Prifysgol Cymru
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Research Paradigms

DSAW6075/DSAW7075 Research Methods for Work-based Learning

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives

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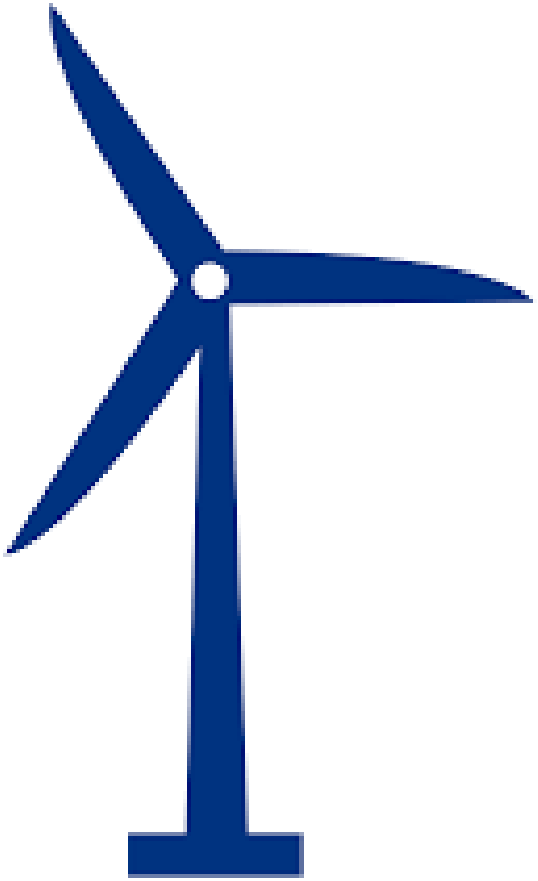
Building a paradigm

- A ‘paradigm’ is a pattern, model, or typical example
- All research is drawn from within a paradigm
  - This paradigm sets the stage, and determines:
    - What the researcher is interested in knowing
    - What the researcher sees as valid questions
    - What the researcher sees as valid answers
    - What the researcher sees as effective ways to answer questions and achieve knowledge

Ontology

Epistemology

Methodology



… and turns the wheels of research!

Building a paradigm…

- What happens when we link our ontological positions with epistemological positions?

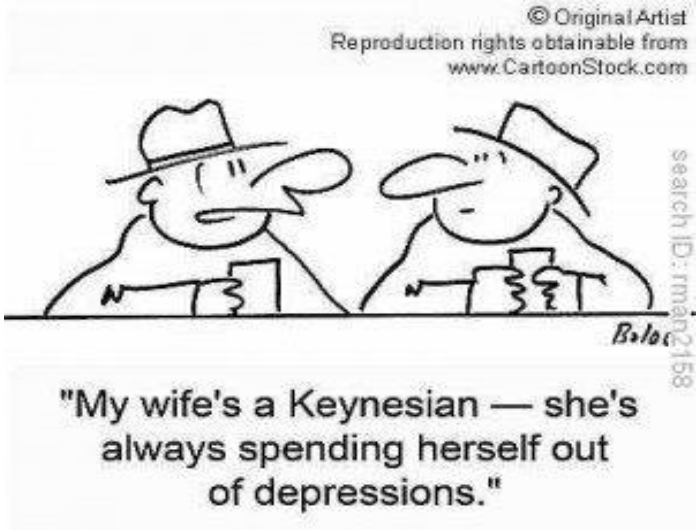
For gnomes who love chemistry, avoiding the Bunsen burner remains a major challenge.

Objectivist + Positivist

"The Chemist"

"There is a correct answer to this question, and I can find it by discovering and analysing what has happened/is happening."

- Believes that there is valid 'truth', a single, objective 'reality', and that there are 'right' and 'wrong' answers to questions.
- Also believes that in order to FIND these things, we must test, measure, gauge, and 'discover'.



Objectivist + Interpretivist

"The Economist"

"There is a correct answer to this question, but in order to find it I need to see if through the eyes of all the groups involved."

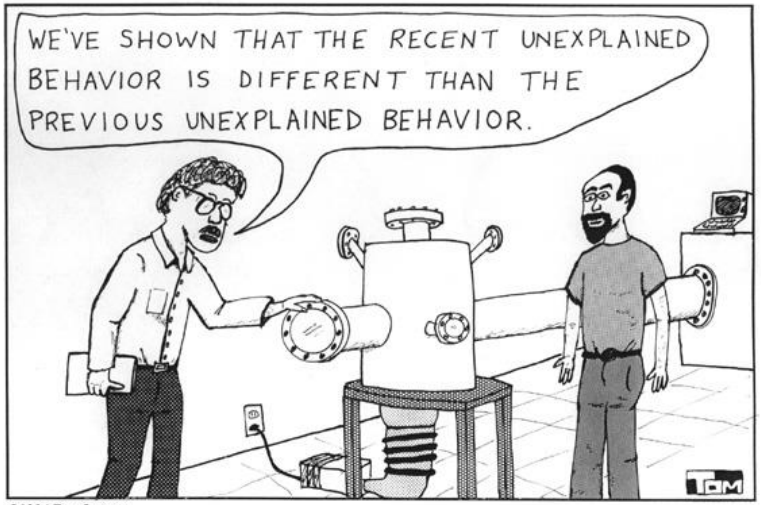
- Believes that there is valid 'truth', a single, objective 'reality', and that there are 'right' and 'wrong' answers to questions.
- Also believes that in order to FIND these things, people's thoughts, beliefs, understandings, and opinions are crucial.

Subjectivist + Interpretivist

"The Anthropologist"

"There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to this question, but I can learn more about it through examining the perspectives of groups involved."

- Believes there is no single, objective 'reality' and that there is no such thing as 'right' or 'wrong' answers – everything comes through the lens of experience and perception, and can only be understood in this way.
- Also believes that in order to UNDERSTAND these things, people's thoughts, beliefs, understandings, and opinions are crucial.



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Subjectivist + Positivist

"The Theoretical Physicist"

"There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to this question, but I can gain knowledge through analysing and measuring what has happened/is happening."

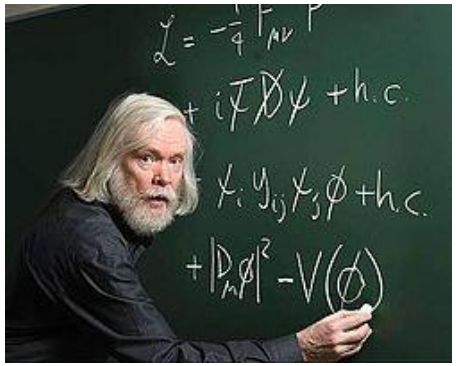
- Believes there is no single, objective 'reality' and that there is no such thing as 'right' or 'wrong' – everything comes through the lens of experience and perception, and can only be understood in this way.
- Also believes that in order to UNDERSTAND these things, we must test, measure, gauge, and 'discover'.

Who are you…?

Objectivist

Positivist

Interpretivist



Subjectivist

Building a paradigm…

- Do you think some of these combinations are more or less common?
- Which ones?
- Why?
- Do you think you can ever TRULY subscribe to an epistemological position that seems ‘contrary’ to your ontological beliefs?

A few things to remember about ontological and epistemological positions….

Both epistemological and ontological positions exist on a **continuum**

You don't necessarily have to fall at one extreme or the other – very few people do

You aren’t ‘stuck’ working from one ontological and epistemological position.

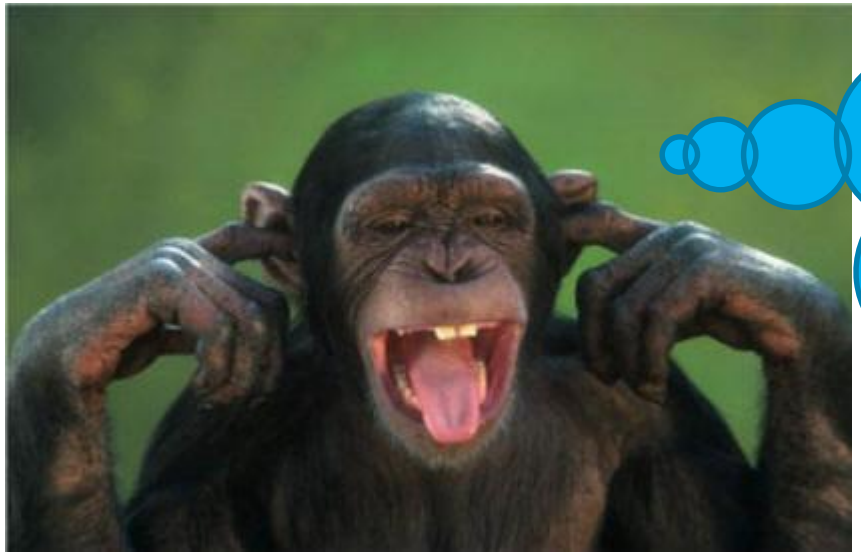
As long as you accept that your underlying beliefs will always have an impact on the research you do, and must be acknowledged

There’s nothing to stop you changing up your perspective to fit the situation!

There's rarely one 'correct' ontological and/or epistemological position that fits a research situation.

The choices you make (and your natural inclinations) will affect the research, but there is a lot of valid knowledge out there to find!

The only bad paradigm is an unacknowledged/improperly acknowledged paradigm



Your perspective isn't 'right' or 'wrong', it just IS. The only way to make it wrong is to fail to acknowledge it, or to acknowledge it inaccurately/untruthfully

Building a paradigm…

- Once we've linked our epistemological and ontological positions, how do we identify a methodology that suits our pursuit of knowledge?

Choosing a methodology

Quantitative

- Almost always linked to a **positivist** epistemology

Qualitative

- Almost always linked to an **interpretivist** epistemology

Choosing a methodology

- While a research project usually has a primary methodology (and that primary methodology is linked to the epistemological position of the researcher…) a great many research projects utilise **mixed methodologies**

Mixed Methodology

- A mixed methodology study is just what it sounds like: using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies
- Why might this be useful in a research or project context?

Activity!

Identify ‘What research can [X] do?’

Identify a ‘research question’ and give a brief outline of what methods the character could use to answer that question, based upon the ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions given on the card.

Make the connections

- Reflect on the reading you did for Day 1
  - Take some time to think about what field of research the author is most interested in, and how that field of research might influence the methods focused on in the text
  - What does this say about research paradigms and their influence?
  - What might this mean for your own engagement with research?

Review Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology, and Research Paradigms

- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011) *Research Methods in Education.* Abingdon: Routledge.
  - Chapter 1 (p. 3-30)
- Costley, C., Elliott, G., and Paul Gibbs (2012) *Doing Work Based Research, Approaches to Enquiry for Insider-Researchers.* London: Sage.
  - Chapter 2 (p. 8-24)
- Gill, J and Phil Johnson, (2012) *Research Methods for Managers*. (4th ed) London: Sage.
  - Chapter 3 (p. 38-68)
  - Part III (p. 185-213)

- Davies, M.B., (2007) *Doing a Successful Research Project - Using Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*. London: Palgrave.
  - Chapter 2 (p. 17-34)
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., and Jackson, P., (2012) *Management Research.* (4th ed) London: Sage.
  - Chapter 1 (p. 1-12)
- Gray, D. E. (2004). *Doing Research in the Real World*. London: Sage.
  - Chapter 2 (p. 15-34)
- Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (2001) *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. London: Sage.
  - Part 1 (p. 15-156)
- Walliman, N. (2001) *Your Research Project: A step-by-step guide for the first-time researcher.* London: Sage
  - Chapter 2 (p. 57-86)