Despite great diversity in terms of our theory and practice one way to think about what constitutes the core of action research is a common values stance. This set of shared beliefs has been described as ‘a respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process, a belief in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change, and a commitment to action’ (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire, 2003, p. 15). But action research can also be defined by its range of research practices which most often involve working in complex, ever-changing, and unpredictable environments. One lesson action researchers learn early and often working in such settings is to expect the unexpected (see also Lichtenstein on emergence, Chapter 44, this volume). How then can we best go about preparing ourselves, our students and our community partners to enter into an action research process mindful of the values that underlie this practice in order to provide them with strategies for responding to ethical concerns when they arise?

In this chapter we consider how we might promote effective ethics education and create institutional structures that better support ethical reflection and action. We begin with a brief review of ethical theory in order to provide a common framework for examining the ways in which values inform action and how we might better understand these decision-making processes. We then present a tool that has been developed to encourage both individual and group-level ethical decision-making, structured ethical reflection (SER), with examples of its use in both individual and small group reflection processes. Finally, we consider ways in which the larger institutional settings within which we operate might draw upon this same framework to deepen the ethical climate of teaching and research and create broader structural change supporting ethical practice.

**REVIEW OF THEORIES OF ETHICS**

**Values into action**

Ethics can be defined as ‘a practical science focused on how we put values into action. It is
the study of ethical relationships we have with human beings, sentient creatures, and the physical world in which we live. It is the study of what we value in these relationships and the decisions we make based on those values’ (Yoak and Brydon-Miller, 2014, p. 306).

Traditionally, ethical theory is most commonly described in one of three ways: deontological or duty ethics, utilitarian or consequentialist ethics, and virtue ethics. More recent contributions from feminist, covenantal, and communitarian perspectives offer more relational and contextualized ways of understanding and enacting ethics.

The study of research ethics in particular applies to the moral implications of the decisions we make regarding the research process – what questions we will ask, what data we will gather and how, who will be involved in the process and what protections those individuals will be afforded, and how the knowledge generated through the research process will ultimately be used. We now briefly review the ways in which the three basic theoretical frameworks are applied in the current systems of ethical review and explore how new approaches might lead to more appropriate strategies for guiding ethical decision-making in the context of action research.

**Duty bound**

The positivist model, upon which many of the current assumptions of research practice not only in the natural sciences but in the social sciences as well are based, suggests that research should be objective and value-neutral, making it difficult to engage in discussions of the moral implications of research or the ethical responsibilities of researchers. This assumption of value neutrality on the part of individual researchers then justifies the imposition of an external set of rules to control the research process. Existing systems for articulating and evaluating human research ethics, as are usually found at dedicated offices placed in universities and hospitals, are based primarily on the idea that if researchers follow a set of prescribed guidelines the research will be ethical. This approach is grounded in a framework referred to as deontological or duty ethics, an approach most often associated with the work of Emmanuel Kant. The advantage of this system is that it provides clear guidance to researchers regarding their actions. For example, by mandating that informed consent documents include specific language and be administered in a particular way, review bodies can presumably be assured that established rules are adhered to in practice. The disadvantage is that this can distance researchers themselves from moral responsibility for their actions by creating formulaic strategies for responding to the ethical demands of research and reinforce the idea that once these often quite stringent (but not necessarily relevant) requirements have been met, there are no further ethical demands upon the researcher. This may lead to inattention to emergent ethical challenges within the research process and moral complacency regarding the larger questions of if and how research is used to bring about positive change. It also places responsibility for defining ethical action outside the control of both the researcher and the researched by empowering research ethics boards to make these determinations and to enforce their vision of ethics through their ability to impose sanctions on researchers who do not follow their directives.

**The truth in consequences**

Building on the work of John Stuart Mill and others, a utilitarian or consequentialist approach to research ethics focuses instead on outcomes – asking what actions will result in the greatest good for the greatest number. The notion of beneficence, which is recognized as a central principle in the foundational documents of research ethics such as the Helsinki Declaration and the Belmont Report (Israel and Hay, 2006), reflects this approach to ethics by requiring researchers to consider the question of what benefits might result from
the research and to balance this against any potential harms that might occur. The trouble with this is that it is often difficult to predict what specific costs and benefits might be involved in any particular study, and here again the responsibility for defining what constitute benefits is generally left to researchers and to members of the review board rather than being established through more democratic and participatory processes by community partners and the broader public. It is also sometimes the case that the institutional interest in avoiding any potential liability and the resulting bias toward avoiding any form of harm, even the mild psychological discomfort associated with confronting difficult or challenging issues, takes precedence over the potential benefits of meaningful engagement with important social issues.

A return to virtue

The third model, virtue ethics, which draws largely upon the work of Aristotle, focuses on the qualities of individuals themselves and the ways in which they are expressed in action. In this model, actors – including researchers, research participants, and others – are able to define a set of values which they then use to guide their behavior. A return to virtue ethics would reframe research ethics training away from a sole reliance on following a specified protocol to focus instead on personal reflection and dialogue regarding the complex ethical issues confronting researchers and would encourage researchers to articulate a personal values stance and to consider how these qualities are reflected in professional practice.

Alternative ways to understand and enact ethics in action research

Deontological, utilitarian, and virtue ethics all offer important perspectives on issues related to research ethics, but all three approaches tend to reinforce a fairly hierarchical and individualistic view of the role of the researcher. Covenantal, feminist, and communitarian approaches to ethics, on the other hand, challenge many of the assumptions upon which current systems of human subjects review are built by taking a more egalitarian and relational approach to understanding the ethical challenges of doing research, making these approaches especially relevant to action researchers. Feminist ethics calls upon researchers to engage in a critical examination of issues of power and, like action research, rejects the notion of value neutrality in favor of a commitment to working to challenge inequality and to promote social justice (Brabeck and Brabeck; 2009; Kirsch, 1999; Lindemann, 2006). Covenantal ethics focuses on the nature of the relationship between researchers and research participants, our interdependence with one another, and our obligation to promote democratic practice and social justice (Brydon-Miller, 2008; Hilsen, 2006). Similarly, communitarian ethics is based on notions of mutual responsibility, citizen participation, and open dialogue with a goal of developing systems that promote the well-being of all members of the community (Tam, 2011). With their emphasis on open and caring relationships among all participants in a research process, a demand for equal participation in decision-making, and a clearly articulated values stance, these last three approaches to research ethics coincide more closely with the values and practices of action research.

OPERATIONALIZING RELATIONAL ETHICS

The structured ethical reflection process discussed here originally developed out of an effort to operationalize covenantal ethics in particular, but the process reflects the basic tenets of feminist, communitarian, and virtue ethics as well. In this process researchers, either individually or together with their community partners, begin by articulating a set of values that they believe should inform their work. Over the course of many discussions
Widening the Circle

with diverse groups of researchers, including social scientists using qualitative and quantitative methods, natural scientists, and research ethics professionals as well as action researchers, we have generated a list of over seventy values, beginning with ‘accuracy’ and ending with ‘zeal’, that serve as inspiration for considering a wide range of possible values, with the option always open to suggest alternatives. We generally suggest that researchers using the SER process focus on a relatively small number of values, somewhere between four to seven, to allow adequate attention to be paid to each. Once this set of values has been identified, they are listed down the first column of the structured ethical reflection grid with the other columns identifying specific stages in the research process (see Table 62.1).

One significant difference between this and current human subjects review processes is that this model includes the entire span of a research project, recognizing that research begins with the formation of research partnerships and the identification of specific research questions and goals, and continues on through the dissemination of findings and the implementation of change processes based on the results of the research and the articulation of continuing cycles of research, all of which carry particular ethical implications and challenges. Researchers and their partners are then invited to consider how, at each stage of the research process, they will be able to determine whether or not the values they have identified are being upheld. In Amy’s individual ethical reflection process described below, this is done through the generation of key questions designed to guide the research process. In Doug’s example, the small-group collaborative project, this is done through a series of specific statements. In both cases, the method is intended to bring the researchers’ attention back to ethical considerations throughout the research process – not with the goal of providing clear answers or correct actions, but with a view toward increasing mindfulness and engaging in dialogue about these issues.

Table 62.1 Structured ethical reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Developing partnerships</th>
<th>Constructing research questions</th>
<th>Planning project/action</th>
<th>Recruiting participants</th>
<th>Collecting data/taking action</th>
<th>Analyzing data/evaluating action</th>
<th>Member checking</th>
<th>Going public (presentation and publication)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note: Based on Brydon-Miller (2012).
could be enhanced for future simulations. The Jewish Court of All Time (JCAT) is a web-mediated simulation designed for middle-school classrooms where students take on roles of various characters throughout the world drawn from history and literature to address an imaginary court case. I had played alongside the other participants for one of the three-month-long simulations, as a character just like the rest of the students, but also fulfilling the role of a mentor behind the scenes, and I used this practitioner experience to inform my research. My primary human subjects were middle-school students who lived throughout the US and Canada, many of whom had already moved on to other classes or grade levels since participating in the simulation. Furthermore, the students’ textual data from the web space was a large subject of study, and not one that was going to offer me any ethical advice of its own. I would define this as a form of first-person action research embedded in a larger educational action research study.

In this project, I found that my institution’s human subjects review board protocols provided me with minimal blueprints for protecting the appropriate parties from common grievances, but offered little help as I struggled to balance my own purposes with upholding the values inherent in an action research stance. With this positivist ethical model that emphasizes distance and neutrality, I was left unsure how to truly safeguard relationships with and responsibilities toward my community, and felt even more vulnerable and unguided in understanding and preserving my personal values and ideals. As an individual researcher who had to essentially make all these ethical decisions alone, I appreciated the SER model wherein I was required at every turn to question my ethical expectations, survey the way they were playing out within the study, and make the necessary adjustments.

Looking at a long list of possible values, those relevant to my particular inquiry seemed to jump out at me: values like critical thinking, conscientiousness, and justice. I then had to define these values clearly and consider how they related to and would be used in this particular framework and setting. I found seemingly overlapping values were actually quite distinct from one another when I set forth to operationalize them in the context of my work. It was easy to believe values like authenticity and originality might be too similar, until I recognized that in my study, the first was best applied to purposes and perspectives, while the other was more applicable to creating a useful product, something new and worthwhile within the existing knowledge on this topic. After settling on seven values, I moved to the arduous task of mapping these values onto the structured ethical reflection grid, a tangible resource to guide the rest of my work.

I began by questioning my strategies and plans regarding each step of the research process, from developing my partnerships, to going public with my findings. I laid these steps out along the top row of my SER grid, with my chosen values down the left column (see Table 62.2).

I then filled in the corresponding spaces with my ethical questions, many of which revolved around participants. For example, for my chosen value of originality regarding the stage of forming and maintaining partnerships, I asked myself, ‘How can I offer this learning community something they need and weren’t already getting?’ To address this, I studied previous work on and about the simulation and pondered ways I could fill a useful gap, settling my attention on the student perspective, as others had already focused on the roles of teachers and mentors. I asked about justice concerning data collection, ‘Am I leaving anyone out of the conversation?’ The answer was to enlist not only students, but also teachers, project directors, and another mentor/practitioner to contribute their thoughts and interpretations to my topic. Further questions centered on how I would uphold my chosen values in parts of the work I must do alone, such as constructing the research question or data analysis. Some values seemed most applicable to
### Table 62.2 Student agency and voice in the JCAT simulation experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Developing partnerships</th>
<th>Constructing research question</th>
<th>Planning project/action</th>
<th>Recruiting participants</th>
<th>Collecting data/taking action</th>
<th>Analyzing data/evaluating action</th>
<th>Member checking</th>
<th>Going public (presentation and publication)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Have I been sure to portray my true self/intentions in developing partnerships?</td>
<td>Does this question truly embody my intended inquiry?</td>
<td>Am I creating a personal project without outside influence? (desire to please others, etc.)</td>
<td>Will my role as JCAT mentor/researcher hinder or help the opening up of participants?</td>
<td>Am I allowing data to find me, or looking for 'preferred' data?</td>
<td>Is my methodology something I can feel personally invested in?</td>
<td>Have I represented the authentic voices of my participants?</td>
<td>Am I confident that this work represents me and my goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>Am I being careful not to run this work together with my work as a GA?</td>
<td>Have I explored all my topic options in JCAT before settling on this one?</td>
<td>Can I involve the participants more somehow?</td>
<td>Can I really get a fair representation without access to all perspectives?</td>
<td>Do I have the right/ enough data for this question?</td>
<td>How can I quickly learn the techniques to properly analyze this data?</td>
<td>Did I seek member input throughout the process?</td>
<td>Is it worthwhile to present findings if they are limited?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>What obstacles are there to working with people I don’t know and/or will never personally know?</td>
<td>Have I considered competing questions and their validity?</td>
<td>Is this the best way to conduct my research? Am I overlooking other options because they don’t fit my personal research perspective?</td>
<td>How can I best utilize the available consents and timeframe without losing validity?</td>
<td>What data am I missing?</td>
<td>How do I account for missing data? How will I explain/ minimize the effects of its absence?</td>
<td>To what extent does my process ‘fit’ the subject/data?</td>
<td>How will I address disagreement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Will I be satisfied with my distance partnerships despite their limitations?</td>
<td>Is my question flexible enough/too flexible to allow the data to inform me?</td>
<td>Can I handle it if I don’t get the expected/needed results this way?</td>
<td>How can I get creative in finding available participants among the few options?</td>
<td>Am I willing to downsize the grandeur of my ideal data collection?</td>
<td>What can/can’t I do with my data that I didn’t predict?</td>
<td>What are my alternatives to member checking with actual participants?</td>
<td>Do I foresee one outlet and miss other potential outlets?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
### Table 62.2  Student agency and voice in the JCAT simulation experience (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Developing partnerships</th>
<th>Constructing research question</th>
<th>Planning project/action</th>
<th>Recruiting participants</th>
<th>Collecting data/taking action</th>
<th>Analyzing data/evaluating action</th>
<th>Member checking</th>
<th>Going public (presentation and publication)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Will this work serve my partners, or is it only for my own purposes?</td>
<td>Did I consider all perspectives who might be affected by my question?</td>
<td>Am I making space for the needs of my participants to be met?</td>
<td>How will I be sure to recruit participants that will fairly represent all viewpoints?</td>
<td>Am I leaving anyone out of the conversation?</td>
<td>Am I being sure to analyze my data from multiple perspectives?</td>
<td>Do my participants find their needs validated in my results?</td>
<td>Where are the best outlets for affecting justice with my work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originality</td>
<td>How can I offer this learning community something they need and weren’t already getting?</td>
<td>Is this a new perspective in the existing JCAT research?</td>
<td>What is an interesting, inventive way I could approach this project?</td>
<td>Is recruiting really something I can make ‘original’…?</td>
<td>How can I get creative with what is available to me?</td>
<td>Can I find anything new in this data not previously addressed in the literature?</td>
<td>What did I find that the members did not previously see themselves?</td>
<td>What can I do to differentiate my work from previous work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality</td>
<td>How can I create relationships over such distances?</td>
<td>Is this a question that will be useful to the creators/participants?</td>
<td>How can I make the best use of the data and time I have available to me?</td>
<td>How can I make the best use of already consented participants?</td>
<td>What is the most efficient way to collect and organize my data?</td>
<td>What is the most effective methodology for analyzing this type of data?</td>
<td>How will I review this with the participants?</td>
<td>What types of dissemination do I have time/energy to pursue?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on Brydon-Miller (2012).
managing my own ethical ideals, rather than my duties toward participants. The resulting variety of considerations mapped out on the SER grid gave me a very accessible, visual representation that would guide me throughout the project.

As will inevitably happen, I did not manage to answer every one of the original ethical challenges to myself, but because I could literally see in front of me which issues I was not addressing, I could regroup and redirect whenever necessary. For example, recruiting participants, which is often one of the most difficult yet vital aspects affecting the accuracy of a study, proved a point where the SER became very useful. First, it helped me become aware of the ways this step could have significant impacts on the data that followed. It therefore influenced the type of data I chose to collect in order to more fully address disparities in recruitment, where I was unable to access enough perspectives because students either failed to return parental consent forms, or perhaps didn’t want to be studied in the first place. Addressing this silence in the data became a prominent part of the analysis and action of the project. Likewise, had the need arisen as the study unfolded, I could have exchanged a value or two for new values, recreating that part of my ethical framework around something more pertinent, which fits well with the action reflection cycle of action research. In some cases, I did have to accept that I would not get all the ‘right’ answers, but through this process, I was more easily able to describe and account for this in my analysis and final presentation of the work.

Overall, SER helped me delineate my ethical considerations for this study and put them into practice. It forced me to consider how ethics would specifically play out in each step of the research process, and to reflect on my goals and values within the study. It was a priceless tool for organizing and maintaining my ethical stance within the previously described confines of individual research.

**STRUCTURED ETHICAL REFLECTION IN A COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH STUDY (DOUG)**

Ethical issues in a qualitative or action research study have traditionally been addressed in an ongoing manner through journaling, reflection, and participation in a local community of practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009). The example I share here is that of an examination of the relational lives of staff members within an urban high school. The primary stakeholder groups in this case were myself (the insider researcher), the collaborative research community of teachers and staff at the high school where I teach, and the organization in which we all work. Each of these three stakeholder groups had a unique set of values with regard to role and function. As the insider researcher, I operated with the values of a researcher, but one who was also a member of both the research community and the organization. At the time of the study I was a full-time doctoral student at the University of Cincinnati as well as a veteran English teacher on a ninth grade multidisciplinary academic team in the school. The members of the research community held personal and group values that were largely, although not exclusively, aligned with those of the school organization. Finally, this organization in particular also had an explicit set of values that were relevant to the study. Creating the guide for ethical reflection meant integrating each of these three sets of values as they applied to the investigatory process (Stevens, 2014).

While community-based and action research endeavors have the added benefit of engaging a larger number of participants to generate meaningful findings and action plans, one caveat is always time. Good reflection takes time and collaborative research participants can rarely devote as much time to a study as the principal investigator. The nature of this research project was such that one of my primary concerns was limiting the amount of staff member time that the research activities consumed. Formal studies like this one still have a principal investigator...
who is ultimately responsible to the sponsoring research institution. In this example, the SER guide was developed in consultation with a larger number of organizational members, but its implementation was still my own responsibility. Of the six values that ultimately comprised the SER guide for this study, three came directly from a set of core values established by the founding faculty members of this teacher-led school and taught to students at the study school: respect, empathy, and integrity. These values were the appropriate starting point because their inclusion in the guide would help to more closely align it with the research setting. The additional values incorporated into the SER were developed in several meetings with school staff members, through discussions about the goals, purposes, and desired outcomes of the study. After eliminating a few originally considered values that were less relevant to the study, the additional values chosen were open mindedness, trust, and caring.

The SER process acted as a kind of ethical guide for each major step in the study. Because the guide itself provides checkpoints throughout the entire investigation, it helped to reduce the likelihood of ‘blind spots’. I chose to write each of the reflective statements in the grid using the infinitive verb tense rather than to simply write a question out, as is described in the original process by Brydon-Miller (2012). I discovered that using the infinitive verb tense reinforced my understanding of the structured ethical reflection process as ongoing, rather than a one-time event. I think of each statement as being preceded by ‘As a researcher, I should be …’ or alternately as a question, ‘As a researcher, am I …’. Thus, at the intersection of open mindedness and developing partnerships, it would read, ‘As a researcher, am I searching for others who may have a vested interest in the data or findings I may discover’. With the SER chart enlarged to poster size and hung on my office wall, I continually took pauses and gazed across the spectrum of ethical challenges to ask myself how well I was doing in remembering to address those concerns. I took a smaller version of the completed SER guide with me to interviews and subsequent meetings with staff members and laid it out on the table while we met to provide a visual focus for the ethical context of our work (see Table 62.3).

While utilizing the SER guide during my interaction with the research community of my study, I found them to be quite receptive to the process. Because all of them worked in a secondary school, they were familiar and comfortable with using rubrics. Although I had not previously thought of the SER guide as a rubric per se, after several participants commented that it reminded them of one, I was able to see the parallels between the guide and a rubric. In a sense, the SER guide does act as a rubric for self-assessment throughout the research process. While some participants laughed at the inclusion of hospitality in the guide during the data collection process, they nevertheless enjoyed the effect snacks, beverages, and a comfortable environment had on interviews. During the member checking process, several participants wished to edit some words out of their transcripts, mostly nervous tics or an unconscious, excessive use of ‘you know’. Even when they chose not to edit their transcripts, they expressed gratitude at being reminded of their ability to do so by their consultation of the guide. The silent partner in this process was the organization itself. It did not participate in a material way other than during the creation of the guide when we made sure its values were also present. However, knowing that the research process had integrated the organization’s values afforded participants more confidence in the findings at the conclusion of the study.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE TO SUPPORT ETHICAL REFLECTION AND ACTION

Creating change and deepening ethical practice at larger institutional and structural levels will involve extending the results of our work to broader audiences – in this case to faculty, students, research partners, and administrators.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Developing partnerships</th>
<th>Constructing research question</th>
<th>Planning project/action</th>
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<th>Analyzing data/evaluating action</th>
<th>Member checking</th>
<th>Going public (presentation and publication)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-Mindedness</td>
<td>Searching for others who may have a vested interest in the data or findings I may discover</td>
<td>Keeping an awareness that the research question may morph during the research process</td>
<td>Listening to the input of my committee and any respected others who may be able to offer insight</td>
<td>Looking for opportunities for participation by all interested parties</td>
<td>Looking beyond what might be right in front of me and convenient when collecting data</td>
<td>Suspending judgment and conclusions when possible until after member checking for validation</td>
<td>Remembering how concepts of feminism and hermeneutics suggest multiple narratives</td>
<td>Remembering findings may be received very differently by various stakeholders and others in my ‘audience’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Being aware of the time constraints of partners</td>
<td>Developing a question that has real potential benefits to research participants</td>
<td>Doing due diligence when following through on my responsibilities</td>
<td>Understanding perspectives of staff members who are not in the ‘higher ed’ mentality</td>
<td>Being flexible when it comes to finding time to do interviews and member checking with participants</td>
<td>Keeping in mind that what people say initially may or may not be quite what they intended to say</td>
<td>Being flexible when offering participants multiple methods for member checking</td>
<td>Working to understand the positionality of audience members when presenting findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Considering the time it takes to develop trust</td>
<td>Ensuring that the research question is one which has the potential to enhance trust</td>
<td>Looking for ways to ensure a sense of confidentiality with participants</td>
<td>Making sure participants understand the safeguards in place to protect them</td>
<td>Honoring the agreement with the participant</td>
<td>Remembering the primacy of the relationship with the research participant</td>
<td>Revisiting the agreement with the research participant</td>
<td>Being clear about the efforts made to develop and maintain trust with participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Working to understand the needs and perspective of partners</td>
<td>Thinking about issues the research question may bring up for participants</td>
<td>Planning for methodologies that mesh well with the culture of the research site</td>
<td>Getting to know potential participants to better understand what might be reasonable to ask or expect</td>
<td>Maintaining an awareness of the individuality of each participant and associated needs and concerns</td>
<td>Skillfully using the Listening Guide during the analysis process to hear both the louder and quieter voices in each person’s interview</td>
<td>Making space for participants to change, alter, clarify, and redact previous statements</td>
<td>Staying in communication with participants about publication and presentation of study findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
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<th>Member checking</th>
<th>Going public (presentation and publication)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Following through on actions agreed upon with any partners</td>
<td>Developing a question that is open-ended and flexible enough to adapt to the research site environment</td>
<td>Being forthright with stakeholders concerning research project activities and schedule</td>
<td>Making the option to participate is open to all staff members as defined in the proposal</td>
<td>Following in word and spirit the agreement co-developed with each of the research participants</td>
<td>Remembering the sense of responsibility implied when taking multiple, partial, and situated perspectives and stitching them together</td>
<td>Providing participants with every chance and method possible to respond to interview transcript and summary</td>
<td>Doing what I said I was going to do, primarily in taking a strength-seeking stance with relation to publication of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Looking for ways that I can help partners meet goals for themselves and/or their organizations</td>
<td>Creating a question that can assist participants in self-reflection and potential growth</td>
<td>Building a project framework that allows ample time to develop relationships with participants</td>
<td>Following up whole group invitations with personal follow-up messages</td>
<td>Setting the environment for the interviews by demonstrating hospitality and allowing participants to unwind from the day</td>
<td>Making careful notations about any follow-up or clarifying questions that may arise during analysis</td>
<td>Doing a check-in with participants before jumping into the nuts and bolts of the member checking process</td>
<td>Working to ensure that presentations and publications acknowledge the importance of contributions by and involvement of participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on Brydon-Miller (2012).
We can begin by providing student researchers with a process for developing a personal set of values that will guide the development of their research agenda, and will inform the decisions they make as they begin to consider how they will implement this agenda in specific research projects. This personal set of values is then integrated with those of research partners in collaborative research projects to develop a shared vision of what constitutes ethical practice and how that will be enacted in a particular project. The final questions to be addressed then are: How is the broader institutional setting supporting these efforts? And, how can action research itself be used to strengthen the ethical climate of our universities and research centers?

The rhetoric of higher education certainly abounds with lofty claims about diversity, integrity, and social change. But in many instances the actual systems of reward and punishment – promotion and tenure for faculty, admission and graduation for students – depend more upon external accounts of grants, publications, test scores, and cumulative grade point averages than they do upon the character of the individuals or the contributions they make toward improving the lives of others. If the academy were to engage in a similar process of structured ethical reflection, what might be the result? How might we define the basic values that should inform our work as university based researchers? We could start with integrity, transparency, and conscientiousness, but might want to include kindness, diversity, democratic practice, and wonder, as well. And the stages of the process might include recruitment and admissions decision-making, teaching and mentoring students, hiring and mentoring faculty, engaging with the local community, encouraging dialogue, undertaking meaningful research, and using the resources of the university to support positive social and environmental change. Creating this climate of ethical reflection provides the setting for the development of more ethical researchers and institutions.

REFERENCES


