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ANOTHER CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION: A RESPONSE TO HILLS'S "ISSUES IN RESEARCH ON INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION"

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article by Haggerson and the one that follows by Scheurich and Lather were written at the invitation of the editor in response to the preceding article by Hills. They are followed by a rejoinder by Hills. All of these articles were stimulated by the series of articles on research in instructional supervision that appeared in the Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, *Volume 5, Number 3, Spring 1990, which in turn had been written in response to an earlier article by Bolin in Volume 3, Number 4, Summer 1988.*

In reading various articles on inquiry in instructional supervision published in the Spring 1990 issue of the *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, Hills discerns that the authors are rejecting "cognitive-technical-rational" science as "misplaced, inappropriate, or unproductive for studying human interaction generally and supervisory behavior specifically" (p. 1). These authors—Garman, Grimmett and Crehan, Blumberg, Sergiovanni, Holland, and Grimmett—Hills says, are ambiguous in their descriptions of the science they seem to reject; therefore, knowing just what they are rejecting is difficult.

Nevertheless, from his interpretations of their writings, he construes a "composite conception of [the] cognitive-technical-rational science" he believes they are rejecting. His composite conception is essentially rational; its value pattern is "cognitive rationality" (p. 3).

Using this frame of reference, and referring to their writings, Hills finds that the authors use rational aspects of the composite construct to justify their anti-rationalist positions. He concludes, therefore, that what they consider contradictory positions are only apparently contradictory.

Next he finds the authors forming a dichotomy "between the composite view of scientific research synthesized from [their] writings and the view of hermeneutics (interpretive understanding)." Hills believes that their dichotomous formulation is ill-founded. In its place he argues for "complementarity."

Indeed, his footnote—"From this point of view, the recent positivist versus post-positivist, quantitative versus qualitative, and rationalist versus naturalistic debates have been much ado about nothing"—indicates that to view the positions as dichotomous rather than complementary is trivial (pp. 13–14).

Finally, Hills contends the authors uncritically hold three assumptions:

> The first is that the only conceivable use of scientific theory and research for the practitioner is providing the basis for a scientifically reliable technology or for technically rational decision making. The second is that some other approach will prove to be more adequate than the scientific in portraying the complexities of practice. The third is the explicitly stated assumption that to practice is to engage in "an idiosyncratic doing of something," and therefore supervision cannot become a science, even in the applied sense (p. 9).

He addresses each of these uncritically examined assumptions that the authors allegedly hold and, once again, concludes that the two approaches to inquiry are both compatible with the cognitive rationality value pattern and that they are essentially complementary.

To argue these points from both interpretivist and generic hermeneutist points of view, I need to establish both a setting and various ways of interpretation (hermeneutics).

THE SETTING

A Tradition of Inquiry

The writings of the authors in the Spring 1990 *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* Hills refers to, and others, of course, are set in a long tradition of inquiry in instructional supervision itself. Writers in this field have recently focused on enduring issues of theory and practice, uses and abuses, and the form and substance of instructional supervision. Scholars, entrepreneurs, and field practitioners continue to ask questions. What is the nature of instructional supervision? What is the role of the supervisor, especially in evaluation? Is there a science of instructional supervision? Is supervision primarily a practice? Is instructional supervision a field of study? Does instructional supervision have an accepted or acceptable language? What form of instructional supervision is most effective? How do we know? How do we do instructional supervision? How do we study instructional supervision? How do we construe instructional supervision? How do we improve instruction? Who says how to improve instruction?

Who says how to improve instructional supervision? Several groups, with several agendas, are working in the field to answer these questions. One group, primarily located in universities, are responsible for teaching educational administrators and supervisors. A second group, under the guise of science and research, have become the entrepreneurs of instructional supervision programs, models, schemes, and packages. The third group, in schools

and other administrative units, are doing their best to improve education in their schools either toward what they wish it to be or toward what they perceive the public wants it to be. They are not sure where to turn for guidance They have tended to follow the entrepreneurs, who seem to promise a quick fix and who often hype products as "scientific" or "research-based."

The scholars. University-based scholars have a long history of studying supervision. American Educational Research Association (AERA) meetings have focused on some recent efforts. In 1986, several scholars gave a symposium, "Toward Instructional Supervision as a Field of Study." Others discussed their work and reconceptualizations at sessions of the AERA's Instructional Supervision Special Interest Group. Still others presented their research at meetings of the Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision. A major thrust of much of the work, including the articles in the Spring 1990 issue of the *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, is that researchers' "mindscapes" of instructional supervision determine how they inquire into its nature and practice.[1] Most of the authors discussed here have concluded that instructional supervision is not a science, it is a practice.[2] Interpretive inquiry into the meaning of instructional supervision as a practice differs from cognitive-technical-rational inquiry into instructional supervision as a science, a scientific theory, or a technology. For the most part, the authors writing in the Spring 1990 *Journal* have determined that interpretive inquiry is most suitable for explicating and understanding practice.

In "Conflicting Conceptions of Clinical Supervision and the Enhancement of Professional Growth and Renewal. Point and Counterpoint," Hunter and Glickman explicate two other inquiry orientations in this tradition.[3] Hunter's position is the most pertinent to this discussion on the scientific and the interpretive approaches to instructional supervision. Hunter describes her orientation to clinical (instructional) supervision as a "model" of supervision. Its research base "began with Thorndike," and its empirical efficacy was determined by "a research project in an inner-city school in Los Angeles ... called 'Project Linkage.'" Numerous interpretivists, including Gibboney, now question the efficacy of the empirical research on her model.[4]

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[1]Thomas J Sergiovanni, "Landscapes, Mindscapes, and Reflective Practice in Supervision," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 1 (Fall 1985): 5–17.

[2]Ibid. Sergiovanni says, "In practice, supervision and evaluation differ markedly from this theoretical view Patterns of practice are actually characterized by a great deal of uncertainty, instability, complexity, and variety Value conflicts and uniqueness are accepted aspects of educational settings" (p. 11)

[3]Noreen B. Garman, Carl D. Glickman, Madeline Hunter, and Nelson L. Haggerson, "Conflicting Conceptions of Clinical Supervision and the Enhancement of Professional Growth and Renewal Point and Counterpoint," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 2 (Winter 1987) 152–177.

[4]Richard A. Gibboney, "A Critique of Madeline Hunter's Teaching Model from Dewey's Perspective," *Educational Leadership* 44 (February 1987). 46–50. Gibboney writes directly to and strongly about the inadequacies of Hunter's model

In my interpretation:

> Hunter's model of clinical [instructional] supervision [which she herself agreed on] seems to reside in behavioral psychology with particular emphasis on the notion of cause-effect relationships between teaching and learning. Her descriptions and discussions place her, philosophically, in the scientific realist camp, which relies heavily on the correspondence theory of knowing and is primarily concerned with cause effect relationships."[5]

This version of scientific instructional superversion troubles interpretivists. They see Hunter and her followers misusing and abusing the concepts of science to sell their process and products. For the most part, scholars view Hunter and her followers as entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurs. The second group trying to improve instruction serve the schools in an entrepreneurial manner. They have taken hold in school districts around the country. One part of this group's work galls the university researchers studying and writing about instructional supervision most. Many entrepreneurs claim that their models, programs, or schemes are based on research or are "scientific."[6] Furthermore, when put to a scientific test—Do these things make a difference in practice?—they fail. This concern, I think, calls the authors writing in the Spring 1990 *Journal* to rail about "this unmindful aping of natural science paradigms."[7]

The field supervisors. The educators responsible for improving instruction in the schools are, in many cases, doing exemplary work. They are providing examples of the practice of instructional supervision that the scholars are studying. The interpretivist inquirers say that their goal is to understand the practice of instructional supervision and to explicate to the best of their ability the nature of the practice so that others, too, can understand. The understanding goes beyond how to do instructional supervision, it includes why it is done the way it is, who the stakeholders are, who benefits, who loses, who makes a profit, and what the rules of the game are. My experience tells me that these scholars are most disturbed about the field supervisors who "put on" a certain model of supervision for all teachers and try to make that model stick by claiming that "research says" or that the model is "scientifically proven."

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[5]Noreen B. Garman, Carl D. Glickman, Madeline Hunter, and Nelson L. Haggerson, "Conflicting Conceptions of Clinical Supervision and the Enhancement of Professional Growth and Renewal: Point and Counterpoint," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 2 (Winter 1987). 169.

[6]Richard A. Gibboney, "A Critique of Madeline Hunter's Teaching Model from Dewey's Perspective," *Educational Leadership* 44 (February 1987): 46.

[7]Peter Grimmett, "Toward a Practice of Scholarship: Beyond the Private Cold War Metaphor, *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 5 (Spring 1990): 257

To portray the setting within which my response to Hills's critique is made, as I have done in this section, might seem superfluous to those criticizing from a strictly rational frame of reference; it is necessary, however, from an interpretivist and a generic hermeneutist point of view. Furthermore, I must also set forth my understanding of the hermeneutic processes themselves if I am to help sort out the epistemological and methodological issues at stake in these articles and in these exchanges over them.

THE HERMENEUTIC PROCESSES

Generic Hermeneutics

In its broadest sense, *hermeneutics* means interpreting texts. I refer to this process as *generic* hermeneutics. The process is rigorous because interpretation is made within the hermeneutic circle or hermeneutic spiral. Within that circle or spiral, interpretations come as a result of comparing and contrasting the whole with the parts or theory with practice. In this sense, a hermeneutist, an interpreter of texts, would interpret texts from various worldviews or frames of reference, trying to understand and help others understand through interpretation those various worldviews. In *Three Faces of Hermeneutics*, Howard makes a case for *analytic* hermeneutics, *ontological* hermeneutics, and *psychological* hermeneutics.[8] To me, Howard's text itself is an example of generic hermeneutics. In "Reconceptualizing Inquiry in Curriculum: Using Multiple Research Paradigms to Enhance the Study of Curriculum," I argue that to understand fully the curriculum, events, and actions under the jurisdiction of the school, we should inquire from at least four paradigms: the theoretical-rational, the mythological-practical, the evolutionary-transformational, and the normative-critical.[9] Studies from each paradigm would render interpretations of curriculum. Here is another case of generic hermeneutics.

Although generic hermeneutics is my term, Soltis also summarizes this position well:

> But I have also argued that pedagogy [or instructional supervision] as a basic human activity, by its very nature, requires a combined serious study of the empirical to give us insight into its causal and correlational dimension, and equally serious study of the intersubjective and subjective dimension to open up our understanding of the kinds of human meanings exchanged, developed, and evoked in the pedagogical encounter, and a searching exploration of the normative, ideological, and ethical dimension of

[8]Roy J Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[9]Nelson L. Haggerson, "Reconceptualizing Inquiry in Curriculum: Using Multiple Research Paradigms to Enhance the Study of Curriculum," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 8 (Spring 1988). 81–102

pedagogy as a basic form of human social interaction Likewise, research in education broadly conceived must be empirical, interpretive, normative, and critical [10]

The worldviews underlying the analytic, rational, and cognitive-rational, whichever term is chosen, call for an epistemology, a way of knowing. Therefore, methods of study are important to an understanding of reality beyond the human being. The ontological position, however, is not really concerned with methods because its goal is to understand *being* and *consciousness*. Reality in this vein is what we experience. A generic hermeneutic provides for recognizing and understanding this basic difference in interpretations. Here we find the basis for interpretivist inquiry.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Ontological Hermeneutics

Packer writes that what Heidegger calls *hermeneutic phenomenology* is often called *hermeneutics* or *hermeneutic inquiry*.[11] This meaning may come to mind first when the reader thinks of interpretive inquiry. I also see it as Howard's ontological hermeneutics.[12] Howard uses Gadamer, Heidegger's student, as an exemplar of one who inquires and interprets in the guise of ontological hermeneutics.

Packer relates hermeneutic inquiry and interpretive inquiry.

> The end product of a hermeneutic inquiry—an interpretive account—is more modest in its aims than is a formal set of rules or a causal law, but at the same time it is, I believe, subtle and complex, intellectually satisfying, and more appropriate to human action, embracing the historical openness, the ambiguity and opacity, the deceptions, dangers, and delights that action manifests.[13]

Heidegger establishes three distinct, though interrelated, modes of engagement or involvement that people have with their surroundings The ways we inquire and then interpret depend on the mode of engagement. In the most basic, the *ready-to-hand mode,* we are actively engaged in practical projects in the world—practicing instructional supervision. When we carry out these activities, our awareness is essentially holistic. As researchers, we experience this mode and then create a story, a stream-of-consciousness journal, or a poem to represent our understandings. Those renderings actually take us to the second mode.

We enter the second mode of engagement, the *unready-to-hand mode,* when we encounter some problem or upset in our practical activity:

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[10]Jonas F Soltis, "On the Nature of Educational Research," *Educational Researcher* 13 (December 1984): 5–10.

[11]Martin J. Packer, "Hermeneutic Inquiry in the Study of Human Conduct," *American Psychologist* 40 (October 1985): 1081–1093.

[12]Roy J. Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics. An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[13]Martin J. Packer, "Hermeneutic Inquiry in the Study of Human Conduct," *American Psychologist* 40 (October 1985): 1092

Experience in the unready-to-hand mode has a structure analogous to the figure-ground structure the Gestalt school found in visual experience. Particular aspects of the whole situation stand out but only against a background provided by the project we are engaged in and the interests and involvements guiding it.[14]

I believe the authors writing in the Spring 1990 *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* are discussing this unready-to-hand mode, even though they may have experienced the practice of instructional supervision at the ready-to-hand mode.

Only when we detach ourselves from the project at hand can we enter the third mode of engagement, the *present-at-hand mode.* We step back, reflect, and call for more abstract forms of logic and analysis (perhaps statistics) to solve the problem as we view it objectively. In this mode, we might engage in generalizations, as we would in the scientific paradigm. In my interpretation, Hills criticizes the articles in the Spring 1990 *Journal* from this present-at hand mode. Howard's analytic hermeneutics and Haggerson's theoretical rational paradigm seem to hold the same methodological views as Heidegger's present-at-hand mode.[15]

In hermeneutic phenomenology, the ready-to-hand mode is primary. I interpret Holland's response to Blumberg as being hermeneutic phenomenology.[16] She practices instructional supervision from the ready-to-hand mode, she writes about it from the unready-to-hand mode.

Normative-Critical Hermeneutics

Those who inquire in the normative-critical paradigm are often called conflict or critical theorists.[17] John Smyth of Deakin University and others refer to their research in this paradigm as *critical pedagogy.* Typically the quest of those interpreting, inquiring, and criticizing from this position is to "discover instances of sciencelike laws that govern social movement . . . forms of both economic and noneconomic oppression and domination."[18] Howard interprets this hermeneutic as his psychological hermeneutics, he uses Habermas as his exemplar.[19]

Although I do not use a critical hermeneutic as a basis for interpreting Hills's article or the articles in the Spring 1990 *Journal*, the use of this

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[14]Ibid., p. 1084.

[15]Roy J. Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Nelson L. Haggerson, "Reconceptualizing Inquiry in Curriculum: Using Multiple Research Paradigms to Enhance the Study of Curriculum," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 8 (Spring 1988). 81–102.

[16]Patricia E. Holland, "A Hermeneutic Perspective on Supervision Scholarship," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 5 (Spring 1990): 252–254.

[17]Walter Feinberg and Jonas F. Soltis, *School and Society* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985), pp. 43–58.

[18]Ibid, p. 54.

[19]Roy J. Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics. An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

form of hermeneutic in this fertile field could provide much needed enlightenment. (Perhaps an issue of the *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* could publish studies giving a critical interpretation, or hermeneutic, of instructional supervision.)

A GENERIC HERMENEUTIC RESPONSE TO HILLS'S ARTICLE

So far I have summarized Hills's criticism, established a setting to respond from, discussed possible faces of hermeneutics for interpreting and criticizing, and stated my own proclivity for inquiry and criticism. Next I address his points of criticism.[20]

Points of Ambiguity

Hills states early in his article that his contribution "draw[s] attention to some problems with several articles published in the Spring 1990 *Journal*." Further, he announces that he submits his contribution to the discussion because of his interest in the philosophy and methodology of science. He is first concerned with points of ambiguity over various terms—*science, rational or technical worldview*. He then goes through several articles in that issue of the *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* and draws out a "composite conception of cognitive-technical-rational science." He continues, "All these authors reject this sort of science as either misplaced, inappropriate, or unproductive for studying human interaction generally and supervisory behavior specifically (pp. 1–3)."

His composite conception of what the authors are rejecting differs considerably from my perception and, I am guessing, from the perceptions of these authors. To understand the meaning of this ambiguous and somewhat polemical language, we have to include the setting, the rules of the game. My understanding is that the authors are not railing against the composite picture of science that Hills conceptualizes, but rather at those who interpret science and research as some "fixed reality," as "*the* way" to do or view instructional supervision. Thus, I believe these authors are criticizing some of the entrepreneurs, scholars, and practitioners I describe in The Setting section. Of course, the ambiguity of the language the authors use for describing what they are railing against leaves something to be desired.

In *School and Society*, Fineberg and Soltis tell a delightful story about a traditional social scientist visiting the United States for the first time.[21] The social scientist wanted to understand American culture. A good place to start, his host suggested, was to understand America's "national pastime sport," baseball. So he went to baseball games and did a detailed study of the acts

[20] I have followed Hills's outline for my commentary.

[21] Walter Feinberg and Jonas F Soltis, *School and Society* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985), pp 81–86

and events of the games. Finally, he sorted, classified, and categorized the data and wrote the report. After looking at the report, his host said, "This is a very impressive report, but unfortunately, you have learned nothing about baseball."

To understand the "texts" of baseball or articles about instructional supervision, we must understand the setting—the intentions of the actors, the interaction of multiple sets of actors and actions—all in respect to the formal and constitutive rules of the game. Is the baseball story analogous to Hills's composite conception of the sort of science "all these authors reject . . . as either misplaced, inappropriate, or unproductive"? When I look at the complex practice of instructional supervision and attempts to understand and characterize it, put it into the context drawn up earlier, look at both the formal and the constitutive rules, my answer is, Yes, I think so. Hills presents an interesting, and at first reading, a convincing report. On further analysis and interpretation, however, I think the story applies, the language of baseball is ambiguous, too.

What audience, then, are we writing for? Do we write only for those who already know the rules of the game? Do we have an obligation to provide the context, the mindscape, and our proclivities in each piece we write? How much responsibility does the reader have to ferret out the meanings, the rules of our games? If we want to understand and to be understood, we should consider these questions. Dialogue is the best way to mutually understand multiple points of view. The *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* is providing an opportunity for such dialogue. One of the most fascinating discoveries I made while studying the philosophy of science was that the literature is full of *letters to the editor, responses, retorts,* and other forms of dialogue. A generic hermeneutics requires these opportunities and responses.

A story of trouble my doctoral students and I have encountered illustrates the need for us to better explicate our points of view, whether theoretical or critical. When I first began directing education dissertations, some 25 years ago, three methods were acceptable for doing research: the empirical, which really meant descriptive or experimental; the philosophical; and the historical. At first, I had my students elaborately describe both the methods they used to conduct their research and the rationale undergirding the methods. As time went on, we assumed more and more and wrote less and less. When the outside member came to the oral defense, the arguments addressed the details and use of the methods, not the efficacy of the method for the task or the researcher's mindscape.

In more recent years, as we have moved toward more interpretive and critical studies, once again I have had students write long rationales and explanations for worldviews, methods, or no method, as the case may be. Now the arguments from the outsiders address the different worldviews, not so much the methods.

As I perceived more professors from various fields coming to understand the different worldviews and hermeneutics, the arguments subsided. I had my students write less and less and assume more and more. My experience tells me the move was premature. We still have little understanding about the vast differences between the paradigms, hermeneutics, worldviews, and implications for inquiry and criticism. We still need to explain, explicate, argue, discuss, and tell stories to promote a mutual understanding of our various views. The need for exposition from the cognitive-technical-rational perspective is as great as the need for exposition from the interpretive and critical perspectives. Some of us are carrying around outdated views of current cognitive-technical-rational science. Perhaps our inaccurate perceptions partly explain the ambiguous language that bothers Hills.

Apparent Contradictions

Hills argues that the authors' contradictions between the scientific and the interpretivist approaches are only apparent. He claims the writers justify their anti-rationalist positions by appealing to aspects of the very science they reject. If, however, his composite conception of science is indeed not what they are rejecting, then his efforts to demonstrate that the contradictions are only apparent is moot.

If we refer to Heidegger's modes of engagement in discussing instructional supervision as a theory or practice, reasons contradictions are real to some, and apparent to others, become clearer. If we view instructional supervision as a practice, as a ready-to-hand experience, then the experience—all the contradictions, complexities, stability, and instability and the variety of thoughts, emotions, senses, and shared understandings in the practice—is consummate. Contradictions just are. But if we think of instructional supervision as a theory and the inquirers are engaging at the present-at-hand mode, stepping back, reflecting, turning to more general and abstract situation-independent tools such as logical analysis, then contradictions become troublesome for them. In attempting to establish that the scientific approach is appropriate for all inquiry, we must argue, then, that real contradictions are merely apparent, unwitting.

Take Hills's reference to the conflict raised in his mind by "Garman's invocation of Muturana's concept of *consensual domain* in support of her hermeneutic perspective" (p. 4). Although I haven't read Muturana's work, I interpret that Garman, in trying to understand and explain the reciprocity between the teacher and the instructional supervisor in the effective practice of instructional supervision, might use Muturana's consensual domain as a metaphor. Engaging the practice of clinical supervision (a particular form of instructional supervision) in the unready-at-hand mode, Garman might focus at one time on the symbolic as the figure and the operational (causal) description as the ground; at another time, she might switch the focus, and in so

doing not think of the conflict as troublesome, but rather as challenging. We could call this phenomenon "the paradox of human subjectivity."[22]

Dichotomous Formulation

Hills writes:

> The dichotomy here is between the composite view of scientific research synthesized from these writings and the view of hermeneutics (interpretive understanding). The writers seem uniformly to regard scientific research as cognitive, rational, and technical. By implication, the hermeneutic-interpretive alternative is noncognitive, nonrational, and nontechnical. (p. 6)

He then argues that the positions are not dichotomous, rather complementary. He has already established that these interpretivists use rational arguments to justify their anti-rationalist positions. From that argument, he deduces that the contradictions posed by the interpretivists are merely apparent.

Next he argues in a similar vein that complementarity, not dichotomy, seems to characterize the interpretivists and the cognitive-rationalists. I would argue that if an interpretivist is coming from Heidegger's ready-to-hand position and a cognitive-rationalist is coming from Hills's composite conception of science, then the two are dichotomous. The one is epistemological; the other is ontological. One is about experience; the other is experience. If, however, the interpretivist is coming from Heidegger's present-at-hand mode and the cognitive-rationalist is coming from Hills's scientific position, then the two are complementary. Viewing the entire dialogue from the generic hermeneutic position, I can understand the logic of Hills's argument, as well as the interpretivist's.

Uncritically Held Assumptions

Hills conjectures that these interpretivists uncritically assume "that the only conceivable use of scientific theory and research for the practitioner is providing the basis for a scientifically reliable technology or for technically rational decision making" (p. 9). As I interpret the texts and the contexts, the *misuses* of the scientific theories and research clothed in the garb of science and research trouble the interpretivists. They may have, however, become myopic over uses other than application or decision making of scientific theory and research.

The second uncritically held assumption, according to Hills, "is that some other approach will prove to be more adequate than the scientific in portraying

[22]Jerry L. Jennings, "Husserl Revisited: The Forgotten Distinction between Psychology and Phenomenology," *American Psychologist* 41 (November 1986): 1236. While I have chosen Packer's treatment of hermeneutic phenomenology, with an emphasis on Heidegger, this piece gives many insights into the 'phenomenological reduction process," or the process of getting at essential meanings from an earlier thinker, Husserl.

the complexities of practice" (p. 9). I like to think that interpretivists use *bracketing*, a phenomenological reduction process, in their search for another approach, albeit some of their polemics may not indicate that process is working. Bracketing means to focus on a given phenomenon or experience without denying that other alternatives are available. This process fits Heidegger's unready-to-hand mode. For me, the most helpful metaphor is Packer's *ground-figure structure.* The theories and practices erroneously disguised as science or research are what the interpretivists deny or reject Considering the setting, the inquiry tradition in instructional supervision, and the need for better programs of instructional supervision, I would surely expect the second assumption to be working. Perhaps a closer study of the Hills-Gibson linguistic-conceptual system would provide one alternative.[23]

The third uncritically held assumption, according to Hills, "is the explicitly stated assumption that to practice is to engage in 'an idiosyncratic doing of something,' and therefore supervision cannot become a science, even in the applied sense" (p. 9). My guess is that the authors assume generalization is part of scientific theory, and if that assumption is true, then how the "idiosyncratic doing of something" will fit that criterion of science is hard to see.

Recently, one of my students completed a sophisticated hermeneutic study of adults leaving a way of life The report from the graduate school committee member, who represented herself as a scientist, included the following comment. "This is not a worthy Ph.D. dissertation because it does not follow the canons of scientific research. Its results are idiosyncratic They cannot be generalized to a parent population." Fortunately for the student, the graduate school accepted her report as only one opinion. Five others voted to pass the student.

Hills's retort to Blumberg on the common elements of several professions appears in the form of a naturalistic, not a scientific, generalization. The reader of such research or the researcher may say, "Yes, I see some commonalities; I think we can incorporate that into our practice." The "scientist" who critiqued the dissertation assumed that the scientist tells us that the results apply to the practice. In this case, Hills might again say that the interpretivist is using cognitive rationality to explain anti-rational allegations. Naturalistic generalizations are fitting for ready-to-hand and unready-to-hand modes; scientific generalizations are appropriate for present-at-hand modes.

POLEMICAL LANGUAGE

I have already pointed out the vulnerability of the language the interpretivists use to make their points. The critics from the theoretical-rational

[23]See Jean Hills and C. Gibson, "A Conceptual Framework for Thinking about Conceptual Frameworks: Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap" (unpublished manuscript, University of British Columbia, 1990).

approach are also emotional, political, polemical, and condescending about putting forth and defending their positions. The last few sentences of Hills's response are telling:

> Evolution occurs through processes of natural selection from among structures sufficiently stable to provide a degree of continuity yet flexible enough to permit variations *No stability, no evolution, no variations, no evolution.* One possible way to increase variations, without risking a self-defeating degree of instability, is to encourage practitioners to approach problematic situations through a variety of linguistic-conceptual systems (generalized conceptions). In turn, these systems will increase the variety of problem formulations and thus the variety of problem solutions for us to select from among in any given situation. From that point of view, *to be so rigid as to reject particular approaches to research either because they did not yield directly applicable results or because their standards of rationality did not encompass the entire cognitive-rationality value pattern would be dysfunctional. After all, the central epistemological point to the work of Muturana and Varela is that the ultimate and only test of validity* is the degree to which knowledge contributes to individual and collective adaptive capacities—adaptive in the sense of constituting structural change that permits the relevant system to maintain its autopoietic organization in the face of a changing environment. (pp. 11–12, my italics)

Focusing on Hills's article, writing as an interpretivist, I have used generic hermeneutics to shed some light on the various interpretations, or hermeneutics, of instructional supervision as a practice, a theory, and a field of study. Generic hermeneutics recognizes both dichotomies and complementarities, both apparent and real differences in point of view. It further recognizes that critics, from whichever frame of reference, use polemical, emotional, and condescending language. Hills's provocative article points out vulnerabilities in interpretivists' writing, it misses some of their points entirely. It does contribute to the discussion. I hope my response to his article does also.

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