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Words of Wisdom, For Now ...The Constructivist Credo

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Abstract

In The Constructivist Credo, Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba present 133 conjectures they believe should guide researchers who use a constructivist approach. In addition, several chapters from a recent dissertation are included and annotated to show how the conjectures might be used in practice.

Keywords

Conjecture, Constructivist Paradigm, Presumptions

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Words of Wisdom, For Now...*The Constructivist Credo*

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In The Constructivist Credo, Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba present 133 conjectures they believe should guide researchers who use a constructivist approach. In addition, several chapters from a recent dissertation are included and annotated to show how the conjectures might be used in practice. Keywords: Conjecture, Constructivist Paradigm, Presumptions

As I read *The Constructivist Credo*, by Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, I kept hearing my professor's voices echoing in my head. Their strong belief that humans must make sense of their world and that truth depends on context was given voice in many sections of the book. The 133 conjectures that make up the heart of the book pull together the many pieces of information I remember from numerous classes and lectures in graduate school. The conjectures make sense and flow from one section to the next. Unfortunately, they are the highlight of the book.

The Credo begins with an explanation of how the conjectures were created. While mentoring doctoral students, Lincoln invited students to her home to discuss their work in a supportive, non-threatening setting. Her husband, Guba, joined some of the meetings. He thought the questions that were posed and the ideas that were presented were noteworthy. He began recording highlights from the meetings and discussing them with Lincoln. After years of reflecting and refining, they had a list of conjectures that became the *credo*. Their goal in writing the book was to define the belief system the constructivist paradigm is based on. Their hope was to provide a guide explaining how a constructivist might behave while conducting research in the field. However, in true constructivist fashion, the authors explain that the reader will need to define constructivism for himself and that the paradigm itself is a "moving target" that must be reconstructed again and again as new knowledge is acquired.

The conjectures are divided into thirteen sections, each with its own general subject heading and specific points of information. The headings range from "in the beginning" to "inquiry" to "methodology" to "application." Each one reads like words of wisdom for the qualitative researcher. They provide morsels of information to consider while conducting research, such as: truth is subjective, truth is constructed, knowledge comes from experience and is context specific, and paradigms are the result of shared constructions. Taken together, these pieces of information build a complete picture of constructivism.

Following this section, Lincoln attempted to show how the conjectures were used by reprinting [the methods and findings chapters](#) ~~chapters three (methods) and four (findings)~~ from one of her student's dissertations. She identified which parts of the dissertation exhibited which conjecture by placing the corresponding number to the left of the writing. While this seems like a good idea, it quickly became tiresome to turn back and forth between the dissertation excerpt and the conjectures. Lincoln undoubtedly used the best writing sample that was available to her, but it is still lacking. Out of the 133 conjectures presented in the book, only 65 are used in the dissertation. In addition, some of the connections between the conjecture and the writing are hard to follow.

The first 85 pages of *The Credo* offers a valuable resource for any qualitative researcher who considers himself a constructivist. The ideas presented help make the paradigm clearer and provide inspiration for deep reflection about the importance of being open to ideas and willing to "reconstruct" truths when new information is discovered. However, the second half of the book is a disappointment.

References

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2013). *The constructivist credo*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Author Note

Michele Repass is a National Board certified teacher, currently teaching 2nd grade in Virginia. She is completing her doctorate in Education at George Mason University. Her interests include novice teacher development and the use of video in teacher education. She can be reached at mrepass@masonlive.gmu.edu.

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