

## **Part II: Key learnings from the YoWiM inquiry group**

Chapter Four: Setting the territory

Chapter Five: Getting started

Chapter Six: Does method exist?

Chapter Seven: My facilitative practice

Chapter Eight: The importance of ending

## Chapter Four

### *The importance of 'beginning'*

As with all co-operative inquiries, much care would be needed in the establishment of the group as a potential learning community with shared purposes (Reason, 1995), with providing appropriate facilitation (Heron, 1992). Experience shows that it is not possible to set up such a group, but rather must work to establish the conditions from which collaborative inquiry can emerge (Reason and Goodwin, 1997). (Reason, 1998:432)

Establishing the YoWiM inquiry group has helped me to explore and understand the elements of inquiry practice I feel are of particular importance in the very early days of forming an inquiry group. I found this stage so full of learning, and subsequently wrote a paper about it: 'Establishing a co-operative inquiry group; the perspective of a first-time inquirer' (McArdle, 2002). Whilst this paper is included in my thesis as an Appendix (Appendix One), I want to encourage you to read it prior to reading this Chapter. I did not want to 'tell the same story twice' and that is why this Chapter is not an 'adjusted' version of the paper - they sit side by side. I regard the paper, written at the time of establishing the group, as an example of first-person inquiry practice - illustrative of where my attention was drawn to at the time of 'beginning' the inquiry. In this Chapter I draw four key themes from my paper:

- Owning the beginning
- Setting the scene
- Choice = commitment
- Some people won't like it and that's fine

I illustrate each with longish extracts from my paper. I put these alongside extracts from my notes at the time and comments from members of the YoWiM group, to check out whether my intentions for the beginning phase were realised.

The above from Reason mirrors much of what I tried to do at the time, and still resonates with me – I wanted to ‘work to establish the conditions from which collaborative inquiry can emerge’. The process of beginning, in my opinion, is more about process – about establishing conditions - than it is about content.

### *Owning the beginning*

We believe that [co-operative inquiry] has great potential for adult development in organisations... However, the participant autonomy required... raises issues that must be negotiated. First and foremost is the freedom of the inquiry group to pursue its own question within the parameters of general purpose. Institutional stakeholders must agree that inquirers have freedom to control and evolve the inquiry. The space, time and right to participate must be held sacred. Expectations about “deliverables,” to use a term with currency in today’s organizations, must be clear. As it is the experience of the participants, not external reporting, that is the purpose of the inquiry, any expectations about external documentation should be addressed prior to putting the group together. The effectiveness of an inquiry is defined by how it changes the learners... (Yorks and Kasl, 2002:102)

Eleven months after enrolling on the PhD programme at Bath, I began to contact organisations requesting access to establish a co-operative inquiry group. During those eleven months, along with other things, I was considering how I would go about establishing inquiry in an organisation. The beginning phase of inquiry was a time filled with many decisions and choices about what I felt it important to do at this stage. Having never established a co-operative inquiry group before, and having only ‘orderly’ and ‘systematic’ accounts of beginning to work with - as Heron describes his ideas on beginning (Heron, 1996) I just decided to get stuck in and deal with whatever issues arose as and when they did – realising I couldn’t become ‘experienced’ without engaging in action. Since this time, richly textured accounts of the experience of doing co-operative inquiry have emerged

- as the above from Yorks and Kasl (2002) illustrates - meaning that the territory of practical engagement in inquiry is much better 'mapped' now than it was when I began. I include their above account as it mirrors what I have learnt about beginning and the choices I made, as I discussed elsewhere (McArdle, 2002) - as well being a succinct nugget of learning to be borne in mind by other neophytes who might read my thesis.

I became aware of the degree of choices facing me through talking my ideas through with some female friends whom I had studied with during my undergraduate degree. On graduating, whilst I had chosen to stay on at Bath, they had left to work for large consultancies and banks in London. In terms of research practice, this was a time when I was deeply engaged in first-person inquiry as it was the only inquiry space available to me to work my issues through. There was no second-person space of other facilitators pondering similar questions. I spent my time generating questions that came up for me as I engaged with literature on beginning and then talking these through with my friends - testing out my assumptions, asking them questions. This seemed like the most appropriate approach, as it put my questions into the kinds of context in which I hoped to establish the inquiry group and began to develop my ideas on making an appropriate space in which to begin inquiry.

I include below an extract from my notes at the time to illustrate the shape this part of the process took:

I've contacted some graduate friends and chatted to them about what I'm doing. They've chatted to their friends. The web of conversation is creeping outwards and interest is being shared. The issues attached to this 'joining' are many. There is confusion as to whether bosses should be asked or told. What would they think? Would they support the inquiry? Would this support be personal, financial...? With being an all-women group, should I worry about the 'feminist tag'? How would this affect internal perceptions? Self-perceptions? What does it even mean? Would we meet during the week or at weekends? Can time be taken off work without 'holidays' being affected? Where would we meet - at home or at

work? And how would our meeting place affect our time together? (My notes, November 1999)

The jumble of questions is included here to illustrate the 'jumbledness' I felt at the time. All I had was questions that I needed to create answers for. This part of the process felt very frustrating - I only had my own shaky sense of what might be appropriate to suggest in a research proposal, and I knew that it was the proposal that would emerge from this that would either open or close the possibility of getting access for the inquiry. This seemed to jar with the way I wanted to work - it didn't feel at all like a collaborative approach, as I wrote at the time 'I was struck at how silenced I felt in presenting myself on paper, how un-included I would be in the decision of whether to meet ' (McArdle, 2002:179). This lack of possibility for collaboration in developing the inquiry proposal made the whole task feel more risky. At this stage my supervisor offered to put together an 'official letter' detailing the work, to aid the possibility of buy-in. I found my self having to balance my own anxiety of doing this in my voice, and the risk that doing it in my voice might mean that I wouldn't get heard:

I find myself feeling frustrated by all of this. I want to get on! Paradoxically, I find I reject offers of help from Peter, who suggested that we could send an official letter detailing the work I'd like to do. I can't decide whether I'm being precious about this inquiry being 'just mine', or if I'm consciously acting in the moment to protect my belief that those who should come, will. Further, I'm aware of the gender implications I see in a well-respected male academic approaching other well-respected (predominantly) male business people, on my behalf. The whole notion of doing something 'formally' on headed paper seems to prop up a culture which stifles, which doesn't sit well with me. This is not to say that I reject the idea outright, but I'm determined to explore other options first. (My notes, July 2000)

It was at this time that I realised I was making space for my voice. My determination to risk not getting access for the sake of it being 'me' who contacted the organisations was an important moment in my practice. I realised

that I was becoming brave enough to live my values in my practice. In Chapter One I discussed my own experience of silence – I was delighted that I was choosing to be heard.

The theme of speaking with my own voice was an integral part of the beginning phase. I managed not to let my voice disintegrate into being ‘a noise, saying what is expected, speaking to the organisational creed’ (Martin, as quoted by Maguire, 2001:63) and managed to be honest enough about what might emerge through the process of inquiry – balancing a need to have something for the sponsor organisation to ‘imagine’ and not promising what I couldn’t deliver. As Traylen suggests:

I was aware that (co-operative inquiry) could evoke anxiety with its lack of structure, excitement with its open-endedness, and uncertainty with its unpredictability regarding specifically desired outcomes. (Traylen, 1994).

This seemed particularly likely in an organisation that valued ‘deliverables’ – an indication before the project begins of what will be delivered when it ends. This was a key challenge in getting access. Through meeting with people at P&G [who became the sponsors for the YoWiM group] I found my way around this by talking about ‘becoming skilled in transferable approaches’ to running workshops – something that people at P&G do every day – rather than ‘group process’. Matching the organisational language seemed to make our conversations work, rather than putting the burden of explanation of terms and approaches onto me.

I made notes as he spoke, particularly on the current workshop structures. I then fed back on what I saw as the value in these structures and then discussed the value in working with a CI structure and how this could work better or differently. Many positive comments were made throughout our three-hour meeting. The opportunity to hear ‘the unheard story, from the inside’ caused considerable interest and excitement. (McArdle, 2002:179)

It seems important to note that the 'invitation phase' in inquiry work is not just about calling a group, but about getting access. Though this may seem obvious, the language used in getting access seems equally important as that used when inviting people to join the group. The language used at both times sets expectations about what will be possible both in terms of content and process and is therefore a concern at both host organisation and participant levels. Traylen suggests that the invitation phase is:

... not a task that can be delegated, but one integral to the formation of the collaborative group. My hunch is that this is because language itself shapes the inquiry. (Traylen, 1994)

A theme I want to make evident here is that this matters at first- second- and third- person levels, and in a way encompasses all four ways of knowing (Heron, 1996). My desire to 'get access in my own voice' was about me deciding to present myself in the inquiry arena, at a first-person level this mattered. So, the presentational form had to match this - I wanted the 'experience' of reading my proposal to build a picture of me, not of Bath University or CARPP. There needed to be a sense of congruence between the presentation of my proposal and the experience of meeting with each other to discuss access. This congruence would have been lost had I begun with a formal letter from Bath University. In our meeting with each other, this congruence was further deepened by my attention to modelling the kinds of ways of working I had proposed to use with an inquiry group. I was facilitative, actively raising questions about why one 'workshop design' might be chosen over another, exploring why current workshops were established to look at predefined issues. I was, as Maguire puts it, '[seeking to enable a modification of] the near environment [by] educating organizations about the harder to quantify benefits of co-operative inquiry' (Maguire, 2002:269).

So, just as Traylen (1994) above suggests that language shapes the inquiry, I want to suggest (whilst agreeing with her) that whether it be the 'invitation phase' of calling a group, or the process of getting access to the organisation, inquiry is

shaped by much more than language. I would like to advocate a position of looking at how we attend to the fourfold ways of knowing before the inquiry group actually begins, as this too seems to shape the inquiry. Below is an excerpt from my notes at the time to illustrate how much I 'knew' from the experience of meeting with the two sponsors:

Being there today made me see how much Anna wants to impress Jon. I felt like she spoke at him quite a lot, telling him her ideas of what the group could do. When I got home I described her to Peter as being like a kite on a windy day - full of energy and going off in very unpredictable directions that seemed not to link up. We [Anna and I] are close in age and I felt she wanted to compete with me, but I don't know what for. I notice that she might want to control our work, so I have to attend to this. I think Jon gets it though [the ideas for the inquiry group] and seems relaxed enough to just get started and see what happens. (My notes, August 2000)

In beginning the process of establishing an inquiry group within P&G, I became aware from our initial meeting that I had to find ways to negotiate my needs alongside those of Anna. Learning how to work the dynamic between Anna and myself wasn't easy, as I suggested (McArdle, 2002) in discussing my desire to 'get my inquiry back on the agenda':

Speaking with power from what I experienced as an un-powerful position wasn't easy. I wanted to keep Anna on 'my side', but I needed to balance this with making her realise that I wouldn't let my inquiry schedule slide. Defending my inquiry is important to me. Not personalising the issues is sometimes difficult - it would have been very easy to blame Anna here, and part of me did for a while. But I also realised my inquiry was just one small thing in her life, not the one huge thing it was in mine. (McArdle, 2002:181)



As it transpired, I had to continue this negotiation, to continue 'working my voice' with Anna throughout the inquiry. I completed the work feeling as though we had never really 'met' each other. I often felt that having Jon as sole sponsor would have been more appropriate and less energy sapping. However, from an organisational perspective having Anna 'on the boundary' of our inquiry was important as she had just been put in charge of re-launching WIBs (Women in Business) – an internally organised network for women, and therefore needed to be kept in touch with 'women's initiatives' in the organisation. Charles and Glennie (2002) also experienced the need to attend to 'influential people' in the process of getting sponsorship for the inquiry process, and long after it:

The recruitment and funding process...had not only helped us to "make it happen", it inevitably gathered influential people on the boundary of the inquiry, all with qualitatively different investments in it. *In practice, this meant that the interests of those at the inquiry boundary demanded our active attention long beyond the initiation and engagement phase of the group's life.* The additional stakeholders that required our attention were its funders and supporters. As Reason and Marshall (1987) simply and elegantly put it, "*inquiry is for me, us, and them*" and all three were apparent from the outset. (Charles and Glennie 2002:209-10, italics mine)

The process of 'establishing' an inquiry can therefore be seen, in the sense of the relationships beyond the group that need long term attention, as one that is also about a continual process of 'keeping it established'.

### Setting the scene

As I discussed in opening this Chapter, the *process* of beginning feels important. In calling the group, attention to the space created for inquiry mattered to me at a 'physical space' level, as my intention was to model how we could work together in terms of both the structure of the space, and the processes that were enabled by that structure. I cite my paper, at length, on this issue as it illustrates the

matching, or congruence I sought to establish between structure and content, and how I actively wanted the women who joined me to know, through their experience of the space, that the type of work I was proposing would not be 'normal'.

I arrived to find a beautiful conference room filled with large wooden tables arranged in a square, on top of which at regularly spaced intervals, were a mixture of mineral waters, glasses arranged in diamond shapes and small dishes of mints on paper doilies. The side table was laden with the hardware involved in serving tea (eleven different varieties), coffee and biscuits.

I wanted a circle of chairs. I phoned Facilities to remove the tables. Two big men in overalls arrived and called Catering to come and move the mints and water. A woman arrived, dressed in a black and white uniform with a bow around her neck and an apron around her waist. I helped her move the water and the mints. She rearranged my random depositings into diamond shapes, with all the labels pointing in the same direction. The men removed the tables and put the chairs back in a square. Then they all left and I was alone again. I wheeled the huge plush chairs into a circle and wondered what the women would think when they arrived. Would they be as bemused by what I had created, as I had been by what I'd seen when I'd arrived?

The meeting was scheduled for 11a.m. and people started to arrive at about five minutes to. I ensured I welcomed everyone as they arrived. I saw them noticing the circle of chairs and the 'no tables'. The structure seemed symbolic of the un-normalness of what I was going to propose we join each other in doing and it helped me to communicate this non-verbally. (McArdle, 2002:182)

I want to move straight from my account of intention to an account from one of the YoWiM group members of how they experienced the space:

I went along to the first session you ran. I was looking for some extra stuff to think about, so it was great! But I can't remember much about it besides there being no tables which completely freaked everyone out. It was like this massive circle of chairs but nothing to lean on or hide your self behind, and we all had stickers with our names on. Sounds weird, but the set up of the room really challenged me, I didn't know what to expect or what would be expected of me. In normal P&G meetings I go in and I know what to do. (YoWiM, October 2001)

The clarity with which the structure of the space was recalled indicates just how 'un-normal' it felt for participants. Furthermore, it indicated a change of rules about what was possible - 'I didn't know what to expect or what would be expected of me' - which when working with inquiry practices that are counter cultural is, I believe, no bad thing. It seems possible that if we had joined each other in a normal space, embedded with normal, entrenched patterns of behaviour, I would have been burdened with facilitating us out of these patterns. This could have meant that we would have spent more time struggling with ideas at the propositional level of 'how we might be if you decide to join' rather than working at the experiential level of 'this is how it will be if you decide to join'.

Another element of the 'normal space' that I wanted to change was the experience of 'the usual hierarchy doing the leading'. When people sit behind tables in P&G meetings, someone presents at the front and leads the process - hence my intuition that the voices of young women probably didn't get heard very much. I wanted women attending the session to experience this as not being the case. I would have preferred to have 'no hierarchy in the room', but 'the influential people gathered on the boundary' wanted to take part. I negotiated with both sponsors that they could be there to open the session and gave them a five minute slot in which to do so. We agreed that they would then leave. I didn't want them to be there. One of the YoWiM group members reflects back on this:

... And then a senior manager bloke and a girl, who I now know are Jon and Anna, [the internal sponsors of our research] did the whole P&G spiel about women and retention and diversity and then they left the room. And I remember thinking 'this is really odd, they've just done the whole Proctoid introduction and now they're leaving, and they've left us with this girl [Kate] who's someone different and she's not a P&G person'. And then you [Kate] welcomed us all and it started to get a lot more interactive. Lots of people spoke which doesn't normally happen at workshops, never mind in meetings. I clearly remember speaking in front of the whole group and thinking as I sat there afterwards that I never normally speak in workshops, in front of people, and wondering what had made me do it. It felt weird that I had done that. (YoWiM, October 2001)

As I suggested was the case with the initial sponsor meetings, the inquiry seems to be shaped very much in these early days by the experience of it. Had I realised the extent to which attention of the participants was focussed on our process (the furniture, the lack of senior managers speaking 'at' them), I may have attended more to ensuring that everyone who decided to join the group was clear on the methodology terms I had spent time carefully explaining during the early sessions. For example, in our February session, one of the participants said to me:

It's only just now that I am realising what you mean when you say 'action phase'. I always thought we were talking about actions in the P&G sense - something we would do, like a task - not the four weeks we spend apart, noticing what is going on. (YoWiM, February 2001)

*Choice = commitment*

I contracted with the sponsors that the invitation to join the inquiry group would go out to all eligible women – that no one should be selected by their bosses, as was the sponsors’ suggestion. Further that the decision to join, and to leave at any time, was that of the women involved. It mattered to me that the people who were going to be involved wanted to be involved, as I had a feeling that this would affect the depth and nature of their participation throughout the inquiry, as Gatenby and Humphries (2000) suggest:

Our understanding ... is that amount of participation must be left to each individual, that this is one way in which participants maintain their own power... Women who choose to be involved make a commitment to research, which even though varying between individuals, is always valid. (Gatenby and Humphries, 2000:95)

Methodologically, the decision to join a co-operative inquiry group is written about as being a choice (Heron, 1996; Mead 2001; Baldwin, 2002; Charles and Glennie, 2002). However, some such studies bring co-operative inquiry to a pre-established group for the purpose of researching a specific question. The YoWiM group however, was made up of women who did not even know each other prior to our inquiry beginning - so they had no reason to work together. The only glue that held the group together was - as a YoWiM member described it below – a sense of commitment to each other, *created by their own decision* to work with each other:

We all seemed to get to that point somehow where each of us contributes personal things as well as contributing the skills we have developed for working this way. And that’s what has kept it strong. *And I think that’s come from this being a voluntary thing.* I know we got to the stage of closing the group [so that no one else could join], where we had to ask if we were committed or not, but *it was never a*

*thing that was pushed on us, so we were able to make that decision for ourselves, which was nice. And I feel, from being able to choose to do this we got a sense of responsibility and commitment to each other that means even when it's tough to take time out [from work] we know that it's really valuable thing for everybody, so we do it. I've felt that I don't want to let anybody down - I sense we all feel that.*

Keeping that commitment to each other's learning alive over the past twelve months - it probably ebbed a bit in the middle when we felt we weren't getting anywhere but - *I always felt that in coming here I would be with people who wanted to be here, who I was interested in, who were interested in me, even if it was just being interested to ask me lots of questions about why I felt stuck.* (YoWiM, October 2001)

It feels strange, with hindsight, to remember the anxiousness I had felt when embarking on the process of establishing a group that held no guarantees of longevity. Though I had asked for a twelve month commitment, I was always clear that no one could make anyone do anything they did not want to do, including remaining as part of the group. I also suggested that if being in the group was not feeling useful, then we were each responsible for making the group what we needed it to be. I wanted, by looking for people to commit to this time frame, to indicate that the process in which we would engage could not just happen in an afternoon, that it would need time to emerge (Reason, 2003) and that we would be responsible for what emerged. One of the YoWiM members later spoke of this as being 'freeing':

I figured that if I decided to get involved and it was rubbish, then I could change it into something better. At least I wasn't going to be locked into something I didn't like, that someone else was in charge of, something that I couldn't opt out of or shift. (YoWiM, March 2001)

Reason has recently discussed that sometimes 'action research is... about issues like how we can put dressings on wounds better' (Reason, 2003:37). Metaphorically speaking, the very act of deciding to work in a new way can be about dressing the wounds caused by working in the old, normal way of 'being locked in to doing things you don't like, that you can't opt out of or shift'. This difference of process - a process that was about choice and change - was something that drew most of the eventual YoWiM members to join the group. I am not proposing that this will have such great appeal in every organisation. The fact that it was 'un-normal' in the P&G context was undoubtedly part of what 'sold' it as an approach. But I believe there is something in the above discussion about the power of a practice that intends to liberate, as answering a felt need for change. One of the YoWiM group members described this need thus:

*My original reason for joining and wanting to be part of this hasn't changed. I'm passionate about learning how people can be more effective - how I can be better at being me and developing that. It was never about gender for me - I didn't go to the first session because it was only going to be women. I just wanted to see if being part of it meant I could develop how I work so I could feel better about it all [working in P&G]. (YoWiM October, 2001)*

### *Some people won't like it and that's fine*

Choosing to establish my first inquiry group with my own voice felt risky, as discussed above. Questions around 'will any organisation buy in?' filled my mind. Following access being gained, I held similar questions about the potential participants: 'what if no one wants to do this?' My relief was apparent when almost thirty people registered to attend the first open session - I describe myself in my paper as being 'overjoyed'.

The point of including this observation here, as I reflect on the beginning stage, is to encourage other neophytes to not let their own desire to 'get enough group members' steer them toward making the potential inquiry sound like a 'one size fits all' experience. It just won't suit some people. Deciding to be involved in a co-operative inquiry is more than about 'gathering people together around questions of shared concern'. As with joining any other type group, we have needs to be liked and to be like others (Srivastva, Orbert and Neilsen, 1977; Randall and Southgate, 1980) that might need to be met. I suggest that the often deeply self-revelatory, and engagement-intense nature of co-operative inquiry work means that feeling settled, accepted and appreciated by the group becomes even more important. When people self-select to join such a group, they have the option to 'vote with their feet' if they don't feel these needs will be met. Co-operative inquiry is not a one size fits all approach. Neophytes need to know that when people decide not to join the inquiry effort, this is not a reflection of them 'doing something wrong', or 'not making people feel welcome'. Instead it is informative about the research approach and the culture of the organization. As Reason suggests:

There is always a pressure in institutional contexts to do what my friend Suzie Morel calls 'end-game', a term used in the inner-game teachings of Tim Gallwey (1986) to draw attention to the how, by attending to *outcomes*, one fails to pay attention to the present moment which creates the opportunities for successful outcomes: in tennis, by being preoccupied by winning the point that one stops actually watching the ball. So, for example, 'participation' becomes something to achieve in a particular way, rather than an organic process of human association. (Reason, 2003:34)

I discussed my realisation of this 'end game' behaviour by a particular participant at the first open session:



Jane persisted in directing questions to, and asking for responses from, *only* me, focussing on 'what is the business benefit of this work?' I heard what she said, and I imagined around what she wasn't actually saying. I heard 'I need to know the end result so *I can feel safe* in being here'. I felt I was stuck. She wanted to hear the 'benefit', before she could get involved in the discussion most of the group were having. But I felt that it was only through discussion that the group could come to understand how this space could be 'useful' to them and therefore to [P&G].

I responded with several 'business benefits' and shared my ideas on using this space creatively together to help understand this more. Even so, Jane continued to focus on me and I wondered why. She wasn't asking questions in an 'interested' way. I felt as though she wanted to compete with me. Each of her interventions seemed to sap the energy from the group - the animated chatter would cease, faces would become more serious, bodies would sit back in their chairs. There was no desire to be involved in responding to her questions, even when I openly invited such involvement.

A large part of the role I planned to take was to help the noticing of process, but I chose not to raise my questions around what was happening with the group. I felt that further engaging them in noticing this would take us off track and it was not how I wanted them to remember our first time together. I felt that I had tried hard to engage with the questions asked of me and to help Jane involve, and be involved with, the group. She seemed to not be making any steps to meet me. I lost my desire to engage with her. And it felt okay. Paying attention to her voice meant silencing a lot of others. And I felt that those with energy should be able to wallow in it for a while, undisturbed. (McArdle, 2002:183)

When I wrote the above I was concerned that people might read it as me being too harsh, or as excluding her, whilst I had felt very strongly at the time that I was doing my best to accommodate her *and* do this in a way that mirrored the

way of working I wanted for us to adopt. It was months later that one of the YoWiM group members told me how she remembered this:

When we first met I remember there being a lot of women there. There were some people who were really harsh, and I was thinking 'so it's going to be like this' and all they kept on asking was 'where are we going to get to?', 'what will the outcomes be?' They were being really inflexible about it being different; they wanted to control the outcome before we had even started. That was the weirdness of that day, but then you [Kate] explained the whole process and said that 'exploring ideas that mattered to us was surely more worthwhile than setting out to prove something', or something like that. You said we'd be working in a way that would feel different, but that was focussed on doing things and getting results of a different type. And you just moved the conversation on, away from that woman. So, that made me feel better - like it wasn't going to be such an aggressive and competitive group. (YoWiM, March 2001)

When modelling (or trying to model) inquiring behaviours at the beginning of a group, I have learnt that sometimes you need to choose when to persist in doing so and when to desist (Marshall, 1999). This is part of bringing yourself fully to the inquiry process, 'co-operative inquiry is not about collaborating the hell out of everyone,' as my friend and colleague Geoff Mead tells me.

### Summary

I wanted to use this Chapter to add the voices of the people who were affected by the decisions and choices I made in establishing the YoWiM group, to the account I gave in my paper (McArdle, 2002). Checking intention against outcome is a way I learn about my practice. I began this Chapter by saying 'All I

had was questions that I needed to create answers for'. This seems to me to mirror the position everybody is in when beginning work in an inquiry group - be they the initiating researcher, the organisational sponsor, or the potential group member. The questions are different and the same. I dare to suggest they are all about 'what will work': Will this research proposal 'work' (will I get access)? Will this inquiry group 'work' (will I retain credibility if I sponsor it)? Will this inquiry group 'work' (will my involvement give me what I need)? And in action research work, we only know what works by doing it, not by thinking about doing it.