

## Ways of Knowing

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## Session Overview

- Why bother?
- What is 'knowing'?
- Approaches to research
- Methods and methodology

## Language and learning objectives

1. By the end of the session you will be familiar with some important terms: ontology, epistemology, interpretivism, paradigm.
2. You will be able to identify some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with different research approaches
3. You will have a basic understanding of two related issues: methods and methodology
4. You will have greater familiarity with some common approaches to research

PLEASE ASK QUESTIONS

## Why bother?

## Why do people ...

- Bother with research?
- Do research in different ways?
- Worry about the way in which research is carried out?
- Worry about the basis for research findings or 'evidence'?

## What is knowing

## Are there necessary and sufficient conditions for what is knowledge?

- Necessary conditions *sine qua non*
- Sufficient conditions – if A then B
- Is 'knowledge' ...
  - Justified
  - True
  - Belief

## Some basic questions to ask about knowing

- What is knowledge?
- Who decides?
- Who can know?
- What kinds of things can be known?
- How can they be known?

Colloquially:

- How do you know?
- Why should I believe you?
- Can you prove it?
- What evidence do you have for that?

## Approaches to research

### A useful acronym

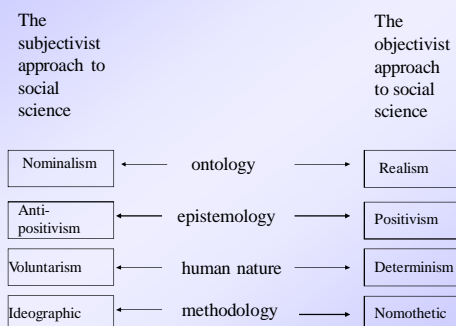
- Knowledge
- Epistemology
- Reality
- Ontology  
(thanks to Laurie Cohen for this acronym)

Used appropriately together with a sense of the context, or scene – you get 'keroscene' an inspirational mix (lame, but easy to remember – the corny add-on is mine)

## What kind of assumptions or beliefs are in play?

- Ontology – what things / phenomena are 'out there' ... what can we agree exists
- Epistemology – how can we know about these things, how do we know we know
- Assumptions about people – freewill and all that
- Assumptions about society – stability...conflict, mechanist...organic, holistic/system... atomist
- Assumptions about truth – correspondence, coherence, relativism

### One way to think about 'knowing' and some labels



Spend 5 minutes trying to 'locate' yourself on these axes... what are the implications of doing this in terms of your dissertation?

## What's a paradigm?

- A much over used and abused term, but still appropriate on occasion
- A set of shared beliefs (or assumptions) about phenomena, and an agreed or sanctioned range of methods that a community uses to carry out research
- 'Paradigmatic consensus' (Pfeffer) – the degree to which these are articulated and agreed on

## Methods and methodology

### They are different but overlap

- Method – how you do something (interview, survey, observe)
- Methodology – the study of how you do something (epistemology, ontology and the paradigms).
- But they overlap considerably: large scale, closed item remotely administered questionnaire... positivist/realist; small scale, in depth observation and analysis of natural speech... interpretivist

### Methods....>

- Survey (closed item, open item, mix)
- Interviews (open-ended, semi-structured, structured, critical incident)
- Focus-groups (as above)
- Observation (time and motion study, non-participant, participant, covert, ethnographic, anthropological)
- Case study (multi method so all above and more)
- 'Discourse' analysis (often loosely used, banner term)
- Narrative analysis
- Documentary analysis

### What methodology and methods should I choose?

Depends on:

- Beliefs and Values
- Ethics
- Goals
- Research Questions
- Data
- Skills (willingness time to develop new ones)
- Feasibility (time, funds, access)