

Week 2: Theories of Knowledge

NURS 485 – The Discipline and Profession of Nursing III

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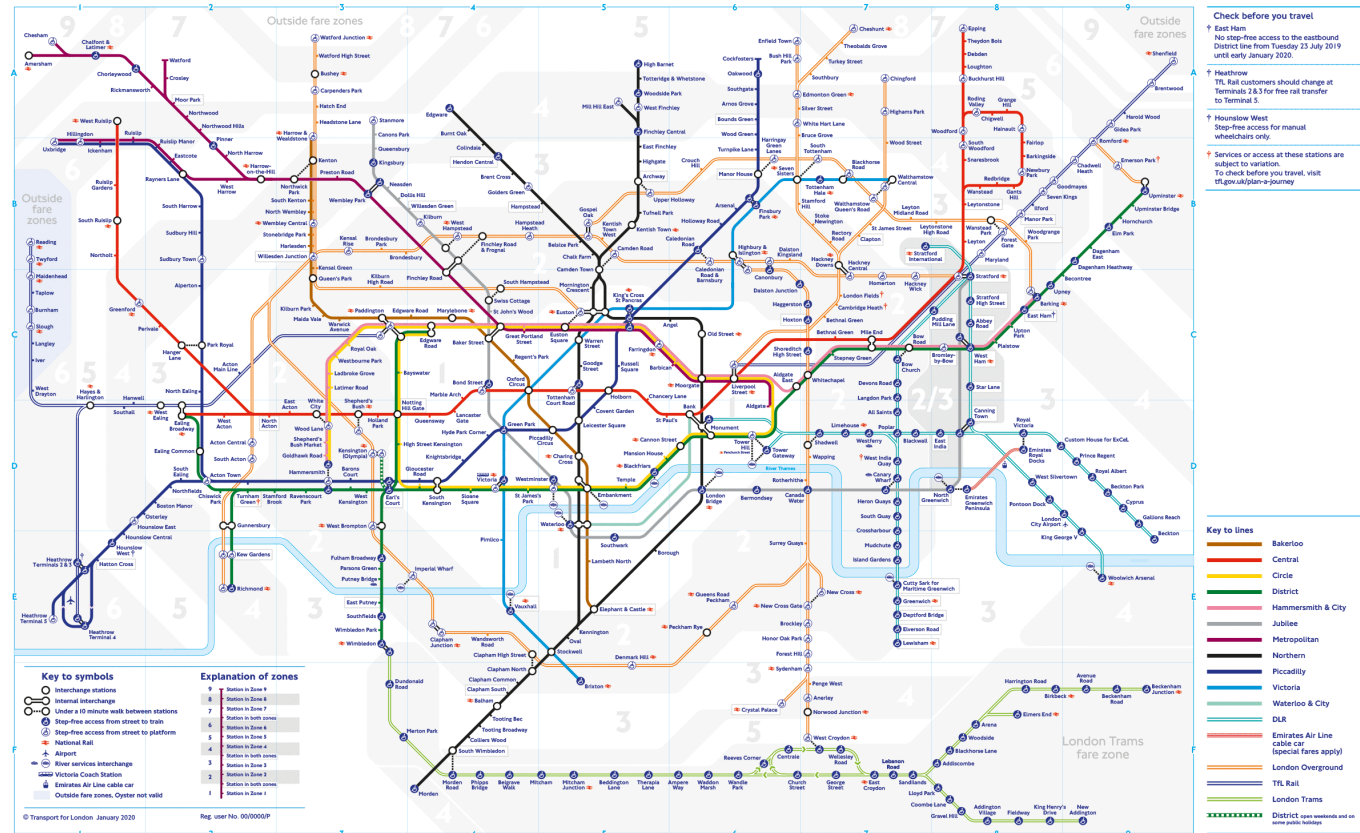


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Why does this matter?

- Helps us understand research and identify the researcher's perspective
- Can assess where this knowledge 'fits' into our understandings of nursing
- Appreciate why other people see things differently

What are we talking about?

- Ontology- What is it?
- Epistemology- What do you have to know to do it?
- Axiology- What is its value?



Ontology

- What is the thing? What are the relationships between the things?
- *Nurses do things for patients*
is different than
- *Nurses are partners with patients*
- The way you understand your topic indicates how you might chose to study it



Epistemology

- What do we need to know to do it? What is considered knowledge?
- *If we need to know about birth, we can study the stages of labour*

OR

- *Birth is something you can really only know about after you have been through it*



Axiology

- What do we value about the thing?
- Values determine our professional ethics
- *We should not give people with addictions high doses of opioids*

OR

- *We should keep someone out of withdrawal so we can focus on other issues*



Philosophy Summary

- These concepts help us understand what we do and how it fits into our profession and society
- People with a different ontology/ epistemology/ axiology of nursing will be a nurse in a different way
- When we do research, we can understand these differences, and make new knowledge from different lenses



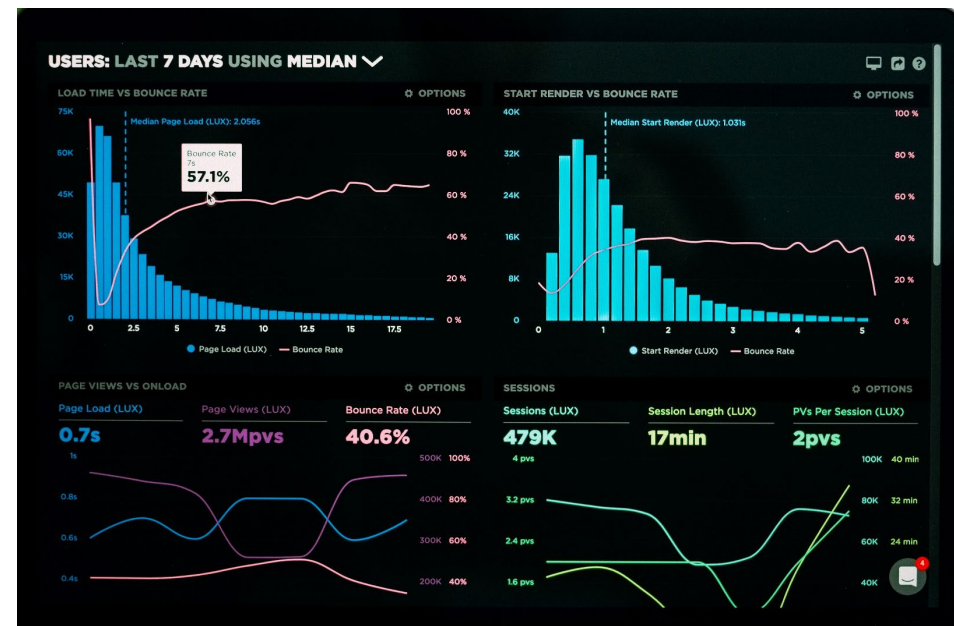
What are research paradigms?

- Paradigms are ways of understanding the world around us
- “Lens” for interpretation of our experiences
 - Empirical
 - Interpretive
 - Critical



Empirical Paradigm

- Sometimes called positivist/postpositivist
- There is an objective truth, which we can measure (and possibly control)
- Usually quantitative methods
- Deductive reasoning: top down





Interpretive Paradigm

- There may be an objective truth, but what matters is how people feel about and understand this truth
- Usually qualitative methods
- Inductive reasoning: bottom up





Critical Paradigm

- What we understand as truth can be deconstructed and changed
- Various methods, often participatory research
- Question what we know to be “truth” and offer alternative explanations/understandings/behaviours





Paradigm Summary

Paradigm	Purpose	Methods	Example
Empirical	Understand objective reality	Usually quantitative	Measure poverty
Interpretive	Understand meanings of reality	Usually qualitative	Understand how it feels to live in poverty
Critical	Change/deconstruct reality	Varies, participatory action research	Create group to help alleviate poverty



When you read an abstract...

- What paradigm does this author have?
- How did their paradigm influence the choices they made?
- How is this research valued?

Thank you!



Questions?
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