

Mentoring for Co-Creating Knowledge in Living Educational Theory Cultures of Inquiry

2021 Action Research Network of the Americas Virtual Conference

June 18, 2021

Jacqueline Delong

Abstract

In this research study, I share my recent learning into the nature of my mentoring of activist living global citizens as we co-create knowledge through Living Educational Theory research in Global Cultures of Inquiry. I describe and explain that my values of loved into learning, democracy, vulnerability and social justice, especially, gender equity are used as explanatory principles to explain my influence on myself, others and social formations where I live in personal and professional contexts. My argument is that my way of living/life according to my values enables me to build global cultures of inquiry where values of love, vulnerability, connection and concern are shared in a community with practitioner-researchers from Nepal, USA, India, and Canada. By encouraging and supporting citizen-scholars to create their own living-educational-theories, I intend to enable them to co-create knowledge with me and to influence others in their circle of influence to do the same as we contribute to the flourishing of humanity. Research methods include dialogue as research, analyzing visual digital data, and empathetic resonance as well as self-study, action research and narrative inquiry. I invite you to join me in strengthening the validity of my argument using Habermas' (1976) criteria in international validation groups.

Introduction

As a global mentor, I present an evidence-based explanation of how a community of practitioner-researchers is creating knowledge within and between the different cultural contexts of Nepal, India, USA, Canada and the UK to create and preserve their contributions to a Living Educational Theory Culture of Inquiry. Using Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 1989), the meanings of the values used by these practitioner-researchers as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning distinguish their educational practices as living global citizens (Potts, 2019) and citizen-scholars (Harper et al, 2021). Harper et al. say:

“Throughout the conference and beyond, colleagues will contemplate many meaningful questions. For instance, how can we individually and collectively demonstrate greater care about what happens in our society and in educational institutions? What evidence and expertise can we bring? How can we unite with practitioners, with scholars across other academic fields and disciplines, and with other citizens beyond academia to strategically address complex social and educational problems? Ultimately, this theme and its corresponding Annual Meeting activities aim to inspire evidence-based political actions and courageous, sustainable coalitions among citizen-scholars.”

Inherent in co-creating knowledge is my hope that each of the mentees that I coach will carry that encouragement and support into their circles of influence (Covey, 1989) and create Living theory cultures of inquiry as part of a Living Educational Theory social movement.

By generating educational conversations sometimes with groups and sometimes with individuals, I hope to share methods such as empathetic resonance with digital visual data to clarify the meanings of the energy-flowing values of democracy, vulnerability and loved into learning (Campbell, 2011) using dialogue as research method (DeLong, 2020), and validation groups to enhance the comprehensibility, evidence, normative understandings and authenticity (Habermas, 1976) of the claims to educational knowledge. The inquiry process includes action-reflection cycles to improve our practice and the co-creation of educational knowledge.

It is important that I am careful and aware of the language I use so that I avoid confusion and establish the meanings of the words for clear communication. I make the point that the meanings of language such as 'life-affirming and life-enhancing' are used within the lens of "in context" of Wittgenstein (1958). Like Buber, I want to be speaking directly to you so that you feel the need for a response:

"We must learn to feel addressed by a book, by the human being behind it, as if a person spoke directly to us. A good book or essay or poem is not primarily an object to be put to use, or an object of experience: it is the voice of You speaking to me, requiring a response." (Buber, 1970, p. 39)

I would like this paper to be accessible to a wide audience, to speak directly to you, reader, be readerly, be a good conversation (Gumede & Mellett, 2019) and enjoyable, bring joy. This is the essence of Living Educational Theory and living-educational-theories. I intend to discuss the educational influence of Living Educational Theory research on my life, on the lives of the mentees, their colleagues and students as we co-create knowledge and empower communities.

The paper is organized under the following headings:

1. Purpose and Aim
2. Theoretical Perspectives
3. Methods
4. Data sources
5. Results
6. Significance

1. Purpose and Aim

The purpose is to provide an evidence-based explanation of how a community of practitioner-researchers with an international mentor is co-creating knowledge within and between the different cultural contexts of Nepal, India, USA, Canada and the UK to create and preserve their contributions to a Living Educational Theory Culture of Inquiry. As a community, our aim is to present the meanings of the values used by practitioner-

researchers as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning with values of human flourishing that distinguish their educational practices as global citizens.

I intend to share my knowledge and experience in working with practitioner-researchers around the globe as I build cultures of inquiry where I encourage and support them, love them into learning (Campbell, 2011), to create their own living-educational-theories. Once they have experienced that process, they, in turn, do the same for others in their circle of influence (Covey, 1989). As part of a Living Educational Theory social movement, we are committed as “citizen-scholars” (Harper et al., 2021) and “living global citizens” (Coombs, Potts & Whitehead, 2014; Potts, 2014; Potts, 2019) to improving our world and the flourishing of humanity. How we do that may be limited by our context but if we each do our 15 percent (Morgan, 1988) combined together, we can make a difference.

This is my form of ‘learning with a life-affirming energy and values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity’ (Whitehead 2018, p. 7). If I can support these practitioner-researchers to create their own living-educational-theories by creating cultures of inquiry, I hope to inspire them to encourage and support others in their contexts to live their values more fully in their practice and inspire others to do the same. It is important to note that the role of mentor helps me improve my practice in a co-learning context (Nyanjom, 2020, p. 243) as “a mentor helps the person under his or her care to see beyond oneself and become more fully human. At the same time, mysteriously, the mentor is being helped to fulfill further his or her own human potential.” (Yamamoto, 1988, p. 188) Being seen in an affirming way is essential for the mentees’ learning and, indeed, for us all.

While I have taught male researchers, all of the practitioner-researchers that I have mentored have been women. While gender bias exists in most if not all countries, the challenges women experience in countries such as Nepal and India are extensive and while I can’t remove those obstacles, I do encourage and support them as they cope with them. They tell me that my support gives them confidence and strength.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

Insights are drawn from ‘Living Educational Theory Research’ (Whitehead, 2019) and ‘Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry’ (DeLong, 2021) explaining how our community of practice fulfils our educational responsibility to improve our educational practices and to contribute to the global knowledgebase of education.

Through co-creating knowledge in Living Theory cultures of inquiry, Michelle Vaughan, Assistant Professor, Florida Atlantic University, and I wrote,

With each of us having been so significantly impacted by the work being done in the Living Theory research field, it is a natural evolution to want to invite others to be a part of this process. If our lives have been forever changed, then we can contribute to the flourishing of humanity by supporting those throughout the world in their efforts to engage in some part of the Living Theory research experience. By ‘flourishing of humanity,’ we are working from a hypothesis that humanity ultimately

flourishes as individuals transform their own lives and begin to impact their own social contexts, thus spreading the reach of influence. We intend to use our work to support others to engage in the transformative experience described by Tillich (1962) and experienced by each of us through this process. As we do this work, together and individually, and reflect on how each of our values are infused in that process, we can begin to see patterns and trends in the ways that we engage in the facilitation of others in their Living Theory research work. (Vaughan & DeLong, 2019, pp 67-68).

I have been advised by the ARNA conference organizers that I should not assume that my readers/audience are familiar with Living Educational Theory so I will take time to explain it briefly. First. Jack Whitehead provides the following:

“You can access my research archive at <https://www.actionresearch.net/> , with its introduction: A Living Educational Theory (Living Theory) Approach to Research and Life:

A Living Educational Theory (Living Theory) approach focuses attention on the experiences and implications of living values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. These values are the life-affirming and life-enhancing values that give meaning and purpose to the researcher’s life. They are clarified as they emerge in the course of researching questions such as, ‘How am I improving what I am doing?’ They form the explanatory principles and standards by which improvements in both practice and knowledge-creation are judged.

The approach stresses the importance of extending the influence of these ontological and relational values and understandings in explanations of educational influence. In a Living Educational Theory approach to research and a human existence, individuals hold their lives to account by producing accounts of their living-educational theories; that is ‘explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations, in enquiries of the kind, ‘How am I improving what I am doing?’” (Whitehead, 1989). <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html>

A Living Theory researcher can use methods and draw insights from a range of other methodologies and theories, such as Action Research, Narrative Enquiry, Self-Study, Participatory Research, Autoethnography, Ethnography, Grounded Theory, Critical Theory and Case Study, as well as various quantitative methods. Researchers new to Living Theory research might visit an introduction <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arplanner.htm> and read the Advanced Bluffer’s Guide.

For tutors and action researchers on masters degree programmes interested in classroom research and action reflection see Action planning in improving practice and in generating educational knowledge See also the Master's Writings <https://www.actionresearch.net/mastermod.shtml>

For Living Theory continuing professional development Programmes (CPD) see Living Values, Improving Practice Co-operatively.

<http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/>

For supervisors and Living Theory researchers on doctoral programmes interested in research methodologies see Doctoral Writings

<http://www.spanglefish.com/livingvaluesimprovingpracticecooperatively/>

For those wanting to develop their support for doctoral and masters researchers and looking for further references try here

[ehttps://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arsup.shtml](https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arsup.shtml)

You can access the commitment and scope of EJOLTS, together with the archive of issues from 2008-2020 at <https://ejolts.net/>

With regard to the Living Educational Theory methodology, Williamson and Whitehead (2021) state:

“In much traditional qualitative research, researchers chose the methodology they are going to use at the beginning of their research. There are a wide range of methodologies to choose from including, Action Research, Narrative Inquiry, Self-Study research, Case Study, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnography and Autoethnography. Our meta-analysis of contributions to the Living Educational Theory literature in Table 1 shows that Living Educational Theory researchers draw insights from these methodologies in the generation of their own, unique, living-educational-theory methodology. The distinction between ‘drawing insights from existing methodologies’ and generating a living-educational-theory methodology’, is important as it stresses the difference between choosing and applying an existing methodology, and generating one’s own in an enquiry of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’. This is important as such researchers as Cresswell stress the importance of choosing a methodology such as Action Research, Case Study, Grounded Theory or Phenomenology before the research is undertaken. It is worth repeating that a Living Educational Theory researcher generates their methodology in the course of the inquiry.”

I need, also, to provide an explanation of this ‘culture of inquiry’ which resides in my article in the December 2013 issue of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS):

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

embodied knowledge, encourage students and teachers to take responsibility for their own learning.” (DeLong, 2013, p. 26)

Glenn (2021) says,

“That process of slow change is reflected in papers published in EJOLTs. DeLong introduces what she terms a ‘culture of inquiry’ in a 2010 edition of EJOLTs and has developed it over time (DeLong 2010, 2013, 2017 and 2019) to the extent that ‘culture of inquiry’ has now become part of recognised terminology used with frequency in Living Theory accounts.”

Further, in his 2021 AERA paper, Jack Whitehead defines my meaning of ‘culture of inquiry’:

In using ‘culture of inquiry’, in the way defined by DeLong (2015), I include the experiencing of being loved into learning in a living-culture-of-inquiry for creating a living-theory of one’s own life. I am claiming that a culture of inquiry, that is grounded in ‘being loved into learning’, is ‘a refining and elevating element, of the best that has been known and thought within any culture’ (Said, . DeLong shares the growth in her learning as she contributes to the creation of a safe environment in which members of the group can participate in a values-based dialogue for creating living-theories. DeLong sees dialogue as crucial to generating and sustaining a culture of inquiry. DeLong encourages dialogue on creating an evolving living-culture-of-inquiry in terms of how to support others to create their own living-theories. I accept DeLong’s understanding of ‘evolving’ in that her understanding of this process of supporting others in a safe, supportive and encouraging space continues to refine through interaction with other practitioner-researchers in locations across the globe, as we have been doing in the preparation of our presentations for this symposium. This includes
...the use of multi-media and multi-screen SKYPE conversations are enabling us to ‘pool’ our life-affirming and life-enhancing energies, as well as sharing and evolving our relationally dynamic culture-of-inquiry in creating our living-theories. (p.1)

I also draw insights from Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) on action research and Feldman and Rowell (2019) on knowledge democracy in explaining our educational influences in learning as global citizens with values of human flourishing. Recent influences have arisen from Maxwell (2021) and Crompton et al. (2014).

Brydon-Miller et al. state,

We all can, and must, do our part to contribute to the goal of achieving greater social justice and each of us brings a unique set of experiences and talents to the task. But even given the diversity of disciplines, locations, and perspectives, there do seem to be certain characteristics common to many of us currently engaged in this practice. For one thing, we’re basically a hybrid of scholar/activist in which neither role takes precedence. Our academic work takes place within and is made possible by our political commitments and we draw on our experience as community activists and organizers to inform our scholarship.

We also tend to be optimistic. We believe in the possibility of change, ‘surprising changes . . . changes that happen unexpectedly, changes that strike us with amazement and wonder’, as John Shotter describes it. And we continue to believe in the potential for change, often despite years of fighting battles within our institutions and communities that might deter a less determined soul. We take joy in what we do (mostly) and we even tend to like one another! Ian Hughes observed, ‘action researchers are a friendly and supportive community,’ and Hilary Bradbury concurs, noting, ‘all of my best friends are action researchers.’ (p. 20)

Some of this emerges directly from ethical and political commitments. As convenient as Fordism is, it makes it impossible to address any significant social issue. Those action researchers committed to social change necessarily have to deal with messes; we are forced to follow the problems wherever they take us, and the best among us learn the theories, methods, and processes we need along the way. Whatever our uncertainties, we seem to tolerate them because we are committed to changing the world in some positive way.

Another element of this is a kind of fundamental sociability that shines through in all the contributions from the editorial board members. Many action researchers find joy in being with others, in working passionately in groups, in brainstorming, in struggling together. Through experience, we have learned that it is not reasonable to try to be alone in our work. Again, the contrast with the isolated disciplinary scholastic hero with 20 books, hundreds of articles and a solitary life is sharp. P. 21

One of the weaknesses of action research is its localism and the difficulty we find in intervening in large-scale social change efforts. The bulk of action research takes place on a case by case basis, often doing great good in a local situation but then failing to extend beyond that local context. P. 25

Rowell and Feldman (2019) write:

Rajesh Tandon and Budd Hall, both active for 40+ years with advocating for and developing initiatives supporting democratizing knowledge, point out that three phenomena intersect in knowledge democracy: (1) acceptance of multiple epistemologies, (2) affirmation that knowledge is created and represented in multiple forms (e.g. text, image, numbers, story, music, drama, poetry, ceremony, etc.), and (3) understanding that knowledge is a tool for taking action to create a more socially just and healthy world and for deepening democracy (Hall and Tandon 2015, n.p.). p. 1

Maxwell (2021)

My purpose is to spread the educational influences of Living Educational Theory Research through these contributions to the generation and sustaining of Cultures of Inquiry. In making this contribution, I accept what Maxwell (2021) refers to as the two great problems in learning.

The first problem is learning about the universe, and about ourselves and other forms of life as a part of the universe. Maxwell refers to this as knowledge-inquiry. We have done very well in addressing this first problem. However, I also agree with Maxwell that knowledge-inquiry has failed in contributing to the second great problem of learning. This learning is focused on how to create a genuinely civilized, enlightened, wise world. In 2021, this failure can be seen in the violence between citizens within and between different countries through the world.

In supporting a global Culture of Inquiry for creating living-educational-theories, I explain how this is contributing to resolving this second problem with what Maxwell refers to as wisdom-inquiry. Included within my explanation are my values of being a citizen-scholar and exercising educational responsibilities is the recognition that my unique constellation of values is relationally dynamic. Hence my use of these values as explanatory principles, means that explanatory principles are relationally dynamic, illustrated by my relational way of being. This is expressed in my educational relationship with the participants in the 2021 American Educational Research Association Symposium on 'Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in global contexts.' You can access the details of the Symposium, with papers, slides and brief video introductions from the participants at:

<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/2021aerasymposiumfull.pdf>

Methods

The methods I/we use in the Living Theory culture of inquiry include: empathetic resonance with digital visual data to clarify the meanings of the energy-flowing values of democracy, vulnerability and loved into learning (Campbell, 2011); dialogue as method (DeLong, 2020); validation groups to enhance the comprehensibility, evidence, normative understandings and authenticity (Habermas, 1976) of the claims to educational knowledge. The inquiry process includes action-reflection cycles to improve our practice and the co-creation of educational knowledge.

Because of my dialogic way of being, I have found that "loving educational conversations" (Vaughan & DeLong, 2019) with practitioner-researchers have become part of 'dialogue as research method' for me and that visual data are essential to deepening and conveying my thinking (DeLong, 2020). In mentoring others to create their own living-educational-theories, the dialogic processes inherent in email and, especially, Zoom, Teams and Skype video recordings, enable me to clarify my thinking and enable others to do the same (Vaughan, 2019; DeLong, 2019; Vaughan & DeLong, 2019). When we have respect for the "narrativity of experience", we can "promote empowered practitioners" (Anderson and Page, 1995).

While the process of dialogue as research involves recording and analyzing the interchange between us, it also involves checking for meaning and risks involved. "Intercultural translation" is de Sousa Santos' (2014) alternative both to the abstract universalism that grounds Western-centric general theories and to the idea of incommensurability between cultures and calls for an "ecology of knowledges", a rich intermingling of diverse and complementary (and sometimes conflicting) understandings. He sees the two as related and

accounting for the destruction and assimilation of non-Western cultures by Western modernity. (Whitehead, 2016. p. 91)

At the heart of my validation methods is the recognition of Popper's point that objectivity is grounded in intersubjective criticism and that I can enhance the validity of explanations through the mutual rational controls of critical discussion (Popper, 1975, p. 44). Therefore, in the Living Educational Theory methodology, we establish validation groups of between three to eight peers to help to test the validity of our claims to knowledge and to strengthen the validity of our explanations through the exercise of critical discussion. We ask the members of a validation group to include in their responses to the following four questions that have been influenced by Habermas' (1976, pp. 2-3) ideas on communication and the future of society.

- 1) How could I enhance the comprehensibility of my explanation?
- 2) How could I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my assertions?
- 3) How could I deepen and extend my sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings of their influence in my practice and explanation?
- 4) How could I enhance the authenticity of my explanation in the sense of showing that I am living as fully as I can the relational and ontological values I claim to be using to give meaning and purpose to my life.

In a process of social validation, I comprehend the world from my own point of view as an individual claiming originality and exercising judgment responsibly with universal intent. As a responsible researcher, I have a sense of personal responsibility in validating for myself my claims for what I am learning and knowing. In doing this, I take account of responses from a process of social validation of personal knowledge. (Polanyi, 1958)

On the topic of values of love, vulnerability, connection and concern that we share in our global culture of inquiry, I am conscious of the need to clarify the meanings of the words I am using. I appreciate the work in Common Cause (2016) and can identify with the values that they claim that characterize, for example, cooperation. However, with this recent work of categorizing them into two kinds of values from Crompton et al. (2014), I do not find the distinction resonates with me since I am comfortable with using values as standards in the context of their use (Wittgenstein, 1958). When I ask, "How do I improve this process of education here?", I am very aware that it is embodied and that values are not easily categorized within lexical definitions. The lens we use is actually influenced by the context of their use (ibid, 1958), and thus, we always need to be as clear as possible about the meanings that we are using and acknowledging that those meanings are influenced by the context in which we are using them. 'In most cases, the meaning of a word is its use', Wittgenstein claimed, in perhaps the most famous passage in the *Investigations*. It ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it, and the context in which you say it. Words are how you use them.

One of our methods is "empathetic resonance" (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2010; DeLong, 2010), a method whereby you move the cursor along without the sound and can see the life-affirming energy and energy-flowing values in the individual and in the relationship. A Culture of Inquiry space is an environment for giving voice to teachers. I frequently exhort them not to allow others to speak for them, to represent their embodied knowledge for and

by themselves. I invite them into a Culture of Inquiry, a culture of love and support and encouragement, to unveil their embodied knowledge and create their own living-educational-theories. The passion that I feel for encouraging teachers to create knowledge can be seen in the following video-clip.



Video 1. Empathetic resonance
<http://youtu.be/qsECy86hzxA>

In the 3:11 minute video-clip, I am contributing to an international panel at an International Conference of Teacher Research. I am responding to a question about my support for teacher-research in the Grand Erie District School Board in Ontario. The process of empathetic resonance involves moving the cursor along the clip and responding to moments in which the viewer experiences the greatest flow of energy from the speaker. For example, as the cursor is moved backwards and forwards around the moment at 2:49 minutes, I am talking about the “SWAT” team arriving to support a teacher in her research. Both Jack and I claim that the image above (at 2:49 minutes) shows me expressing my life-affirming energy and valuing of an embodied expression of a culture-of-inquiry in which several individuals are responding to the needs of another. The expression of my life-affirming energy at 2:49 minutes was evoked through my response to a question about the support I am giving for teacher-research. The responses of others appear attracted into an inclusive space with me and they experience a pooling of a flow of their own life-affirming energies. If we try to communicate the experience of my presencing this flow of life-affirming energy with the words, “flow of life-affirming energy” without the visual data, we (Jackie, Jack, Liz and Cathy) are claiming that something vital about the meaning is lost. I believe, and evidence from others confirms (Griffin, 2011; Campbell, 2011), that this expression of life-affirming energy invites people to join in and to pool their own.

Another example of empathetic resonance is found in this video clip, where Michelle says that she imagines me “like a fairy godmother with all these lives that you are touching.” Here is my reaction! If you put your cursor on the red line of the clip and just move it back and forth, I think you can see the life- affirming energy in both of us in the process called, “empathetic resonance” (DeLong et al., 2013, p. 79)



Video 5. Empathetic Resonance

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

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

I recognize that we as “knowers/subjects are fallible, that our criteria are corrigible (capable of being corrected), and that our standards are socially constructed, and thus continually in need of critique and reconstruction. (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p.7).

Data Sources

The data sources include over 60 publicly-available Living Educational Theory masters and doctoral degrees that have been awarded at Universities around the world and eleven years of publications in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (ejolts.net). Our community members (Dhungana, 2020; Vaughan, 2019, Mishra, 2021, Griffin, 2013, Griffin & DeLong, 2121) contribute their data from their sites of practice and from field-based PAR projects to provide evidence of educational knowledge creation, preservation and access associated with a community of Living Educational Theory researchers. I also access my publications and those of the mentees and colleagues in EJOLTs.

The data collected for this research derived from papers and publications as I worked with mentees in global cultures of inquiry, including Michelle Vaughan, Florida, USA, Parbati Dhungana, Katmandu, Nepal, Shivani, Mishra, Gujarat, India and Cathy Griffin, Ontario, Canada. In 2020-21, Jack Whitehead and I created a global Living Educational culture of inquiry, researched with a community of researchers and we all wrote papers which we presented for an AERA symposium.

a.) *Michelle Vaughan, Assistant Professor, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida, USA.*

From 2018 (DeLong, 2019) I first worked with Michelle Vaughan and, together, (Vaughan & DeLong, 2019) we extended by my earlier understandings of “culture of inquiry” (2010, 2013, 2017 and 2019) to our macro culture of inquiry in our AERA 2021 symposium:

“Through our research, we have found that cultures of inquiry can be created in micro and macro situations and in spontaneous and sustained forms.

Micro and macro cultures of inquiry

Before we begin discussing the difference between sustained and spontaneous cultures of inquiry, it is important to note that cultures of inquiry can be both on the micro and macro level. When we hear the term cultures of inquiry, it may conjure up images of groups sitting together with the purpose of using dialogue to explore various inquiry questions. And while this may be an accurate representation of some of the ways in which cultures of inquiry are formed, they can also be as small as two people involved in a mentoring relationship, where, as Yamamoto (1998) discusses, both parties benefit from the paradox of mentorship through the fulfilment of their roles. When both members of the mentoring relationship are valued and ‘seen’ for their equal contribution to the relationship, symbiosis occurs and both members reap the reward of the relationship.



In the following discussion, macro cultures of inquiry may be defined as a group of students in Michelle’s courses, Jackie’s work with the Bluewater Master’s cohort students, or a group of attendees at a conference session. When discussing micro cultures of inquiry, we will be writing about Michelle’s individual work with her doctoral advisees, Jackie’s mentoring relationships as she supports others to create their own living-educational- theories, and our work with each other.

Sustained cultures of inquiry

A sustained culture of inquiry is an intentional culture of inquiry that exists over extended periods of time at both micro and macro levels. Mentoring relationships are an excellent example of a sustained culture of inquiry at a micro level. These can exist within a created structure, as Michelle sees with her advising relationships with doctoral students, or they can be sought after and nurtured as Jackie has experienced with Michelle and other researchers she meets at conferences. At a macro level, sustained cultures of inquiry might be courses or professional

development experiences that are taught with the intention of exploring values in the participants' practice.

Spontaneous cultures of inquiry

Spontaneous cultures of inquiry occur in meaningful moments that take place when individuals involved in a dialogue or experience have created an open flow of life-affirming energy where participants can feel safe to explore their own values. The clips in the sections below highlight a spontaneous culture of inquiry that we witnessed while facilitating a conference session at ARNA in 2019. (Vaughan & Delong, 2019, pp. 74-75)

b.) Parbati Dhungana, PhD student and Master's teacher at Kathmandu University, Nepal

Second, I share my educational relationship with Parbati, Dhungana. Parbati's research focuses on working with a rural community in Nepal where the resources are limited including teacher professional development. She worked with her colleagues and the school community to build more collaboration, ownership and pride and, in the process, came to recognize her central value as "Living Love". I met Parbati Dhungana in person at the CARN Conference in Split, Croatia in October 2019 at a session presentation (DeLong, Huxtable, Rawal, & Whitehead, 2019). Accepting my offer to support practitioner-researchers intending to create their own-living-educational-theory, Parbati and I met regularly on SKYPE and recorded our meetings. By June of 2020, Parbati had created her own living-educational-theory and published her "'Living love': My living-educational-theory". (Dhungana, 2020) article in EJOLTs. She has made considerable progress in the writing up of her doctoral thesis and here is describing how she created a culture of inquiry in the rural school community:



Video 4. Parbati on building a culture of inquiry

<https://youtu.be/bSu3A80agSw>

07:41-9:18 (DeLong, 2021c)

"I realize that I created a safe environment: I have understood it as an aesthetic environment, an aesthetic learning space; that is, I worked with clearing the space making

open space so that everybody can talk, share. Wherever there was trouble, I was there to facilitate, to talk with them, to discuss with them. And I use different means like sometimes pictures, sometimes I use video and at times I felt like whenever they were not participating, I use different means.”

Parbati also brought Living Educational Theory into her Master’s class and started a culture of inquiry group. She recognized the importance for building that safe, democratic culture of inquiry space is her willingness to be vulnerable:



Video 7. Parbati shares her willingness to be vulnerable Parbati and Jackie 120121
<https://youtu.be/UyJY0o4794I>
25:01-26:20 (DeLong, 2021f)

Jackie: You're enjoying the process. That's what it should be!

Parbati: Yeah I'm enjoying; I'm learning a lot, I think. The next part of my learning is because of my class and I'm also taking the class as my research, as my self-study and whenever the question comes into my mind, I link with my class and then it is an amazing journey for me. It's a very exciting time. The next thing I explore is a very powerful component in my research that I have never talked about in my research field but whenever I talk about love and care and I might have been thinking 'vulnerability' but that was the very source root of my loving and caring because I was very vulnerable at that moment and because of that, I could be loving and caring.

At 36.54 Parbati describes a culture of inquiry group that she has created to help other researchers. At 37.21-37.49, she expresses how necessary our culture of inquiry is to her: I was inspired from you and it was very important because like some people don't need it; they don't want it because they work internally but some, like me, cannot do that. We need somebody to speak with, somebody to care and interact with so that we can understand better. This supportive environment is significant in many ways but especially in the obstacles to employment dominated by males.

While I have mentored Parbati, we have learned together to understand cultural differences, to make explicit our values as explanatory principles and the nature of cultures of inquiry.

In 2020, I shared the importance of 'dialogue as research method' in my own research and within the work I do creating cultures of inquiry. In Parbati Dhungana's paper for the AERA 2021 symposium, my understanding of a culture of inquiry has evolved once again to include the spiritual value of satva (Dhungana, 2021):

The Bhagawat Gita, Chapter 14 verse 5 states that "material nature consists of three modes: satva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (ignorance)". Similarly 14.6 states:

त" सऽवं 'नमल* ,वा,.काशकमनामयम् | सखु सऽगेन ब९ना'त :ानसऽगेन चानघ || 6||

It means, satva, the mode of goodness, is purer than the others which is illuminating and full of well-being. Satva is the state of happiness and full of well-being. We humans have all three qualities but they are dominated by one of the attributes.

c.) Shivani, Mishra, Department Head of Social Work at Sadar Patel University, India

I met Shivani Mishra through Swaroop Rawal, a member of the EJOLTs community when Shivani submitted an article for review. Shivani asked me to read her draft paper for our symposium for the AERA 2021 conference. I responded via email and Shivani asked if we could talk on SKYPE on 21.01.21. One of my values is to ensure that I encourage and support in democratic ways but do not push or colonize. Here is part of our dialogue showing me checking that I was helping and not colonizing:



Video 8. Shivani and Jackie reviewing Shivani's paper
<https://youtu.be/M3KSt2FWJmk> 30:08-32:27
(DeLong, 2021?)

Jackie: I have a request for you. What I am doing as I mentor you is to try to be very careful that I am being helpful but I am not leading you. Do you understand? I never want to be colonizing. I never want to be making you feel that you are doing something that you don't want to do. Do you understand what I am saying?

Shivani: Yes. Let me tell as of now you never upset me. Jackie: Yes, but you need to tell me.

Shivani: The point is that: let me agree. I know my two limitations. First It takes me a time to articulate myself and my work on paper: I am in the learning process. I have never done a paper in qualitative research. I'm a strong quantitative researcher, dealing with numbers. For the first time I am understanding these feelings and how to express your feelings. Second basically, I am a very calm person but a very shy person to be honest. If I feel I can talk, go on; if not, I never talk with the people. So you will also find in my paper. I hardly talk with the people. This is my nature. This is what you found in my paper. So you are not leading me not earlier and now also; let me tell you honestly. You also don't need to feel that I am dependant on you. Initially, yes, I am dependent because I have read your papers and I want to learn from you. Moment you feel I am over dependent on you, you can cut me. I am trying my best so you don't feel I am so dependent in the future.

Jackie: Perfect!

Shivani's paper describes and explains her very courageous act of working with pre-school children using Life Skill Education (Rawal, 2006). She was willing to be vulnerable and live her values in that she, a senior manager and university professor, joined the pre-school student teachers in the field working hand in hand with them to find ways to improve the quality of education for the young children. She shares in her AERA 2021 paper that as a junior in her University, she felt that she could not live her value of democracy but now as a senior leader she feels the educational responsibility to ensure the curriculum and teaching is democratic and she needs to listen to the students:

Me: This I learned from life skills training and also learned to understand my values of democracy and respect and these values are now my standards of judgment.

Me: Initially, children were not ready to come and attendance of them is very low. The life skill training program encouraged them to be in preschool.

Me: I feel happy when student enjoyed in our class. I learned that once you understand yourself and other, you can flourish the humanity. (p. 12)

c.) Cathy Griffin

Further, I have worked with Cathy Griffin, Ontario, Canada over 13 years as a supervisor, colleagues and mentor. In 2009-2011, we worked together in a Master's cohort with Cathy as student and Jackie as facilitator and have continued to collaborate to share our educational relationship over 13 years and the ways in which Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 1989) has helped us to improve our practice and transform our lives. As we each created our own-living-educational-theories and explained the nature of our influence on ourselves, on others and on social formations using our values as explanatory principles, working to live according to our values has become our ontology and epistemology, our 'way of living/life'.

The abstract to our joint EJOLTs paper (Griffin & Delong 2021) says:

Abstract

In this article, two practitioner-researchers, Cathy, principal of a rural elementary school and Jackie, retired superintendent of education and adjunct professor now international mentor, collaborate to share the ways in which Living Educational Theory has helped them improve their practice and transform their lives. Their argument is that subsequent to first engaging in describing and explaining the nature of their influence on themselves, on others and on social formations using their values as explanatory principles, the process has become their ontology and epistemology, their 'way of living/life'. Their learning has been in an educational relationship over 13 years.

In making transparent her efforts to improve her own practice to those in her immediate sphere of influence, Cathy builds educational relationships and studies her influence on their learning and practice. She allows them to find something of use in her practice, to see themselves in her story, her struggle, her journey. Living Educational Theory has become her way of being and leading, inspiring her to live with more love, joy, trust and authenticity.

Having been engaged in Living Educational Theory research for over 25 years, Jackie has continuously researched her practice and supported others in Canada and across the globe as a teacher and mentor. Living according to her value of 'loving into learning' with the help of the practitioner-researchers with whom she has worked, she has refined her understandings of building 'cultures of inquiry' to include democratic evaluation, vulnerability, 'dialogue and digital visual data as research methods' with life-affirming energy-flowing values.

As Cathy enters into a doctoral program in the spring of 2021, I continue to encourage and support her as a mentor in a culture of inquiry and as she says:

In an email (150619), Cathy Griffin, a former student, current school principal and long-term friend, described a living culture of inquiry in her response to our Skype conversation (it is not necessary to view this clip – but I include the video link because it is referred to in the email):



Video 1. Cathy Griffin and Jackie Delong in a culture of inquiry
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEoc-rNG4xE>

“A Skype session with you is a reflective, research space for me. I automatically prepare for a conversation by returning to my values and examining what I am doing in my work and my life. I enter the conversation knowing that you will be a loving listener with concern for my health and well-being above all. I also enter the conversation knowing that, as an astute LET (Living Educational Theory) researcher, you will help me identify and clarify important points in my journey to improving what I am doing and will validate or question the claims I make about my practice. That sounds so technical and 'researchy'. But the reality is much different than that because of the love that underpins the relationship and because of the loving actions you make in line with your values. For example, in the clip above, you honour my time more than once by checking if my household is getting up and needs my attention and by suggesting a next meeting time that suits my schedule which may be more complicated. You voice concern that I don't spend my weekend looking for a video clip for you but take time to relax. You voice your love at the end of each email and voice call. It may seem trite to an onlooker, but it is foundational to the work we do together. The unconditional love is an example of your values in action (ontology) and your intentional creation of a space in which it is safe to do Living Educational Theory action research.”

Our Global Living Educational Theory Culture of Inquiry

Jack Whitehead and I created a global Living Educational Theory culture of inquiry for our AERA2021 symposium. Our community included Michelle, Boco Ratan, FL, USA; Parbati Dhungana, Katmandu, Nepal; Shivani Mishra, Gujarat, India. From the acceptance of our proposal in November 2020 until our virtual session on April 10, 2021, we met every

Monday at our local times, built our global culture of inquiry for the creations of our living-educational-theories, shared and co-created our practitioner-research.

Accepted proposal for A symposium presentation at the April 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on Accepting Responsibility.

Jacqueline Delong, Jack Whitehead, Shivani Mishra, Michelle Vaughan and Parbati Dhungana - clockwise from top left in the image below:



Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in Global Contexts. You can access the details of the Symposium, with papers, slides and brief video introductions from the participants at:

<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/era21/2021aerasymposiumfull.pdf>

Results

The results include the evidence that the community of mentor and mentees' co-learning (Nyanjom, 2020) in Living Educational Theory cultures of inquiry has influenced the knowledge creation, preservation, access and the spreading educational influence of these global cultures of inquiry with practitioner-researchers. The results have emerged from the educational inquiries of researchers who have accepted their educational responsibilities to live values of human flourishing.

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

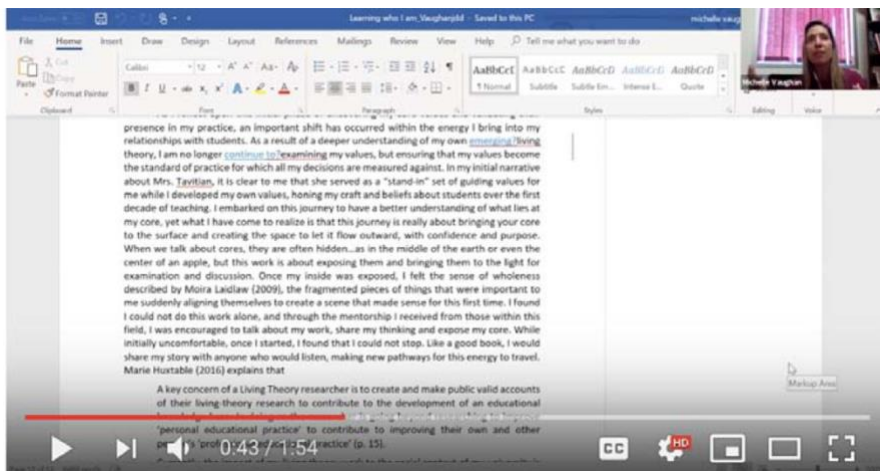
“Just wanted to send a quick email to let you know that last night was our "Living Theory night" in our doc class. The students spent time before class exploring [actionresearch.net](http://www.actionresearch.net) and reading some pieces to help them understand the methodology. We used the AR planner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

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

The AR planner that she references is available at:

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

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



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tchcfRFzC4M,](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tchcfRFzC4M)

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



Figure 2. Michelle talks about joy in the classroom
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riIWhoEFlas&t=796s>

Michelle: “At the end of it on Tuesday night it was if somebody did an analysis of what we talked about the last 2 weeks, the clear theme was, there was a clear theme of joy that was running through their framework. It was on half of their frameworks about the importance of having joy in a classroom and then there were 3 or 4 who had safety. So man, I thought, if somebody could come here and see their work, this group of budding scholars talking about joy and safety and love. One of my students, he (he as an early childhood background) created this whole framework like a solar system with love right in the centre. It was so cool. I mean someone would feel so hopeful to hear this group of budding scholars talk about what is important to them. And I did this exact assignment last year at this time and that was not the outcome. I can’t help but think it’s because I’m in a different place. I am unconsciously but also consciously honouring talking about their values and what’s important and they’ve now bubbled up and they’ve found a place in an academic piece and it was very reaffirming because I felt like ‘they feel it, too’ like I created a space and they rose to the challenge. It’s exciting. It really is exciting.”

While it is not an articulated expectation that members of our global culture of inquiry encourage and support others to create their own living-educational-theories, each practitioner-researcher has carried that influence forward to share the transformation that they have enjoyed. And they all have to date. Each of the mentees has taken the concept of a culture of inquiry for the creation of living educational theories into their sites of practice and through living their values as explanatory principles has explained their educational influence on themselves, on their students and on their institutions. By living their energy-flowing values, they are contributors to human flourishing as citizen scholars and living global citizens.

Significance

The significance is in the values-based explanation of how the Living Educational Theory cultures of inquiry are spreading the educational influences in learning of practitioner-researchers through their community-based participatory action research. It is significant as well that the research explains our influence through shared expertise, decision making and ownership. The analyses of the explanations (DeLong et al, 2021) show how approaches to research are being influenced by the researchers own cultural and individual values, and how they can make these transparent as they strive to contribute to the global educational-knowledge base of Living Educational Theory researchers.

My argument has been that my way of living/life according to my values enables me to build global cultures of inquiry where values of love, vulnerability, connection and concern are shared in a community with practitioner-researchers from Nepal, USA, India, and Canada. By encouraging and supporting citizen-scholars to create their own living-educational-theories, I intend to enable them to co-create knowledge with me and to influence others in their circle of influence to do the same as we contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

It is significant as well that the research explains our influence through shared expertise, decision making and ownership.

I hope that I have made a clear and rigorous argument and communicated in a “good conversation” (Gumede & Mellett, 2019) so that you feel a responsibility to respond and engage with my ideas.

References

Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D., & Maguire, P. (2003). Why action research? *Action Research*. Volume 1(1): 9–28.

Campbell, L. (2011). *Journey to the otherway: How can I improve my practice by living my values of love and joy more fully?* M.Ed. Thesis. Brock University, Canada. Available at: <http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/index.asp?pageid=255602> (Accessed 20 January 2021).

Common Cause Foundation (2016) *Perceptions Matter: The Common Cause UK Values Survey*, London: Common Cause Foundation.

Coombs, S., Potts, M. & Whitehead, J. (2014). *International Educational Development and Learning through Sustainable Partnerships, Living Global Citizenship*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Crompton et al. (2014). No Cause is an Island: How People are Influenced by Values Regardless of the Cause. Common Cause Foundation.

Covey, S. (1989). *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Dadds, M. & Hart, S. (2001). *Doing Practitioner Research Differently*. London: Routledge/Falmer.

Delong, J. (2002). *How can I improve my practice as a superintendent of schools and create my own living-educational-theory*. PhD. Thesis, University of Bath. Available at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/delong.shtml> (Accessed January 20, 2021).

Delong, J. (2013). Transforming teaching and learning through living-theory Action Research in a Culture of Inquiry. Volume 6(2): 25-44. Available at <https://ejolts.net/files/Delong6%282%29.pdf> (Accessed June 13, 2021).

Delong, J. (2019). Dialogical relationships in living cultures of inquiry for the creation of living-theories. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 12(1), 1–22. Available at: <https://ejolts.net/node/334> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

Delong, J. (2020). Raising Voices Using Dialogue as a Research Method for Creating living-educational-theories in Cultures of Inquiry. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 13(2), pp.71-92. Available at: <https://ejolts.net/files/4Jackie367.pdf> (Accessed January 20, 2021).

Delong, J. (2021) *Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a Canadian/global context*. Paper presented to the 2021 Virtual Conference of the American Educational Research Association. .
<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/jackie.pdf>
Powerpoint slides to support the presentation can be accessed at:
<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/jackie.pptx>

Delong, J., Dhungana, P., Vaughan, M, Mishra, S., & Whitehead, J. (2021) Symposium presented at the 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in global contexts. Accessed from
<https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/2021aerasymposiumfull.pdf>

Dhungana, P. (2020). 'Living love': My living-educational-theory. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 13(1), pp.45-70.

Dhungana, P. (2021). in process. Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a Nepal/global context. A contribution to a symposium presentation on 'Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in Global Contexts' at the April 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on 'Accepting Responsibility' with Jacqueline Delong, Shivani Mishra, Parbati Dhungana, Michelle Vaughan and Jack Whitehead.

Feldman, A., & Rowell, L. (2019). Knowledge democracy and action research – an exchange. *Educational Action Research*. 27(3) pp.335-346.

Habermas, J. (1976) *Communication and the evolution of society*. London: Heinemann.

Harper, S, Davis, L.P., Jenkins, T.S., & Soodjinda, D. (2021). 2021 Annual Meeting Theme: Accepting Educational Responsibility. Available at: <https://www.aera.net/Events-Meetings/2021-Annual-Meeting/2021-Annual-Meeting-Program-Information/2021-Annual-Meeting-Theme>.

Maxwell, N. (2021) *The World in Crisis – and what to do about it: A revolution for thought and action*. London; World Scientific.

Mishra, S. (2021) in process. Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in an India/global context. A contribution to a

symposium presentation on 'Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in Global Contexts' at the April 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on 'Accepting Responsibility' with Jacqueline Delong, Parbati Dhungana, Michelle Vaughan and Jack Whitehead.

Morgan, G. (1988) *Riding the Waves of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nyanjom, J. (2020). Calling to mentor: the search for mentor identity through the development of mentor competency. *Educational Action Research*, 28(2), pp. 242-257.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. London: Sage Publications.

Said, E. (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage.

Knowledge democracy and action research Lonnie Rowell & Allan Feldman

To cite this article: Lonnie Rowell & Allan Feldman (2019) Knowledge democracy and action research, *Educational Action Research*, 27:1, 1-6, DOI: 10.1080/09650792.2019.1557456

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2019.1557456>

Vaughan, M. (2019). Learning who I am: The exploration of my guiding values through a Living Theory methodology. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 12(1): 62-80. Available at: <http://ejolts.net/node/336> (Accessed March 9, 2021).

Vaughan, M. (2021) in process. Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a UK/global context. A contribution to a symposium presentation on 'Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in Global Contexts' at the April 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on 'Accepting Responsibility' with Jacqueline Delong, Shivani Mishra, Parbati Dhungana, and Jack Whitehead

Vaughan, M. & Delong, J. (2019) Cultures of inquiry: A transformative method of creating living-theories. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 12(2); 65-88

Whitehead, J. (1989). Creating a Living Educational Theory from Questions of the Kind, 'How do I Improve my Practice?'. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19(1), pp.41-52. Available at: <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.html> (Accessed February 12, 2020).

Whitehead, J. (2019) Creating a living-educational-theory from questions of the kind, 'how do I improve my practice?' 30 years on with Living Theory research. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 12(2): 1-19.

Whitehead, J. (2021) Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in a UK/global context. A contribution to a symposium presentation on 'Accepting Responsibility' at the April 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association on 'Accepting Responsibility' with Jacqueline Delong, Shivani Mishra, Parbati Dhungana, Michelle Vaughn and myself (Jack Whitehead). Available at

Wittgenstein, L. (1958) *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford; Basil Blackwell. Available at: <https://philosophyforchange.wordpress.com/2014/03/11/meaning-is-use-wittgenstein-on-the-limits-of-language/>

Yamamoto, K., 1988. To see life grow: The meaning of mentorship. *Theory Into Practice*, 27(3), pp.183-189. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/147718> (Accessed February 12, 2020).