Action Research
http://arj.sagepub.com/

Ethics and power in community-campus partnerships for research

Susan Boser

Action Research 2006 4: 9
DOI: 10.1177/1476750306060538

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://arj.sagepub.com/content/4/1/9

Published by:
SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

Action Research

Volume 4(1): 9–21

London, Thousand Oaks CA, New Delhi
www.sagepublications.com
DOI: 10.1177/1476750306060538

ARTICLE

Ethics and power in community-campus partnerships for research

Susan Boser
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

The past 20 years have seen a strong emergence of participatory approaches in social research. Such efforts typically include the researched in defining the questions, in data collection and analysis, and in interpreting and taking action based on the research findings. The objective is co-generating knowledge and, potentially, sharing decision-making based on that knowledge. This movement toward participatory research brings new sets of social relations for research and, as such, presents a new set of ethical challenges. The current framework for understanding the ethical issues involved in research is predicated on post-positivist epistemological assumptions of a distanced objectivist research stance, and thus is ill-suited for examining the ethics of participatory research. This article shall address this gap, outlining the potential ethical implications and presenting a framework for considering the ethical questions involved in participatory research partnerships.

KEY WORDS

- action research
- community-based participatory research
- participatory evaluation
- research ethics
- social relations and research

The past 20 years have seen a strong emergence of social research approaches that seek to reduce the distance between the researcher and the researched. Aligned with the critical theory paradigm (Kemmis, 2001) among other traditions, these approaches bring particular attention to relations of power, often with an explicit agenda for altering power imbalance. Emerging in various forms such as action research (Greenwood & Levin, 1998), community-based research (Israel, Schulz, Parker & Becker, 1998) or participatory evaluation (Cousins & Earl, 1995; Fetterman, 2002), these participatory approaches are marked by local stakeholders being directly engaged in the research process itself. In contrast to conventional research, these approaches see those who would normally constitute 'the researched' as actively involved in defining the questions, in data collection and analysis, and in interpreting and taking action based on the research findings. Such community-based research seeks to share power in knowledge generation and, potentially, in decision-making based on that knowledge. Thus, this movement toward participatory research approaches brings new sets of social relations for research and, as such, presents a new set of ethical challenges.

A review of the literature suggests that participatory researchers typically adapt one of two approaches to address these challenges. Some draw on the traditional, deontological model utilized in conventional research, which holds that an ethical position should be guided by a set of externally defined principles regardless of individual circumstances or context (May, 1993). However, the framework itself is predicated on post-positivist epistemological assumptions of a distanced objectivist research stance. As such, it is ill-suited for examining the ethics of participatory research approaches. One alternative, common to participatory research, is to assume that the democratic ethos and practice of such research assures ethicality (Rowan, 2000; Stringer, 1999). Yet this position assumes equal voice among all participants, neglecting the potential for a power imbalance among research participants.

This article presents a framework for considering the ethical questions related to research partnerships involving multiple constituents. I begin by offering an operational definition of 'action research', articulating the implications this has for social relations in the research process. I then summarize the ways in which some action researchers are addressing ethical issues, and discuss some of the limitations of current approaches. Finally, drawing on Hayward's (1998) conceptualization of power and social relations, I propose a model that integrates processes for surfacing and addressing ethical issues directly into the iterative action research cycle.

Action research

A variety of approaches exist that engage those who are typically 'subjects' of research directly into some aspect of developing or implementing that research. Following the lead of Reason and Bradbury (2001), I use the term 'action research' to refer to this broad group of research approaches. Research practices described by this term include participatory action research, community-based research, practitioner research, democratic dialogue and empowerment evaluation, among others. While varying in some respects, this family of research approaches shares the practice of engaging those whose lives are impacted by the research issue directly into the research process. Such research may involve collaborations among professional researchers and local stakeholders; it may also be constituted solely by collaborations among those sharing the lived experience of the problem. However, whether or not outside professional researchers are involved, members of the local community typically shape the research questions to address locally defined concerns. Local stakeholders may also be actively, collaboratively engaged in research design, data gathering and analysis, and in interpreting and making sense of the findings. Furthermore, the research process typically takes place in iterative cycles of research, action and reflection within a democratic process. Thus local stakeholders are generally involved in reflecting on those findings to generate further research or action to address a local problem. Action research therefore aims to provide holistic knowledge, integrating tacit knowledge and the multiple perspectives of disparate stakeholders through an iterative process of research, action, and reflection in order to articulate a theory, grounded in democratic norms, to inform action.

These various action research approaches find their roots in a variety of theoretical locations. Certainly, action research has been influenced by pragmatic philosophy, and its emphasis on knowledge construction informed by social practice (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). However, action research also resembles the hermeneutic, dialectic processes of knowledge construction that comprise the constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Another strand, participatory action research, arises from the emancipatory paradigm associated with Paulo Friere and Orlando Fals Borda (Fals Borda, 2001).

Action research also reflects the tenets of critical theory. Critical theory suggests an attention to the role of power in social relations and an agenda for social change through democratic, dialectic practices (May, 1997). Action research projects are often conducted with an explicit social change agenda, and work from the belief that the very process of participating in constructing knowledge about one's own context has the potential to redress power imbalance. The use of democratic dialogue as approached in Norway, while not intentionally based on Habermas's 'theory of communicative action' (see Sitton, 2003, p. 52), bears some resemblance to the principles articulated there (Gustavsen, 2001).

As this description makes clear, one key element of most action research approaches is that they profoundly reduce or eliminate the 'researcher' and 'researched' distinction common in the traditional research stance. The rationale for this is partially based on the assumption that integrating tacit knowledge and multiple perspectives results in better research. Furthermore, assuming that knowledge is power, action research embraces a democratic ideal of seeking to locate research within a normative process in order to share the power that knowledge brings. Yet, while grounded in a value-based intention, managing the research process in an ethical manner presents numerous challenges.

Ethics and action research practice

Some of these challenges arise because our mechanisms for assuring ethical research processes are predicated on maintaining a distanced objectivist researcher stance. In this model, the researcher, under the eye of the institutional review board, is responsible for assuring the protection of the subjects of his or her research. The researcher is expected to carefully consider the risk for harm, weigh this against the potential benefits of the research, and assure that participants are able to give informed consent and that their confidentiality will be protected.

Yet action research differs from conventional research in that this distanced objectivist stance is removed. Action researchers seek to share power in knowledge generation and, potentially, in decision-making based on that knowledge. Community members participate in determining the research questions, and identifying who should be involved in the research process. Participants might also engage in data gathering and analysis, and, hopefully, are involved in making sense of the findings and determining action based on this research. Thus action research presents a set of social relations which the current framework for human subject protection is ill-suited to address.

The literature offers multiple examples of the ethical challenges involved in conducting action research (Attwater, 1999; DePoy & Hartman, 1999; Lincoln, 2001; Morton, 1999; Williamson, 2002; Williamson & Prossner, 2002). One set of problems arises in trying to adapt the ethical assurance procedures of conventional research to an action research approach.

Informed consent and confidentiality cannot be assured in an action research process in the same way they are handled in conventional research. For instance, informed consent presents a problem as it is currently construed. Participants cannot give informed consent to research activities in advance, because the full scope of the process of the research is not determined in advance by one individual (Williamson, 2002). Rather, research activities are typically negotiated by participants at each stage of the action research cycle. Thus participants will have a voice in determining what these research processes will be.

However, they can only begin with the knowledge that this will be a negotiated process and elect to participate or not as the process unfolds.

Furthermore, confidentiality often cannot be assured, since a discrete, distant researcher does not gather all data and assume responsibility for removing identifying information before releasing findings. Rather, community-based co-researchers often gather data and participate in analysis. Therefore multiple individuals in the context may have access to data. Furthermore, even when publicly disclosed information removes specific identifying information, the location of such projects within local contexts often renders anonymity unlikely (Williamson & Prossner, 2002). Further, action research involves open, dialectic processes, thus participants' perspectives and positions will be articulated in a more public fashion. Consequently, new ways of understanding and addressing informed consent and confidentiality need to be developed.

However, even greater ethical challenges exist owing to the complexity of interrelationships. The local 'community of inquirers' or action co-researchers should not be construed as a homogenous group. Instead, local stakeholders reflect a variety of locations and disparate interests. They also demonstrate varying levels of capacity to advance their own interests.

Complexity theory is useful here for understanding the conditions that constitute action research practice. The theory conceptualizes social conditions as presenting a complex set of interrelationships with multiple feedback loops and the capacity for spontaneous self-reorganization (Flood, 1999). This theory argues that, at best, participants will attain only temporary and partial interpretations of events – what Flood would refer to as a 'bounded appreciation' (p. 252). Further, these boundaries are a result of choices made by people, people who determine what's in and what's out. Such choices are, of course, value laden. Thus questions of how and by whom such decisions are made, and in what ways some interests may override others, all have ethical implications. Such issues must be addressed in action research practice.

In light of these considerations, the protocols utilized by most research institutions are inadequate for providing guidance on the ethical challenges raised by participatory research. This leaves researchers struggling on their own in such face-to-face interactions, with little formal guidance (Lincoln, 2001). Some, in noting the inadequacy of the application of standard ethical guidelines, have turned to the professional codes of the discipline or field associated with the research context (DePoy & Hartman, 1999; Williamson, & Prossner, 2002).

However, other researchers make the argument that participatory research is inherently ethical because it is a normative, dialectic process with a democratizing intent, and support this position through standpoint epistemology (Rowan, 2000; Stringer, 1999). Concurrent with this, strong arguments have been made for why external values, even the emancipatory values espoused by many action researchers, should not supersede those of the local context (Attwater, 1999).

However, while clear problems exist with relying on an external rule book for ethical conduct, a fully normative approach has problems as well. In particular, this position neglects the potential for a power imbalance among action research participants as described above. And as a participatory process within a local context can serve to suppress minority interests, the potential exists for the political location of marginalized groups to be further entrenched through the process itself (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Rosenwein & Campbell, 1992), solidifying asymmetrical patterns of power, as Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) point out. Furthermore, Greenwood (2002) makes the case that the action research approach in itself does not protect work from being done poorly. Thus we cannot assume that good intentions are sufficient. For these reasons, democratic intentions do not obviate the need for thoughtful examination of the ethical implications of the research on individuals or stakeholder groups.

An additional challenge exists in fully relying on the normative process. It ignores that in seeking to solve problems in their context, action researchers are therefore pursuing social change in a politicized context (Williamson, 2002). The research process is not divorced from action, as is the case with conventional research. Rather, in seeking to alter the status quo in a given region, the action research project itself may well entail risk for its participants. Thus considering the ethics involved in action research requires a shift from looking narrowly at the impact of the research process on the individual participant. Instead, we must also consider the social location of the research itself, recognizing the context and the potential intended/unintended consequences in a politicized environment.

What the efforts to conduct ethical action research described above all have in common is that each reflects an understanding of ethical approaches as dichotomous – either a traditional, deontological approach, or a consequentialist approach. Deontology holds that an ethical position should be guided by a set of externally defined principles, such as beneficence and fairness, regardless of individual circumstances or context (May, 1993). As an example, institutional review processes to protect human subjects utilize a deontological approach in articulating standards for informed consent, etc. Consequentialism, on the other hand, rejects the imposition of a standardized set of rules. A consequentialist approach would entail consideration of the unique set of circumstances that comprise an individual research context and making decisions based on that context (May, 1993). This mirrors the approach taken by many of those who do action research (Stringer, 1999).

At the present time, while the ethical challenges are being recognized, a model for how to address these matters in an action research context has yet to be proposed (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Greenwood, 2002; Lincoln, 2001; Morton, 1999; Swenson & Rigoni, 1999; Walker & Haslett, 2002).

A model for addressing ethics in action research

Recognizing the contributions and limits of the deontological approach and consequentialist approach when taken separately, I propose a model that integrates the two, a notion that has support among other researchers (May, 1993; Morton, 1999; Swenson & Rigoni, 1999; Walker & Haslett, 2002). Specifically, I argue that identification of ethical issues should be inherent and unique to each research process and negotiated by the participants in that process, but that such determinations should be informed by an external set of ethical guidelines supporting reflection on the political location and power involved in the social relations in the project. Such a model should have the intention of anticipating, to the greatest degree possible, the ways in which individuals or groups participating in or potentially affected by this research might experience adverse consequences and potential benefit. Furthermore, these considerations and the ways in which they impact methodological decisions should be transparent to all interested parties in order to promote choice. I therefore propose that attention to ethics in an action research process should:

- be guided by a set of externally developed guidelines that direct attention to the sets of relations among those participating in or affected by the project, the patterns of power among these stakeholder groups, and the potential risk of the action research project itself;
- be integrated into each stage of the action research cycle to inform decision-making by stakeholders; and
- be transparent to the larger community.

Taking each of these points individually:

Guiding questions based on analysis of power and social relations

In order to focus and sharpen critique on processes, ethical questions must be developed which can serve to guide co-researchers in considering relations of power in community-based projects. Hayward's framework for social relations and power may serve as a useful tool in developing such questions.

Theories of power have largely conceptualized it as an instrument wielded by one party over another to influence the latter's actions, to prevent participation, or to shape the wants, desires and interests of the powerless (Lukes, 1974). Hayward (1998) challenges this notion of power as an instrument to be wielded, arguing it presupposes that, in the absence of the exercise of power, the powerless would be 'free' to choose an alternate action. She suggests, rather, that the powerless are not free in this manner because of the multiple social relations that impact a sense of identity. Hayward also rejects a dyadic construction of power as an action taken by a powerful party over a relatively powerless other party, in

which power is both an instrument to be exercised and also a quality one either has or lacks. She further notes that this construction requires some link between the two parties, whether immediate or distant. Instead, Hayward conceptualizes power as 'the network of social boundaries that delimit fields of possible action' (1998, p. 9), with freedom being that which 'enables actors to participate effectively in shaping the boundaries that define for them the field of what is possible' (p. 12). This conceptualization permits assessment of the patterned asymmetries among the ways in which individuals or groups are constrained from action in a given situation, without presupposing a dyadic relationship.

Hayward's model of social relations would be useful for developing external guidelines with which to examine the ethical issues constituting the complex interrelationships typical to action research. For example, the model suggests a nuanced consideration of the constraints and possibilities for all actors, both those considered relatively 'powerless' and those considered relatively 'powerful', thus supporting analysis of the restraints on each stakeholder group stemming from their own political context. Further, it promotes examination of the ways in which any social action constrains or enables actors in a given situation, thus resulting in shifts in asymmetries (Hayward, 1998). Such reflection would support broader analysis of the ways in which boundaries shift in the research process.

Thus this model facilitates consideration of:

- The social relations among the multiple stakeholder groups and subgroups, in terms of the relative freedom each has, vis a vis other co-researchers, to set the boundaries of their own actions. For example, how were participants invited to engage in the process? Did they agree to do so voluntarily? Do patterned asymmetries exist among participants in the capacity to call meetings? Set the agenda? Initiate action? Is there potential within the project to advance some interests over others?
- The political relations of each participant/stakeholder group within their own context, and how that could potentially influence and be affected by the research project. Specifically, are there ways in which information arising through the project could negatively impact some constituents? Are there ways in which an individual's particular context might exact influence on the project in an indirect manner? For example, a doctoral student facilitating an action research project may well find that s/he experiences pressure to respond to particular interests of the dissertation committee, interests that limit the student's field of action, yet are not subject to negotiation by the co-researchers.
- The potential political, economic, and social impact of the project as a whole on the larger, local environment. For example, in using action research to address a particular problem, what are the potential risks? Should the project 'fail', what are the potential implications and to whom? What is

the potential for other, unanticipated forces to be stirred by the project to mobilize for the protection of their own interests? And what are the possible implications?

Critical reflection on the potential risks for all constituents must be weighed against the potential benefits. Potential benefits include those that may be realized from the action anticipated to result from the research project. However, beyond that, the potential exists for increased democratization within the set of social relations for the research team as a consequence of participating in action research (Boser, 2001; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). Furthermore, participants often develop a new skill set and sense of agency through involvement in action research. These capacities include broadened and strengthened networks, skills in collaboration, research skills, enhanced knowledge about their local environment, and skills in advocating for social change (Boser, 2001).

Each stage in the action research design reflects attention to ethics

Ethical issues arise in unique ways at each point in an action research process. Thus I argue that reflection on ethical questions should be integrated into each stage in the action research cycle, raising awareness of potential risks for participants. The decision-making that occurs throughout the action research process should therefore reflect this increased awareness.

In project planning and initiation, such attention might suggest not only which groups should be included, but also the particular limitations some groups might experience in engaging. For example, some individuals may require particular communication mechanisms to ensure that all may fully participate. This may be particularly important for those groups that are most marginalized or disempowered, such as employees within an organization, or individuals who have more limited education or special needs.

I will illustrate this point drawing on an action research project I facilitated. The project included consumers of Medicaid-funded behavioral health services, human service professionals, and local government officials. The research focused on designing an alternative administrative structure for service delivery. Our work in the early stages of the project provides examples of ways in which we failed to anticipate challenges the consumers would experience in taking part in the project. For example, language proved to be a challenge in the beginning. In a later reflection on this process, the consumers shared that their participation early on had been inhibited by the jargon and acronyms used by service professionals. They were quite capable of understanding the concepts and issues; they were unable to follow the conversation, though, due to the language. Interestingly, they recommended that future efforts should not modify the language used. Instead, they urged that consumers be provided with an orienta-

tion packet that included definitions of the terms used at the table (Boser, 2001).

Another example involves the space provided for the meetings themselves. The organizing team scheduled an information meeting for consumers at an elegant regional conference center, the same location used for meetings for government officials and service providers. Our intentions were good, reflecting the values that the consumers should be treated the same as any other stakeholder group. The meeting had a low turnout however. Feedback on the event informed us that, for many consumers, the 9:00 a.m. start time, coupled with travel time, itself proved to be a barrier. Many were taking a commonly prescribed psychotropic medication, with side effects that included significant early morning sluggishness. They were simply unable to navigate the arrangements at that hour of the day. Further, the site itself proved somewhat intimidating and uncomfortable for many; they preferred the storefronts or local auditoriums they were accustomed to visiting.

Currently, Institutional Review Board (IRB) research protocols seek to ensure that the informed consent form is written in language accessible to the intended research participant. However, as this example suggests, assuring fully informed choices and participation is more complex in action research. Thus attention to ethical issues in the engagement phase might include working with such marginalized groups to ensure that multiple barriers to participation are anticipated and addressed.

The design of research methods should also reflect a heightened awareness of ethical issues for participants. For example, in that same action research project, the research team opted to have consumers determine the conditions under which they wished to disclose information. In one county the consumers met first by themselves to consider the research questions and develop responses. They then convened a large group meeting, requesting that county and agency professionals be present to hear their prepared responses. In another county, however, consumers preferred that a focus group be conducted by an external researcher, insisting that county and agency professionals not be present. They chose to speak under conditions of anonymity (Boser, 2001).

Other possibilities for research design might include nesting research methods within sub-projects. Consider, for example, an action research project taking place within an organization, with the co-researchers located in varying levels of authority throughout that organization. On one hand, the opportunity to participate in an action research project may indeed provide some with an increased voice in organizational decision-making. However, the power relations among the participants could be such that some may perceive it to be unsafe to participate, yet equally unsafe to decline. Exploring such possibilities in advance might lead to sub-projects being conducted within units, for example with line staff gathering data from line staff, to be analysed and reported by the unit as a whole, thereby permitting participation yet also protecting the individuals involved.

Transparency of this process

Finally, practices to ensure ethical processes should be documented and publicly transparent to all constituents, and included in publications of the findings from action research. Mechanisms for assessing transparency and public accountability should be developed at the project's initiation, upon consideration of each stakeholder group and their preferred means of communication. Possibilities include: broad dissemination of meeting minutes; regular and broadly disseminated project reports; maintaining a website; or periodic informational forums open to the public. An ethical question related to this, however, is whose version of reality will inform the public? Because of the potential to privilege the voices of those involved in developing the written drafts and speaking publicly, participants must ensure that multiple perspectives are involved in crafting and/or approving public documents.

Some have suggested structures for research governance and external scrutiny, perhaps in the form of a steering group charged with monitoring the ethics and providing research supervision (Williamson, 2002). The institutional review board can serve to monitor ethics of decisions on an ongoing basis. Reflective practice groups, modeled after the peer debriefing common to qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Rowan, 2000) may also be useful. While such structures offer distinct advantages, in my opinion use of such an external group must also be considered in terms of its own constituency and interests, and its capacity for limiting the actions of others.

Further, university-based action researchers may benefit from taking an action research approach within their own institutions to address this issue. Rather than view the IRB as an obstacle, an action researcher might seek to partner with members of the IRB. Working together and combining areas of expertise, action researchers and a university's IRB could develop an approach for supporting ethical action research practice within that institution. Such an approach might include developing a set of questions that might serve as a heuristic device for guiding future action projects within the institution.

Summary

Action research holds much promise for socially responsive and responsible research practices. Attention must be paid to ensuring, however, that such research is respectful of the needs and interests of all constituents. Integrating consideration of ethical issues into the research cycle, and guiding this consideration through examination of the potential for risk and asymmetrical patterns of power, will promote democratic practices and support realization of the action research potential.

References

Attwater, R. (1999). Pragmatist philosophy and soft systems in an upland Thai catchment. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, *16*(4), 299–309.

Boser, S. (2001) An action research approach to reforming rural health and human services through Medicaid managed care: Implications for the policy sciences. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *62*(3), 1232A. (UMI AAT 3011234).

Cousins, J. B., & Earl, L. M. (Eds.). (1995). *Participatory evaluation in education: Studies in evaluation use and organizational learning*. Washington, DC: Falmer.

DePoy, E., & Hartman, A. (1999). Critical action research: A model for social work knowing. *Social Work*, *44*(6), 560–570.

Fals Borda, O. (2001). Participatory (action) research in social theory: Origins and challenges. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 27–37). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Fetterman, D. (2002). Empowerment evaluation: Building communities of practice and a culture of learning. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *30*(1), 89–102.

Flood, R. L. (1999). Knowing the unknowable. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *12*(3), 247–256.

Gaventa, J., & Cornwall, A. (2001). Power and knowledge. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 70–80). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Greenwood, D. (2002). Action research: Unfulfilled promises and unmet challenges. *Concepts and Transformations*, *7*(2), 117–139.

Greenwood, D., & Levin, M. (1998). *An introduction to action research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Guba, I., & Lincoln, Y. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Gustavsen, B. (2001). Theory and practice: The mediating discourse. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 17–26). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Hayward, C. R. (1998). De-facing power. *Polity*, *31*(1), 1–22.

Israel, B. A., Schulz, A. J., Parker, E. A., & Becker, A. B. (1998). Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, *19*, 173–202.

Kemmis, S. (2001). Exploring the relevance of critical theory for action research: Emancipatory action research in the footsteps of Jürgen Habermas. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 91–102). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Lincoln, Y. (2001). Engaging sympathies: Relationships between action research and social constructivism. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 124–144). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Lukes, S. (1974). *Power: A radical view*. London: Macmillan.

May, T. (1993). *Social research: Issues, methods and process*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

May, T. (1997). *Situating social theory*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Morton, A. (1999). Ethics in action research. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *12*(2), 219–222.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
Rosenwein, R., & Campbell, D. (1992). Mobilization to achieve collective action democratic majority/plurality amplification. *Journal of Social Issues*, *48*(2), 125–138.
Rowan, J. (2000). Research ethics. *International Journal of Psychotherapy*, *5*(2), 103–112.
Sitton, J. (2003). *Habermas and contemporary society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Stringer, E. (1999). *Action research in action*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE.
Swenson, D. X., & Rigoni, D. (1999). Ethical problem solving and systems theory: The complexity connection. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *12*(6), 573–583.
Walker, B., & Haslett, T. (2002). Action research in management: Ethical dilemmas. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *15*(6), 523–533.
Williamson, G. R. (2002). Illustrating the ethical dimensions of action research. *Nurse Researcher*, *10*(2), 38–50.
Williamson, G. R., & Prossner, S. (2002). Action research, ethics, and participation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *40*(5), 587–594.

Susan Boser is an assistant professor of sociology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and coordinator of the doctoral program for administrative and leadership studies. She facilitated an action research project involving state and local government, non-profit and human service consumers in upstate New York between 1998 and 2002. *Address*: Department of Sociology, Coordinator, Doctoral Program in Administration & Leadership Studies, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 102C McElhaney Hall, Indiana, PA 15705, USA. [*Email*: sboser@iup.edu]