Paradigm, methodology and method: intellectual integrity in consumer scholarship

Sue L.T. McGregor[1]* and Jennifer A. Murnane[2]

[1]Faculty of Education, Director Graduate Education, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS, Canada
[2]Human Capital Lab, Bellevue University, Omaha, NE, USA

Abstract

The intellectual integrity, trustworthiness and diversity of consumer scholarship depend on researchers accounting for the methodological (philosophical) underpinnings of their work. The discussion is predicated on the assumption that many scholars do not clearly differentiate between methodology and method. To address this issue, the paper distinguishes between these two concepts, identifies four axioms of methodologies, identifies and describes two overarching research paradigms (positivism and post-positivism), contrasts quantitative/qualitative with positivistic/post-positivistic, and positions consumer scholarship with three dominant research methodologies: scientific, interpretive and critical. Suggestions are offered about what various actors can do to better ensure responsible consumer scholarship through methodological accountability.

Introduction

Knowingly or not, scholarship intended to generate new knowledge, in each of the natural, social and human sciences, is informed by research paradigms. Within the academy, it is common knowledge that a paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline like consumer studies. Each paradigm is accompanied with attendant methodologies (assumptions about knowledge, values, reality and logic, to be discussed shortly). As a caveat, this paper is not about changing paradigms, the prevailing patterns of thought within a science or discipline (Kuhn, 1962); rather, it is about being conscious of which paradigm and attendant methodologies are being applied when conducting and evaluating research.

To reiterate, a paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality. Although the three main sciences accept this basic notion of what constitutes a paradigm, the *actual* paradigm embraced by each science is often different. The natural sciences tend to use the positivistic paradigm and the human and social sciences tend to use the post-positivistic paradigm, to be discussed shortly. However, what constitutes a paradigm does not change, nor does what constitutes a methodology.

As well, the authors are not advocating any particular paradigm. They are, instead, making the case that if people consciously self-identify with a respective paradigm and properly apply its methodological tenets and principles, they minimize the risk of relinquishing their responsibility to account for the philosophical underpinnings of their work, thereby enhancing the integrity of consumer scholarship. The rigour of the consumer studies discipline depends on scholars being able to address deep questions about the integrity of their work. The common practice of using the heading *Methodology,* but then describing the *methods* used in the research design, is the stepping stone for introducing the main idea shared in this paper – the intellectual integrity, trustworthiness and diversity of consumer scholarship depends on researchers accounting for the methodological (philosophical) underpinnings of their work, not just the methods used to sample, collect and analyze data and report the results.

Methodology vs. method

Consumer scholars often use the terms methodology and method interchangeably. This practice is unfortunate because they are not the same. The former refers to philosophy and the latter refers to technical procedures applied to conduct research. More significantly, methodologies shape the diversity of the entire body of knowledge. For example, if everyone used just the scientific method (informed by the empirical methodology within the positivistic paradigm), all of the knowledge would be predicated on one methodology and world view, significantly

reducing the diversity of knowledge available to address consumer issues.

The word methodology comprises two nouns: method and *ology*, which means a branch of knowledge; hence, methodology is a branch of knowledge that deals with the general principles or axioms of the generation of new knowledge. It refers to the rationale and the philosophical assumptions that underlie any natural, social or human science study, whether articulated or not. Simply put, methodology refers to how each of logic, reality, values and what counts as knowledge inform research. On the other hand, methods are the techniques and procedures followed to conduct research, and are determined *by* the methodology (i.e. sampling, data collection, data analysis and results reporting, as well as theories, conceptual frameworks, taxonomies and models). Even the focus and intent of the research, and the actual research questions themselves, are shaped by the methodology. 'The misuse of [the term] *methodology* obscures an important conceptual distinction between the tools of scientific investigation (properly *methods*) and the principles that determine how such tools are deployed and interpreted (*methodology*)' (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000, web citation).

Conceptual clarification

The authors realize that use of the terms paradigm, methodology and method is incredibly messy in the literature. In the spirit of conceptual clarification, we understand the term *paradigm* to encompass two dimensions: (a) philosophical, basic beliefs and assumptions about the world; and (b) technical, the methods and techniques adopted when conducting research. In this paper, we use the term paradigm to refer to two overarching world views or traditions shaping research: positivism and post-positivism. We appreciate that each of these two paradigms can be distinguished by their philosophical underpinnings (called *methodologies*, with four attendant axioms), which in turn inform the *methods* or techniques employed to conduct research within these paradigms.

Further, we recognize that methods are often characterized as either qualitative or quantitative (to be discussed), appreciating that a cadre of scholars equate quantitative with positivism and qualitative with post-positivism. Recognizing the confusion caused by the interchangeability of these terms, we committed ourselves to be consistent in their use as we understand them. To that end, we used paradigm to refer to positivism and post-positivism, methodology to refer to empirical, interpretive and critical, and method to refer to approaches to gathering and analyzing evidence and presenting results (see Appendix One). Usually, an appendix infers optional reading; in this case, it should be read in order to gain a better understanding of how each of paradigm, methodology and methods are interrelated.

Four methodological axioms

This next section addresses the philosophical underpinnings of research, explaining the four axioms that differentiate one methodology from another. This discussion is followed by our understanding of the concepts of quantitative and qualitative. The paper then turns to an overview of the fundamental differences between positivistic and post-positivistic research paradigms.

All research methodologies are differentiated by four axioms or principles (axiom is from the Greek *axios*, meaning to 'deem

worthy'): (a) what counts (is worthy) as knowledge and how people come to know it (*epistemology*); (b) what counts as nature, reality, feeling, existence or being (*ontology*); (c) what is acceptable as rigour and inference in the development of arguments, judgements or insights (*logic*); and (d) what counts as fundamental values and what is consciousness (moral choices, ethics and normative judgements) (*axiology*). The latter axiom is especially concerned with the role and voice of the researcher and the participants in the research (Ponterotto, 2005), see Appendix One.

In more detail, can knowledge be discovered (is it out there waiting), must it be experienced (created by and among individuals within their cultures), or is it grounded in power and social practices? Is reality a given (external from people's consciousness), a product of individual and collective consciousness, or is it what people are living through, right now? Are humans determined by their environment or do they create their environment (the nature of reality)? What logic is acceptable for forming thoughts, conclusions, opinions, judgements, revelations and insights? What principles, systems of rules or processes should guide people's reasoning so they can meet the demands of thinking accurately, meaningfully or critically? Finally, is there a place for researchers and participants in the research, or should they remain emotionally detached? Do their hopes, values, expectations and feelings have a place in research, or should these be totally divorced from the process?

All of these questions receive different answers depending on the methodology (to be discussed shortly). Greek philosophers believed that an axiom is a claim that is true, without any need for proof. The truth of an axiom is taken for granted, allowing scholars to use it as a starting point for deducing and inferring other truths. Such is the power of methodologies: the four axioms are not to be questioned, meaning scholars can embark on research feeling safe in the arms of their chosen methodology. This security requires a philosophical awareness on the part of scholars so they are not blindly embarking upon research neither questioning their underlying assumptions nor caring one way or the other, simply doing research the way they were taught, told or allowed to. Consumer scholarship warrants rigorous research that yields valid and/or trustworthy results. This rigour enables others to trust the body of knowledge being generated by consumer scholars.

As clarified previously, the authors assumed that trusted knowledge in consumer scholarship is created through one of two research paradigms: positivism and post-positivism (the denial of positivism) (Niglas, 2001). The positivistic research paradigm gained popularity in the early 1800s (Rohmann, 1999). It was the dominant paradigm for conducting research until the middle of the 20th century (after World War II). It has been so pervasive during the past 200 years that it privileged just one way of creating knowledge – that which uses the scientific method (to be discussed shortly). In the process of challenging the scientific community, Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn, in the early 1960s, popularized the idea of thinking about science in ways *other than* positivism (Zammito, 2004). In response to their efforts, there is now a clear distinction in the literature about research paradigms – there *is* positivism and then there are other paradigms that *deny* positivism as the only way to see the world. This movement is called post-positivistic, with *post* being the Greek prefix meaning *after*. Niglas reframed the issue somewhat, using the term *non-positivistic* to refer to those methodologies not aligned with positivistic thinking

(see also Hunt, 1991; Dash, 2005). In the next section, the notions of positivism and post-positivism will be profiled, setting the stage for a discussion of three research methodologies often employed by consumer scholars (i.e. empirical, interpretive and critical). First, though, the authors will clarify their appreciation of the differences between qualitative/quantitative and positivism/post-positivism.

Clarifying qualitative vs. quantitative approaches

In accordance with Ponterotto's (2005) thinking, this paper characterizes quantitative and qualitative as *methods and procedures* and positivism and post-positivism as *research paradigms with attendant methodologies*. Not everyone agrees with this position. For example, Niglas (2001) organized six research methodologies along a quantitative/qualitative continuum. Lin (1998) and Williams (1998) equated quantitative with positivism and qualitative with positivism and interpretivism (and positioned critical as a challenge to post-positivism). Indeed, most scholars are familiar with the notions of quantitative research (numerical analysis and measurements) and qualitative research (feelings, perceptions and meanings) and the arguments around mixing them together in the same research project. Indeed, the call for papers for this journal's special issue identified, as a possible research topic, 'the implications of the qualitative/quantitative traditions.' Often, quantitative (measurements of what, where and when) is associated with positivism while qualitative (the interpretation of the why and how of human behaviour) is associated with post-positivism. But, this characterization is quite misleading. Qualitative research can be very empirical in nature if the methodology informing the research is positivistic (Rowlands, 2005). When the assumptions about the nature of the research and resultant truths shift beyond the scientific, empirical method, then qualitative research is *no longer* positivistic (Guba and Lincoln, 2005).

As noted, positivism can be both qualitative and quantitative. Shah and Corley (2006) asserted qualitative is best used as an umbrella term that covers an array of interpretive techniques that seek to describe, decode, translate or otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of naturally occurring phenomenon. The role of researchers is to create an audit trail showing the thinking behind their interpretation of the participants' accounts of their world. The researcher writes up an account of the world as shared by those who live it, explicitly stating how the researcher's personal reflection, insights and biases were acknowledged (not denied or ignored as in the positivistic paradigm). Number crunching (the positivistic notion of qualitative) does not serve this research methodology. Lin (1998) explained that qualitative post-positivistic work strives 'to uncover the conscious and unconscious explanations people have for what they do or believe, or to capture and reproduce a particular time, culture, or place so that actions people take become intelligible' (p. 162). This purpose also aligns with the critical methodology, with its focus on power.

Positivistic and post-positivistic research paradigms

Having differentiated among the four axioms informing any particular methodology, and having clarified our understanding of the differences between qualitative and quantitative, the discussion now turns to an overview of the positivistic and post-positivistic research paradigms. This order was chosen because our approach to discussing paradigms necessitates readers starting with an understanding of the axioms of methodologies. Also, we felt it necessary to assure readers that we are aware of the existing conceptual confusion amongst the terms qualitative/post-positivistic and quantitative/positivistic.

Positivistic research paradigm

Within the positivistic research paradigm, a term coined 200 years ago, it is assumed that the only way people can be *positive* that the knowledge is true is if it was created using the scientific method; hence, it encompasses the empirical methodology, meaning data is derived from experiment and observation (yielding supportive evidence) (Rohmann, 1999). The scientific approach to research consists of the familiar process of proposing hypotheses as explanations of phenomena and then designing experiments to test the hypotheses. Hypothesis stems from the Greek *hypotithenai*, meaning 'to put under or to suppose.' Put simply, a hypothesis is a provisional idea whose merit requires further examination. The steps involved in putting this idea under scientific examination (sampling, data collection, data analysis) must be repeatable (called reliability, from Latin *religāre*, to bind fast) so scholars can predict any future results generated using the same methods. It is imperative that the entire research process be objective (value free) to reduce biased interpretations of the results. Science is isolated from human beings, who are seen as objects to be studied and controlled. Most research is contrived, happens in a laboratory or controlled setting, and is far removed from the real world of lived experiences.

A wide range of statistical measures have been developed as a means of measuring reliability and validity, the two criteria taken as evidence of intellectual rigour (logically valid) in the positivistic paradigm. Rigour (from Latin *rigēre*, to be stiff) is a sort of quality control of information. It ensures people using scientific results that some standard of accuracy was employed, meaning any conclusions stemming from an analysis of the results can be *trusted* to be true. Validity (from Latin *validus*, strong) refers to the strength of the conclusions and inferences, and can also refer to whether it is appropriate to generalize the findings to larger populations or settings other than those examined in the study. If all of these rules of the scientific method are followed, people using the results of scientific studies should feel comfortable taking action based on their interpretation of the results and subsequent judgements and conclusions.

Post-positivistic research paradigm

Following the example of Zammito (2004), this paper used the label post-positivism as the overarching term for a paradigm that denies positivism (also referred to as non-positivism) (see also Hunt, 1991; Niglas, 2001). Ponterotto (2005) positioned post-positivism as a *strand of positivism*, identifying constructivism/interpretivism and critical/ideological as two additional paradigms. This approach was not used in this paper, opting instead for the model of two research paradigms: positivistic (empirical methodology) and post-positivistic, which

encompasses interpretive and critical methodologies (Alaranta, 2006; Creswell, 1994; Gephart, 1999; Kim, 2003).

The post-positivistic research paradigm, a term coined in the mid 1960s, assumes there are many ways of knowing *aside* from using the scientific method. Rather than testing hypothesis, post-positivistic research generates hypotheses through inductive reasoning. Instead of trying to explain how something operates, scholars strive: (a) to understand why it or people operate in the manner that they do (interpretation); or (b) to reveal power relationships and structures. The post-positivistic paradigm assumes that research should not be value-free and unbiased but be value-laden, subjective and intersubjective, even value-driven within the critical paradigm. There is a place for the voice and role of the researcher and participants in the study. Humans are seen as central to the research process, rather than isolated from it. They are not controlled and studied but are participants in the process, even instigating and benefiting from the research. Within this paradigm, research should happen in communities and in the daily lives of people – in natural settings rather than experimental settings. The intent of the research varies but can include: seeking patterns and commonalities; discovering underlying structures; revealing beliefs, kinships and ways of living; placing experiences into words and narratives; and, uncovering ideologies and power relationships (Lather, 1994; Thorne, 2000). Frequently, studies occur in small groups rather than on a large-scale. The intent is to search for meanings and/or power in specific cultural and social contexts rather than for general laws applicable to everything and everyone. For this reason, neither the researcher nor the participants can remain neutral, as is expected in the positivistic paradigm.

The notion of intellectual rigour is reconceptualized in post-positivistic research (Koch, 1996). As noted, rigour refers to whether the results are valid and/or trustworthy, legitimate and believable. Central to this issue, in the post-positivistic paradigm, is the recording of how the study was accomplished (e.g. methodological decisions, theoretical notes, plans for data collection and analysis and any frameworks used to interpret the results) (Koch, 1996). While positivism uses validity and reliability as tests of rigour, post-positivistic research assumes a different posture. Those functioning in the post-positivistic paradigm strive for trustworthiness criteria instead of unbiased criteria. They endeavour to achieve credibility (instead of internal validity), transferability (instead of external validity), dependability (instead of reliability) and confirmability (instead of objectivity). Authenticity criteria (i.e. fairness, ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical) become paramount when participants are involved in the research design. Relational aspects of this form of scholarship are very important. Context is everything (Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Shah and Corley, 2006). In the post-positivistic research framework, the study is trustworthy (inferences can be trusted) if the reader/user can *audit* the events, influences and actions of the researcher accounting for how his or her perspective was taken into account (Koch). The audit helps the user of the research answer the question 'Why should I believe this?'

Paradigms and methodologies in consumer scholarship

Drawing on the previous discussion, this section will focus on methodologies that can be and are being used within consumer scholarship, and how respective methodologies shape the research and diversity of the entire body of knowledge. Consumer scholarship has long been grounded in the positivistic (especially quantitative) research paradigm. In the early 1970s, the field witnessed a shift to qualitative, positivistic research. Then, in the 1980s, scholars started to embrace post-positivistic notions of consumer scholarship (interpretive and critical methodologies) (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Østergaard and Jantzen, 2002). McGregor (2007, 2008) confirmed that consumer studies still aligns itself predominately with the positivistic paradigm (and empirical methodology), with only nominal, recent movement towards the post-positivistic paradigm via interpretive and critical methodologies. Research examples of the latter include consumer citizenship education scholarship and consumer education as a political site (e.g. Sandlin, 2004; McGregor, 2009; Sandlin and McLaren, 2009).

In a decade review of the *International Journal of Consumer Studies* (IJCS), McGregor (2007) further discovered that the character of the journal, which is clearly positivistic (quantitative, empirical), began to change during the mid-2000s, mainly through the leading-edge work of European scholars (especially from Scandinavian countries). Their choices of methods were informed by the post-positivistic paradigm and attendant methodologies: essay writing, mind maps, citizen juries, public consultations, e-blogs for lay person accounts, oral rhetoric and existential phenomenological interviews. Their scholarship comprised only 3.5% of all of the research in the journal ($n = 18$ papers).

It is very telling that only five papers out of 380 even used the words methodology, ideology or research paradigm (McGregor, 2007). Furthermore, her decade review revealed that, as part of the formal peer review process, the IJCS forms did not require peer reviewers to assess innovativeness in methodology and research paradigms, nor were they asked to determine the alignment of methods with methodology. While some reviewers may do this as a matter of course, others do not. As well, documentation from the journal about how to prepare manuscripts did not require authors to specify methodological issues, although they were required to specify methods applied to create their research design.

As noted, consumer scholarship is moving towards the concurrent application of three methodologies: empirical, interpretive and critical. Appendix One provides an overview of each of these methodologies, organized by paradigm, intent, the four axioms and common methods. The information contained in this appendix is unabashedly an oversimplification of the available methodologies that can inform consumer scholarship. But, with these basic axiomatic distinctions in place, consumer scholars can now go into more depth concerning methodological aspects of their scholarship.

To confirm the benefit of applying the information in Appendix One to one's practice, we created Table 1 to illustrate how we, the authors, used each methodology to approach the consumer problem of indebtedness. During this exercise, it became patently clear that each methodology leads to different research design strategies and eventual use of the results. This variation happened because each methodology is informed by a different intent, generates different research questions, and employs different notions of truth, reality, logic and the role of values and people (see Appendix One).

The information in Table 1 also reinforces the suggestion that methodological orientations can shape the nature of the entire

Table 1 How each research methodology might approach the issue of consumer debt

Positivism	Post-positivism	
Positivistic/scientific prediction, explanation and control	Interpretive understandings	Critical power and liberation
Consumer debt	Consumer debt	Consumer debt
Intent is to be able to *explain* or *predict* why people get in debt so the results of the study can be used to *control* human behaviour leading to less debt. The researcher will use the scientific method to design the research project (likely including a survey instrument), focusing on facts and/or objective assessment of attitudes. Seen as an expert, the researcher's results can be used to legitimize prescriptive policy or design consumer education curricula so as to *control* people's financial behaviour leading to less indebtedness, more solvency and more credit savviness	Intent is to *understand* what is happening (indebtedness), how people who are in debt feel about it, how these conscious and unconscious feelings came to be, and how new, shared meanings affect their lives. The researcher designs the study in such a way that dialogue ensues with and among those in debt to identify patterns of behaviour that lead to indebtedness, as explained by those experiencing this event. Methods could include case studies, story telling, or content or thematic analysis of interview transcripts. Results are used to help the indebted person gain a better understanding of his or her lived experiences with being in debt. With these new insights, humans are capable of intentionally changing their behaviour, given the right circumstances, but behaviour change in not the intent of the research.	Intent is to *reveal power* relationships in society embedded in existing societal institutions (e.g., consumer society, marketplace, lending practices, government policies), and do so by facilitating participation and transactions with and amongst citizens in such a way that their consciousness is raised about the fact that they are oppressed (they also may know this but feel incapable of taking action). This emancipatory process leads to personal empowerment to take steps towards changing their own circumstances and the entire consumerism system. Research methods focus on social justice, inclusion and liberation and can include action research, critical analysis and reflective phenomenology. The intent is to give voice to the participants, leading to social change.

body of consumer-related knowledge. It reiterated the underlying message of this paper: not all methodologies are created equal. As mentioned earlier, if everyone uses just the scientific method, all of the knowledge will be predicated on one methodology and world view, significantly reducing the diversity of knowledge available to address consumer issues, even affecting what constitutes a consumer issue warranting our attention. Per Table 1, if all research is conducted from the perspective of positivism, the discipline would be void of insights into the meanings people attribute to the state of indebtedness and to any discussion of consumers' potential for empowerment, liberation and eventual changes to the system.

Methodological grayness with certainty

Furthermore, the authors are not so naive as to think it is possible to clearly demarcate such clean lines between these and other methodologies. Ercikan and Roth (2006), Howe (1992) and Rusu-Toderean (2000) concurred. They argued that, in isolation, none of these three methodologies give an adequate account of knowledge or human nature (and by association, consumer behaviour). In fact, these scholars acknowledged compelling contradictions that discredit the core essence of each methodology, in effect legitimizing inherent gray areas that emerge when several research paradigms and attendant methodologies co-exist in a field like consumer studies. Powerful examples exist of these gray areas: (a) all sciences *are* affected by internal and external values, wittingly or unwittingly; (b) all sciences strive for conceptual understandings of links between causes and events (intentions and actions) and resultant human behaviour (a commonsense notion of *some-*

thing makes something else happen); (c) all sciences involve some degree of bias and perception, intended or not; (d) humans exhibit passiveness and activeness in varying degrees depending on capacities and opportunities; and (e) all sciences strive for results that can be trusted and used without compunction.

Despite these common threads, each of the methodologies in Appendix One is informed by different world views (paradigms): what counts as knowledge, reality, acceptable logic and what are the roles of values and people. Relationships among these three approaches are not generally synergistic (Kim, 2003), but all three methodologies can and do inform consumer scholarship (Østergaard and Jantzen, 2002; McGregor, 2007). What remains central to the issue is that researchers consider two guiding factors when deciding how they will design their research: (a) the circumstances of their study; and (b) the research questions they intend to study and why (Kim, 2003). Responsible consumer scholars will account for the basic philosophical underpinnings shaping their research (a particular paradigm and methodology), else they run the risk of compromising its integrity. They will clarify which methodology they chose to embrace for a particular study, formulate research questions shaped by the four attendant axioms, and tailor their research design accordingly (Howe, 1992).

Recommendations and concluding comments

Because research is the fundamental cornerstone upon which sound theory is transformed into effective practice and vice-versa, it is important that scholars articulate the methodological, philosophical foundations upon which their research is based (Kim,

2003). Consumer scholars will need help with this academic enterprise. Some rudimentary and fairly obvious recommendations are now tendered to further the agenda informing this paper. First, for the consumer field in general, college and university degree programmes need to develop and deliver research methodology courses to augment the ubiquitous research methods courses. These could be called *Consumer Research Literacy* courses to offset the confusion surrounding the difference between methodology (philosophy and ideology) and methods (techniques and procedures). Second, consumer research textbook editors and authors could provide clearer distinctions between the two concepts, thereby socializing new entrants to the field of the importance of methodological savviness. Third, conference organizers could arrange for in-servicing on the topic.

Fourth, journal editors, including IJCS, could design three different evaluation forms respecting the different notions of rigour and intellectual integrity of the scholarship (one each for a scientific paper, an interpretive paper and a critical paper), or at least different forms for the two paradigms. Fifth, authors could be required to include a *Methodological Issues* section in their submission, which is placed before the *Methods* section. Sixth, peer reviewers could be sensitized to the nature of different methodologies (and the methodology employed in a specific submission) and be asked to self-identify their comfort level with reviewing a paper prepared outside the realm of their preferred methodology or a methodology with which they are not familiar.

Seventh, at the individual level, consumer researchers could strive to become consumer philosophers concerned with paradigms and methodology, characterized as scholars practising from a position of equanimity (composed, assured level-headedness), enlightenment and wisdom. It bears repeating: methodologies matter, and they are not the same as methods. 'Who possesses the "truth" and how have they arrived at it [i.e. knowledge], what questions are important to ask [i.e. reality], and how should they best be answered [i.e. logic and axiology]' – these queries are the focus of methodologies (MacDonald, Kirk, Metzler, Nilges, Schempp and Wright, 2002, p. 133).

Regardless of the research paradigm or methodology, another pressing question is not what *kind* of science (natural, human or social) but whether or not the scholarship is *good* science. Does the work make an intellectual contribution that can be trusted (Kassarjian, 1989; Ercikan and Roth, 2006)? A key to answering this question is people's familiarity with the nuances of research paradigms and methodologies. This conversancy contributes to the integrity of consumer scholarship, enables users to trust the resultant body of knowledge and increases opportunities to create a more diverse body of consumer studies knowledge. Methodological accountability is a responsible, timely, professional posture for consumer scholars.

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Appendix one

Overview of Three Main Consumer Scholarship Methodologies, with Common Methods

[Sources used by the authors to develop the appendix included: Howe, 1992; Lather, 1994; Niglas, 2001; MacDonald *et al.*, 2002; Khazanchi and Munkvold, 2003; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005; Salmani and Akbari, 2008). *Acknowledgement*: Deep thanks to Dr Anne MacCleave, Mount Saint Vincent University, for vetting and validating the core concepts contained in this Appendix]

Paradigm	Positivistic	Post-Positivistic	
Methodology	Positivistic (Scientific, empirical)	Interpretive (Humanistic)	Critical (Power)
Intent	Predict, control and explain	Understand	Emancipate
AXIOMS: Epistemology (what counts as knowledge and ways of knowing (criteria for evaluating knowledge); how should we study the world; what is meaningful evidence or insights; how does knowledge arise)	• the *one* truth is out there waiting to be discovered via the scientific method • strive for certainties, laws of behaviours, principles that provide explanations leading to predictions and control of phenomena • knowledge is objective (bias free) • knowledge is dualistic (fragmented and not connected); mind and matter are separate • only knowledge generated using the scientific method is valid • only things that can be seen (observed) are worthy of study • knowledge comes from using the scientific method	• truth is created and there is more than one truth; relies on humans' interpretations of their world • strive for confidence • knowledge is constructed by people • agreed upon knowledge in one culture may not be valid in another culture • takes into account social and cultural influences on knowledge creation • knowledge is subjective or intersubjective and includes perspective • there are many ways of knowing aside from the scientific method (stories, spiritual experiences, religion, the sacred, mystical, wisdom, art, drama, dreams, music) • knowledge can be cognitive, feelings or embodied	• truth is grounded in the context • knowledge is grounded in social and historical practices • knowledge is emancipatory, created through critically questioning the way things 'have always been done' • knowledge is about hidden power structures that permeate society • knowledge is dialectic (transformative), consensual and normative • knowledge is material (about the world, the way things *really* are) and is subject to change

Paradigm	Positivistic	Post-Positivistic	
Ontology (what should be the object of the study; what is human nature; what does it mean to be human; what counts as a meaningful statement about reality; how do people make choices; what is the nature of reality; how can reality be meaningfully portrayed)	• reality is *out there*; the world is a universe of facts waiting to be discovered • there is a single reality made of discrete elements: when we find them all through the scientific method, we have a full picture of reality • a single reality exists that people cannot see • a fact is a fact; it cannot be interpreted • true nature of reality can only be obtained by testing theories • seeing is believing • laws of nature can be derived from scientific data • human nature is determined by things people are not aware of and have no control over • humans are passive, malleable and controllable • reality is determined by the environment, inherited potential or the interaction of the two • reality is external to our consciousness (not a product of our minds)	• reality is *in here* (in people's minds and collectively constructed) • social reality is relative to the observer and everyday concepts need to be understood to appreciate this reality • focus is on the life-world and shared meanings and understandings of that world • reality is socially constructed via the lived experiences of people • human nature is determined by how people see themselves • humans are active and self-creating • human beings can act intentionally (need capacity and opportunity) • reality can be a product of peoples' minds or the interactions of persons • reality constitutes that which is constructed by individuals in interaction with their contexts and other persons • reality is conditional upon human experiences	• reality is *here and now* • reality is shaped by ethnic, cultural, gender, social and political values and mediated by power relations • reality is constructed within this social-historical context • humans are *not* confined to one particular state or set of conditions; things can change • human beings have the capacity to exercise control over social arrangements and institutions: create a new reality • humans who are oppressed are able to emancipate themselves and challenge the status quo • reality is material (of the world, not imagined), never fully understood and is deeply shaped by power • seek to truly understand the real circumstances (i.e., the political, social and institutional structures) in order to change the everyday power balance
Logic (how do people come to their understandings; what is acceptable as rigour and inference in the development of arguments, judgements, insights, revelations, or social action)	• deductive, rationale, formal logic • through objective observation, experts form research questions and hypotheses and test them empirically • concerned with prediction, control and explanation • clear distinction between fact and value • strive to generalize universal laws • goal of research informed by this logic is replication and theory testing leading to control, prediction and explanations	• inductive logic, attempting to find various interpretations of reality and recognize patterns that govern and guide human behavior • assumes that researcher can help people become aware of unconscious thoughts • concerned with meanings and understandings so people can live together; how people make sense of their world • meaningful findings are more valuable than generalizations • goal is to understand lived experiences from the point of view of those living them day-to-day • goal of research informed by this logic is a credible representation of the interpretations of those experiencing the phenomenon under study	• inductive logic, aimed at emancipation • attempt to reveal ideologies and power relationships leading to self-empowerment and emancipation • concerned with relationship between meanings *and* autonomy and responsibility as citizens • concerned with critiquing and changing society • intent is to create contextualized findings • goal of research informed by this logic is to reveal power relationships leading to changes in the status quo and more autonomy, inclusion and justice • what are sources of oppression (whether internal or external) • complex generative mechanisms are not readily observable (e.g., hard to *observe* consciousness raising)

Paradigm	Positivistic	Post-Positivistic	
Axiology (role of values and perceptions; role of researchers and participants; how is what is studied influenced by the researcher and the participants; what is the relationship between the researcher and the participants)	• values neutral (values are often ignored) • moral issues are beyond empirical investigation • no place for bias, values, feelings, perceptions, hopes or expectations of either researcher or participant • researcher tries to control for anything that can contaminate the study • relationship between researcher and participant is objective and dualistic (separate with no interchange)	• values laden • intent is to uncover the beliefs, customs and so forth that shape human behaviour • bias, feelings, hopes, expectations, perceptions and values are central to the research process • participants play a central role in the research, even instigating it • the perspective of the 'insiders' supercedes that of the researcher • role of researcher is to uncover conscious and unconscious explanations people have for their life through dialogue with and among participants • relationship between the researcher and participants is intense, prolonged and dialogic (deep insights through interaction)	• values oriented and values driven • researcher's *proactive* values concerning social justice are central to the research • intent is to critically examine unquestioned values, beliefs and norms to reveal power • researcher works in collaboration with citizen interlocutors as conversational partners in dialogue • researcher seeks to understand the effects of power so as to help people empower themselves • very participatory research process that is grounded in terms of the insiders' perspective, respecting that researchers have contributing expertise (balance both) • role of the researcher is to challenge insiders with expert research findings leading to self-reflection and emancipation • intent is to create change in society by emancipating citizens to take action • relationship between researcher and participants is dialogic, transactional and dialectic (transformative)
Common Methods (appreciating the practice of mixed methods)	*Seeking causality, laws and relations via:* Quantitative: Experiments Quasi-experiments Field experiments Surveys *Seeking relations and regularities via:* Qualitative: Quasi-experiments Field experiments Surveys Ethnoscience (new ethnography) Ethnography Phenomenology Case studies Content analysis	*Seeking theory and patterns via:* Phenomenology Case studies Content analysis Grounded theory Natural/interpretive inquiry Discourse analysis Thematic Analysis Document analysis *Seeking meanings and interpretations via:* Case Studies Discourse analysis Ethical inquiry Life history study Narrative research Hermeneutic inquiry Heuristic inquiry	*Seeking reflection, emancipation and problem solving via:* Action research Discourse analysis Participatory research Critical analysis Feminist inquiry Reflective phenomenology