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Janice M. Morse, Lynda J. Dimitroff, Robin Harper, Amanda Koontz, Savita Kumra, Nancy Matthew-Maich, Paul Mihas
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Janice M. Morse,¹ Lynda J. Dimitroff,² Robin Harper,³
Amanda Koontz,⁴ Savita Kumra,⁵ Nancy Matthew-Maich,⁶
Paul Mihos,⁷ and Christina Murphey⁸

For several decades, rather awkward and tense relationships exacerbated by common language miscommunications have existed between qualitative and quantitative researchers. These language barriers construct a huge divide, which results in a devaluation of research. This has been mutually destructive to qualitative and quantitative research, and to the advancement of science. The purpose of this End Note is not to offer linguistic solutions nor to introduce new terminologies, but to call attention to this problem and to initiate conversation among colleagues.

What is the nature of this language “barrier”? First, similar terms, or in some cases the same word, have very different meanings when used in qualitative or in quantitative inquiry. Second, similar terms may have the same meanings but are determined according to very different research strategies in the two paradigms. Finally, there are terms that are particular to each paradigm, in both label and method of attainment, but that have an approximate parallel expression in the other paradigm. An example of the last is that the qualitative term *saturation* and the quantitative term *statistical power* are both indicative of the adequacy of the sample.

Types of Linguistic Divides

Similar Terms: Different Meanings

Terms that are similar in both paradigms but have different meanings in each paradigm include:

- *Significance*: In qualitative inquiry this pertains to the importance of the concepts; in quantitative inquiry it refers to statistical significance.
- *Relationship*: In qualitative research this refers to the association between categories or between people; in quantitative research it refers to the statistical relationship between variables.
- *Evidence*: In qualitative inquiry, evidence is related to logic, common sense, and cooccurrence; in quantitative inquiry, evidence is statistical proof of outcomes, benefit, or harm.

Same Meanings: Different Research Strategies

Terms that have the same meanings in both paradigms but represent different research strategies are:

- *Validity*: In qualitative research, validity is determined within the project by processes of internal and external verification, replication, and logic. In quantitative research, it is determined as external, internal, criterion, face, and content. While occasionally determined qualitatively (e.g., face validity), validity is usually determined statistically.
- *Reliability*: In qualitative inquiry, reliability is determined within a descriptive project by using member checking and interrater techniques. In quantitative inquiry, reliability is determined by using interrater techniques and is evaluated statistically.
- *Generalizability*: In qualitative research, generalizability is determined using the transference of the concepts and theory to other situations with similar problems. In quantitative research, generalizability is reliant on random sampling to ensure similarities in populations before the findings may be transferred.

¹University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

²Rochester General Hospital, Rochester, New York, USA

³York College, City University of New York, New York, USA

⁴Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, USA

⁵Brunel University, West London, United Kingdom

⁶Mohawk College, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

⁷University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

⁸University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA

Corresponding Author:

Janice M. Morse, University of Utah College of Nursing,
10 S. 2000 E., Salt Lake City, UT 84112-5880, USA
Email: QHR-Editor@nurs.utah.edu

Particular Terms: Approximate Equivalence (Parallel)

To complicate things further, we have different but particular terms that are approximately equivalent, but incompatible:

- *Counting terms:* Because of the nature of sampling in qualitative inquiry, qualitative researchers are not as concerned with specific numerical values (using words such as *few*, *most*, and *some*). The precise numerical value in quantitative inquiry is crucial for statistical calculation.
- *Subjects:* In qualitative inquiry, researchers refer to subjects as *participants*, (reflecting on the collaborative perspective of research) or *volunteers*; in quantitative inquiry, researchers refer to participants as *subjects* (reflecting on the goal perspective of approximating experimental conditions).

Ramifications of Miscommunication

The continued reinforcement of this divide creates chasms between research paradigms where there are none. These

misunderstandings and lack of appreciation for research methods, either for the qualitative paradigm by the quantitative researcher or the quantitative paradigm by the qualitative researcher, result in the impediment of research. Each devalues the work of the other, leading to the misinterpretation of results, or even a demand for inappropriate strategies that invalidate the research. Of greatest concern is that we create unhealthy relationships, denigrating the products of both research paradigms. Consequently, these relationships create silos of knowledge, isolation, discrimination, and competition; research conducted within such a context shortchanges humankind. We miss critical opportunities to collaborate, prematurely limiting research in both paradigms. A greater awareness of, understanding of, and appreciation for our linguistic similarities and differences to resolve this divide will create the middle ground of wisdom and lay the foundation for mutually beneficial professional relationships.

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