Action Research Ethics for DMin Students

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Abstract

Research influences its context. While careful researchers try to minimize this influence by, for example, avoiding research contexts where researchers exercise authority over individuals or organizations, many DMin students develop research that is designed to influence a context in which they are in power over their participants. Participatory action research has become popular in DMin programs because it is highly compatible with the ministry context. However, it also introduces ethical dilemmas in the areas such as consent and dual-role relationship. This paper explores the ethics of participatory action research in ministry-based contexts.

Introduction

This paper examines the ethical issues that arise when DMin students use their research as a means to change a research context in which they hold a position of authority. It explains how participatory action research can make it possible to conduct ethical research in such contexts by considering the inherent values and customary practices of participatory action research.[1] Scholars have challenged the prevailing positivist research paradigm that required researchers to stand apart from those they research and to attempt to avoid influencing the research context (Boser, 2006; Eikeland, 2006; Blake, 2007; Reid and Brief, 2009). Such challenges rose from an acknowledgement that even observation of a research context influences that context and from a desire on the part of researchers to respond to opportunities and problems identified as part of the research. In both cases the distance between the researcher and the participant(s) was reduced (Boser, 2006, 10.; Eikeland, 2006; Hilsen, 2006). Furthermore, there was a concern to avoid some to the ethical problems that arise with the instrumental use of human subjects. Detardo-Bora (2004, 251.) explains that,

> Scientific approaches are viewed as more ethical and humane even though the participants in the study may be tested, controlled, and used with little gain to themselves. AR [Action Research] avoids this moral quagmire by creating a two-way relationship, through giving back to participants.

Such concerns led to increased attention on research methods that were more participatory and action oriented.

Fields such as nursing, education and other disciplines whose research objectives had always been closely associated with positive change in their research context were the first to adopt participatory and action oriented approaches to research (Zeni, 2001; Löfman et al., 2004). Over time, participatory action research (PAR) has become a recommended methodological approach for dealing with vulnerable populations (e.g., Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014, 109. Nelson et al., 1998). As such, PAR is an ideal research approach to use when individuals are researching their own organizations because it is aware of and provides a means of addressing ethical concerns that occur in such settings. Thus, PAR has become one of the preferred approaches to research in DMin programs (c.f., Bramer and Chapman, 2017; Sensing, 2011). However, few sources address the unique ethical challenges of PAR by exploring its unique advantages for ministry-based research such as that which takes place in DMin programs.[2]

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[1] I would like to thank Dr. Paul Bramer for the many insightful conversations that contributed to the development of this paper.

[2] Sensing (2011, 34-37.) advocates a participatory action research approach and provides some good advice on informed consent and confidentiality but primarily exports approaches to those topics that apply to research broadly.

PAR introduces ethical concerns that differ from traditional positivist research and is not always understood by Institutional Review Boards (IRB).[3] This paper describes some of the ethical issues raised by PAR in the context of DMin research, and how a PAR approach to research has a response to those issues built in.[4] It illustrates this using the example of the dual-role relationship typical in DMin research and the example of how Tyndale Seminary's Doctor of Ministry Program addresses PAR related ethical issues in its curriculum. These discussions illustrate that PAR paradigm is a good choice for assuring that DMin researchers, who attempts to change their context, conduct research in an ethical manner.

What Makes Research Ethical?

Before examining the ethics of participatory action research, specifically this section outlines the general criteria for ethical research. Different disciplines and jurisdictions have policies on ethics that pertain to the specific circumstances of their contexts. Such standards share many similarities across countries and disciplines. They share concern for free and informed consent, respect for persons, minimizing harm and maximizing benefits, etc. The broad categories can be summarized as respect for persons, concern for welfare and attention to justice (e.g., Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014, 6ff; Herr and Anderson, 2005, 114.). These principles are widely shared and applicable to most DMin programs. The following section provides a summary of the concerns of these three areas with particular attention to the ethical concerns of participant researchers.

Respect for Persons

Respect for persons refers to the need to recognize "the intrinsic value of human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014, 6.). This involves assuring that consent is free, informed and ongoing. Participants should have a full understanding of the potential risks and benefits of their involvement. They should also be able to freely choose involvement or non-involvement without coercion or fear of repercussions. In particular, they should not fear alienating those in authority over them.

Concern for Welfare

Concern for a participant's welfare requires attention to "the quality of that person's experience of life in all its aspects" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014, 7.). This would include an individual's "physical, mental and spiritual health" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014, 7.). This encompasses free and informed consent and adds the additional concerns of privacy and participant control over their own information. It also includes concern for the welfare of the entire group as this has a direct effect on individual welfare.[5] Thus, considerations of risks and benefits must consider individuals and groups. Such considerations lead the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* to advocate a participatory approach to research design: "Engagement during the design process with groups whose welfare may be affected by the research can help to clarify the potential impact of the research and indicate where any negative impact on welfare can be minimized" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014, 8.).

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[3] Known in Canada as Research Ethics Boards (REB).

[4] This paper is not a comprehensive examination of the ethical issues surrounding PAR. Specific examples were chosen to illustrate how PAR can be conducted ethically. (For more details see Banks et al., 2013; Marlowe and Tolich, 2015; Shore et al., 2014)

[5] The Canadian Research Ethics Office (CREO) adds this as a fourth core value (http://www.communityresearchethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Principles-Chart-revised-March-2015.pdf)

Attention to Justice

Justice is a reference to "the obligation to treat people fairly and equitably" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014, 8.). The objective is to ensure that "benefits and burdens of research participation" are distributed equitably throughout the research population. Equitable does not always mean equal as different segments of a population have different privileges and vulnerabilities. Particular attention should be paid to vulnerable populations. Of significance for this paper is the concern that the potential imbalance of power between the researcher and the participants is adequately understood and addressed appropriately. One of the main concerns is how the researcher will navigate dual-role relationships.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

The specific concern of this paper is the ethics of ministry-based insider researchers trying to change their own context. A key factor in making research that attempts to change one's own organization ethical is the involvement of those being researched in the process of researching themselves towards the end of the community's benefit. Such research goes by many names but is most commonly known as participatory action research (PAR).

Participatory action research (PAR) is characterized by an inductive, dynamic and evolving approach to research collection and analysis. Research goals and objectives start with general themes and directions rather than defined hypothesis. These goals and objectives are refined and developed through the course of the research process. Knowledge is understood as interpretive or even socially constructed. As such, the process of data collection requires careful attention to participant perceptions and a reflective and multifaceted approach to data analysis. Emphasis is placed on depth of understanding rather than broad representativeness. Bramer and Chapman (2017, 29.) have defined PAR for use in DMin projects as "an iterative project cycle with action, research, and reflection guided by a leader with the participation of others in the situation and consonant with the ideals of the group to effect positive individual and social change and to develop transferable and theoretical knowledge." While PAR is not required for DMin programs there is evidence that it is the research paradigm that best matches the standards set by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) (Bramer and Chapman, 2017). Furthermore, these same standards require DMin students to "make effective educational use of the candidate's ministerial context" (ATS: Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada: The Commission on Accrediting, 2012, E.3.1.2.).

Resonances with the iterative, reflective approach of qualitative research are clear in this definition but it's particular combination of characteristics highlight some distinct characteristics. First, the intentionally interventionist approach of PAR is different from traditional qualitative research. Second, the observation, planning, action, reflection cycle of PAR takes place concurrently in a sort of overlapping spiral (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, 11.). This cycle reflects an iterative and evolving understanding of research. Third, one of the ways in which PAR assures positive change is to involve those who have been considered the research subjects in the research itself (Boser, 2006, 10.). While Bramer and Chapman (2017) argue that this process is "guided by a leader" and other approaches advocate the elimination of the researcher / researched dichotomy (Boser, 2006, 12.) all approaches agree that the participants become co-researchers. The most common way of describing this relationship is that "the researcher researches with, not on, other people and does not treat the group merely as objects or sources of data" (Melrose, 2001, 162.). PAR could involve participants at all stages of the research project but at minimum should involve participant reflection on and response to research results. This response and reflection needs to be accurately represented in described research outcomes and should involve participants in the implementation of the action(s) that derive from the research. The potential outcomes from PAR are thus more

diverse that traditional academic research (Reid and Brief, 2009, 77-78.). Fourth, PAR is intentionally contextual. It is research conducted by individuals in a context in which they participate. Finally, the explicit aim of PAR is to maximize benefit to the participants through the participation of the participants in the research process (Stringer, 2007, 11.). The value of the research is not just its knowledge outcomes but also the positive change that results from the research (cf. Conde-Frazier, 2006, 325-326.).

Key ethical considerations in Participatory Action Research

Many of the ethical review standards that have been developed were first developed for the hard sciences and assume an objectivist researcher (Detardo-Bora, 2004; Brydon-Miller, 2006; Blake, 2007). The involvement of the researcher as participant and the participants as researchers complicates issues of consent, privacy and power because of the inherent role duality of these relationships. However, this blurring of the line between researcher and researched is also the factor that gives PAR tools to address these complications.[6]

Typical Ethical Issues

This section briefly describes some of the main ethics concerns that arise when using PAR and how some approaches to promoting ethical research do the opposite when applied to PAR. First, the research process in PAR may develop over time and thus research participants cannot always give informed consent at the beginning of a research project. Methods of data collection may not be known ahead of time (Detardo-Bora, 2004, 247.). Sometimes, even the researcher cannot determine the processes or outcomes of the research in advance (Boser, 2006, 12.). Thus, the best the researcher can communicate to participants is that the research process will be a negotiated and participatory process. This concern is shared with many forms of research that are iterative or evolving in their design because a rigid understanding of consent could lead to lack of respect for participants. This issue can result in complications for researchers because it is common for research ethics boards to require pre-research consent (e.g., the International Sociological Association Code of Ethics (***http://www.isa-sociology.org/about/isa_code_of_ethics.htm***).

Second, if participants are involved in the research and researchers are participants, confidentiality becomes more complicated. Even the most diligent researcher cannot eliminate their knowledge of the individuals involved in a research context in which they have participated. Furthermore, in PAR there are multiple individuals involved in the research, most of whom do not have the same level of training in research ethics as the lead researcher. Such research is often conducted in public expanding awareness of the research in ways that would be hard if not impossible for a single researcher to contain but necessary to give voice and assure justice is done for all participants (Boser, 2006, 13.).

Finally, PAR questions some of the assumptions of standard approaches to privacy– finding that restrictive privacy requirements can keep the research from providing aid to the community the research was designed to help. One of the main reasons for a community to accept research recommendations is because of the reputations of the individuals involved. Strict confidentiality requirements can lead to the lack of acceptance of research by the community it was designed to help thus negatively affecting their welfare (e.g., Reid and Brief, 2009).

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[6] This section describes several key ethical considerations that are of particular concern for researchers involved in PAR and is not intended as a review of all the ethical concerns that a researcher may encounter. Rather the focus is on ministry-based participant researchers whose objective is to change their contexts. More generalized concerns such as the relationship between PAR and philosophical ethics or research validity are important but beyond the scope of this paper (Melrose, 2001; Hilsen, 2006).

Unique Ethical Advantages

Assumptions of an objective stance on the part of the researcher cannot adequately deal with participatory forms of research and provides inadequate guidance for the participatory researcher. However, a participatory, experiential approach to research does not assure ethical research. We cannot assume that all participants in a research project have an equal voice nor does participant engagement assure that research is done well (Boser, 2006, 10, 14.). PAR needs a research process guided by a clear set of ethical guidelines that considers the location and social relations of the research context (cf. Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014; Boser, 2006).

This section argues that PAR needs to consider the core concerns of ethical research (e.g., respect, welfare, justice) but that such concerns need to be addressed in different ways for PAR than for traditional positivist research. The very nature of PAR provides it with some unique ethical advantages that respond to the requirements of ethical research. These characteristics include prolonged and sustained engagement with a context, participation in that context based on ongoing reflection, the agency of the participants in the context, the mutual social obligation that develops in collective prolonged engagement in a specific context, and reflection on the entire process. These categories are not mutually exclusive but overlap and interact by design in the PAR cycle.

Prolonged and Sustained Engagement with a Context

The requirement of PAR to develop a deep understanding of the research context is an ethical protection for participants. This requirement encourages researchers to spend time on the development and understanding of the problems and opportunities of the context before conducting any formal research or making any active changes. Such a requirement is also good ministry practice (cf. Moschella, 2008) and is encouraged by DMin programs if not already practiced. Intensive involvement in the research context provides the researcher(s) with a more complete understanding of the potential risks and benefits of the research than armchair research and encourages the involvement of more voices in the considerations of those risks and benefits.

Participation in the Context

In PAR participants can be actively involved in all levels of the research. For example, Coghlan and Brannick (2014, 10.) argue that, "the first step of the action research cycle [should be understood as a] dialogic activity in which the stakeholders of the project engage in constructing what the issues are . . ." The relationship between researcher and participant is reciprocal (Detardo-Bora, 2004, 244.). Ongoing open communication and appropriate disclosure can positively contribute to mutual respect and concern for welfare. Hilsen (2006, 27.) uses the language of covenant to emphasize the human interdependency that she argues is a core ethical foundation for PAR (cf. Herr and Anderson, 2005, 120.). This is familiar territory for DMin students and a natural fit for ministry-based research.

A covenant reduces the change of harm because participants get to decide what about them is researched and how that data is used. Such involvement encourages transparency of process and research goals and gives participants the power to decide what is disclosed about the project and where it is disclosed. In the case of a minister-researcher seeking data for publication purposes the use of these data would need to be negotiated with the participants. Likewise, participants themselves should be given control over the degree to which they are identified in any publications or presentations that result from the research (Brydon-Miller, 2006, 124.).

As participants are involved in the research, they develop skill sets that improve their ability to understand the research and care for their own interests. For example, Boser (2006,

17.) points to "broadened and strengthened networks, skills in collaboration, researcher skills, enhanced knowledge about their local environment and skills in advocating for social change (Boser, 2001)." In a ministry context, such participant development has the potential to increase inclusivity and engagement. Likewise, participants are in the best position to interpret the significance of research findings (Stringer, 2014, 54.). A common practice in PAR is to have participants review research reports to assure that they accurately represent their contribution to the research and their understanding of the outcomes. While it is anticipated that action may result during the research, if it has not the research report can be an impetus for the beginning of action or a confirmation of already started action.

Agency of Participants

Attempting research objectivity by reducing engagement does not necessarily result in safeguarding the community. Research that observes communities without engaging communities risks becoming reductionistic. Stringer (2014, 43.) argues that when people speak on behalf of minorities without consulting them effective communication becomes difficult. It prioritizes the perspective of one observer of the research context over that of the larger community. There is a need for outside observers to provide an alternative perspective to the view of organization participants. However, that does not negate the need to consider the views of community participants. In most cases, research is lacking the participant's rather than the researcher's voice. Eikeland (2006, 42.) explains that for action researchers, "The ethical question becomes transformed from 'how should we relate to them?' to 'how should we relate to each other?'" Recent community-based research, a related approach to PAR, has focused on how community involvement in community change is effective at implementing positive change (cf. Centre for Community Based Research, 2010; Flicker and Savan, 2006). This may require a different approach to obtaining consent. For example, requiring a formalized confidentiality agreement at the start of an iterative and evolving research process actually denies participants the opportunity to understand what they are agreeing to, let alone the opportunity to negotiate how their contributions become part of the research. Rather than protecting participants they are denied agency and all power over the research is placed in the hands of the researcher who alone has some idea what comes next (For an illustration of this problem see Blake, 2007, 417.). Furthermore, the formalized process disrupts the relational bond that is the main advantage of conducting research on one's own context and a key factor in effectively changing the context for productive ministry.

In response, PAR advocates that issues of confidentiality are negotiated. PAR encourages bringing the voices of everyone affected into the conversation about changes that will affect them. Therefore, it often leads naturally to a situation where the outcomes can be reported in an aggregate manner. It also lends itself to focus groups and other forms of multiple-individual data collection (Detardo-Bora, 2004, 246.) and to post-research conversations with participants to assure that their views are adequately represented and identified or not as they prefer. This collaborative approach is important as many ministries are team based and single pastor churches need to relay on full congregation participation to meet ministry goals.

Risks remain in situations where people with different levels of access to power in an organization are involved in research. Nonetheless, the participatory and negotiated nature of PAR makes it more, rather than less, ethical than traditional approaches that rely exclusively on the researcher to assure that subordinate groups are protected. Furthermore, as the explicit goal of PAR is to more equitably distribute power, attention to the equity of such relationships is an inherent part of the research process.

Mutual Social Obligation

Traditional approaches to the researcher / participant relationship separate the researcher from the participant and thus provide "no room for a pre-existing social obligation" (Blake, 2007, 145.) such as is the norm in minister / congregation relationships. Even worse, explains Blake (2007, 415.), such a construction of the research separates researchers from the general moral obligations of that social context.

For example, one of the assumptions of consent and anonymity requirements is that the data or information is owned by either the researcher or the individual rather than collectively held and used for the benefit of the community (cf. Blake, 2007, 416.). In PAR, active involvement in the research and the construction of the research narrative builds on existing social obligations, which tend to favor benefit to the community. Maximizing benefits to the community is placed into the hands of the community itself.

The consent process is an example of where shifting agency to participants makes the research more ethical. One of the main concerns of the consent process is assuring that no harm comes to participants. In PAR, the responsibility for assuring that harm is minimized shifts from the researcher to the participants. There are many ways for a researcher to respond to consent requirements but one option is for the researcher to get consent to record whatever actions the community decides upon (Brydon-Miller, 2006, 121.). Efforts to shift the responsibility back to the researcher can contribute to harm because it can slow down or stifle the positive benefits of mutual social obligation or make research among certain communities impossible and thus keeping their voices from being heard (Brydon-Miller, 2006, 123.).

Hilsen (2006, 29, 31, 32.) argues that human interdependence gives us power over each other but also comes with an "ethical demand of caring." This relationship encourages people to identify and address power relationships and to deal with potential conflict before it erupts. When conflict does erupt "The task is to manage the conflict so that all parties can describe their situations clearly, analyze the sources of conflict, and work toward a resolution that enables them to maintain positive working relationships" (Stringer, 2007, 137.). Participant researchers have an incentive to work out conflict because of established relationships and the need to work with participants post-research. PAR can have a positive effect on participant well-being by providing a forum for conversation and positive development of the organization that had not previously existed. Thus, participants can have input and a stake in ethical decisions that affect them (cf. Reid and Brief, 2009, 80.). Stringer (2014, 90.) explains, "Because participants in an action research process have much more control than is usually accorded participants in a study, they are in effect engaging in a mutual agreement about the conduct of a study."

Reflection on the Entire Process

The PAR paradigm customarily involves reflection on one's own role in the research context. Greater researcher self-understanding helps researchers to identify their own biases and expectations. Participation in a peer review process during a DMin class could further contribute to the ability of the research to be self-reflective. The ongoing, iterative, and interactive nature of PAR encourages such reflections throughout the research for both participants and researchers and allows for a mid-course correction to consider newly understood ethical concerns and to continue maximizing individual and collective benefit. As an example, if power relations make it unlikely that individuals with different levels of power could actively participate then research could be divided into sub-projects involving individuals that have similar levels of power (Example found in Boser, 2006, 18.). At the same time, if we restrict all research that involves people who are subordinate to each other

we are confined to relatively small populations and eliminate much of the evaluative research that takes place in the normal course of the operation of organizations (Detardo-Bora, 2004, 244-245.).

Summary

This section argued that PAR's attention to context, participation, agency, social obligation, and reflection reframes the standard ethical concern for respect, welfare and justice but adequately address its intentions. PAR is the preferred research paradigm for dealing with the ethical issues that arise when individuals in ministry research their own organizations because of the required attention to context, issues of power, community participation, and the agency of participants. Specifically, a participatory approach divests power from the researcher and thus minimizes the potential for dual-role conflicts and increases the likelihood that actions derived from the research will be implemented in ways that maximize benefits for those involved.

Using Participatory Action Research for Ethical Research

When the participatory, community-engaged elements of PAR are incorporated into a research project, they address many of the concerns about the role of insider researchers who are trying to change their context. To further illustrate this relationship, the remainder of this paper looks specifically at the issue of dual-role relationships in DMin research and explores the example of how Tyndale Seminary trains its DMin students to conduct PAR in an ethical manner.

Ethical Research in the Context of Dual-Role Relationships

Dual-role relationships occur when the researcher wears the dual hats of researcher and community participant. Such relationships could lead to undue influence over participants, release of results could undermine privacy, and the dual-role may influence the results (e.g., if the participants want to see their friend/colleague succeed). As the typical experience of the DMin student, it serves as a good illustration for how PAR can address ministry-based research ethics. This section identifies some of the problems of dual-role relationships, notes how they have typically been addressed, why this is a problem for PAR, and explains how PAR addresses these problems.

DMin students work in many different domains where dual-role issues come into play (e.g., pastors, therapists, spiritual directors, health care providers, teachers). This does not exclude the possibility of the research taking place but does require full disclosure of the nature of the dual-role conflict during the consent process. Safeguards such as third-party recruitment and third-party data collection are commonly recommended ways of dealing with dual-role relationships. However, this distancing of the researcher from the participants can be counter-productive to the aims of participatory research, which relies on researcher-participant trust and ongoing interaction to direct the research. First, in a small ministry setting individuals are so well known that they can be identified by demographic characteristics and / or opinions negating the benefit of third part data collection. Second, the distancing of the minister-researcher from the congregants / participants could negatively affect a relationship of trust and intimacy that has been developed to facilitate the effectiveness of the work of that ministry.

Careful design of the consent form that clearly identifies the dual-role relationship, advises of the rights to withdraw without repercussion, and provides full disclosure of the aims of the research in a neutral manner are also necessary safeguards. However, in a PAR approach the level of participation of the participant in the research is the most effective safeguard. Participant input into the direction of research, group guidance of implementation,

and group evaluation of outcomes diversifies power. While it does not remove power from the researcher it puts the main seat of power with the group. In order, to effectively divest power the researcher may need to be less involved in the dynamics of the group than they may be when serving in their ministry oriented role. PAR places such decisions in the hands of those likely to be affected by power relationships and encourages researcher reflection which helps to bring such issues to the attention of the group.

Active participant participation in the research also responds to concerns about the role of spiritual power. Researchers have long understood that leaders in religious contexts wield a certain amount of power (cf. Max Weber on Charisma, Weber, 1964). Recent literature that explores leadership in religious settings includes an emphasis on moral responsibility and expresses some concern about dangers specific to power in ministry settings (e.g., Banks et al., 2016; Gibbs, 2005; Lingenfelter, 2008; Willhauck and Thorpe, 2001). None of this literature provide a reason to believe that a PAR approach to research would be any less effective in dealing with power issues in ministry than in other settings. Indeed, some recent literature advocate a participatory approach to religious leadership (e.g., Roxburgh and Romanuk, 2006; Malphurs, 2013). Furthermore, PAR may lead to the disclosure of power relationships that would otherwise have remained unrecognized (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, 137ff.). Participatory approaches to research are often chosen specifically to address issues of injustice (Boser, 2006, 10.; Blake, 2007, 412.). PAR recognizes the expertise of participants in determining how to navigate dual-role relationships. Participants are experts in their own situation and thus possess a great deal of knowledge that is valuable when assessing the ethics of the research process.

Dual-role questions are of specific concern for participatory researchers because the approach to research requires the researcher be involved with the research context as both researcher and participant (Blake, 2007, 412.). This apparent problem is counterbalanced by the nature of PAR. This dual-role relationship is required as an acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the researcher and because the objective of the researcher is not just to provide information about a context but to positively change the context. That is, the ability to change the context requires a deep immersion in the context and the active involvement of context participants that is best facilitated by the researcher's acceptance into the community—which can only be a dual-role relationship.

The Tyndale DMin and the Ethical Review Process

This section uses Tyndale Seminary's DMin program as one example of how the ethical concerns that arise from the use of PAR can be addressed by encouraging a contextual, participatory, reflective approach to ministry and research. Tyndale's Doctor of Ministry program requires that students use some form of PAR. The objective is to provide students with an approach to research that is compatible with their ministry context, can be conducted outside of an academic context, and has the potential to be an effective, positive long-term ministry practice.

PAR is an iterative and evolving form of research. This characteristic makes a single ethical review at the beginning of the process that deals only with the mechanics of the research insufficient. Thus, the DMin program at Tyndale developed a process of ethical reflection and review that begins before students arrive at their first residency and continues through to the writing of their final document. DMin students need to adhere to the ethical requirements of the Tyndale DMin program and be involved in formal ethical review of their proposed project but also need to develop an approach to ministry consonant with the best practices of ethical research.

Contextual

PAR is personal and reflective but it is also highly contextual form of research. A DMin program requires that students are actively involved in ministry and in most cases their research should be conducted in their place of ministry and supported by their place of ministry. Thus, close attention to personal and ministry context is vital. To enter the Tyndale DMin program students must disclose their entrance into the program to their ministry and must get the ministry's explicit permission to enter the program and engage in research in their place of ministry.

PAR researchers must understand what is going on in their research context and the people that are a part of that context. Thus, at the beginning of the program Tyndale DMin students are introduced to the contextual nature of contemporary ministry. Students are given additional lectures and guidance on ethical research throughout the remainder of the program. Students write an assignment that describes their ministry and research context. They are to use documentary research, observational methods and occasional opportunistic conversations to understand their context and to develop some parameters for the conduct of their research.

Participatory

This early contextual work is type of informal preliminary observational activity prior to ethical review. It also further develops the process of full disclosure and participation that is vital to effective PAR. In the ministry context, a continuous consent process provides an additional reminder of the dual-role relationship to participants and any ongoing reference to the individual's DMin degree at the research site are additional reminders (e.g., minister is out of town for residencies, references to books read or assignments completed for the degree). Thus, consent itself becomes ongoing and processual (Herr and Anderson, 2005, 119-120.) as the DMin ministry-researcher engages in a regular dialogue with the ministry site.

Reflective

A substantial part of the effectiveness of PAR is a result of careful reflection on the research context and ongoing process of research. To be able to do this effectively individuals need to have an accurate understanding of themselves and how they respond to and interact with others. All Tyndale DMin students spend substantive time working on their personal development. In the Ministry Leadership track this work has included a *360 assessment* to aid them in understanding how they are perceived by others, a *Myers-Briggs* and a *Emotional Intelligence* test to help them understand their own personality, a *Team Dimensions* test to explore how they work with others, and an *Intercultural Development Inventory* assessment (Myers and Myers, 1990; Inscape Publishing, 1995; Hammer and Bennett, 1998; Bradberry and Greaves, 2009; Goldman, 2011). Students write major assignments which requires them to reflect critically on themselves and their contexts. Finally, students must meet with a counsellor, a spiritual director and a ministry coach at various times during the program.

PAR develops and changes with the progress of the research thus the DMin program requires formal progress reports, peer review and faculty review on at least an annual basis. A formal ethical review proposal must be submitted with the research proposal before formal data collection can begin. This ethical review must be reviewed by a committee of the student's peers, approved by the class instructor, and finally approved by the DMin office. The DMin office must approve any subsequent change to the research project. On completion of the research project the final document must contain a section describing how the research was conducted ethically and samples of the research instruments eventually used. However, part of conducting that research ethically is the discussion of positive social outcomes that can be shown to do justice to the stated opinions of research participants.

Conclusions

Participatory action research is an ideal approach to research for insider researchers because it is effective in contributing to the work of the studied organization even as its contextual, reflective and participatory nature effectively deals with the ethical concerns of such research and of research in insider contexts by people in positions of power. The concern for respect, welfare, and justice when dealing with research participants is met by PAR. The example of Tyndale Seminary's DMin program illustrates how an academic institution can structure an entire program to assure that participatory research is conducted in an ethical manner. A PAR project not only deals with the ethical issues surrounding insider research but lends itself to ongoing dialogue and reflective attention to the ethical realities of that research. This is not just good research practice but also good ministry.

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