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WORKSHOP
Exploring 'evidence' in research

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The workshop was a mix of presentations, small group work and facilitated discussion. Presentations were made on the following topics:

► research paradigms within the social sciences
► basic beliefs of positivism contrasted with interpretivism
► validity frameworks
  – traditional
  – narrative analysis
  – change oriented research
  – ideologically explicit
  – participatory research

A significant proportion of the workshop was spent in small groups. Participants were divided up into groups and worked with the same people on each of the activities. Each of the activities was accompanied by resource documents.

Activity 1: Which camp are you in?

Workshop participants were given a choice of joining a number of small groups based on social science research paradigms. They were asked to join the group that reflected the kind of research they had done in the past or with which they felt most comfortable. The groups were Post-positivism, Social constructivism, Interpretivism, Critical theory and Post-modernism.

The Group task:

► Discuss:
  – the principles/orientation/values of your ‘camp’
  – how does your ‘camp’ understand evidence
  – the role of the researcher
  – limitations of this approach.
Activity 2: Healing rural communities: skilling rural GPs to address family violence

Workshop participants were given a research project to use as a case study. The project description was taken from a real life proposal and was focused on the following:

- early intervention of family violence and child sexual abuse
- skills and support for GPs to provide appropriate response and ongoing management
- the relationship between this issue and the retention of GPs in rural areas.

The group task:

- Select a topic for research
- Develop a research question
- What is the evidence you will need to address this question (how do you understand 'evidence' in this context)?
- What methods do you propose? Justify their appropriateness
- What would be suitable validity criteria for your research?