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**How I come to a compassionate, in-depth understanding of
improving my practice as a clinical supervisor through a theory of
'Freedom from Fictions with Compassion'.**

Abstract

I developed this in-depth practice improvement research to question the value of contemporary professional effectiveness research and expertise development models for evaluating and explaining professional effectiveness. I chose Living Educational Theory's values-oriented methodological inventiveness to facilitate my inquiries, exemplifying my acceptance of professional responsibility for my continuous practice improvement. I integrated Living Educational Theory's use of "living contradiction" (Whitehead 2018) with the Adlerian concept of the fictitious goal (Adler 1956) by applying action reflection cycles to generate a methodology incorporating early recollections, auto~ethno~biography, poetry, stories, artwork, Rich Pictures, reflexive explorations, and digital visual relational evidence. I generated my living-educational-theory of "Freeing Fictions with Compassion" to create new insights into the relational processes that free relational impasse. My contribution demonstrates the benefits of taking professional responsibility for studying my practice in-depth by facilitating my inquiries using Adlerian tools and techniques to generate an evidence-based professional development process. I informed the process by creating a surface principle called encouraging-challenge, which connects my practice values with my praxis. I produced evidence of educational influence expressed through the embodied expressions of my values during supervision sessions to create an elucidatory process of explaining mutual learning and improvement applicable to professional relational settings in education, health, social care, and different supervisory contexts.

Introduction

This research began after I reviewed literature, commending the adaptation of business effective models to support practice effectiveness in counsellors' and psychotherapists' professional development (Rosemaniere et al. 2017), and later, when I referred to McLeod's (2021) research, which focused on practitioners improving their counselling skills technique.

Once I started to ask myself how I could understand and explain my practice improvement, I recognised the importance of taking professional responsibility for my continuous development instead of accepting prescribed techniques. A practitioner's capacity to provide a safe relational presence during counselling and play therapy positively impacts vulnerable children's and young people's (CYP) lives. In-depth relational inquiries during supervision facilitate a practitioner's capacity to empathise

with clients at relational depth while feeling the presence of their own vulnerabilities (Lambert 2013).

I chose Living Educational Theory because it incorporates a values-led methodology compatible with my values-orientated Adlerian practice. I discovered advantages from that decision when I found a way to generate a methodologically inventive research design and drew on Action Research's tried and tested action-reflection process for studying my professional improvement. I incorporated Adlerian tools and concepts to discover my "*humanity in relation to others*" within the research process (McNiff and Whitehead 2013, p. 5). It was how I connected my inquiries with play therapy and CYP practice orientations and broadened their field of applicability. I could also take my research outside dominant discourses and into a feminist-oriented approach to sustaining my practice value of equity.

A Flavour of My Adlerian Practice

My practice as a clinical supervisor primarily relates to play therapy and counselling for children and young people. I base my practice on Adlerian Psychology because it is a socially just, practice-focused, and values-oriented approach that provides unique theoretical perspectives on psychotherapeutic practice according to my feminist values (Orgler 1973). My research opened up new ways of thinking about unconscious influences on practice effectiveness, in contrast to what is currently widely accepted in the CYP field of psychotherapeutic practice. The dominant discourse of the psychoanalytical/psychodynamic fields, which have become the generally accepted foundation for teaching and evaluating clinical supervision practice, contrast with Adlerian Psychology's social justice values.

I invite Montessori's (1966) perceptiveness into my practice and believe in children's 'intuitive curiosity. Like her, I have discovered that I can apply my practice knowledge, creativity, and wisdom to meet young children's needs. I distinguish between adult and child perceptions because adults view the world through a lens of life experience. To fully empathise with CYP, they need to remember how their journey toward independence began and what motivated their choice of occupation. Children's outlook is founded on non-verbal thought actively expressed through metaphor, so working with metaphor is essential to my practice.

In adolescence, when clients are termed young people, their early life experience is much more connected to the past than the present, where their struggles lie. Practice-oriented use of metaphors is necessary to facilitate narrative (Lowenfield 1948). Teens are immersed in physiological change, affecting every element of their biopsychosocial makeup. Distressed teens can be notoriously hard to communicate with; however, when taking an interest in their interests and concerns, I combine my inquiries with

tuning into their non-verbal affective responses. I structure my inquiries using gestures and creativity to nurture their interests and responses.

Connecting Living Contradiction with Adler's concept of the fictitious final goal

I strive to be consistent in embodying my values in my practice. However, as a human being, I am imperfect, with imperfections motivated by my personality priorities (Kfir 1987 and 2014). Kfir (1987), an Adlerian Psychotherapist who worked with people recovering from traumatic events, noticed patterns in the way her clients responded to the stresses of grief and living in a war zone. She linked her observations to Adlerian theory about personality formation developed by Adler (1956) and his colleague Dreikurs (1989), who explained the link between personality and assessing the fictitious final goal. Kfir (2014) combined her theoretical Adlerian knowledge with her practice observations to describe people's 'only if' principles for safeguarding their survival when experiencing stressful events. She named four personality priorities: 1. Pleasing to one's detriment to protect oneself from rejection, 2. Controlling life events to safeguard oneself from embarrassment, 3. Moral superiority to safeguard oneself from feelings of insignificance, 4. Avoidance to protect oneself from failure. During my inquiries, I noticed a connection between my personality priorities, pleasing and controlling and when I act as a living contradiction. Making that connection opened up a useful line of self-inquiry, which I applied to explain a challenging supervision session I videoed when collecting digital visual relational data.

The video below, Movie 1, shows an example of me living as a contradiction. Experiencing it led to a participant to raise her concern about how our previous session had ended. She had felt 'dismissed' from the room. Her observation suggested that I



Movie 1. A Challenging Supervision

<https://youtu.be/vvybwM5xc2E>

was contradicting my value of equity. You will hear the metaphor of how she felt when she described, “*My experience of it was I was kicked out of the room, a bit*”. Her description exemplifies a situational metaphor she identified with her experience (Kopp and Eckstein, 2004, p.165). Her explanation provides an example of ‘situated knowledge’ (Haraway 1988) that she acquired through her early life experience. Haraway (1988) contended that objectivity serves “*hierarchical and positivist orderings*” (p.580). However, I applied subjectivity and objectivity in a non-binary sense to enable the generative nature of the inquiry by creating the knowledge claims (ibid) illustrated in Movie 1. To improve my practice, I need to be consistent in embodying equity.

I was taken aback during the movie. My voice and facial expressions at 00:10 and 00:12 seconds into the movie illustrate my embodied response to the situation. We go on to explore what had happened. As a data source, the video clip revealed so much more information than words and an audio recording would. You can see my embodied expression of honesty and hear the tone in the participant’s voice. Each of us spoke about the mutual respect within our relationship as we worked toward a shared understanding of me, contradicting my value of equity. Later, I added warmth and kindness to my values, which contributed to restoring our relationship and my subsequent discoveries.

Generating my Epistemology of Practice and Methodology

Generating a Living Educational Theory methodology for the first time was challenging because the methodology is generated within the research process. Living theorists support the development of their methodology by participating in regular research group meetings where researchers converse about their practice, clarify their ideas and share their understanding of the research process.

I began by considering how I would connect my Adlerian practice principles with my research methodology’s principles as the foundation for my epistemology of practice. Using photo-elicitation, I worked with a bridge metaphor to create a diagram of each element of how I could make my practice known to others. Figure 1. illustrates the final diagram, which I took through the following refinement process.

- Identifying a visual bridge from a video representing a challenging landscape I wanted to transcend.
- Capturing a still image I could connect to the bridge metaphor I visualised in my head and explain each element of its location and construction.
- Zoom into the details of the bridge and its landscape.
- Draw the bridge in a sketch to bring words to the process.
- Explain the connections between the bridge diagram and my epistemology.

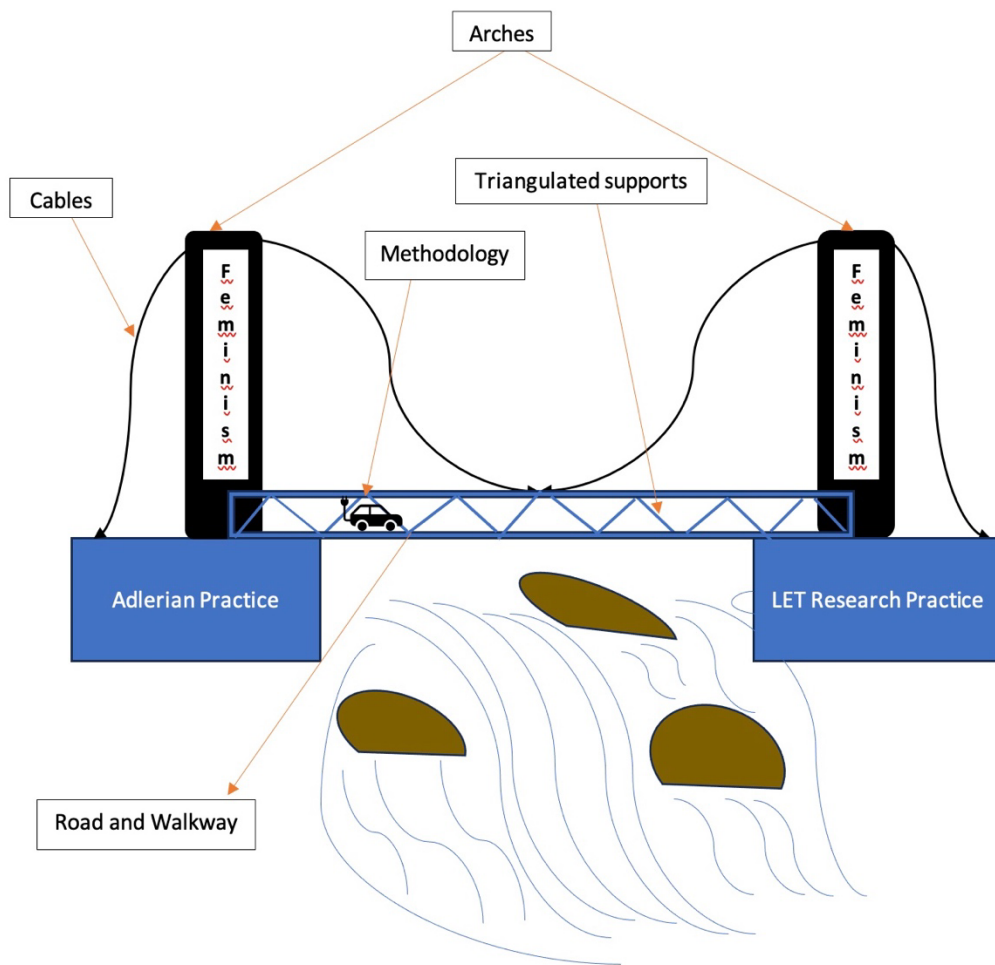


Figure 1. Diagram of the Bridge (Epistemology)

This is the diagram I created. I explain each feature, below. The bridge provides an example of how I used visual metaphors to clarify the epistemology of my practice.

- The arches represent the framework’s feminist philosophy and share the bridge’s load and the methodology’s ‘movement’.
- The cables work with the arches to represent the courage of my convictions and ground the bridge structure.
- The triangulated roadway supports and railings, upheld by the cables, represent my values as standards of judgement and explanatory principles.
- The walkway beside the road provides a stable continuum for ‘walking’ on my own and with the research collective using my methods to test my practice’s dialectic/dialogic process of mutual improvement.
- The rectangular concrete foundations represent Adlerian and LET research practice; they support the approach to the ‘feminist’ arches at either side of the bridge.
- What you see of the bridge reflects my biased practitioner research identity.

- The river below is turbulent, like improving my practice during this research.
- The boulders in the river represent social hierarchies my research transcends.
- The bridge's durability represents my commitment to an unconventional approach to this doctoral inquiry.
- The electric vehicle toward the left riverbank represents my methodology in motion.

Later, I determined what methods could support the generation of the methodology and where my data-gathering focus would be. It was also the context I used to inform my choice of creative methods of inquiry for focusing my discoveries on clarifying my values. I addressed how I could apply the appraisal of my practice to understanding and explaining my practice as a dialectic/dialogic process of mutual improvement. I also involved the ASRG to affirm my growing understanding of how I improve my practice as the research progressed.

I considered alternative methodologies to affirm my methodological choices in parallel with the above.

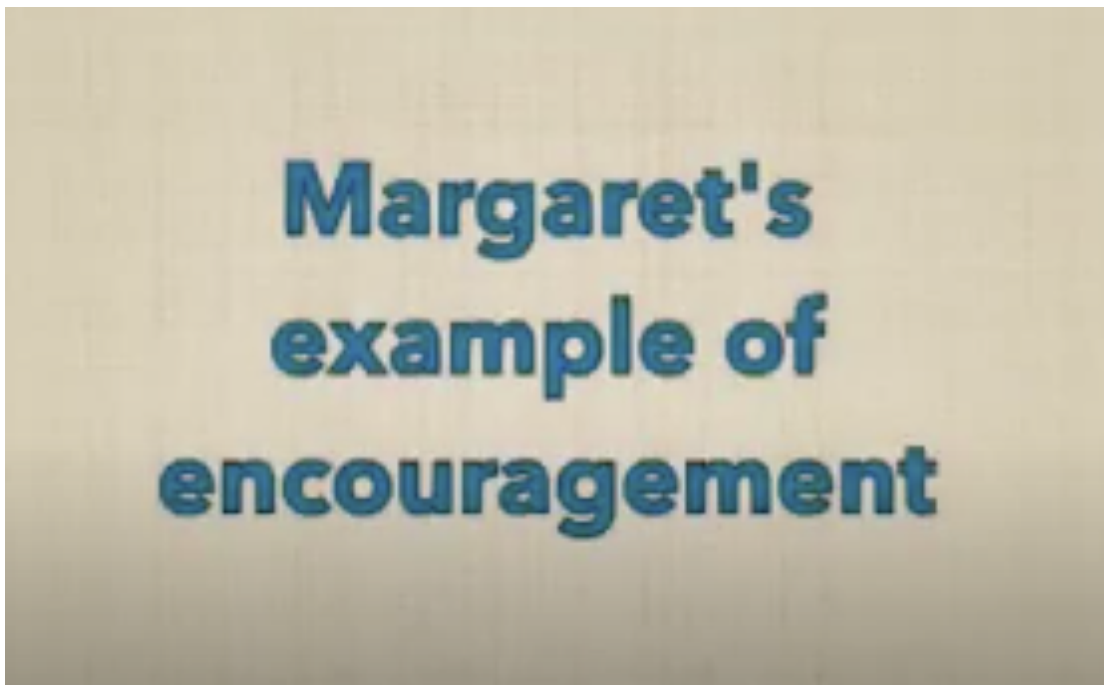
Working with a self-study Research Process

To develop the self-study research process, I began by identifying values I embody in my practice that I would use as “units of appraisal” (Whitehead 2018, p.12). After many revisions, I generated my research question: “How do I understand and explain the dynamics of educational influence as a dialectic/dialogic process of mutual improvement within the supervisory relationship?” Then, I was ready to structure sub-questions and apply action reflection cycles to focus on the specifics of my data collection, data analysis and how to present my discoveries.

Influenced by Dadds et al. (2001), I identified an inventive range of methods, some that I had used in research previously and others new to me. Etherington's (2004) application of critical reflexivity for “*co-constructing knowledge and meaning-making*” (p. 85) in counselling and psychotherapy research provided a useful starting point. I began by writing poetry, which I wrote to facilitate the discovery of my values. I distilled my values from life events and practice experiences that brought a sense of meaning and purpose to my practice. I developed auto~ethno~biographic storytelling during my explorations of the method and added drawing and artwork to my toolbox, enabling me to connect my practice intentions and corresponding motivations. Adlerian Art and Play therapists use art-based practice inquiry (Kottman 2003; Rafferty-Bugher & Ali 2021). Finally, I added an Adlerian inquiry tool called Early Recollections (ER). ER is a projective technique for uncovering my fictional beliefs that motivate my fictitious law of movement formed in my early childhood.

My Methods in Action

I supported the development of my methodology by integrating art, poetry and storytelling and applied photo-elicitation to stills from videos during my inquiries. I structured what I began into three in-depth investigations. In the first of these, I worked with an Adlerian mentor to discover the relationship between my fictitious law of movement and my practice values. In the second investigation, I generated a practice evaluation involving twelve participants comprised of the group of practitioners for whom I provide supervision. I chose the Rich Pictures method, originally developed for soft-systems research. For the third in-depth investigation, I studied my practice during regular supervision sessions, which is common with all Living Educational Theory methodologies. I recorded sixty-six hours of video to analyse how I embody my practice values. I aimed to identify my values and clarify them as standards of judgement I can use to appraise my practice. I then analysed the videos to identify individual clips that stood out as illustrations of embodying my practice values so that I could exemplify their meaning through elucidatory narratives in combination with other relevant discoveries. Finally, I assembled movies and video stills to understand and explain the dialectic/dialogic within my supervisory relationships and demonstrate my meaning of mutual improvement.



Movie 4. An Example of Encouragement as Practice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dE0AZA0JgrU>

In Movie 2, the group comments on how I embodied encouragement in my practice as a course tutor. They linked their observations to their experiences of my practice in the group and their knowledge of me.

I discovered the benefits of drawing and understanding from metaphors, which I facilitated by selecting the creative methods based on my Adlerian practice.

Metaphoric imagery [is] a key that unlocks new possibilities for self-created 'insight'" (Kopp 1995, p. XIV

Here is another example of how I used drawing for “*making meaning of meaning-making*” (Wickramasinghe 2010, p.33). The character in the drawing illustrates the origins of my feelings of inferiority as an academic. I discovered **√AcadamanX**, an expression of the antithesis of how I want to be perceived by others because of his intellectual superiority. When I saw **√AcadamanX**, I realised the significance of understanding the meaning of his metaphor for sustaining my sense of equity and noticing when I contradict it. I discovered that my values of equity and encouragement combination in Movie 2 and illustrate one aspect of the Adlerian Skype Research Group’s involvement in supporting and contributing to the reflexive critiquing process throughout my research.



Figure 1. √AcadamanX.

Freedom from Fictions with Compassion

I began by generating a research question to address understanding, explanations, educational influences, and mutual improvement facilitated by dialectic/dialogic inquiries within my supervisory relationships. I discovered that the key to my practice improvement is to acknowledge how the person of me as a supervisor/therapist (my personality) interacts with me in professional relationships. I applied my self-study discoveries to free myself from the fictional beliefs my personality evokes, influencing my inferiority feelings and activating emotions that motivate me to contradict my values.

Adler (1956) explained the connection between emotions that connect people and those that push people apart. Adler (1956) described his theory of personality through his practitioner lens. He wrote that nothing in life becomes fixed; every aspect of life relates to movement. He also affirmed a human's capacity to self-determine one's personality and that everyone can change by building on one's strengths. I built on his foundations to explain my practice through my living-educational-theory of "Freedom from Fictions with Compassion". My research discovered how my continuous practice improvement process embodies encouragement, equity, honesty, kindness, warmth, and knowledge-sharing and facilitates mutual learning and change by understanding and explaining the meaning and purpose of my fictitious law of movement (personality) in relation to how I improve my practice. I discovered how I improve my practice by freeing myself from contradicting my values while showing compassion for the inferiority feelings ✓AcadamanX and other practice contradictions represent.

And finally...

I came to recognise the importance of providing supervision at relational depth, which Knox et al. (2013) observed in the person-centred tradition. I furthered Living Educational Theory research's applicability to professional practice in many arenas and widened the applicability and recognisability of my findings to include relational settings outside clinical supervision. In that regard, my research provides insights about my practice in professional relationships, seen and validated using a Living Educational Theory methodology. I illustrated my professional relationships and shared my practice setting as research, protected by my research ethics and professionalism.

My practice improvement inquiries are ongoing to express my professional responsibility to continue my personal and professional development alongside others. Adlerian theory draws on Adler's professional practice, which Popper (1989) observed and admired from personal experience in the 1930s. Adler's close associate Dreikurs (1989) furthered the dissemination of Adlerian practice and its applicability to teaching, family education, psychotherapeutic practice, and the development of social interest.

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