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# Alternative Ways of Seeking Knowledge in Consumer Research

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Two of the predominant approaches to gaining knowledge in the social sciences are the positivist and interpretive approaches. Different philosophical assumptions and goals underlie both. We are better able to see the strengths and weaknesses in the two approaches by comparing and contrasting different perspectives; this juxtaposition is essential if we are to improve the ways in which we study consumers. In this article, we demonstrate the influence of assumptions on different research processes, cite problems inherent in both perspectives, point out the range of positions within the interpretive approach, and discuss the ramifications of diverse ways of seeking knowledge for consumer research.

Many ways of seeking knowledge about consumers exist. Knowledge may be gained from such diverse approaches as reading a novel to conducting a laboratory experiment. Each form of knowledge is valuable. However, as individual researchers, we must choose the processes through which we gain knowledge. Our field is dominated by various versions of positivism (Anderson 1986), even though the problems of positivism are well articulated in the literature (Anderson 1983; Olson 1981; Peter and Olson 1983). However, the interpretive approach is beginning to receive some attention as an alternative way of seeking knowledge (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Hirschman 1985, 1986; Holbrook 1986; Hudson and Murray 1986; Solomon 1986; Wallendorf 1987).

The purpose of this article is to explore the assumptions and goals that underlie the two predominant approaches to gaining knowledge in the social sciences. By comparing positivism to interpretivism, we seek to highlight the existence of a number of diverse ways of seeking knowledge. Both of these research approaches include theories and methods based on different goals and underlying assumptions (Anderson 1986; Geertz 1973; Laudan 1984; Shulman 1986). These underlying philosophical assumptions include beliefs about the nature of reality, of social beings, and of what consti-

tutes knowledge. By juxtaposing ways of seeking knowledge, we can learn and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of both research approaches. This reflection is critical if we are to improve the ways in which we study consumers (Morgan 1983a).

This article (1) presents the major philosophical assumptions that underlie the general positivist and interpretive approaches, (2) demonstrates how these assumptions translate into different research processes, (3) explores the interdependency of assumptions, theoretical structures, and methodology, (4) compares the evaluative criteria used in each approach, (5) discusses problems within each approach, (6) highlights the range of positions within the interpretive approach, and (7) draws out implications of diverse ways of seeking knowledge for consumer research. Just as Anderson (1986) concluded that a weak form of incommensurability exists among research programs within the positivist approach, we conclude that the positivist and interpretive approaches (as used in this article and as practiced by many researchers) are incommensurable because they are based on different goals and philosophical assumptions (Kuhn 1962). Nevertheless, we hope this article makes it clear that incommensurability does not mean that the two approaches cannot peacefully coexist or that other alternative middle-ground approaches cannot or should not be developed.

Certain caveats apply to the study of these two approaches. First, philosophical assumptions are statements accepted without direct empirical support and are based on different views of reality, social beings, and knowledge. (However, these assumptions are sometimes based on strong philosophical arguments.) Second, we use the term "methodology" to refer to how one answers research questions. Methodology includes

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**TABLE**  
A SUMMARY OF THE POSITIVIST AND INTERPRETIVE  
APPROACHES

Assumptions	Positivist	Interpretive
<b>Ontological</b>		
Nature of reality	Objective, tangible Single Fragmentable Divisible	Socially constructed Multiple Holistic Contextual
Nature of social beings	Deterministic Reactive	Voluntaristic Proactive
<b>Axiological</b>		
Overriding goal	“Explanation” via subsumption under general laws, prediction	“Understanding” based on Verstehen
<b>Epistemological</b>		
Knowledge generated	Nomothetic Time-free Context-independent	Idiographic Time-bound Context-dependent
View of causality	Real causes exist	Multiple, simultaneous shaping
Research relationship	Dualism, separation Privileged point of observation	Interactive, cooperative No privileged point of observation

not only the data-gathering techniques, but also the research design, setting, subjects, analysis, reporting, and so on. Third, we chose the label of “interpretive” to describe the interpretive paradigm, although other labels abound, e.g., subjective (Rubinstein 1981), naturalistic (Lincoln and Guba 1985), qualitative (Van Maanen, Dabbs, and Faulkner 1982), and humanistic (ACR Special Session 1985). “Positivist” and “interpretive” are summary labels that refer to general research approaches that differ in their philosophical assumptions and goals. A number of positions can be loosely grouped under positivism: logical positivism, the received view, logical empiricism, modern empiricism, neopositivism, foundationalism, and objectivism. Likewise, the interpretive approach loosely captures a number of positions: subjectivism, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, and so on. Within positivism and interpretivism, a range of stances exists for each of the assumptions. In the first section of the article, the philosophical underpinnings of the two research approaches are discussed (see the Table). We emphasize how these philosophical assumptions translate into different ways of doing research within the two approaches. Then, the range of positions within the interpretive approach is further discussed by comparing three specific interpretive approaches.

## POSITIVIST AND INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES

### Ontological Assumptions

*Nature of Reality.* All research approaches in the social sciences make ontological assumptions about the nature of reality and social beings. The positivists tend to take a realist position and assume that a single, objective reality exists independently of what individuals perceive. The social world, like the physical world, also exists independently of individuals’ perceptions as a real, concrete, and unchanging structure. Reality exists as a structure composed of relationships among its parts. This reality is divisible and fragmentable; therefore, precise, accurate measurements and observations of this world are possible (Bagozzi 1980; Burrell and Morgan 1979; Morgan and Smircich 1980). The greatest understanding of this reality may come in a laboratory setting, where confounding variables can be controlled (Calder, Phillips, and Tybout 1981). Although individual inquiries may only approximate this reality, eventually all inquiries will converge on the same objective reality. Ford (1975) and others refer to this reality as “truth.”

The laboratory experiment exemplifies these beliefs about the nature of reality. Parts of reality are separated from their usual context and placed in controlled settings for observation. For example, a problem under investigation might be the influence of different types of information on consumers’ brand evaluations and their subsequent purchasing behaviors. Different types of information might be presented to an individual in a laboratory, and the researcher might measure behavioral or attitudinal responses. One assumption inherent in the laboratory experiment is that these relationships can be taken out of their natural and complex context, and the behavior that is displayed in the laboratory may correspond to the subject’s behavior in the natural context. Thus, it is assumed that the responses to the information in the laboratory will reflect how subjects behave in a natural setting. This assumption enables the researcher to identify and unravel complex relationships while controlling for unstudied variables.

In contrast, the interpretivists deny that one real world exists; that is, reality is essentially mental and perceived. Individuals create devices, such as theories and categories, to help them make sense of their worlds (Burrell and Morgan 1979). Reality is also socially constructed in that “all human knowledge is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social situations” (Berger and Luckman 1967, p. 3). Thus, multiple realities exist because of different individual and group perspectives. The interpretivists believe that no amount of inquiry will converge on one single reality because multiple realities exist and these realities are changing. This approach also views these individual realities holistically—as more than the sum of their parts. That is,

reality is made up of systems that are dependent on other systems for their meaning (Lincoln and Guba 1985). It is crucial for the researcher to know the context of a behavior or event because social beings construct reality and give it meaning based on context. Therefore, consumers would view information differently if they are in a retail store or laboratory setting. Furthermore, these interdependent systems must be viewed holistically. If the systems are separated and fragmented, their meanings change. For example, a researcher cannot grasp the meaning of an exchange ritual without also knowing about the norm of reciprocity.

Taylor and Bogdan's (1984) approach to the participant-observer technique is consistent with the interpretivists' assumptions about reality. For example, they suggest that when using the participant-observer technique the researcher should study people in their natural context and view people holistically; people should not be studied out of context or reduced to variables. Furthermore, people should be studied according to their own perspectives or frames of reference rather than from that of the researcher. Although it is impossible to see the world through the eyes of another, the researcher consciously tries to bracket personal beliefs and views. All perspectives are of interest in such an enterprise because the researcher is interested in describing multiple realities and does not believe a single reality exists.

*Nature of Social Beings.* These two approaches also make different assumptions about the nature of social beings. On one hand, the positivist approach holds a deterministic view: human behavior is determined. Some positivists modify this view and take a more stochastic approach. This model is exemplified, in the extreme, by certain forms of behaviorism that employ operant conditioning, where individuals behave *reactively*, in a response-reinforcement fashion, to the external world (Morgan and Smircich 1980; Rubinstein 1981). For example, the idea that individuals behave reactively is demonstrated by the belief that rewarding a purchase behavior with trading stamps may lead to a change in the probability of a purchase behavior. While cognitivists do not explain behavior generally in terms of external factors, they do reify internal subjective states and explain behavior as being determined by these states. Anderson describes the cognitivists' concept of human nature as "a rational information processor who forms beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that are causally determinant of his behavior" (1986, p. 160). On the other hand, the interpretive approach views people as more voluntaristic: people *actively* create and interact in order to shape their environment. They are not merely acted upon by outside influences. For example, Blumer's symbolic interactionism assumes that people create meaning through their interaction in the world: "It means that the human individual confronts a world that he must interpret in order to act instead of an environment to which he responds because of his organ-

ization" (1969, p. 15). For instance, consumers might engage in activities such as collecting cents-off coupons and trading stamps because they want to communicate to others that they are good, cost-efficient shoppers.

### Axiological Assumptions

Underlying each of these world views are different fundamental goals or axiologies. World views differ, however, not so much in the presence or absence of a specific goal, but in the relative weighting of a goal and in what counts as fulfilling the goal.

The positivists' overriding goal is "explanation" via subsumption of the behavior under universal laws (Anderson 1986; Bredo and Feinberg 1982; Hunt 1983; Kerlinger 1973); the goal of explanation entails prediction. An explanation is achieved when one demonstrates the systematic association of variables underlying a phenomenon. Moreover, if one successfully demonstrates this systematic association, one "understands" the phenomenon (Kerlinger 1973). For instance, if a researcher wants to explain how consumers' involvement influences the processing of subsequent advertisements, the researcher must identify the antecedent variables (e.g., social or financial risk) and show how these variables are related to information processing. An explanation of a phenomenon—the demonstration of a systematic association of variables—should also enable the researcher to achieve some level of prediction.

For the interpretivists, the primary goal of research is understanding behavior, not predicting it (Rubinstein 1981). The interpretivists' view of understanding, however, is radically different from the positivists' view. First, interpretive researchers view understanding as more of a process than an end product. At points in time, researchers may state interpretations—their present understanding. However, the process of understanding is a never-ending process—a hermeneutic circle (this is one usage of the term). In other words, what was interpreted enters into current interpretations, just as the current interpretations will influence future interpretations. Therefore, interpretations are always incomplete. One never achieves *the* understanding; one achieves *an* understanding (Denzin 1984).

A prerequisite for doing research and seeking understanding is *Verstehen*. Wax (1967) focuses on *Verstehen* as the goal that separates the social sciences from the physical sciences by allowing access to the essential human aspects of individuals. We will use one of the more common definitions of *Verstehen*: grasping the shared meanings within a culture of language, contexts, roles, rituals, gestures, arts, and so on (Wax 1967). For example, Wallendorf (1987) discusses an informant who has rooms full of "junk" that he has collected. The *Verstehen*, or shared meaning, necessary to grasp the significance of this type of collecting is that people in American culture normally do not accumulate this many broken and discarded products. Knowing this

shared meaning was a prerequisite to further understanding. Through active participation in the culture, the researcher strives for an insider's view, a knowledge of the shared meanings. Seeking *Verstehen* is an active process because language, customs, meanings, and culture are continuously being created by the joint activities of people. Meaning is dynamically created in the act of living (Wax 1967).

Although *Verstehen* is a necessary prerequisite to understanding, it is not sufficient for understanding. In addition to knowing the culturally shared meanings, it is necessary to obtain more comprehensive understanding by identifying, for example, the motives, dynamic uses of shared meanings, individual meanings, and interactions between shared meanings and individual meanings. For instance, an interpretation of the collecting just discussed is that the man collected products so he would have available parts; collecting this "junk" often saves him from having to go to the hardware store. Another interpretation is that other people started expecting him to have parts that they needed, so he collects because people depend on him. As the individual and shared meanings are identified, the understanding becomes more comprehensive.

It should be noted that most research is conducted in the researcher's culture where a high degree of *Verstehen* already exists. Few researchers consider the number of shared meanings required to create and implement a positivistic survey. The shared meanings are taken for granted and the research questions are often framed, for instance, from the perspective of the researcher's social class, subculture, culture, training, and so on. To gain *Verstehen*, however, the interpretive researcher tries to drop the assumption of shared meanings and tries to see the world from an insider's perspective, as in Liebow's 1967 participant-observer study of lower-class black life. By actively seeking out the perspective of the members of this subculture, Liebow observed that these individuals operate within a value system that has little in common with middle-class values.

## Epistemological Assumptions

*Knowledge Generated.* The difference between what counts as knowledge within the two research approaches is striking. Based on their goals and their assumptions of reality, positivists take a generalizing approach to research; that is, they seek out general, abstract laws that ideally can be applied to an infinitely large number of phenomena, people, settings, and times. In other words, the positivists endeavor to identify time- and context-free generalizations, or nomothetic statements (Keat and Urry 1975). Conversely, interpretivists take a more historical, particularistic approach to research; that is, they study a specific phenomenon in a particular place and time. Rather than seeking to determine law-like regularities, the interpretivists seek to determine

motives, meanings, reasons, and other subjective experiences that are time- and context-bound. Geertz (1973) labeled this context-dependent form of explanation a "thick description." This difference in focus—generalistic vs. particularistic—is the primary difference between the two research approaches.

The difference in focus is fundamental: it changes what each approach views as important problems, facts, and evaluative criteria. For example, positivists, using a generalizing approach and investigating the influence of source credibility on consumers' attitudes, would attempt to derive an abstract, general formulation of this phenomenon. Positivists might seek out initial conditions, the process, causes, and effects. Because they are trying to derive a generalizable law, any number of different observations of this phenomenon would be appropriate. Nevertheless, the particular details of a single instance of the phenomenon have no intrinsic significance. Investigation of the particulars plays only an instrumental role in achieving the real purpose: general laws.

For the interpretivists, it is the particulars of a phenomenon that are of primary importance. In fact, some interpretivists create only idiographic knowledge. If an interpretivist studied people's perceptions of Bloomingdale's retail atmosphere, the researcher would focus on as many details as possible. Bloomingdale's retail environment is not chosen for instrumental reasons; it is chosen because an understanding of people's perceptions of this store is itself intrinsically appealing. A description of this store and people's perceptions of it will only be successful to the extent that the researcher accounts for contextual details. By adding variance, or details, the process will become more complex, and the researcher will achieve a thicker description. But complex processes are not easily generalizable. Therefore, these two approaches are at cross purposes because they produce different knowledge outputs. The particularistic approach creates thick descriptions from which it is difficult to create generalized knowledge statements (Berger, Zelditch, and Anderson 1982). Geertz uses the metaphor of a clinician making a diagnosis and says that "conceptualization is directed toward the task of generating interpretations of matters already in hand, not toward projecting outcomes of experimental manipulations or deducing future states of a determined system" (1973, p. 26). Although the interpretivist approach to research does not readily facilitate the statement of generalizations outside the context of the study, the approach does facilitate generalization within the context or case. For example, a researcher studying Bloomingdale's retail atmosphere would be able to discuss patterns and shared meanings within Bloomingdale's retail atmosphere, but these patterns and meanings would not necessarily transfer to the retail atmosphere of Saks. (It should be noted that some interpretivists do make generalizations between contexts.)

*View of Causality.* The assumptions regarding causality are closely connected with the assumptions regarding generalization and are also reflective of the differing goals of the two perspectives. The positivists, with their goal of explanation and prediction, place a high priority on identifying causal linkages. They believe that human action can be explained as the result of a real cause that temporally precedes the behavior (Hunt 1983). The deterministic assumption regarding the nature of man further supports their effort to identify the causes of individuals' behaviors.

The interpretivists view the world as being so complex and changing that it is impossible to distinguish a cause from an effect. Viewing the world holistically, the interpretivists' stance is that mutual, simultaneous shaping occurs between entities (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Rubinstein 1981). The voluntarist assumption regarding the nature of social beings also supports this position against causality. The interpretivists do not believe that reality is composed of parts or facts. If one attempts to fragment reality, then reality is changed (Rist 1977).

For instance, in studying family decision-making in dining-out decisions, the interpretivists would focus on the dynamic shaping that occurs. They would take into account not only the children's influence on the parents' choices, but the parents' influence on children's preferences. They would also recognize many other shaping factors, including contextual aspects. However, these factors cannot be separated into a temporally ordered causal sequence.

Data-collection techniques that tend to be used by the two approaches reflect these differing views of causality. The positivists often use experimentation in which there is an attempt to control the variables, the context, and the temporal order of events so that causal relationships can be inferred. The interpretivists often use the descriptive analysis of participant observations and historical documents in their attempt to view the entities holistically, in the context of political, social, economic, cultural, and other systems.

*Research Relationship.* The positivists' position regarding the relationship of the researcher to the subject is to assume a pronounced separation in which the researcher does not influence and is independent from the subject. Positivist researchers rely on their expertise to develop the research questions, designs, settings, and so forth. A detached stance is necessary to maintain objectivity, a prerequisite for legitimate knowledge (Bredo and Feinberg 1982). Because the positivists believe that it is possible for researchers to stand outside their object of inquiry and minimize or control for their own influence on it, they assume that a privileged vantage point exists from which researchers can view their subjects.

In contrast, the interpretivists hold that the researcher and the people under investigation interact with each other, creating a cooperative inquiry (Reason and Ro-

wan 1981; Wallendorf 1987). If the social reality is based on individuals' or groups' perceptions, then, in order to be able to understand those perceptions, these individuals must be involved in creating the research process. Thus, the individual who is studied becomes a participant in the experiment, guiding the research as well as supplying information. The interpretivists believe that in the social sciences the scientist is a member of the social reality; no privileged, Archimedian vantage point exists (Giddens 1976; Lincoln and Guba 1985). This view results in emerging research designs that require ongoing adaptability on the part of the researcher. From the interpretivists' point of view, the emerging designs are better able to take into account the subject's knowledge.

Labels used by each approach to describe people under investigation exemplify differing assumptions about the research relationship. In the laboratory experiment, a person under investigation is called the subject, and an effort is made to maintain a separation between the researcher and the subject so that the manipulation of the independent variables, not the researcher, influences the subject's behavior. In the closed-ended survey, the individual is called the respondent, a term presupposing that the researcher knows the best questions to ask in order to discover a phenomenon. In more interpretive data-gathering techniques, such as participant-observation, the person is usually called the informant. These techniques tend to be unstructured, taking their leads from the informant, who informs and guides the research.

## GENERAL RESEARCH PROCESS

These two research approaches, then, differ in their assumptions about the world and their goals. In this section, we discuss some of the general differences in research process arising from each approach and give specific examples. Although general differences exist, it should be noted that neither approach translates into a single, unique research process. For example, the two approaches often use the same data-gathering technique, yet the technique changes as it is adapted from one approach to the other. Furthermore, the nature of the phenomenon studied changes as it is embedded in a different research process; this is highlighted in the section on data-gathering techniques.

### Positivist Research Approach

The positivists' approach to research includes the adherence to scientific protocol. The protocol for the proper research process is well established; we refer to this step-by-step organization as the principles of research design (Campbell and Stanley 1963). The research design is the fixed structure of the research, and adherence to this structure allows for "accurate answers" to research questions. This is not to ignore the

use of pretests and pilot tests that allow the structure of the study to evolve, but at some point the questions to be addressed, the design, and the hypotheses become fixed, at least until the next study. Although different research designs exist, “the ideal of science is the controlled experiment” (Kerlinger 1973, p. 315). The experiment, as used in a positivist research process, allows the researcher to select and assign subjects randomly to experimental groups, control extraneous variables, manipulate the relevant independent variables, and observe the dependent variables. Positivists argue that the controlled experiment allows the researcher the most confidence in discovering causal relationships among variables (Kerlinger 1973). This control provides the ability to isolate and examine only those behaviors that are specified by the hypotheses.

This use of protocol is exemplified in research by Bierley, McSweeney, and Vannieuwkerk (1985). They conducted an experiment to test whether preferences for stimuli, colored geometric figures, could be classically conditioned using music—knowledge that might be useful in advertising. Subjects were randomly assigned to experimental or control groups, separated by partitions, and given prerecorded instructions through headphones. The presentation of conditioned and unconditioned stimuli was carefully controlled and extraneous sources of variance were minimized: each session had 84 trials, conditioned stimuli were presented for five seconds and unconditioned stimuli for 10 seconds, music was played through headphones at 60 db., and experimenter-subject contact was minimized. Preference, the dependent variable, was then measured.

This stance regarding protocol reflects the connection between positivist assumptions and values and their concomitant research process. Through adherence to protocol, the positivists strive toward certitude that the researcher’s descriptions correspond to true reality. The use of protocol is based on the researcher’s assumptions about reality as well as on assumptions about social beings, the need for the separation of the researcher from the subject, the possibility of causal relations, and the desire to reveal the true reality and predict the outcome of events in reality.

### Interpretivist Research Approach

The interpretivists’ approach to research, on the other hand, is typified by a continually evolving research design. The interpretivists seek to describe many perceived realities that cannot be known a priori because they are time- and context-specific. Thus, research is actually an emergent process. As perceived realities change, the research design adapts. In contrast to the experimentalists, to whom the control of all experimental conditions is paramount, the interpretivists conduct research in a natural, changing environment. The interpretivists consider that each researcher comes into the research

environment with some knowledge or preunderstanding. However, this a priori knowledge is deemed inadequate for choosing a research design because of the complex and changing patterns of perceived realities. Although the interpretivists enter a research setting with some preunderstanding and a general plan, attempts are made to be open to new information. The study is allowed to unfold with the assistance of informants. Ideas, meanings, questions, and data-collection techniques are cooperatively developed.

Eugenia Shanklin (1979) discusses the evolving research design she used in a village in Ireland. The data-collection technique of visual documentation through photography was used. She found that perceptions of the role of the researcher changed throughout the research process: she felt that she passed through phases of being perceived as a tourist, a guest, a participant, and a neighbor. In each phase, her informant and photographic approach varied. For example, in the tourist phase, she faced the problem that the individuals who first acknowledged her presence (the town drunk and the village “nuisance”) were at the margins of society. Shanklin explained that individuals at the margins of society often approach outsiders in an effort to gain the approval being withheld by their neighbors. To establish her role and status in the community, a distancing from these individuals was necessary. To get beyond the limited welcome she received for the photography, she examined the ways photographs were used and displayed in Irish homes. She noted that cameras recorded special occasions, but not commonplace ones. Also, few pictures were taken of children. She responded to this discovery by photographing children and giving the snapshots to parents. As informants became more comfortable with the researcher’s photography, she continued to take the research photographs back to the informants and discuss them, often eliciting information or directions Shanklin would “never have known enough to ask about” (1979, p. 144).

The use of an evolving design is consistent with the interpretivists’ belief that, due to the human’s ability to adapt, the best approach to understanding is through the use of the human instrument. It is also consistent with their belief that one cannot have a priori knowledge of the many socially-constructed realities.

We have highlighted some general differences in research design and linked these differences to the positivists’ and interpretivists’ values and assumptions. Many other differences in the research process exist (see Hirschman 1986 for an example of one interpretive research process). Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the next section, a difference does not necessarily exist between the data-gathering techniques used by each approach.

### Data-Gathering Techniques

Although it is tempting to assign quantitative data-gathering techniques to the positivist world view and

qualitative techniques to the interpretivist world view, it is apparent that many techniques can be and are used by both approaches. But in embedding the same technique within different research processes, researchers change the technique and the data produced by the technique. The participant-observer technique is one that changes between the two approaches (Reason and Rowan 1981).

Whiting et al. (1966) provide an example of the participant-observer data-gathering technique in positivist research. In examining parental responses to emotions—in particular, to anger—Whiting et al. spent approximately one year in field work developing an ethnography of socialization and enculturation. The research design was set up to “test the degree to which field work can be preplanned according to fairly explicit theory” (1966, p. 3). Thus, the procedures were structured a priori, dependent and independent variables were identified, hypotheses suggested by psychoanalytic and learning theory were tested, statistical analyses were performed, and concern for reliability was expressed and identified as a priority.

Compare this use of technique to an interpretive study of emotion using the same technique. In Denzin’s (1984) Emotions Project, an ongoing study of emotion in everyday life, he argues that one should use the language and meanings of the people. No hypotheses were proposed because it was felt that an a priori conceptual framework could not capture the flow of human experience. The goal of Denzin’s inquiry was not to test theories but to describe and interpret emotions. Furthermore, each situation was seen as unique. “Nor will these streams of experience submit to experimental, statistical, comparative, or causal control and manipulation” (Denzin 1983, p. 132).

These studies exemplify what Geertz notes with regard to ethnography (1973, p. 6):

From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting information, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques, and received procedures that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is.

Even if a researcher is creating an ethnography, we do not know the researcher’s orientation. In other words, we cannot merely look at the data-gathering techniques to know what methodological orientation is held; we must examine the assumptions, the aims, and the research process.

Furthermore, even though different research approaches may study the same phenomenon, the phenomenon of inquiry is changed as it is approached from the different perspectives. For example, Whiting et al. approached anger from a learning theory perspective and operationalized anger as “gritting teeth, growing red in the face, clinching fists, taking an aggressive

stance, losing oneself in temper tantrum and crying out with rage” (1966, p. 18). Here, consistent with learning theory, the external manifestations of anger are stressed. Compare this view of anger to a description of anger from Denzin’s Emotion Project (1984, p. 100):

When I get mad and angry, especially at my wife, I feel humiliated. I remember my father, when my mother used to get mad at him. She would yell and scream at him when he would come home drunk. He would sit at the kitchen table and hang his head and cry, and then go off to bed . . . I hate myself when I get mad. Afterwards I am always embarrassed. Then I get resentful toward my wife, especially. If I keep this inside of me, we have a fight all over again.

Denzin’s theory of emotions stresses that emotions are self-feelings that must be studied as lived phenomena from the point of view of the emotional person. The same philosophical assumptions that underlie Denzin’s methodology underlie his theory. The methodology is consistent with the theory, and the theory supports the methodology. The same parallel holds for the relationship between Whiting et al.’s assumptions, theory, and methodology: consistent with learning theory, they define anger by a set of external behaviors that can be assessed by the methodology that they are using. Within each researcher’s approach, these three components combine to form an interdependent system that is both self-justifying and self-perpetuating (Anderson 1986). Thus, the phenomenon of anger changes when studied within the two approaches.

## CRITERIA

The extent to which the two world views are encapsulated is highlighted by a comparison of their evaluative criteria. The positivists have a more definitive list of criteria, which is consistent with their desire for a standardized research process. Although the interpretivists have several general criteria, many specific criteria arise because of the differences among individual studies and theorists. In this section, we will discuss (1) Whiting et al.’s research and how it exemplifies positivistic criteria for evaluation, (2) the criteria that are consistently applied to interpretive research, (3) Denzin’s specific criteria for judging interpretive research, and (4) the comparison of positivistic and interpretivistic criteria.

As noted previously, the positivists have a standardized and definitive protocol that allows for a more consistent application of fixed evaluative criteria. Whiting et al.’s (1966) work reflects these more definitive criteria. Whiting et al. discuss and evaluate their research on such criteria as the following:

1. The establishment of a theoretical basis: discussion of previous research, definition of independent and dependent variables a priori, and specification of hypotheses a priori.



2. The adherence to the proper protocol: rules for sample selection to avoid biases, standard questionnaire format across research settings, and antecedent and dependent variables.
3. Demonstration of reliability and generalizability: adherence to a priori definitions and procedures, and sampling within and across cultures.
4. The establishment of the statistical significance of the data.

To interpretivists, these criteria may seem rigid, but they are consistent with the positivists' goal of identifying general laws.

Perhaps the most consistently applied criterion for interpretive research is that the phenomenon be examined in the natural setting (Blumer 1969; Knorr-Cetina 1983; Patton 1980). Because meaning is derived from the context, studies must use natural settings. Also, the researchers must get to the point where they feel at home within the setting, or, as Sanday (1979) states, where they can communicate the patterns and expectations for conduct within the context. This comfort level allows researchers to see things similarly to the way the people being studied see them and to know the questions, problems, and data that are meaningful (Blumer 1969). Another criterion, which refers to Geertz's (1973) "thick description," is that the description of the phenomenon be detailed and inclusive of contextual and historical aspects. A related criterion is that the language and terminology of people being investigated be used (Fielding and Fielding 1986; Knorr-Cetina 1983). Interpretive research holds that language taxonomies and classification systems, subcultural vernaculars, and professional argots all reflect linguistic-cultural differences that the subtle processes of translation may miss: interactions should be recorded verbatim when possible. But while a researcher attempts to capture interactions verbatim—the emic perspective, the researcher does not retain this vocabulary when writing the results—the etic perspective.

Denzin's research incorporates these predominant interpretive criteria and specifies in the following summary additional evaluative criteria that are not as consistently applied (1984, p. 9):

1. Does the interpretation illuminate, disclose, and reveal the lived experience?
2. Does the interpretation rest on thickly contextualized, thickly described materials and on concepts near to experience?
3. Is the interpretation historically embedded and temporally grounded?
4. Does the interpretation reflect the phenomenon as a process that is relational and interactive?
5. Does the interpretation engulf what is known about the phenomenon?
6. Does the interpretation incorporate prior understandings and interpretations (the investigator's and others', including emergent ones) as part of the final interpreted, understood structural totality?
7. Does the interpretation cohere?
8. Does the interpretation produce understanding; that is, do the elements that are interpreted coalesce into a meaningful whole?
9. Is the interpretation unfinished? All interpretation is necessarily provisional and incomplete, to begin anew when the investigator returns to the phenomenon.

To positivists, these criteria may seem vague, but they are consistent with the flexible, adaptive nature of the interpretivists' research process.

If we used the criteria put forth by one of these researchers to assess the results obtained by the other, both approaches would be found lacking. For instance, Bonoma (1985) and Deshpande (1983) view qualitative data techniques as exploratory, not confirmatory, because they use positivist criteria to evaluate these techniques. In fact, many of the criticisms of both approaches arise from judging one approach by the criteria of another approach. For example, if we apply Denzin's and the interpretivists' criteria of (1) the researcher being a competent practitioner in the group, and (2) a thick description to Whiting et al.'s results, the results would fall short of the criteria. Whiting et al. would be criticized for believing that they maintained objectivity, fragmenting realities, and forcing their own conceptual framework on the people studied. Likewise, Denzin would not meet the positivists' criteria of a designated research protocol, a priori hypotheses that identify independent and dependent variables, standardized instruction and communication on the part of the researcher, and statistical significance. Denzin would be criticized for his sloppy research process, post hoc theorizing, unreplicable studies, and the exploratory status of his findings.

## GENERAL CRITICISMS

Although problems arise from judging one approach by another's evaluative criteria, some general criticisms from the philosophy and history of science exist for both approaches. Because the problems of positivism are discussed at length in the literature (Anderson 1983; Peter and Olson 1983; Rubinstein 1981; Suppe 1977), we will just list some of the major attacks. (These attacks also hold for Hunt's (1984) more moderate position of modern empiricism.) Positivists face the problem of induction: a universal statement cannot be verified by a finite number of observations, thus, universal laws are unachievable (probabilistic statements also face the problem of induction). Positivists assume a secure observational base from which objective observations can be made, but observations are value-laden, theory-laden, and interpreted (Anderson 1983; Peter and Olson 1983). Positivists reify subjective states and treat them like objects. Positivists try to conceive of the objective

features of society apart from their social context and the perceptions of people (Rubinstein 1981). Positivists focus on truth content when no defensible method for establishing that truth exists (Peter 1983; Suppe 1977).

Because the interpretive view is not as familiar to consumer researchers, we will spend more time examining some of the prominent criticisms of this world view. One criticism of some interpretivist researchers is that they rely on empathetic identification as a basis for understanding (Hirschman 1986; Rubinstein 1981). Wilhelm Dilthey (Hodges 1969, p. 15) defines empathetic understanding as an observer's reliving of another's mental experiences. Many symbolic interactionists (Denzin 1970, p. 80) suggest that the researcher engage in role taking, whereby the researcher imagines how the receiver of a communication understands that communication. The criticism holds that, to begin with, empathetic identification is nonsensical because one cannot experience the thoughts of another—one can only experience one's own thoughts. Second, empathetic identification cannot be validated. Third, having a mental experience does not mean that one understands it; for example, in the area of mental health, it is the psychiatrist who understands manic depression, not the patient experiencing it (Rubinstein 1981).

Another criticism derives from the interpretivists' tendency to focus on individuals' intentional actions and individuals' consciousness, making it difficult to gain an understanding of macroscopic features of society. For example, one cannot understand the concept of family by just focusing on the knowledge of the individual members; part of the meaning of family is its role in the larger social system (Rubinstein 1981). The criticism holds that a theoretical grasp of the larger social context and social structures is crucial for understanding individual behaviors (Smart 1976).

A third area of criticism is reactivity (Thorns 1976): methods such as participant-observation are intrusive and may disrupt the normal activities of the people being studied. A related criticism concerns the biases of both the researcher and the informant: it is questionable whether researchers can really bracket their biases and social/cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, bias may arise because of the informant's expectations of the researcher, or, as has occurred in a number of studies, the informant may intentionally mislead the researcher. A final criticism concerns the establishment of the boundaries of the culture or group being studied: unless one studies an isolated group, the boundaries may be amorphous and changing, and clear divisions may not exist.

### THREE VARIATIONS OF INTERPRETIVISM

The world views presented for positivism and interpretivism are generalizations (Bogdan and Taylor 1975; Bredo and Feinberg 1982; Bruyn 1966; Burrell and

Morgan 1979; Keat and Urry 1975; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Morgan and Smircich 1980; Rubinstein 1981). However, as Anderson (1986) points out, encapsulated research programs exist even within a world view. Anderson explicates various positivist programs; each has the cognitive goal of "explanation" but varies in the degree of adherence to various assumptions. Also, within the interpretive world view, research programs' common cognitive aim may be "understanding," but their other commitments may be different. Thus, within each world view there is variation in the degree to which different assumptions are emphasized. Furthermore, the meaning of understanding and what counts as fulfilling the goal may also vary. In order to illustrate some of the range within the interpretive world view, the research programs of Clifford Geertz, Yvonne Lincoln and Egon Guba, and Herbert Blumer are examined. Each of these programs is examined to highlight their different interpretations of the cognitive aim of understanding, the assumptions they emphasize or on which they vary, and the issues and problems that may arise from these different emphases.

#### Geertz

Clifford Geertz is a leading exponent of what he calls the interpretive approach to anthropological understanding (Geertz 1973, 1983). Geertz claims that understanding involves interpreting others' modes of expression or symbol systems. Understanding "is more like grasping a proverb, catching an allusion, seeing a joke—or, as I have suggested, reading a poem—than it is like achieving communion" (1983, p. 70). Geertz identifies concrete cases and illustrative concepts that can be felt personally by those reading the research and that are also important to the people or group studied. He describes how he personally comes to understand the meaning of a concept. These meanings are often expressed through the use of metaphors, analogies, parables, and so on. For example, in the following illustration Geertz beautifully sensitizes the reader to the Javanese term "alus," which refers to an individual being refined, smooth, and civilized in both inward feelings and outward actions (1979, p. 231):

Only when you have seen, as I have, a young man whose wife—a woman he had in fact raised from childhood and who had been the center of his life—has suddenly and inexplicably died, greeting everyone with a set smile and formal apologies for his wife's absence and trying, by mystical techniques, to flatten out, as he himself put it, the hills and valleys of his emotion into an even, level plain ("That is what you have to do," he said to me, "be smooth inside and out.") can you come . . . (to) appreciate, however inaccessible it is to you, its own sort of force.

One appreciates the Javanese concept of "alus" by relating the sensitizing example to our own experiences and definitions of self.

As opposed to some interpretivists who base their understanding on empathetic identification, Geertz's interpretation of understanding highlights that the researcher cannot live the subject's perceptions, feelings, or meanings, but that the researcher can interpret them. Thus, the understanding is an interpretation of "thick description" (Geertz 1973). In fact, Crapanzano (1986) criticizes Geertz for conveying his interpretation in such vivid terms and images that he attributes experiences, meanings, and dispositions to people without adequate evidence or perhaps by projecting too much of his own culture on the interpretation. Crapanzano claims that there is little understanding from the native's point of view, but rather a "constructed understanding of the constructed native's constructed point of view" (1986, p. 74).

Geertz focuses on culture or collective meaning, as opposed to particular individual's meanings, and stresses the importance of the epistemological assumption regarding the particularist, nongeneralizing approach to research of a culture. Utilizing his "thick description" of a culture, he emphasizes a context-dependent form of explanation. However, Geertz does compare the concept of self in society across cultures. And he does say that the interpretations should fit not only past realities, but also survive future ones. Thus, the task is "not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" (Geertz 1973, p. 26). So in the previous example, Geertz would suggest patterns within Javanese life, but these patterns would not be expected to apply to another culture. Geertz's particularistic unit of analysis is a culture.

This assumption gives rise to one of the most prominent issues regarding Geertz's philosophy: the boundaries of the context. Especially in studying less isolated cultures, it is difficult to define both the breadth and the depth of the culture or context. For example, Geertz, while focusing on the individuals and their interaction with culture, does not include the examination of social/political structures in his view of context. In fact, a short time after Geertz left Bali, a revolt in Djakarta left between 40,000 and 80,000 Balinese dead (Geertz 1973), yet we have no hint of this tension between the social structure and the culture in his writing.

## Lincoln and Guba

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach to research from the field of education provides the basis for Hirschman's (1986) recent work on humanistic inquiry. Lincoln and Guba do not spend a lot of time in their recent book discussing the aims of their methodology; instead, they emphasize their ontological and epistemological assumptions and provide a step-like approach for doing research. What can be gleaned from their book is that contrary to what they see as the aim of scientific research—prediction—they seek understanding. Under-

standing in this context involves (1) gaining "an appreciation of the myriad mutual shapings that are synchronously ongoing and abstracting from that complexity a subsystem that serves the investigator's needs" (1985, p. 152), and (2) developing "an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of 'working hypotheses' that describe the individual case" (1985, p. 38).

An issue that arises from this definition is the distinction between understanding and prediction. Lincoln and Guba talk about the scientific goals of prediction and control as opposed to the naturalistic goals of understanding and management. Understanding and management imply that although you cannot predict case by case, you can look for patterns and develop working hypotheses that can be examined in pertinent situations to see whether they can be upheld. Management implies that although there cannot be control in the causal sense, there can be attempts to shape based on the tentative patterns a researcher develops.

Given a range of different emphases, Lincoln and Guba fall closer to many positivist programs in their axiological assumption than do interpretivists such as Geertz. However, their explication of ontological and epistemological assumptions are consistent with the general interpretivist world view presented in this article. In fact, Lincoln and Guba are attacked for the inconsistency between their assumptions and evaluative criteria. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability closely parallel the positivist criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Smith and Heshusius 1986).

Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim to use these interpretive assumptions, they ignore them in their discussion of criteria. The authors define confirmability as nonbiased, factual, confirmable findings. However, Lincoln and Guba assume that reality is determined by individuals' and groups' perceptions. If this assumption is held, then there is not one reality that can be captured in an unbiased/neutral way. Furthermore, the researcher's expectations may influence the construction and interpretation of these realities. Even if one evaluated the "raw," uninterpreted data to see if "objective" interpretations were made, the researcher still selects the data that are recorded and the vantage point that is taken. Thus, to interpretivists, there can be no such thing as objective data or confirmable results. Similar arguments can be made for the other criteria.

## Blumer

Herbert Blumer, a sociologist who worked closely with George Herbert Mead, is a leading proponent of one of the symbolic interactionist schools of thought (Solomon 1983). The two major schools of symbolic interactionism orient themselves to the two different world views discussed in this article: Blumer's Chicago

school subscribes to a more interpretive world view, and M. H. Kuhn's Iowa school follows a more positivist philosophy (Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds 1975).

For Blumer, understanding is "feeling one's way inside the experience of the actor." This is necessary because an individual's behavior is based on his/her own particular meanings. Thus, Blumer subscribes to empathetic identification. While Geertz stresses culture, Blumer emphasizes the individual as an actor. He views the individual's actions toward others as being based on the meanings of the others for the individual (Meltzer et al. 1975). These meanings are developed through individuals' interpretations of social interaction with each other. Thus, reality is composed of individuals' perceptions of it. Yet, in his view of reality, Blumer believes that "the empirical world can 'talk back' to our pictures of it or assertions about it—talk back in the sense of challenging and resisting, or not bending to, our images or conceptions of it" (1969, p. 22). Therefore, as opposed to the general interpretivist position, his stance on reality contains an objective and a subjective aspect. Blumer outlines the following tenets of his stance (1980, p. 410):

1. There is a world of reality 'out there' that stands over against human beings and that is capable of resisting actions toward it;
2. This world of reality becomes known to human beings *only* in the form in which it is perceived by human beings;
3. Thus, this reality changes as human beings develop new perceptions of it; and
4. The resistance of the world to perceptions of it is the test of the validity of these perceptions.

This combination of objectivity and subjectivity is carried over into his stance on generalization, and is perhaps most difficult to reconcile there. On one hand, Blumer is very particularistic in his emphasis on the individual and the individual's meanings; on the other hand, he states that researchers should try to formulate problems in a theoretical form and "unearth generic relations" (1969, p. 43).

These three interpretive programs illustrate a range of emphases and adherences to the different philosophical assumptions, demonstrating a "weak form of incommensurability" within the world view as well as between world views (just as Anderson (1986) points out exists within the positivist world). Geertz emphasizes understanding culture—the symbolic construction the group places on the world, while Blumer and Lincoln and Guba place more emphasis on the individual. For Geertz, the unit of analysis is culture and his focus of understanding is on the collective consciousness; for Blumer, the unit of analysis is the individual (actor) and his focus of understanding is on that individual's meanings and perceptions; and for Lincoln and Guba, the unit of analysis is individuals and the focus of un-

derstanding is on their meanings. The other ontological and epistemological assumptions discussed were highlighted to demonstrate the variation in assumptions within a world view. Thus, every researcher develops his/her own unique set of assumptions that fall within the parameters of a general world view.

## IMPLICATIONS

We examined the philosophical assumptions that underlie the positivists' and the interpretivists' research approaches. Each approach's assumptions justify and are consistent with their research methodology. In our discussion of Whiting et al.'s positivist and Denzin's interpretivist approach to anger, we demonstrated that the same assumptions also underlie their concepts and theories.

Assumptions and goals underlie all theories and methods. These components combine to form an interdependent, self-justifying system that is inextricably linked to the knowledge that this system produces. In other words, we cannot sever our knowledge products from the approaches that produced them. In our choice of methodologies for studying any phenomenon, we must consider the assumptions to which we adhere because the phenomenon is different when studied within different approaches (Anderson 1986); the end results and their applicability are different as well. For example, Whiting et al.'s results are aimed at generating laws and making predictions, but Denzin strives for comprehensive understanding.

What we recommend is that researchers recognize that philosophical assumptions underlie their theories and that they should identify their own philosophical assumptions (Gouldner 1970; Murray 1986). We suggest that researchers generally pursue methodologies that are consistent with the assumptions to which they adhere. For example, if a researcher holds a theory that is based on one set of assumptions, s/he should use a methodology that is based on the same set of assumptions. A researcher's assumptions, of course, will constrain the range of goals that can be attained; for instance, the assumption of mutual, simultaneously shaped systems and the context dependency of phenomena prohibits prediction as a goal.

Nevertheless, the violation of assumptions may at times lead to valuable insights. For example, a violation of assumptions may lead to a better understanding of one's own assumptions. But dangers exist. If one ignores guiding assumptions, problems may arise in the process of research and in the achievement of goals. We are a discipline that borrows. A major hazard of borrowing can be the lack of awareness of the assumptions to which these borrowed theories and methodologies adhere (Anderson and Thatcher 1986). For example, in the 1940s and 1950s, Freudian psychoanalytic theory was borrowed to explain consumers' motives for buying. However, this motivation research did not progress far.

Murray suggests that this was due in part to the era of logical empiricism and to attempts to force an interpretive theory into positivist methodologies. In other words, the theory was based on interpretive assumptions and the methodology was based on positivist assumptions. Imagine the difficulty of operationalizing the concept of the unconscious or the superego (Murray 1986).

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although we only highlighted some of the positivist and interpretive approaches to research, it is clear that a range of positions exists within both approaches. As a discipline, what should consumer research do with this diversity? The following alternatives adapted from the work of Anderson (1986), Churchman (1971), Fejerabend (1975), Mason and Mitroff (1981), and Morgan (1983b) illustrate some of the ways of dealing with this diversity that can be and/or are used within consumer research. Some of these alternatives overlap but differ in their focus and goals.

### Supremacy Alternative

The first alternative involves advocates of each research approach continuing to debate and persuade others that their approach is better. The supremacy response to the existence of different world views is to call for an evaluation to determine which of the opposing approaches—for example, positivist vs. interpretive—is best. The supremacy alternative requires supraordinate goals; however, agreement over supraordinate goals probably will not exist because goals acceptable to each world view will depend on each view's assumptions. Examples of supraordinate goals that have been advanced include problem-solving ability or the emancipation of humans (from the critical theory school). However, even if supraordinate goals are agreed upon, the interpretation of these goals may differ (Anderson 1986). For example, if all researchers accepted the goal of problem-solving ability, problems would still exist because each world view would acknowledge different problem sets. Nevertheless, supremacy is a commonly employed alternative.

### Synthesis Alternative

The second alternative is to combine elements of different world views through an additive process. For example, one specific response might be to advocate the synthesis of two approaches, combining the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses of each. This response is evident in attempts to find an all-embracing paradigm or to translate the different strategies of one paradigm into the language of another; these are often attempts to fill the seams between positivism and interpretivism. Elements of this alternative are seen in Lincoln and Guba's 1985 (and consequently Hirschman's 1986) explication of criteria for evaluating research. Here, positivist-like criteria are added to interpretive assumptions

and methodology. In the synthesis alternative, it should be clear that if the knowledge products and guiding assumptions are different, they cannot be merged to create a single, unified approach. In this case, the blending of two approaches either ignores differing, underlying assumptions or changes the approaches and creates a world view that becomes a third approach.

### Dialectic Alternative

In contrast to the alternatives that seek to eliminate diversity by looking for the best world view, the dialectic alternative seeks diversity by counterposing aspects of the different world views in the hope of resolving conflict and developing a completely new mode of understanding through the debate generated by this juxtaposing. Belk (1987) advocates a similar stance in his Presidential Address to the Association for Consumer Research. Morgan (1980) promotes the use of multiple research strategies—accepting that each has something to offer—but attempts to utilize their competing insights within a single analysis. (The challenge here is how to accomplish this single analysis.) Thus, it is hoped that the end result will extend beyond the original formulation of either world view. If synthesis occurs, it happens only at the final stage, following the debate of conflicts, and is in a form of understanding that goes beyond the original formulations.

### Relativistic Alternative

Another alternative, receiving much attention in consumer research, is relativism. One version of relativism is critical relativism. This alternative leaves open the option that any research strategy may have something to offer, but the process and output must be evaluated based on the research program's own specified criteria. Thus, anything does not go. Anderson states that (1986, p. 156)

critical relativists are actually more 'hard-headed' than positivists in their analysis of 'scientific' knowledge claims . . . The critical relativist demands to know a theory's mode of production, criteria by which it is judged, the ideological and value commitment that inform its construction, and the metaphysical beliefs that underwrite its research program. Most importantly, the critical relativist wishes to know the realizable cognitive and practical aims of a theory so that its range of applicability can be assessed.

Thus, although a program is evaluated by its own standards, this does not mean that an individual evaluating the research must accept these standards as his/her own. Instead, positivist research is evaluated by positivist standards, and interpretive research is evaluated by interpretivist standards. There is no single set of standards that can be used across research programs.

Another variety of relativism is the position advocated by Fejerabend (1975) that "anything goes": epistemological anarchy. Here, every and any research strategy has something to offer; it is not necessary to

synthesize, evaluate, be pragmatic, or utilize dialectic analysis.

In conclusion, a variety of options exist for the individual researcher regarding how to handle the diversity of research approaches. The last two alternatives are based on the premise that every approach to consumer research may have something to offer. This article was written in the spirit of encouraging an appreciation of the merits of diversity. We hope that exposure to alternative ways of seeking knowledge will inspire researchers to "explore and enrich research rather than constrain it through a search for an optimum way of doing things" (Morgan 1983b, p. 381). Consumer research, as a multidisciplinary field, is well suited to fostering diversity. Assumptions should be questioned and alternative ways of seeking knowledge should be sought. Our methods and theories are at an embryonic stage, and we can ill afford to stunt their development. Perhaps diversity will provide the challenge needed to stimulate new growth.

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