

**Undertaking Research in Workplaces:
Considerations for Somatic Voice Pedagogy Research**

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Preparing For Somatic Voice Research

This essay evaluates the underpinnings of research, with consideration to somatics and movement research, and their intersection to voice pedagogy. By considering the underlying structures that form research, a practitioner-researcher can develop self-awareness, avoid unconscious bias, and provide a way of thinking that supports more meaningful and rigorous research and practice (Winter, 2020). In connection with voice pedagogy, a practitioner's assumptions about truth and knowledge play an important role in reaching a target outcome with a singer, as they shape a practitioner's decision making (Wiley, 2018; Costley and Fulton, 2019). Thus, Grix (2002, p. 180) asks the practitioner-researcher to consider important questions to guide them through their research process. These questions will act as primary headings for this essay, framing the underpinnings of research practice: ontological and epistemological positions, paradigm, methodology and methods -- concluding with a section on research ethics (with specific consideration to insider-research).

What's out there to know?

Ontology attempts to define truth and reality (Wiley, 2018). How a researcher defines reality and truth defines their ontological position, providing a researcher with a set of assumptions, thus creating a basis for their work (Wiley, 2018). Positions within ontology generally lie between two major stances: realism and relativism (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). A realist stance lends itself to "hard" scientific enquiry, recognizing a reality that is objectively fixed, observable, and quantifiable (Wallimann, 2011). To illustrate, Becker *et al.* (2018) adopts a realist position to describe potential mechanisms of Alexander Technique (AT), a somatic educational method (Gilman, 2014). Through the use electromyography, Becker *et al.* (2018) aims to observe potential changes in muscular activity, after a series of AT lessons. Their truth could only be singular: either validating or invalidating their proposed mechanisms. Alternatively, relativism allows for many truths to co-exist (Hathcoat, Meixner and Nicholas, 2019, pp. 99–116), acknowledging that individual and collective experiences play a role in the construction of meaning and reality (Cohen *et al.*, 2014). For example, inquiry into the mental wellbeing of singers could adopt a relativist position, recognizing that subjective factors, such as identity (race, gender, culture, etc.), could play a significant role in defining a singer's experience (Braken, 2010), as well as affecting what information is gathered and how it is interpreted (Cohen *et al.*, 2014). Consequently, ontological position will serve as the foundation of the research process, dictating how the following research considerations will be engaged with.

What and how can we know about it?

Epistemology aims to understand the nature of knowledge (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Stances within this branch of philosophy are innately connected to the researcher's ontological position (Hathcoat, Meixner and Nicholas, 2019, pp. 99–116), because how knowledge is defined must align with the logic of the chosen ontological position (Grix, 2010). Like ontology, there are two main positions within epistemology: positivism and interpretivism (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Positivism seeks and understands knowledge through a realist ontology, favoring a singular, objective and generalized explanation to phenomena (Walliman, 2011). Interpretivism, on the other hand, adopts a relativistic ontology, which does not seek causal relationships; instead, placing importance on “processes rather than the outcomes” (Jones, 2022; p. 25). Within voice practice this can be illustrated by examining two approaches to researching vocal qualities. First, acoustical analysis (via a spectrograph) of the voice can provide a visual and quantifiable representation of contrasting vocal qualities, such as a “golden-age musical theater belt” versus a “western classical operatic sound” (Steinhauer, McDonald-Klimek and Estill, 2017). The differences in acoustical data are quantifiable, repeatable, and considered independent of the researcher (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Second, the internal sensations, experienced by the singer, could be approached with an interpretivist position, to gather the individual-subjective experiences, to create meaning and context, which may be useful in practical application (Costley and Fulton, 2019). Rather than seeking the mechanics of phenomenon, interpretivists-relativists seek to understand meaning, actions and constructs (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, one's epistemological position will define what kind of knowledge should be sought out in the research process.

How does one operate within their philosophical positions?

The researcher's philosophical position(s) will then determine their paradigm (Cohen *et al.*, 2007), which “orient thinking and research” (Bodgan and Biklen, 1998; p. 22). Specifically, when these philosophical positions are considered, decisions can be made more rigorously on how research problems are defined, how a research project is conducted, how data is interpreted, and how knowledge is verified (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Somatic voice research could operate within several paradigms; therefore, a range of paradigms will be discussed and evaluated in the following section.

Positivism

Positivism (as an epistemological position) adopts a realist ontology as a basis for understanding reality (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, positivism (as a paradigm) favors reductionism and determinism, where phenomenon could be described as linear and deterministic (Cohen *et al.*, 2007), observable, measurable, and generalizable (Mackenzie and Sally, 2006). Research in voice acoustics may provide an example of voice practitioners adopting a generally positivist paradigm. Voice acoustics specialist, Howell (2016) describes in his theory of *absolute spectral tone color* that pitch, vowel formation, vowel perception, and tone quality are fundamentally inseparable. This research aims to create a generalizable theory, using an experimental approach. An advantage to this paradigm is the resulting quantifiable acoustic data, which can be more easily verified and reproduced (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). However, positivism assumes its actors have little to no influence on its conduct or results (Creswell, 2007). Charamaz (2006) and Kuhn (1971) assert that absolute researcher objectivity is unattainable. This is because researchers are affected by their training and social contexts, which further affect their assumptions about the world, potentially creating bias in their research (Kuhn, 1971). To address this, a post-positivist paradigm was introduced, where a researcher's fallibility is considered and where reflexivity is encouraged (Kuhn, 1971). Despite this development, positivism and post-positivism neglect to consider other forms of knowledge such as hermeneutics, aesthetic, critical, moral, and creative knowledge, which may result in being ill-equipped to explain or describe all aspects of the human experience (Habermas, 1972).

Constructivism

Including the vastness of subjective experience, in addition to considering the researcher's influence on the study, may require the consideration of a constructivist paradigm (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Constructivists suggest that reality is co-constructed by its actors and is dependent on social context and perspective. According to its philosophical positions (realism and interpretivism), this paradigm presents reality (and knowledge) as diverse and representational, rather than singular and objective (Mackenzie and Sally, 2006). Music educator, Paparo (2016) adopts a constructivist perspective to investigate the experiences of students training somatically within a choral setting. Rather than seeking numerical data to explain the mechanisms of a phenomenon, Paparo (2016; p. 115) observed the "perceived effects" of the experience, which required participants and researcher to reflect on their personal experiences to evaluate the curriculum's efficacy – resulting in a diverse collection of narrative responses. This study demonstrates that operating within this paradigm provides

rich insights from social phenomenon, such as thoughts, feelings, and meanings of behaviors (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, constructivism may better align with somatic voice research, because it can embrace the subjectivity the soma as a legitimate source of knowledge (Spatz, 2015). However, due to the unique nature of personal experience, verification and generalizability are the two major criticisms (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

A Potential Compromise – Operating Between Paradigms

When considering the many forms of knowledge that are available (Habermas, 1972), operating exclusively within a singular paradigm may not provide the appropriate nuance in exploring the somatic experience of the singing body. Singers are human-artist-athletes (Ried, 2022; Friedlander, 2018; Gilman 2014), and it is advisable that practitioners address potential multifaceted issues, that may require operating within multiple paradigms to solve them. Therefore, a pragmatic paradigm may be suitable. This puts the focus on acquiring knowledge to solve real-world problems (Cohen *et al.*, 2007), thus allowing flexibility to operate in multiple paradigms to keep the problem at the center of research (Costley and Fulton, 2019; Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Prioritizing experience and application may align well to somatic voice research, as it seeks real-world understanding of movement and the experience of the body (Spatz, 2015). Moreover, John Dewey's contributions to pragmatism did emerge out of his collaboration with F.M. Alexander to form the Alexander Technique (Alexander and Dewey, 2016; Cole, 2016; Hickman, Neubert and Reich, 2009). Alexander's somatic approaches, as well as other western somatic practices that followed, are rooted in pragmatism (Alexander and Dewey, 2016; Cole, 2016; Hanna, 2004; Rolf, 1984). However, adopting a paradigm to simply follow established conventions may have limitations.

Despite appearing practical, solution-oriented, and relevant, this paradigm may not fully acknowledge the implications of valuing utility and application above all. A singular focus on utility may be problematic for two reasons: first, pragmatism may dehumanize how we train singers, by reducing a singer to a collection of problems to fix (Callaghan, 2014). Second, pragmatism may not be suitable for understanding "structural social issues," such as gender and racial power-dynamics that may be overlooked by the pragmatic researcher (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). For example, underrepresentation of certain identities within the performance and voice pedagogy field may obscure issues that have yet to be addressed, potentially leading research to prioritize one lived experience over another (Nina Sun Eidsheim, 2019). This could be seen in clinical trials within the medical field (Sheridan and Julian, 2016), and in educational research (Creswell, 2014). A key example would be the emergence of evidence-based voice pedagogy (EBVP) (Ragan, 2014), where a push for

positivist-pragmatism (Callaghan, 2014), utilizing the best-available-information (or “what works”) to achieve greater outcomes with students (Biesta, 2010; 2007). EBVP may influence not only practice but research as well, as research initiatives are often driven by practice (Sheridan and Julian, 2016). Further investigation on this matter is advisable. Consequently, the idealistic-ontology and utilitarian-epistemology of classical-pragmatism may struggle to accept that what works best may not work for all (Biesta, 2007).

Somatic voice research has the potential to operate within many different paradigms, depending on the researchers aims and philosophical positions. Therefore, due consideration should be made to assess if a paradigm can appropriately engage with a research problem (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, paradigms contain both advantages and limitations; thus, should be evaluated to the chosen research problem, instead of simply following established conventions within a field (Biesta, 2007; Jones, 2022).

How can we go about acquiring that knowledge?

Research methodology is concerned with the way a research problem should be pursued, and generally aligns with a research paradigm (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Grix (2002) adds that although methodology emerges through consideration of one’s ontological and epistemological positions within a chosen paradigm, it is a separate and vital element to acknowledge. Methodology is the logic behind conducting research (Grix, 2002), determining and justifying the processes that are suited to engage with a specific research problem (Jones, 2022). Broadly speaking, there are three methodological approaches a researcher can adopt: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research (Grix, 2010).

Quantitative Research

Quantitative Research is often associated with a realist-positivist stance that values determinism (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Because of its philosophical position, adopting this methodology is limited to research that aims to produce conclusive and quantifiable data (numbers). This is not necessarily negative. First, its alignment with positivism may allow for greater objectivity and precision (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Its use of numerical data and statistical analysis, allows researchers to keep some distance, as well as allowing other researchers to replicate and verify results (Grix, 2010). Within somatic voice research, quantitative approaches may be useful in forming possible models for somatic theories to work within. For example, studies of the Alexander Technique may take on a quantitative methodology to understand its underlying biomechanical and neurological mechanisms, as well as to assess

its clinical efficacy (Cacciatore, Johnson and Cohen, 2020). This may allow practitioners to develop new applications that may be suited to a wider population, such as those with treatment resistant chronic illness that restrict movement. Common methods that fall under quantitative research are experiment and survey (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). However, Winter (2020) suggests, that although these approaches may provide arguably conclusive evidence on the mechanics of certain phenomenon, access to resources to fully realize a rigorous experimental approach may be out of reach for many practitioners, conducting small-scale research. Creswell (2014) adds that small-scale sample sizes, from surveys for example, may be too statistically insignificant to draw conclusive results. For these reasons, the rest of this section will be on qualitative approaches. Nonetheless, it is important to understand the tenants of quantitative, even while working within the qualitative tradition is, because it is vital to be aware of their differing aims and processes (Grix, 2002).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative Research engages with the subjective nature of the human experience, investigating unquantifiable concepts such as “feelings, thoughts, and experiences” (Jones, 2022, p. 29). Information that is collected is usually in the form of text, images, or even performances, rather than numbers (Grix, 2010). It is usually inductive, exploratory, and often generative (Jones, 2022). This may be useful for practitioner-researchers seeking to understand the lived experience of the people they study. However, qualitative does not seek causality; rather, this approach gathers insights on patterns and meanings of behaviour, often generating new theories (Jones, 2022). Somatic research operates primarily within this research tradition, to embrace the subjectivity of somatic studies and embodiment (Thanem and Knights, 2019); therefore, this section will evaluate potential qualitative methodologies may be suitable.

Phenomenology is a methodology that centers the study of phenomenon, as it directly appears to consciousness, free of assumption or preconception (Lavery, 2003; Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Edmund Husserl insisted on a new way of investigating reality, criticizing that scientific approaches are flawed due to the exclusion of consciousness and perception (Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, 2010). Phenomenology seeks the essence of a phenomenon through a process called reduction (Lavery, 2003). This process is deeply reflexive process, engaging with the lived experiences of the individuals being studied, as well as the researcher’s own lived experience, systematically bringing any cognitive bias to the surface, revealing underlying universal structures of phenomenon (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). However, Merleau-Ponty (2014) suggests this focus on cognition showcases a significant limitation

(especially to somatic research), arguing that this practice only deepens the mind-body divide. With consideration to somatic research, a dualistic approach may not be appropriate. It may be challenging to align with Husserl's phenomenology, as many somatic practices operate within a non-dualistic paradigm (Spatz, 2015), which does not separate the mind and the body.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception (or embodied phenomenology) may be a more compatible approach (Spatz, 2015). Merleau-Ponty (2014) states that the body is the instrument through which one perceives reality and engages with the world, suggesting that the quality of our perception is directly tied to our experience of reality. Moreover, this approach considers the societal and cultural aspects of one's existence and recognizes that they shape the body and its actions, which in turn also shapes perception of reality (Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, 2010). In application, embodied phenomenology is already seen within somatic, dance, and theater research (Spatz, 2015), and may be suitable within voice practice as voice use is also an embodied act (Cohen, Geller and Dean, 2015). For example, this approach may be valuable towards investigating new biomechanical and anatomical models for singers (Lowell de Solórzano, 2021; Myers, 2021), potentially developing new practices of modifying and optimizing body schema and proprioception for movement and voice training.

Autoethnography may provide a suitable approach for smaller scale research in professional practice. Autoethnography has its roots in ethnographic research, studying the culture and behavior of a population; however, the subject of study, in this case, is the researcher themselves (Chang, 2016). Because both individual and collective identity can shape the embodied somatic experience (Spatz, 2015; Merleau-Ponty, 2014), this may be an appropriate approach to somatic research. Practitioner-researchers often already reflect on themselves and their practices (Schön, 2017), creating a source of knowledge that could be used to create new insights that are not typically seen in other approaches to research (Hernandez, Chang and Bilgen, 2022; Bochner and Ellis, 2016). Educator, Brian Andrew Benoit (2022) utilizes an autoethnographic approach in researching the development of his own teacher identity for professional development. This was achieved using archival documents (past student evaluations and informal surveys), personal reflections, and memory. Using self-reflexivity, Benoit (2022) was able to connect personal experience to a larger critical context, which also aided in the development of his professional practice.

Underrepresented voices within the research community may be able to better share embodied insights and knowledge of personal-private themes, through autoethnography, that are often excluded from typical academic discourse (Bochner and Ellis, 2016). For example, oppressed and marginalized identities, and the challenges they come with them (Nina Sun Eidsheim, 2019; Chang, 2016), and structural issues within a professional institution or community (Costly and Fulton, 2019; Bochner and Ellis, 2016). However, despite growing interest in auto-methodologies across disciplines (Chang, 2016), many institutions believe autoethnography lacks rigor, as it eliminates the distance between the researcher and research subject (Bochner and Ellis, 2016), potentially falling into self-indulgent and narcissistic writing (Chang, 2016).

Contextualization is a key element in bringing validity to this approach (Bochner and Ellis, 2016). This is because autoethnography explicitly showcases the positionality and context of the researcher (drawing from the hermeneutic approach of Heidegger), engaging in reflective and cyclical analysis of the self (part) to understand the world (whole) (Costly and Fulton, 2019). Consequently, this reflexivity provides a means of engaging with personal experience with some distance (Schön, 2017). Moreover, it is advisable that somatic practitioners investigate and familiarize themselves with their own somatic experience before engaging with another (Fertman, 2018). Because the soma is experienced from the first person (Hanna, 2016), autoethnography could, therefore, be argued as a vital methodology in somatic practitioner-research.

Mixed Methods Research

Mixed Methods Research (MMR) does not choose between quantitative or qualitative approaches; rather, this research approach adopts methodologies that combine both types of data in a single study (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Creswell (2014) suggests that this approach provides a more complete and deeper understanding of a research problem, with Grix (2010; p. 83) adding that MMR can “minimize the chance of biased findings.” However, Creswell (2014) warns that simply using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data does not necessarily result in MMR, nor does simply adding more diverse data sets result in better research. Instead, it is through the process of analysis when combining the two data sets that allows this methodology to stand out (Creswell, 2014; Cohen *et al.*, 2017).

Within the field of somatic research for voice practice, this is an appealing and relevant methodology. According to Lee *et al.* (2021; p. 1), the field of neuroscience is currently adopting a somatically relevant and embodied view of the mind, suggesting that the “mental

functions cannot be fully understood without reference to the physical body and the environment in which they are experienced.” This is founded in the notion that cognitive experience (perception) always requires a bodily change (Merleau-Ponty, 2014), potentially offering somatics a scientific foundation (Batson, Quin and Wilson, 2012). To make this work, research may require both quantitative data, to understand the mechanisms of these bodily changes; and qualitative data, to support a more comprehensive interpretation, that aligns with lived experiences (Oleguer Camerino, Castañer and Anguera, 2014). For example, a neuro-phenomenological approach seeks to bridge the first-person phenomenological perspective of lived experience (Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology), as sought after by interpretivists, with neurophysiological or cognitive mechanisms sought after by (post-) positivists (Berkovich-Ohana *et al.*, 2020). This may be achieved through triangulation (Oleguer Camerino, Castañer and Anguera, 2014). In using triangulation, both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered independently, then simultaneous analysis of both data sets are then used to corroborate or find larger contextual insights within the data (Berkovich-Ohana *et al.*, 2020).

However, combining quantitative approaches of neuroscience with the qualitative approaches of phenomenology and somatics present a few challenges. First, competency in both quantitative and qualitative are required to ensure both data sets compatible, to observe any convergence between them (Creswell, 2014). Second, small-scale research by practitioner-researchers may not have access to research instruments, such as MRI imaging or EEG, to conduct neuroscientific, or even biomechanical, experiment (Winter, 2020). Additionally, this approach typically requires a team of researchers to conduct the transdisciplinary processes that this approach requires (Berkovich-Ohana *et al.*, 2020), which may neither be realistic nor appropriate at this stage in my research. Third, this complex approach is time consuming (Berkovich-Ohana *et al.*, 2020), and analysis may not fit within the time scales allotted to MA research projects. However, this approach may be suitable for future research at the PhD level, with a research group, allotted with the appropriate resources.

Because methodologies are generally aligned to their respective research paradigm, similar considerations need to be made (Grix, 2010). Quantitative methodology is well established and generally an accepted approach, however it may not be accessible to small scale research (Winter, 2020). Qualitative methodologies may be more expansive and embracing of the complex aims and subjectivity of somatic research (Thanem and Knights, 2019). Mixed Methods may be suitable to embrace additional complexity, however, advanced skills in analysis and often collaborative (transdisciplinary) work are required to make the most of

this approach (Berkovich-Ohana *et al.*, 2020). Careful consideration should be made to ensure an appropriate and logical process to the research project.

What precise procedures [you] can use?

Surveys typically collect data from a population using a set of predetermined questions, to gain insights on behaviors, trends and opinions (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). They can be either quantitative, qualitative, or mixed, depending on its aims (Jensen, 2022). Closed questions surveys (questions with predetermined responses) are typically quantitative, producing numerical data, which can be analyzed statistically, allowing generalizations to be made (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). For example, Neely (2016) uses an online survey to measure occurrence and diversity of somatic practices within voice teaching studios. The study made use of closed questions, with one open question presented at the end of the survey, providing participants with a means to share an undetermined (narrative-based) response. Because closed questioning only demonstrates statistical diversity and occurrence of phenomenon (Jensen, 2022), this open question allowed participants to describe their experience applying somatic practices in the voice studio, as well as reasons behind their answers (producing qualitative data). As a result, Neely was also able to draw further conclusions from her participants, such as rationale for choosing a somatic practice, and its efficacy. Moreover, this demonstrates a possibility of adopting an MMR design, utilizing this method. This would be an accessible way to approach research, as it often does not require many resources, could access a potentially large population via the internet (to create the statistical significance necessary to form generalizations), and statistical analysis of quantitative data can be streamlined using computer programs (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Neely's (2016) study could also be replicated within different communities to measure differences between populations, which may be interesting for my own research. However, a survey requires careful planning and design to avoid problems. Survey questions may not be universally understood by every participant, resulting in inaccurate results, with no opportunity for the participant to elaborate on their response (Jones, 2022). Additionally, poorly designed questions can also result in biased findings (Cohen *et al.*, 2017).

Interviews can produce large amounts of qualitative data, especially when unstructured, using open-ended questions (Grix, 2010). This may be a useful method in the field with somatic practitioners and their clients, to get an accurate and potentially undisturbed depiction of their practices. However, when conducting somatic research, Thanem and Knights (2019) assert that a standard interview may be a sufficient method to obtain language-based data but typically does not consider embodied (somatic) data. Therefore,

embodied interview methods are advised (Thanem and Knights, 2019). These methods are already in use in the field of somatic psychology (Caldwell and Johnson, 2015), and may be useful to somatic voice research. Somatic psychologists collect not only explicit data from the verbal responses of participants; instead, they also include implicit data, such as the participant's "pauses in the narrative, changes in eye gaze, gestures, [and] deepening of the breath," providing an extra level of understanding (Tantia, 2019). This is akin to the thick-description of ethnographic research, producing a highly descriptive and contextualized depiction of embodied experience (Thanem and Knights, 2019; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). However, whether embodied or disembodied, interviewing requires strong communication skills to collect quality data, and a high level of analysis to interpret the data (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Poor communication could result in unclear or irrelevant responses to the question, in addition to misinterpretation of responses by the researcher (Grix, 2010). There are many methods that are available to a researcher, and it is important to note that this section is only a very small part of a larger discussion. Surveys may allow greater reach and can be effective for gathering large quantities of both quantitative and qualitative data relatively quickly (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Interviews, on the other hand, can also produce large amounts of data, but they can also gather implicit data that may be useful for somatic research (Thanem and Knights, 2019). Consequently, both require effective communication skills, as well as strong analytical skills, to interpret the potentially large and diverse data set that can emerge using these methods (Grix, 2010).

Ethics

Ethical considerations are a must for all research endeavors (Lincoln and Guba, 1989). This is to ensure that projects are "methodologically robust, and due attention has been paid to potential ethical issues that may arise in its execution" (Costley and Fulton, 2019; p. 77). Costley and Fulton (2019; p. 80) identify four general principles that research projects need to address before proceeding: beneficence, respect for autonomy, justice, and non-maleficence. Additionally, Costley, Elliott and Gibbs (2010) state that, for practitioner researchers, ethical issues to consider are often: bias, researcher positionality, and power dynamics. However, each professional association or institution may have differences in their prescribed ethical guidelines. Somatic practitioner-research would require developing a methodology that is inclusive of these considerations (Thanem and Knights, 2019). Issues of maintaining physical safety in researching movement re-patterning and practice are seemingly obvious concerns; but ethical issues hidden within personal experiences, such as trauma or even mental illness, may be more difficult to identify (Jones, 2022). Additionally, narrative, reflexive or auto-methodological approaches would also be advised to consider

the complexities of story ownership and confidentiality (Bochner and Ellis, 2016). To further mitigate these issues, projects proposals are typically required undergo a review process by an institutional ethics review board (Grix, 2010).

Insider Research

Practitioner-research is often criticized as being too subjective and may lack rigor, because of a researchers position as an insider researcher (Saidin, 2017). There may be concerns that research may be unintentionally skewed or that insider researchers may engage in unethical practices (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010). Saidin (2017; p. 850) also states that they “may be blindsided by some issues in their research as they do not consider certain issues as important as how outsiders would see them.” Additionally, “they [may] not be as alert and as sensitive to the information or issue compared to those who are outside the organization” (Saidin, 2017; p. 850). This is due to the researcher’s position to the work, where the researcher is personally and professionally located within the practice or institution and is invested in its values and outcomes (Costley and Fulton, 2019). To counter this, researchers can engage in reflective practices to remain as objective as possible (Costley and Fulton, 2019). However, there are benefits to being an insider researcher. First, the researcher may have knowledge about issues within a practice or institution, that outsiders may not be aware of, and may be better able to identify sensitive research problems (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010). Second, data from participant findings may be more natural, as the researcher is a part of the community or institution (Saidin, 2017). Lastly, the researcher may save time and resources, as they may be already aware of internal issues (Saidin, 2017). Therefore, insider positionality may benefit the research process; however, it is important remain reflexive and uphold oneself to ethical guidelines.

Conclusion

Understanding the foundations of research facilitates stronger and more impactful research (Winter, 2020; Costley and Fulton, 2019). Grix’s (2010) questions highlight the interconnectedness of each concept, within the research process, while showcasing the need consider them individually. Ontological and epistemological positions provide the foundation upon which informed decisions are made, defining reality and knowledge, and the researcher’s relationship to both (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Paradigms emerge out these philosophical foundations, “orienting” the research process (Bodgan and Biklen, 1998; p. 22). Many paradigms may be suited to somatic research; however, suitability of a paradigm should be considered. Methodologies provide the logic to justify the processes and tools

(methods) to engage with a research problem (Grix, 2010); however, like paradigms, need to align with the research problem. Due to the personal and subjective nature of the soma (Hanna, 2004), reflexive, narrative-based (constructivist) methodologies and methods may be advantageous (in the beginning stages) for novice somatic and voice practitioner-researchers. Ethical considerations allow research to remain safe for all actors involved (Lincoln and Guba, 1989), in addition to establishing and maintaining professional researcher conduct (Costley and Fulton, 2019). Insider positionality in research is especially relevant for somatic practitioner-researchers, as it can be both beneficial and problematic (Saidin, 2017). Reflexivity is vital in remaining ethical and objective as an insider (Costley and Fulton, 2019). These considerations, though complex, are essential in conducting sound research, allowing a researcher to remain informed and self-aware (Winter, 2020), thus resulting in grounded and rigorous somatic voice research.

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