CHAPTER ONE

"Validity Crisis" in Qualitative Research

Still? Movement Toward a Unified Approach

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For a while now, academics have produced a cacophony of validity concepts and anti-validity rhetoric that can be stultifying, confusing, frustrating, infuriating, even (for some) silencing. Dialogue on the topic of validity reaches a fever pitch in journal articles and conference presentations where the choice of words indicates the magnitude with which communities of researchers are both laying stake to their own conceptions of truth and validity and where they are simultaneously wrestling with the uncertainty/promise of understanding one another's research (Schwandt, 1996; Alexander, 1990). Despite this noise, chapters on qualitative research in educational research texts (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005) and research reports themselves (Aguinaldo, 2004) give relatively little attention to validity — the issues seem almost too complicated and too divisive to deal with so people tend to write for an audience that already agrees with them in terms of validity (Polkinghorne, 2007). The traditional definition of validity for qualitative research involved the degree to which the researcher's account of the phenomena matched the participants' reality (Eisner & Peshkin, 2000), but this definition is now totally up for grabs (Rolfe, 2006). Polkinghorne (2007) says that validity is not even properly thought of as a definitional concept and should instead be thought of as a "prototype" concept.

There are moments in the history of doing quantitative social science where validity debates were prominent and where progress was made in clarifying what manner of validity questions arise in the context of doing quantitative inquiry (for examples, see Campbell, 1957; Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Cronbach, 1971; Messick, 1989; Kane, 1992; Shepard, 1997). The debates among quantitative researchers are not as widely scattered as those we find going on among qualitative methodologists, but they do, nonetheless, address some similar definitional and practical complexities (Wolming & Wikström, 2010). According to Wolming and Wikström (2010), the fervent debate among statisticians that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s

has come to a recent standstill, with no progress in terms of the debated issues being resolved or more deeply understood (Winter, 2000). Moreover, the validity debates among statisticians have not explicitly called into question the very nature of doing social science inquiry, though there have been significant shifts in validity conceptions. For example, Cronbach (1971) and Messick (1989) invited a shift from talking about the validity of instruments to talking about the validity of interpretations with respect to research that uses tests for data gathering. For qualitative researchers, the "conversation" on validity is a conversation about the nature of understanding, the status of truth, the possibility of justification and rational deliberation, and the purpose of inquiry. In quantitative social science, these sorts of validity concerns lurk behind the definitional reification that has been achieved. The reification has resulted in these basic concerns only surfacing periodically and even then without much of a splash (despite work like Kane, 1992). Efforts among quantitative methodologists to address these more basic questions concerning validity have been largely ignored in practice (Wolming & Wikström, 2010). Despite some theoretical advances toward the development of a more unifying concept of validity (Messick, 1989), the reified notions of construct, content, and criterion validity are still primarily treated as types of validity dependent upon the idea that it is a test that is validated, not a score or an interpretation.

The status of validity conceptualization for qualitative inquiry is contrastingly problematic. The contemporary qualitative research literature poses such a plethora of concepts, ideas, arguments, and approaches to validity that making sense of the literature and weighing into the varied discussions are difficult at best (Seale, 1999; Smith and Deemer, 2000; Lewis & Ritchie, 2003) and contribute to the "crisis in validity" in qualitative research (Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

While the proliferation of ideas might be inspiring, creative, and insightful, there seems to me a need for bringing the conversations together. The risk is that in the bringing together we lose ideas, we close off conversations, and we end up subjugating some ideas to other ideas for reasons that might not be shared. Another possibility, in light of what we have witnessed among quantitative inquiry practices, is that we end up reifying constructs to such an extent that their intractability produces a paralysis in theory and practice. There is synergy between the lack of judgment over which validity concepts/constructs might be more or less valid and the way the contemporary proliferation continues to churn out new ideas without taking positions capable of settling the question of validity and of validity constructs themselves. For some researchers (Richardson, 1994, 1997; Schwandt, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Bochner, 2000; Denzin, 2008) this unwieldy proliferation would be counted as a strength of the literature, but it seems to me that the contemporary conversation is stunted because we are not actually relating these disparate and varied ideas with one another in ways that would lead us to more deeply understand validity (and I am not alone in this view, see also Tracy, 2010; Polkinghorne, 2007; Carspecken, 2003; for examples). We have a flat development and array of ideas that are not gaining in the sort of complexity that many of us envision (Donmoyer, 1996). The validity conversation is, practically speaking, difficult to jump into, maintain, and develop in its current state and this is a problem with ramifications for methodological practices and theory (Tracy, 2010; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Scheurich, 1997).

> Typically, the issue of validity is approached by applying one's own community's protocols about what, in its view, is acceptable evidence and appropriate analysis to the other community's research. In these cases,

> the usual conclusion is that the other community's research is lacking in support for its knowledge claims. I think this cross-community approach is unproductive and leads to a dead end because each community is making different kinds of knowledge claims. (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 475)

A number of attempts at managing the various validity concepts and practices have been developed (see Maxwell, 1992, 1996; Hammersley, 1992; Winter, 2000; Tracy, 2010) as well as attempts to start anew (see Lather, 1993). These efforts suggest some impetus toward bringing diverse sets of validity ideas and concerns into a common dialogue. Most approaches to doing this start with research practice and definitional criteria that was established through research practice. My approach will be different because I will use ordinary life conceptions of validity as the basis for talking about validity in research (I am directly following Habermas, 1984, and Carspecken, 1996, 2003). The trajectory of this chapter points toward a unifying concept of validity that ought to be relevant for quantitative and qualitative methodology (though the focus here will be on its relevance for qualitative methodological theory and practice). My proposal should be challenged and queried, for in the end, that is what validity is based on. To begin with, I will briefly describe the contemporary state of affairs regarding the validity discourse among qualitative researchers. Then, I will introduce the problems and possibilities of moving toward a unified approach to validity. I establish the basis for a unified concept of validity in our ordinary concepts of validity, then, I demonstrate how this ordinary description of validity is applicable to social science (Habermas, 1984, 1987; Carspecken, 2003; Korth, 2005). These two sections lead to a situated articulation of what this unified concept might look like. This approach to validity is not new with me (see, most particularly, Habermas and Carspecken as cited above), but I am hoping that this detailed examination and explanation will seal its relevancy for the validity crisis and increase its understanding among researchers.

State of Affairs: Cacaphony

Lewis (2009) reviewed validity conceptions according to philosophical eras in an effort to arrive at what validity might look like in this fifth (post-modernist) moment (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) of conducting qualitative inquiry. His trajectory demonstrates the increasing complexity, divergence, and discontent riddling the scholarship. He suggests that there is unified agreement about the nature and status of validity and reliability for both quantitatively and qualitatively conducted inquiries among positivists and post-positivists, but that constructivists were not content with these constructs and their definitional baggage. Soon new words replaced old ones. Transferability as a kind of generalizability was the more advanced concept meant to supplant constructs oriented toward external validity. Words like "dependability," "consistency," and "accuracy" were, taken all together, a better fit for qualitative research than the quantitative rendition of reliability. Credibility and truthfulness were more acceptable ways of talking about internal validity for qualitative research. And, confirmability replaced objectivity. By the mid-80s:

> [r]esearch was being dispersed in various interpretive forms, with no consensus between the different paradigms within qualitative research (posistivists, postpositivists, naturalists, constructivists, and the orientationalist inquirists) and the internal paradigms of the crisis of representation period (feminists, culturalists, Marxists, etc.) about the standard for reliability and validity. (Lewis, 2009, p. 6)

And so the proliferation goes.

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) identified 50 "components of validity or legitimation" in use by qualitative educational researchers. Fifty? Fifty! And since their publication, several more have popped up. One benefit of such a rich conceptual state of affairs is the extent to which the terms provide both the grounds and the substance for dialogue. Schwandt (2000) cogently argued that labeling complicated theoretical and practical ideas as this or that "is dangerous, for it blinds us to enduring issues, shared concerns, and points of tension that cut across the landscape of the movement, issues that each inquirer must come to terms with in developing an identity as a social inquirer" (p. 205) and, indeed, perhaps this has been evidenced in the discourse on validity in quantitative approaches with the tendency to remain tethered to construct, content, and criterion validity. However, failing to bring in some coherency and conciseness across the divergent ways of thinking about validity makes it difficult to figure out how to go about conducting valid qualitative research (Tracy, 2010; Lewis, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Does one just pick the validity concepts that seem most helpful? How does one determine the extent to which one's inquiry is valid? These are the sorts of questions that Tracy (2010) says cause problems for students of qualitative inquiry. It's no wonder that there are researchers (for examples, Lather 1993; Richardson, 1994, 1997) that purposively strike off on an altogether "transgressive" path (Lather, 1993; Rolfe, 2006).

The cacophony is marked by different approaches that have different sorts of goals. Moving on from the proliferation of constructs, each with their important nuance, I provide a sample of the variety of approaches scholars have taken to deal with validity in qualitative inquiry. I do this in order to demonstrate the breadth and unwieldy nature of the discourse, but the sampling is by no means exhaustive and at best can be thought of as illustrative. I analyzed the literature and have organized it according to various ways validity seems to be conceptualized. Doing this helps to highlight the differing ways that a unified approach might be developed. The review is a simplified rendition of a complicated set of dialogues. Much more emphasis is placed on the proposal that follows than on the breadth of existing literature.

Organizing/Categorizing Validity According to Research Design or Paradigm

Creswell and Miller (2000)[1] argued that the validity criteria to which researchers might hold themselves accountable are dependent upon two attributes of their research; namely, the particular methodological design and the paradigmatic assumptions invoked by the researcher. Thus, Creswell and Miller's approach to validity has been to organize the range of options in the field according to research design or paradigm, locating specific constructs and methods appropriate for different methodologies with their varying paradigmatic assumptions. This approach is well cited and seems particularly useful for novice qualitative researchers. It is nonoffensive and inclusive in the sense that Creswell and Miller refrain from judging the validity of the different designs and paradigms with their concommitment criteria for validity. It serves as a basic description of a simplified set of paradigms and designs.

Design-Specific Criteria

A substantial number of scholars discuss validity concepts from within one particular design or approach. This seems like a spin-off of the tact Creswell and Miller (2000) have taken. Whereas

Creswell and Miller (2000) survey across approaches, scholarship in this design-specific group focus in one particular theoretical attitude and/or design and address validity as a coherent byproduct of that attitude/design.[2] There are many examples of this, such as addressing validity as it applies to a grounded theory study (for instance, Elliott & Lazenblatt, 2005) or narrative study (Polkinghorne, 2007). Sikes and Gale (2006) created a web-based module for learning about narrative inquiry. In that particular module, there is a section on how one might go about evaluating narrative research. Drawing heavily on Richardson's (2000) work, Sikes and Gale propose tentative criteria for evaluating creative, transgressive and nontraditional forms of research such as we find in narrative inquiry. They are hoping to inspire conversations about criteria, acknowledging that validity propositions should be open to criticism. It is informative to look at the substance of the criteria to see what it is they envision as validity standards. They propose that good research: (1) makes a "substantive contribution" to the "understanding of a social and cultural life"; (2) has "aesthetic merit" noticeable through the way it "opens our senses"; (3) addresses the complexities of representation through reflexive and participatory engagement; (4) has a potential impact for its participants; and (5) what they refer to as "experience-near" accounts — accounts that are fair to the participants (Sikes & Gale, 2006). Sikes and Gale also provided a few techniques for addressing these validity criteria. While Sikes and Gale recognize the risks involved in laying out such criteria, for our purposes, the paper serves as an example of how validity criteria are generated within the context of a specific design or approach linking the criteria as closely to the design characteristics and theoretical principles that are the foundation of the design/approach.

Identifying Validity in Terms of Specific Threats

One way of thinking about validity has involved conceptualizing what threats might accrue both in the general sense, as related to the design, and in the specific sense, as related to the specific implementation/conduct of a research project. Maxwell (1992)[3], in an effort to create a dialogue, wrote an article on the topic of validity in qualitative research. He articulated five domains through which validity can be queried in qualitative research. Those five domains include descriptive validity, which involves the extent to which one's descriptions of an objective nature are accurate; interpretational validity, which involves the extent to which one's interpretations articulate the range of plausible, possible interpretations the participants themselves might understand through their interactions with one another; theoretical validity, which involves articulating how well a theoretical explanation fits the data it is meant to explain; evaluative validity, which involves the extent to which an evaluative framework can be appropriately applied to making sense of the data; and lastly two forms of generalizability. Internal generalizability refers to the extent to which particular inferences can be generalized to the group of participants involved in the study and their particular modes of understanding. External generalizability refers to the extent to which particular inferences can be generalized beyond the group, setting, and particular context within which the inferences were derived.

Organizing Validity According to Research Purpose

In a manner that is similar to organizing validity according to research design or paradigm, Cho and Trent (2006) identified two main types of research genres according to their purposes (transactional and transformational). Then, they identified validity approaches appropriate to the underlying assumptions of the two main purposes. Their work stands as a criticism of the

approaches that are design specific because they think too much is made of design differences when, instead, the purposes of research are a better way to identify underlying paradigmatic assumptions that would be relevant to matching up with validity tools. Cho and Trent extend Donmoyer's (2001) organization of qualitative research to identify relevant "uses" of validity techniques according to each of the five purposes Donmoyer (2001) identified. For example, Cho and Trent identified the main use of validity for research oriented through "truth-seeking" purposes was to establish the correct answer (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 326). The specific validity techniques, it is argued, do not ensure the study is valid, but can be engaged holistically — that is, across the entire research process — to address the kind of validity that is useful for the particular purposes of the inquiry.

Counter-validity, Transvalidity, and Transgressive Constructs

Lather (2007) writes of transgressive validity.

> The following [approach to validity] is a dispersion, circulation, and proliferation of counter-practices of authority that take the crisis of representation into account. In creating a nomadic and dispersed validity, I employ a strategy of excess and categorical scandal in the hope of both imploding ideas of policing social science and working against the inscription of "another regime of truth." (Lather, 2007, p. 120).

Lather's work aims to be an antithesis of modern validity strangleholds. In 1993, Lather presented the idea of catalytic validity, which asks researchers to consider how the findings of the research and/or the research process itself contribute to transforming both the community and the researchers who were involved in the study. Catalytic validity is transgressive in two fundamental ways. First, it speaks of a different kind of relationship between researchers and participants. Second, it suggests that the primary meaning of a research endeavor is its transformative potential and worthwhileness. This second point is transgressive in a summative way. That is, it suggests that data collection and analysis are not the focal junctures through which research ought to be assessed as valid.[4] Lather and Smithies heart-rendering poststructuralist account of women living with HIV/AIDS is a stunning, bold, unnerving example of how this transgressive and catalytic validity is enacted.

The Problems and Possibilities of a Holistic Approach to Validity: Unifying Without Simplifying?

Campbell and Stanley's (1963) influential scholarship identifying threats to internal and external validity has been importantly consequential in conceptualizing and making practical validity concerns for experimental and quasi-experimental quantitative designs, although it left these concerns less articulated with respect to correlational or descriptive quantitative studies. The debate between Cronbach and his colleagues Cook and Campbell has been revisited for experimental and quasi-experimental designs, but these debates have not been extended or examined with respect to nonexperimental designs (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In an educational age in the U.S. that re-emphasizes randomized control trials as the gold standard of educational research, perhaps this revisitation makes sense despite the limitation it reflects in terms of inquiry as a social scientific field (Denzin & Giardina, 2008).

Messick, 1989 (as not the only, but perhaps the most widely cited scholar), encouraged a unitary concept of validity, meant to locate validity concerns variously related to constructs,

criterion-related issues, content, and social consequences in one conceptual apparatus or system. Messick's unitary system of validity was also a more expansive notion, unifying and adding to the prominent notions of validity to which researchers using quantitative methods were being held accountable. Other scholars argued that the best way to unify the concepts of validity would be to focus and simplify what was being conceptualized as validity. This would not force researchers to discount important concerns for how research was applied, but the definitional simplification would result in these kinds of concerns not being treated as a matter of validity (Popham, 1997; Mehrens, 1997). It should be noted that there has been difficulty translating these theoretical ideas of a unitary validity into practice (Wolming & Wikström, 2010).

Given that there has been limited progress toward unifying constructs of validity for quantitative inquiry, and we can see that the conversation on validity among qualitative researchers is far from unified, what sort of progress is possible for unifying across quantitative and qualitative methods? One approach to unification basically held that concepts and standards of validity as they had been worked out by quantitative researchers should be thought of as universal to research, in general, and thus applicable to qualitative research directly. To be sure, the work of qualitative research was blatantly misunderstood and misread when the traditional quantitative ways of reading research were simply applied to the practices of qualitative inquiry (Aguinaldo, 2004; Lewis, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Qualitative researchers were asked to verify and justify their research methods and findings through questions that did not seem either applicable or appropriate (Aguinaldo, 2004). For example, if the findings of an ethnography of a school were presented, the ethnographer might have been asked: "But how do you know whether or not your findings will generalize to other schools?" as the main validity issue to which the research should be accountable. If this question was not answered in a way that might be similar to the answer a statistician might provide in describing how her research was generalizable from a sample to a population, the qualitative findings would likely be discounted as invalid or irrelevant despite the fact that ethnography was usually conducted for reasons unrelated to this kind of generalizing.

It will come as no surprise to social scientists that there has been little effort to apply concepts and standards of validity developed among qualitative researchers to quantitative approaches. If the approach to unifying validity concepts merely involved subsuming the expectations of qualitative inquiry to those of quantitative inquiry on the technical level or vice versa, an oversimplification and misunderstanding would ensue. This is one important impetus behind Lather's (1993) efforts to problematize the historical taken-for-grantedness of validity in social science.

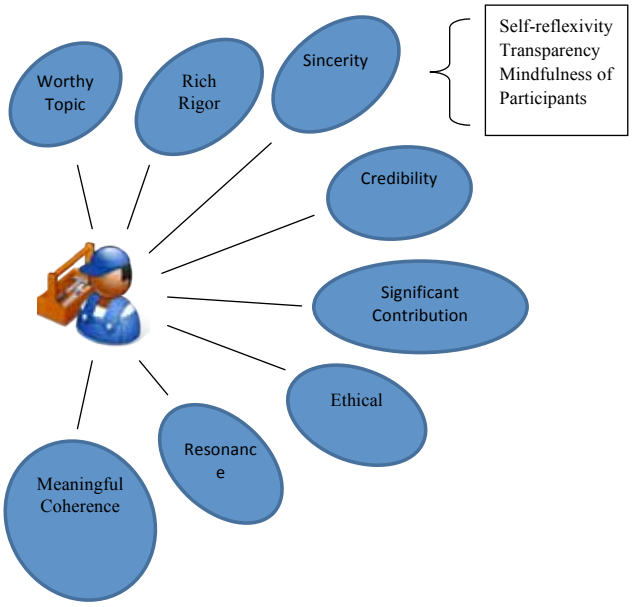
One is left to wonder what other possibilities there might be for developing a more unified validity theory. Rolfe (2006) argues that any attempt to bring together approaches to validity across the various qualitative methodological traditions will prove futile. But perhaps the proliferation of validity concepts among qualitative researchers opens up new possibilities for exploring unified concepts of validity precisely because traditional knowledge about validity, in this context, cannot be taken for granted (Tracy, 2010). Moreover, it is inevitable that researchers involved in the simultaneous use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to inquiry will have to confront the tensions across the different terms and concepts through which validity is addressed and this could contribute to a more unified approach to social science validity. There are some efforts toward this end already at work (see Shaffer & Serlin, 2004; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Mertens, 2007).

Among qualitative researchers, I am not the first to suggest movement toward inclusive, unifying validity conceptions. I will begin this section of the chapter by introducing the work of a few scholars whose exemplary efforts at organizing and unifying validity conceptions with respect to qualitative inquiry contribute to the dialogue.

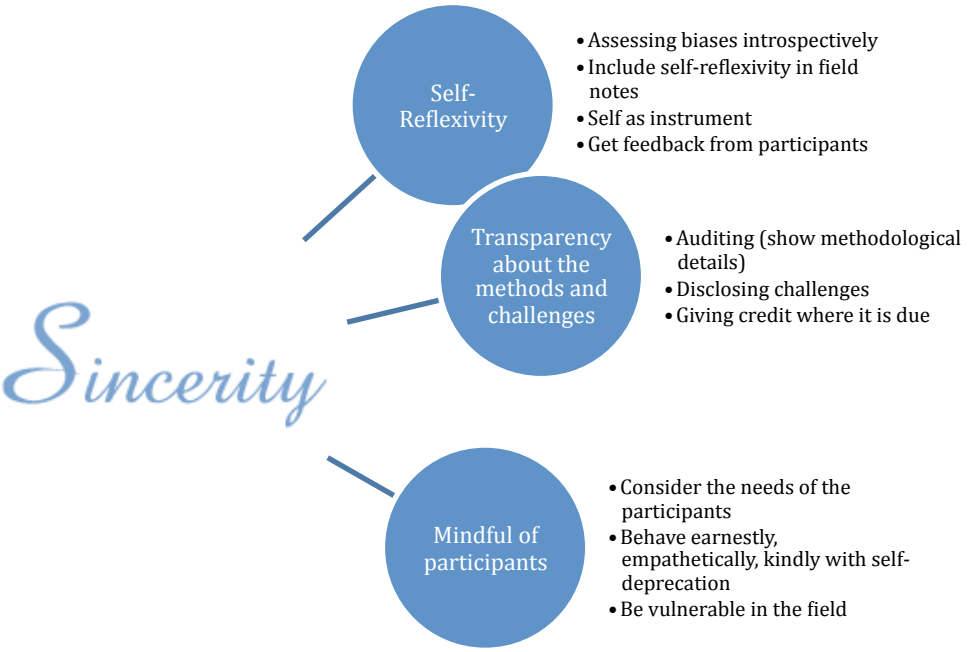
Sarah Tracy

Tracy (2010) drew on her experience as a teacher of qualitative research to propose a twofold schematic for thinking about validity. Her idea can be considered a conceptual advance of approaches that categorize the various ways of thinking about validity across the field of qualitative inquiry. Tracy equates "validity" with "good" in so far as the characteristics she identifies are said to describe good research, and then she assumes that what is meant by "good" is that the research is valid. She suggested that there are eight common markers of goodness (p. 139) that can be examined through a variety of practices (techniques, crafts) that address particular elements specific to each of the common markers. She takes a "big-tent" approach, having reviewed the literature and synthesized it to locate these eight common markers of good qualitative research. She contends that these markers are prevalent regardless of which specific theoretical or design approach one employs. Their particular manifestations may vary. That is, the way the eight markers might actually be put into practice given particular methodological decisions and proclivities will vary. The proposal is a holistic, integrated one. The basis of it is this set of markers assumed to be commonly applicable and that were derived via a review of the validity literature. Given each of those markers, there would be a variety of possible ways to address the common concerns that one might select contingent on one's philosophical orientation. In this way, the markers transcend orientation. Tracy skillfully knits together many of the various constructs of validity within her scheme.

Here is the basic skeleton of a schematic depicting her approach (it's not entirely filled in for want of space):



Now let's focus on just the common marker of "Sincerity" to see how Tracy is developing this twofold idea. You can see that for the marker there are qualities that would be involved in the extent to which one would be judged "sincere" through one's research, and there are specific things to do to increase the extent of one's sincerity. The flexibility so noteworthy and appreciative in qualitative research is respected on the level of how one goes about addressing the common markers.



To develop this particular marker, Tracy drew together the following validity constructs she found in the field. For example, she refers to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (1995) inclusion of self-reflexivity in their field notes. She could have just as easily made reference to others, Peshkin (1988) and Korth (2005), as examples. My point here is that she identified a key element in the literature and then she showed how to establish criteria related to that element by synthesizing the scholarship — reminding us as qualitative researchers what we are saying about our own work. She refers to Seale (1999) and Creswell and Miller (2000) to talk about the method of auditing (using audit trails) to document the process one engages in as a way of increasing transparency. If you return to Tracy's (2010) article, you will notice that her chart only includes the first two sets of criteria, but her text talks about the third and so I added it to the scheme I created.

She skillfully pulls together the various constructs, ideas, and approaches. She locates them either at the level of criteria related to the eight common markers or at the level of craft (for example, how one goes about achieving sincerity, specifically). Gaps indicate gaps in the existing literature. For example, Tracy has identified criteria for assessing the marker "Worthy Topic," but not necessarily techniques or methods for applying those criteria to pieces of research. Further contributors could build on her work at this point.

Dennis Beach

Beach (2003) assumes a view of validity that is unifying through purpose and transgression. His unifying approach can be interpreted as a conceptual advance on validity discussions described above as related to organizing validity around purpose (e.g., Cho and Trent, 2006) and counter-validity/transgressive validity (Lather, 2007). Rather than acknowledging a set of categories of research linked to varying purposes (as did Cho and Trent, 2006), Beach argues that there is one significant reason for doing education research under the conditions of capitalism and this purpose has consequences for validity. Beach is concerned, fundamentally and solely, with research that serves to promote democracy over and against the pressures and illusions of a capitalist market system. "My suggestion is that because of the inequities of capitalism, education research should be concerned with trying to improve equity and democracy both within and through education and that it also requires a validity form that corresponds with this task" (Beach, 2003, p. 860). Beach goes on to indicate that catalytic validity is the only validity concept up to the task. As Beach has argued, it is most typical that education research reifies and supports the inequities that are the effects of capitalism. Rather than following Lather's (2007) ironic approach to validity as something that names itself in order to erase itself (Rolfe, 2006), Beach takes seriously the concept of catalytic validity— seriously enough to think it can serve as a unifying approach to validity across social science in the capitalistic milieu—ethical social science whose lust for democracy should not be assuaged.

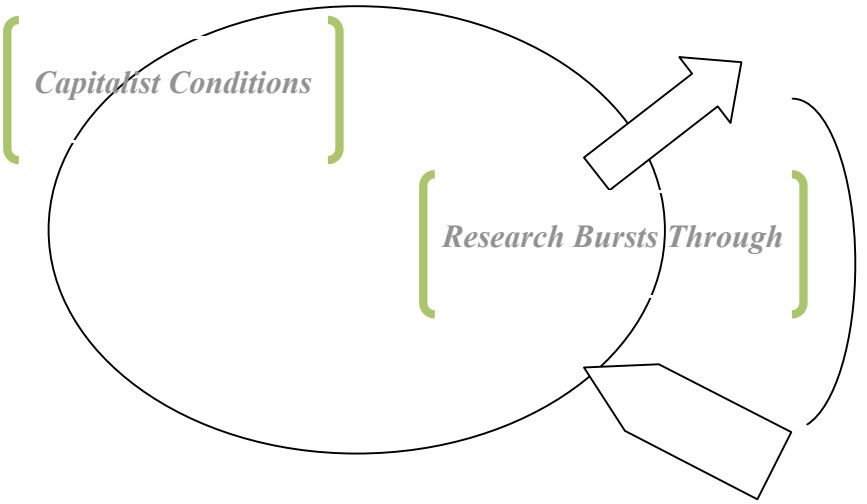
Beach indicates that it is very difficult to conduct research that supports and engages in democratic practices because of contradictions that riddle our research (he is writing specifically about education research, but in a way that suggests his points are applicable regardless of the substantive social domain). These contradictions limit the validity of research in ways that are systematically ignored. The contradictions include:

> a. the celebration of distance, objective truth, and neutrality rather than closeness, subjective engagement, and authenticity;
>
> b. the creation of a labor hierarchy and theory-practice distinction that favors the decisions and ideas of theorists over practitioners with respect to truth claims;
>
> c. the presence of a low exchange rate regarding care for the communities researched, where researchers leave the application of findings to others and wash their hands of any responsibility for the consequences of this application;
>
> d. the production of alienating concepts (e.g., Spearman's g) that severely damage the ecology of genuine community and possibilities for equity and solidarity (see, e.g., racially slurring research such as that by Jensen, 1985a, 1985b, 1987). (Beach, 2003, p. 861)

One can see from the list of contradictions that traditional validity requirements for social science inquiry have, themselves, served to structure the contradictions. Beach holds that catalytic validity loosens research dependency on those first terms in the stated contradictions above. In his description of the research situation under capitalism, Beach (2003) argues that democratically valid inquiry, to be valid, must "contribute toward changing education [and other social contexts] in the interests of a more egalitarian form" and that "this can be done by researchers recognizing and showing in theoretical and practical detail what education actually involves for a population, how it occurs within the corrupted forms of symbolic exchange that

we currently call schooling, and how class interests are presently disguised in and/or protected by education" (p. 864).

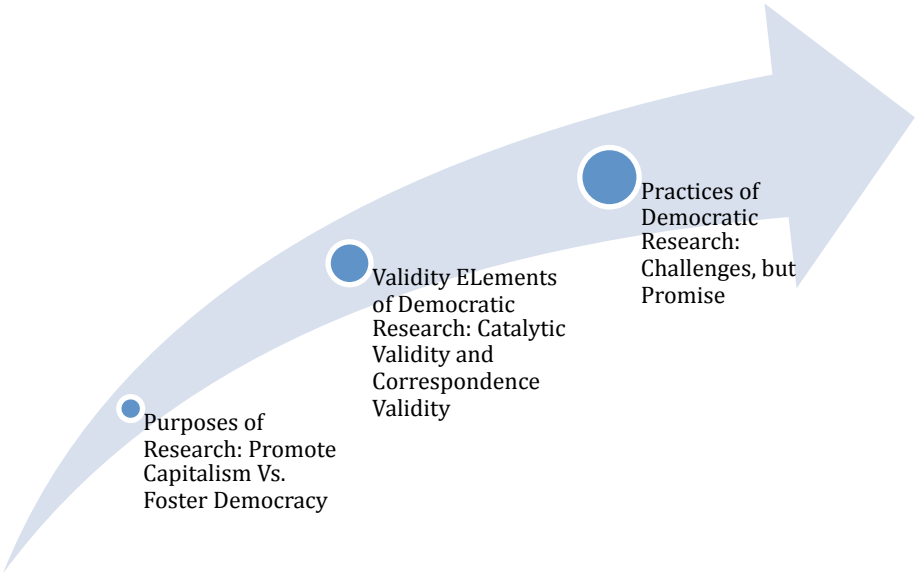
The background schematic that emerges through Beach's conceptualization of validity is vividly described as the practice and promise of research bursting through the capitalist conditions to transform them.



A microscopic view of this background schematic shows us the contrastive nature of the schema through three moments.

The first moment relates to the purposes of research. The first contrast internal to this first moment is a conflict between perpetuating/promoting capitalist economic and ideological conditions versus promoting and establishing democratic opportunities. The second moment relates to validity elements of engaging in democratic inquiry with an internal contrast between the validity requirements of democratic research, which include correspondence validity and catalytic validity. The third moment relates to the practice of democratic research with an internal contrast involving the challenges posed by capitalism, but with the possibilities for transforming the very conditions under which those challenges are sustained.

The internal relations of the contrast sets are not the same across the moments, and this seems to suggest that the moments actually have a trajectory — they are not flat, equivalent phases with characteristics, but rather dynamically evolving moments in the engagement of meaningful social science. The three moments are paradigmatically linked as a trajectory from the purposes to the possibilities. Beach locates validity as the catalyst and lynchpin between the purpose and the possibility of democratic inquiry within capitalist situations.



Beach's unified approach to validity has less to do with specific techniques and more to do with the underlying momentum for social inquiry, most particularly education research.

Laurel Richardson

One way of proposing a unifying concept of validity is to describe the character of validity using a metaphor. This approach shares something in common with the one I will take up: it begins by describing validity itself, rather than by looking at research and trying to locate validity there. Richardson has provided a crucial voice in the scholarship on validity for qualitative inquiry. One of her most cited contributions has been the development of the metaphor "crystallization" for thinking about validity and methodology. The metaphor reflects the (at once) unitary and complicated "nature" of validity for qualitative researchers and expands on the triangulation metaphor that has wide currency in the discourse on validity in qualitative research.

> In postmodern mixed genre texts, we do not triangulate, we *crystallize*…. I propose that the central image for "validity" for postmodern texts is not the triangle — a rigid, fixed two-dimensional object. Rather the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. (Richardson, 2000, p. 934, emphasis in original)

Ellingson (2009) forged Richardson's "crystallization" metaphor into a framework for qualitative researchers to draw upon — putting "crystallization" into the context of a specified methodology for nontraditional qualitative inquiry (Cugno & Thomas, 2009). By developing a metaphor for validity, Richardson is, at base, locating characteristics of both validity and research as if they are really one and the same. Though certainly some evaluative criteria would be presupposed in these descriptive attributes, Richardson's work really stays with locating the characteristics of validity as doubling for characteristics of good research. She then engages people in interacting with those characteristics in studies — for example, encouraging people to use multiple dimensions and modalities. These characteristics enhance the validity of a project because they resist oversimplification, enabling the researcher to both accept and explore

the complexities of the field, including one's own position in it, without reducing, masking, or hiding its validity issues.

Another metaphor that has gained some currency among qualitative researchers as a description of validity is the "rhizome." As with the above example, this metaphor doubles both as a description of validity and as a description of research. Rhizomes are interconnected networks or systems that are complex and tangled beneath the ground. "Rather than a linear progress, rhizomatics is a journey among intersections, nodes, and regionalizations through a multicentered complexity" (Lather, 2007, p. 124). This description of research begs for validity conceptions to mirror its principle characteristics, for example, to be inclusive of complexity.

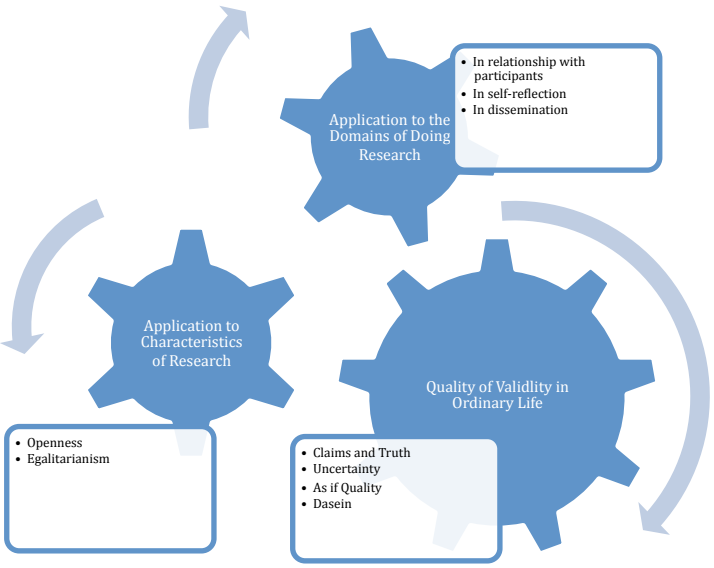
In both of these cases, as with others that might be similar, the metaphor is considered a unifying concept that would apply to social science research in general, on the whole. But the metaphors are also complicated and inviting; inclusive and nondirective. Some people refer to them as ironic because they seem to turn the traditional way of thinking about validity on its head. They require us to recognize the characteristics that might map over to research/validity as a way of conceptualizing validity. Specific combinations of attributes and research decisions would be fit to the metaphor by aligning in saliency and quality.

From http://www.dicts.info/picture-dictionary.php?w=crystal. Accessed January 30, 2011.Used with permission.

Barbara Dennis

The path I want to forge toward a holistic concept of validity is one that has been developed through Habermas's (1984, 1987) critical theory and Carspecken's (2003) postenlightenment methodological theory. It is a path that begins with validity in the ordinary context and then moves into social science. Habermas's (1988) *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* pointed a

way toward this unified theory of validity, which becomes more visible in terms of details in Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action* (*TCA*) (1984, 1987). In the *Logic of the Social Sciences*, Habermas establishes a procedure for connecting validity to the logic of doing social science across the various disciplines. Through this process, he raises questions that propel the reader toward an increasingly unified view of social science validity. For example, he begins by exploring the field of economics, which he argues has two prominent approaches — one that examines economy as a matter of normalized individual behavior and the other that examines economy as a matter of rational choice and deliberation. Habermas is able to argue that both approaches, when modified, contribute in different ways to a fuller understanding of human economic activities, because together they provide a richer description and explanation of those activities. Habermas explored what in practice seemed like divergent, oppositional approaches to validity with the logics of a given social science, and found convergence and correctives. That is, he used the benefits of one to correct the indulgences of another. More important than the really exciting content of his arguments is the structure and origination of the arguments themselves. Habermas kept making the validity assumptions explicit. That is, he looked at the ordinary context of proposing a particular logic to one's social science in conversation with one's colleagues and he brought out implicit validity conditions through which those arguments might be persuasive. It was on the level of examining these implicit conditions and truth claims that Habermas was able to point toward some unifying validity criteria for the social sciences. Carspecken (2003) took a similar approach in examining the philosophical underpinnings of postenlightenment theories of knowledge and inquiry. Both Habermas (1984, 1987) and Carspecken put into practice on the level of social science critique what we can find at work in the ordinary communicative context and they both know they are doing this.



This picture illustrates the interactive, communicative nature of the unified proposal for addressing validity. Image from http://www.rmu.edu/web/cms/academics/scis/organizational-studies/Pages/bs-org-studies.aspx. Accessed January 30, 2011. Used with permission.

The proposal I am spreading is this: We can forge a unifying approach to validity by looking first at a description of validity in its ordinary context. The ordinary context is already necessarily a linguistic, social, intersubjective one (Habermas, 1984, 1987 and many others as this is a well-accepted description of ordinary life across myriad philosophical communities). This becomes the starting place because it is the starting place for validity itself.

Ordinary Concepts of Validity

To suggest, as I am doing, that ordinary concepts of validity supply insight for how we think about validity in qualitative research is not novel in either the general or particular way. For example, in general terms, it is common for qualitative researchers to talk about research validity using words like "trustworthiness" and "authenticity" (Lewis, 2009), which are taken in the first place from our experiences with truth in ordinary life contexts. In particular, specific methodologists and methodological theorists have provided detailed accountings and justifications for this (Habermas, 1984; Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Carspecken, 2003), even in the particular way I am advocating. Habermas (1984) made the following comparison between doing research and the ordinary life context:

> In thematizing what the participants merely presuppose [in ordinary life] and assuming a reflective attitude to the interpretandum, one does not place oneself *outside* the communication context under investigation; one deepens and radicalizes it in a way that is in principle open to *all* participants." (p. 130, emphasis in original)

By examining what validity looks like in ordinary life, we learn more about the nature and structure of validity itself. This examination will produce a description of validity rather than a description of how to apply validity to research. While this link between ordinary concepts of validity and research practice is certainly not an idea original to me, its potential as a unifying

orientation for validity has not been realized. Thus, it is my hope to move further along in its realization.

Moreover, this link is not simply a heuristic for understanding validity; it is matter of necessity — that is, concepts of research validity cannot really escape a connection with ordinary concepts of validity. This isn't a matter of choosing this approach over others; it means that our very validity discussions and the process of deliberating what validity means for qualitative inquiry, in addition to the practices involved in engaging in valid qualitative research, are dependent upon these ordinary concepts of validity (Habermas, 1984; Carspecken, 2003; Korth, 2002, 2005). The subsections below should adequately illustrate this.

Validity in Everyday Interpretations

"To understand a proposition [in ordinary life] means to know what is the case if it is true. (One can understand it, therefore, without knowing if it is true)" (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 21). In rather precise form, Habermas's (1984, 1987) *TCA* articulates the everyday manner in which people interacting with one another will grasp the meaning of those interactions by grasping the reasons one might offer to explain the actions. Every meaningful action, for example, a head-nod greeting in the hallway as you pass by someone you know, or a gesture with one's hand indicating to another an available place to sit down, is imbued with claims to truth that one's interactant will draw on, in part, to understand the activity. Let's say I see you walk into the room. The room is bustling with talk, many people (including me) are already seated in chairs around a large conference table. You look at me and I point with my hand to the empty chair next to me. Then, I move my bags from the chair to the floor next to my chair. You nod and come over to sit there. As you lower yourself into the chair, you smile and whisper, "Thanks." You interpreted my pointing at the chair and looking at you as an invitation for you to sit in that chair. You understand the meaning of my pointing at the empty chair within a context of possible things I might mean. In this case, that range of possible meanings would be narrower than is sometimes the case when we act. To ask if your interpretation of my gesture is valid is to ask more than just whether or not your interpretation matches my intended meaning. According to Polkinghorne (2007), "Validity is not inherent in a claim [by which he means not inherent in the fact that it was claimed with particular intentions] but is a characteristic given to a claim by the ones to whom the claim is addressed [or those who assume the claim includes them as addressees]" (p. 475). The assumption of validity implies that the interpretation could be queried and the interpreter would be able, in principle, to provide responses to those queries. For me to intend my gesture to be interpreted in a particular way, I must be able to anticipate what the likely interpretations are. I also must be able to draw on shared understandings of expression, appropriateness, the states of affairs at the time, and so forth. These shared understandings form a background horizon that is implicit in the meaning of my gesture. The background horizon may be made explicit at any point during our interactions, should you have a question or should there be a misunderstanding. In ordinary life, we do not have a simple yes/no experience with the validity of meaning actions. Instead, when we understand something to be true, we understand what it would take to validate that specific claim to truth should queries be raised. We grasp this intuitively. Thus, to understand my gesture is to understand a whole host of plausible validity claims that are assumed to hold if the given interpretation of my action is reasonable.

In this way, truth claims are quickly and intuitively switched over to validity claims, which Habermas has organized according to categories through which the validity is intuitively established. Let's return to the previous example: If you come over to sit in the chair and I say, "Oh, I am sorry, but I was saving that chair for Lucy," we will both realize that there was a misunderstanding in terms of who I meant to be looking at and gesturing toward. You know who Lucy is and you also know that she is my friend. At this point you become aware that Lucy walked into the room right behind you. Both you and I can see how the misunderstanding happened.

The various categories of validity involved in the interpretive process can be demonstrated in this example. The interpretations and my claims to truth are validated through the process of sussing out what the validity claims/claims to truth are. The validity of aspects of the interpretation that assume the existence of things in the external world, as well as cause and effect or functional, mechanical relations among things in the external world, are examined through an articulation of what is and what works given the principle of multiple access. The principle of multiple access means that any one of us (and in principle, any anonymous observer) should be able to utilize the same methods (usually observational in some way) and definitions in order to arrive at the same claim to truth. Habermas refers to this category of validity as objectivity. Some objective validity claims referred to in my comment include (but are not limited to): that there is a chair I am pointing at, that you entered the room, that Lucy also needs a chair, that there are a particular number of chairs, that the room holds a particular number of people, that there are enough chairs for the number of people who will be attending the meeting, and so on. The interpretation that I am saving a chair for Lucy is valid, in part, to the extent that these objective validity claims hold. This is the most recognizable and well-developed validity category in the practices of doing social science. Habermas (1984, 1987) argues against limiting our truth conceptions and validity to this one category, as it defies our ordinary experience with meaning. Another category of validity, according to Habermas, is subjectivity. Subjective claims refer to claims a person makes about his or her own feelings, states of mind, proclivities, and desires—attributes that indicate the existence of a person's internal world. These claims involve the principle of privileged access, which means that each subject has a distinctly privileged way of knowing his or her own feelings, states of mind, proclivities, desires, and matters internal. These claims point to a world internal to the speaker describing the ontology of that internal world on an epistemological basis. We cannot validate these claims about one another primarily through direct observation. Instead we must establish the extent to which the speaker is being honest and authentic; that is, the extent to which the speaker is both aware of his or her feelings and is being open and honest about those feelings. Part of the meaning you might infer from our interactions about the chair would include that I feel sorry about the misunderstanding and/or I feel awkward. Also, you might think that I did have the intention of saving the seat for someone else—namely Lucy. This would mean ruling out that I intended to put you in an awkward situation or snub you — to articulate just a few counter interpretations. The validity of these parts of the interpretation depends on the extent to which I am being honest and self-aware, because they make reference to states of affairs internal to me to which I would have privileged access. According to Habermas, there is a third category of truth claim whose validity is different from both objectivity and subjectivity—Habermas calls this category normativity. Though we will recognize this category immediately in the ordinary context, we rarely see it referred to in a distinct manner in the research literature—its claims are generally lumped in the category of subjectivity. An example of a couple of normative truth

assumptions implicit in the interpretations one would articulate for my comment to you about my saving the chair for Lucy includes that people should sit in chairs for meetings when chairs are available, people should sit in one and only one chair, people should not hoard chairs for non-sitting purposes when chairs are in short supply, people should be able to hold chairs for other people, people should rectify misunderstandings when they happen. The validity of normative truth claims is linked to the extent to which people in a given community find the norms worthy of their assent. The social world is referred to (as objective claims refer to an external world and subjective claims refer to an internal personal world). The social world is a linguistically, culturally constituted set of relationships with norms and values as its material.

Four insights from the above exploration of validity in the everyday context will be drawn forward in the subsection to come: (1) That validity is conceptualized in terms of interpretive justification or answers to queries that, regardless of whether such queries are explicated, are always implied in the way interpretations are rendered valid. (2) That validity queries reflect categorical differences across objectivity, subjectivity, and normativity. (3) That validity is intersubjectively structured. (4) That validity is horizonally structured—that is, there will be claims in the foreground and claims in the background and the horizon ever recedes so that it's not possible to fully articulate all claims involved in understanding any particular interaction.

These insights about validity eliminate the need for debates about whether or not: (a) subjective claims can be valid; or (b) objective claims always invoke a positivist/postpositivist paradigm; or (c) subjectivity and objectivity work against each other, as in the more objective something is, the less subjective it is. Realism is implied, though the validity procedures are about the claims related to those implications. This is basically what we mean by "critical"—open to scrutiny on the grounds that it claims as its own.

The Uncertainty of Meaning in Ordinary Life

You can see from this approach to validity that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the interpretation and the act being interpreted because meaning does not work that way. When I act, the horizon of my act implies that I expect a range of possible interpretations would be likely, but also your response to my act will hone or shape the meaning of my act. As such, there is an openness to the interpretive process—a bounded openness, not free-for-all incoherency. In terms of the character of validity, the interpretive openness implies a continual nature of validity (which also jibes with the idea that validity has a horizon-like shape with respect to meaning) rather than either/or nature (either it is valid or it isn't valid). As we explicitly query particular truth claims, we draw out the reasons that justify particular claims and interpretations. Let's return to the earlier example. If you come to the empty chair near me and begin to sit down, you are implicitly querying an interpretation of my gesture. You are raising your interpretation as valid. I realize this interpretation is valid and I can either leave the interpretation in place and let you sit down without revealing my initial intentions (which involved directing my gesture at Lucy rather than at you) or I might raise the alternative interpretation, which would rely primarily on knowledge of my initial intentions or on the view of the room that included all three of us: you, me, and Lucy. Then Lucy sees you sitting down. She smiles at me because she recognizes the misunderstanding. She walks passed the two of us to an empty chair behind me (which in fact I had not seen). The openness of interpretation is necessarily bounded, but this boundedness is not standardized across various interpretive encounters. It is linked to the context of the action. Every act is both open/flexible and bounded

in terms of interpretation and this quality of interpretation is important when thinking about validity. As such, validity must be conceptualized as the process through which people come to understand one another given the bounded range and flexible field of possible interpretations. Both the boundedness and the openness are tethered to the context of the interpretive milieu, not to rules about the correspondence between the referent and the expression. There is no one-to-one correspondence of my gesture to an interpretation that would always hold across all particular instances. It is in this way that we can understand Polkinghorne's (2007) comment that validity does not inhere in the claim, but in the judgment of the claim by the interpreting audience/interactants.

Also, there are always presumably shared assumptions in the interpretation process, but there are reasons for us to be more or less certain of the sharedness of our assumptions. The context of our action sets the background for this aspect of certainty. Do we share a common language and culture? Is the meaning general enough to be warranted, given the level of knowledge and history we have of one another and of our shared context? This layer of certainty is most often called into question on definitional levels, but not only on definitional levels.

The uncertainty of meaning is, also, implicit to the assumption that an act always could have been otherwise (Giddens, 1979). In ordinary life, this means that we would be hard pressed to assume that there was a unidirectional, deterministic cause-effect relation for acting. The more plausible way of thinking about contingencies to which our meaningful action might be partially attributed would be as conditions of action. Conditions of action cannot be used to predict forthcoming action, but would instead be linked to action in terms of how the act might be interpreted (Carspecken, 1996). As just mentioned, the context within which I am acting and within which my action is being interpreted contributes to how the action is understood, but does not determine how the act is understood. In ordinary life we cannot effectively understand one another if we limit what is taken to be a valid interpretation to only those interpretations that have a direct cause/effect relation between the conditions of action and the meaning of the action itself. In fact, it is difficult to talk about ordinary validity in this way. Consider this convoluted description of our example articulated using this cause/effect sense of validity: You walked into the room and this caused me to point out the empty chair beside me. Or, the empty chair beside me caused me to indicate its availability for your use. Or, the social norms of politeness caused me to offer you the empty chair beside me. None of these cause/effect articulations would be considered adequate or even accurate in the everyday world of giving reasons for our actions. If you had approached me and said, "Why did you gesture at this chair when I walked into the room?" none of the above answers would have made sense. However, the above conditions help to provide a context within which interpretations are considered plausible or are ruled out. In the ordinary context, there are some examples in which we think of more deterministic, causative conditions as having more sway over the interpretations than is typical for most claims. For example, when someone gets hit and falls down, we might feel some confidence in saying that the force of the hit caused the person to fall down. Even so, this kind of physical description with its focal point on the cause/effect element does not satiate our understanding of the action per se. So while cause/effect relations might be foregrounded in some physical descriptions (he hit her and she fell down) where the range of plausible interpretations is quite narrow, they do not suffice in ordinary life as explanations. We could say that because he hit her, she fell down — but there are assumptions that we must also accept that reveal the partiality of the cause/effect explanation. For example, we must accept

that he is stronger than she is and that she was unable to resist the hit; or that he caught her off guard; or that she was, for some reason, unwilling to resist the hit. We would also want to understand why in the world he hit her.

Sometimes in research literature, uncertainty is treated as a concern peculiar to subjectivity—that the procedures of objectivity specifically preclude interpretive uncertainty, but in our ordinary context we recognize that we experience uncertainty across all three types of claims. In other words, the uncertainty of meaning is addressed, but not eliminated, through validity queries of all three types. There will always be some degree of uncertainty. The validity of objective aspects of interpretation is only potentially resolvable through the principle of multiple access. Thus, it seems easier to diminish the extent of uncertainty related to objective claims. Moreover, objective claims can be very easily taken for granted because of a strong sense of certainty ascribed by Westerners to information from their senses, particularly from vision (Carspecken, 2003). For example, we would probably have little reason to question whether or not the chair next to me was empty (an objective claim) or exists — our certainty would be very strong and the level of facticity we ascribe these claims would be high. In fact, it would seem crazy to query such claims in this example. Actually, in this example, it is hard to come up with an objective claim that would even seem sensible to query, but let's look at the crux of the misunderstanding: you did not notice that Lucy was behind you and I did not realize that you were looking at me when I gestured to her. These are objective claims whose uncertainty had to do with the scope of observational and attentional view we each had. In ordinary life, we deal with the uncertainty associated with objective claims by addressing definitions, by making sure our observations are accurate (including in terms of scope), and by establishing procedures for getting information. Certainty about objective claims invokes a distinction between the claim and the "observation" or the way things are/work.

In contrast, with respect to the uncertainty that might be involved in understanding my initial intentions, one will have to trust that I am being honest and sincere and that I know how I feel. I might experience greater certainty about this than you, because you do not have direct access to my intentional states of mind. So certainty about our self-knowledge claims involves a distinction between our claims and our self-awareness and self-expression.

We would establish certainty about the norms involved by pointing to other supportive and backgrounded norms on which we find agreement. For example, if you said to me "Are you saying that it is okay for you to save a chair for someone at this meeting?" then you would be calling the certainty of that validity claim into question. I might be quite certain about the validity of many other normative claims (such as that people should sit in chairs at the meeting and that people should sit one person to a chair), and experience less certainty about the validity of the normative claim that people should be able to hold or save chairs for other people. Your query would indicate some uncertainty about the validity that particular normative claim.

So while uncertainty is linked to validity claim and while different aspects of certainty reflect different types of validity, uncertainty itself is not solely a product of subjectivity, nor is it totally eliminated when objective claims are offered up. (For a detailed discussion of certainty as it relates to meaning and truth claims, see Carspecken, 2003.) This is important because in the ideology of U.S. life there is a counterintuitive claim that the more certain we are of a truth claim, the more objective it is; the less certain we are of a truth claim, the more subjective it is. This formulation is just not as precise as we actually experience it in our ordinary lives. I am

every bit as certain that I love my children (and so are my children)—a subjective claim—as I am that my children exist in observable form—an objective claim.

There is one more aspect of uncertainty that is even more primary than certainty related to the validity of truth claims, and that is the uncertainty linked to never knowing for sure what someone means. This isn't just about never knowing for sure what another intends, but actually never knowing for sure that there is identity of meaning in any given particular interaction (Carspecken, 2003). We at best understand a range of possible meanings. As Rolfe (2000) stated, it is not a matter of "denying the existence of a real(ist) world, nor … necessarily claiming that we can never 'know' that world, simply that we can never know that we know it" (p. 173). The reason we can never know that we know it is because we cannot establish the identity of meaning. Understanding does not require identity of meaning and instead requires intersubjective fields of possible meaning. Validity as an interpretive concept in ordinary life has this same quality.

Three insights about validity given the certainty/uncertainty of meaning are relevant to the discussion applying ordinary concepts of validity to social science. These insights include: (1) that uncertainty is not a fixed commodity, but indicates domains of validity concern; (2) that uncertainty happens at the level of meaning and is, therefore, not solely a matter of method and is always a matter of interpretation (specifically, interpretation is always partial and a person always could have acted otherwise); and (3) that (un)certainty is addressed via query. "Certainty simply has no paradigm, it is rather a telos of a longing for presence" (Carspecken, 2003, p. 1039) that cannot be fully resolved communicatively through validity queries. "When people push on the question of certainty …, then principles that had always been in the background move forward to become problems" (Carspecken, 2003, p. 1039). These insights are about the nature of validity itself and how we might query that uncertainty, though provisionally and incompletely. "No final answer [to the question 'What do you mean?'] can be formulated but we do [in everyday life] understand what conditions would be required" to answer the question in any given instance in which the question of certainty arises (Carspecken, 2003, p. 1039).

The "As If" Character of Ordinary Interpretation

In our ordinary lives, we understand gestures and utterances through an "as if" quality. This as-if character is basic to meaning. It implicates the intersubjective ground of interpretation. Just in the way a person could have always acted otherwise, within a bounded range of possibilities, an interpretation will always indicate that one is interpreting/expressing something as if a particular set of conditions, assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, proclivities, and whole worlds hold as valid truth claims. This as-if quality indicates that we cannot ever fully explicate the meaning of something and must instead make references that cannot be totally cashed in. On some level, we have to allow the as-if character of understanding to remain. The as-if aspect of understanding always takes a propositional form—actually, the as-if nature of interpretation is entirely propositional in structure (Tugendhat, 1986). This is one of the clearest ways to see the necessarily linguistic and representational aspect of understanding — the way understanding always, in part, invokes this as-if quality. This quality also has motivational force underneath it—the desire to be understood or to understand in a particular way.

Let's return to the example. Of course, on the surface, one might interpret my gesture as if it were an invitation. The mode of inviting carries with it a host of claims including the expectation that you would thank me and that I am a nice person. In addition to this layer of

as-if clustering, there is also the as-if character that has to do with the pragmatic coordination of our interaction. This could be articulated like this: We act as if we are making entitlements for which we are also implicitly expected to make good on should this be requested of us. "Every time any of us acts meaningfully our expressions tacitly carry 'promissory notes' that others can ask to be redeemed'" (Carpecken, 2003, p. 1023). This as-if character is part of what constitutes the paradigmatic horizon of our understanding one another (Carspecken, 1996). In referring to Habermas's ideas about the normative grounds of understanding, Carspecken (2003) reminds us that "the form of both objective and subjective validity claims may have evolved via metaphoric extension from the normative claim" (p. 1034).

It is this as-if quality that some of the sharpest work on referential semantics elucidates and it is this as-if quality of meaning that we have more particularly focused on since the linguistic turn in philosophy and social science.

Care and Dasein in Ordinary Experience

When we are oriented toward understanding those we are interacting with, we are investing ourselves — we care. We care in a way that brings our own identity into being with others while simultaneously opening up our interest in understanding others in a particular way. This understanding has the potential of changing us, and we realize that when we are in these interactive encounters with others, we may emerge new in the process. Heidegger used the word "Dasein" to mean something like one's particular being there, one's "disclosedness" (paraphrased from Tugendhat, 1986, p. 151). It is through understanding that we are able to understand and be understood—to be recognized. "A core 'interest' to all human beings would be the 'interest' in having and maintaining a self. This is an interest that is wholly intersubjective in constitution" (Carspecken, 2003, p. 1035). Recognizing others and being recognized by others is a fundamental element of understanding and interpretation in our ordinary experiences. Often enough, this recognition is satisfied in quite backgrounded ways. "Meaningful acts are motivated, in part, at varying levels of foregrounding and background[ing], by the identity claims they put at stake" (Carspecken, 2003, p. 1036).

There is a necessary connection between the validity of truth claims we offer up and the sense of self carried by the claim. This connection links the validity accepted of the claim to the sense of one's self as a valid worthwhile truth-sayer. When we are engaged in validity efforts, we are also engaged in identity efforts. In some ways, this helps us better understand why there is such passion and diffusion and proliferation going on in the validity discourse itself. As we have staked ourselves in our research and our research findings, we have linked the validity of our own identities in the validity of the work to which we are associating our "selves" (Korth, 2005).

Applying These Concepts to Social Science

Ordinary concepts of validity seem particularly relevant to the way social scientists make sense or interpret ordinary life. In other words, it does not seem like much a stretch to say that ordinary concepts of validity would apply to the substantive material of ordinary life experience under investigation by social scientists. The interpretation of ordinary life tends to be more directly engaged in qualitative approaches to inquiry because ordinary life tends to be more directly engaged with through qualitative research endeavors. However, ordinary concepts of

validity are also applicable in a basic way to understanding social science validity across all sorts of methodological approaches, methods, and designs. This point has been made by others. For example, Carspecken (2003) wrote: "Critical epistemology is a theory of knowledge, truth and power that is exactly this: an articulation of already understood but implicit assumptions and structures used in the course of everyday life" (p. 1040).

This section will largely explore the insights for social science, in general, and qualitative research, most specifically, but will end by troubling this approach. The idea here is to look directly at validity and see how in what ways the concept of validity drawn from ordinary life might have merits for social science.

The Interpretive, Intersubjective Quality of Validity

Validity claiming is a process of articulating what it would take to figure out whether or not something is true (in the objective sense), authentic (in the subjective sense) and right or appropriate (in the normative sense). It is an interpretive process and all interpretation is a manner of position-taking (Mead, 1934; Habermas, 1984; Maxwell, 1996; Carspecken, 2003). This quality of validity holds for all kinds of claims in social science. It is a characteristic of validity, not a characteristic of particular social science methodologies, per se.

We can talk about this with respect to observation. Elements of observation are involved in all forms of social science, whether through direct observation or not. In Western experience, we talk as if "seeing is believing" and so we can easily take for granted the interpretive work involved in "seeing." Historically speaking, the effects of this for Western social science have been to think that objective claims associated with observation primarily rely on our senses and work off of the principle of multiple access and are not, in fact, interpretive. But a similar error is offered up by scholars who claim that qualitative research is subjective and not objective; these scholars they fail to acknowledge the observational engagements of qualitative research. These observational elements have objective components to them regardless of the type, manner, or paradigm under which the researcher is attending to her work. When queried, the objective validity will rely upon procedures related to what things are (how they can be measured, observed, and so forth) and how they work (functions and consequences). In any given particular study (even autoethnography), there will be observations and there will be objective claims. But these will not be the only kinds of claim (even in quantitative studies, objective claims may be foregrounded, but they do not operate solely) and all observations are constituted of interpretation and intersubjectivity. Observations are not free of interpretation. While most social scientists will acknowledge this point, the ramifications for it have not been easily admitted into the conceptions of validity held by the social scientists.

The categorical distinctions between objectivity, subjectivity, and normativity are implicit in the interpretive nature of validity because our interpretations are understood through these categories. This distinction would help us talk about validity issues that have surfaced in the literature. For example, there are arguments about whether or not research should be held accountable to criteria of accuracy. In our ordinary lives, if we were interpreting something objectively, we would hold the meaning accountable to accuracy with respect to its descriptive characteristics of things in the external world and how they work. We would do this even if our conversation is primarily about subjective and evaluative interests. Similarly, it would be possible to raise queries about research interests too (Korth, 2005). Transformational research (Cho & Trent, 2006) foregrounds normative claims about what the research itself should accomplish

in the real world. Even with normative claims foregrounded, there are objective claims about the way things are for the participants that could be queried, and subjective claims about the experiences of the researcher (research reflections) that can be queried. The point here is that all research projects will involve, to varying degrees, objective, subjective, and normative claims with warrants that necessarily fit the category (criteria of accuracy, honesty, normative rightness, for example). Each of these criteria can be addressed through a variety of validity techniques (which the research literature has abundantly supplied). Qualitative researchers might take Peshkin's (1988) work on subjectivity (which includes both subjective and normative interests) as one approach to articulating the subjectivity involved in the research process. It has been common for researchers to speak of objective and subjective validity in research (though these are often talked about as if their difference is one of magnitude or continuum, rather than category).

This interpretive, intersubjective characteristic of validity can be unifying procedurally (an argument-based approach to validity would be implied) and also in terms of the claim-oriented types of validity that would be amenable to query regardless of the type of research or philosophical paradigm one wants to affiliate with and conduct. Given this characteristic, it doesn't make sense to treat research validity as being either objective or subjective or research projects as being only objective or subjective. Furthermore, it would not make much sense to talk about research as valid without an understanding that this is always a negotiable, consensual process of querying what might be taken for granted in the claims.

The Uncertainty of Meaning and Validity

Uncertainty is one of the characteristics of meaning and validity. Uncertainty related to particular kinds of truth claims will involve querying those claims on grounds related to the type of claim — objective, subjective, normative as has been previously described. This is primarily the kind of uncertainty that social scientists try to eliminate. We know that our truth claims can be fallible and that we must be open to challenge and change. When social scientists thought of their work as noninterpretive, a more limited view of uncertainty made sense. Now, however, even people involved in using very objective, quantitative methods acknowledge the interpretive aspects of their research. And interpretation will always carry an element of uncertainty that is not merely about the content of the truth claims—full and complete understanding is not possible to articulate. This insight, also, speaks to the goals of research. The idea of accumulating accurate information about the world (internal and external) can, at best, be a provisional and secondary one: provisional in the sense that our research will constantly be updated by new information, but also by new ways of interpreting old information; secondary in the sense that how people interpret, utilize, care about, change, and engage with the information is more primarily of interest.

The uncertainty character compels us to move past thinking of research as either valid or not. "Either it is/or it isn't" nature of validity has been challenged by others. For example, Aguinaldo (2004) proposed that qualitative researchers should not be asking "is this valid research? Yes or No"; but should instead be asking "What is this research valid for?" However, the nature of validity even in this second question seems to reside in the either/or proposition. For example, if we answer the second of Aguinaldo's questions with the proposition "This research is valid for better understanding the way children read difficult texts," we have still assumed it either is or is not valid for this purpose. We don't assume it is or is not valid

in general, but in particular, given a context. Scheurich (1997) also argued against this either/or way of thinking of validity. In the place of this either/or conceptualization, Scheurich proposed an approach to validity that is dialogic specifically across difference. Conversations across difference help researchers address the uncertainty related to content of truth claims in part because the difference requires us not to take certainty (or identity/sameness of meaning) for granted. Conversations across difference can help researchers face the limits of understanding and interpretation.

What we can be certain about is the conditions under which we could query (Carspecken, 2003).

In research, we need to toggle between the limits of knowledge and the conditions of knowledge. We also need to address the content fallibility, which is the result of never being surely able to reach full consensus on the level of content. This quality of validity seems to require that researchers (1) leave their work open to scrutiny and (2) recognize the boundaries of their work, particularly across difference. Postmodern and poststructuralist forms of research foreground this necessary uncertainty, but often times the insights have been treated as if this is uncertainty rules out the possibility of knowledge or truth all together. In contrast, the insights of ordinary life teach us that even though uncertainty is necessary, it only means our capacity to understand is partial, not eliminated. Our will to knowledge is strong and our capacity for learning and coming to better understand one another is ongoing. This uncertainty does not rule out the possibility for truth; it rules out the concept of totalizing and complete truth at any one given time. Keeping the dialogue of difference at play is one way of taking seriously the uncertainty that inheres in meaning and validity. Scheurich's proposal is one that not only applies to postmodern forms of research, but to all research precisely because uncertainty is a characteristic of all validity and, therefore, all inquiry.

"As if" Quality of Validity

Searle's (1970) speech act theory helped to illustrate the illocutionary force of utterances — the action that was accomplished in speaking. For example, if I say "Girls do well in mathematics," the illocutionary force is something like "I AM SAYING that girls do well in mathematics" and "I ASSERT that I KNOW girls do well in mathematics" The as-if quality of the validity comes to play in the relation between my speech action as a claim (the illocutionary force) and the claim itself. The as-if quality of validity indicates that social science approaches to validity that solely depend on the idea of a match between referent and object are not tenable.

This as-if quality is found foregrounded in approaches to social science that theorize language as the fundamental basis for validity. For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proposed the idea that all language is metaphorical and this has implications for how research claims are interpreted (for example, one might look at the ways the claims themselves are metaphorically contingent) and how research claims are established (for example, one might examine metaphors like inside/outside as applied to research positionality). Minh-ha (1989) voiced a strongly representational view of social science that also foregrounds the as-if quality of validity. With respect to validity, she concludes that no universal validity is possible, only fractured, momentary structures of meaning that do not or need not hold up to particular validity tests. The most important validity issue for her is how the researcher acts as if she is a knower, an interpreter, an articulator, and so forth. Here the metaphorical nature is located between the researcher and how she positions herself. In other words, the as-if quality is about the relation

between the I in the illocutionary force and the pragmatic positionality one would find in that force. I—the sayer; I—the knower; and so forth.

Earlier in the chapter, I described some metaphorical approaches to the description of validity—namely, Richardson's crystallization. The metaphorical approaches to validity recognize that validity itself has an as-if quality that defies being fully articulated, but can be alluded to and referenced through metaphors. The metaphors can invoke subtleties for the interpreters that might be difficult to convey straight up. Though this difficulty speaks to the practical problem of describing validity, at its heart, those who have been drawn to describing validity in this way recognize that validity might best be understood and enacted through proximal metaphors that unite particular characteristics and demonstrate particular uses.

The Dasein Quality of Validity

This aspect of validity links both the doing and producing of research to the praxis needs of the researcher (Carspecken, 2002) and to the researcher's relationship with participants. Ultimately, the researchers, as with persons in their ordinary life experiences, must win the free assent of rational colleagues regarding the validity of their work as part of what it means to be recognized as a worthwhile and valid scholar. One's passion must be engaged, but also opened to others and reflected upon. In some research, this aspect of validity might be more highly backgrounded than in other types of studies (perhaps this is the case with the natural sciences in comparison with autoethnography, for example). Nevertheless, it isn't really the type of research that makes this an issue; rather, it is always at issue. I remember reading about the scientist Maurice Wilkins (Nobel Laureate) who was involved in research that contributed to the atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. He felt remorse when the bomb worked. He spent much of the rest of his life trying to engage in science in ways that contributed to making the world a better place. He led a group called the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, which was formed in 1969 in order to pose questions about the social effects of science (Rose & Rose, 1976). Rose and Rose (1976) describe a natural science that is moving increasingly toward an articulation of this insight in the way it accounts self-reflectively for its own worth.

Cho and Trent (2006) distinguished between transactional and transformational qualitative research, suggesting that transactional researchers were those who looked at validity in terms of their interactions, interpretations, and understandings with/of participants; while transformational qualitative researchers are those who associate the validity of their work with eventual ideals regarding transformational outcomes. This distinction suggests that the Dasein quality of validity is more directly drawn out in some instances, namely when transformational orientations are foregrounded or explicated. But every act of inquiry is an act whereby the researcher is risking herself and the effects for this on validity have been variously named (catalytic validity is one example). McLaren (1993) described this as "being wounded in the field." When one enters a research project, one does so open-minded not only with respect to the substance of one's research questions, but also with regards to one's cares for others and for the self, one's identity so to speak. The basic validity issue at question has to do with worthwhileness and this issue gets at the heart of intersubjectivity and the normative claim. Every critical effort questioning claims to truth, that is, every validity effort, involves the problem of identifying who we are and who we can be through the critique.

The Trouble with Ordinary Validity in Practice: Must Social Science be Truer than True?

Our ordinary validity ensuring processes have problems. In practice, our orientations toward understanding are deeply riddled with oppressive hangovers that go masked in terms of our orientations and intentionalities (Beach, 2003; Carspecken, 2003). Power can distort our capacity to reach consensus and understand truth. But good research ought not perpetuate such masks, rather research ought to contribute to making the world a better place.

Woodhouse, Hess, Breyman, and Martin (2002) remind us that all research is troubled:

> Because all inquiries and knowledge claims occur in social contexts by persons with cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and other commitments, biases, and ideologies, all research can, of course, be said to have a normative component. (p. 298)

Woodhouse includes biases and ideologies in the category of normative, but I think we can safely say (given Habermas's refinements of the terms "objective," "subjective," and "normative") that "social" would be an adequate substitution. The point here is that ordinary interactions have problems in terms of validity. How then can we loosen research from the ordinary binds that limit our understanding of one another (Beach, 2003; Lather, 1993)?

Habermas (1987) has suggested that validity queries can be and regularly are violated on a procedural level because of power, other forms of inequity, and structural distortions.

The answer to this question draws researchers back to the ordinary context of validity. Habermas (1984 and elsewhere) has suggested that validity queries can be violated on a procedural level. These violations take the fundamental form of breaching with principles of egalitarianism and openness, losing sight of the ideal that is implicit to every critical act. Carspecken (1996) ends his practical, methodological guide with the principle of egalitarianism, stating that the best way to limit potential harm to participants is to engage in as democratic a research process as possible. Beach (2003) and Korth (2002) would echo these sentiments. Openness involves coming to the dialogue with an open mind, willing to learn from those with whom you are conversing. The point has already been made that this is best facilitated by encouraging a dialogue across difference. Wilkins (1999), in referring to the strong working relationship among his colleagues Watson and Crick, concluded that "dialogue between scientists who do not share views might be the most important vehicle for keeping science accountable for its social effects" (Dennis, 2009). Power distorts our capacities to freely assent and dissent by damaging the possibilities for egalitarian and open conditions. This happens both in our research and in the ordinary context. We must work against this in both spheres. However, the added complication of the power wielded by science and publication results in the likelihood that the claims rendered by social scientists will be interpreted as "more true" than claims offered up in everyday interactions. For this reason, and because such interpretive distortions have effects on the social world, researchers must be extra careful to encourage conditions of egalitarianism and openness, at the heart of which is self-reflection and freedom from power.

> The knowledge gained by a social scientist in research can and should follow the principles of the ideal speech situation [referencing Habermas's notion and the principle just identified] to invite the voices of those "being studied" into the research process and to allow those voices to change the pre-existing ideas of the researchers. This theory gives us standards by which to design and undertake research that will result in well-supported claims and well-articulated articulations of the research limitations. (Carspecken, 2003, p. 1027)

Also, we should not forget that one of the first layers of transformation comes in the shape of consciousness-raising. Research always has this potential at its disposal (Korth, 2002).

A Unifying Approach to Validity: Conclusion

Rather than approach the problem of complexity by proposing a proliferation of different, divergent, and even contradictory constructs that might each in some nuanced way contribute to thinking of research as valid, the approach I have been establishing involves characterizing the nature of validity in ordinary life from which we might be able to discuss the validity of particular research efforts. In other words, I am starting with the nature of validity rather than with the nature of research; though the two are like sides of the same coin. In this conclusion, I briefly locate an approach to validity that shares many similarities with this proposal and then sketch out the proposal using the schematic presented earlier in the paper.

Argument-Based Validity

Moghaddam (2007), like Carspecken (2003), argued that "validity refers to the reasons we have for believing truth claims" (p. 236). This approach matches up with an approach known as the argument-based validity—an idea that has currency among methodologists of both quantitative and qualitative inquiry (Kane, 1992; Polkinghorne, 2007). Kane (1992), who writes on validity in the quantitative tradition, suggested that validity is an interpretive accomplishment (he drew on Cronbach, 1971, and Messick, 1989, to develop these ideas) whose inferences must hold up to queries. He proposed the idea of argument-based validity "adopts the interpretation as the framework for collecting and presenting validity evidence and explicitly associates validity with the plausibility of the various assumptions and inferences involved in the interpretation" (p. 528). Kane goes further to indicate that the validity argument is actually inherent in the interpretation itself. He proposes (1992), for the context of research that analyzes test scores, that interpretations be analyzed according to "the arguments associated with the interpretations" and that validity be defined "in terms of the overall justification of those arguments" (p. 528). According to Kane, the kinds of evidence needed for validation is determined by the content of the interpretive argument itself. "The validity of an interpretation can be defined in terms of the degree to which the interpretive argument is plausible and appropriate" (p. 532). The validity argument functions as a meta-argument, making the interpretive argument more explicit.

Kane et al. (1999) identified five types of inference made in quantitative research, particularly when using tests as a way of gathering data. These five types of inference include evaluation, generalization, extrapolation, explanation, and decision. Others have been developing this argument-based approach even further (see Kim, 2010; Bachman, 2003; Mislevy, Steinberg, & Almond, 2003). This particular group of scholars makes reference to the argument-based validity work of Toulmin (1969). They have this in common with Habermas. This synergy might indicate some common starting points for forging a unifying conceptualization of validity across the traditional quantitative/qualitative divide.

Polkinghorne (2007) argued that validity is a "prototype" concept rather than a "definitional" concept. He was also arguing for a more unified approach to validity across research communities and he built his position up in much the same way I have done here—by looking at validity directly and then talking about its application for social science. "A conclusion

is valid when there is sufficient evidence and/or reasons to reasonably believe it is so… . A degree of validity or confidence is given to a claim that is proportionate to the strength and power of the argument" (p. 475). He goes on to say, "In spite of differing assumptions, I expect that both social science communities adhere to the general notion that judgments about the validity of a knowledge claim depend on the force and soundness of the argument [not in a rule-based way, but following Habermas in a communicative-rationality way] in support of the claim" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 476). What divides the communities, according to Polkinghorne, are disagreements about what counts as evidence and reasonable argument. I think a way through this division is Habermas's categorization of the three types of validity claim, which corresponds with how we resolve validity concerns in ordinary life experiences.

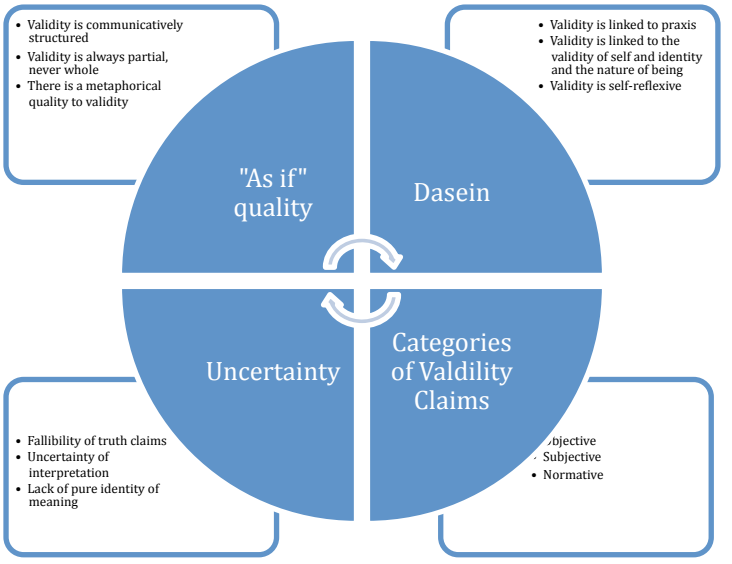
We can look at the structure of arguments to get an idea of how these might apply to social science. Toulmin (1969) proposed that a good argument makes explicit the connection between the conclusion and the evidence, examples of the evidence, justification for the link between the evidence and the conclusions, and rationale for the justification. Perelman (1982) described arguments as (1) having an informal structure (not the formal or strict structure of induction or deduction); (2) addressing an audience ideal or concrete; (3) involving ambiguity; and (4) seeking a measure of acceptance (not total acceptance). These descriptions are compatible with what we learned about validity in ordinary life.

The New Proposal: Following Habermas

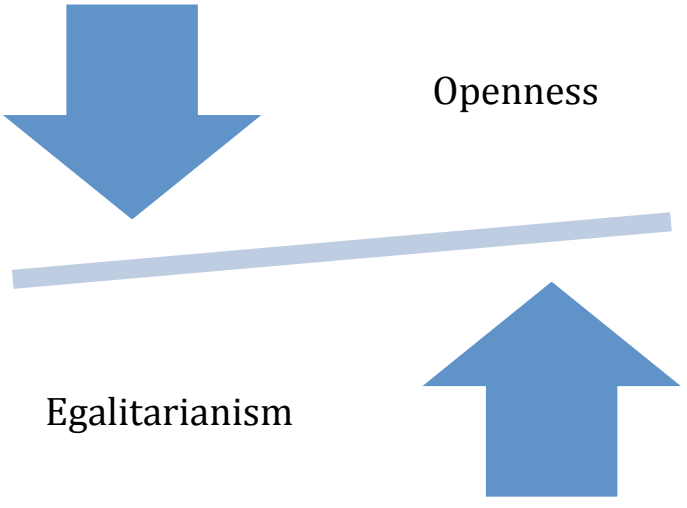
The argument-based approach is in line with the insights we garnered from the everyday context of validity and it demonstrates a potential line of synergy among researchers who engage in both quantitative and qualitative inquiry. We can locate this argument-based approach in the unifying proposal that I am advocating here. The procedural similarities might make it seem that my proposal is redundant to the argument-based approach; these other approaches do not maximize their own insights because they stop short in identifying the intuitive criteria for assessing the validity of objective, subjective, and normative claims, which would be the same regardless of whether one is conducting a study that employs qualitative or quantitative methods and regardless of the type of paradigm to which one ascribes. The following schematic is a representation of that proposal — a proposal that focuses on the nature of validity as its orienting force with explicit correctives for possible ideological distortions and the force of power.

Qualities/Characteristics of Validity. This proposal involves describing the characteristics of validity in the ordinary contexts. I did that by identifying four main elements of the characteristics that emerge from already assumed social, intersubjective way of understanding meaning.

These characteristics of validity have been well described in the chapter. They provide the ground for saying an argument-based approach to validity is, in fact, valid. They also supply the ground for critique that would enable researchers to move toward making claims that are in some ways liberated from the ideologies and distortions that can riddle truth in the ordinary milieu. Though, this same potential for critique is also accessible to participants. There is no reason why these emergent characteristics of validity would not be relevant to all forms of social science regardless of whether quantitative or qualitative methods are being utilized.

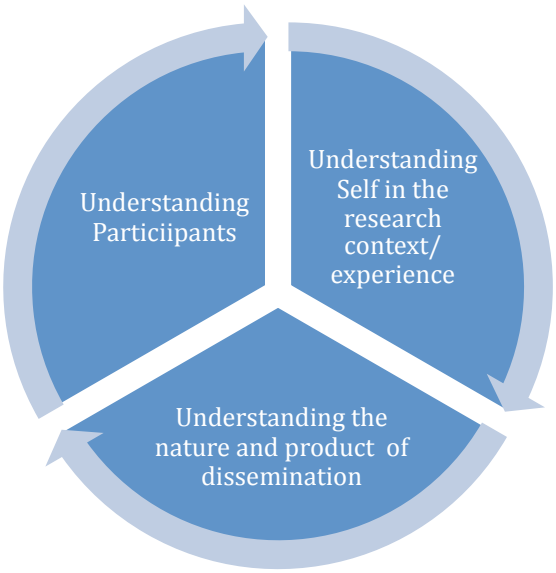


Applications to Characteristics of Research. Habermas's ideal speech situation is a limit case description of the basic underlying assumptions of coming to understand one another through communication. The fundamental principles of this are (1) openness (both in terms of one's expression and in terms of one willingness to hear and be persuaded by others' perspectives) and (2) egalitarianism (all people having equal opportunity to voice and listen to the various ideas that are expressed). These principles set the conditions to best engage the above characteristics of validity. This is no different than in ordinary contexts, but in our research projects we should be explicit about accounting for these conditions. Argument-based approaches to validity make the most sense when these conditions are actualized to the best of our abilities. This holds regardless of whether we are talking about qualitative or quantitative approaches to inquiry. Dialogue across difference and democratic research practices seem to be the most fruitful way to engage these conditions in the conduct of social science.



Applications to the Domains of Doing Research. In every social science effort, ordinary validity concepts come into play across at least three recursive domains. One domain involves understanding participants. Another domain involves the researcher's self-reflective understanding of his or her own involvement in the activities of participants. A third domain has to do with how the dialogue about those findings is rendered public. In all cases, the validity issues are related to the insights garnered from looking at validity in the ordinary context: We can liken the first domain to the experience of witnessing an interaction and being involved in the same interaction. We can liken the second domain to the experience of reflecting on our interactions with others. We can liken the third domain to the experience of telling someone else a story or an account of the interactions. We do these things all the time in ordinary life. For researchers involved in more fixed- designed, quantitative studies, these three domains are quite distinct from one another in ways that are abstracted from, but not unrelated to, the more recursive nature of the domains in ordinary life.[5] The characteristics of validity are not shifted because of the domain involved. Each of the characteristics would apply, but the specificity of the relevant questions would, of course, be different. For example, the second domain would really focus on questions about the researcher's perspectives, while the third domain would focus more on questions of representation; but the process of examining the validity would be the same.

Like Beach (2003), I would argue that validity is the catalyst that infuses the three domains and holds the three domains together. The experiences in all three domains should be recursively returned to participants in order to maximize egalitarianism and openness.



In Summary

I have provided an argument for an approach to validity that is grounded in our everyday experience with validity. This approach can be unifying in that its basic principles hold across all varieties of methods. Moreover, it eliminates the need for some divisions that have perplexed the validity debates (like pitting objectivity against subjectivity). Remaining true to the

underlying argument itself, this proposal should be queried, interrogated, challenged, added to, and developed. The idea is to get the conversation on validity moving in a productive, complicated, and inclusive manner.

Notes

1. Creswell and Miller's (2000) approach, on the surface, is antithetical to a movement toward a unified concept because they assume that people from differing paradigms would not be able to agree on what validity means and how it might best be established. The best- case scenario from this perspective is to be sure that one has taken up the validity challenges appropriate to the paradigm or design one is utilizing. It is a utilitarian approach that might be, in the end, the principle upon which a unified vision of validity could be forged from their work.
2. Criteria in these examples are meant to explicate and clarify validity concepts and procedures within very particular fields of qualitative research conduct. There is an abundance of such validity conversations going on within particular design/approach categories. Often, scholars taking this approach assume that validity is such a specified, contingent concept that conversations across designs and paradigms are moot. (Polkinghorne, 2007, is a counter-example of this.) The unifying concept here would have to be something like validity as a paradigmatic-contingent concept—and then one would need to argue (in general, philosophic terms) how validity and paradigm are internally linked.
3. Maxwell's proposal is a strong one, but there are problems in terms of how it has been utilized. One problem with this scheme is that the domains themselves are distinct from the decisions one must make to fit or use the domains in their research (Tracy, 2010). Another problem involves how to link Maxwell's five domains with what others who are approaching the validity problem in the same way are writing (this is a problem related not specifically to Maxwell's ideas, but to the state of the cacophony). For example, Greenwood and Levin (2000) distinguish between credibility, validity, and reliability in ways that Maxwell subsumes into validity.
4. The prospect of a unified concept of validity would be particularly suspect from this perspective because unification is generally the result of power subordination and ideology rather than the force of the better argument. And yet the idea that research ought to be accountable to its ends is a unifying claim itself applicable to any research endeavor.
5. For example, a quantitative researcher might examine the factors correlated with recidivism in juveniles. The researcher seeks to understand the participants by providing some sort of stimulus (a test maybe) for the participants to use to report their experiences with the juvenile justice system as well as their experiences with criminal activity. The researcher's interest in correlation is at its heart an interest in understanding what conditions and characteristics seem to be involved in the person's recidivism. The test and test responses are an abstraction of a possible conversation about recidivism that a researcher and a participant might, in principle, hold. If the participant does not understand the questions on the test or does not have a way to adequately express an honest response or does not think it's appropriate to interact with the researcher, then a misunderstanding akin to the first domain is likely. Also, issues related to how test scores are interpreted have to do with how the researchers are understanding their participants. When the researcher reflects on her decisions (for example, choice of tests and inclusion of particular variables), her commitment to juveniles,her concern for recidivism, or even her discussions of her own objective perspective—these fall into the second domain. The third domain is involved when researchers include particular literature in their scholarship, publish in particular journals, or return findings to participants.

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