Foundations of Social Science Research: CPT898

Case studies in causation, structure and agency 3:
(a) The "post-social" turn.
(b)Feminist perspectives on the research process.

Further reading

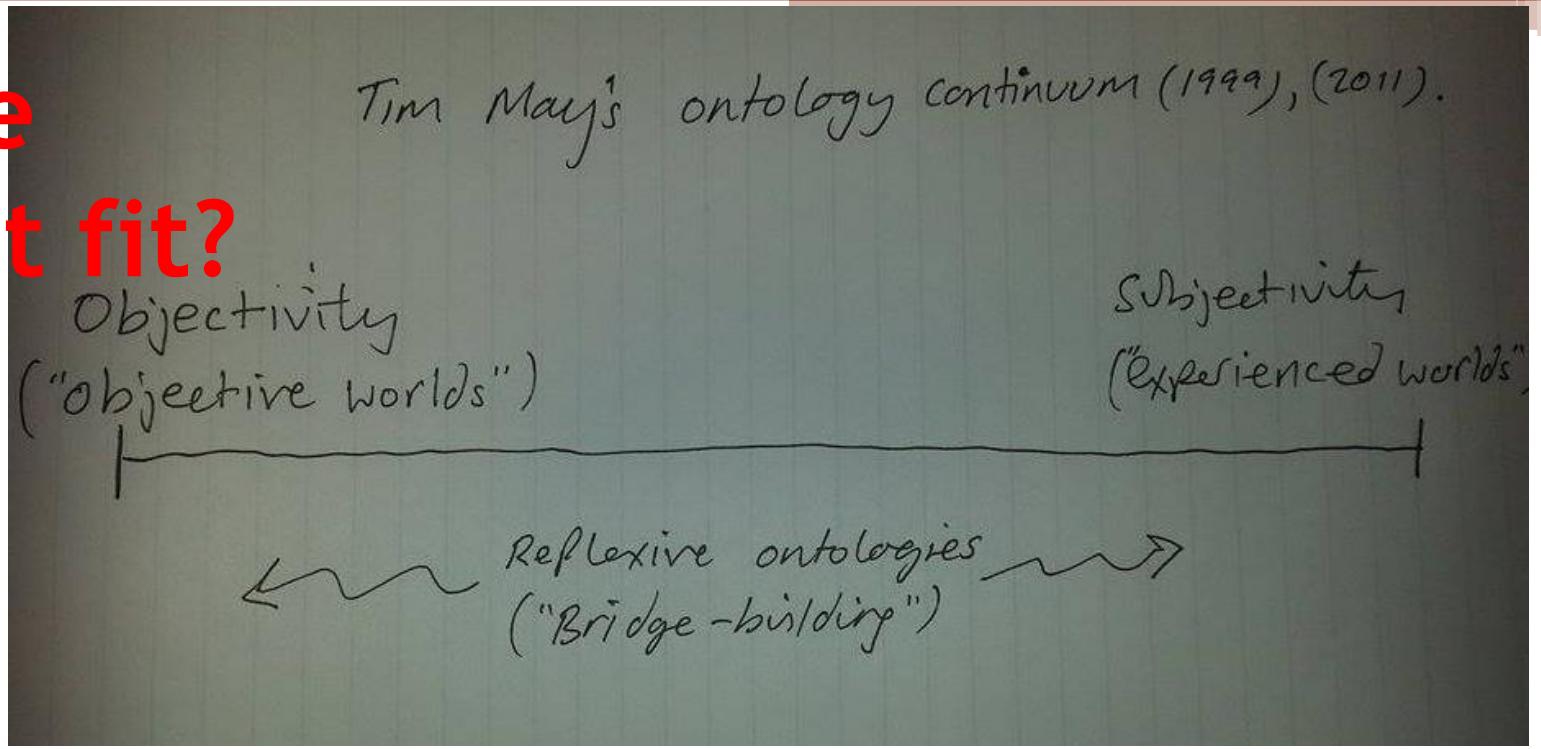
- Learning checks in seminars last week reveals the importance of further reading.
- Today's lectures provide the briefest of introductions to encourage you to read more widely.
- A reminder that learning is assessed with reference to the learning outcomes for the module.

Lecture 5a:
The “post-social” turn.

Outline

- Where does it fit in?
- Contested labels, key authors, key ideas.
- Similarities and differences.
- Hybrids and assemblages.
- Examples 1-4.
- Conclusion.

Where does it fit?



Like the perspectives of post-modernism and post-structuralism, post-social perspectives can be located within what May (1999) calls "reflexive" ontologies or (2011) "bridge building" (between the objective and experienced worlds) ontologies.

(Yet) Another contested label

Contested definitions of “the post-social turn”, variable usage across disciplines. Often also called, or associated with:

- Science (and Technology) Studies
- Actor Network Theory (ANT)
- Feminist technoscience
- Post humanism
- Deleuzian (etc.) studies

Key authors

- Callon (1998), Deleuze, and Guattari (1998), Knorr-Cetina, (2001), Latour (1988) Law, (2002)
- See further reading, in particular:
- Roseneil, S. and Frosh, M. (eds) (2012).

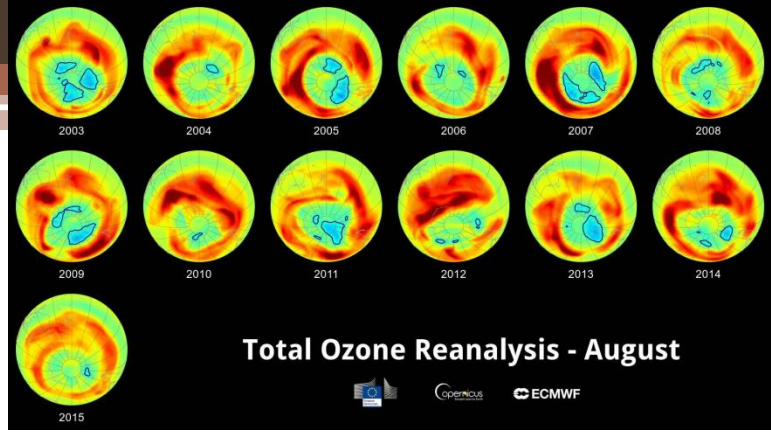
Key ideas

- Post-social, post-modern? *We have never been modern* (Latour 1988).
- Sceptical of modernism - human reason and scientific rationality in human progress and development.
- New types of bonds between humans and objects.
- Critical of the artificial separation of the natural and social world.
- Culture and nature, human and animal consciousness, beings and inanimate objects.

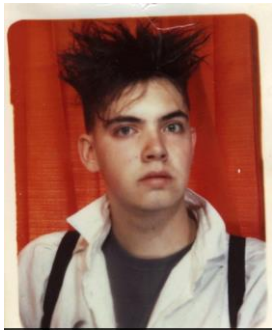
Similarities and differences

"Post-social theorists have provided an important extension to social constructionist interpretations of the social world, and the post modern and post structuralist celebration of the "linguistic turn" in social science… [they] do not privilege the linguistic, but rather recognize that the socio-technological networks they trace and describe are "simultaneously real, *like nature*, narrated, *like discourse*, and collective *like society*" (Latour 1993, p 6 in Gabriel and Jacobs 2008, pp 528-529)

Thus (in relation to the hole in the ozone layer);



The ozone hole is *too social* and *too narrated* to be truly natural; the strategy of industrial firms and heads of state is *too full of chemical reactions* to be reduced to power and interest; the discourse of the ecosphere is *too real* and *too social* to boil down to meaning effects. (Latour 1993, p 6).



Hybrids and assemblages

- Human and non-human
- No *a priori* classifications of the social world
- Privilege verbs over nouns (Deleuzian notion of *becomings* (cf generative mechanisms)
- Performativity: Callon – on markets for instance
- Material Culture. Daniel Miller on consumption and the journal *Home Cultures*

Example 1: Lowe. A. (2004) Objects and the production of technological forms of life.

- Objectualized relations
- Accountants and technological rules – standardised practices in business and accounting systems. Focus on the interplay between systems and work-practices
- Communication technology in currency markets. Their role in the increasing volatility of markets.
- Flatteneing of structures – simultaneously big and small; time compression follow the sun – home working and the subjugation of workers.

Example 2: Irie, K. (2014) Q methodology for post-social-turn research in SLA.

- Second language acquisition.
- Particular focus on the methodological consequences of the epistemological position.
- Q methodology (R sort looks for correlations between variables, Q sort correlations between subjects across variables – ranking answers) at the intersection of qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Example 3: Mayall, M. 2007: Attached to their style: Traders, Technical Analysis and postsocial relationships

- Attachment of traders to financial markets, and the nature of their interactions with them.
- Technical Analysis (Charting) is offered as an example of a postsocial relationship.
- It looks at the way in which the relationship between traders and Technical Analysis develops, and the mutual dependence evidenced between the two.
- Qualitative in depth interviews with 26 share traders, content analysis of websites, attendance at expos.

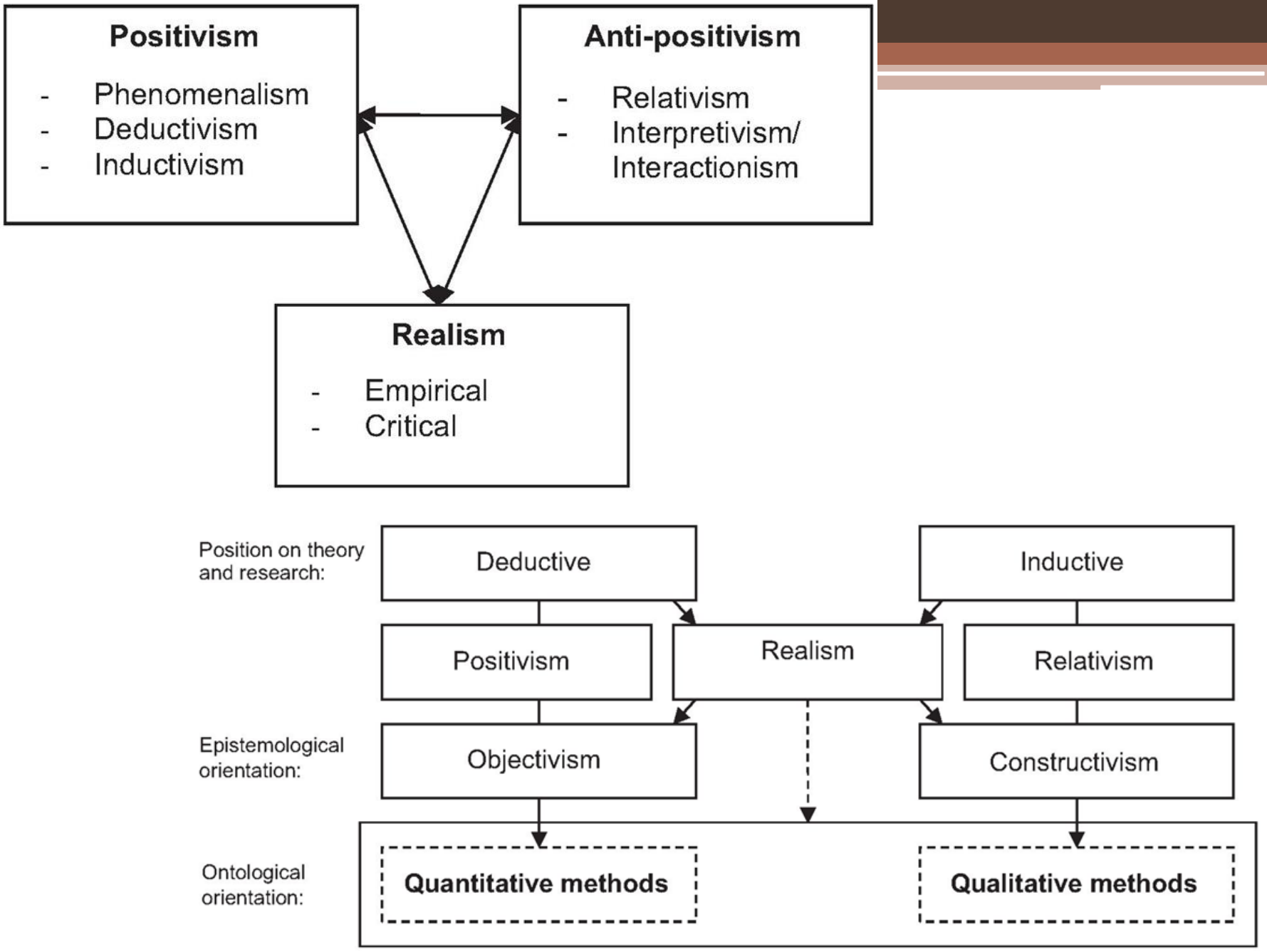
Example 4: Coffey, J. (2013) Bodies, work and gender. Exploring a Deleuzian approach

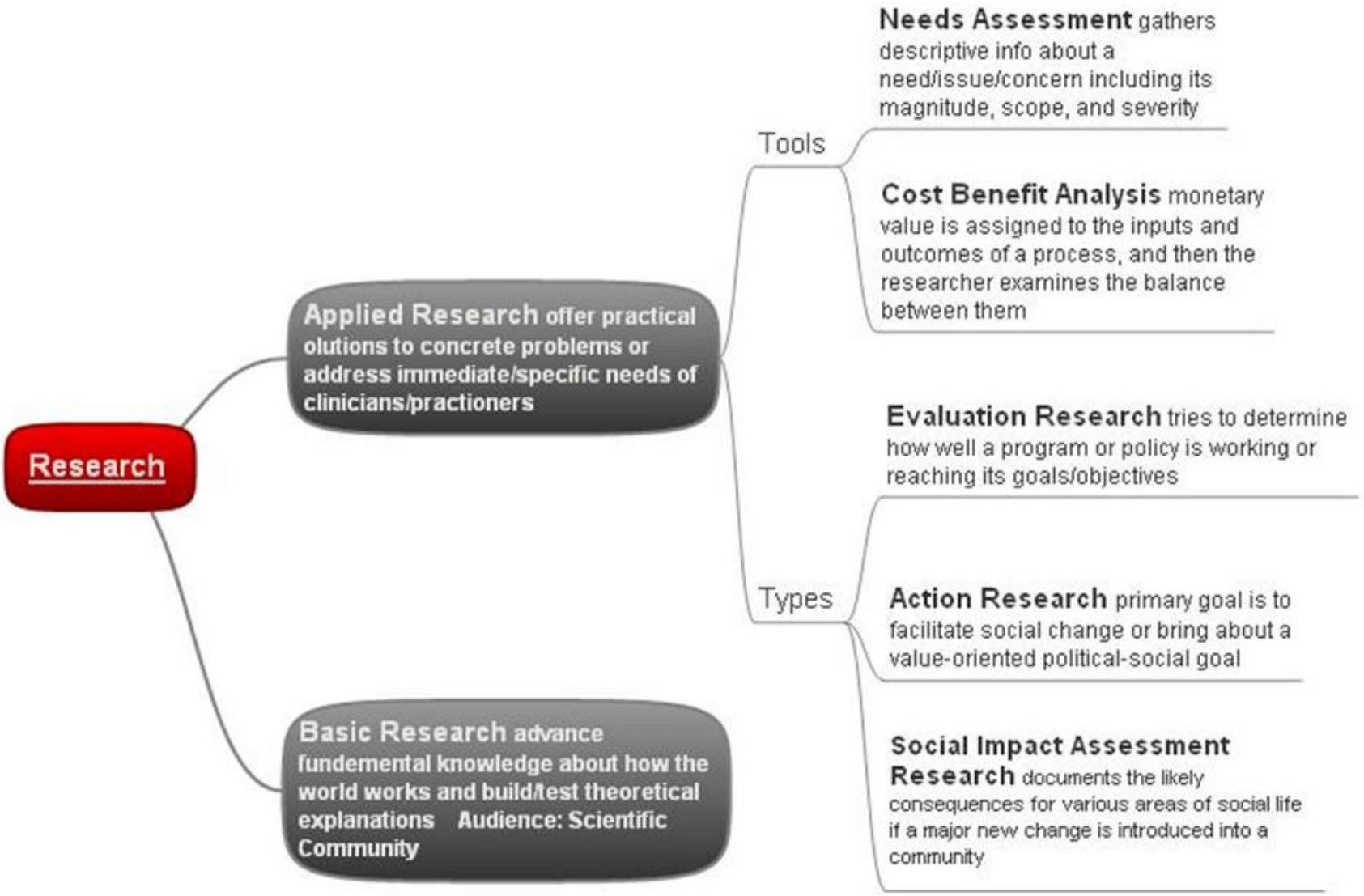
- Body work involves a range of practices to maintain or modify the body's appearance.
- Through body work practices, gender is continually reasserted and reconstructed.
- Deleuzian 'becomings' offered analytic insights.
- 22 qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in 2010 with men and women aged 18–35

Conclusion

- Highly contested
- Variable uptake
- Epistemological position or “just” a theory?
- Methodological implications: participant observation, ethnographies, Deleuzian (speculative) methods?
- Epistemological similarities with critical realism, social constructionism, post structuralism and post modernism!

An intermission: Especially for visual learners

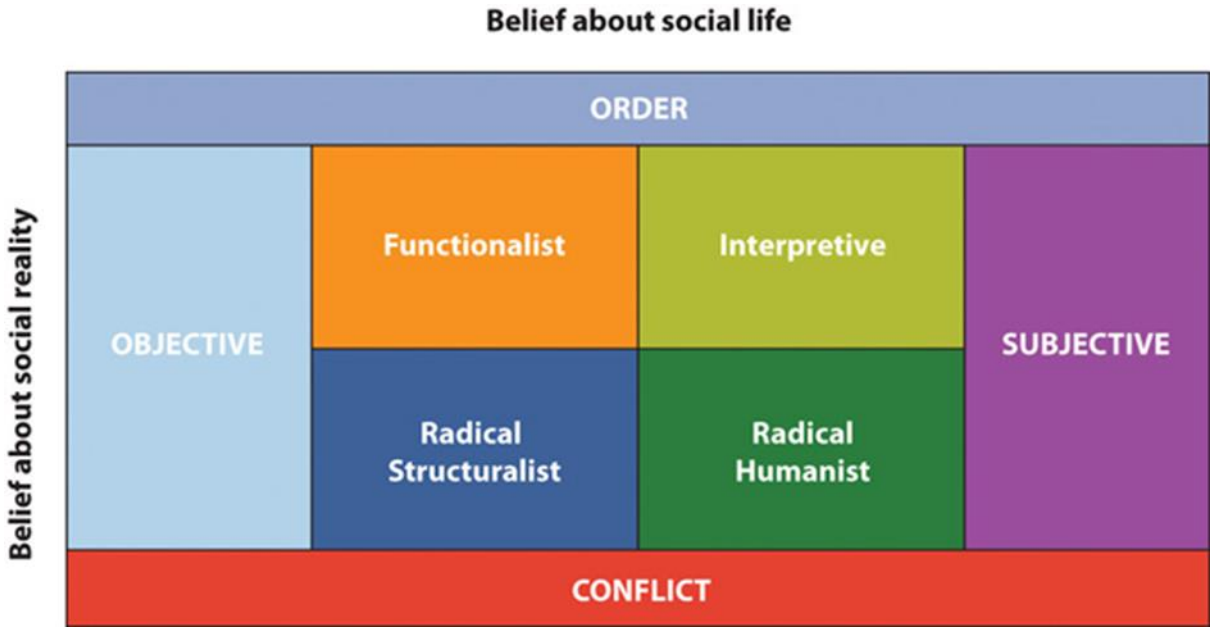

Positivism
- Phenomenalism
- Deductivism
- Inductivism
Anti-positivism
- Relativism
- Interpretivism/ Interactionism
Realism
- Empirical
- Critical
Position on theory and research:
Deductive
Inductive
Positivism
Realism
Relativism
Epistemological orientation:
Objectivism
Constructivism
Ontological orientation:
Quantitative methods
Qualitative methods

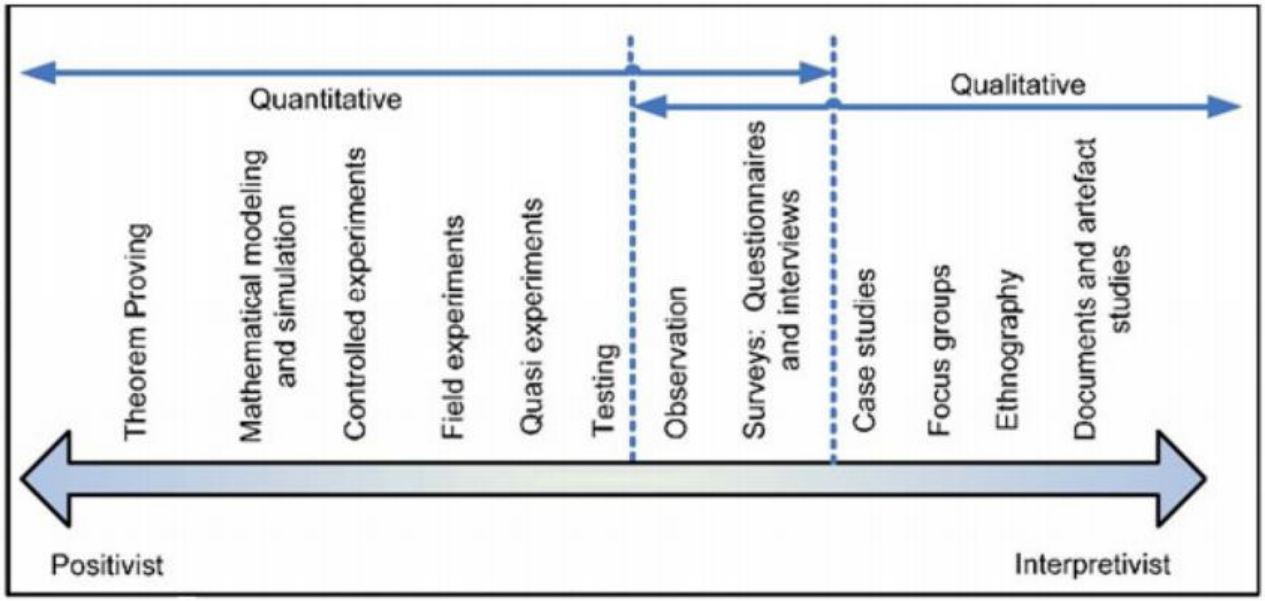

Research
Applied Research offer practical olutions to concrete problems or address immediate/specific needs of clinicians/practioners
Basic Research advance fundemental knowledge about how the world works and build/test theoretical explanations Audience: Scientific Community
Tools
Types
Needs Assessment gathers descriptive info about a need/issue/concern including its magnitude, scope, and severity
Cost Benefit Analysis monetary value is assigned to the inputs and outcomes of a process, and then the researcher examines the balance between them
Evaluation Research tries to determine how well a program or policy is working or reaching its goals/objectives
Action Research primary goal is to facilitate social change or bring about a value-oriented political-social goal
Social Impact Assessment Research documents the likely consequences for various areas of social life if a major new change is introduced into a community

Feminist Research

Subset of CSS and ISS

Positivist SS	**Conflict SS**	**Interpretive SS**
External Reality	Interaction: External & Internal Reality	Internal Reality
One Reality	One or limited Realities	∞ Realities
Behaviourism	Behaviourism	Constructivism
Value-free	Macro	Micro
Objective	Knowledge = Power → Activism	





(De Villiers 2005)

Lecture 5b: Feminist perspectives on the research process.

Outline

- Introduction
- Challenges to the sociological imagination
- Is social science research malestream?
- The feminist critique of malestream social science research
- Critique of disengagement
- Alternative feminist epistemologies
- Conclusion and implications

Introduction

The story so far….

- Choices
- Ontology and epistemology are important whether we like it or not.
- Questions about Power .
- Relative importance of different traditions – realism versus social constructionism.
- Privilege the foundations of the research question and not the methodology or methods.

This lecture

- Why is an understanding of feminist social theory important to my research?

Basic principles

- Feminism as an intellectual tradition is deeply misunderstood
- Well established academic literature developed dramatically since the early 1980s
- Distinction between sex/gender

Please ignore this quote…

"A socialist, anti-family movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."

(Rev. Pat Robertson, The Guardian, 24/10/92)

Challenges to the sociological imagination

- We know that our theories or ways of thinking about the world determine not only how we do our research but also the sorts of questions we ask or don't ask.
- If women's role is accepted as natural (biologically determined) then questions about men and domestic labour, women and identity become very different.
- Leads to a feminist critique of social science research.....

Is social science research *malestream*?

- Social research mainly concerned with research on men and by implication theories for men
- Findings based on all male samples generalised to entire population
- Some aspects of womens' experiences regarded as unimportant or trivial …

- If women included in research it is too often in a sexist or distorted way
- Gender infrequently regarded as a explanatory variable
- All this adds up to a malestream bias in social science research
- Disproportionate focus on the public sphere of work and not the private/domestic sphere of home

The feminist critique of malestream social science research

- Originally first wave academic feminists advocated a distinct feminist method ('soft' rather than 'hard' data).
- Feminist critique of this position developed a more robust feminist epistemology (methods *per se* are less important than epistemology – knowledge production)

Critique of disengagement

- Rigorous scientific research implies objectivity, disengagement and the rigid separation of researcher and researched (NB the emotional/rational dichotomy)
- However, people in the research process are not just sources of data.
- Research should be regarded as a two-way process – the researcher has responsibilities to their respondents.

- Being detached, “rational” and objective is a “mythical aim” but also generally regarded as undesirable (no research can be value-free).
- Biography is important. The researcher and the researched have distinct histories.

Alternative feminist epistemologies

- There are many feminisms and there are multiple feminist epistemologies.

But (after Harding 1987)…

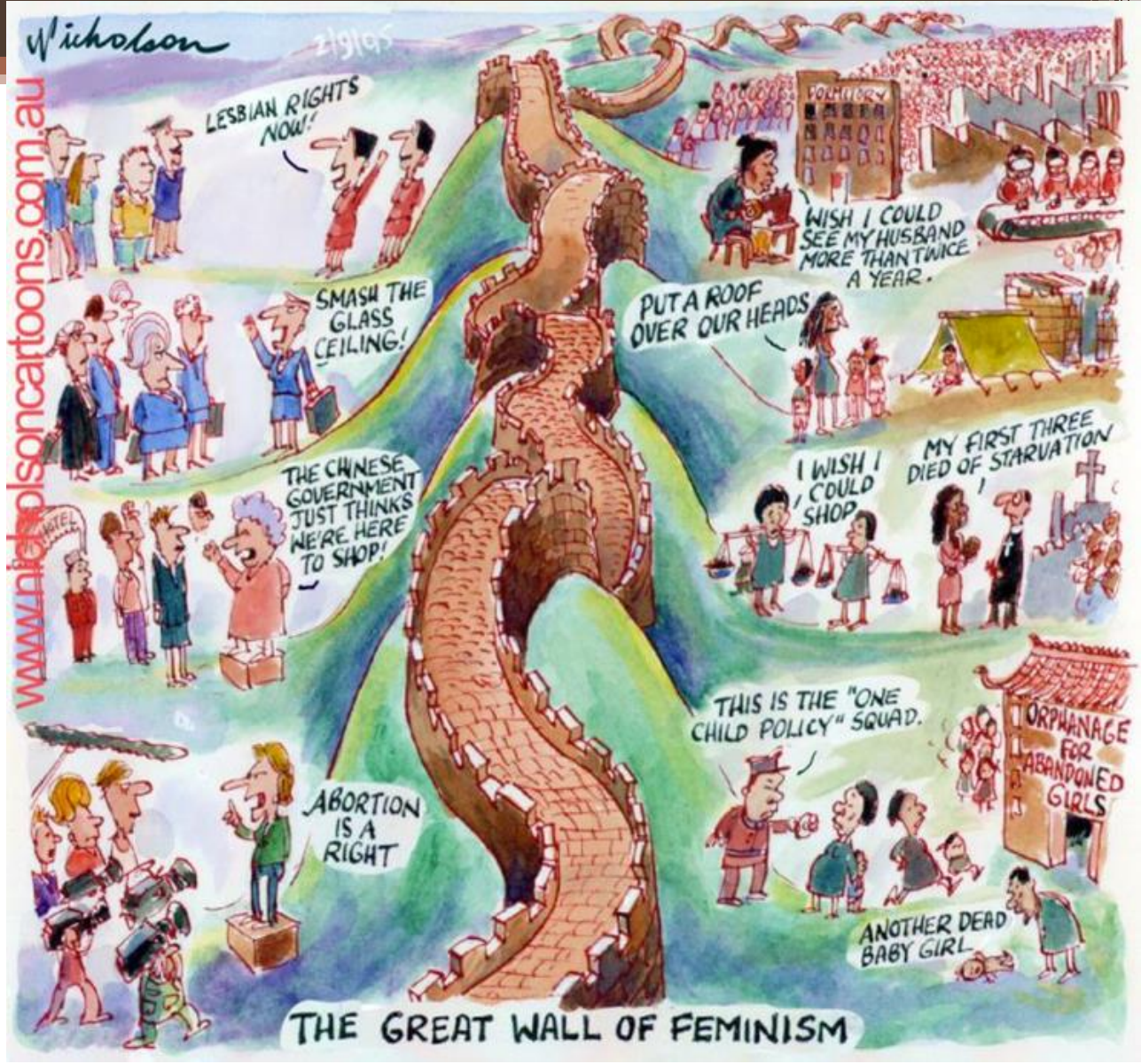
here are three …

1 Feminist empiricists

- “Successor science”
- Work within the context of existing social science research but render faulty or “bad” science “real” by making women visible in the choice of research methods and analysis or by more rigorously adhering to empiricist methods and norms for scientific research. (see Intemann 2010)

2 Standpoint feminist

- Women's oppressed position is the starting for epistemological questions
- Explore the world from the standpoint of women as an **oppressed, invisible** and **marginal** group.
- The standpoint is highly variable – there are many not one …



http://soctheory.iheartsociology.com/2011/11/30/standpoint-theory/

3 Post-modern feminist

- Greater sophistication in constructing the research subject
- Rejects the idea that an objective reality exists “out there” and focus instead (for example) upon issues of interpretation and performativity
- New materialist feminisms (van der Tuin 2011)

Conclusions/Implications

- Think about how you as a researcher have an impact upon the research process and the creation of knowledge.
- What is your relationship to the researched?
- Consider your biography – how is it different/similar to those you are researching?
- Does your research seek to empower disadvantaged groups? To what extent is this expressed as a "value" in your research.
- Is your research gender blind?
- Are other variables such as class more important than gender?
- Are women's voices heard in your research?