

A Shared Journey:
Understanding the Experience of Collaborative Learning

by

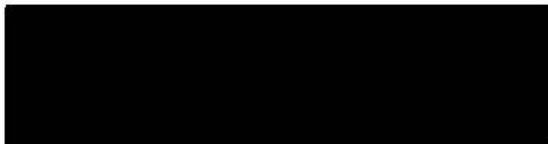
Jacqueline Conway
B.R.E., University of British Columbia, 1984

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the department of Curriculum and Instruction
Faculty of Education

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard



Dr. L.E. Devlin, Supervisor (Department of Communication and Instruction)



Dr. B.L. Hall, Departmental Member (Department of Communication and Instruction)



Dr. J.A. Parsons, Outside Member (Department of Psychology)



Dr. R. Ferguson, External Examiner (School of Child and Youth Care)

© Jacqueline Conway, 2002
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This project may not be reproduced in whole or in part,
by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

LC5225
L42C66


Supervisor: Dr. Laurence E. Devlin

ABSTRACT

This study explores a form of collaboration in learning that alleviates isolation and supports successful graduate degree completion. Collaborative inquiry was used as the research methodology. Nine women (including the author) researched their experience of collaborative learning in the Tuesday Group – a group of individuals who have completed graduate degrees at the University of Victoria. A holistic approach to data collection included: personal writing; oral stories; E-mail conversations; quotes from group members' theses; and collage artwork.

The author found themes of connection, support, and challenge in the experience of collaborative learning.

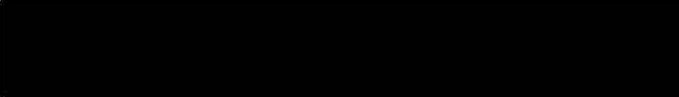
Examiners:




Dr. L.E. Devlin, Supervisor (Department of Communication and Instruction)



Dr. B.L. Hall, Departmental Member (Department of Communication and Instruction)



Dr. J.A. Parsons, Outside Member (Department of Psychology)



Dr. R. Ferguson, External Examiner (School of Child and Youth Care)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH.....	1
Situating Myself.....	1
Problem.....	2
Purpose.....	5
The Tuesday Group.....	5
Method.....	9
Definitions and Conceptual Issues.....	11
Chapter Summary.....	13
THE RESEARCH METHOD EMERGES.....	14
Being.....	15
Thinking and planning the project.....	16
Finding a Research Method.....	18
A Need to be Inclusive.....	20
Space for Diversity.....	21
Encountering and making sense of the experience.....	22
An Unstructured Process.....	23
A Holistic Approach.....	24
Sharing Leadership and Responsibility.....	27
Communicating.....	28
All are Key Informants.....	29
Member Checking.....	30
An Open Boundary.....	31
Location.....	32
Chapter Summary.....	32
THE EXPERIENCE OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING.....	33
Connection.....	35
Connection in conversation.....	35
Freeflowing.....	35
Really talking.....	38
Connection with oneself and with others.....	40
Hearing the inner voice.....	40
Composing a life.....	41
Connecting with others.....	42

Support.....	44
Caring.....	45
Equality.....	47
Community.....	49
Challenge.....	51
Diversity.....	51
Being on the Margins of the Group.....	53
Asking the Right Questions.....	55
Chapter Summary.....	56
FINAL REFLECTIONS.....	57
A Shared Journey.....	58
Personal Implications.....	59
Contributions to Theory.....	60
Suggestions.....	61
The University.....	63
Adult Education.....	64
Gender Questions.....	65
Summary.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of the Tuesday Group - the wise women who invited me to join them in this collaborative inquiry. Thank you for sharing your stories, your questioning minds, and your open hearts.

It has been an honor to work with Dr. Devlin who shared a wealth of knowledge in adult education and offered skilled guidance throughout this research journey. Dr. Parsons and Dr. Hall gave many thoughtful comments and suggestions. Thank you to Dr. Oberg for showing me how a space can be made for collaborative learning in a university classroom, Dr. Nix for her editing assistance and Ann Rosemary Conway for sharing an interest in learning circles and her creativity.

I would especially like to thank my husband Aaron and son Nicholas for supporting me in so many ways and learning with me each day.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

In 1984, I finished my formal education and went traveling in Europe with a good friend. Our conversations during that time opened an exciting new world of learning for me. Emerging from 17 years of received knowledge, memorizing the words of teachers and texts, this was a time of finding my voice. I remember vividly the surge of energy I felt sitting one day in Paris in Notre Dame Cathedral. Using a maze metaphor, my friend and I constructed a wild theory of life's journey based on our personal experiences and the books we were reading at that time. Together we were making meaning; sharing our stories and questions as equal researchers in life. We were listening and speaking, learning and teaching. I felt a creative energy (synergy) as we constructed our knowledge. This experience of collaboration in learning was empowering and exhilarating. I was "hooked".

Situating Myself

In the following 15 years, pursuing a career in recreation and adult education, I participated in traditional continuing education courses but increasingly I found myself joining informal learning groups. In these informal groups, I experienced collaboration in learning that offered multiple perspectives that extended and deepened my understanding. I have been involved for 2 years in a professional group that meets monthly to discuss selected journal articles in our field; for 5 years in a bookclub that

gathers bi-monthly to discuss a novel; and for 10 years in a social group that gathers weekly. These groups enriched my learning. Course instructors and published experts continued to inform me but I learned to leave a space for developing multiple perspectives and for participating in the construction of knowledge.

In 1999, I returned to the formal educational setting of graduate studies with many questions concerning lifelong learning and my role as an adult educator. For personal reasons, I wondered if I might experience collaborative learning in the formal context of a university graduate program but I never thought it would become the focus of my research.

Problem

Over a third of masters students and over a half of doctoral students fail to complete their degrees (Cude, 2001). This high rate of withdrawal is a source of concern not only for graduate students but also for supervisors and administrators in the academic community. Many graduate students have shared stories with me of feeling isolated and unsupported during the research and writing of their theses. Cude (2001) found that withdrawal from graduate programs often occurs after all course work is completed. This withdrawal after such a large investment of time, effort, and money has already been expended is a concern to not only the students and supervisors involved but also the community at large and to governments that fund these programs.

Searching for approaches to this problem, I discovered a promising lead in the acknowledgment section of a Masters thesis completed at the University of Victoria in

1997. "My lifeline has been in the form of the Tuesday Noon Group with the dedicated attendance of ...(lists members by name). Our weekly sessions have ranged from anchoring and validating each other's work to challenging and rocking each other's boat" (Miller, 1997). Looking further, I found that the thesis of this member of the Tuesday Noon Group, stated: "A special part of my university experience has been the Tuesday 'salon' shared with a collage of colleagues" (de Champlain, 1996). Miller and de Champlain were referring to an informal group of graduate students that met weekly during their course work, research, and afterwards. All eight core members of this group, which I call the "Tuesday Group", successfully completed their Masters graduate programs (six in the Department of Communication and Social Foundations / Adult Education, one in the School of Social Work, and one in the School of Physical Education). The group members had diverse educational and professional backgrounds, as well as sharing a common interest in adult learning. All agreed that the Tuesday Group was a special part of their graduate experience, and six mentioned the group in the acknowledgment section of their thesis.

I was curious to know more about such a successful group and how this method of learning might contribute to graduate studies. There is a growing body of research on collaborative learning at the K to 12 and undergraduate levels (Bruffee, 1993; Cranton, 1998; Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990; Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, Smith, & MacGregor, 1992; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991) but little about this method of learning at the graduate level. Educational approaches such as discussion groups (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999), learner networks (Cranton, 1998), cooperative learning groups (Johnson et al., 1991), and learning communities

(Gabelnick et al., 1990) have been studied at the undergraduate level and learning groups have a long recorded history in adult education (Rose, 1996; Selman & Dampier, 1997). However, there seemed to be a gap in the literature when I looked for research on collaborative learning in the educational context of a university graduate program.

Research has been done on the experience of graduate students (Caplan, 1994; Carlson, 1999; Cooper, 1999; Gouthro & Grace, 2000; N. Hall, 1997; Polson, 1998) and some authors recommend networking and collaboration among students (Polson, 1998; N. Hall, 1997; Caplan, 1994) but fail to state how this should occur. Some graduate programs have used cohort groupings to encourage collaboration (Lawrence, 1997; Tom, 1999), but the research on this is limited.

In addition, research literature seldom explores the lived experience of collaborative learning from the learners' perspectives (Armstrong, 2001). Hearing the stories of a group of graduate students that had a high success rate could be of value to the academic and external community. If we can gain a deeper understanding of what collaborative learning is, perhaps it will provide a foundation for further exploration into how it can be encouraged and supported. Since completion of graduate programs by students is of concern to many in the academic and external community, there are practical and professional benefits to gaining a deeper understanding of what the experience of collaborative learning is like for the members of a successful group of graduate students.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate and to describe a form of collaboration in learning that alleviates isolation and supports successful graduate degree completion. The focus of the study is to address the question, What is the experience of collaborative learning in the graduate context? This question is pursued by studying the Tuesday Group. It is hoped that the knowledge gained will contribute not only to research on graduate student success but also to the growing body of research on adult and lifelong learning.

The Tuesday Group

Before exploring what the experience of collaborative learning was like for the members of the Tuesday Group it is helpful to understand the setting. The following brief history helps to situate this group further. Parts of this story emerged during the research meetings with the Group and in the member's writing. At one of our meetings, we worked as a group to brainstorm a timeline of the group's history, and later some members searched their old datebooks to confirm the sequence of events. The following story is a composite from all these sources.

Ten years ago, four graduate students attended a lecture where they heard that approximately half of all graduate students fail to complete their degrees. They were surprised and concerned. The professor suggested that joining a group might be one way to support the completion of the degree. As these four walked away from the lecture, they discussed a plan to form a group. The shared goal of this group would be

to complete their graduate degrees - they were determined that none would join the dismal statistics of failure.

The group began meeting biweekly, but soon switched to weekly meetings when the members found this better suited their schedules. Gathering informally for lunch every Tuesday, the group had an open door to new members. Within three years the group had grown to include eight core members. Other members came and went over the years, but the meetings never grew larger than seven or eight people at a time. The members came to the group with diverse educational and professional backgrounds that included teaching, academic administration, nursing, health education, and social work. They shared a common interest in adult education and a desire to complete a graduate degree. Many members also shared committee members and classes. One of the founding members of the group was a male and a couple of other men joined the group for short periods, but the eight core members that remained with the group were all women. The members of the group all continued with their professional work during their graduate programs and many also balanced family responsibilities in their busy schedules.

The original Tuesday noon meetings took place weekly for nine years as the members completed their course work, engaged in research and the writing of their theses, and continued to share experiences afterwards. The group gathered at the Graduate Student Centre at the University of Victoria. Their location in the Centre moved through the seasons, from outside on the sunny patio to inside in the lounge or conference room. The discussion was usually informal and covered a wide variety of topics. Occasionally through the years, the group would invite a guest to come and

talk with them. These guests ranged from visiting professors who were teaching summer courses at the university to fellow graduate students who were nearing the completion of their research. When the time came for each group member to defend her thesis, meetings were planned to practice defending the thesis with the group. Most members also attended the oral defense of each member's thesis. All eight core members completed their masters degrees between the years of 1994 and 1998. One member went on to complete her doctoral degree in 1999 and one member is currently a doctoral student.

The following excerpt from a story written by a group member gave a glimpse into the lunch meetings of the group when they were graduate students:

Tuesdays at Noon

I remember racing to get there on time - always feeling pressured by a busy work morning - running late, struggling to leave work tasks behind, but wanting to be there. One or two members of the group would always be there before me - they always seemed calm - and I felt like I'd blown in from the trailing edge of a windstorm. They always graciously allowed me to bluster on about the latest work problems and challenges.

I have memories of summertime meetings and vying for an outside table on the patio. Making sure the umbrella worked, and shuffling around the small patio table to ensure that the sun-worshipers and shade-lovers found just the right spot. My black bag would be brimming with books, papers, my journal and other paraphernalia - typically I never used anything except my journal to jot down a special note or reference - but I always dragged it all along just in case.

There'd be calls of delight when yet another group member would appear around the corner to join us - but we never really knew for sure who would come. Over the munching of lunches the discussion would unfold - and soon I'd be basking in the warmth of the sun and the glow of the conversation. I'd begin to forget my work world and submerge myself in the excitement of sharing stories - academic, professional and personal - no rhyme or reason - the words and laughter would flow in their own unpredictable way.

The hardest part was leaving - I'd glance at my watch - how could the time have flown by so quickly? I didn't want to surface - we were just getting going - how could I possibly re-enter my work world now? (Claire, writing shared June 13, 2001)

Special events also occurred outside the group's regular Tuesday noon meetings. These included three writing retreats to Gabriola Island, a group presentation given in a University of Victoria graduate class, and a collage artwork night to mark the end of the millennium. Some events evolved into annual occasions, such as the Christmas lunch and walk that started in 1995 and a summer solstice party that started in 1998.

Occasionally over the years, members would come at noon and find themselves sitting alone, but the group mattered enough that they continued to meet even through these lulls. In 1999, the attendance at the Tuesday noon meetings became more sporadic. As lives changed, it became increasingly difficult to come every week. A few members joined an evening writing circle to continue their inquiries. Acknowledging their changing lives, in 2000, the Tuesday Group switched to biweekly meetings and tried to alternate noon and evening times. All agreed that they valued the opportunity for academic discussion and wanted the meetings to continue. The members discussed possible projects and a new focus for the group. Regularly scheduled meetings stopped in summer 2000 and they gathered instead at various times for potluck dinners such as in November when two members returned from a trip to India. It was at this meeting in November 2000 that my request to research the Tuesday Group was discussed and accepted. When I joined the group in

January of 2001 and we began our collaborative inquiry, the eight core members had been with the group for between seven and ten years.

Method

Collaborative inquiry as described in *Participation in Human Inquiry* (Reason, 1994a) was chosen as a method that most closely fits the topic of this study. To understand the experience of this group, it seemed appropriate to investigate it using a collaborative group process. I, as the initiating researcher, joined the group and we all participated in this inquiry as co-researchers and co-subjects. As Heron (1996) suggests, we researched this topic through our own experience of it, using a series of cycles in which we moved between this experience and reflecting together upon it.

Collaborative inquiry is a form of participatory research (Reason, 1994b; Reason & Bradbury, 2000) and has a world view that sees human beings as co-creating their reality through participation. The Center for Popular Education and Participatory Research (CPEPR) in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California Berkeley defines participatory research as:

An alternative paradigm of knowledge production, *not* simply a more participatory research method. Participatory research starts from the assumption that all people have a special understanding of the problems that affect their own communities and have the ability to take action to address them. Participatory research draws upon this expertise by including these community members in the collective analysis of concrete social realities in an effort to understand and solve common problems. Participatory research blurs the traditional distinction between "researcher" and "subjects," as all are equally engaged in the pursuit of knowledge for a common purpose. It assumes that the purpose of research is not only to gain knowledge, but also to use that knowledge to produce changes that are consistent with a vision of a more equitable society. Participatory research can be seen in its ideal manifestation as a seamless integration of what is generally thought of

separately as research, education, and action towards social transformation. (CPEPR Conference, 2002)

Bray, Lee, Smith, & York (2000) define collaborative inquiry as “a process consisting of repeated episodes of reflection and action through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of importance to them” (p.6). Rossenwasser (2000) claims it enables a small group of people to direct themselves systematically in making meaning from their own experience.

In keeping with the holistic nature of this research method, I tried to be creative and inclusive when making decisions on data sources. The Tuesday Group members and I worked with many kinds of data: personal writing brought to meetings; freewriting done at meetings; oral stories shared at the meetings; field notes taken during the meetings; reflections written after the meetings; email conversations involving a group member who now lives in Ontario; quotes from group members’ theses; and collage artwork.

In *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (1986) Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule talk about returning many times to the work of theorists and researchers. They state “Our conversation with the theorists is an important part of the story we tell” (p. 19). I find the word “conversation” resonates for me. It implies a reciprocal relationship and is congruent with the method of collaborative inquiry. Belenky et al. (1986) discuss views and findings from the literature as they intersect with their own views and findings. In a similar way, I have chosen in this thesis to weave a conversation with the literature throughout. It is part of the whole story not a separate chapter.

Understanding Some Definitions and Conceptual Issues

To conduct this research, it was necessary to sort out a number of definitional and conceptual issues. The most important concept in this research was the idea of collaborative learning. For the purpose of this study, collaborative learning was understood and utilized as a phenomenon that occurs when “learners work together to construct knowledge rather than to discover objective truths” (Cranton, 1998, p.129). This social construction of knowledge is jointly produced, “but that knowledge may then be used by individuals” (Imel, 1996, p. 92).

Collaborative learning is distinct from co-operative learning which is a more structured approach often involving an assigned task (Cranton, 1998; Saltiel, 1998). In collaborative learning, the goal is the acquisition or construction of new knowledge. Saltiel (1998) states that in collaborative learning partnerships “the relationship is as important as the knowledge being sought. It is the interaction of the collaborators who work together that becomes valued and potentates the learning” (p.7). I understand collaborative learning to involve people combining their efforts to help each other to learn (a process) and this emphasis on learning differentiates it from a task-related project (a product).

When the Tuesday group discussed collaborative learning as a possible term to name the form of learning we were studying, one member stated, “I do think we 'co-labour' together as a group when we grapple with sorting out meanings while trying to understand ourselves and each other” (Charlotte, E-mail November 20, 2001). This member pointed out the link between collaboration as co-labouring, and holding or carrying on a discussion. “Working together is a way of holding together a topic, or

carrying the topic along as it is opened up to exploration, inquiry, and understanding" (Gordon, Sheridan, & Paul, 1998, p. 157).

I understand collaborative inquiry to be an exploration of questions and multiple perspectives. The resulting construction of knowledge may or may not be shared. I understand it to be a merging during shared inquiry and an emerging with an individual construction of knowledge. As a Tuesday Group member wrote, "Merge/emerge is a wonderful way to describe a coming together, a collaboration potentially leading to an emergence of new understanding. There is a merging of the minds, then an enriched departure. Tuesday lunches were often like that for me" (Claire, writing shared May 31, 2001). Collaborative mergings along the road inform and enrich our individual journeys.

Education literature includes a number of closely related terms and ideas, often with multiple meanings. Collaborative learning is sometimes used as an "umbrella term" to describe many different educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort (Goodsell et al., 1992, p.9). Saltiel (1998) notes, "There are a great many references in the literature to various learning relationships that address aspects of collaborative learning. However, there is not a consensus regarding definitions of different concepts or terms. This contributes to a certain measure of confusion in discussion" (p.5). Smith and MacGregor (1992) attempt to reduce the confusion by identifying six major approaches and various sub-types that include: cooperative learning; problem-centered instruction; writing groups; peer teaching, discussion groups; and learning communities. A further confusion is whether collaborative learning is used to name a phenomenon or a method. It is often used interchangeably.

To make the distinction between the two in this research, I use collaborative learning to indicate the phenomenon of learning we are studying and use collaborative inquiry to indicate the method.

Chapter Summary

In this Chapter I have introduced the purpose of this research, which was to investigate and describe a form of collaboration in learning that alleviates isolation and supports successful graduate degree completion. Background information was given on myself and on the Tuesday Group. I clarified some definitions and conceptual issues and briefly introduced the research method to be used. In the next Chapter, I shall discuss more fully the method as it emerged in this research.

CHAPTER 2

THE RESEARCH METHOD EMERGES

A framework developed by Rowan (1981, 2000) to describe the standard research cycle is useful in understanding the collaborative inquiry method as it emerged in our research. Rowan outlines six phases in the research cycle:

1. **Being.** This is living our life and working in our field when a disturbance arises that could be a problem to solve or opportunity to pursue. The disturbance causes us to take action and move to the next stage.
 2. **Thinking.** This involves getting more information and clarifying the research question.
 3. **Project planning.** This is developing a plan of action to find answers to our questions.
 4. **Encountering.** This is opening ourselves to the possibility of learning through an encounter with reality
 5. **Making sense.** This is when we stand back and bring all the results together to make sense of them.
 6. **Communicating.** This is when we come up with something to communicate and we share it in some form.
- (Rowan, 2000, pp. 117-118)

I found like others have (Bray, 1995; Smith, 1995) that phases often blur into each other in collaborative inquiry. For example, the present inquiry seemed to move through four phases. The first grew from questions about our experience that members of the Tuesday Group and I had. The second phase began when we joined together to start thinking and planning the project over a period of four monthly meetings. In the third phase, the focus moved to encountering the topic we wanted to understand and making sense of it. We did this at four meetings that occurred approximately biweekly. Finally, in the fourth phase, I worked primarily alone to communicate my understanding of our research in a thesis document. During this last phase we met six more times, approximately monthly, as I shared my writing and the group members

responded. I call these four phases: being; thinking and planning the project; encountering and making sense of the experience; and communicating.

Being

I began this research with past experiences of collaborative learning and a current problem of being a graduate student facing the isolation of thesis completion. Searching for solutions, I heard about the Tuesday Group in one of my first year classes when three members mentioned the group in a presentation on research methods (class notes Ed 559, October 1999). In my second year, when the Tuesday Group was mentioned again in several masters theses I was reading (Miller, 1997; Faulds, 1997; de Champlain, 1996), my research suddenly fell into place. I realized that my questions into the two areas of collaborative learning and thesis completion might converge to become a topic for academic research. I approached Althea, one of the Tuesday Group members, and asked if she would discuss my interest in researching the group with the rest of the members.

The members of the Tuesday Group began with past experiences of graduate studies that were enriched by the group. The group members had wondered several years ago if they might communicate their experiences in some form of writing to be published, but had not done so. In the year before this research project began, the Tuesday Group meetings had become sporadic and increasingly less frequent.

Serendipitously, the group was meeting for a potluck dinner the same evening that I first approached Althea. They would be able to discuss my request immediately. I received an E-mail from Althea the following day stating: "They liked the idea

[research project] very much. We should meet with you sometime to discuss how to go about doing this” (Althea, E-mail November 25, 2000). This group did not ask me to present my plan; instead I understood we would discuss the possibilities. This felt like a collaborative approach emerging right from the very beginning.

Thinking and Planning the Project

The method used for this research project emerged collaboratively. The research method of collaborative inquiry usually has an initiator who is the researcher that extends the invitation to form a group of co-researchers and often teaches or facilitates the method of collaborative inquiry in the beginning stages (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1994a). I could be called the initiator or as some group members have called me a “catalyst” (Dee, E-mail March 10, 2001) for this research project. I brought “energy” to the group and provided “space and encouragement” to reflect (Fiona, writing shared February 15, 2001). I suggested the research project and coordinated the time for our first research meeting. However, after that, my organizational role was limited to booking the room and reminding members by E-mail what we had agreed to do for the next meeting.

The Tuesday Group members could also be called the initiators, as they extended the invitation for me to join them in what emerged as a collaborative inquiry. I had approached an already functioning group with thoughts of researching their experience through some kind of interview method. At the first meeting it was clear the members wanted to do this research as a group and not through individual conversations. The group took the research project on as their own, and it provided a

new focus for the group meetings. Accepting the invitation from the group to join them, I understood my role in this research to be more involved than a participant observer (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The members suggested I research the group through gaining personal experience of it. Many members of the group had used forms of autobiography in their thesis so this suggestion should not have surprised me.

The group members offered to do what they had done for each other in the past, and support me through the process of completing my thesis. As one member stated in our first meeting “If you want to learn about our group, be a part of it. We may share some stories but don’t expect any structure” (meeting notes January 16, 2001). After the first meeting I wrote the following poem:

The circle opens

I have heard stories of a group of graduate students
Then I see mention of this group in several completed theses I am reading
I am curious, I want to know more about this group

I arrive with carrot cake hot from the oven
I feel a need to give, to have something in my hands to offer
These are women who have traveled where I hope to go
They have formed and sustained a successful group, how did they do it?
They have each completed graduate studies, what role did the group play in this?
I have so many questions, what can I offer in return?

I thought I would be looking from the outside researching this topic
Instead they invite me to join them, and now my topic also becomes my method
Collaborative learning, a collaborative inquiry
I gingerly take my place on the rim of the circle
Wondering what does it mean to be the newest member of the group and researcher

(J. Conway, February 2001)

Finding a Research Method

I began to review the literature I had accumulated on research methodology looking for a way of working that would be appropriate for the research topic (collaborative learning), the research questions, and what I had learned already from the Tuesday Group members. Starting with a question that asks about lived experience, I knew that a qualitative research approach was definitely called for (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Looking through *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Creswell, 1998) I could not see the research fitting exactly with any of the five traditions discussed: biography; phenomenology; grounded theory; ethnography; and case study. There seemed to be no place for the collaborative and participatory aspects of the research topic and its context in these traditions.

This research project involved adults and therefore I felt it was important that the method be grounded in adult learning principles such as: developing a climate of respect; building on participant experience; and learning for action (Cranton, 1998; Foley, 2000; Knowles, 1980; Renner, 1993). Paying attention to adult learning principles led me to “the problem of speaking for others” that has been raised by feminist researchers such as Alcoff (1991) and Josselson (1996). It also led me to consider Lather’s (1986) writing on research as praxis, where she stated that for reciprocal shaping of theory and practice we must connect the research method and the topic (p. 258). I wondered what method would be congruent with the collaborative learning process that this group already used in their meetings.

Searching the proceedings from recent Adult Education Research Conferences, I discovered a few papers that described the use of a research method called collaborative or co-operative inquiry (Lawrence & Mealman, 1999; Rosenwasser, 2000; Sparks, 2000) and was instantly intrigued. Using the references listed in these papers I began reading the work done by Reason (1988,1994a, 1994b) and Heron (1996) on these research methods and learned that they were a form of participatory inquiry. They used the label “new paradigm research” and when I read research “*with* people not *on* people” I knew I was in the right place. Bray et al. (2000) defines collaborative inquiry as “a process consisting of repeated episodes of reflection and action through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of importance to them” (p 6).

At the next meeting with the Tuesday Group I talked about my discovery of the literature on participatory research and collaborative inquiry, and how these sounded similar to the process the group used. Hall (2000) suggests that participatory research processes can be the natural way of working in given community or social movements. Maguire (1987) and Treleaven (1994) point out that it is a process commonly used by groups of women. I understood that collaborative inquiry unfolds in ways specific to its context (Reason, 1994a). It was appropriate to let our methods for doing the research evolve, making decisions as a group along the way. I didn't see my role as initiator linked to the role of teacher of this research method as suggested by Bray et al. (2000). In this research project, I had joined an already functioning group. By paying attention to the processes that the group already used, the research

method evolved. We worked together as co-researchers and co-subjects. Informed by participatory, feminist, and adult learning theory, we made this research journey.

Over several meetings we discussed research questions that each member had. By the end of the planning phase we had agreed on the question: What is the experience of learning in this group? This would give everyone enough space to move in the directions that interested her. Later, during the communication phase of the research project, I suggested we revise this question to name the form of learning on which we had focused. Together, we worked to clarify a definition of collaborative learning that made clear “the emergence of individual knowledge construction that is informed by the collaborative process of conversation” (meeting notes November 19, 2001). We discussed an emphasis on “co” as a prefix that means along side. Charlotte stated later that “the group does ‘co-labour’ as we work to understand our inquiries” (E-mail November 20, 2001). The group agreed that the research question would be revised: What is the experience of collaborative learning? I discovered that changes in the research question do occur in collaborative inquiry (Bray, 1995) and that it is part of the evolving process.

A Need to be Inclusive

The Tuesday Group wanted to include a member (Dee) who had moved to Ontario. By the second meeting, one member had contacted her and extended the invitation to participate in the research project. A rich E-mail conversation occurred between the two members that they later agreed to share with the group. At the third meeting, Dee joined the collaborative inquiry by E-mail, and her voice was heard in the discussion when one member read some comments sent before the meeting (E-

mail March 7, 2001). Stretching the research method to include this member by E-mail extended and deepened our understanding in many ways. First, the E-mail conversations proved to be a rich source of written reflection. They opened a space for informal writing and a transition from the oral tradition of the group. Second, we experienced the power and potential of collaborative learning in this group when it effectively reached all the way across the country to move this member forward in her current inquiry. Finally, making the effort to include this member was inclusive and demonstrated that every member's voice was valued.

Including all voices also involved paying attention to how the research methods chosen might silence any person's voice. A safe place to speak might be an important aspect of the process we were evolving. We discussed at several meetings the possibility of making audio tape recordings of the meeting conversations to be used as data for the research. Multiple perspectives on this issue were listened to respectfully and a past taping incident in the group was discussed (meeting notes February 15, 2001). We decided that the potential insights gained would not compensate for any voice that might be silenced and the loss of a safe place to speak. Group discussions on ethical considerations for this research also focused on creating a safe place for all voices to be included.

Space for Diversity

The importance of leaving space for diversity emerged early in our discussions when I asked the group what name they would like to be called for this research project. The members used a different name for the group when they mentioned it in their thesis, and the acknowledgment sections outlined several ways the group had met

different needs for each member. Some went only as far as to name the weekly meeting day or time (Tuesday noon), others included who they were (graduate students or colleagues), and only two added a purpose (support or study). When I asked the group members again what name I should use for this research, they resisted even discussing a possible shared name. Consensus was not wanted here. They did not want the group boxed and labeled into one name or one perspective. They informed me that as a group member, whatever name I chose would be fine as it would represent my perspective only (meeting notes, March 8, 2001). I chose to call the group the Tuesday Group.

Encountering and Making Sense of the Experience

Having identified the focus, we moved to encountering the experience and to making sense of it. The two blurred together into the many cycles of action and reflection, just as was described by Smith (1995). I found an overall theme for me during this phase of the research involved working with the tension of respecting the collaborative inquiry process and thinking about the academic requirements of the university. Several researchers have commented on this tension (Hall, 1993,2000; Maguire, 1987; Treleaven, 1994). During the earlier phases of the research, I did not feel this tension as I enjoyed plunging into the process. As the journey progressed, I found myself thinking more about how this research might fit into the structure of academic requirements for my graduate degree.

An Unstructured Process

I showed up at the first meeting, after we had settled on a focus, with a planned agenda that I had put together based on our previous discussions. Later I realized that this unconscious slip into a facilitator role, after sharing leadership so easily in the planning phase, was something I needed to pay attention to. The first meeting did not follow my planned agenda. The group naturally followed the flow of the conversation in spite of my tentative attempts at structure. For the following meetings, I made myself a list of hoped-for outcomes instead of an agenda. We agreed to structure very loosely some parts of the meetings: reflecting on collage artwork; brainstorming a timeline; and creating a group poem. We left lots of open space. This group had traditionally used an informal format for their meetings. In the past they had tried various structures such as rotating leadership or the use of a talking stick to designate whose turn it was to speak. But none seemed appropriate. One member commented, “We resisted organization” and another said “We found our own way, but we are not sure what it is” (meeting notes June 13, 2001).

This research project had changed some of their processes. I heard several members mention that although their conversations seem to fly from one topic to another, they had been much more focused during our research than they usually had been (meeting notes October 22, 2001). I began to get a sense of the freeflowing nature of the conversations when one member warned me not to expect their stories “served on a plate”, in a linear progression (meeting notes, February 15, 2001).

Moving through cycles of action and reflection we circled down to the deeper layers of the experience. By the fourth meeting of this phase, I felt that I was moving

in the murky and molten core. The depth and chaos of the last meeting as we explored challenges was a rich learning experience (meeting notes June 19, 2001). Heron (1996) suggests that for collaborative inquiry to be valid, it is important to allow for the interdependence of chaos and order (p.62). I felt that the sudden surfacing for a light-hearted solstice celebration at the end of this phase brought both a relief from the intense work and a concern that we had not stayed down there long enough.

A Holistic Approach

During the planning phase of the research, we discussed the different ways we might collect data. When we began encountering and trying to make sense of our experience of collaborative learning, it was clear that a holistic approach using several kinds of data would be the most effective. This facilitated access to different ways of knowing or what Heron and Reason (2000) call an extended epistemology that includes experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowing. Heron and Reason suggest that validity is increased when these four ways of knowing are congruent, “Our knowing is grounded in our experience, expressed through our stories and images, understood through theories that make sense to us, and expressed in worthwhile action in our lives” (2000, pp. 183-184). A holistic approach using several forms of data also gave space for members to work in ways that were most effective for each individual. We were also able to use these multiple sources of data to crosscheck our understanding. Triangulation is a common research process for corroborating evidence and increasing validity (Creswell, 1998, p.202).

A Tuesday Group member raised another validity issue, “I think there’s a danger of glazing the surface if we navel gaze and just try to remember. We might not

look at how the group challenged us as well as supported us. We might gloss over the parts that are uncomfortable” (Fiona, writing shared, February 15, 2001). To address this the group agreed that reading our writing to each other and collectively reflecting on it might give us a deeper understanding of the experience. Heron (1996) wrote that cycles of action and reflection are important for research validity.

There was not as much writing shared from the group members as I had hoped for. The inclusion of other forms of data such as collage artwork, poems, freewriting, meeting notes, and E-mails proved to be an important aspect for ensuring all the group members’ voices were heard in some way. This generated more than enough data when it came time to sort mechanically through it all, clarifying themes that had emerged. My assumption that members would be comfortable expressing their thoughts in writing due to their demonstrated experience writing a thesis was incorrect. Near the end of the project, Althea commented on this difficulty. “The struggle is about not having enough time but it’s also about a few other more personal things, such as not feeling like writing; or feeling that the writing is not good enough; or that I don’t have anything that is not boring to contribute”(E-mail December 2, 2001). All members participated in the oral conversations at the meetings; none of the doubts that seem to arise in writing silenced them in the group conversations. Oral conversation was the preferred method of communication and expression for many group members. In hindsight, I realized that this should not have been a surprise, as maybe they chose to be in the group for just this reason.

A few members consistently wrote thoughtful reflections to read and share with the group. Other members shared their freewriting done at the meetings or shared

their thoughts in written E-mails to the group member in Ontario. These turned out to be a rich source of written reflection. Dee comments, "I conversed more deeply through the E-mail writing than I ever felt I did in person. Through the writing I had more room and time to converse" (E-mail December 18, 2001). I believe the E-mail conversations were a form of writing that came closest to the oral tradition used by this group. All members contributed to the conversations at the meetings with thoughtful reflections and insightful questioning. They also told stories about their experiences. The oral stories shared at the meetings were woven into my own and each group member's emerging understanding of the experience of collaborative learning. Quotes from the meeting notes were used to include the oral voices in this thesis. My intention was not to speak for others. On the contrary, it was to include the voices of the group members to show how their ideas informed my understanding of this experience.

In summary, the forms of data that we collected and found to be a rich source of information for this research included:

1. Writing shared. This was the personal writing (reflections, stories, and poems) that members brought to the group meetings to read.
2. E-mails. This was the written conversation that occurred between meetings in order to include the group member who had moved to Ontario.
3. Freewriting. This was a timed 10 minute writing practice that involved keeping our pens moving and letting the thoughts and words flow freely onto the page. We did this at the end of meetings during the 'encountering and making sense' phase of the research.
4. Meeting notes. Group members took occasional notes during meetings. My notes were more extensive and were most likely motivated by the academic requirements of the thesis. At times I felt distanced from participating in the conversation as I concentrated on writing notes.

5. Oral stories. This was the most common way of sharing experiences during the group meetings.
6. Collage artwork. Each member made a collage in January 2000 and reflected on it during this research.
7. Timeline. A large piece of flipchart paper was used to record a history of the group as members brainstormed a list of past events. The visual image of the time line was a useful way for all to see and check if we had got it right. This process sparked many stories as members worked together to remember the sequence of events.
8. Group poem. Each member contributed a line and a word randomly to create a shared poem about the space created by this group.

Shared Leadership and Responsibility

When we began planning this research, I made a conscious effort to share the leadership role. I felt that the group members sat back the first couple of meetings waiting to see what I might do before the group's natural process of sharing leadership began re-emerging. I felt we were truly working as co-researchers when, after the second meeting, one member E-mailed a summary to everyone outlining what the group had planned to think about for the next meeting. Three other members set up group E-mail lists to share copies of the personal writing that they also brought to the meeting to read.

In the next phase of our research, I noticed that I moved away in several small ways from the shared leadership I was committed to. These included: making a meeting agenda (it was not followed); suggesting freewriting stems and writing topics (they were not used by a few members); and accepting the role of organizer which allowed me to influence our focus when I E-mailed the group reminders of meeting time and what we had planned to do. I was aware of constantly working with the

tension of respecting the process of this research method and thinking about the thesis I would be required to produce to meet the university academic requirements. Reason (1994a) comments that in collaborative inquiry the initiating researcher often takes a leadership role in the beginning phases and then gradually withdraws to equal sharing as co-researchers have learned the process. My experience was different.

Communicating

The Tuesday Group gathered monthly through the fall as I worked on communicating in writing my understanding of our collaborative inquiry and the experience of collaborative learning. I reviewed all the data we had gathered and continued to make sense of it as themes emerged. I read and re-read the data, interpreting then reflecting on my thoughts. I also began to review the wide range of relevant literature I had read over the last two years searching for connections to deepen my understanding. The writing of a document to meet the academic requirements for a graduate degree is a problematic step in collaborative inquiry (Bray, 1995; Heron, 1996; Maguire, 1986). A more congruent method would be a shared document written by all the members of the group. The Tuesday Group members had expressed an interest in publishing a shared document in the future, but currently no movement is taking place. The communication phase is often not emphasized in collaborative inquiries (Heron, 1996).

During this phase, my thesis was the only written communication being produced. The monthly meetings became a place to share my writing with the group, checking descriptions and interpretations with them, and revising as needed. This was

a movement away from the collaborative inquiry method. I became the only researcher writing the thesis and the Tuesday Group members participated as what more traditional qualitative research calls key informants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The partial collaborative inquiry that continued was similar to member checking, a verification method used in more traditional qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). As a result of this movement away from the collaborative inquiry method during the last phase of the research, the group members decided that a better name for their role in the entire research project would be “co-searchers” as we had fully shared the search and not the re-search (meeting notes, October 29, 2001). Although still fully committed to the completion of the research project and participating in meetings, the group began to shift its focus. The invitation for a new member to join the group in October marked this new phase of the research. The group continued its collaborative learning, even as I worked to meet the academic requirements of individual scholarship.

Key Informants

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that in qualitative research, key informants are a good resource for trying out ideas during preliminary analysis. They define a key informant as a participant who is “unusually perceptive and articulate” (p.163). All members of the Tuesday Group fitted this definition. They all participated as key informants during the data analysis that occurred in the communication phase. I re-read all the data that we had collected and began to develop a coding system by making a list of themes that emerged in the data. Using the mechanical sorting method described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), I went through all the data a third time using

a variation of a cut-up-and-put-in-folders approach (p.186). This involved coding pieces of data and copying them into labeled computer folders as a way to begin organizing and searching for patterns. This systematic analysis of the data helped to clarify and deepen the understandings that I had been forming in the group discussions. I then shared this list of themes and my preliminary interpretations with the group members by E-mail and at a group meeting. The group members, as key informants, offered perceptive insights. I then continued analysis and found the themes were clustering into three categories. This further interpretation of data was also E-mailed to the group members, and then discussed at a group meeting.

Member Checking

Creswell (1998) suggests that member checking is a verification method used in most qualitative studies. It involves taking rough drafts back to the participants so that they can judge the “accuracy and credibility” of the account (p.203). The process of member checking that evolved in our research began with my reading writing to the group and then including any revisions needed before E-mailing a copy out to all for further thoughts and reflections. As whole chapters of the thesis started to emerge in rough draft form, it became too time consuming to read it in the meetings. I then began to E-mail the rough draft to all group members before our meetings so that they would have a chance to read it, and our meetings could then focus on discussion. Group members brought copies of the draft to the meeting and had marked sections to discuss (meeting notes, October 29, 2001). This process worked well. The discussion flowed freely as members brought their thoughts and responded with further reflections. After the meeting I again E-mailed out any revisions.

An Open Boundary

This research used an open boundary method as described by Heron and Reason (2000) that included “interaction between the researchers and others in the wider world” during reflection (p.182). In the last phase of the research the boundary opened further to include a new member that joined the group in October 2001 and attended two of the meetings. This member offered new perspectives. Sharing drafts of the thesis with my graduate supervisor and committee members further opened the boundary of this research and their comments and reflections also deepened my understanding.

Location

All meetings during the research were held evenings in the conference room of the University Graduate Student Centre. Meetings usually included the sharing of food and had an average length of 2 ½ hours. This physical context was close to the group’s past meetings that included the same location and shared food. The evening time and a longer duration were changes from the lunch hour meetings the group had in the past. A focus on the collaborative inquiry project changed some of the traditional process used by this group, but we tried to minimize this by allowing the research method to emerge in ways that were congruent with the process used in the past.

Group members had read their writing occasionally to each other in the past. This writing now had a shared focus rather than their individual research inquiries and occurred more frequently. Extending the oral conversation into written E-mails to

include the member who had moved to Ontario was also new for the group. The addition of this writing was agreed upon, in the hope that it would take us to a deeper understanding in a way that was still congruent with past group process. A suggestion to audiotape record meeting conversations was rejected. It was felt the potential “silencing” effect of this device would alter the context of the phenomenon too drastically.

Attendance at the meetings was high throughout the research project. On the rare occasion when a member could not come to a meeting, apologies were usually sent by E-mail to the whole group in advance of the missed meeting. The Ontario member made rich contributions to the conversation through E-mail, often writing a note a few days before the meeting and responding with reflections and thoughts between meetings.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the methodology of collaborative inquiry and how it was used in this research. I have shared something of the richness and complexity of the process that was used in the interactions with the Tuesday Group members. I have outlined the various sources of data and evidence that was used to prepare the themes described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE EXPERIENCE OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

We are Writers in the Raw

How many places can you speak from deep inside yourself?
How many places can you be vulnerable – expose your not knowing?

Come into our circle
where we spin the yarns
of our lives, of women's lives.

Weaving our day to day life
into our talk about research.
Re-searching our lives
Pulling threads of connection
between one another's tales.
Patterns emerge
A tapestry
of vulnerability
A struggle to be free

Melodic creative voices
singing words
A deep harmonious sound echoes
as we weave our words, weave our worlds
We sing the same song each in her own voice

de Champlain, 1998
(from unpublished Tuesday Group presentation handout)

My research journey was guided by the question: What is the experience of collaborative learning? The following three major themes emerged from the data and our reflections: Connection; Support; and Challenge. Threads from each theme spin out and interconnect with threads from the other two to form a complex evolving whole that is like a web. My understanding is grounded in the shared searching, shared

wisdom, and shared weaving of words by the group members as we made this research journey together.

As the co-searchers in the inquiry shared their experiences, many threads and patterns emerged and we worked to deepen and extend our understanding. In the group meetings, a member would read her writing or share a story and another member might pick up on a theme that was embedded in the writing or story. That member would follow the theme, often making connections with a story of how they had experienced it in a different way. Sometimes themes emerged in the conversation that linked in unexpected ways. An example of this occurred when Claire read a story about the lunch meetings. She mentioned the rare occasion when a professor would join them and she would scribble notes “to capture the words of wisdom tossed like birdseed to the patio sparrows” (writing shared June 13, 2001). The meeting conversation picked up on the theme of the university professor holding the knowledge and explored an opposite theme of how there was equal valuing of all knowledge in the group when outside authority was not there (meeting notes June 13, 2001).

The organization and articulation of three major themes in this thesis is my personal understanding of our research and is not intended to represent a group consensus. Each group member weaves her own web of understanding incorporating the many threads shared in the collaborative inquiry in her own unique way. This is a shared journey that continued to be enriched by individual perspectives. As one member stated, “We have never collaborated as a group on a single project. Our collaborative merging along the road has informed and enriched our individual

journeys” (Claire, writing shared May 31, 2001). The journey continued as I shared first and second drafts of my writing with the group and was informed and carefully considered their suggestions. This written document is my emerging understanding after the merging of our collaborative inquiry.

Talking about an article “Merge/Emerge” (Russell, Plotkin & Bell, 1998) Claire stated, “Merge/emerge is a wonderful way to describe a coming together, a collaboration potentially leading to an emergence of new understanding. There is a merging of minds, then an enriched departure. Tuesday lunches were often like that for me” (writing shared May31, 2001). This resonates with my own feeling of an enriched departure after inquiring collaboratively with the group members.

Connection

To connect in an unfamiliar way. Not a bunch of women simply socializing, although we do that; not a group of academics working out intellectual problems, although we do that; not coming together on the basis of friendship although those have developed; not students or teachers to each other by designated role although we expected teaching and learning to happen; not having leaders or followers although we are these; not having a common area of interest although there is an amazing underlying similarity in all our works. (Althea, personal communication June 17, 1997)

The theme of connection has two strands. First, connection is experienced in conversation that is freeflowing and involves what Belenky et al. (1986) called “real talk.” Second, connection is experienced within and with others.

Connection in Conversation

Freeflowing. Collaborative learning is experienced as a conversation that is freeflowing. It flies from one topic to the next, following a thread, connecting to what

was mentioned before and often going off in unexpected directions. Ideas are strung together as different perspectives and experiences are offered. In an E-mail to the group after one meeting, I commented on our discussion, "It was an amazing example of how thoughts and ideas come flying out. All linked together in some way, often going off in wild directions and then spiraling back to give new insight" (E-mail June 1, 2001). Dee commented on the freeflowing nature of the conversation in a series of email exchanges, "It was such a wonderful roll of ideas, flowing from one to the other and falling into places that launched yet more thoughts shared, exploring and further writing, further delving and bringing forth.... on a personal and personally meaningful level.... maybe this is a part of what is important about our connections in the group" (E-mail March 7, 2001). Even seemingly random topics would connect and flow into exciting new territory. Althea stated, "I experience how random ideas spark creativity and understanding as suggested by Bateson and Whitehead. The talk in our group rarely stays on one topic for long. It was not the depth that taught me here, it was the putting together of ideas in random ways" (personal communication June 17, 1997).

In *Writing Down the Bones*, Natalie Goldberg (1986) advocates a form of writing practice that occurs in a set unit of time. In this writing practice, sometimes called freewriting, I find many similarities to the process that occurred collectively in the freeflowing conversations of the group. Goldberg gives guidelines for the writing practice summarized as: (a) keep your hand moving; (b) don't cross out; (c) don't worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar; (d) lose control; (e) stay present with whatever comes up; (f) go for the jugular (p. 8). In the Tuesday Group the conversation also kept moving, flowing naturally from one topic to another. Half-

formed thoughts were shared and received without judgment. There was no structured agenda controlling the direction of the conversational flow. The conversation was often outside the margins and all over the page. Like freewriting, the conversation resisted becoming obsessed with finding the answer, or pinning things down to consensus. The conversation moved beneath the surface and often explored deeper layers of meaning. I found this kind of conversation vitalizing. Goldberg's metaphor of a wild forest fits, "Its our wild forest where we gather energy before going to prune our garden, write our fine books or novels" (1986, p. 13). Freeflowing conversations are a way of going to unexpected places. Goldberg suggests freewriting is a way to help you "penetrate your life and become sane" (p.3).

The Tuesday Group worked with the tension of "wanting no rules and wanting focus to go deeper" (meeting notes June 13, 2001). A few members liked some structure, as expressed to me in an E-mail after I had outlined what the group members had agreed to do for the next meeting; "I do like having a plan" (Claire, E-mail June 18, 2001). A few members liked little structure at all, as stated by this member when I suggested an opening stem for our freewriting, "I don't want a stem...my rebellious nature. I'm more interested in the bloom" (Helen, Freewriting May 31, 2001).

Open to new ideas, the group had occasionally tried more structured processes such as a talking circle or discussion of an assigned article. The need for a less structured space prevailed and the group remained freeflowing most of the time (meeting notes June 13, 2001). "No predictability...you never know what the conversation will unearth and this is what I love" (Fiona, Freewriting June 13, 2001).

Brookfield and Preskill conclude in their book titled *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* (1999) that discussion involves “sheer unpredictability” and “open-endedness”. They believe that “The sense of multiple and infinite possibilities waiting in the future is the joyful essence of teaching and learning through discussion” (p.228). Even a member who is more comfortable with some structure acknowledges and values the creative potential of a less structured space. One member commented, “This space is bursting with possibilities” (Claire, Freewriting May 31, 2001).

Really talking. In *Women's Ways of Knowing* Belenky et al. (1986) found connected knowers valued a conversation they called “really talking”, rather than didactic talk in which the speaker’s intention is to hold forth rather than to share ideas. Really talking requires careful listening; “It implies a mutually shared agreement that together you are creating the optimum setting so that half-baked or emergent ideas can grow” (p. 144).

Real talk is what I experienced in the Tuesday Group meetings. One member talked about how being assessed for marks in the classroom silenced her unformed thoughts on academic theories (Fiona, writing shared June 19, 2001). In the group, Charlotte found “absolutions from self blaming and sins of not knowing” (writing shared May 31, 2001). In real talk, understanding occurs by trying to embrace new ideas, looking for what is right, working to believe, and building rapport. It is different from a conversation where understanding is gained by taking an adversarial stance to new ideas, looking for what is wrong, doubting and testing for weakness (Clinchy, 1996, p. 206). One Tuesday Group member reflected in her thesis:

In argument there is a resistance to listening; there is confrontation, no openness. With my women friends there is a gentle listening and discussion. It is a giving, a taking; we confront ideas, but never in an attack of the person. Our conversations are rich and deep and exploratory. We are always tentative and open and wondering and testing ideas rather than advocating a final edict. Argument is more a patriarchal method. It is a holding of power and maintaining that position. I am not so much interested in the answer, as I am in answers, in possibilities. I want to unearth multiple truths rather than THE truth. (de Champlain, 1996, p. 49)

Tarule (1996) describes this form of conversation as “one that relies on relationships as one enters meaningful conversations that connect one’s ideas with other’s and establishes rapport” (p.277). At a conference on transformational learning, ideal conditions for conversation were discussed (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow emphasized the importance of empathic listening and Belenky contributed that a skill of connected knowing is “deep listening”. Both agreed that by receiving the other through this listening, we give them space to find their voice and understand through connection to their experience (p. 336). A Tuesday Group member commented in her thesis, “I’m thinking about how comfortable I am with the women in my group, how willing they are to go backwards and forward, how their faces invite me to be involved with them.” (Faulds, 1997, p. 16).

Brookfield (1999) and Bruffee (1993) both talk about conversation as a collaborative effort to find meaning in and make sense of, our experience. Charlotte discusses some of the many different experiences the Tuesday Group members explored in their conversations:

We talked about things that happened in and out of classes and how we were coping with them. We talked about professors, supervisors, committee members and family members and how we were doing in relating to each of them. We talked about assignments and workloads, conferences and cooking. (Writing shared February 15, 2001)

Connection with Oneself and With Others

Collaborative learning is grounded in personal experience (Bruffee, 1993). At a Tuesday Group meeting Helen stated “Daily experiences are the source of my knowledge” (meeting notes March 8, 2001). The Tuesday Group included a place for the personal as Fiona suggested. “In university the personal is devalued. Here, the personal is political.” She goes on to write about how the university classes silenced these stories as too personal, and how the personal stories shared in this group connected strongly with the work they were doing professionally and in their research (writing shared June 19, 2001). Belenky et al. (1986) found that women identified as using constructed knowing were able to connect to themselves and hear the inner voice, as well as connect with others, as a result integrating all the voices.

Hearing the inner voice. Sometimes the collaborative process encouraged a connection within, as the members learned to give voice to their personal experience or intuition. Belenky et al. (1986) used the term subjective knowing to describe a kind of knowing that is connected to the self. Dee described the Tuesday Group as “A safe harbor in which to explore, discover, and draw upon my inner wisdom, exercise different ways of thinking and acting that arise from within” (E-mail February 25, 2001). Flannery (2000) expands on this connection with oneself to include one’s body, one’s experiences, and one’s feelings. Another Tuesday Group member writes about roadblocks and feeling “stuck” in her research. “All of a sudden I begin to recognize the knot, the pain within my body. How I wish to untie this knot which at times seems very large. In talking with one member of our graduate study group, the light slowly

begins to dawn” (Hermanson, 1996, p. 35). She realizes she has been searching for answers outside herself at a time when she truly believes this particular answer is hidden within her.

Doll (2002) draws on Gadamer’s thoughts on “true conversation” to include listening to ourselves as well as others. He states “our task is not only to speak well but also to listen well. We need to hear back, recursively, both our own words and those of others” (p. 51). “What I am learning through this is that I really need to hear what I am saying cause I am speaking from a place of knowing, but that knowing hasn’t quite got through to my deeper realization and maybe even acceptance” (Dee, E-mail May 22, 2001).

Composing a life. The collage artwork the group members each created and later reflected on, proved to be an excellent visual metaphor for this strand of connection. The many diverse images were pieced together and connected to compose a meaningful whole. Bateson in a book called *Composing a Life* (1990) suggests that in our current rapidly changing society, many are engaged in an improvisational art form as we “discover the shape of our creation along the way”(p. 1). Using the metaphor of a crazy quilt, which I find similar to the collage one we explored, she talks about trimming, shaping, and arranging the various pieces so they fit together. Bateson states, “Composing a life involves an openness to possibilities and the capacity to put them together in a way that is structurally sound” (p.63).

In the Tuesday Group, the collaborative process generated possibilities and a place to explore the structures. Members contributed to and learned from each other’s evolving life compositions, often noticing and suggesting connections within another

member's inquiry (meeting notes June 19, 2001). In this process, every picture in each person's complex collage is honored and valued, as Charlotte notes, "bringing our whole selves into the group that has been one of the key factors, I think. We don't have to leave a large chunk of self at home! This group handles most all chunks - including differences" (E-mail June 5, 2001). When talking about fitting into their own lives the new identity of graduate student, she suggests that change requires new meaning and new selves, "This group was accepting my new selves and that allowed me to accept my new selves a little more too" (Charlotte, writing shared February 15, 2001).

Connecting with others. There is a growing body of literature that emphasizes how women learn through interactions and relationships (Flannery, 2000). The best known is the procedure of connected knowing as developed by Belenky et al. (1986) and further explored by Clinchy (1996). They suggest that connected knowing assumes that knowledge comes from personal experience and therefore the only way to understand another person's ideas is to try to share her experience through empathy. Connected knowers are interested in the meaning of experience. In contrast, separate knowing assumes that knowledge comes from critical reasoning and therefore feelings and personal beliefs are rigorously excluded. Separate knowers are interested in questions concerning the validity of knowledge. Although women more often than men practice connected knowing, Clinchy (1996, p.226) states clearly that "the difference is not rooted in gender but in epistemology [which although related to gender is not synonymous with it]". She goes on to add that although these two ways of knowing are discussed in dualistic terms, it is not her intention to suggest that they

are mutually exclusive and in reality they can and do co-exist within the same individual.

The connection to others in the Tuesday Group was experienced as a process to deepen understanding of themselves as well as others. Dee described it as a collective process, “We would practice being with our subjective experience and understandings, giving voice to that, expanding our perspectives and gaining new insights” (E-mail May 14, 2001). She goes on to highlight a sense of connection, “I feel that I can risk just putting this writing out to you - just simply letting it be. I already feel a tingle of energy from doing so - maybe the excitement of a little risk - but also a sense of re-connection, with you and even with my self - with myself because I am doing something that was [and evidently still is] very important to me” (Dee, E-mail May 14, 2001).

Connecting with others who could share their academic experiences was also important for the group members as stated by Claire, “Nowhere else in my web of friends, family and colleagues could I safely express the ideas/struggles/new concepts I was learning. The Tuesday Group provided an understanding, receptive learning space to share and question academic experiences”(writing shared May 31, 2001). “I was never able to share the ‘earth-shaking’ experiences I had as a grad student in the same way with friends and family as I could with our group. I suppose that is a central bond among us - we all went through so much which is likely only understood and valued by those experiencing similar transitions” (Claire, E-mail March 4, 2001). Connecting with academic theories also occurred as members tried to fit intellectual concepts into their real lives and “worked to find their voice within the academy”

(Althea, E-mail December 2, 2001). I noticed the weaving of academic theory with different experiences shared by group members often during meetings (meeting notes, May 31, 2001). Dee stated, "I do believe that amongst all of you there will be much understanding - an appreciation of my dilemma from a personal and theoretical perspective. 'The personal is political' - yes, I'd sure say that again" (E-mail May 14, 2001).

They connected and learned from the other members' experiences as voiced in this comment, "thank you for being so open about your journey...you have made me reflect on some aspects of mine that could use a little attention" (Gieslaine, E-mail May 14, 2001). Sometimes the Tuesday Group members found connections that resonated with each others inquiry, as Gieslaine mentioned a phrase that articulated her own experience, "This phrase remains with me because it was exactly the way I had put similar thoughts together in my mind" (E-mail June 19, 2001).

Support

Before long she unexpectedly met some others -- on their own journeys along connecting paths. They agreed to travel together -- at least for awhile. She felt strengthened by the group, and she knew that their companionship would make the adventure more meaningful. (Excerpt from a story titled "An Uncertain Women" in Donaldson, 1998, p. 50)

I find that our study group is a very important support and resource. Within this group there is listening, caring, and respect. Each member always has the time to listen, to share, to clarify and to encourage through hearing or asking just the right questions. (Hermanson, 1996, p. 35)

I found three strands in the theme of Support: caring, equality, and community.

Caring

Gilligan (1977) in her research on moral development in women identified an ethic of care that I found very present in the Tuesday Group. Support experienced is firmly grounded in caring or as one member stated, “it all cooks down to caring” (Charlotte, writing shared February 15, 2001). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) suggested that dialogue couldn’t exist without a caring that he described as humility and profound love for the world and men. He also states that “self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue” (p.151). During our research the group member who had moved to Ontario was involved in a professional challenge that she brought to the group and allowed herself to be vulnerable instead of struggling on alone. The resulting surge of caring that managed to reach all the way across the country by E-mail was a demonstration of the strength of this support (Dee, E-mail May 22, 2001). Other members commented on the caring present in the group: “my panic subsided each time we gathered” (Charlotte, writing shared February 15, 2001) and “they always seemed calm and I felt like I’d blown in from the trailing edge of a windstorm” (Claire, writing shared June 13, 2001).

I experienced the caring of group members surrounding me even at the very first meeting I attended when our relationships were just forming. I found a circle of unfamiliar faces that welcomed me with eyes sparkling with interest and expressions that reflected empathy for the ups and downs of the story I shared (meeting notes January 16, 2001). “Being received” (Noddings, 1981) in this way I felt myself opening like a flower in the sun. Later on when the wild wind of the group stirred

things up and challenged me I still felt the strong foundation of their caring supporting me at the same time.

Noddings (1981) talks about caring as “feeling with” the other. She makes it clear that this is not a projection into the other but instead a receiving of the other. This receiving was not a melting in. A Tuesday Group member talked about an empathy that includes difference and described it as “Finding the point of connection that can be understood without denying the difference” (Althea, E-mail December 2, 2001). Clinchy (1996) reminds us that this empathy includes a cognitive and emotional aspect, to understand “one must ‘imagine other’, put one’s self into the head and heart, as well as the shoes of the other” (p.225). Belenkey et al. (1986) states that individuals must stretch their own vision in order to share the vision of another. “Through mutual stretching and sharing, the group achieves a vision far richer than any individual could achieve alone” (p.119). This Tuesday Group member talked about a willingness to stretch out, “There is creativity, awareness, an understanding and a willingness to share and stretch out to the other, to sense and understand from the other person’s perspective. These are the qualities which I believe are also necessary for reflection” (Hermanson, 1996, p. 36).

The caring experienced in this group gave members support for times of change, transformation, and being on the margins of traditional research (meeting notes June 19, 2001). Claire stated, “I think it is fair to say that I wouldn’t have had the confidence to write an autobiographical narrative thesis or the courage to engage in critical self-reflection without our learning community. My graduate school

experience was far richer, far deeper, because of my involvement with the Tuesday Group” (writing shared May 31, 2001).

Equality

Forming a circle, all members of the Tuesday Group sat facing each other as equals. They shared leadership and responsibility; giving and receiving; as well as teaching and learning in a careful balance. Members supported each other through a “power- with instead of power-over”, and this created the context for “power-from-within” (Fiona, writing shared June 19, 2001; Starhawk, 1982). Gieslaine suggested a great strength of the group was that “Needs were never dependent on the response, insights, support, incentives of only one person. The support team was eclectic and diversified. Sometimes one of us would be really bubbling and someone else would be barely holding on. But with such a diversified mix, we would seldom come away from a contact bereft of any stimulus, insight, or query” (E-mail May 15, 2001).

A balance occurred between giving and receiving in many ways that was a vital part of equality in the group (meeting notes, April 3, 2001). Giving and receiving also included sharing of resources. At the meetings, academic articles and books were constantly being exchanged and recommended. Members shared their unique gifts (Dee, E-mail March 10, 2001). Gieslaine commented on the variety of knowledge shared, which included plant lore, artistic creativity, feminist issues, and the protection of the earth’s natural resources (E-mail May 31, 2001).

Learning together as equals involved all teaching as well. Like Freire’s (1970) partner-teachers or Belenky et al. (1986) midwife-teachers, the group members assisted in the emergence of consciousness. First, they were concerned with

preserving the fragile newborn thoughts and second, supported the growth of those thoughts (Belenky et al., 1986, p.218). One Tuesday Group member described it as 'being there' and supporting when a fellow member moved from silence to voice, "to witness her beginnings to speak up about her exploration, her confusions and her insights.... it was so neat to be there with her and to support her in this process. I gained an appreciation and understanding of her way and learned a little more about myself in the process" (Dee, E-mail March 10, 2001).

Respect and trust were essential for an equal sharing of ideas (Saltiel, Sgroi & Brockett, 1998). When writing about the space created by the Tuesday Group Claire called it "A respectful place where no thought or idea will be ridiculed or dismissed" (Freewriting May 31, 2001). Group members trusted that there would be no judgments or put-downs (meeting notes June 13, 2001). "We respected each others learning space and experience - challenged and supported - but always respected - and learned more from that too" (Dee, E-mail March 10, 2001). I noticed that respect and trust did go hand-in-hand (Armstrong, 2001), each building upon the other. In the following comment by a group member, I saw that respect and trust are also dynamically connected to a growing respect and trust within. "Through my feeling that I could open up to all of you - that I could be with my vulnerability - the tap began to flow which helped me connect with me - which opened up possibilities for understanding. Through writing to you I felt safe in my being - and to be able then to speak my truth - and I began to learn from that" (Dee, E-mail May 22, 2001).

Community

Community was experienced as being supported. Group members felt that no one could vanish, as some graduate students seemed to do, slipping away and giving up without a word to anyone (meeting notes, October 22, 2001). Gieslaine remembered during a part of her research “There were long periods of time when I worked a lot in isolation though the group never abandoned me and would call if I had been away too long” (E-mail May 15). There is a “sense of belonging” (Fiona, writing shared June 19, 2001) and a weaving together of lives that Gieslaine called “holding the dream” (E-mail June 19, 2001). This group did hold the dream of each member as they moved along a twisting turning path towards it (meeting notes May 31, 2001).

For over ten years, members have supported each other through an ongoing commitment to being part of the group. The remarkable period of time the group has stayed together demonstrates the strength of the community they formed. “Classes disband at end of term, no continuity of people you might like to work more with” (Fiona, writing shared June 19, 2001). Bruffee (1993) agrees that the short length of academic semesters do not give students a lot of time to get to know and build the trust needed for collaborative learning. A Tuesday Group member noted that “As the years go by, you know each other more, deeper and deeper layers” (meeting notes June 19, 2001). Friendships grew from this commitment over the years and the member who moved to Ontario comments on this, “I think I am missing this deep-rooted feeling and need much more than I had suspected. Kinda funny when I am now in such close

proximity to family...but it is the meaningful friendships developed from sharing from within that ground me” (Dee, E-mail February 25, 2001).

This kind of commitment requires effort, “Forming a community, especially one where there is total choice about belonging, takes determination and commitment” (Althea, personal communication June 17, 1997). I felt the support of this amazing commitment over a whole year of high attendance at the research meetings. I noticed several members gave the meetings a high priority in already very busy lives (meeting notes March 8 and April 3, 2001). Reflecting on the lunch hour meetings in the past a member stated, “The struggle to get to the meetings was worth it - there were many days that I thought I should just skip it, but something drew me there, week after week - I think I knew it was an academic lifeline - I needed to be a part of this group” (Claire, writing shared June 13, 2001).

Community.

Somewhere, there are people
to whom we can speak with passion
without having the words catch in our throats.
Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us,
eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us
whenever we come into our own power.
Community means strength that joins our strength
to do the work that needs to be done.
Arms to hold us when we falter.
A circle of healing. A circle of friends.
Someplace where
we can be free.

(Starhawk, 1982, p.92)

Challenge

“Real isn’t how you are made”, said the skin horse.
 “It’s a thing that happens to you.”...
 “Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.
 “Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful

(Williams, 1975).

Feyrer (1996) used this quote from the children’s story *The Velveteen Rabbit* in her thesis, to symbolize the human dimension of teaching and learning relationships (p. 14). The Tuesday Group members felt that working through challenges is part of the cement that holds the group together more tightly (Meeting notes May 31, 2001). Althea wrote, “I don’t think I’ve ever found being a part of the group easy [to put this in context, I don’t find belonging to any group easy], but I think this is what has kept me learning” (E-mail December 2, 2001). Claire adds, “Recognizing the difficulties not only provides a more complete view of the experience of collaborative learning, but also illustrates that it wasn’t just to obtain positive support that I, and possibly some of the others, continued to return week after week.” (Writing shared June 19, 2001). Becoming “real” is often difficult and I agree with a group member who stated, “It is important to recognize that learning is messy, painful, evokes feelings of rage, self-doubt, as well as being joyous” (Fiona, writing shared February 15, 2001). The theme of challenge had three strands: diversity, being on the margins of the group, and asking the right questions.

Diversity

Diversity brings two challenges to the Tuesday Group as Charlotte comments, “Challenges come from relating to and accepting ourselves as we find that we are

different from others in the group, and challenges come from accepting others in their differences and enjoying the expanding of our learning horizons through these differences” (E-mail June 19, 2001). She goes on to talk about the stretching involved, “Individuals consistently bring up topics that I haven't thought about or they bring up perspectives of topics that I have not considered before. I then have to examine where I am positioned on that topic or issue and where I think I can move to and still maintain some integrity with my own foundational frameworks” (E-mail June 19, 2001).

“Each group member brings something unique... in terms of learning style, focus of interest, academic background, personality, age, and writing history” (Gieslaine, E-mail May 31, 2001). Fiona commented that, “Each person brings their experiences, insights, stories. We listen to one and other and grow wiser, shift perspective, come to question, and come to understand. Our diversity enriches us” (Freewriting May 31, 2001).

“In this group we seem to receive the variables amongst ourselves and accept that we never fully understand the other, and actually sort of like it that way! It cooks down to our receiving and accepting of perhaps the sacredness of our individuated selves that gather in this shared space.” (Charlotte, writing shared February 15, 2001). When writing about her collage artwork and the “eclectic mix” of images being like the Tuesday Group, Gieslaine notes, “But there are spaces in between... spaces of ‘not knowing’ ...space for revelations” (E-mail May 31).

Being on the Margins of the Group

Diversity is a challenge that was celebrated and honored within the Tuesday Group. The learning that came from this challenge was deepened and intensified on the occasions when a member experienced a larger than normal distance between herself and the rest of the group. This was experienced as being on the margins of the group on an issue or experience. When the Tuesday Group talked about this, Erin used the metaphor of an amoeba to describe it. "The edges of the group ebbing and flowing...you can be out but not out" (meeting notes, June 19, 2001). Another group member stated, "We can cross the lines and still come back and be accepted" (Meeting notes June 13, 2001).

Althea wrote a story and shared it with the group as a way of working through one of these challenging times. The following is a part of her story that is about a "young women" who prefers to stay out of the "rough and tumble of relationship":

One day she went to a regular meeting of friends and was unjustly criticized, or so she perceived, by members of this group. Being highly intelligent (or so she thought), she was able to criticize these friends right back in a very logical way. When the time came for the next meeting she did not go. But something has changed. This time (yes, it has happened before) she is not able to stay so easily in self-righteousness. (Personal communication, June 1995).

Althea did return to the group and later reflected that "the growth for me in the taping incident was that I stayed a member of the group when I was feeling angry. My usual course of action would have been to give it up, not only because of the conflict, but also because of feeling embarrassed" (E-mail December 2, 2001). Because she did not "give it up" further learning occurred. "The incident made me more sensitive to the participants in my own research and it became a symbol for me of trying to stretch my

understanding of myself and other, the concepts of right and wrong, and complexity. The incident is still a source of learning for me” (Althea, E-mail December 2, 2001).

I had a similar experience during our research journey, when I rearranged the lines of a poem we had written together. The group members managed to both support and challenge me as I worked to understand and unravel my job as researcher interpreting meaning and my job documenting the words of the group (meeting notes June 13, 2001). I think that this learning would have been more painful, and possibly have been halted by my defensiveness, if I had not felt the solid foundation of caring and respect supporting me and allowing me to stay open to the process. As Erin put it, the group made you feel “challenged not chastised” (meeting notes June 13, 2001).

Claire wrote about the challenge of feeling alone on an ongoing topic of discussion that all the rest of the group members seemed to agree on. “My experiences were so completely different from theirs that in this respect I felt isolated from the group” (writing shared June 19, 2001). Claire’s high regard for the members of the group left her “at odds” when she could not share in their perspective of this topic. Gieslaine moved away from the group for a period of time when she was deep into the quantitative aspects of her research and found it too painful to see her “fellow travelers” on the autobiographical path she longed to take (E-mail May 15, 2001 and meeting notes June 19, 2001). She stated, “There were long periods of time when I worked a lot in isolation though the group never abandoned me and would call if I had been away too long” (E-mail May 15).

Asking the Right Questions

The right questions are the ones that take you deeper, moving the learning process along and inquiring into assumptions (Armstrong, 2001). A Tuesday Group member commented, “There aren’t many places one can go and talk at a deeper level, where everyone is working beneath the surface, on shaky ground” (Fiona, writing shared February 15, 2001). Often the right questions are the most difficult to ask and the most difficult to answer. In the Tuesday Group I experienced how the right questions were asked based on knowledge gained through many years of relationship and careful listening to each other’s inquiries (meeting notes May 31, 2001). I wondered also, if the connected way of knowing and empathy that seemed to be used by the group members helped them find the right questions to ask?

Based on a strong foundation of support present in the Tuesday Group, it was also possible to begin answering those right questions that were not easy to explore. Erin described a result of this support, “This is a place where I can learn by talking about how I feel, things that might not be explored in another context” (Meeting notes June 13, 2001). I heard one of these right questions at a meeting after Gieslaine had shared some writing that was done at the beginning of her graduate program. Helen asked her, “Where are you now...how is your ‘dream’ being followed now” (meeting notes May 31, 2001). The deep caring present made it harder to ignore these questions or to become defensive. Dee called the group “A safe harbour, where along with supporting, we challenged each other in many ways intentionally and not so intentionally - which was good - it was another step in our journeys as we gained strength and confidence to speak up in the 'bigger' world in which we live” (E-mail

May 14, 2001). Dee adds that “These are the types of challenges that we so often long for, and this group provides the necessary ingredients for the growth and transforming” (E-mail June 19, 2001).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter the three themes of connection, support, and challenge contained many threads that woven together described the experience of collaborative learning. In the final chapter I will reflect on these findings together with what I learned from the emerging research method.

CHAPTER 4

FINAL REFLECTIONS

This research was guided by the question: What is the experience of collaborative learning? Using a research methodology called collaborative inquiry we engaged in a process that is collaborative learning in action (Lawrence, Walsh, & Charaniya, 2001). I found that paying attention to the research method as it emerged in our inquiry deepened and extended my understanding of the experience of collaborative learning. The data collected as the research method emerged, illuminated and extended the themes described in Chapter Three. As the group members reflected on their past experiences of collaborative learning in the group during their graduate studies, they were at the same time engaged in the present action of collaborative learning in this research project. We moved through many cycles of action and reflection that increased the validity of the collaborative inquiry (Heron, 1996). Bringing the data from the research process together with the data gathered on past experiences was a form of triangulation.

The final reflections in this chapter are a pause in a continuing journey. I have no grand concluding comments and recommendations, only more questions to be answered. My purpose in this research was not to develop a “how to” list for people wishing to engage in collaborative learning. My purpose was to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of collaborative learning. More research is still needed on the experience of collaborative learning in other contexts to give us a broader foundation to work from when asking the how to questions.

A Shared Journey

The authors of a book entitled *The Doctoral Thesis Journey* (Cole & Hunt, 1994) used the metaphor of journey to describe the thesis/research process. Several of the stories in this book mentioned traveling together as a theme that facilitated the journey. Traveling together was also a metaphor used by a Tuesday Group member in her thesis (Donaldson, 1998). Collaborative inquiry has been a shared journey for me, one that still continues. Through this research method I have experienced the collaborative learning I hoped to find in the formal context of graduate studies. I have been challenged to climb mountains that could not be scaled alone and look at views I might never have noticed. I have wandered through dark and tangled forests, knowing my fellow travelers were there too, within calling distance and often on intersecting paths. I have been given a drink of water in the middle of a desert and cared for others when they faltered. My understanding of this journey has been deepened and extended by the shared perspectives.

I was able to share my research journey with the members of the Tuesday Group, but not my graduate student journey. That was a journey that they had already completed. Their stories of past experience were helpful. They were able to connect with my current experiences in a way that made me feel that they understood, but they were not there being students with me. This highlighted the important element of sharing the journey, puzzling out the experience while one is in the midst of it.

Traveling into unfamiliar territory
 Trying to make sense of an experience
 I call out to fellow travelers,
 asking for what it looks like from their perspectives
 Puzzling out our understandings together

Humor to lighten the load and brighten a dark moment
 Bubbling, shrieking laughter
 An irreverent perspective that might be just what is needed
 To see another side,
 and around the corner
 Energy lifted with healing laughter.

A community
 Supporting and being supported
 Challenging and being challenged
 Connected

(J. Conway February 2002)

Personal Implications

When I returned to the formal educational setting of a university graduate program, I wondered if I would experience collaborative learning. I was impressed when I found some of my graduate classes created an environment that encouraged collaborative learning. Increased understanding of collaborative learning will facilitate this happening more often. When I had finished my required course work, I did not have a group of fellow students to share the research journey with.

In my first year of classes I had met weekly with a group of seven students. When two members moved away and two graduated we stopped meeting in the second year. In my final year, I did not have the energy to form another group. Instead I registered in an extra course that could provide weekly meetings and provide the connection with fellow students that I needed while engaged in the potentially

isolating work of writing a thesis. This worked for me because I chose a class taught by a professor with expertise in creating a collaborative learning environment and the research methodology I chose was collaborative learning in action.

The learning during this last year was like magic as it was deep and meaningful. In *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996, p. 9) Abram describes magic as the experience of existing in a world made up of multiple intelligences and connecting with this “more-than-human” world. I found that magic moment – that he suggested is a shifting of consciousness in order to make contact with others, had also occurred in the human world of collaborative learning.

Contributions to Theory

Although this was a small-scale study, it has some implications for the theoretical basis of collaborative inquiry as a research method, and for collaborative inquiry generally. First, at least eight sources of data were used in this study as reported on page 26. Both the number and the richness of the data sources raise the question of the need for some conceptual order when using collaborative research. That is, this method of research appears to result in a wide range of data forms that are not necessarily all equally useful relative to the research problem or the purpose of the study. I could find no discussion of the need for a conceptual framework in the literature on collaborative inquiry, yet some kind of conceptual method of organizing data forms is suggested by the study.

A second theoretical implication flows from the ownership of the research process by all the co-researchers. In the current study it was possible to “stay on track”

relative to the purpose and research question pursued, even though collaborative inquiry was used. But it is quite possible that this research method inherently means that a group may take over or redefine both the purpose and research question. How can collaborative inquiry still be used when a research study needs to achieve a predetermined outcome? If a group redefines the question and purpose through collaborative inquiry we have moved to a new ontology which is a byproduct of the epistemological value of collaborative inquiry. In short, theoretically, the constant redefinition of “the question” by the use of collaborative inquiry raises philosophical issues.

A third theoretical implication of this study is specific to university life. The university and university based research traditionally shares the value of free inquiry and freely reported results. This value is not an abstraction. Current events at Canadian universities clearly indicate that when research is sponsored, funded, or conducted cooperatively the research may not be free to report negative results. The use of collaborative inquiry inherently raises this issue. Whose voice is being reported on? Who is responsible for the final communication of the results? How can a group disagree with itself and how can a researcher disagree if she is one with the group?

These are questions of both value and theory, which are implied by the current study.

Suggestions

From this research, it is clear that participation in the Tuesday Group contributed to the successful completion of the members’ graduate student degrees. Is

the existence of the Tuesday Group a lucky chance, or is it possible the academic community could support and encourage this kind of informal group occurring more often? Setting up groups and assigning students to attend will not work. Self-selection has been identified as an important element in collaborative partnerships (Saltiel, 1998). Instead of this, we need to focus on creating environments that will provide fertile ground for these groups to form naturally. The following suggestions might be considered:

- Use collaborative learning processes more often in graduate classes for students to learn and practice.
- Create more opportunities for students to meet and develop relationships. Class activities such as shared food and informal conversation at breaks, clustering graduate student offices together, and graduate student social functions are possibilities.
- Inform students of the challenges involved in thesis completion and suggest formation of groups as a possible solution
- Provide resources such as workshops and handouts that will help students learn how to form and maintain successful groups.
- Create more physical locations appropriate for informal meetings and promote these so graduate students are aware they are available.

The length of commitment and depth of learning that occurred in the Tuesday Group may be extraordinary, but I believe it has been and could be replicated to differing degrees. Further research to identify how the process of collaborative learning unfolds in other contexts could help us understand better how to encourage and support it. Questions for future research include:

- What is the nature of commitment required and how is this commitment maintained?

- How is equality and trust established and maintained?
- How is collaborative inquiry experienced in a mixed gender group?
- What happens when institutions attempt to use collaborative inquiry?

The University

Tarule (1996) suggests that collaborative dialogues in the “bywaters” of the mainstream have been a part of the academic learning environment for a long time and “consistently the academy has required these to be outside ‘regular’ class time, relegating them to the corridors and coffee shops” (p.291). I am excited about the possibilities of bringing collaborative learning into the classroom. I am also concerned that vital elements of the process (the essence of the phenomenon), as I have come to understand it, are not lost in this transition. As Tarule noted, “When collaborative procedures are introduced, they are simply not new ‘tricks’ for teaching; they disrupt the basic assumptions about how learning progresses and who gets to be a knower” (pg.292, 1996).

The most challenging issue to be addressed is the shift in authority from the teacher to an equal sharing among all as learners. Reconceptualizing the teacher as a guide or midwife (Belenky et al, 1986) begins to bring into play this shift in authority, and many have moved in this direction, especially in the areas of adult and continuing education. But there are still teachers and students alike in the context of formal education that are resistant to the disruption of traditional roles in the classroom. Next, the short duration of one-term classes limits the time learners have to get to know each other and to build relationships. Different models of learning communities (Gabelnick

et al., 1990) and the use of cohort groups (Cranton, 1998) are promising starts on addressing this issue.

Adult Education

The Doctoral Thesis Journey (Cole & Hunt, 1994) was written by a group of adult educators in Toronto who had been meeting every other Thursday and called themselves the “Thursday group”. Several similarities to the Tuesday Group in Victoria were noted: the name; the noon meeting time; the adult education background of the members; and they reported that in discussions “we speak from our own direct experience, not from theoretical models or abstractions” (p. vii). The shared focus of the Toronto group was professional development as researchers, and it caused me to wonder how many other groups like this are functioning across the country and what their experience of collaborative learning is like in these different contexts.

More research is needed to understand the exciting potential of this method for learning and research. Bray et al. (2000) suggest adult learning applications, Mezirow (2000) developed a conference model for collaborative inquiry at the first National Conference on Transformative Learning in 1998 and suggests it may be replicated in other areas of adult education. “Designing a conference as a collaborative inquiry may, in fact, enable learning to be advanced more quickly, facilitate making connections between theories and scholars, and expand theories and practice both within and across disciplines. It is a way for scholars and practitioners, who normally work in isolation, to connect ideas and practice” (p.341). Collaborative inquiry might be used in contexts of adult learning such as life transitions (such as parenthood,

divorce, retirement, death and dying) or recreational interests (such as bookclubs, gardening, and genealogy).

Gender Questions

Russell, Plotkin and Bell (1998) wondered if it was a coincidence that their collaborative group was composed of women only, and I too wonder this about the Tuesday Group. Russell et al. have not reached a consensus on this. Two members of their group have found it easier to collaborate with women than with men, and they suspect that women are more likely to engage in this form of knowledge production. One of the group members has collaborated extensively with her male partner and thus doubts that the phenomenon is that straightforward (p.152). From my personal experience of two groups where there has been a lone male present who was very comfortable with this way of learning (and indeed was one of the founding members in both cases) I would agree that this phenomenon is not that straightforward. Although women may engage in collaborative learning more often than men, I believe like Clinchy (1996) that “the difference is not rooted in gender but in epistemology [which although related to gender is not synonymous with it]” (p.226).

Current research in participatory inquiry, adult learning, and feminist theory can contribute to our understanding of collaborative learning. We need to bring these voices together for conversations that might enrich all.

Summary

Every person and every group experiences collaborative learning in a unique way. Further research on collaborative learning in different contexts would increase our understanding. The purpose of this research was not to make generalizations, but to illuminate the whole by looking at the particular. By understanding what the experience of collaborative learning was in the Tuesday Group, I hope to have contributed to the conversations on graduate student success and adult learning. I have entered these conversations with a sense of “multiple and infinite possibilities in the future” (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). I finish with a poem I wrote to express my experience of collaborative learning.

Weaving a Web

Weaving a web of connections through our conversation
A creative and wild construction of knowledge
in the space created by the group
Multiple perspectives shared

It is a different way of knowing,
understanding through connection
Stories emerge from the heart.
My thoughts are not perfectly formed,
understanding is ongoing.

Sometimes tangled up in the threads
it can be a messy process
Living with ambiguity

Connections not always clear,
one story will spark another
Going off into the blue, swinging into space
several stories later a common theme emerges
Unexpected insight gained

Threads being spun into a communal space.
Listening intensely,
connections are felt in my body, mind and spirit
All of me is present and electrified
Illuminated

Open minds reaching out
crossing boundaries
New perspectives discovered
transformations possible

This is not a tidy controlled cloth within the boundaries of a loom.
It is a web,
organic, evolving, and alive.

Discovering complex and sometimes astounding patterns,
I experience magic.

(J.Conway, February 2002)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abram, D. (1996). The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more than human world. New York: Pantheon.
- Alcoff, L. (1991). The problem of speaking for others. Cultural Critique, Winter 1991-92, 5-31.
- Alexander, A. (1997). The Antigonish movement: Moses Coady and adult education today. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- Armstrong, J.L. (2001). Collaborative learning from the participants' perspective. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.
- Baldwin, C. (1994). Calling the circle: The first and future culture. Oregon: Swan-Raven Company.
- Bateson, M.C. (1990). Composing a life. New York: Plume.
- Becker, H.S. (1998). Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R. & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing : The development of self, voice and mind. New York: Basic Books.
- Belenky, M. F. & Stanton, A.V. (2000). Inequality, development, and connected knowing. In Mezirow, J. and Associates, Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress (pp.71-102). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (1998). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and method (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bradfield, M. (1996). Successful female adult language learners: Their strategy use in second language learning. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Bray, J. (1995). The noetic experience of learning in collaborative inquiry groups: From descriptive, hermeneutic, and eidetic perspectives. Dissertation Abstracts International, 56 (07), 2524.
- Bray, J.; Lee, J.; Smith, L. & Yorks, L. (2000). Collaborative inquiry in practice: Action, reflection, and meaning making. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Brookfield, S.D. (1990). Discussion. In M.W. Galbraith (Ed.), Adult learning methods (pp. 187-204). Florida: Robert Krieger Publishing.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1991). The skillful teacher. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S.D. & Preskill, S. (1999). Discussion as a way of teaching: Tools techniques for democratic classrooms. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brooks, P.A. (1998). Cohort communities in higher education: The best example of adult education. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.
- Bruffee, K.A. (1993). Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence and the authority of knowledge. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Candy, P. (1991). Self-direction for lifelong learning: A comprehensive guide to theory and practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Caplan, P. J. (1994). Lifting a ton of feathers: A women's guide for surviving in the academic world. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Chickering, A.W. & Gamson, Z.F. (Eds.). (1991). Applying the seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No 47. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, D.J. & Connelly, F.M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 413-427). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Clark, M.C. & Watson, D.B. (1998). Women's experience of academic collaboration. In I.M. Saltiel, A. Sgroi, & R. Brockett (Eds.), The power and potential of collaborative learning partnerships (pp. 63-74). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No. 79. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Clinchy, B.M. (1996). Connected and separate knowing: Toward a marriage of two minds. In N. Goldberger, J. Tarule, B. Clinchy, M. Belenky (Eds.), Knowledge, difference, and power: Essays inspired by women's way of knowing (pp. 205-247). New York: Basic Books.
- Cole, A.L. & Hunt, D.E. (Eds.). (1994). The doctoral thesis journey: Reflections from travellers and guides. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Cooper, M.K. (1999). The return to academics: The experience of the older graduate student. (Electronic version), Dissertation Abstracts International, Pub #AAT 9941719.

- Courtenay, B.C. (1994). Are psychological models of adult development still important for the practice of adult education? Adult Education Quarterly, 44 (3), 145-153.
- Cranton, P. (1994). Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. (1996). Types of group learning. In S. Imel, (Ed.), Learning in groups: Exploring fundamental principles, new uses, and emerging opportunities (pp. 25-32). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No.71. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. (1998). No one way: Teaching and learning in higher education. Toronto: Wall and Emerson.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cude, W. (2001). The PhD trap revisited. Toronto: Dundurn Group.
- Davis, J.A. (1961). Great books and small groups. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, Inc.
- de Champlain, D. (1996). Being fish: Sounding the depths in the reflecting pools of lifelong learning. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (1994). Handbook of qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- De Venney-Tiernan, M., Goldband, A., Rackham, L., & Reilly, N. (1994). Creating collaborative relationships in a co-operative inquiry group. In P. Reason (Ed.), Participation in human inquiry (pp. 120-137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Doll, W.E. (2002). Ghosts and the curriculum. In W.E. Doll & N. Gough (Eds.), Curriculum visions (pp. 23-73). New York: Peter Lang.
- Donaldson, D.F. (1998). A change agent on shaky ground: Experiencing the fault lines of learning and change. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Eisner, E.W. & Peshkin, A. (Eds.). (1990). Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Faulds, P.C. (1997). Adults returning to school: Seeking understanding in the gap between experience and theory. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Fenimore, M. (1994). Learning experiences of centenarians in their second century of living. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Feyrer, J. (1996). Listening to the voices of distance education students: Teacher(s) being learner(s). Unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Flannery, D.D. (Ed.). (1993). Applying cognitive learning theory to adult learning. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No. 59. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Flannery, D.D. & Hayes, E. (2000). Women as learners: The significance of gender in adult learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Foley, G. (1992). Going deeper: Teaching and group work in adult education. Studies in the Education of Adults, (Electronic version), 24 (2), 143-162.
- Foley, G. (Ed.). (2000). Understanding adult education and training. Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Freire, P. (1997). Pedagogy of the oppressed. In D.J. Flinders & S.J. Thornton (Eds.), The curriculum studies reader (pp. 151-157). New York: Routledge.
- Gabelnick, F., MacGregor, J., Matthews, R.S., & Smith, B.L. (1990). Learning communities: Creating connections among students, faculty, and disciplines. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, No. 41. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gall, M.D.; Borg, W.R. & Gall, J.P. (Eds.). (1996). Educational research: An introduction (6th ed.). New York: Longman Publishers.
- Galbraith, M.W. (Ed.). (1990). Adult learning methods. Florida: Robert Krieger Publishing.
- Gilligan, C. (1977). In a different voice: Women's conceptions of self and of morality. In C.A. Woynshner & H.S. Gelfond (Eds.), (1998), Minding women: Reshaping the educational realm (pp. 3-40). New York: Routledge.
- Goldberg, N. (1986). Writing down the bones. Boston: Shambhala.

- Goodsell, A., Maher, M., Tinto, V., Smith, B.L., & MacGregor, J. (Eds.). (1992). Collaborative learning: A sourcebook for higher education. Pennsylvania: NCTLA.
- Gordon, C.; Sheridan, M. & Paul, W. (1998). Content Literacy for Secondary Teachers. Toronto: Harcourt Brace.
- Gouthro, P.A. & Grace, A.P. (2000). Feminist pedagogies and graduate adult and higher education for women students: Matters of connection and possibility. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.
- Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). Handbook of qualitative research. (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hall B. (1993). Introduction. In E Park, M. Brydon-Miller, B. Hall, & T. Jackson (Eds.), Voices of change: Participatory research in the United States and Canada. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Hall B. (2000). I wish this were a poem of practices of participatory research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury, (Eds.). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice (pp.171-178). London: Sage Publications.
- Hall, N.D. (1997). Variables that enhance the persistence of older female graduate students. (Electronic version), Dissertation Abstracts International, Pub #AAT 9731488.
- Hayes, E.R. & Smith, L. (1994). Women in adult education: An analysis of perspectives in major journals. Adult Education Quarterly, 44 (4), 201-221.
- Hermanson, H.J. (1996). Dwelling with/in possibilities: Lifelong learning through reflection on/in clinical practice. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Heron, J. (1996). Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Heron, J. & P. Reason. (2000). The practice of cooperative inquiry: Research with rather than on people. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury, (Eds.). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice (pp.179-88). London: Sage Publications.
- Hoyer, J.H., Rybash, J.M., & Roodin, P.A. (1999). Adult development and aging (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill College.

- Imel, S. (Ed.). (1996). Learning in groups: Exploring fundamental principles, new uses, and emerging opportunities, New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 71. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Janesick, V.J. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, methodolatry, and meaning. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 209-218). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Jarvis, P. (1995). Adult and continuing education: theory and practice (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Holubec, E. (1990). Circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom (3rd ed.). Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, D.; Johnson, R. & Smith, K. (1991). Cooperative learning: Increasing college faculty instructional productivity. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No.4. Washington: George Washington University.
- Josselson, R. (1996). On writing other people's lives. In R. Josselson (Ed.), Ethics and process in the narrative study of lives (pp. 60-71). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Joyappa, V. & Martin, D.J. (1996). Exploring alternative research epistemologies for adult education: Participatory research, feminist research, and feminist participatory research. Adult Education Quarterly, 47 (1), 1-14.
- Karpiak, I. (1993). An evolutionary model of adult development. Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education, 19 (1), 45-66.
- Kerka, S. (1996). Book groups: Communities of learners. (pp.81-90). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No. 71. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Knox, A.B. (1986). Helping adults learn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Knowles, M.S. (1980). The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy. Chicago: Follett Publishing.
- Lather, P. (1986). Research as praxis. Harvard Educational Review, 56 (3), 257-277.
- Lawrence, R.L. (1997). The interconnecting web: Adult learning cohorts as sites for collaborative learning, feminist pedagogy and experiential ways of knowing. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.

- Lawrence, R.L. & Mealman, C.A. (1999). Collaborative ways of knowing: Storytelling, metaphor and the emergence of the collaborative self. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.
- Lawrence, R.L., Walsh, J.W. & Charaniya, N.K. (2001). Collaborative inquiry: Expanding the boundaries of knowledge construction in graduate adult education. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.
- Livingstone, D.W. (1999). Exploring the icebergs of adult learning: Findings of the first Canadian survey of informal learning practices. Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 13 (2), 49-72.
- Mackeracher, D.M. (1996). Making sense of adult learning. Toronto: Culture Concepts Inc.
- Maguire, P. (1987). Doing participatory research: A feminist approach. Amherst: Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts.
- Maguire, P. (2000). Uneven ground: Feminisms and action research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury, (Eds.). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice (pp.59-67). London: Sage Publications.
- Marsick, V. & Kasl, E. (1997). Factors that affect the epistemology of group learning: A research-based analysis. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.
- Merriam, S.B. and Caffarella, R.S. (1991). Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S.B. & Clark, M.C. (1991). Lifelines: patterns of work, love, and learning in adulthood. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S.B. & Heuer, B. (1996). Meaning-making, adult learning, and development: A model with implications for practice. International Journal of Lifelong Education. 15 (4), 243-255.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, C.M. (1997). Cultivating leisure: Moving from arrest in habitual patterns to participation in conscious choice. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.
- Miller, J.L.(1990). Creating spaces and finding voices: Teachers collaborating for empowerment. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Morgan, D.L. (1997). Focus groups as qualitative research. Qualitative research method series, Vol.16 (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Myers, J. (1992). Cooperative learning: A personal journey. Journal of Education, (Electronic version), 174 (2), 118-144.
- Noddings, N. (1981). Caring. In Pinar, W.F. (Ed). (1999). Contemporary curriculum discourses: Twenty years of JCT (pp. 42-54). New York: Peter Lang.
- Norlander-Case, K.; Reagan, T.; Campbell, P. & Chase, C. (1998). The role of collaborative inquiry and reflective practice in teacher preparation. The Professional Educator, (Electronic version), 21 (1), 1-16.
- Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), Doing feminist research (pp.30-61). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Oliver, L.P. (1995). Is the United States ready for a study circle movement? Adult Learning, 7 (3), 14-16.
- Park, P. (1993). What is participatory research? A theoretical and methodological perspective. In E Park, M. Brydon-Mitler, B. Hall & T.Jackson (Eds.), Voices of change: Participatory research in the United States and Canada. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Park, P. (2000). Knowledge and participatory research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury, (Eds.). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice (pp. 81-89). London: Sage Publications.
- Pinar, W.F.; Reynolds, W.M.; Slattery, P.M.; Taubman, P.M. (1995). Understanding curriculum. New York: Peter Lang.
- Polson, C.J. (1998). Fostering graduate socialization into adult education. Adult Learning, 10 (2), 23-26.
- Reason, P. & Hawkins, P. (1988). Storytelling as inquiry. In P. Reason (Ed.), Human inquiry in action: Developments in new paradigm research. (pp.79-101). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Reason, P. (Ed.). (1994a). Participation in human inquiry. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Reason, P. (1994b). Three approaches to participatory inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.). Handbook of qualitative research, (pp.324-337). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2000). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice. London: Sage Publications.
- Renner, P. (1993). The art of teaching adults: How to become an exceptional instructor and facilitator. Vancouver: Training Associates.
- Rowan, J. (1981). A dialectical paradigm for research. In P. Reason & J. Rowan (Eds.). Human inquiry: A sourcebook of new paradigm research. (pp. 93-112). Toronto: John Wiley and Sons.
- Rowan, J. (2000). The humanistic approach to action research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury, (Eds.). Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice (pp.114-123). London: Sage Publications.
- Rose, A.D. (1996). Group learning in adult education: Its historical roots. In Imel, S. (Ed.). Learning in groups: Exploring fundamental principles, new uses, and emerging opportunities (pp. 3-13). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No.71. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rosenwasser, P. (2000). Tool for transformation: Cooperative inquiry as a process for healing from internalized oppression. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.
- Russell, C.L.; Plotkin, R. & Bell, A.C. (1998). Merge/Emerge: Collaboration in graduate school. In E. G. Peck & J.S. Mink (Eds.), Common ground: Feminist collaboration in the academy (pp. 41-153). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Saavedra, E. (1996). Teachers study groups: Contexts for transformative learning and action. Theory into Practice, (Electronic version), 35 (4), 271-278.
- Saltiel, I.M.; Sgroi, A. & Brockett, R. (Eds.). (1998). The power and potential of collaborative learning partnerships. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No. 79. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Saltiel, I.M. (1998). Defining collaborative partnerships. In Saltiel, I.M.; Sgroi, A. & Brockett, R. (Eds.). The power and potential of collaborative learning partnerships (pp. 5-11). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No. 79. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Selman, M.& Dampier, P. (1997). Foundations of adult education in Canada (2nd ed.). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publications.
- Silverman, S.L. and Casazza, M.E. (2000). Learning and development: Making connections to enhance teaching. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Smith, L. L. (1995). Collaborative inquiry as an adult learning strategy. Dissertation Abstracts International, 56 (07), 2533.
- Smith, B.L.& MacGregor, J. (1992). What is collaborative learning? In A. Goodsell; M. Maher; V. Tinto; B.L. Smith & J. MacGregor (Eds.), Collaborative learning: A sourcebook for higher education (pp.9-20). Pennsylvania: NCTLA.
- Smith, R.M. (1982). Learning how to learn: Applied theory for adults. Chicago: Follett Publishing.
- Smith, M.W. (1996). Conversations about literature outside classrooms: How adults talk about books in their book clubs. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, (Electronic version), 40 (3), 180-186.
- Sparks, B. (2000). Informal learning in community: The role of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. (Electronic version), Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings.
- Stalker, J. (1996). Women and adult education: Rethinking androcentric research. Adult Education Quarterly, 46 (2), 98-113.
- Starhawk. (1982). Dreaming the dark. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Tarule, J. (1996). Voices in dialogue: Collaborative ways of knowing. In N. Goldberger, J. Tarule, B. Clinchy, M. Belenky (Eds.), Knowledge, difference, and power: Essays inspired by women's way of knowing (pp. 274-304). New York: Basic Books.
- Taylor, K. (1996). Why psychological models of adult development are important for the practice of adult education: A response to Courtenay. Adult Education Quarterly, 46 (4), 54-62.
- Tennant, M. & Pogson, P. (1995). Learning and change in the adult years: a developmental perspective. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Tom, A.R. (1999). Reinventing master's degree study for experienced teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, (Electronic version), 50 (4), 245-255.
- Tough, A. (1979). The adult's learning projects. (2nd ed.). San Diego: Learning Concepts.
- Traylen, H. (1994). Confronting hidden agendas: Co-operative inquiry with health visitors. In P. Reason (Ed.), Participation in human inquiry (59-81). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Treleaven, L. (1994). Making a space: A collaborative inquiry with women as staff development. In P. Reason (Ed.), Participation in human inquiry (138-162). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Vella, J. (1994). Learning to listen, learning to teach: The power of dialogue in educating adults. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Walters, J.M. & Gardner, H. (1986). The theory of multiple intelligences: some issues and answers. In R.J. Sternberg & R.K. Wagner (Eds.), Practical intelligence: nature and origins of competence in the everyday world (pp. 163-182). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, M. (1975). The velveteen rabbit. New York: Avon Books.

VITA

Surname: Conway

Given Names: Jacqueline

Place of Birth: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of British Columbia

1980 to 1984

Degrees Awarded:

B.R.E.

University of British Columbia

1984


UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENCE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain by the University of Victoria shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

A Shared Journey: Understanding the Experience of Collaborative Learning

Author:



Jacqueline Conway *J*

April 29, 2002

Date