

“I said that on purpose”: Using Paranoid Validity to Examine the Researcher and Researcher Effects

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This paper discusses the concept of validity in a naturalistic, qualitative study. I investigated the interplay between the multi-layered instructional strategies and writing contexts of one second and third-grade urban elementary teacher and the writing behaviors and beliefs of her students. However, the purpose of this paper is not to focus on the analysis of the students' writing behaviors, the teacher's instruction, or my ability to re-present the students' ways of creating text. The purpose of this paper is to examine my role as a researcher, my relationship with the researched, my questioning of the data, and my subsequent validity interrogation.

When I began studying writing and writing instruction, I was confident that I could “do” qualitative research. After all, I was entering a second and third-grade classroom-- a safe and recognizable place. I understood that data are created in relationships, so I tucked my knowledge of researcher bias and constructed reality neatly into my design. I was ready to track my progressive subjectivity (Ball, 1990).

Sondra, the classroom teacher whom I studied, was vastly different from my former first-grade-teacher self. Although we had different teaching styles, the elementary classroom was a place I knew well. This was a place where children fought over scissors and forgot their lunch, a place where bathroom breaks were necessary and children made and lost best friends during recess. A second and third-grade classroom is definitely real.

Once I was comfortable within the real, I forged ahead describing what I saw. At 10:15, Sondra held a writing conference with Ricky. At 1:00, Karla wrote in her journal. At 1:30 Teshawn cleaned out her cubby. The world of a writing teacher and the behavior of her students was unfolding before me. I began to believe that I was an unobtrusive observer, learning and interpreting in absentia. Sondra even stated, “I notice you try to stay out of the way” (Transcript 9-12). I was researching, and I was invisible. Success!

Then I was rudely awakened from my postpositivist amnesia. One rainy day, I decided to stay in the classroom to observe any writing that occurred during indoor recess. Five girls decided to play school. One girl wanted to be the teacher and three reluctantly agreed to be students. The fifth girl, searching for a way to be a part of this scene said, “I’m pretending like I’m taking notes about the class” (Transcript 10-3). Molly separated herself from the other girls, located a green pen, and scribbled feverishly on a small piece of paper (Figure 1).

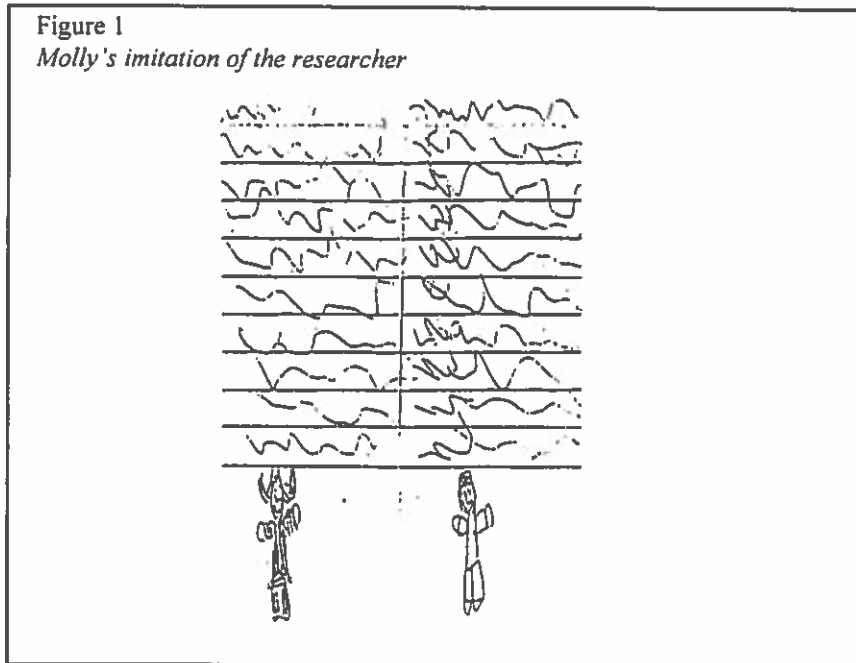
At first I thought, “How funny! She’s pretending to be me.” But then I realized that this was not really funny at all. For weeks I had been cruising along, acting as if I was invisible. I was so immersed in data collection that I forgot I was a human being who interacted with these children and their teacher all day long. I failed to remember that data are created in relationships, and I was part of that creation. Despite the fact that I purposely incorporated procedures into the design that would add to the “trustworthiness” of the research, I was so concerned with accurately recording what I was seeing that I forgot I was part of the equation. I knew that I influenced the data (Noffke, 1990), but I wasn’t paying attention.

What else had I missed? How many times did I perceive writing events or classroom situations to be real when in fact I was creating them? What was real? What wasn’t real? Did the children say things on purpose? What was I doing? How would I find validity in my research?

Theoretical Frame

Many researchers believe that reality is socially constructed (Sparkes, 1992). The ways of knowing this constructed reality lie within the interactions between the researcher and the researched. Positioned reality is constructed from our interpretations and perspectives of relationships and events. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state, “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 4).

In contrast to situated constructions, validity criteria have been conceptualized as objective measures by which to judge the truthfulness and accuracy of research



(Donmoyer, 1990; Sparkes, 1992). For qualitative research, these measures have been reconceptualized to be consistent with postpositivist ontologies, i.e. reality is socially constructed (Donmoyer, 1990; Mishler, 1990; Sparkes, 1992). Some attempts to reconceptualize validity have applied existing criteria used to judge experimental research to postpositivist research. This type of validity check has been termed the parallel criterion (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that "credibility criterion is parallel to internal validity in that the idea of isomorphism between findings and an objective reality is replaced by isomorphism between constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them" (p. 237). Guba and Lincoln's assertion is commensurate with interpretive ontologies about constructed reality. This criteria helps to establish "the match between the constructed realities of respondents. . . and those realities as represented by the evaluator" (1989, p. 237). Finding a match between constructed realities is a great challenge for qualitative researchers. Therefore, Guba and Lincoln outline procedures to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability that attempt to pursue the postpositive simulacrum for truth- - trustworthiness.

However, parallel validity criteria have been criticized for applying positivist criteria to a science that can not be judged. Alternative validity discourses have emerged to displace parallel criteria. Mishler (1990) defines validation as making judgments on "the degree to which we can rely on the concepts, methods, and inferences of a study, or tradition of inquiry, as the basis for our own theorizing and empirical research" (p. 419). For Mishler, validation is ongoing and functional, based on the usefulness of the re-

search to other researchers.

Kvale (1995) views validity as dependent upon the "quality of craftsmanship in an investigation, which includes continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings" (p.8). Validation should be approached throughout the research, not after its conclusion. For Kvale, validating is consistently and critically questioning the research.

Lather (1986) also believes that research needs more reflexivity and the use of corrective mechanisms to minimize the distorting effects of the researcher. Using construct, face, and catalytic validity, Lather moves beyond the researcher to examine the researched. Within Lather's conception of validity, the data makers are essential in analysis as well as recipients of the effects.

Yet, others believe that most validity discourses reinforce the status quo. Scheurich (1993) states, "Validity. . . is the deployment of an either/or, a division between trustworthy and not trustworthy, a two-sided or bipolar map of research work which indicates what is considered acceptable and what is considered unacceptable (p. 8)." Scheurich (1993, 1997) ventures further to categorize existing validity discourses as originary, successor, interrogated, and imperial. Then he offers "validity as the play of difference." as a solution to the either/or, us versus them, right and wrong underpinnings of existing validity criteria. Scheurich (1993) believes that "validity practices that warrant and instantiate multiplicity unmask and subvert the present restricted and restricting order of the Same and enables a mutual, consensual interaction with the Other without the need for dominance or appropriation" (p. 19). Scheurich supports the acceptance of research from multiple voices without the sta-

tus-quo controls of validity.

There are several postpositivist validity discourses available for researchers. These validity criteria provide procedures, discussions, and exemplars that demonstrate the ways in which researchers should craft their design and the collection and analysis of data in order to prove to others that the research is "trustworthy" or "valid." However, there are no specifications or regulations within existing validity discourses that provide criteria for how research participants should behave. What happens to research when explicit statements or actions are made by the participants that reveal a researcher has influenced the data? What happens when a researcher doubts his or her own data? - analysis? - self? In this paper, I discuss my paranoid view of validity based upon my role(s) in the construction of data and my analysis of the ways the students and teacher revealed the influence of the researcher and research on their classroom lives.

Methodology

Participants

The primary focus of my research was to examine writing instruction and children's writing behaviors in a classroom setting. I conducted a field study in one second and third-grade classroom, using individual case studies of the teacher and six of her students. Within the context of this study, I began to examine my role as a researcher.

Sondra Stevens (pseudonym) was an African American teacher who taught a second and third-grade class in an urban, public elementary school. From Sondra's class base of 25 students, I selected six writers of different abilities for case studies (Cristina, Karla, Teshawn, John, Kianna, and Ricky). Although these students were selected for case studies, all students were participants and included in many observations and interviews.

Designed Trustworthiness

In order to examine writing and writing instruction, I designed a study that would be "trustworthy." I conducted persistent and prolonged observations (Miles & Huberman, 1984). I triangulated data sources - field notes, transcripts, written documents; I triangulated methods - observations and interviews; and I triangulated investigators - researcher, students, teacher, peer debriefers (Patton, 1990). I conducted member checks (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) with the students and teacher and used peer debriefers (Patton, 1990) during data collection and analysis. I also used negative case analysis to confirm or disconfirm emerging patterns (Patton, 1990).

As soon as I recognized my explicit influence on the data, I began to carefully examine my role as a researcher and collect "evidence" of my impact. I began writing reflective notes that I included as footnotes to the transcripts

and field notes. This process allowed me to track my decisions and make my role explicit within the contexts of observations and interviews.

Data Analysis

At the conclusion of the study, I reread the field notes, transcripts, and reflections in order to identify events that related to my role as a researcher. After several readings of the data, themes emerged related to my researcher role and my influence on the events within the classroom (Patton, 1990). Eventually, I developed categories, and using a system of colored adhesive notes, relabeled the data with these codes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Results

The Students, The Researcher, The Data

The students' writing, behaviors, and comments revealed the myriad ways I permeated the data. Through analysis of this student-centered data, the following categories emerged: (a) researching the researcher, (b) getting attention from the researcher, (c) helping the researcher, and (d) researcher as authority.

Researching the Researcher

Throughout this study, I engaged in various levels of participation. I entered the site as an observer, carefully watching the social and academic interactions of the students and the teacher from a distance. As I became more familiar with the students, they elicited my responses to their writing or involved me in their conversations. Gradually, I moved from participant observer to "researched." For example, Janeen stopped to watch me and said, "You're writing fast" (Transcript 9-19). Another day, Naledi asked, "Don't you ever get tired of writing?" (Transcript 10-3). I was also questioned about the number of notebooks and cassette tapes I used.

On October 17, I wrote the following in my field notes, "Naledi came over to read her story to me." Naledi noticed what I wrote and asked, "Is that the kind of stuff you write?" I replied that it was. Laughing, Naledi proceeded to tell several other children about the content of my notes. They were quite amused, and occasionally they asked for verification of the information in my notebooks. I never failed to amaze them with my "boring" observations. Actually, Naledi often walked by just to tease me by saying, "Naledi came over." It was our own little joke.

Beyond tape recorders and written notes, some children were interested in my purpose for being in their classroom. They did not seem to understand why I would spend so much time watching and writing about them.

Heather: Why are you watching kids write?

Jenifer: I watch how Sondra teaches and the things you all do so that I can help other teachers learn how to teach. (Transcript 11-28)

This event reveals how the children researched me. Some children liked to engage in personal conversations. Other children allowed me to watch them and ask many questions. Still other children avoided me or ignored me. I became a fixture of the classroom to be studied or easily ignored depending on the students' interest in me.

Getting Attention

As an unofficial member of this classroom, I also became the subject of the children's writing. For example, Kianna wrote, "Jenifer is nice to me," (12-8). On another occasion, she created an interview book and included me as an interviewee (12-11). As Dyson (1995) states, Kianna used text as a "ticket." Writing was her way to initiate contact and sustain conversation.

During the tenth week of data collection, I received my first hug from a student. Similar displays of affection and emotion from others soon followed. However, there was a noticeable distinction between the children who wanted adult help and affection and the children who wanted attention from the researcher. This was especially apparent with the focus students. Each day as my observations shifted from one student to another, I began to notice the subtle ways students tried to attract my attention. After time, the students' hints advanced into more apparent forms. Each day it seemed as if a child asked, "Are you going to watch me today?" Then one day, as I was observing Ricky, the following occurred.

Karla: (To Jenifer) Look, we're writing. Can we have the tape recorder too?

Jenifer: I just have this one today. I'm taking turns.

Ricky: She taped me yesterday. (Transcript 11-27)

I was definitely surprised by Karla's outright attempt to get my attention. Clearly, she understood that I was interested in writing, and she wanted me to be interested in her writing. Ricky, on the other hand, felt proud that he was taped the previous day. He openly shared his "watched" status with everyone.

As a researcher, I made decisions based on what was best for my research, despite the children's requests. At times I worried that my decisions contributed to the power dynamics of the classroom; I felt that the children thought I was playing favorites. During these moments, my decisions certainly affected the students' opinions of me and ultimately the data I collected. In this respect, getting close to the children also distanced me from them.

Helping the Researcher

Once the students became aware of my interest in writing, they found ways to help me conduct research. I noticed that they often made meta-composing statements for my benefit. On one occasion Cristina, Karla, and I had a

lengthy discussion about their writing in which they were reflective about their processes.

Jenifer: And why don't you think you need to [plan for your writing]?

Karla: Because I already know what the story is going to be based on and stuff. And that's exactly what the story plan is - - what the story is going to be based on. Except I don't want to go through that [extra] writing.

Cristina: We want to get right to our story book.

Karla: Yeah

Jenifer: So you want to get right to the story. Is that what you meant?

Karla: Yeah. . . . We're just giving you a lot of information aren't we?

Jenifer: You sure are. (Transcript 1-11)

Cristina and Karla revealed an ability to reflect on their behaviors as well as make their rationales and processes explicit. In addition, Karla clearly identified information that was important to me. Apparently, both girls knew their remarks were exactly what I wanted to hear and precisely what I believed about writing.

On another occasion, I walked past Cristina and Karla while they were writing. I paused briefly for a casual conversation unrelated to their work. Quite unexpectedly Karla said, "I just love writing." Then she paused, looked up at me and said, "I said that on purpose," (Transcript 12-12). Karla and Cristina were cognizant of the purpose of my observations. However, Karla's statement shocked me. Although the children often made statements that revealed they were providing explicit information about their writing in an effort to help me, Karla wanted me to know that she could create data on purpose.

Researcher as Authority

Although I was on a first name basis with the students, I interacted with them not as a peer, but as an adult. My familiarity with the students, my continual observations, and my non-disciplinarian role, often allowed me to observe or tape record language or behavior that was not intended for me to hear or see. In the following example, I placed a tape recorder by Ricky as I observed children in the hallway.

Ricky: If you talk louder, it will record whatever you say. . . . Yeah, she gets to hear what we talk about.

Marc: But where she at?

Ricky: I don't know.

Marc: Then how come she can hear us? . . .

Ricky: It records us and then Jenifer comes back and picks it up and then takes it home, and whatever we say it records. . . .

Marc: If I say a cuss word will she hear me? Ahh. Don't say a cuss word.

Ricky: d-a-m-

Marc: Oh she heard you! . . .

Cedric: It's going to be funny if she come in here and catch you.

Ricky: That would not be funny. That would not be

funny at all, Marc, if she caught us.

Patrick: Where did she go?

Ricky: I think she's at the office. But whatever we say, she can hear. (Transcript 10-18)

Events such as these presented a dilemma for me. Although the students' perceptions of the tape recorder were humorous and expected, I did not want their behavior to escalate or cause problems for Sondra. Clearly the students believed I was an authority figure who possessed the power to get them in trouble. They also revealed an eerie conception of me as omnipresent. There was no place to hide.

Knowing that I could trust Sondra, I discussed the situation with her. She sympathized with my predicament. Later in the week she told the students that I would not react to them unless someone was in danger. Sondra explained that I may not approve of all the things they might do, but it was not my responsibility to correct them. She helped me maintain a "recognizable research role" (Ball, 1990, p. 160).

Despite my efforts to be non-threatening and open with the children, I knew there were times when they did not want me around. In another situation, Cristina and Karla were in the hallway writing a story together. I approached them and asked if I could watch. They said, "OK." As I went to get a chair, I overheard Karla say, "I don't really want Jenifer here. I wanted to talk about things. Oh well." Cristina replied, "I want Jenifer here." Then I returned, and they started to giggle and whisper. I moved the tape recorder closer to the girls.

Cristina: We didn't want to get this on tape.

Jenifer: Oh. Why?

Cristina and Karla: Because. It's just something.

Jenifer: Is it private stuff?

Cristina: No, it just doesn't need to be on the tape recorder. . . .

Jenifer: I want to know everything you do and say when you write. Even if it's not about writing. Don't be embarrassed about it because I'm the only one to listen to it, and I don't tell Sondra anything that I hear. (Transcript 11-7)

Upon reflection, I was disturbed by this research moment. I already knew that Karla did not want me there, and when they requested that I not tape-record them, I disregarded their wishes. Although I reminded myself that these were the girls who always wanted me around, I could not rationalize my behavior. Quite simply, I put my agenda ahead of their rights. My eagerness to get good data muted their voices. That night as I typed the transcripts, my actions were apparent; I was a research bully. I decided that I would never again take the children for granted or exercise my authority as an adult to get data. This incident was embarrassing and wrong. I had become too accustomed to the children, and I did not respect their decisions.

My Role as a Researcher: In Their Words

During the spring months, when I began to pull out of the field, I asked the focus students how they felt about my

presence in the classroom. Kianna, Ricky, and Teshawn felt "fine" or "OK" with my presence, but Karla and Cristina had more to say.

Jenifer: Did I ever make you feel uncomfortable, or that I was staring too much?

Karla: No, no, no, no, no. . . .

Jenifer: I just wanted to see what you thought about the questions [I asked].

Cristina: I don't really mind.

Karla: But sometimes if we were playing a game and you came to sit by us, we couldn't really play it any more. You know?

Jenifer: Why?

Karla: I don't know.

Jenifer: Did you feel that I was like a teacher?

Karla: Yeah.

Jenifer: That you couldn't really do what you wanted?

Cristina: I didn't really mind though.

Karla: I didn't mind.

Jenifer: Did you feel that you had to say certain things around me?

Cristina: I didn't.

Karla: Not exactly.

Jenifer: Did you ever feel that you couldn't talk about other things, like if you were supposed to be writing, you had to be writing?

Karla: Yeah

Cristina: No, I didn't feel that way.

Karla: Neither did I.

Cristina: No, I felt like I could talk to Karla about what ever I wanted to.

Karla: Yeah. (Transcript 3-13)

Fortunately, Karla and Cristina shared their feelings about having me in their classroom. They noticed my odd "researcher" behavior, they wanted my attention, and sometimes they did not. Karla also recognized that my presence caused her to alter her behavior or change her conversations. She agreed that I was a "teacher" figure, and she altered her behavior to fit my role.

The Teacher, The Researcher, The Data

My influence on Sondra was not always apparent; however, the following themes emerged: (a) researcher as teacher-aid, (b) teacher as researcher-aid, and (c) researcher as change agent.

Researcher as Teacher-aid

I viewed Sondra's willingness to participate in my research as a precious gift. Although I could never repay Sondra for her time, patience, and reflection, I found ways to demonstrate my appreciation. From the beginning of the research, I felt obligated to help Sondra with minor tasks in the classroom. I viewed my actions as a form of reciprocity

(Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Noffke, 1990). I took attendance, read to children, stapled papers, helped with costumes, and other various activities. At times, I volunteered my help and other times, Sondra solicited my help.

For example, one morning Sondra asked me to watch Molly in order to figure out why she did not complete any writing projects (10-18). Later that day, Sondra asked me to read with Joy, a child who was a non-reader and in school for the first time. I agreed to read and write with her; however, I was nervous about Sondra's request. I was concerned that she would begin to rely on me for this type of assistance despite the fact that we agreed I would not serve in this role. I knew that I would not be able to properly observe the children's writing behavior if I was working for Sondra. Fortunately, Sondra never took advantage of my willingness to help. She always recognized my role as a researcher, and her requests for help were rare.

Teacher as Researcher-aid

Sondra was very valuable from a research perspective. She narrated her processes prior to, during, and after classroom events. She said she was just "thinking out loud," but I welcomed the opportunity to listen and learn from her. For example, one Friday (12-1), Sondra told me that she was thinking about her writing instruction as she was driving to school. She scribbled notes to herself to share with me. Anxious to get these notes, I asked Sondra if I could have them. But Sondra did not want me to have the notes until she could talk with me about them. The following Tuesday, Sondra found time to discuss her thoughts with me. She shared information that led to major themes in the writing research study.

Sondra also provided suggestions for data analysis and the presentation of my research. She suggested that I watch the students' journals for the progression of writing in role (9-22). She suggested that I examine their writing to determine if text length increases as the story unfolds (9-22). And she suggested that I observe the students' engagement in drama to determine if drama influences their writing in that they provide more details and description (9-12).

Based on interviews and observations of Sondra, I found that she was conscious of my need for information about her philosophical beliefs about teaching. She made efforts to provide explanations about her instruction, and she was also willing to seek and accept advice from me.

Researcher as Change Agent

Although Sondra stated that she felt totally comfortable with me, I often wondered if she altered her instruction because I was in the room. I never witnessed visible signs of this occurrence, but I do not doubt that it happened. As I examined the data, I could only find two instances in which I detected my explicit effect on Sondra's teaching. In one example, Sondra and I discussed her new immigrant unit.

Sondra: I really don't know that much about immigra-

tion. . . . I'm hoping we can have some immigrants come in and talk to the children. . .

Jenifer: I wonder what the process is now?

Sondra: That's another thing, we can write a letter. . . and [the children] can actually ask for information about how to become a citizen. . . .(Transcript 11-7)

Although I did not provide Sondra with any information about immigration, the fact that I was present changed her instruction. Her thoughts developed in the context of our conversations.

In another situation, I influenced Sondra's reflections on her instruction. Sondra asked the students to develop a list of questions they would ask immigrants. Because I did not witness the creation of these questions, Sondra shared the event with me. As I read the questions, I asked Sondra if they were written in the children's words or if she paraphrased. Although I asked out of mere curiosity, Sondra seemed to regret that she did not use the children's exact words. She stated, "I probably should have put it like they said it" (Transcript 11-7). This was the only instance when I noticed Sondra justify her actions. I regretted that Sondra felt doubtful about her choice when she was so excited about the content of the children's questions. This was a research effect that made me feel very uncomfortable; I recognized that questioning is often viewed as disapproval.

My Role as a Researcher: In Sondra's Words

Prior to the end of the school year, I asked Sondra how she felt about the research process and my presence in her classroom. She stated,

For me, it's almost like it met a need of having another adult in the room. . . . And since I have such a high regard for you as a person who understands kids, I felt comfortable in my reactions and my responses to things. . . . I never felt like I was being judged. That made me free to be really myself. There were times when I could ignore that you were there. I mean I didn't even think of you as being there. There were other times when I was energized by your presence, but I think it had a lot to do with you as a person. We understand things in the same ways. We have similar philosophies. Even though we may do things differently, I think that you trust what I do. And I trust what you do. So that may say that researchers and teachers should have some camaraderie, some feeling, because if it had been the opposite, I think I would have been affected negatively. It might have put pressure on me to do things differently than I do. Because I might have felt like, "She won't understand." You know what I mean? I didn't feel any of that. I always felt that whatever I did would be fine. (Transcript 6-3)

Sondra's statements reveal that researchers can be judg-

mental and invasive. She also indicates that "being researched" can cause teachers to behave in artificial and contrived ways. She believes that teachers and researchers need to trust each other in order to have a positive relationship. If there is camaraderie, then the teacher is free to behave "normally."

Discussion

The previous sections outline the numerous ways I influenced Sondra and the children. Through the data, I revealed the times I ingratiated myself on the students and morphed myself into classroom life. I also shared the ways I coerced data from the teacher and students. However, the data also revealed that I did not act in isolation. I received permission to enter this classroom and observe, describe, and interpret what I saw, heard, and experienced. I was invited into conversation and "begged" to watch individuals. I did not ask the children to include my name on their spelling lists or to write stories about me. They acted on their own volition.

Ultimately, my primary goal for observing the children was to examine their writing behaviors. But how do I know I saw "normal" behaviors? After all, Karla admitted that she behaved in certain ways because I was present. Ricky demonstrated that he liked to play around when no one was watching. Were the children manipulating their writing to get my attention? Was I manipulating the children to get data? Their efforts to get and then maintain my attention often led me to question the data I was collecting. Were their writing efforts real or fraudulent?

With regard to Sondra, I trust that she told me her true thoughts and beliefs, but there is no way I will ever know. Sondra revealed that a negative researcher/teacher relationship will affect classroom behavior and eventually alter a teacher's planned course of action. Was she always pleased with my presence? Sondra's real decisions can not be tracked. I cannot step into a parallel universe to observe this classroom without being in it. I may guess about the situations that may have occurred or the teaching decisions that may have been made, but I will never know.

However, I do know that data were created. My opinion, description, and interpretation of those events were recorded, and they are my own. Throughout data collection, I acted as a "change agent" (Bogdewic & Jamison, 1994, p. 59) and not an objective observer. I became a member of that classroom, and my presence influenced the behavior, comments, and writing of the participants. I was data.

As this study was designed, I purposely incorporated methods that would add to the trustworthiness of the research. However, I did not know how to handle myself as data. If constructed reality lies between the researcher and the researched, then this "reality" is not devoid of the researcher. Yet many times research is analyzed and reported as a realist tale (Van Maanen, 1988) from which the researcher is missing. The researcher's reconstruction of a

constructed and positioned reality is often presented out of the context in which it occurred.

Therefore, a researcher should not only research the "other," but a researcher must research herself or himself. A researcher should engage in self-reflection and continual self-interrogation in order to recognize the explicit and implicit ways he or she influences the participants and the data. When this self-observation occurs, it may cause a researcher to become paralyzed because data does not exist apart from the researcher's involvement or interpretation. Constructed "truth" is either colored by the researcher's personal biases and perceptions, or the data is affected because the researcher was a part of its creation. Therefore, researchers may ask, "What is the point?" because they may feel as if they are creating illegitimate data. Self-doubt and data-doubt may cause intellectual and interpretive stoppages in data collection, analysis, or presentation. Researchers who struggle with these issues may become paralyzed.

Movement out of this postmodern paralysis was made possible for me when I developed my own notion of validity: paranoid validity. Paranoid validity is a series of events and understandings that led me to simultaneously trust and mistrust my methodology, data, and interpretations. Paranoid validity forces the researcher into greater depths of doubt through systematic interrogation of his or her effects on the data and acknowledgment that interpretive despotism is inevitable. This admission creates even more paranoia because the researcher may find that he or she is misrepresenting the "others" and essentially inventing data.

However, a researcher can not exist in this state of paranoia indefinitely. Eventually, the researcher must move into the practical and realize that research is created and presented through lenses. The researcher must engage in paranoid validity in order to recognize the tint and shape of the viscous lens he or she is wearing. Knowing and sharing this fluid reality is slippery at best.

Once the researcher moves back towards the practical and into the field, paranoid validity is useful once again. I suggest, in a state of postpositive paranoia, that triangulation of validity criteria becomes necessary. Although I believe that triangulation lies within the realm of "truth" and therefore exists in the positivist camp, I feel as though it must be used in order to pacify my doubts about the research. I, therefore, surrender to a validity flood.

To illustrate this validity onslaught, I will reexamine my research as if it was an exemplar. Using Guba and Lincoln (1989) as a guide, I purposely incorporated validity criteria into the design. To establish credibility, I tracked my progressive subjectivity (Ball, 1990), engaged in persistent and prolonged observations (Miles & Huberman, 1984), conducted member checks (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1989), utilized peer debriefers, and conducted negative case analysis (Patton, 1990). To determine the degree to which my findings were transferable to other populations, I relied upon "thick descriptions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I conducted an inquiry audit in which I tracked my methodological and substantive decisions. I also

triangulated data sources, methods, and theoretical foundations.

Using Lather's (1986) criteria I added other "corrective mechanisms" to increase validity. I conducted member checks to determine if the data and my interpretations were credible. To some degree, I can support catalytic validity in this research in that Sondra felt "energized" by my presence and more conscious of her teaching. Although the research was not designed as a critical ethnography, all participants became more reflective, conscious, and critical to some degree.

Using Mishler's (1990) criteria, I determined that the ultimate indication of the validity of this research is to have others judge its value and importance. In actuality, all research seems to serve to this end.

This validation juggling act is fine on paper, at conferences, or in the small gathering spaces in colleges and universities around the world. However, when you venture into the field, trying to understand, draw conclusions, interpret, and then re-present the writing behaviors of second and third graders and their teacher, such validity discourse becomes a challenging game; you wonder if you have picked the right door for the grand prize. In doing research, you never know what could have been. You don't know what will happen. You don't know what others will think. You don't know if it will make a difference.

Scheurich's (1993) beliefs about the validity of difference are intriguing, but how do you get your voice heard within a system that examines rigor, design, and accuracy? Do you then rely on what Mishler (1990) reinscribes as a validity of importance to others? Do I hope that others rely on my research as a basis for their own theorizing? Yes, but at this point, Mishler's validity claims are dangerous for me. What Mishler proposes is a validity claim based on popularity rather than science. I'm waiting for my 15 minutes of fame. I wonder if I'll know when it happens? If so, my voice may be heard, only if others see value in it. And so, here we go on this validity merry-go-round again.

In my opinion, research may be viewed as interference. It can be intrusive and annoying to participants in its most obtrusive forms, or at least distracting for participants in its more "natural" forms. When conducting research, I find that I must first observe against myself. Then for others, I can make explicit my interpretive frames, reveal my role in the construction of data, insert my self into the writing and presenting of the research, and become functionally paranoid.

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