of Behaviour”](#)

Williamson, [“The Broadness of the Mental”](#)

8 Vocabularies

Measurement as description. Description v. evaluation. Price on naturalisms. The bifurcation thesis.

9 Conflation of Causal and Logical Relations

10 Fact-Value

Messick, for one, conflates two kinds of fact/value distinction. The Kantian idea that we structure our own experience (etc.), Sellars’ Myth of the Given, and etc. - such stuff shows how there is no data that is “objective” and given i.e. “data is theory-laden”.

So facts involve what Putnam calls “epistemic values”.

Messick confuses epistemic and ethical values. He seems to think that although we cannot arrive at value-free facts, this is because brute facts are always packaged with ethical values. The idea seems to be that ethical values are something separate from facts but always attached to them somehow. Whereas the real problem is that there is no genuine distinction between fact and (epistemic) value. Facts express (as it were) our epistemic values.

Messick’s confusion is clear in his distinction between the scientific and social “roles” of validity - as if the social (value-laden) aspect of (Messickian) validity is something distinct from the science.

“[I]t is fundamental that score validation is an empirical evaluation of the meaning and consequences of measurement. As such, validation combines scientific inquiry with rational argument to justify (or nullify) score interpretation and use.” (p. 742) But “scientific inquiry” and “rational argument” are not two distinct things that can be combined. They are the same thing, at least conceptually. If there is a difference here, it is sociological - science as a way of conduction oneself, etc.

Messickian validity boils down to some notion of empirical support for theoretical explanations. For him “evidential basis” seems to correspond to “real” science, and “consequential basis” to “rational argument”.

“[B]oth meaning and values are integral to the concept of validity...” (p. 747). The problem here is that the contrast with value is fact, not meaning.

“Meaning” is not something that can be empirically “validated”.

11 Word-World

One problem with e.g. Messick is fuzziness about the relation of language to world. Ditto for any notion of “measuring a concept”.

Re: validity: is it supposed to be a property of things in the world, or just a concept? Per Messick, validity is “associated with” score interpretation and use. This would seem to imply that it is a matter of language (concepts). But the language is just sloppy; “score interpretation” might (should) refer to how we take a score to relate to some fact in the world, in which case the question is just what is validity-in-the-world.

In any case, Messick’s whole discussion is muddled on this point; it is rarely clear when he is talking about facts, concepts, or the relation between the two. Is a “construct” supposed to be something in the world or a concept that describes some aspect of the world?

Construct v. “indicators”.

Compare positivist notions of observational language v. theoretical language. So-called indicators are (I understand) supposed to be empirical observables. Their relation to the construct is (must be) a matter of theory; but then is that theoretical (conceptual) structure to be taken as a mirror of reality, such that the construct is a real (albeit “hidden”) bit of the world and its relations to the indicators are real relations in the world?

12 Hypothetical Entities

Putnam, Brandom, etc. - if the existence of (some) hypotheticals makes no difference in the way things are then we can just discard them. As Putnam puts it, “Would mathematics *work one bit less well if these funny objects stopped existing? Those who posit “abstract entities” to account for the success of mathematics do not claim that we (or any other things in the empirical world) interact with the abstract entities. But if any entities do not interact with us or with the empirical world at all, then doesn’t it follow that everything would be the same if they didn’t exist?”* (Collapse, p. 33)

This points out another problem with e.g. latent variables, namely that they are supposed to have causal powers, but, insofar as they are abstract at least, they have no connection to the empirical world and so cannot cause anything. The counterargument would presumably be that hidden does not necessarily mean abstract. But in that case they must have a location in space-time, even if we don't know what it is. But this just leads to more problems: where are hidden psychological processes supposed to occur? It can't be the brain, since they are (by stipulation) psychological, not neurological.

So it seems we have no choice but to treat postulation of hidden stuff as a matter of Brandomian methodological pragmatism: useful, but without ontological consequences. "Constructs" may be useful for explaining observable indicators, but they don't really exist in any meaningful sense. But the usual story goes the other way around: indicators are useful because they are how we get constructs.

13 Personal v. Subpersonal

Reasons v. causes

14 Spaces

14.1 Natural space of causes

14.2 Discursive space of reasons

15 Notes

15.1 Evolution

Instead of "the QA process", the proper object of investigation is the local evolution of discourse.

EM studies local produced order. It may come up with a structural description. But locally produced order is the outcome of an essentially evolutionary process - the mutual adaptation of the participants to each other and the context. Also, any such model may not (probably will not) generalize. But what does generalize is the evolutionary mechanism itself, just like in biology.

Rational selection as the mechanism of the evolution of discursive performances. What accounts for the deontic attitudes we adopt regarding performances? Brandom's account describes the architecture of such posturings and the significances the institute. But it does not really address the logic of discourse as an evolutionary process.

The idea is that Brandom provides an account of discourse qua rational action. Different attitudes are endorsed or undertaken for reasons - that is the source or ground of the intelligibility of discursive practice. So if we view the unfolding of discourse as being governed by the logic of evolution, we can treat Brandom's sort of rational pragmatism as the selection mechanism that accounts for why some attitudes (meanings) survive (are endorsed) and others do not. Meanings

that survive must fit into the space of reasons - they must be assertable and justifiable, even if the participants are unable to explicitly articulate this. This makes the evolution of discourse intelligible as a rational process, rather than a natural process. Responses to questions are not explicable as effects caused by "true values" or the like; this would make them fundamentally non-rational. Or to borrow a bon mot from Garfinkel, this would make respondents "rational dopes".

Similar language: "negotiation", e.g. "...I suggest that the content of talk indicates that imposed hierarchies are continually re-negotiated..." Negotiation as rational evolution?

The "true score" and other orthodox models account for sentience, not sapience.

15.2 Verum Factum

Cartesianism (spectator, etc.) inspection, discovery, certainty, foundationism (external foundation grounding knowledge) v.

Verum Factum, geneological/historical, following growth/development, not certainty but ???; no foundationism, no privileged vocab, no external source of authority

Critical notions: authority. For evidence etc. key idea is authority - the only kind of authority is the kind we assent to. So the question is what do we treat as authoritative and why, rather than how can we discover the One True external foundational source of authority and learn to speak its language

Critical notions: vocabulary. Regardless of what there is, we can only talk about it by using vocabs.

Relevance to SR: we make our truths, by engaging in dialog with respondents in order to teach/train them to understand what we want. In other words we work to make our scorecards converge. We can never be sure that researchers and respondents understand each other, have the same interpretations of qx text, etc. But we can do what nature does in evolution and learning: institute a cyclic process of experiment, feedback, and correction. This is operational even at the most simple and basic level of communication. So we can use this fact to our advantage.

Communication interactions as not essentially different from processes of evolution and learning. Evolutionary process tend to coordinate organism and environment; learning processes adapt the learner to the task environment, etc. Any discursive exchange - even simple greetings, etc. - does the same sort of thing: coordinate and mutually adjust the parties to the exchange.

15.3 Rational Evidence

Evidence-Based Rational SR

RCT: isolate the causal factor that links Treatment to Outcome

The mistake made by orthodox SR (shown by its vocab of measurement, error, etc.) is that it confuses the space of causes and the space of reasons.

In RCT, we observe a stimulus followed by a response (T followed by O) and postulate a causal relation. In SR, we observe a Q performance followed by a R performance. In fact this is an idealization since Q and R cannot be isolated - they are both joint performances. Ignore that for

now; the point is that what makes them intelligible as performances is the space of reasons, not causes. That is, as discursive episodes they are essentially rational in a way the T-O trials are not. By definition, "rational" means involving concepts. Stimulus-response does not involve concepts and so is not rational in this favored sense. The natural world may be lawful, but it is not rational.

So SR should abandon the orthodox vocab of measurment, etc. in favor of one involving rationality. What would "evidence-based" mean, then? Not the kind of evidence involve in natural science, since such evidence does not involve concepts and thus meaning. Instead evidence inescapably involves meaning and understanding. What counts as evidence is what we count as a rational explanation or story. And this necessarily involves the perspective of the participants - it is their rationality, their giving and asking for reasons, that provides the observational basis of evidence.

One consequence: Qx does not involve measurement. SR can use stats to statistically measure the collected data, but that is quite separate from whether the data measure anything. So you can say that x% of resonvents pick option X, but that does not mean that you have measured the distribution of "true values" of some latent variable. What you have measure is a distribution of deontic scores, or discursive postures. There is no warrant for claiming that each member of the x% means the same thing by picking X.

15.4 Misc

1. What is a question? Better: what counts as a question, what is it to ask a question?
2. Ditto for answer.
Q and A as parts of a whole (holistic view)
Q token v. Q performance, etc.

15.5 Erotetic Discursive Practice

EDP as production of data rather than discovery of truth

15.6 Replication

Goal is replication. Compare: blood work, e.g. measuring cholesterol. The measuring apparatus reacts to the sample, not the other way around. For EDP, respondent reacts to the question, so the question is analogous to the blood sample. The response is a kind of measurement of the question, not the other way around.

Replicability means same setup, same experimental conditions; in EDP this means replication of conceptual structure, which is accomplished by the dialog preceding the question. Traditionally, "ask the same question"; in practice this is impossible, since what counts is not the question text but respondent's grasp of the sense. So the "experimental setup" should be viewed as the work of teaching the respondent what the sense of the question is. Survey interviewing is essentially interventionist, but this is not necessarily a bad thing, since lab experiments are too - they "intervene" to

set up experimental "initial conditions". The difference is that setting up initial conditions ("same meaning") in question asking means tutoring the respondent.

15.7 Myths and Mythologies

- *The Myth of Question Independence says that the meaning of a question is independent of context. But the meaning of a question is always dependent on what came before it.*
- *Myth of Autonomy. Interviewer and Respondent.*
- *Myth of Error*

15.8 Dopes

Garfinkel's dopes - cultural, judgmental, psychological

Dehumanization. Orthodox Survey Research (OSR) dehumanizes participants. The R is a sampling unit. The mythology of OSR measurement treats the human R as a natural object to be measured rather than a person.

Appendices

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