

Dialogical relationships in living cultures of inquiry for the creation of living-theories

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Abstract

This article describes and explains an educational journey shared by a university teacher, Michelle Vaughan, and myself, over a ten-month period. With the exception of being together in an ALARA workshop in June, 2018, our virtual meetings have been recorded, and shared through YouTube.

The ontological importance of dialogue in relationships informs this approach to educational conversations as a research method. The nature of our influence can be seen through the videos and emails, embodied in a form of inquiry that focuses on dialogue.

The research demonstrates my continuing commitment to building respectful, democratic and caring relationships within a living culture of inquiry and my ongoing, loving encouragement and support of practitioner-researchers as I love them into learning.

The nature of my educational influence in learning, resides in the creation of living-theories in living cultures of inquiry. It is embodied in my dialogic way of being and highlights dialogic research combined with digital data as a form of representation.

I intend this paper to contribute to the development of an educational knowledge-base. While the process of living-theory research is a positive, productive and transformatory one, I include aspects such as epistemicide, burnout, and curriculum limitations on the dialogical journey. A Living Theory movement is growing in which individuals like Michelle share their embodied knowledge and commit themselves to influencing others to join us in improving ourselves and the world that we inhabit for the flourishing of humanity. My claims to know have been strengthened significantly through my validation group and the EJOLTS reviewers.

Keywords: living-theory; dialogue; love

Introduction

At the outset of this article, I want to position myself in the research world as an *educational* researcher as distinct from an *education* researcher. Education researchers, in my view, make contributions to knowledge from disciplines like philosophy, sociology, history, psychology, economics, and politics. Alternatively, educational researchers produce validated explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence their practice and understandings (Whitehead, 2009). As a practitioner-researcher, I am committed to the sharing, recognition and accreditation of the embodied knowledge of educators in which their knowledge often meets what de Sousa Santos (2014) calls 'epistemicide'. Epistemicide draws attention to the ways in which the validity of indigenous and practitioner-knowledge is not recognised or is killed off in the dominant epistemology of universities.

For myself and others in my field, the most compelling research (findings, concepts, methods and scholarly significance) is available from the following sources: Living-Theory doctoral theses in <http://www.actionresearch.net>; Living-Theory Masters major research projects in <http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/>; and the 8 volumes of *Passion in Professional Practice* (Delong, 2001-2007) in <http://schools.granderie.ca/ar/index.html>. I view these latter kinds of non-accredited narratives from teacher-researchers as the bedrock of public scholarship. These original contributions to educational knowledge and theory have gained academic legitimacy for values-based explanatory principles and living standards of judgment (Whitehead, 2007). The ontological and relational values, used as principles for living, permeate the embodied knowledge of practitioner-researchers. This has, in turn, contributed to the knowledge-base.

Innovative methods, alternative ways of representing data and "methodological inventiveness" (Dadds & Hart, 2001) in Living Theory Research (Whitehead, 1989) include a process of 'empathetic resonance' (Delong *et al.*, 2013, p. 79) that uses digital visual data to communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of values and 'life-affirming energy' during the course of their emergence in practice. Part of my contribution to the field has been the ongoing creation, description and explanation of a 'living culture of inquiry' in which individuals are encouraged, supported and "loved into learning" (Campbell, 2011) as they create their own living-educational-theories. An explanation of this 'living culture of inquiry's' contribution resides in my article in the December 2013 issue of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs) at <http://ejolts.net/node/209>:

"When I use the language of Culture of Inquiry, I am meaning the creation of a safe, supportive space where students and teachers are enabled to make explicit their values and make themselves accountable for living according to those values. They learn to recognize when they are not living according to their espoused values and are what Jack Whitehead calls living contradictions. Action-reflection cycles based on asking questions like "How can I improve my teaching of these children?" become as natural as breathing. Experiencing values such as loving kindness and loved into learning in this democratic, non-hierarchical environment and recognition of their

embodied knowledge, encourage students and teachers to take responsibility for their own learning. When I use the language of a culture-of-inquiry I am meaning the unique living and embodied expressions of this culture in the individual's practice." (Delong, 2013, p. 26)

The ontological importance of conversation and dialogue in my relationships informs this approach to educational conversations as a research method. The nature of my influence can be seen through the videos and emails, embodied in a form of inquiry that focuses on dialogue. The conversations are important and legitimate research process whereby I am showing my educational influence with Michelle Vaughan. To me this is self-evident and not revolutionary, as Shotter (2011) says:

"It is our spontaneous, embodied ways of seeing and acting in the world that we change... we change in who we 'are,' how we relate ourselves to our surroundings.

But to say all of this is not to say anything very revolutionary, for such a form of 'research' is already a part of our everyday practices; it is only revolutionary to recognize that fact." (p.191)

I hope to do justice to the significance of this form of research in terms of alternative forms of representation (Eisner, 1988; 1993; 1997; 2005) to share the authentic reality of learning within relationships. Further, I do wish to recognize the barriers, structural constraints and the time commitment for quality dialogic learning and research to unfold.

In this article, I intend to explore my educational relationships and probe into how it is that I encourage and support others so that they experience being "loved into learning" (Campbell, 2011). Just to be clear, by Living Theory I am meaning:

"...the distinguishing qualities of a living theory methodology that include 'I' as a living contradiction, the use of action reflection cycles, the use of procedures of personal and social validation and the inclusion of a life-affirming energy with values as explanatory principles of educational influence." (Whitehead, 2009, p. 182)

In his validation of this article, Tim Pugh asked about the nature of the 'life-affirming energy' (email, March 10, 2019). I don't think that a flow of life-affirming energy can be comprehended only as a quality that is visually-observable. We need a language that points to what we mean by a flow of energy or energy-flowing (Vasilyuk, 1991). Having said that, I do think that you will see in some of the visual data in the article the meanings we give to life-affirming energy. In our 2013 article in EJOLTs, we explain our meaning of "life-affirming energy":

"At the heart of this epistemology are the energy-flowing values that are used as living standards of judgment. In his work on "The Energy Paradigm", Vasilyuk (1991) pointed out that whilst we know how "energetically" a person can act when positively motivated, we have very little idea of how to link energy and motivation, energy and meaning and energy and value (p. 64) within explanations of activity. This paper demonstrates how energy-flowing values can be used as explanatory principles within explanations of influence." (Campbell *et al.*, 2013, p. 3)

I will proceed with this process by examining my experiences facilitating Masters' cohorts, presenting at conferences, writing EJOLTs articles, and, most recently, supporting Michelle Vaughan as she created her own living-theory. I begin with the Vermont-based workshop that Jack Whitehead, Marie Huxtable and I facilitated in June 2018 and follow with describing the journey that Michelle and I took via emails and Zoom video-conferencing as we each described and explained our values around relationships and relationship-building. We expressly articulated an intention of being held accountable for our values and of improving who we are and what we do in our distant worlds: Michelle lives in Boca Raton, Florida, USA and I live in Paris, Ontario, Canada – 2400 km apart but in the same time zone.

Beginning our journey learning together

This narrative starts with the workshop that Jack Whitehead, Marie Huxtable and I presented at the 10th ALARA World Congress in Vermont, USA in June 2018. As I share this story I am aware of what Richardson (1997) cautions:

“The story of a life is less than the actual life, because the story told is selective, partial, contextually constructed and because the life is not yet over. But the story of a life is also more than the life, the contours and meaning allegorically extending to others, seeing themselves, knowing themselves through another’s life story, revisioning their own, arriving where they started and knowing ‘the place for the first time’ (T S Eliot Four Quartets.)” (p. 6)

I am also conscious that “whenever I write a story, I not only produce a narrative but I’m reproducing myself. The very narrating acts upon me and I am changing.” (Aoki, 1994, p. 10) Here is an excerpt from the record of the Action Learning Action Research Association (ALARA) proceedings (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwworkshopalara2018.pdf>):

A workshop at the 10th ALARA World Congress at Norwich University, Vermont, USA on the 19th June 2018 on ‘Where do we go from here in contributing to *The Action Learning and Action Research Legacy for Transforming Social Change?*’ Jackie Delong Jack Whitehead Marie Huxtable



Figure 1. Jack and Jackie getting the workshop underway
1:33 hour video of the workshop at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swTrYSfeb0g>

Abstract:

The workshop brought together researchers who are engaged in action learning/action research inquiries of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing and live, as fully as possible, my values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity?’

Participants comprised researchers physically present in the room, those present through SKYPE and those who have a virtual presence in the form of their living-posters at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage020617.pdf>

This workshop focused on living-theory accounts created by educational practitioner-researchers, including those engaging as AL/AR practitioners, which are contributing to a legacy for transforming social change. The living-theories used in the workshop included those accredited for doctoral degrees in different universities around the world.

The workshop demonstrated the communicative power of multi-media narratives with digital visual data to clarify and communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. Ideas, critically and creatively engaged with included current social theories such as de Sousa Santos' (2014) ideas on 'epistemicide'. These ideas were used to show how Western academic reasoning and epistemology can be understood and transcended in the generation of the living-educational-theories of individuals, grounded in their experiences and contexts.

Purpose of workshop: To contribute to the evolution of global, AR/AL research communities of practitioner-researchers, who are creating and sharing, as living-theories, their evidence-based explanations of educational influences in learning."

It is important to note that we started the workshop with asking the participants to talk with a partner about their values. On the topic of dialogical relationships in a culture of inquiry, Judy McBride, one of the validators, wrote about the ALARA workshop (email March 17, 2019):

"I feel that the visuals support the notion *learning in dialogic, educational relationship*. The participants attend first to the instructions, then to each other, and finally back to the whole. The conversation begins with the invitation to share values, something deeply personal with – I believe in most cases – a stranger. This says a lot about your ability to create a culture of inquiry that is welcoming, safe and exciting as well. Participants reflect, share, know, and learn in physical/spatial relation. I recognize sharing, knowing and learning in digital relation and the evolution of a social movement."

From that workshop, this educational relationship, between Michelle and me, commenced and has continued up to the time of this article's submission in March, 2019. It will live on through a written proposal to present our learnings at the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) in Montreal, Canada, June, 26-28, 2019.

I have Michelle's permission to share the video recording of the meetings and emails and the permission of the validators to include their comments. I am aware that as Linda T. Smith (1999) says, "Insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities," (p.137) and want my loving relationships to thrive for all time.

One effect of the workshop: influence on others

In this part, I share our email and video conversations and some of the issues around using technology and digital data in educational conversations as a research method. I include a process of 'empathetic resonance' that uses digital visual data of

practice to communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of values and 'life-affirming energy' in the course of their emergence in practice.

Among the participants in this workshop (above) was Michelle Vaughan, Assistant Professor at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida, who has recently published a chapter on Action Research (Mertler, 2019). I followed up on our conversation at the workshop and on Michelle's comments in the large group session about experiencing burnout:

Hi, Michelle. How are you? I wanted to make contact with you now that we are back in our real worlds. First, I wanted to thank you for your very affirming comment on the feedback form and second, I wanted to follow up on your meaning of "how we can touch each other exactly where they are".

I remember your comment about helping others experiencing burnout and wondered if we might continue to explore that concern.

I really enjoyed meeting you.

Love, Jackie

(email, Sunday, June 24, 2018, 10:33 am)

Michelle responded to me that evening:

"Jackie, thank you so much for reaching out, your session with Jack was the highlight of my conference and worth all the travel to get to Vermont! I have spent some time reading through actionresearch.net and while I still have just scratched the surface, my heart is full from reading the stories of those who have undergone the process of examining and understanding their own living theory. My comment about touching each other where they are really reflects my own journey to find a place in academia where it is safe to be an individual who is still learning. As I approach tenure, I begin to reflect on the toll it has taken on my own personal values and growth. Yes, we check the boxes, do the research and be sure to publish in the 'right' places, but how does this bring value to our students and our communities? Obviously, I empathize deeply with my doctoral student who is studying his own burnout because I can see my journey through his eyes, he is struggling to find his own place to be an individual within the confines of the dissertation process. I was inspired and, in all honesty, relieved to see the work being done. I left the conference a bit lighter than I arrived and I thank you for that. I look forward to beginning to unpack my own living theory and am open to any guidance you may have as I move into this next phase."

I responded the next day:

"Hi, Michelle. Your comment was a highlight of the conference for me. I can empathize with your struggle to "bring value to our students and our communities". I struggled as a system leader to live my values, to be vulnerable and not simply to follow school district and ministry policies. I often thought that I was alone but found that when I asked for help, I was not alone. There were many that criticized me but also many who supported and encouraged me. I hope that you accept my offer to help as you unpack your living theory. Love, Jackie."

A dialogic educational journey using visual data

While many researchers have been reluctant to make video recordings of their own actions, Michelle was not, either as an individual or when participating in small groups. We will see later that video recording herself as instructor in large groups was a greater challenge. In the Master's groups that I have taught, I have found that the students in the classes were uncomfortable with the video recording initially. In her Master's project, Liz Campbell wrote:

"Also, I want to thank Jackie Delong for video recording our presentations and conversations during the two courses she facilitated in the Master's program (in spite of the reluctance and resistance of many of us) and encouraging us to view the footage to look for evidence of our claims. The trusting relationship that developed with my peers and my instructors is what enabled me to become a reflective practitioner. We (myself and the other students in my class) have many reasons to justify our lack of ready willingness to use video, but fortunately for me, I was able to overcome my initial reluctance." (Campbell, 2011, p. 95)

After some experience with the videotaping process, they found the value in it for data collection and data generation as Liz Campbell explains:

"Using a living educational theory methodology enables me to make use of methodological inventiveness to capture, investigate and articulate my values and experiences and to develop my own living educational theory. This methodology embraces the use of alternative research and video is one way to capture, explain and represent my lived experiences that represent this valid yet alternative way of knowing. I agree that it is difficult to measure if we resort to the traditional measuring tools of empirical, scientific ways of knowing. In order to measure a living educational theory, it is essential to consider alternative ways of measuring these alternative ways of knowing. Video has the potential to capture what I can't relay with words (at this particular junction in my writing career) and, in some cases, it can portray knowledge I am not even aware of yet. In addition, video provides another voice for layered reflection and evidence that is measureable; you can see and hear energy flowing values which enhance the ability to feel life affirming energy." (Campbell, 2011, p. 111)

Michelle has used the data in the videotaping of her conversations with her students evident in her EJOLTs article (Vaughan, 2019) and in our recorded conversations. While I feel that there is so much important data in the longer conversations, I have tried to select short clips that provide greater clarification or crystallization that communicates my meaning and used 'empathetic resonance' to capture the essence.

Here I have selected a short clip where we hear her explain the transformational nature of developing her living-theory and my encouragement to include the clip in the writing of her article on Jan 25, 2019:

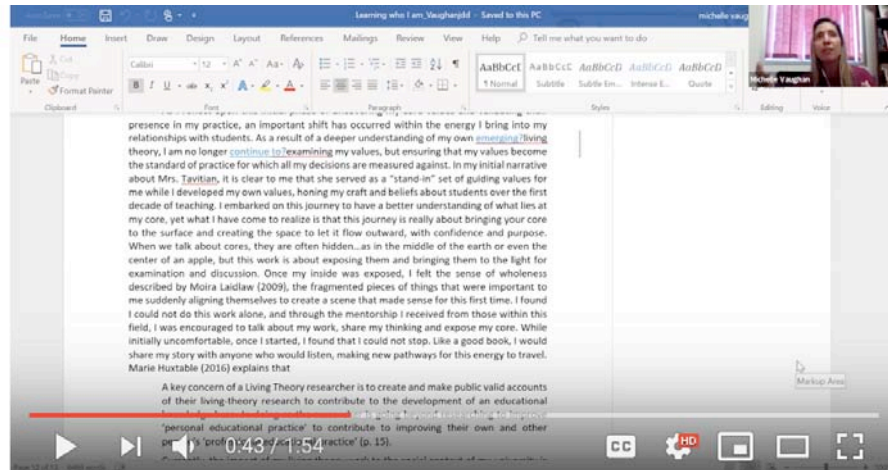


Figure 1. Zoom Meeting with Michelle’s article on screen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnyXGcLrrtU&feature=youtu.be>

Michelle: I think that reflecting on the role of self-reflection. Like you said, there’s levels of reflection. Right. So, writing this is reflecting on my practice and my story and who I am and my values but the actual act of writing it impacted how I behave currently in my context. I could not turn it off so in every department meeting, in every conversation with a peer, there it was a constantly, it was an on-going on the spot reflection of ‘Am I true to my values?’ in this – even though it was outside of what would be “practice”. Right?

I mean, it became all-encompassing and it’s similar to what I talked about as, you know, that core kind of came to the surface and kind of spread out. There was no siloed portion of my life where this didn’t have an impact and so I think it is much more than just ‘How do I improve my practice?’ It really is, ‘How do I be the best version of myself?’ Like you said earlier. How do I live this day-to-day? Instead of just, ‘How do I get better at what I do?’

Jackie: Well, you could put this clip in and pull out two or three things out of it that will certainly provide more data that will support your claim.

Michelle: Yeh. I think that’s a great idea. I think there might be a clip or two that had that piece of the reflection. Thank you.

We hear Michelle explaining her awareness of her educational self-influence in the creation of her own living-theory. We also see her influence on others, her students, as they collaboratively and dialogically discuss their values. Further, we see the influence and impact of this corporate learning upon the social formations in the wider university community. In the whole video, she talks about being part of the Living-Theory social movement. Her “Living Theory Night” at her doctoral class was a big success as evidenced on Feb 7th:

“Just wanted to send a quick email to let you know that last night was our "Living Theory night" in our doc class. The students spent time before class exploring actionresearch.net and reading some pieces to help them understand the methodology. We used the AR planner Jack shared with me after the conference and had some really great conversations. I usually don’t take tears in class as a good sign, but it was a welcome sight last night as students talked about things in their practice that they held dear to them. I look forward to doing more of this work and

taping it (I wasn't ready to do that last night) and asking you more questions!! Just wanted to share!

Still working on edits and will send over my last draft (maybe?) next week so we can Zoom again." Michelle Vaughan, Ed.D. (email, Thursday, Feb. 7, 11:53 am)

The AR planner that she references is available at

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwlivingtheoryplannertemplate.pdf>

In a Zoom conversation on February 17, available in full at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tchcfRFzC4M>.

Michelle shared her excitement about her doctoral class where the students were sharing their values. The excitement in her face as she articulated these thoughts was infectious and, "you can see and hear energy flowing values which enhance the ability to feel life affirming energy" (Campbell, 2011, p. 111). Michelle shares her experience with her students (0-1:41) and the importance of joy in the classroom:

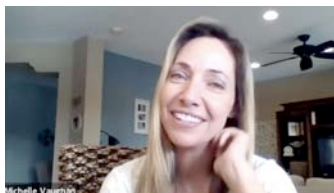


Figure 2. Michelle talks about joy in the classroom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rilWhoEF1as&t=796s>

Michelle: "At the end of it on Tuesday night it was if somebody did an analysis of what we talked about the last 2 weeks, the clear theme was, there was a clear theme of joy that was running through their framework. It was on half of their frameworks about the importance of having joy in a classroom and then there were 3 or 4 who had safety. So man, I thought, if somebody could come here and see their work, this group of budding scholars talking about joy and safety and love. One of my students, he (he as an early childhood background) created this whole framework like a solar system with love right in the centre. It was so cool.

I mean someone would feel so hopeful to hear this group of budding scholars talk about what is important to them. And I did this exact assignment last year at this time and that was not the outcome. I can't help but think it's because I'm in a different place. I am unconsciously but also consciously honouring talking about their values and what's important and they've now bubbled up and they've found a place in an academic piece and it was very reaffirming because I felt like 'they feel it, too' like I created a space and they rose to the challenge. It's exciting. It really is exciting."

Later in the conversation, I suggest that videotaping the session would give them/her the data for the analysis and she mentions that one of her students, a school system administrator, brought her a 'swivel', a camera that can follow you and your movements. I was very excited about this and suggested her using it. I then share that I am writing an article, ask for her help and we discuss our proposal for a presentation at ARNA.

In the video clip, Michelle says that she imagines me “like a fairy godmother with all these lives that you are touching.” Here is my reaction! If you put your cursor on the red line of the clip and just move it back and forth, I think you can see the life-affirming energy in both of us in the process called, “empathetic resonance” (DeLong *et al.*, 2013, p. 79). Herein is the value in using technology and digital data in educational conversations as a research method in order to share our meanings that text alone cannot convey.



Figure 3. Empathetic Resonance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z00ZE1C74II>

She sees it as a kind of “ripple mentorship” in which:

“a little bit of loving kindness here, a little bit of loving kindness here and that ripple effect. And I think about the lives and the students that I’ve touched and then they’re going into classrooms validating their students. And it’s exciting work because it feels so true.”

I do definitely share Yamamoto’s (1988) “paradox of mentorship”:

“There are, to begin with, not many masters in any given field of human endeavor. Of these, only a fraction would qualify as mentors worthy of the name, that is, as individuals of virtuosity, vision, and wisdom... And, finally, mentors ought to see the world they themselves can only dream of through their faith and trust in the guided.” (p. 187)

However, I, as a “fallible knower” (Thayer-Bacon, 2003), see its greatest value in the symbiotic experience of loving another into learning, and learning to be a better person, through a dialogic relationship.

Michelle also mentioned her presentation at a Florida Education Research Association (FERA) conference where she shared her research into improving on-line relationships with students with data from evaluation questionnaires. She was tentative about mentioning her inquiry into living her values in the classroom but she found that the audience was more interested in the living theory aspect than the more quantitative study:

“It’s very affirming to feel that in every room I talk about this in now there are two or three people who are just waiting to hear it, just like I was, so I try to find out who those people are.” (Feb 17, 2019 video, 11:05-11:40)

This could be seen as a Living Theory social movement that may contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

Loved into learning



Figure 4. Michelle shares her enjoyment of the process of creating her own living-theory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzawRc48YgQ&feature=youtu.be>. January 27, 2019, 12:35 to 13:04:

I said [to Jean] I don't know if Jackie knew that she was going to tell me to do all these things along the way but it felt like she had the next step for me planned and was just waiting for me to get somewhere so that I could take the next step. Because had she told me everything up front, I might have been overwhelmed about the process but it was a very nice scaffolding. And I said it really felt like the writing was a journey of self-discovery...

It seems to me that Michelle expresses the same sentiment as Liz Campbell (who graduated from Nipissing University with her Ph.D. on February 18, 2019), as she felt that she was loved into learning:

"I have always been a passionate educator and I cared deeply for my students, but it was only when Jackie Delong, an instructor in one of my courses for a Master's degree who eventually became my supervisor and a lifelong friend, told us that she loved us that I began to contemplate love in my practice; this evolved into my theory of being "loved into learning" (Campbell, 2012). Now, I too tell my students I love them. Not all of my students experience this kind of love and when I tell them I love them I know it makes some of them squirm with discomfort, but I also know some of them breathe a sigh of relief. I know this because they have told me in their writing and with their words and actions. Even the students who are uncomfortable in the beginning come to embrace the idea of being loved in the classroom when they understand what I mean and what the practical application of this love means for them." (Campbell, 2019, p. 70)

It was Liz who developed this theory and saw it as a value that I held (Campbell, 2011). As hooks (2011) shares with us, "we make choices based on the belief that honesty, openness, and personal integrity need to be expressed in public and private decisions." (p.88) I would add 'love'. "The choice to love is a choice to connect – to find ourselves in the other." (hooks, 2011, p. 93)

I wish now to make the connection between the impact of our relationships with our students on the curriculum and the significance of it being 'living' and responsive to the needs of the students.

There is curriculum and there is 'living curriculum'

I start from the position that the curriculum is not just the Ministry of Education document but everything that happens in the school. The UK's OFSTED definition of a (given) curriculum contrasts this view with my own commitment to supporting the creation of each individual's curriculum vitae in the sense of their 'living curriculum':

"... a framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and understanding to be gained at each stage (intent); for translating that framework over time into a structure and narrative, within an institutional context (implementation) and for evaluating what knowledge and understanding students have gained against expectations (achievement). As such, the curriculum lies at the heart of education, determining what pupils will get out of their educational experience." (Muijs *et al.*, 2109, p. 29)

We have so many examples in our world where curriculum is a hammer held over the heads of teachers and students and is not seen as a vehicle to facilitate learning based on the diagnosis of the needs of the learners. In their article, Muijs *et al.* (2019, p. 29) report:

"The curriculum lies at the core of what schools are; without one a school is just a building filled with teachers and pupils. Curriculum is key to defining the knowledge and experiences that pupils receive beyond their home environment."

It is my belief that neither of these sentences captures the meaning of what goes on in schools. Learning lies at the core of what schools are in a space where:

"... teachers approach students with the will and desire to respond to our unique beings, even if the situation does not allow the full emergence of a relationship based on mutual recognition. Yet the possibility of such recognition is always present." (hooks, 2014, p. 13)

The curriculum can be a helpful vehicle for teachers' and pupils' use: once the learning and learning needs of the students have been assessed, teachers and pupils are able to determine what needs learning and what has already been learned. As an example, Cathy Griffin created a classroom where there was mutual learning – teacher and primary-school students learning from each other (Griffin, 2011; 2013). Unless we create the 'living curriculum', we are using 'the empty vessel' view of students and learning:

"In the persistent pressure on teachers from various political bodies to implement the given curriculum to improve test scores so that they can win elections, it is amazing that they manage to stay connected to students. Having said that, I know that every day teachers like Cheryl, Lori, Liz and Cathy focus on the needs of students first and are going beyond the given to create the living curriculum. The idea of a Culture-of-Inquiry came about as a result of coming to recognize that students who are safe, comfortable, respected and loved learn more of the intended curriculum and faster. With the emphasis on "covering the curriculum," it takes courage to see that the front-

end time invested in relationships with students and their wellness can pay dividends (to use economic rationalist language) in terms of their learning. As opposed to dwelling on the small bits within the curriculum but by focusing on the big ideas that connect to the lives of the learners, most of the expectations/outcomes can be integrated (Drake, 1997). Data on inquiry-based learning in my work and in that of my students included in this journal issue demonstrate that students learning in a living curriculum experience more meaningful learning to enrich their lives and environments and at the same time learn all of the essential requirements of the written curriculum.” (DeLong, 2013, p. 39-40)

The curriculum is a guide for the teacher and the pupils for planning and organizing learning. Learning to learn and the skills to access what is currently known as “knowledge” will serve students well in a world that we can only imagine. I find much resonance with aspects of Tim Pugh’s Masters dissertation on professional impostership and authentic curriculum of care. Of particular note is his visual graphic of the Learning Milieu, his Authenticity Meter and the associated discussion about the true nature of curriculum as a lived experience (Pugh, 2005, pp. 77-92).

In Florida, according to Michelle, the conversations around curriculum have evolved to include discussion of values as a result of a school-shooting incident in 2018 (video, Jan 27). In her editorial to Volume 45:2 of *Professional Development in Education*, Fiona King (2019) hopes:

“...that readers may look for the chink amidst the plethora of policies from above to use their agency to challenge existing orthodoxies related to professional learning and further align their values and practice in an effort to make a difference.”

Not only has Michelle created her own living-theory in which she explained her influence on herself and her students, but also, she explained her influence on social formations as a responsive teacher where she adjusts the curriculum to meet the needs of the class. For Michelle and me, an educational relationship evolved and what emerged was a ‘responsive and living curriculum’ and a co-learning experience.

In this next section I strengthen the validity of the argument by including validators’ comments.

Validation group

In order to assess personal and social validity, to enhance the validity of interpretations and to assess the rigor of the data collection, I have asked my validation group, Michelle, Judy, Liz, Jack and Tim, to respond to this article and, with their permission, have included their responses earlier in the article and below. I draw on the criteria of social validity from Habermas (1976) in terms of comprehensibility, truth, rightness, and authenticity (pp. 2-3). Whitehead in Tidwell (2009) defines these criteria:

“Within comprehensibility I include the logic of the explanation “...as a mode of thought that is appropriate for comprehending the real as rational” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 105). Within truthfulness I include the evidence for justifying the assertions I make in my claims to knowledge. Within rightness I include an awareness of the normative assumptions I am making in the values that inform my claims to knowledge. Within

authenticity I include the evidence of interaction over time that I am truly committed to living the values I explicitly espouse.” (p. 108)

Within the whole article, I have made amendments based on the responses of the validators in terms of technical errors and in ways that I believe have strengthened it. From Tim Pugh’s detailed reviews of this article, I learned that I assumed that readers understood the internal language of Living Theory and sometimes they do not. His questions helped me to clarify for my readers some of aspects of Living Theory research such as ‘life-affirming energy’ which I have attempted to explain earlier in the article. He also pushed my thinking on the issues of validity through comprehensibility. He asked how comprehensibility is reflected within the documented interchanges with Michelle (email, March 10, 2019). I think that Comprehensibility in the interchanges with Michelle can be shown to focus on the development of mutual understandings. Further, I hope that enhancing comprehensibility can be located within the responses of the validation group.

In her response, Liz Campbell found it to be, “...well written: very comprehensible and authentic and clearly supports your claims.” She also said:

“I was very engaged by the sections in the paper where Michelle talks about how LET [Living Educational Theory] has become a way of living for her. It is so very true for everyone who has genuinely engaged with the process. I witnessed this over and over again in the BARN sessions. I am not the least bit surprised that Michelle has had such success with her students too. I know how relieved my students were once they understood the process and recognized that they had something valuable to offer in a way that would enable them to improve in meaningful ways. Living theory is definitely a sustainable process for improving education and living in general.” (email, March 12, 2019)

Jack Whitehead, who has been encouraging and supportive in an ongoing way during the writing, said:

“In relation to the social validity criteria we often use, it is comprehensible with sufficient evidence to justify your claims. You do engage with normative influences and are very strong in relation to authenticity.” (email, March, 14, 2019).

I include Judy McBride’s inspiring response about ‘Voice and Voices’ in my account that she said “rings true and hopeful (hope-filled)”:

“The idea of *educational conversation* implies multiple voices. I find the progression of voices interesting in your report. The first, the ominous voice, signals danger, *Epistemicide draws attention to the ways in which the validity of indigenous and practitioner-knowledge is not recognised or is killed off in the dominant epistemology of universities*. This set me up. Then the second voice, that of the knowing educational researcher, compels the reader to visit sites offering evidence of valid, innovative methodologies, and alternate epistemologies, and these within the voices – distinct and varied – of living theorists with a single concern, that is living one’s values for good. A third voice, the intimate voice is heard in the conversations with Michelle about mother, motherhood, and mentoring. This voice took me back to consider the *Culture of Inquiry* and the creation of a safe, supportive space. This voice offers evidence of mutual care, encouragement, empathy. A fourth voice, is that of joy. The words, images and laughter carry the power ... “to clarify and

communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity." I love this shot ... the Joyful Fairy Godmother speaks for herself! (email, March 17, 2019)

In her response to the article, during our Zoom meeting on March 15, 2019, Michelle said, "I thought that you really captured my end of the experience accurately...it represented how I had perceived it to be".

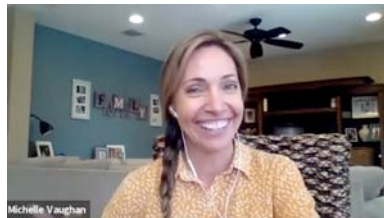


Figure 5. Michelle give feedback on Jackie's article for EJOLTs
(<https://youtu.be/Aws4mB04NMc>)

She read the section on curriculum, "as impact: looking at curriculum as a static, this is what it is, to a living breathing organism that can be impacted by internal changes." (<https://youtu.be/iulHieEUdUY>). I shared with Michelle that Tim Pugh said that he hadn't heard me use the language of 'loved into learning' before and I replied that it was Liz who created the language. He then replied that he felt that was how I related to him in the Grand Erie District School Board. Michelle responded: (<https://youtu.be/wjm13drYVQc>),

"I think that's accurate. It's something about you not bringing your ego into it which I think allows the love to flow through. I think to be able to show genuine love and also having your ego: they don't play well together in the sandbox. So, if you really want to have somebody feel that emotion, I think you approach a lot of these relationships without ego and that is, in my experience, rare in higher education...It feels like everybody needs two chairs; one for your body and one for your ego."

And so, we have the 'two-chair' theory of teaching! In addition, I received loving encouragement and valuable feedback in the final stages from the EJOLTs reviewers. Jocelyn Romero Demirbag helped me clarify some of the writing and caused me to rewrite, and improve, the abstract by "including some of the more powerful concepts from the paper into the abstract." All three reviewers, Jocelyn, Brian Williamson and Mohamed Moustakim wanted more about 'epistemicide'. I have written about it in my 2017 EJOLTs article, "Respecting and Legitimizing the Embodied Knowledge of Practitioners in Contexts of Power Struggles". It may be encouragement for another article in the future – there certainly is plenty of data available to me on the subject and it does make my blood boil when practitioners' embodied knowledge is ignored or rejected!

Next, I ponder the nature of my influence and my contribution.

What is my original contribution to educational research?

I remember one day at an AERA Conference, Jean McNiff asking me what was unique about my work and something to the effect that it was much like that of

Carl Rogers. That question has rumbled around in my thoughts over many years, looking for an answer. It did trigger some reading of Rogers' (1961) work as a humanistic psychologist who says that a person needs an environment that provides them with genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (being seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood) (p. 185). It is important to note that I am not a psychotherapist, but I acknowledge his ideas of "genuineness" and "unconditional positive regard" in my educational relationships. I do like Michelle's language of "authentic connection" (Vaughan, 2019) and recognize the quality that Liz experienced as being "loved into learning":

"One of the key findings in my Master's Research Project (MRP) was my ability to reveal, clarify, and explicate my embodied expression of being "loved into learning" (Campbell, 2012, p. 69). Jacqueline Delong, one of my course instructors in the Master's program and who eventually became my supervisor, stood in front of the entire class and told us she loved us. Delong's actions aligned with her values and this inspired me to believe in myself, to realize that I had something significant to contribute and that I could live more fully according to my values. In addition, I felt trusted and respected which enabled me to continue my research with more confidence and authenticity. Recognizing that I had something of value to contribute enabled me to read the theories of others with a more critical lens which enhanced my learning journey. I refer to this process as loved into learning." (Campbell, 2019, p. 14)

As a Superintendent of Education, I was able to create a critical mass of Living Theory teacher-researchers through my systemic influence (DeLong, 2002). Later, as an educational consultant, I influenced the creation of the Bluewater Action Research Network (Campbell, 2019, p.100-106). In 2017, I wrote,

"Over these 20 years, I have committed myself to ensuring that the voices of the practitioners, teachers, consultants, principals, nurses, and practising professionals are heard, respected and legitimated. I exhort them to refuse to let anyone, supervisor, academic, anyone, however kind they may seem to be, speak for them, to take away their voice, to assume their knowledge. This passion that fuelled my work came, I think, from sensing condescension, from reading about and hearing that access to the temple of all knowledge is through the gates at the university and that the practitioner's knowledge is only legitimated when university academics speak for them. That practitioners have embodied knowledge and write rigorous research seemed an idea from an alien galaxy to the universities as they were negating practitioners' knowledge in forms of epistemicide (Santos, 2014)." (DeLong, 2017, p.58)

On this latter point of epistemicide, Liz Campbell's doctorate highlights some of the political and cultural influences that reduce and hinder the expression of hope and of practitioners' embodied knowledge (Campbell, 2019).

I think two aspects of my work are significant ('unique' is a tough one), namely: (1) My full commitment to building respectful, democratic and caring relationships within a living culture of inquiry; and, (2) My ongoing, loving encouragement and support of practitioner-researchers. In my Masters groups, no one was going to fail if I could help it. Some students needed more assistance than others to the extent that I would sit with them at the computer and make suggestions, probe for deeper

understanding, ask purposeful questions and mostly show my faith in them and their ability to share their embodied knowledge and create their living-theories. For many, writing was difficult and what they needed was to vocalize their understandings which then enabled them to write the words. For others, audio and video journals were a gift as they could then transcribe their work.

One of the motivations for me in the creation of living cultures of inquiry was my own doctoral experience. While Jack Whitehead's support was consistent, committed, caring and responsive, I felt the absence of a community with whom to share and commiserate. I found as I created the teacher research networks in The Brant County District School Board and later in the Grand Erie District School Board that teachers needed support like release time, conferences and comfortable platforms for sharing, and especially, safe communities for support and encouragement, skills-learning and sharing. The full description and explanation of the evolution of a critical mass of researchers can be found at: [http://schools.granderie.ca/ar/passion/pppi/1 Into TOC.pdf](http://schools.granderie.ca/ar/passion/pppi/1%20Into%20TOC.pdf) in "Action Research in Grand Erie" (Delong, 2001). I started with creating a culture of inquiry with five teachers and three school administrators. Working with them directly and over the next 10 years, it rippled out to Networks in the three areas of the district with wonderful facilitators, all of whom had written about their own living-theories. The teachers, administrators and consultants in the groups contributed their classroom research-projects to eight volumes of *Passion In Professional Practice*. Without the safe spaces to meet and be supported, none of this living research would have been contributed to the knowledgebase of teaching and learning. The next step for this lived research was the accreditation of the work through the creation of Masters' cohorts, which again were living cultures of inquiry for the creation of Living Theory research (Delong, 2002, pp. 204-221).

So, I guess my answer to Jean (thank you for asking the question) is that while I share Rogers' expectation of genuineness and unconditional positive regard in my relationships, I am an educator not a therapist. I am intentional about living my value of loving kindness and ensuring that others are loved into learning. I recognize that I am a "fallible knower" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003) and work to create living cultures of inquiry where practitioner- researchers know that they are in a safe place for sharing their vulnerabilities (Brown, 2010). At 21:17 in the Feb 17 video, Michelle says:

"I feel in a much better place being able to be more authentically who I am than having to lead with my brain and have the heart follow; I prefer the other way and it feels better"...We talk a lot about creating a space that lowers the risk so that people can feel free to learn more and I interpreted that as you know telling students don't worry about the grades about the process but I think lowering the risk might be the wrong terminology. I think it's more about creating a space where they are comfortable and feel loved and feel honoured and valued and that is what created the ability for your mind to take risk and leaps because you feel safe."

It seems evident in this and earlier articles that the nature of my educational influence (upon myself, upon others and upon social formations), resides in the creation of living-theories in living cultures of inquiry. It is embodied in my dialogic way of being and highlights dialogic research combined with digital data as a form of representation.

Next steps

Michelle and I will be presenting a workshop at the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) conference in Montreal on June, 26-28, 2019 where we intend to share our journey together and hope to include some of her students through video-conferencing. In addition, two other proposals have been approved for sessions sharing Living Theory research. On October 17-19, 2019, I am proposing to present at the CARNALARA conference in Split, Croatia. I continue my work on the editorial board of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs) (<https://ejolts.net/>) and to encourage living-theorists to share their learning there. Based on Tim's comment in reviewing this article, we have agreed to work together on an article:

"BTW, it struck me that perhaps you and I should talk about working together on a piece that explores the intersection of servant-leadership and its associated authentic curriculum of care with the concept of being 'loved into learning'." (email March 10, 2019)

Conclusion

I am aware that the "very narrating acts upon me and I am changing" (Aoki, 1994, p. 10). Working with Michelle has pushed me to examine how I do what I do in the supporting of those creating their living-theories, how I might do it better and why it is significant. I feel that telling this story of my life has allowed me to arrive where I started and know "the place for the first time" (Richardson, 1997, p. 6). This educational dialogic journey with Michelle continues my commitment to supporting practitioner-researchers to share their embodied knowledge as part of my "living legacy" (Forester, 2015).

Practitioner-researchers like Michelle Vaughan and Elizabeth Campbell show how dominant academic reasoning and epistemology can be understood and transcended in the generation of the living-educational-theories of individuals, grounded in their experiences and contexts. MacIntyre (1988) says:

"The rival claims to truth of contending traditions of enquiry depend for their vindication upon the adequacy and the explanatory power of the histories which the resources of each of those traditions in conflict enable their adherents to write." (p. 403)

I believe that I have provided comprehensibility in the interchanges with Michelle to focus on the development of mutual understandings enhanced by the much-appreciated responses of my validation group. With this study I intend to make public a valid account of living-theory research to contribute to the development of an educational knowledge base. Living cultures of inquiry seem to me to be significant spaces for Living Theory researchers for the development of their own living-theories.

A Living Theory movement is growing in which individuals like Michelle commit themselves to influencing others to join us in improving ourselves and the world that we inhabit for the flourishing of humanity. One of the significant issues with Living Theory research is that it is relentless in its pressure on me to always be improving myself, to be improving the world and to be, in singer Sarah McLachlan's words,

“Spreading love and joy and gratitude” (Lewis, 2019, pp. B1-B4). As Michelle (Vaughan, 2019) says, “Being able to change yourself first and have that impact on your social movement and your context: small changes change the world.” I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey with Michelle of our living-theory relationship within an educational setting that emerged “in our spontaneously responsive, dialogically-structured relations with another person” (Shotter, 2008, p. 168).

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