This is an interesting book and one that is going to be widely discussed. In fact the book has already been debated and several 'response pieces' have been written. The main claim in the work is that the social sciences and its practitioners can be divided into two groups, each having their distinct culture and consequently different views on what good social science is, and how good social science is conducted. One group, the quantitative culture, relies on numbers and regression analysis and a probabilistic view of causality. The other group, the qualitative culture, relies on in-depth case studies, process tracing and a necessary/sufficient condition view on causality.

The book is organised in four sections, each including three to four chapters. The sections cover various aspects of causal models and inference, within-case analysis, concepts and measurements and research design and generalisation. The chapters are clearly and well written and they contrast what the authors believe are the standard operation procedures in the quantitative culture to their set theoretic version of the qualitative culture. This reviewer found the discussion of scope in chapter 16 particularly interesting. Surprisingly the authors do not include what have been labelled interpretivist accounts in their discussion, mainly because these accounts usually do not attempt to make causal claims. This might suggest that the authors believe that the social sciences should focus on causal claims, but we are never told whether this is in fact their position.

The main point that will cause – and already has caused – debate is whether the sociological truth that different research practices can be found in the social sciences can be translated to an epistemological or even ontological truth. Can we, as social scientists, accept that because scientific tasks are approached differently using different methods then there is no best way to get at what is correct? I believe that the authors owe us an answer to this question. Furthermore this reviewer would have liked to see more examples and discussion of how the two cultures can enrich each other, and how research designs can be set up so that the two cultures in combination enhance our understanding of the social world.

All in all the authors should be thanked for writing a very interesting and well-written book which will set the stage for a methodological debate that will enlighten us all.

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