Somatic sensitivity and reflexivity as validity tools in qualitative research

By: Jill Green

Abstract:

Validity is a key concept in qualitative educational research. Yet, it is often not addressed in methodological writing about dance. This essay explores validity in a postmodern world of diverse approaches to scholarship, by looking at the changing face of validity in educational qualitative research and at how new understandings of the concept might be applied in dance inquiry. With new methodological frameworks, ideas about validity have changed. Through this article, I trace validity in educational research frameworks and discuss appropriate approaches, given the purpose of the research and its paradigmatic frameworks. My big questions are: is validity a key aspect of qualitative research in dance? Do we hold onto the concept of validity as a useful indicator of methodological rigor? Do the traditional criteria for qualitative research change according to the purpose of the research? Or has the idea of validity itself become challenged with newer trends in dance education research in the United States? If so, how do we then assure that qualitative research is valid?

Article:

This essay will explore inquiry in a postmodern world of diverse approaches to research, by looking at the changing face of validity in educational qualitative research and how new understandings of the concept may be applied in dance inquiry. With new methodological frameworks, ideas about validity have changed. My big questions are: should validity be a key aspect of qualitative research in dance? Do we hold onto the concept of validity as a useful indicator of methodological rigor? Do the traditional criteria for qualitative research change according to the purpose of the research? Or has the idea of validity itself become irrelevant with

newer trends in dance education research in the United States? If so, how do we then assure that qualitative research is valid?

Validity and rigor

As a reviewer for manuscripts in a number of journals, including *Research in Dance Education,* I receive a number of submissions from authors who claim to be conducting a study, yet include no methodology or validity sections in the article. Authors sometimes collect data, without receiving or indicating that they received Institutional Research Board approval, and with no plan for a systematic methodology, position, or research framework. I am certainly aware that these, often young, scholars are attempting to contribute to the body of literature on dance education and I do attempt to encourage them to do more thinking about conducting qualitative research studies. My concern is not about these authors but about the field in general. Without some consideration and knowledge of research methodology, authors can collect data, and come up with findings that suit their needs, without considering validity or rigor. I contend that findings need to be based on a systematic process that checks our biases and attempts to see where we are limited as scholars.

So what is validity in qualitative research? The answer may be different depending on the epistemological framework used in the study. Some qualitative research may be similar to quantitative research in that it seeks a "found reality" or something to be "discovered." Many postpositivist researchers, on the other hand, do not attempt to find "mind-independent truths" but rather look at the particular context of an educational setting. In other words, the validity criteria are based on the type of research conducted.[1] If one attempts to discover a universal truth, it makes sense to look for findings that would apply to all situations and can be generalizable. If one bases research on the idea of a constructed meaning of truth, it makes sense to want to avoid generalization but look more at constructions of knowledge based on specific contexts. As Kvale suggests, "Validity concerns how we justify our claims to knowledge" (1989, 96). In other words, criteria for validity should reflect the ontological and epistemological views of the researcher.

Qualitative research, positivism, and postpositivism

Before determining appropriate validity constructs, it may be useful to look at general differences between positivist (scientific method) aspects of validity and postpositivist validity characteristics. Then, particular types of validity in qualitative research in general may be considered in order to explore prevailing approaches. It may be significant to note that creating a dichotomy may be problematic since some scientists and academics do accept criteria beyond the "scientific method." In this way, setting up a binary does not provide a complete picture. However, although a number of scientists do not see positivism as the only way to do research, the "scientific method" has been treated as the gold standard by many academics. Diversions from this approach may cause traditional researchers to refute qualitative work. However, they

may not see that postpositivist researchers may argue for a rigor based on a different type of validity. For example, according to Green and Stinson (1999),

Because postpositivist researchers and theorists do not attempt to generalize data, they have searched for a broader concept of validity that does not attempt to determine whether a knowledge statement corresponds to the objective world. There is a greater emphasis on finding consensus within a particular setting than generalizing data to all situations. For this reason, while positivist methodology requires a random sample as a validity measure and a larger sample to ensure generalization, postpositivist methodology requires neither. The researcher is interested in investigating a specific context and may use a particular small group sample. (96–97)

Since postpositivism is based on a different ontology that does not adhere to a belief that reality or truth is found, but rather at least partially contructed, and an epistemology that suggests it may be impossible to detach the researcher from the study completely, ideas such as the ability to take out the human component, are not appropriate for such studies. Postpositivist research calls for a validity that does not generalize data because the researcher is studying a particular context, and because of the interest in constructing the meaning of the study.

In addition, Steiner Kvale also calls for a validity of knowledge claims in dialogue. He refers to this as "a community of scholars." This is similar to Guba and Lincoln's idea of "peer debriefing." This process involves sharing findings with colleagues and others in the field to bring the process more authority (97).

Kvale also asserts that validation is about investigation rather than measurement or generalization [validation being the process whereby validity is established]. To validate is to question, to ask what is being evaluated and why. However since, the researcher is not separating her or himself from the research process, self-reflexivity becomes a component of validity as a way of checking one's bias against other voices and opinions. Without checking, qualitative observations and interpretations may be accepted without any critical thought. In other words, without being aware of researcher assumptions and values, a qualitative researcher would be able to come to any conclusion and not check for consistency. But a system of consistency is created by asking where the researcher's biases live and by acknowledging them. In this way, validity in qualitative research may be evidenced through self-reflexivity. This may be facilitated through a field journal that sorts out personal reflections and methodological choices.

In addition, theorizing becomes a significant aspect of postpositivist validity (97). According to Kvale,

The complexities of validating qualitative research need not be due to a weakness of qualitative methods, but on the contrary, may rest upon their extraordinary power to reflect and conceptualize the nature of the phenomenon investigated, to capture the complexity of the social reality. The validation of qualitative research becomes intrinsically linked to the development of a theory of social reality. (82–83)

In this sense, developing theory is about allowing ideas and questions to emerge throughout the study. It is about constructing ideas that build knowledge, sometimes in an effort to create social change and awareness.

Patti Lather refers to another type of measure, namely "catalytic validity." It requires that an investigation take action to produce change. This type of validity is suited for those critical theory investigators who wish to work towards social change. The idea is that by laying out the purpose of action, researchers should then check to see if the study did in effect have a change of the lives of the participants or the readers (36). The idea here is that the types of validity should be consistent with the theoretical and methodological framework inherent in the study. Postpositivist methodology and validity criteria are different because they are based on different perspectives on reality and knowledge. In this context, positivism is not truer, more correct, or more valid than postpositivism, but rather different. Neither is necessarily more valid or correct. However, it makes sense that validity criteria arise from the paradigmatic basis of the researcher and question. For example, if a researcher wanted to study a particular structural reason for particular injuries in specific dance forms, and believed that injuries were a result the result of a training technique, a scientific method might be called for so that the researcher can then provide information for dance teachers. However, if, for example, a researcher wanted to look at how gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, etc. influences the ways dancers may be bodily and emotionally injured in particular classes due to the history of Euro-centered dance training, a critical research framework would be more appropriate.

Issues and approaches related to qualitative research

Issues related to qualitative research have been addressed for more than half a century (Atkinson et al. cited in Cho and Trent 2006, 31). According to Jeasik Cho and Allan Trent, concerns about validity in qualitative research have increased, both internationally and in the US. This has made it necessary to provide rationales for qualitative research that add rigor to the process. Cho and Trent confer that requirements for institutional rigor led to what they call a "transactional approach" to validity. The "transactional approach" is grounded in active interaction between the inquiry and the research participants by means of an array of techniques such as member checking, bracketing, and triangulation (Cho and Trent 2006, 320). Member checking is a way of checking in with the participants to see if the researcher is correctly interpreting what they say. One way this may be done is by asking participants to read transcripts, and question or change their citations. Bracketing, known particularly in phenomenology, is a method used "to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research … [it] is also a method to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of examining what may be emotionally challenging material" (Tufford and Newman 2010, 81). Triangulation is a process whereby the researcher uses two or more data sources, methods, or theoretical frameworks to allow for multiple interpretations and a fuller, more grounded study. These more "traditional measures" were born as a way to provide rationales for the work of qualitative researchers so their work would be accepted along with quantitative research. They provide a way to check

biases, provide more information, and include voices other than that of the researcher. They provide systemic ways of checking to make sure that the researcher's finding are consistent with what happened within the research context.

Through the years, however, even the basic qualitative measures alone have been critiqued as too simplistic and newer frameworks for validity are emerging. They require different validity criteria. For example, Cho and Trent address the shift to a more "transformational validity," like that of Patti Lather's "catalytic validity." Researchers doing this type of work are not content with mere checking, because it does not necessarily consider the social construction of knowledge and that the ways of checking may be biased. "Transformational validity" is more about social change and justice. Since critical theory researchers are looking for change, it makes sense that the validity approach for such a purpose would be determined by how participants, researchers, and readers respond to ideas about change during the research process and dissemination of findings. This distinction between "transactional" and "transformational" research may also be aligned with the differences between the terms "qualitative research" and "postpositivist research." Although many scholars use the terms interchangeably, I see a distinction. While postpositivist research is part of qualitative research based on the methodology employed, all qualitative research is not postpositivist because qualitative projects do not necessarily look at the social construction of meaning or the proliferation of possible paradigmatic positions.

Cho and Trent offer a holistic model. Since paradigms are expanding they suggest general categories based on the purpose of the project itself. This conceptualization is based on Robert Donmoyer's ideas about of the problematic nature of paradigm proliferation and the need for purpose undergirding contemporary qualitative research (Donmoyer 2001). Cho and Trent break down purposes of research in order to find appropriate validity criteria that include transactional and transformative research models. For example, a qualitative research project that is more consistent with a static reality and has the purpose of "truth" seeking, or finding a correct answer, would employ more of an inductive process and include member checks as a technical process, and causality-based triangulation. If the purpose of the research is to present thick description, or ask how the participants in the study interpret phenomena, the validity process would be more holistic and need to provide prolonged engagement. Validity criteria for such a study would include triangulation through description; accurate knowledge of daily life; and member checks as recursive. A developmental purpose that may ask a question such as "How does an organization change over time," would require a categorical/back and forth process, and include validity criteria such as rich archives reflecting history; and triangulated member checks as ongoing. A project such as a personal essay or ask "What is the researcher's personal interpretation?" would require a reflexive/aesthetic validity process and use criteria that may include self-assessment of experience; or public appeal of opinion of a situation. A praxis-oriented or social purpose investigation, asking a question such as, "How can we learn and change educators, organizations or both?," would have to include inquiry with the participants

and use members checks as critically reflexive of self; and redefinition of the status quo (examples cited in Cho and Trent 2006, 326).

This framework further supports the idea that validity should be tied to the type of purpose of the research. Although it is not connected to particular paradigms directly, it does, in a more simple and practical way, tie validity to the views of the researcher or purpose of the project.

Another example of change is represented in Lather's exploration of validity after poststructuralism (1993). Lather claims that the postmodern turn and crisis of representation in postmodernism, have led to a questioning of the "truth" of validity itself, and the need to explore conceptualizations and explorations that defy traditional labels of validity. She problematizes the idea of validity in a "postfoundational era characterized by the loss of certainties and absolute reference" (from Fine 1986, cited in Lather 1993, 673). In other words, Lather views validity as a space where research challenges easy conclusions and linear frameworks. In pursuit of a less comfortable social science, she continues her "seeming obsession with the topic of validity: the conditions of the legitimatization of knowledge in contemporary postpositivism" (673). She does not discard the term validity but rather uses it to reflect the uncertainty of knowledge in postmodern times, in nonessentialist ways. In this way, validity is problematized and de-centered, yet legitimatized. She says,

Fragmenting and colliding both hegemonic and oppositional codes, my goal is to reinscribe validity as a way that uses the antifoundational problematic to loosen the master code of positivism that continues to so shape even postpositivism. (674)

Lather is referring to a validity that addresses the problem of a loss of innocence about clear answers and unmitigated conclusions. Fragmentation becomes of way of displaying unwhole truths and absolutes in a work of diverse viewpoints and approaches. Lather does this by offering four frames or examples that are counter-practices of authority.

Frame 1: *Validity as simulacra/ironic validity* refers to simulacra and an affinity with the ironic. A simulacrum is a copy without originals. "The Baudrillardian argument is that we have shifted from a culture of representation to one of simulacra. Simulacra functions to mask the absence of referential finalities" (677). Lather refers to ironic validity by stating that "Contrary to dominant validity practices where the rhetorical nature of scientific claims is masked with methodological assurance, a strategy of ironic validity proliferates forms, recognizing that they are rhetorical and without foundation, post-epistemic, lacking an epistemological support" (677).

Lather provides an example of what she means by ironic validity:

[James Agee's postmodern text] illustrates what I mean by ironic validity. Documenting the devastation of rural America by the economic disasters of the 1930's through the study of three white tenant farm families, the text is prefaced by Evan's uncaptioned photographs, which set the stage for the focus on the politics of knowing and being known. Agee's text, which serves

somewhat as one long caption for the photographs, foregrounds the insufficiencies of language via prose that is meandering, incantational, and deeply inscribed by musical forms. Beginning with three vignettes and concluding with multiple endings, Agee presents his awkwardness and hesitancies where his anxiety about "his relationship to his subjects becomes anxiety about the form of the book" (Rabinowitz 1992, 160). Both seeking and refusing a center, he combines documentary and autobiography to describe with "words which are not words" (161) as he moves from representations of the tenant families to the disclosure of his own subjectivity. (678)

There are some dance examples as well. Since ironic validity seeks to demonstrate the failure to represent "truth" effectively and questions the limits of validity and problems with language, very often this crisis of representation exists through a proliferation of forms and voices. Often autoethnography and autonarrative are forms that may display the challenges of coming to absolute conclusions. For example, I address the inability to be situated in one paradigm and the challenges of moving through paradigms, not being able to resolve multiple theoretical conclusions within an autonarrative (forthcoming), and during a project working with women with breast cancer (Green 2012). Fortin juxtaposes voices through poetry and narrative during a dance and health project (Fortin, Cyr, and Tremblay 2005). Both writers make use of a proliferation of forms to address the inability to tell stories through traditionally literal research reports.

Frame 2: Lyotardian paralogy/neo-pragmatic validity, refers to legitimization through paralogy. According to Lather, "this model has nothing to do with maximized performance, but has as its basis difference understood as paralogy" (Lyotard, quoted in Lather1993, 679). Lyotardian paralogy allows the researcher to "tolerate the incommensurable" and introduces "dissent into consensus" (679), and allows for creation of "indeterminate space for the enactment of human imagination" (Lubiano, quoted in Lather, 679). Thus, there is a decentering aspect of validity that is consistent with postmodern thought. This decentering allows the researcher to create routes to the instabilities of knowledge and lack of conclusive evidences. Lather discusses an example of this decentering validity:

A recent dissertation on African-American women and leadership position in higher education gives some feel for paralogic validity … Woodbrook's study was designed to generate more interactive and contextual ways of knowing with a particular focus on openness to counter-interpretations … In analyzing interview data, Woodbrooks made extensive use of two familiar qualitative practices of validity, member checks and peer debriefing. Using both to purposefully locate herself in the contradictory borderland between feminist emancipatory and poststructural positions, she attempted to interrupt her role as the Great Interpreter, "to shake, disrupt, and shift" her feminist critical investments … Peer debriefing and member checks, both coherent within present forms of intelligibility, were used to critique her initial analysis of the data. (697)

Dance examples of parlogical validity may be found in my study on my changing positionalities (Green 1996) and my study on body image (Green 1999), where I challenge my own positions and attempt to provide counter-interpretations.

Frame 3: Derridean rigor/rhizomatic validity refers to what counts as facts and details. Lather asserts that:

The rhizome is a metaphor for reinscription of rigour. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) suggest the tree as the modernist model of knowledge with the rhizome as the model for postmodern knowledge … [While the tree has limited paths] rhizomes are systems with underground stems and aerial roots, whose fruits are tubers and bulbs … Rhizomatics are about the move from hierarchies to networks and the problematic where any concept, when pulled, is recognized as "connected to a mass of untangled ideas, uprooted as it were, from the epistemological field." (Pehfanis 1991, quoted in Lather 1993, 680)

Thus rhizomatic validity is not based on a linear logic but a network of ideas. Lather adds, "As a metaphor, rhizomes work against the constraints of authority, regularity, and commonsense, and open thought up to creative constructions" (680). Multiple and juxtaposed observations and views from different participant and researcher perspectives serve this model well. This is where creativity and back and forth movement become key.

Frame 4: voluptuous validity/situated validity resonates with a somatic sensitivity. It offers a type of feminist embodiment as a break from "situating scientific epistemology as shaped by the male imaginary." The idea is to disrupt the male dominant and privileged, western, objective ideal of knowledge with the marginalized subjective and embodied space of knowledge. Following Irigaray's idea of the maternal/feminine (1985), Lather claims,

Irigaray argues that "the murder of the mother" is the founding act of Western culture. Embodiment is relegated to the female, freeing from the phallocentric idea to transcend the material … The feminist debates over subjectivity are situated in overcoming this split. Haraway (1988), for example argues that self-conscious partiality is a necessary condition of being heard to make rational claims … Authority then comes from engagement and self-reflexivity, not distanced "objectivity." Whether it is possible to produce the maternal/feminine and be heard in the culture raises the politics of excess. (quoted in Lather 1993, 682)

Although scholars such as Butler have debated such approaches as reinforcing problematic identity models and creating an either/or distinction (1999), Lather is referring to the power of using the discouraged discourse as an act of transgression. Thus, embodiment and reflexivity are tools used to disrupt current language and assumptions about the value of female bodies through a voluptuous validity. The term "voluptuous" is not used as an objectification of a sexualized body, as seen through the male gaze, but rather as an ownership of the body through a somatic fullness. Characteristics associated with female, body, fluids, excess, undisciplined, and out of order aspects are purposively used as an act of rebellion against patriarchal taboos.

Application to dance, artistic process, and dissemination of findings

There is a number of other ideas about validity in qualitative research, but I find these frameworks conducive to approaching validity in dance research. The first framework offers a practical and less complex and theoretical approach by providing a model based on what type of research question you may ask and from where you are coming. This is an appropriate approach for beginner and advanced researchers, and suggests a number of validity criteria that can be implemented in qualitative research in general. It comes from identifying the purpose of the researcher and the kinds of questions we are asking. Some dance education researchers who make use of these ideas from Donmoyer include Risner (2000) and Stinson, Blumenfield-Jones, and Van Dyke (1990).

I am particularly interested in Lather's examples of research that legitimizes the postmodern state of knowing because it is quite tied to the arts and dance. So many questions asked by dance researchers move beyond simple logic and refer to bodily experience. The idea of using dance, theatre, literature, poetry, and autobiography to suggest imperfect findings and ideas that come from such research and complex ideas, calls for an approach to validity based on a juxtaposition of thoughts and ways of displaying data about and through the body. Lather's examples not only allow for creativity, but go beyond to allow the reader to enter the texts through a number of paths (as in rhizomatic validity). Using somatic practice during, the research process and through the dissemination of ideas (as in voluptuous validity) may tie dance to research in profound ways.

Although a postmodern world of multiple truths makes it impossible to establish universal or even generalized criteria, these approaches bring authority and legitimization to the study because they serve as a check to see if we are asking appropriate questions and constantly checking for biases and or own ideas about truth and knowledge.

With the body as a major subject in the field, somatic sensitivity or a reflective body awareness may enable researchers to develop systems of reflexivity and "decenter" uncritical assumptions and perceived notions of a found and static reality. In this sense, somatic practice and sensitivity may resonate with a postmodern turn away from a clear certainty or universal truth. It embraces multiple positionality, diverse perspectives, and an inner physical struggle with emerging ideas and issues (Green 2005).

Although these methods may be problematic and contain no closure, there are some ideas about how dance education researchers can make use of these aspects of validity. Although dance education research is relatively young, a number of scholars are exploring new approaches and methodologies, pushing the boundaries of "traditional research." It makes sense that we are seeing embodied and performative ways of doing and presenting scholarship because dance is a performing art and dancers tend to value bodily epistemologies that guide both artistic and research choices.

For example, in the United States, a number of scholars are interested in presenting research through the arts. The American Educational Research Association (AERA 2012) organization includes three Special Interest Groups (SIGS) that include educational research that works through the arts. According to the AERA website, these three groups have different characteristics and foci. As of 17 June 2014, AERA listed these three SIGS on its website:

Arts and Inquiry in the Visual and Performing Arts in Education (SIG #53)

Purpose: This international interdisciplinary SIG offers a space for visual artworks, live performance and theoretical/conceptual praxis, facilitating a platform for artistic researchers and practitioners.

Arts and Learning (SIG #8)

Purpose: Recent themes include arts performance and process in curriculum; arts integration, assessment, and criticism; cultural issues; semiotics creative process; aesthetic education; alternative research methodologies; and constructivism.

Arts-Based Educational Research (SIG #9)

Purpose: To provide a community for those who view education through artistic lenses, who use a variety of arts-based methodologies, and who communicate understandings through diverse genres.

These three SIGS overlap but there are a few differences. **Arts and Inquiry in the Visual and Performing Arts in Education**provides a general outlet for the arts through display, performance venues, and theoretical musings. **Arts and Learning**specifically refers to the learning process in the arts as the content of research. **Arts-Based Educational Research** refers to research that is disseminated through the arts. Very often this SIG provides poster sessions that explore research studies through arts expression. The findings of the research are displayed in artistic venues.

These SIGS provide a number of outlets for artistic performance, new research approaches regarding the arts, and arts-based methodologies, where the research is presented through artistic forms. This is not the same as choreographic research, which, in the US, is done by choreographers and often assessed through reviews and invitations to choreograph work. Rather, it is for those scholars who wish to conduct educational qualitative research or inquiry about or through the arts.

Examples of these types of research dissemination may be explored through a discussion of some validity tools that reflect these types of outlets in education and research. For example, in my graduate body theory and practice class, I attempt to introduce students to the idea of reflexivity by asking them to respond to diverse types of dance texts and publications on a bodily level. Before I read the passages, I ask them to see how they are "reading" the texts on a body level to

see how they are theoretically positioned. Before understanding a text, I want them to become familiar with their bodily responses to the material in order to check their positions and biases. I ask questions such as How am I embodied in this text? Do I resonate with the text? If so how? What is happening in my body to suggest that I respond to this text in this way? Is my body relaxed, released, and open? Where and how do I experience this resonance? Am I resisting the ideas of the text or the way it is written? Where is the tension in my body? What does this tell me about how I perceive the text?

Of course some of these responses may be affected by external influences outside the text, but I ask the students to specifically think about how the text itself is affecting their bodies. There is no authoritative way to assure that responses are directly related to the text but, as a teacher, I attempt to guide them in that direction.

This same pedagogical process exists for researchers as well. In order to see where we are positioned, check our biases, and offer multiple viewpoints, we may ask questions such as "How am I responding to this participant? Is there resistance? Where? What does this tell me about how I observe the context of the study? Is my breath shortened because the participant does not agree with my assumptions about the research? How can I use these tensions to enrichen the study and provide outliers?"

There are a number of other ways to emphasize somatic sensitivity throughout a study. Researchers may for example, include somatic practice during an ongoing investigation. For example, while working with students within a research project, I often take out time to focus on the body and include experiential somatic work as a way of allowing participants to express how they were dealing with the issues raised in the study (see Green 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b). For example after, discussing critical problems associated with media and body image in one investigation, the participants were allowed time to focus on body awareness in order to see how they perceived the material and how their own bodies were affected by the discussion and issues raised. Additionally, dance education researchers might reflect on a bodily basis by engaging in a somatic reading of a particular topic, context, or theory. For example, during a literature review, a researcher may take particular note of bodily sensation regarding diverse theoretical perspectives and views, particularly while doing deconstructive research when many theories and viewpoints may bump up against each other. The somatic tensions may be revealed within the narrative story along with other findings. For example, in my early research, when first introduced to postmodern ideas, and after wrestling with a particularly difficult group of bodies of literature, and how I had moved through multiple positions during the study, I noted,

After much review of literature in feminism and postmodernism, my body began to communicate disturbing messages as I struggled with the material. My state of ease and bliss was shaken. After reading about the possibility of social construction and a foundationalism tied to modernist and humanistic texts, I began to look back at what I had written with certain queasiness. I began to cringe and feel my skin crawl as I reread some of my writings, specifically sections on creativity,

as I became acutely aware of how my initial positioning was reflected in the text. I noticed that I universalized meaning without reference to a social context and defined creativity by assumed universal attributes. I also was aware that initially I had done the same with somatics, limiting it to an individualistic context alone. Rereading my own text from a postmodern perspective, all the big "Truths" popped out at me as I experienced a painful questioning of everything I had previously been so confident about; I felt an existential angst on a very profound level and somatically, I began to feel a postmodern turn[ing] of my stomach as I realized the literatures do not necessarily come together neatly. (Green 2005)

This description was not a mere description of how I felt during a research process but brings authority and validity to the process, because helps to deepen theoretical thinking on a bodily level, bringing authority to body knowledge. It does not claim that experience is reality but rather helps a researcher to locate where s/he stands theoretically so that s/he may begin to see how her or his own biases reflect the research process and see how the issues bump up against other, creating an approach to validity that problematizes on conclusive report. It provides a type of triangulation of theory and diverse theoretical possibilities. This is not about "feeling" the research but presenting a research platform that challenges traditional modes of reporting findings. The body helps to position the researcher in the context of the study, a key part of postpositivist validity.

One last example of an arts-based definition of validity may be demonstrated through an approach offered by AERA and other arts education groups. A number of scholars in arts-based research disseminate their findings through a creative art form. I used this method when I was conducting a body image study. In this investigation, the participants were engaged in a type of artistic presentation of the study. We called this presentation an "interactive movement forum" because it allowed the words of the participants to be present through dance and spoken text, and to communicate interactively with the audience. The participants spoke their data and danced interpretations of the findings. We then invited the audience to join the dance and ask questions. This provided a validity consistent with Lather's models of ironic validity, paralogy/neo-pragmatic validity, and voluptuous validity, because it weaves together the reflexive and bodily elements, and with dance. The event had no closure but opened up more questions and interpretative possibilities while bringing authority to the participant voices and the audience by involving them in the critical and creative processes, and by giving them permission to express their own ideas and experience. They got to dance their own data.

However, there were some difficulties within the construction of this creative venture, particularly dealing with issues of power. Yes, the participants did have room to express their ideas, but in the end I had to admit that I did guide the projects. Although they choreographed sections, and had input regarding the key issues and parts of the final project, I made final decisions. In addition, validity did not exist in the mere ability to participate in the performance. However, the performance was a culmination of ideas that were presented throughout the semester where issues were critically discussed. But this is why it so important to be reflexive

during the research process. In one article, I provided a reflexive validity though the "troubling" of my role in the study.[2]

This whole research project also included triangulation of ideas, perspectives, methods, and areas of dissemination as well as a type of catalytic validity that was exhibited through the changes in the dancers via their movement and text choices. The end project demonstrated a change in viewpoints through the course of the project.

This type of presentation through the arts may be tricky. Mere artistic expression of data findings without a reflexive element does not necessarily address validity. I question the use of creative dissemination in a research project without a validity component.

The articulation of some attempt at validity or legitimacy is key here. I have seen a number of research presentations through the arts that do not have clear attempts at an articulation of findings or theory. A moment of dance expression alone may include nothing that ties the project to a systematic presentation of findings or even complicate the validity process. Writing a poem about process without some articulated development of theory may only weaken the project.

Final thoughts (not conclusive thoughts)

In returning to my initial questions, I believe that validity is a key aspect of qualitative research in dance, even though the tenets of validity itself may be challenged through the project. Some acknowledgment of consistency with a particular purpose is still necessary as an indicator of quality and rigor. Criteria for qualitative research changes according to the purpose of the research but the findings need to be clear in a theoretical sense. The idea of validity itself may not be key with newer trends in dance education research; however, there are postmodern validity criteria that can demonstrate a consistency with the theoretical ideas of the research. This process legitimizes such research. Any academic investigation cannot be considered valid unless there is an attempt at an understanding of validity and a consistency of ideas and methods. It makes sense that dance education researchers utilize validity tools that are appropriate for creative arts modalities and aesthetic ways of knowing the world. Postpositivist research and bodily practices may offer effective frameworks and methods for those researchers involved in the arts.

Qualitative research in dance is not a monolith. Postpositivist researchers may have disagreements with each other, and the categories and frameworks are not fixed. New forms are continually emerging. However, this may be something that dance educators can embrace since creativity is so inherent in the practice. One reason why I am so drawn to this type of research is due to its creative possibilities as well as its fluid process. In this sense, postpositivist research may be thought of as a creative and bodily process. On the other hand, it will not provide complete answers to questions about dance.

Validity means different things to different researchers working in diverse areas of dance. Although validity may be an outdated term in some respects, considering new ways of doing research, it still needs to be addressed to bring rigor and authority to the researcher's case. The point is to check what we assume, and use appropriate methods that addresses our views of validity itself.

Notes on contributor

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Notes

1. See Green and Stinson (1999) for differences in paradigmatic epistemologies and ontologies.

2. See Green (2001a) for a discussion about the creative process during this study.

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