



## ORIGINAL PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

### Human flourishing through body, creative imagination and reflection

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Submitted for publication: 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Accepted for publication: 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011

#### Abstract

*Background:* A new methodological framework for human flourishing as the ends and means of transformational action research and practice development has recently been published. Located in the critical creativity paradigmatic synthesis, the framework is one of the outcomes of our shared journey as practice development facilitators and researchers.

*Aims and objectives:* The aim of this paper is to show how methodological development can be an outcome of practice development. The first objective is to show, through an exemplar story, how our human flourishing was achieved through learning experientially about the new framework at a retreat in the Australian Grampian Mountains. The second objective is to indicate how we exposed the developing framework to national and international artistic and cognitive critique.

*Design:* Part of a co-operative inquiry under the auspices of the International Practice Development Collaborative, including retreats, workshops and conference presentations.

*Methods:* Imbued by the philosophical and theoretical frameworks for human flourishing, the methodological framework was used at the retreat to create conditions for human flourishing through nature, the body, creative imagination, reflection and reflexivity. Data on the impact of using the framework were collected and synthesised through a variety of methods, including dialogue, contemplative walks, dance, landscape art and reflection. Further synthesis was undertaken through experiential workshops and scholarly/creative writing.

*Results:* Findings show how the methodology was further evaluated and refined whilst simultaneously enabling others to flourish as they gained confidence in using the methods of critical creativity as critical companions. Thereby the interrelatedness of methodology and methods of critical creativity is illustrated.

*Conclusions:* This outcome of our practice development journey offers a potential addition to critical social science methodologies in health and social care practice, development, education and research.

*Implications for practice:* The framework can be considered for use in personal, professional, organisational and practice development and research that are transformational in intent and in diverse professional and organisational contexts and settings.

**Keywords:** critical creativity, critical companionship, practice development methodology, artistic and cognitive critique, human flourishing

## Introduction

*Human flourishing* (Heron and Reason, 1997) focuses on maximising individuals' achievement of their potential for growth and development as they change the circumstances and relations of their lives at individual, group, community and societal levels. People are helped to flourish (i.e. grow, develop, thrive) during the change experience in addition to an intended outcome of well-being for the beneficiaries of the work. Flourishing is supported through contemporary facilitation strategies, connecting with beauty and nature and blending with ancient, indigenous and spiritual traditions (c.f. Senge et al., 2005) and Dewing's (2008) active learning (adapted from Titchen and McCormack, 2010, p.532).

We live and work in political, social and cultural worlds where enabling of people to meet their full potential as human beings is often espoused. However, for many leading, giving and receiving health and social care, it is rare to experience service organisations engaging in change, whatever it may be, that also intentionally promotes human flourishing for all those involved in, and those who will benefit by, the change. Unfortunately, it appears that the experience of organisational and workplace change for many staff is quite the opposite and the term 'human flourishing' is not part of contemporary, organisational discourse. Worn down by repetitive structural and systems change and change driven by technical rather than person-centred values and beliefs, financial necessity and top-down approaches, staff are often left de-energised, de-motivated, frustrated and unready for the next round of change.

Our sometimes shared and sometimes separate, emancipatory practice development and research journeys in healthcare over the last 20 years have focussed on creating conditions for change that is experienced as enlightening, empowering and emancipating for all in the organisation, but especially for patients and those who work at the front-line of care. Traditionally, staff members often feel disempowered by the contexts of care, in terms of delivering services that are experienced as person-centred and effective by patients/clients and their carers. Our work has involved helping people to free themselves from inner and outer obstacles to change. Such work is based on the assumptions of critical social science which is derived from critical theory.

Critical theory may be distinguished from other forms of theory in its explicit intent towards emancipation. See for example, the work of Brian Fay (1987). With its roots in a Western European Marxist tradition, the aim of emancipation is "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982: 244) and the work of Paulo Freire (1972). Thus critical theory goes beyond *practical* theory in the sense that it does not just set out to explain and understand social contexts but instead aims to free people from circumstances of domination and oppression. Emancipation arises from critique undertaken by individuals or groups concerned with exposing contradictions in the rationality or justice of social actions. This critique is a form of Habermas' (1972) communicative action. Critical social science is concerned with the kind of action that arises from raised awareness or increased understanding that leads to a desire by individuals or groups to redress contradictions, oppressions or domination, rather than action resulting from power or coercion. So one of the key assumptions is that if we can come to understand the obstacles, for instance, structures, cultures and power relationships that inhibit person-centred care, then we can use that understanding to plan, implement and evaluate effective action to transform these structures, cultures and so on; and thus emancipate ourselves at the same time as improving patient care. We have observed the energy, enthusiasm and personal, professional and workplace learning that this emancipation releases for further changes to improve patient care.

Having focussed, over the years, on the development of processes, tools and outcomes of such practice development, we have, more recently, together been engaged in creating conditions for human flourishing as ends and means of change. Through our own individual, personal growth work

and our critical companionships, we have found that nurturing these conditions means paying attention to the body, creative imagination and reflection. Whilst the human flourishing agenda might often have been the case for emancipatory development and research, rarely has it been so self-consciously pursued, or named. Building on the work of those few who do name it (e.g. Heron and Reason, 1997; Lincoln and Denzin, 2000), our practice development journeys have led to a new synthesis, that is, critical creativity (see below), and the evolution of emancipatory to transformational practice development and research within it (see McCormack and Titchen, 2006 for a full account).

Within the context of critical creativity, this paper sets out one of the outcomes of this shared journey, that is, a new methodological framework for human flourishing as ends and means of transformational development and research. Limitations of space mean that we are only able to provide an overview of the framework in our story and only show parts of it in action. The whole framework is described in detail in Titchen and McCormack (2010). There, we located the framework in the existing literature on reflection, reflexivity and arts-based research. Here, space restrictions presented us with the choice of locating the framework in the practice development methodology literature (such as appreciative inquiry or emancipatory action research literature) or offering you a more in-depth story of the experience of the framework itself. We chose the latter as there is time enough for the other.

The following haiku signifies the three parts of this paper in which we show the framework in action.

Bark cracks wide open  
Revealing new inner core  
Dancing trees and flows

The first line symbolises our breaking out from the confines of critical social science into the new worldview we call critical creativity. The second echoes how the four of us are exploring how to work within this new worldview, whilst the timbre of the third line resonates with the creativity, energy and flourishing resulting from our embodied experience of the framework. The framework is set out through a story, metaphor and poetry in this third part. Imagery in the figures and the haiku symbolise attunement to the natural world and its energy and beauty that are central to critical creativity.

### **Bark cracks wide open**



**Figure 1.** Connecting with nature is central in a critical creativity worldview.

*Critical creativity is a paradigmatic synthesis in which the assumptions of critical social science are blended and balanced with, and attuned to, creative and ancient traditions and the natural world, for the purpose of human flourishing (adapted from Titchen and McCormack, 2010).*

A critical creativity approach can be adopted by individuals, teams, workplaces, organisations and communities who want to transform themselves in order to improve health and social care through development and research (McCormack and Titchen, 2006).

Before developing this synthesis, as indicated above, we had accepted the core assumptions of the critical social science paradigm or worldview for our emancipatory practice development and research. This work has focussed on the planning, implementation and evaluation of person-centred, evidence-informed care by working at all levels within care organisations. Over the years, however, we have come to see that, over and above the delivery of such care, the ultimate purpose of this work is human flourishing as the ends and means. This is shown in the following definitions:

*Practice development is a continuous process of developing person-centred cultures. It is enabled by facilitators who authentically engage with individuals and teams to blend personal qualities and creative imagination with practice skills and practice wisdom. The learning that occurs brings about transformations of individual and team practices. This is sustained by embedding both processes and outcomes in corporate strategy (Manley, McCormack, and Wilson, 2008. p.9).*

*Transformational research is qualitative research that promotes transformation as both end and means of research. So, in addition to knowledge creation, there is a concern with transformation of ourselves as researchers and, if they so wish, transformation of co-researchers, participants and other stakeholders ... [T]ransformational research can lead to human flourishing, in creative, spiritual and ethical senses, of both recipients of the research and those undertaking it (Titchen and Armstrong, 2007, p.151).*

Whilst we still work with core assumptions of critical social science philosophy and theory, we no longer find them sufficient. We challenge the adequacy of the critical social science paradigm for underpinning the new ways we are working to promote human flourishing.

Brendan and Angie began to address these gaps by starting work on developing the new critical creativity worldview. They did this by combining the assumptions of critical social science with their experiences of using the body, creative imagination and expression, ancient wisdom and reflection in their work. Critical creativity is a way of being, knowing, doing and becoming that brings together our critical and creative selves as we seek to understand and facilitate the transformation of practice and, simultaneously, create new knowledge about that transformation.

This synthesis blends *being critical* with *being creative*. *Being critical* means de-constructing, consciously and cognitively, a context, situation, crisis, contradiction or dilemma, politically, socially, historically, culturally, then re-constructing it to develop new understanding for the purposes of transformation of practice and generation of new knowledge. *Being creative* means using creative imagination and expression to grasp the meaning of the whole, to create and/or release energy for development and research and bring embodied and imaginative meaning into cognitive critique. The key idea is that when the critical and creative is blended in our work as developers (who can also be leaders) and/or researchers, we increase potential for transformation and flourishing as we show in this paper.

Previous publications (McCormack and Titchen, 2006; Titchen and McCormack, 2008; Titchen and McCormack, 2010) have set out the philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions of critical creativity and their implications for the practice epistemology (knowledge and ways of knowing) and ontology (ways of being) of the developer/researcher/leader. These publications include the development and refinement of a theoretical framework that draws on and elaborates Fay's (1987) critical theories that we have found helpful in enhancing transformation. In the theoretical framework, these theories are put into action through *praxis* (mindful action with the moral intent of human flourishing). Praxis is enabled by *professional artistry* which is attunement and the capacity to blend, synchronise, balance and interplay, different kinds of knowledge, ways of knowing and intelligences and engage in cognitive and artistic critique (Titchen, 2009). Flowing from this theoretical development, the new methodological framework has this same core. Having worked together on trying out and testing this framework, we (the four of us) propose that use of the methodological framework supports people in putting Fay's theories into action (or any other theories that people draw on in their transformational work) and by doing so, increase potential for human flourishing.

The methodological framework assumes that developers and researchers are facilitators of experiential learning accompanying others on journeys of transformation. As such facilitators, we use the critical companionship conceptual framework, as created by Titchen (2004), to grow relationships based on trust, genuine partnership and co-learning.

#### **Revealing new inner core: inquiry methods for methodology development**

Four stages of development have been carried out, from 2005 to the current day. The first stage included Brendan and Angie's work under the auspices of the International Practice Development Collaborative (IPDC) first with Maeve McGinley (McCormack and Titchen, 2006) and later with Liz Henderson and Lucienne Hoogwerf (Titchen and McCormack, 2008). In the second stage, Brendan and Angie undertook a secondary data analysis and/or synthesis of findings from our other, inter-professional, collaborative inquiries (i.e. Higgs and Titchen, 2001; *Seizing the Fire*, 2002; Coats et al., 2004; Simons and McCormack, 2007). In the third stage, in 2007 – 2008, the four of us tested the methodology within a further co-operative inquiry of critical creativity which included working with others at an international, residential retreat and workshops at seven national or international conferences. The exemplar story presented here takes place at the first of the several retreats the four of us have organised for ourselves to work on this project. In the fourth stage, 2009 to the current day, we are using the framework in practice development facilitation programmes and the design of practice development curricula. Whilst a diverse range of critical-creative methods during these four stages was used, the principles behind them are the same (see Figure 2).

At each event in stage 3, the four of us prepared a simplified painting of the framework in Figure 4 on a huge piece of paper on the floor. We invited people to work through the body, creative imagination and reflection with some aspect of their practice, such as a dilemma, contradiction, paradox, discomfort, issue, problem, question or something that went well. We started with methods that involve the body, such as walking, authentic movement, dance or intentional community living. Then we enabled creative expression of that experience and any insights that had emerged using, for example, landscape art, body sculpture, photographs, paintings, clay modelling, collage or poems. People were invited to place their artworks or body sculpture on the framework where it felt appropriate (see Figure 3). Sitting or standing around what had become a collective creative expression of the framework, we facilitated critical dialogue about the creative experience, why we all had placed the artwork on the framework where we did and did our meanings and experiences resonate or not with that particular part of the framework and/or the whole. Thus we engaged in a synergistic cognitive and artistic critique of the new framework, by moving between

body, creative expression, reflection, critical dialogue and contestation in order to develop understanding and a re-iterative, reciprocal dialogue between words and art forms.



**Figure 2.** Principles for using critical-creative methods.



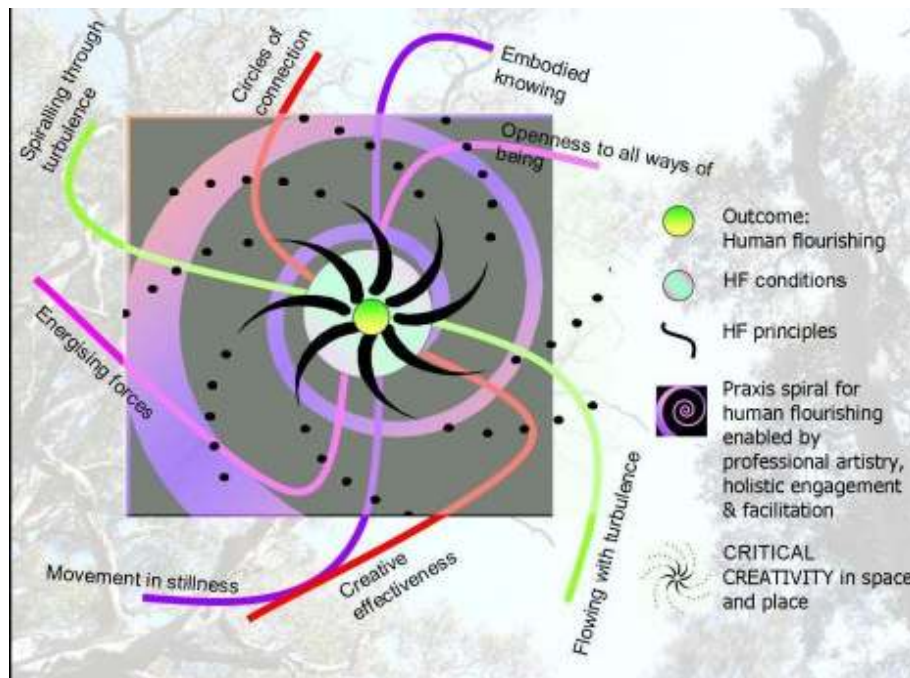
**Figure 3.** Artistic critique of the methodological framework.

By embodying the framework, as critical companions, we provided people with an experience of the framework through these methods which, at the same time, were means of gathering, synthesising and critiquing data. At our retreats, we were able to supplement these data with reflective notes, post-retreat reflective writing and audio-recordings. We undertook further synthesis of data through

re-iterative writing up of the findings as creative and scholarly text. We move now into one such synthesis in our exemplar story, 'Dancing trees and flows'.

### **Dancing trees and flows: embodying a new methodological framework**

Our key assumption, underpinning the new methodological framework shown in Figure 4, is that we assume a critically creative approach to reflexive action (i.e. action driven by critical consciousness and awareness of self in interaction with others). Professional artistry provides the synergy and positive, enabling power to blend the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of critical creativity and convert them into such action. Two values of *creating energy for creative practice* and *informed creativity* (Coats et al., 2004) shape the framework.



**Figure 4.** The methodological framework for human flourishing, Titchen and McCormack, 2010. © The Educational Action Research reprinted by permission of Taylor and Francis Ltd. (<http://tandf.co.uk/journals>) on behalf of Educational Action Research.

The framework is presented in the form of a mandala (an archetypal symbol for showing the parts and the whole and their relationships).

The context of our story of experiencing the framework is, as mentioned above, one of the stage 3 retreats with the four of us. We are all very experienced leaders, facilitators and practice developers. On this retreat, it had been agreed that we would attempt to increase our understanding of critical creativity by using and embodying the new methodological framework. Our intent was to co-create the space, to co-facilitate and help each other to learn. Supporting data in italics are notes or poems written during personal reflections some five months after the retreat. The poem that runs through the story is Brendan's reflection on his experience. It sometimes complements our other quotes or explanations within the paper and sometimes it is free-standing. This is an artistic device or juxtaposition that invites you, the reader, to engage with the text, question it and make your own interpretation.

The storyline is the nurturing of the conditions for human flourishing through paying attention to the body, creative imagination and expression and the natural world.

Late afternoon, we arrive from the city at our forest cabin in the Grampian Mountains in Victoria, Australia. Exhausted. Cold. Val and Annette have worked with Angie and Brendan previously in critiquing a paper on the theoretical framework for human flourishing and, whilst they have experienced critical-creative methods, they have not been introduced to the methodological framework.

*Anticipated apprehension*  
*Social exhaustion*  
*Long journey*  
*Disembodiment*

*Arrival to place of space*  
*Of energies bouncing*  
*Creating fire*  
*Securing space*

*Scooping nourishment*  
*Local supplies*  
*Bouncing friends in space*  
*Grounding*  
*Becoming*  
*Connecting*

With fresh pumpkin soup on the stove for our return, we set off along a path to explore the forest. Our intention was to arrive gently in this beautiful place; to connect through our bodies, not only with each other, but also with nature. Thus we began to create symbolic space for our explorations within this place.

*Wet eucalyptus*  
*Elemental walk*  
*Holding self in space and time*  
*Timeless*  
*Shape-making*  
*Endless wonder*

*Overpowering landscape*  
*Abandonment of the old*  
*Wonderment of the new*

An early night after warming pumpkin soup ... and a little wine!

### **Human flourishing**

At the heart of the mandala, connecting the parts and the whole is a circle symbolising human flourishing. Flourishing is experienced when people achieve growth that pushes their boundaries in a range of directions, for example, emotional, social, artistic, metaphysical directions. Flourishing occurs when people move from a point of inner knowing to taking right action effortlessly, swiftly and with 'a natural flow' (see Senge et al., 2005, pp 88-92). This kind of experience is dazzling! Gathering data to find out whether flourishing occurs and to make it visible to others is essential.



### The conditions for human flourishing

The framework is based on the premise that facilitators cannot go out and just do something to transform people, contexts or cultures and bring about human flourishing. Nor can they expect that by doing things, transformation will occur. Rather, they have to create the conditions to enable and sustain transformation and thus the potential for people to flourish. Moreover, people in health and social care settings are often unfamiliar with the principles (Figure 4) and methods of critical creativity and need conditions that will help them to overcome any resistance to them. Conditions mean the things that have to be fulfilled in order for human flourishing to come about. Without them in place, it would be difficult to work authentically within a critical creativity worldview.

The three conditions are shown in Figure 5:



**Figure 5.** Three conditions for human flourishing.

#### *Stillness in a landscape*

Next morning, refreshed, we agree to begin our exploration of critical creativity in the natural environment beside the cabin. We know we need to create a supportive space and stillness (physically, emotionally and spiritually), to free our bodies' wisdom for reflexivity (critical consciousness). Being still these days is not easy to do as it is rarely an attribute of our workplaces. And whilst simple in itself, it requires sensitive, skilled facilitation to create this condition to enable this essential starting point for energy flow.

In the fresh, eucalypt air, we stand silently, listening to our breath. By grounding and centring ourselves, in the quiet morning light, our bodies connect with stillness in the landscape and create the space we need within it. We try to suspend our habitual ways of seeing. Letting go and opening up to our senses, to energy, smells, textures, tastes, sounds and sights. Observing what is happening from within ourselves, rather from outside ourselves.

Breaking the silence gently, we move on to consider how we can explore critical creativity through awareness, movement and stillness of the body by doing authentic movement (Pallaro, 1999). The aim would be to access our embodied, pre-reflective knowing of critical creativity that is difficult to express in words. We have been feeling our way towards understanding how our bodily sense of a situation can imply the new - *the something more* - about critical creativity than we can, at present, say even though we can feel it at the edge of our thinking (c.f. Gendlin, 1993). Amongst the four of us there are various levels of experience and trepidation about doing such movement in silence and with being witnessed. All of us are learning how to help others work with the body in practice and academic settings. We know how difficult it is for most people who are unfamiliar in working with the body. Usually, in authentic movement, pairs take turns to witness the other who moves with eyes closed, following the lead of the body (rather than the mind). The witness watches with soft, uncritical eyes to support through 'being there', existentially and empathetically. However, we decide to move as individuals without being watched.

*Despite the beauty of our resting place I admit I was very nervous as we began the weekend ... [I felt] an inner tension, a feeling of self doubt, could I do this, am I up for the challenge, will I look a fool in front of everyone, can I trust myself and others enough to let go, and to be [authentic], at one with my body? The answer in the beginning was no, I felt constrained. The authentic movement ... pushed me to a place that I was not ready for. I spent some of the time watching others, watching what was happening beyond our space, instead of going with it. As time went on I became more aware of my body and I was able to move more freely, but it still felt a little stilted, not real, and I felt ashamed that I was not able to give what others could give (Val).*

These words describe the fear that people often feel when they begin to work from Fay's (1987) critical theory of *The Body to Reflexivity*. Facilitators (leaders, developers and researchers) need to be very alert to the attendant risks and consequences of opening people up through developmental work of this kind, especially in demanding workplaces; and to people feeling very uncomfortable and/or resistant to working with the body and other wacky artistic stuff (see Coats, 2001, p262; Coats et al., 2006 for help).

*Whilst we agreed to do authentic movement, we just went into it without intentionally co-creating a safe space by working with the principles of authentic movement. As soon as we started moving, I felt uneasy because I could sense another's unease. I wondered if we should have considered creating a more structured space before we started. I felt that it would be inappropriate now to break the silence and check this out. At the time and afterwards, when I heard this feedback, I felt that the safety provided by witnessing each other with explicitly soft, uncritical eyes would have been helpful to us. This experience raises for me the importance of thoroughly preparing together and checking out how co-facilitation and mutuality of learning will work at every small step along practice development journeys (Angie).*

*From safe to space  
Exposing self  
Dancing and moving bewilderment  
Imagining  
Emotiveness  
Surfacing ...*

*New plans  
Enlightenment*

*We moved on to sculpt the elements of critical creativity beside the stream (Figure 6). Now I began to feel more at ease, here was something I could contribute to, I could be me ... I could see the abstract components and what they could mean ... I am more in tune with this side of my creativity, I can see endless possibilities, I feel I can contribute in a meaningful way. So what did I learn from this? I learned that I was not yet able to let go of the body and just go with the moment, but I did have something to contribute. This was important for me to understand because when we work with others, they may have similar tensions (Val).*



**Figure 6.** Sculpture symbolising critical creativity through the interplay and energies of wood, fire, earth, metal and water.

After the authentic movement, co-creating a landscape sculpture without words helped us to pay attention to creative imagination and the artistic expression of the newly emerging understanding of critical creativity being concerned with an interplay of energies represented here as natural elements. This re-framing of understanding, symbolically and silently, is an intentional facilitation strategy to uncover a collective unconscious for further collective reflection and reflexivity (see McIntosh, 2008 for similarities).

Linked with this condition is the principle for human flourishing, *movement in stillness* (Figure 4). It is about letting go of or suspending the old, for instance, old patterns, assumptions, ways of seeing,

thoughts and images, in order to allow the new to emerge. Senge *et al.* (2005) call this phenomenon, *letting go - letting come*. People empty, still or suspend their minds through contemplative or meditative practices. If they allow nothing happening and stay with it, it is likely that movement will occur. This movement can take the forms of: re-direction of vision, understanding; a new pattern, symbol, image emerging and becoming significant or; knowing the right action to take. The gift is in letting the new come, staying with it, not resisting it, however bizarre, nor rejecting it immediately, before testing it reflexively (with critical consciousness). What is so amazing is that this emergence feels effortless.

*I realised I had been carrying with me for some time 'old stuff' to do with previous professional relationships. I believed I had 'shed this skin' but throughout the retreat I continued to wear this skin in various ways and in the stillness of reflexivity felt it in my body repeatedly. By the third day of the retreat I felt able to 'name it' and admit that I hadn't let it go – yes I had 'dealt' with it, but I hadn't released it from my body that was still holding it like a prisoner caged within me. My retreat companions facilitated me to put it into written words and artistic expression and having done that to put it in the wood stove and burn it. I photographed the beautiful colours of the flames as paint soaked paper burned. Something so 'dark' left me in flames of glory and was released (Brendan).*

*Becoming the landscape: embodying critical creativity*

*Step in the stream  
Wash my feet of the past  
Internal flows of creativity  
Earthed meaning making*

*Self in place  
Self in space  
Self in awe  
Self in love  
Self in new*

Human flourishing occurs when facilitators enable the second condition by embodying the landscape of critical creativity, for example, by living the values, assumptions of critical creativity or by internalising the theories that guide them (in our case, Fay's critical theories). Helping others to become aware of embodiment, as an ontological process, can be done through the body (e.g. dancing, moving or walking), creative imagination (e.g. creative visualisation where people are invited to imagine that they are the landscape or some part of it) and reflection (e.g. dialogue with self and with others about what has happened as they moved or visualised). Others have argued similarly. Senge *et al.* (2005) have discovered the power of participating in retreats in the natural world, meditation and connecting with the deep wisdom of ancient traditions. Whilst not concerned with working in geographical landscapes, McIntosh (2008) argues that the work environment landscape can be used to frame deep reflection and understanding of our own internal and practice landscapes. McIntosh and others argue that this work creates a movement between different kinds of spaces – some spaces that are physical (such as the Grampians) and others that are framed by the meanings that each of us give to particular spaces – personal meanings framed, for example, by values, feelings, energies, emotions or creative imagination. For instance:

*Connecting to the different elements of fire, wood, stone, air, water and earth in the landscape were catalysts for me to further self-discovery during critical creativity and critical companionship.*

- *The cabin provided an earthy presence which I found grounding as it was built on the earth within a bush setting and drew into its structure many aspects of the earth*
- *The mountains with the large stone boulders scattered provided me with a sense of wonder, reflection and protection*
- *The woods a place of mystery and openness just waiting to be shared when you just observe, touch and smell - being in the moment*
- *The fire brought warmth and also cleansing*
- *The water a coolness, the ebb and flow creating its own rhythm to tap into and to cleanse those aspects that no longer serve us well while also providing fluidity to shape our thoughts and feelings (Annette)*

This quote shows how embodying the landscape of critical creativity helps us to step in and out of metaphysical, metaphorical and physical spaces.

Particularly relevant to *Becoming the landscape*, is the principle of *embodied knowing* (see Figure 4) in the context of transforming the culture(s) in the development/research environment. The facilitator who embodies the values, assumptions, ways of knowing, being, doing and becoming of a culture that values human flourishing for all, offers a living exemplar of such a possible culture to others.

#### *Nurturing, flowing, connecting*

The third condition, *nurturing, flowing, connecting*, links with *embodying the landscape (of critical creativity)* because it puts emphasis on being - on who the person is and how the person is, rather than on acting and doing. And that way of being includes modelling critical creativity in the flesh.

Back in the cabin, we decide to explore the eight metaphorical principles of the methodological framework by walking in nature and gathering objects to which we are attracted to place on the critical creativity mandala. We start by painting the critical creativity mandala on a huge piece of paper on the floor and then go back outside. We walk in silence and consciously open up our senses and notice what we notice, what we are attracted to. Without there having to be any reason at all, we bring what we notice back with us, physically and in our imaginations.

We return and create expressions, using paint, our imaginations and objects from nature, to symbolise what has emerged for us through this connection. We place them on the mandala. To further reveal and verbalise our embodied, embedded, intuitive, archetypal knowing of how to facilitate human flourishing, we take turns to dance the praxis spiral (Figure 3, bottom right). We witness each other respectfully and record the words that well up for the mover.

*Spiral dancing on surface of words*  
*Navigating carefully laid intuitive connections*  
*Stepping in and out of body*  
*Attunement*  
*Wonderment*  
*Excitement*

We became aware of how this nurturing and flowing leads to flourishing:

*I experienced a high level of personal challenge in trying to access, through the wisdom of my body, the hidden knowledge. Trusting that my body knew the movements to access other aspects of myself and ancient wisdom and through letting myself be free from the dominance of the mind, was powerful. Toward the end of our retreat, I felt overwhelmed with the enlightenment that had occurred. I came to realise that I had compartmentalised elements of knowledge and had been trying to understand the integration of this knowledge for further meaning. Through critical companionship and the activities in which we engaged, I was able to see clearly that I had created a self-barrier to understanding through trying to problem solve using, predominantly, the mind. It was when I was encouraged and supported to use other aspects of the environment and body movement ... that I recognised this limitation of myself. I then moved into using the body and the environment around me to gain a deeper understanding ... the emotional release was cathartic and I moved to a place of understanding with peace and happiness (Annette).*

Conscious of the need to move now from *the body* and *creative imagination* of the mandala creation to critical consciousness to nurture deep new insights about transformation, we know the energy must be shifted to do so. So we decide to stir up the fire and put the kettle on before settling down to critical-creative dialogue:

*My deepest insight emerging from the dialogue was the invisible yet palpable interplay of energies (wood, fire, earth, metal, water) in the framework. For me these energies are the Taoist five elements of the Tai Chi practice that have transformed my personal way of knowing, being, doing and becoming over many years. Now I felt deeply even more connected with our framework (although I recognise that the significance of the natural world will be different for others). This connection was strengthened by the powerful presence I felt in the landscape as the source of aboriginal wisdom about creativity and leadership. The wise words and paintings in the Aboriginal Centre near our cabin, spoke perhaps a more universal message for practice developers. They re-minded me that facilitation of the conditions for human flourishing needs a light touch, that we need to walk lightly beside others in wonder and respect and not to get in the way of the unfolding (Angie).*

And so the weekend went on, dancing the body, creative imagination, landscape, wisdom and reflection. Preparing food mindfully together, being aware, undertaking household tasks with humankind-ness and love. By giving ourselves to the moment and to our closing ritual (in which transformation was symbolised by a snake shedding its skin), we learned, celebrated and flourished, releasing energy and vitality for transformation back in our workplaces as leaders, developers and researchers:

*Snaking bodies entering newly formed space  
Preparing for connected separateness  
Embodied internalised landscape knowing*

*Re-energised  
Re-engaged  
Re-eneded  
Re-connected  
Re-birth*

*Unfurled  
Unfolded  
Unblocked  
Gratitude*

*The weekend was a time of inner reflection sometimes that was quite personally painful. In revealing the inner self I was opening myself up for critical review and I know that my self doubts always hold me back. I think eventually I was able to overcome this for the most part, and it was at this time that the deepest learning occurred. I take with me a sense of being connected to you all in a deeper more critical way than before the weekend. This is the basis for my ongoing commitment to the journey, one which I know will be personally challenging for me, but one which I believe I am now ready for.*

*And of course we had a good laugh ..... (Val)*

### **Practice development outcome: point of arrival (for now)**

We have claimed that a new methodological framework for enabling human flourishing brought about by learning and change is one of the outcomes of our shared practice development journey. Having shed our outgrown bark and revealed our new inner core of critical creativity, we have presented the dance and flow of the new framework. The form (shape, visual appearance and configuration) of the new framework (mandala) is the same as the theoretical framework, as is the representation of human flourishing, the praxis spiral and critical creativity. However, in the methodological framework, the coloured streamers now symbolise the principles for human flourishing instead of Fay's theories (as in the theoretical framework). We have shown how the methods used in the inquiry resonate with this new methodology. Through story, metaphor and poetry, we have revealed how pre-requisite conditions for promoting human flourishing are created by the facilitator: *stillness in a landscape; becoming the landscape* and; *nurturing, flowing, connecting*. Brief reference to three of eight principles for creating these conditions has been made, i.e., *movement in stillness, embodied knowing* and *spiralling through turbulence*. This exemplar shows that attunement to and blending, melding, synchronising, synthesising, balancing and inter-playing the body, creative imagination and reflection in the use of the methodological framework has the potential to foster learning and human flourishing.

Creating energy for creative practice requires personal and professional maturity, sensitivity, reflexivity and humility as well as professional love or humankind-ness. If others, after rigorous critique of the whole framework (see Titchen and McCormack, 2010), wish to use it, our experience suggests that engagement in personal and professional development is very helpful. In addition, support in learning to work with creative processes and methods (and helping others to take the leap to do so) would be necessary for those without experience of synthesising the critical and

creative. Resources to awaken and inform creative working are available (see Coats et al., 2006; Titchen and Horsfall, 2007; in press).

A limitation of the paper is that the retreat described is an extreme example of what we are able to do in our daily, urban contexts and workplaces to create the conditions for human flourishing. The danger is that the example implies that this work always requires (a) retreating to beautiful, natural places and (b) lots of time. Neither of these are the case. In fact, finding opportunities and funding to go away with colleagues in our practice development work is increasingly difficult. We find the framework useful in our everyday work in the workplace to help people to bring all of themselves into, for example, supervision, mentorship, active learning, stakeholder/practice development meetings, teleconferences, phone discussions. Even dreary, uninspiring, noisy spaces can be transformed into different physical spaces with different energies and which stimulate the body senses. Working with the body can be achieved quickly, for instance, by inviting people to pay attention to their breath and how they are feeling in their body. Neither are we proposing that going away for a few precious days with colleagues is going to turn people into transformational leaders, practice developers and researchers without further work! Such experiences must be followed through back in the workplace. Otherwise the learning and benefits can be lost on return. Given this likelihood, you would be justified in asking why we have chosen to use our mountain retreat in this paper rather than one of our inner city hospital settings. By choosing the retreat, we hope to inspire you to find a way, at least once, to break away from the confines of work setting, if so they are, so that you can experience, full strength, the power of this way of working.

Given that the methodological framework has arisen from our experiences in national and international development, education and research inquiries in health and social care and creative arts contexts and its credibility tested at international, inter-professional events, we tentatively suggest the framework will be useful in other professional, organisational and community contexts and countries that value human flourishing. Based on our experiences, we expect that the framework could be used for a variety of purposes, for example, the implementation and evaluation of evidence-informed practice, professional development and organisational and cultural change. However, systematic and funded evaluation of the framework in these contexts and for these purposes is needed.

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### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to the hundreds of practice developers who have attended our workshops and programmes, thereby helping us to check out the credibility of the framework.

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