Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research

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Not only are the boundaries of interpretive research as yet undefined, but criteria for judging the quality of such research are even more fluid and emergent. Developing criteria are nominated and cautions in applying them are discussed. The author also suggests two critical insights: The most promising of these criteria are relational, and they effectively collapse the distinction between quality (rigor) and research ethics.

Interpretive inquiry—especially as it is practiced in some fields of social science research—has been an accepted form of serious inquiry for a far shorter time than it has been for other social sciences (for instance, anthropology and sociology). Consequently, as its acceptance has been debated, it has been involved in intense cross-disciplinary discussions of what constitutes its quality criteria. I prefer to think of this issue of quality as a dialogue about *emerging criteria*. I label this discussion that way because I believe that the entire field of interpretive or qualitative inquiry is itself still emerging and being defined. There are far fewer fixed regulations in the discourse of interpretive scholarship than there are in more conventional forms of inquiry.

In the midst of this ongoing discussion, however, some scholars are arguing that interpretive research traditions have already moved beyond discussions of firm, fixed, or consensually derived criteria, which are declared foundational (or, at best, nonfoundational). As Smith (1993) points out, "The task for interpretivists is to elaborate what lies beyond epistemology and beyond the idea that there are special, abstract criteria for judging the quality of research" (p. 150), especially because "interpretivist[s] see criteria not as abstract standards, but as an open-ended, evolving list of traits that characterize what we think research should do and be like" (p. 153). These scholars have adopted a posture that is "antifoundational," that is, they argue that it

has moved beyond, or stepped to the side of, rigid dualisms that characterize both empiricist and postempiricist inquiry (e.g., subject-object, true-false, objective-subjective; see, e.g., Smith, 1993, and Schwandt, 1995). But to argue that antifoundationalism avoids modernist and foundational dualisms is to sidestep an important issue, to wit, how *do* we separate good research from poor research across disciplines and traditions? That question still engages many scholars, both those seeking to do such research and those seeking to understand and to use it. And as compelling and seductive as Schwandt's (1995) call for practical rationality is (as an antidote to the epistemologic project of foundationalism), such community deliberation about *rightness* is not likely to prevail anytime soon. In fact, community deliberation about rightness—the exercise of practical rationality itself—suggests (as does Schwandt) that it has a "rhetorical" and "persuasive" (Smith, 1993, p. 16) character, which in turn suggests that listeners and dialogue participants have some standards (criteria?) by which they can judge the power or persuasiveness of various conversational and deliberative partners. We are consequently left with criteria determined by "a community of interpreters"—not far from where we are now. My own position is that conversations about criteria are important to the interpretivist community, if for no better reason than to engage and elaborate a complex and interesting dialogue and to create a space for a shared discourse wherein we might discover a new community of interpreters.

The first systematic consideration of criteria for new-paradigm inquiry was organized in 1981 by Bob Heinich, then the editor of the *Educational Communications and Technology Journal*. Bob commissioned a keynote address on rigor criteria for interpretive research; the invitees to the conference were all journal editors in education seeking guidance on how to judge qualitative studies submitted to them. That keynote address subsequently appeared in the *Educational Communications and Technology Journal* (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) under the title "Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry." Those guidelines essentially proposed a set of criteria, which resembled the four that guided conventional inquiry (see Columns 1 and 2, Table 1). These criteria were what we now understand to be "foundational," that is, they rested in assumptions that had been developed for an empiricist philosophy of research, and spoke to the procedural and methodological concerns that characterize empiricist and postempiricist research. Their primary use now, in my view, is to help students understand that interpretivist inquiry requires as serious a consideration of systematic, thorough, conscious method as does empiricist inquiry. I still use those methodological criteria to question doctoral students who are about to conduct dissertation research. These criteria act as reminders that seeking out multiple constructions of the world by multiple stakeholders has to be marked by serious, sustained searches for, and prolonged engagement with, those stakeholders and their constructions. Others of my colleagues seem to be less concerned with

TABLE 1: Criteria for Assessing Rigor or Trustworthiness in Research

Scientific Paradigm (rigor)	Constructivist/Naturalistic Paradigm (trustworthiness)	
Methodological criteria	Parallel Methodologic Criteria (Extrinsic)	Authenticity/ethical Criteria (Intrinsic)
Internal validity (Coherence)	Credibility (Plausibility)	Fairness
External validity (Isomorphism)	Transferability (Context-embeddedness)	Educative authenticity
Reliability (Relicability)	Dependability (Stability)	Catalytic authenticity
Objectivity (Value-freedom)	Confirmability (Value explication)	Tactical authenticity
(Reliance on method)	(Reliance on data)	(Reliance on internal ethical system)

method, but disciplined inquiry is still characterized in my mind by thoughtful decisions about design strategies, including methods.

As a result of coming to understand the foundational nature of the original four criteria, Guba and I proposed five new criteria which took as their epistemologic basis the claims, concerns, and issues of the new paradigm, which by this time had been expanded and refined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These new criteria were highly reflective of the commitment of inquiry to fairness (balance of stakeholder views), to the learning of respondents as much as to the learning of the researcher, to the open and democratic sharing of knowledge rather than the concentration of inquiry knowledge in the hands of a privileged elite, and to the fostering, stimulation, and enabling of social action (see Column 3, Table 1; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Over the past decade, discussions of appropriate criteria have augmented more general debates about methodology. Scholars have taken up the issue both to defend their own work and to argue for new criteria. In retrospect, these proposals have made the field infinitely more complicated, but also infinitely more responsive, rich, and politically and ethically sensitive and complex. And this is where it begins to be interesting. The issues that scholars are proposing today make it clear that new paradigm inquiry is not, and never will be, second-rate conventional scientific inquiry. It is scientific inquiry that embraces a set of three new commitments: first, to new and emergent relations with respondents; second, to a set of stances—professional, personal, and political—toward the uses of inquiry and toward its ability to foster action; and finally, to a vision of research that enables and promotes social justice,

community, diversity, civic discourse, and caring. As a result, any discussion of standards today necessarily signifies a radical shift in the vision of what research is, what it is for, and who ought to have access to it (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Reason, 1993; Schwandt, 1995; Smith, 1993).

EMERGING CRITERIA

If one were to do a meta-analysis of these criteria, it would be quite clear that nearly all of the emerging criteria are relational, that is, they recognize and validate relationships between the inquirer and those who participate in the inquiry. This monism clearly brings the inquirer and those whose lives are being questioned into the kinds of communal contact that are not possible in more traditional inquiry, which posits a detached observer's distance between the inquirer and the subject of her inquiry. The various criteria that I wish to discuss, however, are distinctly addressed to different interpretive communities, which might be usefully described as more formal or more informal. Because of the specificity of the audience addressed, my discussion will move from the more formal toward the more intimate. I shall conclude with a discussion of several caveats that can be usefully inferred.

Standards for Judging Quality in the Inquiry Community

Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie (1994) presented a workshop at the Society for Psychotherapy Research meeting in Pittsburgh in 1993, which was dedicated to achieving some guidelines for judging qualitative research that is submitted for publication. In a document that they describe as an integration of "comments from panelists, audience, and a follow-up work group," they have proposed nine guidelines for publication. In the rationale for these nine guidelines, they observe the following:

> Diverse qualitative approaches, such as empirical phenomenological psychology, ethnography, qualitative discourse analysis, ethnomethodology, grounded theory, narratology, social action research, and symbolic interactionism, have all developed their own traditions of rigor, communication, and ways of working toward consensus. Qualitative research is conducted not to confirm or disconfirm earlier findings, but rather to contribute to a process of continuous revision and enrichment of understanding of the experience or form of action under study.
>   The following guidelines are intended to characterize general traditions of publishability for qualitative research, guidelines to which all authors hold themselves in principle, although the particular expressions of the traditions may vary. (Elliott et al., 1994)

Elliott and his colleagues (1994) have proposed that

[(1) manuscripts be] of archival significance. That is . . . [they] contribute to the building of the discipline's body of knowledge and understanding. (2) The manuscript specifies where the study fits within relevant literature and indicates the intended contributions (purposes or questions) of the study. (3) The procedures used are appropriate or responsive to the intended contributions (purposes of questions posed for the study). (4) Procedures are specified clearly so that readers may see how to conduct a similar study themselves and may judge for themselves how well the study followed its stated procedures. (5) The research results are discussed in terms of their contribution to theory, content, method, and/or practical domains. (6) Limitations of the study are discussed. (7) The manuscript is written clearly, and any necessary technical terms are defined. (8) *Any speculation is clearly identified as speculation.* (9) The manuscript is acceptable to reviewers familiar with its content area and with its method[s]. (emphasis added)

Please notice that most of us would agree that these are strong criteria or standards for the publication of any form of research, whether conventional or new paradigm. We might quibble about the relative openness of some of the wording, and we might suggest different ways of speaking about interpretive work, but in principle, Elliot and his colleagues have done a careful job of thinking through these guidelines. Their strength, however, is also their weakness: They bear a strong resemblance to quality criteria for conventional research, and in fact display no particular characteristics that would make them responsive primarily or only to qualitative or interpretivist issues. That is to say, any researcher, working in any paradigm that might be used in scholarly work, would almost surely assent to these criteria. Nevertheless, they are one attempt to provide additional clarity with respect to the disciplined nature of such work. The criteria proposed relate almost solely to the inquiry community (that is, to the knowledge production end of the research enterprise), but they are useful because they suggest how qualitative researchers have gone about answering the criticisms of the conventional community.

The statement of standards that Elliott and his colleagues (1994) developed have another weakness, however; this one is grounded in the "conceptual practices of power" (Schwandt, 1995). They are highly responsive to a situation described by Smith (1993, pp. 156-157), wherein the issue of criteria does indeed determine what will be presented and what will be published. And those things, Smith points out, have very clear implications not only for the social status of research knowledge, but also for the careers of social science researchers. Criteria viewed from this vantage point, particularly these criteria, which are aimed at publication, serve a strong exclusionary legitimation function within either the conceptual practice of power or the practice of conceptual power.

Positionality, or Standpoint Judgments

A second kind of quality criteria has to do with what I will label, as others have done, *positionality*. Positionality has been treated in the literature as though it were an epistemologic concern—and it most assuredly is—but I would argue that it is far more critical than simply being an epistemologic position, although that is assuredly important. Positionality, or standpoint epistemology, recognizes the poststructural, postmodern argument that texts, any texts, are always partial and incomplete; socially, culturally, historically, racially, and sexually located; and can therefore never represent any truth except those truths that exhibit the same characteristics. From the work of the standpoint epistemologists (Haraway, 1989; hooks, 1990, 1992, 1994), we can deduce that texts that claim whole and complete truth or that claim to present universal, grand, metanarrative, or generalizable knowledge (or knowledge that applies to all similar individuals or groups across time and across contexts) are themselves specious, inauthentic, and misleading. For standpoint epistemologists, only texts that display their own contextual grounds for argumentation would be eligible for appellations of quality and rigor. In this fashion, what has been treated as grounds for knowing becomes a standard by which all texts might be judged as quality or nonquality scholarship.

For standpoint epistemologists, a text that displays honesty or authenticity "comes clean" about its own stance and about the position of the author. The "immaculate perception" of the realist tale (van Maanen, 1988) is pointedly denied; texts that are not open about their social and cultural positions in the larger intertextual conversation are specifically interrogated and deconstructed to determine their situatedness. Detachment and author objectivity are barriers to quality, not insurance of having achieved it.

Community as Arbiter of Quality

The next set of criteria that are emerging as quality-cum-ethical criteria are a set I would group under the rubric of *community*. Although we might quibble about my name for this category, this particular set of standards does indeed reference the communitarian nature of research as it is reconceived in new-paradigm work. I label it *communitarian* because it recognizes that research takes place in, and is addressed to, a community; it is also accurately labeled because of the desire of those who discuss such research to have it serve the purposes of the community in which it was carried out, rather than simply serving the community of knowledge producers and policymakers. That is to say, it has much broader implications and uses than those to which most research has been directed in the near and far past. Among the scholars and theorists who are exploring community, I would nominate Palmer (1987) and Savage (1988).

Palmer (1987) is primarily concerned with the reestablishment of a sense of true community in academe, but in the process, he points out that the academic community's commitment to the traditional scientific paradigm's requirement of objectivity leads us to a stance of objectifying virtually all of our missions: teaching, inquiry, public service, and collegial relations. The consequences of such objectification of our social relations, he argues, have been a destruction of community and a perversion of research efforts. Only by abandoning the senseless commitment to what we now think of as objectivity can we reattain the state of being a learning community. The question he has posed in his work is: "How should we be thinking about the nature of community in the modern college and university?" The conclusion that he draws is that "epistemology is [not] a bloodless abstraction; the *way* we *know* has powerful implications for the *way* we *live*" (Palmer, 1987, p. 22; emphases added). He goes on to elaborate the argument by noting that

> *every epistemology tends to become an ethic*, and that every way of knowing tends to become a way of living . . . [such that] the relation established between the knower and the known, between the student and the subject, tends to become the relation of the living person to the world itself . . . [and that] *every mode of knowing contains its own moral trajectory*, its own ethical direction and outcomes. (p. 22; emphases added)

Proposing that all knowing is relational and that objectivism (as one aspect of rigor in knowing and knowledge), with its analytic and experimentalist view of the world and persons in it, undermines community, Palmer suggests that objectivist knowing is essentially "anticommunal." That is, it subverts and effectively destroys the possibilities for community, except for that community dedicated to looking at the world in objectivist, abstract, analytic, manipulative, and experimentalist modes. Palmer suggests that new epistemologies might indeed create relational knowledge, the quality and rigor of which might be grounded in nonfragmenting, community-oriented ways of knowing. These might include, according to Palmer, feminist thought, Black scholarship, Native American studies, or ecological studies (Palmer, 1987, p. 24).

Savage (1988) moves the arguments about community specifically to the ethnographic research context. Savage is concerned not only with the devices or methods that we use to assure quality, but also with what quality itself might mean. Her answer is that quality research is that which "integrates research, critical reflection, and action"—a characteristic that she labels, from her work in Nicaragua, as *neighborliness*. She likens her position to those of liberation pedagogy and theology, which are themselves outgrowths of critical theory and action research. Again, we see the close connection between knowledge and the community from which it springs, and in which it is intended to be used.

Savage (1988) defines neighborliness as a "kind of praxis, a practical activity having a complex intellectual dimension, exercised for the sake of

assisting the marginalized on a journey toward greater freedom and participation in common life" (p. 13). Neighborliness does not reject quantitative forms of proof, Savage says, but she agrees with Willis (1977, cited in LeCompte, 1993) that there is probably little that "reproduces something of the original" in such estimates of quality, and so ethnography typically spurns such forms of rigor and reliability (Savage, 1988, pp. 13-14). In aligning one strand of ethnography with the critical tradition—a move echoed by Kincheloe, McLaren, Carspecken, Willis, and others—Savage's intent is to place judgments of quality in the ability of research to link itself with "social action and social consequences" (p. 7). Thus research is first and foremost a community project, not a project of the academic disciplines alone (or even primarily).

The perspectives of Palmer (1987) and Savage (1988) move closer to the later arguments of Schwandt (1995) for creating dialogue and modes of discourse within interpretive communities, informed by moral reasoning as well as practical considerations. However, the emphases of Savage on action alongside and informed by inquiry, and of Palmer on the caring and trust within close-knit communities, reflect a somewhat broader sense of community than Schwandt explores at present.

Voice

Yet another criterion that is mentioned increasingly by researchers and theorists alike is *voice*. Attention to voice—to who speaks, for whom, to whom, for what purposes—effectively creates praxis, even when no praxis was intended. Patricia Hill-Collins, bell hooks, Dorothy Collins, and researchers from many disciplines have tackled the problem of voice: Who speaks for those who do not have access to the corridors of knowledge or the venues of the academic disciplines? LeCompte (1993) argues that it is the responsibility of serious qualitative research to "seek out the silenced because their perspectives are often counter-hegemonic" (p. 10). Research on voice and on the absence of voice or silencing must, Tierney (1993) argues,

> [maintain] traditional social-science standards of accuracy and representation, but it must also break down the shibboleths of disengagement and objectivity. Instead, postmodern research demands that the researcher be involved both with the "research subject" and with changing those conditions that seek to silence and marginalize. (p. 5)

This view of voice—voice as resistance against silence, as resistance to disengagement, as resistance to marginalization—echoes the cry for "passionate participation" (Lincoln, 1987) as a hallmark of quality in interpretive work and reflects earlier demands for any given text to demonstrate activeness, a committed stance on the part of the researcher, and a certain openness to multiple voices and interpretations of the work first proposed by Zeller (1986).

Thus voice not only becomes a characteristic of interpretive work, but the extent to which alternative voices are heard is a criterion by which we can judge the openness, engagement, and problematic nature of any text.

Critical Subjectivity

Yet another criterion is reflexivity, or critical subjectivity. Subjectivity goes under many names: critical subjectivity (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), transformative subjectivity (Frieden, 1989), and critical reflexivity. Although there is no general agreement on what the various forms of subjectivities or reflexivities might be, I will attempt to talk around the concept for the purposes of this work. Critical subjectivity or reflexivity is the ability to enter an altered state of consciousness (Heron, 1981; Rowan, 1981, p. 169) or "high-quality awareness" (Reason & Rowan, 1981b) for the purpose of understanding with great discrimination subtle differences in the personal and psychological states of others. Further, such reflexivity is absolutely required to understand one's psychological and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience. Such reflexivity or subjectivity enables the researcher to begin to uncover dialectic relationships, array and discuss contradictions within the stories being recorded, and move with research participants toward action. Thus the words *transformative* and *critical* not only embody the action aspects of research, but also recognize the ability of meaningful research experiences to heighten self-awareness in the research process and create personal and social transformation.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a term I first encountered in the works of both Rowan (1981) and Reinharz (1979). Reciprocity as a characteristic of high-quality, rigorous qualitative interpretive inquiry is argued to be essential because of the person-centered nature of interpretive work. Rowan (1981), drawing on the work of Aaron Esterson, argues for this "science of reciprocities" because, quoting Esterson:

> Persons are always in relation [and therefore] one cannot study persons without studying the relations they make with others. . . . And the method used to observe must be one that allows us to study the personal form of relating. . . . The observer, with the cooperation of the other, constitutes himself as part of the field of study, while studying the field he and the other constitute. . . . [The researcher] must be able to reflect upon, and reason about, a reciprocity that includes himself as one of the reciprocating terms. (pp. 167-168)

McLaughlin and Tierney (1993) and I (1993) built on this reciprocity in our later work, arguing for the kind of intense sharing that opens all lives party

to the inquiry to examination. But as far back as 1978, Shula Reinharz also dealt with reciprocity, characterizing high-quality research as a kind of "lover-model," wherein parties to the research effort and their relationships were marked by a deep sense of trust, caring, and mutuality.

Sacredness

The next criterion that is emerging is sacredness. The work of some of the feminist writers and the work of management specialists have begun, remarkably, to share some common themes. Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1983) and Schaef's *Women's Reality* (1981) both deal specifically with the relationship between feminism as an inquiry model and ethical and ecological concerns, or concern for the physical environment and its resources. Berry (1988) links not feminism, but rather emerging models and paradigms of science to ecological concerns in a way that recognizes and honors the ecological as well as the human. His concern is that in the destruction of the physical environment are the seeds for the destruction of the human spirit. Only by recapturing the sense of sacredness about that which nourishes and sustains us can we learn how both to inquire sanely and to live in peace.

This theme has been elaborated recently by Reason (1993), who argues that science has a sacred and spiritual character. The spiritual, or sacred, side of science emerges from a profound concern for human dignity, justice, and interpersonal respect. The sacredness in the enterprise of science issues from the collaborative and egalitarian aspects of the relationships created in the research-to-action continuum. Researchers who conceive of science in this way make space for the lifeways of others and create relationships that are based not on unequal power, but on mutual respect, granting of dignity, and deep appreciation of the human condition.

Sharing the Perquisites of Privilege

Brown (1993), in a recent "Point of View" piece in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, makes a rather stunning admission when she says that she and her research respondent, "Mama Lola" (see Brown, 1992), both share in the royalties of the book whose life Mama Lola lives and whose life Brown chronicled in her eponymous book. Brown shares with her readers that when Mama Lola runs short of money, Brown contributes to the mortgage payment.

Lather (1995) has a similar situation in her work with women who live with HIV/AIDS. Although Lather does not contribute money to these women, she is very clear that the first publication—a desktop publication effort—will be for the women themselves, and that they will seek trade

publication for a wider sharing of their story together: that is, Lather, her co-researcher, and the women respondents in the HIV/AIDS support group with whom the two women have been working for 2 years.

Whereas Brown's (1993) sharing of the perquisites is a direct form of recompense for the story to which she has been allowed access, Lather's (1995) relationship is somewhat different. Brown acknowledges directly—through royalty payments split down the middle and through direct cash contributions to the running of Mama Lola's household—the debt that we owe as ethnographers, anthropologists, and qualitative researchers to the persons whose lives we portray. It is not a far leap to comprehend that the lives to which we have access account in no small part for the prestige we enjoy in the worlds we create and sustain via our research. I have written before (Lincoln, 1994, in press) about the question of who "owns" the lives we use, however sacredly and respectfully, for our research. For the somewhat dark side of research hides the fact that most of our research is written for ourselves and our own consumption, and it earns us the dignity, respect, prestige, and economic power in our own worlds that those about whom we write frequently do not have.

Lather's case is somewhat different, but it speaks to the sharing of perquisites nonetheless. It seems to me that Lather is trying, with her co-researcher and the participants, to re-create in textual form some of the complexity, horror, love, and anguish that the support group is going through, and at the same time inviting them to co-create with her a testament to their lives. When the desktop version of this text is created, the HIV-positive women will then begin to respond to what has been assembled from their stories. And the story is told largely in their own words. Although I have no information on royalties should their text become a trade book, it is clear that the women will have been enabled to create a living document about their lives, their struggles, their worries about their children—a personal and group history in which each of them will share some portion of ownership. In a sense, they will have gained power from the work which Lather and her co-researcher have undertaken on their behalf. Indeed, both of these models of ethnographic research begin to approximate very closely the world of true participant action inquiry, where the former subjects of research become active participants in reclaiming their own histories and re-creating their lives.

As we work with respondents in the future, we may have to "come clean" about the advantages that accrue to us as knowledge producers, especially the claim that we, and not they, are the genuine producers. Over time, this acknowledgment may prompt us to reconfigure our relationships not only with fieldwork, but also with our disciplines and our research participants. Imagine an academic world in which judgments about promotion, tenure, and merit pay are made on the basis of the extent of our involvement with research participants, rather than on our presumed objective distance!

SOME CAUTIONS ABOUT
THE EMERGING CRITERIA

I would like to advance a few cautions about this new work. First and foremost, specific criteria might apply to specific kinds or classes of research. To put it another way, any given criterion might have been extracted from a specific set of studies in which the proposer was engaged, and thus another inquirer might find limited utility or applicability for the specific criterion. It is untested whether this particular list would be widely or universally applicable to all qualitative or interpretive research. As the research group I cited earlier commented, different traditions might require different criteria, and indeed, we may be moving beyond criteriology and the search for uniform criteria. This will make our professional judgments harder but it has the potential to make our research more locally usable, as we might perhaps tailor our criteria to the community, or even better, permit criteria to grow indigenously as a natural consequence of the inquiry effort.

The second caution is that some of the criteria may be applicable at a certain stage of the inquiry but less applicable at another. I will use my own authenticity criteria as an example. Fairness could certainly apply to any and all forms of qualitative research and at any stage of the research. But one might be able to achieve catalytic or tactical authenticity only after ontological and educative authenticity have been reasonably fully achieved. In the same sense, and to use another example, voice (or achieving pluralistic voices) might reasonably be expected to occur throughout virtually all stages of an inquiry, but would grow increasingly important as consensus toward action in the social sense and construction of texts in the scholarly or community sense occurs. Thus the qualitative research community might well think about which criteria, at which stage, are the most useful and important, and to whom. Because new-paradigm inquiry directs our attention to multiple audiences and consumers and actors involved in cooperating on, directing, analyzing, creating, and using our research, we might usefully think about criteria for whom, and for what purpose.

The third idea to which I would like to draw attention is that all, or virtually all, of these criteria are relational. Reason and Rowan (1981b) emphasized this idea when they pointed out that "any notion of validity must concern itself both with the knower and with what is to be known; valid knowledge is a matter of *relationship*" (p. 241, emphasis added).

The fourth caution I would advance is that just as the naturalistic/ constructivist paradigm effectively brought about the irrelevance of the distinction between ontology and epistemology, so too does this paradigm and interpretive social science in general bring about the collapse of the distinctions between standards, rigor, and quality criteria and the formerly separate consideration of research ethics. In effect, many of the proposed and emerging

standards for quality in interpretive social science are also standards for ethics. At the time of John K. Smith's gentle criticism of the so-called parallel, or foundational, criteria, I did not understand that standards for quality profoundly interacted with standards for ethics in inquiry. In work directed specifically toward the ethics of qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1989), we were able to generate five previously undiscussed issues in qualitative research, each of which enlarged the debate about standards to which qualitative inquiry might be held. Those were the problems of face-to-face encounters, for example, the necessity to build trust and rapport in what are sometimes short time frames; the virtual impossibility of maintaining anonymity in qualitative research under some circumstances; the problem of selecting and excluding material to be included in a case study; and the political and ethical pressure for open and honest negotiations around data collection, analysis, and presentation (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). None of these is particularly an issue of concern in conventional inquiry, and thus there are no federal guidelines for addressing them. This dissolution of the hard boundaries between rigor and ethics in turn signals that the new research is a relational research—a research grounded in the recognition and valuing of connectedness between researcher and researched, and between knowledge elites and the societies and communities in which they live and labor. Relationality is the major characteristic of research that is neighborly, that is, it is rooted in emerging conceptions of community, shared governance and decision making, and equity. Indeed, community (Stringer, in press) and neighborliness may be the most compelling metaphors for these emergent forms of inquiry and quality in inquiry.

CONCLUSION

What does all this mean? There is a very funny story in the hard sciences about a great physicist who gave a presidential address to a learned society sometime just before the turn of the century. He mourned in this address that new, young physicists had little to do but extend the decimal points out a few numbers farther. This speech occurred just before the work of Heisenberg, Bohr, and Einstein burst upon the world. The point of that story for me has always been that we never know when disciplinary or transdisciplinary challenges will arise, because the very nature of challenges is that they come from unexpected places.

We have a dialogue going now. It is about how we make judgments, how we can trust each other and the things we write. It is about creating certainty when life is about ambiguity. It is about what Karl Weick called creating "a little cognitive economy, and some peace of mind." We are not ready either to close down the conversation or to say farewell to criteria quite yet.

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