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Wheels Within Wheels: The Analysis of a Cultural Event

This article describes a one-semester course on qualitative research methods presented for faculty members in a university school of education. The course was one significant "cultural event" in an ongoing change process toward the inclusion of qualitative methods in a strongly positivistic setting. The inclusion of qualitative methods required a profound adjustment by participants in this culture. The change was eased by official sanction of the course and by faculty members' ability to find entry points to the ideas through established patterns of communication with the course presenters, most of whom came from within the faculty. The author is new to both the university and the country, and her own cultural adjustments, together with her role as one of the course presenters, leads her to reflect anew on the transaction between subjective and objective in qualitative research.

Cet article décrit un cours d'un semestre sur les méthodes de recherche qualitative qui a été offert au personnel académique d'une école universitaire des sciences de l'éducation. Ce cours constituait un « événement culturel » significatif dans un processus évolutif vers l'adoption de méthodes qualitatives dans un milieu hautement positiviste. L'insertion de méthodes qualitatives a exigé une profonde adaptation de la part du personnel qui œuvrait dans cette culture. La transition a été facilitée par le fait que le cours a reçu l'approbation officielle et par la possibilité pour les membres du personnel académique de s'intégrer au cours par le biais de formules de communication habituelles avec les enseignants dont la plupart provenaient de la faculté. L'auteure ne connaissant ni l'université, ni le pays avant l'étude, elle puise dans ses propres adaptations culturelles et son rôle comme une des enseignantes pour présenter des réflexions sur le rapport entre le subjectif et l'objectif dans la recherche qualitative.

Whither goest thou?

Where to begin? With my own relocation to a different culture? With my move to a different university whose history and norms are its own, yet whose familiar characteristics it shares with university culture in much of the world? Perhaps it would be wise to begin with an "objective" description of the context of the cultural event that is the hub of this article's wheel; or with the cultural event itself, working outward along the spokes of the wheel to trace connections so that we can glimpse the myriad systems of hubs, spokes, and wheels turning in complex rhythm.

Denzin (1997) might see in my uncertainty signs of a healthy seeking, the search for an authentic way to tell the stories that spin themselves with the turning of the wheels. It is impossible, or at least unnatural, to separate the teller from the tale, yet there remains a yearning for truth, for explanations, that rise above the subjective. Denzin says that in the present moment

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Interpretive inquiry lacks a center ... We seem to no longer know who the subject is let alone how to write about his or her experiences. We have no agreed-upon method, no new text that points the way forward. We have lost our myths, those larger-than-life paradigms we did battle with during our earlier historical moments. We seek today a new mythology, perhaps not a radical collaboration with the old myths but a redoing of the old, in light of where we have traveled. (p. 25)

These tensions between the "old" and the "new," between the teller and the tale, between "objective" and "subjective" inform the story I wish to tell here and the cultural event I wish to analyze. How much of the story to tell? Should the telling be linear? How much of the *I* can be permitted, or is it absurd to tell the story as if there were no *I*? Peshkin (1985) assures us that the two *I*s—the researcher and the person, are both essential parts of the story.

Thus fieldworkers each bring to their sites at least two selves—the human self that we generally are in everyday situations, and the research self that we fashion for our particular research situations ... participant observation, especially in one's own culture, is emphatically first person singular. (p. 270)

Eisner (1991) can also help us here with his discussion developed from Dewey (1938) about the unnaturalness of the subjective-objective dichotomy that so often forms the basis for critique of qualitative research. Eisner talks about the transaction of objective (external) and subjective (internal) as the essence of knowing, "the locus of human experience ... Since what we know about the world is a product of the transaction of our subjective life and a postulated objective world; these worlds cannot be separated" (p. 52).

If this is correct (and I believe it is; it is the basis of the constructivist view of knowledge), then it is not only legitimate, but essential to highlight (not hide) the subjective—personal along with the objective—external, in the telling of a tale. The teller may play a more or less central role in various tales, but he or she is there as interviewer or participant-observer.

The Truth is Out There

In the tale told in this article I am present as the researcher and also as a player. My own understanding and experiences influence what I tell and how I tell it. I have tried to analyze the data in the traditional terms of "identifying themes and developing concepts and propositions ... coding the data and refining one's understanding of the subject matter," and finally attempting to "understand the data in the context in which they were collected" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 130). The data are the tale, the researcher the teller, a situation that speaks of harmony, not tension, yet subjective-objective tension is an ever-present topic in my current role of teaching qualitative research methods at a university with deep positivist roots. I find myself explaining daily to students and to other faculty members concepts like "the researcher as primary data collection instrument," and how reliability and validity work differently in qualitative research. "How can one know that the analysis isn't 'all in the researcher's head'?" they ask. "How can the researcher be present in the story without this affecting his or her objectivity?" These questions are so basic that they seem light years removed from Denzin's (1997) advanced musings about the state of qualitative research. Yet they have sharpened my awareness of both the technique and the art through which the subjective and objective are

successfully married or, according to Eisner, their transaction successfully navigated, in the pursuit of truth. One of the things that puzzled the reviewers of the first draft of this article was why I kept going on about the subjective-objective tension, and whether there is one at all. Reading this feedback made me reflect on how defensive I have become and how often I have to explain that this *is* a legitimate form of research and that the researcher's subjective involvement does not automatically render the findings tainted. This shows something about the pervasiveness of the positivist paradigm in my new culture and underscores the profundity of the change that acceptance of qualitative research entails for people there, involving a fundamental rethinking of the notion of truth in research.

The Make-Up of a Cultural Event

I have tried here to offer a window on a long and gradual process of change through the analysis of what I have called a cultural event. By this I mean an event bounded in terms of time and place that occurs in a particular cultural setting, is significant (as opposed to trivial) to the participants, and displays some meaningful characteristics of the culture. A Bar Mitzvah, a graduation ceremony, or the Stanley Cup playoffs could all be analyzed as cultural events where behaviors, norms, beliefs, relationships, and power structures are displayed. An event that occurs at a time of change may be particularly revealing as tension is introduced into the normally stable elements of a culture.

Alvesson (1993), writing about organizational culture, says that culture is sometimes seen as *one* critical variable in understanding organizations, and sometimes as a root metaphor *for* the organization: not just a piece of the puzzle, but the puzzle itself. Proponents of this second view, according to Alvesson, often use a second metaphor behind the culture metaphor. In his review of cultural studies of organizations he finds such secondary metaphors as "culture as compass," "culture as social glue," "culture as sacred cow," "culture as manager-controlled rites," and "culture as affect-regulator" (pp. 18-21). The *wheels within wheels* metaphor in this article can be seen as such a secondary metaphor, explicated as follows: culture is a complex set of interacting, interdependent norms, beliefs, and rituals working together as a regulated system and characterized by tension, movement, and stability.¹ Any change that is more than cosmetic is profoundly unsettling to such a system and can be accommodated only after a complex set of adjustments.

There are few reports in the literature of structured courses for faculty such as that described here, although staff development in university faculties is a topic of interest with a recent focus on improving university teaching through peer collaboration (Quinlan, 1998; Shulman, 1993). A number of recent studies take a cultural perspective on change. Thomas and Willcoxson's (1998) report on what they call a "grass-roots" change does begin with a faculty course, although under somewhat different circumstances than those described in the present study. In Thomas and Willcoxson's study six junior faculty members voluntarily enrolled in a university-wide course in effective teaching practices for academia. This had two results. The six junior faculty, who previously had felt that they were outside the research-based in-group of senior faculty in their department, found legitimization for their own innovative teaching practices. Second, the shared experience of the course created a bond between them that

helped them emerge from their isolation and act in concert to effect changes in the culture of their department. Specifically, they were able to bring about increased stress on teaching as a measure of faculty members' academic worth. Thomas and Willcoxson suggest four key factors in the achievement of grassroots change: a supportive "critical mass" of people in the beginning; coordination of the aims of the change with administrative aims; "the progressive 'enlistment' of potential antagonists"; and support and rewards for those who do "come on board." They relate these elements to Schein's (1985) analysis of organizational culture and his recommended "turn-around strategies" for the successful introduction of change. Their analysis is relevant to the changes described in this article. Although the present study does not deal with a grassroots change per se, the fact that the course was given by members of the faculty gave it a grassroots element. Of Thomas and Willcoxson's four elements, a critical mass of people, coordination with administrative aims, and the encouragement of potential protagonists, are all present. A system of support and rewards is largely absent, and this may contribute to the slow pace with which the changes described in this article are being entrenched.

Quinlan and Akerlind (2000) discuss the social constructivist view of culture as "an aspect of one's phenomenological reality" that "is created and recreated by members of a group through interpretation and interaction" (p. 25). This stress on interaction as a means to new group interpretations helps to explain why the forum of a faculty course in the present study was an important vehicle for legitimizing qualitative research. Not only was the course sanctioned by administration (a necessary but by no means sufficient element of legitimization), it gave faculty members a chance to interact with the course presenters and with each other in a public but safe setting to develop new interpretations of what might count as valid research. Quinlan and Akerlind describe two case studies of university departments aiming to improve teaching through peer review, which was conceived as peer inquiry and collaboration rather than judgment. From the results of this study they develop a list of features that can aid success in introducing change, some of which are directly applicable to the present study. Quinlan and Akerlind suggest that faculty ownership of an innovation will be ensured if faculty members lead the new programs. They also suggest building on existing departmental patterns of communication. In the present study existing patterns of communication with most of the course presenters gave people entry points to the new territory under exploration.

There is nothing to do but begin, then, choosing a reasonable entry point. I have often thought that James Burke's approach to his 1980s television program *Connections* was appropriate for qualitative inquiry. In those programs Burke traced stories through time, choosing people and events seemingly almost at random in order to follow the line of the story he wished to tell. The story was true, but other stories could also have been told, other entry points and reference points chosen. Thus the metaphor with which I have tried to capture the turnings, the connections between stories, lives, events, and histories: wheels within wheels, any one of which can be studied, but which must also be understood as parts of the complex, vibrant, living mechanism that is culture.

I choose to begin at the point where my story begins to intersect with the setting of this article's cultural event. I moved to Israel from Canada five years ago at the time of this writing. I had been a teacher, a principal, and for a few years a university faculty member. I did not bring with me a long, impressive academic curriculum vitae (CV) with tons of publications: 10 maybe. It was nothing to write home about, and nothing to warrant a post at one of Israel's fiercely competitive universities. That I obtained such a post was based largely on one prominent aspect of my CV: I did qualitative research and had taught graduate courses in qualitative research methods. They were looking for people to teach the new compulsory qualitative research methods courses that they were introducing, and they simply could not find enough people to teach them.

Israeli faculties of education, grounded in a European positivist tradition and dominated by psychology, have been slow to accept qualitative research methods. The wave that began to sweep North American, Australian, British, and German faculties of education during the 1970s (Erickson, 1986) has only recently been washing tentatively up on Israel's shores. Sabar (1990) identifies one of the first large-scale qualitative studies in Israel as an evaluation of the national science curriculum in 1980-1981 conducted by members of Tel Aviv University education faculty and based largely on classroom observations. During the 1980s a small number of qualitative studies began to appear in Hebrew language journals. In response to increasing interest among both educators and psychologists, Jerome Bruner was invited in 1990 to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he gave a series of lectures on narrative research. From this lecture series grew his book *Acts of Meaning* (1991). The first qualitative doctoral dissertations in education came out in the early 1990s, and since 1999 there has been an Israeli Center for Qualitative Methodologies, based at Ben Gurion University in the south of Israel. This center hosts guest speakers, doctoral seminars, and general discussions of the advancement of qualitative methodologies in nursing, education, and other fields. It was 1997 when my part in the story began.

I had my own set of problems: cultural adjustment and teaching in a new language at the same time as I was learning to speak it. I could see the change process, the growing interest in qualitative research, unfolding. It had begun at my university two years earlier with ideas, suggestions, meetings, and letters. Finally the decision was made that all students coming out of the university with a first or second degree in education had to have courses in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. I could see people's various reactions (especially faculty members', but students' too): eager to learn, dead set against it, willing to accept it as a poor cousin to "real" research. I participated in two study days for faculty as well as a multitude of meetings. I heard from graduate students that although on the one hand they were being given the option of doing a qualitative study for their master's thesis, on the other hand they were finding that no one would advise them because people did not know how. And they were being told that it was not a good idea, that it was too hard, that it was not scientific. More meetings were held: how to evaluate a qualitative thesis, what the structure of the courses should be, good examples of qualitative research, in English and in Hebrew. The central change agent was a senior

faculty member whom I will call Rachel, who supervised the setting of the courses, wrote the letters, arranged the meetings, made up endless bibliographies and lists of criteria for faculty to read, and also arranged the cultural event on which I finally decided to focus. Although the change was officially mandated from above, it was instigated, organized, and encouraged at every step by Rachel. I wanted to study the whole thing, a great, longitudinal ethnographic study that would document the change process. But it was too much; all the interviews in Hebrew, translated later into English, all the documents. And I was new: new to the university, to the culture. For the first two years I was not even sure if my position would continue. And everything, everything, took more energy: ordering cheques at the bank, dealing with neighbors, writing course outlines.

I could see the changes over my first two years at the university. There was growing awareness among faculty members, more openness, more knowledge; there were gradually increasing numbers of qualitative theses. Then, during my third year at the university, a course for faculty was offered, 12 sessions, every Tuesday from 12:00 until 1:30 during the first semester. This, I decided, was what I would study. It was bounded in time and place, yet offered possibilities as a window on the ongoing flow of change.

This, then, is the story of that cultural event.

The Analysis of a Cultural Event

The 12 topics presented during the 12 sessions of the course together with the people who gave the sessions were:

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| 1. Historical and philosophical roots of qualitative research | Me |
| 2. Ethnography | Me |
| 3. Narrative | Rachel and me |
| 4. Observations | Rachel |
| 5. Interviews | David (new faculty member, American, one of the qualitative research courses teachers) |
| 6. Eisner's aesthetic approach | Alex (American, guest speaker from another Israeli university) |
| 7. Action research | Rachel and Sarah (Israeli, new doctorate from this university, one of the qualitative research courses teachers) |
| 8. Content analysis | Sarah |
| 9. Reliability and validity | David |
| 10. Philosophical and historical research | Aharon (Israeli, senior faculty member) |
| 11. Case study | Joseph (part-time lecturer, full-time Board of Education official) |
| 12. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods | Rachel and Varda (Israeli, senior faculty member and quantitative researcher) |

I gave the first two and a half sessions and wrote a protocol afterward. These obviously differ somewhat from the remaining nine protocols, which were written during participant observation of sessions 3-11 (I was ill and missed the last session). During these sessions I wrote notes in more or less ongoing fashion about the content of the lecture, audience questions and reactions, comings and goings, the approach of the lecturer, as well as interpretive asides relating to my own questions and intuitions. These were written in parentheses. While analysis was ongoing in the sense that categories started to develop and were checked while the course was still going on; final analysis was based on repeated readings of the 11 protocols after the course was finished.

The following are the categories that seem best to describe the data I collected, together with illustrative examples from the observation protocols.

Lecturer-audience relations. One of the first things that struck me, during the first observation and in every one thereafter, was how the lecturer's style and status affected audience response, questions, and presumably also learning. In my lectures a small group of senior male faculty with positivist leanings peppered me with questions and argued about much that I said. I was nervous, a new faculty member with imperfect Hebrew talking about a subject I know well and am committed to. This is evident from the protocol I wrote after my second lecture:

Second lecture, still my turn. The topic is ethnography. I am incredibly tired, lacking self-confidence, feel I am not speaking really coherently, but amazingly enough, this lecture is also well received. Additional people have come this week, I think because they heard it was good the first week. I speak about the work of Mead and Malinowski, then describe the nature and tools of an ethnographic study. The interesting thing culturally is that Sam and two other senior male faculty, sitting together, almost ceaselessly ask questions and make comments. I am not with it enough to cut this off at a certain point, and in the middle of the session Rachel stands up and says that people should let me talk, and save the questions for later. This comment was requested by another female faculty member who, she tells me later, was annoyed with all the interruptions.

It seemed to me that not only was qualitative research being tested, but as a newcomer I myself was being tested.

Rachel's lecture style was distinctive. She was always extremely well prepared, with many overheads and examples. She did not just talk; points were always illustrated with visual aids or activities.

Rachel did a wonderful job of introducing four different kinds of narrative through examples. She did a very active, inductive kind of lesson whereby the group had to read the different examples and try, through experience, to answer the questions, "What is narrative?" "What can we learn through narrative?" And "How can we analyze narrative?"

Rachel spoke in a no-nonsense style that kept the "misbehaviors" in line. Sometimes I felt that she cut off questions too quickly.

Rachel is describing the difference between an observation which captures the natural situation, and one which is set up for observation (laboratory). Dov: "What does 'non-participant' mean? Doesn't the presence of the researcher

immediately affect the naturalness of the situation, even if he doesn't do anything?" Rachel does not accept this at all, and moves on with her lecture. I understand exactly what Dov is saying and agree with him. I want to give him support and also answer the question, but I am trying to write. I feel it is a shame that this positivist is shut down when he is in fact making a valid point.

When David, a new, young faculty member gave his lectures, he spoke at a relaxed pace and seemed a little nervous. I noted that the audience wrote a great deal. David came with bibliographies, quotes, and references from relevant sources, and this text-based style seemed to make people want to take notes.

Almost every person has a pen in his or her hand. Some are writing all the time, some occasionally. This was not true last week during Rachel's lecture, and I'm virtually positive that it also wasn't true during mine.

Sarah, who has followed the path from undergraduate at the university to instructor to new doctorate, gave her lectures with enormous enthusiasm and spoke at length about her own past and current research.

Sarah is explaining, with great energy and animation, how she sat on the girls' [participants of her research] beds with no shoes on and they really talked; that she really discovered the truth. She makes a point of contrasting the dry, controlled interview with the kind she conducted. Dov raises a question about truth. (Later this becomes the good-natured joke of the day, that one must sit on someone's bed with no shoes in order to discover the truth.)

When Alex, an American and a full professor from another Israeli university, came to give a guest lecture on Eisner's aesthetic approach, two things struck me. One was his speaking style, which was rapid-fire, full of information, and so fast that it was almost hard to follow. He made little room for questions and had an authoritative style.

When a couple of interactions between people sitting together start up, he responds sharply and says that's the one thing he's absolute about. We must all have one discussion. No extra talking.

The second thing I noted about Alex's lecture was that a number of senior faculty who attended few or no other sessions of the course came to this one. I assumed that this was because Alex was from outside the university and was *known*.

Aharon, a senior faculty member of long standing, spoke about historical and philosophical research. His lecture was the only one that, although full of interesting references, was disorganized and ultimately frustrating because his preamble lasted most of the lecture and we never really learned about how to do this kind of research. I made a number of observations during this lecture:

I begin to have a sneaking suspicion that Aharon gives this same lecture to his students, that it is ready-made.

I feel I am missing a lot here—others seem more interested than I am.

Is all this background really necessary? Has he yet started to talk about historical and philosophical research?

Aharon is using examples from teaching Torah to illustrate some points, and I feel that my lack of knowledge and cultural background is affecting my understanding. He makes a number of comments and jokes. Laughter. There is a shared cultural understanding here that I don't have, about Israeli Jewish education in all the schools.

During Aharon's listing of the six stages of historical research there are a lot of in-jokes, laughter, comments I don't get. Feels like an in-group I'm not part of. First time I've felt like a cultural outsider.

It seemed to me that not only did the lecturer's personal style of delivery affect the nature of the discussion and questions that came from the audience, but that there was a different tone and a different set of expectations depending on the relation of the speaker to the faculty. For me and for David there was polite interest in the newcomers, but I was given a more stringent grilling by "the positivists," I believe because I am female. There was excellent attendance and built-in respect for Alex, an outside lecturer who came with a reputation. Sarah was rather like everyone's child, whom they had raised and looked on with pride and indulgent fondness. Rachel and Aharon are both long-time faculty members, and patterns already established in terms of those relationships continued (respect for Rachel's knowledge, businesslike manner, and sometimes sharp tongue; in-jokes with Aharon, the seemingly befuddled philosopher with whom they feel comfortable). These reactions and relationships shed light on the patterns of interaction that are an essential part of the fabric of any culture. And as Quinlan and Akerlind (2000) suggest, existing patterns of interaction and communication gave people entry points and pathways for exploration of new ideas.

The positivists. I was surprised (and if truth be told, rather thrilled) to identify actual positivists among the attending faculty. There was a group of male faculty members who spoke a great deal during the early lectures. Two who seemed particularly significant were Sam and Dov. After my first lecture I wrote,

I worried a lot about the first lecture that I had to give. I feared the criticism of the faculty members, the arguments about the worth of qualitative research, my ability to communicate really well in Hebrew. But it went extremely well. There were about 36 faculty members, mostly from teacher education. Most of the senior faculty did not come, but there were at least six senior male faculty members. Most of the questions and rejoinders came from them ... Sam, who is the new head of the Master's program, tried repeatedly to challenge my claim that qualitative research comes from a different set of assumptions than quantitative research. I said that qualitative research finds questions along the way, it is inductive by nature. This I had to explain repeatedly to the three or four male professors who challenged the point.

After this protocol I reflected,

I am not 100% sure that this is so, but I think that the dyed-in-the-wool positivists are mostly male. This could be because the faculty is still mostly male, or the senior faculty anyway. The teacher education crew, on the other hand, is mostly female, and they are more open to the idea of qualitative research, perhaps because it is so suited to those who are close to the field.

Sam, and later Dov, became the spokespersons for the point of view that I identified as positivist. After my second lecture I wrote,

Among the comments that Sam makes during the lecture, the one that sticks in my mind is that he does not see qualitative research as coming from a different paradigm than quantitative research. He sees qualitative research as offering different, or additional tools for data collection. Beyond that, research is research. He cannot or does not accept the notions of inductive vs. deductive, different views of knowledge, different kinds of research questions, or different roles for theory in the two research streams, which indeed he does not see as two research streams.

The final chapter to this particular story came with the third lecture, when I wrote:

The big "ah-hah!" of this session was as follows: My role was to give the opening 15 minutes to the session on narrative. I know a lot less about this than I do about ethnography. Rachel then took over. In looking for material to introduce the topic, I turned to Denzin's 1997 book, *Interpretive Ethnography*. There he describes four main positions: the positivist, postpositivist, postmodernist, and critical poststructuralist. The position of Sam was described to a T by the positivist position: There is no basic difference between qualitative and quantitative research. The same criteria should be applied to both. They just offer different tools. This was amazing to me, to see this position, which he so stubbornly argued, seemingly unable to understand the position I was trying to describe, so clearly explained. I felt like, there really are positivists!

Sam's presence was felt less in later lectures. He did not attend them all, and when he did he did not speak much. The group of senior male faculty members who had sat together during the first three lectures dispersed, and not all attended all the sessions. When they did they did not sit together. Dov, who loved to joke and who questioned rather than arguing as Sam had, nevertheless represented the positivist position. In David's lecture on reliability and validity, the issue of generalization brought out a clear delineation among the attending faculty: two camps, one of which I called positivist. One woman from this camp, who did not accept ideas about "naturalistic generalization," "comparability," or the notion that readers participate in generalization through the connections they make to their own experience, said,

"There needs to be a system for collecting and understanding readers' feedback." Dov suggests sharing reactions by Internet or some other forum. He says, "If 70% of the readers agree, then you know you have described the main characteristics. You must have something quantitative in the end." Rachel calls out, "No! Dov! You're copying from one world to another!"

In the lecture on case studies when the speaker gave an example of a case study of a particular school, Dov asked, "But what does it mean to research a school and not a population?"

In the end it seemed to me that there were three groups of faculty members in relation to the introduction of qualitative research. These might be called the converted: mostly women, mostly teacher education faculty, who accepted qualitative research as absolutely appropriate; the converting: mostly men who like Sam and Dov came from a positivist background, but who attended the course and were willing to learn; and a third group whom I was tempted to call

the cantankerous, who did not attend the course. There were 124 names on the faculty list, and because attendance at each course session was around 30, this meant that three quarters of the faculty did not attend. Many were undoubtedly too busy; others were uninterested.

Change agents. Rachel's role as a change agent was clearly important. She was the instigator, organizer, and coordinator of the course, and she introduced each session. As well as giving two and half of the sessions herself and introducing each speaker, she spoke for a few minutes at the beginning of each session about various new articles she had placed in the faculty file in the library where material on qualitative research was being accumulated. In the protocols I commented on her in virtually every session. Some examples:

Rachel introduced the session and then sat at the side as a strong but silent presence.

Rachel stands and says that people should let me talk, and save the questions for later.

[Rachel says] "No! Dov! You're copying from one world to another!"

[Rachel says] "Aharon! Aharon! Continue!" I think she is also worried about the pace.

Although the move to qualitative research at this university's school of education would undoubtedly have taken place anyway, because it was part of a movement at universities in Israel overall and an overdue response to changes in the academic world, the role of a change agent is important. Rachel gave practical shape and impetus to this change, and her teacher-like presence in the faculty course inspired, it seemed to me, both an atmosphere of learning and a set of behavioral expectations for participants.

Somewhat against my will I began to realize that I too was some kind of a change agent, as my name popped up as a reference and people turned to me. I was an unwilling expert, but nevertheless, as I saw through readings of the protocols, I had a role to play. People saw me as an example of someone who did and knew about qualitative research, and there were few other examples in the faculty. During the lectures people occasionally looked to me for clarification or referred to something I had said. During one of Sarah's lectures I wrote,

I am embarrassed several times when Sarah refers to me in glowing terms—calls me "the expert." And yet—this is part of the cultural situation I am in. I am some sort of change agent. Not exactly, but I have a role here.

At the same time I did not delude myself that it was I who was bringing about change; rather, I was filling a necessary role, temporarily, of expert as Rachel was filling the necessary role of initiator and coordinator. The innovation itself was part of larger developments in the academic world and was virtually inevitable. The change process, however, was situated in the details of this time and place, and the players were individuals in this particular cultural setting.

Discussion

Fullan (1982), paraphrasing Bruce Joyce, told us years ago that "educational change is technically simple and socially complex" (p. 54). This is certainly as true of change at universities as it is of change in schools and school systems.

Technically it is relatively simple to introduce mandatory qualitative research courses into the bachelor's and master's programs in education. There is the need to hire or train suitable instructors, to fit the new courses into class schedules, to see that appropriate books and journals are available in the library. But socially and culturally there are many other factors to take into account: people's different levels of acceptance of the change, their views of its relevance and legitimacy, their prior knowledge, what new demands they think will be placed on them. It is important that we document participants' perspectives on change and how people learn. Alvesson (1993) states that most cultural changes in organizations "are viewed through managerial lenses, and the understanding of cultural change which emerges is, to say the least, selective, and may be misleading" (p. 29). Learning and change take time, and cultural change is built on interactions of individual and institutional change, personalities, policies and politics, wheels within wheels, turning together in complex rhythm. It was clear in this study that important factors in people's learning and in their acceptance of qualitative research as legitimate were administrative sanction; a strong, well-organized change agent whom people respected; and a variety of lecturers, most of whom came from within the faculty and with whom people could converse according to existing patterns of communication.

As I sought to find meaning in this change and to describe the turnings of these wheels as I was able to perceive them, it struck me that I was more aware of people's uncertainty and their need for time, information, and guidance because of the profound personal, cultural, and professional changes with which I was grappling. Schön (1971) wrote that real change involves "passing through zones of uncertainty ... the situation of being at sea, of being lost, of confronting more information than you can handle" (p. 12). I felt this while doing the observations for this article, doing lightning translations of Hebrew lectures and discussions into English protocols, missing words and cultural references. I think people like Dov and Sam and many others in this education faculty felt it to greater or lesser degrees as they struggled to open their frames of reference to include ideas about research that are different from those with which they have worked all their academic lives.

In the context of my daily work I find I am still unsure of much that goes on around me. I have gradually come to understand that in the Israeli culture things are not explained; one has to ask for explanation or direction, and sometimes the newcomer does not know when, what, or whom to ask. I learn gradually through experience, mistakes, and the occasional instructional event. This is not unlike educational change, which is also and always cultural change. It is understandable that in the face of change people are cautious, protecting what they know and not plunging too deeply or too fast into the swirling waters of change. In the case of the change described in this article, the positivists had a lot more to learn, lose, give up, or gain (depending how one looks at it) than those from teacher education who were schooled in a more qualitative world view. As an aside, I must relate that when responsibility for statistical analysis of quantitative data collected during a collaborative research project unaccountably fell on me, I did everything I could to avoid, cover up, and delegate before finally admitting my limited knowledge in that area and

confessing that with all the other demands and stresses of life and career, I really did not want to take on learning more about statistics.

Qualitative research is now officially recognized as a legitimate form of research in my department. The faculty course acted both as a sign of official sanction and as a forum for the collaborative building of new understandings. There is still caution about the standards by which qualitative research can be judged, and statements of sweeping condemnation of qualitative methods are still occasionally made. A few faculty members have actively introduced qualitative methods into their own research. There is some talk of backtracking from required to optional courses in qualitative methods. My sense is that the culture has undergone a significant but subtle shift, adjustments in several wheels such that the system of wheels has settled into a somewhat different rhythm.

As for me, I am more convinced than ever that the qualitative researcher is inseparable from his or her work except by unnatural surgery. Errante (2000), in looking at her own part in the collection of others' oral histories, writes:

As for my own running narrative, this odyssey has helped me appreciate and yet be more critical of the autobiographical elements of my own work. I had forgotten Wright Mills's (1959) counsel to "trust, yet be skeptical of your own experience ... Experience is so important as a source of original intellectual work" (p. 197). Mills reminds us that the crafting of interesting and meaningful intellectual work lies in our crafting of interesting and meaningful lives. Our attunement to the central questions of human experience depends upon our degree of engagement with the stuff of our abstractions, for this is what gives us a stake in the questions we pose and the solutions we look for. (p. 26)

In response to Denzin's question of what the new center for qualitative research will be, I think this is at least part of an answer. We must find ways to acknowledge our presence as researchers, cultural participants, and human beings, to imbue our work with insight and compassion, while at the same time casting a critical eye on our participation so that we do not fall prey to an egocentrism that will be both counterproductive and boring.

Note

1. I wish to confess here that the original title of this article was "Wheels Within Wheels, Circling the Wagons, and the Analysis of a Cultural Event." By *circling the wagons* I meant the brave stance of the positivists against the marauding qualitative researchers who were closing in on them. I was rather fond of this additional metaphor, which inspired colorful cowboy images in my mind, as well as of its uneasy pairing with the *wheels* metaphor. But this rowdy couple did not sit well with the reviewers, and I relinquished the *wagons* metaphor. Reflecting on the reviewers' entirely sound comments about the need for metaphors to guide and structure the article in a meaningful way (and thus their discomfort with wheels and wagons together), it struck me that the dissonance between these two metaphors appealed to me because it captured something of my own continuing cultural dissonance in this new setting. This opens up a whole new line of possible inquiry: academic review as therapy!

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