

Moments, Mixed Methods, and Paradigm Dialogs

Qualitative Inquiry
16(6) 419–427
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DOI: 10.1177/1077800410364608
http://qix.sagepub.com


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Abstract

I reread the 50-year-old history of the qualitative inquiry that calls for triangulation and mixed methods. I briefly visit the disputes within the mixed methods community asking how did we get to where we are today, the period of mixed-multiple-methods advocacy, and Teddlie and Tashakkori's third methodological moment.

Keywords

triangulation, mixed methods, paradigm wars

The problems of combining qualitative and quantitative research . . . have not been solved in a satisfying way. Attempts to integrate both approaches often end up in a one-after-the-other (with different preferences), a side-by-side (with various degrees of independence of both strategies) or a dominance (also with different preferences). . . . To develop really integrated qualitative/quantitative methods of data collection or data analysis remains an unresolved problem.

(Flick, 2002, pp. 267, 269)

Triangulation . . . the combination of different methods . . . is less a strategy for validating results . . . than an alternative to validation which increases scope, depth and consistency.

(Flick, 2002, p. 227)

At the very least the use of triangulation should operate according to ground rules.

(Silverman, 2005, p. 121)

Forty-five years ago, hard on the heels of Campbell and Stanley (1963), and Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest (1966), triangulation was the emerging fad in the social sciences.¹ Scholars were racing to design research that was valid, objective, and sensitive to threats to internal and external validity and reliability (see Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Maxwell & Loomis, 2003, p. 255).² In 1970 Thomas Kuhn (1962) was barely on the horizon. The notion of a paradigm war involving fundamental incompatibilities between quantitative (QUAN) and qualitative (QUAL) paradigms had yet to be applied to the methodological resentments simmering in education and sociology (Gage,

1989; Guba, 1990a, 1990b).³ Those who called for multiple methodological approaches in the 1970s were not talking about incompatibility between paradigms. In the spirit of triangulation, they were combining different qualitative methodologies, seeking compatibilities between and across methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003b, p. 7).⁴

A decade after the 1980s QUAN–QUAL paradigm war, discourse moved to a new level. Shaped in part by Howe (1988), a compatibility thesis at the paradigm level emerged. Now quantitative and qualitative methods could be combined (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003b, p. 7). The war between QUAN and QUALs was over. Thus were mixed methods born anew, a new emperor, new clothes. Triangulation now meant the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in the same study (Creswell & Clark, 2007, pp. 8–9)!

Fast forward to the present, the moment of *mixed-methods advocacy*, to use Creswell and Clark's term (2007, p. 14). Mixed, multiple, and emergent methods are everywhere today, in handbooks, readers, texts. Their use is endorsed by major professional societies, as well as by public and private funding agencies and institutes (e.g., American Educational Research Association [AERA], 2006; American Statistical Association; Cochrane Campbell and What Works Clearinghouse Collaborations, Institute of Educational Sciences; National CASP [Critical Appraisal Skills Program] Collaboration, 2006; National Institutes of Health; National Research Council, 2002, 2005; National Science Foundation; Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness; W. T. Grant and Robert Wood Foundations). At least one new journal, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* (JMMR) is devoted to publishing articles within this framework. Crowded plenary sessions at

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professional meetings are devoted to the topic, and to issues, controversies, and new developments in the discourse (see Clark & Creswell, 2008; Clark, Creswell, Green, & Shope, 2008, p. 364; Creswell & Clark, 2007; Denzin, 2009, pp. 142-151; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008; Mertens, 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003a).

Scientifically based research (SBR) and random-control experimental design (randomized controlled trial [RCT]) advocates (Oakley, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d) are calling for research designs that use qualitative methods. Multiple forms of mixed and multiple-method design (terms such as *triangulation*, *embedded*, *explanatory*, *exploratory* now circulate in the literature; Clark et al., 2008, p. 372; Morse, 2003, p. 190).

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I want to turn back on and reread the 50-year-old history of the qualitative inquiry the calls for triangulation and mixed methods, and the disputes between QUAN and QUAL, QUAL and QUAN, QUAN and QUAN, QUAL and QUAL. I also want to briefly visit the disputes within the mixed methods community between purists, synthesizers, simultaneous, sequential, a-paradigmatic, pragmatic, and multiple-paradigm transformative-emancipatory advocates. How did we get to where we are today, the period of mixed-multiple-methods advocacy, Teddlie and Tashakkori's third methodological moment (2003a, p. ix)?

I want to extend the call for paradigm expansion, beyond and within the mixed methods community. Can we use this moment to open up new spaces and new discourses, new ways of connecting people, methodologies, and institutional sites (Dillard, 2006; Lather, 2006a; 2006b; Nesper, 2006, p. 124; Wright, 2006)? Can we use the discursive legacies of the mixed methods discourse, even the ambiguities surrounding the project itself, to achieve these ends?⁵

After Guba, I call for a new paradigm dialog.⁶ This dialog, which anticipates a postparadigm moment, honors emergent and transgressive methodologies, inclusion, a coloring of epistemologies (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008; Scheurich & Young, 1997). It rests on standpoint and decolonizing epistemologies; it establishes links between paradigms, sexuality, gender, and ethnicity. It moves forward under a spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

A Caveat: Poachers and Their Data

With few exceptions, the mixed methods discourse has been shaped by a community of postpositivist scholars who have moved back and forth between quantitative and qualitative research frameworks. These scholars have found utility in ethnographic, interview, case study, narrative, and biographical methodologies. They have sought to bring or combine these methods, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes sequentially, in the same or a series of studies, inquiry

often framed by the use of quantitative, experimental, or survey methods (Morse, 2003, p. 190). Seldom have these scholars been trained in, or identified with, qualitative methodologies. Unlike the poaching of animals, there is nothing illegal about methodological poaching, but it does have some negative consequences.

Persons who are less familiar with the rich traditions of qualitative inquiry are telling others with the same lack of experience how to do qualitative work. Mixed methods discourse introduces and validates a postpositivist language, a language about data, data collection, sampling strategies, methodological congruence, test administration, classifications and typologies of designs, stages of integration of approaches, experimental manipulations, cause, effect, hypothesis testing, data analysis procedures, coding, assigning numbers to codes, quantifying qualitative data, creating variables, instrument construction, producing results, contradictory quantitative and qualitative data, statistics, prediction, generalization, follow-up, and outcome measures. This language says anyone can use any method, for methods are merely tools, not forms of performative, interpretive practice (but see Maxwell & Loomis, 2003).

Guiding the methodological conversation along post-positivist lines leaves little space for issues connected to empowerment, social justice, and a politics of hope (but see Mertens, 2003). In turning inquiry into a set of procedures, this discourse marginalizes the open-ended, free-flowing, emergent nature of critical inquiry (but see Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008). It has the danger of marginalizing those forms of critical inquiry embedded in the critical pedagogy traditions.

Let's Be Fair

But let's be fair. The mixed-multiple emergent-methods discourse is bold, innovative, energizing, and disruptive. Scholars in this interpretive community have lead the charge against the simplistic, evidence-based (SBR) movement (e.g., Morse, Maxwell, Creswell, Clark, Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Mertens). Mixed methods discourse represents a challenge to the broader qualitative interpretive community. It can be read as an invitation to rethink terms that even a decade ago were settled, from validity to design, from praxis to reform. An open mind is required. Who can quarrel with an emergent multimethod sequential or simultaneous triangulation design that works out of an empowerment, critical theory paradigm? (Clark et al., 2008, p. 372; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008, pp. 2-3; Morse, 2003, p. 190).

Revisiting the Paradigm Wars: An Overview

Paradigms are more than nested assumptions about ontology, epistemology, methodology, and ethics. Paradigms are

products of “tensions and conflicts that stretch outside the university to state bureaucracies, pressure groups, big corporations, community groups” (Nespor, 2006, p. 123). They are more than “incommensurably bounded positions . . . they are relationally constituted . . . and proliferate or shift not only when authors bend ideas . . . but as opponents . . . allies . . . situations and events . . . change” (p. 123). Paradigms are human constructions. They define the shifting worldview of the research-as-bricoleur.

Clearly the new paradigm disputes are embedded in the mixed methods movement, as that movement reenacts arguments from the 1980s and 1990s. According to Gage, and elaborating Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003b, pp. 7-8), the paradigm wars, those in the 1980s, resulted in the demise or serious crippling of quantitative research in education, a victim of attacks from antinaturalists, interpretivists, and critical theorists. Ethnographic studies flourished. The cultural appropriateness of schooling, critical pedagogy, and critical theorists and feminists analyses fostered struggles for power and cultural capital for the poor, non-whites, women, and the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender; Gage, 1989). Guba’s (1990a) *Paradigm Dialog* signaled an end to the 1980s wars, at least for the constructivists.

The cornerstone of the 1980s paradigm war turned on complex arguments that moved between axiological, ontological, epistemic, epistemological, and methodological levels: (a) Quantitative and qualitative methods were fundamentally different, the QUAN–QUAL incompatibility paradigm thesis; (b) interpretive or theoretical paradigms could not be combined—the epistemic, incommensurability thesis; (c) there is no value- or theory-free inquiry, the antipositivism thesis; (d) paradigms are incommensurable, the purist thesis; and (e) methods have incompatible assumptions, meaning they can not be combined (Donmoyer, 2006, p. 23; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003b, p. 7).

Suddenly triangulation became problematic. There were two warring paradigm camps, the postpositivists (QUANS) and the constructivists (QUALS); the differences between them could not be erased. Different rules of evidence for each camp had to be constructed. Battles soon broke out in the constructivist camp, in the form of border disputes between advocates of feminism, post-structuralism, critical race, critical pedagogy, and critical theory. At the same time, paradigm purists who rejected the compatibility thesis confronted pragmatists who said mixing methods had become common place (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003b, p. 7).

By the mid-1980s, “Qualitative research had begun to be widely used and widely accepted” (Donmoyer, 2006, p. 18). It was evident that many “champions of qualitative methodology did indeed operate from a fundamentally different

worldview than the one more traditional researchers embraced, and this new worldview could not be simply appropriated into traditional thinking” (Donmoyer, 2006, p. 23).

Multiple Wars, Multiple Histories, Wars Redux

Since the 1980s there have been at least three paradigm wars: the postpositivist war against positivism (1970-1990); the wars between competing postpositivist, constructivist, and critical theory paradigms (1990-2005); and the current war between evidence-based methodologists and the mixed methods, interpretive, and critical theory schools (2005 to present).⁷ Each war has turned on a questioning of paradigm assumptions. Each war has reconfigured the relationship between paradigm, methodology epistemology, and ethics.

A dialectic, of sorts, seems to operate—ying and yang, a merger of binaries, opposite sides of the same coin, paradigms and methods: Side 1, paradigm discourse drives methodology, and Side 2, methodological models drive paradigm discourse. In between the two extremes there is an excluded middle, the space of politics and moral discourse. Each war has occurred alongside policed moves to embrace or ignore the politics of inquiry, the moral discourses of empowerment agendas. A ghostly haunting embedded in the legacies and skeletons of postpositivism and state-sponsored methodologies hovers in the background.

War number 1. Teddlie and Tashakkori’s history is helpful here. They expand the time frame of the 1980s war. While locating mixed methodology in the third methodological movement, they contend that the Golden Age (1950-1970) was marked by the debunking of positivism; the emergence of postpositivism; and the development of designs that used mixed quantitative and qualitative methods. Full-scale conflict developed throughout 1970-1990 period, the time of the first “paradigm war.” Constructivism and postpositivism were in the ascendancy. End of positivism.

War number 2. The discrediting of positivism led to vigorous debates and wars between paradigms. This was the time of Paradigm War Number 2 that involved debates over which paradigm was more revolutionary or more empowering. A flourishing of new ‘isms’ flourished: constructivism, naturalism, interpretivism, multiple versions of critical theory, critical pedagogy, queer, critical race theory, Lat-Crit, feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonial, and decolonizing paradigms (see Lather, 2007, pp. 64-65). All received paradigms were challenged. Theorists argued for the superiority of their paradigm. Special interest groups committed to particular paradigms appeared; some had their own journals.⁸

The second paradigm war also involved disputes “between individuals convinced of the ‘paradigm purity’ of their own position” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003b, p. 7).

Purists resurrected the incommensurability and incompatibility theses from the first war. They extended and repeated the argument that quantitative and qualitative methods, and that postpositivism and the other “isms,” cannot be combined due to the differences between their underlying paradigm assumptions. On the methodological front, the incompatibility thesis was challenged by those who invoked triangulation as a way of combining multiple methods to study the same phenomenon (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003b, p. 7). Thus was ushered in a new round of arguments and debates over paradigm superiority.

War number 3. Pragmatism and the compatibility thesis emerged in the post-1990 period (see Howe, 1988; Maxcy, 2003). Under a soft pragmatic paradigm, quantitative and qualitative methods became compatible and researchers could use both in their empirical inquiries (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 7). Proponents made appeals to a “what-works” pragmatic argument, contending that “no incompatibility between quantitative and qualitative methods exists at either the level of practice or that of epistemology . . . there are thus no good reasons for educational researchers to fear forging ahead with ‘what works’” (Howe, 1988, p. 16). Of course what works is more than an empirical question. It involves the politics of evidence. This is the space that evidence-based research entered, the battle ground of War Number 3.

The seeds of War Number 3 in North American context can be found in “the current upheaval and argument about ‘scientific’ research in the scholarly world of education” (Clark & Scheurich, 2008; Scheurich & Clark, 2006, p. 401). These seeds began before The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Reading First (reading.first@ed.gov) acts. But of course these acts required a focus on identifying and using SBR in designing and implementing educational programs. While it is too easy to blame NCLB for the mess we are in today, the turmoil did not start here. The first two paradigm wars clearly created the conditions for the current conflict.

Wag the Dog

The second paradigm war validated the use of mixed methods designs. No one could refute the argument that the use of more than one method produced stronger inferences, answered research questions that other methodologies could not, and allowed for greater diversity of findings (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 18; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003b, pp. 14-15). Foot in the door, the mixed methods movement spawned at least six different variations on a common theme. The methods tail was wagging the dog. Paradigms were being reconfigured to fit methodological presuppositions; the incompatibility and incommensurability theses were gone.

The Third Moment and the New Paradigm Disputes

There are in fact two versions of Teddlie and Tashakkori’s “third methodological moment”: the mixed methods version, and a somewhat more radical position. This is the version that endorses paradigm proliferation, a version anchored in the critical interpretive social science tradition. It involves the incorporation of increasingly diverse standpoints, the coloring of epistemologies, and the proliferation of colors, the subversion of dominant paradigms, the rejection of norms of objectivity, and the pursuit of progressive politics (Dillard, 2006, p. 64; Donmoyer, 2006; Lather, 2006a; Nespors, 2006, p. 124).

Déjà vu All Over Again or Triangulation Redux

In the first version of the third-moment triangulation discourse gets new legs. It appears in multiple-mixed and multiple models, from Morse (2003) to Creswell, and others. Triangulated designs, combining QUAN and QUAL methods, become a basic part of the new language. This seemed to do more than extend the triangulation arguments of the 1970s that were entirely within the QUAL tradition (Dixon et al., 2006).

Nor did this new discourse address the criticisms of triangulation that had been launched in the 1980s by Silverman (1985, 2005), Fielding and Fielding (1986), Flick (1992, 2002), and others. These critics argued that the approach rested on a naïve positivism that assumed that the same empirical unit can be measured more than once. Silverman contended that such a view ignored the processual nature of reality.

Both Silverman and Flick distinguished two forms of triangulation. The first form combines several different *qualitative* methods, for example, interviewing, observing, and collecting and interpreting documents. The second form (noted earlier) combines *qualitative* and *quantitative* methods. There are problems with both forms. Each qualitative method rests on different assumptions, which cannot be ignored. For example discourse analysis presumes that accounts are socially constructed, while traditional interview formats assume that interview accounts give a definitive version of reality (Silverman, 2005, p. 121). Furthermore, as Flick (2002, pp. 266-267) stated, unresolved problems remain concerning how to transform qualitative data into quantitative data or to transform quantitative data into qualitative data. What happens when the results of the two methods do not converge or support the same conclusions? It should not be naively presumed that combining methods and aggregating data leads to an overall truth, or to a more complete picture, or to increased validity (Silverman, 2005, p. 122).

Flick, Silverman, and Fielding and Fielding agree on this basic point: The use of triangulation should operate according to certain ground rules, including, always beginning from the same theoretical model, and choosing methods and empirical materials that compliment that perspective (Silverman, 2005, pp. 121-122).

Over the past four decades, each decade has taken up triangulation and redefined it to meet perceived needs. And so it is with the current generation. But the very term *triangulation* is unsettling, and unruly. It disrupts and threatens the belief that reality in its complexities can never be fully captured. Richardson (2000, pp. 934-936) disputed the term itself, asserting that the fundamental image should be that of the crystal or of the prism (also Saukko, 2003, p. 27). Crystals reflect and refract, drawing attention to the multiple ways reality is constructed (Ellingson, 2009). Triangulation Redux! Long Live Crystallization!

Mixed and Emergent-Methods Discourse

The recognition, that all methods are hybrids, emergent, interactive productions, productively extends the mixed methods-paradigm discourse (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008, pp. 2-3). The complex intersections between epistemology, methodology, and specific inquiry techniques are stressed. Pragmatics, multiple interpretive practices, and bricolage are paramount (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4). The critical researcher, the bricoleur, the jack of all trades, produces a bricolage based on the use of many different interpretive practices and methodological tools.

Regrettably, for the mixed methods movement, a lingering negative legacy of the 1980s wars is the tendency of students and graduate programs to still consider themselves as QUALS or QUANS. On this, though, some feel, "We need to get rid of that distinction" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 210; Schwandt, 2006).

Presumably, once this is done, only technical and pedagogical problems remain; that is, how do we implement this new paradigm in our research and in our classrooms (Eisenhart, 2006; Eisenhart & DeHaan, 2005)? The mixed methods discourse introduced complex discussions involving design typologies, logistics, validity, data, standards, inferences, and findings that can be generalized from studies that combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies.⁹

The new moment requires multiple investigators with competencies in more than one method or paradigm. The problem of dual competency can be solved with a team approach or with a model that presumes minimal competency in both quantitative and qualitative design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003b, pp. 44-45). Teddlie and Tashakkori recommended "methodological bilingualism" (p. 45). Eisenhart and DeHaan (2005) outlined a multitiered, interdisciplinary educational curriculum that focuses on different cultures and

models of science. Students receive instruction in multiple paradigms, methodologies, and concrete inquiry practices. An interpretive approach to scientific inquiry is emphasized.

For some it is a short step from methodological bilingualism to discussions of design, inference, data quality, and transferability and to inquiries that privilege QUAN over QUAL, creating, in the process, students who lack real expertise in either paradigm.

Science- or Evidence-Based Discourse

But by the end of the 1990s, SBR emerged as a force, poised to erase the majority of the gains previously won in qualitative researchers. With a wave of the postpositivist wand, the key assumptions of the interpretive moment were demolished. It was as if we were back in the 1980s, fighting that old war all over again. The incompatibility and incommensurability theses were back on the table; there is science, and there is nonscience.

But as SBR was gaining strength, so too was the mixed-methods movement (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Creswell & Clark, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003a). Mixed methods critics like Morse (2006) contested the basic assumptions of SBR, including the fact that RCT conditions are not replicable in day-to-day clinical care. Morse noted that an exercise of disciplinary power underlies any concept of evidence. SBR had no monopoly over the word evidence. Indeed their model of evidence is inadequate for critical, qualitative, health care research (p. 80).

Howe (2004) criticized the neoclassical and mixed methods versions of experimentalism that have been central to the SBR paradigm. Neoclassical experimentalism represents a dogmatic adherence to quantitative methods. Mixed methods experimentalism fails to understand the deeper roots of qualitative methods. Both models take a technocratic approach to the role of participants in the research process. Howe offers an alternative democratic framework, what he calls mixed methods interpretivism. This model reverses the primacy of quantitative methods, assigning them an auxiliary role. Mixed methods interpretivism emphasizes understanding persons on their own terms. It engages stakeholders participation through the principles of inclusion and dialogue. The principle of inclusion has a democratic dimension, ensuring that insofar as it is possible, all relevant voices are heard. The principle of dialogue insists that stakeholders be involved in the give and take of conversations involving how and why certain things work and ought to work. Critical dialogue involves bringing expert knowledge to bear on a situation.

Regrettably, despite these resistances, the language and discourse of the mixed methods group was coopted by the SBR, CC, C2, and NRC movements; that is, experimental, nonexperimental, QUAN and QUAL mixed-methods designs were

one answer to the demand for SBR. Soft qualitative research procedures—interviewing, observation—could be folded into RCT protocols (Bell, 2006; Briggs, 2006). These QUAL methods would provide data on context, even as the RCT turned research into a commodity or a result. This “scientific result” could be easily compared with other forms of scientific research (Nespor, 2006, p. 118). The story of SBR reveals how the state has become both producer and consumer of only one form of scientific knowledge (Nespor, 2006, p. 119).

Another Discursive Formation

The field is on the edge of new paradigm dialog, a third formation existing alongside SBR and mixed methods discourses. This is the space primarily filled by non-mixed methods interpretive researchers, the empowerment discourses: critical constructionists, feminists, critical pedagogy, and performance studies; oral historians; CRT; and interpretive interactionists. These are scholars in a different space. They seldom use terms like *validity* or *reliability*. For some, a minimalist approach to theory is endorsed. A disruptive politics of representation is the focus, as are methods that disrupt and disturb the smooth surfaces of SBR. Scholars are crafting works that move persons and communities to action, “coupling research with activism and addressing specific situated problems” (Nespor, 2006, p. 123).

Indeed, it is clear scholars are working in three directions at the same time. On one hand, they are critically engaging and critiquing the SBR movement. They are emphasizing the political and moral consequences of the narrow views of science that are embedded in the movement (Hatch, 2006; Preissle, 2006; St. Pierre, 2004, 2006; St. Pierre & Roulston, 2006). Some advocate a kind of “militant particularism” (Nespor, 2006, p. 122) that privileges meanings and understandings constructed at the local level. They are asking questions about the politics of evidence, about how work can be done for social justice purposes (Denzin & Giardina, 2006, 2008). They are struggling to advance the causes of qualitative inquiry in a time of global crisis.

A second group of scholars celebrate and reread paradigm proliferation, and the profusion of interpretive communities, even the proliferation of uncertainty (Donmoyer, 2006; Lather, 2006a; MacLure, 2006, p. 732). They do not necessarily endorse the incompatibility-incommensurability theses that are so important for the mixed methods community. They understand that each community has differing interpretive criteria (Creswell, 2007, p. 24). This discourse functions as a firewall of sorts against the narrow view of nonpositivism held by SBR authors.

Still a third group of scholars are resisting the implementation of narrow views of ethics, human-subject review boards, IRBs (institutional review boards), informed

consent, and biomedical models of inquiry (see Cannella & Lincoln, 2004; Christians, 2005; Ryan & Hood, 2004). Many campus-level IRBs attempt to manage or redefine qualitative research. This has the effect of interfering with academic freedom, as well as shaping questions concerning design, informed consent, and the researcher-subject relationship.

Two tendencies must be avoided. Some overreact and claim an ethically superior stance to the IRB and SBR apparatuses. Others claim the victim identity; the dangers of these two versions of ethicism are self-evident. On one hand, there is uncritical romanticizing of qualitative inquiry, as well as a refusal to seriously engage critics (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; Kvale, 2008); on the other, a productive engagement with these competing discourses is shut down. There is no dialogue. The opportunity to teach others in the opposing camps is wasted. Nobody wins, nobody learns.

Current turmoil in this version of a third moment repeats nearly 50-year-old arguments, but progress has been made. Moral and epistemological discourses now go on side by side. A vastly superior mixed method discourse exists today. The midcentury multimethods of arguments of Campbell and Stanley seem naïve (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; also Campbell, 1976, 1977). Race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, the research rights of indigenous peoples, Whiteness, and queer studies are taken-for-granted topics today. These conversations were not occurring in the 1970s and 1980s.

Conclusion

The paradigm wars of the 1970s and 1980s played out against a post-Vietnam War civil rights landscape. Qualitative researchers, urban ethnographers, critical theorists, antiwar activists, feminists, participant observers, and cultural studies scholars found their voice in this historical moment. The federal government was mandating accountability criteria for entitlement programs. Qualitative researchers rushed to this space. The field of qualitative program evaluation flourished.

The paradigm wars of the most recent past play out against another set of federal interventions, those connected to NCLB legislations, positivist guidelines promulgated by National Research Councils, and audit criteria administered by governmental managers (Torrance, 2006). We are in a free-fall space concerning the politics of evidence. There are no ironclad criteria regulating the production of knowledge or the validation of inquiry findings. Federal bureaucrats require RCT research protocols, while advertising researchers in the free market freely produce evidence they “deem relevant for controlling the behaviours of consumers” (Kvale, 2008, p. 5), and “Presidential assistants manufacture data to support war efforts” (Denzin, 2009, p. 39). Inquiry has always been and will always be a moral,

political, value-laden enterprise. We seek only a politics of hopes, models of social justice to lead us forward.

As members of a larger moral community, we all need to draw together so we can share our problems and experiences with these new discourses. We need a moral and methodological community that honors and celebrates paradigm and methodological diversity. As fellow travelers we need research agendas that advance human rights and social justice through multiple forms of qualitative research.

There is reason to hope that the administration of President Obama will usher in a new era of critical inquiry. The time seems to have arrived for a new conversation about paradigms, race, methods, and social justice.¹⁰ We need a roadmap and an agenda to carry us through the third moment, and into the next decade, a new call to arms.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

Notes

1. Creswell and Clark (2007, p. 14) called this the formative period in the history of mixed methods research. They outline three other moments: (1) paradigm debate, 1980s; (2) procedural development period, 1990s; and (3) the advocacy and separate design period, 2000 to present.
2. I climbed on this band wagon in the *Research Act* (Denzin, 1970, pp. 297-313), Denzin, N. K. 1970. *The Research Act*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company. advocating the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. I argued that participant observation, case study, and life history each involved the use of multiple interpretive strategies. I then delineated four basic types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory, and methodological.
3. Following Guba a paradigm is a basic set of beliefs that guides action. Inquiry paradigms (positivism, postpositivism, constructivism, structuralism, poststructuralism, etc.) can be differentiated in terms of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and ethics (Guba, 1990a, pp. 17-18).
4. They were focused, to use Morse's label (2003, p. 190), on mixed, not multimethod, designs.
5. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003a, p. xiii) listed six unresolved issues in this discourse: nomenclature, utility, paradigmatic foundations, research design, inferences and analysis, and logistics of conducting such studies.
6. This is Guba's spelling.
7. In sociology and anthropology fierce disputes and wars over quantitative and qualitative paradigms flared up in the 1920s and extended through the immediate post-World War II period (see Vidich & Lyman, 1994, pp. 38-41).
8. Conflict broke out between the many different empowerment pedagogies: feminist, antiracist, radical, Freirean, liberation theology, postmodernists, poststructuralists, cultural studies, and so on (see the essays in Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Luke & Gore, 1992; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007).
9. This is a gloss on a complex discourse. The mixed methods community is by no means defined by a single set of assumptions, beliefs, or practices.
10. These lines were first drafted on November 5, 2008.

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