

Learning New Ideas and Practices Together

A co-operative inquiry into learning to use Johnella Bird's relational language-making approach in couples therapy

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation recounts the process and experiences of five family therapists (including myself) from the Trondheim Family Therapy Centre, in learning Johnella Bird's relational language-making practices. Adapting John Heron's Co-operative Inquiry, we engaged in a collaborative learning process with an added focus on making sense of our learning process itself. Through reading, viewing videotaped demonstrations, participating in group discussions, practicing, sharing personal reflections, and receiving feedback from couples as clients, we learned to use Johnella Bird's relational languagemaking practices. Using Adele E. Clarke's Situational Analysis, we mapped data from many audio-recorded and transcribed conversations to show different aspects of the learning process, depicting its complexities. Three key aspects were identified using Situational Analysis.

These key aspects emphasize our experiences from the group's learning: (a) Collaborative learning projects are useful to professionals' development in their daily practice at a therapy centre, (b) Learning as part of a collegial group is helpful for therapists to stay fresh in practice, and (c) Using video-recordings for self-supervision, group supervision, and for eliciting client feedback from watching the video together with their clients, is a useful resource for therapists in learning new ideas and practices. Challenges faced by our team in learning together are discussed, as are this study's strengths and limitations, as along with suggestions for future research. While challenging, learning together with workplace colleagues, and from client feedback, can be helpful to therapists' ongoing professional development.

Key words: Johnella Bird, couples therapy, training, supervision, client feedback, relational language-making, co-operative inquiry, comprehensive process analysis, situational analysis