

Mounter, Joy, Huxtable, Marie and Whitehead, Jack (2019) Using Thinking Actively in a Social Context and Spirals in Living Theory research in explanations of educational influences in a global social movement. *Gifted Education International*, 35 (2). pp. 91-109.

Downloaded from: <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/4322/>

***Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.***

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

**provided that**

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
- a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

**You may not**

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing [insight@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:insight@cumbria.ac.uk).

Using TASC and Spirals in Living Theory research in explanations of educational influences in a global social movement.

## Author names

- Joy Mounter, University of Cumbria.
- Marie Huxtable, University of Cumbria.
- Jack Whitehead, University of Cumbria.

## Abstract

The paper's authors continually ask and attempt to answer questions, such as, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' and 'How do we improve what we are doing?' by researching their practice and making public what knowledge they create along the way. Here they describe Living Theory research and explain why this has enabled them to improve their practice and hold themselves to account to others and themselves to give expression in practice to their values that contribute to the flourishing of humanity. Drawing on TASC, the integration of research and practice is exemplified. They finally illustrate how educational professionals in diverse fields and contexts of practice have contributed to the growth of a global educational knowledge base comprising the valid values-based explanations of educational-practitioners of their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations they live and work in.

## Introduction

This paper is grounded in our relationship in community through which we are supporting each other in our individual enquiries, whilst generating a co-created explanation of how we are contributing to enhancing the influence of Living Theory research as a social movement with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

As we research our influences in what we are doing, we recognise two foci in our various practices, where we are exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering questions such as, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' We are also researching to co-create contributions to educational knowledge. In our enquiries we draw on a range of methods to support our research as we create our living-theory-methodologies. For example, we use insights from Thinking Actively in a Social Context (TASC)(Wallace 2004). We use insights from: Living Theory research in generating our own living-educational-theories (Whitehead, 1989); Spirals (Mounter 2017) from Living Theory TASC (Huxtable 2012).

The paper is organized as follows:

1. Living Theory research and living-educational-theories
2. Living Theory TASC
3. Spirals
4. Contributing to Living Theory research as a global social movement
5. Units of appraisal and judgements
6. Concluding and projecting into the future

## 1. Living Theory research and living-educational-theories

Eisner (1993) said:

We do research to understand. We try to understand in order to make our schools better places for both the children and the adults who share their lives there. (p.10)

We go further than Eisner and say that we do research to try to understand in order to make this world, and not just schools, a better place to be for all. We research, rather than just enquire, as one way of realising this aspiration, by contributing the knowledge of our educational influences in learning we create to the growth of a global educational knowledge-base.

Living Theory research is a form of self-study, educational practitioner research. The self-study is not a self-serving one but a relational self, where each individual embraces their responsibility to contribute to the flourishing of their own humanity, 'i', as well as contributing to the humanity of others 'we' and to humanity as a whole 'us'. This sense of self is communicated through our understanding of Ubuntu, (a South African concept for being in community) which we summarise as, 'I am because we are' and 'We are because I am' and as Tutu (2012) said, 'I need you, in order for me to be me; I need you to be you to the fullest.'

Huxtable and Whitehead (2015, p. 1) discuss how the 'i' in self, is 'distinct, unique and relational', which exists in community, which is 'inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian'. Huxtable (2012) highlights the 'trustworthy, respectful, co-creative spaces' where the world of researchers practice, questions and values touch. This space is then represented as the ~ between i~we~i and i~we~us. Mounter, in her doctoral research, is focussed on the question, 'How can (do) I contribute to the creation and enhancement of the educational influences of a community of learners, supporting each other and their own development?' Mounter is further developing her understandings of the meanings of the relational self as she researches i~we~us. In i~we~us Mounter argues the start is the 'I', the interdependent-self, unique but connected to and with the community, 'we'. Mounter, (2017), drawing on Desmond Tutu's expression of 'I' and 'you' to the fullest in collective growth and transformation, the designation of interdependent- relational-self becomes 'us', which she represents as i~we~us. Mounter's research will clarify the relationship between personal growth and transformation, which contributes to

community growth and transformation, where each person can recognise their 'i' within 'we' and 'us' and the difference they, and the collective make.

The distinguishing feature of Living Theory research is that the purpose is not just for researchers to improve practice but to generate and share their own living-educational-theories as explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understandings. The researcher may be of any age and researching practice in various fields and contexts. For instance, Mounter (2007) created a Living Theory learning community with her 6/7-year-old pupils. In a school setting the sense of community she generated with children wasn't bound by her obligation to help them progress through the National Curriculum. She extended the educational opportunities for and with children, first with pupils in her Y2 class as a Class-teacher and later in an after school 'club' as a Primary school Head-teacher. The Living Theory learning communities she created enabled her pupils to recognise and develop their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others (including the adult participants and other teachers) and in the educational learning of their own school and others in the area. To help members of the learning community recognise their embodied values that give meaning and purpose to their lives Mounter developed Spirals. Spirals offers a tool for educators to co-create knowledge with their pupils. 'Us' is found in the 'we' and in the 'i'. Mounter shows how she co-created her living-theory methodology with her pupils and as they formed a validation group to help her improve her practice and strengthen her account of her living-theory. The research behind this living-theory methodology is enabling the pupil to understand Living Theory TASC and find the self in we~i. The children took an aspect of Mounter's research and through a greater understanding of themselves as a person and as a researcher understood the values that were important to them in education. This enabled them from the 'I' to generate a theory of learning and find the 'us' in community.

In the process of researching practice the researcher clarifies in the course of their emergence the ontological and relational values that give meaning and purpose to their lives and serve as their explanatory principles (why they do what they do) and standards by which they judge their practice. Such living-theories are often generated by professional educational practitioners who are exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering their questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in enhancing my educational influences in my pupils' learning?' As professional educational practitioners we believe that we have two distinguishable but related forms of practice. Our practice is focused on what we are doing as professional educational practitioners to help others (such as our pupils, students, colleagues) to improve their learning with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. Our practice also includes what we are doing as professional educational practitioners as we research our educational influences to make a contribution to the professional knowledge-base of education through generating and sharing our living-educational-theories.

The *what* of the approach is distinguished by evidence on the uniqueness and originality of the researchers' values-based explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that

influence their practice and understandings (Whitehead, 1989). Educational researchers draw insights from the theories, conceptual frameworks and methods of validation from the disciplinary approaches to knowledge, as they clarify their own embodied theories, beliefs and conceptual frameworks and seek to resolve productively tensions where they experience themselves as living contradictions or their values contradicted by others.

The *why* includes the evidence on the ontological values that are used by Living Theory researchers to give meaning and purpose to their lives. These values are clarified and communicated in the course of their emergence in practice with the help of digital visual data from practice. They are used as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influence and related to the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

The *how* of the approach includes the methodological inventiveness of the practitioner-researcher in creating their own living-theory and living-theory methodology. This includes insights from other methodologies such as Phenomenology, Action Research, Living Theory Research, Self-Study Research and Narrative Research.

We now turn to examples of how Living Theory researchers have used TASC in developing their method of researching.

## 2. Living Theory TASC

Living Theory TASC comprises a synthesis of a Living Theory approach to Action Research<sup>1</sup> (Whitehead, 1989, 2018) and TASC developed by Belle Wallace (Wallace et al, 2004). From a Living Theory approach to Action Research from Whitehead we draw on:

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What am I going to do about it?
- What data will I gather to help me to judge my effectiveness?
- How does the data help me to clarify the meanings of my embodied values as these emerge in practice?
- What values-based explanatory principles do I use to explain my educational influence?
- How do I use my values-based standards of judgment in evaluating the validity of my claims to be improving my practice?
- How will I strengthen the validity of my values-based explanations of my educational influences in learning?

The figure (1) below shows the steps of enquiry of TASC

---

<sup>1</sup> Whitehead first explicated his use of an action-reflection cycle in Whitehead, J. (1976) *Improving Learning for 11-14 year olds in Mixed Ability Groups*. Swindon; Wiltshire Curriculum Development Centre ( <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/ilmagall.pdf>)

**Insert Figure 1. The steps of enquiry in the TASC approach (Wallace et al., 2004)**

What we like about TASC is the clarity of the systematic form of action-reflection cycles in disciplining our enquiry. Mounter (2007) has used the TASC wheel with 6 and 7 year old pupils who have suggested improvements in the two dimensional model to include a further dynamic dimension. We agree with this modification. We, including the children have particularly focused on the nature of ‘what have I learned?’ and ‘let’s tell someone’. We have included what we have learned in our explanations of educational influence in learning, as our living-educational-theories.

Through engaging with TASC and Living Theory research we have come to understand a disciplined process of enquiry that is comprehensible to children and adults, and is an expression of a pedagogy that resonates with our practitioner enquiries. You may have to use your imagination more to understand the systematic aspect of Living Theory TASC as a multidimensional, zero-spiral knot illustrated in a 2D representation in the following figure (2).

**Insert Figure 2. Living-Theory TASC Knot (Huxtable, 2012)**

There are also organic and systematic phases of our educational research and a dynamic inter-relationship within and between the phases.

In the organic phase of Living-Theory TASC we may at various times, or at the same time, be gathering and organising what is known in the field, implementing a plan of action, or clarifying our concerns. We may use qualitative and quantitative methods developed by social scientists, and draw on theories and knowledge developed by academics and practitioners in various fields and disciplines. What we use and draw on is influenced by whether it helps us understand and improve what we are doing.

Living Theory TASC is not followed in a step-by-step fashion. So, where to begin? The short answer is, begin wherever you are. Rather than trying to impose structure and define a route at this point, we have found writing about what comes to mind at this time often seems to clarify what is important. That then becomes part of the research, even if it does not seem to give rise directly and immediately to the formulation of research questions. The research question that does finally emerge is not one located in an idealised world of tomorrow, which never happens, but in the here- and-now, given all

the constraints and tensions of the real world, of which we are a part of and wish to improve:

In the things you write in school you are, in theory, merely explaining yourself to the reader. In a real essay you're writing for yourself. You're thinking out loud.'(Graham, 2004)

As the writings and a focus begins to emerge the researcher moves between the organic and systematic phases and draws in work created in the organic phase of their research into their account.

In the organic phase numerous multimedia narratives can be created, which may appear to have no coherence or even relevance at the time. This may not be when they have a focus or even an intention to create an account. The researcher may begin by telling, often apparently disconnected, stories of what is important to them, and a brief autobiographical story to help them begin to clarify their values and beliefs, and recognise their embodied and acquired knowledge. As their thinking progresses they can begin to see where they are living a contradiction, what they need to do differently, and imagine possibilities, act accordingly, evaluate and so on.

The question to be addressed through the research, the data to collect, and the form of the process, are often not known at the beginning, and may only emerge as the enquiry proceeds. Sometimes this is a case of recognising that the enquiry has been going on for years, and the researcher may have unrecognised data scattered about them as Barry Hymer (2007) found when working on his doctoral thesis.

In the organic phase of research, stories may be created variously as time, other commitments and interests move. On one occasion, you may be reading, and find work that excites you and create notes for yourself while working on an action-reflection cycle dictated by circumstances or interest. On another occasion, you may get an idea of something you might do, but do not follow through in action although this took your thinking forward. As you move through life and create trails in the form of narratives, notes, images and videos, when you move from reflecting-in-action to reflect *on* action, you have data scattered round to draw on as you work on the systematic phase of your research, drawing from your living archive (Mounter 2017).

This paper was created in the first place as a writerly text and then we worked with it to develop it as a readerly text that attracts and hopefully holds the attention of the reader, and communicates the knowledge we have created educationally. We are aware that as we write any words, we are doing so with our lifetimes of experience that embrace our heads, hearts and bodies, and you are reading them with your own. 'A picture is worth a 1,000 words' so working with video and accompanying text to produce a multimedia narrative can further clarify the thinking for reader and researcher.

We recognise that a common key to Living Theory TASC lies in the sections, 'communicate' to and with others, and 'what have I learnt'. Whitehead points to the same

place in the process when he says that it is often the last thing that is written which is the point that needs to be brought to the front. You may not know, or recognise the significance of what you have done, until you have done it. Even then, this clarity may only become clear later when you reflect on the moment from the perspective of other experiences, exploring your living archive.

We understand research to be about trying to make sense of our world in a way that is generative and transformational for us and contributes generative and transformational possibilities for others. We have briefly reflected on the organic phase. As we consider the *systematic* phase please bear in mind that we have written that the form of Living Theory TASC is relationally-dynamic and multidimensional, within phases and between phases. In the systematic phase, the work does not go clockwise round the ‘wheel’, even when creating an account. This paper is a testament to what we mean. For instance, in the process of trying to produce an account that might communicate to you, we have organised and reorganised the material and reorganised it again as new learning emerges.

Research is often thought by educators to start with ‘exploration’, laying out what is already known, or as TASC would have it, ‘gather and organise’. We are taking Whitehead’s ideas of values and embodied theories, beliefs and knowledge being revealed through the Living Theory research process and suggest a starting place of ‘learning from experience’. As we reflect over what has been, we each ask ourselves questions such as:

- What have I learnt about my values, myself, my passions? What skills and understandings have I extended?
- What talents have I developed and which do I need to develop? How does what I have learnt connect with other ideas?
- What knowledge have I created that I value?
- How have I affected others?
- How have I contributed to and benefited from my own learning and the learning of others?
- What are my embodied educational theories and beliefs?
- What do I want to explore now that might contribute to the flourishing of my own humanity, the humanity of others and/or the flourishing of our species in and of the world we inhabit?

We like the way TASC specifically identifies ‘gather and organise knowledge’ particularly relevant to the account. This reminds us explicitly of the *i~we~us* relationship (Mounter 2017). A distinguishing feature of a Living Theory TASC method of researching is the relational-dynamic and multidimensional inter- and intra-connections between the organic and systematic phases. The circle at the top of the drawing shown above represents the systematic phase with interconnections and with the organic phase represented beneath.

The integration of Living Theory and TASC enables us to understand a research method to improve what we are doing as an educator, creating and developing educational



relationships, space and opportunities and to support researchers, irrespective of age of interest, to enhance their sophistication as a learner, creating knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world. Joy Mounter's (2017) 'Spirals', is a physical expression of a three segments of the TASC Wheel; Evaluation, Communication and Learn from Experience in the form of a multi-media repository for reflection and reflexivity, which stresses the importance of the creative phases of Living Theory TASC.

### 3. Spirals: what gave rise to Spirals, what it is about, why it was created.

#### Mounter writes:

Over many years as a Living Theory teacher-researcher, I found myself in a social context co-creating a living-theory TASC methodology with my class. The process of this research looked at theories of learning and developed our understanding of the journey of education and learning. We, my class and I, wanted a space we could hold open for our learning and reflections: a space for reflection and reflexivity over time: a space to generate our own understandings and self-identity, giving us the energy of motivation. This space became Spirals.

One of the oldest geometric shapes, the spiral is fundamental in nature, design and religion. Combining Carl Jung's description of a spiral as a cosmic force and the sacred meaning of the spiral representing growth and the journey of life; birth, phases of life, death and (reincarnation), it is the perfect symbol for the integration of the journey of personal learning, academic learning and life learning leading to living wisdom and ultimately living phronesis.

#### Back to shared writing:

Thinking Actively in a Social Context (Wallace et al 2004) was a learning theory that 'made sense' to Mounter's class of 6 and 7 year olds. After exploring several learning theories including TASC (ibid) and Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power (Claxton, 2002) the children developed their own, QUIFF; Question, Understanding, I am important, Focus and Feelings and the theory underpinning it. For a class engaged in understanding themselves as a person, as a learner and as part of their learning community this was a natural progression from their development of Thinking Actively in a Social Context from a 2D wheel to a 3D model and through later reflection and wider learning to a 5D model.

Mounter's pupils asking how she could write about learning without them, changed the fluidity of the role of teacher between Mounter and her pupils and their desire as a learning community to make a difference to their own learning, but also to the learning of others, hence M.A.D. Make a Difference entered their vocabulary and became the thread

running through all of their research and community ethos. In our commitment to making a difference we explain below that we are holding ourselves accountable for contributing to the realisation of the United Nations (2015), 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which we are identifying as carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity.

As reflexive learners, keen to make a difference to community and each of us, the three sections on the TASC Wheel that continue to hold our interest are Evaluate, Communicate and Learn from Experience. These we feel hold the key to our learning journey and reflections, segments of the wheel that we hold open when creating spirals of TASC research.

Piaget (1964) and Dweck (2006) suggest that we create meaning systems from our experiences and use these to shape our thinking and reactions to experiences. It is these experiences that influence our inner most thoughts and from these thoughts, a physical representation in the way we interact with the world around us.

We, as a community of researching learners using the TASC Wheel (Wallace et al 2004), Spirals and Living Theory TASC, underpinned by a Living Educational Theory methodology to frame our research, are creating a communal space each of us is holding open. We are contributing, feel valued and have a voice. We are exploring our learning skills, attributes, beliefs and popular learning theories whilst also spending time understanding our place in the world and ourselves. The more we reflect and explored our learning, the more we feel the need for a way to hold that space open within ourselves, to carry it with us as an inner understanding and resilience and at times opening the space to others in community. Spirals was developed as a personal living archive of the three segments mentioned earlier (Evaluate, Communicate and Learn from Experience) on the TASC Wheel, but also interconnecting the organic phase above, in Living-Theory TASC (Huxtable, 2012). Spirals is intended to help us to discover, explore and improve our selves with respect to what gives meaning and purpose to each of our lives. As a living archive it can be in a form of personal choice. For Mounter's class, it was A5 ring binders, pockets, wallets, coloured paper and card.

Biesta (2006, p.27) discusses that education should be about, 'individuality, subjectivity and personhood', and not just the transmission of knowledge, skills and values. Spirals enables a place for these reflections and learning of self and self as part of the world. As the spiral represents the cosmic energy of learning and the journey of growth, 'Spirals' is evolving and changing, as our understandings are developing. The diagram below shows the four main sections within Spirals and the link to TASC. It also highlights the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes explored within each section. The fifth column incorporates the social context of TASC, 'in community' and the difference we can make contributing to the flourishing of humanity (Whitehead, 1989). Each section is explored in more depth below.

The four sections are 'Dear Me'; 'Rainbow of Skills/Prism; Projects; MeSearch, and we are exploring the use of the EJOLTS Wiki pages ([http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main_Page)) as a repository for our living archive.

## Spirals: My Living Archive

<b>Dear Me</b>	<b>Prism/ Rainbow of Skills</b>	<b>MeSearch</b> (Evaluate & Learn from Experience)	<b>Projects</b> (Communicate)	<b>In Community</b> (Making a Difference)
Record of personal thoughts, reflections, moments...	Life Skills Life Habits Learning Habits	Deepen knowledge of self by appraising beliefs, values, opinions, actions Double H (Happy, Hope) Reflective Wisdom Emotional Resilience Reflective & Reflexive action	TASC Applying Skills & Habits Independent Learner	i~we~us Trust Confidence Nurturing Responsiveness (Mounter, 2012) Critical Friend

### Dear Me

Personal thoughts, reflection and energy captured in sketched prompt sheets, dated to show developing thinking. The pages are prompts for reflection and recording personal ideas, plan, thoughts, celebrations, frustrations, secrets etc. The brief, sketched outlines prompt thought and reflection, allowing creative interpretation and response. The person can record in any way they like. Areas covered are the face we show the world, hidden self, birthdays, proud moments, family as we explore our sense of self in the world. Understanding and being happy and confident with self and the self we offer others.

### Rainbow of Skills/ Prism

Rainbow of Skills for primary aged researchers and Prism for older researchers, this section enables reflective understanding of skills, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of self and the self in the world.

Seven areas; Community, Inquiring Mind, Active Learning, Creativity, Self-identity, Problem Solving and Adventure (all represented by the colours of a rainbow) encourage the creative exploration of aspects that define us. This in time through cycles of Living Theory TASC (Huxtable, 2012) and (Wallace et al, 2004), combined with reflections from Dear Me and the independent application of these seven areas through creative reflection in MeSearch, allows us as individuals to understand our self, what motivates

us, our beliefs and values and how we want to contribute to our own lives and that of others.

## Projects

This section is used for research projects planned and undertaken independently. Workbooks based around the TASC Wheel (Wallace et al, 2004) support the project work. Areas of interest are chosen from very wide briefs. An outcome is identified. This can be an artefact and a presentation format. The project is undertaken over a number of weeks, independently planned, organised and led. As the project is undertaken reflections on the Dear Me, Rainbow of Skills/ Prism and MeSearch are stored. This continual reflection on the three segments of the TASC Wheel continuously strengthens our view of self, and self as part of a community that we can make a difference to.

## MeSearch

This section connects reflections, moments, ideas, questions and thoughts together and enables a deeper understanding of self in the past, self now and the potential for the self to be. It includes:

- Values, beliefs and opinions
- Reflective Creativity as we pull together threads from experience and the different thoughts captured in our living archive. A depth of understanding with a focus. A question we explore with intra-personal understanding and inter-personal reflection as we move from i~we~us.
- Living wisdom gained through cycles of Living Theory TASC, creative connections found in MeSearch.
- Living phronesis found from the consolidation of ideas and questions found through living wisdom. Living phronesis is the action of our beliefs, values and wisdom in making a difference.

## In Community

Make a Difference (that is important to each of us) is the community thread running through Spirals and the ethos of community we hold open in ourselves and our classroom or other practices. There is a difference in how we approach a task from our personal reflections and growth, to the difference we make to the group we are part of, i~we~us. The reflections through TASC, Living Theory TASC and Spirals leads us to a sense of well-being, confidence and living wisdom (as we continue to grow) and living phronesis in our actions we offer as a gift in our living-educational-theories. Snowman and Biehler (2000) define this as a motivational force, or as the children describe as energy, life-affirming energy, experienced and held within, but offered as a gift in community to make a difference that contributes to the flourishing of humanity. We are using the above methods in our co-creation of a contribution to Living Theory research as a global social movement.

## 4. Co-creating a contribution to Living Theory research as a global social movement.

In this section we want to relate the idea of Living Theory research, as a social movement with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity, to some statements from an International body such as the United Nations that allow a connection to be made between these statements about developmental goals for humanity and the contributions we are making to Living Theory research as a social movement.

In making this co-created contribution we are at the gather and organize phase of the TASC Wheel. In gathering information on values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity we are connecting these values to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 15th September 2015. (United Nations, 2015, p.14). We are also connecting these values to the International Co-operative Alliance at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/coop/coopvalues.pdf> and organisations such as The Common Cause Foundation:

...a small, passionate team working, amidst a large and growing international network, to strengthen and give voice to the compassionate values that underpin social and environmental concern.

Research, by Common Cause and others, shows most people care deeply about one another and the world around them, valuing things like equality, compassion and kindness.

<https://valuesandframes.org/about-us>

The nature of our connections is importance. We are not simply applying the results from other communities as they define their goals and values. We are identifying with the process through which they generated their own statements of goals and values. As we clarify and communicate the meanings of our own values, in the course of their emergence in practice, we are seeing ourselves as contributing our living values and understandings to the global communities who are also concerned with the flourishing of humanity.

In researching our contributions to Living Theory research as a global social movement we are also holding ourselves accountable to living as fully as we can the following pledge:

We pledge to foster intercultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility. We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development. (United Nations, 2015, 10/35)

If you would like to join us in contributing to Living Theory research as a global social movement we are suggesting that you could begin by creating and sharing your living-posters. You can access the living-posters of practitioner-researchers from around the world together with guidelines on their production at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage020617.pdf>

As your explanations of your educational influences in learning develop, you might like to submit them for publication in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS). You can access the archive of the contents of EJOLTS from 2008 to the present from <https://ejolts.net/> together with the instructions for submission.

In our use of Spirals we are formulating a shared project that is directly related to Mounter's doctoral inquiry, 'How Can I Contribute To The Creation And Enhancement Of The Educational Influences Of A Community Of Learners, Supporting Each Other And Their Own Development?' Our shared question is, 'How Are We Contributing To The Creation And Enhancement Of The Educational Influences Of A Community Of Learners, Supporting Each Other And Their Own Development?' The movement between 'I' and 'We' in the two questions might appear simple and easy to accomplish.

In our experience the co-creation and researching of 'We' questions has not been easy or unproblematic. We are engaging in the transformation from 'I' to 'We' questions and researching our 'We' question with TASC, Living Theory TASC and Spirals as we continue to generate our living-educational-theories in the Living Theory wiki at [http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main_Page). You can follow our emerging enquiry by clicking on Joy, Marie and Jack in the above Main Page of the Living Theory wiki.

We understand that Living Theory research as a global social movement requires an appropriate epistemology distinguished by its units of appraisal, standards of judgement and living logic.

## 5. The units of appraisal, standards of judgement and living logics in our explanations of educational influences in learning to enhance the contributions of Living Theory research as a global social movement.

The importance of units, standards and logic in a Living Theory epistemology is that they make explicit what is being judged, how it is being judged and the rationality of the explanation of educational influence in learning, in a contribution to knowledge.

In making a contribution to Living Theory research as a social movement it is important to understand the importance of a co-created 'we' explanation of educational influence in enquiries of the kind, 'How do we improve what we are doing in living as fully as possible a contribution to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development?'. Much of our research so far has been focused on exploring the implications of asking,

researching and answering questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’. As our research has moved into the relational dynamics of community, we are co-creating our explanations of educational influence as we explore the implications of asking ‘How do we improve our practice?’ with Living Theory TASC and Spirals.

As we offer our contributions to educational knowledge for public criticism and validation we understand the importance of being clear about the nature of the standards of judgement that can be used to evaluate the validity of our contributions. Following Laidlaw (1996, 2018) we understand that it is important to clarify the meanings of the standards as they emerge in practice and to show that the standards of judgement are themselves living and open to change.

The standards of judgement are relationally dynamic and co-created. Following Laidlaw (2018) again, in her research on Living Hope and Creativity as Educational Standards of Judgement.

I show how I use my understanding of hope and creativity in my present educational practices with two students and clarify further my understanding of the relational dynamic between hope and creativity as I continue to clarify and communicate their meanings as explanatory principles and living educational standards of judgment. Most significantly for this paper, I am claiming an epistemological significance in clarifying and communicating the relationally-dynamic meanings of hope and creativity that emerge from my practice. (p. 1)

What we are offering are relationally dynamic standards of judgment that have been co-created through our ‘i~we~us’ relationships. ‘I’ questions becoming ‘we’ questions: to generate ‘we’ questions is not an easy process. Mellett and Gumede (2018) show how, as Living Theory researchers, they develop their process for moving from ‘I’ questions to ‘we’ questions as they explain how they have co-created their ‘we’ questions in relationship to the United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2015).

In explicating our living logic we understand logic to be the mode of thought appropriate for comprehending the real as rational (Marcuse, 1964, p 105). Hence the importance of clarifying our logic is that it communicates how we are making sense of our explanations in terms of their rationality. We also agree with Marcuse’s point about dialectical and propositional forms of rationality.

In the classical logic, the judgement which constituted the original core of dialectical thought was formalized in the propositional form, ‘S is p.’ But this form conceals rather than reveals the basic dialectical proposition, which states the negative character of the empirical reality. (Marcuse, 1964, p. 111).

In our living logic we move beyond such limitations as concealing the dialectical nature of reality and beyond a limitation in placing contradiction as the nucleus of explanations (Ilyenkov, 1977, p. 313) as we move into the living logic of natural inclusion (Whitehead & Rayner 2009).

We want to emphasize our commitment to avoiding the criticism that our 'I' or our 'We' remains formal, whilst pretending that they contain content in themselves. We are thinking of Schroyer's (1973) criticism of Heidegger and support of Adorno:

Hence the aura of authenticity in Heidegger is that it names "nothing"; the "I" remains formal and yet pretends that the word contains content in-itself. For Adorno, Heidegger's existentialism is a new Platonism which implies that authenticity comes in the complete disposal of the person over himself – as if there were no determination emerging from the objectivity of history." (Schroyer, p. vii, 1973)

Hall is an influential researcher and Co-Holder of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based research - and this focus on community should have a relationship to Joy's and our question. Hall's analyses are influenced by critical social theory. Our criticism of critical social theorists is that they stay within analysis and don't engage with the implications of their analyses for their own research questions. Hall is a researcher influenced by critical social theory who explicitly asks 'I' questions, which he says that he is asking himself. In giving the Schroyer quote I want to point to the danger of asking 'I' questions in which the 'I' remains formal whilst being apparently unaware that it contains content in itself. For In formulating 'I' questions Hall's (2015) asks himself:

1. How do I 'decolonize', 'deracialise,' demasculanise and degender my inherited 'intellectual spaces?'
2. How do I support the opening up of spaces for the flowering of epistemologies, ontologies, theories, methodologies, objects and questions other than those that have long been hegemonic, and that have exercised dominance over (perhaps have even suffocated) intellectual and scholarly thought and writing?
3. How do I contribute to the building of new academic cultures and, more widely, new inclusive institutional cultures that genuinely respect and appreciate difference and diversity – whether class, gender, national, linguistic, religious, sexual orientation, epistemological or methodological in nature?
4. How do I become a part of creating the new architecture of knowledge that allows co-construction of knowledge between intellectuals in academia and intellectuals located in community settings? (Hall, 2015, p.12)

Hall is the Co-Holder of UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria. We are following with interest Hall's research as he explores the implications of asking, researching and answering his questions, but have yet to see any outcomes or details of the enquiries.



Exploring the implications of asking 'I' and 'We' questions as Living Theory researchers the 'I' is real and we each hold ourselves to account, in our living-educational-theories, for living as fully as we can the values that give meaning and purpose to our lives and carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

We also want to emphasize that we accept Foucault's (1977) statement. He says that for a long period the 'left' intellectual was acknowledged as a champion of truth and justice. The intellectual was a spokesperson of the universal in the sense of moral, theoretical and political choices. In opposition to the universal intellectual, he describes the specific intellectual in terms of an engagement in a struggle at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them. Foucault takes care to emphasise that by 'truth' he does not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted'. By 'truth', he means the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true. The struggles 'around truth' are not 'on behalf' of the truth, but about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.

In contrast to Foucault's commitment to researching the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true, our enquiries are focused on making contributions to knowledge. In saying that we do not mean to imply that we reject such analyses. On the contrary they inform our focus of concern and our practice. For example, we draw on de Sousa Santos' (2014) understandings of 'epistemicide' (Whitehead, 2015) and on Rowell's (2018) understandings of 'knowledge democracy' and 'knowledge mobilisation'. Whilst drawing on such analyses our purpose is different. We are seeking to contribute valid explanations of educational influences in learning as we seek to enhance the contributions of Living Theory research as a global social movement with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

As part of this social movement we are contributing to the inaugural meeting of the Practitioner Action Research and Creative Methods Hub of the University of Cumbria on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018:

Welcome to the Practitioner Action Research and Creative Methods Hub.  
We are delighted to bring together a community of action researchers and people who use creative methods in different settings.

One motivation probably brings us all together today – the question of how can we improve our practice? Whether we work with children, young people, adults, whether we are in education, healthcare or social care, whether academics, practitioners or students, whether front line staff, researchers or managers, we are all wondering – how can I do this better?

## 6. Concluding and projecting into the future

Through this paper we have introduced Living Theory research and shown how and why we see this as important for making a contribution to improving practice and to the growth of a global educational knowledge base, which carries hope for the flourishing of humanity. We have exemplified how educational-practitioners have, drawing on TASC, created methods, such as Spirals and Living Theory TASC, for researching practice to improve it and create knowledge in the form of valid explanations of educational influence in learning. Finally we have shown you where you might both learn more about, and contribute to, Living Theory research as a social movement, beginning with the living-posters, which you can access from <http://www.actionresearch.net/> and the content of the Educational Journal of Living Theories, which you can access from <https://ejolts.net/>. We are continuing to 'walk our own talk' by contributing to both, presenting at conferences and gatherings, supporting Masters, Doctoral and other researchers, and making our own research public. We hope you might feel inspired to join us and we look forward to meeting you in person or through the web or writings in the near future.

## References

Biesta, G. J. J. (2006) *Beyond Learning; Democratic Education for a Human Future*. Boulder; Paradigm Publishers.

Claxton, G. (2002) *Building Learning Power: Helping Young People Become Better Learners*. Bristol; TLO.

De Sousa Santos, B. (2014) *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. London; Paradigm Publishers.

Dweck, C. (2006) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House.

Eisner, E. (1993) Forms of Understanding and the Future of Educational Research. *Educational Researcher*, 22(7): 5-11.

Foucault, M. (1977) Intellectuals and Power - A conversation between Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze: in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, Bouchard, D.F. (Ed.), Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Graham, P. (2004) The Age of the Essay Accessed 3 November 2018 from <http://www.paulgraham.com/essay.html> .

Hall, B. (2015) *Beyond Epistemicide: Knowledge Democracy and Higher Education*. First presented at the International Symposium on Higher Education in the Age of Neo Liberalism and Audit Cultures, July 21-25, University of Regina 2015. Retrieved 19 April 2017 from [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/Beyond\\_Epistemicide\\_final.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/unesco/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/Beyond_Epistemicide_final.pdf)

Huxtable, M. (2012) *How do I Evolve Living-Educational-Theory Praxis in Living-boundaries?* PhD Thesis, University of Bath. Retrieved 22 October 2018 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/mariehuxtable.shtml>

Huxtable, M. & Whitehead, J. (2015) How does Living Educational Theory research enable individuals to research into their higher education to improve it and contribute to educational knowledge? Presented at BERA HE SIG Symposium: Researching into Higher Education: Innovative Research Methods, 8 May 2015, Institute of Education, London, UK. Retrieved 5 November 2018 from <https://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/3813/>

Hymer, B. (2007) *How do I understand and communicate my values and beliefs in my work as an educator in the field of giftedness?* D.Ed. Thesis, University of Newcastle. Retrieved 3 November 2018 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/hymer.shtml>

Ilyenkov, E. (1977) *Dialectical Logic*. Moscow; Progress Publishers.

Laidlaw, M. (2018) Living Hope and Creativity as Educational Standards of Judgement. *Educational Journal of Living Theories* 11(2); 1.

Marcuse, H. (1964) *One Dimensional Man*, London; Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Mellett, P. & Gumede, J. (2018) Contribution to the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Educational Journal of Living Theories (in press).

Mounter, J. (2007) *Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory*. MA unit on understanding learners and learning, University of Bath. Retrieved 24 October 2018 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/joymounterull.pdf>

Mounter, J. (2017) *Spirals*. Unpublished manuscript.

Piaget, J. (1964) *The Early Growth of Logic in the Child*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Rowell, L. (2018) *Knowledge Democracy and Educational Action Research: Beliefs, Science, Politics and Resistance in Knowledge Production*. Keynote to The Inaugural Practitioner Action Research and Creative Methods Hub Seminars, University of Cumbria, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

Schroyer, T. (1973) Foreword, in Adorno, T. W. (1973) *The Jargon of Authenticity*. Translated by Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will, London; Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Snowman, J. and Biehler, R. (2000) *Psychology Applied to Teaching*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Tutu, D. (2013) Who we are: Human uniqueness and the African spirit of Ubuntu. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wZtfqZ271w> (Accessed: 1 February 2016).

United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 29 October 2018 from <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

Wallace, B., Maker, J., Cave, D. and Chandler, S., (2004) *Thinking Skills and Problem-Solving An Inclusive Approach: A Practical Guide for Teachers in Primary School*. London: David Fulton.

Whitehead, J., (1989) Creating a Living Educational Theory from Questions of the Kind, 'How do I Improve My Practice?', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19; 41-52.

Whitehead, J. (2015) Review of [de Sousa Santos, B. \(2014\). \*Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide\*. London: Paradigm Publishers.](#) *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 9(2); 87-98

Whitehead, J. (2018) *Living Theory research as a way of life*. Bath; Brown Dog Books.

Whitehead, J. (2019) Action Research for Self-study and Living-Educational-Theories, Chapter 7 in Zuber-Skerritt, O, & Woods, L. (2019) *Action Learning and Action Research: Genres and Approaches* (in press).

Whitehead, J. & Rayner, A. (2009) *From Dialectics to Inclusionality: A naturally inclusive approach to educational accountability*. Retrieved 29 October 2018 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arjwdialtoIncl061109.pdf>

---

## BIOS

Joy Mounter is the MA and Leadership Course Leader for The learning Institute based in Roche in Cornwall. She is a former primary school Head teacher researcher who is currently researching for her Ph.D. Joy is a peer-reviewer for the Educational Journal of Living Theories.

Email – [joysmounter@gmail.com](mailto:joysmounter@gmail.com)

Postal Address:

Joy Mounter, 1 Hopscotch Cottages, St Erme, Truro, TR49BJ, Cornwall.

---

Marie Huxtable worked as an Educational Psychologist developing and coordinating an inclusive educational gifts and talents programme for a local authority. She is currently a Visiting Research Fellow with the University of Cumbria contributing to the university's CPD programmes and supporting doctoral researchers. She is chair of the editorial board of the Educational Journal of Living Theories and an advisory editor of Gifted Education

International. She has supported the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute Youth programme, the 'Make a Move' research group (a charity with lottery funding to provide an movement based intervention programme for low mood post partum mothers), and a number of local and international SKYPE researching communities.

Email – [marie.huxtable@gmail.com](mailto:marie.huxtable@gmail.com)

Postal Address:

Marie Huxtable, 16 Park Avenue, Bath, BA2 4QD

.....

Jack Whitehead is a Visiting Professor at the University of Cumbria. He is a former President of the British Educational Research Association and Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Westminster College, Utah. He is a Visiting Professor at Ningxia University in China. He is a member of the editorial board of the Educational Journal of Living Theories. Since 1973 his research programme has focused on the creation of the living educational theories that individual's use to explain their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work.

His original contributions to educational knowledge have focused on enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' These contributions can be accessed from his web-site at <http://www.actionresearch.net> . In the multi-media Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) he explains how video-data can be used to communicate the life-affirming energy and values of humanity that teachers are expressing in their educational relationships and in their explanations of their educational influences (<http://ejolts.net/node/80>).

Email - [jack@actionresearch.net](mailto:jack@actionresearch.net)

Postal Address:

Jack Whitehead, 70 Bloomfield Avenue, Bath BA23AA, UK.