

INTRODUCTION

THE STORY WE TELL shows that social workers who collaborate with community partners can conduct credible research while empowering their clients and community partners to obtain the social changes they seek. Participatory action research (PAR) and the less inclusive but more recently popular community-based participatory research (CBPR) can take many forms but always involve working in partnership with community representatives to conduct research. Partnering with advocates helps inform researchers' efforts to address concerns that confront communities. Many social workers and scholar-activists practice this type of research; we think that others should consider it (Greenbaum 1993).

Social work researchers and other social scientists who engage in social research that is grounded in communities follow the lead of great scholar-activists such as Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, who provide a model for how to combine research and advocacy in order to affect social change. Piven and Cloward's studies helped to energize the welfare rights movement in the 1960s and later to push for voting rights for the poor (Piven 2000; Piven and Cloward 1971). Their work demonstrates that social workers can perform meaningful roles as researchers in social change efforts that contribute to what we call "radical incrementalism," where working for incremental change in the short run can lay the groundwork for more transformative changes in the long run (Schram 2002). For social work researchers to participate effectively in social change initiatives, they must think carefully about how to combine research and advocacy, particularly if they want those efforts to have lasting effects. Research can be a tool for reinforcing the status quo as much as a tool for change. Our story seeks to highlight how social work researchers can better ensure that their efforts are dedicated more to the latter than to the former.

2 INTRODUCTION

This book is about imagining how research can be made more centrally part of the effort by social work and related fields to change society for the better. It is also about rethinking what should be included in the category of good research. The idea of combining research and advocacy is currently often frowned upon as unprofessional or unscientific. Social research today is taught mostly as a highly rigorous activity. It is to be conducted in what often seems a rulebook fashion, with its own vocabulary and set principles associated with collecting data that enable researchers to demonstrate causal relationships or to predict the likelihood of events occurring under particular conditions. Research is seen as a legitimating symbol that says a practice needs to be taken seriously because it is associated with science. Many students and practitioners view research with some degree of skepticism. Social research often seems divorced from the world of social work practice, like an appendage to their studies and their work. Since the research methods most often taught are relatively esoteric, learning research is often seen as far removed from what attracts people to social work in the first place or to efforts to make social change happen.

For similar reasons, many social work practitioners see research as an activity divorced from the spirit of caring about others and trying to help them cope with the difficulties in their lives. Rather than the passion of caring, research calls for the dispassion of objective analysis. As a result, students and practitioners approach the requirement or expectation to learn how to conduct research with trepidation. They do not see it as a way to realize the passion that one has for one's chosen area of practice. At worst, they perceive it as a distraction from the real business of helping people and changing communities. At best, it is that necessary evil that helps rationalize and legitimate practice. Rarely do students and practitioners see it as the fundamental basis for what they are learning or trying to do.

Nonetheless, the call for research persists and grows ever louder. Teachers require it in courses, supervisors demand it, and policymakers call upon it as if it were an antidote to bias, a way of making those who want to do good prove they are operating on the basis of more than emotions (Haskins, Paxson, and Brooks-Gunn 2009). Scholars, professionals, and policy analysts must provide objective research in order to be taken seriously. Those who do not are viewed as incautiously reliant on mere feelings, passions, and commitments.

Because of the narrow view of what constitutes good research, and because of the perceived necessity of separating commitment from the production of knowledge, what often happens is an unfortunate bifurcation of practice or

action and research. This divide can be compounded by the fact that those who are good at research may not be as good at taking on the substantive issues in their chosen field and vice versa. Personal preferences and strengths also shape our choices. The more contemplative among us may be more comfortable studying problems, whereas others may be more prepared to attack problems now rather than wait for the studies to be completed. Research has its place in this schema as a distinct activity that can make its own contributions, but the bifurcation between research and practice does neither any good in the long run. They risk becoming worlds unto themselves, disconnected in ways that are detrimental to both. This book is designed to help rethink researchers' drift toward an unquestioned faith in science (i.e., scientization) and the hyperspecialization that comes with it so as to try to reduce the disconnection between research and practice. We offer a way of doing and thinking about research that reconnects it to commitment and practice.

One inspiration for this book is the recent interest in research that does not produce knowledge for its own sake, but in order to address real-world problems as experienced by the people we study and serve (Naples 2003). This book is designed to help us all rethink what research is so that it can be made more relevant to social workers and others who are dedicated to ensuring that their practice empowers clients and communities. How to better connect research and practice is a major challenge facing social work in particular and the social sciences in general (Schram 2002). Collaborative research is one way to improve that connection (Fischer 2003).

We do not argue that collaborative research must replace other forms of social work research. Instead, our hope is that our book provides good reasons for taking seriously the idea that collaborative research is an important form of social work practice and should be included among other useful approaches.

Collaborative research is always tied in some way to helping community research partners better understand the problems they are struggling to address. It sometimes produces generalizable knowledge. At other times, it produces knowledge that is specifically tailored to understanding the circumstances that are unique to a local community. Although there are often debates about who among a broad range of heterogeneous constituents represents the "real" community, community collaborative research is fundamentally about producing research that helps inform community efforts to realize community-defined goals. Yet even the most narrowly focused collaborative research can have uses beyond the local context. Local research can provide case studies that others can learn from, which is our intent with this project.

4 INTRODUCTION

Situated reasoning requires paying attention to the particular context in which people operate. At a minimum, a study of context suggests the importance of the perspectives of people who live a particular phenomenon, experiencing it on a daily basis in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities. A key thesis of this book is that it is better to collaborate with community partners, not just to consult with them. Although other forms of research might be particularly relevant to some forms of social work practice, we believe that community practice, policy advocacy, and related forms of social work and social change efforts are likely to be improved when collaborative research is made part of those efforts in order to enhance contextually sensitive, situated reasoning that helps communities address problems. Collaborative community-based research should not be dismissed simply because it might appear biased in favor of the client groups with which researchers work. Instead, it should be embraced as a practice that, when well done, can help clients to better identify and address problems, practices, and policies that affect their lives and their communities.

Case studies have fallen on hard times in recent years as social sciences have become more interested in systematic studies that have wide generalizability. Although there is merit in studying social problems in the abstract in order to articulate a general rationality as to why things are the way they are, there is also a need to counterbalance this interest in general rationality with concern for the situated reasoning that comes from understanding specific phenomena within a particular context (Toulmin 2001). Research is currently most often dedicated to understanding the general *at the expense of* the particular. Researchers often investigate the causes of economic downturns, the causes of poverty, or the causes of clinical depression, but as a result we know little about how a specific community is handling its economic misfortunes, how a particular neighborhood deals with poverty, or how particular clients should be treated differently from what the generic theories suggest. We must right the balance between abstract rationality and situated reasoning so that research can inform the latter as much as it currently does the former.

In social work, case studies were once considered the best way to get to know an area of practice one client at a time. Social work has now been very much assimilated into the wider push across the allied helping professions for an “evidence-based practice,” which we discuss further in chapter 1. Proponents of evidence-based practice typically place case studies on or near the bottom of the “pyramid of knowledge” (see figure I.1). Systematic reviews or meta-analyses of clinical trials are considered the sine qua non of evidence-based practice.

Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) has challenged the conventional view of case studies, suggesting that it leads us to undervalue case studies as an important

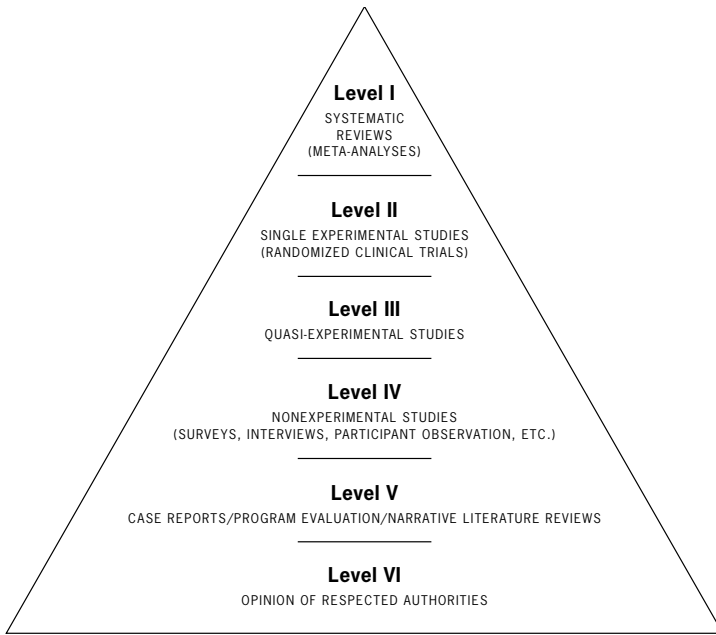


FIGURE I.1 The Pyramid of Research Knowledge: Ranking the Quality of Evidence

Source: Adapted from Melnyck and Fineout-Overholt 2005; Stetler et al. 1998.

source of knowledge, especially for improving practice. Flyvbjerg notes that case studies are especially important sources of knowledge for practitioners because they enable us to see how practice is affected by the context in which it takes place. Demonstrating the context-specific nature of knowledge teaches us that universal, generalizable knowledge inevitably must be adjusted to the specifics of the setting in which we find ourselves; otherwise, it will be of little use. This point is especially relevant when, as in social work, we are dealing with people and their relationships. Given the subjectivity of human interactions, we must be attuned to how they play out differently in specific situations.

Flyvbjerg also shows through numerous examples that carefully selected case studies can be generalizable. Drawing from the natural sciences, he outlines a variety of strategies for selecting instructive cases to be studied that can lead to making important generalizations; these instructive cases can most certainly have relevance beyond the specific circumstances in question. Of particular importance is the “paradigmatic” case study, one that reflects the general characteristics of the problem being studied. Carefully chosen cases

where it seems that success is highly likely can serve as a litmus test; if an intervention fails when circumstances seem optimal, the likelihood of success in more difficult cases will be even lower. Flyvbjerg also uses the famous example of Karl Popper's "black swan," which can show the falsity of general theories or assumptions (such as "all swans are white"). Carefully selected studies such as those focusing on a paradigmatic case, the optimal case, or the black swan are useful for much more than simply generating hypotheses that are to be more systematically tested in clinical trials or experiments.

Case studies are well suited to combat the bias toward considering only what has been previously established in research, a common problem across research areas. Case studies provide up-close, detailed knowledge of the subject being studied that is difficult to deny, often causing researchers to give up preconceived notions (Geertz 1995). Case studies therefore can be sources of "insistent" data that impose their own discipline upon the researcher. Although Flyvbjerg notes that it is dangerous to summarize case studies, he argues that this problem is resolvable by creating opportunities to report cases in depth (as we do in this book). Case studies are important sources of social work knowledge that can help social workers think about how to improve their practice. Ours is a paradigmatic case study demonstrating how in social change efforts social work researchers can play important roles beyond the ones the researchers themselves initiate.

In other words, just as we argue for an alternative form of research, we do so through an alternative presentation of research. We do not use statistics in an explanatory causal analysis based on a large number of cases in order to prove that collaborative, community-based research is an important alternative form of research. Instead, by way of a narrative approach we demonstrate the importance of social work research in advocacy efforts; that is, we tell a story. Stories are their own form of truth. In our highly scientific times, stories are often dismissed as neither objective nor rigorous. Stories are like folktales, rumors, or gossip. They are to be treated suspiciously and not as the basis for concerted social action of any kind, let alone public policymaking to make change happen in communities.

If we step back from the current biases that blind us from seeing a variety of sources for knowledge and truth, however, we can see more clearly that stories have historically been considered their own important source of knowledge, especially when it comes to mobilizing people to work for social change (Schram and Neisser 1997). Stories provide examples or models of how to engage in a particular practice. They are their own source of power and can motivate

people to think differently and change the way they do things on the basis of the inspiration provided. This is often the case when people share personal experiences (see Kilbride and Farley 2007). Sociologist Andrew Greeley, a prolific researcher and an equally prolific novelist, has written on the power of personal stories: “The storyteller, the *seanachie* (the professional storyteller), wants to share his life with you, whatever the risk might be, because only by doing so can he intrude into your life and stir up reactions within your memory that will enable you and him to share experiences. One tells stories not to edify or educate, much less to indoctrinate, but rather to illuminate . . . , to send forth from the story interlude the listener with a heightened sensitivity to the possibilities of life, to give you greater insight into things you dimly thought might be true or hoped to be true” (1999, 176).

Whereas research textbooks often articulate basic rules or guidelines for conducting research, this book provides a story that illustrates how to address the challenges of collaborative community-based research. The story we tell is about our collaboration with activists who were leading an affordable-housing campaign in Philadelphia. These activists asked us to help them do research on the problems associated with low-income homeownership and home repair in their city. We recount how we became involved, how the collaboration unfolded, the tensions that developed between researchers and advocates, and how we managed those tensions successfully in ways that contributed to our research. Our research played a small but significant role in helping create Philadelphia’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund. We discuss how the campaign for affordable housing relied on specific findings from our research and how the campaign succeeded in part because it was backed by credible research that demonstrated the existence of a specific problem in particular communities and the concrete remedies available to address that problem.

Our story of collaboration can also be read as a story of hope. It is easy for educators in the arena of social policy to be disheartened by accounts of social policy, in particular social welfare policy, that are depressing and even paralyzing to emerging social workers. They often find themselves working to educate students and telling them it is their duty as social workers to strive for social justice and to make a difference. However, there are too few inspirational stories to provide examples of how that might happen, what it might look like, and how to assess “success” in the complex arena of politics and policy (Shdaimah 2009b). This is one more reason why it is important to tell stories that show how research can be a critical part of advocacy campaigns to create real social change.

One recent story of hope is told by former community organizer President Barack Obama. In his book *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama writes about how his belief that we can change things for the better by working together motivated him to be active in politics:

I talked to anyone who would listen. I went to block club meetings and church socials, beauty shops and barbershops. If two guys were standing on a corner, I would cross the street to hand them campaign literature. And everywhere I went, I'd get some version of the same two questions.

"Where'd you get that funny name?"

And then: "You seem like a nice enough guy. Why do you want to go into something dirty and nasty like politics?"

I was familiar with the question, a variant on the questions asked of me years earlier, when I'd first arrived in Chicago to work in low-income neighborhoods. It signaled a cynicism not simply with politics but with the very notion of a public life, a cynicism that—at least in the South Side neighborhoods I sought to represent—had been nourished by a generation of broken promises. In response, I would usually smile and nod and say that I understood the skepticism, but that there was—and always had been—another tradition to politics, a tradition that stretched from the days of the country's founding to the glory of the civil rights movement, a tradition based on the simple idea that we have a stake in one another, and that what binds us together is greater than what drives us apart, and that if enough people believe in the truth of that proposition and act on it, then we might not solve every problem, but we can get something meaningful done. (2006, 1–2)

The hope that by working together we can change things for the better was what motivated us as researchers and activists. Given our different roles in the Philadelphia affordable-housing project, tensions often arose, but we viewed these tensions as an opportunity to learn from one another rather than as intractable differences between researchers and advocates. Our collaboration highlights research as one tool that social workers can use to foster social change initiatives at the same time that social change initiatives can help to drive researchers to learn from the people they study. This story is as much about changing research as it is about conducting research for change. Research is not just made more relevant when it is engaged with activism; it is improved, especially in its capacity to help people solve problems. When research related to social change efforts is conducted in collaboration with com-

munity partners, the efforts to produce social change can be made stronger in quality and credibility rather than being compromised and diluted. This story shows the important role that research can play in social change efforts. Research need not be seen as some irrelevant and onerous technical exercise. It is our hope that others will find this story not just educative but inspiring and that they, too, will want to perform or incorporate researcher roles in social change campaigns. Social workers can practice in ways that will help empower clients to pursue the changes they perceive to be necessary. It is a role that social workers are ideally suited for and one, we hope, that students in particular will be inspired to take on. If they do, it will likely result in more effective advocacy efforts because such efforts are informed by sound research.

We tell this story of a case study not only to situate our theoretical argument, but also to explain the values that inform our research. These values are tightly interrelated with the values that have long grounded the profession of social work. Many social workers and social work researchers, ourselves included, believe that our professional values compel us to pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. This is why the American, British, and International Social Work Codes of Ethics explicitly state that social workers should work toward achieving social justice and combating marginalization and oppression with and on behalf of individuals, families, and communities (British Association of Social Workers 2002; International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work 2004; National Association of Social Workers 2008). Social workers' social change efforts should focus primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These efforts promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. In addition to substantive values, social work codes of ethics also call for a collaborative approach to social work in the obligation to work for access to needed information, services, and resources; we should similarly work toward equality of opportunity and meaningful participation in decision making for all people (British Association of Social Workers 2002; International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work 2004; National Association of Social Workers 2008).

Another important dimension of social work ethics is the assertion that social workers should be dedicated to empowering people rather than to trying to control them. Consistent with this philosophy is the idea that social workers should work *with* clients, even when studying them or the problems

that affect them (Strier 2007). Community-based research is well suited to meet this challenge. For the project profiled in this book, we consulted with our advocacy partners at every step. Our collaboration went further and involved our taking direction from our research partners, whose knowledge about affordable housing was more intimate than ours. Our roles as social work researchers were enhanced by our giving up our territorial claim to the role of the “expert” who must be deferred to. Our relationship with our advocate partners provides important lessons for social workers and social researchers alike.

We are well aware that our story is not the only story that might be told of our collaboration. Researchers and community activists play distinct roles. Although we can tell our own story about our role in the collaborative process, we can provide only a portrayal of our partners’ experience that is mediated through our own lens. To provide some insight into our collaborators’ views and to report on their efforts, we solicited their perspectives in interviews and checked with them as we worked on this book. We report our findings from this process evaluation with our collaborators to inform our analysis and to draw out the lessons that they would like us to share. But this story is nevertheless framed and limited by our own standpoint. We recognize that our advocate partners would likely tell different stories and that their stories about this experience would further our knowledge about community-based research collaborations. When community partners tell their stories about research collaborations, all of us learn more about how to do such research well (Hillier and Koppisch 2005; Shlay and Whitman 2004).

We begin our story in chapter 1 by providing background on collaborative, action-oriented research. We discuss the increasing interest in grounding all forms of social work (community based as well as clinical) in research that provides empirical evidence for the effectiveness of practice. We note the dangers, however, of basing practice on research that is disconnected from the context in which it will be used and divorced from consideration of the expressed concerns of those it purports to serve (Shdaimah 2009c). We suggest that, at a minimum, this sort of “top-down” research needs to be supplemented with “bottom-up” research that presents an understanding of the problems studied from the perspective of the clients and communities that are directly affected by the proposed treatments, interventions, services, or programs in question (Schram 1995).

In chapter 2, we discuss how community-based practice must increasingly document effectiveness through research that systematically evaluates

whether community-based programs and services produce intended results, especially when funders demand this type of accountability. Although accountability is undoubtedly a legitimate goal, we argue that the type of evaluation research that is demanded in the name of accountability often leaves a great deal to be desired (Ferguson et al. 2006; Loseke 1989; Rossi and Wright 1984; Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba 2007). We also note the equally troubling problems with documenting effectiveness via evaluation research, even though there is a growing preoccupation with doing so. Accountability systems associated with evaluation efforts are often questionable in their design, methods, measurements, and interpretations. These systems also disconnect researchers from their community partners to the point of suspicion and distrust instead of promoting the synergy and increased effectiveness that can come from combining forces to revise and improve practice.

We propose a different role for social work researchers beyond interacting with community partners in order to evaluate them. A healthier relationship in working with the community, we suggest, can be developed through collaboration with clients and community partners to conduct bottom-up research that will reflect their perspectives on the problems they are confronting and working to address. Researchers should ally with community partners so that their collaborative research can “speak truth to power” and leverage social policy change.¹ Such collaborations have the value of being informed by the agendas of disadvantaged populations and consider how people imagine changing their lives for the better. This added level of insight—framing research in terms of client and community collaborators’ change agenda—makes change research potentially a process that is much more intelligent. An additional feature of such research is that it is structured to empower client and community collaborators by arming them with credible empirical evidence about problems that they wish to address. In other words, collaborative research enhances both the quality of the research and the advocacy efforts with which it is associated. All of these features make research much more compatible with social work ethics.

To illustrate such an alternative relationship between researchers and the people they study, chapter 3 relates the story of our own collaborative efforts. It is told from our perspective as researchers who were invited to join an affordable-housing coalition’s efforts to address problems of low-income home ownership and repair in Philadelphia. We recount the development of the coalition and describe our key advocacy partners. We highlight the strategic concerns the partners had with regard to the role of research in helping

them gain credibility with policymakers and other stakeholders. We discuss the challenges and conflicting commitments that researchers and advocates often face. The in-depth examination of our research collaboration provides examples of what to do and what not to do when serving as a researcher in this type of collaboration.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the essential components of our research. In chapter 4, we discuss our initial investigations using available census and other survey data. We report our findings regarding the state of low-income housing in Philadelphia. Our statistical research is presented in detail in this chapter to demonstrate that our methods of data collection and analysis were credible according to conventional social scientific standards—in other words, that researchers need not compromise on the quality of the research in the name of advocacy for a cause. We also show how community partners' concerns can be addressed through quantitative data analysis in a way that enhances their ability to advocate for desired changes. Chapter 5 presents the results of our field interviews with low-income homeowners, advocates, and key informants in the local policy arena. This discussion demonstrates how qualitative research can contextualize quantitative data and thus provide a more nuanced and concrete understanding of what the “numbers” mean to people and policymakers. Chapters 4 and 5 together demonstrate the richness of the mixed-method research approach that evolved from working with our partners at all steps of the research process. As we report on our findings, we also discuss how collaborative research influenced the data that we collected, our interpretation of those data, and our presentation of these findings to the Philadelphia City Council.

Chapter 6 shows how recommendations that we developed from our collaborative research efforts were presented in the policymaking process. We report both our recommendations and our reflections on how the collaboration process affects findings, including how, when, and where to frame and present them. This chapter focuses on our work with community partners to ensure that our research would effectively inform their advocacy efforts. We report on how policymakers in Philadelphia viewed these efforts and how the research entered into the legislative process to help create and frame the response to housing challenges faced by low-income homeowners at both the city and the state levels. We highlight how participation in the presentation of findings to the broader public and to relevant policy actors is an essential part of the research process, one that affects how research is interpreted and used. Opting for collaborative, community-based PAR

methods enabled us to learn more about our own research by seeing how it was framed and received.

Chapter 7 broadens the discussion to reflect back on our research collaboration more systematically, focusing on the tensions and challenges that we faced in this particular research–advocacy collaboration. This chapter adds some drama to our story, highlighting that the success of our collaboration was not easily achieved. We supplement our own reflections about the collaboration with our partners’ perspectives, which we solicited through retrospective, semistructured interviews. In this retrospective study, we learned to see the collaboration differently. It was a humbling and surprising experience because the various participants’ reflections led us to rethink and alter our own perspective specifically on the project and more generally on collaborative research. We offer suggestions for making collaborative change research more successful. In particular, we emphasize how research collaborations can take advantage of the healthy differences in opinion that are bound to arise. They lead to a more robust research process that better serves advocacy efforts. Finally, we show that collaborative efforts are not without a price. Social workers committed to community collaboration and client empowerment need to be willing to apply the additional time, effort, self-reflection, and compromise that successful collaboration requires.

Chapter 8 builds on our case study to offer a model for collaborative social work research in agency and community settings. All good collaborative social work research involves adapting to the environment into which researchers are invited. In such projects, social workers must be “on tap” rather than “on top.” Social work change research is primarily in service of empowering those on the bottom of the service system. Our model is based on our experience that research and advocacy are made stronger when they work in ways that are mutually informing. Just as we are skeptical of generic research that is disconnected from the social context in which it is to be applied, our model comes with a warning label that reads: “To be applied with sensitivity to the specific setting to which it is to be adapted.” Indeed, the very nature of such research requires researchers’ willingness to expect the unexpected and to be open to their community partners’ needs and concerns. A major point we make is that good collaborative social work research involves listening to client and community partners and allowing them to set the agenda for how research can help them to pursue their desired social changes.

Finally, we offer some concluding thoughts about the relationship of research to practice in social work today. We pose challenges to those entering

the profession by insisting that they take research seriously as an important component to doing good social work. At the same time, we provide support for the demand that research be made relevant to the specifics of any particular form of social work practice and the setting in which it is conducted. We suggest that collaborative, community-based PAR provides great potential to pursue radical incrementalist practice that achieves small, short-run political gains that can contribute to making possible more significant political transformations in the future.

Social work research carried out in collaboration with social workers and community activists, even when there are limited financial resources, is an example of social work research that is both relevant and feasible. It can make a difference in the lives of people and communities. Anyone can be a part of it. A broad variety of knowledge sources and ways of knowing can be respected and employed. We are confident that social workers will find that the role of researcher in such a setting is a good fit for them, and we believe that this role can make them more effective partners in working with clients and communities to promote social change.

To demonstrate how we all can be part of the process of questioning the role of the research we do and use as social workers, each chapter ends with a set of discussion questions. These questions encourage students to engage with the more general implications of each chapter and to consider the theoretical and ethical issues posed by drawing on their own experiences. Dialogue is part of the research process, as we show in the story we tell about our research collaboration. Let the dialogue begin!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This set of questions highlights special features of social work research and its connection to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. Go to the association's Web site at <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp> for the Code of Ethics.

1. What part of the social work mission speaks to you?
 - (a) How do you imagine implementing it in your chosen field of practice?
 - (b) What general ethics do you see espoused in the code that you think might appeal to others outside of social work?
 - (c) How might social work be a model to both professionals and lay people?

2. Think of a problem that you have encountered in your personal life, a job, field placement, or volunteer position.
 - (a) What information would you like to know about this problem?
 - (b) How might that information help you pose a solution to that problem?
 - (c) Who would be the target audience to which you would pitch your solution and why?
 - (d) Which potential partners would you enlist to work with you?
3. Think of how stories and case studies can inform your area of social work practice or any social problem you are interested in addressing.
 - (a) Provide examples of how stories and case studies can help you decide how to act in your area of practice or how to address a social problem.
 - (b) What are the advantages and disadvantages of basing your practice and social change efforts on stories and case studies?
4. Choose an area of social work practice or a problem area where people are working to achieve social change. Think of an example that would qualify as a “black swan.” Specify why the case is a “black swan” and how it can serve as a model for other efforts in that area or as an example others can build on.
5. Consider to what extent research in any form is important to your area of practice or the social change efforts you wish to participate in.
6. What types of research might best inform those efforts and why?

Students can also look at the International Federation of Social Workers Code of Ethics at <http://www.ifsw.org/en/p38000324.html> and the British Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics at <http://www.basw.co.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=64>.