



The Unfolding of Methodological Identity: An Autobiographical Study Using Humor, Competing Voices, and Twists

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This article explores my journey from quantitative to qualitative researcher, including the effects this journey has had on my identity as well as on those whom I previously referred to as “subjects”. “Identity” is examined from both an historical as well as from a self-dialogical, autobiographical perspective. Eleven “twists” that mark turning points and detours describe this journey, and this paper employs “voices” that offer contextual background and contradictory advice on the road towards methodological identity. These twists describe experiences as both teacher and student and readers are invited to join in this retrospective reflection in order to experience insights and new appreciations. The article concludes with a brief integration of the literature and contextual reflection as well as several questions that invite readers to consider issues related to methodological identity and implications for teaching and learning that arose as a consequence of this journey. Keywords: Quantitative Research, Qualitative Research, Identity, Reflexivity, Autobiographical, Twists, Voices, Teaching, Learning

While “identity” is the major theme of this story, it involves a journey along roads that I initially thought spanned a two-year timeframe. However, as I engaged in the writing process, I came to recognize that the construction of these roads actually began well before this two-year period; in fact, it spans two decades. The journey described uses “twists” that mark turning points and detours on the way to the previously unknown destination of methodological identity. The contour of the road ending at Twist 10 transformed my vocabulary from “subjects” to “co-researchers” but I only became cognizant of its implications regarding identity at Twist 11 where I was led to use a writer’s voice as a result of my epiphany about the relationship between quantitative and qualitative research. Describing my own methodological journey has been a therapeutic experience that has resulted in a clarification of my identity. Likewise, I hope that fellow travelers will recognize some commonalities with their own journeys.

In addition to the metaphor of “twists” used to explain the journey towards methodological identity, two internal competing voices that vied for my attention along the way are used to help convey the bumpy road that many of us sometimes travel. I unceremoniously dubbed these co-existing voices as Self 1 and Self 2. Self 1 represents the more idealistic self while Self 2 represents the more cynical and wordly self. The use of Self 1 and Self 2 not only describes inner conflicts, but also takes advantage of using first person voice in order to enable readers to experience vicarious speech that seems spontaneous (Purcell, 1996). While the road culminating in Twists 10 and 11 directly connects to my new identity as a qualitative researcher, the chronological aspects of this

journey as described in Twists 1 to 9 are important to traverse if Twists 10 and 11 are to be fully appreciated. Just as important, the twists and competing voices along the way provide a firmer foundation for conceptualizing not only the culminating twists but also an historical context for any twists that may lie beyond the next horizon!

The Literature as Preview

As I worked on this account and traversed the earlier twists from an historical perspective and the more current twists from more of an auto-phenomenological one, I consulted the literature to see if it could throw some light on the ontological problem of identity. I found that while much has been written regarding identity, I did not find a melding of the identity literature with a specific focus on methodological identity -- at least using an autobiographical approach. Therefore, I hope that this current study provides an additional perspective regarding how individuals' methodological identity can change over time as a function of both their experience and their reflection upon these experiences.

The concept of identity was described in Piaget's early writings as a component of his "Formal Operational" stage of cognitive development (Piaget, 1954, 1964). When we are able to perform abstract thinking and self-reflection, the problem of forming one's identity comes to the fore. I have also found that Piaget's concept of *accommodation* (which is a subset of *adaptation*), helps to explain how a heretofore quantitatively-trained individual (myself) came to realize that the essence of some of the most interesting phenomena in education and the social sciences exhibit an almost impenetrable shield for understanding them via quantification.

I have found a great deal of validity in the expression that "there is nothing new under the sun" especially when it comes to educational "innovations". It is therefore not surprising that my "original" concept of *twists* to represent life changes was already utilized by Borgatta and Borgatta (1992), when they studied transitions or turning points that people experience during problematic times of their lives. In addition, the term *epiphanies*, that is analogous to *twists* was also previously coined by Denzin (1989). Nonetheless, I decided to stick with *twists* since in my blissful ignorance I found that it connoted my feelings about this journey in a fully satisfactory manner. I also feel that, instead of feeling "unoriginal" (a Self 2 accusation), perhaps I should feel validated since others have expressed the same idea (a Self 1 compliment)!

Based on the work of Erik Erikson, Marcia (1991) identified four types of identity and crisis stages:

1. Foreclosure: No identity crisis – individuals assume an identity based on parental or other authority choices and attributes.
2. Identity Diffusion: Individuals tried but failed to resolve competing identities.
3. Moratorium: Individuals are in the thick of the battle and experimenting with competing identities and ideologies.
4. Identity Achievement: Individuals feel that they have wrestled with and successfully achieved their own identity and are comfortable with it.

These four stages illuminated this journey. My efforts were also informed by Carr's (1986) description of the proper role of narrative in historical works as well as coming to recognize the argument that the integration of narrative and historical methods "was seen as a too "literary" view of a discipline which sought to be objective and scientific (p. 7). This resonated with my own experience when a colleague jokingly referred to my journey from quantitative to qualitative as "going to the dark side" (at least, I think he was joking)!

I also found the concept of *generalizability* to be a flashpoint for me as during this journey. For example, in relation to Twist 10 (my first qualitative study) where my informant seemed to "come out of thin air", I was initially held captive by the unquestioned assertion that a sole informant could not be touted as representative of anything; however, the more that I got to know my informant's story, I realized that his case was not only interesting but surely had to be important. Having grown up in the quantitative tradition, this, of course, smacked of heresy since one was supposed to randomly select "subjects" from a defined population in order to promote generalizability. My first line of defense against this entrenched position was the phrase "all generalizations are dangerous, even this one" credited to the French novelist Alexandre Dumas (Moncurs, 2011). However, Wolcott (1988) provided a more relevant retort when he credited Margaret Mead with saying that the question is not "is this case representative?" but rather, "what is this case representative of?" (p. 203). The more that I reflected on my informant's situation, the more convinced I became that his case was indeed representative of exactly what had been perplexing me.

Wolcott (1988) also gave me solace as I negotiated Twists 9 to 11 ("Identity Shakeup") when he noted, "It is hard to imagine that ethnography will ever wring educational research from the iron grip of the statistical methodologists, but it is comforting to note the current receptivity among educators to other ways of asking and other ways of looking" (p. 187). In a way that I can't quite explain, this sentiment gave me the go-ahead to continue my journey; yet, at the same time, the prediction of never getting a real balance in educational research seemed a bit pessimistic. However, given the current emphasis on doing "real science" in education, this 20-year prediction has seemingly not yet been proven false.

One of the themes that I stressed when teaching quantitative methods (Twist 5) was the central importance of the "measurement instrument". Although seemingly innocuous in comparison with the other two components of quantitative research (Design and Statistics), I have always felt that the instrument we use (whether a test or researchers themselves) is terribly important because it enables us to generate the critical evidence upon which we make judgments about things like schools and programs and should be the central component of research. Even though the importance of validity and reliability are addressed in most quantitative research texts, I came to realize that they are generally explained in terms of technical purity that obscures the supportive role that they should play in helping to generate quality evidence. As I traced my journey, this realization seemed to demand my attention when a serendipitous event occurred with the arrival in my mailbox of the *Review of Research in Education* with this question on the cover: "What Counts as Evidence in Educational Settings?" As I began to read the introductory article (Luke, Green, & Kelly, 2010) I began to feel validated in my beliefs and to think

that perhaps we all carry around more insights that we think—it just sometimes takes some “validation” from colleagues to help us rediscover what we already knew!

Angrosino (1994) discusses individual identity as communicated both through the form as well as the content of autobiographical approaches while Elliott (2005) references the concept of a *narrative identity* (Introduction). Consequently, if after reading this article you find that there are gaps and sometimes “twists” that end up leaving you dizzy, please remember that I started on this journey with both ontological and methodological challenges, so there may still exist vestiges of unresolved issues.

In summary, this paper will explore identity in relation to changes in methodological preferences for discovering new things about the world. This paper also uses humor as a writing device because it seems closest to capturing the essence of what actually occurred and communicating it in a way that is hopefully appealing to readers.

Methodological Considerations

An interesting aspect of this study surfaced when I described it to our university IRB chairperson. Seeing that this was an autobiographical study and that I, the researcher, was also the informant, created a bit of a dilemma. Should I give permission to myself to conduct the research? Might I harm myself during the study? Should I grant myself permission to withdraw at anytime? Fortunately, keeping perspective and common sense at the fore, we agreed that I would simply write a letter to be kept on file by the IRB describing the study and that would be that!

Another interesting question that arose related to the issue of trustworthiness and credibility. How can a researcher be trusted to be honest about his or her feelings as they traverse a journey such as the one described in this study? One idea that came to mind was to use my most sincere voice to proclaim, “I solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me God”; however, I decided this would be a bit much. So, instead, I hoped that by using competing voices that readers might perceive some measure of independent verification (member checking?) that might serve as an indicator of credibility – at the very least, perhaps they might be able to fall back on the old saw that the truth probably lies somewhere in the middle of the positions taken by competing protagonists – in this case, Self 1 and Self 2.

Finally, I hoped that my interest in the identity literature might support the notion that I was truly enmeshed in an internal conflict and that the good guy won in the end. I also documented remembrances of my journey as they came back to me at odd hours of the day and night and these notes and reflections over more than a year’s time might serve to show that I spent adequate “time in the field” and lived with the informant through several cycles of activities thus displaying another hallmark of trustworthiness. On the other hand, some stories (like this one) are never quite finished, so I am optimistic that there will be more opportunities to demonstrate hallmarks of quality as time inexorably moves from left to right.

Procedures

Origin of the Article

The genesis of this article was a presentation in January, 2011 at *The Qualitative Report* Second Annual Conference that was based on the theme of *Identity*. This opportunity came at exactly the right time because it gave me reason to pause and reflect on what had transpired in my methodological life. I found it to be similar to the revelations that are sometimes expressed by informants when they confide to researchers during an interview that they never “had the time” to think about various aspects of their lives and that they now see things more clearly – a classic case of participant –researcher interaction that underscores the fact that we as researchers cannot legitimately think of ourselves as detached from the situation – we simply are *not* laboratory researchers.

Participant and Design Considerations

As readers will see as they peruse this article, I found myself to be a perfect informant for this study because not only did I know the ins and outs of myself fairly well, I was also very willing to share my thoughts and feelings with the researcher! It became obvious that while the study would be autobiographical in nature and that a phenomenological focus on lived experience would inform the entire study, I wasn't sure exactly how to go about describing my journey – should I tell folks what happened using a narrative approach? This was certainly a possibility, since narrative and storytelling is a tried and true method for engaging an audience. The longer the incubation period continued, I felt irritated; much like a germinating pearl probably irritates an oyster, and arrived at the idea of competing voices. This idea was probably implanted in my subconscious by having read a narrative study that used “conflicting voices” (Kim, 2007) although the voices belonged to several different individuals.

The idea of using “twists” arose when I realized that while competing voices might be a good approach, chronology might be an effective way to organize the story (Wolcott, 1994, p. 17). I disclosed previously, while I thought that I was indeed being avant-garde with this idea, I soon found that others had discovered and had used this technique long before I did. Regardless, my fondest desire is that readers find something akin to a pearl at the end of this journey.

Data Collection and Analysis

How does one generate and collect data about oneself? Certainly, journaling and reflective notes are valid methods. However, the key criterion for me was that the emic perspective afforded by my being able to exploit the latent and emerging data within myself as a privileged insider provided a rich source of understanding. In addition, the fact that I had decided on a competing voice approach enabled me to analyze and bifurcate data in a manner analogous to real-time that seemed to ameliorate the need for data reduction while also providing a rich source for reflection and interpretation. For example, as I wrote the “lines” for Self 1 and Self 2, I found that another part of me was already seeing where it was all leading to – the next steps in the journey. It was as if the

ending had already been written and I just needed now to methodically connect the dots to arrive at this destination. Of course, in one way, that was exactly the case, since I was writing about an historical experience. However, in a deeper sense, it was only when I worked to create the dots that the story became fully real to me – a sort of existential experience. While I suppose the dots themselves could be conceived as a kind of “coding”, they certainly were not of the transcribing and categorizing kind; rather, data were x-rayed by insights that arose during the “data collection” and writing phase which was certainly a new experience for a quantitative traditionalist. The results of this process and journey are presented towards the end of this narrative where I will try to further “connect the dots” for readers while recognizing that not everybody sees dots in the same sequence or, for that matter, whether “dots” make sense to them – one person’s dots could be another person’s question marks.

Having set the stage for this study and foreshadowed some results, I now begin to describe the twists of my solitary journey but hope that when finished that readers will have found common ground and may even agree with Stake (1995) when he observed that “it startles us all to find our own perplexities in the lives of others” (p. 7).

Twists 1 to 4: Comfortably Set in My Ways

To understand this self-narrative, it is important for readers to know that I was trained in the quantitative tradition and that my dissertation was rife with numbers and statistics. However, the interesting thing is how this dissertation came into being. My professional life had been eclectic to say the least and, recognizing it as such, required that I make a backward and dispassionate appraisal of it. The upshot of this appraisal has been that I now appreciate the fact that qualitative research embraces and celebrates the mundane and commonplace. This realization in turn has given me encouragement that readers may find this story of at least some interest -- and so on with the journey!

My educational and professional life started out normally enough. I graduated with a major in secondary education and expected to teach high school. However, due to the intrusion of military service, teaching was delayed and later led me to get a master’s degree in the education of the hearing impaired. One of the courses in this program was a research class where I was encouraged by the instructor to continue in this line of study when he said, “You seem to have a knack for this stuff”, which made me feel quite good albeit a bit confused. Of course, this research course was quantitative and it turned out to be *Twist #1* because this is where it all began!

After teaching hearing impaired children for two years, I intended to go back to school to earn my doctorate in “educational research methodology” (a.k.a. design, measurement, and statistics) which I now recognize as a decision resulting from the “knack for this stuff” comment uttered by my instructor in *Twist 1*. Coincidentally, this comment underscores the impact that teachers can have for good or ill on the life choices of their students! *Twist #2* began when I discovered that, although I was not as mathematically talented as some of my classmates, this deficiency was ameliorated by my growing interest in quantitative methodology and consequent hard work. Unfortunately, *Twist #3* was right around the corner when I was recruited (the first and only time in my life) to work in the corporate planning department at a large bank (yes, I

said, “bank”). I have reconstructed the following private speech after working at the bank for a few years:

Self 1: Should I go back to school to get my doctorate?

Self 2: Why? You’re earning more money than you ever would in education, and besides, didn’t you always want a Corvette?

Self 1: You got a point there.

Self 2: Look, I’m not saying that you shouldn’t continue with schooling, but it looks like you’re never going back to the education field. How about getting an MBA – the bank will even pay for it!

Self 1: By Jove, you’re right!

[So, for several years I worked as a Vice President, bought my Vette, enjoyed traveling, and earned my MBA. However, at the ten-year mark, I encountered *twist #4* as described in the following dialogue]:

Self 1: I never really chose business as my vocation, it chose me. Maybe I should go back to graduate school. I can do some part-time coursework and have the best of both worlds!

Self 2: Are you nuts? You have a great life – friends, fun, and more hot cars than most people have in their entire lifetimes!

Self 1: Look, I listened to you ten years ago and yes, I agree that I have had some great times, but this business stuff is just not for me!!

Self 2: Do it your way, but you watch, you’ll agree with me after you visit those ivory-tower, elbow-patched, bespectacled milquetoasts!

Twist 5: The Decision

So, one day I hopped on a bus from downtown to the university to put in my application for part-time graduate work. It seemed all fine and good since part-time seemed to offer a nice gradual re-entry to academe (notwithstanding the barbs thrown by Self 2). But, lo and behold, I soon received a phone call from a university professor (that I did not know at the time was internationally recognized and accomplished in the field of quantitative research) who invited me to come and talk with him. This personal invitation was more of a welcome than I anticipated, but I thought that maybe with the new market-driven consciousness of universities, this is the way they did things nowadays. So, back on the bus I went to what I thought would be a nice welcome to part-time graduate work. However, *Twist #5* turned out to be more like a “twister” rather than a regular old twist! This professor offered me a full-time assistantship for doctoral study. I was dazed and asked for time to think about it. The next day, the following dialectic took place:

Self 1: Maybe I should go back to school full-time. After all, I always wanted to be in academe.

Self 2: Are you crazy? You’re going to give all of this up? I knew I should have never let you get on that bus.

Self 1: Maybe you’re right. Just because I can get an assistantship and work with this accomplished researcher and do some important and

interesting things in education, doesn't compare with the life that I have now – Corvettes and all.

Self 2: Now, you're talking!

Self 1: Then why do I have this hollow feeling like I may pass up the opportunity of a lifetime?

Self 2: Stifle it – go jump in the Vette and meet your fun-loving friends at the bar!

Self 1: (quietly but firmly and with a growing sense of certainty) I know this is what I need to do! Who needs a Corvette or fast friends—this is what I was born to do!

Self 2: It's your life—just remember what I said when you are driving a Yugo and drinking cheap beer!

So, after a decade as a banker, I began a full-time assistantship working with a preeminent quantitative researcher who patiently guided me through almost three years of study and growth in research methods. The Vette was gone, but I was home. On the day my advisor shook my hand to congratulate me on the successful defense of my dissertation, it was both the best feeling I had ever had and the most humbling – what did I really know to deserve to be called “doctor”? But, I had a sense that I would soon be off to bigger and better things.

My first university assignment was at a distant university and involved teaching statistics to doctoral level students in addition to some work in urban schools. I met some wonderful friends and colleagues and I was quite happy with my life and my life story!

Twists 6 and 7 – The Next Big Decisions

Twist 6: This one was unforeseen -- I got married. This phenomenon, of course, added a whole new dimension to the emic perspective! *Twist 7:* I decided to leave full-time academe and accept a job in development (a.k.a. fundraising) for a private school because it allowed me to return home. Although I taught part-time as an adjunct at area universities, I was now outside the university envelope but at least on the outer edge. To refresh your memory (and mine), Twists 1 to 4 took place outside of academe, Twist 5 put me in academe, Twist 6 added another dimension, and now Twist 7 relegated me to the fringes of academe.

Just as with the bank job (way back in Twist 3), I found monetary rewards in my new fundraising occupation and enjoyed my rise in administration as well as my role as confidante to the leader of the organization. However, having once tasted academe, with its focus on teaching, learning, and writing, it remained an integral part of my psyche. However, it took yet another decade to resume this journey!

Twist 8 – Back to Academe

Twist 8: I re-entered academe through the back door of part-time teaching aided by serendipity – a faculty person left for a new job fairly quickly, leaving a hole that the university needed to fill and so they hired me as a “visiting professor”. As such, while I taught a normal load of courses the first year, I was not officially in the tenure and

promotion gambit so I was able to escape much of the committee work and concerns with publishing. It was, however, stressful to re-learn the ropes in the academic environment where faculty members function more as independent contractors compared to the regular office routines and lines of commands in other types of organizations such as a bank. This first year was a whirl of learning irregular routines and trying to get new courses organized -- yet I counted it as a good experience.

The machinations described through twists 1 to 8, although simplified considerably, have shaped my identity as I returned into the academic environment. I re-entered the fray with my quantitative armor still relatively intact; however, that was not to last very long.

Twist 9 – Identity Shakeup I: Teaching Qualitative Research

It soon became apparent that the single qualitative research course that I was assigned to teach to doctoral students during my first year was going to have a larger impact on my identity than I had originally anticipated. I should mention that during the “gray years”, I taught a “qualitative” research course that, in retrospect, I realize was a watered-down version of quantitative research 101. I also had done some work where I wedged a few open-ended items among my quantitative Likert scale items so I now pronounced myself a mixed methods researcher --it did rankle, however, that those words in the open-ended response were not readily digestible by SPSS!

A funny thing then happened to me. I began to become acquainted with qualitative researchers and the likes of Bogdan, Biklen, Clandinin, Creswell, Denzin, Eisner, etc. began to occupy more bookshelf space, endangering Glass, Campbell, Stanley and friends. In addition, many of my doctoral students were leaning towards qualitative dissertations and surprisingly, they seemed to like my approach to teaching. Little did they know that my “approach” which they may have perceived as time-honed, was actually developed on-the-fly as a byproduct of the fight or flight apparatus. While I did learn the essentials of qualitative research fairly rapidly, I now wonder to what extent this was due to intrinsic motivation (appreciating the value of qualitative methods) or extrinsic motivation (promotion and tenure).

In any event, they must have thought that I did a fairly decent job because I was hired as a regular faculty member the following year and I began to do those things that faculty members do -- sit on committees of various sorts, learn to categorize students, and get to know the locations of restrooms and coffee outlets. In addition, almost overnight I came to be considered the guy who knew a lot about qualitative research whereas others, who knew my background, thought of me as a “numbers guy”. What kind of identity confusion do you think that caused?

As I began the second year, the need to write became apparent. Although Twist 11 describes the most significant writing effort in terms of its impact on identity, I came to recognize another interesting but-until-the time-of-this-writing, unknown, subconscious behavioral characteristic that I adopted in relation to collaboration with colleagues. I now realize that when I worked with colleagues who were primarily of the “quantitative mindset” I found myself developing precise problem statements and statistical methods. I now think that perhaps a *quantitative mindset* does not necessarily mean an exclusive focus on numerical data but rather the need to use a more “scientific”

approach to both problem finding *and* problem solving. Because of my experience with this type of mindset and emerging internal blurring of the quantitative-qualitative divide, I seemed to be able to act chameleon-like depending on with whom I was working. I must admit, however, that as I began my first qualitative study (Twist 10), that I did not spend as much time worrying about things like controlling variation prior to collecting data!

Twist 10 – Identity Shakeup II: Conducting my First Qualitative Study

While the pendulum of my identity transformation had certainly reached the half-way point by the beginning of the second year of university employment, it broke completely out of its arc as I neared the end of the year!

The first pendulum-accelerator was my getting smitten with a research idea that was firmly on the qualitative side of the divide. I began a series of interviews with “common folk” who in my mind represented people of great accomplishment. Even when I came to my senses and realized that no, I could not work with eight different people at the same time and get the study done in a few months, I was still enamored with the kind of experiences, data, and relationships that I was able to explore. It became obvious that I was dealing with a different kind of animal than running an Independent t-Test to assess significant differences; rather, I was using my entire experience and knowledge to try and understand people’s lives and their unique contributions. I finally decided to approach my study sequentially in light of the sanity factor when my first informant seemingly materialized “out of thin air”!

An abiding interest of mine is young people who do not go to college or technical school and find themselves in a constant financial struggle – what do they do with their lives? How do they find work? What are their aspirations? I even had a clever title in mind for my first article, “The Fast Food Kids”, and my focus would be the workers at the local Subway restaurant. Unfortunately, I found that trying to corral these itinerant workers was like trying to herd a group of cats (where did I hear that expression before?). Anyhow, after several attempts, it became clear that this idea was impractical. And then “Kirk” fell into my lap!

Although Kirk did not attend college, he met none of the other criteria I had in mind – he was financially secure, owned his own home outright, and was not especially “young” (age 43). However, after some informal gatherings, I realized that his story was fascinating and offered a perspective that I did not initially envision. The fact that Kirk wandered into a shoe repair store at age 16, worked there for 27 years, and had interesting things to say about schooling and guidance counselors got me “hook, line and sinker” (see below for another fishing analogy). As a result, I set up a series of interviews with Kirk and the impact on identity (his and mine) has turned out to be significant.

I wanted the first interview (that took place in a food court of a supermarket over coffee and donuts) to be of the getting-to-know-you variety where I tried hard to keep it casual because Kirk is a very private person. In addition, I really needed an informant (publish or perish jitters) and did not want to scare him away. In retrospect, I felt like I was trying to catch and slowly reel in a fish (is there deception involved in fishing?). I now also wonder how much of the “used car salesman syndrome” I displayed. On the

other hand, maybe I am being too hard on myself. In any event, the fish took the bait even as I gently worked to free the hook.

As the interviews progressed and trust grew, these interviews became more like conversations and I found that Kirk opened his shell more and began sharing his mid-life crisis. It then slowly dawned on me that I was becoming as much of a confidante, and counselor as researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). He once told me that it was only at the times that we got together that he took the time to reflect on his life which, while it might be considered a success in terms of financial stability, was a failure in terms of pursuing his life's passion — music and specifically guitar. The article that I am currently writing about Kirk has the working title, “One of the Lucky Ones or Stuck in a Rut?” which I think captures where he is in life.

I sometimes ask myself to what extent I view Kirk as an instrumentality – a means to an end – an object rather than a person who finds himself at a “crossroads” (his term). I also discovered that when I began to write-up the narrative that I discovered another voice – another “I” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10). I found that trying to integrate Kirk's narrative, our dialogue, and my voice as researcher, was new ground for me since I had been trained to not speak until after the results were stated. This was different, this was interesting, this was *really* different -- reflexivity and positionality had now gone from abstraction to reality!

Twist 11: Coup de Grace – The Article

I re-joined AERA after a 15 year hiatus and volunteered to launch a listserv for the Qualitative SIG. Our newsletter editor came up with an idea to use this listserv for members to ask follow-up questions of an interviewee after the transcript appeared in the newsletter. To make a long story short (or at least a bit shorter), the posts that followed seemed to unleash a compulsion in me to write an article whose thesis was that the “paradigm wars” are now over and that that the methodological training of graduate students should reflect this fact.

However, along the way, I found myself peppering the article with descriptions of my own journey that makes me *now* recognize that my argument that the paradigm wars had ended was actually a recognition that they had ended *for me!* That is, as a consequence of my journey from quantitative to qualitative researcher, I felt that I had something of value to say regarding the complementary nature of the two traditions. I thought I had written a great piece and sent it off to be considered for publication. I envisioned the following conversation among the editor and peer reviewers:

Editor: Folks, I think we have here a truly original perspective on the paradigm wars – it may just be what we have been waiting for all of these years!

Reviewer 1: Hold on Ed, I'm just opening the attachment now...give me a minute. [a minute later] Ed, you're right -- this is unbelievable and it gives common sense direction on how to reconstruct methodological training so that our students don't go down that same old divided highway – Quantitative going East and Qualitative going West – Hallelujah, we now have the solution to this age-old dilemma in our hands!

Reviewer 2: Ditto

Editor: I'm going to call this guy right now so he doesn't submit elsewhere!

Unfortunately, this scenario did not transpire; rather, I received an email that went something like this:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for submitting to our journal. Unfortunately your article is really bad and it sounds like you know very little about this subject -- don't call us, we'll call you.

Thanks again and have a nice day!

The Editors

At least, that's what it said to me -- *Twist II* started off so great and ended so poorly! After picking my chin off the ground after a few days and unloading my disappointment onto my son, wife, Dean, colleagues, and Snoopy, our Beagle (actually, I told Snoopy first, since he seems to have sixth sense about my feelings and a good ear), I began to think of some new tactics to try and get some unsuspecting editor to think along the lines envisioned in my first fanciful scenario. What continued to hurt, however, was that the editor and reviewer made several good points and their criticisms, while stinging, were, in retrospect, accurate – darn those people!

Results

I find it somewhat problematic to present a separate results section for this article since the journey itself incorporated meaningful results – but perhaps that is apparent only from my own perspective. Therefore, I felt I should provide readers with an encapsulation of results by continuing the dialogue and then trying to provide a little more definition and structure.

Self 2: So, what have you learned during your “twisted” journey?

Self 1: Thanks for asking – I think. First, I must confess that when I was first confronted with the concept of “identity”, I was confused and skeptical.

Self 2: See, I told you that this would lead nowhere but a barren wasteland where people no longer even know who they are so they have to write articles or go to conferences to talk about it!

Self 1: Ah.....

Self 2: Don't tell me! You don't even know who you are anymore, do you? Do you?

Self 1: Ah....

Self 2: You disgust me! And, I'll bet you never did get another Corvette!

Self 1: You're right about the Vette, but I did have a pretty snappy Yugo until it fell apart but I kinda liked it while it lasted!

You get to the point in these self-talks where you just don't want to give the other guy the opportunity to talk more trash. In retrospect, I think it took this last invective from Self 2 to make me realize that there really is something to this identity thing. As I look back at Marcia's (1991) stages of identity development, which were described earlier and restated here:

1. Foreclosure: No identity crisis – these individuals just assume an identity based on parental or other authority choices and attributes.
2. Identity Diffusion: Individuals here have tried but failed to resolve competing identities.
3. Moratorium: These individuals are in the thick of the battle trying out competing identities and ideologies.
4. Identity Achievement: A belief that one has wrestled with and successfully achieved his or her own identity and is comfortable with this choice.

I think that one could (with some bending and stretching), place Twists 1-4 (Comfortably Set in My Ways) in the Foreclosure Stage, Twists 5-7 (Decisions) in Identity Diffusion, Twists 8-10 (Back to Academe and Shakeups), in Moratorium, and Twist 11 (Coup de Grace – The Article) in Identity Achievement.

Of course, I am not certain to what extent sorting out one's methodological identity connects with and is an important part of one's overall identity, but I think we can safely leave that question for another day – and another study.

I also did not know at the time when I made the decision to go back to graduate school (Twist 5) anything about the “paradigm wars” or how some folks thought these wars might end (Gage, 1989). However, after I became immersed in graduate school, I found myself on the quantitative side of the street, which, in retrospect, was predictable given the still-prevailing culture of the rational research model. In addition, although I was aware that some of the research designs in education had their roots in agriculture (no pun intended), I was not aware of the continuing impact that the split of psychology from philosophy had on the emerging field of education. As Lagemann (2000) points out, this “lent an aura of ‘objective science’ to psychology that philosophy lacked. Seeming to provide education with a scientific basis, psychology became a popular topic among teachers and reformers interested in education” (pp. 23-24). This revelation now has connected the dots regarding one of my questions -- “Why were so many of my research texts used in education written by psychologists?”

Another thing that I now realize is that the passion and sense of meaning that I felt while writing the article described in Twist 11, that was ostensibly a result of a focus on the implication for graduate training, was actually an unintended consequence of restorying my own journey; or as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) call it, “the restorying quality of narrative” (p. 9).

Discussion

I don't know if the act of writing produces “new” knowledge or allows each of us to discover what we already knew perhaps due to a jostling of our neural pathways caused by the writing process. This dilemma may be analogous to Heisenberg's

Uncertainty Principle where two physical properties cannot simultaneously be known. No matter the case, writing (both the article in *Twist 11* and this current one) has increased my appreciation of different ways of knowing. I also have a great appreciation of the journey itself. Based on this journey, I also question how I can be authentic to Kirk and those other Kirks I hope to meet unless I unscramble all of the “Is” that define my own identity.

As a consequence of my journey, there were some questions that arose along the way that relate to methodological identity, teaching, and learning. These questions were helpfully engendered by none other than Self 2 and may be of interest to those who have traveled a similar path. I present them here in order to hopefully provide a sense of continuity between the singular journey that was presented and issues of a more general nature that may offer a path for future travelers.

Self 2: So, has it been worth it? What do you have to show for that foolhardy use of public transportation that took you from the lap of luxury to not even knowing who you are?

Self 1: I guess there are some interesting questions that I’d like to think about that span several areas of educational concern.

Self 2: Great! The guy who gave it all up has – drum roll – “a lot of interesting questions that he would like to think about” – that’s it, I’m done with you!

Self 1: Nevertheless, here are the questions:

1. Why did some of us become quantitatively focused and some qualitatively focused? Tracing these histories might not only be interesting but may foster understanding which in turn may foster more collaboration (Maybe too Pollyanna, but what can it hurt?).
2. What impact does the early acceptance of an identity exemplified by “I’m not a math person” or “I’m not an English person” have on our later identification with specific research approaches?
3. To what extent do our ideas shape our writing versus our writing shape our ideas? Does writing reinforce our own perspectives or can it help us to appreciate others’ perspectives?
4. If each of us is essentially a “writer” or “reader” as Wolcott (2009) suggests or even teachers versus researchers, can we build symbiotic faculty structures where folks can do what they do best and work together to perform exemplary work without being evaluated by a uniform measuring stick?
5. If we transformed the methodological training of graduate students to a problem-based, team-taught, cooperative, quantitatively-qualitatively integrated approach, would it have as much impact on faculty as students? Would students who are not “math or English” persons feel empowered to explore topics using methodologies that they initially felt incapable of pursuing? (See *Twist 11*).
6. If we believe that children’s development encompasses physical, intellectual, social, artistic, emotional, vocational, and spiritual

dimensions, why are K-12 schools being driven by tests that focus on only one of these dimensions? Although K-12 high-stakes testing is the result of high-level policies and supposedly reflects public opinion, it is accompanied by “paradoxes” (Madaus, Russell, & Higgins, 2009) that seem to drive out things like creativity. What if we focused on the achievement of these broader developmental outcomes and evaluated them with the appropriate research and assessment methodologies (see Question 5) instead of under the camouflage of “scientifically based research”?

Self 2: So these are the questions that you are going to pursue for the rest of your life? You’re pathetic!

Self 1: No, actually these questions will probably change as time goes on based on experiences and conversations with colleagues.

Self 2: That’s because you want to be just like the other people who don’t know who they are!

Self 1: No, not because I want to be just like them but because I want to learn to appreciate their *and* your perspectives. Even though we may disagree at times, I suspect that my identity may in fact change as a result of my willingness to be a little more open and a little less judgmental.

Self 2: [Silence]

Self 1: What, no comeback?

Self 2: You said that that you want to appreciate *my* perspective. I thought that you’d want to get rid of me at this point.

Self 1: What, lose my best critic – no way! Besides, I have too much fun talking with you late at night – I think you have been a large part of my inspiration.

Self 2: Wow, I’m touched. I guess we might as well just learn to get along since we’ll be spending so much time together. I gotta tell you though, sometimes I still miss that Vette.....

The Literature as Reflection

Lichtman (2010) infuses her own experiences as a quantitative researcher with discussion related to qualitative research. In a personal communication, (2011), she said that she found a great deal of similarity in her own journey from quantitative to qualitative researcher that I described in this paper. While it is always refreshing to find a fellow traveler, it also seems that no matter the commonality of experiences, there are always aspects of any lived experience that are unique to the individual. This uniqueness reflects the complexity of the human condition and, although we can have communion with others along the way, we often find ourselves alone on the road that we have decided to travel.

In relation to Twist 10 and my informant who seemed to “come out of thin air”, I was well aware that he didn’t exemplify the characteristics that I initially identified; however, the more that I got to know Kirk’s story, I realized that his case was not only interesting but surely had to be representative of *something* important even though it flew in the face of the quest for “generalizability.” I found Stake’s (1995) reference to

generalizability as relevant to Kirk as to myself when he said that “the real job of case study is particularization, not generalization” (p. 8). However, I have also come to see that if our description is rich and “thick” enough (Geertz, 1973) that others will more than likely find common ground with our stories.

The idea for the Self 1 and Self 2 voices and the corresponding dialogue that came to me as I reminisced about some of the conflicts that I experienced during the past 20 years may have been partly a delayed response to reading *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis many years ago. In this novel, an angel and a devil vie for a human’s attention. Although a simplistic translation to the current study would see Self 1 as the angel and Self 2 as the devil, I rather now see Self 2 as that voice in all of us that, while perhaps not seemingly so, serves as a crucible and in spite of itself, helps to forge a path (eventually) to our destination. Moustakas (1994) speaks of the desirability of permitting “what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood in its meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection” (p. 27). I think that by recognizing and then giving voice to competing personalities does just that.

After completing the first draft of this paper, I came across an opening statement of an article (Freeman, 2007) that lent both validation to my efforts and at the same time spoke to me of the possible foolhardiness of my effort: “Autobiography is the inroad par excellence into exploring the dynamic features-as well as the profound challenges-of narrative inquiry, or at least that portion of it that looks to the comprehensive study of lives as an important vehicle for understanding the human condition” (p. 120). This has certainly been the case for me and I hope that readers have also benefitted from this exploration!

Final Thoughts

I heard a radio commentator discussing how Facebook and other electronic interactive media try to create profiles of users so that what is presented or offered can be based on this profile. She cautioned, however, “Who you are and how you portray yourself often differ.” This revelation struck me because although I talked often about my Corvette in this dialogue, the fact is that after I sold it and went back to graduate school, one of my best friends said something like, “Now you can stop living this artificial life and return to who you really are” ... and he was right. Do you find this true sometimes in your own life? Are these the times when you feel most comfortable with your own identity?

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