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**COOPERATIVE LEARNING:
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
THEIR LEARNING**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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ABSTRACT

This study explores undergraduate students' perceptions of their learning when working in a cooperative and collaborative learning environment. Although the literature reports on the effectiveness of these approaches, there is little research available on how university students make sense and meaning of their experiences while learning in this environment.

Forty-four participants were drawn from an *Introduction to Research Methods* course. They were asked to journal their perceptions, and send them electronically to the researcher. One hundred and ninety-seven journal entries were received over a twelve-week period. Major themes were extracted from the data drawing on a phenomenographic approach, which considers the interaction between the students, the content of the learning material, and the overall learning environment.

The major findings were that cooperative and collaborative learning groups:

- require students to shift their thinking from working independently to working interdependently;
- require more emotional energy than traditional forms of learning;
- require students to have a range of positive, interpersonal and problem-solving skills; and
- require lecturers and students to have the appropriate skills, values and attitudes to achieve their academic tasks.

This study has implications for teaching practice, in particular the development, design and planning of cooperative and collaborative course work.

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