

MY410: Seminar Week 3

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Pre-seminar checks

- ▶ How are things going?
- ▶ How are the lecture videos?
- ▶ Any questions/issues/things to flag up?

WK2 seminar refresher

- ▶ Mason's categories provide a useful starting point, but they not mutually exclusive. Certainly it is not the only typology available out there.

WK2 seminar refresher

- ▶ Mason's categories provide a useful starting point, but they are not mutually exclusive. Certainly it is not the only typology available out there.
- ▶ A research project can address one or more of the following questions – for instance,
 - How and why does X happen? Under what conditions will we see X?
 - Do these conditions “cause” X?
 - How and why do these different conditions lead to X?
 - Why does X happen in some places but not others? Why does X happen in some years but not others?
- ▶ Note that we never intend to match these RQs to any specific methods.

WK3 Lecture takeaway

- ▶ There is not one “best” method – yes, but why?
- ▶ There should always be clear **congruence** between theory, question, and method.
- ▶ Evaluating this fit is a fundamental part of being a **critical reader**.
- ▶ Ensuring that your work has such fit is essential to producing **valuable and valid** social science.

Warm-up: Sumner & Tribe (2004)

- ▶ Let's break into pairs to review different sections of the article.
- ▶ Focus on the following tasks/questions:
 - What is epistemology? According to the authors, how many epistemological positions are common in international development studies?
 - What do the authors mean by “rigor?” Why is it in scare-quotes?
 - What are the “problems” in development?
 - The authors discuss descriptive, exploratory, explanatory research – what does each of them do?

Epistemology in intl development studies

	Economics	Politics	Sociology	Social Anthropology
What is reality?	One reality exists; reality is <i>independent</i> of our thoughts; what is observable is real	One reality exists. Reality is <i>independent</i> of our thoughts	One reality exists; Reality is <i>independent</i> of our thoughts, but much of reality is unobservable	There are <i>different</i> realities associated with different standpoints and cultures
Goal of enquiry?	Acquisition of a <i>single</i> truth -- a universal, general law	We can establish truths or <i>generalizations</i> about human beings	Truth needs to be understood in terms of <i>practical adequacy</i>	<i>Interpretation</i> of local meanings; there is <i>no universal truth</i>
How are the researcher (you) and the "researched" related?	The researcher is <i>objective</i> and is <i>independent</i> of the "researched"	The researcher is <i>subjective</i> and is <i>not independent</i> of the "researched"	The researcher is <i>subjective</i> and is <i>not independent</i> of the "researched"	The researcher is <i>subjective</i> and is <i>not independent</i> of the "researched"



Sumner, A, and M Tribe. 2008. *International Development Studies*. London: Sage, p.72.

Epistemology in intl development studies

Lack of income and assets

If you have a job at all now, you're overworked and underpaid.

—Young woman from Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria

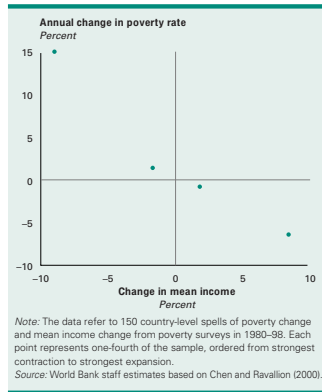
Some have land, but they can't buy fertilizer; if some work as weavers, they aren't well paid; if some work for daily wages, they aren't paid a just wage.

—Cackchiquel Indian, Guatemala

Poor people consistently emphasize the centrality of work to improving their lives. A country's overall wealth is an important influence on this: as countries grow richer, so on average do poor people in those countries,

Figure 2.1

Poverty shows a strong link with economic contractions and expansions



World Bank. 2001. *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*. Oxford: OUP, pp.34-35.

Epistemology in intl development studies

“Is development studies an objective, natural science-like search for one ‘truth’ or is it a subjective, constructivist search for many ‘truths’, or is it perhaps both?” (Sumner & Tribe, 2004)

Epistemology in intl development studies

“Is development studies an objective, natural science-like search for one ‘truth’ or is it a subjective, constructivist search for many ‘truths’, or is it perhaps both?” (Sumner & Tribe, 2004)

And yet, given that the authors say that “*across every conceivable fault-line the two approaches (i.e., positivism and constructivism) sit diametrically opposed,*” how can the answer possibly be *both*?

Exercise: RQ and Design

- ▶ Let's break into small groups and/or pairs again.
- ▶ Take a problem in development (e.g., poverty, inequality, corruption, violence/conflict, etc.).
- ▶ Come up with a research question.
 - Mason (2002): Developmental, mechanical, causal/predictive, and/or comparative?
 - Sumner & Tribe (2004): Descriptive, explanatory, and/or interpretative? Causes of effects and/or effects of causes? Positivist and/or constructivist/Interpretivist?
- ▶ Given your question, what will be the associated design? And what is a possible misaligned design?

Exercise: RQ and Design

- ▶ What are the “question” words you’re using – what? why? how? does?
- ▶ Additional issues associated with various questions and designs.
 - Limitations.
 - Trade-offs.
 - Feasibility.
- ▶ How do you ensure **rigor** in your project?