

Week 2: Theories of Knowledge
 NURS 485 – The Discipline and Profession of Nursing III

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What do you see?

Tube map



MAYOR OF LONDON  TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

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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

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What are we talking about?

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

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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

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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*

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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*

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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

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What are research paradigms?

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

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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



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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



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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



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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 |

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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?

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Thank you!

Questions?
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