

New Paradigm Research Manifesto

1. Research can never be neutral. It is always supporting or questioning social forces, both in its content and by its method. It has effects and side-effects, and these benefit or harm people
2. Even the most static and conventional research discovered and exposes rigidities and fixed patterns, which are thus enabled to change. This is so whether change is intended or not

Knowing and Participation

3. New paradigm research involves a much closer relationship than that which is usual between the researcher and the researched: significant knowledge of persons is generated primarily through reciprocal encounter between subject and researcher, for whom research is a mutual activity involving co-ownership and shared power with respect both to the process and to the product of the research
4. the shared language and praxis of subject and researcher created 'the world' to be studied

Knowing and Action

5. We know that people have the capacity for self awareness and for autonomous, self-directed action within their world, that they may develop the power to change their world. The whole thrust of new paradigm research is to produce the kind of active knowing which will preserve and enhance this capacity and this power. Thus the knowing acquired in new paradigm research is helpful to the flourishing of people and to the politics of self-determination.
6. We see human inquiry not only as a systematic come-to-know process but also as learning through risk-taking in living. Since theoretical and practical knowing are dialectically related, we seek knowledge which can be used in living, and regard knowledge separated from action as in need of special justification. That is why we more often speak of 'knowing' than 'knowledge'.

Knowing and Softness

7. The old paradigm research regarded certain kinds of research as 'soft' (loose-construing, qualitative, hypothesis-generating, informal, discovery-oriented aspects of research) and as fit only for preliminary pilot work. The new paradigm approach says that beyond this one-sided objectivity there is a new kind of tight and rigorous synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity. It seeks to develop a new rigour of softness.

Knowing and the Holistic

8. The intense particularity of individual situations is respected and celebrated. In studying persons and groups in situation we emphasize tacit understanding, phenomenological exactitude, including acceptance of ambiguities, contradictions and imprecision, which are uniquely valuable sources of insight and change. They need to be used to the full, even though they may be painful. This points to the need for emotional support to be built into the research process

9. We are interested in generalization, not in order to make deterministic predictions, but as general statements about power, possibilities and limits of persons acting as agents. We are interested in describing the general patterns within which the particular may exist, and accept that often the most particular and particular is also the most general.
10. We make every effort to do justice to the person-in-context as a whole, and find in practice this entails the use of multi-level, multi-disciplinary models of understanding

Knowledge and Values

11. What we contend for most of all is awareness of what is being done to self and others, and what follows from that—both meant and unmeant. We do not want to give up important ideas like truth and checkability, but we want people to recognize that these things can have human costs when they are narrowly applied. For too long social science has treated people like things, and we are going on not to treat them like people, and like ourselves.
12. The outcome of research is knowledge. Knowledge is power. The wrong kind of research gives the wrong kind of power. The right kind of research gives the right kind of power. Research can never be neutral.

This is the ninth draft of the Manifesto. We expect further drafts to emerge as ideas crystallize.

New Paradigm Research Group
London c 1979