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## Book Review

Michael Donnelly

NORMAN DENZIN and MICHAEL GIARDINA (eds), *Qualitative Inquiry and Social Justice: Toward a Politics of Hope*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009. 309 pp. (including index). ISBN 9781598744224 (hbk); ISBN 9781598744231 (pbk)

This volume of work is the product of plenary discussions at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, held at the University of Illinois in 2008, and forms part of a series. This is clearly evident throughout the book – with contributions overwhelmingly from American critical realist scholars at varying stages of their academic careers; from PhD students to distinguished professors, all drawing on their varied experiences. The book has a stimulating and thought-provoking feel to it – much like you might experience when taking part in a conference discussion session. The volume is heavily political in places, and a common theme throughout is to critique the American ‘evidence-based practice’ research environment which the contributors argue has negative implications for qualitative researchers.

Norman Denzin and Michael Giardina introduce the volume with an outline of the present day research environment; they provide a contemporary ‘state of play’ in which scholars are working within today, arguing that there have been three paradigm wars within the social sciences (pp. 17–19). Following on from this the rest of the volume is divided up into three main sections, ordered according to their particular theme or topic of discussion. The first of the three sections is entitled ‘ethics, evidence, and social justice’, and gives practical advice on conducting qualitative research within the prevailing discourse of evidence-based practice. Gaile Cannella and Yvonna Lincoln begin the section by putting forward three reasons why critical realists are unable to deliver transformative and empowering social research (as it is intended to be). Frederick Erickson follows on from this with constructive and practical advice for qualitative researchers conducting policy-oriented social research. This is followed by Michele McIntosh and Janice Morse’s thought-provoking discussion of the ethics of emotion, and how this relates to American universities’ institutional review boards. The section ends with Joseph Maxwell calling on qualitative social researchers to embrace

and utilise diverse philosophical perspectives in order to fight back against the prevailing American evidence-based policy discourse.

The second of the three sections focuses on Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans in 2005. Gloria Ladson-Billings provides her own account of the social, economic and educational inequalities within New Orleans both before and after the Katrina disaster; her account is particularly critical of the Federal and State Government for bringing about such inequalities, putting forward fundamental questions about the way they perceive individuals within their society, such as: 'Which public(s) command our interest and what, if anything, can we say about those publics we regularly and systematically ignore?' (p.126).

Michael Giardina and Laura Vaughn offer their own account of the New Orleans disaster, with a particular focus on the attitudes of American society that the disaster brought to the surface, as well as the political fallout that followed the event. The account is replete with vignettes of Vaughn's own, and sometimes harrowing, direct experiences in helping the victims of Katrina. These bring the discussed issues to life and help to strengthen the arguments presented within the chapter. The chapter ends with hope for change, which is argued may be brought about not only through the Obama administration, but moreover by an increasing social activism, which is on the rise and clearly evident from the New Orleans disaster. The section ends with Gaile Cannella and Michele Perez highlighting the potential of critical qualitative research methodologies, with particular reference to their lived experiences of New Orleans post-Katrina.

The final section begins with Madison's discussion of the 'dangers' involved in conducting qualitative field research. Her insightful argument flips traditional assumptions about what is dangerous and explores an alternative understanding of ourselves as being 'dangerous'. Following on from this, Karen Stewart et al. report of their experiences of 'risk' within their research; their 'tales from the field' accounts extend traditional understandings about 'risk' to include issues throughout the research process. This is followed by

Cynthia Dillard's discussion of memory within research, and Jean Halley's chapter, which contrasts the death of beef cattle to the death of her childhood cat, drawing attention to the way that death is a move from one state to another. The section closes with Ian Stronach's intriguing chapter on meaning and language within qualitative research, which explores the co-construction of meaning, as well as the tensions that have developed from the connections and disconnections between words within social science research, such as 'global and local'. He ends by calling for a new vocabulary for a changing world.

The volume finishes with a fascinating chapter based upon a panel discussion about mentoring relationships, which emphasizes the importance of such relations for the future development of qualitative researchers.

Overall, the volume is a stimulating read, which acts almost as a rallying call to all qualitative researchers to do all they can to promote their research in these changing times. The practical and direct writing style makes this an accessible and interesting read that should appeal to a wide range of audiences, particularly early career researchers and PhD students seeking inspiration.