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"Engaging with Paradigmatic Stances in Social Science Research": A Book Review of Bunmi Omodan's Research Paradigms and Their Methodological Alignment in Social Sciences

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"Engaging with Paradigmatic Stances in Social Science Research": A Book Review of Bunmi Omodan's Research Paradigms and Their Methodological Alignment in Social Sciences

Abstract

In the book, *Research Paradigms and Their Methodological Alignment in Social Sciences*, Bunmi Omodan explores in depth the philosophical foundations of five paradigms (which he points out are not fixed or univocal in their content), namely positivism; interpretivism/constructivism; transformative paradigm; postcolonial Indigenous paradigm; and pragmatism. Examples of the kinds of research questions, research designs, and attendant data collection and analytic processes, as well as ethical positions, that align with paradigmatic positions are presented to us. At the same time, we are urged to "engage with critiques and debates surrounding each paradigm" (Omodan, 2024, p. xii). The book thus hopes to shed light on, while contributing to, "ongoing intellectual dialogues within the field [of social research]" (Omodan, 2024, p. xii). The book re-opens discussion on topics such as: the meaning of "objectivity"; the role of the "subjectivity" of researchers in engagement with research participants, as admitted within certain paradigms; the need to critically reflect on the consequences for research participants and the wider society(ies) of the research endeavor (which he urges us all to take seriously); the possible commitment to social justice as part of a research agenda (as advocated specifically within the transformative paradigm); and the importance of appreciating the historical context in which all paradigms have arisen (and evolved), including the postcolonial Indigenous one. As he puts it, this latter paradigm "acknowledges that colonialism is not a thing of the past but continues to shape Indigenous realities [of those historically and currently affected] in various forms" (p. 119). Omodan endeavors to navigate the difficult course between trying to give credence to all the paradigms which he discusses, while urging us to continue to reflect upon the consequences of how we invoke them. He also subtly introduces as a general ethical guideline that we should (as expressly advised within transformative and Indigenous paradigms), reflect upon how research can be designed to "provide a space for inclusive decision making and co-learning, cultivating an environment where [professional] researchers' and community members' insights and wisdom are valued" (Omodan, 2024, p. 128).

Keywords

critical self-reflection, impact of research in society, interpreting research products, ongoing paradigmatic discussion, relevance of research, transformative potential of research

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“Engaging with Paradigmatic Stances in Social Science Research”: A Book Review of Bunmi Omodan’s *Research Paradigms and Their Methodological Alignment in Social Sciences*

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In the book, *Research Paradigms and Their Methodological Alignment in Social Sciences*, Bunmi Omodan explores in depth the philosophical foundations of five paradigms (which he points out are not fixed or univocal in their content), namely positivism; interpretivism/constructivism; transformative paradigm; postcolonial Indigenous paradigm; and pragmatism. Examples of the kinds of research questions, research designs, and attendant data collection and analytic processes, as well as ethical positions, that align with paradigmatic positions are presented to us. At the same time, we are urged to “engage with critiques and debates surrounding each paradigm” (Omodan, 2024, p. xii). The book thus hopes to shed light on, while contributing to, “ongoing intellectual dialogues within the field [of social research]” (Omodan, 2024, p. xii). The book re-opens discussion on topics such as: the meaning of “objectivity”; the role of the “subjectivity” of researchers in engagement with research participants, as admitted within certain paradigms; the need to critically reflect on the consequences for research participants and the wider society(ies) of the research endeavor (which he urges us all to take seriously); the possible commitment to social justice as part of a research agenda (as advocated specifically within the transformative paradigm); and the importance of appreciating the historical context in which all paradigms have arisen (and evolved), including the postcolonial Indigenous one. As he puts it, this latter paradigm “acknowledges that colonialism is not a thing of the past but continues to shape Indigenous realities [of those historically and currently affected] in various forms” (p. 119). Omodan endeavors to navigate the difficult course between trying to give credence to all the paradigms which he discusses, while urging us to continue to reflect upon the consequences of how we invoke them. He also subtly introduces as a general ethical guideline that we should (as expressly advised within transformative and Indigenous paradigms), reflect upon how research can be designed to “provide a space for inclusive decision making and co-learning, cultivating an environment where [professional] researchers’ and community members’ insights and wisdom are valued” (Omodan, 2024, p. 128).

Keywords: critical self-reflection, impact of research in society, interpreting research products, ongoing paradigmatic discussion, relevance of research, transformative potential of research

Introduction

This book sets out to offer a way of bridging the divide between philosophical concepts associated with different paradigmatic stances and practical research considerations, in a manner which is accessible to readers of varying levels of research experience. Omodan’s

inclusion of a plethora of examples of research questions, research designs, data collection processes, data analysis processes and ethical considerations that may spring from any invoked paradigmatic position is illuminating in spotlighting the difference between paradigmatic positions. At the same time, he points to ongoing controversies surrounding the quest to organize valuable social science research.

Review

The book is divided into six chapters (with an initial “Justification and Chapter Overview”: pp. xi- xiv). In Chapter 1, he introduces the origin of the concept of “research paradigm” and explains how different paradigms arose in the social sciences in terms of their ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies, and methodological guidelines. This chapter, entitled “Understanding Research Paradigms,” offers some case studies of how the framing of research questions can already be seen as linked to paradigmatic orientations on the part of researchers. For example, when outlining a “postcolonial indigenous paradigmatic” formulation of a research question, he notes that a research question to ask could be: “how do colonial policies and practices impact the wellbeing of Indigenous youth, and what strategies can be employed to promote cultural realization and empowerment?” (p. 17). The suggestion in this case is that the research must resonate with issues of concern in the community, that the youth and other community members should be involved in defining how the research should proceed, and in deciding what (participatory) methods should be employed to help explore together how cultural revitalization efforts can be enhanced. These implications all “align” with the philosophical tenets of a postcolonial indigenous paradigm. (This is not to say that Omodan believes that there are no debatable issues associated with this paradigm, which indeed he explores in his chapter devoted to this paradigm, namely, Chapter 5.)

Also in his first chapter, Omodan offers an example of how, for instance, one can set a research question based in a positivist-oriented paradigm, seeking to explore “the impact of a specific teaching methodology on students’ academic performance – as measured in terms of certain standardized indicators of performance in a secondary school” (p 15). One could here set up pre-and post-tests and compare the scores of students who were subjected to the new method with those not subjected to it. Omodan provides this as an example of how positivist researchers consider that such an approach allows researchers to draw (causal) inferences based on “measurable outcomes” and to render the research replicable (in similar contexts) so that other researchers too can check the “findings.” The idea is to collect and analyze “objective data on the impact of the teaching method” (p 16). Omodan does not try to deconstruct the idea of “objective data” here, as he is explaining how within a positivist framework, measurable outcomes constitute objective data (not inhering in the minds of researchers). Also, the issue of how professional researchers could try to work with participants (including youth) to explore together ways of “teaching” (and learning) that is more culturally responsive (and not based on standardized indicators of performance) does not arise. Omodan does not draw this out for readers but leaves it to us to recognize that a different way of posing a research question, a different relationship between professional researchers and others, and a different stance regarding how “results” are to be interpreted, etc., can be traced back to paradigmatic positions. Omodan proceeds in this way in relation to all the paradigms which he outlines in this chapter, in his effort to do justice to all the philosophical positions.

In explaining paradigms other than positivism, he points out that “researchers in these paradigms are more likely to acknowledge their values and subjectivity and actively engage in reflexivity to understand their impact [influence] on the research process” (p. 11). It is in this way that he offers, somewhat subtly, his preference for a more reflexive stance. All the while, in this beginning chapter (Chapter 1) he tries to alert readers to the complexities governing the

research field (as a whole), which could lead to dialogue with and across paradigms. He argues that these complexities revolve around:

Questions of objectivity and subjectivity, debates on validity and reliability, power dynamics and representation, ethical considerations, the role of theory and generalisability, the ongoing qualitative-quantitative debate, paradigm compatibility and integration, the influence of context and reflexivity, the dynamic nature of paradigms, and the impact of paradigms on research outcomes. Recognising these complexities is crucial for researchers as they embark on their research journey. (p. 18)

He argues that if researchers are more attuned to “understanding the paradigm landscape,” which he is hoping the book will contribute to, this will lead to their:

Promoting reflexivity and self-awareness, embracing flexibility and openness, utilising methodological pluralism, engaging in collaborative and participatory research, pursuing continuous learning and professional development, considering ethical considerations, engaging in reflexive iteration, participating in scholarly dialogue and debates, and seeking mentorship and collaboration. (p. 18)

Having set the scene in this way (and hinted at his preference for continued scholarly dialogue and debates), he turns to a detailed examination of all the paradigms to be explored in the book.

Chapter 2 is entitled “Positivist Paradigm and Methodological Alignment.” In this chapter, Omodan offers an informative exploration of the positivist paradigm, which aids readers in understanding the development of this mode of scientific thought within the social sciences. The chapter equips readers with the knowledge required if they wish to apply this paradigm to their research in relation to the setting of research questions; the use of research designs which focus on relationships between measurable variables; the preference for quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, and the striving for “objectivity” in terms of criteria of validity which express the paradigmatic assumptions. Having explained this in detail, he offers a section in which he points to criticisms that can be levelled. His critique is structured via the following headings:

- “Reductionism and Oversimplification”
- “Objectivity and Value Neutrality”
- “Quantitative Bias”
- “Generalisability and Contextual Understanding”
- “Power Dynamics and Researcher Dominance”
- “Limited Emphasis on Subjective Experience”
- “Ethical Considerations”

He offers his own considerations, coupled with reference to (critical) research literature around these issues, in the hope, as he mentions in his initial Overview of all the chapters, to “enrich the reader’s understanding and facilitating a more nuanced approach to research” (p. xii). In Chapter 2, in his detailed discussion of positivism, he summarizes his argument that:

While objectivity is emphasised within the [positivist] paradigm, it is important to recognise and address the inherent subjectivity of researchers [which cannot

be ignored]. Reflexivity, acknowledging the role of subjectivity, and employing triangulation [including qualitative input in the process] are strategies that researchers can employ to ensure a balanced approach. (p. 58)

In this way, Omodan extends the positivist position beyond what is normally associated with it, but he considers that this extension is not out of the question, especially if (positivist-inspired) researchers embrace a stance of reflexivity and are prepared to engage with debates in the field of social research. I found his manner of granting credibility to a positivist perspective while urging an extension hereof an interesting way for readers to engage with “positivism” in practice. He summarizes in his conclusion to Chapter 2 that:

The main argument is that, by considering these aspects, researchers can conduct research within the positivist paradigm while also being cognisant of its limitations and actively engaging in a more comprehensive and well-aligned approach [where the alignment would presumably be with an extended version of positivism] (p. 58).

Although he makes these caveats, I personally felt that he could have made them even more strongly! Nevertheless, I can understand that he is trying in the book to show respect for the diversity of paradigmatic approaches, while urging all researchers to take on board a stance of reflexivity regarding any assumed paradigmatic position.

Chapter 3 is entitled “Interpretive/Constructive Paradigm and Methodological Alignment”. In this chapter, Omodan suggests that he is “setting the stage for a deeper understanding of its [this paradigm’s] principles and applications (p. 59). He discusses the evolution of the paradigm starting from its origin in “hermeneutic and phenomenological traditions”. He suggests that overall, this paradigm:

Places importance on the researcher’s role as an active participant in the research process, engaging in dialogue and interpretation to make sense of the data collected. On the other hand, interpretive paradigm emphasises the idea of reflexivity, recognising that researchers bring their own perspectives and biases to the research process. Researchers actively reflect on their own assumptions and values, critically examining how their own positionality may influence the research design and interpretation of findings. (p. 63)

When discussing the “value-laden nature of research” (as one of the topics that he explores as linked to this paradigm), he expresses, with reference to various authors, that:

The interpretive paradigm acknowledges that *research is value-laden* and that researchers cannot be completely objective or value-neutral (Brown, 2019; Zyphur & Pierides, 2020). It emphasises the importance of transparency, ethical considerations, and respecting the voices and experiences of research participants including the critiques and debates surrounding its theoretical and methodological underpinnings. This provides a deeper appreciation of the *development and refinement of the interpretive paradigm in response to ongoing scholarly discussions and advancements in the field*. (p. 67, my emphasis)

As he sees it, interpretivism (in “refined” form) appreciates that professional researchers’ ways of interacting with participants means that findings, expressed as meanings,

will be a product of this interaction and furthermore the interpretations of meanings should not purport to be value-neutral, as indicated in the quotation above.

When I read this chapter, I pondered if he could usefully have explored the difference between an interpretivist approach which still sets out to “capture” people’s meaning-making, and an approach which is more firmly rooted in what Guba and Lincoln (2013) call a “Constructivist Credo” and what Gergen (2014, 2015, 2023) in his various writings calls a “social constructionist position, which does not define research as a world-mirroring enterprise.” In this way, Omodan could have focused more deliberately on what he calls “advancements” or developments in the field. Gergen, for instance, criticizes qualitative researchers in the interpretivist tradition who still adhere to the idea that we should strive to mirror the world(s) of people’s meaning-making (2014, p. 55). In some of the examples that Omodan supplies of possible research questions that may be posed from this paradigmatic position, the questions seem to be set as if researchers are striving to understand existing (given) meaning making of participants. For instance, he offers as one example: “What are the subjective meanings that individuals attach to the concept of ‘success’ in the context of a competitive work environment?” (p. 69). He does not highlight here that the way professional researchers frame the research question around the idea of “success” in such a workplace, could already affect how research participants might define their involvement in the workplace – without considering how discourses of success in workplaces are social constructions which can become reproduced (or questioned) through the process of “doing research.”

Although Omodan has stated in various places in his text that researchers (including those adopting an interpretive/constructive approach) need to be reflexive about the impact on participants of their way of approaching the research, I felt that perhaps he should have drawn out more clearly the somewhat different positions/foci offered by interpretivists/constructivists, where the latter more explicitly admit that they are influencing everyday constructions through the manner in which they are proceeding. If one relates this back to Omodan’s point about the value-laden nature of the research enterprise, one will indeed attain a “deeper understanding of its [this paradigm’s] principles and applications” (p. 59), in which an awareness of the social construction of reality means that research is recognized as contributing in some way to this ongoing construction. The chapter in any case offers us as readers ongoing developments within this paradigm and prompts us to consider what reflexivity may mean in practice within this, as other paradigms.

Chapter 4 is entitled “Transformative Paradigm and Methodological Alignment.” In Omodan’s initial Chapter Overview (pages xi-xiv), he expresses that Chapter 4 is aimed at presenting an “insightful dissection of the transformative paradigm and its multifaceted dimensions, serving as an essential guide for readers wishing to engage effectively and meaningfully with this particular research approach” (p. xiii). And in his Chapter 1, when outlining the contours of this paradigm in relation to others, he states the following:

Critical/Transformative: The critical paradigm, otherwise known as transformative paradigm, focuses on power structures, social inequality, and emancipation. Researchers adopting this paradigm aim to uncover hidden power dynamics, challenge oppressive systems, and work towards social change (Omodan, 2022). They also engage in critical analysis, critique existing structures, and advocate for the marginalised (Romm, 2015). This paradigm draws from critical theory and employs interdisciplinary approaches actively involving participants and fostering collaboration with community impacted by social injustices (Mertens, 2007). (Omodan, 2024, p. 6)

He thus highlights for readers how the transformative paradigm specifically focuses on using the research process to support social justice and empowerment initiatives. The intention, he notes, is to achieve social impact, and is therefore particularly relevant for researchers engaging with marginalized communities concerned with forwarding increased social justice issues as part of the research agenda. In his detailed discussion in Chapter 4, he expresses that:

Concepts such as empowerment, liberation, voice, and agency take centre stage as researchers strive to understand and promote these elements within their studies. Assumptions about the importance of reflexivity, acknowledging positionality, and engaging in collaborative partnerships with participants are also central to the transformative paradigm. (p. 88)

He expresses the importance of recognizing the theoretical foundations of the paradigm to appropriately apply the paradigm in research endeavors:

Understanding the transformative paradigm in context requires recognising its theoretical foundations, interdisciplinary nature, and its commitment to social justice and empowerment. By embracing critical theory, challenging dominant ideologies, and centring the voices of marginalised communities, researchers adopting this paradigm undoubtedly contribute to transformative change and the pursuit of a more equitable society. (p. 88)

Here we can see that Omodan himself is not purporting to be value-neutral in his way of explicating this paradigm (in relation to others). He proposes that the embracing of this paradigm, where researchers acknowledge their commitment to social justice and empowerment, does undoubtedly contribute to a “more equitable society”. In this chapter, he explains the origins of the paradigm in critical theory (e.g., the critical theory of the Frankfurt school) and its evolution over the years. He indicates how “the transformative paradigm continued to evolve in the late 20th century and early 21st century, incorporating insights from postcolonial Paulo Freire, Patricia Hill Collins, and Angela Davis” (p. 89). He points out in addition that:

In recent years, the transformative paradigm has increasingly engaged with issues of globalisation, environmental justice, and digital technologies. Researchers within this paradigm have explored the impact of neoliberalism on social inequalities, the environmental consequences of capitalism, and the role of digital activism in transformative change. This expansion reflects the paradigm’s responsiveness to emerging social, political, and technological challenges. (p. 89)

Furthermore, he elucidates how Indigenous scholars have impacted on developments in this paradigm:

Indigenous scholars, activists, and community leaders have contributed to the paradigm’s development by foregrounding decolonisation, cultural revitalisation, and indigenous knowledge systems. Similarly, the contributions of Black, feminist, queer, and disability scholars have enriched the paradigm by highlighting the intersecting oppressions faced by marginalised groups. (p. 89)

I found Omodan's incisive account of this paradigm laid a firm foundation for creating a link for readers between the theoretical discussion and its "methodological alignment." In discussing methodological alignment in this case he refers to research questions that might be set within this paradigm, research designs that align with it (in this case co-decided with research participants), ways of collecting (or generating) relevant data (in this case towards the pursuit of social justice), ways of analyzing the "data" (such that their transformative relevance is highlighted and also such that communities and wider stakeholders can recognize the action implications of the research), and the importance of assuming a stance of reflexivity. He explains that:

By cultivating a heightened awareness of their positionality, researchers within the transformative paradigm strive to mitigate power imbalances inherent in the research dynamic. This intentional self-reflection ... serves as a means to foster collaborative relationships, ensuring that the research process is inclusive and ethically grounded. Through their commitment to reflexivity, the transformative researchers actively contribute to the cultivation of research practices that align with principles of equity, inclusivity, and ethical engagement. (p. 90)

Through his detailed examination of the processes involved in collaborative ways of designing projects, participative styled of data collection/generation, and options for data analysis and interpretation which highlight action potential for transformative change, he offers guidance as to how indeed a transformative agenda can be built into the research process. As far as the use of different kinds of methods are concerned, he points out that "the transformative paradigm can be considered a suitable framework for implementing mixed-methods research due to its emphasis on understanding complex social phenomena, promoting social justice, and generating actionable knowledge for transformative change (Mertens, 2010)" (p. 96).

As part of his discussion, he does also delve into the critiques and debates that circulate around the transformative research paradigm; and he indicates how these might become accommodated. For example, he notes that:

Critics argue that the paradigm's emphasis on social justice and transformative change may lead to a predetermined agenda that influences the research process and outcomes. They highlight the need for researchers to critically reflect on their own biases and ensure transparency in their methods to address these concerns. (p. 115)

In response to these critics, he points out that:

It is essential for researchers to be aware of their positionality and actively engage in reflexivity throughout the research process, acknowledging their own perspectives and potential influence on data collection, analysis, and interpretation. By embracing transparency and reflexivity, researchers can navigate these challenges. (p. 115)

Here again he underscores how reflexivity is a stance that should be incorporated in all research endeavors, and he adds that this is indeed recognized by those propounding the principles of the transformative paradigm. He also makes the point for readers that:

Collaborating with community organisations and advocacy groups can enhance the social justice impact of transformative research. Working closely with these organisations ensures that research findings are relevant, actionable, and have a greater potential for transformative change. By aligning research goals with the priorities and needs of the communities being studied, researchers can strengthen the social justice outcomes of their work.

Throughout the chapter he offers pertinent examples of how the transformative paradigm can be activated in research practice.

Chapter 5 is entitled “Postcolonial Indigenous Paradigm and Methodological Alignment.” This chapter offers a crucial entry into the book, given the growing recognition of Indigenous perspectives in research. Omodan explains with fervor how this paradigm arose:

Within the context of the historical and ongoing effects of colonialism on indigenous communities. It acknowledges and challenges the oppressive legacy of colonisation, recognising the profound social, cultural, political, and economic disruptions experienced by indigenous peoples worldwide. This paradigm seeks to reclaim indigenous identities, knowledge, and sovereignty while critiquing the dominant colonial narratives that have marginalised and eroded indigenous cultures (Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022). (p. 119)

This chapter emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity, and the ethical considerations involved in working with indigenous communities, as well as the ethical principles that can be adopted by all researchers wishing to decolonize the research process so that Western-styled ways of knowing do not dominate the research landscape. The chapter highlights the necessity of empowering marginalized voices and respecting indigenous rights. The options for aligning research questions with this paradigm, coupled with his account of Indigenous-focused ways of collecting/generating data and analyzing and interpreting them to serve Indigenous and marginalized communities across the globe, are well illustrated through his examples. At the same time, he touches on concerns with environmental justice issues as stressed by many Indigenous scholars. He summarizes that the strength of the paradigm is that it “emphasises the importance of engaging in respectful and reciprocal research relationships with indigenous communities, involving them as active participants in the research process and ensuring that research aligns with their needs, priorities, and values” (p 120). The richness of discussion in this chapter points to his familiarity with this way of doing research and of justifying its importance on the world stage (of research).

As in the other chapters, Omodan is not shy from offering potential critiques that might help to further enrich research undertaken in terms of this paradigm. For example, he suggests that power imbalances between professional researchers and research participants still need to be carefully reflected upon in each case of the doing of research. This, he notes, requires researchers to give attention to developing “an understanding of the historical context of colonialism” (with its unbalanced and exploitative relations). Undoing historically embedded colonization, including through processes of research, requires challenging colonial legacies. Researchers thus need to “continuously reflect on the transformative potential of their research, engaging with community members in co-creating knowledge and actively supporting Indigenous-led initiatives for decolonization” (pp. 140-141).

Chapter 6 is entitled “Pragmatism Paradigm and Methodological Alignment.” In this chapter Omodan indicates that this paradigm “represents a unique philosophical stance that emphasises practical application [of knowing endeavors] contextual understanding, and the integration of thought and action” (146). He points to its origins in the late 19th century and

indicates that as an approach to knowledge generation it has shaped various (research) fields, “challenging traditional dichotomies between [for instance] theory and practice, objectivity and subjectivity” (p. 149). He indicates that it is a living philosophy and is likely to “continue evolving” (p. 148). As in other chapters, he delves deeply, with reference to various proponents’ arguments, into the philosophical foundations, including the complex interplay of epistemology, ontology, and axiology.

As far as axiology is concerned, he indicates that a rejection of the “fact-value dichotomy is an integral aspect of the pragmatism paradigm”, which, he notes, posits that “facts and values are intertwined, shaping and influenced by one another” (p. 149). He elucidates the implications of this for the use of research as an approach to “inquiry in action”, guided by efforts to solve issues of concern (as identified in terms of certain values). In the chapter he also discusses how the pragmatic “problem-solving orientation” aligns with the efforts of those looking to employ mixed-methods research, in terms of a notion of the practicalities of aligning diverse data collection and analysis methods. He thus articulates how pragmatism as a philosophy has often been a basis for those employing mixed methods, as a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. As he states, pragmatism “resonates profoundly with mixed methods research” (p. 154). As in other chapters, he offers examples of how research questions might be formulated within this paradigm. But in this case, he remarks that when crafting questions, one needs to “ensure that the inquiry is methodologically consistent and philosophically grounded” (p. 159). To guide readers as to how this may be done, he offers some examples. One example which he offers (as having a problem-centred focus and as thus compatible with a pragmatic position) is the following:

Addressing Mental Health Issues in the Workplace: In a study focusing on mental health in the corporate environment, the researcher could ask: *“What are the primary causes of stress and burnout among employees in high-pressure industries, and what interventions can be designed to alleviate these issues?”* This question targets a real-world problem—work-related stress and burnout—and seeks to understand the causes and possible solutions. The goal is to generate knowledge that could lead to the development of practical interventions for improving mental well-being in the workplace. (p. 161)

When I read this example, as well as some of Omodan’s other ones, I wondered if the focus on the “immediate” problem (of potential burnout) means that researchers do not adopt a more macro (and critical) perspective, which could enable people in the workplace and indeed the wider society to challenge discourses which focus on the mental health of individuals, while leaving intact the structuring of (capitalist) economies around the “productivity” of workers, in the attempt to generate increased corporate profits. The narrow framing of the research question for me implies a narrowing down of meaningful discussion which would allow us to challenge dominant narratives circulating in the society. The idea of researching mental health of workers in a specific industry does not touch on the problem of the way in which work has become organized around the narrative of increasing productivity (which one can critically consider/reconstruct as worker exploitation). Although some immediate “transformative” interventions may result from the narrow setting of the research question, the issue of who is setting it and whose interests it may serve are left in abeyance here. This is the argument offered by Hesse-Biber (2015) in her examination of pragmatism as a paradigm often used to justify the use of mixed method research (MMR). She avers that the kind of pragmatism supported by early philosophical pragmatists such as Dewey and colleagues has now “commonly reverted” to a stance where a research question is posed and whatever methods are seen as helping to answer it, become employed on “pragmatic” grounds. But she insists that we need to partake

in more reflected-upon considerations as to “just how the research question enters into the MMR project.” She argues that this is for the most part “woefully unarticulated” (2015, p. 784).

This is also the argument that Mertens has expressed in her various writings, in which she, along with Indigenous scholars, expresses a preference for the transformative and Indigenous paradigms to justify MMR (cf. Cram & Mertens, 2015). I wondered therefore if Omodan’s chosen examples of the “pragmatic” idea of mixing methods to generate an understanding of reality for purposes of action, could have been used to point to more critical considerations around the setting of the research questions. Of course, Omodan does indicate that, as with all paradigms, it is important that researchers adopt a stance of reflexivity, which includes considering the likely consequences that the research endeavor may have in the society (for participants and wider audiences). But I wondered if he should have brought this out more clearly through the examples that he offered in his discussion of pragmatism.

Having said this, I did find his way of organizing the “methodological alignment” with principles of the paradigm to be a fair way of illustrating how indeed proponents of this paradigm might approach the research endeavor. And Omodan does also offer a section discussing “critiques and debates” within the paradigm, indicating “tensions, challenges and dialogues that continue to shape its role and definition in contemporary research”. In this section, he points out that one critique (among others) is that it can lead to a “superficial understanding of phenomena” (p. 172). Another critique he offers is that the:

Drive to provide immediate, practical solutions may lead researchers to bypass the complexities and nuances of a phenomenon in favour of more accessible but possibly superficial answers. In doing so, the rich theoretical insights and more profound understanding that often emerge from in-depth exploration might be neglected or undervalued. (p. 173)

He states that debates such as the ones he is showcasing here “reflect the complex nature of research paradigms and the ongoing dialogues that shape and refine our understanding of knowledge and inquiry in various fields” (p. 174). He thus uses his discussion in this chapter, as in the others, to urge readers to enter the dialogues.

Conclusion

Overall, Omodan has put considerable thought into explaining the theoretical/philosophical foundations of different paradigms and how these have been, and can be, related to specific ways of doing research. One of the most commendable aspects of this book is its consistent effort to relate philosophical/theoretical concepts to practical research applications, rendering it a resourceful guide for researchers who may find the philosophical dimensions of research paradigms daunting. By incorporating case studies and examples, the book demystifies complex concepts, making them accessible to readers with varying degrees of familiarity with research philosophy. The book's strengths lie in Omodan's thorough exploration of the diverse array of paradigms which he expounds upon, while at the same time, in his subtle way, he calls upon us to adopt a dialogical approach when engaging with debates around the doing of what he calls meaningful research (the word “meaningful” appears 51 times in the book).

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