

## **Doctoral Research Proposal from Margaret Wadsley**

### **Integrative Psychotherapist, Adlerian Family Counsellor, Supervisor Additional Support Needs Teacher, DPN Yoga Teacher**

#### **Suggested Working Title:**

Explaining the Influence of Adlerian Values and Beliefs in My Supervisory Relationships, Evidenced by Living Theory Action Research

#### **Research Question:**

How do I explain my educative influences in my supervisory relationships as an integrative psychotherapist who expresses and sustains ontological security through living Adlerian Psychology's values and beliefs in this role, while practicing self-care and care for my supervisees as expressed through 'community feeling' (gemeinschaftsgefühl)?

#### **Background and Context:**

In April this year I began a journey into the unknown with an Adlerian Research Group. It was a journey into Living Theory Action Research. I had been a Teacher Fellow in Action Research in Derbyshire for the spring term of 1990. I continued my association with the Derbyshire Action Research Network until I left employment as headteacher of a special school there to become a headteacher in a Derby City Council community junior school with a special needs resource. Some of the research teachers developed and shared in our Derbyshire network have left a lasting impression on me in terms of the positive changes they observed in their classrooms as a result of their inquiries. Often it was the insights they gained from stepping back and looking into their classrooms with the Action Research Cycle present in their minds as they researched. In 1992, while a County Appraisal Coordinator my colleague coordinator and I developed an Action Research CPD resource in booklet format as a guide for headteachers and teachers to use Action Research within the Appraisal process.

It was in the 1980s when I first took an interest in Action Research. I was living and working in Cambridgeshire and attended a CARN conference for the only time in around 1981. It was two years later that I met Anthea Millar, now a vice-president of the Adlerian Society UK and Institute of Individual Psychology and so was introduced to Adlerian Psychology.

In 1984 I joined the Adlerian Society of the UK when I was a Team Leader of the Arbury County Primary School Special Education Resource Centre (SERC) in Cambridge during 1984. Prior to that, I had attended a Family Counselling course along with colleagues from my previous school. I learned to apply Adlerian concepts and methods in a classroom context and with the support of the headteacher my team adopted Adlerian class meetings and other methods to support and encourage the children who attended the SERC. The headteacher was very impressed by significant improvements in the behaviour and self-esteem of the children. From then on my approach became Adlerian.

In 1982 I began a Master of Philosophy at the University of East Anglia. There I studied and researched: *Patterns of Development in the Number Concepts of Young Children*. This stemmed from a concern I had at the paucity of assessment procedures developed to identify the learning needs of primary aged children who found learning maths difficult. Cambridgeshire County Council supported me with the empirical data collection my research required, by enabling a colleague in my team to join the data collection process. Together we assessed 100 children aged four and five who were attending Cambridgeshire Primary schools at that time.

In 2002 I began an MA in Integrative Psychotherapy. Although my training was not specifically Adlerian, I always referred to Adlerian theory, its beliefs and values in all of my assessments. I realise

looking back that I was the common denominator in terms of addressing Adlerian values and beliefs, paying heed to holding consistent ontological values. The course was accredited by the University of Birmingham, it also led to me becoming accredited and registered with the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. My research Dissertation for the MA explored: *Client Created Metaphor in an Integrative Psychotherapy Framework* related to gaining perspectives from practitioners on their unique response to and interventions with children under eleven. The methodology was qualitative and phenomenological. The validation of the evidence was carried out through a triangulation process that explored the level of agreement in response to and action on expressed at a semi-structured interview. The transcripts for each participant were reviewed in terms of identifying themes that emerged from the interviews. The themes were then categorised and patterns of agreement identified and tabulated visually. Reflecting back as I write this I can see how I addressed each step of the research in my unique way, seeking to uphold my ontological values and express them through the design itself. I created a poem: *Their Creation Our Endeavours* to express my findings and conclusions. The feedback from the assessors provided a strong affirmation of the strength of my research process. As a trainee psychotherapist who had over 25 years in the teaching profession prior to my change of career, I felt it important to honour all that I had learned about young children while affirming my professional experiences.

### **Motivation to carry out formal research**

I have often explored with supervisees their motivation to join the "healing professions" as a counsellor, psychotherapist or play therapist. Exploring their motivation to become qualified and practise has led me to reflect on this too. I have concluded that I share a similar motivation, in fact we all share a similar motivation, but each in our own unique way.

I find supervising trainee play therapists an inspiration and fulfilling journey. One of the most useful aspects is the paperwork and being able to review our shared evaluations to discover themes that emerge in terms of what their experiences of being in a supervisory relationship with me, is like. Already I have some objective evidence of how I make a difference to them as therapists in the making. What that evidence is telling me is that their relational experience of me holds common threads. It has not only provided me with evidence of the influence I have had on them as trainees, but has also made a difference for them as they engage in their client work from the experience of supervision, but also the benefits they have passed on to their young clients.

I have made a conscious decision to concentrate on my qualified supervisees and so theirs will be the relationships I collect data on. I made this choice as my experience of trainee play is that they are dealing with many life adjustments and discoveries about themselves. I decided that the introduction of recording in sessions might be a step too far while they are 'finding their feet' as therapeutic professionals.

Meeting regularly with an Adlerian research group has encouraged me to observe myself in conversation with group members. The experience of watching myself in conversation, when reviewing recordings, has been helpful in growing my self-awareness. Learning about the visual sensory modality through neuroscience perspectives has also taught me that this modality "reigns supreme". One thing that struck me was seeing my jaw tighten at points during our discussions. Interestingly, when I shared this new awareness with my therapeutic supervisor he observed that there would have been an activating event that had led to my jaw tightening. I am left with curiosity around his observation which bears further reflection. To uphold my ontological values I have decided it is an aspect of myself I wish to discover more about. My wish is to share what I discover so that I can somehow "make a difference" in children's lives.

My passion about creating opportunities for life to improve for children, who have similar literacy difficulties stems from my experience of struggling with reading and making many spelling mistakes at school. Striving to overcome my inferiority feelings from life at primary school was revealed to me through an enduring negative early recollection I reflected on with the research group.

I have chosen to study myself in relationship with supervisees as a development from the assignment I engaged with to gain my Diploma in Supervision from the Sherwood Institute in Nottingham in 2009. My assignment was about expressions of power and difference in a supervisory relationship. As an Adlerian I am keenly on the look-out for the emergence of inferiority feelings in any work relationships, indeed in any of my relationship generally. I was intrigued by an idea expressed by Gershen Kaufman in what he called "A Psychology of Shame" He was a person who valued the learning that he gained through his work with clients, psychotherapeutically. He believes that inferiority is the affect of shame. He quotes Adler in the book he wrote on the topic and related it to his clinical experience. For me he presented an opportunity to bring Adlerian ideas into focus by encouraging practitioners to be alive to the presence of shame in their work relationships.

I have learned that workplace relationships with clients, supervisees and other professionals are crucial in securing ethical practice. I have heard supervisees express dislike for clients, which is helpful for them to acknowledge, however to address the impact of the issues a particular client raises is essential to prevent acting on those negative feelings. For me Adlerian values foster compassion which is the route to a supervisee accepting the negative attributes that illicit prejudice. I will be interested to observe how I tackle tricky issues of this nature while holding to acceptance of my supervisees' imperfections.

**Possible Subsidiary Research Questions:**

How could this planned research positively influence both therapeutic research methodology to the benefit of clients, but also add to pedagogy in terms of the training of therapeutic supervisors?

How does Living-Theory lend itself to providing an effective methodology to use to understand the relational processes of a supervisory relationship from the inside?

How does Living-Theory provide insight into an in-depth relational process, such as the process of Adlerian based integrative supervision?

**My supervision contracting (for actual contract – see Appendix):**

During the process of contracting within the humanistic schools of the therapeutic profession, supervisee autonomy must be promoted in the same spirit in which it is promoted with respect to clients. Within the supervisory relationship, ethics and values are the primary responsibility of supervisor/supervisee in supervision and supervisee/supervisor in supervision of supervision. Parallel responsibilities are held by both parties in a supervisory relationship during supervision sessions, whereby each professional maintains a parallel process between client autonomy and supervisee autonomy. At the same time practitioners are expected to acknowledge their respective ethical duties, both as a primary responsibility towards themselves and in terms of their respective personal boundaries. Such boundaries are designed to uphold their respective self-accountability as a secondary accountability, that of their duty to their professional bodies. These aspects of contracting occur constantly and accounted for within each supervision session.

The contract I provide outlines both my practical responsibilities to my supervisees and my practical expectations of what they bring to our work together. Those set out in writing below are functional in nature, while the deeper aspects of accountability are outlined in the previous paragraph. One of

the ways I anticipate the outcome of this research contributing to the therapeutic professions would be in revealing the deeper aspects of accountability expressed through establishing ontological security. In her book, *A Different Wisdom*, Penny Henderson (2009) acknowledges the challenges of "boundaries that need to exist between the self and the other" (p31), in terms of maintaining a feeling of independence, integrity, proximity and freedom of thought and action. On the basis of such boundaries it becomes possible for supervisee and supervisor to engage in open and honest interchanges, prevent collusion and avoid destructive challenges. The relationship that ensues is one that has the capacity for empathic-attunement and moments where "I" and "we" become one. The relational meeting, moment by moment, becomes one with the potential for transformation when each respective inner-world becomes known, often non-verbally. One could argue that when such moments occur, a therapeutic outcome to the session becomes possible. An explanation of such an outcome also moves toward reality through the provision of evidence from the data collected through video material. A change in behaviour could be revealed through body language, tone of voice or verbal recognition and picked up during data processing and analysis.

### **Methodology**

McLeod (2002) pointed out that humanistic researchers have historically used both "controlled trials and open ended exploratory" qualitative investigations (ibid, p261), theoretical support for this choice was begun with an acknowledgement that creating Living-Theory Action Research would aim to capture the action of individuals interpreting their relational world from an "ideographic" perspective (Cohen and Manion 1994, p8). A crucial philosophical principle in this context is that humanistic therapies, in common with Adlerian approaches (Henderson et al, 2014 p12), seek explanations through interactive relationships by incorporating and tuning into the manner in which:

"...individuals re-create past patterns and experiences in the present." (Gold, 1996, p13).

Perceptions of the past, rather than fact or objective evidence, therefore, guide a person's conclusions. When based on observations in relationship, an individual or phenomenological perspective is created.

Mosak and Maniaci (1999) outlined how people, influenced by their perception of the facts, drew conclusions from them. Humanistic psychologists, Rogers and Maslow, influenced by Adler (Lundin 1989), adopted key principles that nothing in a person's life was determined from causation, but held an "as if" principle that "every phenomenon could have been different" (Adler 1956, p91). Spinelli's (1989) view, that the world has been interpreted by "human perception" was founded on two key variables, genetic inheritance and experience. The resultant interpretative processes reach phenomenological conclusions (ibid, p46). Drawn together as a whole, these views strongly suggest that exploring practitioner experience would address individual phenomena which for the purpose of this investigation would be my lived phenomena, however not only my lived phenomenology but, also the lived phenomenology of my supervisees. I will qualify this statement later when I address 'I' and 'we' in relationship.

For a number of reasons, I have come to the view that Living-Theory (LT) lends itself as a methodology for studying a supervisory relationship where Adlerian values underpin the experience of relating to one another from the inside. To begin with, it is a form of inquiry that is relationship focused. Studying therapy related relationships from an Adlerian perspective requires a qualitative, phenomenological approach that embraces sensitivity to moment by moment relational dynamics. Petrůska Clarkson (2003) investigated research methodology into the "nature of the therapeutic relationship", also relevant to therapeutic supervision. She noted the importance of affirming what a researcher wants to know and understand, as a valid stance for a research question (p330).

Moustakas (1994) noted that it was the human inquiry that Rogers and his colleagues carried out that enabled "theoretical and conceptual depth" to be added to the paradigm of research into the humanistic therapies. In this proposed investigation I would expect to facilitate a depth of understanding I have not experienced before. I anticipate that LT would enable me to embrace both a critical dimension, where I would interrogate my findings and a dimension geared towards an inner process of reflexivity. I would envisage that the former of the two dimensions would stem from my conscious thoughts while the latter would stem from an intrapsychic process from deeper in my being. In my view, as a therapeutic practitioner, the latter is crucial to studying unconscious processes present in in-depth relationships. In the supervisor-supervisee relationship reflections take place that touch deeply into their respective value systems and what motivates each to be providing therapeutic experiences for their clients.

I would argue that reflexivity, as defined by Whitehead (1988, p42), and set out in the context of therapeutic supervision upholds the value of ontological consistency in partnership with the ethical principle of what Rogers called "congruence" cited in (Mearns and Thorne 1999, p15) or a state of 'being yourself' which requires that the supervisor will seek to guide and maintain healthy interactions with supervisees.

To me, congruence naturally aligns with upholding the values that I use from my understanding of Adlerian Psychology to create meaning in my life-task of work and generally throughout all my life-tasks; friendship, intimacy, self and my relationship with the cosmos. Becoming a more discerning reflexive practitioner will provide me with a much broader perspective of 'I~we' because reflexivity embraces more than reflection, it provides evidence around the "explanatory principles" in my way of relating as well as "explanations of educational influence through the process of self-study" I enquire (Whitehead 2014, p82) into. I anticipate the evidence that emerges will show how I influence supervisees in terms of Adlerian values and beliefs and the benefits those influences provide them with and most importantly the benefits to their clients.

My choice of Living-Theory Action Research excites me as I believe the process will mean that a critical interpersonal dimension of human relationship and the educational influences on those involved will be validated. In his article: Enacting Educational Reflexivity in Supervising Research into Creating Living-Educational-Theories, Whitehead (2014) highlights the need to create a difference of definition between a standalone 'I' and an 'I' in relationship to be represented as 'I~we' (p82). To me, accepting the idea 'I~we' in relationship as a truth creates acknowledgement of "mutual influence between with other/s in relational contexts." (ibid) This view is completely consistent with an Adlerian perspective on relationships.

One of the harmonies between LT and rests in a fundament expression of Adler's own values and expressed as "social interest" or "community feeling" and paralleled with LT's intention to influence the flourishing of humanity (Whitehead, ). In the context of "community feeling" (Gemeinschaftsgefühl), Dreikurs (1989) described the degree to which a person can express "community feeling" (Gemeinschaftsgefühl) being an indicator of the: "...extent he can adapt himself to others and, whether he is capable of feeling with and understanding other members." (p5). For me, Dreikurs is saying that a person's awareness of being a part of a relationship is an expression of the presence of "community feeling" (Gemeinschaftsgefühl) when cooperation is in evidence. This observation supports the benefits to humanity of researching Adlerian values and beliefs expressed in the presence of "community feeling" (Gemeinschaftsgefühl) while revealing compatibility of philosophy between research method and the object of the research I wish to undertake.

An important concept in Adlerian Psychology is known as "organ jargon" and defined by Adler in the context of neurosis. He specifically referred to the heart, stomach, lungs, the organs of excretion and

the sexual organs" (Dinkmyer and Sperry (200, p41). The use of LT research methodology, which gathers video evidence, offers the opportunity to explore evidence related to the concept of "organ jargon" within the domain of the data collection and analysis. Such physical evidence not only enhances the potential of explanations that recognise the depth of influence in relationship dynamics during supervisory sessions, but also in understanding the presence of non-verbal communication that increases the depth of evidence to support observations of the lived-experience of each participant.

These points also encourage me that LT is an ideal methodology through which to investigate relationships that grow and thrive through the richness of Adlerian values and beliefs. The reason I say this is that this research will be integral to the enquiring process rather than, as the phenomenological investigation I engaged in for my MA, stood outside and enquired into what was happening for other therapists. I would wish to pick up on the themes outlined here and seek evidence of the part they play in influencing and being influenced by the values I have chosen to investigate through my lived-experience of them.

I believe the 'how' of this enquiry is therefore the crux of its Living Theory methodology, alongside the 'what' and 'why'. Adlerian theory provides insight into human nature that is understandable to ordinary people (Wadsley 2011 p). The video data I will generate will present and support the case for what lies beneath my passion to validate my Adlerian values and beliefs, while holding my deeply held personal and professional values and beliefs. I was drawn to embrace these through empathic resonance I experienced when I was engaged in Adlerian Family Counselling training during the early 1980s. It was the same passion that motivated me to embrace Action Research as a methodology around the same time because I had felt drawn to the concept of practitioner-research in my own classroom as a teacher. The video data I collected then was focused on the children in my class, rather than on me. This time my focus will be on videoing my practice as a supervisor and its effectiveness in influencing change in both myself and my supervisees.

To validate my findings I will engage an audience of my peers. Their role will be to discern what they observe of me in the video material with a view to strengthening the "comprehensibility, truthfulness, rightness and authenticity" of explanations I create from processing the data gathered. Within each of these aspects of discernment I will be asking them to test what I may contend is real and logically supported by the video material through their knowledge of me as well as their experience of reality and logic. I will also be seeking their validation that I behave as I claim and show believable evidence of effectiveness from the explanations I provide and justifications I make. As Adlerians my proposed validators have the knowledge to support the normative process of discernment around explanations I make that use Adlerian concepts as a validating "container" in which I seek to show my explanations fit. Finally I will ask the group to authenticate the evidence in my interactions when I create explanations of a relational nature that are consistent with and illustrate the values and beliefs I espouse. For me it will be important for them to discern conscious and unconscious biases through their knowledge of me and my "lifestyle" biases. Their knowledge of Adlerian theory will equip them with the specific approaches that we all use to understand and appreciate aspect of each other's hidden and overt beliefs. For me the value of studying the Adlerian approach using living theory methodology becomes a unique strength.

## Ethical Considerations in Researching Therapeutic Supervision

### Ethical Orientation

Ensure that fairness, openness and honesty are built into my research design I have consulted the BACP Ethical Guidelines for Researching Counselling and Psychotherapy (Bond 2004) in conjunction with BERA's Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA 2011). Ensuring my trustworthiness is

consistent with how I practice as a psychotherapist and supervisor in a learning context. I also have my previous MA research experience to draw on.

#### Risk

The main risk from this research surrounds confidentiality and possible discovery of participants' identity. Therapeutic risk is safe-guarded by the supervision process and holding attention to the self-care of participants and researcher. The research will be mindful of drawing on the support systems available in the form of her research supervision group, therapeutic supervisor and research consultation group.

#### Relationship with Participants (supervisees)

Relationships with the participants will be key to the success of the research and in providing information in advance of them providing consent so that they are fully informed of how the data will be processed and published. To ensure consistency and fairness a participants' checklist has been drawn up to support this aspect and can be found in appendix 2. An aspect of the research for the participants will be the possibility of becoming named research partners and credited for their influence on my creation of knowledge, should they choose to.

#### Research integrity

Attending to the ethics of data collection, processing and storage are of particular importance in a therapeutic context. These concerns connect with the intentions of LT methodology. As practitioner and as a practitioner-researcher I will ensure that I am treated fairly as well as offering fairness and honesty to those who participate. Keeping participants informed of any changes in timetable or research process as the research proceeds. This also means that I ask for the assistance I need from my research supervisors as well as ensuring my personal and professional safety.

#### Appendix 2

### **Protection of Supervisor/Supervisee Identity Checklist**

#### **Change:**

Name

Occupation

Geographical location

Remove heading on permission forms

#### Actions taken to protect anonymity and secure ethical endeavour in the work:

- Consent given by supervisee to tape sessions and use recordings and notes using Living Theory methodology, including a change of mind at any time to allow for any change of heart or motivation through experiencing the data collection process.
- All qualified supervisees given same requests for videoing in a consistent way.
- Verbal reassurance and clarification on obtaining written consent and the written protocols surrounding the consent.
- Check out consent forms and format in clinical supervision prior to beginning the work.
- Keep all notes and videotaped materials secure.
- Contract and all other proformas to be included in the appendix.

#### Action Plan:

See accompanying document.

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## Appendix

### WASP.ed Clinical Practice Supervision Contract

Contract between WASP.ed and Supervisees

I am a UKCP registered Integrative Therapist, practitioner member of COSCA and abide by their codes of ethics. COSCA's complaints procedure is available to all supervisees on request. I have an MA in Integrative Psychotherapy, Certificate of Study of Adlerian Psychology and a Diploma in Supervision.

To safeguard the interests of supervisees using the therapeutic services of WASP.ed the following contract is provided:

1. As a Supervisor I agree to:
  - a. Carry out supervision, normally at a cost of £55 or £45 each for trainees.
  - b. Provide sessions of 50 minutes supervision.
  - c. Provide written notice of change of fee 3 months in advance. (Fees are reviewed annually in January with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April the same year)
  - d. Treat all information confidentially and make any requested disclosure with the permission of the supervisee(s). Exceptionally, disclosure may be made in the interests of the safety of the supervisee(s) and/or others, including Child Protection or Vulnerable Adult issues and when the Law requires it. Wherever practicable this will happen with the supervisee'(s)' permission being sought my supervisor consulted.
  - e. Attend clinical supervision of supervision sessions in accordance with my UKCP/COSCA Codes of Practice.
  - f. Keep all confidential information and notes in a secure location only accessed by me.
  - g. Provide supervisee access to notes on request.
  - h. Terminate supervision normally where I judge it out with my competency, in consultation with my clinical supervisor of supervision.
  - i. Provide written assessments, reports or references etc. as requested but reserve the right to charge an hourly fee equivalent to our session fee.
2. Contractual arrangements between both parties:
  - a. Cancellation arrangements – a minimum 7 days' notice for planned appointments or holidays, longer where practicable, 24 hours for illness with postponement to an agreed date and time, full fee payable when notice of absence has not been given according to the timescales set out. If you are unable to attend please leave a message on my mobile number: 07802414998 or email me at: [margaret@wadsley.demon.co.uk](mailto:margaret@wadsley.demon.co.uk) (only I answer or receive messages)

- b. Notice of termination – 2 months for supervisee and supervisor if requested.
- c. Payment of the agreed fee £55 or £45, at the beginning or end of each session.
- d. Contact between sessions may be necessary where an urgent issue arises with a client, where an emergency arises or a cancellation or postponement is necessary according to paragraph 2a.
- e. Request permission to record sessions from time to time and use supervision material for professional development purposes, i.e. in supervision, for case-study or research in which case the supervisee's identity will be protected. This will be checked out again with the supervisee when/if it arises.

I agree to the contractual arrangements outlined:

Counsellor/Supervisor's  
Signature:.....Date.....

Counsellor/Supervisor's name:  
(please print).....Date.....

I agree to the contractual arrangements outlined:

Supervisee's signature:.....Date.....

Supervisee's name:  
(please print).....Date.....

**Research Action Plan**

Explaining the Influence of Adlerian Values and Beliefs  
in My Supervisory Relationships, Evidenced by Living Theory Research

Engage in the Research Process from the beginning to completion between August 2016 and June 2020

August 2016 – complete the research proposal and prepare the practical aspects of the research

September 2016 – commence data collection through videoing supervision sessions

Beginning October 2016 – commence formal data processing by giving explanations for the data that I think supports my research question

Mid-October 2016 - invite the research group to validate my explanations and repeat these sessions bi-monthly

January 2017 – May 2017 Gathering together relevant literature with a view to validating the initial data processing and findings to uphold the integrity of the research design and method of data processing

Continuing data collection as a parallel process during the same period

June 2019 – structuring the write up of the thesis with the following shape:

- Research Outline
- Introduction
- Literature Review

Methodology

Research Evidence and Findings

Discussion

Conclusion:

Including an outline of the way in which the research contributes to pedagogy and possible scope for future applications of Living Theory research in the context of the therapeutic professions.

June 2020 – submit completed thesis

**24 Referees: Please provide names, addresses and email address for your chosen referees below.** At least one (and ideally both) should be an academic referee preferably your undergraduate and MA/MSc tutors, if applicable.