CHAPTER 4

Nine Perspectives of Research

PERSPECTIVE 1: A POSTPOSITIVIST, SCIENTIFICALLY ORIENTED APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL INQUIRY

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KEY WORDS*

Warranted Beliefs	Positivism	Epistemology	Knowledge Claims
Postmodernism			

There are vast numbers of people around the globe engaged in one way or another in the educational enterprise—parents, teachers, students, curriculum developers, evaluators, policy analysts and developers, administrators, teacher educators, educational researchers—and many of these (with perhaps the exception of most students) will engage from time-to-time in inquiry *about* education. Teachers may want to improve the effectiveness of their work, or discover the causes of some lesson gone disastrously wrong; two parents may want to identify a program that is suitable for their child who has special needs; evaluators might be trying to determine which of two pilot programs a school district ought to adopt, or what the unintended side-effects of each of the programs happen to be; researchers might be struggling to understand the cognitive demands of a new computer-based educational program, or working on the interaction patterns within multi-ability groups in a classroom; and a policy group might be weighing the pros and cons of lowering class size in a state, balancing the possible gains in learning and positive attitude changes in students against the considerable drain on taxpayers' dollars that would be involved and the opportunities that would be lost to mount important programs elsewhere.

Educational inquiry can take many forms, and we stand to gain important insights from most (if not all) of them. Historians engage in inquiry, and so do philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists. Curriculum developers inquire, as do policymakers and evaluators. A writer working on the biography of an educational leader probably engages in much inquiry, as do parents who are trying to decide on a suitable school for a child, and as do teachers who are analyzing—as part of a process of self-improvement—why a particular lesson was a success or a failure; and a

*Definitions of Key Words are located in the Glossary at the back of this book.

documentary filmmaker, working on a project such as, for example, the prevalence of bullying in high schools, no doubt also engages in a great deal of inquiry (about bullying, but also about such things as effective levels of lighting and camera angles).

Inquiries, however, are not all equal. Some are shoddy pieces of work—the collection of information may be haphazard, and much of what is collected might be of dubious relevance to the issue at hand; recording of observations might be intermittent; biases may be allowed to intrude; the questions asked of interviewees might be leading ones rather than probing ones, or they might be superficial and fail to reach "below the surface" of events; the way points are thought through might be slipshod, and full of non sequiturs or fallacious reasoning; or the aim of the inquiry might simply be to "confirm" the beliefs that were held prior to the inquiry being initiated. The "inquiry" (in this case a pseudo-inquiry) might merely be a vehicle for allowing an individual to express his or her opinions dressed up, as it were, in disguise. It matters, in short, that the inquiries be—in John Dewey's stark term—"competent." Dewey wrote,

> We know that some methods of inquiry are better than others in just the same way in which we know that some methods of surgery, farming, road-making, navigating, or what-not are better than others. It does not follow in any of these cases that the "better" methods are ideally perfect. (Dewey, 1966, p. 8)

It should be noted that nowhere here has it been insisted that all educational inquiries be "scientific" in some narrowly-defined sense of this term; indeed, the term has not yet been used! Dewey himself used the term in a quite broad sense in which it was equivalent in meaning to "competent or disciplined inquiry," and he did not draw a dividing line between inquiries in the sciences and effective inquiries conducted by lay people in everyday life. The moral to be insisted upon here is that whatever the inquiry, the inquirer seems to be under an obligation to win our trust, to somehow or other make clear how the inquiry was conducted, and to indicate what steps were taken to insure that the conclusions reached are trustworthy (that is, *worthy* of trust by others apart from the individual whose inquiry it was). Some individuals, following Dewey, will want to call such trustworthy inquiries "scientific," but others might balk at using this label.

Dewey said that "**warranted beliefs**" (beliefs that are supported by serious considerations that give us substantive reasons to accept them or at least to take them seriously) come from "competent inquiry"; there seems to be little point in carrying out an inquiry if the aim is to produce *unwarranted* beliefs, or shoddily supported beliefs! After all, as made apparent in the examples used at the outset, *we often want to act on the basis of the findings of our inquiries,* and we want our actions to be efficacious in achieving our goals. Educational issues are important— vitally important—and deserve the best types of inquiry that can be mounted, for we want to foster such things as the intellectual and emotional development of students. Another way to put this is that consequences often follow on the heels of inquiries: A child is sent to a particular school, a teacher adopts a new teaching method that will affect the students in her class, a state-wide policy about school funding is adopted, a local school board issues a policy about punishments for bullying, and so forth. It would be immoral for us to affect the lives of individuals in serious ways, and to use precious public resources that could be well-used for other purposes, without having due reasons—trustworthy ones—for so doing. Acting on mere opinion or belief (no matter how heartfelt), or acting on the basis of an incompetent inquiry, is not good enough.

There are many members of the educational research community who think of themselves as being scientists (or applied scientists), and who aspire to produce work that has the trustworthiness associated with rigorous work in the natural, medical, and social sciences; and there are many legislators and policymakers who, in accord with the line of thinking just outlined, want advice about educational matters that emanates from research that is similar in quality to that influencing policy in health and medical matters. This of course raises the "sixty-four thousand dollar question": What is involved in being a scientist? What are the hallmarks of rigor here, of competence? And there is a deeper question: Can many, or even most, significant educational questions be pursued in a scientific manner, even if "science" is defined—following Dewey—quite broadly? The following brief discussion can only provide the outline of a satisfactory set of answers to these questions. (For more detailed accounts, see Phillips & Burbules, 2000; Phillips, 2000.)

A convenient way to start is by quoting a philosopher who does not believe that the naturalistic approach to the study of human (including educational) affairs is viable; the term "naturalistic" is used here to refer to the view that, in some core way, the "logic" or methodology of the social sciences can be similar to that of the natural sciences. In 1996 Brian Fay, a skeptic about much (but not all) of the naturalistic ideal, wrote as follows:

> Throughout much of its history the basic question in the philosophy of social science has been: is social science scientific, or can it be? Social scientists have historically sought to claim the mantle of science and have modeled their studies on the natural sciences. . . . However, although this approach yielded important insights into the study of human beings, it no longer grips philosophers or practitioners of social science. Some new approach more in touch with current intellectual and cultural concerns is required. (Fay, 1996, p. 1)

In essence, Fay sees us as having a forced choice—either we can accept a **positivistic**, narrow view of science (which he rightly regards as unacceptable), or else we have to adopt a view that is more "**postmodern**" and that stresses that human action and social life have features with which science (as defined) cannot deal. If those indeed are the only two choices, all of us certainly must side with Fay! There is, however, a third alternative to which he gives little weight. For many decades within the philosophical and scientific communities it has been widely recognized that the account of science given by the positivists (and by the behaviorists, who were their fellow travelers in psychology) was flawed; a new, *postpositivist* view has been under development (not to be confused with *postmodernism* that was born about the same time). Thus, there is a third path that we can take, one that is more viable than the two alternatives pointed to by Fay.

The term "**postpositivism**" is not meant to imply that this new view of the nature of science has close links with the positivism of the late 19th and first half or so of the 20th centuries—it is not a kind of "super" positivism! It is merely the position that has developed *post*—that is, *after*—the decline of positivism. Furthermore, it is an exaggeration to call it "*the* position," for it is not one position at all; contemporary (postpositivist) philosophers of science do what all philosophers throughout history have done, namely, they disagree with each other—and often about matters that laypeople are likely to think are arcane. What is described below is merely one version, but (as the saying goes) it is a "vanilla" version that would be acceptable to many contemporary philosophers who work on these issues.

1. Science is no longer seen as being completely undergirded by either a rationalist or empiricist **epistemology**; these epistemologies were (in their different ways) foundationalist views

according to which something could only be accorded the status of knowledge if it could be shown to be fully or absolutely justified in terms of a foundation in either reason or experience. Nowdays it is realized that there is no way in which our knowledge of the physical, biological, and social or human worlds can be made absolutely secure; contemporary epistemology is non-foundationalist in the sense that it is widely recognized that there are no absolutely secure foundations for human knowledge—all so-called "bases" are open to at least the possibility of revision in the light of what future experience (including experience in the laboratory) turns up—a position philosophers label as "fallibilism."

2. It follows from this that science cannot be claimed to establish "**absolute truths**," for we have no way of determining whether the things that today we think are true will be judged to be true tomorrow. Some philosophers see science as progressively getting closer to the truth—this is the point of Popper's idea of the increasing verisimilitude of science, which he sees as taking place not through the *establishment* of anything but rather via the *detection and elimination of error.* Others take a different tack; for example the following represents a position that, in one form or another, enjoys quite wide contemporary support:

> Science does not deliver to us universal truths underlying all natural phenomena; but it does provide models possessing various degrees of scope and adequacy. . . . One goal shared by most scientists is to choose from among the available alternatives the model that best fits the real world. (Giere, 1999, pp. 6–7)

3. It does not follow from the fact that no evidence is sufficient to insulate a scientific "finding" or "conclusion" from the possibility of future revision, that we are free to believe anything at all that takes our fancy about the physical, biological, and social worlds. Our beliefs, fallible though they be, are constrained by what the world is really like—indeed, it is the world that determines whether or not our current beliefs are sound or unsound! Consider this: If the balls that Galileo rolled down his inclined plane actually had behaved differently from the way they consistently did (and still do) behave, physics would have taken on a different shape from what it now has. Whatever Galileo came to believe, as a scientist his beliefs were constrained by the behavior of the things that he studied—but it is important to underscore the point that "constrained" does *not* mean "fully determined by!" Similarly, although it is not absolutely certain that there are only nine planets revolving around our sun, we are not free to believe anything at all about what the solar system is like—our beliefs about it, to be competently formed, must be constrained by the realities that exist out there, rotating around the sun! (And if we were to offer a rival account, we would need to warrant it by offering new evidence, or by presenting some kind of new—and acceptable—argument.)

The same can be said about the social or human realms. People, social institutions, customs and practices, all really exist; and they really do have the characteristics they really have. Thus the claims we make about them, to be well-warranted, need to be constrained by those characteristics. For example, if a political scientist were to claim that the majority of fundamentalist Christians in the United States in 2001 support abortion rights for women, then this claim would seem to be unwarranted, and the inquiry (if any) that led to it would seem to have been incompetently carried out. (This conclusion cannot be voided by suggesting that it all depends how one defines what a "fundamentalist Christian" is. Although there may well be rival definitions, it does not square with accepted usage of this descriptive term to use it in such a way that the majority of those who fall under it currently accept abortion rights; if the term were to be used in this way, the purpose would seem to be deceptive.) An example used earlier also can be taken to illustrate

the general point being made here: The parents seeking a suitable school for their child with special needs engage in inquiry to find the characteristics that various candidate schools actually have—they want to place their child in a school that as far as they can tell has the features they find desirable, and their conclusions about the various schools (if those conclusions are going to be well-warranted) will need to have been constrained by the realities that pertain. If they want their child to be well-served, they cannot just believe anything they like about the various schools they investigated.

4. The points already mentioned raise the specter of "reality" and "truth," notions that many turn-of-the-millenium intellectuals of postmodernist disposition find offensive, but which many postpositivist philosophers find essential if we are to maintain clarity of thought. Indeed, the examples used illustrate that these notions are hardly avoidable, either in philosophy or in everyday life. It would seem that a sane person cannot deny the existence of—the reality of—schools, other people, cars and trains, the sun, and so forth. Relatedly, it is not easy to see how we could do away with saying that propositions are true or false; for example, can we easily give up the distinction between the following two propositions, the first of which is false and the second of which is true: (a) "Adolf Hitler was born in the same year as Julius Caesar," (b) "Stanford University is located to the south of San Francisco." We make countless statements each day that are true, and that our hearers take to be true; no doubt we pass on some untruths as well, and we may blush when one of the latter is drawn to our attention—truth in our utterances is pretty central to the successful conduct of everyday social life.

What sometimes confuses the non-philosopher here are the obvious facts that (a) we cannot always, or perhaps even usually, determine what propositions *actually are true*, and (b) we sometimes err in claiming that a particular proposition is true (or false). An example may help here: We cannot tell for sure that there is a tenth planet lying out past the orbit of Pluto, but that does not prevent the proposition that states that there *is* such a planet from being either true or false. As yet we simply cannot *decide* whether it is true or not. If the proposition were *neither* true *or* false, why should we bother with any further inquiry into the matter? And the fact that in the past astronomers claimed that there were only seven planets (i.e., they asserted that this was true), when in fact they were wrong, does not mean that the notion of truth is vacuous. If we could only assert (i.e., put forward as being true) those things that were *absolutely* true, safe from possible future overthrow, then we could assert very little at all! The fact that we are human and prone to make mistakes does not make the notion of truth useless.

When postpositivists deny that absolute truth can be attained in science they are not, then, making the strong—and strange—claim that the word "truth" serves no useful and meaningful purpose; rather, they are making the epistemological point that many of the general propositions (or bodies of propositions) useful in science—such things as laws of nature, theories, conjectures, or models—cannot be known with certainty to be true. For one thing, these laws and theories make universal claims, and as the evidence we have at our disposal is far from being the complete set that in principle exists, any conclusions we reach might well be mistaken. And to seal the case, consider that even if the totality of evidence were available to us we might still be mistaken, for we might have incorrectly explained or conceptualized this evidence; in Giere's terms, we might have produced a model that is compatible with the totality of the evidence but which gets things wrong at the theoretical level—something we would never be able to discover, if in fact all the attainable evidence had been obtained.

Nevertheless, most postpositivists hold that, if we have been careful, we often are warranted in making the truth-claims that we do make on the basis of incomplete evidence (that

is, our truth-claims can be rational ones to put forward, given the evidence we have); *but we must always be aware that our claims are never perfectly or fully or absolutely warranted!* Thus (to use an example suggested by Woody Allen's film *Sleeper*), although there is the theoretical possibility that we might be mistaken in believing that eating too many chocolate fudge sundaes is bad for our health, the best evidence currently available suggests that this belief is true, and a wise person will act accordingly and is warranted in so doing. The position outlined by Giere suggests that we need to abandon the quest for "absolute truth," but he still acknowledges that scientists seek models that do justice to the empirical evidence that is available; in common parlance, a model that does this is often said to be true—as far as we can fallibly tell (all judgments of truth in matters pertaining to theories or abstract models of reality are fallible ones)! On the other hand, Brian Fay argues that once we accept the fallible nature of our **knowledge claims** (the position philosophers call "fallibilism," and which has been advocated earlier), while we can in principle cling to a realist philosophy, the better approach is to frankly acknowledge that "the notion of an independently existing pre-formed structure of cosmic order loses its point." (Fay, 1996, p. 210) Many postpositivists dispute whether this is indeed the best approach, and they are dubious about the line of reasoning that led Fay (and others) to this skeptical conclusion.

When we turn to the concept of reality, postpositivists are far from reaching unanimity; the literature abounds with types of realism and types of anti-realism. I wish to take the bull by the horns and suggest that points similar to the ones just discussed about truth also can be made here. A person would not live very long if, in daily life, she acted as if the reality of physical objects was in doubt—she would trip over the first gutter that she ignored, or she would be run over by the first car that came along and whose path she did not vacate! Literally, we bump up against reality every moment of our waking lives. But of course it cannot be denied that there have been many philosophical (metaphysical) controversies about "reality"; however, in the main these are confined to issues involved in ascertaining the status of the entities that theories postulate to exist. There are a couple of standard cases: In the first place, the reality of the objects postulated in certain basic physical theories and laws has long been a topic of debate (the existence of subatomic particles such as electrons and neutrons, or those described in the theory of quarks); and there has been a parallel debate about some entities postulated in cognitive science and philosophy of mind ("Does consciousness exist?" was the title of a famous—and difficult—essay by William James). Second, there has been a debate in the philosophy of social science about the reality of some of the theoretical entities postulated to exist in human affairs; for example, do organizations—which obviously have legal status, and which thus exist in legal theory—actually also exist as real entities in the world apart from the individuals who collectively constitute them? (Does the world contain individuals, or individuals *and* organizations?) But once again in this whole domain we need to be cautious, for it is one thing to claim that there is a reality, and quite another to claim that our current descriptions of that reality are correct!

5. Many postpositivists are not shy of using the concept of causation, and here they also find support in the practice of the scientific community. Researchers in fields such as education are often concerned to identify causal relationships, and much methodological discussion is about the valid ways of pursuing this aim. Knowledge of causal relationships is indispensible for guiding interventions, and for framing policies (for a policy is, in a sense, an intervention in the social realm that takes something like the form "because we want to achieve X, we should do Y," which is based upon the supposition that doing X will *cause or produce* Y). A teacher

adopts a pedagogical practice because she believes it will help students to learn a difficult topic (and "help" is, in this context, a disguised reference to causation). A state legislature might pass a law mandating a reduction in class size in order to produce gains in student learning (and "produce" is another causal notion). It is worth reflecting on the fact that our commitment to the view that educating young people is important is based in part on the causal belief that this will enable them—or at least assist them—to lead productive and fulfilling lives. (Would we educate if we believed that this would have no effect at all—"effect" being, of course, part of causal discourse.)

The postpositivist, then, believes that causal relationships exist in the human and social worlds just as they exist in the physical and biological realms—although it is crucial to note that the *forms* that causes take in these realms are quite different. Rewards and punishments can cause changes in the behavior of children, but not in the behavior of the planets or of volcanoes; the communication of ideas, factual information, and explanations can change the actions of a person but not of a nuclear pile. Consider these cases: If a child understands the notion of injustice, he might decide to oppose a bully who is terrorizing younger children, and a student who understands the corrosive nature of acids will avoid direct bodily contact with them. Parents who know something about the educational practices adopted in a particular school might then choose not to send their child to that institution.

What is at issue here is the theory or model that is adopted of what leads humans to act— are we merely biological machines that react only to physical stimuli, or are we constituted in such a way that our actions are influenced by reason, knowledge, and the like? If we believe that humans can, on occasion at least, act intentionally, then it seems hard to deny the causal role played by such things as meanings, ideas, and reasons. (The issues here are complex; for further discussion, see Phillips & Burbules, 2000, Chapter 4; Phillips, 2000, Chapter 2.) On this general issue Brian Fay's position seems right on the mark:

> Social phenomena . . . are also events and objects which occur in the world. For this reason to understand them requires more than just knowing *what* they mean; we must also know *why* they occurred. . . . Put succinctly, to comprehend intentional acts we need to know more than just their meaning; we also need to know their cause. (Fay, 1996, p. 119)

Fay makes the point that our intentional acts are caused by our reasoning processes (which include, of course, our knowledge and beliefs, our motives, and the like). This provides a neat segue into the final point.

6. The version of postpositivism that I have been outlining is virtually indistinguishable from common sense: We inhabit a real world, in which there are causal interactions; we inquire in order to acquire genuine (warranted) understanding of this world—and to acquire, also, trustworthy knowledge about the mechanisms and causal factors at work so that we can act or intervene to achieve our worthwhile human purposes. The knowledge we acquire may be fallible, but we are justified in believing and acting upon the most rigorously produced knowledge that is available, until something better (more justified or warranted) comes along to replace it.

Postpositivist philosophers are quite reluctant to tell scientific inquirers their business, and to legislate what methods should be used in the quest for reliable knowledge—it is a matter for inquirers, not primarily for philosophers, to develop research methods that are competent. Nevertheless, philosophers do have a few general pieces of advice to offer, and in a sense they can act as the "Jiminy Cricket" of the research community!

Thus—going where angels fear to tread—I can suggest the following items, which are hardly surprising: It is an aid to competence if inquirers avoid what has been called a "confirmatory stance", and instead of looking for evidence that their deeply held views are right, they actively seek for evidence to prove that these beliefs may be wrong. It also helps to make findings more trustworthy if alternative explanations for the available evidence are sought and then tested in an attempt to eliminate them. It is also crucial, for making a piece of inquiry trustworthy, that it has been opened to inspection and criticism from the wider community of researchers. It helps, too, if research reports describe with care the actual steps that were taken during the inquiry, and if research instruments, questions, interview protocols, and the like, are presented for inspection. Above all, clarity and rigor in argumentation are vital—for then the inquirer's train of reasoning can be assessed.

There is much, then, to be said for the view that Karl Popper expressed in this rather poetic passage:

> What we should do, I suggest, is to give up the idea of ultimate sources of knowledge, and admit that all knowledge is human; that it is mixed with our errors, our prejudices, our dreams, and our hopes; that all we can do is to grope for truth even though it be beyond our reach. We may admit that our groping is often inspired, but we must be on our guard against the belief, however deeply felt, that our inspiration carries any authority, divine or otherwise. If we thus admit that there is no authority beyond the reach of criticism to be found within the whole province of our knowledge . . . then we can retain, without danger, the idea that truth is beyond human authority. And we must retain it. For without this idea there can be no objective standards of inquiry; no criticism of our conjectures; no groping for the unknown; no quest for knowledge. (Popper, 1965, pp. 29–30)

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways does postpositivism expand the more common definitions of science?
2. How is a belief that reason and knowledge have a causal effect on truth and reality different from a more biological framework?
3. How does a researcher assert his/her trustworthiness and believability?
4. How is a claim that there is a reality different from the claim that we can know reality?

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PERSPECTIVE 2: Pragmatism

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KEY WORDS

| Warranted Assertions | Sociology of Knowledge | Care Theory |

In their treatment of knowledge, truth, and meaning, pragmatists emphasize effects and consequences. They reject the certainty of first principles, and they deny the infallibility of passive perception. Human beings are active; they have desires and, to satisfy them, they must try things out. Thinking and acting work together as one process. Both theory (to guide thinking and acting) and practice (to test the suggestions of theory) are important; they are *equally* important.

Charles Sanders Peirce, the first philosopher to use "pragmatism" as a label for this new philosophy, considered **pragmatism** to be primarily a theory of meaning. In one of his best-known essays, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," he said, "What a thing means is simply what habits it involves" or "what habits it produces" (quoted in Thompson, 1963, p. 80). Summing up the pragmatic theory of meaning, Peirce wrote, "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (p. 80). As we seek meaning, we are to ask ourselves what observable effects may be associated with the objects of our thinking. We anticipate certain effects as a result of reflection on past events and, where uncertainty exists, we conjecture. Meaning so described is dynamic. As we test our conjectures, meaning changes; sometimes it becomes more stable, and at other times, continued uncertainty leads to further testing.

John Dewey developed a pragmatic theory of knowledge. Like Peirce, he insisted on the primary role of consequences in establishing knowledge. We need knowledge to guide activity, but knowledge is advanced as activity confirms or disconfirms the trial knowledge with which we started. In an important note, Dewey (1929/1960) wrote, "the essence of pragmatic instrumentalism is to conceive of *both* knowledge [theory] and practice as means of making goods—excellencies of all kinds—secure in experienced existence" (p. 37). Rejecting the traditional reliance on *a priori* principles, he asserted that "standards and tests of validity are found in the consequences of overt activity, not in what is fixed prior to it and independently of it" (p. 73).

Another great pragmatist, William James, described pragmatic method this way: It is "the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequence, facts" (1968, p. 380). Complications arise, however, when we recognize that both false and true ideas have "effects"; we therefore need a method of testing and, as Peirce advised, a commitment to continued inquiry.

Readers new to pragmatism will not go far astray if they think of pragmatism as a method that is modeled on scientific practice. Identifying problems, anticipating the consequences of various courses of action, formulating hypotheses, testing them, and reflecting on the consequences are essential to science and to pragmatism. Because of the inherent uncertainty built into such

methods, Dewey preferred the expression "**warranted assertion**" to "truth." Although we can rarely be sure enough to proclaim having the *truth*, we can make assertions that are warranted—that is, carefully tested and at least partly confirmed. We can, that is, count on a belief justified in this way until something occurs to shake our belief.

In the past two decades, after a long lapse, there has been a revival of interest in pragmatism within philosophical circles. (Interest in Dewey's educational thought never waned in the domain of educational theory.) Richard Rorty (1979) endorses Dewey's notion that "science and philosophy are continuous" (p. 228) and, like Dewey, he rejects the traditional quest for certainty. He points to other prominent philosophers who, without embracing the label, have leaned toward pragmatic approaches—among them, "Sellars, Quine, Davidson, Ryle, Malcolm, Kuhn, and Putnam" (p. 7).

One of the most important features of this renewed interest in pragmatism is an emphasis on the vocabularies we use and how changes in words can affect how we think and act. Rorty (1979) says of such philosophers: "They hammer away at the holistic point that words take their meanings from other words rather than by virtue of their representative character, and the corollary that vocabularies acquire their privileges from the men who use them rather than from their transparency to the real" (p. 368). This comment suggests the necessity of careful attention to the **sociology of knowledge**—that is, to how knowledge is constructed, questioned, refined, and encoded.

Both pragmatism and postmodernism have contributed to the importance of sociology. Instead of looking for the foundations of knowledge or identifiable origins of all knowledge that will guarantee the truth of what is produced from them, we now look at the social history of concepts, the locus of power in which ideas are promoted, and the fruits of contested ideas.

But sociology has itself experienced problems. Thirty years ago, Alvin Gouldner (1970) warned that sociologists must acknowledge their own place in society and its problems. Theory cannot, he said, remain aloof from its social origins and effects without endangering the very life of sociology:

> Any effort to deal with the *extra*-technical sources of theoretical change, if it fails to locate the theorist in society, can only produce a "psychology" of knowledge, overstating the importance of the unique characteristics of the theorist as a person; correspondingly, any such effort that does not relate the theory to the person of the theorist can produce only an unconvincing "sociologism" that fails to explain *how* the society comes to affect theory. (p. 397)

These two extreme traps still threaten sociology and, as we will see in our critiques, sociologists continue to argue over which trap is worse or even whether one or the other should be considered a mistake. Gouldner's statement is very much in the pragmatist tradition. Neither abstract, detached theory nor a mere account of personal experience can yield warranted assertions.

As we examine studies presented for critique in this book, we'll ask pragmatic questions:

What have we learned?

How warranted are the conclusions?

Are further investigations suggested?

Is the field advanced by this study? Is it hurt? How?

Is the chosen method well used?

Is the vocabulary appropriate to the study or does it tend to block change or innovation?

In addition to these questions, we should be interested in ethical questions, such as

Who benefits from this research?

Has anyone been hurt or is anyone likely to be hurt?

Is there a social (as contrasted with scientific) history of the problem?

Has it been discussed?

Should it be?

On this last set questions, I have always found pragmatism a bit weak. When we ask about ethical or moral consequences, we must be ready to evaluate them as ethically acceptable or not acceptable, not simply as predicted or not predicted. What test shall we use for this? Dewey depended heavily on what he called "social" consequences and these are to be counted as favorable when they tend to advance the growth of individuals and strengthen the democratic competence of groups. Much debate has been addressed to the question of whether Dewey's criteria are adequate for the purpose of judging the ethical acceptability of consequences.

Because I think there is a real weakness here (Noddings, 1998), I will use care theory to guide our ethical judgment. This is compatible with the pragmatic insistence on looking at consequences. Using **care theory**, we are directed to look at particular consequences—whether the recipients of our care are hurt or helped and how caring relations are affected. With respect to the latter, we will ask whether caring relations are established, maintained, or enhanced or whether they are damaged. If the research participants feel themselves to have been harmed, then we cannot claim to have maintained or established caring relations.

Research on caring itself can be used to illustrate the concerns of both care theorists and pragmatists (among whom there is considerable overlap). When researchers devise instruments "to measure" caring, the effect can be to trivialize the concept, to reduce it to a set of general indicators instead of describing it in its contextual and relational fullness. Using such methods tends to destroy the possibility of real changes that can follow a significant change in vocabulary, and the new concept can then be assimilated to an old paradigm, its words, and methods. Moreover, if instruments are used to "test" the caring of teachers or administrators, the results may actually damage caring relations. Of course, a devastating "thick description" might also have this effect. The pragmatic test may be applied to the full range of methods used in research, not only to those that fail to do justice to the concepts we favor.

QUESTIONS

1. How is a warranted assertion different from truth?
2. How are thinking and acting one process?
3. What is the role of reflection in pragmatic thinking?
4. How is the link to scientific practice probably a partial cause for the need of care theory to be added to the mix?

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PERSPECTIVE 3: CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A THEORETICAL AND INTERPRETIVE STANCE

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KEY WORDS

Constructivism	Ontology	Methodology or	Verstehen
Meaning-Making Activities	Epistemology	Methodologies	Bricoleurs
		Axiology	

Constructivism covers a fairly large arena in the philosophical literature, an arena too large to permit easy coverage. For purposes of this chapter, however, **constructivism** is defined in its simplest terms as an interpretive stance which attends to the meaning-making activities of active agents and cognizing human beings. These **meaning-making activities** embody both physical and temporal data, acquired through the senses, and the interaction of these physical and temporal data with values, beliefs, opinions, prejudices, hopes, dreams, fears, aspirations, fantasies, attitudes, adopted roles, stereotypes, and other forms of mental processes and received and created knowledge of both individuals and groups. Meaning-making thus engages two dimensions of individual social life: actual events and concrete situations, and the particular and individual mental stances which impute meaning to those events and situations. Constructivists believe *constructions*—the product of meaning-making, sense-making, holism-oriented mental activities of individuals—are critical because they, as much as physical and/or temporal events, determine how individuals (and the groups to which individuals belong) will act toward each other, and toward the physical and temporal events, and how such events will be interpreted and, therefore, frame social performances and cultural space (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2000).

Typically, constructivists lay out a metaphysical space which is comprised of (1) an **ontology**, a definition of what will be considered, for the purposes of inquiry, real; (2) an **epistemology**, a model of how an inquirer may relate to and thus come to know about what is considered real; (3) a **methodology or methodologies**, or inquiry design strategies thought most likely to yield information regarded as valuable, truthful, worthy of knowing, or socially useful within this model; and (4) an **axiology**, or a statement about the role(s) values serve in the processes and products of the inquiry process, and what their influence might be on the product of such research or inquiry. Each of these four interactive axioms, or assumptions, is discussed more fully on the preceding pages.

ONTOLOGY

Humans as social beings interact with two realities: a *physical/temporal reality*, composed of houses, streets, offices, carpool groups, children, co-workers, families, desks, mortar and bricks and other tangible objects, and time; and an *enacted, or constructed, reality*, composed of the interpretive, meaning-making, sense-ascribing, holism-producing, role-assuming activities which produce meaningfulness and order in human life. These two worlds—or realities—exist in parallel and alongside one another, interacting and influencing each other in ways which are impossible, in theory, to predict, control, or even entirely understand. For 100 years, science has focused on the first, to the exclusion of the latter. This dissociation has occurred to such an extent that David Bakan, former president of the American Psychological Association, commented that love, faith, altruism, will, character, and other important human characteristics had been simply excluded from the study of psychology—which was supposed to be the study of human characteristics (Bakan, 1972)! While not denying for a moment the impact or importance of the physical reality which surrounds us as social beings, constructivists aim to counterbalance the strong behaviorist and measurability foci of experimental social science with a re-emphasis on the immeasurable forms of meaning, and on **verstehen**, deep understanding of the meaning-making processes which permit individuals and groups to *enact* organization (Morgan, 1997; Weick, 1985), to co-create shared knowledge (Heron & Reason, 1997), and to construct meaning within their lives.

Most constructivists come to this theoretical stance and interpretive posture because they have come to understand that we know far less about the *whys* than we originally thought we did. As Terry Denny put it over 20 years ago, if all educational research were translated into human stature, we would have a dwarf slightly over 3 feet high. This is not a stellar record for over 100 years of intensive research on, for instance, schooling processes. Nor do we seem able, with conventional science, to counteract the effects of poverty, motivation, or other human failures on schooling. Consequently, alternatives to conventional science have been sought; constructivism has been posed as one alternative for its ability to see human complexity in its fullness; for its ability to understand unseen human meaning-making forces at work; for its relentless insistence that there is no such thing, in the natural social world, as a "controlled variable"; and for its ability to communicate, in natural language, a variety of portrayals representing the positions of many stakeholders, thus enlarging knowledge and understanding throughout a given community.

Many constructivists also come to this position because they realize that it is less the measurable physical/temporal reality which determines the shape and contours of social life, but rather the meanings which are imputed to, within, and between physical/temporal realities. In short, the meaning-making activities of cognizing humans may be more critical to understanding how social life is organized, how historical structures[1] (e.g., economic oppression) become reified, or how daily life is enacted, performed, and storied.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Constructivists elide the idea of extended and multiple realities with the principle of an extended epistemology, or *multiple epistemologies*. Conventional science frequently falls back on conservative theories of what constitutes scientific knowledge. Such knowledge is considered theoretically appropriate if derived with particular design strategies and methods, organized and treated (analyzed) by particular means thought to be both rigorous and objective, and presented within a

particular discursive and rhetorical structure. Data collected and analyzed outside this fairly closed system are suspected of being loose, subjective, unrigorous, theoretically meaningless, and non-contributory to the purposes of prediction and control (and, indeed, constructivist data are neither useful for, nor intended toward, prediction and control).

Extended or multiple epistemologies, however, imply that knowledge derived by conventional (rationalist, experimentalist) methods is not the only knowledge worth having. Other knowledges—feminist, racial, ethnic, cultural, queer, disabled, colonial, marginalized, borderland—grant us insight into the way those different from us construct their own "textured" (Fiske, 1992) realities, their private and public cultural and social milieu, or "habitus." Such knowledges additionally act to resist, undermine, and countermand images of society which are monocultural, majority oriented, or dictated by the interests of powerful elites. Constructivists see as a major responsibility the search for, and representation of, these resistance narratives, wherever they may be found (Lincoln, 1993; McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993). This is done, at its simplest, to recover a fuller and richer description of social life as it is experienced by all research participants. At a more complex level, the search for alternative representations of realities subverts easy "quick fixes" in the policy arenas where dominant interests have long determined images of those for whom social policies are drawn up, and where research portrayals have sometimes been used to "punish" non-mainstream groups (Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2000). At an even higher level of complexity, the representations of multiple "lived experiences" fosters a richer social imagery from which to build a communitarian ethic of caring and social and distributive justice (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

Constructivists are often conflated with those who do solely qualitative research. And indeed, constructivists frequently opt for qualitative methodological strategies because those are the strategies which permit the only entry we have into the "black box" of the human mind, where sense-making and meaning-imputing activities take place. But it would be a mistake to believe that constructivists are solely qualitative researchers, or that those who do qualitative research consider themselves constructivists. These dimensions—qualitative versus quantitative, and constructivist versus non-constructivist—are orthogonal to each other. Many constructivists also utilize, when appropriate to the questions which must be answered, quantitative methods; and many who use qualitative methods are solidly against constructivist forms of interpretation or analysis (Lincoln, in press), preferring instead more "realist" versions of data representation. Constructivists cannot, as a consequence, be called qualitative researchers solely; they are rather **bricoleurs** (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000), choosing and adapting methods which seem to show promise of eliciting the best data for the questions which must be answered.

Nevertheless, all constructivists will have a thorough knowledge of qualitative research methods, and will frequently use design strategies (methodologies) that represent open-ended and rhizomatic (Lather, 1986) stances toward data. Constructivists will also frequently make rhetorical presentational and narrative choices which refuse closure, and which take problematic and uneven discourses to be a part of the human context being portrayed. Thus, methodology is played out as a part of a much larger set of paradigmatic questions: What problem is chosen? How is it to be framed? What theories (or, conversely, what rejections of theories) will guide the inquiry? Where will the inquiry be conducted—in a laboratory, or in the natural context? What data are deemed most important for answering the inquiry questions? What methods are most likely to

uncover those data? What role will the research participants play in the study? Are they simply sources from which data must be "extracted," or are they active agents, suggesting salient issues overlooked in the original design? What form will the research report take? And, what role will values play in the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)? Each question presents a set of choices, and each choice acts to either resonate with other choices, or to create dissonance within the inquiry project itself. Thus, methodology, method, and paradigm (model, metaphysic, worldview) interact to reinforce or contradict each other, although rarely in the way presented by naïve researchers who make the assumption that the differences between paradigms are merely "qualitative" and "quantitative."

AXIOLOGY: THE ROLE OF VALUES

The final premise for constructivists revolves around the role of values in the research act. Constructivists are persuaded that because inquiry is a human activity, it is necessarily imbued with human values. Constructivists therefore reject the possibility of a value-free, "objective" human science, arguing that objectivity is a chimera, a fiction which acts only to obscure the values choices of its claimants. That is, the claim of objectivity is itself a particular value position, one which serves the purpose of taking off the table for consideration both the choices about problem definition, and the particular framework within which findings might be interpreted.

Constructivists take an oppositional posture on the role of values. A constructivist will attempt to clarify values which exist in the context, using the various respondents' value positions—as well as the researcher's own—as a way of demonstrating where consensus and conflict exist in ordinary social life. If values are inescapable, argue constructivists, then we should make extraordinary efforts to uncover the value positions which shape, guide, and create individuals' and groups' constructions. It is only when we understand the underlying values of respondents and research participants that we can begin to understand where conflict exists and where negotiation around larger issues might be engaged.

A part of this determination is the inquiry process itself. Another part of the explication of values is the responsibility of the researcher, in a set of activities routinely called reflexivity. Since the researcher is frequently the "instrument" in constructivist inquiries, it is mandatory that this human instrument reflect upon research practices, activities, relationships, decisions, choices, and his or her own values in those arenas. Knowing the self more intimately with each research project means coming to terms with *etic*—or outsider—values, and "coming clean" about those values as a part of the research process.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Constructivists come in many stripes. Some are persuaded to phenomenology, some to symbolic interactionism, some to philosophical hermeneutics, some to anthropological interpretivism, and some to various critical theories (feminist theory, critical theory, queer theory, race/ethnic theories of knowing). But many would share some of these basic premises, and further, would assert that their end goal is a deep understanding of social processes which might enable and increase social justice, act to increase emancipatory action on the part of citizens, and work toward a communitarian social ethic. Most would argue for a social science which supports positive social change. Many would call themselves liberal, although that term is out of fashion.

All, however, would support an expanded researcher-researched ethic which is far less asymmetrical, and far more egalitarian, inclusive, pluralistic and democratic. These values, as well as the inherent paradigm commitments, are shared values.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the role of meaning and meaning-making in the constructivist position.
2. How does the constructivist "vision" of research differ from that of postpositivism?

NOTES

1. The recognition of the historical nature of some social structures (e.g., economic oppression, as previously mentioned, but also racism, class structures, gender discrimination, and the like) is why I continue to emphasize not only physical realities, but also temporal realities.

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PERSPECTIVE 4: INTERPRETIVE AND NARRATIVE

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KEY WORDS

Contingent   Moral Responsibility   Intelligible Frames

Interpretive perspectives take for granted that all attempts to represent reality are mediated by language. Simply stated, the world does not exist in the shape of the sentences we write when we theorize about it (Rorty, 1989). What we say about the world involves the indistinguishable provocations of the world and the mediations of language by which we make claims about the world. The implication is that we can never completely separate what is being described from the describer. We can never distinguish unequivocally between what is in our minds and what is out there in the world; the mind plays an active role in the construction of knowledge.

If accounts and descriptions of objects are never completely independent of the observer or reporter, then writing and reading scientific (and literary) texts can be understood as activities **contingent** on language, rhetoric, power, gender, and history (Richardson, 1990). No set of procedures can remove the intrusions of the individual knower in order to reflect or mirror nature in an unmediated manner. Knowledge inevitably involves what Steedman (1991) refers to as "attaching significance" by interpreting. From an interpretive perspective, research practices are understood as activities that create value and inscribe meanings and the texts that an investigator crafts can be understood as a site of **moral responsibility** (Richardson, 1990).

The term "interpretive social science" is a generic term covering many different approaches to inquiry: the *verstehen* tradition of Dilthey, Richert, and Weber; the phenomenology of Husserl and Schutz transformed into ethnomethodology by Garfinkel and Sacks; the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer; the symbolic interactionism of Mead, Cooley, Blumer, and Goffman among others; the followers of Ryle and the later Wittgenstein who emphasized ordinary language analysis, speech acts, accounts, and justifications; the ethnogenics of Rom Harre; the dramatism of Kenneth Burke; the interpretive ethnographies of Clifford Geertz; the social constructionist, cybernetic, and relational perspectives of Gregory Bateson and Ken Gergen; the standpoint epistemologies of Harding, Trinh, and Behar; the feminist criticism of Clough and

Smith; the performative ethnographies of Turner and Conquergood; the autoethnographies of Ellis and Richardson; the poetic narrativism of Freeman and Bochner; the dialogic pluralism of Bakhtin and Levinas; and the civic minded, post-foundationalism of Norman Denzin among others.

Putting aside the considerable differences among these interpretive perspectives, I often use the term "interpretive social science" to refer to inquiry that attempts to move beyond objects to meanings and, in the process of grappling with meanings, to focus attention on values, thus affording an opportunity to recover and reclaim the moral importance and imagination of the social sciences. To understand and apply social inquiry in this way is to subvert and/or transgress the traditional categories that separate science and literature, reason and emotion, object and subject, mind and body, facts and values. What results is a set of reformed and creative research practices that allow us to consider what social sciences might be and do if they were understood as closer to literature than to physics, if they privileged stories rather than theories, and if they were self-consciously value-centered rather than pretending to be value-free. The causal orientation of empiricism is a restless search for enduring truths and universal generalizations. Conversely, interpretive social science embraces the power of language to create and change the world, to make new and different activities and meanings possible. Interpretivists emphasize how we talk about the world and try to deal with it; they see the goal of triumphing over received or inherited versions of the world and its meanings as heroic. Often, an interpretive vocabulary emphasizes ambiguity, change, improvisation, and chance, and its worldview feeds a hunger for details, meanings, and peace of mind.

Interpretive social science as a collective endeavor has recently been described as a qualitative revolution (Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Schwandt; 2000), which situates its goals as not only intellectual but also political. Certainly, there is a sense in which interpretive social science has flourished by virtue of mounting criticisms of scientism, foundational philosophy, realism, modernism, and the ethics of experiments with human subjects. These repeated criticisms have made it easier to distinguish and legitimate alternatives to mainstream social science. One of the main distinctions I like to make is between description and communication. In traditional approaches to social science we take what the world necessarily causes us to believe as a model for writing about or describing it. In contrast to this orthodox notion of description, interpretivists posit the practices of communication, that is, how meaning is performed and negotiated in the everyday world, as a model for telling about the world. I refer to this as an epistemology of interactive communication that privileges the ways we are part of the world that we investigate, and the ways we make the world and change it. Instead of being spectators, we become agents and participants. This conversational, interactive, or communicative model of inquiry redefines how we see ourselves positioned in our research; that is, who we are in relation to the "others" we study and who they are in relation to us. It also opens us to consider the constraints of various conventional forms of writing and representation, and the intrusive forms of mediation that fall between reality and data, data and text, text and reader.

In shifting the focus of inquiry from objects to meanings, interpretive social science invites a corresponding shift from theories to stories. The primary means that human beings use to attach meaning to experience is to tell stories. Much of social life rests on the fragile activities of human storytelling at least insofar as we make sense of our lives and experiences by placing them in an **intelligible frame**. As a framework for social research, narrative focuses attention on the relationships between author/researcher and subject, on the expressive forms for making sense of lived experience and communicating it to others, on the entanglements that both separate and connect how life

is lived and how it is told to others, on the functions of stories and storytelling in creating and managing identity in a social world, and on the cultural stories that circulate through our lives—the processes of "culture-making" that can silence minority voices and shape taken-for-granted assumptions that become scripted ways of acting. Thus we must struggle through difficult and uncertain issues, such as the necessity of problematizing the process of writing about others at least insofar as we can become more reflexive about our own constructions and motives; our accountability as researchers who get to tell the story, encouraging the wider usage of an autobiographical voice; our embeddedness in cultural and disciplinary narrative conventions; our openness to experiment with alternative forms of expression; and what we want from our readers and how we can evoke from them a more collaborative and participatory engagement with our texts.

I will look at the research texts in this book as stories of one sort or another ranging from canonical to counter-narratives and looking at the extent to which they show how people breach canonical conventions and expectations; how they cope with ordinary, exceptional, or difficult circumstances; how they invent new ways of speaking if and when old ways fail them; how they make the absurd sensible and the disastrous manageable; and how they try to turn calamities into gifts or lessons for living. I will also look at these research texts as narrative exemplars that inscribe values and imply moral or ethical ideals, whether they breach or reinforce certain traditions, whether they challenge or underscore traditional or alternative norms of writing and research, what polarities or distinctions they promote or question, and how they contribute to the division or integration of social science and literature.

QUESTIONS

1. What changes occur to our understanding when we accept the contingency of language, power, gender, and history as a factor of scientific and literary texts?
2. Why does the world not exist in the shape of the sentences we write about it?
3. How would research in the social sciences change if we thought of it as closer to literature than to physics?
4. What is the relationship of the described and the describer?

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PERSPECTIVE 5: ARTS BASED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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KEY WORD

Heuristic

ORIGINS AND GROWTH

Art based educational research (ABER) is a relatively new form of educational research, originating in the groundbreaking work of Elliot Eisner of Stanford University in the late 1970s. Eisner was the first to imagine the possibilities of a form of educational research that honors the principles, purposes, and premises of the arts rather than the social sciences. This reliance on the arts as opposed to the social sciences continues to set ABER apart from other kinds of research described in this book.

In the last several decades ABER has grown in legitimacy and acceptance within the field of educational research. Discussions about and examples of ABER have been the focus of many presentations at meetings of professional organizations. ABER is the subject of readings and discussions in courses in schools and colleges of education, especially in qualitative research classes. Six Winter Institutes on ABER have been held under the sponsorship of the American Educational Research Association. In 1996 an AERA Special Interest Group on Arts Based Educational Inquiry was formed, and flourishes to this date. Many professional journals accept articles using or discussing ABER. They include (among others) *International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education, Curriculum Inquiry, Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* and the online *International Journal of Education and the Arts.* Some journals (e.g., *Teacher Education Quarterly* and *Qualitative Inquiry*) have devoted entire issues to examples of studies employing this approach.

Most arts based researchers have employed the literary arts as modalities for representing their data. Examples of these literary artforms include poetry (Sullivan, 2000), the novel (Saye, 2002; Dunlop, 1999) and novella (Kilbourne, 1998), the life story (Barone, 2000, 2001), ethnodrama (Saldana & Wolcott, 2001), autobiography and "self-narrative" (Buttignol, 1997), and readers theater (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995).

Arts based educational researchers have also begun experimenting with non-linguistic forms of the arts for alternative modes of representing research data. Various species of the plastic and performing arts have served as modalities for the representation of research findings at American Educational Research Association (AERA) meetings, in journals, dissertations, and theses (Springgay, 2001), and books (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Mirochnik & Sherman, 2002; Diamond & Mullen, 1999).

The introduction and subsequent flourishing of arts based research in the field of education paralleled developments within other areas of the human studies. Indeed, social scientists have long engaged in the creation of research texts that could be characterized as literary or poetic. For example, in *The Children of Sanchez,* anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1961) employed a form of literary nonfiction in portraying the lives of members of one Mexican family. The genre of the ethnographic novel, invented by Bandelier (1890/1971) in the 1890s, was reinvigorated in the 1970s

and 1980s (see Tedlock, 2000). In addition to the rise of literary anthropology, the births of anthropological poetry, ethnopoetics, and literary sociology were evidence of important "turns" in the social sciences. These turns signaled re-orientations of the linguistic, rhetorical, and methodological proclivities of many scholars in these fields.

Much of this early work appeared during a moment of genre dispersion identified by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) as the third stage of qualitative research, a time in which "boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities had become blurred" (p. 18). Today researchers who are comfortable with the label of social scientists nevertheless transgress that border with frequency. The most adventurous even enter the terrain of imaginative literature, experimenting with the fictionalization of their tests (see Banks & Banks, 1998).

Despite all these encouraging developments, artistic approaches to research in the areas of the human studies, including education, remain somewhat on the margins. Academics who have been professionally socialized into a narrow view of what constitutes legitimate research often find it difficult to imagine the potential utility of alternative research approaches. And when it comes to the acceptance of arts based educational research, a fundamental shift must indeed be made, one that accepts the possibility that there are, not one, but *two* equally important and legitimate *purposes* for doing educational research. I will explain.

INQUIRY PURPOSES

The philosopher Richard Rorty (1989) suggests that there are, indeed, two primary purposes for engaging in human inquiry—a quest for certainty and the enhancement of meanings. These purposes reflect different epistemological stances. Converging toward certainty implies movement toward a kind of truth that transcends the individual perspectives of participants in the research. The second purpose suggests that alternative meanings can be construed from human activities, none of which is to be accorded a final, objective status. The first purpose implies the advancement of truth claims about educational phenomena; the second purpose implies raising questions about educational practices, discourses, and values that have been taken for granted within the field.

The first important and legitimate purpose for doing educational research purpose is often identified with traditional, or modernist, forms of social science. The modern social scientist moves to uncover findings that are as certain as possible in order to explain phenomena, and sometimes to predict and control future events. Other research projects honor the second important and legitimate goal: they address the various meanings to be found within the multiple dimensions of human life. And which of these two purposes serve to guide projects of arts based educational research (ABER)? The answer to this question will depend upon one's view of the nature of art. A few aestheticians might argue that art (and hence ABER) can involve a quest for certainty. For example, ascertaining and conveying a conventional version of the truth about a particular person's actions may be especially important when a decision is to be made that will affect the life of that person, decisions that may involve educational matters such as promotion, continuance of employment, and the like. For a story, play, photograph, or film to fulfill this sort of summative purpose, it must function as a kind of mirror that reflects the reality of what has occurred. It must accurately represent, with a high degree of certainty, the facts of the matter. To that end, the unique perspective of the researcher must be filtered out of the work lest it be tainted by a bias that reduces certainty.

But most aestheticians hold definitions of art that preclude the possibilities of ABER (if not of other forms of educational research) for performing this sort of service. For them (and me), good art does not merely replicate, through whatever medium, "real" phenomena in an epistemologically neutral fashion. An artist—to the extent that she or he is an artist—cannot operate from within a kind of perspectiveless perspective, one that denies his or her own experiential viewpoint. Instead, a work of art results from a careful reflection upon and recasting of qualities experienced by the artist into a form that is unique. The result of this process of reconstructing experience is, as Langer (1957) put it, a "semblance . . . a composed and shaped apparition of a new human experience" (p. 148).

This new experience has the potential for persuading an audience to view the recast phenomena in the bold new light of the work confronted, and thereby to question the usefulness of clinging to a conventional way of seeing the world. Or, in the words of James Baldwin (cited in Sullivan, 2000), art serves the purpose of "raising questions that have been hidden by the answers."

CRITERIA FOR JUDGING

A work of ABER that aims to enhance meaning by suggesting such questions is better suited to recasting qualities within an educational research setting, thereby suggesting significant questions about the familiar ways of viewing educational phenomena. Arts based educational research may thus be **heuristic**, a tool of enlightenment and empowerment, not only for those involved in and affected by the research setting, but in other settings that may be similar to the one in which the research occurs.

From this standpoint, a work of ABER must be judged on its potential for raising such questions. To judge it on the basis of the criteria of traditional social science is to engage in a category error. To critique arts based research using criteria such as validity, reliability, and objectivity is to misunderstand its nature and purpose.

Form is, after all, associated with function. And the criteria used in judging an ABER project must take into account whether the elements of design employed achieve the second inquiry purpose mentioned earlier. *In general, we may ask whether a particular work has the potential to persuade its audience to ask themselves trenchant and important questions about educational settings, events, and issues.*

Specific criteria depend somewhat on the art forms employed in the ABER project. Since the examples in this book are literary in character, I will suggest three questions to be asked about examples of this sort of ABER. Each question, in turn, suggests specific dimensions of literature that are designed to serve its intended purpose. This list of questions and criteria is not meant to be exhaustive. But I do believe these questions can help in assessing usefulness.

1. Does the educational researcher/author/artist create a carefully observed virtual world?

For a reader to be persuaded to ask questions about already familiar educational policies and practices, s/he must be able to imagine alternatives. To this end, the author/researcher must create a virtual world that is (not literally true, but) *possible,* one that is plausible, believable, and credible to the reader, one that to some degree resonates with her/his own experiences. This is more likely if the world is a product of empirical research, based, that is, on careful attention to the particulars of actual educational experiences.

2. Is the virtual world sufficiently inviting to the reader?

If the heuristic purposes of an ABER text are to be achieved, the virtual world within it must not only be believable. It must also be compelling enough for the reader to desire access to it, and to maintain engagement with it. To that end, the researcher/author must effectively employ various formal literary devices. These may include, but are not limited to, the following: strong narrative drive, precise and evocative language, textured characterizations, thematic coherence, and a satisfying emplotment (sequencing) of particular events and observations.

3. Does the recreated world of the text serve as an analogue that prompts questions about educational beliefs and values?

A literary-style ABER text must encourage the reader to see the virtual world that s/he has recreated not only as possible and alluring, but also as an analogue. The text must emit a sense of having been fashioned, of presenting a world that may or may not be fictional (in the usual sense of that word), but one that, even as it is inhabited by the reader, suggests that which is not of itself. If the text is to serve a heuristic purpose, its meanings must be of metaphorical significance, understood as relevant to situations experienced by the reader away from the text.

The researcher may achieve this by avoiding an authorial attitude that signifies a single, close, "correct" textual reading. S/he must instead invite the reader to see the text as open to multiple interpretations. The manner in which an author (often subtly) extends this invitation varies from text to text. But when done successfully, the reader has been coaxed into "pragmatizing the imaginary" (Iser, 1993), using the virtually real to re-think the conventionally real. Serving as an analogue to everyday "reality," the text prompts the reader to question the usefulness of prevailing educational beliefs and practices, to reconfigure meanings that have been taken for granted.

One final note: assessing the quality of an ABER text with a heuristic purpose is itself an act of personal judgment rather than one of convening upon "truth." Because each reader inevitably responds to an ABER text in a different fashion, different critics often arrive at different judgments about the heuristic usefulness of the work. In so doing they may cause readers to confront previously ignored educational issues. And they themselves will be engaged in the second of Rorty's two primary purposes of human inquiry.

QUESTIONS

1. Consider the "value" of ABER. When may utilizing ABER, rather than other forms of inquiry, make sense, or prove beneficial?
2. How may utilizing ABER enhance meaning or understanding of a particular education problem or situation?

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PERSPECTIVE 6: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER

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KEY WORDS

Gender   Ethnicity

To examine educational research from the perspectives of race, ethnicity, and gender is to ask that research take into account key aspects of identity which, in American society, signal both status and power. I would qualify this statement, however, by distinguishing between biological sex identity and racial features on the one hand, and ethnicity and gender on the other. The former are the only visible aspects of identity that belong unequivocally to the individual, since both ethnicity and gender represent constructed meanings determined in different ways by different social groups. It is clear that **gender** roles are culturally and familially defined. **Ethnicity** is negotiable because ethnic affiliation is learned, and is dependent upon the influence of the group in which one finds oneself. Ethnic identity is also a product of political forces that require, for example, racial solidarity in the face of a hegemonic mainstream culture. Thus, sex and race are key physical features that signal how the individual will be treated, taught, and valued according to the group's construction of the meaning of these physical features. Depending also on the extent of indoctrination of these meanings, the individual will internalize the group's definition of this or that gender, of this or that race, of this or that ethnicity. Gender and ethnicity, therefore, can only be defined by the individual himself/herself.

What do gender and ethnicity have to do with knowledge? The scientific paradigm from which the study of education has sought to earn its credibility holds certain premises that require that knowledge eschew considerations of individual identity. The main one of these is the assumption of objectivity. In the positivist paradigm knowledge and the knower have traditionally been thought to be neutral, value-free, and objective. Western science was, theoretically, built upon this premise. Yet numerous scholars have debunked this mythology, showing how, for example, the "science" of the measurement of brain capacity was manipulated to support beliefs about the superiority of male intelligence over female and of White intelligence over Black (Gould, 1981).

Paradoxically, beliefs about racial and gender superiority managed to exist, for many years, side by side with the belief that what was true for the dominant ethnic group should be true for others. This ethnocentric lens resulted in the ignoring, by no less a thinker than Piaget, of the role of culture in children's cognitive and psychomotor development. The paradox, of course, was resolved around the fact that since the dominant culture was accepted as the touchstone for normal development, then differential developmental patterns noted among other groups were taken as indicators of inferior capacities. Only in more recent years has cultural psychology succeeded in foregrounding the role of culture in cognitive development (for a review see Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995).

There is no longer any doubt that education and educational research never have been and cannot be value neutral. A decade ago, Eisner (1991) observed that, "Subjectivity is such a troublesome notion in the educational research community that we have created language norms to reduce its presence. Until quite recently the first-person singular—I, me, my—was proscribed in research reports." (p. 45). The changing stance toward this tradition is evident in the current acceptability of the use of these terms even in reports that rely on the positivistic paradigm. Further, the increasing acceptability of narrative and autobiographical forms have brought the role of the knower to center stage. Awareness of both group and individual identities is considered central to a critical perspective on education and educational research. The study of what is taught, to whom, when, and in what manner has become the subject, indeed the target, of multicultural education and critical pedagogy.

What does it mean, however, to know these identities? Despite apparent physical and cultural markers, neither gender nor race/ethnicity can be treated as essential qualities that are

stable across place and time. As McCarthy (1988) has argued, understanding racial identity must take into account both the continuities and the discontinuities—the "nonsynchronous" nature of ethnic identity formation. Despite a common sociohistory and the presence of certain features that have been documented as traditional, African Americans can be expected to be as different from one another as are Americans of European descent. As Morrison (1992) observed in her discussion of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas controversy, "It is clear to the most reductionist intellect that Black people think differently from one another; it is also clear that the time for an undiscriminating racial unity has passed" (p. 61). Socioeconomic status, geographical location, language, and ethnic origins (such as West Indian, African, American) all contribute to the individual identities of persons who are called, or call themselves, African American. The same is true for Native Americans. The complexity of ethnic identity is even clearer with Hispanics, who represent not a group, but a conglomeration of racial and ethnic groups who, for sociopolitical reasons, have been clustered under a single, multicultural, multiracial umbrella. The same is true for people referred to as "Asian," a term which, for the West, is merely a geographical convenience.

For all these groups, however, there is one point of commonality, that of being marginalized in American society. In the case of African Americans, Boykin (1994) described ethnic identity as being marked by the "triple quandary" of merging African traditions with the experience of oppression in the new world, and with the cultural norms of the dominant society that has emerged as the United States. By contrast, for Whites in the mainstream of the society, it is perfectly possible to live with only minimal awareness of the traditions, practices, and values of those perceived to be "minorities." The experience of living on the margins allows, as Du Bois (1953) observed, a sense of "double consciousness"—the keen awareness and sometimes competing valorizing of one's own traditions simultaneously with those of another. But the double consciousness based on a perspective from the margins is further particularized by the other aspects of identity mentioned earlier—class, geography, nationality, language. Thus, we think in terms of a "multiple consciousness" operating. For example, Dernersesian (2000) calls for recognition of the "divergent ethnic pluralities" of Chicana/o identities to replace "fixed categories of race and ethnicity" (p. 85). She presents a passionate call for

> a counter discourse that is capable of contesting many dominant cultures, including the ones that are supported by upper-class Latinas/os, who resist being interpolated by Chicanas/os and the new ethnicities they partner, who contest being made to share in the linguistic, social, and economic conditions of campesinos, indocumentados, and factory workers and their children who abhor the presence of a newly hyphenated Chicana/o Latina/o and its forecasting solidarity. (pp. 97–98)

Ladson-Billings (2000) emphasizes that the discussion of multiple consciousness "is not an attempt to impose essentialized concepts of 'Blackness,' 'Latina/ness,' 'Asian Americanness,' or 'Native Americanness' onto specific individuals or groups. Rather, this discussion is about the multiple ways in which epistemological perspectives are developed" (p. 260). In other words, what I know is determined to a great extent by who I am, where I have been in my experience, and who are the others from whom I have learned. While my race/ethnicity and gender are central to my experience, those aspects of my identity must be deconstructed, not essentialized.

The issue of epistemology is at the heart of the critiques offered in this section. The last two decades have seen a confluence of narrative, autobiography, and ethnography in the interests of moving away from the separation of knower and known and in acknowledging that all knowledge

is situated in the place, time, and perspective of the knower. In offering my perspectives on the articles in this section, I will begin by briefly outlining my own journey toward the recognition of the importance of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Growing up in Jamaica almost half a century ago, I was, along with my middle class peers, the product of a colonial consciousness that strove to be seen as equal to the masters of that place and time. Like the Apache of Cibeque's "Portraits of the Whiteman" (Basso, 1979), we had an outsider's view of our British masters. But, schooled in their language and indoctrinated with their social system, we had also the advantage of seeing them from the inside. We laughed at the physical awkwardness created, it seemed, by the extreme mind-body dichotomy that dominated their ways of knowing. Yet we craved their knowledge, partly because it would bring us power, and partly because it was also ours.

In addition to my status as both outsider and insider to the ways of the masters, however, so was I both an outsider and an insider to the folk culture of my native land. My mother's "Jamaica White" ethnicity combined with my father's professional education to produce a racial mixture, social status, and cognitive orientation which ensured that the coveted knowledge was in fact accessible to me. The knowledge of the folk, though accessible, was at once loved and reviled by me and by all who sought to replace the colonial master. To speak in Patios, the dialect of Jamaica, to absorb unthinkingly the African rhythms of the traditional mento, which gradually gave way to the ska, then reggae, was to celebrate all that was beautiful about our green, gold, and black island. To read Wordsworth, Jane Austen, and Shakespeare (we did not know that T. S. Eliot existed), was to move into a sphere where the iambic pentametre rolled comfortably off my tongue, although I had never seen a daffodil or felt the chill of winter.

There was, no doubt, a nagging discomfort in being so positioned. In being at that liminal point where I was "other" to two opposing extremes. But I was centered by privilege. I would say that the rest of my life has been a repositioning of myself, a process of altering and revising perspectives learned in that combination of raucus joy and protected elitism. When I submitted my dissertation for publication in book form, my doctoral advisor commented that I had not mentioned my ethnicity in my letter to the editor. Although for my dissertation I had studied ethnicity and disability, and had had the privilege of writing in the first person with the voices of 12 Puerto Rican mothers woven into my narrative, I still did not know that, in America, I must put my race/ethnicity first. (In my home country I would have had to put class first and would have been equally disconcerted in doing so). Really, I still did not believe that it was acceptable to present myself in this personal manner. There were two premises underlying this view: first, that to promote my identity would be self-serving, and, second, I was still imbued with the epistemology that said, "This is academic work. In academic work there is no such thing as personal identity." I write this commentary today with considerable trepidation and know that I will not show it to my mother.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the differences between "sex" and "gender"; and "race" and "ethnicity."
2. Consider the statement "ultimately, gender and ethnicity can only be defined by the individual himself/herself." What does Harry mean by this? How may it influence our research, or inquiry?

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PERSPECTIVE 7: CRITICAL THEORY

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KEY WORDS

Ideology   Critical Theory   Critical Ethnography

A critical researcher attempts to reveal the dynamics of power and ideology. Critical ethnography is guided by a central idea that social life is constructed in contexts of power that dominate some in serving the interests of others. Critical researchers take as their central task ". . . raising their voice to speak *to* an audience *on behalf* of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects' voice" (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). Thus the critical researcher is expressly working for emancipation of the less powerful by revealing the dynamics of power and **ideology** and questioning the justification of power and ideology.

Carspecken (1996) argues that critical researchers have both a value orientation and a critical epistemology that characterizes their work. To paraphrase (and quote), the value orientation of critical research includes these characteristics:

1. Research is to be used in cultural and social criticism.
2. Researchers are opposed to inequality in all its forms.
3. Research should be used to reveal oppression and to challenge and change it.
4. "All forms of oppression should be studied."
5. Mainstream research contributes to oppression and thus critical epistemology should presuppose equal power relations. (pp. 6–7)

Carspecken then elaborates central points of critical epistemology. Again paraphrasing (and quoting), he lists

1. critical epistemology must be extremely precise about the relationship of power to research claims, validity claims, culture, and thought;
2. "critical epistemology must make the fact/value distinction very clear and must have a precise understanding of how the two interact"; and
3. critical epistemology must include a theory of how symbols are used to represent reality, how this changes, and how power is implicated in symbolic representation and changes in symbolic representation. (p. 9)

Taken together, then, Carspecken highlights the centrality of working against power and oppression as key elements of the critical approach. For him this acts on two levels. First, the critical researcher works against oppression by revealing and critiquing it. Equally important, though, is that critical researchers understand that knowledge itself is a social practice interpenetrated with power. In this, critical researchers must explicitly consider how their own acts of studying and representing people and situations are acts of domination even as critical researchers reveal the same in what they study. This means Carspecken asks the critical research to turn its value orientation and epistemological understandings back on itself.

The critical approach has multiple origins. It emerged following what was seen as a crisis in social science (Gouldner, 1970) when discipline boundaries were fraying (Geertz, 1973) and when many Western democracies were being challenged by emancipatory social movements. Marxism had been instrumental in challenging dominant social theories, but was in transition itself to a neo-Marxism (and now post-Marxism) that was less deterministic and less associated with the Soviet Union. Stuart Hall (1986) characterized it as "Marxism without guarantees." The critical theory of the Frankfurt School, especially the work of Jurgen Habermas, in many ways, enabled the transition to a less-structuralist neo-Marxism. Yet critical theory was largely philosophical and lacked an empirical methodology to allow it to expand into the social sciences. Similarly, interpretive ethnography was expanding beyond anthropology and symbolic interactionist sociology, and was revitalized by the sociology of knowledge of Berger and Luckmann (1967). Interpretive ethnography, on the other hand, was beleaguered by charges of relativism, and relegated to the status of a "micro" theory. It was seen by many as useful at the level of social interaction but lacking a theoretical base to also be a "macro" institutional and sociocultural approach. What both perspectives shared was an interest in the less powerful and a need for what the other could offer. Critical theory and the sociology of knowledge was first combined in a

"new" sociology of education (Giroux, 1983; Wexler, 1987) which gave way to a critical ethnography as educational anthropology joined the synthesis.

The multiple origins of the critical approach means that there are a number of ways to employ the critical perspective: critical theory, critical ethnography, and "science with an attitude" (Ladwig, 1996, p. 161). **Critical theory** is essentially the critique of ideology. Ideologies that concern critical theorists are best understood as ideas that justify differential power that are taken for granted by people. **Critical ethnography** employs philosophical critique as the explanatory theory for ethnographic studies. These studies reveal the dynamics of power and cultural beliefs in stratifying people and in the reproduction of social relations and cultural beliefs. It also demonstrates the contradictions that come to characterize the lives of the less powerful. "*Science with an attitude*" is Ladwig's way of questioning the dominance of critical ethnography within the critical approach. Ladwig argues critical theory's rejection of positivism was a mistake and argues for "strategic methodological stances" (p. 164) that include "poaching mainstream issues" and "poaching mainstream tools" (pp. 165–166). His argument is that if the goal of critical analyses is to defeat mainstream educational research then we should take over their theories and methods. He is strongly influenced by the feminist, postmodern, and poststructural arguments that no research methodology can provide a definitive proof. Given this, he argues for a strategic approach to win the paradigm wars. That is, any methodology that lets critical theory win is appropriate including positivistic methods. However, critical theorists would also point out that Ladwig's interest in the critical approach becoming the dominant paradigm has its own contradictions that have yet to be deliberated.

Critique must be balanced with attempts to construct a better world. The critical approach then has an explicit political and moral stance. It is about revealing how power is hidden and ideas are justified. In doing so, it promotes awareness, political strategy, and, hopefully, emancipation. The critical approach, because it spans philosophy, social theory, and (largely qualitative) methodology, also critiques positivistic and interpretivist approaches as theoretically weak and advancing specific interests (Habermas, 1971). That is to say, the critical perspective reveals the dynamics of power and ideology even in research studies. I will provide examples of this in what follows. Since the articles I will critique exist as texts they can be subjected to a critique that reveals how research itself can be disempowering and dominating.

Using the lenses of critical theory, I will review each of the studies as the other critics will. Yet I will be looking at the studies for different things. I will ask what interests are served by these studies, and how capable are they to reveal power, domination, and the ideologies that articulate and justify power and domination. My reviews, then, are examples of the critical perspective itself. I want to be clear about my view of these articles. I have used many of them in my own courses, and find them instructive in many ways. Thus my critiques should not be taken as rejections of these studies or their authors. Instead, my goal is to point out what a critical perspective demands of research. Moreover I invite the readers to critique my position as well.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the value orientation, the critical epistemology, and the political and moral stances of critical theory.
2. How does critical ethnography differ from interpretive ethnography?

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PERSPECTIVE 8: ETHICS, METHODOLOGY, AND DEMOCRACY

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KEY WORDS

Expert Approach	Technocratic	Deliberative
Dialogical Approach	Conception	Conception

The spectrum of topics investigated by educational research is broad and so are the conditions under which it must be conducted. Thus, different ethical concerns will come to the foreground or fade into the background, depending on the context and nuances of given studies. The conventional approach to mapping the terrain is to divide it into two areas: research misconduct and the protection of research participants (Howe & Moses, 1999). Research misconduct has to do with how researchers conduct themselves with respect to scientific integrity and relationships with co-workers. It deals with matters such as fabricating or falsifying data, plagiarism, and the abuse of power within research collaborations. The protection of research subjects has to do with how researchers treat research participants. It deals with matters such as informed consent and protecting privacy. The conventional approach is largely silent on broader ethical questions that concern the alignment between research methodology and democracy.

My approach departs significantly from the one just described. I say a little about the protection of research participants, a lot about aligning research methodology and democracy, and nothing about research misconduct. This approach fits best with the emphasis on methodological issues that characterizes this volume. As we shall see, the longstanding divide between the experimentalist-quantitative and the interpretivist-qualitative methodological paradigms is a central issue in the ethics of educational research in the way conceived here (see also Howe, 2003).

My approach also fits better with the studies that serve as the grist for analyses than a more traditional approach to the ethics of research would. Questions concerning the protection of research participants and research misconduct just aren't very prominent among the issues raised.

THE PROTECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Researchers may adopt two basic approaches toward research participants: *expert* and *dialogical*. The **expert approach** fits most naturally with experimentalist-quantitative research. It emphasizes protecting the autonomy of research participants by ensuring they are provided with the opportunity to give or withhold their informed consent to participate and by ensuring their privacy is not breached. Although it provides more exacting standards for members of "vulnerable populations" whose ability to consent is in doubt—for example, children and prisoners—the expert approach otherwise assumes that consent from mentally competent adults is ethically unproblematic and renders research in which they agree to participate ethically unproblematic as well.

The **dialogical approach** fits most naturally with interpretivist-qualitative research. It emphasizes using dialogue with research participants as the way to deal with the ethical complexities wrought by the "interpretive turn." Compared to experimentalist-quantitative research, interpretive-qualitative research is more "open-ended" in its design and conduct and more "intimate" in the methods it employs (e.g., Howe & Dougherty, 1993).

The feature of open-endedness increases the possibility of unanticipated findings as well as the possibility that new avenues of investigation will emerge over the course of a study. This can prompt researchers to have to wrestle with the question of whether they should seek reaffirmations of consent from research participants. The feature of intimacy increases the possibility of discovering practices of questionable ethicality. This can prompt researchers to have to wrestle with the question of whether they have a duty to breach confidentiality. In a related vein, writing up results with the kind of detail—or "thick description"—often associated with

interpretivist research engenders the possibility of unintentionally compromising the confidentiality of research participants.

Neither the dialogical approach nor the expert approach is generally superior with respect to concrete relationships between researchers and research participants. The dialogical approach is well suited to situations in which the research in question is open-ended and intimate, such that risks and benefits unfold unpredictably. By contrast, the more traditional, expert approach is well suited to situations in which the research in question is focused on evaluating well-specified "treatments" or "interventions," such that risks and benefits are much more predictable.

THE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DEMOCRACY

Educational researchers must adopt *some* conception of the relationship between their methodology and democratic decision-making in virtue of adopting some stance both toward research participants and toward the use of research results. One conception of this relationship is **technocratic** (which parallels the expert approach to research participants at a higher level of generality). This conception advocates a neutral moral-political stance. Educational research should be confined to "descriptive" work and should take no "prescriptive" position on values. Its conclusions and recommendations should connect to values only *hypothetically:* Policy or practice X should be adopted, *if* value Y is to be promoted. These hypothetical statements are turned over to policy makers who make the value judgments and the related programmatic decisions.

The technocratic conception has been severely criticized, particularly by critical theorists. But care theorists, communitarians, postmodernists have also joined in, as well as contemporary liberal theorists. Although these philosophical perspectives differ in numerous and important ways, each criticizes the technocratic conception's premise that researchers can be morally and politically neutral. Each also criticizes the technocratic conception for its "methodological individualism," such that persons' identities and choices are to be understood and evaluated apart from social and cultural positioning.

That these various critics are *against* the technocratic conception is clear. What they are *for*, however, isn't so clear (postmodernists present special problems in this regard). But sorting through the differences would take me well beyond what I can accomplish here. Below I sketch one alternative to the technocratic conception, the **deliberative conception** (which parallels the dialogical approach to research participants at a higher level of generality).

Deliberative democratic theory is in the liberal tradition (though it also has a strong affinity with certain versions of critical theory). Contemporary liberal philosophers have endeavored to render liberalism more sensitive to the complex social and cultural factors that go into defining "contexts of choice" by acknowledging how these factors facilitate or blunt the exercise of autonomy and thus facilitate or blunt democratic participation (e.g., Kymlicka, 1991). This is linked to rejecting a technocratic conception of democracy in favor of a deliberative conception (e.g., Gutmann & Thompson, 1996).

The deliberative conception holds that there is something to deliberate about when it comes to values, that values are not impervious to rational investigation and dialogue. It holds that the conditions of decision-making should be designed so as to permit free and equal participation. This requires a joint commitment on the part of participants to determine what is

truly right, based on argument and evidence, rather than a commitment to a strategy to use the power at their disposal to win assent to what they perceive is in their best interests. Participants can actually see their value commitments change, as new, more adequate positions are "constructed" out of the material of joint deliberation.

On the deliberative conception, educational research should not (and cannot) take a neutral moral-political stance. Its work is "prescriptive." Its conclusions and recommendations should connect to values *categorically:* Adopt policy or practice X *in order to achieve* value Y. And it should incorporate specific measures to eliminate or mitigate power imbalances.

The deliberative conception may be fleshed out in terms of three requirements: *inclusion, dialogue,* and *deliberation* (House & Howe, 1999; Howe, 2003).

Inclusion is both a methodological principle (representative sampling) and a democratic principle (the right to have ones views included in forums that have a bearing on social life). Inclusion ranges from *passive* to *active,* from, say, filling out a fixed response survey instrument to engaging in an open-ended discussion.

Active inclusion shades into dialogue, the second principle. Dialogue also has a range: from *elucidating* (getting the diversity of *emic* perspectives on the table) to *critical* (subjecting *emic* perspectives to critical examination, as appropriate). Dialogue, too, is both a methodological and a democratic requirement. It is a methodological requirement of interpretivist-qualitative research that seeks to ascertain social reality from the point of view of the actors who construct and participate in it. It is a democratic requirement because, like the principle of inclusion, all views should be included in forums that have a bearing on social life. In comparison to (passive) inclusion, however, dialogue is better able to yield *genuine* views.

Deliberation, the third principle, is a species of critical dialogue. It fits with a conception of democratic decision-making that differs not only from the technocratic conception, but also from the conception that restricts dialogue to elucidation. The latter approach—"hyper-egalitarianism" (House & Howe, 1999)—aspires to foster equality in dialogue among research participants, but it perverts the idea of *genuine voice* by not paying attention to the conditions out of which it can emerge. When people enter into dialogue about educational practices and policies, they can be mistaken or misinformed about the attendant harms and benefits, including to themselves. Simply clarifying how they think things work, and ought to work, can be no more than one element of genuine deliberation. Deliberation includes clarifying the views and self-understandings of research participants but also subjecting these views and self-understandings to rational scrutiny. Deliberation is a critical activity in which participants and researchers collaboratively engage, and from which the most rationally defensible conclusions emerge.

Once again, methodological and democratic principles dovetail. Deliberation is required, methodologically, to ensure that the most accurate portrayal of educational practices and policies emerge. Deliberation is required, democratically, to insure that power imbalances, including in knowledge and the resources to garner it, do not tilt—or "distort"—the dialogue so as to advantage the already advantaged. Educational researchers have a fiduciary responsibility in this regard (House & Howe, 1999).

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE COMMENTARIES

None of the studies upon which I will be subsequently commenting are self-conscious supporters (or critics, for that matter) of the deliberative democratic conception of educational

research. Thus, this conception cannot be straightforwardly applied in my commentaries. Instead, the deliberative democratic conception will serve as a general backdrop.

Like my fellow contributors', my commentaries will emphasize methodological issues, especially insofar as these overlap with values. However, my commentaries do not provide an additional perspective of the same general kind as postpositivism, critical theory, postmodernism, pragmatism, interpretivism, and constructivism. The deliberative democratic conception of educational research concerns issues that cut across these other perspectives.

QUESTIONS

1. How do ethics differ in each profession?
2. What are the ethical concerns for those researchers of the contemporary approach?
3. Why is the deliberative conception a good fit to contemporary ethics?
4. Is consent from mentally competent adults enough to move research agendas forward?

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PERSPECTIVE 9: POSTSTRUCTURALISM

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KEY WORDS

Historicism	Linguistic Turn	Epistemology	Self-Reflexive
Postmodernism			

OVERVIEW

There is no poststructuralism. Better said, the term refers to a group of nearly contemporary scholars—French with international cousins—who form a Wittgensteinian family resemblance.[1] American legal scholar Drucilla Cornell puts it that this is a family of '*chiffonniers*,' literally "rag and bone men" (*Mansion's Concise French and English Dictionary*).[2] For her, the writings of this significant group of intellectuals carry no satisfactory definition (Cornell, 1988, p. 1587; Huyssen, 1984/1990, p. 276, note 39); together, however, they do critique, scavenge from, and undermine other more traditional philosophical views. They write "against" humanist, formalist, and structuralist theories and theorists.

For the family, Cornell offers a list of authors and concepts ("catchphrases") of association. The focus of this introductory essay is six of these concepts: *language, relation, subject, practice, aesthetic,* and *ethics/politics.* These function as skeletal terms that are used in diverse ways by these writers, that appear in and in some sense organize their texts. They are variously foregrounded and backgrounded and always specifically interpreted. They are aspects of a theoretical framework necessary for understanding poststructuralisms (note plural). A significant qualification: These are not concepts to be easily lifted and applied to educational research. This is because of the particular theorizing and writing style of each family member. In educational research to date, they are principally presented and analyzed as in this text, even more utilized as inspiration through conceptual adaptation, and are sometimes appropriated as methodological models—with writing in the mode of the original (e.g., see Stone 2000).[3] Finally, one notes that there is danger of inappropriate use in Anglo-American educational research because of differences and complexities of the French intellectual tradition.

What follows overviews philosophical insights of poststructuralists who are well-known to English-speaking audiences: Pierre Bourdieu, Hèléne Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, and Jean-François Lyotard. Not included are other important family members, Jacques Baudrillard, Michel de Certeau, Gilles Deleuze, and Luce Irigaray. In turn, each of the six serves as an exemplary theorist for separate renderings of the six research examples in this volume, a different one for each. Since the initiating concepts serve as frames, devolving concepts and ideas particular to each theorist are taken up in the critiques. A listing of these is provided at the end of this overview.

ROOTS

Poststructuralists have roots in various formalisms and structuralisms in philosophy, broadly defined. Their family heroes, ironically in many respects and with varying allegiances, include Nietzsche and Freud, Bahktin and Lacan. They share a stance contra Hegel and Marx as well as the phenomenological tradition that includes Husserl and Sartre but not Heidegger. Significantly they are not "critical theorists" in the German tradition—and indeed important philosophical battles of recent decades have pitted the French against the Germans, for example, in the Lyotard-Habermas debate. Although a bit overstated, in the writings one does not find use of nor support for critical ideas such as class, ideology, and state. Moreover, since they also are not "humanists" or "liberals" in the Anglo-American sense, even as their work is ironically part of a broad western tradition of philosophy, one does not either find use of or support for ideas such as experience, democracy, and progress.[4]

Structuralism Roots of the poststructuralists range across disciplines of philosophy, science, social science, literary theory, literature, and art. All, as well-educated European intellectuals,

have read their philosophy—and many have returned to the ancients for texts and references. Structuralist fathers are themselves very notable: Claude Lévi-Strauss in social sciences particularly anthropology, Roman Jacobson and then Roland Barthes in literary and cultural studies, Jacques Lacan in psychoanalysis, and arguably Louis Althusser in political theory. Even naming these fathers is problematic since many of the family are and were contemporaries and most if not all have themselves been named structuralists.

One root seems generally clear; this is contribution by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, whose theory of the sign initiated structuralism. The basic ideas are these: First, language is form and utterance and they are different. Second, the basic unit of language is the sign, a relation of the signifier or conceptual element and the signified or the acoustic element. This relation entails difference since there is no necessary connection between any signifier and signified and multiple relations are possible. In this structuralist theory every sign forms a unity and is also understood by how it is different from any other. For Saussure language is open but not arbitrary since the places of signs are themselves unique (see Holdcroft, 1998, p. 481).

History A second kind of root also requires comment. As indicated above, all poststructuralists have read Hegel and respond in some way to his theory of history. Most simply put, they give up a historical teleology but retain forms of **historicism**. This means that as a group they posit a deep significance of history as it relates to living in and making worldly sense, but senses are not only multiple they are also always changing. This means also that as "history" influences thought, such influences are particular and contingent even as they endure for a time. Individual family members' visions of history are characteristically "post-structural."

Postmodernism Lastly, "poststructuralism" is often rooted in and conflated in Anglo-American scholarship with postmodernism, but they are not the same. It is probably best to say that each theorist is more or less postmodern. Itself difficult to define, **postmodernism** has variously and positively been named an epochal worldview, a historical condition, a contemporary lifestyle, an intellectual tradition, a mood. Less positively it has also been called a mere fad, a spectacle, a phenomenon of advertising. In an excellent discussion from the 1980s, critic Andreas Huyssen offers a general definition as a "slowly emerging cultural transformation in western societies" that entails "shifting sensibilities, practices, and discourse formations" (Huyssen, 1984/1990, p. 234). Initially employed at mid-twentieth century, the term has been applied specifically in architecture and art, in intellectual fields that range from theology to feminist theory, from philosophy of science to literature, and in general cultural production that includes communications, technology, and consumerism. Applications demonstrate a common set of "uncommon" characteristics: eclecticism (some say schizophrenia); mixing of traditions, codes, and symbols; and responses to modernism, modernity, and modernization (see various uses in Huyssen, 1984/1990; Featherstone, 1991; Harvey, 1990; McGowan, 1991; and Sarup, 1988/1993).

Elaboration here is useful. While several of the poststructuralist family have written about postmodernism, the work of Lyotard has been important to an English-speaking audience. For him, the postmodern is a condition "of knowledge in most highly developed societies," of transformations since the end of the nineteenth century in the rules for science, literature, and the arts (Lyotard, 1979/1984, p. xxiii). These rules undermine what in the modern era was a need for and use of grand or metanarratives. In his famous idiom, postmodern is "incredulity" toward these narratives, toward totality, toward emancipation, toward rational consciousness and consensus, and toward the certain aims of western metaphysics.

SHARED CONCEPTS

Cornell's poststructuralist *chiffonniers* are part of a significant contemporary philosophical tradition that is having increasing influence on educational research. The six family members of this account range from those who are most structuralist, Bourdieu, Foucault, Kristeva, to those who are least, Lyotard, Derrida, Cixous. In a gross generalization since many focus on topics and utilize styles that change over time, those on the structuralist end have more in common with social scientists, historians, and psychoanalysts; those on the other are more like essayists, literary critics, and poets. The point of the present analysis is that unique as each philosopher is, they share a framing set of concepts that each has utilized in his or her own way. Again, key concepts are language, relation, subject, practice, aesthetic, and politics/ethics.

Language Already discussed above, language out of structuralism—and more broadly the western philosophical **linguistic turn**—is central to poststructuralisms.[5] Language usage for these theorists is often rhetorical, figurative, performative, and self-reflexive. Building from Saussure, American critic Mark Poster puts it that "[a general] self-referentiality of signs upsets the representational model of language, the assurance of reason to contain meaning, and the confidence in a . . . [traditional logic] to determine the truth" (Poster, 1989, p. 10). A basic point is this: language has a central **epistemological** function for family members; it is basic to sense making and to knowledge. Language takes on various functions and forms and is utilized not only thematically but also stylistically. Among uses are this superficial but illustrative listing: writing for Derrida and Cixous, texts for the former, discourses and discursive practices for Foucault, forms of language games for Lyotard, all kinds of plays like erasures or parallel texts for Derrida and Kristeva, symbolic significance and split texts for Bourdieu, and narratives and poetry for Cixous. Writing from all even looks, ironically sometimes, like typical philosophy.

Relation Relation permeates and is basic to the family of poststructuralist writers and their writings. Elements of discourse, history, culture, and the like are defined by their difference to others. Through difference in language and other structures there is, as indicated earlier, repudiation of traditional philosophical and logical sameness or identity. Something is always distinct from something else. Relations of difference, furthermore, are themselves diffused; they exist perhaps as chains, through links, and are often "of a moment." Thus there is no "resolution" of difference in some kind of new system, no modern unity or essence: structures are worked through one might say. Significantly, as implied in a distinction from critical theory, difference is not part of a dialectical system.

Based in difference rather than sameness, relation also entails difference to itself. To some degree the poststructuralists work with and through difference as radical alterity, for example, the unknown as unconscious and abjection for Kristeva, the unpresentable in Lyotard, and aporias and "excesses" of various forms as theorized by Derrida. Significantly, too, are relations obtained among practices and persons which have no direct agency or simple institutional structure functions.

Subject The subject (person) is central to poststructuralists' writings but negatively since, again, there is no "agency." To begin, of course people act in the world, but thoughts, actions, and their results are not simply desired, conscious, intentional, and consequential. The subject comes to be constituted; how this occurs variously matters to each member of the family. In general, there is no essential self, no unitary person upon which each of *us* can count. Moreover the meanings of our lives—including who we are—are "got at" through language.

One of the most important aspects of the status of *subjects* is that they are related to *others* who are different from them. But here others are not opposites and there is no resolution of otherness:

Everyone is another not only to others but also to themselves. Diversity also characterizes treatment of subjects among family members: Kristeva's subject-in-process has individuality; Bourdieu recognizes a kind of "agency" in power relations; Foucault's subject is self-formed as internalization of external norms. Finally, the poststructuralists recognize hierarchy; in the social order some others count more, have more power and the like. Thus in a spirit of justice, persons on the margins, minorities, foreigners, and strangers receive special attention.

Practice Processes and practices go together for the poststructuralists. Again, there is no agency but, within institutions, ways of being and doing themselves come to be enacted. They are not structures but for unfamiliar readers often seem so; indeed practices do take place within social entities that have their own "histories." The term "practice" best stands for "what gets done"; how this getting done itself is understood, over time and at a time, as having a life of its own. Practices are contextual and iterated, once again got at primarily although not entirely through language.

Each of the poststructuralists conceives of process/practice in unique ways. These range from an emphasis on the discursive/nondiscursive in formations of power/knowledge in Foucault to ones defined in terms of capital for Bourdieu. They concern ways of living that themselves range from the psychological to the societal and combinations of both as in Kristeva. They are primarily linguistic and aesthetic as in Lyotard and textual and writerly in Derrida and Cixous. In this category, significantly, affinity with particular structuralist roots is often indicated. Roots are returned to and transformed—structuralist to poststructuralist.

Aesthetic Use and concern for the aesthetic permeates the work of each poststructuralist writer. Each is, first, **self-reflexively** a writer who—as described earlier—plays with philosophical form and either employs aesthetic/writerly devices or adopts aesthetic genres for theoretical purposes. Each also writes at times about literature and/or the arts. These writings incorporate both analysis and critique of important contributions to a very significant French arts tradition. For example, Foucault and Kristeva write about literature; Cixous and Derrida write in literary forms; Bourdieu and Lyotard analyze the visual arts. Impetus for this aesthetic occupation arises from two premises. The first is a blurring of disciplines with no strong separation of the sciences and arts as in the Anglo-American context. The second is a move away from correspondence and representational truth to a construction of "truth" as a social convention; within the family, not very much is actually written about truth. Commentator Mandan Sarup (1988/1993) sums that for poststructuralists "philosophy, law, and political theory work by metaphor just as poems do, and so are just as fictional" (p. 47). Here metaphor stands for a general and relatively open process of meaning-making that is always aesthetic.

Ethics/Politics Lastly, rebutting a charge by other traditions of conservatism, each writer's project entails a politics and/or an ethics. Foucault and Kristeva either imply or call for revolutionary politics; Lyotard and Derrida write about ethics as justice. Bourdieu inhabits the former camp in his dealings with practices and power and Cixous has affinity with the latter in textual revolts. In conflating the categories two observations are helpful: one is the basic point that a politics/ethics is neither transcendental nor teleological. There is no such congratulatory aim but instead process, a "life-working through" that is always messy. Messiness, as indicated in other categories, arises within ethical/political discursive and other forms of practice that are tentative, ambiguous, complex, always multiple, and with elements that are unknown. The other matter is this—whatever is posed as politics/ethics denies a humanist and a structuralist "consciousness": Persons act and they must. But

questions always remain: What in making sense of the world is taken for granted? What warnings are entailed in a philosophical "uncovering"? What is evoked when agency is given up? What does a poststructuralists' de-emphasis of epistemology and an emphasis on aesthetics (or ethics) reveal of cultural life? What does an ethical revolution look like?

CRITIQUES

In considering the exemplars of educational research, each philosopher is turned to as an illustration. Each is briefly introduced given relative non-familiarity in Anglo-American educational research and from each element of a project are presented and "applied." To sum and preview: Six central concepts permeating poststructuralists' writings are language, relation, subject, practice, aesthetic, and politics/ethics. Out of this framework particular conceptions "define" each theorist. (1) Bourdieu describes practices discursively in relational, often aesthetic terms; practices are actions by persons within institutional power structures. A key concept is *habitus*. (2) Cixous's project is one of feminine writing that undermines traditional binary relations; relations are both concrete and textual. For her aesthetic form contributes to politics. (3) In the project of deconstruction, Derrida undermines traditional language, philosophy and other practices of inquiry such as science. His concept *différance* is basic; textual aesthetic plays are methodologically central. (4) For Foucault, traditional relations of knowledge and power in society as in research are reconceived; there is no direct agency or "authority." Instead subjects come to be constituted through constantly shifting discursive/non-discursive formations. (5) Kristeva's subject is one "in process," best got at through poetic language and best recognized in Freudian "structures." Primary is the semiotic, that is, generative, pre-linguistic, and drive-based forces that open up and make symbolic social life ambiguous. (6) Finally in Lyotard, science and art are modern rule-governed practices—language games—that are being transformed within an emerging postmodern condition. Practices, in his idiom—performances—are coming to be justified in new forms of legitimation.

Lastly, a note about the research selections is in order. Considered excellent and even *avant garde* in educational research, they are still largely humanist (with some Marxist or critical representation), and within the greater theoretical realm to which poststructuralisms pose critique. American education (if not by British and other siblings) focuses in practice and most often in research on epistemology, on knowing, learning, truth, on outcome or product. The pieces of this volume in and of themselves seek to undermine what has been defined as a present day techno-rational approach to education. Implication from the critiques that follow, however, is that even with qualitative, narrative, artistic, and more eclectic research forms, the standard western philosophical epistemological traditional remains as basis. From poststructuralisms, the concluding idea is this: unlike fears of "critique-only" and of nihilism that have been expressed, there is a positive aim for education and educational research. It may well be to warn of dangers of reinscription, to see the limits of agentive and institutionally-based panaceas, to emphasize the place of language in educational change, and to move to a basis for change primarily in ethics. Time, theoretical explication, application, and dissemination will tell.[6]

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Stone refer to postructuralisms rather than the singular poststructuralism?
2. To who are poststructuralists aligned and to who are they disaligned?
3. How does the root represented by Saussure grow through all of the postructuralisms?

NOTES

1. The later Ludwig Wittgenstein posited similarities among language games that utilized similar rules. For him and many followers since, these language games form resemblances of sense making and potential for communication.
2. Cornell actually evokes the figure of the *Chiffonnier* chiefly referring to Derrida but generally indicating an ironic role of "salvaging remains" of western mimesis, of identity and sameness as logocentrism (Cornell, 1988, p. 1611). For both Derrida and Cornell, the poststructuralist idea is to undermine in thought the constrictions of mimesis.
3. Various uses and interpretations are found in the excellent work of Gert Biesta, Elizabeth Ellsworth, Patti Lather, James Marshall, Michael Peters, and Thomas Popkewitz. There is a group of younger scholars who are also contributing to a growing Anglo-American/Western European tradition.
4. The American neo-pragmatist, Richard Rorty, along with a few others, writes about affinity between the pragmatist tradition out of Dewey and James and the French writers. There are important differences too.
5. Anglo-American philosophical traditions too underwent the linguistic turn. For all I like to name two phases, the first to locate 'linguistic foundations' and the second to give these up.
6. Thanks to Marianne Bloch, Thomas Popkewitz, and the Wednesday Group at Madison for encouragement and helpful critique.

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INTRODUCTION TO CRITIQUES

All research is conducted within a particular perspective. That is, researchers must make assumptions about knowledge and method and those assumptions are framed within a worldview. As we have seen in Part Two, there are many different perspectives, each with its own values and assumptions about knowledge and method. We turn our attention now to the following question: What value does a perspective have in helping us analyze and understand research that was conducted in a different perspective? What, for example, does a postpositivist perspective have to offer in critique of a narrative study? Or, what does a critical perspective have to offer in examining an experimental study?

In this section, each of the nine scholars who wrote the perspectives in Chapter 4 critiques six different types of studies: experimental, correlational, narrative, ethnographic, autoethnographic, and one that combines ethnographic and autoethnographic methods.

It is not likely that this text could have been written 10 years ago, especially this section on criticism. For one thing, some of the perspectives were not as clearly formulated and certainly not as widely recognized outside particular academic communities as they are today. Second, the idea of different perspectives having something of value to contribute in critiques of different kinds of research would not have been accepted by many. One might have argued that the critiques were so predictable that they were pointless. Postpositivist critics had much to be concerned about in nonpositivist research. Similarly, research embracing remnants of positivist philosophy became familiar targets for nonpositivists. Although many of these issues remain, the focus of criticism has changed. Before the early 1990s, the focus was primarily on what was wrong with research guided by assumptions outside a particular perspective. There were territorial struggles as scholars embracing nonpositivist perspectives were seeking legitimacy in the context of a post positivist era.

Criticism became more complex in the 1990s and continues today. Matters are not so straightforward as objective versus subjective criteria or generalizable versus local knowledge although these continue to be substantive issues dividing perspectives. Rather, many critics focus on issues such as the legitimacy of various forms of representation, the assumption that one person, however equipped methodologically, can ever understand and communicate the experience of another, and the nature and role of language. Examples of these kinds of concerns will be found in the critiques that follow. Further, the emergence of new forms of inquiry and increased emphasis on criticism have brought much more attention to critical questions that were, for the most part, not asked when the emphasis during the positivist era was primarily on method. For example: What is the cultural identity of those we study? How are those we study advantaged or disadvantaged by our work? How do our own values and cultural identity interact with what we study and how we interpret and share our findings? These questions direct attention to ethical and political as well as epistemological implications of all aspects of the research process and are more likely to be made explicit now and, often, problematized by critics.

This has created a space for different kinds of scholarship. Of course, postpositivists have not become arts based researchers, traditional research journals have not opened to all forms of scholarship, and federal funding has not become suddenly available to support autoethnographic research. However, critique is more likely to be informed and differences acknowledged respectfully

than they were before the late 1990s. The quality of the critiques in this section reflects the higher standard. All of the nine critics seek to find value in works that, in their opinion, do not meet the standards for research in their perspective.

As you read the critiques you will begin to appreciate the complexity of understanding a study that is conceptualized within a perspective that is very different than your own. The challenge is to be intellectually honest, remain faithful to your own values and convictions about the nature of research, and yet become open enough to see that there are other ways of thinking and learning about what is true or meaningful. Some perspectives lead critics to focus primarily on the truth, or trustworthiness, of the findings. Others focus more on the meaning of the findings. All are interested in adding to knowledge, as it is understood within the perspective guiding the research. What follows are models of informed scholars extending their perspectives on research, in some instances, into unfamiliar territory. In some instances they view a study as good research, flawed research, or not research at all. In all instances, however, their reasoning with respect to their own perspective is explicit and respectful.

The lengths of the critiques predictably vary because some perspectives have more to say about some studies than others. Also, as with the chapter describing the perspectives, the authors were not constrained by a common outline or format, leaving them free to write in the voice of their own perspective.