Explorations Notes Chapter 1

* A scientific approach to the question of politics
  + Many views or results may differ
  + Not a matter of just opinion
* An outcome may be obvious but the reasons for its occurrence might be heavily disputed
  + Why are women underrepresented in the House of Commons?
    - Child-bearing and/or lack of enthusiasm on their part
* A scientific approach can test hypotheses through empirical data
* Normative analysis
  + More feelings, morality involved
  + Hard to measure
  + Ex: the debate surrounding on how the death penalty can be immoral and moral
  + How things should be
* Emperical analysis
  + Descriptive by nature and more rooted in facts
  + Can only be empirical if it is felt by the senses such as faith and common sense
  + Need many respondents to respond to the question to create an objective view of the issues
  + The more responses that are taken, the more likely it will be seen as fact
  + In short, tell it how it is!
* Imbedded interest in allowing the filtering of observstions
  + Political or personal image to preserve (Observe v. how it should have been)
* Normative and empirical can overlap
  + Evidence that environment is good, and we should all be happy
  + Usually happens when there is flimsy empirical evidence (ex: climate change or gun laws)
* Science more about digging for the answers through a specified approach than having the knowledge itself
* Social sciences v. Natural sciences (more on the social aspect)
  + Hard to isolate specific variables (independent)
  + Hard to create a law of behaviour as free will is present
  + Hard to accept a definite meaning for certain subjects
* Needs to be verifiable by others in order to be credible
* Needs variance in the effects of the causes (why did not vote or vote)
  + Checking alternative hypotheses (vote bc interested or rich)
* Can be used to predict future events (assumed order in the present)
  + Can be discovered through science
* Attempt to make sweeping generalizations that can survive the test of time (can a banking practice survive during prosperity and downturn?)
* Positivism: can measure anything and the observer must be removed from the observed
* Postulates as to how discover nature and nature itself
  + There is a pattern and order that is in place that may produce similar actions—depending on how someone experiences the stimulant (something happens for a reason)
  + The scientific method reveals the nature of the world or subject—the skills of the person conducting the survey is irrelevant
  + Important for ideas and solutions to be grounded in reality—cannot allow for ignorance to be a guide (ex: does not understand the electorate)
  + Natural things or occurences have a natural cause
    - Ex: how important DNA is to political ideology—very hard to measure
    - Residual subjects: things that are out of the model’s reach of explaining something (leaves room for spirituality to emerge as an explanation)
  + Ideas or even the existence of things must be tested through the method
    - There is a lot of things to prove (ex: causes of war)
  + Ideas and knowledge can be gained by constantly testing an idea
    - Can be incremental or quick in changing
    - Struggle btw. What is generally accepted and the new studies (want to replace the orthodoxy)
* I have to build upon the work of the research community and it will build upon my work (reject or maybe verify it)
* How to conduct a reasonable scientific theory test
  + Need to indentify the problem or the outcome clearly and it must be measurable for other scientists to replicate your study (the dependent variable)
    - Needs some variation in the outcome
  + Pick a theory to test to guide you in your research (find the independent variable for your hypothesis)
    - Ask teacher for help on this question
  + Clearly define the concepts you are trying to address (can be extremely difficult as ideology may play a big role)
    - Some aspects of the concepts may not be equally measured (ex: voting v. writing a letter to a MP)
  + Operationalization: turn a concept into measurement
    - Ex: Sex means you are either male or female (in a bio sense it could be more complicated)
    - Measurement needs to stick to its concept
    - It is the concept, not the variable that is being concluded
  + Find data collecting approaches that best suite your topic—varies (ex: interview v. survey) (for both the independent and dependent variable)
  + Hypotheses must be able to be proven wrong (never able to be proven fully truthful)
    - Null hypotheses to show if relationship btw. 2 concepts are wrong (can be rejected or accepted)
  + Look back at the theory and your empirical evidence to draw some conclusions (lawlike generalizations)
  + Publish your work to contribute to the community (debate, replication and criticism)
  + Make replications in order to draw law-like conclusions (good to detail every step of the research process)
    - Can gather data in a different time span
* That took a lot of time!