

## CONTRIBUTING TO MOVING ACTION RESEARCH TO ACTIVISM WITH LIVING THEORY RESEARCH

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper follows the organisation of the successful proposal: 1) The research and action aims; 2) methodology, theoretical tools and methods; 3) results, outputs, program changes and events. The research aims are focused on the communication of meanings of relationally dynamic values in educational conversations in the generation of living-theories by activist scholars that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. The action aims are focused on establishing a global educational conversation with a focus on improving practice with these values. The methodology, theoretical tools and methods are focused on the generation of their living-theories. The results, outputs, program changes and events demonstrate the spreading global educational influences of Living Theory research.*

**KEY WORDS:** Action research; Activist research; Living Theory Research

### THE RESEARCH AND ACTION AIMS

The research aims to contribute to an ecology of knowledges that includes moving from action research to activism with Living Theory research. In this research, individuals hold themselves accountable for their action aims of living in practice as fully as possible, and their values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. The research is located in social contexts that are distinguished by knowledge-mobilisation, knowledge-democracy and an ecology of knowledges. I shall begin by clarifying these meanings before providing an evidence-based explanation of a process of moving from action research to activism with Living Theory research.

### *Activist Research*

As an activist scholar, I follow Hale's (2001) understanding of 'What is Activist Research?' in that I have developed particular affinities with a group of practitioners whose knowledge has been masked, distorted or replaced in a process of Epistemicide (de Santos, 2014) and I have given special priority

to dialogue with them in establishing the academic legitimacy of their knowledge creation.

I also agree with Hale that the practice of activist research involves the identification of our deepest ethical-political convictions that drive the formulation of research objectives. The ethical convictions involve the clarification of the meanings of the ontological values that give meaning and purpose to one's activism and that are used as explanatory principles in generating living-educational-theories of educational influences in learning. These theories are the explanations produced by an individual to explain 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 (Whitehead, 1989, 2019a).

In validating their knowledge creation, activist researchers also focus on the questions, "Has the research produced knowledge that helps to resolve the problem, to guide some transformation, which formed part of the research objectives from the start? Is the knowledge useful?" (Hale, 2001, p. 14)

Choudry (2013) analyses the practices and processes of activist researchers in a discussion of social relations of knowledge production located outside of academia with/in social movement milieus. Choudry focuses on the politics of research in people's organizations and social movement organizations in the Philippines building on interviews with activist researchers. Choudry argues for a Marxist theory of praxis:

...which insists upon the unity of thought and action, contending that research and organizing in this context are mutually constitutive and that knowledge production in these movements is dialectically related to the material conditions experienced in struggles for social and economic justice. (p. 472)

I agree with Choudry (2013) that in the dialectic of the research process and organizing:

.... you can't really put boundaries in terms of "am I doing research now or am I doing education, or am I doing organizing", the lines are blurred, and ... that struck me more when I was in organizing as opposed to when I was in a research institution. (p. 480)

In exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve this process of education here?' and 'How do I improve my practice?' the boundaries are blurred in that exploring these questions has included improving practice, gaining academic legitimation for the knowledge-creation and organizing a network of relationships that are involved in the power relations that influence the politics of knowledge surrounding the legitimating of knowledge generating in Living Educational Theory research.

I also agree that activist research has the potential to develop powerful tools for critique of capitalism not only to understand the world, but to change it. However, I also stress the importance in Living Theory research of not only changing the world but improving it. This can be seen in the latest Living Theory doctoral thesis on 'My Living Theory of International Development':

Whilst exploring commonalities between Living Theory and International Development, I show they can reinforce each other and combine in the practical realization of a commitment to a fairer world. A generative form of development emerges that includes a gendered epistemology. I discuss how my own pursuit of gender justice has improved the quality of my work as a female development economist and practitioner, living in a capitalistic era. (Briganti, 2020, p. iii)

My Living Theory research has been influenced by Ilyenkov's (1977) analysis of dialectical logic in which he asks the questions:

Contradiction as the concrete unity of mutually exclusive opposites is the real nucleus of dialectics, its central category. On that score there cannot be two views among Marxists; but no small difficulty immediately arises as soon as matters touch on 'subjective dialectics', on dialectics as the logic of thinking. If any object is a living contradiction, what must the thought (statement about the object) be that expresses it? Can and should an objective contradiction find reflection in thought? And if so, in what form? (p. 313)

Rather than base my analysis in interview data, like Choudry, my analysis of moving action research to activism with Living Theory Research is grounded in the data of explanations provided by activist researchers of their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understandings. In relation to Ilyenkov's questions, living contradictions are focused on the 'I' responding to their contradictions in their question, 'How do I improve what I am doing in living my values as fully as possible?'

### ***Knowledge Mobilization***

Knowledge mobilization (KMb) is an important part of the mission of the Action Research Network of the Americas. KMb is often defined as the use of evidence and expertise to align research, policy and practice to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. It involves knowledge sharing between research producers (e.g. university researchers) and research users (including practitioners whose work can benefit from research findings). In contributing to moving action research to activism with Living Theory research this paper stresses the contribution that the knowledge-creating capacities of practitioner researchers can make to the knowledge sharing between university researchers and research users.

The concept reflects the view that verified empirical knowledge should be the basis for policies and practices in education, healthcare, community

development, social services and a variety of other social sectors. Thus, KMb fits within concern in the social sciences for bridging gaps between research and practice. KMb also aligns with the origins of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA), as ARNA emerged through shared recognition among the network's founders that work was needed to better position action researchers in relation to the use of evidence and expertise in shaping social policies, particularly in education. As an activist in KMb, I share ARNA's desire to seek:

... an alignment in which knowledge is decolonized to better serve the marginalized and oppressed and is created in intellectual and social spaces in which knowledge production is horizontal and symmetrical, is based on respect for diverse epistemologies and in which action researchers demonstrate a deep appreciation of the capacity of ordinary people to fashion a socially just, more equitably organized and peaceful world. (<http://arnawebsite.org/knowledge-mobilization/>)

### ***Ecology of Knowledges***

For me, knowledge mobilisation is intimately connected to the concept of an ecology of knowledges, which was highlighted in the first Global Assembly in Knowledge Democracy: *Towards an Ecology of Knowledges*, in Cartagena, Colombia, on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2018. An ecology of knowledges is:

... a thoughtful and strategic assessment of the politics of knowledge creation and the potential of participatory approaches as alternatives to a monolithic knowledge enterprise based on the domination of the Global North and the marginalization and subordination of other knowledges. (Global Assembly for Knowledge Democracy, 2018)

### ***Knowledge Democracy***

In a lecture on 'Knowledge Democracy and Educational Action Research: Beliefs, Science, Politics and Resistance in Knowledge Production', Professor Lonnie Rowell, a co-founder and lead organiser in establishing the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) had this to say about knowledge-democracy:

Knowledge democracy is a concept that has grown out of transformations in the politics of knowledge production. The concept is rooted in resistance to the monopolisation of expert knowledge producers in relation to global north-south splits in the politics of development from the mid-20th century up to our time. The democratisation of knowledge production and the expansion of challenges to all forms of elitist domination have been joined at the hip for at least the last 50 years, fueled by a recognition of the transformative power of knowledge democratisation. (Rowell, 2018)

In an earlier paper exploring the question, 'How can transdisciplinary research contribute to knowledge democracy?' Bunders et al. (2010) make the following points about knowledge-democracy. They point out that in a knowledge democracy, both dominant and non-dominant actors have equal access and ability to put this knowledge forward in the process of solving societal

problems. They argue that for this to happen, a transdisciplinary research process is needed. They distinguish two important dimensions in the research approaches used. The first is the degree of knowledge input of lay groups that is included in a specific transdisciplinary project. The second is the degree in which non-dominant actors are explicitly involved in the decision-making of the development process of policies or research agendas. Bunders et al. say that such a knowledge democracy has no bias regarding access of knowledge, ways of knowledge sharing and the role of knowledge democracy.

Mark Potts (2014) is a Living Educational Theory researcher whose living-educational-theory has contributed to moving action research to activism with Living Theory research. In a similar way described by Bunders et al., Potts traces the origins of Living Global Citizenship in a sustained international partnership between two schools in South Africa and the UK. He demonstrates how to move from a concept of Living Educational Theory research into a form of activism that is motivated by the values of human flourishing. These values include the African value of *Ubuntu*. Potts provides a set of pedagogical protocols as a practical guide for the development of Living Global Citizenship projects as a means of fulfilling the goal of providing meaningful citizenship education. He also explains why it is significant for those involved in international development work to engage in self-studies of their own influence in enquiries (e.g. 'How do I improve what I am doing?') in ways that avoid colonisation, but enable mutual negotiation and agreement of common values. Finally, he calls on others to use living-global-citizenship as a standard of judgment to help to critically evaluate and strengthen these contributions to knowledge. Potts has recently contributed to the 1<sup>st</sup> International Living Educational Theory Research Conference on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020. His virtual presentation in which he explains how he has developed his work and research in democracy cafes can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maAyelphGcg&feature=youtu.be>.

### ***Some Questions for Myself***

In concluding this section on research and action aims, I want to focus on four questions asked by Budd Hall (2015) in a presentation he made called, 'Beyond Epistemicide: Knowledge Democracy and Higher Education' as Co-Holder, UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria.

- 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)

In terms of research and action aims, I want to emphasise the necessity of including 'I' within such questions and of accepting an educational responsibility for researching them. Asking such 'I' questions is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition in contributing to moving action research to activism with Living Theory research. It is both a necessary and sufficient condition, in fulfilling one's educational responsibility as an activist, of practically exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering such questions. In researching these implications in research, it is necessary to make public an explanation of one's educational influence in one's own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding. This responsibility is explored below in the section on methodology, theoretical tools and methods.

### **METHODOLOGY, THEORETICAL TOOLS AND METHODS**

The living-theory-methodologies in this research draw insights from the methodologies of auto-ethnography, critical social constructivism, action research, narrative and self-study. The theoretical tools include insights from ecology of knowledges and knowledge democracy in creating alternatives to neoliberalism with co-operative economies. The methods include the use of empathetic resonance and empathetic validity for clarifying the meanings of the embodied values used as explanatory principles. They include the use of four criteria (comprehensibility, evidence, normative influences and authenticity) to strengthen the validity of explanations in moving from action research to activism. The methods include the generation and sharing of living-posters (see <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage0619.pdf> for the 2019 collection of living-posters) along with an explanation of how to create and share your own living-posters if you would like to join the global educational conversation on contributing to moving Action Research to Activism with Living Theory Research. The most recent homepage of living-posters is: <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage2020.pdf>

These collections of living-posters are proving influential in spreading the influence of living-educational-theories as action researchers move to activism. Individual researchers and communities of practice share details of their contexts, their values and their practical questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' The original idea for developing living-posters as a way of globally connecting Living Theory researchers from the ground of their local contexts came from Marie Huxtable (2020). You can access details of the original ideas from her web page: <http://www.spanglefish.com/mariessite/>.

The global spread of the living-posters of individuals and communities include the Bluewater Action Research Network in Canada (BARN); a global post-doctoral Living Theory group; a Mongolian practitioner-researcher group; the Network Educational Action Research Ireland (NEARI); the editorial board of

the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS), and many others.<sup>1</sup> You can access the living-posters of the participants from 14 different countries in the 1<sup>st</sup> International Living Educational Theory Research Conference at: <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/participants2020conference.pdf>.

The living and evolving nature of the contributions of action researchers to a global social movement of Living Theory researchers can be seen in the contributions of the Network for Educational Action Researchers in Ireland (see <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/neari20.pdf>). On the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020, NEARI held an inaugural meeting of a Special Interest Group for the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) on 'Values-based Practitioner Action Research'. The establishment of NEARI developed from the collaboration of Mairin Glenn, Caitriona McDonagh, Mary Roche and Bernie Sullivan. These four researchers were awarded their doctorates for their Living Theory research by the University of Limerick in Ireland during 2006-2007. If you access the NEARI living-poster from the above link, you will be able to access details of four books that have already been published in support of practitioner-research by these activist scholars. Working with others, they successfully submitted a proposal in 2019 to ESAI to create a Special Interest Group. The inaugural meeting, with its focus on values-based practitioner action research, marked the growth of a social movement of practitioner-researchers who are sharing globally their explanations of educational influence in learning with values of human flourishing. The sustained activism of the participants in NEARI continues to extend their local, national and international influence.

### ***Methodology***

In Living Theory research, an individual produces an explanation for 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. In research proposals made to universities, it is usual to specify the research methodology to be used (applied). It is a characteristic of Living Theory research that the researcher generates their unique living-theory methodology in the course of producing their explanation of educational influences in learning. To stress the importance of this generation, rather than application, of a methodology, I have described how to justify your creation of a living theory methodology in the creation of your living educational theory. This justification includes responding to Creswell's (2007) ideas on narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case studies; Ellis' and Bochner's (2000) ideas on autoethnography; Whitehead & McNiff's (2006) ideas on action research and Living Theory research; and Tight's (2016) ideas on phenomenography (see Whitehead, 2018a).

### ***Theoretical Tools***

Every Living Theory researcher will have a different constellation of theoretical tools that they use in explaining their educational influences in learning. One of

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<sup>1</sup> If you are not already represented on this living-poster homepage do please send your living-poster to me at [jack@livingtheor.org](mailto:jack@livingtheor.org).



the distinguishing characteristics of a living-theory are the insights that the researcher draws on from different theoretical perspectives in their explanations. For example, Critical Theory offers insights into the political, historical, cultural and economic influences of neoliberal policies in the social contexts that locate the practitioner's enquiries. Psychoanalytic theories can be helpful in understanding how to strengthen one's mental health in terms of one's ontological security in the face of debilitating and destructive power relations in the social context. Positivist, Dialectical and Inclusional theories can offer insights into the nature of the claims to knowledge being made by the Living Theory researcher. The living-theories that help to constitute Living Theory research can help a Living Theory researcher to locate their original contribution to knowledge within the field of Living Theory research. Theories of climate change (Bendell, 2018) are particularly helpful in contributing to moving action research to activism with Living Theory research through lessons learnt from the Extinction Rebellion movement.

### **Methods**

I shall highlight two methods that I have found particularly useful in moving action research to activism with Living Theory research. The first method is the use of an action-reflection cycle in the following framework and rationale for Living Theory research. Practitioner-researchers usually ask questions which are directed at improving the quality of their own practice, their understanding of their practice and the social context in which the practice is located. Their purpose is to bring about a change that is important to them.

The action planner is usually organised through discussions which help to clarify the nature of the enquiry, 'How do I improve...?', into questions of the form:

- 1) What is my concern? What do I want to improve?
- 2) Why am I concerned? What difference do I want to make by trying to improve my practice?
- 3) What might I do to improve my practice that will improve my learning and the learning of other people and the learning of the social formation I am living and working in?
- 4) How will I know that what I am doing is changing anything in the way I want it to change? How am I going to find out? What data will I collect to help me understand what is going on and what differences I am making that are important to me?
- 5) What kind of evidence will I need to collect to enable me to make a judgement about the outcomes of my changes in practice, in terms of the quality of my own and the learning of others?
- 6) What kind of resources will you need to enable you to implement your plan?

The focus on improving practice, as well as generating a valid explanation of educational influences in learning, ensures a continuing focus on the activism of the researcher.

The second method involves the use of digital visual data with the method of empathetic resonance to keep the researcher focused on their accountability, in



their explanation of educational influence, for living as fully as possible the values they use to give meaning and purpose to their lives. In writing the above words I am aware of limitations of using words alone to communicate meanings of embodied expressions of energy-flowing values. Elsewhere, I have provided details of the method of empathetic resonance with digital visual data to clarify and communicate the embodied expressions of the meanings of these values and their use as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning (Whitehead, 2012). The details include the use of a method of empathetic resonance. This is central to the original contribution of this presentation of educational knowledge. The method is used below with visual data and digital technology to communicate meanings of a 'relationally dynamic awareness' and 'energy-flowing values' in explanatory principles for explaining educational influences in learning.

You can see more evidence of the educational influence and scholarly significance of this approach in another presentation to AERA 2012 called *The Educational Significance of a Teaching Model for the Creation of a Culture of Inquiry* (Delong & Whitehead, 2012). Part of this evidence is drawn from visual data on the evolution of relational dynamic understandings of love, hope and wisdom in educational conversations between Liz Campbell, Cathy Griffin, Jacqueline Delong and Jack Whitehead (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHAXuNe5vVw>). While the entire conversation spanned 25 minutes, I particularly recommend watching the last 19 seconds leading up to the frame below (Figure 1) to experience an empathetic resonance with the life-affirming energy that is being 'pooled' at the end of this conversation with the values we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives in education, including love, hope and wisdom.



**Figure 1.** A snapshot from a conversation on Youtube illustrating a 'pooling of energy with values'

As you watch the last 19 seconds, please move the cursor back and forth so that you can see if you feel a resonance around 16 seconds with a 'pooling of energy with values' (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bViANZrIqkM>). As we, as participants in the conversation, watch these 19 seconds of video and pause at 16 seconds, we observe and experience an empathetic resonance with our life-affirming energy that is being 'pooled' at the end of this conversation with the values we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives in education, including love, hope and wisdom. The scholarly significance of this experience will, to a large extent, depend on you and others sharing and extending this awareness of a pooling of life-affirming energy with values that carry hope for the future of humanity:

We need a new approach: recognising the importance of values and frames; taking into account how the things we call for or do can help strengthen or weaken them; and making sure that, in doing so, we are all pulling together across different sectors. The need for trade-offs and compromises will remain – but we should make them in light of the bigger picture: an understanding of the values that will be essential to securing lasting change. (Common Cause, 2012)

I know that each individual will experience what they recognise as love, hope and wisdom in their unique way. If you do watch the full 25 minute clip above, you will hear a conversation in which the participants are sharing their embodied meanings of love, hope and wisdom. A clear example of the use of this method of empathetic resonance with digital visual data has been provided by Naidoo (2005) in communicating her meaning of 'a passion for compassion', to the examiners of her doctoral thesis:

In telling the story of the unique development of my inclusional and responsive practice I will show how I have been influenced by the work of theatre practitioners such as Augusto Boal, educational theorists such as Paulo Freire and drawn on, incorporated and developed ideas from complexity theory and living theory action research. I will also describe how my engagement with the thinking of others has enabled my own practice to develop and from that to develop a living, inclusional and responsive theory of my practice. Through this research and the writing of this thesis, I now also understand that my ontological commitment to a passion for compassion has its roots in significant events in my past. (p. 8)

### **RESULTS, OUTPUTS, PROGRAM CHANGES AND EVENTS**

The results include the accreditation of over 40 Living Theory doctoral theses in a range of universities in different countries, including both the Global North and the Global South (see <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>).

Recent outputs include: Mounter, Huxtable and Whitehead, (2019); Stringer, Dick and Whitehead (2019); Whitehead (2016a,b, 2017a,b,c, 2018b,c,d,e; 2019a,b); Whitehead, Delong, Huxtable, Campbell, Griffin and Mounter (2019); Whitehead and Huxtable (2016); Wood, McAteer and Whitehead (2019).

In terms of the program changes, one of the most impressive contributions to moving action research to activism with Living Theory Research has been accomplished by Joy Mounter of The Learning Institute in Cornwall, UK. As MA lead at The Learning Institute, Mounter designed the successful proposal to Newman University in the UK to accredit an MA program in 'Values-led Leadership Using a Living Theory Research Methodology' (See <http://www.spanglefish.com/allicanbe/index.asp?pageid=698882> )

The events include:

- Two educational conversations with multi-screen SKYPE contributions from national and international contributors. These are described in the following reports:
  - a) Report on the *CARN study day/Pre-conference participatory workshop* on the 4th February, 2016, hosted by Rachael Burgess in Bath, for the '1st Global Assembly for Knowledge Democracy: towards an ecology of knowledges' in Cartagena, Columbia on the 16th June 2017.<sup>2</sup>
  - b) Report on the 13th April 2019 gathering hosted by Rachael Burgess in Bath UK. *Living Theory research making a difference in communities and organisations: continuing conversations*.<sup>3</sup>
- Workshops and Town Hall meetings at the conferences of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), Action Learning, Action Research Association (ALARA) and the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA).
- A workshop at the 10th ALARA World Congress at Norwich University, Vermont, USA on the 19th June 2018 on "Where do we go from here in contributing to 'The Action Learning and Action Research Legacy for Transforming Social Change?'" (DeLong, Whitehead & Huxtable 2019).<sup>4</sup>
- The 1st International Living Educational Theory Research Conference held virtually on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020 with participants from 14 countries. (see <http://www.spanglefish.com/livingtheoryresearchgathering/>).

## INTERIM CONCLUSION

In contributing to moving Action Research to activism with Living Theory Research, an emphasis has been placed on the exercise of individual responsibility for exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering activist questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in living the values of human flourishing as fully as possible?' The action aims are focused on establishing a global educational conversation with a focus on improving practice with these values. These conversations are at the heart of evidence-based explanations of the enhancement of the global educational influence of moving Action Research to Activism with Living Theory Research. They explain a present practice in terms of an evaluation of past practice and in

<sup>2</sup> See <https://knowledgedemocracy.org/2017/02/15/report-on-the-carn-study-daypre-conference-workshop/>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwreport13april260419.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwworkshopalara2018.pdf>

terms of intentions to improve personal and social contexts that have yet to be created. You can follow such intentions by accessing the plans and participants in a Living Educational Theory research gathering on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at <http://www.spanglefish.com/livingtheoryresearchgathering/index.asp> .

The participants are contributing to the conversation through sharing their writings and living-posters. The intention is to sustain and enlarge the communities within which these conversations are taking place. This global social movement needs enlarging if it is to enhance the influence of activists in spreading the values and understandings that carry hope of human flourishing. Two recent contributions to enlarging these communities are from Peter Mellett (2020) and Ariana Briganti (2020). Mellett has summarised his contribution to Moving Action Research to Activism with Living Theory Research in his writings on 'Evolving my Educational Influence in Learning: Collaborative Communities of Practice, Relationally-dynamic Constellations of Values and *Praxis*'. These writings include a focus on regenerating human settlements with values of human flourishing. In the collaborative communities of practice researched by Mellett, members undertake living-theory research (either overt or implied) in their own practices and in their educational influences. Mellett draws a link between living-theory research and the 'new forms of scholarship' called for by Ernest Boyer (1990) and the requisite 'new epistemology' characterised by Donald Schön (1995). Having made this connection, Mellett makes a case that Living Educational Theory can legitimately make a claim to have realised as a credible *praxis* the conceptual framework set out by Boyer and Schön. Mellett explores his own *praxis* in extending the role of values as explanatory principles for living-theory research accounts. Rather than a static list residing within an individual, Mellett describes values as constellations that are in a dynamic state of flux over time, adjusting their relationships with each other to fit changing circumstances and contexts. In his activist research in the regeneration of human settlements, Mellett shows how co-researchers within collaborative communities of practice are seen to align their value-sets with each other's, placing the same core value at the centre of each member's constellation of values (Mellett, 2020, p. 71).

Briganti has summarised her contribution in her thesis on 'My living-theory of International Development'. In her living-theory, Briganti focuses on the relationally dynamic values of human flourishing of *empathy, social and gender justice, outrage, responsibility, love for and faith in humanity and dignity*. Her originality lies in their use as explanatory principles in her explanation of her educational influence in her own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that affect her practice as a development professional.

Briganti's other original contribution to knowledge is in relating the threefold nature of Living Theory methodology – a self-reflexive action-led research, a way of life, and a social movement – with her practice in International Development. Briganti provides an example of how limitations in International Development might be overcome in a form of activism that embraces Living Educational Theory Research with values of human flourishing. In her self-reflexive research,

Briganti conceptualizes International Development as a global responsibility. Briganti offers instances of how to work with others at micro (community) level, at meso (organizational) level, and shows a developing understanding of her potential systemic influence at a macro (political) level.

As an activist scholar Briganti draws insights from a range of methodological approaches including self-study and narrative enquiry methodologies. Briganti presents her living-theory of International Development as an alternative to a neoliberal approach. It rests on the idea that Development means having a chance to contribute to a good change (Chambers, 1997).

Briganti's stories derive from the experiences from her own life and that of the people she works with. In her living-theory of international development, Briganti uses the South African value of *Ubuntu* and its transformative growth into I~we~us relationships. In her exploration of commonalities between Living Theory and International Development, Briganti shows how they can reinforce each other and combine in the practical realization of a commitment to a fairer world. A generative form of development emerges that includes a gendered epistemology. Briganti also discusses how her own pursuit of gender justice has improved the quality of her work as a female development economist and practitioner, living in a capitalistic era (Briganti, 2020, p. iii).

Both Mellett and Briganti focus on the importance of human generativity in their contributions to moving action research to activism with Living Theory research. Mellett focuses on the importance of regenerating human settlements in the face of disaster relief. It is not difficult to extend his ideas, especially on the importance of relationally dynamic values in communities of practice, to all of our human settlements as we are plagued by the health and economic costs of the coronavirus pandemic. Briganti focuses on the importance of generativity in the development of her living-educational-theory as an international development practitioner. Briganti's ideas make a persuasive case for each one of us fulfilling our responsibility as global citizens (Potts, 2012) in working and researching together to regenerate our communities and societies in ways that contribute to human flourishing.

As I was finishing a draft of this paper, the December 2019 issue of the Action Learning, Action Research Journal was delivered. This issue included three contributions (DeLong, Whitehead & Huxtable, 2019; Giguere, MacLeod & McBride, 2019; Whitehead, 2019a) to the 10<sup>th</sup> World Congress of ALARA from Living Theorists, held at Norwich University, Vermont, USA, in June 2018. I have worked with Judy McBride for over 20 years, and Judy invited me to contribute a keynote address to the following: *Introduction to Action Research: Self-Directed Professional Development Pilot: Live Online Mini-Conference Programme* on 8 May 2020.

I make the above points to emphasise the importance of publishing our explanations of our educational influences in Journals such as EJOLTS, Action Learning Action Research Association Journal (ALARJ) and the Canadian Journal



of Action Research (CJAR); and presenting to conferences in a way that is informed by Zuber-Skeritt's (2017) call for 'Loving Learning Conferences':

I have argued that we need to shift away from the mindset of neoliberalism and reductionism dominating our present society and driving its obsession with consumerism, power and control. Instead we need a collaborative, participative and inclusive paradigm built on love and working through local and global action to connect us with each other as human beings and with nature. Society needs to be renewed by making a shift from the negative energy of fear, competition, control and war to the positive energy of faith, love, hope and creativity. Clearly, we need to conceptualize and practice not just learning conferences but Loving Learning Conferences. (p. 224)

As we move our action research to activism with Living Theory research, I am emphasising the importance of making public our explanations of the educational influences with values of human flourishing. I cannot stress enough the importance of sharing, as widely as possible, our explanations of educational influences in learning. This will enable others to gain further insights from these explanations, into how they might improve their practice as they seek to enhance the flow of values of human flourishing.

My latest keynote, which contributes to Moving Action Research to Activism with Living Theory Research, was to a group of educators and educational researchers in Malaysia (Whitehead 2020).

All our voices matter in this global process of human regeneration as we respond to the coronavirus pandemic that will influence our lives for years to come. I do hope that you feel moved to contribute your own voice by joining the collaborative social movement outlined above that is spreading the influence of the values of human flourishing as we activist scholars create and share our living-educational-theories. ■

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