

**RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY,
PORT HARCOURT**



**TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN IN CONDUCTING
RESEARCH IN THE MANAGEMENT SCIENCES:
A PHILOSOPHICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL
REFLECTION OF THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISTS
AND POSITIVISTS APPROACHES**

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE

By

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and Organizational Behaviour*

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PREAMBLE

It is with deep sense of motivation and gladness that I stand in this privileged podium to deliver a once in a life time lecture. This inaugural lecture would have been delivered fifteen (15) years or so earlier, but I deliberately refused to do this because the University in the past lost all the traditions and trappings of a foremost tertiary institution. I was promoted professor twenty (20) years ago – in other words, more than two-thirds of my academic sojourn - I have occupied this exalted academic position of professor, probably at a fairly youthful age. The fact that this inaugural lecture is delivered late does not take away the academic aroma and flavor from it. This inaugural lecture is the 47th in the series. Spiritually, 47 is God's special number. And I am extremely lucky to deliver this lecture as the 47th person.

The values and traditions of a university were suppressed in the past and if not completely obliterated. But Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, you came from a sister university and brought back the venter of university culture, tradition and precepts. This was what encouraged me to embark on this fine intellectual part of necessity.

Knowing that inaugural lectures are not compulsory, I decided to ignore the powers that be, who lined-up university professors names as primary school children who waited and lined up to read their "Nursery Rhythms," in turns. I refused to be part of such "military type" of academic management style and

regimentation, because I know the right way to go. Some of those fellows who subjected the system to such calamitous bravados have not in fact gone through the crucible of academic and intellectual assessment at the professorial level. State Universities have problems, that was why such unpardonable aberrations were given legitimacy by the powers that be. But I believe that those of us who are in the academia are part of the problems. We should always be ready to support our Vice Chancellor anytime such untoward steps are introduced by anyone. The concept of the universality of a university must always be protected. The power to protect the university is in our hands and not in the hands of anyone else.

Some of us have overstayed in one system, therefore, do not know what is happening elsewhere. Intellectual and academic in-breeding seems to be one of major problems we have as academics. We as academics must learn to go round to other universities to do what I would refer to as comparative “academic, intellectual and administrative” exposure. This will, not only make us become more prolific in our academic productivity but in terms also of prosaic flourish in all other areas of work within the precinct of the University.

One other problem that is about to destroy the university system is ethnicity. I have always regarded the university or a university as an international academic play ground. My dynamism as an academic transcended parochialism and jingoism. I have always subscribed to the fact that all over the

- Johnnie, P. B. (1988c) “Corporate Performance of Public Enterprises in Developing Countries: The Human Factor as a Neglected Area” *Journal of African Administrative Studies*, No. 31, Morocco
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world great intellectuals do not confine their knowledge and inventions to their local government areas, States or Countries, as we do here. Great intellectuals see the universe as their arena. And as such, strive to elevate that which is decrepit and to glorify that which is superlative. It is on these principles that I have always lived. I have always opposed the rampant but repugnant aberration where even the educated individuals in this part of the country dragoon ethnic politics into academics.

Anybody who shares my views will be troubled by the recondite academic corruption desacralizing the campuses and the intelligentsia. Suffice to note that academic corruption is more serious and deleterious than financial corruption. Academic corruption is eroding the very foundation of our society. Research evidence shows a high degree of correlation between academic corruption and financial corruption. It appears that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) should have resident offices on all University campuses to check this evil trend that has destroyed the foundation of the centres of moral rectitude.

Note: You have to be patient with me because I am not going to use signs and symbols to drive home my point(s). The main engine of delivery here is language; therefore, I shall be prodigious in my use of literature of the discipline of the philosophy of management science.

DEFINING THE MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

As used here, Management Sciences have a very broad application. The management sciences, among others, include disciplines such as organizational behavior, industrial or organizational psychology, industrial sociology, economics, operations research, political science, statistics, cultural anthropology, accountancy, human resource management, organization theory and all other related disciplines. Depending on the persuasion and school of thought of each contributor, the various disciplinary areas which constitute management sciences could as well be described as behavioral or social sciences. Here, I am not interested in the identification of semantic differences between different scholars. The terms management, behavioral or social science, therefore, are used interchangeably in this lecture. (Johnnie, 2001a).

SYNONYMS

In this lecture, the following words are used as synonyms - social constructionist, relativist, subjectivist, anti-positivist, voluntarist, nominalist, pluralist and interpretivist while the following words are also used as synonyms – positivist, objectivist, absolutist, realist, determinist, and monist For purposes of clarity and easy intellectual consumption, these words are used interchangeably by the two schools of thought because they have the same meaning, conceptually and contextually.

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INTRODUCTION

Before 1824 when Western civilization's focus on “science of society” and “human happiness” inspired William Thomson to coin the concept of “social sciences,” interest in the best method to conduct research in the broad areas that constitute the field of social sciences had exercised the imagination of scholars (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2014). In modern analysis, the social sciences have been conceptualized as “science of people or collections of people and their individual or collective behaviors in groups, firms, societies, or economies” (Bhattacharjee, 2012). It is interesting though to note that this modern analysis has not eliminated concerns as to the best way to conduct inquiries in the field. This concern necessitates the need to draw on foundational postulations that flow in the history of scientific thought.

A FORAY INTO SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT

Given its prominence in phrases such as 'scientific method' and 'social sciences,' the concept of 'science' warrants a special attention. It is on record for instance that since the beginning of the 19th century when the “scientific method” phrase was coined, thinkers in the social sciences have squabbled over what the 'science' in the social sciences should be (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Woolgar (1996) has differentiated the “realist” the “canonical version” or the “idealized view” from the “relativist” view of science. The hallmark of the canonical view of science promotes it as “a unitary set of methods and

procedures, concerning which there is, by and large, a consensus” (Woolgar, 1996). The canonical view of science finds resonance where Denzin (2013) cites American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in order to disagree with a conceptualization of the scientific method as:

Any activity designed to test a hypothesis, permit conclusions to be drawn, and thereby develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge expressed in theories, principles and statements of relationships. Research is described in a formal protocol that sets forth an objective and a set of procedures designed to reach that objective. (AAUP, 2001, Denzin, 2013).

In rejecting this canonical view, Woolgar upholds the relativist view of science in a manner that is congruent with St. Pierre's (2013) treatise on the 'science' of modern social science. St. Pierre ridicules the received view of science as a prescriptive articulation in which the scientific research approach is defined as “systematic procedures and protocols, mechanistic in technique, statistically manipulated in pursuit of causal structures, replication, generalizability” and as a “tradition of prediction and accumulation where knowledge is thought of as the one produced by science” St. Pierre (2013). In refuting this mechanistic articulation, St. Pierre rather maintains that the science that beckons in modern social science is no longer the “outdated, ruptured, ruined, prescriptive and idealized Popperian perspective” that imposes structures like “*research*

incidentally also was my classmate. My name has therefore, gone into the Guinness Book of records as the only man who was classmate of two female Registrars.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of my Head Chief, Professor B. B. Kombo-Igbeta – Professor of Surgery. I extend my thanks also to Justice (Sir) Stanley and Dame (Dr) Mrs. Alagoa (Retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria)

Assistance given during the writing of this inaugural lecture goes to Mrs. Nelly Ikoawaji of Mineik Computers, Port Harcourt. She produced the early drafts of the manuscript and the final processed pages at her computer facility. She coped heroically with the atrocious writing of my hand writing drafts. She and her staff completed the cycle of the production process by word-processing the text in a very professional fashion; I remain indebted to her for a very long time to come.

I am very grateful to my friends and our visitors who came from outside this campus to give this gathering the fine colour and flavor it has. I wish to also thank our great students who abandoned their lectures to grace this lecture. I am very proud of them. Once again, I wish to say special thank you to my colleagues, both in my Faculty and other Faculties who came to grace this occasion. I wish to thank my Vice Chancellor for finding time to chair this occasion. I deliberately thanked and acknowledged my Vice Chancellor last because he is the Chief Host of this occasion, without him, there would have been no meeting here.

May I also wish all those who came from far and near, that the Almighty God who brought them here safely will also take them back safely to their respective places of abode. God bless you.

Joseph Toby, Professor Bariyima Kiabel and Dr. Fred Azubuike Amadi, Ag, Head of the Department of Mass Communication who once in a while, calls my attention to some unwitting orthographic missteps in some aspects of my inaugural lecture. I also wish to thank my other colleagues in the Faculty of Management Sciences for the support they have given me over the years which made me develop a stronger academic stamina and fibre. I would also want to extend my gratitude to three important academic friends at the University of Lagos – Professors Dafe Otobo, Tayo Fashoyin and Owolabi Kuye. I would like to appreciate the numerous post-graduate students who benefited from my organizational behaviour lectures. I will like to thank them for teaching me as much as I taught them. I would also want to thank my colleagues from other faculties of this university.

Those who have not enjoyed the rewards of conviviality in their academic career may fall into the trap of occluding its benefits when they acknowledge the variables that shape success in this career. The affable atmosphere my family, particularly my darling wife and jewel, Mrs. Ibifuro Bala-Johnnie and my children and other loved ones created for me deserves more than glorious mention.

And most importantly, I wish to thank my affable Vice Chancellor, Professor Blessing Chimezie Didia who made it possible for this lecture to take place today. May the good Lord continue to direct his path correctly. I also wish to acknowledge the enormous assistance I received from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Boma Oruwari. May I also thank the new Registrar of this university, Mrs. Victoria Jamabo, who incidentally was my classmate. I would also want to extend my gratitude to the immediate out gone Registrar, Mrs. Daba Odimabo, who

design, data collection, data analysis and presentation ”but that the science of contemporary social science is the “science of deconstruction at its best” where science is deconstructed as a “rigorous reimagining, a capricious science that cannot be defined in advance – such science” St. Pierre insists, “is science of *differ'ance*’ – not repetition” (St. Pierre, 2013).

If the foregoing articulations are adjudged as replete with social constructionist view of science, such judgment could find justification from many quarters. Bhattacharjee, (2012) remains instructive with regard to the contentions that had raged right from the time of Greek philosophers – Plato, Aristotle, Socrates – whose focus on rationalism spiraled into meditations in metaphysics, theology, ontology and universal science. The inconclusive attempt to establish an unquestionable method of generating knowledge in the social sciences by the Greek philosophers enlisted the interest of Francis Bacon and John Locke, whose sixteenth-century contribution on how to gain scientific knowledge resulted in the concept of empiricism. When Immanuel Kant, an 18th century German philosopher disagreed with empiricism's belief that knowledge-generation is an empirical activity rather than a reasoning one, Kant came up with a book, “*Critique of Pure Reason*” in which he argued that “experience is purely subjective and processing them using pure reason without first delving into the subjective nature of experience will lead to theoretical illusions” Bhattacharjee, (2012). Immanuel Kant's postulations would later crystalized into *German Idealism* which triggered the intellectual

movements that spawned many interpretive techniques of the qualitative research methods. When interpretivists reject positivists' thinking, they premise their rejection on what they see as many flaws of their opponents. Apart from Bruner's insistence that positivistic “measurement falsifies whatever it is measuring” (Hoffmeyer, 1996), it gladdens other anti-positivists when they realize that arch-proponents of positivism, such as the “American sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld who pioneered large-scale survey research and statistical techniques for analyzing survey data, acknowledged potential problem of observer-bias and structural limitations in positivist inquiry” (Bhattacharjee, (2012).

Method concerns in the social sciences have heightened to warrant the setting up in 1996, of the *Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (Wallerstein, et. al. 1996; OECD *Workshop on Re-inventing the Social Sciences* (2001). The Gulbenkian Commission which came out with a report that has been translated into 24 world major languages was chaired by the world-acclaimed U.S. intellectual, Professor Immanuel Wellerstein. Other members were Calestous Juma (Kenya), Evelyn Fox Keller (U.S.A), Jurgen Kocka (Germany), Dominique Lecourt (France), V.Y. Mudimbe (Zaire), Kinhide Mushakoji (Japan), Ilya Prigogine (Belgium), Peter J. Taylor (U.K.) and Michel-Ralp Trouillot (Haiti) with Richard Lee as the Secretary. Six of those members were social scientists and two each from natural sciences and humanities. Their concern was about the world-wide state of the social sciences, the

Acknowledgments

God Almighty has never been niggardly in measuring out His Grace upon me. The abundance of this grace on me deserves the most adorable commendation. This inimitable favour from the One who dwells in luminescence has garnished my career with victorious condiments. May I proclaim that the Almighty God embellished the roadway of this rewarding career with avuncular facilitators whose vibrations became my ballast. To be modest, no acknowledgement crafted in human language can adequately capture the essence of the contributions these facilitators made in their resolve to mold me.

Among the most cherished of the facilitators are my savants (highly revered university professors) at the London School of Economics and Political Science – University of London, Professor Ben Roberts for instance, was unflappable but not dismissive. Professor David Marsden (my supervisor) was critical but inspiring. The attention of Professor Keith Bradley was parsimonious but very heuristic. So were those of Professors Keith Thurley (of blessed memory), Sander Meredeem, Stephen Wood, Joe Kelly and the indomitable Professor Ray Richardson. Their jabs and pep-talks inspired courage at harassing moments. They were a real source of inspiration in enkindling the fire of academic and intellectual values which made my work lighter.

It is invidious to single out individuals for particular mention but I must acknowledge the support I received from Professor Augustine Ahiauzu, Professor Bedford Fubara, Professor Donald Hamilton, my current Dean of Faculty. Professor Aldophus

Frequency distribution might best be obtained by enumerators and samples, but incidents and histories are illuminatingly studied by direct observation and institutionalized norms and statutes by interviewing informants.

With these inspiring, illuminatingly powerful and philosophical words from Zelditch, I draw the curtain on the philosophy of conducting research in the management sciences. Thank you for your patience in listening to my extended lecture.

relations among the disciplines of the social sciences and the relations of the social sciences with both the humanities and the natural sciences. One of the major findings of the Commission was how “misguided nomothetic methodology still dominates the practice of the social sciences” (Burawoy, 2007).

Consequent upon the instructive findings and recommendations of the Gulbenkian Commission, the OECD mounted in 2001, a workshop for re-inventing the social sciences. The workshop came up with a seminal report. Because of its heuristic relevance to social science research practices, only two excerpts from the voluminous proceedings of the workshop is hereunder quoted starting with parts of the submissions made by Luk Van Langenhove of United Nations University Maastricht who observes as follows:

...with the emergence of the physical sciences in the eighteenth century, scientists have tried to explain the world by setting up experiments and by developing theories. As such, the perceived material world becomes to a large extent understandable in terms of causal interactions between observable material entities. The key elements in this process of understanding (and predicting) material processes were the Euclidean conception of space, the Newtonian view of movements and the human model causality...when the social sciences emerged as separate academic

disciplines, they implicitly adopted this ontological grid by adhering to Newtonian experimental methodology. This implied an epistemology of psychological and social in three realms: an observable Realm 1 (mainly behavior); a Realm 2 that could be observed with the help of psychological instruments such as tests (for example, an attitude); and an unobservable Realm 3 that includes concepts such as mind and self. But today one can argue that there is no logical need to apply Newtonian and Euclidean grids as models for a social world grid. *Moreover, it can even be argued that on the whole, the referential grid of the classical natural sciences is simply inadequate for the social sciences from an epistemological point of view.*

Further to the above, Kazancigil (2001), editor of 1999 UNESCO/Elsevier *World Social Science Report* take the following stance on social science research:

The naturalistic conception of social science is not altogether wrong, but it is reductionist... The social sciences also stretch towards the humanities, cultural studies (mass communication) and philosophy. Empirical as well as hermeneutic paradigms constitute the field. The real value-added of the social sciences, in terms of understanding the world, as well as responding to the

‘new hermeneutics’ by introducing mechanisms where we can appreciate the interchange of the frames of reference of the observer and observed. The most potent vehicle for both the mediation and modulation of the interchange process is language (Johnnie, 1998a, 1998b).

From the views expressed above, it has become evident that both in critical theory and reflexive sociology, any attempt at positivism is to be rejected. While we do not completely ignore positivism, particularly in the physical sciences, what we stand to question and reject is ‘easy’ positivism in social research. There is therefore, no one ‘best’ method or approach in conducting research in the management sciences. The best approach almost always is a function of the background of the researcher, the researcher’s ideological persuasion, the contextual factors militating in favour or against the researcher and the nature of the phenomena under investigation. The adoption of a combination of the different research approaches is likely to lead scholars in the management sciences closer to the ‘truth’. We would refer to this approach as methodological marriages in social research, (Johnnie, 2017, in Press). But this does not mean that researchers in the management sciences should always adopt a combination of the two approaches simultaneously. Some studies may require a combination of both approaches while others may require the adoption of a single research approach. Zelditch (1962) had demonstrated that there were several routes to obtain different types of information. Zelditch, therefore, went on to argue that:

epistemology, and model of human nature and methodology. Because social constructionists and positivists see the social world from two contrasting viewpoints, it has always been difficult to harmonize these views. While social constructionists favour pluralistic and relativistic approach, positivists insist on monistic approach and unity of truth.

I think that the explanation of social phenomena via any explicit conceptual rubric, conflates rather than clarifies issues. In my view, the adoption of a middle-of-the-road stance is likely to lead us to less fatal philosophical polemics in social enquiry (Johnnie, 1997). This leads me to accept Weber's view of the adoption of interpretive sociology, which enables the acting individual to create subjective meaning to social action. The use of interpretive sociology in social analysis allows the acting individual to arrive at a causal explanation between cause and effect. If we understand the relationship between cause and effect, then we shall be able to interpret human actions more appropriately using the canons of sociological paradigms (Johnnie, 2008).

In an attempt to narrow the divide between social constructionists and positivists perspectives in their understanding of the social world, it is important to adopt Dilthey's traditional hermeneutics, and Gadamer and Giddens' 'new hermeneutics'. The first level of Dilthey's hermeneutics assists us to externalize the internal processes of our minds through the creation of cultural artefacts. We go beyond Dilthey's early hermeneutics and adopt Gadamer and Giddens'

demands from policy-makers lies precisely in their capacity to be at once critical/ reflexive... Therefore, *the social sciences must be assessed in their own right and not in comparison to natural sciences*: they are at once contextual and universal. They cannot be expected to produce social engineering, offering ready-made formulas and solutions for application in all settings and circumstances. Their observations and findings *cannot be replicated*, given the enormous quantity of variables and their combinations which are more complex than in natural phenomenon. *Many of them not being quantifiable...* The natural sciences which so powerfully influenced the social sciences both conceptually and organizationally have been undergoing an epistemological shift away from Newtonian paradigm as discussed in the Gulbenkian Report: **the positivistic epistemology on which they grew is being replaced by one based on complexity and such factors as non-replicability. These developments bring to question, the mechanistic theories and nomothetic methods which the social sciences generated in their urge to imitate the older and better established branch of science.**

(emphasis added)

The foregoing does not anyway; mean that the anti-positivists do not have their fair share of criticism. Positivists condemn the anti-positivists for only trying “to understand society but not critiquing and changing society for the better” (Bhattacharjee, (2012). Bhattacharjee locates the grain of anti-positivist criticism by positivist thinkers in *Das Capital* written by German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in which the duo critiqued capitalistic societies as being socially inequitable and inefficient, compelling them to recommend resolving this inequity through class conflict and proletarian revolutions. Bhattacharjee points out that the failure of Marxism to accomplish the social equality that it aspired to when it inspired social revolutions in countries such as Germany, Italy, Russia, and China are blots that furnish ammunition for positivists when they take swipes at the supposed brilliance of the anti-positivists stance.

Given that the field of management is a relatively new discipline, it however, even in pre-modern times, did not fail to embrace one form of technique or the other as it confronts the challenge of solving organizational problems. But as modern organizations become more and more complex in scope, modern managers now face newer challenges at work. The organization of work in modern times seems to have become a kind of jigsaw puzzle (Johnnie, 1991b, 1991c). This situation has arisen as a result of the rapid growth and development of modern industrial activities in the last century. The growth in industrial activities has also affected the activities of modern

that 'Weber's view has been challenged from both Marxist and non-Marxist perspectives by those who argue that a value-free stance is both logically and morally wrong'. Keat and Urry (1975) Gouldner (1973) also argued that a value-free stance has no place in social enquiry. This view was also advanced earlier by Hanson (1958) when he discussed the critical nature of the cognitive ability of human beings. Hanson went further to say that, “people, not their eyes, see. Cameras and eyeballs are blind”.

This means that social theorists should, as a matter of culture and tradition, highlight their value position in social research. Myrdal (1961) and Watson (1977) have also highlighted the importance and place of value-relevance in sociological orthodoxy. Myrdal went as far as arguing that theoretical issues, which we discuss, are denoted in concepts which are “spaces into which reality is fitted by analysis”. However, Hyman and Borough (1975) warned that in an attempt to adopt value-position in our analyses of social phenomena, we must avoid the danger of reification in which “the irrational consequences of a specific form of social organization are regarded as natural and inevitable”.

Social constructionists' and positivists' explanations of the social world rests on their conception of the nature of the social world and the place of value-freedom in social analysis. Social constructionists and positivists have had long tradition of disagreements on issues which loom largely on ontology,

researcher is a value-laden instrument used for answering the research question” (Stewart, Gapp & Harwood, 2017). The anti-triangulation argument sees triangulation as a positivistic geometric metaphor which limits how the social world could be seen to only three dimension/perspectives. The rejection of the three dimension perspective has given rise to the metaphor of the crystal (crystallization). The metaphor of crystallization rejects the three dimension view by informing that there is no single or correct description or perspective of how one sees the crystal. Crystallization accepts the multidimensionality of qualitative research to reflect external view and refract internal view whilst conceding the limitations of these same views” (Stewart, Gapp & Harwood, 2017, 5). The concession of limitations to what crystallization brings back into focus, echoes Weber (1949) and Ahiauzu's (1982) postulations on value-freedom in the social sciences.

OBSERVING AND INTERPRETING THE SOCIAL WORLD: THE PLACE OF VALUE-FREE ENQUIRY

With regard to the moot-point of the ideal of value-freedom in both critical sociology and the social sciences generally, Weber (1949) had articulated a classic case for the ideal of value-freedom in social sciences. Weber argued that in all social enquiry, what is necessary is the selection of appropriate topics for investigation and that, if this was done, the question of 'value-relevance or value-judgment' becomes irrelevant in all social enquiry. Ahiauzu (1982) has argued, on the other hand,

governments and this seems to have ostensibly created a reciprocal interaction between the organized business activities of the entrepreneur and the development of policy instruments by government to control business activities. The intensive nature of the interrelationship between the activities of industry and the public sector has generated a lot of debate as to how best to manage the scarce and limited resources of the modern state. The situation is becoming more complicated and, therefore, calls our attention to the introduction of more appropriate techniques in the organization of work and work-related activities at the workplace (Johnnie, 1992a; 1995a). Some scholars (Shott, 1979; Hochschild, 1979; Denzin, 1970; Becker, 1953) have argued that problems in the management sciences could be solved through the use of analysis of qualitative data in social research. Other scholars (Dantzig, 1967; Goodeve, 1948; Ackoff and Sasieni, 1968, Kemper 1978a, 1978b) have argued that it is unlikely that merely analyzing qualitative data in social enquiry could solve problems in the management sciences. They argue that organizational problems could only be solved through the application of scientific tools in the analysis of data. The first group sees research in the management sciences as involving the investigation and interpretation of the social world using qualitative techniques in the data analysis. The second group sees all social actions or the social world as an objective reality which therefore, could be investigated and interpreted using the canons of scientific principles and rigours applicable in the natural sciences. This debate has had a long-

standing tradition which appears to have defied any form of meaningful settlement. But management scientists should, as a matter of necessity, adopt a position if their studies are to be given a place of prominence in contemporary research agenda (Johnnie, 1991a).

In view of the issues I have raised, what I have set out to do in this lecture is threefold. First, I shall discuss assumptions relating to ontology, epistemology, models of human nature and methodologies employed in analyzing and interpreting the social world from the point of view of the subjectivists' frame of reference. Second, I shall also discuss assumptions relating to ontology, epistemology, and models of human nature and methodologies employed by positivists in the analysis and interpretation of data in the management and/or social sciences. The third and, perhaps, final issue addressed here is an attempt to identify areas of pragmatic affinity between the two polarities - relativism and absolutism. This will be my contribution to the debate between relativist and absolutist scholars in their search for answers in interpreting the social world.

The integration of research techniques within a single project opens up enormous opportunities for mutual advantage in each of the three major phases - design, data collection and analysis. These mutual benefits are not merely quantitative...but qualitative as well - one could almost say that a new style of research is born of the marriage of survey and field work methodology.

The argument presented above by Sieber is also supported by Warwick (1983) where the importance of 'methodological marriages' was stressed. Warwick has insisted that it is important to adopt different approaches or styles, as the weaknesses of one approach may be counterbalanced by the other. Though the view that qualitative and quantitative methods are not simply different ways of doing the same thing; but are profoundly different in their "strengths and logics in a way that sets them apart with regard to addressing different questions and purposes" is a voice showing that method-triangulation might not bring the anodyne needed to calm methodological tension in the social sciences (Maxwell, 1996). More worrisome is the belief that triangulation increases rather than "reduces the bias inherent in particular data collection effort" (Philips, 1973). This anti-triangulation concern finds a premise on the incongruent epistemological positions espoused in quantitative as opposed to the qualitative research method. For "unlike quantitative research where the emphasis is on external measurement that is value free, the qualitative

In an attempt to blur the contours of demarcation between the two research approaches adopted by anti-positivists and positivists, Bulmer (1984) has argued that any attempt to polarize the two dominant approaches results in 'reifying the distinction between them and implying that each may be a self-contained and alternative method of social enquiry'. Bulmer says this is not the true situation but the opposite of the truth and he goes further to argue that different styles of research complement each other; and that a combination of different approaches can be fruitfully exploited to the advantage of management or social scientists. The view expressed above had earlier been advanced by Anderson (1972) and also by Johnnie and Ahiamadu (1996d), when they argued that there is a need to combine both qualitative and quantitative data in the analysis and interpretation of social phenomena. Using the same argument in sociological analysis, Coser (1984) argue that sociology as a discipline is not sufficiently advanced 'to rely on precisely measurable variables'. He believes that qualitative data collected within a small universe could theoretically provide a lead which, at a later stage in the development of the discipline, could be subjected to the rigours of statistical analysis.

In another stimulating discourse, Sieber (1973) highlighted the danger inherent in treating different research approaches as alternatives and, therefore, advocated that it is likely to be more fruitful to combine different approaches within a single study. Sieber went on to argue that:

RESEARCH APPROACHES IN THE MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISTS OR SUBJECTIVISTS AND POSITIVISTS OR OBJECTIVISTS ASSUMPTIONS

Research approaches in the management sciences could be typologized into two broad conceptual categories - the positivist or objectivist and the subjectivist or relativist approaches. The positivist or realist approaches in the management sciences assume or adopt scientific methodology in their data collection, analysis and interpretation. The positivist uses nomothetic methodology found in the natural sciences in the study of the social world. The subjectivist or relativist, on the other hand, assumes or adopts ideographic methodology in their data collection, analysis and interpretation. I shall explain the concepts of nomothetic and ideographic methodologies later in this lecture (Johnnie and Nwasike, 2001b).

Management scientists have, in the main, adopted these two approaches in social enquiry. But there seems to be areas of conflict in the adoption of these two broad categories as a result of the unit of analysis in all management sciences (Johnnie, 1993a). The view has been advanced that, because the management sciences are concerned with the investigation and interpretation of social phenomena, it is wrong to adopt positivist methodology or scientific investigations that are popular in the natural sciences. But positivist scholars, on the

other hand, have argued that irrespective of the environment and social context in which we find ourselves, the appropriate methodology to adopt in an attempt to establish any form of objective reality is through the use of methods that are adopted in the natural sciences.

Such has been the nature of the long-drawn argument between subjectivist and objectivist scholars in their analysis and understanding of the social world. These arguments premise the belief that 'all theories of organization are based upon a philosophy of science and theory of society'. It is therefore important to discuss the philosophical assumptions upon which the various approaches are predicated. Burrell and Morgan (1979) have argued that the convenience exists to conceptualize the management sciences based on four sets of assumptions. These assumptions, according to them, are related to ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology.

It is the view of Burrell and Morgan (1979) that management scientists should see their subjects through 'explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it may be investigated'. The first set of assumptions is of an ontological nature. These are assumptions which concern the very purpose of the phenomena to be investigated. Management scientists are faced with a fundamental ontological question which has to do with questions relating to the 'reality' to be investigated. Ontological assumptions create the necessary pathway for the researcher to understand the reasoning behind the very essence of studying any phenomenon. Ontological

The wide polarity created by anti-positivists and positivists in their attempt to understand the social world has caused a great deal of concern among scholars. Dilthey (1976) has therefore made some efforts through the use of hermeneutics to establish some form of conceptual mediation and modulation between the two competing polarities in social research. It is Dilthey's thinking that over time, human beings 'externalize the internal processes of their minds through the creation of cultural artefacts which attain an objective character.' Such cultural artefacts could be exemplified and typified in the form of 'institutions, works of arts, literature, languages, religions and other forms of characterizations of human thought. Other scholars (such as Weber, 1949; Hughes, 1958; Runciman, 1972) have also shown great concern as to how best to reduce the gap between the rival claims of anti-positivists and positivists in their understanding of social reality. Johnnie (1993a), in a rather philosophical discourse, has argued that the boundary between social constructionists (anti-positivists) and positivists in their analysis and interpretation of the social world cannot be stretched beyond a breakable limit. This is because the arguments of both groups are all poised on the same continuum. The demarcating point is merely the method adopted by each group to get closer to the 'truth'. Since what is regarded as 'true' or 'false' in the management sciences is still a matter of the theoretical and ideological persuasion of each researcher, it is difficult to conclude that one approach is superior to the other (Johnnie, 1990b, 1997).

relevant to all areas of enquiry: a universal mode of philosophy' and 'not a methodological foundation for the culture sciences'.

EPILOGUE

Both anti-positivists and positivists have a common goal of analyzing and interpreting social phenomena. They both have different ways of attempting to achieve the same goal - the issue is not that of goal-setting but how to get to the goal. The process of attempting to get to the goal is where the argument begins to tilt towards the two polarities (Johnnie, 1993a, 1996b).

If we examine the rival claims made by anti-positivists and positivists in their analysis and interpretation of social phenomena based on different ontologies, epistemologies, models of human nature, and methodologies, the view has been powerfully articulated that they are competing approaches in social research. While anti-positivists have argued that their approach to the analysis and interpretation of the social world is the only viable option open to the researcher, positivists have strongly condemned this claim, arguing that it is 'fatally wrong' to compare two approaches that are entirely different. I have argued elsewhere that oranges and grapes are not the same, therefore, cannot be compared. We must always learn to compare a like with a like and not unlike with a like (Johnnie, 2016).

assumptions are made to stimulate individuals to ask questions relating to the phenomena they are investigating - to establish the fact, whether or not the phenomena to be investigated are real, and of an objective nature. Ontological assumptions are made by researchers to identify the nature of the phenomena to be investigated - whether the phenomena being investigated are concrete, hard, and have objective features and characteristics. Some scholars refer to the ontological assumptions at issue here as stating researcher reflexivity, where reflexivity is encapsulated as researcher's ability to be able to self-consciously refer to him or herself in relation to key epistemological assumptions on how knowledge is produced (Roulston, 2010).

Burrell and Morgan (1979) went further to argue that, succeeding the assumptions relating to ontology are other associated assumptions which are essentially of an epistemological nature. Epistemological assumptions which we make as management scientists centre on the theory of knowledge. These are assumptions which have to do with how knowledge develops and is communicated to other people in intelligible form (Johnnie, 1993b). The question of epistemological assumptions does not only address issues relating to the communication of ideas or knowledge to people but also anchors on how to establish a line of divide between what is regarded as 'true' from what is regarded as 'false.' The ability to develop a level of consciousness to discriminate between what is generally regarded as true or false is what

shapes our frame of reference. On a rather philosophical note, Burrell and Morgan (1979) have, in fact, argued that the dichotomy of 'true' and 'false' itself presupposes a certain epistemological stance. All epistemological assumptions therefore are based on the 'view of the nature of knowledge itself, whether knowledge could be identified and its nature communicated as being hard, real or tangible, or whether knowledge is something of softer, subjective, spiritual or even transcendental kind', which is based on our experience of the past. In other words, it is a question of whether knowledge, as a phenomenon, could be acquired through teaching in ways that enables the learner to experience, personally.

Closely following in the heels of the ontological and epistemological assumptions, but 'conceptually separate,' is a third set of assumptions relating to 'human nature'. Assumptions relating to human nature try to identify the relationship or tissue of connection between human beings and the environment in which they operate and transact. Johnnie (1991a) has previously argued that there cannot be any meaningful discussion in the management sciences if the nature of human beings that form the object and subject of discussion is excluded. It is therefore possible to identify perspectives in the literature which advocate the view that human beings respond in a mechanistic way to their environments which, in turn, condition and shape their behaviours. If, however, human beings do not respond to their environments in a deterministic

observer must enter into a dialogue with the subject of study'. Giddens (1976 p.56) supported Gadamer's contention and argued that for us to correctly understand and interpret historical material, the material must not be different from other historical accounts which are part of our culture, or not too remote from our historical past, otherwise we may end up enriching our knowledge through the historical past of others, which may not portray the correct situation. Giddens therefore, argued that instead of 'placing oneself "inside" the subjective experience of a text author but in understanding literary art through grasping', we should see ourselves as 'the 'form of life' which gives meaning'. The tool which serves in the process both as mediator and modulator is language.

From the foregoing, it seems Giddens' new hermeneutics', which takes its original source from Dilthey's early hermeneutics', has introduced a new dimension which borders essentially both on epistemology and methodology. While Dilthey focuses his attention on how man re-lives and reconstructs the past through various cultural artefacts exemplified in the form of objective reality, Giddens' 'new hermeneutics' does not believe that we can reconstruct the past correctly by simply re-creating and re-living through an alien mode of existence. Giddens' was 'more concerned with appreciating the interchange of the frames of reference of the observer and the observed'. The mechanism for appreciating the interchange process is facilitated by language. Hermeneutics, seen through the insight of Gadamer and Giddens, 'becomes

It therefore follows, that an understanding and interpretation of the social world really requires that a body of general laws should apply both to the whole and parts of the whole.

This part-whole relationship becomes a characteristic of the social world, and, therefore, poses a very serious epistemological problem. Dilthey thus, saw the need for a systematic approach in resolving this problem. However, Rickman (1976) has argued that:

'there are no absolute starting points, no self-evident, self-contained certainties on which we can build because we always find ourselves in the middle of complex situations which we try to disentangle by making, then revising provisional assumptions'.

The above statement clearly shows that the 'methodological rules of hermeneutics' do not move in one identifiable direction but follows an interactive and circular pattern 'towards an increased understanding of the objectification of mind'.

In recent times, Dilthey's hermeneutic tradition appears to have given way to newer insights developed by Gadamer (1965). Gadamer argues that Dilthey's hermeneutic tradition has methodological flaws because he does not think that we can relate 'to a historic tradition as if it existed as an object apart from us, since there is an interplay between the movement of tradition and the interpreter'. Gadamer concluded by saying that, 'in order to understand social or cultural phenomena, the

way, then it is assumed that they create, control, manage and direct activities in their environments.

The three sets of assumptions discussed above have a symbiotic relationship and implication of a methodological nature. Each of these assumptions has an overwhelming influence on the way we try to explain the social world. The kind of ontologies, epistemologies and nature of human beings determine the type of methodology one adopts in social research. There are methodologies used in the social sciences which conceptualize the social world, in the same way as the natural world, as being objective, hard 'real and external to the individual'. But there are others who see the social world in a rather subjective form, therefore, softer and even of transcendental and spiritual in nature. Burrell and Morgan (1979) have argued that if management scientists subject themselves to methodologies which treat the social world as a tangible entity, constituting any form of objective reality, then the issues involved would border on the 'analysis of relationship and regulations between the various elements which it comprises'. The focus, therefore is for those with such a view, must be on how to identify and define the elements and how to design ways of expressing these relationships. The perspective that adopts a methodological stance which sees the social world as objective reality, attempts to establish principles and universal laws to explain and 'govern the reality which is being observed'.

But if a management scientist subscribes to the view that society or the social world could be explained or created through the subjective experience of individuals, it means that our search for understanding the social world around us is based on the subjective experience of the individual who is attempting to study and explain it. The central issues in this perspective border essentially on how individuals create, modify or interpret social phenomena via their understanding of the social world around them. The interpretation and explanation of the social world is seen to be a reflection of the unique features and finite provinces of meanings the individual gives to the phenomena under investigation. This approach, in methodological parlance, highlights the fact that, the social world is, on the whole, relativistic in nature; therefore, could be seen as 'anti-scientific' as opposed to the 'ground rules' which are generally used in the natural sciences. Burrell and Morgan made an attempt to use a schema to illustrate the dimensions on which to explain the subjective-objective debate in social enquiry. Burrell and Morgan's (1979) schema is modified and replicated below for easy intellectual consumption.

expression of human thought. Dilthey's hermeneutics, ontologically appears to come fairly close to the objectification process associated with solipsism. He asserts that through hermeneutics it is possible 'the subject of study is needed to relive in the subjective life of the observer'. He goes further to say that 'social phenomena of all kinds should be analyzed in detail and interpreted as texts, to reveal their essential meaning and significance'. While the methodology of the social constructionist in the investigation of the social world is basically ideographic, and that of positivism is nomothetic. These two methodological approaches stand at two extremes of a continuum, but the method of hermeneutics attempts at unifying or obliterating them. Hermeneutics involves a situation whereby 'human scientists' adopt 'the style of literary analysis rather than that of natural scientists'. Instead of the traditional search for general scientific laws, hermeneutics explores the phenomenon or phenomena through textual analysis of meaning. This involves defining clearly the basic rules of hermeneutics 'so that the insights of interpreters of rare genius could be utilized by others'. Through this process, it has been argued, 'objective knowledge' about human beings could be obtained.

Dilthey's pioneering works in hermeneutics were made more clearly and illustrated through the introduction of the concept of 'hermeneutic circle'. Dilthey saw the difficulty in isolating the total whole from its parts. He believes that an understanding of the whole cannot be independent from its parts, and vice versa.

From the analysis presented above, Weber seems to have made very serious attempts to reconcile the potentially divergent perspectives of relativism and absolutism. Weber, while emphasizing 'the importance of subjective meaning in explanations of social affairs, at the same time, seeks to contain and limit the role of these objective factors'. He attempts to classify human action in different behaviour types such as 'traditional' as a necessary honey-comb to assist him move towards conceptual convergence; but this does not completely remove the problems associated with the use of methodologies in two conceptually separate areas that have different ontologies, epistemologies, models of human nature and methodologies (Johnnie, 1992b, 1993a).

In an attempt to draw closer, philosophically and ideologically, the social constructionists and positivists in their understanding of the social world, Dilthey developed hermeneutics. In the words of Burrell and Morgan:

'Hermeneutics is concerned with interpreting and understanding the products of the human mind which characterize the social and cultural world'
(p.236).

Dilthey believes that human beings, through time, 'externalize the internal processes of their minds through the creation of cultural artefacts which attain an objective character'. Examples of such cultural artefacts are 'institutions, works of art, literature, languages, religions' and other forms of symbolic

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST OR SUBJECTIVIST AND POSITIVIST OR OBJECTIVIST DIMENSION IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

**The Social Constructionist
or Subjectivist approach to
Social Research**

**The Positivist or Objectivist
approach to Social
Research**

Nominalism.....	Ontology.....	Realism
Anti-Positivism.....	Epistemology.....	Positivism
Voluntarism.....	Human Nature.....	Determinism
Ideographic.....	Methodology.....	Nomothetic

*Adapted and modified from Burrell & Morgan's analytical
framework, 1979.*

THE ONTOLOGICAL DEBATE BETWEEN NOMINALISM AND REALISM

The ontological debate between nominalist and realist conceptions of the social world has been a long-drawn battle. The nominalist argument on what represents the social world anchors on the fact that what is regarded as social world external to the individual is merely the imagination of that individual - nothing but names, concepts, ideas, and labels used by individuals to describe situations. The nominalist does not accept the view that there exists any 'real' structure in the social

world. The 'names used by individuals are referred to as artificial creations whose value is merely to make sense in our analysis of situations and negotiating the social world of which we are an integral part. The realist or positivist on the other hand, argues that the social world in which we exist is something of an objective type. The social world of the realist is assumed to be hard, tangible and is made of immutable structures'. The realist has postulated that even if we do see, feel or touch these structures they still exist as 'empirical entities'. The realist developed the ontological argument that as we may not even be aware of the existence of some of these structures we cannot even give them names, labels or 'concepts to articulate them'. The realist has a strong belief that the social world exists quite differently and 'independently of the individual's appreciation of it'. The individual is born into the social world and learns to live within it and cannot create the social world or any part thereof. The social world maintains an objective form and therefore, determines the behaviour of the individual (Johnnie, 2001a). Ontologically, it is argued that the existence of the social world is beyond the realm of imagination of the individual. The realist believes very fervently that the social world has an existence which is tangible with immutable structures, therefore, is as hard as the natural world.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) have argued that the above definition, with its emphasis on interpretive sociology, is an attempt by Weber at introducing 'fusion of idealist and positivist perspectives'. Weber supports this view because it provides 'causal explanations of social phenomena but insists that such explanations must be reduced to the level of the individual'. This led Schutz to argue that:

'Weber reduces all kinds of social relationships and structures, all cultural objectification, all realms of mind, to the most elementary forms of individual behaviour' (Schutz, 1967).

The above statement clearly shows that Weber's interpretive sociology is concerned with the provision of causal explanations of social phenomena. However, in doing this, he avoids the problems of reification. Weber's focus, according to Burrell and Morgan, builds 'an objective science of sociology upon the foundations of subjective meaning and individual action'. But this is problematic. Weber has, therefore gone further to say that the development of objectivity in the social sciences is only 'possible through the use of ideal types, which allows for the ordering of statement of reality'. Ideal types are simply constructs which, for analytical purposes, were created by Weber to introduce some form of unity while analyzing social phenomenon. Through the use of ideal types, Weber was able to "incorporate the 'spirit' which characterizes individual phenomena into a wider generalized whole".

he regarded as characterizing positivist explanations of society, and also greatly concerned with the subjective and 'unscientific' nature of idealist thoughts'. Weber's dissatisfaction with the two polar positions of positivism and anti-positivism led him to adopt a unifying stance in his methodological writings, in which he developed the argument that all matters relating to social affairs can only be explained adequately 'on the level of meaning', and that the essential function of social science is to be 'interpretive', that is, to understand the subjective meaning of social action.

What Weber seems to imply in the above statement is that any attempt at bridge-building between social constructionism and positivism must necessarily start the process of abstraction from the understanding of the subjective meaning of social action. The theoretical or disciplinary plank on which this can be done is through interpretive sociology. Interpretive sociology enables the acting individual to create subjective meaning to social action in order to 'arrive at a causal explanation of its causes and effects. Weber (1947) defines sociology as:

'a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its causes and effects... Action in so far as, by virtue of the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behaviour of others, and is thereby oriented in causes'.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEBATE BETWEEN ANTI-POSITIVISM AND POSITIVISM IN SOCIAL ENQUIRY

The epistemology of anti-positivism argues that it is practically impossible to establish regularities and search for general laws which could be used in defining, explaining and interpreting the social world. It is the view of the anti-positivist that the social world is highly relativistic, therefore, 'can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be studied'. Anti-positivism completely rejects the notion of the 'observer' which dominates the epistemology of the positivist. Anti-positivists do not believe in the argument that those who observe situations and other social activities are better disposed towards understanding and explaining these activities. They argue that it is only possible to 'understand' social action or human activities if we put ourselves in the place of those individuals whose activities we are attempting to understand while they are in action. They believe that we can only understand human activities from the 'inside' rather than the 'outside'. Anti-positivists do not believe that science can generate any form of objective knowledge. The argument that comprehending social action is possible only when we put ourselves in the place of those individuals whose activities we are trying to comprehend is encapsulated in a German concept of *verstehen*. Max Weber popularized the concept (Babbie, 2005; Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Encapsulated, the concept refers to an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their social situations and

activities (Jankowski and Wester, 1991). When operationalized, the core of what *Verstehen* promotes is akin to Herbert Blumer's reading of Mead's *Symbolic Interactionism*. Blumer's take on Symbolic Interactionism posits that “people act on the basis of the meaning they themselves ascribe to objects and situations” (Jankowski & Wester, 1991). Researchers are advised to respect such meaning when they opt for the qualitative method. *Verstehen*, as an attribute of the qualitative method, stresses respect for the “meanings that emanate from research participants” (Jankowski & Wester, 1991; Okeke and Ume, 2004). Supporting the concept of *verstehen* is (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013) who note that the primary goal of qualitative inquiry is “to generate rich, complex nuanced accounts of how people ascribe meaning to and interpret their lived experience with eye toward how these accounts might be used to affect social policy and change.” To establish research conclusion on meanings that emanate from the researched gives the qualitative method its stamp of quality. It does so because it enables the researcher “to know more about the phenomenon under study from the *emic* (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) aspects of the research participants and not through the researchers' pre-constructed instrument that have not been influenced by the nature of the research participants themselves” (Okeke & Ume, 2004).

Positivists, on the other hand, attempt to understand and interpret the social world by trying to establish regularities and general laws. Positivists themselves may differ in essentials and details in their search for regularities and establishment of

testing and the quantification of facts. Silverman (1985) seems to offer a very useful analytical insight in this matter. He has argued that:

“The behaviour of matter may be regarded as a necessary reaction to a stimulus matter which itself does not understand its own behaviour. It is literally meaningless until the scientist imposes his frame of reference upon it. There is no possibility of apprehending its subjective intentions, and the logic of its behaviour may be understood solely by observation of the behaviour itself. The actions of men, on the other hand, are meaningful to them”.

Attempts at establishing a conceptual bridge between social constructionists and positivists approaches to social enquiry became the preoccupation of early writers such as Dilthey (1976; Weber 1949). They were particularly concerned with bridging the conceptual gap between social constructionists who believe in German idealism, coupled with their great plasticity and positivists whose law-governed position is based on their much avowed 'indeterminacy principle'. From his writings, Weber was apparently standing between the gulf that divides social constructionists' position and that of the positivists. In fact, Hughes (1958) and Runciman (1972) referred to Weber as fighting a war from two fronts. This is because 'Weber was dissatisfied with the superficialities which

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST & POSITIVIST DEBATE IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: THE NEED FOR A CONVERGENCE THESIS

Any attempt at conceptual convergence between social constructionists and positivists approaches to social enquiry cannot be a straightforward academic and intellectual exercise. This difficulty seems to have stemmed essentially from the bipolar epistemological assumptions made by scholars of the two schools of thought. While social constructionists insist that their own approach to the study of the social world is the most viable option, positivists on the other hand, have strongly argued that it is fatally wrong to compare two approaches that are not the same. Be that as it may, the exploration of the social world via any of the two methodologies points to the fact that both social constructionists and positivists have the same goal of analyzing and interpreting the social world. However, one fact that comes out clearly from the various views and arguments developed by the two schools of thought is that both have the same goal but different methodologies of arriving at their goals (Johnnie, 1993a).

The ontological debate between the approaches adopted by social constructionists and positivists understanding of the social world has been amply discussed. While social constructionists adopt ideographic methods in their enquiry, positivists adopt nomothetic methods via the performance of laboratory experiments, formulation of a priori hypotheses for

general laws, but they are all in agreement as to how knowledge grows over time. They all see knowledge as a cumulative process. I have argued elsewhere, (Johnnie, 1988e, 1993b, 1996c), that knowledge is like mental bricklaying. Any time a new 'block' of knowledge is laid, the tendency is that the old knowledge becomes obsolete. It is therefore, important to tear down the old knowledge and allow the new stock of knowledge to assume its proper place. This is what I would want to refer to as the banking theory of knowledge (Johnnie, 1993b). Positivist scholars believe in experimenting in their environments as a natural step towards establishing objective reality in the social world.

THE DEBATE BETWEEN VOLUNTARISM AND DETERMINISM AS MODELS OF HUMAN NATURE

There have been rival claims between positivists and anti-positivists as to the correct model of human nature in social scientific theory. The debate has rested on two extremes of a continuum, each group holding very fast to its claims of the proper model of human nature in social analysis. On one extreme are positivists who hold determinist view, arguing that humans and their activities are determined by the situation in which they find themselves or the environment in which they exist and transact. On the opposite end of the continuum, we have those who maintain a voluntarist position, arguing that humans are completely autonomous and free-willed. For management or social sciences theories to be imbibed and

articulated by both determinists and voluntarists, in an attempt to understand human nature, they must adopt either of these two broad categories. But those who are unable to identify themselves with any one particular conceptual rubric should adopt a 'middle-of-the-road' position by synthesizing the two extremes of a bipolar system to understand the correct nature of human beings. I shall discuss a possible point of convergence between positivism and relativism in understanding human nature as I proceed in this lecture.

THE METHODOLOGICAL DEBATE BETWEEN IDEOGRAPHIC AND NOMOTHETIC THEORY IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

The ideographic methodology in social research is concerned with the argument that, to understand the social world requires the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation. This requires the investigator to have very close contact with the background and life-history of the subject of investigation. The ideographic research methodology focuses on the analysis of the subjective information to be generated by the researcher. The information to be generated could be obtained by 'getting inside' the situation to be investigated and taking active part in the daily flow of activities. The researcher could analyze insights or information emanating from such encounters with one's subjects. This could be done through the analysis of information found in dairies, biographies, resumes and journalistic records. Blumer (1969)

hypotheses. The major tool of analysis in the nomothetic approach to conducting research in management sciences is the use of quantitative techniques. The specific research instruments used in the nomothetic approach are surveys, questionnaires, personality tests and other standardized instruments.

The specific research instruments mentioned above form the basis of the nomothetic methodology in the management sciences. These instruments are essentially statistical in character. The techniques that are relevant in analyzing and interpreting social reality in the management sciences are the non-parametric statistics. Other aspects of the nomothetic approach that are relevant in conducting research in the management sciences are the use of operations research techniques. A fundamental feature of the use of scientific techniques in conducting research in the management sciences 'is its ideal of objectivity'- a kind of ideal which subjects scientific knowledge to objective and impartial tests. The nomothetic methodology in conducting research in the management sciences relies in explaining social phenomena via scientific experimentation. Scientism is the ideological preoccupation of the researcher who adopts the nomothetic methodology in conducting research in the management sciences. The analysis and interpretation of all social phenomena are based on the principles of science.

approach in investigating human activities in African organizations. Ethnographic research approach involves a situation where the researcher takes active part in activities involved in the phenomenon under investigation. While actively participating in the group, the researcher is also observing, grasping and comprehending those aspects of a people's culture which influence the behaviour of group members in organizations. Although this approach is relatively new in mainstream management science investigations, it has a fairly long historical tradition in cognitive anthropology and interactionist sociology. Since management science principles are essentially derived from both anthropological and sociological theories, it follows therefore, that what is new is the practice and what is not new is the theory (Johnnie, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c).

The second major strand of the debate is the use of nomothetic methodology in conducting research in the management sciences. The nomothetic approach to social enquiry lays a great deal of premium on the application of scientific techniques in the analysis and interpretation of data. The nomothetic approach to conducting research in the management sciences, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979), places great emphasis 'on the importance of basing research upon systematic protocol and technique'. The nomothetic approach adopts techniques and methods characteristic of the natural sciences. It subjects all data to the crucible and rigours of scientific examination, which has as its focus the process of formulation and testing of

has argued that the ideographic research methodology emphasizes the relevance and usefulness of allowing 'one's subjects unfold its nature and characteristics' while the investigation is going on.

The ideographic research methodology was highlighted earlier by Glasser and Strauss (1967) in their 'Grounded Theory' approach in social research. Brown (1973) also discussed the concept of 'Grounded Theory' elaborating in his review of literature in respect of approaches to conducting research in the management or social sciences. The 'Grounded Theory' approach highlights the fact that in all social scientific productions, it is necessary for the researcher to collect as much information as possible, in view of the fact that the knowledge being sought for is 'grounded' in the data the researcher is able to collect. The 'Grounded Theory' approach has little or no favour for a priori hypothesis formulation and testing. It is a research approach which assumes that, as the researcher analyzes the research data, the answers being looked for shall emerge as findings. The 'Grounded Theory' approach therefore ignores hypothesis formulation and testing but encourages the use of research questions (Johnnie, 1988a, 1988b).

Two important variants of the ideographic research methodology which have become acceptable and popular in the management sciences are the concepts of interactionism and ethnomethodology. Weber (1949) and Mead (1938) popularized interactionism as a research approach. Interactionism as a

management science research approach is concerned with the 'interpretation of meaning'. The researcher interacts with respondents who are likely to act or react to the researcher's questions and the researcher interprets the actions of the respondents by giving meaning to such actions (Johnnie, 1996c).

Another variant of the ideographic research approach, which is relevant in the management sciences, is ethnomethodology (Johnnie, 1993b). Ethnomethodology, which is reminiscent of Garfinkel's (1967) work, is concerned with interest in observing everyday practices of organizational or societal members. Based on these observations, ethnomethodologists make identifiable 'observable-reportable' behaviour patterns of organizational members, and, according to Silverman (1985), they 'are not concerned with what they are doing'. Ethnomethodologists, because of their interest in what people are doing, are able to observe and report social behaviour in organizations and at the wider level of society (Johnnie and Nwasike, 2001b). They differ somewhat in their method of enquiry from interactionist scholars, but share a common view that proper description is, in itself, an explanatory part of 'a naturalistic observational discipline that can rigorously, empirically and formally' deal with the details of social action(s) (Schegloff and Sacks, 1974:233). Other scholars, Cuff and Payne (1979), whose research approach lies within the rubric of interactionist-ethnomethodological perspective, have vividly established the tissue of connection between description

and explanation within ethnomethodology (Johnnie, 2001a). Popper (1959) has therefore, argued that:

Instead of trying to produce 'deductive causal explanations' or sets of law-like propositions, they aim to produce descriptions. The descriptions concern methods members use to accomplish the world for what it is. In the description and analysis of those methods, ethnomethodologists, like other social scientists, are attempting to generalize about social life. In their case, these generalizations are about the sort of 'apparatus' the 'sense assembly equipment' that human beings use to construct and sustain their everyday lives.

Another aspect of the ideographic research tradition which has important theoretical taste and value to the management scientists is the concept of ethnography found in cognitive anthropology. Ethnography, according to Silverman (1985) in sociological orthodoxy, is concerned with 'methods for describing interactional particulars' which the sociologist would also refer to as 'participant observation' in social research. Halfpenny (1979) found a great deal of value in ethnography which is widely used in cognitive anthropology by researchers, and argue that the approach involves 'grasping and comprehending the culturally appropriate concepts through which (actors)...conduct their social life. Because culture has an important role to play in the management sciences, Ahiauzu (1987) and Johnnie (1996b) have in the past, used ethnographic

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PREAMBLE

It is with deep sense of motivation and gladness that I stand in this privileged podium to deliver a once in a life time lecture. This inaugural lecture would have been delivered fifteen (15) years or so earlier, but I deliberately refused to do this because the University in the past lost all the traditions and trappings of a foremost tertiary institution. I was promoted professor twenty (20) years ago – in other words, more than two-thirds of my academic sojourn - I have occupied this exalted academic position of professor, probably at a fairly youthful age. The fact that this inaugural lecture is delivered late does not take away the academic aroma and flavor from it. This inaugural lecture is the 47th in the series. Spiritually, 47 is God's special number. And I am extremely lucky to deliver this lecture as the 47th person.

The values and traditions of a university were suppressed in the past and if not completely obliterated. But Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, you came from a sister university and brought back the venter of university culture, tradition and precepts. This was what encouraged me to embark on this fine intellectual part of necessity.

Knowing that inaugural lectures are not compulsory, I decided to ignore the powers that be, who lined-up university professors names as primary school children who waited and lined up to read their "Nursery Rhythms," in turns. I refused to be part of such "military type" of academic management style and

regimentation, because I know the right way to go. Some of those fellows who subjected the system to such calamitous bravados have not in fact gone through the crucible of academic and intellectual assessment at the professorial level. State Universities have problems, that was why such unpardonable aberrations were given legitimacy by the powers that be. But I believe that those of us who are in the academia are part of the problems. We should always be ready to support our Vice Chancellor anytime such untoward steps are introduced by anyone. The concept of the universality of a university must always be protected. The power to protect the university is in our hands and not in the hands of anyone else.

Some of us have overstayed in one system, therefore, do not know what is happening elsewhere. Intellectual and academic in-breeding seems to be one of major problems we have as academics. We as academics must learn to go round to other universities to do what I would refer to as comparative “academic, intellectual and administrative” exposure. This will, not only make us become more prolific in our academic productivity but in terms also of prosaic flourish in all other areas of work within the precinct of the University.

One other problem that is about to destroy the university system is ethnicity. I have always regarded the university or a university as an international academic play ground. My dynamism as an academic transcended parochialism and jingoism. I have always subscribed to the fact that all over the

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world great intellectuals do not confine their knowledge and inventions to their local government areas, States or Countries, as we do here. Great intellectuals see the universe as their arena. And as such, strive to elevate that which is decrepit and to glorify that which is superlative. It is on these principles that I have always lived. I have always opposed the rampant but repugnant aberration where even the educated individuals in this part of the country dragoon ethnic politics into academics.

Anybody who shares my views will be troubled by the recondite academic corruption desacralizing the campuses and the intelligentsia. Suffice to note that academic corruption is more serious and deleterious than financial corruption. Academic corruption is eroding the very foundation of our society. Research evidence shows a high degree of correlation between academic corruption and financial corruption. It appears that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) should have resident offices on all University campuses to check this evil trend that has destroyed the foundation of the centres of moral rectitude.

Note: You have to be patient with me because I am not going to use signs and symbols to drive home my point(s). The main engine of delivery here is language; therefore, I shall be prodigious in my use of literature of the discipline of the philosophy of management science.

DEFINING THE MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

As used here, Management Sciences have a very broad application. The management sciences, among others, include disciplines such as organizational behavior, industrial or organizational psychology, industrial sociology, economics, operations research, political science, statistics, cultural anthropology, accountancy, human resource management, organization theory and all other related disciplines. Depending on the persuasion and school of thought of each contributor, the various disciplinary areas which constitute management sciences could as well be described as behavioral or social sciences. Here, I am not interested in the identification of semantic differences between different scholars. The terms management, behavioral or social science, therefore, are used interchangeably in this lecture. (Johnnie, 2001a).

SYNONYMS

In this lecture, the following words are used as synonyms - social constructionist, relativist, subjectivist, anti-positivist, voluntarist, nominalist, pluralist and interpretivist while the following words are also used as synonyms – positivist, objectivist, absolutist, realist, determinist, and monist For purposes of clarity and easy intellectual consumption, these words are used interchangeably by the two schools of thought because they have the same meaning, conceptually and contextually.

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INTRODUCTION

Before 1824 when Western civilization's focus on “science of society” and “human happiness” inspired William Thomson to coin the concept of “social sciences,” interest in the best method to conduct research in the broad areas that constitute the field of social sciences had exercised the imagination of scholars (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2014). In modern analysis, the social sciences have been conceptualized as “science of people or collections of people and their individual or collective behaviors in groups, firms, societies, or economies” (Bhattacharjee, 2012). It is interesting though to note that this modern analysis has not eliminated concerns as to the best way to conduct inquiries in the field. This concern necessitates the need to draw on foundational postulations that flow in the history of scientific thought.

A FORAY INTO SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT

Given its prominence in phrases such as 'scientific method' and 'social sciences,' the concept of 'science' warrants a special attention. It is on record for instance that since the beginning of the 19th century when the “scientific method” phrase was coined, thinkers in the social sciences have squabbled over what the 'science' in the social sciences should be (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Woolgar (1996) has differentiated the “realist” the “canonical version” or the “idealized view” from the “relativist” view of science. The hallmark of the canonical view of science promotes it as “a unitary set of methods and

procedures, concerning which there is, by and large, a consensus” (Woolgar, 1996). The canonical view of science finds resonance where Denzin (2013) cites American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in order to disagree with a conceptualization of the scientific method as:

Any activity designed to test a hypothesis, permit conclusions to be drawn, and thereby develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge expressed in theories, principles and statements of relationships. Research is described in a formal protocol that sets forth an objective and a set of procedures designed to reach that objective. (AAUP, 2001, Denzin, 2013).

In rejecting this canonical view, Woolgar upholds the relativist view of science in a manner that is congruent with St. Pierre's (2013) treatise on the 'science' of modern social science. St. Pierre ridicules the received view of science as a prescriptive articulation in which the scientific research approach is defined as “systematic procedures and protocols, mechanistic in technique, statistically manipulated in pursuit of causal structures, replication, generalizability” and as a “tradition of prediction and accumulation where knowledge is thought of as the one produced by science” St. Pierre (2013). In refuting this mechanistic articulation, St. Pierre rather maintains that the science that beckons in modern social science is no longer the “outdated, ruptured, ruined, prescriptive and idealized Popperian perspective” that imposes structures like “*research*

incidentally also was my classmate. My name has therefore, gone into the Guinness Book of records as the only man who was classmate of two female Registrars.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of my Head Chief, Professor B. B. Kombo-Igbeta – Professor of Surgery. I extend my thanks also to Justice (Sir) Stanley and Dame (Dr) Mrs. Alagoa (Retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria)

Assistance given during the writing of this inaugural lecture goes to Mrs. Nelly Ikoawaji of Mineik Computers, Port Harcourt. She produced the early drafts of the manuscript and the final processed pages at her computer facility. She coped heroically with the atrocious writing of my hand writing drafts. She and her staff completed the cycle of the production process by word-processing the text in a very professional fashion; I remain indebted to her for a very long time to come.

I am very grateful to my friends and our visitors who came from outside this campus to give this gathering the fine colour and flavor it has. I wish to also thank our great students who abandoned their lectures to grace this lecture. I am very proud of them. Once again, I wish to say special thank you to my colleagues, both in my Faculty and other Faculties who came to grace this occasion. I wish to thank my Vice Chancellor for finding time to chair this occasion. I deliberately thanked and acknowledged my Vice Chancellor last because he is the Chief Host of this occasion, without him, there would have been no meeting here.

May I also wish all those who came from far and near, that the Almighty God who brought them here safely will also take them back safely to their respective places of abode. God bless you.

Joseph Toby, Professor Bariyima Kiabel and Dr. Fred Azubuike Amadi, Ag, Head of the Department of Mass Communication who once in a while, calls my attention to some unwitting orthographic missteps in some aspects of my inaugural lecture. I also wish to thank my other colleagues in the Faculty of Management Sciences for the support they have given me over the years which made me develop a stronger academic stamina and fibre. I would also want to extend my gratitude to three important academic friends at the University of Lagos – Professors Dafe Otobo, Tayo Fashoyin and Owolabi Kuye. I would like to appreciate the numerous post-graduate students who benefited from my organizational behaviour lectures. I will like to thank them for teaching me as much as I taught them. I would also want to thank my colleagues from other faculties of this university.

Those who have not enjoyed the rewards of conviviality in their academic career may fall into the trap of occluding its benefits when they acknowledge the variables that shape success in this career. The affable atmosphere my family, particularly my darling wife and jewel, Mrs. Ibifuro Bala-Johnnie and my children and other loved ones created for me deserves more than glorious mention.

And most importantly, I wish to thank my affable Vice Chancellor, Professor Blessing Chimezie Didia who made it possible for this lecture to take place today. May the good Lord continue to direct his path correctly. I also wish to acknowledge the enormous assistance I received from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Boma Oruwari. May I also thank the new Registrar of this university, Mrs. Victoria Jamabo, who incidentally was my classmate. I would also want to extend my gratitude to the immediate out gone Registrar, Mrs. Daba Odimabo, who

design, data collection, data analysis and presentation ”but that the science of contemporary social science is the “science of deconstruction at its best” where science is deconstructed as a “rigorous reimagining, a capricious science that cannot be defined in advance – such science” St. Pierre insists, “is science of *differ'ance*’ – not repetition” (St. Pierre, 2013).

If the foregoing articulations are adjudged as replete with social constructionist view of science, such judgment could find justification from many quarters. Bhattacharjee, (2012) remains instructive with regard to the contentions that had raged right from the time of Greek philosophers – Plato, Aristotle, Socrates – whose focus on rationalism spiraled into meditations in metaphysics, theology, ontology and universal science. The inconclusive attempt to establish an unquestionable method of generating knowledge in the social sciences by the Greek philosophers enlisted the interest of Francis Bacon and John Locke, whose sixteenth-century contribution on how to gain scientific knowledge resulted in the concept of empiricism. When Immanuel Kant, an 18th century German philosopher disagreed with empiricism's belief that knowledge-generation is an empirical activity rather than a reasoning one, Kant came up with a book, “*Critique of Pure Reason*” in which he argued that “experience is purely subjective and processing them using pure reason without first delving into the subjective nature of experience will lead to theoretical illusions” Bhattacharjee, (2012). Immanuel Kant's postulations would later crystalized into *German Idealism* which triggered the intellectual

movements that spawned many interpretive techniques of the qualitative research methods. When interpretivists reject positivists' thinking, they premise their rejection on what they see as many flaws of their opponents. Apart from Bruner's insistence that positivistic “measurement falsifies whatever it is measuring” (Hoffmeyer, 1996), it gladdens other anti-positivists when they realize that arch-proponents of positivism, such as the “American sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld who pioneered large-scale survey research and statistical techniques for analyzing survey data, acknowledged potential problem of observer-bias and structural limitations in positivist inquiry” (Bhattacharjee, (2012).

Method concerns in the social sciences have heightened to warrant the setting up in 1996, of the *Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (Wallerstein, et. al. 1996; OECD *Workshop on Re-inventing the Social Sciences* (2001). The Gulbenkian Commission which came out with a report that has been translated into 24 world major languages was chaired by the world-acclaimed U.S. intellectual, Professor Immanuel Wellerstein. Other members were Calestous Juma (Kenya), Evelyn Fox Keller (U.S.A), Jurgen Kocka (Germany), Dominique Lecourt (France), V.Y. Mudimbe (Zaire), Kinhide Mushakoji (Japan), Ilya Prigogine (Belgium), Peter J. Taylor (U.K.) and Michel-Ralp Trouillot (Haiti) with Richard Lee as the Secretary. Six of those members were social scientists and two each from natural sciences and humanities. Their concern was about the world-wide state of the social sciences, the

Acknowledgments

God Almighty has never been niggardly in measuring out His Grace upon me. The abundance of this grace on me deserves the most adorable commendation. This inimitable favour from the One who dwells in luminescence has garnished my career with victorious condiments. May I proclaim that the Almighty God embellished the roadway of this rewarding career with avuncular facilitators whose vibrations became my ballast. To be modest, no acknowledgement crafted in human language can adequately capture the essence of the contributions these facilitators made in their resolve to mold me.

Among the most cherished of the facilitators are my savants (highly revered university professors) at the London School of Economics and Political Science – University of London, Professor Ben Roberts for instance, was unflappable but not dismissive. Professor David Marsden (my supervisor) was critical but inspiring. The attention of Professor Keith Bradley was parsimonious but very heuristic. So were those of Professors Keith Thurley (of blessed memory), Sander Meredeen, Stephen Wood, Joe Kelly and the indomitable Professor Ray Richardson. Their jabs and pep-talks inspired courage at harassing moments. They were a real source of inspiration in enkindling the fire of academic and intellectual values which made my work lighter.

It is invidious to single out individuals for particular mention but I must acknowledge the support I received from Professor Augustine Ahiauzu, Professor Bedford Fubara, Professor Donald Hamilton, my current Dean of Faculty. Professor Aldophus

Frequency distribution might best be obtained by enumerators and samples, but incidents and histories are illuminatingly studied by direct observation and institutionalized norms and statutes by interviewing informants.

With these inspiring, illuminatingly powerful and philosophical words from Zelditch, I draw the curtain on the philosophy of conducting research in the management sciences. Thank you for your patience in listening to my extended lecture.

relations among the disciplines of the social sciences and the relations of the social sciences with both the humanities and the natural sciences. One of the major findings of the Commission was how “misguided nomothetic methodology still dominates the practice of the social sciences” (Burawoy, 2007).

Consequent upon the instructive findings and recommendations of the Gulbenkian Commission, the OECD mounted in 2001, a workshop for re-inventing the social sciences. The workshop came up with a seminal report. Because of its heuristic relevance to social science research practices, only two excerpts from the voluminous proceedings of the workshop is hereunder quoted starting with parts of the submissions made by Luk Van Langenhove of United Nations University Maastricht who observes as follows:

...with the emergence of the physical sciences in the eighteenth century, scientists have tried to explain the world by setting up experiments and by developing theories. As such, the perceived material world becomes to a large extent understandable in terms of causal interactions between observable material entities. The key elements in this process of understanding (and predicting) material processes were the Euclidean conception of space, the Newtonian view of movements and the human model causality...when the social sciences emerged as separate academic

disciplines, they implicitly adopted this ontological grid by adhering to Newtonian experimental methodology. This implied an epistemology of psychological and social in three realms: an observable Realm 1 (mainly behavior); a Realm 2 that could be observed with the help of psychological instruments such as tests (for example, an attitude); and an unobservable Realm 3 that includes concepts such as mind and self. But today one can argue that there is no logical need to apply Newtonian and Euclidean grids as models for a social world grid. *Moreover, it can even be argued that on the whole, the referential grid of the classical natural sciences is simply inadequate for the social sciences from an epistemological point of view.*

Further to the above, Kazancigil (2001), editor of 1999 UNESCO/Elsevier *World Social Science Report* take the following stance on social science research:

The naturalistic conception of social science is not altogether wrong, but it is reductionist... The social sciences also stretch towards the humanities, cultural studies (mass communication) and philosophy. Empirical as well as hermeneutic paradigms constitute the field. The real value-added of the social sciences, in terms of understanding the world, as well as responding to the

‘new hermeneutics’ by introducing mechanisms where we can appreciate the interchange of the frames of reference of the observer and observed. The most potent vehicle for both the mediation and modulation of the interchange process is language (Johnnie, 1998a, 1998b).

From the views expressed above, it has become evident that both in critical theory and reflexive sociology, any attempt at positivism is to be rejected. While we do not completely ignore positivism, particularly in the physical sciences, what we stand to question and reject is ‘easy’ positivism in social research. There is therefore, no one ‘best’ method or approach in conducting research in the management sciences. The best approach almost always is a function of the background of the researcher, the researcher’s ideological persuasion, the contextual factors militating in favour or against the researcher and the nature of the phenomena under investigation. The adoption of a combination of the different research approaches is likely to lead scholars in the management sciences closer to the ‘truth’. We would refer to this approach as methodological marriages in social research, (Johnnie, 2017, in Press). But this does not mean that researchers in the management sciences should always adopt a combination of the two approaches simultaneously. Some studies may require a combination of both approaches while others may require the adoption of a single research approach. Zelditch (1962) had demonstrated that there were several routes to obtain different types of information. Zelditch, therefore, went on to argue that:

epistemology, and model of human nature and methodology. Because social constructionists and positivists see the social world from two contrasting viewpoints, it has always been difficult to harmonize these views. While social constructionists favour pluralistic and relativistic approach, positivists insist on monistic approach and unity of truth.

I think that the explanation of social phenomena via any explicit conceptual rubric, conflates rather than clarifies issues. In my view, the adoption of a middle-of-the-road stance is likely to lead us to less fatal philosophical polemics in social enquiry (Johnnie, 1997). This leads me to accept Weber's view of the adoption of interpretive sociology, which enables the acting individual to create subjective meaning to social action. The use of interpretive sociology in social analysis allows the acting individual to arrive at a causal explanation between cause and effect. If we understand the relationship between cause and effect, then we shall be able to interpret human actions more appropriately using the canons of sociological paradigms (Johnnie, 2008).

In an attempt to narrow the divide between social constructionists and positivists perspectives in their understanding of the social world, it is important to adopt Dilthey's traditional hermeneutics, and Gadamer and Giddens' 'new hermeneutics'. The first level of Dilthey's hermeneutics assists us to externalize the internal processes of our minds through the creation of cultural artefacts. We go beyond Dilthey's early hermeneutics and adopt Gadamer and Giddens'

demands from policy-makers lies precisely in their capacity to be at once critical/ reflexive... Therefore, *the social sciences must be assessed in their own right and not in comparison to natural sciences*: they are at once contextual and universal. They cannot be expected to produce social engineering, offering ready-made formulas and solutions for application in all settings and circumstances. Their observations and findings *cannot be replicated*, given the enormous quantity of variables and their combinations which are more complex than in natural phenomenon. *Many of them not being quantifiable...* The natural sciences which so powerfully influenced the social sciences both conceptually and organizationally have been undergoing an epistemological shift away from Newtonian paradigm as discussed in the Gulbenkian Report: **the positivistic epistemology on which they grew is being replaced by one based on complexity and such factors as non-replicability. These developments bring to question, the mechanistic theories and nomothetic methods which the social sciences generated in their urge to imitate the older and better established branch of science.**

(emphasis added)

The foregoing does not anyway; mean that the anti-positivists do not have their fair share of criticism. Positivists condemn the anti-positivists for only trying “to understand society but not critiquing and changing society for the better” (Bhattacharjee, (2012). Bhattacharjee locates the grain of anti-positivist criticism by positivist thinkers in *Das Capital* written by German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in which the duo critiqued capitalistic societies as being socially inequitable and inefficient, compelling them to recommend resolving this inequity through class conflict and proletarian revolutions. Bhattacharjee points out that the failure of Marxism to accomplish the social equality that it aspired to when it inspired social revolutions in countries such as Germany, Italy, Russia, and China are blots that furnish ammunition for positivists when they take swipes at the supposed brilliance of the anti-positivists stance.

Given that the field of management is a relatively new discipline, it however, even in pre-modern times, did not fail to embrace one form of technique or the other as it confronts the challenge of solving organizational problems. But as modern organizations become more and more complex in scope, modern managers now face newer challenges at work. The organization of work in modern times seems to have become a kind of jigsaw puzzle (Johnnie, 1991b, 1991c). This situation has arisen as a result of the rapid growth and development of modern industrial activities in the last century. The growth in industrial activities has also affected the activities of modern

that 'Weber's view has been challenged from both Marxist and non-Marxist perspectives by those who argue that a value-free stance is both logically and morally wrong'. Keat and Urry (1975) Gouldner (1973) also argued that a value-free stance has no place in social enquiry. This view was also advanced earlier by Hanson (1958) when he discussed the critical nature of the cognitive ability of human beings. Hanson went further to say that, “people, not their eyes, see. Cameras and eyeballs are blind”.

This means that social theorists should, as a matter of culture and tradition, highlight their value position in social research. Myrdal (1961) and Watson (1977) have also highlighted the importance and place of value-relevance in sociological orthodoxy. Myrdal went as far as arguing that theoretical issues, which we discuss, are denoted in concepts which are “spaces into which reality is fitted by analysis”. However, Hyman and Borough (1975) warned that in an attempt to adopt value-position in our analyses of social phenomena, we must avoid the danger of reification in which “the irrational consequences of a specific form of social organization are regarded as natural and inevitable”.

Social constructionists' and positivists' explanations of the social world rests on their conception of the nature of the social world and the place of value-freedom in social analysis. Social constructionists and positivists have had long tradition of disagreements on issues which loom largely on ontology,

researcher is a value-laden instrument used for answering the research question” (Stewart, Gapp & Harwood, 2017). The anti-triangulation argument sees triangulation as a positivistic geometric metaphor which limits how the social world could be seen to only three dimension/perspectives. The rejection of the three dimension perspective has given rise to the metaphor of the crystal (crystallization). The metaphor of crystallization rejects the three dimension view by informing that there is no single or correct description or perspective of how one sees the crystal. Crystallization accepts the multidimensionality of qualitative research to reflect external view and refract internal view whilst conceding the limitations of these same views” (Stewart, Gapp & Harwood, 2017, 5). The concession of limitations to what crystallization brings back into focus, echoes Weber (1949) and Ahiauzu's (1982) postulations on value-freedom in the social sciences.

OBSERVING AND INTERPRETING THE SOCIAL WORLD: THE PLACE OF VALUE-FREE ENQUIRY

With regard to the moot-point of the ideal of value-freedom in both critical sociology and the social sciences generally, Weber (1949) had articulated a classic case for the ideal of value-freedom in social sciences. Weber argued that in all social enquiry, what is necessary is the selection of appropriate topics for investigation and that, if this was done, the question of 'value-relevance or value-judgment' becomes irrelevant in all social enquiry. Ahiauzu (1982) has argued, on the other hand,

governments and this seems to have ostensibly created a reciprocal interaction between the organized business activities of the entrepreneur and the development of policy instruments by government to control business activities. The intensive nature of the interrelationship between the activities of industry and the public sector has generated a lot of debate as to how best to manage the scarce and limited resources of the modern state. The situation is becoming more complicated and, therefore, calls our attention to the introduction of more appropriate techniques in the organization of work and work-related activities at the workplace (Johnnie, 1992a; 1995a). Some scholars (Shott, 1979; Hochschild, 1979; Denzin, 1970; Becker, 1953) have argued that problems in the management sciences could be solved through the use of analysis of qualitative data in social research. Other scholars (Dantzig, 1967; Goodeve, 1948; Ackoff and Sasieni, 1968, Kemper 1978a, 1978b) have argued that it is unlikely that merely analyzing qualitative data in social enquiry could solve problems in the management sciences. They argue that organizational problems could only be solved through the application of scientific tools in the analysis of data. The first group sees research in the management sciences as involving the investigation and interpretation of the social world using qualitative techniques in the data analysis. The second group sees all social actions or the social world as an objective reality which therefore, could be investigated and interpreted using the canons of scientific principles and rigours applicable in the natural sciences. This debate has had a long-

standing tradition which appears to have defied any form of meaningful settlement. But management scientists should, as a matter of necessity, adopt a position if their studies are to be given a place of prominence in contemporary research agenda (Johnnie, 1991a).

In view of the issues I have raised, what I have set out to do in this lecture is threefold. First, I shall discuss assumptions relating to ontology, epistemology, models of human nature and methodologies employed in analyzing and interpreting the social world from the point of view of the subjectivists' frame of reference. Second, I shall also discuss assumptions relating to ontology, epistemology, and models of human nature and methodologies employed by positivists in the analysis and interpretation of data in the management and/or social sciences. The third and, perhaps, final issue addressed here is an attempt to identify areas of pragmatic affinity between the two polarities - relativism and absolutism. This will be my contribution to the debate between relativist and absolutist scholars in their search for answers in interpreting the social world.

The integration of research techniques within a single project opens up enormous opportunities for mutual advantage in each of the three major phases - design, data collection and analysis. These mutual benefits are not merely quantitative...but qualitative as well - one could almost say that a new style of research is born of the marriage of survey and field work methodology.

The argument presented above by Sieber is also supported by Warwick (1983) where the importance of 'methodological marriages' was stressed. Warwick has insisted that it is important to adopt different approaches or styles, as the weaknesses of one approach may be counterbalanced by the other. Though the view that qualitative and quantitative methods are not simply different ways of doing the same thing; but are profoundly different in their "strengths and logics in a way that sets them apart with regard to addressing different questions and purposes" is a voice showing that method-triangulation might not bring the anodyne needed to calm methodological tension in the social sciences (Maxwell, 1996). More worrisome is the belief that triangulation increases rather than "reduces the bias inherent in particular data collection effort" (Philips, 1973). This anti-triangulation concern finds a premise on the incongruent epistemological positions espoused in quantitative as opposed to the qualitative research method. For "unlike quantitative research where the emphasis is on external measurement that is value free, the qualitative

In an attempt to blur the contours of demarcation between the two research approaches adopted by anti-positivists and positivists, Bulmer (1984) has argued that any attempt to polarize the two dominant approaches results in 'reifying the distinction between them and implying that each may be a self-contained and alternative method of social enquiry'. Bulmer says this is not the true situation but the opposite of the truth and he goes further to argue that different styles of research complement each other; and that a combination of different approaches can be fruitfully exploited to the advantage of management or social scientists. The view expressed above had earlier been advanced by Anderson (1972) and also by Johnnie and Ahiamadu (1996d), when they argued that there is a need to combine both qualitative and quantitative data in the analysis and interpretation of social phenomena. Using the same argument in sociological analysis, Coser (1984) argue that sociology as a discipline is not sufficiently advanced 'to rely on precisely measurable variables'. He believes that qualitative data collected within a small universe could theoretically provide a lead which, at a later stage in the development of the discipline, could be subjected to the rigours of statistical analysis.

In another stimulating discourse, Sieber (1973) highlighted the danger inherent in treating different research approaches as alternatives and, therefore, advocated that it is likely to be more fruitful to combine different approaches within a single study. Sieber went on to argue that:

RESEARCH APPROACHES IN THE MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISTS OR SUBJECTIVISTS AND POSITIVISTS OR OBJECTIVISTS ASSUMPTIONS

Research approaches in the management sciences could be typologized into two broad conceptual categories - the positivist or objectivist and the subjectivist or relativist approaches. The positivist or realist approaches in the management sciences assume or adopt scientific methodology in their data collection, analysis and interpretation. The positivist uses nomothetic methodology found in the natural sciences in the study of the social world. The subjectivist or relativist, on the other hand, assumes or adopts ideographic methodology in their data collection, analysis and interpretation. I shall explain the concepts of nomothetic and ideographic methodologies later in this lecture (Johnnie and Nwasike, 2001b).

Management scientists have, in the main, adopted these two approaches in social enquiry. But there seems to be areas of conflict in the adoption of these two broad categories as a result of the unit of analysis in all management sciences (Johnnie, 1993a). The view has been advanced that, because the management sciences are concerned with the investigation and interpretation of social phenomena, it is wrong to adopt positivist methodology or scientific investigations that are popular in the natural sciences. But positivist scholars, on the

other hand, have argued that irrespective of the environment and social context in which we find ourselves, the appropriate methodology to adopt in an attempt to establish any form of objective reality is through the use of methods that are adopted in the natural sciences.

Such has been the nature of the long-drawn argument between subjectivist and objectivist scholars in their analysis and understanding of the social world. These arguments premise the belief that 'all theories of organization are based upon a philosophy of science and theory of society'. It is therefore important to discuss the philosophical assumptions upon which the various approaches are predicated. Burrell and Morgan (1979) have argued that the convenience exists to conceptualize the management sciences based on four sets of assumptions. These assumptions, according to them, are related to ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology.

It is the view of Burrell and Morgan (1979) that management scientists should see their subjects through 'explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it may be investigated'. The first set of assumptions is of an ontological nature. These are assumptions which concern the very purpose of the phenomena to be investigated. Management scientists are faced with a fundamental ontological question which has to do with questions relating to the 'reality' to be investigated. Ontological assumptions create the necessary pathway for the researcher to understand the reasoning behind the very essence of studying any phenomenon. Ontological

The wide polarity created by anti-positivists and positivists in their attempt to understand the social world has caused a great deal of concern among scholars. Dilthey (1976) has therefore made some efforts through the use of hermeneutics to establish some form of conceptual mediation and modulation between the two competing polarities in social research. It is Dilthey's thinking that over time, human beings 'externalize the internal processes of their minds through the creation of cultural artefacts which attain an objective character.' Such cultural artefacts could be exemplified and typified in the form of 'institutions, works of arts, literature, languages, religions and other forms of characterizations of human thought. Other scholars (such as Weber, 1949; Hughes, 1958; Runciman, 1972) have also shown great concern as to how best to reduce the gap between the rival claims of anti-positivists and positivists in their understanding of social reality. Johnnie (1993a), in a rather philosophical discourse, has argued that the boundary between social constructionists (anti-positivists) and positivists in their analysis and interpretation of the social world cannot be stretched beyond a breakable limit. This is because the arguments of both groups are all poised on the same continuum. The demarcating point is merely the method adopted by each group to get closer to the 'truth'. Since what is regarded as 'true' or 'false' in the management sciences is still a matter of the theoretical and ideological persuasion of each researcher, it is difficult to conclude that one approach is superior to the other (Johnnie, 1990b, 1997).

relevant to all areas of enquiry: a universal mode of philosophy' and 'not a methodological foundation for the culture sciences'.

EPILOGUE

Both anti-positivists and positivists have a common goal of analyzing and interpreting social phenomena. They both have different ways of attempting to achieve the same goal - the issue is not that of goal-setting but how to get to the goal. The process of attempting to get to the goal is where the argument begins to tilt towards the two polarities (Johnnie, 1993a, 1996b).

If we examine the rival claims made by anti-positivists and positivists in their analysis and interpretation of social phenomena based on different ontologies, epistemologies, models of human nature, and methodologies, the view has been powerfully articulated that they are competing approaches in social research. While anti-positivists have argued that their approach to the analysis and interpretation of the social world is the only viable option open to the researcher, positivists have strongly condemned this claim, arguing that it is 'fatally wrong' to compare two approaches that are entirely different. I have argued elsewhere that oranges and grapes are not the same, therefore, cannot be compared. We must always learn to compare a like with a like and not unlike with a like (Johnnie, 2016).

assumptions are made to stimulate individuals to ask questions relating to the phenomena they are investigating - to establish the fact, whether or not the phenomena to be investigated are real, and of an objective nature. Ontological assumptions are made by researchers to identify the nature of the phenomena to be investigated - whether the phenomena being investigated are concrete, hard, and have objective features and characteristics. Some scholars refer to the ontological assumptions at issue here as stating researcher reflexivity, where reflexivity is encapsulated as researcher's ability to be able to self-consciously refer to him or herself in relation to key epistemological assumptions on how knowledge is produced (Roulston, 2010).

Burrell and Morgan (1979) went further to argue that, succeeding the assumptions relating to ontology are other associated assumptions which are essentially of an epistemological nature. Epistemological assumptions which we make as management scientists centre on the theory of knowledge. These are assumptions which have to do with how knowledge develops and is communicated to other people in intelligible form (Johnnie, 1993b). The question of epistemological assumptions does not only address issues relating to the communication of ideas or knowledge to people but also anchors on how to establish a line of divide between what is regarded as 'true' from what is regarded as 'false.' The ability to develop a level of consciousness to discriminate between what is generally regarded as true or false is what

shapes our frame of reference. On a rather philosophical note, Burrell and Morgan (1979) have, in fact, argued that the dichotomy of 'true' and 'false' itself presupposes a certain epistemological stance. All epistemological assumptions therefore are based on the 'view of the nature of knowledge itself, whether knowledge could be identified and its nature communicated as being hard, real or tangible, or whether knowledge is something of softer, subjective, spiritual or even transcendental kind', which is based on our experience of the past. In other words, it is a question of whether knowledge, as a phenomenon, could be acquired through teaching in ways that enables the learner to experience, personally.

Closely following in the heels of the ontological and epistemological assumptions, but 'conceptually separate,' is a third set of assumptions relating to 'human nature'. Assumptions relating to human nature try to identify the relationship or tissue of connection between human beings and the environment in which they operate and transact. Johnnie (1991a) has previously argued that there cannot be any meaningful discussion in the management sciences if the nature of human beings that form the object and subject of discussion is excluded. It is therefore possible to identify perspectives in the literature which advocate the view that human beings respond in a mechanistic way to their environments which, in turn, condition and shape their behaviours. If, however, human beings do not respond to their environments in a deterministic

observer must enter into a dialogue with the subject of study'. Giddens (1976 p.56) supported Gadamer's contention and argued that for us to correctly understand and interpret historical material, the material must not be different from other historical accounts which are part of our culture, or not too remote from our historical past, otherwise we may end up enriching our knowledge through the historical past of others, which may not portray the correct situation. Giddens therefore, argued that instead of 'placing oneself "inside" the subjective experience of a text author but in understanding literary art through grasping', we should see ourselves as 'the 'form of life' which gives meaning'. The tool which serves in the process both as mediator and modulator is language.

From the foregoing, it seems Giddens' new hermeneutics', which takes its original source from Dilthey's early hermeneutics', has introduced a new dimension which borders essentially both on epistemology and methodology. While Dilthey focuses his attention on how man re-lives and reconstructs the past through various cultural artefacts exemplified in the form of objective reality, Giddens' 'new hermeneutics' does not believe that we can reconstruct the past correctly by simply re-creating and re-living through an alien mode of existence. Giddens' was 'more concerned with appreciating the interchange of the frames of reference of the observer and the observed'. The mechanism for appreciating the interchange process is facilitated by language. Hermeneutics, seen through the insight of Gadamer and Giddens, 'becomes

It therefore follows, that an understanding and interpretation of the social world really requires that a body of general laws should apply both to the whole and parts of the whole.

This part-whole relationship becomes a characteristic of the social world, and, therefore, poses a very serious epistemological problem. Dilthey thus, saw the need for a systematic approach in resolving this problem. However, Rickman (1976) has argued that:

'there are no absolute starting points, no self-evident, self-contained certainties on which we can build because we always find ourselves in the middle of complex situations which we try to disentangle by making, then revising provisional assumptions'.

The above statement clearly shows that the 'methodological rules of hermeneutics' do not move in one identifiable direction but follows an interactive and circular pattern 'towards an increased understanding of the objectification of mind'.

In recent times, Dilthey's hermeneutic tradition appears to have given way to newer insights developed by Gadamer (1965). Gadamer argues that Dilthey's hermeneutic tradition has methodological flaws because he does not think that we can relate 'to a historic tradition as if it existed as an object apart from us, since there is an interplay between the movement of tradition and the interpreter'. Gadamer concluded by saying that, 'in order to understand social or cultural phenomena, the

way, then it is assumed that they create, control, manage and direct activities in their environments.

The three sets of assumptions discussed above have a symbiotic relationship and implication of a methodological nature. Each of these assumptions has an overwhelming influence on the way we try to explain the social world. The kind of ontologies, epistemologies and nature of human beings determine the type of methodology one adopts in social research. There are methodologies used in the social sciences which conceptualize the social world, in the same way as the natural world, as being objective, hard 'real and external to the individual'. But there are others who see the social world in a rather subjective form, therefore, softer and even of transcendental and spiritual in nature. Burrell and Morgan (1979) have argued that if management scientists subject themselves to methodologies which treat the social world as a tangible entity, constituting any form of objective reality, then the issues involved would border on the 'analysis of relationship and regulations between the various elements which it comprises'. The focus, therefore is for those with such a view, must be on how to identify and define the elements and how to design ways of expressing these relationships. The perspective that adopts a methodological stance which sees the social world as objective reality, attempts to establish principles and universal laws to explain and 'govern the reality which is being observed'.

But if a management scientist subscribes to the view that society or the social world could be explained or created through the subjective experience of individuals, it means that our search for understanding the social world around us is based on the subjective experience of the individual who is attempting to study and explain it. The central issues in this perspective border essentially on how individuals create, modify or interpret social phenomena via their understanding of the social world around them. The interpretation and explanation of the social world is seen to be a reflection of the unique features and finite provinces of meanings the individual gives to the phenomena under investigation. This approach, in methodological parlance, highlights the fact that, the social world is, on the whole, relativistic in nature; therefore, could be seen as 'anti-scientific' as opposed to the 'ground rules' which are generally used in the natural sciences. Burrell and Morgan made an attempt to use a schema to illustrate the dimensions on which to explain the subjective-objective debate in social enquiry. Burrell and Morgan's (1979) schema is modified and replicated below for easy intellectual consumption.

expression of human thought. Dilthey's hermeneutics, ontologically appears to come fairly close to the objectification process associated with solipsism. He asserts that through hermeneutics it is possible 'the subject of study is needed to relive in the subjective life of the observer'. He goes further to say that 'social phenomena of all kinds should be analyzed in detail and interpreted as texts, to reveal their essential meaning and significance'. While the methodology of the social constructionist in the investigation of the social world is basically ideographic, and that of positivism is nomothetic. These two methodological approaches stand at two extremes of a continuum, but the method of hermeneutics attempts at unifying or obliterating them. Hermeneutics involves a situation whereby 'human scientists' adopt 'the style of literary analysis rather than that of natural scientists'. Instead of the traditional search for general scientific laws, hermeneutics explores the phenomenon or phenomena through textual analysis of meaning. This involves defining clearly the basic rules of hermeneutics 'so that the insights of interpreters of rare genius could be utilized by others'. Through this process, it has been argued, 'objective knowledge' about human beings could be obtained.

Dilthey's pioneering works in hermeneutics were made more clearly and illustrated through the introduction of the concept of 'hermeneutic circle'. Dilthey saw the difficulty in isolating the total whole from its parts. He believes that an understanding of the whole cannot be independent from its parts, and vice versa.

From the analysis presented above, Weber seems to have made very serious attempts to reconcile the potentially divergent perspectives of relativism and absolutism. Weber, while emphasizing 'the importance of subjective meaning in explanations of social affairs, at the same time, seeks to contain and limit the role of these objective factors'. He attempts to classify human action in different behaviour types such as 'traditional' as a necessary honey-comb to assist him move towards conceptual convergence; but this does not completely remove the problems associated with the use of methodologies in two conceptually separate areas that have different ontologies, epistemologies, models of human nature and methodologies (Johnnie, 1992b, 1993a).

In an attempt to draw closer, philosophically and ideologically, the social constructionists and positivists in their understanding of the social world, Dilthey developed hermeneutics. In the words of Burrell and Morgan:

'Hermeneutics is concerned with interpreting and understanding the products of the human mind which characterize the social and cultural world'
(p.236).

Dilthey believes that human beings, through time, 'externalize the internal processes of their minds through the creation of cultural artefacts which attain an objective character'. Examples of such cultural artefacts are 'institutions, works of art, literature, languages, religions' and other forms of symbolic

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST OR SUBJECTIVIST AND POSITIVIST OR OBJECTIVIST DIMENSION IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

**The Social Constructionist
or Subjectivist approach to
Social Research**

**The Positivist or Objectivist
approach to Social
Research**

Nominalism.....	Ontology.....	Realism
Anti-Positivism.....	Epistemology.....	Positivism
Voluntarism.....	Human Nature.....	Determinism
Ideographic.....	Methodology.....	Nomothetic

Adapted and modified from Burrell & Morgan's analytical framework, 1979.

THE ONTOLOGICAL DEBATE BETWEEN NOMINALISM AND REALISM

The ontological debate between nominalist and realist conceptions of the social world has been a long-drawn battle. The nominalist argument on what represents the social world anchors on the fact that what is regarded as social world external to the individual is merely the imagination of that individual - nothing but names, concepts, ideas, and labels used by individuals to describe situations. The nominalist does not accept the view that there exists any 'real' structure in the social

world. The 'names used by individuals are referred to as artificial creations whose value is merely to make sense in our analysis of situations and negotiating the social world of which we are an integral part. The realist or positivist on the other hand, argues that the social world in which we exist is something of an objective type. The social world of the realist is assumed to be hard, tangible and is made of immutable structures'. The realist has postulated that even if we do see, feel or touch these structures they still exist as 'empirical entities'. The realist developed the ontological argument that as we may not even be aware of the existence of some of these structures we cannot even give them names, labels or 'concepts to articulate them'. The realist has a strong belief that the social world exists quite differently and 'independently of the individual's appreciation of it'. The individual is born into the social world and learns to live within it and cannot create the social world or any part thereof. The social world maintains an objective form and therefore, determines the behaviour of the individual (Johnnie, 2001a). Ontologically, it is argued that the existence of the social world is beyond the realm of imagination of the individual. The realist believes very fervently that the social world has an existence which is tangible with immutable structures, therefore, is as hard as the natural world.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) have argued that the above definition, with its emphasis on interpretive sociology, is an attempt by Weber at introducing 'fusion of idealist and positivist perspectives'. Weber supports this view because it provides 'causal explanations of social phenomena but insists that such explanations must be reduced to the level of the individual'. This led Schutz to argue that:

'Weber reduces all kinds of social relationships and structures, all cultural objectification, all realms of mind, to the most elementary forms of individual behaviour' (Schutz, 1967).

The above statement clearly shows that Weber's interpretive sociology is concerned with the provision of causal explanations of social phenomena. However, in doing this, he avoids the problems of reification. Weber's focus, according to Burrell and Morgan, builds 'an objective science of sociology upon the foundations of subjective meaning and individual action'. But this is problematic. Weber has, therefore gone further to say that the development of objectivity in the social sciences is only 'possible through the use of ideal types, which allows for the ordering of statement of reality'. Ideal types are simply constructs which, for analytical purposes, were created by Weber to introduce some form of unity while analyzing social phenomenon. Through the use of ideal types, Weber was able to "incorporate the 'spirit' which characterizes individual phenomena into a wider generalized whole".

he regarded as characterizing positivist explanations of society, and also greatly concerned with the subjective and 'unscientific' nature of idealist thoughts'. Weber's dissatisfaction with the two polar positions of positivism and anti-positivism led him to adopt a unifying stance in his methodological writings, in which he developed the argument that all matters relating to social affairs can only be explained adequately 'on the level of meaning', and that the essential function of social science is to be 'interpretive', that is, to understand the subjective meaning of social action.

What Weber seems to imply in the above statement is that any attempt at bridge-building between social constructionism and positivism must necessarily start the process of abstraction from the understanding of the subjective meaning of social action. The theoretical or disciplinary plank on which this can be done is through interpretive sociology. Interpretive sociology enables the acting individual to create subjective meaning to social action in order to 'arrive at a causal explanation of its causes and effects. Weber (1947) defines sociology as:

'a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its causes and effects... Action in so far as, by virtue of the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behaviour of others, and is thereby oriented in causes'.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEBATE BETWEEN ANTI-POSITIVISM AND POSITIVISM IN SOCIAL ENQUIRY

The epistemology of anti-positivism argues that it is practically impossible to establish regularities and search for general laws which could be used in defining, explaining and interpreting the social world. It is the view of the anti-positivist that the social world is highly relativistic, therefore, 'can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be studied'. Anti-positivism completely rejects the notion of the 'observer' which dominates the epistemology of the positivist. Anti-positivists do not believe in the argument that those who observe situations and other social activities are better disposed towards understanding and explaining these activities. They argue that it is only possible to 'understand' social action or human activities if we put ourselves in the place of those individuals whose activities we are attempting to understand while they are in action. They believe that we can only understand human activities from the 'inside' rather than the 'outside'. Anti-positivists do not believe that science can generate any form of objective knowledge. The argument that comprehending social action is possible only when we put ourselves in the place of those individuals whose activities we are trying to comprehend is encapsulated in a German concept of *verstehen*. Max Weber popularized the concept (Babbie, 2005; Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Encapsulated, the concept refers to an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their social situations and

activities (Jankowski and Wester, 1991). When operationalized, the core of what *Verstehen* promotes is akin to Herbert Blumer's reading of Mead's *Symbolic Interactionism*. Blumer's take on Symbolic Interactionism posits that “people act on the basis of the meaning they themselves ascribe to objects and situations” (Jankowski & Wester, 1991). Researchers are advised to respect such meaning when they opt for the qualitative method. *Verstehen*, as an attribute of the qualitative method, stresses respect for the “meanings that emanate from research participants” (Jankowski & Wester, 1991; Okeke and Ume, 2004). Supporting the concept of *verstehen* is (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013) who note that the primary goal of qualitative inquiry is “to generate rich, complex nuanced accounts of how people ascribe meaning to and interpret their lived experience with eye toward how these accounts might be used to affect social policy and change.” To establish research conclusion on meanings that emanate from the researched gives the qualitative method its stamp of quality. It does so because it enables the researcher “to know more about the phenomenon under study from the *emic* (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) aspects of the research participants and not through the researchers' pre-constructed instrument that have not been influenced by the nature of the research participants themselves” (Okeke & Ume, 2004).

Positivists, on the other hand, attempt to understand and interpret the social world by trying to establish regularities and general laws. Positivists themselves may differ in essentials and details in their search for regularities and establishment of

testing and the quantification of facts. Silverman (1985) seems to offer a very useful analytical insight in this matter. He has argued that:

“The behaviour of matter may be regarded as a necessary reaction to a stimulus matter which itself does not understand its own behaviour. It is literally meaningless until the scientist imposes his frame of reference upon it. There is no possibility of apprehending its subjective intentions, and the logic of its behaviour may be understood solely by observation of the behaviour itself. The actions of men, on the other hand, are meaningful to them”.

Attempts at establishing a conceptual bridge between social constructionists and positivists approaches to social enquiry became the preoccupation of early writers such as Dilthey (1976; Weber 1949). They were particularly concerned with bridging the conceptual gap between social constructionists who believe in German idealism, coupled with their great plasticity and positivists whose law-governed position is based on their much avowed 'indeterminacy principle'. From his writings, Weber was apparently standing between the gulf that divides social constructionists' position and that of the positivists. In fact, Hughes (1958) and Runciman (1972) referred to Weber as fighting a war from two fronts. This is because 'Weber was dissatisfied with the superficialities which

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST & POSITIVIST DEBATE IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: THE NEED FOR A CONVERGENCE THESIS

Any attempt at conceptual convergence between social constructionists and positivists approaches to social enquiry cannot be a straightforward academic and intellectual exercise. This difficulty seems to have stemmed essentially from the bipolar epistemological assumptions made by scholars of the two schools of thought. While social constructionists insist that their own approach to the study of the social world is the most viable option, positivists on the other hand, have strongly argued that it is fatally wrong to compare two approaches that are not the same. Be that as it may, the exploration of the social world via any of the two methodologies points to the fact that both social constructionists and positivists have the same goal of analyzing and interpreting the social world. However, one fact that comes out clearly from the various views and arguments developed by the two schools of thought is that both have the same goal but different methodologies of arriving at their goals (Johnnie, 1993a).

The ontological debate between the approaches adopted by social constructionists and positivists understanding of the social world has been amply discussed. While social constructionists adopt ideographic methods in their enquiry, positivists adopt nomothetic methods via the performance of laboratory experiments, formulation of a priori hypotheses for

general laws, but they are all in agreement as to how knowledge grows over time. They all see knowledge as a cumulative process. I have argued elsewhere, (Johnnie, 1988e, 1993b, 1996c), that knowledge is like mental bricklaying. Any time a new 'block' of knowledge is laid, the tendency is that the old knowledge becomes obsolete. It is therefore, important to tear down the old knowledge and allow the new stock of knowledge to assume its proper place. This is what I would want to refer to as the banking theory of knowledge (Johnnie, 1993b). Positivist scholars believe in experimenting in their environments as a natural step towards establishing objective reality in the social world.

THE DEBATE BETWEEN VOLUNTARISM AND DETERMINISM AS MODELS OF HUMAN NATURE

There have been rival claims between positivists and anti-positivists as to the correct model of human nature in social scientific theory. The debate has rested on two extremes of a continuum, each group holding very fast to its claims of the proper model of human nature in social analysis. On one extreme are positivists who hold determinist view, arguing that humans and their activities are determined by the situation in which they find themselves or the environment in which they exist and transact. On the opposite end of the continuum, we have those who maintain a voluntarist position, arguing that humans are completely autonomous and free-willed. For management or social sciences theories to be imbibed and

articulated by both determinists and voluntarists, in an attempt to understand human nature, they must adopt either of these two broad categories. But those who are unable to identify themselves with any one particular conceptual rubric should adopt a 'middle-of-the-road' position by synthesizing the two extremes of a bipolar system to understand the correct nature of human beings. I shall discuss a possible point of convergence between positivism and relativism in understanding human nature as I proceed in this lecture.

THE METHODOLOGICAL DEBATE BETWEEN IDEOGRAPHIC AND NOMOTHETIC THEORY IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

The ideographic methodology in social research is concerned with the argument that, to understand the social world requires the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation. This requires the investigator to have very close contact with the background and life-history of the subject of investigation. The ideographic research methodology focuses on the analysis of the subjective information to be generated by the researcher. The information to be generated could be obtained by 'getting inside' the situation to be investigated and taking active part in the daily flow of activities. The researcher could analyze insights or information emanating from such encounters with one's subjects. This could be done through the analysis of information found in dairies, biographies, resumes and journalistic records. Blumer (1969)

hypotheses. The major tool of analysis in the nomothetic approach to conducting research in management sciences is the use of quantitative techniques. The specific research instruments used in the nomothetic approach are surveys, questionnaires, personality tests and other standardized instruments.

The specific research instruments mentioned above form the basis of the nomothetic methodology in the management sciences. These instruments are essentially statistical in character. The techniques that are relevant in analyzing and interpreting social reality in the management sciences are the non-parametric statistics. Other aspects of the nomothetic approach that are relevant in conducting research in the management sciences are the use of operations research techniques. A fundamental feature of the use of scientific techniques in conducting research in the management sciences 'is its ideal of objectivity'- a kind of ideal which subjects scientific knowledge to objective and impartial tests. The nomothetic methodology in conducting research in the management sciences relies in explaining social phenomena via scientific experimentation. Scientism is the ideological preoccupation of the researcher who adopts the nomothetic methodology in conducting research in the management sciences. The analysis and interpretation of all social phenomena are based on the principles of science.

approach in investigating human activities in African organizations. Ethnographic research approach involves a situation where the researcher takes active part in activities involved in the phenomenon under investigation. While actively participating in the group, the researcher is also observing, grasping and comprehending those aspects of a people's culture which influence the behaviour of group members in organizations. Although this approach is relatively new in mainstream management science investigations, it has a fairly long historical tradition in cognitive anthropology and interactionist sociology. Since management science principles are essentially derived from both anthropological and sociological theories, it follows therefore, that what is new is the practice and what is not new is the theory (Johnnie, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c).

The second major strand of the debate is the use of nomothetic methodology in conducting research in the management sciences. The nomothetic approach to social enquiry lays a great deal of premium on the application of scientific techniques in the analysis and interpretation of data. The nomothetic approach to conducting research in the management sciences, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979), places great emphasis 'on the importance of basing research upon systematic protocol and technique'. The nomothetic approach adopts techniques and methods characteristic of the natural sciences. It subjects all data to the crucible and rigours of scientific examination, which has as its focus the process of formulation and testing of

has argued that the ideographic research methodology emphasizes the relevance and usefulness of allowing 'one's subjects unfold its nature and characteristics' while the investigation is going on.

The ideographic research methodology was highlighted earlier by Glasser and Strauss (1967) in their 'Grounded Theory' approach in social research. Brown (1973) also discussed the concept of 'Grounded Theory' elaborating in his review of literature in respect of approaches to conducting research in the management or social sciences. The 'Grounded Theory' approach highlights the fact that in all social scientific productions, it is necessary for the researcher to collect as much information as possible, in view of the fact that the knowledge being sought for is 'grounded' in the data the researcher is able to collect. The 'Grounded Theory' approach has little or no favour for a priori hypothesis formulation and testing. It is a research approach which assumes that, as the researcher analyzes the research data, the answers being looked for shall emerge as findings. The 'Grounded Theory' approach therefore ignores hypothesis formulation and testing but encourages the use of research questions (Johnnie, 1988a, 1988b).

Two important variants of the ideographic research methodology which have become acceptable and popular in the management sciences are the concepts of interactionism and ethnomethodology. Weber (1949) and Mead (1938) popularized interactionism as a research approach. Interactionism as a

management science research approach is concerned with the 'interpretation of meaning'. The researcher interacts with respondents who are likely to act or react to the researcher's questions and the researcher interprets the actions of the respondents by giving meaning to such actions (Johnnie, 1996c).

Another variant of the ideographic research approach, which is relevant in the management sciences, is ethnomethodology (Johnnie, 1993b). Ethnomethodology, which is reminiscent of Garfinkel's (1967) work, is concerned with interest in observing everyday practices of organizational or societal members. Based on these observations, ethnomethodologists make identifiable 'observable-reportable' behaviour patterns of organizational members, and, according to Silverman (1985), they 'are not concerned with what they are doing'. Ethnomethodologists, because of their interest in what people are doing, are able to observe and report social behaviour in organizations and at the wider level of society (Johnnie and Nwasike, 2001b). They differ somewhat in their method of enquiry from interactionist scholars, but share a common view that proper description is, in itself, an explanatory part of 'a naturalistic observational discipline that can rigorously, empirically and formally' deal with the details of social action(s) (Schegloff and Sacks, 1974:233). Other scholars, Cuff and Payne (1979), whose research approach lies within the rubric of interactionist-ethnomethodological perspective, have vividly established the tissue of connection between description

and explanation within ethnomethodology (Johnnie, 2001a). Popper (1959) has therefore, argued that:

Instead of trying to produce 'deductive causal explanations' or sets of law-like propositions, they aim to produce descriptions. The descriptions concern methods members use to accomplish the world for what it is. In the description and analysis of those methods, ethnomethodologists, like other social scientists, are attempting to generalize about social life. In their case, these generalizations are about the sort of 'apparatus' the 'sense assembly equipment' that human beings use to construct and sustain their everyday lives.

Another aspect of the ideographic research tradition which has important theoretical taste and value to the management scientists is the concept of ethnography found in cognitive anthropology. Ethnography, according to Silverman (1985) in sociological orthodoxy, is concerned with 'methods for describing interactional particulars' which the sociologist would also refer to as 'participant observation' in social research. Halfpenny (1979) found a great deal of value in ethnography which is widely used in cognitive anthropology by researchers, and argue that the approach involves 'grasping and comprehending the culturally appropriate concepts through which (actors)...conduct their social life. Because culture has an important role to play in the management sciences, Ahiauzu (1987) and Johnnie (1996b) have in the past, used ethnographic