

**Potent Recreation:
The Relationship between Teacher Flourishing
and Imaginative Education**

by

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Abstract

This research is part of a collaborative effort pursued by faculty and graduate students at Simon Fraser University. The project name, LUCID, is an acronym representing the overall research goal: Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development: A community-university research alliance to build culturally inclusive schools through imaginative education.

The purpose of this research is to address teachers' efforts to implement the Imaginative Education approach. Of special concern is how their perceptions of "flourishing" are implicated in these efforts. Collaborating teachers work in elementary schools with high populations of First Nations (Aboriginal) heritage.

This research shares with the LUCID project an action research approach but also explores cooperative inquiry and portraiture methodologies. By critically witnessing their own daily struggles to affect change in schools and sharing those efforts with others, the participants contribute to the understandings of teacher flourishing and its relationships with Imaginative Education.

For my dearest baby boy,
Dylan,
whose joyfulness is a daily reminder
to flourish
in the midst of adversity.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction to the Research Project

The research I have conducted is part of a collaborative effort pursued by a number of faculty and graduate students at Simon Fraser University. The project name, LUCID, is an acronym that represents, at least in part, the research goal: Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development: A community-university research alliance to build culturally inclusive schools through imaginative education.¹

1.1.1 Statement of Research Problem

Many challenges face public school teachers, especially those who teach in schools with diverse student populations. In such multicultural schools, teachers who choose to instruct with an emancipatory agenda² must be creative both in their approaches to teaching in the classroom and in finding successful ways to work within a bureaucratic school system. Regrettably, many educators striving to create positive, sustainable educational change either become numb from what they perceive as failure of their efforts and resigned to not undertaking further attempts, or they become so overworked trying to meet their diverse students' needs that they are unable to grow and learn in their positions (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning, 2001). The latter state of self-deprivation I call the

¹ Appendix 1 outlines the details of the project.

² As discussed in works such as Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994).

“Gandhi Effect.” This problem emerges when teachers starve themselves to feed their students.

The specific research that I have conducted as part of the LUCID project team has been directed at addressing teachers’ efforts to teach imaginatively. I have focused particularly on their perceptions of how their own sense of “professional flourishing” is implicated in these efforts. *Flourishing*³ is a word often used - but not to describe teachers - and much of the research being conducted with and about teachers is centred on teacher change, professional development, and programmatic efforts to increase student performance in the face of high accountability with few resources (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning, 2001). Teacher’s voices are still not often heard in the outcry for educational reform, nor are they often recognized in academic research settings.⁴ My decision to research teacher flourishing is driven by my belief that efforts to insure teacher’s professional health helps to insure the health of our children, and thus, our future. As Bateson suggests in *Composing a Life* (1989), “The need to sustain human growth should be a matter of concern for the entire society, even more fundamental than the problem of sustaining productivity” (p. 55).

Always more than a master’s thesis, this research was born from my own strivings to maintain vitality and flourish as an educator. After teaching in secondary schools for over six years in a manner my peers judged to be successful, I nevertheless became disheartened by the state of schools in the

³ An exploration of this term will follow.

⁴ Kathleen Casey discusses the silencing of teachers, especially minority women, in her introduction to *I Answer with my Life: Life Histories of Women Teachers Working for Social Change*. (1993). New York: Routledge.

United States and the magnitude of demands placed on teachers who desired to be agents of change. When I left teaching to attend graduate school, my desire to do research that would support teachers became more urgent. Questions concerning ties between human flourishing and teaching continued to dwell with me. I did not want to become entrapped in the ongoing discussion concerning teacher burnout, as I see the state of human flourishing to be a deeper, multifaceted phenomenon. An active teacher and a flourishing teacher are analogous to a lit candle and a flourishing fire. When a candle burns out, it leaves a lump of wax. When a flourishing fire is extinguished, it leaves an expansive area of barren ground. The loss of a flourishing teacher is of such magnitude.

As I became involved in the Imaginative Education Research Group, I began to see connections between teachers' use of their imaginations and their ability to improvise in the classroom. Could a more developed understanding of the power of our imaginations enable teachers to flourish professionally? Were our imaginations the key to moving from the alienated, fragmented persona of post-modern discourse to a self who can not only "articulate her own coherence" but also aid others in doing so?⁵ Although dozens of questions attend to the relationships between teacher flourishing and imagination, some of the questions which guided my initial work are as follows:

- How are educators using imagination to improvise teaching practices?
- What factors (administrative, collegial or other) support a climate in which teachers can flourish professionally?

⁵ Casey, K. (1993). Using Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the subject, she states that "acting within the limitations constructed by the other, she [all individuals] nevertheless has some choice, and she has some power." p. 18.

- How might this flourishing be implicated in teachers' imaginative work to create inclusive classrooms?⁶

Due to my chosen methodology, I did not enter the research scene nailed to these questions, but rather allowed the urgent questions of my fellow inquirers to emerge and to be addressed. Since I have sought to write a text that transgresses boundaries, that “seeks to create a social science about human life rather than on subjects,”(Lincoln and Guba, 1981, p. 184) allowing the focus of the inquiry to emerge and yet maintain my own interest in teacher flourishing required constant resculpting of my philosophy, my methodology, and my relationships with the teachers involved in the project.

1.1.2 Philosophical, Theoretical, and Political Grounding

Initially, this thesis was grounded in the philosophical theories of Aristotle and Nietzsche and the discourse on democracy as outlined by Held. As my research progressed, the sociocultural theories of Dorothy Holland, Mikhail Bakhtin, Clifford Geertz, and Michel Foucault emerged as being relevant to my findings. Because of this occurrence, I have included philosophical, theoretical, and political frameworks in Chapter 2. I have also included brief summaries of contemporary attempts to establish collaborative, democratic research to illustrate the “progress” research has made based on these philosophies. I feel that this “broadening” of research scope illustrates my personal growth as a researcher.

⁶ In order to narrow the scope and account for what emerged in my research, the focus on *inclusion* in this third question was omitted.

1.1.3 Approaches to Research

This research shares with the LUCID project an action research approach. However, this research also encompasses qualitative, cooperative and feminist elements especially relevant to the purposes with which I am concerned. Because of my quest to find a suitable methodology for researching teacher flourishing, this thesis has become a documentation of many explorations: that of the relationships among teacher flourishing and Imaginative Education, the methodologies of cooperative inquiry and portraiture, and of implementing Imaginative Education itself. The methodology I have used is a blend of two approaches – cooperative inquiry, and portraiture. Instead of being bound by a single approach, I found this blend to better suit both the participants' and my needs as the research progressed.

1.1.3.1 Cooperative Inquiry

In my research, I have attempted to conduct a study *with* people, not *about* them. This is a point of divergence from traditional qualitative research but represents the key aspect of an approach referred to as cooperative inquiry (Heron, 1996). Cooperative inquirers do research with people, who are invited to be full inquirers with the initiating researcher and become fully involved in decision-making (Heron, 1996, p. 3). Researchers choose to explore any aspect of the human condition through the instrumentality of their own experience.

The outcome of good research should not be just books and academic papers, but also the creative action of people to address matters that are important to them. Cooperative inquiry thus correlates with the approach of

action research, but it is also concerned with revisioning understandings of our world (in this case, the world of public schools), as well as transforming practice within it (Reason and Heron, “A short guide...” p. 1). It is essentially tied to the idea of human flourishing.

1.1.3.2 Portraiture

With its focus on narrative and its use of metaphor and symbol, portraiture intends to address a wider, more eclectic audience than traditional ethnographies that focus on specific cultures (Lawrence-Lightfoot, p. 10). My intention has been to move beyond a solely academic audience by writing in a language that is not specifically coded or exclusive and is instead evocative for readers who are interested in how imagination and teaching are related. I have attempted to highlight one teacher’s experience with hope that it will resonate with others. While sculpting the portrait, I considered two central questions: (1) What in this life would have resonance in other lives? and (2) How might this individual experience inform others? (Lawrence-Lightfoot, p.153) My hope is that by creating a portrait of a teacher, others may be able to see an image that reflects their own state of being in some way. Perhaps readers will reflect on what leads to and deters their own flourishing and consider how imagination is tied to this reflection.

1.1.4 Approach to Relationships

The teachers involved in my research volunteered their time and effort to explore the nature of teacher flourishing and Imaginative Education. I encourage

those represented in this thesis to see my representation as a reflection of my experiences. As Bateson (1977) suggests:

There are two things about dealing with creative people. One is acknowledging their creativity, exploring it with them, getting them to do something other than just talking about it, and the other is helping them, because it's a hard process, and they can get discouraged. The advantage is that they really want to finish their creations. The thing that keeps them going isn't charisma—that's what hooks them in—it's achieving. Frequently, when you're exploring some blockage, just doing it is like holding up a mirror, so they can see what they have achieved, and that's more important than the actual advice you give. (Bateson, p. 182)

This thesis is a mirror that reflects my beliefs, my research experiences, and the relationships between teacher flourishing and Imaginative Education.

Chapter 2

2.1 Philosophical Framework

2.1.1 Definition of Terms

I will first present the various definitions of the term, *flourishing*, and illustrate its symbiotic relationship with the word, *imagination*. Flourishing means to “grow well...thrive...to do or fare well...to prosper” (*Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, 1998). These definitions could describe a person, a plant, or an industry, among others. However, further definitions relate more to human beings: “to be in a period of highest productivity, excellence, or influence; specifically of authors, painters, etc.; to be in a state of activity or production.” These definitions seem to suggest that flourishers are “in the zone,” in athletic terms. For instance, Lance Armstrong, professional cyclist, has been flourishing since overcoming cancer and winning the Tour de France six years in a row. These definitions also may conjure images of passionate painters, stroking their canvasses with a frenzy, perhaps even with a flourish, as represented by the following definition: “to make bold, sweeping movements...to play with fantastic and irregular motion...to execute in an irregular or fanciful strain of music...”(*Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*). These last definitions tie flourishing to creativity and risk taking, both of which are, arguably, key aspects of master teaching. As a whole, these definitions describe processes that can be said to be highly imaginative.

Imagination is what gives flourishers creative potency. Is it not striking, then, that the definition of the word *imagination* is rife with references to power: “the imagine-making power of the mind: the power to create or reproduce ideally an object of sense previously perceived; the representative power: the power to reconstruct or recombine the materials furnished by direct apprehension; the power of recollection: the power to recombine materials furnished by experience or memory for the accomplishment of an elevated purpose”(Webster’s 1913 *Dictionary*). Imagination instils people with the ability to confront and resourcefully deal with unusual problems (*WordNet*, 2005). It is also regarded as responsible for “fantasy, inventiveness, idiosyncrasy, and creative, original, and insightful thought in general, and, sometimes, for a much wider range of mental activities dealing with the non-actual, such as supposing, pretending, 'seeing as', thinking of possibilities, and even being mistaken” (*Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind*, 2005). It is the power to improvise.

The potency of the imagination relies on the mind’s capacity to decompose its conceptions and then recombine the elements of them at its pleasure. People who harness this imaginative power not only survive, but flourish. One would think that such flourishing individuals would also be happy, but this is not necessarily so. An analysis of the relationship between flourishing individuals and their state of happiness follows.

2.1.2 Aristotle: The *Telos* and its Relationship to Happiness

The concept of *human flourishing* was first recorded by Aristotle (384-322 BC), who described *happiness (eudaemonia)* as “human beings flourishing in

their natural environment,” (Bellioti, 2004, p. 6) and an “activity of the soul in accord with excellence” (Bellioti, p. 11). His definition of happiness as flourishing extends to “living well and faring well: having and exercising the moral and intellectual virtues, while enjoying a measure of material, worldly, and personal success” (Bellioti, p. 11). His recipe for happiness includes attaining these five virtues: “wisdom, understanding, prudence, temperance, and generosity,” while benefiting from a number of “goods”: “a congenial home life, friends, leisure time, freedom, health, an acceptable physical appearance, and material prosperity” (ibid., p. 11). Aristotle explains how and why achieving this recipe makes us happy by referring to our *telos*—our innate goal based on our distinctive human function. Because of our biological constitution, he believed we are fulfilled only through requisite intellectual and moral activities that lead to a goal, all carried out within a social context (Bellioti, p. 6).

Although Aristotle’s concepts have been highly influential in Western philosophy, he failed to address the tragic nature of human life and its relationship to happiness, instead offering only a picture of a middle-class male citizen who enjoys leisure, contemplation, civic participation, relatively good luck, and congenial social and family relations.⁷ In addition, his appeal to a fixed human *telos* as the link between happiness and value is less persuasive today than when he wrote, as his views can be considered reductionist in a pluralistic society. Most important, his definition of happiness as “faring well” could

⁷ Bellioti, p. 15. Aristotle denied that women, slaves, manual labourers could be happy due to the virtue of their social positions, which did not grant them the mental capacity or social conditions to fare well. As a feminist, I obviously have issues with this ideology, but, then, he was a man of his time and accurately saw how poorly women were positioned.

describe those who would not consider themselves happy. Individuals like Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, and John Lennon could be described as flourishing in their time, but it is difficult to determine if they were *happy*. Thus, Aristotle's definition has been understood more as the concept of human flourishing, a contemporary designation which does not require a person to consider themselves happy. Although meeting his list of "faring well" increases our chances for happiness, it would seem that a conscious subjective response entailing sustained joy, contentment, exuberance, or peace is necessary for happiness (Bellotti, 2004, p. 18).

2.1.3 Nietzsche: Enjoying the Struggle

How does struggling with challenges, even tragedies, influence our capacity for flourishing? Nietzsche understood that achieving greatness necessarily involves suffering and the overcoming of grave obstacles (Bellotti, p. 55). Since we cannot eliminate suffering, he said, we should use it creatively; consequently, he evaluated people by their ability to transform suffering to spiritual advantage. Because suffering and resistance can stimulate our highest creative energies, by changing our attitude toward suffering from pity to affirmation, we can open ourselves to greatness. For Nietzsche, the joy and strength built by such creative struggle surpassed the "happiness" of the "banal masses" (Bellotti, p. 56). Although as elitist in his viewpoints as Aristotle, Nietzsche thought the ability to understand and celebrate the unpredictable nature of existence and the fragility of our social structures and to find happiness in the process of experiences that are affirming could grant even those not born

into aristocracy the highest mentality of *amor fati*, the unconditional love of life (Bellioti, p. 91). The trick to creative living is to use suffering as a springboard for robust creative striving, which creates meaning and purpose for life. People who live in such a way become “grand transcendents” who are deeply and self-consciously engaged in the project of deconstructing, re imagining, and recreating the self (ibid., p. 116).

Applying Nietzsche’s ideology to the lifestyle and practice of teachers can evoke interesting insights regarding teacher flourishing. Since teachers encounter daily challenges as they are confronted with students of diverse needs, ever-changing curriculum, increasingly mandated tests, and concerned parents, how they respond to these struggles has important implications for their possibilities for flourishing. These notions are echoed and specified in Holland’s (1998) sociocultural orientation to improvisation, which is explored below.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Improvising Worlds

Whereas Nietzsche posited the importance of transcending boundaries and reimagining the self, he did not indicate much about how this process could be undertaken in the social spaces we live in, most of which are more bureaucratic than democratic. The work of sociocultural theorists suggests how this work might be taken up by individuals in the positions to which they find themselves assigned.

In their work, *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998), Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain state their objective: to recognize human beings as bounded social and cultural creatures, but to recognize the manner in which individuals and groups sculpt their identities, “led by hope, desperation, or even playfulness, but certainly by no rational plan” (p. 7). Holland et al. seek to move beyond the culturalist and constructivist approaches by building upon elements of Vygotsky (1978), Bourdieu (1977), and Bakhtin’s (1981) theories of culture, identity, and discourse.

Culturalists theorize that people are socialized in given cultural milieus to internalize morals, beliefs and knowledge valorised in those settings. Constructivists put forward that social positions (based on unequal distributions of power and privilege) have major implications for the participation or exclusion of people from the milieus they inhabit. In Holland et al.’s perspective, neither socialization nor positioning tells the whole story of persons’ lives. Rather, Holland et al. theorize that actors respond to these socio-cultural elements in creative ways, often improvising novel activities (Holland et al., 1998, p. 13).

People constantly face disjoint circumstances in which they need to improvise a response. Hence, who we are (our identities) may be under constant reformulation. As we relate to new circumstances and with new people, we change in a multitude of ways. Four specific ideas help to indicate how this change might occur: figured worlds, positionality, the space of authoring, and imagined worlds (Holland et al., 1998).

2.2.1.1 Figured Worlds

In Holland's terms, "A figured world is a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (1998, p. 52). In the figured world of the Catholic Church, for example, the Pope is the recognized leader, attendance, prayer, and confession are significant acts, and the dissemination of the Christian faith is highly valued. The rules of the Church are authoritative discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) that shape its realm. Those who violate these rules may be condemned and ostracised.

2.2.1.2 Positionality

Positionality is one's relational identity. It concerns one's social place, entitlement, and how one identifies one's position relative to others in terms of power, social affiliation and distance (Holland et al., p. 127). Persons look at the world from the positions into which they are cast consistently and often act accordingly (Holland et al., p. 44).

In this realm of identity, one's acts constitute relations of hierarchy. One's acts and comfort level are determined by her own assessment of her place in the world. This perceived position may lead minority groups to silence themselves and Presidents to attempt to conquer the world. Positionality affects confidence, and being "low" in position can inhibit creative action altogether:

Such persons [in reference to those who hold a "low" position] lose their creativity: because they are compelled to assume the identity of the Other—in exchange for academic success—they cannot represent themselves; they are forced to masquerade as the

authentic, idealized ‘Other.’” (Fordham, 1993, p. 26, cited in Holland et al., p. 132)

Much of the space of our lives is a masquerade. Through acknowledging our identities as being tied to the communities we inhabit but allowing for individual agency in the fashioning of these identities, we create spaces of authorship.

2.2.1.3 Space of Authoring

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) brings attention to the process of “dialogism,” in which sentient beings always exist in a space of being ‘addressed’ and in the process of ‘answering’” (Holquist, 1990, p. 169). In this space, there is no human action that is singularly expressive. The author works within and alongside a set of constraints that are also a set of possibilities for utterance (ibid., p. 171). “In ‘answering,’ the self “authors” the world—including itself and others” (ibid). Identities are thus social forms of organization, public and intimate, that mediate a development of human agency. Subjectivity happens at an interface between the social and embodied sources of the self. This is called the self-in-practice, or the “authoring self” (Bakhtin, p. 32).

The space of authoring is a social space of struggle, and intentionally joining this struggle has a powerful effect on one’s identity and agency:

This process...becomes especially important in those cases where a struggle against such images has already begun, where someone is striving to liberate himself from the influence of such an image and its discourse by means of objectification, or is striving to expose the limitations of both image and discourse. The importance of struggling with another’s discourse, its influence in the history of an individual’s coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One’s own discourse and one’s own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other’s discourse.

This process is made more complex by the fact that a variety of alien voices enter into the struggle for influence within an individual's consciousness. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 348)

The writing of this thesis, for example, represents my own struggle with various limitations of schools of thought, methodologies, and relationship boundaries.

2.2.1.4 Imagined Worlds

School often begins through play, and play happens through the world in which it is observably set. When we master play, we master our imagination, for “the social practice of ‘acting otherwise’ becomes the grounds for ‘thinking otherwise’” (Holland et al., p. 236). The capacity to formulate other social scenarios through imagination ensures one's individual agency (ibid., p. 236). As Weber (1978) proposes, there may be an iron cage around us, but not within us, as long as we can imagine other possibilities. Imagined worlds can be potent cultural resources that help us envision new identities and act to bring them to fruition. Once developed, discussed, and otherwise “played with,” new worlds can become foundations for changes in greater society.

Individuals labouring in isolation cannot author identity. Since creativity is collectively enabled, it takes a group of active players to create an imagined world and pass it on to others (Holland et al., p. 275). Just as identity cannot be authored individually (ibid., p. 272), the boundaries of Imaginative Education must be played with collectively. This social play develops competency in newly imagined communities. Such newly imagined worlds “build in their rehearsal a structure of disposition, a habitus, that comes to imbue the cultural media, the means of expression, that are their legacy” (Holland et al., p. 273). This has

interesting implications for a consideration of teachers' imaginative acts and their relationships to other players, be they students, peers or members of the Imaginative Education Research Group (IERG). How these players are positioned relative to one another may contribute to (or hinder) their possibilities for collective imagining. This will be considered in more depth in Chapter 5.

2.2.2 Fossilization

Improvisations, although seemingly fleeting acts, can lead to lifestyle changes in whole societies. According to Bourdieu's "practice theory," (1977) improvisations happen when "our past, brought to the present as *habitus*, meets with a particular combination of circumstances for which they have no programmed response" (Holland et al., p. 18). Through improvisation, significant changes occur in lifestyle from one generation to another, for the initiatives of the parent generation are the beginning of a new *habitus* for the next generation. In other words, sediment from one woman's experiences grounds her improvisations, which are influenced by the cultural resources available and are subject to the positions afforded her in the current circumstance. The more habitual the "new" improvisations become in a present generation, the more prone they are to "fossilization."⁸ These whims of improvisations may one day become an icon for future practices, a process of heuristic development (Holland et al., p. 40). Therefore, teachers who improve their ability to improvise by strengthening their imaginative ability may, in creating opportunities for improvisation for their students, act as catalysts for

⁸ "Fossilization" is Vygotsky's term (1978).

societal change. If their students have opportunities to improvise they may feel more secure and confident in their abilities to do so not only in the figured world of the classroom, but also in other worlds they may encounter.

2.2.3 Improvising and Composing Lives

In *Composing a Life* (1989), Bateson suggests that the compositions of individual improvisations be shared as models of possibility for future generations (p. 232). As each person does identity work by improvisation, she discovers the shape of her creation along the way, rather than simply pursuing a vision already defined. Composing a life means integrating one's own commitments with the differences created by change and the differences that exist between the people of our pluralistic society (Bateson, p. 59). To compose, we must be open to possibilities and gather the capacity to put these possibilities together in a way that is structurally sound (*ibid.*, p. 263). The first process is improvisational, requiring the imagination to gather the resources available, create new resources, and combine them in various ways; the second process is one of memory, requiring the imagination to reproduce, recollect, and reconfigure past solutions to challenges (*ibid.*, p. 34). Composing a life as an artistic task requires individuals to find a way of taking what is simply ugly and, instead of trying to deny it, using it in a broader design (*ibid.*, p. 211). Following Nietzsche's ideal of *amor fati* (1954), artists grapple with all aspects of their environment and incorporate them unconditionally into their work.

Bateson shares Held's viewpoint (1984), which is discussed in the following political framework, that human beings must evolve toward a more

accepting, open, democratic society in order to flourish. She believes that “one of the great steps forward in history was learning to regard those who spoke odd-sounding languages and had different smells and habits as fully human. The next step, which we have not yet fully made, is the willingness to question and purposefully alter one’s own conditions and habits, to learn by observing others” (Bateson, p. 57). When she teaches anthropology, she encourages students to think in terms of three cultures, because they could too easily reduce true human diversity to a single dimension of difference - us and them, civilized and savage (ibid., p. 70). She also stresses to these students that the fundamental problem of our society and our species today is to discover a way to “flourish” that will not be at the expense of some other community or of the biosphere, that we must replace competition with creative inter-dependence (ibid., p. 239).

The struggle to combine commitments in order to flourish is really a search for ways to make the combinations mutually enhancing. Bateson says, “Implicit in everything we do is a longing for synergy, a hope that when there are competing demands on our time or strength we can find a non-zero-sum solution—not this replacing that, but this enhancing that” (Bateson, p. 238). It is not sufficient to reject one tradition and embrace another, nor is it sufficient to “camp out” in a new tradition without commitment, taking refuge in relativism to avoid responsibility and using distance to avoid the need to criticize the culture one comes from (ibid., p. 66). We must create new ways of being as our lives, and our world, evolve.

Bateson believes it is time to explore the creative potential of interrupted and conflicted lives, in which energies are not narrowly focused nor pointed toward a single ambition (ibid., p. 9). These are lives in which commitments are continually refocused and redefined; these are, in my opinion, the very lives of teachers. By observing how teachers have coped with discontinuities in their lives, we may discover important clues that will help others cope with the unfolding education agenda.

Bateson, like Nietzsche (1954), and Hargreaves (2001),⁹ believes that within discontinuity is implied possibility as well as loss and the need to construct a new model of self-preservation that proclaims commitment without dependency (Bateson, p. 197). The central survival skills are building the capacity to pay attention and respond to changing circumstances, to learn and adapt to new environments (ibid., p. 231). While immersed in the changing milieu of educational practice, each teacher searches for her own kind of integrity, learning to improvise in a culture where she can only partly be at home (Bateson, p. 13).

2.2.4 Interpretation as an Imaginative Act

Conducting research with integrity while also allowing for creativity is the work of qualitative researchers, especially those attempting to interpret culture. I see three significations for *imagination* in my work as it relates to the following: ethnography, the work of teachers, and the theoretical framework of Imaginative Education. Interpreting these overlapping layers of meaning is a complex task.

⁹ Hargreaves' research is discussed in the Political Framework.

According to Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), “What the ethnographer is faced with is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another...which he must contrive somehow to grasp and then to render” (p. 10). In a place like schools, what most prevents those of us who grew up in separate cultures from grasping what people are up to is not ignorance as to how cognition works, but “lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs”(Geertz, p. 13). Anthropological writings are second and third order interpretations, so to construct descriptions of the involvements of teachers is clearly an *imaginative act* (p. 15). This thesis is thus an imaginative act relating to the imaginative work of teachers involved in implementing Imaginative Education.

Although the appraisal of an ethnographic account rests with the degree to which the writer is able to clarify what goes on, (Geertz, p. 16) “nothing has done more to discredit cultural analysis than the construction of impeccable depictions of formal order in whose actual existence nobody can quite believe” (ibid., p. 18). Thus, I have written about how I understand what I observed and trust that it is not necessary to know everything to understand something (p. 20).

When we apply the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of human flourishing, identity, and imagination, “teacher flourishing” becomes a term that describes professional educators possessing the power to utilize their imaginations to create vibrant classroom climates and engaging curricular units that allow spaces for self-fashioning. Although such teachers may maintain these

characteristics in adverse educational environments, it would seem that the suggested freedom and camaraderie of a democratic climate would foster a community of flourishing teachers. It becomes necessary, then, to look into the variety of ways “democracy” is interpreted currently, and what such a setting can offer as far as foundational support for educational institutions.

2.3 Political Framework

Democracy is a term heralded across mountaintops and placed on the tallest pillars of North American society, but it remains a concept heatedly debated. In today’s postmodern society, meaning making is a pluralistic, evolving phenomenon, and reform efforts to restructure governmental power and civic structure are aimed to equalize the capacities of humankind to make these meanings. It is no longer an acceptable democratic practice to invite anyone interested to participate; instead, “spaces” are “created” by those intending to minimize privileged voices and evoke those often silenced. The question remains: how *much* democracy do we need? The seductive aspects of “unity” and “justice” that pervade political discourse create assumptions and invite patterns of repetition. These same patterns are replicated in research methodologies, so it is important to look at their origin and evolution.

Democracy has evolved significantly since the time of Aristotle. For instance, contemporary liberals agree that liberal educational institutions need to disconnect their evaluation and functioning from a teleological understanding of human beings or the designation of the activities and practices signalling human flourishing (Mara, 1998, p. 2). According to this viewpoint, democracy seen as a

regime characterized by freedom and equality accommodates a variety of competing conceptions of “the good life.” By refraining from endorsing a single vision of the “good” human being, democracy allows its citizens substantial freedom of choice. While this openness accepts the possibility of serious mistakes about private goals, democratic citizenship stands independent of the practice, and perhaps even the possibility, of human excellence, and thus human flourishing (Mara, p. 301).

Is it possible, however, for a democratic setting to exist separate from a participatory public? Aristotle's teleological understanding of human practice challenges this separation. For him, it is illusory to expect that even moderate regimes can encourage the development of “good” citizens without also attempting to foster the growth of people who are also “good” human beings (Mara, p. 301). Thus, as Holland et al. (1998) suggest, the educational processes of socialization and individuation are interconnected and are influenced by the political culture. Constructive education within democratic societies therefore requires a knowledgeable appreciation of the liberal institution's influence and limitations. For Aristotle, the best available education does not require the creation of a more communitarian culture that challenges liberalism. Instead, it relies on the encouragement of a choice - worthy *human practice* that is accessible within liberal democratic political culture (ibid., p. 301). Although human beings need a strong social aspect of their lives to flourish, they do not need to be part of a commune or find consultation for every choice they need to make.

Presently challenging one another in the democratic arena are the New Right and New Left theorists. In general, the New Right, often called neo-liberalism or neo-conservatism, holds that political life should be a matter of individual freedom and initiative, like economic life (Held, 1984, p. 175). Therefore, a free market society that works alongside a “minimal” state is the key political objective. New Right thinkers insist that individual freedom and responsibility have been compromised recently due to bureaucratic agencies increasingly regulating and controlling people’s activities. They call for an advancing “liberalism” against “democracy” by limiting the state’s use of power. They believe that the ideas behind distributive justice are unjust because “equitable distribution” always requires a central authority to act *as if* it knew what people should receive for their efforts and how they should behave. They therefore put their collective hope in the free market, a “sufficiently sensitive mechanism for determining ‘collective’ choice on an individual basis” (Held, p. 175).

The New Left theorists, on the other hand, question the extent to which individuals are “free” in contemporary liberal democracies. To enjoy liberty, they say, means to not only enjoy equality before the law, but also to have the *capacities* (the material and cultural resources) to be able to choose between courses of action (Held, p. 176). The existing relationships between men and women, working, middle, and upper classes, various ethnic groups, homo and heterosexuals do not allow formally recognized rights to be realized. They believe that the rights stated in democratic theory are impotent if they cannot be practiced in everyday situations, and they view the current privileges of

individuals to be highly unequal. One illustrative comment from the Left: “The doors of the Court of Justice stand open to all, like the doors to the Ritz Hotel” (ibid., p. 177).

Held (1984) identifies two main problems with current democratic society that encapsulate issues from the Left and the Right. First, the structure of civil society, which includes private ownership of productive property and vast sexual and racial inequalities, does not create equal spaces for effective participation, thoughtful political understanding, and equal control of the political agenda. Second, the structure of the liberal-democratic state, which includes large, often unaccountable bureaucratic apparatuses, institutional dependence for capital accumulation, and politicians distracted by pending elections, does not create an organizational force that can adequately regulate civil power centres (Held, p. 181). It is necessary, therefore, to look beyond the polarizing forces of the Left and Right to create a form of democracy that addresses these two issues creatively. Held does so through his concept of “democratic autonomy.”

Held’s “democratic autonomy” position commits to the idea that the liberty of some individuals should not be allowed at the expense of others, and seeks to place at its centre the right of all citizens to participate in public affairs (Held, p. 186). “For democracy to *flourish*¹⁰ today, he proclaims, “it has to be conceived as a double-sided phenomenon: concerned, on the one hand, with the reform of state power and, on the other hand, with the restructuring of civil society” (Held, 182). If we choose democracy, we must choose to operationalize a

¹⁰ Emphasis added.

radical system of individual rights while eroding the systematic privileges enjoyed by some social groups at the expense of others.

Held admits his ideology raises profound questions, but he models a recreative stance that Nietzsche would surely applaud. At any rate, it is quite evident that although the concept of democracy has evolved significantly since its conception, it still is in need of refashioning. Currently, researchers are exploring democratic methods and representation as they work collaboratively with teachers. I have found the works of Miller (1990), Clift (1995), Rosenholtz (1989), and Hargreaves (2001) instructive in helping me to work towards a democratic approach to conducting research with teachers. What follows is a brief description of their work.

2.3.1 Miller: Educational Researchers as Creators of Space

In *Creating Spaces and Finding Voices* (1990), Miller traces the steps of five teachers and a university professor as they experiment with collaborative inquiry to determine constraints and possibilities for teacher empowerment as co-researchers. Questioning the democratized research process that became popular during the 1980's, Miller wished to examine the ways in which their own research processes might unintentionally reproduce the same oppressions as traditional research by their imposing meanings on situations, rather than constructing meaning through negotiation with other research participants (Miller, p. 14). They sought to challenge their research processes, even if described as reciprocal and liberating in intent, to see if these processes were contributing to a situation of power in which the university researcher alone

remained an “expert” (Miller, p. 15). It is her opinion that freedom emerges through risk taking, challenging, and taking initiative. Like Bateson (1989), she suggests that “By knowing the ways of others’ histories,” she quotes, “we may be encouraged to see beyond and through our own” (deLauretis, 1986, as cited in Miller, 1990, p. 15).

Together, the researchers articulate three main obstacles: barriers of time, layers of assumptions, and ambiguity (Miller, p. 1). As the group continued to meet, Miller clearly explained that she could provide no definitive answers for the forms that teacher-oriented research might take. However, what she could offer is “a detailing of the processes as well as problematic aspects of dialogue and collaboration that characterize our particular forms of inquiry...the constantly changing and emerging nature of our voices, and the questions and points of dissonance that accompany our explorations” (Miller, p. 7). She found that meeting on their own time assured that all were motivated by a true sense of curiosity and a sense of possible meaningful connections and that focusing on gaining understanding of forces that guide and shape daily practice helped to clarify ambiguity (Miller, p. 28).

Quite insightful are her comments on the seductive aspects of “unity,” which can threaten to obscure the positive and necessary differences among group members: “In my desire for the comforts of unity, I was ignoring the overlapping yet varying experiences that marked each of our understandings of our teacher-researcher work” (Miller, p. 91). One can become entrapped within collaborative assumptions just as easily as within individual assumptions (Miller,

p. 103). As a result, group members must explore the balancing points between personal and collective interactions.

2.3.2 Clift: Collaborative Leadership

Clift explores collaborative leadership in a project titled “Time for Reflection: A Project in Collaborative Leadership for Working More Effectively in Multicultural Settings” (Clift, 1995). Based on an action research approach over three years, their model for collaboration, termed *professional reflective activity*, is too relationally distant for my preferences, but it offers many tools for research, nonetheless. The most pervasive metaphors presented are those of the “parlour guests” and the “interior designers.”

Parlours, well-kempt rooms at the front of many older homes in North America and England, were used to entertain guests (Clift, p. 3). While guests were entertained, family members were able to maintain their daily routines behind parlour doors safely away from scrutinizing gazes, and guests were not subjected to the “messiness” of their associates’ daily home lives. In the parlour tradition, educational researchers often seek to study aspects of schooling without interfering or becoming personally involved in the entire school context. Carefully structured visits and interviews ensure that researchers gain the information they desire while remaining apart from the private worlds of the people and places studied.

While parlour guests remain only in the parlour area, “interior designers” may sometimes venture into the living areas, often for the purpose of helping occupants rearrange the metaphoric furniture or “redecorating” (Clift, p. 3).

Sometimes invited, sometimes not, these guests intend to “fix” what is “broken.” Although sometimes their advice is helpful, irritation can occur if occupants decide not to implement suggested “renovations” or when scholars are perceived as uncaring and unrealistic.

Their project was quite a helpful guide for planning how to structure and “lead” the cooperative inquiry group that could venture beyond the parlour in a respectful manner. I will discuss this approach in Chapter 3.

2.3.3 Rosenholtz: Organizing for Commitment

In *Teachers' Workplace: The Social Organization of Schools* (1989), Rosenholtz examines the school as a workplace, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to gauge school effectiveness and, more importantly, how school organizations affect teachers and their teaching. She determined that teachers' workplace commitment, which relates directly to their professional fulfilment, is determined by three workplace conditions: (1) teacher's empowerment, which gives them the sense that student growth and development results directly from their instruction, (2) teachers' learning opportunities, which offer them a sense of continuing challenge and growth that makes greater environmental mastery and control possible, and (3) teachers' psychic rewards, which ensure their continuous school wide contributions (Rosenholtz, p. 7). These conditions and the daily school structure influence teachers as they seek to make sense of their school world in order to simplify, predict, and control events (Rosenholtz, p. 11). If teachers are uncertain about

the technology¹¹ of teaching, they will be unable to “rally” in a single-minded pursuit, to ask for help from their peers, and to have faith in their students’ abilities to learn. Like Holland, Rosenholtz sees this attitude as being determined socially rather than objectively (Rosenholtz, p.11). Her work adds a needed dimension in my research – that of the influences of workplace conditions, organization, and leadership on teacher flourishing.

2.3.4 Hargreaves: The Nature of Teacher Change

The purpose of one of Hargreaves’ latest work (2001), which he conducted with Earl, Moore, and Manning and portrayed in *Learning to Change: Teaching Beyond Subjects and Standards*, is to determine how and to what extent teachers were able to integrate changes into their practice, to examine understandings that teachers developed of changes embedded in new curriculum, to identify what conditions, supports, and processes were necessary for them to do so, and to understand their experiences of the changes involved (pp. 11-12). His results focus on recommended actions for school leaders who hope to help teachers weather change.

Hargreaves insists that we cannot raise standards for students by “dumbing down their teachers with inflexible systems of standardization” (Hargreaves et al., p. 196). In contrast, his “action implications” for school leaders involve time for teacher reflection and experimentation with current reforms; building teams carefully to ensure trust is fostered instead of thwarted; getting involved on an administrative level to witness firsthand the messiness of

¹¹*Technology* is her term for the skills needed to operate in a classroom of students.

change and to act as consistent leadership, and according high priority to both emotional and intellectual goals (Hargreaves et al., p. 194). He states that a gap exists in the educational change literature and standards-based reform concerning the emotional aspects of teaching and change (ibid., p. 193). Thus, there is an acute need for more narrative inquiries (such as Bateson's work) or otherwise qualitative methods to evoke voices in this area.

2.3.5 The Democratic Process

In response to this need to evoke and portray often unheard voices, I have attempted through conducting a cooperative inquiry and presenting a respectful portrait of a participating teacher, to follow a process that is strikingly democratic. However, from a Foucaultian (1975) perspective, "any alternative discourse runs the risk of emerging as a new 'regime of truth' with its own set of disciplinary practices and its own unique forms of oppression" (Anderson, p. 331). Since power is not wielded but embedded in social situations, people are caught up in power situations of which they themselves are the bearers (ibid., p. 334).

According to Barker (1993), "the relative success of a certain approach hinges not on reducing control but on achieving a system of control that is more effective than that of other systems" (p. 433, cited in Anderson, 1983, p. 337). Concertive control is much more subtle than a director giving orders to a group of workers. In a concertive system, "the workers create a values-based system of control and then invest themselves in it through their strong identity with the system" (Barker, p. 434).

Collaborative action research can either open up authentic spaces or discipline (bind) school professionals through what Foucault calls “pastoral power” (Anderson, p. 343). Foucault argues that participatory methodologies are no less oppressive than traditional methodologies. This is the line of thought that caused Miller to scrutinize meaning making in her collaborative research experiences. Although I see their point that our perceptions of our positions within these structures may be limiting, I recognize levels of oppression. Asking for someone’s opinion and creating a space for them to share it, willingly, is less likely to be oppressive than liberating. In addition, even the most oppressed individuals still have some agency over their own thoughts and imaginations. For instance, they can absent themselves in the case of this project.

For Foucault, transgressing (protesting and attempting to break) the limits imposed by discourses and disciplinary practices is the highest achievement of human subjects (Anderson, p. 345). Although I am not in entire agreement, I have striven to push the boundaries of research methodology through my work.

Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction: Approach to Research

This thesis documents many explorations: the relationship between teacher flourishing and Imaginative Education, the implementation of Imaginative Education in one setting, and the blending of two methodologies – Cooperative Inquiry, and Portraiture. This chapter describes the combination of research methodologies used in this research and elaborates on how they were improvised to fit the needs of the research participants.

Researchers involved in the LUCID project incorporate an action research methodology. According to Grundy and Kemmis (1982), action research is characterized by its repeated patterns of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and replanning, and it involves a high degree of participation and collaboration:

In action research, all actors involved in the process are equal participants, and must be involved in every stage of the research process. Collaborative participation in theoretical, practical, and political discourse is a hallmark of action research and the action researcher. (p. 87)

Action research is an important part of current, ongoing practice by practitioners for practitioners (Zuber–Skerritt, 1992, pp. 11-17). To accomplish the objectives of the LUCID research project, a sustained research alliance is essential (Fettes, LUCID research proposal, 2004). For a transformation of

teaching practices to take place on a foundational level, knowledge must be shared and developed among a professional community of educators.¹²

The purpose of action research is to evoke change; thus, the process involves determining a problem to be solved, determining a plan of action to address this problem, and following through in an appropriate manner. However, researchers focused solely on problem solving do not usually delve deeply into theories of the human condition (Heron, 1996). Because my focus has been the dynamics of a human condition, that of teacher flourishing, action research alone with its singular focus on problem solving would have constrained both the research and its interpretation. With this in mind, my research has been qualitative in style with a strong focus on inquiry. In particular, for reasons I will explain more fully in a later section of this chapter, I found Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997) useful for portraying research data.

Qualitative research focuses on people in their own social settings and the meanings actors bring to their situation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Researchers seek to negotiate three things with these actors: (1) access to their setting, (2) issues involved in ongoing management of the research, and (3) the delivery of the interpretations of the research (Heron, 1996, p.3). Given the political consequences of some current research, “which seems to solicit teachers’ understandings only to sit in judgment upon them”(Casey, 1993, p. 5), I searched for the most democratic form of research currently available, and initially settled on Cooperative Inquiry.

¹² See Appendix for an overview of the overall LUCID research team structure.

3.2 Cooperative Inquiry

3.2.1 Defining Characteristics

Cooperative Inquiry, a methodology coined by John Heron (1996) and further developed with Peter Reason (2001),¹³ stresses the importance of fully involving participants in all aspects of the research process (Heron, 1996, p. 3). This includes determining the focus of the research, structuring the inquiry sessions, and compiling the findings. In my research, I have attempted to conduct a study *with* people, not *about* them. This involvement on a participant level is a point of divergence from traditional qualitative research.

Cooperative inquiry is a method of working with others who have similar concerns and interests in order to (1) better understand one's world, make sense of one's life, and develop creative ways of looking at things, and (2) learn how to act to change things that one chooses and find out how to do things better (Reason and Heron, 2001, p.1). Researchers choose to explore any aspect of the human condition through the instrumentality of their own experience. A systematic approach to developing understanding and taking action, in cooperative inquiry, groups engage themselves in cycles of action and reflection, like most action research. However, in this form of inquiry, the process has four distinct phases.

In Phase One, a group of co-researchers, usually ranging in numbers from 5 to 12, form and establish a common interest. They discuss their concerns and share their interests regarding an essential human activity or state, then establish

¹³ John Heron is the Director for The International Centre for Cooperative Inquiry, Auckland, New Zealand. Peter Reason is a professor at the University of Bath, England.

an inquiry question. They agree to undertake some action that will contribute to exploring this question and establish a procedure for recording both their own and each other's experiences (Reason and Heron, 1999, p. 3).

For example, in September, 2004 in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, Canada, a group of 12 people committed to joining an inquiry group to explore relationships among teacher flourishing, Imaginative Education, and cultural inclusion. These participants were already a part of the LUCID research team as practicing teachers and administrators. After a brief demonstration on the process of cooperative inquiry, all of the district teachers and administrators who were part of the overall project decided to join the inquiry. Over six months, participants held seven inquiry sessions and I spent over a dozen additional days in teachers' classrooms.

After several meetings designed to explore the concept of teacher flourishing and to establish group procedural norms, the participants decided to focus on the inquiry question, "What *is* and *is not* Imaginative Education?" Journals were distributed for recording their explorations of both this question and how their strivings to incorporate Imaginative Education affected their state of flourishing as teachers, and meetings were designed as workshops for discussing and designing imaginative education lessons with their peers. At this time, they sought no aid from the university and decided not to pursue master's degrees as an Imaginative Education cohort, an option that LUCID participants in other participating districts took.

In Phase Two of the inquiry process, participants apply their agreed actions to their everyday life. All should initiate, observe, and record their own and each other's actions and the effects of these actions. At first, they may simply reflect on their own experience, and then begin trying out new forms of action based on their understandings gleaned from these reflections (Reason and Heron, 1999, p. 2).

Members of the group implemented Imaginative Education lessons and units according to their present understandings of what constitutes imaginative education. Some participants fully engaged with the approach by redesigning their classrooms, designing whole units, and modifying their methodology at a foundational level. Others observed and recorded how they already incorporated imagination in their standard lessons and methodologies, and a few designed new mini-lessons by using and adapting lesson frameworks provided by the LUCID research team. At meetings sponsored by a different school each session, they discussed their experiences, both frustrating and invigorating, and shared a meal.

In Phase Three of the inquiry process, participants should be more fully engaged in the experience than in Phase Two, according to Reason and Heron. This involves potentially being more open to the research process, more confident in themselves as researchers, and more substantially committed to acting, observing, and reflecting on their experiences. They may deepen and problematize inquiries so that superficial understandings are elaborated and developed, or they may venture away from the original inquiry into unpredicted

actions and unique insights (Reason and Heron, 1999, p.4). It is even possible that they become so enmeshed with their practice that they forget they are an essential part of a research group: there may be personal, practical crises, they may become enthralled, or they may simply forget. The “touchstone” (ibid., p. 4) of this methodology, Phase Three is a time when many practical skills and new core understandings arise.

For the inquiry group, this was a period when teachers either opted out of the process or more fully committed to it. For reasons that will be discussed in the following chapters, attendance at meetings became erratic. However, to illustrate, one of the participants who had fully engaged in the approach was so confused by the current state of her classroom and the lack of clarity regarding the approach that she ceased participating for several months. Those who kept attending inquiry sessions expressed that the contact provided at the meetings, not only with peers but also with university researchers, helped them to continue implementing the approach.

Phase Four completes the cycle of inquiry. At an agreed time, the participants meet to consider their original questions in light of reflections on their experience. They may now develop a new central inquiry question and adjust the norms for the meetings and the procedures for the inquiry. New members may join the next cycle and original members may move on.

January of 2005 was the agreed time for Phase Four. We met for a celebratory dinner and discussed the concepts of teacher flourishing, cultural inclusion, and imaginative education. Participants drew representations of these

terms as they now understood them and shared these understandings with one another. At the last meeting for this cycle, participants completed questionnaires aimed to gauge the impact of the experience on their flourishing as teachers. In February, 2005, they met to determine their new course of action and their evolving needs as participants in the overall LUCID research project. At this time, I ceased being an integral part of the inquiry cycle, and the project leader solely organized the meetings and determined the agenda.

3.2.2 Forms of Knowing

According to many action researchers, one valuable research result is the furthering of pedagogical knowledge and the interrelationship of the types of knowledge teachers can use in their daily practice. Accordingly, Reason and Heron propose that co-researchers are involved in four different kinds of knowing: experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical.¹⁴ They suggest that knowing in general will be more valid if these four ways of knowing are congruent with each other: if knowing is grounded in experience, expressed through stories and images, understood through theories that make sense to us, and expressed in worthwhile action in our practices (1999, p. 4). Although I do not necessarily believe at this point that there are only four ways of knowing, I do believe that integrating the experiential practice of action and reflection in

¹⁴ Reason and Heron (1999), p. 4, state the following: Experiential knowing is through face-to-face encounter with person, place, or thing; it is knowing through empathy and resonance, and is difficult to put into words. Presentational knowing emerges from experiential knowing and draws on expressive forms of imagery through drawing, sculpture, movement, etc. Propositional knowing is knowing through ideas and theories and is expressed in informative statements. Practical knowing is knowing how to do something and is expressed in a skill, knack, or competence.

collaboration with others in a shared experience may result in both professional and personal growth, if not flourishing.

3.3 Portraiture

3.3.1 Defining Characteristics

Portraiture is a research methodology that was introduced to me once I was already immersed in Phase Three of the cooperative inquiry. As the research progressed, I saw this methodology as an effective way to incorporate an imaginative style in the writing of the thesis and to relate the inquiry's focus on imagination in the overall representation of the thesis. I also recognized at this point that to discuss solely the process of the inquiry in a thesis would be less significant than giving an in-depth account of one person's journey within the process. As teachers' commitment to the project wavered more and more, I also saw portraiture as a way to salvage both my own research interests in teacher flourishing and the overall LUCID project's goal of "testing" the implementation of Imaginative Education. Since portraiture requires that the researcher take a "snapshot" of the complete setting, utilizing this methodology of representation would also help me to keep the thesis at a level of scope more geared toward a master's, rather than a doctorate, level. By January, 2005, when only three of the initial ten participating teachers were consistently attending meetings, I introduced the approach and announced my intention to represent the inquiry in the style of a portrait. This shift in research methodology was met with no resistance. Although I would have preferred that the inquiry group research and collaboratively determine the method of representation of their research, the fact

that they were not managing to meet as a group and thus unable to make collaborative decisions nullified this option.

Portraiture is more than a writing style – it is a fully developed methodology sculpted by Jessica Hoffman Davis and Sara Lawrence - Lightfoot (1997). A method of inquiry that shares aspects of other qualitative research, such as case study, ethnography, and narrative, portraiture blends aspects of aesthetics and empiricism in an attempt to capture the complex, changing, and subtle nature of human experience and organizational life. As a researcher entering the “field” - in this case, the classrooms of participating teachers in the LUCID project, one asks, “What is the *story* here?” Researchers search for gestures symbolic of teachers’ styles, witness and record their interrelationships with others, and write a web- like representation of scenarios. Thus, as a way to honour my co-researchers’ need to workshop imaginative lessons, yet also honour my need as a researcher to better understand teacher flourishing, I began looking for “the story” in both the overall research project and in individual teachers’ classrooms.

The goal of portraiture is to develop a narrative that both informs and inspires. The portraitist seeks to “blend empirical choices and aesthetic sensibilities, to capture insight and emotion” (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 259). To construct the aesthetic whole, the portraitist needs to synthesize four processes: First, she must identify the overarching gestalt, the “story” that will frame, focus, and energize the narrative. Second, she must build the scaffold that structures the narrative. This structure should reflect the emergent themes of the

research. Third, she creates the flow of the narrative that washes over the piece, giving it texture, nuance, and emotion. This is the “flesh and bones” of the piece. Last, she creates unity through solidly establishing the sequencing of events (the beginning, middle, and end that all narratives require) along with repetition of images, insights, and metaphors. Throughout the narrative, the portraitist’s voice must be clear and reflect her perspective in the field, her relationship with the actor, and the emotional range of the narrative (ibid., p.260).

When the narrative resonates with these characteristics, it achieves authenticity. Actors should recognize their images and experiences mirrored in the narrative, yet also be confronted by another person’s perspective of these images and experiences. This may be a rather shocking experience, but in the end, they should feel that the portrait fairly illustrates their practices and displays patterns in their lives perhaps before unnoticed. The obvious challenge of this approach for the portraitist is in assembling the various parts of the narrative into a unified, coherent, recognizable representation. This challenge is rife with potential mishap, as misrepresentations and misunderstandings abound in our attempts to communicate with one another, and a researcher cannot, actually, have an “absolute” experience nor portray it completely accurately. Heron and Reason (1997) comment on this phenomenon, which they term the “participatory paradigm”:

The participatory paradigm asserts that we cannot have any final or absolute experience of what there is. In the relation of participative knowing by face-to-face acquaintance, the experiential knower shapes perceptually what is there. And this still is so when the perceiving mind is relatively free of conceptual labels imposed upon its imaging of reality...the very process of perceiving is also a

meeting, a transaction with what there is. To touch, see or hear something or someone does not tell us either about our self all on its own, nor about a being out there all on its own. It tells us about a being in a state of interrelation and co-presence with us. (“Participative Knowing and an Extended Epistemology”)

The portraitist strives to achieve a balance between the extremes of solipsism, in which the portraitist makes up the representation, and a purely external reality, in which the portraitist ceases to exist. Bateson and Brockman (1977) claim that there is “a region where you are partly blown by the winds of reality and partly an artist creating a composite out of inner and outer events (p. 245). A balanced portrait resonates with both artistry and authenticity.

Sculpting the narrative involves three processes: how to decide what to *exclude*, how to fit together what is *included*, and how to know when the whole is *unified* (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 262). These are artful, intuitive processes, and thus imaginative ones. While immersed in these processes, the researcher must dutifully observe her own process of interpretation and selection, a process aided by her asking the following two questions: (1) How does my interpretation lend coherence to the various parts of my experience of the participant and site? and (2) How true to my overall vision of the whole is the representation I have constructed (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 263) ? Although aesthetic in nature, portraiture is more than “a graceful compilation of random reflections, personal views, and interactions with individuals and sites, there must be an underlying structure” (ibid., p. 264). The resonance of the portrait relies on a structure fortified by empirical evidence “across as well as within numerous dimensions” (ibid., p. 264). Researchers tend to use outlines to

evoke and tie together themes and metaphors to be represented in the written portrait.

When composing the portrait, which is usually in the form of a narrative, the researcher uses Aristotle's guidelines for narrative structure, as follows:

A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot therefore must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles. (*Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, 1951 ed., p. 31)

Thus, the narrative begins with an introduction of the setting (the site and its cultural influences) and the themes that will organize the story's structure and content. Although these themes serve to help organize the coordination of the components of the narrative, they do not determine the size and shape of its constituent parts – this process is up to the art of the portraitist (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 265). Structuring the web, the whole, exemplifies the ongoing dialectic between process and product, between what has been witnessed and recorded, between what was intended and what was communicated. Because language is “overpopulated with the intentions of others, expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents is a difficult and complicated process” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). Change is a part of this complicated process, as new strands of the web are interwoven and others dissipate, stretch, or are “blown away” by environmental factors. The process, like that of spinning a web, is emergent and based on meeting the needs of the individual portrait's space.

“You start with the gesture that gives the design,” (Nicolaidis, 1941, p. 151) keeping the structure in mind but not being bound by it, for “when you become self-conscious about the rules, they impose limitations upon you” (ibid.).

The portrait is finished (unified) when again according to Aristotle, the “structural union of the parts is such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed” (1951 ed., p. 35). The placement of descriptive details, the elaboration of themes, and the discussion of activities all have a “best” placement. In the end, the parts of the narrative should fulfil “tests” for sufficiency, unity, and necessity (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 275). If the portrait is of something that is in discord, then the portrait should illustrate the disparate parts, but maintain its own integrity as a piece of work.

3.3.2 Features of the Portrait

The writing of the portrait involved addressing its five essential features: context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole. It is important that I elaborate on how I addressed these features.

The *context* is the frame of the piece. It should not overwhelm the piece but instead provide a suitable, aesthetic boundary for the picture and introduce relevant themes and metaphors. Portraits usually begin with a broad description of the natural environment, then gradually focus inward to a central figure acting within a specific environment. Select aspects of the social, political, and environmental background are highlighted in this process. I chose to accent the First Nations influence and the natural beauty of the area, which correlate well

and distinguish the region. The description of the mountain also foreshadows the impending presence of Ian¹⁵, the principal subject of the portrait.

In terms of *voice*, the researcher's stance "becomes a dance of vigilance and improvisation" (ibid., p.43). Representing one's own voice and autobiographical content is difficult, for it should not obscure nor overwhelm the portrait, but clearly represent oneself as a biased research instrument. Although I found much of Ian's experience to resonate with my own life's work, I attempted to sketch only those dimensions of my story that had relevance with the themes in the portrait. During the process of the inquiry, I noted my self-analyses in my research journal, finding, like Jackson (1989), that "Research becomes a project of empathic and vicarious understanding in that the other is seen in the light of one's own experiences and the activity of trying to fathom the other in turn illuminates and alters one's sense of self" (pp. 34-35. cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 136). I understand myself as a teacher with far greater clarity than I did before I met Ian. The blatant differences between elementary and secondary instruction, classroom management, and student interaction were shocking, and I needed to deal with these differences while acknowledging the similarities between Ian's approach to teaching and my own approach in the past. Interacting and managing a group of elementary students without the positional power of authority that accompanies the designation of "teacher" is also quite difficult. For the first time in my career, students intentionally ignored my instructions, and I floundered. The effect of this experience was twofold: a bit of humble pie for my perceived talent as a teacher and a dose of increased respect

¹⁵ I use Ian's actual name with his permission.

for those who successfully intrigue, manage, and otherwise teach elementary – age children. My awe for their daily accomplishments is perceptible in the voice of the portrait.

I openly acknowledged to the LUCID research team and all participating teachers three areas of research that were my “preoccupations” throughout my research: the concept of teacher flourishing, collaborative research methodology, and my goal to work especially with minority women. These preoccupations were areas of “mattering” that derived from my knowledge of the larger field of teacher research involving teacher change, critical theory, and “flow” psychology.¹⁶ According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, “An individual researcher can purposefully develop and consciously articulate a set of preoccupations that will help guide the inquiry and shape the interpretation” (p. 113). Although I chose to follow up with a white male instead of a First Nations female to construct the portrait, due to reasons that will be explained in Chapter 5, my focus on collaborative research and teacher flourishing did shape the research experience for all participants since the inquiry sessions were sculpted according to these preoccupations.

In terms of *relationship*, the third feature of portraiture, I followed a feminist approach, believing, as Oakley (1981), that “Relationships are fluid, complex, and reciprocally shaped by all parties, and allowing these relationships reflects a more responsible, ethical stance and is likely to yield deeper data ”

¹⁶ “Flow” is a mental state of operation in which the person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing, characterized by a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity. Proposed by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the concept has been widely referenced across a variety of fields.” Wikipedia. Accessed Feb. 15, 2006.

(cited in Lawrence Lightfoot and Davis, p. 138). “It is in the building of relationships that the portraitist experiences most pointedly the complex fusion of conceptual, methodological, emotional and ethical challenges” (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 135).

Relationships require continuous negotiation in terms of roles and boundaries and often entail considerable emotional investment. Portraitists hope to build trust and rapport – first, through the search for goodness; second, through empathic regard; and third, through the development of reciprocity and boundary negotiation with the actors (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 141). Portraitists believe that the more knowledgeable about the actor’s reality and the more self-analytic you are about your own experience, the better you will be able to empathize (*ibid.*, p. 149). Ian was forthcoming in many ways – he offered his home for me to stay in while I was visiting, allowed me to get to know his wife and children, and spoke openly about his life. Unlike most of the other participants in the project, he also offered me his friendship. Over the course of the research, our families met to celebrate different holiday occasions and simply to enjoy each other’s company. Although these meetings were not research focused, they nevertheless influenced my portrait of him and added further authenticity. Unlike Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, who claim that portraitists should not strive to forge new friendships or act like “a player on the scene,” (p. 165) I saw no difficulty with accepting Ian’s kind offer of friendship, and the few times I was of some help to him in his classroom (watching and aiding a group of his students in the computer lab, for instance) only further enabled me to experience the differences between elementary and secondary teaching.

As I swam between the approaches of cooperative inquiry and portraiture, I strove to be mindful of both of their key tenets: Do no harm (portraiture), and the co-researcher relationship (collaborative inquiry). Accordingly, my interpretive goal has been to tell Ian's story, not to expose and analyze his traumas or to prescribe a remedy for any of his angst and weariness. The boundary drawing is the responsibility of the portraitist (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 153), and out of respect for him and his family, I have omitted elements of his personal life which I deem to be irrelevant to his portrait.

The fourth portraiture feature, *emergent themes*, arises usually through a process of ongoing coding – iterative cycles in which the researcher identifies emerging themes beginning immediately and continuing over the course of the research until writing is complete (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p.188). Although I do have experience coding material in this manner, I chose a more hermeneutical process used by some individual portraitists. This methodology resists the use of rigid, discrete codes and gives less emphasis to the organization of data into analytic categories (ibid., p.191). I sought to recognize the themes that emerged from multiple visits to the site and repetitive readings of the data but did not force groupings of data, for I felt that looking for the exceptions reflected the complexity of reality. The repetitive refrains that arose from the data were obvious: *frameworks, intuition, learn to think, think to learn*. Other themes that surfaced upon more intentional scrutiny of the data are *contrast, risk, humour, movement, and follow through*. These themes resonate in the portrait itself.

I used four of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' modes of "synthesis, convergence, and contrast" (ibid., p. 193) to code themes: resonant metaphors, such as a tree; institutional and cultural rituals, such as the annual Christmas concert and soccer games; personal rituals, such as Ian attending Kindermusik and biking to work; and triangulation, which informed my data collection. I collected data from personal interviews, classroom observations, and group inquiry settings. Using these four modes for structural guidance, I strove to write a brief, yet discerning interpretation.

The final feature of portraiture is *aesthetic whole*. Since the methodology of this thesis has been improvised and blended to accommodate the needs of the participants, unifying the piece has been a challenge. My task has been to create a resonating, unified whole from one aspect of the LUCID Project, which then became essentially one teacher's experience that I hoped would be evocative for others. Without unity, without the parts of the portrait fitting together into an intelligent articulation, there could be no communication – no understanding to be shared or found (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, p. 261). The most significant validity check has rested with the portrait participant's recognition of his portrayal.

3.4 Reflexivity

What remained constant throughout the process of blending methodologies has been the reflexive nature of the data collection. Reflexivity involves the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe the process as "Conscious

experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the coming to know the self through the process of research itself” (p. 183). Being immersed in the classroom with the teachers, engaging with their students, participating in their inquiry sessions, and writing (from preliminary note taking to the final editing of this thesis) are all part of the discovery process of the “subject”(Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).¹⁷ Throughout the research and writing of this thesis, I have had the noblest of intentions to accurately portray the site, the culture, and the actors within these spaces, yet I realize that no such accuracy exists, that my own bias slants every personal perception. Regardless, it is a purpose of research to strive to make sense of the many phenomena in this world. I realize that what I have selected and rejected for inclusion in the following chapter has depended on who I am, who has spoken to me, what they have chosen to say, how they have rendered it, and where and when I was listening (Casey, 1993). In addition, my own life experiences, especially my teaching experience, during which I strove doggedly to “flourish” before ever conceiving of the term, influenced this piece. Writing this thesis has given me the opportunity to reflect on my own teaching, to explore the social grounding of my current beliefs, and to more fully engage my imagination.

My greatest challenge with this blend of methodologies has been the “messiness” of the process. At times, I felt the process lacked any web of structure, and I questioned its validity. However, I consistently returned to the grounding realization that the shift in research processes itself reflected the varying flow of teaching and learning. I could much more easily have reduced my

¹⁷ “subject”, in this case, refers to the inquiry itself.

research to one short, simple questionnaire. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), “Messy texts... seek to break the binary between science and literature, to portray the contradiction and truth of human experience, to break the rules in the service of showing, even partially, how real human beings cope with both the external verities of human existence and the daily irritations and tragedies of living that existence”(p. 184). Since the purpose of my research was to witness, both personally and publicly, the relationships between imaginative education and teacher flourishing, accounting for both the “irritations” and inspirations of this experience seemed appropriate. I have also tried to balance the objective and subjective nature of this research, keeping in mind that both “objective” (structure) and “subjective” (culture) are important.

I do not believe research can accurately exhibit the “truth” of any human experience or phenomenon, so my aim has been to provide a portrait, selected through the lenses of my eyes and experiences and those of other participants as shared with me. Thus, this thesis is but a glimpse of the whole account and is therefore limited in its verities.

Following is a portrait of one co-researcher and his cultural setting, including excerpts from his own writing and interviews. Readers interested in applying the findings can consider how similar they are to the situation of interest to them, leading to generalizability. Although I have attempted to focus more on the professional lives of teachers, I have found, not surprisingly, that their private lives are inextricably entangled in their teaching. As Parker Palmer notes, “we teach who we are” (1999). Thus, teachers’ private lives are implicated

in their professional flourishing, and I have attempted to address this through my relationships with the participants and in my promise to keep their names anonymous.

Although I felt that using portraiture to portray one teacher's experience correlated with the overall imaginative style of my research, I also needed to follow through with the overall inquiry process. Therefore, an account of the inquiry, consideration of key aspects of the experiences of the other teachers, and my reflections as a participant follow the portrait.

Chapter 4

4.1 The Frame

Every time I go to the Fraser Valley, the weather is strikingly different. One time I was caught in a blizzard, the wind sweeping across the highway taking me home. The locals say that this wind can sometimes push cars right off the road.

Another time it was a deluge.

The next the crispest winter day I've witnessed in the area for three years. That was a sunset to remember. . . nestled in the bowl of the mountains, I stood in a large open parking lot after a rain, watching the clouds lift and take form again as the last rays of the sun lit them scarlet. Some stars were already visible, showing through the layers of pastel pink, fuchsia, and dark grey, playing off each other like foil characters.

At times like this, the prominent surroundings of the commercial market economy faded, and I could deepen into the story of this place. I could feel the power of its history, the rich story of its soil, its mountains, its people. This may sound nostalgic on my part or illustrate, perhaps, my attempt to feel connected to the "natives." Honestly, I never felt that I had to attempt to feel connected. Small town Canada and small town America feel remarkably the same to me.

A recent immigrant to Canada, I usually enjoyed these drives to the country because it reminded me of going home to North Carolina. Seeing the land open up and the mountains rise as I drove East, I could relax and put my "city antennae" away. During these drives, I often thought of the progress of the overall LUCID project and my part to play within it. Although designated a research assistant, I had been given significantly free rein to do independent research, and the responsibility evoked both feelings of pride and panic. "What ifs" paraded through my brain, calmed only by purposefully turning my focus to the more important matter swimming around in my abdomen. For someone who was conducting research on imagination and teacher flourishing, I was surely swelling with creativity.

4.2 The Contrasting Colours in the Background

Chilliwack, fondly referred to as "the Wack" by some locals, is a place of extremes and many things in between: booming suburbia, rural farmland; globalized marketplace, staunch individualism; bureaucratic quagmire, the "simple" life; gateway to a dream, and threshold to the harshness of the natural world. When the sun shines on its snowy peaks at dusk on a clear night, the area can be stunningly beautiful; when you're driving through the farmland on a balmy afternoon, the stench can be downright noxious.

Another striking extreme is the contrast between the First Nations presence and the multi-national corporate presence. These represent the old and new ways of life. For instance, consider Tzeachten Gas Bar, a First Nations owned and operated service station, which is flanked by Planet Earth, a modern, Western -style espresso bar and deli. Here Yuppie meets Native. Between the two walks a First Nations man in a NIKE workout suit. Perhaps he appreciates the tax-free gas he receives at the Gas Bar, but craves a good mochachino?

Mt. Cheam, sacred to the First Nations peoples that still inhabit much of the area, looks down on the valley like an historic elder. Yet in this bustling valley have purportedly sprung more churches per capita than anywhere else in the world (teacher interview, Nov. 25th, 2004). The same is true of beer and wine stores. Over the last ten years, housing developments have erupted both in the valley and in the surrounding hills. Three- bedroom homes are still affordable here for a family of modest income, whereas in Vancouver, half a million dollar starter homes are becoming the norm.

4.3 The Holes in the River

The name, "Chilliwack", according to Ethel Gardner, a First Nations language expert, means in Sto:lo "as far as you can get up river with a paddle." In contrast, some teachers who work in the district might say that they're "up the river without a paddle". According to Lorna

Williams, First Nations educator, there is a First Nations' perception that institutions and agencies are not there to help, but to control (Williams, 2000, p. 172). First Nations parents fear their children will be taken away by these insensitive organizations. Thus, First Nations people often rely on First Nations operated organizations, which have tenuous, often short-term funding. The current Enhancement Agreement, which the LUCID project leader spent much of her time working to improve, is a case in point. The Enhancement Agreement between the school and the community addresses how they are going to respond to the academic issues with which many First Nations students struggle. The project leader comments on a committee being formed to address some First Nations fears about childcare and custody as follows:

The communities here are developing what's called care team committees. So, when children are apprehended by social services, they can't just come in and apprehend a child. It [the apprehension] has to go through the community child care committee. Then the child care committee can intervene and say "Ok, we are going to take this on ourselves and place that child to an uncle, aunt, or grandmother. We're not gonna have you apprehend the child because these communities are not happy with the apprehension perhaps taking place. There's kind of a filter. . . (Project Leader interview, Nov. 5th, 2004)

While some First Nations students are living in financially stable conditions, many more are immersed in situations of poverty and experience "multiple social difficulties" (Williams, p. 172).

Moreover, First Nations students consistently report that the greatest challenge they experience is racism (ibid., p. 173). These situations are holes in the flow of service that these individuals receive.

Once they are caught in these difficult situations, it is difficult for them to escape and progress with their lives.

Even though many efforts have been made to better integrate and meet the needs of First Nations populations in Canada, more and more First Nations students are leaving elementary school, living on the street, and becoming involved in criminal activity. A three-phase study conducted in the Vancouver school district, approximately fifty kilometres west of Chilliwack, found that First Nations students are more mobile, have lower attendance and achievement rates in school, and have a much higher drop-out rate than their peers (Williams, p. 173). Even though it seems that the standard school setting is not providing a nurturing space for these students, the majority of First Nations parents and students wish to remain a part of the regular school system and would consider segregated alternatives only as a last resort (ibid., p. 173).

Most First Nations parents want schools to both ground their children in their aboriginal culture and prep kids to function in broader society. Regrettably, schools are not well suited to do either of these tasks, much less both at the same time (Fettes, 2004, "Indigenizing Schools..."). Nevertheless, more public schools are incorporating First Nations language, history, and rituals into the standard curriculum. Since most First Nations parents believe it is the school's job to teach reading and writing – not theirs, (Fettes, 2004, president's lecture series) a significant cultural gap

still exists between the expectations of teachers and staff operating in a traditional school system and the expectations of the adult First Nations community. Parents of First Nations students rarely participate in school activities, and members in some bands, in particular, are known to harbour resentment for the present and past educational system. According to Williams, "The challenge is to develop respectful, collaborative, and cooperative partnerships" (p. 173).

One effort that the system has made to address the needs of First Nations students is to hire First Nations school support workers and resource teachers for those schools that have an especially high First Nations student population. These workers tutor and design cultural enrichment activities inside and outside the classroom for both First Nations students and the wider population aimed to increase understanding of First Nations culture. They also act as mediators for families, social workers, and school staff in what remains a highly charged political environment (p. 175). The Multigenerational Family Systems Approach Training for First Nations School Support Workers is a three-year training program aimed at providing both theoretical and skills-based tools for these support workers, who are faced with complex, often overwhelming challenges in a system that otherwise gives little support (p. 176).

Receiving funding for projects in First Nations communities relies on the strategy of highlighting and amplifying the negative aspects of some First Nations students' lives. This practice

supports stereotypes in the general populace. These stereotypes affect the manner in which teachers relate to First Nations students, causing them to expect less and label them with deficiencies more often (Williams, p. 179). Some data from my personal interviews with teachers illustrates this tendency to dwell on the "inabilities" of the students. According to one teacher, most First Nations students are at least two years below grade level, even in elementary school. They do not arrive with language skills, either in English or in the native language, which they speak in various proficiencies depending on the band and the area (teacher interview, Oct 13, 2004). According to another teacher, the First Nations culture is not an oral culture anymore, but it is not a literate one, either. The children do not sit at the feet of the elders anymore, soaking up stories and traditions, as they did years ago, she says. No longer are speeches distinguished (honoured) by someone's ability to speak long and figuratively about something. "Kids are plunked in front of the TV" and arrive rich in visual skills but weak in both oral and literate knowledge (teacher interview, Oct. 13, 2004). The picture painted of these children, over and over again, is that they're not school ready, they're deficient in life skills, emotionally unstable, and so defensive that it may take years of intense counselling to enable them to fully trust anyone.

From what I witnessed, teachers with a high percentage of First Nations students feel so overwhelmed trying to meet the students' physical, emotional, and cultural needs that very little

academic content is actually taught. After visiting the exclusively First Nations school one morning, it was difficult to remain unbiased as I later witnessed the pace at which the students in a non-native school moved through their daily tasks. Although teachers in traditional public schools have twice the number of students in their classrooms than the completely First Nations school, their students are obviously more manageable. One teacher commented on this at the November 24th meeting:

I think the reality is that you guys have a lot more challenging kids and a lot more challenging situation. I mean, I can think about it. We now have a student from your school who was previously a problem. And if you know the student that I'm talking about, we can say this is ten times over -- there are ten of those kids in those classes—.

However, it is important to keep in mind that "different social groups. . . speak distinctive languages for valuing education" (Casey, 1993, introduction). Perhaps if the content and manner of instruction were more attuned to a First Nations lifestyle, management issues would diminish.

Although my point of view is tainted with my own experience as a secondary English teacher who lived in a country where efficiency is worshipped and standardized testing spurs teachers to quickly cover course material, it is evident that more can be done to keep First Nations students from being entrapped by the "holes in the river."

4.4 *The Rocks in the River*

Obstacles to teachers' participation in the project that were both shared in meetings and witnessed by me were the lesson frameworks (which will be discussed in the following section), familial responsibilities, and second jobs. All of these require teachers' time. In addition to struggling to be inclusive of the various cultures that populate their classrooms, the LUCID teachers easily name many other obstacles to their being able to flourish as teachers, as follows.

The provincial government, which changed leadership and approach four years before the writing of this thesis, raised expectations (requiring schools to feed students, for example) yet gave less support for innovative methodologies and learning assistance (inquiry meeting, October 13, 2004). Teachers feel as if they have "no one to talk through ideas with" and that negative public relations (mostly influenced through the media) have discredited the efforts teachers do make to teach well in difficult circumstances. They feel shackled by the system's focus on assessment and accountability and frustrated by the daily interruptions in their instruction and ever-increasing curriculum content. Feeling isolated, they crave more contact with parents and yearn for the respect of their administrators and students. Torn between the desire to ask for help and the desire to succeed independently, "against all odds," they have days when they admit to being "paralysed by pressure" (inquiry meeting, Oct. 13, 2004). Even the teachers who volunteered to participate in the LUCID project, who realize the need to do something "more" for their students, feel stuck. One

teacher recounts how she would love to incorporate more cultural education in her curriculum, "but it's like, I feel that accountability -- it's just horrible" (teacher interview, Nov. 24th, 2004).

On the flip side, teachers do recognize what agency they have to aid their abilities to flourish. Acting within the limitations constructed by the system, they nevertheless have some choices, and thus some power (Apple, in introduction to Casey, 1993, x.). For example, many became involved in the project because they enjoy developing professionally through collaboration (inquiry meeting, Oct. 13, 2004). Maintaining an acute awareness of personal limits, they say, helps them to achieve a better balance in both their personal and professional lives. Most still positively anticipate teaching on a daily basis, especially when they feel they have good classroom dynamics. When they are teaching well, they utilize their intuition to enable them to "think out of the box" to address everyday challenges while garnering courage to jump wholeheartedly into newly designed units. "Everyday is a new start," one teacher commented, "you have to focus on what you want to do well and not allow yourself to become overwhelmed with tasks, and when something doesn't work, then you need to forgive yourself" (inquiry meeting, October 13th, 2004). Using the "rocks in the river" as opportunities to slow down and scrutinize their intentions, teachers can then plunge forward with a plan for how to work with these obstacles in the future.

4.5 *The Waterfall*

An important pivot in the teachers' flow of Imaginative Education implementation is their use of the lesson-planning framework created by Kieran Egan and further developed by Mark Fettes and Anne Chodakowski. The framework is structured according to Egan's categories of Mythic, Romantic, Philosophic, and Ironic understandings. Each framework is two to four pages long and sectioned into boxes with written prompts. Although intended to aid teachers in their planning, the difficulty teachers expressed in using these frameworks became their chief concern as they strove to implement Imaginative Education lessons and units. Many spent hours attempting to "fill in the boxes" and "figure out what I'm being asked to do," then ending with a lesson that was not clear where it might lead. This second disconcerting factor – the fear of the unknown – kept some teachers from ever implementing their fully developed lessons. Others expressed the need to know how to assess the students' learning before moving forward, and still others wanted help designing "the look" of the unit.¹⁸

At one inquiry session, the project leader and I thought it might be interesting to simply cut and paste some of the prompts from the frameworks and represent them as a list instead of using the boxes. The teachers reacted quite favourably; selecting a few of the questions gave them more

¹⁸ "The look" of the unit was mostly influenced by an Australian educator, Miranda Armstrong, who presented at the 2004 JERG conference and greatly influenced many of the LUCID participants. Because she completely transforms her classroom to frame her units, many of the LUCID teachers felt that this visual transformation was needed in order to be authentically implementing the approach.

ownership and not having a boxed space to fill felt less intimidating. This illustrated their desire to take elements of the frameworks that were working for them and release elements that were confusing or too time consuming. Some also expressed how working without the boxed frames of the plans allowed their ideas to develop more freely instead of being "boxed in." Instead of trying to pick apart their own planning process and put it into the framework, which they felt was not working, they used the prompts from the framework as a launching pad. Once they believed that they could break from the look of the framework and the look of the classroom space, some teachers sculpted lessons with more ease. "You can't just chuck it," one teacher stated, "Adapt it. . . mutate it. Teach something on its own if you have to" (Inquiry session, November 23rd, 2005).

Battling with the framework may have been frustrating for the participants, but they also voiced the positive influence this process had on their planning habits. They expressed how they were becoming "more aware of their thinking in their teaching practice" and that the discussion concerning the frameworks was "really spinning our wheels" (Inquiry session, November 23rd, 2005).

The overall inquiry question (What are the Boundaries of Imaginative Education?) remained pertinent in this planning process: if they did not use the complete design of the

framework, were they still using Imaginative Education? Some of their other common questions exhibit how they felt a need to break from the rigidity of the framework, yet maintain guidelines:

- *What separates teaching imaginatively from using Imaginative Education?*
- *How important is it to keep the overall mythic/romantic framework in mind?*
- *Isn't a good story a good story [many Imaginative Education lessons are structured around a narrative]? How do you maintain the story? How and when do you end it?*
- *Does the teacher also have to maintain the "destination into the unknown [not knowing where the lesson might go]?"*
- *Can it be teacher-driven, but open to unexpected route taking?*
- *How do you get the students to "take it" [assume some responsibility for directing the course of study]?*
- *Aren't teachers already doing this?*
- *Are they [students] actually using their imagination more in this approach?*

Because the LUCID project was in its initial stages, there were no clear answers to them. Teachers really were required to take a leap of faith. What awaited them at the bottom of the waterfall was a mystery.

4.6 *The Canoe's Path*

Over a span of six months, I met with the inquiry group six times and witnessed teachers instructing in their perspective classrooms for an additional thirteen days. In order to gain an understanding of the flow of a teacher's workday, I typically split the day by visiting two teachers within one school instead of visiting numerous teachers at different schools. This practice afforded me ample time to chat with teachers during their recesses and planning times, to interact with their students, and to meet other staff. During these classroom visits, teachers openly welcomed me and often explained to their students the work we were conducting. Some teachers found ways for me to interact with their students over the course of the day, while others seemed to prefer that I observe unobtrusively in a less busy area of the room. All teachers seemed especially eager to share their ideas concerning Imaginative Education, their current frustrations with the school setting, parents, students, or teaching in general, and their busy schedules outside of the classroom.

The inquiry sessions were held alternately at the participating schools for two hours after school. Part of the time was scheduled for sharing a meal provided by the members of the host school. The agendas were determined by the project leader and me, with the teachers' requests in mind, and they were initially sent to teachers beforehand for approval. After a few sessions with no response from the teachers, we handed out the agendas at the meeting and asked for any needed changes at that time. The inquiry sessions were often opened and closed by the First Nations

members in attendance. The Project Leader and I shared responsibility for facilitating the meeting, and both of us practiced a non-directive approach. Our goal was to make space for the individual voices of the teachers.

During individual interviews and the group inquiry sessions, I mostly listened to the participants' stories and asked questions regarding their implementation process. I was not there to instruct them on how to implement Imaginative Education, but to witness their process and to act as a facilitator for structuring inquiry sessions focused on their needs. This role became difficult to maintain due to an odd scenario – although the teachers were quite adamant that they did not want help from the project coordinators at SFU, they did want specific information concerning how to implement the theory. As I was the only "expert" they often saw, they began to seek clarification from me, and when I did not provide these answers, they began to lose confidence in their own abilities and interest in the overall project. For example, one teacher who had restructured her whole classroom to exhibit a First Nations theme was struggling with how to conduct "normal" classroom activities in the absence of rows of desks. Although the students were initially excited about their renovated classroom and engaged by her introduction to the unit, she was confused about the next step in the process. Where could the underlying narrative go from here? How could she incorporate teaching math skills?

Another teacher brought his unit ideas to an inquiry session and sought help from the group, but left feeling that his ideas did not fulfil the Imaginative Education methodology. He later left the project. Yet another teacher commented: "I just want to be told what to do."

Why didn't the teachers want university support? There are a number of possible reasons. Some stated that the university setting is "a different world" (inquiry notes, October 13th, 2004). Because the initiators of the project had never actually taught in elementary or secondary schools, some teachers felt the professors could not relate to the obstacles they faced as teachers "in the trenches." Others felt that their existing efforts to teach imaginatively were not always honoured by the professors. A memo from the project leaders in another participating district in the overall LUCID project, addresses this unease:

"A number of teachers felt that negative comments made by [some of the project coordinators] concerning how boring most current teaching is were not very respectful of the many efforts that districts and individual teachers are making to involve students in the best learning situations they can. I guess it's a reminder to us to honour and value where teachers are at in their classrooms, and, when we talk about the need to change, to think about how those who toil daily in the 'trenches' will receive the message." (Project Leaders, Sept. 24th, 2004, LUCID progress report)

Perhaps because I had taught for six years in public schools and was less intimidating as a master's student, I was welcomed into the district proceedings. Perhaps they liked the initial presentations I delivered at the summer JERG conference and the initial district meeting regarding

my approach to research. Nothing required them to work with me in order to participate in the project. Nevertheless, as the months progressed and their participation in the program lagged, I often wondered if I had somehow disappointed them.

At the initial meetings, we discussed what it meant to "flourish" professionally and brainstormed lists of phenomena that aided and deterred their individual flourishing. Teachers proclaimed their commitment to implementing lessons within the next few months and enjoyed the social time spent with their peers. As a researcher, however, I was hoping to observe significant changes in how they planned lessons, how their mental approach to teaching may have shifted, and how they may be relating to their students, peers, and administrators differently. How was the implementation affecting their flourishing as teachers?

By November, 2004, three months into the implementation of the project, I was worried about the progress of the project. Most teachers had not yet designed and implemented a single lesson, and we had to cancel two meetings due to a principal's tragic death, and my being away to tend my sick father. Although one teacher had completely immersed herself in creating the "look" of an imaginative education classroom, after struggling with the structure and theory, she completely pulled back:

Yeah, they [students] had enthusiasm, but [they were] not engaged. So, with that enthusiasm, and nothing to engage them, the classroom became nothing but

chaos. That's when I took down the pit house. That's it, the desks are coming back in. And things just tumbled, and it just got worse. But we as a school had a hard week —it was about a week or two that was bad in there. It got bad. I don't know. I can't say because there was so much going on at that time. Things were just escalating everywhere. And I just remember saying, "I've had it". Everything. Shut everything down. We need to go backwards. (inquiry session, Nov. 24th, 2004)

Although the teachers were quite supportive of one another, most seemed content to occasionally attend meetings and share general "war stories." Not much seemed to be happening.

When I visited one teacher's classroom in early November, however, his comments were clarifying: He saw his involvement as a five-year process, so he was not worried about his current progress in the project. He sincerely stated his commitment, said he "had shifted the way he thought in the classroom," and felt that he would continue to work with the approach incrementally. "It's not about getting it all right now," he stated casually, "it will happen" (Personal interview, Nov. 5th, 2004). His attitude was refreshing for me, and his enthusiasm surprised me. I realized I had become jaded concerning the lack of visible response and commitment in the district. Although I considered three months ample time to design and implement whole units using the Imaginative Education approach, I was not "in the trenches." I was being judgmental, anxious to get on with my own work, and I needed to let go of the resulting negativity. Concurrently, I needed to address the participants' lack of action.

At the meeting that same evening, I shared a story about my mother and commitment. I had just returned from helping her nurse my father, who had been hospitalized briefly. The week I spent witnessing her complete selflessness as she tended him resonated with my readings concerning human flourishing. The comments she heard daily from others to take care of herself went unheard, and she worked herself into a state of infirmity. A sad story, it nevertheless exhibited my understanding of the various levels of commitment and linked this commitment to personal health. Through sharing this story, I hoped to encourage the teachers to commit more fully to the project, to follow through with their lesson ideas, to attend the meetings, and to access each other for support.

By November 17th, 2004, my research notes again reflect my own ambivalence concerning the project. By this time, only two teachers had implemented a single Imaginative Education lesson, and I was feeling more like a secretary as I hunted teachers down to organize meetings, than a participatory researcher. I was weary with the process, heavy with pregnancy, worried that the whole project was floundering, and thus concerned that my research would be worthless. By November 23rd, I realized the fully collaborative inquiry I had in mind initially would never come to fruition, but that perhaps this was for the best. Another teacher within the project also came to this realization, as exhibited by her email to me that week:

Hi Ann! Sounds like we have a mutual thing happening here! I wonder if, subconsciously, you remind me of my daughter, in all her earnestness, and with all

her goals in life, being pregnant and all... when I couldn't be with her to help her in any way. Maybe this is sort of "paying it backward"! Anyway I am very much looking forward to our next meeting...and I am thinking that this whole thing may not turn out as you planned or hoped, but rather finds a life of its own! Look forward to sharing my home with you... (personal communication, November 25th, 2004)

The project had indeed found a life of its own, and I oscillated between feeling the need to give it life support or allow it to perish, if that was its due course. Although at times I felt the freedom of "letting go" of the responsibility for the project's successful implementation, the part of me that really believed in the potential of the theory in practice began to interfere with my intention to act solely as a witness to the teachers' implementation efforts. My research journal notes illustrate this confusion and the projects' success as it related to my own identity:

I'm feeling refreshed to give up my agenda and allow the teachers to focus on exactly what they need – lesson work shopping. If they can meet for two hours a week to develop lesson plans, terrific, and if they maintain a collaborative tone, all the better. I'm still feeling driven to keep the teachers in the project, and I question what is behind this. Does the project's success reflect my own success as a team builder? My need to feel liked and appreciated? (Nov. 23rd, 2004)

As the months progressed, it became clear through the individual teacher interviews that the teachers wanted two things: time to plan together and feel supported by their peers, and direct answers from the "experts" on Imaginative Education. I was neither a "peer" due to being a foreigner and a university researcher nor an "expert" on developing Imaginative Education lessons, so I focused my efforts on facilitating workshops and bringing in "expert" guidance – Anne

Chodakowski, who helped Mark Fettes create most of the sample lesson plans available on the IERG website. Perhaps because she was a student, she was less intimidating; because she had struggled with the frameworks firsthand, she understood their frustration; and because she was animated and articulate, she was inspiring. Her attendance at one of the meetings was the highlight of the inquiry sessions.

Now that the teachers were using their meeting times to plan together, I realized I needed to change my research approach. Although they had created their inquiry question ("What are the boundaries of Imaginative Education?") and developed an overall structure to the meetings (they rotated school settings, provided a meal, and relied on the project leader and me to organize the dates and times and communicate these), they were not, overall, reflecting on their implementation process through journaling nor designating roles and norms for the group. Although they were participating in an inquiry, the structure was not fully collaborative, and they "owned" very little responsibility for running the meetings. They wanted to show up if it was convenient, to be fed, to be inspired, and to have their implementation problems solved by their peers. Who can blame them?

By Dec. 6th, even though we were structuring the sessions according to the participants' expressed needs, we had lost three, if not four, of the teachers from the inquiry group. A pattern

became evident: teachers welcomed me into their classrooms, said they would "try their best" to be at the meetings, then most would not attend. Although they vociferously requested support from their peers when they spoke with me, they then would not attend the meetings to garner and contribute to that support.

By December 7th, after spending a restive night at one of the participant's homes, I questioned my presence in the district. My notes illustrate my state of mind:

I'm wondering if my stubbornness is forcing my presence here. I messed up - didn't tape the session last night, burned a hole in my host's furniture, got a flat tire, then stuck in snow. . . .all signs that I should NOT be here?

The last two inquiry sessions were held in January, 2005. The first, hosted by me, was held at a local restaurant. At this meeting, I gave an overview of the participation and activities of the inquiry group over the last four months and introduced portraiture as my intended format for the research interpretation and write-up. The tone of the session was intended to be celebratory and invigorating, which I hoped to accomplish, in part, through sharing good food and a sketching activity. Every teacher involved in the project attended this meeting.

For the final session that I attended, on January 19th, only four teachers were present. Although I realized that there were numerous "good" reasons for individual teachers to be absent, I could not help feeling disappointed. I was ready to let go of the research process in the district at this

time and to switch my focus to the one teacher whose participation had been consistent and whose practice had reflected some implementation of Imaginative Education. I focused, at this point, on one of the key questions of portraiture: "What is good here?" The resounding answer was Jan. His portrait follows.

4.7 One Paddler's Strokes

The elementary school where Jan works is a bright, fresh-looking building immersed in the surrounding farmland fumes. As I enter the newly-renovated school, the mission statement boldly pronounces the following:

LEARN TO THINK, THINK TO LEARN

We are:

- *a family of learners committed to building independent literacy and numeracy*
- *striving for personal excellence in attitude, skills, and knowledge*
- *creating a safe collaborative environment*
- *providing enriching experiences and diverse opportunities*
- *developing responsible, contributing members of a global society*

I find the blend of individuality and global morality quite interesting in this mission statement. As

*I enter various teachers' classrooms in the school, I see *LEARN TO THINK, THINK TO**

LEARN prominently displayed, perhaps signalling the teachers' focus on teaching metacognition, which may enable more "independent" learners.

As I make my way down the long hallway toward a cluster of rooms that house the LUCID participants' classes, the characteristics that separate an elementary school from my own experiences teaching in high school strike me. Rows of "outdoor" shoes line the area next to each classroom's door, most wall space is covered in bulletin boards, displaying various classes' recent work, and the air seems downright electric. Perhaps I'm picking up on the students' enthusiasm? Or simply their youth? As I near my destination, two puppies bounce out of classroom doors, and eager students run to fetch them. The puppies put me instantly at ease, and I enter the rooms with a smile.

On this first visit to the school, I briefly visit two of the participants' classrooms, whose ambiance boldly contrasts due to their different teaching styles. During a break, all three participating teachers meet spontaneously in the open hallway and immediately begin to banter. Comrades-in-arms, (they're keenest weapon being their mouths, one says) they seem more tied together through their mutual wittiness than their overall interests or personalities. According to one of the teachers, the elementary school used to have a much tighter community, but two teachers are on maternity leave, and there is a new principal, who, though well liked, is not as "friendly" as the

previous one. Over the past two years, the school has grown from a K-3 to a K-6, so many new teachers were hired who haven't yet fully affiliated with the staff. It is evident that these three, however, share a bond.

Dressed in a golf shirt and slacks, Jan is small in build but large in presence. Cordial and quick to play the host, he ensures I know how to make my way around the school and finds a specific place for me to "hang out" in his classroom.

The first thing I notice about Jan's 4th-grade classroom from my perch on the front left side of the room is his windows – they are a teacher's dream. Big, looking out to the playfield, they beckon but do not really distract. Their effect is to open the room visually, allowing it to expand beyond its walled area. After recess, the class sits in a carpeted area directly in front of these windows while Jan reads a section from their current class novel. He has a crisp, brisk voice. As he reads, he varies his tone and boosts the volume during the interesting bits. He is collected physically so he doesn't make broad, theatrical gestures while lecturing or reading. Fingering his wedding ring, he keeps a constant eye on those students known to pick at others during this time and gathers them toward him in a nurturing, yet enforcing manner. Because he finds humour in most everything, he puts me and his charges right at ease.

The kids are excited about constructing their own stories. They're engaged, evidenced by a high level of focused energy in the room. Their writing prompt, from a book by Harris Burdock, is a picture with a small door and big skates. Based on this image, they develop a main character, a secondary character, and a title for their story. They then have an hour to write the story, gleaning help from Ian on how to construct an exciting plot as they progress.

Ian monitors them and advises: "Part of being a good writer is writing within the time you have to the audience. . . not an epic that will take the rest of your life." This tip, I realize, will help prepare them for their timed writing tests, mandated by the province. I also notice his attempts to use elements of Imaginative Education in his suggestions, using binary opposites, like "good" and "evil," to help them make it imaginative. To help them with characterization, he asks, "What makes the characters wonderful?"

As they construct their stories, the students speak casually to their neighbours and to me, speaking as easily about a cougar that frequents their neighbourhood as about the next Harry Potter book. They move freely around the room to sharpen pencils, fetch items, and put their names on the board to visit the washroom. There's an appropriate balance between structure and freedom in here, and as the months progress, I witness that the students become significantly more self

reliant. "You're nine; you can zip up your own boots," Jan tells one girl as she readies herself for recess. Such comments help the students understand Jan's expectations.

Jan is quick, witty, and creative. As a student himself, he's the intelligent kid who sits in the back making ongoing, humorous, yet relevant quips about the lecture. This behaviour first brought him to my attention at the 2004 IERG conference. As a teacher, he's comfortable with a little noise and mayhem, but he's just as quick to let his charges know when they've crossed the boundary to zooland. In January, when his charges return from their holiday break, he's quick to catch misbehaviours and to remind them of both their rules and rights in his classroom.

"Remember your manners and jobs – I know you're excited," he says as he breaks out the materials for their science lesson. The kids attempt to restrain themselves from swarming his desk which sits in the middle of the front of the room, covered in class supplies and papers to be marked or returned.

As one girl mischievously tosses some materials over her shoulder, he admonishes, "That's just being silly; that's not helping anybody."

Jan's ability to play flexibly with structure makes him a likely candidate for Imaginative Education methodology, which requires teachers to be quite intentional about their plans but flexible in the process of implementing them. In addition, his capability to "size up the scene" and make

impromptu changes in well-structured plans allows him to feel comfortable with the storyline of an Imaginative Education unit, whose destination may be unknown. He realizes that Imaginative Education is not about the methodological label. "You don't have to pigeonhole these things," he said at one of the inquiry sessions, "– make your own definition and go with it."

He seems as comfortable in front of a group of adults as in front of his students, evidenced by his presenting some of his more imaginative, well-tuned lessons at local educational conferences. I was lucky enough to witness his class engrossed in a "Brewster' Millions" lesson, in which every student inherits but must spend a million dollars in a short amount of time to earn even more money. A math lesson that also incorporates reading, research, and synthesis skills, "Brewster's Millions" was, undoubtedly, a hit. During another visit, his students had just displayed their Probability Carnival for the rest of the school, and on yet another occasion, I witnessed a lesson on the musculoskeletal system that taught me some fundamentals that even my own emergency medical training didn't touch. Jan is a superb teacher in many ways, and he doesn't need Imaginative Education methodology to be creative – he's a natural.

Jan is the son of outstanding educators; his father is especially known for his prowess teaching high school math and science. I often wondered just how significantly his father influenced

his own teaching. When one of the inquiry participants asked for ideas on how she could simplify her daily marking, Jan suggested a "random draw," a procedure he learned from his father:

Pick one person's name and check their homework in this group of four. If it's done, you will get rewarded, if not, it's not. Then there's that peer pressure, right? My dad did that - he used to do that with tests in science units. The kids learn as a group, and one kid would write the test on a test day, and they would all get that mark. You have to make sure your group knew their stuff, so you can get a good mark out of it.

He had one parent coming up [to complain about this practice], I think. Once he explained why he was doing it, that parent actually went away quite understanding because he said that it was the first time his kid actually reads at home and had to work. The dad was like - he came in and he was mad. But he also understood at the end that his daughter had to work at something other than school. She was trying [difficult], socially, that was her problem.

Jan and his father run a summer school together, and, perhaps due to his father's influence, Jan often presents his ideas at local conferences. Teaching in this family is treated as a profession, not just a job.

Jan's world never stops spinning. After school, he often plays soccer with his peers, goes to Kindermusik with the kids, and makes social visits with his whole family. On weekends, his family often travels to North Vancouver, where his parents and in-laws reside. With a wife and two children under age three, he is perhaps one of the busiest teachers in the group, but he remained the

most consistent presence at the inquiry sessions and represented the group at the 2005 JERG conference.

His family housed me on several occasions during my visits. The night before I first stayed in his home, he was hanging sheet rock in the guestroom in order that it would be ready for me. Jan doesn't make excuses – he gets things done.

When I picture Jan, I often imagine him as I once saw him in his kitchen, at ease while cooking rice and salmon and holding the baby perched on one raised leg, like a crane. This is how he runs his classes, too: at ease, multitasking, caring, and feeding his students nutritiously.

Jan's wife is as bright eyed and as quick as he is. In a phrase, she's "with it." After having spent all day with the kids, a six-month-old and a 2 ½ year-old, she's still quick on her feet and ready to discuss any topic. "Mommy brain" seems to have bypassed this woman. She's involved with Jan's professional life, evidenced by her knowledge of his colleagues and the mutual friendships among them. Undoubtedly, he shares his daily experiences with her.

Although they're not housekeepers, they're excellent hosts. "By the third time you visit, you're family," they say. I changed my first diaper on his daughter. Jan stood beside me, guiding me as he does his students – giving space to do something independently, but showing and answering questions when needed.

Over the six months I spent interacting with the inquiry group in their classrooms, at their homes, and during meetings, I was often impressed by their dedication, resilience, and insight. When these teachers shared what it means to flourish as an educator, many metaphors arose. One mentioned at various times by various people was that of a tree:

*A teacher is a tree - small, alone. It needs sun for support and confidence. This sun represents all the people with whom the teacher interacts. A balance of give/take delivers CO₂, food and water to the tree while the tree produces oxygen for those around it to breathe freely. Some trees flourish, others don't survive.
(inquiry session, Oct. 13th, 2004)*

The world is full of species of trees, all flourishing at different capacities. Although all seedlings in terms of being Imaginative Educators, Jan had an outstanding presence in the project. I see Jan's resilience and determination to flourish as best represented as a mangrove.

Mangroves begin as propagules- a six-inch long seedpod, bobbing in the currents of fresh to salty water. These seedlings don't know where they'll end up. Over the years, they must tolerate this ambiguity to survive. Eventually, some are swept far enough on shore to take root.

There's something very hopeful about those seedlings. As I passed them during paddling trips in the Florida Everglades, I wondered where they'd end up, if they would thrive there, whether the whims of nature and the imperialistic nature of humankind would permit them to find their most healthful path in life. Their lives are not easy.

Storm swells and inland floods cause water to rise above these shrubby trees, even when they're mature. During these swells, all sorts of creatures will sweep through and among them, even exotic species that are seeking new niches (or to bully their way into someone else's). Regardless, these trees manage to not only survive, but thrive. They seem to enjoy the struggle.

Back when the Seminole canoed these shallow waters, these trees were a refuge for more than the birds and crabs. Human beings would lash themselves to their twisted trunks during hurricanes. Once the sands had shifted and the waves had receded, these trees remained, their roots interconnected with so many fingers, nothing could break their grasp.



*Figure 1 "Mangrove"
By permission of Clyde Butcher*

Chapter 5

“All real change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle.”¹⁹

5.1 Philosophical Interpretation

5.1.1 Extension of Terminology

As presented in Chapter 2, *flourishing* means, “to be in a period of highest productivity, excellence, or influence; specifically of authors, painters, etc.: to be in a state of activity or production” (*Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, 1998). Based on this definition, flourishing teachers would produce excellent work that influences others. Although some inquiry participants produced work of high quality using the Imaginative Education approach, I did not observe any significant influence these lessons had on other professionals. In this sense, their flourishing was not evident. Potential long-term outcomes are difficult to predict due to their wavering involvement in the project. If, however, one considers a second definition of *flourish*: “to make bold, sweeping movements...to play with fantastic and irregular motion...to execute in an irregular of fanciful strain of music...” (*Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*), the efforts of the participants show up like spatters of paint on a canvas. These spatters may not have come together like the artwork of Pollock, but they were colourful moments nonetheless. Although the participants’ efforts were not sustained, they did “play

¹⁹ Fullan, M. (1982). *The Meaning of Educational Change*. New York: Teacher’s College Press, p. 60.

with” the ideas, and one teacher allowed the approach to create a highly “fantastic and irregular” climate in her classroom.

During the inquiry sessions, teachers occasionally showed signs of flourishing. These moments generally occurred when the group was in an active, productive discussion. For example, one of the activities we conducted in the inquiry was to brainstorm, sketch, and share our thoughts on some of the key terms involved in the LUCID project. The group thus shared their individual thoughts concerning imagination, cultural inclusion, and flourishing. Discussing these terms powerfully affected the demeanour of the group and influenced their future discussions and lesson planning. Teachers often began the future inquiry sessions by sharing their successes and struggles and relating these stories to their personal flourishing (with no prompting by me), and defining imagination and the boundaries of imaginative education became the focus of the group.

For the inquiry participants, the word *flourishing* evoked images found mostly in nature: deciduous trees that provide homes and stability for others, and evergreens on mountaintops that weather the harshest of conditions. The lushness of many of these images signifies the complex needs of those who are flourishing in a sustained manner. The participants easily elaborated on their conceptions of the term, saying that those flourishing are creative and productive, moving over and through obstacles in their paths like water, rising every day to shine like the sun on someone, somewhere. In addition, those experiencing flourishing feel heightened intuition, that they are achieving important accomplishments, and are positively influencing others and their environment in

general. Although those flourishing maintain highly active lifestyles, they have ample time to enjoy life (inquiry session, Oct. 13, 2004). Although the teachers made these terms personally relevant, they also recognized the resonating themes in the other participants' definitions.

5.1.2 Imaginative Education and Flourishing

If we assume that the state of flourishing is both appetising and achievable for teachers, what aspects of implementing Imaginative Education could contribute to teacher flourishing?

First, implementing Imaginative Education requires teachers to reflect upon their planning process. This reflection can lead to more intentional use of time. Those using the approach tend to either structure their units "beginning with the end in mind" or by seeking available materials with which to base their plans (teacher interviews, Nov.-July, 2005). Because some teachers also sculpt their classroom spaces to accommodate a theme or overall activity for the units, they must identify the conditions they need in the classroom, especially in terms of classroom management. Those who attended the inquiry sessions consistently found that the collaborative meetings rejuvenated their interest and commitment levels, provided recognition for their efforts, helped them to develop partnerships within and between schools, and clarified the lesson design process (ibid.). In addition, involvement in a process that supports and reflects creativity may contribute to teacher development in this area.

Another question pertinent to my research was how teachers could enable their students to flourish while also flourishing themselves. How can teachers

avoid the “Gandhi Effect?” Based on my research, the answers to this query are presently indeterminable. More consistent participation over a span of years could lend the data to create a thorough discussion. However, considering Aristotle’s viewpoint that happiness (flourishing) is tied to the telos (an innate goal) is informative.

Aristotle believed that because of our biological constitution, we are fulfilled only through requisite intellectual and moral activities that lead to a goal, all carried out within a social context (Bellioiti, 2004, p. 6). The LUCID project offers teachers the goal of implementing an intellectually challenging theory. The moral aspect of the project – to provide a more inclusive learning environment for all learners - requires a social context. During the course of my research, I witnessed teachers seemingly fulfilled when their classes were responding well to Imaginative Education unit framings and lessons. When teachers did not meet their goals concerning implementation, they stated that neither they nor their students were flourishing (teacher interviews, October 2004 -July 2005). It follows that a teacher’s flourishing is implicated in their students’ flourishing, if the students’ flourishing is the teacher’s goal.

Administrative support was implicated in the teacher’s determination of personal flourishing. As a whole, they felt supported by the SFU team and their peers, but were quite clear that their administrators were unaware of their strivings to implement Imaginative Education. For Nietzsche, affirmation within experiences directly contributed to the mentality of *amor fati*, the unconditional love of life (Bellioiti, p. 91). Although some teachers were praised by their peers

and administrators for their creative ideas, at least one dropped from the project because he perceived his efforts to be negated. Although others may have a different perception, the participant felt his efforts were not supported. As a whole, teachers consistently expressed the need to have their efforts witnessed and affirmed in the classroom. Although these needs were communicated to the university researchers, I witnessed no efforts to accommodate their request.

Nietzsche strove to celebrate the unpredictable nature of existence and the fragility of our social structures. Using suffering as a springboard for robust creative striving, he felt that people could transcend boundaries by deconstructing, re imagining, and recreating the self. He suggested that this process creates meaning and purpose for life (Bellotti, 2004, p. 116).

As the teachers battled with the lesson frameworks and shared their frustrations and successes, they wavered between using the frameworks as an excuse for their implementation delay and using the framework and theory as a springboard for creativity. The teacher who “dove in” seemed to be engaged as Nietzsche describes, but she could not sustain her efforts without outside help. What began as an affirming experience for her turned difficult. Teachers also struggled with the ambiguity of the theory and with designing lessons that had flexible endings. The “destination into the unknown” was simply daunting and inhibited some participants from ever taking their first steps forward.

In contrast, some of the participants volunteered many hours of their personal time and took the risk of momentarily changing their teaching approach. I think it is fair to say, however, that the teachers were not completely

committed to implementing the approach. According to Nietzsche, “When they no longer do anything ‘voluntarily’ but do everything of necessity, their feeling of freedom, subtlety, full power, of creative placing, disposing, and forming reaches its peak -- in short, that necessity and ‘freedom of the will’ become one in them” (as cited in Cameron, 2002, p. 42). If teachers had felt that to teach well, they *must* incorporate an Imaginative Education approach, their flourishing may have been implicated differently.

5.2 Theoretical Interpretation

5.2.1 Improvising a Vision

In *Composing a Life* (1989), Bateson suggests that each of us has done identity work by improvisation, discovering the shape of our creation along the way, rather than by pursuing a vision already defined. The vision of academia is an authoritative discourse in need of change. For example, Bateson recounts how many women at Amherst ended up investing huge amounts of time in needed public service, committee work, and teaching nondepartmental courses. Since these activities were not weighed significantly in promotion decisions, she believes they were in part self-destructive (Bateson, p. 54). As this situation illustrates, many women raised in male-dominated cultures have to struggle against the impulse to sacrifice their health for the health of the whole; while many men reared in these same traditions have to struggle against pervasive imageries in which their own health is a victory achieved at the expense of another (ibid., p. 240). For us to flourish, Bateson believes we need to equalize

these gender roles and slow the pace of life to establish more consistent caretaking.

These suggestions require significant shifts in culture both inside and outside educational settings. Especially in North America, where efficiency and productivity are prized, “slowing down” is a difficult sell. Improving our improvisational skills, however, might work. For example, one of the women Bateson worked with did not so much reduce her professional life to have children as change the way that life was organized, learning to compose the disparate elements in novel ways (*ibid.*, p. 174). The most important difference between her life then and now is that in escaping from a career track in which her rhythms were dictated from above, she became able to orchestrate her own life. “The name of the game for me now is to ensure flexibility in my daily schedule,” she writes (*ibid.*, p. 176). Such compositions of individual improvisations can be shared as models of possibility for future generations (Bateson, p. 232). Men and women who address multiple commitments in flexible contexts can flourish in new ways.

Bateson observed that constantly recreating ourselves is difficult, and we may resist change and hold onto the stability of continuity even when it inflicts pain or damage. Witnessing people maintain damaging relationships for the sake of continuity made her wonder about the nature of commitment, and about the need for a more fluid way to imagine the future (Bateson, p. 8). She espouses fashioning the ability to fluidly combine commitments in order that they enhance one another instead of detract. Instead of rejecting old traditions to embrace new

ones or settling into in a new tradition without commitment, we must create new ways of being as our lives, and our world, evolve (ibid., p. 66).

The question of what to keep and what to “chuck” is omnipresent in educational theory and practice. The inquiry participants spent much of their time deliberating what *is* and *is not* Imaginative Education. Each teacher worked to determine how she could enhance her present practice through incorporating aspects of Imaginative Education. Some settled into the tradition without commitment, and some never found a way to incorporate the theory fluidly in their practice. They struggled with the flow of the narrative and sought help with all the phases of lesson design and implementation: deriving topics, designing lessons, obtaining material resources, planning follow-up to the lessons, obtaining feedback during the implementation, and using appropriate assessment. Typically, a teacher would come up with an idea for a lesson, then go to the framework and “get stuck.”

When people are “stuck,” outsiders who reflect their work back to them can aid the difficult process of implementation. For example, a woman with whom Bateson worked offers this advice concerning working with creative people:

There are two things about dealing with creative people. One is acknowledging their creativity, exploring it with them, getting them to do something other than just talking about it, and the other is helping them, because it's a hard process, and they can get discouraged. The advantage is that they really want to finish their creations. The thing that keeps them going isn't charisma—that's what hooks them in—it's achieving. Frequently, when you're exploring some blockage, just doing it is like holding up a mirror, so

they can see what they have achieved, and that's more important than the actual advice you give. (Bateson, p. 182)²⁰

These two processes – getting teachers to act on their ideas, and helping them to clarify and work through their blockages-were pivotal in the implementation of Imaginative Education.

5.2.2 Weaving the Web

Like many qualitative researchers following the general theories of Max Weber and Clifford Geertz, I profess a semiotic definition of “culture.” This suggests humans are suspended in webs of significance that we ourselves have spun, that culture is those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz, 1973, p. 4). Like Geertz, I believe it is of utmost importance to “look in the first instance not at its [teaching’s] theories or findings” in order to gain understanding, but “at what the practitioners of it do” (ibid., p. 4). This practice of valuing experiential knowledge is consistent with the tenets of cooperative inquiry. Since I wanted to gain a better understanding of teacher flourishing, it was imperative that I witness teachers in the social environment of their schools. I acknowledge that what I perceived, what became my data, was actually my constructions of other people’s constructions of their situations and actions (Geertz, p. 9). Nevertheless, I feel more efforts should be conducted to support and clarify the practice of teachers, so the rendering of their practice is important.

²⁰ This passage was also quoted in the section titled “Approach to Relationships.”

Because culture is complex, rendering an account of it is also complex. Like the process of gaining knowledge in any field, one realizes, during the process of investigating and learning, that with every step gained in knowledge, another world of potential paths to more knowledge materializes. “Cultural analysis is... intrinsically incomplete. And worse than that, the deeper one goes the less complete it is” (Geertz, p. 29). Thus, one never can grasp fully and render accurately a culture, but the culture may be thickly described and creatively portrayed (Geertz, p. 14).

Due in part to the imaginative act involved in producing cultural theory, the rendering of it is neither predictive nor prescriptive. One teacher’s experience incorporating Imaginative Education does not predetermine another’s. I have attempted through sculpting a portrait of the inquiry process and one specific teacher, to creatively and aptly portray an experience. Although this account could be more intricately woven with more participation from the inquiry group, I am attempting to at least provide a platform for their voices in the future of the project. Perhaps then they may “deepen the conversation” (Geertz, 1973, p. 29, as cited in Lawrence - Lightfoot and Davis, p. 10).

Why attend to and celebrate moments of resourcefulness? Why recognize them instead of analyzing the webs of constraints that inhibit people’s possibilities? Because, like Holland et al., I take an evaluative stance toward the oppressions that Foucault described, yet I do not anticipate a whole scale revolution nor favour interventions that impose policies and programs that only a few realize as beneficial. I choose to document and support those who strive to

liberate themselves and those around them on a daily basis. I seek to support the teacher (Holland et al., p. 277).

5.2.3 Grappling with Frameworks

Partially because the lesson framework the teachers were attempting to use was awkward for them and the process of determining key characteristics of Imaginative Education troublesome, teachers decided to use their collective time to explore the question, “What *is* and *is not* Imagination Education?” and to brainstorm lessons. This meant that we spent less time discussing teacher flourishing and developing the structure of the inquiry (determining the norms for the meetings and alternating roles). However, by sharing their experiences in the classroom and helping one another build Imaginative Education lessons, they still maintained a focus on their personal flourishing as teachers and maintained a collaborative research methodology. The agendas for the meetings became as improvised as the implementation process itself, and I recognize now that the identity work these teachers were involved in was, as Holland et al. state, “led by hope, desperation, or even playfulness, but certainly by no rational plan” (1998, p. 7). As I witnessed their process, relationships between teacher flourishing and Imaginative Education became apparent.

Grappling with the lesson design framework evoked many questions central to the practice of teaching. This process illustrates how the tools used to incorporate the methodology were also “using” the participants. For example, Holland and Cole (1995, p. 482) suggest we consider the hammer as a tool/artefact/mediator. Every hammer can be seen as an encapsulation of the

theory of the task and the theory of the person who fulfils the task. If one considers the Imaginative Education framework as a tool, then the users [teachers] could be encapsulated as Imaginative Educators. Being known in this terminology affects the manner of their approach to teaching. Language, too, is a tool that “uses” people. People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are (Holland et al., p. 3), so just by becoming involved in Imaginative Education, teachers may make a mental shift that affects their approach to teaching. Because they are involved in a group that is engaged in using imagination to teach more effectively, they may begin to see themselves as imaginative teachers, which may pervade their actual practices.

Tools produce people that are like the tools they use. Perhaps this is what the creator of the framework intended – to sculpt a framework that would in turn, sculpt the teachers who implement his theory. The teachers who most resisted the framework were those who most perceived their planning processes as an expression of their teacher identities. Thus, changing the framework became essential in order to preserve their concepts of selfhood. Herein lies a paradox: “The accumulation and mastery of a cultural tool kit and its use in overcoming the dependency on a particular culture is one of the basic contradictions of human development” (Shepel, 1995, p. 428). “How does liberation from the entrapments of our cultural worlds come about through the tools shaped in those worlds for their perpetuation?” (Holland et al., p.64) By submitting to the Imaginative Education methodology and using the prescribed

lesson – planning frameworks, teachers both evoke and inhibit the power of their imaginations. They are both freed and entrapped by the process.

Some participants in the project seemed hesitant to alter the frameworks or use them only in part. Even though these frameworks were laboriously and intentionally designed by the Imaginative Education Research Group, the frameworks are a result of social interaction within that group:

Although individuals constantly construct and reconstruct their own mediating devices, most of their constructions are not original. They have been appropriated in the course of social interaction with others, who, in turn, appropriated the devices from others. Even productions we might call innovative have developed in the flow of social interaction and depend intimately upon it for their significance. (Holland et al., p. 36)

Teachers who adjust the framework are adding their voice to a dynamic process.

Everyone has this right to authorship.

5.2.4 Positioning Ourselves

Accounts of culture that ignore the importance of social position surreptitiously participate in silencing of those who lack privilege and power. Upon my reflections of the inquiry experience, I became aware that even though all teachers volunteered to be a part of the inquiry, some perhaps felt oppressed by my attempt to get them to be more active in the implementation of Imaginative Education. One way to interpret this phenomenon is to address the expectations laid upon us due to our individual positions in a figured world.

In Holland et al.'s (1998) terms, "A figured world is a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and

actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (p. 52). If LUCID is a figured world, then participants are actors who are changing the conceptual and material aspects of this world through their improvisations (ibid., p. 63). Significance is assigned to acts that correlate with the Imaginative Education approach, so fluid lessons that illustrate the use of the prescribed frameworks, active participation at workshops and conferences, and recruiting and educating other group members are outcomes highly valued. Those who end up going to Hawaii to present at international conferences have learned to internalize the authoritative discourses that configure these worlds and to “position themselves for themselves” (ibid., p. 64).

Positionality is one’s relational identity. It concerns one’s social place, entitlement, how one identifies one’s position relative to others in terms of power, social affiliation and distance (Holland et al., p. 127). These positions often affect how people perceive and act within diverse social settings (ibid., p. 44).

For instance, my work as a researcher in the Imaginative Education Research Group may have positioned me in the slot of academia in many LUCID participants’ minds. This position garnered me a certain amount of respect, but an amount less than that of the director of the overall research group. Because positionality affects confidence, being in a “low” position relative to others in the group may inhibit creative action altogether if the individual feels they must

“assume the identity of the Other” to meet expectations (Fordham 1993, p. 26, as cited in Holland et al., 1998, p. 132).

Based on this idea, is using the Imaginative Education frameworks forcing teachers to think imaginatively from a white English male perspective? Could using these frameworks actually undermine teachers’ possibilities for exercising their full creative powers? Especially in the Imaginative Education master’s cohorts, where students are graded by their successful use of these frameworks, could these teachers be learning to colour in the drawings of the “Other”?

The implementation of methodologies others have designed is an ongoing practice in education. In fact, many superb teachers appropriate ideas, full unit plans, and mannerisms from others. I see this practice as being quite different from using someone else’s framework for how to *think*, to *imagine*. The initial process, like borrowing a sweater, is cursory, external in nature. The latter process, like taking a psychedelic drug, is more significant, an internal process. It can literally be mind-bending. Two teachers at one of the inquiry sessions came to this conclusion:

“As a team we realize that a lot of the questions [in the framework] are really in-depth and they cause you to think in a different way and that’s why it takes so long.”

“I think that’s what’s bending my mind. That’s exactly it.”

“It’s [bending one’s mind] not a bad thing.”

“That’s true. It just causes a bit of frustration”. (Jan. 19th, 2005)

The resistance to the frameworks was deep-felt. Until teachers felt they had the positional power to apprehend the framework and make it their own, they could not create. Some became paralyzed by the discourses represented by the framework and the overall approach.

These discourses are the media around which socially and historically positioned persons orchestrate their subjectivities in practice. People are limited by their position but also provided with resources to respond to the problematic situations they find themselves in (Holland et al., p. 32). This phenomenon relates back to Nietzsche's belief that obstacles provide opportunities for growth. How teachers choose to address these obstacles determines their agency.

5.2.5 Answering

In Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic world, people are constantly being "addressed" and must somehow provide an "answer" (Holquist, 1990, p. 169). Just as with their positions, people work within and alongside a set of constraints that are also a set of possibilities for utterance (ibid., p. 171). "In 'answering,' the self "authors" the world—including itself and others" (ibid., p. 171). Identities, which are organized socially, mediate the development of human agency. Subjectivity happens at an interface between the social and embodied sources of the self. This is called the self-in-practice, or the "authoring self" (Bakhtin, p. 32).

During the inquiry sessions in which we discussed the frameworks and the boundaries of Imaginative Education, the teachers were immersed in this authorial process. Some developed an authorial stance, finding that the discussion process helped to clarify their understandings of Imaginative

Education and their place within its implementation. *Imagination* solidified as being part of their identity as educators. Others found the struggle too demanding, too ambiguous, and withdrew from the inquiry. They still had to address their identity as educators – did this mean they were not imaginative teachers? Dialogism suggests that our identities remain dependent upon social relations and material conditions. “If these [conditions] change, they must be ‘answered,’ and old ‘answers’ about who one is may be undone...” (Holland et al., p. 187). Struggling with another’s discourse is an important process, for it exposes the limitations of these existing discourses and provides opportunity for both personal growth and, in this case, the growth of the LUCID project itself.

Teachers are enmeshed in disparate discourses – on practice, on curriculum, on classroom management, on community relations - and must be selective concerning where they extend their energy and time. Within these choices lies potential for sculpting not only their classroom spaces, but also their own identities and agency:

Identities are improvised - in the flow of activity within specific social situations – from the cultural resources at hand. Thus, persons and...groups are caught in the tensions between histories that have settled within them and the present discourses and images that attract them or somehow impinge upon them. In this continuous self-fashioning, identities are hard-won standpoints that, however dependent upon social support and however vulnerable to change, make at least a modicum of self-direction possible. They are possibilities for mediating agency. (Holland et al., p. 4)

Human agents use whatever opportunity is at hand to affect their position in the cultural game (Holland et al., p. 279). These strivings are relevant not only to educators but to all people trying to make a better life for themselves and others.

Being involved in the inquiry was an opportunity for the participants to activate this agency, to improvise their own paths.

5.2.6 Making Worlds

The irony of play is that its freedom is as contained as its discipline, for both depend on the border established by the authority of the imaginer. This illuminates the frustrations the teachers experienced concerning the boundaries of Imaginative Education. What are they? Whose are they? Just as identity cannot be authored individually (Holland et al., p. 272), the boundaries of Imaginative Education must be played with collectively. This social play develops competency in newly imagined communities, like the inquiry group: “These new ‘imaginaries’ build in their rehearsal a structure of disposition, a *habitus*, that comes to imbue the cultural media, the means of expression, that are their legacy” (Holland et al., p. 273). It takes a group of active players to create an imagined world and pass it on to others, for people achieve brilliant creativity when it is collectively enabled (Holland et al., p. 275). If Imaginative Education is to flourish as an educational approach, it will need to be sculpted by individuals who are invited to “play” as equal teammates, with full authorship.

5.3 The Political Process

5.3.1 Miller

Miller (1990) examined research processes to determine how or if democratic, collaborative research methodologies might unintentionally reproduce the same oppressions as traditional research (Miller, p. 14). Of

particular concern was the designation of the sites of knowledge and power. In collaborative settings, does the university researcher alone remain an “expert?” (Miller, p. 15).

Miller’s work has encouraged me to be more aware of a number of researcher “traps.” First, she warns of assumptions and the importance of documenting both others, and mine, then looking repetitively at situations to formulate a deeper and broader viewpoint. Second, she suggests tolerating ambiguity and being patient with beginnings and the messiness associated with them (Miller, p. 58). This advice kept me sane during the long months of waiting for the inquiry to gain momentum. Third, she warns of the “malefic generosity” associated with change agents, noting, like Paulo Freire, that the subtle ways in which attempts to help others may become infused with unexamined assumptions about the “right” ways to be or act (Miller, p. 53). These ways more often represent the attitudes and stances of those who are in charge rather than representing the actual needs of those identified as “needing help.” For all participants to have the space to flourish, researchers must be constantly aware of assumptions and power dynamics that may limit others’ voices.

One challenge for research participants is to shift the focus from mastery as residing within the “experts” to mastery as residing within the practice community (ibid., p. 273). Inquiry members may find it difficult to take on a long-term and open-ended commitment and may be confused by the notion that research questions could originate and be addressed within a practice community

(ibid., p.274). A comment by one of the LUCID principal researchers illustrates this point:

“As a broader philosophical point, I am sceptical about research approaches that claim to derive research questions from the setting itself. Questions only become meaningful against what Taylor calls a horizon of significance. In LUCID this has to do with values of equity and inclusion, cultural diversity and resilience, community sustainability and an attachment to place. These are not values that are inherent in schools: that's why they're educationally important. So a methodology that places a focus on the subjective experience of "teacher flourishing" without reference to this broader value context may actually make it harder for you to get at the questions that really matter.” (personal communication, October 11, 2005)

Presently, I am uncertain that the IERG supports that mastery resides within the practice community. How does the research group consistently validate teachers' perspectives and experiences?

Strikingly, although they vociferously requested help and feedback in the classroom, the inquiry participants resisted help offered from the project coordinators and chief researchers at SFU. This was due, in part, to a personality clash with one or more of the university researchers (project leader and teacher interviews, October-November, 2004). Even though the inquiry group was set up to establish a learning community across levels of expertise rather than within them (Miller, p. 266), I found the teachers still considered the researchers experts and themselves novices. In fact, I felt they might have been disappointed in what I could offer them since I was not an expert in Imaginative Education theory.

Miller's opinion is that freedom emerges through risk taking, challenging, and taking initiative. These actions help educators overcome the three main obstacles she found: barriers of time, layers of assumptions, and ambiguity

(Miller, p. 1). The inquiry group was the only LUCID cohort to decide not to pursue a master's degree through their participation in the project. This, I believe, illustrated their overall choice not to carve a considerable amount of time out of their personal lives for the project. In part, because they were not obligated through a degree program to attend meetings and were offered no other appetising incentives, their attendance was spotty. Whereas individual teachers would often tell me they would be at the meetings during my visits to their classrooms, often something would "come up" to deter their attendance. This was frustrating for both the teachers who made sacrifices to attend and for me, since I spent a considerable amount of time organizing days when the majority of the group said they could attend. As the months progressed, it became apparent that commitment to the project was low. Although the participants were happy to open their classrooms to me and make time for lengthy interviews, I believe that the ambiguity and complexity of the nature of Imaginative Education affected their ability to commit to it fully.

5.3.2 Clift

Clift proposes that many researchers assume the roles of "parlour guests" and "interior decorators" (Clift, 1995, p. 3). These researchers come with intention of fixing what is broken. Upon reflection, my own irritation at the lack of initiative I witnessed concerning the overall implementation of the project is representative of the irritation she discusses in her work. Based on the individual teacher interviews, the participants believed the university researchers' expectations to be unrealistic. For example, the hours of planning required to

design a single Imaginative Education lesson is simply not feasible for teachers, who are already overwhelmed with tasks. Teachers mentioned feeling as if they were “drowning” (inquiry session, January, 2005). Who should be the lifeguard in this situation?

There needs to be a shift from working *on* to working *with* the world of practice. Although researchers attempted to work with teachers on the lesson plans, lessons were often worked *on*, mostly separate from the site of implementation. Teachers are not broken entities that need to be fixed. The development and implementation of ideas should be shared by all participants.

5.3.3 Rosenholtz

Rosenholtz (1989) offers advice concerning how the organization and leadership of schools can affect learning outcomes. What factors (administrative, collegial or other) support a climate in which teachers can flourish professionally?

She suggests that what policy makers need to focus on is not regulation, but deregulation, which she says makes schools more responsive to communities' needs, and gives more power to teachers and principals (Rosenholtz, p. 216). To accomplish this, she says policymakers will have to learn to *trust* teachers, “something too few politicians and bureaucrats seem capable of doing” (ibid., p. 216). Since lack of trust is an obstacle that most likely will not dissipate soon, what do we do in the meantime? Citing deregulation as the overall answer to school organizational problems is a simplistic solution, as deregulation has been proven as systematically oppressive as centralized “dictatorship.” While

Rosenholtz does make some hopeful claims, her ideas are now dated. Of course teachers need to feel like professionals, like they are an important part of a team, and that they are supported in their own learning quests. It will take more than deregulation to accomplish this, however, as Hargreaves suggests: teachers need support in the classroom, and their emotional needs, as well as intellectual needs, must be directly addressed in order for them to flourish professionally.

The workplace conditions Rosenholtz found that influence more teacher collaboration are (1) certainty about their technical culture (that they are professionals), (2) shared teaching goals, (3) involvement in schools' technical decisions, (4) team-teaching, and (5) school size and SES (1989., p. 45). In addition to these, I found that the more affective aspects of school culture significantly influenced collaboration. Charismatic leadership, involvement at a classroom level, and affirmation of effort and risk-taking are needed from direct administrators. With regard to Imaginative Education implementation, compatibility of teaching styles and grade levels encouraged team planning and teaching.

5.3.4 Hargreaves

Much research has been conducted regarding teacher change and the obstacles that impede teacher professional growth. Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning (2001) provide a contemporary account of some of the most stressful impediments to teacher flourishing. The overwhelming chief concern of most teachers in North America is increased accountability with fewer resources. Frankly, teachers are needy: in need of more time to plan, more quality

instructional materials, more training in special skills to address today's special learners, more recognition for their efforts, and more monetary compensation for their work. Given these needs, it would seem miraculous that some teachers still love what they do and flourish while doing it. I have never met a teacher, however, who felt that she could not improve her art. How could the implementation of Imaginative Education assist teacher flourishing?

I agree with Hargreaves et al. that a gap exists in the educational change literature and standards-based reform concerning the emotional aspects of teaching and change (Hargreaves et al., p. 193). This thesis is a response to his call for more narrative inquiries that address the emotional natures of teaching and change.

The action implications that Hargreaves et al. recommend for school leaders are directly applicable to the LUCID project. For example, redesigning timetables to align with the flexibility needed to plan and carry out imaginative lessons may help teachers feel less "boxed in" by time constraints. More planning time, especially with teachers of similar styles and curricula, may encourage more teacher reflection and risk-taking. Building teams (cohorts) carefully and providing facilitation may ensure trust is fostered, not thwarted, across all participants. Regularly witnessing teachers' implementation efforts on site may affirm their process and offer researchers insights concerning the messiness of change. In addition, according high priority to both emotional and intellectual goals, both verbally and through written publications, may help validate the

process of Imaginative Education implementation, as well as the more quantifiable outcomes (Hargreaves et al., p. 194).

5.4 The Research Process

5.4.1 Cooperative Inquiry

Cooperative Inquiry encourages deep and broad understanding among the co-researchers involved. By critically witnessing their own daily struggles to affect change in schools and sharing those efforts with others, the participants contribute to the understandings of teacher flourishing and its relationships with imaginative education. This research may suggest important lines of inquiry for consideration in the larger LUCID project.

Influenced by Miller's (1990) interest on what constitutes "expert" knowledge, one question that I considered in my research was what motivates people to participate in collaborative inquiry, and who benefits most from these arrangements (Heron, 1996, p. 265)?

The process of collaborative inquiry establishes the potential for all participants to co-construct knowledge because the process represents an ongoing enterprise that invites groups to share, build upon, and transform what they understand concerning effective practice (ibid., p. 265). The process also requires rethinking the locus of learning from individual minds to an unfolding within a participatory, dialogical framework (ibid., p. 266). I found that teachers were resistant to this process, instead wanting the boundaries established for them by "experts." Even in terms of setting norms, participants seemed

disinterested, based on their overall lack of journaling on this topic and wavering attendance at meetings.

What distinguishes cooperative inquiry from other forms of participatory research is the essential element that those involved develop themselves through participation in the community of inquirers (Heron, 1996, p. 266). However, I wonder how one could fully resist developing personally through involvement with others? Is it possible NOT to be affected by others? Is this really a valid difference that separates this model from others in the action research tradition? I recognize the difficulty in determining how significantly people are affected by an experience. Nevertheless, it is part of the cooperative inquiry process to further understanding through sharing experiential knowledge.

Consider the two critical tenets of cooperative inquiry: (1) knowledge is situated in experience, and (2) experience is understood through critical reflection with others who share this experience (ibid., p. 267). This suggests that without a forum of *participating* teachers, cooperative inquiry simply cannot work. This surely resonates with the Imaginative Education inquiry group.

Researchers evaluate the success of cooperative inquiries, however, by whether or not new knowledge is applied to practice. Although some new knowledge was applied to this inquiry participants' teaching practices, these lessons/units were either not maintained or not wholly based on Imaginative Education. Thus, for some individuals, the inquiry may have "worked," to a degree, but not for the overall group. Currently, LUCID is attempting to recruit more teachers for the project to move forward in the research site, but I know of

no further group lesson-planning or individually-created lessons being implemented in the district since January, 2005.

An aspect often missing in cooperative inquiry is the legitimate linking of the ideas and innovations with the broader educational community (ibid., p. 273). Based on the administrators' lack of awareness of the Imaginative Education approach and how they could aid their striving teachers, I think it is fair to say that the broader community was not linked legitimately at this research site.

Shared leadership is more demanding of teachers than they may desire. Inquiry groups need a strong facilitator, especially in the beginning of the inquiry, to convey the structure of the inquiry, aid in the development of the initial inquiry question, establish collaborative decision-making, and safeguard an emotionally safe space for discussion. Based on the advice in my readings on methodology, I felt I needed to quickly concede authority so that the group could become self-reliant. Upon reflection, the group needed guidance that is more direct in order to keep up enthusiasm and momentum from the conference. Nevertheless, participants' sincere commitment and follow through is required for an inquiry to work.

5.4.2 Portraiture

Portraiture, while still a form of qualitative research, puts the research more in the hands of one researcher, who works to portray a picture that reflects the complexity of individuals' experiences and beliefs. Portraiture arose as a less demanding form of research for participants in this research. I realize that

portraiture can be viewed as an “escape” to the essentially contestable methodology of ethnography; nevertheless, I believe that it is a worthy practice, that by sharing a portrait, one may share understanding, which is an essential goal of research.

As I read my research journal, the “story” that pops out is that of a First Nations Band School. It is a story that beckons me due to all the stereotypical reasons – a foreign land and people [to me], a conflict-ridden setting, multifaceted “characters” ready for portraits. Yet I exclude this story for political and ethical reasons: these people have had their story told too often by white, privileged outsiders, there to gawk at their ways, write a book, and then go on about their ways, neglecting the need that screams out everyday. I do not want to add my name to the list of those who have used these people for their own progress. It would take a lifetime of study and a sincere invitation into their world for me to be able to create a portrait that does them justice. I am interested in their story, and I will continue to listen to it, but I cannot, at this time, attempt to represent it for others.

As Gilligan (1982) writes, “one cannot take the life history out of history” (as quoted by Sterling, L. “Indigenizing Schools...,” 2004). We must know the history to address the issue. Due to my inquisitiveness, I have broadened my understanding of the “integration” of First Nations peoples and its effects on

them today.²¹ Nevertheless, I realize I have much to learn. I am an outsider looking in, in most every way.

Thus, I chose what some might view to be the “easy” way out – to represent a white male’s scenario. In anticipation of such claims, I must put forth that he was the most willing participant, the one who divulged his experiences most openly, and who attempted to incorporate Imaginative Education lessons in more than a cursory fashion. In sum, Ian followed through in a manner that no other participant did. Thus, his experience seemed most meaningful in terms of showing the relationships between Imaginative Education and teacher flourishing.

5.4.3 Reflexivity

The interpretation of this thesis, as readers will see, is frank and straightforward in tone. My experience with cooperative inquiry was not glossy, and I do not exhibit it as such. In her article, “Good Enough Methods for Ethnographic Research,” Luttrell (2000) advocates that “researchers name the tensions, contradictions, and power imbalances that they encounter in their work, rather than attempting to eliminate them” (p. 499). Research should be “good enough.”²² Whereby researchers view fieldwork as an ongoing process of realizations that lead to complex choices, one “should think about research decisions in terms of what is lost and what is gained rather than what might be

²¹ By “integration,” I mean the historical colonization of British Columbia and the resulting decimation of First Nations culture through the education of children separate from their families and tribal elders.

²² Luttrell (2000) advocates that, as Winnecott (1965) called for “good enough” mothering, we strive to develop “good enough” research methods (p. 515).

ideal... accounting for these ‘good enough’ decisions is ...the nitty-gritty of researcher reflexivity” (Luttrell, p. 500). My decision to focus on Ian in the portrait was a long, complex process. Ideally, I would have written portraits of three or more project participants from different schools and illustrated their resulting cross-cultural experiences. But there simply was not enough overall participation to do this well. The layers of assumptions and false connections I would make would be a result of force. The portraits would not have resonated with one another.

A “good enough” researcher is aware that she has personal stakes and investments in research relationships, does not shy away from frustrations, anxieties, and disappointments that are a part of these relationships, and seeks to understand and appreciate the differences between one’s self and the other. This researcher also accepts the mistakes she makes, for these mistakes are errors often made because of her blind spots and the intensity of her social, emotional, and intellectual involvement in and with the subjects of her research (Luttrell, p. 515). “At its core, ethnographic research is creative, inventive, emotionally charged, and uneasy. ‘Good enough’ researchers find ways to sustain all these aspects” (ibid., p. 517).

I have found that allowing methodology to act as a tool and not as a restraint helped me to portray more authentically my understanding of the situations involved in my own research. My attempt to be imaginative in my use of the methodologies of cooperative inquiry and portraiture illustrates my belief that improvisation, more than transgression, is an emancipatory act.

Chapter 6

The following suggestions are based on my reflections on what I witnessed as a research assistant for the LUCID project. I offer these suggestions humbly. Individuals seeking more specific suggestions on teaching in an Imaginative Education approach should contact the IERG.

6.1 Suggestions

6.1.1 Concerning Teaching

Planning Imaginative Education lessons requires that teachers return to the planning process and write out their intentions meticulously. Because most senior, practiced teachers teach more from “their heads” than from written plans, this process can be gruelling. This transition might be eased by encouraging teachers to begin with mini-lessons, instead of whole units, and to adapt the planning framework until it suits them.

Most teaching occurs in professional isolation. Teachers need to feel supported when they are attempting to implement new approaches, especially ones as ambiguous as Imaginative Education. Incorporating “expert” guidance in individuals’ classes may help teachers feel confident that they are doing the “right” thing and encourage them to follow through with their ideas.

Teachers who have been using the Imaginative Education approach in other districts offer this advice for those teachers just beginning implementation:

- Focus less on testing curriculum coverage and more on significant student engagement with the material.
- Keeping them in the game cannot be forced. If they lose interest, end the unit and move on.
- You can't use the same structure everyday. Vary your cognitive tools.
- Allow yourself to take breaks from the approach.
- Don't attempt to engage the student if you're not engaged yourself.
- The longer you teach with this approach, the less you write down.²³

6.1.2 Concerning Administrative Support

As part of following my role as a co-researcher, I wanted the enthusiasm for the project to come from the group, not to be generated by the project leader or me. Upon reflection, charismatic influence is probably something they needed from a leader.

Offering a choice of incentives to reciprocate the time and effort teachers volunteer for the project implementation may garner more participation. Since the master's cohort was not feasible for the teachers in the inquiry group, honouring a request made through group consensus might be beneficial.

LUCID may want to redesign the project leader's role to ensure she has available time to visit teachers on site, schedule monthly meetings, and actively recruit other participants.

²³ These suggestions were gathered from teachers at the 2005 summer workshop held by IERG at SFU.

Most administrators who had teachers involved in the project seemed unaware as to how implementation might look and how they could support their teachers. Ideally, teachers need flexible scheduling in order to work with the underlying narratives involved in Imaginative Education lesson planning. More administrative availability may be requested to enable excursions and to forewarn school staff and parents that “strange happenings” might soon occur due to teachers incorporating the Imaginative Education approach.

6.1.3 Concerning Structure of Meetings

Most teachers involved in the inquiry needed more structure for both the inquiry sessions and the implementation of Imaginative Education. Setting aside planning days that allow teachers to work with peers according to their needs may help teachers maintain their momentum and work through obstacles in their planning process. Since Imaginative Education lesson planning may require more sustained focus than other approaches, having food and drink available and scheduling lengthy meetings might allow for more complete results. For the same reason, meetings should be composed of little lecturing from experts and more hands-on lesson planning.

Because expression organizes experience, teachers also need the opportunity to voice their struggles and successes. Perhaps a limited time per session could be established for this task.

6.2 Afterward: Potent Recreation

What enamours me most concerning the potency of the imagination is the mind's capacity to deconstruct its conceptions and then recombine the elements of them at its pleasure. In such a way, we "story" our lives through combining and recombining events according to our changing perceptions of them, thus fashioning our identities and the way we perceive the world in general. Flourishers create flourishing stories of their lives, using their imaginations to maintain a positive approach to challenges and tragedies. Their imaginations empower them to not only survive and endure, but to thrive.

Composing a life involves a continual re imagining of the future and reinterpretation of the past to give meaning to the present, remembering best those events that prefigured what followed, forgetting those that proved to have no meaning within the narrative (Bateson, 1989, p. 30). Imagination gives us the strength to recreate both our identities and our perceptions of our world, allowing us to flourish. This same practice transfers to the classroom setting, in which teachers may not only teach in a more engaging manner, but also model for their students an essential life skill. My research has illustrated that, as Casey (1993) says, "Human agency may be frail, especially with those of little power, but it happens daily and mundanely, and it deserves our attention" (p. 5).

Teacher flourishing can be a process of potent recreation. Like the seeds of a dandelion blown by a light-hearted, wishful child, flourishing teachers have the potency to create new worlds wherever they land. As Ian said to explain his sketch of a dandelion: "I sort of think flourishing is that. It looks like it's

contained, but the slightest energy spreads it everywhere. It's infectious that way. You can't get rid of it once it starts."

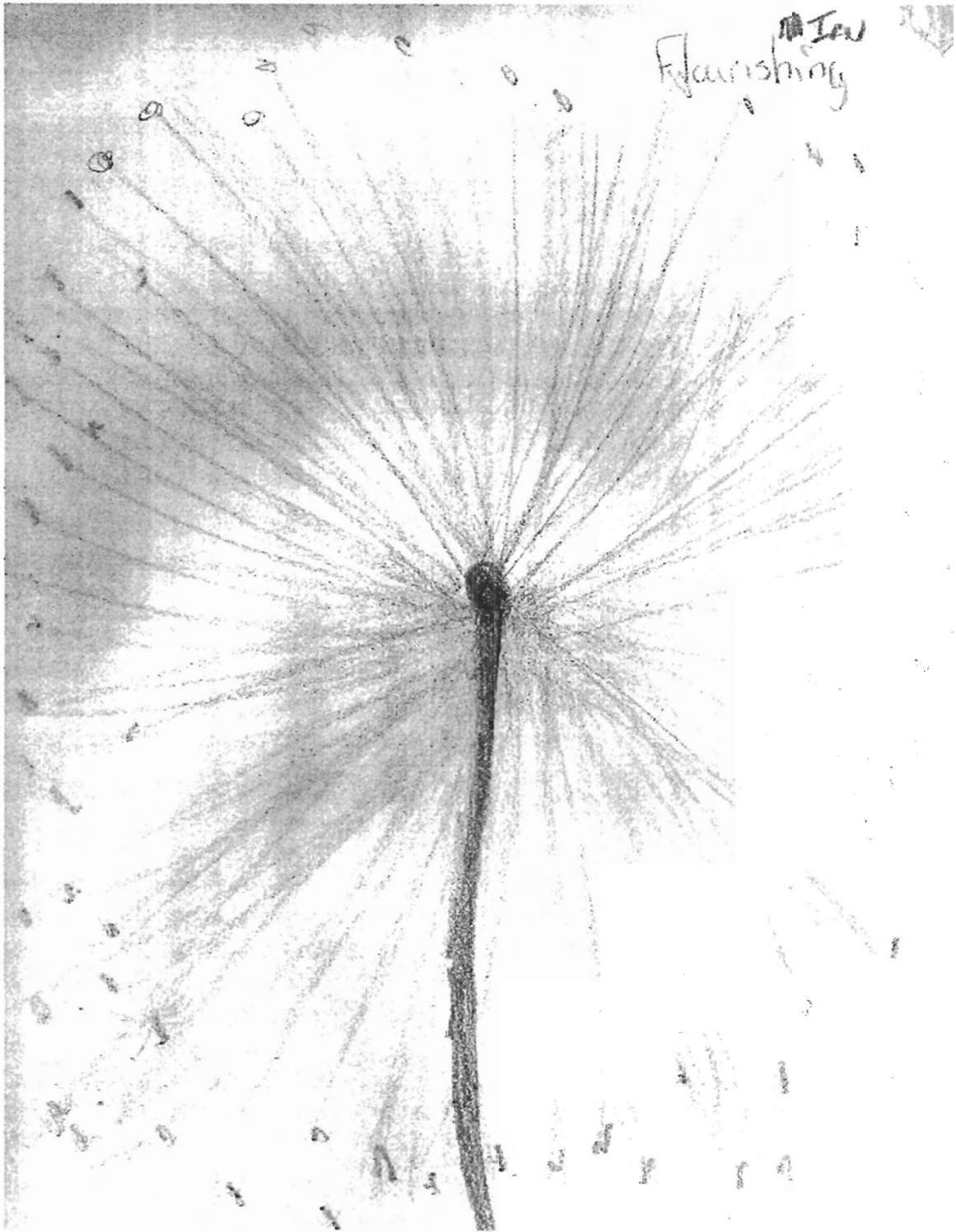


Figure 2 Ian's sketch of a dandelion: "Flourishing"

Appendix

This project entails a research alliance between the Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, and school district-First Nation partnerships in three locations in British Columbia. Building on the work of SFU's Kieran Egan, holder of a Canada Research Chair in Education, and on the Faculty's extensive experience with community-based professional programs, we will investigate whether the concepts and methods of imaginative education can help schools meet the academic, social, cultural, and emotional needs of First Nations children, in ways that are inclusive of all children in those schools.

The project applies an innovative educational theory to a problem of major importance to communities across Canada and elsewhere: How can schools improve the academic success and life chances of Aboriginal children? At its heart is a transformation of the ways in which teachers think about and practice education, so that the imaginative engagement of all learners becomes for them a basic professional standard, and so that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to routinely achieve this standard across the curriculum. While there is considerable theoretical and empirical evidence to suggest this may be possible, this project will constitute the first intensive, large-scale attempt at implementation. As such, it brings together three major fields of educational research: the relationship between curriculum, teaching, and learning; effective schooling for First Nations children; and sustainable educational change.

To accomplish the objectives of the study, a research alliance is essential. In order for any educational reform to be sustainable, knowledge has to be held, developed, and passed on within the professional community of teachers and teacher educators. In school districts where Aboriginal children form a substantial proportion of the enrollment, First Nations organizations must be actively involved in the process of change as well. Accordingly, the project has been designed as a three-way partnership between the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, three British Columbia school districts, and the respective First Nation educational body in each district. It is anticipated that, in addition to the project's contributions to academic knowledge in a broader sense, all three partners will benefit directly and substantially from the proposed research and training activities.

Stage One: Professional transformation

In Year One of the project, up to the beginning of the school year in September 2004, we will focus on training Project Leaders and teachers in the concepts and methods of culturally inclusive imaginative education. The capstone event of this phase will be an intensive collaborative curriculum development workshop held at SFU in the summer of 2004, attended by Project Leaders and teachers from all three districts. By the end of this workshop we expect teachers to be confident in working with the imaginative education framework, to have developed imaginative unit plans covering 30- 50% of the curriculum in grades 4-7, and to have acquired new skills of assessment and classroom observation that

will form the basis for collecting action-research data in the next phase of the project.

Research in this initial phase will focus primarily on the nature of the professional transformation that teachers undergo as they acquire new ways of thinking about their practice and about children's access to curricular knowledge, building on a preliminary study by McKenzie and Fettes (2002). Teachers will be engaged in self-reflection through journal writing, peer-group discussions, and interviews. Questions will be open-ended, for instance "Can you briefly describe your understanding of imaginative education?", "Can you describe one lesson or unit in which you think your class was imaginatively engaged?", and "How do you know what the children in your class are learning?" Data from across the sites will be combined and subjected to qualitative analysis for common themes, derived in part from prior research and theory and in part from the data themselves. This research will continue through the subsequent phases of the project, yielding a valuable set of portraits that will contribute to the literature on teachers' professional growth and the ways in which universities can foster it. We also expect this research to yield direct benefits for SFU's professional programs and for the teachers and school districts involved.

Stage Two: Working models

Years Two and Three of the project will entail intensive research aimed at developing working models of culturally inclusive imaginative education that fit the circumstances of each school and community. Project Leaders and teachers will be trained as co-researchers in assessing the nature and quality of children's

learning, in collaboration with faculty and students from SFU. A project-wide evaluation will be carried out in January-March, 2005, and the entire project team will meet at a retreat hosted by one of the districts to discuss the findings and draft a research plan for the following year. Team members will also attend and present findings from the project in the second International Conference on Imagination and Education at SFU in the summer of 2005. The 2005-2006 school year will see a continuation and expansion of the work done in the previous year; by this time teachers will be expected to have developed a high level of mastery and to be able to draw on a wide array of unit plans and materials developed across the sites. Team members will also be engaged in planning for the third phase of the project, to begin in the summer of 2006. A second project-wide evaluation will take place in January-March, 2006, followed by a retreat designed to facilitate the transition to the third phase.

Research in this second phase will focus on curriculum and pedagogy. Because imaginative education actively engages learners in making sense of the curriculum, individually and collectively, it requires considerable skills of observation and responsiveness on the part of the teacher: no two children and no two classes follow exactly the same path to understanding. For this reason, teachers will be trained in methods of ethnographic observation and authentic assessment that will help them find out more about their learners and the ways in which they respond to the classroom experience. Some preliminary research in Year One will be conducted by SFU faculty in collaboration with teachers and First Nation educators, yielding baseline knowledge about learners, pedagogy, classroom environment, and barriers to learning that will inform the

interventions planned in Years Two and Three. The following list is not intended to be exhaustive, but to give an idea of the kinds of procedures that will be used.

The research undertaken in this central phase of the project is expected to be of great interest to educators working in multicultural contexts around the world. It will also contribute to substantially increasing the professional capacity and knowledge base of the school districts and First Nation educational institutions involved.²⁴

²⁴ This section of the proposal is directly copied from the research proposal submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by Mark Fettes, LUCID chief researcher.

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