
1 Contextualising the EDI research agenda in the larger social sciences research landscape

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we set the stage for the chapters that follow, each one exploring in depth a specific research methodology and its application for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) research. We provide a short overview of qualitative research methods including a discussion of (1) ontology, the assumptions about the nature of reality, (2) epistemology, the nature of knowledge and how we know, (3) axiology, the role of values and ethics in the inquiry process, and (4) methodology, the decision-making in identifying and justifying the research methods chosen. Other definitional issues, such as research approaches, paradigms, methods, and techniques, are clarified and defined. Rather than focusing on the artificial distinction between quantitative and qualitative research approaches, this chapter uses research paradigms as an organising principle. To that effect it gives a cursory overview of the major research paradigms, namely, positivist and post-positivist, interpretivist/constructivist, post-structuralist/postmodern and critical/radical/transformational paradigms, emerging paradigms such as Indigenous Kaupapa Māori, and their applicability for EDI research. The importance of reflecting on and making our own positionality and research stance explicit is also discussed along with enduring issues of establishing rigour and trustworthiness of research, followed by the way forward for EDI research.

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Social science and associated organisational research was dominated by positivist research and quantitative methodologies, arguably until the mid-1980s with the memorable publication of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis* and the landmark 1980 paper 'The case for qualitative research' by Morgan and Smircich that ushered in a different era solidifying the status of qualitative

research, and ‘situating qualitative methods within broader philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge’ (Cunliffe 2011, p.647). This was followed by the almost canon-like *Sage Handbook(s) of Qualitative Research* (Denzin and Lincoln 1995, 2005, 2011), revolutionising qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). We have since witnessed the development and ever-expanding proliferation of ‘qualitative’ methods and increasing acceptance of ‘qualitative’ research methodologies (Bentz and Shapiro 1998; Prasad 2005; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Cunliffe 2011). Nevertheless, the greater weight given to positivist research even today, especially in US journals (Lee and Cassells 2013), can arguably give less palatable EDI research, such as the experiences of gay and lesbian employees (Ragins et al. 2003), earlier acceptance into the field than more contentious methodologies.

The development of research methods and research practice as places for debate, reflection, dialogue and participant collaboration are relatively new in business and management schools (Lee and Cassells 2013). Previously, quantitative methodologies and analyses were viewed as the only legitimate way to conduct research. Research methodologies in business, management and organisation studies have been enhanced and enlivened from neighbouring disciplines such as education, psychology, sociology and, notably, nursing (Grant and Giddings 2002; Smythe 2012). ‘As non-positivist methodologies grow and proliferate we may be better equipped to understand the complexity of a more sophisticated diversity studies that take into account, intersecting identities, global influences, theory and organisational applications’ (Pringle and Strachan 2015, p. 53).

RESEARCH PARADIGMS, METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS DEFINED

The major research paradigms, at this point in an expanding field of research methodologies, are generally regarded as positivist, post-positivist, interpretivist (interpretist/constructivist), post-structuralist and critical/radical/transformational (Grant and Giddings 2002; Guba and Lincoln 2005; Eriksson and Kovalainen 2016; Dugan 2017). The terminologies of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the continuum of research are widely used, but the distinction is imprecise and artificial as they encompass a range of different epistemological assumptions. For instance, participatory qualitative methods can be implemented, analysed and interpreted in a post-positivist manner, while inferential statistical analysis can form part of a critical/radical/transformational research study (Bentz and Shapiro 1998). Furthermore, mixed methods approaches

are used more often for pragmatic reasons (pragmatism) (Johnson and Christensen 2012) but are not without critics, with methodologist Giddings (2007) likening them to a Trojan horse for positivism.

Using research paradigms as our organising framework disrupts the simplistic and misleading quantitative–qualitative dichotomy that has permeated many disagreements within research methods at large. Paradigm has become much used term in academic writing, but we refer to it as a higher level conceptual framework for creating order out of a dynamic and often conflicting social reality. It refers to discrete research traditions, or cultures of inquiry (Bentz and Shapiro 1998; Creswell 2013), within each of which there is an ‘implicit body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief that permits selection, evaluation and criticism’ (Kuhn 1970, p. 17). A choice of paradigm is based on a researcher’s ontology or belief system that guides the way we think about and do research. Owing to the different epistemological assumptions of the respective paradigms, they also display different rhetorical underpinnings. Rhetoric is the art or science of effective and persuasive oral and written communication and argument, and refers to what kind of language, communication style and writing should be used in the research process and the writing up of the research (Johnson and Christensen 2012).

Figure 1.1 shows the different components underlying research paradigms and their rhetoric. As discussed in the introduction, while each of this volume’s chapters is not discretely situated in one specific research paradigm, we requested all our authors to identify their ontological, epistemological and axiological positioning within the spectrum of research methodologies.

From Figure 1.1 it is clear that there are reciprocal influences between our ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology, and they all inform our research paradigm or world view and research rhetoric. For instance, having a particular ontological position constrains the epistemological position that can be held (Grant and Giddings 2002) and directly impacts on the nature of research enquiry (methodology) that can be carried out.

Ontology refers to our assumptions about the nature of reality, our view of reality and asks questions such as ‘What is “out there” to know?’, ‘How does it exist?’, ‘How are things really?’ and ‘How do things really work?’ Ontology refers to an individual’s world view about the nature of truth, and is most clearly distinguished in radical, feminist research and Kaupapa Māori (a form of Indigenous methodology). However, all researchers act from their beliefs about the nature of reality, the place of humans within it and what constitutes knowledge.

Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge and how we know, the

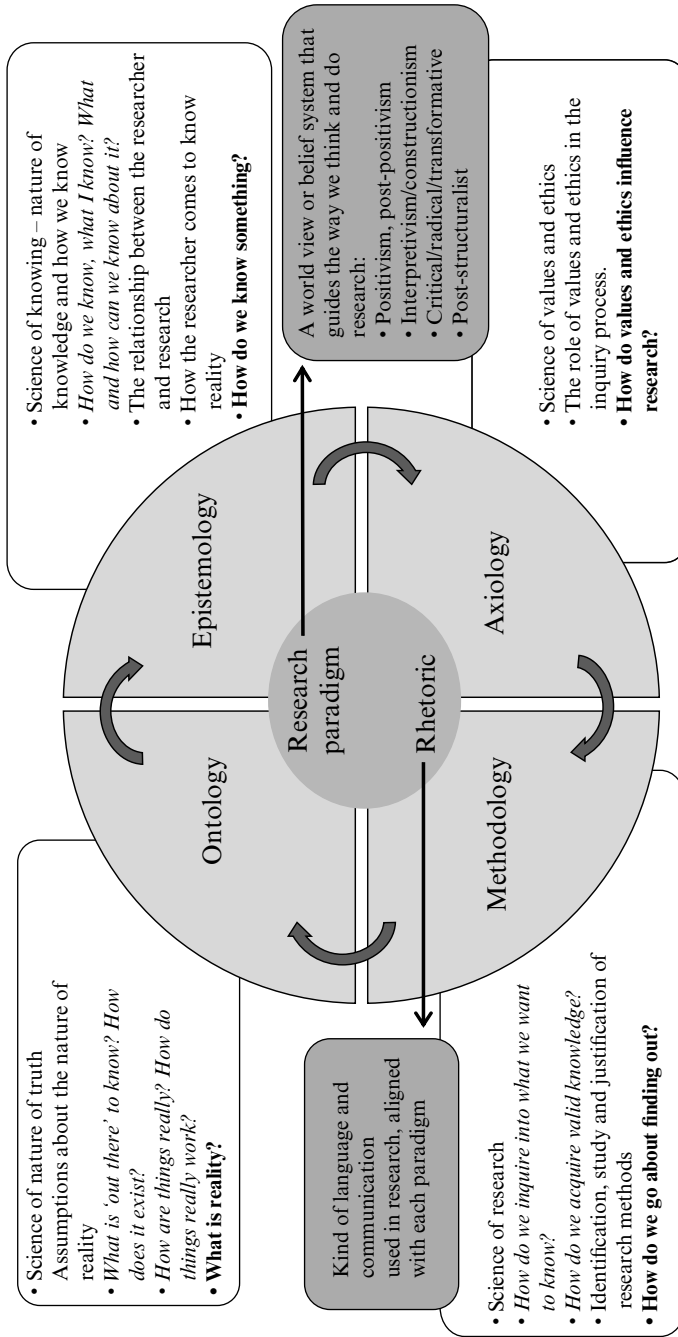


Figure 1.1 Components underlying research paradigms and rhetoric

relationship between the researcher, the research and the researched, and how the researcher comes to know reality. It asks questions such as ‘How do we know something?’, ‘How do we know, what we know?’, ‘What and how can we know about it?’ Epistemology defines the nature of knowledge and directs what methods can be used within a methodology to add to a body of knowledge defined within paradigmatic boundaries. Can poetry, performance art and dreams be data as legitimately as a circled number on a Likert scale? Where researchers do not declare their ontology and epistemology they are most usually situated within a positivist research paradigm that is based on assumptions of ‘hard’ science (for example, biology or chemistry) as the basis for research and accumulation of knowledge.

Axiology is the science of the nature of value and ethics, it explores the role of values and ethics in the inquiry process, and asks: ‘How do values and ethics influence research?’ Axiology is the values on which our thinking and research assumptions are based. Ontology and epistemology are implicitly based on our own axiology, a more recent addition to the theoretical foundations of research methodologies (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Guba and Lincoln (2000, p. 200) note that axiology originally ‘refers to the branch of philosophy dealing with ethics aesthetics, and religion’, and is in a sense ‘a place where the spiritual meets social inquiry’.

Methodology, the science of research methods, or the identification, study and justification of research methods, speaks to how do we go about finding out. It explores: ‘How do we acquire valid knowledge?’ and ‘How do we inquire into what we want to know?’

While methods may be similar across different research methodologies we were particularly keen that in this volume the reader had access to the often hidden theoretical and philosophical assumptions that underpin our choices of research design, methodologies and, ultimately, dissemination and use of the findings. ‘The outcome of the research process then, not only reflects the researcher’s paradigmatic positioning, but also reflects their theoretical stance or methodology’ (Grant and Giddings 2002, p. 12).

MAJOR RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Researchers’ ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology inform their paradigmatic stance, and each paradigm has its own rhetoric, or kind of language and communication, associated with it, as can be seen in Figure 1.1. This logic creates some order in underlying research methodologies. Generally in social sciences there are five major research paradigms – positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism/constructionism, critical/radical/

transformative, post-structuralist – and clear differentiation among particularly the latter three paradigms is not always easy, with overlapping methods and techniques used across paradigms (Grant and Giddings 2002; Johnson and Christensen 2012).

The dominant paradigm of the twentieth century was the positivist research paradigm, predicated on objectivity, the discovery of (one) truth and use of the scientific method. However, EDI is predicated on difference and therefore we have seen major developments of EDI research as non-positivist research methodologies have mushroomed, mainly in the early twenty-first century.

Positivist Researchers

Positivist researchers work within a stable ontology believing that there is a ‘truth’ and knowledge is ‘out there’. Pre-existing patterns and order in the nature of experiences are waiting to be uncovered. That is, there is an objective (single) reality that we can understand and study and uncover through the natural laws by which it is governed. Positivism adheres to scientific realism, a search for agreed truths through justification by empirical confirmation. The researcher and research process are seen as objective and value-free; participants are seen as research subjects and as objects of study (Johnson and Christensen 2012).

The *modus operandi* is to use systematic testing of hypotheses (or suppositions) to establish the probability of cause-and-effect relationships through the application of statistical techniques (Grant and Giddings 2002). A step along the way is the establishment of correlations, the recurring coexistence of conditions. In these quantifiable methodologies the researchers believe they are objective, outside or external to the phenomenon of interest. The tools of mathematical modelling, hypothesis testing and significance probabilities are all mechanisms to enable the researcher to minimise his or her influences. A major critique of positivist research methodologies is the extent to which the researcher is value-free, unaffected by their social and cultural identity.

Post-positivism

As researchers became more cognisant of the influences of context on research processes, post-positivism was born; a child of positivism and interpretivism. In this research development, ontology was defined in terms of relatively stable patterns but it was also recognised that the context was important. In particular, the experiences and context of the subject (or participant) were taken into account in the discovery of findings. Findings

usually arose from interviews conducted within semi-structured question schedules to fulfil the positivist criteria of rigour (validity, reliability and generalisability). Critical realism has had important influences in the development of this research paradigm (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2016). Within post-positivism, it is acknowledged that the research cannot be 'value-free' (Guba and Lincoln 2005) and 'mixed' methods are common, as a pragmatic offshoot of post-positivism (Johnson and Christensen 2012).

Interpretivist Positioned within a Constructionist Philosophy

Interpretivist positioned within a constructionist philosophy emerged in reaction to the dominance of positivism in the 1960s (Grant and Giddings 2002). The ontology is based on fluid definitions of a situation created by human interaction with the associated epistemology being relative, and context dependent. That is, the world and knowledge is created by social and contextual understanding. This paradigm is based on relativism, reality is constructed, subjective, multiple and relative. Constructions are not more or less 'true', only more or less informed. Researchers come to understanding by entering the world view of a unique person or persons, and there is a reciprocal relationship between researchers and participants. To some extent researchers are seen to be subjectively involved in research and intersubjectively involved with participants. Consequently, findings are created and co-created as the research proceeds. Inquiry is value-bound, the researcher's values influence the study, and values are also inherent in the choice of context and domain of the study (Cunliffe 2011).

Interpretivist research focuses on an individual's actions, beliefs (as 'participant') and importantly his or her explanations of them. The researcher is in a relationship with the participant as a listener and interpreter. The resulting findings then are co-constructed through the interpretations by the participant of his or her experiences, and the interpretations of the researcher. Interpretivism is most well known through the methodologies of narrative inquiry (Clandinin 2007) and phenomenology (Van Manen 1990), and theoretical assumptions may be underpinned by significant philosophers.

Post-structuralist Research Paradigm

Post-structuralist research paradigm is as far from positivism as a researcher can position him or herself. It emerged strongly in the late twentieth century, turning sociology upside down. Truth is not absolute;

rather, there are many truths. Our experiences, identities and the world are constructed through discourses. Discourses include language (as fluid signifier of reality) but also forms of knowledge, forms of subjectivity and social practices. Within this paradigm the epistemologies of researchers are constructed and represent interactions among 'discourse, power and subject' (Grant and Giddings 2002, p.20). Discourses offer us a way of talking about an understanding the world but, simultaneously, our discourses constitute us and our discourses are influenced by us, our 'subjects' and the socio-historic-political contexts. The 'subject' and researcher are de-centred and fragmented. Furthermore, within the interview setting, we as researchers are not free from the discourses we construct about others or ourselves. We are also impacted by discourses that exist outside the interview and our research. Moreover the people that we study in organisations are not totally free from the discourses circulating in society about diversity and difference.

A number of our chapters draw on the post-structuralist research paradigm to greater or lesser extent and discourse analysis is described with different theoretical guides. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) highlights the key role discourse plays in the reproduction of power relations by explaining how discourses are embedded within sociocultural routinised practice, or incorporated knowledge. It can include examining the form or organisation of texts, the analysis of the discursive practice through which speakers produce texts, or discourse can be conceptualised as a specific form of social practice. Chapters 8 and 20 in this volume are examples of two different types of CDA. Zanoni and Janssens's research using CDA, in Chapter 8, is heavily influenced by Fairclough, while Jones, in Chapter 20, takes us through the influence of Foucaudian philosophy within a feminist epistemology to interrogate equality and diversity in the public sector.

Critical/Radical/Transformative Research Paradigm

The critical/radical/transformational research paradigm is perhaps the research paradigm that most obviously aligns with EDI research. In some writings it is noted to be advocacy research aimed at changing an unjust world. It draws on the two main social theories: critical social theory and feminist theory (Olesen 2005; Prasad 2005). The ontological underpinning of this research paradigm is that we are positioned within an unjust world with inequalities configured along social lines such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability, sexuality and religion. The analysis of power within the structures and enacted through the power holders provides the focus of research attention. The researcher and the researched come to understand

oppressed views by uncovering the contradictory conditions of action which are hidden or distorted by everyday understanding. Research is emancipatory in nature and directly aims to further positive social change. The usual research processes are seen as value laden, with unequal power distributed in favour of the researcher. The researcher is seen as part of the research, subjectively involved in the research, embedded in complex power systems and discourses. Participants are quite often seen as co-researchers, and researchers are seen as intersubjectively involved with participants/co-researchers (Cunliffe 2011).

The development of feminist standpoint theory (Harding 1987) and the emergence of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) provided gravitas to an epistemology that believes the words and actions encapsulate the experiences of the oppressed and marginalised. Research within the radical/critical paradigm often has the goal of providing an avenue for the ignored and silenced to give them voice. Through research it may also be possible for the traditionally marginalised to be conscientised and transformed.

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PARADIGM(S): KAUPAPA MĀORI

It is through the emerging Indigenous research paradigm(s) (Denzin et al. 2008; Chilisa 2012), such as anti-colonial perspectives in Africa (Nkomo 2011; Khupe and Moyra 2017), the USA and Canada (Wilson 2001; Kenny and Ngaroimata Fraser 2012), Australia (Martin and Mirraoopa 2003) and New Zealand (Smith 1999; Henry and Pene 2001; Bishop 2005) that we see most starkly the impact of different world views; the impact of researchers' axiology and ontology is laid bare, affecting every part of the research process. A core feature of Indigenous research methods is the collective nature of the culture(s) meaning that collaborative processes lie at the heart of research processes (Bishop 2005), as well as the focus on relational integrity and accountability (Wilson 2001). In keeping with the critical/radical research paradigm, a common agenda for indigenous research is 'to improve things for our people' in a meaningful, positive and sustainable way. An example of one of the most developed indigenous methodologies is Kaupapa Māori research (Chapter 10 in this volume). Kaupapa Māori was founded on a Māori world view and it arose from close scrutiny of critical social theory, feminist epistemologies (Smith 1999) and postcolonial critiques (Prasad 2005). The underlying maxim of self-determination was a key driver in the contemporary cultural renaissance of Māori as they resisted many forms of modern-day colonisation or neocolonialism. Indigenous communities have survived colonialism and

have historically been subjected to neocolonial research; over scrutinised and yet under researched (Smith 1999).

Kaupapa Māori research provides a means for the Indigenous group(s) to be freed from neocolonial domination by creating conditions that encourage resistance, foster self-determination (*tino rangatiratanga*) and essentially create culturally responsive research practices (Bishop 2005). In Indigenous research the core of ethics involves establishing and maintaining reciprocal and respectful relationships (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Five issues of power are directly addressed in this research paradigm: initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation and accountability (Bishop 2005, p. 109). The crucial question is, who has control over the research processes?

Kaupapa Māori research practices were originally developed from well-known proverbs (*whakatauki*) and include seven principles to guide processes: face-to-face interactions, cultural protocols for introductions and to conduct interviews, use of Māori language where appropriate, *koha* (gifts) for participants (now an embedded part of many New Zealand universities' research ethics), protection for participants' cultural and intellectual property, significance of hospitality in interactions with participants, and the active practice of culturally appropriate processes wherever possible (Smith 2012). Whether or not outsiders can be involved is a contentious issue (Bishop 2005) as essentially Kaupapa Māori research is 'research for, by and with Māori' (Smith 1999, p. 183).

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY AND STANCE

Our world view, identities and situated knowledge impact on our scholarship, practice, sense-making and unfolding research agenda in a myriad of ways. Who we are, what we know and how we think impact on the questions we ask, the methods we choose and the lenses we use to interpret our observations. Even the most 'objective' studies in the arts, sciences, humanities and organisational studies are shaped by the long-standing assumptions that researchers have proffered about how and why certain events occur, and to what end. It is the researcher's interest from which research enquiry springs. Research is subjective and biased, and research methods cannot be value-free in their application because our own values will always impact upon our research processes. Objectivity in research is a myth.

It is thus necessary to carefully consider the potential effects we as researchers might have on the research process and research product. Making our own research stance and positionality explicit in our research allows for a narrative placement of our situatedness within the research. It

poses as an exploration of the researchers' reflection on our own positionality within the many contexts, layers, power structures, identities and subjectivities of the viewpoint (Bourke 2014; Throne et al. 2016; Dugan 2017).

To make our own positionalities in relation to EDI practice and research clear, we, the authors of this chapter, ascribe to a critical interpretative constructionist standpoint, where we examine the role of the individual in relation to the social reality in which knowledge is constructed and embedded in its socio-historical-political contexts (Grant and Giddings 2002). We both vary in terms of the degree of fluidity that is acceptable; Lize veering towards post-structuralism and Judith towards post-positivism. Nevertheless, we both agree that we simply cannot escape the world in which we live. When we study it, we as researchers are part of the social process we study and are shaped by our social-historical locations, which influence how we perceive, collect data and interpret what we study. We believe that, as observers, we are reflected within our observations, we are subjectively involved in our research and in an intersubjective relationship with our research participants. There is no single reality; there are multiple fluid realities, co-constructed by the researcher and the researched (Cunliffe 2011).

In our opinion, positionality is more than just the recognition of our own position vis-à-vis a research project and the researched, a declaration of intersecting identities in a piece of academic work, or explicitly stating a paradigmatic stance. Positionality also speaks to our own situated knowledge based on our embodied views, values and beliefs and insider–outsider status in relation to the research process, research setting, research context, research focus, research participants as others and research output. Finally, making our own positionality explicit is not a limitation; it serves to inform our EDI research rather than to invalidate it as biased or contaminated by personal perspectives and social or political viewpoints.

Positionality statements will typically include a description of the researchers' paradigmatic stance (their philosophical, personal, theoretical beliefs and perspective through which they view the research process), their potential influences on the research (identity categories salient to the research), the researcher's chosen or predetermined position in relation to the participants (as an insider or an outsider), their context and an understanding/explanation as to how, where, when and in what way the researcher may have influenced the research process. A positionality statement thus carefully considers the potential effects of the researcher on the research subject area, the research context and process, as well as on the research participants (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013; Throne et al. 2016; Dugan 2017).

Coupled to the acknowledgement of our own positionality and research paradigmatic stance is the importance of reflecting on and interrogating our own research practices, and to be self-reflexive through critically examining the assumptions underlying our values and actions that influence and impact on ourselves and others. Self-reflection and a reflexive approach is both a necessary prerequisite and an ongoing process for the researcher to be able to clearly identify, construct, critique and articulate their positionality. Reflexivity is the concept that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on the research. Such awareness not only informs positionality but helps to execute positionality. Reflexivity requires an explicit self-consciousness and self-assessment by the researcher about their own views and positions, and how these might have influenced the design, execution and interpretation of the research findings (Cunliffe 2004).

The following examples of the authors' previous positionality statements illustrate how the research context, process, participants and subject area might influence a researcher's positionality statement. A positionality statement that speaks to the subject area of a chapter written by one of the authors reads as:

Upfront, I need to make my own subjective positionality and insider-outsider status clear. My identity as a White South African holds its own biases and tensions in terms of my voice. Like Nkomo (2011, p. 16) I can also ask 'Should I speak and can I speak unproblematically about "African" leadership and management given my identities?' and 'Can a privileged White Afrikaner (or so called Afropean or Eurokaner) female academic who grew up in Apartheid South Africa, now living in diaspora in the United States speak about Ubuntu?'

Another way of framing our own position is to highlight that which is most relevant to the argument in the chapter or article. One of the editors described her ontology in the following way in a chapter that analysed the multi-ethnic research team:

I am Pākehā, and in that statement I signal to you that I am a descendant of the colonizers, originating mainly from Scotland and coming to the South Island in the 1860s. I grew up in the rural South Island far removed from Māori people, brought up to believe that we were one people in New Zealand. My awareness of identity politics of difference grew through the feminist movement and was expanded through the 1981 anti-apartheid protests in New Zealand. My consciousness of the politics of difference was further extended when I relocated in 1990 to an academic position in the multi-cultural city of Auckland. It was here, through my Māori and Pacific Island students, I began to learn of a different worldview and its importance.

CORNERSTONE CONSIDERATIONS FOR QUALITY RESEARCH

The long history of positivist research has provided time for well-developed measures of accepted quality criteria such as validity, reliability and generalisability. In keeping with the faith in mathematical evaluation of the paradigm, acceptable statistical measures abound for the varieties of quantitative research. Developments in quantitative methods [have] continued to become increasingly sophisticated as the advance of technology and software packages enabled the analysis of complex sets of statistical data (Lee and Cassells 2013, p. 126).

Within qualitative research the process of evaluating the quality or rigour of the research is more difficult, particularly if the research is based on a relativist ontology (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2016). The gurus of qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba 1985) posited the concept of 'trustworthiness' as a substitute for the concepts validity and reliability in positivist research. Trustworthiness in qualitative research can be assessed in four ways: credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability. Credibility refers to the perceived authenticity and 'truth' of the participants' views, and how they have been represented by the researcher (Cope 2014). Confirmability is demonstrated by the researcher describing how conclusions and interpretation were established. It is indicated by clear documentation of decision points at each stage of the research process. Both credibility and confirmability are usually established by providing rich quotes from the participants' interviews. Dependability refers to the constancy of the interview materials over similar conditions and context (although the need for this varies within the specific research paradigm). Finally, transferability refers to how findings may be applied to other related settings or groups of participants (Cope 2014); however, this concept may only be relevant if that is the intent of the research and would be signalled in the research objective and, often, in the research questions. Altogether, the overriding construct for establishing rigour in qualitative research is to have a transparent audit trail, documenting all decisions in the design and execution of the research process.

While 'mixed methods' are often viewed as a compromise position between positivism and interpretivism, particularly by researchers less confident in interpretivist or critical research methodologies, there are dangers in mixing methodologies. Using mixed methods requires that the researcher be keenly cognisant of their paradigmatic positioning (Giddings 2007). Care must be taken not to mix incompatible assumptions from dipping into multiple research paradigms. Nevertheless, as Sandelowski (2000) pointed out when discussing the qualitative descriptive

methodology within post-positivism, it is certainly acceptable to have ‘hues’ or overtones of other methodologies. She gives the example of ‘ethnographic studies with grounded theory overtones’, meaning that it may include a process of constant comparison (Sandelowski 2000, p. 337). Another common mix in EDI research is the inclusion of a feminist epistemology within multiple paradigms such as post-positivism, interpretivism and post-structuralism.

EMERGING METHODOLOGIES AND GLIMPSES OF THE FUTURE

From a starting point of positivist and managerialist approaches (Pringle and Strachan 2015), the field of EDI research has become more interdisciplinary and has expanded to include subjectivist and intersubjectivist approaches, with associated methods, epistemologies and ontological understandings (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009). Much of the extant EDI research falls within the critical/radical/transformational research paradigm owing to the emancipatory aims many EDI researchers have as a primary motivation for being involved in this sub-discipline. In addition, a fundamental ontological belief for many critical/radical/transformational EDI researchers is that we, as researchers, cannot be divorced from our backgrounds, social identities and/or earlier knowledge. We are subjectively involved and we cannot be objective or separate ourselves from our social reality. We are embedded in the world, not removed from it. Bleijenbergh et al. (2016) argued that examples of promising emerging methodologies in EDI can be found in post-colonialism, relational constructionism, and post-qualitative and reflexive dialogism, and confirmed that most of these examples would be included under the umbrella of critical approaches (Bendl et al. 2015).

The recent debates around intersectionality, identity formation and theorisation of power in EDI research have shown there is some confusion about how to undertake critical EDI research (Zanoni et al. 2010). These authors urge critical EDI scholars to revisit existing approaches or paradigms and methods, and even reinvent novel ways of inquiry into EDI issues. Booyesen (2018) and others (Ferdman 2015; Ferdman and Sagiv 2012; Syed and Özbilgin 2009; Pringle and Ryan 2015) argue that understanding the interplay of the multiple analytic levels helps us to understand the individual’s sense-making processes and everyday interactions. Common multiple levels used include: micro-level, individual (agency), relational and collective identities; nested in the meso-level structures of domination are organisational and professional

‘best practice’, and organisational politics; at the macro level are the socio-political context including historical influences and legislative boundaries. This multi-layered understanding can help to create spaces where non-normative individuals can resist, disrupt, withdraw or refuse to enact the ‘limited’ accepted identities and create alternative discourses.

Within the many chapters that follow, multiple futures have been indicated, and hopefully they will inspire readers into uncharted, innovative, new and emergent methodologies.

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