

**Bachelor in Politics And International Studies
Bachelor in Sociology**

Digital Data, Data Collection (QS102)

Philippe Blanchard

Bachelor in Politics And International Studies
Bachelor in Sociology

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**Week 1: Presentation of the seminar
+ The role of data in the social sciences
before and since the digital times**

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Week 1

The image is a composite graphic. On the left, a cartoon shows a man in a hat and a woman in a doorway. The man is holding a clipboard and looking at the woman. The woman is looking back at him. The cartoon is signed 'PARK CHIT'. Below the cartoon, the text reads: "WE'RE CONDUCTING A SURVEY TO FIND OUT HOW MANY MARRIED COUPLES STILL HAVE THAT OLD FEELING". To the right of the cartoon is a large, complex network graph with many nodes and connecting lines. The nodes are labeled with names of artists and art movements, such as 'CUBISM', 'DADAISM', 'SURREALISM', 'ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM', 'MINIMALISM', 'CONTEMPORARY ART', 'POST-CONTEMPORARY ART', 'DIGITAL ART', 'NET ART', 'VIDEO ART', 'SCULPTURE', 'DRAWING', 'PHOTOGRAPHY', 'FILM', 'TELEVISION', 'PERFORMANCE ART', 'LANDSCAPE ART', 'ARCHITECTURE', 'DESIGN', 'CRAFT', 'TEXTILES', 'JEWELRY', 'GLASS', 'METALS', 'WOOD', 'STONE', 'PAPER', 'LEATHER', 'FIBER', 'CERAMICS', 'TEXTILES', 'JEWELRY', 'GLASS', 'METALS', 'WOOD', 'STONE', 'PAPER', 'LEATHER', 'FIBER', 'CERAMICS'. The graph is titled 'Search: 20901212'. Below the network graph, the text reads: 'INVENTING ABSTRACTION 1910-1925 THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART DECEMBER 23, 2012 - APRIL 15, 2013'. At the bottom right of the network graph, there is a small copyright notice: '© 2012 THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK'. In the bottom left corner of the composite image, the text reads: 'Week 1: The role of data in the social sciences before and since the digital times'. At the bottom of the composite image, there is a blue bar with the Warwick logo on the left, the number '4' in the center, 'P. Blanchard-QS102' on the right, and 'Week 1' on the far right.

Week 1: The role of data in the social sciences before and since the digital times

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Week 1

Organisation of the seminar

- Who I am
- The QStep project and methods courses
- Course webpages: important!
- Schedule and times
- Seminars and essays
- Advice and feedback hours
- Questions?

Content of the seminar

- Some reading
...and some practising
- Some social and political theory (develop your critical mind!),
some case studies (see what real research looks like)
...and some techniques (acquire some standard tools)
- Some individual work (summative work)
...and some team work (formative).

Assessments

1. **Formative:** By teams of two, compose a research question and a survey questionnaire to test it. Justify your choices using the lectures, your readings and your personal knowledge of the topic.
 - Essay title discussion: optional, by email or appointment
 - Tabula submission: 9th-18th Feb
 - Feedback: 18th March

2. **Summative:** Individually, pass the questionnaire online, treat and interpret the results. You may continue collaborating, but the essay has to be composed and written personally, taking an angle that significantly differs from your partner. The RQ may be rearranged after the formative essay.
 - Essay title submission: tbc
 - Tabula submission: 27th Apr.-5th May
 - Feedback: 4th June

The Warwick Q-Step Team



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Philippe Blanchard

Warwick Q-Step Centre

About Study Placements Research People News and Events

Quantitative Methods Degrees » Course Structure Politics and QM

An Overview of Course Structure - Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods (7L29)

Year one	
1	Introduction to Politics (CORE)
2	World Politics (CORE)
3	Introduction to Quantitative Methods (CORE)
4	Introduction to Qualitative Methods (CORE)
5	Digital Data - Data Collection (Option) or other Option in PAIS or cognate department

Year Two	
1	Political Theory from Hobbes (CORE)
2	Core Issues in Comparative Politics (CORE)
3	Statistical Models for Social Analytics (CORE)
4	Option Module
5	Numbers in the Workplace - Placement (CORE) [SUMMER] 1-week Quantitative Methods Spring Camp [EASTER]

Year Three	
1	Advanced Quantitative Methods (CORE)
2	Optional Modules
3	Quantitative Dissertation (CORE)

Please note: The module titles shown above may be subject to change

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Data?

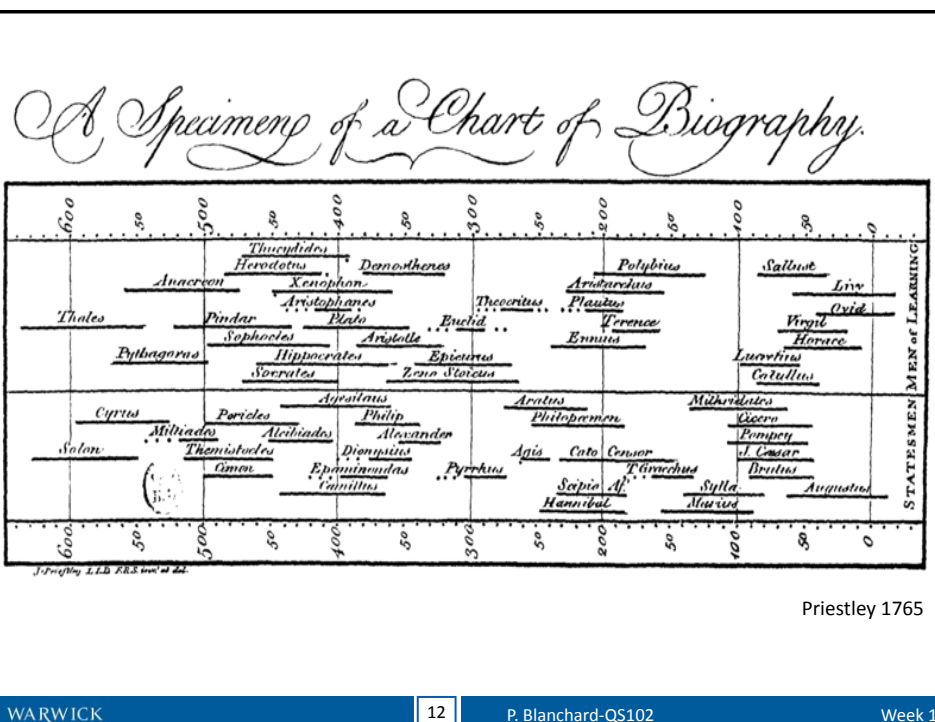
- Data < dare > *versus* informations, facts and evidences
Ex.: Linguistics and dictionaries (Rosenberg *in* Gitelman 2013, chap. 1)
- A philosophical and epistemological debate:
Empiricism, realism, positivism, inductivism
versus
Idealism, constructionism, relativism, deductivism?
- Are there any pure/raw data?
Cf. grounded theory—a worthy sociological approach to fieldwork
Cf. scientific positivism—a less worthy belief
Rather layers of manipulation and relevant levels of standardisation

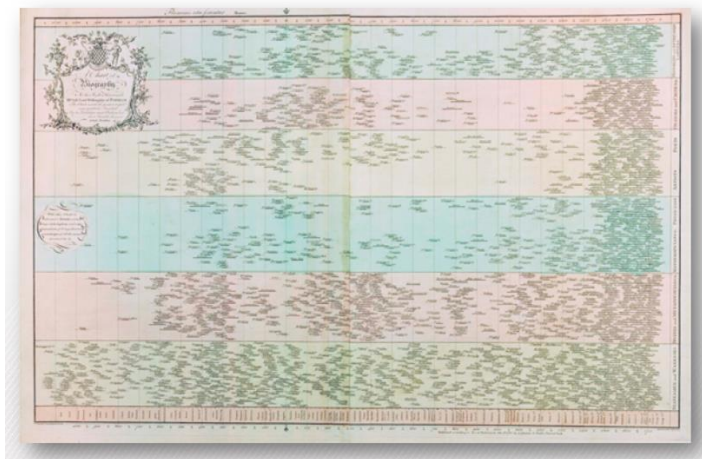
Data—necessary, but not sufficient

- No science without concrete investigation
Pure theorising is pointless
Reliable knowledge requires observation or experimentation

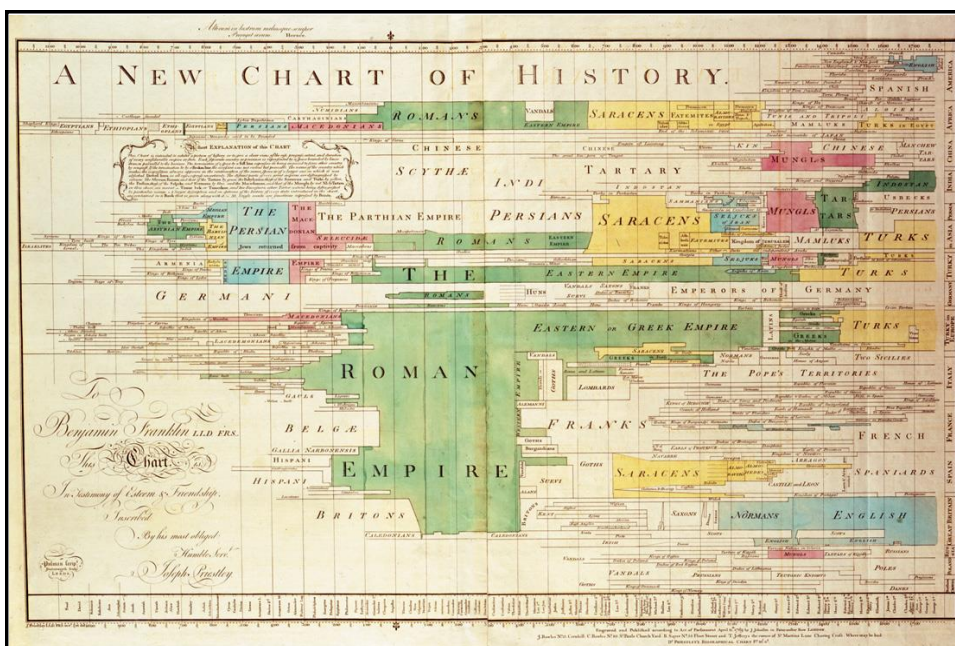
GREAT improvements in science are not, therefore, in general, to be expected from men confined to their clofets. Even the science of human nature requires a knowledge of the world as well as observations on a man's own internal feelings.

Priestley 1765 (cf. Rosenberg in Gitelman 2013, ed.)





Priestley 1765



Priestley 1769

Data—necessary, but not sufficient

- No science without empirical investigation
 - Pure theorising is pointless
 - Reliable knowledge requires observation or experimentation
 - No science without a theoretical frame
 - One sees what one expects
 - New knowledge needs logical articulation with previous
- **The dialectic of cognition (e.g. Kant's schematism)**
- **"Data" reinstate the role of empirical documentation**
 => **Always check empirical grounding in papers.**

What do we call data?

- Systematic collection of pieces of information that document rigorously one given population, group, attitude or event.

Cf. Gruber Garvey *in* Gitelman, chap. 5:

Our present occupation . . . looking over southern papers, is calculated to help us . . . see the inside of that horrible system of oppression which is enfibred with the heart strings of the South. In the advertisements for runaways we detect the cruel whippings & shootings & brandings, practiced on the helpless slaves. Heartsickening as the details are, I am thankful that God in his providence has put into our hands these weapons prepared by the South herself, to destroy the fell monster.¹⁴

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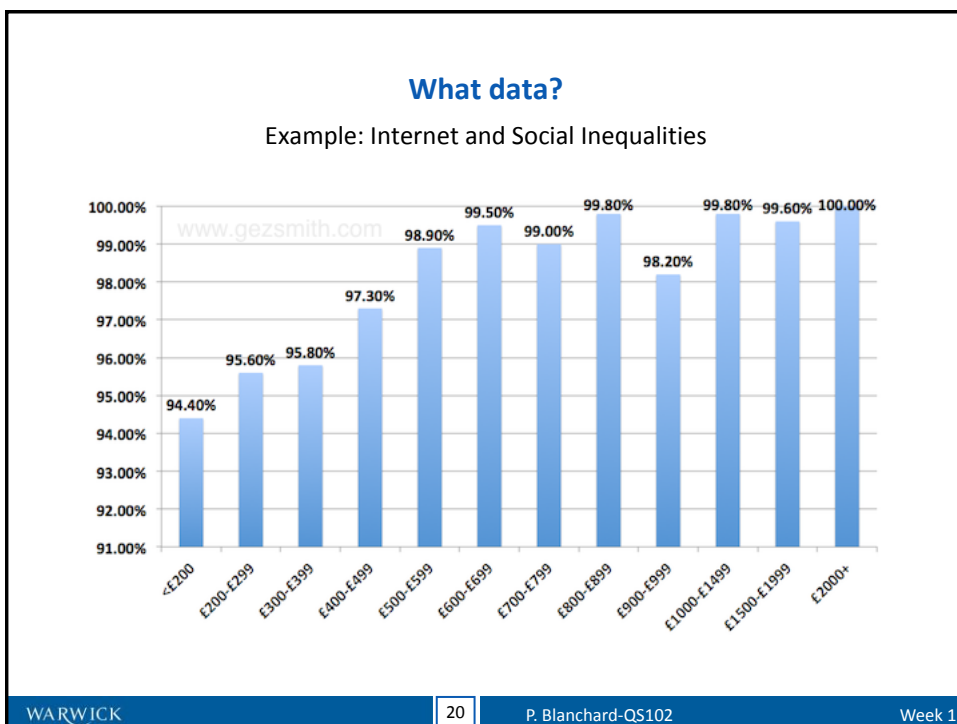
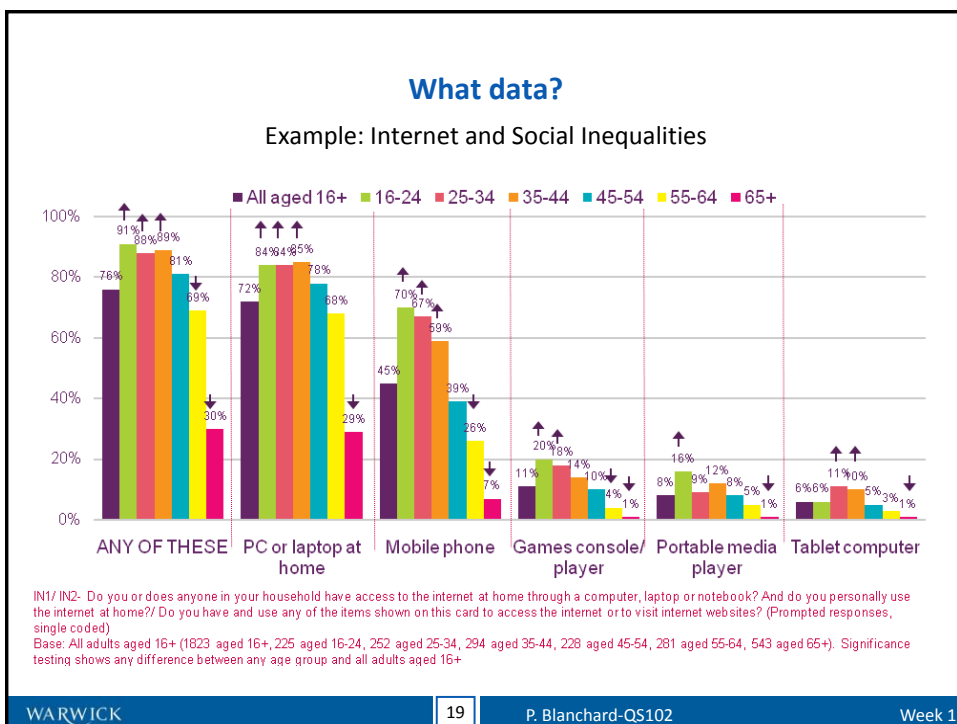
Another method of *marking* slaves, is by drawing out or breaking off one or two *front teeth*—commonly the upper ones, as the mark would in that case be the more obvious. An instance of this kind the reader will recall in the testimony of Sarah M. Grimké . . . of which she had personal knowledge; being well acquainted both with the inhuman master . . . by whose order the brutal deed was done, and with the poor young girl whose mouth was thus barbarously mutilated, to furnish a convenient mark by which to describe her in case of her elopement, as she had frequently run away.¹⁶

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Why data now?

1. Technological factors: www, micro-computing, servers, databases
2. Organisational factors: more and more complex public administrations; globalised companies with global marketing strategies; open access
3. Political factors: social, political and ideological control by governments and allied organisations; war on terrorism
4. Practices of intellectual consumption: online, distant, diversified, strategic in many social settings.

→ **Not new, but reinforced: "Open data", "Data journalism/t", "Data blogs", "Data management", "Big data"...**
(see bibliography on "Big data")



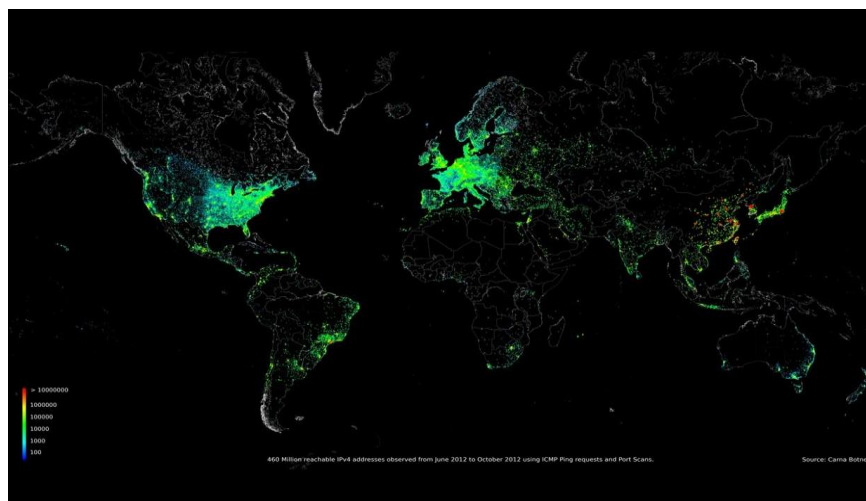
What data?

Example: Internet
and
Social Inequalities



What data?

Example: Internet and Social Inequalities



What about data for social and political sciences?

- Data can be of any kind: words, raw numbers, percentages, images, hyperlinks...
- Data can describe many objects: events, opinions, ideological positions, attitudes, statuses, actions, relationships, etc.
- Data are related to a unit of analysis: individuals, groups, regions, countries, organisations, families, events, actions, records, products, etc.
- Most common: individuals x variables