

Normative or Empirical? Below are links to scholarly works that use either the empirical approach or normative approach. Generally the author identifies the approach of the research in the thesis statement, which usually is found in the introduction, abstract, or preface. They use words, such as “in this work...,” “I argue that,” or “This book is about ...” You will want to look for and pay attention to these statements, then think about what conclusions the author comes to. What is he or she trying to prove? Then you can ask yourself, from the research, is the author relating the facts as they are laid out (empirical) or making a value judgment (normative)?

Write a short statement (50 words) for each study explaining why you made this determination. Be sure to use examples from the text.

1. Petersen, the author, is relating the facts as they are laid out. This is an empirical piece in which the author attempts to identify the motivations of perpetrators of ethnic violence. For example, Petersen takes a close look at the 1905 Russian Revolution, applying models of Fear, Hatred, Resentment, and Rage to understand the underlying causes of such ethnic conflict during this time as the attacks on those of Jewish heritage.
2. The author, Iris Young, argues that a conception of justice should begin with concepts of domination and oppression. She writes in an empirical manner, relating the facts as they are laid out. This is apparent in her introduction, in which she asks many questions and states her intent not to posit theories, but to examine objectively subjects pertaining to justice. It can be argued that her writing is normative, however, based off when she contends that “justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression.”
3. Elisabeth Wood’s writing is of an empirical nature. It begins with an objective recounting of the ~~facts leading up to the civil war in El Salvador, and there is no value judgement present.~~ For example, she writes, “The farm was expropriated in 1980 as part of the agrarian reform and a cooperative of former employees was named by the military officer present.” This is a simple statement that she uses to describe profound changes in El Salvador without a value judgement being made.
4. The fourth passage, written by Du Bois and Gibson, appears to be an empirical study. While it may seem that certain judgements are made and certain questions asked about spirit of the black man and the life of the black man in the past that are not clearly objective, its primary purpose is to relate the qualities of the time period and the resulting qualities of ‘black folk’. It doesn’t argue that something should be a different way, instead describing a situation that once was. For example, “The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land.”
5. Wilkinson appears to take a look at ethnic violence and party fractionalization in India through an empirical lens at first. Analysis is performed objectively based on relevant facts to determine and understand the true state of and reasoning behind ethnic conflict between different groups in India. In positing specific theories to describe the relationship of ethnic violence and votes, to describe when and why politicians may incite ethnic violence, Wilkinson employs a normative strategy. “First, we know that national-level differences in political institutions, important though they are, cannot explain why different regions and provinces within the same national institutional framework have such different levels of ethnic violence.” Value judgements such as this that question previous studies and ascribe value to a new conclusion that the reader is encouraged to accept are characteristic of a normative approach that Wilkinson employs to validate his theories.
6. Nussbaum’s argument appears to possess elements both normative and empirical in nature, but the main point that the author is attempting to get across is presented through normative argument. The author attaches value to the concept of ‘democracy’ and assesses based on value propositions that recent events in the Republic of India are degrading and damaging to the cause of democracy. Relevant contextual, factual information is cited, but it is presented not based on objectivity, but subjectivity. Furthermore, the author encourages a certain conclusion or goal to be

reached: "This book about India also suggests a way to see America both as it faces outward, relating to a world in which cultures are complex, not simple; and America in relation to itself."