

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: A CARTOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY AS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR ART EDUCATORS

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This dissertation draws on a number of cartographical processes to explore the particularities and circumstances of eight visual art teachers engaged in a yearlong collaborative inquiry within a formal, federally funded professional development program for arts educators. Art educators, many of whom lack content area colleagues within their schools, often work separated by geographical distance and may not have opportunities to regularly engage in professional development opportunities that are simultaneously content-specific, collaborative, and related to their working contexts. By examining the ways in which collaborative inquiry might provide such an opportunity, this study presents a number of challenges that emerged for the participants in this study, including: 1) Participants' socio-cultural norms and a desire to belong to a group that could offer the collegial support absent in many of their schools led participants to downplay their differences and suppress conflict for the sake of inclusion in the group; 2) Teachers' participation in a collaborative inquiry group operating within a funded professional development program provided them with professional opportunities and technological equipment, yet offered little support as they attempted to integrate the technology into their classrooms and to negotiate their sudden visibility within their teaching contexts; and 3) The researcher, acting as a participant facilitator within the

group, unintentionally assumed a neutral stance in an effort to negotiate her competing desire for a close relationship with participants with her desire to disrupt assumptions and trouble practices for the sake of professional learning and growth. A number of “openings” may allow art educators to continue to engage in, create, and advocate for arts-based collaborative inquiry opportunities in a current socio-political climate that threatens such opportunities. For instance, art educators’ need for collegial support and the existence of online networks and free internet-based software provides both a motive and means for geographically separated art educators to connect. Future research that more specifically addresses the challenges of providing art educators with collaborative professional development opportunities can build on the particular description and identification of challenges this study offers.

A CARTOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY AS A
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR ART EDUCATORS

by

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Chapter 1: Research as Cartography – Initial Mapping

The creation of metaphors has always been central to my artistic practice.

Metaphors allow me to make sense of the world and provide possibilities for representing my ideas to a broader audience. Making meaning and representing ideas are also central tasks of a researcher, and my fondness of metaphor has allowed me to see my research as an extension of my artistic practice.

I use cartography as a metaphorical process for this research because a cartographer negotiates both visual and textual elements to represent a space. I have found that my natural inclination to interact with information through imagery is in constant negotiation with the current language-based descriptions present (and required) in much of educational research (Emme, 2001). Eisner states that arts-based research

begins with the recognition that the arts as well as the sciences can help us understand the world in which we live...Arts-based research is a way to ensure that science-based research alone does not monopolize how educational practice can be studied or what needs to be done to describe it (as cited in Willis, 2008, p. 51).

My choices to use arts-based research methods and to conceptualize this research as a cartographical practice allow me to present this dissertation in both visual and written forms.

I began to associate my role as a researcher to that of a cartographer when I started making physical and conceptual “maps” to understand and illustrate the landscape of professional development in art education. In this introductory chapter, I present my initial mapping (e.g., conceptual framework) that served to orient my research. More

specifically, I describe the background, rationale, context, and significance of this journey, as well as the commitments and lenses I bring to this work.

Background

My lived experience as an elementary art teacher was very much like being an island. As the only art teacher in the building, I was physically isolated from others like me. The emotional isolation was so real that I initiated weekly meetings with an art teacher at a neighboring school. In addition to being an island in “form,” I was also an island in “function.” I was unprepared for the reality that students and staff saw my art classroom as a vacation destination.

Although many reform efforts have attempted to promote collaboration and dissolve the autonomous and isolated nature of teaching, many teachers work in isolation (DuFour, 2011). Art educators in elementary settings, who are likely to be working as the sole teacher in their discipline within their school setting, commonly describe their practice as isolated (Barrett, 2006; Chapman, 2005). To further accentuate feelings of isolation, some elementary art teachers teach in more than one school and thus rotate among a number of communities. The art educator’s inconsistent presence in any one school may challenge the establishment of consistent and supportive collegial relationships that potentially lessen feelings of isolation.

The culture of isolation in schools (Little, 2007) leaves many teachers feeling that they are, in a sense, islands. Working from the idea of an island, and acknowledging Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995) metaphor of “professional knowledge landscapes,” I have found the geographic metaphor of an archipelago helpful in describing the field of art education, and as a means to understand the tensions between isolation and

collaboration related to professional development for art educators. I located my initial research wonderings (and thus began my cartography) when considering the parallels between an archipelago and the field of art education.

Gonzalez (2008) recently used the metaphor of an archipelago, a group of islands within an expanse of water, to describe feminist constructions of individual and collective identity. Based on Gonzalez's work, I challenge the idea that we can discuss the field of art education as if art educators are a homogenous group. The term "art educators" is complex and describes a diverse group of individuals. Just as the limits of an archipelago are not fixed, the border that defines who is and is not an art educator is not immediately clear. For instance, artists-in-residence, studio art faculty in departments of higher education, and elementary classroom teachers may all consider themselves art educators.

Seeing the field of art education as an archipelago also challenges easily defined borders and promotes a definition of art education that allows for diversity and intersectionality within a collective identity. In other words, understanding the field of art education as an archipelago challenges an assumption that everyone who considers herself or himself an "art educator" shares identical desires, interests, and needs, since variation is also true of islands within an archipelago. Each island is uniquely shaped and has a unique geographical position. Within the archipelago metaphor, individual islands also exemplify the physical separation of art teachers, but downplay the physical separation when we consider the islands as a group.

The islands within an archipelago drift and move, which further challenges the modern notion that identity has stable borders that are fixed and static. Rather, the islands are free to float. Individual art teacher identities also evolve and drift to different

locations within the field of art education. My space within the art education archipelago has drifted from K-12 teaching into a Ph.D. program and new work supporting professional development. As I drift, my proximity (not only geographically, but also pedagogically and emotionally) to other islands changes. The collective identity of the archipelago allows for those of us who fulfill multiple and/or simultaneous roles to still self-identify as art educators.

I have found a stylized image of an archipelago (Figure 1) helpful when attempting to visualize what an archipelago of art education might look like. The sections of islands and the variation in the borders maintain a sense of visual unity because of the artist's use of line and repeated shapes. In other words, despite a significant amount of variation, the image appears unified.



Figure 1. “Archipelago.” Artwork by Matt Borchert, 2009.

The archipelago provides a means for thinking about the general cartography of art education. Yet, the collective and individual aspects of the archipelago metaphor parallel a tension experienced by many K-12 art educators concerning their professional development. The isolated feeling I experienced in my art classroom continued even when I found myself among groups of teachers in professional development settings. For instance, I remember sitting among the rest of the elementary school faculty listening to an “expert” hired by our administration to present various strategies for differentiating math lessons. As the only art educator in the school, I was used to professional development that administrators designed without me in mind. At the end of the presentation, the speaker asked if anyone had questions, and a veteran first grade teacher stood up. She looked directly at the principal. With language and a posture that communicated that she was speaking on behalf of everyone, she declared that this was the most relevant professional development that we had received in years. She, apparently, had not considered those of us who did not teach mathematics in her declaration about “we.” Based on this experience and after reading the literature presented in the following chapter, I became interested in researching the professional development of K-12 art educators.

This dissertation presents a thematic cartography¹ of the art education archipelago by furthering an understanding of the professional development experiences of K-12 teachers. The following sections describe my rationale for selecting a specific approach to professional development for K-12 art teachers, and identify the framework and

¹ Thematic cartography is map-making in service to a (typically, geographical) theme and intended for a specific audience. I write primarily for an audience interested in the intersection of art education and professional development. The “theme” of this cartography is K-12 art educators.

research questions that served as my compass, providing me with an initial sense of direction.

Rationale: Professional Development for Art Educators as a Complex Problem

Professional development (PD) research describes the characteristics of high-quality PD, and recommends PD that is job-embedded, collaborative, and consists of relevant content (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 2007; Kennedy, M. M., 1998; Richardson, 2003). I contend that of the many characteristics of high-quality PD, these three specific traits create dynamic tensions for those attempting to provide art educators with high-quality professional development opportunities.

These tensions overlap conceptually and are complex in nature. In an attempt to illustrate the complexity and interaction, I began a reflexive process of manipulating shapes and words (see the initial sketches in Appendix A). I later realized these efforts were an early attempt to “map” an area of the professional development landscape within art education. The following map (Figure 3) includes simple definitions for collaborative, job-embedded, and content-specific professional development within three large overlapping circles. I sought to define the ways in which these circles typically overlap in accordance with professional development literature and my own experience. In the paragraphs that follow, I use the tensions to demonstrate the complexity of providing art educators with professional development that simultaneously exhibits these three characteristics.

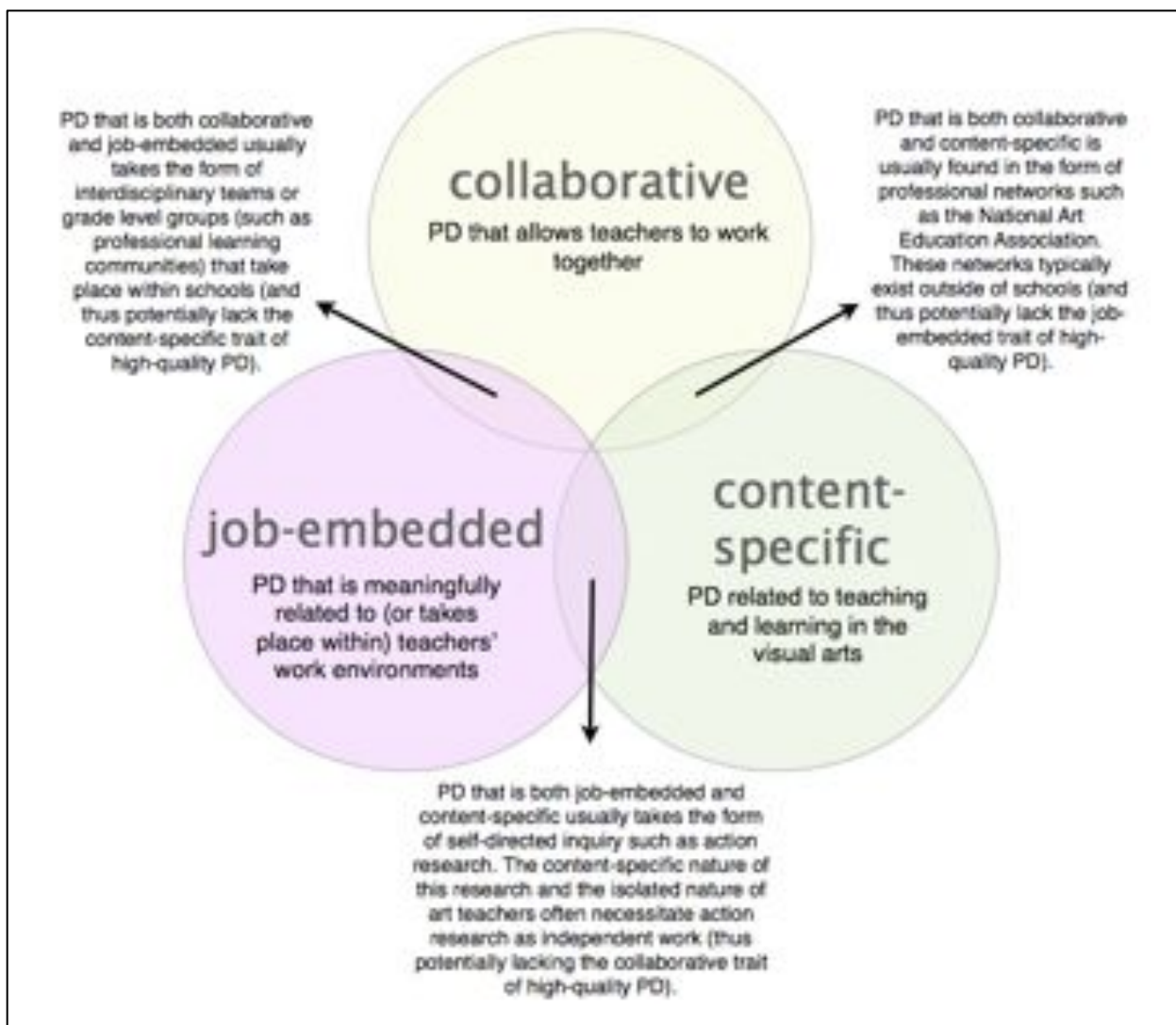


Figure 2. Inherent tensions among three traits of high-quality professional development when applied to K-12 art educators.²

Tension: Content-Specific/Job-Embedded

The current methods of “top-down” PD, wherein administrators choose a topic and hire an “expert” to present a one-time workshop to teachers, is still prevalent in today’s schools (Kooy, 2009; Webster-Wright, 2009). Such PD may not create sufficient

² In this figure, I adopt the term and concept of “high-quality PD” from the professional development scholarship with some reservation, not desiring to present “high-quality PD” as a static phenomenon that should go unquestioned.

opportunities for teachers to engage in content-specific professional development. While some administrator-selected topics may be relevant to an entire faculty, others may not be of equal relevance.

One likely factor determining the content of such experiences is administrators' felt need to improve the quality of reading and math instruction due to the current pressure to increase student achievement scores in these areas. Conway, Hibbard, Albert, & Hourigan (2005) painted a picture of what job-embedded PD for arts educators looks like given the policy climate created by No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. They argue, "Professional development activities for all teachers have been largely geared toward the 'traditional' academic subject teachers, ignoring the different and sometimes unique needs of arts educators" (p. 4). This narrowing of PD content enforces a hierarchy of subjects (Robinson, 2006) and marginalizes professional learning opportunities for teachers of other subjects, including art educators. This narrowing parallels current cuts in instructional time that further marginalize learning in the arts for K-12 students (McMurrer, 2008). While this policy climate likely limits the diversity of PD content in general, teachers of subject areas not tied to testing may find the content of their PD (e.g., differentiated instruction in math) largely unrelated to the teaching and learning that takes place within their own classrooms. Thus, school-based PD using a "one size fits all" model is unlikely to meet the recommended content-specific professional development needs features for art educators.

Other models of professional development may help to mitigate the challenge of providing art teachers with content-specific professional development within their teaching contexts. For well over a decade, PD scholarship has criticized the traditional

model of PD for its unclear relationship to professional learning (Webster-Wright, 2009) and its ineffectiveness to transform teacher practice (Borko, 2004; Fullan, 2007), and advocated for other approaches that involve teachers in the design and implementation of their professional learning (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Inquiry-based and collaborative approaches to PD move away from the traditional approach; and both have gained support within recent scholarship (e.g., Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2009). Action research, for example, involves teachers in an inquiry process for the purpose of investigating problems of practice that emerge in their classrooms throughout the year. Unlike the traditional model of professional development, inquiry-based approaches differentiate PD based on individual teacher interests and acknowledge teacher's agency to represent and define their own professional learning (Webster-Wright, 2009).

My experience working to support teacher learning tells me that when given the opportunity to articulate their own learning goals, teachers can quickly identify things that they would like to learn. However, the task of implementing an inquiry-based approach within a formal professional development structure can be difficult. Administrators who attempt to use an inquiry-based approach to PD within their school must negotiate the benefits of teachers defining their own learning goals with other important learning goals that teachers may not articulate (Borko & Putnam, 1995; Hawley & Valli, 1999) and with external pressure to standardize content in order to meet accountability requirements (Fenwick, 2004).

Allowing teachers to define and investigate their own learning goals is a logical way to differentiate job-embedded professional development based on individual teacher interests. However, this process assumes a level of trust that may not be present between

teachers and those responsible for designing the professional development. Even when the goals are teacher-defined, “in practice, school districts and supervisors sometimes exert intentional influence on these goals” (Fenwick, 2004, p. 265). The silencing of voices and promoting of certain lines and modes of inquiry create situations wherein inquiry “may potentially be co-opted and misinterpreted until it appears as frozen as the methods it was intended to replace” (Beiler & Thomas, 2009, p. 1033).

In addition, districts that use teacher-directed inquiry as a professional development model may lack adequate resources or personnel to appropriately support it. Instructional coaches or mentors can significantly enhance the learning experience for teachers, especially when the coach is not also an evaluator (Fenwick, 2004). Currently, literacy and math coaches are in place throughout U.S. schools in an effort to improve teacher quality as well as to raise student test scores. Data presented about district spending in five urban districts reveal large percentages of professional development contract money spent on instructional coaches, mentors, and outside consultants (Miles, Odden, Fermanich, & Archibald, 2005). However, without political pressure for increased student learning in the arts, it is unlikely the resources currently spent on literacy and math coaches will be available for art educators.

In Fenwick’s (2004) study of schools using inquiry as a professional development model, administrators required every teacher to create a Teacher Professional Growth Plan (TPGP). In some of the schools in the study, administrators provided time for teachers to dialogue about their various learning goals. When given this opportunity, a large majority of teachers chose to engage in discussion with colleagues about their own TPGPs. This finding supports the work of Kooy (2009) and Yendol-Hoppey and Dana

(2009), who argue that teacher-directed inquiry is most powerful when it takes place within a community that provides opportunities for dialogic and relational learning.

While an inquiry model is one potential means to provide art teachers with content-specific PD that is also job-embedded, providing teachers with opportunities (or requiring them) to collaborate may unintentionally encourage art teachers who lack content area colleagues in their school to choose inquiry topics not specific to their content area in order to be better understood by colleagues. In other words, school-based professional development methods that involve collaboration may dissuade art teachers from pursuing their content-specific interests that an individual inquiry model may have encouraged. The following section describes the tensions art teachers may experience when attempting to engage in collaborative professional development with colleagues from other disciplines within their schools.

Tension: Collaborative/Job-embedded

PD models that involve teachers working together respond to the call in the PD scholarship for teacher learning that is collaborative, sustained, and focused on student learning (Hawley & Valli, 2007; Richardson, 2003). The collaborative models use a number of terms to describe groups of teachers working together, including Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Professional Learning Networks (PLNs), Collaborative Inquiry Groups (CIGs), and Critical Friend Groups (CFGs) among others. Learning communities can be organized (by teachers and/or administrators) in many ways: teachers might be grouped by grade level, or subject matter, or assigned to a focus group, or to an interdisciplinary group. These groups usually involve teachers collaboratively

viewing student work while planning, implementing, and reworking assessments of student learning.

Attempts to create more collaborative PD opportunities within schools have not sufficiently resolved the lack of content-specific professional development art educators experience within their school contexts. However, I do not claim that art educators cannot be meaningfully involved in school-wide improvement. Certainly, an art educator may be very committed to the overall school goals and should be expected to participate in and contribute to PD opportunities related to the school at large. Because art educators share students with other teachers, they will likely contribute substantially to any assigned group. Stewart and Davis (2007) list art teachers' creativity, knowledge of art materials, and the relative flexibility of an art teacher's curriculum as advantages when working with teachers of other subjects. However, placing art teachers on interdisciplinary teams also has disadvantages. The disadvantage of having an art teacher on the team is that this configuration can create scheduling difficulties, because administrators often create common planning time for a grade level team by scheduling students for art, music, or physical education classes. Thus the art educator, even as an official member of the team, is often absent from team meetings. These scheduling difficulties create a situation where art teachers are not able to participate in all aspects of the team activities (Stewart & Davis, 2007).

Additionally, because the arts are almost never the focus of the professional development, art teachers may not experience content-specific professional learning when assigned to groups organized by grade level or another subject matter. For instance, if an administrator has given a group the task of improving the fourth grade students'

writing, a visual art teacher may help the team to identify weaknesses in a piece of student writing. However, the fourth grade teachers are not then also responsible to provide feedback on a fourth grade student's sketchbook. Districts that always require art teachers to take part in learning communities organized by grade level (or perpetually assign them to a focus or interdisciplinary group) with tasks related to other content areas create situations wherein the art teacher is unlikely to receive the content-based professional development that is regularly afforded to other members of collaborative teacher groups. Thus, art teachers who desire professional development that is both collaborative and content-specific are likely to engage in PD opportunities outside of their schools.

Tension: Collaborative/Content-Specific

In general, the content of PD opportunities offered within school districts are not meeting the stated desires of visual art educators (Charland, 2006; Conway et al., 2005; Sabol, 2006). Sabol's (2006) survey of the members of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) revealed that art teachers who desire to attend professional development outside their school district run into the additional obstacles, such as distance and time, both of which create the need for funding. More specifically, Sabol reported that 17% of art educators cite problems with professional development opportunities being too far away, and 34% identified time as an obstacle to attending professional development activities. Without comparative statistics, I do not claim that the obstacles faced by art educators are more challenging than those faced by teachers in other content areas. Rather, these statistics illustrate the existence of obstacles that art educators have encountered.

According to Sabol's (2006) study, art teachers attending professional development outside their districts often do so outside their normal school day, when time for professional development is in competition with personal and family responsibilities. Sixty-one percent of art teachers attended professional development opportunities on weekends, after school, and during the summer, and "art educators bear the major degrees of responsibility for pursuing their own professional development" (Sabol, 2006, p. 48). Despite receiving some funding from their schools, 58% of Sabol's respondents reported that the support they receive to attend professional development experiences is inadequate. When asked about drawbacks to attending professional development opportunities, teachers' most frequent response (35%) was that attending professional development was "too expensive." These obstacles, though not an exhaustive list, demonstrate the challenges art teachers experience in accessing collaborative professional development outside their schools.

Despite these challenges, art educators who lack content area colleagues in their school and who are looking to collaborate likely leave their school context to do so. Their need to go beyond their teaching context to find content-specific collaboration presents a logistical tension with the professional development literature's recommendation for high-quality PD that is simultaneously collaborative, content-specific, and job-embedded. While art teachers have likely engaged in PD experiences that are collaborative, content-specific, and job-embedded, it is unlikely these three characteristics were present within a single professional development opportunity given many art teachers' content area isolation within their teaching contexts.

Purpose and Significance

Having acknowledged the logistical challenge in providing a professional development opportunity for art educators that is simultaneously collaborative, content-specific, and job-embedded, I began to consider how various professional development models appeared to meet one or two of these recommended characteristics but not the other(s). For instance, attending a National Art Education Association annual conference is highly content-specific and likely collaborative. However, conferences take place outside of teachers' schools, where presenters provide information without knowledge of attendees' students within their particular contexts. The attendees must translate this learning back to their working contexts (Barrett, 2006). The purpose of this study, then, is to explore the relationships between one professional development opportunity for art educators and the collaborative, content-specific, and job-embedded recommendations from the PD literature.

I identified collaborative inquiry as a PD model well matched to my interest in exploring an approach to professional development for art educators. A collaborative inquiry group is "a group of six to twelve professionals who meet on a regular basis to learn from practice through structured dialogue and engage in continuous cycles through the process of action research" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008, p. 16). The commitment of feminist research to investigate relationships influenced my choice to advocate for and to study collaboration within professional development contexts. Orland-Barak (2009) argues that professional conversation is inherently feminist because of its relational nature and its valuing of diversity/multiple perspectives. I believed that studying art educators engaged in collaborative inquiry would allow me to further understand the

relationships between art educators in the group as well as the group's relationship to the job-embedded, content-specific, and collaborative characteristics recommended in the PD scholarship (Figure 3) for a number of reasons.

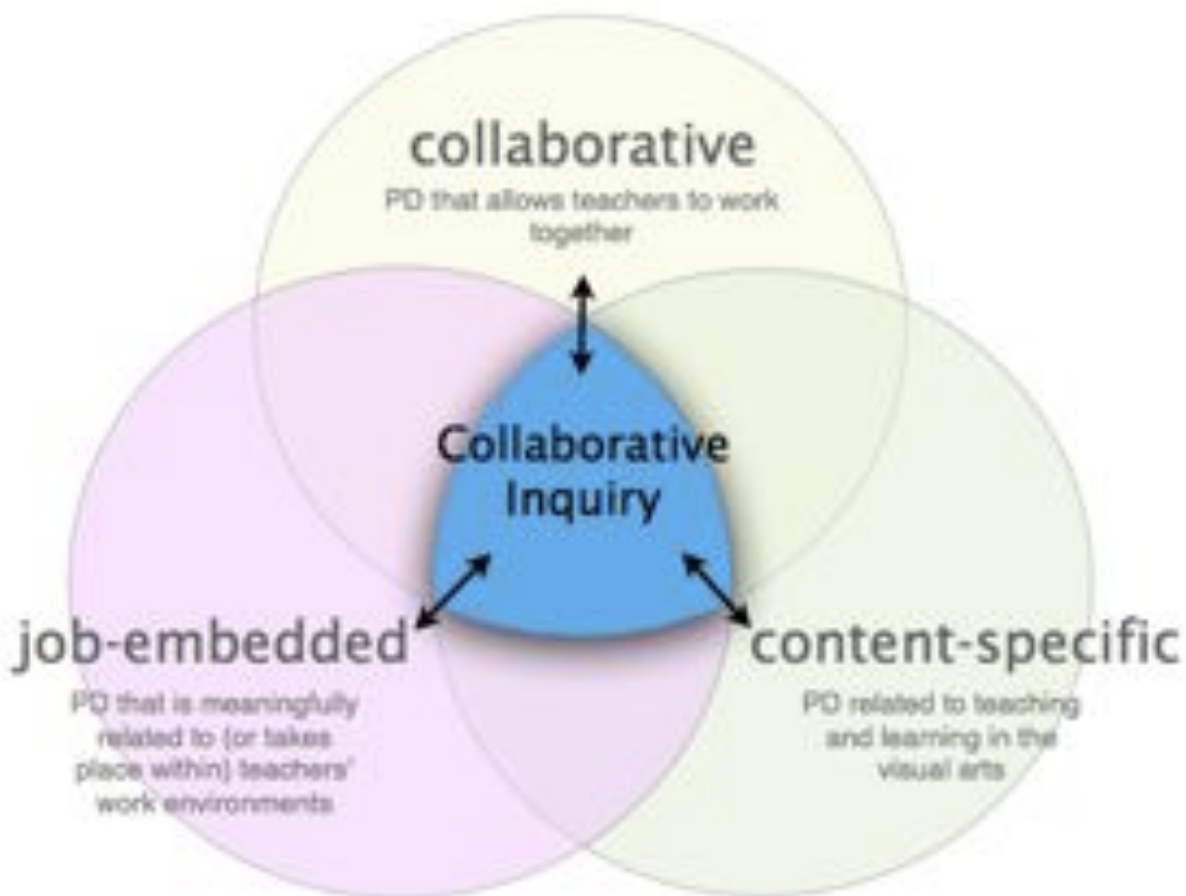


Figure 3. Conceptual space of research that explores the relationships between collaborative inquiry and three qualities of high-quality PD for K-12 art educators.

Collaborative inquiry would afford teachers an opportunity to collaborate. From my own experience, I knew that art educators valued spending time with colleagues who “have a shared set of ideas and a vocabulary that [allows] them to understand one another” (Lind, 2007, p. 8). Studying a collaborative inquiry group of all art educators would likely offer an experience that was content-specific in addition to collaborative.

Finally, although the collaborative inquiry group could not meet simultaneously in each member's physical classroom, the action research element of collaborative inquiry would likely require the group to relate the experience to their working contexts as teachers collaboratively inquired about their practice.

The number of teachers participating in collaborative inquiry groups is increasing as schools adopt new school reform models that promote teachers working in collaboration to examine their problems of practice (Craig & Deretchin, 2009). However, the limited data available suggest that visual art teachers rarely engage in collaborative inquiry with other visual art teachers. A lack of collaborative opportunities for art educators may partially result from visual art teachers working as the only art teacher within their school setting. I was able to find only one empirical study (Lind, 2007) and a few brief summaries (Beattie, 2006; Charland, 2006, 2008) that described art teachers' experience with *any type* of professional development. Thus, this study's significance lies, in part, in its ability to describe and interpret how a small group of visual art educators, a population largely unrepresented in professional development literature, experienced collaborative inquiry. This study's significance also lies in its ability to cast a vision of professional development for arts educators by describing their engagement with an ongoing and sustained model of professional development, supported by a literature base of effective PD practice.

The potential value of collaborative inquiry for teachers' professional growth as well as the ability to contribute to professional development research in art education drove my desire to understand how visual art teachers viewed their experience in a collaborative inquiry group. A number of questions assisted my investigation of this main

wondering. The questions drew on the three recommended professional development characteristics identified in Figures 2 and 3:

- In what ways do the participants view this experience as collaborative?
Non-collaborative?
- In what ways do the participants view this experience as related to their content area? Unrelated to their content area?
- In what ways do the participants view this experience as context-specific?
Unrelated to their context?

Feminist conceptions of research significantly influenced how I chose to explore these questions. I desired to treat participants “not as objects of exchange and spectacle, voyeurs or eavesdroppers on a conversation not meant for them, but rather interlocutors of our storying of their lives” (Lather, 2003, p. 10). For this reason, I sought methods that would “de-center my role as a researcher and forward voices of participants” (Bode, 2005, p. 108).

Extending this idea to my study, I believed that teachers’ lived experience was legitimate knowledge through which they could “‘test’ the adequacy of systemic knowledge” (Smith, 2008, p. 42). Viewing participants in this way directly challenged traditional modes of professional development, which operate on a behaviorist model that discredits teachers’ direct experience (Smith, 2008). The direct experience of the teachers in my study was valuable to our inquiry process. Teachers had crucial knowledge about their students and their teaching contexts that informed and situated our collaborative work.

As I conceptualized my study and considered both my identity as an art educator and my research commitments, I made the decision to position myself as a participant in my own study. The choice to participate in my own study is an attempt to demonstrate, rather than to hide, my reflexive role in the research. By virtue of assuming the role of a participant in my own study, I investigated my experience within the collaborative inquiry group among and in addition to the experience of the other group members. I was also the group facilitator, hired by a professional network in advance of the group forming. A feminist framework also led me to acknowledge the power that I had and the power that other group members would likely attribute to my roles as a facilitator and doctoral student researcher. I desired to investigate this power dynamic, and was interested in how the multiple roles of visual art teacher (participant)/facilitator/researcher were made in/visible within the collaborative inquiry group. Thus, the following sub-questions assisted my investigation of my experience within the collaborative inquiry group:

- How do I negotiate the multiple roles of participant, facilitator, and researcher?
- How are these roles made in/visible within the collaborative inquiry group?
- How do participants view my role(s)?

I elaborate on my decision to participate in my own study and discuss the benefits and limitations of this choice in Chapter 3.

As I mentioned previously, the research questions and the conceptual framework served as a compass as I began this research. I intentionally relate the research questions and conceptual framework to the general direction provided by a compass rather than the turn-by-turn directional commands provided by a global positioning system (GPS). The

precise directional data provided by a GPS is dependent on a predetermined end location. This research, motivated by a desire to explore and to map art educators' experience with collaborative inquiry, did not include precise directional data or clear end location predetermined by an outside source. The research questions thus provided me with a sense of direction but necessitated that I remained alert and open to shifting my route. While the research questions provided a sense of direction, I chose a collaborative inquiry group of art educators as my beginning location. In the following section, I describe the broader context in which our collaborative inquiry group existed to further illuminate the space in which I centered my research.

Context of the Study

The geographies and settings in which this study took place are essential elements of understanding my process of map making. I played a role in creating the specific space years before I set to research it, and therefore, in addition to description for the sake of reader understanding, I define my role in creating the research setting for the sake of transparency.

This study took place in a northeastern state where the organization of the public education system into localized school districts creates smaller districts overall than county-based schools systems. Regional education agencies (REA) channel state services to local school districts. The REAs do not play the same role as county boards of education in other states because they have no power to create policies or govern the districts in their region. Instead, the REAs often act as an agent between the districts and the state department by providing services such as localized special education services, hiring and dispersing of substitutes, and centralized technology trainings. The REAs

throughout the state vary in the services they provide to the local districts, in part due to different needs in the districts they serve. For example, the REA that serves school districts in the geographic area in which this study took place serves a three-county area that includes 25 school districts. Sixteen of those districts meet the U.S. Department of Education's classification of "high poverty" by having more than 50% of their student population receiving free or reduced meals.

I worked closely with a staff member at this REA and a representative from the state department of education to apply for a U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) grant to provide professional development to arts educators in high poverty settings. During the process of writing the application, we realized that we were a synergistic trio. The state department representative's knowledge of government bureaucracy, the staff member's position at an REA willing to act as the grantee and provide her with time to take on another project, and my immersion in the professional development scholarship as a result of my Ph.D. coursework were all vital to the grant application process. In August of 2008, the USDOE awarded the REA funds to launch our proposed project and to sustain it for three years. The staff member from the REA and the representative from the state department took on the role of project co-directors, fulfilling tasks originally drafted and proposed in the application to the USDOE. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will call the professional development project ArtsEdPD.

The REA advertised the program to fine arts teachers in its 25 school districts. We accepted all 24 applicants, which were predominately teachers of visual art and music. ArtsEdPD hired me to mentor to 12 participants who were visual art educators and an additional mentor with a music education background. In the first year of ArtsEdPD, my

role as a mentor included helping teachers construct standards-based units and to design and implement a personal professional development plan for that year.

Although I was not one of the grant directors, the representatives from the state department and the REA continued to involve me in some conversations about grant administration and implementation. The three of us began to reflect on what we would change for the following year.³ At this time, I began to consider ArtsEdPD as a potential site for my dissertation research. The project directors, uninterested in continuing with the ArtsEdPD model from year one, asked me to propose a different professional development model that I thought had the potential to be meaningful for arts educators. I elicited feedback from the participants I was mentoring and began to evaluate a number of PD models that I had encountered through my Ph.D. coursework. While I attended to that task, the REA staff member attempted to secure private funds in order to extend the ArtsEdPD project to teachers who taught in schools serviced by the REA but that did not meet the “high poverty” designation required for participation in the grant. The grant directors also sought and gained approval from the USDOE to make changes to the proposed model of ArtsEdPD for the upcoming year.

In March 2009, I presented the entire grant faculty and the REA with a proposal that we use collaborative inquiry groups for the second year of ArtsEdPD. As I led the faculty through some descriptions of what collaborative inquiry groups might offer to teachers and described how grant faculty could position themselves as participant facilitators in the group, the faculty became more excited about using this model for the

³ The unit plan writing process, as part of year 1, required teachers to write units using the Understanding by Design framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), which was new to the majority of the teachers. Participant feedback indicated a desire to work together rather than individually. We wanted to be responsive to their desire for collaborative work and, if these same participants returned, could not simply repeat the unit plan content we had provided in year 1.

second year of the project. After the faculty agreed to the model, I continued to initiate conversations during our monthly planning meetings about collaborative inquiry groups and our role as facilitators of those groups. In preparation for year two, ArtsEdPD hired additional facilitators and made necessary adjustments to the budget. So, I played a key role in choosing collaborative inquiry and a supportive role as a general faculty member; but, I had no involvement in many of the administrative tasks such as managing the budget and scheduling.

Because of increased in federal funding as well as a supplemental private grant award, ArtsEdPD was able to accept all 42 applicants who applied to be involved in year two of the project, when I collected data for this dissertation. The application included open-ended questions that asked applicants about their teaching context, their reasons for wanting to be involved in the project, and issues or topics about which they would like to learn. I chose to study one group of eight visual art educators (myself included) engaging in collaborative inquiry within ArtsEdPD. This collaborative inquiry group was a space in which each of the group members engaged in collaborative inquiry for the first time.

The chapters that follow serve to describe our experience in a number of layers. In Chapter 2, I review relevant bodies of literature that generated my interest in collaborative inquiry as a professional development model for art educators. The process of reviewing the literature shaped our collaborative inquiry group's experience insofar as the review process unintentionally generated a number of personal commitments that informed my methods of research and facilitation. I describe my research methods, and their relationship to the literature, in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 also introduces the members of our group and describes our position among other ArtsEdPD collaborative inquiry

groups. In Chapter 4, I present a close interpretation of our experience according to four main themes. Our experience within the group lead me to reframe a few of the initial research questions that I've presented in this chapter, and the revised questions appear alongside the interpretation in the fourth chapter. In Chapter 5, I describe the ways in which our experience can inform future collaborative inquiry opportunities, especially for art educators, and situate our experience within the social and political contexts that have and may continue to threaten future collaborative inquiry opportunities for art educators.

Chapter 2: Preparation for Map-Making

This chapter provided me with an opportunity to explore a number of areas that other researchers have mapped and thus prepare for my own cartographic work. Through the exploration, I locate and evaluate the kind of tools others have used to map surrounding or conceptually adjacent areas. When I considered the vastness of the landscape (literature), as well as the role I play in recording it, I identified with Paul Cezanne who mused, “Here, on the river's verge, I could be busy for months without changing my place, simply leaning a little more to right or left.”⁴

In preparation for my maiden expedition as a cartographer, I identify the literature that informs this study and provide a critical synthesis of both the content and methods presented in that literature. In so doing, I demonstrate the significance of my cartography within both art education and professional development (PD) scholarship.

Coverage

I entered my doctoral program with the desire to study the professional development of K-12 art teachers. My desire has not changed. Thus, the reading, evaluating, and synthesizing that appear in this literature review have taken place over a three year period. My ideas about the relevance of literature to my own study have evolved over time. These ideas are reflected in the narrative approach that I use to discuss the issue of coverage; specifically, what I have included and excluded from this review and my justifications for doing so.

⁴ Unfortunately, the proliferation of websites that attribute this quote to Paul Cezanne fail to cite the source of the quote and despite significant effort, I could not locate an original source. I retrieved the quote from <http://www.great-quotes.com/quote/1397195> on June 4, 2010.

Based on a requirement to write a general review of professional development in K-12 art education for an entry-level doctoral course, I first attempted to access literature about the professional development of art educators using the terms “art education” and “professional development” to search five databases available through the university library. This search yielded 62 sources. I evaluated these 62 possibilities, and chose to include any empirical, descriptive, or theoretical sources related to the professional development of K-12 art teachers. Consequently, I excluded sources about preservice teachers, teaching artists, arts integration PD for teachers of other subjects, and sources that, once explored, appeared completely unrelated to my search terms. The sources I did not include lacked either a focus on professional development and/or lacked art educators as the participants in the study. Of the 62 original sources, four met my criteria for inclusion (Charland, 2006, 2008; Hutchens, 1998; Jeffers, 1996). That is, four empirical studies explored the professional development of art educators.

I knew I had to broaden my search. I conducted another database search using “arts education” and “professional development,” because visual art education is couched in the larger discipline of arts education. This search yielded 99 hits, including many duplicates from the initial search. I applied the same criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and added a criterion for exclusion that filtered sources that dealt solely with music, dance, or theater teachers. I included those that used “arts educators” broadly and/or included visual art educators. This search yielded an additional three sources (Barrett, 2006; Bodenhamer, 1997; Conway, 2005).

As I progressed through my coursework, I continued my search for relevant sources. I soon realized the value in the references cited within the articles I had found,

and began to locate a few additional sources through Google Scholar and through my membership in the National Art Education Association. As my knowledge of arts education journals grew, I conducted journal-specific searches in *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, *Studies in Art Education*, *Art Education*, and *Arts Education Policy Review* with search terms such as “professional development,” “professional learning,” “teacher development,” and “teacher learning.” The journal-specific searches typically provided one additional source that met my criteria. The number of sources that I compiled related to art education and professional development had not grown as fast as my conviction that there was much work to be done in this area. Three arts education scholars whom I contacted via email confirmed my growing belief that the professional development literature within art education was “almost nonexistent” (B. Sabol, personal communication, June 17, 2008).

In my teacher education and professional development coursework, I began to encounter various types of professional development models and structures. I recognized the importance of applying the professional development scholarship to my conceptions of professional development in art education and began a second wave of literature review, this time within a literature base that was much larger and growing rapidly. My process of becoming familiar with the broader professional development literature relied on a number of sources in addition to electronic searches. I subscribed to numerous RSS feeds that offered me professional development literature abstracts, received articles from classmates and colleagues with similar interests, followed leads and recommendations from professors, and continued to pursue references located within other sources. I also perused the professional development-related holdings at the university library, at one

point checking out more books than I could physically carry out of the library. As I narrowed my interest to collaborative professional development, I then began the process of applying search terms (e.g., “collaborative professional development,” “collaborative inquiry,” and “learning communities”) to searches in library databases and in Google Scholar.

For the purposes of this literature review, I narrowed the professional development scholarship to sources that provide rationale, descriptions, or empirical studies of collaborative learning opportunities. Based on the pre-existence of two comprehensive literature reviews of collaborative learning communities (Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, & Wallace, 2005; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008) and my desire to apply this work to art education, I further narrowed the sources. Ultimately, I chose to include the professional development literature that extends, challenges, or raises tensions for me as I consider how learning communities, specifically collaborative inquiry, might create new possibilities for professional development in art education. Thus, I use the professional development literature from within art education to “filter” the wider literature on professional development. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the literature presented and discussed in this chapter.

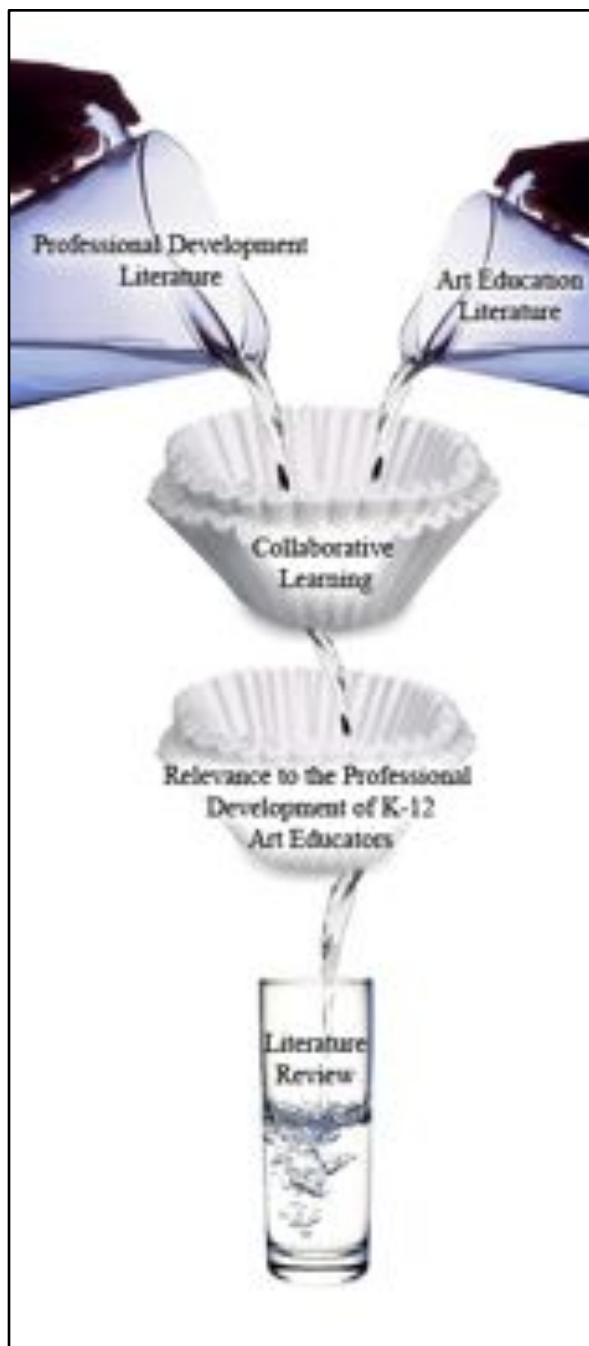


Figure 4. Visual representation of the filters used in order to narrow broad fields of literature into aspects most relevant for this study.⁵

⁵ In this image, I hoped to convey the way in which my search began with two broad literature bases (i.e., professional development and art education). However, these bodies of literature overlap so they are not completely separate as they appear in this image.

I recognize that this criterion for inclusion is subjective. Like Paul Cezanne's statement that opens this chapter, I acknowledge that what ultimately ends up in the composition is the result of "leaning a little more to the right or left" based on what I was interested in "painting." I attempt to make my choices for including or excluding certain sources more transparent as I draw connections between the literature in professional development and art education throughout this chapter. In the following section, I briefly describe how theory and policy have prompted new recommendations within the professional development literature.

Theoretical and Historical Underpinnings of Professional Development

Traditional professional development practices that attempt to transfer knowledge from an expert to teachers (often sitting as passive participants) became suspect amidst research about adult learning that acknowledges professional knowledge as complex, diverse, particular, and intimately related to practice (see Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Sociocognitive theories of learning proposed by Bruner (1985) and Vygotsky (1978) promote the role of collaboration in learning and challenge the objectivist epistemology of knowledge as a transferrable object. The design of emerging professional development opportunities began to reflect the principles of sociocognitive learning theory; specifically, that learning takes place through interaction and dialogue. As Issacs (1999) wrote, "Dialogue can empower people to learn with and through each other" (p. 12). New professional development opportunities also began to label themselves as "constructivist" (see Nelson, Slavit, Perkins, & Hathorn, 2008) based on the primary role teachers played in helping to design and control the content of the professional development. These new models for professional development no longer relegated teachers to passive participants.

Based on a call to redefine traditional professional development practices and to support school improvement efforts (Guskey, 2003), educational researchers generated lists of characteristics of “effective” professional development practices (e.g., Barrett, 2006; Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 2007; Kennedy, 1998; Richardson, 2003). These lists describe the structural elements of professional development that attend to psychological research about optimal learning (Murphy & Alexander, 2002). For example, Murphy and Alexander suggest that learners’ agency and freedom to choose tasks related to a learning objective is a necessary structure for learning given research that defines the unique and diverse ways in which people learn.

In addition, researchers recommend that student learning be the focus of teacher’s PD (Alexander & Murphy, 1998; Hawley & Valli, 2007). Hawley and Valli (2007), for example, suggested nine design principles that re-focus PD on improving student learning through increased teacher learning. They argue that professional development should:

1. Focus on what student are to learn and how to address the different problems students may have learning that material;
2. Be driven by analyses of the differences between (a) goals and standards for student learning, and (b) student performance;
3. Involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and, when possible, in the development of the learning opportunity or the process to be used;
4. Be primarily school based and integral to school operations;
5. Provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving;

6. Be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning—including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and an outsider perspective;
7. Incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students, and (b) processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned through professional development;
8. Provide opportunities to engage in developing a theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned;
9. Be integrated with a comprehensive change process that deals with impediments to and facilitators of student learning. (pp. 117-137)

Education policy in the United States has used many of the characteristics of effective professional development to define “high quality professional development” in *No Child Left Behind*. Despite the growing research describing professional development opportunities that meet many of these characteristics and the inclusion of this language in educational policy, the existence of such characteristics does not guarantee that the professional development teachers regularly experience has these common characteristics.

Assuming the Language of the Field

Although I did not desire to take a research stance that adopts the “effectiveness” and “high quality” language, I had to first assume the language of the field (Mehta, 2009). My initial readings of the professional development literature indicate that the interests of those funding the research and the social and political contexts of the research

both strongly influence the research agenda. I expect this influence is present in every field and not specific to educational research. The professional development research agenda has, at this time, an overwhelming focus on the structures and designs of professional development as potential models of school reform. Specifically, researchers evaluate these structures and designs to test their “effectiveness” in advancing student achievement by transforming teacher practice. While I do not contest the strong influence of good teaching on student learning, I believe this attempt to generate tidy lists of characteristics through which we can evaluate the success of programs operates on the assumption that we can and should normalize and regulate teaching and learning. I did not want to blindly adopt this terminology, or to assume that the frequency with which researchers use this framework means that this is the only reasonable approach to professional development research. Consequently, I expect that this literature review will illustrate my struggle to present a field of literature based on a number of assumptions, many of which I do not share.

The phrase *professional learning* better captures my own definition of and vision for professional development. Webster-Wright (2009) describes professional learning as an alternative conceptualization of professional development that acknowledges philosophical and empirical research about how professionals learn. Based on such research, Webster-Wright recommended, “a shift in discourse and focus from delivering and evaluating professional development programs to understanding and supporting authentic professional learning” (p. 702). I value Webster-Wright’s critique of the current conception of professional development and hope that this research follows her

recommendation by allowing for new understandings about how collaborative inquiry might support authentic professional learning.

However, I continue to use the term *professional development* rather than *professional learning* throughout this research for two reasons. First, I believe that by using the term *professional development*, I allow others to access this research easily using a common search term. The ability of others to find this research is important given my desire for this research to inform and challenge the current conversation in the professional development scholarship. Second, I use the term *professional development* because scholars have used this term in much of the research that has informed my practice of creating professional development opportunities for art educators. Using one term to describe previous research and another to describe this research would likely create an artificial separation between the two. Furthermore, the use of separate terms throughout this study may have been unnecessarily confusing for the readers.

By using this common term for the purpose of my own research, I am not also pledging allegiance to or suggesting my support for all of the practices that scholars have named *professional development*. Professional development research has guided but not prescribed my own beliefs about professional learning. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998), well respected for their research in school reform, stated,

Research can give us promising lines of thinking but never a complete answer. To some extent, each group must build its own model and develop local ownership through its own process (p. 582).

I have chosen to adopt Hargreaves and Fullan's perspective that research can guide our work but cannot provide complete or prescriptive answers in particular situations. Thus,

in the following sections, I describe the research that guides my own ideas and propose methods of study that honor particularities, acknowledge social and political contexts, and focus on teachers' experiences. However, in order to do so, I must attend to the structure and design of collaborative learning opportunities, which I have found to be the central concern of current professional development scholarship.

The Structure and Design of Alphabet Soup

Researchers have studied a variety of learning communities and have categorized and labeled them according to a variety of characteristics. The labels include “professional learning communities” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), “critical friend groups” (Curry, 2008), “content-based collaborative inquiry groups” (Zech, Gause-Vega, Bray, Secules, & Goldman, 2000), “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998), “teacher learning communities” (Horn, 2005), “teacher networks” (Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010), and “teacher inquiry groups” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). However, the criteria by which researchers assign groups with one label or another are not clear. Often researchers refer to these groups using an acronym, and before long, the literature about learning communities resembles alphabet soup with the organization of the letters dependent on who is holding the spoon.

Levine (2010) proposed that the proliferation of terms used to describe learning communities reflects both a trend in professional development design but also a potential absence of meaning.⁶ He cautioned researchers from using these terms as the only constructs through which they attempt to study teacher collaboration when he wrote,

⁶ Because the proliferation of terms also lacks clear distinctions between terms, I included all conceptions of teachers engaged in collaborative learning, not just those specifically labeled

Most conceptions of teacher community do have a common core, i.e., the notion that ongoing collaboration among educators produces teacher learning, and this ultimately improves teaching and learning for K-12 students. Different constructs, however, can also focus us on different aspects of teacher learning from collaboration...some additional theorizing regarding how individuals may act and learn together offer even more affordances for studying collaborative teacher learning. (2010, p. 110)

Here Levine called for researchers to extend the ways in which they have conceptualized and branded the concepts of collaboration and community.

While Levine's (2010) article contributed significantly to my understanding of the labels and the general purposes of certain types of collaborative teacher learning, it did not discuss the location or contexts in which the groups traditionally operate. For instance, Levine did not suggest that research using the label "professional learning communities" often describes interdisciplinary groups of teachers from the same school, although I have found that those engaging in and writing about such configurations typically call them professional learning communities. I have a special interest in the location and context of the groups based on my desire to create collaborative spaces for art educators who are not in the same geographical location. Thus, I began to consider studies of learning communities based on the group's location and structure rather than by community label. By attending to the groups' locations, I began to see the different and complementary roles that professional development opportunities "external" and "internal" to teachers' schools might provide to their participants (Morris, Chrispeels, &

"collaborative inquiry." I welcomed the ways in which these different conceptions could inform my work.

Burke, 2003). Moreover, the structure and composition of the group appears to have a significant impact on both teacher satisfaction and group “effectiveness.” (Curry, 2008; Levine & Marcus, 2010).

In the following sub-sections, I discuss learning communities using the following four traits: school-based, non-school based, disciplinary groupings, and non-disciplinary groupings. I recognize that not all of the studies fall neatly into these categories, yet I chose to use the constructs because they appeared to have a significant impact on teacher satisfaction and group effectiveness. Although I artificially separate the studies in quadrants that allowed me to simultaneously acknowledge both a group’s location and composition (Table 1), each of these studies involved places *and* structures and therefore overlapped significantly. Because some studies include data from a number of groups with different structures, I created an additional column and row in which to place these studies. I included studies that described collaborative learning communities of two or more members.

Table 1. Studies of learning communities arranged by location and group composition

	<i>Disciplinary</i> <i>(learning community members teach the same subject)</i>	<i>Interdisciplinary</i> <i>(learning community members do not teach the same subject)</i>	<i>Both/Other</i>
<i>School-based</i> <i>(learning community members teach at the same school)</i>	Moje, 2000	Clausen, 2009; Curry, 2008; Given, 2010; Jennings & Mills, 2009; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Stewart & Davis, 2007	Nelson, 2009; Nelson & Slavit, 2008
<i>Non school-based</i> <i>(learning community members do not teach at the same school)</i>	Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006; Lind, 2007; Swidler, 2001; Watson & Manning, 2008	Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010	
<i>Both/Other</i>			Zech, 2000

School-based Learning Communities

School-based learning communities have gained popularity as a school reform movement that promises “a fairly straightforward, well-established way to appreciably improve both teaching and qualities and levels of learning” (Schmoker, 2005). In the introduction to *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities*, the editors associate professional learning communities with school reform when they wrote, “We hope [that this book] will be a valuable tool for educators who are doing the hard work of improving their schools” (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005, p. 6).

Many of the characteristics of “effective” or “high quality” professional development, including Hawley and Valli’s (2007) design principles (listed earlier in this chapter), are recommendations for transforming teacher practice through *school-based* professional development. School-based professional learning communities can meet many of the criteria for effective professional development because they are collaborative, sustained, centered on student learning, and aligned with comprehensive school reform efforts. Researchers who have studied learning communities situated within schools (e.g., Clausen, 2009; Curry, 2008; Given, 2010; Jennings & Mills, 2009; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Moje, 2000; Nelson, 2009; Nelson & Slavit, 2008; Stewart & Davis, 2007) list the benefits of having professional development take place inside teacher’s working contexts. These benefits include: a) coupling school-wide macro issues with classroom-level micro concerns, b) creating spaces in which to discuss sensitive school issues, c) becoming informed about school reform choices and commitments, and d) sustaining a focus on specific aspects of student learning/achievement.

However, having these recommended design principles in place does not ensure all of the promised benefits. The extent to which learning communities affect teacher learning and school improvement is dependent on how schools design and negotiate the enactment of these communities (Curry, 2008; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Nelson, 2009). Curry’s (2008) investigation of an urban high school’s implementation of critical friend groups (CFGs) highlighted how design choices (a diverse menu of activities, decentralized structure, interdisciplinary membership, and reliance on protocols) enabled certain aspects of teacher learning and school improvement while constraining others. More specifically, Levine and Marcus (2010) found in their study,

Decisions about the structure and focus of teachers' collaborative activities can both facilitate and constrain what teachers can learn together by influencing: whether teachers make their own practices in the classroom public; which aspects of teaching are discussed; the degree of specificity with which teachers share aspects of their work; and the kinds of information about students teachers make available to each other. (p. 397)

By exposing the complexities of implementing learning communities, these studies and others (e.g., Given, 2010; Moje, 2000; Nelson, 2009; Stewart & Davis, 2007) challenge the general optimism surrounding collaborative professional development as a model for school reform. The following statement displays the general optimism that these studies call into question:

So what if there was, right now, a fairly straightforward, well-established way to appreciably improve both teaching quality and levels of learning? What if evidence from numerous schools and the research community points to proven structures and practices that (1) stand to make an immediate difference in achievement and (2) require reasonable amounts of time and resources? The fact is that such structure and practice do exist and there is no reason to delay their implementation. (Schmoker, 2005, p. xi)

The hope for teacher learning that results in "immediate differences in achievement" with the promise that this learning can occur with "reasonable amounts of time and resources" appears to falsely advertise the complexity of this work. Levine and Marcus (2010) raise questions about guaranteed outcomes when they conclude that, "Even with this one case, educators' joint work within the context of professional community was not a unitary

phenomenon, nor one that automatically would result in every kind of learning anticipated by champions of teacher collaboration” (p. 397).

The research that problematizes the optimism associated with professional learning communities and suggests that despite strong support in the literature, strong professional communities are rare in schools should generate questions about the challenges schools face in creating and supporting such communities (Nelson, 2009). Certainly, creating and enacting a collaborative, inquiry-based professional development model amidst the isolated and non-democratic realities present in many schools will create tensions (Ballock, 2009; Curry, 2008; Drennon, 2002; Given, 2010; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Nelson, 2009). Ballock (2009) writes, “The task of replacing traditions of isolation, privacy, and competition with habits of collaboration, collective responsibility, and ongoing inquiry can be a challenging enterprise” (pp. 40-41). For instance, if “sustained critical inquiry into practice” is not a regular characteristic of school culture, teachers may struggle to develop critical examination skills, let alone find time to participate in a formal inquiry (Nelson, 2009, p. 551). Teachers involved in professional learning communities must then negotiate the everyday demands of teaching and their inquiry work (Nelson et al., 2008). Despite these complex challenges, Nelson (2009) labels her attitude toward professional learning communities as “cautious optimism,” that acknowledges both the powerful potential of collaborative learning while respecting the deep complexities involved in its implementation (p. 579).

The majority of the literature I encountered on school-based professional learning communities involves teachers working in interdisciplinary teams. Earlier, I cited Curry’s (2008) study that considers how interdisciplinary compositions both enable and constrain

aspects of teacher learning. In chapter one, I described the difficulties art teachers have encountered when placed on interdisciplinary teams within their school (Stewart & Davis, 2007). In the next section, I briefly review Curry's findings and related studies in an attempt to consider the possibilities and limitations that membership in an interdisciplinary learning community might have for an art educator.

Interdisciplinary Learning Communities in Schools

Curry (2008) describes the endemic tensions that exist when interdisciplinary learning communities (in this case, critical friend groups, or CFGs) purport to improve instruction. While members benefit from the diversity of experience represented in the group, many of the teachers in Curry's study were dissatisfied with the inability of other CFG members to attend to content-related instructional issues. Although I only highlight some aspects of what interdisciplinary membership enables and constrains, I present Curry's full analysis in list form in Table 2.

Table 2. Curry's analysis of interdisciplinary group membership

<i>Enables</i>	<i>Constrains</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings together a diversity of expertise • Provides sustained and extended opportunities for communication between people from programs across the school • Fosters collegiality • Alleviates isolation • Provides a space for teachers to share about their disciplinary programs • Fosters a collective responsibility for student learning, and the mentality of being a “team player” • Fosters curricular coherence and cross-fertilization • Heightens teachers’ awareness of general pedagogic “best practices” • Develops a common language of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a shallow distribution of content expertise • Creates an environment where teachers are less prepared to provide content-specific help • Constrains members’ ability to assist peers with content-related teaching and learning issues • Fosters a generic type of talk about general pedagogical principles rather than subject-specific ways of implementing new strategies • Focuses teachers on the “glitz rather than the substance” of student work

Curry's (2008) study included Lars, an art teacher who withdrew from his CFG stating that he was "not sure that people who teach other disciplines can help [me]" (p. 761). However, teachers' desire for professional development activities to increase their pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) is not only an art educator's desire. A math teacher in another CFG stated, "The thing that bothers me is that I wish I had more time with math teachers" (p. 763). A biology teacher in Levine and Marcus' (2010) study also wished her group was composed of more teachers from "within the content area," because "nobody else has that bag of tricks to be able to access what I'm trying to teach" (p. 396).

In fact, a teacher's years of experience may be a more accurate predictor of her or his content-related expectations of professional development than the discipline she or he teaches (Curry, 2008; Jeffers, 1996). Some veteran teachers appear to desire more content-specific help than novice teachers and voice more disappointment when interdisciplinary groups are unable to deepen their pedagogical content knowledge (Curry, 2008). Conversely, Curry found that the generalized pedagogic strategies often offered by members of interdisciplinary groups are especially valuable for novice teachers who desire general pedagogic support. One novice science teacher in Curry's study stated,

I'm not really concerned about the subject matter. I've had lots and lots of that.

What I need is the stuff from them that applies to all the subjects. You know, how the kids work, how they think, and better ways to present things to the kids—that definitely applies to all the subjects. (p. 760)

The results of a survey of art educator's professional development preferences (Jeffers, 1996) affirm that the professional backgrounds and interests of beginning, mid-career, and veteran teachers may differ significantly.⁷ The professional development topics of interest to novice art educators in Jeffers' study were classroom management, curriculum development, diversity, and creativity. Meanwhile, veteran art educators expressed virtually no interest in these topics, but instead desired professional development content focused on computers in art; technology; and new trends, techniques, and processes in art-making. Based on these survey results and Curry's analysis, the interdisciplinary groupings present in most school-based reforms may better match novice teachers' professional development interests. However, the ability for interdisciplinary groups to meet novice teachers' needs may be dependent on a diverse range of experience among teachers in the group. Thus, the diversity of teacher backgrounds and PD needs represented in the group is both a benefit and a challenge to interdisciplinary groups.

The ability of interdisciplinary groups to attend to novice teachers' desires for general pedagogical strategies does not negate veteran teachers' PD interests or their frustration with a lack of content-specific support. Huberman (1993) raises concerns that the diverse disciplinary representation in collaborative communities is potentially antithetical to the collaboration usually expected within such communities when he asked,

How much collaboration can we expect between 9th grade physics teachers, 11th grade English teachers, and physical education instructors? Why are we putting

⁷ Jeffers' survey included 109 responses from art educators in the state of Kansas.

these people together to draft objectives, plan curricula, and monitor one another's test results when their actual instructional contexts are so different? (p. 45)

Echoing Huberman's concern, Nelson (2009) observed that composing collaborative groups across subjects and/or grade levels requires additional trust-building and the development of a shared language that can attend to differences in teacher's content areas. The complexity of this work may actually challenge the group's ability to engage in collaborative inquiry. If teachers are unable to find a common language or develop a collective responsibility for student learning, they may resort to sharing stories from their classrooms or about individual students (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006) rather than engaging in collaborative work.

Groups with interdisciplinary membership may lack the ability to attend to teachers' content-specific interests, but the benefits of school-based collaborations appear to outweigh the constraints. In Curry's (2008) study, for example, "roughly two thirds of my sample of 25 interviewees perceived CFGs in a strongly positive manner" while only a fourth of the sample "displayed mixed views on their CFGs" (p. 768). Based on these data, Curry recommends that collaborative experiences (perhaps from outside the school) might complement school-based, interdisciplinary groupings by composing groups according to subject matter. Levine and Marcus (2010) also recommend that "teachers may need to engage in more than one type of collaboration" (p. 397) in order to meet their diverse professional development needs. In conclusion, interdisciplinary groupings can provide a valuable structure for school-based professional development, but the

interdisciplinary nature of these groups often prevents the group from meeting the diverse needs of its membership.

Non School-based Learning Communities

Teachers who seek content-specific professional development and are not finding it within their school may choose to participate in disciplinary professional development opportunities outside of their school. Morris et al. (2003) proposed that these “external” sources of professional development “focus predominantly on enhancing teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and collaborative and leadership skills in the content area” (p. 764). These external opportunities often include: professional specialized associations, professional networks, seminars and workshops hosted by non-profit, for profit, and private agencies, and courses offered through colleges and universities (Barrett, 2006). Of these opportunities, professional specialized associations and professional networks appear to be the most likely places where an ongoing collaborative community could develop. The continuous structure of these opportunities differs from the independent episodic nature of seminars or a university course, which may provide a structure for disciplinary collaboration but likely exists only for a short time. In this section, I specifically investigate professional networks for their potential to provide content-based, collaborative opportunities.

While some professional networks have their beginnings at a university, others evolve within a professional association or from the grassroots efforts of educators, and state departments of education have initiated others (Firestone & Pennell, 1997). Professional networks vary in purpose, size, and structure, and therefore a common definition is problematic. However, the networks often share common features, which

include: (a) members' common purpose and identity that results from a clear focus on a specific subject area, teaching method, or approaches to reform; (b) a variety of activities that provide opportunities for teachers' self-determination; (c) communities of discourse where members address problems of teaching through exchange with other members; and (d) opportunities for leadership within the network and within members' schools (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992).

A number of beneficial aspects of teacher networks exist by virtue of the network being located outside of the schools in which teachers work. For example, network leaders often organize activities around the desires of their members by building agendas sensitive to the collective and individual professional interests of its members (Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010). The ability of professional networks to “[engage] school-based educators in better directing their own learning; allowing them to sidestep the limitations of institutional roles, hierarchies, and geographic locations; and encouraging them to work with many different kinds of people” (Lieberman & Grolnick, 1996, p. 1) may contribute to teachers' expectation that professional networks will be successful at meeting their professional development needs (Boyle, Lamprianou, & Boyle, 2005). If a primary goal of professional networks is to meet teachers' professional development interests, professional networks will likely exhibit noticeable differences from school-based collaborations, where school reform agendas and administrative concerns, which may or may not align with teacher interests, often influence the goals of collaborative work (Fenwick, 2004).

Teacher collaboration that exists outside a school or district structure can provide teachers a space to voice dilemmas and controversies that the system in which they work

often silences (Orland-Barak, 2009). For example, teachers may seek feedback on how to negotiate a personal or professional commitment that does not align with the social, political, or organizational forces at work within their school. For networks using inquiry-oriented models, the external nature of teacher networks may also provide teachers with a space where they do not have to worry about designing “safe” inquiries that will not disrupt the status quo (Drennon, 2002). In addition, teachers who are able to interact with teachers from other contexts may have a better understanding of their own context as a result (Nelson & Slavit, 2008).

Professional networks are not without their limitations. Because professional networks are comprised of teachers who may not live in close geographic proximity, teachers’ involvement in networks may be constrained by practical issues such as travel time and costs (Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010). Furthermore, because network-related activities involve teachers from multiple districts, participation in a professional network often takes place in addition to a teacher’s full-time job. Thus, the attempt for network participants to find a common meeting time and a central meeting place can pose additional obstacles. Art teachers frequently cite these practical issues as obstacles to their involvement in external professional networks (Sabol, 2006), which I have presented in more detail in Chapter 1. New social networking tools available online have the potential to mitigate some of the practical issues teachers experience in participating in professional networks, and the loose, flexible structure of professional networks may enable networks to quickly adapt to new methods of working (Lieberman, 2005).

While practical issues do threaten teachers’ involvement in professional networks, other limitations also exist. Morris et al. (2003) wrote,

The challenge faced by such external networks has been to keep the fires that were lit at the external institutes burning once teachers return to their schools.

Indeed, network participants often face school environments that are, at best, not structured to allow teachers to share what they have learned. At worst, school environments may even be hostile to their new ideas (p. 767).

Thus, they acknowledge an important reality: the ability for teachers to implement changes in their practice as a result of an experience in an external network is potentially constrained by teacher's working environments, over which the external networks have little control. In other words, whether or not attendees transfer new knowledge back to their specific working contexts is partially dependent on "the extent to which teachers work in settings that allow them to incorporate what they have learned into their classroom practice" (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 2000, p. 233). Granted, not all external professional development opportunities aim to transform teacher practice. However, if the transformation of teachers' classroom practices is the goal, external networks must consider how to support teachers' learning within their working contexts (Watson & Manning, 2008).

Disciplinary Learning Communities

The majority of learning communities composed of teachers who teach the same discipline appear to exist outside of schools. The instances where this is not the case often occur when teachers work with a co-teacher or instructional coach inside a classroom (e.g., Moje, 2000; Zech, 2000). However, this co-teaching model may not fit the traditional definition of "a community" because of the limited number of participants working in collaboration. Other opportunities for disciplinary learning communities may

be possible if enough teachers exist within a content area in the school to comprise an entire learning community. Thus, this arrangement is more likely to exist in some content areas than others. For art teachers, disciplinary groupings within a school are unlikely due to the small number of art teachers typically employed at a school. I have not found any studies that document a school-based collaborative community consisting of only art teachers.

In this section, I synthesize five studies (Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006, Lind, 2007; Moje, 2000; Swidler, 2001, Watson & Manning, 2008) in order to consider how teachers describe their experiences in disciplinary groups. Table 3 presents some characteristics of these groups for easy comparison. While these studies share similar group compositions, the groups represented in these studies do not share a common purpose for their meetings. The group of literacy teachers in Fairbanks and LaGrone's study and the science teachers in Watson and Manning's study met to formally inquire about their own teaching practices, while the music teachers involved in Lind's study had the primary task of learning a new method of curriculum design. The group of elementary teachers in Swidler's study met to dialogue about their teaching practice; while the collaboration present in Moje's article met with the intent to transform one teacher's literacy pedagogy.

Table 3. Characteristics of disciplinary learning communities represented in five studies

<i>Study</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>Discipline / teaching assignment</i>	<i>Group purpose</i>	<i>Group affiliation/history</i>	<i>Role of the researcher(s)</i>
Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 directors • 4 literacy teachers • 1 graduate research assistant 	To formally inquire about their own literacy teaching practices	National Writing Project (NWP)	Fairbanks and LaGrone are NWP directors who participated as members of this group and who authored the article; the graduate research assistant participated in the group and assisted with documentation and analysis
Lind, 2007	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 high school band director • 1 middle school band director • 1 elementary general music teacher • 3 middle school general music teachers. 	To create a unit of study based on Wiggins & McTighe's <i>Understanding By Design</i> curriculum framework	The Collaborative Design Institute (CDI), a subject matter collaboration developed and implemented by teachers working through The California Arts Project	Lind, the author of this article, is a university faculty member investigating the CDI model and was not a member of this group.
Moje, 2000	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 junior high school English teacher • 1 university professor 	To enact a literacy pedagogy different from that which the junior high teacher had typically used	This project was mutually initiated after the teacher took a master's level class taught by the university	Moje is the university professor involved in this collaboration and author of this study

				professor	
Swidler, 2001	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 fifth grade teachers • 1 elementary teacher (unidentified grade) • 1 third grade teacher • 1 second/third grade teacher • 1 teacher educator • some occasional members 	To create a space for “thoughtful” teachers to dialogue	The teacher educator knew and invited two members of the group, who invited the additional members.	Swidler is the author of this chapter and was an elementary teacher before becoming a teacher educator. He was a member of the group.
Watson & Manning, 2008	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 science teachers (grade level and specific content area not identified) 	To help teachers move from a basic level of expertise to a level at which they considered themselves to be accomplished teachers of inquiry	The group was part of a continuing professional development program carried out at King’s College, London, UK and the Weizmann Institute, Israel	Watson and Manning, authored this article, researched factors influencing teachers’ success, and were not members of the group.

In addition, these groups are not as mono-disciplinary as they first appear. The groups represented in the studies by Lind (2007) and Watson and Manning (2007) were composed completely of music and science K-12 teachers respectively, yet the diversity of their teaching assignments introduced significant disciplinary variation within each group. Furthermore, Swidler's (2001) group was composed of elementary teachers, who taught a variety of grades and who were responsible for teaching many disciplines.

The specific information about teachers' working contexts demonstrates the rich diversity that might exist in groups even when members are all teaching a common subject. Other facets of group members' identities further illuminate the potential diversity within a group (e.g., years of experience, gender, and socioeconomic status of a teacher's student population). The amount and type of information presented about individual group members varied greatly among these studies. I believe that this variation is a reflection of the studies' varied purposes as well as the researchers' commitments.

I believe that the stories behind the formation of these groups were integral to understanding how disciplinary groups outside of schools manage to operate, given the practical obstacles outlined in the previous section. Both Lind (2007) and Watson and Manning (2007) describe groups that operated as part of formal professional networks. The teachers in both studies volunteered to participate and school districts supported their participation in the group meetings, the majority of which took place during the school day. Teachers in both these studies voiced concerns about missing school and having to negotiate their time between the network and their students. For example, an elementary music educator in Lind's study stated,

For me the biggest challenge was the amount of time. Taking off from school was really difficult for me. I know it is for all teachers. In my case, if I miss one day at my school I don't see those students that week. For the classes that I saw on Friday, I didn't get to see them much. That was the most challenging. I had complete support from administration but I had trouble missing at school. (p. 13)

The disciplinary learning communities that were not part of formal programs appear to have begun after a member of the group (typically the researcher) extended an invitation to other potential members. The three authors who described groups formed in this way (Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006; Moje, 2000; Swidler, 2001) each acknowledged that they and other members of the group had pre-existing professional contact. For the teachers in the Fairbanks and LaGrone (2006) study, each of the members "shared an affiliation with the National Writing Project in the southwest" and the four teachers in the study attended a 2002 summer writing institute together (p. 10). In Moje's (2000) study, the collaboration emerged from one of her former students demonstrating an interest in working with her around issues of literacy pedagogy. In his study, Swidler's (2001) worked with two of the teachers prior to the formation of this group. The remainder of the teachers invited each other after mutual involvement in a teacher education program or placement. The formation stories of the groups represented in these studies describe the facilitating role of a formal program or pre-existing professional relationships for initiating collaborative communities outside school contexts (Zech, 2000).

Formal programs can also provide a space in which teachers, engaged in disciplinary learning communities, experience professional development meaningfully related to their content area. The teachers in Lind's study (2007) found such groups able

to meet their desires for content-related professional development, citing the discipline-specific model of the external network as the single most important component of the professional development experience. One middle school music teacher stated,

The collaboration with so many music colleagues has been wonderful. It has provided me with an array of ideas that has reinforced my teaching in a way that has provided support, reassurance, and understanding. I have felt very alone in the music profession until now. (p. 8)

According to a science teacher in Watson and Manning's (2008) study, the discipline-specific conversations facilitated the sharing of particular teaching strategies:

I think it's really good when you talk to other teachers. It's just about sharing ideas... seeing how other people do enquiry in their own schools and then using that information to kind of feed back into your own work. For example, if someone recommended a particular activity and said: 'Oh yeah, I did this activity and it was really good', then I would come back to school and try that because I would think: 'Oh yeah, OK you know, they thought it was really good so I'm going to try that and see how it works for me.' (p. 703)

The remaining three studies did not include any explicit analysis about the disciplinary composition of the group. Such analysis is likely absent because the group's composition was not associated with the focus of the research.

In conclusion, disciplinary groupings provide a valuable structure for content-based professional development, but the external natures of most groups may present obstacles for teachers who desire to participate. Teachers who do participate may struggle to implement what they have learned back into their teaching contexts. Furthermore,

teachers in these groups share a commitment to a common discipline, but the external location of these groups illuminates the diverse teaching contexts (and potentially, other characteristics) of its members.

Reconsidering the Categories

In the previous four sections, I presented the literature about learning communities according to four self-created categories (school-based learning communities, interdisciplinary learning communities, non school-based learning communities, disciplinary learning communities). In doing so, I risk appearing as if I intended to compare the various types of professional development in order to determine which may be most “effective.” I also risk presenting professional development opportunities as if they can/should be easily classified into static categories. However, I am not interested in crowning a specific type or brand of professional development “most effective;” neither do I desire anyone to continue to use these categories to create standard “traits” of professional development. Instead, I have attempted to present literature that demonstrated how the structures and locations of professional development opportunities afford certain opportunities and constrained others. By presenting the literature in this way, I have come to appreciate the ways in which a variety of professional development opportunities may be required in order to address the diverse interests of teachers.

The four categories I chose do not imply equal numbers of professional development experiences in each of these categories. In addition, by using “disciplinary” and “interdisciplinary” as a way to categorize learning communities, I have temporarily

adopted the assumption present within the literature and broader U.S. education system that the academic disciplines are disparate in nature and therefore easily classified. Thus, I also risk privileging content-level expertise and content-related knowledge over other characteristics of teaching. However, art educators have voluntarily organized themselves into disciplinary associations such as the National Art Education Association and its affiliate state associations. Art educators also have articulated a desire for content-specific professional development (Sabol, 2006). Therefore, I have chosen to consider the benefits of professional development opportunities along disciplinary lines, so I can reflect on potential applications for K-12 art educators. In the next section, I describe the ways in which the scholarship on collaborative learning opportunities informs the research methods I chose to use in this study before returning to additional considerations of how the bodies of professional development and art education literature intersect.

Reconsidering Methods

Research describing learning communities shifts the unit of analysis from individual teachers to the group (Curry, 2008) and requires a type of collective examination rather than a focus on individual teacher practice (Nelson, 2009). The downplaying of individual attributes in an attempt to create a description of a group mirrors the development of a common set of approaches used in much of the learning community research including: a limited attention to individual group members (e.g., Nelson & Slavit, 2008), a lack of teacher voice (e.g., Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010), a disembodied researcher and/or facilitator (e.g., Hofman & Dijkstra, 2010; Levine & Marcus, 2010), and untroubled group practices (e.g., DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005).

In this section, I describe why future research should better attend to these characteristics in order to create new ways of seeing and understanding teacher learning communities.

The amount of information researchers provide about individuals within their studies varies. In the discussion following Table 3, I described the uneven and limited nature of the information given about the individuals represented within the learning community literature. The limited information about study participants may be due to word limits imposed by publications or may go uncollected by researchers who do not anticipate its relevance to their research questions. However, teachers' involvement in collaborative communities rarely changes the reality that they teach alone. Whether the collaborative community benefits and/or influences teacher practice is often dependent on teacher's perceived (individual) needs and whether their individual teaching context welcomes and supports new learning (Morris et al., 2003; Watson & Manning, 2008). Therefore, the many studies that intend to describe the potential success or impact of a learning community should not continue to minimize the information about the experiences and teaching contexts of individual group members.

One possible way to include the experiences of individual teachers is to make teacher voice a more prominent part of all aspects of learning community research. Drennon (2002) points out that democratic beliefs are at the core of the practitioner inquiry movement. Thus, teachers should have a significant voice in determining the structure of and research about learning communities. In Moje's (2000) view, "research should make positive change in the lives of those who participate in research, change that the participants desire and articulate for themselves" (p. 25). Unfortunately, teacher voice is not always included in studies about teachers, and researchers may not consider the

potential role teachers might play in their research. For example, despite Hofman and Dijkstra acknowledging that their research on professional networks “will [make] clear that the voice of teachers themselves is a useful indicator of what happens in professional development programs, more specifically in teacher networks” (2010, p. 1032), they interviewed the network initiators rather than the teachers in their study. Thus, this study demonstrates how researchers can both acknowledge the importance of teacher voice and yet not allow teachers to describe their own experiences.

As I indicated in my discussion of Table 1, a number of the studies I reviewed for this chapter lack transparency about the roles of the researcher and group facilitator within the teacher learning communities. Fontana and Frey (2005) remind researchers that they are the one “who ultimately cuts and pastes together the narrative, choosing what will become a part of it and what will be cut” (p. 697). I desire to see more research about learning communities wherein the researchers acknowledge their role in the research and in the learning community. Researchers and participants “reciprocally influence each other,” in ways that can strengthen rather than destroy qualitative research (Kvale, 1996, p. 35). In a few instances, the disembodiment of the researcher is obvious through the lack of a subject in the written account, which leaves the reader wondering who was acting and making the research decisions. For instance, Hofman and Dijkstra write, “the goal of the network can best be defined...” and in doing so, keep the reader from knowing who defined the goal of the network (2010, p. 1034). In Levine and Marcus’ (2010) mixed-methods study, they described the various structures used to facilitate group meetings without acknowledging who chose and incorporated these structures. They stated that their research is “built on the premise that the quantity,

specificity, and content of talk about practice shapes individuals' opportunities to learn from their work with others" (p. 390). As a reader, I find this articulated premise ironic, given the way in which the researchers' lack of specificity about the workings of the teacher collaborations hinders my ability to learn from their work.

A group facilitator, a position advocated by Ballock (2009) and Nelson and Slavit (2008), supports teacher communities by working to establish a safe space, and can attend to necessary administrative details such as reserving meeting space. Aligning with learning theories proposed by Bruner (1985) and Vygotsky (1978), collaborative inquiry groups use a facilitator who serves to expand and extend learning rather than directly transmit knowledge. For example, a facilitator plays a crucial role within group dialogue by "paying attention to themes emerging from the group that have not been articulated by any single person" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 297).

Given the "pivotal" role of the facilitator according to studies that include them in the description of the group (Given, 2010, p. 42), the studies of learning communities must better attend to the roles and identity of the group facilitator. Drennon (2002) echoes my concern, noting that when the facilitator is invisible,

critical reflection, dialogue, and action just seem to happen. In a more realistic depiction, facilitators would be central in the effort to democratize knowledge production in inquiry groups, yet they would struggle to do so in the cross-currents of internally and externally based power dynamics. (p. 62)

By acknowledging the role and struggles encountered by a group facilitator, researchers can better present aspects of group life that learning community research often presents as automatic or easy.

The power and politics at work both inside and outside of teacher learning communities create complex and challenging interactions (Drennon, 2002; Moje, 2000). However, the practices of a teacher learning community may appear untroubled depending on the researcher's focus and attention. As Drennon (2002) wrote, "many descriptions of democratic inquiry communities are constructed as if the material realities of this world are not being played out" (p. 62). At present, the complexities of human interaction appear as the focus of a study (i.e., Drennon, 2002; Moje, 2000) or as tangential comments during a discussion of study implications (i.e., Jennings & Mills, 2009; Nelson, 2009; Nelson et al., 2008) rather than woven into the storying of the group.

The characteristics with which individuals are born (i.e., race and gender), the characteristics not necessarily an affect of birth (i.e., religion, sexual orientation), and characteristics of organizationally structured roles (i.e., teacher, principal, researcher) constitute the power and politics at play within collaborative inquiry groups (Drennon, 2002). In order for researchers to acknowledge these power relationships, they must consider the individual bodies and roles of the group members. Perhaps the appearance that collaborative work is easy or automatic is a result of researchers' lack of attention to individual members within the group, inattention to teacher voice, and/or unequal power dynamics. By including teacher voice in the presentation of her data, Lind (2007) was able to present some of the challenges teachers experienced when attempting to collaborate:

[Collaboration] is not as easy as one might think. Especially because, as arts teachers, most of us are accustomed to being on our own and alone, teaching and planning the way we see fit. While the 3rd grade teachers are all at their grade

level meetings, we are (I am) back in the band room trying to write a 4th clarinet part for the Star Spangled Banner, before that evening's performance. But I think our cadre is really getting good at working collaboratively and it is evidenced by the amount of work we are cranking out. (p. 9)

Additionally, Moje (2000), in attending to the characteristics of her body, demonstrated how her class, race, and gender have influenced her expectations and understandings of collaboration:

As Banning (1998), Evans (1998) and hooks (1990) have argued, collaborative relationships—especially between women teachers and researchers—are very likely to be shaped by white, middle-class notions of niceness, notions that serve to control and discipline our practices.” (p. 32)

These two examples illustrate the importance of attending to the politics and power at play within a learning community in my own research design and methods, which I describe in chapter three. By providing readers with more information about individual group members, representing teacher voice, embodying research, and presenting the power and politics involved in group practices, researchers can create new ways of seeing and understanding teacher learning communities. Having considered the professional development literature related to collaborative learning and suggesting the ways in which it informed my research, in the next section, I attend to the scholarship within the field of art education related to my research.

Professional Development Research with/in Art Education

In this section, I present the art education literature that attends to the professional development of art educators in relationship to the learning community literature

presented previously. The slash (/) in the above section heading indicates the dynamic relationship I seek to create between these two largely unconnected bodies of literature. As noted above, few researchers have published studies of the professional development that art educators experience (Conway, et al., 2005; Sabol, 2006). Nevertheless, the survey data collected by various art education researchers (Brewer, 1999; Burton, 1998; Ellis, Shields, Jur, & Spomer, 1980; Jeffers, 1996; Lehr 1981; Sabol, 2006) provide important information about the demographics and needs of art teachers, all of which have implications for designing and implementing professional development. As a whole, the surveys of art educators demonstrate the diverse interests of art educators related to the content of their PD. However, the surveys did not elicit information about educators' interests related to the structure (design and implementation) of PD experiences. Indeed, only one of these surveys (Sabol, 2006) set out to answer research questions specifically related to the professional development of art teachers. In addition, the reporting of survey data does not provide readers with descriptions of professional development programs and other important components for understanding the professional development experiences of art educators. Lind (2007), Charland (2006, 2008), and Stewart and Davis (2007) have begun to address this need for research that extends beyond what survey data have revealed.

Both the survey and descriptive research of professional development within art education suggest that PD opportunities offered within school districts are not meeting the stated interests of visual art educators (Charland, 2006; Conway et al., 2005; Sabol, 2006). Eighty-three percent of Sabol's (2006) survey respondents indicated that their district provided local professional development, but only 41% percent agreed that

district-sponsored professional development was beneficial. An additional 19% were undecided. However, all forms of school-based professional development were included in this one question, and the survey did not distinguish between learning communities within or outside of schools.

Based on the learning community literature reviewed in this chapter, school-based learning communities may play a role in relieving art teachers' sense of isolation and provide a valuable opportunity for art teachers to advocate for their programs among their peers (Curry, 2008). Novice art teachers may find the general pedagogic support they seek in an interdisciplinary, school-based group (Jeffers, 1996). However, having art educators as members of these communities creates logistical issues (e.g., scheduling common meeting times) and may actually prevent art teacher's meaningful participation in such a group (Stewart & Davis, 2007).

The survey data presented by Sabol (2006) does not present a clear picture about art educators' experiences within learning communities, but does list the most frequently attended professional development opportunities that respondents have had (Figure 5).

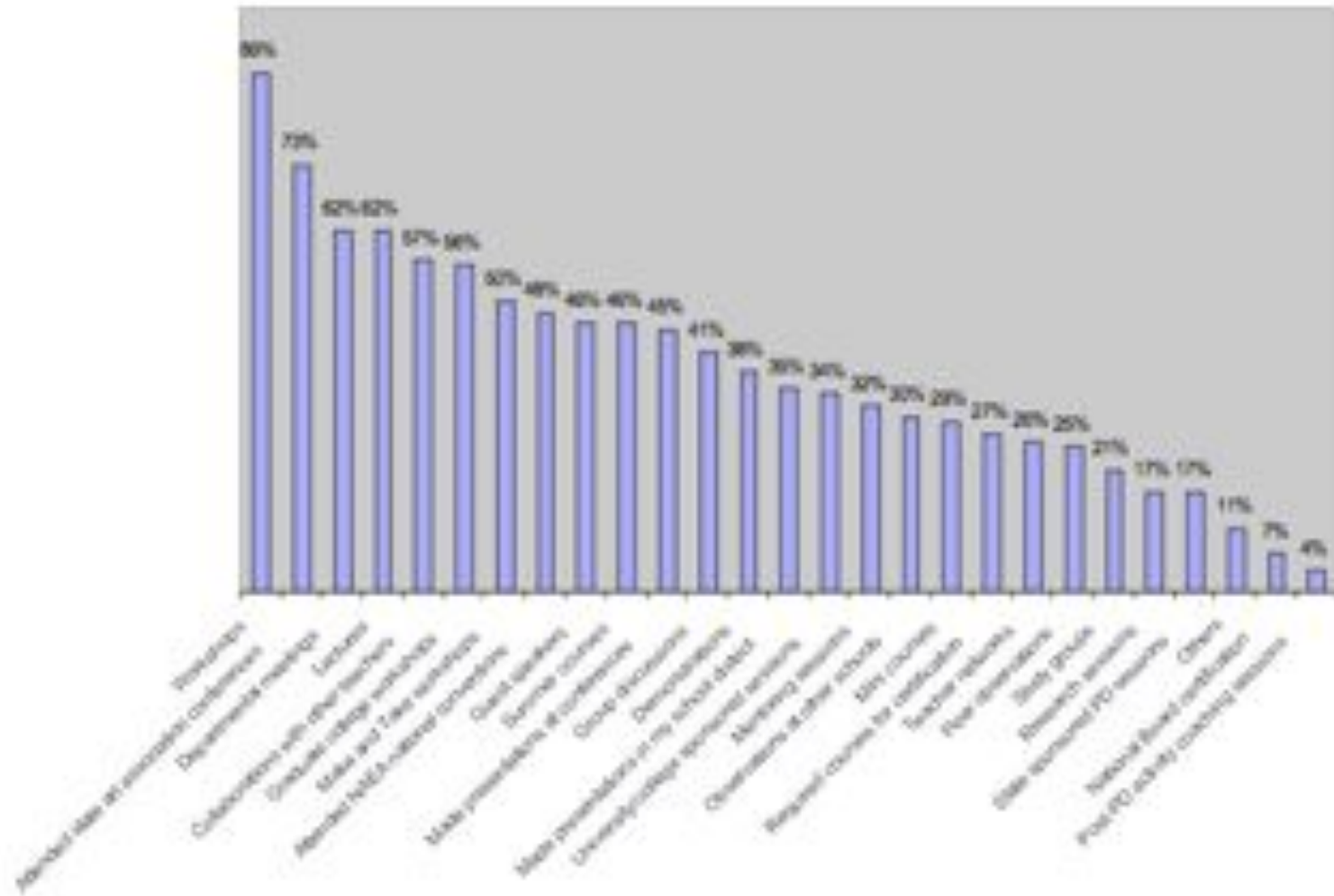


Figure 5. Types of professional development experienced by Sabol's (2006) survey respondents.

From "Professional development in art education: A study of needs, issues, and concerns of art educators" by R. Sabol, 2006, *National Art Education Association*.

The professional development formats most frequently experienced by art educators are workshops (89%) followed by state art education conferences (73%), department meetings and lectures (62% each). The responses presented in Figure 2 do not make clear whether any of these activities happen within a learning community, although 57% of respondents indicate having experienced collaboration with other teachers as a form of their professional development.

Without sufficient descriptive research, we know little about the structure and format of the professional development that art educators experience. For instance, Sabol (2006) reports that 66% of respondents have been involved in ongoing and sustained professional development. However, the types of professional development most frequently attended by Sabol's survey respondents (workshops, conferences, department meetings, and lectures) are not the formats frequently associated with ongoing or sustained professional development. This potential mismatch raises questions about how teachers interpreted "ongoing and sustained," especially since the survey did not provide a definition to survey respondents or readers of the study. Information about the type and frequency of professional development experiences attended by art teachers shows a potential disconnect with the type of professional development currently advocated in the research.

Nevertheless, art educators appear to be optimistic about the role professional associations and networks play in their professional development. Seventy-percent of respondents (Sabol, 2006) agreed that their state art association provided beneficial professional development experiences. The word "beneficial" appeared in the survey question eliciting these statistics. However, since the researcher did not ask the

respondents to define “beneficial,” the readers of the study do not know the criteria upon which respondents decided what constituted “beneficial” PD.

Charland published a couple of articles that, although not based on empirical studies, (2006, 2008) begin to describe the experience of art educators engaged in professional development which was absent from Sabol’s (2006) study that relied solely on survey methodology. Charland’s articles advocate for professional associations to work in conjunction with universities to provide art educators with residential and extended programming which is unlike what many art educators experience in their schools. The first article (2006) described the rationale for such a partnership, and the second (2008) described such a partnership in Michigan.

In 2007, Lind published an empirical study of arts educators working within learning communities as part of an external network. The external network included visual art, music, dance, and theater teachers, but the focus group Lind used for research purposes was composed entirely of music educators. I have yet to find any empirical studies that have documented the experience of a learning community composed of art educators.

With no empirical research describing learning communities of art educators, the literature about non school-based learning communities reviewed in this chapter can only propose the possible benefits and limitations of such a group. Non school-based learning communities such as state associations may play a role in developing art educators’ content and pedagogical content knowledge. In addition, art teachers might find that external networks provide a place to voice dilemmas and controversies (Orland-Barak, 2009) and may understand their own teaching contexts better as a result of participating

in them (Nelson & Slavit, 2008). However, finding the time and resources to participate in opportunities outside of their schools is often falls on the art educator (Sabol, 2006). Such circumstances present obstacles for those seeking professional development opportunities outside of their working context, and likely generate inequities in professional development opportunities (where the teachers who can personally afford to go is more likely to, which may further cement existing disparities). While a few studies within art education have begun to describe the professional development opportunities in which art educators engage as well as some of the obstacles art educators face, additional research will continue to develop the professional development scholarship with/in art education.

Implications for this Study

My decision to study a learning community comprising art educators responds to needs within the professional development literature at large and within art education. An historical unevenness in funding has generated professional development research in some subject areas and not in others (Borko, 2004). I value Borko drawing attention to previously overlooked and underfunded subject areas within the professional development literature when she suggested,

there is an urgent need for...work in areas that have received little attention to date. As an example, researchers might investigate whether professional development programs with demonstrated effectiveness for elementary mathematics teachers can be adapted to different subject areas and grade levels.

(p. 12)

Art education is one area that has received little attention to date. The limited professional development research in art education provides an enormous opportunity for this study to fill a long-standing void. I believe that my study is the first empirical study of art educators engaged in a non school-based learning community, and thus simultaneously extends the existing scholarship in art education and teacher learning communities.

In her example about extending research, Borko acknowledges that we should not assume that effective professional development in math education is transferrable without adaptation to all subject areas. My research does not attempt to claim whether a specific method of professional development is “effective,” or to conduct a design experiment as she suggests later in her recommendation. Although I do not intend to study art educators’ professional development experiences in order to prove the effectiveness of the learning community model, the descriptive accounts of learning communities in the literature have informed my decision to study art teachers’ engagement with collaborative inquiry. In the following paragraphs, I describe my initial expectations about ways in which a learning community would meet many of the stated professional development needs of art educators. I developed these expectations before embarking on this study, and I believe being transparent about these expectations adds trustworthiness to my research.

Insofar as learning communities create dialogic, collaborative spaces, they fulfill art educators’ desire and appreciation for times where they are able to be together. Providing teachers with space to talk and to share ideas is central to the fostering of collegiality, and to the collaborative inquiry process (Jennings & Mills, 2009) and allows

for initial “problem finding” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 44), and collaborative problem solving. Inquiry-oriented dialogue aims to produce knowledge on which participants can take action. When practiced well, dialogue is “a process and method by which the awareness and understanding that you already possess may surface in you and be acted upon” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 386). The opportunity for teachers to collaborate presents an alternative to the isolation many art educators experience. Teachers can participate in learning communities across school and district lines, which is another benefit to art educators who may work in isolation.

Collaborative inquiry, the nexus of action research and professional learning communities (Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2009), encourages teachers to problematize and investigate their practice. The action research elements embedded within learning communities empower teachers to define their own lines and modes of inquiry rather than having it prescribed and enforced by an outsider. This model is potentially well-suited to meet art educators’ diverse and varied professional learning interests by allowing individuals and groups of art educators to define and structure their own professional learning.

Art educators may find learning communities valuable for their ability to foster collegiality and act as a support when teachers face difficult and challenging situations. Art educators are keenly aware of the ways in which the current educational policy climate has affected their classrooms. The increased focus on tested subject areas has cut instructional time in other subjects and has further marginalized learning in the arts (McMurrer, 2008). According to Orland-Barak (2009), collaborative inquiry “enhances and sustains a motivated professional community that can withstand the pressures and

challenges of accountability and standardization” (p. 23). As art educators face additional challenges such as funding their programs, educating English language learners, or navigating their first years as a teacher, learning communities may be places of valuable support.

Not only might learning communities operate to support and transform teacher practice, they also may make the transformation of the larger system (in which the collaborative inquiry group operates) possible. The communities exist in places (professional, cultural, societal, etc.) that influence how group members act and interact. The relationships within the group exist in a larger network of relationships, both physical and social. As new understandings surface, group members may be more keenly aware of the context in which they exist, including the sociopolitical structures of power at play (Orland-Barak, 2009). As Isaacs (1999) writes, “One of the possibilities of inquiry is becoming aware of the ‘sea’ in which [teachers] swim, and in doing so, fundamentally alter it” (p. 39). Art education scholars (Cosier, 2004; Darts, 2008) have recently called for art educators to challenge the structures in which they find themselves.

For example, Cosier (2004) writes, “If we are to craft an art education that is meaningful and relevant to the lives of students, we should focus on developing tools to help them connect to ways of knowing the world that may be alien and/or inaccessible in current school paradigms” (p. 48). Darts (2008) also asks art teachers to stand united as “freedom fighters” because “significant institutional and professional change is unlikely to occur without direct intervention, including political lobbying, professional development, and teacher education” (p. 115). Art teachers who hope for a new paradigm in art education may find that the traditional educational system is one of the main

barriers to meaningful student learning. Thus, if art educators are committed to meaningful student learning, they must necessarily challenge the structures that stand in the way. Learning communities can begin to investigate these structures and support teachers' efforts to work towards positive change.

Teachers' engagement with collaborative inquiry can also provide a responsive and dialogic pedagogical model. Maxine Greene (1988) has long advocated for the use of collaborative inquiry as a pedagogical model for K-12 classrooms and called for teacher education that can "empower students to create spaces of dialogue in their classrooms, spaces where they can take initiatives and uncover humanizing possibilities" (p. 13). Additionally, Hagaman (1990) describes the powerful learning that can take place in an inquiry-oriented art classroom and recommends that, "if teachers are expected to organize and facilitate meaningful dialogues and collaborative inquiry in the classroom, they must be provided with opportunities to experience the nature and rewards of such processes firsthand" (p. 155).

The potential benefits of teachers working in collaborative communities do not guarantee that these benefits will be the experience of the art educators in my study. Yet, this examination and application of the professional development research to art education affords a clearer picture of the reasons I have chosen to sit "on the river's verge." The Cezanne quote in the introduction of this chapter does not explicitly acknowledge the number of choices artists make before they begin to work. Cezanne chose the river's verge as a place ripe with opportunity. Through this literature review, I have attempted to demonstrate the ways my choice of location (studying a group of art

educators engaged in a teacher learning community) is a ripe location for research. In Chapter 3, I describe the tools I used to map this uncharted territory.

Chapter 3: Cartographic Tools and Their Uses

“Whatever the medium, there is the difficulty, challenge, fascination and often productive clumsiness of learning a new method: the wonderful puzzles and problems of translating with new materials” – Helen Frankenthaler (Kern, 1980, p. 25).

In Chapter 1, I equated research methods to the tools used by a cartographer. As a novice researcher, all research methods feel like new tools to me. This chapter describes my process of learning, choosing, and using a specific set of tools for my cartographic work.

My work as an artist has significantly informed the way that I come to understand and work with new materials as a cartographer/researcher. Fellow artist Helen Frankenthaler (1980) stated that learning a new method involves difficulty, challenge, fascination, and often a productive clumsiness. Her statement eloquently describes my experience as a novice cartographer. As I expected, cartography and art-making are similar endeavors, and my experiences choosing artistic media paralleled my attempt to find appropriate cartographic tools. Artists recognize that their end product is the result of a dynamic interaction between hand, tool, medium, and surface. Consequently, this chapter describes my cartography as a dynamic interaction between research tools and methods, my participants, the research setting, and me.

My Hand

One of the most delightful things about teaching elementary art was observing and talking with students about their artistic choices. Their rationales for choosing a

certain color often ranged from personal (“I always use purple. It’s my favorite color.”), to practical (“This green was the one in the box.”), to philosophical (“Well, not all people are the same color.”). The factors that influenced my students’ artistic choices are similar to those present as I designed and conducted this research. Like my students, I had to negotiate personal, practical, and philosophical factors in order to make methodological decisions that would affect the final product. These decisions represent my “hand” in this research.

Personal Factors - “I always use purple. It’s my favorite color.”

When young artists are engaged in their work, you can see it in their bodies. I found that five year olds working hard on a painting almost never sat quietly. Their minds and bodies work together. They stand, clap, talk, and even dance. Like the work of these young artists, my physical characteristics and the roles I played impacted this research. Because my second research question specifically considers the way in which my participants viewed my role(s), I discuss the related nature of my identities and power and position as a researcher in Chapter 4. However, my personal beliefs and preferences (a defining aspect of my identities, I would argue) directly shaped my methodological decisions and so I provide a slice of the discussion about my identities here.

In my first semester as a doctoral student, I sat in a research methods class participating in a discussion about the beliefs and assumptions underpinning a number of research examples that we had read. Many of my classmates began to identify with one “philosophy” or another. I became discouraged. Each of the three philosophies appeared quite similar to me, and all three felt misaligned with my ideas about research and research participants. Without knowledge of any alternative research philosophies, I was

unsure if research was something that I wanted to do. Over time, I learned about alternative philosophies that better aligned with my beliefs and research aspirations.

In the same way that an elementary student justifies the personal nature of their color choice (“I always use purple. It’s my favorite color.”), my ideas about knowledge, research, and participants resulted in my choice to use participatory and arts-based research methods. While I do prefer these to other methods I have encountered, the “It’s my favorite color” rationale is woefully inadequate in this instance. Indeed, hearing a student claim a favorite color provokes additional questions such as, “Why is it your favorite? What do you like about it?” These questions necessitate a rationale for how collaborative and arts-based research methods align with my beliefs, which I present in the next section.

Philosophical Factors - “Well, not all people are the same color.”

The elementary art student who defended her color choice with the statement “Well, not all people are the same color,” demonstrated an attention to relationships. She recognized difference. After a careful examination of all of the color choices in the container, she chose the one that best represented her understanding. Like the difference noticed by this young artist, I recognize that the philosophies underlying research methodologies often differ significantly. After considering a number of research methodologies “in the container,” I chose two research methodologies that could best represent my own understandings about research.

Participatory action research (PAR) and arts-based research (ABR) are methodologies that do not prescribe a set of methods or techniques for conducting research. Instead, by including participants as co-researchers (PAR) and promoting arts-

based processes as important tools for the researcher (ABR), both these methodologies offer alternative approaches to knowledge production. Although PAR and ABR each have their own distinct literature base, PAR projects often incorporate alternative forms of doing and presenting research, many of which are arts-based (Conrad & Campbell, 2008). Similarly, arts-based research projects have become increasingly collaborative and participatory (Rumbold, Allen, Alexander, & van Laar, 2008). Finley (2003) described the collaborative possibilities within art-making when she wrote, “Making art is passionate, visceral activity that creates opportunities for communion among participants, researchers, and the various shared and dissimilar discourse communities who are audiences of (and participants with) the research text” (p. 288). I chose to use both PAR and ABR for this study after recognizing the philosophical and methodological congruency of these two methodologies.

As I indicated in Chapter 1, I was attracted to PAR because it attempts to democratize knowledge, “queer the relationship between the researcher and the researched” (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009, p. 254), and investigate questions that emerge from participants’ lived experiences. I also appreciated that PAR emphasizes collaboration, which, to some extent, is present (though often ignored) in all research endeavors. Fine et al. (2004) argue that, “all research is collaborative and participatory... More researchers must acknowledge the co-construction of knowledge and that material gathered from, with, and on any community... constitutes a participatory process (p. 119). Furthermore, I began to see my own beliefs about research reflected in the “underlying tenets of PAR: (1) an emphasis on the lived experiences of human beings, (2) the subjectivity and activist stance of the researcher, and (3) an emphasis on

social change” (McIntyre, 1997, p. 21). While my initial desire to attempt a PAR study was due to the alignment between the tenets of PAR and my research philosophy, my desire to use ABR as an additional methodology was due to an alignment between ABR and my tendency to use artistic processes in order to make sense of the world.

Researchers have employed arts-based methods both for their ability to generate sophisticated analyses and in an effort to challenge the “monopoly of the written word” (Conrad & Campbell, 2008, p. 252). Ewing and Hughes (2008), citing the lack of an accepted definition of arts-based research within the literature, synthesized research from Barone and Eisner (1997) and Knowles and Cole (2008) to provide the following list of commonly accepted characteristics of arts-based research:

- the use of expressive and/or contextualized vernacular language as appropriate;
- the promotion of empathy or engagement with the audience;
- the presence of an aesthetic form or forms (literary, visual and/or performing) in data collection and/or analysis and/or representation and dissemination of the research findings;
- the relationship between the research topic or issue and its form has integrity;
- the opportunity to explore multiple perspectives around the research question(s) or dilemma(s);
- reflexivity and the personal signature or presence of the researcher/writer, even though the researcher may not be the subject of the research. (p. 514)

These characteristics include the engagement of research participants and the active presence of the researcher, both of which align with tenets of PAR. However, the

presence of an aesthetic form listed as a common characteristic of ABR studies is something that PAR does not guarantee. Combining PAR and ABR methodologies provided me with an opportunity to conduct research that is both participatory and artistic. For this reason, these methodologies have provided an alternative to the post-positivist methods of research that framed the discussion in my earliest doctoral research courses.

However, a post-positivist framework continues to dominate much of the educational research literature, especially in regards to evaluation and rigor (Finley, 2003). Because of this framework's prevalence, I anticipate questions about the objectivity and rigor of this research. Traditionally, those evaluating research would deem research "objective" when it separated "the knower from what he knows and in particular with the separation of what is known from any interests, 'biases,' etc., which he may have which are not the interests and concerns authorized by the discipline" (Smith, 2008, p. 40-41). However, I do not believe that by conducting research I am able to reveal an objective truth. Instead, I am aware of how my position and power as a researcher affect what I come to understand through my study (Foucault, 1977). These epistemological beliefs about the relationship between knowledge, power, and researcher positionality have motivated me to be transparent about my role and relationship to this research, and allows those who read it to judge its objectivity (and thus, its legitimacy) not from the distance I keep, but from the trustworthiness I establish (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Scheman, 2008). In order to establish trustworthiness in my research, I do not deny or attempt to obscure the fact that, like my young elementary art students, I was deeply engaged in this process.

While my rationale for choosing these methods is not as straightforward as my elementary art student's statement, "Well, not all people are the same color," I hope that in describing the philosophies that underlie ABR and PAR as well as my epistemological beliefs, I have made my rationale for choosing these methods clear. I chose these methods for their ability to allow me to work in ways that felt "right" to me. Despite being satisfied with what PAR and ABR offered me as a researcher, I quickly realized that I was unable to enact either of the methodologies fully due to a number of constraints. This recognition parallels something that my elementary art students also came to understand.

As these students matured, they became increasingly frustrated when they were unable to realize in their product what was in their heads. The young student who stated, "Well, not all people are the same color," eventually found even the set of multicultural crayons woefully inadequate. I remember watching her as she held crayons up to the skin of her fellow classmates, working hard to find the best match, but never feeling quite satisfied. What she was learning is that all artists have practical constraints on their work. At times, the constraints create situations that are less than ideal. However, when this student asked me if mixing the colors together might actually get her closer to using the crayons straight out of the box, she reminded me that exciting possibilities exist even amidst constraining circumstances.

Practical Factors - "This green was the one in the box."

Because this discussion on practical factors is part of a larger section describing the ways that I have shaped this research, here I discuss my role as a doctoral student, my geographic proximity to the research site, and my responsibilities outside of this research

project. Readers of this study who subscribe to a post-positivist research framework may consider the practical realities in which I conducted this study as “limitations.” While practical factors do limit some aspects of the study, they also create spaces of new possibilities, like my elementary student’s desire to learn how to mix colors.

In addition, practical factors are only limitations if the readers of this study expect it to meet an “ideal” model proposed in theoretical literature. PAR and ABR researchers recognize that theories are “historically produced, traveling through time and space as transplanted and translating phenomena, changing significantly in the process of particularization (Friedman, 1998, p. 69). As a result, neither PAR nor ABR adherents view theory as a static object or recommend using theory to evaluate the merits of a particular study. PAR scholarship also has challenged the assumption that readers should use an “ideal” model of the methodology as a standard for evaluating individual PAR studies. As Conrad & Campbell (2008) argue,

We must assess [participatory research’s (PR)] accomplishments according to how well it has addressed the unique challenges of a specific project. Since one cannot expect a single project to exemplify all of the ideals of PR (Parks, 1993), we need not assess it in terms of how closely it has adhered to PR principles.

Rather, one must assess each project according to the particularities of its own context, considering what might be realistically accomplished in the research project over a limited span in time. (p. 257)

By proposing that readers should assess a research project according to its particularities, PAR and ABR projects acknowledge that researchers “work within the constraints of the society as [they] find it” (Mellor, 1988, p. 80). Similarly, my elementary artists worked

with a limited number of colors and other practical constraints. Yet, because these students did not work under an expectation that all their work should look the same or meet a certain standard, the constraints rarely troubled them. A student who stated, “This green was the one in the box,” communicates his willingness and ability to work with what he had available to him.

As I came to understand the set of expectations that accompanied my status as a doctoral student, I realized that the university-driven nature of my research constrained my methodological choices in ways that were not as trouble-free as the constraints of my elementary art students. Even if I had believed enacting an ideal PAR model was possible, the university-driven nature of my research alone posed significant challenges to my attempt to conduct PAR in at least three ways. First, doctoral study required me to predetermine aspects of this research such as research questions and research design. These requirements were challenging to negotiate given PAR’s attempt to involve participants in posing research questions and designing the inquiry process (McIntyre, 1997). Reflecting on her experience as a doctoral student, Maguire (1993) asked, “How could I write a dissertation proposal with its problem statement unless I did it unilaterally—the antithesis of participatory research?” (p. 162). Like Maguire, I created and proposed my research questions and study design before meeting my study participants. However, I did attempt to include participants in aspects conducting this research (e.g., having participants facilitate group interviews) as the process allowed.

Secondly, PAR is ideally a collaborative endeavor. Many universities expect that doctoral students individually conduct all aspects of their research and award degrees based on an individual student’s completion of university requirements (Maguire, 1993).

Despite participant involvement in group organization and problem formation, Maguire (1993) describes the writing and defending of the dissertation as a solitary process that did not include her participants in the final presentation of their collaborative research. My experience writing and defending this research was similarly a solitary endeavor.

Finally, “universities often encourage knowledge production that fills gaps in scholarly literature and, in the process, demonstrates a researcher’s intellectual competence” (Gates & North, in press). PAR, on the other hand, aims to produce knowledge that is specific to local contexts and that is useful (primarily) to participants in the study (Herr & Anderson, 2005). As a researcher attempting to meet both of these expectations, I had to negotiate an inquiry topic that was both important to teachers’ individual contexts and filled a gap in scholarly literature.

Other scholars have described the challenges faced by any member of the academy (doctoral student or otherwise) when attempting arts-based research. Arts-based research contests Carey’s (2005) assertion that language is superior to other semiotic systems, even though it often includes some form of text. The inclusion of text in arts-based research endeavors may be a necessary concession given that the academy has not fully embraced arts-based research methods. However, the academy has welcomed arts-based research as an integral part *of* research rather than research itself (Ewing & Hughes, 2008). The academy’s skepticism toward such research has generated a discussion about what delineates fine art making from arts-based research (Cutcher, 2004; Eisner, 2008; Ewing & Hughes, 2008). However, I gain little from categorizing a researcher’s work as art *or* research. I suspect that a clean distinction between art and research would abolish conversations in the academy centered on how a research study

helps us to make meaning and draw connections. This making of meaning and connections is, after all, a common goal of art and research. In addition, doctoral students may struggle to defend the rigor of their arts-based research to committee members unfamiliar with the methodology. Committee members without experience in the arts may not recognize the criteria of rigorous ABR (such as a systematic engagement in an inquiry process, a transparent research process, and the provision of strong warrants) as characteristics of the art-making process itself (Cutcher, 2004; Grumet, 1995).

I am not the first doctoral student to have my role as a doctoral student impose methodological constraints on my research. Maguire (1993) and McIntyre (1997), both respected participatory action researchers, have written about their struggle to employ PAR for their doctoral dissertation research. Yet, deeply committed to its potential to transform lives, both chose to use the methodology to the greatest possible extent. Their attitude and commitment mirrors the perspective I have about this research: despite the ways in which my role as a doctoral student limited this research, I have attempted both PAR and ABR to the extent it was possible to do so in this situation.

While collecting and analyzing data for this study, I had other responsibilities in addition to my role as a doctoral student researcher that presented practical constraints. To make my doctoral studies affordable, I worked as a teaching assistant at the university. Although I taught only one class, the 150-mile roundtrip drive to campus meant that I was committed to the university for an entire day each week. I also accepted a semester-long adjunct position at a local university to teach one section of art education methods in order to gain additional teaching experience. Based on the lavish support I received from my spouse throughout my doctoral program, I attempted to reciprocate by

remaining involved at our church, and thus, in my husband's career as a pastor. At the very least, I was at church and smiling on Sundays (although on a few occasions I locked myself in his office during Sunday School in order to transcribe interviews)!

These teaching and personal responsibilities supported me financially and emotionally while I conducted this dissertation research. At the same time, they required my physical presence and did not allow me to temporarily relocate myself closer to the research site. The regional education agency (REA) that administered ArtsEdPD and where we held a number of our group meetings was 325 miles roundtrip from home and 350 miles roundtrip from the university. I found that my multiple responsibilities and geographic distance between these responsibilities were spaces of both restriction and possibility (Figure 6).

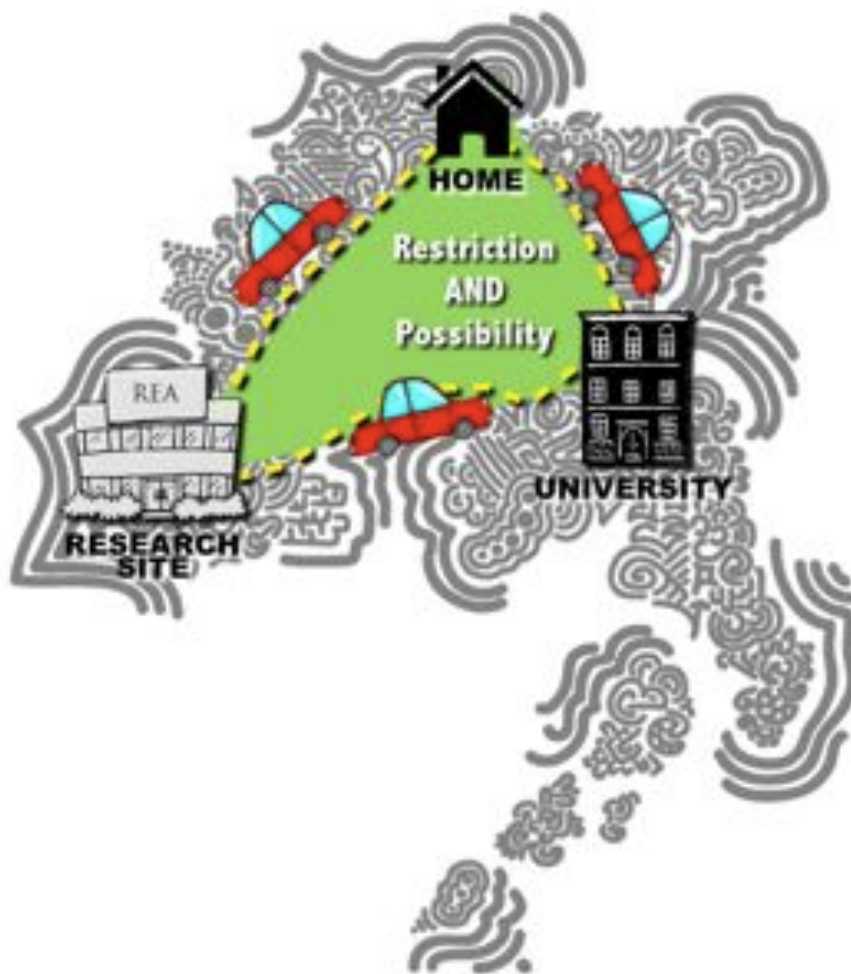


Figure 6. The geographical realities of this study.

For instance, the distance between my home, research site, and university meant that I stayed at the research site for two to three days every time I visited. During those days, I attended ArtsEdPD planning meetings, facilitated collaborative inquiry group meetings, conducted interviews, and visited participants' schools. The pace was exhausting, but this arrangement afforded me the opportunity to gain local knowledge by eating, sleeping, and driving in and around the three-county area with which my participants were so familiar. The amount of driving involved in data collection also provided many opportunities for creating voice memos. Thanks to a hands-free headset

and voice recorder on my cell phone, I was able to memo my thoughts immediately after group meetings, interviews, and school visits.

Teaching an undergraduate class at the university demanded a significant amount of time, my physical presence, and thus, additional travel. However, my frequent trips to campus afforded me regular access to the campus libraries and art galleries as well as regular in-person contact with my advisors and fellow doctoral students. I found these contacts extremely valuable as a novice researcher. The practical, philosophical, and personal realities that shaped this study undoubtedly influenced my methodological choices and the way in which I conducted the research. In other words, the artist has a choice about which tools to use and must negotiate how to use them based on both her artistic intentions, her circumstances, and the surface in which she works.

The Research Context as Surface

Similar to an artist choosing a surface on which to work, researchers choose a context in which to conduct research. When artists choose a surface, they recognize that their choice of surface affects the way in which they work, and that in order to achieve their intentions, some tools are more effective than others are. For example, a chisel is more effective than a paintbrush for an artist hoping to carve a statue out of marble. Artists also recognize that surfaces can resist particular media and thus must choose appropriate media with which to work. For instance, watercolor paint, designed for a porous surface, beads when applied to a gessoed (nonporous) canvas. I chose the surface (context) of this research based on my interests in art education and professional development, which I described in Chapter 1. In this section, I describe the context of this research and the ways in which this context both necessitated and resisted certain

methodological tools. Although I briefly mention specific tools (e.g., interviews, recording group meetings) throughout this section, I present a more explicit discussion about how I used these tools in the sections that follow.

The collaborative inquiry group of art educators who participated in this study was one of six groups formed within the ArtsEdPD project during the 2009-2010 school year. ArtsEdPD grouped the 40 visual art, music, and theater teachers who applied using information harvested from the teachers' applications to participate in the project. Although the original intent of the ArtsEdPD faculty was to place teachers into groups based on their interests, a number of other non-negotiable factors affected the groups' compositions (Figure 7).

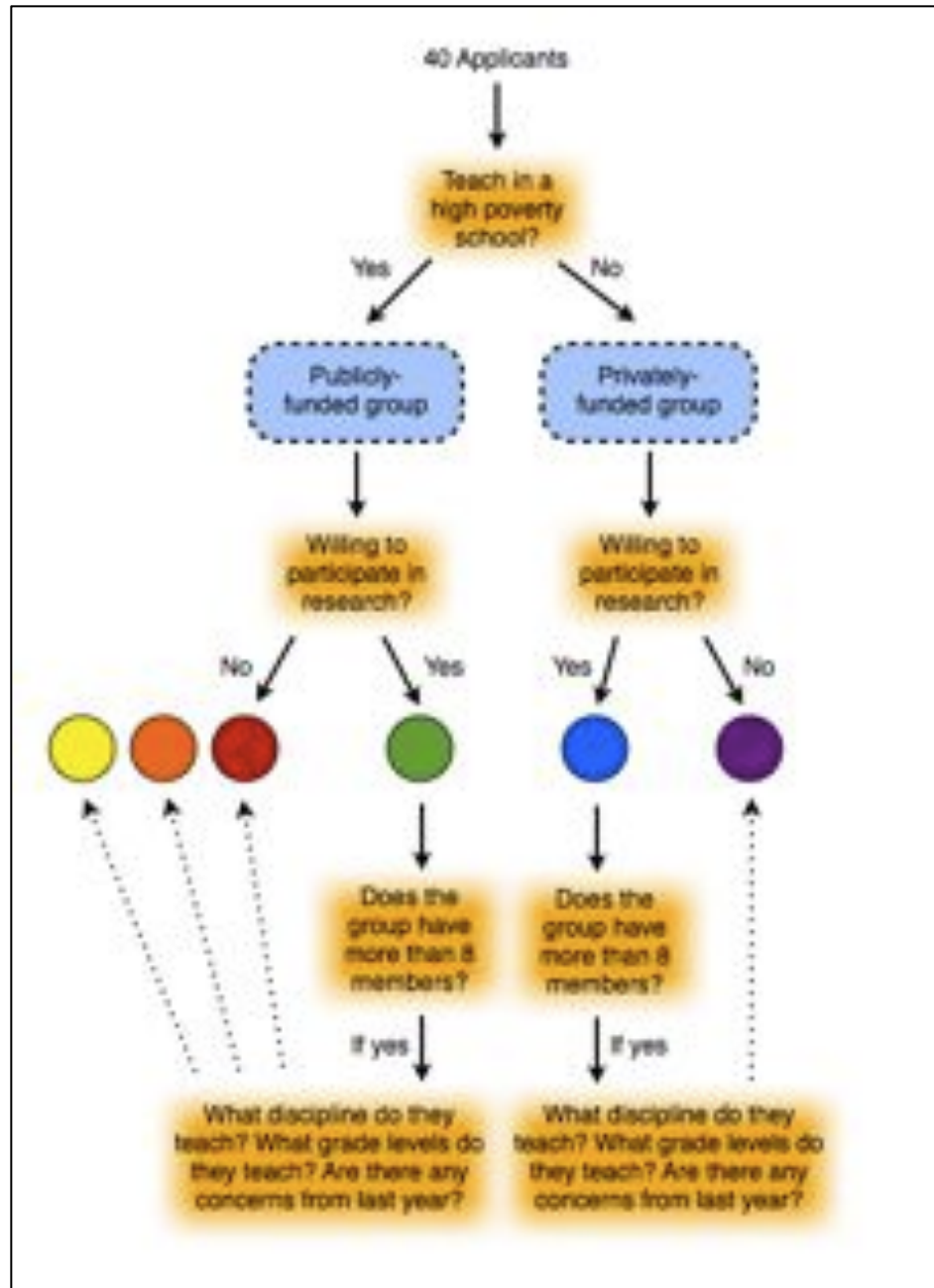


Figure 7. Series of factors influencing ArtsEdPD applicants' placement into one of six collaborative inquiry groups.

I worked with one of the grant co-directors and another ArtsEdPD faculty member (also a doctoral student researcher) to place teachers into collaborative inquiry groups consisting of 6-8 teachers. We assigned each facilitator (and eventually, their group) a color for

identification purposes. Our initial placement of teachers began by considering the following factors:

- 1) ArtsEdPD had both public and private grant money funding the project. The federal government awarded ArtsEdPD a grant in order to provide professional development opportunities for teachers in “high poverty” districts. Thus, we were required to separate teachers into two initial groups based on whether the teacher worked in a school defined as “high poverty” according to federal guidelines. Of the 40 participants, 27 teachers worked in high poverty schools and 13 did not.⁸
- 2) Because there were two ArtsEdPD faculty members collecting data about our experiences within a collaborative inquiry group, we sorted participants based on their willingness to participate in research (as indicated in their applications). Sorting the participants according to their willingness to participate in research was an attempt to both satisfy requirements from Institutional Review Boards as well as an attempt to create an opportunity to include all the members of a group in the research about collaborative inquiry.

We continued placing teachers into groups based on a host of other factors, such as the discipline and content level that they taught, their topic of study preference as indicated on the application, and known personalities of returning participants. At the end of the placement process, I was discouraged by the fact that, in some instances, the requirements for conducting my research trumped a teacher being placed in a group purely based on her or his topic of interest. For instance, if a teacher had interests well-

⁸ Separating teachers based on the poverty level of their students was logistically necessary given the parameters of our funding. However, segregating teachers in this way may have been potentially harmful in that it perpetuated the segregation of these teachers within the professional development opportunity.

matched to the interests of the teachers we had already assigned to my group, yet was not willing to participate in research, we did not place that individual in my group. For a professional development approach that esteems teachers working collaboratively to explore a common interest, the situation was far from ideal.

We completed assigning each applicant to one of the six groups. My “blue” collaborative inquiry group consisted of seven other visual art educators who taught in schools that were not “high poverty” and who were willing to participate in research. The “green” collaborative inquiry group also included teachers willing to participate in research, but unlike the “blue” group, the “green” group was composed of both art and music teachers. Thus, another researcher with a research interest that did not necessitate having a group in which the members all taught the same discipline worked with the green group. When I first contacted the teachers in my group by email, I welcomed them and thanked them for their willingness to participate in research. I also described the formal consent process involved in participation. A few days before the first meeting, I phoned each member to introduce myself and to answer any questions related to ArtsEdPD or my research.

The “Blue CIG” met for the first time on September 25, 2009. The group was composed of four elementary art teachers, two middle school art teachers, one art teacher who taught both middle and high school, and me (Table 4). Thus, I was the only group member who was not currently teaching full time in a K-12 context. I was also the only member with a pre-defined role (facilitator) and had the least amount of K-12 teaching experience. Our group was composed of seven females and one male. All of the group members were White. Of the seven K-12 teachers in our group, Veronica and Bonnie

were the only teachers who taught in the same school. The other five members taught in different districts and thus, different schools. The K-12 teachers in the Blue CIG taught in districts that did not meet the federal definition of “high poverty,” yet the Blue CIG members agreed that the affluence of their schools varied considerably. The teachers agreed that despite the varying affluence, all of their schools were unquestionably rural.

Table 4. Current teaching assignment and years of K-12 teaching experience of Blue CIG members

<i>Name</i>	<i>Current teaching assignment</i>	<i>Years of K-12 experience</i>
Keara	K-6	16
Dominick	K-6	35
Jenni	7-12	8
Veronica	6-8	32
Bonnie	6-8	25
Jackie	K-4	36
Lisa	PreK-5	10
Leslie	Higher Ed	3.5

Note: With the exception of the researcher, all of the names used are pseudonyms.

Throughout the school year, our group met for ten formal and three informal meetings (Table 5). Six of these meetings took place at the REA as part of a full-day ArtsEdPD program, two meetings took place at the REA but were not part of a full-day ArtsEdPD program, and five took place in a private meeting room at a local restaurant.

Table 5. Blue CIG meetings

#	Date	Location	Length	Type	ArtsEdPD program day?	# of members present
1	9/25/09	REA	2 hours	Formal	Yes	7
2	10/6/09	Restaurant	3 hours	Formal	No	8
3	11/13/09	REA	2 hours	Formal	Yes	8
4	11/16/09	Restaurant	3 hours	Formal	No	7
5	12/4/09	REA	2 hours	Formal	Yes	8
6	1/14/10	REA	2 hours	Formal	Yes	8
7	3/5/10	REA	2 hours	Formal	Yes	8
8	3/17/10	Restaurant	3 hours	Informal	No	7
9	3/18/10	Restaurant	3 hours	Formal	No	7
10	4/30/10	REA	7 hours	Formal	No	8
11	5/13/10	REA	2 hours	Informal	No	4
12	5/14/10	REA	1 hour	Formal	Yes	8
13	5/20/10	Restaurant	2 hours	Informal	No	7

Formal meetings were those during which the group attended to its collaborative inquiry.

I regularly asked the group members for input about how we should spend our meeting time. The agendas, which I drafted ahead of each meeting, included items based on member input (including my own), as well as items that addressed the expectations communicated to me by the ArtsEdPD co-directors. The formal meetings typically included a brief time for administrative tasks such as planning the next meeting date followed by a larger block of time for collaborative inquiry work. We held informal meetings to address concerns that emerged throughout the year; attendance by all members was not expected or required at informal meetings. For instance, I suggested scheduling an informal meeting after one or two group members' specific technology-related issues began to take up significant amounts of time the group had intended to devote to their collaborative research. Group members suggested additional informal

meetings in order to install a collaborative artwork at the REA and to have a nice dinner together to celebrate our year together.

Approximately half of the Blue CIG meetings occurred within ArtsEdPD program days, scheduled on six Fridays between September and May. The ArtsEdPD program days typically included a two-hour time slot for collaborative inquiry group meetings as well as time to view and respond to a work of art, explore new technological equipment and applications, and eat lunch. With the exception of the two-hour collaborative inquiry group meeting, all 40 ArtsEdPD participants and faculty members assembled in a large group setting. Even though all 40 ArtsEdPD participants and faculty members participated in these activities, the project co-directors encouraged collaborative inquiry groups to sit together for a majority of these activities. The ArtsEdPD faculty worked collaboratively to design the technological and artistic activities in order to meet ArtsEdPD project goals originally articulated in the federal grant proposal. These goals included building a community of practice among arts educators in the three-county area served by the REA and conducting all learning opportunities through the introduction of new and emerging technologies in order to promote 21st century learning skills for both arts educators and the students they serve. As part of the ArtsEdPD program, teachers enrolled in a three-credit continuing education course, which required 90 hours of documented work time. The six ArtsEdPD program days constituted 42 of the 90 hours, and ArtsEdPD required teachers to document an additional 48 hours of engagement in collaborative inquiry. For this reason and others, the situated nature of the CIGs within ArtsEdPD had a significant impact on the ways in which the Blue CIG operated. I

provide some observations and interpretations of the relationship between the Blue CIG and ArtsEdPD in Chapter 4.

In order to progress in our collaborative inquiry and to document the additional 48 hours required by ArtsEdPD, the Blue CIG held additional meetings. Most Blue CIG meetings lasted between two and three hours, with two exceptions. ArtsEdPD had built in a snow make-up day and, since this day was not needed, offered participants the chance to use the day as an all-day CIG work session. ArtsEdPD agreed to reimburse districts for substitute costs if CIGs chose to take advantage of this daylong work session. Although ArtsEdPD did not require attendance, all members of the Blue CIG chose to attend this meeting. The shortest Blue CIG meeting, lasting only an hour, took place on the last ArtsEdPD program day. The purpose of this meeting was for each CIG facilitator to engage their group in reflection about their experiences with ArtsEdPD and with collaborative inquiry. Every Blue CIG member completed the required 48 hours by attending group meetings and by documenting the time spent on their individual inquiry-related tasks such as reading, reflecting, collecting data, or preparing to share their work.

Earlier in this section, I described the research context as the surface on which I worked. However, this analogy fails to communicate the reality that I was not just the artist, but also part of the surface. My choice to situate myself inside a collaborative inquiry group as a participant/facilitator was both a strength and a challenge of this research. My involvement in the group provided an opportunity to experience the content, power, and politics of the group in addition to the design choices and structures typically reported by researchers located outside communities (Clausen, 2009). Maguire (2008) suggested that researchers who position themselves as participants in their own study,

and therefore engage deeply with participants, add a level of authenticity to their research. I agree. In addition, my involvement in the varied aspects of group life was an attempt to avoid the oversimplification of communities and especially of collaboration, present within much of the learning community literature (Dooner, Mandzuk, & Clifton, 2008; Drennon, 2000; Moje, 2000). My position within the group also answers a call within professional development scholarship (e.g., Curry, 2008) to locate research inside rather than outside communities of practice. Locating myself within the group provided me with an opportunity to take part in informal conversations and events that were significant in helping me to understand how participants were experiencing collaborative inquiry.

My status as both participant and researcher also posed significant challenges. In addition to experiencing many of the dilemmas (e.g., negotiating my own democratic aims for the group amidst group members' expectation that I should tell them what to do) inherent in the process of facilitation (Curry, 2008; Drennon, 2000; Given, 2010), I struggled to negotiate the preferences of my participants, ArtsEdPD goals, and my own research goals. These diverse and, at times, competing agendas allowed me to recognize the ways in which the surface of this research both necessitated and resisted certain tools, as I suggested previously. For instance, participants often used me as the first point of contact with questions about documentation, technology, or ArtsEdPD-related paperwork. These interactions, typically over the phone or email, were unscheduled yet very much a part of our "group life" as I came to call it. The frequency of these informal, unscheduled interactions necessitated that I carry a tablet in my purse to ensure a place in which I could record notes in any location. When these conversations happened in

person, I resisted the urge to take notes as we were talking and attempted to capture my thoughts as soon as possible afterwards in order to document the parts of our conversation that seemed related to my research interests, or to remind me to attend to their questions about ArtsEdPD requirements. When I learned that six of the eight members of our group were attending the National Art Education Association (NAEA) convention, and that three of the members were staying in an adjoining hotel room, I made the choice to relax my researcher instincts. In other words, I chose to use my energy to engage with the conference content and enjoy the opportunity to forefront my role as their colleague rather than a researcher or facilitator. I found that any time I spent with the participants, whether formal/informal, planned/unplanned, inquiry-related or not, influenced my perceptions of my participants and of the group.

I also found that much of the negotiating among participants' needs, ArtsEdPD goals, and my own research goals centered on time-related issues. Despite teachers' appreciation for content-specific professional development, the teachers in this study voiced their frustrations with having to miss school in order to attend ArtsEdPD because they valued their time with their students. Missing school was a special concern for three of the four elementary teachers in the Blue CIG, who taught on a schedule in which each classroom of students had art class on one specific day of the week. Their schedules, combined with the ArtsEdPD program days always falling on a Friday, meant that their Friday classes would often have substitute teachers. District substitute shortages created an even greater frustration when Blue CIG teachers learned that administrators were cancelling their art classes altogether if the substitute had to cover another classroom. For Keara, her administrator's decision to cancel the art classes created animosity among her

colleagues who did not receive the expected (and often, contracted) time for preparation if their students did not have art class. The complex dilemmas created by teachers missing school to participate in ArtsEdPD caused our group to schedule all of our Blue CIG meetings (happening outside of the six ArtsEdPD program days) after school. While this arrangement allowed us to avoid the dilemmas created when teachers missed school, teachers often came to these meetings with noticeably less energy. The after-school meetings were also difficult to schedule when personal events and family responsibilities competed for after-school time.

As a researcher, I wanted to be sensitive to teachers' complex teaching situations and busy lives. Asking for an hour in which I could conduct an interview seemed like a huge imposition, especially at the beginning of the year when I was only beginning to establish rapport with my participants. I attempted to make the interviews less of an imposition by allowing them to choose the location of the interview and offering to pay for the meal when the interview took place in a restaurant. Despite my initial hesitations to ask for their time, I found that these interviews were invaluable opportunities for trust building as participants and I talked one-on-one. I had originally planned to conduct three face-to-face interviews with each participant spread over the course of the year, but had to modify this plan due to a month of treacherous winter weather and my geographic distance from the research site. During the month of February, our collaborative inquiry (and thus, my research) was stunted. In the words of Jackie, "We lost the whole month of February!" Many of the Blue CIG participants went for a week or more without electricity and/or running water in their homes. As a result, we cancelled two scheduled meetings; I was unable to conduct the mid-year interviews I had planned; and, the

teachers struggled to collect data related to our collaborative inquiry due to the many canceled school days. We added an extra meeting in March to regroup, but the interviews I planned to conduct in the middle of the year ended up closer in proximity to the end of the year interviews than I had hoped.

I also found myself negotiating my desire to audio-record the interviews and group meetings with participants' comfort levels. At the beginning of our second Blue CIG meeting, Dominick specifically asked me not to turn on the audio recording device. Having missed the first group meeting due to a family vacation, Dominick was not part of our group's initial conversation about my research, the recording devices, and how I planned to use the recordings, which I discuss in the next section. The other group members, who welcomed the recording equipment after the discussion during the first meeting, helped me to recreate parts of our initial discussion. Eventually, with Dominick's permission, I was able to record the second group meeting. In a few instances, I struggled to negotiate my need to document conversations with my own comfort level doing so in public settings.

Throughout the year, I interviewed each Blue CIG member at his or her school. Having visited a large number of schools due to my recent roles as a university supervisor and as a faculty member during the first year of ArtsEdPD, I desired to photograph each school setting. I reasoned that photographs would help with recall and serve as an important visual reference when creating researcher memos about the school visits, particularly the influence of the institutional setting on my participants' teaching and learning. Based on the intended purposes of the photographs, I decided the internal camera on my iPhone would be sufficient. What I soon realized was that, in addition to

the cell phone ban in many of the schools I visited, another problem surfaced; I found it difficult to take images without including the students whom I did not have permission to photograph. In the end, I ended up with a few pictures of most of the schools and no pictures of others. Most of the images were of empty classrooms, empty hallways, or of the outside of the building.

Although the contexts in which this research took place resisted my efforts to record aspects of our work, the fact that ArtsEdPD required participants to document an additional 48 hours of collaborative inquiry work was very helpful in my work as a researcher. The documentation requirement, combined with ArtsEdPD's expectation that participants would use new and emerging technologies to exhibit their experience, meant that each Blue CIG member was documenting our collaborative inquiry from his or her own perspective and sharing the documentation in online spaces.

The context of this research undoubtedly influenced the way in which I was able to conduct this study. As this section began to illustrate, the type of research tools I used and how I used them were in a dynamic relationship with the surface of this research. In the next section, I describe how and why I used specific methods (tools) to conduct this research.

The Research Methods as Tools

When artists choose a tool with which to work, they consider its appropriateness for the task. Similarly, I chose research tools that enabled me to collect, interpret, and/or present data in order to investigate my research questions. Because my first research question attempted to illuminate art educators' experience within a collaborative inquiry group, the social practices and activities of the group become the primary unit of my data

collection and interpretation (Stein, Silver, and Smith, 1998). Thus, I collected a broad variety of data about all aspects of the collaborative inquiry group in which I was involved and/or invited, such as phone calls, shared meals, three informal group meetings, collaboratively produced artworks, a trip with members to a national conference, and a surprise baby shower. Desiring a rich and rigorous set of data, I initiated other opportunities (such as interviews) that provided me with additional and diverse data sources (Lennie, 2006). I found some of these data sources equally valuable for collecting data related to my second research question investigating my multiple roles within this research, and initiated one additional data source (the group interview) to more specifically address this second question.

Group Meetings

In the previous sections describing the research context, Table 2 provided specific information about the number, frequency, length, and location of the 10 formal and three informal collaborative inquiry group meetings. My position as the group facilitator was my primary focus during the formal group meetings, and audio recording each of those meetings allowed me to revisit events at a time when I was free of my responsibility as a facilitator. I would often listen to the recordings while driving home after the group meetings.

I chose not to record the informal meetings for a variety of reasons. Our first informal meeting ran as “office hours,” where I located myself in a local restaurant for three hours during which participants could come work with each other or me on items of individual concern such as troubleshooting technology issues or documenting their hours for ArtsEdPD credit. The overlapping conversations, seating arrangement, and drop-in

style meeting format made the first informal meeting a challenge for a unitary audio-recording device. Approximately halfway through this meeting I recognized the significance of the interactions taking place and began taking scrupulous field notes, something I was typically unable to do while facilitating formal group meetings. The second informal meeting involved unloading a truck and carrying artwork into the REA's conference room. In this instance, the constant movement inhibited the use of an audio recorder. The third informal meeting was a celebratory dinner in an intimate local restaurant. In this situation, audio recording felt robotic and insensitive. In lieu of an audio recording, I attempted to write or record field notes during these informal meetings as well as create researcher memos shortly afterwards.

The audio-recordings and field notes created during these meetings allowed me to actively participate in the collaborative inquiry and simultaneously collect data that were important to my research. In other words, I used data collection strategies that allowed me to participate in the study. However, I could not artificially separate my roles as researcher and as the group facilitator. While I was fully engaged as facilitator, I was also aware that my desire to conduct participatory research influenced the content of our formal group meetings. For instance, I attempted to support the group by engaging them in ongoing and explicit discussion about group norms (Nelson & Slavit, 2008), which included their involvement in this research. As a result, participants played a role in matters of establishing appropriateness, accessibility, confidentiality, and trustworthiness related to our group norms.

The formal and informal group meetings were instrumental in my attempt to understand participants' experiences within a collaborative inquiry group. However, I did

not assume that group members would have a uniform experience, or that the context of the group was the only location where I could gather data about the group. I found that conducting interviews, both with the group and with individual group members, was helpful in understanding our collaborative inquiry process.

Interviews

I used a variety of interviews to gather data about how participants viewed the collaborative inquiry process. The interviews also served as an important tool for investigating my second research question by helping me to understand the ways in which participants viewed my roles. Tables 6 and 7 provide an overview of the interviews that took place throughout this study.

Table 6. An overview of the 20 interviews with individual participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Interview Date</i>	<i>Location</i>
Jenni	11/12/09	Restaurant
	5/13/10	Classroom
Keara	11/12/09	Restaurant
	3/18/10	Classroom
	5/5/10	Skype
Lisa	11/14/09	Restaurant
	3/17/10	Classroom
	5/5/10	Skype
Dominick	11/15/09	Restaurant
	3/17/10	Classroom
	5/11/10	Skype
Veronica	11/15/09	Coffee shop
	3/17/10	Classroom
	5/28/10	Email
Bonnie	11/16/09	Restaurant
	3/17/10	Classroom
	5/6/10	Skype
Jackie	12/3/09	Restaurant
	4/28/10	Classroom
	5/11/10	Phone

Table 7. An overview of the three group interviews

<i>Date</i>	<i>Conducted by</i>	<i>Location</i>
11/16/09	Jenni	Restaurant
3/18/10	Dominick	Restaurant
5/14/10	Leslie	REA

My initial reason for conducting individual interviews was to gather data about how individual group members viewed our collaborative inquiry process. While I found interviews valuable for this purpose, I quickly realized that the 20 individual interviews I conducted served a variety of other purposes. Kong, Mahoney, and Plummer (2002) describe interviews as part of a “methodology of friendship” (p. 254).

My initial interview with each member of the group provided the first opportunity for a sustained one-on-one dialogue, and many of these first interviews began with a lengthy conversation one would expect at the beginning of a new friendship. By attempting to set a casual, conversational tone for the interviews, participants and I were able to first exchange information about our lives. A fuller knowledge of my participants was crucial in helping me to understand how they were making meaning of the collaborative inquiry experience.

I believe that talking with participants about my life outside ArtsEdPD played an important role in establishing rapport and building trust. In addition, I found that the individual interviews were places of reflexivity: as I got to know each participant, I came to a better understanding of who I was as well as my role in the group (Fontana & Frey, 2005). I also came to realize that “regardless of how open-ended and negotiable our two-way conversations may have been, they were still interviews, with all the psychological inequalities inherent therein” (Goldstein, 2000, p. 520). The interviews were not naturally occurring circumstances, and my participants and I were both aware that our conversation had a purpose. Early on in the year, participants were very concerned about whether their responses were “enough” or what I “had in mind.” Participants appeared to be less concerned about the adequacy of their responses as the year progressed.

I conducted an initial interview with each group member at a restaurant or coffee shop, often over a meal. I audio recorded and transcribed each interview. I will elaborate in the role of transcription in my data interpretation in a later section. The purpose of the first interview was to talk with participants about how they viewed their roles in the Blue CIG at the beginning of the year. I drafted a set of potential questions (see Appendix B)

and emailed the questions to each teacher a few days before the interview. When a few participants arrived at the interviews with hand-written notes to help them respond to each question, I quickly realized that my attempt to be transparent and to build trust by emailing the questions to the participants ahead of time negated my intention for these questions to serve as “potential” questions. Rather, a few of the participants saw the questions as a list of things I really wanted to know.

The first interviews took place over a two-month period, and thus not at the same chronological point in our group life. For instance, the first interview took place with a group member after only two Blue CIG meetings, while the last group member I interviewed had already participated in four meetings. While the number of group meetings attended by each participant before the first interview varied, I was not interested in comparing the experience of one participant to another and thus unconcerned by the fact that it took two months to conduct the seven interviews. I had a greater desire to interview teachers at a time and location that was convenient for them. Having interviews spread over the course of a couple months afforded me the ability to have lengthy conversations with participants throughout our yearlong process. In turn, I was able to gather participants’ ongoing descriptions of our process, which were important in my attempt to forward participant voice (Bode, 2005) in my presentation of the data.

I conducted a second interview with each of the participants at her or his school. The in-context interviews took place on four different days throughout the spring. The purpose of the second interview was to observe the group members’ working contexts so that I could construct a more critical analysis of the relationship between our

collaborative inquiry work and the teachers' school contexts. Because the purpose of the interview did not necessarily require my presence while they were teaching, I attempted to schedule the interviews at times when the teachers had a break for lunch or planning, or at the end of the day. In four of the seven interviews, the time I slated to be at their school overlapped with their teaching, and I felt welcomed to observe while they taught. Like Goldstein (2000), I overlooked the ways in which my presence during their teaching may have complicated the purpose of this visit. Stacey (1991) cautioned, "[N]o matter how welcome, even enjoyable, the field-worker's presence may appear to 'natives,' fieldwork still represents an intrusion" (p. 113). The feeling of intrusion may be especially troublesome in schools (Musanti & Pence, 2010) if teachers view researchers as one of many more powerful others who visit their classrooms in order to evaluate their effectiveness.

Unfortunately, my good intentions did not dissipate the culture of surveillance (Foucault, 1977) operating in many of the schools. In fact, when I read the transcript from one of the group interviews (for which I was not present), I was horrified at how participants described the experience of having me visit their schools. One group member described the experience as "embarrassing." Two group members who worked at the same school said, "I don't think she noticed all the neat stuff...we were actually hurt." In my attempt not to evaluate the teachers by providing feedback (positive or negative), I had severely disappointed my fellow group members who "wanted a few ooohs and ahhs." Although the school visits provided me with very important information about the teachers' working contexts, the fact that I had not been clear about the purpose of the visit led to group members feeling confused and hurt.

The third individual interview was similar to the first interview, in that participants chose a time and location for the interview. Unlike the first interviews during which I met participants in restaurants or coffee shops, a majority of the third interviews happened using Skype, a voice over internet protocol (VOIP). Most participants encountered Skype for the first time during an ArtsEdPD program day and were excited for a chance to apply this new technology. I interviewed four participants using Skype, one on the phone, and one via email after many failed attempts to find a time that we were both available. I recorded and transcribed the interviews that took place using Skype and the phone. I was unable to interview Jenni a third time due to some difficult life circumstances she faced at the conclusion of this study.

After reflecting on my experience conducting the first interviews, I decided not to use a set list of questions for each participant's third interview. I wanted to know more about how each participant viewed her or his role in our Blue CIG at the conclusion of our year together, but I had individualized, unique wonderings about each participant. I also wanted to pose questions in a way that would elicit "nuanced descriptions that depict the qualitative diversity [and] the many differences and varieties of a phenomenon, rather than on ending up with fixed categorizations" (Kvale, 1996, p. 32). For instance, I asked the question "Do you have any general comments about the CIG so far?" to each participant in the first interview. The following interaction was part of Lisa's response to this question:

Lisa: I like our group. I don't like that there's two teachers in the same group from the same building. That's tough.

Leslie: How come?

Lisa: Just because, it gives a sense that they get to work together and nobody else does. It's like an unfair advantage almost. They get to do things together, to share workload, they know each other and they know exactly how they think. Whereas the rest of us all have to get to know each other. You know. That's always tough.
(personal communication, November 14, 2009)

When planning for my third interview with Lisa, I wanted to return to this interaction to get Lisa's thoughts on the "unfair advantage" six months later. I emailed Lisa the transcript from the first interview with some follow-up comments and questions in the margins that corresponded to specific highlighted sections. In my third interview with Lisa, my question was much more specific: "Here you were talking about how Bonnie and Veronica having a shared teaching context is almost like an unfair advantage. Can you describe a time when you felt that this impacted our CIG (positively or negatively)?"

I used this procedure for all of the third interviews, in which I returned to themes in the first interview based on my belief that our subjectivities as individuals are not fixed, and that "no story or self-representation will ever or should ever be understood as complete or final" (Bloom, 1996, p. 193). Thus, my third interviews provided a space for my participants to respond to their earlier ideas, as well as my interpretations of those ideas. In this way, the third interview also served as a member check by providing clarity and insight to my initial interpretations. As a standard part of the third interview, I also provided participants the opportunity to return to sections of the transcript that they thought were important, and/or to talk with me about anything that had not come up in the interviews that they wished to discuss.

In addition to the three individual interviews, I conducted a group interview during our last formal meeting. My desire to conduct a group interview grew out of my wish for participants to hear each other's rich reflections about their yearlong experience with collaborative inquiry that I had heard during the individual interviews. I was also interested in observing how group members would respond to hearing each other's experiences. When faced with the reality that scheduling an additional group meeting in which to have this interview was nearly impossible, I approached the ArtsEdPD faculty with the idea of embedding a reflective group interview into the last ArtsEdPD program day. They agreed that group reflection was valuable and encouraged me to speak with the project evaluator about using these reflective interviews in place of the small group interviews she had planned to conduct. With all parties in agreement, the project co-directors asked each ArtsEdPD facilitator to conduct a reflective interview with his or her CIG on the last ArtsEdPD project day. The faculty worked together to generate a list of potential questions for the interviews, but did not attempt to create a set of required questions. Each facilitator had the autonomy to use questions from the faculty-generated list or to create her or his own. I provide a list of the questions I chose to ask the Blue CIG in Appendix B.

While the reflective interview was the only group interview I conducted, the Blue CIG participated in two additional group interviews during which I removed myself from the room. The purpose of these interviews was to create a space in which participants could discuss how they viewed my role(s), an effort to gather data directly related to my second research question. Based on the recommendation of a member of my dissertation committee, I sought to hire someone to conduct, record, and transcribe these interviews

as well as to save both the audio file and the transcript until the end of the school year. This arrangement was an effort to establish a safeguard for participants who may feel unable to be honest about my roles within the group if I was present and/or had access to their thoughts before the year ended.

As someone interested in participatory research, I first approached my group members to find out if any of them would be interested in this task. Jenni immediately volunteered. I drafted a contract (see Appendix C) that both of us signed. Jenni conducted the first group interview by asking each of the questions I had drafted in order (see Appendix B). The second scheduled group interview was cancelled because of February's bad weather. When Jenni informed me that she was unable to attend the meeting during which she was going to conduct the final group interview, I asked Dominick to conduct and record the interview. He agreed. I provided him with the list of questions that I had originally sent to Jenni. Jenni was still interested in transcribing the final interview, so I posted the file to a secure online site where she could download and listen to the interview. Following our last CIG meeting, Jenni sent me the transcripts and audio files of the two group interviews.

The two group interviews both lasted approximately 15 minutes and consisted of two or three questions that I created. I constructed questions about my role in the group that helped to elicit a dialogue that may have taken on a different form had I been present. For instance, I wondered how participants felt about our school visits, and created a question for the group interview format that served to archive how teachers were feeling, since this group interview took place only a day or two after the majority of visits had occurred.

Although the group interviews served a unique role by generating discussion about participants' multiple perspectives without me present, I did not find that the group interviews stimulated the "embellished descriptions of specific events or experiences shared by members of the group" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 704) for which I had hoped. I believe that the participant comments within the group interviews lacked a certain descriptive quality for at least three reasons. First, because of the group dynamics present, conducting group interviews often requires greater skill than conducting individual interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005). However, other than asking if Jenni or Dominick had any questions, I did not provide any resources that may have better prepared them for the difficult task of conducting a group interview. Secondly, both group interviews took place at the end of a three-hour CIG meeting scheduled after a full day of teaching. In hindsight, placing these interviews earlier in the meeting or scheduling them within an ArtsEdPD program day when teachers had more energy may have elicited more in-depth, descriptive responses. Finally, I constructed the group interview questions as if I was the one doing the interview and thus failed to account for the fact that Jenni and Dominick did not ask the spontaneous follow-up questions that I typically pose to probe for clarification and elicit a more detailed response. Jenni and Dominick delivered the questions I created as actors reading a script; they provided time for group members to respond and then moved on to the next question. Despite these complications, I believe that having group members (rather than an outsider) conduct these interviews created a safe space for the dialogue and provided me with important insights about involving participants in research.⁹

⁹ I suspect that if I would have given Jenni or the entire group the task of drafting the questions, their ownership over the process would have influenced the way they participated as well as the quality of their

Documents and Artifacts

ArtsEdPD expected that each group would document their collaborative inquiry process. Not surprisingly, the documents, images, and artifacts that documented the Blue CIG's collaborative inquiry process became an important data source for this research. As a data source, the documents and artifacts produced during the Blue CIG's collaborative inquiry process provided me with an opportunity for in-process and retrospective reflection and interpretation. A variety of documents including meeting agendas, meeting notes, photographs, emails, and working documents served as important data sources.

Early in the year, I struggled to define parameters to determine whether and how each artifact related to our collaborative inquiry and thus, whether certain artifacts should count as "data." For instance, I received an email from Dominick asking if I knew of any good places he and his family could stop to eat on a highway near my house. While the content of the email was not specific to our collaborative inquiry, the email and others like it documented the developing relationships within our group. I decided that such exchanges were still valuable sources of data and thus decided to keep all of the artifacts to which I had access. The decision to consider all of the artifacts as possible data sources paralleled my artistic tendencies to keep interesting objects, scraps, and trash. As an artist, I recognize that given a different day with different problems to solve, that piece of trash may prove to be priceless.

participation.

Field Notes and Researcher Memos

While others produced many of the documents and artifacts I collected, I was also producing data in the form of field notes and researcher memos to document both the collaborative inquiry group experience and the research process. I wrote field notes during the few events that did not require my active engagement as the group facilitator, such as the informal group meetings and during a few ArtsEdPD program day activities. In those instances, I was still participating and thus unable to create a running log of events. Instead, I jotted down notes to capture an important participant quote, remember a thought, or to draft a question for an upcoming interview based on what had happened. Although I know that many researchers create field notes during interviews, I found that continuous writing during an interview inhibited the casual, conversational tone I desired. The task of writing also pulled my attention away from listening and responding meaningfully to the interviewee. I took field notes during my first interview with Jenni and abandoned the process after only one interview, in order to better engage with my participants. I reasoned that the audio recording equipment and a researcher memo following the interview were sufficient tools to archive the experience.

I created researcher memos shortly after each event that required my active engagement either as the group facilitator or interviewer. My participation in the CIG allowed me (consciously and unconsciously) to collect “headnotes” (Ottenburg, 1990, p. 144-16), or memories of the field research that I later included in the researcher memos. As I mentioned previously, the researcher memos were usually in the form of voice memos that I recorded while driving. The researcher memos captured my reflections on

elements of the event that felt significant, such as our first attempt to construct a question for our collaborative inquiry:

We tried tonight to get our question for our collaborative inquiry. It seemed a little difficult. There were a couple of people really interested in technology ideas but then there were a few other folks who were scared of putting the word technology in our question because they didn't feel prepared to investigate [technology]. That was interesting, I guess because they wanted to be at a place where they had some existing comfort with the topic that we were going to explore. So we ended up with an inquiry question that was very broad, and I'm not really sure how that's going to work. (researcher memo, October, 2009)

I also used the researcher memos as a place to document my feelings about my role within the collaborative inquiry group, and to remind myself of things on which I wanted to follow up later. For instance, after I completed the first round of interviews, I was reflecting on how to structure the next round of interviews,

I think what I might do for the next interview is try to summarize the first interview and give it to the person before the second interview with questions that I'd like to ask them now. That way they read a short summary (or maybe the whole transcript?) and see the connections between our interviews and our practice. I don't know. I just hate to give them more work. (researcher memo, January 15th, 2010)

I also created researcher memos after having conversations with my advisors, fellow doctoral students, or ArtsEdPD faculty members that influenced the way I was thinking about my research. Insofar as the research memos and field notes captured my initial

observations and interpretations about the data, they often served as starting points for my writing.

Data Interpretation

Throughout the process of data interpretation, I attempted to resist a tradition that tends to “simplify the complex processes of representing the ‘voices’ of respondents as though these voices speak on their own, rather than through the researcher who makes choices about how to interpret these voices and which transcript extracts to present as evidence” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 418). Thus, I intentionally use the term *data interpretation* rather than *data analysis* in order to stress the role I play in making meaning of data rather than simply separating, organizing, and categorizing it.

In an effort to carry my embodied and participatory research goals into the interpretative process, and to mitigate any potential predisposition to present only positive aspects of the group’s inquiry, I attempted to involve others in data interpretation as much as possible. For instance, I used the third interviews as a method of member checking. More specifically, I provided each participant with a full transcript of our first interview in which I had inserted a number of interpretations and questions using the comment feature in Microsoft Word. The third interview involved, among other things, me asking each participant to comment on the interpretations I had inserted in the initial transcript. Additional member checking occurred throughout the year when I shared my observations of the group with fellow group members, often while we were having lunch or during another informal time. By relying on participants to help interpret the collaborative experience of our CIG, I present my data as “a conversation, not an interview or a portrait” (Grumet, 1990, p. 119).

Because I believe a diverse representation of perspectives provides a rich description of an event, I committed to represent the learning of all study participants, even (and especially) if their experience was different from my own. Thus, I collected and interpreted data generated by all members of the collaborative inquiry group and not solely data that I collected. In other words, I have chosen to present my experience as situated within and among the experiences of all Blue CIG members. Although I failed to ask participants explicitly for feedback about my research methods, I did initiate many conversations with colleagues in an attempt to invite a constant critique of my own research process. By providing “critical scrutiny” (Lennie, 2006, p. 32), three doctoral students and my dissertation co-advisors also played participatory roles in this research.

I began to see how many of my data collection methods were also methods of interpretation when a doctoral student suggested that by creating artwork, I was also engaged in interpretation. I constructed a diagram (Figure 3) in order to represent the layers that emerged in my efforts to interpret data. I found that my efforts to interpret the data often took a similar direction. First, I made initial observations and interpretations in field notes, researcher memos, visual metaphors, and postcards. I then worked to identify themes and relationships in the data set through content logging, transcription, and concept mapping. As themes emerged, I worked to organize the themes for presentation by supporting them with the relevant data. I purposefully present the layers of interpretation in ways that demonstrate how the interpretation occurring in one layer related or connected to the others. Although the data interpretation process often followed a similar direction, it overlapped chronologically with data collection and presentation. In Figure 8, I attempted to disrupt the sense of an exact chronological order with the blue

arrow, indicating the active relationship between the data collection, data interpretation, and data presentation. By repeatedly engaging with the data throughout the year, I found that the processes of data collection, interpretation, and presentation repeatedly informed one another. The discussion that follows describes the methods I used within my layered interpretation.

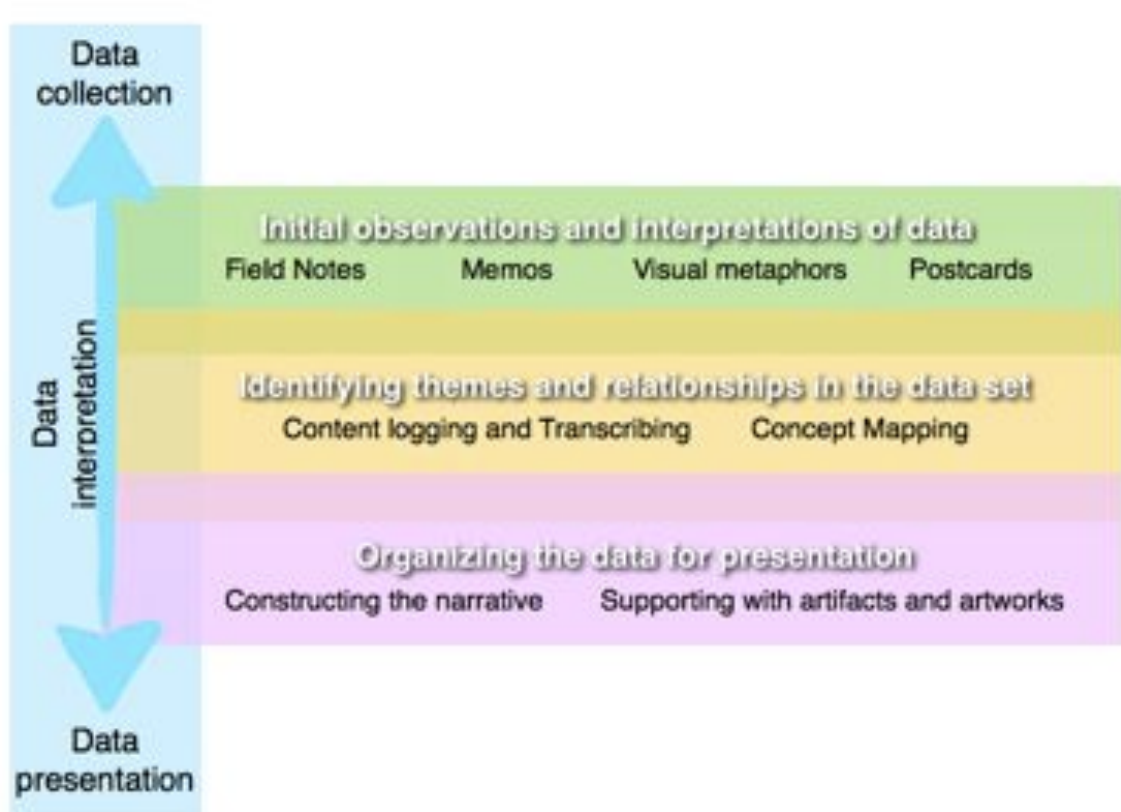


Figure 8. The transparent layers of data interpretation.

In my initial stages of data interpretation, I often relied on metaphors to communicate how specific participant comments affected me. For instance, I created “Clamp” (Figure 9) following an interview with Keara.



Figure 9. "Clamp." Artwork by Leslie Gates, 2009.

I recorded my thoughts in a memo:

I created this piece to illustrate the moment when Keara told me (in her first interview) that Jackie announced that the group was “lucky” that I was the facilitator assigned to their group. Jackie said this having only received a “hello” email from me and seeing what I looked like on the first morning of ArtsEdPD. I wondered on what basis Keara and Jackie decided that they were lucky to have me rather than someone else. The clamp demonstrates the pressure that I have felt

from the beginning to facilitate well. Keara probably believed that I would receive Jackie's announcement as a compliment, but instead, I felt that she had just given the clamp a squeeze. (Research journal, February, 2010)

In creating this artistic metaphor and accompanying text, I was both collecting data about my own experience within the collaborative inquiry group and interpreting the data presented to me in an interview. While some might also consider this work a method of data presentation, my purpose for creating the works was to reflect on my experience rather than to create a means for exhibiting data. In fact, this visual and a number of other artworks I created throughout the year do not appear in the following chapters in which I present the data. However, I include this artwork here to demonstrate the ways in which data collection and interpretation were not always separate processes in my research. This example also demonstrates the transparency of the layers of analysis by forging an explicit relationship between an interview transcript, a researcher memo, and a visual metaphor.

Similar to the process of creating visual metaphors, I also engaged in creating a series of postcards. The postcards extended the idea that this research was an exploration and mapping venture within a geographic place, and that I, as the cartographer, was able to mark the journey. The postcards (e.g., Figure 10) served as in-process reflections and as a record of my movement without predicting the next steps (Block & Klein, 1996). As a whole, the series of postcards described my process of becoming a researcher, and thus played an important function in interpreting data connected to my second interview question about my role in this research.

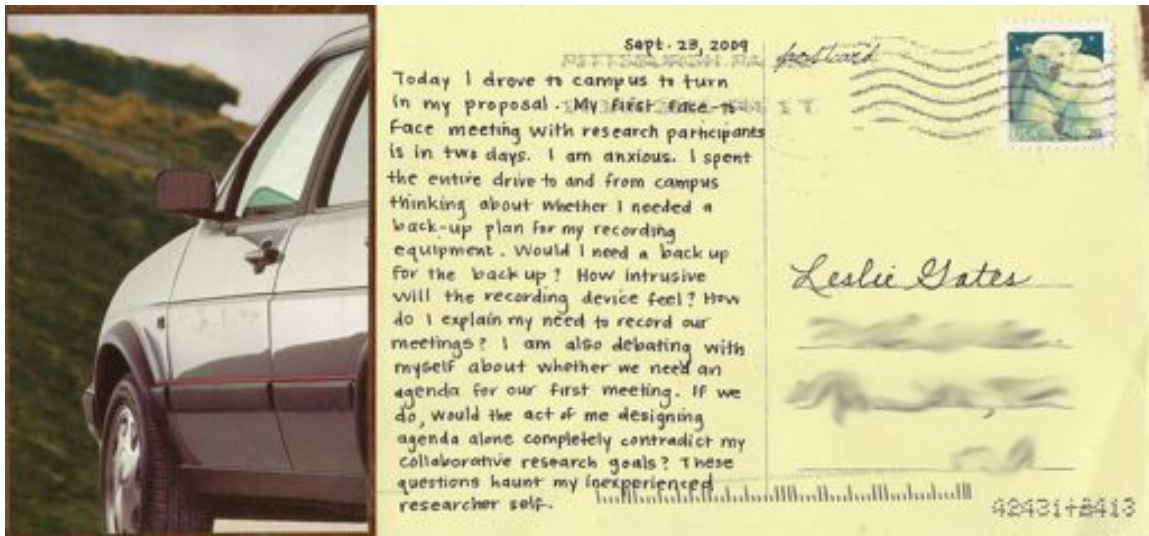


Figure 10. Postcard from September 28, 2009.¹⁰

In addition to recording my initial observations and interpretations in both visual and textual forms, I engaged in a second layer of interpretation by content logging group meetings, transcribing interviews, and creating concept maps. Content logging stems from a common practice in video production, where someone watches and labels a video according to its content to aid in post-production activities. In a first attempt to manage the large amount of data generated from ten formal CIG group meetings, I logged each audio file by listening to the recording and taking notes that indicated the content of the conversation at certain times in the recording. I also made notes about important ideas to which I expected to return. I would stop logging in order to transcribe if I felt the conversation was significant in relationship to my research questions or to the themes that had emerged within the first layer of analysis. By logging each group meeting, I was able

¹⁰ Text reads: Today I drove to campus to turn in my proposal. My first face to face meeting with research participants is in two days. I am anxious. I spent the entire drive to and from campus thinking about whether I needed a back-up plan for my recording equipment. Would I need a back-up for the back-up? How intrusive will the recording device feel? How do I explain my need to record our meetings? I am also debating with myself about whether we need an agenda for our first meeting. If we do, would the act of me designing [an] agenda alone completely contradict my collaborative research goals? These questions haunt my inexperienced researcher self.

to easily return to the proper place in the recording if I desired to transcribe additional sections based on themes that did not appear significant earlier in the process. I transcribed each individual interview and the reflective group interview. As I logged meetings and transcribed interviews, I became interested in a number of themes and relationships present within the data set. In order to have a place for these themes to “live” while I continued collecting and transcribing data, I created a concept map on which I could begin to consider how the themes related to each other and to my research questions. The concept map also provided a space in which I could view the themes holistically and systematically examine how themes emerged across various data sources.

After identifying themes and relationships in the data set, I realized that I could organize the information for presentation in many different ways. In my third layer of analysis, I continually asked myself, “What is the most useful story?” During this process, I became very aware that I was one of eight participants in this study, and yet, as the researcher, I was the one “who ultimately cuts and pastes together the narrative, choosing what will become part of it and what will be cut” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 697). Moje (2000) described the complications inherent in this situation when she wrote,

There are advantages, particularly in regard to honesty and voice, to writing about our experiences as individuals. It is, however, a complicated endeavor to reflect on one’s role in a relationship without othering, through re-representation, someone else’s voice and experience. (p. 29)

In the following section, I describe a number of cartographical processes that I found useful for framing my attempts to acknowledge the need for me to interpret the words

and actions of others is an inevitable aspect of dissertation writing and my efforts to diminish the “othering” that Moje previously described.

Data Re/presentation

I have found three fundamental cartographic processes helpful in shaping my approach for re/presenting the experiences of the teachers in this study: editing, generalizing, and designing. Cartographic editing is the reflexive process whereby a cartographer selects traits of the objects to map based on the map’s intended purpose. For instance, a cartographer creating a map to communicate the locations and features of rest stops along a turnpike would likely include whether the rest stop has a fueling station but would likely exclude details unrelated to the map’s purpose, such as the date of construction. Thus during the editing process, the cartographer determines which pieces of information related to the rest stops are most helpful to those using the map. This dissertation attempts to illuminate the helpful and unhelpful aspects of art teachers’ experiences in collaborative inquiry so that others interested in art education and professional development can learn from it. Like a cartographer engaged in the process of editing, I have used a reflexive process to select the conversations, images, and other artifacts that best answer my research questions.

Cartographic generalization is the process in which cartographers decide how and when to reduce the complexity of a map in order to make the map more user-friendly. Topological maps (such as those portraying subway systems) are often simplified and, in the interest of clarity, disregard scale and other non-vital information. For example, a topological map of a subway system might straighten curved tracks and limit topographical information such as county borders or bodies of water to present vital

information as clearly as possible. In the next few chapters, I have straightened curved tracks by editing direct quotes for clarity and readability while attempting to preserve the content. In a few instances, I have removed content (such as someone apologizing for their phone ringing) from an exchange in an effort to limit confusion.

Cartographic design is the process of ordering the elements of a map in such a way that the reader can easily find information and the purpose of the map is clear. Cartographers must label items of interest in ways that do not displace or cover other items of interest. At times cartographers break a uniform system of labeling (e.g., decreasing the font size of a label) or label things in a less ideal location (e.g., writing the name “Rhode Island” in the Atlantic Ocean with an arrow to its referent rather than placing the label inside the borders of the state). Thus, cartographers are engaged in a constant process of negotiation. I have attempted to present teachers’ varied experiences clearly by organizing and presenting relevant data in themes. The process of determining how I generated and supported themes from the data involved a significant amount of negotiation as I realized the many ways in which the themes relate and intersect.

I attempted to be sensitive to the fact that naming, coding, and labeling, although necessary in cartography and data interpretation, create an unequal power dynamic between the labeler and the labeled. Earlier in this chapter, I described the ways in which I attempted to democratize the data interpretation process by inviting the teachers in this study into the process through interviewing. I have employed additional methods in the writing of following chapters that also attempt to empower teacher voice and to make difficult a blind acceptance of my labels as a final or exact interpretation. For instance, the inclusion of direct quotations from group members (especially when we disagreed) is

an attempt to represent our diverse individual experiences rather to present a prevailing opinion as the unitary group experience.

Despite these efforts, I am the one telling the story and therefore act as a representative from our collaborative inquiry group to those who read this research. By *presenting* this data, I am also *re-presenting* the experiences of the group members. Even when I present sections of a transcript, by having decided that a specific section was dramatic and story-worthy, I have not presented the experience, but rather, “representations of those events and experiences through narrative form” (Swidler, 2001, p. 120). I have constructed the term “re/presenting” to represent the interactive nature of the data presentation process and to describe my consistent movement between my roles as participant, facilitator, and researcher. I more fully explore these roles in the last section of Chapter 4.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the chapter, I presented Helen Frankenthaler’s observation that in working with new materials, artists confront wonderful puzzles and problems. I have experienced both puzzles and problems throughout this research project, which were sometimes wonderful and always motivating. Like an artist working with new materials, I recognized that my end product was the result of a dynamic interaction of my hand, the surface of the research, and tools of inquiry. I have attempted to demonstrate how this dynamic interaction was also present in my research. I present the results of this dynamic interaction in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4: Mapping the Challenges

In this chapter, I present and interpret data in ways that are inspired by a number of cartographical processes. The processes of traditional cartography commence in a literal, physical map that is the result of a cartographer's effort to portray something accurately. However, my cartography is metaphorical, and focuses on the *processes* of map-making rather than the creation and presentation of a final static map. Thus, this chapter does not result in a literal, visual map. Instead, I use the language of maps and include visual elements in order to make data and my interpretation of them visible to myself and my readers, which reflects the process of map-making in its broadest sense.

Furthermore, while my research aims to illuminate art educators' experience within a collaborative inquiry group, I do not purport that my portrayal of this experience has (or intends to have) the objective accuracy expected of a literal map. Instead, my metaphorical use of cartographic processes follows a rich history of artists who engage in the process of mapping to "chart emotional, interpersonal, or imaginary territories" (Dignazio, 2009, p. 192). Charting such territories not only involved personal negotiations of perspective, but also made visible the ways that the other teachers in this study were engaged in a series of challenges and negotiations. Thus, I have chosen to organize my re/presentation of our experiences in this chapter by describing four challenges that reveal the relationships between the data and my original research questions.

The Challenge of Labels

"Regular teachers, or art teachers?" (Lisa, personal communication, November 13, 2009).

“We are all art people” (Veronica, personal communication, May 14, 2010).

Cartographers use labels to identify relevant features and to communicate information about them to the map reader. The labels used in literal map-making of geographical spaces often identify items such as states, rivers, and famous landmarks by using their commonly accepted names. However, a relatively new form of cartography known as critical cartography challenges map-making (and thus the process of labeling inherent) as an apolitical and value-free activity. Critical cartographers analyze attributes of map-making that map readers might otherwise take for granted in order to raise awareness of inequalities and other geopolitical realities (Wood, Fels, & Krygier, 2010). I found that my own process of exploring the research question, “In what ways do the participants view this experience as related and/or unrelated to their content area?” led me to (re)consider the label “art teacher.” This chapter, insofar as it critically examines the assumptions inherent in the term “art teacher,” resembles critical cartography.

Each of the teachers in this study self-identified as visual art teachers on their initial applications to participate in ArtsEdPD, and the collaborative inquiry group of which we were a part included teachers all wearing the label “art teacher.” As emphasized in Chapter 2, art teachers in previous studies voiced their dissatisfaction with interdisciplinary and school-based collaborative groups and expressed a desire for professional development opportunities in which they could work alongside other art teachers (Curry, 2008). The desire for such opportunities assumes that art educators have unique interests that content-specific professional development situations might better

address. Jackie, the teacher in our group with the most years of experience, expressed her appreciation for this professional development opportunity by saying,

With us coming from where we come from, no matter what kind of school you are in, how many people talk our language? To sit a day to talk with people who talk our language, so to speak, is such a treat. This is such a special occasion.

(personal communication, September 25, 2009)

Jackie's statement captured both her appreciation for this experience and an assumption that we had things in common simply because we were all art teachers.

Regardless of the commonalities shared and expressed by teachers in the group, the term "art educator" as a label with "accompanying qualities assumed to be part of that construct" potentially minimizes the complex identities and diversities that were present within the group (Smith, 1999, p. 131). In addition, the label "art teacher" was only one of many labels worn by each member of the group. Understanding our complex art teacher identity, especially given the fact that it was only one of a number of identities of each member of our group, required me to consider both similarities and differences. As Smith (1999) asserted,

On the one hand, *identity* means sameness, as in the word *identical*, and involves the perception of common qualities...[and] emerges out of an identification with others in [a] group. This requires the foregrounding of one aspect of identity and a backgrounding of others in an emphasis on what is shared with others in that group. On the other hand, *identity* requires a perception of difference from others in order for the recognition of sameness to come into play (p. 75).

Because understanding sameness (i.e., “art teacher”) is dependent on also recognizing that which is different from that role and/or identity, I began to create memos attending to the diversities present within our group. After the first meeting, I noted:

- Jenni was the only group member currently teaching high school;
- I was the only member not currently teaching in a K-12 context;
- Jenni was single while the rest of us were in a long-term relationship;
- Dominick was the only male group member of our group;
- Jenni, Lisa, and I did not have children; Veronica, Keara, Dominick, Bonnie, and Jackie did.¹¹

Based on my own initial observations of our group’s diversity as well as my desire to act as a critical cartographer, I asked participants in individual interviews about the ways in which they viewed our group as diverse. The teachers identified their age, years of experience, age of their students, salaries, amount and type of supplies, approach to teaching and comfort with technology as diversities present within our group.

Although each teacher identified ways in which our group was diverse when asked, I began to see ways that they were attempting to forefront the group’s commonalities and minimize the diversities within the group. In the following conversation, Dominick suggests that the differences within the group were “minor:”

Leslie: Are there other things that, as we sit around the table, that maybe you don’t have in common with some people within the group?

Dominick: hmmm...

¹¹ I later recognized that I had observed a number of other similarities that I did not include in the list. For instance, we were all White, all middle-class, all able-bodied, and all had at least one college degree. My failure to include these similarities, and my assumption that we shared other identities such as religion and (hetero)sexuality, demonstrates my early struggle to employ the critical lens I sought to bring to this work.

Leslie: Have you noticed differences that are emerging?

Dominick: No. Well, if there are differences, they're minor. (personal communication, November 15, 2009)

Dominick was the only male in our group, and when we spoke one-on-one, he often referred to the younger members of our group (me included) as "kids." He often addressed the rest of the group members using terms such as "hon," "dear," or "sweetie" far more often than our names. Dominick reports that he did not realize he was the only male in our group until our second meeting. Dominick's use of gendered terms such as "hon" and "sweetie" to refer to members of our group and failure to mention his minority status may demonstrate the effect (at least in part) of his male privilege as well as having spent his career teaching at the elementary level, which is historically female-dominated. So, even though Dominick did not verbalize such differences as age and gender when asked directly, these differences appeared to impact the way he interacted with the group and, thus, were evident to me.

While Dominick did not list the diversities of our group for whatever reason, Veronica quickly identified a number of things that she perceived as differences within our group:

Our experience, our years of teaching. When I began teaching, Jenni probably wasn't even born. Well, I know she wasn't. You know what makes us different? Some of us are extremely different with technology, and so they aim that way in their teaching. Others of us (Bonnie and I) are horribly uncomfortable with it, and we very seldom every use it. So I don't see common ground there, because people love it. If they use it, they seem to love it. But I think our years of experience,

where we are in our life, where we are in our families, and everything else. I think that's what is very different. But I think the thing that brings us all together is we all seem to love what we do. (personal communication, November 15, 2009)

Despite identifying a number of differences between her and members of the group, finishing her closing remark suggests her discomfort with attending only to the differences. The tendency for Veronica and other group members to believe that our group members had much in common and agreed on most things demonstrated the ways in which our group acted as a "*pseudocommunity*" (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001, p. 20) that suppresses difference and conflict while maintaining the illusion of consensus.

As a fellow art teacher, I empathized with other group members' efforts to focus on our similarities. Feelings of invisibility and unimportance in our schools may have contributed to our appreciation for a professional development opportunity that brought us together. I know the loneliness of being the only art teacher in a school, especially in the current educational climate wherein efforts to improve student achievement in tested subject areas make non-tested subject appear less important. However, the diversity within our group prompted me to (re)consider our "art teacher" label and the qualities associated with its meaning. To do this deconstructive work, I inquired into not just our similarities, but also our differences, and, perhaps most important to collaboration, the ways in which we related across these spaces (Friedman, 1998).

One of the first assumptions I sought to (re)consider about the label "art teacher" was the assumed shared experiences that accompanied it. Teachers in our group would often project their individual experience onto the entire group by using the pronoun "we"

rather than “I.” For instance, Dominick projected his own sense of lacking support and feeling of isolation when he said, “We all are suffering from like the lack of time, and lack of support. The biggest thing is that we’re all little islands out there” (personal communication, November 15, 2009). Dominick’s statement did represent the experience of many members in our group, including my own. However, Veronica and Bonnie did not feel like islands. Veronica and Bonnie have taught in adjacent classrooms at the same middle school for the last 15 years. They work out together after school, carpool to our group meetings and activities, and finish each other’s sentences. Veronica is “really grateful” to have Bonnie in the group with her (personal communication, November 15, 2009). Bonnie helped me to understand their ongoing collaboration when she said,

Like at the beginning when we talked about working in a collaborative way, it didn’t stand out as something like, “Oh wow,” because like I said, “We’ve done this for years and years and years.” I could not do this job by myself. (personal communication, May 6, 2010)

Lisa identified Veronica and Bonnie’s situation as very different from her own. In my first interview with her, Lisa reported that Bonnie and Veronica’s working relationship gave them an “unfair advantage”:

Lisa: I like our group. I don’t like that there’s two teachers in the same group from the same building. That’s tough.

Leslie: How come?

Lisa: Just because, it’s, it gives a sense that they get to work together and nobody else does. It’s like an unfair advantage almost. Like, they get to do things together, they get to share workload, they know each other, and they know exactly

how they think, whereas the rest of us all have to get to know each other. You know. That's always tough. It's like having a married couple in the group.

(November 14, 2009)

In addition to the false sense of shared isolation, group members presumed a singular approach to teaching. For instance, Jackie suggested that a certain method of teaching was "something we do naturally," once again assuming by her use of "we" that the teachers in our group had similar pedagogical approaches to teaching art (group meeting, December 5, 2009). Attempting to act once again as a critical facilitator, I challenged group members to focus the conversation on their individual teaching styles and thus to (re)consider this assumed shared perspective rather than to allow Jackie's statement to remain unexamined. In the subsequent discussion, the elementary teachers in our group consider their teaching practices:

Leslie: I think one of the things that we should do is to focus this inquiry on our teaching.

Lisa (directed to Dominick): So, you teach elementary too...do you teach, like, pictures? What do you teach? Do you make pictures of stuff a lot?

Dominick: What do you mean by "make pictures?"

Lisa: Because the more I'm sitting here, I'm thinking, oh my God, I think all my projects are conceptual because we don't make pictures of stuff. We don't. I exercise their hands and their eyes, and I really make them solve a problem. But we don't make pictures of stuff.

Keara: What do you mean, you don't draw what you see?

Lisa: If that happens to be what we're doing, like, if 4th grade does the architecture project where we learn about Greek architecture and try to create the value... What do you guys teach? (group meeting, November 13, 2009)

The day following this discussion, Lisa described that she felt she did not share an approach to teaching elementary art with the other members of our group. After I asked her if she felt she shared commonalities with other group members, she replied,

Well when I was bouncing my information off of my neighbor (who is a special education teacher), she asked if we were all thinking the same way. And I said, "No." And as I was driving home, I started running through all of my projects in my head. And I said to my neighbor, "I think my whole program is conceptual. Like, I really do. I think that's what it is. The more I think about it, the less I feel in common with the other elementary teachers." And she said, "Who cares?" And I said, "I care. I don't like that." You know, because you like to be like everyone else and you like to think that you're doing the same thing. And you're doing the right thing. And she said, "But you don't do the same thing as the teachers in your district, what do you care?" But that's different. I don't see them. Like, I'm not with them, and... I don't know. I don't know that I have anything in common with them. (personal communication, November 14, 2009)

Despite Jackie's initial suspicion that teachers in our group taught in similar ways, Lisa felt that she had a different approach to teaching elementary art than the other teachers in our group. This initial interview with Lisa also confirmed my observation that our group did not always share the common language that Jackie had previously identified as a shared trait of our group:

Leslie: There was a theme in our conversation about providing students with choice or leading them on a rote step-by-step production of a product. I'm actually not convinced that the [veteran teachers] teach like that. I just think that we're having some...

Lisa: Vocab issues.

Leslie: Vocab. Yes. We need to work a little bit when someone says something. I noticed a few times yesterday Dominick used the word "it" and I said, "It what? What do you mean?" because I didn't think we had a clear understanding. I feel like we need to work hard to describe the terms we're using, because I'm starting to realize that we're not sharing language. Even though we're all art teachers, we're using that language pretty differently. (personal communication, November 14, 2009)

I was surprised that the words such as "process," "concept" and "art" that are closely tied to our work as art teachers were especially problematic in our group conversations because of my own assumption about shared meanings. A conversation in our third meeting made apparent individual members' varied interpretations of our inquiry question, How can we make art more meaningful and relevant to our students?

Veronica: Our eighth graders think art is the class they take with an art teacher. We're trying to make them understand...

Bonnie: That it's not here, it's everywhere.

Veronica: We just want them to be aware, I think.

Bonnie: Art isn't just in the art room. It's in every part of your life. I took 'art' as art.

Lisa: Everywhere.

Bonnie: But I think some of us interpreted this question “art class.” Maybe that’s why we’re thinking differently. Maybe that’s wrong.

Lisa: No.

Jackie: Oh, no.

Keara: No, that’s not wrong. It’s just making us realize... maybe my approach was off.

Veronica: If you say to anyone, “What would your world be without art – not art class -- without art, something that was designed? What would your world be?”

Lisa: Yeah, I like that concept.

Veronica: That brings everybody to the same level.

Jackie: So we’re doing art as the big term?

Lisa: Yeah, I feel like that’s why we became art teachers.

Bonnie: Why pigeon hole ourselves?

Veronica: Yeah. I agree.

Bonnie: Because we’re saying art’s everywhere, so why are we assuming it’s only in our art class? (group meeting, December 4, 2009)

Not only did the teachers identify two different interpretations of the inquiry question – “art” in reference to art class or in reference to a practice that typically produces exhibited products – but they also began to suggest that their multiple interpretations might mean that one of the interpretations was “wrong” or “off.” Rather than allow multiple interpretations, the teachers attempted to come to a common interpretation of the term “art” related to our group inquiry. Our group shared a common

language insofar as we were using similar *words* to describe our practice. However, I found that using the same words did not also guarantee a shared *meaning* among members of the group.

The previous conversations demonstrate three prevailing assumptions that individual members of our group held about our entire group based on our common “art teacher” label: a common language, feelings of isolation, and similar teaching approaches. However, (re)considering the assumptions led me to understand that these assumptions were not true for all members of our group and helped me to see the ways in which our group’s diversities were not all demographic in nature, as I had initially presumed. In addition to the three assumptions that were not true for all members, a fourth assumption did hold true for each member of our group: a feeling of invisibility within their teaching contexts. Veronica told me,

I think we’re all very proud of what we do. We’re all very passionate about art and being art teachers. And I think we all feel stressed out and tired and feel that we’re not very important in our districts. And that’s hard for people like us who feel that what we do is very important. I think that a lot of us, at different times, feel invisible. And there’s no worse feeling. (personal communication, November 15, 2009)

A number of group conversations, as demonstrated in the excerpt below, followed Veronica’s initial observation that the art teachers in our group felt marginalized in their schools.

Bonnie: There may be degrees of importance [to what we do].

Lisa: We’re not as important as the core curriculum.

Jackie: But we are the core curriculum, that's what the standards say. We are core.

Lisa: According to *Dateline* and *20/20*, we are not core.

Jackie: According to our state standards, we are core.

Lisa: In my opinion, my kids don't take an art [state achievement] test, so...I'm out.

Jackie: If art is relevant and important to them, right now in the age of testing, how is it improving student achievement? We better have answers, in this age of testing. We better have answers, or we're out the door.

Bonnie: Assuming testing is the answer.

Lisa: Only the parents of the kids who really love art even know who I am. The rest are like, "I think that's the art teacher because she has an apron on. I'm pretty sure." (group meeting, November 13, 2009)

In this excerpt, the group members suggest that their feelings of unimportance come from teaching a non-core and/or untested subject area and from going unrecognized. Group members also described how working conditions such as scheduling contributed to their feelings of unimportance. For instance, Lisa described how her students' parents may not recognize her as the art teacher, likely the result of a schedule that requires her to spend just a few days a week (or less) at each three elementary schools. In the following conversation, Keara described her physical separation from other teachers in the building, and suggested room placement affected her feelings of unimportance:

Keara: It's like, I don't get a chance to share and when I do, gosh darn it, I go overboard! (Laughs.)

Veronica: That's cause no one in your school cares what you think!

Keara: Yeah, 'cause I'm in the basement.

Veronica: That's 'cause you're the art teacher!

Keara: ...and I got this long hallway, it's just me, and nobody listens! (Laughs.)

Veronica: Oh, it's coming out.

Jackie: Let's get some Kleenex. (Keara still laughing.)

Veronica: Here, give her a paper towel.

Jackie: You go ahead and cry. We don't need tissues, we've got paper towels.

Bonnie: Go ahead, I'll take notes. (Group laughs.)

Keara: It's awful. (group meeting, September 25, 2009)

Additional conversations uncovered teachers' feelings of marginalization in light of challenging workplace issues like budget cuts and art teachers' unequal access to technology in their schools. Lisa regularly described herself by using terms that demonstrated her feelings of unimportance in relationship to teachers of other subject areas. When attempting to explain the inequitable access to technology in her school, Lisa stated, "I am a fake teacher, not a real teacher. Why would [the administration] give me a ten thousand dollar Promethean® board?" (personal communication, November 13, 2009). In another instance, our group was considering how our colleagues might provide additional perspectives about our inquiry question¹². Lisa attempted to clarify how we were defining "colleagues" by asking, "Do you mean regular teachers, or art teachers?" (personal communication, November 13, 2009), implying that art teachers are somehow different from and are not "regular" teachers.

¹² How can we make art more meaningful/relevant to our students? colleagues? administrators? the public?

In some conversations, our group appeared to appreciate the ways in which their relative unimportance within their school provided them with a level of autonomy. Jenni told the group how being different from other teachers has worked to her advantage, by describing the amount of autonomy and access to resources she has when ordering supplies for her classes:

Jenni: Another thing I need to do is give you supplies that are building up in my room that I don't need.

Veronica: How does that happen?

Jenni: I don't know. I inherited a closet full of stuff. And I keep ordering because they keep giving me money.

Jackie: Never tell anyone about it. You never want to tell your administrators that.

Jenni: Oh, they don't care.

Jackie: Oh, let me tell you.

Jenni: I just have to clean out my room because I have too much stuff.

Jackie: Just find a way to get rid of it without anyone knowing so your budget line doesn't change. Last year I ordered less out of the goodness of my heart because we were in a budget crisis and now this year they want me to be at the same figure I spent last year, even though all the teachers in the building came and stole my supplies.

Jenni: Literally – they don't even come near me. They think, “Ew, you're an art person. I don't understand you.”

Jackie: You are very fortunate you don't have anyone near you. Enjoy the moment. (group meeting, March 5, 2010)

The challenges each of these teachers faced were slightly different, and yet the challenges were common topics of conversation during formal group meetings, interviews, and times of informal gathering. After having spent a year engaged in conversations about members' situational challenges and feelings of unimportance, Dominick suggested, "We are all lacking support. We are all stressed" (personal communication, November 15, 2009). The following conversation is especially emblematic of the ways in which this group acted as a safe and supportive space for its members:

Jackie: One of the ways to break down barriers is to communicate. And we as art teachers never have the chance to communicate with each other. I think that's a big factor of why we're like kids in the candy shop. Because, my god, we're actually able to talk to people who can communicate with us. So communication is a big... words are important.

Veronica: It makes us feel important.

Jackie: Yeah, you know, experiences...and that's what art is all about. Because there's not anyone who can know all of our experiences or know everything. There's so much to know. (group interview, November 16, 2009)

In Chapter 1, I described the uniqueness of the collaborative inquiry group composed entirely of art educators like the one in this study, and posed the following research question, "In what ways do the participants view this experience as related and/or unrelated to their content area?" Through my (re)consideration of the label "art teacher," I realized that teachers' understanding of their content area was interwoven with their identity as an art teacher, and that their desire for content-specific PD was not driven

solely by a desire for content knowledge. Instead, the teachers in this study saw ArtsEdPD as related to their content area because it provided a supportive space for them to discuss the dilemmas and challenges they encounter in their teaching with other art teachers. As the following conversation demonstrates, teachers saw this experience as related to their content area because it provided a level of collegial support that is absent in many of their schools:

Jackie: Well I think we will all be able to make it a meaningful experience because we don't all have this opportunity. I think that's why we cherish the moments, because as art educators this could change your whole career. Because I can remember doing this like 25 years ago. And it did change my career. Just that one moment they let me out of the building. You know. (Group laughs.)

Jackie: I mean they gave you the confidence, the connection, they gave you the focus, and it can really change your career. And so cherish this moment, its not going to happen all the time.

Dominick: You may not see another like art teacher for twenty years. (Group laughs.)

Jackie: Enjoy the moment. Take pictures. (group meeting, November 16, 2009)

The ability for the group members to provide collegial support to each other was due (at least in part) to the disciplinary homogeneity of the group. Veronica and Jackie expressed their appreciation for the disciplinary homogeneity of our group in a reflective group interview at the end of the year:

Jackie: We laughed. That was the nice thing about it, is that we felt that we could express ourselves, say our emotions, and how we really felt. We were generally

accepted for them and everyone came together in collaboration and thought, oh, I can help you with that.

Veronica: And we are all art people.

Jackie: Yeah, yeah.

Veronica: That helped a lot. (group interview, May 14, 2010)

Given the fact that the group members valued this space for its ability to support our work as art teachers, paired with the reality that the members of our group felt marginalized in their teaching contexts, our efforts to cover up differences for the sake of inclusion is not surprising. The downplaying of our diversities demonstrates the continual oscillation of our individual and group identities.

Friedman (1998) suggests that the space in between differences allows for a number of positive interactions: mutual understanding, connections based on need, coalitions, and affiliations, however provisional. These positive interactions enable marginalized groups to work together despite their differences in such powerful ways that the marginalized groups “cannot afford to abandon them” (p. 73). By expanding Friedman’s theory to a professional group, and acknowledging the marginalization members of our group had experienced in their workplaces, I believe that the members of our group downplayed their differences in an attempt to be included by the group based, at least in part, on a desire for collegial support.

At our third group meeting, Lisa recognized the unifying possibilities of this experience and suggested (in jest) that the group form an “art militia.”

Jackie: I feel we were lucky

Bonnie: Well yeah, I really feel lucky. When I think of the other collaborative inquiry groups, I just think ours is fantastic.

Veronica: We are the only ArtsEdPD group with all art people in it.

Bonnie: The others have music people and others mixed in with their group.

Lisa: We need to form an art militia. (group meeting, May 14, 2010)

The idea of an art militia communicates the re/activist stance art teachers might take in order to declare the value of art education in a hostile educational climate. The prevailing educational climate resulting in art educators' feelings of invisibility seemed to be the main commonality among our group of art teachers.

After acknowledging the ways in which my fellow group members viewed this experience, I now realize that my initial research question, "In what ways do the participants view this experience as related to their content area?" did not sufficiently acknowledge teachers' identities or make space for other important outcomes (e.g., collegial support) of content-specific professional development. I believe that the question, "In what ways do the participants view this experience as related and/or unrelated to *their work as art teachers*?" is a better representation of my new understandings because it invites a multiplicity of significant outcomes rather than assuming that a relatedness to teachers' content area is the only important outcome of content-specific PD.

For instance, while I entered our collaborative inquiry experience expecting to spend the majority of our group meetings engaged in conversations centered on members' teaching practice, such conversation was rare. The rarity of these conversations suggests that they were not automatic within our collaborative inquiry experience.

Furthermore, my fellow group members' appreciation for our experience, from which critical conversations of teaching practice were almost absent, suggests such conversations are not the only conversations of value within a collaborative inquiry experience. In our case, conversations about teaching practice followed many hours of story telling, both classroom-based and otherwise.

Conversations centered on teaching practice began to take place when members of the group shared data they had collected from their students related to our inquiry question, almost six months into our eight month long collaborative inquiry process. After spending a significant amount of time building trust and sensing a need to regain momentum after winter weather cancelled a meeting, our group drafted a plan that outlined what we hoped to accomplish before the year's end (Table 8). The group members hoped that the plan would help them to attend more directly and specifically to our inquiry question than we had up until that point.

Table 8. Group-defined tasks for our work between March 5 and May 14, 2010, created on March 5, 2010

<i>Meeting Date</i>	<i>Tasks to complete before meeting</i>	<i>Theme of and/or Tasks for meeting</i>
March 5, 2010	1. Collect data from students 2. Reflect: What am I (not) doing?	1. Analyze data about students and share reflection statements 2. Draft questions for administrators and colleagues
March 18, 2010	1. Collect data from administrators 2. Collect data from colleagues	1. Compile and analyze the data from administrators and colleagues 2. Decide what to do with the data
TBA	1. Implement task/change 2. Reflect	1. Reflect as a group 2. Plan final artwork/sharing
TBA	Prepare individual pieces for the installation	Collaborative work on the installation
May 14, 2010	TBA	Sharing the installation with the rest of ArtsEdPD

For instance, Lisa shared an example from her own classroom during our meeting in early March. After any one of Lisa's elementary art classes exhibited positive behavior for a certain number of art class periods, Lisa would allow the students in that class to vote on a number of ways in which they could spend their next allotted art class time. She observed that classes seemed to always choose the "free art" option, in which students could make art about whatever they wanted and had their choice of a number of mediums with which to make it. Lisa reasoned that students' consistent choice to have "free art" might have been because this format was meaningful to them, and began to explore the

relationship between “free art” and our group’s inquiry question.¹³ After Lisa shared with our group that her students liked free art because they could “make what they’re good at,” “take it home right away,” and “choose who they work with,” I saw an opportunity to ask her about her teaching practice:

Leslie: Given their appreciation for choice, is there a way that you already allow for choice in your other lessons? How could you use this information to inform your practice?

Lisa: Yes. I even put that as one of the things that I’m [already] doing. I do give them so many choices, but, I think that when they have free art it doesn’t matter if it’s right or wrong and they’re not getting graded on it. It doesn’t have to please me. It just has to please them. On the one hand, I like that. On the other hand, we are teaching to a curriculum. You can’t just have free art every day...It threw me a little bit. What are you supposed to do in terms of choice? I don’t know. (group meeting, March 5, 2010)

In this conversation, Lisa finished sharing her data by posing a question, and a period of silence followed. No one attempted to engage with her about the tension she identified in her teaching practice between student choice and curriculum. The fact that we did not engage with her in this potentially generative conversation about the role of student choice in relationship to curriculum and pedagogy demonstrates our group’s hesitancy to engage in critical conversations of practice for whatever reason. In this conversation and others, group members would often speak in generalities that masked specific descriptions of their teaching practice and may have unknowingly contributed to

¹³ How can we make art more meaningful and relevant to our students? Colleagues? Administrators? The public?

an “illusion of consensus” (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001, p. 955) within the group. We did not know exactly how much choice Lisa gave her students in other lessons, and in our silence agreed that she did in fact give her students “many choices.” In hindsight, I could have asked Lisa to provide a more specific example that would have allowed our group to engage about the tension Lisa identified. Instead, I interrupted the silence by noting some key features of Lisa’s data collection process and asked the next person to share. Through my reflection on this process, I realized that facilitators may be able to encourage deeper discussions of practice by asking questions that prompt group members to share their practice in specific and detailed ways. However, asking such questions before an appropriate level of trust is established may come across as an interrogation rather than out of an interest and desire to learn from the experience of others.

Conversations with individual group members and the data collected by ArtsEdPD’s evaluator¹⁴ sometimes provided information about the ways teachers related our group experience to their work that were often absent from our group conversations. For instance, Jackie said that the group gave her the opportunity to reflect on her teaching, something she often does not have time to do during her regular school day. Lisa described how reflecting on her practice as a result of participating in the group gave her a new perspective when she said, “this group enhances my teaching by making me look at my program overall. I had to take a step back and now have a new perspective on things” (personal communication, October 21, 2009).

¹⁴ ArtsEdPD had a standard online form that consisted of three questions participants were to answer after each group meeting. The questions were: 1) Describe your experience working in collaborative inquiry groups today. How is the inquiry process unfolding for you and your group?, 2) What will you be thinking about and working on before our next CIG meeting?, and 3) How is the work you are doing in your CIG likely to enhance your teaching?

In addition, the responses group members entered in the ArtsEdPD form reveal how individual group members began to relate their engagement with our collaborative inquiry process to their classroom practice. In the following list, I have selected one response from each group member that demonstrates how they were relating our work to their teaching around the middle of our year together:

- “Our collaborative inquiry work is making me see my students as more than just members in a class, but as people who have ideas about art that need to be shared” (Veronica, December 10, 2009).
- “I have a better understanding of how my students look at art and what they find meaningful about it” (Jenni, December 4, 2009).
- “I feel I have a better understanding of where my students are coming from and where I need to lead them” (Bonnie, December 5, 2009).
- “This group has improved the way I approach my teaching in method, technique, and attitude” (Dominick, December 7, 2009).
- “I believe that our work together will take the focus off of production and open new ways to enrich my teaching. I have enjoyed the conversations with my students [about our inquiry question]. It makes me constantly reflect on my teaching” (Jackie, January 15, 2010).
- “This entire process is giving every move I make in teaching and reacting to art more meaning” (Keara, March 5, 2010).
- “I need to think more about how my students are viewing the field of art. I wonder if they think it is relevant to their lives” (Leslie, November 13, 2010).

- “I am working to make art class more meaningful to my students” (Lisa, December 4, 2009).

This list demonstrates some of the ways each group member related our work to her or his practice. The connections we made were not standardized responses or necessarily predictable outcomes. The presence of these connections and the variation in our experience demonstrates how inquiry-based professional development opportunities can meaningfully attend to teachers’ dilemmas of practice and allow for a diversity of experience.

Even though each member of our group referred to themselves as an “art teacher,” our group members and their experiences in our inquiry group were diverse. The process of mapping the content-specific nature of this professional development experience helped me to reconsider the characteristics assumed to accompany the “art teacher” label and observe the variation of our experiences relating our collaborative inquiry work to our teaching practice. Like any social construct, labels refer to objects (or in this case, people) existing in cultural, political, and historical contexts. Given the current educational context in the United States, which has privileged certain content areas by tying them to funding, I am not surprised that the two things in common among our group members, the “art teacher” label and our feelings of invisibility, are related. The next section more fully explores spaces of in/visibility as I describe the relationships between our collaborative inquiry group and teachers’ individual working contexts.

The Challenge of Location and Position

“Some of the differences [we experience] depend on where you’re at, and that depends on the community that you’re supported by. And, a lot of [our lack of support] goes back

to the fact that we're separated so that we can't get together to share ideas and help each other out." (Dominick, personal communication, November 15, 2009)

"This is what a lot of superintendents don't want you to—they don't want you to hear what's going on somewhere else. You know, because separate you are less powerful. And when they bring us together people start talking about what I have, what I don't have, and what I can do. So it's like, uh-oh. Because they haven't let us out of the building, Veronica and I, and it's like we're chained to our desks." (Bonnie, personal communication, November 16, 2009)

At the beginning of this study, I wondered, "In what ways do the participants view this experience as related and/or unrelated to their teaching context?" This question prompted me to try to understand individual teachers' contexts as well as the ways that teachers were relating our collaborative inquiry experience to their work in K-12 visual art classrooms. I began to understand how teachers' views of their locations and positions, both within our group and within their teaching contexts, were informed by the locations and positions of other group members. Moreover, group members continually negotiated their locations/positions by and through relationships with others.

Cartographers must understand the location and position of the objects that they intend to map if they are to show the geographical relationships between objects. For instance, understanding the geographical position of Tennessee is dependent on seeing its position among bordering states. Similarly, attempting to understand the location and position of people within social structures requires observing people in relationship to one another. Like a cartographer, I was involved in ongoing negotiations as I attempted to

understand and re/present the locations and positions of the teachers, including my own, in this study. For instance, I struggled with how to re/present a teacher's position when our perceptions of each other or of our circumstances differed. In these instances, I present both perceptions, not supposing that one is somehow more accurate than the other, and I suggest how the interaction of the two perceptions might be a place of generative understanding (Maguire, 2008).

Re/presenting location is also complex because the types of locations and positions of interest in this study are not fixed or static (Tisdell, 1998). In these instances, I present multiple and/or changing perceptions, including my own, because I believe that "narrating a nonunitary self allows for greater self-knowledge" (Bloom, 1996, p. 176). Through the re/presentation of teachers' multiple and sometimes conflicting perspectives in this section, I suggest the ways in which the teachers viewed our collaborative inquiry experience as related and/or unrelated to their teaching context.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the metaphor of an archipelago and suggested that like islands, art teachers have unique geographical positions and are often physically separated from one another. As the data presented in the previous chapter illustrate, this feeling of isolation was not the case for Bonnie and Veronica, who taught in adjacent classrooms in the same building. However, Bonnie's statement, "It's like we're chained to our desks," in the opening quotation implies that despite their close working relationship, they have been isolated from other art teachers outside their school building. Bonnie explained to me that it was unusual for her district to allow both Veronica and her to be part of something outside the building such as ArtsEdPD: "Well, I think we've

always – as far as going to conferences and all that, they’ve clipped our wings. But now they’re opening the door to us.”

As the opening quotations suggest, the ArtsEdPD experience brought together teachers who often consider themselves “separated” from each other. In this way, our group functioned as a new location in which we could come together physically, pedagogically, and emotionally. The next few sections describe the ways that the inquiry group space affected group members’ views of their locations and positions.

Locating Inequities

One of the benefits of collaborative inquiry located outside of teachers’ working environments is that teachers can learn about the working environments of others and, as a result, gain a better understanding of their own (Isaacs, 1999; Nelson & Slavit, 2008). Bonnie’s statement that opens this chapter tells how members of our group exchanged information about what they had or could do within their specific teaching contexts. The following conversation is emblematic of many group conversations in which teachers began to see their own teaching context in relationship to others’ contexts and, perhaps more importantly, uncovered issues related to accessing resources and understanding hierarchical organizational structures.

Jenni: Do any of you have trouble accessing things on the internet at your school?

Veronica: Yeah. Well, we only have one computer for the kids to use.

Keara: I have two. Do you have a tech guy?

Jenni: Yeah, but he blames everything on the REA [Regional Education Agency].

Veronica: We got ours unblocked. We had to get a password...

Jenni: We need something. I need something for my own teaching purposes to be able to find images to manipulate and things. I can't use Google images or Bing.

Lisa: Even if I try the search engines, if it includes an image, it blocks it...

Jenni: My computer is unblocked. But if I was to get on a student computer, I can't get any images. So I have to find ways to get the images to students...I mean, there has to be a way to let them on some of these sites as long as we're supervising.

Jackie: That might be a good question to go back to our districts with, or to present to our superintendents and principals. We're looking to produce images, what does your district do for a safe site for children as opposed to blocking everything? Sometimes you just have to make them accountable. They don't know. They give it to somebody else to do. Maybe they know they are being blocked. You know what I'm saying?

Jenni: I think they lie to us.

Lisa: My principal told me, "It is the way that it is. If you want a site unblocked, send the site to me. I will check it, and if I approve it, I'll get back to you within the week." Really? Within a week? I want to print out one thing, and you won't buy me a reproduction. (group meeting, October 6, 2009)

Through such conversations, teachers began to realize that there was not only significant variation in their experiences across their school districts but also different procedures in place that provided some of them with more access to resources than others. Group members continued to identify other inequities, such as incongruencies in their salaries:

We just settled a contract and so they compared our contract to the neighboring schools. Like, literally, the day before we had our first meeting, we sat at a meeting after school and compared the contracts, and then we were sitting at the first CIG meeting and I'm going, "Oh my gosh, I saw all of their pay scales yesterday. And I'm the lowest paid. But oh well, that's ok" (Keara, personal communication, November 12, 2009).

Before the interview in which Keara described the salaries of members of our group, I had assumed all of the local districts' pay scales were similar because they were located in a relatively small geographic area where the cost of living was similar from one school district to another.¹⁵ Later in the year, a group conversation confirmed that my assumption was inaccurate:

Veronica: I mean, we are all within 15 miles of each other, right?

Jackie: If it was just a straight path...

Veronica: Yeah, well, except [Jenni's district]. It just takes 45 minutes to get there. You have to go by boat, canoe, and 4-wheeler. (Group laughs.)

Jackie: You know what, the pay scale goes like that too. You can go 10 miles down the road and the pay scale is entirely different. It jumps 15 thousand.

Lisa: It's all about crossing over the county line.

Dominick and Jackie: Yeah.

Lisa: Like teachers that have been working for two years are making more than I'll be making two years from now.

Jackie: Starting salary is sometimes higher.

¹⁵ Using the online cost of living calculator found at www.bestplaces.net, I was able to confirm that the cost of living among the towns in which the group members taught differed by less than \$3,000 (6%) for someone making \$50,000 a year.

Lisa: My neighbor...this year is his fourth year. He is making what I will be making in six years. And that will be my thirteenth year at my school district.

Keara: Let's not talk about my contract compared to that district. Please.

Dominick: This is the kicker. My wife and I just sat down [to talk about retirement]. She teaches at [another school district]. When we retire, she'll make \$700 more a month than I will.

Jackie: Whoa.

Keara: A month?

Dominick: A month. And over the course of our teaching career, I've always taught more classes a day than her, more duties, everything. I'm more taxed and less paid.

Veronica: It amazes me.

Jackie: The inequities are ridiculous (personal communication, April 30, 2010).

This conversation paired with Keara's interview led me to believe that unequal pay was one factor in how Keara and others saw themselves positioned in the group. Thus, I requested salary information from our group members in an attempt to understand the difference in pay between the districts represented by our group members during the previous school year. More specifically, I asked each participant to provide me with the base salary for a starting teacher in his or her district during the 2009-2010 year. I asked for this figure rather than their own salaries based on my own middle class assumption that asking them for their current salary figures is taboo. Table 9 represents the starting teacher salaries in the six districts represented by our group members.

Table 9. Base teacher salary for 2009-2010 school year in districts represented by members of our collaborative inquiry group

<i>District</i>	<i>Salary</i>
Jenni	\$28,500
Dominick	\$31,700
Keara	\$32,500
Jackie	\$35,974
Lisa	\$37,000
Bonnie/Veronica	\$42,625

The difference in starting teacher salaries across districts represented by teachers in our group was \$14,125, or 50% of the lowest paying district's starting salary. Dominick suggested that the significant variation among school districts is due to the differing commitments of the administrators and school boards that govern and fund each district. As he said, "The problem is, with all districts, we're not even at the mercy of administration. It goes back to the school board: what they will fund and what they won't. We don't have control of that" (personal communication, October 6, 2009).

Whatever the cause of the variations, they did exist. In the case of teacher salary, group members did not suggest any action after a general discussion of the differences noted above. However, I began to see how teachers would attempt to tackle other inequities that surfaced through group conversation when the inequity directly affected their students. In the following discussion, group members realized the inequity in the amount of time their students had allotted for art class:

Keara: I just need to find a way to make my class longer. I'm trying to suggest a 5-day cycle that would take us to 45-minute classes.

Jackie: What do you have now?

Keara: 30.

Jackie: Oh, that's horrendous. Just horrendous. That's ridiculous. So once a week, 30 minutes?

Keara: I have 8 classes a day.

Jackie: Do you have children once a week?

Keara: Once a week. Uh huh. (group meeting, April 30, 2010)

In this case, the group began a more formal process of collecting and interpreting data in order to assess differences in the amount of time their students receive art instruction (see Table 10 for a comparison).

Table 10. Number of hours students receive art instruction in districts represented by members of our collaborative inquiry group

	<i>Elementary (hours per year)</i>	<i>Middle (hours per year)</i>	<i>High¹⁶ (hours per elected class)</i>
Jackie	32	unknown	unknown
Lisa	21-27	20	66
B & V	25	31.5	63
Keara	18	30.75	30.75
Dominick	27.5	33	unknown
Jenni	17.5	63	63

As a result of this discussion, Keara and Lisa began to work together based on the fact that they were both worried about issues of equity for their students. In Lisa's case, she had calculated that her students who had art class on Fridays had 21 hours of art per year as opposed to her students who had art class on Thursdays, who were in art class for 27 hours a year. The disparity was the result of a school schedule that attaches students' art time to a particular weekday rather than a 5-day cycle. Professional development days, holidays, and other reasons explain why students attend art class less often on Fridays than on Thursdays in Lisa's district. In Keara's situation, she saw students for 30 minutes a week plus for an additional art class that rotated bi-weekly. She wanted to move to a 5-day cycle for the same reasons as Lisa, but hoped that she could work towards one 45-

¹⁶ The number of hours a student receives art instruction depends on the number of elected art classes. In the state in which this study took place, students are required at least one fine arts credit in high school, which includes a number of disciplines/courses in addition to visual arts.

minute class a week for her students rather than a 30-minute class and an extra 30-minute class once every two weeks. Keara and Lisa realized they had a similar issue in the following conversation:

Keara: I actually pulled out my calendar and looked. Without having snow days (because I didn't record those), I saw my Friday class 39 times and my Thursday class 29 times. That's a pretty big leap.

Lisa: Uh huh. That's like two whole projects.

Keara: I guess my administrator asked to switch to a 5-day rotation last year and got a lot of flack, so I have to figure out a way to present it differently.

Lisa: Let me know what you come up with because I have to do the same thing before June 11th, which is when they have their meeting.

Keara: Yeah, this 45-minute thing is getting a lot of flack. (group meeting, April 30, 2010)

The inequities discussed in our collaborative inquiry group related to teacher's access to technological equipment, teaching resources, salaries, teaching schedules, facilities, instructional time, and supplies. These inequities also influenced the ways that teachers saw themselves, both within our group and in their teaching contexts. In an interview with Veronica at the beginning of the year, for example, she described how each teacher in the group was relating these conversations to her or his own teaching context:

I think it's an excellent group. I really do. I think they all teach in totally different school districts – I mean from very poor. Jenni's is very poor, but our district gives us as much money as we want. I mean, it's unbelievable. So to see

everybody's problems, and to see the different age groups. You know what you notice? When you ask a question, everyone reverts back to how it affects them. You know? They go, "Well in my classroom, we do this project..." because I think that's where they're comfortable and they know that area. And then when you start looking at the big picture and you say, "Well let's look at the big picture" then everyone sees it more globally. (personal communication, November 12, 2009)

In addition, Veronica described to me how being in the group specifically affected her perceptions of her teaching context at the end of the year:

Well, I feel very grateful for the situation I am in. I realized, by being in this group, how very lucky I am to have another art teacher in the building with me to bounce ideas off of and to share and plan as a team. I also was made aware of how lucky we are to have the budget and beautiful art room facility that we sometimes take for granted. (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

Like Veronica, Dominick compared his school to Jenni's school when I asked him if there was a time this year when he felt that differences in teaching contexts were especially apparent in our group:

I feel bad – and I still feel bad for Jenni. I think she is a pretty dynamic person, and I think she has a lot going for her. She's a good kid. She seems like a pretty creative person and energetic. But that's one situation that I felt really bad about because basically, all I ever had to do was ask. I think once you do a few things, and they are successful, if you're in the right situation, you don't have a problem.

I think that poor girl is always battling, you know? (personal communication, May 11, 2010)

Through individual interviews with group members, I was able to listen to the ways that our group interactions shaped their individual understandings of their own teaching context and the teaching contexts of other group members. Bonnie, for example, classified group members into two categories, “We are a group of ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots.’ Like, listening to Jenni and what she has to do to get things...I mean, [Veronica and I] just put it in and we get it” (personal communication, November 16, 2009). As in the latter illustration, I noticed that group members often presented their contexts in relationship to one another in order to describe perceived inequities. I also saw how our understandings of each other’s contexts were dependent, at least in part, on how we had described our teaching contexts to other members of the group. Thus, teachers’ perceptions of their own working contexts played a significant role in how we came to understand each other’s joys, challenges, and struggles. I explore group members’ perceptions further in the next section.

Perceptions of Position

What our group members knew about each other’s teaching contexts was primarily the result of group members’ stories. A few group members had been to these other districts because of a student teaching placement, substitute position, or for a professional workshop. In a small number of situations, participants also referred to the news or small town gossip as sources of information about others’ teaching contexts, as demonstrated in a conversation I had with Bonnie:

Bonnie: It's interesting to hear Lisa and her beef with [her district]. I mean, they're out to screw you left and right down there.

Leslie: Really?

Bonnie: Only because it's their school board. Somebody just told me – it was in the paper? The letter to the editor – they were taking teachers that were nestled into what they were teaching and taking them and putting them three grades down or in different areas than what was on their certificate. (group meeting, November 16, 2009)

I lacked this understanding of the districts because I lived so far from where the group members were teaching. However, I was the only group member who had the opportunity to visit each of these teachers in their classrooms. These visits helped me to understand the power of perception in teacher's representations of their contexts.

For instance, a number of group members seemed concerned about the lack of teaching resources Jenni had available to her, based on Jenni's candid description of her challenge to show students reference images.

We're teaching art, and it's very visual. And yet we're extremely lacking any of the technology to show it better. Like the overhead projectors. We have an English teacher that has one, but I can't get one. And I don't understand that part. The technology to be able to access and to do programs with the arts and everything –we can't get it. I'd like to be able to show an art history video on something bigger than a screen this big. I've seen English teachers...they don't even care to use it some times. I have to print stuff off and show them little things. (personal communication, October 6, 2009)

I was the only one in the group who observed first-hand that Veronica and Bonnie had the same amount of technology in their classroom as Jenni did in hers. Each of these women had a personal computer and a small number of student computers. Yet, their perception that this technology was adequate for teaching led them to present their contexts in significantly different ways than Jenni. As Veronica asserted,

Well, technology scares me because I know where our district is, and I know what we can use. And I also know the size of my classroom and just the logistics of technology, and I don't want to lose the hands-on work that we have done as art teachers for 30 years. And I see that going away everywhere else, and I don't want to lose that skill. So to use technology in whatever we decide on I think is a great idea, and I think it could help all of us, but I think to concentrate, maybe because I'm not versed in it and it's not a major part of my life, and so I'd hate to see that be the focus of everything. (Veronica, group meeting, October 6, 2009)

Despite having the same amount of technology in their classrooms, Jenni expressed a frustration with her lack of technology while Veronica and Bonnie feared that increasing their technology use would result in students losing other valuable skills. Based on how Jenni had described her teaching context, Bonnie believed that she had things that Jenni did not have:

Well, I would normally put everyone on the same playing field, but when I heard coming from her, the things she didn't have, it made me feel that we were very fortunate to have what we have. I only felt like that *because of what she said. You know, I've never been to Jenni's school*, but she does cool things with what she does have. (personal communication, May 6, 2010, emphasis added)

Had I not visited their classrooms, my understanding of their classrooms would have been based only on how teachers spoke about their contexts, and I would have assumed that Jenni actually had less equipment than Veronica.

Perception influenced not only how the teachers viewed each other's contexts, but also how group members described their positions within the group. In my initial interview with Keara, for example, she described to me how her perceived inexperience affected the way she saw herself in relation to the group.

Leslie: Do you have anything else you want to say about the group? Or your experience with it?

Keara: One minute it's exciting, but the next minute it's intimidating.

Leslie: Oh yeah?

Keara: 'Cause there's no way I can, I mean, I never feel like I can equal up to them. I don't know if Lisa or Jenni feel that way.

Leslie: You mean the people who have a lot of experience?

Keara: Yeah, their experience, their knowledge, their...

Leslie: Oh.

Keara: appreciation,

Leslie: So it's exciting to be with them?

Keara: and it's also in the next breath, like, what if I prove to be a failure to them, you know what I mean?

Leslie: Right, because you have such close relationships with some of them and they mentored you.

Keara: Yeah, I base my whole art curriculum on what I learned from Jackie millions of years ago. (personal communication, November 12, 2009)

As the above conversation implies, Jackie was Keara's elementary school art teacher, and Keara student taught at Bonnie and Veronica's school over 15 years ago. Keara was now in a professional space in which she was a colleague with Bonnie, Veronica, and Jackie, but worried about teachers whom she had looked up to early in her career seeing her as "a failure." However, in a later conversation, when I asked Keara about the role she played within the group, her perceived position in the group had changed:

Keara: Equal. We were all equal. We all asked the same question and it was really neat. All of us were equal. I thought it turned out good. I feel positive about the whole experience.

Leslie: Do you think there were strengths that you brought...

Keara: No. No, I felt like the little person.

Leslie: How come?

Keara: At the beginning because of all of the experience everyone else had. It was just Lisa and I and Jenni, but the others double us. If you add them all together they quadruple us. And it's like...ooo. These people have a lot of experience.

Leslie: But by the end you felt like we were all pretty equal?

Keara: Yeah. Mmhmm. Just all little art people passing out our curriculums.

Leslie: Well that's good. I'm glad you felt like your role was as significant as everyone else's at the end. You said you felt like the 'little art person' because of your experience. And so I interpret that to mean that maybe you felt like you had

less power than other people because of their experience and your lack of experience.

Keara: Yeah. (personal communication, May 5, 2010)

I was unsure if other members of the group had sensed Keara's initial perceptions of her position within the group until Bonnie brought it up in an interview at the end of the year.

Bonnie: Keara is just such a sweetheart. I mean, she student taught at our school. She is just something else. And I think she felt so insecure in this process, or she's so sensitive, and I don't think she felt worthy sometimes of everything that was going on. And I felt so bad every time that she felt that she wasn't to the same level that she thought everybody else was. I told her, "The grass may always look greener on the other side, but there might be poop in it!" But I just wanted to tell you that because I don't know if you got that feeling from her, and I just didn't want her to feel like that and I told her she – by no means—does she have to feel like that around anybody.

Leslie: Yeah, I did get that impression too at the beginning, and she shared some of that with me when we did the first interview. Last night she said that she felt that at the end we were all equal.

Bonnie: I feel better now that she feels ok with everything because I felt bad about her feeling less, you know, qualified. (personal communication, May 6, 2010)

Bonnie's statement about Keara's role in our group confirmed Keara's belief that the group members valued her role in the group and considered her as an equal, despite the things (e.g., experience) that Keara worried might lower her status in the group.

In contrast to Keara's emphasis on experience, Dominick identified technological skill as a characteristic that positioned him "in-between" other group members:

I feel like I was in-between. I don't feel like I was as bad off as some people with technology, but I also know what an iPod is. I don't want to deal with it at this point, but I know how to use my camera, download and upload in certain software program situations. (personal communication, May 11, 2010)

As members of our group shared these perceptions, I was able to see how their sense of position within our group depended on its relationship to the position of other group members.

Hiding Positions

In a number of interviews, group members based their perceived position within the group on a number of different characteristics, such as age, experience, technological skill, access to teaching resources, and teaching approach. Participants also appeared to be ranking themselves in relationship to other members and on scales that reflected macro-level social values (Drennon, 2002), as demonstrated when they praised members with sophisticated technological skill and/or those who had seemingly unrestrained access to the newest technological equipment. Keara, who said that she was "spoiled" with the amount of technology equipment and support she received in her district, began to withdraw from group conversations that would expose this privilege. Keara explained her reasoning for self-censoring her privilege as follows:

They [other group members] don't have the technology, and I kinda feel like I need to keep my mouth shut because I feel like the spoiled kid on the block, you know. I have the power, the projector. I've told you guys. I don't know, it just makes me feel bad because they're right, these kids need this stuff. They need to experience this stuff...I just really got to be quiet because I got it made. Our superintendent has us on the edge of technology (at least he thinks he does) so I have all of the stuff that they want so I always feel guilty. Like, cause I should be in their shoes really. It's only because our superintendent the last seven years has been pushing technology all the way. (personal communication, November 12, 2009)

Keara also told me that she knew her superintendent and principal's significant investment in technology could end with new administrators.

Keara's sense of privilege in one area and self-perceived low position in the group due other factors (i.e., her relative teaching inexperience, a lack of instructional time with students, and the low starting teacher salary in her district), demonstrates *polyrhythmic realities*, or "how a person can be privileged by one characteristic and at the same time not be privileged by virtue of another" (Rocco & West, 1998, p. 173). When I asked Keara directly why she did not share more about how she uses her technology in her teaching, she said, "Because I felt like I was bragging, and it's not good to brag" (personal communication, May 5, 2010). Keara perhaps chose to hide her position of privilege from the group for the sake of inclusion, or a desire for collegial support that she feared she would lose if she explicitly discussed this inequity.

Lisa also spoke with me about deciding not to share certain things in our group meeting. In her case, she wanted to keep the group conversations from becoming too elementary-specific since the group included a disproportionate number of elementary teachers. In an interview later in the year, I specifically asked Lisa how she decided when and what to share with the rest of the group.

Leslie: Can you describe a time this year when you decided not to say something in a CIG meeting and how you made the decision what to share or not to share?

Lisa: So many times, Leslie.

Leslie: Really?

Lisa: Yeah. Just because some times...I don't know how to...like sometimes I think we all get stuck in our little tunnel vision world, and it's great to share your tunnel vision world at certain times, but at other times it's not really moving anything forward. And there were a lot of times where I would think in my head, "Oh, I remember a time when..." or, "Yeah, that would be great and I could expand on that," but this isn't what we're here for. That wasn't the end all goal for what we were talking about. So I kind of just, like, I don't like to share because I want it to move on. If that makes sense.

Leslie: Yeah, so it seems like you adding your own personal story wasn't necessarily helping us with our agenda?

Lisa: Right. It's just fun gossip because we're a bunch of art teachers, and we don't get to talk to a bunch of art teachers that often. And when we do, it's like, you know, here's someone else that understands what we go through. No one else understands cleaning up seven times a day or fishing out kids from this place and

that place. And it is nice, but at the same time, it's counterproductive and we need to get back onto it. So I just keep quiet so that it will move on. Because I like for things to move on. (personal communication, May 5, 2010)

In addition to describing how her desire for things to "move on" kept her from engaging in certain group conversations, Lisa went on to identify other reasons why she would self-censor:

Lisa: Some things I don't share because I don't want, how do I say this...you don't want it to come back that somehow even inadvertently, you bad-mouthed the school district that you work for. So sometimes, like I would get uncomfortable when Jackie would specifically say things about [my principal]. Like I don't want to comment on that because it's my boss. Yeah, ok, she's great...moving on. I don't want to share personal things about her. So, yeah. Just because you don't want to accidentally say something that you're going to regret later on when it is repeated I guess.

Leslie: Yeah. As I've been re-reading these interviews from the beginning of the year, I've realized that there were some things that people told me in the interviews that never came up in our group meeting. So that's something that I found really interesting. The things that felt safe with one person that maybe wasn't safe, relevant, or not derailing the agenda...that's something I'm really interested in. Why would some of these things came up one-on-one but in a group people felt like they shouldn't talk about it?

Lisa: Oh. Well, don't get me wrong, Leslie. I don't want to look like a dummy, either. You don't want to be the lone soldier that's like, "Oh, I totally think this," and no one else agrees. (personal communication, November 14, 2011)

In this exchange, Lisa described two additional reasons why she did not always participate in group conversations. First, she worried that she might regret engaging in conversations that portrayed her school district or her administrators negatively. Second, Lisa did not offer her position on certain issues when she felt that no one would agree, suggesting once again a desire to be accepted by the group.

Keara and Lisa's reasons for self-censoring demonstrate times when individual members chose to hide their positions from our group. Their stories suggest that members of our group made individual decisions about what and when to share information based on their perception of what would be most beneficial for the group and for themselves as a professional as well as a vulnerable human being. Although many things likely remained invisible to me, my role as a researcher did give me access to some of these hidden positions through individual interviews and school visits. I now wonder how hidden positions (those both revealed to me and those that remained hidden) affected our perceptions of ourselves and our teaching contexts. For instance, if Keara had fully disclosed the way she integrated technology into her elementary art classroom, would that have changed the way that the rest of the group members saw their position within the group? On a few occasions, I was able to observe group members explore and reconsider a sort the relationship between our group and their teaching. I describe these occasions in the following section.

Shifting Positions

The schedule of ArtsEdPD meetings (held on six Fridays throughout the school year), along with the funding provided to each collaborative inquiry group, created situations in which I saw teachers' positions shift within their teaching context. For instance, Keara struggled to negotiate her position with other teachers in her building due to the ArtsEdPD schedule. ArtsEdPD held day-long workshops on six Fridays throughout the school year, and ArtsEdPD reimbursed districts for the cost of substitutes for each of the participants. A shortage of substitutes in Keara's district meant that when she was attending ArtsEdPD, the principal would often cancel art classes that day in order to use the substitute in another classroom. Because Keara's schedule was based on students having art class on specific week days, the teachers who had art class scheduled on Fridays consistently missed their contracted prep time when the principal canceled art class. Keara spoke with an ArtsEdPD co-director to suggest that the ArtsEdPD meetings take place different days of the week throughout the year in an effort to alleviate some of the pressure she felt from teachers in her school. In the following conversation, Keara described her interaction with the co-director:

Keara: They didn't like that when I told them about it. They said, "We're just trying to find our happy place here." I said, "Oh, that's not very nice." Ok, so I go to work and get abused from my kindergarten teacher who hasn't had art for each of these meetings because the sub is taken, you know what I mean?

Leslie: Yeah.

Keara: It's just frustrating. Today they cancelled gym, art and music today due to lack of subs. (personal communication, March 5, 2010)

Having been involved in the ArtsEdPD planning, I felt some responsibility towards the “abuse” Keara was encountering back in her school as a result of the ArtsEdPD schedule. I knew the grant co-directors had scheduled ArtsEdPD dates over a year ahead of time in order to accommodate the schedules of ten faculty members, including my own. I worked with Keara (and Lisa) to propose the five-day cycle plan to their school districts to help alleviate the problem, but neither school district has accepted the proposal to date. I continue to be concerned about the ways ArtsEdPD’s schedule generated a level of resentment among Keara’s colleagues, and the implications that could have on her position within her school building.

Luckily, Keara’s principal did not appear to hold any resentment towards her. At the end of the year, Keara shared the following story with me:

Keara: Do you know what my principal said today? She said, “I need to tell you, Keara, Yesterday I gave you the best compliment ever and you didn’t even get to hear it.”

Leslie: Aww.

Keara: I looked at her and she said, “You have been a better person and a better teacher with this whole thing that you’re doing at the REA.”...I told her that the REA was wonderful. She said she thought I changed this year just from this.

Leslie: That is a huge compliment. I’m glad she told you. (personal communication, May 5, 2010)

So while Keara had experienced some hostility from her fellow teachers, her principal appeared appreciative of Keara’s involvement in ArtsEdPD despite the scheduling challenges.

While the ArtsEdPD schedule caused some members of our group to renegotiate their position within their school, other group members saw their positions change because of the technological equipment that ArtsEdPD provided for their classrooms. Our group conversations from the beginning of our year together demonstrate the ways in which some group members did not have the same levels of access to technology in their buildings as teachers of other subject areas:

Lisa: I find it frustrating that classroom teachers have mounted Smartboards in their room, but yet the art teacher and the music teacher and the gym teacher – we're not valid teachers to have that kind of technology.

Jackie: The administrators--don't they realize it's a core subject?

Jenni: They don't care. It's not important to them...I can just imagine what we could do with Smartboards.

Lisa: Especially when they sit and gather dust in other rooms. So upsetting.

Jenni: Some of the teachers don't want to touch it. (group meeting, October 6, 2009)

Although ArtsEdPD did not attempt to provide its participants with all of the technology to which many of their colleagues had regular access, ArtsEdPD did provide each participant with a netbook at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, ArtsEdPD provided each collaborative inquiry group with \$7500 to use to support their work with technology or other opportunities as decided by the group. Based on the budget in the approved grant proposal, the ArtsEdPD co-directors desired instructional technology to have priority as groups determined how to spend their funds.

When I originally told the group about our \$7,500 fund, the group members began to imagine how they might benefit from purchasing additional technology for their classrooms. Our collaborative inquiry group used our funds to purchase technological equipment such as projectors, digital cameras, memory cards, and peripherals for their netbooks. ArtsEdPD expected that the equipment purchased on behalf of the teacher would be in the teacher's possession at all times. The ArtsEdPD Equipment Ownership Contract (Appendix D) states, "All equipment is to remain in your (the participant's) possession for the duration of the Arts Educator 2.0 Project," and, "At the end of the project, all issued equipment may remain in the participant's possession for continued use in the classroom, so long as he or she remains employed with the same school district listed below."

However, having new technology in their possession meant that the group members experienced a sudden visibility in their schools, as evidenced by group members' stories that describe colleagues now coming to them to borrow equipment. For instance, Jackie told a story about her efforts to keep the camera in her possession:

One of my kindergarten teachers needed a camera and I saw her come in my room and walk out with a camera. I said, "What are you doing?" She said, "you have the camera." I said, "No, this is my own camera. Get your hands off of it." (group meeting, April 30, 2010)

Prior to this ArtsEdPD equipment, a few of the group members did not have technological equipment that belonged in the art room. In Jackie's case, her colleagues had to learn that not all of the technology in Jackie's classroom was also for general school use.

To help mitigate any potential equipment ownership issues, ArtsEdPD provided each participant with stickers to mark all of the purchased equipment. In Lisa's case, this sticker helped her explain the agreement to teachers in her building,

I had a 4th grade teacher come in and pull the plugs out of my projector, and I said, "Can I help you?" And she said, "Oh, I just need the projector." And I said, "Then you're just going to have to keep on lookin' because flip that over—there's a sticker on the bottom that means do not touch." She was like, "Oh." And I said, "Yeah, it does not belong to you guys." What's funny is that yesterday she comes in and said, "That art thing you're doing...so I want to sign up for that next year." I said, "Oh, well you have to be an arts teacher." She said, "What do you mean?" and I said, "You have to be an arts teacher." She said, "I'm sure they just told you guys that." So I said, "Well, good luck with that." (group meeting, April 30, 2010)

Jackie and Lisa's stories helped me to understand how some of our group member's positions began to change because of the increase of technology in their classrooms. Both Jackie and Lisa responded strongly (or at least reported to have responded strongly) to colleagues who attempted to borrow their ArtsEdPD equipment. Their responses may demonstrate not only the unequal power relationship that was present in their school, but also the tendency of those who are marginalized and then get power to treat others in the same way they had been treated. I believe that their reactivity and possessive individualism are demonstrations of larger macro-level social conceptions of ownership and individualism that have likely influenced the cultures of their schools.

Not all members of my group had to defend their equipment. Others, like Bonnie, wanted to show it to everyone: "When I pulled this [netbook] out at school I was like,

‘Guys look at this!’ and they were like, ‘Oh, we’re jealous.’ And I said, ‘I almost know how to use it!’ You know, I was really excited about that” (personal communication, November 16, 2009). Bonnie’s experience demonstrates that, in addition to the practical benefits of having classroom-based equipment, such as the time saved from having to continually locate a camera, the new equipment made other colleagues take notice. Although group members negotiated this equipment with their teaching context and colleagues in different ways, ArtsEdPD offered teachers resources and opportunities that many of our group members previously lacked in their schools. In so doing, ArtsEdPD also presented new challenges for teachers such as Keara, Lisa, and Jackie, as they negotiated their participation in ArtsEdPD with the expectations and cultures within their individual teaching contexts.

I began this chapter suggesting that location and position are central concepts in cartography, and that communicating location and position requires viewing objects in relationship to one another. The stories presented in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which I understood the group members’ locations and positions as interrelated and active. Rather than present the locations and positions as unitary, fixed, or final, I attempted to show how the locations and positions assumed by the group members were the result of an ongoing series of negotiations that took place both within and outside of our group. The next section follows this work with a closer look at the series of negotiations involved in our collaborative inquiry process.

The Challenge of Orientation

“We’re working backwards on it, which is kind of nice. We know where we want to be but we just don’t know how we’re going to get there” (Veronica, personal communication, December 5, 2009).

“We can do all this documentation and all this collaborating, and all this, but where does it go from there” (Jackie, personal communication, March 18, 2010)?

The word orientation, as it relates to mapping, describes the relationship between the location and position of an object on a map and the points of a compass or other system of direction. The idea that orientation depends on a relationship between a location and directions (that are often assumed to be fixed) is helpful in understanding how our group inquiry experience existed within the requirements of a formal professional development program. Orientation, apart from mapping, is partially defined as, “the adjustment or alignment of oneself or one's ideas to surroundings or circumstances” (Orientation, n.d, ¶ 1). The idea that orientation is also an individual experience of adjustment or alignment is helpful in understanding how specific group members negotiated their expectations of the collaborative inquiry with the process that unfolded throughout the year.

The following section draws on both of these understandings of orientation to re/present the challenges our group faced in our collaborative inquiry process. Although my original research question, “In what ways do the participants view this experience as collaborative? Non-collaborative?” focused primarily on the collaborative aspect of our

inquiry, I include data about participants' experiences with collaboration as well as the process of inquiry after recognizing the ways in which collaboration and inquiry were entwined elements of our experience.

Coordinates of Collaboration

Because collaboration was central to our collaborative inquiry task, I led our group in a brainstorming activity during our first meeting in which we created a list of characteristics and elements of collaboration (see Figure 11).

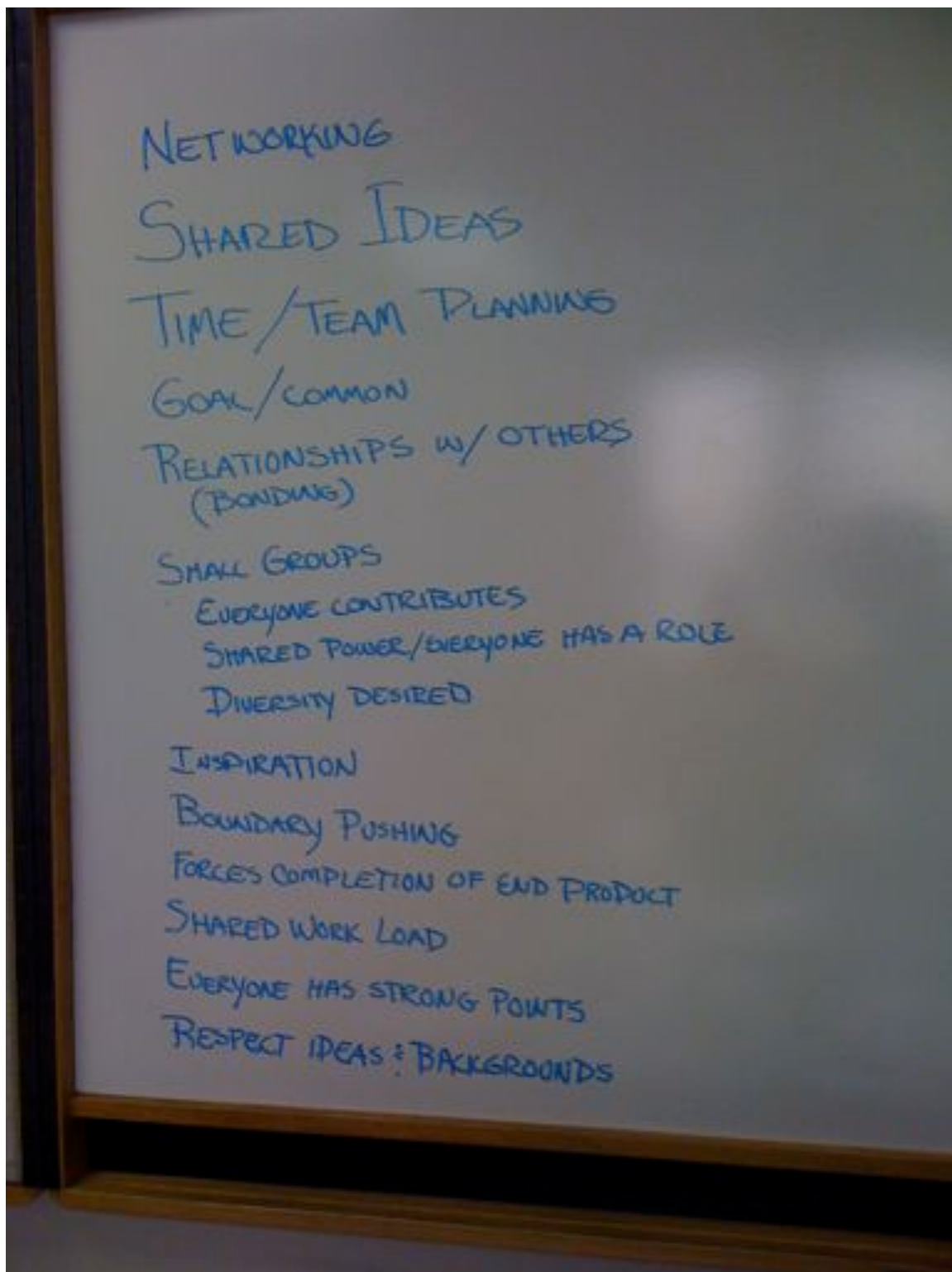


Figure 11. Our collaborative inquiry group list of characteristics and elements of collaboration.

This initial conversation about collaboration served a number of purposes. First, my desire to explore whether and how group members viewed this experience as collaborative and non-collaborative required me to understand how teachers defined “collaborative.” Second, the conversation provided an opportunity for the members of our group to consider their own expectations of collaboration. Third, the conversation (and resulting documentation) could serve as an important reference point for our group throughout the rest of the year.

With our initial conversation in mind, I asked our group to describe our collaboration during a reflective group interview at the end of the year. The members of our group identified many of the characteristics and elements of collaboration listed during our first group meeting.

Keara: We [collaborated well] every time together.

Veronica: Actually, I sat there this morning and I thought, oh, I love our group.

Bonnie: I know!...

Veronica: I mean, there were groups that worked totally individually. I would have been beside myself if someone said, “go do this.”

Jackie: That was the nice thing about it, is that we felt that we could express ourselves, say our emotions, and how we really felt. We were generally accepted for them and everyone came together in collaboration and thought, “Oh, I can help you with that.” And that was the best part of it...is the interconnecting of everyone...everyone and interconnectivity to work together. It’s a nice experience...

Bonnie: And whenever we needed a leader for something, somebody jumped in. There wasn't one person that said that they wanted it, you know, a forceful person that wanted to be the leader and I think we were all on an equal playing field.

Jenni: I think we definitely collaborate well – pulling all of these chairs together to get them to here, and to make them work together. (group interview, May 14, 2010)

In this exchange, Veronica appreciated that our group shared the workload rather than working individually. Bonnie recalled multiple members of the group who took the lead on different items and suggested her sense of shared power within the group. Jenni offers a specific group activity as an example of effective collaboration.

The chairs Jenni referenced in this conversation refer to a collaborative installation (see Figure 12) that our group created to fulfill an ArtsEdPD requirement that each of the six collaborative inquiry groups share their inquiry process with the other five groups. Throughout the process of creating and installing the work, group members cooperated to realize the installation. For example, Dominick volunteered to use his truck pick up and deliver a number of the pieces to the REA. Lisa bought tape in order to direct viewers through our exhibition. Lisa, Jackie, Dominick, and I installed half of the exhibit the night before the last ArtsEdPD day. Jenni volunteered to create and print a brochure that would describe each member's chair and act as a viewing guide during the exhibition and an artifact afterwards. Jackie, Lisa, Dominick and I worked on wording for the brochure.

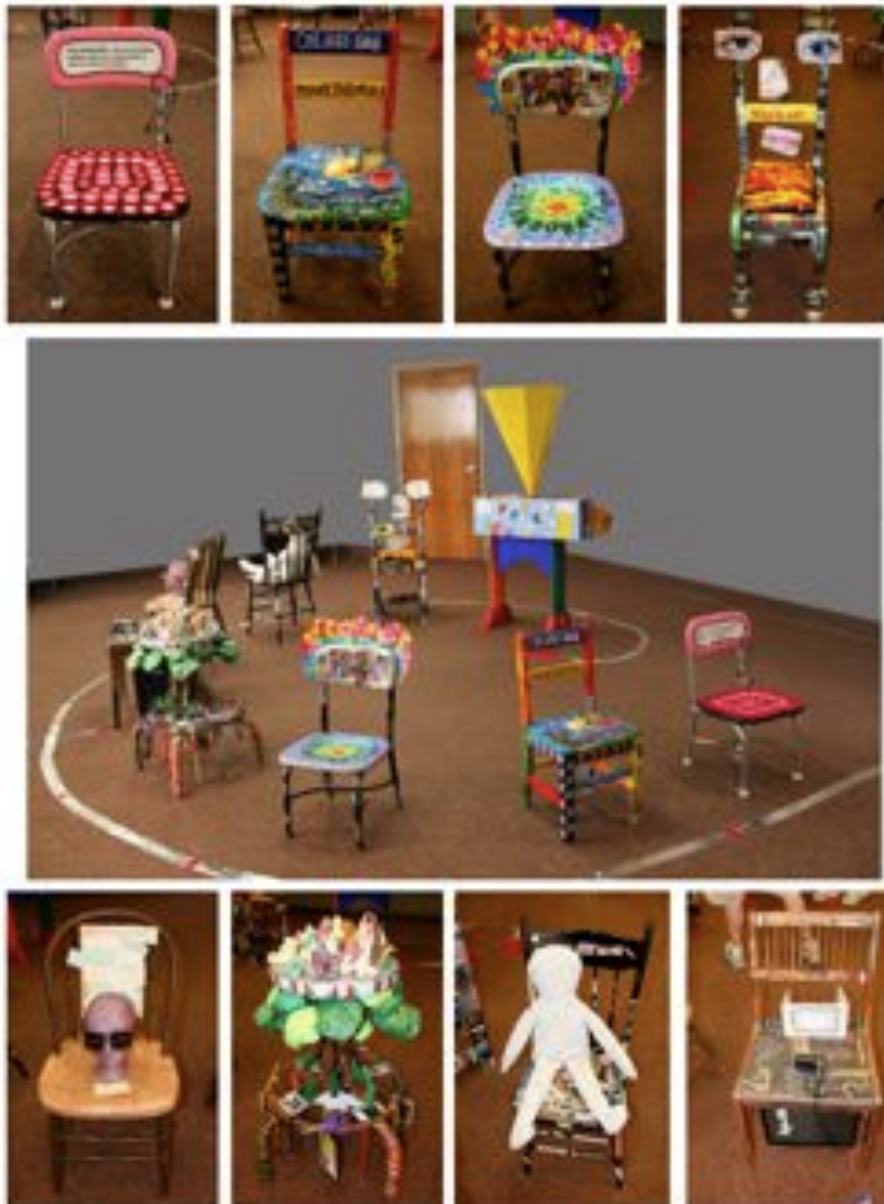


Figure 12. Documentation of our collaborative inquiry group's installation, exhibited May 14, 2010 at the Regional Education Agency.

When completed, the installation included a chair designed by each member of the group that demonstrated his or her individual experience with collaborative inquiry. The group worked together to decide how the arrangement of the pieces, a desk structure and the chairs, could demonstrate our group experience with collaborative inquiry. We

decided to include the desk structure as an interactive element that invited other ArtsEdPD participants to directly respond to our inquiry question.

As we reflected on our year together, a number of group members said that displaying this artifact of our collaboration was the most rewarding part of our work together. Jackie described how she explained the process to other ArtsEdPD participants:

I didn't know if [the other ArtsEdPD participants] were just politely engaged or they were really enjoying it, but the blog made it sound like they enjoyed it. And you know, what better way to present research than enjoyably? And that generated the one question, "How did you guys come up with this idea?" And I said, we started at the beginning. And you being the facilitator, and it was able to keep us thinking outside of the box or in different ways that we didn't realize. Because we probably would have done the same approach. Powerpoint, put it up, that type of thing. Not that we didn't – this is what we were comfortable with (group interview, May 14, 2010).

Jackie's statement, "This is what we were comfortable with," confirmed my own observations about our group's installation. Because our group members were experienced as artists, I noticed that my role as facilitator changed when our group took on the task of creating a collaborative artwork. I am not aware that any of these teachers had ever engaged in inquiry (individually or collaboratively); they depended on my leadership to guide them through the process. Often this guiding took the form of setting goals for each of our meetings and suggesting tasks for the time in-between meetings. Lisa described to me the importance of me playing this role during an interview at the end of the year:

Lisa: Every meeting we had, we really needed you to guide us where we needed to go. I think we were all waiting to be put on our paths so we know where we're going by the end of this meeting. I think your role was very important. Very important.

Leslie: The way you just talked about that makes me wonder if the whole group the whole year felt like I knew what we were going to do or felt like I knew where we should be going.

Lisa: Oh no. Not in the end. We all knew you were with us. But at the same time, I felt like every meeting we had a mini goal. And you needed to be the one to verbalize that mini goal.

Leslie: I see. Did you feel that the goals that I proposed were in line with where you thought we should go, or did you feel that the goals that I was proposing for the meetings weren't necessarily aligned with what people knew we had to do?

Lisa: No...I never felt like you just pulled these things out or you came with an agenda already down and then thought "I'm going to let them talk and then I'm going to tell them what to do." You would just listen to us and sort of take from each one of us, "ok, this is what she is saying, this is what he is saying, ok. This is where we need to go." Because we have tunnel vision. (personal communication, May 5, 2010)

However, when we began to plan our installation, our group did not need me in the same capacity. After one meeting in which we were planning where we should place specific elements of the installation, I wrote:

I loved how Dominick just stood up and started drawing the diagram on the chart paper and everyone was working on their chair ideas and I was just sitting there video recording. One of the good things about this art project was that the whole thing – from conception to exhibition – was someone else’s idea. Different group members tossed around different ideas, and each of them were excited about different parts of the process. I just got to sit there and let them tell me what to do. (researcher memo, April 30, 2010)

Our group’s collaborative artwork represented, in physical form, many of the elements and characteristics of collaboration we listed during our very first meeting. However, our inquiry process itself lacked some of the characteristics on the whiteboard in Figure 11 due to factors that challenged our collaborative inquiry process. I draw attention to two challenges in the remaining discussion, un/certainty and dis/comfort, because I believe that the intersection of these challenges provides coordinates that allow the reader to understand the position and orientation of our group’s collaborative inquiry experience.

Fixed(?) directions.

ArtsEdPD, as a formal program responsible for enacting the initiatives in the original grant proposal, played a significant role in shaping our group’s experience. For instance, we spent time filling out program assessments, recording hours, and documenting our process, each of which was required for continuing education credit through participation in ArtsEdPD. Because technology integration and collaborative inquiry were both essential initiatives of ArtsEdPD, our group spent a significant amount of time attending to tasks such as researching, ordering, and becoming familiar with

technological equipment. In my roles as a group facilitator and paid faculty member of ArtsEdPD, I acted as both a technological supporter and a correspondent who communicated and clarified ArtsEdPD expectations and requirements to the rest of my group.

My own individual expectations about the process also shaped our group's experience due, at least in part, to the asymmetrical power relationship created by my roles as facilitator, doctoral student, and paid faculty member of ArtsEdPD (Drennon, 2002). Insofar as my commitments influenced my work within the group, they acted as a second set of directions that oriented our group. For instance, my belief that this content-specific collaborative inquiry experience was unique and had the potential to be transformative led me to take measures to protect our group's inquiry space. I desired our collaborative inquiry to be a place where teachers had "considerable latitude and flexibility to design and continue to revise their own goals" (Fenwick, 2004, p. 277).

My campaign for group autonomy and long amounts of time in which to work took place primarily during the ArtsEdPD faculty meetings in which we planned the six daylong workshops. On a few occasions, the amount of time allotted for collaborative inquiry groups meetings dwindled as we attempted to find time to address ArtsEdPD's other goals and administrative tasks. Occasionally, a faculty member would propose that facilitators could address some of these other tasks during the group's allotted inquiry time. The frustration I felt when the schedule left little time for collaborative inquiry group meetings or when I was expected to use our collaborative inquiry group meeting time to attend to other ArtsEdPD agenda items alerted me to my emerging commitment to protect our group's inquiry space. I found myself negotiating this commitment with

ArtsEdPD's expectation that our group would spend some of our collaborative inquiry time attending to administrative tasks and other ArtsEdPD goals. I also knew how crucial regular meetings were to continuing our work. As Bonnie said,

This thing has stretched out so far for me that we get all jazzed up and then we go back to the real world and then I come back and it's like ok, when did we say that, and how did we say it, and what did we mean by it? You know what I mean? I think it's very hard to do this in chunks of time with weeks in between. I think we're spinning our wheels. (group meeting, January 15, 2010)

I grew increasingly concerned that the time in between our meetings, the administrative tasks associated with ArtsEdPD, and group members' requests for technology support were threatening the momentum necessary to continue our inquiry. When we canceled our February meeting due to a blizzard, my concern grew larger. During the two months in between meetings, the group members had missed many days of school (i.e., chances to collect data from students), were without power at their homes for days at a time, and thus, our communication was spotty at best. In early March, we reconvened and returned to our inquiry question. At that meeting, Jackie said, "I just feel like I've been so out there, that I've been trying to, like I'm drawing a complete blank right now. What did we do the last time we were here?" (personal communication, March 5, 2010).

At that point, I proposed adding an additional meeting the night before our next regularly scheduled meeting in order to handle administrative and technological issues. This proposal was the result of my effort to negotiate all of the competing agendas and still make space for us to regain the momentum necessary to continue with our inquiry.

The additional meeting that we called our “office hours” allowed members to work on their own or with others on ArtsEdPD related tasks. The day before our scheduled office hours meeting, Lisa asked if I would create a list of items to which group members might attend to during the meeting.

The process of creating this list (Appendix E) helped me to realize that a number of these items could happen asynchronously, and that the many things our group had to do as part of (or in addition to) our collaborative inquiry did not all have to take place during whole group meeting times. Thus, I began to deal with many of the ArtsEdPD requirements or individual participant issues outside of the group meeting time in an effort to protect our meeting time for group collaborative inquiry. At the end of the year, Jackie pointed to our group’s decision to hold office hours as one of the main reasons it was necessary for our group to have a facilitator. In her words,

What you did as the facilitator is you gave us that time and said, “come to office hours, and I will deal with each one of you individually if you have individual questions that I can answer.” And that’s perfect. Because I always felt guilty because I’m so behind and some of the other ones are so advanced and I thought I was holding them back from what they could really have done with the technology. I always felt, “am I holding this whole group back?” So that was nice to do that. Just like children...small group instruction is very nice to have.

(personal communication, May 11, 2010)

The series of negotiations present in my facilitation were the result of my commitments and beliefs about how I could serve our group’s collaborative inquiry process. My expectations and directions were different from the ArtsEdPD expectations

in that they were not fixed requirements for the group members. In other words, ArtsEdPD often mandated what we had to do, but my own expectations often influenced how we accomplished those goals. ArtsEdPD mandates and my own ideals undoubtedly oriented our work.

Another obvious factor that oriented our work was our charge to engage in collaborative inquiry. Our group's inquiry experience was un/certain. I use the term un/certain in an attempt to acknowledge the relationship between the simultaneous nature of our certainty and uncertainty. I mentioned previously that our group members, myself included, were inexperienced with collaborative inquiry as a formal method of/professional development. Group members' inexperience likely contributed to their feelings of uncertainty, expressed by Keara in the following interaction with me:

Keara: It's kind of weird, isn't it? Like, endless, until we can bring it in and center it. I am so used to being told what I can't do. You're bringing me the opposite way and it's a little stressful. Just a little. You know what I mean?

Leslie: Is that uncomfortable?

Keara: Yeah, 'cause like I said, you're so used to being told ahead of time, "ok, you can only go this far." But we're doing the opposite. We are this far and we're trying to come in.

Leslie: Yup.

Keara: It's a little different. I can see how it's going to work. (personal communication, November 11, 2009)

Keara described our inquiry process as "opposite" and uncomfortable based on her expectation that this professional development experience would involve someone telling

her what to do. Insofar as our collaborative inquiry practiced democratic decision-making, our experience challenged Keara's initial expectations.

Dominick also talked about his initial expectations for participating in a collaborative inquiry group. He specifically mentioned a desire for this experience to “reinforce what I’m doing” as well as to “find out how we can improve general aspects of art education” (personal communication, November 15, 2009). After my first interview with Dominick, I wrote,

He seems especially committed to creating a project (e.g., a program, website, or activity) that can meet tangible needs and is available for all school districts in the county. I believe that his initial expectations may create some tension for him, given that collaborative inquiry encourages teachers to critically examine and refine (rather than “reinforce”) their current practices, and because collaborative inquiry esteems the process rather than a completed, final project. (researcher memo, November 15, 2009)

I wondered if Dominick was resenting the collaborative inquiry process and/or our group when his ideas were not realized. At the end of the year, I asked Dominick about his initial expectations,

Leslie: [Earlier in the year] we were talking about what you anticipated that people would get out of the group. You suggested some practical things that the group could do to help each other out...

Dominick: Well actually, the rest of the group helped me to clarify the meaning of that question, you know. The group actually, just by conversation and going

through and working with them, it just helped clarify to me to define a direction for the question itself.

Leslie: Ok. Yeah. So, you said at the beginning that you were kind of looking for a boxed item.

Dominick: Right, right.

Leslie: So what happened to that? Your idea changed? Or...

Dominick: No, because that's being selfish. You know, I'm hoping for, let's do this. I've got a great idea: let's build a website for the entire three county area that we can all tap into. In a sense, it's selfish because this is my idea and it's a great way to bring people together in a collaborative effort, which we might do in the future. (personal communication, May 11, 2010)

Dominick and Keara's perspectives demonstrate how the collaborative inquiry process did not match their initial expectations. In the latter example, Dominick tells how he abandoned his initial expectations as the group's process helped him to pose and clarify the meaning of an inquiry question. In this way, the group functioned as a space of negotiation for member's individual expectations about the collaborative inquiry process.

At the end of the year, the group reflected on when their feelings of uncertainty began to change,

Veronica: When we were in that little room with the bulletin board, I think that was my most stressful, when we were trying to...

Lisa: We needed a task. We needed a task, remember?

Dominic: I think that was a turning point.

Keara: I was stressed out.

Dominick: I think that was a turning point in that room when [Leslie] listed out the possibilities and choices that we had, I think that was a turning point for our group.

Veronica: Something did it.

Dominick: And then I think it refined when we were up here in the conference room the following meeting. (group interview, May 14, 2010)

The two meetings that Dominick described happened in close succession. I noticed that our group members felt more comfortable with inquiry as an unprescribed process when meetings were frequent and when they had a tangible task to work on in between meetings. Lisa confirmed my observation,

I feel like now, well before, we had our question, but it was in that thinking phase of this giant bubble and so many things could fit in that bubble. It was almost like...it was too vast. But now, after yesterday, I feel like we know we have to think about how our students are thinking, we have to think about how we're teaching it ourselves, we have to think about how we're going to measure this, like now everyone has specific things to actually think about and focus on so that when we meet...and I'm glad we're meeting on Monday, actually, because I feel like that's a nice short amount of time. It's enough time to reflect and go back and think, but then to hurry up and get back in there and get our ideas down. (personal communication, November 14, 2009)

My actions responded to our group's expressed need for frequent meetings and tangible tasks. More specifically, I began to check in with participants periodically between meetings and, before the end of each meeting, helped to facilitate a discussion

about the next possible step. From this discussion, I would recommend some tangible tasks that members of our group could do (e.g., spend some time writing about what makes art meaningful to you and come prepared to share at the next meeting). I also insisted on meeting regularly with my teachers face-to-face even though some of the other ArtsEdPD facilitators were holding virtual meetings with their collaborative inquiry groups. I did this because I was not sure that each member of the group was able to use the necessary virtual meeting software with confidence. Given the importance the group placed on our meetings, I did not want to unintentionally exclude members from those meetings if they were not successful with the necessary software.

Despite my emergent commitment to hold regular face-to-face meetings during which I provided tangible tasks, I found some members who remained frustrated with the uncertainty of the process. I found myself continually reminding the group that the inquiry was not the final product, but that the final product was supposed to be a representation of our inquiry process. After one meeting during which I reminded the group that inquiry was a process, I wrote:

One thing that is going to be evident in the recording is the amount of talk about this art project. I had to remind my group one more time that the inquiry is about the process and not about creating a final product. That is hard for art teachers because we're used to having a product at the end. Dominick especially seems bent on two ideas: one, to have a common art show or two, to have a common art space for teachers in the county. Both ideas I am uncomfortable with because I'm not sure how he's relating them to our question, but he suggested those ideas and then Jackie was suggesting additional ideas that weren't connected in a way that

was obvious to me. So I had to keep...I think almost every meeting this is one thing I reframe. I remind us about our professional learning and not about a doing. You know what? It's funny because that's exactly what I think Dominick feels like is a waste of time. It's a waste of time to just learn something. The other thing is, I don't think you can decide what to do to show your inquiry until you've actually engaged in it. (researcher memo, January 15, 2010)

Our inquiry was very unlike art teacher's work in many of their classrooms, where learning is often in service of a specific product. While I believe that collaborative inquiry, as a method of action research, may generate products, the products ideally take the form of changed practice (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). I feared our group's uncertainty related to inquiry would lead us to disregard it, especially given our group members' excitement for collaborating on a product. I wondered how I might communicate the charge from ArtsEdPD not just to collaborate, but also to engage in inquiry. Furthermore, I feared that our group might not share my belief that processes have their own value apart from a product. During our January meeting, I described the inquiry process yet again, this time by comparing it to a student's art portfolio that includes final products, as well as their research materials, sketches, and other artifacts of their learning. The metaphor helped our group members begin to see inquiry as a process.

Bonnie: I think [earlier in the year] I was still a little confused about what we were doing and once I wrapped my head around the idea—you said it's the process—then it was a lot easier for me to understand what we were doing.

Leslie: How do you feel about that now? How do you feel about professional development that makes the process important rather than the outcome?

Bonnie: I have greater respect for that now. Because when you think process you think muddling through something...ok, ok...but I realized through that process we did have little goals and accomplishments and ending things. Like, you know, the things we did with our students or the things we made, and the chair. It gave you those little things that we need as art people...look at what I did. Look at what we've done. So I think that worked.

Leslie: So I think what you just said is that there were enough products or enough milestones that you could actually feel like you had accomplished something.

Bonnie: Yes. If we had sat and talked and that's all we did, without...well, we could have just talked but the first thing Veronica and I, of course we have to whip out and make a mobile. String and glue and paste. Gotta do it. But that's what I needed, to see something concrete. But if we had just done nothing, that's not who we are. None of us. (personal communication, May 6, 2010)

The process of inquiry led to feelings of un/certainty insofar as it disrupted group member's expectations of professional development as the delivery of rubber-stamped curricula and required teachers to reconsider the relationship between the process of learning and a product. After almost an entire school year together, I heard a group member describe our group's final product as a representation of learning rather than the learning itself:

Keara: I showed my chair to someone that I work with and she said, "What did you learn from that?" I was like, "Oh please."

Jackie: From what?

Keara: From creating my chair.

Bonnie: I had fun creating my chair.

Keara: I did too. But she said, “What does it mean?” So I’ll tell her, maybe you need to see the whole work of art.

Jenni: Who said that?

Keara: One of the teachers I worked with wanted to know what we learned from that. Why did you have to create that? What did you really learn from that?

Leslie: It’s the equivalent of her writing a paper for her grad class.

Lisa and Bonnie: Yeah

Keara: That’s what I thought, too, but I was so shocked she said it, I just left. I went home. Then as I went home I thought...

Bonnie: *Well, the chair isn’t what you learned. It represents what we’ve learned.*

Keara: What we’ve experienced.

Veronica: Yes. (group meeting, April 30, 2010, emphasis added)

Although ArtsEdPD assembled our group for the purpose of collaborative inquiry, it took almost an entire school year for our group to understand that the inquiry process was also the group’s purpose. Participants’ own expectations, ArtsEdPD requirements, and my commitments all served as directions that influenced the orientation of our group. Our group existed at the nexus of these three directions, a location that often felt un/certain. I noticed that participants’ willingness and ability to engage in the un/certainties of inquiry related to their feelings of dis/comfort. In the following section, I explore dis/comfort as a second reference point in the coordinates that describe the location of our group.

Dis/comfort.

I use the term dis/comfort to describe the safe and comfortable space desired by our group amidst a collaborative process that likely includes discomfort as group members challenge each others' ideas/beliefs/practice. I present these ideas in one word using a slash to acknowledge the relationships between (and, at times, simultaneous nature of) our comfort and discomfort. I offer these thoughts about our group's dis/comfort not in an attempt to posit whether our collaboration was somehow "effective" according to outside theories, but rather to describe how our group's desire for comfort significantly shaped the conversations in which we began our collaborative work.

During our first meeting, our group members expressed a desire for people to "respect ideas and backgrounds" and suggested that "bonding" with others is an important step in developing a collaborative relationship (personal communication, September 25, 2009). Throughout the year, group members affirmed their appreciation for being a part of a group in which they felt "comfortable." Without prompting, Jackie described her appreciation for the group during our November meeting:

Jackie: What I think is unique, which is fun, just from the years of teaching that I have, this is a really nice, unique group. I think what is nice is that everybody feels very comfortable. At least I do. I feel very comfortable with everybody here, and that was probably one of the things I thought, "Oh Lord."

Dominick: Right.

Jackie: That is one of the things we have to hold on to. I don't know if every group is as lucky as us.

Veronica (directed to Leslie): I bet everyone has said that to you in this group, haven't they?

Jackie: Is that right?

Veronica: That's exactly what I said to her yesterday [in the interview]. I said, "I look around there and I feel so grateful that we have this group that has just clicked."

Jackie: Yes...it's so nice to be in a group where you don't feel like "oh, she's just..." or you know, been there, done that. I've been in so many of those groups that have been like "Oh Lord, help me." In fact, I left one of those just today. You know. I think that's unique. (group meeting, November 16, 2009)

Throughout the year, our group continued to have these short conversations where members of the group would express their appreciation for the comfortable climate within our group.

At the end of the year, I asked the group what contributed to the level of comfort they felt in the group:

Veronica: Laughter. I felt comfortable since we got together.

Keara: Yeah that first meeting, the honesty...

Dominick: Everyone helped.

Veronica: And you have to be a large part of it.

Dominick and Jackie: Yeah.

Jackie: Being real, you know, whatever it is, it is. So many times we sit around educators, or with artists, too...

Keara: Stuffy.

Jackie: Did you ever notice that one is trying to top another? And there's always like a rivalry. I've experience that a lot of times. And I'm thinking, you know, just enjoy the moment.

Dominick: Right.

Jackie: And the people you're with. And I think we took that time and said, let's enjoy the moment. Let's learn from it and be together, and we could still leave with the same feeling but a better feeling than when we came in the door. And I think that's a great thing. Especially when we're out here in a rural setting where connections aren't easily made. So having that opportunity...

Keara: I love it when I'm in my class and get an email from you guys. I'm like, "Oh, they were thinking of me!" (personal communication, May 14, 2010)

This conversation describes "laughter," shared workload (i.e. "everyone helped"), and a sense of belonging (i.e. "Oh, they were thinking of me!") as elements of our collaboration that contributed to our group's sense of comfort.

I believe that this comfort supported collaborative inquiry insofar as it fostered a space in which group members felt comfortable presenting divergent ideas. Often the divergent idea called attention to the multiplicity of understandings among our group members and led to fruitful clarifications and revisions of our group's mission and practices. For example, during our third group meeting, in which we were discussing the question that would drive our group's yearlong inquiry, the following exchange took place:

Bonnie: I'm reading this [inquiry question] totally wrong. That's why I feel like I'm out of the loop. Everything you mentioned will make what we do better, but

how does it make art more relevant? How will it make it more important? I think all of the things you mentioned won't make it more relevant and don't make it more important. It makes us have access to things easier, gives us more color...but I'm still missing the whole...And then when you say students, administrators, colleagues, the public—I was taking that to mean all of these people. Not just, you know, my 7th graders. Or what we all do in art. How do we...I mean, maybe I'm just totally missing the boat. Maybe I'm just thinking too hard.”

Leslie: I think you're going to help us. I think you're helping us.

Dominick: Right.

Bonnie: Because to me, when I read this, I told Veronica, when they say how to make art relevant, I said, “to make something important to me, take it away.”

Now that doesn't mean take away art class, but erase it. Erase color. Erase this, erase that. And I thought of this public service announcement. Like a commercial in my head about it. To make something important, take it away. Now I don't know what that means, but that's the end I was coming from. I wasn't thinking to ask my kids “what do you want?”

Dominick: Because you were thinking about posing the question to yourself. I posed the question to my students...

Veronica: Our 8th graders think art is the class they take with an art teacher. We're trying to make them understand...

Bonnie: That it's not here, it's everywhere. Art isn't just in the art room. It's in every part of your life. I took 'art' as art. But I think some of us interpreted this

question “art class.” Maybe that’s why we’re thinking differently. Maybe that’s wrong.

Lisa: No.

Jackie: Oh, no.

Keara: No, that’s not wrong. It’s just making us realize...maybe my approach was off.

Veronica: If you say to anyone, “What would your world be without art” – not art class -- without art. Something that was designed. What would your world be?

Lisa: Yeah, I like that concept.

Jackie: So we’re doing art as the big term?

Bonnie: Why pigeon hole ourselves? Because we’re saying art’s everywhere, so why are we assuming it’s only in our art class? (personal communication, November 13, 2009)

In this conversation, Bonnie suggested that her understanding of the inquiry question (and thus her research methods) were different than those shared previously by other group members. She challenged our group to reconsider our inquiry by asking, “How does it make art more relevant? How will it make it more important?” and suggested that “all of the things [the other group members] mentioned won’t make it more relevant and don’t make it more important.” A few days after that meeting, Veronica and I talked about whether group members’ willingness to voice divergent opinions points to group members’ feelings of comfort within our group:

Leslie: At the last meeting, Bonnie basically said, “That’s not how I was thinking about it at all.” I was so glad she said that, because what that tells me as a

facilitator is that the group feels safe enough that someone who thinks that their opinion is way out in left field can actually stop the conversation and say, “wait a second.” And, do you remember, she kept apologizing, saying, “I’m sorry if I’m way off.” But three or four people said, “No, this is helpful. It’s helpful to think about this question in different ways.”

Veronica: Yeah, Lisa I think even said that. Do you know what? I have been in different committees...I’ve been on every committee in the book and I’ve been in groups where I got shut down so quickly with a different idea that I never opened my mouth again. And you’re right—I don’t ever feel that there...I think because nobody in our group feels attacked. Everybody in our group feels like we’re all fighting the same battle and we’re all in the same game. So nobody feels like they’re being attacked.

Leslie: Yeah

Veronica: Or, they also don’t feel that they’re less than the person beside them.

Leslie: Right.

Veronica: So that makes you just very comfortable. (personal communication, November 15, 2009)

Veronica’s perception that our group is a place where members feel comfortable contributing divergent opinions affirmed my belief that a level of comfort, as well as equality of participation, is necessary and to be desired in collaborative inquiry.

A closer look at our group conversations led me to wonder about the role politeness played in helping our group members feel comfortable. For instance, in the conversation where Bonnie presented a divergent understanding of our group’s inquiry

question, group members were quick to assure Bonnie that her view was not wrong. Furthermore, Keara suggested that her own view might have been “off.”

Keara’s desire to assume responsibility for any confusion may have been an attempt to circumvent any offense caused by differences of opinion. Although differing opinions are inevitable in an eight-person collaboration, our efforts to be polite often kept us from exploring spaces of individual difference. In the conversation that follows, group members responded to my request that they identify what they would need to know in order to explore our group inquiry question.

Dominick: I’ll be selfish here. I came here because I wanted to find out what everyone else is teaching because when you go in front of people and you have to teach new student teachers coming out, it’s too much. It’s too vast, it’s too, you know. I’d like to know what everyone else is teaching so we can all get on the same page.

Leslie: So how does that...can you connect that desire with how it’s going to help us answer our question? Or, anyone else can jump in.

Jackie: Well, that would give you more tools to make it more relevant, right?

Dominick: It would bring some consistency.

Jackie: That’s a pet peeve for me. I’ll tell you...

Dominick: In a central, but, I think essentially that everyone is teaching the same thing. Even if it’s basic, like she said. We are minimum time. We have to get down to what is the minimum for kids in kindergarten and first grade all the way up to 12th grade. What should they be learning? What should they be prepared for when they leave? (With a good concept of how it all ties together).

Lisa: Well, that's in that framework book that the [local arts education organization] put out. That's nice for the parents.

Leslie: So let's figure out what information you think we need. You think that we need to know what others are doing that is working to make art relevant and important?

Dominick: Yeah. What's the essential...

Silence.

Leslie: So...how does this tie to the question?

Jackie: Getting back to consistency, we are hurting ourselves in art education because we get trained all over the place, but why aren't we teaching, in our own creative ways, consistent themes? Which elements and principles should you teach in first grade? Why aren't we consistent?

Leslie: Well, the push back is because not everyone agrees that those are the most important themes. The elements and principles are only in one of our, like, 26 state art standards.

Veronica: And humans are teaching. Everybody is different.

Leslie: And we're creative people.

Jackie: We're lacking continuity, even if we all had the same, something that had structure...Wouldn't it be nice to know that everyone is sending the same message to make art relevant? And we know through data and research that this has been a productive way to do it, using those tools?

Leslie: But that's carrying the assumption that art is meaningful and relevant to all students in the same way, which I don't think is true, because I've taught in an

urban high school and a rural elementary school and what made art relevant to each of those students is different. So this question is complex. I understand you think continuity is important for selling ourselves as important and unified as art educators who care deeply about what we do.

Dominick: There is some similar ground, there are certain concepts and processes, but the expressive part will be different. As it should be.

Leslie: What else do we need to know? What other people are doing is really important.

Lisa: Right, so we're all on the same page. Not that anyone would have to change anything, just so we know where everyone is coming from, um, don't we need to know what our students think? (personal communication, November 13, 2009, emphasis added)

In this conversation, Jackie and Dominick suggest the benefits of having a common curriculum in art education. I was confused about how these comments connected to the inquiry question, and I disagreed with Jackie's assumption that art would be more relevant to students if art education curricula were more standardized. After Jackie and I had each presented (at least part of) our views, Dominick, Lisa and I all made an effort to move away from the disagreement rather than to explore it. Dominick suggested that there was some common ground. I attempted to redirect our focus back to the question. Lisa proposed that somehow we could all be on the same page without anyone changing anything. She then gave a direct answer to the question I posed, which turned everyone's

attention back to the table we were constructing on the Smart board (Figure 13).

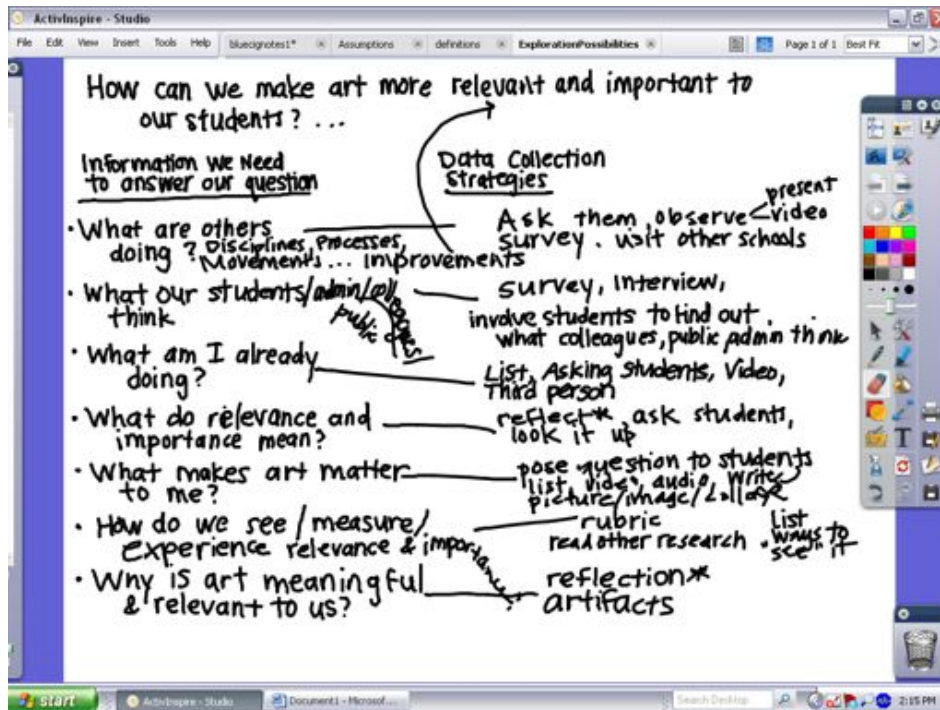


Figure 13. Artifact of our group discussion about methods of exploring our question from our meeting on November 13, 2009.

Although I cannot presume to understand the rationale behind Dominick and Lisa's responses, my own response was an effort to mask my own views about art education curricula so as not to appear ill-mannered or impolite by suggesting that my views were better than anyone else's. As the facilitator, I had a difficult time knowing how long to spend on a conversation that appeared tangentially related to the present task. Taken as a whole, our responses demonstrate the way our group operated within socially constructed norms of politeness by not drawing attention to difference, changing subjects when our personal views were threatened, and downplaying interpersonal differences of opinion (Jameson, 2004; Mills, 2003).

I found out that a number of our group members, including Lisa, were very interested in talking about art education curricula. The day after the meeting during which Lisa “helped” me to change the subject, she told me,

What I would like to see is like an example lesson plan from each person. I know I’m a big nerd, but that tells me a lot. Like even if you don’t follow it to the letter, the way that you write that lesson plan, that’s how you think. That’s how you see the steps going in your head and that’s how you see the lesson happening in your room. Like, I would like to see what each one of them looks like. And do they write process or do they write procedure or do they actually step-by-step the days, or...I don’t know, I’d love to see that. (personal communication, November 14, 2009)

Keara also expressed an interest in learning more about the other group member’s classrooms and “projects” during an interview early in the year when she said, “I would love to go see their rooms and see their projects and stuff. I wish we could figure out a way to do all that” (personal communication, November 12, 2009). Dominick returned to his desire for curricular continuity in our individual interview, “I think we really need to focus on the fact that we need some continuity, not only in what we’re teaching—the actual curriculum—but we need continuity amongst each other as an element of advocacy in our region (personal communication, November 15, 2009). Despite these group members’ interest; our group never had another explicit conversation about curriculum.

James Gee (1996) explains that our ways of being in the world, that is, our saying-doing-being-valuing-believing (p.127) are part of social Discourses (with a capital D) that provide “the often unspoken and tacit rules and conventions that govern how we

learn to think, act, and speak” (Evans, 2001, p. 107). Our group’s efforts to be polite and to “make nice,” often associated with the interactions of middle-class white females (Moje, 2000), were efforts to maintain relationships that provided us with a sense of safety and security. As Evans (2001) suggests, “Our need to ‘make nice’ often stems from our need to maintain our own and others’ comfort level” (p. 107). Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) suggest that “comfort” is actually a sign of a non-collaborative culture in which,

...teachers stay out of deeper, more extended relationships that could foster problem-solving, exchange of craft knowledge, and professional support. This form of [comfortable] collaboration can be thin and superficial, with teachers sharing some materials, some instructional techniques, or bits of wisdom but avoiding deeper discussions of teaching, curriculum, long-range planning, and the shared purpose of schooling. Collegial interchanges, when they occur, focus on comfortable, immediate, short-term issues that are not likely to solve thornier problems facing teachers. (Peterson, 2011, “What Types of School Cultures Exist?” ¶ 4)

In the following discussion, which demonstrates the type collegial interchange that Hargreaves and Fullan described, Keara, Jenni, and Jackie discuss Jenni’s attendance at a workshop hosted by a local arts education organization that aimed to introduce teachers to the organization’s new visual arts curriculum framework:

Keara: What is that?

Jenni: You know that curriculum class that we took?

Jackie: The framework.

Keara (directed to Jackie): Oh nice. That was that thing you wanted me to go to but I just couldn't do one more thing. What was it, was it nice? Did you like it?

Jackie: Yeah, you get a \$150...you get the piece. You get the book and everything with it. Plus it gives you a way of designing your curriculum and lesson plans. You get ideas from some of the questions.

Jackie (directed to Jenni): We actually threw our [group's inquiry] question out that day and had them talk about it, remember?

Jenni: Yeah. I had a hard time in that class. I think I was just tired that day.

Jackie: Yeah.

Jenni: Also, it was hard to understand. I think that was...

Jackie: Did you put that down in your comments? Make sure you put that down.

(group meeting, April 30, 2010)

In this conversation, Jenni mentioned that she had a "hard time" in the workshop and that "it was hard to understand." Jackie, who served on the organization's advisory committee, may have been in a position to clarify elements of the workshop or framework that Jenni had a hard time understanding. However, instead of engaging into a deeper conversation about the workshop and/or the curriculum framework, Jackie recommended that Jenni state her feelings on the workshop feedback form.

The culture of comfort in our group allowed Jenni to discuss her less-than-positive experience at the curriculum framework workshop with Jackie, who works with the organization that designed the workshop. However, according to Jackie, our group "generally accepted" each member's ideas,

What's nice about the collaboration was that we could express ourselves, say our emotions, and how we really felt. We were generally accepted for them and everyone came together in collaboration and thought, "oh, I can help you with that." And that was the best part of it...is the interconnecting of everyone...everyone and interconnectivity to work together. It's a nice experience. (group interview, May 14, 2010)

In other words, this "nice experience" made the functional aspects of our collaboration (i.e. coordination, cooperation, and communication) possible (Head, 2003). Having spent a year engaged with our group, I do not feel that the collegial conversations that substantiated a significant amount of our group time were a sign of a non-collaborative culture as Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) have suggested. Instead, I believe these conversations often work as seeds that grow deeper collaborative conversations over time. In situations like ours where a collaborative inquiry group is contrived by/within a formal program and likely includes members without pre-existing relationships, deep collaborative conversations are likely to take place only after the group members feel comfortable and safe within the group. In other words, comfort and safety¹⁷ necessarily precedes (rather than impedes) collaboration. Suggesting that a collaborative endeavor cannot or should not be comfortable downplays the relationship between a sense of comfort and teachers' willingness to later engage in deeper conversations that may disturb or disrupt existing ideas and/or beliefs and ignores the human desire for safety and belonging.

¹⁷ The participants in this study often used the words comfort and safety interchangeably.

Even though our group members desired a safe space and appreciated the “comfort” of our group, they expected that collaboration would include “boundary pushing” that would take them out of their “comfort zone:”

Veronica: Oh, I was just going to say, in the process of collaboration, and I don’t know if it’s already up here, but you hear other ideas that you never would have thought of yourself.

Keara: Inspirations.

Jackie: Exactly.

Veronica: So you...

Bonnie: Or take your idea to another level. You can share ideas but sometimes one person says something that bumps it up a notch.

Jackie: Or it forces you to do things that you would not normally do.

Bonnie: that happens after a couple drinks too!

Group laughs.

Jackie: When I saw technology I thought, “what am I doing here? Why am I walking into technology? Like, this is crazy.”

Veronica: Yeah, that’s the only part.

Jackie: It’s a comfort zone. It takes you out of your comfort zone.

Veronica: That’s out of the comfort zone for me.

Jackie: me too.

Veronica: Completely

Bonnie: Yeah.

Veronica: I mean, I still write – when I write directions on something – right click,

Jackie: I do too, I do too. Yeah, so good. It means we're learning. (group meeting, September 25, 2009)

In this discussion, Jackie states that discomfort is good and that it indicates learning. Perhaps one of the challenges embedded in collaborative inquiry is recognizing and providing the amount of time necessary for a group to be both comfortable and collaborative (i.e. uncomfortable, at times). While our group's engagement in a substantial amount of collegial conversation and effort to "make nice" may initially appear to have (re)directed us away from uncomfortable conversations, I believe the trust built through such interactions met necessary social and human conditions for deep and meaningful collaboration and learning.

Throughout this section on the challenges of orientation, I located our group in an area of un/certain dis/comfort. While our group viewed our experience as collaborative insofar as it evidenced a shared workload, a common goal, relationships with others, and other functional aspects of collaboration, the multiple sets of directions attempting to orient our group paired with members' inexperience with inquiry created un/certainties. In addition, our collaboration most often took the form of collegial conversations that resulted in the group members feeling safe and comfortable, making deeper and more critical conversations possible. I faced my own challenges as a participant/facilitator/researcher in a constant process of orienting and negotiating my roles within our group. In the following section, I continue to describe the experience of

our collaborative inquiry group but center the discussion on my own experience navigating multiple roles.

The Challenge of Overlap

I originally viewed my roles within our group as separate functions of myself, and believed that most of my work would involve employing these roles one at a time. In March, I attended a presentation given by an arts-based researcher during which he projected an image of a doll he constructed as a self-portrait. The doll had two heads, and the researcher used the image to describe his dual nature as a teacher and a researcher (Barney, 2010). I knew the powerful role images play in how I learn. Saunders-Bustle (2003) suggests,

Engagements with visual representations encourage learners to be creative and critical at the same time, to challenge the status quo, and to create possible worlds. In doing so, learners transform understanding and ultimately reconstruct their lives. (p.14)

Barney's doll prompted me to consider how I might also use images to better understand my participation in our group. This exploration into my experience is like the cartographical process of real-time mapping, in which technological advances such as GPS devices allow cartographers to map directly in the terrain. Throughout the year, I engaged in art making as a means for understanding my roles within the collaborative inquiry group. I began by manipulating a doll structure similar to Barney's in an attempt to understand my multiple roles within our group (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Documentation of my process creating a three-headed doll.

I knew my doll would need at least three heads. My primitive sewing skills brought the project to a halt when I realized I could not buy nor sew clothing for this doll. I began talking to friends in search of help. During one discussion, a friend asked if I viewed my roles as separate as the heads made the roles appear.

The discussion about the merits of representing my roles as a three-headed doll led me to two new understandings. First, I realized that my multiple roles were overlapping rather than separate. Second, I realized that who I am had an undeniable influence in how I embodied these roles. I now needed to find a way to represent how my roles as participant, researcher, and facilitator were all part of one self that simultaneously embodied (at least) three roles. I spoke with Lisa about a new idea of using “lenses” to communicate my new understanding of self, and how to integrate this new understanding into the chair I was creating for our group installation,

Leslie: I was trying to think of other ways that I can say the same thing, and I realized that a better metaphor would be to have three pairs of glasses that were all lined up because the doll has them all separate. It’s like I’m looking through

one set of eyes or the other or the other. But really, I only have one set of eyes and what happens is that I have these lenses that change the way that I view things. So now I don't even know if the doll is going to go on the chair or if I need to have something else.

Lisa: Hmm. So wait. You're saying you have, ok, three different sets of lenses...I'm trying to think though. Because the glasses aren't going to be able to sit on anything.

Leslie: Not unless I'd go get a Styrofoam head or something.

Lisa: That would be cool. (personal communication, May 5, 2010)

This conversation with Lisa led me to abandon the doll and consider the serious overlap present among my roles within our group. I eventually incorporated the idea of overlapping lenses as a visual element in the chair I contributed to our group installation (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Photograph of the chair I created for inclusion in our group's collaborative installation.

While the lenses represent the overlapping nature of my roles, the bust communicates the importance of the self that embodied these roles. That is, what I saw through the lenses was specific to the reality that the lenses were on me.

My initial research questions that attempted to drive the investigation into my own experience within the collaborative inquiry group did not adequately account for the undeniable interplay between these roles and my whole self. Those questions were:

- How do I negotiate the multiple roles of participant, facilitator, and researcher?
- How are these roles made in/visible within the collaborative inquiry group?
- How do participants view my role(s)?

These questions remain important to understanding my experience within the group.

However, this section also will demonstrate how my group members and I came to understand these roles. Similar to the process of cartographic generalization, in which a cartographer chooses to identify the characteristics that best serve the map's purpose, I include pertinent information about myself to help demonstrate the ways in which I embodied these roles.

Neutrality as a Negotiated Stance

Feminist research has long challenged the possibility of research as a neutral and objective practice by arguing that all research is political and that neutrality simply masks the researcher's subjectivities (Fine, 1994). Why was it that I, as someone who claims to align myself with the ideals of feminist research, often presented myself as neutral within our group?

The prevailing discourse in a number of my early research methods courses centered on post-positivist research methods that included the insistence of a neutral researcher. This approach to research was prominent in my early training and remains prominent in educational literature (Finley, 2003), and thus, likely acted as my "default setting." In other words, I found that my actions related to my facilitation and research

promoted a neutral stance unless I intentionally chose otherwise. The neutral stance I assumed was evident in how I spoke of my role as a participant, in which I felt free to voice my opinions, as separate from my role as a facilitator. I shared this struggle during my first interview with Jackie:

Mostly I've been struggling with how often to give my opinion during group meetings because I think sometimes people want my opinion. But there are other times when I've mainly facilitated, and in those times I haven't talked a whole bunch about how I feel about our inquiry question. (personal communication, December 3, 2009)

In this statement, I separate giving my opinion from my role as a facilitator, which may demonstrate the post-positivist ideal of neutrality. However, in this statement, I admit to having opinions and share the struggle I faced knowing when to share them. I certainly was not intending to mask all of my opinions. Opinions as a site of struggle suggest that there may be more to my neutrality than simply a post-positivist default setting.

I believe my effort to maintain neutrality was also the way in which I negotiated the complicated dilemma of closeness and disruption present within my multiple and, at times, conflicting roles of participant, facilitator, and researcher. As a participant in our collaborative inquiry group, I wanted comfort, security, and the sense that I belonged in the group. As a facilitator, I wanted to support our collaborative inquiry process while remaining sensitive to the asymmetrical power relationship between the other group members and me in an attempt to help the group claim its own authority (Drennon, 2002). As a feminist researcher, I wanted to trouble assumptions and disrupt taken-for-

granted practices in hopes of helping the teachers adopt a critical stance towards their work.

My neutral stance was problematic in light of feminist research that is interested in disrupting hierarchies and other social structures that silence and marginalize (Fine, 1992), and insofar as it maintains the status quo. Evans (2001) applied the feminist desire for disruption to the field education when she wrote,

As educators, we often resist creating this type of conflict and adopt instead the ideology that claims our role is that of nurturer. We strive to “make nice” (Alvermann, 1995), to be kind and helpful (Finders, 1997), and to ensure that our students are comfortable. Feminist researchers argue, however, that it is only through disruption, not comfort, that critical learning and social transformation can occur (Rockhill, 1993). (p. 105)

Disruption creates a complicated tension in feminist research insofar as it potentially interferes with feminist researchers’ desire to develop research relations based on trust and friendship that result in shared decision making (Lather, 1991). Evans (2001) asks, “If we disrupt people’s lives, are they not likely to move away from us? How does one get close and disrupt simultaneously?” (p. 105).

Given my previous discussion of the role of dis/comfort in our group, I believe that my neutral stance was, at times, an attempt to negotiate my desire for a close relationship with participants when my own ideas, opinions, and power may have disrupted group norms. In the group conversation during which the elementary teachers were comparing their curricula, Lisa realized that her approach to teaching elementary art differed from the other elementary art teachers in our group. My approach to teaching

elementary art was much like Lisa's, but I chose not to share my own ideas during that conversation since I felt I had come to an impasse as a facilitator. I desired to affirm Lisa's teaching by sharing examples from my own classroom. However, I worried that sharing might somehow carry an unintended message that my approach to teaching was somehow superior based on the power associated with my role as a facilitator. In that moment, I wished that I could affirm Lisa's approach without potentially marginalizing the other teachers. In my interview with Lisa the next day, I explained to her the previous day's predicament.

Leslie: It was hard for me not to jump in. I think I taught more like you teach.

Lisa: Yeah.

Leslie: And I want to, in our group meetings, give space for other people to talk because I think that there is, even though I'm a participant, there is a certain level of power that I have as the facilitator and so I don't want it to seem like I'm overly supportive of one person's teaching style or another,

Lisa: No.

Leslie: because I think that could be detrimental to the group as a whole.

Lisa: Yeah.

Leslie: But you started talking, and in my head, I started thinking about all the lessons that I did at the elementary school that were rather different from the types of things that I was hearing them talk about.

Lisa: And you start the list.

Leslie: Yeah. So I'm glad you brought that up. Because you're not alone. In my head, I was thinking, "She's just like me!"

Lisa: Oh, see, and I left getting very flustered thinking “Oh my god, I’m doing everything wrong and no one is like me...” (personal communication, November 14, 2009)

Because I interviewed Lisa for my research, I had the opportunity to speak with her individually. The individual interview space allowed me to discuss my own experience without appearing to affirm the teaching methods of certain group members over others in a group meeting. In this way, the opportunities I had to affirm participants during interviews unintentionally supported my neutral stance during group meetings.

My supposed neutrality typically took the form of silence, where I withheld my own opinions from our group discussions. My choice to stay silent is similar to the choice made in Alvermann et al.’s (1995) study, in which the researchers avoided expressing feelings for fear that they would serve to unintentionally privilege those who held similar feelings. I now see the ways in which my neutrality was an attempt to operate under the “pretense of impartiality” (Thomas, 2005, p. 534). My effort to stay neutral during group conversations meant that I often heard, gathered, and synthesized group members’ ideas and opinions without giving my own. Lisa described the role I played during our meeting in a conversation with her neighbor:

[My neighbor asked me], “well, how did the facilitator think it went?” I said, “I don’t know, because I couldn’t get a gauge from her because she was so fervently writing, writing, writing,” I said, “and everyone was talking, talking, talking” (Lisa, personal communication, November 14, 2009).

My neutral stance during group meetings demonstrated one of the main ways in which I negotiated my multiple roles within our collaborative inquiry group. While this stance

ultimately helped me to facilitate the development of a sense of community and support within our group, it paralyzed me from acting on my desire for the disruption that I believe is important for critical learning. My neutrality also may have made some of my roles more visible than others. In the next section, I explore the in/visibility of the multiple roles I played within our group.

In/visible Self

One of the questions I asked to drive my inquiry of my own experience was, “How are my roles made in/visible within the collaborative inquiry group?” I came to realize that no matter which roles were in action at any given point in time, my person was constantly visible. That is, while my roles oscillated and overlapped, the participants continued to see Leslie. Thus, whether and how these roles were made in/visible to the group depended on how I embodied the roles within our group. The following discussion describes my actions that rendered these roles in/visible.

I had a difficult time initially introducing myself to the group when I began to understand the seemingly infinite number of connections the other group members already had with one another. Keara used to teach with Veronica and Bonnie. Veronica and Bonnie work at the same school. Jackie was Keara’s elementary art teacher. Veronica’s daughter substituted for Dominick a few weeks ago. Dominick and Lisa had worked with the same group of local artists years apart. Veronica and Lisa grew up in the same town. Me? I was the stranger from the outside. I realized that the rest of the teachers, who all taught within a 15-mile radius of one another and many of whom had met before, were having a small impromptu reunion during our first group meeting.

Many of the initial conversations that took place in our group involved teachers finding ways in which they were already connected to each other, and locating similar interests. Because I did not share these connections, and because many of the teachers' preexisting connections were dependent on local knowledge, I was quiet for much of our first group meeting. I created a postcard describing what it felt like to sit and listen to the teachers talk during that first meeting (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Postcard from September 25, 2009.¹⁸

While I could have shared stories and challenges from my own years teaching art K-12, I wondered if the fact that my experience was not at one of the local schools would make my outsider status more visible to the group. After all of the teachers had introduced themselves and had moved on to a new topic, I shared one of my teaching

¹⁸ Text on the back reads: "As we introduced ourselves to one another, the teachers would share what they knew about each other's schools, art programs, curricula, special events, and administrators. I didn't have any of that local knowledge and was thus very quiet, only asking questions when I needed clarification in order to understand what they were talking about. As I listened, I imagined some of these schools were difficult contexts in which to work. Some group members lacked adequate supplies, other lacked a supportive administrator, and some taught schedules that would challenge the stamina of the Energizer bunny. Despite their challenging contextual factors, the conversation felt filled with excitement. The opportunities for these teachers to connect and to tell their stories somehow kept the conversation from focusing on their daily challenges. I wonder when we will talk about the challenges."

experiences before saying, “I’ll tell you a little bit about myself, if that’s ok.” Then, 26 minutes into our first meeting, I finally told the group some things about myself. When I told them I was a Ph.D. student, they asked me a number of questions, such as, “What do you want to do after you graduate” (group meeting, September 25, 2009)? Through my introduction and then answering their questions about my personal life, I hoped that I had made my participatory role in the group visible. After two meetings, Keara assured me I was now “part of the web” during my first interview with her:

Leslie: At the first meeting I was sitting there and I was thinking, “I feel like such an outsider.” I often interrupted for clarification because people were using acronyms or names and I was like, “Is that a name of an art association? Is that a museum? Is that an artists’ name?” Everyone shared some local knowledge, and I was sitting there like, “Wow, is this as noticeable to the rest of the group as it is to me?” I think one of the reasons that I was so quiet is because I was so astounded with how much I felt like an outsider that first week.

Keara: Yeah, but now you’re not. Now you’re part of the web. There’s no getting out of it.

Leslie: You think so?

Keara: Yeah, once you’re introduced to them, sincerely, you’re part of the web. There’s not getting out of it now (Laughs). Once you started sharing your own personal stuff, like, that’s how they all work. They like that personal stuff and then they build up from it. (personal communication, November 12, 2009)

Although Keara told me I was no longer an outsider, I knew that group members viewed and acknowledged my role as a participant when group members began to

consider me when making group decisions. When our group attempted to find a meeting date for February, Keara asked, “What works best with you and your driving abilities?” (group meeting, January 15, 2010). In another situation, I listed a number of different possibilities for members of our group to record and document the time they spent on inquiry-related work to fulfill their ArtsEdPD requirements. I offered to set up any of the methods I offered to them (e.g., spreadsheet, online form). Dominick asked, “Well, which would take you the least amount of time?” Because group members considered me a fellow participant, I benefitted from their collegial support. I found the research aspects of my work pleasurable due, in part, to their desire to help and willingness to work around my schedule.

In order to consider further my role as a participant in the group, I asked Lisa¹⁹ directly about the visibility of my participation in the group. She suggested that I made my participatory role visible by participating in group activities,

I think when you brought something meaningful that you shared with us. That night you were more a participant because that was the night we discussed ourselves and what’s meaningful to us in terms of art and you were a part of that. If you were just a facilitator, you would have just listened to all of us, but you shared with us. (personal communication, May 5, 2010)

In her statement, Lisa also acknowledges that participating in our group was only one of my roles when she said “more a participant” and “if you were just a facilitator.” While my roles as facilitator and participant were simultaneous, I often sensed that my role as a

¹⁹ I asked Lisa because earlier in the year she mentioned her inability to “get a gauge” about how I was feeling during group meetings, and I wanted to explore other possible definitions of my participation in the group.

facilitator was more prominent and sometimes made my participation in our group invisible. Reflecting on my roles approximately halfway through the year, I wrote:

My role as a participant feels, at times, almost absent because of my other role of facilitator. In some ways, I feel like a participant. I sit with them, we talk together, and I participate in side conversations. But in many other ways, they expected me to steer the CIG meetings. I end up standing at the front scribing while they are talking and providing direction and clarification at times. I rarely offer my own ideas. I don't feel very much like a participant right now. I do feel a lot like a facilitator. (researcher memo, January 15, 2010)

The group verified my sense that my role as facilitator was the prominent role I played in our group.

Dominick: What roles do you see, hear or observe Leslie playing with the group?

Bonnie: Facilitator.

Veronica: Facilitator, major.

Dominick: Major. Major.

Jackie: Yeah.

Keara: Major facilitator. She absorbs all of our information, and then hits you with all of it. (*Group Laughs*).

Veronica: She does and spits it back out and makes it sound right.

Jackie: Yeah, she's very good with that. (group interview, March 18, 2010)

In the above exchange, the group suggested that my facilitation was visible as I listened and then restated or summarized during group conversations.

I also made my role visible to group members when I would attempt to refocus discussions. In the following excerpt, for example, Dominick describes me as a “steering wheel”:

Dominick: I think she works like a steering wheel also and she guides us so we don't go off on tangents and she'll bring us around to keep us focused on an idea we might start with. We might go out and then she will bring us back again.

Veronica: She does keep us focused.

Jackie: Yeah she does. (group interview, November 16, 2009)

Based on this participant feedback and my own researcher memos, I believe that the visibility of my role as a facilitator, in conjunction with my neutrality that I described previously, sometimes rendered my participatory role invisible.

The members of my group stated their need for a facilitator, especially related to our ongoing inquiry question. Because of their stated need, and because I was being paid by ArtsEdPD to facilitate the group, I spent the majority of our group meetings facilitating conversations, handling paperwork, and documenting our process in ways that were unlike the ways in which the rest of the group members participated in our group. The group members did not forget that I was a fellow art educator; they mentioned a number of times the value of having a facilitator that understood their daily struggles. However, my role as a facilitator remained prominent, and the periodic invisibility of my role as a participant was likely due to the ways in which I spent my time during group meetings.

The periodic invisibility of my participatory role was similar to the ways that my role as a researcher was more visible in some instances than in others. While the

recording equipment I used was a continuous visible reminder of my role as a researcher, participants never mentioned my role as a researcher when prompted to discuss my roles during interviews. My researcher role was obvious in certain group meetings during which I obtained the required IRB permissions, shared my research questions with participants, and attempted to schedule times in which to meet group members for individual interviews. These actions were specific to my role as a researcher, that is, they did not necessarily overlap with my responsibilities as a group member or as facilitator.

I believe that participants noticed the ways my role as a researcher was visible even though they did not mention my role as a researcher in conversations with me or during group interviews. For instance, at the end of the year, I asked the group members to describe a time when our collaborative inquiry felt like research.

Keara: When I had to ask my principal and administration that question and set up my little video camera.

Leslie: So it felt like research when you were documenting it?

Keara: When I had to do that. Like, ok, this is uncomfortable.

Leslie: Oh

Lisa: Because it's not...it doesn't fit into your normal day.

Keara: Yeah, it doesn't.

Lisa: Like, talking to your students and...that's all normal.

Jackie: I think I agree with what you're saying. (group interview, May 14, 2010)

The group members described their work as research related to documentation and interviewing, which happened to be the two research practices of mine that were most consistently visible within the group.

Unlike Keara's feeling that documenting an interview with her administrators was "uncomfortable," my sense is that group members enjoyed meeting me for interviews. Dominick and I had such an enjoyable time talking about a number of art movements during our first one-on-one interview he suggested that we meet again "just to talk about art" (personal communication, November 15, 2009). The interviews allowed me to speak to group members one on one and thus provided an opportunity for me to develop connections with participants. Thus, participants' comfort with my research practices may have contributed to the relative invisibility of my role as a researcher within our group. In other words, it was through the interviews that I had developed a sense of comfort and rapport with the participants, which they ascribed to my person rather than my role as a researcher. Jackie told me, "What I'm talking about is a comfort level, this group is so nice and comfortable to work in...It's a good thing, and I think a lot of it has to do with you, though" (personal communication, December 3, 2009). As Jackie's statement suggests, the group members often attributed the results of my actions as a researcher, facilitator, and participant such as "comfort" to me as a person, rather to describe them as necessary functions of the individual roles. The participants viewed my multiple roles as part of me, and me and my multiple roles as part of our group.

However, one critical incident—the school visit—challenged the perceptions that group members had developed about me and my roles. During our year together, I realized that visiting each group members' classroom would enhance my research by allowing me to observe the teachers' contexts firsthand and so to consider how our inquiry related to their daily work environments. The visits also informed my role as a facilitator insofar as I was able to make recommendations about technology integration

and other ArtsEdPD initiatives after observing the physical set up of their classrooms. I was also able to view their teaching contexts in relationship to each other, allowing me to direct one group member to another group member with a similar situation or challenge. Furthermore, the visits provided me with the local knowledge that I felt I was missing as a participant in our group. However, my research was the main reason I sought to observe group members' working contexts.

Seven months after we began our inquiry, I made one visit to each of the group members' classrooms during which I took notes and asked many questions. I also took a few pictures of their classrooms and school buildings. During the visit, I attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible to minimize any potential inconvenience of my visit. My attempt to be unobtrusive meant that I allowed the teachers to schedule the time for my visit and to choose my location in the classroom when the time of my visit overlapped with a class they were teaching. I left the visits feeling appreciative for what I was able to learn about their working contexts during the visits.

After receiving the data from the group interviews that happened throughout the year, I realized that the group members did not share my view that the school visits were a positive experience. Dominick facilitated the group interview in which they described their experiences:

Dominick: Those of you who've had Leslie visit your school already, how was that for you?

Keara: Embarrassing

Dominick: Embarrassing?

Keara: uh huh.

Veronica: Well ours to me, well it was just, um....

Bonnie: It wasn't what I expected.

Keara: It was good visiting with her, but...

Bonnie: I felt that, the visit was more, which I found out tonight, to get documentation for what she's doing. And I felt like her visit was to see what we're doing. And I didn't think she really noticed all the neat stuff.

Jackie: Oh?

Veronica: She never said one word to us.

Keara: Really? Cause she was in and out so quick?

Bonnie: No she sat an hour, and forty with her, and after she left, I was like, she didn't, even, she wasn't even impressed with all the stuff we do. We were actually hurt.

Keara: She probably just didn't get to tell you. She did with me.

Bonnie: No, see she never said one thing, so now...

Veronica: We didn't know. Now that makes me feel better.

Bonnie: It makes me feel better.

Jackie: Well what do you suppose [was] her purpose then? Why did she come?

Veronica: I felt that her purpose was to help her research, and um, was [a] comparison to other schools and the art programs in each school and how much art the kids are getting in schools.

Dominick: Right, do you think she came in as an observationist, or do you think she was just coming as not an observer, but more as...

Veronica: I thought she was coming in to observe me teaching, my student, assignment, what [we] were doing in my classroom. I didn't realize it was sit down, ask questions when the kids weren't there. So she never saw our students working in our room.

Keara: She saw mine.

Veronica: Not ours. And to just get specifics about our program. It was pretty much just informational.

Dominick: But all in all the experience was ok?

Bonnie: Yeah yeah, right. It was just not what we expected.

Veronica: Right. (group interview, March 18, 2010)

Because the visits were not what participants expected, the visits resulted in group members feeling embarrassed, confused, and hurt. From the following conversation, I later learned that these feelings resulted from group member's expectation that I would provide them with affirmative feedback.

Veronica: Right, right I agree. So I think she got a lot of information about our scheduling and our specific program, but I don't think she got any knowledge about our students and how we teach.

Bonnie: But maybe that's not what she came for.

Veronica: See I misunderstood.

Bonnie: We wanted a few oohs and ahs.

Jackie: Yeah, well I don't think we were really told.

Keara: I don't ever get any oohs and ahs.

Bonnie: Well we don't really get any from anyone so,

Keara: Well we don't.

Veronica: We don't get any. We don't get oohs and ahs either. (group interview, March 18, 2010)

Not having intended confusion, hurt, or embarrassment, I was startled and saddened by the difference between my perception of the school visits and my group members' perceptions. The differences in our perceptions may have resulted from the fact that my approach to the school visits made my role as a researcher most prominent, which was unusual in our group life to date. Most of the activities related only to my researcher role (e.g., transcribing, data interpretation) were invisible to our group. The visible actions (e.g., interviews) were part of a "methodology of friendship" (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2002, p. 254) that had produced feelings of comfort and closeness that were unintentionally absent in my actions during the school visit. Lisa said, "I thought she was there to see me teach, and she wasn't like, actually two different teachers asked me if she was there to observe the students. They did not even think that I even knew her" (group interview, March 18, 2009). Even though I had a clear understanding about my purpose for the school visits, my actions during the visit were unlike the roles I played in the group, and left the group members unsure of why I had visited their schools.

The confusion and difference in perception may also have been my failure to acknowledge that these teachers, who operate in a culture of surveillance (Foucault, 1977) within their schools, are so used to evaluative feedback following an observation that they were surprised when feedback was absent during my visit. Furthermore, my approach to the visits did not generate the "comfort" they previously associated with me. Group members were "hurt" because I was able to provide them with relevant and

specific feedback and did not do so. Keara discussed the role of encouragement in our process:

Keara: There isn't any encouragement because we're always thinking or doing. There's not time to go, "Oh, you're doing that right." We don't do that. We're too busy looking into more and more stuff. When you're working with administration, you're so used to that but we didn't do that. I guess that's what we were looking for.

Leslie: Yeah. I sensed intuitively what you just told me: that some of the members of our group really wanted me to just affirm what they were doing. But I didn't, and it wasn't because I thought that what they were doing wasn't good, it's because that's not why I was there.

Keara: Yeah, you're right. And it was hard for us because we're so centered in that. Maybe because there's no one else like us in our buildings. But, I think now we probably all understand that wasn't part of the process. Because now it makes more sense. Like you said, you kind of expected it, but then again we've never been in the position to not expect it. (personal communication, May 5, 2010)

Following these visits, I mailed each teacher a thank you card with a small gift certificate to a local coffee shop as a token of my appreciation for them allowing me to visit their classrooms. Now after having the data from the group interview that I shared above, I realize that my group members may have much preferred positive feedback (i.e., "oohs and aahs") as a token of appreciation. The teachers, who work in places where "there's no one else like us," really expected my role as a participant (i.e., fellow art teacher) to be visible, and they desired me to affirm their hard work. The fact that I was

did not affirm their work might demonstrate the invisibility of my role as a participant during the school visits.

From the experience of visiting group members' schools and then hearing their perceptions of the visits, I recognized that my actions during the school visits departed from the way I had embodied my multiple roles within the context of our group. There, I negotiated my roles in a way that made some of the roles more visible than others. How I embodied these roles in our group during the first seven months of our collaborative inquiry understandably shaped how the group members viewed me. Because I was the same physical body in our group as the one who visited their schools, I believe the group members expected my roles to be visible in their schools in similar ways as they were in our group. However, in the context and culture of their schools, the ways in which I embodied these roles shifted. A research-related task drove my actions, which potentially made my roles as a participant and facilitator less visible. Furthermore, the contexts in which teachers' worked also shaped their expectations of my roles. The group members expected feedback on their teaching regardless of the purpose of my visit.

In addition, I failed to extend the participatory methods I had employed during our group meetings (e.g., brainstorming collaboration) to the school visits. I easily could have had an explicit discussion with each teacher asking what she or he wanted from the observation, yet it had not occurred to me to do so. My failure to engage in such participatory methods outside of our group was likely the result of a significant amount of reflection on the purpose of these visits for my research and a failure to reflect on how the visits might benefit the participants. I believe that my inexperience as a researcher also played a role in overlooking the opportunity to invite participants into shaping the

experience. For instance, I gathered the participatory methods that I often used in our group meetings from my previous experiences facilitating groups in and outside of educational settings. However, I had no experience conducting research-related observations and site visits, and failed to relate my participatory methods from facilitating groups to my research.²⁰

As I mentioned previously, I view the experience of visiting members' schools as critical; that is, it was significant in helping me to see how contexts and expectations influenced the in/visibility of my roles. However, my visits to schools were one of many experiences within our group, and while this experience illuminates important perspectives about the in/visibility of my roles, the experience was a singular occurrence for each group member. The more common experience in the life of our group involved a predominant visibility of my role as a facilitator, wherein my participation and desire for group members to view me as a fellow art teacher undoubtedly shaped my methods of facilitation. My role as a researcher was perhaps the least visible role, which I believe was due in part to the routine presence of the recording device, which was participants' only regular reminder that I was conducting research about our group.

The View from Here

The previous discussion describes the ways in which I embodied various roles and how my actions related to the in/visibility of these roles. I think about the in/visibility discussion as related to *when* and *under what circumstances* participants saw me embody certain roles. The following discussion, which addresses the research question, "How do

²⁰ I take heart in Elizabeth Ellsworth's (1988) conception of understanding self as a process of becoming, which allows me to accept the many things I learned throughout this study as important in my process of becoming a participatory researcher, among other things.

participants view my roles?” addresses how participants *described* and *defined* the roles they saw me playing in the group. I began this research wondering how participants would view my roles within our group. Although this research question does not ask how I viewed my roles, I found that I was constantly considering the group members’ views in relationship to my own. I quickly learned that our perceptions were, at times, quite diverse.

Early in our group interactions, particularly during one community building activity, I realized the importance of an historical understanding of self. In the activity, group members were cutting images from magazines that would serve as representations of self in a visual collage of our group. I selected an image of a young woman with her hair pulled up in two intentionally knotted pigtails (Figure 17).

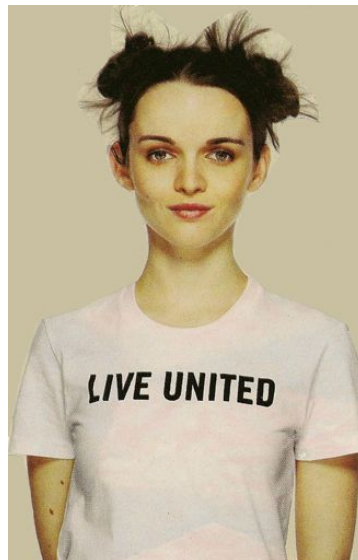


Figure 17. Image I chose to represent me in the group collage we constructed during our first collaborative inquiry group meeting.

While I felt connected to the image for its ability to communicate my inner-spunk (even without pigtails), Veronica, having just met me, felt this center image was “opposite” of

the way I now appear. Veronica also acknowledged the role history plays in her perception when she said, “I’ve never met you before” (group meeting, September 25, 2009). This conversation helped me to understand that my view of myself was dependent on a history that Veronica and I did not share, and thus, it is not surprising that Veronica’s view differed from my own.

While this example focuses on my appearance, it exemplifies how my own historicized self-image was sometimes different from the things I heard participants say about me. For example, based on Veronica’s observation of my role in our first two group meetings, she labeled me a “word person” during our first interview:

Veronica: Yeah, a word person. I think a word person is someone who has a huge vocabulary, a huge knowledge, I call them a walking thesaurus. (*Laughs*). A huge knowledge, and to me, they seem much brighter because they know how to use their words to make everything seem important.

Leslie: Oh.

Veronica: I think you and Jackie could walk into the Senate and talk to them. I could talk to them and they would know I’m passionate about what I do and I love what I do and everything, but you could talk to them and they would know that you’re brilliant, that you are very knowledgeable, and they would feel much more comfortable. You know what? They would put a lot more importance on what you say than what I say.

Leslie: Because of the vocab? The things you’ve described?

Veronica: The vocabulary, your presence, the way you are an excellent listener and then you sit back and listen and then you can say one sentence that is what we were saying for the past twenty minutes.

Leslie: I see. That's interesting because at Maryland I'm the only doctoral student that is an art teacher in my program, and, I feel like the least "word person."

Veronica: Really?

Leslie: I would rather hand in a concept map, an image, or a painting than a paper.

Writing is very difficult for me. (personal communication, November 15, 2009)

As someone who would much prefer communicating via imagery, I have never considered myself as articulate as Veronica described me. Veronica's view made me consider how my work as a graduate student actually requires (and helps to develop) the communication skills and a certain level of verbal aptitude that she described.

Throughout the year, I received similar feedback from other participants. For instance, Bonnie suggested that as I summarized, I introduced new language to help her describe things she was already doing: "You've suddenly given a name to everything we did. You know? Like, ok, that has a name. Oh, I've been doing that for a while, and now it has a name (group interview, May 14, 2010). These group member comments described the roles I played, specifically as a facilitator, as personal attributes and not simply a function of the role. While I realized that a facilitator and researcher should have the ability to listen, summarize, and synthesize, I had never considered these roles a part of who I am, as Veronica originally suggested by calling me a "word *person*."

The group members also described my role as the member of the group who affirms:

Bonnie: I think a big part of what made me feel comfortable is that no matter what we said, you always validated and found something important. I mean, I could have said “the grass is green.” And you would have said, “well, you are actually telling me that...” (*Group laughs*).

Keara: Yeah!

Veronica: [Bonnie and I] would sit in the car and think, “oh my god! How did she get that out of what I said today?!?!”

Bonnie: So no matter what you said, there was always something that made us feel like, “ok, we’re not idiots.”

Veronica: I agree. You make us sound good. (group interview, May 14, 2010)

My ability to affirm and synthesize group members’ ideas helped them to feel validated. They appeared to value my ability to validate their ideas. Veronica described how she felt understood when I was able to restate her ideas and synthesize them with other group member’s ideas:

I think she does the part were not comfortable with, at least I’m speaking for myself, I’m not comfortable as a person that knows how to take everything were saying and make it work for all those people who sit in a room and read 50 sheets and then understand it. I can’t do that. She can, she’s very comfortable. She seems to understand us, probably ‘cause she taught. So she understands us but she also understands that other world that I’m not comfortable in. And she bridges the gap between the two. (Veronica, November 16, 2009)

Veronica described my role as a bridge between her practice as a teacher and “that other world that I’m not comfortable in.” Because I was not conducting the interview in

which Veronica made this statement and did not have the data until the end of the year, I was not able to ask her directly what she meant by “that other world.” However, based on her description of the other world (i.e. “people who sit in a room and read 50 sheets and then understand it”), I wonder if she is describing the world of academia. If this is true, my overlapping roles as participant, facilitator, and researcher allowed me to act as a bridge between academia and teacher practice.

While affirming teacher practice, providing a safe space, and acting as a bridge are all noble outcomes of my role as our group facilitator, whether I felt successful as a facilitator largely depended on how group members responded to my actions in the moment. My earliest feeling of success came during a group meeting in which we struggled to negotiate our varied interests into one question that would drive a yearlong inquiry. I created a postcard (Figure 18) that described my feeling of success after the group accepted my suggestion to broaden the inquiry question.

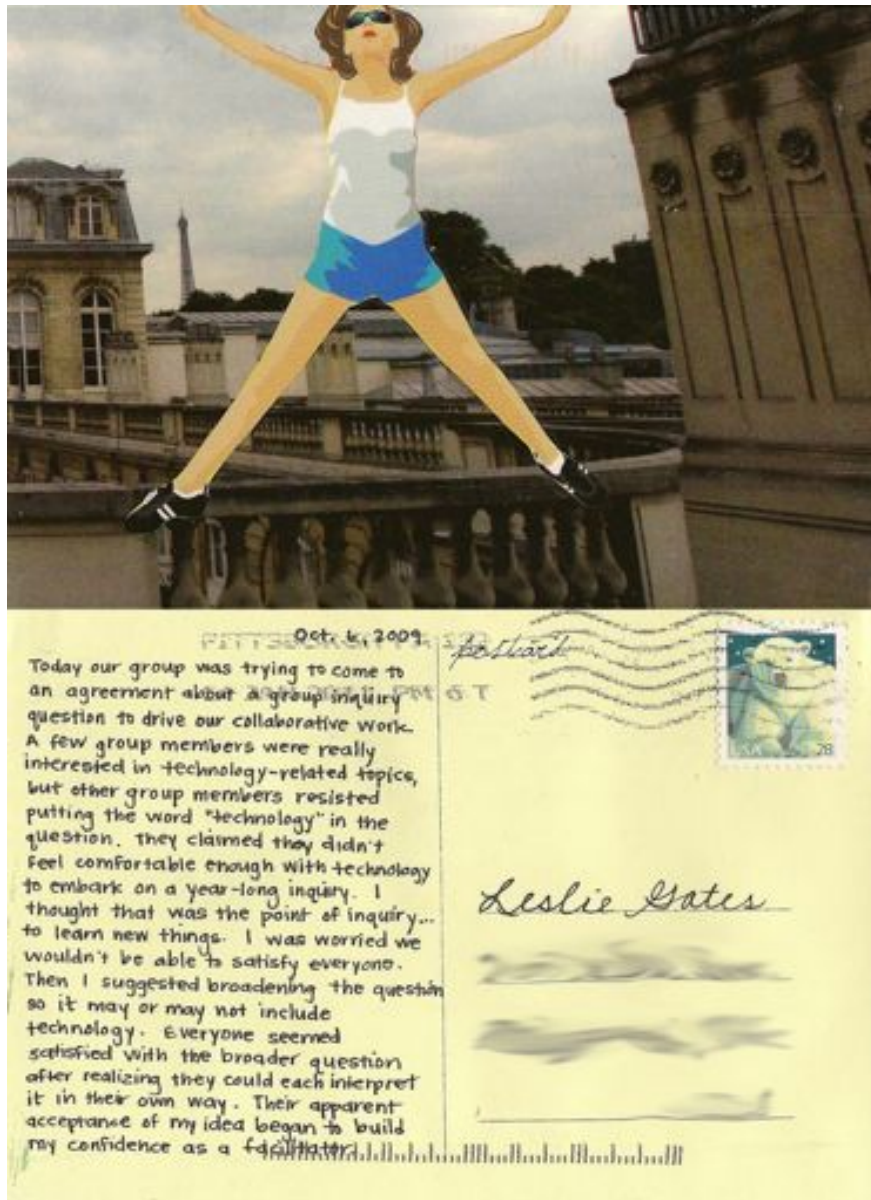


Figure 18. Postcard from October 6, 2009.²¹

²¹ Text on back reads: "Today our group was trying to come to an agreement about a group inquiry question to drive our collaborative work. A few group members were really interested in technology-related topics, but other group members resisted putting the word "technology" in the question. They claimed they didn't feel comfortable enough with technology to embark on a yearlong inquiry. I thought that was the point of inquiry... to learn new things. I worried we wouldn't be able to satisfy everyone. Then I suggested broadening the question so it may or may not include technology. Everyone seemed satisfied with the broader question after realizing they could each interpret it in their own way. Their apparent acceptance of my idea began to build my confidence as a facilitator."

After the discussion in which we managed to locate our inquiry question, I reflected on the way in which I facilitated that meeting, and hoped to use some of those same strategies throughout the year. I noticed that I would often pose a question, listen, summarize, synthesize, and then pose another question or suggest a next direction. I repeated this cycle intuitively throughout much of the year. Following our fourth group meeting, I asked Jackie about my style of facilitation. She responded:

One thing about you is that you're not one to control. And, you know, it's not a controlling thing. You're giving people the opportunities to be part of a group as opposed to, "I'm the leader, I'm in charge, and you're going to hear what I have to say and we're going to do it this way." (personal communication, December 3, 2009)

Jackie said that my facilitation encouraged group members' participation and provided opportunities for shared decision making.

However, my additional role as an ArtsEdPD faculty member sometimes interrupted the democracy Jackie described, especially when I had to convey requirements that were not welcome by the group (see Figure 19). ArtsEdPD required that teachers' post their documentation of the inquiry online. I encouraged teachers to keep documentation in any form throughout the year and, two months before we needed to have the documentation uploaded, reminded the group of this requirement. Although I had mentioned the requirement once before during our second meeting, teachers believed they were hearing this for the first time and thought that this was an added requirement. Keara said, "Now we are getting dumped on and this is the worst...I'm stressing out...It's just overwhelming." (group meeting, March 18, 2010)

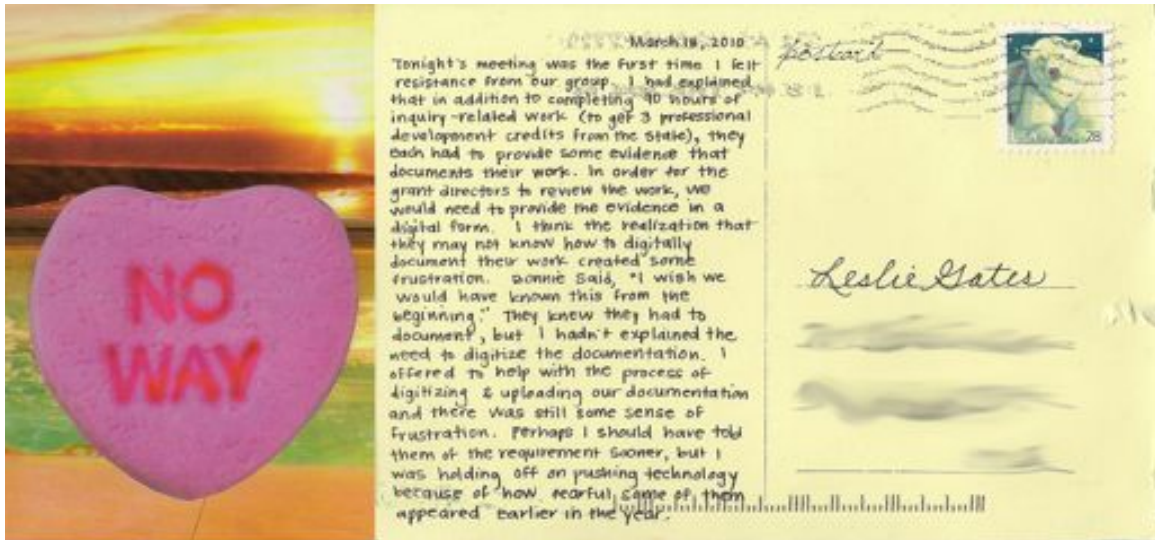


Figure 19. Postcard from March 18, 2010.²²

The online documentation requirement was in place all year. Since group members realized that fulfilling this requirement might involve technological expertise that they did not have, I volunteered to help them with the technological aspects of uploading their documentation at our next group meeting. However, this offer did not appear to alleviate the sense of anxiety and frustration. A month later, Keara explained to Jenni (who missed the previous meeting) what happened in the following way:

Keara: They set up this new documentation thing

Jenni: Why didn't they tell us this before?

²² Text on back reads: "Tonight's meeting was the first time I felt resistance from our group. I explained that in addition to completing 90 hours of inquiry-related work (to get three professional development credits), they each had to provide some evidence that documented their work. In order for the grant co-directors to review their work, we would need to provide the evidence in a digital form. I think the realization that they may not know how to digitally document their work created some frustration. Bonnie said, "I wish we would have known this from the beginning." They knew they had to document, but I hadn't explained the need to digitize the documentation. I offered to help with the process of digitizing and uploading our documentation and there was still some sense of frustration. Perhaps I should have told them of the requirements sooner, but I was holding off on pushing technology because of how fearful some of them appeared earlier in the year."

Keara: They did at the last meeting. It would have been nice to know earlier, but I guess they discovered a new way. So now we have to go in, redo our hours and mark down everything.

Jenni: What do you mean mark down everything?

Keara: They want more information. So I'm going to go back to the 4th grade work and take pictures of it, or scan a couple of them on, just to show them that I did it.

Jenni: Oh.

Keara: Yeah, because we specifically said, "Wow, this is all we have to do?" when we were doing this and she's like "Yeah, this is it." But now we have to go back in. I'm like really bummed. (group meeting, April 30, 2010)

Despite all my efforts to alleviate fears and assist group members in their documentation process, Keara was still "bummed" about "this new documentation thing." The ArtsEdPD requirements forced me into an authoritative role that felt contrary to my actions as a participant and facilitator. When the group members spoke of this requirement, they often did so using "she" or "they" rather than using my name or the names of the grant co-directors, who were also both female. By not using names, I was unable to know exactly how the group members were understanding who was requiring the online documentation and how they viewed my role in the process of disseminating ArtsEdPD requirements. I sensed that group members struggled to blame their frustration on me, a fellow trusted group member.

I felt somewhat caught between my role as an ArtsEdPD faculty member and the other roles I played within our group. For instance, my role as a faculty member with

ArtsEdPD meant that I was at “work” during our group meetings, and therefore I chose to dress professionally. Meanwhile, the rest of our group members were not at their full time jobs, so many of them dressed casually when they attended our meetings. My affiliation with ArtsEdPD also meant that I had direct access to the project co-directors. As part of my contract, ArtsEdPD expected me to oversee our group’s budget, track group progress, handle supplies, act as technological support for my teachers, and report any issues. Although ArtsEdPD called me a “facilitator,” a number of group members also referred to me as the group “leader,” and affirmed my expectation that the tasks associated with my role enforced a hierarchy within our group.

I observed how group members ascribed authority to me because of my role as an ArtsEdPD faculty member by asking questions like, “Are we allowed to record, as part of our data, what we interpret the students feel is meaningful to them? Am I allowed to include that as my interpretation?” (Lisa, group meeting, January 14, 2010). In another conversation, Jackie asked me, “How do you want our documentation recorded?” (group meeting, November 16, 2010). These questions suggest that I had the authority to “approve” actions and that participants wanted me to endorse their methods of meeting ArtsEdPD requirements.

While I certainly understood the requirements related to earning continuing educational credits via ArtsEdPD, I was not responsible for granting teachers credit. I did not see myself as having the authority to “approve” group members’ efforts at meeting the documentation requirements, but group members’ questions suggest that they, at the least, saw me as an ambassador who would clarify their concerns. This role as an ArtsEdPD ambassador created a dynamic in the group that was noticeably different from

our other group conversations in which I was the one asking the questions and participants were providing the answers. Thus, the participatory aims of my facilitation and research were, at times, in tension with the authority that group members' ascribed to my status as an ArtsEdPD faculty member. One conversation, in which the group members were discussing the elements of our collaborative installation, captured this tension.

Lisa: I might change my mind [about my chair] several times from now until the exhibition.

Leslie: I have an old wooden chair sitting at my house that I can use, but I need to think about what my chair might look like.

Keara (to Veronica): She should be the cone. Shouldn't she be the cone?

Veronica: I don't know. (group meeting, March 18, 2010)

At this point in time, our group planned to include one chair representing each participant, and a desk/cone structure in the center of the chairs. Keara suggested that my role is unlike the other group members by suggesting that the cone (rather than a chair) represent my role in the group. This suggestion made me uncomfortable because I did not want the group to revolve around me in practice, or in our representation of our practice/experience. I also wanted to be a participant, and thus, represented by a chair rather than something different from the rest of the group members.

I continued to hear group members describe my roles and position in the group when I visited their classrooms. Three of the group members introduced me to their students; the variation in their introductions astounded me. When Keara's class entered the room, she greeted them and introduced me by saying, "This is Mrs. Gates. She is my

teacher.” Had she not used my name, I would have wondered if she was talking about me. I had never considered the word “teacher” to describe the relationship between Keara and me. Jackie, who introduced me to a group of students who had entered her room after school, simply said, “This is Leslie.” I responded with a hearty “hello!” and the students went about their work. Dominick, whose classroom I visited on Saint Patrick’s Day, told his first grade class, “Hey everyone! This is Miss G. She’s from Ireland. Isn’t that cool?” in which case I immediately began planning strategies for how I would answer all of the questions about Ireland sure to come from a classroom full of inquisitive six year olds.

As I considered the different ways these three group members presented me to their students, I remembered other ways I had heard group members describe my roles: word person, bridge, summarizer, affirmer, teacher, leader, listener. These participant views of the roles I played in the group are not more or less accurate than my own views, nor are they more or less sophisticated titles than participant, facilitator, and researcher. Instead, they demonstrate the richness of our experience and the variation found within my roles. In fact, the group members’ description of me as “leader” and “teacher” capture the significance of my role as an ArtsEdPD faculty member, which I had not considered in my original research questions about my experience within the group.

By describing how we defined my roles, how and when my roles were in/visible, and the ways I negotiated the multiple roles, I have attempted to re/present my experience within the collaborative inquiry group. As this section suggests, my roles were not static phenomena. The group members contributed significantly to my own understandings of this experience and the ways in which my roles were essential parts of me.

Chapter 5: Searching for Openings

“Ok, when we get to the end, is it just –do we just fade off into the sunset? Do we sing kum-bah-yah? What do we do?” (Bonnie, personal communication, November 16, 2009).

This study is an example of “deep local work” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 153) that explored the particularities and circumstances of eight art teachers’ experiences with collaborative inquiry. My exploration of this place, one in which art education and professional development overlap, used cartographical processes that helped me to see my own position in relationship to the rest of the landscape. The cartographical processes also allowed me to make sense of what I observed using the language, symbols, and strategies of maps (Harmon, 2009). Unlike traditional cartography, which locates and illustrates static characteristics of a place, my process represented a dynamic experience. In this place, I met teachers who expressed overwhelming and genuine appreciation for an opportunity to connect with one another, and this appreciation permeated our experience together.

Because of the group members’ appreciation for this experience, I agree with Cochran-Smith & Lytle that such collaborative learning communities are “moves in the right directions” (2009, p. 59). However, I fear that larger social structures potentially endanger future professional development opportunities for art educators like the one I have described in this study. At the time of this writing, the United States Congress just passed a final Continuing Resolution to temporarily fund government institutions through September of 2011. The resolution cuts \$15 million from the \$40 million that funds the United States Department of Education’s Arts in Education initiatives, from which

ArtsEdPD and many other professional development initiatives for arts educators have received their funding (Americans for the Arts, 2011). In the present economy, government-funded arts-based organizations have become endangered species, and the budget cuts will likely limit the professional development opportunities these organizations have offered to art educators.

Furthermore, the U.S. government's requirement for funded professional development initiatives to demonstrate "effectiveness" based on a scientific model of evaluation presents challenges for inquiry-based professional development models. For instance, imagine the ArtsEdPD faculty's frustration as we attempted to construct a pre-test for an inquiry-based professional development model in which we did not pre-determine the content. Funding that requires scientifically based reporting measures is unfortunately misaligned with professional development models based on research studies that demonstrate the value of inquiry-based and content-specific professional development models and that attend to contextual specificities (c.f. Clausen, 2009; Curry, 2008; Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006; Given, 2010; Jennings & Mills, 2009; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Lind, 2007; Nelson, 2009; Nelson & Slavit, 2008; Stewart & Davis, 2007; Swidler, 2001; Watson & Manning, 2008). The challenges created due to this misalignment may dissuade some from seeking the funding necessary to provide art educators with experiences like the one in this study.

However, the challenges are not insurmountable, and thus should not deter those interested in inquiry-based professional development from applying for funding. For instance, ArtsEdPD was able to demonstrate its "effectiveness" by looking for the

openings in the requirements and, in some respects, subverting the requirements.²³

Although ArtsEdPD was able to provide gain scores and other necessary quantitative reporting measures to the U.S. government, such reporting measures fail to communicate all of the ways in which participants benefitted from and valued their experience (Figure 20). For instance, forced-choice response items on a test did not capture the contextual and specific practice-based knowledge that resulted from participants' experience with inquiry. Moreover, the reporting measures required the evaluator to represent participants' experiences according to pre-determined criteria and thus did not allow participants to directly represent their own varied and diverse experiences.

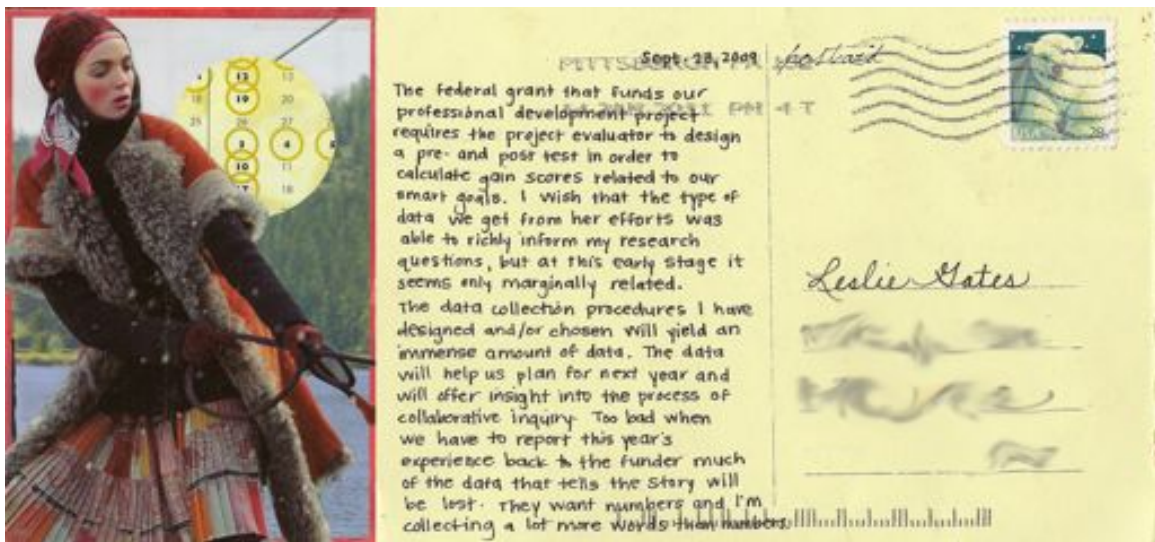


Figure 20. Postcard from September 23, 2009.²⁴

²³ In the case of ArtsEdPD, we negotiated our inquiry model and the reporting requirements by filling a pre- and post-test with questions about the inquiry process (rather than the content of the inquiry) as well as questions related to our technology initiatives. In short, the pre- and post-tests served to calculate the required gain scores yet failed to represent the most sophisticated learning that took place throughout the year.

²⁴ Text reads: The federal grant that funds our professional development project requires the evaluator to design a pre- and post-test in order to calculate gain scores related to our smart goals. I wish that the type of data we get from her efforts were able to richly inform my research questions, but at this early stage it seems only marginally related. The data collection procedures I have designed and/or chosen will yield an immense amount of data. The data will help us plan for next year and will offer insight into the process of collaborative inquiry. Too bad when we have to report this year's experiences back to the funder much of the data that tells the story will be lost. They want numbers and I'm collecting a lot more words than numbers.

At present, the place where art education and professional development meet is one in which budget cuts and hopelessness threatens to seize the psyches of those who understand the value of engagements such as the one I have described in this study.

However, the words of Maxine Green encourage me to find ways forward,

I am moved to resist walls and barricades, to discover openings somehow, to bring in sight the visions of justice and freedom that occupy me – and to do it without impinging on the dignity, the integrity of the art forms we are working – for their sake and our sakes, to bring alive, to make present, to shine in the world.

(2009, pp. 9-10)

Believing that collaborative inquiry is a process of value for art educators, and considering its challenges within the current social structures, I find that a search for openings becomes a necessary part of my cartographical process. Where are the places of possibility in this landscape? This chapter attempts to locate a few openings that may in/form future collaborative inquiry efforts for art educators. The following recommendations for future arts-based collaborative inquiry and research draw upon this study's findings as well as the educational literature. I conclude by offering specific recommendations for future researcher.

Opening: Our Desire for Connection and Our Impetus for Creativity

This study answered the call from teachers for professional development spaces in which they can connect with other teachers (Compton, 2010). Although connecting with

year and will offer insight into the process of collaborative inquiry. Too bad when we have to report this year's experience back to the funder, much of the data that tells the story will be lost. They want numbers and I'm collecting a lot more words than numbers.

other teachers is not the only goal of collaborative inquiry, the participants in this study clearly valued the connection and collaboration that occurred in our group. As Jackie said, “This is exciting to me. [Working in collaboration] is something new and can transform thinking” (group meeting, September 25, 2009).

In the preceding chapters, I have described a mismatch between the professional development many art educators seek and the professional development art educators traditionally receive, especially within their schools. My experiences working with the art teachers in this study and those across my home state lead me to believe that art educators’ desire for connection is one of the main reasons that they spend their own money and time beyond their teaching contracts to gather at workshops and conferences (Sabol, 2006). While I do not intend to suggest that all art educators have the resources to pursue professional opportunities on their own time and with their own money (or that they should), art educators have demonstrated their desire for connection as well as their willingness to sacrifice for it. Art educators can act as change agents insofar as they embody this desire for connection with concrete actions.

However, suggesting that art educators could fulfill their desire to connect with other teachers if they took concrete steps to do so may be over-simplistic and begs discussion about the potential obstacles to creating or accessing collaborations. I will briefly suggest two such obstacles. First, apart from formal programs (e.g., ArtsEdPD) that are able to provide districts with monetary reimbursement for substitutes, art teachers who lack content-area colleagues in their schools but desire collaboration with other art teachers likely do so outside of their regular school day. These opportunities then compete with teachers’ other personal and professional responsibilities. In addition,

teachers might forego potentially valuable informal opportunities if they are in need of a specific type of professional development that “counts” towards continuing education requirements for maintaining licensure. Second, professional development has so long placed teachers in the position to be “developed” by an outside expert (Webster-Wright, 2009) that teachers may lack a sense of agency about their own professional development. Art teachers who do not view their professional development as their own responsibility will likely engage only in professional development chosen and required by their school administrators, which may or may not include opportunities to collaborate with other art educators.

Bignall (2008) argued for a conception of agency defined as, “creative, productive and associative (rather than imposing, dominating, and appropriative)” (p. 142) and suggested that desire and power are constructive forces for change. Using this definition, I see art teachers’ creative and productive capacities as assets of their potential agency. These capacities are openings; art educators have the creative capacity to design professional development that is meaningful to them within the current social structures. The ArtsEdPD faculty, full of arts educators, took on this task. Furthermore, I found that within our collaborative inquiry experience, I was able to help teachers cultivate a recognition of and appreciation for their own power within the context of our collaboration by allowing them to define much of our experience.

A second necessary task involves art educators advocating for the credibility of their collaborative learning experiences to building administrators, professional organizations, and policymakers. By doing so, they demonstrate their agency amidst the “current regime of scientifically based research and evidence-based education” that

“positions practitioners as the recipients of other people’s knowledge” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 11). Art educators’ desire to connect with one another and their creative capacities are openings, that is, existing traits that are beneficial for ongoing work in which art educators design and advocate for professional development experiences that they find valuable. Given that such work is likely in addition to other professional responsibilities, perhaps the most strategic way for art educators to enact the advocacy I have promoted is by forging connections with professional organizations and teachers of other subject areas. By joining forces with others, art educators do not have to be fully responsible to bring about the large-scale political, economic, and socio-cultural changes that currently threaten their opportunities for meaningful professional learning opportunities. Instead, they can help to build a coalition that has the power to bring about such large-scale change.

Opening: Technology that Builds Community and Supports Collaboration

The geographical distance between art teachers need not be a significant barrier to their collaboration given the multiple methods of communication that technology now makes possible. In my own work, I regularly rely on voice over internet protocols (VoIP) (e.g., Skype) to “meet” with colleagues, students, and my university advisors. VoIPs such as Skype are free to use but do require high-speed Internet access. In addition, web-based file collaboration tools such as Google Docs and Zoho allow for those collaborating to simultaneously view and edit documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and image files. While VoIPs and web-based file collaboration tools are not the means through which I established relationships in this study, they provide a means for me to communicate and/or collaborate with anyone else who has internet access.

Teachers looking to establish initial relationships with other art teachers can benefit from art education networks that exist online. For instance, over 8,500 art educators currently belong to a global community of art educators called Art Education 2.0 (<http://arted20.ning.com>). Membership is free and open to anyone. Within this community, art educators have created and joined a number of sub-communities (called “groups”) based on common interests, teaching levels, course structures, and special projects. Members can communicate with each other via asynchronous discussions in “forums,” synchronously using the embedded chat feature, or by sending each other private messages similar to email. While Art Education 2.0 is only one of many places art educators are communicating online, Art Education 2.0 demonstrates the potential for the Internet to provide a virtual community of art educators. Once connected, art teachers can rely on VoiPs and other web-based communication tools that make long-distance collaboration possible. Such collaboration could provide a means for ongoing professional development, cooperative research, and strengthening collegial relationships in addition to many other possibilities.

Opening: This Research as One Account

This research itself is an opening, providing one account of an atypical professional development experience for art educators that can inform the work of those engaged in designing their own professional development experiences. Not only was the collaborative inquiry group in this study the only group within ArtsEdPD composed solely of visual art educators, but also such groups are absent from the professional development literature, as illustrated in Chapter 2. Thus, our group and this study can serve as the beginning for a line of research into collaborative inquiry as a professional

development model for arts educators. However, this research generated a number of insights that apply to professional development writ large, based on the premise that art educators have professional development needs that are specific but not separate from the professional development needs of all teachers. Thus, the remainder of this section describes three generative insights supported by the data presented in the previous chapters that can inform future professional development efforts.

This research supports a broader notion of what counts as collaborative inquiry and thus, as professional development. Practice-based conversation and critical reflection appear embedded in definitions of collaborative inquiry, such as the one I adopted for this research,²⁵ and thus promote these activities as the unquestioned and defining processes that generate professional learning within collaborative inquiry groups. While practice based discussions are important, they are not a complete picture of how teachers benefit from and what they learn within collaborative opportunities. The collaborative inquiry group in this study was significant in the professional lives of its members,²⁶ despite limited conversation centered on group members' practice and a general hesitancy towards critical reflection.

For instance, some of the professional learning that took place in our group centered on understanding the policies and procedures present in other group members' schools. In the case of Keara and Lisa, hearing about schedules in other school districts prompted them to examine and identify the ways in which their own schedules created

²⁵ "A group of six to twelve professionals who meet on a regular basis *to learn from practice* through structured dialogue and engage in continuous cycles through the process of action research" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008, p. 16, emphasis added).

²⁶ I initially struggled with the interplay between the reasons for which this study is significant and the reasons that this group was significant in the lives of its members. I eventually gave up attempting to separate the two, realizing that the interplay is a desirable outcome of participatory action research that aims to generate positive changes in participants' lives (Brydon-Miller & Macguire, 2009).

inequities for their students. With the support of our group, both of these women drafted proposals and approached their administration with alternative scheduling options. Such actions demonstrate the possibilities embedded in professional development opportunities that create spaces for teachers to dialogue about aspects of their professional life that relate to but are not centered solely on their classroom practice. Because offering one's own teaching practice as a topic for group discussion is a vulnerable act, conversations and collaborative efforts centered on other topics may help to build the trust necessary to move collaborative inquiry groups towards discussions based on teachers classroom practice.

While I support Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) supposition that professional development that includes such activities can and should assist teachers in the development of an inquiry stance towards their practice, this study cautions me against using these activities as the only indicators of professional learning within collaborative inquiry. Broadening the definition of collaborative inquiry to include inquiry into aspects of an educator's professional life beyond their classroom practice also supports a broader notion of professional development by challenging transformed classroom practice as professional development's only desired outcome. Certainly, Lisa and Keara's attempt to create more equitable educational situations for their students was a noble and worthy outcome of our collaborative inquiry experience and demonstrates how the group served to sustain teachers in a number of aspects related to their daily work.

This research demonstrates why collaborative professional development requires a substantial amount of time. Each teacher in our group was engaging in collaborative inquiry for the first time. Few if any had formal experience with the action research cycle

or with research techniques. Thus, a significant portion of our group meetings involved conversation in which we were learning how to do this work together.

The nature of what we were learning was a paradigmatic shift away from professional development in which an “expert” transfers knowledge to teachers in a lecture format. The data I presented in Chapter 4 suggests that group members’ previous professional development experiences (e.g., workshops, conferences, and graduate courses) as well as their pedagogy (i.e., regularly teaching artistic processes in service of a product) likely shaped their expectations that our inquiry experience would have a defined beginning and end as well as result in a final product. Ironically, the structure of ArtsEdPD may have enforced this view²⁷ despite enacting a collaborative inquiry model that promoted learning as ongoing and cyclical.

Four of the eight members of our group had at least 25 years of teaching experience that included their fair share of traditional professional development. For these teachers especially, understanding the basic tenets of collaborative inquiry as professional development required conversations that allowed them to both unlearn and reconsider their professional learning. For instance, Bonnie’s quote that opens this chapter demonstrates her desire to know how our inquiry would “end” only two months after our group began. Our group’s experience demonstrates the amount of time it took for teachers to release and/or negotiate some of these initial expectations. Only at the end of our year together did the teachers in this study begin to describe our work as a process and the products we created as representations of learning rather than the purpose of our group.

²⁷ ArtsEdPD offered participants continuing education credit by running collaborative inquiry groups as a “course” with defined beginning and end dates as well as a list of loose requirements about teachers’ engagement with their inquiry group.

Collaborative inquiry, insofar as it encourages an active and reflective engagement with teachers' own problems of practice in a collaborative setting, requires a level of vulnerability. This research demonstrates that collegial conversation and inquiries based on topics other than teachers' classroom practices help to build the relationships and trust that are necessary conditions for conversations about teacher practice. Engaging in critical self-reflection in the presence of one's peers was not automatic in our group experience. Instead, our group spent the majority of time in our first year together developing trusted relationships. Only toward the end of the year did our conversation shift towards practice.

A number of situational factors also challenged our group's desire to meet regularly, which potentially prolonged the amount of time it took our group to get to a place of active and reflective engagement. I had to cancel one meeting due to a blizzard, which created a two-month period in which we did not meet. In addition, not all group members attended every meeting. Because half of our group meetings occurred beyond the confines of members' school day, the members found themselves juggling our group's activities with other personal and family responsibilities. Although I believe that regular meetings are essential for maintaining a sense of momentum necessary for teachers to engage in the action research process, such variables will likely affect teachers' participation in any collaborative effort.

This research reveals that participant-facilitators will likely confront tensions between their democratic aims and the participants' desire for an expert or "leader." Perhaps due to participants' prior experiences with traditional professional development models that involve an "expert" or their unfamiliarity with collaborative inquiry, the

participants in this study sometimes expected me to tell them what to do. The self-study aspect of this research described my hesitancy to assume the role of a group leader. The knowledge and power I had as an ArtsEdPD faculty member further complicated my democratic hopes for our group. Reflecting on her own facilitation experiences, Drennon (2002) noted, “There is often tension between a group’s desire for a high level of direction from me, and my desire for the group to claim its own authority” (p. 62). Thus, collaborative inquiry, insofar as it introduces teachers to a new paradigm, might require facilitators with democratic commitments to negotiate their commitments and desires with participants’ expressed need for direction.

Perhaps one way forward is for facilitators to have explicit discussions with their group about expectations, roles, and the process of inquiry (Drennon, 2002; Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001; Moje, 2000). Although these discussions would not make the inquiry process certain, they would potentially make competing expectations within the group the problem of the whole group rather than the responsibility of one person (who is also likely in a position of power). I neglected to predict the importance of explicit discussions with my group about the collaborative inquiry process or our roles within the group. Perhaps my failure to see this need was the result of having spent significant time reflecting on my own multiple roles within the group before the group formed, or an unconscious attempt to maintain our *pseudocommunity* (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001) by suppressing topics that might challenge the status quo and thus generate conflict. In hindsight, I see the value in such explicit conversations, wherein any inherent conflict could have served to crack the illusion of consensus and moved us towards more specific and negotiated understandings of our roles. In addition,

such conversations, insofar as they model conflict as generative for group understanding, may have helped my group to embrace the dis/comfort associated with our inquiry process.

Future Research

This study provides a number of possible directions for future research. In this study, I attempted to view multiple characteristics of collaborative inquiry as well as my own role in the process. While attending to each of these attributes of our experience provided what I believe to be an important “first” look into collaborative inquiry for art educators, I see enormous value in understanding each of these attributes (and others) more deeply. Each of the sub-questions I posed in Chapter 1 merit their own study. For instance, a researcher asking one question such as, “In what ways do participants view this experience as context specific?” would likely spend more time observing teachers’ contexts and talking with teachers more directly about the relationship between the professional development opportunity and their classrooms than what I was able to accomplish given the varied areas of focus in this study. Such research is likely to build on the tensions that this study surfaced by further describing and theorizing critical components of professional development with/in art education.

Despite the inability of this one study to give multiple research questions the full attention they merit, the value of this first look into collaborative inquiry for art educators lies, at least in part, in the tensions it surfaced. As a result of this first experience with art educators and collaborative inquiry, I have many more questions that could prompt future inquiry about these tensions for those, including myself, who wish to continue exploring professional development in art education. For instance, how might professional

development opportunities that take place outside of teachers' working contexts support teachers' attempts to integrate their learning (and, in some cases, new equipment) into their schools? Related to this question, I wonder how art teachers negotiate their position within their schools. What factors influence their position? Other research might focus on how collaborative inquiry groups might engage in rich collaboration, which may mean discussing potentially contentious topics, while also maintaining the feeling of safety necessary within a collaborative culture. In addition, facilitators who are interested in self-study might study how they attempt to negotiate their own commitments (e.g., democratic ideals for the group) with those of their participants (e.g., group members' desire for the facilitator to act as a group leader).

In addition to suggesting content for future studies, I also advocate for methods of research that forefront the voices of K-12 art educators. I do not presume that the research agenda I just proposed is equally important to all group members in this study. The requirements of this dissertation prevented me from co-authoring this study with one or more participants. However, I believe that including K-12 practitioners as co-researchers is important, given that this work draws heavily on their experience in addition to my own. I expect that my future work will invite the collaboration of K-12 art educators beyond what was possible in this study.

Kim Dingle, in her work *The United Shapes of America* (Figure 21), demonstrates the potential power in seeing one individual's rendering of a space among the renderings of others.



Figure 21. Kim Dingle, United Shapes of America (Maps Drawn by Las Vegas Teenagers), 1991, Oil on wood, 48 x 72 inches.

Although some viewers may desire to use this work to assess the accuracy of the maps according to a fixed understanding of the United States border (that exists outside the work), I believe the power of Dingle's work lies in its ability to exemplify multiple and diverse perspectives of a shared space. This work serves as an illustration of the multiple perspectives of participants engaged in one collaborative inquiry group. However, I would like to consider how Dingle's work might illustrate this study in a broader context, that is, as one of many potential mappings of professional development in art education. I eagerly anticipate the ways my own personal understandings of this study will shift and change as future research and my own lived experiences render additional and/or diverse perspectives of the art education archipelago.

Epilogue

With the exception of Dominick, who retired at the end of the year in which this study took place, each of the Blue CIG members returned to ArtsEdPD and to our collaborative inquiry during the 2010-2011 school year. I continued to facilitate the Blue CIG, which included three new members who were all music educators. The group members developed a new inquiry question in an effort to explore how they could use technology to enhance the teaching and learning in their classrooms.

My ongoing work with these teachers has allowed me to see the ways in which they have benefitted from an additional year working within our group and ArtsEdPD. For instance, Jackie recently wrote me an email responding to a request for her to review selections of this dissertation before its publication. She added:

“You might want to mention that I went from, ‘How do you turn this computer on?’ to presenting to the [local arts agency’s] board, via a blog, about our inquiry project...I’m typing this email from the hospital...I got on their WiFi. What a difference a year makes!” (personal communication, April 21, 2011).

She is right to acknowledge the benefit of continuing our work beyond the year in which this study took place. Jackie and I are currently co-authoring an article and conference proposal to tell her story.

Appendix A

Initial Sketches of the PD Tensions for Art Educators

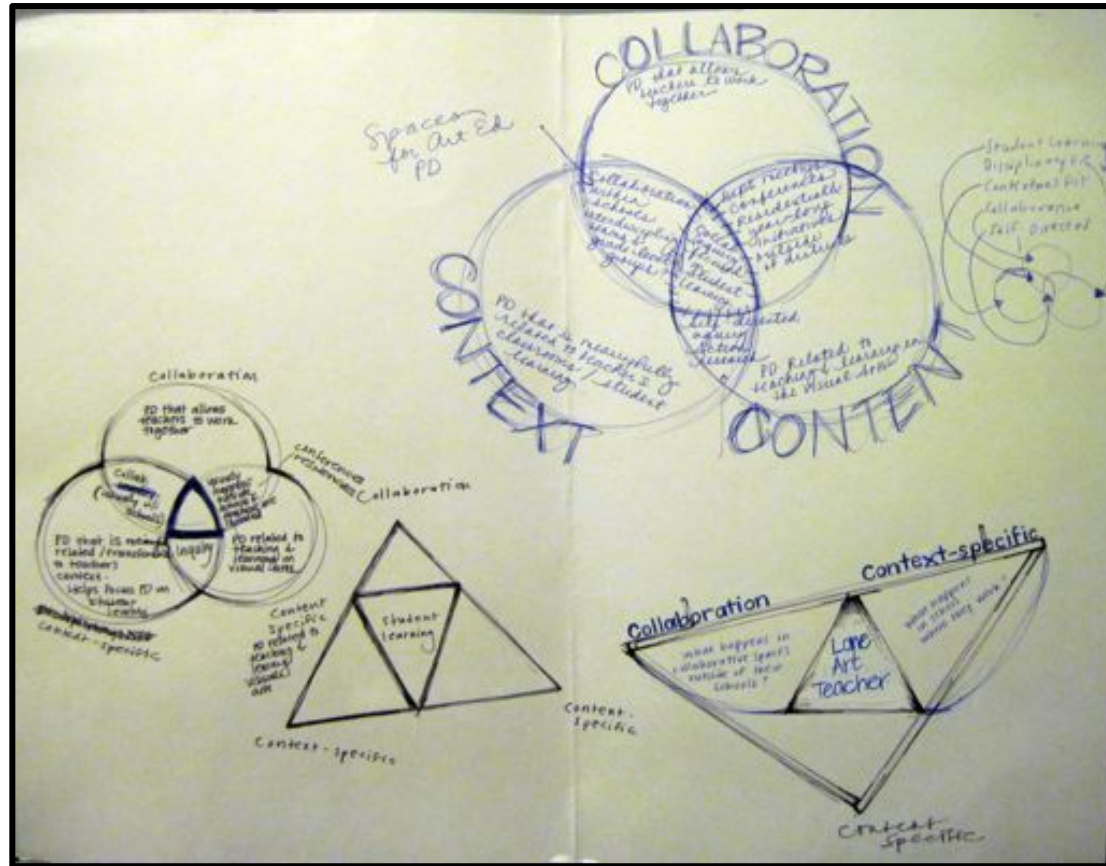


Figure A1. Initial sketches of the tensions I identified when attempting to envision professional development for art educators that met certain characteristics of high-quality professional development.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Individual Interview #1 Questions

1. Do you have any general comments about the CIG so far?
2. Would you share some things that you feel you have in common with other CIG members?
3. Would you share some things that you feel you do not have in common with other CIG members?
4. What are your thoughts about the make up of our group?
5. How do you feel about our inquiry question?
6. Do you have other questions or topics that you would like to talk about?

Reflective Group Interview Questions

1. Can you describe a time this year when you felt that the group was collaborating well?
2. Can you describe a time this year when the inquiry process felt uncertain?
3. Can you describe a time this year when something you did felt like research?
4. What parts of this year felt rewarding?
5. Describe an experience within our CIG that helped you feel comfortable within our group.
6. Is there anything that you would like to share with the group that you haven't had a chance to share?

Group Interview #1 Questions

1. What roles do you see/hear/observe Leslie playing within the group?
2. Do you feel it is important for an inquiry group to have a facilitator? Why or why not?

Group Interview #2 Questions

1. What roles do you see/hear/observe Leslie playing within the group?
2. In what ways do you see this project as research?
3. For those of you who have had Leslie visit your school already, how was that experience?

Appendix C

An Agreement between Jenni and Leslie Gates

Purpose: To gather data from our CIG about my role(s).

Note: I will not be present during this interview. I expect that you will pose the questions, record, and transcribe the conversation.

Pose: Ask the question (writing it on the board may be beneficial for people to refer back to it). You are also a participant, so please engage in the discussion. I expect each of these discussions will probably require approximately 10-15 minutes and I will build that into our group time.

Record: I bought you an 8gb SD card (yours to keep when all this is over) on which you can record the conversation. Our CIG will have a Zoom Q3 recording device (<http://www.samsontech.com/products/productpage.cfm?prodID=2020>) that will record onto the SD card. Alternatively, I have a Belkin TuneTalk that hooks onto the end of an iPod as a recording device. We can use that for backup the first time if you have an iPod.

Transcribe: Listen to the recording and type what was said in script-style. Save it as a word document. Here is an example of transcription from our first CIG meeting where you were describing yourself to the group:

Jenni: And that is me 100%. I am a packrat. Because if I see something in multiples I try to figure out what can I do with that?

<Laughter>

Jenni: No matter what it is. I even, at one point, my mom...my one mom...she, for some reason, decided to save all the shells to cashews because I can do something with those. So I had this big bag of cashew shells while I was in college and I kept them for probably a good 10-12 years.

Veronica: Oh my gosh!

Jennie: Cause I kept saying, I'm going to do something with these. And I threw 'em away and wouldn't you know...

Jackie: Mmm-hmmm

Jenni: It was like two weeks later and a kid came up with the perfect project that would have been for those cashew shells.

Compensation: I really appreciate you doing this. Really! I plan to have you facilitate three of these group interviews. I plan to pay you a flat fee of \$100 for each interview (posing the questions, recording the interview, and then transcribing and storing the data) which amounts to \$300 total. I will pay you after each interview. Just let me know when you finish the work and I will mail you a check asap.

Storage and Delivery: These documents MUST be saved somewhere in addition to your own computer (like in an online cloud or an external hard drive). You can email me the transcripts after our last CIG meeting. Once I verify that I have received the files, you should delete the files. At that time you can reformat the card and use it for other purposes.

I agree to the terms specified above.

Jenni, research participant

Date

Leslie Gates, researcher

Date

Appendix D

ArtsEdPD Participant Equipment Contract

In regards to technological equipment being furnished to you as a participant in the ArtsEdPD Project:

- All equipment is to remain in your (the participant's) possession for the duration of the ArtsEdPD Project.
- Equipment will be issued to participants who are in good standing with the project – those who are up to date with attendance, participation and performance requirements specified in the two CPE courses being run by REA.
- *At any point should the participant be no longer able to participate or complete the coursework, all issued equipment shall be returned to REA.*
- At the end of the project, all issued equipment may remain in the participant's possession for continued use in the classroom, so long as he or she remains employed with the same school district listed below.
- Should the participant leave the district's employment, all equipment must be returned to the district or to REA.

I have read, understand, and agree to adhere to the above requirements:

Signature _____

Printed name _____

District & School _____

Address _____

Date _____

Appendix E

CIG Office Hours Menu

Here are some suggestions about how to spend your time tonight (or your time at home later in order to meet your 48 required hours in addition to attending the REA days.

- **CIG Funds**
If you have items you'd like to request for purchase, please enter those into the form on our CIG website.
- **Residency Funds**
ArtsEdPD has allotted \$6,000 to our CIG to bring artists-in-residence to your schools. If you are interested in making use of this money, please contact (information withheld from publication for confidentiality).
- **STEAM Grant**
The STEAM grant application was handed out during the March 5th meeting of the REA. If you are interested in applying for this grant, you can log hours for this work. Leslie can help support the grant writing if you need help.
- **Logging Hours**
Make sure you are keeping up to date with logging your hours. If you have questions about what "counts," or how to enter your hours, let me know.
- **Dealing With Your Data: Collect, Interpret, Reflect**
Throughout the inquiry process, we have agreed to collect data from students, colleagues, administrators, and ourselves. Consider spending time thinking about the data you've collected. What does it mean? Feel free to write/make art/etc. as a response to this data. What does it mean for your teaching practice?
- **Day 6 Sharing**
We talked earlier in the year about demonstrating our inquiry process through the creation of a collaborative artwork. The hours you spend on this should also be logged.
- **Technology – Learning and Exploring**
If you have received new equipment with our CIG funds, learn how to use it! Explore things on the technology exploration pages from the multiple days we've spent at the REA and document your work. Log those hours.
- **Reading Related Resources**
Spend time reading or searching for resources about what makes art meaningful and relevant to students...or how others have defined "meaningful" and "relevant." Or, resources about art education and meaning making. Make sure you

consult the items on our resources page – there are a few there you may find helpful. If you find others that are helpful, email them to Leslie to upload for others to view.

- **GPR A Measures**

As part of the ArtsEdPD reporting to the federal government, we need to provide documentation that support the following:

- % of teachers who receive professional development that is sustained and intensive
(required - document time and quality)
- Pilot Measures: (adopt one)
% of teachers who demonstrate increased knowledge of teaching standards-based arts education (document knowledge)
- % of teachers who demonstrate the ability to teach standards-based arts education
(document practice)

Therefore, please consider what types of documentation you've collected that might be helpful to support any or all of these GPR A measures. Please email the documentation to Leslie or upload it to our CIG site for collection.

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