


Slide 1



**The Philosophical  
Commitments and Disputes  
which inform Qualitative  
Research Methodologies.**

Workshop Number 2  
ESRC Workshops for Qualitative  
Research in Management.

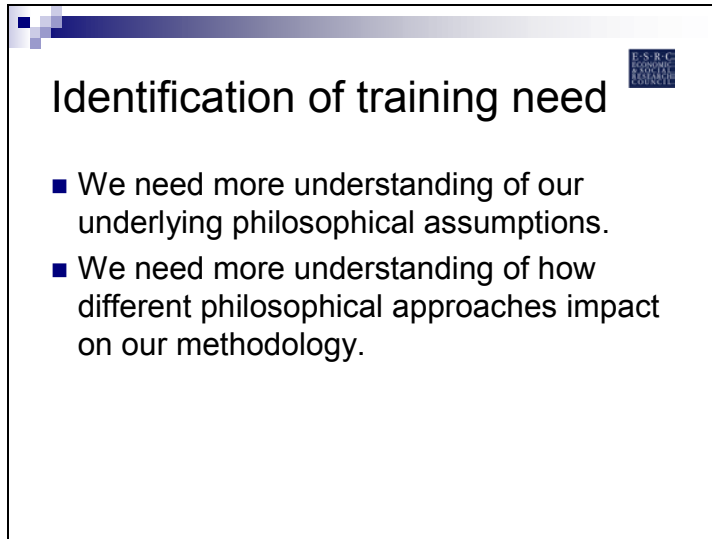
**The philosophical commitments and disputes which inform qualitative  
research methodologies: The Facilitators Guide**

**Pre-reading: Prior** Enclosed paper entitled “Evaluating Qualitative Management Research: Towards a contingent criteriology” (Johnson, P., Buehring, A., Cassell, C. and Symon, G.).

**Handouts:** N/A

**Target audience:** PhD Students

**Any thing else to note?:** N/A.




Identification of training need


- We need more understanding of our underlying philosophical assumptions.
- We need more understanding of how different philosophical approaches impact on our methodology.

**Additional Comments:**

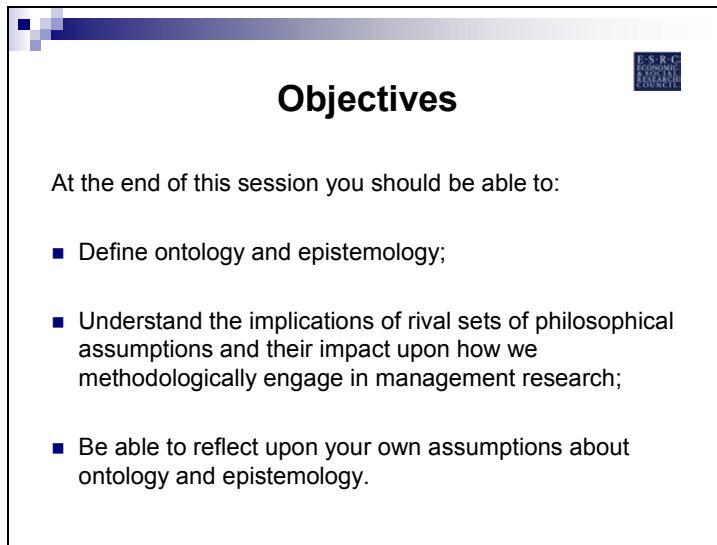
This training need was identified in the accompanying study carried out by Cassell et al 2005 entitled 'Benchmarking Good Practice in Qualitative Research'. >>



## Aims



- To identify how philosophy impacts upon management research;
- To explore 3 areas of philosophical dispute and rival commitments which promote different modes of engagement;
- To provide a model that facilitates reflexive interrogation of three modes of qualitative management research.



## Objectives

At the end of this session you should be able to:

- Define ontology and epistemology;
- Understand the implications of rival sets of philosophical assumptions and their impact upon how we methodologically engage in management research;
- Be able to reflect upon your own assumptions about ontology and epistemology.

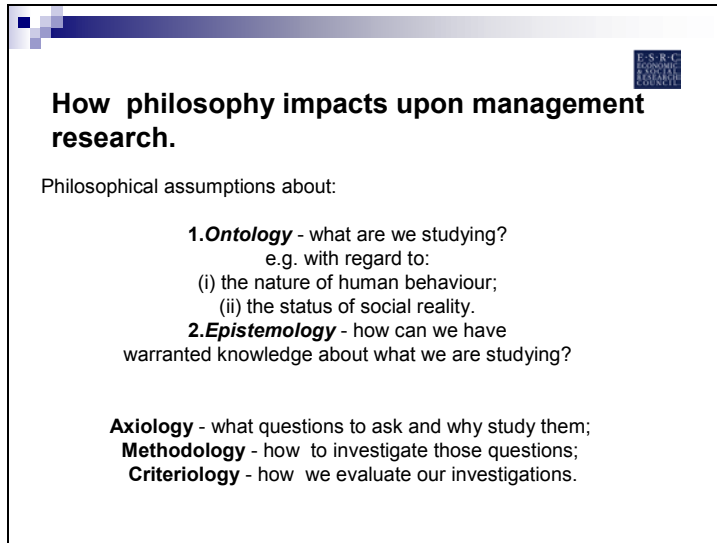
### **Additional Comments:**

In many respects any research method articulates, and is constituted by, philosophical commitments which are often sublimated if they are perceived as mere tools for enabling us to collect particular types of data and to deal with particular research questions.

How different methodologies are variably constituted inevitably expresses the appropriation of often competing philosophical commitments.

For example, the decision to use hypothetico- deductive research methods that are designed to test, and indeed falsify, priorly formulated theory through confronting its predictions with empirical data gathered through observation of reality tacitly draws upon an array of philosophical assumptions and commitments that are contestable yet so often remain uninterrogated.

Even a cursory inspection of the management field would show that such methodological choices are common place yet, by default, also involve the decision not to engage through alternative means: alternatives that themselves articulate different philosophical commitments e.g. to build theory inductively out of observation of the empirical world.



**How philosophy impacts upon management research.**

Philosophical assumptions about:

- 1. Ontology** - what are we studying?  
e.g. with regard to:  
(i) the nature of human behaviour;  
(ii) the status of social reality.
- 2. Epistemology** - how can we have warranted knowledge about what we are studying?

**Axiology** - what questions to ask and why study them;  
**Methodology** - how to investigate those questions;  
**Criteriaology** - how we evaluate our investigations.

**Additional Comments:**

Whilst we cannot avoid making philosophical commitments in undertaking any research, any philosophical commitment can be simultaneously contested.


This is because the philosophical commitments which are inevitably made in undertaking research always entail commitment to knowledge constituting assumptions about the nature of truth, human behaviour, representation and the accessibility of social reality. In other words tacit answers to questions about ontology (what are we studying?), epistemology (how can we have warranted knowledge about our chosen domains?) and axiology (why study them?) impact upon any methodological engagement.

The philosophical assumptions we make in dealing with these questions implicitly present different normative definitions of management research along with particular justificatory logics.

Therefore, they simultaneously impinge upon a further crucial area called criteriaology - how should we judge, or evaluate, the findings and quality of any research?

For further information see the Workshop Number 7: Assessment Criteria >>

## Slide 6



### First philosophical dispute: The nature of human behaviour

- **Erklaren:** the explanation of behaviour by providing a deterministic account of the external causal variables which brought about the behaviour in question through the observation of the empirically discernible features and antecedent conditions of that behaviour.

Stimuli / Structures  $\longrightarrow$  Responses/ Behaviours

**Vs**

Stimuli Reality  $\longleftrightarrow$  Meanings Cultures  $\longrightarrow$  Indexical Action

- **Verstehen:** the interpretative understanding of the meaning a set of actions has to an actor through some form of contact with how s/he experiences her/his experience.

## Slide 7

### The importance of subjectivity

- Attempts at (re) establishing human subjectivity as a legitimate domain for social scientific endeavour and thereby (re) establish a discontinuity between the natural and social sciences.
- This is illustrated by Laing (1967) who points out the error of blindly following the approach of the natural sciences in the study of the social world...  
  
*"...the error fundamentally is the failure to realize that there is an **ontological discontinuity** between human beings and it-beings...Persons are distinguished from things in that persons experience the world, whereas things behave in the world" (Laing, *ibid.*: 53)*
- Here Laing draws attention to how human action has an internal logic of its own which must be understood in order to make it intelligible.

### **Additional Comments:**

Qualitative management research initially appears to be a commonly applied umbrella term for the use of a vast array of non-statistical data collection and analysis techniques which have forged some tentative linkages through a shared, yet often tacit, rejection of methodological monism.

According to Held methodological monism represents the culmination of the Enlightenment project: " a universal mathematically formulated science...as the model for all science and knowledge" (1980: 161). Therefore in some respects qualitative management research seems to be defined by what it is not.

For Ross (1991:350) allegiance to methodological monism entails the notion that only natural science methodology can provide certain knowledge and enable prediction and control. Monism is usually expressed via the deployment of *erklären* in social science where human behaviour is conceptualized deterministically: as necessary responses to empirically discernible and manipulable antecedent conditions or causes (Outhwaite, 1975) which are

investigated through Popper's (1959) hypothetico-deductive method with the aim of producing generalizable nomothetic knowledge.

Typically the observation and testing of theoretical predictions entail the researcher's a priori conceptualization, operationalization and statistical measurement of dimensions of respondents' behaviour rather than beginning with their subjective perspectives.

Indeed for Lessnoff (1974: 96), human subjectivity is often specifically excluded from explanations of behaviour because such "inner" subjective causes are taken to be empirically unobservable (e.g. Abel, 1958) and hence inadmissible as "genuinely scientific explanations".

In contrast, qualitative research has a direct interest in accessing actors' subjective meanings and interpretations in order to explain their behaviour (see: Van Maanen, 1979; Patton, 1990; Schwandt, 1994; 1999; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Alvesson and Deetz, 2000), although whether or not this is possible in an objective manner has been subjected to much debate (Seale, 1999a; 1999b).



Such commitments to *verstehen* (see Outhwaite, *ibid.*) are premised upon the idea that to follow the approach of the natural sciences in the study of the social world is an error because human action, unlike the behaviour of non-sentient objects in the natural world, has an internal subjective logic which must be understood in order to make it intelligible (Laing, 1967: 53).

So as Guba and Lincoln (1994: 106) note, quantitative measures of phenomena are seen to impose an external researcher-derived logic which excludes, or at best distorts rather than captures, actors' subjectivity from the data collected.



Hence qualitative management research has been seen as arising in response to these perceived limitations in conventional quantitative management research (e.g. Prasad and Prasad, 2002).

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**Key aspects of the interpretative approach:**

- Disparate group - ethnographers, phenomenologists, and **various qualitative researchers** etc.;
- all attack positivism's methodological monism;
- all try to (re-)establish human subjectivity as legitimate;
- but does this attack entail a fundamental break with positivism?
- As Knights has observed, interpretative approaches "*who claim a distance from positivistic beliefs*" are often "*representational*" in that they "*rest on a privileging of the consciousness of the researcher who is deemed capable of discovering the 'truth' about the world*" (1992 p.515).
- This raises our second area of philosophical dispute - epistemology

## Slide 10

**Exercise:**

In small groups:

- Identify the different ways by which people decide whether or not something is “true” or “false”;
- How , and why, do these different ways of establishing truth etc. vary?
- Which of these ways of establishing “truth” do you prefer and why?



### **Additional Comments:**

Aim of this exercise is to get people to think about how they know when something is true or false - to illustrate what epistemology is about i.e.

the study of the criteria by which we know what does and does not constitute warranted or scientific knowledge.

This exercise also illustrates that epistemology is about our everyday assumptions about what is true which presuppose agreement about how we determine truth.

In other words we are all epistemologists in that we routinely deploy different epistemological assumptions, in different social contexts, to make sense of what is going on.



**Second philosophical dispute:**

**epistemology:**      *episteme* - knowledge or science  
                                 *logos* - knowledge or account

- About everyday assumptions about how we know whether or not some claim that we are confronted by, about our worlds, is warranted.
- Raises the issue of whether or not we can objectively, or neutrally know what there is “out there” in the social world.
- Poses the question as to whether it is possible to neutrally observe the social world without contaminating what we see by that very act of cognition?

## Slide 12

Positivist epistemology propose a Correspondence Theory of Truth enabled by a *Theory - Neutral Observational Language* :-

*"Makes possible a very precise conception of the testing of theory against observation. The testing of theory against irreducible statements of observation is equivalent to a direct comparison between theory and the real. If they fail to correspond then the theory is false and therefore may be rejected" (Hindess, 1977, p18).*  
e.g.

Theory Neutral  
Observational  
Language  
Enables direct  
testing of Theory

THEORY  
↑  
↓  
OBSERVED REALITY

*The observer is separated from what s/he observes during the act of observation- known as a subject-object dualism.*

### Additional Comments:

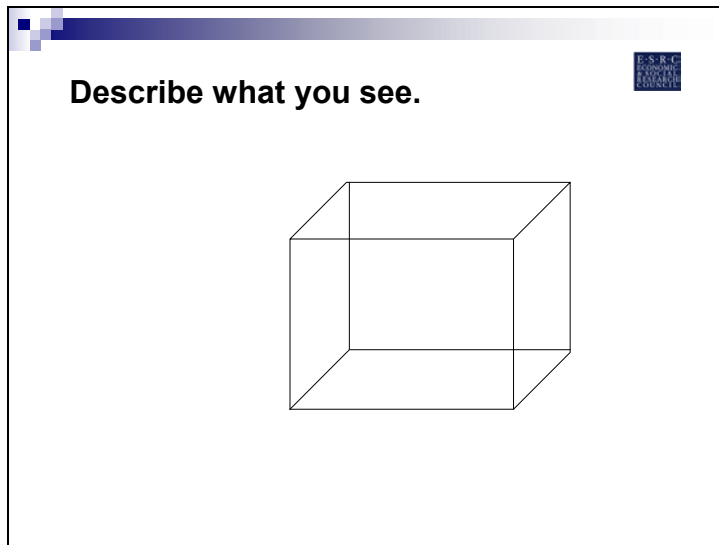
Now it is at this point where we can see the second major philosophical dispute arising which affects how we do research.

Here we can identify what we shall call epistemological objectivists - people who assume that it is possible to observe the social world, and the behaviour of social phenomena like organizations, neutrally - that is, without contaminating what we see by and through that act of observation, or perception.

For epistemological objectivists, like positivists, what we see is what there is: provided that we have been suitably trained to observe in a rigorous manner, we can, for instance, collect objective evidence to test the truthfulness of our theories. Therefore the facts "out there" can be, indeed must be, the ultimate arbiter of whether or not our theories are true and hence can be used to guide practice - otherwise we are in danger of being held in thrall by an amalgam of guess work, dogma, superstition, prejudice and so on.

Hence a subject-object dualism - that the knower is separated from what s/he observes during the act of observation - Richard Rorty (1979) calls this the mirror metaphor - that it is presumed that there is a mirror in the mind of the observer, which metaphorically just needs to be methodologically polished so as to reflect what is “out there”.

At first sight epistemological objectivism seems eminently sensible and coincides with ideas that we routinely use to differentiate between, for instance, truth and falsity, or lies. However it raises the question of whether or not we can actually observe “the facts out there” without influencing what we see? Now undertake the next exercise.



**Additional Comments:**

Almost certainly, most of you will have described the above object in three dimensional terms, for instance as a cube.

If you have done so which face of the cube is facing towards you?

Strange isn't it that the face towards us keeps changing!

Why should this happen?

What is perhaps even stranger is that you have automatically assumed that this is a three dimensional object - why?

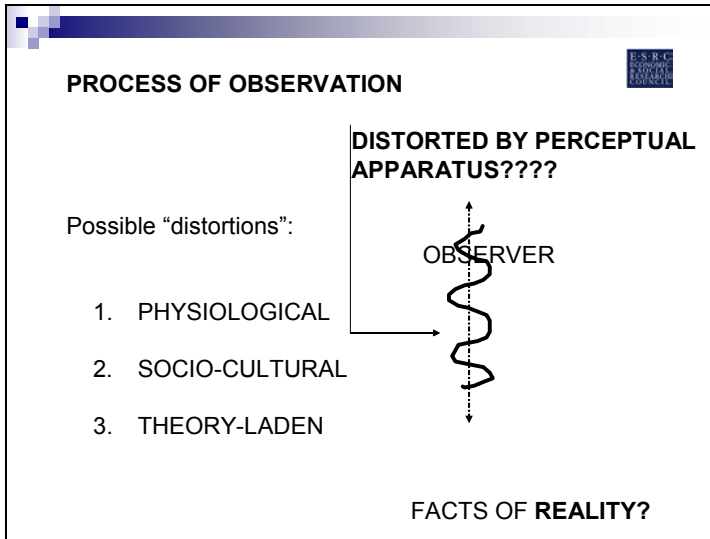
Surely it is just as possible to see this as flat - as a mixture of oblongs, parallelograms and triangles etc. Is there something which we bring with us to observing, what is after all a very simple set of data, which makes us interpret these data in a particular way - as three dimensional.

Role of baggage we bring with us - cultural and theoretical - also role of physiological - e.g. where our attention gets directed but simultaneously excludes.


Does what has happened above cast any doubt upon the epistemological objectivist claim that we can observe what is "out there" in a passive manner so that we do not contaminate what we see during that act of observation? If, for

instance, you think we cannot do this, what does this mean for social scientific knowledge - especially where that knowledge concerns complex social phenomena, such as organizations, rather than just a few lines drawn on a slide?





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**5 Key characteristics of mainstream positivism** 

1. All theoretical statements must be either grounded in empirical observation or capable of, and subject to, empirical testing. Hence either empirical verification, or more usually falsification, is the key to all scientific research.
2. Positivists believe that observation of the empirical world - through our senses - provides the only foundation for knowledge. This entails the claim that such observation can be neutral, value-free and objective.
3. Since primary importance is placed upon what is taken to be observable reality - the postulation of non-observable mechanisms (e.g. the subjective) is rejected as metaphysical speculation and beyond the realm of "science".
4. Positivists support Hume's notion of the "constant conjunction" as a legitimate means of explaining cause and effect - i.e. when one event follows another in a regular and predictable manner, a causal relationship may be said to exist. This is usually moderated by the use of probability and statistical correlation as necessary evidence for causation to be operating between 2 or more variables.
5. Positivists see the task of science as to enable the prediction and control of social and natural events.


### **Additional Comments:**

Characteristic 2 is pivotal to all forms of positivism - it is embedded in the term - "the positively given" - the facts or data that can be neutrally accessed through observation. It is this philosophical commitment that unites all variants of positivism.

As we have already noted some disputes within positivism focus upon what is legitimately observable in a neutral fashion - i.e. characteristic 3 is the areas of contention for some *neo-empiricist* qualitative researchers that differentiates their attachment to *verstehen* from the *erklaren* approach of mainstream positivism. i.e. whether or not we can observe the subjective realm neutrally.



This dispute, in turn, has implications for the use of induction to describe and explain the subjective worlds of actors as opposed to mainstream positivism's falsificationism and, hence, the relevance of characteristics 4 and 5 to the researcher. For the neo-empiricist we can build our descriptions of actors' cultural worlds, by using qualitative methods, in a neutral fashion and it is in those descriptions wherein lies explanation of actors' behaviours.

For other qualitative researchers, such as postmodernists and critical theorists, their criticisms of positivism begin their trajectory primarily with attacking the notion that any form of neutral observation is possible - i.e. characteristic 2 is their key target. Return to slides 11 and 12 to illustrate this philosophical reasoning.

**Third philosophical dispute:** 


**ontology:**                    *ontos - being*  
   *logos - knowledge or account*


- Is therefore concerned with the nature of phenomena and their existence. But...
- here ontology raises questions regarding whether or not some phenomenon that we are interested in actually exists independently of our knowing and perceiving it...
- ...for example, is what we see and usually take to be real and independent of knowing about it, instead, an outcome or "externalization" of this act of cognition.
- *Here we are primarily concerned with the ontological status of social reality and the phenomena we take to constitute aspects of that reality.*




**Here it is useful to differentiate between:**

- **realist assumptions** *about the ontological status of the phenomena we assume to constitute social reality*
  - that they exist, "out there", independently of our perceptual or cognitive structures - we might not already know it, but this reality exists and is there awaiting discovery by us;
- **subjectivist assumptions** *about the ontological status of the social phenomena we deal with*
  - entails the view that what we take to be social reality is a creation, or projection, of our consciousness and cognition which has no real, independent, status separate from the act of knowing. In knowing the social world we create it - **a hyper-reality consisting of simulacra.**

**Summary so far:** 

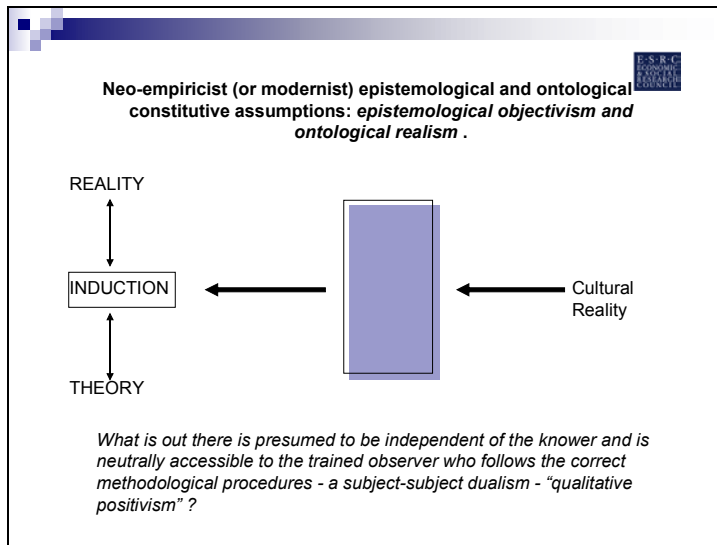
- Qualitative researchers are united by a desire to explore the subjective interpretations and understandings actors deploy in their everyday lives which, it is presumed, lead to the social construction of meaningful behaviour. or action.
- ***However qualitative researchers simultaneously have their own philosophical disputes with each other around*** 

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- Epistemology - is it possible to neutrally engage with, and describe, actors' cultural worlds?
  - Epistemological subjectivists Vs epistemological objectivists.
- Ontological status of social reality - does social reality have an existence independent of our cognitions?
  - Ontological realists Vs ontological subjectivists.
- Result: Three schools of thought using qualitative methodologies - neo-empiricism, critical theory, postmodernism - based upon different combinations of epistemological and ontological assumptions .

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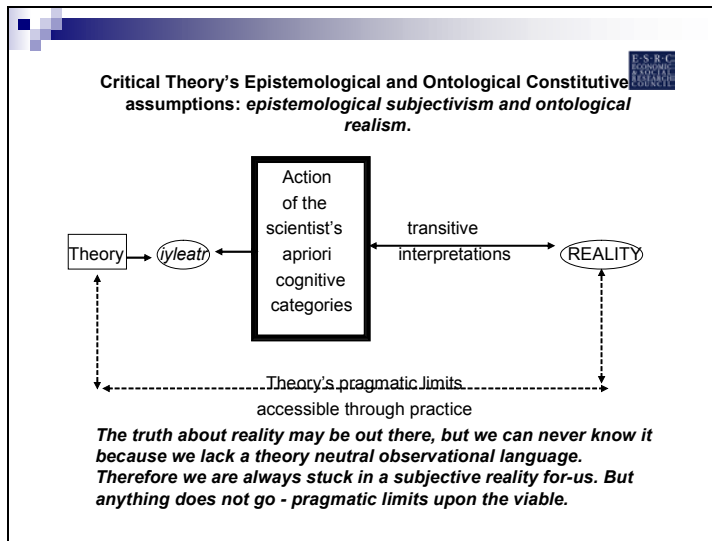
Hence, there is a significant interpretive tradition within positivism actor's subjective, cultural, meanings in order to explain their actions in varying organizational contexts.

Their dispute with mainstream positivist is therefore more about what is important in understanding organizations and the behaviour of their memberships and what is directly observable in a neutral fashion.

Therefore despite these disputes there are important philosophical continuities between the two approaches to organization theory. For instance, as Schwandt (1996: 62) puts it, the positivist "the third-person point of view" is retained which continues to privilege the consciousness of the management researcher (see also: Knights, 1992; Van Maanen, 1995) by retaining the ontological idea that there is a world out there, albeit primarily cultural, that awaits discovery and epistemological exploration in an objective manner. For further reading see list at end of the presentation.



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**Additional Comments:**

Here the outcomes of research are influenced by the subjectivity of the social scientist, and his /her mode of engagement, which leads to the production of different versions of an independently existing reality which we can never fully know. The same applies to the actors the scientist is trying to understand. Existing asymmetrical power relations in society simultaneously influence the form that the subjectivity of actors takes.

Basically the truth might be out there but we can never know it because of the action of our cognitive processing mechanisms which are influenced by power relations.

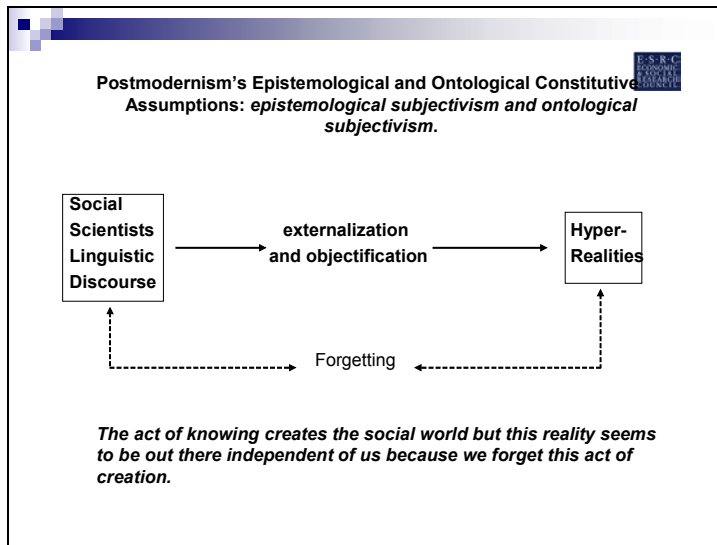
Hence some qualitative research, especially that which is inspired by Habermas' critical theory (1972; 1974) adopts what is called a structural phenomenalist position (e.g. Forester, 1983). This is where, through the action of culturally specific interpretive processes, human cognition shapes external reality through its imposition of the apriori which "determine the aspects under which reality is objectified and thus can be made accessible to experience to begin with"

(Habermas,1974: 8-9). In this Habermas accepts the existence of a reality independent of human cognition which imposes pragmatic limits upon human endeavours through “the contingency of its ultimate constants” (1972: 33).

In other words anything does not work when it comes to our practical endeavours that are guided by our subjective theoretical apprehension of the world since the real world will ultimately intervene and constrain what is pragmatically effective - even though we can never directly know what this reality-as-it-is might be and remain stuck in a “reality-for-us”.

However a key issue is that accounts of actors interpretations must also be agreed, democratically, with those actors who then must be stimulated to critique their own subjectivity to derive new interpretations and practices that are agreed and free from power distortions.

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### Additional Comments:

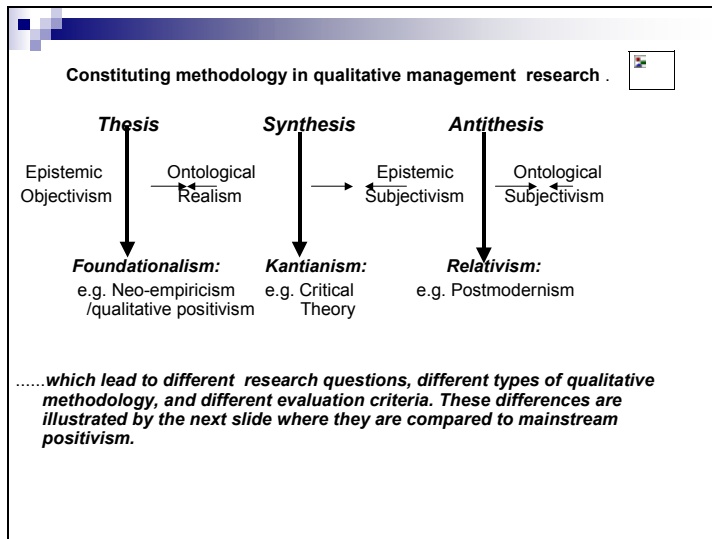
Here what we take to be reality is itself created and determined by these acts of cognition. Here the social world isn't there waiting for us to discover it, rather that act of knowing creates what we find. Everything is therefore relative to the eye of the beholder.

Discourses are subjective, linguistically formed, ways of experiencing and acting and constituting phenomena which we take to be "out there". As such they are expressed in all that can be thought, written or said about a particular phenomena which through creating the phenomena influence our behaviour. Therefore a discourse, for the postmodernist, stabilizes our subjectivity into a particular gaze by which we come to normally construe ourselves, others and what we take to be social reality. A dominant discourse, which is taken for granted by people and hence is not challenged, thereby limits our knowledge and practices and dictates what is legitimate. Inevitably a dominant discourse excludes alternative ways of knowing and behaving - alternative discourses and their associated practices are always possible, they are just being suppressed.

The result is that discursively produced hyper-realities are mistaken for an independent external reality: a “false consciousness” is accorded to these subjective linguistic outcomes which appear as being natural and out-there independent of us.

Hence the concern of the postmodernist is to describe these discursive forms, explore how they have developed and impact upon people, identify how they might change and then ultimately to destabilize them so that alternative discourses, which are always possible, might then develop.

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### Additional Comments:

Three combinations of knowledge constituting assumptions that influence the forms that qualitative research takes are illustrated above - along with the schools of thought that they produce/ underlie (adapted from Johnson and Dubberley, 2003).

Each school of thought shares an emphasis upon exploring human subjectivity, however how this may be done and what status any qualitative research has varies due to epistemological and ontological discontinuities.

This variation and how it compares to mainstream positivist research is illustrated by the next slide.



# Slide 24



**Four Key Approaches to Management Research:**

*← Knowledge constituting assumptions →*

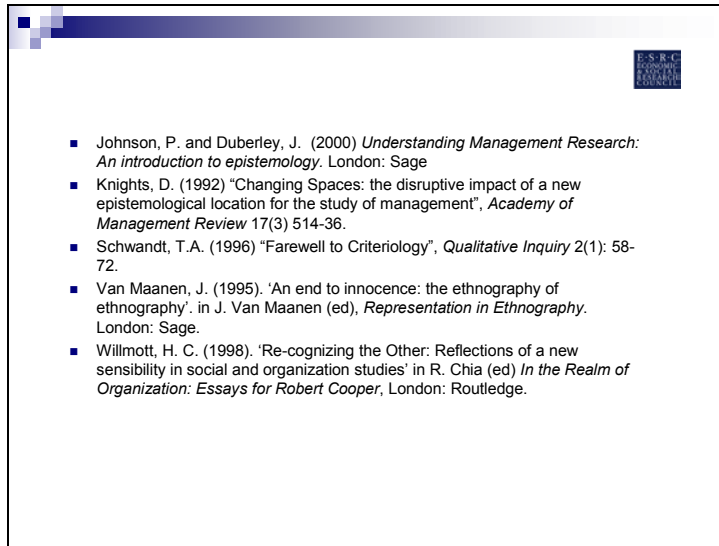
Management Schools of Thought:	Ontological Status of Human Behaviour/action:	Epistemology:	Ontological Status of Social Reality:	Methodological Commitments:	Key research questions:
<b>1. Positivism</b>	Determined	Objectivist	Realist	Quantitative methods to enable erklären	<i>What are the causes of variable x?</i>
<b>2. Neo-empiricism</b>	Meaningful	Objectivist	Realist	Qualitative methods to enable verstehen	<i>How do people subjectively experience the world?</i>
<b>3. Critical Theory</b>	Meaningful	Subjectivist	Realist	Qualitative methods to enable a structural phenomenology	<i>How do people subjectively experience the world and how can they free themselves from domination?</i>
<b>4. Post-modernism</b>	Discursive	Subjectivist	Subjectivist	Qualitative methods to enable deconstruction	<i>How and why are particular discourses being voiced while others aren't?</i>



**Further sources**

- Burrell, G. and Morgan, G. (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*, London : Heineman, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Morgan G. and Smircich, L. (1980) The Case for Qualitative Research, *Academy of Management Review* , 5(4): 491-500.
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- Donaldson, L. (2003) "A Critique of Postmodernism in Organization Studies. Postmodernism and management: Pros, cons and the alternative", *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 21: 169-202.
- Forrester, J. (1983) Critical Theory and Organizational Analysis, in G.Morgan (ed), *Beyond Method*, London: Sage: 234-46.
- Hardy, C. and Clegg, S. (1997) Relativity without relativism: Reflexivity in Post-Paradigm Organization Studies, *British Journal of Management*, 8 (special issue) : S5-19. CIFx2
- Guba, E. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research", in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Newbury Park: Sage.

## Slide 26

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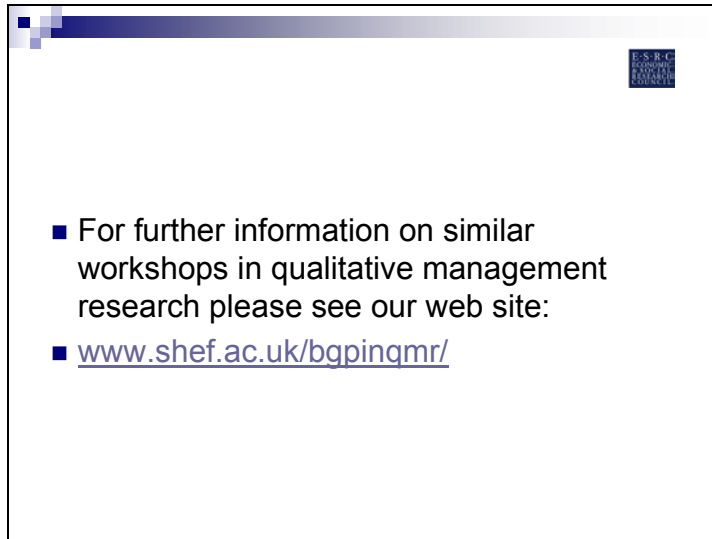
- Johnson, P. and Duberley, J. (2000) *Understanding Management Research: An introduction to epistemology*. London: Sage
- Knights, D. (1992) "Changing Spaces: the disruptive impact of a new epistemological location for the study of management", *Academy of Management Review* 17(3) 514-36.
- Schwandt, T.A. (1996) "Farewell to Criteriology", *Qualitative Inquiry* 2(1): 58-72.
- Van Maanen, J. (1995). 'An end to innocence: the ethnography of ethnography'. in J. Van Maanen (ed), *Representation in Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Willmott, H. C. (1998). 'Re-cognizing the Other: Reflections of a new sensibility in social and organization studies' in R. Chia (ed) *In the Realm of Organization: Essays for Robert Cooper*, London: Routledge.

### **Additional Comments:**

The references in the text of the slides can be found in the enclosed paper "Evaluating Qualitative Management Research: Towards a Contingent Criteriology" by Johnson, Buehring, Cassell and Symon.



Slide 27

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- For further information on similar workshops in qualitative management research please see our web site:  
■ [www.shef.ac.uk/bgpinqmr/](http://www.shef.ac.uk/bgpinqmr/)

There is a space on our website for feedback on the training modules. Please use it to record any feedback including modifications/ adaptations made to the original modules. >>

## **Pre-reading**

### **Evaluating Qualitative Management Research: Towards a Contingent Criteriology.**

**Phil Johnson(1), Anna Buehring(2), Catherine Cassell (3) and Gillian Symon(4).**

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(3) Sheffield University Management School, 9 Mappin Street, Sheffield S1 4DT.

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This work was sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council's Research Methods Programme: Grant No H33250006

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## **Evaluating Qualitative Management Research: Towards a Contingent Criteriology.**

### **Abstract**

*The term qualitative management research embraces an array of non-statistical research practices. Here it is argued that this diversity is an outcome of competing philosophical assumptions which produce distinctive research perspectives and legitimate the appropriation of different sets of evaluation criteria. Some confusion can arise when evaluation criteria constituted by particular philosophical conventions are universally applied to this heterogeneous management field. So as to avoid such misappropriation, this paper presents a contingent criteriology, located in a metatheoretical analysis of four schools of management thought: positivism; neo-empiricism; critical theory; and postmodernism. Armed with criteria that vary accordingly, evaluation can reflexively focus upon the extent to which any management research consistently embraces the particular methodological principles that are sanctioned by its a priori philosophical commitments.*

### **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to develop a heuristic framework which could guide the evaluation of qualitative management research. This concern with criteriology is very important because, despite the historical dominance of quantitative methodology in anglophone counties (see: Daft, 1980; Stalbein, 1996; Stern and

Barley, 1996), for many years qualitative research has also made a significant contribution to many substantive areas of management research. For example, much qualitative research has focused upon: the nature of managerial work (Dalton, 1959; Mintzberg, 1973; Watson, 1977; Jackall, 1988; Watson, 1994); the impact of organizational control systems (Lupton, 1963; Kunda, 1992; Willmott and Knights, 1995); relations with employees (Gouldner, 1954; Armstrong et al. 1981; Collinson, 1992); the everyday experience of work (Roy, 1958; Rosen, 1985; Kondo, 1990; Van Maanen, 1991; Giroux, 1992; Meyerson, 1994); gender and identity at work (Kanter, 1977; Pollert, 1981; Martin, 1990; Ely, 1995; Parker, 2000). However, even a cursory inspection of this genre would reveal how qualitative management research, especially in Europe (Usdiken and Pasadeos, 1995), is being inspired by an expanding array of modes of engagement which philosophically vary (see Prasad and Prasad, 2002) and thereby tacitly promulgate different forms of evaluation. Therefore any evaluative framework must take into account this increasing diversity by encouraging the reflexive application of the appropriate evaluation criteria contingently foregrounded in the philosophical assumptions articulated though the mode of engagement deployed by the management researcher.

### **Defining Qualitative Research**

Given the diverse modes of engagement noted above, qualitative management research initially appears to be a commonly applied umbrella term for the use of a vast array of non-statistical data collection and analysis techniques which have

forged some tentative linkages through a shared, yet often tacit, rejection of methodological *monism*. According to Held methodological *monism* represents the culmination of the Enlightenment project: “ a universal mathematically formulated science...as the model for all science and knowledge” (1980: 161). Therefore in some respects qualitative management research seems to be defined by what it is not.

For Ross (1991:350) allegiance to methodological *monism* entails the notion that only natural science methodology can provide certain knowledge and enable prediction and control. *Monism* is usually expressed via the deployment of *erklären* in social science where human behaviour is conceptualized deterministically: as necessary responses to empirically discernible and manipulable antecedent conditions or causes (Outhwaite, 1975) which are investigated through Popper’s (1959) hypothetico-deductive method with the aim of producing generalizable nomothetic knowledge. Typically the observation and testing of theoretical predictions entail the researcher’s a priori conceptualization, operationalization and statistical measurement of dimensions of respondents’ behaviour rather than beginning with their subjective perspectives. Indeed for Lessnoff (1974: 96), human subjectivity is often specifically excluded from explanations of behaviour because such “inner” subjective causes are taken to be empirically unobservable (e.g. Abel, 1958) and hence inadmissible as “genuinely scientific explanations”.

In contrast, qualitative research is usually recognized as having a direct concern with capturing the actual meanings and interpretations actors subjectively ascribe to phenomena in order to describe and explain their behaviour through investigating how they experience, share and sustain everyday realities (see: Van Maanen, 1979; 1998; Patton, 1990; Schwandt, 1994; 1999; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; 2000; Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). Although whether or not this engagement is possible in an objective manner has been subjected to much debate (Seale, 1999a; 1999b), such commitments to *verstehen* (see Outhwaite, *ibid.*) are also premised upon the idea that to follow the approach of the natural sciences in the study of the social world is an error because human action, unlike the behaviour of non-sentient objects in the natural world, has an internal subjective logic which must be understood in order to make human action intelligible (Laing, 1967: 53). So as Guba and Lincoln (1994: 106) note, quantitative measures of phenomena and statistical reasoning are seen to impose an external researcher-derived logic which excludes, or at best distorts rather than captures, actors' subjectivity from the data collected. Hence qualitative management research has been seen as arising in response to these perceived limitations in conventional quantitative management research (e.g. Prasad and Prasad, 2002) whilst its necessarily "flexible and emergent character" simultaneously makes it "particularly difficult to pin down" (Van Maanen, 1998: xi).

However a shared commitment to *verstehen* does not explain the heterogeneity evident in qualitative management research: a characteristic which suggests that

considerable differences underlie the initial appearance of similarity usually invoked by the term “qualitative”. Patton (1990: 153) may go some way to explaining this conundrum by showing how qualitative research generally articulates various research questions which derive from different research perspectives which have specific disciplinary roots (see also Snape and Spencer, 2003). So while it is important to note that qualitative research is generally a classification that embraces a large number of different research activities (see; Schwandt, 1994; Cassell and Symon, 2004), this diversity is exacerbated in management research precisely because of its multi-disciplinary (Brown, 1997) and inter-disciplinary (Watson, 1997) nature. However it is also evident that a significant influence upon how qualitative research is variably constituted, lies in how researchers often articulate competing philosophical commitments. These commitments entail different knowledge constituting assumptions about the nature of truth, human behaviour, representation and reality etc. (Altheide and Johnson, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 1994) which implicitly and explicitly present different normative definitions of management research (see Morgan and Smircich, 1980). Such dissensus is not replicated in the quantitative mainstream where philosophical consensus has enabled the development of explicit evaluative criteria and limited any controversy to debates about how to most effectively meet those benchmarks (Schwandt, 1996; Scheurich, 1997).

### **The Need for a Contingent Criteriology**

Due to the variability of qualitative management research, providing criteria for its evaluation becomes a problematic process because what constitutes “good” research becomes a polysemous, and therefore somewhat elusive, concept. Whilst this suggests a need for caution, there is also the danger that without evaluative guidelines this research will struggle to convince some audiences of its legitimacy - especially those who occupy the quantitative mainstream. But if we accept it is important that methodological issues in qualitative management research should be transparent and hence open to critical scrutiny, we also must be alert to how confusion can inadvertently arise. For instance, as Bochner forcefully argues (2000: 267) evaluation criteria constituted by particular philosophical conventions may be universally applied, as if they were “culture-free” and hence indisputable, to what is a heterogeneous field inspired by a number of different epistemological and ontological dispositions which thereby articulate a range of competing justificatory logics.

This problem of misappropriation is often ignored in reviews of evaluation criteria for management research (e.g: Mitchell, 1985; Scandura and Williams, 2000) where it would seem, metaphorically, that “one size” is presumed to fit all. In other words, these reviews are somewhat philosophically parochial, and tend to lack much sensitivity to difference, by producing what amounts to a one-sided reductionism. Even writers who promote forms of qualitative research (e.g. Kirk and Miller 1986; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Yin, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994) have tended to transfer into its evaluation notions such as objectivity,



validity, reliability and generalizability with little modification. But such evaluative criteria tacitly articulate positivist philosophical assumptions (see: Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Johnson and Cassell, 2001) which serve to undermine and subordinate the alternative philosophical stances being articulated by much, but by no means all, of the work produced by qualitative management researchers. Thus one of the key barriers to the use and publication of qualitative management research could be the monological application of assessment criteria (Symon, Cassell and Dickson, 2000). Clearly such misappropriation is not a trivial matter, not least of all to those management researchers whose work might be unintentionally misjudged.

Given this context, it is crucial that management researchers are able to deal with the ensuing uncertainty caused by the profusion of philosophical perspectives, research techniques, modes of presentation etc. evident here by being able to fairly assess qualitative management research through using the *appropriate* evaluation criteria in a reflexive manner. Hence the aim of this paper is to develop a criteriology that enables different sets of evaluation criteria to be *contingently* deployed so that they fit the researcher's mode of engagement. This sensitivity initially requires the development of a metatheory of evaluation before proceeding to identify the possible evaluation criteria appropriate to different genres of management research. This paper will then conclude by considering the implications of the proposed contingent criteriology for management research.

## **Developing a Metatheory of Evaluation**

Metatheoretical examination involves elucidation of the overarching structures of thought within a substantive domain so as to explore the philosophical conventions which inform different perspectives: the often subliminal a priori knowledge constituting assumptions which tacitly organize theoretical and methodological variation. Here, such examination serves as a heuristic device to describe and explain the contingent nature of assessment in management research generally and foster an understanding of understanding which promotes consistency between knowledge constituting assumptions, methodology and evaluation.

Management research is often characterized as lacking paradigmatic development, in a Kuhnian sense (Kuhn, 1970), because of theoretical and methodological diversity (see: Pfeffer, 1993; 1995; Van Maanen, 1995a). Table 1 attempts to capture this diversity by illustrating 4 modes of engagement which have been widely debated and are thought to influence many substantive areas of management research (see: Laughlin, 1995; Alvesson and Wilmott 1996; Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Hancock and Tyler, 2001; Griseri, 2002). These orientations, along with their attendant methodological commitments and key research questions, are portrayed as engaged in philosophical struggles as protagonists deploy different sets of knowledge constituting assumptions about: the ontological status of human behaviour/action; epistemology; the ontological status of social reality.

About here: **Table 1: Four Approaches to Management Research**

So strictly speaking, since the 4 modes of engagement illustrated in Table 1 exist synchronically they cannot constitute paradigms - at least given Kuhn's (1970) diachronic specification of the term. Hence they are probably more akin to Kuhn's pre-paradigmatic schools of thought. For Kuhn (1957;1970) the early stages of the development of a science are characterized by diversity in that there is no universally accepted set of theoretical and methodological commitments organized into a received paradigm - rather no one is prepotent and thereby constitutes an overarching paradigm (see Kuhn, 1977: 295) that governs puzzle-solving. As Pfeffer (1993) has observed, management research is characterized by the existence of various competing pre-paradigmatic schools of thought which disagree over basic epistemological assumptions and interpret the same areas of interest in divergent ways. To claim that their proponents "practice their trades in different worlds" (Kuhn,1970:150) so that "meaningful communication is not possible" (Jackson and Carter, 1991:117) would be an exaggeration given the epistemic zones of transition (Gioia and Pitre, 1990) between different schools of thought illustrated in Table 1. Nevertheless it is also evident that by accepting the assumptions of one school we always will deny some of the assumptions of alternatives. Therefore the schools are to a degree mutually exclusive in the sense that management researchers cannot operate in two schools simultaneously in the same piece of work without some fear of self-contradiction. For instance they would struggle to be both a neo-empiricist and a critical theorist

at the same time but researchers can understand what these perspectives mean and why they might be seen legitimate or illegitimate from different perspectives. So despite the propensity for mutual contradiction, mutual understanding is possible - otherwise this paper in itself would be inconceivable.

As we have already noted, key philosophical differences emerge over the significance of human subjectivity in explaining behaviour and its appropriateness to scientific investigation. Some philosophers (e.g. Abel, 1958; Neurath, 1959) have rejected the investigation of human subjectivity on two grounds. First, it is taken to echo with “the residues of theology” (Neurath, 1959:295) as it is metaphysical and therefore beyond reliable empirical investigation. Second, its investigation would undermine methodological monism and prevent social science emulating the operational successes of natural science. However as numerous scholars (e.g. Laing, 1967; Blumer, 1969; Geertz, 1973; Harre and Secord, 1973; Shotter, 1975; Morrow, 1994) have repeatedly argued, methodological *monism* entails a deterministic stance which treats people as if they were analogous to unthinking entities at the mercy of external forces whereas any human being is an agent capable of making choices based upon his or her subjective interpretation of the situation. Hence social scientists, in order to explain human action, have to begin by understanding the ways in which people actively constitute and reconstitute the culturally derived meanings which they deploy to interpret their experiences and organize social action.

The second point of departure is around different epistemological assumptions. Located in a Cartesian dualism, an objectivist view of epistemology presupposes the possibility of a neutral observational language: a “view from nowhere” (Nagel, 1986), where our sensory experience of the objects of an external reality provides the only secure foundation for social scientific knowledge (e.g. Wittgenstein, 1922; Reichenbach, 1963; Ayer, 1971). Truth, as correspondence, is to be found in the researcher’s passive registration of “the positively given” - the facts that constitute reality (Comte, 1853). In contrast, a subjectivist view of epistemology repudiates the possibility of a neutral observational language: language does not allow access to, or representation of, reality. As Sayer (1981: 6) has commented, with this “shattering of innocence”, any form of the empiricist claim that objective knowledge can be founded upon direct sensory experience of reality is dismissed and, inevitably, any account must be therefore some form of social construction (see: Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 1995).

The third point of departure concerns the ontological status of reality. A realist<sup>i</sup> view assumes that social reality has an independent existence prior to human cognition whereas a subjectivist ontology assumes that what we take to be reality is an output of human cognitive processes. As is in Table 1, an objectivist epistemology is necessarily dependent on realist ontological assumptions - one cannot maintain the ideal of a neutral observational language whilst simultaneously assuming that reality does not exist independently of one’s act of cognition. Although rival assumptions about the ontological status of human action/behaviour differentiate

neo-empiricism from positivism, both schools articulate objectivist epistemological assumptions combined with realist assumptions about the ontological status of reality. In contrast, a subjectivist epistemology can be combined with *either* subjectivist or realist assumptions about reality (see Bhaskar, 1978; Putnam, 1981; Margolis, 1986) - a point often missed by other metatheoretical schemes (e.g. Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The former combination forms a postmodern position where reality becomes an outcome of discursive practices (e.g. Foucault, 1970; Baudrillard, 1983). The latter is a Kantian (Kant, 1781) position typical of critical theory (Bernstein, 1983:18). This differentiates between socially constructed "realities-for- us" and "reality-as-it-is" by suggesting that there is an external reality independent of, yet resistant to, human activity which ultimately remains unknowable (Kolakowski 1969; Sayer, 1981; Latour, 1988) yet simultaneously imposes pragmatic limits upon our social constructions so that anything does not go. The result is "subtle" (Hammersley, 1992: 50-54) or "transcendental" (Bhaskar, 1986: 72-5) realism: where knowledge of a mind-independent and extra-discursive reality is always culturally determined yet reality recursively acts to constrain the pragmatic viability of those interpretations.

Below we shall explore how these 4 rival philosophical positions impact upon the constitution of evaluation criteria in management research, with specific reference to deployment in qualitative management research.

### **Constituting Evaluation Criteria in Management Research**

## **1. Positivism**

It is important to begin our contingent constitution of evaluation criteria with positivism since this school of thought continues to dominate management research. Hence, due to its mainstream status, there continues to be the possibility that evaluation criteria relevant to positivism, have gained the status of a common sense benchmark, and might be inadvertently and inappropriately imported into assessments management research that deploys non-positivistic knowledge constitution assumptions.

Popper's (1959) falsificationist hypothetico-deductive methodology has largely superseded the empiricist-verificationist origins of positivism (see Comte, 1853; Mill, 1874) so as to deal with the problems of induction first identified by Hume (1739/1965). Whilst some have labeled this development as *postpositivism* (e.g. Guba and Lincoln, 1994), falsificationism maintains important positivist commitments: an objectivist epistemology, a realist ontology and methodological *monism* (see Johnson and Duberley, 2000). The result is that Popper's modified positivist methodology emphasizes objective data collection in order to test hypotheses by having built in "extensive means for protecting against personal biases" (Behling, 1980: 489) which thereby militate against "fanciful theorizing" (Donaldson, 1996: 164) in management research.

Here positivists try to ensure their view of scientific rigour by deploying particular conceptions of validity and reliability - evaluative criteria which assume that

phenomena are independent of the researcher, and the methodology used, provided that the correct procedures are followed. As Scandura and Williams (2000) note with regard to management research, the deployment of such criteria are pivotal to enabling progress through the assessment of the various methods used by management researchers. Here progress in management research entails a “pursuit of ‘truth’ that is a closer and closer fitting of our theories to the one objective reality we presume exists” (Mitroff and Pondy, 1978: 146). For other commentators (e.g. Hogan and Sinclair, 1996: 439) although positivist methods are imperfect, they have a direct bearing upon management practice as they are not only “rational, theoretically derived, and dependent on replicable and generalizable empirical validation”, they also enable the description, explanation and prediction of individual behaviour in organizational settings which promises to improve the effectiveness of managers by conferring the power of control (see also Donaldson, 1996).

Through *erklären* the aim is to gain access to the causal relations that are thought to be embedded in an a priori, cognitively accessible reality. This is pursued by management researchers methodologically creating, or simulating, conditions of closure which allow empirical testing and are crucial to ensuring internal validity (e.g. Behling, 1980; Davis, 1985; Di Maggio, 1995; Donaldson, 1996, 1997). Although often working in the quasi-experimental conditions which usually apply in management research (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Orpen, 1979; Luthans et al., 1985; Wall et al., 1986), key quality concerns of this experimental logic include:



ensuring that every respondent within an experimental group has experienced the same experimental treatment physically manipulated by researchers; valid and reliable quantitative measures of variance in the dependent variable; matching control and experimental groups so as to rule out the influence of extraneous variables, generalizing findings to a defined population beyond those respondents participating in the research. Whether their aim is hypothesis testing or population description, survey researchers have similar quality concerns. For instance they must evaluate construct validity by considering the adequacy of the operationalization processes through which they have translated the abstract concepts, they need to measure and statistically analyse, into valid and reliable sets of standardized indicators articulated in questionnaires (see Reeves and Harper, 1981; Schoenfeldt, 1984; Schriesheim et al, 1993; Simons and Thompson, 1998). These instruments are administered by various means to statistically representative samples to ensure external validity (see Simsek and Veiga, 2000; 2001). In the case of hypothesis testing analytical surveys, internal validity is pursued through the use of increasingly complex statistical procedures which enable control over extraneous variables and the measurement of variance in both independent and dependent variables (see Allen et al. 2001).

In positivist management research, because of the underlying commitment to a correspondence theory of truth, the aim is to ensure distance between the researcher and the researched so that research processes and findings are not contaminated by the actions of the researcher. Hence a key evaluation criterion

pertains to the reliability of findings in the sense that different researchers, or the same researcher on different occasions, would “discover the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in the same or similar settings” (Lecompte and Goetz, 1982:32). In other words, reliability refers to “the extent to which studies can be replicated” (ibid.: 35). Hence assessment of reliability requires the use of clear methodological protocols so that regulation by peers, through replication and the deployment of the organized scepticism so pivotal to Merton’s “scientific ethos” (1938: 259), would be, in principle, possible.

Therefore it is evident that reliability depends upon the a priori philosophical commitment that the world is both stable and neutrally accessible. Such an ontological and epistemological stance is retained in neo-empiricism where, however, qualitative methods predominate. However, as we shall illustrate, in neo-empiricist reliability becomes a contentious issue because a simultaneous commitment to *verstehen* means that research design and fieldwork emerges out of, and is largely limited to and dependent upon, specific research settings. This makes the possibility of replication problematic and also questions the continued relevance of other positivist evaluation criteria since generalizability becomes problematic.

## ***2. Neo-empiricism***

Neo-empiricist is used by Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 60-74) to categorize those management researchers who assume the possibility of the unbiased and

objective collection of qualitative empirical data (see also: Putnam et al., 1993; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and who simultaneously reject falsificationism in favour of induction. Elsewhere, this management research has been more generally called “qualitative positivism” (Prasad and Prasad, 2002:6) because researchers use non-quantitative methods within largely positivistic assumptions. Here we use the term neo-empiricist to specifically refer to those “qualitative positivists” who rely upon an array of qualitative methods to inductively develop thick descriptions of the patterns in the subjective meanings that actors use to make sense of their everyday worlds and who investigate the implications of those interpretations for social interaction. Often these data are used to generate grounded theory, that parsimoniously explains and predicts behaviour (see Morse, 1994), through the deployment of Glaser and Strauss’ (1967; see also Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Locke, 2000; Partington, 2000) constant comparative method or analytic induction (e.g. Johnson, 1998).

Within this interpretive agenda, neo-empiricists construe the passivity and neutrality of the researcher as a separation of the knower-researcher from his/her inductive descriptions of other actors’ intersubjective cultural experiences which await discovery (Denzin, 1970: 168; Glaser, 1992: 16). As Schwandt (1996: 62) puts it, this “the third-person point of view” privileges the consciousness of the management researcher (see also Knights, 1992; Van Maanen, 1995b) by retaining the idea that there is a world out there to be discovered and explored in an objective manner. Hence the dispute with mainstream positivism is centred upon

what is open to direct, neutral, observation through sensory experience and the continuing relevance of induction in the social sciences (Markus, 1994). These philosophical commitments have led some writers to reject the idea that such qualitative research is philosophically distinct from quantitative research and to directly apply unreconstructed positivist evaluation criteria (e.g. Lecompte and Goetz, 1982; Kirk and Miller, 1986).

According to others these differences are philosophically significant and therefore they have attempted to revise positivist evaluation criteria to reflect this inductive agenda through articulating alternative ways of demonstrating the qualitative researcher's objectivity and scientific rigour that displace mainstream conceptions of validity and reliability. For instance, in their early work, Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized the need for qualitative researchers to provide various audit trails, in a self-critical fashion, that allow audiences to make judgements for themselves as to its rigour. Hence they suggest the following general principles which replace: internal validity with credibility (authentic representations); external validity with transferability (extent of applicability); reliability with dependability (minimization of researcher idiosyncrasies); objectivity with confirmability (researcher self-criticism). Meanwhile Morse (1994) focuses upon the inductive analysis of qualitative data through: comprehension (learning about a setting); synthesising (identifying patterns in the data to produce categories); theorizing (explanations that fit the data); recontextualizing (abstracting the emerging theory to new settings and relating it to established knowledge). A significant issue is that the management researcher must provide an account of how inductive analysis of the organizational

settings under investigation was accomplished by demonstrating how concepts were derived and applied as well as showing how alternative explanations have been considered but rejected (see: Adler and Adler, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Locke, 1996).

Hammersley's contribution (1989; 1990; 1992) adds to the above criteria by suggesting that qualitative researchers ought to be internally reflexive through critically scrutinizing the impact of their field roles upon the research setting and findings so as to reduce sources of contamination thereby enhancing "naturalism" or ecological validity (see also Brunswick, 1956; Bracht and Glass, 1968; Cicourel, 1982; Pollner and Emerson, 1983). So in management research a key aim would be to facilitate access to members' "theories-in-use" (Argyris et al., 1985), and the multiple perspectives that abound in organizations (Pettigrew, 1985), whilst avoiding "over rapport" with those members. In this it would be necessary to treat organizational settings as "anthropologically strange" (Hammersley, 1990: 16) whilst demonstrating "social and intellectual distance" and "analytical space" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 115). As Seale notes (1999a: 161), through revealing aspects of themselves and the research process as a traceable audit trail, the qualitative researcher persuades readers that they "can rely on the writer's hard won objectivity" thereby establishing the credibility, dependability and confirmability of findings.

As we noted above, because the promise of replication is more problematic in qualitative research, because so much depends upon the social setting in which research takes place, dependability may be further demonstrated through a particular form of triangulation. This entails the contingent use of multiple researchers, multiple primary and secondary data sources and collection methods to cross reference and substantiate the objectivity of findings by demonstrating their convergence and consistency of meaning (see: Leininger, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Lowe et al., 2000).

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of neo-empiricism's naturalistic concern with preserving research settings is that due to the small samples used, although generalization within a setting is possible, the qualitative researcher can rarely make claims about the setting's representativeness of a wider population and therefore any claims to external validity are always tenuous (see Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). For Mitchell (1983; see also Stake, 2000) such a traditional conception of external validity shows a confusion between the procedures appropriate to making probabilistic inferences from survey research and those which are appropriate to what he calls "case studies". He argues that analytical thinking about survey data is based upon both statistical and logical (i.e. causal) inference and that there is a tendency to elide the former with the latter in that "the postulated causal connection among features in a sample may be assumed to exist in some parent population simply because the features may be inferred to co-exist in that population" (ibid.:200). He proceeds to argue that, in contrast, inference in case study research

can only be logical and derives its external validity not from sampling but from unassailable logical inference based upon the demonstrated all-inclusive power of the inductively generated and tested theoretical model (ibid.: 190; see also: Fielding and Fielding, 1986:89; Strauss, 1987: 38-9).

Sometimes neo-empiricists advocate a pluralistic methodological orientation (e.g. Lecompte and Goetz, 1982; McCall and Bobko (1999).) which pragmatically combines qualitative and quantitative work to investigate different dimensions of actors' behaviour. Here the difference between different methods is perceived as being one of trade-off between mainstream positivist evaluation criteria such as reliability, internal, ecological and external validity etc., and their appropriateness to the research topic. The notion of trade-off illustrates the need to use quantitative and qualitative methodologies to triangulate findings so as to "locate an object's exact position" (Jick, 1979: 602) and overcome the bias inherent in a single-method approach (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). Thus pluralists argue that quantitative and qualitative methodologies do not reflect a fundamental philosophical conflict rather they complement one another in a variety of ways that add to the credibility of a study. However, this *rapprochement* is only tenable within neo-empiricist philosophical assumptions which recognize the importance of actors' subjectivity and the consequent need for, and possibility of, *verstehen* whilst simultaneously recognizing the influence of external causal variables upon behaviour (see McLennan, 1995). For the pluralist, qualitative methods are the most appropriate for fulfilling their commitment to exploration of actors' subjective

worlds but usually within a version of “variable analysis” (Blumer, 1969) which has to also deploy quantitative methods.

For instance, within this pluralist position, qualitative methodology could also be used within a hypothetico-deductive framework to control the extraneous variables that interpretive researchers would see as deriving from indexical nature of actors’ organizational behaviour and their consequent variable interpretation of designated independent variables measured by quantitative procedures. In this manner qualitative research is seen to improve the internal validity of quantitative research by attending to ecological validity (Schuman, 1982). Alternatively, methodological pluralism may also arise from a commitment to linking micro-analyses of individual or group action(s) with a macro-structural analysis of society (see Fielding, 1988). For instance, in this form of methodological pluralism, the researcher provides a quantitative etic analysis that seeks to explain and holistically contextualize qualitative emic descriptions of actors’ perspectives (Boyle, 1994). Underlying either approach is the aim of providing what Fay (1975: 84-5) has called “quasi-causal” accounts where, “in these sorts of conditionship relations, consciousness functions as a mediator between the determining antecedent factors and the subsequent actions”.

In sum, neo-empiricist methodological pluralism considers that combining quantitative and qualitative methods is not only viable, it actually would significantly improve management research in terms of mainstream positivist



criteria. However such a stance can only be maintained by accepting the relevance of both *verstehen* and *erklären* to social science and by assuming that there are not significant philosophical differences at play - something, as we have shown, with which not all neo-empiricists are prepared to agree and hence limit their work to the deployment of qualitative methods.

Within all neo-empiricism there lurks a tension between an empiricist impulse that emphasizes how inductive descriptions of cultures should correspond with members' subjectivity and an interpretive impulse that suggests that people socially construct versions of reality - culturally derived processes which somehow do not extend to the neo-empiricist's own research processes (see Hammersley, 1992). It is this empiricist assumption that is questioned by social constructionists through their claim that interpretation applies to both researchers and the researched. As Van Maanen (1988: 74) argues, social constructionism dismisses the possibility of a neutral observational language because such a possibility can only be sustained through the deployment of a rhetoric of objectivity that privileges the consciousness of the researcher. It is in this repudiation of the researcher's "immaculate perception" (Van Maanen *ibid.*) that we can identify the point of departure of two competing social constructionist approaches to qualitative management research: critical theory and postmodernism along with their attendant evaluation criteria.

### ***3. Critical Theory***

Sometimes scholars whose work we have classified as neo-empiricist begins to slide into social constructionism. For instance at one point Lincoln and Guba reject what they construe as “naive realism” (1985: 293) in favour of “multiple constructed realities” (ibid.: 295), while Hammersley (1990; 1992) also argues for “subtle realism”. Yet these writers fail to translate this philosophical shift into a congruent set of evaluation criteria. As we have shown, the criteria they do propose still rely upon privileging the consciousness of the researcher relative to the researched.

In response to this criticism Guba and Lincoln (1989; 1994) replaced their earlier neo-empiricist evaluation criteria with what amounts to a consensus view of truth expressed through their criterion of “authenticity” where research findings should represent an agreement about what is considered to be true. To demonstrate authenticity researchers must show: how different members’ realities are represented in any account (fairness); how they have helped members develop a range of understandings of the phenomenon being investigated and appreciate those of others (ontological and educative authenticity); and stimulated action (analytical authenticity) through empowerment (tactical authenticity). Here it is evident that Guba and Lincoln’s social constructionist criteriology has striking parallels with the development of critical theory, inspired by the Frankfurt School, in management research. The latter has grown out of an overt rejection of positivist philosophical assumptions and by implication a critique of management prerogative, to articulate a consensus theory of truth intimately linked to

participatory approaches to management research whose aim is emancipation. Here it is important to trace how particular constitutive assumptions, originating with the Frankfurt School's critique of positivism, have led to a distinctive approach to qualitative management research with the articulation of commensurate evaluation criteria.

Some management researchers (Grey and Mitev, 1995; Grey 1997; Thomas 1997) have argued that positivism is pivotal to management as it enshrines managerial prerogative in a persuasive claim to expertise grounded in objective knowledge. However, as Grey and Willmott (2002) explain, the positivist consensus has been attacked by scholars who have dismissed the possibility of a neutral observational language and argue that notions of truth and objectivity are merely the outcomes of prestigious discursive practices which sublimate partiality. With this attack, the claim that management is founded upon a technical imperative to improve efficiency, justified and enabled by objective analyses of how things really are, crumbles (R. Locke 1996; Fournier and Grey, 2000). However this repudiation of positivism poses a problem since if we reject the possibility of scientific objectivity how can we aspire to present anything more than mere speculation?

Inspired largely by Habermas' (1984; 1987) inter-subjective theory of communicative action, this epistemological conundrum translated into a demand for the discursive democratization of social practices by critical theorists (e.g. Beck,

1992; Deetz, 1992; Forrester, 1993; Alvesson and Willmott, 1996). For instance, in his early work Habermas (1972; 1973; 1974a; 1974b) argued that positivism's limitation of the sciences to entities that were assumed to be immediately available to sensory experience helped to remove metaphysical and religious dogmas from the realm of science. Although *erklären* may be appropriate for the non-sentient domains of the natural sciences, according to Habermas social phenomena are not governed by causal regularities and, significantly, the epistemological imposition of such relations may entrap people in objectified "pseudo-natural constraints" (1973: 176). This is because positivism's presupposition of a neutral observational language allows positivists to ignore the effects of the knower upon what is known and thereby protects them from any form of epistemological reflexivity.

For Habermas all knowledge is contaminated at source by the influence of socio-cultural factors upon sensory experience (1974b: 199). In this manner Habermas substitutes the empiricism of the correspondence approach to truth with a social constructionism based upon the object-constituting activity of epistemic human beings. Nevertheless, like Kant (1781), he accepts the existence of a reality independent of human subjectivity which imposes limitations upon human endeavours through "the contingency of its ultimate constants" (1972:33) but which humans simultaneously shape through their deployment of epistemological "categories" (1974a: 8-9).

In order to avoid the problems associated with relativism, that can arise with any dismissal of epistemic objectivity, Habermas (ibid.) proposes a new epistemic standard: the “ideal-speech situation” where discursively produced consensus is induced when that consensus derives from argument and analysis without the resort to coercion, distortion or duplicity. Such an ideal expresses Habermas’ emancipatory interest which, located in the principle of self-reflection upon their organizational predicaments, aims to liberate people from asymmetrical power relations, dependencies and constraints. For Habermas (1984) such communicative rationality, and attendant epistemologically legitimate organizational practices, will only occur where democratic social relations have been already established (see Forrester 1993: 57).

But democratic communication can be a facade in which the more powerful deploy a rhetoric of democracy to impose their own preferences upon, and silence or marginalize the less powerful (see Marcuse, 1965). So for critical theorists it is only through the participation of all in democratic discourse, and crucially, through the prior development of a critical consciousness, that such a scenario may be avoided. Here the task is...

*“...first to understand the ideologically distorted subjective situation of some individual or group, second to explore the forces that have caused that situation, and third to show that these forces can be overcome through awareness of them on the part of the oppressed individual or group in question” (Dryzek, 1995: 99).*

The aim is to de-reify extant organizational practices (see: Friere, 1972a; 1972b; Unger 1987; Beck 1992; Fuller, 1993; Warren, 1995) through developing a self-conception in which members are epistemic subjects who are able to determine and change their situation, as opposed to powerless objects determined by an immutable situation. Through such critical reasoning lies emancipation and freedom as the negotiation of alternative renditions of reality creates novel questions, inaugurates new problems and makes socially transformative forms of organizational practice sensible and therefore possible (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001). Epistemologically legitimate knowledge arises only where it is the outcome of such empowered democratic collective dialogue. Importantly, because different knowledge products have different interest-laden ends, it follows that the knowing selection of one product, as opposed to an alternative, is inevitably a matter of ethical priority (see: Bernstein, 1991; Rheg, 1994).

The evaluation criteria that derive from critical theory's philosophy centre on five interrelated issues. First, because any knowledge is a product of particular values and interests researchers must reflexively interrogate "the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998: 265). Second, through "critical interpretation" (Denzin, 1998:332) and what amounts to a structural phenomenology (Forrester, 1993) or "critical ethnography" (Thomas, 1993; Morrow and Brown, 1994), which uses a range of qualitative methods to collect and analyse primary and secondary information (Harvey, 1990:196),

researchers attempt to sensitize themselves and participants to how hegemonic regimes of truth impact upon the subjectivities of the disadvantaged (Marcus and Fisher, 1986; Putnam et al., 1993). Third, positivist conceptions of validity are overtly rejected and replaced by democratic research designs to generate conditions that approximate Habermas' ideal speech situation (e.g. Broadbent and Laughlin, 1997) and are dialogical (Schwandt, 1996: 66-7). Pivotal is the credibility of the constructed realities to those who have participated in their development (Kincheloe and McLaren, *ibid.*). Fourth, positivist concerns with generalizability are rejected in favour of what Kincheloe and McLaren (*ibid.*) call "accommodation" where researcher use their knowledge of a range of comparable contexts to assess similarities and differences. Fifth is what Kincheloe and McLaren (*ibid.*) call "catalytic validity": the extent to which research changes those it studies so that they understand the world in new ways and use this knowledge to change it (see also Schwant, 1996: 67).

As noted earlier, it is evident that the evaluation criteria deriving from critical theory closely parallel Guba and Lincoln's (1989; 1994) own increasing emphasis upon authenticity. As with critical theory's Kantian philosophy, their social constructionist stance directs qualitative management research into a processual project that emphasizes researchers' and participants' reflexive and dialogical interrogation of their own understandings and the hegemonic discourses of the powerful. The aim is to engender new democratically grounded self-understandings to challenge that which was previously taken to be authoritative and immutable thereby reclaiming

alternative accounts of organizational phenomena and the possibility of transformative organizational change (see: Unger, 1987; Beck, 1992; Alvesson, 1996; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001; Park, 2001).

#### ***4. Postmodernism***

Recently postmodernism has attracted the interest of management researchers and a new form of qualitative management research has emerged where suitably reformulated ethnographies (Linstead, 1993a: 65-8) have become the “the language of postmodernism” (Linstead, 1993b: 98; see also: Kondo, 1990; Giroux, 1992; Ely, 1995). Despite this interest, the promulgation of specific evaluation criteria inspired by postmodernist writers remains, perhaps purposely, nebulous.

For instance postmodernists sometimes accuse critical theorists of presenting discourses as being constituted by non-discursive conditions (e.g. Quantz, 1992). Postmodernists see that such essentialism lies in critical theory’s guiding presupposition that structurally based oppression and exploitation lie hidden beneath appearances: an essentialism which is further articulated in its concern with enabling emancipation through democratization. Such presuppositions (another example would be positivism’s and neo-empiricism’s promulgation of a neutral observational language) are dismissed by postmodernists as unsustainable “grand” or “meta” narratives which arbitrarily “assume the validity of their own truth claims” (Rosenau, 1992:xi). Of course such relentless, indeed



for some a “promiscuous” (Billig and Simon, 1994:6), scepticism is itself an expression of a distinctive epistemological and ontological position from which we can infer specific evaluation criteria for postmodernist management research, despite the denials of some postmodernists (e.g. Lyotard, 1984).

As we have indicated, postmodernism is characterized by a profound disdain towards the representational capacity of language. Indeed all linguistic manifestations are suspect as there can be no single discoverable true meaning. There are only numerous different arbitrary and *polysemous* interpretations. Because discourses are thought to actively create and naturalize, rather than discover, the objects (i.e. simulacra) which seem to populate our (hyper)realities (Baudrillard, 1983) they are pivotal to the social construction of organization members subjectivities and are the means by which power struggles occur (Boje, 1995; Westwood and Linstead, 2001). The result is that knowledge, truth and reality become construed as precarious linguistic constructs potentially open to constant revision but which are often stabilized through scientists’ performative ability (Lyotard 1984). Therefore much qualitative management research is seen to adopt a spurious objectivity that is only maintained through the rhetorical skill of the researcher (see: Tyler, 1986; Linstead, 1993a&b). Given this subjectivist ontological and epistemological stance, the postmodernist must accept the relativist position that there are no good reasons for preferring one representation over another (Rosenau, 1992:8).

For some postmodernists (e.g. Smith, 1990; Mulkay, 1991; Smith and Deemer, 2000) their commitment to relativism means that the development of specific evaluative criteria for the outcomes of qualitative inquiry cannot be sanctioned. Indeed any evaluation per se is construed as a modernist (i.e. positivist) anachronism because postmodernists argue that phenomena are constituted by the methodologies used by the researcher to examine them. Therefore any evaluative criteria must be rejected as rhetorical devices in a hegemonic scientific discourse which masks the researcher's own subjectivity to produce truth-effects. Indeed, postmodernism's incipient nihilism could promote a wholly permissive stance that denies any chance of developing criteria for judging the quality of any management research, including the postmodern, since such evaluation frameworks themselves must represent discursively constituted regimes of power and must be subverted. Ironically, lurking here is nevertheless a normative agenda, embedded within postmodernists' own linguistic play, that sanctions certain research practices which are centred upon undermining any external claim to authority. If such an agenda wasn't present, it is difficult to see how postmodernists could say anything at all - yet clearly they do. In its very presence, this normative yet nihilistic postmodern agenda tacitly valorizes and promotes particular modes of evaluation for postmodern management research in and through destabilizing alternatives.

If language can rhetorically produce as many realities as there are modes of describing and explaining (see: Baudrillard, 1983, 1993; Jeffcutt, 1994; Chia, 1995;

Kilduff and Mehra, 1997), a postmodernist must repudiate any representational aspirations for qualitative research in favour of a postmodern evocation of plurality and indeterminacy. The aim is to open up modernist discursive closure to a multiplicity of divergent possibilities by subverting conventional ways of thinking. Therefore a key task for the postmodernist is to display and unsettle the discursive “rules of the game” through deconstruction. For instance Linstead (1993a) illustrates how postmodernism directs organizational ethnographers to explore ways in which certain realities are produced and reproduced through members’ textual strategies. Here the postmodernist ethnographer attempts to expose how there are always deferred or marginalized meanings within any form of speech or writing which can be revealed through deconstruction: the dismantling of such texts so as to reveal their internal contradictions, assumptions and different layers of meaning, which are hidden from the naive reader/listener and unrecognised by the author/speaker as they strive to maintain unity and consistency (see also: Cooper, 1990; Martin,1990; Carter and Jackson, 1993; Kilduff, 1993; Czarniawaska-Joerges, 1996; Boje, 2001). Therefore postmodernists deny that any linguistic construction, including their own (see Clifford and Marcus, 1986), produced in any social setting, can be ever settled or stable: it can always be reflexively questioned as layers of meaning are removed to reveal those meanings which have been suppressed, sublimated or forgotten (Chia, 1995) in the act of speaking or writing.

So a key endeavour is to understand the ways in which discourses are sustained and undermined rather than to make claims about a reality independent of human cognition (Edwards et al., 1995). However as this is a relativistic position, deconstruction cannot get the deconstructor closer to a “fixed”, or privileged, truth. In organizational life meaning is always precarious and local (Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992), and every text expresses a hidden narrative logic concerning discursive authority, gender, power and knowledge (Clough, 1992: 5) which deconstruction (re)presents for reflexive analysis. However “power and history work through them in ways authors cannot fully control” (Clifford, 1986:7). So at most, deconstruction can only invoke an alternative social construction of reality within a text which itself is amenable to further interrogation so as to expose its underlying narrative logic - and so on, ad infinitum. As Derrida (1976:51) argues, when protected by a contrived invisibility, the authorial presence behind a text exerts authority and privilege unless the text is deconstructed: something which applies to postmodernists as much as anyone else. In order to pursue this relativist commitment by destabilizing their own narratives, some postmodernists have challenged and eschewed the dominant conventions of writing through promoting an awareness of the author(s) behind the text thereby undermining asymmetrical authority relations between author and reader (e.g. Ashmore, 1989; Burrell, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Nason and Golding, 1998; Woolgar, 1989). Indeed the resultant unsettling, or paralogy (see Lyotard, 1984), is pivotal since it avoids the authorial privileging upon which discursive closure depends (Ashmore et al., 1995; Foucault, 1984) and encourages the proliferation of discursive practices which

postmodernists call heteroglossia (see Gergen, 1992). So it is a preference-less toleration of the polyphonic (many voices) which is pivotal for the postmodernist since *any* discursive closure, whether grounded in democratic consensus or otherwise, implies the arbitrary dominance of a particular discourse which serves to silence alternative possible voices and prevent the dissensus and heteroglossia which could otherwise ensue (see Rosenau, 1992; Rhodes, 2001 ). The resultant postmodern science "...refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" (Lyotard, 1984:xxv).

Therefore, within postmodern epistemological and ontological commitments, any evaluation of qualitative management research can only be concerned with how research unsettles those discourses that have become more privileged than others by encouraging resistance and space for alternative texts, discourses, narratives or language games without advocating any preference (e.g.Gergen and Thatchenkerry, 1996; Barry, 1997; Barry and Elmes, 1997; Ford, 1999; Boje, 2001; Treleaven, 2001; Currie and Brown, 2003). As we have noted above, a key criterion relates to how the author is decentred to avoid any authorial privileging which would result in the postmodern anathema of discursive closure (see Foucault, 1984: 101). Hence a key issue in the evaluation of postmodernist management research concerns how it helps people to think about their own and others' thinking so as to question the familiar and taken-for-granted by empowering multivocal authors to manipulate signifiers to create new textual domains of

intelligibility without imposing discursive closure (Cooper and Burrell, 1988; Tsoukas, 1992; Chia, 1995; Kilduff and Mehra, 1997; Treleaven, 2001).

## **Conclusions**

Evaluation is a significant issue for everyone involved in the academic labour process: we all evaluate others' research, we also evaluate our own research which is, in turn, eventually evaluated by others. Indeed so many aspects of our career prospects are dependent on the outcomes of such processes. Moreover, in an age when the economic viability of many UK university management schools and departments depends upon their performance in the Research Assessment Exercise, how the outcomes of management research are evaluated has taken on an even greater significance. Meanwhile the expanding popularity of qualitative management research seems to have accompanied an increasing divergence in the forms that it takes. Here we have attempted to illustrate how the label qualitative management research embraces a diverse array of practices which creates problems with regard to how to undertake its evaluation and has simultaneously engendered a growing sense of confusion (see Prasad and Prasad, 2002). We have simultaneously argued that this diversity and confusion are outcomes of the varying knowledge constituting assumptions which legitimize distinctive perspectives and research agendas whilst promulgating particular evaluation criteria. In doing so we have traced this array of competing normative positions which are evidently available for the evaluation of qualitative management research.

Here it is important to note that in any research, management or otherwise, adopting a priori knowledge constituting assumptions is unavoidable as there is no space available to the researcher that is not regulated by some organizing philosophical logic. Hence we must focus our attention upon the often unnoticed philosophical commitments and disagreements that pervade management research. However, as has long been noted (e.g. Burrell and Morgan, 1979), embracing any set of knowledge constituting assumptions is always contentious for there is no single, incontestable scheme of ontological and epistemological commitments which may be deployed to protect and regulate any (management) research. Philosophical struggle is always immanent. Therefore trying to articulate a one set of all embracing, indisputable, regulative standards to interrogate and methodologically police qualitative management research, so as to discipline practitioners, would seem both a forlorn hope and an unfair practice. As Scheurich (1997) notes, the danger here is that boundaries are established which seek to exclude that which questions or attacks the status quo (see also Bochner, 2000). For Scheurich such boundaries are always ideological power alignments which create insiders and outsiders. Nevertheless, as we have tried to show, although these boundaries may be exclusionary, they are not arbitrary, and it is possible to identify how particular epistemological and ontological positions do legitimate: particular research aims; make certain methodological commitments; and suggest the contingent application of specific evaluation criteria (see Table 2).

About here - **Table 2: A Contingent Criteriology**

Table 2 highlights the importance of evaluating any qualitative research project from within the particular logic of justification articulated by its immanent philosophical stance. The aims of management research are different in each school of thought illustrated in Table 2 as a result of the underlying philosophical assumptions. The quality criteria by which work in each school may be evaluated are also different. The key issue here is that when we are assessing the extent to which qualitative management research is of value, we apply the *appropriate* assessment criteria. It is, for example, ludicrous to evaluate postmodern research in terms of objectivity or correspondence, as expressed through different forms of validity, reliability and generalizability, as such criteria are dismissed by postmodernists as tools of a hegemonic discourse which are legitimated by the very regimes of truth encoded into the metanarratives that the postmodernist seeks to overthrow through deconstruction and heteroglossia.

Therefore the proposed *contingent criteriology* is a heuristic device which aims to help sensitize management researchers to the particular quality issues that their own, and others', research should address and how these issues are "social products created by human beings in the course of evolving a set of practices" (Bochner, 2000: 269). Of course practising management researchers do not necessarily operate consistently within a particular stance and do vary their



approach within a specific piece of research - a process dubbed ontological oscillation (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 266; Weick, 1995: 34-8). But by implication the proposed criteriology suggests that researchers should follow what Willmott (1998) calls the “new sensitivity” in management research by simultaneously articulating and reflecting upon their particular philosophical commitments, then exploring their methodological and criteriological consequences as resources for contingent evaluation. Likewise such a sensitivity should be appropriated by the various epistemological gatekeepers who socially patrol the boundaries of peer-reviewed management journals - the “gold standard” of this disciplinary field(see Bedeian, 2004).

The awareness that can result from such interrogations may help management researchers match their philosophical preferences to particular forms of inquiry and evaluation which articulate the often tacit conventions of a specific academic community. This requires management researchers to: subject their philosophical assumptions to sustained reflection and evaluation through their confrontation with possible alternatives; deliberate the implications of their informed choices for research practice; be consistent in their actual engagements with management practices and be clear about how they meet specific but philosophically contingent evaluation criteria. Such transparency and reflexivity may empower audiences by enabling their understanding of the philosophical context in which the work was produced. Peer-evaluation can then also focus upon the extent to which the research project consistently embraces the methodological principles

the author claims to follow. We suggest, therefore, that this process applies both to how we should evaluate our own management research and to how we should evaluate the work of others. Moreover the transparency created by such interrogations could function as a means of communication between schools of thought at a metatheoretical level and may serve to empower mutual understanding through a dialogue with, and a receptiveness to, the orientations of others. Nevertheless we must not be complacent about the institutional barriers which may exist and hinder the adoption of such a contingent criteriology in practice. As illustrated in Stern and Barley's (1996) account of how one management discipline (organization theory) became institutionalized, we also need to be concerned about how and why, in particular social contexts, certain research practices become valued and deemed to be the norm while others are sometimes discounted as aberrations with little value for management research.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that we have argued that any (management) research is embedded in specific knowledge constituting assumptions. Of course this applies as much to this work as to anyone else's. The irony here is that in developing a contingent criteriology located in a philosophical analysis of management research, we must undermine some schools of thought in that overview. As we have argued, no one, including ourselves, can stand outside their own epistemological and ontological commitments. By pointing to how researchers must take into account their own philosophically contingent role in producing management research, we tacitly

promulgate an anti-foundationalist stance which opposes the view that knowledge can be founded upon an unassailable epistemological base which may be taken-for-granted. Moreover, by attempting to interrogate the overarching structures of thought which justify particular approaches to management research, the very act of writing this kind of paper tends to undermine both positivist/neo-empiricist notions of objectivity and the postmodernist's disdain towards the authoritative monologue. In this manner we confront the conundrum of epistemological circularity - one cannot have knowledge about knowledge without already deploying a priori knowledge-constituting commitments (see Johnson and Duberley, 2000: 3-6). So here we might inadvertently undermine some of the positions we analyse, in and through the very act of writing. As Neurath (1944: 47) has noted, such dilemmas are inevitable as epistemologically we "are never able to start afresh from the bottom". Hopefully this paper contributes to the "new sensibility" by enhancing management researchers' reflexive awareness of these dilemmas and by encouraging us to publicly admit to them and cope with them as best we can, for perhaps we can never transcend them.

**Table 1: Four Approaches to Management Research**

<b>Management Schools of Thought:</b>	<b>Knowledge constituting assumptions:</b>			Methodological Commitments:	<b>Examples of Research Questions:</b>
	<i>Ontological Status of Human Behaviour/ action</i>	<i>Epistemology</i>	<i>Ontological Status of Social Reality</i>		
1. <i>Positivism</i>	Determined	Objectivist	Realist	Quantitative methods to enable <i>erklären</i>	<i>What are the causes of variable x?</i>
2. <i>Neo Empiricism</i>	Meaningful	Objectivist	Realist	Qualitative methods to enable <i>verstehen</i>	<i>How do people subjectively experience their worlds?</i>
3. <i>Critical Theory</i>	Meaningful	Subjectivist	Realist	Qualitative methods to enable a structural phenomenology or critical ethnography	<i>How do people subjectively experience the world in a particular socio-historical period and how can they free themselves from this domination?</i>
4. <i>Postmodernism</i>	Discursive	Subjectivist	Subjectivist	Qualitative methods to enable deconstruction	<i>How and why are particular discourses being voiced while others are silenced?</i>

**Table 2: A Contingent Criteriology**

<b>Schools of Thought</b>	<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Neo-empiricism</b>	<b>Critical Theory</b>	<b>Postmodernism.</b>
<b>Underlying Philosophical Assumptions</b>	Real world independent of human cognition which science can neutrally access to produce privileged knowledge.	Real and intersubjective worlds which science can neutrally represent and explain.	Noumenal world which science can never know save through the lens of phenomenal worlds.	Hyper realities produced through discourses, narratives, language games etc..
<b>Research Aims</b>	Description of the world , and explanation through prediction, to improve management decision making.	Discovery of the intersubjective to describe and explain human action in and around organizations.	To understand managerial hegemony: to explore its causes and to develop strategies through dialogue to change the situation.	To understand the ways in which discourses/texts are sustained and constitute subjectivities and identities.
<b>Methodological Commitments</b>	Methodological monism: erklaren and deductive testing of hypotheses through quantification.	Verstehen to inductively describe and explain patterns of actors meanings - sometimes contextualized by pluralistic quasi-causal accounts.	Critical ethnographies/ structural phenomenologies to facilitate transformational change and emancipation.	Deconstruction of texts whether written or spoken; new styles of writing which challenge authorial presence.
<b>Evaluation Criteria for Assessing Management Research:</b>	Internal validity, external validity, construct validity and reliability.	Internally reflexive audit trails to demonstrate credibility, dependability , confirmability,	Accommodation, catalytic validity and various forms of authenticity expressed in and through	Heteroglossia - to give voice to previously silenced textual domains; unsettling of

		and ecological validity; transferability/ logical inference.	epistemically reflexive dialogue grounded in discursive democracy.	the hegemonic; articulation of incommensurable plurality of discourses, narratives etc. which decentre the author through multivocality.
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