

Paradigms, theory and frameworks in scholarly enquiry

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Beginnings

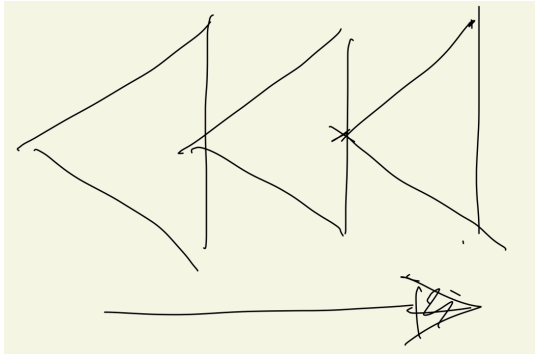
Ernest Gellner (1964), *Thought and change*

both empirically *and a priori*. Empirically, it seems far more natural now to view history as a succession of plateaux, interrupted by steep, near perpendicular cliffs – by the dramatic and profound transformations. There was the neolithic revolution, and there is the industrial one, and the sociology of either must be concerned primarily with *change*; but the sociology of the societies on the intervening plateau may tend to be ‘functionalist’ and be concerned primarily with the manner in which they maintained themselves in relative stability. Even when concerned with changes within them (sometimes dramatic ones), there can still be no presumption that these undulations on the plateau are somehow premonitions of the cliff to come, that these changes are somehow contributions, preparations, dress-rehearsals for the major change which is to come. This – the fact that history is now far more plausibly seen as a succession of cliffs and plateaux without any underlying, so to speak,

Key images



‘Climb one mountain and look at the rest from its summit’

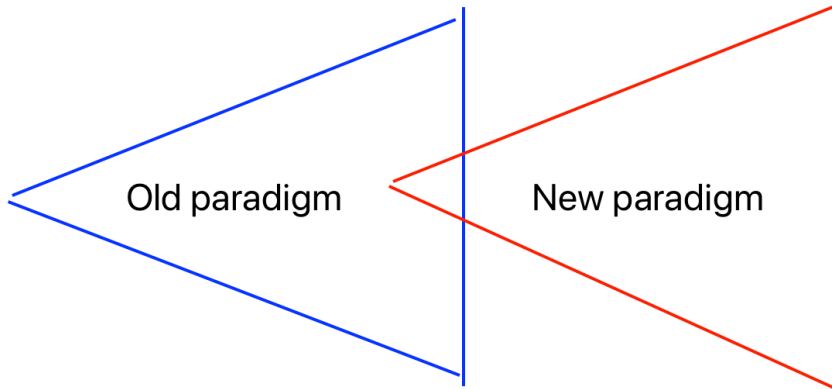


Paradigms

Thomas Kuhn (1970) *The structure of scientific revolutions* - (1st edition 1962)

Scientific revolutions

Paradigm - distinctly influential system of ideas that **governs** scientific research and practice



The old paradigm becomes more and more bureaucratic

More and more researchers losing sight of original ideas

The new paradigm attacks established academic structures

→ careers, specialisms, reputations, publications

Science becomes **political**

We all need to know where we stand

The architecture behind 'new knowledge'

Example from his text

The scientist who embraces a new paradigm is like the man wearing inverting lenses. Confronting the same constellation of objects as before ..., he nevertheless finds them transformed through and through in many of their details. ...

Scientists, being only human, cannot always admit their errors, even when confronted with strict proof. ... The transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a conversion experience that cannot be forced. Lifelong resistance, particularly from those whose productive careers have committed them to an older tradition of normal science, is not a violation of scientific standards but an index to the nature of scientific research itself. ...

Though some scientists ... may resist indefinitely, ... the whole profession will again be practicing under a single, but now a different, paradigm. We must therefore ask how conversion is induced and how resisted. (Kuhn 1970: 122, 151–122)

What are the key phrases?

In what ways can we all **identify** with this?

Academic, professional, personal experience?

Paradigm change regarding subjectivity in social science

Positivism	Postpositivist	Postmodern
Objective reality can be measured with the right instruments Rational and detached researcher Hard data 'are' transcripts and statistics Representative samples, triangulation, replication Get the sample → ask the questions → report the results	Values qualitative data But, 'mixed' with quantitative to reduce subjectivity Controlled, replicable method	Reality and science are socially constructed Subjectivity is recognised and managed Methods develop in response to knowledge of the setting Building pictures from rich instances Researchers are implicated and must explain every decision ... and consider all possibilities

Key text - Clifford & Marcus (1986). *Writing culture*.

Also liberating ethnography from justifying empire

Example from intercultural studies

Positivism	Postpositivist	Postmodern
Cultures can be measured, defined, mapped and predicted, and define all behaviour within them Based on interviews with representative samples Nations are the basic unit Western cultures are individualist and low-context Non-Western cultures are collectivist and high-context	There are always exceptions to the rule	National cultures do not contain and define behaviour ‘Individualism’, ‘collectivism’, ‘high-context’ and ‘low-context’ are ideologically constructed categories ... derived from racist grand narratives Nations are not the basic unit

The positivist paradigm is **still dominant** in the majority of studies and many professional circles

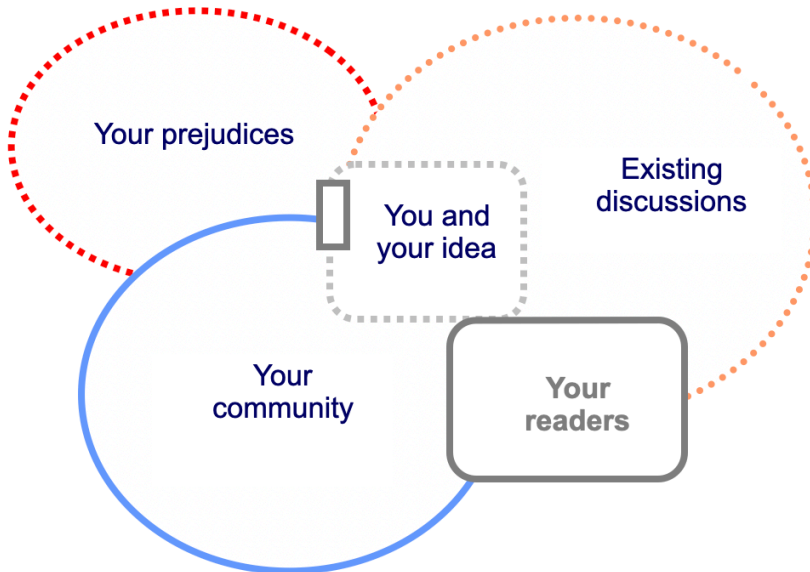
Easily found in **literature searches**

Which might be a disciplinary requirement - using particular search engines

What about the interviews?

Communities

Researchers need to be **aware of the politics**



... of how this operates in the **milieux** in which you are operating

... of **who you are** in this complexity

... and **how** you must therefore write

... **your community**

Which includes your university department, your supervisor, people at conferences, and your **examiner** (who you can choose)

‘Post-.....’

Common use of the ‘**post-** ...’ prefix

‘Posthuman’, ‘post-intercultural’

Bandwagons?

Academics using current labels to be published and promoted

Changing with fashion

Need to **distinguish** which is real and not

Showing awareness in the literature review - search issues

Theoretic (conceptual) framework

And in **writing about data** - everywhere

Theoretical imagination

Choices

Are there really choices between which paradigm to adopt?

Can they can exist side-by-side?

Can you choose the one that best fits your research needs?

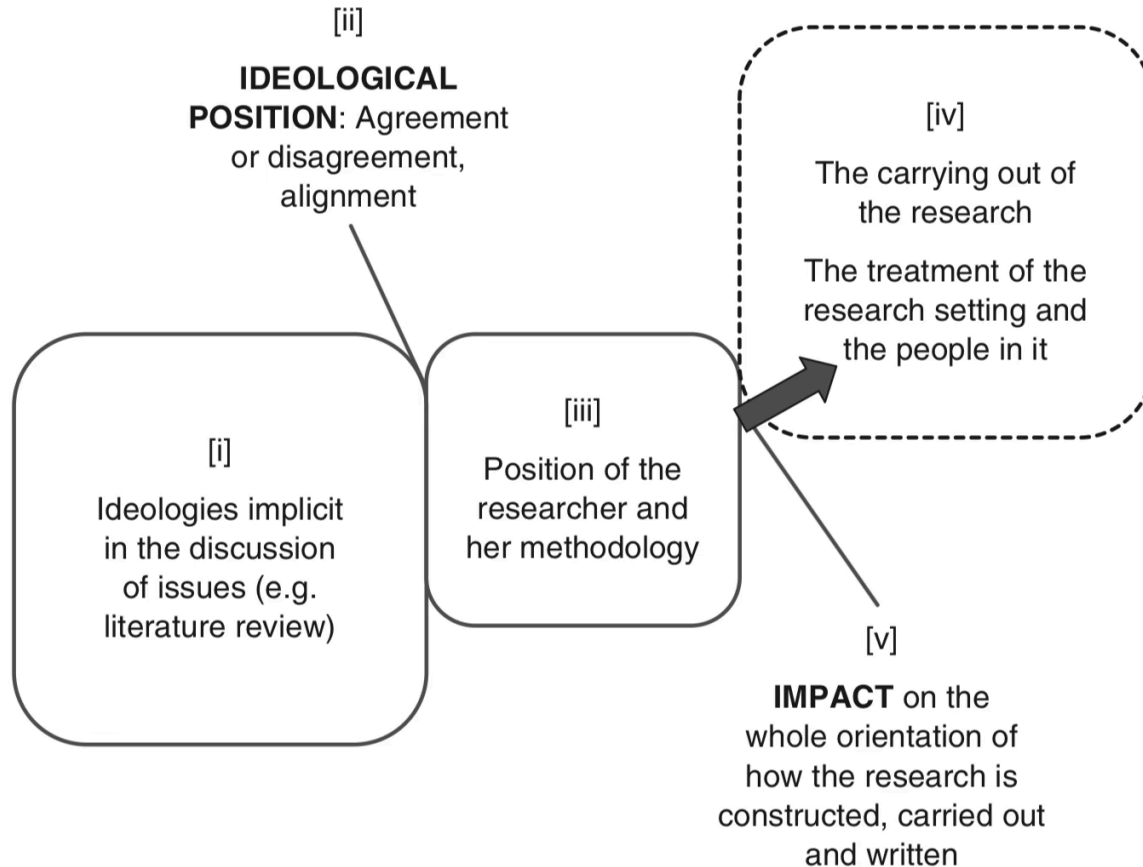
Or would this be **recidivist** (Holliday & MacDonald 2020)?

Clinging to the old paradigm for the sake of career and security

Is Kuhn's thesis itself a paradigmatic position?

He's been labelled as 'postmodern'

Conceptual framework



How should we therefore write?

In the choices made in this thesis regarding research approaches and methods, it has been necessary to locate its positionality within diverse and sometimes conflicting narratives within the field of It is very clear that there has been a significant paradigm shift. ... (...) present this as ...

While some people argue that this ... is merely a passing discussion (...), this thesis argues that ...

This research project therefore wishes to locate itself within what ... (...) refers to as While this statement has sometimes been interpreted as ... (...), it is the belief of this researcher that It is this interpretation that lies at the very core of the overall approach and methodology that drive this project

Because the core of this paradigm shift goes back over twenty years to ... (...), this research approach can also claim to be the continuation of a sustained trajectory. However, at the same time, ...

Knowing which are the key literatures

Yet **showing ownership** of what you think they say

In a way that will **convince the opposition** that you have a well-grounded argument
- even if they disagree with it.

Getting to grips with core concepts in primary texts

Those in the grip of the methodological inhibition often refuse to say anything about modern society unless it has been through the fine little mill of The Statistical Ritual. It is usual to say that what they produce is true even if unimportant. I do not agree with this; more and more I wonder how true it is. I wonder how much exactitude, or even pseudo-precision, is here confused with 'truth'; and how much abstracted empiricism is taken as the only 'empirical' manner of work. If you have ever seriously studied, for a year or two, some thousand hour-long interviews, carefully coded and punched, you will have begun to see how very malleable the realm of 'fact' may really be. Moreover, as for 'importance', surely it is important when some of the most energetic minds among us use themselves up in the study of details because The Method to which they are dogmatically committed does not allow them to study anything else. Much of such work, I am now convinced, has become the mere following of a ritual – which happens to have gained commercial and foundation value – rather than, in the words of its spokesmen, a 'commitment to the hard demands of science'.

C Wright Mills
(1970/1959: 83)

Ritual???

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