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## The Confluence of Intersubjectivity and Dialogue in Postmodern Organizational Workgroups

Daniel J. Shuster

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Concordia University  
St. Paul, Minnesota

This Capstone paper for the  
Master of Arts in Organizational Management degree

**The Confluence of Intersubjectivity and Dialogue  
in Postmodern Organizational Workgroups**

by

Daniel J. Shuster

has been approved by a committee  
composed of the following members:

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Date

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## Dedication

This Capstone study is dedicated to my wife Cynthia Hummel and our son Thomas Shuster who each sustain and inspire me every day.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge Jan Blake and Pam Nelson who took the time to review and comment on the early drafts of this paper, and the many friends who encouraged and sustained me with prayer. I am grateful to Dr. Jim Gimbel, my Capstone advisor, and Dr. Kristin Bransford, my Capstone reader, who each helped me prepare a quality document. Special thanks to Dr. Mike Driscoll who coached me on qualitative research methods. Thanks also to Sharon Walbran for technical instruction of advanced word processing methods.

## Abstract

Nascent revival of dialogue is struggling to reach its potential within the postmodern organizational milieu. Concurrently, interpersonal intersubjectivity has steadily been de-pathologized, via reassessments of countertransference in the psychoanalytic sphere, allowing exploration of its utility in other domains of relational process. Effective use of dialogue is critical and foundational to developing meaningful and sustainable enterprise in the immediate future. Despite the risks, intentionally explored intersubjectivity is a powerful tool to enrich the container of dialogue. This paper qualitatively explores the literature on intersubjectivity and dialogue with an hermeneutic approach to discern the implications of their convergence for collaborative workgroups in emergent enterprise.

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## Introduction

This hermeneutic study is driven by the question of what positive implications are to be found through reconciliation of intersubjectivity and dialogue for postmodern collaborative workgroups. The approach to this question is to inquire of, and interpret, the literature about their intrinsic nature, how they effect each other, and the *a priori* ontology and epistemology of their critical elements and uses. Hence, the following two sections are literature reviews of a broad selection of social science perspectives on intersubjectivity and dialogue.

[I wish to disclose how I came to select this particular research question. My 27 years of successful work using dialogue, empathy, and redirection in sales and marketing work, and more intensely in pastoral care work led me to this thread:

- 1) What core ontological and epistemological roots inform this amazing praxis?
- 2) What is the distinct nature of the dialogical container vis-à-vis the intersubjective field such that the former effects the latter?
- 3) What positive implications (or promise) would a hermeneutic study of those phenomena reveal for the postmodern, collaborative workgroup, given the plethora of theoretical and methodological tools available to intensify the dialogical container?

Recognizing that the first two questions are subordinate to the third, I structured the research around the third question and began with the foundational work in the first and second questions.]

Herein the term *workgroup* signifies between 2 and 20 interdependent individuals who share proximity, tools, purpose, and identity. Herein the term *collaborative* signifies

a shared intention to optimize outputs while minimizing costs and externalities. Herein the term *postmodern* signifies a workgroup which is likely to be, or become, highly diversified with respect to its members' races, ethnicities, genders, ages, memes, sexual inclinations, cognitive and affective capacities, behavioral control, instrumental and communicative skills, political, philosophical, and religious orientations and depth, and any number of disparate values, deconstructed identities and fragmented lifestyles. Their interactions are significantly face-to-face and intermediated with technology.

The section Postmodern Collaborative Workgroups is a survey of theories and factors that may either directly or heuristically intensify or attenuate the quality of the dialogical container and the intersubjective field.

## Intersubjectivity

The study of human group life has a multitude of “roots, variations, issues and debates” (Prus, 1996, p. 10) that run through the gamut of social sciences. One simple definition of intersubjectivity is the shared meaning generated through the social, physical, neurolinguistic, and dialogical interactions of people, however this understanding is not sufficient to appreciate its polysemic nature and growing significance in many social sciences. Wikipedia (.org) at one point in its ever changing offerings gave three meanings—consensual agreement, participation, and co-creation—each closely related in social interaction. A review of the literature reveals many other perspectives on the term as it evolves from historical traditions such as the I–Thou and I–Other dyads of Buber (1937). Definitions and names for intersubjectivity also shift with the perspectives of the fields, sciences, and disciplines that study and utilize it.

### *Psychoanalysis*

Cooper-White (2004) traces an historical thread of the use of the term in the context of psychoanalysis. Countertransference, one of the terms largely synonymous with intersubjectivity, was a taboo topic in psychoanalytic circles until the mid 1950s with the exception of Harry Stack Sullivan, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, and Erich Fromm, whose works focused on the interpersonal dynamics between patients and others in their lives. Sullivan did not actually use the terms transference and countertransference, but rather referred to “parataxic interpersonal experiences, understood as distortions created by carryovers from either the patient’s or the therapist’s childhood” (pp. 20-21). Lewin (1947) used the term *paratactic distortions* for the same purpose. Stolorow and Atwood (1992) report that although Sullivan was the first to replace Freud’s intrapsychic

determinism “with an emphasis on the centrality of social interaction” (p. 21), the concept of “parataxic distortion” compromised a full shift to intersubjective doctrine.

Cultural shifts, beginning in the late 1950s, influenced by Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and Einstein's Theory of Relativity, began to open up a valuing of empathy and the subjective space between people—or as the space between subjectivities. Presented in 1957, a paper named *Introspection, Empathy, and Psychoanalysis* by Heinz Kohut kicked open the doors on the use of empathy (Harwood, 1998; Cooper-White, 2004) as a means and effective source of data gathering. Kohut distinguished empathy apart from the popular notion of "sympathy or warmth" (Cooper-White, 2004, p. 22). A number of analysts adopted this use of empathy in practice through the 1960s and 1970s with mixed results. A distinction between the pathological and non-pathological aspects of counter transference began to emerge in psychoanalytic literature toward the end of the 1970s. A number of converging forces which carried the positive utility of countertransference forward in the 1980s included Kohut's self-psychology movement; feminist thought and action; the rise of postmodernist philosophy; social constructionism (Cooper-White, 2004); quantum physics; nonlinear systems theory (Shaddock, 2000, citing Sucharov); and development of hermeneutics (Shaddock, 2000, citing Atwood & Stolorow). Since the 1980s there has emerged a distinct relational form of psychoanalysis that utilizes mutuality on both the conscious and unconscious levels to co-construct meaning between therapist and analysand and recognizes the uniqueness of the dyad. The positivist idea of the neutral authoritative expert has been displaced with an intersubjective, relational paradigm that allows for a wide range of mutuality, depending on the relative needs of the participants.

Within the evolving relational school of psychoanalytic theory Cooper-White (2004) describes a new reification praxis:

Meaning and therefore reality itself in the form of one's worldview, is continually being coconstructed in relationships (including all helping relationships).

Subjectivity is also no longer understood solely as the product of individual consciousness, but rather as a shared experience of reality in any given moment.

Individual subjectivity is relativized in importance, in favor of a view toward *intersubjectivity* as a central (if not the central) area of knowing and experiencing of reality (p. 47).

### *Self Psychology*

Contemporary intersubjective systems theory has largely arisen from Kohut's psychoanalytic self psychology. It is a *dyadic* or two-person theory that forms a new paradigm in psychoanalytic circles also known as "relational model theorizing . . . dyadic systems perspective . . . [and] social constructivism" (Shaddock, 2000, p. 17, citing Mitchell, Beebe, and Hoffman respectively). The therapeutic method usually employs sustained empathic inquiry; remaining in the frame of the other; and self reference.

Stolorow and Atwood (1992) were among the early theorists to extend Kohut's use of the intersubjective field to a wider range of human interactions including group and intergroup relations. Group dynamics was of great concern to Kohut, who warned of the regressive propensities of, and iatrogenic risk within, groups, but recognized their potential for "decisive discoveries . . . and crucial new insight" (Harwood, 1998, p. 10) where empathic inquiry and disciplined commitment to process are observed.

Intersubjectivist group and family therapies structured around Kohutian selfobject (transference) can reveal many dynamics applicable to other small groups. A few negative examples are: toxic group myths, homeostatic systems-norming of shame and anger, cognitive and affectual boundary blurring, conditional mirroring predicated on conformity, traumatic rupture of protective myths, distorted or reductive meanings imposed on individual experience, over-stimulating affect tolerance set point, diffused or violated boundaries blocking self-delineation, pervasive defenses precluding acknowledgement or repair of injury, and concretization of subjective experience through “fixed identities (one child is the smart one, another is ‘cute’ but ineffectual) and enactment of fixed or ritualized behavior patterns” (see Shaddock, 2000, pp. 143-147).

Shapiro, (1998, citing Lee & Martin) suggests the breakdown of totemic systems of shared values in urban industrialized society “leaves unfulfilled the need for twinship affirmation that had formerly been taken care of through sibling relationships and affiliation with an extended family or tribal structure” ( p. 50). “Twinship provides for the bonds that exist in a group. Intersubjectivity . . . provides the perspective with which to explore those bonds” (p. 56). The sense of belonging promotes healing and growth.

Three realms of the unconscious (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992) derived from specific formative intersubjective contexts help to understand blockage of attunement with others and articulation of experience:

*Prereflective unconscious*—The organizing principles that unconsciously shape and thematize a person’s experiences. [Derived from interplay of subjectivities of child and caregivers.]

*Dynamic unconscious*—Experiences that were denied articulation because they were perceived to threaten needed ties. [Derived from intersubjective transaction; specifically unintegrated affect states.]

*Unvalidated unconscious*—Experiences [never] articulated because they never evoked the requisite validating responsiveness from the surround. (p. 33)

### *Pastoral Care*

Another concurrent trend away from the unilateral observing and helping model is occurring in the social sciences. Remen (1996) describes helping as an inequality model of the strong helping the weak, the whole fixing the broken, the blessed helping the needy. “People feel this inequality. When we help we may inadvertently take away from people more than we ever could give them; we may diminish their self esteem, their sense of worth, integrity and wholeness” (p. 17). Cooper-White (2004) describes the positivist view of the helping relationship with similar dyads: “expert — client, knower — to be known, interpreter of data — source of data, subject — object, I — it” (p. 55).

Pastoral care ministries in the tradition of Stephen Ministries and BeFriender Ministries use the relational paradigm for spiritual healing. Mutuality is used as the exclusive relational modality for ministers relating to those visited. It is defined as a “respectful give-and-take between people with the experience and frame of reference of each [to be] held worthy of dignity and respect” (BeFriender, 1997, sec. 2, p. 4).

There are two levels of mutuality, that if practiced with integrity and authenticity, can lead to formation of genuine mutual relationship and spiritual growth. Level 1 combines the “telling the story appropriately” by those ministered to, with “understanding the story accurately from the [minister’s] perspective” (BeFriender, 1997,

sec. 2, p. 5). This level is accomplished with active listening skills, total attention to the story, and suspension of all judgment and comparison to the minister's "assumptive world" (p. 4) of ideas and values. After a solid base of trust and compassion is established and the one visited feels understood and empowered, the minister can lead the mutual relationship into Level 2. The complementary elements of this level of mutuality are "giving feedback respectfully" and "receiving feedback with a measure of openness" (p. 5).

Level 2 Mutuality occurs when the minister can safely share a reaction to what was heard in the context of each person's assumptive world. It is done carefully with extreme reverence for the other's dignity and validity, and is always expressed with an "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (*a feeling word*) when \_\_\_\_\_ (*a non-evaluative story detail*) because I \_\_\_\_\_ (*reference to one's own assumptive world*)" (BeFriender, 1997, sec. 3, p. 15). Brief, appropriate self-disclosure is offered as a thought alternative only, and not as a persuasion to a new worldview. At this point in the relationship the minister remembers that the assumptive world of each party makes possible, and at the same time limits, the interpretation of what each has heard from other. That interpretation in any case will affect, change, alter, or transform the assumptive world of each in an iterative and self-reflexive manner. This level of mutuality need not be reached expediently, but when and if it is achieved, it forms a completely mutual and authentic relationship. That relationship can catalyze spiritual healing and growth with both parties.

The cultivation of trust for Level 1 Mutuality requires disciplined confidentiality. Going forward, empathy is the tool with which to achieve Level 2 Mutuality. Sweeten,



Ping, and Sweeten (1993) define empathy as a rigorous balancing of “thought” with “feeling”—of “needing to be right” with “needing to be needed” (pp. 114-115).

### *Buber and Habermas*

Martin Buber (1937) explained the perils of the "I and it" relationship shortly after Freud's major works were published, but it did not deter the hegemony of Freud's followers until recent years. Buber (1992) found “. . . communicative openness is maximized in situations which have certain structural attributes. The most important such attribute is that the participants have a strong commitment to direct interpersonal relations. The emphasis on such communicative situations seems close to the more recent formulations by Jürgen Habermas” (Buber, 1992, Editor’s Introduction, pp. 11-12). For Habermas “the intersubjective sphere has an autonomous existence, beyond any one individual” (Grady & Wells, 1985) whereas Buber’s focus is on the spiritual and transcendent qualities of dialogic exchange (Buber, 1992). Cooper-White (2004) also links Habermas with the spirit of this new paradigm:

If reality is no longer seen as imposed, but coconstructed in relationship, then relations among people require a higher level of intentional listening and intentional speaking. The 'ideal speech situation' to use the language of Jürgen Habermas, will be one of inter-subjectivity (p. 188).

### *Phenomenology*

Habermas offers descriptions of intersubjectivity that are consistently tied to the understanding of utterances and written symbols between communicators (Habermas, 1981b), and it would appear difficult to refute that many levels of intersubjective agreement can be achieved through rhetoric (Grady & Wells, 1985) but he does not

appear to agree on the foundations of ontological development of the Other in the manner of Edmond Husserl's generative phenomenology (Donohoe, 2004). As Donohoe (2004) and Zahavi (2001a) suggest, Habermas and others who have approached the problem of understanding the Other have taken various routes that don't include the later work of Husserl because his unpublished manuscripts have not been accessible until recently. In examining Habermas (1968, 1981a), most reference to Husserl's work points to the static phenomenology which Habermas (1981a) credits with laying a foundation for understanding [*Verstehen*] of Heidegger's and Gadamer's subsequent works. This leaves a lost opportunity to see what Habermas' treatment of intersubjectivity would look like with the generative ideas of time perception and the streaming, living present that Husserl finally developed in his last decade as constitutive of intersubjectivity. However:

... it is possible to recognize some ways in which Habermas is indebted to Husserl for themes relating to the notions of the lifeworld and constitution.

Habermas is critical of Husserl for a social theory that is grounded in constitution, indicating that he does not except to the transcendental intersubjective theory of Husserl that identifies intersubjectivity as constituting and not constituted

(Donohoe, 2004, p. 12).

Habermas does not indicate any reference to Husserl beyond the published *Cartesian Meditations* and *Crisis of the European Sciences*, neither of which explicate the role of temporality and streaming, living present in the evolution of ego, Other, and community that Husserl addresses in the late manuscripts. Habermas (1968) described ego development simply as this:

In the communication structure of the polis, individuation has progressed to the point where the identity of the individual ego as a stable entity can only be developed through identification with abstract laws of cosmic order (p. 307).

In contrast, Husserl's genetic analysis says that an ego acquires capabilities and convictions over time—and even from pre-egoic time—to form habitualities which constitute and re-constitute the ego and the world it experiences (i.e. Others) in successive layering which creates time (Donohoe, 2004). The ego acquires sedimentations of experience from prior traditions and ongoing interaction with Others. Donohoe describes generative analysis as a regressive inquiry to uncover those layers; to “peel away” (p. 35-36) these constitutional sedimentations of the individual and its preceding generations. In contrast to where Habermas leaves off, Donohoe draws from Husserl's C-manuscripts<sup>1</sup>:

The temporal reduction to the streaming, living present reveals a position where I am with others in a more original way than Husserl's [early] analysis of empathy allows. The ego is with the Other in a radically immediate way. It is a level where there is a coincidence with others on the original level of constitution, my coincidence, so to speak, before there is constituted a world for myself and others. The lived experience belongs to both the ego and the Other as lived. It is only distinguished as belonging to the ego or the Other when it is subsequently thematized. It must belong to both as opposed to belonging to one or the other because if it did not belong to both, it would be referring to a time that would be cosmological rather than lived human time. It is only through the process of

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1 Husserl, E. (2006). Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution (1929-1934): Die C-Manuskripte. Reihe: Husserliana Materialien, Band 8. ISBN: 1-4020-4121-7

asking back initiated by genetic phenomenology that one is able to make such a claim. (p.87)

Although both philosophers have much insight to offer on the foundations of intersubjectivity, Zahavi (2001b) simplifies their differences as Habermas' focus on linguistics and his not yet knowing or acknowledging that Husserl's passive and active synthesis of generative intersubjectivity includes linguistic and extra-linguistic forms.

### *Evolutionary Theory*

Wheeler (2000) offers intersubjectivity as a new way of thinking about evolutionary theory from the perspective of the relationship between organisms and not the features of the individual organism. Wheeler draws from experience in Gestalt psychology to eschew the atomistic trend in Western thought, and points to Homer's *Odysseus* as a prototype of evolved humanity as evidenced by the character's unique use of intersubjective skill. In Jung's analysis of the Book of Job, Wheeler shows how Job is defined through his relationship with God, and presumably with the counselors who visit to dissuade him from his intersubjective connection to God. Wheeler is also said to have postulated that the sudden increase in hominid brain size at the point of divergence from adult chimp brain size may have been driven by social complexity—contrasting it with the view of some archeologists who attribute the change to manual coordination with tools. An insightful quote taken from Wheeler is “I am loved, therefore I am” (p. 3) revealing identity through relationship.

## *Social Psychology*

Coelho and Figueiredo (2003) also credit Husserl with turning the tide on modern philosophical tradition that supposes the “I” as self-constituted and presuppose the subject / object opposition as an *a priori* given. The authors also point to a number of other philosophers—including Scheler, Buber and Marcel—who define intersubjectivity in similar fashion to Husserl as “a sense of interpersonal communion between subjects who are attuned to one another in their emotional states and in their respective expressions” (p. 196). Secondly the authors distinguish Habermas’ understanding of intersubjectivity “as that which defines joint attention to objects of reference in a shared domain of linguistic or extra-linguistic conversation” (p. 196). A third interpretation of intersubjectivity offered is “the capacity for inferences to be established concerning the intentions, beliefs and feelings of others” (p. 196) as related to *Einfühlung* [or] empathy. A fourth interpretation Coelho and Figueiredo cite from Jolivet is “the situation in which, through their mutual relations, [two or more] subjects form a society or community or a common field and can speak of us” (p. 196). The authors consider all four definitions as facets of intersubjectivity that are simultaneously in play. As so many writers and theorists along with Donohoe (2004) and Zahavi (2001a) have pointed out, Coelho and Figueiredo also only cite Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* as their source of tribute to the ground shift in perspective which phenomenology brings to the value and praxis of intersubjectivity. This leaves the challenge of using these insights, in conjunction with Husserl’s more generative phenomenology revealed in recently translated later works, yet to be met.

### *Human Ethology*

Bråten (2003, p. 263) correlates three levels of ontogenetic development in infants that resonate with Coelho and Figueiredo's delineation of trans-subjective intersubjectivity . A "primary level of sensorimotor attunement and interpersonal communion in the mode of felt intimacy prevailing throughout life" begins in the first two months after birth. A "secondary level of object-oriented intersubjective attunement and joint attention to objects . . . [begins] at around nine months of age when infants identify others as agents and movers of objects." The "tertiary level of intersubjective understanding [entails] first-order mental understanding of self and others in representational mediacy, mediated by personal pronouns and a sense of verbal self and others in symbolic conversation" beginning between 18 and 24 months, and "second-order mental understanding of others' minds . . . " beginning between 3 and 6 years of age.

### *Consciousness Studies*

Christian de Quincey (2005) situates intersubjectivity in second-person, I–Thou perspectives. He places subjectivity in first-person I–I perspective of personal "contemplation." He places objectivity in third-person I–It perspective "as in study of the brain" (p. 2). In the same text he cites Jacques' Tripartite Intersubjectivity which can be described as an I–Thou–He/She triad to allow for "presence of absence—the felt presence of the departed other...how it is when an absent spouse or boss hovers in the background of many conversations" (p. 200). de Quincey (2005) delineates his second-person perspective into three meanings for intersubjectivity:

Intersubjectivity – 1. *We connect by communicating*. This starts by assuming the Cartesian notion of self-encapsulated subjects, individual "I"s who connect with each other by *exchanging physical signals* (for example by speaking or writing). Individuals form relationships through communication. We could call this "*linguistic*" intersubjectivity--and this is the weakest meaning of the three.

Intersubjectivity – 2. *We condition each other*. Individual subjects don't merely exchange signals; we change each other's sense of self. By engaging and participating in communication, we *condition* each other's experience. This is "*mutual conditioning*" intersubjectivity--and is mutual strength.

Intersubjectivity – 3. *We co-create each other*. This is the most radical of all the types of intersubjectivity because it means that individuals don't merely influence and change each other by communicating and participating in relationships, but literally *co-create* each other's existence. Rather than connecting by exchanging signals and informing each other ("*linguistic*"), or coming together in relationships and changing each other ("*mutual conditioning*"), this strongest meaning implies that *relationships are primary* and that our sense of individuality is secondary, arising from a network of relationships. (p. 183-184)

### *Ethnographic Research*

Herbert Blumer created the term "symbolic interaction" in 1937 to describe the intersubjective phenomena of human group life. Blumer fully credited his insights on the reflective, interactive and emergent nature of group life to his mentor George Herbert Mead (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Combining Mead's position that society is essentially an ongoing process of action (Prus, 1996; Athens, 2005) with the hermeneutic principles of

Wilhelm Dilthey, Blumer created an analytical research method of interpreting actions and signals between persons to determine how each is influenced by the other. Prus (1996) cites Dilthey for clear and unequivocal direction:

Dilthey stressed the fundamentally *intersubjective* nature of human behavior: that human life is group life and is built on a *sharedness of understandings*.

Interpretation . . . depends pivotally on making sense of the other by reference to the community context in which the actions of the other are embedded. A self without another, an outer without an inner—these are merely senseless words (pp. 35-36).

Blumer's method, known as Chicago-style symbolic interaction, is scalable from dyads to large groups. His post-Cartesian interactionist framework, as influenced by Mead and Dilthey, is strictly founded on interpretation of actions and language, which is not to say it's inconsistent with the study of emotionality (i.e. fear, shame, etc.) as a generic social process. "[The framework] embraces equally well such relationships as cooperation, conflict, domination, exploitation, consensus, disagreement, closely knit identification, and indifferent concern for one another" (Prus, 1996, citing Blumer, p. 72).

The interactionist school of thought which began with the work of Mead and as advanced by Blumer and others, takes as a given that those who interact with words and action intersubjectively share a common reality at that particular point in time. "Intersubjectivity is . . . a social accomplishment, a set of understandings sustained in and through the shared assumptions of interaction and recurrently sustained in processes of typification" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1994, p. 489). Mead was a contemporary of Husserl's though there is no evidence they knew of each other's work.



Resonant with Husserl's "streaming, living present" is the "specious present" of Mead (Stacey, 2003, p. 36), whose theory of the emergence of mind and self out of the social process of communication became the foundation of the symbolic interactionist school (p. 37). It is the moment-to-moment impressions that become sedimented and constitutive of the ego to form habitualities of behavior within dyads and groups. "Culture is the emergence of pattern in the form of habits. What we call culture is that aspect of our emergent interaction that is iterated as continuity" (p. 37).

### *Neurobiology*

Gallese (2003) describes a new hypothetical tool named the shared manifold of intersubjectivity "that can be empirically tested at [three] levels both in healthy and psychotic individuals" (p. 178). Three operational levels of the shared manifold are: the phenomenological, the functional, and the subpersonal. Gallese claims that the implicit recognition humans have for one another has a neurological basis in identification mapping of specialized F5 area visuomotor neurons of the ventral premotor cortex shared with macaque monkeys, and with the homologically comparable Broca's region in humans, known as mirror neurons. "Mirror neurons require, in order to be activated by visual stimuli, an interaction between the action's agent . . . and its object" (p. 173). Gallese and his colleagues propose that "mirror neurons may constitute a neural mechanism *enabling implicit action understanding*" (p. 173). Human brain imaging experiments have revealed an extended sensorimotor integration process that "instantiates an 'internal copy' of [intentional] actions utilized not only to generate and control goal-related behaviors, but also to provide—at a prereflexive and prelinguistic level—a meaningful account of behaviors performed by other individuals" (p. 174).

Citing Lipps and Husserl on their perspectives of empathy, Gallese (2003) conceives *Einfühlung* as “an intentional form of perception by analogy” (p. 175). Gallese’s hypothesis is that this neural substrate of mirror neurons, when activated, creates a “*subpersonally instantiated* common space” (p. 176) that “could . . . underpin our capacity to share feelings and emotions with others . . . that [in turn] can be empathized and . . . implicitly understood . . . ” (p. 176).

These studies continue and have not yet shown how damage to the mirror neurons may modulate intersubjective capacity (Bower, [2005a](#), citing Nakahara & Miyashita). One recent exception has been MRI studies of autistic children by Mirella Dapretto and colleagues that suggest a correlation of reduced activity in, and blood flow to, the mirror neuron system (Scientific American, [2005](#); Bower, [2005b](#)). Autistics are known to suffer lack of intersubjective awareness.

The hormones oxytocin and vasopressin have been found to intermediate social interactions between individuals. Pollack and colleagues have determined that lack of parental bonding in the first two years of child development deprives the child’s ability to produce oxytocin later in life. Oxytocin elevates trust levels between individuals. Neglected children exhibit low levels of oxytocin after efforts to comfort them. The researchers also found low levels of vasopressin in adopted children. “This hormone, they say, is critical for recognizing individuals as familiar, an essential step in forming social bonds” (Wade, [2005](#)).

The drug ecstasy (3-4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine or MDMA) is a synthetic, psychoactive drug used illegally as a recreational drug. It is neurotoxic and reported to produce a syntonic and empathic effect among and between individuals

under its influence. No studies could be found linking the drug to the shared manifold of intersubjectivity to date.

### *Collective Resonance Theory*

Levi (2005) describes collective resonance as “a felt sense of energy, rhythm, or intuitive knowing that occurs in a group of human beings and positively affects the way they interact toward a common purpose” (p. 21). Working with a diversity of participants and group contexts, Levi discovered a number of experiential phenomena that indicated the presence of biophysical rhythm entrainment [which matches the signature of intersubjectivity], and nine shifting factors that each worked at different energetic, physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual levels to shift the group into a felt collective resonance. They are: “vulnerability, silence, story, place/space, container contraction, shared intention, truth, sound/vibration, and spirit” (p. 23).

### *Summation 1*

This survey of thought on intersubjectivity points to its primary sources of ontology. Most first order derivative use of intersubjectivity—as with Habermas, Blumer, Gallese, and Coelho and Figueiredo—is largely predicated on the independent and synchronous epistemes of Buber, Husserl, and, or Mead that find intersubjectivity as constituting of identity and knowledge. Inchoate biophysical theories appear to align with the philosophical, phenomenological, and psychological theories described, to form potentially useful schema for adaption of dialogue to intentionally modulate intersubjective fields. The most salient impression here is the continuity and lack of friction among the growing number of relational perspectives.

## Dialogue

### *Socrates and Plato*

The earliest form of dialogue associated with this incipient dialectic with intersubjectivity is the elenctic dialogue of Socrates otherwise known as the Socratic method of ethical inquiry as portrayed in Plato's Dialogues (Hamilton & Cairns, 1969). The underlying purpose of the Dialogues is to educe moral accountability to the polis with a process of answering questions with more questions that invite the interlocutor to examine their antecedent premises. Socrates' use of the elenchus was intended to expedite the discovery of an interlocutor's predications and inconsistencies. As effective of a learning tool the elenchus was, it had the unintended consequence of humiliating those who wanted to be seen as knowledgeable. This Argyrisian (see Argyris, 1993) defensive routine led to Socrates' death sentence.

A modern and less threatening use of Socratic dialogue, which originated with the work of philosopher Leonard Nelson (1882-1927) is used to find specific answers to singular questions—often ethical in nature. It requires the participation of a facilitator trained in rhetoric and argumentation, and the goal is to arrive at consensus about a specific issue or problem among a small group (Bolton, 2001).

### *Bohm*

Bohm (1996) identified the principal elements of modern dialogue and began a surge of interest in its utility beginning in 1970. Bohm conceived a multi-faceted dialogical worldview that encompassed a wide array of human experience. On its superficial level, dialogue is seen as a process of creating meaning among individuals in

a group. As members of such a group become sensitive to or aware of each other's assumptions, the phenomena of shared new meaning unfolds.

"Dialogue comes from the Greek word *dialogos*. *Logos* means "the word," or in our case we would think of the "meaning of the word." And *dia* means "through"—it doesn't mean "two." . . . This derivation suggests...*a stream of meaning* flowing among, and through, and between us. (Bohm, 1996, p. 6)

This understanding of the term dialogue<sup>2</sup> excludes the alternative definitions as a literary form and that of the technological form as in 'dialogue box.'

A brief excerpt from *On Dialogue* (Bohm, 1996) captures the essential dynamic of Bohmian dialogue:

In dialogue, when one person says something, the other person does not in general respond with exactly the same meaning as that seen by the first person. Rather, the meanings are only *similar* and not identical. Thus, when the second person replies, the first person sees a *difference* between what he meant and what the other person understood. On considering this difference, he may then be able to see something new, which is relevant both to his own views, and to those of the other person. And so it can go back and forth, with the continual emergence of a new content that is common to both participants. Thus . . . each person does not attempt to *make common* certain ideas or items of information that are already known to him. Rather it may be said that the two people are making something *in common*, i.e., creating something new together. (p. 2)

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<sup>2</sup> Variations of the term 'dialogue' germane to this discussion (in the sense of verbal exchange of thought between two or more persons) from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2004) include dialogic, dialogical, dialogism, dialogist, dialogistic, dialogistical, dialogistically, dialogize, dialogous (rare), *dialogue de sourds*, dialoguer (rare), and dialoguize (obsolete).

Bohm (1996) brought to the forefront this idea of emerging new content at a time when most interpretations of dialogue were narrowly focused. As with Socrates, shared consciousness of underlying impediments to authentic communication is the first priority of Bohm's process as described by his editor, Lee Nichol:

...dialogue is aimed at the understanding of consciousness *per se*, as well as exploring the problematic nature of day-to-day relationship and communication. This definition provides a foundation, a reference point . . . for the key components of dialogue: shared meaning; the nature of collective thought; the pervasiveness of fragmentation; the function of awareness; the microcultural context; undirected inquiry; impersonal fellowship; and the paradox of the observer and the observed. (Bohm, 1996, p. xi, Editor's Forward)

Chris Argyris, as cited by Kurtzman (1998), speaks of discussions wherein participants engage in conversations that take place on an "espoused theory" level, and never acknowledge their actual "theories in use" (p. 1). These defensive routines can be exacerbated with personal inferential assumptions that paralyze the group's ability to create authentic meaning or knowledge for action (Argyris, 1993). Bohm's approach to such gridlock is to use it to confront the need to trace the thinking that led to the freezing in place of the espoused theory which he calls assumptions. ". . . dialogue has to go into all the pressures that are behind our assumptions. It goes into the process of thought *behind* the assumptions" (Bohm, 1996, p. 9). These assumptions are often constructs from another time and purpose that need shared reflection to realign with current reality.

Experience has shown that if . . . a group continues to meet regularly, social conventions begin to wear thin, and the content of sub-cultural differences begins

to assert itself, regardless of the topic *du jour*. This emergent friction between contrasting values is at the heart of dialogue, in that it allows the participants to notice the assumptions that are active in the group, including one's own personal assumptions. Recognizing the power of these assumptions and attending to their 'virus-like' nature may lead to a new understanding of the fragmentary and self-destructive nature of many of our thought processes. With such understanding, defensive posturing can diminish, and a quality of natural warmth and fellowship can infuse the group. (Bohm, 1996, p. ix, Editor's Forward)

Individuals build high value around fragmentary constructs, and reify and defend them because they accumulate so much at stake in their validity; and walking away from them alone is uncharted ground. It's as if the constructs are snapshots of a changing landscape that gradually lose their utility as maps.

One of [the] difficulties [of thinking] is *fragmentation* which originates in thought—it is thought which divides everything up. Every division we make is a result of how we think. In actuality, the whole world is shades merging into one. But we select certain things and separate them from others—for convenience at first. Later we give this separation great importance. We set up separate nations, which are entirely the result of our thinking, and then we begin to give them supreme importance. We also divide religions by thought—separate religions are entirely a result of how we think. (Bohm, 1996, p. 9)

In *On Dialogue*, Bohm spoke of the dialogic process in its purest form as conducted without specific outcome goals and as topically unlimited discourse to generate shared meaning—not specific answers to predetermined questions. Bohm

however did make the case for a limited form of dialogue, as applied to the business case, where a dialogic approach to problems can be useful if sensitivity is maintained.

Bohm is clear in identifying personal assumptions as the primary barrier to shared meaning through dialogue. Those assumptions are developed from one's cultural ground and the chunking or snapshots taken at other times for other purposes. Sensitivity during the dialogic process is the key to getting behind the thinking that produced the assumptions that block the creation of shared meaning. New meaning to an individual doesn't directly benefit society, but shared new meaning can.

So sensitivity involves the senses, and also something beyond. The senses are sensitive to certain things to which they respond, but that's not enough. The senses will tell you what is happening, and then the consciousness must build a form, or create some sense of what it *means*, which holds it together. Therefore meaning is part of it. You are sensitive to the meaning, or to the lack of meaning. It's perception of meaning if you want to put it that way. In other words it is a more subtle perception. The meaning is what holds it together. As I said, it is the "cement." Meaning is not static—it is flowing. And if we have the meaning being shared, then it is flowing among us; it holds the group together. Then everybody is sensitive to all the nuances going around, not merely to what is happening in his own mind. From that forms a meaning which is shared. And in that way we can talk together coherently and think together. Whereas generally people hold to their assumptions, so they are not thinking together. (Bohm, 1996, p. 40)



### *Bakhtin and Vygotsky*

There are two camps on dialogue; “those who idealize dialogue as mutual action including but . . . transcending ordinary discourse and dialectics, and [those who darkly] see dialogue as essentially examinatory and inquisitorial” (Fogel, 1996, p. 1). Bakhtin explored the dark side of dialogue he calls a “dialogeme” (p. 2) of forced or coerced dialogue as seen in Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannos.

Cheyne and Tarulli (1999) interpret the work of Bakhtin and Vygotsky to deduce three genres of dialogue to be found within and defined by Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) when mediated by the polis. Vygotsky defined the ZPD as “the distance between [one’s] actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and [one’s] level of potential development as determined through problem solving . . . in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The three genres of dialogue introduced are “Magistral dialogue: the authoritative other” (p. 11), “Socratic dialogue: the questioning other” (p. 12), and “Menippean dialogue: carnival, [de-construction, misbehavior, etc.]” (p. 14). Each genre can be seen as different phases of the ZPD with social forces always pulling back toward Magistral oppression with a third voice.

Vygotsky (1978) originally proposed the ZPD as a way to explain the dialectical relationship between learning and development among children.

We propose that an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers.

Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. (p. 90)

The use of the ZPD model has expanded to adult learning and development and has positive implications for workgroups. In practice it is the dialectic “between changing social conditions and the biological substrata of behavior” (p. 123).

Bakhtin (as cited in Zappen, 2000) brought a strong sense of context to his work in understanding the dialogical life in the literary characters of Dostoyevsky and Rabelais. Bakhtin reflected that “‘to be means to communicate’ and ‘life by its very nature is dialogic’” (p. 3). He distinguishes a sentence as described linguistically from utterance which correlates directly with the “‘extraverbal context of reality (situation, setting, prehistory)’ and with the utterances of other speakers” (p. 3). One is reminded here of Karl Mannheim’s idea of situation-bound meaning (Berman, 1981). Bakhtin discerns three different aspects of the dialogic relationship of utterances as a complex unity of differences—differences in the dyad and differences in the changing self. They are named polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnival.

Bakhtin found the characters in Dostoyevsky’s polyphonic novels to be constituted by their interactions with each other and the reader. Dostoyevsky did not describe the characters for the reader, because the words and actions of the characters did—for each other and the reader. Bakhtin sees this as a parallel authentic way that people come to develop and know themselves—through their exchange of utterances with one another. The greater the number of actors and exchanges, the richer the development of the self.

Heteroglossia describes speech styles in a language but Bakhtin extends it to “a complex mixture of languages and world views that is . . . dialogized, as each language is viewed from the perspective of others” (p. 6). This dialogized heteroglossia leads to hybridization of the languages which brings new meanings together and enriches development of each actor.

Bakhtin finds in Rabelais a way of life and mode of language he calls carnival which is a complete immersion in “freedom from official norms and values, ‘a special type of communication impossible in everyday life’” (Zappen, 2000). Whereas heteroglossia seems supplemental to polyphony in human development, carnival seems like the back side of the same coin—one being the constructive Apollonian side, and the other a darker, earthier Bacchanalian side toward which one can turn to the exclusion of the other.

### *Appreciative Inquiry*

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) steered action research away from its “pervasive deficiency / problem orientation” (p. 24) toward a generative model of appreciative inquiry (AI) founded on four principles. They state that “research into the social potential of organizational life should [1] begin with appreciation, [2] . . . be applicable [3] . . . be provocative, [and 4] . . . be collaborative” (p. 27). “Much of the theory, implicit and explicit, behind the effects of AI focuses on the bonding, healing and enlivening qualities of appreciative dialogue on social relations” (Bushe, 2001, p. 11). A salient feature of AI is that it is a meaning making process that is effective with “both synchronous and asynchronous interactions” (Stamps & Lipnack, 2004, p. 31) thereby preserving integrity of distributed teams.

The aims of Bohmian dialogue and AI are powerfully aligned. Whereas dialogue initiates an arising of consciousness between interlocutors with its inquiry and suspension of judgment to understand the other and to co-create new meaning, AI takes that new meaning in a positive direction through narrative wholeness, to organizational consciousness, and ultimately to global-well being (Whitney, 2004).

Thatchenkery (2004) introduces the concept of hermeneutic appreciation to reframe the basic organizational propensity to expend energy solving paradoxes by embracing and using them as a generative force. The German word *Weltanschauung* unifies perception of reality with experience of the world in language to create “an inseparability of interpretation from experience” (p. 81). The generative opportunities of this method are lost to workgroups persisting with deficit orientation.

### *Autopoietic Theory*

Humberto Maturano “considers language as a coupling activity based on the establishment of consensuality between recursive interactions among self and others” (Sekerka & McCraty, 2004, p. 221). As with Husserl’s streaming, living present, each instant of our reality is constituted by cognitive and biological interactions within and between the poles of each dyad, with each being structurally changed as evidenced by affect, behavior, acquisition of knowledge, and creation of new meaning. “We literally create the world we live in by living it” (Sekerka & McCraty, 2004, p. 221, quoting Maturano).

Sekerka and McCraty (2004) assert that one’s entire biological system baselines to normative patterns of experience, and immediately adjusts to perturbations or new unfamiliar patterns of input.

Once a stable baseline pattern . . . is established, the neural systems attempt to maintain a match between the baseline pattern and current inputs and the outcomes of projected future behaviors. If the baseline pattern becomes maladapted, the system will still strive to maintain a match to that pattern, even though it is not in our best interest (p. 226).

This may provide a window for understanding the significance of breathing techniques in controlling emotions during dialogue. The biophysical platform for pattern matching may have implications for intensities of the dialogical container and intersubjective field of each instantiation of personal interaction in its ever changing context.

#### *Wittgensteinian Language-Games and Batesonian Metalogues*

Shotter and Katz (1999, citing Anderson) discusses the “very crucial . . . momentary, bodily ‘moving,’ not-easily-picturable, ‘living’ nature of our conversational practices” (p. 4). Drawing from Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, they say that what we apprehend in our interactions with people and phenomena is an embodied way of acting in relation to them.

To compare one apprehension to another for difference and understanding we must not look to “static pictures, nor in fixed inner mental representations or ideas, but in the moving, momentary dialogic, living relationships that occur in the streams of life between us (p. 5).

This concept resonates with Husserl’s temporal sedimentations and ‘streaming, living present’ which took him from static to generative phenomenology (via passive and active synthesis).

Wittgenstein (Shotter, 1995) does not address the outcomes of dialogic process, but is concerned how we come to agreement on those outcomes and can be assured we lay the foundation to speak coherently in each situated context. Wittgenstein argues that instead of turning immediately to a study of how individuals come to know the objects and entities in the world around them, we should begin in a quite different way: by studying how, by interweaving our talk in with our other actions and activities, we first develop and sustain between us, different particular ways of relating ourselves to each other—that is, that we should first study . . . our different forms of life with their associated language-games (p. 3, citing Gergen). Wittgenstein urges us to examine the poetics of our moment-to-moment circumstances and interactions in praxis, and to avoid using static theories and historical schemas as guides for interpretation of ever changing “momentary relational encounters” (p. 2). Each language-game is generatively constituted with words colored with the situated context of actions and circumstances. The objective is to attend to the tone of the words and the lacuna between them, to “follow or grasp the tendencies in each other’s conduct” (p. 3) in a way that maintains sense-making relationships and finds those circumstances for “being able to go on with each other in practice” (p. 3). This appears very similar to what Issacs (1999) would call attending to the container, and what Bohm would call protecting the conversations from fragmentation.

Shotter (1995) extracts from Wittgenstein a number of reminders for gaining understanding of how to draw attention to *how* we draw attention to things:

- (i) of the ‘gestural’ nature of our practical, embodied understandings; (ii) of our concern with the tensions, the struggles, and the ambiguities at work in the gaps

between us; (iii) of the possibility of us constructing new relations between us from the resources available to us in such gaps; and (iv) of our concern with how, in the making of such new connections and relations, we are projecting various, possibly new, forms of life (p. 5).

The process is remarkably well demonstrated in Bateson's (1972) *Metalogues* (pp. 3-58). Bateson defines a metalogue as a conversation about a problematic subject in which the participants discuss both the problem and the structure of the conversation simultaneously.

Wittgenstein (2001) is consonant with Bohm's later expressions on dialogue as when one is shown alternate circumstantial possibilities a person is "now . . . inclined to regard a given case differently: that is, to compare it with this rather than that set of pictures. I have changed his way of looking at a thing" (1953, no. 144).

#### *Issacs' Dialogic Container and Fields of Conversation*

Issacs (1999) cites Bohm as the first to compare conversation with the field behavior of a superconductor. The field of conversation is constituted with the memories, feelings, and history of the participants. This field is the intersubjective field if only for an isolated conversation. As more people join the conversation and interact in common time and space, that field becomes modulated with experiential feedback on many levels. The intersubjective field is that part of the dialogical container that passively carries forward, whereas there are many ways the container can be actively enhanced to enrich the field and produce a variety of positive outcomes such as innovations and new knowledge. As Issacs says, "we cannot manufacture a field . . . you cannot work on a field" because the field always exists as a natural exchange of

human energy. Intentionality is to be directed to creating the container “in which the intensities of human activity can safely emerge” (p. 242) and that will serve as an attractor to a healthy (intersubjective) field.

Issacs (1999) offers four practices that are elemental to the container: listening, respecting one another, suspending judgments, and speaking one’s own voice.

“Dialogue sets out to clarify and explain the container in which a conversation might take place . . . no consciously held container, no dialogue” (p. 244). Citing Pearce, Issacs suggests that for growth to occur in the container, “energy, possibility, and safety” (p. 244) must be evident and assured.

Isaacs (1999) also describes what he and C. Otto Scharmer name the Four Fields of Conversation which are the four stages of group development to fully generative dialogue. In Field 1, when a group first meets to converse, there is no container and politeness is carried to extremes to avoid discomfort. Any process reflection can raise defensive feeling. Keeping personal dignity and saving face are primary and contributions are monological. Field 2 is an uncomfortable place where, through facilitation or skillful conversation, people’s ideas are challenged or contextualized, sending some into retreat to field 1 and possibly leading to overall dialogical breakdown. Many groups cannot move beyond this point and remain fragmented. Field 3 is where a group moves into reflection and begins using inquiry<sup>3</sup> as a means of finding some new meaning together, and field 4 is where the group is in flow with generative dialogue and maintaining a very stable container. At this place there is an “awareness of the primacy of the whole . . . and people generate new rules for

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<sup>3</sup> There are several styles of inquiry that may be suitable here: simple Bohmian inquiry, Action inquiry, and Appreciative inquiry.



interaction” (p. 279). This series of fields is not unlike Tuckman’s four stages of group formation: forming, storming, norming, and performing.

### *Interreligious and Interideological Dialogue*

Leonard Swidler has for many decades convened and edited voices around the world on the matter of dialogue among Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Hindi. Among his prolific writings he published a decalogue of ground rules for interreligious and interideological dialogue (see [Appendix](#)). Swidler (1992) describes the approach to dialogue between people and groups of differing religions and ideologies as requiring a dialogical learning attitude and avoiding a monological teaching attitude. The signature challenge of these dialogues has been the absolutism each group reveres for its traditions. Swidler (Sahadat, 1997) cautions against allowing dialogue in this realm becoming “polemical or dialectical [because] the former functions on the basis of confrontation and refutation and the later [functions] on the basis of systematic reasoning for the juxtaposition of opposing views” (p. 1). Debate nor forced change have no place here either. “The fundamental goal . . . is for partners in dialogue to learn from one another, understand, grow, and change for the better. Patience, courtesy, and the ability to listen attentively with an open mind [is] helpful in this process” (p. 1).

Two prominent issues of religious pluralism (Sahadat, 1997) are “different apprehensions, interpretations, and expressions of truth [and that] there is not one exclusive way to liberation from the human condition” (p. 1-2) to reconcile soderologies. Swidler points to two reasons why so many of the religious cannot accept the truths and means of salvation of other faith traditions: because they believe God has revealed

himself exclusively to their own tradition, and because their model of truth is absolute, static, and exclusive. Küng (1992) offers a more detailed description of this perspective:

Every religion has its problematic point, a crucial point that seems to be indisputable, not negotiable, and which is the main difficulty for the others. For Christians, this point is Christology, that Jesus is the Son of God. For Jews, it is the promise that Israel, with its land, is the People of God. For Muslims, it is the Qur'an as the Word of God-Son of God, People of God, Word of God (p. 272).

Swidler (Sahadat, 1997) contends we must shift to a relational model of truth that is deabsolutized in the manner of the Jain<sup>4</sup> *anekintavada* tradition that accepts many paths to the truth and “states that contrary alternatives can be true from different standpoints” (p. 3). This epistemological relationality in the Swidlerian model links truths with the contextualized reality of each speaker-knower. “Relationality and mutuality are at the very foundation of this new model of truth and they point ineluctably to the need for dialogue” (p. 4).

The texts abound with enlightened Muslim intellectuals striving for dialogue among world religions. A rich excerpt from al Faruqi's (1992, p. 9) paper *Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue*, originally published in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* in 1968 is one of the more powerful pre-quantum descriptions of dialogue.

Dialogue is education at its widest and noblest. It is the fulfillment of the command of reality to become known, to be compared and contrasted with other

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4 Jainism (Sahadat, 1997) which dates back to the sixth century B.C.E. is a non-theistic Indian religion that offers a timely contribution to dialogue through its model of truth, fundamental to which is *anekintavada*: nonabsolutization or many-sidedness. This theory states that reality is complex with infinite sides or aspects, all of which can never be known through either the various categories of thought or sense perception or both (p. 4). The Jain theory of many-sidedness presupposes a manifold number of viewpoints (p. 5) . . . hence, the true nature [of a thing] will always be beyond our grasp (p. 6). The fundamental principle in Jain ethics, nonviolence (*ahimsa*), is an excellent complement to Swidler's ground rules for dialogue (p. 9).

claims, to be acquiesced in if true, amended if inadequate, and rejected if false.

Dialogue is the removal of all barriers between men for a free intercourse of ideas where the categorical imperative is to let the sounder claim to the truth win.

Dialogue disciplines our consciousness to recognize the truth inherent in realities and figurizations of realities beyond our usual ken and reach. If we are not fanatics, the consequence can-not be anything but enrichment to all concerned.

Dialogue, in short, is the only kind of inter-human relationship worthy of man!

Swidler also points to other prominent Muslim thought leaders who focus on the contextual matters preceding good dialogue. Duran (1992) discusses the Muslim diasporas and contrasts the *hijra*<sup>5</sup> to modern economic dislocations. Modern day Muslim laborers in Europe are somewhat estranged from the ancient practice of discerning *dar al-islam*<sup>6</sup> from *dar al-harb*<sup>7</sup>—a Manichean division of the world from early Islamic law—and alienated in their foreign cultures and unable to assimilate them because of their low economic status. “Many view their sojourn in a non-Muslim society as a temporary necessity and long to return to sources of purity that become more and more imaginary” (p. 99). One can imagine the challenge of initiating meaningful dialogue with and among such populations who are fragmented in their understanding of their faith, economically disenfranchised, lacking in political agency, and dreaming of an earthly future that doesn’t exist. “The increasing inter-penetration of different national societies and religious communities has created new conditions that make . . . reciprocity [between them] incumbent upon communities less and less homogeneous” (p. 109).

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5 Historically the *hijra* was a mass migration from lands not tolerant of Muslim religious practice (*dar al-islam*) to places where one’s religion could be practiced freely (*dar al-harb*).

6 The *dar al-islam* is an envisioning of an “abode of peace.”

7 The *dar al-harb* is an envisioning of an “abode of war. “

This is, by extension, a compelling case for workgroups, however hysteretic patterns are difficult for cultures to ignore as in cases of past efforts at dialogue “sometimes misunderstood by Muslims as a masked attempt at syncretism—[a suspicion] not always without basis” (Askari, 1992, p. 37). Ironically, dialogue practiced in authentic relationships is the only tool with which to untangle such deeply embedded misunderstandings among the myriad religious cultures, some of which are themselves changing, and so many which are disparate in knowledge.

This problem of education is perhaps addressed by Hassan (1992) in a discussion of Hindu-Muslim ‘dialogue of life’ which she describes as not “contrived” and emerging from the daily processes of living (p. 405). “There is a great need today to make ‘dialogue from above’ coalesce with ‘dialogue from below’” (p. 406) which is to say that both the academic dialogue (i.e. Bohmian) and the everyday discourse of people interacting and negotiating with each other go hand in hand to resolving the more existential problems between them.

### *Summation 2*

The art of dialogue has a number of original thinkers like Socrates, Buber, Bohm, and Wittgenstein who point the way for the substantive work of Issacs and Maturano. Their combined work helps bring to focus new relevance for other threads of inquiry as those of Bakhtin, Vygotsky, and Cooperrider attest. Along the way, practitioners like Swidler accumulate and reflect on methodologies used to make dialogue effective in difficult circumstances. This *bricolage* of knowledge and wisdom provides permutations of opportunity to craft innovative dialogical solutions to the needs of human enterprise.

## Postmodern Collaborative Workgroups

Workgroups positioned in hierarchical command-and-control oriented organizations are constrained by directives, micromanagement, and the metaphors of superior layers of management. This precludes unrestrained meaning-making through dialogue because expressions must to some degree align to the egoistic and political pall over the intersubjective space. It is for this reason that the better locus for the dialogic container is found in emergent, postmodern organizations, or once-positivist organizations intentionally transforming toward the relational quantum paradigm. That new paradigm has brought forth the awareness that particles do not tend to exist except in relationship with others, and the same can be said for the self in relationship with others (Wheatley, 1999). As Martin Luther King said: “We are entangled in a web of mutuality.” The quality of our actions is predicated on the quality or nature of our relationships.

### *Group Formation*

Katzenbach & Smith (1993) set the direction for development of workgroups into high performance teams with the following set of eight common approaches that—albeit unintentionally—lends well to the behavioral framework for fully intersubjective dialogue, as indicated in brackets:

1. Establish urgency and direction. [A natural sense of urgency—not externally imposed time-result pressure—stemming from the revelations can serve like a stochastic resonance reinforcing the contextual orientation. General direction at the outset of dialogue prevents *non sequitur*.]

2. Select members based on skills and skill potential, not personalities. [Similar personalities can conceivably reduce diversity of creative thought, whereas polarity can be dialogically fruitful.]
3. Pay particular attention to first meetings and actions. [Expectations are best set early in the dialogic process to cement the group in uncontaminated unity of purpose.]
4. Set some clear rules of behavior [i.e. balancing advocacy and inquiry (Argyris, 1993)].
5. Set and seize upon a few immediate performance-oriented tasks and goals [—the topical part of the dialogue container].
6. Challenge the group regularly with fresh facts and information [—providing waves of opportunity for double-loop and triple-loop learning].
7. Spend lots of time together [—one of Bohm's essential requirements for surfacing assumptions and thereby generating sensitivity].
8. Exploit the power of positive feedback, recognition, and reward.  
[Paraphrasing, validating, encouraging all lead to increased mutuality, generative dialog, and new shared meaning.] (pp. 119-127)

A good team intentionally learns to coordinate these actions to lay the groundwork for the dialogic container. William Issacs (1999) likens a successful team or workgroup using dialogue to an improvisational jazz group that creates new music simply by interacting with their unique skills and idioms within an intersubjective space. McCullough (2005) attributes America's historically great accomplishments to its peoples' unique ability to improvise [and one might add its diversity]. There are many

layers of scholarship to be reviewed in the literature, such as for example the caveat of Brown, Tumeo, Larey and Paulus (1998) regarding the negative effects of expressing feelings and emotion in brainstorming sessions. A term Illich (1973) introduced is *conviviality* to mean “autonomous and creative intercourse among persons” and “individual freedom realized in personal interdependence” (p. 11). As society moves into the post-industrial era, Illich theorized that industrial productivity and professional services will quickly fall short of helping people with their authentic needs.

Illich’s prescience is playing out in communities and organizations at an alarming rate. To forestall this trend we may consider the following theories and methods as adjunctive to the maintenance and positive attenuation of each dialogic container and its surrounding intersubjective field within workgroups and networks.

### *Group Decision Making*

The value of group decision making over individual decision making is apparent in the literature on dialogue. There is a natural propensity for individuals to offer solutions and advice from their own experiential background and referential framework. As limited or expansive as that might be, the testing of one’s ideas alongside those of others in a group provides an opportunity for creative insight for each party that transcends the initial ideas offered. That synergy can also be used to refine the individual’s offering to become more germane to the specific topic or problem at hand or, alternatively, to set a valid new direction or goal based on resulting revelations. This is an efficacious approach a group can take for outside-the-box solutions.

Occasionally we don’t hear the actual words that are being spoken because we substitute the words that we’re expecting to hear from another party. In responding, we

will reference the words we thought we heard only to find ourselves off track with the other's intentions. Also we may find that although we may be discussing the same topic, the other may be approaching it from an entirely different frame of reference.

Recalling Bohm's (1996) explanation that what one person says is not exactly responded to by another in the way it is meant, an "other" sees that slight difference to generate a new perspective on their preconception. This process brings the "tacit infrastructure" (Bohm, 1985) of thought to the surface. If this happens reciprocally among several people with diverse backgrounds, the ideation is enriched. If the elements of the interpersonal process which include active listening and clarifying, supporting and building, along with confronting and differing are skillfully engaged in this enriched discussion; the outcome can be very fruitful.

*Action Theory (as a dialogical platform and mutuality generator)*

Argyris (1993) developed action science for effective stewardship in any group or organization. Used as a framework for learning, it enables groups to become resilient to external changes. Values are fundamental in explaining action theory.

Theories of action are governed by a set of values that provide the framework for the action strategies chosen. Thus, human beings are designing beings. They create, store, and retrieve designs that advise them how to act if they are to achieve their intentions and act consistently with their governing values. These designs are key to understanding human action. (p. 50)

Argyris (1993) has developed two action models for organizational limited-learning systems that pivot on the potential embarrassment attached to actions.



Model 1 tells individuals to craft their positions, evaluations, and attributions in ways that inhibit inquiries into them and tests of them with others' logic. The consequences . . . are likely to be defensiveness, misunderstanding, and self-fulfilling and self-sealing processes. (p. 52)

Model 2 behaviors are crafted into action strategies that openly illustrate how the actors [reach] their evaluations or attributions and how they [craft] them to encourage inquiry and testing by others. As a consequence, defensive routines that are anti-learning are minimized and double loop learning is facilitated. (p. 55, citing Argyris & Schön)

The process of intentionally engaging action science on the Model 2 level produces trust in the actions taken and, by default, in the people executing them. This trust is vital to each dialogical container in which healthy, ethical transactions occur. The intersubjective field of that container is enlarged with the confidence that exchanges are reliable; and authentic learning and growth are present upon which to build.

Specific practices of identifying defensive routines and avoidance of escalating inferential presumption support a healthy dialogic culture. Defensive routines (Argyris, 1993, Argyris, & Schön, 1996) can be discerned through conversational patterns using Argyris' "left-hand column method" (Argyris, Putnam & McLain Smith, 1985) of annotation. Inferential presumption is tested by analyzing his "ladder-of-inference" as described by its rungs:

1. Experience Some Relatively Directly Observable Data - Listen to a recorded conversation, not merely to what he, she, or they recall was said.
2. Impose Meanings on Conversation - "The meaning of the conversation is...."

3. Impose Meanings on Actions - "The intention the person had in taking the action was....'

4. Evaluate an action – 'The action was effective or not.' (Action, 2005)

The original author of action science, action research, and more recently action inquiry, Torbert (2004), describes action inquiry as a kind of behavior that "is simultaneously productive and self assessing . . . listens into the developing situation . . . accomplishes whatever tasks appear to have priority . . . invites a revisioning . . . if necessary . . . is always a timely discipline . . . because its purpose is . . . to discover . . . what action is timely" (p. 13).

Fundamental to action inquiry is what Torbert (2004) names "super-vision" which is achieved through the systems theory process of triple-loop feedback within each person's awareness to generate and maintain mutuality within a group. He reveals that there are three nested levels of feedback that constitute triple-loop feedback. Single-loop feedback acceptance leads to change in behaviors and operations; this is the deepest level of acceptance most people tolerate to one extent or another. Double-loop feedback acceptance can lead to change in structure, strategy, and action-logic but it is difficult to accept because of the propensity for strong self-identity with these constructs. It requires the pull of a deeper spiritual sense of presence, attention, intention, and vision found in triple-loop feedback to move one out of this self-identity anchoring, to full acceptance of changes required in structure, strategy, and action-logic, and to acquire super-vision and the ability to lead others in mutuality to such actions. "Triple-loop feedback makes us present to ourselves now" (p. 18).

Correlating to the levels of feedback are territories of experience and parts of speech that facilitate the acquisition of triple-loop feedback. The first two territories of experience Torbert (2004) names “outside events” and “own sense of performance” which are the actions and the behavioral responses of others and self respectively. These correspond to single-loop feedback. Torbert’s third territory of experience is “action-logics” which are the schemas and experiential modes of reflection that can educe double-loop feedback. The fourth territory named “intentional attention,” is the rarified field of presencing awareness, vision, and intuition that confirms the second-loop response-actions by generating confidence and mutuality among immediate others. Moment-to-moment reflection on this plane of awareness generates triple-loop feedback (p. 22).

Torbert’s (2004) four corresponding styles of speech that draw timely content from the four territories of experience are: “inquiring and listening [to] outcomes in the external world . . . illustrating behaviors [and] operations . . . advocating strategy and structure [and] goals . . . [and corresponding to triple-loop super-vision] framing of attention [and] intention [and] vision” (p. 30). The “interweaving [of] first- [objective], second- [intersubjective], and third-person [objective] action-inquiry” (p. 219) can generate transformation in any community of practice.

*Group Problem Solving Processes (as platforms for intersubjectivity)*

Collaborative business process models and methodologies abound and many in and of themselves require individual and group attention to discipline akin to the principles of dialogical process to be at all effective. In this sense the models and methods, as tools, may recursively reinforce healthy intersubjective fields.

The Osborne-Parnes Creative Problem Solving (CPS) process is the product of Parnes' extension of Osborne's work on creative problem solving methods. The process draws participants through a combination of convergent and divergent thinking tools—to avoid only singular solutions that have worked before—to generate multiple fresh solutions. CSP uses six steps of inquiry named mess-finding, data-finding, problem-finding, idea-finding, solution-finding, and acceptance-finding. Elements of this process may have synergy with those of Altshuller's Ideation / TRIZ (I/T) innovation concepts and tools. The five focal elements of TRIZ are technical contradictions, physical contradictions, substance-fields, and Ideal Final Result (Hughes, 1998). The two models, coming from different cultures—American and Soviet respectively—complement each other in vital ways and their confluence holds promise, not just for effective group innovation, but for providing a pathway that forms cohesion, shared purpose, and a platform for intersubjective engagement. Other models that have such implications are A. Buzan's Mindmapping® methods as used in MindManager® software, and E. Goldratt's project management based Theory of Constraints (TOC). It is reported “that TOC and TRIZ are being combined in Israel” (Hughes, 1998, p. 11).

### *Social Networks and Communities of Practice*

A social network is a finite number of actors with common relationships, such as a workgroup or organization. Social network analysis is a mathematical method of determining the interdependent nature of those relationships and the centrality of specified attributes. Construction of network diagrams allows groups to understand how each person tends to fall into one of four roles (Cross & Parker, 2004):

central connectors, who have a disproportionate number of relations in the network and might be either unrecognized resources or bottlenecks; boundary spanners who connect a [group] with other [groups] or with similar networks in other organizations; information brokers, [who] communicate across sub-groups of an informal network so that the group as a whole won't splinter . . . [and] peripheral people, who might either need help getting better connected or need space to operate on the fringes. (p. 71)

Network analysis can be a powerful adjuvant to understanding and focusing the dialogic container and sensing the intersubjective field because a diagram acts like a mirror with a macro view for groups and subgroups. Each member can graphically see his or her position in the relational network and is free to explore new connections toward wholeness of the group.

The next evolutionary step for individual networks is formation of communities of practice (Wheatley, 2005). In the true sense of community, members are committed to mutual support and shared learning “to consciously develop new knowledge . . . [and] to advance the field of practice” (p. 177).

### *Small Group Communication Theory*

Beebe and Masterson (2003) illustrate the complexity of communication by listing the six persons represented in a dyadic conversation as:

the person who you think you are, who you think the other person is, who you think the other person thinks you are, who the other person thinks he or she is, who the other person thinks you are, and who the other person thinks you think he or she is. (p. 38)

The permutation of this combination for a seven member group is 966 representations of identity to modify for uncertainty reduction on an unconscious level (p. 39, Table 2.1). Third person representations multiply that. Intentional cultivation of interpersonal relationships to an authentic level without dialogic inquiry can be a fruitless task.

Maslow's theory of interpersonal needs (Beebe & Masterson, 2003) are arranged hierarchically in ascending order of physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. The theory assumes that higher level needs become manifest as lower level needs are fulfilled. If workgroups can provide a structure for this ascension of all its members, the intersubjective field and corresponding dialogic container are likely to be more generative. This theory has not been verified by research; however it may enhance the effectiveness of group work if members shared similar measures of ascension on this hierarchy for faster satisfaction, attunement of values, coherence, and reduction of anxiety.

Schutz's theory of individual needs is also known as fundamental interpersonal relations orientation (FIRO) (Griffin, 1991). Beebe and Masterson (2003) list inclusion, control, and affection as primary sequential phases in the formation and interaction of a group. (In later expository on FIRO, Schutz replaced the term 'affection' with 'openness.')

Schutz uses the term 'arena' to describe the space in which group members' needs become satisfied or frustrated. The arena can be seen as corresponding to the intersubjective field, with inclusion, control, and affection as conducive factors that are cyclical in the sense that "cohesiveness peaks during the affection phase" (p. 55) as goals are met. An helical cycle begins anew as the group reforms for each new phase or goal in linear progress toward its overall common

purpose. The satisfaction of affection needs is likely facilitated if not amplified by the syntonic nature of positive intersubjectivity within the group.

### *Social Exchange Theory*

Social exchange theory describes the balance of rewards and costs of belonging to groups and committing to the relationships within the group (Beebe & Masterson, 2003). The success factors of the small group “such as cohesiveness and productivity are directly related to how rewarding the group experience is” (p. 40). Costs can include “mental effort, anxiety, or . . . embarrassment” (p. 39). Rewards can include “fellowship, job satisfaction, achievement, status, and meeting personal needs and goals” (p. 39). Such awards enhance the intensity of the intersubjective field of the group. Stemming from equity theory this is a deeply engrained social norm of *quid pro quo* wherein people are found to join and support the goals of a workgroup in some balanced measure with the fulfillment of their personal goals—as in the case of FIRO.

Systems theory, as applied to small groups, takes the perspective that workgroups and teams are open systems that receive input, process input, and yield output, and that exhibit properties of synergy, entropy, and equifinality. Systems theory can only trace the boundaries of small group process by revealing its broader context and external contingencies (Beebe & Masterson, 2003).

### *Symbolic Convergence Theory*

Ernest Borman’s symbolic convergence theory (Beebe & Masterson, 2003) explains how certain types of communication shape a group’s identity and culture, which in turn influence . . . norms, roles, and decision making . . . Group consciousness . . . evolves as group members share . . . creative and

imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfills a group psychological or rhetorical need. (p. 42)

As a group interacts, interpretations and beliefs tend to sediment with the group to become a shared identity carried forward into new interactions. “By describing how people in groups come to share a common social reality, symbolic convergence theory explains how groups make decisions and make sense of the decision making process (p. 43, citing Propp & Kreps). This learning propensity should be attended with dialogical reflection and caution for groupthink.

### *Structuration Theory*

Giddens’s structuration theory “suggests that when we join a new group, we use rules we learned in other groups to structure our behavior” (Beebe & Masterson, 2003, p. 44). This can act as a double edged sword in that the diversity of backgrounds brings optional and new rules to the group to enrich the containers, yet it sometimes brings dysfunctional rules that may need re-alignment to avoid fragmentation and useless perturbations.

Structuration theory treats structure and agency as a mutually dependent duality interacting in a helical cycle along a time-space axis. Its utility in the context of this paper is to remind us that in structuration theory, “structure is regarded as rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction” (Universiteit, 2004). The organizational structure of workgroups modulates the focal points, amplitude, and alignment of energy expended by its participants through situational rules, while fluctuation among participants and other resources gradually overcome homeostasis in Lewinian freeze-unfreeze-refreeze manner evidenced by occasional rule changes.



Persistent social structures and persistent situated actions (i.e. social practices, routines, etc.) essentially reproduce one another form structuration (Johnston, 2001).

### *Functional Theory*

Functional relationship exists where specific, intentional behavior produces desired, appropriate outcomes without unintended consequences. The positivist roots of functionalism are found in the scientific method. Functionalists largely look at outcomes after-the-fact to gauge their predictability based on the rules and controls that were in place during the interactions. This is an example of a model which would have little utility in the confluence of intersubjectivity and dialogue, because of its objective nature, but is useful for the maintenance of machines and chemical processes.

### *Nonverbal behaviors and Non-behavioral Factors*

Nonverbal behaviors in workgroups are critically important to understand because they are more universal and convey much more information than verbal expressions and utterances do, and thereby can negate or interfere with quality dialogue, or enhance it. Research continues to study the nonverbal communication system for its ambiguity, degrees of intentionality, levels of meaning, and cultural context (Byers, 1997).

Behavioral codes include kinesics (posturing, moving, gesturing), proxemics (personal space, territoriality), facial expressions and eye behavior (gaze), haptics (touch), and vocalics (pitch, rate, volume, paralanguage) (Beebe & Masterson, 2003; Verderber & Verderber, 1998; Byers, 1997). These behaviors are continuous during face to face conversations and exert enormous influence on the outcomes in extremely complex ways. Additional factors, not behavioral per se, also weigh in heavily. These

include dress, grooming, appearance, chronemics, and physical environment. These later factors are often attended to for optimization of business meetings, however often get overlooked with day-to-day workgroups.

Open discussion of nonverbal behaviors in a trusting environment is another facet of the process theorists Torbert and Argyris promote to create alignment between the verbal, the nonverbal, and the action. Gestures and body language that don't match the words are at best perplexing, and at worst destructive to coherent discourse and gainful enterprise. Studies assessing ability to interpret emotion and tone via email (Kruger, Epley, Parker & Ng, 2005) in the absence of gesture, emphasis, inflection and intonation demonstrated persistent overconfidence on the part of senders that intended humor and sarcasm were communicated. This points to the value of face-to-face venues for discourse. Although telephone and videoconferencing are respectively more marginally effective at relationship management, Wheatley (2005) finds that organizations need periodic face to face meetings to establish and reinforce the human relationships necessary for sharing knowledge. Wheatley states,

It's important to remember that technology does not connect us. Our relationships connect us, and once we know the person or team, then we use the technology to stay connected. We share knowledge because we are in relationship, not because we have broader bandwidth available (p. 153).

### *Expectancy Violation Theory*

One promising area of research with implications for workgroups is the development of Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT) by Burgoon (2003) discerning the positive and negative valences of rapport.

EVT frames interpersonal communication patterns and their outcomes within the context of expectancies and violations of those expectancies. Expectancies are enduring patterns of anticipated verbal and nonverbal behavior for a particular individual that are appropriate, desired or preferred. Violations of these expectancies occur when actions are sufficiently discrepant as to be noticeable by the receiver. A key assumption of EVT is that prior to or during an interaction, interactants form impressions of one another that have valences (either positive or negative) attached to them (p. 3-4).

This apt chemical analogy of valence—suggesting covalent bonding potential—is striking in the context of a prospective field of expectancy and potentiality that may be modulated by the intentionality of its dialogical containers.

#### *Balancing Group Culture with Strategy*

Handy (1996) speaks of 'federated organizations' where dedicated teams have autonomy to collaborate on 'portfolio work' which is employment tied to specific team projects. He compares the British and Japanese models for group work and suggests that each borrow certain ideas from the other culture to strike a healthy balance between the Japanese over-commitment to the group and the British over-emphasis on "duty to the world" (p. 132). Unbalanced commitment to homogenous workgroups as seen in Japan can lead to groupthink and burnout from unbalanced lives and singular focus. Presence and being in the moment intersubjectively with teammates does not necessarily mean commitments to the team outside of work or extended work hours that disrupt family and personal lives.

Going forward, Handy predicts that people will increasingly accept portfolio work with one, two, or several organizational teams or workgroups. Given the American cultural bent for competition and superstars, and workplace roots in Taylorism, it seems likely there will be a considerable resistance to deeply engage in dialogical intersubjective relations here for a long time because compensation systems, training programs, and organization structure are not conducive to it in critical measure. Culture trumps everything. Groups that can break free from such norms have the potential to form their own self-directed, collaborative enterprises to work on similar projects for one or several other such organizations.

#### *Physical Location Factors that Intensify the Dialogical Container*

A number of physical location comfort factors to consider for enhancing the dialogical container include transportation and proximity to home, accessibility, ergonomic furniture, audiovisual equipment, phones, fax machines, printers and computers with internet access, privacy, temperature, air pressure, humidity, allergen count, odor, sound distractions, light quality, colors, time of day, week, lunar cycle, and year, clean restrooms, access to food and drinks, special needs accommodation and administrative support. Many people from diverse cultures also require a private space for prayer several times per day. An overall distraction-free atmosphere of comfort and safety is imperative for dialogue.

#### *Summation 3*

Positivist, Cartesian work management theories are losing currency in the marketplace in a global economy. Surviving and emergent organizations of all kind will

continue to move toward collaborative, dialogical, and networked project teams. This section highlights a broad array of tools with which workgroups can excel together.

## Conclusions

I take strong exception to Crossley's (1996) conclusion, after examining many dimensions of intersubjectivity, that there is nowhere else to go with the concept and no instrumental utility in its measure. Crossley's discussions traced "a common path through the work of Merleau-Ponty, Wittgenstein, Mead, Schutz, and Habermas" considered "against a background formed by the work of Husserl, Buber and Hegel" (preface). Recent scholarship on Husserl's unpublished later works indicate that Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Habermas, and others have each predicated their understandings and disagreements about intersubjectivity on Husserl's earlier static phenomenology (Donohoe, 2004; Zahavi, 2001). Crossley's exploration missed the implications of genetic phenomenology which implicates temporality, the streaming, living present, and community to open the way for a new conceptualizing of relationality.

Donohoe's (2004) explication of Husserl's passive and active genesis of the ego substantially furthers the understanding of transcendental intersubjectivity stemming from its founding in the prepredicative realm of constitution. Because "there is [Husserl's] pre-individual, passive givenness ... it is possible to speak of a coincidence between ego and Other" (p. 88). This is a foundation for intersubjectivity, mutuality, and the shared generation of realities. Constructivism with its trivial, radical, social, cultural, critical, and constructionist dimensions—as described by student Dougiamas (1998)—seems to be a valid and useful alternative to Kantian epistemology and not mutually exclusive to the relational perspective we have followed here.

Development of the relational form of psychoanalysis that utilizes mutuality on both the conscious and unconscious levels to co-construct meaning between therapist

and analysis and recognize the uniqueness of the dyad is a complete paradigm shift. This has changed the approach to understanding (*Verstehen*) and the human condition in most of the social sciences by co-construction of realities through relationships situated in the temporal, streaming, living present. As each ego acquires sedimentations of experience, habitualities form to express language and behavior patterns and anchor expectations. Through dialogical relationship each offers a mirror for the other and alternate patterns to compare and differentiate those patterns within unfolding circumstances. If such relationship is authentic and mutual, the sharing is transcendental and leads from fragmentation toward a Gestalt. Absence of dialogue and mutuality leaves a subjectivity with the sedimentations of its narrow experience to become entrenched in habitualities and representations that are parochial and incongruent with others except in a most tangential way. This can calcify boundaries that impede the sharing of knowledge and development of larger truths and realities.

Wheeler's (2000) posit "I am loved therefore I am," reveals a clear portal into the new paradigm of intersubjective relationality that is quickly displacing the Cartesian positivism that has ruled organization science through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The polysemic nature of intersubjectivity as described by Coelho and Figueiredo (2003), Bråten (2003), de Quincey (2005), and others are reconcilable, supplemental and without contradiction. The concept of symbolic interaction stemming from the work of Mead was synchronously developed at the same time Husserl defined intersubjectivity. The interactionist takes as a given that those who interact with words and action intersubjectively share a common reality at that particular point in time.

Gallese's (2003) conception of *Einfühlung* as "an intentional form of perception by analogy" and hypothesis that a neural substrate of mirror neurons, when activated, creates a "subpersonally instantiated common space" provide a neurobiological foundation for the pre-conscious elements of intersubjectivity. That common space can be seen as coincidental with Issac's (1999) dialogical container and with the intersubjective field from which new shared meaning arises.

Bohm (1996) speaks of assumptions developed from one's cultural ground and the chunking or snapshots taken at other times for other purposes that block the creation of shared meaning. These assumptions—whether formed of personal or cultural habituations—situated in a new or emergent culture will create and extend the storming phase of group formation and otherwise impede generation of new knowledge, understanding, and shared meaning. At this particular stage—which Issacs (1999) would call "field 2"—the use of carefully facilitated elenctic dialogue may decongest the container of unexamined assumptions, thereby reducing or eliminating Argyris & Schön's (1996) "defensive routines" and moving the group to "Model 2" behavior and away from the "ladder of inference." As "the content of sub-cultural differences begins to assert itself" (Bohm, 1996), the Socratic elenchus can reveal the gap between Argyris' (1993) "espoused values and values in use;" and it can be gently used to bring "undiscussables" into the light.

Vygotsky's (1979) dialectic "between changing social conditions and the biological substrata of behavior" within the zone of proximal development suggests a linkage between group development and Gallese's (2003) "shared manifold of intersubjectivity." The presence of skilled coaches and facilitators has potential to



intensify the common space with Cooperrider and Srivastva's (1987) "appreciative inquiry" and Torbert's (2004) "action inquiry" methods at critical inflection points in group development to align the shared manifold of neural patterning of pivotal values.

Bakhtin's rich idioms of polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnival color the language patterns we see with deeper meaning and he shows us in literary works where their misinterpretation or misapplication can be negative.

The theme of iterative recursion comes up in discussions of Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Maturano. Sekerka & McCraty (2004, citing Maturano) point to cognitive and biological interactions leading to structural changes with recursive dyadic interactions to a normative baseline—evidenced by affect, behavior and acquisition of knowledge—the inertia of which may or may not be positive. It appears to be a natural process that will occur with or without attention to the intersubjective field or dialogical container. This neurolinguistic process can have unintended consequences pathological to the goals of a group. Shotter's (1995) extraction of Wittgenstein's reminders for gaining understanding of how to draw attention to *how* we draw attention to things seems to fit here as a means to group self monitoring of where the interactions are taking them. Complementary but more specific in methodology is Torbert's (2004) "supervision" from three nested levels of feedback that constitute triple-loop feedback requiring presence, attention, intention, and vision. Again we see a struggling stage at the double-loop level of feedback vis-à-vis strong self-identity with these constructs. Singel (2004) remembers being told three forces stand in the way of learning: "the need to be right, to be in control and to look good" (p. 2) which may be very common, culturally frozen, defensive habitualities to explore with these forms of reflective inquiry.

The intersubjective psychotherapeutic methods of Kohut and others were developed to reintegrate individuals and groups and families. As with so many positive changes, the naming of phenomena is the beginning of cognitively reframing them—as with Sullivan’s ‘parataxic interpersonal experiences’ and Lewin’s ‘paratactic distortions’ leading to that field of experience connecting to intersubjectivity—to create a new therapeutic model. That model which employs sustained empathic inquiry; remaining in the frame of the other; and self-reference must now be reexamined with the naming of new phenomena from Husserl’s hyle, or Bohm’s implicate order, at the boundaries of chaos. Effective, coherent, collaborative workgroups must preempt dis-ease and dysfunction by engaging these tools before the fact of their need as remediation or therapy. Finding out how families reintegrate from dysfunction can then, as it were, lead to avoiding dysfunction in workgroups. Unlike families, chronically dysfunctional workgroups may need to be remixed where coaching is not effective due to cost.

Shapiro’s (1998) ‘unfulfilled need for twinship affirmation’ from loss of ‘extended family or tribal structure’ will increasingly be addressed by the team or workgroup in Western culture. Since ‘twinship provides for the bonds that exist in a group’ and ‘intersubjectivity . . . provides the perspective with which to explore those bonds’ the sense of belonging to these groups can promote healing and growth for individuals within them. Everyone needs a tribe and meaningful work to actualize. The inequality model of helping vs. serving (Remen, 1996; Cooper-White, 2004) is easily addressed in workgroups where mentoring and assisting is defined as part of the job and where daily *quid pro quo* opportunities abound in a syntonetic field of mutuality.

From the standpoint of mental hygiene, groups of equals with requisite agency, resources, and mutual respect and intent to learn, reflect, and take right action should be able to process stress, resolve cognitive dissonance, and reconcile paradox and complexity far more effectively than the same number of individuals working independently or serially and separately. Power differentials can be a disruptive factor when trying to optimize creative sharing within a workgroup. It invariably erodes trust by compromising the I–Thou structure if it isn't distributed in rational measure.

The true value of developing the sensitivity to “read” intersubjectivity is two-fold: to guide groups or co-workers toward dialogical fixes to avoid the accumulation of fragmentations (baggage) and undiscussibles, and to steer the group to peak performance and experiences (flow). The intersubjective field then is at the heart of group work. In some groups it is the uncomfortable “elephant in the room” that leads people to think one thing and say another. In other groups it is a source of joy and generative collaboration.

Revisiting our research question: What positive implications are to be found through reconciliation of intersubjectivity and dialogue for postmodern collaborative workgroups? The preceding conclusions positively imply: that dialogue has a direct transcending effect on intersubjectivity; that we are given a relational form through which workgroup members can co-construct new meaning through mutuality; that dialogical relationships provide the means to rectify fragmented beliefs, and to descend ladders of inference; that dialogue builds and sustains an intersubjective field of validation, belonging, twinship, and common reality; that common reality patterns support uniform action and bypass defensive routines; that physical proximity of group

members provides a biological anchoring of *Verstehen* within an ‘instantiated common space’ that is at once nested within a ‘zone of proximal development,’ within a ‘dialogical container,’ within an ‘intersubjective field;’ that ‘drawing attention to how we draw attention to things’ allows members to move forward with coherence; that a self-reflective community of practice is open to appreciative inquiry and action inquiry through which triple-loop feedback is accessible with ‘presence, attention, intention, and vision;’ that through ‘sustained empathic inquiry, remaining in the frame of the other, and self-reference’ team members may thwart dis-ease and dysfunction; that intersubjectivity is the readable signifier of tribal bonds in the group and dialogue is the means through which to establish, strengthen, and affirm ‘twinship’ therein; that the needs of ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ are naturally balanced in a ‘syntonic field of mutuality;’ that such mutuality may provide the respect and intent to learn, reflect, and take right action to face such obstacles of our time as stress, cognitive dissonance, paradox, and complexity; that the dialogic container may provide a forum to elentically expose the erosive effects of asymmetrically imposed power; that reading the intersubjective field may guide members toward dialogical solutions for cognitive and spiritual fragmentation, shame, and fear; and that through communality, postmodern collaborative workgroups may aspire to peak performance and transcendent flow.

## Leadership Implications for Group Management

The tectonic shifts underway in global society are not understood by most of its members. Changes in the environment and economy are giving those with the agency of capital unfettered opportunities to aggregate resources under their control in the name of free enterprise without consideration of the externalities of each privileged decision. Growing numbers of disenfranchised people will become an [It-like?] “problem” for the privileged “I”s unless this “bottom of the pyramid” (see Prahalad, 2005) is given the opportunity to participate in the global market economy. Millions of people who now have gainful employment will also be displaced by the shifts to come. Small and medium enterprises which can network with other organizations and supply chains should be built as a viable way to generate meaningful work for the underemployed. These enterprises will need to be extremely flexible and resilient learning organizations capable of adapting quickly to new situations and business models. Such strong organizations attend to the need of all participants to feel worthy. Handy (1994) said,

If we want to reconcile our humanity with our economics, we have to find a way to give more influence to what is personal and local, so that we can each feel that we have a chance to make a difference, that we matter. (p. 109)

It will remain to be seen for some time whether such clusters of organization will federate or merely con-federate (Handy, 1994) in response to actions by governments, multinational mega-corporations, and the shallow calling of consumers.

Strong organizations begin with artful cultivation of culture among the smaller work groups. The successful cultivation of culture begins with the attention given to the individual relationships formed in daily interaction, and to the habituated behaviors of

each member. The intersubjective field as it fluxes with each new situation and new member can be intentionally modulated with skillful dialogue that includes group self-reflection. Many factors can impede the progress of dialogue by attenuating the container of dialogue, which is completely avoidable where there is a shared will to minimize them. Purposeful training in the skills of dialogue and awareness of its limitations is the first priority of forming new workgroups. Members must understand how to optimize the container in every discussion to realize the benefits. Once people become engaged in dialogue, defenses fall away and trust continually grows new authentic relationships. Open, shared reflection on the evolving intersubjective field can become freeing.

A natural consequence of strong, positive intersubjectivity is that participants look forward to taking creative actions together that carry the dialogue to higher levels by providing new subjective experiences for each individual to share. This process leads a group to find more sophisticated tools, such as those described in the Postmodern Collaborative Workgroup section of this paper. With elevated dialogue and use of new tools in the form of shared models and theories, workgroups will enter into what Csikszentmihalyi (1993) calls a state of *flow* where members “act at the peak of their capacity” (p. 197) and find extreme gratification in the process of working and learning together. This drives a desire to continuously refine their communication and work processes, and to find systemic enhancements to raise group capacity and competitiveness. Workgroups at this level of shared consciousness are, for example, highly amenable to practicing appreciative inquiry and action inquiry, exploring problem

solving models and new structurations brought by new members, all the while continuously expectant of positive valencey with one another.

It's important to remember that these tools are readily available and have been validated for many years. What's needed is the shared initiative to explore them. The very process of investigating these various frameworks leads to healthy norm building. It is often overlooked that an unattended culture develops entropically, which is how so many organizations that grew quickly on the thrust of their brand, cheap oil, regulation loopholes, or political timing have become dysfunctional or obsolete from malaise.

Managers who would aspire to organize and motivate workgroups to combine their instrumental skills with intersubjective, social skills for the sake of shared goals, must exhibit transformational and servant leadership skills. Building a community of practice requires skillful recruiting, coaching, and facilitation. Once the process takes on its own life, the manager must work continuously to support the group in its linearly progressive spiral of achievement. As an outsider to the daily transactions of the group, the manager/coach is in a position to see if the dialogic container is being attended in meetings and can read the intersubjective cues with fresh eyes.

Communities of practice require special compensation that is not competitive among the members. Similar base salaries and team performance bonuses divided equitably can raise the level of knowledge sharing and mentoring locally within a "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978) and reciprocation. The compensation of flow and enjoyment of working well together can outweigh concern for intrinsic levels of pay, especially when everyone has similar pay and the group has the means to generate more together, and each has the opportunity to increase his or her value to the group.

High-level workgroups, built with positive social architecture, are dissipative structures that resist entropy by systematically apprehending complexity. “A vital culture is always the product of a small ‘creative minority’” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 282, citing Toynbee). The power of one small high-level team in an organization can have an enormous cultural impact on a parent or client organization. Many such groups can change society. The future of what expert teams and groups can accomplish is limitless and promises to be fulfilling on many levels, as Gardner’s multiple intelligences are explored and mediated with emerging technology to produce generative, “evolutionary cells” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 289). Unsponsored efforts such as skunkworks to develop low or mid-level performance teams often fail for lack of understanding or “nice idea, but not mine” attitudes among upper management. Those which aren’t marginalized or disbanded are often groups who achieve remarkable results before they are discovered. Upper management will often then support the initiative and praise it locally while gradually taking credit for it in the boardroom.

Upper level managers are advised to use collaborative workgroups as incubators for management training. This ensures the support and cultivation of high-level group work culture and the perpetuation of dialogue as a means to keeping intersubjective consciousness in focus. Without that, all enterprise is the same old same old I–It. New managers can practice radical listening skills and exchange knowledge with a multitude of stakeholders on tactical teams in preparation to network into the core, join strategic level workgroups, and to learn how to coach other workgroups.



#### *Summation 4*

It behooves managers to understand how each person in a workgroup draws his or her vital identity, on a multitude of intersubjective levels, from the group he or she works with every day. Dialogue is the means to explore and modulate that intersubjectivity toward wholeness and away from fragmentation. Groups and organizations built on that foundation will tap the generative capacity of their people to find new structures and solutions.

Through this paper, my intent is to give managers, in all size organizations, an awareness and appreciation for the vast untapped human potential that lies relatively dormant within and among groups of people who work together. This is an advisory that Cartesian, Baconian, Newtonian, positivist, hierarchical, command-and-control management practices attenuate the human spirit and suppress its potential. It is a call to apply positive attention and intention to the realm of intersubjectivity, (symbolic interaction, shared manifold, collective resonance, etc.) of each work group, and to nurture and align it with authentic dialogue and emerging organizational theories such as appreciative inquiry and action inquiry. In this realm we can find our true identities and purpose. Through positive entrainment of our hearts and minds we may find more sustainable enterprise and life. It is often said that “culture trumps everything,” however culture is constituted by individual relationships. Relationships are more mutable and fragile than cultures, and it is relationships that must be valued and improved within organizations for lasting improvement of cultures and performance of organizations. The apperceptive cladding that accumulates in the psyche of the individual, and becomes sedimented through habituations, can be wholesome or pathological depending on the

mental models of management. Therein lies the opportunity for management to balance management by objectives with the need to nourish the collective soul of work groups for coherence and alignment.

The demands of the postmodern workgroup have become extreme, such that productivity and creativity cannot be further sustained with carrot-and-stick incentives. Organizational leaders must now look for synergies within the relational thinking and feeling realm, and support dialogical practices and processes that are sensitive to both. The best performing organizational culture will reflect the attention paid to developing these synergies. Developing strongholds of dialogical inquiry isn't going to be easy in our current culture, but it is necessary at this pivotal point in history. It requires courageous, unwaivering peer leadership, without which organizational management will fall back to autocratic manipulation. The key operations are intersubjective mutuality and dialogue.

## Reflection

In the spring of 1961 my extended family bought a tiny wooded plot of land on the lee side of a sharp turn in a river. Our location was protected by an upstream, deep sloping granite ledge that redirected the channel and main current to the other side of the river from our shore where it eroded the bank and sometimes washed out the road on that far side. This produced a large clock-wise oval eddy current in front of our location, such that the water actually flowed in an upriver direction for 20 feet out from our shorefront. My father was in charge of claiming a beach out of the riverbank of roots and boulders that fell off directly at the waters edge. As my younger brothers and cousins helped me dig into the bank my father directed the humus to be brought up to the garden, the roots and small trees to be cut and dried for firewood, and all boulders and stones to be used to build a 20-foot long, 4-foot wide jetty from the bank out into the water above the waterline on the upriver boundary of the property. Each worked according to his capacity and we took frequent swim breaks.

As the job got underway, I asked my father why he wanted the stone jetty instead of a stone retainer wall along the face of the property like our neighbors had. He only said, "watch the river, not the neighbors," and threw a stick 20 feet out into the river. We watched it float up-river to the backside of the ledge and then around the entire oval path of the eddy current several times before the surface breeze pushed it out into the main current to be swept away. Then he said, "we're building a sand-catcher."

After we cut the bank back about 10 feet along the 70-foot waterfront to expose the underlying sand, and the jetty was complete, we began to see fine soft sand accumulate throughout the summer with particular depth in the corner where the jetty

was catching it from the eddy current to form a delightful, crescent shaped beach that extended the original waterline out an additional 10 feet. The harsher the weather and faster the main channel ran, the faster our beach was replenished perpetually with trapped sand until our side of the jetty was submerged with sand—thanks to a granite ledge, a powerful current, and a systems thinker.

This was one of my many early lessons in systems. My father's prescience in selecting this property location and pointing where to stack tons of stone helped me want to think ahead strategically and observe my actions and those around me moment to moment. The eddy current is a dissipative structure (Google Prigogine) created and energized by the entropy of a modulated river racing to the sea. The new beach is a dissipative structure energized by the eddy current and envisioned and created by humans working in alignment with visionary leadership and the freedom to put the stones where they see fit. As the forces of environmental, political, and economic change challenge us, we will find that societies and large organizations are too big to adapt in time except through the work of individuals working together effectively in small to moderate size groups—and each finding their own way of doing it with what they uniquely share and within their unique circumstances. Great workgroups are chaotic dissipative structures bounded by attended intersubjective field lines and managed dialogical containers. Just as I am herein seeking coherence within and between the complexity of metaphors—fields, containers, and dissipative structure—such workgroups can dialogically generate new conceptual metaphors grounded in co-occurrence and similarity correlations of shared experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and germane to each unfolding situation.

From my reading of history and the sources for this paper, it is my sense that the focus of our will should be continuously kept on the authenticity of relationships and quality of communication between all actors of all shared endeavors. Resilience and sustainability of our organizations rests squarely on the quality of our interpersonal relationships and the behaviors that nourish them. Theories, models, and methods that can modulate that quality in a positive, life-affirming manner should be embraced, learned, and integrated into group processes to evolve from fragmentation to Gestalts of dissipative structure through alignment of intention with leadership, convivial tools, and agape. I see a wealth of tools such as discussed in this paper that seem to be collecting dust in out-of-print book shops.

As roads wash out we need to anticipate where to lay our jetties for new beach fronts and roads instead of fighting the current head on. As political exigencies generate fear and totalitarianism we need to turn to our deepest wisdom. Those of us who can read and think deeply, and write and speak coherently, must willfully do so. We all must share our values through stories, find coherent, new metaphors, and do what is best done together. We must courageously, ethically and empathically turn to one another and discover who we really are through each other, and who we will become, in all our diversity, together, anew. It's not all about you—it's all about all of us.

My future work in this topical area will likely take me to greater depth on intercultural dialogue, and a search for the implications of Spiral Dynamics and axiology.

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### Appendix

*The Dialogue Decalogue excerpts (Swidler, 1983, see below)*

1. The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly.
2. Interreligious, Interideological dialogue must be a two-sided project—within [and between] each religious or ideological community .
3. Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity.
4. In Interreligious, Interideological dialogue, we must not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather our ideals with our partner's ideals, our practice with our partner's practice.
5. Each participant must define himself.
6. Each participant must come to the dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement are.
7. Dialogue can take place only between equals, or par turn part.
8. Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust.
9. Persons entering into Interreligious, Interideological dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own religious or ideological traditions.
10. Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology from within.

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