Joshua Clegg is a professor of psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. His published work focuses on research methodology and philosophy of science, emphasizing the contributions of Continental philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas and Mikhail Bakhtin, as well as on empirical work in social alienation. He earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in psychology from Brigham Young University, where he was trained as a phenomenologist and a theoretician, and his Ph.D. in psychology from Clark University, where he was trained as a social psychologist.

Brent D. Slife is Professor of Psychology and Chair of the doctoral program in Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology at Brigham Young University. Recently honored with the Eliza R. Snow and Karl G. Maeser awards for Outstanding Scholarship, he was also distinguished as "Teacher of the Year" by the university and "Most Outstanding Professor" by the Psychology Honorary, Psi Chi. He served as the president of the Society of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology and on the editorial boards of six journals. He has authored over 120 articles and books, including *Critical Thinking About Psychology* (2005), *Taking Sides* (2007), *Critical Issues in Psychotherapy* (2001), *Toward a Unified Psychology* (2000), *What's Behind the Research?* (1995), and *Time and Psychological Explanation* (1993).

2

RESEARCH ETHICS IN THE POSTMODERN CONTEXT

Joshua W. Clegg

Brent D. Slife

Discussing a topic as broad and as frequently misunderstood as postmodernism requires some organizing principle, some general definition. Yet postmodernism makes such broad generalizations problematic at the outset. From the postmodern viewpoint, any definition of anything, including the definition of postmodernism itself, is a value judgment, with ethical and even political implications. Another problem in defining postmodernism is that postmodernists (whoever these undefined entities are) resist the closed "totalizing" conceptions of things. They view such conceptions as inappropriate reductions of the real—stereotypes of the rich experience of whatever is being conceived or defined.

Postmodernism is not, then, best understood in conceptual terms at all; it is perhaps best understood by engaging in practices that are postmodern, rather than conceptualizing things as postmodern. Consequently, this entire chapter (and perhaps this entire volume) could be construed as the modernist project of summarizing the unsummarizable, and thus conflicting with the very

spirit of postmodernism. Any conception of postmodernity would have to be pluralistic, rarely unitary, and perhaps even poetic. Still, we remain committed to making this chapter understandable to the modern thinker and coherent within the underpinnings of this book, which implies some dedication to a clear organization.

Consequently, we begin by outlining some of the major movements and figures in postmodern philosophy. We follow this with a discussion of four postmodern ethical/philosophical commitments, which we frame not as conceptual foundations but as Wittgensteinian "family resemblances" (1953/2001). These four resemblances, which include the *particular*, the *contextual*, the *value laden*, and the *other*, are then contrasted with modernist commitments. True to the rich, particular, and contextualized values of postmodern theorists, we illustrate and explicate these contrasting commitments in terms of particular examples from existing research traditions.

Much of this discussion will appropriately concern what would traditionally be considered as "methodological" issues. However, we caution the reader that one of the primary lessons of a postmodern approach to research ethics is that every research activity is an exercise in research ethics, every research question is a moral dilemma, and every research decision is an instantiation of values. In short, postmodernism does not permit the distinction between research methods and research ethics.

The Postmodern Context

Postmodern thought is something of an antithesis to the thesis of modernism—different sides of the same coin. Some of the specific characteristics of both modernism and postmodernism are outlined below, but in general, this dichotomy centers on the dialectic between a generally naturalistic, positivistic, and realist worldview (modernism) and its antithesis in a critical, constructivist or

interpretivist worldview (postmodernism). In its historically explicit form, this dialectic is essentially a 20th-century phenomenon, but its roots reach back into the Enlightenment and perhaps before.

Of the most essential modernist themes, naturalism probably boasts the oldest pedigree. Naturalism, or the notion that the world and everything in it can be explained in terms of natural, material, and narrowly empirical processes, had advocates among the pre-Socratic philosophers (e.g., Democritus). There were, of course, any number of antinaturalist philosophers in the Western intellectual tradition, particularly among the mystical or hermetic and early Christian philosophers. It was not until the Enlightenment, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries, that the theme of naturalism was wedded to a broader intellectual and cultural positivism, or a general belief in the social, empirical, and theoretical power of science to ask and answer the basic questions of reality. This marriage permitted the modernist worldview to be fully forged as a culturally powerful antithesis to various premodern mystical, feudal, or otherwise centralized worldviews.

However, the rise of an unambiguously naturalistic worldview was not unopposed by influential thinkers. Nearly every major philosopher of the Enlightenment era was interested in and supported the development of a naturalistic philosophy, but there were many who also advocated a kind of metaphysical counterpoint to strictly empirical or material accounts. Descartes (1641/1996), for example, produced an elaborately mechanistic (and naturalistic) account of the human organism while also postulating a purely metaphysical realm of the mind (*res cogitans*). Even in Britain, the home of the most stridently empiricistic philosophers, thinkers in the tradition of Berkeley (1710/2004) or Reid (1764/2005) cast doubt on the unproblematically realist approach to philosophy.

Notwithstanding these currents of dissent, the postmodern view as a whole could not

develop until modernism itself was fully fledged by the dramatic successes of the industrial age, or what Polkinghorne (2005) calls "technification" (p. 5). Modernism as a generally dominant Western worldview reached its zenith only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and this is precisely when the forces of postmodernism began to gather. The successes of industrial technology began to meet its excesses, and the positivist worldview received both the praise and the blame. Philosophers and scientists began to question the monolith of materialistic and naturalistic science, and that dissent would eventually be labeled (not unproblematically) "postmodernism." The gathering force of postmodern philosophy was, in some sense, the natural dissenting extension of the modernist worldview and so, like Western philosophy in general, is typically divided into an Anglo-American tradition and a Continental European tradition.

Anglo-American Postmodernism

In the Anglo-American tradition, the primary thematic contexts for postmodernism have been philosophy of language and philosophy of science. Philosophy of language in the 20th century made a radical "shift from a focus on meaning as reference to a focus on meaning as use," and this was "a change revolutionary enough to mark the shift from modern to postmodern in philosophy of language" (Murphy, 1997, p. 23).

Alfred North Whitehead was one of the first who began to question a fully realist and objectivist philosophy (i.e., meaning as reference). In his later writings, Whitehead (1925) asserted that "process rather than substance is the most basic reality. Substance, in fact, is an abstraction from the processes of experience" (p. 90). For Whitehead, the generalized categories of "existence" were not the fundamental realities but were essentially perceiver dependent. In this way, Whitehead delineated a pivotal theme of postmodernism—its rejection of the modernist division of the subjective and objective in favor of a perceiver-dependent or interpreted reality.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, another influential Anglo postmodern philosopher, claimed that "meaning depends on the role language plays in a system of conventions, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, of practices, performances, 'forms of life'" (Murphy, 1997, p. 24), a claim that has had profound implications for postmodern philosophy. In Wittgenstein's later work, language almost completely abandons its objective and rationalist roots and replaces them with particular forms of everyday life. Again, meaning is viewed more as a particular social function ("use") than as a reference to an objective reality. Other philosophers in this tradition include Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976) and J. L. Austin (1911–1960).

This shift from substance to process and from the abstract or universal to social convention and everyday life was mirrored in the Anglo-American philosophy of science. Thomas Kuhn (1996), for example, asserted that change in science was not the product of systematic empirical or rational progress but was, rather, the result of radical paradigm shifts in scientific epistemology. For Kuhn, then, science had to be understood culturally and socially. W.V. Quine (1908–2000) also eschewed a view of science founded entirely on a system of empirical and rational facts. Philosophers such as Imre Lakatos (1922–1974) and Paul Feyerabend (1924–1994) further elaborated this nonfoundationalist approach to the philosophy of science.

The Anglo-American tradition of postmodernism also included ethical philosophers such as Alasdair McIntyre (1984)—who argued that ethics had to be understood within its social and historical context—and, to some extent, philosophers in the American pragmatist tradition. American pragmatism, beginning with William James (1842–1910), John Dewey (1859–1952), and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), was by no means a unitary tradition, but in general, pragmatists replaced a realist picture of the world with one that centers meaning in functional relations. This tradition was at least partly a postmodern one in that it undermined the modernist

worldview. As Richard Rorty (1991) argues, pragmatists believe that the epistemology that underlies science is not a "privileged method," and they deny "that the results of the natural sciences suffice to give meaning to our lives" (p. 75).

Generally, then, Anglo postmodernism reacts to Anglo modernism by emphasizing the interpreted and social over the objective and rational. The modernist considers the objective and the rational to be essentially uninterpreted and universal, whereas the postmodernist views even these "foundations" of modernism as context and perceiver dependent. For many modernists, this sort of context and perceiver dependence raises the specter of radical relativism, and some see chaos and nihilism as the eventual result (Capaldi & Proctor, 1999). As we will see, however, this kind of relativism is not inevitable in postmodernism. The absence of a modernist grounding of ideas, such as objectivism and foundationalism, does not mean the absence of grounds altogether. As we will describe, postmodern grounds include, to name a few, the particular, the contextual, and the value laden.

Continental European Postmodernism

The Continental European strain of postmodernism began to take shape with a systematic reconceptualization of subjectivity, beginning in the Austro-German tradition. Immanuel Kant (1781/1998) set the agenda for this reconceptualization when he reaffirmed and systematized the subjective-objective dichotomy in terms of the noumenal, or independent and unknowable reality, and the phenomenal, or the interpreted, knowable reality. This reduction of human knowledge to human experience paved the way for what Wilhelm Dilthey (1883/1988) would later call "human science" conceptions of knowledge.

The phenomenological tradition was perhaps the most prominent of these human science approaches. Hegel (1770–1831) pioneered the philosophical investigation of the phenomenal, but it

was Edmund Husserl (1900/1999) who turned phenomenology into a systematic investigation of human experience. For Husserl, this was a radical enterprise that explicitly undermined naturalistic conceptions of science. He claimed, following the logic of his teacher Franz Brentano (1838–1917), that experience is always intentional—always an experience of something. This may seem like a deceptively simple premise, but it has radical implications. Unlike the modernist notion of an independent and isolated "object," this intentionality implies that experienced objects are irreducibly composed in both perceiver and perceived. Under Husserlian phenomenology, purely objective (uninterpreted) reality is an incoherent notion.

The students of Husserlian phenomenology extended this basic logic into an elaborate and robust challenge to the modernist worldview. Martin Heidegger (1927/1962), for example, argued that all meaning, including the meanings of research findings, is fundamentally interpretive. All knowledge, in this sense, is developed within a preexisting social milieu, ever interpreting and reinterpreting itself. This perspective, usually called hermeneutics, was systematically applied to the social sciences by Hans Georg Gadamer (1960/1989). He argued that because the social sciences (like other sciences) build their interpretive assumptions into their methods (including their scientific methods), they necessarily reproduce their theoretical assumptions in their professional treatments and empirical findings.

Other students of Husserlian phenomenology radically redefined the nature and scope of meaning, and thus the human sciences. The analysis of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964), for example, demonstrated important differences between the conventional category of "body" and the phenomenological meaning of embodiment. He claimed, in fact, that all higher-order intellectual meaning was derivative of the concrete experience of our embodiment. Jean-Paul Sartre (1943/1956) even more radically redefined all meaning in terms of the radically free human agent.

Emmanuel Levinas (1961/1969) was another phenomenologist who redefined meaning, this time in terms of the ethical. Later students of both phenomenology and hermeneutics—for example, Paul Ricouer (1913–2005), Charles Taylor (1931–)—further developed this tradition into a nonnaturalistic and nonpositivist approach to research and the social sciences.

Another influential strain of Continental postmodernism emerged from France and was concerned primarily with the deconstruction of social meanings, including institution, power, and politics. Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924–1998), and Michel Foucault (1926–1984) are some of the more prominent figures in this tradition. In postmodern approaches to the human sciences, Foucault (1972) is especially influential, given that many of his works deal explicitly with the institutions of psychology and psychiatry. This tradition of deconstructing power has also been influential in much of postmodern feminist psychology. Feminist theorists such as Jane Flax (1990) or Evelyn Fox-Keller (1982), have drawn on the rhetoric of power relations developed in the French tradition.

In general, then, like Anglo-American postmodernists, Continental postmodernists reject an objectivist and rationalist view of science. For thinkers in the Continental tradition, the "objective" categories of science are objects of human experience and thus depend on the values, perspectives, and context of the researcher. For these reasons, Continental postmodernists move away from general and abstract conceptions of science and move toward particular research contexts and concrete researcher-participant relationships.

Family Resemblances: Research Ethics in the Modern and the Postmodern

As noted in the introduction, we are committed to some degree of organization and clarity in this chapter, but we are also wary of an overly systematic presentation of postmodern philosophy.

Consequently, Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances (1953/2001) will serve as a fairly malleable "organizing principle" for our discussion of postmodern ethics. Wittgenstein used the analogy of apparent similarities among members of the same family to describe a unity that does not necessarily depend on a coherent, universal underlying structure. Likewise, we employ the notion of family resemblance because there is no coherent, unitary tradition that could be called postmodern and yet there is a general set of similarities that, though they often derive from entirely different logics, nevertheless characterize a general ideological trend that could be called postmodern. It is our hope that this approach to the topic will be true to the nonreductive, nontotalizing spirit of postmodernism, while at the same time providing accessibility to those readers unfamiliar with it.

Of the many candidates for postmodern family resemblances, we selected four that we will treat below: particular, contextual, value laden, and other focused. These four were selected for two reasons. First, we judged them to be those most directly related to social science research and, second, they provide instructive contrasts with modernist research ethics. However, these resemblances do not lead to a set of postmodern ethical guidelines per se. Such an outcome would be inconsistent with the nonreductive, nonfoundationalist sensibilities of the postmodernist. Postmodern thought provides us not with clear-cut answers to the problems of research ethics but, rather, with challenging, instructive, and transforming dialogues that help us think about the ethical implications of research.

Our discussion of family resemblances will also extend beyond the boundaries of what have been traditionally (i.e., in the modernist tradition) considered ethical issues. Research ethics from the postmodern perspective is not separated from the goals and procedures of the research enterprise itself (like it often is in modernist research). For this reason, we discuss postmodernist

themes as they apply not just to conventional (modernist) ethics but also to research practices in general. In drawing comparisons between the research practices of modernists and postmodernists, we hope to illuminate many of the hidden values of both approaches to inquiry. We also hope to make clear some of the ethical implications of a postmodernist approach to research without reducing these to a set of ethical principles or guidelines.

Particular

Modern

From the traditional modernist worldview, the primary function of research is not to discover findings that pertain only to the particular (situation or population) but to uncover the generalizable, if not universal, laws (or principles). Examples of this span the history of psychology: 19th-century psychophysicists sought the universal laws of perception; behaviorists, perhaps the quintessential modernist psychologists, sought the explanation of all "psychological" phenomena in terms of a single, basic mechanism—for example, operant conditioning; even movements such as Gestalt psychology, whose antagonism to reductionistic psychology was explicit, still understood psychological science as the pursuit of universal, general principles. The Gestaltist Kurt Lewin (1931/1999), for example, characterized a mature (or "Galilean") psychology as one that recognizes that "every psychological law must hold without exception" (p. 52).

To discover the universal and unchanging, the methods of the social sciences have properties intended to reveal these laws and principles, such as replication, standardization, and reliability. For the modernist, psychological law and its principles must hold in every situation, and thus we need not take the particulars of the situation into account. The particular case is considered an instance of the universal law, and likewise, the particular individual is essentially a concrete

instance of general abstract phenomena, such as law, principle, and theory. For the modernist, the individual, or individual case, is of interest only in its relation to these abstractions and not as a particular or unique phenomenon.

This insistence on abstract universals is chronicled in Jerome Kagan's book *Three Seductive Ideas* (1998). In it, Kagan asserts that many psychologists do not find it

> terribly important to specify the agent being studied, whether rat, monkey or human, or the context in which the subject acts, whether laboratory, natural habitat, work-place, or home, because broad conclusions can be drawn regardless of the agent and context. (p. 1)

The modernist focus on the general is evident in essentially every subdiscipline of 20th-century psychology (Slife, Reber, & Richardson, 2005), but a particularly clear instance of this phenomenon is the theory and research on intelligence, a topic Kagan treats at length. According to Kagan (1998), there has been little empirical success in substantiating the notion of a universal concept that could be labeled "intelligence." Nevertheless, the undifferentiated and unspecified term is employed at all levels of psychological discourse. As Kagan argues, "The descriptor 'intelligent' is frequently found in sentences that are indifferent to the age and background of the person (or sometimes the animal species) or the evidential basis for the assignment" (p. 52).

Not surprisingly, the modernist focus on abstract generalizations has migrated into the general discussion on research ethics. The very term *research ethics* suggests a generalized set of rules for dealing with the ethical implications of research. In the social sciences, we often approach the question of research ethics in an essentially bureaucratic manner, developing handbooks, professional guidelines, and review boards whose purpose is to engender, if not legislate, adherence

to general codes of conduct. In modernist research, research ethics is not a particular set of concrete dilemmas but a general set of rules meant to apply to all (or at least most) research situations.

Postmodern

From the postmodern perspective, we do not live in the realm of the abstract and general, hence their relevance to us is limited. We live instead in the concrete and particular—a particular place at a particular time, which is our primary nexus of meaning making. This means that the personal and narrative are valued over the abstract and universal. Abstract principles (e.g., concepts, ideas) are still important, but concrete particulars are more fundamental. Postmodernists do not seek a universal set of truths, nor do they subscribe to an independent or objective knowledge-advancing tradition. To the postmodernist, science is one of many cultural objects that "are not only enrooted in the incontrovertible presence of this perceived world" but are "also the achievement of a cultural activity, of a cultural life of which science, considered subjectively as human work, is a part" (Ricoeur, 1965, p. 168).

The primary methodological implication of the postmodern denial of objectivity and universality is that while "the mainstream tradition has focused almost exclusively on problems of standardization" (Mishler, 1986, p. 233), psychological research inspired by postmodern traditions has focused more on the understanding of particular lives. These traditions have focused on particular stories because, as Taylor (1992) argues, "we grasp our lives in a narrative. . . . In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become" (p. 47).

Within the contemporary social sciences, there are innumerable interpretive investigations whose intent is to narrate particular lives, but let us consider one especially rich example. In an article in *Qualitative Inquiry*, Arthur Bochner (1997) narrates an event from his own history as a way of illuminating multiple levels of psychological knowledge. He tells of being awakened in a

hotel room and informed of his father's death. In the article, Bochner narrates his actions, thoughts, and feelings following this revelation. He uses this narrative to discuss grief and dying, psychological method and theory, and the method of personal narrative itself. When, for example, he compares psychological literature on death and dying with his own experience, he concludes that the academic world is "long on conceptualizations and short on details; long on abstractions, short on concrete events; long on analysis, short on experience; long on theories, short on stories" (p. 424).

From within a very particular context, Bochner (1997) draws a number of conclusions about social science methods, and this practice reflects the postmodern approach to "data." As Bochner puts it,

> We do not turn stories into data to test theoretical propositions. Rather, we link theory to story when we think with a story, trying to stay with the story, letting ourselves resonate with the moral dilemmas it may pose, understanding its ambiguities, examining its contradictions, feeling its nuances, letting ourselves become part of the story. (p. 436)

From this postmodern perspective, the notion of "generalization" in inquiry is more from concrete parts to concrete wholes rather than from concrete instances to abstract generalities.

Bochner's (1997) story also highlights another ethical tension between modernist and postmodernist approaches to research. Insofar as a tradition holds to "a reverent and idealized view of science that positions science above the contingencies of language and outside the circle of historical and cultural interests" (p. 422), research practices themselves will meet with little broader social control. Under the modernist worldview, the special status of the "scientific" easily leads to

that circumstance where "psychologists too often use their warrant of expertise not only to manipulate variables but also to manipulate people and their lives" (p. 422). There is a kind of monolithic power inherent in the universalism of the scientific mythos, and a postmodern understanding of research ethics would likely begin in the deconstruction of that power.

Practical Implications

Again, the practical implications of a postmodernist conceptualization of research would likely never be put into simple guidelines or an ethical code. However, the postmodern "family resemblance" of emphasizing the *particular* does imply greater emphasis on the unique particulars of the situation and the individual than in modernist research. As such, the postmodernist would likely move away from testing thin theoretical propositions and move toward the richer and thicker accounts encompassed in a narrative. Similarly, the instrumental use of science—where universals, power, and expertise are viewed as the means to various social ends—would be eschewed in favor of less certainty and more humility about knowledge and its use. If we take the particular as a fundamental research value, ethical research has less to do with an attempt to reason about ethical research practices and more to do with an uncertain researcher perpetually struggling with the obligations and responsibilities of a particular situation, to a particular community, and to a particular participant.

Contextual

Modern

Because generalizable principles and laws are the *telos* of modernist research, traditional theory and method have attempted to remove all possible contingency from both theoretical models and particular research findings. In modernist methods, "truth was to be found through method, by

following general rules of method that were largely independent of the content and context of the investigation. Any influence by the person of the researcher should be eliminated or minimized" (Kvale, 1996, p. 61).

Theories and findings are thus only considered universally valid if they are free from any contingent context. In this sense, when the modernist is attempting to discern general social science principles, much of culture, history, relation, and subjectivity are primarily sources of error variance.

The acontextual nature of modernist theory is explicit and unambiguous in most contemporary psychological traditions. Personality theory has nearly always sought to describe the psyche as an abstract and context-less type; learning researchers obsessively attempted to remove all contextual factors in their animal research (e.g., using rats from the same genetic stock, raised in the same environment, and subjected to precisely identical conditions). Indeed, the modern symbol of the scientist—the laboratory—is significant because of its context-less representation of the modern subject of science. The justification for such context-independent research procedures lies in the modernist notion that general knowledge comes from predictable events and that the basis of this predictability can only be ensured in the absence of all confounding contextual factors.

Because context-less results were so fundamental to psychological research in the 20th century, a great many programs of research could be employed as exemplars. Here, we will consider the research of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky—work widely considered to be one of the great successes of contemporary social science research. Tversky and Kahneman (1983) summarize the basic conclusion drawn from a large portion of their work: "People do not normally analyze daily events into exhaustive lists of possibilities or evaluate compound probabilities by aggregating elementary ones. Instead, they commonly use a limited number of heuristics, such as

representativeness and availability" (p. 294). The language used in this statement is instructive in its reflection of the acontextual ideal of modernist research. First, this statement represents a conclusion about "people" outside of any special context, as if this extra-contextual condition actually occurs and is possible. Second, reduction to a "limited number" of heuristics in "common use" would be pivotal to any research program, because reduction to context-less fundamentals is the sine qua non of modernist investigation. There is little discussion here, for example, of the changing use of heuristics depending on the context or situation involved. Indeed, the ability to talk without (or at least across) contexts is an essential goal of modernist research. It is that very ability that qualifies the statement as knowledge (possibly even truth).

Tversky and Kahneman's approach (1983) to reporting their findings reflects and embodies this acontextual ideal. In one study, the participants are considered fully described by the phrase "a group of 88 undergraduates at UBC" (p. 297). Research subjects are discussed in terms of general categories—for example, "naive" or "sophisticated" (p. 300), and the behaviors of subjects are discussed only in general or aggregate terms—for example, "the numerous conjunction errors reported in this article illustrate people's affinity for nonextensional reasoning" (p. 308). Like the vast majority of modernist research, for Tversky and Kahneman, essentially every statement that could be considered representative of general knowledge will not (and, in fact, should not) contain any unique contextual content.

This way of valuing acontextual knowledge is clearly reflected in the modernist discourse about research and research ethics (e.g., ethical principles). Just as ethical codes are designed to apply to all particular individuals (see the previous section), they are also constructed to apply across contexts (and not to take the uniqueness of contexts into account). Just as modernists assume that there is some independent set of verifiable facts, they also assume that there is some

independent (though perhaps more difficult to define) set of acceptable ethical codes.

Postmodern

The postmodern perspective holds that meaning is always embodied, situated, and inseparable from its surrounding context. For the postmodernist, the personal and the public are inseparable parts of the same whole, and "any attempt rigorously to eliminate our human perspective from our picture of the world must lead to absurdity" (Polanyi, 1974, p. 3).

For a postmodern researcher, then, procedures and findings are enriched by context and impoverished, even misunderstood entirely, by laboratory sanitization and numerical representation. This approach to research, most clearly embraced by the qualitative or interpretive traditions, asserts that "if participants are removed from their setting, it leads to contrived findings that are out of context" (Creswell, 1998, p. 17). Even more, enriching contexts are considered integral elements of all research findings. Discussing interviews, for example, Steinar Kvale (1996), asserts that "the interview takes place in an interpersonal context, and the meaning of the interview statements depends on this context" (p. 44). Contexts, in this sense, are not just "variables" that "interact" with the subject of interest; they are necessary for understanding the subject of interest itself. From the postmodern perspective, even traditional biological laboratory science can be undermined by its focus on inert bodies—with all their passive, inanimate connotations—and enriched by a focus on embodiment as lived, contextualized, and animate (see Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

Phenomenological research is an example of a tradition that explicitly advocates and integrates a detailed description of the research context into the results. In a study by Philip Welches and Michael Pica (2005), for example, the authors provide a rich array of contextualizing information. Their article, which analyzes the experiences of nine men who had been admitted to a

psychiatric hospital for being a danger to self or others, provides a detailed case study for each of the participants, including relevant personal details and excerpts from the interview interactions themselves. The contexts of the interview situations as well as some of the relevant behaviors of the participants are also described in a way that shows how integral they are to the understanding of the study's findings.

This sort of "thick" description also provides a necessary context for understanding and evaluating the conclusions drawn by the researchers. The interpretive categories developed by Welches and Pica (2005), contrary to most modernist research, served to "classify common themes" (p. 49) and not to draw general conclusions about abstract psychological processes. As in most phenomenological research, the authors' goal was to develop a general descriptive account of a specific kind of situation and not an abstract model of psychological or social functioning.

We recognize, of course, that the modernist may see no way to build "general" knowledge from such contextualized analysis. For the postmodernist, however, the contextualization of the subject matter situates it in the whole of knowledge (e.g., the culture, the era) and thus provides knowledge transfer through context and not through its elimination (as in the modernist tradition).

Practical Implications

The practical implication of the *contextual* for a postmodern research ethic is, in some sense, straightforward: The researcher does not attempt to eliminate—whether through laboratory or control—context from the investigation or its results. Instead, the postmodern researcher values the importance of context (e.g., situation, history, embodiment, possibilities) for understanding the meaning of the results and for situating them in the broader context of the discipline or culture. The postmodern researcher also values the uniqueness and autonomy of research participants and is thus wary of removing contextual (including unique and personal) factors through laboratory and

procedural controls. For the postmodernist, the use and presentation of knowledge is a primary ethical consideration—one in which the research participant is intimately concerned, and so the modernist attempt to eliminate the unique contexts of research participants appears dangerously egocentric.

Value Laden (Interpretive, Perspectival)

Modern

The pursuit of natural or social laws also requires that knowledge claims be free from bias, prejudice, and personal or subjective values. For the modernist, "goods or 'values' were understood as projections of ours onto a world which in itself was neutral" (Taylor, 1992, p. 53). It is for precisely this reason that, for the modernist, "scientific statements ought to be value-neutral; facts were to be distinguished from values, and science from politics" (Kvale, 1996, p. 62).

Traditional methods thus attempt to build impersonal, blinded, and mechanical procedures that minimize personal nuance, bias, or interpretive slant. For the modernist, bias is bad, and the "objective" world provides a value-free picture of reality. As Howard Kendler (2004) phrases it, "Empirical results are value-free. Raw data do not imply any moral judgment" (p. 122), and it is the role of science "to provide unbiased information" (p. 123). For the modernist, the scientific method provides a bridge between the subjective realm of the scientist and the objective realm of nature and, thus, provides supposedly value-neutral, objective information about the world.

This objectivist perspective has put the research of positive psychology in an interesting position. This movement attempts to discern and promote "the highest qualities of civic and personal life" (Seligman, 1998), yet the modernist philosophy of social science says that this seemingly value-laden task should be conducted in a value-free manner. Indeed, the main leader of

this movement, Martin Seligman (1998), considers positive psychology to be a superior approach to other sources of optimal human functioning, because those other sources are "too subjective . . . dependent on faith or . . . dubious assumptions; they lacked the clear-eyed skepticism and the slow cumulative growth that I (and Csikszentmihalyi) associated with science" (p. 7).

Consequently, positive psychologists cannot draw from moral traditions or disciplines that discuss the nature of a good or flourishing life. All they believe they can do is classify "the strengths that every major subculture in America today values positively" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001, p. 90). In other words, their work is an empirical polling of what other people think are "the highest qualities of civic and personal life." The essential point here is that, even when studying human values, the modernist espouses a value-free approach to research, and it is this very distinction between hard fact and subjective value that makes "research ethics" a consideration separate from scientific knowledge.

Postmodern

For the postmodernist, the subjective and objective are inseparable and together constitute any given meaning. In this sense, all meaning—all experience—is inherently and inescapably interpretive, and bias is not only inevitable but also a basic element of all knowledge practices. H. G. Gadamer (1960/1989), in fact, argues for the essential importance of prejudice in all research. As Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) frame their argument,

> Prejudices are not external impositions that constrain our ability to be free and rational subjects. On the contrary, having a 'horizon' or framework of prejudgments is what first makes it possible for us to think and act in intelligible ways. (p. 230)

Bias and *prejudice* are often pejorative terms in our modernist culture, so the more common terminology in postmodern philosophy is *value* or *value laden*. To say that all knowledge is biased is to claim that any meaning-making activity is directed by values and interpretive contexts. Fact and value are inseparable because the postmodernist sees a "fundamental moral orientation as essential to being a human interlocutor" (Taylor, 1992, p. 29). Taylor (1992) states it even more strongly: "We cannot do without some orientation to the good" (p. 33).

For the postmodernist, then, value and bias are fundamental and, indeed, the primary impetus for research (e.g., the selection of a research topic). As such, bias and value should not be avoided or eliminated but made as explicit and transparent as possible: "The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias" (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 269). Though full value transparency in research is perhaps impossible, the postmodern ideal is to make one's own assumptions, historical context, and value stances explicit in reports of research findings.

A study of working-class girls conducted by Sandra Jones (2001) should serve as an exemplar of this approach to research. Jones, who explicitly aligns herself with feminist and critical theory, observed, interviewed, and analyzed biographical information concerning 10 female academics who grew up in the working class. Her approach to this research included the assumption that "the researcher is the research instrument" (p. 147), and so, when evaluating interview data, it was "important to ask who is listening and what is the nature of listener's relationship with the speaker" (p. 147).

To help identify her values as a researcher, Jones provided information about her own childhood context among the working class and discussed some of the effects of her powerful position as researcher. Jones also made explicit many of her research values. She talked about how she is sensitive to power relations and so strove for equity in research situations. She discussed her

belief that research participants should be approached in dialogue, and so she provided participants with copies of transcripts and drafts of her interpretations.

Finally, Jones incorporated her values and influence into the presentation of her research findings. When she quoted the participants, she included her own dialogue in the excerpts. She also narrated her own reactions to the included excerpts as well as how she came to her subsequent interpretations. The main point here is that the author tried to make the values of her investigation as explicit and as integrated into the research findings as possible, and this practice helps the reader understand how those values influenced the findings.

From the postmodern perspective, values are just as influential in modernist findings; they are just not acknowledged. Researcher values are integral to all kinds of research, and the need to recognize and incorporate these influences is an ethical imperative. This is the reason, as mentioned at the outset, why there is no hard distinction between research ethics and research per se. Even the most basic research activities are situated within an evaluative context and carry very concrete ethical implications.

Practical Implications

The value-ladenness of social science research has many ethical implications from the viewpoint of a postmodern. First, we need to recognize that there is no escape from this value-ladenness—the assumptions and philosophies underlying research often involve values that frequently remain unexamined in modernist research. Second, we should identify these values as much as possible before, during, and after engaging in research. We do this to understand their potential impact and to be open to their replacement in the service of the topic of study. Perhaps even more important, we do this to serve the particular individuals or groups affected by the study. Third, such values are integral to the meaning and use of any study's results, so these should be

taken explicitly into account in presenting, reporting, or applying the research in question. In short, values and their explicit discussion are of primary importance at every stage of social science research.

Other-Focus

Modern

The "other" of the social sciences is generally conceived of as an impersonal subject because the generalized, decontextualized, and unbiased ideal of modernist research requires a research participant whose values, projects, and idiosyncrasies do not interfere with the claims of science. The ideal subject is thus impersonalized and reduced—an object in the sense of any other natural thing.

This notion of a manipulated, controlled, and objectified subject is fairly endemic to modernist research, and the social science vocabulary for describing research participants well illustrates this phenomenon. Though *observer* was the most frequently used participant term in late-19th- and early-20th-century psychology, the increasingly objectivist inclination of (particularly American) psychology was accompanied by an increasing use of the term *subject*. The historian of psychology, Kurt Danziger (1990), argues that this terminology was borrowed from French psychiatry, where its earliest known use was to refer to corpses used for anatomical dissection. The use of such a term makes sense from the modernist viewpoint because it implies a kind of clinical distance and almost inanimate or passive status, much as any other "subject" matter (e.g., cells, structures).

In contemporary psychology, *subject* continues to be a common term. In fact, Henry Roediger (2004), while president of APS, argued strenuously for a return to the exclusive use of the

"subject" terminology because it better fit his conception of the research subject. For him, "the college student is the ideal experimental animal" (p. 46), an animal he compares with drosophila, the fruit fly that has been the subject of so many genetic studies. It makes sense that he would prefer *subject* to *participant* because his research topics, like so many in psychology, concern presumed universal properties—learning and memory—rather than unique, particular individuals.

Terms other than *subject* have begun to see significant use in the social sciences. In the last two versions of the APA style manual, for example, the shift to *participant* has been explicitly encouraged. It could be argued that the terminological shift to *participant* signals a kind of drift from the hard modernist worldview in American psychology, and there may be some truth to this argument. However, Gary VandenBos (the executive director of publications and communications for APA) describes this shift as largely political and legal: "'Subjects' implies that these are people who are having things done to them, whereas 'participants' implies that they gave consent" (Carey, 2004). There is really no suggestion that one treats a participant differently than a subject; The change has more to do with legal consent. In any case, whether they are participants or subjects, the ultimate goal of the modernist is to systematically control them and their values and context.

Postmodern

When postmodernists hear the kind of "control" discourse found in modernist research, they often consider it a vocabulary of power and dominance, a consideration most notably connected with the work of the postmodernist Michel Foucault. Modernity's instrumentalized and reduced research subject is understood more as a means to solidify the power of those who conduct research than as a means to discern generalized principles. For the postmodernist, in fact, all "disciplines constitute a system of control in the production of discourse" (Foucault, 1972, p. 224), including any particular postmodernist discipline.

This sensitivity to power relations is a hallmark of many postmodern approaches to research, and it entails a concomitant sensitivity to how researchers subject research participants to their projects. As Foucault (1972) argues, "We must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them" (p. 229). It is not surprising, then, that the status of the participant is extremely significant to the postmodern researcher. The particularity of the valuing other is not a research confound but is, rather, the starting place for all meaning-making activities. The values, projects, and idiosyncrasies of the research participant constitute both an ethical imperative and the foundational knowledge relation. As such, a primary imperative of postmodernist research is "to do research 'with' rather than 'on' people" (Burman, 2001, p. 260).

An excellent example of this approach to research is Michelle Fine's four-year study on the impact of a college-in-prison program at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (Fine et al., 2001). The impact of an other-focused approach to research is immediately apparent in the author line of the book, where there are 11 names listed. The multiplicity of authors stems from the fact that, in addition to graduate student researchers, Fine recruited participant observers from among the female inmates she was studying. These women conducted interviews, took field notes, and met as a research team every few weeks to compare findings. True to the other-focused ideal, the research reports generated from this study are rich with participant narratives.

Fine's design made her project an essentially communitarian one, where research interpretations are not the province of merely the privileged researcher but also of those for whom researchers presume to speak. These kinds of methods aim to provide a research environment where "the respondents become active agents, the creators of the worlds they inhabit and the interpreters of their experiences" (Marecek, Fine, & Kidder, 2001, p. 34). While many postmodernists recognize that asymmetrical power relations are perhaps inevitable in many aspects

of research, they nevertheless seek to make power relations as explicit as possible and reveal rather than obscure the unique constructive contexts of research participants.

Practical Implications

The other-focus of the postmodernist has important ethical implications for researchers. The first is undoubtedly that we need to have greater sensitivity to the power relations of many research settings and relationships. For many postmodernists, the subjectification and objectification of persons, and even animals, is a kind of violence that should never be tolerated. The researcher should do research *with* people, including making participants co-investigators, rather than *on* people.

Second, postmodernists recognize that data interpretation is unavoidable in any kind of research, regardless of the methods used, and that such interpretation is the province, not simply of the "author" but also of a community of researchers, participants, and readers. Philosophers of science have long understood how data underdetermine these interpretations, allowing for alternative interpretations that usually go unmentioned in research reports (Curd & Cover, 1998). For the postmodernist, reports and presentations should avoid misleading language, such as "the data indicate," and should discuss instead the many data interpretations available as well as the reasons for the interpretations favored by researchers and the participants producing the data.

Conclusion

We have argued that the postmodern turn points toward a research tradition that is interpretive, particular, contextual, value laden, and other focused—that is, in fact, thoroughly ethical in its character. Research methods are not essentially amoral—as in many modernist understandings,

with ethics as a separate consideration. Research from the postmodern perspective is rife with values, assumptions, and perspectives that need to be identified and incorporated explicitly in the "findings." There is no moment in the conceptualization, design, execution, or presentation of research that is not inescapably and fundamentally ethical. As Kvale (1996) argues, "Ethical decisions do not belong to a separate stage . . . but arise throughout the entire research process" (p. 110).

Because the postmodernist sees research as an inherently ethical enterprise, the notion of a separate, postmodern ethical code is problematic. If the postmodernist is to talk about research ethics, it could only be a discussion about a kind of praxis or, perhaps, even a way of being: "Moral research behavior is more than ethical knowledge and cognitive choices; it involves the person of the researcher, his or her sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and action" (Kvale, 1996, p. 117). For the postmodernist, all research activity is fraught with moral and ethical issues. As such, scientific investigations require not a set of general solutions to such issues but a very particular commitment to both an insistent ethical self-examination and an unflinching sensitivity to our relation with the other.

References

Berkeley, G. (2004). *A treatise concerning the principles of human knowledge.* Whitefish, MT: Kessinger. (Original work published 1710)

Bochner, A. P. (1997). It's about time: Narrative and the divided self. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3*(4), 418–438.

Burman, E. (2001). Minding the gap: Positivism, psychology, and the politics of qualitative

methods. In D. L. Tolman & M. B. Miller (Eds.), *From subjects to subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods* (pp. 259–275). New York: New York University Press.

Capaldi, E. J., & Proctor, R. W. (1999). *Contextualism in psychological research? A critical review*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Carey, B. (2004, June 15). The subject is subjects. *The New York Times*.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Curd, M., & Cover, J. A. (1998). *Philosophy of science: The central issues.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Danziger, K. (1990). *Constructing the subject.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Descartes, R. (1996). *Meditations on first philosophy* (J. Cottingham, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1641)

Dilthey, W. (1988). *Introduction to the human sciences* (R. J. Betanzos, Trans.). Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press. (Original work published 1883)

Fine, M., Torre, M. E., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D., et al. (2001). *Changing minds*. New York: The City University of New York Graduate Center.

Flax, J. (1990). *Thinking fragments: Psychoanalysis, feminism, and postmodernism in the contemporary West*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge* (A. M. S. Smith, Trans.). New York: Harper Colophon Books. (Original work published 1969)

Fox-Keller, E. (1982). Feminism and science. *Signs, 7*(3), 589–602.

Gadamer, H. G. (1989). *Truth and method* (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). New York: Crossroad. (Original work published 1960)

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). San Francisco: Harper Collins. (Original work published 1927)

Husserl, E. (1999). *Logical Investigations* (J.N. Findlay, Trans.) In D. Welton (Ed.), *The Essential Husserl: Basic writings in transcendental phenomenology*. Bloomington, Indian: Indian University Press. (Original work published 1900).

Jones, S. J. (2001). Embodying working class subjectivity and narrating self: "We were the hired help." In D. L. Tolman & M. B. Miller (Eds.), *From subjects to subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods* (pp. 145–162). New York: New York University Press.

Kagan, J. (1998). *Three seductive ideas.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of pure reason* (P. Guyer & A. Wood, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1781)

Kendler, H. H. (2004). Politics and science: A combustible mixture. *American Psychologist, 59*(2), 122–123.

Kuhn, T. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (3rd, ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and infinity* (A. Lingis, Trans.). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press. (Original work published 1961)

Lewin, K. (1999). The conflict between Aristotelian and Galilean modes of thought in contemporary psychology (D. K. Adams, Trans.). In M. Gold (Ed.), *The complete social scientist: A Kurt Lewin reader* (2nd ed., pp. 37–66). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. (Original work published 1931)

Marecek, J., Fine, M., & Kidder, L. (2001). Working between two worlds: Qualitative methods and psychology. In D. L. Tolman & M. B. Miller (Eds.), *From subjects to subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods* (pp. 29–41). New York: New York University Press.

McIntyre, A. (1984). *After virtue* (2nd ed.). Notre Dame, France: University of Notre Dame Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Primacy of perception* (W. Cobb, Trans.; J. Edie, Ed.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). The analysis of interview narratives. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.), *Narrative psychology* (pp. 233–255). New York: Praeger.

Murphy, N. (1997). *Anglo-American postmodernity: Philosophical perspectives on science, religion, and ethics*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Polanyi, M. (1974). *Personal knowledge: Towards a post-critical philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Polkinghorne, D. (2005). *Practice and the human sciences: A case for a judgment-based practice of care*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Reid, T. (2005). *Essays on the active powers of the human mind: An inquiry into the human mind on the principle of common sense*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger. (Original work published 1764)

Richardson, F. C., Fowers, B. J., & Guignon, C. B. (1999). *Re-envisioning psychology: Moral dimensions of theory and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ricoeur, P. (1965). *History and truth* (C. A. Kelbley, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Roediger, R. (2004). What should they be called? *APS Observer, 17*(5), 46–48.

Rorty, R. (1991). *Objectivity, relativism and truth: Philosophical papers I.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Sartre, J. P. (1956). *Being and nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology* (H. Barnes, Trans.). New York: Philosophical Library. (Original work published 1943)

Seligman, M. (1998). President's column: Positive social science. *APA Monitor, 29*(4).

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2001). "Positive Psychology: An Introduction": Reply. *The American Psychologist, 56,* 89–90.

Slife, B.D., Reber, J., & Richardson, F. (2005). *Critical thinking about psychology: Hidden assumptions and plausible alternatives*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association Press.

Taylor, C. (1992). *Sources of the self.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1983). Extensional versus intuitive reasoning: The conjunction fallacy in probability judgment. *Psychological Review, 90*(4), 293–315.

Welches, P., & Pica, M. (2005). Assessed danger to others as a reason for psychiatric hospitalization: An investigation of patients' perspectives. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 36*(1), 45–73.

Whitehead, A. N. (1925). *Science and the modern world*. New York: Macmillan.

Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Philosophical investigations* (E. Anscombe, Trans.). London: Blackwell. (Original work published 1953)