

Why not Quantitative Methods?

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- division into variables:
 - destroys the connections among actions and events
 - destroys the links to context
- measuring:
 - imposes the researcher's categories
 - imposes a single interpretation
- official statistics (e.g. suicide) reflect tacit assumptions

Correlation is not Causation

- clinical trials can show that a treatment has a significant effect
- but they can't show **how** it has an effect
- they can only test a **theory** about causation

Why do people act as they do?

Talcott Parsons



- Socialization = internalization of societal norms
- -> Personality - unconscious need-dispositions
- -> Motivation - selection of goals
- Reasoning about ends in a recognizable situation -> action
- Social order is the result

Deviancy:

- lack of adequate reasoning
- lack of appropriate norms

Problems

- Cognition and action are divided
- People are 'judgemental dopes' who simply follow the norms
- Everyday life is too random to be studied
- Situations (contexts, settings) are treated as objective & fixed

Alfred Schutz



- the social world is interpreted using common-sense categories
- typifications: an American; a dog...
- social science needs to **begin** with these constructs
- and build interpretations of interpretations
- if not, science creates a fictional reality - of variables, of structures...

There are multiple social worlds

- in each one the natural attitude is suspension of doubt
- each actor carries out a "subjective synthesis of identification"
- an ongoing cognitive process of categorization
- based on a social stock of knowledge
 - practical, recipe knowledge
 - "common sense" knowledge - what 'everyone' knows
- people assume a reciprocity of perspectives

Problems:

- focus is on mental processes, the activity of subjective consciousness
- i.e., social cognition
- doesn't explain how individuals create a social (intersubjective) world
- cognition and action are still divided

Harold Garfinkel

- People actively make sense together
- Using shared methods of practical reasoning
- Everyday actions are systematically produced and recognized
- To achieve social order
- Actions have **public** accountability (not **subjective** meaning)
- The gap between cognition and action is avoided



Ethnomethodology

- A program of investigation
- Based on this new view of social action
- defines an important **task** for QR:
 - study the practices that produce social order
