Table 2.1 Differences and similarities between the typified research paradigms

Part A: Initial decisions and actions

Paradigm	Neo-Positive	Interpretive	Critical Realist
Starting point	An observed regularity or pattern that needs an explanation.	A social phenomenon that needs to be better understood.	An observed regularity or pattern that needs a causal explanation.
Purpose	To find or produce a theory and test it as a possible explanation for an observed regularity or pattern.	To develop typified descriptions and interpretation-based understanding of everyday concepts and meanings.	To establish the existence of underlying explanatory structures and mechanisms.
Assumptions	*Ontology*: cautious realist. *Epistemology*: falsificationism.	*Ontology*: idealist. *Epistemology*: constructionism.	*Ontology*: depth realist. *Epistemology*: neo-realism.
Using extant literature	As a source of an existing theory or idea that can be used to construct a new theory.	To develop sensitizing concepts and identify possible ideas to help generate understanding.	To help sensitize researchers' recognition and imaginative theorizing as part of identifying possible underlying causal mechanisms.
Type of research design	Linear.	Iterative.	Linear and iterative.
Researcher's stance	Top-down; outsider. Detached observer.	Bottom-up; insider. Any or all of: empathetic observer; faithful reporter; mediator of languages.	Both bottom-up & top-down; insider & outsider. Reflective partner.

Part B: Logic, concepts, theory and hypotheses

	Neo-Positive	Interpretive	Critical Realist
Logics of inquiry	*Inductive* to establish the regularity. *Deductive* to produce a possible explanation.	*Inductive* or *abductive* to produce thematic descriptions and abstracted typifications.	*Inductive* or *abductive* to model the regularity. *Retroductive* to produce a possible underlying causal explanation.
Initial process	Select or construct a theory to explain the observed regularity or relationship between concepts. Deduce hypotheses from the theory to test it.	Explore an everyday social world to develop typified concepts and interpreted understanding.	Model both the regularity and possible underlying explanatory structures and causal mechanisms.
Later process	Corroborate, reject or modify the theory for further testing.	Use emerging hypotheses as a way of developing more comprehensive understanding and explanation.	Search for evidence of the existence of the hypothesized causal structures and mechanisms.
Role of concepts	To identify observable phenomena. Concepts are formally defined and then operationalized.	Sensitizing concepts provide an orientation to the phenomenon. These give way to everyday concepts that provide the basis for typified descriptions and understanding.	Used to model both the regularities and explanatory structures and mechanisms.
Role of theory	A theory in deductive form is necessary at the outset to provide a possible explanation.	Theory emerges from the iterative process in the interplay between ideas and data.	Theoretical ideas may emerge and be embedded in the description of hypothetical causal structures and mechanisms.

Part B: Logic, concepts, theory and hypotheses

Paradigm	Neo-Positive	Interpretive	Critical Realist
Role of hypotheses	As statements of relationships between concepts that are deduced from a theory for testing.	Micro-working hypotheses play a role in the emergence of interpretive understanding and explanation.	Explanatory mechanisms are hypothesized as potential causal explanations.

Part C: Data generation/collection and analysis

	Neo-Positive	Interpretive	Critical Realist
Use of data	To describe regularities and relationships about social phenomena and to test hypotheses.	To generate concepts, descriptions and understanding from everyday concepts and interpretations.	To model regularities in social phenomena and find strong evidence for the existence of hypothesized causal structures and mechanisms.
Main types and forms of data	Primary, secondary and tertiary. Predominantly numerical.	Primary and individual case studies. Predominantly textual. Researchers' cognitive data.	Primary, secondary and tertiary. Numerical and textual. Researchers' cognitive data.
Main data sources	Semi-natural and artificial settings; social artefacts.	Natural and semi-natural social settings.	Natural, semi-natural and artificial social settings; social artefacts.
Main types of data selection	Populations, probability and non-probability samples.	Populations and non-probability samples.	Populations, probability and non-probability samples.
Main methods of data collection & generation	Mainly quantitative. Collected rather then generated.	Qualitative. Generated.	Quantitative and qualitative. Collected and generated.
Purpose of data analysis	To corroborate, reject or modify a theory according to evidence obtained.	To iteratively (or even reflexively) produce typified concepts, understanding and explanation.	To reflexively model regularities and relationships. To evaluate evidence for the existence of the hypothesized causal structures and mechanisms.
Main types of data analysis	Measures of distribution, association or difference and, if appropriate, tests of significance.	*Abductive* generation of typifications, understanding and explanation.	Iterative modelling of contexts and causal mechanisms. Evaluate evidence for the presence or absence of causal structures and mechanisms.

Part D: Status and use of results

	Neo-Positive	Interpretive	Critical Realist
Establishing status of research findings	'Validity' and 'reliability' established by accepted methods. 'Objectivity' a goal.	Authenticity established by use of 'member checking'.	Depends on domain of reality. Strength of argument from evidence for the existence of proposed causal structures and mechanisms.
Generaliz-ability of results	From probability sample to population. Beyond a population: methods of 'transferability' and 'relatability'.	The use of analytic induction to generalize. Methods of 'transferability' and 'relatability'.	Where appropriate, methods of 'transferability' and 'relatability'.
Reporting	See relevant section above.	See relevant section above.	See relevant section above.

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