



# Retrospection on the impact of Wallendorf and Brucks' "Introspection in consumer research: Implementation and implications"

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## ABSTRACT

This paper offers a retrospection of the impact of Wallendorf & Brucks' (W&Bs') (1993) contribution. The present article considers W&Bs' contributions to theory and research and uses citation analyses to consider W&Bs' impact in the literature. The number of citation references indicates that the article has substantial impact on introspection scholarship. An analysis of the contents of references confirms W&Bs' unique importance to introspection theory and research. W&Bs' influence on introspection studies is diverse and substantive, spanning a wide range of topics that W&B explicate. These contributions move W&B from noteworthy scholarship to seminal status in its contributions to introspection research.

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## 1. Introduction

Historically, the concept of introspection traces back to the works of Aristotle and Plato (Boring, 1953) and covers a range of divergent positions on theory and practice. Notable proponents in the early twentieth century include the Wurzburg School and E.B. (Danziger, 1980). Even though the first half of the twentieth century includes a decline in the use of introspection mainly because of the growth of behaviorism; with the development of cognitive psychology in the second half, interest is rebounding (Pritchard, 1990). Current research interest, practice, and scholarship span the range of sciences (see Gibbs, 2006; Gopnik, 1993; Overgaard, 2006; Pronin et al., 2007).

Within the realm of consumer behavior, interest in introspection is as recent as the late 20th Century. W&Bs' (1993) article stands as a landmark in this direction. This paper considers its value. To do so, it undertakes the following tasks – a brief overview of the article, followed by an assessment of impact metrics in terms of citation references and a comparison with other articles in the same issue; a commentary on the nature of references to the article, and finally, concluding thoughts.

## 2. Overview

W&B discuss the advantages, problems, and consumer research potential of introspection as a research approach. They draw upon

introspection related literature within the social sciences, a few studies within the consumer behavior realm, mainly conference publications, and a significant number of illustrations from a single article published in a major consumer research journal (Gould, 1991) before 1993. An understanding of introspection is offered in terms of "researchers' life experiences" (p. 339), and the reporting of what one discovers when one looks into the mind. The authors delineate five categories of introspection, formulate a set of methodological issues, and then apply them to the use of introspection in consumer research.

W&B propose five categories of introspection. Researcher introspection – in this category, the researcher is the sole introspector, studies himself or herself, with no other informants present. The context is an aspect of the researcher's life experience.

Guided introspection – in guided introspection, people other than the researcher introspect or think aloud, and their introspections are recorded as data. Examples of this kind include responses to written questionnaires, or transcriptions/records of verbal introspections.

Interactive introspection – the researcher assists others in interactive introspection but the goal of the study is the emergent experience of both researcher and informants. Both the researcher and the introspecting informants share a similar life experience that serves as the focus of their discussion with each other.

Syncretic introspection – this kind involves combinations of the previous categories. Unlike interactive introspection, the researcher in this case does not share his/her introspections with informants. However, both researcher and informants are included in the sample.

Reflexivity within research – this approach refers to reflexivity in studies that use participant observation as a method. That is, researchers are both outsiders and insiders to the research process. All five categories

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of introspection rely to some extent on an individual's reports of his/her conscious awareness of some aspect of experience.

W&B raise five methodological issues. The first issue acknowledges potential problems posed by the reconstructive nature of long-term memory and biased sampling of events from memory. They suggest taking daily field notes and description of data collection techniques to acknowledge or minimize any problems. The second issue concerns the specificity of data the introspector is asked to provide. W&B suggest ample data gathered through an appropriately large or diverse sample or through a suitably lengthy period of time is a necessary corrective to researcher generalizations. The third issue relates to the documentation of data. W&B emphasize the need of documented records to enable comparisons, to build theory, and to be able to make reliable or trustworthy claims about theoretical relationships between concepts. The fourth methodological issue involves selection of cases for inclusion in the sample. Issues and implications for research practice involve detail on decision criteria for sample inclusion. The fifth and final issue refers to the analytic stance adopted. Issues and implications for research practice concern the objectification of analysis and attaining distance during different phases of the research, particularly analytic distance.

W&B suggest that researcher introspection has the most limited potential. The advantages do not outweigh the problems of achieving distance and sample adequacy. In contrast, guided introspection offers considerable future potential. Syncretic forms of introspection that include some researcher introspection as well as some guided introspections with informants other than the researcher, according to W&B, may offer some potential and are probably best used by researchers with some training or qualifications. Interactive introspection offers greater potential than sole reliance on researcher introspection. Researchers using interactive introspection may underestimate the power hegemony that exists between themselves and their informants. According to W&B, greater reflexivity is likely to improve understanding and reporting of the actual research process.

### 3. Impact metrics

Citation counts provide a quantitative and objective means of evaluating scholarly works. The number of citations of an author's journal articles, books, and other publications by other authors is a measure of impact of an author's work (Woodside, 2009). Woodside further proposes that substantial numbers of citations by other scholars to a candidate's publications occurs because of the recognition by these authors of the unique value in the work.

This study selected two databases — Scopus and Google to examine citation references to W&Bs' (1993). Citation references in this paper are limited to articles in peer reviewed journals, while the study excludes

**Table 2**

Primacy — a comparison between Scopus and Google (references in bold are common to both databases).

Scopus	Google
Earl (2001)	<b>Gilly and Wolfenbarger (1998)</b>
Simonson et al. (2001)	Goulding (1998)
Szmigin and Carrigan (2001)	Holbrook (1998a,b)
Brown (1999)	<b>Jacoby et al. (1998)</b>
Brown et al. (1999)	Patterson et al. (1998)
Johnston et al. (1999)	<b>Cotte (1997)</b>
<b>Gilly and Wolfenbarger (1998)</b>	<b>Drumwright (1996)</b>
<b>Jacoby et al. (1998)</b>	Reid and Brown (1996)
<b>Cotte (1997)</b>	Gould (1995)
<b>Drumwright (1996)</b>	Zinkhan (1994)

self citations, books, and or random web sites. The reasons for applying these restrictions include the following points. Self citations may have self-serving purposes (Kostoff, 1998); the impact of a citation in a book is hard to measure, while random web sites may be equally confounding.

A search on the Scopus database shows the W&B article receives 35 citations with most citations appearing in journals relating to disciplines of psychology, marketing, and qualitative research. The first citation appears in 1996, three years after the W&B publication, although Google Scholar shows a first citation in 1994. Citation references peak from 2004 to 2006, with sustained interest continuing since. The article receives 67 citations on Google Scholar (as of August 2009). Quite obviously, while all article citations do not appear on Scopus (35 recorded citations as opposed to 67 on Google Scholar), likewise, not all Scopus citations are covered on Google scholar either.

A comparison between Scopus and Google (see Table 1) shows almost one-third of the documents (11) on Scopus do not appear on Google Scholar. Perhaps some journals are not as strongly linked to Google search protocols as others. On the other hand, Scopus on its own seems inadequate. A big miss is Gould's (1995) landmark response to W&Bs' (1993). The comparison between Scopus and Google Scholar suggests the need to expand article/citation search options beyond a single database, as conjunction widens scope. A comparison on factors such as primacy (earliest article citations) and recency (most recent article citations) further underscores the need to do so (see Tables 2 and 3).

A disadvantage with Scopus, however, is that it is difficult to locate all articles and relevant statistics prior to 1996, the year Scopus was set up. In view of this difficulty, graphical comparisons (see Fig. 1) in this paper limit citation counts to Google Scholar only.

A comparison of annual citations for W&B with average citations for all articles in the same JCR issue (Fig. 1) shows the article has a steady increase in the number of citation references up to the mid nineties, however a sharp decline is noted in 2000, followed by a strong peak in 2001, a decline in 2003, a pick-up in 2004, a slight dip in 2005, again a peak in 2006, followed by a dip in 2007, and then a rise again which seems to have plateaued off over the last two years. On the other hand, the annual average citations for all articles in the same issue show a steady rise up to 2005, a leveling off in 2006–2007, from when onwards there is a steady decline. Even though the graph shows

**Table 1**

A comparison of articles citing Wallendorf & Brucks on Scopus and Google Scholar.

Articles citing Wallendorf & Brucks on Scopus (not found on Google Scholar)	Articles citing Wallendorf & Brucks on Google Scholar (not found on Scopus) (Articles receiving 5+ citations)
Rajagopal (2007)	Caru and Cova (2006)
Bettany and Burton (2006)	Carrigan and Szmigin (2004)
Shaw et al. (2006)	Hopkinson and Hogg (2004)
Cheung and Prendergast (2006)	Martin (2004)
Gummeson (2005)	Woodside et al. (2004)
Patterson (2005)	Holbrook and Schindler (2003)
Canniford (2005)	Gummeson (2001)
Martin (2004)	Maclaran and Brown (2001)
Roberts (2004)	Pachauri (2001)
Carrigan et al. (2004)	Shankar et al. (2001)
Brown (1999)	Shankar (2000)
	Goulding (1999)
	Brown (1998)
	Goulding (1998)
	Holbrook (1998a,b)
	Gould (1995)

**Table 3**

Recency — a comparison between Scopus and Google (references in bold are common to both databases).

Scopus	Google
<b>Diamond et al. (2009)</b>	<b>Diamond et al. (2009)</b>
Bowen (2008)	Gould (2008)
Woodside (2008)	Bradshaw and Holbrook (2008)
Rajagopal (2007)	Shaw (2007)
Hackley (2007)	Caru and Cova (2006)
<b>Woodside (2006)</b>	<b>Woodside (2006)</b>
Bettany and Burton (2006)	Hackley (2006)

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