

## The blurred lines of research paradigms: Where are you?

Summary of presentation by Dr. Larkin Lamarche (they/them)

### What is a paradigm?

A set of interconnected or related assumptions or beliefs. These beliefs relate to ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Paradigms anchor a research study, and therefore a certain research question should line up with ontological, epistemological, and methodological components that anchor the question. Knowing about these three components may allow someone to be more aware of having them line up, so that they can be consistent with one another throughout a research study.

Ontology is the nature of reality – what we believe constitutes reality.

Epistemology has to do with knowledge – what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified.

Methodology – plan of action of the process and the decisions behind acquiring that knowledge. Methodology is a bit broader than methods alone as it includes the overall strategy of the plan and the decisions behind acquiring that knowledge.

### How to identify your paradigm?

1. What is the nature of reality?
2. What is the purpose of research?
3. What is the nature of truth and knowledge?
4. What is the role of objectivity?
5. What is the role of values?
6. What is the role of the researcher?
7. How is knowledge created?

These are the questions you need to work through. These questions relate to how those assumptions and beliefs underlie paradigms. If you were to respond to each of these questions based on what you believe, the responses that you respond with are linked to a certain paradigm. You are encouraged to find out where you operate by answering these questions and seeing which specific paradigm your responses match with.

### Common Paradigms: Where do you operate?

*Participatory:* reality is formed through active participation. The aim of research is for mutual benefit and growth between people.

*Critical:* reality is shaped by social, political, economical, and other values formed over time. The purpose of the research is to emancipate because people are capable of controlling their own destiny. Truth is influenced by history and societal structures.

*Interpretivism:* reality is socially constructed. The aim of research is increased understanding of complex human phenomenon. Values are a means of understanding. Knowledge is co-constructed between participants and researchers.

*Post-positivism:* reality is a physical and observable event. The aim of research is to imperfectly predict and explain generalizing results. The researcher can and should be objective to the best of their ability. Good research is value free. Researchers study a problem. Knowledge is verified through rigorous methodologies.

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*Others:* There are many other paradigms, this is an area of research that is constantly changing. It's important to stay current in this area to know how language and paradigms are changing.

### **How might understanding paradigms help you in your work?**

The paradigm you're operating from should line up with the beliefs about data and knowledge. This informs your methodology, methods and ultimately the conclusions that you want to make. People in a research team may operate from different paradigms. This means that the research problem is being looked at from different angles. It can be beneficial to think about things from multiple perspectives to develop a solution for a problem. Understanding that people operate from different paradigms can help facilitate communication on a research team.

### **Additional resources:**

1. Please watch the presentation to learn about paradigms in mixed methods research, conflicting paradigm and Dialectical Pluralism: A metaparadigm