CHAPTER 12

Advocacy and Ethics

Making Things Work Better

There is wide agreement that research should make things work better. There is less agreement that researchers should use their research to advocate for particular solutions. Some choose research questions and interpret their research so as to maximize helping things work better. We need critical studies, but advocacy spotlights some flaws and hides others. That can be a problem. Some say that the world will not be made better until we understand it better. I am dismayed when I feel that researchers are jumping too quickly from investigating into ameliorating.

12.1. ALL RESEARCH IS ADVOCATIVE

Most researchers see themselves as searching objectively for explanation and understanding. They shudder if someone says they are biased or too subjective. Many of their own mentors once said that "research should be value-free." But almost no one now believes the social researcher can operate without exercising personal values. Yet, they sometimes speak angrily of research that deliberately takes sides, promoting or opposing some cause. And still, it is clear that researchers, like other people, have strong feelings about social matters and show advocacy in their reports. Box 12.1 lists advocacies of qualitative researchers.

BOX 12.1. Six Advocacies Common in Qualitative Studies

1. We care about the groups we work with. Often we hope to see their work advanced. Some researchers are studying a part of their own organization. Barry MacDonald once said, "One should not study a program if one does not support its goals." Seldom do we have a large conflict of interest in our research, but often we have a *confluence* of interest, a sharing of interest. We hope to find the group succeeding. We are disposed to see evidence of success.
2. We care about the methods we use. We want to see others care about them. We want to encourage them to use the methods too. We sometimes promote qualitative study as a professional service to help people. We favor methods that dig into the depth of issues, and we encourage others to probe in similar ways. Our methods are an advocacy we flaunt.
3. We advocate rationality. We are comfortable with personalistic knowing and intuition, but we support rationality strongly. We would like the people we study and study for, and our colleagues and administrators on campus, to explicate and be logical and even-handed. We sometimes pause in our data gathering and reporting to point out ways that the people could have behaved more rationally.
4. We care to be heard. We are troubled if our studies are not used. We feel qualitative study is more useful if the participants take some ownership of the research. Some of us are advocates of self-study and action research. Even a quantitative study can profitably use input from constituents, including suggestions for design and interpretation.
5. We are distressed by underprivilege. We see gaps among the privileged—the patrons and managers and staff—and underprivileged participants and communities. We often devote some of the study to the issues of privilege, coming up with research questions that illuminate or possibly might alleviate underprivilege. We like distribution of our findings to reach people distant from research.
6. We are advocates of a democratic society. We see democracies depending on the exchange of good information, some of which our studies can provide. But also, we see democracies needing the exercise of public expression, dialogue, and collective action. Most case study researchers try to create reports that provide grounds for and stimulate action.

We do advocate, yet we are troubled. We are troubled by the possibility that our advocacies will cause us to search more vigorously for aspiration-focused evidence than for other evidence. We cling to some advocacies more than to neutrality, believing these well-considered biases to be compatible with the interests of the profession, our clients, and society.

Each of us is more than a researcher. We are complex human beings. Some of the things we do are part of our work and some are outside our work. Each of us has political, spiritual, aesthetic, and other advocacies. Some of the panorama of advocacy cannot help but become part of the final report, even if we individually try to separate our research assertions from the rest of our life. Perceptions and values from any part of our lives may influence the interpretations we make in writing a final report.

12.2. A VOICE FOR THE UNDERREPRESENTED

Many of us qualitative researchers aspire to work with people whose voice has little carry. For the poor, for minorities, for those with disabilities, for the disenfranchised. Our studies perhaps may illuminate the plight and virtue of the disenfranchised. As advance organizers, we express need for empathy, for assistance, for advocacy—even sometimes ignoring conventional research ethics. As a program evaluator, I remember *under*stating the shortcomings of a teachers group, thinking otherwise the budget knives might cut deep, possibly forcing its termination. And you know those stories too. Advocacy abounds. Even in our most ethical research, there is advocacy, with some of it intending to assist "marginalized" people. In studying them, many of us become their agents.

But I am not confident we serve the people we research well. How accurately do we read their need, their aspiration, their constraint? We are confident, sometimes overly confident, that the more we know about them, the better we tell their story. What is the evidence that the impoverished are empowered when we portray their impoverishment? What is the evidence that the rebellious find empathy when we illuminate their cause? I would say the evidence is weak. During the Iraq War, I read in a newspaper that graffiti on a Baghdad wall voiced the question, "Is help helping?"

Much research is sponsored by those who believe that with factual knowledge comes better policy. But we know that much social

and educational policy is formed for narrow political reasons, self-perpetuating, not always to make a more democratic world. The facts are used selectively, and sometimes to deepen the plight of the underclass. With skepticism we should continue to question our rationale for studying the disenfranchised. And one of the questions has to do with the intrusiveness of the personalistic methods of qualitative research.

Yes, I question the grounds for intruding into the lives of those we would help. We want to lessen their hurt. But we serve ourselves too by taking up their cause. We serve our pride, our vanity. In our circles we are admired for our words of care, for the stories we tell.

To get to better description, we press closer to those we study. The story comes slowly. We entice and cajole and purchase. We choose the facts and quotations and mood to report. Is the expression coming from our keyboard their expression? Is it an extraction, a wrenching away, something of their private selves?

As often said in this book, qualitative research methods emphasize the importance of multiple perspectives, recognizing that there are other ways of seeing things, other ways of explaining things, and alternative ways of changing things. We need the same multiplicity of views and values when we reflect upon our own work. The first argument is that we are allies of those with little voice. The counterargument is that we do more harm than good.

The good we expect is that, working collaboratively, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) and Antjie Krog (2009) would have us do, we will enjoin educators, parents, community members, and public policy setters to reach out with respect and caring. And, in some measure, we do that. But we do harm too. We sometimes tell their story badly. We sometimes expose their condition, and contrary to our intent, we get some people to dismiss them as beyond help. We may undercut their aspirations by clarifying the enormity of the obstacles they face. We may cause them to try less. There is another. One possible harm is next on my list: violating their privacy.

12.3. PERSONAL ETHICS

The following excerpt is from a collection of case studies about adolescents in trouble. In her report, the researcher, Linda Mabry (1991), quoted a girl she called Nicole as saying:

> I started getting in trouble probably the summer after seventh grade. I hung out with people that were in high school. I *looked* older, but I wasn't being responsible like an older person. I start thinking about the past like, "God, that was stupid!" Your parents say, "When you're older, you're going to thank me for this." But (back) *then*, you don't care.
>
> Second quarter of my freshman year, last year, I moved in with my aunt upstate. Then we got in a fight over my grades. So, fourth quarter, I went and lived with my dad. While I was there, my stepmom and the two kids packed up and moved. My father and I were left together about a month, and he tried something on me. I was standing up, and he had his arms around me and was rubbing me up and down. I called a friend to pick me up. I got my checks where I'd been working, called my mom, and bought a bus ticket back home. My mom told me to call the cops, and I did but they said they couldn't do anything because he didn't get in my clothes. . . .
>
> I've smoked pot maybe ten times. I've done speed once. I've never done cocaine or shot up or anything like that. I haven't smoked pot in probably six months. I don't need that stuff to have a good time. Some of those kids are screwing their lives up. (p. 17)

The case study of Nicole was part of a collection published by Phi Delta Kappa to portray young people failing. I agree that professional and lay people need to know about such troubled students. I did not consider it at the time, but I now think that her privacy may have been compromised. Is it ethical for a researcher to enter into an anonymized, consenting, collaborating individual's privacy? I don't know. Is it still invading an individual's privacy if the individual's identity is effectively concealed? Aren't we giving voice to youth who need to be heard? I just don't know.

I found those three paragraphs the most intimate and self-incriminating words of a 24-page chapter. They nicely represent the deep intimacy of some case studies. The researcher's care and caring were there for all to read. But just by the fact that we have Nicole's words here for all to read, how can we say that this was not a breach of her privacy?

Would we agree that life stories like this one can be of value to many readers? Yes. So we have a dilemma. At some point, getting closer is intrusive. At some point, learning the next fact about an individual will be a violation of his or her privacy. And can't the same be said about the privacy of a family, of a community, and of a people?

Some kind of "zone of privacy" exists, though not in the same way for different cases, nor for the same case in different circumstances, nor for different researchers, nor for different audiences. Privacy is relative, situational. We cannot expect hard and fast zone boundaries. They can change in the space of an hour. The shift and transparency of the boundaries does not make them less real. It is difficult for a researcher to find the zone of privacy into which he or she should not step. (What about Question 3 that ends Section 5.4?)

Each person can be expected to have somewhat unique zones of privacy. Zones for many people may be similar, but I think it necessary that we presume each person is different and changing. When a person feels threatened, the zone will be larger. When a person is sitting among strangers on an overseas flight, the zone may be smaller. We are sometimes willing to confide in a stranger something we are not willing to confide to a family member.

A researcher I know was studying immigrant families. One father was cold and unsympathetic toward his unmarried sister, who had become pregnant. His wife admitted being sympathetic toward her sister-in-law—but could not say so to her husband. She volunteered all this and explained the sequence of events that led to the illegitimate pregnancy and how the extended family members and the community at large reacted to the family's plight. The wife also asked that this not be mentioned to her husband. If her husband began talking about his sibling, then the researcher was asked to behave as if she was hearing it for the first time. "He will get really mad at me for telling you," she said. "It matters a lot to him how you think about our family, and this news is not good news at all." The researcher did not particularly want to hear about it and did not include it in her report.

You may be thinking that it is not a violation of privacy if Nicole or the immigrant wife volunteers the information, that where the informant sets the privacy boundary should be the law. But sometimes the researcher may need to set an earlier boundary. None of us can be counted on to know, each time, what information we should keep to ourselves.

In a long-ago evaluation of computer-based learning, Barry MacDonald was interviewing a headmaster, who said: "I wish they would send all these black boys back to the Caribbean." Barry said that he could not include such a quote in his report. The man told him something like, "Well, you should. That is honestly the way I feel." A year or

so later, unrelated to the opinion he had expressed, the man was seeking another position. It might have been useful for the potential employers to know what Barry knew. But was it his responsibility to tell them? He thought not. I think not. Shouldn't the principle be that we researchers need to honor privacy even when our informants fail to? Unlike with doctors and attorneys in similar situations, our silence is not protected by law. But shouldn't our ethical principles call us to remain silent? (For much more on research ethics, see Ryen, 2004, and Mertens and Ginsberg, 2008.)

12.4. PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

In the history of social and medical science, there have been a few research studies that seriously injured people, and many more in which their welfare was not sufficiently protected. Nations and research associations have taken steps to prevent hurtful and intrusive research. Human-subjects review boards have been established. On American university campuses, we call them institutional review boards, IRBs. They have authority, they have a mission, they do some good; certainly they are no substitute for personal care by researchers.

Rules of ethics give inadequate protection against violation of ethics. Just to continue being the nice people we are gives inadequate protection. Review boards are too far removed from the research to give adequate protection. The people being researched cannot be counted on to protect themselves. It is the researchers themselves who provide the bulwark of protection. Through empathy, intuition, intelligence, and experience, we ourselves have to see the dangers emerging.

In social research the dangers are almost never physical. They are mental. They are the dangers of exposure, humiliation, embarrassment, loss of respect and self-respect, loss of standing at work or in the group. The probability of hurt may seem so low that researchers contend that the potential good of the research to society outweighs those small dangers. Some have spoken even of a "right to know." It is important to find out how things work. But is there any scientific, political, or public right to know that justifies a single case of intrusion into personal privacy or threatens personal standing? What do you think?

Human-subjects review boards operate differently from country to country, even from campus to campus. Each country and institution and

research team should follow strong review procedures for conducting human research. Uniform procedures have been officially adopted in the United States, but so far, in my view, they have been inappropriate for qualitative research and ineffective in protecting human subjects. Norman Denzin (2002) has evaluated the situation well in his chapter on "Performance Ethics" in *Pedagogy, Politics, and Ethics*, noting both orientation of IRBs to biomedical research and their overreliance on "informed consent." By requiring full planning in advance, the American IRBs interfere with the evolving nature of action research, case study, and participatory evaluation. Ethical conduct of interpersonal research depends not so much on letters of informed consent but on deliberated and collaborative caution by the researcher, invoking a demand for help from critical friends (McIntosh and Morse, 2008). These review board problems can be fixed, but until they are, we need to obey the law while we heed our own higher standards.

To return to the matter of privacy, the researcher should not rely on the informant alone to identify the intrusion but should work at anticipating it along the way. Avoiding intrusion should not be thought of as satisfied by maintaining confidentiality. Anonymity is weak protection. The main way to respect a person's privacy is not to come to know the private matters. The researcher should not solicit private information that is not closely related to the research question. For impersonal matters, the inquiry can evolve spontaneously. But for highly personal matters, solicitation should be announced well in advance.

In the United States, during the Clinton presidency, there emerged a problem of how to deal with gay men and women in the military. The rule adopted was, "Don't ask. Don't tell." Perhaps in our world we should do better than that. For us, perhaps it should be "Don't ask. Don't tell. Don't listen." When someone starts to reveal a private matter, should we say, "Ah, that is a topic we need to put off for now"? Should we say, "I'm sorry. We really have time for just one other critical question"? Or should we knock a cup of coffee into our lap? Almost anything to avoid the zone of privacy.

Box 12.2 presents some possible rules to diminish intrusion. It is incumbent on the researcher to anticipate it. Some of the rules have more of a privacy aspect than others. It may help us keep in mind a zone of privacy like the one mentioned earlier.

The problem of intrusion is important yet little addressed as part of research design, triangulation, and training. Conventional readings

BOX 12.2. Rules to Diminish Intrusion

1. Regardless of where data are to be gathered, "personalistic research" will enter the "spaces" of personal experience. The researcher needs to get close enough to comprehend that experience and stay far enough away to avoid intrusion into the truly felt private.
2. Access to those "spaces" is not through a one-time "letter of consent" but a continuing negotiation of roles and permissions to inquire about matters, personal and otherwise.
3. Personal access sometimes needs to be given formally by persons in authority but always by a continuing showing of willingness by each participant. The researcher needs to develop acuity to read those signs.
4. Termination options should be clear. Exiting should not be taken for granted.
5. There is a special problem when the data provider is under obligation or pressure to participate but is not fully willing. The researcher needs to weigh the costs of going ahead, with or without discussion with this data provider.
6. In dealing with highly personal matters, children and others in dependency should have an advocate present during initial negotiation of access and possibly during data gathering.
7. Early on, the research proposal (or an abbreviated but not deceptive version) should be made available. Previous pertinent reports by the researcher should also be accessible. The main research question(s) and the specific topics to be raised with the person usually should be indicated.
8. When disclosure of the aim or a topic would possibly alter the behavior of the person and hurt the research, that information should be given to his or her advocate in advance and to the person, as part of member checking, after data collection and well before writing a final draft.
9. By pledge and in showing respect, the researcher should give the person reason to believe he or she can be trusted to avoid putting people at risk or burdening them.
10. Even beyond the extent asked, the researcher should indicate, in writing, who will have access to raw data and how the interpreted findings probably will be used.
11. If the researcher is funded or is serving an advocacy effort, the sponsors and other associates should be identified.

(cont.)

BOX 12.2. *(cont.)*

12. Usually, beyond token gifts, the researcher has little, other than gratitude, with which to pay a data provider. He or she should not offer benefits that research often fails to give. He or she should not pose as therapist or problem solver.
13. The role of the researcher as (a) stranger, (b) visitor, (c) initiate, or (d) insider-expert or other (see Agar, 1980) should be thought out and indicated.
14. The researcher and the person being studied can together become collaborators, but the benefits and responsibilities should be carefully and repeatedly explored, sometimes with legal counsel.
15. The researcher should have a plan for data gathering, intuitive or formal, which again undergoes scrutiny for protecting human subjects prior to each data gathering.
16. Advance into new and unexpected personal topics should carry a warning.
17. When a person begins to volunteer personal and private information not directly pertinent to the study, the researcher should interrupt the revelation and divert the inquiry—and sometimes even when the information is pertinent.

of methods often offer us simplistic and nonexperiential warnings. Each of us has to plan for each situation. If we leave it to intuition, however good that usually is, we may hurt people. And on the triangulation side, the quality of our data often depends on making and keeping good personal relationships. We need to remember that, at the end of the study, whatever understandings we have gained may not be worth the trouble we have caused.

12.5. PEOPLE EXPOSED

The reality of personal fieldwork is very complex (Lee, 2000). A cultural divide between researcher and researched appears even when gathering face-to-face data in a neighboring community or in an unfamiliar organization or just in a new house down the street, but we are less worried about how to behave among those strangers. With an intention to learn

across cultures about patterns of belief and behavior, in matters personal and private, the estrangement can be considerable.

When is permission enough? I will tell you about a privacy problem that I faced in 2003 and again in 2006 when I was writing that book on multiple case study analysis (Stake, 2006). The book included three Step by Step case studies, one of them in Slovakia. As you read earlier, in some 30 countries, Step by Step was primarily a teacher-training program for child-centered kindergartens. But in Slovakia, the primary attention was on inclusion—particularly on the education of Roma children, who were not being admitted to first grade because their cultural backgrounds were not scholastic and they spoke Romani rather than Slovak, the language of the schools. The program developed a home-based teaching program, getting mothers and grandmothers (who themselves knew little Slovak, or how to hold a pencil and identify a triangle) to teach their children. The women were coming, bringing their preschool children 1 full day a week, all of them getting instruction. And in the remaining days of the week, they would instruct the children at home.

The Slovakia Step by Step Foundation leaders located their research study at one of their projects in a Roma settlement adjacent to the village of Jarovnice—where the efforts had been quite impressive. For more than a year, mothers and children had been coming to the Community Center and the Pastoral Center for instruction. They were supported by a tiny staff of Step by Step teachers. One of the vignettes from their case report is in Box 12.3.

With some help from me, the researchers wrote up a 40-page case report of this Jarovnice project. It was really good. I got their permission to publish it.

But, as I have said, permission is not necessarily enough. I published the report. Still, should I even have been a party to describing the history of the meanness to and the poverty of these Roma families? I cannot automatically agree with those who say, "Their story needs to be told." They greatly needed help. The stories might help. But also, the stories expose them, put them on exhibit. And I do so again in these pages.

In Slovakia we were dealing with violation of personal privacy and the privacy of a people. It was their settlement being exposed. Should our research ethics allow us to expose their conditions? As in almost all ethical problems, there is a choice between two ethics. Which is more important here, portraying the conditions or avoiding the hurt of exposure?

BOX 12.3. Case Report Vignette

At the Community Center, 14 Roma children ages 6 and 7 sit around Iveta Fabulová, their teacher, in the corner of the room, to hear a story about Marika. Nine Roma moms have joined them.

Iveta tells them all a story about Marika, a Roma blacksmith's wife. "She had too many children, and they didn't have enough to eat. One day her husband put shoes on a horse for a farmer, and the farmer paid him with a sack of flour. Marika took the flour, added water and baking soda, and made dough. She slapped the dough into a flat, round shape. She baked it over the fire. The delicious smell of the bread went out to the whole settlement. It smelled so good that everyone came to Marika's house. She fed everyone. Because her name was Marika, they called the bread '*marikle*.' Ever since that time, long ago, Roma people have been baking *marikle* to remember the generosity of Marika."

The children and their moms listen to Iveta quietly. "What do you think about this story?" Her question is addressed to a mom sitting next to her. "She was a good person." "Yes," replies Iveta, "she was generous. She shared bread with other poor people."

"Children, what was the shape of the bread? Was it like this one?" Iveta takes a round loaf from a bag. "Look, its shape is a circle. Try to draw a circle in the air. And repeat after me, 'Circle.' " The children draw circles in the air and shout, "Circle!" in chorus.

"In Presov, people buy garlic bread shaped like this." Iveta points to a yellow triangle on the blackboard. "I want you to draw this triangle and repeat after me, 'Triangle.' And soon we are going to make bread in these two shapes."

Iveta invites them to choose their activity center. The children quickly move to the centers where material has been prepared (clay, paper, pencils, pens). Some choose clay, others paper and pencil, to make these shapes. Olga, a Roma woman, the teacher assistant, helps divide the clay. The mothers move their chairs to join each group. Iveta asks them to help the children name each shape. Later, Iveta says, "Do you know the names of the shapes you made? What is this, Dusan?" Dusan has drawn circles and triangles of different colors and sizes. He answers without hesitation. Many children need the teacher's help to pronounce the Slovak word for "triangle."

Source: Koncoková and Handzelová (2004). Copyright 2004 by the Open Society Institute. Reprinted by permission.

But there is a more personal exposure for which I have been responsible. One of the photographs taken by the team was of a mother and father at home helping the children to draw. I was fascinated by their faces. I wanted to use it as a cover photo on my book.

The Step by Step program was already using the photo as one of many in their promotions. The foundation director readily gave me permission. I said, "Do we have the permission of the family?" I was told that they are very happy to have us helping them, happy to have us show them doing their lessons, that they are proud to be doing what they are doing. I passed that word along to my publisher, but I still did not feel comfortable. And it was not just because I had no signatures on an agreement.

I asked a researcher with experience with the Roma in Romania. She said, "Privacy never comes up as an issue." "But do some of them sometimes feel that we are exposing them?" "No one speaks of it." I got the same answer from a retired anthropologist. He said, "We honor the local customs. We didn't talk about what they didn't choose to talk about. We followed their lead." Are we being helpful or intruding? I don't know. Sometimes trying to help things work better makes them not work so well. But there is no alternative to trying until there is reason to believe it is hurting more than helping.

12.6. ESSENTIALS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The report of home schooling in Slovakia[1] can be used to look back at what this book tells about qualitative research, previewed in Box 1.2. It will help us think about the typical as well as the diversities of ways to do such studies. And it will remind us of the methodological choices available, including the fact that many qualitative studies will have some quantitative thinking and data.

The report of illiterate mothers preparing their children for school had "story quality." It spoke of the experience of the women who planned and carried out the plan. Stories present sequences of problems. In this Roma community, they looked at one main problem: the social discrimination. The Roma were almost without a social support system.

[1]The full report of the Slovakia case study authored by Eva Koncoková and Jana Handzelová can be read in Stake (2006).

Research seemed needed to make real the destitution and the stamina, not in the language of economics but in the language of experience.

The report was interpretive, highly interpretive. It described the people, the spaces, and the activity, but it spoke of these things as they were interpreted by Roma persons, by non-Roma community members, and by the people who funded Step by Step and came to observe the social changes. These interpretations revealed multiple realities across the groups and among individuals within the groups.

The researchers identified many contexts that gave meaning to what was happening in the situation. The political and educational contexts included a long-standing lack of social and governmental support for the Roma, but later with Ministry of Education and European Union rhetoric changing toward support and the protection of diversity. The efforts of the Step by Step teacher trainers were a big part of the contextual picture.

Vignettes and photographs and quotes helped to make the study personal and the report empathic. For most readers, the community was unique, almost hypothetical, and the teaching unreal—because it departed from much of their own experience of teaching and learning—yet the mothers and teachers and children were real. The study helped make them real.

Not much was apparent of the Slovak researchers' efforts to triangulate their data and interpretations. There was little effort to relate the study to other research literature on the Roma, on post-Soviet education, on ethnic hostilities in the Balkans, on literacy, on school admissions, and many adjacent topics.

Among the choices the researchers made was to work toward practical understanding more than toward theory development. They chose not to establish the typicality of the settlement situation. They chose to support their own views of education of Roma children rather than let the descriptions stand for themselves. Efimova and Sofiy chose to recognize the multiple realities present. They worked with particular knowledge but frequently spoke of it as generalizable. And they had no inclination to keep program improvement separate from the effort to understand the situation better. Like the program itself, the research was not flawless but still produced a successful research study.

These were not experienced researchers. They were early childhood educators. They followed their instincts, their common sense, but they also worked to discipline their study. They repeated their observations,

deliberately sought multiple interpretations, and pondered at length the words and ideas to include in the report. They conveyed the experience of Roma mothers in an almost hopeless situation working to help their children. Can these teacher educators be a challenge to the rest of us trying to figure out how things work?

12.7. LOOKING FORWARD

Here at the end of the ride, you have a lot to look back on. But as you know, you can look back further than Chapter 1. You have been doing qualitative research since your own kindergarten, and before. Of course, your research is better now than it was in kindergarten. It is more disciplined and will become increasingly so as you extend your experience.

Since kindergarten, you have experienced all the stuff around you, like bicycles and curried chicken, and a first date and being a stranger in a strange land, and you have figured and refigured what it means, and then you have realized it meant something else to your sisters and something else to your attorney. And there it is, multiple realities, not even the same between your sisters.

Of course, not everyone gets excited about multiple realities. And one of the important things about qualitative research is that there are so many different things to get excited about, and lots of people have a different twist on what they mean.

Looking forward, perhaps you are thinking, I don't really want to see things differently, I just want to turn the corner or to pass my quals or get a better job. How am I more ready for the interviews? They will be expecting me to have some right answers. And I have doubts that I've found enough right answers since kindergarten and particularly in this book.

So when they interview you for that dream job, the one that pays all expenses to professional meetings, you figure that you need right answers. And the right answers are some version or other of "it depends." It all depends on the situation. And you will tell them that the researchers you have read and admired have looked closely at situations, and you know that what works in one situation does not necessarily work in another, that the complexities are great, and that the Powers That Be end up setting policy based on the pressures they are under and the experiences

they have had. Not just the impulses, although impulses are right some of the time. To figure what will work next takes a lot of pondering, some new data, and a lot of relating to the best cautions and assertions that practitioners and researchers have passed on to you.

Qualitative research depends on planning, but one thing you have to plan especially well is to be open to new ways of interpreting things. Being able to sketch it out. Being able to talk it through. Bringing in new interpretations that tie in with economic, political, and communication developments may be the best right answer.

The words of this book have tried to add up to a right answer to the question, What works? One answer is that different things work in different places. You know how to look closely in a particular place, better now, I hope, than when you started Chapter 1. Answers can be figured out, not often to solve a problem completely, not ones we can always fit within a budget. But we can figure out how not to keep making the same mistakes, because figuring out how it works includes figuring out how it doesn't work in the trouble we are in right now.

The problems of cultures (as in Box 12.4) and the problems of policy are not solved by research. They are tackled and sometimes ameliorated by people who draw on professional knowledge and research knowledge and talk about it with other people and work something out. It is not like building a bridge. It is not like testing a new pharmaceutical. It is thinking many times about what works in some situations and trying something better for this situation.

BOX 12.4. Ana and Issam

The kindergarten is one of three classrooms at the training center. Eighteen children are working and playing around the room.

Marja, a short woman in her 40s, is a kindergarten teacher with child care experience. Working with her today is Luci, a young trainee from outside the country. Both Marja and Luci are well aware of an ethnic split among the children, but Luci has little experience with diversity in the classroom.

Ana seizes Issam's black brush and starts to paint with it. Issam cries. Luci shouts, "Ana, give the brush back to Issam." Ana looks at Luci, then at Issam. She takes the cup of black paint and pours it on Issam's hand. "He's black!" she says.

It has been important to learn that how the thing works in several small situations does not aggregate to solving a big-thing problem. Answers to macro problems call mostly for study of macro situations. Answers to micro problems call mostly for study of micro situations. The contexts are different, the action is different, the understandings are different. The ideas of qualitative inquiry are of value in both.

Most qualitative research focuses on the microsituation, the ordinary dog-bites-man situation, where the carefully collected personal experiences of people and dogs observed take on meaning through past experiences of the people doing the observing.

> The task is not so much to see what no one yet has seen, but to think what no body yet has thought about what everyone sees. (Arthur Schopenhauer, 1818, quoted in Athena McLean and Annette Leibing, 2000, p. 20)

And then writing it up so that readers have something of a vicarious experience. So much more is learned by seeing that experience close up than by finding it in distanced sources.

If you prefer a more disciplined retrospective for this book, you may turn back again to Box 1.2 in the first chapter. But you and I have spent a lot of time together, and I thought we might just sit here and think about this while we still have some time together. So. . . .