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Bridging Perspectives: Intercultural Dialogue and a Mixed Methods Way of Thinking for Inclusive Knowledge Creation

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Abstract

This paper explores the shared philosophies between Richard Evanoff's intercultural dialogue on ethics and Jennifer Greene's mixed methods way of thinking, both of which are rooted in a dialectical approach. This approach emphasizes engaging with contradictions and synthesizing diverse perspectives to generate new insights. Evanoff's normative framework highlights the importance of dialogue in reconciling cultural differences, fostering the creation of a "third culture" that integrates conflicting values. Similarly, Greene's mixed methods way of thinking, guided by a multiplistic mental model and a dialectical stance, incorporates empirical and theoretical dimensions to address complex social phenomena comprehensively. This paper argues that combining Evanoff's emphasis on ethical dialogue within a normative approach with Greene's methodological rigor in mixed methods research provides a robust framework for fostering inclusivity, advancing social justice, and achieving a deeper understanding of complex issues through dialogic practices.
Keywords: intercultural dialogue, mixed methods research, dialectical approaches, integration

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Evanoff has long advocated a communicative approach to establishing a normative foundation for intercultural ethics, critiquing the traditional frameworks for their inability to resolve ethical conflicts across cultures. In his seminal essay, he defines ethics as a "critical reflection on behavior in relation to ourselves (personal ethics), others (social ethics), and the world in which we live (environmental ethics)" (Evanoff, 2005, p. 476). He also highlights the limitations of relying solely on universalism or cultural relativism in shaping intercultural ethics, given the multiplicity of values held by different cultural groups.

Furthermore, Evanoff critiques Aristotelian logic for its binary perspective (i.e., framing one viewpoint as correct and its opposite as incorrect), posits that it constrains cross-cultural understanding, and calls for a Hegelian dialectical approach that recognizes both the positive and negative aspects of differing perspectives. This method synthesizes the positive elements of opposing cultural values into a new and creative "third culture" (Evanoff, 2005, p. 479), hence fostering mutual understanding and collaboration in intercultural ethics. Integration plays a central role in this process, as it unites diverse cultural perspectives into shared and adaptable norms, and then ensures that the derived solutions are inclusive and context sensitive.

Evanoff's concept of intercultural dialogue parallels the notion of communicative rationality put forward by Habermas (1981/1984, 1981/1987), as both emphasize achieving mutual understanding through open and equitable dialogue. These approaches advocate for reciprocal communication, wherein no single perspective is dominant, and aim to construct shared norms through reasoned discussion. Therefore, Evanoff stands with Habermas in rejecting both cultural relativism and rigid universalism, instead proposing dialogue as a method to synthesize diverse perspectives into inclusive and adaptable ethical frameworks. By situating his intercultural dialogue in this theoretical context, Evanoff underscores the significance of rational and context-sensitive communication in resolving cross-cultural ethical conflicts.

The purpose of this paper

Evanoff (2005) identifies three fundamental methodological approaches within the field of intercultural communication: (a) empirical approaches, which describe cultures as they are by employing both quantitative and qualitative methods and focusing on *what is*; (b) theoretical approaches, which construct models or generalizations about cultures based on empirical data, bridging the empirical and normative approaches; and (c) normative approaches, which aim to solve problems in intercultural contexts, emphasizing *what ought to be* (p. 476). While Evanoff's approach is grounded in normative frameworks, it shares significant similarities with mixed methods research, which is rooted in empirical methodologies. Gaining theoretical recognition since the late 1980s through milestone works such as Greene et al. (1989), mixed methods research emphasizes integrating diverse paradigms to promote a holistic understanding. Greene's "mixed methods way of thinking," which is guided by a multiplistic model recognizing the limitations of single approaches and emphasizing the integration of diverse methods and paradigms (Greene, 2007), aligns with Evanoff's perspective on fostering synergies across different cultures.

This paper explores the intersections and contrasts between Evanoff's intercultural dialogue and Greene's mixed methods way of thinking. Focusing on Greene's framework, it demonstrates how integrating her mixed methods way of thinking with Evanoff's normative approach provides a robust strategy for fostering dialogue, promoting diversity, and achieving inclusive understandings of complex social phenomena.

What is Mixed Methods Research?

Mixed methods research is generally defined as "research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry" (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). This approach is an "old yet new" methodology, with its formal theorization gaining momentum in the 1990s. The phrase "old yet new" is pertinent here because early social science research saw the use of diverse methods and data sources, such as the naturalistic studies of the Chicago School of Sociology and the combined use of qualitative and quantitative approaches in

social psychology. Maxwell (2016) emphasizes that researchers pragmatically combined methods to address complex social phenomena long before mixed methods research became a formally theorized approach. For example, early studies such as Festinger et al.'s (1956) investigation of cults, Asch's (1956) conformity experiments, and Milgram's (1963, 1965) obedience studies employed multiple methods. Meanwhile, the systematic development and formal recognition of mixed methods as a distinct research methodology only emerged at the turn of the 21st century.

During the paradigm war of the 1980s and early 1990s, intense debates over methodological superiority between post-positivists advocating quantitative approaches and proponents of constructivism and interpretivism favoring qualitative approaches highlighted the philosophical differences between the two, making integration theoretically challenging. Pragmatically inclined researchers who were frustrated by these divisions, particularly in applied fields like educational evaluation, business, and health sciences, sought a new framework that balanced the strengths of both approaches. Their efforts fostered the development of the contemporary mixed methods research community, which emphasized integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to better address complex social issues.

According to Greene (2007), central to mixed methods research is the concept of "integration," which involves combining diverse data sources and methodological paradigms to generate richer, more comprehensive insights than those achievable with a single-method approach. These insights, as described by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), are termed "meta-inferences" and refer to "a conclusion generated through an integration of the inferences that have been obtained from the results of the qualitative and quantitative strands of a mixed methods study" (p. 152). Creswell (2021) further elaborates that "metainferences can be used interchangeably with insight, conclusions, or interpretations," and that "[d]rawing metainferences provides the value that a mixed methods research study rests on learning not only from our qualitative and quantitative data but also from their combination or integration" (pp. 103–104). Notably, simply using both quantitative and qualitative data does not constitute a mixed methods study. A genuine mixed methods approach requires integrating different data types, often involving abductive reasoning—

an intellectual process that synthesizes disparate data to generate compelling hypotheses or explanatory models. A detailed discussion of specific integration methods is beyond the scope of this paper; further information can be found in other resources (e.g., Bazeley, 2018; Creamer, 2017, 2024; Creswell, 2021; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fetters, 2020; Guetterman et al., 2015).

Key Features of Greene's Mixed Methods Way of Thinking

In this section, I introduce Greene's (2007) concept of the "mixed methods way of thinking." As one of the earliest contributors to the theorization of mixed methods research, she has significantly shaped the field through her extensive writings and empirical work in educational evaluation. Her approach emphasizes the philosophical and methodological benefits of mixed methods research over monomethod approaches and advocates for its capacity to generate richer and more holistic understandings of complex social phenomena.

Greene (2007) defines her mixed methods way of thinking as follows:

A mixed methods way of thinking involves an openness to multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished. A mixed methods way of thinking rests on assumptions that there are multiple legitimate approaches to social inquiry, that any given approach to social inquiry is inevitably partial, and that thereby multiple approaches can generate more complete and meaningful understanding of complex human phenomena. A mixed methods way of thinking means genuine acceptance of other ways of seeing and knowing as legitimate. A mixed methods way of thinking involves an active engagement with difference and diversity (xii).

Greene's mixed methods way of thinking is characterized by eight key principles: (a) orientation toward multiplicity; (b) recognition of social complexity; (c) generative approach; (d) engagement with difference; (e) dialogic commitment; (f) epistemological diversity; (g) practical implications; and (h) commitment to equity and inclusion. The following sections briefly elaborate on each principle.

Orientation Toward Multiplicity

Greene's approach embraces diverse perspectives and methods, thus acknowledging that no single method can fully capture the complexities of social phenomena. This principle underscores the value of integrating multiple viewpoints to enhance understanding.

Recognition of Social Complexity

This principle highlights the intricate nature of social issues and emphasizes that mixed methods research can address such complexity by combining the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Generative Approach

Greene advocates for a research process that continuously generates both questions and potential answers, leading to insights that may not emerge from monomethod studies. This approach fosters the discovery of untold stories and unexpected findings.

Engagement with Difference

Rather than striving for consensus, Greene emphasizes the importance of engaging with diverse perspectives and embracing dissonance as a source of new insights. This principle promotes inclusivity and equity by valuing all the voices involved in the research process.

Dialogic Commitment

Central to Greene's framework is a commitment to open dialogue across diverse paradigms and perspectives. Differences are viewed not as obstacles but as opportunities for deeper inquiry and understanding.

Epistemological Diversity

Greene's mixed methods way of thinking respects a wide range of epistemological positions, from post-positivism to interpretivism. She regards the tension between these paradigms as a fertile ground for creativity and innovation.

Practical Implications

This principle focuses on the practical application of a mixed methods way of thinking in research design, data integration, and analysis. Greene advocates for the deliberate selection of distinct yet complementary methods to achieve a richer understanding of research questions.

Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

Greene underscores the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives in the research process to enhance the depth and breadth of knowledge creation in mixed methods research.

Furthermore, Greene (2007) emphasizes the role of mental models in her dialectical approach. She defines a mental model as a set of assumptions, beliefs, and values that guide a social researcher's approach, encompassing philosophical assumptions about reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and methods (methodology), as well as the researcher's stance, disciplinary background, experiences, and practical insights.

Unlike in the past, a variety of inquiry approaches now exist, requiring each researcher to understand the diverse options available and carefully determine which approach to adopt and whose interests the research will serve. Thus, each researcher's mental model significantly influences this decision. Her mixed methods way of thinking advocates integrating diverse methods and viewpoints, while acknowledging the inherent limitations of any single approach. Greene contends that differing methods (i.e., qualitative and quantitative approaches) and paradigms (e.g., post-positivism and constructivism) should coexist and complement each other in mixed methods research. This pluralistic stance not only promotes methodological inclusivity but also encourages researchers to engage in meaningful dialogue across paradigms, fostering a deeper and more extensive understanding of complex phenomena.

In summary, Greene's mixed methods way of thinking is best understood as an adaptive and inclusive framework that transcends a single mental model. Central to her approach is the dialectical stance, which emphasizes coexistence and dialogue between differing paradigms to generate new insights. By leveraging the tensions and contradictions inherent in diverse perspectives, Greene's framework fosters deeper understanding, promotes innovation, and

ensures inclusivity and fairness in knowledge generation.

Shared Philosophies Between Intercultural Dialogue and a Mixed Methods Way of Thinking

Evanoff's intercultural dialogue and Greene's mixed methods way of thinking, though applied in different domains, share key principles: respect for diversity, emphasis on dialogue, acceptance of contradictions, pursuit of equity and inclusivity, and integration of theory and practice. These commonalities demonstrate that both frameworks offer comprehensive approaches for deepening understanding and generating new knowledge.

Intercultural dialogue emphasizes embracing diverse cultural perspectives and values, with respect for differences at its core in forming ethical frameworks. Similarly, Greene's mixed methods way of thinking is grounded in a multiplistic mental model, acknowledging the complexity of social phenomena and the partial nature of any single perspective. Her approach promotes a holistic understanding of complex social issues by integrating both qualitative and quantitative data and drawing from philosophical paradigms like post-positivism and constructivism.

Both approaches view diversity as a resource rather than an obstacle. Greene's dialectical stance further underscores this point by promoting the coexistence and interaction of differing paradigms, and leverages the tensions between them to generate richer insights. Similarly, Evanoff supports treating diverse perspectives in intercultural dialogue as opportunities for growth, and not as problems to be resolved. Both approaches foster deeper understanding and generate novel insights by embracing different perspectives.

Dialogue is central to both methods. Intercultural dialogue promotes reciprocal communication to negotiate shared ethical norms among people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Meanwhile, Greene emphasizes dialogue not only between paradigms but also between methods, particularly qualitative and quantitative approaches. This dialogue enhances the depth and breadth of research findings. Both methods emphasize the importance of integrating diverse viewpoints through dialogue to create new knowledge.

A shared stance on accepting contradictions further unites these approaches. Evanoff regards contradictions arising from cultural differences as natural and as valuable starting points for generating new insights. Greene's dialectical

stance similarly views contradictions between qualitative and quantitative data as opportunities for deeper understanding rather than as obstacles to be resolved. Both treat contradictions as valuable resources for innovation and growth.

Equity and inclusivity are also fundamental to both. Intercultural dialogue seeks to ensure equal treatment of all cultural perspectives. Greene's approach promotes equity in knowledge creation by balancing the objectivity of quantitative research with the subjectivity of qualitative inquiry, while ensuring that diverse voices are heard and valued. Both approaches strive to incorporate diverse perspectives and uphold fairness throughout the research process.

Lastly, both Evanoff and Greene emphasize the integration of theory and practice. Intercultural dialogue applies theoretical frameworks to real-world challenges and guides concrete actions. Similarly, Greene's mixed methods way of thinking leverages the interaction between theoretical paradigms and research practices to generate practical solutions. This interplay between theory and practice enables both approaches to effectively address societal issues.

In summary, Evanoff's intercultural dialogue and Greene's mixed methods way of thinking exhibit noteworthy parallels across their respective fields. Their shared commitment to multiplistic and dialectical thinking highlights their potential to offer flexible and comprehensive frameworks for addressing complex societal challenges.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the shared philosophies between Richard Evanoff's intercultural dialogue and Jennifer Greene's mixed methods way of thinking. While Evanoff's approach is rooted in a normative framework and Greene's in empirical methodologies, both adopt a dialectical approach that emphasizes engaging with contradictions and synthesizing diverse perspectives to address complex issues. Evanoff's focus on fostering intercultural dialogue to create a "third culture" parallels Greene's commitment to integrating diverse methods and paradigms in mixed methods research. Both frameworks highlight the importance of inclusivity, dialogue, and respect for diversity in generating

innovative solutions.

The findings suggest that combining empirical, theoretical, and normative dimensions, as advocated by Evanoff and Greene, provides a comprehensive framework for addressing societal challenges. Evanoff's normative emphasis on ethical dialogue complements Greene's methodological rigor in mixed methods research, demonstrating how these approaches can work in tandem to foster deeper understanding and social justice. By integrating Evanoff's normative perspective with Greene's mixed methods framework, researchers can adopt a holistic approach that bridges cultural and methodological divides. This synthesis underscores the transformative potential of engaging in inclusive, dialogic practices to address the complexities of an interconnected world.

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