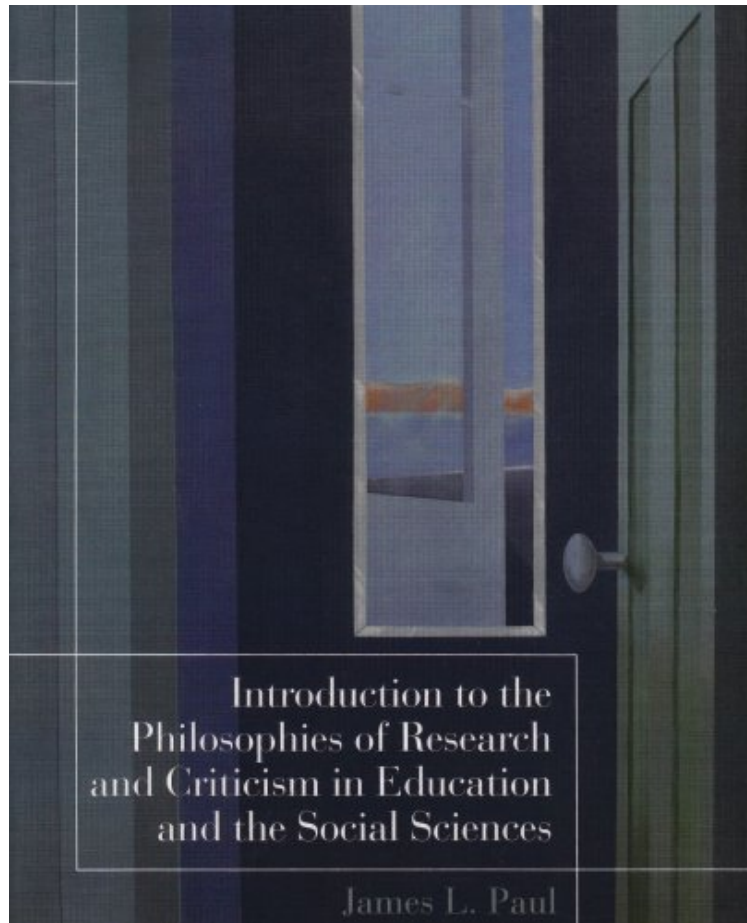


Introduction to the Philosophies of Research and Criticism in Education and the Social Sciences

James Paul

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James Paul : Introduction to the Philosophies of Research and Criticism in Education and the Social Sciences before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Introduction to the Philosophies of Research and Criticism in Education and the Social Sciences:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Intellectually challenging, yet perfectly clearBy J. HoltzPaul's book is excellent for making clear to readers the essential differences between philosophies of research, largely through the second part of the book, in which research questions are developed by alternative methodologies. While the book is structured as a text, it will be of interest to anyone who is a critical consumer of research reports. Not only will I use this with my research students, but I will also use it as a refresher for course design.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good Text to Understand the Philosophical Perspectives for Educational ResearchBy Danielle, Ph.D.Having had James Paul as an instructor for a doctorate class, I know first-hand how knowledgeable he is about

the perspectives and philosophies. He does a nice job summarizing the perspectives to make it easy to understand. Additionally, I appreciate having the collection of experts on the perspectives in one text. I highly recommend this text as a college textbook or as a desk reference on the different philosophies.

This rigorous volume focuses on the underlying perspectives justifying the major approaches currently being used in educational research. Introductory chapters lay the foundation for exploring varying research perspectives. Nine specific perspectives on research—post-positivism, pragmatism, constructivism, ethics and deliberate democracy, criticism, interpretivism, race/ethnicity/gender, arts-based research, and post-structuralism—are examined, through discussions written by senior scholars known for their expertise in the perspective. And, a guided tour of criticism is given, in which these same scholars demonstrate the use of the critical method by critiquing six studies selected as exemplars of different research approaches. For education students who aspire to become researchers, and for those who simply need to read and understand research literature.

Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. During the last half of the 20th century, public life changed in fundamental ways that reflected, among other things, different social values, global consciousness, and new visions of the human community. Changes in concepts of communication, economics, space, time, transportation, human development, and intelligence are but a few of the life-altering changes that occurred during this time. The world we inhabit now and the values and systems of thought we use in making meaning of our lives stand in stark contrast to the world as it was before the 1960s. A part of this change was a radical transformation of thinking about knowledge. New perspectives on knowledge and approaches to acquiring or creating knowledge emerged, creating a diverse literature filled with vigorous debates about what is, and what is not, research. This book presents nine of those perspectives that now support different approaches to research and the implications of those perspectives for how we understand and critically appreciate the new pluralism in research that now exists. Generally, students are not expected to know enough about all or even most of the different perspectives to be sophisticated in using the methods derived from those views. However, in order to read the literature and participate as a member of critical research communities, students need to have some knowledge of different perspectives and be able to think critically about the implications of the multiple discourses on knowledge and knowing that now exist. Learning to value different approaches and to accord respect to those who hold views different from our own is an ethical matter as well as a necessary attitude for participating constructively in the conversation about the nature of research. This in no way suggests that students and researchers must believe all approaches to be equally valid or must agree with views that do not make sense to them. That, too, is an ethical matter. Rather, it suggests the need for a positive regard for those whose work is guided by different lights and for vigilance in keeping the conversation fair. Rapprochement may or may not be possible in some instances, and agreeing on basic research issues is not necessarily a goal. However, there should be a credible space where diverse scholarly perspectives are shared and valued and where an ethic of positive regard for diversity in scholarship sustains a pluralistic discourse about knowledge and ethics. This book is intended for those who are learning to read education and related research literature as well as those preparing to become education researchers. It is intended to help students read and think critically about alternative approaches to research. The focus is not on research methods in different approaches but on the perspectives that provide the justifying reasons for those approaches. The book begins with two chapters, both of which are essentially preamble to Parts Two and Three. In Chapter 1, I discuss some of the historical and political influences shaping the current conversations about different perspectives on research. In Chapter 2, Lynda Stone prepares those readers with a limited background in philosophy for reading and understanding Parts Two and Three. She provides foundational concepts and vocabularies related to the nature and history of philosophical arguments related to knowledge and method. Part Two includes nine research perspectives, each written by a senior scholar whose expertise in the perspective is widely known and respected. Part Three provides a "guided tour" of criticism, with the scholars introduced in Part Two demonstrating the use of critical method in applying their perspectives in critiquing six studies selected as exemplars of different research approaches or methods. In both Parts Two and Three, readers will learn the basic concepts and vocabularies of the perspectives and methods of criticism. In Chapter 11, I discuss central issues raised by a pluralistic view of research and the likely influence of critical perspectives on the future of education research. Before the journey begins, however, a brief word about "perspectives" is needed. Throughout this text the emphasis is on different perspectives. Other words such as lens, worldview, or paradigm are used interchangeably with perspective. Although the nature of a particular perspective can be complex, it is essentially a coherent, systematic view of what is believed to be true, real, and of value. These perspectives and their use in critiquing different approaches to research form the core of this text. The idea of perspectivism, or perspectivalism, is that there are different legitimate ways of understanding reality, different truths, and different ways of knowing the truth. This concept, associated with the work of Nietzsche in the last quarter of the 19th century, became significant in criticism of all forms of research in education and the social sciences during the last part of the 20th century. The implication of perspectivism, that knowledge is relative to the knower and the view of truth he or she holds, has divided the research community that had traditionally grounded its work in pursuit of

universal truths and understandings. At issue here is whether reality is regarded as external and independent of an observer, the traditional positivist view, or a product of the mind of the observer. What may appear at first blush to be a "common sense" matter turns out to be a serious philosophical problem that, in the last quarter of the 20th century, generated a considerable literature on the nature of research and how it should be conducted. This literature now includes multiple discourses about knowledge, each with its own vocabulary, history, worldview, and priorities. So, what is research? Or, what is "good" research? Although peer review is a mainstay for the research community in validating a researcher's work, such reviews are usually conducted within the perspective of the work being reviewed. Criticism, however, includes but also extends beyond the perspective in which the research is conducted. Perspective-based critique involves employing a point of view, a set of values, and assumptions that may be different from those of the study. For example, a quantitative study can be critiqued through a race-based, or a gender-based, lens or perspective. Such a critique yields a different view of the work. It raises questions and offers insights that are not a part of the logics and conventions of the perspective that guided the research. Some may question whether it is fair to raise questions that are outside the worldview reflected in the study. As you will see, this issue is raised in the text. However, the view here is that all authoritative texts are strengthened by critique from different perspectives. For example, Biblical texts are investigated and critiqued by archaeologists, historians, linguists, and individuals with different theological perspectives, each of whom brings a particular point of view, assumptions, and knowledge to the criticism. Similarly, published research is a text that has the authority of a particular approach or method and the academic community supporting the publication. All research should be examined and critiqued from any perspective that adds information and value with respect to the methods, claims, and implications of the research. The politics of research and the ethical quandaries that can arise in the methods and substance of different approaches to research can pose great difficulty for anyone reading and interpreting the texts who does not understand the perspectives involved and the nature of criticism. The perspectives described in this text include postpositivism; pragmatism; constructivism; ethics and deliberative democracy; criticism; interpretivism; race, ethnicity, and gender; arts based educational research; and poststructuralism. Each perspective reflects a point of view and assumptions about the nature of research. Each has its own constructs and poses particular dilemmas when applied to other perspectives. Each tends to privilege one or more methods or approaches to research. And, finally, each has its own utilities with respect to applications in practice. Why these perspectives? There are other perspectives that could have been included. Conversely, it could be argued that the differences could have been illustrated by focusing on a smaller number of more distinct perspectives. For example, postpositivism places a high premium on objectivity while others, such as interpretivism, prize subjectivity. Certainly, the perspectives selected are not mutually exclusive. Critical theory and race, ethnicity, and gender perspectives are similar and the similarities and differences depend, in part, on the scholar describing and interpreting the perspective. However, I selected these nine perspectives because, in my view, they are among the most prominent perspectives guiding research and framing criticism in the current research literature. Debates about different approaches to research are filled with concepts drawn from one or more of these perspectives. I chose to include what I consider to be a sufficiently broad sample of perspectives from several fields to enable students preparing to be researchers and those learning to read the research literature to see the similarities and differences in vocabularies, core concepts, and values of the different perspectives. The studies critiqued are experimental, correlational, ethnographic, autoethnography, narrative, and arts based. Why these studies? Again, they do not reflect all possible approaches to research. They do, however, span a wide range of approaches in education and related research and provide critics with an opportunity to make rather clear discriminations with respect to different perspectives. Selecting an exemplar for any approach to research can be problematic. Researchers who share the same general perspective do not necessarily agree on exemplars. I consulted researchers within the different traditions and made decisions based on their advice and, in my opinion, the potential for the studies selected to serve the purpose of the text. There is no presumption of endorsing or privileging a particular view in this text, but it would be naive to assume that preferences will not surface. Indeed, it could not be otherwise. Although the purpose here is to appreciate the nature and values of different perspectives providing the justifying reasons for different approaches to research and the complexity of the increasingly diverse cultures of inquiry, my own perspective is clearly present in the construction of this text. I believe different kinds of research approaches are needed to answer different kinds of questions. This should not be confused with an eclectic view suggesting that anything can count for research and that any critique is as good as another. Research is a systematic approach to knowledge that leads to understanding and it should conform to the rules and reflect the values of a particular perspective. Whether or not the research is "good" should be determined by the canons of the perspective. However, there is much more to be known about the research than is revealed in the findings or the product of a study. All approaches to research should be critiqued with respect to their implicit values and applications as well as the more typical peer review that focuses on the logic of the methods consistent with the perspective guiding the research. The critic should also work within a perspective. Just as the researcher is guided by a perspective and is held accountable by an academic community of peers, so the critic should be informed by a perspective that is anchored in a set of values and has its own integrity. An art critic, for example, has knowledge of the culture and art of the period in which a work was done and brings an informed view to his or her

critique of a painting. Similarly, a postpositivist, poststructuralist, or critical theorist, for example, works within a perspective, the substance of which guides the critique of any work. Most perspectives do not leave the person of the critic out of the critique. Although the perspective guides the critique, the critic is a thinking, valuing, cultural being whose voice in the critique should not be lost. Herein lies one of the conundrums of criticism. How much of criticism is personal beliefs and values? How much of it involves applying the standards and values of a particular perspective and how much of it is a personal construction based on the critic's beliefs, values, and cultural identity? Is such a distinction artificial? Scholars differ in their responses to these questions. My own view is that the individual is always in his or her work, whether planning, conducting, and sharing the findings of a study or in critiquing the work of another researcher. Determining where and how the "personal" voice of the researcher and critic is situated is a perspective-based issue. Postpositivist researchers, for example, seek to minimize the influence of their personal values and identity on their research while interpretivists emphasize the centrality of their personal voice. Reasonable arguments have been advanced by some that a distinction needs to be made between research and inquiry, associating research more with basic science and inquiry more with applied studies. I did not make that distinction in this text because of the complexity and diversity of the various perspectives described here. Research and inquiry are, therefore, used interchangeably as are the terms researcher and scholar. Although the book is written primarily for those interested in education research, the focus extends beyond education into the social sciences. My decision to broaden the focus was based on the fact that education researchers are continuing to explore and use new approaches to research in the social sciences and there is, therefore, a need to understand the perspectives grounding those approaches. The narrative perspective included in Part Two is an example of a view of research that is beginning to be used by some education researchers. Also, autoethnography, included as one of the studies in Part Three, has gained the interest of education researchers focusing their work more on individual students and teachers. Research approaches in education have had limited success in helping educators know more about the emotional lives and emotional capacities of their students. Although the focus of the narrative study included here is not directly related to education as it is typically framed in the research literature, it is an example of, among other things, an approach to examining qualities of the emotional life which is of concern to educators. Finally, with respect to the purpose of this text, different genres of inquiry now are part of the educational research landscape and researchers need to be able to interpret and negotiate that landscape. Some will require statistical tools, others facility in creating and interpreting texts, and still others, paints, a canvas, and brushes. The purpose here is not to elevate the relative value of what one can come to know in the laboratory, library, writer's office, or studio but to provide the basis for visiting these different sites of inquiry with informed respect.