

epistemological positions being discussed the field of education more diligently, or restricted their writing to the field of psychology. Nevertheless, if, as Martin and Sugarman claim, the ideas they present are new to the field of their intended audience, then the text serves as a credible introduction.

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*Researching Education: Data, Methods and Theory in Educational Inquiry*. David Scott and Robin Usher. New York: Cassell & Continuum, 1999, 179 pages.

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Two criteria for reviewing this book include the general conditions governing the use of course textbooks in university education departments and the possibilities for using this particular text in a graduate seminar on educational research methods. Both perspectives partake of a fundamental question raised by the text itself: How is knowledge configured in relation to practices in education, and how is that question addressed by the text under review?

The presentation of philosophy, theory, method, criticism, and interpretation in an exegetical (expository textbook) format is an ambitious undertaking. *Researching Education* might find its application in graduate seminars where students of diverse backgrounds and interests gather, challenging the instructor to make coherent sense of a field of study that is itself highly diversified. This is where the book's claim to be of value to "anyone involved in education" will be most aptly tested—in sites where students may display a resistance to unfamiliar paradigms and to the literature that conveys them. Because instruction in a timed syllabus is a largely invitational effort, the depth of students' engagement depends greatly on their receptivity and on a sustained interest beyond the scope of the course.

In my own experience of a graduate research methods seminar, selected readings were handed out in the absence of a core text. That Gadamer, Geertz,

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Grumet, and others spoke through the crafted richness of their own, unparaphrased work was a definite strength for those who sought a grounding in original sources; but there were students who complained of problematic “languaging” and who in the end had not grasped the philosophical tenets contained in the literature. Alternatively, had *Researching Education* been the central text, we might have expected less resistance to and more equitable exchange based on that reading. However, we might also wonder if the invitation to engage further with, say, interpretive inquiry or critical pedagogy might not have been foreclosed on due to an inescapable compactness and hence token attention to major topics—more or less a deficiency of every expository text. Not even Scott and Usher with their postmodern emphasis on discursive openness can quite ameliorate the self-sufficiency and closure that this form of exposition tends to embody.

Although the cause of discursive openness may be a worthy one, it is held in check by the need to represent justly the methodological exactitude and careful wording of specific theorists. The balance sought between impervious “grand narratives” (p. 156) and unlimited license for the reader, between an over and an underdetermined text or between its relative closeness and distance, are all in question with a overview of this sort. If there is an accepting predisposition toward truncated histories and abbreviated thought, textbook authors, course instructors, and students share the potential of either exploiting that tendency or minimizing it. A zealously terse précis and an equally obdurate reluctance to read deeply or at length can operate in collusion, so we might remind one another that neither classroom nor textbook discourse is a substitute for the personalized, reflective study of whole, unabridged sources. Some of us are not so anxious to abandon the possibility of entering a room full of those who have actually read Gadamer’s (1989) *Truth and Method*, Ricoeur’s (1984) *Time and Narrative*, or Heidegger’s (1912) *Being and Time*. This is no concession to the “modernist project,” but neither does it pretend to subvert the “performativity” that Lyotard (1984) decries in *The Postmodern Condition*. Scott and Usher warn us that in research initiatives, performativity promotes a “business ethos,” “hit and run projects,” and the “fragmentation of work” (pp. 157-159). Their rather unconvincing answer to this menace is “transgressive research,” which in the example they select amounts to the perpetration of a deliberately rigid research strategy so as to manipulate respondents into various preconceived grades of “transgressive behavior” (pp. 157-159). This puerile trickery ignores the potentially deleterious effects of the performativist ethos on legitimate scholarly enterprises.

The development of understanding we seek through research requires “convergent horizons”: a degree of common ground that relies on (some) shared references; this mandate is where the present review and *Researching Education* are most at odds, for what “performativism” does, as the authors have indicated, is profit from our complicity in putting efficiency and practicality before academic and ethical duties (pp. 155-157). Besides being crucial to collaborative research, the inter-referential base of theory I mention is arguably the most direct resistance to the degradation of research in its current and ever-emergent state. But such rigors are apparently no longer program-

matically tenable by virtue of their association to “mainstream” and “traditional” research strategies, characterized as “lengthy, theory oriented, experiential (fieldwork oriented)”; these elements are further conflated with “modernistic assumptions about knowledge, an essentialist view of the researcher, e.g. as ethnographer” (p. 157).

We might resist the temptation to join in the wholesale rejection of (to pick one example) ethnographic research; since the mid-1960s at least, survey techniques have undergone substantial changes. Widely heralded in its time, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) included sophisticated critiques of knowledge, epistemology, logico-positivism, and objectivity, while advancing a concept of intersubjectivity that helped to explode modernist assumptions and remap human research methods. Between the disciplines briefly examined and those that have not been treated, the “postmodern” perspective taken by *Researching Education* tacitly assumes credit for dethroning the old gods. In every section preceding the final one (most conspicuously in chapters 2-3), theories and methods receive their synopsis mainly as a pretext for bringing a charge against them, which in its tone hardly varies: critical theory as a “power-knowledge nexus” enforces the “norms governing rational discourse” and as such may be “masterful” (p. 35). The historical linkage between existential, phenomenological, interpretive, and hermeneutic modes of inquiry languishes under the heading “interpretivist/hermeneutic approaches” (p. 24). This subsection is more thoroughgoing than others, and yet in the end nameless “radical educators” step forward to insinuate that “interpretive approaches merely perpetuate positivism’s hierarchy of knowers and doers, theory and practice, and in so doing serve to maintain the world as it is” (p. 30).

In stressing the integral dynamics of philosophy, theory, method, and practice, this book is useful. It is organized into three parts: Philosophy/Strategies and Methods/Issues and supports that imperative without constructed hierarchies. Part two is the most compelling, with concise chapters on experimental, survey, qualitative research, observation, interview, biographical, and autobiographical methods. In its discursive framework and critique, a number of significant factors are problematized: “time” in forms of testing, distinctive aspects of curriculum, causality and correlation, quality/quantity, epistemology and ontology, effects of participant observation, power relations, the research text, and many other considerations are deftly articulated.

Parts one and three, however, bring to bear some difficulties in the material coverage and editing of a textbook destined for international readership. There are some omissions that, depending on one’s regional or paradigmatic situation, compromise its worldliness. American pragmatic, liberal, and democratic traditions are not implicated in Scott and Usher’s philosophical exposé, hence the absence of Dewey, Burke, Friere, Giroux, and hooks, to name a few. Garfinkel’s Ethnomethodology, Cultural Studies and Reader Response Criticism are unacknowledged. The French fare little better, with Lacan, Kristeva, Ricoeur, and many others left out. There is not even a brief account of formalism—structuralism—semiotics and post-structuralism, so that Barthes and Derrida are denied a context; without Saussure, Todorov, Bakhtin, and Jakob-

son, other successors including Eco, Culler, Jameson, and Eagleton might as well have never existed; consequently, the earned stake of education in language, text, and "criticism" as a literary enterprise is granted no appreciable foundation.

A pattern emerges involving the complete erasure of two vital historical trajectories, Freudian and Marxist, which accounts for the awkwardness with which latter-day analytic, critical, and interpretive movements are accommodated. Habermas is dubbed "The spiritual successor of the Frankfurt School" (p. 23), but we must guess what that is, with Adorno getting one citation and Marcuse as well as Horkheimer left unmentioned. By further omitting Weber, Durkheim, Malinowski, and Boaz, the roots of sociology and anthropology are severed, and the connection between social thought and social research cannot be made. Feminism and deconstruction are there in fragments but media—postindustrial, consumer, popular, and youth—cultures are not, having lost their historical moorings and their current ties to one another. Postcolonial critiques (Said, Spivak, Fanon, Ngugi) as well as those pertaining generally to class and race are overlooked. The term *postmodern*, which may have been an associative compass for this contemporary terrain, is instead deployed to enhance simplistic notions of "rupture" in the historical continuum.

This book does not present an overview so much as it defends a thesis, the dimensions of which are sketched out in the introduction, elaborated in the second chapter on "philosophical issues," then brought to summation in the final chapter where the postmodern theme becomes an agenda, exploiting our anticipation that the best will be saved for last or that the proverbial cavalry will enter. Unlike every preceding theory or perspective, the term *postmodern* is not so much problematized as apologized for (pp. 154-155); its unclear paradigmatic status, the confusion as to whether it designates an historical period, how it is constituted, and what its purposes are defer to more facile questions regarding its supposed "relativism," "nihilism," and overemphasis on the "aesthetic."

An awareness of reflexivity between the discourse and focus of research (p. 19) is important across educational subdisciplines; however, when research focus dissolves into research form, a trivializing of the enterprise from the standpoints of both practice and theory results.

That one can "interrupt or disrupt" a "validity of correspondence" is demonstrable, but not necessarily desirable as the principle goal of research (p. 22). The parlor trick that is "transgressive research" may hold some possibilities for the utterly self-absorbed, but the researcher whose inquiry is more outwardly directed might want to forgo this experience.

A more ethical approach would have dispensed with subversive pretensions, sparing informants the indignities of being pawns in a game that only flirts with the "performative" agenda. Some collaborative and not just "hybrid" (p. 160) methods might intervene more effectively in the power-performativity equation; for this we need to be inclusivizing agents, which is not easy if in referring to "power" we do everything in our discursive power to avoid common terms such as *capital*, preferring uncritical evocations like

*resources, money, and funding* (p. 156), admonishing the state for its “formal control” even in the face of government divestment in education, privatizing, and corporate speculation. Meanwhile, this book utters “research” and “power” in the same breath, mouthing a great deal without coming close to the hand that feeds. *Researching Education* is a slim volume (179 pages with references); outwardly it resembles the calendar for a polytechnic institute, which would be ironic if there were not also in its contents some capitulations to instrumentalism: a treatment of philosophy and theory that is scarcely more than a concession to the spirit of an integrated approach. Something rare in educational literature is promised, but here the pressure we feel from so many directions to cut our readings short and just get on with it finds no relief nor opposition.

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