INQUIRY INTO SCHOOLING:
DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

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There is renewed interest in studies of schooling. The secondary school is illustrative. Special issues in widely read national magazines such as *Educational Leadership* and the *Kappan* have been recently published, along with books devoted explicitly to the secondary school. Some of these books—for instance, the Carnegie Foundation's *High School* by Ernest Boyer,1 *The Good High School* by Sara Lawrence Lightfoot,2 and *The Egalitarian Ideal and the American High School* by Philip Cusick3—are the culmination of intensive inquiries into American secondary schooling. In Great Britain, Michael Rutter's *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children*4 represents a similar emphasis, and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) has sponsored a worldwide series of student achievement studies in the primary, intermediate, and secondary schools in various subject areas. These works, together with studies reported in academic journals, add up to a remarkably diverse and extensive recent literature on schooling.

An examination of these inquiries is particularly relevant, since many provincial and state governments and school boards are undertaking far-reaching curriculum and evaluation reforms. How do these studies add up? Do we now have a comprehensive view of the schools, a view composed of the knowledge generated by different methodologies? Do the different results nullify one another? What are the perspectives that guide all this research, and how does the research fit together?

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Our purpose in this paper is to characterize the research on schooling literature. We agree with Mathew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman's view that the qualitative-quantitative distinction and debate is no longer useful. For our purposes of looking at inquiry into schools, the distinction has limited use as a framework. In this paper, our purpose is to develop another way of looking at inquiry into schooling: to define perspectives at work in the research on schooling.

INQUIRY PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOLING

Marshall D. Herron's analysis of the nature of inquiry expressed in the philosophic literature clearly showed that diversity is its hallmark. Writers with different starting points develop different theories of inquiry. Herron generated a set of commonplaces by which the various theories could be compared. Following Herron's approach, one could select several possible key terms on which to found a theory of inquiry or to construct a classification scheme. Therefore, any scheme claiming to offer a structure for classifying inquiry into schooling is the result of a choice.

The vantage point of perspective is particularly useful. From it we can look both in the direction of school phenomena and ask, "What events are telling?" and in the direction of school conception and ask, "How is schooling conceptualized?" These two questions, along with method, constitute what we call an inquiry perspective. A perspective, for purposes of this paper, is a characterization of inquiry consisting of a conception of schooling, with appropriate questions; the phenomena of inquiry, which yield telling data; and a method of inquiry. Joseph J. Schwab's notion of "principles of scientific inquiry" serves similar purposes for scientific inquiry that the notion of perspective serves for research on schooling.

While a perspective constitutes a relatively consistent and coherent outlook on inquiry into schooling, and while researchers within a perspective need to adopt its norms, individual researchers may, depending on their circumstances, adopt different perspectives. Our purpose is not to label individual researchers according to a perspective. What we seek to illustrate is that different perspectives yield different kinds of knowledge about schooling and that all the perspectives contribute to our understanding of schooling. Each perspective is labelled with a term that expresses our intuitive sense of its conception of schooling.

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Researchers adopting the analytic perspective seek to analyze schooling in its component parts. At the outset, they see a kind of working mechanism and are interested in the way its parts interact. Researchers adopting the portrait perspective wish to characterize schooling as an entity, for example, a classroom or a school. They see a working whole and attempt to describe it fully. Researchers adopting the intentional perspective are concerned with the purposes of schooling and with gaps between school intentions and outcomes. At first glance, they see a system marked by discrepancies, and they seek to identify and account for the differences between goals and accomplishments. Researchers adopting the structural perspective are concerned with the structures and functions of schooling. They see a set of structures common to schools and attempt to describe the corresponding processes and services performed for the whole. Researchers adopting the societal perspective focus on the relationship of schooling to society. Seeing schooling as a microcosm of society, they seek to identify correspondences and to explain schooling in societal terms. Researchers adopting the narrative perspective are concerned with the social and personal history of schooling and its participants. They see the school as a historical entity, and their purpose is to identify the personal, social, and historical narratives at work. Figure 1 summarizes the following description of these six perspectives. We identify the conception of schooling at work, along with a characteristic of its method, and describe the main characteristic of interest and the telling data generated. An exemplary study is used to illustrate each perspective.

The Analytic Perspective

This perspective embodies a conception of schooling as a complex set of interacting variables. Schooling is viewed as a composite of these variables and their various relations. The main characteristic of the perspective's methods is that variables are identified and their behavior in school systems is traced under natural, quasi-experimental, or experimental settings. Variables may be identified before inquiry or, given the appropriate statistical and interpretive procedures, may be generated from the data.

The kinds of questions asked by those who hold this perspective tend to be specific rather than general and tend to be posed in terms of either effect or correlation. For example, the question "What is the relationship of parental economic level to student achievement in grade 9?" is specific to grade 9 achievement and is posed in terms of effect.

The phenomena of schooling are, accordingly, treated as sets of interacting variables in which telling data consist of predictable variations in the relationship between two or more variables. For example, data on student achievement become telling with respect to the influence of parental economic level when collected under covariant conditions through the question posed above.
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The IEA studies illustrate this perspective. These studies are the second in a series of worldwide studies on achievement. The first, some 20 years earlier, were noteworthy for the psychometric methods adopted to analyze standardized achievement data. Published results ranking countries according to levels of achievement resulted in debates and explanations of why certain countries did better than others. Concern about these explanations resulted in the two phases of the current round of studies. In the first phase, data were gathered on policy and practice variables in each participating country; in the second phase, achievement data were collected. While the second round of studies examines more variables and provides a richer basis for understanding student achievement than the earlier one, the underlying concept remains the same—that achievement is comprehensible in terms of an array of conditioning variables. It will be possible to account for achievement in terms of opportunity to learn, kind and content of policy documents, methods of instruction, teacher education, and even the ideological history of the country. All these constitute explanatory variables. The telling data for this study are, therefore, variations in education policy, history, teacher education, and teaching methods, in association with variation in achievement levels.

The power of the perspective to shape inquiry is illustrated by an exchange between the IEA Canadian science researchers and the international team. Researchers were required to prepare a numerical grid that rated the degree of attention given to science content topics within policy guidelines. The purpose of these ratings was to provide data for use in subsequent international correlation studies. The Canadian conception of this part of the study was that the policy exercise was concerned with providing an interpretive, qualitative base for later analysis of achievement data; it was not, they believed, relevant to give ratings. From the perspective of the international team, however, anything less was of little use, since correlations could not be obtained. The international team viewed policy documents as input variables, while the Canadians saw the documents as interpretative context. Both of these conceptions, of course, make sense and are useful in giving an account of schooling.

Without an understanding of the perspectives at work, these differences are reduced to disputes in which each side views the other as intransigent. With an understanding of the different perspectives, and their attendant conceptions of schooling, we can avoid disputes and enrich the use of inquiry. In the science study, the analysis of the policy documents from both perspectives yields material important to an understanding of science achievement.

The Portrait Perspective

This perspective conceives of schooling as a whole, with a certain form, richness of detail, and a particular ethos that can be expressed in a written

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account. The main characteristic of this perspective’s methods is that the activities undertaken allow the researcher to illuminate the school’s character so that an insider’s view of what is important is represented. What constitutes the next appropriate steps in the inquiry is determined by the state of the evolving portrait. Researchers may need interviews, surveys, participant observations, or even questionnaires to find clues to facets of the portrait.

The questions asked by those who hold the portrait perspective are, at bottom, generic questions aimed at discovering the essence of the setting. A question such as “What characterizes a good secondary school?” is illustrative.

The phenomena of schooling are treated as integral elements of a whole in which telling data consist of observations and other records through which a part of the whole may be constructed. Unlike an observation that might, in a study from an analytic perspective, be used for purposes of correlation, here an observation is used to create the form.

Lightfoot’s *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture* illustrates this perspective. The book consists of portraits of schools, each presented as a chapter. In her words, she seeks “to capture the culture of these schools, their essential features, their generic character, the values that define their curricular goals and institutional structures, and their individual styles and rituals.” The statement clearly expresses the perspective, and we expect that Lightfoot will give us a sense of these schools as dynamic, complex entities. We see how her original question “What makes a good high school?” is given direction and form by the perspective. Thus, Lightfoot’s more detailed questions are about what works—questions that seek to identify good schools, ask what is right in them, and determine which practices could be transferred to other school environments.

These questions tend to be posed in ethical and aesthetic terms. The method is one in which the portraits become increasingly complex as the day-by-day data are obtained. These data, gathered by participant observation, interview, survey, and text analysis, become telling when they contribute to a developing account or portrait of the school as a whole. In this perspective, it is difficult to specify in advance what will pass as telling data or to justify collected data as telling information. As Lightfoot remarks, “As a matter of fact, before embarking on this adventure, it was easier to know what we would not be able to accomplish in a few days than it was to know what we might be able to produce.” Something of the artist enters into the process; both aesthetic and empirical elements combine to create the portraits.

The power of the perspective to shape inquiry is seen in the treatment of apparently discrepant data. Within an analytic perspective, researchers

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11 Ibid., p. 6
12 Ibid., p. 13
commonly treat discrepant data, if sufficiently extreme, as falling outside the limits of the particular inquiry and therefore as subject matter for a new one. More often, discrepant data are treated as an error term in an analysis of the relations existing between variables. But within the portrait perspective, researchers "must always listen for the deviant voice as an important version of the truth (and as a useful indicator of what the culture or social group defines as normal), not disregarded as outside of the central pattern." Thus, what is seen as deviant, and how this deviance is treated, depends on the researcher's perspective. Indeed, the portrait perspective sometimes appears clumsy and unsatisfactory, since the closer the inquirer comes to understanding the phenomena and the more adequate the account, the more deviance and diversity is included and the more fragmented and rough-edged the portrait becomes.

The Intentional Perspective

The intentional perspective conceives of schooling in terms of accomplishments: teacher accomplishments, student accomplishments, and social accomplishments. Schooling is essentially a quest to achieve the intentions of parents, society, and reformers. The main characteristic of this perspective's methods is that gaps between goals and achievements are identified, the intervening impediments and conditioning factors discovered, and solutions proposed. Inquiries within an intentional perspective may adopt different forms. For example, implementation studies often begin with intentions and search for gaps through the measurement of achievements. Alternatively, gaps may be given, for example, in policy studies such as A Nation at Risk, and the inquiry focuses on identifying the impediments. Impediments may be known from studies, for example, on home environment, and in these cases inquiry is concerned with methods of lessening the influence of these impediments.

The kinds of questions asked by those who hold this perspective are structured in terms of intentions, achievements, and impediments. An illustrative question is "What are the trends in reading levels, and what accounts for these trends?" Questions like this one are asked in a way that implies the possibility of improvement.

The phenomena of schooling are treated as more or less productive performances in which telling data consist of measures of performance judged against standards set by intentions. For example, meaningful data for the question on reading levels are judgments on the adequacy of current reading scores in terms of a historical benchmark. Government policy may be seen

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13Ibid., pp. 13-14.
to account for the trend, and accordingly, its modification becomes the source of improving reading levels.

Boyer’s *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America,* supported by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, illustrates the intentional perspective. The book, in Boyer’s words, is an “academic report card on the nation’s schools.” It consists of six sections. The first gives an account of the secondary school as “A Troubled Institution.” The goals of schooling are described in the section “A Clear and Vital Mission,” and the achievements desired from students are detailed in “What Every Student Should Learn.” Conditioning factors are identified in “The Heart of the Matter,” and an ideal picture of an effective institution is presented in “A School That Works.” Boyer concludes with “Connections Beyond the School,” which contains a chapter on “An Agenda for Action.” In the Foreword, he makes his intentional perspective clear:

The time has come for the nation’s high schools to serve their students more effectively and regain public confidence and support. . . . We agreed to focus on the high school as an educational institution, a place where people come to study and to learn. Our specific aim was to look at teachers, at students, at what is being taught, searching for 12 ways to strengthen the academic quality of the public school

The reader understands that Boyer will present a picture of the nation’s schools as troubled institutions with a high-minded mandate. He will specify the new courses of action needed. We see how the intentional perspective gives direction to the Carnegie Foundation’s original question, “What is the current condition of American secondary education?” Thus, Boyer’s more detailed questions seek to discover what behavior would cause us to believe that students are deeply involved in learning, how the role of the principal could be assessed, and in what ways the shared purposes of the school could be revealed.

The method relies heavily on identifying factors, trends, and insights found in the literature on schooling. The method provides a framework of issues and questions that structure the study. In Boyer’s book, he identifies ten issues that served as a “framework for the report.” He states the issues in terms of needed improvements—for example, “We conclude the time has come to stress the centrality of language and link the curriculum to a changing national and global context.” Given this framework, he develops a set of questions to use in field studies of 20-day duration in 15 schools, selected to represent a cross-section of American public secondary education. He defines the telling data in advance as data that would yield information on these questions and that might be used to compare the degree of accomplishment with the specified intention.

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16Ibid., p. 7.
The power of the intentional perspective to shape inquiry is seen in comparison with Lightfoot's portrait study. The more insight Lightfoot gained into specific schools, the more complex and practically detailed became her portraits. Boyer's perspective leads him to construct the ideal "good school," which is abstract and free of practical detail. Lightfoot's "good school" is a real place with specific characteristics; Boyer's is an ideal place with general characteristics. For Lightfoot, transposing "goodness" from school to school is possible only in context. She says, "The attempt to transpose 'the goods' to other settings requires an awareness of the ecology and dynamics of the original context." For Boyer, on the other hand, the ideal school functions as a standard against which actual schools may measure themselves and toward which they may strive. This transposition of goodness takes place through the adoption of general rules specified by Boyer—for example, "A high school, to be effective, must have a clear and vital mission," a reference to the first of his ten framework issues.

**The Structural Perspective**

This perspective embodies a conception of schooling as the reflection of structural characteristics common to all schools. These structures enable specific functions to be carried out in schools, functions that serve the purposes of schooling. The structural and portrait perspectives share the conception that the whole predominates. In the structural perspective, however, the structural form is abstracted from several schools; it is not specific to one. The form is a genus identified through its concrete expressions in different settings, an account of what is common to existing schools or classrooms. It does not imply an ideal school, as the intentional perspective does. The structural perspective does, however, imply that individual wholes, for example, individual schools, are most appropriately described and understood in terms of their general structural characteristics.

The main characteristic of this perspective's methods is that structures imply functions, and vice versa. If a process is identified, a search ensues for the structure; likewise, if a structure is assumed, certain school processes are sought. Various specific methodologies are appropriate to this process—for example, interviews, surveys, participant observations, questionnaires, and document analyses.

The kinds of questions asked by those who hold the structural perspective are either descriptive, structural questions or functional, process ones. A question such as "What are the decision-making structures in secondary schools?" is illustrative. Ordinarily, of course, such a question is followed by its functional

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counterpart, for instance, "How is computer time assigned to English class rooms?" The phenomena of schooling are evidence of structures and functions in which telling data consist of observations and other records that support an account of structure or process. These data, cast in structural and functional terms, contribute to an understanding of the whole, for example, the main tenance of school order.

Cusick's *The Egalitarian Ideal and the American High School: Studies of Three Schools* illustrates the structural perspective. The book is based on two studies using data collected from three schools. In the first study, Cusick begins with the problem of attendance and discipline and searches for the school structures and processes used to maintain school order. In the second, he develops two further themes, "the creation of curriculum" and "teacher lives" as vehicles for developing a general model of the structure:

The task is to describe the pattern of activities that occurred in these three schools in order to understand how people behave in them, what activities are undertaken there, and what accommodations the inhabitants make to the constraints and to one another, and to use that description to develop a model of the structures of these three, and in some ways, of other secondary schools.

This statement clearly expresses the structural perspective, we see how structures and functions are intertwined in his conception of the school. We also see that his account is aimed at building a structure common to the three schools, and ultimately to all schools.

The book does not provide an account of the individual schools, there are no portraits of his research sites. Urban High, Factory High, and Suburban High. The central question is posed in the form of a premise.

The premise of this book is that secondary schools have a structure and that any serious discussion of secondary education has to proceed from an understanding of that structure. The structure of an organization is an abstracted coherence that makes sense of the disparate elements.

The general question behind this premise might read, "What are schools made up of, and how do they work?" In the structural method, coherence dominates the drive to select and interpret data. The data are gathered by "observing classes, interviewing teachers and students, taking a limited role in discussions, and pursuing issues of curriculum or public relations through the organization." These data become telling when they contribute to the development of a coherent account of the structure at work.

The power of the perspective to shape inquiry is seen in Cusick's treatment of unanticipated data to modify his notion of school structure. In his

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20Ibid., p. 6
21Ibid., p. 4.
22Ibid., p. 7
second study, Cusick assumes the existence of decision-making structures in the allocation and creation of curriculum, and he begins to identify teacher decision-making networks. When it becomes clear that such a structure is not in place, he seeks to trace the way individual teachers define their own curriculum. He begins with a notion of a rational decision-making structure in which teachers develop curriculum according to agreed-upon rules and in which students follow a planned program. Ultimately, Cusick views a "structure which ultimately left each teacher alone to work out his or her own version of curriculum and each student alone to work out his or her education."24 He sees this structure, and the processes of individual teacher autonomy and individual student choice, as serving an egalitarian ideal. Therefore, the data do not modify his notion that a structure exists but, instead, modify his concept of the structure.

The Societal Perspective

This perspective conceives of schooling as a reflection of society. The school has certain values, structures, purposes, and patterns of action that are societal reproductions. The main characteristic of the perspective's methods is that the activities undertaken allow the researcher to illuminate societal features as they are expressed in the school. Data collection focuses on the correspondence between school and society in their treatment of race, gender, and class differences. Once again, several methods—interview, participant observation, and critical analysis—are all appropriate.

The kinds of questions asked by those who hold the societal perspective deal with the relationship between school and society. A question such as "How do inner-city schools reproduce class structure?" is illustrative.

The phenomena of schooling are treated as versions of more pervasive societal structures. Meaningful data consist of observations and other records of differential treatment of a social variable such as gender. For example, in a study of school knowledge, such data might consist of information on the relative distribution of knowledge along gender and class lines.

Peter Ramsay's "Fresh Perspectives on the School Transformation-Reproduction Debate"25 illustrates the societal perspective. In his paper, a response to one by Jean Anyon,26 Ramsay presents the findings of his New Zealand study of 30 schools, including a subsample of secondary schools. Partly because the article is a dialogue, it exhibits the characteristic of good books in revealing its working perspective. Ramsay's work is a study of schools in two working-class neighborhoods. A subset of four pairs of schools was

24Ibid., p. 107.
studied in depth. Schools were matched across variables such as socioeconomic status, family structure, and level of parental education. Ramsay identifies his study as one in the "new sociology of education—conducted from a sociological perspective." His work, he says, seeks to identify "a sound theoretical basis for the claim that knowledge was being used as a form of social control, and that schools have not advanced much from the days when they began with a chant 'God bless the Squire and His Relations, and help to keep us in our social stations.'" The statement makes clear that Ramsay and Anyon conceive of schools as versions of the larger society.

Ramsay's method is based on the principles of grounded theory and uses ethnomethodological principles as well as applied historical techniques and demographic surveys. He attempts to treat "all phenomena as data." For Ramsay, data become telling when they are displayed according to the social variables on which his schools were matched. He makes interpretations in terms of social reproduction and transformation. Therefore, an interpretative direction is built into the method, a direction given by a general view of the relation of schools to society and of the relevant social class factors. Ramsay's paper is particularly interesting on this point, since he is sensitive to the possibility that this interpretive direction will obscure both what is observed and how it is interpreted. He criticizes Anyon, claiming, in effect, that her adherence to their shared research perspective yielded overly neat results.

The power of the perspective to shape inquiry is seen in the Ramsay-Anyon debate. Ramsay insists on adopting methodological strategies such as making "a deliberate effort to control an ontological approach," making researcher dispositions explicit, writing personal researcher statements in advance of the research, using debriefing sessions designed in part to test interpretations against researcher bias, searching for "taken for granted assumptions to avoid tunnel vision," and writing as complex an account of schools as possible. The motive for these strategies is the fear that the interpretive direction might obscure incompatible results.

The Narrative Perspective

This perspective conceives of schooling as an expression of personal and social narrative history. Schooling is viewed as a story in which inquiry focuses on the developing text so that the present is seen in terms of experiential reconstructions of the past and in terms of an intentional future. The main characteristic of this perspective's methods is that a range of diverse data is collected over time on specific school practices. These data are then arranged...
so that the account of the practice is given in terms of narrative history. What is appropriate at any point in time and what constitutes the next appropriate steps in the inquiry are determined by the evolving narrative. Interviews, participant observations, questionnaires, or document analyses may be needed to complete a step in the narrative.

The questions asked by those who hold a narrative perspective focus on the meaning that specific actions hold in terms of participants’ personal and social history. A question such as “What is the meaning of the school celebration of cultural holidays for students?” is illustrative.

The phenomena of schooling are treated as personally and socially meaningful acts. Telling data consist of observations and other records in which the narrative origins and, therefore, the embodied meaning of an act are revealed.

Our own studies of classroom participants’ practical knowledge illustrate this perspective. This work has been ongoing in one inner-city school for seven years. The published work consists of interpretive accounts of individual teachers and their practices and is organized around a problem of practical knowledge. The narrative perspective is concerned with the personal histories of participants embedded within the social history of schools and schooling. Central constructs within the narrative perspective are the notions of narrative unity and the rhythms in individuals’ lives. We define narrative unity as a continuum within a person's experience; experiences become meaningful through the unity they achieve for the individual. Unity means the union, in a particular person in a particular time and place, of all that he has been and undergone and of the tradition that helped shape him.

Mark Johnson says:

This [focus on narrative unity and rhythms] would involve examining the images and metaphors that structure, not just teachers’ classroom knowledge, but also the personal knowledge and human affairs, personal past history, and so forth that any teacher brings into the classroom experience and understood in terms of where the narrative

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is headed. That is, we need to begin looking at the dominant images and metaphors of the teacher’s entire world, in and out of the classroom."

To understand rhythm in the narrative of teaching is to understand something of how a person conforms to the cyclic temporal structure of schooling and social life and becomes what we call a teacher while still stamping her own particular cultural and personal mark on the teaching process through the rhythms she develops.

These notions of narrative unity and rhythm and their entailments in inquiry express the narrative perspective. They provide a way of understanding participants' experiential knowledge. Classroom actions are treated as meaningful events, where the meaning arises from the images and metaphors developed through the narrative of experience. Thus, the narrative perspective gives our basic question “What is the personal practical knowledge at work in classroom settings?” a historical direction.

Increasingly complex narratives are written in this method. They are based on daily participant observations, narrative accounts of participants' work, and conversations with participants, the dialogue focuses on narrative antecedents and intentional futures, to events described in the accounts. The data, gathered by participant observation, interview, and text analysis, become telling as they acquire meaning within the context of the developing narrative. As with the portrait perspective, it is not easy to predict what will pass as telling data, nor is it easy to justify collected data as telling. Any item of data, considered in isolation, could provide evidence for any number of possible narrative unities and rhythms. Thus, the justification for the use of any item depends on the plausibility of the written narrative, and this plausibility depends, in part, on how a complex web of observation and interview data is shaped.

The power of the narrative perspective to shape inquiry is seen in the non-judgmental character of the accounts presented. The main purpose, to reconstruct the meaningfulness of an act, is carried out in terms of personal and social narrative history and future. For some readers, the narrative perspective appears unsatisfactory, since teaching actions that might distress them are treated as meaningful. The “goodness” of a particular act is judged from the teacher’s perspective. The social and educational goodness of an act judged against external standards is outside the frame of reference of the narrative perspective, except in so far as the researcher does enter into dialogue with the participant. Of course, a view of school reform is still retained in the narrative perspective. The process of inquiry within schools, and the insights that result, are set within a particular, dialectical view of school reform in which growth occurs through reflection on narrative meaning.

FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT A CHILD’S EDUCATION

What kinds of things would we learn and know about a child’s education from the six perspectives on inquiry? We believe that each perspective generates a different form of knowledge and that we may, accordingly, discover different kinds of things about schooling, or some aspect of it, from each one. Each perspective offers useful knowledge about schooling. To understand schooling in all its complexity, we need to understand it from these, and perhaps other, perspectives. For purposes of this summary, we have focused on the education of a single child. We might have focused on a classroom, a school, the learning of mathematics, and so on.

From the analytic perspective, we understand the child’s education in terms of interacting variables in her learning. Such matters as her age, sex, learning style, intelligence level, and age of entry into school are all important. Teacher factors such as teaching style, sex, age, preparation, years of experience, and teaching performance are important. A similar analysis of matters such as classroom environment, school program, and parental characteristics is relevant. A comprehensive account of the child’s education, according to this perspective, would consist of a listing of these variables and their correlations.

From the portrait perspective, a picture of the child’s education would be built up through a holistic account of the child, the classroom, the school, or even the school board. The child’s education is seen in the context of a portrait of this complex and pervasive whole and would be described in terms of the quality of the educational experiences.

From the intentional perspective, the child’s education is seen as one of achievement in relation to educational goals that may be specified by others or even by the child herself. Measures of progress are available for comparison with either oneself or others. Using this perspective, we understand the extent to which the child is attaining standards and fulfilling expectations for her education.

With the structural perspective, we understand the child’s education in terms of general structures common to schools and of the processes that result from these structures. We understand the child’s education in the context of such structural matters as curriculum levels, the adaptations of curriculum content, and the processes of student choice—all within a broad K–12 curriculum structure. In general, we understand the child’s education in terms of social services performed by school structures and functions.

With the societal perspective, we understand the child’s education in terms of the predominant forms of treatment of social groups within the society. To understand her education, we would consider her school subjects as representing kinds of knowledge accessible to groups within society on a varying basis. The child’s education would be perceived as a reflection of this treatment.
Finally, from the narrative perspective, we understand the child's education in terms of the child's and the teacher's dominant narratives embedded within cultural and historical narratives. The child's education, for instance, is seen in terms of her personal narrative and of the meaning this narrative conveys on her learning experiences in a particular classroom. The child's education is seen historically in a temporal continuum.

Returning to the original question of how these studies on schooling add up, we note that each of the perspectives adds a special understanding of the child's education. An understanding of effective variables, of a complex whole, of accomplishment, of general school structure and process, of societal forms, and of personal narrative.

A DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES VERSUS A MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD VIEW

This understanding is, of course, of a hypothetical child. We know of no studies that actually use as wide an array of perspectives as the six described here. Still, there is no reason, in principle, why complex studies cannot be designed. We believe a major impediment to comprehensive studies embodying a rich diversity of perspectives is what Schwab calls a researcher's "Decision Point 0." Schwab was writing on the principles of inquiry chosen by individual researchers, and his "0-Point" referred to content-free considerations such as research pursued to please the biases of a promotions committee or a research career used to gain entry to administrative positions. From our point of view, the "0-Point" is a matter of the different languages and interests of researchers trained, and working in, different perspectives. For a researcher trained in a perspective and working with colleagues within a similar perspective, it is unlikely that he would be able to step outside his working perspective to adapt or even understand another perspective. Witness our account of the impact of differing perspectives on research purposes in the section on the analytic perspective. In part, this tendency to remain within a perspective is a result of the power of perspective. Still, researchers within a perspective may be unable to understand the value of research from a different perspective.

The avowed "middle-of-the-road" sentiments of Miles and Huberman ameliorate the situation. They believe that with less rhetoric and more inquiry,


pursued with a sufficiently tolerant attitude, barriers now existing between different lines of research will fall. Still, as we read their rich set of methodological prescriptions for qualitative research, we get the feeling that a "middle-of-the-roader" might not be comfortable with an anthropologist such as Clifford Geertz\(^6\) who drives along the shoulder of the highway. Miles and Huberman write, for example, that Elliot W. Eisner's "artistry" is only "a sort of simile, there are no actual poems or dramas being produced."\(^3\) In what might be read as a counterpoint to them, however, Geertz says, "This sort of thing has always gone on—Lucretius, Mandeville and Erasmus Darwin all made their theories rhyme."\(^5\) In the phrase "this sort of thing," Geertz draws attention to artistry in the form of what Miles and Huberman call "data presentation." Our reading of Geertz encourages the view that a comprehensive understanding of schooling is best pursued by allowing a diversity of perspectives, not by searching for positions that would rule some work in and some out. We see a kinship between Geertz's observations on inquiry in general and Eisner's\(^9\) observations on the aesthetics of educational inquiry.

Although we find Miles and Huberman's views useful in thinking about qualitative inquiry, we want to compare their efforts with Eisner's and, by association, with the notion developed in this paper, of inquiry perspectives into schooling. Qualitative methodologies, according to Miles and Huberman, can be reduced to a consideration of how, under what conditions, and with what method of interpretation data are handled. But data considerations are part of a larger whole captured by the notion of an inquiry perspective. A perspective draws attention not only to the method of inquiry but to the problem of how we conceptualize schooling and of how data may be rendered as telling within this conception.

This idea, we take it, is Eisner's point when he talks about aesthetic approaches to research. It is not merely a matter of how data are handled but a matter of how data are rendered within the context of the whole. There is an aesthetic of presentation: of report writing, article making, and book preparing. Eisner wants us to think of research in non-reductionistic terms. An understanding of inquiry includes, but is much more than, a matter of specific methods, data, and how they both are handled. It is, rather, a matter of how they are all conceptualized by our notion of schooling and of how they are presented in a final work. The final work is a whole. It is not mere simile to

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call a well-crafted article or a well-crafted book an “artwork.” Books and articles are productions, as are paintings and sculptures. The fact that educational research has tended to reify a particular productive form should not mislead us into thinking that the productive form itself is unavailable as a legitimate problem for educational inquiry. What form should the whole take? This, we take it, is Eisner’s question. He makes problematic how the field is taken for granted and reminds us that how we present our data is a proper matter for consideration.

The idea of perspectives on inquiry into schooling draws attention to these aspects of inquiry. A perspective captures the sense in which data become telling within the form of a crafted product such as an article or a book. As both Geertz and Eisner remind us, our articles and our books may take on some of the characteristics commonly attributed to poetry, painting, fiction, and biography. The best forms for presenting the results of analytic and narrative inquiry may well differ. Granted, we do not know very well how to present them, but we think it is legitimate for inquirers into schooling to pursue the use of different perspectives.

PRACTICAL POSSIBILITIES

While we prefer the narrative, we believe that each of these six perspectives contributes to our understanding of schooling. The perspectives do not compete with one another. One of the practical possibilities, given the set of perspectives, is that communication among researchers will be enhanced. Researchers tend to communicate only with others who adhere to the same perspective, and sometimes only with those who hold the same theory within a perspective. This tendency, a consequence of the terms, methods, and courses we teach and accept, can narrow our outlook on what is acceptable and valuable research into schooling. The risk in not acknowledging diversity is that a small group within a particular perspective may define a field by ignoring those whose perspectives differ from their own. One possible use of this framework of perspectives, then, is to allow researchers to identify and deliberately seek out researchers who adopt different perspectives but whose phenomena of inquiry and central problems are the same.

These considerations highlight the importance of interdisciplinary research in dealing with educational problems, as well as the value of interdisciplinary training for researchers interested in schooling. We believe it is important that research groups exhibit a multiplicity of perspectives. We also believe individual researchers should be educated to understand a diversity of perspectives, not only those in which they received their doctoral training. Given the intensity of a doctoral program, it is far too easy to blind a potential researcher to the strengths and possibilities of other perspectives.

Finally, we wish to comment that we have not written on the problem of school reform and on the relations of theory and practice. From this vantage
point, some might say that all educational research is "intentional," but this notion would be a misreading of the intentional perspective as defined. To argue that all schooling research takes place within a reform context is not the same as defining research as being concerned with intentions and their achievement. Lightfoot is concerned with the "good school," for example, but she has not designed a study in terms of the intentional perspective. Each of the perspectives stands in a different relation to practice. Some, to use the philosopher Richard McKeon's terms, are logistic and imply a prescriptive relationship; some are dialectic and imply a mutuality of researcher and practitioner; and some are problematic and imply a consultancy relationship. A proper rendition of these relations is the subject of another paper.41

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Ramsey focuses on the teachers and problem solvers who are capable of generating new possibilities in teaching. The book is an attempt to expand on the often narrow Anglo-American perspective held by many educators. The author provides general goals and models to serve teachers who wish to incorporate a multicultural perspective into aspects of their teaching. The book is appropriate for use by preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and school administrators who wish to work more creatively and effectively with children from a diverse and changing social landscape.

—Gregory J Nolan


This collection of 12 research articles, originally published in the Journal of Curriculum Studies, focuses on curriculum theory and theorizing (Wellington, Pinar, Roby), curriculum history (Reid, Hamilton, de Castell, Luke), subjects of the curriculum (Portal, McEwen, Harris, Taylor), and curriculum, school, and teacher (Lindblad, Pophewitz, Lampert).
