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THE UNDERGRADUATE CLASSROOM AS A COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

by

CARA TAYLOR MILLER

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2012

Dissertation Committee

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ABSTRACT

This project contributes to the literature on action research and undergraduate pedagogy for leadership development through application and expansion of existing theory on collaborative ways of teaching and learning. I applied a participatory, inquiry-based approach to teaching an undergraduate course in leadership studies over four semesters using the action research process of recursively asking and answering living questions in real time about teaching and learning with students' participating as co-researchers.

Reflection on my initial, mostly traditional teaching strategies generated questions about the students' detachment from and resistance to exercising leadership, as well as the challenge of aligning my deepest values with my teaching. I invited subsequent cohorts to be co-investigators of these questions with me, guided by Torbert's method of action inquiry. I collected first-, second-, and third-person data from journals, course assignments, field notes, personal correspondence, discussion notes, interviews, collaborative writing, electronic discussion threads, and student course evaluations. The recursive action inquiry process led me to enact an increasingly experimental and emancipatory pedagogy which enabled the students to recognize the inertial passivity that restricted their capacity for agency, the experiences that had conditioned them in that way, and to acknowledge and act upon their responsibility for their own learning and exercise of leadership. At the same time I learned that my passion for liberating my students in this way paralleled and has been sustained by my ongoing, and unfinished struggle for my own emancipation from similar conditioning.

Initially, I intended to contribute specifically to the improvement of pedagogy for undergraduate student leadership development; however, my findings have broader applicability. My narrative of the students', my dissertation committee's, and my struggles toward increasingly participatory and democratic forms of working in groups has larger application for those seeking to collaboratively transform their own groups and organizations with integrity, mutuality, and sustainability.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my two daughters, Lilly Lindgren and Fern Ashley. I love you with all of my heart. “Mommy” is the name that changes everything; it has intensified my personal meaning and vocational purpose in beautiful, mysterious ways. Dare to dream little ladies, I am your biggest fan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Though only my name appears as the author of this dissertation, there are many people who have contributed to its production and helped it come to life. I am pleased and humbled to acknowledge them here.

I am thankful for my dissertation chair, Dr. Steve Gelb, who has advocated for my freedom and voice as a researcher while encouraging me to explore them on my own. He modeled the attempt to hold many territories of awareness and the use of metaphor in the emancipatory research stance. At the same time Steve provided guidance to recover when either of our steps faltered in the collaborative dissertation process.

I am thankful to my second committee member, Dr. Cheryl Getz, who provided feedback, generative questions, and revisions of my document. I am deeply grateful for her role as department chair and the precious opportunity she provided for me to teach these courses during my time in the doctoral program.

I am uniquely thankful for my third committee member, Dr. Bill Torbert. His insightful comments and constructive criticisms at different stages of my research were thought-provoking and helped me focus my ideas. He has been the best teacher and mentor I have had in my life. He set high standards for my research, personal practice, and quality of our intellectual and social friendship. He introduced me to action inquiry, a discipline which extends beyond this project, and his writing has inspired me steadfastly through this dissertation process. I am indebted to him for his continuous encouragement, friendship, and guidance.

I am indebted to the four cohorts of students with whom I have interacted during the course of teaching the leadership seminar. Particularly, I would like to acknowledge the students who authentically engaged in these questions with me after their formal course of study was finished, those who presented with me at conferences, and those whom are now truly peers and friends. I am also thankful for the students who experienced difficulty and fear in engaging in this method but who courageously pressed on and achieved deeper learning. To all of those students, thank you for trusting me and joining me.

Many friends have helped me stay steady through these many years. Their support and care helped me overcome setbacks, stay focused, and cling to my purpose and calling. I greatly value the friendship of my church small groups especially; I deeply appreciate their fellowship and commitment to prayer with me.

Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the love and patience of my family. My parents Bill and Paula have been a constant source of love, concern, support, and strength. I am profoundly thankful for their tenacious belief in me, and their breathtaking, tangible love of my two daughters.

My most important source of support and strength has been my husband Matt. His special blend of friendship, humor, romance, faith, and encouragement has sustained me as I never imagined I could be sustained. I love you Matt.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I review and analyze the experiences of a participatory, inquiry-based, teaching and learning approach I developed over four semesters teaching an undergraduate seminar on leadership. I describe the action research process of recursively asking and answering living questions about undergraduate teaching and learning, with the students involved as co-researchers. I taught the first semester fairly traditionally and my reflection on the experience generated questions about the students' detachment from the act of learning, and my ability to engage my deepest values while teaching (Getz, 2009; Getz & Gelb, 2007; Heron, 1998; Kahn, 1992). I invited the subsequent three cohorts to engage these questions with me as co-investigators of our experiences during the class. I collected data focusing on first-, second-, and third-person areas of inquiry (Torbert & Associates, 2004). The research was integrated with the course curriculum and organization; we aimed to serve the learning outcomes of the course while examining our activities and experiences as a case for learning about and exercising leadership. I have found a dearth of publications reporting on courses engaging action research to involve undergraduates as co-researchers of their own class as a case study.

Although I collected, analyzed, and reflected upon these data in real-time with the students as I taught the courses, I revisit them in an overarching way now. What began as research for the sake of my teaching, became research also for the sake of the students and me, now is research for us, and beyond this particular context. I write and publish

this dissertation document with the intent to share this research with anyone wishing to increase learning and incorporate meaning into their own context, with their own participants.

Interweaving the different levels of data collection and interpretations (mine, theirs, and ours) using a blend of traditional qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), action research (Coughlan & Brannick, 2005), depth psychology, and innovative analysis tools, I have also used the process of writing this document to examine the data for higher order trends and insights. In addition to whatever single-loop (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Torbert & Associates, 2004) incremental learning the students may have done within any given semester of the course, and in addition to whatever incremental learning I did across the four times I offered it, I attempt to identify double-loop, transformational learning as well.

Finally, in practical terms, the intent of this dissertation is to enhance undergraduate pedagogy for leadership development. Personal translation of these methods and practices may be useful for those working toward student transformation in leadership development programs, as well as for those seeking collaborative transformation within their own groups, organizational contexts, and social interactions.

Framing the Narrative

It's not about *them*. It's not about *me*. It's about *us*.

Have you ever attended an academic conference presentation during which those being researched were those presenting the findings? Welcome to our session, we are the researchers . . . *and* we are the researched.

This was my opening statement at the 7th Annual San Diego Action Research Conference in a session titled, “Leadership Seminar: Co-Researching an Undergraduate Leadership Course.” I was sitting at the front of an auditorium next to three undergraduate students who had completed the capstone course I taught in leadership studies. We had submitted a proposal to present an action research project together. One attendee raised an eyebrow and a few chuckled to one another. My advisor walked in late and I wished he had been there to hear our “hook” reflecting the out-of-the-ordinary nature of our research. In the conference bulletin our session was described as,

An account from a teacher and students who completed a capstone undergraduate leadership studies course using Action Research to study their work together in real time. Students were invited to join the teacher as co-researchers of the experience of learning and teaching about leadership, engaging the principles of Action Inquiry. (*Conference Bulletin*, 2010)

This study is a description of the process of recursively asking and answering living questions about the method of undergraduate teaching and learning, with the students involved as co-researchers. By “living questions” I mean questions that spontaneously arose for the students and for me as we engaged with one another each semester. All told, the story encompasses four semesters and four different cohorts of students. The first semester I taught fairly traditionally and this generated questions, reflection, and called for pedagogical experiments of things I wanted to apply to future iterations of the course. I invited the subsequent three cohorts to participate with me as co-investigators of our experiences of the class. Our research was integrated with the course curriculum and organization; it served the learning outcomes of the course as we examined our activities and experiences as a case for collaborative group work while

learning about and exercising leadership. In retrospect, I now see my shift between my first and second semesters of teaching as a double-loop, transformational shift in my teaching. I moved from the conventional unilateral control action-logic of most college classrooms (Runkel, Harrison, & Runkel, 1971) to a mutual power action-logic. Such a change in one's manner of exercising power is a matter of at least one developmental transformation, according to Torbert & Associates (2004). When we reach that part of the story—the comparison between my semesters of teaching (leading) the leadership seminar—I will explore more closely what evidence does and does not support the claim that my change in the way I taught re-presents (i.e., illustrates in a qualitative way) transformational change.

If you've read action research reports before, then in all probability you have come to know action researchers' response to the question of generalizability: transferability. Transferability from one action inquirer to another, best done in conversation, can also at least be initiated by describing an attempt at action research through narrative. If you have not been exposed to action research reports, especially action research dissertations, then I'd like to offer a sense of re-framing that might be helpful.

When reading an action research report like this, your question should not be whether any particular proposition about a relationship between two variables is validated sufficiently to be treated as true. Rather, you should determine whether the report of the study influences its participants and you, the reader, to begin acting in a more beneficial way in your learning, your teaching, your experiences in leadership and leadership

education. More importantly, please determine whether this report influences you in your experiences as an adult leader, whether as a married partner, a parent, a leader of others at work, or in a spiritual or other leisure endeavor.

My study describes one person deeply engaging in a form of action and research that gradually includes more persons, students and professors, into temporary communities of inquiry in action. It was my role and context this time, but it can be you in your own role, and in your own way next time. Questions you can hold loosely as you read: Is there a detailed sense of whether and how this approach improved the learning of the students? And whether and how it improved the teacher's teaching? Does the body of the report offer evidence of how the process of action inquiry works in different circumstances? Is there enough evidence to inspire and attract you, the reader, toward finding further support for approaching some of your activities in a way that interweaves research and action? Action inquiry is generalized, not by a shared belief in it, but rather by our individualized practice of inquiry in our everyday lives with others and by increasingly frequent, sustainable, living celebrations of mutuality.

Although I am the named author of this study I've attempted as much as possible to be faithful to the multi-vocal, co-constructed interpretations that emerged through asking and answering questions like these together with my students. I consulted each cohort of students, as a group and individually, in varied ways during and after the academic semesters seeking their interpretations, reflections, conclusions, and questions about our collaborative work together. And although the study is about all of us, across cohorts, I claim my privileged position in the research however collaborative I desire it to

be. I am the only one who was present for the entire experience over four semesters. I am the one who was inspired to initiate and facilitate the whole process, and I am the one aspiring to benefit through its presentation in this doctoral dissertation. I express this as *our* story to the most appropriate degree while it remains my story to tell, and your story to read.

As the author of this dissertation, and the teacher-facilitator of these courses, I view it as my privilege and calling to recount this story for me, for them, and for us. There is an unattributed aphorism, “there are three versions of every story; yours, mine, and the truth.” In the story of these experiences, as is consistent with the stance of action research, which I will present later, there aren’t three versions, there are three kinds of truths: mine, theirs, and ours that combine to become a fuller truth (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 32). In that sense, the *us* also includes *you*, the reader. In positioning the research in this way, I’m responding in part to a call published by Reason, Torbert, and others (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, Reason & Torbert, 2001; Sherman & Torbert, 2000; Torbert & Taylor, 2006) in related fields, to integrate action and inquiry from the standpoint of all three “persons” (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 39). More specifically, it follows Torbert’s specific call for “a holistic understanding of a given situation that also tries to act and inquire at the same time” (Torbert & Taylor, 2006, p. 2) using three types of methods for testing the validity of findings. While examples of inquiry that imply first, second, and third person exist, I agree with these scholars that research that overtly integrates them alongside timely action is still needed (Reason & Torbert, 2001). It is my intention in this text to move beyond the third-person voice of traditional

research, and beyond the exclusive first-person voice of many action research dissertations. I aspire to interweave first-, second-, and third-person voices together in my reporting to evoke the pulse of this living research method. Furthermore, each reader will generate another living interpretation, which makes this document even more deeply *ours*. Welcome.

Data and Analysis

Like many action research studies, the systematic collection of data for this study was born out of my desire to improve my practice as a teacher-facilitator, and it grew into a collaborative effort to observe and reflect together with students on our practice of learning. It has further developed into a larger, collective calling to communicate our experiences, learning, and methods to a greater audience through academic conference presentations with students, co-authorship, and publication of a dissertation.

Interweaving the different levels of data collection and interpretations (mine, theirs, and ours), I have incorporated the process of writing this document to explore and examine the data for higher order trends and insights. The interweaving of the initial findings and reflections with the newer findings and reflections is an attempt to further elucidate these practices for the sake of transferability to other contexts. A translation of this approach may be useful to those seeking a transformation of their own organizational contexts and interactions.

Action research has been appropriate for this endeavor as it is cyclical in nature and assumes that the reflection and action one takes for change and improvement in the moment will necessarily inform the next cycle of one's action and reflection, and so on.

This approach has not only been effective for improving my practice as a teacher-facilitator; it has also generated a distinctive, organic form of teaching and learning in real-time collaboration.

The use of action research has enabled my students and me to learn the designated theory and practice of the subject of study by using our classroom interactions as a case study. By recursively asking ourselves individually and as a group, in the moment and after, why we take the actions we do, why we make the interventions we do, we are exercising the practical principle of freedom (Whitehead, 1993). This freedom to act, reflect, and amend action in concert with others, may be particularly useful for students entering the workplace and other professional or personal group contexts. In doing so, we have learned to observe, act, and reflect with one another on our own group dynamics while at once being engaged in the course curriculum, and I think the evidence shows, many of us have found it transforming. I recount the story of each of the four iterations of the course describing the cyclical action research I was doing throughout each semester to change and address challenges, as well as explaining the action research and reading I did over and between semesters to improve and expand my practice. I have increasingly had the opportunity to exercise my deepest values in these research processes, and have developed them in concert with methodological rigor, collaborative evidence gathering, and systematic analytical review. In this document, I am guided by some of the most recent action research scholarship regarding the presentation of data and findings, validity claims (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Lincoln, 1995; Nolen & Vander Putten, 2007), form (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009);

Mellor, 1998, 1999, 2002), and significance (Coughlan & Brannick, 2005; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Holian, 1999; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). I also describe my own innovations in action research data collection, forms of presenting data, and validity claims.

While researching my own practice and co-researching the use of action research as pedagogy, I was enrolled in doctoral level courses and training that used group relations principles and practices to teach leadership (for a description of a similar doctoral course see Parks, 2005). My exposure to this pedagogical method, concurrent with my teaching, led to a unique experience of learning about leadership within the context of actually attempting to exercise leadership (Heifetz, 1994). This learning experience, as I detail later, intensely influenced the way I engaged in my teaching and the analysis of my data. Further, I describe how my doctoral research courses introduced me to action research (Chandler & Torbert, 2003; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Lewin, 1946; Stringer, 1999), a participatory, democratic form of research that includes stakeholders and may be employed when change or influence is desired in one's own context. Action research has been likened to a large family tree of research philosophies (Noffke, 1997, 2009) and I discuss its branches later in this document. My exposure to action research, along with literature searches, discussions, and brainstorming with colleagues, has facilitated changes in my ideas about what teaching and learning can be.

Through these influences I began to see the possibilities for using action research in the courses I was teaching. I identified inconsistencies between how I wanted to teach and learn, and how I actually taught and learned. I felt myself swinging back and forth,

wanting to control my class authoritatively in one moment and wanting to share my authority and collaborate with them during others. I celebrated the moments between us that fell somewhere in between these extremes, and agonized over the moments that were unproductively either-or. To address these experiences, I began by using a basic plan presented in *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* (Coughlan & Brannick, 2005) to engage in introductory action research for the purpose of improving my practice and my students' learning. I started simply by diagnosing things I thought needed attention in my teaching, reflecting on them, planning intervention into them, and then acting on those plans. As I learned more, my engagement and plans became as much about my learning as they were about that of my practice and students' learning. I'll recount how I soon determined that to teach and learn in a manner consistent with my values as a teacher and learner, I would need to invite the students to share more deeply in the inquiry process with me. I moved forward by being transparent with the students, telling them about my efforts to reflect in real-time about my facilitation, learning, and reflection, encouraging them to do the same. In later cycles, I eventually invited the students to gather and analyze data with me, make changes to the curriculum, reflect on the process, and share the authority of interpretation about what was happening. Though they effectively took up this challenge at some points, like me, they often struggled greatly to author their own learning experiences. At many points, we attempted to collaboratively inquire about the experience of authoring our respective learning experiences, I as a doctoral student and they as undergraduates, since we could identify with one another's experiences. It often happened in a remarkably parallel manner,

which I present and explore further (Getz, 2009; Heifetz, 1994). For each cycle of research, I will explain my process and learning, summarize the literature I consulted, describe the disciplines the students and I practiced, present the disconfirming evidence we sought (or that found us!), reveal my foibles and failures, and the changes I planned for each subsequent cycle of research. I will then present a description and analysis of the overarching learning and transformations, accompanied by my perspective on the personal and group psychological dynamics at play.

Methodology

I take a radical methodological turn in my dissertation in contrast to prevailing frameworks of scientific methodology. Inquiries that follow the scientific method propose hypotheses, test them using random, unbiased procedures, and seek outcomes that are universal and replicable, capable of predicting future results. In contrast, action research inquiries are adaptable, and emerge out of observations in a particular context. Research processes in action research follow a cyclical and recursive process involving working hypotheses, actions, and reflections for application toward further observations, questions, actions and reflections (Bradbury & Reason, 2003; Lewin, 1946).

Furthermore, I depart even from some predominant action research methodologies. Predominant forms of action research do not attend to the interactions of the co-researchers as the primary aim of their action research, nor do they attempt to investigate one another's interpretations of action in-the-moment. Even action research approaches that are educational in focus do not use the actual class as the subject of research for the purpose of enacting change and timely leadership for its duration. Some

come close to studying the actual class of students and teacher but are engaged in role-playing, outside environments, or simulation-based learning, not real-time learning involving the content of class time. In accord with the general values of action research I subsequently present one of my unique contributions in this dissertation: the incorporation of the voices and interpretations of those who would traditionally be categorized as subjects, the students. However, I expand this value into a deeper, more dynamic, in-the-moment incorporation of these voices and interpretations treated as authoritative for that moment and for the present moment. I argue that my approach is radical in three senses: (a) my intent to integrate first-, second-, and third-person perspectives (Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Reason & Torbert, 2001; Torbert & Associates, 2004), with special emphasis on the second person; (b) my openness to double- and triple-loop findings (Torbert & Associates, 2004), not just single-loop hypothesis testing; and (c) my integration of the interpretations and data analysis of my co-researchers, my students. This dissertation recounts my efforts at developing a method of emancipatory group inquiry rooted deeply in collaboration and mutuality. Later, in a more detailed discussion of methodology and validity I will expand on the implications these departures from traditional research methods bring, with brief attention to the journey through the dissertation stages.

Purpose of the Study

The initial purpose of this research was to liberate and transform my own teaching. It quickly moved toward the liberation and transformation of my students' learning, and eventually spiraled into an enduring endeavor to experience the liberation

and transformation of inquiry together as a class, a researcher, and then partly as a dissertation committee. In early drafts of this document, I resisted owning the deeper insinuations of some of these as my purposes, namely, that I wanted liberation from oppressive, authoritarian forms of education as much as my students did and that in taking on the role of revolution leader I was attempting to liberate myself. At an even deeper level, I would later uncover ways in which I was unconsciously reenacting the same type of oppressive power and authority I had felt subjugated to as a student over the years. Consequently, I have felt whipsawed between the guidance of my heart and conflicting concepts about what a “proper” dissertation must look and sound like (Grogan, Donaldson, & Simmons, 2007). When I have lost contact with my heart about this, my efforts at understanding my purpose and my writing have become faint-hearted, my writing voice switching from crisp to dull. And like my students, it has been at the instigation and encouragement of my advisors, peers, and colleagues that I have found a voice to ultimately give public life and personal voice to this research project. And in that voice, I will posit that a specific paradigm of action research, action inquiry, offers a unique way to establish and develop a generative community of inquiry, through which to transform the undergraduate classroom. This model challenges typical ways of learning in universities by offering a space for students to examine the sense of ownership (Fletcher, 2008) they have over their own learning process and by opening spaces for all of us to exercise a sense of personal authority and power. This research was conducted to enhance my own practice of teaching and facilitation, to bring into alignment my deepest values and my professional practice, and to provide the same, self-efficacious

opportunities for development for my students. My ideal outcome is that this research would become available to students, teachers, and others looking to transform their learning or working relationships from within their own group contexts.

Action Research and Undergraduate Teaching

I've come to action research as a way of addressing my topic beyond the limitations of existing research "on" classrooms, "on" programs, "on" students. There is a gap in the literature regarding undergraduate education that involves students, constitutes research "with" students (Heron & Reason, 2001), and incorporates multiple territories of experience (Torbert & Associates, 2004). Action research allows me to tell multiple sides of this learning and teaching story, permitting inclusion and the participation of those who would be silent subjects in the gaze of traditional research. In addition, it includes observations of both internal and external experiences as data to be integrated. I will present a summary of the literature on including internal and external territories of experience later in the dissertation document. For brevity's sake here, I will say that just as qualitative research methods offer a more descriptive side of the quantitative research story, particularly different interpretations, action research offers yet more description of the qualitative research story. This approach attempts to reveal to those involved, real-time data through varied forms of feedback, about the relationship between their own intentions, strategies, behavior, and the consequent effects. Action researchers may obtain more descriptive data than researchers who are limited to qualitative methods alone because they include experience-based observations from the subjects of study, and the researcher as data, and provide opportunities for the researcher

and subjects to share interpretation of that data in real time. Likewise, the experience of researching together is also included for analysis making the data on hand wider, more complex, and gathered by all of those involved.

Even more unique to action research is that the data and evidence that are gathered from these multiple perspectives are all considered authoritative. The interest is rarely in identifying some average of the responses, but rather, for action purposes, the very distinctness of the second-person voices is key. Collaborative interpretation in action research settings could be seen as a highly sophisticated and vulnerable form of member checking, and as such is viewed as enhancing the validity of findings.

Participants, formerly called subjects, are also involved in designing parts of the study, for example, identifying generative themes (Freire, 1970), questions, hypotheses, or issues that seem the most salient to that group in their context. Rather than beginning research with a question or hypothesis that remains static throughout, action researchers discover questions that arise out of experience and begin to hypothesize and test those hypotheses with participants in real-time. This approach allows the questions to change as answers to them emerge. Fundamental to this type of research is the conviction that the persons involved are experts of their own experience and therefore should be consulted before, throughout, and after any inquiry into it.

The standards by which I gathered data while conducting action research were initially similar to those of direct qualitative (e.g., ethnographic, phenomenological) inquiry. As the initiating researcher, I collected field notes and observations in a systematic manner and created domains to categorize themes and significant conclusions

that emerged from them. I consistently checked my domains, themes, conclusions, and connections with the students in the course, both one-on-one and as a group, in an informal discussion style. Checking my evaluations and conclusions with the students in several settings served to enhance the trustworthiness of the data I was recording and to test whether the meanings I assigned to the data reflected the meanings the student were also assigning to the data. When we came upon differences between our interpretations or between student interpretations, we took time to explore those differences through discussion, reflection, and writing, believing them to be informative gauges of our research collaboration. In addition, the discussion-based form of member checking allowed me to model a method of collaborative reflection for the students, and created space for the students to inquire *with* me into what was happening in our class. This paradigm opens up space for the person holding the traditionally power-full position in the classroom, the teacher, to inquire into the power differential present in that position to those subjected to it, the students. Action research allowed me as the researcher to acknowledge such interaction with the students as valuable to the research outcomes as well as the benefit of input by them in the framing and reframing of the research.

The research presented in this dissertation is also fundamentally distinct from qualitative research, in that I, as the researcher, had both insider *and* outsider status. More typically, the qualitative researcher is a third party observer in a study (i.e., ethnography, case study) and makes efforts not to “go native.” But, as the instructor of the class as well as a researcher using action inquiry as pedagogy, I was an insider. In addition, when I collaborated with those whom I was researching, I violated the principle

of objectivity required by positivist research methodologies. As is consistent with action research, the collaborative stance of this research includes the students and I practicing action inquiry together as the collective “subject” of inquiry. Rather than the subject of the research being “out there,” the subject included what was “right here” for me, for them, for us as a class. The data from our life together quickly showed “us” to be a very complicated, compelling subject.

Origins of My Questions

In this section I discuss the origins of my developing and increasingly layered research questions and initially present those questions at the start of chapter two. After teaching a few courses in my early years as a graduate student, I became aware that I was working with an oppressed people; undergraduate students. That sounds dramatic, but in my experience, the oppression of students’ minds and hearts can be as real and painful and socially destructive as more familiar forms of oppression (e.g., political, religious). I don’t mean the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1970) in strictly the Freirian sense, although that text has been an inspiring companion for my journey. In my experience, many students have become downright robotic. They come to class, repeat what has been assigned, and jump through every hoop they are asked to. But they aren’t alive in their role as student. They seem burdened, overwhelmed, solemn, and without the wonder of curiosity. They are often difficult to engage in lively debates, even over controversial issues. I wanted something different for them, different for me, an experience that transcends a grade on a transcript. Early in my teaching, I felt idealistic in every sense about the ways I would soften students, engage them, and inspire them. But it didn’t

work. I employed elementary experiential learning techniques and problem-based learning (Hmelo-Silver, 2004) in a few courses and although some students were more interested in attending, I don't think there were any paradigms shifting.

The “professional student” or “entitled student consumer” archetype of the 21st century is described in the higher education and student attitude literature as having low self-esteem, being exploitative in relationships, more anxious than their lower achieving peers, and engaged in more academic dishonesty (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2010). These are not students for whom learning is an act of curiosity and wonder. The literature convincingly shows that students’ narcissistic, consumerist view of higher education are influenced by generational differences in parenting, K-12 schooling, the increased marketing of universities, technological speed and connectivity, and current university culture (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). Relationships between models of higher education and the millennial cohort of students have reportedly become transactional in nature and are thus seen as problematic (Feiertag & Berge, 2008; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). Many agree that the model of university as business, student as customer, and degree as receipt for services rendered, has a negative impact on the core values of education (Singleton-Jackson, Lumsden, & Newsom, 2009). Similarly, Freire (1970) famously critiqued the “banking model” of classroom teaching, the belief that students are empty banks to be filled with deposits by experts, and instead suggested a “pedagogy of the oppressed” that would treat the student as a learner and as a co-creator of knowledge. Even though the business and banking models persist in higher education,

I assert that universities have great potential to develop and excellent resources to humanely and collaboratively nurture curiosity and transformational learning.

CHAPTER TWO

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

This dissertation departs from standard doctoral research reports in structure and organization. A discussion of methods traditionally appears as one cohesive chapter in a dissertation. As a reflection of the evolutionary nature of this cyclical research paradigm, the methods and practices for this study will be expressed chronologically as they were learned, incorporated, constructed, authored, and enacted. Mirroring the responsive and cyclical nature of action research I will subsequently describe, this document will present method, literature, data, and findings via a chronological narrative that unfolds cyclically.

Research Questions

Before I knew they would be my dissertation research questions, I consulted literature on method, content, and existing scope on the living research questions that emerged out of my practice:

- How do I align my deepest values with my practice of teaching?
- How do I share this exploration with students?
- How do I invite my students to align their values with their practice of learning?
- How might we do this work collaboratively?
- How does collaboration enhance this work?
- How do I share this with others?

The research questions came as I worked, and evolved as new data came to light. Sometimes this happened in the moment of experience, and at others times, it emerged upon reflection through subsequent planned action. What began as an inquiry into my

own teaching for the sake of making my personal values and professional practice congruent then became a more encompassing, emancipatory inquiry into the working life of groups. As I continued, the stakes grew higher. The more committed I became to vulnerability with the students and the more engagement I asked for from them the riskier it felt, but my sense of the potential for higher order learning and depth of purpose for all of us persisted. At more moments than I can count, I experienced a surge of energy that aligned my heart and research purposes, and subsequently propelled me forward in the work. Later in the dissertation I expand on experiences like these that drew me toward the engagement of participatory teaching paradigms and helped to conceive of this project as my dissertation undertaking. My teaching at USD began as a way to finance my doctoral education, but the research questions and data organically generated during the living of it, became so compelling I felt it *had* to be the subject of my dissertation work. Herr and Anderson (2005) write that action researchers “can expect that their work will contribute to their sense of being-in-the-world, to their praxis, and to the larger conversation regarding the topic under study” (p. 70).

As I moved through the three years of exploration of these questions, I systematically kept three journals. One was for “work,” to keep track of my relative successes and failures, lest my performance reviews require an accounting for the unconventional teaching style I was becoming known for amongst the students. A second journal was for “personal” journaling and recorded my deep thinking, reflections, values, intuitions, confusions, and general working out of thoughts regarding my practice. The third journal was for my “student” endeavors since my doctoral courses,

certifications, conferences, and course work were challenging my paradigms for teaching and learning at a parallel intensity to my students'. The material from these journals will be explored alongside the literature, more traditional forms of qualitative data gathering (e.g., field notes, member-checking, document analysis, observations), and narrative accounts of these interlevel dynamics (Carspecken, 1996; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Coughlan & Brannick, 2005; Ellis & Bochner, 2000) in the order in which they occurred and as they are relevant. In all three journals, there are themes heavily paralleled in the students' work and process. I discuss my difficulty in giving myself full permission to let go of conventional boundaries, and my fear of my own sense of authority and power in teaching. Even having three journals separating the categories reflects the early belief that the three were going to somehow be discrete and distinct. My later analysis demonstrated otherwise.

I systematically accumulated data on my professional practice, an expression of my desire to improve and interpret the quality and significance of my teaching in my specific context. I was addressing my local practice of teaching undergraduate students at USD, in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences, in the Department of Leadership Studies. I wanted to increase my understanding of and effectiveness at the pedagogical practices in which I was involved. Therefore, I systematically collected data in order to be prepared to publish any findings or learning that might prove transferable or translatable to other contexts and practices. Publications are most often considered the currency of academic life, and as a doctoral student I was eager for each opportunity to unearth a possible subject matter for one. One's job can often provide research

connections or opportunities and such was the case with my teaching fellowship. This is especially true for action research projects as I was soon to discover in my literature searches (Coughlan & Brannick, 2005; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Although I was interested in dissertation topics more closely aligned with my background in sociology and religious studies, a series of realizations and conversations led me to recognize that this effort at transparent, mutual, collaborative inquiry is the contribution I'd like my doctoral work to make. Recognizing that this form of living, participatory pedagogy and pulsing, shadowed, research inquiry is more deeply rooted in my own personal narrative of learning, drew me to it. This aspect of my narrative will also be included for analysis, as I concurrently found myself going through much of what the students were going through in my own role as a student. Like my students, I struggled with my sense of purpose and identity in the acts of teaching and learning, as well as relating to those in positions of authority over me in those endeavors.

In this dissertation, I critically analyze, synthesize, organize, and interpret this accumulation of data in order to make tentative conclusions, provide descriptions, ask new questions, build meaning, and unveil new directions and applications for this pedagogy and research method. As the document unfolds, I explain in an ongoing way the research and analysis choices I made and am making as my inquiry progressed (Reason & Bradbury, 2006) as well as identify my evolving, increasingly inclusive methods of data gathering, analysis, and synthesis. From my teacher, student, and researcher roles, I include data from my work, student, and personal journals, class notes, graphics, personal art, written and meditative reflections, papers, interviews, email

communications, and records of conversations of relevance. From the students, as individual co-researchers and across cohorts, I include data from their coursework in the form of journals, class notes, graphics, written and electronic reflections, papers, interviews, email communications, and notes or mentions of conversations that they found relevant. From “us” as a community of inquiry, I will include group level, co-researched data, which includes collaborative documents, notes from conversations, web-based discussion threads, graphic illustrations, shared documents, academic conference presentations, reflection discussions, and cluster email communications from our course. I have interpreted these both by myself and with students with increasing depth of purpose. I began with superficial levels of inquiry to improve my own practice and share more meaningful levels of learning with the students. I started inviting collaboration with the students for the sake of immediate revision of the course in progress and for the next iteration of the course, and then moved toward collective interpretation for the sake of developing my own leadership by teaching collaboratively and reflectively. In the process I became aware of my enthusiasm for the group’s working life together and came to realize that constructing a classroom as a collaborative and reflexive community of inquiry was my real passion. Our class on leadership was the group that worked in this way, and as a result, it developed both the teacher’s and students’ exercise of leadership. Schon (1983) writes,

There is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing “messes” incapable of technical solution . . . in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern. (p. 42)

Indeed, at times I felt my students and I had gotten ourselves into some swampy, lowland messes but the joy of finally operating on the plane of our deepest human concerns seemed overwhelmingly worth it. To be sure, not everything went smoothly and not all students were enthusiastic. In fact there were some that flat out refused at different times to participate in the inquiry methods and some that only completed only the technical assignments in order to pass the course. These moments are as much a part of this study as any others that may be deemed “successful.” I am committed to making space for them in an ongoing way, that is, when recounting each semester I will not avoid presenting my hesitations, questions, and difficulties in the belief that inclusion of them adds to the validity of the study. With the action research values of developing and responding to feedback as one progresses in research, I was able to continue in meaningful ways even if there were what traditional research studies would call “dropouts” or outliers. Only one of the total 43 students to come through this course with me chose not to respond to communication from me in some form following the course. I take special consideration in the dissertation of this student and the others who I would categorize as “along for the ride but not engaged.” Their situations and perspectives are authoritative data as well and have something significant to say about my facilitation of this technique and more. Even so, my developing relationship with the students that took up their authority as co-researchers (however hard won it was) has been deep, risky, and powerfully transformative. My regard for them has matured to the extent that I had an inside joke with one of my colleagues that starts a few weeks in to every semester, “Have you fallen in love with them yet?” The answer is always eventually, “Yep.” When

trudging together through that which is incapable of technical solution, or when technical solutions seem devoid of vitality, this work is life bringing. I am beginning to see my personal role, in many contexts (e.g., student, teacher, family of origin) as similar to that of a translator and that my leadership role is often to help allow for conversations like these to take place. I feel at my highest potential when I am able to act as a translator through which others can see the correlation between transformative truths, collaborative learning and teaching moments. In my personal spiritual and psychological work I have discovered that when at my best, I am able to access what is true and make it available to others “in the moment.” My best work is as the catalyst to processes like these, facilitating others to begin working, and joining them in it. Of course, I have inconsistencies and fears, missteps and mistakes and I’ve had to fight hard past discouragements and resistances internal and external. I am certain I would not have persisted in it without great encouragement and camaraderie.

Support for Inquiry

As a researcher and student, I have been fortunate to exist within the framework of another community of inquiry made up of several professors and doctoral colleagues, who have also served as advisors, supervisors, mentors, advocates, competitors, and critical friends. This network of individuals is a remarkably intuitive group committed in personally distinctive ways to the role of inquiry in teaching, learning, and leadership. I will include as data for analysis, my reflections on conversations with members of this network, email content, papers, and editorial comments of early versions of this document. Our interactions ranged from transformational to detrimental, and my roles in

these relationships have ranged from fully engaged to missing-in-action. I include them, with strong urging from my dissertation chair, in the hopes that our messy, though purposeful process of inquiry and the transformation of teaching and learning together as teachers and learners might be communicated as well.

In specific, three people in this community became my dissertation committee members. They directly introduced, trained, disciplined, and mentored me through these research paradigms and personal practices. I introduce them individually with some depth here as an indication of their influential and collaborative role in the development and expression of this research. I also introduce them in order to reflect the nested complexity of our interwoven roles during this project, which served to both strengthen and muddy the completion and presentation of an action research dissertation. Action research is “characterized by its use of autobiographical data” and therefore, researchers are “clearly required to study themselves” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 77). And I would add it requires those who are guiding the researcher to study themselves. Reason and Bradbury (2006) state that,

A key dimension of quality [in action research] is to be aware of the choices, and to make those choices clear, transparent, articulate, to your selves, to your inquiry partners, and, when you start writing and presenting, to the wider world. (p. xxiii)

As such, these dissertation committee members and critical friends “should anticipate that supervising an action research dissertation is likely to become more intense and relational than it is for traditional dissertations” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 78). From early on in this process, various pairings of us have been asking the question, “Should an action research dissertation committee function differently from a

traditional dissertation committee?” In other words, in our work together, could we enact or at least strive to enact the territory-encompassing, real-time inquiry the students and I have been striving to enact? At times, we could answer yes but at most others the answer is no. We’ve struggled with job, family, and time constraints. Though that sounds like a convenient scapegoat for me, I’d speculate that it is representative of each of our experiences at different moments. I am willing to claim that I’ve struggled deeply with the material, the process, and with the members for varied reasons at varied points in the process. I explore this to some extent late in the dissertation with the help of the committee, and boundaries set by them each individually. As a result of my initial questions, the committee did agree to commit our interactions to analysis, as part of this dissertation research. There has, however, been little interaction over the years of this process, and it has not been together as a foursome but rather in pairs when it has occurred. I had high hopes in the design stages of this study that throughout the dissertation document there would be “commentary” from me, various committee members, or from us as a whole committee that would at once (a) model and enhance the validity of the real-time analysis we are espousing, (b) come clean about the muddiness of collaborative work that endeavors to be truly mutual, (c) express the layered, overlapping nature of reflective research, (d) record our decision-making processes and the issues at stake for those looking to complete or advise an action research dissertation as well. But alas, it hasn’t happened. My students, especially the fourth cohort, struggled mightily to complete projects together while also exercising a thoughtful, mutual, reflective manner, and my committee and I have acted out a similar struggle. As the

students eventually did, we too ultimately revisit the struggle and at least make efforts at thoughtful, disciplined analysis of it.

The Dissertation Committee

When embarking on this unusual type of dissertation, I sought dissertation committee members who had also undertaken uncommon research opportunities in their work. Fortunately, two researchers meeting this description were present at my institution, and a third was gracious enough to join us from outside of it. Steve Gelb is the professor at USD who introduced me in a doctoral research methods course to action research in general, as well as to the specific work of Bill Torbert. Steve encouraged me to research my teaching approach early on and I ultimately asked him to be my dissertation chair. He has been an associate dean in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences during my tenure as a student, now is a department chair, and holds a role in the department of teaching and learning as well. Steve has been present, and therefore a witness, to some of my group relations experiences though not in direct relation to the roles I held there. Steve has presented and attended national and international action research conferences and has researched, published, and presented on educational, committee, and group applications of action research, as well as the Institutional Review Board's interaction with action research proposals.

My second institutional member, Cheryl Getz, has been present through all of my group relations experiences and held several roles in my training and development there. She has held many roles influencing my personal development as well as my teaching and the development of this dissertation work. She has at overlapping moments over the

past four years been my supervisor, my professor, my trainer, my conference co-presenter, a co-participant in an action research methods class with Bill Torbert, my committee member, and my department chair. Cheryl has published and presented on inquiry-based teaching, action research and education, and group applications of action inquiry. I describe later in the document an undergraduate course Cheryl designed and teaches that is a group relations conference-style course designed to teach leadership while exercising leadership. Cheryl and Steve have had overlapping working relationships within the school, as associate dean and chair, professors, curricular committee members, co-authors, and staff members at institutionally sponsored group relations conferences.

My third and outside member, Bill Torbert, began as an author I read with great interest and as I'll recount later, became an informal advisor, mentor, friend, and eventual formal dissertation committee member after we met at an earlier San Diego Action Research Conference. Later, Bill became my professor for a doctoral level action research methods course and was also an observer in one of the group relations conferences I participated in. Bill is the premier thought leader in action inquiry for multiple applications, and has written numerous pieces addressing forms of self-study-in-action (Torbert, 1976, 1991, 2001; Torbert & Associates, 2004; Torbert, Livne-Tarandach, Herdman-Barker, Nicolaidis, & McCallum, 2008). Among all his professional and academic accolades, his greatest strength could be considered methodological in a very practical sense of the term. His academic and personal methods of working and being are interwoven. Bill espouses his own theoretical contributions and

also enacts them authentically, and accessibly. Although his thinking and conceptual work are sometimes abstract, his personal work is intensely earthly and human. This is extremely uncommon or at best infrequent among intellectual innovators and pioneers. Most suitably for a methodological and philosophical model for this project, Bill has (a) woven together action inquiry and teaching, (b) researched his teaching collaboratively with students, and (c) written collaboratively about it. In short, he is more than the methodological “specialist” the doctoral handbook calls for on a dissertation committee. Fortunately, all three of these committee members have shown an interest in my intellectual and personal development as a practitioner, scholar, and person, the knowledge of which consistently humbles me, causes me anxiety, and inspires me to do the same with my students. As a result of, and sometimes in spite of, each of our relationships, I have produced this piece of research.

Researcher as Instrument

I’ll introduce myself as well since I am also part of the research. When utilizing such a complicated research mechanism—the researcher as instrument to gather data—one should understand something about my work and history. I am native to southern California and graduated from University of California at Santa Barbara in the sociology of religion and religious studies. I wrote an honors thesis analyzing generational differences in the marketing of US religion and spent much of my extra-curricular time engaged in student organizations. I went to Princeton Theological Seminary and graduated with a Master of Divinity, completing a thesis that calls for new forms of spiritual community to address generational senses of belonging. I then spent two years

at Baylor University studying for a PhD in sociology, studying leadership in various religious contexts as well as the cognitive processes of educational self-efficacy. I enjoyed my studies there, but took a break to battle cancer for two years and subsequently transferred to the University of San Diego to complete the Ph.D., now in leadership studies. Most of my academic career, when I had a choice about it, has been about acknowledging the spirit of the learner whether it is my own or another's. Over these years of education, I've felt increased confidence in thinking about these things in ways that are "outside of the box" or nontraditional, the most recent, deep, and transformative of which will be presented here.

In my journey, I've found that I make new discoveries and see my data from new angles during the act of writing about it. This happens in the moment of taking notes, later while journaling as a reflective exercise, in electronic discourse through email conversations and online discussion threads, and the reporting of it for academic purposes. Looking for new relationships or findings in the research through the act of writing up the research, has been illuminating for me. As such, the actual act of writing up the research, bringing it to text, contributes to my analysis of it. Textual communication depends on the decoding of the reader, and the encoding of the communication depends on the writer using the signs of language; analogy, metaphor, sentence structure, word choice, to convey meaning. Presumably, as the qualitative writer linguistically encodes (writes) to convey the research, fresh analysis is necessarily occurring since there is no "one correct way" to textually express an idea or experience. The writer creates a textual description, deliberately choosing language with an

awareness of its nuance and connotation just as a painter chooses color or a composer chooses instruments. This is itself an act of reflection and re-creating that which is being described, and produces a new artifact of the research. New findings are sure to come from this act and they have in such significant ways for me. This is a sort of semiotic act since the reflective search for the meanings is expressed in the signs of language (text). In this analysis, I'm searching reflectively during the research process but also *during* the writing of the research process for conclusions and meaning that emerge beyond the meanings I already had assigned to the experience. For example, I wrote and reflected upon much of the narrative content in this dissertation during or immediately following the semester that it occurred. Later, the whole collection of these written texts and reflections were ripe for a fresh re-reading, editing, and reflective semiotic analysis toward contribution to the final dissertation document. By re-writing the text, re-examining, and reflecting again on the experiences recorded, I've discovered new or multi-faceted findings and conclusions. The notion of reflective analysis during the construction of a text is closely related to the idea of linguistic constructionism, which suggests that we construct our reality when we express it with cultural symbols and context, primarily with language. This view builds on Kant's distinction between the world itself and our interpretation of that world, and his assertion that there is no reality outside of our construction of it, language included. With this philosophical stance undergirding the writing, reflection, and analysis of this data, I am not looking for or desiring to communicate universal, or generalizable truths. These results will not be useable as "stand alone" formulas or prescriptions. Rather, I am seeking to demonstrate

and analyze collaborative practice in one context, so that you, as the reader, may read this with a mind to do this type of research for yourself, with your “others,” and in your contexts. In this sense, my hope is that this research will offer you vision about the transferability of these practices, applications, and learning to your life contexts. Indeed, they have served me well in the other contexts of my life though I primarily reflect their application to my teaching and learning in this document. If this dissertation aids you in the translation between contexts I am pleased but, if you feel “lost in translation” please contact me as we cannot attempt this type of being-in-the-world apart from a network of “friends” who are also attempting this risky, beautiful, fulfilling work.

On Literature

I have found very little literature reporting on undergraduate courses facilitated collaboratively from an inquiry-based, action-oriented, process-driven stance. One text, *The Changing College Classroom* (Torbert & Hackman, 1969), gathers thought leaders on innovative undergraduate teaching approaches. And although it is over 40 years old, is strangely timely for this study and wider discussion. It points out the primacy of the student’s interaction with faculty for their overall impression and experience of the university. Written in an era of overt cultural scrutiny of institutions, especially educational ones, it aims to “sound a constructive note” introducing innovative, experimental case studies of classroom teaching at the college level that incorporate varied forms of inquiry (Torbert & Hackman, 1969). Another collection may be found in *Student Perceptions in the Classroom* (Schunk & Meece, 1992), especially the chapter on instructional discourse and student engagement (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1992). Other

than these, case studies, collections, or published discussions of these types of teaching approaches are rare (Nahavandi, 2006). Although there are reports of action research projects completed by students of all ages (Alderson, 2000; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Bulpitt & Martin, 2005; Corbett & Wilson, 1995; Danby & Farrell, 2004; Fielding & Bragg, 2003; Groundwater-Smith & Downes, 1995; Hadfield & Hawe, 2001; Kellett, 2003; Leitch et al., 2007; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1992; Zuber-Skerritt, 1992), they are in every instance focused on an organization outside of the classroom or encased within a simulation, role-play, or external case study or project (Carpenter, 2011; Deeley, 2010). In the studies I identify, the class then engages in reflection on the work they are doing in or for these external or hypothetical settings. There are many published accounts of this type of reflection on outside experiences “brought into the classroom and used as the substance of learning from experience” (Bulpitt & Martin, 2005) framed as participatory or community action research, service-learning (Deeley, 2010), experiential learning (Barbuto, 2006), problem-based learning (Barbour, 2006; Barrows, 1998; Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Bridges & Hallinger, 2006; Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Nahavandi, 2006), or undergraduate cross-listed courses that assert a leadership learning element, sometimes called First-year Learning Communities (Gabelnick, 1990; Jones, Laufgraben, & Morris, 2006; Nahavandi, 2006; Shapiro & Levine, 1999) or Freshman Interest Groups (Minor, 1997; Rodriguez, Sen, & Boyette, 2003; Schroeder, Minor, & Tarkow, 1999).

Additionally, I've found a gap in the literature regarding inquiry-based, reflective, class-as-case¹ pedagogy in undergraduate education. Which should not be mistaken for the related pedagogy, "case-in-point" (Parks, 2005) also presented in this document.

I haven't found publications that report on the reflective practices of action research explicitly and transparently involving both teacher and the students as co-researchers of their own experience of teaching and learning at the college level. The studies that assert they are conducting reflective action research or inquiry-based research with students most often hold as their purpose some external programmatic reform (e.g., faculty evaluation, course assessment, student satisfaction) (Cook-Slather, 2006, 2009) or social change effort. Under these circumstances, the student "voice" is taken under consideration by decision-makers and treated as informative though not ultimately authoritative for influence in the moment, for the students themselves. While these types of studies are important as they bring the student voice to departmental reform, course design, social problems, campus issues, and curricular learning outcomes, they do not entertain the real-time reform of the course in session as it is occurring.

There are instances of undergraduate learning directed by case-in-point style or group relations conference-type learning. And there is an insightful article outlining one instructor's rejection of the traditional syllabus in his courses (Sigham, 2007) that has inspired instructors to offer their students shared authorship of the course design and structure. These are the closest examples I've found of real-time, undergraduate, action

¹ This should not be mistaken for a related pedagogy, "case-in-point" (Parks, 2005) also presented in this document.

focused research that investigate the interactions of the class as the case to be studied. These forms of co-research often involve very large groups of students, are not systematic or explicit about their practices and disciplines, are often concentrated into day-long or weekend sessions, do not stand on an empirically-grounded, developmental framework, and are not directly replicable in other contexts. The large, intensive class experiences like these are powerful for students coming to an understanding of organizational dynamics in social systems, though they lack the consistent, intimate, scaffolding, and relationship that an ongoing course based on action inquiry offers. If one is keen to do so, the modeling of collaborative reflection practices within an action inquiry based course may be translated into other contexts. As such, this study contributes to a dearth of research regarding collaborative inquiry practices and reflection strategies that address the complexity of learning and teaching with undergraduate students in real time for immediate transformation as well as translation to other contexts.

Several authors have published directions for reporting action research; there are many versions and plenty of debate about which are most appropriate and effective. I'll present the major ones in the dissertation in the order I encountered them, but I share an obscure one here in pursuit of simplifying what may accurately seem to be a very complex research approach. During my literature searches I came across an insightful and amusing scholar, psychologist, and author, Nigel Mellor. He has developed the idea of "messy method" (1998, 1999, 2002) as a means of communicating nontraditional inquiry studies such as action research. He offers a succinct, news headlines-type description of his own dissertation study process. When I read it, I felt that it was in large

part the “two minute elevator speech” I wished I could write about my own project. So, at one particularly muddy moment in my conceptualization of this project, I challenged myself to rewrite and paraphrase his headlines-type description for my own project.

Using my notes, I reproduce my version of it here as a brief, accessible conceptualization of this dissertation project,

I experienced a curiosity about my teaching work and decided to investigate it. I began without a clear concept of method or research questions. I learned to investigate this aspect of my work by doing and then found approaches others had used to do similar investigation of their own work. As practice is eclectic, so I drew upon many approaches and practices in my research. Some of these are similar to qualitative research strategies and some are different. When conflict or inconsistencies arise within me, the ethics of professional practice, the insight of friends and mentors establish priorities for continuing my research practice. I’ve been keeping a reflective journal for each my work, my research, and my learning. I research all three of them ongoingly. During my inquiry I’ve uncovered areas of my practice, which I wished were different. As a professional, I acted to change these, and eventually to inquire with others about them. Certain areas of my practice with others I was curious about. I set out to change these, to understand them, to invite others to join me. My journals record my thoughts, hypotheses, and feelings about my experiences of learning and how I’ve come to value this type of research process that is deeply collaborative. Sharing the research process with students and with colleagues feels risky at times and comforting at others. There’s a profound spiritual component to this type of research too, though it is more complex and multi-faceted than I can express at this point. A crucial element in maintaining my research is the empowering form of supervision and partnership I experienced from colleagues and others. I have needed continual support to pursue this type of inquiry, from spouse, friends, colleagues, and family. Professional presentation of this ongoing inquiry has given me encouragement, acting partly as a kind of “cheering on.” Reflection on my practice involves not just criticism but also celebration, which provides another source of support. Though I’ve changed many things, my ongoing research has also served to reinforce certain facets of practice rather than alter them. This is far from a solitary activity, even though the dissertation process is designed to be isolated. I engaged and continue to engage dialogue with friends, colleagues, spouse, complete strangers, former students, critical friends, authors, and conferences. Making meaning of this process has emerged slowly, and collaboratively through both structured and unstructured reflection. I hope to continue in such a manner indefinitely (Miller, 2009)!

CHAPTER THREE

BACKGROUND

Researcher as a Student

Before I was exposed to action research practices or group relations, before I was a doctoral student, I began reflection on my life as a student. Here I share my own story of being a student to illustrate some of the experiences that shaped my perspectives of undergraduate learning. Many of these directly make up the frameworks from which I re-experienced undergraduate life, though this time in a teaching role. I've seen parallels with my students' experiences for similar things and sought to explore the experiences they have that are dissimilar from mine. Over time this made me particularly attuned, critical, sometimes sympathetic, and definitely committed to addressing and problematizing this with them. One prominent action research author and editor explains that,

Action researchers are, relative to conventional social scientists, more autobiographical in their expression (we call it reflexive). Because we acknowledge that all claims to knowledge are shaped by interests (consider that knowledge claims are never neutral), what may seem like autobiographical self-indulgence is offered to help contextualize the claims, create transparency and also to anchor ownership of expression that can otherwise masquerade as worryingly disembodied and neutral. We might say that reflexivity is as much a part of explaining any project as is the conventional article's array of methodological and literature review statements at the outset of most articles. (Bradbury-Huang, 2010, p. 95)

After graduating from a small private high school, I attended the University of California at Santa Barbara and promptly found myself lost in a sea of course sections, teaching assistants, and 18,000 fellow students. I changed my major three times before settling on the sociology of religion during my junior year. Decidedly, I made the final

choice as the result of a professor who made an impression that directed my course selections away from those in my previously declared majors. He was different from every other professor I had encountered up until then; I can see now how sophisticated his teaching philosophy was and how intentional he was with students inside and out of the classroom. At the time I appreciated that he was friendly, jovial, and that he treated me as if he already knew me, which was a far cry from other professors who didn't seem to want to know students. He was relaxed in demeanor while managing to be very dynamic about his subject matter.

I was deeply engrossed in individuating during my college years after moving away from home and my strong, close relationships with my parents and adult family friends. I looked to my professors for the kind of direct inspiration, feedback, and encouragement I was used to. This professor, who I'll call Bert, was responsive to these requests, and had an affable way of interacting with my academic work and me. My relationship with him during and after my undergraduate years engaged several realms including intellectual, spiritual, and social. I sought direct inspiration, feedback, and encouragement about my intellectual work and vocational direction I had previously received from my parents, now additionally from him. I see now how my interaction with Bert in particular also contributed to the maturation of my relationships with my parents at home, as they developed (not without the usual back and forth) toward increasingly peer-like relationships. As an apprentice joins an artisan to develop a sense of adulthood and trade, I watched and trained formally and informally with Bert. He intentionally instilled in me a confidence in my intellectual abilities, though not always

by overtly saying so. He suggested I enroll in a doctoral seminar he facilitated during my senior year, demonstrating his belief in my academic imagination and in me. I experienced it as a powerful move, and all semester I relished the intense more peer-like academic interaction between him, the doctoral students, and me. Sometimes he held the seminars in his home and his wife joined us. She was not a trained scholar but was skilled in hospitality and at guiding a conversation forward in which scholarly thinkers could develop their ideas out loud, collaboratively. It took courage for me to enter the conversation on the occasions that I did, and restraint in trying not to reveal the depth of my excitement about being a part of it all. Because of my youth I doubted my authority and ability to keep up intellectually but I felt authorized by Bert. It was during that doctoral seminar that I decided to apply to graduate school to pursue my interests in religion and sociology. The graduate students, Bert, and his wife encouraged me to aim for a higher tier institution than I had previously considered. Blending my interests in religious leadership and sociological scholarship, I applied to a handful of divinity schools and seminaries.

Following my undergraduate graduation, I enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at Princeton Theological Seminary, one of Bert's most compelling suggestions. It was difficult, not only to move from California to New Jersey, but to move into such a competitive, intense institution socially, spiritually, and academically. To steady myself from the disruption of all those realms I worked harder academically, spiritually, and psychologically than I'd ever had to. I attended psychotherapy to sort out a bout with insomnia in my first quarter. I studied Jungian dream psychology, joined in a Freudian

work group, travelled to monasteries for silent retreats, and for leisure and relief frequented the on-campus, graduate student bar, full of pipe smoke and music. All this work became significantly less arduous when I encountered a professor there, who I'll call Paul. He supervised my thesis and offered a similar type of relationship during my time in Princeton that Bert provided for me at UCSB, authorizing me to speak out when I thought it was perhaps outside my age and experience, and eventually encouraging me toward more study, resulting in my doctoral work. Paul is also a sociologist of religion and has focused his scholarship on topics that fall decidedly outside of the mainstreams of sociology or religious studies. In my third year at Princeton, Paul and his wife helped identify a developing theme for me, my curiosity about facilitating generational conversations about spiritual community and belonging. I completed a thesis on those themes with him, proposing that existing spiritual communities in the US, specifically denominational religions, reconsider their efforts at authentic, mutual forms of spiritual community. Completing the thesis process with him was a powerful foray beyond the classwork of my student life to that point and into a non-traditional, freethinking, critical effort at seeing and saying something prophetic about my experience and field of study. I felt great power in speaking so forthrightly and much of it came directly from his courageous, constructive critiques of his area of study and from his encouragement of me to do so in my areas. We met in nontraditional places like the dining commons, or his home and our back and forth dialogue both written and verbal was more like a challenging friendship than the stereotypical professor-student relationship. I felt authorized, smart, and insightful during and after that experience. Indeed it fed my

personal self-concept and student ego but more than that, it pushed me to authorize myself to tell the truth, with personal conviction, about what I saw in a field I was passionate about. I wanted more academic and personal experiences like that.

Upon graduating from Princeton, I entered a doctoral program in sociology at Baylor University that specialized in the scientific study of religion. I had been recruited there through a relationship with another sociologist of religion, whom I'll call John. As a scholar, he is interested in innovating more effective ways of quantitatively studying, measuring, and describing religious values and membership trends in the US as well as religious, historical demographic data. During my time at Baylor, I had a chance to teach undergraduate students in the sociology department as a teaching assistant and guest lecturer and initially loved it. But I started to discover, and confirm with other instructors, that though the students seemed engaged, they weren't doing the self-critical reflection we were asking of them. In one particular lecture I gave on hate crimes in an undergraduate course, I got the feeling that the students were disengaged. This seemed odd since the subject of criminology, specifically a focus on hate crimes, is often of great interest to students in the midst of the introductory sociology curriculum. I paused in my lecture and then asked out loud, "so . . . what's really going on here?" The class was still for several moments, and I sat down on the table in front of the class. After a few more moments, then I asked, "really, why talk about this?" Then some students looked up from their notebooks, and several shifted in discomfort. They waited, presuming I would continue. When it was apparent I wasn't going to, someone piped up in the back of the auditorium. "It's just all too complicated to think about or change—all the factors that

affect crime and hate.” I said only a few more things and returned to the graduate student office to spend time reflecting with colleagues about the interaction.

When I read the reflection papers later that week, many students asserted similarly, “there is no good way” to address “all the factors that affect crime and hate” and therefore many concluded that we should “hope for good education and law enforcement.” The students seemed resistant to seeing the less obvious ways in which our society or economy, let alone the students themselves, perpetuate or at least complicate the issues of crime and hate.

I was having a good experience at Baylor though I wasn’t finding a true motivational fit for my research while I was there. I didn’t really know what I was looking for. I loved Baylor but I loved my husband-to-be more and decided to attempt a transfer after getting married. I left Baylor, got married, and moved to San Francisco during my second year. A week after my honeymoon, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and spent the next year undergoing surgeries and radiation treatment for it. While recovering I searched for sociology programs in California that would be appropriate for transfer. Thinking I would look into the sociology department at the University of California campus near my hometown in San Diego, I mistakenly typed, “sociology religion usd” instead of “sociology religion ucsd” into an online search engine. Instead of the University of California, the University of San Diego’s graduate programs in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences came up as options. I was fascinated and after interviews and investigation the doctoral program became my most exciting lead for completing my doctoral journey. I was accepted to the doctoral program in Leadership

Studies and granted an assistantship that involved teaching in the undergraduate leadership studies minor and administrative work for the group relations based Leadership Institute. I enrolled in the Fall of 2007.

Group Relations Exposure

During that first semester, I was enrolled in a doctoral level course that uses group relations principles and practices to teach leadership theory and practice (for a description of a similar course see Parks, 2005). Often referred to as “case-in-point,” this pedagogy is a form of experiential learning in real time that espouses a highly complex, systems philosophy of organizational dynamics. It is based in early and current psychoanalytic and Tavistock-inspired methodologies of studying groups. Case-in-point teaching views the class as a social system in which macro-realities of organizational life manifest themselves in a micro-setting within specific circumstances. In other words, the distinct problems that crop up in organizational life are often identifiable as universal issues across organizational contexts. In this model of leadership learning, the classroom is treated as a laboratory within which students are invited to negotiate prevalent leadership challenges decision-making, conflict management, factions, consensus finding, and collaboration (Parks, 2005). The classroom is viewed as a social system in which students are expected to work out leadership roles and issues among themselves amidst loosely structured, though intentionally so, intervention from faculty.

In the case-in-point doctoral course, I came to understand the unique experience of learning about leadership within the context of actually trying to exercise leadership. While group relations work is different and distinct from action inquiry, they actually are

distant cousins in purpose and task, studying the self as a part of the system in real-time. Group relations pedagogies have even been categorized as action research approaches (The Tavistock Institute, 2007a, 2007b). Studying myself as a student in the system of a class (though a markedly larger one and composed of graduate students) offered inspiration for the ways I might offer opportunities for my students and me to do so in our class. Part of this research includes an identification of the differences and similarities between the group relations influence in my practice of teaching and the action inquiry framework I have engaged, in both my personal and public study of it. I wrote this about it in one of my journal entries,

Where or when does group relations end and action inquiry begin? It seems confusing at first glance, but really, I might see it as . . . “I speak action inquiry with a group relations accent.” Group relations principles and experiences offer strength and strategies, i.e. holding steady, tolerating uncertainty, etc. for fully engaging my action inquiry disciplines, i.e. territories of awareness, collaborative inquiry, framing . . . but it is in the end disciplined action inquiry. Action inquiry is a much easier “sell” to the layperson anyhow, and isn’t that the world I operate in (desire to influence) most of the time?

Although powerfully informative for my personal practice, perspective, and facilitation, I determined that a group relations, case-in-point pedagogy was beyond my scope of ability, institutional resources and design, and course structure to import to my undergraduate teaching. My various doctoral courses and professional conferences that utilized it and my own brainstorming with colleagues during and after them generated and structured many of my questions about teaching and learning about leadership. In large part, the learning from those courses made it possible for me to survive the agonizing silences and other anxiety producing situations I would later experience as

these are key moments for me and all teachers who make the transition from unilateral to collaborative teaching.

Doctoral Course Content

During that semester my role as a student included the first research course in the doctoral program titled, Leadership, Inquiry, and Research I. The course focused on,

(a) Alternative conceptions of leadership, (b) alternative conceptions of knowledge, (c) the relationship between different notions of leadership and different views of knowledge, and (d) the implications of all of the above for doing research in Leadership Studies. (University of San Diego [USD])

The content in that course included Argyris and Schon's (1978) concepts of double-loop learning, Schon's (1983) reflective practice, Dewey's (1938) theory of inquiry, Freire's problem-posing education, and Lewin's (1946) cycles of research. During this course I was putting together a research plan to gather data for the second semester of leadership seminar I was preparing to teach. Being exposed to good theory on logic and learning, perception and development in this initial research course, coupled with the group relations learning that was ongoing in a theory and practice course and in conferences all combined to author my desire to be more aware in my own practice of teaching.

At the beginning stages of my research I could only imagine myself engaging in this type of practice in my teaching to a certain extent. I initially imagined boundaries limiting the transparency I could embody and I predetermined the "appropriate" and inappropriate times for collaboration with the students. This was in part due to my insecurity about losing control or losing authority with them, though as the document will show, I only began to explore this in later semesters. As the semesters went on I was able

to increase the depth of my investment and vulnerability to incorporate deeper levels of mutuality, sharing more of the authority available to the students and me, as well as integrate more of a participatory pedagogy. This capacity grew alongside the literature I was consulting, the training I was undergoing in my doctoral program, and the teaching experience I was completing. But at this stage, I was only ready and feeling compelled to make efforts at increasing my sense of integrity in my teaching. That is, I saw the possibility of integrating my personal beliefs and values more deeply in my professional teaching. I wanted to respect my students as people and learners, to allow them experiential opportunities to practice leadership rather than just learn about it, to inquire together about power and collaboration, and I wanted to be authentic about my own learning and experience.

The Action Research Stance

As I entered the action research literature, through the doctoral research courses and group relations readings, I found that most action researchers agree that in the western mind, causation of most everything is considered to be linear, and solutions to most difficulties or challenges are approached in a linear fashion (Harvey, 1990; Kuhn, 1962; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Looking for the cause of behavior or attitude with the intention of finding a logical reason for it, or a target for placing blame is a decidedly western habit. When facing an organizational challenge it is counterintuitive and sometimes difficult to find the ways in which we, and the organizations we are a part of contribute to the circular (or spherical!) causation of behaviors or attitudes. In this sense we are more apt to see the problem within the “other” and neglect to acknowledge the

fact that we ourselves are in the circle of causation, consciously or not. Thus, the challenges students of this generational cohort face are in part due to the fact that we (professional members of the university community, teachers at every level, parents) have contributed to the linear expectations and conditioned normalcy of their behavior. Reason and Bradbury (2006) suggest,

We are living as part of a cosmos that is far more interconnected than we have hitherto suspected, a cosmos of non-local correlations and coherence, organized in ways that cannot be explained either by classical or systemic models. (p. 8).

We are a part of a circle of causation by our involvement in it and our connectedness within that circle seems no longer disputable. A constant question in my personal reflection on my teaching and facilitation of the more difficult moments has become, “what role am I playing in this?” It is within this pedagogical “dance” between teacher and students that I’ve sought to hear a different, less linear beat, and attune my students’ ears to hear it as well. To set up my description of the first cycle of teaching research, I will flesh out my process and learning, the literature I consulted, my reflections, and conclude with the changes I planned for the next cycle of research.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

The First Cohort—Events of the Course

The teaching portion of my assistantship was in the undergraduate leadership studies minor sequence and the first course I taught was the capstone, “Leadership Seminar.” The undergraduate bulletin explains that,

This capstone course will allow students to integrate what they have learned throughout the leadership sequence of courses. In seminar fashion, the students will research and discuss various issues facing leaders both now and in the future. Each student will develop a personal philosophy of leadership to which he or she is committed. Case analysis will give the students an opportunity to build policy-making and change-agent skills. (USD)

The first course started out uneventfully although internally, I was keenly aware of the fact that my students, mostly seniors, were only six years younger than I. Being younger than the “average” professor, I felt pulled to both exert and hold my authority as the instructor through an externally rigid classroom structure, while also presenting myself as friendly and peer-like to gain my students approval and participation. I struggled to understand how to engage and utilize both the formal authority of my position, and the informal authority of my age and ability to relate to the students. The power of being named the instructor of record for an undergraduate course appealed to me greatly, especially since I had been a student for so long never yet having worked outside the university setting. Intuitively I knew that achieving a balance of both formal and informal power would make me the most effective and authentic in my teaching role, but if I grew anxious in the moment, my default stance was usually the formal, positional one. And when things felt more secure, I felt at home engaging my informal authority to

bring relation and rapport. I looked forward to the opportunity to have input into a functioning classroom since I had until then held the less powerful, though no less experienced, role of student in them.

From reading the students' first reflection papers, I found that every student had indeed been surprised to see such a young woman as their professor on the first day of class, but nonetheless that first cohort fell in step with my unyielding classroom policies and laughed along with my attempts at witty irony and identification of curricular concepts with pop culture. Fortunately, I was simultaneously experiencing this back and forth as a student during my exposure to an intense form of rigorous self-study through the doctoral course based in group relations philosophy. Later, I describe experiences I had of questioning my teaching values and practices while exploring myself in my role as a student and staff member in my involvement in group relations conference settings.

From the start of this first leadership seminar course, which I billed in the syllabus as a discussion based, seminar style course, the students consistently made clear their preferences for the traditional learning styles and measurements of success. They quizzed me from the first day (to the last!) about grade percentages, and what they should be writing about "exactly." I felt the temptation to engage with them in this way, and on many occasions I did. But upon reflection, I determined the "living inconsistency" I would be if I continued to espouse adaptive leadership theories (along with the department I represented) and yet enacted something technical and traditional in my teaching.

One afternoon, after explaining my fear and awareness of this impending inconsistency to a colleague, I walked across campus to meet with my spiritual director, as I was doing on a regular basis. On the walk, the air was crisp and full of fall sun, and I had some sort of epiphany that both inspired and felt threatening to me, “why not inquire into this as a case study *with* the students?” I literally stopped walking causing a few students to “rear end” me on the busy path I was following. Using myself and the students, “us” as a case study, we could inquire together about how to integrate our learning right there in the moment. I assumed that the content the students had studied in the prerequisite courses (prevailing leadership concepts and theories) espoused an adaptive form of leadership (Heifetz, 1994), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), servant attitudes (Greenleaf, 2002), social change model (Dugan, 2006), learning through service (Dill, 2009), and collaborative action. In this capstone course, designed to integrate some measure of this knowledge, I felt we were not enacting those theories but rather speculating about how one *could*, *would*, or *should* enact them. We did not attempt to engage that content within the very context in which we lived, our classroom. Instead, we used cases and hypothetical situations outside of our classroom that involved other, hypothetical, or unknown individuals. We were studying for and accomplishing the following stated learning outcomes successfully: (a) research and discuss various issues facing leaders; (b) develop a personal philosophy of leadership; and (c) analyze cases to build policy-making and change-agent skills, but the process felt somehow devoid of the pulse and breath of real-life leadership scenarios.

While I began to investigate these questions, the assignments in the course remained status quo. I felt courageous enough during class period discussions though, to bring up the fundamental question I was asking,

Can we learn to practice leadership by studying theory, examining cases of how others led, memorizing scholars' definitions of leadership, or imagining how we ourselves might lead in different contexts?

Their initial answers were more or less in the affirmative. Some of the great graduate business schools are centered on case-study learning so it would follow that it is an effective way to teach leadership and management. In all honesty, I was only beginning to be able to deconstruct these questions myself. In the doctoral case-in-point course my first semester, I was learning to mentally and emotionally hold steady during group discussions. Waiting while the first, technical answers to big questions came to mind and then passed, gave me time and space for deeper thinking and discussion to occur. At first it was agonizing to practice this while teaching. But the students agreed that leadership should require a suspension of one's predetermined assumptions, and so together we started a different type of teacher-student relationship. I loved it. It was difficult and scary but I slowly began to feel less defensive of the "teaching space" and more collaborative in my critical stance about traditional pedagogy. Just asking the students what they thought and felt about *how* they learned or *what* they were learning was exciting to me, even when I was not yet ready to make any really non-traditional changes to our class.

Pre-Reading and Planning

I will begin this section by presenting the more intensive reading I was doing on action research and action inquiry. After that I will explain the ways I began to understand this framework for pedagogy as especially suited to teaching Leadership Studies. Then, I will tell the story of the second cohort, illustrating the themes that emerged from the actual action research study in which I collected data, made observations, and collaborated with students. I will also offer examples of the interventions, methods, and process facilitation experiences involved with conducting this cycle of the study. To orient the reader to the basic development of the course over the semesters I include Table 1 showing the dates of each cohort, as well as when I systematically began my action research (during the second semester cohort), and the addition of each type of action inquiry aim as I became more committed to the participatory framework and collaborative stance.

The spring of 2008 was my second semester at USD and I was headed into my second semester of teaching the leadership seminar. In a required doctoral course on research methods and reviewing literature, I was becoming more informed about action research through a few of the works of Bill Torbert (Chandler & Torbert, 2003; Rooke & Torbert, 1998) and a chapter from Herr and Anderson's (2005) action research dissertation handbook. In an introductory PowerPoint presentation, Steve introduced the basics of the philosophy underpinning action research. I instantly saw application of these specification research approaches to the investigation of my teaching as well as the investigation of my own learning together with my students. Even so, I continued my

doctoral written work on a topic I had begun to research the semester before and wrote the final paper in that course about the application of an economic theory to the field of leadership studies. Concurrently, I continued to look up action research resources and make translation to my classroom context. I discovered that action research is a diverse field of theory with its earliest roots in Kurt Lewin's social psychological work describing,

A collaborative, cyclical process of diagnosing a change situation or a problem, planning, gathering data, taking action, and then fact-finding about the results of that action in order to plan and take further action. (Coughlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 9)

Table 1

Cohorts and Cycles of Research

		1 st Cycle of AR	2 nd Cycle of AR	3 rd Cycle of AR
	1st Cohort Fall 2007	2nd Cohort Spring 2008	3rd Cohort Fall 2008	4th Cohort Spring 2009
Action Inquiry for Sustainability				x
Action Inquiry for Mutuality			x	x
Action Inquiry for Integrity		x	x	x
Action Research Project		x	x	x
Group Relations Influence	x	x	x	x
Reflection on personal practice	x	x	x	x

In a consolidated presentation of action research theory, Coughlan and Brannick (2005) offer a diagram illustrating the main steps involved in action research as generalized over the many different versions of the theory that have emerged (p. 22) (see Figure 1).

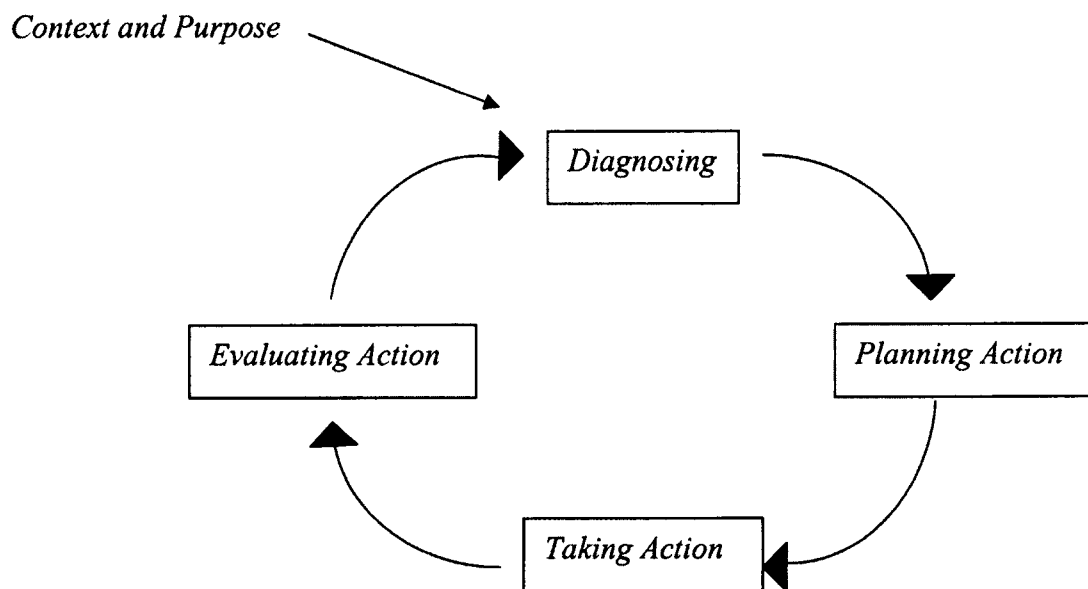


Figure 1. Action research cycle.

Figure 1 depicts the acknowledgement of context and purpose within which the stakeholders of the organization diagnose an issue. The participants then plan out action steps to take in order to address, influence, change, or learn about the diagnosed issues. When the participants find a suitable intervention to make, they proceed, and upon doing so examine and evaluate the impact of that action on the diagnosed issue, the reflection step.

Since Lewin's (1946) introduction of action research as a method that allows theory to inform data, and data to inform theory in a cyclical, collaborative, simultaneous

process, scholars from various disciplines have added to the concept of action research.

Rearick and Feldman (2000) suggest that action research may have technical, practical, or emancipatory stances, as well professional, personal, or political aims. They explain that action researchers may report their learning autobiographically or collaboratively.

Similarly, Noffke's (1997) distinctions between the professional, political, and personal categories of action research are widely used to categorize and represent research. There are many variations of action research though most involve the desire to change or improve a local situation and most espouse a systematic inquiry using cycles of observation, planning, acting, and reflecting.

Action Inquiry

One specific family of action research is Action Inquiry, as described in a book of the same name (Torbert & Associates, 2004). After reading it, I saw action inquiry as a set of action research disciplines rather than a prescriptive methodology, one that had the potential to be the framework for collaborative teaching and learning. This proved to be the case, and as I'll discuss later, I discovered it was already being used as such by Bill in his doctoral courses at Boston College (Steckler & Torbert, 2010). Indeed, action inquiry offers a unique paradigm, a community of inquiry (Torbert & Associates, 2004), through which to see the classroom. Communities of inquiry are juxtaposed by the authors of *Action Inquiry* with the more commonly occurring and well-known concept, communities of practice. Where communities of practice are "voluntary and usually temporary networks of co-professionals who share know-how and invent leading edge practices" (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 206), a community of inquiry can be described as a group

of people operating within or guided by the aims of action inquiry. These aims, integrity, mutuality, and sustainability are concepts I will come back to discuss in depth. Building on the group relations and research course material and experiences, I was beginning to envision their integration into my teaching and learning. But I was only just beginning to imagine creating an actual community of inquiry in the classroom. Doing so challenges the current models of learning in use in universities by offering a space for students to examine the sense of ownership they have over their own learning process in an environment of mutuality and collaboration.

As a result of this exposure and my increasing interest in *group relations teaching and learning philosophies*, I began to experiment with their application to the undergraduate courses I was teaching. Learning to experiment within, and study one's own leadership actions and intentions to influence, amongst others committed to similar study and feedback seemed a good fit for the questions and issues I wanted to address in my teaching. In addition, this seemed to be the direction the course and our department was aiming for. At the beginning of the semester, I presented to the students some of my learning about operating as a class in a collaborative, discussion-based manner. I incorporated deeper forms of written reflection and class time reflection into the course from the start as an effort to emphasize the discipline of integrity, becoming integral or whole in one's interaction with the world. This was coming into focus for me through readings and group process in my course work, and I began to add what I was learning and share what I was reading as it seemed appropriate through the semester. I often shared excerpts of articles and books I had been assigned in my courses, with my

students. Even so, during this second semester, the integration of action research and inquiry in our class was directed toward problem solving an issue that the students had an investment in that was *outside* of our classroom. I applied the action inquiry disciplines I was learning to my personal teaching and used them as a framework to encourage the students to interact with one another personally while completing the action research project. In subsequent iterations of the course, and as my own learning increased and became more complex, I would encourage us to direct our action research and inquiry toward the issues we all had investment in *inside* our classroom. I am better able to see that I wasn't yet ready to release myself or us into the realms of mutuality and sustainability that practitioners of action inquiry aspire to. However, I was already passionate that even the most progressive and effective forms of reflection and learning I had seen in my university experience were still not getting to the heart of what I cared about. They definitely had never gotten to the deeper, effective group learning I was seeing in my doctoral courses and in the novice efforts I'd already made with my own teaching.

In many areas of the university students are asked to reflect on their own academic or service learning experiences in journal assignments or personal essays. It has been my experience that they are able to perform this type of reflection task sufficiently well, though only to a certain point of depth in analysis. When the level of reflection requested is deeper than an account of "what I did on my summer vacation," it is more difficult for the students to reflect and express the connections and outcomes of their reflection. With a few exceptions, to reflect collaboratively with a group of peers or

with a person in a position of authority proves much more difficult for students of all levels to practice than the previously described personal reflection. In planning for the next iteration of the course, I set an intention to follow the principles of action inquiry and to collect data on my engagement with undergraduate students in collaborative action research. I wanted to develop a personal, deliberate methodology for involving undergraduate students in collaborative research methods of learning and teaching while reflecting on the process and relationships present. I set out to informally collect data on this endeavor by recording my hypotheses and conclusions in reflective field notes each week.

The Second Cohort—Events of the Course

Following the first leadership seminar cohort I taught, I had numerous discussions about learning outcomes and consistency of learning with my colleagues also teaching in the leadership minor. We shared the observation that our students entered our courses with different levels of knowledge depending on who taught their previous courses. Curricular consistency was low, turnover of teaching instructors was high, and our inquiries about this situation to the department were met with assurances that a future assessment of the minor would yield a plan and structure for content, process, and outcomes. In the meantime, one of the difficulties associated with this inconsistency of content was the students' resolve to know and agree upon the "correct" definitions of leadership. Some of this was coupled with the students' determination to show their allegiance to other previous instructors, and some of it was associated with studying a field of knowledge that, at their stage of engagement, looked to be either black and white

and/or without boundary. In other words, leadership as a field of study had at times been presented either as a 7- or 12-step set of behaviors, beliefs, or habits provided by successful others that would ensure achievement if followed. At other times, it was offered as a touchy-feely, individual, experience-based phenomenon in which one was either born to influence, or trained to influence by means of specific models and activities. In part to even out the knowledge base among the students in regards to historical and current leadership theory and research, I scheduled readings and held discussions using a leadership textbook, *The Art and Science of Leadership* (Nahavandi, 1997). This text presents historical and current theories, concepts, and research in leadership studies, management, psychology, and other related fields. This did offer the students a base of knowledge from which to see their own leadership experiences but, similar to the temptation to define leadership concretely, there was a tendency to accept everything in the text as complete truth. Much of my intention for the second cohort was to problematize their uncritical conceptions of leadership practice and theory, then invite them to explore them together.

Critical Lenses

As a doctoral student who moved from sociology, a rigid and at times dogmatic discipline, to leadership studies, one of the ways I had been practicing this myself was through the use of critical lenses. In my academic training I had been encouraged to critically examine the research, theories, and concepts presented; and I felt the same should hold true for those being published and presented in the field of leadership. As I was doing this in my own studies simultaneously, I brought up this topic with the

students and we listed together constructive lenses through which to evaluate leadership scholarship and knowledge. Examining these characteristics of the author, investigator, audience, publisher, and population studied offered a larger context within which we could understand more about the research that at times is taken for granted as objectively “right.” Scrutinizing the positionality of the research and researcher, as well as our positionality as readers of it contributed to the philosophical stance that all research and knowledge is necessarily framed by the human involvement in it and the values and purposes of those involved in its production and consumption. I encouraged the students to use these categories and others from their personal experience while reading any research or theory on leadership from a critical (though not negative) stance. This is the list I eventually sent out via class email as a result of our discussion and with a few of my additions.

- Age
- Culture (Organizational, National, Group, Ethnic)
- Race
- Gender
- Religion and Spirituality
- Ethnicity
- Sexuality
- Language
- Socioeconomic Status
- Educational Attainment
- Structure of Research (Methodology)
- Mental Models (Assumptions, Associations, Paradigms)
- Measurement Problems and Biases

Moving forward through the semester we agreed to pose these points of critique to the curriculum we were learning, including the psychometric assessments associated with leadership studies. This represented an effort to expose the biases, assumptions, and

frameworks associated with theory and data measurement, as well as identify strengths and potential applications. For both the students and me, this addressed some of our concerns, internal and externally derived, about leadership as a valid field of study and encouraged us to critique the overly rigid or loose forms of it.

I introduced the action research project as something they would work collaboratively on, but differentiated it from regular group projects in that the topic they chose should be one that mattered to them and for them. Since action research involves those to whom the issue belongs, they would need to research an issue that belonged to them. It also had to be an issue they could actually do something about, make recommendations for, or interventions into.

The students spent time discussing issues that could be of concern to all of them, holding the concept of being *stakeholders* in the issue they would research and attempt to influence. We read about one example of collaborative undergraduate action research as fortuitously that semester my undergraduate alma mater, UC Santa Barbara, published an article in an alumni e-newsletter about action research. Undergraduate arts students and faculty were partnering to address a mutually defined problem in their campus community: the aesthetics and safety in their immediate neighborhood. These students and faculty followed a general action research format to investigate shared solutions to the problems they observed by talking to other local stakeholders (e.g., business owners, surrounding renters, homeless residents, students, community planners, university administrators) and involving them in problem solving. It was an excellent, brief example of basic action research engagement. It helped the students see how action

research for community engagement and local problem solving opens the process up to all levels of people involved and affected.

The leadership seminar students eventually chose their subject of research: the campus' perception of the leadership minor they were completing and its reputation on campus. The students observed that even though they were enrolled in the minor, they didn't know much about its history, design, purpose, or philosophy. They all agreed that it had thus far been a good experience and decision for their studies, and now were asking how they could share this with the campus community. In addition, the majority of students had experienced some sort of misperception or example of negative reputation about the leadership minor. I encouraged them to start by discovering if negative or absent perceptions existed, and to determine where they might stem from. We reviewed common forms of data collection that might help us in this discovery (e.g. focus groups, surveys, interviews). Our next step then was to obtain information about the minor, its history, present, and future through other document analysis, interviews with stakeholders, and more. Deciding how we might feed those findings back into the system we were a part of could be the goal of our research. Once we could put together a picture of the situation from as many angles as possible, we could then make interventions into it as we deemed appropriate according to the findings. If indeed the students' desire to change, enhance, or introduce a perception of the leadership minor was supported by the action research process then how would we do that?

Students split up into groups according to different research activities we deemed effective for assessing the perception of the minor: written surveys, focus groups,

interviews with key personnel, historical and document analysis of the marketing materials provided by the department and website. Simultaneously, we read and discussed Peter Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers' (2004) work on mental models, *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell (2002), and the article "To Be Fully There" by William Kahn (1992), and I gave a few mini lectures about forms of action research that focus more intensely on internal awareness in the moment of leadership activity, especially the 27 flavors of action research (Chandler & Torbert, 2003). All of this material shares the underpinning of an individual being increasingly present to the current moment, and the latter in particular calls for the increasing capacity to make frequent and immediate changes in one's organizational context for the sake of mutual inquiry and effectiveness. The students were very capable of and, for the most part, willing to engage in meaningful discussion about these concepts although we agreed that they were rare in our experience of being students. Following one class session, I recorded in my notes,

Feeling strong camaraderie with the students, they want to reflect an authentic self in their role as a student but feel like there isn't a way to do that in a traditional classroom. I wanted to do that too as an undergrad, got close to it in the grad seminar with Bert [thesis advisor UCSB] but felt too intimidated and young to really allow myself the freedom. I wanted it at Princeton but it was hard to come by inside my classes, definitely tasted it outside of them with Paul [thesis advisor Princeton]. I thought I was doing it at Baylor (it was closer) but it wasn't until I got to USD that I saw professors using all their senses, the eyes of their spirit *and* their reason to speak into circumstances for the sake of learning. Praying I can offer this to my students so they can go and "see" more in their organizational and personal lives, for the sake of transforming those into more meaningful experiences.

The students struggled throughout the semester to walk the line between the desire for an agreed upon definition of leadership, and the aspiration that leadership be fluid enough to become what it needs to be for influencing a particular group in a

particular circumstance. Occasionally, I felt compelled to help facilitate the mostly positive and pragmatic generalizations they wanted to assign to or use to connect different leadership cases and scenarios. For example, we read Gladwell in order to spark discussions about real-world opportunities to influence and I'd ask the students to identify circumstances in their own lives that came to mind during their reading that either supported or contradicted the concepts Gladwell put forth. They were most often enticed by "matching" a facet of his theory with their own experience or generalizing their experience in a very tidy fashion. They were attracted to real life scenarios that "proved" their previously studied or favorite hard-and-fast definitions of leadership. Here are a few illustrative excerpts from writing assignments early in the semester; "Gladwell's ideas are completely true, every leadership scenario I've been in has matched his points," and "more often than not, Gladwell's insightful concepts hold true for my leadership experience in my [student organization]," or

There's a reason that Gladwell is a best-selling author, and why Nahavandi is the author of this textbook on leadership. They both have the true keys to the kingdom for leadership knowledge and I will strive to follow them in my leadership experiences.

These types of critical thinking missteps in their written assignments reflected not a lack of capacity or aptitude for thinking analytically about leadership, or their experience of the world. Rather, it reflected a belief that application of a published theory must match one's experience of the world in order to secure a good grade in academic learning. This belief is jettisoned by an unwritten rule of agreeing with what the teacher is teaching because by inference, the teacher espouses the content they are teaching. They had great difficulty believing that I was willing to truly question and

critically analyze the content I was presenting using other content and my own experience. At one point, I brought this up to the class and we discussed the impact that authority, perceived or real, has on our thinking about the world. For example, because I held a position of authority in the classroom, the ability to grant grades and determine much of the content of our learning, the students were more apt to agree with my statements or decisions. In the same way, because a study or theory has been published in textual form, therefore lending it some form of professional credibility, it tends to be criticized less by the students. We understood why there is a temptation to do this but agreed that the more interesting piece of learning for us would be to ask *how* we might be critical and analytical about knowledge as we encounter it. We talked about how intimidating power can be, how expertise and position can wield power that stunts our authentic curiosity about the world, including our exercise of leadership within it. I felt like we had opened up a can of worms with the dialogue about power and intimidation. I sensed something deeper there for them and me but didn't know how to access it in the moment. I asked them to write a short response after our discussion of assigning authority and different perceptions of authority, and I wrote one myself. Here are a few excerpts from theirs followed by an excerpt from mine.

Of course I make a positive argument for everything I read in my classes and I always study and answer the same way the prof presents info in class. It doesn't feel like it's my job to question the info, I feel like I'm supposed to show I can remember it. The trouble now is, when Miller asks me to think through whether something makes good sense to me or whether I think my life lines up with it, I'm stumped. Give me something to memorize and I can do it. Ask me whether I agree with it or can think of something better, no dice. Its trippy because I say that about people who watch the news and swallow everything they say.

Another student wrote,

When people have power over me, I'm more apt to agree with what they say or assume they want me to agree with them. This makes sense if they are trying to use their power to get you to comply but if they tell you they aren't looking for blind agreement then you'd think I'd be able to respond. I still have trouble, I'm too concerned about my grade and I don't know how to let that go.

In my response I wrote,

We're onto something about power and feeling the freedom to be critical. They are expressing honest intimidation about saying anything negative or original about the content I'm presenting, or the traditional process of learning and teaching we're enacting. In [my own doctoral course] I feel that fear too. If I can become courageous enough to interact in my context, and share the experience with them, good or bad outcome, perhaps this will be an effective prompt, a sacrificial offering that might hold weight for learning. How do I use the power to influence that I am only beginning to claim?

Further, *how* would I, or we become critical of the knowledge, authority, and power in the experience we were having? *How* would we engage the disciplines we were learning and the strong theoretical framework that exists to influence the moments we were working in? Events during the semester, many outside of the class, began to offer answers some of these questions (or more questions!), as if on order for me, for them, for us.

Learning and New Questions

One of these experiences was during that same semester. The School of Leadership and Education Sciences (SOLES) at USD held The 5th Annual Center for Student Support Systems Symposium: Action Research in Education and Leadership, and invited Bill Torbert to be the keynote speaker. Intrigued by his work, I requested an individual meeting with him during his symposium stay. I talked with him about using action research methods, specifically action inquiry, to teach leadership studies to

undergraduate students. I saw great possibilities for enhanced, more reflective learning about leadership with this guiding methodology. I recounted the ways I had already begun, that semester, to incorporate action inquiry practices into my own experience of teaching as well as in my students' learning about leadership. I told him that I introduced a loosely structured action research project and that the students had made great strides in completing it with collaboration, inquiry, and action disciplines. The students and I were inspired by the practices of action research and the disciplines of action inquiry we had learned. Thus, I planned to incorporate an action research project and deeper experimentation with action inquiry disciplines into the leadership seminar course scheduled for the following fall.

In our meeting, Bill offered direction about how to further incorporate action inquiry into my teaching as well as feedback about what to be aware of each new semester when continuing inquiry with a new cohort of students. He asserts that action research is not so much a methodology as an attitude, or way of being-in-the-world. It continued the shift in my whole thinking on action research and provoked me to continually see action research as set apart from other forms of research. He shared his syllabi for the doctoral level action research methods course he taught at Boston College, as well as a not-yet-published paper he wrote with a doctoral student recounting one of those courses (Steckler & Torbert, 2010). I asked if he knew of anyone using action research or action inquiry with undergraduate students to guide study of the class itself as a temporary organization, but he did not.

My interaction with Bill and the resources he offered directly influenced my plans for the Fall 2008 iteration of leadership seminar, described later in this paper. In addition to my meetings with Bill and the resources he shared, I also formed a summer reading group with fellow doctoral students and faculty to explore action research methods further. During that time, I petitioned to design an independent study course on action inquiry that would chronologically parallel the undergraduate course in which I was planning to draw on action inquiry. I posited that this would be a way to study the practices of action inquiry in a more directed manner, while experimenting with its practices and application to teaching and learning. The independent study served the purpose of directing my reading and reflection throughout the semester as well as offered me a professor, Cheryl Getz, to discuss my experiences and findings with. I read a list of books suggested by her, Bill, and others, as well as those I found cited in the reference lists.

Among them, most significantly for the purposes and scope of this dissertation, is Bill's collaboratively written, *Action Inquiry* (Torbert & Associates, 2004). After reading it, I saw action inquiry as a set of action research disciplines rather than a prescriptive methodology, one that had the potential to be the framework for collaborative teaching and learning. This proved to be the case, and I discovered it was already being used as such by Bill in his doctoral courses at Boston College (Steckler & Torbert, 2010). Indeed, action inquiry offers a unique paradigm, a community of inquiry (Torbert & Associates, 2004), through which to see the classroom. Communities of inquiry are juxtaposed by the authors of *Action Inquiry* with the more commonly occurring and well-

known concept, communities of practice. Where communities of practice are “voluntary and usually temporary networks of co-professionals who share know-how and invent leading edge practices” (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 206), a community of inquiry can be described as a group of people operating within or guided by the aims of action inquiry. These aims, integrity, mutuality, and sustainability are concepts I will discuss in depth. Building on the group relations and research course material and experiences, I was beginning to envision their integration into my teaching and learning. But I was only just beginning to imagine creating an actual community of inquiry in the classroom. Doing so challenges the current models of learning in use in universities by offering a space for students to examine the sense of ownership they have over their own learning process in an environment of mutuality and collaboration.

The authors of *Action Inquiry* present their framework, building on Lewin and others’ work in action research by deepening the understanding of the awareness and feedback they believe are required to produce timely and transforming action. Action inquiry is a member of the action research family but is distinct in that it (a) includes *single-, double-, and triple-loop feedback* components; (b) describes *four territories of experience* and awareness; (c) identifies the developmental states from which we operate with others and our organizations, *action-logics*; (d) advances the concept of *communities of inquiry*; and (e) is focused on the way we enact this type of work verbally through the *four parts of speech*.

Single-, Double-, and Triple-Loop Feedback

Torbert and his co-authors assert that action inquiry begins researching a given situation from the inside-out whereas mainstream scientific inquiry begins researching from the observable outside and works inward. When practicing action inquiry, an individual can “become more aware of, and less constrained by . . . implicit and often untested assumptions about situations” (2004, p. 21) by developing a capacity for reading and incorporating internal and external sources of feedback. The first level of feedback, *single-loop*, communicates whether an action taken has moved one toward the goal of the action or not. Having the capacity to receive and act on single-loop feedback exhibits an awareness of the effects of one’s behavioral actions relative to the goal or purpose with which it is taken, goal-oriented action. The next level of feedback, *double-loop*, is used for discerning not only whether the action moved one closer to the identified goal but also whether the strategy behind that action was the most appropriate. Possessing the awareness of double-loop feedback is the ability to see one’s goal-oriented behavior from outside that orientation, and to strategize about the goals directing that behavior through self-critical inquiry. The third level of feedback, *triple-loop*, allows the individual to experience at once what is going on internally as well as externally, to affect the desired outcomes of the actions taken and individuals involved. Triple-loop feedback requires the capacity to see one’s own goal-oriented behavior and evaluate strategies for accomplishing them, as well as being awake and present to one’s own intentions for and experience of the behavior and strategy. The incorporation of these feedback awarenesses and the territories of experience, into the action research cycle are part of

what make action inquiry unique and a particularly strong lens through which to see undergraduate teaching and learning.

Four Territories of Experience

The four territories of experience expressed in action inquiry (Table 2) are the four areas of attention or awareness within which we receive and process the feedback loops. The authors assert that to be effective in action inquiry, an individual should engage in at least three, or ideally four territories of experience. The first territory of experience is that of *outside events*, the observed, behavioral consequences and effects exhibited by the environment around us. The second territory of experience is a *sense of our own performance* and interaction within those outside events and realities. The third territory of experience is characterized by the awareness of an *action-logic*, “an overall strategy that so thoroughly informs our experience that we cannot see it” (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 66). These are the usual strategies of making sense of and manipulating one’s own perceived performance with the outside events of our environment. According to the authors, most of the time we remain within these first three territories of experience. The fourth territory of experience requires a deeper level of psychological commitment, and a more intentional awareness of self and situation in the moment. It involves *intentional attention* to our intuition, interior objectives, and the other three territories of experience. The deeper intention of identifying these territories of experience and feedback loops in real time set action inquiry apart from traditional action research and I argue, make it uniquely suited to teaching collaboratively.

Table 2

Four Territories of Experience of an Individual Person

1) the outside world	objectified, discrete, interval units, of which 'I' am actively aware when 'I' notice the color and manyness of what 'I' see or the support the outside world is giving me through the soles of my feet (focused attention)
2) one's own sensed behavior and feeling	processual, ordinal rhythms in passing time, of which 'I' am actively aware when I feel what I am touching from the inside, or when I listen to the in-and-out of my breathing or the rhythms and tones of my own speaking (subsidiary, sensual awareness)
3) the realm of thought	eternal nominal distinctions and interrelations, of which I can be actively aware if my attention 'follows' my thought, if I am not just thinking, but 'mindful' that I am thinking (witnessing awareness)
4) vision/attention/intention	the kind of noumenal vision/ attention/ intention that can simultaneously interpenetrate the other three territories and experience incongruities or harmonies among them

Source: Torbert and Taylor, 2006, p. 2.

Communities of Inquiry

In addition to discussing the feedback loops and territories of experience in *Action Inquiry*, Torbert continues to develop the concept of communities of inquiry (Torbert, 1976; Torbert & Associates, 2004). A community of inquiry is an organization of people who agree to a mutuality of interests expressed in collaborative inquiry into their interactions, dilemmas, exchanges, and aims. In a book chapter recounting the experience of teaching action research methods to doctoral students, Steckler and Torbert (2010) remind their reader that,

There is no mechanical, general way of creating a community of inquiry; it must be constructed from the materials and limitations of each distinct situation by an increasingly conscious, skillful, and, above all, truly mutual action inquiry process among the participants. (p. 6)

This type of inquiry and reflective action will produce timely, transforming leadership and help “individuals, teams, organizations, and still larger institutions become more capable of self-transformation and thus more creative, more aware, more just, and more sustainable” (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 1). The authors state that,

Action inquiry is a way of learning anew, in the vividness of each moment, how best to act now. The source of both its difficulty and potential is that action inquiry requires making ourselves, not just others, vulnerable to inquiry and transformation. (p. 2).

Torbert and his co-authors further contend that the practices of action inquiry will enhance the ability of the action researcher(s) to produce relevant knowledge that leads to meaningful action and significant learning. He sees action inquiry as an increased form of conscious living in that at any moment, during any personal, social, or organizational interaction, one may inquire as to what is at stake, who is involved, and what might happen next. When practiced consistently, Torbert argues that,

Action inquiry becomes a moment-to-moment way of living whereby we attune ourselves through inquiry to acting in an increasingly timely and wise fashion for the overall development of the families, teams, and organizations in which we Participate. (p. 2).

Action-Logics

One of the key components of action inquiry is the presentation of developmental stages of adult growth, or *action-logics* (Table 3). Each successive stage of development is “an overall strategy that so thoroughly informs our experience that we cannot see it” (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 66). The stages increase in complexity and although one can and will resort back to behaviors associated with previous stages of development, movement through the stages is overall progressive in the order they are presented. In

addition, the authors assert that each action-logic subsumes the previous ones, that we may at times experience our contexts and behaviors through the lens of a later action-logic though we cannot yet operate from it, and that we have a specific earlier stage from which we operate when under some type of physical and psychological stress. In later, “postconventional” action-logics, the world is seen as less linear and,

Instead causation is recognized as circular, relational, and systemic and the assessment measures one chooses are recognized as reflecting one’s action-logic as well as feedback from the outside world. (p. 94)

Table 3

Developmental Action-Logics

Developmental Action-Logics	
Impulsive	Impulses rule behavior
Opportunist	Needs rule impulses
Diplomat	Norms rule needs
Expert	Craft logic rules norms
Achiever	System effectiveness rules craft logic
Individualist	Reflexive awareness rules effectiveness
Strategist	Self-amending principle rules reflexive awareness
Alchemist	Process (interplay of principle/action) rules principle

Source: Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 66.

I did not hold an understanding of this developmental framework beyond a reading of it in the book, until later in the cycles of research. I didn’t work to assess my students’ developmental stages along the way although I identify evidence of their most likely stages, Diplomat—Expert later in the document. These stages are also the most likely according to the ages of undergraduate students. Torbert & Associates (2004) describe the diplomat as being,

Committed to routines; observes protocol; avoids inner and outer conflict; conforms; works to group standard; seeks membership, status . . . face-saving

essential; loyalty to immediate group; feels shame if violates the norm; sin = hurting others . . . nice, cooperative. (p. 74).

They describe the expert as,

Interested in problem solving; seeks causes; critical of self/others based on own craft logic; wants to stand out, be unique; perfectionist; chooses efficiency over effectiveness; dogmatic; accepts feedback only from objective acknowledged craft masters; values decisions based on technical merit. (p. 86)

Across cohorts the majority of students demonstrated many of the attributes of transitioning between these two developmental stages.

Studying Leadership with Action Inquiry

I began to conclude that action inquiry, as one branch of action research, would address my teaching concerns and be particularly suitable for the subject matter being addressed, leadership. Currently, leadership is often described as a practice that requires constant evaluation and reevaluation of actions and interventions. Much contemporary scholarship states that leadership calls for the ability to reflect individually and collaboratively on the fundamentals of intervention and reflection for the purpose of exercising effective influence. Action inquiry is continually, in real time, constructing and reconstructing the questions we ask, the conclusions we make, the actions we take, and impact we observe. Its practitioners are “alert to the dangers and opportunities of the present moment” (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 1) examining action through reflection within a strong and accessible theoretical framework. Much recent scholarship attempts to distance leadership from the positivist stance in which traditional research methods frame research, action, and interventions. Scholars are attempting to redefine leadership in terms of responsiveness, adaptability, collaboration, and situationality (Heifetz, 1994;

Scharmer, 2009; Wheatley, 1999; Wilber, 2000). Action research, and action inquiry in particular, are effective frameworks for teaching leadership in that they collaboratively consider context and purpose, diagnose the issues in real time, intervene to influence, and reflect to evaluate the intervention. At once, action inquiry offers the opportunity for emergent and reflective teaching about leadership studies, as well as the practice of leadership within the process of learning about it. Similarly, one may learn the theory behind how to sing, though actually singing is a different skill. Although most singers learn to sing before they learn any theory about singing, learning singing theory informs and structures their singing practice. Similarly, many individuals learn to lead and influence without knowledge of leadership theory, but leadership theory has the potential to inform and structure one's practice of leadership. Hence the intention that leadership seminar would use theory to inform practice, not hypothetical practice "out there in the real world" but rather, the real practice of leadership within the class organization and interaction itself. My use of action inquiry in this dissertation takes this intention further, using theory to inform practice, and then using reflection on and in that practice to inform theory, in real time. This is a complex conception of teaching leadership and is at a tangent from most contemporary leadership teaching that uses case studies, example problems, scenarios from students' lives and organizations outside of the classroom, or simulation-based leadership learning (Carpenter, 2011).

Increasingly complex leadership challenges in our world have led many authors to call for more complex understandings of leadership in order to meet these challenges

(Getz, 2009; Getz & Gelb, 2007; Heifetz, 1994; Scharmer, 2009; Senge et al, 2004; Wheatley, 1999). Grogan et al. (2007) state that,

The philosophical foundations that undergird action research as a democratically driven, mutual, co-generative activity incorporate the values and dimensions that Burns (1978) first highlighted as central to transformative leadership—values, morals, and mutuality of effect in raising leaders and followers above self-interests. (p. 5)

For leadership studies in particular, this approach offered rich opportunities and potential for transformative learning, for my students and me. Even so, as I began to see more clearly between this and the next semester, it has great potential for application beyond the leadership studies classroom. I wrote in my journal at the time,

My work thus far in the tradition of insider action research, is characterized by a deep commitment to co-creating a space where my I hope my students and I can reflect to offer insight to our group *as* we work, to each other individually *as* we learn, to the tradition of research, and to leadership studies Even though this is a leadership course, this type of perspective, this level of intentional inquiry into what we're doing, and this commitment to mutuality in our interactions, could translate to the life of a non-profit board of directors, an executive sales team, marriage partners, etc. Most any group could work to accomplish their task (ours is learning and practicing leadership), committed to disciplined inquiry into their working process (our classroom space and time) and their own personal engagement in it (our reflection as a class and personal reflection on our role in the class).

Between Semesters

As I mentioned earlier, several learning events offered insight into *how* to think about power, influence, and authority in the classroom as a community of inquiry. Utilizing critical lenses, learning from the action research conference, application of Torbert's work in awareness of the four territories of experience, and the feedback loops among them, all offered frames and perspectives from which we could inquire into our work together and individually in the moment. Many of these are rooted in the study and

practice of leadership, and appropriately so since that was the department I was in as a student and employee. In addition to these events, my doctoral work required a course in adult development I completed in the summer of 2008 between semesters and offered a group relations conference training opportunity during the same time. In fact, the group relations training experience occurred the week prior to (ending the day before) the intensive adult development course. This course was an extremely intensive course in content and process. It utilized a Socratic-style pedagogy that was laced with concentrated group relations and systems thinking psychology

The Third Cohort—Events of the Course

I will begin this section with my learning from an independent study on action inquiry I completed over two semesters. I did more self-directed readings, and initiated interviews with several action research scholars. Next, I will tell the story of the third cohort, illustrating the themes that emerged from the actual action research study in which I collected data, made observations, and collaborated with students. This will include a discussion of the outliers that emerged and began a new line of inquiry into shadow aspects of my teaching and this format. Along the way, I offer examples of the interventions, methods, and process facilitation experiences involved with conducting this cycle of the study as well as literature that I encountered or consulted in response.

Pre-Reading and Planning

This first section will briefly address the ballooning reading list that I waded through over the two semesters. The second section will present my findings from phone conversations with prominent action researchers. Throughout, I will hypothesize a bit

about the underlying dynamics that lay underneath some of the relationships and interactions outside of the classroom throughout this independent study. Intriguingly, these have been and continue to be helpful for me, serving as a backdrop for understanding my struggles and triumphs in the classroom. Then I'll present the themes that emerged from the actual action research study cycle in which I collected data, made observations, and collaborated with students. This final section on the independent study will also address some of the interventions, methods, and process facilitation experiences involved with conducting the study.

At this point in my research, my intention was to increase knowledge of the implications of a reflective action research methodology, action inquiry, in order to enhance the learning and experiential outcomes of a leadership studies course for both teacher and students. It had progressed from the previous semester during which I was only experimenting with allowing the disciplines to penetrate the actual classroom learning, even while integrating them deeply in the personal side of my classroom work. I was willing to take them on initially in my first person perspective, and now, during my third round of teaching, increasingly took steps to widen their integration into the second and third person perspectives of my working experience.

This time, I attempted to initiate a classroom experience that had the potential and intention to become a community of inquiry by setting up agreements of integrity, mutuality, and sustainability (Torbert & Associates, 2004), through readings, by modeling methods of inquiry in the moment, and identifying feedback mechanisms and

territories of experience while teaching the planned curriculum. This was an expansion of the more amateur efforts I had made in the previous semesters.

The data and papers from this study; the interventions, emails, field notes, interviews, focus groups, journals, student papers, and more influenced the decisions about the research project as it cycled. In addition, former students who were collaborators and co-researchers in this and a previous study have assisted me in interpreting the experience of the study.

The Readings

The reading list for this course quickly blossomed in number and range of texts and continued to do so throughout the extended study. The rapid ballooning of resources had to do with three major factors. First, every time I read something that I had identified as essential to an understanding of action research processes, I would consult the reference list and glean 5-6 new texts that I deemed also essential. Second, every time I spoke to an action research scholar or practitioner, she would recommend several readings or authors she deemed essential. Third, my online searching took on a life of its own, through links to resources previously unknown to me.

The readings that became the most significant during the time of the study were Bill Torbert's, recommended by him and others. In our conversations about my study (discussion to follow) he encouraged me to read from his early work. His third book and the first one in which he attempted to exercise action inquiry is named *Creating a Community of Inquiry: Conflict, Collaboration, Transformation* (Torbert, 1976). It is out of print and I had to obtain a copy of the text through Boston College's SharePoint site. It

is a poignant narrative of his first attempts at making the actions of an organization, a group, and the individuals in it, especially himself, subject to critical inquiry. Reflecting and hypothesizing with impressive depth and employing beyond-his-years analysis at the time, I saw the beginnings of what would become his life's work in action inquiry.

Though the piece was written before I was born, I had a sense of "joining" the younger Bill who was authoring it. The work was expressing an articulation of theory making, while being an analysis of behavior, during which his inner and outer experiences were recorded. He describes strictly centered intention and attention during an intense time of leadership in his working role directing an urban youth school program. His vulnerable description of efforts at democratic, compassionate, and sustainable forms of leadership for learning were admirable if not transformative for me. He often found himself wavering between unilateral leadership and a commitment to collaboration, all the while acknowledging the pull that the organization's members had on him toward the former. The parallel here was so timely for me in my study, as one of the most pressing issues I felt strongly about addressing was the students' resistance to my invitation to collaborate. There was an intense pressure to "bail them out" of their uncertainty and attempts at returning the roles in our course to more traditional ones. In the midst of reading it, I exchanged emails with Bill expressing my thoughts and reactions about the book.

In addition to this early book, I was struck by the parallels between a few of the other documents he sent and my current situation at the time. He sent a syllabus from an action research methods course he taught at Boston College, an integral education book

chapter recounting the experience of that course co-authored by a student from the course, and another out-of-print book, *The Power of Balance* (Torbert, 1991). These documents helped to shape my imagination about how to teach the course I was teaching, and suggested more specific strategies and frames of mind about how to teach this form of action research through modeling and practice rather than cognitive presentation. Amidst the positive sensations I was having teaching and learning in new collaborative ways, I was struggling with how to do it as effectively as I imagined I could or should.

The Conversations

My most significant conversations were with Bill. He read some of what I had written about the course that far. His main coaching was regarding the ability that action research methods have to make a study more convincing in that they have forms of validity that other methodologies cannot demonstrate. This was corroborated later by his suggestion that I read Herr and Anderson's (2005) action research dissertation book in which they argue for different types of validity that qualify as rigorous criteria for action research. He encouraged me many times over the phone to watch for, hope for, and expect opportunities for inquiry during the course that come unexpectedly. This, he said, keeps the research profoundly organic, and sets our expectations at a higher level of abstraction while still being recognizable again and again as opportunities for inquiry. I asked him for action research scholars he would suggest for me to contact, and he suggested Hilary Bradbury-Huang, co-editor of the *Sage Handbook for Action Research*, and David McCallum SJ who wrote a dissertation while at Columbia using Bill's developmental scales on a population attending a group relations conference at USD.

When I initially contacted Hilary, she asked if she could read something I'd written before we spoke so she'd have a feel for the type of work I was doing. And though she is the co-author of the *Handbook of Action Research*, the editor of an action research journal, teaches doctoral students at two universities, and has her hand in about 100 projects at once, I sent her one of my ending reflection papers from a previous semester. She was very positive about the paper, saying she was impressed by the strength of the study and reporting. She was mostly focused on the technical issues of completing an action research dissertation (of which she chairs many) like: IRB's, power differentials, empirical measures that may show increased leadership capacities as a result of these methods, and nesting the study within the empirical literature which exists to support an application of action research methods such as mine. She brought up the use of positivist concepts such as inter-rater reliability, third party verifiable findings, anonymity, replicability, and measurement tools. This took me a bit off guard as I was expecting to hear more of the emancipatory, activist, democratic, interrelated stance about the research. But it was good to hear her perspective on those issues since many action researchers face them. In addition, she posed an excellent directional question for me,

Is your dissertation (1) demonstrating a new way of teaching, (2) showing increased effectiveness of an introduction of action research to the classroom, or (3) showing special applicability of action research methods as pedagogy for leadership studies capacity building, or (4) what?

I held these questions throughout the research reflected here. I also spoke with David McCallum SJ. He gave good encouragement and reflections regarding frameworks for this type of teaching and study. Other than reacting positively about

employing the action inquiry framework for an undergraduate class, especially one in leadership studies, David fondly called Bill a “character” and was happy to hear Bill was on my committee. He also shared his critique of Bill’s work that the shadow side of action logics and inquiry in service of leadership is not addressed there. He encouraged me to keep that perspective in mind as I worked. Accordingly, I shared with him our (the class and my) leadership edge component looking at the blind spots or possible derailment risks to leadership and he was very energized by it. We spent time wondering if I might construct a bit of a critical or competing framework that includes the Jungian concept of shadow as a territory of experience essential to exercising leadership and the ability to change. This was a most interesting parallel as I had already identified the topic of shadow as a personal work I had been attending to in other contexts. I didn’t go deeply into this with David, but I had a sense he knew what he was doing in bringing it up for me. Following our conversations I wrote in my notes, “the universe is in cahoots and you’re all in on it. I want to make sure I am willing to be in on it as well.” For my continued study, he suggested a few driving questions, which he thought I should constantly be asking myself:

What do I want to be in service of with this project?

What is my perception of the need I am addressing?

Where is my participants’ line of inquiry in relation to mine?

I was on a roll finding scholars to speak with, and so I contacted Kathryn Herr, the co-author of the previously mentioned work, *The Action Research Dissertation* (2005). Steve and I had been discussing action research dissertation protocols and

committee work (whether they are/should be operating differently for action research dissertations) for some time. My perception was that Kathryn bristled when I brought up this question and she then attempted to convince me not to get my hopes up regarding my faculty members investment in the method, subject matter, or me. She explained that faculty members and doctoral students often don't have the tools, skills, or ability to “go there” with reflective cycles of action research together. My interpretation of her caution was that she thought that well-meaning committees open the curtain of inquiry together with good will and genuine curiosity only to realize they don't like finding themselves and hard work there instead of a wondrous wizard. I listened for quite some time and had the feeling that I was offering her some kind of service in allowing her to express this narrative about small groups struggling mightily with inquiry and reflection. I talked about the group relations underpinning that two of my committee members shared with me, and talked about Bill's deep sense of spiritual commitment to the work of inquiry, and his graciousness and skill in working with me so far. I shared that my relationships with Cheryl and Steve had components of personal and professional development, and that my work with them didn't seem to consist of resistance to this type of study.

My conversation with Kathryn was very helpful in regard to IRB issues, and data collection as well. For IRB, she suggested reporting the use of normal and customary teaching practices that I have used for several years to teach the same course. Further, she encouraged me to state that I will reflect on the ways I teach *systematically*, in order to make explicit my implicit teaching practices and values that are participatory, democratic, and collaborative. Kathryn did not like the ideas of having third party raters

and graders, or of creating or using third-person measures of increased capacity or development, instead she said,

Unless having a third party grader is your normal practice you should not do it. Do what you know and trust, informed by the data you gather, the voices of your students, and the validation of your critical friends. In your case that may be the students.

With this said, regarding the more traditional ideas of ensuring “validity,” she asked the question, “what artifacts will you use to lend each type of action research validity to your study?” I shared with her my use of music to facilitate inquiry, WebCT technology for journaling, discussion threads, readings, written assignments, participant observation, and hypothesis drafting. Kathryn suggested quick-writes periodically through the semester to gather real-time reactions to use for collaborative meaning-making later. She supervises several doctoral students in action research dissertations at a time, and our conversation offered me moral support and good news from “the front lines” about doing action research for dissertation study. She was particularly interested in the depth of analysis, involving the students in more significant ways, as well as the role of inquiry for the committee.

Events of the Course

In the 2008 fall semester, 11 students registered for the leadership seminar. In addition to our verbal exchanges, this cycle of the research is based on my personal notes and reflections before, during, and after the course meetings, as well as the written submissions, collective hypotheses, emails, and final papers of the students. The seminar was discussion-based as usual and set up around a large square table area in a classroom equipped with media and audio capabilities.

In the first few weeks of the course I presented the collaborative nature of action research methods as represented widely by the tradition through mini-lecture, discussion, and readings. I used Coughlan and Brannick's (2005) action research cycle diagram (see figure 1) to illustrate the normative steps of action research; diagnosing (keeping context and purpose in mind), planning action, taking action, evaluating action.

In this iteration of the course and at this stage in my learning, I began to view the class as a temporary organization in which I could transparently introduce the aims and practices of action inquiry. Almost immediately, students read part one of *Action Inquiry* (Torbert & Associates, 2004), and discussed the implications of collaborative learning in an undergraduate setting. I attempted to co-construct our classroom as a community of inquiry by setting up initial agreements of integrity, mutuality, and sustainability with the students. I attempted to model methods of inquiry in the moment, identify feedback mechanisms and territories of experience, all while teaching the planned curriculum.

Most students took diligent notes and agreed to experiment with the first-, second-, and third-person awarenesses as well as the single-, double-, and triple-loop feedback and learning, and attend to the four territories of experience associated with action inquiry. One student wrote about the introduction to action research and action inquiry in a way that was representative of many of the students' initial reactions,

The action research project took me through more of a learning process than I ever anticipated. To be honest, I initially thought it was silly and looked just like every other class that requires a "collaborative" group project. However, after a lot of reflection, I realized a number of things arose out of this project . . . I've been able to see that it is a non-traditional research method that aims for integrity to keep all research in line with your initial purpose and diagnosis, mutuality in order to have meaningful, flexible collaboration, and sustainability to be able to

recycle the research and learning, allowing for research to continue after the initial inquiry is over.

While introducing the fundamentals of action research and the practices of action inquiry as the ways we would complete our action research and conduct the class, I explained to the students that I would involve myself as a co-collaborator with them. Other than the requirements that they attend scheduled class meetings, submit written assignments on time, and complete the readings, the rest of the course was available for collaborative input. I openly communicated and demonstrated my efforts to engage in action inquiry practices myself as I instructed and facilitated the course, as well as to co-create a community of inquiry in our class in which we could engage in action inquiry together. I shared that we would attempt to practice action inquiry in our own process of learning while we completed action research on an issue in which we all were stakeholders and desired to take action or have influence.

As was mentioned in an earlier quote from Steckler and Torbert (2010), a community of inquiry “must be constructed from the materials and limitations of each distinct situation” (p. 6). Understandably, one of the distinct limitations in our class was that the students were again confused about the concept of collaborating with me, the authority figure. In general, they had a difficult time the whole semester accepting the sense of ownership I tried to share with them over their learning and the ability to inquire about the ways that our interactions, and their experience of that inquiry affected their learning. As was becoming an overarching finding for me in this research, up until the very last class session of the course the students consistently sought clarification about what my expectations were for each activity of the class. Even when a student or I could

identify this seeking behavior occurring in real time, even when we could identify it out loud in the moment, the desire never ceased. This was now a consistent trend as evidenced by previous iterations of the course and I continued to explore it, sometimes identifying it as a high level of uncertainty about the expectations of, and an intense desire for specific direction from authority, in this case, the professor.

It became clear to me that the students experienced the most debilitating uncertainty when I, as the authority figure, gave some measure of control over the process of learning back to the students. Sharing my authority over the process of learning about leadership was intended to offer opportunities for the students to practice leadership, through collaboration and experiments with influence in a relatively “safe” environment. But after interviewing several former and current students about this sense of uncertainty and the resistance to taking ownership of one’s learning that follows it, I further concluded that this is largely a result of the of pedagogy-in-use in higher education. One student wrote,

Through reflection it was apparent to me that my biggest problem derived from society’s mental models about the educational system I have mastered society’s system [of higher education]. I have never been asked to take ownership of my learning and as a senior I wasn’t really in the mood to reshape my learning process.

The Confines of Socialization

In the final paper, one student wrote, “how can we call ourselves leaders, or say we have learned anything about leadership if we only act when told when and how to?” The students that enter my courses have been trained to identify quickly and with a high level of analytical skill, the expectations of the course (as dictated by the syllabus) and

those of the instructor. The majority of their subsequent actions (physical, textual, verbal) are shaped and informed by this continual analysis of the expectations and standards of the person in authority. The students are socialized to be nimble and discern the slightest nuance of expectation or probability expressed by the authority figure. In one sense, this socialization is good and contributes to certain kinds of learning that are applicable to real-world circumstances. But in another sense, the aim of the leadership seminar course is not the mirroring and regurgitation of precise content. As the capstone course of a minor devoted to understanding the lived experiences of individual, group, and organizational influence, change, and power (leadership), this is a course in which students ideally weave this learning together into a personal philosophy of leadership expressed in a final paper or project.

I assumed, consistent with the aim of the course, that students would be able to take ownership of a personal philosophy of leadership after earning a minor in the study of it. But I began to see that this only occurred authentically if the students are given the opportunity to un-socialize themselves from the traditional model of classroom learning, which is dependent on the authority's expectations and definitions, and instead set their own personal expectations for learning, as an act of leadership, within the boundaries the authority figure represents (or, perhaps, even contesting the boundaries the authority sets). This, along with the previous cycles of research demonstrates that the students were resistant to the idea of having input into what or how they learn and would rather have been given explicit content and expectations to meet. This resistance is an obstacle to teaching a course in leadership studies as the content is associated with having a sense

of one's self and surroundings in order to exercise effective influence with personal authority.

This traditional socialization is especially powerful for the upper division students finishing the leadership studies minor at USD. They are bright, capable, and successful students who have chosen to add a minor to an already heavy load of major courses, at an elite, private university. They are often seniors, who having successfully navigated their college careers are looking toward the future confident that they also know how to navigate the careers that await them post-graduation. I had assumed that these students were the least likely to experience uncertainty when given opportunities to lead, influence, change, or collaborate and thought of them as the most equipped to do so. However, the data from this cycle, nested in that of the previous cycles, expresses that before experiencing the freedom to lead, influence, change, or collaborate (activities associated with leadership) in the classroom, students must face and overcome the uncertainty that exists when traditional expectations are not met. More and more I realized that action inquiry is a prescient pedagogical stance and practice for making these issues of uncertainty and expectations available for personal and collaborative questioning for the purpose of increasing the depth of learning. One student wrote,

What truly affected my learning and development in this class came . . . ultimately from the feelings of uncertainty. The design of the course made my learning resonate even deeper, as the uncertainty of the class forced immediate application of my own leadership philosophies. Presented with a classroom structure that strongly defied any mental models I had . . . I quickly found that sedentary behaviors would be unacceptable during our time together. Daily, we were challenged to exercise leadership from within . . . the uncertainty was left within each of us, not avoided or solved, providing the opportunity to develop our own leadership understandings, and hopefully help each other within this process.

Especially in this iteration of the course, my expectations as the teacher were continually the topic of our inquiry as a class, even when our inquiry was explicitly about why the students felt they could not set or hold expectations for themselves. They continually expressed, implicitly and explicitly, that my expectations and standards for their learning were more important than their own in the context of this course. I had begun a diagnosis of the situation that took into consideration the context and purpose of our being together, and recognized that in spite of the discomfort caused by “the action research project . . . challenging traditional procedures and ways of thinking” (Coughlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 83), there was great potential for learning about leadership in the continued practice of action inquiry as a class.

This diagnosis called me toward plans and preparations of ways to address the level of uncertainty, bringing it to the attention of the students as a barrier to ownership over their own learning and understanding about the exercise of leadership. Reflecting on the semester in a final paper another student wrote,

I have never made true acknowledgement over my life as an individual. Yet now is truly the time, and through my growth within this [leadership studies] minor and especially within this course, I feel as though . . . what has been caged within the confines of socialization now needs to be ultimately released in order to surpass feelings of confusion and anxiety . . . to own my reality of purpose and learning. I am trying to start doing this through the feedback loops, territories of experience and patterns of inquiry.

I wished I had written it, I identified so strongly with the perspective and the desires. I wished I had had it to read during the semester to inform my interventions and hypotheses rather than at the end. Though, even so, over time and with reflection on the cycle of diagnosing, planning, taking, and evaluating action, I designed several scenarios

during the course that would either (a) provoke some uncertainty about said expectations by openly challenging them and refusing to meet them or (b) inquire collaboratively about the nature of the uncertainty and why it existed. This began with the introduction of the action research project. Paying close attention to “the developmental timing of interventions meant to influence others’ first, second, and third person action inquiry” (Steckler & Torbert, 2010, p. 2) I continually returned to the disciplines of action inquiry, while we moved together through the action research cycle (see figure 1) as identified by Coughlan and Brannick (2005) diagnosing the issues, planning, taking, and evaluating action.

I began by defining the issues as I saw them and diagnosing them from my perspective: uncertainty experienced when socialized expectations are not met, specifically when the authority offers shared ownership over the expectations and learning. Through collaborative inquiry in discussion, I addressed the definitions and roots of these issues, offering the students a continual place to correct or alter the assumptions and conclusions underpinning them. I designed challenging interventions that attempted to offer opportunities for the students to practice taking responsibility and ownership of their own learning, and create expectations for themselves within a context of authority. I steadily encouraged the students to hypothesize, publically and privately, about the diagnoses they were making, to intervene in planned ways, and to reflect individually and collectively on those interventions. In addition, I consistently recounted my observations and reflections to the class as transparently as I could and invited the students to do so as well. In doing this we were collaboratively testing the conclusions

we were making, the interventions made: reflecting on the impact of them, and evaluating the learning that was occurring as a result. For this cycle of research, I describe three examples of interventions designed to challenge the students' uncertainty and sense of ownership over their learning created in response to the unfolding issues. The interventions grew in level of intensity, as the students developed increased ability to practice inquiry into their own process as well as that of the class. I determined the development of this ability through the disciplined diagnosing, planning, taking, and evaluating of small interventions, keeping in mind context and purpose, while reflecting individually and collaboratively with the students.

Stakeholders: Framing the Action Research Project

One of the first assignments introduced to the class was a general action research project in which the topic was open for the class to choose and complete together. The only stipulations were that the research be conducted as action research while endeavoring to practice action inquiry as had been presented by mini-lecture, discussion, and the readings aforementioned. In addition, the work was all to be done in collaboration with the exception of a final paper, which would be written individually. From my perspective, this served not only to teach general action research methods for use in one's own organization but, would allow the students to practice the collaborative inquiry, and reflection that action inquiry represented while doing so. I communicated that it was important that the students "be able to frame and select a project from a position of being close to the issue" (Coughlin & Brannick, 2005, p. 88). Identifying an issue they had a stake in and doing research to learn more about it, was intended to give

the students an action research aim that was tangible. This allowed them some concrete sense of how to inquire about an issue collaboratively, while using action inquiry to investigate the process of inquiry being conducted together.

The students were very resistant to choosing a topic of study, and even though they each came with excellent ideas, they avoided identifying any one that most resonated with all members of the class. They inquired often during the choosing process about what previous classes had done for their projects, further illustrating the issue I was diagnosing as uncertainty about absent expectations. I often stated that the evaluation of their learning in this course was not going to be about repeating what other students had done in the past but rather, about their ability to exercise or practice the exercise of leadership in their learning now, individually and collaboratively.

After much consternation about choosing a topic, and many conversations about how choosing the first alternative offered in order to avoid conflict is not always the best choice, the class came to a decision. They decided to conduct research about their perception that college students do not vote in presidential elections. This issue was timely in that the presidential elections between John McCain and Barack Obama were taking place during the semester. This was an apt issue for study by undergraduate leadership studies students in that much was at stake for them in understanding this issue and taking action to influence it. The students perceived that the popular news media held the assumption that the majority of college students do not vote for presidential elections. They accepted this assumption and wanted to find out why this population of eligible voters does not exercise the right to vote. Their inquiry was designed with the

purpose of designing sustainable ways to intervene and influence the issue of college voting in positive ways.

Though the students requested, and at times required, concentrated facilitation from me through most conversations, they collaborated about how to go about diagnosing the issue accurately, rather than depending on their perceptions of the situation. This ability to make their perceptions vulnerable to new insights and diagnoses would become one of the most effective learning outcomes of the action research teaching stance. While I attempted to facilitate as loosely as possible, they began to discuss planning actions, how they would go about taking them, and the evaluation of them. The facilitation required from me to move their process forward was to be expected, as these students had not been exposed to action research or the disciplines of action inquiry as a directing practice of collaboration. However, I observed again that the need for facilitation was mostly due to the fact that they felt uncertain about making decisions that were not dictated or witnessed by me. One student reflected,

For whatever reason, we're trained like dogs to perform on command, only for an audience. I guess that audience in this metaphor is the professor, and the grade is like applause. If there's no possibility for applause, then we don't perform. We are so used to not seeing the fun and purpose in performing, just for the sake of performing or otherwise. You [professor Miller] had to be there for us to put in any effort at all. That's hard to admit.

They continually resisted making decisions together or moving forward with the research and constantly asked me to make decisions for them rather than facilitate our decision-making and research process together. I openly discussed my observation of this tendency with the students, and we explored it together in class discussions on several occasions throughout the first half of the semester. They were insightful about

the reasons why this tendency was present for them but expressed the difficulty they had getting beyond their uncertainty about initiating action or decisions outside of the authority's direct expectations.

It was during this work, and with this diagnosis, that I designed the first intervention. It took place well into the semester, at a point where the students' understanding was high regarding their action research project on college voters. I emailed the students prior to one class meeting to let them know that I would be absent for the first 30 minutes of class time due to a prior commitment. I suggested that they get started with work on their project together (we had previously scheduled the tasks to be completed individually by that day so that specific group decisions about moving the project forward could be made). I suggested they be ready to bring me up to speed when I joined them 30 minutes in to the 80-minute class period. Although I hoped through this intervention that they would have a good experience of working together without me, proving to themselves that they could "perform" without an audience, my diagnoses to this point predicted that they might struggle. Discovering that learning and collaboration could be completed together with or without the authority figure would be powerful, I believed, and so I proceeded.

When I joined them 30 minutes into class, nothing had been decided and no movement had occurred in regard to the research aims scheduled for that day. The students had not been neglecting the group project or work at all, they just neglected to draw any conclusions, complete any decisions, or collaborate together. They had nothing to report. I remarked about this in my notes, and about the shame I could sense from

them in the moment. I began some simple facilitation of the scheduled items, and they responded very quickly, took up the work at hand, and completed everything scheduled for that class period. Once the work was completed, I opened up an inquiry discussion about why they thought they had made no progress before I arrived at class. I said something along the lines of,

You arrived with your individual work prepared, and with some simple facilitation you were able to make decisions together but as we've been noticing the key variable to the work being completed was my presence. What sense can we continue making of this?

They argued with me. They did not think this was the factor preventing them from completing work together until one student and I began speculating about whether the students would be able to complete work if they met outside of class, without me. At that point, a majority of students balked defensively and began to inquire as to whether I expected them to meet outside of class, if it would affect their grade if they didn't do so, and if so, how many times should they meet and for how long. One student exclaimed, "THAT was not on the syllabus!" After more discussion and my most gentle diffusion of the dialogue, the class period ended. Later, while reflecting on the class period, reviewing my field notes, and evaluating the impact of my intervention, I began the design of another intervention that would address this new facet of the diagnosed issue of uncertainty and their expectations of authority: whether my presence was necessary for these students to learn about leadership and work collaboratively.

The Uncertainty Class: Who Owns the Learning?

My intentions for the design of the leadership seminar in this cycle were consistent with Steckler and Torbert's (2010) description of their doctoral classroom which incorporates action inquiry: "an existentially challenging setting in which students assume more leadership responsibility than usual and the teacher is more transparent about his or her own learning than usual" (p. 2). Using this description as a pattern for approaching the learning to be completed in this cycle, I knew that the rest of the class sessions needed to be more existentially challenging and that my next intervention should creatively invite the students to assume more leadership responsibility. Simultaneously, I encouraged myself to be even more transparent about my own learning and process with the class. In my field notes during that time I wrote,

I'm beginning to ask myself who has ownership over the learning of these students? If they are only willing and able to collaborate and learn when I am present, then do I inadvertently have ownership of their learning? Is the learning these students do for my benefit and does it only "count" when I can witness it? Of course it is not, but if they believe this, then what is at stake? What do I, what do we as a class, as a department, as a university, stand to lose and what do we stand to gain from this reality?

I knew my next intervention was risky but felt strongly that having considered the context and purpose of the course, diagnosed this issue, and planned, taken and evaluated actions prior to this one, I was on the right track. The learning the students stood to gain was significant if I could help them to see the dilemma if someone other than they has ownership over their learning.

One day, at about the three quarter mark of the semester, I did not come to class. I did not send an email instructing students what to do or what would be expected, though

the students knew precisely what the next steps in our research work together on voting were. They had access to all relevant information, shared Google documents, and knew the outcomes expected for that class period since we had set them as a group. I didn't hear any communication from the students that day or the next several days before our next meeting, and although it was difficult, I resisted emailing students to find out what had occurred in my absence. Instead, I emailed a reading they had requested earlier so they would know I was okay and looking forward to the next class session.

When we met again, I began the class session with the question, "so what came of class on Thursday?" I was immediately bombarded with angry comments about how they could not do their work because I wasn't present, complaining about how they didn't have explicit instructions, and accusing me of wasting their expensive tuition dollars by not coming to class to teach them about leadership. I prepared for this type of reaction to whatever extent I could in case it came, and for some time I just listened, and kept the purpose of the exercise in mind. I explained early on in the furor of the discussion that no one would receive a negative grade for that class session regardless of what had occurred. Instead, I encouraged them to practice inquiry into what had happened when I was absent, in between, and was happening at that moment, in my presence.

When the emotion, volume, and interruptions died down, I inquired as to whether they had stayed for the whole class period. They had not stayed and they explained that since there was nothing for them to do, they left 15 minutes or so into the class period. When I further probed the complaint that they didn't know what to do without me and their resulting anger, they seemed somewhat befuddled upon the realization that all they

needed to complete the work that day was available to them. I reminded them that on top of being a capstone course in leadership studies, the whole semester thus far had been openly structured around the students taking ownership of their own learning, working collaboratively with the other students in the course, toward a research topic that they had created themselves and had a stake in. At that point they indeed began to see themselves as “living inconsistencies” but my assessment was that they felt so defensive and conflicted in the moment that they were unable to explore it.

Half way through the class period, one of the students began to absorb the intention of the intervention and started to speak. She stated that they, as a class, already had the opportunity to see themselves in this light during my previous “30 minutes late” intervention, when without my facilitation they had not completed any work or made any decisions. She challenged the class further reminding them that following the intervention, we had even practiced inquiry about who owned the learning in the course, the students or the professor. Her comments that day marked a transition in the students’ understanding of the dependence they had on the authority figure, to own and legitimize their learning. In the final paper that student recounted her thoughts at the time,

I didn’t understand what it was going to take for a group of mature college students, leadership studies students no less, to finish a project. I am not saying that my class is a bunch of slackers, I am questioning their leadership abilities. Too many of us have been raised to follow every little rule . . . what impact will we have if we can’t even set our own expectations and get work done when we have full freedom to create and do it?

As the class period continued, I continued to draw out generalizations and assumptions that the students were making but did not have awareness of. When they were asked to practice inquiry about where those generalizations and assumptions may

have come from they were eventually able to do so. Some students right away, some later in email correspondence, and yet others later on in class, one on one discussions, or the final paper. Eventually, most all of the students were able to identify the subtle, socialized patterns of reasoning that underpinned all of their behavior, and that had betrayed them in this opportunity to collaborate, exercise leadership, and ultimately, learn. In a reflection paper a student wrote later,

I learned how it is so easy to read the articles assigned and think to yourself that you do that [exercise leadership during crisis], but it is through the actual practice of the process that you are able to see your weakness in it.

Another student wrote,

By that point in the semester, I knew about it [the disciplines of inquiry] cognitively, but I wouldn't have learned this behavior unless I had watched myself fail at doing it in the moment.

Together we ended up calling this intervention “the uncertainty class” as it was a dramatic manifestation of the uncertainty created when these students’ expectations about higher education, authority, and personal leadership were challenged. The increased awareness following the uncertainty class and the interpretation of it going forward was an exciting outcome of conducting it. The students began to see that even in the most provoking circumstances; practicing action inquiry makes it is possible to approach the world through inquiry and action rather than generalizations and reaction.

The practice of action inquiry offered these students a method of diagnosing one’s own implicit expectations and assumptions about the world in light of the purpose and context of the situation. Then, the student may inquire as to what might be challenging

their identified assumptions and expectations, plan interventions, take actions, and reflectively evaluate their impact.

The Learning Edge Project

The third intervention I'll discuss for this cycle, was intended to address the identification of the students' implicit expectations, assumptions, and generalizations about the world that, as demonstrated in the uncertainty class, may be holding them back from exercising leadership and having effective influence both personally and organizationally. As a class we identified this as the learning that needed to occur for the student to move forward in leadership efforts or in growth and maturity as a leader. We were identifying the outer limits of their learning, their "learning edge."

The learning edge project represented the edge or limits of the students' learning about and practice of leadership. Through personal reflection, noticing, journaling, conversations with family, friends, professors, and supervisors, the students were asked to identify the learning they knew they needed and wanted to do, and to take ownership of it. The project required that the students then share the leadership learning they wanted to take ownership of with the rest of the class. On my part, this was done with "the explicit intention of simultaneously supporting students' intellectual, experiential, and practical development through the building and ever-evolving reconstruction of liberating disciplines" (Steckler & Torbert, 2010, p. 2). As a result of my constant self-reflection and continued collaboration with the students, I suggested meeting one on one with each of them to assist in processing the learning edge assignment, and to encourage them in their inquiry about the deepest assumptions guiding their understandings of their

own leadership. We came to consensus in class that his would be a good way to move forward. One student wrote in reflection on that day,

No professor had ever offered to meet with everyone in my whole class individually before, they're like, "why do I care as long as you turn everything in?" In fact, if you ask to meet, let's say you get really interested in something from a lecture, some professors just say to email them your questions and leave it at that. Lame.

Every student but one met with me individually for an hour, to explore their leadership edge. According to my assessment, the final write-ups, and post-semester interviews with several of the students, significant learning occurred in those meetings as I continually provided questions that inquired into their expressions and sources of learning that they wanted to take ownership of. Not for lack of trying, many of them experienced difficulty in gaining access to their deepest purposes and thus difficulty in identifying the learning they wanted to do to accomplish them. Anticipating this difficulty, since I had experienced it as well, I introduced them to a purpose identifying exercise I learned in another doctoral course. While we met, I asked the students to respond with a short sentence or phrase to the question, "what's your purpose?" and then to immediately answer the question, "why?" I asked these two questions of each student several times in a row as a method of accessing the deeper and more meaningful purposes and reasoning upon which he or she bases action. Each time I posed the question, a deeper, more intricate truth or complexity emerged from the student's answer. For instance, one student answered, "my purpose is to be happy." When I asked why they thought they should be happy, the student was stumped for several moments. "Being happy is all there is," he responded and then added half-heartedly, "if you're not happy

then your life sucks (deferential laugh).” I switched tactics, “what would make you happy?” He answered quickly with a proud smile, “If my family is happy, then I’m happy!” I pressed further, “So your happiness depends on the happiness of five other people? (long pause, he was staring down into his coffee. I thought maybe he was contemplating jumping in.) Those are not great odds.” In between meetings, I would undergo the exercise myself within the context of facilitating the course. One example in my notes read,

What’s my purpose? To teach leadership studies to undergraduate students.

Why? My graduate assistantship includes this duty.

What’s my purpose? To help students take ownership of their own learning.

Why? My experience of taking ownership of my own learning enhanced my satisfaction with it immensely. It made me love learning.

What’s my purpose? To equip students with methods of self-access and awareness that serves their efforts at leadership.

Why? I have needed methods of self-access and awareness in order to improve my efforts at leadership.

What’s my purpose? To see and believe in the students’ potential for learning and leadership, and communicate it to them.

Why? This has been one of the greatest gifts given to me in my academic career.

While working on this kind of reflective practice myself and in the sharing of it with the students, I came to see more and more clearly the reason action inquiry is so appropriate for teaching. This excerpt illustrates the power of identifying the significance from which our learning and purposes emanate, resulting in the motivation to work toward accomplishing them, and the satisfaction that comes from taking ownership of

them. Action inquiry provides the practices; territories of experience, feedback mechanisms, and steps that guide our diagnosis, planning, taking, and evaluating action in alignment with our identified purpose. Practicing action inquiry as a lens through which to study our own learning and practice enabled the students and I to encounter the study of leadership as an act of learning. One that incorporates the principles of action inquiry not as a set of prescriptions for behavior or a process that can be followed in an imitative, mechanical way but as an opening up of a spirit of questioning and reflection for the purpose of one's own learning personally, interpersonally, and organizationally.

One student wrote,

A leadership quality that I never really acknowledged in other classes I have taken is purpose . . . you need to be sure that you are able to define your purposes. As a leader, I think that if people's purposes are out there you are able to know what to do to stimulate them to the next level. As a leader you know what it is personally going to take for that specific person to reach success, as they define it, because you know what their purpose is.

I recorded in my journal toward the end of this semester,

Could this understanding of leadership that incorporates purpose, self-awareness, and ownership of one's own learning be taught in some way other than action inquiry? Yes, of course. Then why action inquiry? It offers a thoughtful, intensely human, accessible, and developmentally established paradigm through which to present these complex and personal topics of learning.

And one student wrote,

We would not have been able to experience the learning on purpose and ownership, the pinnacles for this specific class, if you [professor Miller] had been rigid in your structure and expectations for the course. And, if you didn't practice action inquiry patterns yourself. Through my analysis at the end of this class, it looks as though, using action inquiry while teaching action inquiry, you restructured the class often enough in order to address identified needs. Action inquiry is an in the moment thing and it made the difference.

The Focus Group and the Observer

By this time, the semester was nearing its end and the students began to hit their stride with the inquiry process, diagnosing an issue that they wanted to address, the sharing of their learning edges with one another, and planning what action would be the most conducive considering the purpose of the assignment and the context of the course thus far. Because they had done much of the work on their learning edges individually and with me, they determined that they would present their learning edge project to one another in a focus group setting. I would be in the role of observer and timekeeper, rather than participant or facilitator. This was a significant decision for this class of students in light of the early dilemmas they faced with collaboration or decision-making apart from my facilitation. This decision also represented a sense of collective ownership the students felt about their learning edges: they exercised authoritative leadership in determining that they would share them with one another, in a setting that they designed and would facilitate. It was especially indicative of the ownership of their authority in the placement of me outside of the circle, without a voice (except for the technical keeping of time) in the sharing. It did not feel violent to me, although earlier in the semester it might have. Instead, it felt like they had launched themselves out of the nest, and I felt like a proud mama bird. Watching them gather in a circle of chairs and begin to reveal their learning edges to one another, my eyes welled up with tears, not because it was sentimental or because it was a happy ending, but because their sense of purpose was so clear and the aroma of their collaboration so fragrant. While listening to them share difficult, vulnerable areas where they needed to improve, they were literally holding one

another's vulnerability so that the individual could explore it out loud. It was a powerful act of mutuality.

I discovered that practicing action inquiry with more depth, personally, collectively, and individually, served to increase the sense of ownership the students and I felt about our learning, content, and process. Here, I use "ownership" to describe a sense of personal authority and agency in the act of learning and the content being learned in the course and while engaging in inquiry about our actions and their outcomes. It is similar to what the educational psychology literature calls student engagement (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1992; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) but is more aptly identified as an outcome of increased student engagement. Engaging in action inquiry as individuals and as a class offered a technique and practice that could be harnessed in service of increased learning comprehension, a feeling of ownership over one's learning, personal application of the material in real time, as well as a method that could inform the actual individual and collective practice of the subject being taught, leadership. Most amazingly, this occurred equally both for the students and for me as the instructor. My feelings of ownership, personal application of the material, and practice of leadership were enhanced as I deepened the experience of inquiry.

Even so, not everyone in the course was as ready or willing to make the developmental shifts I experienced some of the students making. Indeed, as with any research sample there are outliers and unknowns. I was beginning to become aware of an outlier in the making, toward the middle of the semester with one student who was unusually averse to verbally contributing to discussion, or to making eye contact with me.

He wrote rather superficially and avoided direct interaction with me although I suspected these were actually defense mechanisms. I tread carefully with him in my public facilitation of the class, while being more forthcoming in my comments on his papers. I attempted exploration and accountability, encouraging him to really dig in to the material or try out the practices either in writing assignments or in verbal participation in class. On one hand, participation with the material and in the class was required as part of the final grade but, on the other hand I did have a hunch that something more was at stake. I took the situation to one of my supervisors who suggested I either refer him to the syllabus' policy on classroom participation or refer him to a university counselor if I suspected psychological disturbances. These technical solutions to my challenge were appropriate and "right" though they did not feel like the right moves to make in my powerful teaching role, nor did they seem like a collaborative and vulnerable use of my authority in the situation. Instead, I wanted to believe that I could coax him out of his hang-ups, and into a developmental shift with the promise of transformation through inquiry. In short, it didn't work. Although his papers got significantly more insightful and improved greatly, he still was unwilling or unable to explore the deeper issues in the class, or in his own leadership experiences. He was the only leadership seminar student who has ever completely stood me up for a one-on-one meeting, left emails unreturned, comments unacknowledged, completely avoided eye contact, and ignored my direct feedback. I knew from other professors that this was not his consistent presence, and that he indeed was engaged and bright in other courses and contexts. Strangely enough, this baffling student experience didn't anger me; it actually made me painfully curious about

his experience of the class and of me. His power was in the withholding, for a whole semester (!), and it really stuck with me. In my follow-up interviews with students after the conclusion of this cohort's course I reached out to him and heard no response. I was holding out hope that perhaps after grades were turned in and the course was over he might be willing to download his experience in a casual setting like lunch or coffee on campus, but no luck. The one glimmer of insight I received was from another student who was a friend of his outside of class. She said she had run into him and mentioned she was meeting me for lunch to follow-up and check-in after the semester. His response was something to the effect of, "I really don't know why I just couldn't be in it with her, I really should've met with her then, I really should meet with her now." But I never heard from him.

Sometimes our best efforts, our most insightful interventions, our strongest convictions aligned with our personal practice are not enough to ensure the learning, engagement, or mutuality of others. Sometimes we are not enough, our efforts are not timed well, or something is not quite right and the vulnerable power of transformation does not occur. If we're lucky we get a resolution or information about what the real story is behind our foibles, misfires, or failures. And sometimes, we don't.

Another perspective on this experience with the student who chose relative withdrawal comes from Torbert (1991) who has pointed out that the exercise of unilateral power cannot generate double-loop developmental transformation of a person's action-logic, only mutuality-based power can. But he also points out that one can never guarantee developmental transformation at all. The teacher cannot teach anyone to

increase their capacity through examining their current assumptions and then experimenting beyond them, if the learner at issue does not want to learn it. It would not be mutually-transforming power if it were not mutual. Still a third, and decidedly hopeful perspective on this episode is that this experience may have prepared the student at issue to respond in a different way at some later date.

The Fourth Cohort—Events of the Course

I will begin this last narrative section by presenting further reading I was doing in regards to theoretical frameworks and ways of knowing, and explain the ways that this reading affected my developing understanding of the action inquiry framework for pedagogy. I'll discuss the ways I "pedagogized" the most influential literature I was consulting and offer examples of the interventions, methods, and process facilitation experiences involved with conducting this cycle of the study. I'll tell the story of the fourth cohort a bit differently this time using larger portions of the students' writing and quotes to reflect my enlarging perspective on involving the students in interpretation and decision-making. They will "help" me, in their own voices, illustrate the themes that emerged from the actual action research study in which we collected data, made observations, consistently committed to collaboration with one another. I also offer my own concurrent student and training experiences as I began more deeply to connect them with my authority, sense of mutuality, teaching practice, and design of the course. Next, I will present my difficulties that arose from completing the requirements for the doctoral dissertation preparation seminar. Some of this was due to the obscurity (or purposeful nonexistence) of methodological imperatives for action research, and some of the

difficulties were from the growing complexity of the system I was trying to manage anew with previous tidy cycles and research aims. Next, a section describing learning that came out of another group relations conference, this time in a consulting role, and from an action research methods course Bill taught that summer in between semesters. This will lead to a description of the Steve's first, critical readings of the dissertation proposal I prepared in the previously mentioned dissertation seminar course and the deep learning I did following.

Pre-Reading and Planning

At the conclusion of the third semester of leadership seminar, I submitted a manuscript I had written about the leadership seminar courses so far toward completion of the qualifying paper requirement in my doctoral program. Frankly, I had begun to research my practice of teaching this course and inviting my students to research their practice of learning in hopes that it would perhaps become a paper for use at some point. It seemed this was the occasion for its use and when my faculty readers passed it I felt very happy that a piece of research so important to me and transformative for me was valued. This was the first time in which I felt real possibility and permission to aggregate the data I had gathered less formally at first and more formally now into a dissertation study. I could see there would be hurdles to jump along the way to be sure, not the least of which was that no one had ever completed an action research dissertation before at USD. But my conviction about the significance of the work overshadowed my intuition about the murkiness this would lead me into. The radical, dangerous, and transformative nature of what had already happened in the courses appealed to the parts of my

personality that had identified with the renegade-type professors I had taken up with at UCSB, Princeton, Baylor, and now, USD.

I explored the use of the data and learning I had done in relation to the course more intentionally during a weekend group relations conference that took place immediately following the third semester. After the reflection I did over that weekend, I decided that I would enter the spring semester's dissertation writing seminar with action research as my dissertation method and the use of action inquiry for pedagogy as my topic.

The spring semester of 2009 I was teaching undergraduate courses, but not leadership seminar. I encountered an influential piece of literature for my work and thinking during this time, Heron and Reason's (1997) article, "A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm." These authors elucidate a participatory worldview in which epistemology includes experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical ways of knowing, and in which methodology is based on cooperative inquiry (Heron, 1996), a form of action research. They argue that although we each encounter the world from a subjective stance and that even our "objective" realities are shaped by our linguistic expressions of them, we can, nevertheless, commit to critical subjectivity (Heron & Reason, 1997). That is, an awareness of the ways we come to know what we know, of which they contend there are four, will enable us to experience and express a reality that is disciplined, conscious, and adaptive. The first is *experiential knowing*, which consists of knowledge obtained through direct encounter with "some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 280). *Presentational knowing* is knowledge gained in our

attempts at expressing our experiential knowing of these things or persons with symbols, metaphors, images, and sounds. *Propositional knowing* is the linguistic description of knowledge about something we know, most commonly expressed in formal or informal statements or theories. And *practical knowing* is the ability to demonstrate what is descriptively known or to practice what we have expressed about our experiences. Heron and Reason explain that each of these forms of knowing presuppose and fulfill the previous one culminating in a more holistic, inclusive paradigm of inquiry as well as a more fruitful approach to being in the world than focusing only on propositional, scientific knowledge. Interestingly, Heron and Reason heavily cite Torbert's work in this article, linking his concept of the "reframing mind" (Torbert, 1987), that avoids quick conclusions, and a "consciousness in the midst of action" (Torbert, 1991), that keeps us awake to what's happening in the moment, with their notion of critical subjectivity (Heron & Reason, 1997). They suggest that people working together engage in a cooperative inquiry with critical subjectivity that cycles them through the four ways of knowing to achieve greater alignment and deepen their work together. In addition, Heron and Reason add a fourth characteristic question to Guba and Lincoln's (1994) qualitative research inquiry paradigm. Guba and Lincoln's paradigm includes "the *ontological* question about the nature of reality, the *epistemological* question about the nature of knowing, and the *methodological* question about how to know and what sorts of injunctions to follow" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 286). Heron and Reason argue that an *axiological* question about what is intrinsically worthwhile needs to be added to this inquiry paradigm in order that the value of the inquiry to the human experience be

established. This doesn't need to completely upset the apple cart of organizational life entirely though. They argue, citing Torbert, that normative organizational hierarchy can provide direction from those capable and authorized to lead and can be authentic when it seeks "the developmental emergence of autonomy and cooperation" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 287).

But they also remind the reader about of the shadow side of authority, which in the Jungian sense is authoritarianism, as well as the shadow side of collaboration, which is competition or conformity, and the shadow side of autonomy, which is isolation and narcissism (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 287), and these made me think about my students. For the first time I began to see the shadow side of my espousing and enacting this form of inquiry as pedagogy.

Addressing inconsistencies in even the most progressive and critical pedagogies Ellsworth (1989) argues that these attend only to the rational, conscious, analytical discourse of teaching and learning in the classroom. She suggests that these logical perspectives on "universal" truths and the accurate views of reality are presented with the intention of giving the student the freedom to chose which moral standpoint they feel is most true. Although this perspective sounds objective and emancipatory, it leaves intact the principle that the teacher still has more power than the students. The teacher may strive to position herself as a learner once again but does so in order to better understand the students' less powerful position and improve her ability to bring the students' up to her superior level of understanding. Ellsworth asserts that the truest participatory form of dealing with the power differential between students and teacher is to openly

acknowledge it as unavoidable, and seek to understand the most tolerable expressions of it collaboratively. Even though I had not encountered her work specifically, I also began to feel brave enough to ask hard questions about my practice, as participatory and emancipatory as I viewed it to be. I asked myself how the students might experience my use of this alternative pedagogy as an expression of authoritarianism, as well as how my invitation to collaboration had actually invited conformity disguised as democracy. I reflected on how my encouragement to exercise autonomy might have isolated or inflated students. These questions were an element of a re-enchantment of teaching and learning, a fleshing out of doing human research that was occurring more and more for me. They contributed to my encountering the classroom, this research, and the world as a more sacred, meaningful, but shadowy place. The account of this cohort will discuss more of that shadow perspective than the previous accounts not because shadow elements weren't present or at work in previous semesters but because I was finally attending to them and inviting students to become aware of them too.

My course with the third cohort was during the fall semester of 2008 and the course for the fourth cohort took place during the following fall, 2009. Between the two was the longest stretch between courses yet and I had time and experiences that deepened, shifted, and informed the fourth and final cycle of this study. I'll discuss a few of these events that contributed to both the sense of re-enchantment and shadow-work from which I made direct application to the course. I'll start with the ways I was attempting to pedagogize the central literature I was consulting; namely Bill's action inquiry, and Heron and Reason's ways of knowing.

It didn't seem enough to introduce and encourage the action inquiry disciplines propositionally to the students (which I did in the first two semesters). And even though it felt revolutionary for me, it didn't even seem enough to be transparent about my use of and struggles with enacting the action inquiry framework myself practically (which I did in the third semester). I felt the conviction to really invite the students to undertake them on their own, together as a class, and accordingly, to reflect both individually and together about it. I was convinced, and Torbert's literature affirmed, that the experiential knowing of the aims and practices would be the way transformation would occur if we were open to it. In *Action Inquiry* (2004), Torbert & Associates offered exercises for becoming more present to one's awarenesses and territories of experience. I introduced them and we agreed to complete one of them, an awareness check-in every minute for one hour outside of class. The subsequent discussion and written reflections about the exercise were positive overall, although a majority of the students expressed difficulty about ever getting to the deepest levels of awareness and about staying within the territories they desired. Not surprising, the practice of holding one's awareness at a deeper level is difficult during everyday, rote, unreflective tasks.

Jack Whitehead (1993) writes about living one's questions and explains that the practice of living one's questions in the action of everyday life, instead of separating them from the action of everyday life, is also a thoughtful construction of personal theory. Although this is an individual task that could be categorized as accomplishing the action inquiry aim of integrity or personal action research, I wondered if seeing one's practice as theory construction might be a second-person tool for the aim of mutuality as

well. Toward translating this idea into a teaching instrument, I previously viewed my use of a third-person text, *The Tipping Point* (Gladwell, 2002), as a model for and an interactive tool for generating discussion about how one begins to build practical theory from experiences. This was effective with the students in earlier semesters but, as I've stated previously, it only went so far in inviting the students to practice theory construction during the moment of their own action and experiences. Learning about leadership within the context of exercising leadership is a multi-level juggling act indeed but learning content in the context of that content is an effective tool for learning. Certainly, learning to influence a situation in the midst of that situation seems more suitable for addressing the challenges that await students in their post-graduate circumstances. Practicing more conscious levels of awareness and attending to varied territories of experience during our living had the potential to cultivate more effective influence and work in real-life scenarios. That is, those circumstances in work or social life that do not wait for separate reflection times or review papers. Taking this effort further during the fourth semester, and attempting to respond to the students analysis of our ongoing work, I decided to make first-person texts, the students' written reflections and papers, into anonymous, third-person interactive tools for generating discussion about our interactions in the course.

One of the assignments in the course was writing short reflections following every class meeting submitted through an electronic web-based teaching technology tool the university uses. These submissions were seen only by me and were ungraded; in addition, the students knew that I was completing the same exercise. I gave full credit

towards the student's participation grade if they wrote something in reflection following every class period. Several weeks into the semester I began to see good insights coming from students in these reflections but most of them were not being offered in class session. It was my initial thought that if the students could find a way to reflect these insights and hypotheses about the group's working life together to the group, they would be immensely helpful. I mentioned this in two class sessions and it was met with much discussion. Several students responded passionately (and had written) about wishing they could see the reflections of their classmates. One student wrote in her journal reflecting on the discussion,

Many people voiced a desire to read each other's journals believing it would give them a better idea of what everyone was thinking. Like if we had the opportunity to read each other's journals then we would seemingly have the knowledge that Professor Miller has, how we could be a better group. . . . The sense from the group was that this information was intentionally being withheld by Professor Miller but, the reflections are ours (not hers) to offer to one another. Hello! In other words, WE are intentionally withholding this information from each other by putting it in private journals.

Another student wrote this in his reflection paper,

We also discussed that if we were told earlier that it was more expectable to talk about our journals, we would have done so. Some suggested that the journals were a waste of time and others suggested that they felt like we were all a part of a big experiment. We did not like the feeling of being a part of this experiment and many suggested that Professor Miller was just dangling the information that she had from reading all of our journals over us. Professor Miller has all the power because she has information that we do not have. I disagreed with the class somewhat and argued that we had given this power to Professor Miller because we chose to share all this information with her and have decided not to share it with the class until late. I suggested that if we wanted to regain some of this power we needed to use our resources and share this information with each other. But at that point nobody wanted to hear it.

The irony of this excellent insight was that the student didn't make the observation or interpretation during class. I offered this observation to her in an electronic response to her reflection and she responded by sharing the vignette with the class during our next meeting. This intervention of offering her living inconsistency, seeing something but not being able to enact it, was successful from my point of view. A few students reacted to the recounting of her insight, which she presented with humor and vulnerability, by speculating about the reasons it might be occurring. A student suggested that the temptation to read one another's journals stemmed from the belief that it would be a more comfortable and less confrontational form of communication. They explained that if they had access to each other's written work, they might be spared the emotion in someone's voice, and feelings of shame or embarrassment if someone were to verbalize something about us in class. Another student hypothesized that since I was intentionally not offering traditional forms of feedback to the students, that reading each other's papers and journals would give them a good gauge of where they stood in relation to others' work in the course. Another student continued, stating that they kept their insights and interpretation of the group's interaction private since it was the only thing they felt they had power over. They explained that they had the feeling of "not knowing who is in control of this course, us or the professor, or nobody." This student's original intervention yielded more hypotheses and interpretation of the *why* of what was going on in the group rather than merely analysis of *what* had happened. Her offering of inquiry invited more inquiry that led to many insights in students' reflection pieces and papers in the following weeks directly linked to her intervention. She felt empowered and I did

too. The group was able to receive her intervention and attempt direct inquiry into and interpretation of their own process in the moment. Their hypotheses of conflict prevention, competition, uncertainty avoidance, and desire for control were revealing for us and these hypotheses continued to make appearances as the course progressed.

In addition, two students had separately come to my office hours to talk about insights they were having about how to help the group accomplish its tasks and interact more effectively. They were each hoping that I would relay the insight as an intervention. I encouraged the two students to think about ways they might offer these good insights to the group themselves. One of them said they'd think about it and the other planned and attempted an intervention that was effective at bringing up his insight. It was well crafted but once he brought the insight, the student dropped it altogether for the rest of the discussion. I wrote in my notes,

He threw out his intervention like a bobbing fishing lure, then effectively set the pole down on the bank and went back to his car to watch what would happen . . . uh oh, [another student] just said, "wait, how did we start talking about this?" And . . . [the intervening student] is looking at his notes.

Without someone championing the potentially helpful insight, the group could only work with it to a certain extent. I emailed the student after class acknowledging his courage at bringing up the hypothesis and crafting the intervention he did. I posed an open question for him about the experience if he wanted to answer it, "how did it feel to do that?" His response, "A relief. Then, lonely." I couldn't have empathized more, as I had had the same sensation upon intervening in classes, meetings, conferences, many times. To offer an insight or hypothesis to a working group is indeed just that, an offering. If I feel like my insight is appropriate for the group, or belongs to the group

then I feel relief upon giving the “burden” (not necessarily in the negative sense) to the group to work on together. But, with that offering and relief comes some sense of sacrifice and risk as well, risk that the group may not work with it, and sacrifice of one’s sense of groupness to single oneself out as an interpretive voice. Timing of the intervention, the tone, role, and personality of the intervener all shape the way the group receives it. It is perhaps this sense of sacrifice and risk that may prevent groups from achieving the mutuality that could make them more effective and their work more significant. I decided to conduct another pedagogical experiment. This experiment would be aimed at practicing the offering of insights and hypotheses for a group’s working life for the sake of effectiveness and enhanced mutuality.

This was occurring well into the semester and the students had been actively avoiding work on an action research project, instead spending their time and energies during class addressing interpersonal issues. They would agree consistently that the non-traditional structure of the class prevented them from doing project work together. They gained an easy consensus that if one member (most appropriately me) wouldn’t exert one leadership “style” or designation, that the confluence of all of our individual styles would clash and make it impossible to proceed. Several vocal students established that the group could not accomplish the task if only some students chose to speak and others chose to remain silent. Those students who spoke up often in class also conjectured about the silent judgments the “non-speakers” must have been accumulating about the others. Some students rehashed comments that had been made or facial expressions they had seen as objectionable following someone’s comments. Overall, they were focused on

addressing the action of our interactions in an effort to fix them thereby enabling us to do our work. Their focus on “fixing” interrupted their ability to look for the interplay between or overarching reasons for our interactions. One student wrote in her final paper,

We are given an open forum, to talk about what we are noticing, to practice reflecting and acting to influence our process. On most days, we are given free reign on how we want to run class, how we want to learn, and accomplish the tasks. But we avoid asking ourselves “why?” questions and instead focus on actual events or personality differences. At one point in the semester I couldn’t see us being able to get beyond personal literal issues of “who bugs who” to get to the learning of this course, which *I think* is about leading the people around you, influencing a group to get its work done without ignoring who each member is but also without getting too distracted by that.

Indeed, I desired the learning of the course to include the practice of leading others while attending to peer relationships and interpersonal dynamics for the sake of translating those skills to other, later, life contexts. In the ordinary setting of the classroom, leadership situations arise that look like those of other ordinary settings; board rooms, nonprofit organizations, sales teams, religious groups, families. In these contexts, as in ours, leadership is challenged, resisted, criticized, yearned for, and aspired to in the midst of the task at hand, just as it was in the context of our classroom. One student wrote in a reflection paper, a few sessions later,

If I could draw the most common themes of the last two classes it would be power, group dimensions, a need for structure and goals. This class is in distress because we do not have structure and I can see some are starving for lecture and others are overwhelmed. In the cap stone class of my leadership minor I see that many of my peers are not ready to face the real world, because they cannot handle some of the applications in this class; they leave this class, the closest thing we have to reality, defeated, heads hung low. How can we become true leaders if we are not comfortable to push ourselves and our peers to go beyond our comfort level? I am ready to get to that level, but I been noticing that I am not on the

same page as my peers. All they want to do is know what somebody is saying about the other person, and blame Miller for any struggle or anxiety they have.

The students complained that if they knew what their fellow students had written about their interactions together, that the air would be cleared and they could complete their task with effectiveness and harmony. I reflected on this request from the students with a colleague who taught equivalent courses and eventually decided to engage in the experiment they were suggesting and see what results might come. Perhaps, I thought, the aversion to making their deeper insights known to the group was a real fear that I needed to respect and that my step of mutuality might be to listen and trust their proposal.

I asked the students if I could have permission to use anonymous excerpts from their reflection submissions and papers for our group work together. I explained that perhaps we could “test” the theories we were constructing about whether revealing the private insights of the group would help us become more effective in our work together (the practice of the leadership content we had previously learned and the accomplishment of an action research project). Each student agreed privately to the anonymous use of his or her reflections. Although I told them it would not affect their grade, I can’t know if they felt compelled to agree in pursuit of a good grade or favorable impression on me. I also couldn’t know what the individual’s knowledge that their quote had or had not been chosen by me for the exercise would do to the course dynamic. Regardless, I moved forward and my conclusion was that the exercise was, at best, mildly effective for the purpose initially suggested.

I chose a few of the more perceptive observations or connections in the students’ reflection journals and written assignments and set them as Powerpoint slides during one

class session. I let the students decide which excerpts to discuss and there were a few good discussion loops about a few of them but, as I had previously observed, without someone to bring voice and life to the interventions they summarily died. These observations were of a first-person nature about second-person interactions. Reducing them to third-person captions under our living and breathing together as if we were editorial cartoons diminished the powerful potential they had for bringing mutuality and transformation to our work together. This was a powerful example of the voice and the person bringing as much meaning and being of as much importance to the inquiry as the objective accuracy of the inquiry itself. Mutuality is the aim that allows both the voice and person to bring and receive inquiry.

Both my reflections and those of the students synthesized our conclusion that avoiding the difficult work of seeing the bigger picture and offering it to one another with purpose and vulnerability prevented us from being effective. One student wrote,

“Us vs. her” [Professor Miller] or “me vs. you” talk is convenient. This is more comfortable and less confrontational, we don’t have to claim personal responsibility. These are all easy targets . . . it helps us channel our emotions together against something or someone, rather than face one another. But getting agreement like this isn’t unifying, I actually find myself disconnected from the group and frustrated.

My reflection journal read,

Perhaps this is a fear of mutuality? If mutuality is scary, is it because it’s real and has the power to show us who we really are, what our motives really are, and offers us real learning possibilities? Seeing the “wizard behind the curtain” is not comforting, it is disconcerting and makes us rethink all we counted on before, even brings some paranoia about how others are operating. Seeing the “reality behind the reality” of group life is a messy, at times disturbing sight. I think self-directed learning about exercising leadership with others compels us to “see” this way though. Next questions . . . how do we see like this (action inquiry), how do we know in this way (Heron & Reason)?

My adult development course had exposed me to developmental stages that characterized the difficulties experienced in the stage that many of these students were in. And Bill's expanded work on developmental stages, action-logics, can be brought to bear in understanding the results of introducing this emancipatory stance to students. From a subject-object point of view, they were most likely moving from an interpersonal to an institutional "order of mind" (Kegan, 1982, 1994) characterized by the reluctance or hesitation to trust mutual relationships beyond those of formally established mentors or persons of assigned informal authority. In developmental action inquiry terms, some of the students, or we might say the group, may have been moving from diplomat toward expert action-logics (Torbert & Associates, 2004). In either framework, the distance between a disposition of unilateral power to one of mutual power is far and difficult to navigate. It is difficult enough at these stages, and ages, to relate as a separate "you" and "me" without losing or assimilating "me." Coming to recognize both the "me" and the "we" of the group, and holding them both at once while acknowledging that all of the manifestations of the "we" are also in "me" is fragmenting if not frightening. In addition, asking persons in these stages of development to incorporate and practice double and triple-loop feedback requires that they make their previous assumptions about the individual in group life available for examination at least, if not deconstruction. This examination for the sake of mutual power and co-creation requires the individual to see the shadows of their previous developmental stage and of the socialized assumption of unilateral disposition. As in Plato's allegory of the cave, knowing only the shadows of reality, we often name what we see as reality when in fact it may instead be a

representation of reality which we might only identify if we engage in some manner of expansion of our seeing and therefore knowing.

In final drafting and revision of this dissertation document, Bill inserted a relevant recommendation and offered the use of his comments at this point in the text to respond to. He recommended that I examine the

tension between my [Cara's] efforts to generate double and triple-loop feedback and their [the students'] typical starting points at the Diplomat/Expert positions. My take at this point is that you need to reflect on the double-loop feedback to you that, despite the powerful interventions your courses constituted, overall the liberating disciplines you sculpted tended to focus too much on generating potential double-loop feedback to the students, given their overwhelmingly Diplomatic responses to the classroom freedom. Liberating disciplines that provided more specific guidance earlier in the course and single-loop interventions that built toward double-loop changes might have improved the sense of connection and progression within the class. For example, when that guy spoke up in class, but no one responded to him, and he didn't return to his point, a possible, single-loop intervention by you could have been to test with him during the class how he felt, then check with other students why they did not support him a few minutes earlier, then propose they restart the conversation from that point and see if they could now enact it differently.

Of course! Now, I wish I could check in with my "teaching self" from that moment, ask why I didn't provide a single-loop intervention like that, and have the chance to restart the facilitation from that point, enacting it differently this time? I present now a concrete example from the fourth semester in which the students and I explored our responses upon discovering ourselves to be ineffective in the moment.

In one exercise during the fourth semester, the students and I hypothesized about "what's really going on" underneath our curricular work and discussions by covering the table we sat around with large sheets of blank flipchart paper. Using markers, we sat quietly and waited for someone to begin the conversation by writing down a question or

hypothesis. By this point in the semester the students and I were in the habit of engaging in these “check-ins.” They were often accompanied by one of the alternative methods of inquiry stemming from one or more of the ways of knowing, (e.g., using textile objects during discussion, writing at the board, quick write exchanges, silence, music, drawing, walking) which I will discuss in detail in the next section.

One student began by writing, “What do I do when I discover I’m ineffective?” Another student said out loud, “it’s humiliating” and then wrote down, “ineffective = humiliating.” A third student shifted in her seat and addressed the second student, “I couldn’t imagine you feeling humiliated.” The second student responded, talking and writing, “It’s acknowledging what you actually do compared to what you should or want to do. I avoid this feeling by getting angry and shutting down. If anyone ever called me out on it, I’d be humiliated.” Another student starts a list of ways to avoid feeling the “humiliating” realization that we are not as effective as we would like to be. It begins, “crying, shutting down, getting angry.” Another student adds, “trembling” and “sweating.” I wrote down, “pouting, withholding contribution to ‘punish’ the group, a member, or the facilitator.” A usually quiet student adds, “we just need to take away . . .” and writes “take away emotions/reactions.” It was quiet for a few moments, and I took a deep breath, “what if I offer those emotions or reactions to the group as an observation instead?” A student immediately wrote that down, then it was quiet again. The original student smirked and said “that would be trying something new” and wrote “TRY SOMETHING NEW” next to the original question, “What do I do when I discover I’m ineffective?” A number of us chuckled, and then a student wrote, “allies help us

intervene, to get over our fear of humiliation” and wrote down “allies.” I asked him if he’d be willing say more about his comment (it was a student who had written in his journals about his experiences of testing out interventions and observations with a friend in the class before making them, or at least counting on the fact that the friend would most likely support him in the moment). He explained as much and added that the difficult feelings that come with intervening can be mitigated by the confidence one has in the group’s or group members’ capacity to see the purpose of the intervention, which is hopefully in alignment with the group’s overall shared purposes even if it’s perceived as negative or shadow derived.

Pedagogizing the Ways of Knowing

Pedagogizing the theory and literature I was consulting consisted of translating them into inquiry facilitation tools, and the same was true with Heron and Reason’s (1997) ways of knowing. Desiring to align my own developing philosophical, methodological, and pedagogical values within their participatory inquiry paradigm, I paralleled Heron and Reason’s ways of knowing with my understandings of inquiry. The first question I addressed is whether knowing truth propositionally is the only or best way of knowing. And since much of my institutional life as a student was structured under this assumption, especially theorem-based sociology and doctrine-driven religious studies, it felt fitting to mark my inquiry paradigm as one that was aimed at moving through experiential, presentational, and propositional knowing to practical knowing. Development through an experience of what is true, to the symbolic expression of that experience, toward a sophisticated description of it, for the enactment of that which is

discovered to be true was something I wanted for myself and my students. For Heron and Reason (1997), “practical knowing is an end in itself” (p. 287) that can be summoned to answer the axiological question of what the human purpose is for our inquiry. I began asking myself their question, “for what purposes do we co-create reality?” (p. 287). My copy of the Heron and Reason article is covered in notes, many attempts at answering this question and working the paradigm for my own experience and context. I set about answering this co-creation question in my notes beginning with the purpose, “to change and influence the world in service of human flourishing.” Then further, for my context, “to transform the experience of learning in service of teacher and student flourishing” and additionally, in my particular field “to do so especially with respect to the study and practice of leadership for eventual organizational flourishing.” I re-drew the diagram depicting the consummating progression of the ways of knowing to attempt a concrete example. For example, I can know about leadership experientially, having been influenced by the exercise of it. My experience of either being led or leading produces knowledge about leadership. Likewise, I might identify someone’s act of leadership according to the presentational standards or understandings I have about the exercise of leadership saying, “that’s leadership” or like one of my students wrote early on in the first semester, “I don’t know how to perfectly describe leadership but I definitely know it when I see it.” I might further know or theorize about leadership or the exercise thereof propositionally, by observing and constructing theory about the ways I view leadership scenarios. Actually exercising or enacting leadership is the consummation of the “whats” of leadership. Practical knowing, or the embodiment of

leadership is more about the “hows” and the “whys” of leadership, those being the axiological realities that are of true transformational substance.

My reflection on this grounded and consummating paradigm of inquiry led me to the deeper, more practical, and epistemological questions; how do we seek these ways of knowing? What constitutes inquiry? Participatory inquiry? How do we inquire? My written notes on these questions illustrated the expanding nature of my inquiry worldview; I cluster them here in an effort to reproduce the progression of my contemplation:

- Reading
- Writing
- Asking—verbally, textually, in reflection, for feedback
- Discussing—verbally, textually, technologically, psychologically, spiritually
- Listening—to speakers, others, self (thought, body, emotion), feedback, music
- Watching/Observing—to you, us, me, critically, metaphorically, literally, emotionally, compassionately
- Seeing—they, you, us, me, others present (literally, metaphorically, appreciatively, paranormally), patterns, design
- Drawing/Painting
- Singing
- Playing—games, music
- Dancing
- Touching—sensory, tasting, texture, Playdoh

- Sensing—evidence and nonevidence, energy, vibes, “knowing,” faith
- Consciousness—reflection, meditation, examen, DMT, social dreaming, social matrix
- Experimenting/trying as inquiry—theory testing, hypothesis testing, interpretation testing

I began to make more sense of my experimentation with these forms of inquiry by corresponding them with Heron and Reason’s (1997) ways of knowing from the stance of each of the three persons (Table 4). For instance, if drawing or writing is used as an individual form of inquiry it may be considered to be evocative of first-person, presentational knowing. Similarly, the process of writing this dissertation could be considered all at once to be first-person, propositional knowledge in its assertions, as well as third-person, presentational knowledge in its reporting of them, and an illustration of first-person, practical knowledge in its recounting of the practice of action inquiry for pedagogy.

I was actively engaged in exploring more forms of inquiry, practical, pragmatic, and for my pedagogical circumstances, collaborative ways of knowing, pushing on the boundaries of what constitutes research or inquiry. I was searching for and finding alternate methods of inquiring that begin where standard forms of inquiry are ineffective or insufficient to get to where I wanted to be. Sharing the claim over the data gathering and research, expanding the tenets of what counts as data and knowledge, and collaborating on interpretation and presentation of it was becoming my desired contribution. Heron and Reason’s ways of knowing, embodied in these expanded forms

of inquiry, and further nested within Torbert's understanding of first, second, and third-person stances subsequently align with and begin to invite a model for the aims of action inquiry.

Table 4

Inquiry Practices

	Ways of knowing			
	Experiential	Presentational	Propositional	Practical
First-person	Listening, Observing, Touching, Tasting, Smelling	Drawing, Painting, Singing, Reading, Writing	Experimenting, Intervening, Narrative	Acting
Second-person	Reflective listening, Social Matrix, Dialogue	Asking, Discussing, Dancing, Playing, Looking, Singing, Reading, Writing	Collaborative writing or drawing	Experimenting, Intervening, Interacting, Influencing
Third-person	Seeing patterns			Writing, Reflection, Action

I researched and reflected about methods of trying more forms of inquiry. Continuing the time of music reflection at the start of class, I also asked the students to share in the choice of music for our interpretation. Employing literature, guest facilitators, and the one on one meetings I had been having for a few semesters we engaged in competency evaluations, spiritual discernment exercises, dialogue practices, sensory activities, role playing, world café type brainstorming, reflective hypothesis writing, meditation, free writing, drawing, and more during the semester. Using different

methods of inquiring into our working life together was eventually what the students utilized to examine their inability or disinclination to complete a “real” project together which I’ll discuss in the events of the course section. Practicing these different forms of inquiry and challenging our conceptions about what constitutes legitimate inquiry and data resulting from it, was also an opportunity to practice our broader learning outcomes and desired skills of critical thinking, participant observation, organizational and group dynamics perspectives, change presentation and management, self-efficacy and empowerment, and the exercise of adaptive leadership.

Action Research Conference

During the spring semester between the third and fourth cohorts, I attended the San Diego Action Research Conference at USD again, this time presenting my initial questions and learning gleaned from using action inquiry in my teaching. As a result of my expressed interest in applying action research to my teaching, Steve invited me to join him for dinner with the keynote that year, Susan Noffke. Dr. Noffke is well-published and respected in regards to action research in educational settings and I brought some of my questions for her with me. I was familiar with the family tree metaphor she has identified to distinguish between the different types of aims action research studies attempt. But when thinking about my project, I struggled to find a categorical home to for it within her framework. Under the action research family tree, Noffke (1997; 2009) describes most action research as being personal, professional, or political in focus. The intent of *personal* action research is most often the development of an individual theory about one’s own local, personal practice (of teaching, nursing, parenting, etc.) inquiring

for the purpose of improving that practice. *Professional* action research contributions aim to improve the practice of a certain profession such as, educational administration, teaching, nursing, school or psychological counseling, etc. for the sake of all who undertake or benefit from that profession as well. *Political* action research inquires into a social situation for the sake of liberating or advocating alongside disadvantaged groups or individuals. Examples of political action research are Participatory Action Research for liberation of governmentally oppressed peoples, legal advocacy, etc. But, I wondered, what about other forms of action research that don't fit these categories? The research I was doing with my students was not *only* for my own personal development, or for contributing to the professional body of knowledge about undergraduate pedagogy. Nor was it *just* for the liberation of my students from the traditional models of rote learning. Indeed, my project attempts to adjoin all three of these purposes. In addition, the action research we were doing was for the purpose of attempting a more authentic partnering together to make our task completion more effective, complex, humane, and meaningful.

During dinner, Steve invited me to recount my action research experiments so far, and the ways I continually asked my students to join me in studying our own practice of learning together. I explained to her that although I was the instructor for the course and had the responsibility and authority to make formal and functional decisions about it, I endeavored to suspend that sense of hierarchy when it came to interaction during our class time together. In addition, I reported that all of the action research I'd found thus far taking place in undergraduate settings was focused on causes outside the actual organization of the classroom (e.g., campus, community, national, international). I

suggested that using the framework and philosophy of action research to focus on our “causes” or difficulties that restrained our effectiveness inside the classroom was a constructive endeavor and might allow for effectiveness conversations that are more participatory and less performance-review. Inquiring into this potential space for partnership during a group’s working interactions seemed to be the crux of the research for me. In my action research conference presentation, I experimented with using the aims of action inquiry to perhaps expand Noffke’s categories of action research according to their purpose. I’ll return to how this became a constructive, theoretical effort for me in the discussion and suggestions for further research sections of this document.

Dissertation Seminar

That spring I was enrolled in the final doctoral course in my program, dissertation seminar. This course is designed to offer the student a consummation of the research methods learning for the purpose of crafting a proposal for their dissertation research. I knew I wanted to use my previous and ongoing research in the leadership seminar course for my dissertation project but was at a loss about how to go about fitting it into a traditional research and reporting mold. When instructed to gather resources about our chosen research tradition’s tenet methods and forms of validity I came up short. I quickly became swamped in discussing Herr and Anderson’s (2005) new categories of validity and in explaining my first and second-person experiences in a third-person academic voice. Although my student counterparts were supportive and my instructor earnest in trying to understand where I was coming from, I ended the course with the only B I’d

earn in the doctoral program and a boggy, disembodied draft of a proposal that I didn't feel passionate affection for. It was no mirror for the reality of my research.

Undergraduate Conference

That same semester, I was also participating as a teaching assistant in an undergraduate group relations course that was similar to the usual conferences, though developmentally scaffolded and appropriate for undergraduates. This course was pioneered by Cheryl at USD. She has published about her growth during the development of it and her experience of doing inquiry into the experience (Getz, 2009). My TA experience in this course, specifically, helped bring to light shadow aspects of my presence in the role of leadership seminar instructor. It has since brought to mind a quote from Carl Jung I encountered during seminary,

If you imagine someone who is brave enough to withdraw all his projections, then you get an individual who is conscious of a pretty thick shadow. Such a man has saddled himself with new problems and conflicts. He has become a serious problem to himself, as he is now unable to say that they do this or that, they are wrong, and they must be fought against. . . . Such a man knows that whatever is wrong in the world is in himself, and if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day. (Jung, 1938, p. 140)

Not that I have been, or will be able to withdraw all of my projections or fully explore my own shadow consciously but, the attempt to do so in earnest has been and is now a sincere offering on my part in response to a call like Jung's.

Group relations theory and practice draws heavily upon many such "fathers" of psychological theory and psychoanalysis in groups. Its practitioners whom I have been exposed to talk about one's individual shadow as being a representation of the larger

group's shadow or hidden aspects. If one is willing to work on the individual sense of this shadow in the moment that it manifests itself during group work, it serves to expose the unconscious shadow aspects of the group. Accordingly, two of the central concepts of group relations theory are *projection* and *projective identification*, or the tendency of the unconscious mind to assign negative conclusions about oneself to an outside other. By projecting what my mind does not wish to be true about myself (most often the dark parts of my shadow) onto another individual or the group, I thereby avoid the discomfort and anxiety of taking responsibility for the negative reality of my own shadow aspects. But by exercising the vulnerability to explore or expose the hidden shadow within oneself before the group I may free myself of the discomfort of holding or repressing this reality. Instead, I release the work to the group to take responsibility for together. This is an important concept to understand when working in a position of formal authority, as groups that experience difficulties commonly begin this type of negative projection with the perceived or assigned "leader" of the group. But as my group relations training progressed I also learned that projections are also often looking for a magnetic "home." That is, that the specific kind of *projective identification* we receive may say as much about our own unconscious anxieties and negative shadow realities as they do about the group or individual projecting them. For me, this is something to take note of especially when I find myself accepting, reacting to, or holding the projections of the group or individual. It could be said that we don't end up holding projections that we don't already have a valence for, defensive repulsion from, or attraction to. And since this is for the most part in an effort by all parties to avoid the discomfort of examining one's

own perception of our imperfections as shameful, it is anxiety-producing to name the projections as shadow actualities, or attempt to metabolize, or expose them. Tolerating or inviting the anxiety of these working moments is the management of the group process that group relations espouses will free the group and its individuals from unconsciously lodging insecurities, barriers, and hang-ups in one member or another.

Being in the position of formal authority can offer the individual the opportunity to act as a temporary container that holds the negative projections of the group or individual while they work to expose them to the group. Consequently, being in this authoritative position and acting as a container also offers one the temptation to internalize the projections as personal, particular, or predictive. It was in this continued group relations learning and the practice of it in conferences and teaching that I began to allow myself to become haunted by the importance of authority, power, and shadow in my teaching role. I use the heavily connotated word “haunted” because I was coming to realize, and still am, that the formation of learning and leadership processes in the vulnerable atmosphere that these methods represent is very risky. These practices are risky to the false sense of security that we are in control of or have done away with our shadow side. It seems dangerous and scandalous to admit that that we may not be in control of our shadow and that it may not consist of merely benign flaws or imperfections. Again Jung speaks to this,

It is a frightening thought that man also has a shadow side to him, consisting not just of little weaknesses—and foibles, but of a positively demonic dynamism. The individual seldom knows anything of this; to him, as an individual, it is incredible that he should ever in any circumstances go beyond himself. But let these harmless creatures form a mass, and there emerges a raging monster; and each individual is only one tiny cell in the monster's body, so that for better or

worse he must accompany it on its bloody rampages and even assist it to the utmost. Having a dark suspicion of these grim possibilities, man turns a blind eye to the shadow-side of human nature. Blindly he strives against the salutary dogma of original sin, which is yet so prodigiously true. Yes, he even hesitates to admit the conflict of which he is so painfully aware. (Jung, 1912, p. 35)

During the undergraduate group relations course, one of the students was working to disclose and work with her projections toward me during one of the small group sessions. She wrote in her reflection paper that upon seeing me in the opening plenary session she presumed that I was going to be “anal and high-strung” as a result of her past experience with young, female professors. She expressed in the small working group (in which I and another staff member had more or less quiet roles) that she made negative assumptions about the fact that I was a “beautiful graduate student” and one of the youngest staff members at the conference. She disclosed that she was intimidated by my “pretty outward appearance and my powerful role” as a staff member and concluded that I would “probably overcompensate” for my youth and beauty by exerting more rigid control and authority. The small group had a lengthy and honest discussion following the student’s “confession” as she called it. I felt she did good work bringing to the surface an issue that many young women face in leadership; how those they lead or lead alongside perceive their youth, beauty, and gendered sexuality. Examining the perceptions one might sustain in leadership is helpful for all those who desire to use their power and influence thoughtfully but it was especially timely for the student and as it turned out, for me. Her projections of my being likely to overcompensate for my youth and beauty implied a need to contend with the reality that youth and beauty may invite assumptions of ineptitude or be setbacks to leadership. And though she couldn’t have imagined it, I

had indeed struggled with this reality in my teaching experience. I was making conscious and unconscious efforts at balancing my rigidity and authority, my perceptions of my students' perceptions of me as a young woman in a powerful role.

This student addressed the issue further in various settings in the conference, and more together later at her request. We were both able to identify experiences in which we had each battled assumptions like these, from within and without. This young, beautiful, and as she demonstrated, powerful student was addressing the notion that sexuality plays an important role in the use of power in groups and individuals exercising leadership. She was projecting this onto me in this context as a means of discovery, and my role offered me the opportunity to allow her work to take place while ultimately offering it back to her. My valence, or ability to receive her projections was high as a result of my life experiences and physical appearance, and although I was able to help her eventually take back the projections for her good learning, I also took the opportunity to explore those projections for my own learning with careful attention not to receive them as projective identification (I had struggled to do so in other conferences and circumstances). Indeed that group also was able to work on otherwise latent gendered and sexuality issues in that conference as a result of both her and my willingness to make vulnerable and speak to our shadowed struggles.

I had studied gender and power in an overarching sense in my seminary, sociology, and leadership theory courses. Age, beauty, and sexuality are important components in social perception and interaction along with the more often acknowledged demographic of race. I was aware that having a young female instructor most likely

influenced our classroom interactions, in both positive and negative ways. I suspect that this has something to do with being desirable. At one point or another all humans wrestle with what it means to understand oneself as desirable, socially, culturally, spiritually, sexually, and intellectually. I have avoided dealing with my own desirability in an effort to be taken seriously. I have received the projections and been representative of this issue in the group relations conferences and classes I have been a part of. There has been some powerful identification for me but I had and still have learning that I need to do around this.

But more importantly when I thought about my own experiences with those in positions of authority and power over me, also positive and negative, I quickly realized that they were almost exclusively men. For all the reasons above and more I began working on this, though intermittently, and in a more isolated fashion than it probably warranted at the time.

In high school I had a confrontation with a male teacher about whether it was appropriate for women to be elders or pastors in a church. We disagreed, he believing it not appropriate, and my disagreement stemming from the fact that my mom held both positions in my church tradition and I thought myself capable of it one day. But during that same time, another male teacher was very influential in fostering my curiosity about worldview and faith in ways that I still identify as important now. Similarly, in college I was removed from a religious extra-curricular leadership position because I was a woman at the same time that my religion professor was encouraging me to seek a doctoral degree in seminary.

I can see now that I was not impressed or inspired by any of my female teachers or coaches during those years. I didn't perceive that they were looking to advance my learning, voice, or leadership. The male teachers and authority figures I had either took interest in me and challenged me to do greater things or openly prevented me from being able to lead or influence. And my perception of the female teachers and authority figures I encountered was that they either tolerated me, made me invisible, covertly or unconsciously competed with me, or thought I was competing with them. And from about that time, I actively though mostly unconsciously, sought relationships with men in positions of authority who would invest in, encourage, and advocate for me and who perhaps wouldn't compete with, challenge, or couldn't upstage my feminine presence. The chain of male authority figures in my academic narrative is long beginning with my undergraduate professor, to my seminary thesis advisor and professors at Baylor, then to Steve in the role of dissertation chair, Zachary as professor and guide, and Bill as a mentor and professor. Cheryl was really the only variance in the sequence since she held many roles with me and since she had provided great opportunities for me and had had significant developmental interactions with me in most of those roles. In examining these relationships, I was doing similar work as the undergraduate student; making my female professors, supervisors, and consultants' roles in conferences, classes, and work at USD available for reflection and interpretation knowing that those relationships were representations of or models for my own roles of authority as a woman. Looking back, wherever I had a illustration of a neutral or negative experience with a woman in a position of authority I would turn the projection around and try to claim it as being in

some part mine. For instance, I had felt ignored and made to be invisible by an aggressive, intelligent woman who held an influential position in one of my learning contexts. It was disturbing and bothersome to me at the time and became that way again when I recalled it. In the spirit of this discipline, I began to examine whether I had consciously or unconsciously ignored or made invisible any of my students, especially female students. I also examined whether my trepidation about being perceived as aggressive was causing me to make myself invisible in order not to be perceived like her. And additionally, I asked myself “what’s a young person to do when they find answers to these types of questions?” What if the person in authority really is trying to make you invisible, compete with you, or dismiss you? What if you find yourself competing with persons in authority over you, dismissing people you have authority over, or most importantly unconsciously projecting your own fears and shadow aspects onto others you are working with, leading, or following? I set the intention to incorporate more of this line of reflection into my personal contribution to the fourth cohort of students for their sake and mine believing that the framework of action inquiry and the foundational psychology of group relations would hold this type of inquiry. I also intended to determine an appropriate form of disclosure about translating my own experiences doing this as an illustration for later organizational life.

The timeline of my classes and training set up more opportunities for me to do more work around my interaction with authority, male and female. Following the undergraduate group relations course in the spring, I took part in another summer group relations conference at USD, this time as a member of a designated course embedded

within the design of the larger conference. A sequence of three doctoral courses made up the components of a certificate in Purpose Based Consulting, a model of organizational consulting being developed at USD's Leadership Institute. This summer component of the PBC track included participation in the annual summer group relations conference by a group of doctoral students as a cohort (similar description identified as LTAG and SAT groups in Hayden & Molenkamp, 2002, p. 23). This particular conference connected to my dissertation work in that it influenced my teaching of the fourth cohort to come and interestingly included Bill, visiting the conference in an observer role. I later spent time reflecting on the conference, my reactions and interactions to the authority held by female staff and members, and the implications for my research process and teaching. I'll return to a discussion of my developing interpretations and paralleling of these issues in the final chapter of the dissertation, presenting their analogous nature with the findings I had with the students.

Action Research Methods Course

Closely following the PBC courses, I took an action research methods course Bill taught as a visiting professor. It was loosely modeled after the course I had heard and read about from him (Steckler & Torbert, 2010) though it took into consideration that the group of students had never been exposed to him as a faculty member and several of us not to one another yet in the doctoral program. Taking this course as a student proved to be a very tangible experience of watching how Bill used his power, positional (as the professor), professional (as a published author and known scholar), and personal (we knew he was respected by the USD faculty who had approved his visit), to create a

classroom that functioned as a community of inquiry. He used power with vulnerability and authenticity; his purpose of mutuality evident throughout. Even so, it included moments of brutal honesty and feedback, beginning with a critical discerning reading of our autobiographies submitted prior to the course. This course provided the opportunity to identify with my students' experience of being in a student role within a participatory paradigm of teaching and challenged the ways I saw my own use of power, authority, and influence in my teaching. Before the course, Bill explained his approach,

As the syllabus you are receiving with this note tries to make clear (in third-person language), this will be a deeply participative course that attempts to get all of us to extend not just our impersonal, third-person knowledge of research methods, but also (and interweavingly) our first-person self-knowledge and ongoing "action inquiry" into ourselves, as well as our second-person action inquiry skills in helping our group/class as a whole and one another transform toward increasing integrity, efficacy, mutuality, and sustainability during our brief time together this summer.

Aha! It was this second-person action inquiry within the class-as-a-whole that I was seeking for my students and me. Intellectually, I had wanted and suggested working together for mutuality within our classroom experience but I realized that truly releasing power and authority to the students to work directly in a stance facing one another had been too threatening to my sense of authority and power early on. I had experienced counterintuitive moments of feeling greater power as I loosened my hold on traditional structures of teaching and interaction between the students and I, but I didn't truly become conscious to what Bill means by vulnerable power for transformation and mutuality until I addressed this second-person aspect more deeply. The texts assigned in that course contributed to my understanding of facilitating the deeper work of action

inquiry and clarified the expression of the facilitation or participant role using autoethnography, personal narrative, and reflexivity (Ellis & Bochner, 2005).

The following section presents the events of the course for the fourth semester and begins with a description of how I committed to addressing second-person mutuality pedagogically.

Events of the Course

At this point in my research, my intentions moved beyond the use of a reflective action research methodology to enhance the learning and experiential outcomes of a leadership studies course for my students and me. I had progressed from the first semester's incorporation of a group action research project focused outside our classroom, and further than the second semester during which I was only experimenting with integrating action inquiry disciplines in the actual classroom learning. In the third semester, I felt myself loosen the reins in significant ways and observed noteworthy second and triple loop learning for us individually and as a group as a result of enacting action inquiry disciplines together as a class. I was integrating the action inquiry framework deeply within the personal side of my teaching and interaction with students all along but, the integration of the philosophy became increasingly interwoven into more aspects of our learning and teaching together in the fourth semester. During this semester I openly presented, modeled, confessed, and invited the first, second, and third-person perspectives of our classroom experience together. Where in previous semesters the students and I had been able to respond to this form of learning and experiment with this form of pedagogy, it was more or less done (a) within the individuals (each student

including myself as the instructor), (b) between individual students and me, and (c) between the students as a group and me. The dearth of interaction *between* the students as individuals within our classroom, inclusive or exclusive of my presence had not been visible or central to me previously. But, this 2nd-person, peer interaction came to be the umbrella category under which other themes emerged during this fourth semester.

The data and papers from this semester; the interventions, emails, field notes, interviews, focus groups, journals, student papers, and more so in this cycle, electronic reflections, influenced the decisions about the research project as it cycled. In addition, former students who were collaborators and co-researchers in this and the previous cycles have ongoingly assisted me in interpreting the experience of this stage of the study.

I began the fourth semester setting a more specific intention of mutuality within our roles as students and teacher, while accomplishing our task of teaching and learning. Within the more concerted attention toward mutuality, I held the dual intention that (a) the actions we were researching were our *interactions*, for the sake of each other, all while remaining committed to, and (b) our task (the course) for the sake of our individual learning, and my institutional commitment. I knew it would be a challenge to stay focused on our task *while* remaining committed to our aims (integrity, mutuality, sustainability) of interaction but, any success in these efforts would mark a complete departure from undergraduate classroom learning-as-usual for my students, or me. Perhaps it would set up optimistic directions for others aspiring to bring lifeblood to their work in groups, classrooms or otherwise.

The Action Research Project

As I describe the more specific events of the course I'll move between the collective and individual voices of the students and mine. At the close of the semester, the students submitted a collective document that represented the events of the course from an interpretative stance, and from which I draw some of this text. I will indicate the shift in voices as the document progresses.

As in previous semesters, I introduced the framework of action research and the philosophy of action inquiry as a component of the course through short lectures and readings. In their collective paper submitted at the end of the course, the students summarized their semester to an extent,

Our class was given an assignment to complete an action research project of our own topic. While our class initially discussed a wide variety of ideas and appeared engaged in completing a project, we ultimately failed. We diagnosed and observed a variety of situations that were happening in class through our interpersonal relationships, our group dynamics, and situations that occurred in the classroom. As individuals we planned interventions, which many times did not prove to be effective. Sometimes interventions occurred without substantial thought. Whether our class consciously chose to or not, we avoided the Action Research Project all together. We decided that this required a lot of reflecting. In our last class periods, we hypothesized a variety of reasons as to why specifically we failed as a class. Utilizing the Action Research Cycle, we analyzed contributory causes, contexts to failure. Each member of the class brought a hypothesis that we discussed in class to explore further.

Our Action Research Project

We believe that our AR Project is a result of our semester's work. While we failed at the task, we have been developing an action inquiry about our failure. Our final project is instead a combination of the work we have done throughout the semester in the interpersonal arena of our class and our hypotheses are about why and how we allowed this supplantation and supression of task to take place. We decided to dedicate our last class session as a more formal discussion of our work. Our final project submission is a combination of the action inquiry work we have done throughout the semester, the class sessions where we addressed our failure together,

and this document where we explore our rejection of the task collectively through our hypotheses.

Hypotheses

- I could not commit to doing work on the project because I was concerned about the cohesiveness of the group.
- We let our own values inhibit the values/goals of a group.
- We thought that Professor Miller would “bail us out.”
- As individuals and as a group when we will feel like we are ineffective we shut down and thus are even more ineffective.
- The class was still so focused on and frustrated by the interpersonal issues that it was automatically assumed that the class would be unable to work together to complete such a project.
- As a whole, our class failed to make effective interventions that would have advanced the goal of completing a group project.
- At the beginning of the semester we had the interpersonal problems but we did not have the skills to address them.
- Being the one to organize and implement the project was scary, for me especially. We were a new group and we were having interpersonal conflict, which also could explain the fear to move back to the task. I could not authorize myself to fulfill that role, even though the class needed someone to do it. I think it was fear that I did not have enough power in the class to rally up strength behind me.
- I became more concerned about the cohesiveness of the group than the project because I felt we were not ready to perform.
- How do you not let your own values inhibit the values/goals of a group without putting your values to the side? I noticed the conflicting intentions and expectations but did not make myself vulnerable enough to help the group to remedy it. By putting my values to the side I did not make things easier for the group but instead diffused the ownership on to those who were trying so hard to welcome mutuality.
- Coming into class thinking, “I can do this,” be in a group and lead a group, but realizing that I still have a lot to learn about both. I was unable to be in the group much less lead the group. I relied on the other people in the group to step up and lead while I watched and listened.
- My not speaking up (along with a few others in class) made the tension in the class so high it got people, and me, very frustrated. No one wanted to call attention to it, which built the tension even more. I think when it came down to it, when I became more vulnerable with the group, I expressed to the group how I felt and how the group has taught me so much. However, the group doesn’t learn from me if I don’t participate return in. Some group members (including me) only took didn’t give. I short-changed the group.

In the collective document, the students expanded their explanations of each of these hypotheses inclusive of context and purpose, as well as a presentation of their cumulative individual efforts at diagnosing, planning, intervening with action, and reflection over the semester. A few of these were perfunctory and focused blame on basic conflict avoidance though most displayed a double-loop quality and claimed some personal responsibility for the group's movements, and a few delved into triple-loop, deep insights that connected them with the group as a whole. Here is an example of each type, the first reflecting a single-loop of feedback that concludes with satisfactory enough answers to the inquiry, why didn't we do what we intended to do?

The common issue in our group was the people who talk vs. the people who don't talk. This was a huge interpersonal issue, which ultimately put a stop to our progression and obtaining any sustainable inquiry until the end. We didn't want to offend each other or fight so we just checked out.

Another student wrote a reflection that demonstrated a second loop of feedback, that perhaps there are always other ways of intervening and that she had difficulty seeing them or enacting them in the moment,

I was unable to direct the class away from dealing with its interpersonal issues and instead work towards the development of a project. There will always be interpersonal issues, that doesn't excuse a group from completing a task. But I decided that it would be better to let people work through their interpersonal issues first and then tackle the task later, but perhaps in the future I should experiment with interventions that encourage the group to accomplish the task even among the existing interpersonal issues. I think I knew this is what I should have been doing but couldn't get it out in the moment.

And another account, reflecting more sophistication,

How do I hold my values without letting them inhibit the goals of the group? I think that individuals did sufficient inquiry work to achieve integrated understandings of themselves, aiming for integrity. And I think that the group reached a level, maybe a fluctuating one, of mutuality (this group document is a

step in the right direction) but that being stuck in our own purposes and intentions for the class hindered us from creating anything sustainable. I inhibited the group by noticing the conflicting intentions and expectations in myself and in the group but did not make myself vulnerable enough to help. I did not make things easier for the group or myself but instead I diffused ownership of the conflict and projected it on to those who were trying so hard to welcome signs of mutuality.

Dissertation Proposal Draft

During the events of this course I submitted an initial draft of my dissertation proposal to Steve. His initial critique of the document was not favorable. It was based largely on the document I produced in the dissertation seminar in which I felt pulled between the positivist, third-person, justification-centered paradigm of proposing and presenting research and my passion for a participatory, first- and second-person, collaboration-centered paradigm. My third-person, dispassionate, reporter voice ended up being the voice that won out in the proposal and not surprisingly, Steve said something along the lines of, “this doesn’t reflect the radical nature of your work.” I knew he was right but I had been afraid to write it differently. I felt defensive when writing the document, and sounded defensive rather than authoritative in it as a result of knowing that an action research dissertation had not been undertaken in my program and that there existed resistance to it from some faculty members. I also took in my own projection that Steve, though he espoused confidence, was actually scared of said resistance and about how this work might reflect on him as an administrator, scholar, and practitioner. I felt pressure, consciously and unconsciously, to make the research presentable to positivist audiences on behalf of him and myself. At the same time, I felt embarrassed and angry that I hadn’t been able to write in the same manner I was capable of living in the classroom. Lastly, Steve and I thought we were on the same page about

timing of data collection but when I submitted the draft of the proposal I was still completing the last semester of data collection. The document I submitted was proposing to review the four semesters of data collection I had already completed as well as the last semester that was underway. Somehow we hadn't been clear with each other about our expectations of these things, and got our wires crossed. Steve was very concerned about this misunderstanding, and with much tension between us he talked about IRB difficulties, and said he'd have to contact a few people to discuss and clarify. His response blindsided and scared me, my efforts to explain the situation didn't produce the impact I desired and I left his office in total despair about my prospects and wondering where we'd gone wrong.

In response, I clung to the experience I was having with the students in the classroom. We were at a crucial point in the semester when connections were being made and mutuality was on the table in more and more open ways. Ironically, the students were working with *their* anger and frustration about achieving mutuality in the action inquiry process and their negotiation of their traditional and nontraditional experiences of learning. I opened discussion about their experience of the power differential between us, and asked them about what I could do, in my teacher as co-researcher role to contribute to a sense of mutual power among us. They had very good answers, and though some were difficult to hear they were willing to offer them, which encouraged me. My asking and opening discussion about it, and their willingness to answer or engage with those questions was as strong a sense of community inquiry as I had had with students thus far.

I wasn't oblivious to the fact that they and we were doing some of this work "for me" as well as for them. I had a meeting with a former seminar student who had always been a bit out front of the others in his own class and I told him in vague terms about my latest difficulties with the document, my committee, and the connection I was making to the learning taking place in the class.

I was not able to "work with" my experience of what had happened, let alone with Steve, but felt like mutuality between us was not in good working order. I became fearful of losing my research, offended that they were exchanging my work and their comments without my knowledge. My pride as a student was bruised, I didn't feel like the committee was entering "into" the work to see what was happening, or how they might participate, and I took a break from it. I was pregnant during that fall and then spring semester and went on maternity leave when I had my daughter in April. I had wanted to defend the proposal before that but since I felt so upset and uncertain about where things were or whether I would be permitted to go any further that I put the document, and the committee work out of my mind for the time leading up to the birth and the whole summer after. I was already walking a shaky line of confidence in my research, coming off of the negative experience I had had in the dissertation seminar course the previous semester. Several months later I revisited the proposal document, chose to scrap it, make a fresh start, and begin on a new document. I had had time and distance from the whole endeavor, had attended to something completely different, my growing my family, and felt I could make a recommitment to it. I regrouped emotionally, started a writing partnership with another doctoral student who was a great encouragement to me and sat

down to email Steve to reconnect. When I signed on to my school email, which I hadn't looked at in months there was an email from Steve,

I know things were confusing when you turned in your proposal last fall and I was alarmed about the timing of the proposal vis-a-vis your last semester of collecting data. I'm excited about your project and have total confidence that you can pull it off. The draft you turned in was a good start and I'd like to help you finish it so that you can get done. I apologize if I came across as hypercritical last year and if this has kept you from moving forward. On the other hand if it would be easier for you to work with someone else as chair I will understand that and not be miffed. I just want to see you finish. Can we get together and discuss where things stand?

I was surprised, greatly relieved and sent this response,

Thank you for your email, I was delighted to receive it, I apologize for my slow response. Until now I haven't been able to revisit my student role. I have been completely surrendered to the joyfilled first embrace of the role of parenthood. The spirit of your email is important to me and is coinciding with a resurrected spirit of curiosity and courage in facing this dissertation project. I did feel somewhat enmeshed with my data and proposal in many ways when we first looked at it together. Your critical eye, a third party felt more violent and debasing perhaps than it should have. Thank you for the apology. I was struggling with a spiral of, is this "right"? Am I the "right" person for this data? Am I in trouble? Is he disappointed? . . . you are already in touch with the theme there . . . the assumption that there is a "right or wrong" or that the fear of disappointing those I respect or "doing it wrong" is an excuse for not doing that which you feel called to do. And without sounding too hocus-pocusy, I feel called to this. I feel this data and these experiences have been given as gifts to me, and that I am meant to learn from them, bring them to life and translate them for the larger community of learning. Translating them has proven a difficult elephant to swallow

Most interesting about my email response, and the reason I share it here, is the one-dimensional reason I offer for my difficulty in attending to my student role, parenthood. This was in part true, and healthy of course but demonstrates my reluctance to tell Steve that indeed, I was "miffed" and deeply discouraged by our interactions and his reactions. I couldn't offer my own feelings of disappointment in myself, in the ways I

hadn't communicated correctly, or had assumed that my research track was correct and acceptable. And although I acknowledged his apology I also qualified it. We ended up talking and I got back to the document work. The new version of the document reflected my research and me as the researcher in an active, living voice. After working on it for a semester, I submitted the new proposal document to Steve and received this email correspondence which I count as an important turning point in my process:

I think this is a really, really, great start! I applaud you for taking up your authority and finding your voice. The difference between this draft and what you turned in last year helps me understand what is meant by "living theory" and I hope you'll consider your struggle to find your voice part of the journey and the data to be analyzed. I want to strongly encourage you to continue being bold in the writing and listening to your heart because it's clear to me that is where the life and strength is in this project. If this work is about the liberation of your students from oppression it's also about your liberation as well and perhaps your sensitivity to their state is due to the constriction you were experiencing as a result of your own graduate education at Baylor and here. And, if so, those experiences can also be brought into the study. I think the potential organization looks good and you should go forward on this path.

Steve's reaction shored up my efforts anew and I felt recommitted to my process.

It also began an ongoing conversation between Steve and I regarding a shift in authoritative voice between the reporting of my student experiences and my description of teaching experiences. Even up to the last drafts of the final dissertation Steve has been identifying a difference in my descriptions of transformative moments with the students and my reporting about my own experiences as a student. When discussing my classroom work with students, my writing is authoritative and crisp. In contrast, when describing my student role, my voice becomes third-person in nature, authoritatively weaker, and the thread of purpose and direction becomes muddled. I reflect on student

findings and my own to examine this tendency in context and parallel next in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

My purpose for this dissertation was to describe the iterative implementation, and evaluation, through cycles of action and reflection, of a participatory inquiry paradigm framework, action inquiry, in an undergraduate leadership studies course. Utilizing first-, second-, and third-person perspectives, I attempted to teach action inquiry skills while practicing them myself and inviting the students to practice them individually and collectively as a group. I set out to co-create a learning environment that might provide students and me with a meaningful, humane, practical space to recognize ourselves as “living inconsistencies” and in this manner experiment with ways to bring our individual and group lives into closer alignment. I held the hope that the events in our classroom, whether experienced as achievements, disappointments or otherwise, might be transferable to contexts outside of the classroom. In addition, since the course and department with which I was affiliated focus on the study of leadership, I aimed for the development and enhancement of our leadership capabilities through reflection, vulnerability, and commitment to achieve integrity, mutuality, and sustainability. My focus in this dissertation has been to study how this pedagogical design and facilitation of learning and interaction impacted the students and me. In recounting the cycles of research and reflecting more deeply on the dynamics in my teaching I have learned more and identified further opportunities, taken and missed, to practice action inquiry in the formal dissertation process itself.

Methods

During these cycles of research, I explored methods of actualizing a participatory inquiry paradigm in my teaching and used the specific disciplines of action inquiry as a framework to do so. I'm not aware of other instances of undergraduate teaching that are specifically framed by the practice of an emancipatory inquiry paradigm using the classroom as the interactive case for group work while seeking to achieve specified learning outcomes. Many researchers and practitioners have focused on student leadership development and group dynamics in their teaching by providing leadership roles, activities, and opportunities for students to take ownership and to learn skills that are transferable to other contexts. However, these are most often not structured around a transparently communicated, emancipatory, inquiry-based, developmental framework that includes the facilitator or researcher as well as reflective, in-the-moment work in group dynamics.

For me, the frame of group relations and the depth psychology on which it rests enabled me, my students, and to a lesser extent, my committee to formulate and test our hypotheses, and undertake work around purpose and shadow. As the result of this systems view of the nested groups involved, the class, the students, the committee, I have a language and frame for describing what was happening at each level and how it might have connected to other levels. Steve and I have used a group relations lens to examine how shadow manifested itself in my work as researcher, and how my experiences as a student influenced my practice as a teacher. I also was able to use it, through readings and teaching, to explore with my students the representations of shadow in the classroom,

the projections, representations, and aspects of my own student experience paralleled with their experience. In addition, the use of metaphor has been useful to capture associations and deeper unconscious meanings than are otherwise available. The use of metaphor is rooted deeply in the group relations traditions and Steve and I have played with it to help us understand my dissertation process.

This type of reflective work, and my commitment to get beneath the literal findings of this study using frameworks like group relations and action inquiry, is both challenging and risky. I invited the committee members to participate with me and read my dissertation at this deeper level. I have attempted to allow them to hold me accountable to the difficult work that I was asking my students to undertake, though on a deeper more extended plane. All along, Steve, Cheryl, and Bill have encouraged me to include my parallel experiences, personal observations, and realizations about complex dynamics as data beneficial to this research. However, agreeing to include and interpret these realities has been and still is a difficult enterprise. Like my students, I find it difficult to share my own imperfect journey of learning and working, potentially exposing myself to the critique of those who don't accept participatory research paradigms, recognizing and facing my resistances to seeing unfavorable parts of my own work. I have felt defensive about my inconsistencies, and have had to see finding the dark and light aspects of this research within myself as a discipline. My students found it difficult and at times unbearable to undertake these difficult practices and disciplines, to allow these questions to sink in. I have felt the equivalent sense of difficulty, resistance, and exposure my students did, and more as it was over a longer, more involved period of

time and at my own instigation. I recognize my personal inclination to circumvent negative interpretations, or dark shadow dynamics in favor of positive interpretations, and transformative archetypes. But the encouragement to see the dual nature of reality, that both shadow and light are present and must be integrated for balance, did translate into my interactions with the students at the end of the third cohort and throughout the fourth cohort and therefore truly belong here in the documentation of the study.

Most difficult, and in fact impossible at times, has been my hesitation to enter into analysis of the parallel dynamics and patterns occurring during this process with my committee members, especially Steve and Cheryl as they hold powerful formal positions in my life as a student. This hesitation would be familiar to my students as the relationship I had with them was also one of formal positional power and elicited hesitations and resistances from them.

I can identify many of my purposes and commitments to my teaching and this whole dissertation process attempts as efforts to correct my own experiences of feeling oppressed by and not experiencing mutuality in relationships with authority figures. Indeed, Steve's email quote cited in the previous chapter states,

If this work is about the liberation of your students from oppression it's also about your liberation as well and perhaps your sensitivity to their state is due to the constriction you were experiencing as a result of your own graduate education at Baylor and here.

Steve's liberating message to me, which he later confirmed was communicated consciously, lay in the last two words, "and here." Only in the final stages of this process, and through deep reflective work alone and with others, have I come to see that my purposes in doing this type of teaching and dedicating my dissertation energies to it

are more complex and multi-faceted than I realized. Where I have previously reported them, my purposes have been about sharing or reflecting the ways I have been finally liberated in my learning while in the doctoral program at USD. But I see now that this is a two dimensional picture of my lived reality, at best. More interestingly, alongside my transformative, liberating, exceptional learning experiences as a student and employee at USD, I have also had significant moments of feeling oppressed in my student role, just as my students had. Insinuating this about the institution from which I am seeking degree conferral, let alone implicating the committee members who determine it, is a risky endeavor indeed. But I think there is a difference between riskiness and safety. Because of the common institutional and individual commitments to doing this type of work in this way, I rely on the safety of experimentation of doing so rather than on the assessment of risk of it. It is from a confidence in this safety that I move forward in this chapter. Especially in later drafts of this document and following the defense of it, I have made changes to the way I report this part of the work in response to boundaries the committee and I have set. I'll begin with a discussion of how I began to see my own sense of purpose as multi-dimensional and inclusive of shadow, as it did not occur as a momentary epiphany.

Purpose and Shadow

Where I had only worked with the positive aspects of purpose before, personally and with the students, I now was inviting the duality of light and dark aspects of purpose. Asking myself questions like, why work with shadow elements of purpose? What does an acknowledgement of shadow aspects of individual or group life add to the "official" task

of the group? I asked myself first what my noble and lovely purposes were, a productive endeavor, but then asked as well what the hidden motives of my purposes were, watching for compensation behaviors, and corrective efforts. For example, several times over the cycles of study students accused me directly, though mostly indirectly, of “using” them for my dissertation research, or for purposes of experimentation. During one class session we stopped during an intense discussion to complete a 7-minute, quick-write, in-class reflection on what might be happening in the moment, then passed what we wrote to the person on our left. That person had 7 minutes to write a reaction on the paper then pass it to the middle to be redistributed randomly to a student who would read both write-ups silently. We’d then open up discussion with the discipline of only being able to bring up what we had read, rather than what we had written. After our discussion, I collected them. One student read aloud from the paper they received,

I can’t stand this lack of structure. I have structure in every other part of my life. Maybe Miller just wants to see us squirm . . . maybe she just wants to see what happens when you piss off the monkeys by banging on their cages. Or maybe she’s the only person whose ever given a damn about whats going on with me. I’m on the fence right now.

My notes from that day look rather blank so I am now glad I collected the quick-write papers and that I additionally have the 11 student reflections of that session, as well as mine to hearken back to. I do remember in the moment (and the students recounted clearly in their journals) becoming flushed and teary. I felt the weight of the accusation the writer and reader had leveled by their choosing to write and read the statement, as well as the 11 gazes of the students. I took a deep breath and while doing so, felt the emotional experience of accusing my professors or conference staff members of the same

experimentation fill me up and then flow back out. I sat for a moment knowing the tension it was causing but knowing that having the negative capability (Simpson & French, 2006) *not* to act for a moment would serve me and us well. I finally looked up and into their eyes, deciding that facing the accusation, as a fellow inquirer was the best offering I could muster. A student recounted what happened then in his journal,

When [the reader] read about us being a research experiment, Miller took forever to respond it was killing me every one tightened up and pulled back from the table. She was going through something for sure. I probably should've felt bad for her but somehow I didn't think she was feeling bad for herself so I didn't. She finally looked up at all of us and I couldn't turn away. She didn't argue, she had tears in her eyes but she didn't seem sad either (isn't it weird that I'm writing this like I don't know whose reading it?)

I asked what might be or feel different if it were true that I was just using them as lab rats in my action inquiry experiment. They were quiet at first, and I restated it more directly asking, "what if you are just an experiment?" A few of them talked about how they might feel bitter and resent the efforts they had made in good faith. I then wondered aloud whether both things could be true, that we were indeed a dissertation project *and* that I really did care about the learning that we did together for the sake of each of us. One student suggested that it perhaps it wouldn't matter, and wrote in their journal after the session that,

Maybe it doesn't matter if we are an experiment. Even if it were an experiment we still came into class thinking, "I can do this (be in a group/lead a group)" and then realize we still have a lot to learn. Whether Miller really cares or not - its something we needed to come to.

Here's an excerpt from my reflection paper following the session,

I went ahead and let it be real for a moment, that I was "using" my students for my personal gain. That they were a "convenience sample" and that it was indeed convenient that they were here and I was here and we were doing this work

together. But it doesn't fit snugly my experience of this situation, without coming from a defensive place, I know that I really do care, my passion really is ignited by the possibility of transformational learning for them and me. This method and application has been effective and our own evidence is compelling to us. Both can be true, we are an experiment and also the subject of someone's love and passion demonstrated when they undertake the experiment. Even I feel like an experiment when the students really try to work with me, not "Cara," but the me who is the teacher. Every inquiry is indeed an action and every action is indeed an inquiry.

Another student wrote in his final paper,

When we did the reflection in class that told Miller we felt like lab rats, that was a really interesting example of mutuality and action inquiry. That was my statement that [the reader] read. I didn't even really feel mad but I felt I had to let it out, people had been kind of suggesting that their roommates and parents had been suggesting it since the start of the semester. That Miller was just experimenting. But when we accused her and she took it on and didn't get mad or offended I knew that something about this was real. I could tell that she [Cara] was processing with action inquiry what was being told to her. I never could've taken it from people like that, and kept on going. But I learned something that day about trusting your inner voice, like the discernment article we read and the action inquiry awarenesses. She knew what she was doing was from a good place but didn't deny that there was something in it for her and she let it show itself.

I was asking questions about my own individual purposes in action and also about our actions together as a group in the class, and inviting the students to do the same with me in class time and in one-on-one meetings. As I began listening to the group and individual shadow aspects and continued searching for my personal hidden motives and attempts to do things differently, I discovered that they were coupled closely with my espoused intentions for teaching within this paradigm and writing about it. Up to the final drafts of this document Steve has repeatedly asked that I unearth and reveal my alternative purposes alongside those I espouse, acknowledging that they are all important for a whole picture.

Although I have often felt it to be negative, working to unearth shadow aspects of purpose isn't necessarily so. In fact, if done in a vulnerable, self-conscious way, as evidenced by the scenario presented previously with the students, it can be constructive and bring about greater equilibrium for the individual, group, or organization.

If we repress the daimonic [dark shadow aspects], we shall find these powers returning to "sicken" us; whereas if we let them stay, we shall have to struggle to a new level of consciousness in order to integrate them . . . either way will hurt. (May, 1969, p. 176)

To be sure, I have had my own as well as system-repressed dark shadow aspects return to sicken me, sometimes literally, manifesting as migraine headaches, vision disturbances, and other psychosomatic ailments when deeper learning is occurring for me or for a group I am a part of. During the final exam for the adult development course that represented the consummation of deeper learning I was doing between a group relations course right before and that class, I became violently ill. The professor of that course immediately identified a larger representation of toxicity, rooted in my tendency to see shadow as only degenerative and not generative, and further made more universal connections between toxicity and my earlier battle with cancer.

Similarly, during the final day of a course in purpose-based consulting, I developed a literal shadow in the field of vision in my left eye. I experienced numbness in my hands and face, vomited violently, and was so ill one of the consultants, who is also a priest, sat on the floor of the bathroom in the USD building praying and interceding for me in the moment. The most recent physical manifestation occurred only a month before the culmination of this cycle of the dissertation learning and documentation, following Steve's feedback regarding my hesitation to disclose and work

with shadow issues for the sake of generative learning. The day I received his most direct comments thus far regarding the appearance of shadow in the document, I experienced headache, numbness and vision loss so severe I spent nine hours in the emergency room undergoing MRI and MRV testing. The provisional diagnosis was in its most basic form, “severe migraine variant” though in follow up meetings with a neurologist, the radiologist diagnosed Virchow-Robin spaces, or “microscopic spaces between the outer and inner/middle lamina of the brain vessels.” These are most often noted in the white matter of aging brains and their less severe symptoms include numbness, headaches, and visual impairment. More interesting for this topic of working with shadow, is that during my second follow up appointment with the neurologist I asked him if there was any alternative hypotheses about these spaces, apart from their causing variant migraines. He mentioned that some have found their higher incidence in children with savant and autistic developmental disorders and that on the fringes of the medical community some are exploring their connections to the liminal realities of neurology. Clinical or conspiracy theories aside, the threat of exposing shadow aspects of oneself or of the group can be paralyzing both physically and psychologically and I have experienced it as a danger as real as any other. But taking on the toxicity that occurs psychologically or physically when I initiate or participate in keeping negative, shadow aspects of purpose from manifesting themselves or being exposed is not worth it individually or for a group and I believe is a systems level disservice to this type of work. Especially in the third and fourth cohorts, the students and I could name some of these physical and psychological experiences we manifested during our interactions of

exposing negative or shadow aspects of our group life together, as previously described in my account of one flipchart exercise.

Even if we could come to an agreed upon purpose, asking *why* that is your, my, or our purpose will most likely reveal both our positive and negative motives and desires. In addition, questions like, what does our stated purpose say about you, me, and us? What is the opposite side of that purpose? Translating it out to a group or organizational level, asking what our choices, purposes, interactions, and hang-ups say about our group or organization is also helpful, and it can be persuasively argued, healthy. What are the particular strengths, dysfunctions of our community of inquiry? By discovering or exploring our duality of purpose and shadow we may be less likely to be ambushed or sabotaged by their manifestations. The mutuality required and potentially experienced in looking for, finding, and owning these realities together also has the ring of duality in that it increases intimacy and vulnerability. It integrates the action inquiry aims with their possible shadow aspects; integrity with incongruity and false-self exhortations, mutuality with competition and betrayal, sustainability with fixed patterns and legacy behaviors. Clinging to the dual, balanced views of these aims and the disciplines associated with the cycle of reflection individually and together may help us stay connected to task while attending to the whole reality of purpose. Action inquiry serves as a framework for doing so and can go as far as one desires developmentally.

Taking on this type of work has forced me into a confrontation with these theoretical realities as well as an obligation to “flesh them out” with real life examples that demonstrate the difficulties and benefits. Experiencing my self as a living

inconsistency and writing about it is one side of this effort, and offering this experience as an illustration to my students is another. To some extent I have been able to do these things. Though, when operating from a systems perspective, acknowledging that those in positions of authority over me are also themselves, living inconsistencies has been more difficult. In one of our committee conference calls, Steve verbally invited me to talk about the fact that he is also a living inconsistency. We all three, I think I represent correctly, have experienced the complicated distance between a unilateral disposition and one of mutual power in our many contexts. Moving in the direction of mutuality in these power-filled relationships requires looking at the underlying shadows of our unilateral stances which we often continue to retreat to when making developmentally complex attempts at movement. This is at almost no point trickier than when position and authority are formalized, reflecting a literal and technical power differential, as it is variably with Steve and Cheryl and I (which also parallels my students and I). It has been difficult to enter shadow analysis of my relationships with them as I have had interrupted experiences of mutuality with them each. I am, of course, as responsible for these interruptions as they are, though I have not been able or willing to see it from that perspective, let alone intervene as a result of that perspective. But from early on both Cheryl, and especially Steve, have urged me to dig down to shadow aspects and present them. Following one of the committee member's comments on my document at one point Steve wrote this email to me,

I find [their] honesty . . . a gift for us to work with. It speaks to the need to establish trust and honesty within the supervisory process and in the dissertation itself . . . this is an example I think of the messiness and uncomfortable nature of

what occurs in relationships that we have to deal with to make things honestly alive. It's the absence of this shadow in the writing so far I think that underlies . . . [our] suggestion that it [this research] is (only or mainly) beautiful can be experienced as constricting. To be honest, I find myself weighing my words carefully at this moment for fear of causing you pain or confusion . . . and that's the dilemma when the work is around honesty and being alive.

“The absence of shadow” has become a guiding force for this concluding chapter of the dissertation and has directed several aspects of it including what would traditionally be the limitations section. To be fair, I haven't worked on most of these issues directly with the committee but with their permission and sometimes insistence I've begun to in later versions of this document, including the following application of the student teacher relationship parallels in the following narrative.

The archetypal relationship between teacher and student has always included both aspects of purpose. Though the intention of instruction may be the eventual independence of the student, dependence on the instructor during the process is unavoidable and at times this dependence can be experienced with resentment. Up and into the very moment of writing and defending this dissertation I can identify my own conflicting feelings of wanting direction and affirmation from my “teachers,” the committee members, while also wanting to express my own way of working and researching. Steve wrote an email stating,

I think you need to share your own struggle with “uncertainty” and your conditioning to follow authority. There is a normative dimension to that struggle for doctoral students who are dependent upon faculty to get through a program preparing them to be independent scholars who can then function without faculty. Maybe the shadow is in the tension of this dependency to produce independence, that can provoke conflicting emotions as in families.

Needing the positional power and wanting the expert power Steve held for my research led me to seek his approval. And most of the time I experienced him as the “good master” who treated his slaves well, respects their opinion, and promotes them to more and more powerful positions in his home. But the metaphor has still been unpredictably that of slave-master in that he could, at any point, change his mind, demand something different, misunderstand intention or explanation. When Steve reminded me that that the committee members are also living inconsistencies and that to truly take on this deeper angle of analysis I must be willing to examine and express the ways that they are, I am better able to see myself in this way. I found it was easier to work with seeing my self as an inconsistency with my students. Perhaps my positional power, that would remain even if I was deemed to be unacceptably inconsistent, gave me the fallback position that made it less risky to do the work in that direction. I have more at stake, more to lose in my “less powerful” position as student with the committee. At many times, I have felt and do feel Steve is a fantastic cheerleader for me as a result of his enthusiasm for this emancipatory research and teaching philosophy. I also have felt a victim of what I presume is his own fluctuation between that enthusiasm and a pull of the traditional structures of research and teaching. Though Steve was insightful and effective at pushing me to see my own liberation in the liberation of the students, I have never taken the opportunity to parallel my pursuit of these types of liberation with my students as being in part on behalf of Steve’s liberation. I never asked how his encouragement and endorsement of my liberation of my students and myself might be representative of his own liberation from traditional structures and conditioning. I haven’t explored with

him the ways that his support of my research appeared simultaneously with his representation of the technical barriers and resistances to this research paradigm. My missed opportunities to be sure, for me, for Steve, and for the larger system whole we are a part of. Especially since I imagine that he would most probably have been able to work with such an opportunity. Regardless, I neglected sending that invitation to him for his learning, to the committee for our learning, and the learning of the parts of the whole beyond us. Further, and perhaps even more uncomfortable, has been the question of why the committee has been so deliberate about my presentation of shadow aspects of my own experience, teaching, and relationships with them as authority figures. Of course, I've already owned up to the fact that I avoid negative interpretations of myself and situations, as well as the fact that I asked for a more holistic view of my research and this process, but more than that, what does their request for my shadow work represent for them? How is my shadow work in a sense, on their behalf? These are questions that are difficult to work on apart from actual collaboration with them and have proven (surprise!) impossible for me to actually collaborate with them about.

I acknowledge that at some point some of my students, or all of my students at some point, must have had similar sentiments toward me. I can think of a few quotes from my quote book, journals, and evaluations that offer what could be evidence of this.

One student wrote in her final paper,

I was so angry and embarrassed at myself that I concluded we were nothing more than lab rats in her dissertation experiment, blaming that for my confusion.

Another student anonymously posted to ratemyprofessor.com,

She doesn't necessarily practice what she preaches. Everything she expects of you seems fair on paper but not really in real life If that makes sense. Take her though because it is true that she has changed my perspective positively, she just could have done it [cuts off].

And a fourth cohort student wrote in the final collective paper,

When things got tense and we begged for rescue in the form of answers and structure, I assumed she was either afraid to step in, didn't care, or was just irresponsible not to. She said she cared, and wanted us to take ownership but I just got mad and shut down for a meeting or two.

The urgency of the course schedule and the frequency with which the students and I met in a semester made a difference in taking this type of opportunity. When these types of comments came to me, whether in discussion, journals, or final papers I attempted to address them, and my efforts were met with evidence of learning every time for me and most every time with the student or students. Of course the anonymous ones, and those that appeared in evaluations I couldn't address directly, though I could take them in as part of the data.

Evaluations

The university conducted student evaluations at the end of each course, which consisted of both qualitative and quantitative measures of my instruction. These were administered during the last class session of the semester, without my presence in the room, and delivered by student volunteers to the dean's office. The combined quantitative scores (combined in the instrument) for "instructor's effectiveness and contribution, the course as a whole, and course content" were highest for the first semester. The highest scores overall for "relevance and usefulness of the course content" and the "amount learned in the course" were highest in the first and the fourth semester.

Four open-ended, qualitative questions were also administered. The first question, "Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking?" offered a place to circle yes or no and then the follow-up question, "Why or why not?" "Yes" was chosen on every evaluation form across all four semesters. In answer to the why or why not question, every answer was positive in nature and could be categorized under the themes of, "made me think," "best leadership class I've taken," "small class size atmosphere," "challenged my previous understandings," "expanded theory into practical knowledge/real life situations," "learned from my peers/learned from professor," "professor encouraged opinions and questions," "The Tipping Point book." The second question, "What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?" were answered most often "group discussion," "reflective journals/made me read," "group project," "The Tipping Point," "small class size," "professor Miller/meeting one-on-one," "action research cycle/group dynamics/asking why?" The third question, "What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?" was most often answered "none" though "the Nahavandi text is dull," "reflection papers were too long," "overlap of learning from other semesters," "the action research project," "sometimes unclear guidelines/lack of feedback," and "apathetic classmates/my own ignorance and incompetence" were all identified as well. The final question, "What suggestions do you have for improving the class?" was most often answered, "none" though "feedback," "more organization/structure/real life incorporation," "keep it small" were given as well.

I'll quote the most positive evaluation in full (from the third cohort) followed by the most negative (from the first cohort),

Best class I have taken at USD. Only class that actually shapes your personhood. Develops your whole self. I have grown intellectually and have improved my reflection skills. Learned about my self and how to apply what I've learned in other situations. The songs at the beginning of the class allowed us to be fully present in class. Discussions were great and allowed us to understand each other as leaders. Great experiments. Loved how structure was taken away so we could take control of our own learning. Challenged me to make this class so much more than a class. None of the aspects of this class detracted from my learning. I think action research is a great tool for this class. It prepares us for the real world and frees us to take ownership of our learning. Requires us to be leaders and do something we are interested in.

The class was one that caused the class to interact in a group effort, perhaps this is how seminars are run at USD. The reading from Nahavandi and Gladwell contributed most to my learning. The teacher misled and caused great anxiety from day one. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Miller said not to reiterate the book in the journals yet that's what got A's. Creativity earned C's.

As with other the other forms of data collected during this study, in the evaluations there were positive and negative interpretations of the use of action research in my teaching and our learning, as well as with my facilitation of it. There was evidence not only of students achieving the learning outcomes of the seminar course but also the integration of a more complex view of leadership, learning, and the individual's role in transforming one's own understanding of self in the world. In addition, there was evidence that students felt fear, insecurity, and a lack of direction and feedback as a result of the use of action research and my facilitation of it. Particularly interesting for this study, is the overwhelming citation of learning from our group discussion format and indication of learning from peers, both in these third person evaluation data and in those data collected over the semesters. This evidence supports both the intentions and outcomes of mutuality embedded in my efforts at implementing a participatory inquiry

paradigm. But this evidence also informs me of my own learning edges and should caution the reader that this form of research should be undertaken with great care.

Gender

One of the ways I came to see the tenuous relationship with authority play out was in the dynamic between the male and female students. Several of the female students and I were able to find learning and connection to the difficulty we have had including masculine expressions in our enactment of femininity. I was offered the opportunity to reconcile my version of femininity as exclusive of aggressive control, anger, overt competition, and ruthless ambition alongside the ways that my female students were able to assert themselves in overt and covertly aggressive, angry, competitive, ambitious ways. Through their vulnerability in discussion, writing assignments, and post-semester interviews I learned (and re-learned) ways of being a woman in the world.

There is a danger women face when they attempt to express themselves in “traditionally” masculine ways, through aggression, assertiveness, and the exercise of power and authority, as well as when they express themselves in “traditionally” feminine ways, nurturing and self-effacing. I have discovered that I am afraid of expressing myself in angry, aggressive, or antagonistic ways for fear of being categorized as a bitch. Because the archetype of “bitch” is socially constructed as negative in my family, my schools, my faith tradition, I don’t want be a bitch and certainly, being labeled a bitch isn’t rewarded anywhere in my experience of friendship, church, family, academics, hierarchical work life, etc. In fact, I have lived by the credo that I should avoid these labels (aggressive, angry, antagonistic) at all costs as it may actually cost me upward

movement, advancement, basic inclusion, opportunity. Distinguishing between the behaviors of assertion and the ability to express anger and the punitive labels that may be projected onto them has proven difficult for me. Though walking through four semesters with a population of mostly women students has given me fresh perspectives on it. They have also felt the tension between acceptable and unacceptable expressions of emotion and they have experienced the negative social consequences of expressing it in a way that is perceived as unacceptable.

After the semester was over, I was able to share with a few of the female students my experiences of feeling obligated to express myself with confident, reasonable logic. I shared with them my use of humor as well since it is often well received as a communication tool. I have perceived laughter to be an acceptable emotional release and method of connection to others, over the alternative emotional releases and levels of connection, which are often not as acceptable (e.g. crying, anger, sexual intimacy, physical affection). In the past, I have almost exclusively worked to interact through the use of logic and reason with those whom I perceive will not accept other forms of emotion and connection. I've felt I would be risking my stability and trustworthiness if I interacted differently. At times this has negated others' willingness to engage me profoundly, and aborted possible deeper connection. But with my students, especially after the semesters were over, I was able to experiment with a new kind of interaction. Many of them were very interested in friendship around this work, follow up interviews and a few presented this work with me at academic conferences. Working with my students to name and discuss the reactions we have had to experiencing ourselves as

ineffective, or in the face of humiliation has been a transforming piece of learning for them and me.

A deep awareness of this “false self” modulation initially occurred in an adult development course in which I became very sick and I saw it as deeply connected to the effort to express myself in what I perceive to be acceptable emotions. Indeed for my own development, marriage, family interactions, friends, and two daughters, I have begun to address the underpinnings of not being willing to be overtly angry, aggressive, ambitious: a more complete mix of emotional capacities. Even in the throes of cancer treatment it was very difficult for me to express and release the fear, grief, pain, despair, sorrow, anger, and loneliness that were and still are present for me. To some extent I allowed those around me to express these feelings for me, which was unsatisfying and still feels unresolved to say the least. A positive outlook can be helpful but when the shadow aspects are denied they return in a more daemonic form, projected onto, or get taken up by others.

As a student in group relations courses and conferences that took a systems perspective on group work and learning, I was able to see how when we as a group are unwilling to see difficult realities, individual members of the group express them on our behalf. Group relations practitioners explain that,

Essential to the . . . approach is the belief that when an aggregate of people becomes a group, the group behaves as a system—an entity or organism that is in some respects greater than the sum of its individual parts Just as a family is “something more” than individual parents and children, just as an organization is “something more” than executives, managers, and line workers, so any group is “something more.” It is a new entity with its own unique energies and dynamic forces . . . individuals are recognized as voices of the collective that . . . express various elements of the group as a whole. (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2002, pp. 7-8)

Just as I have struggled with the experience of espousing emancipatory principles and then feeling the temptation to suppress them when they actually present themselves, the staff and directors of group relations conferences, professors, administrators experience the same temptations. At times, I have observed them formulate interventions that were moderate and cooperative, others that are timely and transformational, and yet others that are received as punitive and forceful. Similarly, at times I have experienced my conversation with students as a veiled argument rather than a collaborative dialogue. In those moments my heart rate was high, my throat was tight and I'd fumble with in-the-moment interpretations I knew I ought to be sharing. I've heard groans and sighs and shifting from the students in my classroom, just as I've been the student groaning and shifting while perceiving an authority figure as inconsistent. I have felt the same distrust of authority figures' interactions and intentions as I presume my students have felt towards me. I have accused authorities of presenting as playful seductors while behaving like wolves in sheep's clothing, luring students in with the promise of creative partnership but then pouncing upon them with demands of conformity. And I experienced myself as a wolf in sheep's clothing that has desired partnership and at times been ineffective, unable, or fearful about enacting it.

But to take this exploration further, I'll explore the shadow side of these insights as well. Even though I was acting in some regards from the desire to reenact positive relationships with authority with my students, I also was reenacting my negative mentoring relationships. Steve commented early in the thesis about how my mostly male mentors have provided me with guidance that was more overt than what I often provided

to my students. This led to a discussion of how withholding guidance may be helpful and generative but may be experienced as unhelpful distancing, as was my experience at times ingroup relations settings. I have to admit that my withholding, under consciously positive and methodologically sound purposes, included an unconscious element of reenactment of some of my own negative experiences with female authorities that I experienced as negatively distant or withholding. This was most often the case when I felt my own authority or power threatened in some, oftentimes unconscious, way.

As a result of the committee's struggles with frequency of communication, and the absence of collaborative work at the level which I proposed at the outset, and concerns about an inconsistent process that at times didn't allow for all of our full participation, Steve proposed a metaphor for conceptualizing our work together. He presented "hide and seek" imagery relating it to several layers of this process; my tendency to work strong and hard, then disappear for awhile, the students' inclination to show up ready to learn and adapt and then retreat in fear or contempt, my penchant for shifting between first and third-person "voices" in the dissertation document. And while it is a good fit for his experience of the process, Bill also put forth an addendum to it, the metaphor of "show and hide" which he related to the student who left his "fishing pole" intervention to fend for itself and which I relate to my willingness to be very transparent about the research on one hand and very withholding about my personal work on the other. However, when I sat down to write a response to or incorporation of the metaphors that were offered I was stumped. Replying to Bill's email suggesting the show and hide metaphor I wrote this,

Stumped yesterday but not anymore,
 woke up at 3:30 am to insight knocking,
 grabbed banana and OJ then
 sat on the bathroom floor with pen
 and index cards writing frantically
 and then it hit me with the cards in hand,
 maybe the metaphor is actually...

show 'em, hold 'em, or fold 'em.

. . . between all of us, and students too.
 “My cards” held close to the vest,
 or laid out for all to see,
 hidden for bluffing,
 folded in exit/avoidance strategies,
 upping the ante,
 betting on what others are holding,
 acting in a dance with each others' ‘tells,’
 aces up our sleeves in covert alliances or
 power plays

When I presented this metaphor to Steve, his first reaction was something like, “If it’s a game, that implies we’re all trying to win, win money. I didn’t know we were playing cards!” And although my lighthearted response was “neither did I!” I think the case can be made that there really has been more at stake than just a game of hide and seek. From every level of our organization and relationships, the values of the bets set are not inconsequential. At the organizational level, Steve and Cheryl are not only faculty members but have also been administrators, and their research endeavors with colleagues and students are subject to scrutiny that could influence their jobs and or work relationships. At the personal level, my achievement of an advanced degree depends on the guidance, cooperation, and eventual approval of my work by Steve and Cheryl both as chair and committee member but also since Steve was the associate dean for most of my time as a student and Cheryl the department chair. And with Bill, for each of us, we

are working on and with a representation and application of his well-received theoretical and methodological work. This is all in conjunction with the normative weight of “do no harm” in our research and teaching, as well as our myriad personal and working relationships that exist across the various pairs and trios of us. Accessing the deeper elements of purpose and shadow may be a helpful, alternative way to understand the limitations of this action research study and all its facets that, as with all the elements of this dissertation, extend beyond the traditional and customary bounds. Although I originally set out to enact an alternative pattern of working as a dissertation committee, we have not done so. Much has occurred in my personal life (two daughters born), in committee members’ academic and personal lives, to delay or prevent this alternative work. In the end I (perhaps we) have come to see the merit of identifying the reality that we did not accomplish what we desired but that learning has occurred or may occur from further inquiry, when timely.

Theoretical Contributions and Suggestions for Further Research

In this section I attempt to expand two theories in light of the data I collected in this research project; the categories of action research presented by Noffke (1997), the ways of knowing put forth by Heron and Reason (1997). I begin with an expansion of the categories of action research by returning to my earlier description of a discussion with Susan Noffke and Steve during one of the action research conferences at USD. To review, though the three categories that exist now (personal, professional, political) are accurate and appropriate to encompass and describe most action research activities, I was having trouble finding a philosophical fit for my own developing action research and the

collaborative application of action inquiry I was attempting with my students. When I posed my dilemma and research to Dr. Noffke, her advice was simple, “write it up and get it out there,” and so I proceed.

Partnered Action Research

Many forms of action research are thoughtful and attentive to psychological and nontraditional dynamics, though they are most often attended to for the sake of the research contribution (personal, professional, political) at hand and perhaps for critical reflection about the researchers’ sense of being personally involved in the research (integrity). Even those that are attentive to these dynamics are not usually for the sake of the participants’ sense of partnership in their work together (mutuality), or for their continued ability to complete their work in analogous fashion in that group or another context (sustainability). Many action research studies pair the task and a sense of individual integrity with good working relations in the group in order to accomplish a productive outcome of change for a particular problem. Though, as in adaptive work, the technical and operational forms of personal, professional, and political action research are beneficial and effective as is the distinction between categories.

In my action research I was attempting to layer professional task (teaching and learning), personal integrity, group mutuality, and political sustainability. I was systematically asking, with increasing transparency and invitation to the students, how to accomplish the task (the course) *while* accomplishing the aims of interaction (integrity, mutuality, sustainability). Indeed, I was studying in first-person, my personal practice of teaching for the sake of improving my own practice (personal integrity). And I was

studying in first and third person my pedagogical commitments and practices for the sake of the greater practice of teaching (professional sustainability). In addition, I was involving the students as co-researchers in studying their experience of these commitments and practices from all of our first and third-person stances for the sake of their liberation and emancipation from traditional learning structures (political mutuality and sustainability) and the development of their capacity to exercise leadership. But I was also interested in what happened for us while completing our task, in our context and roles, from simultaneous first-, second-, and third-person stances, for the sake of our own quality of individual and group life, nested in and representative of our larger organization, field of study, and unified field of humanness (Laszlo, 2004). A category for this type of layered research purpose could in some instances subsume the previous three categories as mine did but could also be committed to solely for the purpose of enacting mutuality for an individual, group, or on behalf of universal, representative systems. I consider my application of action research to be more at home in a category like this, and also think that systems psychology and work like group relations conferences (already considered by some to be action research methodologies) would also be more aptly categorized in this way. I facilitated a collaborative discussion about this proposed category of action research during the action research conference in San Diego in 2011 and found synergy among colleagues from other universities and contexts. I briefly presented my proposed thoughts, and asked the open-ended question, “how have you experienced or invited mutuality in your action research and where do you categorize those experiences?” A helpful discussion followed in that session in which I met some

researchers also wondering where to place their learning about or experience of mutuality in their action research. And at the encouragement of Dr. Noffke and others, I write it up here to contribute to activating the conversation.

I present Noffke's (1997) three existing categories of action research in the dissertation document; personal, professional, political. I'm exploring the creation of a new fourth category in relation to those three, as none of them encompass action research projects that include or make explicit a purpose of second-person mutuality. Perhaps the category could be *partnered* (to comply with the alliteration of the previous three). Action research writers do discuss mutuality but not as an intentionally set outcome or value embedded in the purpose of their project or research interactions. Even though I feel confident that I am contributing uniquely to this conversation, I also know (and have been reminded by my dissertation committee members) that I cannot know enough about all action research endeavors to definitively say that there aren't others that have undertaken or are undertaking a similarly specific partnered quality. Indeed, Reason and Heron's efforts at cooperative inquiry (Heron, 1996; Reason & Heron, 1997), Torbert's effort with high school (Torbert, 1976) and doctoral students (Steckler & Torbert, 2010) demonstrate distinct forms of partnership in their action and research. As a graduate student who is becoming a scholar, I sincerely hope that this dissertation and future publications resulting from this research initiate scholarly and personal exchanges regarding just such distinctions. Of course, this proposed additional category needs collaborative contribution, peer review, and constructive scrutiny.

Collaborative Knowing

I also want to utilize this research project to explore and inform an extension of Heron and Reason's (1997) presentation of the epistemological foundations of inquiry. Their explication of an emancipatory inquiry paradigm and categorization of the ways of knowing directly informed my understanding of my own inquiry paradigm and guided and categorized the actualization of my inquiry in teaching practices. The categories of experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowing are the underpinnings of their process of cooperative or collaborative inquiry, the inquiry process that espouses research "with" rather than "on" people. Through extended reflection on these categories, and in my application of them to my teaching and learning practices, I've concluded that they do not explicitly include a place for knowledge that emerges in collective and collaborative work. The knowledge that comes from the four ways of knowing about our action in the world is primarily first-person knowledge; experiencing something (experiential knowing), representing that experience (presentational knowing), describing or theorizing about the experience (propositional knowing), and enacting learning from the experience (practical knowing). But what about the knowledge that comes from seeing and enacting these ways of knowing in concert and collaboration with others, as in a community of inquiry?

I am confident that these authors' would acknowledge that the ways of knowing are enhanced or at times instigated by the cooperation of others. I think this study suggests that the notion of collaborative knowledge, those ways of knowing that emerge indivisibly from interaction in a group, are distinct from the other ways of knowing.

They are second person in nature and accessible only when first person experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical experience of one's knowledge, is completed in relationship to a group. That is to say, I believe there is transformational learning that occurs in a group setting that cannot be replicated individually or in pairs. For example, one student wrote in a journal about her experience of group work in the course,

A bunch of times when I couldn't find a way to express it someone expressed what I was feeling. One time [a student] brought up that struggling with intervening in the moment happens to everyone in the group and we all have a piece of it. We all affect whether an intervention can happen or get worked on. It's like we have to stop thinking about our cohesiveness and start thinking about owning our personal expectations. We have to balance our interpersonal issues with our actions and purpose . . . those should match the groups [purpose]. If we stick only to our own thinking and reasoning—we are so doomed. But we didn't have any skills to address them alone. Even though I thought I hated it the group as a whole was the only one who had the skills to do it.

The students and I began to experience the kind of knowing that a group can uniquely offer, in the context of collaboration and group purpose. Additionally, a group may often be better equipped than its individual members to intervene and work on interpersonal issues that pertain to or are inhibiting group life. An illustration of this from one of the students' reflection papers,

It was especially interesting today that [a student] decided to speak up finally with ten minutes left in class. She was inspired by [a fellow student] to come out with her issue. She told [a fellow student] her issues with the way she is in the group. [Another student] proposed that the two of them pair up and solve it together. But [a student] said no, that it was too easy to do that. The harder but better thing to do would be to let the group help work on the problem and see more. Miller then said that the issue is probably not really even about [the two students] specifically but about what they are representing in the group. I think [the first student] represents the courage to make conflict and [the second student] represents the courage to respond to it. Both are things we can't really do or really don't want to do. Thinking about them as a group problem makes it way easier to work on, feeling like we're not alone and that we can see different sides of things. This takes trust which I think is the simple way to say mutuality, and it takes courage

to do what's right which I think is like integrity, and putting your values aside so the group can work on to achieve its goals which is sustainability.

Additionally, when the group is committed to shared principles, aims, or values in its working life together (as with the aims of action inquiry) the collaborative knowing may be all the more profound or provocative of increased individual knowing. It would follow that purposefully cultivating a greater depth of commitment or even mutual covenant to this collaborative kind of knowing could produce an analogous increase in depth of knowledge. Cultivating a community of inquiry in an undergraduate classroom while attending to the task of teaching and learning offered learning that occurred beyond the institutional or my intended learning outcomes for the course. Further research could connect with greater psychological depth this concept of partnered, mutual, or collaborative knowing with the well-researched concepts of collective consciousness (Durkheim, 1933), collective unconscious (Jung, cited in Fordham, 1953), or unified field (Laszlo, 2004). For me, and for the purposes of this dissertation, collaborative knowing is most importantly connected to a description of the knowing that came as a result of approaching group life from the stance of mutuality. As with the expansion of categories of action research, further exploration of this expansion of ways of knowing through collaborative knowing, peer review, critical reflection, personal illustration, and dialogue must take place for it to gather validity or critique for its real-world usefulness.

Conclusion

The intent of this dissertation became multilayered beyond just the enhancement of undergraduate pedagogy for leadership development. Translation of these methods and practices may be useful for someone working toward student transformation in

leadership development programs indeed, but may also be useful for those seeking collaborative transformation within their own groups, organizational contexts, and social interactions. In this dissertation process, I have been gathering and analyzing data in order to build meaning about our experiences of our classroom as a community of inquiry, and explore directions and applications for this pedagogy and research method. Recording my ongoing learning as my inquiry progressed from my teacher, student, and researcher roles, I have interpreted these both by myself, with students, and to some extent my committee with increasing depth of purpose. I began with superficial levels of inquiry to improve my own practice and share more meaningful levels of learning with the students. When I began inviting the students to collaborate with me for the sake of immediate revision of the course in progress and for the next iteration of the course, they responded with such capacity that I then moved toward collective interpretation for the sake of developing my own leadership by teaching collaboratively and reflectively. In the process I became aware of my enthusiasm for the group's working life together and came to realize that constructing a classroom, as a collaborative and reflexive community of inquiry was my real passion. My efforts at enacting a new way of teaching, one that is transparent and self-effacing, inclusive of power dynamics, and unconscious forces showed a special applicability of action research methods as pedagogy for leadership studies capacity building.

Our study of leadership was enhanced by the practice of partnered action research, utilizing action inquiry with special attention to the collaborative forms of

knowing we experienced. As a result of this type of learning community, a community of inquiry, both the students' and teacher's exercise of leadership was developed.

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