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# Doing Superb, Excellent, Marvelous, Awe-Inspiring, Cool Research (like mine)

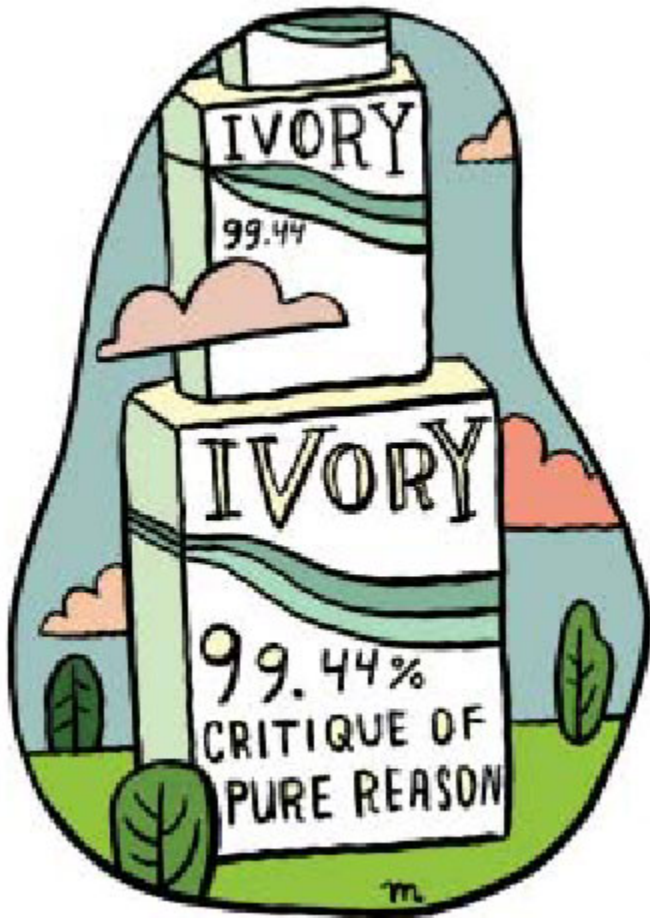
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# Real World Research

“... talk about whatever you consider to be most fun and exciting about the research you do, but particularly to talk about the **real-world** applications of your work (e.g. terror networks, AIDs networks).”

“Since you have done some really interesting and important work applying network analysis to **real world** issues and problems, we were hoping you would be able to talk about your work and what it means to do great research from a more applied perspective.”

# What's the difference?



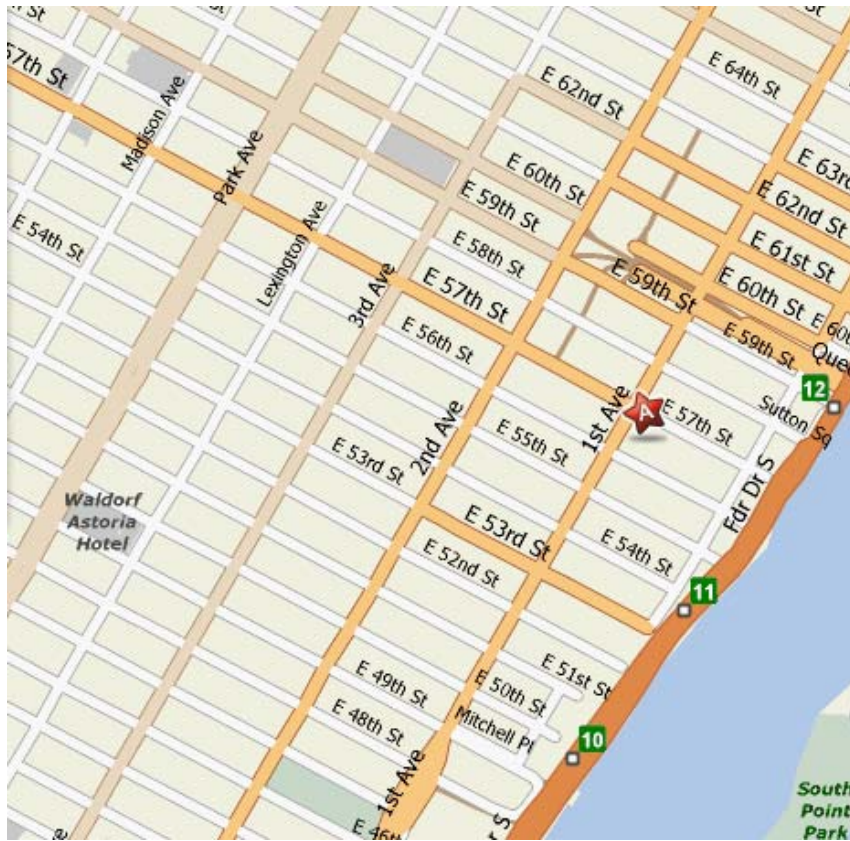
The Ivory Tower



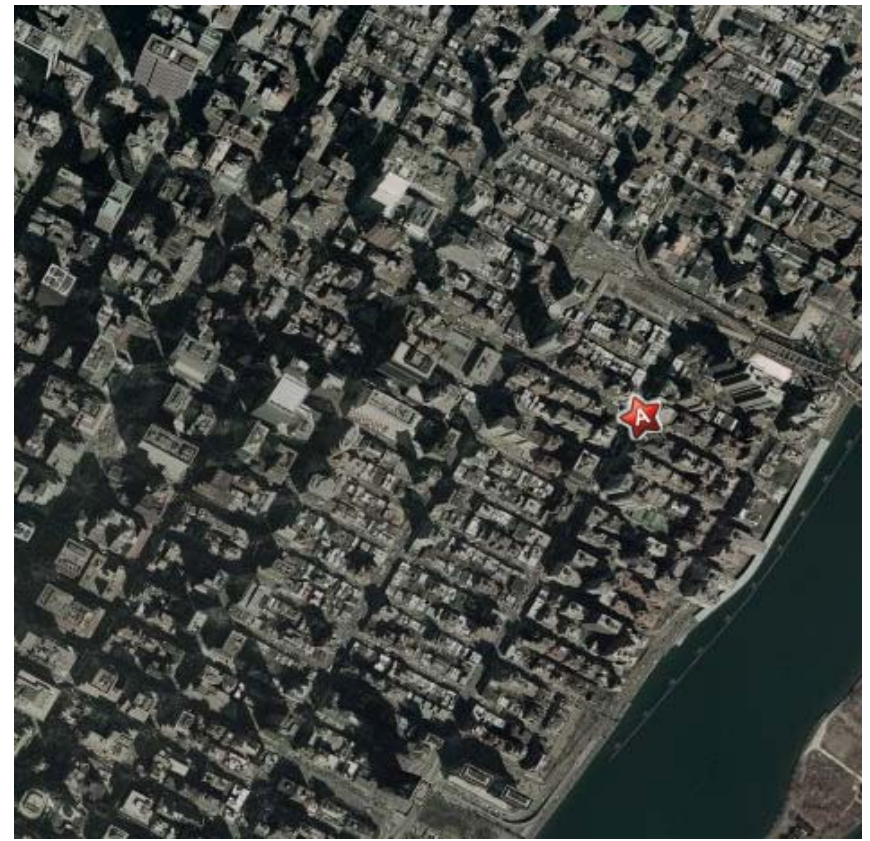
The Real World

# It's not in the approach

(both kinds of research rely on abstracting)



Abstract concepts. The map.  
Simple models. Theory. Etic



Raw sensory input. The territory.  
Complexity. Data. Emic



# DTRA Grant / 3yr project

From DTRA request for proposal (BAA):

Although theoretical arguments on social networks underlie the analyses in many of these studies, there has been a significant lack of integration of all relevant areas of the social sciences. For example, political science offers insights on certain aspects of social networks, as does sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, and organizational studies. The computational social sciences also offer insights on social network issues, and have contributed quantitative methods for looking at interpersonal relationships and activities.

The fundamental reason for this lack of integration is that a broad, generic, adaptable, flexible and modular theory of social networks that spans all relevant disciplines has not been realized.

The objective of this effort is to develop fundamental theoretical approaches which can allow for a fuller understanding of social networks, encompassing network formation, architectures, processes and activities ...

Project Deliverable:

A universal, integrated, network theory of everything

# On the basic/applied dichotomy

- We have probably let basic research get too separated from applied research
  - I don't mean that authors need to expand that obligatory paragraph about the implications for practitioners
    - That just compounds the problem by adding BS
  - Nor do I want most research to be immediately useful to managers
    - Short term focus a mistake – see US government
- Problem with the separation is that it is too easy to lose the meaning and purpose of theory

# Theory today

- Increasingly, theory refers to a network of references and allusions to other work, woven together in an artful way that makes a pretty ensemble that expresses the author's identity
  - And shows how cool the author is
- Theorizing is how you accessorize your study

# Scientism

- Adopting the form of science, but not the underlying logic
  - Every paper twisted into a common format whether it makes sense or not  
Theory → hypotheses → data collection → analysis → results → discussion → limitations → mgr implications
  - Cookie cutter studies
- Fraud or ritual art form?
  - Research papers as *kata* – choreographed forms used in kabuki and karate
- Selling “hits”



# The applied perspective on theory

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”



- Given an observation, such as X leads to Y,
- Theory is constructed to explain why this is
- Hypotheses are not pieces of the theory but rather testable implications
  - If things work the way I think they do, then I should see XYZ
- Prescriptions are also implications of the theory
  - If things work the way I think they do, then I should see XYZ

data → theory → data → action  
(obs)                      (hyp)