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**Review of *The Logic of Social Research*. Arthur L. Stinchcombe.  
Reviewed by Marvin D. Feit.**

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narcissistic mindset, with its emphasis on lifestyles rather than life chances, but he does it with considerable flair for building upon and synthesizing a vast body of knowledge from American history, literature, and classical and extant social science theories, and through an acute eye and ear for current events and controversies in religion, politics, the arts, and the corporate world.

This is a book of analysis and interpretation, not a manual or manifesto for action or intervention. It has the perspective and, for the most part, the circumspection of a widely read social scientist, not the passion or the commitment of an agent of social change. The book essays a commentary on the narrative of consumption, but has a disappointing omission of the narrative of religious fundamentalism and its byproducts. For a book so audacious in scope, it has surprisingly little discussion of extremism and terrorism for, like it or not, terrorism, whatever its sources, and the muscular and militaristic response to it, rooted in a queer mix of paranoia and real politic, is already beginning to have a more than passing impact on America. An understanding of this relatively new phenomenon is necessary in order to make sense of the changing American society and culture.

Shanti K. Khinduka  
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Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *The Logic of Social Research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005. \$ 20.00 papercover.

*The Logic of Social Research* provides a very different and fascinating perspective for understanding social research. Most of social research addresses its conduct covering topics such as the various steps and procedures one needs to include in research design, the specifics of the independent, dependent, and intervening variable, and so forth. This text examines how best to understand the research components. The author's intention is to orient students to a set of logical problems that the four major research methods (quantitative, historical, ethnographic, and experiential) must address to study social

causation. This approach is significantly different to understanding causation as it addresses the relationship between cause and effect across research methods.

The interesting approach Stinchcombe presents is that historical exploration of causal theories must be viewed in regard to the social, economic and political impacts over time. It is most helpful to understand how major policies and human behavior are affected by the social environment at a particular point in time. It is least helpful to understand those policies if one applies current conditions to previous situations. As the author notes, the context of social action is shaped by the path history has taken, which is a very important key to understanding causation.

As a means to understanding Stinchcombe's presentation, he presents his argument in chapters dealing with topics such as "Methods for Sociology and Related Disciplines", "Using Data to Refine Concepts of Distances between Units of Analysis", "Units of Analysis and Mechanisms: Turning Causes into Effects" and "Testing Theories by Testing Hypotheses with Data", and "Improving Theories with Data."

It is important to note that Stinchcombe's work centers on the logical arguments presented in each research format rather than focusing on how each research format is conducted. For example, central to his argument is the importance of distance in study design and how distance impacts the relationship between cause and effect. He then uses the importance of distance in any social research effect.

One must recognize that in his framework "all causation is a relation between a distance of some sort or a cause and a distance of some sort on the effect." (p. 22). To understand whether causal information has a defined effect, one must be able to measure the difference "between at least two units of analysis." (p. 22). One is then in a position to determine the actual distance between two points and therefore better understand the extent to which cause and effect relationships are real.

When he frames the discussion of cause and effect to include the context and time in which the research takes place, one is struck with the importance of including the processes by which the social action takes place. For example, in the public

health epidemiology model, the environment is a powerful and intervening force in considering the interaction between the host and the causative agent leading to a specific outcome. In other words, the environment can either alleviate, exacerbate, or maintain the relationship between the specific causative agent and the individual or host. For example, when trying to get people to reduce or stop smoking, the impact of tobacco, where marketing and advertising are promotional activities and are key agents in the process, one must remember that each is external/environmental to the primary relationship between tobacco intake (agent) and the individual host. Thus social research must continually take into account the particular context or environment and period of time when social studies are conducted. Stinchcombe's perspective refers his brief introduction to his check of the core logical issues and problems in sociology and methods that have formed the bases of his argument. These issues include outlining the argument; economy in data collection; using data to refine concepts; using data to find mechanisms and processes; theory testing and using data to refine theories.

To place his thoughts in perspective, one must view with caution today's commentaries on the Civil Rights Movement, the War on Drugs, the War on Poverty, when the measurement and analysis fails to take into account the social, economic and political context of the time when these societal efforts emerged, and the relative impact such had on society over time. Thus, affirmative action, and substance abuse diversion programs are examples of specific programs which emerged in response to critical needs at that time, and which are often examined and judged by today's "standards."

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David Stoesz, *Quixote's Ghost: The Right, the Liberati, and the Future of Social Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. \$ 35.00 hardcover.

David Stoesz's *Quixote's Ghost* is an odd, infuriating and engaging book, one that can cause a sort of intellectual