

Seminar Exercise: "What Kind of Researcher are You?"

The aims of this seminar are:

- To reflect upon the different standpoints researchers have towards the process of research;
- To encourage research students to question their own and others' assumptions about differing approaches to research activities;
- To identify and characterise established differences in research philosophy (the *ontology* and *epistemology* of research practice).

1. Each group works in pairs.
2. Consider each statement with your partner.
3. Indicate in the boxes provided (for both you and your partner) the strength of your agreement or disagreement with the statement.
4. Use the scoring system displayed in class to add up totals for each partner.
5. Show your results to the rest of your group.
6. One (elected) member of each group is to make notes and report back on the similarities and differences in totals and responses.

1. I usually accept as true only those things I have experienced myself.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Score: (A) (B)

2. For me, understanding why people think and act as they do is more important than being able to predict what people will do.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Score: (A) (B)

3. I think the most important reason for doing research is to discover new facts about the world.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Score: (A) (B)

4. The best type of evidence to support a research conclusion is based on numerical data.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Score: (A) (B)

5. Those who are familiar with and involved in the activities being investigated do the best research.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Score: (A) (B)

6. I prefer research results to be presented in graphs and charts rather than in text.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Score: (A) (B)

7. When choosing a sample of people as sources for research data, it is better to choose those who you are familiar with, rather than strangers.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Score: (A) (B)

8. Science is the only reliable source of knowledge about the world and people.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Score: (A) (B)

Total (A)_____ Total (B)_____

Now add up the scores for each person - using the table or scores displayed and discuss the results with the others in your group.

Scoring Table: (scores are positive, zero or negative)

Q1:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
+2	+1	0	-1	-2

Q2:

-3	-1	0	+1	+3
----	----	---	----	----

Q3:

+3	+1	0	-1	-3
----	----	---	----	----

Q4:

+3	+1	0	-1	-3
----	----	---	----	----

Q5:

-3	-1	0	+1	+3
----	----	---	----	----

Q6:

+3	+1	0	-1	-3
----	----	---	----	----

Q7:

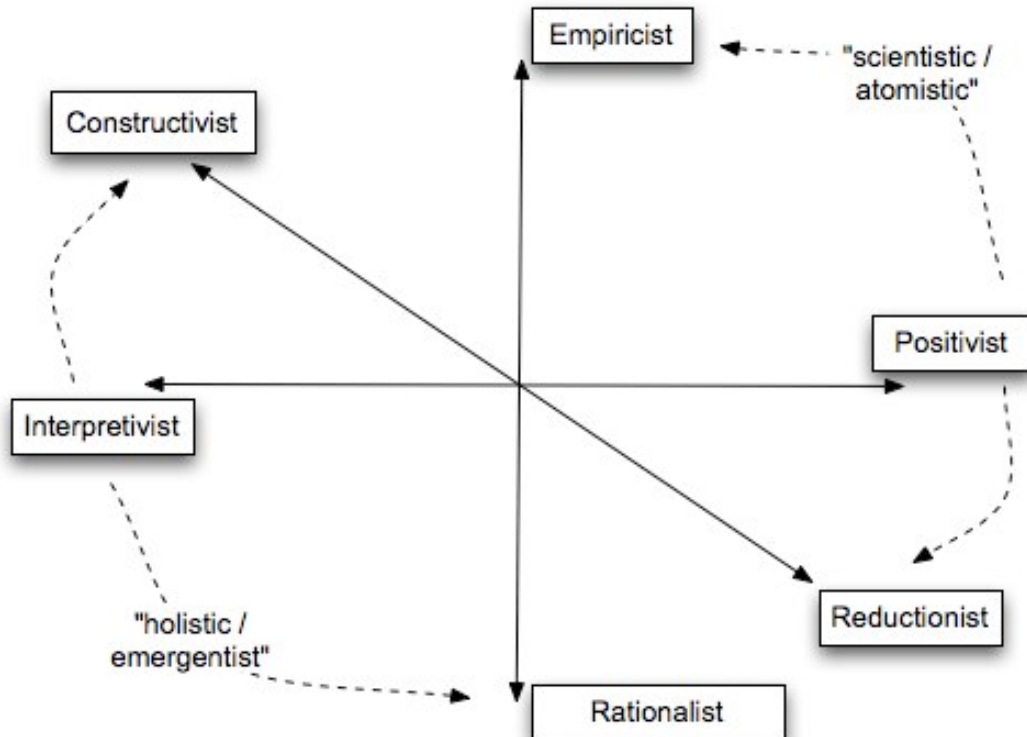
-2	-1	0	+1	+2
----	----	---	----	----

Q8:

+4	+2	0	-2	-4
----	----	---	----	----

Notes for Seminar Participants:

The purpose of the discussion is compare each researcher's score and to note similarities and differences as a way of reflecting upon how you "position" yourself (metaphorically) inside a 3D "cube" of opposites whose dimensions are:



Each axis (X, Y, Z) represents differing types of answer to basic questions about research philosophy:

- **X-axis (Positivist / Interpretivist):** concerns the **types** of evidence the researcher regards as best – roughly: grounded in observable, testable behaviour and phenomena, versus inferred from what gives meaning to actions and events.
- **Y axis (Empiricist / Rationalist):** concerns the **sources** of evidence -- roughly 'inductive, based on experience', 'deductive, derived from general principles/ axioms'.
- **Z-axis (Reductionist / Constructivist):** concerns the preferred forms of explanation / theory for the researcher: decomposing complex phenomena into its simplest components versus constructing an overall account or narrative of the phenomena as a whole.

Negative scores from the questionnaire indicate a researcher whose preference is for the more holistic, interpretivist, rationalist approach; positive scores indicate a preference for empirical, positivist, reductionist approaches to scientific research.