

Resolving Paradigm Wars: Cooperation in Educational Research Design

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The paradigm wars have wasted countless resources in educational research. When an educational researcher of a worldview, that is a paradigm, perceives themselves as strongly opposed to and cannot cooperate with another researcher of a different paradigm the trouble has only just begun. The question raised in this paper is, do we benefit from this useless splintering of academia? The answer argued here is an emphatic no. Instead of dividing into retaliatory groups and sub-groups, educational researchers should consolidate and cooperate to focus on the important issue at hand, that is, joining forces to educate the next generation of society as they pass through the various levels of educational institutions.

Key words: paradigm wars, qualitative inquirers, quantitative researchers, reductionism, mixed methods research design

The paradigm wars can be viewed as wars of words. In these battles holders of worldviews, defined in this paper as paradigms, engage in ongoing semantic civil wars against domestic evils. Unfortunately these so-called “worldview” holders are often researchers who instead of focusing on salient global issues limit themselves by exerting their energy on mere trivial pursuits. Therefore, we now have situations in educational research for example, where quantitative researchers refuse to cooperate with qualitative inquirers and vice versa. This reductionism is often attributed to the placing of quantitative and qualitative researchers on opposite ends of a continuum. However, this continuum is abstract, it does not exist. Rather, it is a figment in the imagination of those who believe in it. However, many researchers refer to this continuum as something concrete, tangible and real.

The Renaissance era poet John Donne (n.d.) wrote over 400 years ago in *Mediation XVII*, “No man [woman] is an island, entire of itself; everyman [woman] is a piece of the continent, a

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part of the main.” This interconnectivity of people is food for thought for the soldiers of the paradigm wars. Is it time for a truce? Should we agree to disagree? Just get on with the job of education? Am I missing something? Is this novice (me) too naive?

On one hand I see the infighting as a waste of resources (time, money, energy, etc.), but on the other hand, I see the infighting as necessary for keeping a healthy balance. In a sense we are stuck between two forces: we are damned if we do, and we are damned if we don't. We shouldn't fight, but then again, we should fight. Have we achieved this healthy balance already, or, will we ever achieve it in the future?

Beliefs as Statements

As we deal with semantics as teachers of English, our beliefs are paramount. What do we find behind our statements of language? We find our beliefs, philosophies, and paradigms. Like a snake shedding its skin, we can expose our inner beings. “In short, teachers of semantics will concern themselves, first of all with the truth, the adequacy, and the degree of trustworthiness of statements” (Hayakawa & Hayakawa, 1990, p. xi).

Perceptions

William Blake (n.d.) wrote “if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man [woman] as it truly is, infinite. For man [woman] has closed himself [herself] up, till he [she] sees all things thru' narrow chinks of his [her] own cavern.” What about the paradigm doors? From what I can see, or more specifically can't see through, the paradigm doors need a really good cleaning. The paradigm doors are filthy and most writers on this subject only perpetuate this ambiguity and vagueness, often to serve their own hidden interests.

Seeing is Believing

If a color blind person sees a blue sky as yellow, are they wrong? Should we blame the rod and cone cells in their eyes? Or, are they telling the truth? Yes, they are telling *their* truth. They will swear black-and-blue (no pun intended) that the sky they see is yellow. Like released prisoners returning to Plato's (n.d.) cave, they have a different perception from the norm. Should we attack them because they believe or perceive something differently? No. Should we

despise them? No.

No Bull: A Nod is as Good as a Wink to a Blind Horse

In summer of 2005 I went to Spain and watched a bullfight at Ventas Stadium, Madrid. The ceremony, music, fanfare, and heat were incredible, with enough tension in the atmosphere that you could almost cut through it with a dull knife. The matadoras and matadors provocatively waved red capes in front of the raging bulls. By the way, bulls are color-blind. Therefore a white with green dots cape could have been jostled in front of the bulls with probably a similar effect. These bulls were angry. I don't know if it was some complex they had about being color-blind, or if they had woken up on the wrong side of the bed, but they were really worked up about something and were ready to scream it from the rooftops. The bulls would have charged *anything* that was teasingly dangled in front of them. These were creatures not to be mocked in front of a cheering crowd.

The red-colored capes are used only for the audience. It makes a good show. Red is the color of blood. Blood unites all humans, no matter the outside appearance. Red is primal, inflammatory, lustful, and passionate – it is symbolic of Spain. Unfortunately the main attraction in this game, the bull, is also an expendable player. The bull's life is sacrificed at the finale of this spectacle to the enthusiastic sounds of the mob cheering "Ole!" "Ole!" "Ole!"

Are there any parallels we can draw between the expendable life of the bull, with the bloodthirsty crowd in Ventas Stadium, and the expendable lives of paradigms, with the academic niches in the paradigm wars? I would argue yes. Are the paradigm wars merely a show that goes on no matter what the cost? Yes again. Which paradigm will be the next casualty is anyone's guess. In this game, players die as the mob roars. Time marches on. Paradigms come and go. Yours, or mine, may be next ...

Paradigms as Perspectives

A more mature approach is to adopt the notion of *perspectivism* (Paul, 2005). Perspectivism could be thought of as respecting everyone's right to believe in their own truth, reality, and paradigm. After all, the world is a big place, and there is plenty of room for all of us, and our ideas.

Perspective Perfection ... Tentatively

How do we strive towards perspective perfection? A couple of tentative ideas are:

1. Limit infighting. See the wood from the trees. This is not a civil war between inquirers. This war is outside of our domestic homeland. In the education field we are fighting to find out how to teach and learn effectively. The more we concentrate on the childish ‘my paradigm is better than yours, so there!’ mentality, the more the various people involved in education, from teachers, learners, parents, administrators, the list goes on, lose. It’s a responsibility of researchers to act like grown-ups. Let’s not lose track of the big picture. However, we must also strive to keep a healthy balance, which can hopefully be achieved by the next point, critical communities.

2. Form critical communities (Phillips, 1990). Be objective and conduct good quality inquiries. Thrive on critique and scrutiny, and then disseminate the findings to a larger community by publishing.

3. Eschew obfuscation. Incorporate the necessary, and eliminate the unnecessary. Use Ockham’s razor, or the Law of Parsimony. However, if these two terms are too ‘scientific’ we could use other labels like ‘economy of style,’ or the recently popular ‘KISS’ (Keep It Simple, Stupid) principle. Same concept, but different labels. Like when we go shopping we have a choice to buy brand or generic goods. In the end, verbosity is not a virtue, it’s very boring! Like peeling off the layers of skin from an onion bulb, we can get to the heart of the matter, without waffle. This is a goal I wish to achieve in the future with my own writing.

‘Weak as Water’? No, ... as Powerful as Water

I hope to be as transparent as water in my writing. Water is complex: it is a liquid that makes up most of our bodies, and covers most of our planet, we need water to survive, but it is also one of the most destructive forces of nature. Water is powerful and clear: in short, it is an exemplary model for my future writing.

The ‘Real’ Alternative

The *real* alternative paradigm is of course, *aparadigmism*. Aparadigmism is defined here as having no interest or involvement in paradigms. This positioning is a cop out. However, without getting too critical, I must admit that I personally had aparadigmatic feelings

previously. In the sense that previously I really did not understand them well enough to place myself, or form an alliance with a paradigm/s. Of course I had my own teaching style, philosophy, and beliefs. I simply had not put them under such a strong microscope and examined my own teaching and myself so intensely.

Many texts refer to qualitative research as *the* alternative paradigm. However for me, the alternative is quantitative research. Why? Let me explain. I completed my masters degree in the year 2000. I had no educational statistics classes from until I started my doctoral degree in 2005. Therefore, *my* alternative, over nearly the last decade, has been quantitative research.

My Perspective Future

According to Creswell (2007) in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a paradigm debate period about whether qualitative and quantitative data were combinable or not. In 2003, Tashakkori and Teddlie published the 768-page *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research* (Creswell, 2007). Mixed methods research is an area I am extremely interested in, possibly because of my disillusionment with the paradigm wars.

As Rudyard Kipling (1889) wrote “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” Perhaps this is how many perceive the extended paradigm battles. In my personal movement from being a qualitatively-focused teacher/researcher to a Paradigm Pyrrhonist (who delayed judgment) to a post-positivist teacher/researcher, I take great solace in the words of Tom Waits (1990) “Never saw the east coast ‘til I moved to the west.” Perhaps this is what it takes to call a truce to the paradigm wars—get inquirers from either side to study or use perspectives that they typically do not use. However, this involves *change*. Change can be a very scary thing for some people. Change could involve a transformation of their personally-held perspective, like it did for me.

To answer the question posed in the title of this reaction paper: time for a perspective rebirth? Yes, bring on the change. Do not cling to the remnants of yesterday. We are in a new millennium where change is welcome, wanted, and overdue.

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研究ノート

パラダイム闘争の解決に向けて

— 教育研究デザインにおける協力 —

フィリップ・ロウレス

パラダイム闘争は、教育研究において数え切れない資源を無駄にしてきた。ある世界観、つまりパラダイムを持つ教育研究者が、自分と異なるパラダイムを持つ別の研究者に対して強い反対意見を持ち、協力できないと判断する時、問題は始まったばかりである。本稿で取り上げている問いは、我々にこの学术界の無用な対立から得るものがあるかというものであり、本稿の答えは、断固たる「ノー」である。教育研究者は、報復的なグループやサブグループに分かれるのではなく、統合して目の前の重要な問題の解決に集中できるように協力すべきである。その問題とは、様々なレベルの教育機関を通っていく社会の次世代を育成することである。

キーワード： パラダイム闘争、質的研究者、量的研究者、還元主義、混合手法による研究計画
