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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DISCOVERING A SHARED PURPOSE: THE QUESTION OF COLLABORATION IN ACTION RESEARCH

BY

HANS SMITS

A THESIS

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NAME OF AUTHOR: Hans Smits

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H. Smits
(Student's signature)

11304-66 St.
(Student's permanent address)
Edmonton, Alberta T5B 1H6

Date: Oct 9, 1987

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Discovering Shared Purpose: The Question of Collaboration in Action Research submitted by Hans Smits in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Supervisor

Date: _____

ABSTRACT

This study represents a reflection on the experience of collaborating on two school-based action research projects. What it means for a teacher and outside researcher to collaborate in action research emerged as a central question. Action research, conceived as an alternative to positivist forms of educational research, raises the question of how collaboration ought to be conducted. In order to respect the contexts, practices, knowledge, and normative bases of teaching, we are challenged to rethink the meaning of collaboration. To discover a shared purpose in educational research implies that the question of collaboration must be an open one.

The collaborative experience recounted in this study took the form of conversations between each of the two teachers and the researcher. The teachers' observations and reflections about their action research projects became the content of the conversations. Transcripts of these conversations became a further text for interpretation in succeeding meetings. The distanciation created by written transcripts appeared to enhance reflective talk between the teachers and the researcher.

It was in this process that the meaning of collaboration emerged as an important question. The conversations began to be guided by objects of interest that went beyond the immediate situations, and towards more shared understandings. Through an interpretative approach, the researcher recognized three themes which are suggested as being essential in the life world of teachers, but also find expression in the concerns of researchers. The three themes discussed are pedagogic hope, pedagogic being, and pedagogic knowing.

The meaning of collaboration can be further understood by reflecting on the tensions inherent in the collaborative experience. There is the ethical tension of relating to the other. Tensions exist also between knowing and doing, between different claims to truth, and in the struggle to become more critically aware. The tension of dialogue marks the possibility for community. Viewed this way, collaboration implies an engagement in social reasoning: educators reasoning together to improve their understandings and practices.

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Encouragement and support also came from my wife Donna. Among many other things, we share a concern for teaching. Her ability to translate that concern into positive practice challenges me to think more concretely about the question of collaboration in action research.

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CHAPTER 1

THE QUESTION OF COLLABORATION

> The logos is common to all, but people behave as if each had a private reason. Does it have to remain this way? (Gadamer, 1984, p.87)

The Impetus for asking the Question of Collaboration

Collaboration in action research became a question of inquiry for me through my interest in learning about action research and actual involvement in two teacher-initiated projects. This thesis represents a reflection on that involvement. Learning about action research, and becoming involved in some action research projects brought the question of collaboration to the fore.

My introduction to action research prior to the experience related in this thesis was through graduate course work and a reading of the literature. One of the primary sources which helped form a theoretical understanding of action research was the work of Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, whose main work, Becoming Critical: Knowing Through Action Research (1986), attempts to build a theoretical foundation for educational action research. The definition of action research that Carr and Kemmis offer is as follows:

> Action research is simply (sic!) a form of self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understandings of those practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (1986, p.162)

As appealing as this definition seems, Carr and Kemmis evince a certain lack of reflectiveness in their use of the term "simply." What in theory appears rational and sensible, in practice soon becomes very

muddled. Certainly that was the experience for those of us who attempted to put action research into practice, whether as teachers doing action research, or outside researchers attempting to work with teachers.

Especially from the perspective of an "outside" researcher, what arose as a particular concern was the question of collaboration in educational action research. More fundamentally, the question asks whether there may be a shared purpose in the vocations of teachers and researchers. The question asks whether people with diverse responsibilities and interests can come together to inform and understand each other's theories and practices in order to improve practice and build knowledge. This sense of collaboration in action research hints at an embodiment of collective understanding and interpretation oriented to practice. As an idea, collaboration suggests a "community of discourse", and proposes a view of educational research that is integrally interpretative and practical. It could be said that there is a communal interest in discovering and fostering a shared purpose in education.

The idea of collaboration, however, remains an idea only without its practice. Thus the question of collaboration also asks how we may build collaborative inquiry within the practice of action research. Indeed, the question asks more fundamentally whether collaboration is a necessary aspect of educational action research. So while the question is fundamentally theoretical, it is also essentially practical. That is, the question of collaboration asks whether action research can be a viable form of educational research for teachers and university-based

researchers. At the same time there is the question of how people may work together to improve and understand education. In an attempt to develop collaboration in actual practice and deal with specific situations and problems, the meaning of such collaboration, in the context of action research becomes an object for inquiry.

This study represents an effort at such an inquiry into collaboration at two levels. One is a recounting of the experience of trying to establish a collaborative relationship in two action research projects. Through conversation and reflection, there is also a second level which is one of interpreting the experience and approaching an understanding of collaboration. It is possible, therefore, to suggest a tension between action and reflection, two moments of experience some would say are the crucial and distinguishing features of action research.

The use of the term "tension" or "tensionality" to describe the relationship between the idea of collaboration and its practice suggests a dynamic interplay, a dialectic between the concrete and the abstract (Aoki, 1985), action and reflection. Collaboration as a tensionality suggests that we dwell in that space between understanding--making sense of practice--and the practice itself. For educational researchers interested in action research, there may be an interest in informing school practices, to make theory relevant for teachers, or to develop more effective modes of implementation and curricular change. For teachers there may be an interest in professional growth, to make more manifest tacit knowing about their ways of teaching, and to find legitimacy for their theories of teaching. Above all, as the

conversations with the two teachers in this study show, there is the practical and simultaneously ethical concern for their students reflected in teachers' language.

In the practice and theory of collaborative action research there is a tension between knowing and doing, theory and practice. The suggestion that in action research both researchers and teachers are oriented to theory and practice is also to ask how they are being oriented and to question the assumptions behind their respective interests. The tension is reflected in renewed interest in action research, emerging out of a profound distrust and dissatisfaction with more "traditional" forms of educational research. In seeking to recast the relationship of theory and practice, action research may be seen as an alternative to forms of research which have tended to promote technical solutions--linear means-ends problem solving approaches--which often deny the practical knowledge and understandings of educational practioners.

James Bowen (1982) argues that as we approach the twenty-first century we still lack a coherent educational theory as we continue to flounder in the dualism of theory and practice which posivitivism in educational research effects. From a teacher's point of view, action research creates opportunities for overcoming such dualism. Action research offers a way to improve teaching and create an awareness that respects individual and professional integrity.

In more concrete terms, action research provides a possibility to counter the "deskilling" of teachers (Apple, 1981) which some observers believe has become a quality of teachers' experiences as education

succumbs to seemingly greater administrative and political control. Interest in action research is raised by questions such as the one Tom McConaghy (1987) asks, "how do we free teachers from the bureaucratic control that is strangling them?" This question prompts as well the further question of collaboration and how collaborative action research may encourage more holistic and democratic forms of engaged inquiry.

Yet, the adoption of action research as a strategy raises as many questions, perhaps many more, than remaining with the status quo of educational research, curricular change, and teacher and school improvement. On the theoretical level, there are many conceptions of action research, and within those conceptions, there are theoretical assumptions that may or may not differ radically from more traditional forms of doing research and encouraging implementation. There are "strong" and "weak" conceptions of action research, which may or may not question more general epistemological assumptions (Peters and Robinson, 1984).

The ways knowledge and its purposes are conceived has implications for the form and practice of action research projects. On a practical level, the "methodology" of action research assumes certain kinds of relationships that are central to the question of collaboration, that is, what collaboration means and how it is practiced. Moreover, even the adoption of a certain conception of action research does not mean that in its practice traditional relations of dominance, theory over practice, for example, are avoided. The domination of theory is one of the criticisms that Gibson (1985) for instance, makes of Carr's and Kemmis's idea of action research as a praxis for critical theory.

Thus, the notion of tensionality also suggests the need to question our assumptions and procedures in action research. This becomes more pertinently alive when we ask the question of how people from inside schools and outside may work together. My study attempts to question what it is that draws people to collaborate and what collaborative effort means to the people involved.

Action research and the question of collaboration finds nurturance, I believe, in other veins of curriculum theory. Curriculum theorists writing from the "reconceptualist" perspective have recognized the need to return to an understanding of experience at the level of practice (Pinar and Grumet, 1981) and to examine those understandings through the medium of autobiography and life histories (Grumet, 1981; Woods, 1986). From the reconceptualist perspective it would be legitimate, therefore, to take a "detour" through one's own experience to "re-search" the origins of the questions we ask. As important is the recognition of the contexts we work in, and the developments and understandings in education that have led us to question meanings and practices. From those various perspectives, this study has led to considering collaboration in action research as an alternative way of thinking and doing in educational research and practice.

Autobiographical Sources for the Question of Collaboration

It was through an interest in peace education that I was first introduced to the notion of action research. In fact, my initial thesis interest was to be an attempt to inquire into the implementation of peace education through action research. A strong appeal of this proposal was to be a collaborative effort between classroom teachers,

university professors and graduate students with a common interest in peace education. As a teacher just emerging from the classroom for a year, the collaborative notion seemed to address the chronic isolation that seems to be a truism of teachers' working lives. Additionally, in my experience at least, peace education had lacked a sound practice; collaborative action research seemed to promise a way of actually putting ideas into practice.

My interest in action research as an approach to developing understanding and creating genuine change in my classroom represents then as much a journey based on personal concerns as those developed in educational research literature. As a teacher, I have been interested in the problem of curriculum change and implementation--a basic drive for me has been and still is to become a "better" teacher, whatever that may mean. The interest in peace education derives as much from my personal view of the world as it does for a concern for children and their futures. In terms of education this means the necessity to reflect on both the content and context of teaching, developing a better understanding of how certain ideas may be put into everyday practice.

In fact, thinking about peace education and attempting to integrate notions of peace into my teaching or into specific curricula or even lesson plans created considerable tension between my conception of peace and my effort at teaching it, an awareness that brought me to thinking about action research. Working on my own as a teacher it was with difficulty and frequent disappointment that I attempted to teach "for peace". For instance, I taught in a situation where various forms of violence seemed endemic to a considerable number of students' lives.

Whether we think of the more abstract sense of global violence, or more concretely, family violence and fighting between students, the very idea of peace education is challenged by these levels of reality.

When I think back now on how I thought about peace education, my attempts at teaching peace was done very unreflectively. That is, I did not try to become more aware of the situations students were in, their meanings, and their degrees of consciousness of the language that expressed their understandings. Could I have learned more from the students first? Did I understand the context of their understandings? Did I really have an understanding of peace or peace education myself? More concretely what were conditions like in my classroom that facilitated or undermined peace education? These are only a few, still very general, questions I ask myself now. Such questions may have helped to open up some windows to awareness.

The point of this is that it would not have been very helpful to have just applied a theory of peace education, or even a pre-designed curriculum, since there was a gap between my own theory and practice. In other words this was an example of an educational problem, when a teacher's expectations do not match with what actually happens (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 110). It is this kind of problem Carr and Kemmis consider to be the concern of an adequate educational science, that is, a concern about how the teacher can become more reflective, and how the gap between his or her theory and practice can be reduced.

My initial research interest as a graduate student returning to university for a year was to "study" peace education, that is to learn and think more about the possibilities of developing a practice for

teaching peace in the classroom. As I began to think about the problem of incorporating peace education into my own practice, the more important it seemed to research what that practice actually was and could be and to find the openings that might lead to change. Underlying the possibilities for peace education, I came to believe, was the need to become a more reflective practioner in the classroom. Moreover, there was a very concrete concern of how that could be achieved working with others, particularly other teachers and university researchers interested in the practice of peace education.

Origins of the Question of Collaboration in Theory

The question of collaboration also asks how the divide separating theory from practice or university research from school concerns can be crossed more bravely than seems to be the case at the present. This gap is evident in the literature on school and curricular change, and this literature is replete with examples of how curricular innovations hinge on teachers' mediations. Fullan's (1982) exhaustive analysis of curriculum implementation projects confirms the centrality of meaning teachers assign to curriculum and change, and hence how such change is mediated by teachers. As Fullan concludes, "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think--it's as simple and as complex as that" (1982, p. 107). Fullan echoes other writers who speak to the relationship between research and change. Stenhouse, for example, wrote, "It is teachers who, in the end, will change the world of the school by understanding it" (Rudduck and Hopkins, 1985, p. 56).

The apparent teacher-centeredness of these conceptions may seem rather narrow, but they do orient our thinking about the locus of

change, and the importance of the meaning that involved individuals have for their vocations. It is hardly a simple matter, and recognizes too the complexity of schools, classrooms, and teaching, what Sarason (1982) terms the culture of the school. The literature on school change and culture supports the position that theory and knowledge require development from the perspectives of practioners and from within the contexts they work. The failure of research to accomplish this leads to continued dashing of the hopes for reform. Reflecting on this problem, Elliot writes,

> The fundamental problem of curriculum reform lies in the clash between the theories of the reformers and those implicit, often unconsciously, in the practice of teachers. Reformers fail to realize that fundamental changes in classroom practice can be brought about only if teachers become conscious of the latter theories and are able to reflect critically about them (Elliot, 176-77, p. 2).

The concern Elliot and others have expressed is a clarion call for outside researchers interested in educational improvement to seek collaboration. It is a call to deepen our understanding of change and its possibilities, and to begin to discover questions in the practices of teachers.

The lack of reform in schools has also received notable treatment in the more critical educational literature. While radical critiques of the educational system serve to explain the functioning of education on a structural level, those "macro" level critiques also serve to ignore the possibilities for developing what Aronowitz and Giroux call "the question of internal counterhegemonic moments within school knowledge" (1987, p.15). What they term the "agony of marxist and radical social theory" refers to a form of discourse that often prevents conceiving of

change within institutions. This is a concern shared by Flitner: "Sharing the daily needs of education and the reconstruction of the common educational tasks has lagged far behind the criticism" (1982, p.70). In these critiques of critiques of education, there is a desire to discover a "language of possibility" (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1987, p.33), and a form of "right action" based on an understanding of the lived experience of the school (Flitner, 1982).

A "language of the possible" and the search for "right action" resides as possibility in action research as praxis. One of the critiques that proponents of action research offer is that educational research in the mainstream has purposely withdrawn from actual practice. The scientific claim to value-neutrality, is one that a practioner of action researcher would deny as valid. Deeper analyses emphasize that "for too long 'thought' and 'practice' have been set apart," that we need to consider possibilities for "contextualizing 'thought' and 'practice'," which recognizes the necessity for an "emic" perspective in research (Aoki, 1985). The perception of the distance between educational theory and educational realities, what Carson (1986) calls the "gap" between theory and practice is also the gap that collaboration, in idea and actual practice, wishes to bridge. This gap directs our attention to the question that Torbert (1981) asks "Why hasn't past educational research taught us better educational practice?"

The tentative embrace of collaboration as an aspect of action research is evident in Carr's and Kemmis's effort to develop a theoretical grounding for action research. Their work in particular, provided one of the challenges to inquire into the meaning of

collaboration in the present study. There is an unresolved ambiguity in Carr's and Kemmis's conception of collaboration that must be considered both in the context of their own work, and in attempts at collaborative action research in our own situations.

On the one hand, Carr and Kemmis consider action research to be essentially and necessarily participatory. In fact, "Action research ... precipitates collaborative involvement in the research process in which the research process is extended towards including all those involved in, or affected by, the action" (1986, p.199). This conception of collaboration leans heavily on Habermas's notion of the "ideal speech situation", in which equals can engage in "practical discourse" as a way of coming to truth (Bernstein, 1986). Carr and Kemmis propose a conception of collaboration that has as its requirement democratic, non-dominating forms of participation; "it recognizes that conditions for investigating the truth of knowledge claims are also the conditions for democratic participation in critical discussion" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.199).

On the other hand the idea of collaboration that Carr and Kemmis propose makes problematic the role that outsiders can play in action research. Carr and Kemmis do not discount what outside researchers may contribute, but do consider it problematic because the traditional educational community has tended to reflect the gap between theory and practice, and the interests, roles, responsibilities, and power implicit in that gap. From the critical theory perspective this is a gap that militates against free and critical discourse which is considered to be

a necessary condition for promoting awareness and emancipation (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.199-202).

The literature recounting experiences with collaborative action research does reflect, consciously and not, the problem with collaboration that Carr and Kemmis alert us to. In the following chapter this will be reviewed in greater detail, but briefly for now, it is possible to outline some of the main positions. Some writers discuss collaboration uncritically, assuming the priority of traditional research concerns and viewing schools as sites for research, and teachers as partners who have the practical interests and responsibilities. A variant of this is the concern that teachers do not use university-generated research, and the proposal that collaborative research is one means around this perceived impasse.

Other writers, from more critical or reflective views do acknowledge the difficulties with doing collaborative research, sometimes offering lists of practical ideas for initiating more effective collaboration. In general, however, there was little in the literature that helped to come to an understanding of collaboration that could guide its actual practice, especially in terms of collaboration with teacher-initiated action research. The shortcomings of the literature in this respect also means the need to distinguish collaborative action research from other forms of collaboration in research.

The Emergence of the Question in Practice

It is interesting to note that the question of collaboration became one of the more contentious ones in the Ed. C.I. graduate course I was a

student in and which explored action research as an alternative mode of inquiry into curriculum implementation. Because action research may question the institutionalized dominance of the university researcher, collaborative effort involving university researchers and teachers was considered potentially problematic by the participants in the class. In trying to develop a conception of collaboration (there had been no practice of it at that stage), there seemed to be considerable emphasis on the criteria of equality of "inside" and "outside" researchers, but also the probable difficulty, in reality, of achieving that. There was a difficulty accepting a notion of collaboration whereby participants might be "separate but equal." The separation between responsibilities suggested an immutable inequality, perhaps reflecting the tension of the gap between theory and practice.

The question of collaboration explores the tensionality in that gap between theoretical and experiential perspectives. In turn, these perspectives are developed both from the literature on action research and immediate experiences. The literature on collaborative action research provides accounts of research projects involving collaboration as well as theoretical reflection on the notion of collaboration. Experiences also allow for a re-telling as well as further reflection and theorizing.

For me the question of collaboration emerged more out of necessity than intent. This thesis owes its outcome to an involvement I was offered by participating in an off-campus graduate seminar dealing with action research. One of the features of this course was that the teachers enrolled in the course were engaged in actual

research/implementation projects in their schools. One of my tasks, so to speak, was to engage collaboratively with two of the teachers. John, a high school teacher of computer processing, was interested in implementing a problem solving approach in in his classes. Catherine, a resource or "catalyst" teacher in her elementary school was working on the implementation of a gifted program.

Even though it was initially tempting to treat collaboration as a technical problem that could be solved through application of rules, it soon became apparent in the projects in which I became involved that there was a dynamic which called for something else than a technical solution. My initial interest in the action research projects was in the action research process itself, and not necessarily the actual content of the changes of the persons I was collaborating with. When I initially began conversations with John and Catherine, the two teachers I "collaborated" with, I felt a little frustrated, because it was not at all clear what we were collaborating on.

My interest, uncritically examined, was the "what" of action research and collaboration, as in "what is action research in practice," for example. However, the "what" of our discussions was not the moments of action research, or the plan, or the monitoring, but rather what the nature of giftedness might be, what problem solving entailed, how one could teach with certain concepts in mind, and so on. Thus as an outside collaborator it became necessary for me to enter into the world of meaning and the actual experience of each teacher's situation, in order to understand "what" was being researched.

Relevant to my concerns was that in some accounts of collaborative action research there is also a realization that the meanings of collaboration and action research cannot be taken for granted. Participants may have different interpretations of what is involved. Just focusing on action research and collaboration as technical problems to be solved, and solutions to be implemented, may obscure the deeper questions of the meaning of research, what it is for, and whether action research can respect and join persons of different interests. The question is also raised as to whether collaboration can be established by the application of rules learned from research in other situations or whether the very notion of collaboration requires careful examination and thought in each context.

The discussion above represents a brief background to the situation I found myself in at the beginning of the project in which I became involved. At the outset, diverse strands of understandings (and misunderstandings!), influences, and experiences awaited weaving into some coherent pattern. To arrive at an understanding of action research in practice, and how an outside researcher could collaborate with teachers in schools was my primary expectation. With eager anticipation, I began to ask questions of my teacher collaborators, to find out how they were "using" action research. Yet, the essential questions remained outside of my awareness: who were the weavers, and what was the loom? Underlying the technical interests in action research there were other questions to be asked that could stand as guides for developing what collaboration might mean.

Gadamer advises that, "We cannot have experiences without asking questions" (Gadamer, 1986, p.325). In other words, as I understand Gadamer to be saying, in order to discover what collaboration meant to us, we had to question our situations. We had to broaden our horizons of understanding. Thinking in those terms allowed the question of collaboration to begin to flourish.

The fabric of our experiences of collaboration over the course of the project, as short in time as it was, began to emerge as conversation. Conversation allowed the question of collaboration to come to the forefront. Whether we ever achieved "true conversation", what Bernstein terms an extended and open dialogue based on "a background of intersubjective agreements and a tacit sense of relevance" (Bernstein, 1983, p.2), is still an open question for me. Gadamer suggests that "To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in the conversation are directed" (1986, p.330). In my discussions with John and Catherine there were glimmerings, I believe, of objects which began to focus our attention. It was perhaps a still largely tacit idea of what we were doing as collaborators in action research. As incomplete as our tapestry may seem, there was nevertheless an emerging pattern, a movement between our immediate experiences and understandings, and a more general, overarching conception of what it might mean to be better teachers and a hope for students to be better learners.

The tension of the this movement through our mostly immanent conversations seemed to point to a meaning of research in education that action research may provide a means to uncover. Dialogue as a relation

between teachers and outside researchers also opens the question of collaboration, and an attempt to uncover what it means for a teacher and outside researcher to collaborate in an action research project. While our goals may ultimately be critical awareness and change, the question also points us to the necessity for interpretative exchange and mutual understanding, a task this study, at least in conception, is oriented to.

The Emergence of the Question in Reflection and Writing

At the outset of my involvement with John and Catherine and their action research projects, I had neither a "plan" in mind as to how I could collaborate, nor an intention to "research" that experience in order to write a thesis. The idea for basing my thesis on the collaborative experience came well after the initiation of the experience.

Generally speaking, I was very interested in knowing whether action research could really make a difference in a teacher's practice, and I did have a thesis interest from that point of view. Engaging in collaboration, however, began to raise the question of how we could actually collaborate and what that would mean. Without understanding those questions I began to engage in conversations with John and Catherine. Those conversations became the basis for reflecting on the their action research projects, as well as for our reflections on the meaning of collaboration.

My reflections on the experience of collaboration, and my attempts to write about those experiences became guided by the question that stands as the challenge for this thesis:

What does it mean for an outside researcher and teacher to collaborate on an action research project?

Subsumed under this main question, are questions about how collaborative action research may differ from "normal" educational research, what it is that may draw teachers and outsiders together to research practice, and what tensions are inherent in the collaborative experience.

The question of the meaning of collaboration in action research will be followed through the remaining chapters, as listed below. The organization of this thesis reflects that search for meaning, as well as recounting of how I came to the question and its implications for practice.

Ch. 2: Discovering Origins for the Question of Collaboration in Educational Research

Ch. 3: How Can a Collaborative Experience Be Understood? The Question of Method.

Ch. 4: The Talk of a Collaborative Experience

Ch. 5: Themes of a Collaborative Experience

Ch. 6: Tensions of Collaboration

CHAPTER 2

DISCOVERING ORIGINS FOR THE QUESTION OF COLLABORATION IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

> But our wealth of facts is not necessarily a wealth of thoughts. (Schrag, 1980, p.2)
>
> It is not enough that teachers' work should be studied: they need to study it themselves. (Stenhouse, 1975, p.143)

Critique of Positivist Educational Research as a Basis for Collaborative Action Research

Fostering interest in action research and the question of collaboration is the burgeoning critique of what may be loosely called the positivist approach to understanding in educational research. In the context of this study, the importance of the critique is a foundation in theory provided for collaborative action research as an alternative form of research to the positivist approach. My interest in providing a brief analysis of the critique of positivism is to assist in an understanding for the practice of collaboration in action research. In so doing, I realize I am not acknowledging the full diversity and complexity of the positions currently extant in educational research.

There are writers who see in action research the possibility of developing a practice for the more theoretical positions countering the positivist or "empirical-analytic" approach to educational research, considered the dominant paradigm in North America (Aoki, 1985, p.12). I am interested especially in how the idea and experience of collaboration relates to the conduct of action research conceived as a potentially alternative paradigm in educational research.

The critique of positivism in educational science follows several strands of thought. Acknowledging the risk of oversimplification, I understand these to be as follows: 1. the context of educational research; 2. the forms of knowledge appropriate to educational work--the epistemological question; 3. the interests that are intrinsic to the educational enterprise- the inherent purpose and normative foundation of education, and 4. following intrinsically from the above, the relationship between theory and practice. These strands come to mind particularly when thinking about action research. Action research grows out of a concern for building appropriately contextualized knowledge which can normatively guide practice. As points of focus for a critique of educational research in the mainstream they point to the underlying question of the meaning and possibility of colla ion in action research.

1. The Context of Educational Research

One of the important criticisms of the positivist approach in educational science is that it seeks to produce knowledge that is context free, produced with the aim of being universally applicable. Mishler calls this "context stripping": "As theorists and researchers, we tend to behave as if context were the enemy of understanding rather than the resource for understanding which it is in our everyday lives (Mishler, 1979, p.2). A consequence of this kind of orientation is that in terms of education, the school, classroom, students and teachers are viewed as an objectified world to be apprehended through measurement or other forms of research methodology. In the positivist approach, the researcher stands apart, distanced and detached. The positivist

approach suggests a relationship of researcher as subject to the researched as objects. Such a stance may abort collaborative effort conceived in terms of a dialogical relationship right from the start.

Views critical of the decontextualized approach that positivism fosters in educational research stress instead the importance of experiential sources for understanding. van Manen (1984) speaks for example, of greater acceptance of theories of the "unique" recognizing particular pedagogic situations. Such a view emphasizes an interpretative turn for educational science, which challenges the positivist approach "by stressing the ways in which the subjective interpretations of educational practioners are constitutive of educational realities" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.98).

In a more general sense the notion of context suggests the necessarily social basis of education and what that implies for understanding. That is to say, the meanings that people hold for things educational are not forms of objectified knowledge, but rather, are meanings of something, and moreover these meanings are for subjects, who can share meanings intersubjectively. Charles Taylor (1979) considers the positivist approach in the human sciences of being incapable of seeing social reality as intersubjective. It has instead a tendency to view humans only as individual actors or "respondents" (Sanford, 1970). It is suggestive, in this discussion of the importance of context, that the Latin origin of context denotes the idea of "weaving together," signaling the importance of considering how people interact with each other and their situations.

There is another sense also in which positivist educational science tends to ignore contexts and particular situations and that is the tendency to adopt and rely on concepts and methods established by other sciences. Flitner asks:

> by continuing to pursue the concepts, constructs, research models and methods of other disciplines, have we not lost our indigenous elements altogether, or dismembered and distorted them in such a way that they fit into forms of thinking and processing in which they may look nice and scientific, but have scarcely anything to do with the problems of education? (1982, p.65)

Flitner gives the example of "social class" as a concept that may be used in education, but one that tends to generalize characteristics of children without consideration of their real life situations and particular contexts. Stones (1986) finds that experimental educational research frequently overlooks the "pedagogical dimension," that is, an understanding of what it actually means to "teach" or to "learn".

Like Flitner, Schrag (1980), in a more general critique of the human sciences also sees the need to return to an understanding of lived experience. He considers that the human sciences especially those in the positivist vein tend to impose conceptual blindfolds on the way we see the world. In terms of educational science, both Flitner and Schrag raise the question of what constitutes a more foundational or originative inquiry and how we may become more aware of situated knowledge, free of conceptual prisms that tend to either distort knowing or alienate it from its source.

2. Forms of Knowledge

The question of the source of knowledge also raises the issue of what is valid educational knowledge. This is the epistemological

question in educational science. Critics of the positivist approach in educational research maintain that the knowledge produced by that orientation tends to be "objective" and reductionist, taking the form of "hypothetico-deductive statements" about social reality (Aoki, 1985; Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Such knowledge may be said to be objective in its claim to exist independently of the observer (Friedmann 1979), and reductionist in the sense described above, where actions and meanings become decontextualized and treated as data. Typically, according to Carr and Kemmis

> ... scientific enquiries proceed by proposing hypotheses, preferably in the form of universal laws which can be assessed by comparing their deductive consequences with the results of observations and experiments (1986, p.63).

As Carr and Kemmis emphasize, this approach leads to separating so-called observable knowledge from values, normative claims or ideological positions. It also tends to ignore, as has been argued, the contexts of such knowledge.

Critics of the positivist approach also question the relevance for education of the form of explanation that such an approach seems to engender. Explanations are in the form of "scientific laws," which "express an unrestricted universality in that they claim to be true for any place at any time. They express, in short, some sort of nomic necessity'" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.65). The "necessity" that Carr and Kemmis speak of usually takes causal forms, which when applied to educational situations assumes an invariability and uniformity in human action and behaviour. Indeed, in Taylor's words, this form of explanation "tries to reconstruct social reality as consisting of brute data alone (Taylor, 1979, p.53). In other words, the positivist

approach cannot account for the ways in which people understand and mediate events and ways of knowing that may not take causal and predictive forms.

Rather than decontextualized, law-like, and objectively verifiable knowledge that the positivist approach strives for, proponents of alternative scientific "paradigms" in educational research stress the unique, context-specific, and practical nature of edueational or pedagogical knowledge. Whereas the positivist approach strives for certainty and exactness, the character of pedagogic knowledge is difficult to reduce to "factors." It is a form of knowledge that involves an "open certainty" and a "closed imperfection" (Woods, 1986), suggesting an inherent practicality in that it is a form of knowledge related to practice or to improving practice.

Thus educational knowledge may be termed "practical" knowledge rather than theoretical (Friedmann, 1979; van Manen, 1984). It is also a form of knowledge that is not derived autonomously or externally from a situation, but rather grows out of gaps between a teacher's knowledge and practice (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Pertinently, considering the idea of collaboration, educational knowledge may be considered knowledge that teachers have, and not researchers (Woods, 1986). As Elliot emphasizes: "... if theory development is to have any practical significance for teachers, it must be rooted in those conceptualizations that arise out of their practical deliberations about what to do" (1976-77, p.8).

3. Normative Foundations

Knowledge conceived in practical terms also raises the question of what the purposes and interests are of such knowledge. A positivist

research approach may be said to have an inherent interest in prediction and control (Aoki, 1985; Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Because there is an assumption of certainty and "objective truth" regardless of the situation, the truth of such knowledge is considered to be applicable to any situation. As well, while data is gathered from sites of practice, and while the interest may be to influence such practice, a primary goal of "scientific" research in the positivist vein is to discover scientific laws. This process finds concrete expression in the separation between research and teaching, what Apple has called the "divorce of conception from execution";

> The separation of mental from manual labour, the divorce of conception from execution, each of these is a constitutive element in organizing work in our society (Apple, 1981, p.150).

Mirrored in this division of labour is also a conception that separates means from ends and alienates ends from what is intrinsically educational. Educational ends become treated as technical problems which can "be resolved objectively through the rational assessment of evidence" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.67). More emphasis is placed on discovering means, based on rational, scientific decision making. Thus, looking at it from a teacher's point of view, positivist educational research views the teacher not as a producer of knowledge, but a consumer of knowledge which has been produced by researchers. Further, the knowledge that is produced for teachers considers teaching and learning as technical problems that can be solved through application of externally-produced knowledge.

What is missing in this conception according to some views is a notion of the intrinsically ethical character of the educational

enterprise. What it means to be a "good teacher", or what "effective teaching" means, are not "ends" separate from the meaning of education. In other words there is something in being a good or an effective teacher which is not reducible or separable from an intrinsic notion of right or ethical action. It is possible that the positivist approach in educational research, which for example has helped to create the effective teaching programs, also promotes the view that such skills can be seen apart from who or what the person actually is and what his or her ethical stance might be. Reflecting on some recent incidents of the sexual abuse of children by teachers, Aoki raises this concern about separating the idea of "good teaching" from ethical responsibility:

> Recent experiences in British Columbia compel us to sense that an 'educator' who is knowledgeable and skillful in matters educational but who is destitute in human goodness is wanting (1987).

Aoki speaks to the heart as well as the head in teaching and, I believe, how as researchers we may come to a more holistic view of teaching and teachers, and to have a more "educational" view of change and improvement. Such a view of education cannot countenance the separation of knowledge from the larger question of what education is, and indeed what we are as humans. In the words of R.S. Peters,

> The point is that making a man (sic) better is not an aim extrinsic to reform. In the same way a necessary feature of education is often extracted as an extrinsic end. People thus think that education must be for the sake of something extrinsic that is worthwhile, whereas worthwhile is part of what is meant by calling it 'education' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.77).

In Peters' and Aoki's words there is a call to resurrect the Greek notion of "phronesis", a form of practical reasoning concerned with just

action. Phronesis refers to an ethical knowledge oriented to a co--determination of the universal and and the particular (Bernstein, 1983, p.146). In the context of education this means that the skills and knowledge of teaching cannot be seen apart from the larger goals of what education is for, the "ethical aspects of pedagogical actions" (van Manen, 1984).

4. Theory-Practice Relationship

The conception of educational knowledge as phronesis also forces a reconception of the relationship between theory and practice. The positivist view is found wanting for the way practice is devalued as the application of theory of scientific knowledge (Gadamer, 1984). Such a view of practice carries an instrumentality of means to ends, leaving out the ethical and indeed the ontological questions about who we are and why we are involved in educating children. Flitner presents, I think, a cogent characterization of the way in which positivist educational science fosters a particular relationship between theory and action or practice:

> Educational science has missed its action relevance again and again, because it has delivered itself up too easily and too quickly in the scientific working out of problems to those sciences--and their concepts and constructs--which are not themselves and would not wish to be action-oriented sciences, or which have a quite different relationship to action, in that they operate along the lines of models such as 'basic research and application' or 'diagnosis and therapy' (1982, p.67).

This critique of the positivist approach in educational research requires a reconstituting of a notion of praxis that recognizes the essential requirements of an educational science briefly discussed above: the importance of the context and situatedness of educational

knowledge, the practical nature of educational knowledge, and the integral purpose and ethical interest of education. An educational praxis would involve practical understanding inseparable from action (Hoy, 1978, p.56). Thought and action would be "mutually constitutive" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.34).

The question of collaboration in action research asks therefore what is the nature of reasoning in relation to action that is appropriate to the teacher in the classroom. If collaborative inquiry is to truly contribute to the development of teaching-researching as a praxis, then there must also be a fundamental questioning of the kinds of knowledge appropriate to such praxis, and the relationships that have traditionally been fostered through the interest in theory apart from practice.

If there is a type of reasoning appropriate to praxis, with "the ability to do justice to particular situations in their particularity" (Bernstein, 1983, p.219), then the question of collaboration must have an orientation to practical wisdom and just action. If, as Schrag (1980) suggests, there is a "crisis" in the human sciences, can collaboration in action research provide a means for an originative questioning in educational research? What may be the form of action research and collaboration that helps point us to this kind of questioning? These concerns appear to be on the horizon in the practice of action research to date, but not satisfactorily answered. Indeed it is these concerns that have created interest in action research, historically speaking, and continue to guide the development of action research in theory and practice.

Action Research: Historical and Conceptual Review

Action research has a fairly long history in North America, England, and in revised form, more recently in Australia. Within a time frame of approximately forty years, the theory of action research at least, has undergone some transformations. It is significant to note that the tension between the positivist view of theory and practice and the critique of that view finds expression in conceptions of action research as well. In an analysis of the origin of action research, Peters and Robinson (1984) distinguish "weak" from "strong" versions of action research, with the stronger versions questioning the precepts of the more traditional forms of positivist research.

With regard to the interest in this study, the conception of action research in terms of its "paradigmatic" underpinnings also has strong connotations for the idea and practice of collaboration. One of the difficulties in coming to a clearer understanding of what collaboration would mean in terms not contaminated with a positivist and technical-rational language and approach is with the origins of action research itself. Although historically-speaking action research has an implicitly critical view of the scientism inherent in positivist social science, at the same time action research owed its origin to scientists working within the positivist framework. In my review of the literature, I found that this made it difficult to form a clear picture of not only how action research was interpreted, but also how it was practiced.

Although most discussions of the origin and theory of action research pay homage to Kurt Lewin, some writers acknowledge the ideas of

the John Dewey as foundational for the notion of action research. Dewey's ideas about the experimental nature of teaching, practical reasoning, and democratically based inquiry and action may be considered central to the idea of action research (Schubert and Schubert, 1984). The work of Argyris, in developing "action science" as a distinct form of social science research, also claims to have built his notion of action research on Dewey's vision of "using scientific method in practice" (Argyris, et al., 1985).

It is Lewin, however, who is usually posed as being synonymous with action research. In the 1940's he sought a more practical role for the social sciences in resolving group conflicts and minority problems. Lewin envisaged action research both as a way of solving such social problems, and building social scientific knowledge (Lewin, 1946, 1947a,b). Lewin was interested in facilitating change through group process (Lewin, 1947a) and referred to action research as a form of "social engineering" or "social management" (Lewin, 1946, 1947b), which he compared to the "basic research" in the physical sciences: application of theory to practical problems.

Although oriented to social change, particularly in terms of changing attitudes, for Lewin action research was also a means of developing social-psychological theory in a natural laboratory: human groups. By developing "general laws" about group behaviour, Lewin saw the possibility of influencing group change, albeit more democratically and in a more participatory fashion than in the dominant mode of social scientific research.

Lewin's conception of action research also contributed the notion of the plan-action-observation-reflection cycle that some writers feel is central to the process of doing action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1984). Such a cyclical process certainly suggests the importance of reflective action, or reflection in-action as Schon (1983) terms it. As well, the spiral that Lewin proposed also offered a way of thinking about research as related to practice, within a specific situation, and oriented to improvement. Some interpreters of Lewin's work perceive a tentative movement in his work towards the idea of attending to the importance of meaning that actors have in their situations, and also towards an incipient notion of praxis (Peters and Robinson, 1984). While Lewin's work did retain a positivist stance in some respects, there were important elements in his work which are considered important for action research: the emphasis on participation by practioners in the field, its democratic nature, and the dual premise of contributing to change and developing scientific knowledge (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

Considering Lewin's work in retrospect, it is interesting that there appears to be a tension between the desire to establish fairly rigorous "scientific" standards in the positivist sense, and the desire to affect practice and respect context and values which may challenge those scientific assumptions, procedures and knowledge. That kind of tension still seems unresolved in the many accounts of action research in education, and raises the question of whether or not action research has found a sound basis in theory and practice. In other words, there appears to be a retention of a dualism between theory and practice.

This is a dualism that finds its way into conceptions and practices of collaboration as well.

Thus it is possible to read in the research, examples of action research that do not question the assumptions of a positivist approach and deliberately or not promote an instrumental view of research. An example of this is an Alberta Teacher's Association Monograph written approximately twenty years ago (Ingram and Robinson, 1967). Written as a practical guide for teachers it does recognize the value of more reflective and conscious teaching practices. At the same time, the authors seek a method whereby teachers can make decisions based on research evidence, and make educational programs more efficient. They claim one of the problems with teacher research (in the classroom) is that it lacks adequate quantitative methodology (Ingram and Robinson, 1967, p.27).

The conception of action research that is offered in the A.T.A. document is to teach teachers simplified methods of quantitative research models. It could be argued that there is nothing wrong with that, except that there is also a strong sense that the "knowing" teachers might possess is external to their actions and such knowing can be applied in linear fashion to improving teaching. As well, while there is a not so subtle criticism of teaching in the schools, there is, unconsciously perhaps, a lack of a corresponding critique of the outside researcher's role. This one sidedness is also evident in other accounts of action research, particularly that of a collaborative nature, pointing to one of the problematic aspects of collaborative effort.

Much more recently Carr and Kemmis have theoretically elaborated a "model" of action research based on the critical theory of Habermas. In fact, Carr and Kemmis see in action research the possibility of providing critical theory with a praxis: action research. Thus, "true" action research would be critical (of structures and ideologies) and emancipatory, promoting more rational action and freedom from domination.

> Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations in which the practices are carried out (Kemmis, 1985).

Based on this definition, Kemmis and others have developed practical guides for using action research in the classroom, explicating the process of action research in more accessible terms. An example is the The Action Research Planner, which provides a "model" of the action research spiral, which includes the four "moments" of planning, acting, observing, and reflection, and concrete suggestions for observing and monitoring (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982). Based on this work school districts in Australia have also developed action research planners for teachers (Davis, 1985). Such practical guides, while promoting the theoretical notions of reflection and critical, emancipatory change, do leave the achievement of such goals critically unexamined, however. Moreover, as will be examined further on, the question of collaboration is also stranded on very ambiguous grounds.

Perhaps confusion about the "paradigmatic" status of action research and it loose theoretical underpinnings may account in part for

its somewhat spotty history. For despite its seeming promise as a form of research and action, action research has never really caught on as a major force in educational research. According to Smulyan (1984), Stephen Corey was one of the first to apply action research to education, in the 1950's. However, Corey experienced difficulty in showing that there could be either development of theory or that practice could be improved. As Smulyan and others have indicated, dissatisfaction with action research revolved around these issues, indicating the centrality of the relationship between theory and practice, an issue that seems not to have been explored further at the time.

Sanford (1970) traces action research's lack of success to at least two important factors. One was the increasing trend to separation of action from research. Sanford traces this to the tremendous growth of the social sciences in the 1950's and 1960's, especially in the United States, with so-called "pure" science gaining tremendous dominance, not least of which meant obtaining funding and institutional legitimation. Concomitantly, as the separation between research and practice grew, this contributed to an increasingly "scientized" view of human beings: the notion that research treats humans only as respondents, and in very individuated ways (Sanford, 1970). This tended to reinforce the split even more, contributing to the split between "conception and execution" that Apple, for example, discusses.

Rapoport (1970) also analyzes the difficulties experienced in using action research, perceiving the problem as a continuum between pure research and social action. Caught on this continuum, researchers may

thus be reluctant to engage in action research because of a number of possible dilemmas: ethical problems, what the goals should be, and who should take the initiative in the research and/or action (Rapoport, 1970). Because of the potential difficulties, researchers have tended to remain reluctant to become involved in more practical, action-oriented research.

A strong interest in action research has nonetheless existed in England, based to a large extent on the work of Lawrence Stenhouse. Stenhouse defined curriculum specifically in terms of teaching practice, and took the view that teachers needed to study their own experience: curriculum is the form of educational ideas that could be tested in practice (Stenhouse, 1975, p.142). For Stenhouse, teachers being involved in their own research is an aspect of being an "extended professional":

> In short, the outstanding characteristics of an extended professional is a capacity for autonomous professional self development through systematic self-study, through the study of the works of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures (1975, p.144).

In terms of conceiving of action research or "the teacher as researcher", Stenhouse was critical of more traditional curriculum research in its inability to both understand and affect teaching practice which he saw as the prima purpose for an educational science. Thus for Stenhouse, teachers in specific situations presented the pivotal condition in understanding and implementing curricular change (1975, p.137). At the same time, there is still a sense in Stenhouse's work, of transferring positivist notions of research to the classroom,

with phrases like "curriculum specifications for testing in the classroom as laboratory" (1975, p.142).

Building on the work of Stenhouse, and the Ford Teaching Project, John Elliot has offered critical analyses of action research from that context. He sought to distinguish action research in the schools from what he calls evaluative research, and deliberative research. Elliot identified specific characteristics of action research which include emphasis on the everyday problems experienced by teachers and creating change within the context of the participants' understandings (Elliot, 1979). In an analysis of the results of the Ford Teaching Project, Elliot confirms the value of action research in creating change but accompanies this with a call to heed the problems involved, including a need to attend to the problem of self awareness in the practice of teachers. In particular, Elliot is concerned with the ability of teachers to self monitor and become more reflective (Elliot, 1976-77), issues that are problematic for collaborative inquiry.

In spite of the theoretical difficulties and general lack of institutional support there have been various efforts to employ action research in school settings. Such accounts of these experiences, including more current ones do often lack critical analyses, but nevertheless offer promise and optimism for the role of action research in education. These experiences and analyses of action research have in common the interest in reducing the gap between research and action or practice but with some significantly different emphases, mirroring the debate between the positivist view and the critique of that view. Significant work with action research seems to have been accomplished in

the area of teaching writing to children as exemplified in the work of Donald Graves. Interest in the action research approach has grown out of dissatisfaction with forms of knowledge gleaned from experimental research on the writing process (Atwell, 1982). This particular form of action research seeks to attend to the importance of context and meanings children bring with them (Graves,1904; Myers, 1985). For example, Atwell (1982) has described how teachers introduced and learned about the writing process in their classrooms. By researching writing in their own classrooms, teachers also experienced other significant transformations, including seeing their own work, and the students, in much more positive light, a consequence also noted by other reporters on action research experiences (Ross, 1983, 1984; Biott, 1983; McConaghy, 1987).

In a similar vein, action research has received credit for "personalizing teaching" and providing greater awareness of students and their abilities (Lasky, 1978). Teachers have also become more critically aware of grading practices (Cooke, et al., 1982; Ross, 1984). Other examinations of action research "in action" have also noted that it increased teacher understanding, created greater awareness of teaching actions, created awareness of the need to share among teachers, and in general saw improved teaching leading to improved learning through increased questioning and thoughtfulness (Nixon, 1981). Action research has been promoted as an effective way of implementing new curricula, such as environmental education (Robottom, et al., 1985), and as a way of encouraging and achieving school-wide improvement (Keiny, 1985).

Action research has also been seen as a fruitful approach to in-service training (Oliver, 1980) and for "reconceptualizing" the practice of student teaching (Wedman, 1985). Schubert and Schubert see in action research a more meaningful approach to post-graduate teacher education in promoting practical, reflective, inquiry;

> ... the most meaningful image of action research derived from our teaching is a continuous, conscious attempt to seek increased meaning and direction in our lives with students, and our own personal lives (Schubert, 1984).

Schubert's conception of action research perhaps speaks to a deeper, more philosophically-based notion of what it means to be a teacher than some of the other examples provided here which tend to retain a more technical, instrumentalist view of research.

In "researching" action research there are many other terms encountered that describe the idea of action research: "collaborative research" (Torbert, 1981; Kyle and McCutcheon, 1984), "participative research" (Brown, 1981), "dialogical research" (Randall and Southgate, 1981, a "dialectical approach to educational research" (Whitehead, 1981), and "research action" (Sanford, 1981). More recently, growing particularly out of the work with the writing process, is the notion of "teacher researcher" (Bissex, 1986, McConaghy, 1987). The teacher as researcher "movement" seems interested in developing alternatives to traditional form of inservice, and providing "practical" means for doing research in classroom situations without some of the theoretical rationales that Carr and Kemmis, for example, give to action research.

This sketchy summary, while perhaps not clarifying what action research is or can be, does help to point to some of the contradictions that require resolution. For instance, it is not clear in many of the

accounts of action research whether the interest is in research (for greater knowledge and awareness) or in curriculum implementation. Stenhouse, for example, considers what is researched in the classroom to be curriculum or curriculum knowledge. Similarly, Gough (1982) views action research as means to develop curriculum. The work in writing research, likewise, appears to have a curricular interest as central. While the curriculum innovation approach as a linear form of implementation shares some of the precepts of action research in terms of bridging theory and practice, there does seem to be a much more limited purpose in mind and less questioning of the structural and ideological constraints of teaching.

On the other hand, in versions of action research that seem to stress "research" into practice, for example in the writing of Schubert and Schubert (1984) and Carr and Kemmis (1986) there is a sense in which the purpose stretches beyond immediate changes in the classroom. There is talk of "self knowing", "seeking increased meaning", "emancipation", and "rational empowerment" to give some flavour of the "ends" to which action research may be directed.

The representation of various strands of action research attempted above reflects, I think, fairly, the lack of clear definitions, especially in theoretical terms of what action research means and how it may be practiced. However, taking a cue from the idea of action research itself, those definitions await explication in reflective practice.

What is significant in terms of the problem of collaboration is that the conceptions of action research that still view research as

being more or less an empirical-analytic activity, necessary to achieving certain pre-determined ends, also tend to have a much less critical view of the role of the outside (university) researcher. For example, in some accounts of action research, there is still a tendency to see research as an activity apart from the control of or production of teachers, certainly with an interest in affecting or influencing practice or having teachers "use" research (Clark, in press; Hopkins, 1982; Huling and Johnson, 1983).

In contrast to these positions, other forms of action research, including that proposed by Kemmis et al. stress control of the research by the actors involved to a much greater degree. In these forms of action research, it is the participants themselves who initiate, carry out, and control the inquiry, as a way of both becoming more aware of and changing structural and ideological constraints. There is a much greater emphasis on the normative aspects of the research, and as well, both ends and means are seen as open to question. While all kinds of research methods may be employed, there appears to be an emphasis on more "qualitative methods": interviewing, journal writing, dialogue, with the validity of the methods and findings being defined by the needs of the particular situations and actors. Within such conceptions of action research the issue of collaboration is also conceived of differently and generally appears to be a critically problematic element in terms of fusing practical and theoretical interests.

The Question of Collaboration in the Literature: Rationales, Problems and, Issues

One of the most troublesome issues in the work of Carr and Kemmis (1986) especially from a "practical" point of view, is the question of collaboration between practitioners and outside collaborators. For Carr and Kemmis, "true" action research would operate without the intervention of outside researchers. The implication of their work is that educational knowledge and research is ultimately only possible, and ultimately only critical and liberating within communities of practioners free of external control and domination. Some of the forms of action research we have discussed above, for example, could not be considered action research, at least in the critical emancipatory sense, because control is still in the hands of outside researchers. An outside researcher may affect the issues selected for research, the methods and quality of data-gathering, the analytical techniques employed, the character of reflection and the interpretations from the process (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.201-3).

Yet educational action research is "social action", thereby precipitating collaborative involvement (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.199). For Carr and Kemmis, the reason for involvement is an interest in practice or action. The form of the involvement or collaboration is determined by the "interest" of the research, whether it be technical, practical, or emancipatory. The emancipatory mode of action research, which Carr and Kemmis consider to best embody the goals of a critical educational science <u>is essentially</u> collaborative. By collaboration they mean a group of practitioners working together to understand and

transform their situation. It is in this context that the role of an outside researcher or "facilitator" is considered to be most problematic, carrying the danger of undermining the actual collaborative intent of the action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.203).

Certainly the integrity of action research Projects is a major concern. As Tripp (1984) warns, the greatest threat to that integrity is for outside collaborators "to use merely the technical form as a means of engineering professional teacher development." It is possible to find in the literature examples of unquestioned technical, administrative rationality; for example, "An Easy Guide to Action research for School Administrators" (Sabine, 1983), which sees in action research a series of steps and procedures to facilitate school change, without critically examining presuppositions.

However, wittingly or perhaps not, in the experience of collaborative action research, the problems that Carr and Kemmis, and Tripp refer to are mirrored in the analyses. Some writers note that the interests of researchers from outside the schools may be inconsistent with the more practical goals of teachers (Robottom, 1986). Often, perceptions of the traditional role and status of university researchers versus school teachers create difficulties in establishing collaboration (Oakes, et al., 1985; Smulyan, 1983, 84). In an account of an action research project to implement environmental education in a school setting, the authors found the initial design proposed by outside "facilitors" tended to create a dependency of practioners on facilitators (Robottom, 1985, p.40).

Other summaries of action research experiences cite fairly pessimistic conclusions regarding the possibilities for equitable forms of collaboration, noting Problems of time, teachers' work loads, and administrative constraints in schools (Roweton and Wright, 1985; Norris and Sanger, 1984). As mentioned earlier, there are many examples of action research that tend to be critical of teacher practice, but correspondingly uncritical about university researchers, assuming a dominance of theory over practice.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Carr and Kemmis do pose a stimulus to ask the question of the meaning of collaboration, and to critically reflect on that meaning. As Torbert (1981) emphasizes, collaborative inquiry is an inherently ambiguous process perhaps because of the need to discover what the shared interest is in the research. Perhaps not willing to forego a fruitful role for outside researchers in educational action research, other writers do provided rationales that in the context of this study encourage reflection on the meaning of collaboration.

Ebbut (1985), for example, considers that collaboration is essential to action research, particularly from the point of view of distinguishing action research from "what the good intuitive teacher does all the time." Also collaboration encourages public disclosure of knowledge, which he considers an essential aspect of research. In a description of a school improvement project, collaboration is mentioned as one way to provide support and motivation to teachers (Keiny, 1985). This function of collaboration is supported by Pine (1984) in his

suggestion that an action research group may provide a system within a system to encourage change in a school.

In terms of working with a more qualitative research approach, Rist (1981) considers that collaborative effort may enhance the process of qualitative research, in terms of the necessity of engaging in an interpretative process. Further, in the critique of the positivist approach in educational science, Torbert mentions the importance of knowledge oriented to action, and need for researchers and practioners to discover a shared purpose (Torbert, 1981b). This perspective is implicit in those who are also interested in action research as an integration of educational science and practice. Tripp (1984) suggests consideration of who and what the research is for, and attempting to work for a common ground. Attending carefully and consciously to consequences of action research by practioners may be enhanced through collaboration (Schubert and Schubert, 1984).

Why Collaboration?

It is interesting that in some of the accounts of collaboration in action research there is a realization that the meanings of collaboration and action research cannot be taken for granted. Participants may have different interpretations of what is involved. Thus one meaning of collaboration in practice, perhaps, is to come to an understanding of diverse meanings (Smulyan, 1984). Questions of how the research is to be done, and who is to do it need to be preceded with opening such questions for discussion, attempting to uncover meanings and interpretations people hold about their positions, their interests, and expectations.

From the perspective of the project in which I was involved, the question of what collaboration meant and how it may have worked in practice was not answered or guided satisfactorily by the literature reviewed above. For one thing, attempting to "implement" a model of collaboration from other experiences carried with it the danger of influencing and determining the nature and quality of research in the school. My interest as an outside researcher may also have been incongruent with the practical goals and tasks of the teachers and schools with whom I worked.

Not collaborating with outsiders on the other hand, offers little hope of either advancing educational theorizing in a practical vein, or opening up teacher practice to change and growth. Carr and Kemmis (1986) conceive of action and understanding as being an essentially personal process. They see outside collaboration as potentially limiting that process, that is, the process of coming to understanding. Yet, if we follow Gadamer, understanding is essentially a social process. The basic human stance is to be dialogical: to reason together. Encouraging understanding in education requires a shared understanding of what education is.

The promise of collaborative action research is that it it offers opportunity and encouragement for reflection about practice and educational thought. From the critique of mainstream educational science, the idea of collaboration presents the possibility of developing a praxis. More thoughtful action as a possibility prompts awareness of the need for a structure to enable and encourage sharing and exploring meaning with others. The question of the meaning of

collaboration, then, is also a question about what is essential to our lives as teachers and researchers.

CHAPTER 3

HOW CAN A COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE BE UNDERSTOOD? THE QUESTION OF METHOD

> At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only [people] who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know (Freire, 1986, p.79).

The Question of Method: Background to the Study

At the outset of the project in which I was involved, it was tempting to march into the classrooms of the teacher collaborators with a plan of action. Not very thoughtfully, I had in mind the moments of the action research spiral, and in linear fashion, I anticipated "our" discussions to follow the process of the action research in theory and practice: we would discuss the plan, the observations, critically reflect on what had happened and so forth. From this process we would really arrive at an understanding of action research and its possibilities.

The question of collaboration I took for granted. It was a "problem" that seemed subsidiary to the action research process. For me, the action research, as I understood it in theory, was the method and purpose for our interaction. Yet, questions kept jumping into our view, like signposts on an unfamiliar road, signposts that did not necessarily point to a destination. What ought to be the method that would enable understanding of collaboration became a question for me in the writing of this thesis.

The question of method was, and still is, troublesome in the context of this study. For one thing, in terms of the meanings reviewed

in the previous chapter the idea and practice of an outside researcher barging in with pre-defined ends and the means to "study" the situation runs counter to at least some conceptions of collaborative action research. For another, my experience as an outside collaborator could not be explained in terms of a before and after treatment, as--to state it simply--these were the changes in the classroom or school, or these were the changes in the teachers as a result of the action research and collaborative experience. Even if I wanted to attempt this (and I honestly did want to know if action research made a difference in a teacher's thinking and practice), the data--as spurious as it might have been--was not available for that kind of analysis. Neither was it possible to do an evaluative study of action research, and arrive at some conclusions about the validity of the experience and knowledge that was gained in the process. A relating of the background and context of the study will offer some reasons for this, and provide a context for understanding the difficulty with defining a method.

As briefly alluded to in the introductory chapter, this study grew out of my participation in an off-campus graduate Secondary Education seminar called "Implementing Curricular Innovations." One of the guiding purposes of this course was to introduce action research to practicing teachers. The setting for the course--a town fairly distant from Edmonton--was chosen for at least a couple of reasons. The school division was and is quite supportive of teacher initiatives. Morever, the board and administration of the division also seemed to encourage and permit curricular innovations. For example, there had been considerable interest in the idea of peace education. Most importantly

there were a number of teachers who were interested in working on self-directed projects.

As initially conceived by the instructor there were to be two important aspects to the course. One, through reading and critical discussion in the seminar participants were introduced to some of the literature and theory of curriculum change and action research. The two primary texts were The Meaning of Educational Change by Michael Fullan, and Wilfred Carr's and Stephen Kemmis' Becoming Critical: Knowing Through Action Research. These two sources complemented the focus of the course quite well. Fullan's, analyses of attempts at curriculum reform points to the necessity of attending to meaning that teachers have for change, as well as the factors in schools and school systems that hamper or encourage reform. Carr and Kemmis provide a theory of action research that picks up the challenge that Fullan presents, that is, how classroom teachers can become actively involved in and critically aware about changes in their classrooms.

The second level of experience, perhaps unique in graduate education seminars, was the practical element. One of the requirements of the course was that the participants would plan and be involved in an innovation in their own classrooms and/or school. The teachers participating in the course were asked to choose a general idea for implementation and research prior to the first meeting. Thus the overall purpose of the course was to enable a critical assessment of action research from the perspective of practice as well as theory: ideally, theory in practice.

At the outset of the course, one of the questions in terms of the conduct of the course and the process of the innovation projects related to collaboration. To be more specific, the course itself was to function as kind of collaborative effort: the seminar afforded an opportunity to reflect on the texts of curricular change and action research and through discussion with the class, the actual projects. In this situation the six teachers who were enrolled in the course, the course instructor, and myself as a graduate assistant were able to share some productive discussions about the readings and the projects. To structure an opportunity for more intensive collaboration, the class was also divided into two groups to work with the "outside" collaborators. It was my good fortune, then, to work individually with the two teachers--John and Catherine--who generously helped to provide substance and meaning to this study. With the risk of misinterpreting their work, a brief description of the projects they initiated is nevertheless essential to set the context for my own questions about methodology for the study.

John is a teacher of computer processing and mathematics in a medium sized high school that serves a town and the surrounding area. He has worked in his current position for eight or nine years and has been largely responsible for establishing the computer education program in his school. In addition to his school responsibilities, John is also completing a masters degree in education in the area of computer education. His accomplishments at the school, and his knowledge and expertise in the area of computer education has received interested

attention from many other teachers and school authorities beyond his own district.

To a computer illiterate like myself walking into John's class for the ~~first~~ time was quite an eye-opener. As a teacher, I envied both his working environment--small classes of mostly academic students and extremely well-equipped computer "labs"--and the ease with which he taught his program, based on incredible organization, preparation of materials, and his immersion in the knowledge of computers and programming. In fact, it seemed like an "ideal" situation for a teacher. Everything functioned smoothly. John's classes appeared to run on their own volition. Discipline and motivation of students were non-existent problems. Why then, I wondered almost from the outset of stepping into his class, was John questioning how he was teaching? How did he come to an awareness that led to his interest in making a change through the action research project?

In a sense, and this is my interpretation of what John discussed with me, his "program" was a victim of its own success. For several years John had been teaching computer processing with textual materials he had written himself (the high school computer processing curriculum allows considerable teacher discretion and input). Students in his classes had been learning computer programming through a "tutorial" approach. From my understanding this involved students proceeding individually through written tutorials that provided essential information for programming. Included also were set problems for practice. By this means students were able to learn--successfully it

seems--computer languages, and also practice them through structured and predetermined problems.

Over the years, this approach had been very successful, by John's own admission: students were able to complete and master the tutorials according to the evaluations John did. However, from informal discussions with former students who had proceeded to post-secondary education, John learned that they were experiencing some difficulty in adapting what they had learned in high school to new problems, whether dealing with different hardware or other computing languages. In other words, what they had learned was in John's estimation, only the content of the tutorials. Students had not learned how to use a problem solving approach that would help them in new situations. Thus the general idea behind the innovation John wanted to introduce through action research was to structure the learning experiences of his students in computer processing to cultivate greater degrees of independence and flexibility in their thinking. As I understood his project John was interested in having his students learn research skills and to become more capable problem solvers. The issues that evolved out of this project became the basis of our discussions, which also shaped the form of our collaboration.

My other collaborative experience was with Catherine, who worked in an elementary school. Catherine was the vice-principal in the school and had responsibility for the library as well as teaching a class. On top of that she was also a "catalyst teacher" appointed by the school board to introduce and implement a gifted program in her school. Catherine's action research project became the implementation of the

gifted program. So a major difference between her project and John's was that while John chose a problem for research based on his own perception of an educational problem, Catherine had responsibility for implementing a mandated program.

More specifically her action research plan was to introduce a gifted program in one of the primary classrooms, based on the school board prescriptions of providing challenging learning experiences within the classroom for children identified as gifted. From my understanding of her project, this made her task extremely complex. Not only did Catherine have to convince teachers of the value and meaning of a gifted program, she also was responsible for actually putting such ideas into practice. Thus while the general problem was to implement the gifted program, in the course of her action research she had to deal with relationships with particular teachers, the creation of materials, integrate "gifted education" into existing curricula, and evaluate whether an "in class" or "pull-out" program would be more beneficial for gifted children. In our conversations, her thinking about these issues became the focus for our collaboration.

How is this discussion of the context of my experience of collaboration relevant to the question of the method or methods I could "use" to uncover what that collaboration meant? How could I weave my own interests into a cloth that highlighted the pattern of John and Catherine's concerns and ideas? There were a number of "snags" as I saw them that required unraveling.

Firstly the basis for collaboration between the two teachers and myself was not defined clearly at the outset. For one thing the course

established a form of outside control and interest. Thus while the participants were more than willing to share their projects, there was nevertheless and element of compulsion based on course requirements. As a result my collaboration was not invited as such, but suggested by the instructor and I, although both John and Catherine offered generously to share time with me. From my perspective the projects that I became involved with were not necessarily ones I would have chosen. However I justified my involvement as an opportunity to learn about action research and to practice collaboration. This meant that we met initially with probably ambiguous feelings about how we could work together, and quite different horizons of interests.

Secondly, while we did ostensibly share an interest in the idea of action research, it soon became apparent also that that was not to be the dominant topic or focus of our discussions. This was very frustrating for me at the beginning because I was really hoping to glean some critical insights about whether the action research process was working. The bulbs of critical awareness, I thought, would start flashing! Instead, we became engaged in lengthy discussions about some of the issues, and some not, that related to the actual experiences John and Catherine were having with their computer education and gifted programs, respectively. Every time I drove out to meet with my collaborators in anticipation, I drove back perplexed and a little frustrated because I did not feel I was advancing my own understanding.

Of course, I could see that I was being pulled into John and Catherine's concerns, and the changes and understandings they were attempting to cultivate in their own situations. The question of the

action research was really secondary in their striving to create what they perceived to be improvement. Action research appeared to help frame the inquiry but it was not the inquiry itself. Obviously my approach was very instrumentalist in thinking that action research could be a process applied to solve the problems that John and Catherine had each found salient in their own situations. As an outside collaborator I was invited, so to speak, to engage in conversation and reflection about what was happening in their classroom or school.

It became very difficult as a consequence to separate my interest in the process of collaboration from the interest in the progress of John's and Catherine's projects. Over the period of time that I was privileged to learn from them and about their interests, the nature of the collaboration was closely related to who we were, the specific situations, the intersections of our interests, and the outcome of the projects. The success or failure of the collaboration, or action research as a process, could not be determined as separate qualities from the meanings each of us had for our involvement. The action research, and the collaboration, in other words, were not objective methods in the sense of being a means to an end to knowledge, but perhaps became part of the end itself, a search for a shared interest in education.

As an outside collaborator, the situation was not mine to study in terms of apprehending facts and data that I could analyze for some preconceived theoretical end. Therefore it is not possible, nor would it be ethical, for me to evaluate our collaborative experience, and to relate for outside readers how collaboration ought to work and what a

theory of collaboration might possibly look like. Yet in wanting to understand my experience of collaborating with John and Catherine it seems important to attempt to find some meaning in that experience. The meaning that is immanent in those discussions however is not solely my own. "We do not and cannot miraculously create meaning out of ourselves," Kearney attests;

> We inherit meaning from others who have thought, spoken or written before us. And wherever possible, we recreate this meaning, according to our own projects and interpretations (Kearney, 1984, p.128).

Thus the question of method. How could I make sense of my collaborative experience? How could I do justice to the meanings that John and Catherine had for their experiences? The roots of the word method opens a window that throws some light on my dilemma: from the Greek, "meta" denotes "after" and "hodos" means "way". This original meaning suggests a search, or a going after, trying to discover a way or a route. It creates the image of journey, a journey with detours through our own mediations (Kearney, 1984, p.22)--our own need to make sense of our experiences.

The word method, Polkinghorne explains, "usually refers to the procedures or the detailed and logically ordered plan used to 'go after' knowledge" (1983, p.5). It is this literal connotation of method that would be difficult to find in this study. But what we did in the experience of collaboration was a search for knowledge: knowledge about teaching, what it meant for students to learn, how we could collaborate. There were patterns that emerged but not the result of a necessarily ordered plan. Instead the attempt at dialogue or conversation allowed the emergence of themes and tensions that pointed to the idea of

collaboration as a form of dialogue or conversation. It is in this sense that method is a search for knowing in an engagement with others. Perhaps then, to mangle an old saying, there is a method in the meaning.

The asking of the question of the meaning of collaboration forced to the surface the question of method. In other words, how could we as teacher and outside researcher come to understand better what it means to collaborate, and how could we achieve that understanding? These questions, in turn focused on the practice of our collaboration. Initially conversation was not deliberately chosen as a way of collaborating in the situation we found ourselves. However, as we proceeded, further discussion and reflections on the meaning of what we were doing grew out of conversation. It is in this sense that conversation became a "method" of research in this study, if method is thought of as a search for meaning and understanding.

Attempting to Enter Into Conversation/Dialogue

When I initiated my collaborative experience with John and Catherine it was not clear what my role was to be, nor how we would actually collaborate. In retrospect that was probably a good thing, in that it minimized the liability of outside domination. Nonetheless, as I have indicated, I did enter the collaborative situation with a definite interest in seeing action research at work, so to speak, and to "research" the experience of collaboration. Rather uncritically I envisioned entering into dialogue to uncover an understanding of collaboration in action research. My questions I thought would set that process in motion. Gadamer's admonition probably describes my level of awareness at the beginning of the project: "For someone who uses

dialogue only in order to prove himself right and not to gain insight, asking questions will indeed seem easier than answering them" (Gadamer, 1986, p.326)!

My interest was of course based on several assumptions, which grew out of my experience as a teacher, and some of the theoretical knowledge that had influenced me during a year at university. As a classroom teacher I believed that in the practice of teaching, important knowledge is developed which seems not to find confirmation in the theoretical literature. As well, that knowledge often remains at a tacit level; in Michael Polanyi's words, "we can know more than we can tell" (1966, p.4). The idea that there is a great deal of hidden or tacit knowing in teachers' theories and practices is an important one for action research. I envisioned collaboration through dialogue as one way of uncovering and celebrating that knowing.

Again, derived from my own experience as a classroom teacher, I believed strongly in the need to struggle against an encroaching technical-administrative movement in education which limits the possibility for thoughtful practice. Although I have found the more radical critiques of education and schooling compelling, whereby an understanding is offered of how the education system fits into the larger economic/political system, I also increasingly felt that such critiques ignored the teacher and the possibility for meaningful, emancipatory work within the schools. Thus my interest in action research is partially founded on the idea that theory and practice can be combined, and that this combining is, in fact, essential to combatting the technical-rational view of curriculum implementation and

school change. Framing my attempts to enter into collaboration was also a desire to avoid using action research and collaboration as "techniques."

My third major assumption was a recognition of the essentially social nature of education, as cliched as it may sound to say that. The reality of classrooms and schools are "socially constructed" to use Berger's and Luckmann's (1967) term, and this also implies the necessity to talk to people in the situation to discover what is "real" to them, and how they make sense and meaning of their work and lives. Like other "worlds" of experience, that of teachers can also be thought of as a "life world." This "life world is always at the same a communal world and involves the existence of other people as well" (Gadamer, 1986, p.218). The idea of collaboration it seemed to me, offered a means to enter this world of meaning, to see practice, including research as a practice, as a form of "social reason" in Gadamer's words. The possibilities for change then, I assumed, may require discovery of opportunities for solidarity with others. Certainly this is at the heart of Fullan's argument too in his advice to attend to meaning in the context of change.

Underlying all these assumptions is a normative and personal belief that constructive and positive change is possible in schools, and that teachers ought to play a central and informed role in creating it. Such a belief does not denigrate the value of theoretical and university-generated knowledge, nor does it argue that teachers' knowing and doing are faultless and beyond reproach. But with the idea of collaboration in hand, it appeared to be a possibility that action research would be a

means of both illuminating practice in the schools and enriching theory in search of practice. To borrow Gadamer's word, my assumptions and interests formed the "horizon" over which I viewed the process of working with John and Catherine.

As I have admitted, these assumptions did not entirely prevent a rather instrumental interest to creep into my questioning. For example, from my first meetings with John and Catherine, I asked questions like,

> What were some of your experiences in planning the action research?
>
> What kind of time line do you anticipate? Are there any obstacles you envision in your project?
>
> Are there any things you would like me to bring to your project?
>
> How do you think the action research is different from other implementation projects you have been involved in?

The initial "discussion" based on this line of questioning did not produce a great deal of satisfactory insight into what was really going on. When first meeting with John and Catherine the structure of the interaction was more like a formal interview with the questions coming from me and responses that only answered, superficially, the questions. However at the same time I did feel it was important to try to enter into the "situations" of John and Catherine and to attempt to learn from them as much as learning about what they were doing in their respective schools.

Attempting to do that presented the problem of understanding what it means to enter into a "situation." The idea of collaboration suggests the entry into a specific situation or "life world" of a teacher. This idea proved to be much more ambiguous and difficult in

practice. Entering a situation was not just a matter of knocking on a door and walking in; nor was it as simple as just sitting down and talking. Importantly, there is also a question of whether entering totally into a situation--into the lived experience--of the teacher is really the aim of the collaborative experience.

The idea of situation is itself problematic then. Gadamer defines the concept of situation in terms of "a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision" (Gadamer, 1986, p.269). As Gadamer advises, "The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside of it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it" (Gadamer, 1986, p.268-69). Thus as an outsider interested in learning about and from this situation it is not entirely possible, or necessarily desirable to immerse oneself into the situation. In a sense, as an outside collaborator to John and Catherine's projects, I did want to have a more objective knowledge of what they were doing in their situations.

At the same time, to understand the situation meant to understand that it helps form the horizon of the person involved. In other words, I would not be able to understand the situation except through the understandings of the person who inhabits it. The situation provides a horizon, which "is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, 1986, p.269). From the interest of collaboration, the situation does in some sense become a shared situation between teacher and outside researcher, although it would be difficult, practically and otherwise to "enter" into that situation totally.

This is not to shy away from the importance of recognizing and appreciating the situation, but to try to understand what it means to place ourselves in a situation. In following Gadamer, the notion of "horizon" speaks more meaningfully to me now. As he counsels, "We must always already have a horizon in order to be able to place ourselves within a situation" (1986, p.271). Thus, as I tried to outline above, my horizon emerged from my own experience and interests. John's and Catherine's situations represented their horizons. At one level this account of the collaborative experience is a recounting of what it meant to place myself in a situation. But to do this does not mean to disregard oneself--we do bring ourselves into the situation. By doing so we also grasp an opportunity to become more aware of our own "horizon of effective understanding" (Howard, 1982, p.152): to become more aware of how our own horizons are formed.

Although I am now attempting to provide a "hermeneutical" cast for this study, it was definitely unclear to me at the beginning of the project either how we could conduct the collaboration, or how we could make meaning from the experience. The process was implicitly ambiguous for several reasons. Firstly, we were attempting to "practice" collaboration and reporting on that experience is partly what this thesis is about. Secondly, we were also attempting to derive understanding about the practice of collaboration in action research, an understanding that could not be separated easily from the interests of the actual projects. Thirdly, and most germane to the intention of my study, we were also attempting to develop a meaning of collaboration that perhaps speaks more universally to the idea of action research in

education. That is to say, in the "doing" of the collaboration, and in our reflections on the experience, we may not have defined collaboration more precisely, but we were guided by some "themes" that seemed central to being teachers and researchers.

"Dialogue," Freire writes, "is the encounter between [people], mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (1986, p.76). This is an appealing notion that appeared on the horizon of the collaborative experience but was not consciously "implemented" at the beginning of my work with John and Catherine. Gadamer says that it is more correct to say that we fall into conversation (which I am using synonymously with dialogue) rather than to suggest that a conversation is conducted through the will of one or the other partner (Gadamer, 1986, p.345). I am reluctant to suggest that what we conducted was true conversation because to be honest I am not sure it really was. There was often a flitting over the surface that seemed to deny questioning of what lay below. Yet my limited understanding of the meaning of conversation as developed by Gadamer and Bernstein especially, helps make sense of what did occur in my talk with John and Catherine. My aim in considering the idea of conversation is not to elaborate it as a method of collaboration but as a way of attempting to make sense of that collaborative experience. At the same time this points to possibilities that the idea of conversation in collaboration suggests.

Gadamer provides a basis for grasping the idea of conversation in the following passage:

> A conversation is a process of two people understanding each other. Thus it is characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration

> and gets inside the other to such an extent that he understands not a particular individual but what he says (1986, p.347).

What is significant in this "definition" for understanding collaboration is that cultivating understanding does not mean "getting inside" another person in a psychological sense. It is not the same notion as empathy--to see the world as the other person sees it, or to feel as the other feels. Rather, conversation has to do with working out a common meaning and this common meaning transcends the subjectivities of each partner in dialogue (Gadamer, 1986, p. 331). As Kearney affirms,

> ... the dialogical model of hermeneutics ... insists that meaning always originates in some source other than the intuitive immediacies of subjectivity or even intersubjectivity" (1984, p.128).

In a true or genuine dialogue, then, there is a "what" to be understood. This object of intersubjective agreement "guides the movement of the dialogue" (Bernstein, 1983, p.2, 162).

Thus to be involved in a conversation means that the partners in dialogue are oriented and guided by an object that transcends each person's subjective opinions and each person's situation (Gadamer, 1986, p.330). To be involved in dialogue is not an attempt to out-argue the other, or to prove the rightness of an opinion, but to be guided by the object, an object that comes into being by asking of questions that keep this object in view. The notion of the dialogical relationship as being "triadic" as suggested by Scudder and Mickunas (1985) is helpful. "Triadic dialogue" is described as a relationship of subjects who [illegible] side by side, "as a co-presence in orientation of intentionality [illegible] the world" (1985, p.36). In the process of attempting to "ent[illegible] situation of the other, an opportunity for a situation may be created in

which understanding can grow, understanding as a process of meaning coming into being (Bernstein, 1983, p.126).

Dialogue fosters a process of understanding that is termed the "hermeneutic circle" : a circle of understanding oriented to the object of our interest and the dialectical interplay between our particular understandings, our own horizons and the horizon of the universal (Bernstein, 1983, p.135; Taylor, 1979, p.28). We try to make sense, for example, of our own actions as teachers in terms of conceptions of good education, or ethical standards. Significantly for the idea of collaboration, Gadamer explains the hermeneutic circle as one in which "the practical and theoretical are inextricably joined" (Bernstein, 1983, p.135). Bernstein elaborates:

> The circle of understanding is 'object' oriented, in the sense that it directs us to the texts, institutions, practices, or forms of life that we are seeking to understand. It directs us to sensitive dialectical play between part and whole in the circle of understanding (1983, p.135).

As Bernstein explains, this notion of the hermeneutical circle also implies application: in trying to understand our actions in terms of a wider meaning, we are also engaged actively in interpretation.

It is with these ideas about conversation in mind that I approached the interpretation of my discussions with John and Catherine. In the several meetings that we had it would be difficult and dishonest to claim that there was always "true conversation," that is, that it was a dialogue that consistently went beyond the sharing of opinions, small talk, or just "talking shop." Yet there were moments, appreciated especially after some distancing from the original meetings, that some

genuine sharing occurred, a search for understanding and meaning of what was important in education and in our lives as teachers.

Interpreting the Text of the Conversations

In the preceding section I attempted to consider conversation as a medium for the possibility of understanding in collaborative action research situations. Such understanding, it was suggested, founded on the meanings each of us brought to the situation--the horizons of our interests and concerns--began to point to some objects, or topics, of common interest. In subsequent meetings such topics began more and more to orient our talk. They appeared to take on life of their own, creating a situation that allowed for further conversation. The meanings that we were becoming oriented to in conversation also called for further explanation or interpretation.

In order to better understand emergent meaning requires interpretation but this interpretation is not a separate process from the process of understanding. It is an aspect of the hermeneutical circle that the process of conversation occasions: the topics of our discussion are related to the particulars of each participant's situation, as well as to the wider questions of theory and educational concerns. As Gadamer explains, every interpretation is integrally bound with the situation (Gadamer, 1986, p.358). As he elaborates,

> Interpretation is not an occasional additional act subsequent to understanding, but rather understanding is always an interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding (1986, p.274).

My interest in this study is to try to clarify through interpretation some of the topics and themes that seemed to weave a pattern through my conversations with John and Catherine. As I have

already argued, to the extent our interactions allowed that to happen, we pushed our interactions into the direction of conversation. It is in these moments, when our individual horizons moved closer in conversation that we became oriented to some common interests. These moments provided a basis for this study and called for interpretation, in terms that Charles Taylor, for example, defines it:

> Interpretation ... is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory--in one way or another--unclear. The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense (Taylor, 1979, p.25).

What was the text that allowed for interpretation? A brief explanation is necessary. In a period of approximately three months John and Catherine met individually with me five times (outside of the other times the seminar met). Our first meeting was very informal, and was not recorded, nor did I take notes. The purpose was to become acquainted and to work out some possible parameters for working together. It was also the time that I imposed some questions about action research specifically, and we did throw around some thoughts about the process. My meeting with John was much less formal and more "social" in nature, and we discussed our interests and background in a general way. Catherine shared some of her frustrations with the action research project right at that first meeting. In general, the pattern established in that first meeting seemed to carry over in our subsequent ones. With John, our discussions were often more widely ranging, and included more "personal" history while with Catherine our discussions

remained more formal, directed by her concerns about the action research.

The main "agreement" we arrived at was to meet again, and I asked both John and Catherine if I could audio-tape our conversations in later meetings. They agreed willingly, and three of our following conversations were taped. I also offered to take the responsibility to transcribe the tapes, and to return a copy of the transcription to them prior to the each meeting. On the first transcription, I offered some interpretations of what seemed to emerge in the conversation and asked John and Irene to comment on those. In the remaining transcriptions I returned them without initial comment or interpretation. However, statements and questions in each transcription did become the foundation for the conversation that followed it. In this sense we were able to establish some continuity between the time we met, but more importantly, the emerging topics as revealed in the transcripts became the situation or common horizon of our dialogue.

It is possible to say that the written transcripts allowed a certain distanciation to occur which distinguished the experience of being in conversation, and conversation with the written text of the original discussion. Language at the level of speech, or what Ricoeur calls discourse of speech situation, makes it difficult to separate the meaning of the words from the speaker's intentions. As Ricoeur suggests, "It is almost the same thing to ask, 'What do you mean?' and 'What does that mean?'" (Ricoeur, 1979, p.78). In the process of talking to each other, it was difficult to establish a clear meaning of the text. Putting the speech to writing, however, resulted in some

interesting things happening. Asked about his experience of reading the first transcript, John answered:

> Like I say, I was reading through that [the last transcript] and when you're talking you can follow a particular stream, you know it's not really connected to what happened five or ten minutes ago, but you read through that and you say, hey what did I say before and you flip back three pages and put it side by side and you say, I couldn't have ...

And in a later conversation John comments again,

> The written transcripts help to gel some of the concepts. The conversations we've been having are just pulling in threads ... for every question that comes up, there is a specific sort of answer to it, and I think as I ramble along trying to put that answer together, it sort of hooks a few other threads along the way ... they may tend to lead off in a number of directions. It is nice to look at a transcript later on and say, well this is what I said, but what did I really mean?

Catherine too, discussed her impressions of reading the transcripts:

> You writing down or conversation like that and bringing the main points out like you did today is very interesting. I think sometimes we talk around in circles and never really see the main points we're trying to bring out ... and when you get that it really helps.

It is interesting from these comments that the process of writing down provided distanciation that facilitated greater reflection on the meaning of what was said, and opens the dialogue to further questioning. In the face to face situation attention is paid to the discourse and attempting to understand the other as much as what is being said. When that discourse is transposed into print it becomes more autonomous, and the words of the speaker lose some of their coincidence with the intentions of that speaker (Kearney, 1984, p.129); the words become an object for reflection and understanding and admit a movement from the original particular intentions and situation to a wider meaning that can

also be shared with other readers of the text. In other words, it followed the movement of the hermeneutical circle of understanding. Speaking of the passage from speaking to writing, which the oral conversation to written transcripts may be said to represent, Kearney explains,

> Once committed to writing, the meaning of the speakers is distanced or 'distanciated' in some fundamental respect. And in the process, the text transcends the finite intentional horizons of the the two interlocutors and opens up new horizons of meaning (Kearney, 1984, p.129).

What became the object for interpretation was these "new horizons of meaning." This, however, was not something that was necessarily "hidden" deeply in the text or involved a probing of the participants minds to discover their "real" intentions. As I participated in the conversation, I began to realize it was not what Ricoeur calls the "initial situation of discourse" that was to be understood, but "what points towards a possible world," something that is "disclosed in front" of the original text (1979, p.97), in this case, the conversations. Thus, the conversations provided a basis for collaboration, and the nature of this collaboration, glimmering on the horizon as possibility, offered a greater awareness of what a shared interest between a teacher and interested outsider might be.

Further, as will be shown shortly, the conversations I had with John and Catherine were oriented to practice: their teaching situations in particular, and the changes they were implementing through the process of action research. The "actions" which became the basis of our discussions became the basis for a text for interpretation, in Ricoeur's sense of "meaningful action as a text." In initial discussions of

practice, its transformation into written text, and subsequent reflection on that action seen in language allowed the building of meaning detached from the original event of the action of practice. In other words, treating action as a text for interpretation allows for more critical reflection on that action, and also encourages greater reference to a wider educational or social context (Ricoeur, 1979, p.80-88).

This rather limited presentation of the basis for my interpretation is really meant as an initial exploration for understanding the meaning of the relationship of my collaboration with John and Catherine. It is not meant to suggest that we entirely achieved conversation in a full sense, that we were guided by the question of collaboration throughout, or that through interpretation we consistently achieved higher levels of understanding. There were several obstacles and ambiguities that stood in the way of achieving what Carr and Kemmis term an "ideal speech situation," which in their terms,

> requires a democratic form of public discussion which allows for an uncoerced flow of ideas and arguments and for participants to be free from any threat of domination, manipulation or control (1986, p.142).

One of the obstacles to developing deeper and freer communication was that we were temporally and geographically distant, and it was difficult in the short period of time we had to build greater degrees of trust, common interest, and more critical interaction. Secondly, because of my own thesis interest, I took it upon myself to transcribe the conversations which at the beginning were also initiated by me through the structure of the graduate seminar. Transcribing the conversations from tape to print required a process of interpretation

that preceded the meetings which followed. As Gadamer says about the process of translation as a form of interpretation (1986, p.348), transcription also highlights certain aspects of the original. So it would be realistic to expect a certain bias in the conduct of the conversations as they preceded over time. Moreover, in the writing of this thesis the "interpretations" that led to the main "themes" of our collaboration were ones that I chose to emphasize although they grew out of the conversations with John and Catherine.

While as teachers and graduate-student researcher we were on fairly equitable grounds, we did not pursue our biases extensively. To a certain extent, the three of us worked within the framework of the graduate seminar, which created a form of outside authority, and legitimated my collaboration. Once the course was finished, it became more difficult to sustain the collaborative relationship. As well, both John and Catherine had responsibilities to their respective schools, their district board, and so on, responsibilities or allegiances which were not really made manifest in the conversations. Likewise, once I realized the possibility of thesis work from the experience of collaboration, and broached this with John and Catherine, it became difficult to separate my interest from the practice of collaboration.

From the perspective of the conversations or dialogues, we also did not explore our "roles" or give them definition. In a way, that allowed the relationship to develop, and allowed responsibilities to be defined by the situation. We also did not discuss the idea of "difference" between us. As it turned out, and I think the conversations will show this, I did not have major disagreements with either John or Catherine.

As a teacher myself, I did not feel a great deal of distance from teacher and classroom concerns, and could sympathize with some of the dilemmas and predicaments faced by John and Catherine.

In one respect, this allowed considerable "mutual" understanding to grow. In other words my interpretations of the action research observations, for example, did not seem to differ drastically from those of John and Catherine. On the other hand, the lack of difference between us also seemed to minimize some opportunities for more critical engagement. It may be argued that conversation or dialogue ought to foster difference rather than sameness, to be able to recognize the other, and as well to open up tacit knowledge and ideologies for critique. "Without the tension between self and the other, there is no historical consciousness," Ricoeur writes (1973, p.160).

Nevertheless, the attempt made here does represent a hesitant movement in my understanding of the meaning of collaboration. The interpretations represent the work of an "outside" collaborator, and in that respect offers an incomplete understanding, but hopefully, a still "meaning-full" picture of collaboration in the action research projects.

Turning and Returning to the Conversations

In the following chapter, I will attempt to elaborate and illustrate what came to be the central interests of the conversations between John, Catherine, and I. Those interests, as I have suggested in the preceding passage arose in our attempt at collaboration through dialogue. In my analysis of this experience I am interested of course in understanding what that experience meant: how we may understand what it means to collaborate in an action research project.

In reflecting on that meaning in the process of writing thus far, I found that I had been very one-sided, speaking mostly in abstract terms about what it is that I was engaged in. Thus before proceeding further, I discovered it was necessary to turn to the transcripts of the conversations, and return again, and again ... and attempt to make sense of what we actually talked about. The simple question, "what did we talk about?" guided my reading of the conversations, and helped to focus on certain dominant topics that focused our talk. An illustration of these topics will be the purpose of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE TALK OF A COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE

> The most important form of action is talk (Argyris, 1985, p.56).

One of the assumptions I am making in writing this study is that the question of collaboration is relevant for those people--teachers or researchers--who are interested in action research in the schools. To this point in my account however, the discussion of the collaborative experience and its possible meaning has been very one-sided indeed. In the review of the literature and an examination of the question of method, the question of collaboration has been approached from the horizon of an "outside" collaborator, which was the role I attempted to practice and understand as a basis for this study. In bringing the discussion to this point the voices of the teachers who made this experience possible have not been heard. But it was the willingness to share their experiences and reflections with me that made it possible to inquire into a meaning of collaboration.

Attempting to give life to the idea of collaboration in a school and classroom setting however, does not imply that the meaning of collaboration simply jumps out at us. Developing an understanding seems a circuitous route; understanding weaves a detour through our mediations, to paraphrase Kearney (1984, p.22). From the point of view of John and Catherine those mediations are their own histories as teachers: their knowledge, interests, responsibilities, ambitions, disappointments, hopes. The meaning of collaboration then, is mediated as well through the realities of being a teacher and offers an horizon

for an outside researcher to discover his bearings. The meeting of horizons through dialogue signals the possibility for an understanding that belongs to both partners in the exchange. Collaboration in action research raises the question of whether an outside researcher can share in creating change and knowledge. This sharing presupposes a willingness to learn about the situation, as problematic as that may be. A review of the conversations also allows the question to be asked: what were the moments that emerged as central in our conversations?

To answer I am turning to an exploration of some moments that spring from the conversations I had with John and Catherine regarding their action research projects. In these moments there is a vibrancy, a life that fosters questioning. Some dominant topics, although not consciously chosen at the outset pulled us together in conversation and at the same time afforded a more concrete understanding of the question of collaboration. In part what follows may be seen as a representation of what we talked about in a collaborative experience. The topics around which our discussions formed are specific to the contexts in which the collaboration occurred. While there are questions that may be pursued beyond the actual content of the conversations, it is appropriate to present some answers to the question "What did we talk about?" An attempt to present answers to this question precedes discussion of more universal themes that may be present in the experience of collaborating in a school based action research project.

John: Introducing a Discovery Learning Approach in a High School Computer Processing Class

The immediate concern of our talk was John's action research project, which as explained in the previous chapter was to introduce a problem-solving or discovery approach to learning computer programming in a Grade twelve classroom. My lack of knowledge about computer education and computers generally made it difficult for John to discuss specifics of his project. For example, I did not really grasp the detailed steps about how students learn and adopt various computer languages. Nevertheless, the general approach was very interesting and appealing for me in that as a teacher I had been concerned also about how students could become more independent learners. I understood this to be John's orientation as well. Thus there was an initial point of interest when we first met.

Because I was really unsure about what my role as a collaborator ought to be, my original "approach", if you could call it that, was to listen to John's explanation of his project and his observations on it. I interceded with questions that explored the meaning of problem-solving education, classroom structure and so forth. In our first meeting, my questions about action research tended to dominate the flow of the discussion, but in subsequent meetings we allowed the conversations to wander more freely.

What followed was fairly wide-ranging talk, sometimes moving between anecdotal accounts of our own experiences, our personal histories, and some exploration--sometimes disagreement--on the issues

raised by his project. In the process several topics emerged and tended to guide the dialogue of the three taped sessions:

1. The concern for students:
   a. The tension of responsibility for teaching the content of subject matter, but also the wish to cultivate more independent learning in students.
   b. Research as a way to help students learn. Evaluation in the traditional sense, such as testing can show learning of content, but "process" involves "watching" or more careful observation of students.
   c. The idea of collaboration as watching students and sharing a concern for students.
2. A teacher's activity and approach sets the structure for learning and imposes a learning style on students raising the question of what it means to teach.
3. The centrality of subject matter content as the end or goal of a teacher's work.
4. The nature of theorizing/reflection as moving from the practical to theory and back to the practical.

In the following section are some examples and discussion of the conversations that revolve around these topics.

1. The concern for students

A dominant thread running through our talk was how John's innovation would affect his students. By his own admission, and in his apparent reputation among others, John's approach to teaching computer processing had been very successful: students did very well on the tests that he gave at the end of each unit. These tests were based on the ability of students to use various computer languages to solve programming problems. They had learned to do this through a tutorial approach, using materials written by John himself. However, as explained earlier, John became somewhat dissatisfied with this approach because it did not foster skills that were generalizable in other situations.

Early on in our conversations, John and I discussed his observations about implementing the problem-solving approach. His observations about how the innovation was affecting students became a topic of discussion;

> J: One of the problems that I see is that some of the kids aren't comfortable enough with the idea of trying things on their own ... they are not willing to jump in with both feet and say, 'well this doesn't work, let's try something else'; that's what slows some of them down.
>
> H: You mean that in terms of the direction you would like them to go, when they were doing the tutorial?
>
> J: If they have the tutorial, it's canned, you know, in about four or five pages they have examples, full blown examples. They have step by step procedures how to run the examples, what to expect ... without that structure there, a lot, well not a lot, maybe three or four have a hard time creating with nothing to refer back to other than simple description in a manual as to what syntax means ...

Based on John's observations about the difficulty some of his students were experiencing, much of our subsequent conversation dealt with the distinction between teaching a process and teaching specific content. I became more critical of my own view in seeing process and content as separate entities. For John, the content of computer processing--languages like Pascal, for example--were also a process in the sense that they could be used to solve problems, so it seemed difficult to speak of process as divorced from content. Thus for John, the content was still extremely important. More essentially he justified the emphasis on content in developmental terms: younger students require a sound basis in the "content" of computer processing before being able to handle more independent projects. John likened this to practicing equations in math, for example. The greater emphasis on content, which we sometimes talked about in terms of teacher directed

learning was also considered essential by John for those students who seemed incapable of learning on their own volition.

Despite our "disagreement" about the relative importance of process and content my understanding of John's action research project was that he was introducing more process based learning to his students, whereby students "create" their own knowledge. Reflecting on the question of whether students were responding to his "new" approach, John answered,

> It's something I really haven't talked to the students about, but the feeling that I get from them is that if I create, then I know, whereas if I copy I only get a peripheral knowledge of what it is that I need to learn.

The concern for what students learn turned our conversation to the question of how a teacher would evaluate something like a problem-solving approach. John had mentioned that he would "test" the success of his innovation by giving students a test based on content, the same test, in fact, that he has used with the tutorial approach. In a subsequent conversation we talked about that a little more:

> H: ... just for argument's sake, if there was a real problem solving approach of the kind you were talking about, theoretically at least, a student could fail the course in terms of content ... but in a way the student could still have learned problem solving. Then the problem would be ...
>
> J: How do you evaluate? And when you mentioned that it sort of twigged my thought there, something I hadn't thought of before because the evaluation is on the end result which is content, but the student may have picked up some pretty good research skills ... it's kind of tough on the kid to say, well you got zero on it because you didn't produce anything tangible whereas the student still learned a little bit about how to handle a problem solving approach.

Although John felt it would be difficult to evaluate a problem solving approach, he thought that it could be "something you sort of judge by watching the student and seeing what he does, more physically,

more than what he writes." It was interesting for me to see in the conversations that John returned to this notion of observing or "watching" students, and becoming more aware of individual students was one of the important results of his action research project. As he relates,

> ... it's one thing that this two month project has really opened my eyes to ... if little Sam or Betty or Joe was sitting in the corner going tickety tickety, tickety, and successfully handing in assignments you assumed everything was going well ... I think opening it up in this fashion did allow me to catch a few more unconscious responses ... leading to more verbal interaction with those who seemed to have difficulties.

Perhaps the idea of evaluating content had masked a more tacit notion of concern for the student, that the student be offered an opportunity for success. Such concern also marked John's conception of what collaboration might be, when we discussed the idea of collaboration more specifically. The interest in how the student learns, whether it is seen in terms of content--subject matter--or learning process became a question about the nature of collaboration as well.

More specifically the success or failure of an innovation was conceived in terms of student achievement and success, as problematic as that is to determine. The concern over the difficulty of "evaluating" successful learning was reflected in our conversations. Based on the concern that students should be successful John saw collaboration between teachers in the same school as vital, especially when teachers "share" the same students,

> ... so we can sit back and say [a student] is doing this and this and I found that in my class he works well when I do this, this, and this, so there's an exchange there that is useful .... There is a shared experience there.

On the other hand, collaboration with an outside collaborator was thought to be more difficult: as an outside collaborator I had only a very abstract sense of the students. Yet we could also see value in that the observations of an outside collaborator might help the teacher see the students more objectively, "without any pre-conceived ideas." Again, a more "objective" view is interpreted as a concern for how a student may be responding to the teacher's instruction.

To summarize then, a great deal of conversation focused on the concern or interest of the student. This was reflected at various levels in John's talk with me:

- -the original and continuing concern for [redacted] students would adapt to post-secondary education.
- -the concern that students learn a specific "content" in terms of subject matter and teacher direction as a manifestation of that concern.
- -the concern for the growth or development of the student: a belief that a students progress needs to be guided and built on a foundation of "basic knowledge.
- -an incipient notion of "watching" students as a means of evaluating their progress in certain learning situations.
- -the idea of collaboration as sharing an interest and/or awareness of students.

2. Teacher activity as imposing a structure and questions about what it means to teach

A second major topic in our conversations focused on questions raised by the implementation of a problem-solving approach in John's computer processing class. Because of the nature of the innovation that John had introduced, one of the interesting and important "by-products" was his awareness of how that affected individual students. John's observations about this became a basis for our discussion about what a teacher actually does in the classroom, and how that in a sense imposes

a "learning style" on students. I had asked John whether he thought his students were becoming more aware of how they learn--their own "styles" to use the jargon of currently popular approaches to the question of learning. John replied,

> ... the individual students, each one has his own way in which he feels comfortable learning information ... and I think every teacher imposes one particular style in a classroom setting. Whether that style matches that particular learning style or not, well it's the luck of the draw, that's what it amounts to.

As with our dialogue about the relative merits of content and process, we also discussed, with some differing opinion, the difference in structure imposed by a problem solving approach and John's former tutorial method of teaching computer processing. My own conception of a problem solving approach to teaching is that it becomes, to some extent an end itself, that it extends beyond the learning of specific content or subject matter. When I broached this idea to John, he agreed that students becoming more independent learners was a goal that he set for himself in this project. When I expressed a concern again whether students would learn the material or content, John replied,

> ... regardless of any procedure you use you're in a position where you find some that are going to have difficulty with any instructional technique ... perhaps I just have to learn to live with it, and say if we can get the content across regardless of the method we use, then we'll be accomplishing what we should be accomplishing.

The focus of these strands of our conversation really evolved questions of what it means to teach whether teaching subject matter more traditional teacher-directed ways is significantly different from teaching students to use a problem-solving approach. From my perspective as an outside collaborator, I thought it was significant

that in his research project John saw a difference between the tut[illegible] approach and the problem solving approach. In terms of his role [illegible] teacher it was not a different relationship to his subject matter, [illegible] a different relationship to his students.

3. The centrality of subject matter

A third major topic of our conversations hinged on John's interest and competence in computer education. Since I did not have a specific interest in that area, I felt my credibility as a collaborator in his action research project was most strained when John discussed concrete aspects of computer education. What came through for me was the importance for a teacher--especially in high school--of knowing and being immersed in one's subject, indeed having responsibility to that subject matter. In numerous instances in our conversations we attempted to come to a better understanding of the meaning of content--in this case computer processing--in relation to the learning process that John was implementing and researching.

In terms of "evaluating" the outcome of his action research, John again stressed the importance of content, when I asked him how he would reflect on the process he had attempted to introduce, John responded, "it reflects basically the content and not the process at all." We also began to talk about the problem solving as being the "content" of the course, defining it as "what" it is that students learn. At other times, however, we discussed content, in terms of computer processing as a subject, distinct from the process of learning, as something to be apprehended through discovery learning. At the end of the road, there was always the content that justified the journey.

In terms of our collaboration, John was implicitly critical of our particular form of collaborative effort, in that my interest was quite detached from his specific ones. In relating his collaborative experiences with teachers in his school, John mentioned that "The content of the course" made collaboration possible and meaningful. Trying to make sense of our collaborative experience, John explained how collaboration with a teacher in the school differs:

> I think that type of collaboration differs from what you and I have been doing by the fact that it is core specific--there are specific goals for that kind of collaboration--there is something there that says, we've got to get the content defined, we've got to get something together for this course and always looking at what we're doing as a sort of trial and error procedure--more of technique sort of thing, very specific to the area ...

And later asked if he meant that an outside collaborator should have specific knowledge and interests related to the teacher's subject matter, John replied.

> I think that does lend credibility to the collaboration. That's something we ran into problems with at the beginning when you were feeling rather uncomfortable about me rambling on about specifics in this particular course and you were not looking at the course as the end but sort of more of an overview of the process being undertaken in the course.

The tension between John's legitimately specific concerns, and my more general ones became an aspect of our understanding of collaboration, but the central importance of "knowing" content--subject matter--was still deemed to be essential by John. As well, the longer I talked with John, the more important it began to seem to me to "know" something about computer processing.

4. The nature of theorizing/reflection

The fourth main topic of our conversations had to do with the idea of reflection: "theorizing", if you will, about our experiences. This seemed to happen at a couple of levels. One, in conversation with me, was John's efforts to make sense of his action research project--specifically his observations about what was happening in the classroom. Secondly, as we dialogued we also attempted to make sense of that experience and the understandings that talking together offered us. The more "reflective" dialogue started to happen in the later conversations, as we returned to some of the earlier topics of our discussions, topics related above. Our reflection and our discussion about reflection took two detours: firstly how collaboration might facilitate reflection, and secondly how that reflection fosters understanding.

Discussing the differences between my collaboration and that with a teacher-colleague, I asked John what the difference might be. He offered some thoughts in response.

> ... it's a different kind of collaboration than making a checklist and ticking off each student's response or whatever ... but I think the sort of reflecting that we've been doing helps me anyway in looking at, putting some structure on what I see happening ...
>
> ... the discussions you and I have had have been more centered around helping to firm up what actually did happen: looking at the observations, how do I read what is happening in class ... and I think you acted more as a sounding board that I bounced a few things off ...

This idea, that in conversation with an outside collaborator John was able to reflect more "objectively" in a sense, also pointed to the nature of theorizing in a practical situation--in an action research

situation. The "problems" that we discussed, usually introduced by John were, by his own admission, always related to the specifics of the situation. The analysis we were attempting to do, according to John, always had to begin with the practical, "something tangible." Where I may have started with generalities, the conversation tended to swing back to the specifics of the situation. Yet at the same time, we would also try to understand in a wider context. John explains it much better than I'm attempting here:

> ... the type of collaboration we've been doing takes me away from the project specifically, and looking at teaching in general and saying the observations I'm making here, how can I apply them to what I'm doing in two other courses and also how is this applying to that action research model .... seeing where it fits.

When we were able to achieve that, it might be possible to claim that we were involved in a circle of understanding, a movement between the particular and the universal, an effort to make sense of our experiences in a wider context. Such moments, although still begging for greater questioning and understanding were still relevant and meaningful, approaching "true" conversation. It was an experience also repeated in my collaboration with Catherine.

Catherine: Implementing a District Mandated Gifted Program

As with John, my conversations with Catherine did not initially seem to follow a pattern or agenda. Much of our discussion was exploratory and speculative. For example we talked about our own ideas, as teachers, about what gifted education might be. Much of our talk focused on the process of action research. Most interesting and significant for me were the difference between my conversations with

John and with Catherine. As an outside collaborator there was an adjustment to be made in each situation. It thus seemed important to portray the particulars of each conversation, respecting the situatedness of the concerns and reflections.

Catherine, as explained previously, had responsibility as a "catalyst teacher"--an in-school consultant to implement a district mandated gifted education program in her elementary school. There were two main features of this program that the district wanted implemented. First, the gifted program was to be an in-class program, taught by classroom teachers, presumably through grouping children within classrooms. Secondly, gifted education was to be offered within existing curricula, but extending and making learning activities more challenging through application of Bloom's taxonomy.

It was Catherine's general responsibility to make teachers in her school aware of the program, and to seek implementation along board guidelines. In terms of her action research project, Catherine chose to focus on the implementation of the gifted program in a grade one classroom. While the general problem was to implement the gifted program along district lines, the concrete problem was working with one teacher who seemed to have difficulty in either accepting the program or introducing it into her classroom. Thus while focusing in on a specific problem in her action research, through the process many other questions and problems came to the fore. The pattern of our mutual reflection then, tended to be dominated by four main topics arising from Catherine's concerns:

1. How teachers deal with curricular change.
   a. Teachers change programs to fit perceived constraints.

b. Teachers require support and cooperation for change.
2. Curriculum innovations are justified by concerns for children.
3. The nature of reflection/theorizing: the relation between the practical and the theoretical.
4. The nature of collaboration.
   a. Collaboration as a focus on practical concerns.
   b. The nature of the collaborative relationship depending on who and what is involved.

1. How teachers deal with curricular change

Our discussions about how teachers deal with change really found concrete referent in Catherine's action research experience. From the outset, Catherine discussed the difficulty of actually implementing a program: that verbal acceptance by a teacher does not mean that the program will be actually implemented. This was a source of frustration, and Catherine expressed this when I asked her about the progress of her project in the context of our discussion about some readings on implementation in Fullan's book:

> I have found from reading that teachers will often give their verbal OK for somethihg but when it comes to doing it they're not quite as enthusiastic and that's a problem I'm facing with all of them ... they all agree that's a good idea, that the gifted program is great ... many are using it ... they are not quite as enthusiastic about the usage of it, and I agree with Fullan when he says that in his book about teachers. I'm getting carry through but not as much carry through as what I [would like].

The importance of the role that the classroom teacher plays in the adoption and implementation of a curriculum change was emphasized by Catherine in a later conversation when she mentioned that her "problem" with the grade one teacher had been resolved because an "intern teacher" had taken responsibility for setting up learning centres in the classroom, and this made it possible to have activities for group work and the gifted program. The intern teacher's initiative was apparently

acceptable to the grade one teacher, allowing her to continue teaching as she wanted.

As a mediator, in a sense, between the board and other classroom teachers, Catherine felt she had considerable leeway in interpreting both the content of the gifted program and how it could operate. In her own classroom, she had found it relatively easy to introduce gifted education since she had her students already "grouped." As a catalyst teacher she had considerable stake in implementation of the program in other classrooms as well. Where she found teachers which had compatible beliefs about classroom organization, Catherine found little difficulty. But where there was resistance to allotting time and place for gifted activities, Catherine began to question the goals of the program in terms of it necessarily being an "in-class" one, and in fact, began to practice "pull-out" sessions, which she was able to do in her role as school librarian. In an initial conversation:

> H: So, last time you mentioned you were looking at pull-out, although you didn't want that as the initial thing ...
>
> C: No, the division didn't really want it as the initial thing. They are trying to get away from that. They feel it would be more effective to keep it in the classroom itself ... and I agree it would be to a point ...

Catherine mentioned further that the pull-out program was necessary in her estimation as way of keeping track of what was happening with the program. In a later conversation, in answer to my question about how her original action research plan had been transformed, Catherine replied.

> Well, I see a lot change in my attitude, yes, when I started out I was convinced that the really best way to go was to have a totally in-class program and now I'm seeing that this is not the best way, that I would like to take them out even more

> often than once a week. I can do that but I was trying to work under the guidelines [ ] school district had set up, but I'm finding there are many advantages to having them pulled out ...

Concurrently with the change in her thinking, and her actual alteration of a mandated program, Catherine expressed greater awareness of the difficulties teachers experience when faced with mandated changes. In our discussion about the difficulty of working with the grade one teacher particularly, Catherine seemed sympathetic to the teacher's reluctance.

> Yes, I've already talked to her about it and of course she is agreeable to anything I want to do providing it's not a lot more work for her because I think all the teachers are feeling very much pressured ... there is too much going on in this division ... they are feeling the pinch ... so I'm reluctant to ask her to do extra work.

In discussing how action research may help teachers to become more aware of the constraints in their situations, and perhaps discover more creative ways to implement programs, Catherine countered by suggesting that there have to be incentives for teachers to change. Particularly salient, she offered, was the problem of time, and how teachers would have to given more time in order to be involved in change projects. In terms of her own role as a catalyst teacher, Catherine also expressed the need for more support, pointing to the possible importance of collaboration with others in similar roles.

2. Concern for children

In talking about her understanding of the gifted program and how she was implementing it, our discussion revolved around what we thought were the interests of children. For example, when Catherine offered to show me some of the material she was using with her gifted groups, and

as well proudly showed me some of the work being done by children in terms of "brainstorming" ideas and activities, it stimulated discussion about what would be "good" education for all kids. The concern that children identified as gifted be offered more challenging experiences in school also found expression in our conversations as a concern for children in general.

The ways in which the mandated gifted program was mediated by Catherine in her role as catalyst and by the teachers she worked with was justified in large part for the concern that children not miss out parts of the regular curriculum or what the gifted program had to offer. Describing the difficulty she was experiencing with the grade one teacher, Catherine said,

> I think this grade one teacher I'm dealing with primarily has given a verbal OK and she means it. I'm sure she means it when I'm talking with her, but it's a way of going around her problems, and not being able to justify leaving out some of the grade one curriculum, and I guess I have to agree with her that we can't leave out all these parts, because the kids need to know all these things ...

Especially important for a grade one teacher is the responsibility for teaching children to read and write, and the view, which Catherine was sympathetic to, that the time for learning to read and write not be compromised. When working with other teachers, the gifted program, according to Catherine was discussed in terms of the needs of the children, with language arts time being considered too valuable to give up for other activities.

At the same time, Catherine justified her pull out program as a <u>way</u> of meeting the needs of students: "they need to get down to the library--being the librarian helps as well because I can bring them down

here and let them do a lot more research, and research skills are so important." The gifted program itself could be subject to change: "a new group of students ... changes your ideas from year to year."

The concern for children became a focus for our conversation about our collaboration. In discussing her action research as [redacted] of collaboration with a teacher in her school, Catherine mentioned that the basis of their talk was what the needs of their students were. Focusing on the needs of students was offered as a basis for collaboration. Students were the common ground for discussing the program, and Catherine offered that "hopefully, that's what it should be."

3. The nature of theorizing/reflection

Our conversation seemed to encourage reflection. Catherine reflected on her experiences in the action research. I was able to reflect on some of my concerns, for example, ~~how~~ we were talking about giftedness, and what my collaboration meant in the context of Catherine's work. Through this reflection we also attempted to make sense--to theorize--about our roles, to come to a better understanding of what it means to be a catalyst teacher, to be involved in action research, and to be a collaborator.

A large part of our conversations dealt with our interpretations of the action research process. We seemed to have some disagreement about what it involved, but as we talked more, the disagreement seemed to be more in terms of the language we used. As Catherine discussed her experiences, there appeared to be a growing awareness of other problems. She saw it as "spiraling down" and being able to "pinpoint" a specific

problem. The action research approach she perceived as a "narrowing down" so that a specific solution could be applied, and then one could go on to another problem. At the same time, however, Catherine did admit that as she focused in on a specific problem, she became more aware of new ones, and moreover, could begin to see connections. Yet we could never quite agree that was a process of really opening up the question, and attempting to look beyond or deeper.

> C: I keep coming with a new problem ... I seem to have spiraled down from one problem and then I go into more and more of a little different nature.
>
> H: ... in a sense though you're not really, although you're saying that it helps you to pinpoint a problem, getting narrower, yet I sense that you're saying is that you see more of the problem.
>
> C: Well, I'm getting rid of one problem, and then another one arises ... I'm certainly pinpointing it down because I was doing it more generally. I was trying to solve the problem all the way around, but this is making me solve one problem at a time, making me look really closely at one particular problem that I have.

In later conversations Catherine maintained her n[redacted]at action research was a process of narrowing down, but in terms of focusing action:

> I think the action research has helped me go into one direction. I think that has been the biggest advantage of it, to take one problem at a time, to do one problem only and to work it right down and have it solved, and then if another presents itself, work it down ...

Yet while her interest was in the action, our contributions to the conversation, although couched in sometimes different language, seemed to help foster the awareness that in attempting to solve isolated problems, new problems emerged for consideration, and that a more holistic view was probably necessary. Catherine helped me to also see the importance of understanding and reflecting on the concrete, the

practical, and dealing with the frustration of not solving the problem or understanding it better. She offered,

> I don't really think it's frustrating, I think it's alright ... it's just bringing out different things we weren't aware of, what things are really like out there. It's alright to draw it out on paper, but when you actually start working on it you can't see what problems you are going to face.

Our discussion about the meaning of action research brought to light as well the way in which we might "theorize" about educational problems. My contribution to the collaboration had tended to be very abstract, based on some understanding of the theory of action research. Moreover, I did not really have a concrete understanding of Catherine's situation. There was an implicit criticism of that in our "theorizing" about collaboration and the nature of reflection. In Catherine's words, I had to get "dragged into the practical." The reflection we were attempting was based on practical needs and interests. At the same time we talked about the need for critical awareness, to understand in broader context. Catherine's understanding and critical awareness started moving towards that I thought, when she asked, "is this what should be done, is there a better way to do it ... you really have to look at and be honest about your answers."

4. <u>The nature of collaboration</u>

Perhaps because Catherine was sensitive to my interests, we spent a considerable portion of our conversations, particularly the last one, discussing the idea and practice of collaboration in action research. On one level, her interest in the question of collaboration arose from the difficulties she was experiencing as a person responsible for the

implementation of a program. Her specific action research problem, for example, could have focused more specifically on the question of how to work with a classroom teacher to plan and implement an innovation. Catherine also discussed her frustration with not being able to share her problems as a catalyst teacher with others in similar positions, especially if they were working on the same program. She saw collaboration in this respect as a need to discuss "practical problems" with someone.

As an outside collaborator, I also felt compelled to get involved in the practical. As Catherine mentioned several times, she really would have appreciated an opportunity to share practical concerns with someone. In part this reflected her frustration with having been left alone, so to speak, to implement the gifted program in her school. The other aspect of her frustration, was I thought, the difficulty of working with a specific teacher, although we did not explore that further in the conversations. Implicit in the view of collaboration as sharing practical interests was an emphasis on getting results: Catherine was after all responsible for implementing a program. From this perspective, more theoretical points of view were perceived as being not relevant. In conversation, I asked Catherine if my collaboration had been "useful." She answered that I was able to bring some of the "theory." But, she added,

> ... you need to bring it down from the theory, to asking does it really work practically. So I guess that's why you have to get drawn into it a certain extent; otherwise you are not going to know if there is a practical solution.

The necessarily practical interest, however, did not stop Catherine from seeing our collaboration as a "reflective conversation." It seems that in our conversations, as incomplete as they were, there was also an opportunity to reflect on practical concerns, and to understand action in terms of theory, theory as understanding developed in dialogue. My understanding of action research had been in terms of abstract language and categories. Working with Catherine such categories became tempered in a crucible of practical concerns. The conversational situation allowed both of us some distanciation from our particular interests. Catherine, I believe, tried to give words to that experience:—

> Well, I think you've studied enough of the theory that you're going to be able to put it into practice quite easily, probably a little more easily than someone who hasn't studied it separately. I think maybe I got so wrapped up in the practical end that the theory was secondary. Maybe you need to know the theory so well that it is primary, that it is just automatic ...

I think what Catherine was trying to articulate was the need to see a greater unity between theory and practice. To her words I would add that the theory still has to be learned--collaboratively, and that the practical also has to be known really well.

What is the What that we Talked About?

Writing this chapter was difficult. For one, I had to let go of the crutch of "theory" and reliance on what others have said that may have been relevant to my experience of collaborating with John and Catherine. At times, I also experienced panic: I felt I was losing the question that ought to run through this thesis: what is a meaning of collaboration? Was it necessary to show what it was that we talked about?

In situating my interest in the question, I believe it was essential to return to the conversations, and relate the actual experience of collaboration. As the accounts of the conversations between John and I, and Catherine and I show, there were similarities. In both instances, there was an expression of concern for students: either for students to be well prepared for experiences beyond school, or for children to have the opportunities for more challenging learning. As well, the practical demands of their situations led John and Catherine to express a need for collaboration with "researchers" sharing the same immediate interests and responsibilities. Perhaps because of the nature of the collaborative experience I was able to offer, both John and Catherine were able to reflect, or "theorize" about their action research experiences.

Just focusing on the similarities, however, would do an injustice to the particularities of each situation. The experience, the talk, and the content of the reflections were not identical in each situation. John's experience was much more closely attuned to questions of what it means to teach, and the nature of curricular knowledge. It was much more difficult for me, in his case, to separate the person from his research. In a sense, John was researching himself in his own practice of teaching. Such "researching" appeared to promote reflective talk with me. Catherine was much more concerned about the implementation of a program. For her, action research became a way of understanding relationships between teachers, and between teachers and outside authorities. There seemed to be a pressure to solve "problems" rather than raise questions.

Thus it might be possible to conclude that the collaborative experience will necessarily be different in different situations. Yet, in front of us also hovered understandings we could not quite reach, possibly points of common interest that require more questioning, and more understanding. Given the particular situations of John and Catherine I asked myself if there were more general "themes" to which we could orient our collaboration. The question then is raised, do these "themes" speak to the experiences of teachers in schools? Do these themes also provide a basis for building meaningful collaborative experiences of teachers in schools? Do these themes also provide a basis for building meaningful collaborative experiences between teachers and outside researchers? These are some questions that will guide the discussion in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THEMES OF A COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE

> I ask, 'What is teaching?' (emphasizing 'is') ... So placed I may be allowed to hear better the voice of what teaching essentially is. The question understood in this way urges me to be attuned to a teacher's presence with children. This presence if authentic, is being. I find that teaching so understood is attuned to the place where care dwells, a place of engathering, where the in-dwelling of teachers and students is made possible by the presence of care that each has for the other (Aoki, 1987, p. 9).

A re-telling of the topics of my collaborative experience was a long detour provoked by the simple question, "what did we talk about?" A return to the transcripts of the conversations with John and Catherine was also an interesting, if frustrating, experience for me. Like the actual collaborative experience, when I felt unclear about the focus of my role and practice, writing about the conversations felt like going for a walk and not remembering why or where to. I lost sight of my guiding question: what it means for a teacher and outside researcher to collaborate on an action research project.

Reflecting on the topics of our conversations calls for a retrieval of that question, a question not yet clear. While the topics we talked, agreed, or disagreed about are meaningful--to me and also I believe to John and Catherine, they do not necessarily point to developing a meaning of collaboration in a more general sense. The topics of our conversation serve as examples of a search for meaning. Such a search prompts the question, "what was it that we talked about that pointed to collaboration as shared purpose?"

This question invokes the exploration of some themes, themes which invite reflection on the experience and meaning of collaboration. The

themes I chose to address in this chapter seemed to grow out of the experiences of teaching, and researching that teaching with action research. The themes represent, I believe, what is essential in the working lives of teachers. Moreover, the themes I discuss below find confirmation in educational literature. Researchers too are interested in discovering what is essential in teaching.

As Vangie Bergum explains the term "themes" in her dissertation, they "are not magically appearing essences, but are useful focal points or commonalties of experience" (1986, p.47). Metaphorically, Max van Manen likens themes to "knots in the web of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus experienced as meaningful wholes" (1984, p.57). Freire offers the notion of theme as "the concrete representation of ideas, values, concepts, hopes, as well as the obstacle to full humanization in an epoch" (1986, p.91). While he paints a picture of the meaning of theme in broad strokes, I find Freire's definition helpful for a couple of reasons. Firstly is the orientation to the concrete: people's relations to each other and the world. And secondly, the idea of theme allows an exploration of the situation, to both understand it and change it. Additionally, the idea of theme assists an understanding of ambiguities and contradictions in a situation. As well as understanding theory and practice in schools, for example, themes may also invite critique of theory and practice.

The notion of themes, therefore, is that they stand as guideposts to direct our search for understanding, in this instance, collaborative action research in schools. More specifically, the question is asked, what are the shared interests for teachers and outside researchers in

collaboration? What we talked about goes beyond what can be neatly categorized or quantified. However, the meeting of horizons in conversation suggests that there may be a shared purpose in learning from each other in a collaborative situation. Our discussion of the "topics" illustrated previously may be seen as examples of sharing some meanings and understandings. But such sharings were very specific to each situation, and specific to the two people involved in each setting.

To share a meaning of collaboration requires that what we talked about also be meaningful to others. As Charles Taylor counsels, "what is required for common meanings is that this shared value ~~be~~ part of the common world, that this sharing be shared" (1979, p.51). Thus I am attempting to explicate some themes, focal points that appeared to hover in front of our questioning in the conversations, and which allow the sharing of the experience to be broadened.

From those conversations, three themes seemed to shine through most clearly. I decided to call these pedagogic hope, pedagogic being, and pedagogic knowing. I struggled with naming the themes. The term pedagogic is still not one that is commonly used by teachers in the schools. Yet other adjectives seemed to be not quite appropriate; "educational" seemed too general, too broad, while "teacher" implied too specific an orientation. Pedagogic on the other hand, carries a notion of the situation in schools, and the teacher's role in that, and hopefully, a researcher's role as well. Pedagogy denotes originally, a leading of children. Ted Aoki has written,

> Teaching is truly pedagogic, if the leading grows out of this care which inevitably is filled with the good of care. Teaching, then, is a tactful leading that knows and

> follows the pedagogic good in a caring situation (1987, p.10).

There is a grace in Aoki's words that orients us to what the educational situation ought to be. It is with this meaning of pedagogic in mind that I turn to an exploration of the themes.

Pedagogic Hope

Central in our conversations was always an expressed concern for students or children. John's action research project was conceived as a concern that his graduating students be able to do well--be able to apply what they had learned in his classes--in post-secondary situations. During the course of his action research, concern was expressed about whether his students would still learn the specified and necessary content, or even do better, as a consequence of his classroom innovation. John's sense of the basics of his subject was seen by him as foundational for younger students, before they could engage in more independent learning.

Throughout my collaboration with him, John reflected on the observational and monitoring components of action research, and how he could monitor students, how he could evaluate them and what that meant in the context of his innovation. To me, as the outside collaborator in his research, John's commitment was always evident. There was an undeniable "hope" for his students. His work, the physical setting, his writing of manuals, and the action research project all embodied a hope for students to do well in computer processing. As an outside collaborator, in conversations with John I was drawn into discussion of what his project meant for students, and I was able to express some of

my concerns about evaluation. For example, how would traditional modes of evaluation fit with a problem-solving or discovery method in teaching?

Likewise, much of Catherine's talk centered on the well-being of children. Whether a program was good or not was justified in terms of her hopes for her students. What actually became her mediation of a mandated gifted program, the changes she made in its implementation, was justified in the interests of children. A strong hope for beginning students was expressed in their need for learning to read. In Catherine's estimation, collaboration, whether with teachers within the school or with outsiders, ought to be based on a shared interest in students, an idea also expressed by John. In conversation with Catherine, we were able to talk about the nature of giftedness, and what good education meant for all students.

Pedagogic hope as a theme wove its pattern through our discussion, pointing to a shared concern between teacher and researcher. Its expression was sometimes cloaked in the language of evaluation for example, but more often lurked as a "deeper, less specified hope for the well-being of the ones hope for" (Parker, 1986). In considering the theme of pedagogic hope, I also discovered it in other writings. In attempting to understand why "Dorothy and Mary" implemented computer-assisted instruction into their classrooms Parker focused on the hope these teachers embodied for their students. What is pedagogic hope, Parker asks? "It is a category of experience plainly discernible from teachers' talk about the more schoolish 'goals' and 'objectives'" (Parker, 1986). Catherine, in her conversations with me, did express

her concern for her students in terms of the goals of the gifted program, but did so in much more diffusely stated concerns for them doing well.

The theme of pedagogic hope is found in other texts about teaching. Bollnow talks of pedagogic "love", a form of love that the adult has who has responsibility to help the child or young person reach a further stage in development. As Bollnow emphasizes, this is not an uncritical love; it must also allow the child to be seen realistically in the present, as well as having "regard for the still latent ideal potentialities" (Bollnow, 1986). It is this kind of concern for his students that John expressed in our conversations. While he wanted his students, particularly the graduating ones to be capable, independent learners, who would continue to find success in future educational endeavours, for younger students John tempered the idea of independence with the need for more "basics." Even for his more mature students, John's concern for them was based on a hope that they also mastered a certain "content."

Because the teacher's relationship with students is limited in time and space, there is urgency to "help" children. Hope expressed as the desire to help children is bounded by the limits of the teacher's situation. What Sarason describes as "the felt necessity to have the class reach a particular level of skill in a fixed period of time" (1982, p.187), found expression in John's concern that his students be competent in computer processing before they graduated; but also more than that, because he also wished to assure their competence beyond his relationship with them. Catherine, bounded by the limits of what could

be achieved in certain classrooms, nevertheless saw the need for "gifted" children to have the opportunity to learn certain skills. This justified, as expressed in conversation, the alteration of a mandated program from "in-class" to "pull-out."

The responsibility that the teacher has for students, and the hope that nourishes the relationship of the teacher to his/her students is a lifeblood of the pedagogic situation. Beyond the "objectives" of any curriculum or school plan, pedagogic hope lies beneath questions about the purpose of teaching. Elbaz writes,

> The teacher confronts a classroom full of waiting human beings; ultimately the psychological sense of responsibility for what happens to those students in the course of the day devolves upon the teacher (1983, p.17).

It is this responsibility for students, expressed in terms of hope that also mediates changes in the school and classroom. Interpreting the research on curricular change, Fullan notes that teachers ask of changes, "will students be interested?", "will they learn" (1982, p.113)?

As I have attempted to illustrate from the conversations, John's and Catherine's innovations through action research were also justified by their concerns for children. However, it is important to emphasize that pedagogic hope, as a focal point for understanding our actions as teachers and researchers also finds ambivalent and ambiguous expression. Fullan (1982) has written convincingly about the importance of the teacher's role in mediating change, and how the teacher's understanding of his/her role, especially in relation to students, will largely effect the success or failure of what may be well-conceived programs or curricula.

Parker (1986) too talks about ambiguity in the teacher's experience: how strong beliefs and "prior commitments" will mediate proposed changes. In his case study, Dorothy and Mary did adopt and introduce computer-assisted instruction in their classroom because of the hope they had for students. Yet, they may also have rejected that innovation in part or whole based on the same beliefs. In her conversations with me, Catherine told of her re-interpretation of the guidelines of a gifted program in ways that would fit her situation, and justified in terms of children's needs.

Pedagogic hope, and the responsibility for children which is an expression of that hope may also carry the understanding that children are different from adults, that they ought to be treated differently. Indeed, in her "The Crisis in Education", Hannah Arendt (1978) decries the deterioration of the natural authority the teacher has for the child, and the throwing of children into the world when they are not ready. She reminds us of the inherently ethical responsibility contained within the notion of pedagogy. Pedagogy denotes a difference between adults and children, a relationship with a special sense of caring. From a feminist perspective, Madeleine Grumet evokes the image of teacher as mediating between the public world and the private world of the child: "The teacher looks out to the world and through the world to the student. It is this detour through the world that we call curriculum" (1983, p.52).

Yet, as Sarason points out that sense of difference may also allow teachers to create conditions in their classrooms that they personally would dislike (1982, p.222). Hope for students does not automatically

find concrete manifestation in classroom activities, and may indeed justify conditions that work against the inherent meaning of pedagogy. But it is the theme of hope that allows a foothold for critical discussion about teaching practice to begin.

As illustrated previously, John and I disagreed about the relative importance of content and process in teaching. I lacked understanding of what content meant in the context of computer processing, and the importance of that content to John's program. John, while emphasizing the importance of content, and indeed still insisting that the success of his innovation could only be measured through testing for content, nevertheless began to question what it means for students to learn, to ask what was really important to come away with. As with Catherine's ideas about gifted education, we were on a threshold of more critical discussions about the goals of their action research projects, but guided by the theme of pedagogic hope.

Being involved in the two action research projects meant learning about two teachers and their hopes. It was interesting that in the process of action research, the teacher researchers became more "aware" of the individual student. John expressed his own surprise at what was really an "unintended" outcome:

> What was really brought out in this project is that there are individual styles in which kids learn, ways in which the kid will perform better, say in a verbal kind of exchange, but if you dump a tutorial on them, even if they can read don't do as well ...

In our conversations about giftedness, Catherine and I discussed in more general terms how so-called "gifted education" designed to provide more

stimulation for brighter students may really contain ideas that all students ought to be exposed to.

As an outside collaborator, I was invited into the worlds of teaching that John and Catherine had constructed with their hopes for children. I was invited to share in the meaning of pedagogic hope. John and Catherine both saw the concern for students as a basis for collaboration, and not so silently admonished my own distance from that concern. But as an outside "researcher," the question also had to be asked, "what was my interest?" Although I did not know the students and children, I nevertheless felt compelled to see the success of the action research projects in terms beneficial to those students and children.

"To educate children is by definition an activity with an intention for the future," Lea Dasberg (1983, p.117) writes, and the question of collaboration asks whether an outside collaborator shares in that intention. Action research offers a closer connection between teaching and research; both are ways of learning about the pedagogical situation, a situation oriented to children. van Manen reminds us that "we learn, as educators from the incompleteness, the possibilities of childhood" (1986, p.13). Through working with a teacher, a researcher also comes to share concerns about those Madeleine Grumet calls "other people's children" (Grumet, 1981).

Pedagogical Being

What does it mean to be a teacher? The question points to the theme of pedagogical being. As a theme, it appeared to focus a good deal of our conversations. John talked about how his activity set the structure of learning in the classroom. From his action research, he

gained a greater awareness of how his teaching style set a pattern for students. Especially in talking with John, a strong sense of commitment to subject matter shone through; indeed John seemed to live--to embody--in his professional life his interest in computer education. There was a confidence in his knowledge of subject matter that seemed to define his being as teacher.

Woods discusses the difficulty of distinguishing teacher self from curriculum. He asks the question, "to what extent is the person engaged with the subject matter" (1984, p.219)? Thinking about John and his action research project, I would have to answer a great deal, and it is perhaps significant that in my conversations with John, talk about curriculum often strayed onto more biographical paths. Woods' assertion, based on an in-depth case study of a teacher, is that teachers make, rather than take roles, and that the teacher's own being is manifest in the curriculum as presented to students. In my collaboration with John, there was this strong sense of curriculum inextricably bound with the person and his ideas.

Although John was obviously an "effective" teacher, I started to become more aware of the poverty of that term in the context of his work. The talk about how to teach or the techniques one could use was difficult to separate from John's knowledge about computer processing, and about who he was as person and teacher. In a critical comment on the effective teaching movement that now dominates much talk about teaching, Aoki, echoing Woods above, asserts that "the effectiveness of teaching may have more to do with the being of teacher--who the teacher is" (1987, p.7). John's knowledge of his subject matter infused the way

that he taught. What was "effective" about how he taught was contained in his knowledge of subject matter and who he was.

The sense of pedagogic being was also present in conversations with Catherine. In the conversations with her there was extensive talk about the role of teachers in implementing new programs. Specifically, as has been illustrated previously, Catherine had responsibility for implementing a system mandated gifted program. This program had several guidelines to be followed. It was Catherine's job to translate these guidelines into practice in her school.

It appeared to become difficult for Catherine to separate her role as "catalyst teacher" from her other positions as teacher, vice-principal and librarian. As a teacher, she seemed to believe in and practice grouping children, and having them work in independent learning centers. The ideas of the gifted program seemed to fit the already established organization of her classroom. Although we did not discuss it directly, I felt that her job as a temporary vice-principal in the school put extra pressure on her to "succeed" with the gifted program, as evidence of good administrative ability. As well, as librarian, she was proud of the materials she had produced, which she felt could be used by any teachers in an in-class gifted program.

Despite some difficulties with the gifted program as mandated, Catherine did assume ownership of it in a sense. From our conversations, it appeared that as the catalyst teacher, she became the gifted program in the school. She talked about her catalyst role as being a "salesman." The problem, she thought, was to convince teachers to accept the program. An outcome of her action research project that

we touched upon in conversation was the nature of her relationship with a teacher, and more generally, how teachers would work together to implement change. Embodying, in a sense, a curricular innovation--an aspect of her pedagogic being--also brought to awareness the nature of relationships between teachers, and between teachers and outsiders. The quality of those relationships may also be seen as part of pedagogic being, what it means to be a teacher in a pedagogic situation.

Pedagogic being presupposes there is a lived experience, a life-world that gives meaning to being a teacher. As every teacher is surely aware, this is a world of practical demands, and a teacher is asked to be a master of the practical. As Elbaz argues,

> In the practical context it is the teacher, not the learning theorist, who is the final authority on learning; the teacher, not the sociologist, who is the final authority on the social development of children; the teacher, not the psychologist or artist, who is the final authority on the creativity of children; the teacher, not the scientist, who is the final authority on the science kids learn. Whether or not such authority is actually granted him, the teacher is the only one in a practical position to discharge it. (1983, p.17)

In their action research projects both John and Catherine attempted to become more "authoritative" so to speak, in their situations. In attempting to create innovations, they also came to question their own roles as teachers, and to question what it means to be a teacher. Focusing on who the teacher is invites the possibility of a more critical examination of the situation: to understand how personal commitments and hopes can actually be realized in practice, or become more critically aware of what Freire calls "limit situations."

As an outside collaborator I felt drawn in to a greater appreciation of who John and Catherine were as teachers. But in

conversations there was also a glimpse of what we could be as teachers. Through action research, we came to recognize the importance of the teacher's role, an importance that both Sarason and Fullan acknowledge in their reviews of school change. In a modest way, we were exploring the question that Sarason asks, that is, how can the teacher's role be expanded in importance (1982, p.195)? Perhaps too, action research, as Schubert and Schubert interpret it, can be "a building of philosophical assumptions or principles that guides one's life (1984, p.17).

The theme of pedagogic being focuses our attention on the teacher's need for autonomy as a decision maker in a practical situation. The theme of pedagogic being alerts us to the harm that is created by separating conception from execution, the "deskilling" of teachers of which Michael Apple and others have written. We may reflect critically, then, on what it means to be a teacher, to come to a better understanding of terms like "professional." In my conversations with both John and Catherine, there was a further, more distant, view of what collaboration could be, an invitation to understand the teacher and his world, and to share in the uncovering and creation of further meanings and the improvement of the realities of teaching.

Pedagogic Knowing

With eloquence and caring, Ted Aoki writes that "teaching is a deeply practical vocation" and "that our predicament as teachers is a very pragmatic one" (1987, p.7). Aoki's thoughtful expression helps to illuminate the collaborative experience in which I was involved. His words asks for reflection on the practical and varied dilemmas of the teacher in the classroom. His words point to the importance of the

"pedagogic act" and the intrinsically moral or normative basis of decisions about what to do in the classroom. Pragmatic actions are not just expedient actions if they are truly pedagogic. By "predicament" I believe Aoki means that teachers are constantly faced with pedagogical problems, "between what exists and what should be" (Daignault, 1984, p.27). The kind of knowledge produced in this situation may be referred to as "phronesis": "a form of reasoning, yielding a type of ethical know-how in which what is universal and what is particular are undetermined". (Bernstein, 1983, p.146).

The theme of pedagogic knowing raises questions about how teachers make sense of their actions. As I have tried to show in the exploration of the themes of pedagogic hope and pedagogic being, such actions are not blind and thoughtless. They are driven by deep hopes and a sense of what it means to be a teacher. Freidmann (1979) talks about action being primary in practice. There is "knowing in the action" although some of that knowing may be tacit (Schon, 1983, p.49). With action research, then, the goal is to learn about and from the actions we carry out as teachers--to see the knowledge in the action, That does not make actions immune to criticism or change; reflection on action opens the possibility for critical awareness and change. Nor can those actions be isolated as simple rules or techniques of teaching divorced from the situation of that knowledge.

In the talk of the collaborative experience, the actions of John and Catherine became topics for our dialogues. While the actions and our sense-making of these actions were particularistic in nature, addressing the theme of pedagogic knowing suggests a more universal

orientation which can be identified with pedagogical situations. It was this sense of being drawn into the specific situations, and then reflecting on them that characterized our conversations.

My general interest in action research as an outside observer, and the specific interests of John and Catherine in their situations meant that we sometimes failed to achieve common horizons of understanding. In John's project for example, I was really seeing problem solving in the abstract, as a generalized strategy that could be universally applied in classrooms. My "understanding" of action research was also limited to what I had read and studied. But when I began to talk with John and Catherine, the theoretical categories of action research, or problem solving, or giftedness did not necessarily fit with what they were doing in their particular situations.

In the first instance, both John and Catherine had concrete responsibilities for students. John was preparing a group of students for graduation. The specific objectives of his action research plan--to introduce a problem solving approach, could not be separated from what he saw as his responsibility to pass on subject matter. Moreover, he worked with certain personal, school, and district goals. For example, working with other teachers, John explained, was necessary to maintain discrete course offerings by different teachers. To a certain extent, John maintained a distinction between the objectives of the course he taught, and the objectives of the action research project. It was not the content of computer processing that was under question, but his method of teaching it. At the same time, the content was difficult to

separate from the way it was taught. These were some of my observations as an outside collaborator.

Catherine too had very concrete concerns and responsibilities. Those concerns and responsibilities created the general framework for her action research project. In conversations with her, I became more aware of the complexity of her responsibilities: in attempting to implement a gifted program she was dealing with understanding notions of giftedness, preparing materials, implementing it in her own classroom as a teacher, and working with others to implement it in their classrooms. That was in addition to her other school responsibilities.

Before appreciating her situation more, I felt a little frustrated with the way she was interpreting the action research process as a "narrowing down" and "solving one problem at a time." In this situation, bounded concretely by time, space, relationships, and her own well-being, Catherine had to "fit" a gifted program. It was her own understanding of that situation which led her to make alterations to the mandated guidelines of the district gifted program. In her situation, these were actions she took to solve perceived problems.

According to Reid (1978, p.17), theory may be viewed as idealized practice. Moreover, such theory viewed as an enquiry outside of the situation is not normative. My own view of action research had been in terms of an "idealized" form of practice. But in collaborating with Catherine and John, the action research became much more what they were actually doing in their schools and classrooms. Crucially, the "ends" so to speak of their action research was not to learn about action research, but to make improvements in their situations. Thus the action

research became not so much a "method" as a "doing" normatively infused. To me, as an outside collaborator, there was an appeal to share the goals and normative interests, or at least to understand those norms and interests.

In discussing reflective practice, Schon recognizes that understanding the situation grows out of trying to change it (1983, p.132). It was in Ricoeur's sense of action as a text for interpretation that allowed us to begin to learn from the actions, and to begin sharing observations and ideas. Both Catherine and John reminded me that we had to begin with the practical. As much as they generously allowed my interest in action research and collaboration to intrude in the conversations, the more meaningful discussions occurred when we attempted to reflect more critically on what was actually happening in their situations. When that did happen--and I am not suggesting, as I have said before that we consistently achieved "ideal" conversations, or mutually critical analyses--I felt I was beginning to learn more about what collaboration might mean. As John mentioned once, "... I don't think it is something that you can start with nice speculative types of conversations about the nature of teaching and then narrow in on one particular project ... I think it starts with something tangible."

The focus on the tangible, however, did allow reflection--knowing--to grow. Analysis of action in the research projects meant we began to reflect on what our purposes and goals as teachers are, or more specifically how we affect students or how we teach. Tantalizingly, Schon writes, "through unintended effects of action the situation talks

back" (1983, p.135). I have recounted already how John claimed he started to become much more aware of individual differences in his students, how they "learned." In this observation, several possibilities for further learning blossomed. John began to question some of the previously held assumptions about his role in the classroom, his own actions that had been more or less automatic and unconscious. We also began to discuss the notion of learning styles, but not in terms of the currently popular theories extant in the schools. Rather than conceiving of learning styles as individual characteristics of students that the teacher responds to, we were thinking more in terms of the context, the situation the teacher creates which opens up possibilities for learning.

Catherine's experience too allowed "reflective conversation with the situation" (Schon, 1983, p.135). In teaching the gifted program in her own classroom, Catherine recounted student's experiences with the activities she had designed, and expressed enthusiasm for the ways in which students responded. What "gifted" children could accomplish, encouraged her to reflect on what other children in her classroom could also accomplish. As a result of her experience, we talked promisingly about seeing learning in terms of children's potentials rather than in terms of prejudging that by using artificial categories like giftedness.

More specifically in terms of her action research project, the implementation of a gifted program in another classroom, Catherine's actions started to throw light on the meaning of implementation. Catherine expressed empathy for other teachers in terms of the time and structural constraints that made it difficult to accept change. There

was awareness about the need to build structures of support between teachers, and between those responsible for introducing programs. In reflective conversation with consultants and teachers involved in the implementation of a curriculum, Terry Carson illustrated how in that reflection a need was expressed to break down barriers between teachers and the necessity for building supportive social situations (Carson, 1986). While Catherine and I did not have the opportunity to pursue those concerns, what became apparent was that we were able to learn from her action and her situation, and that learning could be a basis for further change. The movement from the practical, to a broader understanding, but always returning to the practical as central feature of pedagogic knowing was expressed well by John:

> I think that what happens or I'm hoping what happens here anyway is that the initial analysis is always related to the specifics of the group that you're dealing with and the content and so on, and its an analysis of whether what we're doing is meeting those objectives that we set out in the project, and I think once you can modify it by doing this or yes, I can do that to improve or no, it's not and see why it's not and see what we can come up with. You know the project itself is short term, you know it's something you're trying for a month or two months and it's done, but I think the collaboration that goes on, the analysis that takes place as a result of that always tends to branch out from the specifics of that particular course and group of students ... out to saying well, maybe I can modify this way next year--it doesn't get 'blown up' to cover more than the specific project and hopefully give you time to reflect teaching in general--what I have learned about this that is applicable to the art of teaching ... looking at a more holistic view of the results of the project ...

Pedagogic knowing then, grows out of the situation, the practical and normative concerns of teaching, and the interest in approaching the intrinsic good of pedagogy. That there is knowledge in action means that action can be and ought to be interpreted and understood for what

it is. To name such knowledge in pre-existing categories is to do it a disservice, to leave out the essential practical interests. Yet, it also seems necessary to build a forum for becoming more "knowledgeable," and for finding a language to express what that action means. There is a "uniqueness" to pedagogic knowing, but the common interest in education also means that pedagogic knowing may speak more universally.

Recently, there has been increased interest in "teacher thinking" (Elbaz, 1983; Connelly and Elbaz, 1980). Much in the way I have tried to talk about "pedagogic knowing" writers about "teacher thinking" acknowledge the practical and normative bases of teacher thinking, stressing the importance of the situation and the teacher's experience of self and others (Elbaz, 1983). And yet, and I may be unfair here in my estimation, I get a sense of a dualism that is retained in the talk about "the teacher as knower of the practical" (Connelly and Elbaz, 1980, p.110). The implicit proposition appears to be that practical knowing is only the property of the teacher, and it is still up to researchers to theorize about the practical knowing. As well, "teacher thinking" puts the idea of practical knowing too much in the domain of the individual teacher. I am compelled to ask the question, is it only thinking we should be interested in, or action?

The theme of pedagogic knowing, I believe, points not just to the teacher, but the situation, and most crucially, the interpretations and understandings of action: how action speaks becomes the ground for pedagogic knowing. Thus conceived, the theme of pedagogic knowing also speaks to a meaning of collaboration. How can we make sense of teaching? What does it mean to be a teacher? How can we achieve

authentic pedagogy? Such questions call out for collaborative scrutiny in action and between teachers and researchers. The question is raised whether collaborative action research can create structures and opportunities for new languages. Can those languages assist in creating change in the schools? As Schon observed, "Where teachers were encouraged to reflect-in-action, the meaning of 'good teaching' and a 'good classroom' would become topics of urgent institutional concern" (1983, p.335). The question of collaboration also asks then, what it means for an outside researcher to become involved, indeed, to ask the meaning of research.

The Themes of Collaboration and The Question of Collaboration

In reflecting on the conversations I was privileged to share with John and Catherine, three dominant themes appeared to guide our discussion: pedagogic hope, pedagogic being, and pedagogic knowing. Attempting to illustrate these themes in terms of the conversations and what other writers have suggested, seemed for me at least, a return, however circuitous, to the question I am raising about the meaning of collaboration: "what does it mean for an outside researcher and teacher to collaborate in an action research project?"

I cannot honestly say that I have this question clearly focused yet, but it continues to guide my inquiry nonetheless. Interpreting the conversations in terms of the themes outlined above, allowed for deeper reflection on the meaning of collaboration. Particularly, my search for such meaning is guided by assumptions that action research, conceived in ways that reject a positivist approach to educational research, and a

"technical rational" approach to school change, may be a means to develop new ways of thinking and talking about and creating change.

The theme of pedagogic hope shows the deep and essential nature of caring that is central to the teacher's task. Such hope challenges the values and ideals of the outside researcher as well, to question what the purpose of research is.

The theme of pedagogic being speaks to the importance of integrity and authenticity in a teacher's work. Does the outside collaborator have an interest in supporting the teacher in his/her quest for more holistic, meaningful experience? Does the researcher too have a being that is defined by the pedagogical situation?

The theme of pedagogic knowing raises the question of what is important knowledge in classrooms and schools, and how we can learn from our actions. The theme of pedagogic knowing points to the need for more reflective action, but also to an appreciation of the situation and the persons involved. Perhaps teacher's knowing and doing may be tacit or sometimes uncritical. But the idea of pedagogic knowing asks whether or not outside collaborators can leave behind conceptual blindfolds.

The three themes discussed above are not isolated signposts of experience. There is also an intimate relationship between them. To speak of pedagogic being means also to speak of pedagogic knowing. That is, what it means to be a teacher is not separate from the kinds of knowing that are important to teaching. What it means to be a teacher, and what the nature is of a teacher's knowledge must be seen in terms of pedagogic hope, which provides meaning for our work as teachers, and

allows us to focus on the need for change and improvement. Pedagogic hope provides incentive to raise questions about teaching and knowing.

The experience of collaboration, and reflection on that experience through, conversations allowed these questions to come to the fore. There are many unresolved issues or tensions remaining. The final chapter will attempt to examine the tensions of collaboration as viewed through the experience of this inquiry.

CHAPTER 6

TENSIONS OF COLLABORATION

> The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled (Gadamer, 1986, p.326).

In the preceding chapter I attempted to illustrate and interpret the themes of a collaborative experience. I believe these themes pointed to what our collaboration was about, or rather what could further orient our collaborative research. Focusing on these themes speaks to the existential meaning of teaching. The question of collaboration asks whether outside researchers can share in that meaning.

In the actual conduct of collaboration there are still many questions that tug at the fabric of our understandings. In the "lived experience" of collaboration, we experience "tensionality." Ted Aoki (1985) talks about the "tensionality" in the dialectic between the abstract ideas of curriculum and curriculum as experience, each seeking to inform the other. It is this sense of dialectic and tensionality that helps me to reflect on both the idea and practice of collaboration.

Reflecting on the experience of collaboration, there were several tensions in the relationships between John and Catherine and myself. Attempting to understand and interpret those tensions encourages reflection on a meaning of collaboration in action research. Rather than a simple recounting of the problems that emerged in the process, the notion of tension suggests a further search for understanding: the tension of the incompleteness of our knowledge and practices. But that incompleteness allows for a continued openness to the question.

Tensions may be a part of the life world of collaboration. Reflection on the tension of collaboration draws consideration of collaborative action research as a viable, post-positivist form of educational research.

Working Relationships: The Tension of Ethical Involvement

The question of collaboration raises the question of the ethical integrity of action research. As Tripp warns, the greatest threat to that integrity is for outside collaborators "to use merely the technical form as a means of engineering professional teacher development" (Tripp, 1984: 27). Carr and Kemmis do not discount the role of outsiders but do consider it problematic because the traditional educational community has tended to reflect the gap between theory and practice, and the interests, roles, responsibilities, and power implicit in that gap.

The literature recounting experiences with collaborative action research reflects the problems with collaboration that Carr and Kemmis, Tripp, and others would alert us to. Some writers note that the interests of researchers from outside the schools may be inconsistent with the more practical goals of the teachers. Often, perceptions of traditional roles and status of university researchers relative to school teachers seem to create difficulties in establishing collaboration (Oakes, et al., 1985; Smulyan, 1983, 1984). Other writers cite rather pessimistic conclusions regarding the possibilities for equitable forms of collaboration, noting the problems of time, workloads, and administrative constraints in schools (Roweton and Wright, 1985; Norris and Sanger, 1984).

It is significant though, that in some of these accounts there is also a realization that the meanings of collaboration and action research cannot be taken for granted. Participants may have different interpretations of what is involved. Thus the meaning of collaboration has to be consciously reflected on in the actual practice of collaboration (Smulyan, 1984). Questions of how the research is to be done, what is to be done, and who is to do what task need to be preceded with opening such questions for discussion. This implies the necessity for uncovering various meanings and interpretations people hold about the process, as well as their positions in the process.

The projects I was involved with were initiated and controlled by the teachers in the schools at all times. Nonetheless, the fact that the projects were an aspect of the teachers' participation in a graduate university class made the independence of those projects somewhat problematic. The course established a form of outside control, which I felt made my position ambiguous: in a sense, there were expectations built in that were not entirely of the partjcipants' making. Initially, it seemed difficult to build a common ground for discussion and for establishing what the form of the collaboration could take. What would we talk about at our first meeting? Should I ask to sit in on John's computer processing class? What should be done with our conversations? Ought I, as an outside collaborator, attempt to learn more about giftedness, or computer processing? These were just a few questions that related to problem of initiation and conduct of collaboration.

My initial interest in the action research projects was in the action research process itself. I was not primarily interested in the

actual content of the changes of the persons I was collaborating with: John's computer processing project and Catherine's gifted program. When I initiated conversations with John and Catherine I felt a little frustrated, in that I was feeling "pulled into" their specific concerns. The "what" of our discussions was not the moments of action research, or the plan, or the monitoring, but rather what the nature of giftedness might be, what problem solving entailed, how one could teach with certain concepts in mind, and so on. It became increasingly compelling for me as an outside collaborator to involve myself with the world of meaning, the lived experience of each teacher's situation, in order to understand "what" was being researched.

Partly at least, the tension I experienced of establishing a working relationship grew out of my desire to influence the outcome, if not of John's and Catherine's action research projects, certainly my own project, which was to build an understanding of collaboration. From more practical perspectives, John and Catherine saw the need for different kinds of collaboration. They expressed the ideas that it may have been more beneficial for them to have worked with a collaborator who was more directly knowledgeable and interested in the actual content of their action research projects. The practice of my collaboration had still been remote from that. On the other hand, the distancing on my part, minimized perhaps the possibility of outside control, and allowed more reflection in a general sense to occur.

In reflecting on my working relationships with John and Catherine, it is difficult to describe the "roles" that we played as collaborators in an action research project. Initially, as has been described

earlier, the nature of the collaborative relationship was undefined and unclear, and in fact, we never did reach a stage where we could say definitely, "this is your role as the outside researcher," or "this is your role as the teacher-researcher." The character of our relationships, such as they were, evolved over the relatively short period of time we were able to work together. Moreover, the meaning of the relationship probably also changed. The meaning of our relationships was defined by the context of the collaborative experience, and the content of our conversations as we reflected on that.

My perceived status as an outside collaborator undoubtedly influenced the nature of the relationship as well. Would the content and quality of conversations have been different if I was a teacher from the schools in which John and Catherine worked? Or from the same school district? If I had been a university professor, would John and Catherine have disclosed more or less about their projects than they did with me? And would those disclosures have allowed for more critical interpretations? These are only hypothetical questions, but they do help to reflect on the relationship in which I was involved as a graduate student, albeit one with a professed interest in teaching.

One of the frustrations I "discovered" in reviewing the literature was the lack of self-reflectiveness of outside--usually university--researchers in collaborative experiences. The "problems" of collaboration are usually couched in terms of the teacher's experiences and the limitations of the teacher's situation. Undeniably, as Fullan and Sarason and many others have reflected on, the structures that many

teachers work in seem to militate against more reflective practice. Yet, the question I am attempting to raise about collaboration is whether there are also practices and forms of thinking, and roles and behaviours which prevent outside researchers from becoming more critically aware.

In the experience of my collaboration there was still a gap, in part due to the various working concerns that required critical reflection and action in themselves. But that concern should be more than just a practical concern about collaboration. Just focusing on action research and collaboration as technical problems to be solved may obscure the deeper questions of the meaning of research, what it is for, and whether action research can respect and join persons of different interests. The question is also raised as to whether these issues can be resolved through the application of rules about collaboration learned form research in other situations or whether the very notion of collaboration requires careful examination and thought in each context.

Certainly the question of collaboration and the tension of working relationships ought to focus our concern on the ethical qualities of those relationships. In many respects, the question of collaboration raises in sharp relief ethical issues in doing research in schools. Especially because the research is conceived as a way of both encouraging reflective and practical activity, questions of responsibility and accountability are paramount. The "locus of control" as Robottom et al. (1986) discovered in an experience of collaborative action research, needs to be critically examined. Whether or not change in a school or classroom is successfully achieved, action research as a

process deals intimately with what people think and do. In other words, "being" is not separable from "knowing," as some forms of research would have it.

Collaborative action research, as a form of educational research, is also much more intrusive, and as an intrusive form of research demands careful thought and practice (Walker, 1983). However, as an orientation to practice, the responsibility for changing that practice belongs to the teacher, which makes collaboration more problematic in terms of developing "roles" and building relationships that are democratic in nature, respectful of the situation, and responsive rather than dominating.

Just as action research is a way of attending to particular situations and respecting particularities, in collaborative action research, ethical considerations must also be worked out in the particular settings by the people involved, with an appreciation and understanding of the meanings that people hold in their situations. Such a perspective recognizes the inherent ambiguity and complexity of human situations (deVoss, et al., 1982). It is another way of saying that ethics must be inherent in the practice of collaboration rather than an applied set of rules about what to do.

Perhaps, as teachers and researchers interested in working collaboratively in action research, we have to understand the collaborative relationship as one that is intrinsically ethical. Such a view would be critical of the domination of theory over practice that the positivist approach tends to foster. A collaborative relationship would have to consciously struggle against the instrumentality that is

engendered by the desire to predict and control. The totalizing claims of objectified knowledge may find expression in actual relations between teachers and researchers, which would inhibit collaborative effort. Collaborative action research, as still incompletely conceived in this study, would reject in concrete terms the social and technical division of labour inherent in the positivist approach to research (Friedmann, 1979). Rejecting the totalizing influence of theory perhaps demands of the participants in collaborative action research what Emmanuel Levinas calls the "ethical relation to the other," a relation that "is ultimately prior to his ontological relation to himself or the totality of things which we call the world" (Kearney, 1984, p.57). I understand Levinas to be saying that what most defines our humanity is the responsibility for others, and that this responsibility is primary. Levinas argues that the ethical call to be responsible to others moves beyond the notion of attempting to define our existence in terms of finite and fixed truths, to a greater awareness of interhuman relationships. We require, Levinas proposes,

> an ethical conscience cutting through the ontological identification of truth with an ideal intelligibility and demanding that theory be converted into a concrete praxis of concern for the other (Kearney, 1984, p.68).

In the context of the interest of my inquiry into collaboration, I find Levinas' notions particularly relevant and thought-provoking. In terms of ethical relation to the other, Levinas also posits "difference" as better than sameness (Kearney, 1984, p.58): the other cannot be reduced to myself or to a conception posited by theory. Thus in the relationship that collaborative action research has the potential to encourage, there would have to be respect for the uniqueness and

particularity of the situation, an openness to others, and above all, an ethical responsibility for others in the situation.

Theory-Practice Relationship: The Tension of Knowing and Action

Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest in their book on action research that a truly adequate educational science would be deliberately based on practical concerns of teachers working in classrooms. Further, the validity of educational theory would be determined by the way it actually relates to practice. The content of my conversations with John and Catherine, and my interpretations of those experiences were challenged by their practical interests and concerns. It is legitimate to say that we were attempting to understand the theories implicit in their practices, and to inform those practices with renewed reflection.

In coming to terms with what action research means, a central problem is an understanding of the notion of a unity of theory and practice, or what may be termed "praxis." Moreover, the problem of collaboration revolves around the issue of whether teaching as a practical activity can be imbued with greater self-reflection, and whether research may be more practically-oriented. The notion of praxis, then, means something quite different from the way we usually talk about theory and practice.

Praxis means more than the more common word in our lexicon: practice. For me, the term practice denotes activity which may be imbued with a certain degree of reflectiveness or consciousness. If we think of a teacher's practice for example, that practice may be carried out with a certain degree of awareness of the situation, consequences, motivations and so forth. Yet, the guiding interests, ends, and more

universal notions may be tacit or absent. Schon (1983) considers that a great deal of practical action in professional situations carries with it largely tacit knowledge. Practice, from this perspective may be carried out in largely unconscious ways;

> By practice, then, we understand a practical social activity transforming reality in obedience to practical needs and implying a certain degree of knowledge of the reality it transforms and the needs it satisfies. Yet practice cannot explain itself; it is not directly theoretical (Sanchez Vazquez, 1977, p.188).

One of the essential goals of action research--or at least some forms of action research--is that it seeks to recast practice through consciousness of itself. As Sanchez Vasquez explains the idea of praxis, there must be a unity of theory and practice in such a form that the consciousness of and about practice is also guided by consciousness; in terms of practical action, consciousness about ends is also guided by self-conscious actions or means (1977, p.195). As Lawrence Stenhouse explained the notion of an educational praxis, it would be "the substantive educational act conscious of itself as theoretical hypothesis" (1983, p.214).

Action research by teachers may be based on a recognition of a gap between theory and practice. There is commonly a belief among teachers that "theory" which is external to their practices is not relevant or "practical." Argyris notes, however, that the term practical is ambiguous in usage today--it has a utilitarian sense, in terms of the linear means-end conception of action (Argyris, et al., 1985). Likewise, Gadamer (1984) thinks that practice has been devalued by thinking of it in terms of the application of theory, turning practice into a technique.

Many writers, including Carr and Kemmis see in action research the possibility of recovering the notion of practice as praxis, which is an inherently moral concept, being concerned with both ends and means, where practice is guided not by theoretical knowledge, but practical reasoning and knowledge, with a disposition to act justly. The Greek term that describes this kind of reasoning is "phronesis."

The problem of understanding the relation of theory and practice seems central to action research, especially in collaborative terms. For an outside researcher coming into a school or classroom a possible implication is that he or she has to "let go" of the theoretical. That is not to argue that the theoretical has no value or importance, but as we have tried to understand above, it cannot inform practical wisdom. Practical wisdom or knowledge is embedded in the practice of education. Daignault (1984), in "theorizing" about action research, suggests that theory-practice cannot be looked at from the idea of applying theory to practice or vice versa, since they deal with very different problematics: theory must account for facts in establishing "a" truth, while practice is inherently political, and must deal with many truths. Thus for Daignault, action is appropriate for investigating "political space", and the truths we seek are necessarily moral ones, decisions about what we ought to do. The concern is about "what could be" rather than the "what is".

Similarly, in seeing "Action Research as a Theory of the Unique", Max van Manen conceives of skills and "pedagogic actions" as not being derived from theory, but from the practice of teaching. The relation of "thought-to-action" is governed not by theory, but practical wisdom (van

Manen, 1984). Praxis in this sense is orienting oneself to both the actions in teaching and one's understanding of those--focusing on the concrete, lived experience. For van Manen, the praxis of action research would be more "ontological" than "epistemological"; the problem is not to see how we can relate theory to practice or practice to theory, but rather, how we can better understand our own practice, and our own knowledge, and be more thoughtful. Pedagogy itself is a form of being, and by definition it deals with practical action (van Manen, 1984).

Attempting to formulate praxis this way does not mean to denigrate theory, not does our argument mean that theory and experience are "dissolved" in each other. Experience by itself may not provide the key to understanding our situations. Thus, theory helps to reflect on experience. As Henry Giroux writes, the real value of theory "lies in its ability to provide the reflexivity needed to interpret the concrete experience that is the object of research" (Giroux, 1983, p.99). What this means for collaborative action research is that the ways in which people make sense of and interpret their experiences creates possibilities for both critical awareness and change. It also implies that we have to pay attention to the "theorizing" that people do in practical situations. Both the practice and the theory in this context are open to critique, which is a different problem than just applying an external body of theory to a perceived problem.

From a critical theory perspective, in which theory is imbued with an emancipatory goal, it is considered important for theory to have some distance or space from experience, in order to promote the possibility

for critical reflection. We can conceive of this distance as opening up the experience and the theory to each other, and to see the dialectic at work in a dynamic way. In other words, within the lived experience of the class or school the experience, or interpretation of that experience is not necessarily frozen in time. There is a possibility of praxis, and this is precisely where and how action research, practiced collaboratively, may contribute. In emphasizing participation and collaboration, critical reflection may be promoted, that is, theorizing about and for practice.

The assumption underlying my interest in this thesis is that theory and practice can be combined, and that this combining is in fact essential to overcoming the technical-rational view of curriculum implementation and school change. Also I am attempting to avoid seeing action research as a "technique." It is essential, I believe, for "practioners" of action research to attend critically to the tendency to slip into a technical mode of thinking and doing, which I am assuming is a dominant aspect of our thinking and practice in education today.

The tension between the idea of collaboration and the experience of collaboration is reflected in the relationship between theory and practice as I experienced it in John's and Catherine's projects. My understanding of John's project, for example, was that he wanted to introduce a more flexible problem-solving approach in his computer processing class. The impetus for the change came from his own understandings and experiences and involved an examination of his own theories about teaching, such as the relative importance of content and process, and how individual students learned. These theories were

opened to question through his own action in the classroom, and not by the application of theoretical knowledge.

In that situation, what could I as the outside collaborator bring? From a practical point of view it became necessary for me to enter into the actions and thinking that John, and Catherine in her project, were engaged in. In the experience of our collaboration it seemed to be important for John and Catherine to discuss their theories as reflected in their practices. It became necessary for me to understand those practices in terms of the ideas set out in the action research plans, in the context of their respective situations and their overall philosophy of teaching.

What was required from me as the outside collaborator was to work as a participant in the research and be willing to let go of my "external" theoretical interests which were the idea of collaboration and my practical interest in influencing the practice of collaboration. In other words, my praxis could have been conceived as entering into the lived experience of John's and Catherine's situations, attempting to understand their theories, as well as developing both the idea and practice of collaboration, but collaboratively.

How does the notion of praxis speak to the question of collaboration? Can collaboration itself be seen as a praxis? As a praxis, collaboration confronts us with the question of why we should collaborate. The notion of praxis has a normative imperative. What is that shared interest or purpose? Does the outside collaborator bring theory to change the practice of the teacher? Is it the teacher's interest only to change a practice? Or do collaborators meet to learn

about each other's theories and practices? Carr and Kemmis suggest that "action research is collaborative when groups of practioners jointly participate in studying their own individual praxis" (1986, p.191). I wonder whether there is not also a more communal praxis, what Gadamer terms "social reason," a praxis which has in its heart a fundamental concern for others.

Epistemological Questions: The Tension of What Knowledge Counts

The question of what knowledge counts is in part related to the issue of praxis, which suggests that we need to attend to the practical knowledge of teachers and others involved in the action research. Attending to the practical suggests outside researchers need to respect the situatedness of educational problems and practices, and not to see research as "context stripping" (Mishler, 1979).

Argyris, et al. writes, "like sentences in a particular language, actions make sense in a particular community of practice" (1985, p.25). The question of collaboration asks whether collaborative action research can contribute to this task of producing knowledge that is both situated and has the possibility of changing practices in schools. From this perspective objectified and generalized forms of knowledge are inadequate for understanding educational problems and practical actions, which are contextualized and particular in nature. Whitehead (1981) believes the challenge is to produce educational theory on the basis of explanations for teachers' own educational practices. The form of educational theory conceived in those terms has also been called "theories of action":

> Theories of action are the conceptual structures and visions that provide our reasons for acting as we do, and for choosing the activities, curriculum materials, and other things that we choose in order to be effective (Sanders and McCutcheon, 1984, p.5).

In this respect collaboration suggests a different stance of outside researchers to knowledge interests. It cannot be an indifferent one, or a dominating one of subject to object. Perhaps the relation of outside researcher and school practioner may be conceived as subjects who stand side by side, in co-presence, oriented to understanding and improving educational practice and discovering meaning (Scudder and Mickunas, 1985). The validity of such knowledge, derived in practice, can only be determined by a "community of interpreters."

In Bernstein's words, a claim to validity may be thought of as "a claim to reason that points to the possibility of the argumentative redemption of validity claims through mutual dialogue and discourse" (1983, p.192). In collaborative action research, such discourse may be said to be founded on practical concerns and normative interests. Thus, as much as deciding on the validity of knowledge in terms of its "truth" in empirical terms, there may also be an appeal to ethical "goodness" that is, how knowledge relates to the practice of pedagogy.

I walked into my collaborative experience with limited knowledge of action research. My intention nevertheless to influence a pattern of collaboration quickly lost its impetus in conversations with John and Catherine who were more than tolerant of my arrogance. In our conversations we discussed theories and concepts which had a direct impact on their practices. For example, in Catherine's project we discussed the relative merits of in-class as opposed to pull-out gifted

programs. Catherine also shared with me some of the materials she had developed that could be used by classroom teachers with "gifted" children.

As an outside researcher, an aspect of my collaborative experience was learning from and about specific teaching experiences, and forms of knowledge embedded in practical, pedagogical interests. But we also discussed educational issues from a much broader perspective. Significantly in both my conversations with Catherine and John, much of our discussion revolved around notions of what good education might be, and how this related to the interests of students. In the conversations there always seemed to be this movement between particular instances and more universal ideas of good education.

Although my collaborative experience was very "educational" in that as an outside collaborator I learned a great deal from John and Catherine in conversation, my position as a collaborator always felt somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand I am a classroom teacher, with a strong orientation to that vocation but also I had been enjoying a year "off" at university, soaking up some theory. Partly I was feeling ambiguous about what knowledge really counts. Perhaps for a university researcher the epistemological question is more problematic.

For a university researcher the epistemological question of collaboratively produced knowledge in action research may be of more concern, since he or she does not have direct responsibility for pedagogic practice in the schools, or a direct interest in affecting change in schools. In other words, there may be a greater interest in the generalizability of knowledge created through action research.

Additionally, the university researcher may be subject to institutional and collegial restraints with regard to the conduct of research, and its justification. At the same time, most university researchers are also teachers, and especially in education departments there is a professed and a necessary interest in pedagogical practice.

The tension of what knowledge counts does raise the question of whether knowledge developed through collaborative action research ought to be made public. Does the outside researcher have any responsibility to bring new or different understandings to bear on the situation? In these questions there is a notion that collaboration points a way in which educational research can become more educational. The collaborative relationship is also an educational one, in the sense of education as a leading out and moving beyond, a responsibility of all the participants in a collaborative project.

Reflection: The Tension of Awareness

In one of his many eloquent turns of phrase, Freire writes:

> Whether it be a raindrop (a raindrop that was about to fall but froze, giving birth to a beautiful icicle), be it a bird that sings, a bus that runs, a violent person in the street, be it a sentence in the newspaper, a political speech, a lover's rejection, be it anything, we must adopt a critical view, that of the person who questions, who doubts, who investigates, and who wants to illuminate the very life we live (1985, p. 198).

A distinguishing feature of action research from both "normal" research and "normal" classroom practice is the greater potential for systematic (and some would say critical) reflection on knowledge and experience. Most writers interested in action research seem to agree with Freire that educational practice ought to be imbued with

reflection. Reflection would mean the ability to see one's self, as teacher, as both an active thinker and doer, as a subject in control of the situation. Carr and Kemmis (1986) also consider critical reflection, whereby the teacher becomes more aware of wider issues, as an essential component of action research. Burton (1986) considers reflection to be "the soul of action," allowing us to become more aware of our tensions and critique our impressions about what we do as teachers.

Through the process of dialogue, Freire (1986) argues that people may become more aware of "limit situations"--ideologies and structural constraints--and in the process discover opportunities for change. In terms of professional practice, Schon (1983) talks about the "frames" of a practioner's activity. When a practitioner becomes more aware of his or her "frames" the possibility is also created for alternatively framing practice (Schon, 1983, p.310).

The possibility for systematic reflection appears to be enhanced through collaboration by helping to structure observations, discover themes, and discuss plans and observations. As I have alluded to previously, collaborating through the means of conversation seemed to promote more reflective conversation as a consequence. Schon considers that it is important that there is a partnership between researchers and practioners in order to create more reflective practice and research (1983, p.323). Perhaps collaboration may help to uncover knowledge and meanings that may be largely tacit, to uncover that which we are not necessarily aware of. According to theorists who stress the interpretative nature of human endeavours like education, understanding

is enhanced through communication. In other words through conversation individuals may become more reflective about their own situations.

In becoming more aware of the tacit nature of practical knowledge or theory, and to be able to see that theory in action is in a sense to have a conversation with the situation (Argyris, et al., 1985). Ricoeur (1979) also considers that action can be a text for interpretation and conversation, a conception that points to importance of writing and sharing interpretation collaboratively. The idea and practice of conversation in collaboration is intriguing as a way of promoting reflection. Argyris proposes that "this reflective talk provides another window into practical reasoning" (1985, p.59).

The orientation to the lived experience of the teacher, classroom, or school as the context of both the practical action, and the practical wisdom or theory, forms the parameters for my current understanding of action research and how an "outsider" may collaborate in research and in research and innovation. Particularly in attempting to define, and practice a form of collaboration, we are required to begin with our own understandings, to recover, in sense, the meanings of our practice, as teachers and researchers.

Personal reflection on the work in which we are involved is an essential element of this kind of research; "... those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively" (Grumet, 1985, p.5). This also speaks to a rationale for collaboration in action research: that the "release of subjectivity is mediated by others" (Grumet, 1981, p.128). The purpose of collaboration so conceived dwells in the idea of conversation as a mode of research, perhaps what Liam Hudson means by

research "as a process wherein one person becomes acquainted with others" (Hudson, 1976), and, it should be added, to come to know ourselves better. This perspective in research considers, therefore, conversation as an opportunity for thoughtful reflection oriented to improving practice (Carson, 1986).

Michael Polanyi, in The Tacit Dimension develops the notion that "we can know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966, p.4). The idea that there is perhaps a great deal of hidden, or tacit, knowledge that is implicit in teachers' theories and practices is an important one in the context of action research. Speaking about practice enhances what we can tell. Collaboration, from this point of view, may be a way that we can come to know more. Such knowing, as has been presented above, is oriented to improving practice. As Schon asserts,

> The extent of our capacity for reciprocal reflection-in-action can be discovered only through an action science which seeks to make what some of us do on rare occasions into a dominant pattern of practice (1983, p.354).

When I read over our "reflections" in the form of written transcripts based on my conversations with John and Catherine there is a much more active connotation than the word reflection sometimes suggests. What we discussed, the way we framed our observations in language was not necessarily what we actually observed. The written transcripts of our conversations were particularly interesting in that way: a text was provided in which we could interpret our theories, which seemed a different order of interpretation from the original oral conversation when we theorized about our practice.

Tentatively, in our conversations, we entered a "hermeneutical circle": moving back and forth between particular instances and more

universal notions, attempting to understand and interpret, trying to answer the why. That this could evolve in a fairly short period of time is a promising indicator of the value of conversation or dialogue in collaboration. However, the time factor and other considerations worked against the participants taking a more critical stance in these conversations.

My feeling is that the tension of reflection in practice calls for much greater reflection. For example, the question may be asked, is reflective action different from an evaluative model of action, where we judge action on the basis only of its outcomes? Is reflection itself a form of action? Does the idea of dialogue or conversation suggest an appropriate model for collaboration in action research? Promisingly, the collaboration I experienced through conversations and the transcripts of those conversations, plus the personal journals that we kept, pointed to the possibility of promoting and enhancing critical reflection. If this project had extended for a longer time, I suspect that the sharing in conversations and writings would have deepened. The limits of the collaborative experience may well have become objects of more critical scrutiny.

The Idea of Community: The Tension of Dialogue

The concept of "paradigm" suggests that scientists of a particular persuasion have institutional support in a community of researchers. From the perspective of the dominant forms of educational science, university scholars can probably talk about being part of an educational science community. To a lesser extent, teachers, usually as clients, sometimes as participants, may be members of such communities. To the

extent that there may be such a community, the question still has to be posed, is it one that will close the gap between theory and practice, doing and knowing, and research and action?

The notion of community also asks whether we can develop a language imbued with practical interest oriented to an enlightened view of change and its possibilities. Existing roles and traditions in education may work against the realization of genuine action research. Collaboration is central to this question. In part, the question of collaboration asks whether through open dialogue, an educational community based on a normatively grounded praxis can find sustenance within existing structures and institutions.

Certainly in the literature there is acknowledgment of the difficulty of building communities of reflective practioners. Reflection about practice, and monitoring of actions appear to be very difficult without support from others (Elliot, 1976-77). Carr and Kemmis (1986) discuss the difficulty of an action researcher working alone, particularly in terms of promoting reflection, and maintaining integrity in the research process. Without more critical dialogue, it may be difficult for teachers to become aware of "bad habits" or ideological distortions in thinking (Tripp, 1984, p.21). Ebbut (1985) considers that public critique of research findings in teacher action research is essential if it is to find legitimacy as research, another rationale for some kind of institutional support.

Several commentators have noted the positive results of the support of "research teams" for individual teachers engaged in change projects. Keiny (1985) mentions the supportive function of a research team for

individual teachers in a school renewal program. The action research teams seemed to provide a "subsystem" within the larger system of the school that appeared to nourish some teachers' motivations for change. Similarly, Gerald Pine (1984) suggests in a paper on collaborative action research than an action research group may provide a system within a system to encourage change in a school. Torbert (1978) suggests that participants in collaborative action research need to seriously reflect on and build "liberating structures" before discovering of shared purposes can occur. From a more general perspective, we may ask whether collaboration in action research can be a way of building a "community of interpreters" whereby "truth" in education can be discovered through dialogue and practice.

The experience of the graduate seminar from which my experience originated provided a glimpse, I believe, of how an action research community might begin to function. To be sure, there was not enough time to develop deeper levels of communication. Nevertheless, as an outside collaborator I eagerly anticipated and enjoyed my conversations with the teachers in the projects I have described previously. The class itself was unique in terms of providing a forum not only for theoretical discussion, but also ways to discuss the projects from more practical perspectives.

Collaborative action research provides at least a way to begin thinking about what an educational research community oriented to practical concerns might be like. Paramount in such a conception is the need to provide a forum for discussion, conversation and support. Would an ideal mix be teachers and university researchers? Are more formal

structures necessary to promote and nurture the possibilities inherent in action research? Is it possible to build genuinely collaborative communities in situations often dominated by bureaucratic and hierarchical structures and demands?

The dilemma for those interested in fostering change through collaborative action research is that we work in institutions and structures that do not in reality encourage self-initiated and non-bureaucratic innovations. Bernstein (1983) discusses that problem from a more general philosophical perspective, but I believe his insights are relevant to the question of collaboration in educational action research. Bernstein, like many other thinkers, wonders whether conditions for the idea of community that would allow for dialogue can be found in modern society. To some extent, the possibilities for such community "presupposes the incipient forms of such communal life" (1983, p.226).

It seems relatively easy to get caught up in what Bernstein calls thinking in terms of a "totalizing critique" (1983, p.225) when we despair of challenging on a personal scale the institutions we work in. Such critiques, however, often obscure the possibilities for constructive and progressive change within those institutions (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1987). The journey I began this year, halted by detours and mined with contradictions, nevertheless I believe, allowed a view of the possibility of a community in which practioners and researchers might find common ground through dialogue. As much as anything, collaboration in action research may open up awareness of possibilities and as Bernstein contends we need

> to seize upon those experiences and struggles in which there are still the glimmerings of solidarity and the promise of dialogical communities in which there can be genuine mutual participation and where reciprocal wooing and persuasion can prevail (1983, p.228).

In trying to develop a practice of collaboration, we may heed Gadamer's words when he tells us that "practice has to do with others and codetermines the communal concerns by its doing; ... practice is conducting oneself and acting in solidarity. Solidarity, however, is the decisive condition and basis of all social reason" (1984, p.82). The notion of community as a basis for research describes what is essentially human in our enterprise, the concern for others and in our case, the shared and yet to be discovered meanings of education.

Some may argue that such a conception is a utopian notion, that it does not recognize the reality of our situations in the schools. But as Levinas asserts, "being utopian does not prevent it from investing our everyday actions of generosity or good will towards the other" (Kearney, 1984, p.68). Gadamer calls utopia "a form of suggestiveness from afar," but which allows us to reflect on and critique the present (1984, p.80). The concerns which fuel our interest in action research and collaboration are of the world, but our search for shared purpose is a search for meaning that may transcend the immediate and particular.

Conclusion: The Tension of the Question

I have attempted in this thesis to reflect on experiences with both the theory of collaborative action research and my experience as an outside collaborator in two action research projects. My own search for understanding was generally oriented by the question of what it means to collaborate. That search took me through some of the literature on

action research and collaboration. John's and Catherine's generosity and openness in conversation gave the question life, and allowed it to grow.

It is difficult to derive conclusions about the experiences of this past year except that we need to learn a great deal more. Perhaps the value of action research is that we become more open to questions; questions which point to something that is shared between us as teachers and university researchers. Our attempts to understand and improve education are powerful incentives to continue asking the question about collaboration in action research.

To some extent, I feel quite dissatisfied and frustrated at this point in the thesis, the point that ought to be a conclusion, where I could say "the end!" I wish in some ways I could say, well, this is what collaboration in action research really means. Moreover, it would be comforting to follow up with a list of recommendations for those interested in pursuing collaborative action research, and a list of do's and don'ts.

Yet I realize that would be arrogant and dishonest. Arrogant, because my own learning and experience was incomplete, specific to a situation, and subject to more critical scrutiny. Dishonest, because the situation that allowed me to write this thesis was not totally my own to interpret. Of course I take responsibility for what I have written here. But I would still have to ask, what would John say about collaboration? Would Catherine have a different view on the conduct of collaboration and its meaning? What would other teachers and researchers say?

The question of collaboration asks those teachers and researchers who are interested in finding common ground in education to think about what it is that draws their common interest and concerns. That common search is challenged to find expression in non-dominating ways in dialogue or conversation. Through dialogue it may be possible to find common themes: existential realities which speak more universally about our concerns for children, teaching, and knowing. Entering into a collaborative situation also means dealing with tensions and dilemmas that are inherent in our work as teachers and researchers. Above all, discovering a shared purpose is presupposed by the possibility of building an ethical engagement of responsibility and concern for others.

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Appendix 1

Samples of Conversation
with John & Catherine
With Notes & Observations

CONVERSATION WITH JOHN - APRIL 20, 1987

NOTES & OBSERVATIONS

J: Like I say, I was reading through that [the last transcripts] and when you're talking you can follow a particular stream, you know its not really connected to what happened five or ten minutes ago, but you read through that and you say, hey, what did I say before and you flip back three pages and put it side by side and you say, I couldn't have ...

Does the written word help to reflect
- is there a more critical stance?
- a temporal element (relate to question of interpretation)

H: I just want to go back to something you said, you look upon a method of teaching as a discovery method as just a technique--which has the same goal, to achieve a certain level of consciousness, now I wonder though if you hadn't set your problem at the outset of your project, that is whether students couldn't become more independent learners

J: I think that is a goal but the way I handled the course is a technique that is used to attain that goal.

technical thinking

H: That is not the same goal as attaining a specific amount of content is it?

H: So I guess in a way, the way you are teaching computing processing, the process is the content, the process involves knowing the languages, ... etc. ... so I was critical of myself here for seeing content and process too apart ... just for argument's sake, if there was a real problem solving approach of the kind you were talking about, theoretically at least, a student could fail the course in terms of content ... but in a way the student could still have learned problem solving, then the problem would be ...

process in content

J: How do you evaluate? And when you mentioned that it sort of twigged my thought there, something I hadn't thought of before because the evaluation is on the end result which is content, but the student may have picked up some pretty good research skills you know ... the student may have learned how to dig through materials, where to look, how to look, he may have been collaborating with his friends in the class ... to the point he knows how to ask questions and get answers through conversations with his peers, and still not have covered the content ... and another thing I just thought of a couple of students went through the work, the research, building the

greater awareness of process
problem of knowing
- evaluation an end result -- content

awareness

programs, but couldn't write up the results and as a result got nothing on that component, and as far as the evaluation is concerned its kind of tough on the kid to say well you got 0 on it because you didn't produce anything tangible whereas the student still learned a little bit about how to handle a problem solving approach ...

H: It seems almost like there are a couple of levels at which you are working ... it seems to me that at one level you are saying that computer processing, to go through the course successfully you learn a problem solving approach, in a sense the content is a problem-solving approach ... — content is the problem solving approach

J: Ya, in a standard sort of definition of problem solving ... you're set with a problem, and data you have to graph ...

H: No, I was thinking in more of a sense that you would want it to be open-ended ... someone is going to know how to program, you can deal with different programs ... to be able to work beyond fixed boundaries so to speak ...

J: Ya, ya ... I think programming by nature has that ...

H: Ya ... so in a sense that is, you want to teach a problem-solving approach ... obviously that involves a certain kind of content ... but ... where does the problem come in then, by teaching these languages and certain approaches and that ends up working against more open-ended problem solving, then where do you see the linkages between the two, and how do you see them working hand in hand. Obviously you can't just walk in and give problems, and just give problems background knowledge, how would you get them to learn stuff and at the same time maintain a problem-solving approach or orientation? — relation between solving

J: I look at the ten group and over the three years I think we get to a point where we can open it up and make a situation where the student has to analyze a situation and apply what he knows. Down at the ten level the student doesn't have anything to apply, so it is a little more structured, a little more rigorous ... you know I don't want to compare it to a math course but it is almost like a math course ... — notion of structure

H: Lots of problems ...

J: Lots of problems ... you learn how to factor a quadratic, here are forty-seven quadratics ... same sort of thing, you vary the problem somewhat, but this is the same thing you did a few days ago and say you have to learn how to solve a particular problem when you don't know what a computer language is ... I think you have to establish some sort of a base, a working base to start from and at the upper level once they have got that to draw on and they feel a little more confident, and say "ya I have done something like that before and all I have to really do now is see if I can apply it to this kind of particular setting" ... and break down that big problem that they've got and break it down into little chunks and say ya I can build a little program that will do that chunk ... and then tie them all together ... that's something I don't think we can do at the ten level.

is process built on knowledge?

younger students need foundation

H: It strikes me as the same problem that runs throughout our educational system ... you know the way we all ask that question, "where do we start" ... you know we got to have the basics ... and we always find more basics to build on ... we talk about teaching kids "how to learn" or "problem solving" but I wonder if we really know what those terms mean ...

J: What was really brought out in this project is that there are individual styles in which kids learn, ways in which one kid will perform better, say in a verbal kind of exchange, but if you dump a tutorial on them, even if they can read don't do as well ...

learning style

researching students

H: It sounds like, as one spinoff of the action research, you were researching students in your classroom ... as one result you weren't looking for but certainly came to your awareness ...

J: It became very evident as time went on ... that these students who worked well on a verbal sort of basis ...

H: Obviously more so than if you had just read about it ... about "learning styles" ...

J: ... reading about learning styles, and I would have said, oh ya, learning styles ... and in most classroom settings the teacher determines the style ... he is comfortable with one particular style presenting the information because it works with 99.9% of his kids, or 60% of his kids maybe ... and he gets the results back that he wants ... whereas you know there is a minority in there that can't function with that particular style ...

teacher sets learning style

H: In a sense we're really talking about teaching in a similar way, or seeing the problem in a similar way that you see these kids using the computer knowledge ... we have certain notions of teaching, and I wonder to the extent we see our own teaching as problem solving ...

What it means to teach

teaching as problem solving

In terms of the action research I wonder if that's a way of ... like your problem solving approach if that has the same problem ... rather than just writing it up and you're done and then go back and do the same thing, I wonder if we are looking at something a little more open-ended here because if it isn't it seems to me we end up doing the just same things over again ... just something else that we incorporate in our routines ...

action research -- orients to watching kids

J: I think the observations of the results of an action research project, that is fairly strictly monitored, where you are looking at each kid ... those sorts of things the action research model forces you into a position where you say ya I'm going to have to keep my eyes open and look at what is happening here, more so than you would in a regular sort of classroom setting where you say well the guy didn't say anything for the forty minutes so he must understand what is going on, and you don't realize until you give him a test on the content that he didn't. I think that opens your eyes to what the students are doing ... it's up to you as a teacher to take that information and incorporate it into your teaching ... it's one thing that this two month project has really opened my eyes to ... up to this point everything has been canned, like you know two months, here's the tutorial and I want the exercises this this and this and I'm sure I'd go around and help each student, but there was not the constant monitoring ... if little Sam or Betty or Joe was sitting in the corner going tickety-tickety-tickety and successfully handing in assignments you assumed

awareness of students

monitoring things that happen in class

everything was going well ... I think opening it up in this fashion did allow me to catch a few more unconscious responses ... leading to more verbal interaction with those who seemed to have difficulties.

H: What is your thinking now about the content of the project, as an approach to teaching computer processing?

J: I think I'm going to try it again next year, the next year I teach this stuff ... I think as a result of this one I've done this way, I think I'm going to be able to notice some things a little quicker ...

awareness of what happens in class

research as finding the unexpected

H: It sounds like from doing this project there are a number of things you have actually learned from doing the research that you see as problems now ... you mentioned individual students, their learning styles, as one example ...

J: And those sorts of things are what I'm going to be looking for, and not sort of by products that come on later down the line ... when you look at this project, this is not something I set out to research, but it is something I learned as a by-product, and it is something that is rather important, to help each kid perform up to his potential, and it is something I'm going to be looking for now ...

action research like problem solving but more monitoring

H: Are you going to make any comments on the action research process?

J: The structure of it, it may be similar to the old problem solving steps and that sort of thing, but the structure to it puts a little more consistent effort in monitoring the situation and reflection on what you perceive is taking place and trying to analyze what you can do to modify it classroom setting ... and the idea of having people come in and collaborate with you is valuable, in that when the other people in our Bus. Ed. department sat in on the classes a number of the students in my classes are also students in their classes as well, so we can sit back and say, little Johnny is doing this this and this and I found that in my class he works well when I do this, this and this so there's an exchange there that is useful ...

collaboration oriented to understanding individual students

H: ... a kind of collaboration between teachers that is really important ...

J: I find that really helpful, especially the couple of circumstances under which we had share particular students ... — sharing students

H: ... ya, because when I talk with you it's very abstract in a way, you know when you're talking about your classroom or students ... I didn't have as much a concrete sense of it ...

J: Yes the content of the course is something that makes collaboration a little ... — content of course is a basis of collaboration

H: Would that kid of collaboration be more valuable do you think, if there was more, sort in intimate, like with another teacher doing similar things, or in the school ...

J: There is value to both collaboration with another teacher in the same school, in the sense they share the same student, there is a shared experience there, that should be shared, ... but I think external collaborators have a role to play as well in that first of all, if the collaborator comes into a classroom setting he doesn't know any of the students, he doesn't have a pre-conceived notion of what is acceptable behaviour for this particular student or what his past performance is like ... there are a dozen bodies there and you treat them as equals and you're not burdened with any preconceived ideas ... collaborators that come in externally and can sit down and view the responses to the instruction on a sort of unbiased perspective. I think there comments on their observations are worth as much if not more than observations that come from people who know the students ... — teachers - shared experiences; outside collaborator - "objective" point of view; ask to elaborate

H: That kind of collaboration would be somewhat more systematic ... it seems to me what we have been doing is collaborating on our reflections ... we've been sharing ideas, bouncing ideas off each other, you know, about your project and action research ... — external collaboration provides unbiased perspective

J: That I think is valid ...

H: It's a different kind of collaboration though then what you were talking about ...

J: ... it's a different kind of collaboration than making a checklist and ticking off each student's response or whatever ... but I think the sort of reflecting that we've been doing ... helps my anyway in looking at, putting some structure on what I see happening ... and I can sit down and I can say well I've got sort of concrete written or verbal responses ... (end of tape).

reflections -- putting structure in observations -- ask John to elaborate

CONVERSATION WITH CATHERINE, APRIL 20, 1987

C: (Talking about university research) Fullan is saying this too that it's stopping, that teachers are giving lip service to it but not really following through ...

H: (talking about how action research is going to be different from past experiences) How is it going to be different this time around ... the fact that we are talking about action research ...

C: There has to be some incentive for teachers to want to change ... — incentives for teachers

I think sometimes we are expecting too many things from teachers and there isn't enough time, I think time is the big factor, there isn't enough time to do this action research kind of thing and it would be valuable I'm sure but teachers have to be given more time somewhere along the line to be able to do it ... — time

H: That raises the whole question of the culture of the school, and whether it promotes change or not ...

C: (discussing some of the ideas in my proposal) I think that's the whole thing right there, if we have time to reflect and be conscious of where the improvements need to be that gives us a critical awareness ... — time; reflection; critical awareness; ask Catherine to elaborate - ie. what does reflection mean

Why not see action research as a technique? It is a technique as far as I can see.

H: That's a good question ... uh, I think on one level, I would agree with you, or at least with what you are implying that action research is a technique that we apply, as long as we do that in a conscious way ... you know, as this is a technique for becoming more conscious and learning more about our own classrooms, so in that sense, yeah, I would have to agree with you. I guess where I would want to be careful about it becoming a technique is that as a technique it tends to just become that, just automatically ...

C: ... an end in itself?

H: Yeah, and then it doesn't really promote thinking anymore, it's just something that you do, like taking the register ... I'm not sure ...

C: It's exercise in itself is what you're saying, it's just an exercise in itself then ... — technique as an exercise in itself

H: ... the stuff we do in teaching, the actions we do everyday, do we always reflect on them or do we just do them ... become second nature in a way ... you know you could go into a "good teacher's classroom and one of the reasons they are called a good teacher is because they have control of the classroom, right, they have discipline. I'm sure if you went into that classroom, and asked a teacher like that, at least at that particular moment anyway, she may not be able to tell you what it is that she is doing to make her class work ... in that sense in kind of unconscious in that she has these techniques that she applies almost unconsciously, almost by habit. Now I'm not criticizing that ... I guess what I'm saying is can we also become more aware and ... for instance you might argue in the context of what you're doing, if you want kids to expand their thinking for instance, some people say if you have too tight a control of the classroom that in a sense it could work against that, so programmed, so controlled ... so many people might say, the principal might say, well she's doing a wonderful job, you know the class is quiet, the kids are working etc. ... but you could also say that might not encourage a certain kind of thinking ... in order to become aware of that you would have to become self-critical of certain techniques that you're applying in that situation ... — why action research not a technique

C: Yes that can happen, that has happened in the gifted program, where you want to expand their thinking, get into really creative ideas. The first time I did brainstorming with them I got very careful answers and you don't want careful answers ... — making innovation work for students

(further discussion about technique ...)

H: I'm not sure you can have an open mind, that doesn't really make sense, but in a sense to try to see beyond ... you don't want to put blinders on to see only what you are looking for, you know, there could be a lot more ...

C: ... you're critically assessing as you're doing ...

critical assessing

H: Yes, that's what you said at several points (in our last conversation) that its pointing to something else, that you start off with a narrow question, but when you start trying to find answers for it you begin finding, begin seeing, other questions ...

C: Yes, yes, definitely, that's exactly what you do, and I guess maybe after you said it's not really a spiraling down, it's these little spinoff, but each little spinoff down closer to thing you are trying to solve ...

spinoffs -- going to the question

... Yes, this is where you were talking about the spinoffs too and you were saying to me you are really widening the inquiry, because you were talking about the role of the teacher in the classroom, the teacher's attitude towards the change ... part of the different problems I was bringing into it and they are all different problems but at the same time they all belong to the major one ...

H: One of the things I saw you addressing was this question of collaboration in a sense, and I'm not sure you were conscious of that or not ...

question of collaboration

C: Yes ...

H: ... it seemed like your problem in terms of the action research was how you could work with this particular teacher ...

C: That's right ... to get something that we could do together or that she's at least happy with ...

H: So it wasn't necessarily the gifted program ...

C: Well it's part of the gifted program ...

H: Yeah, but the problem was in a way, it sounded like, how you could sort of work collaboratively with this teacher. Did you ever see it that way?

C: Yes, I did, definitely, it's an important factor. What we have done this last two weeks is talk about what the needs of these students are ...

collaboration - focusing on needs of students

H: Have you seen any change from your original plan to now ...?

C: Well, I see a lot of change in my attitude, yes ... when I started out I was convinced the really best way to go was to have a totally in-class program and now I'm seeing that this is not the best way, that I would like to take them out even more often than once a week I think ... I can do that but I was trying to work under the guidelines the Yellowhead School district had set up, but I'm finding there are many advantages to having them pulled out, and I was talking to Joan and she was finding that just working in the class room was just to confusing ... so I don't want to go right back to a total pull-out program ... it's important to have the cooperation of the classroom teacher to get things going ... so that has been a change ...

changing mandated program - not best for situation

need cooperation of classroom teacher to get change

( ) mentioned the necessity and importance of catalyst teachers to be able to meet and discuss common problems and insights, and that it had been a difficult task with the absence of a central office coordinator)

appointments for meeting

H: Where would you say you have gained the most knowledge from doing the action research?

C: I ~~think~~ the action research has helped me go into one direction ... I think that has been the biggest advantage of it, to take one problem at a time, that's a big advantage, to do one problem only and to work it right down and have it solved and then if another one presents itself, work it down ... I think that has been good, because I have carried it down step by step ...

action research -- helped to focus action .

C: (discussed what she saw to be significant about Fullan's ideas about change, particularly the teacher believing and understanding the adopted change and how it has changed her ideas about implementation -- to look for things in the classroom and the teacher's believes that would make a program possible).

(also discussed how she has learned and thought about the nature of giftedness and what gifted students are like).

(We also discussed briefly thoughts about action research -- she has found it useful in terms that she described her experience above -- she feels it would be a useful procedure for starting off a new program).

H: Did you any value in collaboration with an outsider, like myself ... was that useful; or how could it be more useful? — outside collaboration

C: You writing down our conversation like that and bringing the main points out like you did today is very interesting. I think sometimes we talk around in circles and never really the main points we're trying to bring out ... and when you get that it really helps. — writing conversation; talk around in circles

H: Perhaps talking together, we're really sure of what we want to say ... maybe the idea of conversation is like a kind of mutual research ... because you are trying to bring out meanings ...

C: ... and you feed it back to that person ...

H: ... so it's kind of joint inquiry in a way, conversation is a form of inquiry ...

C: And it's nice if you have a problem that you can discuss it with someone ... — importance of discussing a problem with a person

... It would have been really interesting if (had been working at the same level that I had, and the same gifted program and talk about it back and forth, but they were so different so it didn't really seem like it was going to be that worthwhile ... — need for collaboration with others with same interests/problems

(Discussing notion of collaboration: Irene wondered whether action research could not be built into the practicum program at the university, and have a form of collaboration between the school and university.) — action research as practicum

C: I think you have to see collaboration through different lights ... and the way I was thinking of it, if I don't have the collaboration of a teacher in the classroom I don't have her support, so for that reason you need the support of the classroom teacher, you have to collaborate with her on what's going to happen ... it's nice to have the collaboration of somebody from outside, just feedback of what you're doing, the problems you're — need for collaboration at school level; collaboration as

facing and the ways to solve that, and then you need, it would be nice also, as I said, if I could have collaborated with Joan ... you see it's three different kinds of collaboration isn't it? I mean you have to think of all three of those ...

feedback

different forms of collaboration

H: there are different levels of problems, different interests ...

... it sounds like from what you're saying that you have got a much more ... you're much more critically aware of your role, that kind of consulting role ... in other words, I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but initially you might have thought all I've got to do is to tell teachers about this and the program will be implemented ....

C: I did, that's exactly what I thought ...

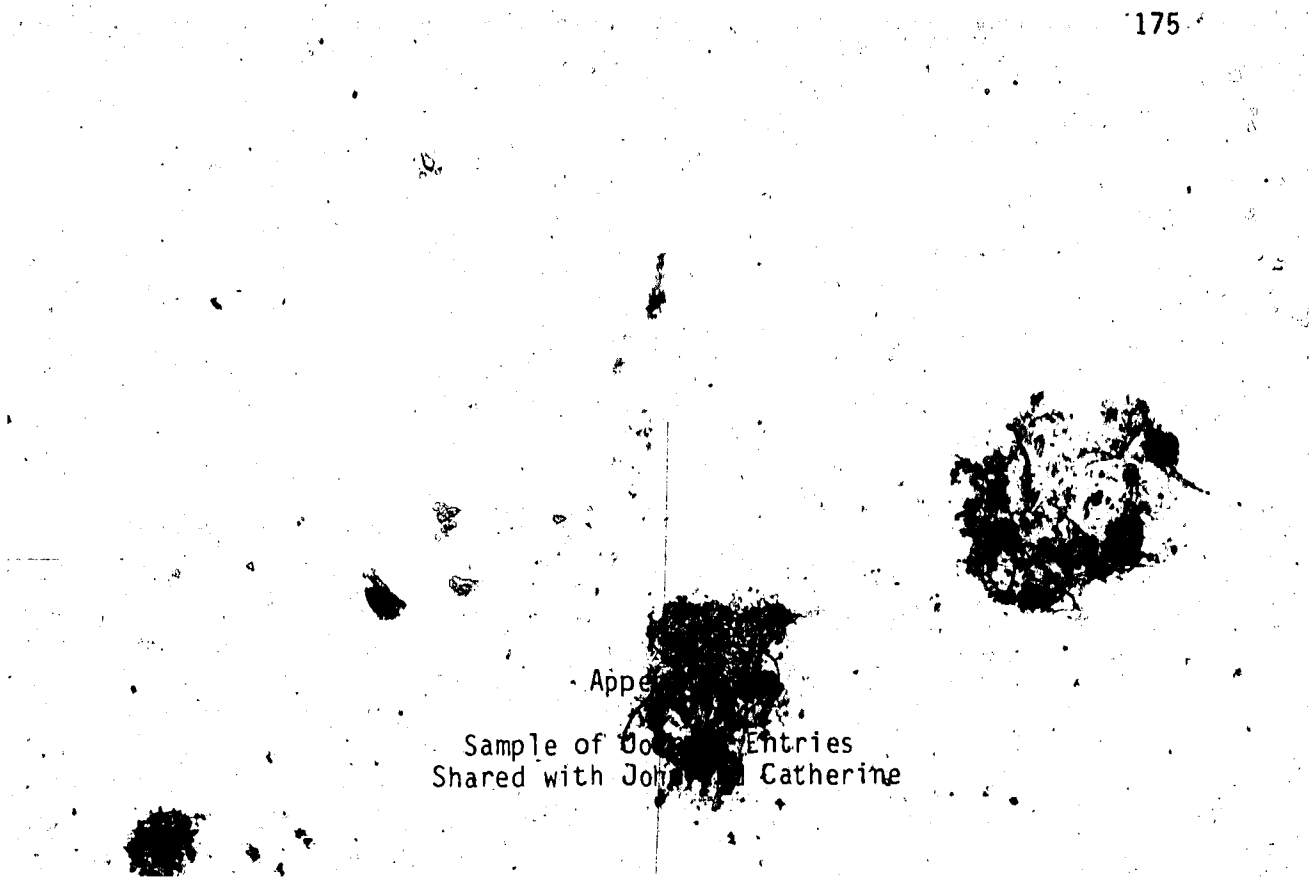
H: Now you have a much more critically aware idea of what that role entails ... and

C: Now it's more like a salesman ...

- implementor as salesman

H: Well, and also you're saying too that to extend the notions of collaboration somehow as part of the implementation ... that's a pretty significant outcome really in your own thinking

C: Well, I've got a class, I think I better go!



Appe

Sample of Do Entries
Shared with Jo Catherine

JOURNAL REFLECTIONS SHARED WITH JOHN & CATHERINE Mar. 2/87

My interest in this course and project is to attempt to learn more about action research in actual practice. More specifically, in terms of my own thesis project, I am interested in discovering whether or ~~not~~ action research makes a difference in teachers' work--whether it can be a means for changing practice, and for increasing awareness and opening up possibilities for change.

For me, this course offers an interesting opportunity for dialogue with some teachers who are engaged in doing action research projects in their schools/classrooms. I am also interested in looking at this course as an action research project: the combination of practical projects with more traditional classroom work, and conversations between individual course members and ( ) and myself seems to be a unique way of approaching the study of curriculum and school change. So just as within the individual projects of class members there is a central question of how theory and practice can be combined more effectively, in this course as a whole the question may be posed as to the effectiveness of joining "educational theory" with actual practice in both learning about change and actually creating it.

Thinking about this last point already points out one important difference between this course and common university courses that I've been involved in, and that is its explicitly normative aspect. Each of us has some particular and important values and interests that derive from our situations and from the changes we wish to affect. Certainly this is an issue that action research addresses--that by focusing on theory and practice, action research as educational research is directed to improvement, and accepts our value interests as inherent in this process.

I think this may also pose a problem for collaboration. If teachers and "outside" researchers work together, interests have to be made explicit and accepted by the cooperating parties. In "traditional" educational research this has been a problem, in that either the nature of collaboration has not been fully negotiated, or the interest of research projects has just been assumed to be neutral, which of course it is not, or university researchers have just assumed that their work carried intellectual and moral weight. I thought that after ( ) explained his and my roles as "outside" collaborators in the action research projects that it helped to break down some of the barriers to beginning a collaboration. Of course, the nature of how we can work together fully still requires conversation in each particular situation. There is thus an important question for an experience like this course represents, and that is, how explicit and directed should the instructor be at the outset of the course?

It certainly appears that trust has to be established. Perhaps the meaning of collaboration has to be worked out in practice, in a setting of mutual acceptance and understanding--in conversation. One of the problems may be that the meaning of collaboration has been contaminated

by the nature of other contacts that teachers experience, which may be relations of dominance, control, and evaluation.

In terms of looking at my own "role" as a collaborator in some of your projects, I realize that as a role it has to be problematized and "researched", so to speak. One of the problems is how to initiate collaboration, and get started, as discussed above. Another problem is to define the role. I'm finding that it probably cannot be determined in advance of actually working with people. For example, in terms of my own interests, there were many questions I wanted to ask ( ) and ( ) when I met with them. But in actually meeting with them, asking a set of questions seemed inappropriate, and instead the conversations seemed to revolve around certain issues each of us brought up. Perhaps a more democratic "conversation" fits the idea of collaboration in action research. While each of us have questions that we bring to the situation, in conversation there seem to be many questions raised as well.

Carr and Kemmis suggest one role of the outside researcher is to be a "critical friend." I have some problems at the moment conceiving of that in practice, so I have to leave it as a question, and that is, in conversations, does the discussion of issues and problems have the effect of raising awareness in a critical sense?

There have been other possibly interesting "problems" and questions that have emerged as this course has proceeded:

- At the outset of an action research project, as in this course, how much "theory" should there be? Was there enough information about action research as a model, and if it is presented as a "model" does that enhance understanding and moving towards a practical integration of the theory and the change that is desired?

- While it obviously seems necessary to have some theory and to aim for some specific process in doing action research there is also a possible paradox. In one way action research may speak to the need to develop an alternative vocabulary than the more technical-rationalist one that pervades our culture and education. Treating action research then in a strictly technical, "method" fashion may work against the goal of achieving real change, to also changing the structural aspects of our work. Certainly the emphasis on monitoring and reflecting are important in this context. On the other hand, if we also want to promote "action" some degree of "technical rationality" seems to be called for. How can this be balanced in action research?

- Another question that is related to the above is how action research changes us in our practice. By this I mean does action research help us ask questions and notice things that we may not have been aware of previously? Do we begin to question our own practice, or do we see change as something outside of ourselves--something that happens in our classrooms or to our students, or their learning. This

certainly is related to the question of action research as "method" in a technical sense, or as a way of being in our teaching.

- How do we involve students was a question that especially came up in our Edmonton class. This raises the question, similar to the one above, as to who we are doing the research for. If it is appropriate, how can students be involved in monitoring and reflection?

- The problem of what to research, what to look for seems like an issue that may come up. I'm not sure what to think about this problem at the moment. When I was describing some action research projects to a PhD student at the university recently, she asked me, "but what is their question, what are they trying to find out?" In one respect, I can see that not having a clear question in doing our action research may obscure what it is we are trying to discover. On the other hand, it seems that we would not want to have such a tightly defined problem that we close off the questions and possibilities that arise in the process.

- This last point also asks how themes and ideas that emerge in the process of doing action research, and also in conversation with collaborators can be acted upon.

There were some other questions and ideas that came up in my conversations with ( ) and ( ) but we had not agreed whether or not to discuss these publicly. I'd like to end this summary of my journal with two questions though:

- What possibilities do you see for collaboration? What specific things would you like ( ) and I to bring to your projects?

- Thinking about the action research process, do you think it is significantly different from other processes of implementation you have experienced?

Appendix 3

Samples of Correspondence with John and Catherine

April 6, 1987

Dear John,

Hope you had a relaxing holiday! The spring break is one thing I did miss this year, as I was "slaving" away at the university!

Enclosed is a copy of the transcript of our discussion on March 9, and also a copy of the proposal I submitted for my research class. If you have time, I would really appreciate your comments and suggestions.

In terms of the transcript, I saw several major "themes" emerging related to your project. It would be interesting to compare "notes" as it were, the next time we meet; I have not put my comments on your copy, so that you can make your own interpretations. (The transcript is not the entire conversation.)

The main themes, as it were, that I saw in our conversation related to several "tensions" or dilemmas inherent in the question that you are dealing with. When I was struggling with how to write about [redacted] I initially wrote them as, for example, "process vs. content. [redacted]er, I don't really think that fairly portrays the idea of a tension or relationship; perhaps they reflect, more usefully, continuums. I would be interested in your thinking about this tool. At any rate, some of the main tensions I saw coming out of our discussion were as follows:

1. Process-content: I think my own understanding of this is too dualistic, and I feel you are attempting, in your project and teaching to develop a meaningful relationship between the two. I think you are absolutely right of course in stating that the two can't be separated. But perhaps the question is not so much of relative importance as ultimate purpose, and also how the students learn. As we suggest in the conversation, process can be taught as a kind of content, and defeat the purpose of engendering greater student autonomy. If, as you suggest yourself, content is never remembered, then what is it that is crucial? Our discussion about awareness, and coming to understand how we learn, as well as why we learn it seems to be pointing to something.

2. Knowing-doing: At one point in the conversation you state, "but the feel that I get from them is that if I create, then I know ... whereas if I copy I only get a peripheral knowledge of what it is that I need to learn ...." That really struck me as a beautiful and important insight, perhaps something that captures the spirit of your project. What it suggests to me is that knowing cannot be divorced from doing, and likewise, we learn from our doing. Am I correct in interpreting this as related to the purpose of your project?

3. Structure-direction: I felt you were beginning to develop an important distinction between these notions--perhaps that much of what we do as teachers is to direct, whereas our roles ought to be to provide a structure wherein students could maximize their learning. Obviously, it would be absurd to say that one teaches without "structure"--even no structure would be one, so perhaps the question is, again suggested by your project, what kind of classroom structure best facilitates student learning, or especially more autonomous learning. Would there be room in such a structure for direction, for prodding students who find it difficult to cope without direction? What does structure really mean? Is it possible to become ore aware of the various aspects of our classroom practices? Does action research help in this regard?

4. Teacher control-student autonomy: I'm not sure why I put this as a different category than in (3) above, but I felt it was an important tension running through our dialogue, especially in relation to the problem you perceive: of motivating some students, and your feeling that the "process" approach perhaps doesn't work with all students. I certainly don't have an answer here--it's a frustration I too have experience in teaching. My thinking is that perhaps an action research approach in our teaching might help us here: for example to research our own teaching approaches to attempt to understand how that affects how students learn. Can you already see how that is quite different from attempting to apply a "model" of learning that is not grounded in the situation? I also see some of the problems you are perceiving as relating to the high school's emphasis on "content"; it strikes me that approach tends to stress teacher direction and control more, something your project is addressing.

There were some other interesting and important ideas that came up in discussion: for example, student awareness of their own learning; is that different from knowing why they have to do something? I think you are also questioning the notion of evaluation, and its purpose. When I was thinking about this, I was reminded about some of the ideas in ch. 2 in Carr and Kemmis and their critique of positivism. As you brought out in your presentation, the emphasis in positivism is on validation, and presenting verifiable knowledge, with the goals of prediction and control, and this is inherent in the idea of evaluation. So in a sense, we could argue that the manner of teaching for content so that it can be tested is a "positivist" approach to knowing. On the other hand, you suggested in our conversation, that there was something else going on, a kind of learning that needs to be made more manifest in a sense. This is much more difficult to evaluate, as you point out.

This does relate to the other problem too, that is how to monitor one's research in action research project. Perhaps I'll just raise the question here, and ask, will testing, essentially for content, help you decide on the efficacy of your approach? Hopefully we can pursue this question more.

I believe ( ) will be getting in touch with you regarding the one day symposium. The last I heard was that it will be on Sat., April 25, since getting a day off from school was not practical for most people. I would like to meet with you and ( ) at least once before then again. How would Mon., April 13 be, tentatively? I'll give you a call on the weekend before to confirm. Meanwhile, all the best!

Sincerely,

April 6, 1987

Dear Catherine,

I hope you had a wonderful time in ( ). While you were away, spring made at least a tentative probe. At least there won't be any more snow storms to drive through to ( ).

I'd like to thank you for sharing your time with me so far, and especially so the last time we met, when you were struggling with the flu. As I think you will see from some of the stuff I am sending you, there are some very worthwhile ideas emerging in our collaboration.

Enclosed are a couple of things: a copy of my proposal; if you have time, I would really appreciate your suggestions and comments on it. More importantly, there is also a transcript of our conversation on Mar. 9. This is not the entire conversation--I typed what seemed to be the most essential parts, which means of course that I already have done some interpretation. Nevertheless, I'm sending you an unmarked copy, so that we may compare interpretations next time we are able to meet.

Just in advance of that, I thought I would share my understandings of some of the main ideas that emerged in our discussions. As you can see on the transcript, we talked widely about several issues, not least in importance the nature of a gifted program. We can follow up on that a little more, if you like. For the purpose of this letter, and to prepare for our next meeting, I would like to highlight some important points that I thought revolved around the problems of doing action research:

1. I think you really captured the meaning of the tension that Fullan talks about: the problem of "adoption" of an innovation, vs. its "implementation." It seems to me that your project is really trying to get at the heart of what implementation means in practice. How we do the action research seems to be emerging as a major question here.

2. As you can also see in the transcript, we have some differing interpretations of what you mean by "spiraling down." At some points you talk about that as a "narrowing." What I think you mean by that is that you are focusing more clearly on specific action steps, from the general plan you started with. In other words, I see you getting more into the nitty-gritty of "implementation", as mentioned above. At the same time, however, I also see this as a "widening" in the sense that you suggest yourself: you "see" more problems, achieve insights, see the necessity for changing the action steps etc. In a way this sounds contradictory: by narrowing down you are also opening up the original question. At this point I really see that as a purpose of action research: to increase our insights and awareness of what we do when we think we are "implementing" something that seems very specific and straightforward. I think I like your idea of the "spinoffs" more than the spiral: starting from an initial action step/observations/

reflections, we begin other spirals that may be qualitatively different from the original. So the "narrowing down" doesn't mean that we become narrower; while more questions and problems are raised, in a sense it enables us to deal with the frustration of living with plans that have gone awry. Do you agree?

3. Although we did not discuss this explicitly, it strikes me that you are pointing to the issue of how collaboration may function in an actin research project, particularly collaboration between a person in your position, and teachers you are working with. There were several references to this, I think. For example, how to coordinate "pull-out" vs. "in-class" programs; the problem of teaching the curriculum vs. skills mandated by other programs; how curricular could be altered and shared; how to deal with time and overwork, etc. I felt you were beginning to ask important questions about these dimensions of your project, and really, in a way, asking how changes could be made working together with other teachers. In this respect, while I agree pull-out seems like a viable alternative for you, from the perspective of classroom practice, does it mean the goal of integrating gifted learning into the curriculum?

When I was thinking about this last point, I thought about your presentation of Ch. 3 in Carr and Kemmis, and the importance of an interpretative approach in research. It really struck from our discussion that you were looking for a way for teachers to understand your responsibilities for implementing a gifted program, and you were attempting to understand how you help teachers put it into their own practices. I'm beginning to wonder whether an action research project that emphasized, as the problem how teachers could work together and help each other understand is something that is actually implicit in what you are attempting to do. It would be interesting for us to follow this up!

In terms of the one day symposium, I believe it will be on Sat., April 25. For too many participants, taking a day off school was not feasible. ( ) will probably inform you a little more about this. Meanwhile, I would like to meet with you at least once more before then. I suggested April 13 to ( ) but that's flexible. I will give you a call on the weekend before to confirm. Until then, all the best!