1 THE 21ST CENTURY CONTEXT AND A NEW APPROACH

"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." These words by Charles Dickens truly describe your situation today if you are a social science or human science researcher. We are "in over our heads," as Kegan (1994) suggested, not only as people facing life but also as researchers. While this was true in 1998 when the first edition of *Mindful Inquiry* came out, the situation has intensified in the 21st century.

The supposed triumph of science and rationality was called into question in the late 20th century, resulting in an array of diverse and divergent conceptions of knowledge. Over the past quarter century, and increasingly in the past decade, the human and **social sciences** have been undergoing the proliferation and diversification of the following epistemological paradigms, or models of valid knowledge:

- Intellectual disciplines, or how knowledge is organized
- Research methods, or how knowledge is produced
- Modes of interdisciplinary collaboration, or how knowledge is shared and linked
- Mediums of scholarly communication, or how knowledge is transmitted, accessed, and integrated
- The volume of scientific information available, or how much knowledge is stored and retrievable
- Cultural voices and social perspectives claiming to be represented within the public arenas and discourses of knowledge
- The exponential increase in the use of smartphones, texting, and social media making global connections accessible and at the same time complex
- Human-generated research processes and findings, as well as the ascendency of artificial intelligence threatening to replace these research processes and findings

This situation can be disorienting and confusing. Previously, researchers were exposed to a restricted set of techniques that were the research methods of their discipline, and graduate students had to learn just this set or the set of the school of thought that their departments or professors occupied within their discipline.

Students today, however, are made aware not only of a larger set of techniques but also of an array of research methods so different from one another that they do not even fit into previous definitions of the field of research or scholarship. Consider the following:

- A historian no longer works only with the traditional approaches of historians but may use anthropological methods as well.
- A piece of sociological research may not look like what would have been found in a sociology journal 20 years ago. Instead, it may look like literary criticism. By the same token, literary scholars are using the methods of demography, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy to understand literature.
- A philosopher may argue that philosophy is dead.
- A political scientist may do research using conversational analysis or analyzing video sources.
- A psychologist may study emotions in online environments using email, texts, or social media posts as data.
- Anthropologists are writing studies in which their own emotions about being in foreign cultures are as important as the behavior of the people in those cultures.
- People of various ethnic and gender groups are proposing models of knowledge that reflect the situation of their group, and they are contesting scientific and research traditions that reflect the worldview, biases, and emotions of White European and American men.
- Philosophers and theorists are debating whether knowledge can be objective, whether there is such a thing as rational agreement, whether selves exist, and whether any phrase, text, or document has an unambiguous meaning.
- Where social scientists used to talk as though there were such things as sexuality, identity, and personhood, they now look at them as "constructs."
- Popular culture is studied with the same discipline and scholarly apparatus that used to be reserved for the classics.
- Educators debate whether artificial intelligence will surpass human intelligence and comprehension.
- *Collapsologists* have delineated the complex and interdependent systems the planet depends upon and how each of them is vulnerable to collapse, which would cascade into a collapse of everything (Servigne & Stevens, 2020).
- The roles of workers and citizens have been diminished as lifeworlds are replaced by systems of control.

- Individuals are increasingly seen as consumers and clients, while students are treated as customers.
- Citizens are managed through therapy, coaching, and change management, and experts hold authority over them.
- Constant exposure to the Internet, smartphones, text messages, television, and media streaming raises questions about the extent of freedom in decision making.

There is an undercurrent that exists beneath these phenomena, a crisis about what knowledge is, what makes it valid, and whether and how it can be objective if it is shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts. Harding (1996) called this the *epistemological crisis of the West*, which continues to manifest in increasing mistrust in science and distrust in democracy. For a society that defines itself as based on knowledge, an epistemological crisis—that is, a crisis about the legitimacy and validity of knowledge—is a serious matter.

On one hand, because becoming a researcher is about becoming a producer of legitimate and valid knowledge, doing so in an epistemological crisis is a serious personal matter. It is a bit like learning to drive a car in a wrecking yard, learning good health practices amid a pandemic, or learning to build a house in an area devastated by a flood. The situation can disorient, scare, frustrate, or depress you if you are entering the world of social science and human science research at any level. That is why we say this is "the worst of times."

On the other hand, these new aspects of knowledge creation are exciting. They provide you with an amazing array of possibilities for creative research work: new fields of study, new things about which to inquire, new methods of **inquiry**, new ways of combining knowledge of different fields, new ways to incorporate yourself and your social background into your research, new technologies to play with, and new social relationships with peers. Existing knowledge is being critiqued and revised considering these innovations, and uncharted territory expands on all sides, offering you exciting new vistas, whether you are a beginning or an established researcher. This is why we say this is also "the best of times."

In addition to the new research questions and challenges arising from the expansion of modes of knowledge, new intellectual issues have been arising both from the progress of scientific disciplines and the social, cultural, and technological changes of the present period. The human and social sciences are being asked to face an array of momentous and unprecedented social and human problems. Some examples include how to do the following:

- Manage the transition to a new phase of social organization, a global economy, which some see as the harbinger of an era of prosperity, peace, and freedom and others see as the sure cause of global poverty, social injustice, exploitation, and environmental devastation

- Manage an information society, one in which information technology is part of the social infrastructure and in which information products, commodities, and services are reshaping organizations, daily life, relationships, and experience
- Respond to and manage a global environmental crisis and incorporate ecological and environmental awareness into our ways of thinking about and dealing with human affairs
- Organize political life after a century of intensified conflict
- Develop methods of resolving conflicts in a nonviolent manner
- Determine what kinds of cultures and education to develop around family and sexuality now that conventional conceptions of family and sexuality are no longer taken for granted
- Bridge differences among people of widely divergent cultures
- Develop new philosophical conceptions of the meaning of life, identity, love, community, work, justice, democracy, leisure, and freedom when the traditional conceptions have been called into question

So far, the work of the human and social sciences has been largely determined by the social, psychological, economic, political, and cultural problems posed by the surrounding society. There is every reason to expect that this new set of social issues will generate new and challenging sets of research questions.

As work in advanced industrial society has become more knowledge based, social and human science research has moved farther out of the exclusive domain of academia into the world of work and business. Corporations have hired anthropologists to study how human beings interact with computers, sociologists to study and help manage organizational change, and psychologists to help design products and media. These changes in the production, diffusion, and consumption of knowledge are not just academic matters. They are a matter of everyday life.

We believe this new situation is a uniquely confusing and disorienting one we all face as researchers. Our aim in this book is to help you navigate the situation of 21st century chaos. We also believe you need to figure out your relation to the current situation to develop a coherent, grounded approach toward your research, and that the only way to do so is by centering your research on yourself through what we call **Mindful Inquiry**. Mindful Inquiry will be both helpful and challenging. Whether you are a student embarking on a dissertation or capstone project or a seasoned researcher, Mindful Inquiry offers tools to clear your pathway.

The rest of this chapter briefly summarizes our own approach to responding to the current situation faced by social researchers. After each section, we present one or more activities we recommend you engage in as part of developing your response.

PUTTING YOURSELF AT THE CENTER

Research is always conducted by an individual with a life, a lifeworld, a personality, a social context, and various personal and practical challenges and conflicts. All affect your research, including the choice of a research question or topic, the method used, and the reporting of the project's outcome.

Most research textbooks and courses do not bring the living reality of you, the researcher, or your lifeworld situations, into the discussion of research. We believe the person is always at the center of the process of inquiry, and you will always be at the center of your research, which in turn will always be part of you. We believe this to be true in more than just a psychological sense. For example, it is true in the way that being insecure about your intellectual ability can create ambivalence about your work, or your personality style can shape your choice of research method. For example, consider recognizing research not as a disembodied, programmed activity but rather as part of how you engage with the world.

Lifeworld is the lived experiences of human beings and other living creatures as formed into more or less coherent grounds for their existence. This consists of the entire system of interactions with others and objects in an environment that is fused with meaning and language and that sustains life from birth through death. Alfred Schütz elucidated powerful ways in which we function in lifeworlds through what we learn to see as relevant and how we typify ourselves, our situations, and others. Becoming aware of how we perceive our lifeworld is key to our ability to sustain or change it.

The lifeworld assumes humans are autonomous individuals living in a social environment. They have the freedom to create and pursue various projects in their minds. However, these actions are influenced by preexisting plans and projects that exist within a larger system. The lifeworld also includes imposed cultural and social factors such as family, social class, physical condition, gender identity, sexual orientation, job, and economic constraints.

Life projects and plans are of fundamental importance. Research endeavors are central plans and projects. In this book, we try to address the nature of research and its challenges as personal or existential. For a wonderful illustration of the way research interacts with our identities and life plans and projects, see Helmut Wagner's example of the life of Alfred Schütz, a prominent phenomenologically oriented social theorist (Wagner, 1983).

In our work with students, we always try to locate an individual's research interests and projects within their **being-in-the-world** or personally configured universe. We have also seen how one's research can contribute to the transformation of one's self or identity. We have experienced this ourselves and seen it in our students. We are always noticing how values shape conceptual frameworks, and we believe that research needs to be thought of in connection with all the ways it is part of an individual's life and lifeworld.

Since the first edition of *Mindful Inquiry*, we have become aware of the power of phenomenology and hermeneutics as a transformative process for researchers, research participants, and the communities in which research occurs. We call this process Transformative Phenomenology, an applied phenomenological attitude that can support positive personal, social, and ecological change through research and practice (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008, 2017; Bentz et al., 2021). We will have more to say about Transformative Phenomenology later. These insights are integrated into our overall perspective of Mindful Inquiry, which is based on the idea that your research is, or should be, intimately linked with your awareness of yourself and your world. We strongly believe your awareness of and reflection on your world and the intellectual awareness and reflection woven into your research affect, or should affect, one another. Research should contribute to your development as a mindful person, and your development as an aware and reflective individual should be embodied in your research.

One advantage of taking a philosophical approach to research is that it enables you to confront the vital question of why you are doing research in the first place, which so few research guides have asked, let alone answered. We believe clarifying why you want to do research, even if your reason is a requirement of a degree program or an employer, will be of immense value to you in your research, as well as a tool of self-knowledge. We hope when you have finished this book, you will have more clarity about why *you* do research.

Because research has become institutionalized and industrialized, it is possible to engage in it like a cog in the wheel of the modern industrial apparatus, without reflection on its purpose or one's purpose in engaging in it. Indeed, because much actual research is conducted to solve problems, the problems are often given before the research and exist outside of the researcher.

There are currently strong debates over the nature of knowledge and the types of knowledge that are appropriate for providing useful scientific understanding. Choosing a research method necessarily requires one to make conscious choices about the assumptions underlying the inquiry. One must, in other words, take responsibility for one's approach and its consequences. The choice of research approach, therefore, ought to be made consciously.

Activity: Reflect on What Research Would Be Meaningful to You

Go to a quiet place, and let go of all thoughts and feelings, making your mind blank. After you have cleared your thoughts, think of your life and a possible research project that would be meaningful to you and others in your lifeworld. Do not consider any possible limitations and constraints. Does this idea relate to your current research projects or ones you have thought you would do? If not, why not? Think of ways in which your fundamental interests and your actual research could become more congruent.

MINDFUL INQUIRY: OUR PHILOSOPHY

Most guides to research present themselves as without philosophy, or they present their philosophical biases as if they are common knowledge or can be taken for granted. We, on the contrary, come to the research process with philosophy, and we want briefly to say something about it here so you know our biases and framework. Briefly, our philosophy of research, which we call Mindful Inquiry, is a synthesis of four intellectual traditions: phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical social science, and contemplative embodied awareness. Some or all of these may be unfamiliar to you. They are explained in Chapter 3 as well as later in the book. For right now, *phenomenology* is the analysis of consciousness and experience; *hermeneutics* is the analysis of texts in their contexts; *critical social science* is the analysis of domination and oppression with a view to changing it; and *contemplative embodied awareness* is a mind/body/spirit practice that allows one to free oneself from suffering and illusion in several ways, one of which is becoming more aware of our embodied and mindful natures. Mindful Inquiry includes several ideas from those four traditions:

Awareness of self and reality and their interaction is foundational to mindfulness.

- Authentic transformation involves tolerating and integrating multiple perspectives.
- We need to bracket our assumptions and look at the deep layers of consciousness and unconsciousness that underlie them.
- Human existence, as well as research, is an ongoing process of interpreting both one's self and others, including other cultures and subcultures.
- All research involves both accepting and trying to transcend the bias of one's situation and context.
- We are always immersed in and shaped by historical, social, economic, political, and cultural structures and constraints, and those structures and constraints usually have domination and oppression, and therefore suffering, built into them.
- Knowing involves caring for the world and the human life that one studies.
- The elimination or diminution of suffering is an important goal accompanying inquiry and often involves critical judgment about how much suffering is required by existing arrangements.
- Inquiry often involves the critique of existing values, social and personal illusions, and harmful practices and institutions.
- Inquiry should contribute to the development of awareness and self-reflection in the inquirer and may contribute to the development of spirituality.

- Inquiry usually requires giving up ego or transcending self, even though it is grounded in self and requires intensified self-awareness.
- Inquiry may contribute to and be part of social action.
- The development of awareness is not a purely intellectual or cognitive process but part of a person's total way of living their life.

We do not expect you to accept these ideas on faith. We simply want you to know the particular perspective that shapes this book. Later, we will explain how we see Mindful Inquiry as an encompassing framework within which research can be carried out using a variety of approaches and methods.

Activity: Stay Open to Your Assumptions About Mindful Inquiry

Review each one of the assumptions about Mindful Inquiry. On reading each one, direct your attention to your inhalation and exhalation to channel awareness of your embodied state. Ask yourself whether you accept it fully, do not accept it, or do not know if you do but wish to investigate it in the future. We ask that you be open to the cases we make and to the assumptions we hold as you read this book. As you experience these assumptions, what messages come to you from your body? Who are you as a researcher?

WHO IS THE RESEARCHER?

Every introduction to research makes some assumptions about its readers. Although there are some notable exceptions (see, for example, Robson, 1993, which includes practitioner–researchers among its intended audience), most writers of guides to research assume their readers are either young graduate students who intend to become full-time scholars in an academic setting or undergraduates for whom research training will serve as preparation for graduate school. The intended audience may also be students in particular applied fields who are learning special research techniques employed in those fields and who will need to read such generic works as *Introduction to Market Research, Introduction to Research in Speech, Introduction to Criminal Justice Research*, and so on.

We hope prospective full-time scholars will find our book useful, and we assume them to be among our audience. However, we make some additional assumptions based on our experience and knowledge of changes in work and education. First, we believe that as knowledge work expands, the ability to conduct, evaluate, and plan research is increasingly considered a general skill, or set of skills, that people need to work in knowledge-based occupations (Reich, 1991). Many people in graduate school do not, in any case, become full-time scholars in academic environments but instead pursue occupations in the private, public, or nonprofit sectors where their research skills and activities are part of a wider range of skills and activities.

Second, we have been working for years with adult students who have decided, either independently or with encouragement from their places of work, to become researchers and add scholarship to their work and lives as professionals and practitioners. Because adult students are a growing fraction of the student population, the underlying assumption that the developing researcher is a young person can no longer be sustained. Thus, we have tried in our book to keep in mind the needs and perspectives of adult practitioners or professionals who are adding research thinking and skills to their existing skill sets and ways of knowing.

Third, we have seen, especially with these adult students, that learning and conducting research is not just an item to check off on a list of requirements but rather something undertaken deliberately to enhance and enrich life. Although we believe and hope our philosophy of Mindful Inquiry will be helpful as well as exciting for all our readers, we think adults entering the path of research as part of expanding their life options will find it particularly valuable. In addition, we have tried to make the book suitable for independent study as well as for use in classroom contexts.

Activity: Writing Phenomenology

Writing phenomenology is a way of knowing yourself and your research topic.

With pen and paper, sit in a quiet place, and take a few deep breaths. Think of an experience in your life that was especially important or meaningful, then recall the most memorable or poignant time you had this experience. Take yourself back to that time and place, and describe what it felt like to you in your body. Describe your sense of the experience, one by one. What did you see, hear, smell, or touch? What was the physical setting like? Who were the others present? What was your sense of time, space, emotions, and body awareness? After you have finished writing, look at the experience. You may go on to explore it in a deeper way using the eight protocols we will share in the chapter on phenomenology. We are convinced such meaningful experiences are often key aspects of who we are, and if you work with them through the process of writing the eight protocols, you will find the experiences are shared by many and that by sharing yours you can become a more authentic person. In addition, you may find that this experience or phenomenon is a research topic you would like to carry further using phenomenology or one of the other modes of inquiry we describe later in this chapter. Whether you end up using a phenomenological method or not, you will empower yourself as a researcher in a deeply mindful way.

Activity: Reflect on Your Social Roles for Research Topics

Think of various social roles you have played in your life. For each one, imagine yourself to be a researcher who has received a large grant to learn more about these social roles. What questions most interest you about each one? In this exercise, you must think of real concerns, questions, or problems in your experience, regardless of whether

you know them to be accepted subjects of actual research. As C. Wright Mills pointed out in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), the key contribution of sociology to the world is to show how personal troubles connect with social issues. Sometimes, the things we think are unimportant or perhaps troubling only to us are troublesome to others as well. For example, Clark Moustakas, in his path-breaking phenomenological study of loneliness (1961), described his loneliness as being out of touch with himself and not having enough time to be alone and to cultivate his uniqueness. His study showed loneliness to be an important feature in the landscape of everyone's life.

MULTIPLICITY OF APPROACHES, CULTURES OF INQUIRY

One consequence of the new intellectual situation of the human and social sciences is their increasingly interdisciplinary character. That is, the methods of inquiry used in different scientific disciplines borrow frequently from one another: history from anthropology and sociology, anthropology and sociology from linguistics and literary criticism, psychology from computer science, economics from history, and so on. Indeed, the social sciences and humanities frequently merge, as art historians and literary critics borrow sociological and economic categories and concepts, and sociologists and political scientists learn from philosophy. Even the boundaries between the natural and social sciences are less clear than they used to be, as sociologists and management scientists draw on biology and ecology. Furthermore, according to a tradition in the social sciences going back to the late 19th century, knowledge that tries to explain phenomena has different intentions and rules than knowledge that tries to understand them in the sense of knowing their subjective meaning. Some philosophers have added to this list of knowledge intentions (Apel, 1984) the idea of knowledge that tries to emancipate people or help them gain more freedom, justice, or happiness (Fay, 1987). In any case, inquiry is pursued according to varying conceptions and models of what knowledge is, how it is created, and what it looks like.

What we have done to help you make your way amid this variety—and here we owe a great debt to our colleagues in the Human and Organization Development Program at the Fielding Graduate University, with whom we have collaborated in developing this conception—is to provide introductions to what we call **cultures of inquiry**. These cultures, which are far broader than research methods, are general approaches to creating knowledge in the human and social sciences, each with its own model of what counts as knowledge, what knowledge is for, and how knowledge is produced. Our array of cultures of inquiry is more extensive than what is found in most introductions to research. For example, we consider phenomenology, critical social science, hermeneutics, action research, and theoretical research as cultures of inquiry, although many research textbooks do not even mention them. We also discuss ethnography, methods based on quantitative data and analysis (e.g., correlational, experimental, quasi-experimental, and survey), behavioral science, historical research, and evaluation

research. We are convinced this will broaden your range of choices and your ways of conceptualizing your interests when planning and conducting your own research.

This book is designed to introduce you to the principal approaches to scholarly inquiry that characterize the community of human and social science at large and the world of reflective practitioners in particular. A generation ago, it was widely assumed that, depending on what school of thought you belonged to, there was only one valid approach to all knowledge gathering: either the highly quantitative methods customarily associated with the natural sciences or the interpretive-qualitative-humanistic approaches.

Today, we recognize that the study of people and their institutions may rightfully entail a variety of approaches. Some involve methods suited to quantitative data, and some rely on qualitative data and approaches. Some call for the researcher to be detached and impersonal, while others call for direct engagement and involvement. Some require strongly developed skills in data manipulation and statistical analysis, and others require people skills. A good research project will match the research approach to the problem to be studied, and it will ensure the researcher is comfortable and competent in their role.

After reading this book, we expect you will be better able to intelligently sort through the variety of existing research approaches, choosing those both personally compatible and adequate to the needs of your research. This book will introduce you to these approaches and give you a sense of the kind of knowledge they produce, their strengths and limitations, and their applicability to your concerns. Given that each of these approaches comprises dozens of actual research techniques, this book is not intended to provide you with a sufficiently deep understanding of the methods you will eventually use to conduct research intelligently and defensibly in your field. For this, you will need to delve more deeply into the general approach to inquiry you adopt—what we call a culture of inquiry, such as phenomenology, action research, or critical social science—and you will need to master the specific set of methods and techniques used in that approach. This can be done through a combination of organized research training in courses or training sessions; a research practicum, internship, or apprenticeship; independent study; observation of researchers at work; and acquaintance with exemplars of research through classic or outstanding research studies.

We strongly believe researchers should be familiar with the language, culture, intent, and purposes of inquiry and research in their disciplines in a way that reflects the goals of integrating personal, professional, and intellectual competence and development. Hence, you should develop an understanding of fundamental issues regarding the diverse ways in which we know, what constitutes reliable knowledge, and how learnings are made credible and incorporated into the culture of inquiry. You should also reflect personally on the psychological, intellectual, and social meanings of your research interests and your personal ways of engaging with ideas, data, methodologies, and decisions. Moreover, because inquiry and research in the human and social sciences occur within several divergent cultures of inquiry and research traditions, you

should work at comparing and critically evaluating several cultures of inquiry and the research traditions in which they are embodied in your area of intellectual interest or professional work.

Finally, before engaging in a major research project, whether that is thesis or dissertation research, or research as part of your work, you should develop specialized competence in the methods that are appropriate to its question, including current trends and methodological controversies. As we said, this volume is an introduction to the general cultures of inquiry and not to the specific and detailed research techniques of which they consist.

Activity: Compare Known Cultures of Learning

Think of two quite different kinds of skills you have learned in your lifetime—for example, riding a bicycle and cooking. How did the culture of learning about each skill differ? What elements in each learning process were the same?

BECOMING A RESEARCHER AS SOCIALIZATION INTO A COMMUNITY

Thinking about research and science has changed over the past generation in major ways. The most important change has been the shift to thinking of disciplined inquiry and scientific research—whether in the natural sciences, the social and human sciences, or the humanities—as social processes. Previously, research was often thought of and described as the activity of a solitary individual—the scientist, researcher, or scholar—facing reality or the world or nature and applying a body of universally valid scientific methods to it. To the extent that other people entered into research, they were thought of as "the audience," that is, the people who would read the results of those solitary activities. This is still the view of research that shapes almost all introductions and guides to research. They focus primarily on learning certain methods or techniques through which this lone individual will produce a piece of knowledge or research.

In the view that has evolved over the past quarter century, however, science and research are understood as being embedded in concrete communities and social groups. They are seen as processes that occur as part of dialogues, conversations, or discourses among members of communities of scientists or researchers. Like other human beings, the individuals who are members of these communities are motivated in various and complex ways: by ambition, competition, desire for material success and recognition, generosity, religious and political beliefs, nonrational impulses, neurosis, and self-transcendence. Scientific communities, in turn, are governed by (often nonrational) social norms, rules, rituals, myths, ideologies, and "totems" (Hess, 1995), as are other kinds of communities. Individual scientists, as well as scientific communities, live in multiple, complex relationships with the society that surrounds them, which in turn affects how they live, think, feel, and behave. Furthermore, these communities of

researchers are not static. They are continually evolving in time, changing their rules for producing knowledge, their "hot topics," their heroes and stars, and their achievements and scandals.

Just as joining a fraternity, social club, firm, or religious order is a process of socialization in which people develop new ways of acting and new identities—that is new ways not only of behaving, thinking, and feeling toward the rest of the world but also new ways of thinking about, behaving toward, and feeling about themselves—so becoming a scientist or researcher means becoming a member of a scientific community or a community of investigators, which therefore also means taking on new values, behaviors, and identities. Many of the values and social rules in scientific communities have to do with the creation of knowledge, what counts as knowledge, how legitimate knowledge is created, and how one establishes claims that something is or is not knowledge. Moreover, some values and rules have to do with such things as the "ownership" of knowledge, propriety in distributing knowledge, and originality in knowledge, which are cultural and social values rather than purely knowledge-based values (see Boyle & Jenkins, 2021, for an excellent and illuminating discussion of some of these issues surrounding intellectual property). For example, if I author a paper copying verbatim from someone else's paper, it is as knowledgeable as the first person's paper, yet everyone who has been in school knows this is plagiarism and is one of the most morally reprehensible acts in the world of knowledge. As in joining any other community, one joins a community of researchers in the context of its history and at its current point in time. If one migrates to a new city or country, it is not enough to know about that place in general. One wants to understand what is going on there right now, which usually means knowing something about what went on before. The same holds true when joining a research community.

What we want to emphasize is that becoming a researcher consists largely of becoming socialized into a community of researchers, and much of the learning involved is social learning. This means learning not about research methods in the abstract but about the research methods currently in use and the controversies surrounding them. It means learning the language and social conventions of the community. It means learning where the action is. Textbooks and introductions teach these things only to a limited extent, which is a primary reason our book is not a textbook in research methods. Rather, we want to encourage you to intentionally and mindfully develop both your individuality as a researcher and your membership in one or more research communities.

Despite differences among scientific and research communities, all scientists, whatever their worldview, tend to agree on one thing: Following rational procedures of argument, criticism, and evaluation is the best way to get at that ever-elusive truth. Despite the influence of money, politics, spiritual beliefs, imagination, and sheer adventure on the practice of science, it is still the case that only what will stand up to rational argument will count as scientifically valid knowledge—that is, rational argument combined with some information about the world.

Activity: Know Your Community

- Interview an active social researcher. Ask them what other people, groups, and societies they think about and communicate with about work. Ask what it means to be part of this group of colleagues.
- Log in to a discussion group on the Internet about a research topic. Who are the primary participants? What theorists, researchers, and others do they frequently refer to?
- Question foundational definitions related to your interests. Are there terms in the discussions you do not understand? Ask questions in classes and online forums and reflect on any responses you receive.
- Scan the past several years of a scholarly journal in which you are interested. Look for themes in the areas of questions, vocabulary, and frequently cited authors, articles, or books.

BUILDING CARING COMMUNITIES THROUGH MINDFUL INQUIRY

Before we get into our presentation in the next chapter about the key aspects of the historical, social, and political situation in which the social and human sciences find themselves, we wish to present an approach forward. "Why do your research at all?" is a crucial question for the mindful researcher. Our answer involves building caring relationships, organizations, and communities. This requires engaging with the lifeworld of the participants or those who are affected by your research. How might they be affected by the research? How will the problems and issues they are facing be ameliorated and caring relationships and communities be developed and supported by your research?

Maurice Hamington (2004), building upon the work of Jane Addams, a world leader for peace and feminist ethics, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the phenomenological pioneer of embodied awareness, outlines a process of "embodied care." Mindful Inquirers, as scholar–practitioners, must go beyond research techniques and methods limited by scientistic assumptions about reality, which also push morality and ethics to the sidelines. Hamington also acknowledges Carol Gilligan's (1982) feminist focus on building connection and care as inherent in women's approach to human development.

Care comes from one's sense of living in a body that engages with other living bodies. As Hamington (2004) says, "There is a presumption of knowledge in care ethics, for we cannot care for that for which we do not know" (p. 60). In addition, a caring imagination is needed to imagine the situation of others with whom you engage. He cites Hannah Arendt's (1962) work as a holocaust survivor in understanding the political and social realities and the perspectives of the perpetrators of the death camps, such as Adolph Eichmann, who worked as a bureaucrat who was just following orders,

mindless of the deadly outcomes of his signatures. In addition to a caring imagination, social habits of care must also be cultivated. Hamington's (2004) exemplar here is Jane Addams, who worked and lived in an impoverished community in Chicago and, through the work of Hull House, engaged with others at all levels, from dealing with garbage removal to fighting for women's vote and forming the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to try to end the First World War (p. 111).

Social habits of care are embedded into some Indigenous cultures. For example, the powerful work of Four Arrows and Darcia Narvaez (2022) presents us with ways of preserving and enhancing the web of life by a process of reindigenization. Arrows and Narvaez diagnose world malaise via an analysis of the **Dominant Worldview** vs. the **Indigenous Worldview** (Table 1.1). They also refer to this as the original or kinship worldview.

TABLE 1.1 ■ Manifestations of Dominant and Indigenous Worldviews

Common Dominant Worldview Manifestations	Common Indigenous Worldview Manifestations
Acceptance of rigid hierarchies	Use of egalitarian and reverse dominance
Fear-based thoughts and behaviors	Courage and fearless trust in the universe
Primarily selfish goals for personal gain	Emphasis on generosity and future generations
Anthropocentric	Animals, insects, plants, water are our teachers
Using words to deceive self or others	Words are sacred vibrations
Minimal contact with others	High interpersonal engagement, touching
Emphasis on theory, rhetoric versus action	Inseparability of knowledge and action
Learning as didactic	Learning as experiential and collaborative
Trance as dangerous or stemming from evil	Trance-based learning as natural and essential
Humor as entertainment	Humor as essential tool for coping and bonding
Social laws of society are primary	Seeing laws of nature as highest rules for living
Self-knowledge less important	Self-knowledge is most important
Nature is not sentient	Nature is sentient
Lacking empathy	Empathetic

Note. Adapted from *The Red Road (Čhaŋkú Lúta): Linking Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives to Indigenous Worldview* by Four Arrows, 2020. Copyright 2020 by Information Age, Inc. Reproduced with permission.

The elements presented in the table contrasting Dominant and Indigenous Worldviews are to be taken as ideal types. The table does not imply that all Indigenous cultures are the same and share all norms and practices or that all Indigenous persons subscribe to the Indigenous worldview. Similarly, individuals and subcultures within the dominant worldview may subscribe to some or all tenets of the Indigenous worldview. However, for the most part, indigenous cultures manifest the viewpoints expressed in Table 1.1. Narvaez (2014) outlines a theory of optimal human development that echoes the child-rearing and communal living orientation of Indigenous communities that support connection and optimize neurological development. Narvaez highlights the importance of how moral development and neurological development interface with worldviews under which communities and selves operate. This cannot be accomplished without a change from the Dominant Worldview, which is leading the planet and life to deathworlds and perhaps extinction of the Indigenous Worldview of interconnection and community.

Deathworlds are places, both physical and conceptual, that cease to sustain life (Bentz et al., 2018). We can experience deathworlds in psychic and cultural planes, for example, in the traumatic echoes of war, genocide, and oppression. They are also found in environmental devastation and degradation of natural resources. Deathworlds can and do exist on smaller scales as well, for example, in substance abuse, gaming and social media addictions, domestic and community violence, bullying and incivility in workplaces and schools, food deserts and nutritional deficiencies, and persistent negative emotional climates. Deathworlds can connect and influence each other (Bentz & Marlatt, 2021). We are not independent beings but interdependent beings coexisting with all other living creatures and life on planet Earth. Practices, policies, and attitudes that undermine healthy lifeworlds are deathworld-making, contributing to community decline, illnesses, climate crisis, and a proliferation of hate, intolerance, and ignorance. Although we recognize that such provinces of meaning, once entered, are difficult to escape, we fundamentally believe that the trend toward deathworlds can be reversed through a transformation of consciousness and that Mindful Inquiry is an important vehicle in that quest. In this book, we repeatedly return to the theme of antidotes to deathworlds out of a belief in the potential to transform through individual actions and communities of practice.

DEATHWORLDS BY OTHER NAMES

We have adopted deathworlds as a framework for contextualizing our contemporary lifeworld and its existential challenges. Deathworlds can no longer sustain life (Bentz & Marlatt, 2021). Conceptualized elsewhere as the anthropocene crisis (Kennel, 2021), climate, ecological, and public health degradations pose

insurmountable threats to sustainability. Other worldviews have proposed alternative perspectives and definitions for marking this extraordinarily disturbing time. The term *in extremis*, from the Latin meaning "at the point of death" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), was adopted by classic scholars (e.g., Dewey, 1944). Today, *in extremis* has found diverse applications, from the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Birch, 2021) to pop culture (e.g., Willis &Murphy-Shigematsu, 2007). Another portrayal, V UCA, stands for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments. Initially coined by U.S. military operations in the 1980s, VUCA environments plague organizational systems and leadership circles that in turn strategize solutions, still hopeful of overcoming obstacles. A still more optimistic adaptation of the VUCA acronym relabels it as vision, understanding, clarity, and agility (Dima et al., 2021). Similarly, the book *Deathworlds to Lifeworlds* (Bentz & Marlatt, 2021) explores the potential to forge corrective pathways through collaboration. We think the emergence of terms from multiple disciplines and fields portends a zeitgeist, or mood, that we are living in extraordinary times.

Activity: What Is Your Experience of Lifeworld Challenges to Caring Communities?

In these times of existential challenge, we ask you to look at your own experience and the lifeworlds in which you dwell. What aspects of your lifeworld could you research to better understand the negative and positive dynamics making for more caring relationships and **caring communities**? What could you research to expose and clarify the deathworld-making underlying the lifeworlds of organizations, neighborhoods, groups, families, or relationships? What research traditions exist that may already give insights into these situations?

Activity: Embodying Qualities of Care

Evaluate the participants who will be engaged with you in research in terms of the qualities of caring relationships, organizations, or communities they manifest. To what extent do the participants, organizations, or communities you will be studying embody qualities of care? How could your research efforts improve the situation?

MODE OF SERIOUS PLAY

We write in the mode of serious play. The play we write is a comedy, not a tragedy. We are willing to expose our blind spots as well as the weaknesses and limitations in our orientations—not as a ritual or confession that would force us back into the tragic mode, which, after all, came from religious rites. That mode of thinking and writing places us too close to the skewer, to be deep-fried by our critics. Our mode is that of comedy, which encourages others to laugh with us at our limitations (Duncan, 1964).

Approaches to social knowledge will not always be laughing matters, however, as the results of the research can hurt those affected by the interpretations and truth claims such research asserts. Research on race is one such example. The concepts and categories researchers employ may skew and distort the results that in turn may taint the forms of practice that follow. For example, the concept of leadership has been picked up from everyday use and built into a stream of research. However, attention has consequently been drawn away from questions of power and manipulation. This illustrates the importance of clarifying concepts before proceeding with an investigation.

Although many social science programs are still dominated by traditional scientific ways of knowing, they are increasingly including courses in alternative approaches. Recent social science and humanities journals and books reflect this new diversity of research approaches and knowledge perspectives. Epistemological openings may reveal opportunities in practice. For example, Jewel Ray Chaudhuri, after learning of hermeneutics as an approach to inquiry, used it to redeem a training situation in which a measurement instrument did not have its intended result (Chaudhuri, 1996). She was conducting a training session with executives in a Fortune 500 company using a well-known measurement instrument. However, the results did not provoke the anticipated discussion from the group. Whereas before she would have written this session off as unsuccessful, having learned of hermeneutic epistemology, she now asked participants to critically interpret the instrument itself and discuss their varying interpretations. This turned out to be one of the better training situations she conducted.

Activity: Know Your Audience?

- Imagine yourself sharing your research results with a community where it can create change or have an impact, Who is your audience?
- What are some of your reasons for wanting to do research? What prior research approaches have most impacted your research goals?
- Consider your understanding or experience with mindfulness before reading this chapter. How might your previous interactions with mindfulness either shape or limit your research?

CONCLUSION

Once again, we say that this is the worst of times as well as the best of times. It is the worst of times because of the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding one needs to acquire to make appropriate, justified, rational decisions about frameworks and principles. In addition, one needs detailed empirical knowledge to investigate any aspect of human and social reality. However, the "worst" is also a "best" because working from the epistemological level offers openings, insights, and opportunities that are closed to the orthodox. This is especially important, we feel, for a student who comes

to research with lots of work and life experience. It is the best of times because it offers opportunities for social researchers to select their questions and research approaches more freely. More importantly, never before have researchers been able to connect with others globally with such speed and ease of access.

In this chapter, we have introduced our concept of Mindful Inquiry as an approach to social sciences research. We have stated why we believe each researcher should place themself at the center of the process. Focusing attention on the demographic changes in who researchers are, we realized more scholar–practitioners are learning to become researchers in applied settings. We have briefly introduced the concept of cultures of inquiry and how you, as a researcher, will become part of a community of scholars with shared research cultures and subcultures.

In Chapter 2, we will explore the current historical and intellectual situation through which you must navigate as you conduct your research. If you wish, you may skip this chapter now and go on to Chapter 3, where we explain Mindful Inquiry in more detail. We hope if you do this you will come back to Chapter 2 later, because you need to understand the postmodern situation, positivism, and why we developed our concept of Mindful Inquiry.

KEY TERMS

being-in-the-world
caring communities
cultures of inquiry
Deathworlds
Dominant Worldview
Indigenous Worldview
inquiry
Lifeworld
Mindful Inquiry
social sciences

2 THE MINDFUL INQUIRER AS PHILOSOPHER: FROM POSITIVISM/SCIENTISM TO POST-MODERNISM AND BEYOND

In Chapter 1, we introduced Mindful Inquiry as an approach to support scholar–researchers engaged with relevant questions in challenging times. Our philosophy and understanding of the **postmodern** situation are foundational to why we developed Mindful Inquiry. In this chapter, we share our understanding, exploring the historical context of positivism and scientism in relation to the current historical and intellectual situation.

Being a researcher means far more than mastering research methods and techniques. It means entering a community of researchers, its conversations, and its debates. In the social and human sciences, that means entering the historical situation of the community of researchers, facing the issues it faces, and understanding something of how they have emerged. In the late 20th century and more intensely in the 21st century, the social and human sciences face increased challenges to their ways of knowing, or epistemologies. The philosophical base of the predominant epistemology, known as positivism or scientism has been called into question both from within the academic centers themselves and from the historical, economic, political, and social settings in which they exist. For this reason, researchers today are called upon to become philosophers so they can clear pathways for the reception and impact their work may have. This chapter provides a guide for researchers through this terrain in the following ways: describing the situation of the researcher as applied philosopher; describing the development and criticism of positivism and scientism and their continued impact on research; describing the historical situation of research and knowledge from **modern** through postmodernism; and discussing current challenges to research, such as "post-truth" and "posthumanism."

THE RESEARCHER AS APPLIED PHILOSOPHER

We are old-fashioned in believing that the scientist or working researcher is always a kind of philosopher, or at least an applied philosopher. We are even pre-modern in the sense that before the 19th century, the sciences did not exist as separate disciplines and were considered part of philosophy. We believe it is impossible to fully understand the

nature of research or to make the best choices about it without paying some attention to its philosophical context, its assumptions, its apriorist constructions of reality, and its knowledge values. No matter how technical and mechanical research may be, at least at some points in the process, it is always also a form of philosophical inquiry. That is, it always involves philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the world and about what the point of knowledge and research is in the first place.

Consciously or unconsciously, research is always contributing to the advancement of some philosophical "project" and to a personal and social one as well. In most research textbooks and courses, research tools (and research itself) are presented as "value-neutral"—that is, as having no ethical, moral, or political content or significance. This, in turn, is part of research being presented *without philosophy* or as requiring no philosophy. The way this works is that the author will say research is about creating *science* or *knowledge* about *the world* or *reality* or *society* or *human behavior.* But what is *science*? What is *knowledge*? What is *reality*? These are precisely philosophical questions, and any statement about them is a philosophical one. You must already have some idea about them to engage in research. Does knowledge mean being able to predict? Does it include intuitive knowledge one has about something? Does it have to be generalizable? And what is this *reality*? Does it have an *essence*? Is it a collection of facts? Is the reality that I know the same as yours? These are all philosophical questions that you should have some tentative answers to before you conduct a disciplined inquiry, because they shape how you do research and what you may find.

Attention to philosophical issues is as important as learning to use a specific research method, and we pay some attention to these issues. Perhaps you do not normally think of yourself as a philosopher. However, to the extent that you are engaged in research, you are a philosopher and need to think of yourself as such. The researcher today must be aware of the epistemological grounds on which inquiry rests. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that investigates the basis of knowledge claims, or the grounding of knowledge. What model of knowledge is being adopted here? What grounds are there for accepting this model? What makes it valid? Are there alternative models? What is my definition of knowledge and on what do I base it? In our view, having to answer these questions—even having to ask them—is a sign that today's researcher must become what their predecessor was half a millennium ago: a philosopher.

All the modern sciences are offshoots of philosophy. Physics and biology emerged from natural philosophy just as political science and sociology did from social philosophy. This specialization has produced wonders of scientific and cognitive achievement. However, without eliminating the need for specialization, the present situation also requires us to return in some ways to the philosophical origins of science—if not to spin new systems of metaphysics, at least to be able to take responsibility for our actions, decisions, and beliefs about knowledge and science.

Research methods are often learned as mechanical procedures. Just as a carpenter learns a hammer is for pounding nails into wood or an auto mechanic learns a torque

wrench is for applying just the right amount of pressure to make the parts of an engine fit together, social science and human science researchers learned survey techniques, interview methods, and tests of statistical significance as algorithms that, when used properly, produced knowledge. This is not to deny that algorithms and mechanical rules can contribute to the generation of knowledge. However, the broad variety of methods available for social and human science research today are not merely "chips off the old block" of science. They reflect fundamentally different ideas of what knowledge is, what it looks like, how it is obtained, how it is validated, and what it is for. A student encountering, for example, phenomenological research, hermeneutic interpretation, feminist analysis, or postmodernist film criticism may find themself in an alien intellectual world, literally unable to make sense of it either in detail or in the underlying cognitive intent. It may not look anything like what they have been educated to recognize as knowledge. Their situation can resemble that of a person who has grown up eating in burger chains and coffee shops and then wanders into a neighborhood of people who eat foods prepared according to the traditions of other cultures and continents. They may find themself not merely unfamiliar with the tastes and textures of new foods but also asking themself, "Is this food?" Someone picking up a scholarly journal or book from an alien epistemological paradigm may find themself asking, "Is this knowledge?" or even, "Do these sentences even mean anything?" As with cultural differences, epistemological differences may have been created according to very different conceptions or meanings. It is, therefore, not just a question of finding the right tool for the task but also of coming to realize that some people formulate the tasks so differently that tools appropriate for one are inappropriate for another.

Although diverse approaches to knowledge and research can be overlapped, blended, or integrated, because of the underlying divergence of their assumptions and orientations, they cannot simply be stuck together willy-nilly. Two tablespoons of statistical analysis, a teaspoon of phenomenology, a quarter cup of feminism, and a liberal sprinkling of action research do not add up to a delectable dish. The researcher needs to have thought in enough depth about the meaning of different pieces of knowledge or analysis to know if they address the same question, are from the same corner of the cognitive universe, or have legitimate points of overlap or *interface*. This requires understanding both the research method and how it is typically used, as well as the philosophical assumptions on which it is based.

Transdisciplinary work is increasing. At the same time, the boundaries of existing disciplines are increasingly seen as overlapping. In action research, it is recognized that any actual situation involves elements from all the social and human sciences: psychology, sociology, economics, politics, and religious and cultural studies. A philosophical and epistemological grounding is necessary to take such complexities into account in a meaningful and fruitful manner.

The need for epistemological grounding—for understanding and being able to justify what makes something count as knowledge in a situation of methodological and

epistemological pluralism—requires more from the student than a deeper exploration of the epistemological assumptions and paradigms underlying contemporary methods of inquiry. It also requires a reflective personal commitment to those with whom the researcher chooses to work. In a certain sense, researchers before the postmodern period were like people in sociologists' conceptions of a traditional society. Working within a commonly accepted value system, they did not have to make choices about the value system itself but only about individual situations. In comparison, today's scholars must choose the underlying cognitive framework in which they work. Although this choice is also an existential one, it is not *merely* an existential one. That is, it is not only an act of will or ethical decision but also one into which several scientific and philosophical reasons and arguments enter. Thus, the present intellectual situation demands the integration of personal and philosophical self-awareness and self-reflection.

In our work with students, we have repeatedly observed how the process of carrying out a research project promotes psychological and even spiritual development and transformation. We have seen how engaging in research as a philosopher—that is, as a person who takes responsibility not only for producing knowledge but also for knowing why it is knowledge, defining what knowledge is, and integrating it into one's *self*—leads to deepening one's experience of the meaning, value, and richness of life.

Under the reign of a unitary model of scientific knowledge like scientism or positivism, it was possible, even inevitable, for research training to be focused on techniques and methods of research. The researcher could be an epistemological ignoramus because the nature and definition of knowledge could be taken for granted, and the only thing to be learned was how to produce it. The end of this reign forces the researcher back to epistemology—the study of how we know—and even to **ontology**—the study of what there is that knowledge is about. Without some reflection on what the "it" of knowledge is, training in how to produce "it" does not make much sense.

These are not armchair questions. A researcher can complete a study and be confronted not merely with methodological challenges—"your sample wasn't random," "your population was too small," "your questionnaire isn't valid"—but also with epistemological ones—"your assumptions are sexist," "that's a scientistic approach to history," "your interpretation of that text is hermeneutically naive because you didn't take into account either its context or your own," "you didn't pay attention to the socially constructed nature of your variables," "you didn't ask how these features of the culture are produced," "your data analysis is ahistorical," and so on. In other words, after a long period of being able to get by as a kind of engineer, the researcher in the human and social sciences must now be a practicing epistemologist.

We are not claiming the social scientist needs to be a trained philosopher and follow the ins and outs of technical philosophical discussions of epistemology. Rather, we claim that being aware of the fundamental issues and making conscious epistemological choices are essential for today's social scientists. In our view, a **methodology** is parasitic on epistemology and ontology, and we believe an individual who uses a particular research method without being able to articulate its epistemological and ontological assumptions and preconditions is not a fully human, fully responsible researcher.

Activity: Understanding the Researcher as an Applied Philosopher

Make a list of some of the likely consequences of the type of research you are planning to carry out. Do those outcomes justify the effort? What are the assumptions about knowledge that your methods and techniques assume? How do you personally distinguish between scientific or scholarly knowledge and other kinds of knowledge? What are your criteria?

THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH AND AFTERLIFE OF POSITIVISM

In the cultural and intellectual world, to fully understand a new development, it is important to understand its context, especially what it is reacting against. To understand the philosophical and methodological aspects of the current situation in the social sciences and of the research approaches we are emphasizing, it is important to understand the context in which they originated: a situation in which the current of thought known first as positivism and later as scientism—we will use the two terms almost interchangeably—played, and continues to play, an important role. **Positivism** and **scientism** assert that the research methods used in the natural sciences, especially physics, are the model for all research and that any research that does not follow that model is junk—in other words, it is not legitimate research and does not produce real knowledge (Sorell, 1994; Wellmuth, 1944). Although positivism and scientism originated in the 19th century, they still shape some scholars' and the general public's understanding of what counts as knowledge and research, which is why we feel it is important to have some sense of them. Until the past half-century, much of the philosophy of science and the theory of knowledge was highly influenced by this current of thought, and much recent philosophical thought has been a reaction against it and cannot be understood without it. Some philosophers of science try to base human and social science research on an explicit post-positivist theory of knowledge (Polkinghorne, 1983). However, current research training and research textbooks in the social sciences are often still based on positivistic, scientistic ideas. Indeed, there are still courses about research that consist largely of introductions to statistics because of the scientistic belief that only what can be counted and then analyzed statistically is the proper subject of research. Most of us, before we ever knew there were such things as epistemology and the philosophy of science, were indoctrinated into positivism in high school when we were told there was such a thing as "the scientific method" based on observation, hypothesis, and verification, and when we were given the general idea that the march of science and technology is the key to human progress. See Appendix B for key ideas about scientism/positivism.

During the heyday of the Cold War, when Communism was the reigning enemy of the "free world," a public opinion survey found that many Americans had never heard of Communism. Far more numerous, we are sure, are those from all walks of life who have never heard of positivism or scientism. However, this perspective, which involves embracing a somewhat narrow understanding of the scientific method not only as a guide for conducting research and generating scientific knowledge but also as an

all-encompassing worldview, societal belief system, and interpretation of life's purpose, holds a significant influence within the context of modern culture. This influence has been particularly pronounced in the realm of intellectual pursuits and research throughout history. This is because it has been not only a philosophy of science but a major version of the modern philosophy of history, defining the history we are living in. It has linked certain ideas about the nature of science and knowledge with a notion of modernity as scientific progress.

So, what are positivism and scientism? The term *positivism* is sometimes used ambiguously or incorrectly in a way that contributes to confusion about epistemology and the conduct of research. As Anthony Giddens (1974) wrote, "The word 'positivist,' like the word 'bourgeois,' has become more of a derogatory epithet than a useful descriptive concept, and consequently has been largely stripped of whatever agreed meaning it may once have had" (p. ix). This is especially true because, as Giddens noted, "After Comte, no philosophers or social thinkers willingly called themselves 'positivists'" (p. 2). Thus, it is easy to concoct a positivist straw person, a construct of the writer's worldview rather than a description of something identifiable in the world.

Positivism and scientism originated in the 19th century in the thought of Auguste Comte (1974) (also see Marcuse, 1954; Simon, 1963) and received their most extreme formulation in the logical positivism and logical empiricism of the 1920s and 1930s (Ayer, 1952; Ayer, 1957; Russell, 1956). Because positivism is a complex and composite phenomenon, because it is also a controversial and partisan set of ideas, and because it is not just a theory of knowledge but also a cultural and political orientation, it is not something that can be covered by a simple, dictionary definition. Not all people who have called themselves positivists hold all their ideas in common. Not everyone who has ideas that have been considered positivistic calls themself a positivist. More importantly, some thinkers hold, either explicitly or by implication, ideas and intellectual positions that are positivistic or scientistic in significant ways, even when they are expressly critical of or opposed to positivism.

Positivism/scientism has characteristics of both clearly defined doctrines and large, amorphous worldviews. Here, we would like to emphasize certain key positivist, scientistic theses and beliefs:

- The modern "positive," empirical, factual sciences are the only legitimate form of knowledge, replacing religion, metaphysics, and philosophical speculation as valid knowledge. Science is its own justification and requires no philosophical justification or validation. Philosophy can provide no genuine knowledge but can merely clarify scientific methods and help determine whether something is scientific or not. In Comte's idea, human thought and knowledge naturally develop from religion to metaphysics to "positive" science, which observes facts and uses them to help build explanations.
- There is, or should be, a unitary form for science, with the implication that there is a single, canonical model; that particular disciplines are more or less

scientific and more or less "mature" to the extent that they conform to this model; and that ultimately, they will all, according to logical positivism, converge in a *unified science*. Usually, natural science is taken as the exemplar, with the implication that it could serve as a model for the human and social sciences.

- The world and knowledge are structured atomistically. That is, reality consists of a collection of disconnected facts, and experience consists of a gathering of disconnected perceptions or observations.
- Ethics, values, and politics have no rational basis because they are not scientific. Rationality can exist only in the realm of science and not in the ethical or practical realm, which is seen as the expression of irrational or nonrational emotion, will, instinct, or arbitrary decision making.
- Human and social progress are interpreted in terms of scientific progress. Here, scientism has not only tended to regard the advancement of science as the key motor of human and social progress, but it has also defined human and social progress in terms of scientific progress because, according to scientism, there are no rational nonscientific criteria of progress. Additionally, because it tends to conceive of science in terms of prediction and control, it typically frames human and social improvement or change in terms of "social engineering." As Gillispie (1960) has said of Comte, "he converted sociology from the science to the engineering of humanity . . . He would know in order to predict, and predict in order to control, and such was the program of positivism" (p. 496). The social message of positivism has tended to be that the social order in which we live is fundamentally alright as it is, requiring for improvement simply the piecemeal extension of the scientific method to problem areas. Although Comte thought of positivism as part of the *religion of humanity*—of which sociologists were to be the priests—it was a scientific, technocratic, managerial religion.
- Positivism, as a theory of science and scientific development, has been criticized as false even in the natural sciences. There is a substantial tradition arguing that the unrestrained application of a single, natural-scientific method to every domain is inappropriate, especially for the human and social sciences. In seeing the world as a collection of disconnected facts, positivism/scientism conceives of both facts and researchers as having no context or history. Philosophy and sociology of science emphasize the extent to which knowing is always embedded in history and a cultural and social context. Any approach to knowledge can be positivistic/scientistic if it does not look at the broader history and context in which knowledge is generated.
- There is a long philosophical tradition, from ancient philosophy to the present, that argues it is possible or necessary to be rational in the realm of

ethics, values, and politics—that it is possible to give a rational justification of, or motivation for, a moral action as it is to give a rational explanation of a physical event (Benhabib & Dallmayr, 1990). The philosopher Kant called this *practical* reason.

- Positivism/scientism is also a general doctrine about the relation of knowledge to ethics, politics, and society. In its stress on the power of facts and the limitation of knowledge to facts, its rejection of the potential rationality of norms and values, and its denial of the possibility of a critical perspective on the whole of society, it glamorizes science and technology, functioning as an ideology (Habermas, 1971) that is uncritical and antihumanistic, propping up the status quo and contributing to the development of a *one-dimensional society* (Marcuse, 1966). In this view, positivism helps prevent progressive social change by rejecting as irrational any norms or goals that transcend the status quo.

Critics of positivism/scientism point out that during the early modern period and the rise of modern science, philosophers, scientists, and political thinkers linked the advancement of science and knowledge to the general education of the population and the growth of individual, political, and social autonomy and freedom. They believed the advancement of science would or should lead to the elimination of archaic, barbaric, or repressive institutions. This was the predominant belief of the 18th-century Enlightenment, especially in France, England, and America. After the French Revolution, positivism attempted to liquidate the connection between the advancement of knowledge and the growth of freedom by defining scientific progress as the primary force of the present. Comte himself saw the purpose of the advancement of science as serving humanity and reorganizing society. However, the primacy positivism gave to science, as well as its idealistic, religious, and vague conception of such social reorganization, ended in the worship of science regardless of its political, social, or human consequences. Even though positivists wanted benign human consequences to occur, they were concerned that these consequences occur in an "orderly" way, hence the positivist motto, "order and progress."

Whether a particular piece of research or scholarship is positivistic or not is something that must be decided in each case based on the structure and operative assumptions the researchers employ and not on their self-described philosophical affiliation or the research method they employ. The term is sometimes simply used incorrectly. For example, "positivism" is sometimes used to refer to the use of quantitative methods in the social sciences. Positivism is not a particular way of doing research. There is no such thing as a positivist research method. Any research method or culture of inquiry—not only quantitative and behavioral science inquiry but also phenomenology, ethnography, action research, and so on—can be carried out in either a positivistic or nonpositivistic way. Positivism/scientism is a philosophical position about knowledge and research and their social context and consequences, one that also takes on ideological

functions. Consequently, it is important to understand the theory and the reactions to positivism/scientism as a researcher.

Over and above its views about the nature of science, positivism, explicitly or implicitly, is at the core of the modern worldview of scientific, technological, bureaucratic, and commercial civilization. The advancement of science and the adoption of scientifically and technologically rational procedures are basic components not only of that civilization but also of its self-justification and self-legitimation. This "instrumental" or "strategic" rationality is part of the achievements on which the citizens of that civilization pride themselves and based on which the civilization is *sold*. Thus, positivism/scientism has cultural, symbolic, political, and social significance as well as epistemological meaning. That is why the critique of and crises of advanced industrial civilization—of modernity—have been intertwined with the critique of positivism and scientism. Positivism and scientism are part of *the system*, part of the phase of modernity that started in the 19th century.

That is why we do not accept the idea of a new, *postpositivist* theory of knowledge that has superseded positivism. That idea implies there was a time when everyone was a positivist, but now, through either increased wisdom or a paradigm shift, everyone sees the light and recognizes the limitations and defects of positivism. This would imply that the positivist age has given way to a postpositivist age. However, positivism was always just one stream of thought and has been criticized since its beginnings. Conversely, even though few philosophers and social scientists currently accept the philosophy of science of the logical positivists of the 1930s, positivism/scientism as a general worldview is still alive and well not only within the philosophy of scientific method but also within prevailing orientations to knowledge and its relation to society. One could almost say the idea of postpositivism is itself positivistic, because it just adds a phase—postpositivism—to Comte's phases of the development of knowledge, of which the last is always the truest. Postpositivism can become, like positivism did, an excuse for not reflecting on the grounds of one's beliefs and practices about knowledge and one's social and historical context.

Jürgen Habermas (1971) has argued that, at the root, positivism is simply the denial of reflection—that is, of the need to reflect explicitly on the philosophical and social conditions of knowledge. From this point of view, any "official" philosophy of science, whether positivistic or postpositivistic, is inherently positivistic/scientistic because of the implication that there is a basis for knowledge that does not need to be questioned.

The method of Mindful Inquiry that we propose will help you stay in a reflective mode; be conscious of the basis of your knowledge claims; and make explicit choices about the philosophical, value, disciplinary, theoretical, and sociopolitical frameworks within which you work. Regardless of your research method, this will make your work less likely to be positivistic/scientistic in the ideological sense.

The single most important consequence of the critique of positivism/scientism is this: By removing a taken-for-granted account and justification of science, it forces the researcher to become their own philosopher. To be an inquirer in the human and

social sciences, you now must become something of an **epistemologist**, a theorist of knowledge. Because you cannot simply fall back on positivism as your ultimate foundation, you must create your own. Even if, along with contemporary philosophers who are "antifoundationalists," you do not accept that there is or can be a foundation for knowledge, then you must show why.

Activity: Elucidating Your Assumptions

List four assumptions of scientism or positivism. To what extent do you accept or reject them? Why?

THE POSTMODERN SITUATION AND THE CRISIS IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

In this section, we will discuss the movement in the overall culture of knowledge from modern to postmodern and from "post-truth" to mindful inquiry.

A common feature of most conceptions of modernity is what the sociologist Max Weber called *rationalization*—that is, the expansion to more and more sectors of behavior, thought, and social life of *formally* or *technically* rational conduct, which is based on efficiency, calculation, predictability, procedures or algorithms, and the adaptation of means to ends (Habermas, 1984; Weber, 1968; Weber, 1992). Especially since the late 18th and early 19th centuries, this rationalization of social life has been associated with the economic and social priority given to the intertwined growth of economic production, technological mastery, scientific knowledge, and bureaucratic administration of public and private institutions.

In the modern period, this rationalization has been accompanied, although in an ambivalent way, by the growth of rationalistic and secular belief systems—for example, the belief that there is a rationally structured world, and human beings are rational and autonomous individuals or *subjects* capable of objective knowledge of this world, rational action, control of their natural and social environments, and self-knowledge. Modern culture has emphasized the centrality of the human being, the human self, the human subject, over and against the centrality of either God or nature. According to Kant, knowledge is relative to the knower, who may not be central to the physical universe but who is central to the world *as known*. Another version of the centrality of the human subject is contained in this gloss of Friedrich Nietzsche's statement from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, If God existed, I could not be God. Therefore, there is no God*. Modern thinkers see human beings, rather than God, as the source of meaning. In James Mensch's (1996) words, "This positioning of the subject or self as normative has worked for hundreds of years. In a broad sense, modernity is this appeal to subjectivity" (p. 21).

Part of the modern belief system is a particular philosophy of history—the notion that human beings and civilization are on a course of progress to a better, freer, more

knowledge-based, and more peaceful society based on science and the recognition and valuing of human rights. Different philosophers and theorists of the past two centuries have formulated this idea differently, seeing the path of modernity as leading, for example, from a military to an industrial society (Herbert Spencer), from feudalism to capitalism to socialism (Karl Marx), from community to society (Ferdinand Toennies), from traditional to rational-legal authority (Max Weber), from religious to secular society (many thinkers), and so on. However, all modern thinkers, from the 18th century to the present, define the history of modern society as progressive, even if they are ambivalent about this progress.

Postmodernity was a break with characteristic modern social and cultural forms, structures, and processes. For example, whereas within a segment of modern consciousness, there was the belief that culture would become more secular with the advance of science and technology, we now see that the spread of modern science, technology, and commerce in fact can be accompanied by the intensification of religious belief, participation, and consciousness (Barber, 1995; Bloom, 1992). Because in the 20th century and beyond, science and technology have been used to build concentration camps, develop nuclear weapons, wreak destruction on the environment, and create information media that end up making people less informed (McKibben, 1992), doubts have been raised about the reality and inevitability of progress to the point where some thinkers have criticized *enlightenment* as a new myth (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1975). Whereas modern thinkers saw technological progress as helping moderate the human struggle for existence and reducing human labor while increasing leisure, anthropologists have shown that precisely the reverse is true—that technological progress, associated with the infinite expansion of human needs, has intensified the struggle for existence, reduced leisure, and increased labor (Sahlins, 1972; Schor, 1992). The emergence and expansion of information technology are taken by some to constitute a break with the technological and social basis of modernity (Lyon, 1994; Lyotard, 1984), and others see the break as being the end of modern mass production or Fordism (Harvey, 1989). The historical context has become both more multicultural and more universal or transcultural than it was before. Because of the globalization of technology and the availability of communication among cultures via electronic means and air travel, global culture is evolving. At the same time, we are aware of more cultures with more diverse points of view both within our own countries and outside. We are becoming aware that there are differences that are not a result of ignorance of each other but a result of knowledge of each other (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

Postmodern theory is a particular body of thought and theory, especially in philosophy, the humanities, and the social sciences, that constitutes a break with the main tradition of modern philosophy and social theory since the 17th century. Postmodern theory is characterized by the idea of the *death of man*, which asserts that the *rational autonomous subject* is just a fiction or construct of a particular period of cultural history and that there may not be any such thing as a subject or even a self.

Leading postmodern deconstructionist philosopher Derrida claimed *there is nothing but text*, and all texts are subject to erasure. This includes the idea that facts, meanings, and theories are constructs that reflect the temporary power of social classes, ethnic groups, and genders in an ongoing power struggle about defining reality. These facts, meanings, and theories need to be not so much explained, interpreted, or critiqued as *deconstructed*—that is, to have their cultural, historical, and power bases exposed.

What the postmodern situation brought forward concerning the context of present work in the human and social sciences is fundamental. We do not accept the tenets of postmodernism. On the contrary, we are highly critical of some of the official doctrines of postmodernism (Bentz & Kenny, 1997). In some ways, we are old-fashionedly modern and even unfashionably premodern, but we do think there is a postmodern situation, and it is important that social researchers are aware of the effects of this historical turn on the current situation (see Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp.19–26 for a fuller explanation).

Postmodernism was a response to life under increased bureaucratic control. Foucault detailed the long histories of the vast institutions of medicine, prisons and mental health facilities, demonstrating the link between power and knowledge (Foucault et al., 2013). Radical postmodernists, such as Derrida, pushed forward the notion that "there is nothing but the text," and all texts are subject to deconstruction. The self of the person was also a text to be deconstructed. Paul de Man and other deconstructive postmodernists sought to erase their own predecessor. However, they carefully claimed authorship of their own works (see Bentz & Kenny, 1997). It is important to note that the fact that humans and other life forms exist in living bodies was not part of their consideration.

Activities: Explore Your Position on Postmodernism

The most important and useful thing you can do as a researcher about postmodernism is to figure out how you stand concerning it. Do you believe there is a postmodern situation, that the current period of history is a new historical phase that bears on the nature of knowledge and research in the way the theorists of postmodernity maintain? If so, how do you see yourself, your family, your social network, your environment, and your prospects as affected by this situation? How would you define any differences you believe exist between the modern and the postmodern? Are there cultural works (scholarly books, novels, songs, movies, television shows, websites, etc.) that you would describe as postmodern, and if so, why? Are there people you know who seem aware of being in a postmodern situation? If so, how do they demonstrate this awareness? Are there significant aftereffects of postmodernism, such as social and political movements seeking to restore or overcome postmodern chaos?

The place to start in thinking about these questions is to read some of the characterizations of the postmodern age and postmodern thought and see if they make sense to you. Next, look at cultural phenomena to see if they reflect a postmodern consciousness or a reaction against postmodernism. Are social researchers studying these movements?

LIVING AT A HISTORICAL TURNING POINT: FORMS OF POSTHUMANISM OR THE GLOBAL CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

The 21st century has brought us major sociohistorical turning points. If we include the ecological crisis, it is a sociohistorical-natural turning point globally. In this section, we will briefly highlight some aspects of this situation. Together, these have been discussed as forms of Transhumanism or Posthumanism.

The 21st century has brought with it environmental devastation, a resurgence of wars, famine, drought, human expulsions, an increasing wealth divide, political oppression, autocratic governments, racism, and gender oppression. Although scientists and scholars have been warning us since the early 1970s that unchecked population and economic growth would eventually lead to large-scale threats to human society, these threats were predicted to occur mainly in the future, and their imminence was not part of many people's consciousness. We face these now in the global context of research.

Expulsions: Saskia Sassen (2014) sheds light on the unacknowledged consequences of our global economic systems on human societies. She highlights how these systems result in the expulsion of individuals from political, social, and environmental ecosystems, leaving them depleted, deteriorating, or lifeless due to the extraction of natural resources, conflicts, and other factors. Sassen emphasizes the importance of active involvement and urges us to bring these concealed spaces and locations to the forefront, making what is hidden visible to others. By maintaining awareness and recognizing these hidden realities, we can take a critical step toward their revitalization and rejuvenation. We face these now in the global context of research.

Climate Crisis: The effect of human activity on the earth's ecosystem is perhaps the most significant aspect of our 21st-century situation. The increased scale of damage to the natural environment caused by human activity has resulted in the climate crisis and the loss of biodiversity. We are struck by a sense of deep obligation as researchers and practitioners to the planet Earth, "Gaia," and the next generations of humans, and to try to save as many animals as possible and preserve and protect our biomes (Kelly, 2021).

The continued pursuit to extract every bit of fossil fuel on the earth despite the deadly impact of global heating is testimony to the lemming-like thoughtlessness in what has been called the **Anthropocene**. This word ("anthro" meaning human) reinforces the legacy of humanism, which assumes homo sapiens to be the center of everything (Dominant Worldview) instead of interdependent (Indigenous Worldview). An alternative name is "Capitalocene," which searches for more profits from renewable energy while continuing fossil fuel development in the interests of national states and corporate profits. Both images of our current state are based on "bounded utilitarian individualism—preexisting units in competition relations that take up all the air in the atmosphere," and both are still within the dominant worldview (Haraway, 2016, p. 49). Corals of the sea and lichens of the land are destroyed by fracking and pipeline construction and drilling. Haraway, a biologist, also considered "Plantationocene" to depict mass agribusiness and factory farming.

Haraway also suggests "Chthulucene" because of the need for cleaning up the vast amounts of spoilage worldwide: "The unfinished Chthulucene must collect up the trash of the Anthropocene, the extremism of the Capitalocene and chipping and shredding and layering like a mad gardener, make a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents and futures" (p. 57). There are spaces in and around and all about where other creatures and life forms are struggling to make life go on, like the spiders under the remaining giant redwoods or the matsutake mushrooms growing over blasted landscapes (Haraway, 2016, pp. 36–37). These are like compost piles where various lifeforms make new life out of death. This vision is a form of posthumanism based on connection to lifeforms.

The increase in population worldwide has been accompanied by an increase in surveillance and connectivity to the point that we are all hyperconnected in what Ray Kurzweil (2006) calls the "Singularity." Posthumanists of this orientation look forward to a form of immortality where they can be uploaded into a giant cybernetic system. This vision is a form of technological posthumanism.

"Collapsologists" have delineated the complex and interdependent systems the planet depends upon and how each of them is vulnerable to collapse, which would cascade into a collapse of everything (Servigne & Stevens, 2020). Others are "cheering humanity's end," because human activity has led to the coming collapse of the planet (Kirsch, 2023). This is a form of posthumanism that looks forward to humanity's end.

Technological innovations, and in particular artificial intelligence (AI), may become so powerful they surpass human intelligence and comprehension. If machines become more intelligent and capable than humans, humans will merge into a symbiotic relationship with machines, sharing the posthumanist vision. Stephen Hawkings (Cellan-Jones, 2014) also warned us of the dangers of artificial intelligence. Geoffrey Hinton, the "godfather of AI," left Google to warn of AI outperforming humans. If AI systems become more intelligent than humans, they could become uncontrollable and develop goals that do not align with the well-being of life.

As society becomes more colonized by technology and external influences, the notion of freedom and personal choice becomes uncertain—Jürgen Habermas calls this the "**colonization of the lifeworld**" (Eriksen & Weigard, 2003). The colonization of the lifeworld prioritizes systems of oppression and domination. This concept has been explored by Oliver (2004) in *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression*, where technocratic thinking becomes an ideology that prioritizes technical control and power over the meaningful lifeworlds of citizens and communities. The roles of workers and citizens have been diminished as lifeworlds are replaced by systems of control. Individuals are increasingly seen as consumers and clients, while students are treated as customers. Citizens are managed through therapy, coaching, and change management, and experts hold authority over them.

Constant exposure to the Internet, smartphones, text messages, and television in the capitalist world raises questions about the extent of freedom in decision making. How much control do individuals truly have over their choices? We wonder if the

higher-level cognitive processes or the "true self" that drives decision making may be underdeveloped or influenced by external factors in the absence of the adoption of a reflective attitude. Additionally, the relevances or factors that matter to individuals in their lifeworlds are sometimes predetermined and skewed by the social and cultural context. Social media has permeated culture from everyday life at home, work, and play. Global connectivity is now available nearly everywhere on the planet, and at the same time it is increasingly subject to fraud, deception, and challenging levels of complexity. Identities are bought and sold, and while "character" once meant a cultivated sense of empowered personhood, it has now degenerated into a struggle to achieve recognition via a large quantity of "hits."

We have experienced global shared trauma and global control via the COVID-19 pandemic. Global conflict and wars continue with the threat of possible nuclear global annihilation in the background. Previously suppressed or marginalized groups are taking an active role in political and social power and public cultural and intellectual dialogues. The "woke" and Black Lives Matter movements in the United States have spread and become institutionalized structures in universities that demand adherence to new curricula. Developing nations previously dominated by imperialism; members of dominated ethnic minorities in many lands; women deprived of their voice and power by patriarchal social systems; gay, lesbian, transgender, and other people hiding their sexual orientation for fear of violence, humiliation, or discrimination—members of all of these groups have entered the long process of reclaiming their rights, power, and identity and wresting from the ruling groups the right to control and to define. Indigenous peoples attempt to maintain their remaining lands, where most species still exist in the face of powerful demands for their resources. These movements themselves have created a backlash from those with different religious views and political and cultural values, as evidenced by anti-woke agendas and a rise in censorship and suppression. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has documented a nationwide effort to control the content of education from primary schools through universities (Ruth, 2023).

CRISIS OF ACCELERATIONS

A convergence of external factors describes a critical time in human evolution, where progress accelerates at a rate beyond human capacity to adapt (Friedman, 2016). As humanity's accelerating numbers continue to deplete the planet's natural resources, we further accelerate social and economic shifts, political disruptions, and resistance to the unavoidable migration movements. In parallel, technological advancements have exploded exponentially, allowing our personal computing devices to connect us globally while supporting social media platforms that isolate and polarize us. Conjoined economic interdependencies continue to compound

unprecedented riches, widening economic disparities and social inequalities, and insurmountable debt. In the meantime, the biodiversity cost could be unsustainable as we embark on the Sixth Mass Extinction, silently grieving 150 species that go extinct every day (Cowie et al., 2022).

Activity: Think About Your Lifeworld and Its Reflection in Your Research

Consider your lifeworld. List material, political, social, personal, and ecological streams in your immediate environment. How do these affect your desire to do research? How do these affect your ability to do research? What kind of research will be the most likely for you to do? How do the people in your social environment—fellow students, coworkers, family—see their relationship to these larger historical trends and forces? How does your institution (university, workplace, community, larger system) see its relationship to these larger historical trends and forces? Why do you want to do the research?

POST-TRUTH AND FAKE NEWS

We are in what has been called a **post-truth** society (Harsin, 2018; Rauch, 2021). News channels and talking heads have overlapped. Lies are abundant across social media. In the year 2016, the Oxford English Dictionary named *post-truth* its Word of the Year, the Macquarie Dictionary named *fake news* its Word of the Year, the Cambridge Dictionary named *paranoid* its Word of the Year, and Dictionary.com named *xenophobia* its Word of the Year. In 2017, the American Dialect Society and the Collins Dictionary did the same with *fake news* and the Cambridge Dictionary with *populism*. In 2018, Dictionary.com identified "misinformation" as the Word of the Year (Strauss, 2018). These word choices were based either on the word most searched for by the public or the word considered most prominent or notable.

These Words of the Year are indications taken by some to mean we are now living in a post-truth society or at least a post-truth political culture, in which statements made by politicians and by the media are no longer taken at face value. Instead, they are designated by some politicians and commentators as false and as a cover for some political interest on the part of a politician, a political party or group, or media source with a strong political bias. We have included xenophobia and paranoia as psychological states that seem to be part of the political and cultural environment in which accusations of fake news and misinformation are made.

In the 2016 and 2020 United States presidential elections, two related phrases were used, although they did not achieve the status of Word of the Year: *alternative facts* and *truth isn't truth* (Rauch, 2021). Both phrases, which were uttered as attempts to deny

what appeared to be facts, imply that some facts and truths are not part of publicly available knowledge. To grasp them, one must be part of a private belief system, in these cases a political ideology. In the context of the disputed U.S. elections, the alternate truth could be known only if you were a loyal, sectarian follower of a particular candidate or political party. It was not part of publicly verifiable knowledge.

Such an idea was first enunciated in the Middle Ages when some Catholic philosophers asserted there was a *double truth* or two truths (Harsin, 2018). One was what could be known through rational thought, while the other could be known only through religious belief and was true even if it conflicted with what could be known rationally. That religious belief was not private, personal religious belief. Rather, it was the official belief of the Roman Catholic Church—in other words, a belief dictated by authority.

The idea that some politicians and some media lie is not new. Indeed, it can be traced back thousands of years, at least as far as the Roman Republic of Classical Antiquity (Harsin, 2018). However, lying and falsehood are meaningful only in relation to truth. It is only in virtue of some conception of truth that it makes sense to accuse someone of lying. Indeed, without such a conception, human society could not function. Jonathan Rauch (2021), in his comprehensive work on the constitution of knowledge, documents the extent to which we are now faced with an epistemological crisis. Drawing parallels with historic events, Rauch presents a portrait of a society divided by extremist opinions such as *cancel culture, disinformation technology, misinformation*, and *disinformation*. Nevertheless, it is essential for a democratic society to hold trust in common norms about reality and in truth grounded in scholarship, journalism, government, and laws.

What seems new and newsworthy about current preoccupations with post-truth is the prominence that accusations of fake news and misinformation have taken on recently in political culture (Rauch, 2021). Some assertions of truth and some accusations of falsehood are made without any attempt to back them up. Normally, assertions of truth or falsehood are backed up by evidence. It is evidence that convinces us whether something is true or false. To say something is true means there is evidence to support it. To say something is false means there is no evidence to support it or that evidence brought to support it is invalid or illegitimate. This raises the question of whether citizens have learned how to judge what would count as evidence for or against assertions.

The political thinker Hannah Arendt lends further perspective on the dynamics supporting the proliferation of "fake news" through her insightful essays "Truth and Politics" (2000) and "Lying in Politics" (1972). In aggregating Arendt's ideas in the current context, Bernstein (2018) discriminates between genuine knowledge as *rational truth*, such as exemplified by a mathematical truth, and *factual truth*, an unstable truth that is represented as genuine opinion and developed through genuine encounters with other citizens. The current reality points to conditions where genuine opinions are not entertained. Factual truth is supplanted by powerful proclivities for *deliberate lying*; it

is dismissed if it does not fit the image portrayed by political leaders with autocratic tendencies and is denied by followers who turn the cards to declare that "fake news" has its origin in the truth-seeking free press. In reflecting on Arendt's warning, Bernstein reiterates that "fake news"—organized lying and fictitious image-making (deception), believing your own lies (self-deception), and so on—are embedded in totalitarian regimes. Indeed, Arendt (1958) indicates that "The ideal subject[s] of totalitarian rule [are] . . . people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist" (p. 484).

Many children who grow up in Western societies encounter at some point the story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," one of Aesop's fables from classical antiquity. In a village devoted to sheep farming, a boy, wanting to show off his ability to stir up the villagers, cries out, "A wolf! A wolf!" The townspeople come running to chase off the wolf and protect their sheep, only to find there is no wolf, and the boy has committed mischief by intentionally sounding a false alarm. They scold the boy and go back to their business. The same thing happens again and then a third time. The villagers are disgusted with the boy, and the next time they hear, "A wolf!" they think, "It's that boy again." They shrug their shoulders and make no effort to protect their flock. However, this time there really is a wolf who has devoured or injured a significant number of their sheep. The moral of the story is to show how liars are rewarded: Even if they tell the truth, no one believes them.

This story illustrates how important it is for society, for its security and survival, to receive accurate information about the world and how damaging it is to receive falsehood or misinformation. This importance holds true even in the animal world. We know that bees bring back to their hive information about where flowers are located, enabling other bees to go out and collect the pollen that is essential to them. If they were given misinformation and did not reach the flowers, they would not be able to survive. Much research in both the natural sciences and the human and social sciences is devoted to gaining knowledge that will be useful to society. Even basic research that is not devoted to a practical goal often ends up having offshoots and implications that are useful.

"The Boy Who Cried Wolf" reveals two aspects of truth. The first has to do with whether the knowledge being put forth is accurate and is a faithful representation of the part of the world being studied or described. The boy cried out inaccurate information that did not faithfully represent the real status of the sheep and the wolf. The second has to do with the intention in the minds of the people who are communicating what is being asserted. Are they genuinely trying to provide knowledge as accurately as they can? Or are they intentionally trying to deceive people about the situation they are talking about? There are also obstacles to presenting knowledge and claiming to be stating the truth.

The paradigmatic case of this is Galileo. When Galileo made observations confirming the Copernican idea that the earth and other planets revolved around the sun, his subsequent publications were considered threatening to the powerful Roman

Catholic Church, which held as a central belief that man, and therefore the earth, was the center of the universe. The Church made Galileo recant his views and kept him under house arrest for many years.

Political and religious powers have often interfered with the spread of knowledge of the truth. Many of the ideas central to modern society, such as those of Galileo and Charles Darwin, were considered threats to organized religion and orderly government. This is true of some governments and ideas today. Currently, some powerful individuals and institutions do not accept modern knowledge of the evolution of species, do not accept that women have the same rights as men, and do not accept that certain races and ethnic groups have the same claims to power as dominant races or ethnic groups.

It is normal for individuals, groups, and societies to claim that their beliefs are true. What distinguishes modernity from pre-modernity is the idea that there are procedures—public rather than private or secret procedures—for establishing whether a belief is valid and that these procedures involve evidence. That is the basis for being able to arrive at beliefs that can be accepted without coercion, because the procedures and evidence justify the belief. The American philosopher C. S. Pierce (1877) noted in a famous essay, "The Fixation of Belief," that there are four methods of arriving at beliefs, but only beliefs that result from the scientific method in a broad sense—that is, beliefs that are independent of ourselves, based on what he called *Reals* and what we would today call *facts*—are likely to prevail in the long run. Artificial intelligence has greatly intensified the truth/falsehood problem. Anyone in the world may access video information allowing an image of themself, including their voice, saying anything the AI author wishes!

These factors change who we are as human beings, how we see and define ourselves, and the problems we face both individually and collectively. The human and social sciences, as they have been handed down to us, are largely human and social attempts to respond to the set of problems distinctive to modern society. These arose in the 19th century as the Industrial Revolution, capitalism, urbanization, population growth, and bureaucratization met new ways of thinking derived from the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment. Eric Hobsbawm (1962) has pointed out that, in the period from 1789 to 1848, many words came into existence that are now part of our everyday vocabulary: *industry, industrialist, factory, middle-class, working-class, capitalism, socialism, aristocracy, railway, liberal, conservative, nationality, scientist, engineer, economic crisis, utilitarian, statistics, sociology, journalism, ideology, strike,* and *pauperism*. As Hobsbawm noted,

> To imagine the world without these words (i.e., without the things and concepts for which they provide names) is to measure the profundity of the revolution which broke out between 1789 and 1848 and forms the greatest transformation in human history since the remote times when men invented agriculture and metallurgy, writing, the city and the state. (p. 17)

This transformation occurred at the origin of the human and social sciences. A more current list of words and terms from the present suggests another major transformation and, correspondingly, the need for new efforts, achievements, and creativity by the human and social sciences: *Anthropocene, climate crisis, ecological collapse, global pandemics, biodiversity loss, transgender, the threat of nuclear warfare, AI, global economic collapse, water and food scarcity, human expulsions, terrorism and extremism, mass surveillance and loss of privacy, war-in-Europe, mission-to-Mars, post-truth, fake news,* and *the rise of fascism*.

At some point, any researcher must be able to answer the following questions about proposed or completed research: "So what?" and "What is the significance of your research?" One consideration, although not the only one, in evaluating answers to these questions is whether research helps us understand these trends, their consequences, and their implications. It seems that an introduction to research that does not pay specific attention to the new historical situation in which we live and work is bound to seem somewhat "out of it." Because we see ourselves—and you—as "in it," we pay attention to it. Furthermore, as researchers, your scholarship must rest on methods of inquiry that are clear and replicable; that are never seen as final or absolute; that are open to disagreement; and that are free from distortions based on power, money, and privilege.

Activity: Planning for Veracity

How does your research connect with living in a post-truth environment? How will you determine if your data are actual, virtual, made up, or real?

MINDFUL INQUIRY AND THE WAY FORWARD: ALTERNATIVE EPISTEMOLOGIES TO SCIENTISM/POSITIVISM

In his book *The Crisis*, Edmund Husserl (1970) conveys a message regarding the decline of Western civilization, stemming from a loss of meaning and a shift toward a purely scientific and technological worldview. Husserl calls for a return to the realm of subjective consciousness and the exploration of lived experiences to reestablish authentic human values and restore a sense of purpose in a world overshadowed by a scientific mindset. According to Martin Heidegger (1977), technology fundamentally transforms everything, including people, into a mere resource to be used, commonly referred to as a "standing reserve."

Since the first edition, there have been major changes in the world as a whole and in people's immediate lifeworld that form the horizon of research. Husserl, who was one of the founding figures of phenomenology, introduced the concept of "Lebenswelt" or lifeworld—the prereflective everyday world of human experience. Husserl emphasized

lifeworld as the starting point for all philosophical investigations. In the first edition of *Mindful Inquiry* (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998, p. 171) we describe the lifeworld as follows:

> The lived experiences of human beings and other living creatures as formed into more or less coherent grounds for their existence. This consists of the whole system of interactions with others and objects in an environment fused with meaning and language and which sustains the life of all creatures from birth through death. It is the fundamental ground of all experiences for human beings.

The lifeworld assumes that humans are autonomous individuals living in a social environment. They have the freedom to create and pursue various projects in their minds. However, these actions are influenced by preexisting plans and projects that exist within a larger system. The lifeworld also includes imposed cultural and social factors, such as family, social class, physical condition, gender, job, and economic constraints.

The 21st century has also brought an explosion of interest in **Mindfulness**, from very few publications on mindfulness in 1998 to over 3,000 a year in 2020. Mindfulness is the practice of intentionally focusing one's attention on the present moment with an attitude of nonjudgmental awareness and acceptance. A Google search produced 228,000,000 results on mindfulness. The number of research articles on mindfulness has topped 800,000. The number of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) has multiplied, as have acronyms for mindfulness-based interventions of various types: MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction), MBCT (mindfulness-based cognitive therapy), and many others (Davies & Crowther, 2023; Giorgino, 2016). The flooding of media attention to mindfulness has led to critiques calling it a religion focused on the self, an accompaniment to Capitalism, another way to oppress and exploit workers, or a cheap and easy fix— "McMindfulness"—a remedy for self-soothing and a potential tool for societal manipulation (Purser, 2019). Buddhist principles and ethics are not generally included.

On the positive side, since the first edition of *Mindful Inquiry* in 1998, we have become aware of the power of phenomenology and hermeneutics as a transformative process for researchers, research participants, and the communities in which research occurs. We called this process **Transformative Phenomenology**, an applied phenomenological attitude that can support positive personal, social, and ecological change through research and practice (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008, 2017; Bentz et al., 2021). We will have more to say about this later. These insights are integrated into our overall "Mindful Inquiry" perspective. Phenomenology clears the focus, reflecting a deeper and truer image of who we are. The phenomenological looking glass also reflects the lifeworld behind the image, revealing structures we had not seen before and pathways to new destinations (Rehorick and Bentz, 2008, p.4).

We are in a situation where restoring our mindfulness as researchers is the first necessary step to developing and engaging in research projects that will allow a peek at the underlying reality of the lifeworlds on which we still all depend for continued existence. This requires designing research that will allow participants to come forward

as they authentically are in an open, communicative engagement. It requires engaging our participants with us in mindful communities of research and practice so we can recognize deathworlds and rebuild lifeworlds. See Chapter 1 for what we mean by "deathworlds."

As the survival of life forms on earth is in question, humans must overcome the economic and technological forces leading to deathworlds. Deathworlds focus on destroying meaning, coherence, we-relationships, and intersubjectivity for humans and other life forms. In the current epoch, complex arrangements of legal, financial, technological, corporate, and governmental structures have created powerful dynamics that create great wealth for some, expulsions for millions, and the persistence of deathworlds (Bentz et al., 2018, p. 194).

Twenty-four researchers from three universities spanning North America and Europe collaborated to gain an understanding of the prevalence of deathworlds within llifeworlds (Bentz & Marlatt, 2021). These included deathworlds within the city of Lodz, Poland; first responders to disaster; young people dying of cancer; loss of a homeland by Mongolian sheep herders to mining; the cycle of famine in Mizoram, India; perversity of alcohol and drug addiction; pervasiveness of trash in cities; and increasing homelessness. Recognizing and calling out deathworlds and developing action-oriented research is part of the process of positive change.

For Alfred Schütz (cited in Wagner, 1983, pp. 173–174), death was a phenomenon within the lifeworld, and one assumption of the lifeworld is the belief that life will continue as usual. However, humans now face the existential anxiety of the potential death of all life on the planet through nuclear annihilation and climate crises due to the pursuit of control by political-techno-economic forces. More than half of Earth's species are predicted to face extinction by the end of the century. Have we become numb to this possibility? The phenomenologically oriented sociologist Kurt. H. Wolff admonishes that,

> the possibility that some of us end the world remains the overwhelming characteristic of our time . . . survival, for us, now lies in seeing that which we have so many ways of not seeing . . . darkness so ordinary and pervasive that we do not see it as darkness. (Wolff, 1995, p. xviii & 203)

The concept of "world" underlies the concept of lifeworld. Scientistic/positivistic thought, while providing some material benefits and control over nature, has detached from the lifeworld. Only recently have scientists begun to examine the overall ecological impact of their actions. This decoupling of systems and the lifeworld has led to the destruction of living environments and human expulsions, loss of animal and plant species diversity, and the emergence of places where liveness and even life cannot be sustained in the world.

We believe that sharing information and raising awareness about the colonization of the lifeworld, and its impact on individuals and communities, is a sensibility of the mindful researcher—promising the shift from deathworlds to lifeworlds.

Valerie Malhotra Bentz, David Rehorick, and their colleagues provide examples of how scholar–practitioners activate through their research and practice for a more livable world (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008, 2017; Bentz & Marlatt, 2021).

We encourage you to embark on social research in the face of what Gaia (our living planet, Earth) and all of us are facing today and to engage with these challenges. We are not laying out the nature of the issues faced by mindful researchers and then leaving you to deal with them alone. A truly positive aspect of these changes is that we can work together across the globe using Zoom and other shared media. We already have formed a global network of scholar–practitioners supporting each other in the face of deathworlds and working together to enhance lifeworlds. We call it the Somatics, Phenomenology, and Communicative Leadership (SPCL) Community of Research and Practice, because it is based on the principles of Mindful Inquiry. These principles are given not just so you can become martyrs to a cause but also because we know they will be beneficial to you. We have found that engaging in the process of Transformative Phenomenology, which is keenly related to mindfulness, benefits the researchers as well as the individuals and communities participating in the research. Many of you will join other research groups, organizations, and associations. Whatever path you take, we offer here opportunities to be together in building lifeworlds and diminishing deathworlds and deathworld-making.

Activity: Identifying Potential Negatives and Alternatives

This activity is not for those who are faint of heart or for those who reject open acknowledgment of death (see Becker, 1997). We ask you to look at a research situation you may be involved in—whether at the community, organization, or psychological level—in terms of elements that may negatively impact the lifeworld situation. In other words, what are the deathworlds within the research context in which you may engage? Can you imagine different levels in which to organize your study? Would an action research approach, for example, lend itself to greater awareness and therefore amelioration or change in the situation (see Bentz & Marlatt, 2021 for examples of such research from the level of individual psychology to whole cities)?

CONCLUSION

We have discussed how all research takes place in a historical situation. This allows some aspects of a situation to come to light but conceals others. Currently, the social researcher is at a historical turning point at which scientism and its modernist assumptions are being challenged. At the same time, ardent critics of scientism find themselves ironically falling into scientistic modes of thinking and analysis.

Postmodern theory asserts that all knowledge is socially constructed and that we do not exist as human subjects. Rather, we are modules in information flows.

Mindful Inquiry takes issue with this virulent form of postmodernism. By putting the person at the center of the research process, we are choosing to hold on to the view of ourselves and of you as rational, creative, ethical people. As such, you must be an applied philosopher. The mindful inquirer is an applied philosopher, not an information-processing machine.

You may be asking yourself how we are proposing, in the rest of this short introductory book, to meet all the goals we have set for ourselves and to cover all the topics we have introduced. In truth, to meet our own goals fully would require a book many times the length of this one—one that, precisely because of its length, might scare off more readers than it would attract. Our aim for this project is different. We will not try to meet each of our goals thoroughly. Rather, we will attempt to provide enough grounding and initiate some thought processes about all the goals so readers will feel empowered to continue these thought processes on their own and know where and how to do that through suggestions and pointers we provide.

Tools of research are ever-changing historical products that meet the changing research needs and knowledge models of researchers—researchers who are always redefining themselves historically. Mindful Inquiry is particularly suited to this context because it includes explicitly defining your research in terms of your understanding of your historical context. Thus, we take a critical, historical, and nonscientistic approach to the research methods themselves.

In this chapter, we considered how prevailing thinking and scholarship evolved with a linearity that directed the flow of research. We cited cultural events and intellectual movements, from the Enlightenment to posthumanism and the invasion of AI, interacted with the realm of scholarship. We suggested the result has had negative consequences that a paradigm shift can still correct. In the next chapter, we will describe how the mindful scholar–practitioner can redirect the flow toward reconstitution and sustainability. We propose Mindful Inquiry invites us to follow a different path, beginning by positioning the researcher in the center with intentionality and knowledge.

KEY TERMS

Anthropocene
colonization of the lifeworld
epistemologist
methodology
Mindfulness
modern
ontology
Positivism
postmodern
postmodern theory
post-truth
scientism
Transformative Phenomenology