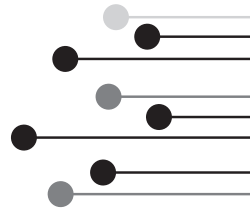




Methodological Language Creates “Realities”

Labels and Language Matter



Why Do Labels Matter?

The purpose of this section is to draw attention to the various ways in which methodological language and labels are used in qualitative research to create “realities” (“reality” in this context refers to onto-epistemological spaces that have been created, and I do not use the label “reality” in an objectivist, positivist, or neopositivist sense, but quite possibly in opposite ways). It is important to emphasize that I am especially interested in diverse and changing realities that labels can provoke and set in motion.

Section key points:

- Labels reflect power, legitimacy, and historical markers
- Labels should not be taken for granted
- Labels are creations, and scholars can create new labels to represent new material and linguistic connections
- **Labels and their uses cannot be separated from their contexts**
- Labels and concepts carry diverse and possibly continuously changing meanings, and they guide practice in particular and specific ways
- The informed use of labels calls for theoretical and methodological awareness
- More flexible and critical use of labels could add to methodological conversations and discourses

Why do you choose to rely on a particular linguistic or theoretical tradition in your research?

I disagree. This happens all the time where the meaning of the words evolves to mean new things when adopted and carried across contexts. Maybe I am misunderstanding?
—Darby

Methodological language and labels are presented and located within a particular time, space, and cultural context. Additionally, different uses of language and labels are often historical

How are you using different labels, and for what purposes?

and ideological, building from and referring to traditions, intertextual connections, and values and beliefs of the users. Methodological labels are stances and indications of linguistic and material connections. Labels matter, since they serve as epistemological markers, ontological reference points, and personal preferences, and they are often used as means to legitimize one's scholarship. However, the connections and realities language and labels create may not always be easily identified, readily available, or direct. From this perspective, uncertainty associated with linguistic signifiers and the impact of this uncertainty on methodology is one of my main dilemmas in this section. I also question the directly decodable nature of methodological labels, and thus I approach language and labels from a questioning, wondering point of view, possibly devalidating established ways of reasoning by creating a type of humble and unfinished paralogy, a staggering movement against established way of reasoning.

What do I wonder

Where do I want to go, not sure

Do I wonder? or

Am I expected to know?

Am I afraid of dismissal

of me, this text,

these not/un/finished ideas

Purposefully not arriving

just puzzled

What kinds of onto-epistemological connections are being created and repeated through your use of methodological labels?

When thinking about methodologies without methodology, a part of the potential rethinking has to do with the ways in which qualitative researchers buy into different traditions of doing and believing that are enacted through and explained by the labels. Labels and methodological language guide scholars' methodological activities, and thus I begin this section by looking more deeply into different ways scholars use labels. A part of my goal in this chapter is to enable students and those new to qualitative inquiry to begin to detect differences in the ways in which linguistic grand narratives produce methodological language and generate normative labels and signifiers used in research discourses.

GLOSSARY

Label. Way of making social discriminations and distinctions in human interaction (Gochman, 1982, p. 167).

Label. Form of social control (Gochman, 1982, p. 167).

Paralogy. A conversation that tries to break out of old systems of thought by not relying on experts and meta-narratives to legitimate ideas (Shawver, 2001, p. 246).

Paralogy. Promotes dissensus rather than consensus, heterogeneity and plurality rather than homogeneity and universality, on the grounds that new knowledge comes about by dissent, by questioning what is consensually assented to (Nola & Irzik, 2003, p. 419).

Signifier. A word or related symbol that refers to a class of objects (Jacques, 2010).

Signifier. Everyday language we take for granted: science, method, validity, truth, power, rationality, objectivity, identity, sexuality, culture, history, democracy, and so forth (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 175).

Signified. The object referred to (Jacques, 2010).

Intertextuality. Occurs at levels higher than merely interacting with texts. Is socially constructed during the discussion of texts (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 304).

Intertextuality. Does not occur with questioning author's intent. Only occurs with the comparison of other "texts" (including cultures, social systems). It's impossible to comprehend a text without the network of additional texts (Kristeva, as translated by Freiherr von der Goltz, 2011, p. 42).

Different Uses of Labels

Throughout history, established names, labels, and categories have been used to gain legitimacy and power. For example, Gubrium and Holstein (1997) believed that language use, terminology, and labels are vital for qualitative methods and for the process of social science research. Language-in-use is everywhere and always political according to Gee (2005). Foucault (1995), in turn, proposed that knowledge and power are inseparable and that the corpus of knowledge and techniques of scientific discourses are formed and entangled with the practices of power.

Power produces knowledge . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another; . . . there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault, 1995, p. 27)

Knowledge is defined by the discourse rather than by the researcher or by the method. According to Foucault (1972), knowledge is formed within discursive practices, and those practices further guide future knowledge production

Political choices and epistemological decisions characterize the method selection of many qualitative researchers who desire to gain legitimacy and acceptance in the field. However, scholars' awareness of the connection between labels and power, between labels and history, and between labels and cultural values vary considerably.

Some scholars are attentive, informed, and careful about the ways in which they label, cite, and connect labels with material, whereas others never think about these questions or connections.

(Here is where I think you place the first sentence with the people who know and purposefully resist being classified by the label.)

Labels, including methodological labels, are dispelled by informed researchers, who place labels in a particular epistemological and empirical context. Questions will arise, for these scholars, about specific disciplinary practices, such as "Who has the right label?" or "Who uses the right term?"

—Darby

and power associated with knowledge. **Labels, including methodological labels, are dispelled by researchers, who place labels in a particular epistemological and empirical context. Political choices and epistemological conclusions and preferences characterize the method selection of many qualitative researchers who desire to gain legitimacy and acceptance in the field.** However, scholars' awareness of the connection between labels and power, between labels and history, and between labels and cultural values can vary considerably.

The question of labels, legitimizing language, or perceived inappropriate uses of labels can challenge the positions of power vested in epistemological or knowledge authority—the authority that is “accepted” to produce taken-for-granted definitions and regulate normative research practices. In the past, those scholars working against normative research practices have raised many questions about the “ownership” or “policing” associated with methods, about the assumed context and functions of particular labels, and about the overall “justifications” for different methodological practices (see, e.g., Lather, 2010; St. Pierre, 2002; Torrance, 2011). The concerns emerging in these discussions have been and still are very important. Researchers should ask themselves why they prefer to use particular labels or make specific discursive connections in their work. Why are they drawn to a particular set of beliefs? What are labels such as “paradigms,” “reflexivity,” or “triangulation” expected to signify? What do particular labels do? How do they operate? Who might gain from the use of these methods?

What can challenging the norms of labels do to/for the researcher?

Qualitative Researchers' Romance With *the* Meaning

What is the connection between “labels” and “meaning”?

For the longest time

in my own successful and unsuccessful research

I wanted to know what labels, experiences, connections, comparisons, and theories

mean

endless search for meaning

purposefully shaping my interactions

talk, listening, thinking, not thinking,

doing something

with participants and me and participants and others

Forming my analytical approaches with data

I worried endlessly

about the right ways to represent the meanings

I

had

found

or created.

I've been reading Baudrillard this week and was reminded of this fragment: "The world does not exist so that we may know it. It is not in any way predestined for knowledge. However, knowledge itself is part of the world, but of the world in its profound illusoriness, which consists in bearing no necessary relation to knowledge" (Baudrillard, 2003, p. 104).

—Jasmine

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I am not an exception. I also have had a love affair with meaning. For a long time, I wanted to find participants' meaning and be "true" to their meanings when (re)presenting the research and findings. Many aspects of my research seemed to relate to the concept of meaning in different ways. It has not been until quite recently that I have been able (at least temporarily) to see beyond the meaning and have allowed myself to conceptualize research and data without being bounded by restrictive notions of meaning or an exclusive focus on meaning making. Giving up my search for meaning—that is, meaning as a thing or state—has changed my views on data, the research process, and research outcomes. As a result, I have also changed my view on meaning. Instead of restricting meaning to signifying an intentional core or cognitive center that may lie at the heart of a knowable object, I propose that qualitative researchers could allow meaning to reestablish itself in a flux, in the liminal space, at the limit of words and things, as what is said of a thing (not its attribute or the thing in itself) and as something that happens (not its process or its state; see also Foucault & Faubion, 1998).



Robert Ulmer

This is not to say that meaning and searching for meaning cannot be important, epistemologically consistent, and culturally appropriate, especially for many scholars operating from interpretivist traditions and humanistic perspectives. For example, Polkinghorne (2005) discussed his purpose of locating core meanings, and he explained how data triangulation can assist researchers in recognizing variations in participants' experiences and in "locating its core meaning by approaching it through different accounts" (p. 140). Polkinghorne also emphasized the role of meaning in storytelling by stating how interviewers can support interviewees in recalling an experience and its meaning. He noted that by remembering past events, interviewees can reflect on the meaning of the events and their impact on the lives of the participants.

Furthermore, meanings can be significant, illuminative, or an essential concept and approach within one's qualitative research. For example, in phenomenology, scholars might study meanings through the manifestations, presence, and appearance of different experiences and phenomena (see, e.g., Heidegger, 1996, 2010; Merleau-Ponty, 1974, 2004). Similarly, in constructivist studies, the investigations of participants and community members' meaning-making processes, collaborative meanings created within particular social interactions, and meanings associated with key educational concepts can

When can searching for meaning be useful?

enhance understanding, empathy, and information about the needs and desires of particular individuals or cultural groups (see, e.g., Crotty, 1998; Fosnot, 2005). In these examples, a focus on meaning is aligned with theories, scholarly interests, and theoretical perspectives. **However, some scholars might associate qualitative research exclusively with meaning making. It is possible that for these qualitative researchers, locating and describing the meaning is the ultimate task in every qualitative project,** and all qualitative research is or should be about the meaning. This kind of theoretical narrowing may be dangerous and counterproductive at the time of theoretical dispersion. Thus, I worry about this imperative and the exclusive meaning-making task sometimes associated with qualitative research and qualitative studies.

That is a very interesting point. Meaning is the purpose behind qualitative research methods in general, but the method of constructing it or surfacing it varies depending on the epistemological orientation to knowledge that the theoretical framework holds. Hmm.

—Kathryn

I wonder how you are defining meaning. It seems like to you it may not be a thing but a verb or a process of doing.

—Darby

Instead, I would like to think about meaning as something one might think to do with data, or it could be a way to theoretically guide one's research, but it cannot possibly represent everything qualitative researchers can do with their research, projects, or theories.

Some qualitative and critical scholars have also expressed concerns about epistemologically and theoretically blinded searches for meaning. For example, St. Pierre (2009) wrote that she no longer believes in meaning as a portable property or that language can transport meaning in some unmediated way. She also explained that in her work, signifiers and meanings do not emerge miraculously or spontaneously.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) referred to the representational trap associated with meaning seeking and finding during the analysis, and insisted that they try to avoid the desire to reduce participants' words and stories into coherent narratives and pure meaning. Derrida (1997) also worried about readers' and writers' desire to think through meanings:

From the moment that there is meaning, there are nothing but signs. We think only in signs. Which amounts to ruining the notion of sign at the very moment when, as in Nietzsche, its exigency is recognized in the absoluteness of its right. (p. 50)

However, meanings could also be thought of through plurality. For example, meaning does not necessarily need to close down dialogue, and meanings can, indeed, be multiple. Once meanings begin to multiply and happen more spontaneously, the "nature" of research and research activities changes. Knowledge is no longer tied to the search for (right, true, singular, or universal) meaning (in meaning's strict or objectified sense), but knowledge can be found in living, experiencing, material interactions, intuition, and subject-object

relations without clear or direct signifier–signified links. These interactions and experiences might generate references or linkages to meaning, but they do not capture it. **Research and findings can be more about meaning-making processes than outcomes, more about questions than answers**, more about connecting and living than arriving, and more about exploration than delivery.

Giving up objectified notions of meaning also has implications for the ways in which we approach labels. When one is dedicated to finding stable and potentially generalizable meaning, this dedication usually implies an unquestionable and direct connection between the signifier and the signified. The question of what labels, language, or data mean is not necessarily driven by anticipated outcomes and consequences of one’s research, but may be related to the researcher’s individual desire to square off the data, locate the meaning to provide closure, and put an end to the project. Finding meaning may be viewed as a simplified task linked with all qualitative research practices, especially by those less familiar with diverse qualitative research traditions.

You
my dear colleague, collaborator, my grant sugar-daddy
you want an answer
reason(s) to engage in
qualitative inquiry
How about this or that?
I need to know the meaning
meaning of the world, you, life, text
I need to know the meaning of all there is
to be studied empirically
I am committed
to answer you
through, by, side-by-side with the meaning or was it
meanings (sorry)

The idea of focusing more on processes rather than outcomes really resonates with me. To me, qualitative research involves a complex process in which authors “find out” about themselves as well as the subjects/objects being studied.

—Cheryl

This poem is great. It challenges the dominant positivist perspective in a powerful way.

—Kathryn

I feel some resistance here within myself, because labels can exclude, and I have found that providing artifacts or narratives of the context can be a tool for inviting others into the conversation. I am not sure if this is advocating discovery or unintentional alienation or exclusion. I am feeling challenged to rethink my practices.

—Darby

You mention the constant comparative method. This is a common label, and I think it represents more of a power move to legitimate the research methodology rather than a representation of what was done (not to say they didn't do anything like it, but mentioning it is strategic). This is especially apparent when someone says they are doing grounded theory and then cites Glaser and Strauss, mid-1990s Glaser, Charmaz, and Clarke. These all represent different approaches with different underlying assumptions. I have seen this done (my own adviser did something akin to this in his first grounded theory paper), and it seems to be more of a need to justify the method and the authors' knowledge of it (or lack thereof) than an attempt to explain how the research was performed.

—Justin

BUT

I am not sure if my meaning

is your meaning

or meaning at all

but I have a meaning to offer

to answer your question

OR have I?

Labels Create, Act, Provoke, and Do Other Things

Labels can create meaning, but they can also act, provoke, and do many other things. For example, labels shape individuals' interactions with their environment, and labels guide and generate conversations. Labels can silence and move. Labels also categorize. However, a label does not create or dispel anything outside its context (e.g., the label's theoretical context, processes it is associated with, or other conceptual connections it generates) **unless labels are intentionally decontextualized and overgeneralized**. Every label also forms an indefinite number of connections, orderings, and traces, which are always political and theoretical. Additionally, this infinite intertextuality and interconnectivity of labels calls for critical reflection by scholars who desire to work against normative practices and taken-for-granted assumptions.

I see three main areas of critical reflection and possible dilemmas with the (un)critical use of labels in qualitative research. The first is about legitimization. For example, certain terms such as *saturation*, *triangulation*, *emergent themes*, and *interrater reliability* are sometimes used merely to indicate quasi-connections, or what I would call "shallow conceptual links" to "socially accepted" qualitative research practices used mainly to gain reviewers' trust and create a sense of expertise. In this case, the researcher's goal is to demonstrate and reproduce acceptable knowledge that can lead to acknowledgment, further acceptance, and belonging. For example, by using labels this way, researchers can gain membership in the qualitative research community, which in turn can legitimize scholars' claims and validate their studies and findings.

Another type of dilemma has to do with ambiguity, the potential overgeneralization of labels, and the lack of contextual grounding or understandings of historical discourses shaping different language uses (see also Gürtler & Huber, 2006). For example, it is also possible to use **the constant comparative method** to describe *any* type of data analysis or with interview study as a proxy for all qualitative research traditions. Sometimes these unintentional or uninformed uses of labels may not only lead to overgeneralization, but may also exemplify undesirable decontextualization and limited knowledge about diverse traditions associated with qualitative research. Decontextualization can also lead to what I call “conceptual immunity.” For example, **when labels and their uses are not situated in discursive, epistemological, and theoretical contexts**, proposed meanings, uses of labels, or things that labels do cannot easily be dismantled or questioned on epistemological and theoretical grounds by other discourses or language users. In this case, researchers may establish an illusion of a generalizable label that can be used uncritically across contexts. By doing this, researchers grant a sort of conceptual immunity to the labels—a **view from nowhere**—as if a label associated with nothing is possible.

A third dilemma relates to the acknowledged insufficiency of language to describe or represent realities (see, e.g., MacLure, 2013). This dilemma is practical but also ontological, and it is often faced by postmodernist and poststructuralist scholars alike. From this perspective, labels are always inaccurate in describing meanings, realities, relationships, or thinking. Words do not signify, and labels are never fixed but escaping (Derrida), becoming (Deleuze), or only reproductions (Baudrillard). In the following section, I briefly discuss Dilemmas 1 and 2, but my main argument has to do with productive, critical, and informed ways of using labels, acknowledging that labels are always insufficient and inaccurate but necessary (Dilemma 3). For me, the insufficiency of language and labels is a productive and stimulating dilemma that makes me reconsider the ways in which I am accustomed to approaching labels and signifiers.

Scholars may situate their uses of labels in various moving, shifting, and overlapping networks of discourses where assigning a single and stable connection or privileged/preferred purpose is impossible and undesirable. In this case, labels, their connections, and their doings/actions are situated in epistemological temporality, conceptual emergence, and linguistic movement.

The awareness of contextualized linkages, traces, and potentially different discursive uses of labels can make researchers more sensitive to language games

This makes me so anxious. I find the politically nuanced language of specific discourse/theoretical communities very challenging sometimes. When I write, I write alongside the fear of committing epistemological sins.

—Jasmine

As a young scholar trying to join the field, this is a daily challenge. Few mentors and veterans want to engage in these conversations when I am constructing my understanding.

—Darby

and power embedded in these games. More specifically, different uses of labels can be seen as a part of language games that are shaped by language users and their resistance toward normativity and structured rules of language (see also Browning, 2000; Lyotard, 1997). For Lyotard (1999), “postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert’s homology, but the inventor’s paralogy” (p. xxv). By working against established ways of reasoning and linguistic structures, scholars are able to dissent from normative language, which in turn can lead to linguistic creation and conceptual movement.

In your own research, you could:

- Be conscious and conceptually aware of the ways in which you tend to use labels
- Articulate how you intend to use particular labels and why
- Try to stay uncertain about the labels and their function and see what might happen
- Allow your labels to change, morph, and disappear

The labels one uses are only as accurate as the individuals that designate them. What does a novice researcher do when those who designate them have differences in opinion? How do we navigate the potentially confusing world of labels?
—Cheryl

Even though this section critically examines normative uses of labels and calls for experimentation in terms of diverse uses of labels, it is hard and sometimes even impossible to give up labels altogether. Spivak (1997) wrote that labels are necessary **yet inaccurate**. They are necessary for engaging in various forms of dialogue, producing text, and showing intertextual connections between discourses and within texts, but at the same time labels never truly capture or represent what they signify.

To make myself more clear or not

I provide I look closer

various inaccuracies, problems, inaccuracies, problems, inaccuracies

Maybe I find possibilities

Maybe I find different uses of labels or l-abels or la-bels or lab-els

Two common ones, negotiated, agreed upon

Yet I wonder

what is common, negotiated, agreed upon for whom with whom?

Labels in qualitative research?

Reflexivity, ref-lexivity, reflex-ivity, reflexiv-i-t-y and

triangulation as stuttered mislabels inaccuracies

KEEP READING

Using Labels of Reflexivity and Triangulation

In the following paragraphs, I elaborate in more detail two common labels used in qualitative research discourses and introductory textbooks. Both reflexivity and triangulation are methodological labels that can be understood differently in different discourse communities. These labels may also be new to students in qualitative research courses and thus need introduction and explanation. Drawing from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we can see that both of these labels have a long and diverse history. For example, *reflexivity* was used in the mid-1600s in philosophy to indicate the quality or condition of being reflexive and in the 1950s in sociology as an opposite of automatism. Additionally, reflexivity has been linked to logic and math discourses since the 1930s (as the fact of being a reflexive relation). For qualitative researchers, reflexivity might indicate a stance of being reflective, a disposition of qualitative researchers, or maybe a characteristic of a thoughtful scholar. Schwandt (2007) defines reflexivity as critical self-reflection focusing on biases, theoretical orientation, and preferences. Reflexivity can also be used to critically evaluate and inspect the entire research process.

Triangulation, in turn, was used in the early 1800s to trace and measure series of triangles to map our territory or regions in geography and medicine. Later, namely in the mid and late 1900s, triangulation was used in math and political discourses to describe the process of positioning oneself between left and right ideologies. In the context of qualitative research, triangulation can be seen as one validation strategy, a means of studying and representing various perspectives simultaneously. For example, triangulation can be conceptualized as a means of checking the validity or the integrity of inference utilizing multiple data sources, researchers, theoretical perspectives, and methods—that is, checking arguments and conclusions against a variety of viewpoints (see Schwandt, 2007).

The Label of Reflexivity

I was curious how different authors utilize the labels *triangulation* and *reflexivity* in their work. To locate article examples, I reviewed all articles that met the following criteria: (1) appeared in Academic Search Premier, (2) included

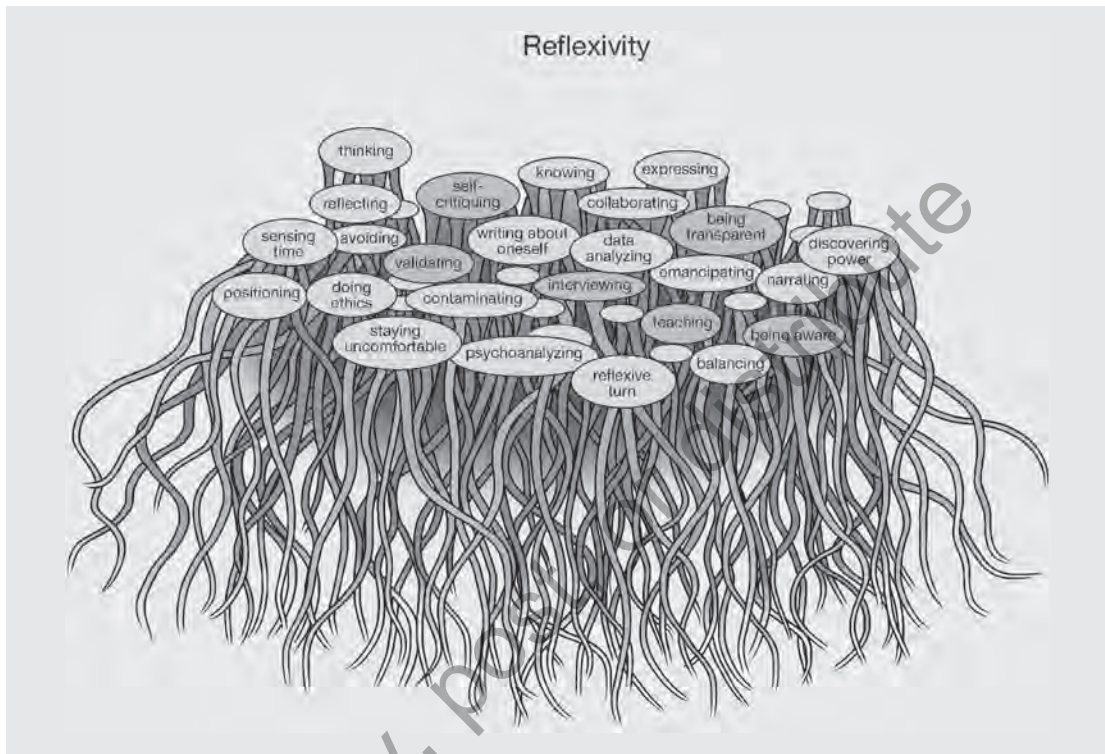
the keyword “qualitative research,” and (3) included the article title term “triangulation” or “reflexivity.” By using these criteria, I hoped to eliminate articles that were not directly associated with qualitative inquiry. Based on these criteria, I found 14 articles related to reflexivity that had been published between 1998 and 2013. Thirty-six percent of them were in method-focused journals such as *Qualitative Social Work*, *Qualitative Research*, and *Qualitative Health Research*. Eighty-six percent of these articles were conceptual papers, and 14% were research papers.

Overall, when the authors of these 14 papers wrote about reflexivity, they used the label as a reference to data contamination and a description of the impact of the researcher’s presence on the findings. However, the authors who published in health-related journals and who took a postmodern or hermeneutical perspective emphasized less the concept of reflexivity in relation to the validity questions. Instead, they paid more attention to the possible connections between empowerment and reflexivity and between critical self-reflection and reflexivity. Similarly, those authors who situated their work more deeply in epistemological and theoretical contexts also seemed to extend the traditional uses of reflexivity. Rather than recycling existing discourses and relying on the documented practices commonly associated with the label, these authors connected reflexivity with other concepts and practices.

In the following paragraphs, I point to some ways in which the authors put the labels to “work” and what kinds of actions these labels created. Thus, rather than focusing on the definitions per se, I center my attention on the verbs associated with the labels. First, I share a figure that highlights actions associated with reflexivity among all authors of the reviewed articles. Then I discuss some examples in more detail. The verbs that I use to summarize or synthesize authors’ ways of operationalizing the labels in the articles are marked in brackets in my narration.

When I thought not only about the linguistic connections associated with the label but also about the ways in which this particular label functioned to guide researchers’ and writers’ actions, various conceptual and practical connections became visible and possible. For example, the label of reflexivity was enacted in ways that promoted self-awareness but also self-critique. Being reflexive was often connected with interviewing and validating interview data rather than thinking about reflexivity as a more central activity within any qualitative research project. Reflexivity was also seen as a skill that needs to be taught. Interestingly, some authors linked reflexivity with an ability to think not just critically but as a solely cognitive activity without the involvement of and relation to the body, affect, and so on. Not surprisingly, for many authors, to “do” reflexivity was to write about oneself and one’s thinking while interviewing or to be aware of one’s assumptions

Figure 2.1 Actions Associated With Reflexivity as Described in the Selected Articles



and epistemologies in order to increase the validity of one's qualitative study. Alternatively, some authors proposed that emancipating and being responsible for one's choices (i.e., Foucault's care of self) exemplified practices they associated with reflexivity. Thus, doing reflexivity was seen as an ethical act: an ethical act turned toward oneself, seen as responsive and methodologically the "right thing" to do.

When reviewing the authors' text more carefully, I also located less direct connections and conceptual linkages. For example, a feminist article (citing, e.g., Benhabib, Butler, Brown & Gilligan, Haraway, Lather, and Olesen) published in *Sociology* described the authors' conceptual linkages as follows (emphasis and action linkages added, here and in quotes throughout chapter):

Our interest in reflexivity generally, and as it relates to data analysis in particular, is *more recent* [sensing time]. It has

developed largely in response to our increasing awareness of how *limited our reflexive processes were at the time* [reflecting within reflexivity] of our doctoral research, and how this was linked to *our ambivalence about our role in the research* [positioning], to the epistemological and other assumptions underpinning the data analysis methods we used, and *to our lack of theoretical and methodological tools* [methodological knowing] with which to operationalize reflexivity (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 414).

- **These authors link the following “doings” and activities: Sensing time + reflecting within reflexivity + positioning + methodological knowing + + (possible other things that I did not come to think about)**

There are days when time comes closer

time seems as if it has stopped,

Research has momentarily ended

to begin again

in immediacy

offering a moment

to reflect

if when how

I know methodologically

These authors also made multiple links between reflexivity and other concepts. For example, the **authors proposed that it is possible that when qualitative researchers become more experienced, they also become more**

reflexive. Learning experiences, an increased awareness of the complexities of data analysis, and multifaceted roles of researchers in the analysis process may also prompt reflexivity. Alternatively, more sophisticated and nuanced knowledge about theoretical and methodological tools can assist scholars in integrating and using reflexivity in their scholarship. Or it could also be that reflexivity always takes a long time and that reflexivity is about gaining methodological expertise over time through practice and methodological and theoretical exposure.

Could it also be possible that over time scholars become less reflexive (i.e., they fall into a certain pattern of doing research and they don't question it)?

—Kathryn

In the second postmodern example (citing Foucault), published in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, reflexivity was enacted through self-discovery and gaining awareness of power and social norms. Instead of focusing solely on the reflexivity of researchers, these authors proposed that interview participants “use reflexivity to *discover dominating* discourses and power structures [discovering power] with the *assistance* of the researcher [collaborating]” (McCabe & Holmes, 2009, p. 1523). Reflexivity was also about becoming aware of power relations and later readjusting one’s actions based on newly acquired knowledge. This use of reflexivity was more collaborative, collective, and action oriented, and it emphasized the goals of emancipation.

- **These authors link the following “doings” and activities:
Discovering power + collaborating + (possible other things that I did not come to think about)**

The last example, situated in psychoanalytic theory (Bion), was published in *Qualitative Health Research*. In this example, the author portrayed reflexivity as thinking in the present. In other words, rather than conceptualizing reflexivity as a past or retrospective activity, this author introduced a notion of reflexivity that required individuals to be active in the moment-to-moment research interactions. Additionally, the author proposed that reflexivity calls for researchers to acknowledge and follow their epistemological frameworks. The author also suggested that

the reflexive ability to share the feeling [expressing feelings] is revealed to be essential but not enough [needs to be accompanied by other activity]. It must be accompanied by the capacity to think [thinking], so that the experience can be thought about (Doyle, 2013, p. 251) . . . This surely requires that the researcher maintain awareness [being aware] of the context, purpose, and focus of the research, which should mitigate risks of excessive focus on self [balancing risks + avoiding self-centeredness]. Last example also emphasized the need for thinking about, rather than simply revealing [avoiding simple revealing], aspects of self. (p. 253)

Reflexivity during the interviews could lead to momentary failure—not being able to share feelings and thoughts with the study participants. As a temporary halt or situated expressions, reflexivity cannot be decontextualized or separated from the sense of self.

- **This author links the following “doings” and activities:
Expressing feelings + needs to be accompanied by other activity + thinking + being aware + balancing risks + avoiding self-centeredness + avoiding simple revealing + (possible other things that I did not come to think about).**

These examples illustrate that the label of reflexivity is used in various connected yet disconnected ways. Each time the authors use the term, they situate their examples in different contexts, connect with other uses of the same label, and create different understandings or purposes for the label. These examples also show that it is impossible to take for granted one assumed or normative notion associated with a label. Even though all authors used the same label, they put the label to work in considerably different ways, and the labels prompted and stimulated different actions and outcomes in these research reports and conceptualizations. Thus, rather than debating the label itself, it might be more illuminative and important to look at the conceptual, material, but also activating connections that the authors put forward in their texts and practices.

In your own research, you could:

- Trace back your conceptual development throughout the years. How have you used similar labels, and how have your connections between the label and cited literature possibly changed?
- Consider the following questions: What does your use of reflexivity do to you? How does your reflexivity label function, and what does that label generate?

The Label of Triangulation

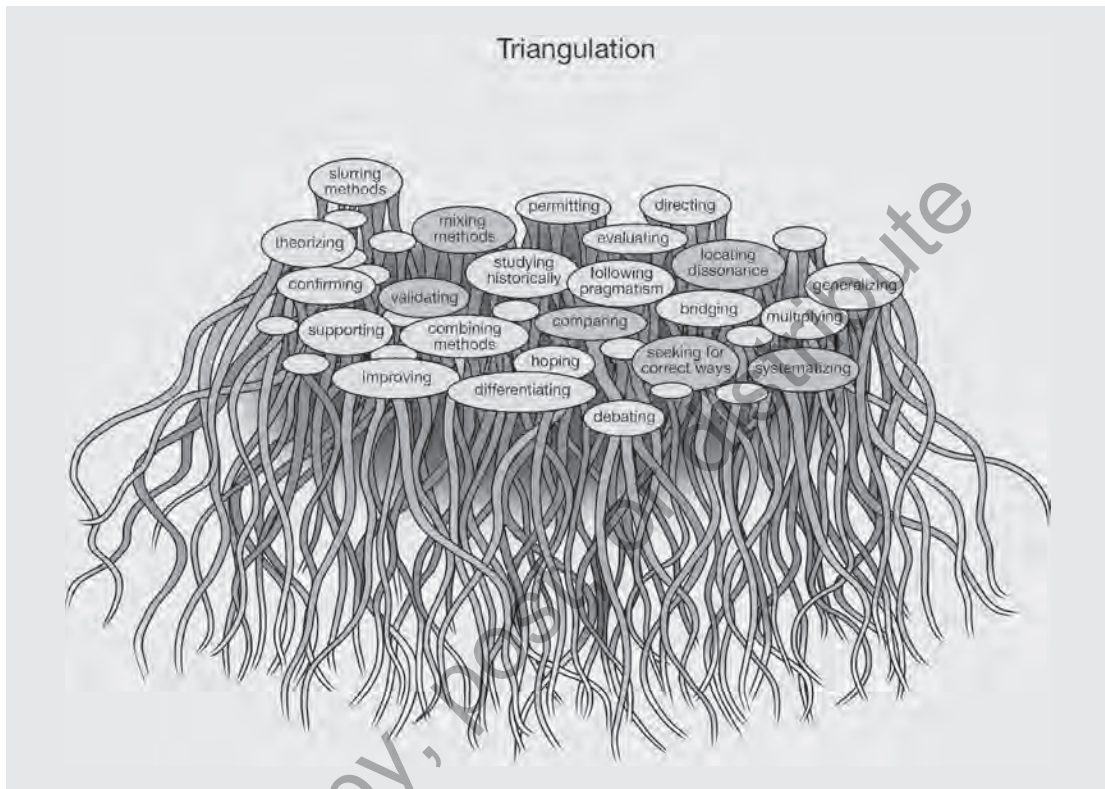
Based on the reviewed articles, reflexivity appears to have been used earlier than the more recent methodological label of **triangulation**. Eight articles discussing triangulation (published between 2002 and 2012) reflected more recent discourses, potentially following the expansion of mixed-methods research. Sixty-three percent of these articles appeared in methodological journals and came from health disciplines. Unsurprisingly, most of the triangulation papers (62%) reported research findings rather than advanced a methodological argument per se, even though these articles were published in the journals focusing on methodology. Interestingly, the opposite happened with the reflexivity articles. The articles that focused on reflexivity had more of a conceptual or methodological focus, but they were published in content journals. Additionally, more than half of the authors writing

When I picture triangulation and the sharp edges of a triangle, the rigidity you are describing fits perfectly, yet when I picture reflexivity, it is far more chaotic and cyclical.
—Darby

Why do you think that the label of triangulation is less “theoretically situated” than the label of reflexivity?

about reflexivity mentioned their epistemology and theoretical perspective, whereas only 25% of the authors writing about triangulation did the same. Thus, it could be argued that reflexivity was by and large a more theoretically situated label, while triangulation appeared to be used more mechanically and possibly in decontextualized ways.

Figure 2.2 Activities Associated With Triangulation as Described in the Selected Articles



Some authors of the reviewed articles (especially those scholars who took a pragmatist or unidentified epistemological stance) seemed to approach triangulation as a response to and potential cure for dissonant and discrepant data. Some authors across different disciplines adopted a somewhat technical approach to triangulation. For example, these authors developed matrices, frameworks, or “systematic” tools and techniques to carry out triangulation processes. The triangulation label prompted methodological “doings” and activities, often in objectivist, epistemologically neutral, or assumingly “correct” ways.

In the reviewed articles, “doing triangulation” happened mostly in the mixed-methods context, and it was seen as an analytical activity involving comparing, systemizing, or validating data and findings. **Doing triangulation** was also viewed as a mechanical task that called for systems, rules, steps, and **protocols**.

I was impressed with Richardson's (2000) view that one should "crystallize" rather than "triangulate," because there are far more than three sides from which the data can be approached.

—Cheryl

It feels natural here to say this is not surprising, given that the etymology of the word implies systematic, legitimate, or legal proof of ownership.

—Darby

According to the authors of reviewed articles, without triangulation, scholars would slur methods and conduct invalid studies, and they would not know what to do with inconsistent or divergent findings. Thus, "doing triangulation" was seen as "purifying" and verifying.

An author in the *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* offering a pragmatist perspective (citing Creswell, Onwuegbuzie, and Leech) conceptualized triangulation as a way of validating combined and mixed perspectives. This author stated,

In permitting a variety of perspectives [permitting multiplicity], triangulation offers exploratory possibilities for all those scholars looking to bridge disciplinary divides [bridging paradigms] or paradigm borders and enjoy new, or each other's, expertise to solve [supporting new perspectives + solving problems] the issue. (Vikström, 2010, p. 220)

For this author, triangulation may have more to do with "permitting"—providing permission—and "allowing" scholars to use and mix different perspectives and methods than accumulating findings to ensure validity or rigor. Alternatively, the author saw triangulation as an opportunity to explore possibilities, to bridge paradigms and paradigmatic debates, and to support new perspectives and collaborations. It is possible that triangulation offered a solution to problems that required expert knowledge. In this context, the label of triangulation also put forward future-oriented and optimistic activities related to blending paradigms and engaging in exploratory and collaborative work. In some ways, this author used triangulation as a proxy or justification for interdisciplinary collaboration and theoretically hybrid perspectives.

- **This author links the following "doings" and activities: permitting multiplicity + bridging paradigms + supporting new perspectives + solving problems + + (possible other things that I did not come to think about).**

Whereas the previous article connected the label "triangulation" with permission to conduct mixed-methods research, another example from *Qualitative Health Research* (no theoretical perspective identified) put forward notions of triangulation that implied completeness and procedures that can ultimately

enhance validity. Both ways to operationalize triangulation (permit/allow/call for mixed-methods work and support validity) are common in qualitative research literature, yet scholars rarely specify which way they use the term in their particular context.

By triangulating the findings from different methodological approaches, we were able to tap into *different elements of the issue* [differentiating], *providing complementary findings that contributed to achieving a more complete picture* [achieving holistic Truth] of the issue under study. It is our *hope* [hoping] that by sharing and *debating* [debating] the methodological processes and challenges of triangulation, qualitative researchers *will not have to rely on intuitively “feeling our way”* [gaining legitimacy] but, rather, can be *guided by a set of basic triangulation procedures* [following procedures] *that aim to enhance the validity* [validating] of research results. (Farmer et al., 2006, p. 378)

This conceptualization emphasized triangulation as a process to bring together complementary findings from different sources in order to achieve a more complete picture and “True” findings while simultaneously working against intuitive, emotional, or unconscious ways of carrying out research. According to this author, feelings and intuition should be replaced by a guided set of procedures, since the ultimate goal of triangulation is to enhance validity and gain legitimacy.

- **These authors link the following “doings” and activities: differentiating + achieving holistic Truth + hoping + debating + gaining legitimacy + following procedures + validating + + (possible other things that I did not come to think about)**

I love to differentiate

locate difference to build to reflect to move on

but

I fail to find Truth in difference

truths escape

Truths do not follow procedures

or other predetermined structures

I find this sometimes challenging,
because the audience (often
faculty or editors) seem to have
more power to decide what is
valid. Do you think a certain
amount of time in the field or
specific references would be
needed for your scholars to
deviate from normative research
trajectories?
—Darby

Just differences to differentiate
me from you, us from us, from from froms
Differentiated “validity”
is
that
possible
Is that legitimate
Who decides?

The last example comes from the *International Journal of Medical Informatics* (no theoretical perspective identified). This article used triangulation in the context of evaluation and argued that triangulation can be beneficial for evaluation studies. In this example, the authors situated the discussion of triangulation in a particular disciplinary context (evaluation research). At the same time, the authors made generalizations within evaluation studies, implying that there might be one (generalizable) way to triangulate within these types of studies. In some ways, the authors mixed local and generalizable discourses and ways to use the label. By generalizing the practice, the authors created a vision of a standardized practice and legitimization through standardization. The authors explained:

The *theory of triangulation* [theorizing] deals with the integration of methods and approaches so as to *conduct better* [improving] evaluation studies. In evaluation research, *triangulation in general* [generalizing] means the multiple employments of various sources of data, observers, methods, and/or theories in investigations of the same phenomenon. Triangulation has *two main objectives* [directing action]: to *confirm results* [confirming] with data from other sources (validation of results [validating]), and to *find new data* [finding new data] to get a more *complete picture* [achieving a complete picture] (completeness of results). (Ammenwerth et al., 2003, p. 237)

Here, the authors also referred to the theory of triangulation, a set of related arguments associated with triangulation, or an argumentation system of triangulation. The integration of methods was seen as a form of abstracting and exemplifying how nature works (i.e., through theorizing). Similar to other authors, these authors linked triangulation to overall improvement of

research practice and quality control. In addition, the act of triangulation was positioned as a somewhat limited and narrow activity, since it aimed only to confirm results and find additional data to achieve completeness and potential Truth.

- **These authors link the following “doings” and activities: Theorizing + improving + generalizing + directing action + confirming + validating + finding new data + achieving a complete picture + + (possible other things that I did not come to think about).**

In your own research, you could:

- Discuss with a colleague why you are drawn to particular ways to carry out the label of triangulation and what could explain the differences between your views and your colleague's views.
- Locate 5 to 10 citations outside your discipline and social and geographical context. Investigate and review how these authors put the label of triangulation to work and what kinds of discourses and practices the label generates and promotes.

The Label of “Triangulaxivity”

Based on the previous examples, we see that the ways in which labels operate can vary considerably, and each function or action prompted by the label is contextual, historical, and in some ways intentional yet also irrational. Labels and their conceptual connections can come together in unlimited ways and through infinite connections. This infinite connectivity does not diminish the value of these labels or make this type of language use less scholarly, especially when notions of scholarship and knowledge extend beyond positivism and empiricism. It is also likely that some connections appear to readers to be more familiar than others. However, this unfamiliarity should not lead to rejection or dismissal. I wonder whether rejection of some labels or distancing oneself from specific uses of labels based solely on unfamiliarity or normativity is productive or desirable when one attempts to work through dilemmas and problems associated with unstable signifiers. Maybe the more important question is: Can the new label or function work for me?

What happens if one desires to move away from the normative meanings and existing labels to create a new label that implies alternative conceptual connections? What happens when scholars enter into language games without clear norms or social expectations? What happens to language when it no longer identifies or confirms? What if language moves and provokes? What becomes possible, and what are some risks associated with these practices?

*That's interesting. Like the inverse
of positivism.*

—Kathryn

*Or is it to mean we all arrive at
individual acceptance of answers
for the moment?*

—Darby

Answers to the previous questions vary or may not exist at all, at least in general or generalizable ways. **Alternatively, only temporary answers may lie in particulars that will stay always partially unknown.** We may not know what labels can do, not even after we have interacted with labels or have encountered the events where we are affected by new irrational labels. It is also possible that at the moment when we thought we knew the impact of the label on our practices, the label and its affect have shifted, moved on, and escaped our attention. In this case we might be better off to become less concerned about the label itself. Instead, we might want to process and analyze the affect and effect any labels have on our practices.

We also know that context matters. For example, in the context of qualitative research, it matters whether the person who is being affected by the labels is a tenured, accepted, and known member of a scholarly community (power); whether this person is seen as knowledgeable (knowledge), and how this person views himself or herself in relation to other individuals and matter (self-reflection and situatedness). Similarly, the context—when, why, and how new labels are introduced—matters, for example, in the context of a textbook, casual conversation, policy brief, call for proposals, image, or movie.

Alternative uses of labels may come with a cost. Regardless of the context, any move away from normative uses of labels can be risky, since alternative or new conceptual connections may create new linguistic extensions, understandings, or actions that other individuals might not recognize. Newly created labels may fail to produce the intended impact or anticipated outcome—but maybe they accomplish something else, something unanticipated. Since the path is not given, the only way to find out is to take the risk and make the leap of faith.

Second, it is interesting to consider what changes when qualitative researchers develop their own concepts (as they have done in the past; consider, for example, double[d] science [Lather], autoethnography [Ellis], intersubjectivity [Mead], and how a label becomes recognized and accepted). There seem to be at least two main areas of consideration: (1) disciplinary gatekeeping and (2) the goals and purposes of scholarly communication. First, let us consider the issue of recognition and acceptance by peer qualitative researchers and other scientists. Who is to decide the legitimized use of a label? Who is required or privileged to recognize it? Who cannot know the label or who should not know? When exactly does something become a label, and when is the signifier–signified link established?

Recognition and acceptance are, of course, emphasized in the context of peer reviews, collegial support, funding decisions, national and international reputation, tenure, and promotion, among other things. All these tasks and

activities represent normative ways in which academia and higher education operate, identify, and mark their community and exercise power. Presence is shaped by the past, and innovation is linked to the tradition. However, this leaves little room for innovation or creativity outside normativity, especially when a tradition or existing practice is used as a measuring stick for success. Innovative and creative uses of labels may go unrecognized and sometimes rejected by peer reviewers, since these reviewers cannot identify or locate existing traditions that can legitimize proposed uses or practices. There may exist no predefined criteria, and therefore reviewers cannot rely on existing authority and cannot delegate the responsibility to make a decision to others or other things (see also Section 7). One can wonder whether this discursive and authoritative problem and lack of citational authority is a valid reason to make a new label or an innovative use of a label less important, purposeful, or meaningful. What about paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1996) and less paradigmatic ways to use labels and language?

Another issue relates to the goals and purposes of scholarly communication. Why do qualitative researchers communicate and share their thoughts? For example, are our communications based on technical, communicative, or other types of interests (Habermas, 1971), or is something else at stake? For Habermas (1990), communicative action builds on mutual understanding and reaching a type of consensus related to shared language. Certainly, many researchers communicate to create mutual understanding, but sometimes shared understanding may be impossible to achieve or is an undesirable goal to begin with. This might especially be the case when scholars have considerably different standpoints and/or epistemologies, or when power dictates communication practices. Alternatively, mutual understanding may be both desired and resisted. At the same time, the notion of different communicative interests is not new for qualitative researchers. For example, some qualitative researchers communicate to share self-expression, to deliver information, to describe and understand, to engage in cultural critique, to emancipate or persuade, and to provoke. If a mutual or agreed-upon understanding is not one's goal, the lack of shared language might be less problematic, and communicative persuasion might ultimately be even more effective when alternative language or new labels have been introduced. Do we need to rely on known labels in order to achieve effective communication, or is "effective" communication even desirable? (Especially if effectiveness is being defined by narrow policy discourses.) Maybe unclear, less directed or directive, less coherent and logical communication can create more productive dialogue—inviting space to think differently.

To think without normative labels could imply thinking about language in deterritorialized ways (breaking free from existing paths, lines of inquiry, and practices to generate new connection and possibilities). Deleuze encouraged us to deviate from the normativity of language, since this helps to deterritorialize meanings and subvert linguistic structures (see, e.g., Bogue, 2005; Deleuze &

To be honest, I am not sure I understand this. . . . is it to mean if I think I have a case, someone labeled that thing I have a case, and therefore I can have a case, but if I do not have one I may still have the thing but not the label of case, and therefore it has been taken away? Maybe a footnote to help people like me who are confused.

—Darby

If it was really “nonsense,” why draw on known words? Are you feeling bound to this topic based on your anticipated audience?

—Darby

Guattari, 1987). Deleuze (1990) drew a subversion example from a Zen master: “**If you have a case,**” says the Zen master, “**I am giving you one; if you do not have one, I am taking it away**” (p. 136). Language games are infinitive in number, and diverse events make these games and subversion possible. Nonsense, absurdity, and paradox are Deleuze’s preferred expressions of language, since these forms of events can free language from its referential and normative functions. Deleuze asks, what happens to systems and normativity when language becomes nonrepresentational?

Additionally, “concepts [or labels] are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts. They must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be nothing without their creator’s signature” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 5). Concepts are also becoming and always regenerating and recreating themselves through their interactions and relationships with other concepts. In the next two examples I create two different forms of “triangulaxivity,” a “**nonsense**” and possibly unrecognizable label that combines distinct functions of both reflexivity and triangulation. My purpose is not to argue for the use or adaptation of this particular concept (triangulaxivity) per se, but I use this example to illustrate my point about infinite iterations. I also chose to use concepts closely associated with the initial concepts

instead of using concepts outside methodological discourses (which of itself is a limitation, of course). For example, I could have put forward conceptual connections to history, the arts, literature, and pop culture rather than creating relations to other scholarly discourses. In addition, there could be an indefinite number of examples and forms of intertextuality, but for the sake of the argument I present only a few here.

Let’s play

even though you might

not want to

You don’t have time

to play not in my space

Not according to my rules but wait

There are no rules

we can just pretend maybe
we like to play crazy games
We like to respond to oneself and otherness
within and outside ourselves us and over ourselves (and labels)
done again and again

In the following examples, I engage both preexisting versions of the concepts (reflexivity and triangulation) and attempt to create a new space where concepts respond to otherness outside and within themselves. This experiment is also meant to illustrate how “nonsense” activity like this and untraditional function of a label can be both nonsensical and sensical at the same time.

From Deleuze’s (1990) perspective, concepts speak to events, not meanings. So, think about an event where the acts of triangulating and being reflexive come together in their singularity within the same study. For example, Scholar A (see Form IA, IB) desires to use multiple techniques of data collection or analysis, and she is also committed to self-inspection, including different ways to gather and handle one’s thoughts and activities. Neither multiple techniques nor self-inspection can take place without the other (so this particular way of engaging and doing differs, e.g., from the event where triangulation is followed by being reflexive). The acts and practices of triangulation and being reflexive are also simultaneous. Furthermore, this event is not a pure triangulation event, since being reflexive blends with and bleeds into triangulation activity. A new event is created that also carries another label. In addition, triangulaxivity is more than a unifying act of triangulation and reflexivity. Since we do not know this conceptual space beforehand, something unanticipated is likely to take place. Doing multiple techniques and engaging in self-inspection simultaneously are likely to bring along other concepts and new forms of intertextuality and “inter-doing.” Maybe triangulaxivity involves a choice (regarding methods, a choice between dichotomies, a choice to continue or stop), resolutions between conflicting thoughts and methods, methodological conflicts that may stay unsolved, stops and pauses to think or practice methods, and comparisons (self and others, past, present, and future), and triangulaxivity might be used as an approach that aims to create change and promote action. Think about these options as possibilities, events to come—not just any possibility but possibilities that will work for you.

Form I:

Triangulation is the use of multiple techniques for gathering and/or handling data within a single study.

Reflexivity is the commitment to self-inspection based on the researchers’ own thoughts and activities.

IA. Triangulaxivity is the use of multiple techniques and a commitment to self-inspection for gathering and /or handling researchers’ own thoughts and activities within a single study.

IB. Triangulaxivity is pausing and stopping during research activities to consider the choice regarding multiple methodological techniques and commitment to action-oriented self-inspection for gathering and /or handling researchers’ own thoughts and activities within a single study.

Form II:

Triangulation is a methodological approach that contributes to the validity of research results when multiple methods, sources, theories, and/or investigators are employed.

Reflexivity is the personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological, and ontological influences on our research and data analysis processes.

IIA. Triangulaxivity is a methodological approach that contributes to the validity of personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological, and ontological influences when multiple methods, sources, theories, and/or investigators are employed during research and data analysis processes.

IIB. Triangulaxivity is an analysis of the validity of personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological and ontological influences when multiple methods, sources, theories, and/or investigators are employed during the research and data analysis processes. This analysis can be used to externally evaluate the rigor of the research process and study findings.

An infinite number of combinations and events are possible. For example, another form of “triangulaxivity” might be more appropriate or needed for other qualitative researchers. In this second form of “triangulaxivity,” the label itself stays the same but the signifier–signified connection changes. For instance, Scholar B (see Form IIA and IIB) has thought about a relationship between triangulation, validity, and reflexivity for some time now. For Scholar B, triangulating always happens in the context of validation, and he also believes that triangulating and validation take place outside their narrowly defined methodological contexts. Triangulation connects not only methods, investigators, and theories, but also power, institutional influences, pragmatic desires, and epistemologies in reflective ways.

Maybe

triangulaxivity is the outcome of rigorous Did I say rigorous?

research,

A process

you may use for your purposes

Maybe your purpose is to carry out external evaluation

But what is external and what is evaluation Mirka asks

Alternatively

triangulaxivity is an analysis; analysis of analysis, analysis of oneself

not the other

Alternatively

analysis of the impact did I say impact?

of multiple methods

Impact on individual choices the researcher makes

Are there any?

Alternatively

concepts come together maybe more randomly than expected

to help you and the world

to think with triangulation and reflexivity

In the previous examples, the body of triangulaxivity could be seen as a virtual label—a label without stable conceptual origins, linguistic limbs, or methodological structures. Multiple heads thinking the thought, committed eyes searching for references, thoughtful facial muscles exercising discipline, and epistemological fingertips crafting solid claims—all becoming everything and nothing. Fingers and words fold into each other to form praying hands. Fingers, words, prayers, and labels. Or do fingers and words pray? Intermingled energy, messy wordiness, puzzling connection. Are we there yet? A triangulaxivity yawn or a tringulaxivity prayer? Not sure.

Huh, that is a fascinating way to convey that idea.

—Kathryn

In its becoming, triangulaxivity brings together multiple techniques and self-inspection; doing and thinking (Form I); the (im)possibility of validity of the personal, the institutional, and the emotional; a multiplicity of methods, theories, and investigators (Form II); and many other connections to come. These paradoxical and somewhat absurd connections can create new lines of thought, practices, and application (e.g., the multiplicity of the researcher self, a continuum of theorizing and practicing theory, multiple validities of the personal or institutional). Concepts and labels become more promiscuous but not too palatable or too illegible (Childers, Rhee, & Daza, 2013). And maybe one's researcher self or selves become a dog in training, and theorizing and practicing appear on same side of the coin; and institutional validity creates an institution. Think about these options as possibilities, events to come—not just any possibility but the possibilities that will work for you (return of possibility).

These examples also illustrate how triangulaxivity could change and vary based on activities and perspectives that are used to construct or enact it. Meaning is harder to capture and normativity is more challenging to sustain if there are no preferred or privileged uses or users. Different forms of triangulaxivity bring together unexpected relations to other concepts, and they do not honor disciplinary or socially accepted uses of signifiers. However, this disturbance can be productive and even liberating, thus leading to other unconventional uses or labels. Triangulaxivity is a playful creation that could prompt other conceptual interchanges and linkages, such as trianography (forms of cultural triangulation), unsubjectivity (forms of subjectivity working against themselves), samplexivity (forms of reflexive sampling), and **themaxivity (forms of synthesized reflexivity)**.

How about crystalaxivity?

—Cheryl

How does the concept of privilege influence label use and meaning making?

But why care? Who would care about these different forms of triangulaxivity? Maybe those scholars who have been searching for ways to share what they have been doing that is “not this or that” care. Those scholars who think that the tasks of triangulation or reflexivity cannot be decontextualized but that these tasks take different, simultaneous, and overlapping forms might also care. Those scholars who believe that triangulation is always a reflexive task might care. Some other scholars might care for other reasons.

In your own research, you could:

1. Discuss with a colleague why you are drawn to particular ways to carry the label of triangulation and what could explain, express, use, transfer, or transplant the differences between your views and your colleague's views.
2. Consider what happens when the same label has vastly different actions and activities associated with it. Who needs to control different uses of labels? Why do the ways in which we use labels need to be guarded and socially accepted?
3. **E-mail me your thoughts and reactions to “triangulaxivity.”**

Possibilities of Linguistic Creativity and Innovation in Research: Living With Words Without Stable Meaning

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LOL. Readers e-mailing you their thoughts and reactions—that might be the best book assignment I've ever seen! What would you do with these thoughts and reactions?
—Jasmine

Some of the possibilities of (linguistic) creativity and innovation in research are endless, inspiring, freeing, and still to come. It is fascinating to think about methodology and its vocabulary that is always becoming and never a finished project. From this perspective, qualitative researchers cannot rest their cases, finish their learning, or close their glossaries. Similar to the social and material worlds at large, methodology, its labels, and its concepts are in constant flux. There is work to do and new expressions and “formalizations” to be created. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained that language becomes the new form of expression and a set of formal traits defining this new expression. “Signs are not signs of a thing; they are signs of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, they mark a certain threshold crossed in the course of these movements . . . signs designate only a certain formalization of expression” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 67–68).

Living with words without stable and fixed meaning can create a space to think about scholarship and our lives differently. We will have more time to experience, live, and do scholarship and life rather than seeking for meanings that may or may not confirm the norm. In addition, we may be able to give up notions of finality of knowledge or findings and approach ending and “conclusions” as temporary and unstable. Instead of rigidly studying methodological techniques or worrying about right ways to carry out scholarship, we could try to live

research. Different notions of *living research* present interesting intellectual and material challenges, especially related to expertise, time, resources, and peer evaluations. Who will fund living research? Will living research serve as justification for a faculty member's sabbatical or a student's request to have one summer funded without completing any traditional course credits?

Words without meaning could be contrasted to Massumi's (2002) concept of the body without an image. Both words without meaning and bodies without an image are accumulative spaces and intersections of perspectives and, as Massumi put it, "passages between" and "a gap in space that is also a suspension of the normal unfolding of time" (p. 57). Massumi also suggested that we should rethink bodies, subjectivities, and social change through movement, affect, and force instead of code, text, and signification.

Words without meaning create anticipation that can produce and inspire. "Subject and object are embedded in the situational relation in a way that cannot be fully determined in advance. As long as the event is ongoing, its outcome even slightly uncertain, their contextual identity is open to amendment" (Massumi, 2002, p. 231).

I understand.

—Jasmine

Here, today

I follow Deleuze and Guattari

I think with them about maps

zones of proximity

you, me, texts, labels and our temporary meeting, rapid encounter

us coming together

Copresence and the impossible

Difficult to say where one

word and

particle ends Think with triangulation!

and other begins Think with reflexivity!

Triangulativity is becoming neither triangulation nor reflexivity

has a privileged position

in that becoming Think privilege! Not!

What would happen to the labels associated with qualitative research if one thought similarly to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), who proposed that “form itself became a *great form in continuous development*, a gathering of forces . . . matter itself was no longer a chaos to subjugate and organize but rather *the moving matter of a continuous variation*” (p. 340)? From this perspective, methodological labels have a temporal presence and virtual subjectivity. They move and shift, and they are only known through their variations and co-presence. Instead of creating networks of meaning word and labels without meaning, they create varying alliances and affiliations.

Massumi (2002) encouraged scholars to follow and create affirmative methods:

techniques which embrace their own inventiveness and are not afraid to own up to the fact that they add (if so meagerly) to reality . . . *vague* concepts, and concepts of vagueness, have a crucial, and often enjoyable, role to play. (p. 13)

Furthermore, Massumi emphasized how paradox can be an effective logical operator for vague concepts. Furthermore, the question at hand is not about truth value but whether something works and can be useful for you. “What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body” (Massumi, 1987, p. xv)?

Generally speaking, qualitative researchers do not lack communication, but maybe they have too much of it and they worry too much about it. Qualitative



Robert Ulmer

researchers may lack creation (see also Koro-Ljungberg, 2012). “*We lack resistance to the present*. The creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist” (p. 108). “Concepts are really monsters that are reborn from their fragments” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 140). These concepts in making and monsters haunting in the shadows of normative language can be seen as potential and a form of energy that has power to surprise and diversify. For Deleuze, the goal of philosophy “pragmatics” is to invent concepts that do not add up to a system that you enter but that will pack potential “in a way a crowbar in a willing hand envelops an energy of prying” (Massumi, 1987, p. xv). Similarly, Derrida’s vocabulary is always on the move. “He does not relinquish a term altogether. He simply reduces it to the lower case of a common noun, where each context establishes its provisional definition yet once again” (Spivak, 1997, p. lxxi).

It is possible that language and labels fail to represent. Spivak (1997) explained that “in examining familiar things we come to such unfamiliar conclusions that our very language is twisted and bent even as it guides us” (p. xiv). For Derrida, a possibility of thought does not come through being or identity but in the thought’s simultaneous separation and the sameness of the other. Half of the sign is “not there” (same as the other) and the other half is “not that.” The structure of signs is determined by a trace that will always stay at least partially absent. If meanings and signifiers stay at least partially absent, why forcefully fit labels or why insist on language carrying particular meanings? Maybe qualitative researchers would do better to think about temporary, virtual, or quasi-conceptual links assigned to labels and words. From this perspective, scholars should always recheck and in some ways question normative language and labels, and they could adopt a position of linguistic openness and uncertainty. In that way, labels and language might become more of a game with constantly changing rules, a puzzle without an end, or a nagging thought that won’t go away.

Even though normativity and socially accepted uses of the labels may prevail and dominate, especially in peer-review processes, we should not give up our desire to think the impossible. One cannot think the impossible only with the possible, since logic, language, and **labels must fail first**. Language and different uses of labels are always historical, political, incomplete, stuttering, and repetitive in their imperfection and inaccuracy, which, luckily, leaves room for impossible yet provocative methodological projects. How would qualitative researchers’ normative practices and/or legitimizing uses of labels change if Lyotard’s language games or Deleuzian endless language events informed our methodological processes and decision making? Think about these options as possibilities, events to come—not just any possibility but possibilities that will work for you (return of possibility).

This ties nicely to a conversation we had about hegemony in Buffy’s summer class. We arrived at the conclusion that we may not be able to imagine what is possible for race relations because we only had normative language to describe what might be possible bounding our ideas to what is not and what is possible.

—Darby



READING LIST OF LIFE

Coelho, P. (2006). *The alchemist*. HarperLuxe.

Frankl, V. (2006). *Man's search for meaning*. Beacon Press.

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