

**Human Studies**  
**CONTENTS Volume 24, No 3, 2001**

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Kurt H. Wolff, I Feel I Am   | 177-186 |
| Kevin McKenzie, Fact and the Narratives of War: Produced Undecidability in Accounts of Armed Conflict          | 187-209 |
| Corey Anton, Beyond Theoretical Ethics: Bakhtinian Anti-Theoreticism   | 211-225 |
| Stacy Burns, "Think Your Blackest Thoughts and Darken Them:" Judicial Mediation of Large Money Damage Disputes | 227-249 |

**Book Reviews**

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| → V.M. Bentz and J.J. Shapiro, <i>Mindful Inquiry in Social Research</i> (Gary Backhaus)                            | 251-259 |
| Hwa Yol Jung, <i>Rethinking Political Theory: Essays in Phenomenology and the Study of Politics</i> (J.M. Fritzman) | 261-266 |

Electronic journals at

**KluwerOnline**  
WWW.KLUWERONLINE.NL

Contact your librarian for more information



0163-8548(2001)24:3;1-2

**Book review**

**Researcher Meets New World: The Pedagogical Re-Framing of the Human/Social Scientist**

---

V.M. Bentz and J.J. Shapiro *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications. 1998. 216 pages including appendices, bibliographic references, index, and author's biographies.

The writing of *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research* is an achievement that must not be underestimated. This work could not have appeared prior to the last decade of the twentieth century. Even then, the prerequisites for the authorship of a volume such as this one are formidable. The authors would have to be sensitively aware of the multifarious cultural and intellectual/academic transformations that have received the appellation, "postmodern," and keenly apprised of the multiplication of perspectives and methods in academic research. Most educated people are aware of many of these changes, but in order to write this book, the authors would have to nurture open-minded, but critically engaged perspectives toward these changes as they were occurring. Those who took recalcitrant postures toward the break-up of the hegemony of "scientific legitimacy" could not have written this book. Graduate students during recent times can testify to the difficulties associated with the postmodern foray. The adversarial model based on the old paradigm meant that only one voice could be right, but new models that encourage the cooperation of perspectives accommodate more reasonably set scientific goals. To author this book requires having been involved in both pedagogy and research over a period of great change. Explorations of various orientations, methods, and techniques have provided the authors with experiential insight into the requirements placed on the new ideal type(s) of researcher(s) who must now take responsibility (ethically, epistemologically, and axiologically) for choosing among many research possibilities. Having background in continental thought, which now is necessary, means that the authors could have been marginalized as human/social scientists for much of their careers. They would need a cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary education and to have conducted research in multiple ways. The authors would have to resist positivism and the ideology of scientism by engaging research with a deep awareness of philosophical problems and tacit commitments. They would have to call into question the "scientific prerequisite" of partitioning fact and value. These are many of the reasons why we should not take the authors'

achievement lightly, as it marks a new form for both pedagogy and practice. This is a groundbreaking book, for it makes sense out of the knotty realities that many would rather ignore.

The text's main purpose is to provide an orientation and guide to research for the graduate student in the human/social sciences. Yet, this focus is accomplished in such a way as to be informative and appealing to those who would use the book for other purposes. It is accessible enough to be employed in senior level undergraduate courses for majors in the human/social sciences. It can function as a reference book for practicing researchers who are venturing into new forms of inquiry, and serve as an illuminating guide for academics in other fields and administrators who want to understand the pedagogical and professional concerns of their colleagues in the human/social sciences. It is useful as a how-to-manual of practical research skills for those in the continually expanding knowledge/service-based occupations. It will appeal to educated persons who want to understand the contemporary state of these sciences.

I begin by examining the first two chapters, which orient the researcher. Next, I address chapters five and six, which prepare the researcher to carry through research projects. Then I discuss the organization of chapters seven through eleven, which explicate various research traditions. I offer comments along the way, but I save a more critical voice for chapters three and four, which is where the authors lay out the philosophy of *mindful inquiry*.

Chapters one and two orient researchers to the complex milieu that they necessarily will have to recognize, understand, and manage. First the reader is alerted to the proliferation and diversification in conceptions of how knowledge is produced, organized, shared and linked, transmitted, accessed and integrated, stored and retrieved, and represented (p. 1). Next is a discussion of a new and larger set of research techniques and methods that are quite different from those implemented only a generation ago (p. 2). This change is attributed to an epistemological crisis concerning the legitimacy and validity of knowledge. The authors go on to indicate the emerging world-scale problems with which human and social scientists must deal (p. 3). They introduce *mindful inquiry* as a basic orientation for researchers so that they can successfully handle the situation that now confronts them. The tacit theme of this chapter is that research conducted without careful cognizance of these many diverse changes risks ideological distortions and displays ethical irresponsibility.

*Mindful inquiry* takes into account the researcher (personally and existentially) as fundamental to the process of inquiry. I would argue that this "turn to the researcher" is necessary and it results in more humanly responsible and epistemologically sound research. In this sense *mindful inquiry* is meant to be a framework (a propaedeutic for any future research practice) within which various forms of inquiry, methods, and techniques can be carried out.

Thus, e  
for exa  
discard

A re:  
"Far b:  
approa  
its own  
produc  
approa  
adequa  
now re-  
of its co  
the esta  
the crit  
center  
needs 1  
and the  
associat

Cha  
traditi  
embed  
research  
of the  
follow  
of post  
them.  
scienc  
the pos  
the ep  
remain  
infuse  
sedim

Wit  
philos  
the nc  
episte  
descri  
elucid  
author  
scienc  
maint.  
could  
of rec

Thus, emphasis on the researcher as a mindful inquirer does not mean that, for example, quantitative procedures or impersonal types of studies are discarded.

A research practitioner must become familiar with the cultures of inquiry. "Far broader than research methods, [cultures of inquiry] are general approaches to creating knowledge in the human and social sciences, each with its own model of what counts as knowledge, what it is for, and how it is produced" (p. 9). According to *mindful inquiry* it is foolish to choose an approach that is not *both* suitable to the personality of the researcher and adequate for the objective of the research. Secondly, professional socialization now requires that the practitioner enter into a culture of inquiry as a member of its community. This pedagogy meets Kuhnian challenges (Kuhn, 1970) for the establishment of a successful and responsible practitioner. But here I offer the critical point that the relationship between the individual researcher as the center in the process of inquiry and the communalism of cultures of inquiry needs further discussion. There is a tension between the individual as center and the commitment to a scientific community as a form of institutionalized association.

Chapter two moves to the idea of communities' embeddedness in their own traditions and historical situation. But this intellectual context is itself embedded, which creates a threefold dialectical relationship that involves the research community, that which is researched, and the encompassing history of the world. A very good discussion of the postmodern culture/situation follows: since the human sciences are caught up in the socio-historical context of postmodernism they will reflect these changes as well as attempt to study them. The authors point out the Kuhnian thesis that unmasks the pretense that science is ahistorical. One crucial consequence is the cultural dissolution of the positivist paradigm. Husserlian phenomenology (1983) already had shown the epistemological biases in positivism. Yet as a world-view, positivism remained a presupposition of science. Bentz and Shapiro's examination is infused with critical theory, which provides an analysis of this historically sedimented supposition of the Enlightenment.

Without the positivistic ideology of the brute fact, scientists must again gain philosophical acumen. In the postmodern era, as there is widening belief in the non-foundational status of knowledge, greater care in establishing an epistemological justification of research must be undertaken. Ontological description is also necessary, because researchers must take responsibility for elucidating what it is that their alleged knowledge is about. The tenor of the authors' voice is not to embrace a postmodern philosophy of the human/social sciences but to carve out a way to remain focussed and grounded in order to maintain research integrity within the postmodern milieu. Their discussion could have benefited by including a discussion of Merleau-Ponty's concept of reciprocal envelopment (1964 pp. 98–113), which establishes the intrinsic

inter-relation of philosophy and science. As presented by Bentz and Shapiro, it is unclear whether scientists' turn to philosophy is not merely based on their tendency to turn to philosophy when in crisis. Twentieth century physics exemplified this tendency in its theoretical crisis, and on the practical level, the proliferation of applied ethics now exhibits this tendency.

Chapters five and six prepare scholarly practitioners to carry out their research project. The researcher's role involves "using professional practice and knowledge as a resource for the formulation and production of scholarly practice and knowledge as well as for evaluating, testing, applying, extending, or modifying existing knowledge" (p. 66). Because of debates and controversies surrounding the knowledge crisis, researchers must justify their choices. The authors' pedagogical strategy trains practitioners to actively engage in the critical evaluation of their activities throughout their research project. They identify the primary functions of the scholarly practitioner as personal transformation, the improvement of professional practice, the generation of knowledge, and appreciation of the complexity, intricacy, structure and – some would say – the beauty of reality (p. 68). A testimony from a student illustrates these features, especially the first, which may seem irrelevant to those who hold to an epistemology that partitions the observer and the observed. One source for this idea of personal transformation is Shapiro's tutelage under Kurt H. Wolff. A discussion of Wolff's (1976, 1995) surrender-and-catch at this juncture would have demonstrated the epistemological justification and methodological legitimacy of personal transformation, and thus would have clarified the necessary relationship between transformation and the appreciation of reality. For Wolff, reality does not show itself in any profound way to the knower without a personal commitment that results in transformation. Personal transformation isn't a by-product; it is a requirement for research. Since this point is not strongly articulated, a skeptical reader may interpret personal transformation as a self-indulgent turn.

The authors advise researchers to construct outlines of research traditions that are relevant to their projects. The outline includes the theories that shape those traditions, the empirical findings that pertain to each tradition, their outstanding problems and questions, and the research methods that are appropriate to each tradition (p. 71). They also provide an excellent appendix on skills competencies for the researcher, a list of ways to become informed about the various research traditions (pp. 72–73), and a list of critical questions for the evaluation of a research proposal (pp. 74–75). Another list of questions is used to evaluate the epistemological legitimacy of the research (p. 75). Reflective awareness of the acts of generating and validating an idea prepares researchers to detect inexplicit biases and assumptions in their research. Finally, a set of questions helps researchers select a method (p. 78). Motivations for selecting a particular topic should be examined. Factors are cited that are

used to appraise the feasibility of the project (p. 81). These pedagogical strategies are invaluable for "sculpting" a researcher. Those who follow this manual will not face difficulties naively and will be prepared to respond to contemporary challenges.

Chapter six describes a new structural organization for science, which is essential because of the proliferation and overlapping "of disciplines, philosophical orientations, theories, methods, [and] research traditions" (p. 82). I like the clarity of the definitions, which is reinforced by rephrasing them at important junctures. "A *discipline* is an established field of . . . knowledge that has, over time, developed standing and recognition within the academic community and the world at large" (p. 82). "A *culture of inquiry* is a chosen modality of working within a field, an applied epistemology or working model of knowledge used in explaining or understanding reality" (p. 83). A research method is "a coherent way of going about answering a question and may resemble a guideline more than a recipe" (p. 87). "Specific research techniques are used to implement method" (p. 83). "The idea of *triangulation* is that different theories, cultures of inquiry, methods, and techniques will elucidate and cover different aspects of a situation" (pp. 88–89). Multiple triangulation organizes various levels (cultures, methods, and techniques) in researching the same situation. Strategies of triangulation are illustrated by examples, such as psychotherapy, ethnographic research, and questionnaire in a study of a lesbian motorcycle club. Two topics, electronically mediated sexuality and the social impact of computer technology, are mapped in several of the research traditions in order to show the continuing expansion of possible kinds of studies (p. 92).

Chapters seven through eleven introduce the various cultures of inquiry: chapter seven, phenomenology, chapter eight, hermeneutics and ethnography, chapter nine, quantitative and behavioral inquiry, action and evaluation research, chapter ten, comparative-historical inquiry and theoretical inquiry, and chapter eleven, critical social science and critical social theory. The same basic subheadings (with minor adjustments) organize the presentations of the cultures of inquiry. These include an orientation to each specific culture of inquiry, its typical problems and concerns, how it views explanation and the nature of explanation, and the relationship between the researcher and subject matter (which includes discussion of the personal characteristics of the researcher). This organization allows for easy comparison and cross-reference. Appendix D provides an introductory reading list that directs researchers to recommended primary sources. These chapters establish the basic content of these orientations and relate it to the actual decision processes of the researcher.

Chapter three introduces *mindful inquiry* and offers two reasons why it serves as the basis for scholarly practice. "The first is that it helps the scholar-practitioner sustain her or his own personal identity amid the onslaught of the information age" (p. 36). "The second reason . . . is in order to use available

information in a productive way" (p. 37). But do we need to adopt a philosophical basis for these instrumental purposes? Troubling socio-historical situations at times have been the impetus for the creation of philosophical positions, e.g., Epicureanism and Skepticism. But such philosophies were not intended merely to cope with problems associated with research. The intrinsic value of mindful inquiry's four components (Buddhism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and critical social science) transcend troubling situations of personal identity management and information production for human/social science researchers.

The authors seem to have an unstated opposition to postmodernism concerning the thesis of the death of the subject. They intend to reassert the subject by "putting the person at the center." I am sympathetic with this aim; however, I would argue that the notion of 'person' is not compatible with the philosophical components of mindful inquiry. 'Person' has two primary meanings. Person as an autonomous rational agent is based in Enlightenment thinking and is incompatible with critical theory. Person as a spirit or soul is incompatible with Buddhism, unless one has revised Buddhism for westerners. The Buddhist text that the authors cite – Walpola Rahula (1959) – explicates the doctrine of no self and the doctrine of the five aggregates, which clearly expunges the idea of persons. Secondly, I question the idea of placing the person at the center, which is another Enlightenment concept. I think Simmel's theory of the individual (1978) captures the insight of postmodern thinking without arriving at its conclusions, and avoids the metaphysics of the person. I would replace the idea of centering the person with a notion of relational attunement, which could come out of Simmel, Buber's ontology of the between (1958, 1971), and Merleau-Ponty's dehiscence of the flesh (1968).

Identity in Simmel's sense is the manner in which vectors of energy are concretized as a "relative unity," for personality is the problematic relational process of talents and interests. Merleau-Ponty describes a primordial dehiscence in the ontology of the flesh. Dehiscence ontologically founds George Herbert Mead's I-me distinction (1934) in a way that provides a non-centered, ambiguously charged, I-me dialectic. When Martin Buber created his ethical ontology through his study of Simmel's forms of association, he created an ontology of the between. I interpret this to mean that human beings live ethically and authentically when transcending themselves (de-centered) in the transformational sanctity of the between. I argue that these notions are more consistent with the authors' synthesis of the four traditions.

The authors conceive of mindful inquiry as a spiral: "with each turn of the spiral, you create a deeper and richer understanding both of the phenomenon, problem, or question and of yourself as a reflective, mindful inquirer" (p. 43). The spiral is well conceived and the section that deals with research ethics brings out its teleological aspect. Discussion could have been amplified to show how *mindful inquiry* enriches applied ethics. As the world becomes so

much more complex, the proliferation of applied ethics is obviously of great importance. But specific ethical practices must be grounded in a deeper sense of life, which the spiral of *mindful inquiry* provides.

On the whole the descriptions of Buddhism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and critical theory are quite good, but there is a detail concerning phenomenology that needs clarification. The authors state that the lifeworld means "the entire ongoing social world as actually experienced by living human beings – in other words, the world of everyday life" (p. 42). The everyday world is the paramount reality but it does not exhaust the lifeworld. There are other provinces of meaning that are to be distinguished; this is extremely crucial in Schutzian phenomenology (1973). The authors relate their dream and fantasy provinces to the writing of the book, which suggests that the spiral should have been characterized more inclusively.

The sixteen turns of the spiral present an architectonic of professional integrity and responsibility. Critical theory provides four turns (pp. 44–48): Examine the historical, political, economic, and cultural circumstances in which you work. Look into your own psychological make-up and ask how it may distort your perceptions and actions. Be sensitive to the way that the communicative process may distort the truth. Link your inquiry to the project of reducing suffering or increasing freedom, justice, or happiness in the world. There are five phenomenological turns (pp. 48–50): Pay attention to the phenomena by writing a deep description of one's own experience of it. Use 'imaginative variations' to elucidate aspects of the phenomenon. Ask: 'What modes of consciousness do I bring to bear in the situation?' and 'What typifications am I using?' Obtain descriptions from those involved and determine their use of typifications. Describe the relevant intersubjective communities in which the situations occur. There are three hermeneutic turns (pp. 51–52): Elucidate the preexisting interpretations of the situations and their relevance. Allow the process of understanding to happen on its own time. Allow for new meanings to emerge. There are four Buddhist turns (pp. 52–54): Become aware of personal addictions with regard to inquiry. Become aware of how you define and construct the "other" of your research. Pay attention to suffering and ask what kind of inquiry and action would diminish suffering. Focus on rightness of thought and action, increase your own mindfulness and nonattachment to things and desires, and increase your capacity to experience ecstasy, particularly in relation to both the object and the process of inquiry.

Chapter four begins with a list (p. 58) of the fundamental characteristics of *mindful inquiry*, but I find that it is the weakest chapter due to a lack of direction. *Mindful inquiry* is framed by consciousness, by the historical-political-social-psychological setting, and by interpretation. It is interested in cause, meaning, the sequence of events, and prediction. It is concerned with underlying experimental design and connected to theory. It involves typology,



makes comparisons, and cares for the life-world. This list is multifaceted and thus two critical thoughts arise. First, when something accounts for too much it can lose its meaning. On the other hand, why these characteristics and not others? For example, left unframed is the geographical, which seems to be a bias, and left out of the results is the specificity of an event, which appears then to be a bias toward a structural sociology over the historical. I appreciate the breadth, which seems aimed at developing "the renaissance researcher." Yet as specified, it seems exclusionary. Also, it would be useful to illustrate how the fundamental characteristics of *mindful inquiry* relate to some well-developed, concrete examples.

There are two worthy discussions in this chapter: experimental and everyday typifications, and the difference between journalism and social science. In between there are brief glosses on classical experimentation, social psychological experiments, historical ex post facto experiments, Simmel's formal sociology, survey research and experimental logic, and tests and measurements. The authors provide a good illustration for each. Also, there is interesting pedagogy in the last paragraph: "Prior to beginning your investigations you, should, at the very least, know how your topic would be explained given several different theoretical perspectives" (p. 64). The authors provide a brief example. But expanding the discussion of theoretical perspectives through some more illustrative topics would have given this chapter a better sense of direction.

To conclude, this volume is an exemplar that will serve as a measure for all texts that train researchers. Its scope and depth provide an emerging researcher with an appropriate orientation and skills to be successful in these times of incredible change.

Gary Backhaus  
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies  
Morgan State University  
Baltimore, MD 21251, USA

### References

- Buber, Martin. (1971). *Between Man and Man*. Trans. R.G. Smith. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Buber, Martin. (1958). *I and Thou*. Trans. R.G. Smith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Husserl, Edmund. (1983). *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. F. Kersten. The Hague: Kluwer Academic Publishing Group.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mead, George Herbert. (1934). *Mind, Self, & Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. (1964). *The Philosopher and Sociology*. In *Signs*. Trans. R.C. McCleary. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. (1968). *The Visible and the Invisible*. Trans. A. Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Rahula, Walpola. (1959). *What the Buddha Taught*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld.
- Schutz, Alfred and Thomas Luckmann (1973). *The Structures of the Life-World*. Trans. R.M. Zaner and H.T. Engelhardt Jr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Simmel, Georg. (1978). *The Philosophy of Money*. Trans. T. Bottomore and D. Frisby. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- ~~Wolff, Kurt H. (1976). *Surrender and Catch Experience and Inquiry Today*. Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company.~~
- Wolff, Kurt H. (1995). *Transformation in the Writing A Case of Surrender-and-Catch*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.