RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Lecture 4:
Research Paradigms

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- **What is Paradigm? Definition, Concept, the Paradigm Shift?**
- **Main Components of a Paradigm: Ontology, Epistemology & Methodology**
- **Research Paradigms and Social Research: Three Main Paradigms**

Paradigm is

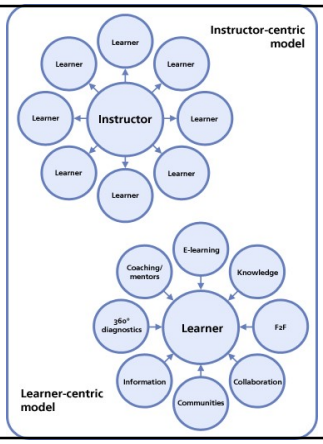
- **A broad framework of perception, understanding, belief within which theories and practices operate.**
- **A Story-Telling Tradition**
- **… a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions their thinking and underpins their research actions [Bassey, 1990: para 8.1]**

Synoptic View of *PARADIGM* ?

- a mental model
- a way of seeing
- a filter for one's perceptions
- a frame of reference
- a framework of thought or beliefs through which one's world or reality is interpreted
- an example used to define a phenomenon
- a commonly held belief among a group of people, such as scientists of a given discipline

Paradigm Shift

- In 1962, Thomas Kuhn wrote *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, and fathered, defined and popularized the concept of "paradigm shift" (p.10). Kuhn argues that scientific advancement is not evolutionary, but rather is a "series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions", and in those revolutions "one conceptual world view is replaced by another".
- Paradigm Shift is a **change from one way of thinking to another**. It's a revolution, a transformation, a sort of metamorphosis. It is driven by agents of change.



Main Components of Research Paradigm:

(Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology)

Ontology is study of reality

- **Norman Blaikie –**
- **ontological claims are about the nature of reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other.**

Epistemology is study of Knowledge

- **Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge and possible ways of gaining knowledge, especially in regard to its methods and validation.**

Knowledge theories differ based on the ontological position of the researcher

Research Methodology

Methodology refers to general principles which underline how we investigate the social world and how we demonstrate that the knowledge generated is valid.

Research Methodology follows from epistemological position, which itself is defined by the ontological assumptions of a research

Research Paradigms and Social Research

Basic Beliefs (Metaphysics) of Alternative Inquiry Paradigms

Item	Positivism	Post Positivism	Critical Theory, et al	Constructivism
Ontology	Naïve realism—"real" reality but apprehendable	Critical realism—"real" reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Historical realism—virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time	Relativism—local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; findings true	Modified dualist/ objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional/ subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional/ subjectivist; created findings
Methodology	Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods methods	Modified experimental/ manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative	Dialogic/dialectical	Hermeneutical/ dialectical

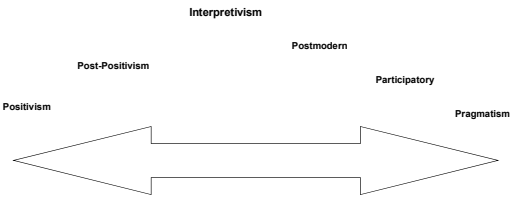
Paradigm Positions on Selected Practical Issues

Issue	Positivism	Post Positivism	Critical Theory, et al	Constructivism
Nature of knowledge	Verified hypotheses established as facts or laws	Non falsified hypotheses that are probable facts or laws	Structural/historical insights	Individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus
Inquiry aim	explanation	Prediction and control	Critique and transformation, restitution and emancipation	Understanding; reconstruction
Knowledge accumulation	Accretion – "building blocks" adding to "edifice of knowledge"; generalizations and cause-effect linkages		Historical situatedness; generalization by similarity	More informed and sophisticated reconstructions, vicarious experience
Goodness or quality criteria	Conventional benchmarks of "rigor" internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity		Historical situatenedness; erosion of ignorance and misapprehensions, action stimulus	Credibility, Trustworthiness, Authenticity, Transferability
Values	Excluded – influence denied		Included -- formative	

Paradigm Positions on Selected Practical Issues (Continued)

Issue	Positivism	Post Positivism	Critical Theory, et al	Constructivism
Ethics	Extrinsic; tilt towards deception		Intrinsic; tilt towards moral elevation	Intrinsic; process tilt towards revelation; special problems
Voice	"disinterested scientist" as informer of decision makers, policy makers, and change agents		"transformative intellectual" as advocate and activist	"passionate participant" as facilitator of multi-voice reconstruction
Training	Technical and quantitative; substantive theories	Technical; quantitative and qualitative; substantive theories	Re-socialization; qualitative and quantitative; history; values of altruism and empowerment	
Accommodation	Commensurable		Incommensurable	
Hegemony	In control of publication, funding, promotion, and tenure		Seeking recognition and input	

Theoretical Perspective History



Positivism, Critical Theory et. al, Interpretivism/Constructivism: Further Comparison Among Paradigms

Positivism

Quantitative purists (Positivists):

- **Believe that social observations should be treated as entities in much the same way that physical scientists treat physical phenomena.**
- **Contend that the observer is separate from the entities that are subject to observation.**
- **Maintain that social science inquiry should be objective.**
- **That time- and context-free generalizations (Nagel, 1986) are desirable and possible, and**
- **Real causes of social scientific outcomes can be determined reliably and validly.**

Interpretivism/Constructivism

- Qualitative purists (also called *constructivists* and *interpretivists*) reject positivism.
- Argue for the superiority of constructivism, idealism, relativism, humanism, hermeneutics, and, sometimes, postmodernism.
- Contend that multiple-constructed realities abound,
- That time- and context-free generalizations are neither desirable nor possible,

Interpretivism/Constructivism (Cont'd)

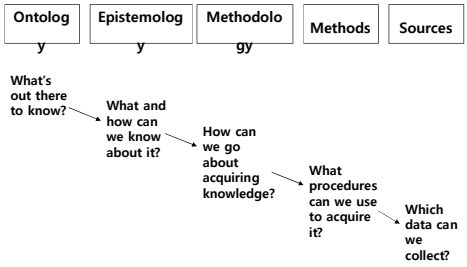
- That research is value-bound,
- That it is impossible to differentiate fully causes and effects,
- That logic flows from specific to general (e.g., explanations are generated inductively from the data), and
- That knower and known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is the only source of reality.

Understanding Critical Theory

Two Propositions

- 1) People are a product of the society in which they live. Hence this implies that their is no such thing as an objective fact that can be known outside of social structure.
- 2) Intellectuals should not try to be objective and separate value judgments from their work

Inter-relationship between the building blocks of Research



Adapted from Hay, 2002, pg. 64

Researcher as Bricoleur

The Qualitative Researcher as Bricoleur

The multiple methodologies of qualitative research may be viewed as a bricolage, and the researcher as bricoleur.

The bricoleur produces a bricolage, that is, a pieced together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation.

- **The researcher-as-bricoleur-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms.**
- **Research is an interactive process shaped by researcher's personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting.**
- **The bricoleur knows that there is no value-free science.**