

## How do you Know (Conventional Research)

I know because I did a study which framed an answerable question and employed sound methods of investigation. The account produced by analysis of my data is true because, within some known margin of error, it corresponds with what is actually going on. I believe that class consisted of a real set of interactions with a temporal and spatial locus. The events were complex, but by breaking them into units, parceling out extraneous elements until the particular was revealed, I could assume they were knowable. Beneath fluctuations over time and variability across cases, lie the regularities of lawful human behavior.

The first requisite was that I maintain objectivity by limiting interaction with people in the study context and insulating the data from any personal influence. My recorded observations were publicly verified for reliability and the analysis follow a strict protocol for legitimate operations. The findings are all linked directly to the question asked, the most serious of the rival accounts can be refuted, my report will allow replication, and my assertions while properly tentative, can by that means be proven true.

While I now know only about the particular point tested in my design, a series of studies can be used to weave a larger network of assertions which will capture enough of the real world to allow prediction, and thus a measure of control through informed action.

## How do you Know (Qualitative Research)

I can't answer your question exactly as asked, at least not until we share a common definition of what it means to know something. It may help if I tell you about the study, but if you are to get a full and fair impression of what I learned and how I learned it, you will have to read the report. I went to the site, negotiated carefully for permission to visit, and stayed a long time. Each day I would watch unobtrusively, listen, ask discreet questions, and keep meticulous records of everything. I worked at establishing myself as a friendly, non-judgmental observer who never intruded.

I cultivated some participants who became both friends and collaborators, shearing information not otherwise available to outsiders. I didn't believe everything I was told, or even some of what I saw, often crosschecking points with second and third sources. I recorded how my initial hunches and study plans changed under the impact of accumulated experience, and how evidence that did not fit my emerging analysis was pursued and either explained or accommodated.