

ACTION RESEARCH SIG NEWSLETTER

A C T I O N R E S E A R C H S P E C I A L I N T E R E S T G R O U P O F A E R A

LETTER FROM CHER HENDRICKS INCOMING SIG PRESIDENT

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Our SIG funds total over \$7000.00! (Read the report on page 1).
- Dates and times for our SIG AERA presentations have changed. View the program at www.aera.net
- Check out tour information in Montreal at <http://www.aera.net/annualmeeting/?id=292>

SIG members,

In this issue of the Newsletter, we begin a new feature to focus on the action research work of both practitioner and academic researchers.

Jack Whitehead's article focuses on *living educational theory* and his personal journey to that approach. Jack has also provided a number of websites that contain supporting information and video clips. There is a wealth of materials that helps to explain living educational theory approach and its impact on those who engage in this type of study.

Barbara Smith, a practitioner and academic director of The Sterling Hall School in Toronto, shares a story on her collaborative action research efforts with other practitioners focused on the unique educational needs of boys. For more in-depth information, you can email Barbara for a copy of the coalition's research paper.

I hope that you find these two articles useful and informative. I believe that the Newsletter offers a good forum for sharing our work and for learning what our academic and practitioner colleagues are doing in the area of action research studies. If you are interested in sharing information

about your own work, please email me at

cchester@westga.edu

The next Newsletter will be published in May. I look forward to seeing you in Montreal next month.



Cher Hendricks
Associate Professor &
Assessment Coordinator
University of West Georgia

MEMBER PUBLICATIONS

Meyer, H., Hamilton, B., Kroeger, S., Stewart, S., & Brydon-Miller, M. (2004). The unexpected journey: Renewing our commitment to students through educational action research. *Educational Action Research, 12*, 557-574.

McNiff, J., Lomax, P., & Whitehead, J. (2003). *You and your action research project* (2nd ed.). New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Whitehead, J. (2005). What is a living theory approach to action research? Retrieved 28 January 2005 from <http://www.actionresearch.net>

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SIG TREASURER'S REPORT



Barbara Kawulich,
Assistant Professor of
Educational Research
University of West Georgia

Dear SIG members:

Last year, at the SIG Officers' meeting, it was mentioned that some of the SIGs were in danger of losing their status because their funds were depleted and their membership was low. I am happy to inform you that our SIG's finances are well above what they need to be to enable us to maintain our good standing. Our present balance, as of December 31, 2004, is \$7,278.50. The only expense we had for this past year was

for the refreshments served at AERA during our SIG meeting (\$589.50). We need to discuss ways to increase our membership and how we can use the funds we have to support the Action Research community. If you have ideas that you would like to discuss for using these funds, please e-mail Dr. Cher Hendricks, our incoming SIG President. Thank you for your continued support of our SIG. I look forward to serving you this next year.

Barbara Kawulich, Treasurer

MEMBER NOTES
LIVING EDUCATIONAL THEORY
 BY JACK WHITEHEAD

Dear Cher, many thanks for your delightfully inclusive invitation to contribute to the newsletter. You asked if I could say something about the way AR has influenced my self-understandings and practices and my convictions about the power of AR with some thoughts about the barriers and supports to AR.

The approach to AR I have been developing with others is a [Living Educational Theory approach](#). By this I mean that individuals account for their educational influence in explanations for their own learning, in the learning of others and in the education of the social formations in which they live and work. Living Educational Theorists experience and express a flow of life-affirming energy. We express a desire to live, as fully as we can, values that carry hope for the future of humanity and for our own. We also experience ourselves as living contradictions when we see ourselves holding together these values with the experience of their denial in practice. This experience of living contradiction stimulates our imaginations to create an action plan to improve matters, to act and to gather data on which to make a judgment on the effectiveness of our actions, to evaluate the actions and to modify our concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations.

Living educational theorists are also [committed to sharing action research accounts](#) of their learning as part of a process of public validation to help us not to persist in error and to benefit from the ideas and creative and critical discourses of others.

I felt a loving warmth of humanity, a value that carries my hope for the future of humanity and which I associate with the power of AR, through the words of your invitation and your picture in the [January 2004 SIG newsletter](#):

I'd like for you to be the first person to contribute to this section. I have a great deal of respect for you as a colleague and as a passionate scholar. I think you see the power of AR in a slightly (or not so slightly!) different way than most others, and someone like me (a person who has been moving away from my technical/practical AR focus) can learn a lot from you and your AR experiences.



Jack Whitehead
Lecturer in Education
Centre for Action Research
in Professional Practice
University of Bath

It may be that action researchers like yourself who feel a limitation in technical/practical approaches may decide to see if a living educational theory approach resonates more profoundly with your desire to live a worthwhile life. If you do I think you will enjoy placing your accounts of your educational influences [alongside those of others](#) in the flow of the living theory web-spaces.

My most powerful AR learning experience was in 1971 on seeing myself teaching. I had been given a video-camera by an Inspector in my School Board to explore its educational potential. I saw myself on the video actually closing down the learning experiences I thought that I was encouraging! I experienced my 'I' as a living contradiction. I became aware of the educational significance of exploring the implications of asking myself, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' from the ground of my 'living contradiction'.

I am still learning from the communicative power of video-images. My latest learning took place in a classroom at Guyuan Teachers College in China on the 15 October 2004. I had videotaped a lesson, thought that it had ended and turned the camera off. I then saw the teacher, Moira Laidlaw, go to the door as the students started to leave and I turned the camera back on. You can see some of the stills of the lesson and the ending at:

<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/moira151004/moira151004.html>

The following 9 MB video clip of the end

of this class will take several minutes to download using Broadband (10 minutes on my system) and opens in Quicktime.

<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/mlendSorenson.mov>

Watching this ending contributed to my understanding of the importance of [inclusional](#) meanings of embodied values and living standards of educational judgement. Do see if you share my intuition that enhancing the flow of such relationships of mutual availability, like those between Moira and her students, will make a fundamental contribution to the future of humanity. Guyuan Teacher's College is the [host](#) to China's Experimental Centre for Educational Action Research in Foreign Languages Teaching.

You ask about my learning about the barriers and supports to AR. [I have analysed](#) my educational influence in my own learning in relation to some barriers I encountered in establishing a living theory approach to action research in theses accepted by the University of Bath. The analysis is focused on my embodied value of academic freedom and its transformation into a living standard of judgement in the growth of my educational knowledge between 1973-1993.

[Geoff Suderman-Gladwell](#) has also documented and analysed, in his masters dissertation, his learning from responding to barriers to his AR from a University ethics committee. I still recall a letter from a Research Committee of a British University to a student I was jointly supervising in the early 1990s, requiring that the personal pronoun, the 'I', was removed from the title of an AR enquiry before the proposal could be accepted! At such moments I can experience the strength of raw power. While I find it difficult to resist the expression of verbal, emotional and physical aggression and abuse, I seek not only to consciously resist their spontaneous expression. I seek to channel the power of these emotions into a creative response that strengthens, rather than damages and undermines my identity. I have analysed my own response to one such moment at my

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University in a performance text you can access from Part 11 of my presentation in the [October 2004 issue of Action Research Expeditions](#). You can access this by clicking on the live link: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw//multimedia/iimenomov/JIMEW98.html>

And scrolling down to 'I now ask you to accompany me into a performance text of a meeting with the four university colleagues who formed, in 1991, the Senate Working Party to investigate a matter of academic freedom in relation to my own work.'

I have found the greatest supports to AR to be my own recognition and the recognition of others in the mutual affirmation that we are doing something worthwhile with our lives. I think you will feel this recognition and affirmation in the Abstracts and Acknowledgements of each of the living theory accounts at http://www.actionresearch.net/living_shtml. I think you will enjoy the latest additions by [Mary Hartog](#), [Ram Punia](#) and [Madeline Church](#). I think [Jaqueline Delong](#) has provided the most inspiring account of support for AR in the creation and sustaining of a culture of inquiry in the Grand Erie District School Board in Ontario. I am looking forward to developing our ideas

together at the AR SIG meetings in AERA in April 2005 and to continuing my most productive and pleasurable collaboration with [Jean McNiff](#).

Love Jack.

When Martin Dobson, a colleague, died in 2002 the last thing he said to me was 'Give my Love to the Department'. In the 20 years I'd worked with Martin it was his loving warmth of humanity that I recall with great life affirming pleasure and I'm hoping that in *Love Jack* we can share this value of common humanity.



MEMBER NOTES
THE TORONTO BOYS' GROUP COALITION
ACTION RESEARCH GROUP
 BY BARBARA SMITH

The Toronto Boys' School Coalition (TBSC) Research Group emerged from a series of conferences focusing on boys and learning. Five hundred teachers of boys met at Upper Canada College for two summer professional development days dedicated to sharing current research on boys in learning. Prior to the organization of the second conference in 2004, we realized we needed to unveil more contextual layers of research to see how boys within the context of learning, in real classrooms, responded to customized, boys friendly, ways of teaching and learning.

While we were inspired by the talks by various boys experts, we realized we needed to form a core group of educators focused on examining ways boys were learning in our classrooms and what modifications to practice served to enrich their passion for learning.

As a result, all delegates were invited to participate in a research group that would meet three times in the year, and as expected, we pulled together twenty participants representing four different boys schools. In our first year, we have generated collaborative questions, determined methods for gathering data, and have analyzed our data. Group members will pull together their action research papers in a publication due out in the summer of 2005.

The International Boys' Schools Coalition (IBSC) is viewing our model as one that they are interesting in supporting world-wide. Currently, our efforts are supported by an expert researcher from our local school board, and we are looking into making more concrete connections with university researchers. We are in the beginning stages of using a list serve to provide supports at various stages of the research process.

We see this research group as a collaborative school professional development initiative. Some members participate for a few years, and then move on to graduate programs or other professional development pursuits. Others will continue to elaborate on their research and follow more specific leads.

We are interested in connecting with other action research groups so we can learn more about other perspectives and strategies for supporting, engaging, and empowering the 'teacher as researcher.' If you would like more information, or a copy of our publication, please contact bsmith@sterlinghall.com.

Barbara Smith
Academic Director
The Sterling Hall School
Toronto, Ontario



American Educational Research Association

ACTION RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Send membership form and dues to:

President Geoff Mills (mills@sou.edu)
President-Elect Cher Hendricks (cchester@westga.edu)
Program Chair Arlene Borthwick (aborthwick@nl.edu)
Treasurer Barbara Kawulich (bkawulic@westga.edu)

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Membership Form for Action Research Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Educational Research Association

Name: _____ Title: _____

Employer/Affiliation: _____

Address: _____ email: _____
 _____ phones: _____

Special Area(s) of Interest: _____

Are you a member of AERA? Yes No

Membership Level (please choose one):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (one year), \$5.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Three Years, \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One Year, \$10.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Four Years, \$31.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two Years, \$18.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Five Years, \$36.00 |

Please pay by check or money order.