PARADIGMATIC ROOTS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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What is a Paradigm?

“Paradigms are patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished”

Weaver and Olson (2006, p. 460)
Paradigm Functions

Define how the world works, how knowledge is extracted from this world, and how one is to think, write, and talk about this knowledge.

Maintain consistency in research (Paradigm matches theory, matches design, matches findings, etc.)

Good research = being able to articulate the nature of your inquiry in the write-up of your study.
Philosophical Assumptions of Paradigms

Ontology: a stance toward the nature of reality

Epistemology: how the researcher knows what she or he knows

Axiology: the role of values in the research

Rhetoric: the language of research

Methodology: the appropriate methods used in the research process
Major Paradigms

![Paradigm Diagram]

**Source:** Alvesson and Deetz (2000, p. 24)
Origin of concepts and problem statements

Local/Emergent – Seeks situated knowledge claims

Elite/a priori - Search for large-scale empirical generalizations
Relation of research to existing social orders

Consensus – identifying the social world’s underlying stable and orderly patterns

Dissensus – conflict, fragmentation, struggle, and disorder as normal
Normative/Post-Positive Paradigm

Goal: Uncover basic, law-like patterns between variables

Represents an objective reality

Minimize subjectivity of researcher and participants
Interpretive Paradigm

Goal: Understand how particular realities are produced and maintained

Focuses on shared values and common practices

Explores multiple, subjective realities and perspectives of those who are studied
Critical Paradigm

Goal: demonstrate and critique forms of domination

Social world is full of struggle and power relations

Use a priori theoretical commitments to deconstruct domination
Dialogic Paradigm

Goal: focus on ruptures, struggles, and fragmentation seen to characterize language use

Central place given to discourse, or ideology by which social realities are shaped
Can you situate yourself in more than one Paradigm?

“Unquestionably, too, as an applied research methodologist my focus is on research designs or procedures, not on philosophical assumptions. Granted, these assumptions cannot be separated from procedures, but I position these assumptions in the background rather than the foreground, admitting openly that I am not a philosopher of education but rather a research methodologist”

(Creswell, 2007, p. 11)
Pragmatism

- Not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality.
- Focus is on the outcomes of research, and the solutions to problems.
- The problem being studied and the questions that are asked guide the methodology.
- Truth or knowledge is not based on the dualism of multiple vs single/shared reality, but rather on what works at the time.
“To a pragmatist, the mandate of science is not to find truth or reality, the existence of which are perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem-solving”

(Powell, 2001, p. 884)
Can you conduct qualitative research from each of these paradigms?
Qualitative Normative/Post-Positive Studies

Still cause-and-effect oriented

Still use deductive reasoning based on a priori theories

Researchers will likely believe in multiple perspectives rather than a single reality

Likely to use computer programs, statistical analyses, and measure intercoder reliability
Qualitative Critical Studies

Post-positivism does not fit marginalized individuals or groups

Interpretivism does not go far enough in advocating for change

Research should include an action agenda, or a call for change

Focus on issues such as oppression, domination, suppression, alienation, and hegemony

Researchers provide voice for the marginalized
Qualitative Dialogic Studies

Engage participants in talk about identity issues and then analyze the transcripts to identify completing ideologies and how they are organized in the participants’ talk.
Pragmatism Studies

Multiple methods of data collection

Use mixed-methodology (Qual only part of the study)

Focus on practical implications of research (often applied research)

Focus on research that solves a problem
Interpretive Studies

Concerned with how people view an object or event and the meanings that they attribute to it

Multiple realities

Not interested in averages, but in the syntheses (consensus) of understandings

Recognize the role of the researcher in the research process
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Implications for Practice (Examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontological</td>
<td>What is the nature of reality?</td>
<td>Reality is subjective and multiple, as seen by participants in the study</td>
<td>Researcher uses quotes and themes in words of participants and provides evidence of different perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?</td>
<td>Researcher attempts to lessen distance between himself or herself and that being researched</td>
<td>Researcher collaborates, spends time in field with participants, and becomes an “insider”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Axiological</td>
<td>What is the role of values?</td>
<td>Researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden and that biases are present</td>
<td>Researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes his or her own interpretation in conjunction with the interpretations of participants</td>
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<td>Rhetorical</td>
<td>What is the language of research?</td>
<td>Researcher writes in a literary, informal style using the personal voice and uses qualitative terms and limited definitions</td>
<td>Researcher uses an engaging style of narrative, may use first-person pronoun, and employs the language of qualitative research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>What is the process of research?</td>
<td>Researcher uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design</td>
<td>Researcher works with particulars (details) before generalizations, describes in detail the context of the study, and continually revises questions from experiences in the field</td>
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Think of your research topic:

- In paradigm is it situated?
  - Why? (argue for its placement)

- How would your topic/RQs change in each of the 5 paradigms?