The IRB, the HSR -- and the Ethics of Insider Research

by Jane Zeni

Jane Zeni is an Associate Professor in the Departments of English and Education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, U.S.A.
The author and *Networks* gratefully acknowledge the permission granted by Teachers College Press to include the final chapter from *Ethical Issues in Practitioner Research* (J. Zeni (Ed.) 2001).

This project began about eight years ago when I tried adapt the mandated "human subjects review" (HSR) by my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to the work I was doing as a researcher of my own practice and as a consultant to K-12 teacher researchers. After many roadblocks and revisions, I produced a guide intended, not for IRB review, but for discussion in action research groups and dissertation committees. It was first published in *Educational Action Research* (1998, vol 6, no. 1), then revised and updated as the Epilogue to the new book (Zeni, 2001). Despite its convoluted genealogy, the Guide and its heuristic questions have proven useful to researchers trying to make ethical decisions amid the alphabet soup of regulations.

Today I believe we must engage in dialogue about ethics with two very different groups. We must talk with the traditional arbiters of research ethics -- the Institutional Review Boards that control access to research funding and academic degrees. However, we cannot allow this dialogue to stay within the walls of the universities; we must widen the conversation to include the stakeholders in the schools where most practitioner research is conducted.

Currently in the United States, the Federal OHRP (Office for Human Research Protection) is looking more closely at practitioner research. The OHRP now mandates that training in research ethics be provided for everyone conducting research at an institution receiving Federal funds (this includes virtually all higher education institutions). While no particular course is mandated, online training has been designed by the National Institute of Health (NIH), and many universities now simply require it to fulfill the OHRP mandate (http://ohsr.od.nih.gov). My university is probably typical in requiring the NIH certificate of completion, not only for funded research, but for theses, dissertations, and other projects that involve data collected from humans in any way. Last month, one of my students took the training in order to gain approval from the IRB to proceed with a Master's thesis in English involving case studies of graduate student writers. She and I were disappointed, but not surprised, to see how firmly the program was rooted in a medical model of research.

It is informative and useful, I feel, for new researchers to learn through the NIH training about such abuses as the Tuskegee syphilis experiment (in which researchers documented the course of untreated syphilis among indigent black men, continuing the study for decades after drugs were developed to cure the disease) and the Milgram experiment (in which subjects were ordered by an authority figure to inflict pain and electric shock that they believed could be life-threatening). It is also heartening to see that the NIH course replaces "Human Subjects" -- a rather bizarre abstraction -- with "Human Participants." The modules lead the trainee to apply the ethical

principles drawn from cases such as Tuskegee and Milgram to a wide range of research situations in medicine and in psychology. Looking at ethics through the lenses of natural science, however, can mislead us as teachers doing action research. Not seeing our contexts or our dilemmas in the cases presented, we may be lulled into believing our research poses no risks.

As Fred Erickson (2001, April) explains, the medical model used by the Institutional Review Boards focuses on dangers to participants during the process of data gathering and experimentation. However, in the case of action research, the serious risks are generally those to privacy and reputation -- risks that occur for the most part during the process of disseminating and publishing research. A Missouri teacher-research team began their inquiry into ethics by asking, "Whose story is this?" and "Who has the right to share this story?" (Clayton Research Review Team, Chapter 5 in Zeni, 2001). About such questions, the OHRP and the IRB have little to say.

During the last few months, the University of Missouri-St. Louis has been moving toward a more collaborative and inclusive approach to ethical review. On the one hand, the university is bringing the IRB and the qualitative research faculty into dialogue in hope of reviewing practitioner inquiry more appropriately. On the other hand, the schools where practitioner research is conducted are engaging in a new dialogue that goes beyond the IRB's concerns to issues of responsibility, relationships, and respect.

At the university, we are identifying one or two members of the Institutional Review Board to work with qualitative and action research. In addition, we are "deputizing" the faculty who teach and supervise this kind of research to conduct much of the ethical review themselves (the idea is borrowed from Gordon Wells, who proposed such a plan OISE/University of Toronto). A key change is that we no longer define "review" as something that happens once, at the start of a project. Because the nature of qualitative inquiry is to take shape gradually and to change focus as data are gathered, a meaningful ethical review has to be flexible and ongoing.

According to our plan, a faculty member teaching any qualitative research course first submits a syllabus, a list of assignments, and a description of the probable research methods (case study, interview, autobiography, etc.) to the IRB's qualitative representatives. A conference follows, allowing IRB members to ask questions and offer suggestions. Once the course is approved, the professor monitors the students' projects and advises them on ethical safeguards and appropriate forms of consent, consulting the IRB as needed. Later, as some of these student projects grow into conference presentations, dissertation proposals, or publications, the standard HSR applications will be submitted.

These changes will help, I believe, to transform the university's ethical review from an adversarial to a more collaborative, constructive process. But this is not enough. An adequate ethical review needs to take the concerns of stakeholders in the schools as seriously as it takes the concerns of the academy and funding agencies. Especially today, as school-university partnerships and professional development schools become the norm, it is clear that standards for research ethics must be negotiated in "two worlds" (Cohn & Kirkpatrick, Chapter 12 in Zeni, 2001).

In my struggles to design an alternative HSR, one roadblock has been the situatedness of practitioner research in a specific place and social context: What qualifies as informed consent may depend not only on what information is given but especially on who gives it (the teacher? the principal? a university co-researcher?) and in what context (during the negotiation of a major grant? during the approval of a teacher's dissertation? before a mass-market publication?) Ivor Pritchard (2001, April) points out that the HSR is a "blunt instrument" asking for yes/ no responses; it cannot adequately guide a researcher in making complex personal, professional, and political decisions in a specific setting.

Several chapters in *Ethical Issues* are written by school-based researchers working to support as well as review practitioner inquiry. District-sponsored teacher research teams have drawn up their own guidelines (Mohr, Chapter 1 in Zeni 2001). University faculty have been invited as discussants rather than as experts. While there is not yet a consensus on these school-based guidelines, a look at some of the traditional IRB issues from an off-campus perspective can be revealing.

For example, "anonymity" is not a realistic protection for action research that will be disseminated beyond the school where it is conducted. If a teacher publishes under his or her own name and district, the classroom and students can probably be identified. Besides, we have found that students, parents, and school personnel are often more concerned about receiving proper credit than about being "protected" (van den Berg, Chapter 8 in Zeni, 2001).

"Informed consent" is equally problematic because much of the information available at the start of a study is likely to change. Action researchers would be better advised to go beyond the HSR's requirements by negotiating informed consent in stages. Early in the process, teachers might inform students that "research is part of how I teach," and ask for a simple "consent to participate." Later, if the research leads to a publication with an audience beyond the school, the teacher would request specific permission -- ideally after sharing a draft with students (and parents) for feedback (Clayton Research Review Team, Chapter 5 in Zeni 2001).

The following is my attempt to summarize some ethical principles relevant to people in the schools:

Responsibility -- seeing research in the context of professional commitments to students, to parents, to the community.

Accountability -- referring data and tentative interpretations back to the participants and including their perspectives in the report.

Credit -- giving students and colleagues a choice of real name or pseudonym rather than assuming that anonymity is the norm..

Reputations -- portraying colleagues and students with respect.

Cultural sensitivity -- recognizing that no researcher is culturally neutral, and that observers should report their own race, gender, class whenever they apply such categories to others.

"Informed" consent -- the participants understand the kind of document/ presentation, the audience(s) with whom it will be shared, and the context in which their work will be quoted.

I am encouraged by the direction in which we are moving. I hope that readers will find the following guide useful to prompt their own thinking and to widen the conversation about ethical issues in practitioner research.

Epilogue from Ethical Issues in Practitioner Research, ed Jane Zeni (Teachers College Press, 2001), pp. 153-165.

A Guide to Ethical Decision Making for Insider Research

Practitioner research has become a major mode of inquiry in American education. As classroom teachers discover the intellectual excitement of studying their own practice and the power of collaborative action research with other insiders, many decide to pursue their inquiries through grant proposals, publications, or graduate theses. At this point, however, many are bewildered by the advice on "research ethics" dispensed by various colleagues and institutions.

Most universities and school districts have an institutional review board (IRB) that monitors research proposals using questions designed for traditional scientific experiments. Researchers are asked if their tests are dangerous, if their subjects will be given drugs, if the treatment will be traumatic. Researchers are asked to state precisely which data they will collect, which techniques they will use. But research by insiders--which may be called "practitioner inquiry," "action research," "teacher research," or "classroom ethnography"--does not fit the IRB's model. Action researchers pursue a question through an often-meandering route, finding appropriate data sources along the way. When researchers investigate their own practice, many of the traditional guidelines collapse. Yet practitioner research raises its own, often sticky, ethical issues which may never be addressed by review boards.

In my graduate classes, I find that teachers see the issues more clearly by locating action research on a matrix of research methods (see Figure 1). Action research draws on the qualitative methods and multiple perspectives of educational ethnography. When challenged, those of us who do action research take pains to distinguish our work from traditional quantitative research: We explain that we don't deal with big numbers, random samples, or manipulated variables, but with the human drama as lived by self-conscious actors. Perhaps it is just as important to distinguish action research from traditional *qualitative* research: We aren't outsiders peering from the shadows into the classroom, but insiders responsible to the students whose learning we document.

Figure 1. Educational Research Methods: A Matrix

QUANTITATIVE QUALITATIVE

TRADITIONAL RESEARCH

Outsider: Researcher investigating a teacher's practice

Classic experiment (techniques of natural science, agriculture)	Classic ethnography or case study (techniques of anthropology)

Goal: T**o change/ improve/ document someone else's teaching/ learning**

ACTION RESEARCH

Insider: Teacher investigating his or her own practice

"Small-n" statistics (test scores; surveys; word counts; syntax measures)	Classroom ethnography; case study; autobiography curriculum development & field testing.

Goal: **To change/ improve/ document one's own teaching/ learning**

NB Most, but not all, classroom action research is qualitative.

Figure 1 illustrates modes of research across two dimensions: qualitative/ quantitative and insider/ outsider. Action research usually falls in the lower-right quadrant of the matrix: qualitative research by insiders. Such "insiders" may be preschool teachers, assistant principals, reading specialists, high school math teachers, curriculum coordinators, coaches, university professors -- any of us who study our own practice as educators. We find the ethical safeguards of the outsider doing quantitative, experimental research (random selection, control groups, removing the personal influence of the researcher) either irrelevant or problematic for us as insiders. In the same way, the ethical safeguards of the outsider doing qualitative research (anonymous informants, disguised settings) are subverted as soon as the inside author is named; in addition, anonymity may defeat the insider's goal of open communication with students, colleagues, and parents. Ethical guidelines need to be rethought for the special case of research by practitioners in their own workplaces.

When does good teaching become research? The line is hard to draw until a study is underway. Research tends to involve:

(1) more systematic documentation and data gathering
(2) more self-reflection in writing
(3) more audience (collaboration, presentation, publication)

It is this third feature that most often brings ethical dilemmas. If our journals remain private and our videotapes are not played, we can inquire with equanimity. But though we document our own practice, we rarely work in isolation. We draw energy and insight from colleagues, seminars, outside researchers. From this informal sharing, we may reach out to wider audiences at conferences or in print. Dilemmas of responsibility and ownership arise, and the academic codes of conduct are silent.

An Alternative Human Subjects Review?

This guide emerged from discussions in the Teacher Educator Seminar of the Action Research Collaborative in St. Louis, MO. We meet monthly, a dozen or more faculty from several colleges and the Gateway Writing Project, to share our own action research and to discuss issues in facilitating teachers' work. As some teacher inquiries led to proposals for grants and dissertations, I found myself struggling with the language and assumptions of the mandated "human subjects" review (see P. V. Anderson, 1996). "Human" in contrast to what? Rodent? And "subjects"? How can this impersonal term identify the relationship between teacher and student? I raised the issue of ethics at the seminar and found that others had similar concerns. Could we, perhaps, revise the university's IRB process to make it appropriate for action research?

An ARC committee examined human subjects reviews and ethics policies from local universities and from the American Anthropological Association, the Oral History Association, and the American Educational Research Association. I began writing the guide, bringing drafts to ARC seminars for discussion. Feedback came from a wider audience of teachers and administrators in conferences, graduate courses, and teacher research groups.

What at first seemed a rather straightforward exercise in translation proved a formidable task. The more I tried to address the different contexts and communities in which practitioners do research, the more convoluted our ethical guidelines became. As teacher educators, we began to see that a "new paradigm code of ethics" would itself become "procrustean" (Gregory, 1990, p. 166). I finally abandoned the goal of an alternative "human subjects" review. Even if an adequate ethical code could be written, having it enforced by administrators who were not grounded in action research might do more harm than good. How, then, could we protect the rights of students without inhibiting the rights of teachers to gather and reflect on data from their own classrooms?

The document contained in this chapter supports what Jennifer Mason (1996) calls an "active and self-questioning" approach (p. 167):

It is because of the complexities of research ethics, and because there is unlikely ever to be one clear ethical solution, that a practical approach to ethics which involves asking yourself difficult questions--and pushing yourself hard to answer them--is particularly appropriate. (p. 29)

The guide offers a set of questions as a heuristic for reflection. A research team or dissertation committee can work through the guide with anyone who is planning a project. Most questions

ask the researcher to discuss a potential ethical problem, to consider alternative actions, and to explain his or her choices.

The following "Questions for Review and Reflection" use the categories of a typical IRB ethics review only as a point of departure. Part I requests an overview of the project. Part II examines the role and location of the researcher within the research setting. Part III asks about methods, and whether the research falls within the everyday decisions of a teacher or whether there is some further intervention. Part IV examines what the IRB calls subjects and the impact of the research on relationships with students, colleagues, and administrators. Part V considers the consequences of the research for participants and ways to reduce risks either through informed consent or through openness, dialogue, and acknowledgment. Part VI deals with publication and the issues of credit, privacy, voice, and multiple perspectives. Part VII poses some questions that have been generally ignored in IRB documents, but have been especially problematic for researchers studying their own practice.

Questions for Review and Reflection

I. Overview of the Study

1. Briefly describe your project as you see it today.
2. What is your time frame? Is this a one-shot project or do you anticipate several cycles? Have you done a preliminary study?
3. What problem does your research address? Is it a problem in your own practice? Or is it a problem with your students or with your administrators? Who owns the problem?
4. What (initial) action will you take? What do you hope to accomplish?
5. List your research questions as they appear at this time. (Questions will be revised or refocused during your project.)

Comments. This section can help beginners grasp the mind-set of action research, recognizing that their study will not provide simple "yes" or "no" answers, that each cycle of research will lead them to a deeper inquiry, and that the questions themselves are likely to change. They may need to redefine their initial problem so that they "own" it and can therefore take action to address it. Hubbard and Power (1993) portray this initial phase of research:

As Glenda Bissex writes, "A teacher-researcher may start out not with a hypothesis to test, but with a wondering to pursue" (1987, p. 3). All teachers have wonderings worth pursuing. Transforming wonderings into questions is the start of teacher research. (pp. 1-2)

II. Location

1. Are you, the researcher, also a participant in the setting where this research will take place? Specify your role (teacher, supervisor, principal, counselor, social worker, and so forth)
2. Map your position on such dimensions of culture as gender, race, age, region, ethnic heritage, education, class, and family.

Comments. Practitioner research is inquiry into one's own practice. Therefore we begin by looking at ourselves and what we bring to the research--personally, culturally, and professionally (see Zeni & Prophete, Chapter 10 in this volume). Traditional experimental research sees the ideal researcher as neutral, unbiased, objective, but as teachers we are personally involved in our classrooms. Instead of trying to distance ourselves, we need to articulate our own position and analyze how it differs from that of other participants in the research. As Gesa Kirsch (1999) explains, "The goal of situating ourselves in our work and acknowledging our limited perspectives is not to overcome these limits--an impossible task--but to reveal to readers. . . what factors have shaped the research" (p. 14).

III. Methods

1. For this research, will you gather data on your normal educational practice and on changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment that you could make in your role according to your own professional judgment?
2. List the kinds of data you plan to collect (e.g. fieldnotes, taped interviews, writing samples).
3. How is this plan different from the way you normally document your practice? Consider two or three alternative ways you could gather data for this project. What are the ethical implications of choosing your preferred method?
4. At this time in your research, what do you aim to understand? What do you aim to change?

Comments. Traditional research in education is conducted by outsiders who intervene in the instructional process to answer questions that may benefit themselves or the profession in general. While the goal may be to improve instruction, rarely do the teachers or students in the study benefit directly.

In practitioner research, insiders study their own professional practice and frame their own questions with an immediate goal to assess, develop, or improve their practice. Such research belongs to the daily process of good teaching, to what has been called the "zone of accepted practice."

This concept has been used to determine whether research requires a formal proposal to an institutional review board (IRB). Answering "yes" to question 1 made a project exempt from full review by a university or district IRB. Most practitioner research would thus be exempt.

In 1995, the U. S. Office for Protection from Research Risks tightened its regulations, directing that all research, even in the zone of accepted practice, must be reviewed (P. V. Anderson, 1998). This directive poses an ethical dilemma for educational institutions that want to encourage teacher research. One solution is an expedited review of projects conducted within an established seminar or professional development partnership (see chapters 1, 5, and 12 in this volume). Another is a reviewer who understands qualitative research and is designated by the IRB to offer quick, appropriate feedback to practitioners

Beyond the institutional regulations, research in the zone of accepted practice may involve genuine risks to participants. Practitioner research should be discussed with a principal, supervisor, or other school-based mentor and often with parents. It must, of course, conform to

local school policy. A research team based in the school, district, or university, with advice from a professor or team leader, can help members work through the ethical dilemmas that may surface during the research.

Question 4 takes a closer look at purpose as well as methods. Traditionally, subjects were not considered at risk if the research was merely unobtrusive observation of behavior not "caused" by the researcher. But a teacher inevitably tries to cause some outcome (such as learning); action research involves taking some action and observing what happens.

"Understanding," however, is a valid goal for practitioner research. We may cause more harm than good by trying out new methods to solve an alleged problem we have never taken the time to understand, document, and analyze. The first cycles of action research might well aim simply to understand the problem; later cycles might involve specific changes designed to address it.

IV. Subjects, Subjectivity, and Relationships

1. Describe the individuals, groups, or communities you expect will be touched by your project. List their roles (student, parent, resource teacher, and so forth). Which participants are minors?
2. Analyze the power relations in this group. Which people (e.g. students, parents) do you have some power over? Which people (e.g. principals, professors) have some power over you?
3. What shared understandings do you have with these people? Do you have personal bonds, professional commitments? Will your research strengthen this trust or perhaps abuse it?
4. Will your study attempt to read and interpret the experience of people who differ from you in race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other cultural dimensions? How have you prepared yourself to share the perspective of the "other" (coursework, experiences, other sources of insight)?
5. Will an insider review your questionnaires or teaching materials for cultural bias? Have you provided for consultation by adult members of the community? How will you reduce or correct for your misreading of populations who differ from you?
6. Does your inquiry focus on people with less power than you? Children in classrooms are always vulnerable--especially if their families have little money or education. ("Where are the ethnographies of corporate boardrooms?" asks House, 1990, p. 162.) How does your project demonstrate mutual respect and justice?
7. What negative or embarrassing data can you anticipate emerging from this research? Who might be harmed (personally, professionally, financially)? What precautions have you taken?
8. Might your research lead to knowledge of sensitive matters such as illegal activities, drug/ alcohol use, or sexual behavior of participants? How do you plan to handle such information?

Comments. We must examine the impact of our research on the people whose lives we document. A classroom teacher may write field notes in order to improve her own practice. But what if her notes focus on certain members of the class ("at-risk," "Black males," "learning disabled")? These questions suggest a closer look at the power the researcher may have over students and staff (see Clay, Chapter 3, Barr Ebest, Chapter 7, and van den Berg, Chapter 8 in this volume).

Our students and colleagues are more than "subjects." Sharon Lee and Seena Kohl (see Chapter 6) suggest these distinctions:

Subject: Observed by researcher; no active participation.(Not suited to action research.)
Informant: Knowingly gives information to researcher.
Participant: More involved; perspective considered in research.
Collaborator: Fully involved in planning and interpretation.

We should also examine the impact of the study on ourselves. Becoming a researcher changes a teacher's professional status. Relationships with colleagues, administrators, and students may be threatened or enhanced. (See Minarik, Chapter 2, Clay, Chapter 3, and Hajj, Chapter 4 in this volume.)

Since I cannot be a fly on the wall in my own classroom, I must deal with my emotional and interpersonal responses as part of my data. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) call this the principle of "reflexivity." Teacher research is engaged and committed. Its "findings" should include the relationships among participants.

V. Consequences

1. Describe the possible benefits of your research--to students, teachers, or other participants; to society or to the profession.
2. Describe any risks to participants. For example, might your current students be disadvantaged for the possible benefit of future students? What steps are you taking to minimize risks?
3. Explain how you will protect the people from whom you collect data through surveys, interviews, or observations.
4. Describe how you will obtain informed consent. Do you need permission from students, parents, or both? How will you work with any students who refuse to be interviewed or to allow their materials to be quoted?
5. Are different kinds of consent needed at different stages in the project? (a) A blanket consent to participate from all students at the start of each year (with parent signatures of minors). (b) An individual consent to publish from selected students, giving you access to writing samples, videotapes, photographs, or fieldnotes that describe recognizable people.
6. Do you wish to protect the anonymity of students, teachers, parents, and other participants? If so, it is wise to use pseudonyms even in your fieldnotes. If your report is eventually published, you can also interchange physical description, grade level, gender, and so forth or develop composite rather than individual portraits. What are the gains and losses of anonymity?
7. On the other hand, instead of anonymity, it may be wiser to seek full participation and credit for students and colleagues. Research by an educator in his or her own classroom is rarely anonymous. Even if names are changed, students can be recognized in a well-written case study or classroom scene. What are the gains and losses of open acknowledgment?

Comments. These questions deal with the welfare of students and colleagues. Informed consent should be viewed as a process rather than a single gesture (see the Clayton Research Review Team, Chapter 5 in this volume). According to the AERA's Qualitative Research SIG (1993), "Informed consent is granted at the initiation of the study and codified in signed consent forms. .

. . Informants may withdraw at any time, [so] informed consent is ongoing, continual negotiation" (Mathison, Ross, & Cornett, p. 3).

But how informed is "informed consent?" Traditionally, participants have been considered free from risk if the following conditions are met:

- They are first informed. They must know the general nature of the study and what is expected of them.
- They give informed consent.
- They can refuse to participate, and they can withdraw without penalty after beginning the research.
- Anonymity of persons or confidentiality of data, or both, are protected if appropriate.

On the other hand, Lou Smith argues that "field research is so different from the usual experimental approaches that many individuals, even responsible professional educators, do not understand what . . . they are getting themselves into" (1990, p. 151). He stresses the need for dialogue, moving beyond "contract" relationships to "covenants" of trust (pp. 149-150). In this volume, Lee (Chapter 6) and Smith (Chapter 9) portray the misunderstandings that can occur in the absence of this dialogue.

Qualitative researchers have long considered anonymity the norm, essential to protect "informants." Concepts from outsider social science spilled over into guidelines for teacher research (e.g., Hubbard & Power, 1993, pp. 60-61). Today some researchers, especially those working in collaborative and feminist modes, are challenging the assumptions. Why should a teacher quote published writers with credit and citations, but quote her own student writers under pseudonyms? Can anonymity conflict with intellectual property rights?

Yvonna Lincoln (1990, pp. 279-280) agrees that "privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity regulations were written under assumptions that are ill suited" to qualitative research. She suggests that colleagues, administrators, and parents participate "as full, cooperative agents," our co-researchers.

Recent models of consent forms by the National Council of Teachers of English (see P. V. Anderson, 1998, pp. 84-86) and by Hubbard and Power (1999, p. 62) give students their choice of anonymity or personal credit; a parent must approve the choice of a minor. When teacher-researchers have used this approach, most students have chosen to be named (see Barr Ebest, Chapter 7, and van den Berg, Chapter 8 in this volume).

VI. Publication

1. What data will be contributed by others? Will you record student writing, oral histories, or other documents that may be considered someone's intellectual property? How have you arranged with colleagues or students for credit in your manuscript?
2. If your study is collaborative, how are you negotiating authorship and ownership? University researchers, colleagues, students, and parents may interpret their stake in the research in quite

different ways. Who owns the videotape of a classroom writing group, the dialogue journal between teacher and mentor, the transcription of talk by teacher-researchers in a college seminar?
3. Who is responsible for what is said in the final report? Will other stakeholders (teacher, principal, school board) review your report in draft? Will this (a) improve your accuracy or (b) compromise your candor? Which participants (students, colleagues) might be embarrassed if they were to read your report?
4. You will inevitably gather more data than you "need." Consider why you choose some data to report to a wider audience and why some is left in your files. (On what basis do you select?) Consider the politics of the way you focus your story.
5. How will your report recognize the perspectives of participants who disagree with some of your interpretations? For example, you may revise your views; quote their objections and tell why you maintain your original view; or invite them to state alternative views in an appendix.
6. Have you decided on anonymity or on full acknowledgment of other participants in your report? Perhaps you will identify teachers but use pseudonyms for students. If you began your study with a blanket consent form, have you now requested consent to publish specific material from specific people?

Comments. Publication brings out ethical dilemmas that may lie dormant during a study. Recent discussions (P. V. Anderson, 1998) call into question the practice of relying on a general "consent to participate" when colleagues or students are to be quoted in an eventual publication. For example, students may be shown not only the samples of their work that will be published but also the passages in which they will be quoted. (This practice may lead researchers to edit such comments as "John, a low-skilled B.D. male, produced the following garbled response.")

Action research can support democratic, student-centered pedagogy when teachers periodically share their drafts with students or colleagues. Lather (1991) sees "the submission of a preliminary description of the data to the scrutiny of the researched" (p. 53) as an emancipatory approach to inquiry and a source of "face validity" (p. 67).

A growing trend in practitioner research is "multivoiced" publication, incorporating not only the perspectives but also the texts of colleagues, students, and others. Sometimes these reports take the form of a script or simulated dialogue (Harris, Lowenstein, & Scott, Chapter 11 in this volume); sometimes they weave together several authors' statements on a common topic (Zeni & Prophete, Chapter 10); sometimes they use quotations and layers of feedback (van den Berg, Chapter 8). Incorporating other voices, especially when their views differ from that of the researcher, can make a report richer, more nuanced, more authentic (McCarthy & Fishman, 1996).

VII. Ethical Questions Specific to "Insider" Research

1. Does your district have a formal review procedure for research? If you are collaborating with people at a university or research institute, you may need approval from the institutional review board (IRB) in both settings.
2. Which participants at your school or college have read your research proposal? Which ones have been informed of the research orally in some detail? Which ones know little or nothing of

this project? Reflect on the decisions behind your answers.
3. What do your students know of your research? Who told them? What are the risks to them or their families of their knowing (or not knowing) what you write or collect?
4. How do your school administrators view your work? Is action research under suspicion or is it mandated from the top in a drive for organizational quality control? How safe do you feel in this institutional setting pursuing this research? Would you be free to report your findings and interpretations to a wider audience?
5. Who is sponsoring this research through grants, contracts, released time, course credit, and so forth? Will you evaluate the sponsor's program, textbook, or method? Do you anticipate pressure to report what the sponsor wants to hear?
6. Does your study evaluate your own effectiveness or a method to which you are committed? How will you handle the temptation to see what you hope to see? How will you obtain other perspectives--for example, classroom observation or analysis of student work by people who do not share your assumptions?

Conclusion

Practitioner researchers who have worked through this guide may be unnerved by the sheer range of ethical concerns. It seems that three major tasks are facing us. First is to know the Federal and institutional regulations that may apply to our work. Second is to educate the people charged with enforcing those regulations so that they do not force us to mimic an inappropriate mode of inquiry. Third is to continue developing our own professional discourse about ethics.

Paul Anderson (1998) calls for an ethical standard "beyond the Federal regulation" (p. 72). Along with obtaining whatever consent is legally required, we must protect our relationships of trust with those vulnerable to exploitation, especially students. Marian Mohr states it this way:

Teacher researchers are teachers first. They respect those with whom they work, openly sharing information about their research. While they seek understanding and knowledge, they also nurture the well-being of others, both students and professional colleagues (Chapter 1 in this volume).

Whenever possible, parents, students, and colleagues should be knowingly involved in the work from the start, with time to ask their own questions and make suggestions (See the Clayton Research Review Team, Chapter 5, and Cohn & Kirkpatrick, Chapter 12).

Collaboration and communication are the best guides to preventing the ethical dilemmas of practitioner research.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this chapter was published in 1998 under the title "A Guide to Ethical Issues and Action Research," in Educational Action Research, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 9-19.

The guide was originally prepared for the St. Louis Action Research Collaborative (ARC) and the Gateway Writing Project, the local site of the National Writing Project. The topics addressed

reflect the suggestions and experiences of the ARC's Teacher Educators' Seminar, especially Lou Smith (Washington University), Sharon Lee (Webster University), Kathryn Mitchell-Pierce (Clayton Public Schools), Sunny Pervil (Maryville University), and Mike McGrath, Jori Martinez, and Owen van den Berg (National-Louis University). Douglas Wartzok (University of Missouri-St. Louis) also gave helpful feedback.

References

1. Anderson, P.V. (1996). Ethics, institutional review boards, and the involvement of human participants in composition research. In P. Mortensen & G.E.Kirsch (Eds.), *Ethics and representation in qualitative studies of literacy* (pp. 260-285). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
2. Anderson, P.V. (1998). Simple Gifts: Ethical issues in the conduct of person-based composition research. *College Composition and Communication*, 49 (1), 63-89.
3. Barr Ebest, S. (2001). Action research on action research: Emancipatory research or abuse of power? In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 72-82). New York: Teachers College Press.
4. Bissex, G. L. (1987). What is a teacher-researcher? In G. L. Bissex & R. H. Bullock (Eds.), *Seeing for ourselves: Case study research by teachers of writing* (pp. 3-5). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
5. Clay, W. C. (2001). Coming to know my place. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 24-34). New York: Teachers College Press.
6. Clayton (MO) Research Review Team (2001). Who owns the story? Ethical issues in the conduct of practitioner research. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 45-54). New York: Teachers College Press.
7. Cohn, M. M., & Kirkpatrick, S. (2001). Negotiating two worlds: Conducting action research within a school-university partnership. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 136-148). New York: Teachers College Press.
8. Erickson, F. (2001, April). *Ethical questions in practitioner research: Human subjects and other issues*. Comments on panel presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle.
9. Gregory, T. B. (1990). Discussion on ethics. In E. Guba (Ed.), *The paradigm dialog* (pp.165-166). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
10. Hajj, L. (2001). Teacher research: A wolf in sheep's clothing. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 35-44). New York: Teachers College Press.
11. Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. London: Routledge.
12. Harris, J. C., Lowenstein, M., & Scott, Rosalynde. Insiders and outsiders: Perspectives on urban action research. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 123-135). New York: Teachers College Press.
13. House, E. R. (1990). An ethics of qualitative field studies. In E. Guba (Ed.), *The paradigm dialog* (pp. 158-164). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
14. Hubbard, R.S., & Power, B.M. (1993). *The art of classroom inquiry*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
15. Hubbard, R.S., & Power, B.M. (1999). *Living the questions: A guide for teacher-researchers.* York, ME: Stenhouse.

16. Kirsch, G. (1999). *Ethical dilemmas in feminist research: The politics of location, interpretation, and publication.* Albany: State University of New York Press.
17. Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/ in the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.
18. Lee, S. S. (2001). A root out of a dry ground: Resolving the researcher/ researched dilemma. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 61-71). New York: Teachers College Press.
19. Lincoln, Y. (1990). Toward a categorical imperative for qualitative research. In E. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education* (pp. 277-295). NY: Teachers College Press.
20. Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative Researching.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
21. Mathison, S., Ross, E. W., Cornett, J. (Eds.) (1993). *Casebook for teaching about ethical issues in qualitative research*. Qualitative Research SIG, American Ed. Research Association.
22. McCarthy, L., & Fishman, S. (1996). A text for many voices: Representing diversity in reports of naturalistic research. In P. Mortenson & G.E. Kirsch, (Eds.), *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy* (pp. 155-176). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
23. Minarik, L. T. (2001). "Tuesday Night" revisited: Learning to survive. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 13-23). New York: Teachers College Press.
24. Mohr, M. M. (2001). Drafting ethical guidelines for teacher research in schools. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 3-12). New York: Teachers College Press.
25. Pritchard, Ivor (2001, April). *Ethical questions in practitioner research: Human subjects and other issues*. Comments on panel presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle.
26. Smith, L. M. (1990). Ethics, field studies, and the paradigm crisis. In E. Guba (Ed.), *The paradigm dialog* (pp. 139-157). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
27. Smith, L. M. (2001). When evaluation turns sour: Quandaries of the individual case. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 92-104). New York: Teachers College Press.
28. van den Berg, O. C. (2001). The ethics of accountability in action research. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 83-91). New York: Teachers College Press.
29. Zeni, J. (1998). Guide to ethical issues and action research. *Educational Action Research, 6* (1), 9-19.
30. Zeni, J. & Prophete, M. (with N. Cason & M. Phillips). The ethics of cultural invisibility. In J. Zeni (Ed.), *Ethical issues in practitioner research* (pp. 113-122). New York: Teachers College Press.