



METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGMS

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Learning Objectives

01

Understand what a methodological paradigm is.

02

Be familiar with objective vs. subjective ontologies.

03

Have comprehension of the various methodological paradigms in qualitative research.



Ways of Understanding Reality

- Ontology – nature of reality
- Epistemology – theory of knowledge
- Methodology – approach for gathering “data” about knowledge
- Methodological paradigm = ontology (reality) + epistemology (knowledge) + methodology (gather knowledge)

EVERYTHING YOU CAN IMAGINE IS REAL



Identifying Different Paradigms (and Your Own)

- Bewilderment at wide array.
- Researchers create their own methodological paradigms.
- Theoretical perspectives within methodological paradigms help justify design choices.
- Questions to ask:
 - What methods do we propose to use?
 - What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?
 - What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?
 - What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?



Epistemology

Theoretical
Perspective

Methodology

Methods

Crotty's Definitions (p. 3)

- Method: “the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis.” Like questionnaires, surveys, experiments, interviews, or focus groups.
- Methodology: “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of your methods to the desired outcomes.” Like experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, interview, or narrative studies.
- Theoretical perspective: “the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria.” I.e. your methodological paradigm like positivism, interpretivism, or critical inquiry.
- Epistemology: “the theory of knowledge established in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology.” Like objectivism, constructionism, or subjectivism.

Paradigms in Quantitative Research

- Objectivism: “meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness” (Crotty, p. 8).
- Methodologies & collection methods collect data under this assumption.

Objectivism

Positivism

Experimental, quasi-experimental, correlative, etc.

Surveys, pre-post test data, etc.



Paradigms in Qualitative Research

Constructionism, subjectivism,
etc.

Positivist/postpositivist,
Constructivist/interpretive,
Critical, Feminist/post-structural

Phenomenology, grounded theory,
ethnography, etc.

Interviews, observations,
documents, etc.

- Interpretive paradigms
- 4 major paradigms:
 - Positivist/postpositivist
 - Constructivist/interpretive
 - Critical
 - Feminist/post-structural



A Qualitative Example

Constructivism

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graph TD; A[Constructivism] --> B[Critical Realism]; B --> C[Basic qualitative research, case study, grounded theory, etc.]; C --> D[Interviews, observations, focus groups, etc.];
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Critical Realism

Basic qualitative research, case study, grounded theory, etc.

Interviews, observations, focus groups, etc.



References

- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

