# Research Paradigms

**NUR 1024 – Foundations of Qualitative Inquiry, Winter 2011, D. Gastaldo**

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| **Ontology:** What do we believe about the nature of reality? What is the nature of reality? | - Reality exists but is imperfectly and probabilistically comprehended  
- Individuals are perceive mainly as rational actors; they have choice and autonomy; there are causes and effects to human behaviour  
- Reality is stable and temporarily persistent thus allows generalization  
- Some degree of critical realism characterizes post-positivism | (1) Critical realism or historical realism: social structures are historically constructed and they shape and represent current reality; reality is both objective and subjective  
- Power struggles define reality  
- Values and ideas are naturalized over time and that is what we think reality is  
- Individuals have agency and potential for autonomy despite social structures | - Relativism: Multiple interpretations of reality account for a single phenomenon  
- Reality is dynamic and socially co-constructed  
- There are many specific constructs of reality (individual or negotiated consensus) |
| **Epistemology:** How do we know what we know? What is the nature of knowledge? | - Revised objectivism and dualism: attempts of neutral assessment and knowledge creation in binary oppositions  
- Findings are the closest we can get to the truth; predictive character  
- Experience must be verifiable to be a source of knowledge (evidence)  
- Examples in social sciences: Functionalism and behaviourism | (1) Focus on structural forces and value-mediated knowledge production:  
- Reveals ideologies and false consciousness  
- Against oppression and in favour social justice  
- Examples of social theories: Marxism and neo-Marxism, (2nd wave) feminism, critical theories, postcolonialism, critical race studies, and queer theory | - Transactional: Knowledge is produced between researcher and participant  
- Knowledge is the result of a process of human interactions in specific locations  
- Truth is mediated by interpretation and meanings  
- Examples of social theories and philosophies: Phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, social constructionism |
| **Methodology:** How should we study the world? How to create knowledge? | - Hypothetico-deductive method  
- Verification or falsification of hypotheses  
- Researcher and subjects are independent of one another  
- Primarily quantitative but include some qualitative studies (descriptive, some forms of grounded theory)  
- Typical designs include experimental studies and randomized controlled trials | (1) Critique, dialogical, and dialectical: Confrontation of oppressive structures and transformational aims for knowledge production  
- Quantitative and qualitative  
- Examples: Participatory and action research, dialogical and cooperative inquiry, critical ethnography, institutional ethnography | - Hermeneutics: Search for meanings and consensus through lived experiences  
- Qualitative  
- Examples: Constructivist grounded theory and ethnomethodology |
| **Position of Researcher:** Who is the researcher within this paradigm? | - To discover what is real and to be an informed of findings to knowledge users  
- To control subjectivity to avoid bias  
- In qualitative, to uncover how people “really think” | (1) Organic Intellectual: Researcher is involved in empowerment, advocacy or committed towards social justice; explicit social agenda; personal position is basis for interpretation of findings; many times co-ownership of findings; KTE for social change  
(2) Transgressive Intellectual: Challenges other paradigms propositions; aware that (s)he benefits from current power arrangements and has multiple subjectivities | - Passionate participant and co-creator of multiple voices; altruist values  
- Researcher’s subjectivity is essential for the co-creation of meaning |

**References**

My own thinking on research paradigms.
