

Dancing the Mandalas of Critical Creativity in nursing and health care



A collection of new work, published papers, book chapters, creative media
& Blog entries with weaving commentary by

**Angie Titchen &
Brendan McCormack**
with Vaibhav Tyagi

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Critical Creativity

in Nursing and Health Care

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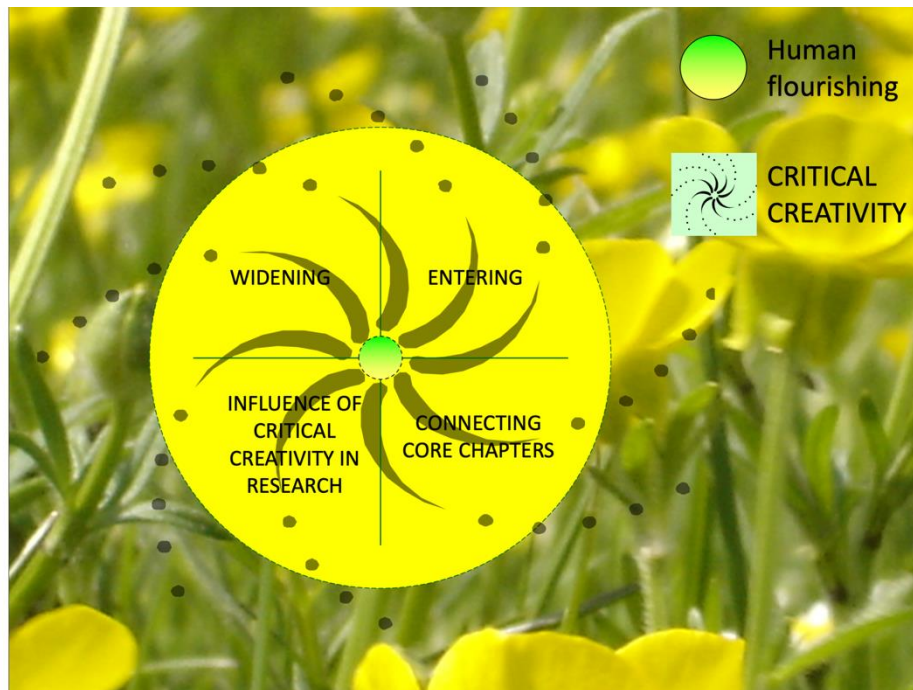
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To reference this work please use the following citation formats –

Angie Titchen & Brendan McCormack (2020). Dancing the Mandalas of Critical Creativity in Nursing and Health Care: A collection of new work, published papers, book chapters, creative media and Blog entries with weaving commentary. Division of Nursing, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/schools-and-divisions/nursing/>

A symbolic representation

This e-book is a mandala¹ of mandalas founded on the heart. It is invitational, gentle, flowing, delicate and provides readers with ways in and out of the central frameworks underpinning critical creativity. The book uses story, conversational tones and provides hooks or 'ladders' to help people into and out of this centre.



Overview

The aim of our book is to illustrate, with practical examples, a new worldview or paradigmatic synthesis that we have called critical creativity. Designed to underpin transformational practice development and research within health and social care, this synthesis of criticality and creativity brings together critical social science, creative and ancient traditions, ecology, spirituality and human being. The ultimate purpose for such work is human flourishing for all involved; a concept that is much promoted in today's health and social care as well as education.

At its centre, the book sets out our key published papers (McCormack and Titchen), describing the elements of human flourishing and philosophical, theoretical and methodological mandalas (frameworks) for person-centred, action-oriented research, education and practice development work within this worldview. Indeed, the book itself is a mandala with these papers physically in the middle and connecting with the outer published stories, experiences and Blog posts (<https://criticalcreativity.org/>) of practice developers, researchers and educators using the mandalas in their practices. These illustrations and substantial new contributions by ourselves and others focus on how critical creativity helps to improve practice, through transformation and human flourishing. Alongside run some of the challenges of doing so and how they can be overcome.

¹ A mandala is an ancient symbol that shows the whole and its parts and the relationships between them

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“Titchen’s research engages with critical questions of authenticity and the possibilities for research as a transformative, egalitarian and essentially critical praxis. Her engagement with forms of creative expression as modes of research puts her at the forefront of a vibrant and emerging field of research being led by people like Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln, Michael Giardina, Carolyn Ellis and Chris Po.” (Dr David Nichols, 2012 - Head of Physiotherapy, AUT University, Auckland)

Angie received the British Educational Research Association Award for the best PhD thesis awarded by a British University in 1999. As a doctoral student at the University of Oxford, she created a conceptual framework for critical companionship, a transformational facilitation approach that she has continued testing and developing throughout her career in the NHS, professional bodies and universities in the UK, as well as, in universities in Australia and The Netherlands. With 26 years working at the cutting edge of phenomenological and action-oriented research and practice development, she has brought this experience to the design, implementation and evaluation of facilitation development programmes for healthcare teams wishing to deliver person-centred, evidence-informed practice. This work includes helping practitioners to become practitioner-researchers studying their own practice. Angie is passionate about practice development and bringing criticality and creativity together. She has researched and published widely on: critical creativity, critical companionship; transformational practice development and research; qualitative research; professional artistry; the nature of professional practice and expertise; professional knowledge and; facilitation of experiential learning. She is listed in the Thomson Reuters 3000 most influential researchers globally. An Angie Titchen Award was set up in 2018 by the International Community of Practice for Person-centred Practice. Winners of the Award are supported by Angie in ways described in this publication.

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Compiled, edited and published by

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Acknowledgements

A million thank yous to the huge number of people who have worked with us over the last 20 years in developing, and evaluating the effectiveness of working with, the critical creativity mandalas. You came to our workshops at the International Practice Development Collaborative Enhancing Practice conferences and Summer Schools, as well as other national and international conferences. You took part in a variety of support programmes that we offered in the UK, Ireland and around the world, particularly in Australia, Canada, South Africa, Norway, The Netherlands, Switzerland. You were/are colleagues in our workplaces over these years who have been prepared to live the philosophical, theoretical and methodological principles of critical creativity and go with whacky ideas in our daily work together.

In particular, we want to thank members of the International Practice Development Collaborative who had the courage to embrace the unknown in the early days of our work and accept the challenge of trying out new and unfamiliar ideas and supporting their use in practice. A huge thanks also to our doctoral students who began to work with our more refined and developed mandalas and strove to embody critical creativity in their research. We also want to thank our colleagues and students who have contributed to this e-book.

Finally, we want to acknowledge and thank each other - Angie would like to thank Brendan for his loving kindness and for being her critical creative companion and Anam Cara (Soul Friend) throughout this journey and beyond. Brendan would like to acknowledge Angie for being the 'wise woman' who remained grounded in her values and guided him through difficult periods, values-conflicts and ontological contradictions whilst always showing loving kindness, generosity of spirit and an open heart – thank you.

Chapter 1 - Critical creativity origins: Bedrock, landscape and ecology

Angie Titchen & Brendan McCormack



Critical creativity is a new practice development/research paradigmatic synthesis in nursing and health care practice development and action-oriented research that blends and melds assumptions from very different worldviews. We are not aware of any other practice developers or researchers, in any other field, who have developed or built the foundations for a similar synthesis. However, we are aware of the findings of a public health collaborative inquiry, called the Afternow project (see Hanlon & Carlisle, 2016), which resonates with the blending, melding synthesis of critical creativity. After drawing together and integrating literature from a wide spectrum including public health, psychology, neuroscience and anthropology, an appreciation emerged in this project that current worldviews and paradigms are not working in public health. The project concludes that a Fifth Wave of public health practice in western-type societies is required because certain aspects of modern life threaten health and wellbeing. The use of creative arts is central to this Fifth Wave.

We need to develop a practice that is first of all *integrative* – bringing together science, ethics and aesthetics. It must also be *ecological* – recognising limits to growth and engaging with other complex adaptive systems that influence human health. It should also be *ethical* – respecting human rights and raising human consciousness globally. To achieve some of this we will have to be more *creative* – envisioning a better future and unblocking the forces that impede creativity. To inspire us, the future for which we work should be *beautiful* – a future that raises our spirits and fires our imagination. We should encourage and support each other to *embody* the change we want to see in the world and to become more *reflexive* and more self-aware of our own mindset and practice (Hanlon et al, 2012).

(Hanlon & Carlisle, 2016, p23, their italics)

Since the late nineties, we have gone a long way already to making these ideas of integration, ethics, aesthetics, creativity and beauty a living reality through our critical creativity collaborative inquiries. In this e-book, we present our integrative ecology of critical social science with its ethics of social justice and human flourishing, as well as, aesthetics, creativity, ancient wisdom and spirituality. However, when people first meet critical creativity, they often don't get it cognitively as some of these ideas are outside their experience, but there is something about it that they resonate with, that they know in their heart, body, through their connection with nature, beauty or what it is like to flourish.

In this introductory chapter, we start by defining critical creativity and setting out why we think this e-book is needed, before outlining, broad brush, the bedrock, landscape and ecology of critical creativity. We do this through an informal telling of our own travels through different bedrocks and landscapes to arrive at the ecology of three deeply connected mandalas² - the philosophical/ theoretical, methodological and human flourishing mandalas. Together they offer a cumulative framework for embodying and living critical creativity. Put another way, together they are a mandala of mandalas that practice developers and researchers can learn to 'dance'.

Critical Creativity

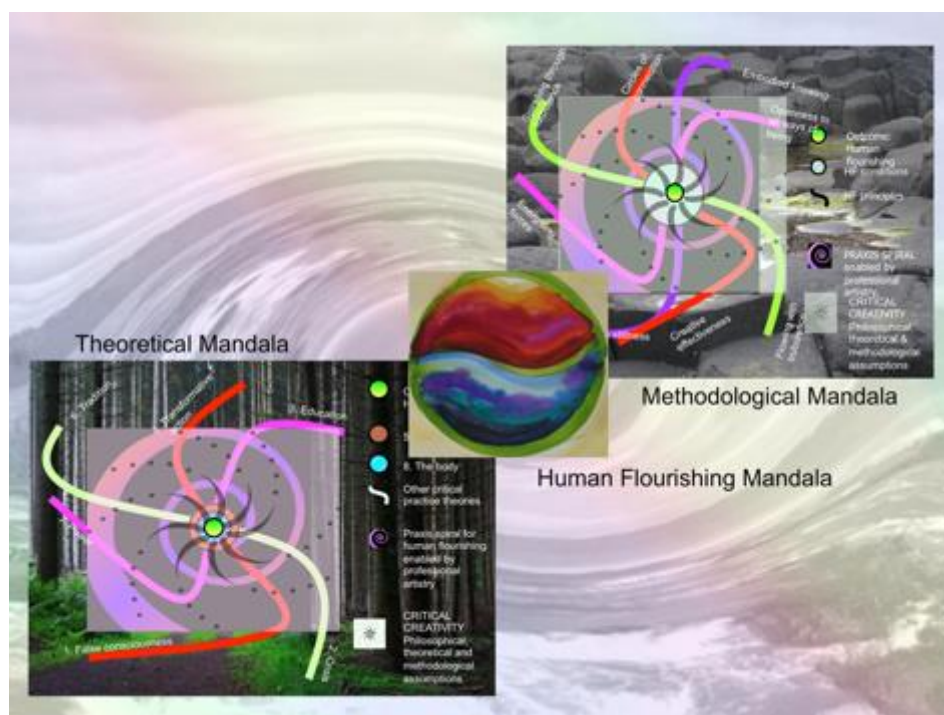


Figure 1.1: The mandala of mandalas (do not worry about the words on the frameworks at this moment, just look at the backgrounds)

In 2010, we defined critical creativity thus

² A mandala is an ancient symbol that shows the whole and its parts and the relationships between them. It is sometimes a circle, sometimes a square, but whichever shape, its segments are usually held together at the center. In our mandalas, human flourishing as outcome is the heart or center and is held by the dynamic praxis spiral.

Critical creativity is a paradigmatic synthesis in which the assumptions of the critical paradigm are blended and balanced with, and attuned to, creative and ancient traditions, for the purpose of human flourishing. Human flourishing focuses on maximising individuals' achievement of their potential for growth and development as they change the circumstances and relations of their lives. People are helped to flourish (i.e. grow, develop, thrive) during the change experience in addition to an intended outcome of wellbeing 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 active learning (Dewing 2008).

... Critical creativity blends being critical with being creative. By being critical we mean engaging in cognitive critique by de-constructing 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 ever evolving knowledge (see Habermas 1974; Fay 1987). Whilst this kind of reflective re-construction is a creative process, being creative, in the context of critical creativity, also means using creative imagination and expression to: de-construct the context, and so forth; grasp the meaning of the whole; access embodied, tacit knowing (the root of verbal knowing); create and/or release energy for practice development and research; and blend/interplay embodied and imaginative knowing and meaning into cognitive critique (see Senge et al. 2005; Higgs et al. 2007; Marshall and Reason 2008). The key idea is that when we blend being critical and creative in our work as practice developers and/or researchers, we increase potential for our own and others' flourishing that is visible to others (Titchen & McCormack, 2010; 2017, p532).

Since then, in a number of co-inquiries together and separately in our work with PhD students and colleagues, we have challenged this definition, and for us seven years on, this definition still stands.

Gradually, since the early 2000s, increasing numbers of researchers, practice developers and educators in health and social care are using critical-creative approaches in their work. Whilst supporting some of these innovators, we have observed that, unsurprisingly, some people work at the level of method, using creative arts media like picture cards, painting, clay modelling or poetry in their research and practice development without appreciating, understanding and working intentionally with any of the mandalas. Others who are aware of them, often tend to focus on working with one. Then there are those who work with all of them, but easily get muddled between the mandalas or forget their components (been there, done that!) or find it difficult to 'dance' them i.e., to flow effortlessly from one to the other and often use them simultaneously. Finally, to our great delight, we observe people who know that they have embodied the mandalas. Sometimes in the moment and sometimes afterwards, they see that they have, indeed, been 'dancing' them. That moment is fantastically exhilarating!

In relation to these different positions, you can probably see evidence of working from novice to expert. Critical creativity is complex; it takes time to learn. Not only are there the mandalas to unravel and reflexively work with, there is also the philosophical underpinning (bedrock) and the research paradigm (landscape) to understand and distinguish from perhaps more familiar paradigms and then to embody them. In addition, there are also new facilitation

and creative arts skills to acquire. Moreover, the mandalas were created and published over nearly a decade, so they have never been published altogether in one place until now, so people have been introduced to them piecemeal, as it were. Also, except for our Critical Creativity Blog entries, there have never before been published accounts of how to dance the mandala of mandalas.

We also know that it is hard to remember the parts and their relationships with the whole, until they become embodied or grounded in practice. This means experiencing this in practice and critical-creative reflection, preferably with a critical-creative companion. The danger for critical creativity becoming embodied and embedded in practice is that people miss the need to ‘dance’ the mandalas to be successful as a facilitator or critical-creative companion in creating the conditions for human flourishing to occur. This ‘dancing’ means developing the capacity to move seamlessly and fluently between the frameworks according to what is happening and any inner and outer turbulences that are occurring and support flourishing and resilience.

Our work so far suggests that critical creativity enables effective transformation of health and social care practices and workplace cultures by practice developers, researchers and educators, at the same time as creating the conditions for everyone to flourish. It is also clear that we need to help people to understand its potential, what it is and how to live it. In this spirit, we offer this e-book.

Origins, landscape and ecology of critical creativity

Origins

We have known each other as dear friends and colleagues since the early nineties when we were both working at the Institute of Nursing in Oxford, UK (an umbrella organisation that brought together the Oxfordshire Health Authority, University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University). The Institute’s vision included the integration of ‘nursing practice development with first class scholarship in a way that is unique to nursing’ (Pembrey, 1992, p 4). It was an innovative and exciting place to work. New ideas were welcome, holistic approaches to research and development were encouraged and blue skies thinking and being were nurtured! In the mid-nineties, Angie began experimenting with the use of creative arts media (e.g., painting, clay-modelling, dance, poetry writing, drama, landscape art, story-telling) and working in nature in her personal development work (see her TEDx talk link in Chapter 14).

‘I had an arresting dream that would not go away. I realised that there was probably a very important message for me in there, so I worked with it using Diana Glouberman’s dream work approach. The result was astonishing. The dream told me loud and clear that I had to bring my experience of using creative arts into practice development! In summer of 1998, this is exactly what I did at a workshop at one of the early Practice Development Schools (in the gardens of one of the Oxford colleges). It was daring and required a lot of courage. Fortunately, Brendan was one of the participants and he entered authentically into the experience. I will never forget and I treasure the sight of him hugging a tree, unbidden, during the workshop!’

Brendan always had a ‘creative streak’ that was articulated through dance. As a child, youth and young adult, Brendan had a love of Irish dancing and engaged competitively in it. It was

escapism as much as an art form, helping him make sense of his life growing up in a large Irish family context. He found that when he danced, ‘things made sense’, he became clearer about his thoughts and ‘settled’ in time and space. He subsequently came to realise through his work with Angie and others that this is the core of embodied knowing. Whilst doing a Postgraduate Certificate in the Education of Adults (PGCEA) at Surrey University, Brendan was fortunate to spend time in the ‘Human Potential Resource Centre’ – a centre established by John Heron that focused on developing humanistic approaches to facilitating learning and development. This was a truly transformational experience and again there was significant emphasis on embodied knowing. Brendan has talked about some of this experience in his TEDx talk (see his TEDx talk link in Chapter 14) and how they shaped his personhood. So, meeting Angie in 1991 and joining in the creative journey she was exploring was a natural extension of these earlier experiences and was truly a gift enabled by Sue Pembrey – she knew! However, making the leap into making creative and artistic activities a component of Brendan’s everyday practice was hard and without the critical companionship of Angie (who was fearless and lived her authenticity!) he may not have succeeded.

In the 90’s, there emerged ideas, particularly in the self-help and arts-based research literature that captured our imagination. For instance, we wanted to play with Pat Allen’s (1995) idea that art is a way of knowing and that creativity can lead us to self-knowledge and spiritual fulfilment. We loved Sean McNiff’s (1998) idea of using art to research art and shared his dissatisfaction, as an educator and researcher, at the way arts researchers in his field (and in ours) were using quantitative research approaches that failed to come up to the mark. Together and with others in a collaborative inquiry called ‘Seizing the Fire’, we worked together to understand how we could bring creative imagination and expression into our workplaces.

We continued this work in the International Practice Development Colloquium cooperative inquiry, presented below. In addition, we intentionally began to use creative approaches in our everyday practice development and research work, for example, at team meetings, staff away days, as well as contributions to international and national conferences, practice development schools, seminars and masterclasses. So we tried out creative arts media as data gathering methods in the sense that they enabled participants to express the tacit or difficult to put into words and to question the meaning of meanings in everyday practice through, for example, paintings, clay-modelling movement, drama, poetry writing, story-telling and music. These kinds of media were also used to synthesise, interpret and share findings.

ways of knowing. We worked on the premise that everyone can express themselves through creative arts media when a non-judgmental culture has been created.

Difference also emerged in relation to how creative arts in health care should be researched and evaluated. To show this distinction it is helpful to think about the different worldviews of research in terms of their: philosophical underpinnings or ‘bedrock’; research paradigms as ‘landscapes’ and; methodologies as ‘gardens’ (Titchen & Horsfall, 2011). If we think about the different bedrocks in the natural world, we know that they create different kinds of landscape, soil and vegetation and which in turn, are likely to influence the creation of different kinds of garden.

Most of our co-inquirers considered that the research should focus on testing the use of creative arts in order to predict and explain, so they thought it should be carried out in the Technical worldview that is traditionally favoured by the health and medical sciences. This worldview is founded on the bedrock of empiricism and rationalism that supports the empirical-analytical research paradigm (Figure 1.2). So many of the collaborators believed that research and evaluation should be carried out using controlled studies and quantitative approaches. Their research gardens would thus be predicated on methodological principles derived from the hierarchy of evidence. We were not surprised. We had already confronted the paradigm wars throughout the nineties as we undertook our practice development and doctoral studies to understand and enable the development of person-centred nursing practice. This previous work had moved us through the bedrocks, landscapes and gardens of both the Practical and Emancipatory worldviews (Figure 1.2).



Practice development/research worldviews				
Worldviews	TECHNICAL	PRACTICAL	EMANCIPATORY	TRANSFORMATIONAL
Philosophical stance (Bedrock)	Empiricism/ Rationalism	Idealism/ existentialism	Realism	Metaphysics/ Aesthetics
Practice development/ Research paradigm (Landscape)	Empirico-analytical	Interpretive/ Constructivist/ Hermeneutic	Critical	Critical Creativity/New paradigm/8 th moment
View of the person/world	Individuality of persons is not the focus.	Individuality of person Being-in-the-world	Welfare of the person/ community is the focus	Transformation and flourishing of the person and community

Figure 1.2: Bedrock and landscapes of four practice development/research worldviews (see Titchen & Horsfall, 2011; Titchen et al, 2017 and Titchen, 2018 for a deeper comparison)

The Practical worldview acts as a portal to achieving understanding or making sense of and interpreting the practice world and our ways of knowing, being, doing and becoming. The Emancipatory worldview builds on this intention of understanding and interpretation and takes it further. It offers a portal to achieving social justice as well through the blending of sense making and interpretation with bringing about change. Change comes by freeing ourselves, by letting go of things within and outside that stop us creating better, more just and equal ways of knowing, being, doing and becoming. So, for us, we had worked with assumptions from the Practical worldview to increase understanding of person-centred care and its facilitation and with assumptions from the Emancipatory worldview to use that new understanding to help others to learn how to give person-centred care.

We were becoming aware that the assumptions about, for instance, the role of the body and multiple intelligences and connections with the natural world, beauty, ancient wisdom and spirituality were not fully supported by these worldviews. We knew we needed to find a new home and sometime later, we did - within the Transformational worldview. This worldview blends, but goes beyond, understanding and taking action to achieve social justice to achieving transformation and human flourishing as well.



In 2003, as we were working on the Nuffield Trust project, the ecology of critical creativity started to emerge within us at a gathering of practice developers and researchers in nursing at our International Practice Development Colloquium. It began with our spontaneous haiku.

Alone on the edge
Melding, exploding, blending
Critical creativity

When we shared our poem and our feeling that we needed to find a paradigmatic home for our work, our colleagues were intrigued. It was totally new for them, but they were very clear – they wanted to help. So over time at future gatherings, whilst we took the lead and worked with a small critical creativity group, we sometimes worked altogether in nature and beauty to embrace and uncover the unknown about transformational knowing, doing, being and becoming in practice development and action-oriented research. During this time, we (Brendan and Angie) began developing the mandalas and invited feedback on the papers and offered workshops to develop the ideas further. This journey was challenging, so it was not always easy. We describe this challenge in a fiction³ in a book chapter (Titchen & McCormack (2008) which is presented here in Chapter 4.

We move now from the landscape of critical creativity to its ecology.

Ecology

Ecology is concerned with connections between the whole and its parts. In critical creativity this means that attunement to the connections between the planet and the parts of everything existing in and on it, including ourselves, is central. So you may not be surprised that there are deep connections between the philosophical/ theoretical, methodological and human flourishing mandalas we have created. To be effective as transformational practice developers and researchers, we have to be attuned to these connections, so that we can dance the whole, i.e., the mandala of mandalas (Figure 1.1) and its parts (Figures 1.3 – 1.5).

Philosophical & theoretical mandala

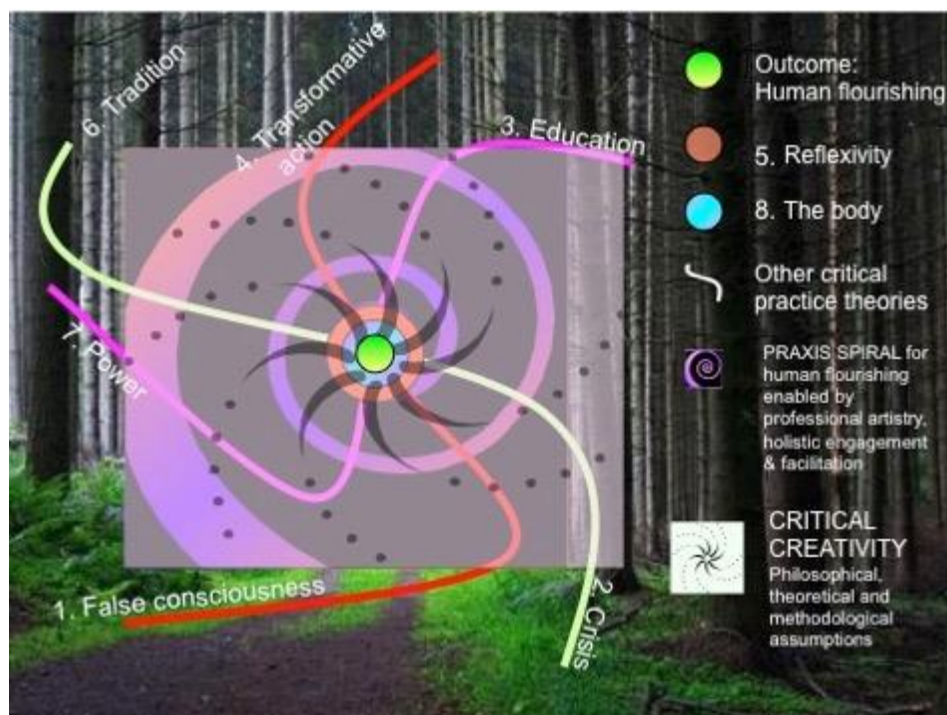


Figure 1.3: Modified philosophical and theoretical mandala for human flourishing (Chapter 4). Original 2006 framework shown in Chapter 5.

³ Fiction based on facts from our own experience

The first paper published was the original version of the philosophical and theoretical mandala (McCormack & Titchen, 2006). It is reproduced in Chapter 5. In brief, it sets out the philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions that underpin critical creativity and presents the theoretical mandala (we called it ‘framework’ back then) that is based on philosopher Brian Fay’s critical theories of critical social science. We offered a slight modification because we found creativity lacking in Fay’s complex of eight theories and 20 sub-theories. So, with his agreement, we added a new sub-theory, called ‘Creativity’ to his theory of Transformative action (see Table 2 in Chapter 5). At the centre is the dynamic praxis spiral that is enabled by professional artistry. This is new and Brian Fay agreed with us that this is necessary when practitioners are translating his theories into their practices. Praxis is defined in critical creativity as mindful doing with the moral intent of human flourishing. The intent of social justice also underlies our praxis spiral, but it is human flourishing that is the ultimate outcome striven for in critical creativity.

Later, after re-testing the published framework within the International Practice Development Colloquium, we modified the layout of the mandala (see Figure 1.3). We did this to better reflect the central role the critical theories of The Body (which we also slightly modified) and Reflexivity play in practice development and action-oriented research (Titchen & McCormack, 2008). Brian Fay had not made this distinction. Our testing and modification can be examined in Chapter 4.

Methodological mandala

The second paper published, *Dancing with Stones*, set out the methodological mandala. Whilst the underpinning assumptions of critical creativity, the praxis spiral and human flourishing at the centre remain constant, this framework shows the methodological principles for creating the conditions so that everyone involved in the practice development

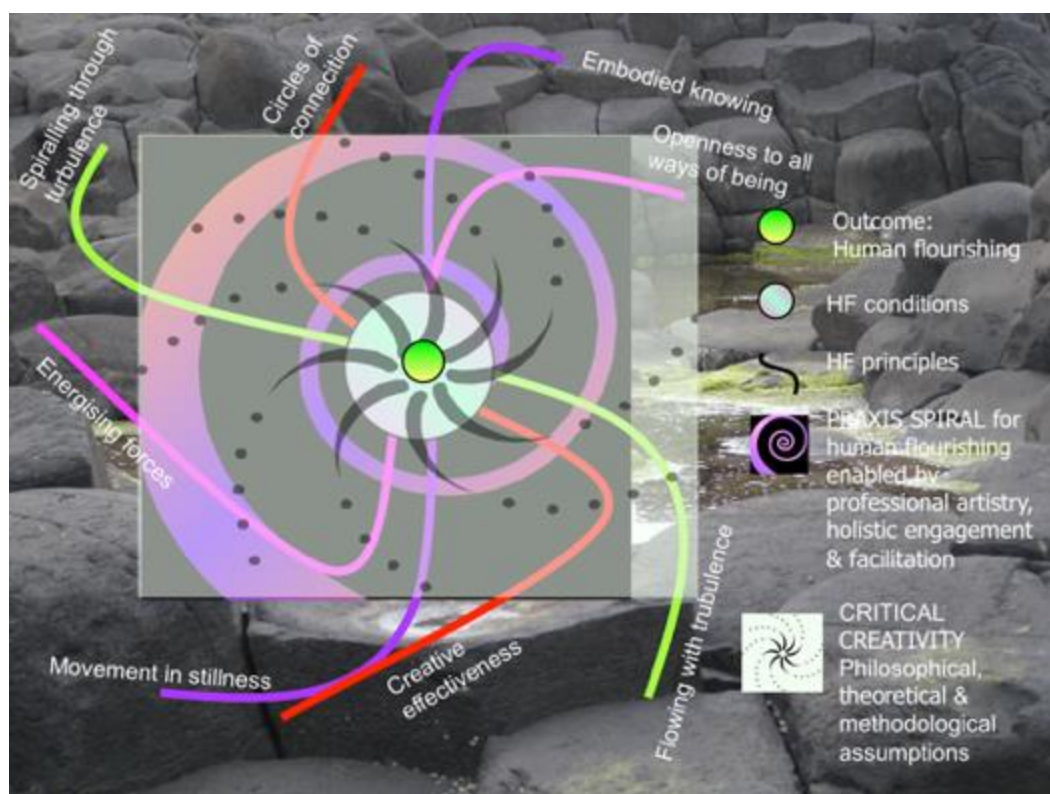


Figure 1.4: Methodological mandala for facilitating human flourishing (Chapter 6)

or research flourishes (see Figure 1.4). If you start with reading Chapter 5 you will see there, metaphors arising from our creative engagement through painting that we used to name these principles. After bringing our tacit knowing into language, we deepened our understanding of them on the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland. You will be able to read about the amazing experience we had there and see the three conditions for human flourishing and the embodiment of the principles in action.

The human flourishing mandala

The human flourishing mandala (McCormack & Titchen, 2014; 2015) completes the critical creativity ecology/trilogy. In existence when the conditions for human flourishing are present, enabled by the praxis spiral through professional artistry, holistic engagement and facilitation and embedded in the philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions, human flourishing has eight elements (see Figure 1.5). These elements have been distilled into the following definition as well as the painting at the heart of the mandala.

Human flourishing occurs when we bound and frame naturally co-existing energies, when we embrace the known and yet to be known, when we embody contrasts and when we achieve stillness and harmony. When we flourish we give and receive loving kindness.

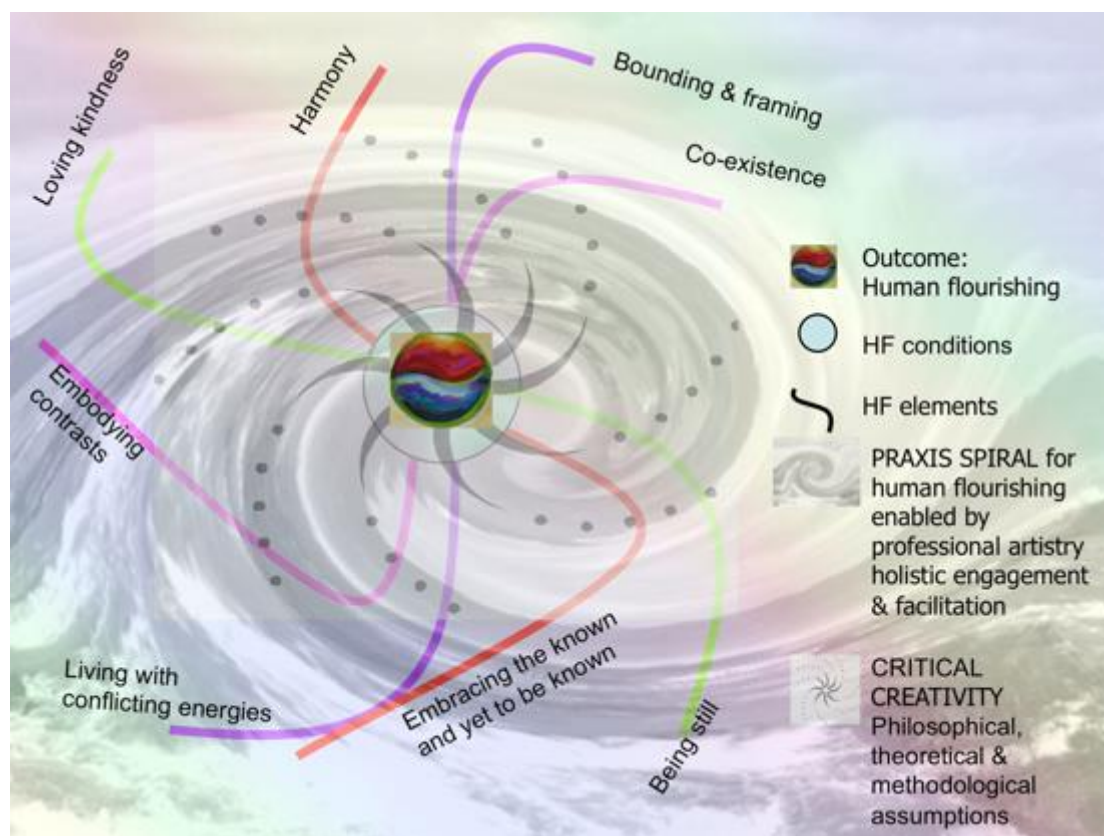


Figure 1.5: Human flourishing mandala (Chapter 7)

Dancing this e-book



Figure: 1.6: E-book as a mandala founded on the heart

This e-book is structured as a mandala with the trilogy of critical creativity mandalas at its core. It is invitational, gentle, flowing, delicate and provides readers with ways in and out of the trilogy. It uses story, conversational tones and provides hooks or ‘ladders’ to help people into and out of this centre.

Key published papers on critical creativity are placed physically in the middle of the e-book, so they connect with, and flow into, the outer published stories, experiences and Blog posts (<https://criticalcreativity.org/>) of practice developers, researchers and educators, who use the mandalas in their practices. They include some of the challenges of doing so and how they can be overcome. This is not necessarily a publication to be read cover to cover. Rather it can be ‘danced’ by moving around it. For example, after reading a story of a practice experience, the reader might refer to one of the mandala papers relevant to that story before perusing specific workplace resources. Alternatively, a reader might skim these core chapters to get a feel for them, read the illustrative chapters, noting down questions/painting images/writing poems about thoughts, ideas or emotions that surface and then return to the core chapters to look for echoes, responses and evocations. Or just dance the offerings when they are ready for them.

The original publications blend discursive writing with art forms, such as, paintings, poems and novelettes and critical-creative dialogue and the design of the e-book continues in this vein. Links with other relevant papers, book chapters and resources published elsewhere are referred to throughout the e-book.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our fellow members of the International Practice Development Colloquium, our doctoral students and colleagues and the many hundreds of practice developers and researchers who have attended our workshops at national and international conferences. You have helped us to develop and test the enfolding mandalas. We are particularly grateful to Annette Solman and Val Wilson who also helped and challenged us in the early days of translating critical creativity into our various workplaces and practices and getting this e-book together. You kept us grounded by your challenging experiences of using critical creativity at times of organisational crisis.

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Chapter 2 - Dancing the mandalas of critical creativity

Angie Titchen & Brendan McCormack

Abstract

Whether you are familiar with the three philosophical/theoretical, methodological and human flourishing mandalas or newly coming to them, this chapter is likely to be useful to you. Not only does the chapter show how the mandalas have complementary purposes to each other and an overall purpose together, it also uncovers something of the mysterious professional artistry that enables the praxis spiral to dance the mandalas.

Professional artistry is difficult to put into words because it is deeply embodied and embedded in our praxis. Even though it has been partly articulated, it will never be possible to completely rationalise what is largely intuitive, embodied and ancient. We show however our cognitive thinking about this artistry and embed it in imagery so hopefully you may sense and feel something of its magic⁴!



Professional artistry can be likened to the sun filtering through trees and transforming the dark wood into zinging green light or rainbows of light dancing over the turbulent river. It takes what is there and by blending and melding turns it into something unique, new and energising.

We show how we interplay and improvise the mandalas to create the conditions for human flourishing and bring about transformation. Pointing out the complexity and skill required to facilitate transformational practice development and action-oriented research, we invite you to look out for professional artistry in chapters where we (and others) have not mentioned it, but where you might metaphorically see, taste, smell, hear, feel it.

⁴ The accompanying slide show for this chapter was created (by Angie) for Celina, a PhD student, after they had worked together in a garden. Celina had wanted to experience the nature of critical creativity inquiry. Afterwards, Angie shared something of her professional artistry as a critical-creative inquirer and companion, through imagery and symbols, to help Celina make sense of the experience.

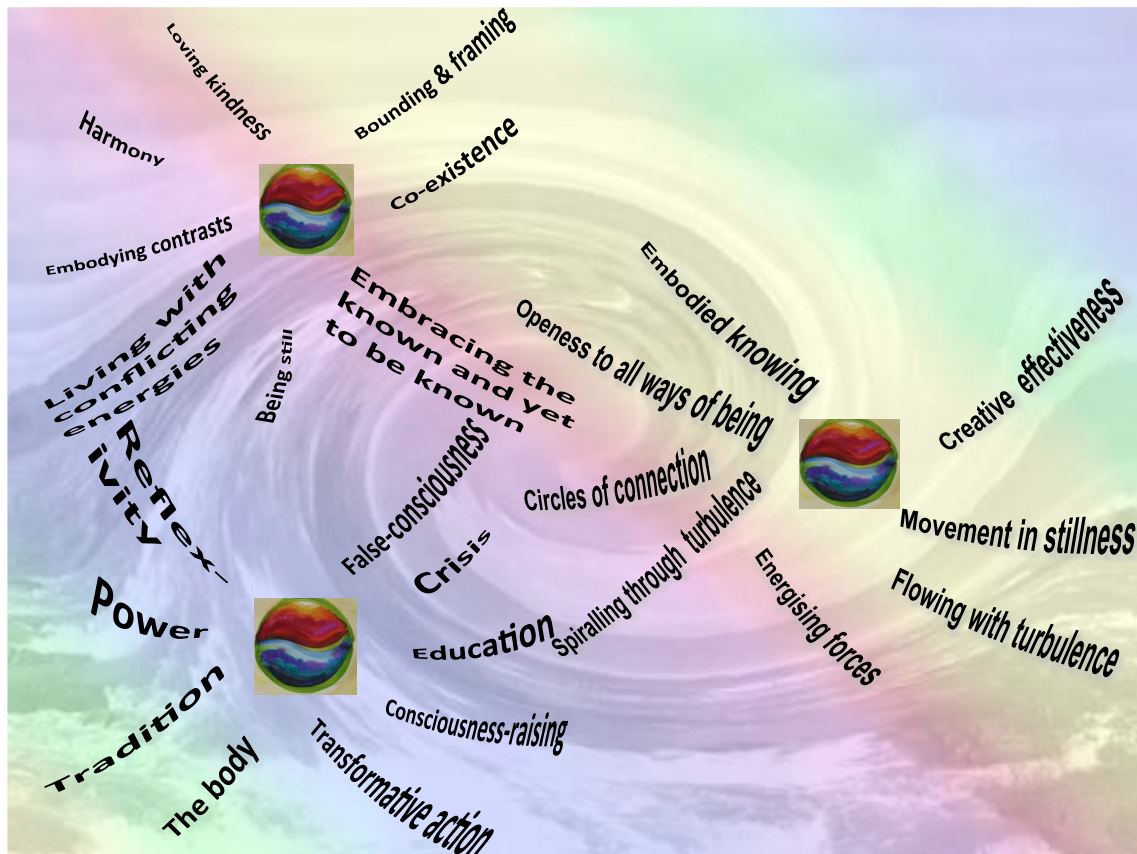


Figure 2.1: Professional artistry dancing the praxis spiral of the three critical creativity mandalas (mandala top left (McCormack & Titchen, 2014; 2015): mandala right (Titchen & McCormack, 2010); bottom left based on Fay's (1987) eight critical social science theories (McCormack & Titchen, 2006)

The dance

We invite you to look at Figure 2.1 as whole, with soft eyes. Let the images and words wash over you. Notice what you notice. What do you sense, feel, imagine? Are there any resonances for you?

Now look at the words, how do they make you feel?

What about the images, what do you sense, feel, imagine?

If you have accepted this invitation, you may have had the experience of using the wisdom of your body to make sense and meaning for you.

Now we invite you to use your cognitive mind. What is going on here? What does this mean? Why have we created this image? Does it resonate with what you know already – with your body and/or your mind?

We created Figure 2.1 for a number of reasons. First, we set out a simplified structure of each mandala⁵, so we could show you the commonalities of each of them, that is, the aesthetic and metaphysical bedrock of critical creativity (Chapter 1, Figure 1.2), the praxis spiral enabled by professional artistry, with human flourishing at the heart. Second, we want you to see, as a whole, the critical theories, methodological principles and elements of human flourishing. This is the first time they have been laid out altogether. We hope this will help people see how each ‘dance’ is unique, depending on the person/people involved, the problem/issue/question being worked with, the situation, context and culture. Third, through the imagery and slide show, we show something of the form and tone of professional artistry: its echo or resonance with processes like flow, balance and interaction found in the natural world and human grace.

We think of professional artistry as comprising a variety of dimensions and processes (Figures 2.2 – 3)⁶. The dimensions are more easily visible and written about, whilst the processes are less so. Both dimensions and processes are described in Chapter 8 on pages 7-8, but for now, we invite you to think about what you know about each of these dimensions already.

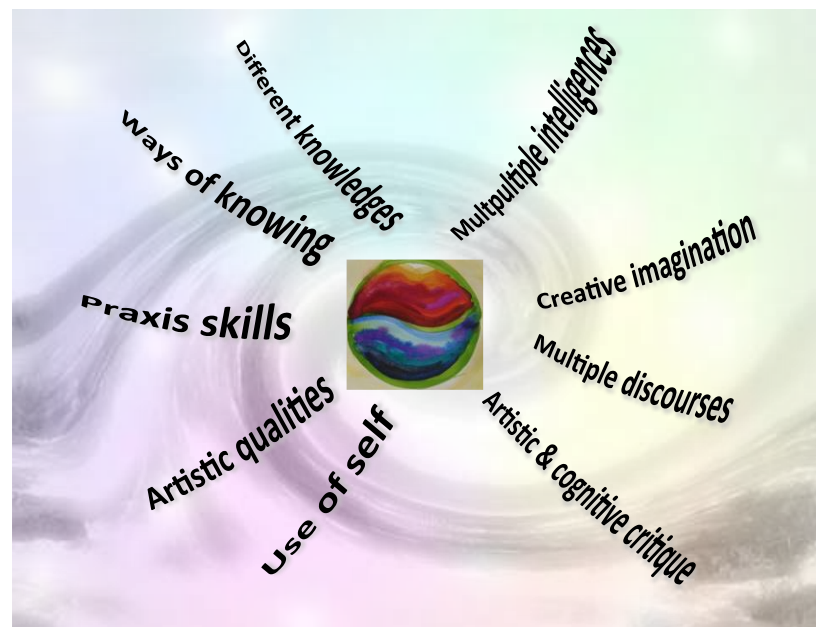


Figure 2.2 Dimensions of professional artistry (Titchen, 2009)

⁵ The full structure is introduced In Chapter 1 and described in detail in Chapters 4 – 6. In Figure 2.1, their structure is simplified further to show their key elements all in one place.

⁶ Dimensions and processes of professional artistry have emerged and been challenged within clinical, educational and research fields through Angie’s doctoral research (Titchen, 2001); her work with colleagues in Australia (Higgs & Titchen, 2001; Titchen et al, 2007; Solman & Titchen (unpublished paper) and in the UK and Ireland (Titchen, McGinley & McCormack; Hardy et al, 2009). A full account of the dimensions and processes can be found in Titchen (2009). Angie continues to challenge these in her critical-creative companionships with practice developers, researchers and doctoral students. A brief description of them is offered in Chapter 8 in the context of such a companionship.

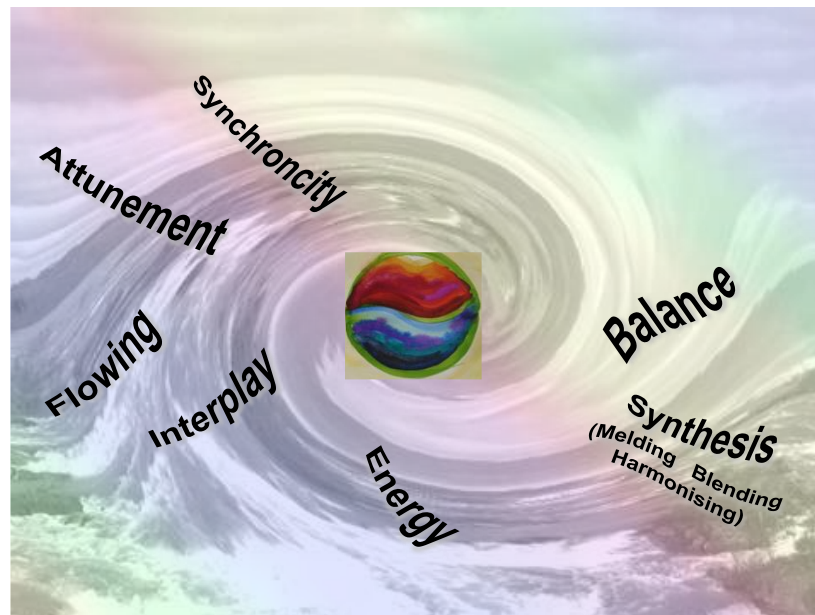


Figure 2.2: Processes of professional artistry (adapted from Titchen 2009)

How we dance the mandalas

Creating the conditions for human flourishing



Photo by Alex Fink

We have worked as transformational practice developers, action-oriented researchers, academic leaders, educators and doctoral supervisors within different contexts, cultures and countries. Within all these roles, we are critical-creative companions where appropriate. This is part of who we are. We have walked alongside practitioners, practice developers, facilitators, critical companions, managers, leaders, researchers and educators in health and social care.

The place we always start is to find out where this person, group, team, community are coming from, where they are at and where they want to go. We need to know who they are as people and about the context and culture they work or live in, if we are to work successfully together in partnership. Maybe, you have recognised already that this is the *particularity* and

mutuality of person-centred practice and critical companionship. From this starting point, we can begin to move into *creating the conditions for human flourishing*. So which mandala are we starting from?



Figure 2.3: Three conditions for human flourishing

Stillness in a landscape

This means being still, open and empty in the practice/ practice development/ research/ education place and space. For this, we have to embrace the fear, suspend habitual ways of seeing, let go and open up to sense and observe what is happening within and outside us and notice what we notice, however bizarre – there doesn't have to be a rational reason. And we have to help others to do this too, so we are in two spaces at the same time or constantly moving around an infinity loop containing the two spaces. *Becoming the rock* means becoming, in our work, a living example of critical creativity and the thing we are striving for or believe in passionately, like being person-centred. It's in everything we do and are, in what we know and are becoming. It also means being able to facilitate the co-creation of methods.

You've probably worked out now that we are talking about the methodological, 'Dancing with Stones' mandala!

The emphasis in *nurturing, flowing, connecting* is on being, rather than intentional action. This condition is brought about by the hidden being of the practitioner, leader, manager, practice developer, researcher, educator as they enable stillness in the landscape and support for *becoming the rock* – both for themselves and others. This means helping people step in and out of metaphysical, metaphorical and physical spaces to:

- Nurture a person's flowing into and out of these spaces
- Help people to connect the hidden messages that emerge from connection with nature and from others' and one's own deep instinctual selves and embodied knowing
- Connect these insights with how they can begin to flow and spiral through the inner and outer turbulence they are facing in their work of transforming self, teams,

cultures, contexts, practices for example –rather than being buffeted and overwhelmed by it

- Embodiment relevant critical theories through critical and creative dialogues and artistic and cognitive critique.

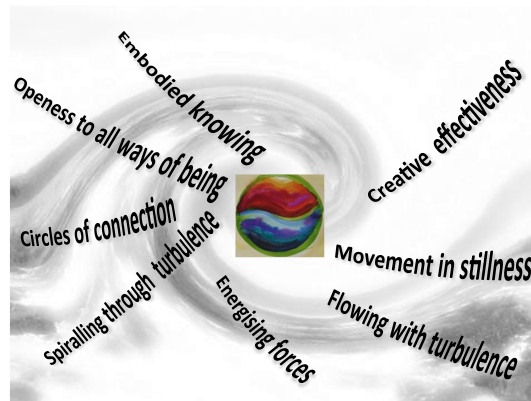
So how do we help people step into these spaces?

Metaphysical spaces in critical creativity are ‘outside the cognitive mind’ in the realms of ‘being’, imagination and *embodied*, instinctual, archetypal *knowing* of the body and soul. In metaphorical spaces, we work with metaphors that arise and resonate with how we are feeling, thinking, being and becoming. So, we work with the cognitive mind, as well, in this kind of space. Both kinds of space belong to a more embodied world. This way of being may not be readily accessible to us unless we have developed ways for doing it ourselves in our lives, for example, meditation, gardening, jogging or walking that takes us out of our rational mind. In critical creativity, these spaces can be accessed by creating gateways or portals into embodiment.



A real gateway used as a portal into metaphysical or metaphorical space

These gateways may be real or just ‘looking out the window’ or ‘when we get to the corner’, for example, or they may be imagined in a creative visualisation. Whichever way, we give this experience symbolic meaning of stepping into new space. Once through the real or imaginary portal, we invite people to let go of the cognitive mind, to ‘walk’ or ‘move’ in silence and connect with nature and beauty, through opening up the body senses and being playful. We invite people to allow their body to lead, so that its wisdom (embodied, instinctual, archetypal and metaphorical knowing) can emerge. We also suggest that they might like to reframe what comes up in creative and symbolic ways. This is when metaphors often rise up. Using such strategies, for example, in a hospital garden or grounds, park or university campus, we can expose something of previously tacit, embedded knowing and transform it into cognitive and metacognitive knowing through critical and creative dialogue and artistic and cognitive critique. This also works too in health care buildings and on busy streets!



Can you sense any of the principles for facilitating human flourishing (above) just touched on in this description? In the chapters with Lorna Peelo-Kilroe, Mary Mulcahy and Karen Hammond, you will see them in action.



Let us give a brief example - of how stepping through portals to gain insight and understanding into self and others in challenging situations, contexts and cultures can be facilitated by dancing with the theoretical mandala (above). Do you think any of Fay's critical social science theories might be useful? Perhaps the most obvious one is *Tradition* because working in metaphysical and metaphorical spaces might be considered strange in some practice, research or education settings. Even if you haven't read our paper in Chapter 4, can you instinctively see any potential for any of the other critical theories having a part to play in creating the conditions for human flourishing?

Going through the portal

Back in 2013, Angie worked with Alex, a social worker interested in youth work, mentoring relationships and skill/craft/practice development. At the University of Minnesota in the US, he was undertaking a dual Masters and Doctoral programme in social work. When they first met, Alex expressed great interest in practice development (entirely new to him) and our approach to it through critical creativity. Angie quickly established that although Alex was very interested in aesthetic approaches, he spent most of his creative time in his head. Over a couple of days together, Angie created conditions for human flourishing to help Alex to get out of his head and into his body and creative imagination. An excerpt from her account of this time shows how she danced the theoretical mandala when creating these conditions and how this dance seemed to enable Alex to own his own *Crisis*.

Through emancipatory and hermeneutic praxis, enabled by the professional artistry dimensions and processes, I worked primarily through our modifications of Brian Fay's critical theories of the *Body* and *Reflexivity*. In our theoretical mandala, we place the *Body* as primary in relation to *Reflexivity* and then the two of them as pre-requisites to realising all the other theories in action. As with others, such as the philosopher, Gendlin, we have found that the wisdom of the body is several steps ahead of cognition in identifying salient features to attend to and emergent knowing (Titchen & Niessen, 2011). Alex had indicated in our first dialogue that the body was largely ignored in the university and that he wanted to work more with it to open up new doorways/curiosity and ways of thinking. In a sense perhaps, Alex was identifying the *False consciousness* of academia in valuing only rationality and cognition within scholarly work. Possibly Alex had become aware of a *Crisis* in himself as he clearly recognised that he needed to pay attention to working with the whole of himself if he wanted to use a critical creativity approach to his youth work and PhD. Through *Education* (using the strategies of critical-creative companionship enabled by *professional artistry*), I intentionally modelled and articulated something of my practical know-how of engaging the whole of myself in our companionship and my *professional artistry*. In terms of *Power*, I worked with strategies linked to *mutuality* to enable a collegiate, equal companionship like negotiating every activity with Alex, holding back and letting go to create more space for Alex and for the leadership/following relationship to constantly flow between us. The *professional artistry processes* are very evident in the *mutuality* strategies I used.

Alex: Yes – I think this resonates with me deeply. It continues to resonate upon reflection on this document (both the first time I read it and now as I'm reflecting on it again).

Regarding *Tradition*, I was aware of Alex's love and 'obsession' (his word) with reading as he strove to strengthen his position as a 'young academic'/scholar and PhD student. He too recognised that he was doing this in 'traditional ways' that further indicates his awareness of how the *False consciousness* of the university and professional practice was embodied in him too. I had noted on the first day together that he talked a lot about the works of many philosophers, but he did not talk so much about how he is using any of their ideas in his research or youth work. I did think that perhaps this traditional way of approaching philosophy might be one of the reasons why Alex was so much in his head. Perhaps he needed help to develop an action plan for melding and blending cognition with creative imagination, the body, bodily, aesthetic and spiritual intelligences and the natural world (*Transformative action*), if he wanted to work within a critical creativity paradigm in his PhD and youth work. Later, I was very pleased to listen to Alex's video diary where he described his experience of our companionship as opening up new doors to understanding. I was also pleased that our action plan included the writing of a paper that would be inspired by the holding images of the cracks in the field and the thistle that had resonated with both of us.

Alex: [During our silent walk and creative expression], I experienced something ... that I'm not sure I ever experienced before. In feeling present to the world around me, I felt I needed language that was non-verbal, or at least non-linear, that would help me describe the intensity of this experience to others. I have experienced this in reverse with art and poetry – where I've experienced something I haven't actually experienced through the work. However,

this was the first time I felt intensely that I could struggle to write or express something that others might be able to take up and experience for themselves.

This excerpt shows how creating the conditions for human flourishing enables us to begin and improvise the dance in the moment. This dance or praxis spiral is an embodied understanding and sensitivity to the different purposes of each mandala and, when put together, the overarching purpose of human flourishing for all persons involved. The specific purpose of the philosophical and theoretical mandala is to make explicit the *bedrock* of critical creativity (idealism, realism, metaphysics and aesthetics) and its *landscape* (research paradigm informed by critical social science theories). The eight critical social theories (derived through philosopher Brian Fay's scholarship) provide the propositional knowledge base of critical creativity. This purpose is to facilitate the development of a theoretical understanding of the historical, social, political and cultural contexts that have and/or are shaping the challenges to transformation in ourselves and our teams, workplaces and organisations. Having theoretical understanding enables the development of strategies that emancipate us from these challenges. *The following example highlights a common experience of the challenge of theory itself getting in the way of practitioners, practice developers and researchers beginning to understand these contexts better. It shows how creating the right conditions can help overcome it.*

At a workshop, practice developers and researchers were invited to attend an imaginary cocktail party to meet a surprise guest, Brian Fay! The workshop facilitator showed them his photograph before briefly presenting the basic scheme of critical social science, i.e., the four grand theories of *False-consciousness*, *Crisis*, *Education* and *Transformative Action*.

These four social life theories were derived through theoretical and empirical work notably by the Frankfurt School who built on earlier work stemming originally from Neo-Marxist philosophy. You might have heard of the scholar, Jurgen Habermas? He is one of the big names from the later Frankfurt School theoreticians.

Whilst Fay built on this basic scheme, he recognised that the ontology of critical social science was missing. This is why he created the four other, not so grand theories, *Tradition*, *Power*, *The Body* and *Reflexivity*. They show how history, politics, society and culture are embodied in our being and embedded in our contexts. These theories uncover what is often either not noticed, or, noticed and accepted even though it isn't acceptable! Sound familiar? If you are an emancipatory practice developer/researcher you might underpin your work with the three 'Es', i.e., Enlightenment, Empowerment and Emancipation. These concepts spring from this supplementary set of theories in Fay's scheme.

Anyway, as this stuff was all a bit heavy, the facilitator invited them then to make props from creative arts materials to get into the party mood and to devise questions, issues and challenges to pose to the professor.

The result was extraordinary. In spite of, but probably because of, a general feeling of hilarity, there was an immediate letting go of the fear of not being able to understand or talk sensibly about the critical theories. As they created cocktail glasses, straws and decorations, they talked in small groups about what they understood already and by combining what they knew they felt empowered to ask critical questions and

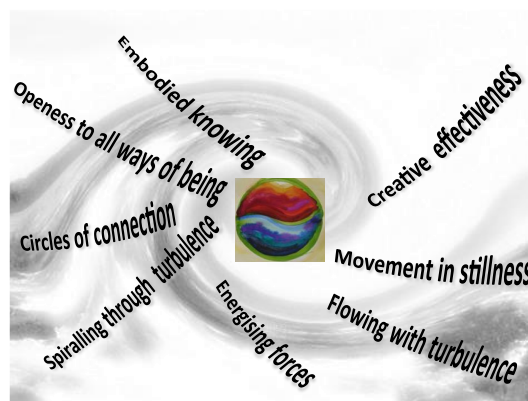
challenge Brian Fay in the context of their practical experience of bringing about practice change. This helped them to move more fluently around the theories that up to that point had been distant and outside their bodies.

To help participants begin to understand the bedrock and landscape of critical creativity, the workshop facilitator used professional artistry to bring together propositional knowledge with participants' own pre-reflective knowing (embodied, embedded, intuitive and aesthetic knowing) of bringing about transformation. The premise is that if practice developers and researchers and participants in a transformational practice development or research project can understand these underpinnings, then they can better be collaborative, inclusive and participative in it.

'In a sense, we have modelled this way to enabling understanding, in Chapter 1 and here, in our use of visual imagery and the very metaphor of bedrock and landscape to create portals to these different ways of knowing.'

But the theoretical mandala is not enough on its own (as are any of the three) because just understanding our situation is not necessarily going to help us to change it. To bring about *Transformative Action* in a critical creativity way, we have to build on the bedrock of metaphysics and aesthetics and move beyond the ultimate purpose of the critical paradigm (social justice) towards human flourishing. Understanding the propositional knowledge of the critical theories with our heads has to become internalised or embodied, as well as blended with different ways of knowing, being, doing and becoming that have their bedrock in the metaphysical and aesthetic. Facilitators therefore use the metaphorical knowing of the methodological mandala to bring creativity into the critical!

The purpose of the methodological mandala is to offer a metaphorical guide in further embodying and using new understandings to take effective action. The methodological principles for action show the way for creating conducive conditions for people to flourish. The conditions and principles are based on the wisdom of the body and the natural world, as well as aesthetic, ancient and spiritual knowing. The mandala offers guidance to moving intentionally beyond emancipation from hindrances both inside and outside ourselves to transformation that enables human flourishing for all persons actually within the turbulence of change (rapids!), as well as when we are out the other side. We guess it is not surprising that this is the mandala to which many are first drawn, perhaps because of some resonance with their deep inner knowing born of work and life experience and being human.



The purpose of the human flourishing mandala is to name something of this slippery construct, slippery given that human flourishing is likely to be experienced differently. Our interpretation of its elements (below) arose through a critical-creative inquiry into our own human flourishing arising from our critical creativity work. We experienced this emergent knowing and being as something deeper and more tangible than we had hitherto been able to express. We wondered whether these elements could help shape, not only actions, but also a vision of what to strive for? Could the mandala act as a wise guide/ancestor to help transformational practice developers and researchers to shape their facilitation approaches, for example, when creating the conditions, using the critical theories and enacting the principles for human flourishing? Could the mandala potentially guide personal development, like how to be still in busy working environments, not to be afraid of embracing the yet to be known and to live with conflicting energies?



Connecting with own flourishing through critical creativity: here is a link to an example of how critical creativity helped a PhD candidate (Niamh) working with Brendan to unfold her embodied understanding of human flourishing and its meaning for her research ([Journey in paintings](#)). Through a series of facilitated supervision meetings that used painting as a focus of engagement, Niamh developed an understanding of her own ontological position, the epistemological underpinnings of her research and how this needed to shape her methodology (which was feeling ‘clunky’ and difficult to work with). In essence, Brendan and Niamh ‘danced’ the dance of the three mandalas through painting, leading to some fundamental questioning of her research focus and methodology. This clarity was further enhanced through follow-up facilitated reflection with another member of her supervision team who is an art-therapist. This facilitated reflection deepened her ontological clarity and enabled Niamh to have confidence in some of the decisions she needed to make in order to focus her research and develop a study that was authentic, moral and person-centred.



The three mandalas together are a metaphorical ecosystem, held together by the constant presence of the praxis spiral and its backlight, professional artistry which brings it to life. The overarching purpose is a guiding choreograph for improvisation. The critical theories, principles and elements are aligned in new and unique alignments for a particular moment in time and space, for that person/team, in that context.

We invite you to look again Figure 2.1 with new eyes and imagine the three mandalas in all spinning round separately and at different speeds. Each time the movement stops momentarily, the theories, principles and elements are in different configurations to use. Through the dimensions and processes of professional artistry, what often seems mysterious and magical happens.

The best way we have found to show how this mystery and magic works, is to reveal how an experienced transformational practice developer, facilitator, action-oriented researcher shares this artistry with those aspiring towards it. We ourselves often do this in the role of critical-creative companion working alongside and role-modelling and then sharing what we are doing shortly after (as shown in [Retreat with Celina](#)). So, we might share which critical theories we are using and how we are combining them with which metaphorical principles and human flourishing elements (as shown in Chapters 8 and 17 for example). We reveal which dimensions and processes of our professional artistry we are aware of as we, for example, connect with nature; are still; create gateways; use creative expression and imagination and; engage in reflexive, artistic and cognitive critique. As many doctoral students and colleagues have said to us, this strategy of role modelling and articulating the practical know-how of the dance turns what they took, on the surface, to be pretty straight

forward and simple into something complex and sophisticated. Does it remind you of swans ... or dancers?

Changing configurations of the critical theories, methodological principles for, and elements of, human flourishing in practice can be made partially explicit.

Enough for now

In this chapter, we have oscillated from foreground to background by bounding and framing. The foreground is the three mandalas of critical creativity. The background is the usually hidden professional artistry of the transformational practice developer, facilitator, action-oriented researcher who is dancing the mandalas to enable human flourishing for all persons involved in the endeavour. By bounding and framing the parts (individual mandalas and professional artistry) we have been able to reveal the hidden messages of critical creativity as a whole. One of these messages is that enabling human flourishing in any of these roles and within and between the mandalas is complex and requires great skill. The new chapters in this e-book show something of this complexity. Given the hidden nature of professional artistry, you might decide to look for it in the chapters and resources where we (and others) have not mentioned it, but where you might metaphorically see, taste, smell, hear, feel it.

Enjoy!!

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Chapter 3 - Critical creativity in pictures

Brendan & Angie dancing the mandalas of critical creativity - Enhancing Practice Conference, Melbourne, 2007



This chapter presents several PowerPoint presentations which can be found within this repository (see Chapter 3 in ‘Supplementary documents’ section):



Some examples are shown in this repository and the evolution of critical creativity can be seen in pictures on this YouTube link:



A group poem created at an international conference by 60+ participants at a workshop can be found on this link –



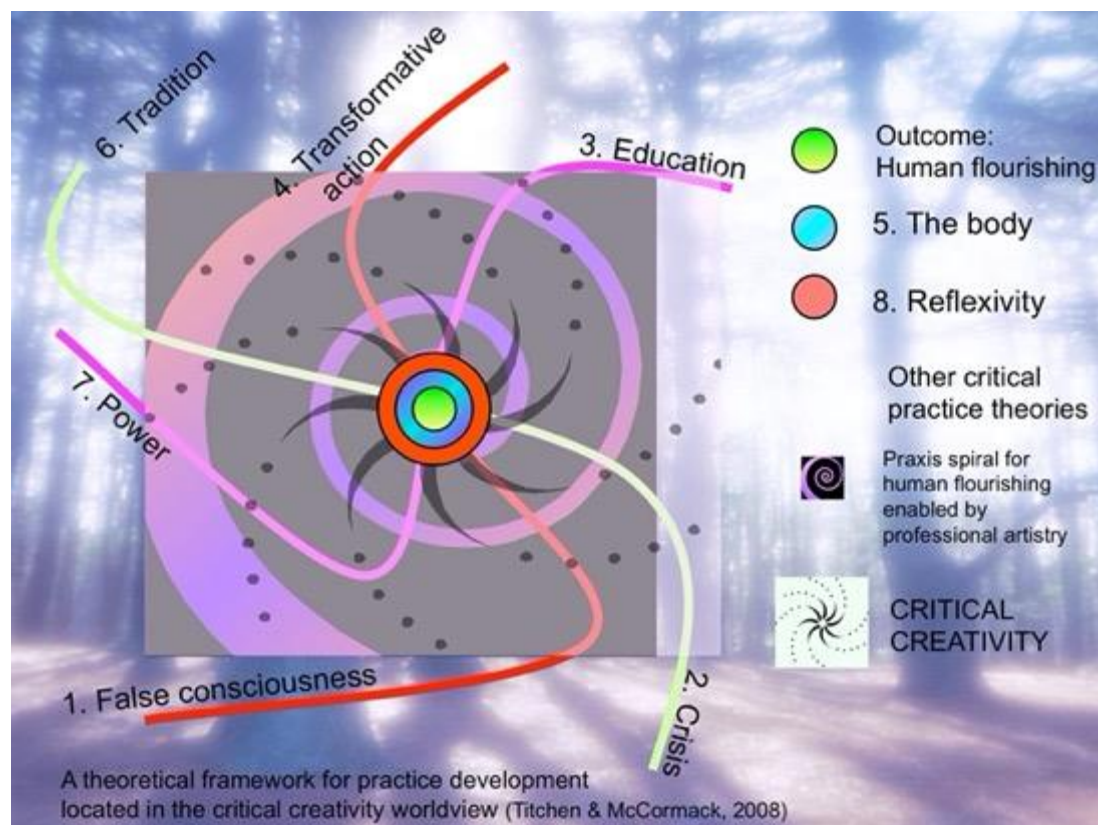
Chapter 4 - A methodological walk in the forest: critical creativity and human flourishing

Angie Titchen & Brendan McCormack

Titchen A. & McCormack B. (2008) A methodological walk in the forest: critical creativity and human flourishing. In K. Manley, B. McCormack & V. Wilson (eds), *International Practice Development in Nursing and Healthcare*. Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 59-83 (© 2008 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd)

Originally published in the above book chapter, we reproduce it here with kind permission of Wiley.

But first, a short summary of our story in which we take you on a journey to help you to experience critical creativity in your practice development and/or your action-oriented research work. Critical creativity is a new framework for practice development and research that blends being critical (for example, challenging assumptions, pointing out contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas, reflecting in and on practice) with using creative imagination.



We present, in this chapter, the refinement of our theoretical framework/mandala for human flourishing within a critical creativity worldview (see McCormack & Titchen, 2006; Chapter 5). We describe the methodology and methods that we have co-constructed within the International Practice Development Collaborative (IPDC) co-operative inquiry and show how they have been shaped through critical creativity's unique philosophical, theoretical and

methodological assumptions. Throughout the chapter, we offer a faction (fiction based on fact) growing from walks that members of the IPDC have taken together (both metaphorically and metaphysically) in a forest near Utrecht in the Netherlands. The faction is also rooted in our experience of many years of practice development, researching practice development and researching our-selves. It provides an example of how our inquiry methodology is also a methodology for developing practice.

Download the book chapter:

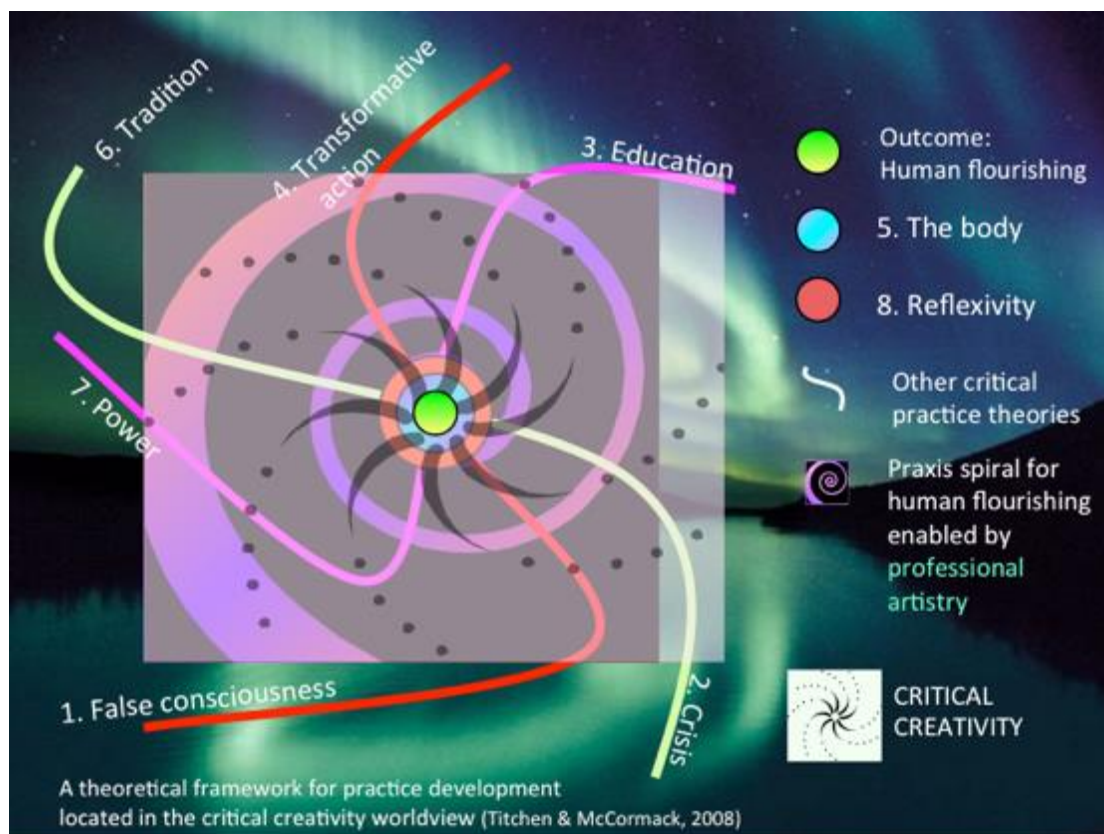


Chapter 5 - Critical creativity: melding, exploding, blending

Brendan McCormack & Angie Titchen

McCormack B. and Titchen A. (2006) Critical creativity: melding, exploding, blending, *Educational Action Research: an International Journal*, 14(2), 239-266 (reproduced by kind permission of Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group - <http://www.tandfonline.com/>)

It is bold to confront an established paradigm or worldview and propose additions to it. We expose, for critical review and public scrutiny, our challenge to the critical paradigm as an adequate location for the transformational practice development and research approaches that we are developing in healthcare. Whilst we accept the fundamental assumptions of the critical paradigm, in our view, it does not recognise the creativity required in our approaches. Neither does it explicitly acknowledge that creativity often requires moral and sacred dimensions as people push out the boundaries of the known within their own practices. In particular, we expose these gaps within Brian Fay's eight critical theories for practice.



Over the last decade, we have addressed these gaps, by combining the assumptions of the critical paradigm with our experiences of using creative imagination and expression in our practice development and action research work. Then through a critical review of our work, we have created a new paradigmatic synthesis to add to the critical research paradigm. We call this synthesis, 'critical creativity', but we locate it today in the 'transformational', rather than 'emancipatory' worldview. Within critical creativity, human flourishing is the central

assumption. It is the ultimate ‘end’ or purpose of practice development and action research and the ‘means’ or processes, strategies and tools through which the end is achieved.

In this 2006 paper, we set out our reflexive journey that led to the articulation of ‘critical creativity’ as a paradigmatic synthesis for action orientated development and research. In the development of the methodology of critical creativity we critique current assumptions underpinning the critical paradigm and articulate critical creativity and its unique philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions. Wherever possible we draw upon our practice development and action research work (and those of colleagues) to illustrate these assumptions at work. Finally, we propose that the critical creativity paradigmatic synthesis is relevant beyond health science, to the whole of critical social science.

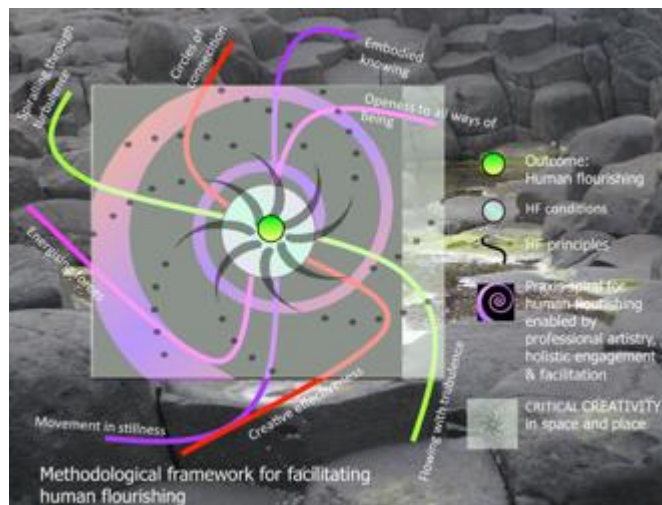
Download the paper:



Chapter 6 - Dancing with Stones: Critical creativity as methodology for human flourishing

Angie Titchen & Brendan McCormack

Titchen A. & McCormack B. (2010) Dancing with Stones: Critical creativity as methodology for human flourishing, *Educational Action Research: An International Journal*, 18(4), 531-554 (reproduced by kind permission of Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group - <http://www.tandfonline.com/>)



Heavy feet of stone
Seeking transformation
Dancing rocks and flows

Critical creativity is a paradigmatic synthesis linking critical social science with creative and ancient traditions. Our haiku summarises the essence of this three-part paper. ‘Heavy feet of stone’ describes the rationale for our creation of critical creativity. ‘Seeking transformation’ sets out the background and methodology for our inductive, methodological development. ‘Dancing rocks and flows’ unfolds a new methodological framework for action-oriented, transformational practice development and research which is concerned with human flourishing for those who engage in such work, as well as those for whom the work is intended. Through interplay of story, metaphor, poetry and critical dialogue, we present our methodological development approach for critical creativity and the methodological framework. Within the framework, we focus on conditions and principles that enable our worldview of critical creativity to be used in action research and practice development.

Download the paper:

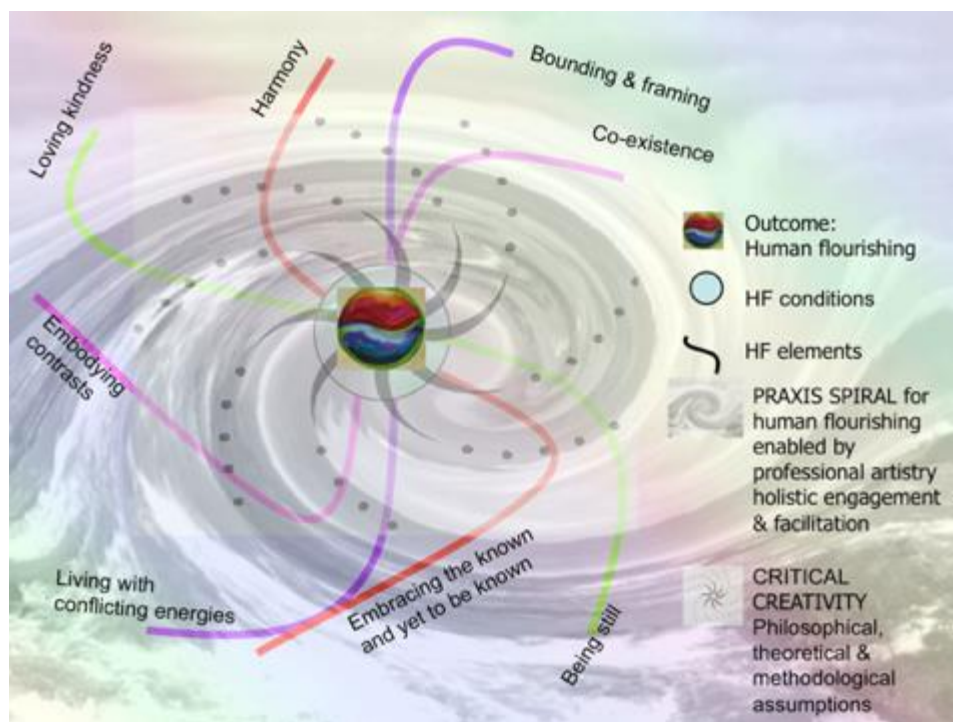


Chapter 7 - No beginning, no end: An ecology of human flourishing

Brendan McCormack & Angie Titchen

After seven years of work, this chapter was created and written on a seven-day retreat at Dzogchen Beare, a Buddhist retreat centre in the south west of Ireland. We present our methods, then our findings in the form of a poem with commentary. Whilst we briefly point out the resonances between our findings and key literature in the field, the purpose of this paper is not to engage in a comprehensive review of the literature and to locate our work within it, but rather to express simply and poetically the nature of human flourishing, as we have come to know it directly and experientially. Finally, we offer a definition and symbolic image of human flourishing.

This is an extended version of a paper published in the International Practice Development Journal (McCormack & Titchen, 2014).



Download the paper:



McCormack B. & Titchen A. (2014) No beginning, no end: An ecology of human flourishing. International Practice Development Journal, 4(2), [2]
(<http://www.fons.org/library/journal/volume4-issue2/article2>)

Chapter 8 - Critical-creative companionship: A strategy for showing others how to dance the critical creativity mandala of mandalas

Angie Titchen & Lorna Peelo-Kilroe



Lorna (left) and Angie (right)

This chapter shows the mandala of mandalas in action in the early days of a doctoral supervisory relationship. We include a summary of the critical-creative companionship mandala and reveal how the critical-creative companion dances the mandala of mandalas during a critical-creative inquiry retreat. Lorna's progress one year on can be found Chapter 15, "Riding the heron".

Before or after reading this chapter, if you haven't already, you might like to look at this slideshow as it gives more detail of the critical-creative companionship mandala through images and words ([Critical-creative companionship](#)).

Opening

In Chapter 2, the hidden professional artistry of dancing the mandalas of critical creativity was brought to the foreground. The tacit dimensions and processes of professional artistry introduced there are central to the story told in this chapter. They will emerge into view through showing how Angie, as one of Lorna's PhD supervisors, helped her to learn experientially how to embody the mandalas and dance or interplay them. This is not an easy learning journey, as you will have seen if you have read Chapter 4, 'A methodological walk in the forest', where some co-inquirers struggled to find meaning and understanding for themselves. Angie's experience as one of the facilitators in that inquiry led her to question and inquire into how she could better help others with this journey. In a current series of co-

inquiries with PhD students and practice developers, Angie has explored how, as a critical-creative companion, she can make something of this professional artistry visible to others. This chapter is one such story and is woven from [critical creativity blog posts](#) created by Angie and Lorna from 2013-16 as a means of both critically and creatively simultaneously reflecting upon and sharing their findings.

Lorna opens the story here. She is near the beginning of her PhD. Lorna's inquiry question at that point, concerned how the paradigm of critical creativity would hold her philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions together in her PhD study. Angie tells her story of the same event. Her own inquiry question was about what she does, as a critical creative companion, to help others work effectively with their own inquiry question. As some readers may not be familiar with critical-creative companionship, we interrupt the story briefly to set out the mandala in words and imagery, so that Angie's story makes sense. Even if you have read Chapter 2 where it was introduced or looked at the Critical-creative companionship slideshow, you will find a more detail here.

The story: Critical-creative companionship by the Rivers Colne and Windrush in the Cotswolds (August 9th-11th 2013)

I (Lorna) start my walk with my critical companion, Angie, excited about what was going to be ahead and what would unfold over the day. We agree to walk in the countryside and as Angie was familiar with the area she described it and we both agreed that the location sounded ideal for us. We arrived at the place along beautiful country roads that were quiet and sunny and as it is late summer it was harvest time so the variety of dusty colours across the Cotswolds was lovely. We discussed how we would approach our session as we travelled. We agreed that at a certain point in our walk we would give a signal to start our silent reflection focusing on what we see and on a critical question we have. During this time we would be open to whatever would inspire us in nature to think about our critical question remaining aware of where the other person was on our walk without either leading or following.



I had a number of questions that I wanted to focus on and had made a note of them over the previous days prior to my supervision. I wanted to understand what critical creativity really meant to me in my work and research and I also wanted to link it to human flourishing in a

way that created meaning for me. And the key to how I would recognise meaning is that the understanding of these concepts would be internalised so that I feel the understanding deeply or reflexively.

I felt a comfort in walking together but having the silent space to start a process of deep reflection. I wanted to experience everything that presented and work through the links and prompts that nature was providing. I started by noticing the trees and their standing within the landscape. They looked powerful and created a striking pose against a blue sky and a landscape getting ready for harvest. The sounds of nature started to take over and helped me to focus on letting go. Nearing the river the energy changed and a quickness took over matching the flow of the water and the movement of river creatures. My thinking changes to shorter reflections perhaps in response to the increased energy around. A link was forming about the landscapes we work in and how we respond as practice developers. How is this fitting in with my ideas of critical companionship and creativity and further linking to human flourishing? I felt I was flourishing within the landscape and within the boundaries we had created for our reflections.

I started to think about the supportive space that I was in and how that felt for me. Seeing symbols of being in tune emerged for me; two horses in a field grazing together comfortable in each other's presence; butterflies going about their business together and apart; river birds and insects at ease with their environment although there was a degree of danger for them; the river and how it responds to the changing landscape and contexts it encounters. Looking more closely at the foliage nearby the river I noticed a tree that had part of its branch lying across the river, almost perpendicular to the trunk but still alive. It reminded me that we can't assume that someone has totally switched off. I then noticed a thistle clump and how it had established itself even though often considered a pest plant to farmers. This clump was tall and proud in its space and looked beautiful for itself. I thought of how human flourishing is about freedom to be who we are.



Coming together and sharing our experiences felt very natural for me, almost in a way I hadn't expected. It was about opening up and sharing without judgements. Everything was significant and all sharing was appreciated and accepted. I started to 'feel' a sense of what critical creativity is and what it feels like to have a critical companion.

On this journey I was fearful at times of certain dangers as I perceived them – the time of year and possibility of encountering a bull in a field of cattle. And my fear of wasps that had modified over the years, but still bothers me. Angie kindly acknowledged these for what they meant to me. I finished the day with thoughts about how good I was feeling about the experience and how nourished I felt. The following day was a building on this experience and looking deeper and refining my critical question - what does critical creativity feel like and how does it link with human flourishing? How can I start to feel confident about what I am learning, confident enough to be able to ‘know’ that I know it? ...

... I thought again about being a critical companion and how it felt to me in this space.

Critical companion

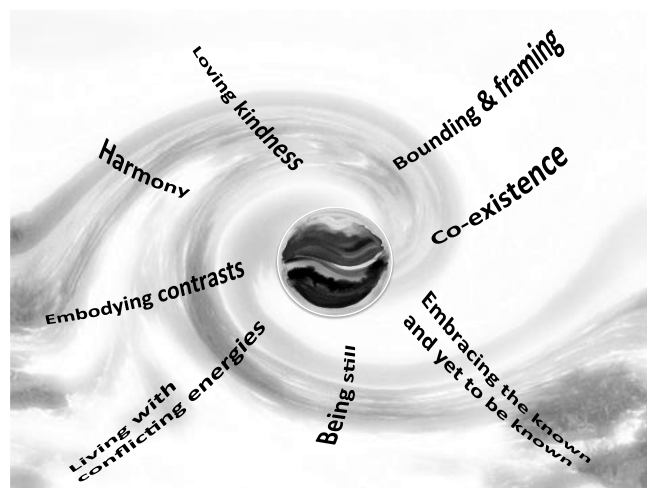
Rambling through confusion and doubt
Hoping for deep understanding and meaning
Asking questions and wondering and seeking
Trying to find that elusive ‘light bulb’ moment

Letting go and letting come, saying yes
Focus is on what is felt and slowly dawning
With gracious support and felt kindness
Walking near and holding our precious space

(Lorna Peelo-Kilroe, August 2014)

Back home in Ireland, I looked at Brendan and Angie’s definition of flourishing.

“Human flourishing occurs when we bound and frame naturally co-existing energies, when we embrace the known and yet to be known, when we embody contrasts and when we achieve stillness and harmony. When we flourish we give and receive loving kindness” (McCormack & Titchen, 2014, Chapter 7).



To make sense of this definition, I decided to link what I was learning from the work of Gaffney (2011) and Senge et al (2005) with what I understand about transformational practice development. I did this by creating a matrix, but as I looked at it, I decided to make it more real to me, by making a mandala of my growing knowledge. I am hoping that both mandala and matrix will change significantly over the next few years.

Finally, to capture the learning from my weekend of reflection I painted a picture of my journey (below). It shows the earth as the foundation (brown) and the elements of nature that left an impression such as water (blue), the harvest crops, bushes and flowers and plants that I noticed. I also captured ... the threat of the bull and wasps, symbolised by the crosses, and when I put them all together the picture for me shows movement and the beginnings of what I hope are learning spirals that will grow with me. The bull and wasps do not appear out of place or menacing in the picture to me but blend in to form a picture of my inner and outer journey.



We interrupt now to summarise the critical-creative companionship mandala, detail of which can be accessed elsewhere (Titchen, 2000; 2004; Brown & Harrison, 2009; Titchen & Hammond, 2016; Tasker & Titchen, 2017).

Interruption: Critical-creative companionship

Critical-creative companionship is a metaphor for an experiential, co-learning/inquiry journey with a companion who brings the whole self (mind, heart, body, imagination, soul/spirit) to help another. Companions may have more experience than those they are helping, but they are overtly learning and inquiring by walking alongside and learning with and from the other. Facilitators of learning and development of any kind sometimes use the same strategies and methods of critical-creative companionship, like the use of creative expression and imagination and artistic and cognitive critique, but they locate their work in another worldview or theoretical underpinning.

The critical-creative companionship mandala is an evolution of Angie's original critical companionship framework (as she called it then) (Titchen, 2002; 2004) that is located in the critical worldview⁷. As Angie and Brendan worked together to develop critical creativity, their companionship naturally changed form to be congruent with the slowly emerging worldview. Actually, it was more chicken and egg as inquiring into the nature of their own companionship helped them better articulate the new paradigmatic synthesis. Thus, critical-creative companionship is an extension of Angie's original framework and is located within

⁷ This original framework has been used by researchers, practice developers, educators and curriculum developers, in different countries, contexts, settings and professions.

critical creativity (which of course melds and blends the assumptions of the critical paradigm). The major difference in this new version is that, at its heart is the moral intent of human flourishing and social justice for all involved. Practically, the difference is that the companion uses the whole self and connects with the natural world and ancient wisdom, for example, through creative imagination and expression, metaphors, natural objects and working outside in hospital/university grounds, gardens, streets (see Chapter 17), parks and occasionally in natural surroundings (see Chapter 16). These practical differences have the biggest impact on professional artistry as the companion is blending and melding a wider range of qualities, knowledges, ways of knowing and intelligences, for example.



There are four domains comprising a number of processes (Figure 8.1) and practical know-how strategies (see Titchen, 2003; Wright & Titchen, 2003; Titchen, 2004). Professional artistry is the overarching domain and has several dimensions and processes.

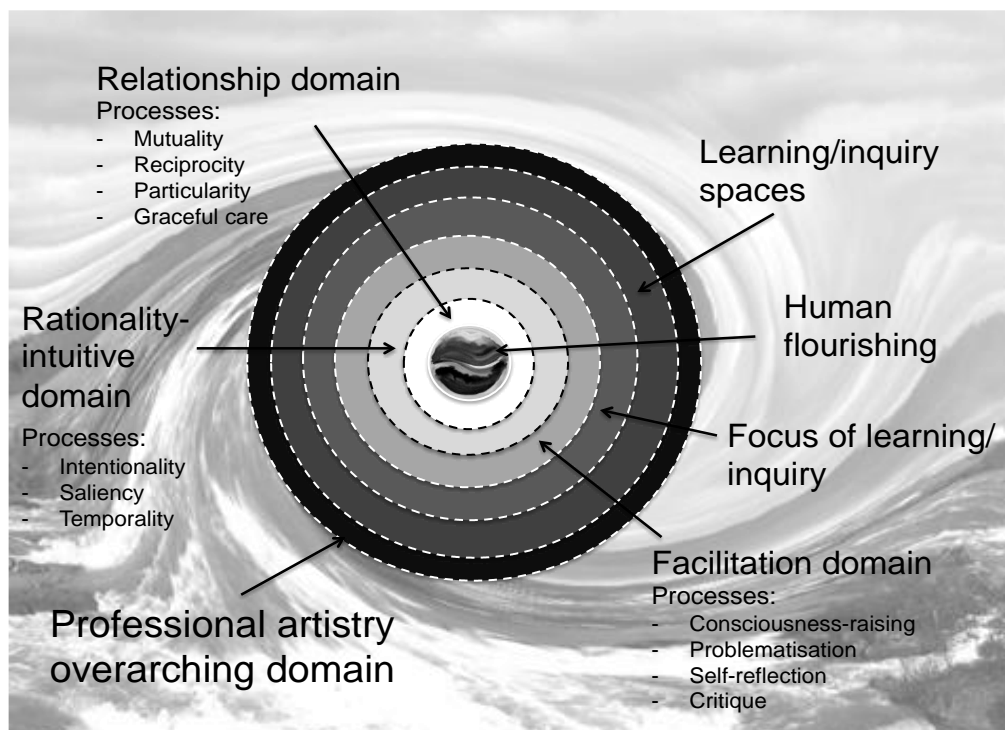


Figure 8.1: The critical-creative companionship mandala

Relationship domain

Mutuality – working with

Reciprocity – reciprocal giving and receiving of wisdom, care, concern

Particularity – getting to know the other as a whole person

Graceful care – engaging the other as a whole person authentically with the whole of oneself/being kind/present/emotionally engaged but balanced/

Rationality-intuitive domain

Intentionality – Being deliberate, purposeful cognitively and intuitively

Saliency – Knowing what matters/what is significant/what needs to be paid attention to

Temporality – past, present future time, timing, timeliness, pacing and anticipating

Facilitation domain

Consciousness-raising – enabling conscious awareness of taken-for-granted assumptions, embodied wisdom and the carrying of culture in the body, discourse and language

Problematisation – helping others to see problems that they are not aware of or re-framing problems to help others see things from different perspectives

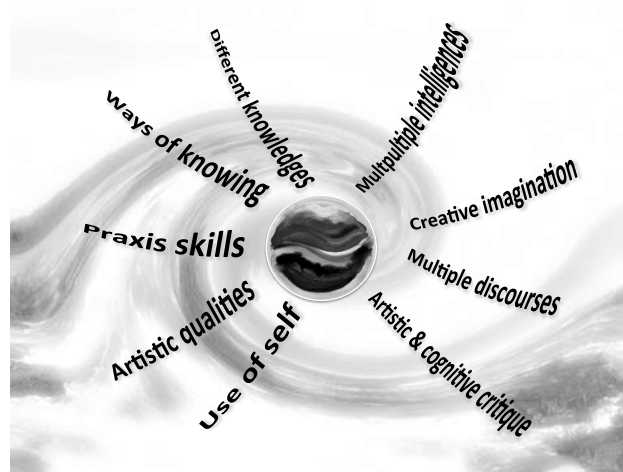
Self-reflection – helping people to reflect on themselves and their practices to develop self-knowledge and to be able to evaluate their impact in interaction with others

Critique – engaging in critical-creative dialogue with self and others to co-create and contest new knowledge and understanding.

Professional artistry (overarching domain)

Through the dimensions and processes of professional artistry the companion blends, ‘dances’ or improvises any combination of the domains, processes and their strategies to meet the particular needs of people being helped in relation to their particular experiences, contexts and situations (Titchen & Higgs, 2001; Titchen et al., 2007; Titchen, 2009).

Dimensions of professional artistry



Artistic qualities, such as connoisseurship, appreciation, discrimination, disposition to what is good, boldness, audacity and sticking power

Praxis skills for melding and blending the dimensions of professional artistry are the capacities to interplay, unravel, reveal, interweave, imagine, symbolise, harmonise and balance

Different ways of knowing and being, including pre-reflective (embodied or without mental representation), reflective, reflexive, metacognitive, aesthetic and ancient wisdom (derived through our evolution as humans and being part of nature on our planet and the universe.

Different knowledges, for example, local, professional craft knowledge, personal, experiential and propositional knowledges

Multiple intelligences or the wisdom/capacity to grasp something quickly and enable the use of multiple knowledges and ways of knowing in the moment, for instance, embodied, aesthetic, emotional, spatial, musical and spiritual intelligences

Creative imagination as a means, for example, of surfacing tacit, embedded and embodied knowing that is hard or impossible to put into words and developing new understandings, meanings and insights

Multiple discourses concerns the capacity to dance between different discourses (use of language which is imbued with specific cultural meanings) at different interfaces in and beyond the workplace and organisation

Artistic and cognitive critique occurs through a re-iterative, reciprocal dialogue between words and art forms and enables the turning of emerging understanding into informed, transformed and transforming action



The processes of attunement, synchronicity, flowing, interplay, energy (work), synthesis and balance enable critical-creative companions to dance the praxis spiral of critical creativity to achieve the ultimate outcome of human flourishing. Each 'dance' is unique, depending on the person/people involved, the problem/issue/question being worked with, the situation and context.

Back to the story ...

Angie now shows Lorna how, as a critical-creative companion, she danced the critical creativity mandalas. Over a relaxed supper, Angie has established some sense of Lorna's inquiry focus as an exploration of how to embody critical creativity because approaching the frameworks cognitively just wasn't working for her. She couldn't remember them. She is not alone in this! Lorna also wanted to explore further the nature of human flourishing and then how it links to critical creativity. Angie, to her delight, found that Lorna's wants blended beautifully with her own inquiry question about how she did critical-creative companionship that enabled human flourishing for those involved. She felt this focus in their co-inquiry would also help Lorna to begin her journey towards becoming a critical-creative companion for the Palliative Care teams that she will be working with to review and develop their service. They agreed that Angie would point out to Lorna, during and after the retreat, which aspects of the frameworks she had been using, when and why; in other words, articulating her professional craft knowledge (practical know-how) of being a critical-creative companion. Afterwards, when Angie came to write up her reflection as a blog post, she was able to point out in even more detail what she had been doing and to link the frameworks as a critical creativity mandala of mandalas (Figure 8.2 below) for the very first time.



Figure 8.2: Critical creativity mandala of mandalas

Critical-creative companionship mandala (CM) (This chapter)

Theoretical mandala (TM) of critical creativity (Chapters 4, 5)

Methodological mandala (MM) of critical creativity (Chapter 6)

Human flourishing Mandala (HFM) (Chapter 7)

In her reflection, she identified the mandalas by using the abbreviations above.

Angie's story: Tramlines

As we continued our contemplative walk, we traverse a wheat field. I noticed that, at regular intervals, there were parallel lines of space created when the wheat was sown mechanically. They reminded me of tramlines and that symbolised for me how our ways of being, knowing, doing and becoming are often habituated. The next day, I was able to use this symbol to help Lorna. But I go ahead.

We were actually engaged on this second period of silent walking because of what Lorna had just shared with me with in our critical dialogue. Some ideas had emerged for her about working with her participants in the palliative care programme review during our earlier contemplative walk where I had encouraged Lorna to let go of her thoughts by opening up her body senses and noticing what she noticed. After sharing, she had concluded that the insights coming from her engagement with her body senses and then dialogue with herself had given her some clarity, but that there were other things that still were unclear and this was making her anxious (TM: Crisis). She started to discuss these other things and I gently stopped her. From what I already knew of Lorna I could see her falling into the familiar tramlines of trying to talk her way to understanding (TM: False-consciousness and CM: Problematisation; Particularity; Saliency). Whilst using our cognition is often very helpful to us in moving on, I felt in this case, with her inquiry foci, this was too soon (CM: Temporality) and that she could go deeper into openness through her body before bringing in her head (MM: Openness to all ways of being). So I suggested that she go back into her body

senses and continue in her meditative walk (CM: Intentionality). ‘Walk a while more and open up your senses again to let your new insights settle into your body. Remember your body is always several steps ahead of your cognition and there may be further insights embedded there that you have not accessed yet. If you talk now, you may be denying your body’s wisdom (CM: Problematisation). Try following the wisdom of your body’ (TM: Education). ‘I am going to say yes to the adventure, Angie’, Lorna said, ‘just like you said yes to the adventures that opened up for you on your world trip (I had told her about this previously in a ‘getting to know each other’ way!’

The next morning in the car, without prompting, Lorna told me that that moment had been very significant for her because going back to the body really ‘shifted’ her subsequent thinking about how she might start with the two palliative care teams (TM: Transformative action). She recognised, for the first time, a pattern in the way she approaches things with her head only. This often results in her ‘just going round and round the circle and getting nowhere’. I took this ‘significant moment’ as evidence that my use of the processes of the rationality-intuitive domain of critical-creative companionship (i.e., CM Intentionality, Saliency, Temporality) had been effective in facilitating a shift. I explained this to Lorna and pointed out that I had realised these processes by stopping her in her tracks and suggesting going back into the body. After this revelation, I pointed out to Lorna that her going round in circles was like circular tramlines going nowhere! I didn’t know at that point if Lorna was getting this articulation of my professional craft knowledge fully, so I will tell you shortly what I did about that. First I want to link the tramlines with danger and vulnerability.

Danger & Vulnerability

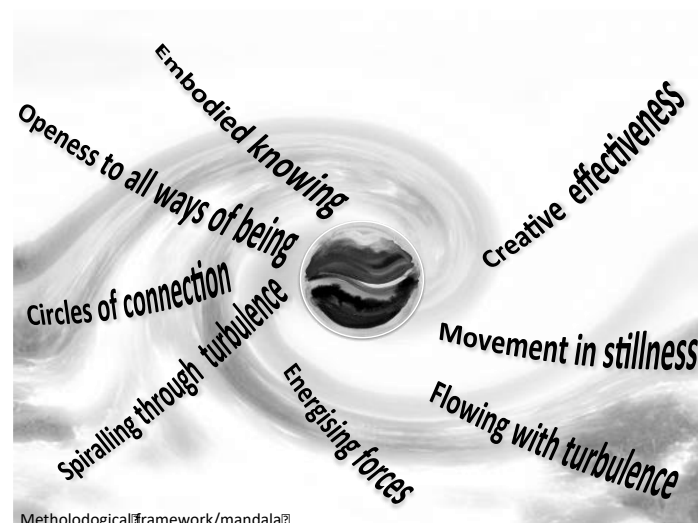
Our walks took us through fields that I know have cows and bullocks in them year-round. I know they are safe. But twice during the weekend, Lorna spotted a bull in a field of cows and calves. She knew that August is the time the bulls do their work and at this time they can be very dangerous. We were astonished to see this because public footpaths cross these fields. On both occasions, the only route to our destination was across the field. Seeing the bull (TM: Power in the sense of ‘power over’) was aware of us, we felt our fear and recognised our vulnerability so we stayed close to the fence to ensure escape if necessary.



Danger and vulnerability, unknown for me on this walk before surfaced again in the form of a monster combine harvester cropping oilseed rape. The harvester was bearing down on us (TM: Tradition; Power). I knew we had right of way over the field and I wanted to maintain that right, but it felt scary as the harvester was very big and I couldn't see the driver. It was heading straight for us. It re-surfaced a fear I had felt in a terrifying thriller I had seen years ago where a huge truck relentlessly 'stalked' and maliciously threatened a car driver. This visual image and fear of both bull and monster machine symbolised for me, at that moment, the dangers of challenging myself and others to move off tramlines to open up to new ways of being. At more or less the last minute, the harvester turned and went round us, leaving us with safe passage and a feeling of joy at the result of standing our ground in the face of danger (TM: Power in the sense of power circulating). This image felt relevant in terms of exploring how to help others to recognise socialised stuckness with the need sometimes to be courageous as well as protect ourselves if necessary (HFM: Embodying contrasts – in this case the different emotions of fear vs. happiness and Power over vs. Power circulating).

Articulating my professional craft knowledge of dancing the mandalas

Back now to the morning moment in the car. Because I didn't know whether Lorna was making connections between the things I was pointing out to her, I decided to begin our critique and contestation of the critical creativity mandalas. I explained that although the mandalas were published separately because they were created over a span of over 10 years, they are linked. I also said that the critical-creative companion uses professional artistry to dance them or improvise use of various aspects of them to inform specific actions in particular situations, cultures and contexts (much as described in the interruption above and in the way I am pointing them out in this reflection). I suggested to Lorna that novices to critical creativity tend to focus on the mandalas separately or they do not link the critical companionship and professional artistry mandalas with the critical creativity mandalas. Thus they tend to miss the dance of MM: Creative effectiveness and TM: Transformative action, for example. Whilst working with one mandala at a time (HFM: Bounding and framing) is a good idea when learning the complexity of doing research, practice development and education within a critical creativity worldview, it is very important to be aware that they are connected.



Yesterday, Lorna had an insight about going round in circles and getting nowhere. So picking up on that, I asked her how she tried to make sense of the mandalas. She responded, 'By reading and re-reading many times over'. 'Would it be appropriate to say that you are trying to learn them to some extent by rote-learning, that is, trying to memorise them?' Lorna nodded, so I suggested the following propositional and professional craft knowledge (practical know-how) that I have shared with other students over the years.

'How about when you read, you keep stopping, say every five minutes and ask yourself how this connects with something you already know or do in your practice? Then alternate reading and connecting all the way through. As you read, be playful and curious. You might want to have a big sheet of paper and create a mind-map of these connections or draw visual symbols or develop metaphors. Even go for meditative and reflective walks in nature with yourself!!

When you have read the whole article or chapter, develop an action plan about how you might test your deepened understanding in your practice and how you will gather evidence to see if your understanding results in more effective outcomes. When you have carried out your action, go back and read the paper/chapter again and keep repeating this process of reading, playing and dancing with ideas through your creative imagination and expression, trying them out in practice, then reading again to see if what you experienced fits with what is written. And you might find that you also want to contest what is written and we can have a critical-creative dialogue or artistic and cognitive critique about that. Over time, I suggest that you widen the scope of the mandalas you work with in this way and play with the connections between them.'

I finish by saying, 'Finally, throughout this whole process, remember these mandalas are presented separately for the purpose of Bounding and framing (s) so that critical creativity might not be so overwhelming. But as you progress, remember that they are not god-given separate entities. They meld and blend with each other and are held together by the emancipatory and hermeneutic praxis spiral that is enabled by professional artistry. Also, they should not be revered as god-given, but should be constantly challenged and tested for suitability for your purpose and research questions (CM: Critique). **You** will have to work out how you are going to use the processes, principles in the particulars of your research and situation. Thus you will create new new understandings about the mandalas as you use them. So don't accept them blindly which novices tend to do of any mandala they read in the literature. Contest them, by yourself and with others, see if they have legs for you.'

Lorna said that she had never done anything like this before and no-one (not even in her Master's degree course) had suggested this way of learning to her. I replied that others had said much the same to me before when I suggested this approach. 'Maybe it is a case of lecturers and supervisors failing to articulate their professional craft knowledge of learning and critiquing because it is so taken for granted by them.'

Not completing the learning circle

When we arrived in Swinbrook by the River Windrush, I asked Lorna how she would like to use the time today (CM: mutuality). 'Using the same approach as yesterday in order to go deeper'. And so we did. When we came to dialogue with each other, Lorna shared a startling realisation she had had after our conversation in the car. 'I realise now that I have not been completing my learning circle.' 'What do you mean by that?' I asked. 'I am not

making sure I really understand something before I try it out in practice, then it doesn't work. I now realise that I must go right round the circle and keep going round, but now it is a spiral and I will move forward.'

Lorna asked me the following question to remind her what I had said in the car.

- Do you look at each mandala in isolation and then try that out in your practice and then go back to reading the mandala?

The next question was new

- As you develop expertise as a critical-creative companion, are you conscious in action which process, principle and mandala you are using at the time?

I responded, 'These are good questions, Lorna. Taking your first question. For me, I would read them all in overview, just to get a 'feel ' for them, rather than understand them in detail, so that I could get a sense of the whole 'mandala of mandalas' of critical creativity. Then I would start with the particular mandala that I am most attracted to. This attraction means that my body is telling me that that mandala is the most relevant to me right now, even though I can't put why this is the case into words or thoughts (MM: Embodied knowing). When the mandala was beginning to consolidate in me through this process, I would start on the next most attractive in the light of what I had learned. But as we are all different, we will find the way that suits us best.

Regarding your second question, when you start as a novice accompanying someone on their learning/inquiry journey, it is good to ask them if they are willing to help you to develop your skills as a companion. When planning your session, you might appropriately say to yourself, 'Today, I am going to try out 'this, this and this process strategies'. You do and then something happens as a result that you haven't foreseen and you need to do something else to help the other move on. So you have to re-think in the moment what you are going to do. You might have a copy of the mandala in your pocket to remind you and/or you might ask the person you are helping to help you.

As you develop your skills, you will find that the concepts, processes and principles gradually go into your body and you begin to act first and then become conscious of what you are using. That shows you that the rationality-intuitive domain, the professional artistry dimensions of discrimination, appreciation and connoisseurship and processes of synthesis and interplay and embodying contrasts are coming into play (CM). It is very exciting when that realisation happens!

However, as we develop finesse and expertise, we respond so fast that we only cognitively recognise what we are using afterwards (CM: Pre-reflective, reflective, metacognitive and reflexive ways of knowing; Multiple intelligences). It might be seconds later or afterwards when reflecting or talking about them with your co-learner/inquirer. That is exactly what has been happening to me this weekend with you. You will have noticed that I keep pointing stuff out to you as we dialogue and informally over meals and drinks. I have never done this so self-consciously and intensely before! I am also increasingly aware that I swing really fast from being in an embodied space (i.e., totally focussed on the present experience) like I was at the water's edge yesterday) to being in a cognitive space, like me thinking I need to role-model to Lorna how to open up the body senses as we set off on our walk yesterday. The nearest I can get to explaining this magical thing is that it is like flowing round a laminscate or infinity sign. I am in constant motion (flowing) and it is like being in two different spaces

at the same time. In ancient wisdom, this might be called ‘shape-shifting’ (acknowledgement to Anne Ryan for this ‘naming’)! (CM: Professional artistry -different knowledges



Concluding remarks

In this reflection, I have had more time to identify and articulate many other processes, concepts, critical theories and human flourishing principles than I shared with you at the time. I know I could have pointed out here a lot more connections to the mandalas than I have, but I think it would cause an imbalance and put you off! Also, at this stage I think it is more important for you to grasp the essence of what we experienced, in terms of how to do transformational action-oriented research within a critical creativity worldview.



I have finished, in my beautiful garden, the painting I started in the last field when the bull started approaching us and we exited rapidly! You may notice that I have used the grass and wheat heads that you left behind. Hope that is OK. It felt good to me in terms of connecting with you! The painting captures for me the essence of how the mandalas dance with each other, sometimes being in the foreground and sometimes in the background, supporting and giving meaning and guidance for the foreground work. I have then laid the painting in the centre of a mandala of mandalas (Figure 8.2). Our River Colne forms the overall background that has enabled us to foreground these mandalas in our inquiry together. Perhaps this might be useful to you, Lorna, as you go back to your reading, knowing, doing, being and becoming and help you to trust yourself more (to access your Warrior Woman (Titchen & Higgs, 2001)). I hope this reflection and collage inspire you to be playful and curious as you dance between the mandalas and your experience and maybe create your own mandala too. In terms of your inquiry question about human flourishing, I have been able to see all the elements at work in our companionship this weekend. Perhaps there is something of it too expressed in the mandala of mandalas.

I know I have flourished. I have been happy which many people claim is at the heart of human flourishing. I have really enjoyed myself. I have also learned a lot more about how to express the melding and blending of the mandalas and to reveal how the critical-creative companion uses them through synthesis, flow, interplay, working with energy and

maximising synchronicity, attunement and balance. It is these professional artistry processes that are so hard to show others, but I think I have achieved that with you this weekend.

So you see you have been able to help me enormously in my own inquiry into being a critical-creative companion!! Thank you, Lorna.

August 2013

P.S. (July 2017) My work with you that weekend and over the following years with you and others inspired a chapter that I wrote with an Australian colleague (Titchen & Tasker, 2017). It is just published!

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Chapter 9 - Being a member of the Student's International Community of Practice (SICoP)

Brighide M Lynch, Michele Hardiman, Francis Grand, Tone Elin Mekki, Dr Shaun Cardiff, Dr Famke Van Lieshout, Catherine Buckley, Liz Breslin, Caroline Williams & Donna Frost

The Person-centred Practice Research International Community of Practice (ICoP) is a formal partnership between the Person-Centred Practice Research Centre at the Institute of Nursing and Health Research, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland with: England Centre of Practice Development at Canterbury Christ Church University, England; Fontys University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands; Buskerud and Vestfold University College, Norway; West Park Healthcare, Canada; and the University of Technology, Australia.

One of its foci is the creation and support of a doctoral studies community of practice. This community of practice has been supported by members of the ICoP and facilitated primarily by Professors Jan Dewing, Brendan McCormack and Angie Titchen. A number of PhD students in the SICoP are using a critical creativity approach in their research and/or have experienced our person-centred, critical-creative facilitation approaches in their workshops, meetings and doctoral supervision. This booklet, created by the members of the SICoP in 2014, shows how they experienced it.

Booklet



Chapter 10 - 'Plain sailing'? A metaphorical critical-creative journey

Famke van Lieshout

Coming to understand, embody and live the depth and breadth of the critical creativity mandalas takes time. Famke deepened her understanding in her doctoral action research where she took a critical-creative approach, not only to analysis and interpretation, but also in the way she wrote her findings in her PhD thesis. Her personal narrative, as a novice facilitator of action research attempting to help practitioners and leaders to transform their workplace cultures, is beautifully illustrated by paintings and a metaphor of sailing. Extracts are given here. Since then, Famke continues to grow and live her understanding of critical creativity as a paradigmatic synthesis which now informs her action research, teaching and personal life (<https://youtu.be/xbrbc2wSfFg>). She shares something here about how she has come to embody and live this worldview more fully. For others' experiences also see [this link](#).

Famke

I am a nurse, health scientist and member of the Knowledge Centre for Person-centred Practice at Fontys University in the Netherlands. During my first years as a PhD student I only had a vague notion of what a philosophical stance was. I saw fellow students struggling to define theirs and did not know where to start. The importance of developing my philosophical stance, was something however that was emphasized over-and-over by my supervision team, during the doctoral study (Lieshout van, 2013). I understand why now.

In the first years of this study, I facilitated practitioners and leaders in transforming their workplace cultures, through participatory action research. I know now that a key attribute of facilitating transformational processes is to be clear about your philosophical stance that guides and informs your facilitative and research actions. How do I know this? By the painful experience I had as a novice in facilitating action research. This experience arose from starting to work in the practice setting before I had clarified my stance. What happened is that I found myself easily caught up by the practice setting. This resulted in me using methods for action that I was familiar with, but that I could barely justify with some kind of philosophical or theoretical underpinning.

After two years in the hospital, little progress was being made with developing practice and cultural transformation. My supply of strategies for action ran out. This lack of success caused imbalance and impacted on my facilitation and interplay with practitioners and leaders in practice. An extended reflexive analysis on this particular phenomenon became the new focus of the study. A final stage of this analysis was the creation of a metanarrative that I constructed around a sailing metaphor in which interrelated stories were used. These, I had previously constructed from data about facilitating action research in a dynamic context. These data were analysed with different interpretive teams using critical creative hermeneutic analysis (Lieshout & Cardiff, 2011). This resulted in the identification of multiple themes and categories that characterised the phenomenon. The metanarrative was a newly constructed, all-encompassing narrative, in which these themes and categories were interrelated and explained. It revealed the essential meaning of the lived experience of a facilitator of

participatory action research. The use of the metaphor of sailing in the construction of the narrative was to make the experience more universal and tangible for others. Within this metanarrative six critical moments were identified. These were significant recurring patterns that impacted on my facilitation practice and were also collective for my journey of becoming. Fundamental in this journey was how I came to define my philosophical stance and embodied and lived the principles underlying a critical creativity worldview more fully.

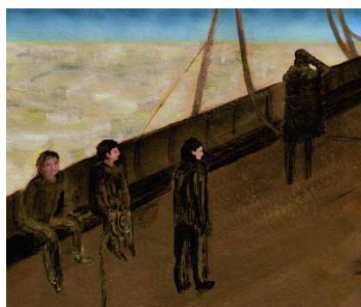
In this chapter, I will extract and reveal some essential parts of this sailing journey through these critical moments. I will tap into different sources to illustrate what happened and what the effect was on me as a person living the critical creativity 'mandala of mandalas'.

Editors' note: Dear Reader, see if you can spot any of the critical creativity mandalas at work in Famke's story that follows. We can see aspects of all of them. Just to get you started, some of Brian Fay's critical theories (Chapter 5) are being lived out at the beginning of her story.

'Plain sailing' – I don't think so!

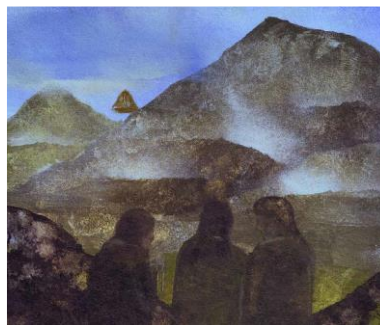


While I worked with practitioners and leaders in practice I was challenged by a constant tussle of assumptions, values and beliefs that were held by the context and myself and the critical paradigm in which I had embedded my research methodology. However, I found myself living a more positivist/interpretative worldview in my research practice, because the context of the hospital and the research going on within it was more positivistic. This was confusing and made me make zigzag movements. I tried to **find navigational buoys** to reach desired destinations, but they were often inconsistent with the critical paradigm. I did notice the difference in worldviews, but I was persistent in sticking to my chosen course. I was hesitant and unable to bring this tussle into the open with my supervisors. I was too busy riding out the heavy sea traffic and turbulence of doing action research in daily practice.

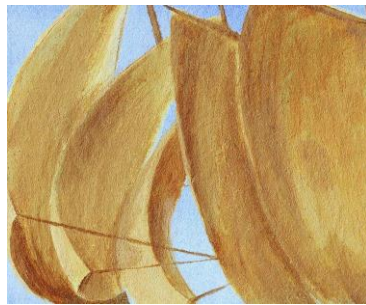


In these conditions, progress was very slow or non-existent, so I decided to move away temporarily from the practice setting to make sense of what had happened. Hence, I made a

shift in my study from emancipatory praxis to hermeneutic praxis. Working with a different philosophical perspective now led me to acknowledge the importance of defining my philosophical stance as I had to decide on different strategies to answer my revised research questions. So I took the time to work collaboratively with my supervising team. Defining this philosophical stance became a recurring item on our agenda. We, so to speak, **positioned the boat, plotted the course, and directed the crew**. I started to read about different philosophies, became more attentive and mindful to things happening around me. I also facilitated and participated in critical dialogues with fellow doctoral students and colleagues about issues related to different philosophical perspectives. Integrating phenomenological hermeneutics and critical creativity, enabled me to hold on to some crucial principles and to work with these in my own way in the reflexive analysis. My first success was when I used the ‘Alice in Wonderland’ fairytale in preparing a certain set of data. By adopting the original storyline and characters in the book I was drawing on different knowledges and ways of knowing that enabled me to achieve a deeper reflection on my experiences and simultaneously provided a structure for me to write a story for further analysis.



Working more closely with my supervisors within and outside the study, gave them the opportunity to deliberately role model different philosophical perspectives to me and then enter into reflexive conversations together afterwards. This closer working also helped us get to know each other more personally and to learn from each other. We became more open about our stances and the struggles, even as expert research facilitators, with living our espoused principles in our individual practices. This contributed to **building trust and morale on board**, as a research team. My supervisors’ commitment to the study and their unconditional belief in me restored my self-confidence that I had lost while I was in the practice field. This enabled me to be more courageous and to take risks. This meant that I became more open about expressing sharing what I felt and thought and sharing primary ideas for discussion. Supervisors and critical friends in the university and the Students’ International Community of Practice (Chapter 9) together formed a ‘system of support’ for me and played a pivotal role in helping me to define my own stance throughout the study. I was continuously challenged and supported to open up my thoughts, feelings and imaginations and to articulate underlying values and beliefs. I often found it more comfortable to express myself through the use of creative arts. Then I could find the words to talk about my values and beliefs and open up the possibilities to reflect and critique them together. Because we spoke different languages, the use of creative arts also prevented us from becoming bogged down in semantics (Lieshout & Cardiff, 2011). I can honestly say that I came to better understand, embody and live the depth and breadth of the critical creativity ‘mandala’, mainly through working with these people in my ‘system of support’. This happened through experimenting with different artistic approaches with them and then applying new learnings gained from this process in my teaching, facilitation and research contexts.



I opened myself to different methods that would enable me to bring heart, mind, body and soul into the reflexive inquiry. I experienced that my visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic and naturalist intelligences (Gardner, 1983) were well developed and enabled me **to catch wind**, to work with all my senses, emotions and multiple ways of knowing. This clarified my preference to use creative arts as imagery, metaphors, nature collages and storytelling, to engage my whole self in making meaning from the data.

In my writing, the sailing metaphor became a constant feature. Although the search for a metaphor took me a while, it was actually ‘right under my nose’; it was very close to me and felt authentic. Sailing was something I practised much and enjoyed every time. Every detail helped me to distance myself from the personally lived experience, for deepening reflection and to gain new insights. Despite the complexity of the reflexive analysis, I noticed myself most of the time enjoying the writing, making sense of it, reading about it and discussing my findings with others. It gave my self-esteem a boost, I flourished as a person and it was really energizing.



Nevertheless, energizing moments still alternated with moments of energy depletion. There were moments when I fell back into old patterns guided by assumptions, values and beliefs from my former worldview. This was a view that I had held for a long time and felt safe with. Therefore I was hesitant to just ‘let it go’. And I blamed myself for not staying true to my recently adopted worldview. It was very challenging for me to live the principles underlying critical creativity in contexts that, or with individuals who, embraced a different or even conflicting worldview. Also when I had a deadline, I easily relapsed into former strategies. I had to go through several ‘storms’ of frustrations also when creative arts did not seem to work. Then I became impatient and uncertain and often started to THINK about or searched for what I ought to be doing, rather than to FEEL and ‘let-come’ what should be the right thing to do. For example, the metanarrative was only created after several attempts and only revealed to me after I had ‘moved in stillness’, walked on the beach and opened all my senses. I only decided on this strategy, based on critical creativity and focussing more on the affective, when other more cognitively based strategies had not worked in this situation. It required me to be courageous and to have trust in the outcome. During these moments I was

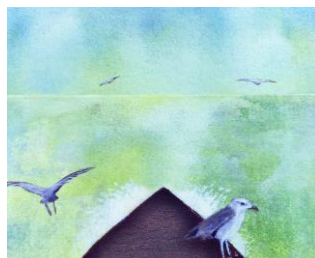
grateful to be able to fall back on my support system that principally helped me with **preserving energy to face the storm** and encouraged me to continue.



My system of support helped me to come out of a storm, often related to the paradigmatic imbalance I experienced, and helped me to make sense of what had happened. I experienced the reflexive spaces we created as a safe haven **to anchor**, meaning to take time to reflect and to recuperate from the turbulent journey. The use of critical creativity helped me to reconnect with myself, the context and the study as a whole, as well as, appreciate, interweave and playfully make use of the different stances I seemed to embrace at that moment. I realised it was OK where I came from and where I was now in my personal journey of defining my philosophical stance and living it in my practices. It provided me with a better understanding of myself and the contexts that I worked with. The scope of strategies that I could use in different contexts was widened. Through reflexivity, I also realised that helping teams to transform their practice and the process of me becoming a skilled facilitator were parallel processes. Because of the ever changing and dynamic practice we are thus all in a constant state of becoming. Therefore, working from a critical creativity stance was appropriate here.

This shortened metaphorical journey has shown that coming to understand, embody and live the depth and breadth of the critical creativity mandalas is not really ‘plain sailing’, but rather a process of constant balancing and trying to achieve synchronicity with self, others and wider contexts. There is a constant change and tussle between different perspectives when working collaboratively with others particular in participatory Action Research and Practice Development. Knowing and being able to use the assumptions and principles of critical creativity takes time. In my case, it was mainly about ‘awakening what was already there’, developing trust to use it in a research context and experimenting with it in different contexts. Critical creativity became an overall approach, not only to analyse and interpret the research data, but also in the way I reported my findings in the thesis. It resulted in both the development of new insights about the phenomenon of the study, as well as mutual growth for both me and the research team. My own perseverance and the commitment and expertise of my system of support in living the critical creativity mandala of mandalas, were essential in the process too. They helped me to understand myself and the context and the interplay between them in order to understand and facilitate others in their transformation. They also helped me to appreciate and understand the philosophical, theoretical and methodological underpinnings of any critical worldview. Without this, the potential for transformation of health and social services and workplace cultures through action-orientated methodologies may not be fully realised.

Since my study, I continue to grow and live my understanding of critical creativity as a paradigmatic synthesis, which now informs my action research and teaching approach and personal life. I also recognise underlying assumptions in other approaches such as corporate anthropology (Braun, 2015), appreciative inquiry (Masselink & De Jong, 2014), positive psychology (Bohlmeijer et al., 2013), theme-centred interaction (<http://www.ruth-cohn-institute.org/home.html>) and mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). This inspires me and even adds new elements to the mandala and helps me to set sail to new destinations.



In my supervision of Masters and Bachelors students, I am always checking whether the student and their final thesis project will benefit from the use of creative arts to tap into their different ways of knowing in the context of narrative or data analysis workshops, for example. We also use creative arts as a contemplative activity and when there is a need to express ourselves in different ways. Sometimes we use Image Theatre (Boal, 1994) to feel with our bodies what is happening in a situation. Working with students who are engaged with developing themselves as person-centred, (clinical) leaders and professionals during a programme, is most rewarding in terms of using critical creativity and its purpose of human flourishing. I work with them for a period of one or two years, quite intensely. We then really get a chance to get to know each other and to build trust. We work more on a one to one base at the University and in their (clinical) practices. I help the students to stay connected with themselves and to formulate their own learning needs and work towards them. Sometimes, at first sight, their needs seem at odds with the learning needs formulated by the University. However, they always come together by the end of the programme, but uniquely for each student, at different moments and at a different pace. In these relationships, I have observed that mutual growth is at its greatest.

Sometimes I co-facilitate students in using creative arts in their own practice settings, to role model myself and to achieve confidence with facilitating critical creative methods. We always evaluate our collaboration and the relationship and how we both have come to grow personally/professionally.

Author's Note: The paintings used in this chapter were specially made for my PhD thesis by the Dutch artist Laury Persoon. Here, I have 'translated' and used these paintings and the critical moments to reflect on my journey of adapting to researching in the critical creativity paradigm, as well as becoming a facilitator of participatory action research (the latter as presented in my thesis). These parallels or 'circles of connection' have thus made a new narrative that adds to the transferability of my original interpretation because it also works in a different context and with different people.

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Chapter 11 - Writing with flow: publish and flourish through whole-self writing

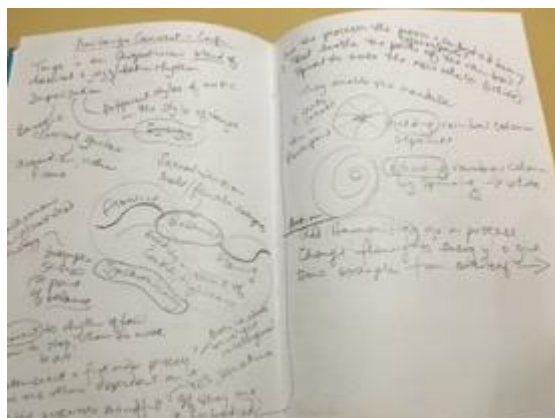
Angie Titchen

Titchen A. (2013) Writing with flow: publish and flourish through whole-self writing, International Practice Development Journal, 3 (1), May 2013
(<http://www.fons.org/library/journal/volume3-issue1/article10>) (permission to republish this article kindly given by the International Practice Development Journal)



In this chapter, Angie writes about how the embodiment of critical creativity can play out in our research/practice development writing. You might recognise the methods she used as similar to the inquiry methods used in our creation of the critical creativity mandalas, as well as how her writing on the day she describes here was informed by the assumptions of the methodological mandala.

A good start to writing with flow is simply going out and buying yourself a notebook that gives you pleasure to look at and hold! Then take it when you go for walks in parks and countryside, sit on the beach or go to conferences and meetings. You might want to take coloured pencils, pens or a tiny paint box and brush with you. You can download the article for free here [Writing with flow](#).



Chapter 12 - Exploring 'self' as a person-centred academic through critical creativity: a case study of educators in a school of nursing

Brendan McCormack, Brian McGowan, Mary McGonigle, Deborah Goode, Pauline Black & Marlene Sinclair

McCormack B, McGowan B, McGonigle M, Goode P, Black P & Sinclair M (2014) Exploring 'self' as a person-centred academic through critical creativity: a case study of educators in a school of nursing, International Practice Development Journal, 4 (2) (3) (<http://www.fons.org/library/journal/volume4-issue2/article3>) (permission to re-publish this article kindly given by the International Practice Development Journal)

This paper provides a reflective overview of the experiences of a group of educators in one school of nursing who participated in a programme of creative engagements that focused on exploring 'self' as a key concept in person-centredness. Practice development depends on effective facilitation undertaken by facilitators who are critical and creative. Whilst there is an increasing literature on facilitation models and processes, there is less attention paid to 'understanding self' as a facilitator of person-centred cultures. Practice development methodologies need to make such exploration an explicit part of their work in order to engage in authentic facilitation of learning and development.

Download the paper:



Chapter 13 - Helping others to inter-relate critical creativity methods with the methodological mandala

Angie Titchen, Brendan McCormack, Val Wilson & Annette Solman

Titchen A., McCormack B., Wilson V. & Solman, A. (2011) Human flourishing through body, creative imagination and reflection. International Practice Development Journal, 1(1), Article 1

(http://www.fons.org/Resources/Documents/Journal/Vol1No1/IPDJ_0101_01.pdf)

(permission to re-publish this article kindly given by the International Practice Development Journal)

This chapter presents a previously published article, 'Human flourishing through body, creative imagination and reflection'. It describes our experience of further evaluating and refining the critical creativity methodological framework 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.

Download the paper:



Chapter 14 - Creating the conditions for human flourishing

This section presents our TED talks that are concerned with creating the conditions for human flourishing.

Brendan's TED talk - "In search of (my) personhood"

is imbued with the principles of critical creativity. See if you can see them at work. Open Brendan's TED talk in YouTube:



Angie's TEDx talk - "Running with wolves"

tells the story of creating the conditions for human flourishing. Actually, it also shows the origin and the first steps of her journey towards critical creativity with Brendan. What are/were your first steps towards being critical and creative at work?

Open Angie's TEDx Talk in YouTube:



If you would like to see Angie's slides of her talk more closely, then this is the [link](#).

Chapter 15 - Embodying critical creativity. Riding the Heron: An experience of undertaking a creative visioning exercise with my critical creative companion

Lorna Peelo-Kilroe & Angie Titchen

This chapter follows on from Chapter 8 and shows Lorna's progress a year on at our 2nd critical-creative retreat. Lorna starts by describing her experience.



Flying through spaces in the imagination provides powerful images of understanding and insight. This was my experience when I undertook this exercise in the beautiful Cotswolds with Dr Angie Titchen, my critical creative companion as part of our creative retreat. We are using critical creativity approaches to increase my understanding of how the paradigm of critical creativity can support and hold my methodological and philosophical assumptions together. I also wanted to distinguish the different research landscapes from the paradigm of critical creativity. Angie, as an experienced critical creative companion and skilled facilitator wanted to explore ways to support me in my quest.

Angie and I set out on a reflective walk to River Evenlode which flows through the grounds of Blenheim Palace. Angie and I have undertaken several reflective walks together and we have established a general preference for how we like to walk together. Based on the Critical Companionship Framework (Titchen, 2000, 2004) we agreed how we would structure our walk – *mutuality*, agreed a time frame and signal for the stages of our walk – *temporality*, and because Angie knows my learning styles – *saliency* and *particularity*, I was able to

confidently start walking knowing our agreed signals for transitioning and how we would stay in touch - *reciprocity* enabling independent exploration of our landscape. Although this may sound quite obvious and straightforward it is in fact quite a sophisticated process because showing consideration for each other and our needs enables a much richer reflection. In my case I didn't have to lead or follow and could be confident that I wouldn't 'get lost' in unfamiliar surroundings or that I have to keep up. I could go at my own pace and experience my reflection in mind, body and spirit; a whole-body experience. A lovely sense of completely letting go and experiencing everything that is available to me and that is a liberating experience in itself.

I only noticed when I reflected back on my walks that I use some skills that I have developed when I am in work. I 'dabble' in mindfulness, initially as a way of calming my thoughts and capturing my feelings in a grounding way, particularly in times of pressure or stress. Although I am not proclaiming any level of expertise in mindfulness I have a rudimentary understanding and appreciation of the benefits particularly at times when I am under pressure or when I am generally feeling anxious. A lovely feeling of relaxation and curiosity takes over when I engage in reflective walking. I focus on almost disengaging from my cognitive brain and avoid trying to make sense of what I see and feel. I just let it be what it is in the moment, a breeze, crunching of earth and foliage underfoot or the sight and sound of perhaps a river or birds and insects singing and humming. I am aware that I have questions I want to find answers to, but I want to find out in a different way, so that my learning can be internalised and not forgotten, as is often the case with me when I use my cognitive brain for new academic learning.

Walking towards the River Evenlode I noticed some beautiful trees that were gracefully imposing on the landscape and represented strength and endurance to me at that time.



I walked along the riverbank and noticed how still the water was and how much vegetation was growing in the river although it seemed quite deep. There were people sitting by the river and they were quite noisy but somehow the intrusion didn't derail my reflection. I wanted to get inspiration from nature to understand my metaphysical and theoretical bedrock for my research and let that thought come and go as I walked. We reached our transitioning point

which was at a bridge over the river and along the way I had picked up a twig that was in the shape of a two-pronged fork that symbolised two paths for me. I wasn't sure whether I needed to choose a path or that I had arrived at the point where both paths met. I picked up a stone that represented consistency, strength and landscape.



Angie had collected some symbolic artefacts of nature too and we stopped by the bridge and slowly engaged in conversation sharing our experience of the walk and what our artefacts meant. One of Angie's artefacts was a heron's grey feather and she said that this symbolised the main theme of her reflection. We saw a beautiful heron beside the river at the end of the bridge – perhaps the owner of the feather!

Starting our creative vision

After we shared our reflections we prepared to undertake the creative visioning exercise which would explore different worldviews of research by using a metaphor in which the bedrock of each worldview is its philosophical stance, the landscape that it supports is the research paradigm and then within the landscape, the gardens are the research studies. We agreed the location - facing the river with our backs to a tree.

We sat down and began the exercise by closing our eyes. Creative visioning was instantly appealing to me. I noticed that as soon as I closed my eyes and Angie started talking me through the journey, I linked almost instantly with my imagination. I can describe it as having one foot in the present and being aware of my body in relation to where I was sitting, and one foot in an imaginary landscape. I was climbing on the back of a huge heron and flying away from the tree I was sitting by, going up into the air and away into the distance to a technical research landscape. Guiding me through the journey, Angie asked me to experience the flight imaginatively with all my senses.

When I had reached the technical bedrock, she asked me what I could see. I didn't have to answer her questions, I just had to use my imagination to picture what I was looking at and engage all of myself in the experience, for example, the sound of Angie's voice, the noises taking place around us, the breeze blowing gently, and how I was feeling. What was the bedrock like? What was the landscape garden like? I knew I was engaging in the exercise because I could see the bedrock as grey and uniform. Then the landscape garden was grey too and sterile looking. Individuals working in the garden looking robotic and trying to prop up lifeless plants in a sterile soil.

Getting back on the heron's back I was flying away to another landscape – a transformational bedrock and landscape garden. The contrast to the technical image was huge. The transformational garden was colourful and lively with people interacting together and happily attending their growing plants. I imagined that they were actually transforming the garden as they worked. The whole atmosphere here was one of freedom, energy and engagement.

To bring the visioning exercise to a close I imagined that my heron transported me back to the tree where I was sitting and we then slowly opened our eyes to return to the present. We shared our visioning experience and how we had experienced our landscapes.

What did I see?

In my vision of a technical garden I saw people working hard and using all their energy on trying to get plants to grow. Making things grow was the fundamental aim in the technical garden and not, for example painting the fence. However the essential ingredients of moisture and heat were missing and the soil was barren and grey, so the task was almost impossible and unfortunately the gardeners couldn't see this. If the fundamental aim in the garden was to paint the fences then the essential ingredients would be a fence, paint, brushes and individuals to do the painting. A researcher would be looking at perhaps the quality of the paint or brushes or perhaps how long the job takes. There may be a focus on how the job was planned and levels of satisfaction with the job. But my research study with its philosophical bedrock of virtue ethics and a research landscape (paradigm) with an emphasis on transformation and human flourishing did not seem to fit in to my image of how that my research landscape and garden might look.

The overall feeling in the technical garden was one of disappointment and resignation and it wasn't a place that I wanted to linger in for long. Interestingly on reflection, if the tasks were different in the technical garden, not focused on growing things in barren soil, then I could see perhaps a more appealing landscape where fences were nicely maintained and objects or ornamental features could be introduced that would make it more appealing. This underlined the importance for me of choosing the right philosophical underpinnings for my study, based on my purpose and context. It was important to choose well because these underpinnings would hold my research together as it progresses.

My vision in the transformational garden was in stark contrast to the technical garden. A strong vision that wasn't orderly or sterile but a blaze of colour and activity. The process of transformation was demonstrated by skilled gardeners who were moving together through the garden, planting flowers and shrubs and transforming barren soil that has been prepared to receive plants and seeds. The gardeners were working hard and getting soil on their hands and shoes as they watered and fed the soil and plants. Their skills were demonstrated in an intuitive way. They seemed to know what to do and how to do it as their hands expertly crafted this beautiful garden. The garden looked so natural and in tune with the research landscape. They were planning and exchanging opinions and comments as they worked. In an almost straight line, they were moving together through this huge garden where everything ahead of them barren. But everything they touched and planted was growing. Along with the liveliness and colour that the gardeners were creating there was an atmosphere of joy and satisfaction. This was conveyed in their confident skill in what they were doing. I wanted to linger here for a while longer because the atmosphere was so appealing to me.

What did I learn?

This visioning exercise enabled me to picture in a deep and powerful way what my research philosophical underpinnings might look like. Also, at a very profound level, I understood the significance of whole body engagement and bringing in creative and ancient ways of knowing, as well as rational, cognitive ways of knowing, so that we can bring the whole of ourselves to our research and practice development. This consolidated, for me, my decision that critical creativity with its focus on transformation and human flourishing was congruent with virtue ethics and would, therefore, be my research paradigm.

Titchen et. al. (2011:4) describe critical creativity as “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”. Titchen and Horsfall (2011) maintain that a critical worldview of research alone won't support transformation of practice research. It requires a focus on being critical and at the same time on being creative and using our whole selves to transform practice. The critical creative paradigm enables human flourishing in just this way through the body, creative imagination, nature, beauty and the sacred as well as through the critical mind (Titchen and McCormack, 2010). And why through the body, creative imagination, nature, sacred knowing and beauty? **Because, from my growing understanding, I believe that we have many of the answers to our questions within us that we have yet to unlock and discover.** McCormack and Titchen (2006) maintain that the critical creative paradigm attempts to enable, empower, democratise and emancipate and uses hermeneutics to discover unconscious pre-reflective knowing.

Linking with our inner selves, mind, body, heart and soul and the ethical virtues we have developed enables us to fully engage with our whole selves. By using creative ways of learning we are enabled to discover what some would say we already know – the yet to be discovered knowledge that we all have within. **Therefore emotions, spirituality, aesthetic and creative knowing and imagination are important and significant to our development and practice and our choice of research methodology.** We are only propping up existing structures if we try to develop cultures using technical approaches. **We cannot engage in transformational research without using the congruent philosophical underpinnings that will hold and carry the research study.**

I have found the slide⁸ below about action-oriented research very useful in pin-pointing my worldview. The slide has helped me to cognitively process my learning in relation to research world views. Combining this cognitive learning with my Riding the Heron experiential learning, I can now say, from a deeper understanding, that my research study is in a transformational worldview. We, my supervision team and I, think that virtue ethics fits under the broad philosophical stances of metaphysics and aesthetics and that philosophical assumptions drawn from virtue ethics do blend and meld with those of the research paradigm of critical creativity. After working with all aspects of myself, I am much more confident that the research paradigm of critical creativity will enable the capturing of whole body engagement. It will also support the exploration of cultures and systems right to the roots and opportunities for transformation and human flourishing. Now I know that this understanding will stay with me. It is no longer scary and, as Angie says, it is now embodied in me.

Action research worldviews				
Worldviews	TECHNICAL	PRACTICAL	EMANCIPATORY	TRANSFORMATIONAL
Philosophical stance	Empiricism/ Rationalism	Idealism	+ Critical realism	+ + Metaphysics/ Aesthetics
Ontology/ epistemology	<i>Objectivity is key, sense data determine reality</i>	<i>Emphasis on actors' ideas as determinant of reality</i>	<i>+ Social practice and culture shape practice</i>	<i>+ + Philosophical inquiry of a non-empirical character into nature of existence</i>
View of persons	<i>Instruments to carry out action</i>	<i>Individuality of persons</i>	<i>Welfare of the person & community</i>	<i>Transformation and flourishing of whole person & community</i>
Knowledge	Instrumental Explanation	Practical Understanding	Practical + Emancipatory Reflection	Practical, Emancipatory + transformational
Practice development/ Research paradigm	Empirico-analytical Positivist	Interpretive constructivist/ hermeneutic	Interpretive + Critical	Interpretive + Critical Creativity

⁸ Developed by Angie Titchen and her colleagues in the International Practice Development Collaborative and International Community of Practice

Currently, I am exploring virtue ethics as the philosophical/theoretical stance and I am finding that it fits very well with my belief that we have character virtues that have the potential to enable us as rational human beings to know the right thing to do and to become expert in doing the right thing. This knowing comes from a process of developing practical or moral wisdom, as we grow and mature into adults supported by our character virtues. For example we may feel that we have a strong sense of compassion or justice or generosity, three of the many virtues we may have. According to Aristotle, who developed the theory of virtue ethics, when we develop the practical or moral wisdom to support our virtues we become excellent in using them. When we become excellent then there is no time when we would not choose to be just or compassionate or generous and it is in applying our virtues in our everyday life that we flourish. The wonderful thing about virtue ethics is that one is never too late to develop them and that they are then available to us in all facets of our lives to help us to be more fulfilled. This fits very well for me with using our whole selves as with critical creativity and I am excited now to have the opportunity to continue building on this combination in my research study.

Thank you, Angie, for this enlightening and stimulating experience and for being my critical creative companion.

September 17th 2014

Riding the heron: Angie's experience as Lorna's critical creative companion

Angie takes up the story ... Before we arrived at Blenheim Palace, I knew that Lorna wanted to explore the slide that she presents in her reflection above. Together, we (Lorna's supervision team) have used the slide to help Lorna to identify where her research on human flourishing in a strategic nursing context is located philosophically in terms of her research methodology and in relation to the topic of her research, that is, human flourishing.

I wanted to help her explore the essence of the slide in a creative way and I had no idea how I might do that when we entered the gates of Blenheim Palace. I wasn't worried though because I knew that if we walked in contemplative silence by the lake, using all our senses, it would just come to me effortlessly. In other words, I would be living the methodological principle of critical creativity of 'creative effectiveness'. And, of course, after bringing myself to be truly present in this moment through getting out of my head and into my body, it came in a flash. Knowing that Lorna learns through using imagery and her creative imagination, I would suggest doing a creative visualisation of the different research landscapes seen from the air, but first, we shared our creative expressions on the bridge over the river as Lorna has just described.

Then I saw the heron.



cc – [creative commons](#)

Yes, I said to myself, we will ride the heron on a mythical journey!

Once sitting at the base of the ancient tree and leaning on the trunk, we closed our eyes and I began. My voice tone was deliberately soft and slow to give Lorna time to imagine climbing onto the bird's huge back and taking her far away. Actually, I also imagined that I was riding behind her and holding lightly onto her waist! In that beautiful mythical space, I was able, not only to keep opening my eyes to check that Lorna was OK, but also to go on my own journey to the different bedrocks, landscapes and gardens.

As we rose up into the sky, I could feel the slow rippling energy of the heron's muscles. I could hear her wings beating through the air, feel the powerful air currents each beat created and smell the river as we climbed. I was astonished to find that I had unconsciously crossed my hands in front of my chest and they had become the beating wings. My voice moved to the same slow beat. Perhaps I was expressing through my body the ancient memory, locked away in our DNA, of being a bird. At the very least, I was connecting with nature and archetypal myth. Later, in critical-creative dialogue with Lorna under the tree, I told her that it reminded me of the young heroine, Lyra, in Philip Pullman's archetypal Dark Materials Trilogy who also rode the back of a giant bird to a distant land. It all may sound crazy, a magical fantasy, yes, but it was a really deep experience and an important one too.

First, it helped Lorna to recognise the importance of being aware of what our bodies are telling us in our everyday work. Second, she appears to have had a perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1981) about the slide that she had been struggling with for some months as she tried to make sense of how she needed to design her study on congruent

philosophical, theoretical and methodological principles. She is now in a position where she can see that attending to this congruence will shape her roles and relationships and the way she carries out the study. Her supervision team will encourage Lorna to explore the assumptions underpinning each aspect so that she can make choices that are congruent or consistent with the assumptions of virtue ethics and critical creativity.

On reflection now, I am struck that, in my visualisation, I was behind Lorna and holding her only lightly. There was no doubt, I was there and not left on the ground watching her fly away!!! As her critical-creative companion at this stage in her research journey, I needed to watch out for her, but also create spaces for her to take risks and step into the unknown. And as Lorna says, that requires trust between critical-creative companions to do this kind of work together.

At our next Skype supervision with Savina Tropea (whose background is both in philosophy and nursing and who is a member of Lorna's supervision team), Lorna shared what she had learned through this experience and how it was playing out in her practice. Savina responded thus:

‘ I think the level of deep understanding that this process has unravelled (and I have never seen it before) is very new to me. Angie has a lot of experience in this field, but for me to see the application and depth that can be achieved by engaging in this process is absolutely amazing. I think you managed to capture the essence of the concepts. And they are not just concepts, there is a meaning for you and I think you also managed to relate it to your practice and the kind of/the nature of the decisions that nursing and nurses have to make on a daily basis.’

Update 2016

Today is August 10th and much has changed since Angie and I rode the heron in the Cotswolds and also since last summer (2015) in the Burren in Co. Clare. In the Burren, we focused on how I would incorporate the methodological mandala of critical creativity and Aristotle's virtue ethics into my study. In doing so, Angie helped me to see and understand the differences between the methodological principles for enabling human flourishing (Chapter 6) and the elements or nature of human flourishing (Chapter 7), as she had rightly established that I had been muddling them up! (Angie informs me that I am not the only one!) Anyway, over time this blending with virtue ethics has resulted in my own mandala or framework for my study. The year started with my probationary viva in January and the time I spent preparing for it enabled me to look at my study in a step by step process. I had to understand clearly my methodology and philosophical underpinnings and how I would use my mandala with our research group. I found my viva a very positive and encouraging experience.

My research group work started in February with two groups of community nursing teams, four from a hospice and six from public health nursing teams. The purpose of their research is



to explore how they can create greater synergy between their services when providing palliative care to their community. Both nursing groups work in the same region, one service providing general palliative care and the other specialist palliative care. Both nursing services often visit the same cohort of people. My research is to help them achieve this synergy and as my worldview is transformational, human flourishing will be an explicit outcome. So this is where my research lens will be focused.

I started the study by using the critical research paradigm of Cooperative Inquiry, as described by Heron and Reason (1997), and their step by step approach from the conception of an idea to establishing how a group will work together. This felt right for getting our group going, but when it was established, I then diverted to using the paradigm of Critical Creativity (McCormack and Titchen, 2006). My reason for changing research paradigms from the critical to critical creativity is that I believe critical creativity will better support my study. That is because I believe that critical creativity engages our whole selves, including our practical and theoretical wisdom and intuitive and creative imagination, linked to ancient wisdom that is held within our bodies. This is in addition to the assumptions of the critical paradigm like enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation and social justice as the ultimate outcome, so it is, as Angie says, a ‘yes and’ relationship between the two paradigms (see also Titchen, 2015). For that reason my diversion to critical creativity is philosophically consistent and coherent. So if you look at the slide above that I was grappling with in the Riding the heron story, I have moved to the right! The added dimension for me is the use of our virtues in accordance with Aristotle’s theory on virtue ethics. According to McCormack and Titchen (2014), Manley et al. (2013), Titchen et al. (2011), Titchen and McCormack (2010) and McCormack and Titchen (2006), human flourishing is an explicit outcome of transformational practice development and research, requiring a research paradigm that enables us to engage with our whole selves reflexively.

We have had six research group meetings where we have engaged creatively with each other. We have given our group a name – ‘Harmony’ and we have identified a statement that represents what we collectively want from this study;

“Our aspiration is to transform practice in harmony”



Through our engagement together, six months into an 18 month study, we have noticed one theme emerging- that of friendship. I believe friendship is linked to my methodological framework through the Titchen and McCormack (2010) principles for creating the conditions for human flourishing and, in particular, the ‘circles of connection’ principle and Aristotle’s theory on friendship. We are having fun creatively exploring engagement of our whole selves in the study. I am reflexively inquiring into my level of authentic engagement as facilitator of the group and co-researcher to establish whether or not the level of authenticity I have used with this group has had an impact on engagement and commitment within the group. I am wondering about this, as to date, we have had almost full attendance and a lot of positive energy at each meeting.

We are throwing pebbles into a pond at the moment and making new discoveries about ourselves and how we can work together in harmony.

Pebbles in a Pond

*Throwing pebbles into a pond
Watching graceful circles running swiftly away
Unsure as yet how far they will reach*

(April, 2016)

To see how Lorna has embodied critical creativity, one year on, into her facilitator self, open the following PDF file:



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Chapter 16 - “Mary Mulcahy, practice developer & critical creative companion - this is your life!”

Mary Mulcahy & Angie Titchen

When Mary, a Nurse Educator Practice Development at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick, Sydney, Australia first looked at this ‘necklace’ of blog posts, emails and creative expressions, she exclaimed it was like “Mary Mulcahy, practice developer and critical-creative companion, this is your life!”. So that is what we have called this chapter. Mary has had an extensive career in nursing spanning over 25 years and has worked as a facilitator in a variety of education settings. She is dedicated to working with critical creativity strategies in order to enhance personal qualities, skills and wisdom to empower and connect individuals and groups. Mary reflects on the support she has received from Angie to use critical creativity more intentionally in her work. The ‘necklace’ of this chapter gives glimpses of her development over three years, as well as the way Angie journeys alongside Mary, at the same time as involving her as her co-inquirer. Mary begins.

Weaving a Path Towards Human Flourishing– The first few steps....



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In June 2013 I made my way to spend some time and visit Angie in her home in Oxfordshire, England. I first met Angie at an International Practice Development Conference in Sydney, Australia in October 2012, where I presented a paper that had elements of critical creativity spun through it. Angie was seated in the front row. Even though I didn’t recognise her, I felt comforted by her ‘presence’ in the audience. This was my first time presenting at an International conference and my presentation experience up to then had been fairly limited. At the question time, Angie commented on my use of metaphor (the sheep on the rock) that I used in the first slide of my presentation. I had invited the audience to consider the following reflective cue; “How do you think you would be feeling if you were that sheep, standing up there on that rock? Well that’s what it was like for the early facilitators of Practice Development in our hospital, they didn’t know if the rock would collapse beneath them or if

it would support them. By the end of the presentation you will get to see how this sheep fares out!”

When I was preparing for the presentation I had debated with myself whether I should use images as a way to engage with the audience or if I should just stick with the ‘facts’ and provide the data from the research project that I was presenting on. I followed my heart and used the image to frame the presentation as a means of creating a meaningful connection between me, the presenter, and the audience and also for individuals on a personal level to create an empathetic link between the research participants in the study and themselves. When Angie expressed her enthusiasm for my use of critical creative methods in my presentation, it felt as if she saw a ‘light’ within me either flash or glimmer and later asked to meet with me for morning tea to share how I was using critical creativity in my workplace. Of course, I was delighted and our journey as critical-creative companions (CCC) began... It was a joy to share with someone who also understood the power of working with self and others’ in critically creative ways.

For me, critical creative companionship is all about trust and this takes time to build. It is also about recognizing the ‘light and shadow’ of self and situations, embracing all its aspects. Critical companionship takes on a type of ‘inquiry’ that one takes with a more experienced facilitator. The rewards of CCC are far-reaching. Words are hard to find to describe the transformation that occurs. CCC can be seen as a trusted companion to journey with on a common road towards human flourishing.

The whole self is used in this work, imagination, physical movement, ritual, emotional connection, written and artistic expression.



A key element is creating silent spaces. As companions journeying towards the inner parts of self, I see it as if you are actually walking on ‘holy ground’ together. Angie and I, as CCCs, crafted a huge mandala together using the natural resources (e.g stones, tree branches, cow pats, buttercups, water) found in a stunning meadow in the Cotswolds. The symbolism inherent in this process will remain forever etched on my consciousness and continues to serve me in my current practice today with a richness that serves to remind and motivate me to keep flourishing. As Angie says, ‘A little bit of critical creativity goes a long way!’

I continue to approach critical creativity through the use of personal mandalas to access inner knowing, to allow for wholeness of self, while nourishing my sense of professional artistry (Mulcahy, 2014). CCC is a privileged relationship to have, allowing for support and challenge that provides me with the courage to keep taking the next right steps towards human flourishing. In my Practice Development work I integrate elements of CCC when I facilitate groups through mandala making or individually through reflective supervision and coaching. What I notice when I work with others in critical creative ways is that it allows individuals to believe more deeply in their own intuitive selves. It fosters graceful attention to their own professional artistry and consequently creates deeper meaning to the work they undertake with the patients they care for. Critical creativity gives honour to the noble work that health practitioners do.

This weekend I am visiting a retreat centre in country New South Wales, it has an amazing labyrinth garden. I am really looking forward to walking the labyrinth and to reflecting on my own practice to hopefully gain new insights. When I return home to Sydney on Sunday, I plan to speak to Angie and Lorna (my other CCC who is from Ireland) via Skype and, hopefully, to share some of my experiences with them. As CCCs, the journey is continuous and, as we weave our own individual paths from different parts of the world, we can still be there to support and inspire each other.



Angie

Working with Mary by the river – the contemplative silence and ritual as we created and walked our mandala – was rich, deep and immensely exciting. But I want to go back first to our earlier work together by email and Skype and trace fragments of our shared journey up to today.

After the conference, Mary emailed me.

14th January 2013: Your feedback and encouragement around the work I do in relation to critical creativity meant so much. I loved being a participant in your Workshop on Human Flourishing, it helped to inspire me to facilitate a workshop shortly afterwards in relation to Transformational Facilitation. I used an exercise similar to the one you facilitated in relation firstly getting into the body at the beginning of the session (as we know, a lot of knowledge and wisdom is already stored there) and then moving from the body to the mind where I used a power point to capture the imagination of participants to what transformation is ... We then captured this new learning / insight with a Haiku.

Mind over Matter,
Discovering Potential,
Still amazes me

(Participants' haiku)

I practised this session with four nursing work experience students, thinking if they understand what Transformational Facilitation is, then there is a good chance the high powered adult participants in my workshop a couple of days later would. These 14 year old students blew me away with their take on Transformation, ranging from the

changes that occur to self through puberty and the transformation that occurs when you live in a happy and safe home environment.

The idea of possibly writing about critical creativity in partnership with you would be wonderful. I would greatly appreciate your feedback on how I could progress with this ...

Warmest Wishes
Mary

Over the next few months, Mary shared with me the powerful place creating mandalas was having in her own personal and professional development. This seemed a good place to start our long distance companionship and so I encouraged her to write, using 'unconventional formats' about, not only the work she was doing with others in practice development education sessions, but also about her use of mandalas in her own personal and professional transformation.

Excited by the liberation of unconventional formats, she decided, not to write about work she had already undertaken, but rather to experiment, 'in relation to Critical creativity and Companionship', in some upcoming sessions. Thus, Mary's intention to write took on a learning inquiry form. Before a session, she would run a plan by me for review and then afterwards, she would send me variously an account, an evaluation by participants and a self-evaluation. I would offer feedback and pose critical questions.

28th August 2013: Hi Mary, was great to have 40 minutes of uninterrupted cyber space last night! I love the way you are working to understand critical creativity by relating it to yourself and your work. It is a great starting point.

Here are some thoughts and questions arising from our discussion that you might find helpful ...

... As you begin to work with the critical creativity mandala of mandalas, I see your entry point into the mandala through the portal (gateway) of Method. You have shown me through your reflections how you are striving to develop methods that enable staff to be reflective and you are using creative ways to do that. As you entered the methodological mandala, you were first drawn to the human flourishing principle of 'spiralling through turbulence'. This principle resonated with you as you worked with the Stolen Moon Mother story in relation to your own personal transformation, as well as your work on Monday with the group of staff who are overworked and for whom reflection is something that does not enter into their workday experience. The principle seems to capture the essence of your intention, as a facilitator, to bring about transformation for yourself and the group.

As we talked about the group, the focus was again on Method – how you could help such a group who are buffeted helplessly in the maelstrom and turbulence of their everyday work. I challenged you to think about using archetypal stories to help people to become aware and to go deeper into understanding themselves. You could use the story to help them to bound and frame their situations in new, perhaps more inner and soulful ways. Bounding and framing the macro (e.g., the organisation) and the meso (e.g., the workplace) to see the micro (e.g., team/individual) can be helpful because

they may find the same messages in the micro that are there in the macro/meso. Being able to work with the micro with that understanding will help them to flourish.

My questions to you here are: What do you think as your critical-creative companion I was doing last night on skype and right now in this email? What process concepts was/am I using? What impact do they have on you? Are they effective? How? What have you learned? What action might you take?

4th September 2013: Response from Mary -

What do I think Angie was doing as my critical –creative companion during VSee and within this email?

Using the Critical Companionship Mandala [in terms of]

- Tapping into the Rational / Intuitive Domain by creating an opportunity for reflection that was focused. Angie used reflective questioning with me as to what was going on for me, I was taken back by the connection Angie made between the sense of overwhelm I sensed from the group I was facilitating to some personal issues I am facing currently. I found this a comfort to have had this linkage made for me and a sense that Angie could tap into what was going on for me underneath that I wasn't able to see for myself.
- I really loved the way it was suggested that I could incorporate the use of Archetypal stories to bound and frame situations, this ability has yet to be developed within myself. I feel comfortable very much 'at home within myself' with this form of critical creativity.

What process concepts and strategies from the framework was Angie using?

Being Critical involved Angie problematising my issues and at the same time reframing them as a way to create new understanding. I was engaged in critical dialogue and my assumptions were challenged in the email

What impact did they have on me?

It made me more aware of the need to be authentic and to decrease the gap that is there between what I espouse and how I practice. Made me feel a little ashamed yet grateful to have the opportunity to have someone like Angie as my critical companion to help support and challenge me to keep growing and developing so that I don't, according to Gaffney, "languish". I have to learn to spiral through turbulence and the value of 'crisis' for transformation, examining false consciousness as a means to reframe situations and perspectives.

What have I learned?

I cannot do this on my own, there is help and support available to me, I just need to keep doing the 'next right thing'. I have so much yet to learn regarding PD and the critical creativity worldview. I am excited about the future. Actions outlined in Plan

Mary: I went on to undertake much deeper work with groups of nurses and junior doctors over the next while and we continued our companionship via Skype and email, focussing on our embodied exploration of the critical creativity mandalas within our work. And as you have seen, I did publish a paper about my use of mandalas.

Angie: In September 2015, we met at last for another critical-creative retreat - again in Oxfordshire. It was wonderful, we had become very close and connected. Even though this was digitally, we had touched each other at very deep levels! We hugged and wanted to hear all about our families and lives ... I told Mary about a critical-creative inquiry that I had been engaging in with Di Tasker, an Australian colleague at Charles Sturt University in Sydney, in preparation for writing a book chapter together, entitled 'Through mindfulness and grace towards embodied practice (Tasker & Titchen, 2014). I particularly wanted to open myself to my embodied knowing about the connections between grace and human flourishing within critical creativity. I felt that uncovering this ancient wisdom and exposing it to conscious reflection could help critical-creative companions to work more intentionally.

... We decided to spend the afternoon in a very beautiful, ancient garden, walking in contemplative silence and waiting patiently to see what emerged.



Our learning and inquiring together was crystallised when we created the beginnings of 'speaking out loud when moving' poems in a thunderstorm under the domes of the garden shelter (to the left of this picture).

Angie's Poem

Chaotic colour; letting go in turbulence; grace emerges

Winding paths
Grassy green serene
Quiet churchyard

Sweet sour blackberries
Wind-fall apples offer themselves
Gently

Vegetables in glory, no reason
They just are
Like grace descending from nowhere

Enchantment, wonder, awe
I feel a flood of happiness

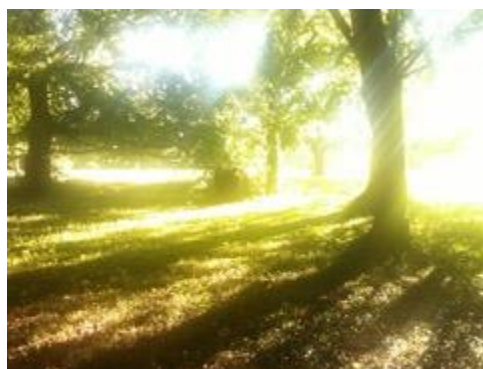
Gratitude

Thunder clap, rain-hail
Train, plane, helicopter
Cacophony

Then wet stone fragrance
Silence
Peace

Sitting together
In curved walled domes
Damp earth

Patiently waiting
In silence



Then shafts of green light create
Conditions for grace
And grace becomes embodied

This co-inquiry into grace with Mary fed into the book chapter and into my own life. And it seems to have had an impact on Mary too.

Mary

9th June 2016

Hi Angie ... [Your] poem which I read yesterday before I went into facilitating a transformational facilitation master class - totally inspired me & I found it so uplifting. It brought me right back to that time / day & found it matched my experience in a beautiful way. I loved it Angie & will use it as a metaphor for the 'much needed grace' which is available & can descend upon us all - at those times when we are open to 'receiving'. There isn't anything I feel that I could add to it that could possibly improve it. Thanks again for taking the time to create & write it ...

Continue to Enjoy every moment & every day.

Lots of love
Mary xx

PS Here is my poem.

Mary's Poem

Everything touched by grace

Fragrant Roses
Childhood Dahlias
Gardens lovingly tended to
Old old stones
Apple trees
Garden benches to rest upon
In good company
Warmth & chill
Coming together
Secret lookouts
Small beings lifted up to their full and mighty glory
Sacred space held by a still tongue
Body infused with awe and wonder, shining through
Charmed by the beholder
Everything touched by grace
No mistake, Rainbow appears, everything is in order and as it should be
"I couldn't have come up with this on my own / by myself"
"Like a birthing experience, Angie was the midwife helping me to birth my ideas
Through the dome"

21st June 2016

Hello Angie

Great to hear the update on the e-book. Very exciting. I'm facilitating a workshop today on critical creativity & planning to work with each of the principles while embracing an experiential & embodied approach. I'm also going to show your Tedx talk on this subject. I viewed it again yesterday myself & find it a real 'gem' for helping people to access their creative selves. I'll keep u posted on how it goes ... Lots of love & continued inspiration in all that you do. Mary xxx

24th June 2016

Hello Angie, Thank you yet again for your very kind words, the workshop on Wednesday went I feel very well, I'm on days off now and reflecting on the power of the principles of critical creativity. I felt your presence and companionship in the room and believe you would have been proud to see the uptake of the critical creative principles by a group of participants for whom this way of being and knowing would have been new and maybe foreign.



I have written a reflective piece following this workshop that symbolizes my growth and development as I work in critically creative ways ... I felt compelled to write in this way, having studied and brought them into a deeper sense within myself.

Your feedback is much appreciated as I can change / reformat etc depending on the requirements for the e-book. I have got permission to use the photo with people at workshop. Thank you so much for asking me to contribute.

With loving kindness
Mary xxx



[Angie: Below is Mary's reflective piece on the elements of human flourishing within a critical creativity worldview that she attached to this email. Mary has gone way beyond Method!]

An Embodiment of Critical Creative Principles as a Pathway towards Human Flourishing

Loving kindness

What is filled with love and kindness can have no limits
It promises peace and contentment
Its greatest demonstration is in the living of a joy filled existence

Bounding and Framing

When life feels burdensome and overwhelming
Step back, step aside, close my eyes
Imagine inherent gifts that exist within these small and sacred spaces

Co-existence

Where I am, in the here and now
I can simply notice, feel and know all is well and will be well
I am not alone

Embracing the Known and yet to be Known

Day to day living has its own turbulence
Fear can grip so tightly that I am unable to move
I remember to connect with the breath
The space where love enters
And radiates out to the rest of creation

Being Still

There is no need to rush
Calm and gentleness is the greatest antidote to all of life's woes
Come back to my own sweet self
Be still and remember loving kindness is the answer and the way

Living with Co-existing Energies

Shame and judgement need no longer be my teachers or my foe
I can come to believe that the body is a sacred vessel
Containing a myriad of magnificent energies
With power to heal and serve

Embodying contrasts

Life is not a straight line
It spirals and twists
Like the craggy face of a cliff that has had to endure the ocean's force
There is great beauty to be found in this turbulence
When I follow the dictates of my soul energies

Harmony

When I open myself to the creative force within
Harmony comes through like water
Where it gushes in torrents
Heard in unrestrained peals of laughter
And surprises me when in private, it leaks from my eyes
I know I am home

In response to Angie's 'I love your poem' and Brendan's 'Fabulous – really beautiful work', I emailed back:

5th July 2016: I wrote this poem / reflection on 23rd June 2016 the day after I facilitated the workshop on the critical creative principles. I called on 'Grace' to guide me with what to write and felt the words flowed through me. I felt very calm as I wrote it so didn't question but 'let go'.

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Chapter 17 - Critical-creative companionship: Walking alongside in city streets and health care settings

Angie Titchen & Karen Hammond

To develop the capacity to dance the mandalas of critical creativity, most of us need the support and challenge of a skilled facilitator of learning from experience. Such a facilitator can be called a critical-creative companion. This term has evolved through Angie and Brendan's intuitive use of her critical companionship framework (Titchen, 1998; 2004) resulting in the gentle addition of the philosophical assumptions of critical creativity and practical facilitation strategies to create the conditions for human flourishing. If you are not already familiar with the critical-creative companionship mandala (framework), then we suggest you look at Chapter 8 first.

In this chapter, we show how dancing the critical creativity mandala of mandalas works just as well when working together in rather more mundane places than the critical-creative retreats described in other chapters in this book. In reality, critical-creative companions are usually doing whole self co-learning and inquiry in the sometimes rather barren environments of public health care buildings. They use whatever they find to hand to create the conditions for human flourishing and transitioning into enlightening, metaphysical and metaphorical realms and spaces. Walking whether real or imaginary plays an important role in this transition.

We are critical-creative companions helping each other in a critical-creative inquiry. Karen is an experienced critical companion in her practice development facilitator role. Observations, interview data, evaluations and personal testimonies by those she 'companions' show that she is very effective in helping others learn through and in practice (e.g., Akshtar et al, 2006). Karen is now moving her critical companionship work into the critical creativity paradigm. This journey is sometimes one of great vulnerability, even for already skilled practitioners. We share something of this here. Originally a midwife, Karen was, at the time of writing, critical companion to 42 members of nursing, medical and management staff in a large NHS Foundation Trust, comprising four hospitals. She is currently studying part-time for her Master's degree in practice development. Angie is continuing to deepen her understanding and the outcomes of dancing the mandalas. Between 2014 -16, we met two or three times a year in person for about half a day and occasionally by Skype in between. As inquiry of any kind usually involves sharing it in some form with others, this piece backlights our journey to becoming co-authors in a recently published book on person-centred care McCormack & McCance (2017), whilst simultaneously uncovering and weaving our learning journeys (although the focus here is on Karen's learning).

Oooh!
Have you ever been in here?
No
But the gate is firmly closed
So all my senses open onto city street
Little purple plants creviced in high flint wall
Previously unnoticed
Groaning magnolia blossom waves
Drowning out the traffic

The porter's lodge at King's School
 No
 You are not allowed in here

 Thwarted but letting go
 We glide through university gate

 Immediately beside the path
 We glimpse daffodils through undergrowth
 A hidden spring garden
 Almond blossom
 Peace

 Nurtured space
 With delicate sweetness
 Honey suckled
 An empty bench

 But it looks so secret
 So private that I do not enter

 Moving on I notice
 Periwinkle – white on green
 Purity gateway

 High sloping wall of flint surprises
 It bounds quietness, unvisitedness
 A physic garden!

 Analgesia Aquilegia Vulgaris
 Yarrow dermatology Bugle
 I wake up

 Poking about
 Medicinal herbed greenhouse
 Old pipe and bricks on crusty tabletop

 And then the sign

 “Outer precinct of St Augustine's Abbey”
 We are in an urban diversity hub!
 I flood with joy
 A radical garden

 Yes, I have been here before!

(Angie Titchen, March 2014)

April 2014

Dear Karen



It was wonderful to be with you last month and immerse ourselves whole-heartedly in a critical creativity way of being, learning, knowing and becoming, even though it was only a couple of hours! It was good to have that bit more time to go beyond our previous time together in the post-grad centre and the rather concrete grounds we walked in when we were establishing where we were at and where we wanted to go (see above). As promised, I have written an account to share with you something of what I was doing last month, as your critical-creative companion. In some ways, I am trying to show you how my webbed feet were paddling fast under water while I looked, I hope, like a serene white swan! I have structured my account using the poem I wrote as we walked through the city streets in our quest to find our creative space.

My overall intention that afternoon was to help you, Karen, to begin to draw into your body the essence and spirit of the critical creativity mandalas. I wanted to do this in a way that would help both of us experience the elements of human flourishing. To do this, I intended to *role model and articulate my professional craft knowledge* (practical strategies or know how within the Facilitation domain of critical creative companionship – Figure 8.1 and accompanying text). Thereby, I would show how the mandalas dance with each other and how working with these frameworks as embodied underpinnings enables us flourish within the turbulence and complexity of transformational practice development (*intentionality*). I write this de-construction for you in the present tense, not only as a dramatic, creative device to evoke immediacy and the here and now, but also because I was aware of much of it, at the time, in my body, heart, mind or soul. You see I have already started to put the processes and strategies I was using at the time in italics. I leave it up to you to locate them in the three critical creativity and critical-creative companionship mandalas and check out what they are as a way of you making them more familiar to yourself! (*Education*) I haven't pointed them all out, so look out for more with all your senses.

Beginning

You pick me up from the station and take me to the B&B to dump my bag. It is so good to see you again! We decide to have lunch first then do a “mind” walk, as you call it (*mutuality*). As we drive to the pub for lunch, we chat socially about progress we are each

making in our inquiry. I really love hearing your amazing and detailed stories and I am looking forward to helping you probe beneath the surface to help you to get to the nub of what you are doing that makes you so successful and effective as a critical companion. At the pub, we meet Chris and Chrystal who are both using critical companionship roles in their quality improvement work in the Trust and who I met at the first Advanced School Practice Development school in September. We have a lovely lunch, re-connecting with each other (*particularity/reciprocity*). At several points in our conversation, I point out various critical companionship processes that I can see in their descriptions of what they were doing in their work. I am the only one doing this pointing out (*consciousness-raising*).

After lunch, we make a joint decision to go for an intentional walk in the St Augustine Abbey grounds (*mutuality*). We did a very brief reflective walk and creative expression at our first inquiry meeting, you will remember, and I know that you also had this experience at the Advanced Practice Development School (*particularity*). Since we last met, you have tried out the method with someone you are companioning and you say that it really works. Now I hope to deepen your experience of this creative method, so I suggest we could de-construct our walk experiences today to see if there is any evidence of the critical creativity mandalas in what we do. You agree. I make this suggestion because you have been telling me this morning and back in November, a lot about how you are working as a critical companion and its impact on others. But this telling seems to be primarily descriptive, although you are very aware of the power of your role-modelling (*intentionality* based on *particularity*). You seem to shy away from critiquing your experience theoretically. By using creative media and *artistic and cognitive critique*, I am intending to help you critically examine your own experience with the mandala frameworks (*high challenge*). I also want to help you move beyond the “mind” walk to something deeper and more embodied. Am I working with the critical theories of *False-consciousness* and *Tradition* here? What do you think?

Transition

I know that there needs to be a clear transition or portal to this different way of working and being, but I don't have a clear idea of how I could help you move from the everyday driving in the car to the Abbey into the critical-creative space of our walk. I need a portal or bridge that will be right for your unique self and for what I want to do to help you. I feel perfectly comfortable with this not knowing how to do this transition, because I know that it has been incubating in me since lunch and that what is right will come of its own accord (embracing the yet to be known). Also I need to be attuned to that right moment and not miss it (professional artistry). As I get out of the car, there it is! I know intuitively it will work to suggest that we each write a poem about our own inquiry question as we walk. Although this is the first time, Karen, I have ever done this with a companion, other than with Brendan, I know in my gut that it is right. I also know rationally that this strategy is very likely to enable you to experience writing a poem through the body and that you will almost certainly agree to it because I know that you want to stretch yourself. So what I am doing here, Karen, I was working with two dimensions of professional artistry, i.e., working with *different knowledges* and with *different ways of knowing* and intending to help you to do the same. My intention also is to help you to *bound and frame* what is going on for you right now in terms of developing your expertise as a critical-creative companion by offering you this portal or bridging into an embodied creative space. Do you know what I mean, Karen, by bounding and framing and in which mandala it sits (see Chapter 7)?



My rational, cognitive thinking had come about earlier over lunch when Chrystal had opened her ipad to read us a poem that she had found and thought fitted what we were discussing about critical companionship. You said, “You are so good, Chrystal, at poetry. I can’t write poetry”. I attributed this, at the time, to your perception that writing is your weak point. You mentioned this at our first face-to-face meeting in November last year and also, given that we are planning to write up our critical-creative inquiry together and that our methods would require regular and creative writing, I knew then that I would have to pay attention to this (saliency). You also told me today that you have started several writing ventures since then which is great. So I decide that this is the moment (temporality) to help you write poetry effortlessly and to check out my intuition that you are, in fact, an embodied poem!⁹ I feel this matters (even though you hadn’t said that it does or is something you even want to do) (problematisation and saliency), but I feel strongly again with my head and gut that it will help you gain confidence with your writing overall and give you another significant writing strategy (intentionality/ consciousness-raising/high challenge/high support). I don’t say any of this now because it would get in the way of creating an embodied, creative space by taking us into headspace. That will come later (temporality) when we can critique the issue of mutuality in all of this amongst other things.

Creating the conditions for learning/inquiry/flourishing

So, we walk to the gate of the Abbey.

Oooh!
Have you ever been in here?
No
But the gate is firmly closed

So all my senses open onto city street

Little purple plants creviced in high flint wall
Previously unnoticed
Groaning magnolia blossom waves
Drowning out the traffic

The porter’s lodge at King’s School
No

⁹ Later you told me how amazed you were that the poem emerged so easily!

You are not allowed in here

I offer you some paper and a pen as I see you aren't holding any in your hands, and you respond by asking me to capture your walking poem. I don't want to do that as I feel that you will lose out on the creative, self-reflection and consciousness-raising experience of capturing your own noticings, but I am respectful of your starting point (*particularity/graceful care/giving loving kindness*). I record your "Have you ever been in here?" However, you quickly say, "I will borrow your pen, because I know I am ducking out of doing this by asking you to do it". I am pleased because I recognise that you are enabling mutuality by this change of mind and also freeing me up to write my own poem and giving me the potential to learn and flourish through the experience of the walk (*reciprocity*).

My initial 'ooh' delight with glimpsing the Abbey through the gate is quickly eclipsed by disappointment on seeing the large padlock. We decide to walk to the university gardens which I know will mean walking some distance on the polluted, noisy road, but I immediately re-frame this situation into a meditative, contemplative practice (*problematisation*). I do this re-framing by noticing the little purple plants in the nooks and crannies in the wall by the gate and experiencing the plants with all my senses. Thus I am role modelling to you doing such a practice on busy streets (perhaps synonymous with busy health care contexts?). Similar delight in the magnolia blossom is then supplanted by further disappointment at being stopped from entering into the medieval King's school despite your very polite request to look around. Back again into the traffic.

Thwarted but letting go
We glide through university gate

Immediately beside the path
We glimpse daffodils through undergrowth
A hidden spring garden
Almond blossom
Peace

Nurtured space
With delicate sweetness
Honey suckled
An empty bench

But it looks so secret
So private that I do not enter

I continue to notice with all my body senses, touching the leaves of the shrubs hiding the secret garden, smelling the fragrance of winter honeysuckle. I know that I am role-modelling this noticing with the body senses and using myself to bring about transformation from the negativity we had encountered so far. Through emotional, body and soul attunement (*professional artistry*), I show you how finding the secret garden is transforming me towards flourishing, but that I still feel held back. Are my multiple intelligences or the capacity to grasp something quickly emotionally, with the body, aesthetically, spiritually not fully

working here or what? Or is it that the professional artistry processes of *attunement, flowing, working with energy, synchronicity, synergy, or balance* are not bubbling up yet?¹⁰

Turning my back on the secret garden, I am drawn to another opening beyond. Beside this opening, there is an ancient yew tree casting a deep shade. And there glowing in this darkness are the white periwinkles.



Moving on I notice
Periwinkle – white on green
Purity gateway

They are unexpected, unbidden and their simplicity and purity gives me a jolt. I don't know why, but they seem significant (*pre-cognitive knowing of bounding and framing naturally co-existing energies*) and they give me joy (*flourishing through embracing the known and yet to be known/embodying contrasts*).

Coming together/Synchronicity

Aware of each other, we enter a very different type of garden, one that initially seems dry and neglected. It is hard, angular with concrete and brick. But closer, more attentive noticing reveals something very different.

High sloping wall of flint surprises
It bounds quietness, unvisitedness
A physic garden!

Analgesia Aquilegia Vulgaris
Yarrow dermatology Bugle
I wake up

Poking about
Medicinal herbed greenhouse
Old pipe and bricks on crusty tabletop

¹⁰ Later, I find out that something else had to happen first!



Seeing the raised beds of medicinal herbs, I am reminded of discovering a community vegetable garden in the middle of Regents Park in London (Titchen & McMahon, 2012) and my metaphor of transformational practice development as ‘radical gardening’ (*synchronicity*).

And then the sign

“Outer precinct of St Augustine’s Abbey”
 We are in “an urban diversity hub”!
 I flood with joy
 A radical garden!

Yes, I have been here before

In 2012, I wrote the following:

“I use the term radical gardening as a metaphor for doing practice development in workplaces where it is difficult to find space to plan, implement, reflect on and evaluate the development. It’s all about re-framing the mind-set that it’s impossible to do [transformational] practice development, [in today’s world], given the current pressures we are all facing in healthcare. Radical gardening symbolizes thinking out of the box, being imaginative and doing things differently. In other words, being creative and innovative! The idea of radical gardening comes from people in different parts of the world, including the UK, growing their own food in urban areas or where land is disappearing or flooding due the effects of global warming. So volunteers use any space they can find - roof tops, school grounds, round-a-bouts, derelict land or railway station platforms! And everyone in the community can forage for free. “ (Titchen & McMahon, 2012, p.212)



(Karen, here is my own radical garden created last summer in the alley behind my house for my neighbours to forage. I am waiting for them to follow suit – already someone has put a compost bin outside their bit!)

Anyway, back to the physic garden! This garden, used for teaching students at the university, returns me to the power of the metaphor of radical gardening and working with the unexpected. It reminds me that working as a critical companion within a critical creativity worldview really does require “Trusting the process”! Unfailingly, the universe has brought us straight to where we wanted and needed to be. Despite being “thwarted” three times, here we are in the outer precincts of the Abbey without us even knowing! That’s the professional artistry process of *synchronicity* where the companion recognises that the universe or whatever is supplying exactly what is needed. That these things are there, but we have to recognise and be open to them (*Reflexivity*).

Blending and melding (Synthesis)

I recognise that I am connecting with the agelessness of the monastic tradition of caring for, and offering healing herbs to, others. Thus I remember the role that ancient wisdom plays with other forms of knowing within the professional artistry of critical-creative companionship and how I am synthesising this wisdom in my companionship with you. I feel the methodological principle, *movement in stillness* that comes from honouring such wisdom and the artlessness of unintended juxtaposition – healing plants in soil, derelict pots, water pipes, decaying tabletop (symbolising the human flourishing elements of *embodying contrasts, living with conflicting energies, co-existence, being still, harmony and loving kindness*) and the sense of *balance* that is required for creating the right conditions for human flourishing and the satisfaction this juxtaposition brings me.

The garden is a *bounding and a framing*. I see and understand the wider macro of human flourishing in healthcare and practice development and the role of the critical-creative companion in creating the conditions for it, through looking at the micro of the garden, how it came about and what it has become – “an urban diversity hub” for students, the university and local communities and visitors in a busy and frenetic city. In that place, I could sense the giving and receiving of loving kindness that emanates from human flourishing.

Everything has come together for me in this garden and I sense (attunement – professional artistry) that it has for you too. I ask softly whether this is the right time to begin to share (*mutuality and graceful care*). Yes. We decide to walk back to the secret spring garden and sit on the bench. No longer does that garden feel private, rather it feels open, inviting us in to

share its beauty and flourishing. I sense that you have been greatly moved by your experience and gently, I invite you to start ...

... After we had shared our experiences, we concluded that we had both flourished during our walk, despite the turbulence of being denied access of our own and others' making. In other words, we had lived the methodological principle of *flowing through turbulence*.



Transformative Action: Karen, six months later, making connections for herself between the mandalas

Dear Angie

It was so lovely to see you. Thank you for travelling to meet and connect with me in another critical creative companionship inquiry. I always anticipate what we will explore and uncover when we are together. As ever your welcome, loving kindness and care is such gift and a blessing to me, I always feel like I have come home when I am with you.

As we drove from the pub to the Abbey, I re-connected with you by discussing my work and experiences in practice. You listened attentively. When I parked the car, we walked along the pavement a few steps towards Abbey entrance. Then you gently asked me if I would like to try creating a poem as we walked. I felt anxious and sure that I couldn't do it, so I tried to distract you by talking about the Abbey entrance and that I wasn't sure if it was open. However, you, as my companion, re-focussed me and helped me to establish my inquiry question - 'Why do I believe I can't write poetry?'

We explored my lack of confidence with words and how I perceive they hang together to make patterns, reflections and descriptions called a poem and what that means to me. Mindful of our ground rules of high support, high challenge, you challenged me and invited me on a creative walk. I was enthusiastic but reticent. However, my embodied knowing and trust of you previously, how you use graceful care and kindness in our companionship, enabled me to take the risk to be led in the dance of words.

That day, I felt conflicted as the white noise of my personal life was jarring and loud, turbulent. My sister was critically ill in ITU and I could hardly bear the noise and the feelings, but I didn't want to discuss this in any depth right now. However, trusting you and your integrity and your espoused values of person-centred companionship, I entered into the dialogue.

I can't write poetry!!!

Why do I believe I can't write Poetry?
Have you paper and pen? Angie asked
No its ok you have!!
I really was resisting engaging in this process but I didn't know what to expect
Angie gently offered me paper and said here try this
I accepted

We started the walk in silence
Stepping out in symbiotic flow I was next to Angie
But I followed her stiffly holding paper and pen
Immediately I was halted, sharp interjection
A sweet shop bright pink Candy emblazoned over the door
It was my sister's name, thoughts of the past few days, tears, pain, sadness flood in
Something wanted me to stop and not push through this inquiry and release the known from
the yet to be known within me
Poetry

Pushing on, watching attentively Angie's body language
How she was embracing and exuding peace as she engaged with the universe
Arms by her side, back slightly back like she was inviting an embrace
Firm sure-footed strides, head up, open body, open mind, in silence
I watched as if she was sucking up the air into her core
Synthesising sights smells, sounds, Universe
Confident that the message for that moment was received and she would be able to translate
the elements to paper in words – a Poem

As always I follow
My words bubble up within me and start to flow
The more I open myself the more I receive

We are stopped at a gate NO as if something is pulling me back to the white noise
Trying to distract me from my quest, my path, my freedom with words
Like a river flowing that meets the resistance of a dam
We just change direction of flow and with determination walk on

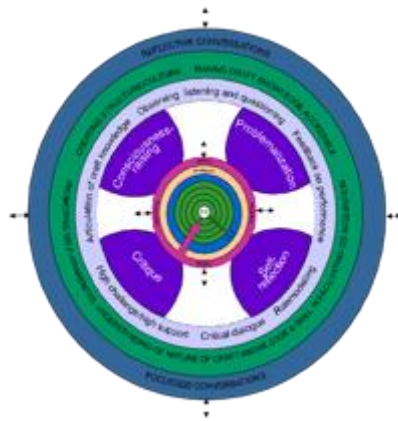
Discovering archways, hidden gardens, quiet secret havens of beauty
Into a medical garden full of plants
Healing herbs, plants to remind me of my sister's condition
More peaceful connection now to my sister's plight
Quieter, resolute, a reminder of nature and the great gifts of healing
HOPE

I feel peaceful, alive, fulfilled
The universe has helped me explore my white noise with my companion without saying a word!!

We sit to discuss our experiences of the journey. The spiritual knowing that Angie and I have experienced has deepened our companionship further. I feel so supported, so cared for and safe. Also through this process I have settled my soul, the white noise is quiet. And I have answered my inquiry question!

I can dance with words
Free them and lay them down together
A poem
But more than this
I am experiencing critical creative companionship
And the power of discovering the known and yet to be known

Dear Karen



I love your poem. Your authenticity rings through and you are beginning to express the essence of critical creativity. Especially strong is your growing awareness of the spiritual aspects and the elements of human flourishing. I can sense all eight elements at play between us (bounding and framing; co-existence; embracing the known and yet to be known; being still; living with conflicting energies; embodying contrasts, harmony and loving kindness). I feel you beginning to flourish at a very difficult time for you personally through letting go and not only dancing with words, but also dancing with your deeper self and soul. Perhaps one key to this outcome was our being able to create the right conditions for human flourishing to happen even though things seemed to be against us.



Have you ever noticed the Celtic cross in the critical companionship mandala? This expresses wordlessly the spiritual wisdom of the critical companion. I have long been attracted to the Celtic spiritual tradition and the prominence that it gives to connecting with Nature. Irish philosopher John O'Donohue has been particularly influential here. When he says, 'I would love to live like a river flows, carried by the surprise of its own unfolding' (O'Donohue, unfinished poem), he is expressing something of what I mean by spiritual wisdom. It doesn't surprise me that you attuned to the river too in your poem.

Drawing on the philosophy of Hegel and Celtic spirituality, O'Donohue (1997) argues that the wisdom needed for meaningful engagement with others is provided by the beauty of nature and our presence in it. O'Donohue argues that for persons to be present in the moment, there is a need for us to be rooted in the here and now.

'Being present' is an important element of authentic and compassionate caring and the practitioner who is 'present' has the potential to engage with the other in what O'Donohue has called, 'anam cara' or soul friend to whom intimate intricacies can be revealed. Within such a relationship, the 'hidden gems' of the each person in relation are manifested, not as ego driven characteristics, but instead as elements of hidden complexity of persons that are yet to be revealed and shared. 'Through the development of connected relationships, the hidden beauty of each person can be revealed and unfolded (Chapter 7; McCormack & Titchen, 2014, p.11).

You have shown me some of your hidden beauty in your poem. It makes me feel very humble.

Is the process concept of graceful care of critical companionship with its strategies of being present, being authentic, compassionate and giving loving kindness vital for creating the conditions for human flourishing? Does critical companionship offer something of the potential for an 'anam cara' relationship? If so, is this always appropriate? Can we discuss these questions and others when we Skype?

Dear Angie

Thank you for the special time we spent together I was able to explore feelings and reflect in a safe and supported way ... The experience very much resonated with John O'Donohue's writings in *Anam Cara - Soul friend* (O'Donohue, 1997) and his insights to loving kindness and graceful care.

In the days following our walk, I looked at my poem and reflected on the walk. I thought of the model of critical creative companionship and what I had learnt from you through your role modelling. You showed me how you immerse your whole self, that is, your physical, spiritual and emotional self, in the experience. How in silence, you let the energy flow organically and the space to move into whatever shape it needs to be. This allowed me to explore my deep vulnerabilities and challenge myself to change.

With this in mind, I met Helen (pseudonym), one of my critical creative companions in practice. Helen is a learning and development facilitator at Kirby Hospital and we had planned to do some work together. When I met Helen she seemed preoccupied and appeared to be struggling with some issues. I asked if it was still okay to meet. Helen agreed that would be good, so I suggested we went out into the hospital gardens. They are small, but very lovely.

Helen arranged for someone to cover for her for an hour and we walked to the beautiful garden. I could see her relax a bit outside in the open air, away from the closed confines of the unit in which she spends all her days. We have used this space before to sit and have coffee, talk and reflect, but following my walk with you, I recognised I can use this space in a very different way to help Helen to challenge her vulnerabilities. So I encouraged her to sit quietly and just breathe in the space and connect with the new space. "Use all your senses to feel where you are and then let the energy tell you what you would like to explore." After five minutes, Helen said, "Yes! I've got it." She said it was about a difficult situation with a student who was failing and she was stuck with where to go with this next.

I suggested that we looked at the patch of garden in front of us as a metaphor for us both to think about her issue. How we might we describe the situation, what's going on and how she might change things to help. Helen was happy to try this. This wasn't so strange for Helen because we have often used the metaphor of gardens to explore the culture of the unit where she works. For example, we have identified paths and fences as symbolising the complex framework of the systems and processes that the organisation works within.

We agreed to have 10 minutes to walk in silence and then come back to this bench when we were ready to share.

We walked around looking at the border for some time, lingering in different places to contemplate. Settled back on the bench, I asked Helen to tell me her revelations. She described the edges of the garden as the boundaries of the unit setting she works in. She went on to explain that the plants were arranged in the borders, in an ordered fashion, with tall geraniums around the edge, then the next layer, begonias, then marigolds and petunias and, in the centre, a cluster of daises. To her, this represented the systems and processes of how the unit worked, that is, the rigidity of the shift pattern and the off duty and the different grades of staff that make up the teams and how they work together.

On further examination and thought, Helen said that she could see that the tall plants represented mentors and that the new plants there were the newly qualified staff. She went on to describe that some of the daises had straggled their way into the rows and broken up the regimentation and were disrupting the lines of flowers. Also that these tall plants and the stray daises were sitting together. One of the daises represented the student that she had offered support to, spending hours talking with her and trying to help her realise how to work

in a professional setting. But this student was heading towards failing and Helen wasn't sure what to do next.

I asked Helen how she had been communicating with the student, in terms of, being mindful of her body language and the transactional analysis model that we had worked on previously. Where was she in the garden? Helen thought for a while and said she was the gardener and that she had allowed the stray plants to continue to grow in that particular way in order to be kind and supportive and caring. So she was acting as the nurturing parent and perhaps she needed to be the adult and clip the plant back!!! For it to survive.

An 'aha' moment for Helen, "Yes I see! I see it now! I need to see the student with this in mind."

We reflected in the session and Helen said how this was a difficult situation, but that through this creative process, she had been able to challenge her own behaviour and decide to try something different.

We ended the session at that point.

One week later, Helen called me to say thank you so much, she had met the student, changed how she delivered the message, adult to adult, and amazingly the student finally changed her behaviour. In the following 2 months, the student went on to pass and qualify.

The energy and the communicative thread that had connected me to Angie in the moment of our critical creative companionship in the medicine garden, ran through this experience with Helen and it continues on as I see her now with colleagues in the garden. I smile as I see Helen encouraging staff to walk around the garden gathering flowers, blossoms, stones and making mandalas to reconnect with, and express, how they are feeling.

Dear Karen

This is a beautiful description of your critical creative companionship with Helen. Do you think that you were working with any aspects of any of the critical creativity mandalas?

Postscript from Angie – 2016

Last week, I received my copy of McCormack & McCance's (2017) book on person-centred nursing and health care. Here is an excerpt from Karen's writing. It is a 'faction' or fiction based on fact, i.e., empirical evidence and experience.

James steps into my office, "I've had enough!" he says. "I can't do it any more!" His angry tone, wide eyes and pained expression, alert me to his distress and I know I need to help him right now. But I am mindful of the relentless, rhythmic beat of the cardiac unit pulsing in the background (*temporality*)."

"This place is all wrong and unfair. I am really worked up!"

Recognising the window of opportunity and the urgent need for me to open a dialogue space (*saliency* and *temporality*), I say, "James, do you have 15 mins now?" "Yes." "OK, please shut the door and sit down (*graceful care*)."

Chrissie thinks, “How and where should I start?” Critical questions flow across my mind. What strategies am I going to draw on (*intentionality*)? How will I gather the salient issues in this situation where time is so limited? How can I help James to learn from the past, present and the future in this moment (*temporality*)?

In this very moment, I am minded of a metaphor of music. My thoughts tune into the gathering orchestral instruments which, for me, represent the domains of the person-centred nursing and critical companionship frameworks, as well as the elements of human flourishing.

I imagine a harp. I embrace it and begin to pluck the strings to improvise a melodic, harmonious tune of human flourishing. Using all the strings of my knowledge and skills, I draw together the sounds of my *professional artistry* to help James in this personal moment. I am aware of grasping the situation rapidly with my embodied, artistic and spiritual *intelligences* (they are like my antennae!) and *synthesising* my theoretical knowledge with my personal knowledge of James (*particularity*) in my body and my imagination. I feel a surge of energy as I interplay these dimensions of professional artistry, in what seems like milli-seconds. I know deep inside myself that my strategy is very likely to work for James and to help him become more reflexive about his impact on others.

I take paper and pen. I draw a central hub in the centre of the page, telling James this circle represents him. Then I add spokes off this circle to represent his concerns which we will fill in together. Dipping into my embodied knowing of creativity, I draw this out so we could see and focus on the real issues (*saliency, intentionality, consciousness-raising*). I do this because James feels hopeless about the hugeness of the problem that he sees as a weakness within the hospital *care environment* and beyond his control. I also recognise that I am working with the human flourishing elements of *bounding and framing* and *embracing the known and yet to be known* elements of human flourishing.

By putting a frame around a tiny part of the musical score, as it were, I am putting boundaries on the problem to make it feel more manageable for James (*problematization*). I hope also that the *bounding and framing* element of human flourishing will help James to flourish over time as he begins to understand the bigger musical score of person-centred cultures through understanding himself better. So the hub and spokes are a way of helping James critique what he knows and get a sense or feeling of what he does not yet know and then work with it (*self-reflection*). My aim also is to help him to *live with conflicting energies*.

(Titchen & Hammond, 2017, pp. 166-8)

I am so proud of you, Karen! X

And so for now ...

In this chapter, we have shown something of how working in odd corners of time in mundane, everyday workplaces in health and social care and even on city streets, we can achieve similar outcomes to those achieved in places of great physical beauty and stillness. The conditions for human flourishing, stillness, embodiment, nurturing, flowing and

connecting can be created in everyday practice by critical-creative companions who can dance the mandalas of critical creativity. Moreover, willing others can be helped to become such companions also in the workplace if they are supported and challenged by those who live and can talk about their use of the mandalas in everyday practice.

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Chapter 18 - Creativity Resources: Practical ideas, tips for working creatively and references

Mary Mulcahy, Lorna Peelo-Kilroe & Angie Titchen

We prepared this set of five resources for our Flourishing Shelter, offered at the 2014 International Practice Development 'Enhancing Practice' Conference in Toronto, Ontario, Canada:

- Creativity statements/affirmations
- Ideas and reflective cues for making a mandala
- Meditation to calm the body and soothe the spirit
- Hospitality is not to change people
- Critical creativity references

We offer first, for background, our conference abstract.

Critical creative companionship: A strategy for human flourishing in whole person co-inquiry and learning



Our interprofessional co-inquiry is located within a critical creativity worldview (McCormack & Titchen, 2006). Through critical creative companionship, we are exploring how to make the theoretical and methodological frameworks of critical creativity come alive and 'zing' in our practice. We are so excited by our experiences so far that we want to show and tell you about unique, personal and potentially transferable insights that are emerging. We will share our 'high point stories' of how this collaboration has strengthened our practice development, facilitation and research work.

We started out as strangers, united in believing that transformational change starts with self-exploration. At the Prince of Wales Hospital, Sydney, Mary enables such change through the use of reflective mandalas to nourish professional artistry, and, in the health service in Ireland, Lorna uses transformational approaches to practice development to develop strategy. Angie uses the principles of critical creativity in academic and healthcare settings in the UK and Australia. Together, we are experiencing, with mind, body, heart and soul, the value of a more experienced facilitator journeying with less experienced facilitators, in terms of 'untapping a reserve' for human flourishing.

We will portray how the companion's use of self enables holistic engagement and expression of what emerges when working with critical creativity. Mary will show how she uses mandalas (Mulcahy, 2013) as a tool for transformation within the hospital, whilst Lorna will share how it is possible to suspend cognitive thinking to engage creative brain. Angie will illustrate how the companion helps others to embody critical creativity through walking, creative expression and dialogue.



We will create a 'Flourishing Shelter' for people to try out new creative ways to increase their self-knowledge and experience how skilled facilitation can help people to discover joy in new learning and to flourish.

Find the set of resources here (See Chapter 18 documents in “Supplementary documents”):



You can read more about our co-inquiry in Chapters 8, 15 and 16.

Chapter 19 - 'It's a nice place, a nice place to be'

Brendan McCormack, Caroline Dickson, Tracy Smith, Hilary Ford, Steffi Ludwig, Rhona Moyes, Laura Lee, Elaine Adam, Tracy Paton, Brigid Lydon & Juliet Spiller

To have the opportunity to immerse oneself in a critical and creative action orientated research and practice development project with a group of highly motivated and committed practitioners is always a joyous and fulfilling experience – and such was the case with the work we report on in Chapter 19. The project which was undertaken in partnership with an interdisciplinary team from a Marie Curie Hospice and co-facilitated by Brendan and Dr Caroline Dickson, focused on developing a person-centred culture in a hospice setting, a place where person-centred practices are often taken for granted and assumed, but which need to be continuously nourished and nurtured. Adopting a methodology informed by critical creativity enabled us as collaborators to 'dig deep and spread the joy' of what was possible through a person-centred approach to practice and how everyone could be enabled to flourish as persons. The collaborators in this project are genuine change-makers, committed to being the best that they can be and to understanding how embracing our humanness can transcend challenges and difficulties. What follows is an unfolding story of flourishing (as captured in this image of the shared values among the team members).



McCormack B, Dickson C, Smith T, Ford H, Ludwig S, Moyes R, Lee L, Adam E, Paton T, Lydon B and Spiller J (2018) 'It's a nice place, a nice place to be'. The story of a practice development programme to further develop person-centred cultures in palliative and end-of-life care. *International Practice Development Journal* 8 (1) [2] (<https://www.fons.org/library/journal/volume8-issue1/article2>)

Find the publication here –

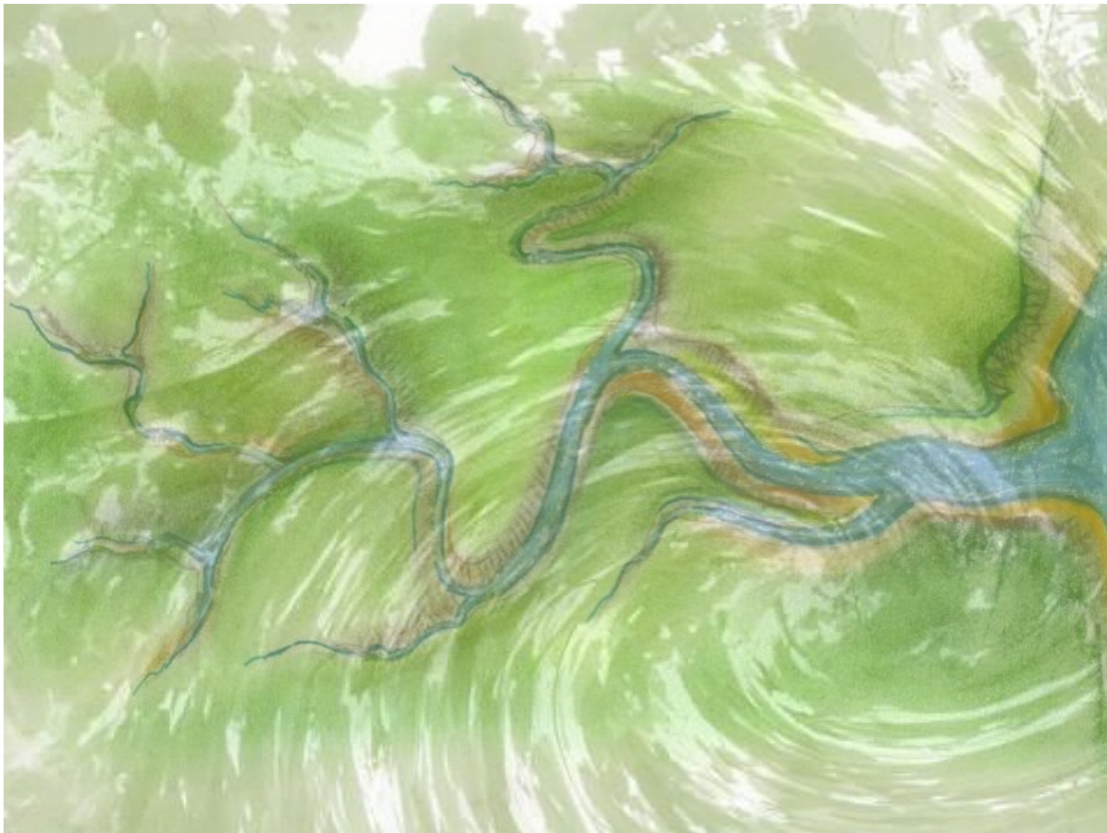


Chapter 20 - A new dawning: Living like a river flows

Brendan McCormack & Angie Titchen

I would love to live
Like a river flows
Carried by the surprise
Of its own unfolding

Unfinished poem by John O'Donohue
(Conamara Blues)



Original drawing by Annie Hart

In this final chapter, we consider the future for critical creativity and its place in the bedrocks, ecology and landscape of practice. We of course have a focus on health and social care practice as it is through that lens that our work has developed, evolved and transformed over the past decade or so. We will use a poetic metaphor that focuses on ‘water’ to shape the chapter and as a means of connecting the parts and the whole of critical creativity as articulated through this e-book. Mary Reynolds Thompson (2014) re-minds us that water connects us with the world. Water ebbs and flows in our bodies and in our rivers and oceans. We take in water from the earth through our nourishment and we give it back. It is the same water that ebbed and flowed through our ancestors and the world – the ecology, nature, creativity, ancient wisdom and spiritual dimensions of critical creativity. These are the flows that technical-rationality dams. We have shown so far that critical creativity explodes these dams and enables melding and blending of rationality-criticality-creativity. Previous chapters

have demonstrated that it enables water to flow between the silos built by western thought and creates a new landscape. We will continue to dance these connections between the theoretical and methodological assumptions and weave these into a narrative that has the potential of flourishing as its primary purpose.

Tumultuous, turbulent torrent
Water wears out rock
Transforms
Shape-shifting
Earth scribing, sculpting
Learning from water

When we started on this journey of critically creative discovery fourteen years ago, we did feel very much alone (alone on the edge). We knew there was something significant in what we were wanting to do and we also knew that whilst it drew on existing arts and creativity practices, we were adopting a different way of being. At times the lack of engagement by different audiences was deafening and the view that what we were doing was too far out of the mainstream overwhelming. The endorsement of the value of our work by the philosopher Brian Fay was a major boost to our confidence in the value of what we were pursuing. Over these fourteen years we have witnessed an initial trickle, then a small stream and now a torrential river of engagement in critical creativity from a variety of perspectives. This e-book holds testimony to that evolution, with practitioners from a variety of contexts engaging in creative work to step outside dominant philosophical bedrocks of knowledge and challenge prevailing landscapes. They have dug deep in the ecology of practices and reconstructed bedrocks so that they can accommodate authentic embodied ways of being and knowing. This has not been without its risks and critics. Too often for example, during periodic assessments and public presentations, our doctoral students have been challenged that “there is an easier way to get a PhD” meaning that all one needs to do is replicate existing landscapes, and add to its topology without upsetting the overall ecology. At these times, we have needed to hold ourselves and them and connect with our core values to stay strong. What these students and other practitioners with whom we have collaborated experienced is no different to what any practitioner experiences when they try to transform themselves, their context and/or their practice.

Sharmer and colleagues (Senge et al, 2005; Sharmer 2009) recognise this in their ‘Theory U’. At the bottom of the U is the point of transformation, the place where we have a choice to stay moving forward or retreat to the (seemingly) safe space of familiarity. Of course, this is a false safety that replicates and reinforces old ways of being and doing that act as straight-jackets of conformity. The extent to which we are each ‘held’ at the base of the U determines the rate at which the water can flow through our bodies, disrupting the existing ecology and transforming the landscape. A tiny trickle will help us to step outside the immediate safe zone, exposing new vistas of possibility and potential for repainting the landscape of our lives. A more significant stream of consciousness enabled through the conditions for human flourishing will take us further into the landscape, embodying its key characteristics and locating us in a space that ‘feels’ real. However, it is only ever tentative and is inherently fragile. Like all streams, if they are not continuously fed by the mountain rains then they dry up and the remaining landscape maintains its richness for a short time. What we really need in practice is a surge of water that reshapes forever the nature of the landscape and at the same time readjusting the ecology that sustains it:

Waves gently massaging rocky beach
Gently moving each stone from whence it came
Forming and reforming the topology
Unnoticed by slipper-bound feet that tread them
No movement the same, no stone untouched.

As this verse suggests, the surge is not overwhelming, indeed it is gentle and its transformative qualities often go unnoticed by others. It is only over time that the newly shaped landscape is recognised as being different and the effort in changing is acknowledged.

Oceans rising
Polar caps melting – danger
Obama-care
Sustainability & Transformation Plans
Slash, Trash & Plunder
Health & Social Care
Economies of scale
Cost cutting
Services slashed
Loss

However, the contemporary landscape of health and social care is far from gentle. We are experiencing unprecedented change in strategic frameworks, finance plans, delivery models, service-user engagement and the (lack of) valuing of staff. These changes in health and social care are indicative of a wider social change that has seen globalisation, corporatisation and individualisation as the driving forces behind global change, coinciding with increasingly unstable governments and dysfunctional governance frameworks. Whilst not wishing to paint an overly harsh picture of society, it is clear to us that the world in which critical creativity exists now, is a very different one from ten years previously. Does that mean that critical creativity needs to be more ‘harsh’? Indeed not – quite the opposite in fact. We believe that a critically creative perspective that is embedded in clearly articulated theoretical and methodological principles has the potential to ‘soften’ the seemingly harsh corporate globalised world. In the opening Haiku of our ‘Dancing with Stones’ paper (Titchen & McCormack 2010, Chapter 6) we captured this potential:

Heavy feet of stone
Seeking transformation
Dancing rocks and flows

We know that applying the methods for creating the conditions for human flourishing enables a softness to emerge, for the river water to find new tracks, cracks and routes through which to flow. Throughout this e-book, we see evidence of this – Lorna’s movement from a technical to a transformational approach to her research; nursing lecturers at Ulster finding their creative potential and using that to bring joy to their work life and that of student engagement; Famke’s riding of the waves and Alex’s embodied philosophical knowing. These are just some examples of the kinds of experiences we have had of working with collaborators in a variety of contexts and witnessing the ‘softening’ of their approaches to dealing with the harsh realities of their practice worlds. Through small, seemingly insignificant ‘adjustments’ to their ways of being, the energy moves and new ways of collective being start to emerge. We are not being naïve however, as we are also very aware

that significant change is needed in the way that democracies operate, in the way that global finance is distributed (it is hard to flourish when hungry, thirsty and homeless!) and in the way that citizenship is experienced. But creating the conditions for flourishing of all persons requires multiple integrated strategies and we consider critical creativity to be one component of that integration.

We are streams of fresh water
 We must channel waters in new directions
 As individuals
 we can act together
 To bring about transformation
 Create conditions for human flourishing
 Explode the dams of care reforms
 Bound and frame the immensity of this task
 Bringing courage and ‘Can do’



Figure 19.1

Individual streams of fresh water will create individual streams of change and self-transformation. But is that enough to create transformative realities to the everyday world? How do we create a collective surge that focuses on enabling all persons to flourish? The intent of creating ‘places that flourish’ has to be top of this agenda. We presented the conditions for human flourishing in Chapters 2 and 6 and we re-present them here (Figure 19.1). How these conditions operate to create people and places that flourish has been articulated in Chapter 2 and by the many collaborators who have shared their ways of being, knowing and becoming throughout this e-book. However, for a collective surge to happen it is not enough to rely on such individual action. Instead we need organisations to embed their strategic directions, goals and ways of being in the dance of the mandalas – corporately embodying the theoretical, methodological and creative methods of the mandalas in strategic plans. For most organisations, this will be a challenge and not one they can easily adopt – not least because it is risky, edgy and non-conformist!

However, there is increasing evidence of the need for organisations to make such transformational shifts. For example, Laloux’s (2014) analysis of ‘Teal Organisations’ is consistent with the 5th wave of public health and the humanising of organisations. According to Laloux, this development represents the next stage of the evolution of the human consciousness applied to organisations. Laloux suggests that there are three practices that organisations need to privilege and we believe that these are consistent with the conditions for human flourishing – Maximise trust (stillness in the landscape) so that small teams can

take responsibility for their own governance and for how they interact with others; enhance individual and collective autonomy (becoming the rock) so that roles are fluid and interchangeable to be ‘fleet of foot’ in response to the need for change; and, engage in soulful practices (nurturing, flowing, connecting) that ‘tame the fears of the ego’, privilege wisdom over rationality, deal gracefully with adversity, unfold individual and collective strength and strive for wholeness. A detailed analysis of Laloux’s work makes real the dance of the three mandalas and it is exciting for us to think that working with individuals, teams and organisations through the lens of these mandalas can create such an ocean of transformation.

Water energising the dance
 Mandalas spiralling in synchronised waves
 Stillness, becoming, nurturing and connecting
 Multi-coloured transformations emerging
 Authenticity and wisdom privileged
 Calmness in chaos
 Flourishing

The dance of the mandalas has been a powerful and energising force in shaping our ways of being and doing as practitioners, researchers, practice developers, facilitators, leaders and collaborators. We know that the dance never ends and the power of technical rationality to sweep away the softness of critical creativity is omnipresent. We don’t view this work as ending with this e-book, but instead this collection acts as a platform for the ‘surge of water’ to become even more gently forceful in bringing together different energies with the intent of transformation. Adopting a critical-creative-rational way of being must be the way forward in enabling authentic, person-centred and effective models of practice to emerge. As we step back, others who have embraced these ways of being and doing are stepping forward, in a rhythmical dance of growth, confidence and maturity – an exciting critically creative transformative future lies ahead:

Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin
 Dance me through the panic till I’m gathered safely in
 Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove
 Dance me to the end of love
 (Leonard Cohen ‘Dance me to the end of love’)

References

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