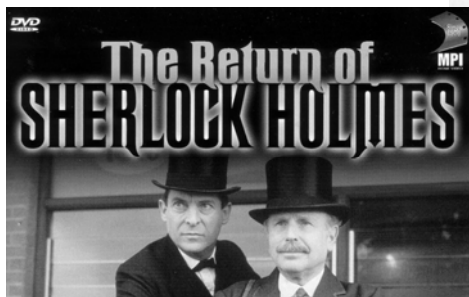


Criminology 321 / Week 3

Logic and Principles of Qualitative Inquiry



- Sherlock Holmes exemplifies many of the same methodological principles we've discussed
- Can compare Gregory vs Holmes

Inspector Gregory

- Gathers evidence
- Comes to a quick conclusion
- Then starts to exhibit “tunnel vision”
 - Is content with “shadow” evidence
 - Forecloses on his search; does not look for negative evidence
 - Does not consider rival plausible explanations

Sherlock Holmes

- Holmes had followed the case in the paper
- Upon arrival he surveys the scene, interviews the principals, and is very specific about what he asks (What was for dinner? Did you close door behind you?)
 - Seeks “rich description”; thinks re *process*
- He inductively generates theories *and* creates tests to see which rival explanations are most plausible

Sherlock Holmes

- The curried mutton and the dog that didn't bark suggest to him it was an inside job. Was Mrs. Straker a part of it?



Sherlock Holmes

If Straker had intended to harm Silver Blaze, wouldn't there be evidence of it?



Sherlock Holmes

But then where's the horse?
Looking for clues in the right places



Sherlock Holmes

- The interview with Syllas Brown at Mapleton – “You’ve been watching me” – shows that Holmes is right about the horse
- But is he right about Straker, too?
- Not content with “shadow evidence,” he goes to London to see whether “Mr. Darbyshire” is actually Straker.

Different Styles of Qualitative Analysis in *Silver Blaze*

Inspector Gregory:

- Gathers evidence
- Comes to a quick conclusion
- Is content with “shadow” evidence
- Does not look for negative evidence
- Remains purely inductive
- Lacks imagination
- Does not consider rival plausible explanations

Sherlock Holmes:

- Gathers evidence
- No premature conclusions
- Is not content with “shadow” evidence
- Is particularly attuned to negative evidence
- Inductively generates a theory, then tests its implications deductively
- Considers rival plausible explanations

Logic of Qualitative Inquiry

- Although fictional, Sherlock and Inspector Gregory have parallels in the real world
- The “qualitative research” you will do after you graduate will affect real people and change their lives

What do these people have in common?



 thestar.com

Police sway pathologists' conclusions, expert says

Inquiry heard Charles Smith made faulty conclusion after hearing officers make comments at autopsy
December 11, 2007

THELISA KOVAC
STAFF REPORTER

A pathologist can be influenced by the opinions of police when conducting an autopsy to learn how someone has died, a public inquiry heard yesterday.

Phil Campbell, lawyer for several individuals convicted of crimes on the evidence of now-disgraced pathologist Dr. Charles Smith, posed the question about police influence at the Inquiry into Pediatric Forensic Pathology in Ontario.

"You would not dispute the real world fact that police officers who have a theory occasionally come into autopsies pointing the pathologist in the direction of a theory and very visibly hoping that evidence will emerge to support it. In the real world, doesn't it?" he asked Dr. David Chassin, the province's top forensic pathologist.

"Is there a potential that a pathologist could be influenced in a subtle way, the outlet in terms of his thinking? Yes, of course," Chassin responded. "It's more likely to happen with an inexperienced pathologist."

The inquiry was prompted by errors Smith made on 20 cases, resulting in 12 deaths.

In one case, a Kingston mother was charged with stabbing her 7-year-old daughter to death with scissors, based on an erroneous autopsy done by Smith. The autopsy had noted scissors were found at the scene. The girl had actually died of a pit bull bite. The mother, denied bail, spent almost two years in jail.



Parallels

Wrongful Conviction:

- premature conclusions, tunnel vision
- coercion in interviewing, leading questions, false confessions
- conflicts of interest (e.g., gaol informants)
- confusing science and advocacy

Qualitative Principles:

- must consider rival plausible explanations
- assertive but unbiased; non-judgemental; guided by evidence
- must consider social location of participants
- reflexivity; the data must make a difference

How I Learned What a 'Crock' Was

- But what does this look like in the research world?
- Step 1 is to locate “the body”
- Esterberg talks about finding a focus
- A great example of the preliminary steps (and follow-through) can be seen in Becker’s *How I learned what a ‘crock’ was*.