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Transforming *Accidental Adversaries* Dynamics in Client Systems and Ourselves

Jody Jacobson

*Innovation and Growth at the
Intersection of Relationships,
Structures, and Strengths ...*

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Transforming Accidental Adversaries Dynamics in Client Systems and Ourselves

Jody Jacobson



Transforming “accidental adversaries” dynamics in client systems and ourselves

Proefschrift

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door

Jody Jacobson

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Abstract

This dissertation is a story about a company that found itself entrenched in an escalating dynamic known as *accidental adversaries*. The dynamic stifles collaboration and innovation, and is a leading preventable cause of limited growth in organizations. The dissertation also tells the story of reconstructing the traditional consultant's role from expert observer to reflexive coach and partner.

The case that set this dissertation in motion took place at CT, Inc., a high tech company based in the Silicon Valley region of California, USA. The company had recently acquired a software company from which it imported a cadre of engineers and managers. Shortly following the merger, a new, high profile CEO was hired to leverage further development and delivery of a key technological breakthrough. At the time of the study, the company was being heralded widely in technology and business media both for its recent technical innovation and business turnaround. During the course of the project interviews, however, a different story began to unfold. Groups that needed to collaborate in order to innovate and grow the company, instead appeared to be working at cross-purposes, embroiled in a counter-productive adversarial dynamics.

A Note to Readers: How to Read this Paper

This dissertation represents a departure from the typical quantitative empirical research study. Readers will find that parts are written in the first person, a reflection of the focus of social construction on (a) narratives, (b) emergent meaning-making, and (c) continuous shaping and reshaping of “reality” through relationships, past and present. The title of Robert Quinn’s book, *Building the Bridge As You Walk On It*, characterizes the tone and style of writing that also differs from the structure of most traditional dissertations. For this reason, the paper may have an unfinished feel. That is in the nature of relational being and social construction, and is an intentional design component. The paper is intended to take readers on a sense-making journey along with the author. It is written in a social constructionist voice, although it often does so in harmony with a systems thinking perspective. As a constructionist paper, it is intended to read as an emergent conversational narrative. Wherever appropriate, the paper foreshadows the intent in taking the reader down a particular avenue or alleyway of thought, especially in Part II, “Conceptual Framework for Meaning-making.” The reader, however, is encouraged to co-construct meanings with the text, based on their own constructions and lived experiences.

Although basic concepts of social construction and systems thinking are defined in the paper, the following rudimentary explanation of relational being may be helpful to readers who are new to social construction:

Relational being is a foundational idea in the field of social construction, which suggest that individual identity is shaped in and by relationships, and that the self has no meaning apart from its relational context and origins. Some relationships are more primary than others (e.g., an individual’s early relationships with parents, influential relatives, siblings, etc.). These tend to shape the content that a person’s being will take on in key aspects of life, as a son/daughter, child, adult, parent, partner, teacher, etc. Other relationships are more immediate, continuously shaping and reshaping a person’s constructions of reality (i.e., meanings that are socially constructed in/through relationship). Relational being is a dynamic state in which new meaning and, thus, reality are constantly being created. Relational being stands in direct contrast to *bounded being*. Constructionists often refer to bounded being as a positivist or modernist construction of self and reality as having an essentialist nature that is biologically predetermined, or determined by a higher power, or god, depending on an individual’s belief system. From the perspective of social construction, a bounded view of being suggests that reality exists “out there,” in an objective sense, outside of relationships.

Finally, the company case that this paper is based on is real and all interview excerpts are taken verbatim from the transcripts; however, company (i.e., CT, Inc. and GEBco) and interviewee names are fictitious, as are a limited number of other unique identifiers (e.g., locations and historical details).

INTRODUCTION

Accidental adversaries can take hold of an organization like an invasive species, quickly limiting its ability to grow, prosper, and innovate. When groups and individuals who need to collaborate and cooperate instead compete and indulge in conflict (i.e., develop an adversarial relationship), they can “do in” a company faster, more effectively, and with greater precision than even the most cunning external competitor. Given how common and damaging the dynamic is, surprisingly little has been written about it. Addressing accidental adversaries involves crossing the great divide between affective and cognitive, behavioral and structural, people and process approaches to change. And “therein may lie the rub.” Transforming the dynamic in client systems may highlight a limiting dynamic in the field of Organization Development (OD), itself--the tendency for practitioners and academics to fall into one camp or the other:

- Those who favor cognitive approaches to change, like those prevalent in the quality and performance excellence¹ arenas, *or*
- Practitioners who strongly prefer affective approaches like dialogic practices and appreciative inquiry² (referred to in the rest of the document as AI), more often embraced in the OD field.

Human organizations are inherently both-and propositions where structures³, processes, and behaviors meet. One of the jobs of OD consultants is to help leaders coordinate these often competing components seamlessly, effectively, and with integrity.

While this paper is written from a social constructionist perspective, it does not suggest that practitioners and researchers should discard all cognitive models in favor of affective ones, nor does it negate the former as positivist, modernist, or mechanistic. Instead, it proposes to augment their effectiveness by coupling them with a constructionist overlay that may enable them to more effectively address the affective, relational aspects of organizations--effective work relationships, trust, willingness to collaborate, exploring shared values and aspirations, resilience, and more—that are key leverage points for long-term strategic success and for transforming the accidental adversaries dynamic.

¹ E.g. LEAN and Six Sigma, focus on reducing waste and increasing efficiency; Baldrige Performance Excellence Model (NIST, 2011) focuses on *aligning* decisions and actions to an organizations’ key success factors, or most desired results.

² A constructionist dialog-based approach to identify and leverage shared values, hopes, and aspirations toward creating the most desired future.

³ Baldrige model (NIST, 2011) offers a good definition of *structures*: Leadership; Strategic Planning; Customer Focus; Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management; Workforce Focus; Operations Focus; and Results.

Speaking to quality practitioners and others who gravitate towards purely logical, cognitive approaches to change, H. William Dettmer, author of *The Logical Thinking Process*, heralds the need for crosscutting approaches in this way:

The challenge of changing existing ways of doing things...goes far beyond logic. It's necessary but not sufficient, to create technically and economically sound solutions to problems. But even so, some estimates of failure run as high as 80 percent. There's a reason why many major systemic changes fail to realize expectations fully, or fail outright. The missing sufficiency is the failure of most methods...to inherently address the psychology of change (Dettmer, 2007, p. xxviii).

Implicit in Dettmer's words is (a) a strong acknowledgement that effective change is both a cognitive (process and structural improvements) *and* an affective (relational, psychological) process, and (b) a call for collaborative partnership between those whose practices and comfort zones most favor the process improvement, rational side of change, and others whose skill base and comfort is to serve on the affective, psychological side of change. That call resonates with one of the core purposes of this paper: To gain awareness of the potential for accidental adversaries dynamics to occur, not only in client systems, but also in ourselves as OD consultants, researchers, and educators, and to use that awareness as a leverage point to "do our own work first."

Preventing and transforming accidental adversaries may serve as the "poster child" in the call for OD practitioners and academics to bridge the gulf between affect and cognition, thinking and feeling, people and structures in order to be of service to clients who find themselves embroiled in this pervasive, limiting, and preventable dynamic. As an organizational leader, acknowledging that the dynamic exists and having the will to change it require courage, clarity, focus, and determination. Merely studying and assessing the dynamic are easier and less risky jobs than actively embracing the challenge of changing it. To prevent and transform the dynamic, leaders may be called upon to face entrenched factionalized colleagues with strong informal or formal networks of supporters. Likewise, an internal or external consultant brought in to *fix* a presenting problem of limited growth, failure to meet goals, or poor workplace dynamics, may need to face a CEO and say:

"There is an adversarial dynamic in your organization. It will continue to limit growth and escalate *unless* both the structures *and* relationships that perpetuate it are addressed effectively and systemically. Turning it around will require getting people to talk with each other differently *and* correcting structural dynamics that pit them against each other. This work transcends naming names or firing 'troublemakers.' The dynamic took time to develop and likely has deep roots. Recalibrating the system will take

time, commitment, and courage. The good news is that most people in your organization already want to be part of the solution.”

This paper equips readers, be they organizational leaders, OD consultants, or researchers with a) an understanding of the structural nature of the accidental adversaries dynamic and its behavioral cues and risk factors, (b) an interview-based case example, conveyed first in a narrative form and later in the visual-spatial language of systems thinking, (c) a set of theoretical concepts for understanding and engaging in dialog about the dynamic from multiple perspectives, and (d) a theoretical model and practice-based approach for transforming and preventing the dynamic in client systems.

An Experience That Inspired This Paper—

Bearing witness to one particular accidental adversaries dynamic in action sparked a transformation in my consulting career from an expert, hands-off outside observer to an active, invested collaborator. The turning point came ten years ago when I was involved in a unique project with CT, Inc., a Texas-based company that specializes in niche software applications and related equipment. At the time, CT, Inc. had a large campus in Houston, Texas and a presence in San Jose (Silicon Valley), California, where its leaders planned to reinvent CT, Inc. into an Internet company. My role as an outsider--an academic—was to explore the organizational story behind CT, Inc.’s then much touted business turnaround and write about it for publication in academic and popular media. Being at CT, Inc. at that exact moment in time, however, brought me face-to-face with three key unsettling questions:

1. How could so many of the people working in a company, heralded in the tech media for being in the midst of a brilliant business turnaround, be so miserable? Was this “success”?
2. How could organizational leaders not only allow destructive mischief to occur, but even appear to fuel the flames of factional hostilities?
3. How could an organization so verbally committed to innovation, squash the very conditions that are essential for achieving it?

In the time that has passed since the project, I have gained experience and matured as a consultant while expanding the theoretical grounding of my practice. As a result, several new questions have emerged over time:

4. In organization development (OD) practice, is there an important distinction to be made between (a) the *pain* experienced in response to planned changes and unexpected events, and (b) the *suffering* caused and perpetuated by unmindful or impulsive behaviors and ineffective, uninformed decisions?

5. Under what conditions, if any, can I, as a researcher and consultant, maintain the role of hands-off observer when bearing witness to pain and suffering? Is there an imperative to shift roles midstream, or blur lines of distinction between witness and change agent, researcher and consultant, when faced with issues of professional and personal integrity or the client's wellbeing?
6. Can bearing witness to stories through interviewing, in itself, be an effective intervention?
7. To what extent do I allow interactions with clients to reflexively shape my practice, especially when doing so blurs boundaries between ontologic, epistemologic, and methodologic schools of thought, including those of social construction?
8. When strong leaders are hard to find, is "the devil you know better than the devil you don't know"? Or, are there other capacities within the organization that may be leveraged to lead change and innovation?
9. Do the constructions of strong leaders and creative innovators as special, highly talented, brilliant individuals serve organizations well, or is there another relational model that may better leverage all of an organizational human capacity?

Not having satisfactory answers for these questions marked the beginning of a professional learning journey that has (a) given me the courage to start breaking the rules of hands-off, empirical convention that had been the core tenets of my training to that point, (b) helped me to trust that the quality of how I "show up" and listen as a consultant trumps the weight of my toolkit, and (c) reinforced my commitment to help individuals and organizations transform accidental adversaries dynamics that frustrate growth, create waste, and generate negativity at work. That journey is reflected in the pages that follow.

Collaborative Goals of this Paper

As has been foreshadowed above, this paper aspires to introduce useful tools and concepts from systems thinking-based organizational learning into social constructionist theory and practice, and vice versa. It specifically asks constructionists to take a closer look at systems thinking and the systems archetype known as "accidental adversaries," as an effective means for:

- Articulating the business case for attending to the quality of relationships at work, and
- Graphically illustrating the high leverage impact that the quality of relationships has on systemic outcomes and overall growth.

In speaking to organizational leaders, the paper stresses:

- That the accidental adversaries dynamic is one of the key factors that limits growth,
- How the dynamic occurs in an unplanned and uncontrolled way, and
- Key leverage points for change, including the quality of relationships, the nature of dialog, clarity and compatibility of goals and projects, and styles of leadership.

Advocating for care and attention to the quality of work relationships can be a hard sell, especially in strained economic times, when resources are stretched thin and the rational desire is for people to feel lucky to have jobs and “get with the program.” The accidental adversaries model (discussed in detail later in this section), offers a visual tool for easily and effectively linking the quality of relationships to bottom line, measurable objectives. It also illustrates the ways in which seemingly rational behaviors may lead to adversarial dynamics when structural limitations are at play. In this sense, the model may serve as a transducer, or carrier of meaning, between communities of thought, language, and practice. The paper asserts that much may be gained from this proposed collaboration, especially in:

- a. Promoting deep, systemic change and transformation, and
- b. Effectively addressing organizational change holistically as a process that is inherently and simultaneously affective *and* cognitive.

Figure 1 illustrates a proposed virtuous reinforcing⁴ collaboration that may be leveraged by coordinating the strengths of social construction (i.e. addressing affective factors, such as promoting generative dialog and effective relational dynamics) with those of systems thinking (i.e. building cognitive awareness and understanding of

⁴ The “R” encircled by a looped arrow in the center of the figure signifies the potential for the cycle to be self-reinforcing. Plus signs (+) on arrows connote variables that move in the same direction. Later, a small case “s” will be used in place of the “+.” Both have the same meaning.

structural, systemic factors that reinforce organizational behavior and that are necessary to operationalize change).

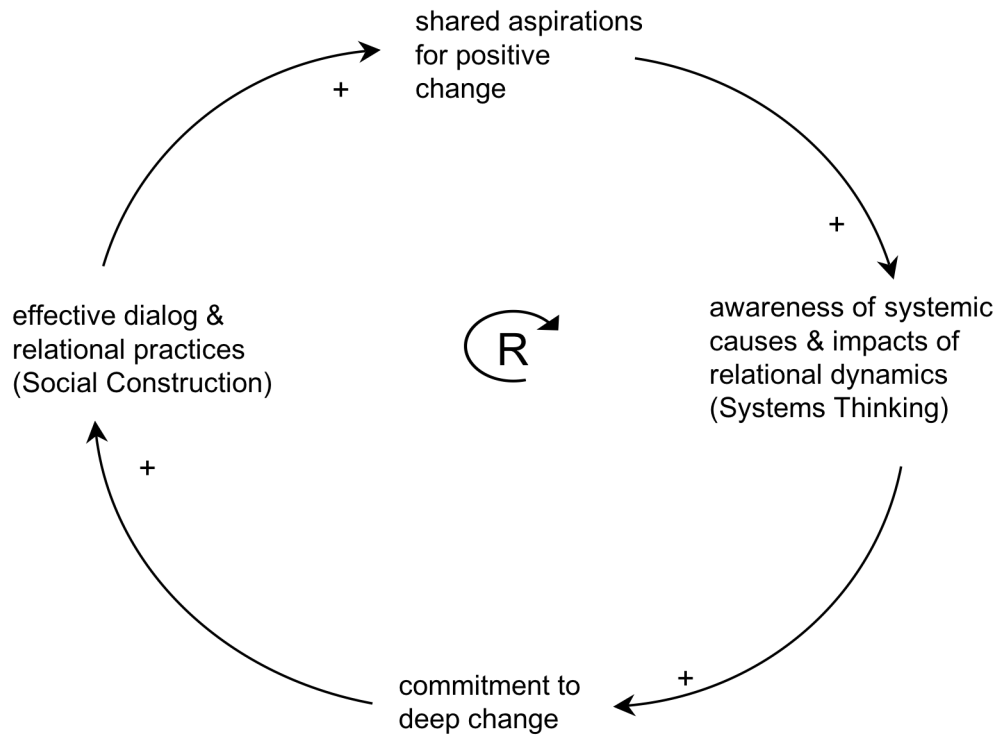


Figure 1. Generative collaboration between social construction and systems thinking

The figure may be read in the following way:

1. Introducing constructionist approaches, like appreciative inquiry, may increase the quality of dialog in organizations.
2. When people engage in effective, purposeful dialog, they may discover shared values, aspirations, and guiding principles. Increasing the sense of I-You-Us shifts the charge on relational dynamics from repulsion to attraction, and overall affect becomes more positive.
3. When people are operating from shared aspirations and values, they may be more open⁵ and able to take a systemic view of structural factors that

⁵ Barbara Fredrickson (2009, has produced a large body of work supporting the link between positivity, openness, creativity, and other factors that promote generative change.

may (a) perpetuate limiting, divisive dynamics, when ignored, or (b) be choicefully leveraged in service of deep change that supports shared aspirations and values.

4. People are more likely to commit to and collaborate for deep change when pulled forward by the shared aspirations, the image of a more positive future, and clarity about leverage points for high impact systemic action.
5. Commitment to deep change increases the will to engage in dialog and hone more effective relational practices.

Figure 1 represents a *positive image* of the future. In this case, the image is depicted in a visual-spatial language as a system of dynamic, interrelated factors--a virtuous reinforcing loop of collaborative possibility, the antithesis of and antidote for accidental adversaries.

Doing Our Own Work

The title of this paper suggests that the work of constructionist researchers and practitioners is to simultaneously:

- Help our clients transform accidental adversaries dynamics that may be limiting their growth,
- Heal our own individual internal contradictions that may hinder our effectiveness by pitting us against ourselves or others, and
- Work inside our academic disciplines to heal adversarial dynamics that may exist between schools of constructionist theory and practice, or with other disciplines, that may, ultimately, limit the growth and evolution of constructionist theory and practice, itself.

When the dynamic exists in us, it may create a limit to our own success as constructionist practitioners in addressing the dynamic in organizations, and in advancing theory in the field, especially through fruitful collaborations with colleagues in other disciplines or even from other schools of thought in OD.

The steps for transcending rifts and transforming accidental adversaries dynamics in *ourselves* are essentially the same as those that will be recommended for the workplace. This is sometimes referred to by OD educators as “doing our own work first.” Later in this paper (Part III, Figures 19-21), a process model is offered to illustrate the potential for leveraging synergies between constructionist approaches (e.g., appreciative inquiry, or AI) and systemic thinking to transform and prevent adversarial

organizational dynamics. The paper introduces the three R's approach for transforming adversarial dynamics:

- **Re-calibrate** the relational valence from negative forces of repulsion that break groups into factions, to positive forces of attraction toward achieving shared aspirations.
- **Re-up**, meaning to transform vicious downward spirals, perpetuated by embedded structural limitations, into generative upward growth that builds upon leverage points.
- **Re-commit** to the initial positive intensions of collaboration by reinforcing systemic structures that promote and leverage ongoing dialog and relationship building.

Throughout this paper, a number of concepts drawn from social construction, systems thinking, and other perspectives will be discussed and woven together across paradigms.

The Accidental Adversaries Archetype at Work

While few people are familiar with the term “accidental adversaries,” they quickly recognize the noticeable behaviors characteristic of the dynamic, named by Jennifer Kemeny in *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (Senge et al., 1994, pp. 145-148) and described by others (Rieley, 2001, pp. 97-100; Goodman, 2006; SystemsWiki, 2009). A typical scenario looks something like this: Two or more individuals or groups (Group A and Group B) with different talents, disciplinary or functional traditions, and/or organizational experiences (e.g., groups brought together through mergers or acquisitions) are expected to collaborate in order to move an organization forward. The plan seems rational and actionable: Group A will do what is expected of them, Group B will do likewise, and the organization will grow and prosper as a result. Figure 2 illustrates the initial intention to set in motion a positive reinforcing cycle, or virtuous loop, of group successes and organizational growth. The underlying structural assumptions are that if each group carries out its projects effectively (a) all groups and the organization as a whole will grow, and (b) growth will be self-reinforcing. The intention is for the collaboration to create a positive reinforcing relationship resulting in increased effectiveness and productivity.

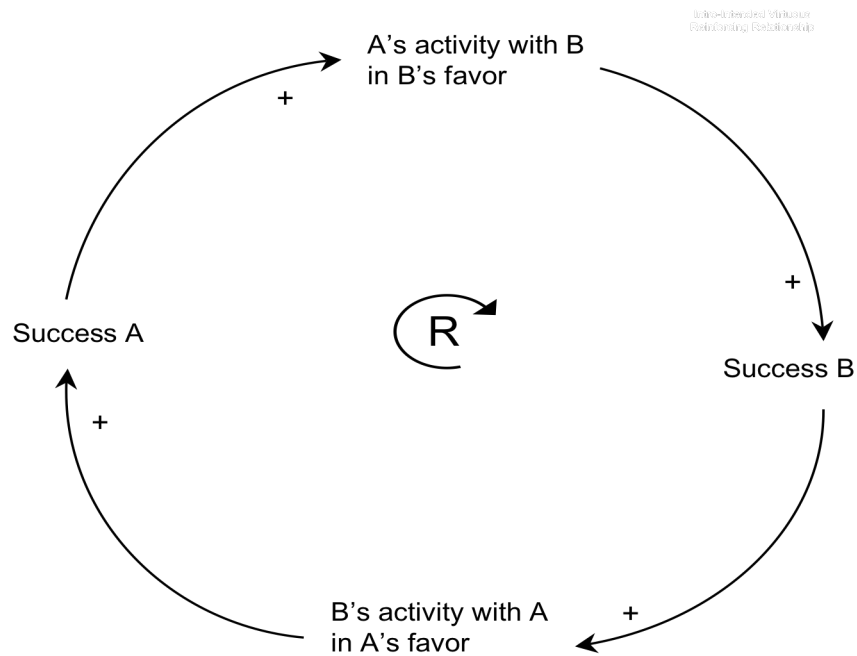


Figure 2. Positive intentions of collaboration between Groups A and B

An example will help give life to the model. Figure 3 illustrates the intentions of the CEO and executive leadership of a technology sector business to be a sustainable growth business. Executive leadership has determined that to achieve their strategic vision, the company must again dominate its core market and expand into new markets. In the past, the company has had difficulty completing the innovation cycle. There is a history of new technologies and “productized” ideas languishing in R&D in the absence of strong operations to get products tested efficiently and to market in a timely way. With a new infusion of leadership and staffing in Operations (Group A), the intentions are for operations to build upon the company’s history of strong R&D (Group B) and move a backlog of product innovations to market, while R&D focuses on improving core products and developing new targeted technologies. With both groups working in tandem, the positive intentions are that market share will again expand, there will be a continued pipeline of new technologies being productized, and the company will sustain a growth trajectory, even after the backlog of productized inventory has been moved to market. These were the initial intentions at CT, Inc., where leaders hoped to move the company from turnaround into sustainable growth.

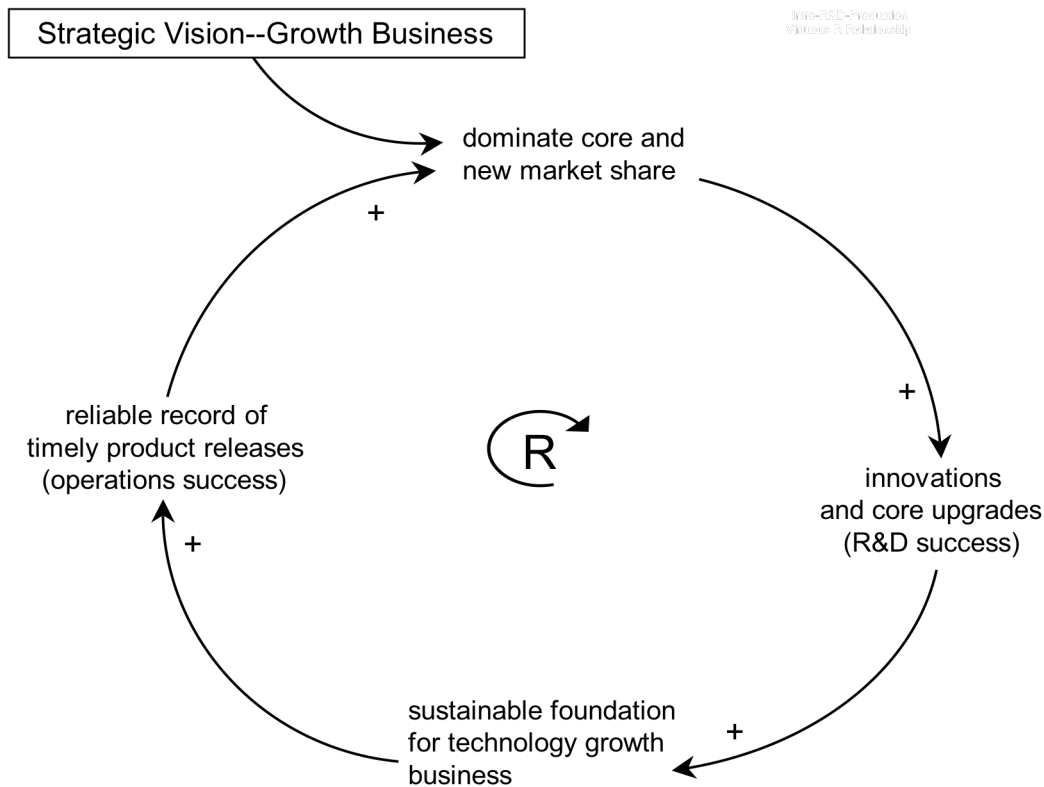


Figure 3. Positive intentions for collaboration to generate innovation

But things do not go as envisioned. Rather than cooperating and collaborating as intended, the relational tone between groups becomes increasingly adversarial, to the point where it appears as if each is willfully sabotaging the other's efforts. Neither group appears to appreciate the ways in which each group's skills, abilities, and aspirations serve the organization's vision. And, even if they do, either intellectually or with apparent heart-felt belief, their behaviors, nevertheless, are willful, impulsive, and emotionally charged. Groups turn into factions, with group affiliations and projects overtaking the larger organizational project or vision, further dividing individuals and groups that most need to collaborate to fulfill the organization's vision. The adversarial relationships continue to be fueled by false assumptions, mismatched goals, and distrust -- a belief that the other person or group doesn't care about the company or, worse, will eventually destroy it if left unchecked or unchallenged. They may wish for leaders to see what they see happening on the ground. These dynamics may eventually or quickly transform the

intended virtuous reinforcing cycle of productive collaboration into a vicious downward spiral of adversarial dynamics that limit effectiveness and growth.

Behaviorally, the accidental adversaries scenario is fueled by negative assumptions about intent and beliefs of *others* that are allowed to fester and grow. As Jane Magruder Watkins (2001) has said, “the roots of the word ‘assume’ are to make an ‘ass’ of ‘u’ and ‘me’.” Assumptions also lay the groundwork for adversarial relationships that limit individual and organizational successes and growth. The archetype, however, may be traced to common hidden structural components. These structural factors, when not consciously avoided, managed, or prevented, have been widely (Senge et al., 1994, pp. 145-148) observed to increase the likelihood of adversarial dynamics occurring. Like a tsunami, there is a delay between initiation of the underlying structural conditions and observable events.

Even in these conditions, however, the possibility of renewal still exists by virtue of the original positive intentions and plans for productive collaboration. Systemic structures and behaviors may be recalibrated by re-engaging the original virtuous reinforcing cycle of coordination and collaboration.

Key Risk Factors

Some conditions that heighten the risk of adversarial dynamics taking hold in an organization are:

- Changes in structure or leadership.
- Functional or disciplinary work units or departments.
- Dichotomous thinking (e.g., “Us-or-Them,” “silo mentality”).
- Tentative, disengaged, or highly partisan leadership.
- Mergers and acquisitions.
- Unexpected events.

Goodman (2006) also lists the following as “Situations Ripe for Accidental Adversaries Breakdowns”:

- Between departmental or process groups
- Between client and support groups
- Between customers and suppliers
- Between sister divisions
- Between field and headquarters
- Between organizations

All of these are essential, unavoidable relationships in effective organizations. Given that different individuals and groups have differing talents and preferred ways of being,

working, and sense-making, the potential challenges of coordination are great. Thus, any kind of organization, private, public, or non-government, in which relational dynamics are involved is at risk of the dynamic being set in motion. *This direct linkage to the very nature of relational being⁶ gives the accidental adversaries dynamic its archetypal quality, both in the context of systems thinking and social construction.*

Fault Lines

The intersections of R&D and operations, as well as other components of successful innovation and organizational effectiveness, sit on the fault lines of accidental adversaries. As will be discussed in Parts I and II, innovation is a collaborative process. Even in an engineering organization, there are individuals and groups who are most interested in and best suited for certain phases of the innovation process. On the one hand, innovation tends to be an open-ended, non-linear process: traits often associated with “innovative types.” On the other hand, operations and production--getting a marketable product out the door on time--are necessarily linear, sequential and results-oriented: traits often associated with managers and operations executives. The types of people who gravitate towards these two ways of working and thinking often see the other as not “getting” what’s most important. Based on the OLH interviews conducted at CT, Inc. and other conversations⁷ both planned and unexpected, during on-site visits, it appeared that members of the two groups or mindsets genuinely believed that the other was going to destroy the company. While innovation-based organizations cannot prosper without talented people working in both capacities, these two types, in particular, tend not to understand each other’s motives or ways of thinking and working. During the course of the CT, Inc. interview project people who served in a broad array of roles were interviewed, including talented technologists, visionary software architects, accomplished operations leaders and managers, topnotch software coders and testers, and executives. *During the interviews it became apparent that if only they had told each other what they said during the interviews, particularly about what they most valued and wished for the organization, they probably would have been stunned to discover that much more could have potentially united them than what they were allowing to divide them. In fact, had they been encouraged to engage in constructive dialog, the sharp edges of their differences might have smoothed or even become receptive rather than remaining reactive and repelling.*

How the CT, Inc. Project Came Into Being

⁶ Relational being will be discussed in Part II, in the section on Multi-being.

⁷ Included OLH interviews, follow-up conversations regarding issues that surfaced in interviews, meetings I was invited to observe, and discussions I happened to overhear while waiting for interviewees.

The CT, Inc. story began in April 1999 in a conversation with my longtime friend, Andrew Meyer, who had been recruited two years earlier to lead CT, Inc. as its CEO. Andrew told me about what was being heralded in technology and popular media as an historic turnaround. The press credited two key factors for the turnaround: (1) A new technological innovation called Waverider that was the foundation for CT, Inc.'s Waverider and e-Rider core software (2) Andrew's leadership. The technological advances in the e-Rider software being made possible by Waverider constituted a CT, Inc. success story. As Andrew does, he sent me several video clips of speeches he had recently given, as well as links to newspaper stories and journals featuring interviews he had given about Waverider and the turnaround.

I shared with Andrew my excitement for systems thinking and thought out loud about how the organizational learning history approach (OLH) could be an excellent method for mining organizational learning from the successful development of a breakthrough technology, like Waverider. I explained how the interview-based learning history approach could be used to help companies like his learn about the organizational dynamics and other factors in play when they are operating most successfully. By the end of the conversation, we had agreed that I would study the Waverider project from an organizational perspective (up to that point it had been studied and written about solely from a technological standpoint), with the goal of helping leaders and members of the organization better understand how they are when they work together with greatest success. The project was structured to serve as a win-win, collaborative learning experience (see Appendix A for original project proposal, design, and interview guide).

Early Observations

During the project 35 employees were interviewed, including several engineers, lead engineers, unit managers, marketing and HR directors, software architects, the senior executive VPs and the CEO. The company was at the crest of a widely heralded, seemingly miraculous turnaround. Leaders and employees, as well as the technology news media, attributed the success to two key factors: the core technological innovation that the new product line was based on, and the new CEO, Andrew Meyer, who the company brought in to lead the turnaround.

Given the volumes I had read about the company in preparation for the project, I was stunned by what I observed on-site: two factions fighting it out, with the faction on top at the time, production managers and executives, making life a living hell for the technology innovators. One exasperated employee--one of the few individuals who could see the scenario from multiple perspectives--described the organization as a pendulum that swung wildly from one extreme to the other, never finding a rhythm of give-and-take, appreciation, and collaboration. One of the lead innovators described the company's current success as akin to harvesting the golden eggs of innovation that had

laid fallow in the absence of disciplined production to harvest and market them. He predicted that as soon as the leaders of the new command-and-control production culture realized that the geese that laid the golden eggs were flying the coop to escape what had become for them organizational purgatory, the remaining organization would be left to adapt at best. In retrospect, his predictions were not far from the truth, as ten years later, the company barely resembles its former dreams. While the company has survived, it appears to have done so by shifting its vision from leading in technology innovation to providing services that leverage its existing core technologies and producing adaptive products (i.e., adaptations of the existing core capacity rather than new, innovative technologies).

The story might have ended differently had the company understood its propensity toward accidental adversaries. (The pendulum swings between focusing on R&D *or* operations were not a new tendency for CT, Inc.) Instead, many actions of its leaders fueled the flames of conflict by taking sides, mischievously engaging in spiteful actions, or abdicating leadership and empowering an incendiary proxy. The flames, ignited and fueled by unchecked accidental adversaries, eventually left the company's stock price and its dreams in cinders.

A Story Told in Three Parts

The CT, Inc. experience was the professional ride of a lifetime, largely due to its unique pre-story that led to its being structured as a learning experience for CT, Inc. and for me. Those factors gave me the freedom to go with the flow as the project evolved and took on a life of its own. My experience there set in motion a transformation that eventually led me to practice collaborative, strength-based approaches to organizational learning and change. Until that time, empiricism and systems thinking were the strongest influences in my professional practice. The CT, Inc. experience, however, created an ethical dilemma that eventually transformed my approach to organizational development. At CT, Inc., I experienced first-hand the limitations of my empirical, hands-off scientific and business school training. My desire to be more effective and of greater service to clients led me to explore and embrace frameworks rooted in social construction. Appreciative inquiry became a key influence in my subsequent work, as it provided a process model for engaging with clients in unapologetically collaborative ways.

This dissertation is the story of how a synchronous experience came into being, created cognitive and ethical dissonance, and socially reconstructed my view of my role as consultant. The dissertation is structured in three inter-related parts that report and reflect on my experience at CT, Inc., discuss how I continue to make sense of and create meaning from the experience, and how it continues to transform and inspire my work as a facilitator, organizational development consultant, friend of the quality improvement community, and coach.

Part One—the CT, Inc. Story

The first part of this dissertation tells the story of my experience working with CT, Inc. from July 1999 to February 2000. This section addresses three key components:

1. A narrative analysis based on 35 OLH interviews that were conducted onsite in Houston, Texas and San Jose, California during three week-long visits from July 1999 to February 2000.
2. A story about life at CT, Inc. during and following a specific technical innovation that was widely heralded as fueling a business turnaround in the late 1990's.
3. Narrative themes that emerge from the confluence of the original project's theoretical grounding in systems thinking philosophy and OLH methodology, and the subsequent learning journey it set in motion that led me to appreciative inquiry, social construction, and grounded theory.

Part Two—Conceptual Overview and Meaning-making

This section discusses social construction as well as other ideas, philosophical and organizational approaches to change, and methodologies that help to (a) make sense of the CT, Inc. narrative, (b) shed light on the accidental adversaries dynamic at CT, Inc. and in general, and (c) explore the potential for synergies between social construction and systems thinking. Concepts and discussions included in this section focus on:

1. The role that systems thinking may serve in making sense of the CT, Inc. narrative, and in appreciating the structural dynamics and *leverage points* for transforming the systems archetype called accidental adversaries. Systems thinking is discussed through a constructionist lens.
2. The limitations of the OLH method, the “expert” model of consulting, and hands-off empirical approaches to organizational research and learning.
3. How social construction informs these limitations and the dilemmas and contradictions they pose.

Part Three—Practice Transformed

This section synthesizes (a) the CT, Inc. experience as reflected in the narrative analysis, (b) social constructionist theory, and (c) other theoretical constructs and ideas presented in Part Two that may create conceptual bridges across paradigms in order to be of greater service to organizations facing accidental adversaries dynamics. This section focuses on translating experience and theory into practice. Ideas addressed in this section include:

1. Reflections on how the CT, Inc. experience, and the sense-making journey that it sparked, inform practice, especially the consultant's role, sources of efficacy, and relationships (with self, clients, colleagues).
2. The role of dichotomous thinking in accidental adversaries, and other limiting behaviors in organizations and groups.
3. How to transcend dichotomous thinking, and build bridges across concepts, philosophical frameworks, and approaches in service of meeting clients where they are.
4. The reflexive nature of consulting practice and organizational research.
5. How these inform the conditions for inclusive expression of multi-being, wholeness, and systemic thinking; and how to hold that space with clients so they may "be the change they most want to create."
6. A discussion about how a constructionist dissertation *process* informs practice and theory development.

A Tapestry of Narrative Voices—Formatting Tools

Four distinct yet related narratives are woven into the fabric of this paper:

1. A discrete narrative analysis of the case example upon which the dissertation is based. Interview excerpts are indented but presented in the normal text of the paper. The letter "Q" designates the interviewer's voice, while the letter "A" designates interviewees' comments.
2. A running narrative about the reflexive journey and inner thoughts of the researcher as it played out during the original study. These are identified with the heading "Left-hand Column--Internal Narrative." The left-hand column is a tool used in systems thinking to metaphorically pull the curtain back to show the reader thoughts that were

undiscussable at the time. The typical structure for this in systems thinking is to insert a table, like the following (Rieley, 2001, p. 143):

What I am Thinking (Left-hand Column)	What was Said (Right-hand Column)
<p>The learning historian thought, “The Senior Executive Vice President just doubled the list of interviewees one day before the interviews are to begin! That’s going to change the project design. This is supposed to be research, not a consulting project!</p>	<p>‘Yes, I understand. I am delighted that Jon is so interested in the project and I look forward to talking with him about it. Can you arrange an interview with him for me?’</p>

This paper uses an adaptation that includes the left column only in the form of a narrowed column resembling a sidebar insert. The “right-hand column,” is embedded in the body of the paper. Additionally, Left-hand Column inserts are written in the first person to reflect the researcher’s own thoughts and feelings while the project was in process. The following is an example of the way the Left-hand Column narrative is employed in this paper:

Left-hand Column--Internal Narrative

The Vice President’s sudden interest and dogged insistence on changing the interview list threw me for a loop. I wondered what that could be about. This was the first indication that the line between research and consulting might not be as clear-cut as I had assumed it would be.

3. A third narrative addresses the researcher’s / consultant’s / author’s reflexive journey set in motion in 1999-2000 by the original study and shaped over the last ten years. The process of researching and writing this paper has served as the capstone of that learning journey. Those narratives are designated by the title, “Reflections in the Rear View Mirror,” followed by a subtitle. Like the Left-hand Column inserts, these reflections are distinguished from the main body of text by the use of text boxes. The following is an example:

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Thinking Across Paradigms

The model of collaboration across paradigms (i.e., social construction and systems thinking), depicted in Figure 1, is derived from my consulting practice. My awareness of it has evolved and emerged in the ten years since my engagement with CT Inc. It is an eclectic approach that I have come to embrace, more and more, over the years, especially for identifying and transforming accidental adversaries dynamics, “naming elephants,” and addressing other dysfunctional dynamics. I have found that beginning with a constructionist approach, like appreciative inquiry (AI) is most effective for discovering and co-creating shared vision, values, and aspirations to inspire design and delivery of meaningful outcomes. I have also found, however, that systems thinking offers better solutions than social construction for (a) translating a dream/vision statement into a picture of systemic wholeness and interrelatedness and (b) effectively determining which possible actions may have highest leverage for positive change.

4. The fourth and over-arching narrative is that of the paper as a whole, which weaves together all these voices: past, present, and future. Its voice has a conversational, narrative tone, reflecting an emergent, narrative style of research (discussed in the Methodology section, below).

Thus, the paper as a whole is an emergent expression of coordination between (a) the multiple selves of the researcher, (b) a body of literature developed over time by others, and (c) a group of people (research “subjects”) whose experience played a role in shaping the researcher/practitioner and is emblematic of the suffering that many people experience daily the workplace. This paper reflects and tells the story of a dynamic, process of sense-making and practice development derived from (a) a review of literature, (b) reflections on practice-based experiential learning, and (c) *presencing*, or grounded contemplation and experimentation.

The three-part process described here is similar to the process of creation in the arts, simultaneously grounded, integrative, and emergent. This link to the artistic process is broached, implicitly or explicitly, by several thought leaders, including (1) Kenneth and Mary Gergen who worked with the artist Marie Rijsman to create a visual representation of multi-being and most practiced ways of being (MPWoB), (2) Otto Scharmer, who uses the example of a concert in which Zubin Mehta conducts the operatic virtuoso Placido Domingo to convey the meaning of deep listening and presencing in an “organization,” and (3) the creators of an early OD video (no longer available) called, “The Symphony,” which took viewers along as the members of a symphony orchestra prepared for a concert. In “The Symphony”, the musicians were shown speaking about their previous training, the rigorous practice they continue

individually and in “concert” with their orchestra colleagues, the respect they have for each other and the trust that develops through that, and their relationship with the conductor and the music. The transcendent quality of their performance (beyond the notes written on the sheets of music) may be seen as a result of the quality of the preparation and relationships that preceded it.

Left-hand Column--Internal Narrative

In saying this, I fear being viewed as arrogant, ostentatious, or unscientific (i.e., not scholarly). This way of holding the overarching process of researching and writing of this paper, however, represents “home” for me; having been raised among and by artists and art educators. I believe that there is an aesthetic quality to research and practices that matter, and that creative process and expression are not the sole domain of the arts and artists.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Dissertation Process as Poetry

The words of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke best describe both the experience of writing this dissertation, a process that started ten years ago, and the theorizing that has emerged as a result:

“Works of art are of an infinite solitude... Only love can touch and hold them and be fair to them. —Always trust yourself and your own feeling, as opposed to argumentations, discussions, or introductions of that sort; if it turns out that you are wrong, then the natural growth of your inner life will eventually guide you to other insights. Allow your judgments their own silent, undisturbed development, which, like all progress, must come from deep within and cannot be forced or hastened. Everything is gestation and then birthing. To let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely in itself, in the dark, in the unsayable, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one’s own understanding, and with deep humility and patience to wait for the hour when a new clarity is born: this alone is what it means to live as an artist: in understanding and in creating... In this there is no measuring with time, a year doesn’t matter, and ten years are nothing” (Rilke, translated by Mitchell, 1994, pp. 23-24).

The Project's Roots in Systems Thinking

The idea to conduct an OLH project with CT, Inc. (1999-2000) emerged from conversations with Dr. James B. Rieley, a master systems thinking practitioner, author, coach, and mentor. Drawing on the metaphor of quantum “new sciences,” systems thinking challenged the positivist Newtonian view of reality as something fixed “out there,” static, and measurable. Early thought leaders of the movement, including Peter Senge, Art Kleiner, Meg Wheatley, Robert Fritz and others, espoused systems thinking as the philosophical application of the new sciences to organizational change and sustainability (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1994; Wheatley, 2006). To embrace a systems thinking mindset meant to see organizational reality as complex; comprised of multiple, diverse perspectives in a dynamic state of flow. Leading effectively meant learning to live on the edge of chaos and to transcend dichotomies of order and chaos toward creating chaordic (Wheatley, 2006; Hock, 1995) organizations that can exist in a dynamic state of equilibrium (or, at times, disequilibrium), order, change, complexity, and chaos, much like the most adaptive biological systems and species have done over the course of evolution.

To its practitioners, systems thinking offers a philosophical approach (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1994) and a set of tools (the Systems Thinking Toolkit) (Kim, 1992, 1994) for seeing complex wholes, acting on parts with a heightened awareness of their relational nature, identifying leverage points, and appreciating the systemic impacts of potential decisions and subsequent actions. At a philosophical level, the language of the Learning Organization and systems thinking was and is similar to, if not the same, as that used at the March 2010 “New OD” Conference sponsored by NTL and the Taos Institute. A notable exception is the use of the word “systems,” which appears to hold negative connotations for some in the social constructionist and appreciative inquiry communities of theory and practice, where the more widely accepted term appears to be “systemic thinking.” A review of systems thinking literature included in the citations section of this paper, however, illustrates that the terms “systems thinking” and “systemic thinking” are used interchangeably as synonyms in that practice community. Other key points of overlap between systems thinking and social construction are:

- Each philosophy explicitly embraces a metaphorical application of quantum physics (rather than Newtonian) to organizational dynamics.
- Both use methodologies that employ interviews to elicit stories, basing sense-making on data derived through story telling.
- They engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders in generative dialog as a form and forum of discovery and shared meaning-making.

While systems thinking shares these characteristics with social construction and AI, its approaches to meaning-making and learning are more cognitively oriented. The focus

on similarities is not intended to mask key differences, but to start from the unifying, rather than dichotomizing standpoint, foreshadowed in Figure 1, above. As has been stated already, this paper is not intended to discredit systems thinking or any other philosophy or field of practice. Instead, it focuses on commonalities that may be leveraged in service of the health, vitality, and effectiveness of client systems; *especially ways that different approaches may be used in concert to promote systemic thinking, effective results, and relational being at work.* This paper focuses on the positive possibilities for synergistic relationships between these philosophies, practices, and practitioners.

The paper asserts that, when viewed at a level of philosophical meaning and intent, what appears to unite social construction, appreciative inquiry, and systems thinking is more fundamental, profound, and useful than the perceived paradigmatic distinctions that often divide their adherents. *Occasionally, these distinctions result in accidental adversarial dynamics within the discipline of social construction (research, education, OD consulting), itself.*

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Flying Home

In June 2010, on my return flight after attending Kenneth and Mary Gergen's Social Construction Workshop in Pennsylvania, I was seated across the aisle from a doctoral student studying mathematics at the University of Pennsylvania. We struck up a conversation, which continued until we deplaned in Detroit to catch our respective connecting flights. During the conversation, we each tried our best to explain to the other the crux of our areas of interest.

I explained that I had come to social construction circuitously through systems thinking, an approach that some in the social construction community negate as a modernist, positivist, and/or mechanistic approach. I further explained that while I practice and value both approaches, what excites me most is what happens when the approaches are used in concert, and that I want to introduce systems thinking into the constructionist discourse. He thought about my goal and said, "You must be a bird." I asked him to say more. He explained that in mathematics the sort of conceptual and practical collaboration I had described is both valued and sought after. In the field of mathematics, it is called "birds and frogs."

Birds and Frogs

The Reflections box, above, introduces the “birds and frogs” metaphor, part of popular lore in the field of mathematics. Freeman Dyson, an emeritus professor of mathematics has written the seminal lecture on the collaborative relationship (Dyson, 2009). In the introduction, Dyson describes birds and frogs in this way:

Some mathematicians are birds, others are frogs. Birds fly high in the air and survey broad vistas of mathematics out to the far horizon. They delight in concepts that unify our thinking and bring together diverse problems from different parts of the landscape. Frogs live in the mud below and see only the flowers that grow nearby. They delight in the details of particular objects, and they solve problems one at a time. I happen to be a frog, but many of my best friends are birds...Mathematics needs both birds and frogs. Mathematics is rich and beautiful because birds give it broad visions and frogs give it intricate details. Mathematics is both great art and important science, because it combines generality of concepts with depth of structures. It is stupid to claim that birds are better than frogs because they see farther, or that frogs are better than birds because they see deeper. The world of mathematics is both broad and deep, and we need birds and frogs working together to explore it (Dyson, 2009, p. 212).

There appears to an especially rich tradition of collaboration between mathematicians and physicists, which has evolved because mathematicians recognize that some problems may be solved more easily using tools and approaches from other disciplines. *Birds* tend to scan the environment for such opportunities. The birds and frogs metaphor is helpful in appreciating the value of the proposed collaboration between social construction and systems thinking, as each may solve a practical problem for the other, as suggested in the earlier discussion about Figure 1. Dialogic constructionist approaches may address the blind spot in systems thinking and other cognitive models regarding co-creation of a shared vision, whereas systems thinking more effectively identifies leverage and provides a visual-spatial and kinesthetic toolkit for seeing systemic relationships in action.

Dyson closes his lecture in a lyrical, poetic, and uplifting way:

To end this talk, I come back to Yuri Manin and his book *Mathematics as Metaphor*. ...Manin is a bird whose vision extends far beyond the territory of mathematics into the wider landscape of human culture. One of his hobbies is the theory of archetypes invented by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. An archetype, according to Jung, is a mental image rooted in a collective unconscious that we all share. ...[Manin] describes the collective unconscious as an irrational force that powerfully pulls us toward death

and destruction. ...Our only way of escape from the insanity of the collective unconscious is a collective consciousness of sanity, based upon hope and reason. The great task that faces our contemporary civilization is to create such a collective consciousness (pp. 222-223).

Dyson's words are emblematic of the aspirations and wishes of many practitioners of constructionist-based organizational, intra-personal, and community-based change and transformation. They also embody the essential ideals and aspirations of the thought leaders who have developed the discipline of systems thinking.

Introduction to Central Concepts of Systems/Systemic Thinking

As a discipline, systems thinking employs a specialized conceptual language of visual-spatial loops and diagrams. A few basic definitions will help readers who are not already familiar with the language to (a) understand the specialized contextual meanings of words used in systems thinking discourse, (b) benefit from the ways the language informs awareness of the underlying structure of the accidental adversaries dynamic, and (c) more deeply appreciate what systems thinking offers to holistic, systemic thinking. This discussion begins with definitions of six terms and concepts—variables, leverage, systems, archetypes, tip of the iceberg, delays, and unintended consequences—that are essential for understanding the “Gestalt” of the systems thinking paradigm, and for reading many of the figures included in this paper. It is followed by definitions of two key building blocks of the visual-spatial language of systems thinking: balancing and reinforcing loops.

Variables are derived from stories about organizational life. Variables are key success factors, or desired systemic outcomes, that may be changed directly, or impacted by and through other variables. The four interrelated factors shown in Figure 1 (i.e., shared aspirations for positive change, commitment to deep change, etc.) are known as systemic variables.

Leverage is a key principle of the systems thinking discipline⁸, and is referred to throughout this paper. Senge (1990) describes its central importance in this way:

The bottom line of systems thinking is leverage—seeing where actions and changes in structures can lead to significant, enduring improvements. Often, leverage follows the principle of economy of means: where the best results come not from large-scale efforts but from small well-focused

⁸ Systems thinking is referred to by Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) as the “fifth discipline” of *organizational learning*. The other four disciplines (Senge, 1990, pp. 6-11) are Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Building Shared Vision, and Team Learning.

actions. Our non-systemic ways of thinking are so damaging specifically because they consistently lead us to focus on low-leverage changes: we focus on symptoms where the stress is greatest. We repair or ameliorate the symptoms. But such efforts only make matters better in the short run, at best, and worse in the long run (p. 114).

The four variables shown in Figure 1 are considered *high leverage* variables, given the potential of each to significantly impact each of the others, and systemic outcomes overall. Thus, each may also be referred to as a *leverage point*.

Systems are small (micro-level) or large (meta-level) groupings of related variables that together have integrity and wholeness. Figure 1 represents a small system of four interrelated variables that have are inter-related. The outcome of each is impacted by the outcomes of the others. Larger systems also exhibit the same relational integrity of wholeness, and are typically comprised of a few or many micro-level systems whose outcomes are related. Senge (1990) adds:

Living systems have integrity. Their character depends on the whole. The same is true for organizations; to understand the most challenging managerial issues requires seeing the whole system that generates the issues. ...We tend to blame outside circumstances for our problems. 'Someone else'—the competitors, the press, the changing mood of the marketplace, the government—did it to us. Systems thinking shows us that there is no outside; that you and the cause of your problems are part of a single system. The cure lies in your relationship with your 'enemy' (p. 67).

Systems Archetypes are derived from patterns of organizational behavior observed by practitioners over and over again. Accidental adversaries, as well as the other systemic archetypes that have been named (Bellinger, 2010; Goodman, 2006; Kim, 1992, 1994; Senge et al., 1994), represent common disintegrative patterns of organizational behavior: the antithesis of relational being. They are composed of related micro-level systems of variables that may act together as a larger macro-system of dysfunctional behavior. The relationship tends to develop over time. In this respect, archetypal dynamics may be viewed as lagging indicators of systemic *dis-ease*. Archetypes build upon the principle of leverage:

...Leverage in most real-life systems, such as most organizations, is not obvious to most of the actors in those systems. They don't see the "structures" underlying their actions. The purpose of the systems archetypes, such as limits to growth and shifting the burden, is to help see those structures and thus find the leverage, especially amid the pressures and crosscurrents of real-life business situations (Senge, 1990, p. 114).

The Tip of the Iceberg refers to observable, or noticeable behaviors that belie deep underlying patterns of behavior and even deeper structural foundations. An iceberg is formed by patterns of left hand column thinking, covert processes (Marshak, 2006), mental models based on untested assumptions, the shadow side of socially constructed behavior, habitual organizational dynamics, and the underlying structures that give rise to these and root them in the organization's socially constructed culture and ways of being. The tip of the iceberg rises out of the water on the backs of these patterns and structures that lie below the surface and obstruct the deeper shared vision. Changing organizational life in an effective and sustainable way requires working at the level of shared vision, mental models, and structures. Through this lens, events are viewed as all that may be seen above the surface of much larger dynamics. Below the surface is an ever-widening and deepening foundation of patterns of behavior, underlying structures, mental models, and shared visions. Often, these icebergs become dissociated from what may or may not have once been shared vision. Understanding events as layered social constructions is, thus, a one of the core goals of systems thinking.

Delays represent asynchronous relationship between decisions/actions and outcomes over time. As a key component of systems, the phenomenon of delays critically informs systemic thinking. The nature and sources of delays are similar to the social construction of meanings and beliefs. In systems thinking, events are viewed as the visible components of layered icebergs of meaning. The intricate, relational nature of organization dynamics leads to delays. When problems, or even positive possible ideal states, are approached at the events level alone, unintended negative consequences often result; however, they generally take time to occur, and so they are hard to link back to the original event or to the system of unintended events set in motion as a result of non systemic thinking and acting.

Unintended Consequences are unanticipated systemic outcomes of best-intended actions. They reflect decision-making informed by bounded or dichotomous thinking rather than holistic⁹ and systemic thinking. Unintended consequences often have an unexpected quality given (a) the inherent delays between actions and their systemic impacts, and (b) in complex systems, acting on one factor may have broad impacts across multiple other factors. Given the relational nature of cause and effect in organizations, it is often impossible to tease out precipitating actions and decisions later in time. This highlights the essential purpose of systems thinking, which is to help leaders and decision-makers think more systemically and holistically when making decisions either reflectively or in the heat of the moment.

⁹ The word "holistic," and other forms of the word, are used in this paper instead of "wholistic." While the two are often used interchangeably, holism connotes a broader meaning, inclusive of wholism "and the notion that reality is an interconnected whole" (HENT, 2003).

Introduction to the Symbolic Language of Systems Thinking

AI philosophy asserts that “words create worlds,” whereas the systems thinking approach suggests that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” The building blocks of the systems thinking symbolic language are variables, relational arrows, and balancing (B) and reinforcing (R) loops, shown in Figures 4 and 5, respectively.

Balancing Loops

A balancing loop, process, or relationship, is identified with a capital “B” surrounded by a small looped arrow. Balancing loops are micro-systems comprised of a small cluster of related variables (e.g., behaviors or outcomes) that interact to create limits in systems. Figure 4 below illustrates a balancing loop in which an individual’s desire to maintain a comfortable body temperature sets in motion a series of events that balance each other to maintain body temperature within a desirable range:

- First, the individual experiences a gap between their desired state and their perceived current state.
- If they are feeling too cold, they might put on a sweater to increase their sense of warmth, or, if they are feeling too warm, they may cool down by removing the sweater. These actions reduce the gap between desired and current states, ultimately increasing their comfort.
- In this example, the larger the gap between desired and current temperature, the greater the adjustment in clothing. Both increase. The “s” near the head of an arrow connotes a change in the same direction.
- On the other hand, the greater the adjustment in clothing, the less extreme the body temperature becomes. As one variable increases, the other decreases. The variables move in an opposite direction, connoted by the letter “o.”
- As the person’s body temperature becomes less extreme, the gap between desired and current body temperature decreases. The two variables move in the same direction (“s”).
- The balancing process continues in an iterative way.

While limits in themselves may be good, bad, or neutral; in the case of accidental adversaries, balancing processes of competition replace collaboration, limiting the organization’s capacity to grow and compete in the external market.

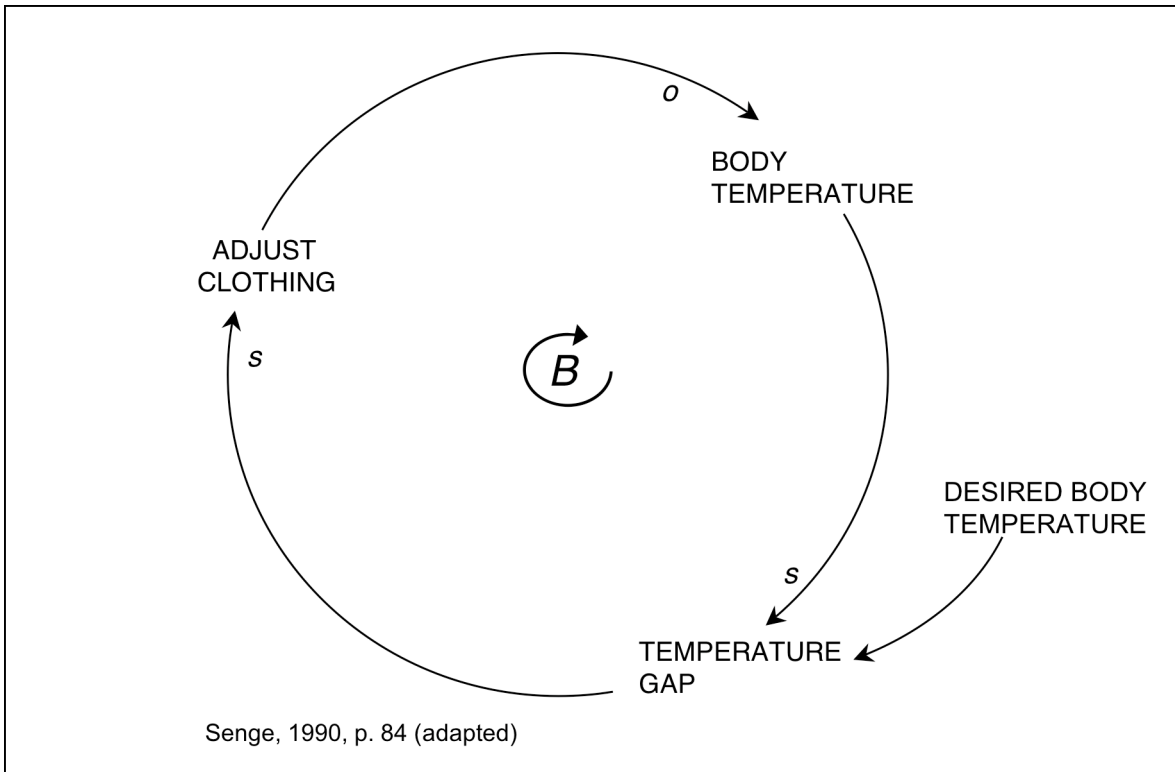


Figure 4. Classic balancing loop

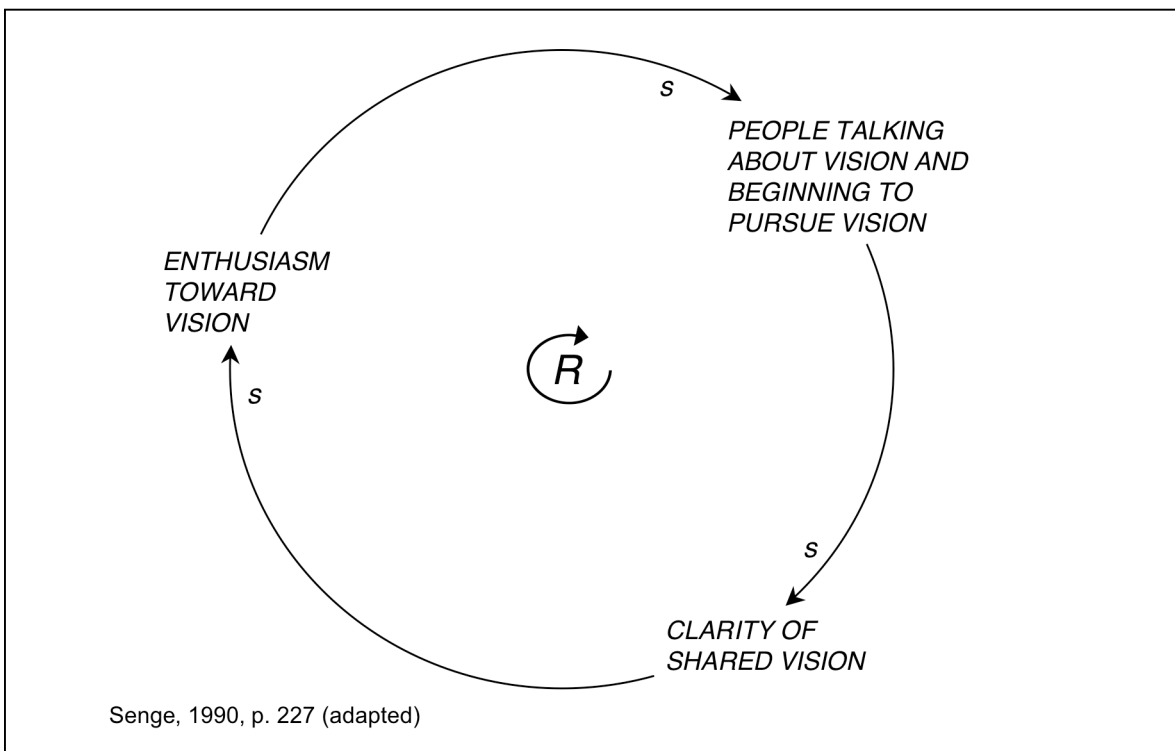


Figure 5. Classic reinforcing loop

Reinforcing Loops

Groupings of variables that act in ways that are self-reinforcing are connoted by a capital “R” inside of a small looped arrow, depicted in Figure 5, below. These are called “reinforcing” loops. In some systems thinking texts, these loops, or sub-systems, are represented by a picture of a snowball building up size and steam as it rolls down a hill. Reinforcing processes may be “virtuous” or “vicious.” The classic snowball example may be read as either. In the case of a virtuous reinforcing cycle, people in an organization are clear about their shared vision. Their clarity and sense of shared purpose heighten enthusiasm for the vision. Their enthusiasm sparks conversations about the vision and their eagerness to pursue it. The process of talking about it adds to their clarity of shared vision, and the virtuous cycle continues. Senge (1990) explains, however, that virtuous cycles can turn vicious:

If the reinforcing process operated unfettered, it would lead to continuing growth in clarity and shared commitment toward the vision, among increasing numbers of people. But any of a variety of limiting factors can come into play to slow down this virtuous cycle (p. 227).

In the case of the accidental adversaries dynamic, once it takes hold, initial intentions of virtuous self-reinforcing collaboration devolve into a vicious cycle of mutual negation and systemic disruption.

The Accidental Adversaries Archetype—Underlying Structures

To fully understand and appreciate the story of accidental adversaries at CT, Inc., it is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the organizational anatomy and physiology of the archetype. The accidental adversaries archetype was not one of the original ten archetypes identified by Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline* (Senge, 1990). As mentioned earlier, the archetype appears to have been introduced first by Jennifer Kemeny in *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*. She noted that the model emerged from conversations with many organizational consultants who saw the dynamic in operation in much of their consulting work. Figure 6 illustrates the construction of the accidental adversaries archetype in the symbolic language of systems thinking (the model is deconstructed, explained, and reconstructed in Figures 7-12).

To those unfamiliar with the systems thinking lexicon or visual-spatial ways of knowing, the diagram may look confusing, complex, or mechanical at first blush; however, understanding its underlying relational dynamics may help the reader to appreciate (a) the initial accidental nature of the dynamic (even though it typically does not feel accidental to those who feel trapped in its sticky web), (b) why it is so common, and (c) the picture it paints of shadow and covert dynamics that may be set in motion or aggravated in the absence of discourse and shared meaning-making in complex organizations.

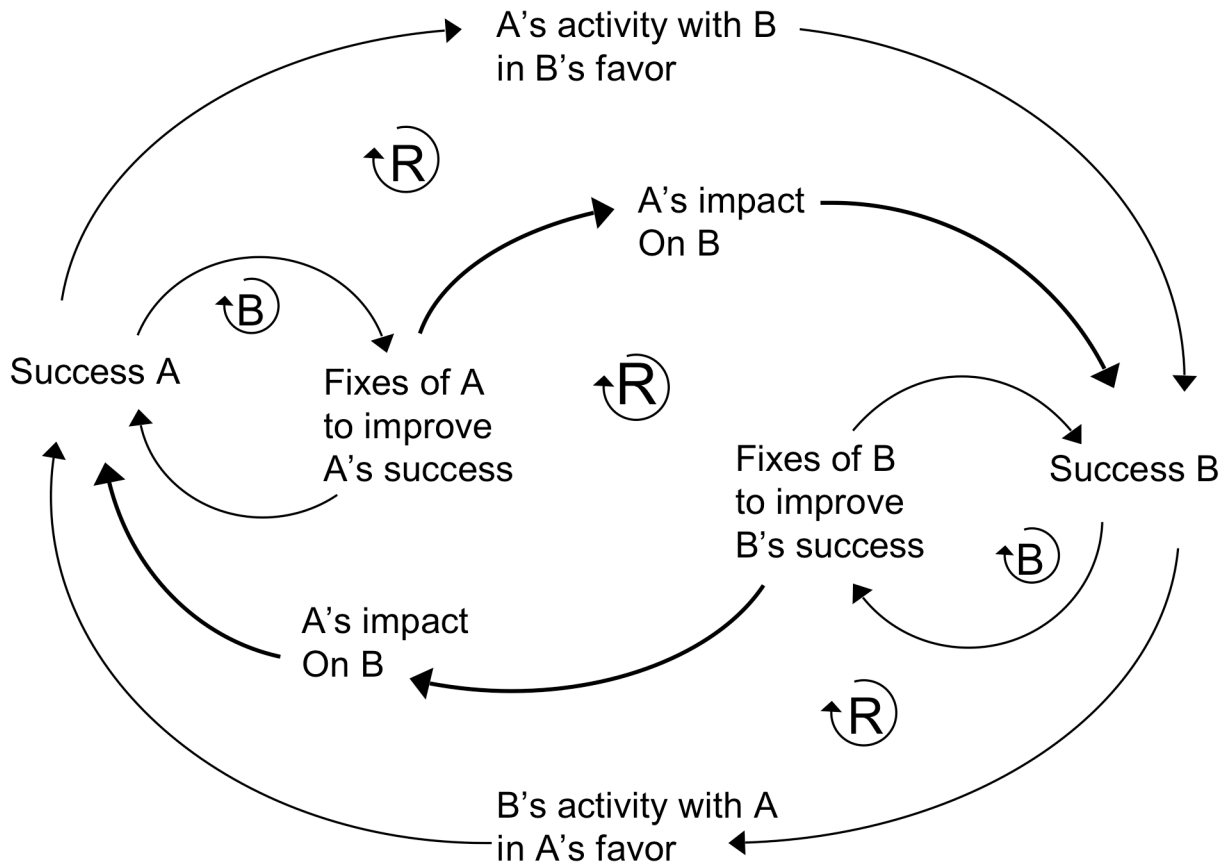


Figure 6. Accidental adversaries archetype

Initially, the dynamic starts with the intention of a virtuous Reinforcing process. This is represented by the outer-most loop (Figure 7), signifying the company's intention for groups to collaborate in a way that increases the success of both groups and the organization as a whole. The words or phrases at each arrowhead are called "variables." These are behaviors or outcomes that change over time, and which may be leveraged for positive change within the system. The small letter "s" on each of the arrows, signifies that as one variable increases, so does the next one that it directly impacts. (The letter "o" signifies a relationship in the opposite direction. That is, as one variable increases, the other decreases or vice versa.) The "s" or "o" relationship between variables is not considered to be fixed over time; and, as this model shows, can change to (a) shift a vicious reinforcing cycle into a virtuous one, (b) change a reinforcing relationship into a balancing one, or even (c) change the way two variables or a micro-system of variables relate to each other at all. In these respects, the diagrams merely represent tendencies or snapshots akin to brain imaging showing activity in the brain, referred to as "brain lock," when a person is engaging in an addictive behavior.

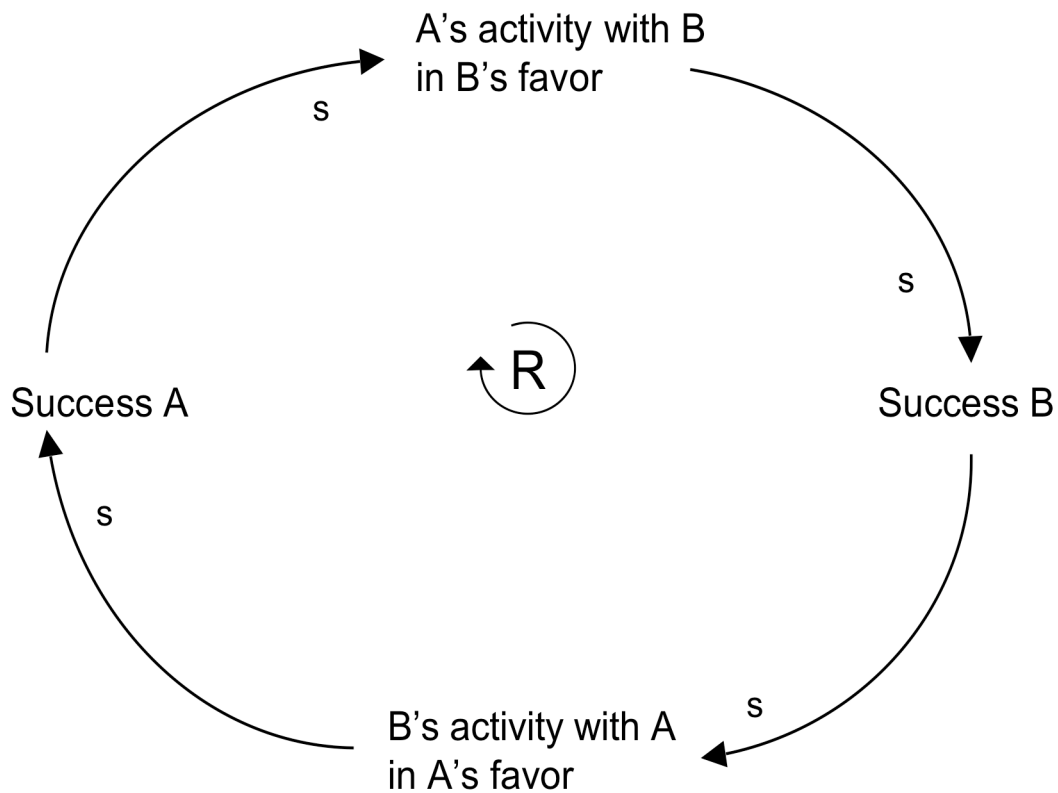


Figure 7. Initial outer virtuous reinforcing relationship between A and B

At some point early on, A and/or B start to make fixes to improve their own success (Figures 8 and 9), even beyond what they perceived they could achieve through collaboration. As either acts to increase its own success, it forms a local feedback loop of behaviors and outcomes that, for its own in-group, are Reinforcing. Because systems tend to have delays, the impact of one group's fixes on their own success, or on the system as a whole, may not be felt immediately. It is often the case that this delay blurs the connection between actions and outcomes. Over time, the link may become increasingly complex and difficult to trace. It is possible for the impact of B's fixes to have no apparent detrimental impact on A until they build to a tipping point. At this critical point, A begins to perceive a direct connection between B's fixes and the reduction in A's success. Of course, it is possible that B's fixes will never have a negative impact. The model, however, is a representation of those times when they do. Its purpose is to demonstrate the relational nature of behaviors within a work system, and how actions that may appear personal or willful, may be due simply to not taking a holistic approach to change.

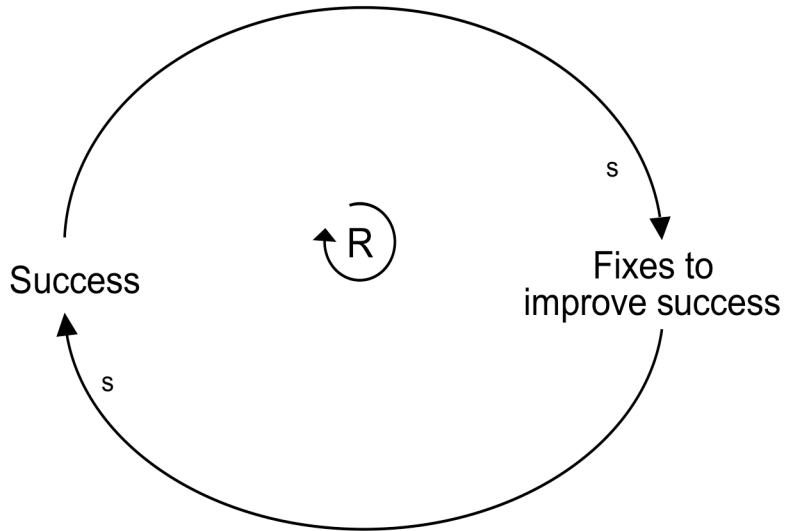


Figure 8. Early Individual Reinforcing Loops of A and B

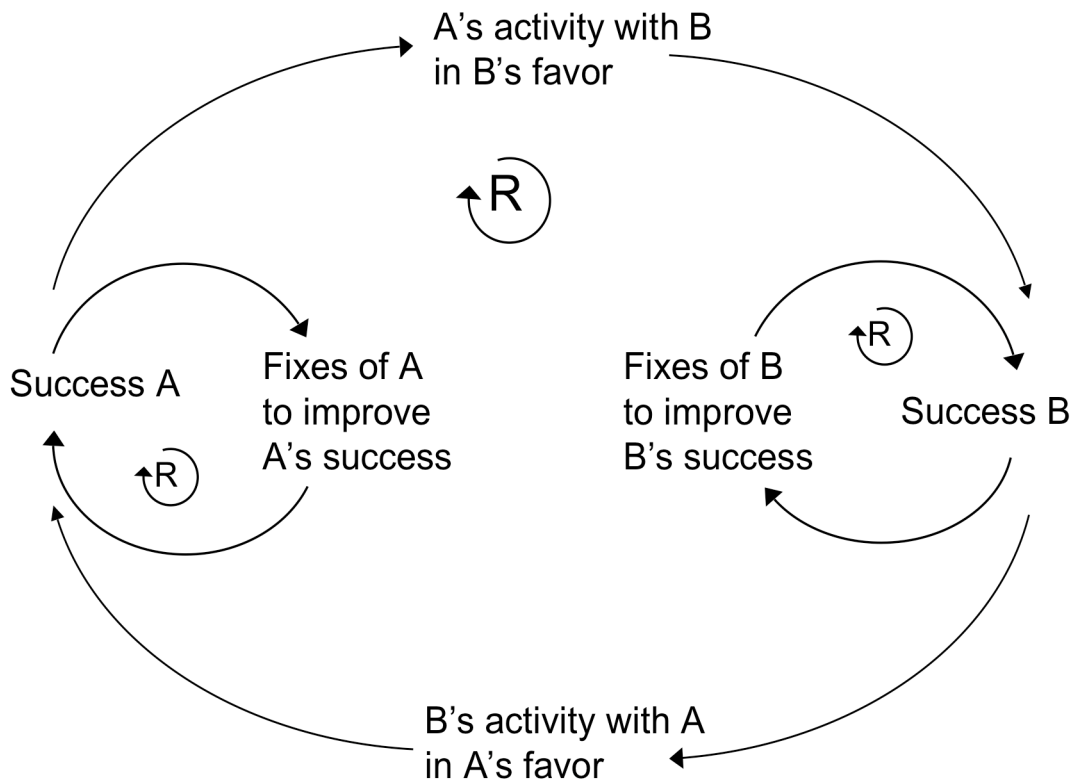


Figure 9. Early win-win-win goals before adversarial dynamic

At some point, as one or both groups (A and/or B) continue increasing its own success, the impacts of the fixes are felt by the other group. In Figure 10, A's fixes to increase A's success unintentionally obstruct B's success. Thus, there is an "s" on the arrow between A's fixes and A's unintended obstruction of B's success. This indicates that as A's fixes increase, so do obstructive impacts on B. The "o" between the obstruction of B and B's success, suggests that as obstruction increases, B's success decreases, so the two variables change in opposite directions.

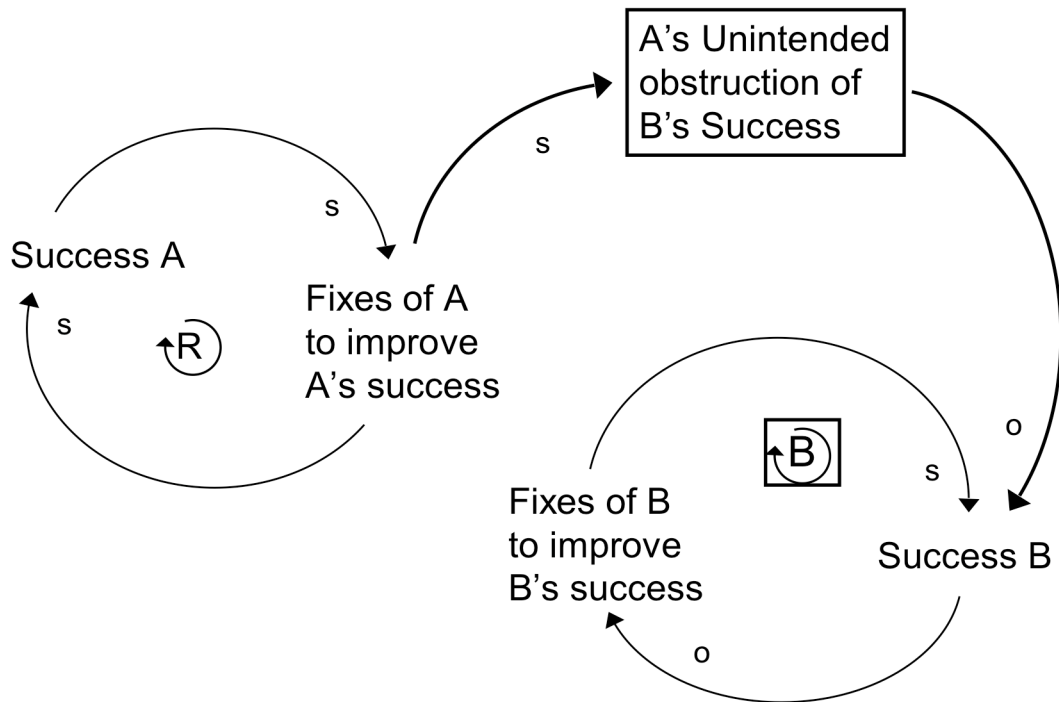


Figure 10. First critical incident in accidental adversaries dynamic

Figure 11 illustrates the cascade of reactive events that occur over time, following the initial unintentional obstruction. At some point, members of B may begin to wonder if A is intentionally acting to limit B's success. In response, B increases its own fixing activities to bring B's own success back up. B's local feedback loop then changes from a virtuous reinforcing process to an uphill climb against the continuing negative impact of A's actions on B's success. B's local loop shifts to what is referred to as a Balancing loop, connoted by the letter "B," encircled by an arrow. Over time, however, B's fixes "unintentionally" obstruct A's success, which then decreases A's Success and shifting A's initial Reinforcing loop into a Balancing loop. At this point, both local loops of A and B have shifted from virtuous Reinforcing into Balancing loops in which both groups are trying to not lose ground, never mind trying to grow—the original intention of the collaboration, merger, acquisition, or other effort that set the cycle in motion. At some

point after both A and B's small causal loops have shifted to Balancing, the actions of the two local groups form an unholy communion, creating a vicious internal Reinforcing process that locks the two into an addictive form of covert, counter-productive and potential destructive systemic behavior. The internal Reinforcing (R) loop that forms between Groups A and B illustrates this.

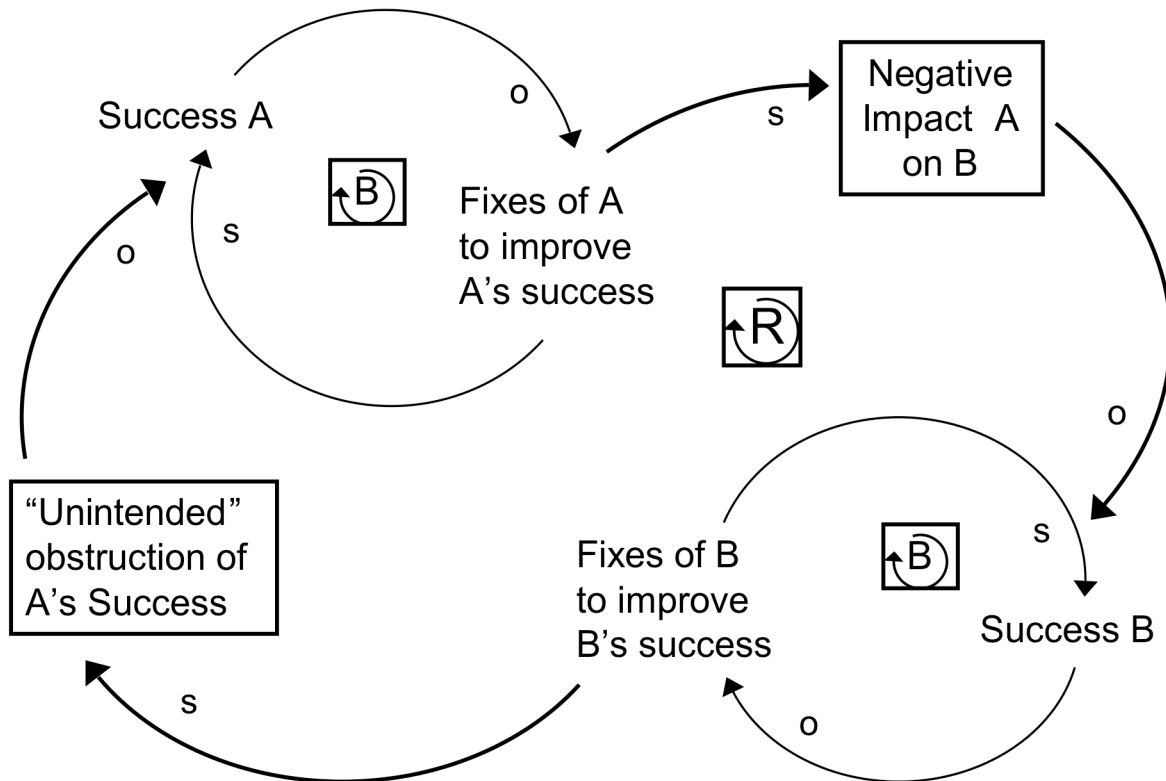


Figure 11. Second critical incident in the accidental adversaries dynamic

Figure 12 (a repeat of Fig. 6) illustrates the full dynamic, although by this time the initial outer virtuous reinforcing loop of generative collaboration has degraded to one that may best be described as a vicious reinforcing loop of factionalism. As groups become locked into the internal Reinforcing relationship, the once virtuous outer Reinforcing loop degrades. As A's success decreases, A's activities with B in B's favor decrease, decreasing B's success, decreasing B's willingness to engage in activities with A in A's favor, thus reducing A's success, and on. The outer Reinforcing loop, however, is still available to be socially reconstructed through effective leadership, appreciative dialog, and mindful action.

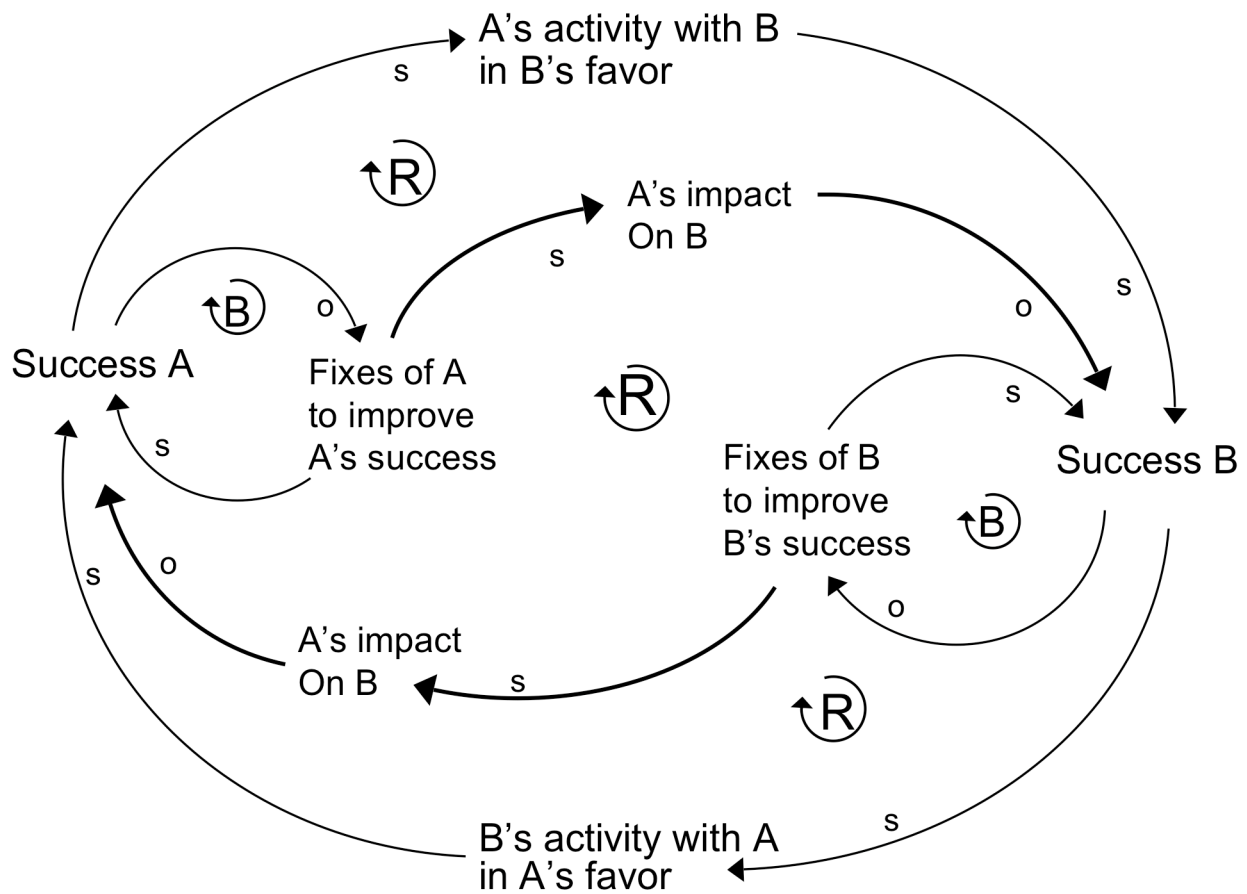


Figure 12. Complete accidental adversaries archetype

As has been stated in the discussion above, the model assumes that groups first begin operating at cross-purposes unintentionally. When this behavior goes on unchecked, or worse, when fueled by managers and executives choosing sides, it can take on a willful, self-indulgent nature, reinforced by a devolving culture of suspicion and distrust. The more each group engages in self-serving activities, based both on negative assumptions about the other group and an overblown concept of their own independent success, the more they eventually hurt the enterprise as a whole system. Left unchecked by clear leadership and mindful self-discipline, the vicious cycle can take hold and take over, and is hard to reverse. The accidental adversaries dynamic may serve as the precursor for other dysfunctional organizational dynamics, especially “escalation” and “drifting goals” (Goodman, 2006; Senge et al., 1994, p. 149). Because of the lag time between actions and noticeable consequences in systems, it is important to address adversarial dynamics quickly and effectively. When an adversarial dynamic

advances to escalation, the original vision for positive collaboration may no longer be accessible or relevant. Leaders and managers may react to behaviors they see as irrational and unnecessary by pushing harder for people to get down to work and not indulge in emotionally-charge conflicts. Alternatively, they may encourage certain people to leave, and reorganize others. Another common reaction is to adjust goals and aspirations downward, known as drifting goals.

Again, while the word “accidental” is used to describe the dynamic, systemic delays between actions and their consequences make it hard to track. By the time adversarial behaviors are visible and appear as a pattern, they may seem to be willful, personal, and intentional. In later sections of this paper, the meaning of the word “accidental,” as it is used in the context of the dynamic, will be examined further. Gaining an understanding, in Part II, of the social constructionist concepts of relational multi-being and most practiced ways of being (MPWoB), will deepen that discussion.

A Note About Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a philosophy of generative change with a process model for driving generative dialog and inclusive, strength-based organizational change processes (Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Cooperrider et al., 2001; Watkins, 2002; Bushe, 2007). It engages the “whole system” in a multi-phased process with the purpose of creating internally generated movement toward organizational change that is both transformational and life-enhancing. AI emerged from the philosophy of Social Constructionism, which acknowledges that people are “multi-beings,” each of whom has distinct and diverse “most practiced ways of being” that are enhanced and develop in relation to others’ multi-being-ness¹⁰. References are made to AI practice throughout this paper; however, the philosophy and processes model will be not addressed in detail. The books cited above, and *The Appreciative Inquiry Commons* (appreciativeinquiry.case.edu) are excellent resources. The AI principles and process model are included in Appendix B as a primer for those who may not be familiar with the approach.

¹⁰ Multi-being and most practiced ways of being (MPWoB) are discussed at length in Part II.

METHODOLOGY

This Methodology section addresses three periods of time: (1) the OLH project from 1999-2000 from which the interview data for the narrative analysis section of this paper are drawn, (2) the period of time in which this paper was conceived of and written, and (3) the ten year learning journey from 2000 to present, which intersects with number (2). Methodologies employed in the original project, do not reflect social construction as a discipline. For this reason, the reader may find many, if not most aspects of the original OLH project to be inconsistent with a post-modern, social constructionist approach to research. These contradictions are a key part of the narrative of the dissertation as a whole, and many, if not most, will be addressed in the larger narrative.

Methods employed in time periods 1 and 2, above, will be discussed in detail in this section; whereas, time period 3 will be addressed primarily in the Rear View Window text boxes. First, the dissertation methodology as a whole will be discussed. Next, the purpose, goals and design of the original OLH project will be outlined. The former will address how the original project methodology meshes in a holistic way with the larger picture of the dissertation as a socially constructed meta-narrative. It will highlight the relational role of the OLH project experience in sometimes bringing into question, and oft-times into conflict, positivist and/or modernist beliefs and practices imparted and reinforced by years of academic training. As such, the dissertation methodology consciously uses the practitioner/researcher as an instrument and illustration of reflexive sense-making, emergent and conflicted multi-being, and socially constructed praxis. Within this contextual framework, actual data derived from the project interviews, informal conversations, briefings, reports, and subsequent project-specific dialogs comprise only part of the data upon which the larger dissertation narrative is based.

Left-hand Column--Internal Narrative

It is probably safe to assume that many of the existential and experiential questions raised in this paper will also resonate with other OD consultants, as have the ideas of others helped me to make sense of my own experiences. As the reader will learn, some of the challenges I faced when applying the OLH methodology at CT, Inc. were not unique to me, even though they felt that way at the time.

Original Project Methodology: 1999-2000

The case project upon which this dissertation is based was initially designed using the OLH method (Appendix C), developed in the late 1990's by Art Kleiner, George Roth, and The Learning History Pioneer's Group (Kleiner, Roth, et al., 1995; Castleberg & Roth, 1998; Bradbury & Mainemelis, 2001), under the auspices of the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT) Center for Organizational Learning. The OLH methodology was the *adapted* child of the systems thinking - Organizational Learning movement, then being led by Peter Senge and Daniel Kim out of the MIT Center. Other key organizations associated with the movement are, SoL (Society for Organizational Learning, established in 1997) and Pegasus Communications, which publishes the *Systems Thinker Newsletter* and *Leverage Points* (e-newsletter) and hosts the annual Systems Thinking In Action Conference.

Dr. James B. Rieley (2001), a strong proponent of systems thinking, introduced me to the OLH approach in 1999. Roth and Kleiner (1995) describe their motivations for developing the methodology in this way:

At the MIT Center for Organizational Learning, we've struggled for several years to find a reasonable way to assess learning efforts. Our corporate affiliates, as partners in learning projects, need to get some idea of the return on their investments, and our own researchers need a better understanding of their work. One year ago a group of colleagues at the Learning Center set out to develop a better form for making assessments. We rejected the idea of traditional quantitative assessment and measurement techniques, because learning cannot be quantified. Even analytic tools, such as the tools of system dynamics, lead inevitably into unquantifiable realms like the explication of mental models. We also rejected the maxim, as proposed by Harvard professor David Garvin, that 'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it.' Many systems that can't be measured must be managed.

We started, instead, by going back to the source: the people who initiate and implement systems work, learning laboratories, or other pilot projects in a large organization. We tried to capture and convey the experiences and understandings of a group of people who have expanded their own capabilities. The resulting document may become a new and much-needed form of institutional memory. We call it a 'learning history' (p. 1).

Thus, the OLH approach represented an experiment. As is true with experimentation in many fields, Roth and Kleiner took a grounded gamble on a workable solution to a difficult challenge. Embedded in their motivations, and in the OLH design, is a Catch-22 of sorts: they attempted to simultaneously engage in processes

with distinctly different temporal and process demands: consulting, research, and assessment. Research and assessment tend to have long delays between implementation and results, whereas most business consulting environments are product-focused, and demand quick results (Waddock, 1988; Siegel, 1992). The OLH method emerged as an experiment in meeting diverse, perhaps even contradictory, goals simultaneously, with one methodological process model. It was intended to promote double-loop learning (Argyris, 1997, 1995, and 1980; Rieley, 2001, pp 4-6) in organizations, while providing a means for assessing learning efforts (Roth & Kleiner, 1995, p. 1). Simply stated, double-loop learning is an approach to decision-making and action that continuously loops back and carries forward learning about the “noticeable results” of past effective actions:

Argyris and Schon’s work on learning identifies another learning model, double-loop learning, in which it is possible to look at how we understand a problem-solving process. Double-loop learning takes place when it is recognized that the solution utilized does not result in the expected outcome. This mismatch, instead of causing the development of a new intervention, causes a shift in the mental models that contributed to an understanding of the problem and the strategy determined to resolve it (Rieley, 2001, p. 5).

For an organization to learn to become more effective, it must recognize that learning is everyone’s responsibility. This has a strong connection to the need for double-loop learning in organizations. By having managers make all the decisions, only single-loop learning is likely to take place, i.e., learning what to do. The understanding and utilization of double-loop learning as a way to conduct business will be the key to long-term organizational success... Rieley, 2001, p. 25).

While the language has a more cognitive tone than what might be used in social constructionist discourse, double-loop learning does suggest a relational, experiential component to learning. Rieley’s words suggest that while “single-loop” learning, which he argues is ineffective, can take place in isolation, double-loop learning happens in relationship.

The OLH approach attempted to operationalize a narrative-based process for double-loop organizational learning. In the case of the study that will be presented and discussed in this paper, the method began with a reflective analysis of a past event; but the approach also was intended for use during the learning process itself. For the client system being studied, the ultimate goal of the methodology is to promote a habit of reflective, double loop learning.

Four cornerstones that underlie the OLH approach are:

1. Develop knowledge by reflecting back on a past success;
2. Disseminate knowledge broadly beyond those who were directly involved in the event through a formal written report;
3. Engage members of the organization in inclusive dialog about the report; and
4. Practice double-loop learning that will (a) inform future action, and (b) learn to engage in reflective learning and dialog as ongoing ways of being in the organization.

After its initial development, Roth and Kleiner enlisted a cadre of OD consultants to test the OLH approach in client systems, and provide validation in the form of publishable case data. That group was called the Learning History Pioneers Group. In the Spring of 1999, Dr. James (Jim) B. Rieley introduced me to Dr. Marty Castleberg (Castleberg & Roth, 1998; Kleiner, Roth, and The Learning History Pioneer's Group, 1995), a member of the Pioneers Group, who was then a longtime consultant with Harley Davidson Motorcycles in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. Castleberg had been applying the OLH methodology in his work with Harley. He introduced me to the Organizational Learning History Fieldbook (Kleiner & Roth et al., 1995) and coached me through the CT, Inc. OLH proposal process and project design.

The OLH model assumes that past decisions, actions, and behaviors generalize to future challenges and solutions, and that learning is both cognitive and dialogic. The approach focuses on learning from the organization at its best by examining the history of a successful event or project. SoL (the Society for Organizational Learning), describes the bases of the OLH approach in this way:

A Learning History is an approach which: 1) applies the assessment of an organizational change initiative through 2) an effort to develop the capability of the people in the change process to evaluate their program and its progress, in the service of 3) creating materials that will help to diffuse their learning to other interested parties. In combining these three elements of learning history work, we create a feedback cycle at an organizational level. Assessment to capability-development to evaluation and back to assessment becomes a process of organizational reflection that leads to the development of actionable knowledge (Argyris, 1993). Actionable knowledge, in this context, represents both the "know-how" and "know why" that guides people's actions so that they can consistently produce the results they set out to achieve (SoL, 1999).

The process attempts to accomplish this through a seven-stage process described in the next section.

OLH Project Focus, Design, and Interview Guide for CT, Inc.

The CT, Inc. OLH research project was conducted between April 1999 and March 2000. The project timeline is shown in Table 1:

Table 1. CT, Inc. OLH project timeline

Timeframe	Project Phase
April-July 1999	Developed project design, submitted proposal, and planned an exploratory visit.
July 1999	Exploratory on-site interviews (5) conducted at Silicon Valley campus.
February 2000	First round of on-site interviews at TX and CA campuses.
March 2000	Second round of on-site interviews at TX and CA campuses.

The project was intended to provide CT, Inc. with objective documentation of a successful organizational change initiative: the decoupling of Waverider from e-Rider. How that goal was arrived at is described below, in conjunction with a description of the seven stages of the OLH process. The stages listed below were excerpted from the SoL (Society for Organizational Learning) website in 1999. The corresponding methodologies adopted for the initial project are annotated after each excerpted phase. The first of the seven phases, and one that was included in the project, is described by SoL (1999) in this way:

First, a planning stage delineates the range and scope of the document as well as the audience which is seeking to learn from the organization's experience. ...Linking noticeable results with an improvement effort becomes an area of inquiry for the subsequent reflective conversation interviews. Including people in the planning process develops a capacity in the organization being studied to plan and conduct descriptive evaluations.

This phase was accomplished through four key activities:

1. Discussions with Dr. James B. Rieley and Dr. Marty Castleberg about the OLH methodology, especially how to craft the OLH interview protocol.

2. Review of selected internal documents and press books (collections of press released and articles written about CT, Inc.) for the period from approximately 1994-1999. This activity led me to the “logical” conclusion that Waverider would likely be the focus of the OLH project.
3. Phone and email correspondence with CT, Inc.’s CEO and the Director of Corporate Affairs, Roger Smith, to discuss the scope of the proposed project and to determine who to interview in the initial exploratory visit, and who would serve as the primary internal consultant / project advisor.
4. A phone interview with the internal project lead and another with the key technology lead for the project likely to be the focus of the study.
5. An exploratory visit in July 1999 at which time four additional key internal contacts and one former employee were interviewed to determine whether Waverider would be appropriate project to study.

Subsequent to the above-mentioned activities, the following decisions were made:

- a. Because of it’s make or break historical role, the story of the decoupling process was selected because it was believed that learning about the factors that led to its success would (1) shed light broadly on many aspects of the organization beyond the product decoupling, and (2) provide data-based information for then current and future organizational change initiatives. A third hope was for the internal organizational learning document to provide a database for writing journal articles to submit to publications like the National Productivity Review, The Systems Thinker, and other similar academic and professional journals. The proposed project did not include follow-up activities such as presenting or disseminating a formal organizational learning document, or facilitating organization-wide dialogs about the project results.
- b. The Director for Strategic Market Development was selected to be the internal project consultant.
- c. A project outline / proposal would be submitted to the Corporate Affairs Officer.
- d. It was agreed that the project would include 10-15 onsite interviews, to be conducted in February 2000.

- e. It was also agreed that the scope of the project would include conducting interviews and writing a brief OLH report. Dissemination of the report and facilitating dialogs around it were not included in the project contract, although those stages of the OLH process are listed below. The project was to end at this point.

In early February 2000, less than one week before the interviews were to begin, the Chief of Staff to the Senior Executive Vice President (EVP) of Engineering sent an email stating that the Senior EVP had become aware of the project and the list of interviewees and that he believed the list to be incomplete. He added names, essentially doubling the list of interviewees, to 30. (This was not open for discussion.) A second week of interviews was added in March to accommodate the expansion. While it only became apparent from the onsite interviews themselves, the additional list of interviews also had significant impacts on the project design itself, shifting it away from a controlled study to something that felt more like an active consulting project. This also resulted in a project for which the OLH methodology was less well suited. The impacts of this unilateral decision will be discussed in detail in the Narrative Analysis and in Part II.

The second stage of the OLH process was also part of the initial project design. Again, SoL describes the stage in this way:

Second, there are a series of retrospective, reflective conversational interviews with participants in a learning effort (along with key outsiders), taking pains to gather perspective from every significant point of view. The interviewing process itself develops the skill for reflective conversations and the benefits that can provide for the organization.

The interviews were conducted at CT, Inc.'s campuses in Houston, Texas in February 2000, and at the Silicon Valley, California campus in March 2000. Each visit was from seven to nine days in length. An internal assistant scheduled appointments. That person suggested that interviewees would not want to take more than 30 minutes for the interviews. Based on his experience, Dr. Rieley suggested requesting that appointments be scheduled with 45-minute breaks between the end of one interview and the start of the next one. This proved to be invaluable advice, as most interviews ran for a minimum of one hour, at the interviewee's choice.

The OLH interview guide follows, although it was used merely as a rough guide during the actual project; and in many cases, not at all. As readers will learn, the project took on a life of its own after the Senior EVP for Engineering changed the interview list, qualitatively shifting the focus and tenor of the interviews.

Organizational Learning History Interview Guide

1. How long have you been with CT, Inc.? Where were you before that?
2. How did you get involved with the decoupling project?
3. What was the most significant aspect of the decoupling for you?
4. Did it meet your expectations?
5. Did you think it would when it started?
6. What was the turning point?
7. I read that there was a production goal of one new Waverider related product release per month. What has that been like?
8. I understand the decoupling was attempted unsuccessfully first and then successfully the second time. Why was it first unsuccessful and then successful?
9. Could it happen now? What would that be like?
10. What is Waverider's strategic role now?
11. Is there a comparable effort going on right now?

Left-hand Column--Internal Narrative

Given my friendship with the CEO, as well as the facts that (a) I was employed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and (b) I was trying out an approach that was new to me, I asked to be reimbursed for project expenses, including travel, lodgings, and transcription; but not to be paid for my time. In retrospect, this arrangement gave me the freedom to improvise methodologically when the need to do so became apparent (during the on-site interviews when I came to understand the significance of the Senior EVP's insistence about doubling the list of interviewees). The project quickly shifted from OLH to reflexive social construction.

SoL describes the third phase of the OLH method below in this way:

Third, a small group of internal staff members and outsider learning historians "distills" the raw material (from reflective conversation interviews, documents, observations, and so on) into a coherent set of themes with relevance for those seeking to learn from the effort. This analytic effort, based on techniques of qualitative data analysis and the development of grounded theory, builds capacity for making sense of and evaluating improvement efforts.

In the case of this project, the final report (Appendix D) included a concise seven-page report with recommendations. The form was not that of a formal OLH report. In addition to the report, a briefing was prepared and presented to the CEO (Appendix E).¹¹

The following is a complete list of the final four phases, as described by SoL:

Fourth, a document is written based on a thematic orientation, which includes extensive use of and editing of narrative from interviews. These quotes are fact-checked with participants before they are distributed in any written material (even though they will be anonymous in all drafts). The writing and fact-checking process continues to build the capacity of people in the organization to describe and present its improvement process, and

¹¹ These were requested by the CEO in lieu of a formal OLH report.

in the course of checking facts and themes, provides an additional opportunity for reflection.

Fifth, a small key group of managers, participants in the original effort and others interested in learning from their efforts, attend a validation workshop after reading the learning history prototype. This validation workshop allows those that participated in the improvement effort to reflect on and review for accuracy the material and their presentation in the learning history, as well as observe how others respond to the formal description of their efforts.

Sixth, the learning history document becomes the basis for a series of dissemination workshops. In the dissemination workshops people throughout the company consider the questions: What has the company learned so far from this program? How do we judge its success (or lack of success)? And how do we, and how does the company, build on what can be learned to best move forward in other initiatives?

Seventh, after a series of dissemination workshops, we conduct a review of the learning history effort itself, gathering data on the influence the learning history data gathering, analysis, writing, validation and dissemination process had in other improvement efforts. In this review, the people in the organization develop their abilities to conduct learning history efforts and consider how future efforts can improve upon and adapt a learning history process for their own specific needs.

Confidentiality

The following measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of comments made by specific employees:

1. Interviewees were asked to review an introductory statement (Appendix F) and sign a confidentiality agreement before being scheduled for an interview.
2. Interview tapes were destroyed following transcription.
3. Employees were not be identified by name in any of the drafts or in the final written report presented to CT, Inc.
4. The final report was to be given only to the CEO and the Corporate Affairs Officer.

5. Manuscripts of journal articles were to be provided to the Corporate Affairs Officer for review prior to submission for publication.

Original Project Goals

Goals of the project, as stated in the initial project proposal, were “to understand the why’s and how’s of CT, Inc.’s success in order to”:

- More effectively target training and other organizational change/development initiatives based on the current reality and gaps.
- More effectively train employees so they would be able to better understand and implement strategies.
- Provide an objective measure of the gap between present and desired states on a number of organizational variables including, but not limited to:
 - Alignment of vision and culture,
 - Current perception of the role and importance of Waverider-related production goals,
 - Current operational understanding of the corporate vision,
 - The future role of e-Rider,
 - The sense of urgency or survival anxiety,
 - The sense of psychological safety to innovate, etc.
- Help CT, Inc.’s leadership better understand and build upon its success:
 - Changing the culture, and
 - Leveraging existing cultural strengths.
- Identify where and under what conditions change has been easiest and hardest to effect.
- Define CT, Inc. as an organization that models leadership and organizational effectiveness in addition to being profitable.
- Reinforce CT, Inc. as a ‘statesman’ organization in which profits and principles coexist.
- Tangibly reinforce CT, Inc.’s vision for creating a campus environment.
- Expose CT, Inc. to a new academic and professional arena.

Dissertation Methodology

The initial study on which this dissertation is based was rooted in systems thinking and the organizational learning history (OLH) methodology. The dissertation methodology, however, is not. During the original study, the OLH methods needed to be jettisoned when the interview list was doubled, thus changing the focus and scope of the project. The change, in methodology, resulted in the interviews aligning better with the intended purpose of the study (at least from the researcher's perspective) than they likely would have using the OLH methodology. This assertion is based partly on intuition, as well as on the following three situational factors:

1. Two key announcements—a resignation and a promotion--were made on the first day of interviews, thus the interviews were conducted when emotions were highly charged, on the surface, and looking for an outlet and a connection. (It is not possible to know this, but it is possible that the promotion was announced on that day specifically because it was known that interviews were being conducted. Or, it may simply have been serendipity.)
2. The doubling of the number of interviews was both a quantitative and qualitative change in scope that “violated” the OLH methodology, making the project something else. Paradoxically, the change brought the interviews into better alignment with the intended purpose of the OLH method, to study *organizational* dynamics, while at the same time distancing it from the stated OLH methodology (i.e., to use a pre-determined interview protocol, to study a past event, and to focus on a bounded period of time).
3. Interviewees were engineers. Their comfort zone was to talk about technology. Talking about emotions and relationships as part of the equation was not their first “go to” place, nor something they tended to equate with “real” work. The emotionality of the environment broke through boundaries. While most understood that the interviews were intended to focus on the *organizational* dynamics that supported a specific technical innovation, many did not address the people side of the innovation at first, or until the tape recorder was turned off and they were asked if there was anything they wanted to talk about or that they thought should be discussed, but that they'd not been asked about during the interview. A typical statement was, “this might not be relevant, but...”

In other words, the change of plans, in combination with the exquisite timing of the interviews, heightened the emotionality of the interviewees, and, thus, likely made it easier for interviewees to think and talk about the organizational aspects of innovation. The situation may have been such that many could not *not* talk about it.

In retrospect, the changes of scope imposed on the project, and reflexive, improvisational changes made to “save” the project, unselfconsciously and unknowingly (at that time) rooted it in social constructionist principles and methods. This is reflected in the words of Kathy Charmaz (2008, p. 397-398), speaking about a social constructionist approach to grounded theory: “Grounded theorists adopt a few strategies to focus their data gathering and analyzing, but what they do, how they do it, and why they do it emerge through interacting in the research setting, with their data, colleagues, and themselves.” This statement best describes the nature of the initial interview-based process as it unfolded on-site.

While the interviews were initially intended to follow the OLH interview protocol, that was abandoned in favor of what Harlene Anderson and Harold Goolishian describe as a “not knowing mindset” that looks to the “client as expert” (in McNamee and Gergen, 1992, pp. 25-39). It must be noted again that these approaches were not consciously referenced during the initial project, but have come into play in the process of reflectively making sense of the earlier experience and the transcripts of the interviews. At the time of the original interview project, the key methodologies were survival and faith that the story would disclose itself. On a conscious level at the time, the methods employed when the OLH method proved irrelevant and not useful were:

- Focused interviews: i.e., maintain a clear focus on the organizational dynamics surrounding a specific technological innovation;
- Deep listening;
- Improvisation: i.e., let go of the predetermined questions and allow the right questions to emerge from the dialog; and
- Faith (a) that I’d prepared well, and (b) in the “not knowing mindset” to lead the way to discovery.

This current dissertation project, however, is consciously rooted in social constructionist research methods, which are addressed below.

Social Construction of Themes Using Grounded Theory

The approach for interviewing, culling themes from the interviews, and writing the narrative analysis section of this dissertation is based on a qualitative method of interview analysis (Kvale, 1996) and general principles of grounded theory (Glaser 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Charmaz, 2008; Kelle, 2007), as well as the style of *narrative research* developed by Karl Weick (Weick, 1995; Weick, 1999) discussed later in this section. Thus, the methodology is eclectic in nature. As the reader will learn, the

initial interview process was, itself, an emergent socially constructed outcome necessitated by an organization that “refused” to sit still and be studied.

The derived processes for interview analysis closely followed the first four of six steps outlined by Kvale (1996, pp. 189-190). Those steps are quoted below. Each step is followed by a description of the specific actions taken during either at the time of the original study, or subsequently:

A first step is when subjects describe their lived world during the interview. They spontaneously tell what they experience, feel, and do in relation to a topic. There is little interpretation or explanation from either the interviewees or the interviewer (Kvale, 1996, p. 189).

As will become clearer to the reader in the Narrative Analysis section, below, interviews varied in their spontaneity, in part because of the personalities of interviewees, but also because of the fading relevance of the predetermined OLH interview guide. With the exception of a handful of interviews with people who did not appear to feel comfortable talking about organizational dynamics, most interviews did take on a spontaneous, “not-knowing” nature:

A second step would be that the subjects themselves discover new relationships during the interview, see new meanings in what they experience and do. ...The interviewees themselves start to see new connections in their life worlds on the basis of their spontaneous descriptions, free of interpretation by the interviewer (Kvale, 1996, p. 189).

While this appeared to be the case, there was not a formal way of assessing this. At best, interpretations may be made based on the facts that: (a) interviews were scheduled for 30 minutes, however, the overwhelming majority of interviewees opted to talk for 60 minutes or more, (b) several noted at the end of their interviews that they greatly appreciated the opportunity to talk, stating either that they had been needing to do so for a long time, or that they hadn’t realized how deeply they felt and were affected by the situation until they started talking about it, and (c) when interviewees were given the opportunity to speak off the record at the end of the interview, many opened up with their own “left-hand column” thoughts that appeared to have gained clarity for them during the course of the conversation. While it had not been a conscious goal of the initial OLH project design, conducting the interviews in a way that would best serve the interests of interviewees quickly became the guiding principle of the interview process when the OLH methodology no longer fit the situation, and interviewees began talking about their experiences.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

Making this shift in methodology required a deep change, or at least a willingness to suspend a sense of knowing about how to do research and how to conduct interviews the *right* way. Like the seeds of certain species of pine that can only germinate in fire, the experience was for me a trial by fire; a challenge to drop my empirical-only tools and mental models. At the time, more than training or guidance, letting go and letting emerge (i.e., the process, my role, the story) required an act of faith in the sponsors, interviewees, and myself.

In a third step, the interviewer, during the interview, condenses and interprets the meaning of what the interviewee describes, and “sends” the meaning back. The interviewee then has the opportunity to reply, for example, ‘I did not mean that’ or ‘That was precisely what I was trying to say’ or “no, that was not quite what I felt. It was more like...’ This dialogue ideally continues till there is only one possible interpretation left, or it is established that the subject has multiple, and possibly contradictory, understandings of a theme. This form of interviewing implies an ongoing ‘on-the-line interpretation’ with the possibility of an ‘on-the-spot’ confirmation or disconfirmation of the interviewer’s interpretations. The result can then be a ‘self-correcting’ interview (Kvale, 1996, p. 189).

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

At the time of the project, I was not an experienced interviewer and lacked the confidence to essentially function “off the grid”; one of the reasons I liked the OLH method’s predetermined interview questions. As the reader will learn, however, circumstances required letting go of the script in order to be of greatest service to the interviewees, to respect the time that they were taking from their busy work schedules to tell the story, and to be most useful and effective. Under those conditions, the process described above simply made sense.

Almost as soon as the interviews began, I realized that the story I thought I was there to explore was, at least to some degree, a fabrication; a constructed PR story. Not assuming that I knew what an interviewee meant by a particular statement simply made sense under the circumstances. What I did not yet have the wisdom or experience to understand at the time was that this “not-knowing mind” was also the best way to get as close as possible to the interviewee’s meanings, and peel away as much as possible of the interviewer’s own assumption-based overlay.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror--Seat-of-the-Pants Improv

Improvisational actions and decisions made at the time may be described as a combination of luck and the wisdom of a creative “not-knowing mind.” Challenged to find a win-win-win solution, as much for selfish as compassionate reasons, I made what I can now appreciate as good decisions. Looking back, having grounded my practice in the study of social construction and grounded theory, I can see how closely my improvisations fit the spirit, and even some of the methods, of social construction, although I was not yet aware of the discipline.

In a fourth step, the interviewer interprets the transcribed interview, either alone or with other researchers. Three parts of this analysis may be discerned; first, structuring the often large and complex interview material for analysis. This is usually done today by transcription and by programs for computer analysis of qualitative materials. The next part consists of a clarification of the materials, making it amenable to analysis; for example, by eliminating superfluous material such as digressions and repetitions, distinguishing between the essential and the non-essential. What is essential or non-essential again depends on the purpose of the study and its theoretical presuppositions. The analysis proper involves developing the meanings of the interviews. Bringing the subjects' own understanding into the light as well as providing new perspectives from the researcher on the phenomena. Five main approaches to the analysis of meaning are condensation, categorization, narrative structuring, interpretation, and ad hoc methods (Kvale, 1996, p. 190).

The report for the initial OLH project represented a compressed version of these guidelines, albeit a heavily intuitive version of analysis, as the sponsors wanted a final report well before the interview tapes and transcriptions were returned by the transcription service. The dissertation methodology, however, more closely followed the above-mentioned guidelines and characteristics.

Kvale (1996, p. 192), however, goes on to say:

The form of the results will mainly be in words in meaning condensation, interpretation, and narrative analyses, possibly with some figures for narrative structuring. The outcome of categorization is in numbers, which can be subjected to statistical analysis. The eclectic ad hoc analysis may involve words and figures as well as numbers (Kvale, 1996, p. 192).

Neither the original project analysis, nor the dissertation analysis was aligned to, nor did they involve statistical analyses, instead it more closely resembles Karl Weick's style of narrative research, discussed in the section, "Constructing the Narrative: Narrative Style of Research." Weick's approach is more consistent with the purpose and goals of the narrative within the context of the meta-story of this dissertation. The results of categorization were used to identify key themes that are incorporated in the narrative analysis, and to inform the development of a series of figures that will be presented and discussed in Part III.

The narrative analysis contained in this dissertation is the first and only in-depth analysis that has been written based on examination of the CT, Inc. interview transcripts.

While Kvale (1996) identified two more *possible* steps in qualitative research interview analysis, neither was part of the original study, nor the dissertation methodology. As described by Kvale, the fifth and sixth steps are:

A fifth step would be a re-interview. When the researcher has analyzed and interpreted the completed interviews, he or she may give the interpretations back to the subjects. In a continuation of a “self-correcting” interview, the subjects get an opportunity to comment on the interviewer’s interpretations as well as to elaborate on their own original statements.

A possible sixth step would be to extend the continuum of description and interpretation to include action, in that subjects begin to act from new insights they have gained during their interview. The research interview may in such cases approximate a therapeutic interview. The changes can also be brought about by actions in a larger social setting such as action research, where the researcher and the subjects together act on the basis of the knowledge produced in the interviews. (Kvale, 1996, p. 190).

During the original study, two interviewees were interviewed twice. One was the primary internal contact, and the other was the person at the center of many of the interviews. There was not time, however, to formally re-interview others. During the process of researching and writing the dissertation, the then CEO and internal contact were briefly re-interviewed. The sixth step, action, also was not formally incorporated into the original study, or into the dissertation. During the original project, however, certain findings were brought to the attention of the CEO who acted upon them immediately. It is also possible that during their interviews a number of interviewees got clearer with themselves about the toll the adversarial environment was taking on them and made decisions either about how to be in the organization in a less painful way, or to leave. This possibilities cannot be substantiated within the context of this dissertation.

Sources of Data

Themes were culled by reviewing data from the following sources:

- Transcripts of 35 on-site interviews (includes exploratory interviews).
- Notes and recollections of several additional ad hoc or informal conversations with the internal project contact.
- Observations at Town Hall meetings, and smaller meetings by invitation.

- One incident of opportunistic eavesdropping between interviews. (The interview room in Houston was adjacent to the room used for teleconferencing between campuses. As attendees were gathering for a teleconference, members of one key faction could be overheard expressing their dissatisfaction with efforts the company was making to facilitate innovation. This was key data for understanding the context of comments made in some of the interviews.)

The processes of categorizing, condensing, structuring narrative themes are described below:

- Transcripts were reviewed both in the order that interviews were conducted, and again in groups (e.g., executive leadership, technology managers, mid-level employees, those who had been at the organization before a key acquisition, and those who had been imported from the acquired company).
- Each transcript was reviewed, highlighting the most relevant sections of text, and noting themes in the columns.
- Then, all of the themes were reviewed across transcripts and groupings. From those, key themes with greatest relevance to (a) the story, (b) understanding and transforming the accidental adversaries dynamic, and (c) successful innovation processes, were identified.
- Themes included in the narrative analysis additionally reflect those with greatest relevance to a constructionist analysis. This was less an issue of omission as one of naming. For example, the theme, “negation,” was originally named, “loss of agency,” but was later changed, based on a discussion in Kenneth Gergen’s 2009 book, *Relational Being*.

While the narrative analysis is based on grounded theory, the methodological style of the dissertation as a whole can best be described as “narrative research,” in the style of Karl Weick (see below). Adopting and adapting an overarching style was required for embodying the play-within-a-play-within-a-play, emergent nature of the learning journey that the dissertation represents. As discussed previously, the final study is a tapestry that weaves together a reflexive learning journey played in three movements:

1. 1999-2000, when the OLH project was designed and the interviews were conducted.
2. 2000-present, when learnings were culled from the experience, leading to learning about appreciative inquiry and then social construction.

3. The learning journey of the dissertation itself, which like the initial OLH project will surely lead to my deepening understanding of social construction, as well as igniting future learning and exploration of new concepts and methodologies.

Constructing the Narrative Voice: Weick's Narrative Style of Research

The dissertation methodology steers away from formal, codified narrative discourse (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008; Nikander, 2008) in favor Karl Weick' *narrative style*, which focuses on learning from failures that shed light on the "collapse of sense-making in organizations" (Weick, 2001, pp. 97-124), and, thus is both *reflective* and *reflexive*. The style is reflective in its approach to reviewing interviews to identify over-arching themes, after the fact; however, it is reflexively in the moment in that the researcher writes the narrative as an emergent process of sense-making in union with the voices and motivations of the participants. A goal is to more deeply and intuitively reconstruct an understanding of what their sense-making might have been in the process of action itself by reflexively merging with the speaker's voice when writing the narrative. Rather than being a detached observer and interpreter, the researcher takes on an active voice, and in so doing, is reflexively changed through and with the story. The researcher does not merely report the words of the speakers, but attempts to inhabit their voice, without changing it.

The tone of much of Weick's writing may be described as polyvocal and narrative. He interweaves the voices of early theorists, contemporaries, as well as those of people who were or are still in the action about which he is theorizing. As narrator and meaning-weaver, his sense-making and theorizing processes are transparent, and unapologetically contingent and improvisational:

All told, Karl Weick has made great strides in the struggle to re-enchant the world of organizations, returning to them the mystery that resides at their core (Goodall, 1991). He has done so without ever falling prey to easy answers or fundamentalisms. Rather than seeking to purify human action through the development of a more perfect belief system (cf. Burke, 1969), Weick rejoices in the choppy humanness of action, and in the ways in which belief and action are consistently out of alignment (e.g., when a fire-fighter struggles to choose between dropping his tools and ignoring the advice of his squad leader)...

For Weick, organizing is improvisation without end, set in a world where our actions have serious consequences but lack solid foundations. ...Weick sustains his focus on belief-in-action and on the ongoing interplay between thought and behavior. In this sense, he responds to the

hopelessness that can accompany paradigms lost by redoubling his faith in human ingenuity and the endless possibilities of human organizing.

Put another way, Weick's work reveals a wellspring that exists just beyond the concepts at hand, a worldview that transcends human organizing and reflects a strong view of the human spirit. In addition to the many intellectual contributions Weick has made in his career, his legacy will include the advancement of a particular aesthetic, one that construes the world as contingent and multifaceted and conceives of effective communication as heedful interrelating across a diversity of perspectives (Eisenberg, 2006, pp. 272-273).

The philosophers, Kierkegaard and Heidegger, heavily influence Weick's narrative style of research. Writing about why theories really matter, Weick (1995 and 1999), cites a famous statement made by Kierkegaard:

'It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition that it must be lived forwards' (Weick, 2001, from Gardiner, 1988, p. 127).

This latter statement forms the basis of his assertion that the most emotionally resonant and useful theories are developed through and in action, rather than retrospectively with a detached mindset (Weick, 1999). This theme plays through much of his work. In his accounts of tragic organizational failures (Weick, 1999, 2001, 2007), Weick writes not as a detached expert telling us about his findings, but as an actively engaged voice in the story itself. In this way, he engages in the form of theorizing that he appears to value most: relationally conceived, emergent, and "ready-to-hand." Heidegger's concepts of "ready-to-hand" and "present-at-hand" are key influences in Weick's work, especially regarding the formulation of organizational theories (Weick, 1999), and in the paradox of praxis addressed above.

Quoting the famous American radio host, Paul Harvey¹², "The rest of the story"--the learning that occurred as improvisation during the project, in the ten years since the project's completion, and during the integrative process of writing this paper – are where the story really gets interesting, and what may be most useful to others. The "rest of the story," has emerged from the paradoxical process of "living forward" into the questions that have been raised by the structured research process of reflecting backwards into

¹² Paul Harvey (1918 – 2009), was an American radio host known for his distinctive voice and storytelling style. He was most well known for his "The Rest of the Story" segments, in which he would divide his commentary into two distinct parts, separated by a commercial break. He would begin the second segment with the famous preamble, "and now for the rest of the story..."

sense- and meaning-making. The dilemma posed by the paradox of useful “data” obtained “living forwards” and the more typical mode of academe of reflecting backwards, can promote a reflexive attitude in the research and learning processes. At the same time, the inherent creative tension between the pull backwards and the press forwards can resonate with the multiple facets of the researcher’s own multi-being, sparking or aggravating an internal accidental adversaries dynamic.

Weick makes a strong case for theorizing that focuses on living forward:

I want to argue that one reason we theorize poorly about what matters most is because we use discourse that makes it hard to capture living forward. Living forward is a blend of thrownness, making do, journeys stitched together by faith, presumptions, expectations, alertness, and actions—all of which may amount to something, although we will know for sure what that something may be only when it is too late to do much about it.

He continues, addressing the dilemma posed by “backward-oriented” research:

...Unsettled, emergent, contingent living forward contrasts sharply with our backward-oriented theoretical propositions that depict that living as settled, causally connected, and coherent after the fact. The compact causal structures that epitomize our theories are artifacts of retrospect rather than narratives of prospect. And that is part of the reason those theories fail to move us. Theorists who are able to narrow the gap between understanding and living, or between the present-at-hand stance of the spectator and the ready-to-hand stance of the agent, are more likely to generate work that is judged to be moving (Weick, 1999, p. 135).

While the original CT, Inc. project was intended to be undertaken in the style of backward-oriented, reflective research, it quickly became apparent that the only useful, *and* workable approach was to “drop my tools” (Weick, 2007) and improvise. Likewise, while this dissertation is based on a specific interview-based project that provided rich data for narrative analysis, it is based on a much broader “database.” As a larger whole, it is a project about living forwards, albeit based in part on backward-oriented interview data.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Paving the Road

The poly-vocal meaning-making embodied in this paper is akin to what Robert Quinn refers to as “building the bridge as you walk on it.” The process of writing can be likened to mixing a new bucket of tar each day and paving the road a bit further. The reflexive nature of the writing and learning processes have existed in a dynamic state of creative tension between continuous learning and curiosity, on the one hand, and the need to define a discrete topic and impose healthy boundaries, on the other.

Weick’s narrative style discloses the narrative of his own theorizing process. His is a transparent, active voice, reflexively engaged in meaning-making, in relationship with the voices of the actors and actions about which he is writing and theorizing. In doing so he models “theorizing” rather than “present-at-hand” (detached, retrospective) theory development currently in favor and which he challenges (Weick, 1995). Weick has developed a generative approach to the study of failure in the face of natural disasters, like the Mann Gulch fire disaster that shed light on the “gap” between theories for action that are formed in retrospect—understanding backward—and those adopted and adapted in the context of action itself by the primary actors (Weick, 1999, p. 136). Weick’s narratives are as much about the research subjects as they are about the theorizing and theory building process itself. As stated above, he appears to intentionally make his own process of theorizing as transparent as possible, so the reader will learn as much about the narrative style from the research subject as from the researcher’s own process. In a similar way, the overall “voice” and tone of this dissertation may be described as a “narrative style of research.”

While the initial project upon which this dissertation is based set out to study a success, what it disclosed about two systemic failures was much more instructive. The first, the failure to effectively manage a business turnaround, set the stage for the second, the failure to transition into growth. *Adopting a narrative research style for this dissertation resolved the issues of zeitgeist and methodological out-of-sync-ness between the original OLH project and that of the social constructionist dissertation project.* Also, similar to Weick’s approach, much of the data used in this study is derived from conversational interviews with people who were with the organization throughout these changes. In one or two instances, people who chose to leave the system also were interviewed.

The dissertation, thus, forms the fabric of a larger narrative, interweaving the factors mentioned above as relational pieces of the multi-being of the story itself, inseparable from and integral to the theory and praxis that emerge or may be derived from it. As the author, the most compelling aspects of writing this dissertation have been the ready-to-hand nature of the original OLH, the subsequent meaning-making it ignited and shed light on, and the present-day learning journey set in motion by the present-at-hand demands of communicating that learning in the form of a dissertation. Of special

relevance is exploring the usefulness for praxis of what lies at the dynamic intersection of these multiple forms of data and emergence. Some of these include:

- The project experience and data;
- The OLH methodology initially planned;
- The improvised methodology actually employed living forward;
- Reactions and engagement of interviewees and sponsors during the project and immediately following;
- Relevant literature, reflective of emergence in the fields of systems thinking; social construction, and appreciative inquiry practice;
- The reflexive experiential learning journey of the researcher-practitioner, in preparation for, during, and in the ten years since the initial project; and
- What contemplation and narrative analysis of all of the above may offer to other researchers and practitioners.

At times, this paper may have the feel of a jazz improvisation based on three major chords: (a) the original OLH project that, (b) set into play the learning history of the consultant, and (c) the learning history of the writing process itself. The overriding theme and melody is the reflexive process of socially constructed research. All of the above informs the narrative voice of the dissertation as a whole. At times, the larger process has led to integration, and at others to unresolved conflict, and almost always to new questions. Thus, it is a very large snapshot of a string of socially constructed moments of multi-being.

The CT, Inc. OLH project presented situations that required my “dropping the tools” of my training, as Weick implores business school graduates and practitioners to be prepared to do so they may be of service in the ready-to-hand environment of most workplaces (Weick, 2007). This is reflected in the creative tension that often exists between OD consultants who are often pressured by clients to move forward; and academics, who are also pressured by editorial boards and review committees to develop theories in a scholarly way, which typically involves living in a backward mode, over an extended period of time. (This is discussed in both text and narrative forms in the section, “Limits of the OLH Methodology.”)

A creative tension also exists in the process of writing a dissertation, particularly in the field of social construction, in particular. Part of the methodology of writing a *done* dissertation (some say this is the best kind) is deciding which themes and ideas to include and riff on, and which to save for the next book. That is a paradox of living and working reflexively, while getting anything done, or committing to ideas on paper, when socially constructed insights and meanings are emergent and contingent. Thus, part of the methodology of writing this paper in the style of a traditional dissertation has been the precarious act of balancing creative tension between what Heidegger refers to as “living forward” and “living backwards” (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger addresses the tension created by methodological traditions in this way:

When tradition thus becomes master, it does so in such a way that what it 'transmits' is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part, that it rather becomes concealed. Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial 'sources' from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 43)

On the one hand, engaging in the holistic process of emergent theorizing creates an irresistible pull toward thinking and living forward; whereas, on the other hand, the requirements of a done dissertation also create an equally compelling awareness of the value in drawing boundaries in order to capture, codify, and reflect on learning in a way that meets the muster of scholarly research, and doneness. This tension is reflected in the pages and narrative style of this dissertation. It is a tension that naturally exists between the "most practiced ways of being" of people who: (a) work in and lead client systems, (b) serve them as OD consultants, and/or (c) conduct and advance academic research and teaching through theorizing and publishing.

PART I: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The following narrative analysis is written in a Q&A format excerpted verbatim from the interview transcripts. This style is consistent with social construction. The decision to use a Q&A format reflects a larger creative tension between structure and emergence, form and content. The choice was made with the belief that the verbatim excerpts best (a) reflect the socially constructed nature of the interview process as it unfolded and (b) illustrate the structure and value of entering interviews with a “not-knowing” mindset consistent with relational social construction.

The OLH format consists of two columns:

In the *left-hand column*, you will see critical observations and key questions from the “learning historians. “These comments show why the right-hand text was chosen, and help you apply it to your own situation.

The *right-hand column* contains the primary narrative. You will see each paragraph in the right-hand column credited to a particular individual, who tells his or her part of the story (Wyer & Roth, 1997, p. 11).

Were this paper written in the OLH format, however, the narrative analysis would be presented in the following style (excerpt from Wyer & Roth, 1997, p. 4):

<p>What are the implications for later improvement efforts when the organization’s previous changes are described as “bloodletting” and a “blood bath?”</p>	<p>Management Team Member: ...Within a year of 1986, right after that major “bloodbath”— she ended up exceeding her business target in 1987, and in 1989, you are making a profit and have a relocation—not jut the people but the equipment and everything else—it’s unheard of to be able to do that not only without glitches, but also without missing your business objectives.</p>
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While the OLH format is easy, arguably easier to read than the Q&A format, it extends the historian’s interpretive voice beyond the point of identifying themes. While it saves interpretive work for the reader (which may be desirable in a consulting report), it does so at the cost of limiting the reader’s role and engagement in interpreting new meaning. In so doing, the structure moves towards an objectivist view of reality, which, while more reflective of the OLH approach, is less consistent with constructionist research. The Q&A format used here allows the reader to engage with the actual dialog at the time, and construct her/his own meanings of the themes.

Prologue— A Play Within-A-Play, Within-A-Play, Within-A-Play

As mentioned earlier, this narrative analysis is a tapestry of four interwoven learning histories:

1. CT, Inc.'s, as told in this part through the words of the people who were interviewed as part of the OLH project between July 1999 and February 2000;
2. Mine, as the learning historian and action researcher *during* the project, as reflected in “Left-hand Column¹³” boxes;
3. My reflexive learning history, as an OD consultant and individual that was set in motion by the experience ten years ago, and which is captured primarily in text boxes labeled, “Reflections in the Rear View Mirror;” and
4. The ongoing learning history catalyzed by the integrative process of developing and sharing new knowledge through the dissertation writing process. In fact, this forms the interstitial sense-making glue of this paper.

The multiple narratives came together through a meticulous thinking and writing process that involved re-reading the original interview transcripts and culling themes from them, engaging in sense-making by reading literature and discussing ideas with my dissertation advisor, as well as renewing conversations with two of the people who were integral to the project: the now-former CEO and the man who served as the key internal contact during the OLH project.

¹³The “Left-hand Column” is a term borrowed from the systems thinking lexicon. It refers to thoughts and feelings being experienced but not expressed openly. The Right-hand Column contains what *was* said.

Reflections in the Rear View Window—What is Old is New Again

Reading through the interview transcripts ten years after the project's close, I have been surprised by how much of the story feels new *again*, and how much of it just feels new. After ten years, it makes sense that reading through the transcripts would refresh my memory; however, it is satisfying to be hearing more deeply into the stories now than earlier. Possible reasons for this are:

- First, at the time of the project, I was asked to quickly write and submit the final project report, before the interview transcriptions were returned to me. In fact, there appeared to be a sense among top executives that gut reactions are better than those obtained through studied analysis. Once the report was written, I did not re-read the transcripts as carefully or completely as I have in the process of writing the narrative analysis that follows.
- Second, the experience catalyzed a learning journey that led me through systems thinking to appreciative inquiry, social construction, and what is now emerging in dialog as “the new O.D.” With several years more of consulting experience informed by new knowledge about social construction and AI, it is natural that I would now see the story with greater nuance, and that new themes would become apparent.

Interviewees were aware that I was there as a friend of the CEO, which may have played a role, perhaps a significant one, in constructing their sense of ease and openness. The bonds of friendship also played a central role in shaping sensitive decisions along the way, especially when it came time to report my findings.

A Change in the Play Book: From Hands-off to Social Construction

In February 2000, well after the project proposal was finalized and a few days before the first round of OLH interviews, a senior executive made a unilateral decision to add a new set of people—his people—to the list of interviewees. That action immediately changed the project's focus and scope. As a result, both my role and the purpose of the project—especially its focus on the past—suddenly became unclear. While the agreed-upon purpose and focus had been to (a) study a specific time-limited event, (b) interview those who had been most involved, and (c) write an OLH report about it (see Appendices A and B for a brief overview of the OLH approach and the original project proposal letter), the project seemed to be moving in a different direction, one that might call for a different set of actions and deliverables.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

I felt my role shift away from my comfort zone of hands-off researcher to something else, as yet unclear to me; as if the Universe was saying, “Jody, take your hands out of your pockets!” In that moment, the only thing that seemed to make sense was to break the rules of empiricism and get my hands dirty.

While I had heard the term “post-modern” debated in academe, I did not know what it meant; nor was I familiar with social construction or appreciative inquiry. Still relatively inexperienced as an organization development consultant, I tapped into my pool of human intuition and relational instinct, allowing myself to be drawn forward as much by compassion as by intellectual curiosity. Now, I was faced with a situation in which the best, most feasible course of action was to trust the wisdom of what Buddhists refer to as the “not-knowing mind.”

During the planning phase, I had been told not to expect the engineers to be willing to take more than 30 minutes for the interviews. That seemed short to me, especially given the emerging recognition that the interviews might be emotionally charged. My OLH mentors advised me to ask the scheduler to schedule interviews at least 45 minutes apart. This advice turned out to be a blessing, given the timing of the first set of interviews, which took place on the day when two much rumored announcements were made--one confirmed a controversial resignation, and the other a key promotion. I had not been told in advance either about the decisions or that they would be announced that day.

Because of the announcements, the environment in which the interviews began was emotionally charged. Many interviewees wanted to talk for an hour or more, expressing appreciation for the rare opportunity to reflect on things that had been weighing on them, but which did not seem to be within the scope of what they or others defined as “work” or “relevant.” In retrospect, the AI Simultaneity Principle (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 38) and the reflexive nature of constructionist consulting and research, help to make sense of why interviewees appeared to feel that they had benefited so much by having the opportunity to (a) reflect on the roles they played in advancing a significant technological innovation, and (b) check-in with themselves about how they were feeling about the announcements.

While hindsight is said to be “20-20,” adjustments and decisions made at the time, especially improvising from the predetermined interview guide rather than following it verbatim, appeared to result in the greatest possible benefit and lowest risk to all involved. Ten years of experience and wisdom gained since the CT, Inc. OLH project might lead to different decisions. That realization is, in fact, a central goal of this dissertation process—to capture and share the wisdom gained from a socially constructed learning journey catalyzed by a life-changing personal and professional experience. When the story of accidental adversaries at CT, Inc. began to come into focus, it forced decisions about how to act with integrity and resilience in a difficult, unexpected situation.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

While I might have benefited personally at the time by telling the story in a more public way (e.g., journal articles, case write-up, etc.), or by “hitting Andrew between the eyes with it” and recommending a specific course of action, as one stakeholder (a senior executive and advisor to Andrew) implored me to do (suggesting the potential for future consulting work with the company if I did), I opted instead to report on what I heard and saw, but to do so directly to Andrew with quiet discretion.

As the reader will learn, there were specific expectations about the nature of the “story” that would be written after the OLH project, and who the audience would be. The story that had been told by interviewees, however, was not among those expected options. The story of accidental adversaries that the project disclosed was not one that could have been written for public consumption without bringing potential harm, especially to the CEO and other executives, others who had shared their stories in

confidence, or the company. (Perhaps that is why there is so little case-based literature on accidental adversaries, or on the topic in general.) Compromising the integrity of the project or the researcher-interviewee relationship, or “massaging the data” to support a manufactured “PR” story were neither considered nor suggested. The inherent purpose and “construction in use” for the CT, Inc. OLH project was to honor and tell the collective organizational narrative in the service of organizational *learning*. As a result, the project deliverables changed from a formal OLH project report, as suggested in the OLH Guidebook (Kleiner & Roth, 1995) to the confidential briefing for the CEO at the close of the last round of interviews, followed by the Project Report that was sent to the CEO, the Director of Corporate Affairs, my chief internal contact, and one other senior executive.

Reflections in the View Mirror--A Project Rooted in Bonds of Friendship

As mentioned above, my engagement in the OLH project upon which this narrative analysis is based came about because my friendship with the then-CEO, Andrew Meyer. That friendship began in the 1970's during my junior year in high school. When I first met Andrew, I was eating my sack lunch on a sunny September day outside of the high school cafeteria. Andrew asked if he could join me on the brick retaining wall where I was sitting. “Sure,” I said, partially happy for the company and interested in meeting a new kid who also didn't appear to fit any of the typical high school stereotypes of the time. He was tall and gangly with long hair and was wearing wire-framed glasses and baggy overalls. Soft-spoken, with a pleasant, warm demeanor, he appeared comfortable in his own skin and unconcerned about seeking out in-groups. He was clearly very intelligent, but without the intellectual smugness or cockiness of the self-appointed young intellectuals who stood nearby debating a priori versus a posteriori knowledge while quoting right-wing intellectual pundits of the day, like George Will of the National Review. My new acquaintance was an age-mate, although he was a year ahead in school. I soon learned that he was a prodigy of sorts with a driving passion for computers. It was the first time I'd been in the presence of someone who was compelled by an irrepressible calling, and I found that intriguing. We soon became close platonic friends, and have remained so since that time.

Some days after school, we'd go to his house (we lived just a few blocks from each other). While his mother tended to his baby brother in the kitchen, he'd show me the cool things he could do with the strange contraption he had on loan from a local company or university; it was a large black modem that looked like an oversized rotary dial phone. He explained that using the modem he could dial-in to a large mainframe computer somewhere (I don't remember where, but he surely told me...) that stored extraordinary amounts of information. To demonstrate, he typed a

command and entered my birth date using a keyboard or terminal that the modem connected to with black cables. A few minutes later, he printed a report that listed the days of the week that my birthday would fall on for the rest of my life. These sorts of activities intrigued and entertained him for hours. He assumed that I would be delighted and amazed by the extraordinary potentials and speed of computing demonstrated by this small feat. In fact, I still have that printout.

While I was finishing my senior year in high school, Andrew headed off to pursue his calling at one of the Ivy League universities in the USA. He'd have surely studied computer science, but the academic discipline, as we know it today, did not yet exist. In fact, he became one of its pioneers. We maintained contact for several years after high school until we both eventually got busy with our adult lives, children, and careers. While I had foolishly rejected the computer revolution on principle (I saw myself as an artist and viewed computers as diabolical and antithetical to the art spirit) and refused to channel my mathematical aptitude in that direction, my own career eventually led me to being what was then called a "knowledge management officer," or "information resources manager." In fact, at one time, I managed automated call sequencing as well as networking and database functions for a national (USA) public health hotline. These roles brought me in direct contact with some of the products that his company developed. After that, I returned to academe where I developed administrative infrastructures and academic support programs, all of which continued to involve developing and/or managing databases and interacting with IT students and professionals. So, I had a degree of familiarity with the lingo of the IT world.

Almost 20 years after losing contact, I got curious about my friend's whereabouts, and so I did an Internet search for him. To my slight surprise, the search yielded several press releases announcing his appointment, a year earlier, as the company's new CEO (and former CTO of another key player in the burgeoning computing industry). "Okay, that's cool," I thought. Then, in 1999, I had dinner with a university colleague and her husband, Victor, who was an IT professional who dreamed of working for my friend's company. To impress, I told him that I'd been good friends and went to high school with the company's new CEO. We talked about the company for a while. I thought nothing more of it until the phone rang on April 1st ("April Fools Day" in the USA), 1999. The voice on the other end said, "Hello there, this is Andrew. Remember me?" To which I responded, "Very funny, Victor... April Fools!" "No," he said, "it's really me, your friend Andrew." (Victor had heard that the CEO responded to emails personally, so Victor had emailed him suggesting ways he could improve the company's marketing message, asking for an interview, and saying that he'd been referred by a mutual friend—me.)

As old friends do, we exchanged stories about our children and careers. In the same spirit of engagement and novelty with which he'd shown me the old phone modem, Andrew told me about the company and his new experiences as a CEO. I told him about my own work with related technologies, my university career, and involvement with systems thinking through a professional mentorship with Dr. James B. Rieley, a thought leader in the field. I told Andrew about the organizational learning history (OLH) methodology being developed at the MIT Sloan School of Management. By the end of our conversation, we'd decided that it would be fun and interesting for me to study and write about his company. And, so, the project began.

OLH Project Initiation and Focus

The initial contact for the negotiation stage of the project was the company's Director of Corporate Affairs, Roger Smith. As background, he provided press books filled with media stories about the company's much-heralded business turnaround under the new "Technology CEO's" leadership. The press stories suggested that a project called "Waverider" and the "Waverider/e-Rider decoupling" would be the ideal focus for the OLH approach—an organizational success story.

The project began in July 1999 with the first of three on-site visits. The first visit was exploratory in nature. Meetings and interviews were conducted with the CEO, Corporate Affairs Director, two HR representatives (Cheryl Winters and Giff Strang), and the Director for Strategic Market Planning, Alan Davis, who as to serve as the project's key internal company contact. Alan was one of a handful of people at the company who Andrew considered really smart and worth spending time with, and whom he believed the company should take special effort to not lose (early on, Andrew asked the chief technologist to provide him with a list of the five brightest people that the company should keep happy). A key part of Alan's job responsibilities appeared to be engaging Andrew in thought-provoking strategic conversations.

The press releases that had been provided as background for the visit told the story of a remarkable business turnaround fueled by a breakthrough technological innovation (Waverider, and its decoupling from a proprietary platform) and the leadership of a new breed of technology CEO (my friend). That story was reinforced during the initial visit, and so it was agreed that the OLH project would focus on the Waverider decoupling.

CT, Inc. Company Background and Business Environment

Some additional background on the company will help to establish the *zeitgeist* of the OLH project and the story upon which the study's narrative analysis is based.

CT, Inc. was a company caught in the rising tide of the Internet movement and its impact on computing technologies companies in the 1980's and 1990's. Founded in 1980, it was in its late teens at the time of the OLH project, perhaps emblematic of the struggle it was then experiencing transitioning from turnaround to growth. The following brief company history (FundingUniverse) contains highlights from a profile compiled by a company that is not affiliated with CT, Inc. Facts listed below match those gathered from the company itself, and other media sources. Highlights most relevant to the CT, Inc. narrative are:

- Struggled in the early 1980's, then started to grow and prosper with stable leadership.
- Early focus was on R&D and hardware.
- In its first ten years of operation, successfully shifted from a hardware to a software¹⁴ development focus, still heavily rooted in R&D.
- Entered the 1990's as a new leader in its industry, with a growing and significant presence in Europe, Asia, and South America.
- The company's first significant competitive threats came in the early 1990's, at about the same time as the industry's overall shifts toward the Internet.
- Key strategic efforts during this period involved (a) shifting focus away from manufacturing proprietary hardware, (b) focusing on software, and (c) creating scalable cross-platform¹⁵ products.
- Leadership at the top changed during this time.
- Most analysts and many company insiders suggested that a period of poor business choices related to mergers and acquisitions made in

¹⁴ It is an interesting, albeit coincidental, footnote that I worked directly with the company's core hardware and software products as a management analyst and information resources manager in the mid 1980's, experiencing subsequent improvements firsthand.

¹⁵ Not dependent on the company's proprietary operating system. Works on multiple operating systems (platforms), like Windows, Mac OS X, Linux, etc.

response to the new competition, distracted the former and new CEOs from responding effectively to the rise of the Internet, squandering its dominance.

- Andrew Meyer, the CEO during the OLH project, joined the company near the end of its second decade. His charge was to lead a company turnaround and transition the company into growth by leveraging its core strengths.
- The company's R&D group had successfully "productized" a serendipitous technology breakthrough. The important breakthrough occurred outside of the formal organizational structure, essentially as an individual R&D employee's solution to a work-life challenge. That is the innovation referred to here as Waverider.
- The company was failing to meet published ship dates for new product releases.
- The decision was made to promote a cadre of leaders and managers, from a company acquired earlier, to lead the turnaround in Engineering.
- As it entered the new millennium, the company changed its business model toward one that may be described as a technology services and support model, based on its core technology products; it was no longer a leader in or primarily a culture of R&D.

In Meyer's words (August, 20, 2009 interview), the company today is "a union of where the technology ended up [in the early 2000's] and service." According to Meyer, the company never fully achieved its key goal of moving away from a proprietary model. In the same interview, Meyer also noted that:

"The quality of executive you can get in a turnaround is low. The paper rule is that you'll fire 80 percent of current executives, and hire from within."

A variation of that statement appeared to have been the case with a cadre of operations leaders and managers employed or promoted to complete the turnaround; the vast majority having joined CT, Inc. as part of an acquisition made prior to Andrew's appointment. That is essentially what occurred, with the cadre of leaders and managers referred to, above. It also appears that rather than continuing to compete with its historic arc enemy, the current company appears to have strategic partnerships with it.

At the time of the OLH project, Meyer had been widely heralded in the technology media for leading a successful business turnaround, based on a key technological advance in its core products referred to here as Waverider and e-Rider. The press books that were sent to me prior to the exploratory visit contained articles that had been published in the technology media during an approximately two-year period preceding the OLH study. Most articles were related to the turnaround and the core technologies.

Change Happens While We're Busy Making Plans

The OLH approach and project needs, timeframes, and confidentiality were discussed during the initial exploratory visit. Following that visit, the project proposal was developed and sent to the Corporate Affairs Officer. It was agreed that the project's internal contact, Alan Davis, would compile a representative list of at least 15 key individuals to be interviewed on-site at the company's two campuses. The first round of project-specific on-site interviews was to be conducted in February 2000. Prior to that visit, Alan Davis compiled a list of interviewees, all of whom had been members of the original Waverider design team. It is important to note that the 15 employees named on the original list had been with CT, Inc. dating back to before the acquisition of a company called, SiliconIT. This is especially relevant to the OLH project because (a) the initial Waverider technology breakthrough occurred under different leadership and management, and (b) the Engineering leadership and management team that was in place at the time of the project, consisted of individuals who had been imported from GEBco, a SiliconIT company, either immediately following the acquisition or over time as those who took on CT, Inc. leadership positions brought in individuals they had worked with at GEBco.

Then, on February 2, 2000, days before the first OLH interviews were to begin, Joe Richter, an executive who worked directly with the company's engineering chief, Bill Keith sent an email message to me in which he mentioned that he'd been asked by Keith to add a few names to the list of interviewees. In his email, he said:

“ I spent a few minutes this morning with [Cheryl Winter¹⁶] discussing the interview list and made recommendations about individuals that should be added to the list so that you can get the full picture of what has been accomplished by this team. In short (and meaning no disrespect as people on the original list are all very intelligent and capable) while the original list of people were instrumental in building a vision for Waverider, they would never have been able to execute against that vision. Thus, the story isn't complete unless we talk not only to the original visionaries but also to those who are responsible for making sure that we executed against the

¹⁶ HR Director.

vision. Cheryl will make sure that you have the opportunity to interview some of these additional people as well.”

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

When the scope doubled, I felt blind-sided. I naively thought to myself, “Doesn’t he realize that this is *research*...?!” It seemed to me that the senior executive apparently hadn’t “gotten the memo,” or, more likely, didn’t care that this project had an agreed upon scope, focus and methodology. The project was expanding in scope and looking more like consulting...and no one had consulted me about it! For a brief time, I felt annoyed and exploited.

I did not want to be paid for my time because at the time (a) I was employed by a university, (b) had been given release time to study CT, Inc. under a university-based professional development grant, (c) was a personal friend of the CEO, and (d) was trying out a new approach. The company was to pay all expenses, which they did, including transcription services. I could have renegotiated, but opted not to. Instead, I allowed myself to let go of the OLH methodology in a strict sense, and allow the project and my learning to emerge, which they did.

As was later reported to me in an interview with another senior executive who was a close advisor to the CEO, Keith essentially “went appoplectic; he was furious for who [Andrew] put on the interview list.” The interviewee reflected that he’d never seen Keith that angry before. Not seeing the names of *his* team on the list, he saw to it that they were added. In so doing, the project began to take on a life of its own. Rather than controlled research on the factors leading to the success of a past technical breakthrough, it became a present, real-life drama, one that was filled with emotionality, irrationality, and unpredictability. And, instead of 15 on-site interviews, the number doubled to 31.

It is not possible to say how the project would have turned out had Keith not insisted on the change. While it is likely that interviewees from the original list would have discussed the adversarial dynamics that existed at the time of the interviews, it is likely that the story would have been skewed toward seeing one group as the victimizer and one as victimized. The shift in focus imposed by Keith's impulsive, unilateral decision, ironically, served the goals of organizational and personal learning better than the initial design by highlighting a more authentic and complete story than the one that was being fed to and portrayed by the media at the time. It is possible that Keith's actions were actually a mix of impulsivity and tactical calculation. It may have appeared to him that his team was being intentionally excluded, which may have angered him. At the same time, he may have taken an opportunistic view of the OLH project, although that cannot be confirmed. In his OLH interview, he reported that he occasionally had his chief of staff or a consultant interview employees as a way of extracting information from deep in the organization about who was obstructing progress. (Related interview excerpts are included later in the narrative.) Thus, it is possible that he may have viewed the OLH interview process as an opportunity to (a) highlight the role that he and his team played, (b) confirm the recent report of a high profile consulting group which suggested that particular members of the original interview list were intentionally obstructing change¹⁷, and/or (c) take the emotional pulse of the R&D group following the announced resignation and promotion.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Affinity and Appreciation

My guiding principle as a researcher and learning historian was to serve organizational learning and development, and to do no harm. At the time of the project, I had a strong affinity and sense of identification with the plight of one of the groups. I still feel that today; however, I now have a deeper appreciation for the circumstances surrounding the story and am able to hold all of the individuals and groups with greater compassion.

From Learning Historian to Improv Artist

As the interviews commenced, the OLH guidelines and the interview guide were used in a manner that was analogous to the way a jazz musician improvises around a set of basic chords or themes; in many cases, reading all of the questions aloud at the beginning of the interview merely to establish a container for the conversation. The questions helped to focus the interviews on organizational dynamics, rather than the familiar “go-to” topic of technology.

¹⁷ While I was not given a copy of the report, I was told by various parties that it named names.

All interviewees were asked to sign the Confidentiality Agreement in advance that was distributed with the Statement of Introduction making it clear that the CEO had seen and approved the interview questions. Architects and engineers in R&D, in particular, trusted and respected Andrew and so believed that their input would reach him past the gatekeepers (mid- and upper-level management team), who for some, were akin to jailers and prison guards. This trust gave permission and value to talking about the organizational side of things. Most interviewees took off talking like race horses held in the starting gate too long. Once the floodgates opened, the interviews that had been scheduled for 30 minutes each typically went on for a full hour or more. As mentioned above, many thanked me for listening and acknowledged that they hadn't realized how much they had needed to talk.

On the first day of interviews two key announcements were made:

1. Early in the day, the resignation of Trevor James, chief architect of the Waverider decoupling, was announced early in the day, and
2. Later in the day, the establishment of a new COO position and the appointment of Bill Keith, the senior executive VP who had expanded the interview list, into that role was announced.

While neither announcement came as a surprise, the coupling of the two unleashed strong feelings on all sides of the equation—some positive, some negative, depending on allegiances and affinities. While the timing of both events on the first day of interviews was likely coincidental, Keith may have seen that the timing of the OLH interviews could serve a useful purpose. As he explained in my interview with him, he was known to perform what he called an “enema” on the organization. In his words:

“An enema is when you take [Joe Richter] and you send him in and he goes in and he interviews everybody, both inside and outside the organization. I've done four of these in the last two and a half years since I took over. You know, whenever there's a problem we conduct an enema of the organization. And the word is interesting but it's true. You go in and you cleanse it and you find out exactly what's going on and you make changes. The enema is to find out what the problem is... All you know is nothing is happening... You have rumors and you have he-said, she-said. You have all this stuff going on but you don't have the facts. So, the purpose of the enema is to go talk to people inside and outside and actually try to ascertain what really is the issue...”

So, it is possible that some of the interviewees may have perceived me as an enema--an endoscope employed to perform a colonoscopy on CT, Inc. The senior executive undoubtedly had some construction of how he could leverage the OLH project

to serve his purposes. As he and his Chief of Staff explained, he'd earlier used a well-known consulting firm to perform one of these exercises (an "enema"). That firm had apparently conducted a deficit-based inquiry focused on identifying why the original Waverider team was not shipping new products in a timely, efficient, or effective way, and who was obstructing progress. One executive who had been brought in to lead the "supplementation" effort described the report's usefulness in this way:

...This McKenzie team had gone in to the team before me and done some analysis on the team members, their strengths and weaknesses and written up a little bit of detail on the state of things. That was pretty beneficial to me because as a brand new manager you can get misled and so I went back to that report I could see who was assigned to which projects and what things had happened historically. So, I was brand new, but I felt I was a couple of months ahead in my understanding. ...I felt like I had about three months experience, not experience, but knowledge on paper so that when issues came up I would go and find someone, map it to a strength area where we were weak.

A copy of the report was requested but was never provided. Joe Richter, who had informed me about Bill Keith's decision to augment the interview list, later foreshadowed the sort of scenario he thought I might be learning about from the interviews:

I think a story that you will chronicle shows that there's been a bit of conflict, and that the original idea people, very bright people, very talented people, needed to be supplemented, or complimented rather, by a set of engineering people that you could count on, not just for ideas, but also for executing against the ideas. And you'll see that that balance has come in and has allowed us to deliver several different products. ...So while we've been very successful at doing that, we have introduced an element of tension which is still a plague and still very much a part of what's going on and that is the tension between the creativity and building the vision and actually keeping our commitments and executing against that vision.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

Back home, I was in what for me had become a mind- and spirit-numbing administrative job/career, when what I really wanted was to be a management consultant. The CT, Inc. project offered a unique opportunity to spread my wings. What I hadn't bargained on was being confronted with what felt like a sink or swim situation. My transformative, "oh shit" moment came when the senior executive augmented the list of interviewees, thrusting me into the epicenter of a messy organizational dynamic and a fuzzy role. Faced with a new situation for which I felt ill prepared, I had to choose to fish or cut bait. I found myself consciously channeling my equestrian days; holding on for dear life, while not letting others see that I was secretly terrified and unsure of myself. This was the opportunity of a lifetime and I was not about to see it, much less myself, fall apart. I spontaneously shifted into what the Buddhists call, "Don't-Know Mind." From that mindset, the choices were obvious and instantaneous: fall into the river, panic, and sink; or, transform free fall into a deep dive, using my instincts and preparation to go with the flow of emergent meanings and themes. In this case, necessity was, indeed, "the mother of invention," offering me a rudimentary, experiential introduction to social construction, reflexivity, and grounded theory.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror--Struggles

At the time of the project, I believed that to conduct research in an ethical way meant observing but not changing the system being studied. This was reinforced by beliefs I held about my own strengths--logical thinking and keen observational abilities--and weaknesses--facilitating open-ended dialog or believing I know enough about anything, especially consulting. My own internal struggle, sparked by this experience, was for a time akin to the philosophical dramas portrayed in the original Star Trek series. The motto of the Star Trek crew was to learn about life in other galaxies without changing the course of nature or history. A parallel theme was the struggle between Mr. Spock's detached logic and Captain Kirk's intuitive and emotional (sometime impulsive) engagement; as well as Spock's own internal battle between his Vulcan logical half and his human emotional half. This project was my Star Trek.

Just like the contradiction embedded within the crew's mission, my beliefs and constructions about the researcher's role kept me from stepping over an imaginary line between cognitive learning and empirical research, and the emotionally fraught realms of reflexive learning and action research. This project confronted me with certain internal contradictions and raised the questions:

1. "Is it ethical to simply bear witness to pain, frustration, and counterproductive behaviors and not at least try to serve as a catalyst¹⁸ for healing and positive change?"
2. "Am I ethically obliged, or obliged in some other way—perhaps spiritually—to be of service, even when that scares me or challenges my beliefs about myself, or requires me to reintegrate or release my own shadows?"

These questions continue to move me towards exploring strange new galaxies, like social construction, appreciative inquiry, the role of positive emotions in creativity, presencing, spiral dynamics, and more.

¹⁸ In natural systems, catalysts are substances that may be added to a solution to stimulate or speed up advantageous changes that otherwise might not happen (a) at all, (b) within a viable timeframe, and/or (c) within acceptable probabilities for survival.

The Narrative

Numerous thematic threads wove through the interviews. The following narrative includes a subset of those themes that:

- Were most pronounced across the interviews,
- Highlight important contours of the story, but which may not have been mentioned broadly across the interviews, and/or
- Address key issues experienced by specific groups or individuals and which illuminate the story as a whole.

Themes are discussed individually and illustrated with selected excerpts that best represent the theme in the context of the story as a whole.

Marketing: Social Construction of the CT, Inc. Story

About midway through the first round of interviews in February 2000, it became clear to me that the story being reported by the press did not match the stories being told within the organization or to me. As my key internal contact, Alan Davis, explained in his interview, the story of Waverider and the turnaround was in large measure crafted and fed to the press (and to internal staff, and me) to reinforce, if not actually fuel the turnaround:

CT, Inc. just didn't think of it, so we did PR and I was with the press. I got reports every single night...summaries of who was the most quoted person...that talk about what reporters printed what articles about CT, Inc. How many were positive, negative, neutral or were writing a lot of articles, like one reporter wrote 14 articles in a month on CT, Inc. What analysts wrote reports or were quoted in the press. ...What were the issues? We have all these graphs and everything. We paid a lot of money for this stuff. And I tracked it every single month. I would look at it and I'd go well, these three reporters haven't written, there's three at the top that are usually the ones that I called every single week. And there's three down here that weren't. So I would start talking to them every single week. And it's amazing that those three would then be somewhere on the top five on the list of the 15 reporters that wrote about CT, Inc. within 6 weeks. Every single time, it was incredibly methodical. It was a process and it was completely, it was like a complete equation. I mean, I don't think anybody understands that we did this kind of stuff. Nobody in the company knew this other than my marketing people. Nobody knew this...that us owning this [the power of Waverider] was inevitable. And so we created that.

He continued:

We had to convince people that CT, Inc. was a different type of company so we really controlled who we let talk to the press about the directory. Nobody was going to talk to the press because we had to create a persona around this thing. So we actually got three, no four articles printed about the Internet infrastructure division that me and Zeek and Ed were in, and that was on purpose. And everyone's like 'why are you doing this?' You know, that's not important, that's internal stuff. Well it is important because we had to convince people that there is change occurring in the company and we had to then, for internal and external reasons. ...So I had to create a perception that this was the cool place to be. We did all kinds of cool stuff, you know. ...And look at these articles, and basically it was just an evangelism job. Everything that we did was to accomplish this stuff was about evangelism and that's the number one issue.

And, frankly, we did actually do this; we did unify Waverider in all product group marketing. We established ways that people could talk about Waverider and you know, people can go back and argue was it the right way to talk about it, blah blah blah. Was it too technical? But you know what? This happened so you know hindsight's 20-20, but that did happen. Waverider is the thing that got us over this hump. Everybody on Wall Street will say so.

So what's interesting is that these are the things, this is the thinking that was going on behind the scenes but what was sad, and what we're working on right now is the thing, change of thinking that has to happen within the company today, you know.

A fascinating footnote to my interview with Alan is that at the time of this writing, he is a Christian *evangelist* writer and missionary, in addition to being a chocolatier and executive coach.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

At the time, I viewed the media packets as being comprised of factual reports. My construction of the technology press and of press reports in general connoted the reporting of objective, fact-based information, which could not be influenced by corporate or other vested interests. I believed that press reports were based on objective facts, guided by journalistic ethics and integrity and so were immune to the influences of marketing hype or an attractive storyline, no matter how compelling the story or the players involved. It was only later that my naïve construction began to crumble. And, at that point, I found myself wondering if my friend knew about all of this, or if he actually believed the entirety of the overwhelmingly positive press accounts.

One of the interviewees, a mid-level engineer made the following observation about the disconnect he experienced between the story and his experience:

Well, [Andrew Meyer] has made a lot of bold marketing statements that have been really great. I can't put my finger on it but I do remember reading several issues on news articles or interviews with reporters where he's made statements that made me feel like wow, I'm glad I work for this company. But then the next thing I do is turn around and think how come our management isn't doing the same thing that he's saying our company is doing... Why aren't they following what he says we are doing? That is part of the problem right there is it feels like executive level management has one way of doing things, and management below that is saying well they're either not paying attention to what he's saying or they're misinterpreting what he's saying and doing it a different way. I don't know.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—A Constructed Lens

Ten years later, I see more clearly than I did at the time that efforts were made by *multiple* stakeholders to construct the lens through which I would view and report the story:

- First, the chief PR officer suggested that the “real” story was my friend’s transformation from CTO (Chief Technology Officer) to Technology CEO.
- At the same time, my key internal contact was leading me to the related story of the Waverider decoupling as a technology innovation that was leading change both within CT, Inc. and for its customers and the Internet and networking environments as a whole.
- And third, by presenting me with two very different lists of interviewees, my internal contact and the senior executive were also informing my constructions of who the key players were, what the Waverider decoupling project was, and what success meant.

As the expanded interviews progressed, the PR nature of my visit quickly dissolved and the story of internal organizational dynamics came to the forefront. The act of “augmenting” the list of interviewees shifted the calculus toward an exploration of the story’s own “left-hand column.” As the more authentic internal story unfolded, I became aware of the inherent risks to my friend and the company should I report the story externally, at least until the “statute of limitations” had run out on its potential impact on careers or the company’s stock value.

While I was unfamiliar with the ways of for-profit corporate environments, I now see the value of carefully crafting public perceptions. Even though I was entering the project as a friend of the CEO, the rise and fall of stock prices are acutely attuned to stories of success or downfall. And, I too, was taking care to craft my own public persona.

Relationships in R&D Practice

Many interviewees spoke about the role of strong relationship within and between R&D teams. The idea of individual innovators who require special care and feeding (Cohn et al., 2008) was not supported by the findings of this study. While certain talented individuals may make key contributions, the quality of their relationships with other key stakeholders, as well as the underlying organizational structures that support productive relational dynamics, ultimately limit or ignite overall success.

Of the interviewees referred to above, virtually all talked about Trevor, who was seen by many in the original project group as a wise “elder” (albeit a young one) or “shaman.” They viewed his work and his presence as core to the health and vitality of the broader R&D community and the company’s ability to innovate and be innovative. An engineer who had been with the company for 10 years discussed his role in this way:

Q. ...So at what point did you have a sense of where it, the project was going, or what its role was, its strategic importance in the company?

A. I have no idea. It was probably (laugh) it was probably after it shipped...

Q. ...Was there a sense of there being a vision for it? Were there certain people who had that sense about it?

A. And Trevor came into the project probably in August after I got there. He may have had a vision but I certainly didn't. And Karl may have had a vision but I certainly didn't. I didn't understand. Yeah. I didn't have any vision at all. But Trevor may have had and he's really the, as I'm sure other people have told you...the visionary behind a lot of things that ended up being in Waverider. ...But he's also responsible for keeping it moving forward. He recognized the importance of having it be cross-platform which is why, where it is today. CT, Inc. has a product that is available on multiple platforms. Had it not been for his vision and notion of that, it wouldn't have happened. But he's always been the one with the vision. I don't know if initially he was [the one], but certainly he was after a while.

Q. How do you feel about his leaving?

A. I'm really sad about his leaving. In many respects, not only because I think it's a big loss to CT, Inc. in terms of the vision and you know, the sort of talent that he has, but also the history of why he's leaving us is sad for me. That he wasn't sort of regarded and respected enough to be given a little bit better treatment. So I really hate seeing him go. He's been a really good mentor as well.

Q. Do you think mentors are recognized in this company?

A. No. (laugh)

Q. What would be appropriate ways to...

A. To recognize mentors?

Q. ...to recognize that somebody in fact is a mentor?

A. Yeah. I guess it depends on what you're reviewed on. If you're reviewed on producing a certain product feature, and your raise and your bonuses depend on your review, then, it doesn't leave time for mentoring. The current bonus and review rating system, I don't believe lends itself very well to mentoring because it's, I'm assuming you know, it doesn't foster sharing to help your coworker because one of you has to be higher than the other. If you help him, he could probably be better than you. So it doesn't foster good mentoring.

Q. If you were to design a reward or evaluation system that did support mentoring and cross-functional problem solving and all of that, what would be some of the key things you would change or keep from the current system?

A. One of the things that I think is really hard with the current system is if you have a team of like five people and all of them have worked really hard and are really good people, that the system dictates that it's a belt so there's a high and low on either end, and a meeting in the middle. That's really hard if you have a really small team and everybody is really good. Who you give the highest rating to, and who do you give the lowest? On the other hand, also kind of sexist, but I really feel that I've been rewarded for being in mentoring because I am more patient than maybe some men have been and so people ask me questions and because I would be kind in the process more people ask me questions and I've filled that role for a long, long time. I really believe I was rewarded for being a mentor, but not officially through the system.

Leadership and the Struggle to Lead Change

While leadership was a theme addressed by many of the interviewees, it was often done in an oblique or tacit way; it often seemed as though the person was attempting to make sense of perplexing events, or to state a wish for more the broadly-admired CEO to be more visible within the organization. Many of these comments were made with the recorder turned off.

Espoused Theories of Leadership

At the initiation of the OLH project, a storyline strongly suggested to me was the transformation of a Chief Technology Officer to a Technology CEO. Press briefings sent to me prior to the first exploratory interviews were geared towards crafting this perception, along with the success stories of the business turnaround and Waverider. As the project progressed, however, the story being fed to the press about the CEO's transformation appeared to belie a deep frustration. It was as if he had discovered that he had stepped into a different reality than the one he thought he had signed on to—one fraught with emotional dilly-dallying that was getting in the way of progress. Later, in an interview with the CEO, Andrew Meyer, he disclosed many of his beliefs and feelings about leading at CT, Inc:

Q: What are qualities that you can define a leader verses a manager

A: Well in the first place there's a set of people who need to be managed. The correct thing in my view in high-tech is for those people not to work at CT, Inc. because if you have something which needs to be managed it should be out-sourced. There are plenty of companies that provide excellent boring services like sweeping the floors. These are things that need to be managed very tightly and it's important that they be done well. Leadership is defined by people. The way you test a leader is you ask the people that are being lead; are they being lead well? The judge is not the leader but his followers.

Q: Well what do you think are some of the attributes that define that kind of person? If you were to employ an organization full of leaders what would you go out and look for?

A: Leadership is hard to define. Leadership is an ability to take an idea or goal and get other people to follow you. So there is a human component and a commitment component. There is an idea component. The difference between management and leadership is that managers will design the entire system and tell people what to do with each of the specifics. A leader will get the person to believe that they should do that. That's the difference. Books have been written on this, all of which are conclusive. If you ask people they'll tell you the difference between management and leadership.

Q: Do you think it's feasible to have an organization that just has leaders?

A: Sure, why not. It's called basketball teams. As long as all the stuff that has to get done is out-sourced then sure.

Q: Well you have a lot of managers at CT, Inc.?

A: Sure. You ask me a theoretical question. The theoretical answer is if I had a choice of building my own company from scratch, I'd build a virtual one and I would figure out a way to have a CFO and no staff, an HR VP and no staff, and an attorney and no staff because they'd have to be a leader and they can go out-source everything. ...

Q: So how do you come to terms with being the leader of an organization like this that has lots of managers?

A: It's a compromise. My answer is I just talk to people that are interesting.

Q: Who talks to the people who aren't interesting?

A: The people who aren't interesting talk to the people they work for. My attitude is that we agree to a plan, people should go implement it. The issue inside the company; look at sales, which is currently a rat's nest of political issues. The leadership failed and I'm very upset about it. They missed the quarter. We agreed to a set of steps, which would include putting in detailed goaling and planning. They didn't do it, and they lied to me. That's a failure and I'm upset about it. So now I'm micro-managing them. We are auditing them; they are being investigated in an accounting sense of what actually happened. I have lost trust in that organization. The problem with somebody like me is that because I assume that if you and I have a conversation you're capable of then implementing what we discussed. But you get these poor implementation skills. The specific history in my case was that I was brought in with a presumption that I was a leader and there would be some implementation types. We tried to accrue them from the outside; they are impossible to find so we promoted Bill. Bill is now cleaning up all the mess that occurred because I didn't micro-manage functions and my position is that of a CEO of 6,000 people, I should be a leader not a manager. My job in my view is to provide leadership and select the right people and worry about shareholders because the right people with the right leadership will do great things. Unfortunately if you look at my execution in certain functions I admit that we just didn't do a very good job. I'm responsible for that because I have the wrong people. I understand the problem; I just don't want to deal with it. I did that. I did the turnaround and that was fine. It was interesting and intellectual and I'm happy to have done it once but basically being surrounded by all sorts of people that don't know what they are doing and are either lying or incompetent is no fun.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

On first blush, the story of the CEO's transformation did not resonate with the purpose or focus of the OLH methodology on a broader, organization-based success story. Likewise, I quietly bristled at the idea of being told what story to write before I'd heard the stories of the people in the organization, or seen and heard things for myself. The idea of writing a prefabricated story hit a nerve, which chafed at my personal and professional integrity. While my friend had become a highly regarded technologist and CEO, I was neither willing to lend support to a public relations hype, nor profit from harming his reputation. If, in fact, the story I was being told supported the PR story, then I would have been open to reporting it. At the time, I simply listened to the story suggestions offered to me by the Corporate Affairs Officer and set about researching the story.

The PR narrative about a new, transformational type of technology CEO appears to have been the *espoused* theory of leadership, a guiding positive image representative of the organization's striving to move from turnaround to growth. A primary objective of the marketing story was to excite interest in the company in order to increase its sagging stock value. The idea of the story as a guiding positive image, however, was focused on internal stakeholders. The hope was that they would read and believe the story into being, behaving "as if" it were a true reflection of reality and source of professional pride (which it was). Embedded in the positive image of the new technology CEO was a keen awareness that the type and style of leadership needed to drive the organization into growth would be qualitatively different from what was needed during the turnaround. In this sense, the story was both aspirational and practical. Inherent challenges of leading a turnaround, however, are how to (a) transition from one style of leadership to another at the right time, and (b) dislodge the tightly controlled hold of turnaround-focused operations leaders so they do not strangle growth. The chief architect of the PR story described his espoused theory in this way:

The whole Peter Schwartz [*The Art of the Long View*] thing is about creating a memory of the future, you know. It sounds kind of like a weird

thing but a memory is basically a recollection of an experience that you had, right? And if creating a memory of the future you have to actually spend time in the future to do that. So you actually have to think about all the different ramifications of this and that, how people respond. And then what you can then do is apply that memory to your present situation. So why do memories only have to be about a past event? Why can't you establish memories of future events? But the way to do it though, is it has to be very, very real to you. The future has to be real, as like you were there and then you back up to today and then you start from there.

His espoused theory for change is much like appreciative inquiry. The difference was that the image strategically fed to the media, with the hopes of it both increasing stock value and constructing belief among employees, was not an inclusive vision.

Leadership Theories in Practice

The prevailing *theories in practice* among top executives and their field commanders, appear to have been (a) primarily adaptive in design, modeled after familiar approaches, (b) largely tactical, (c) fear-driven and reactive, and (d) hierarchical, especially in terms of subject-object relationships between leaders and followers and modes of decision-making. The leadership structure that was imported, and some of the decisions behind it are captured in the following exchange with Bill Keith:

As I started digging into Waverider I found that it was much like the SiliconIT culture that I came from. It was very family-oriented. You know what I mean? It was very, very; these people were close, they were family, you know what I mean. They were solving world hunger. e-Rider was holding them back from doing the things that Waverider could do and there was a group of programmers there who were very, very talented who Zeek just couldn't handle, you know what I mean. Just quite frankly, he couldn't handle them. And so my first decision, my first thing I had to do was after about two months it became apparent to me that we were never going to make any progress there so I took Zeek out. ...And I took a bastard, to be quite frank. I brought in the biggest jerk, you know what I mean, focused, developed manager I could find. ...

This guy, you can't hurt him. You point him in that direction and show him the dot on the wall. He will go and he will make that dot, even if the world starts to come to an end in the process. So I went up and I talked to the senior management team and told them this was going to happen. They were shocked and in disbelief. The comments were everything from "oh no, I've heard of him" to you know "this is wrong because we really are a tight-knit group up here and this is going to destroy all of the chemistry we have." And of course that was what I came from at SiliconIT. It was a

mirror of that organization. The very tight-knit family, you know what I mean?

We all loved one another and the company went down the tubes very quickly because we didn't dare do anything. You know when it came time to do the hard stuff we just didn't do it. We liked each other too much. And so I put Bob in charge. I remember the day we did it. We had the meeting down here with the whole Waverider team and it was the worst meeting I've ever been at literally. It was the destruction of a 3-year family. You could feel it in the room; you could see it in the room. It was the unhappiest room I have ever seen and it literally was the destruction of that family unit. We had, we gave Bob three goals. Three things to do the day he took over. We had done what we called an enema. (Both laughing.) It's an important word for you to remember.

Several more times during the interview Keith compared the issues faced at CT, Inc. with those at SiliconIT. Ironically, it appeared that the same actions taken at SiliconIT had similar outcomes as those experienced at CT, Inc. shortly after appointment of the GEBco Management Team. Speaking of the recent spike in attrition at CT, Inc., Keith said:

I don't know that the first 20 needed to leave, to be quite honest. I figured that they would leave. Most of them I tried to stop. The Ocean guys that left all sat in that chair with me trying to keep them for example. I don't, I didn't say they needed to leave. What I said was they would leave. I went through this at SiliconIT. When we figured out that we were dying at SiliconIT we started to do the right things, try to get discipline and correct the problem. But it was obviously too late in that respect. People started bailing like flies once the family atmosphere ended.

Panic and Crisis at the Top

It was becoming evident that fear was increasing at the top and decisions were being made in a panicked mode, at least as reported by Bill Keith:

Andrew was, quite frankly, a little discouraged. He'd been here six months. He had come here to change the world and after about a month of being here he realized that, not only was he not going to change the world immediately, but if he didn't do something quick, you know what I mean, the world was going to fall apart because the flagship product was dying.

And we were in these business units. I now know why we're not shipping any products because all of these groups are fighting back and forth and

no one's cooperating. So he functionalized everything and said OK, R&D is all going to be in one group, Marketing is in one group, business development is in one group, with all of their own SVP's. So, because we just needed to get focused. And about the time that that happened the person who he put in charge of all of it left.

And the guy who was running Waverider, by the way, is a super star at another job here today. He had been overtaken by the people in the organization on a theoretical level. Does that make sense? In other words the people in his organization wanted to boil the ocean. And they had a plan to boil the ocean. They literally believed they could solve world hunger with the project that had been going on for 2-3 years. And our problem was not 2 or 3 years at that point. Our problem was just get the damn thing out quick so we can, you know, live another day. ...I was panicking. Others were panicking. You literally, you are in a survival mode. You are doing things that you would normally never do. You're putting people in charge that you would never normally put there. When you're in that mode of literally this thing could go under, you know in a month or a week, you know you do things differently.

And I'll give you one last story to just emphasize what I mean. ...Before I became the senior executive over engineering I went to Andrew's office one day to argue with him about not doing a GEBco launch. I knocked on the door and he said "come in and sit down." And he says, "What in the f--- are you guys doing up there? Do you guys have any f'ing clue about what's going on?" He said, "Do you know I'm going to have to see this f'ing company at a \$5 stock price probably in two months because of you're f'ing incompetence." He said "Do you understand I have no options in my life. I have none." He says, "I've screwed up my career. I've come here thinking I'm gonna..." He went on, and again, this is him talking to [Bill Keith] who's not in charge.

...When I took the job, that conversation that I had with Andrew in his office that day which he may or may not remember. I remembered that conversation, that is the conversation that kind of, you know, in the morning when I got up and I thought, 'what am I gonna do' I remember, you know, this is serious shit. If I don't do something, if I don't make this ball move forward, this is the outcome. Now we're not faced with that today, although on some respects the stakes are even higher, because at \$6 a share you can only fall to \$5. At \$36 you can fall a little bit further which would be more devastating to the employees today. But people, you have to understand, when you write a story on something like this, of how people react and how people move, the types of things you do when you're in a survival instinct, you know, it's just different. It's just very

different. And that's the wild card. That's the story. The good, the bad, and the ugly.

Transactional Leadership Down the Ranks

In CT, Inc.'s engineering division, the predominant styles of leadership, from top executives down through the field commanders—the top engineering managers—appeared to be a transactional command-and-control style. This was characteristic of the “turnaround” period at CT, Inc. when there was a sense of urgency. At times, a measure of panic could be seen through chinks in the armor of top leaders. The transactional command-and-control style during this time was characterized by a leader-follower mentality in which orders were given and expected to be followed. The dilemma was that change needed to happen, and happen fast. During this period, employees who had previously enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and creative freedoms were reorganized, sometimes reassigned as if “interchangeable parts,” and given responsibility only for following orders and meeting deadlines. This was reported primarily by interviewees on the original list, while those added in the second list were enjoying new responsibilities.

Members of the original Waverider project team from R&D were no longer allowed to take responsibility for self-organizing to complete tasks, nor to mentor others. Trevor James appeared to have been singled out and stripped of his unofficial R&D leadership role. Bill Keith was given authority partly by design and perhaps partly by proxy as well to oversee commanders in the field. The relationship between the top tactical commander and the field commanders (engineering managers) appeared to be transactional in nature, which suited their personalities and strengths. The field commanders were motivated by loyalty to the chief, by comfort with hierarchical models of leadership (church, state, and work), and by the promise of rewards for turning things around and meeting deadlines. These methods of leadership were consciously chosen and sanctioned for their expediency and efficiency in the face of what was constructed as a dire situation, that the company might or might not survive. In the service of the tactical business turnaround, this approach seemed expedient and efficient, which it was in the short term.

As suggested earlier in this section, the risk in this approach is that it can unwittingly establish conditions in which a new, rigid status quo may take hold; one that is likely to resist change later when the time comes to shift from turnaround to growth. In an innovation organization, in particular, this is a high stakes game, as it was at CT, Inc. where the transactional command-and-control leadership approach employed to fuel the turnaround resulted in high rates of attrition among the ranks of the most creative and visionary employees whose input would be essential to fuel future growth. In the name of expediency, tactics employed during the turnaround resulted in significant losses of human capital (R&D leaders and creative engagement). At CT, Inc., the risk appears to have been exacerbated by a linear construction of turnaround and growth as separate

and distinct phases, which may have originated with the Board of Directors that put Meyers and Keith in place.

A conversation conducted by editors of the Harvard Business School Press (Harvard Business School, 2000) with the Authors of “More Than A Motorcycle: The Leadership Journey at Harley-Davidson” sheds light on the risky nature of command-and-control expediency:

Q: You've said that the command-and-control leadership at Harley during the 1980s was critical to its well-known financial turnaround. Do you still believe in its effectiveness given the "softer" management style Harley has adopted?

A: We believe that traditional command and control hierarchies are of limited effectiveness and have a host of fatal flaws in the long run. But command and control works in certain situations--and in fact may be the only thing that works when circumstances are desperate enough. If an organization is under extreme pressure--so much so that one wrong move can mean the death of that organization--then an authoritarian system of controls may be absolutely necessary. Because they're top-down and more or less unilateral in their decision-making, command-and-control organizations can move quickly in a crisis. When Harley was in trouble in the early 1980s, it benefited significantly from just this kind of decisive leadership style.

Q: What prompted the leadership journey--away from command and control management -- that you write about in your book?

A: We can make an analogy with a country surrounded on all sides by invading forces. The defending army looks to its generals for decisive leadership, and the nation prays that those generals are skilled and lucky. But what happens when the invading armies are turned back and that immediate pressure is relieved? The crisis had receded at Harley--we had regained market share and the company was financially stable again. The challenge was to sustain this success and sustain the high performance and the zeal that employees had demonstrated when survival was everyone's shared goal. After the crisis had passed, the motivation for working together collaboratively began to fade. Everyone began reverting back to former habits. Unilateral decision making at the top, a clear chain of command and foot soldiers who take orders and execute someone else's plans meticulously--all of these serve well in the

crisis mode but don't help the organization months or years after the fire is extinguished.

The above scenario at Harley Davidson closely mirrors the state of affairs at CT, Inc. at the time of the OLH project. The following is excerpted from an interview with Bob Zander, the "chief field commander" who discusses his tactics and communication and decision-making process:

A: Yeah, so, actually Bill [Keith] gave me this list of priorities and we send it out to all the ranks. The object was that everybody has this paper on their wall in their office so they see the priorities. ...And I don't remember anything else past [the first two priorities] because I didn't care about it. I cared; I just didn't get concerned about it.

So, the thing that we discovered is that there were four or five different projects that were going on in the Waverider team and all of them had a couple of people on them. None of them were successful because you're not going to do it with just a couple of people. So, after a few days since [I focused on the top two priorities], I killed all the other projects; which was pretty emotional for all the guys that were working on them. I put everybody on the [top two priorities]. It was basically, "good luck, and be done in August.

Then I had to meet with those guys, the leaders of the team, just to keep them going. One of the problems was that we didn't have enough testers. ...So, I gave them more engineers than they needed, I thought, and no testers. Which actually was not a good thing because engineers don't like tests. It's a redundant, repetitive process in their mind and they're above it. I knew we had a challenge there because I was asking for them to do something that they didn't want to do.

Q: Is this what you meant when you said that you're an engineer and you understood? One of the first things you told me when you first came into this was about your background as an engineer...

A: Yeah. ...In my previous assignments we had to go through a few lay-offs. I made a strategic decision at that point that I was going to lay-off my testers and not my engineers because the engineers can test and testers can't write code. The thing that I discovered was that engineers can test, but it's pretty hard to get them to do it.

Q: Do you think they see it as being disenfranchised or a demotion or...

A: Maybe, but I don't think so though. I think they see it as; because normally they write their code and give it to somebody else and they come back and tell them yes or no it works. So, if they have to go do that test I think they see that as; beneath them is too strong, but I think you know what I'm trying to say. ...As a task somebody else could do so they could do more productive things, at least in their mind. ...*Although, personally, I enjoy testing, I don't know why, but I really like it though, I really like to take something and break it; it's kind of a demented thing I guess.*"

Q: *What kind of a person would you put into that role? If you don't have a bevy of testers around, what kind of person are you going to take? What kind of engineer are you going to take to do that?*

A: I think I had 46 people on the team and I took everybody that could help us get e-Rider going. We're talking six weeks until the next beta and it turned out to be six months after that we shipped. And my logic was take everybody that knows the e-Rider product and get them on it and march to deadlines and dates. Have lots of accountability, a set of objectives that have to be met, there's accountability now and you don't want to miss your date.

Many engineers and others who were part of the enterprise teams prior to the time when Andrew reorganized to functions groups, were clear about the limitations of the new command structure. The following excerpt is characteristic of their views:

Q: If you were to do some analogous thinking to the scenario planning you've described for futuring, what are the attributes you would look for in a manager who can bridge the gap between the creative thought process, productizing, and getting it out the door?

A. Well, as a team, there are five of us who can. ...So the things that we've discovered over the two months of actually doing this is that we're pretty good at driving these things to deliverables because we know that we have to. ...The culture of CT, Inc. is that you only move into management if you're a taskmaster. And that's the way Bill Keith moved into management and that's the way he handles delivery. You know. He is a deliverable guy. Bob Zander, Yukiko, guess what, not a creative bone in their bodies. And print it. Not a creative bone in their bodies. They are assembly line managers. That's it. That's how they do development. That's why a lot of our engineers are not here today, because they don't honor or support creativity outside of the path of delivery that they've been tasked with. And so these ideas have to come almost subversively in our organization through the individuals. The key is to get them into product management...

Sowing Seeds of Accidental Adversaries

A small degree of internal competition is not necessarily a bad thing in an organization. Accidental adversaries, however, differs from a productive competitive spirit. Signs that are indicative of the dynamic are when: (a) the competition stops being good-natured, (b) a group feels that the other has an unfair resource advantage that is keeping their own group from competing fairly, or (c) one group is allowed to dominate over the other, resulting in loss of agency or affirmation for one and overblown status for the other. Reaching any of these points, especially (c) is a strong lagging indicator that key aspects of organizational effectiveness, like leadership, engagement, communication, and shared vision, are out of alignment with the organization's vision and mission.

Success to the Successful--An Ill-fated Competition

The structural "straw that broke the camel's back" that resulted in loss of affirmation of a critical and small group of stakeholders—the architects—was the dynamic that, in the language of systems archetypes, is called "Success to the Successful," represented in Figure 13.

In the initial Phase, one group harvests the low fruit for immediate success, or their success is simply favored by circumstance or leaders who more highly value or understand the perspective or approach of one group over the other/s. As a result, that group is initially successful. Because that success benefits decision-makers, the group is then, or continues to be, more highly resourced. The conditions of their success then move from initially being circumstantial to being structurally codified and resourced favorably. This occurred early in the transition and is illustrated by the story of an ill-fated competition between two teams called River and Ocean.

A long-standing project within R&D had been to solve a relatively simple problem that was integral to the company's ability to go cross platform—i.e., to be freed from solely operating on its proprietary operating system--and to significantly increase its functionality and competitive value in the burgeoning Internet environment. The Ocean team had been working on the project for a long time not making clear progress. One of the first things that the new GEBco Management Team did was to set up a competition between the old and new (GEBco) teams to see who could complete the project by a set time:

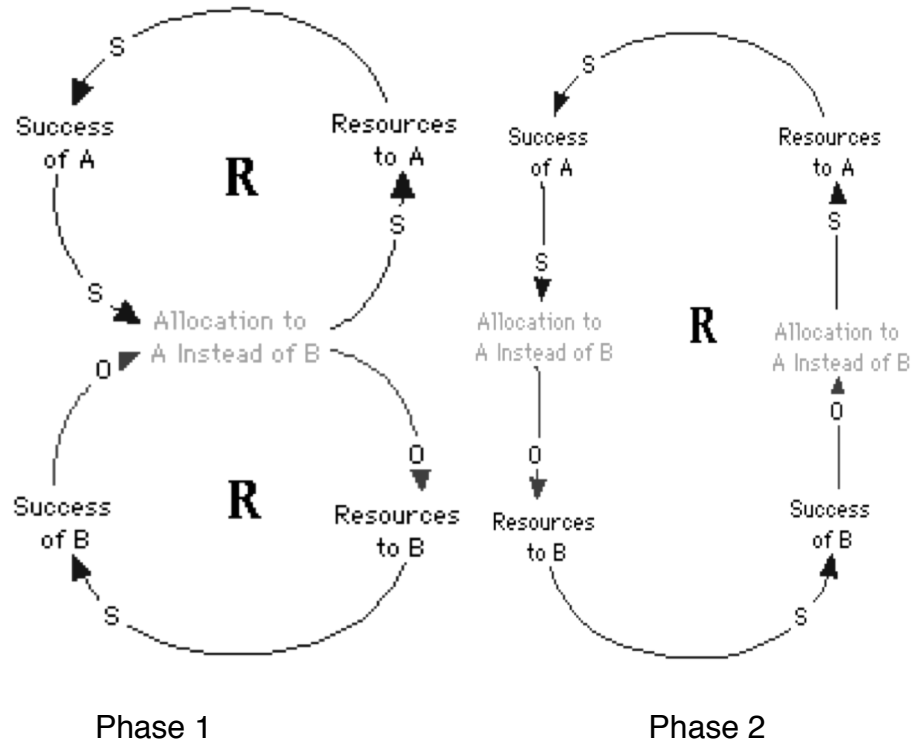


Figure 13. Two phases of “success to the successful” archetype

So, Bill was really bothered that we weren't making any progress on this Ocean thing. We have an internal database in the company, so, in that meeting Bill says "I want you to go have a competition in four weeks or six weeks, I don't remember. ...I want you to take the Ocean database, that we've been working on for two years, make it work and then let's pit the two against each other and see what happens." Kind of like let's get some motivation going here to meet some deadlines.

So, to answer your question, there were some Waverider people in the room when Bill said that and they said, "Let's make it a three way race and do this old system too." We did that and it turned out that the Ocean team, I don't know if they didn't take me serious or not, but they weren't ready. When the day came and it was time to stand up in front and show their stuff, it wasn't working. Which was a problem we had all along, we couldn't make it work. This other team had come in and they had it working in just six weeks. That was pretty telling. You've been working on something so long and you've got a six week deadline and if you don't come in with something demonstrateable, that's a problem. And the other team came through and had a pretty good solution in that short time. That's a pretty good tribute to the Waverider team. Even though there was emotion there they supported it to the point where someone else could come in. The

team that was supposed to come in with the Ocean technology didn't deliver.

It was reported that emotions ran high after this and several people on the Ocean team resigned. This appeared to be the first wave of mass resignations.

One interviewee described the costs in this way:

The downside was that when it finally happened there were bitter feelings among the different groups. Because I mean I think at the time the organization fostered this mentality of teams fighting teams or whatever.

Constructing Negative Mental Models: Who's to Blame?

A well-known consulting group had been used during the turnaround to assess problems in the project team. Given that the new engineering managers had little prior knowledge of the players or leadership history, they based many assumptions on (a) the findings of the consulting group, and (b) what they had been told by the executive who had put them in place. The key manager among them described the following conclusions as guiding his approach:

The other thing that happened was this consulting team had gone in to the team before me and done some analysis on the team members, their strengths and weaknesses and written up a little bit of detail on the state of things. That was pretty beneficial to me because as a brand new manager you can get misled and so I went back to that report I had and to who was assigned to which projects and what things had happened historically. So, I was brand new, but I felt I had a couple of month's lead in understanding.

He noted that the consulting firm had helped him and some of the other lead engineers identify underutilized strengths in the testing staff, although they were using outdated equipment. So that was something concrete that the manager focused on. All roads, however, seemed to reinforce or lead back to his construction of the project team leaders (architects) as obstructionist dilettantes:

The first thing that I thought of was that the team wasn't concerned at all about dates, they would come and go and it didn't matter. There was no accountability for missing a deadline or a day.

The second thing that was really interesting is that there was no coordination. Even between the Waverider team there was not a coordination meeting to determine where we were and what needed to be fixed and what milestones we needed to accomplish in order to be able to send our product out the door.

So, we had our team that I pulled together to find out. ...“Okay, you’ve got to have your product ready to go to beta on March 16th.” So, I had six weeks, which isn’t very long in an engineering cycle, so I pulled the management team that was in place together and the project leaders that create the [component] that goes into this other team. They hadn’t been coordinating well; they didn’t have a good feel for what needed to be accomplished in order to meet that deadline in six weeks. The behavior was, the technical managers; well, the project manager he’s not very technical, and would ask about a certain deliverable and the technical lead, who is pretty technical would say, “Well, we’re not going to make that and we have these reasons.” Which would be technical and the project manager wouldn’t understand and then he’d say, “Well, when are we going to do it?” They’d just take at face value whatever the engineering managers would say.

So, one breakdown was that we weren’t having these [conversations] and then when we did have the meetings there was some level of intimidation around technical space. My background is on the engineering side; I was brand new to the team and I didn’t know most of the things that they were talking about in terms of accuracy, but I understood the behavior that was going on in the room. You could see that it was wrong.

So, after the first day I was pretty depressed because basically, the company’s on the line. Our flagship product is already a couple of years late...and there’s no commitment to make it happen. So, the next day I came into that same team and. ...I started putting pressure on the manager and I quizzed him: Is there anybody in the company, we’re a company of five thousand people, tell me where we need to go to find people that can help us meet these deadlines.” The attitude was, “There is nobody else, basically it’s just us.” I spent 5-10 minutes just questioning him, trying to find places, “Where are we going to get help, what are we going to do?” There was no way to do anything other than these guys. So, I kind of felt like I was being held hostage, do you know what I mean?

So, basically what you’re telling me is that your team is the only team that can do it. Therefore, they’re going to have to work night and day until it is done. We might as well start getting dinners in here at night because they’re going to be here for a long time. Which is a management tool that I have used in the past; if you’re going to work late, buy dinner so the people don’t have to; people don’t want to be here anyway at night, right?”

In the Us-Versus-Them environment of distrust and disrespect that was brewing, the manager's tried-and-true tool of providing dinners was interpreted by some as a Trojan horse:

Whenever he starts a new thing he schedules demos and brings in dinner. And dinner is brought in every night because it gives this sense of urgency start-up environment.

The issue of dinner was raised across many of the interviews, often with heightened affect, as if it represented much more. The emotionality connected with it may have been related to the line it stepped over between work and personal life, however, that was not mentioned in any of the interviews. One of the engineers described the dinners in this way:

Right now what happens is if you have face time here at CT Inc., in other words if you're signing up for the dinner list at night, you're coming in and eating at night. They can see that you're working around the clock, you're going to get bonuses. But if you're like Trevor, he can probably do more in five minutes than five of these other guys in eight hours, but they don't see that. He only comes in like three days a week, he works at home and that's because he gets bugged so much that he'll go up the canyon and code. He can do more in those short trips up the canyon coding, but the current management can't see that. It absolutely, I want to tear my hair out, and he doesn't get rewarded for it. He's been well rewarded for it, I would imagine, but out of anybody here at CT Inc. I think behind Andrew Meyer. I think Andrew Meyer deserves everything he gets, but I think Trevor is probably been more under rewarded than any other person I've known for his contributions. So, you know, I guess, I just feel so bad about the fact that Trevor's taking off because this company could go so, so much further. And Andrew's promoting the very problem, Bill Keith in my opinion, is part of the problem. Him and Bob and the rest of these guys, they're so close to being perfect managers, but this one little problem that they've got of being short sighted. And everything is so objective driven now, objectives, objectives, objectives, and tie everything you do to money, it's going to kill them.

As is the case with accidental adversaries, Zander did not understand why his act of kindness was not well received:

So, I got some pushback on that that they would take care of it themselves. But I thought having people come in and eat together as a team would lessen the pain, make it more productive, I don't know. So, I did that and then we went through several weeks of hell, long days and nights and weekends.

Golden Eggs and Pendulums

Two metaphors, popular among interviewees from the original list and others who had been with the company the longest, were golden eggs,” or “the goose that laid the golden eggs,” and the “pendulum” that never achieves equilibrium or stasis. In the words of one of the interviewees, an architect, the goose metaphor was described in this way:

...Where we are, nothing happens unless there’s a crisis and then we will get decisions. ...Hopefully, a more humorous analogy, actually a jointly-built analogy from some of the older team members and people who are no longer with CT, Inc. from sales. The analogy goes like this: The significant thing about Waverider and the releases of e-Rider are they’re like golden eggs and the team was the golden goose. ...Like one of our previous Vice Presidents told us. He said, “Congratulations, you won. The good news is that with Waverider you won, the bad news is you’ve won now we’ve got to figure out what to do about it.”

We struggled with that for years. And basically as the golden goose we thought about what are we going to do, we’ve got to grow, we’ve got to increase production here. There are other things we have to do to take this technology someplace. We’ve got to keep the golden eggs coming. What are we going to do for that? So, we were kind of in a state of disarray, there were a couple of golden eggs sitting on the floor that we’d forgotten to polish up. And the farm was in a little bit of a state of disarray and the goose is standing there talking to the farm foreman saying “What are we going to do?” And we couldn’t quite figure it out. So, the farmer comes in and kicks out the foreman and puts in a new one and the golden goose doesn’t mean anything to him, I’ve got golden eggs on the floor there. Let’s polish them, let’s bring in some people that can polish those things, get them out the door and they brought them out with great fanfare, see what the new guy can do. A lot of it was polishing, finishing stuff that was already there, things we had been working on.

He continued by elaborating on the metaphor from a business standpoint, quoting a humorous and widely acknowledged satirical representation. His statement begins in response to a follow-up question:

A: Using up inventory as opposed to generating new technology?

*Q: Exactly, there’s also a great line in the *Looney Fierce Creatures* where John Cleese talks about reducing quality to gain market share in the short term. Leveraging the reputation for quality and increasing production by*

lowering quality and that can give you a boost for a certain period of time before people recognize that the quality has actually declined.

(In systems thinking, the name for this dynamic is “Drifting Goals.”) The interviewee continues, reporting on how the metaphor of the goose and the golden eggs was socially constructed by original members of the innovation team:

So, someone else actually came up with the punch line for my analogy formula and I thought it was really good. So, now we pick up all the eggs off the floor; the floor is swept, the golden goose [original innovation team] was divided up, actually. It needed to go for some reason and so, now the foreman stands there and says, “What do we do next?” “I don’t know, let’s hire new chickens.” See he didn’t even recognize where the stuff was coming from, that’s not what interests him, what interests him is polishing the golden eggs and getting them out. Particularly the fanfare as it goes out so he can show it to the owner that he has done a good job and that he has done what he was asked to do.

I think about a year ago we were to the point where we had polished up all the eggs and we had completed things. That was...the first time we actually went across platform. ...Now there are no more eggs and one of your questions was “Is there a comparable effort going on right now?” No, and one of the things I see about CT, Inc., and looking outside of Waverider, one of the reasons had to do with my decision to leave. There is a group of people that to me seem to be absolutely brilliant at picking the, almost the intuitive market niche, the...[new products] that CT, Inc. is putting together. The problem is that they’re handed off to the foreman and he’s looking around for golden eggs to polish. There’s nobody making those anymore.”

He then focused on the impact of disbanding the project team / community of innovation that pre-dated the new management team. Those teams were responsible for creating the golden eggs and connecting them to solutions, but were not also able to develop products effectively, according to timelines. It should be noted that when the interviewee refers to engineers, he is primarily referencing the subset of architects.

The pendulums metaphor captured the concerns of many who saw the company shifting too far to the side of operations and production management and away from the core business of architecting new technologies. A group of three colleagues, known as technology visionaries, discussed the pendulum metaphor:

Q: *You spoke of the pendulum swinging. Where do you think it needs to be?*

A1: It used to be right in the middle. I think we are so far this way right now that there's no architecture and things are just going off a gut feeling and there's really not a stated direction. You know, "That's where we're going guys, be creative, be creative, some of the architecture stuff" versus "You're just a coder, write the code I tell you to write" that type of a thing. There's got to be a coming together of this to where you have very bright people who are visionary, who see where the company needs to go in terms of actual code. It's one thing, Andrew does a great job, he's way up here, it's in the middle layers that the translation [does or does not happen] between what Andrew wants and the products that get shipped. These middle layers are just clueless and I think that's CT Inc.'s biggest challenge right now. My belief is that unless CT Inc. can fix that we are going to see a set of products come out that will be late, that will be not necessarily applicable in the market. For example, technology for the sake of technology sake or code for code sake, doesn't do anything. There's got to be a reason that people use it.

I think when you talk about a pendulum you can define a lot of different things. This may be creativity versus shipping product. You can be real creative, but never get anything out the door or versus you can ship a lot of products, but there's nothing creative about them, nothing innovative, nothing to take us to the next level. I think we suffer from a lot of that. I think we went from this pure architecture phase where we weren't shipping anything, there was a period where we were not shipping product, but we were being very creative. A lot of the new features we thought of and worked through. Now, we're just doing features for features sake.

They came back to the pendulum later in the interview:

A2: The pendulum problem. So, I think part of this pendulum problem is that we're seeing some very key, creative, motivated engineers who are leaving CT Inc. because they don't feel like they have the ability to have an impact in the way that the process works. They have great ideas, but you don't get your bonus on those great ideas, you get your bonus paid on whether or not you fixed three bugs or whatever is in your quota. So, it's another part of this pendulum and being in the middle of here's what needs to be built and here's management saying, "Yeah, this is what we need to build. Here's the feature set we need you guys to be involved with, feed some stuff back up. What if we did this, what if we did this?" And in the past we've had teams that have been very successful and had very successful products, but it requires teamwork. Engineers, all

the way up to the top need to understand that. I think we suffer right now because of the guys in the middle.

Negation and Loss of Affirmation

This section originally was called, “Loss of Agency.” The name was later changed in homage to ideas about affirmation presented in Kenneth Gergen’s recent book, *Relational Being* (Gergen, 2009, pp. 167-170), and because the new language may best convey my intended meaning to those in the social constructionist arena. Bunker (co-author of *The Handbook of Large Group Methods*, Bunker and Alban, 2006) first introduced me to the idea of “agency,” which she borrowed from her husband’s faith, Mormonism. She uses the term “loss of agency,” to describe the denial of personal efficacy, sometimes experienced in organizations and across genders. While the original Mormon concept of agency is rooted in the idea of free agency¹⁹ where the individual acts as a bounded being, separate and apart from others; Bunker’s use of agency is more relational. She uses the term to describe the denial of individual or group autonomy, freedom to contribute fully, and to exhibit personal mastery. While I find Bunker’s term “loss of agency” to be especially meaningful, I recently became aware that some constructionist thought leaders believe that agency connotes a bounded, individualistic view of self. To avoid confusion, I have instead adopted Gergen’s use of the words “affirmation” and “negation.”

The excerpts related to the compound theme of negation and loss of affirmation address the emotional, relational, and organizational impacts of (a) disallowing or attaching negating meanings to certain voices, (b) having one’s role and/or perspective devalued or dismissed a priori, or (c) being stripped of relational meaning. This section is central to the narrative and, I believe, to its implications for understanding the limits to growth, collaboration, and innovation that the accidental adversaries dynamic imposed on CT, Inc.

The golden eggs and pendulum metaphors may have been a humorous form of code for negation and loss of affirmation felt most deeply by disenfranchised members of the “founding” Waverider team. From the perspective of those who had felt the greatest loss of agency--architects, some mid-level engineers, and others who saw things happening but were not in one of the few positions of influence or power—the success of the operations managers was possible only because of the architect’s success before they took control. (While having influence is often a powerful position to be in to effect change, the heroic mental model of leadership that seemed to be held by top leaders appeared to significantly narrow the field of influence.) Ironically,

¹⁹ Free agency also focuses on the responsibility of each individual to make choices that do not harm, interfere with, or negate the free agency of others.

neither the R&D group nor the operations group could have completed the innovation cycle without the other. And, like many technology companies, R&D strength preceded operations capabilities.

The architects' sense of negation and feelings of betrayal (loss of affirmation) had three key components. *First*, they believed that the managers' success would not have been possible had the architects not first been successful (a large inventory of golden eggs just laying waiting to be productized and shipped to market) over a longer period of time and in a way that was now being discounted. *Second*, the managers were now being given the power to create conditions that disempowered architects in a way that crossed a line between having to deal with the inevitable discomfort of change, and no longer being allowed to be architects. One architect expressed it this way:

I would have a hard time working for CT, Inc. on something other than Waverider because I've felt ownership of it and felt a vision for where it was going to go. It would be difficult to see that go somewhere else. ...Engineers are like artists. Source code is an important thing, they argue vehemently about coding styles because this is their canvas. This is how they express their work. Well, a year ago we got dictated to use radically different coding styles. The first time anybody's ever told me, while I've worked at CT, Inc., where management has said, "This is your coding style, this is how your code is to look, and you will be graded on how well you follow this." Even though they didn't enforce it, they instilled it. The fact that they would do that and throw all these different people in the field of ownership and just are accomplishing tasks. Which means for me even if CT, Inc. did go through the turnaround and started in the growth phase and started innovating again. ...Do I want that back? No, I've seen the source code, it's rotted in there, I don't want to see that anymore, I don't want to participate in that anymore.

Another mid-level engineer and aspiring architect explained that the feelings of despair, anger, and dislocation were not about the obvious—objections to change, a new regime, or even loss of authority; they were more primary, at the level of personal and professional affirmation and integrity:

I think the reason why people are leaving has very little to do with the fact they no longer feel like the big boss of the group. It has much more to do with the fact that when they have a good idea it doesn't get heard at all. Someone at that level in a technical field; you can't smother them that much and not have them get disgruntled. They have to at least feel like their ideas are going into a pool of ideas that are going to be evaluated. I think what's happened is these people have put in some ideas and they've been rejected without even a thought. It's hard to handle for anyone.

Then, speaking of his own aspirations, he continued:

You like to feel; even someone who is not at that level likes to feel like his ideas are heard. Seems like we had the ability at one point. ...It's good to feel like you've been heard at any level but when you get to a position of creativity and all of a sudden you're somebody put a basket over you, or something like that; I don't think that is something that a lot of those people can live with. So they just have to leave and go find somewhere new and small and a lot of these guys that left went to start-up companies. That would be hard for me at this point because I have too many financial obligations and too much security; that security is important to me because of my family.

Third, the architects saw the negation and loss of affirmation extending beyond individual architects to the dissolution of innovation teams that were the lifeblood for the development of new architects and of architecting, in general.

The tipping point at CT, Inc. appeared to be reached when Trevor resigned and Keith was promoted. At that point, the benefits and contributions of the operations managers and coders appeared to be privileged above those of R&D architects and engineers. Some saw the negation and loss of affirmation being applied exclusively to original members of the project team, people who had been at CT, Inc. before the appointment of the new operations team, virtually all of whom had worked for a SiliconIT company called GEBco before it was acquired by CT, Inc. The operations team may have been favored for a number of reasons:

- a) The benefits of their actions were concrete, measurable, and easily understood without abstract thinking or reasoning,
- b) Outcomes were easy to measure in the short-term windows of time (quarters) that shareholders demanded,
- c) Their actions filled the engineering/production management gap in the innovation process cycle, so was heralded as a relief in the near-term,
- d) They were not temperamental like the architects,
- e) They got things done,
- f) They were sure of themselves, and their views of right and wrong,
- g) Their actions appeared to be effective, and
- h) No one had a better idea of how to move forward.

As was discussed in the section on the leadership theme, there was a sense of panic within the executive team who felt they needed to have *the* answers about how to move to a growth model. Perhaps Andrew also had a measure of buyer's remorse. When one group started to achieve immediate measurable results, leaders essentially decided to have the managers keep doing more of that, and allowed them to do so with greater and greater autonomy. The force of the operations managers soon took on the quality of a runaway locomotive. The force that had been so crucial in the heart of the turnaround was now pulling Andrew and the company off and away from the rails of growth.

Individual Sense-making, Identity, Negation and Affirmation

Three threads regarding the value of different roles ran through many of the interview conversations. Expressed as themes, they are:

1. Sense-making efforts;
2. The importance of identity, especially regarding (a) the values, roles, and aspirations of engineers identified as architects and those identified as engineering or production managers, and (b) characterizations of key types of engineers who need to be engaged in the product innovation cycle; and
3. Affirmation and negation, particularly loss of personal and professional *agency*.

As narrative themes, these are hard to tease apart, and harder to report separately under distinct headings. An overarching theme seemed to be sense making, so we'll start there. For some, that meant holding the situation in a way that made it livable for them from day to day. For others, it meant reflecting for an instant here or there about whether they had made good decisions along the way. And, for many of the men and women I interviewed, their sense-making efforts focused on individual and group role identities.

Many interviewees from the original list who had stayed on did so for reasons of security, or because they liked the area and the benefits of working for a medium-sized company rather than a small start-up or a large corporation. While I had come to the organization to explore an organizational success, there seemed to be a large "elephants in the room" for which the Waverider project name seemed to serve as code. Had interviews solely been with people on the original list, and not both lists, I cannot say how things might have gone. The fact was that the construction of the project as a success, which gave rise to the first list, was not the accepted construction of success at the time of the OLH project. In fact, the work of the original team was viewed by many on the second list as an incomplete success at best, and a failure to launch and willful obstruction at worst. Most, if not all of the names on the initial 15-name list pre-dated the

regime of mid-level managers in place at the time of the OLH project, as well as the CEO and Senior Executive VP of Engineering, soon to be COO. People whose names were added were primarily members of the new management team and people who the new managers had pulled onto the project, and with whom they had worked at GEBco. Thus, two levels of identity were at times woven together, and at others teased apart. Those were:

1. Professional Role Identity (e.g., architect, R&D manager, production manager, coder, tester, etc.) and
2. Group Identity (i.e., original Waverider team member, longtime CT, Inc. employee, GEBco Management Team, or previous GEBco employee, R&D, Operations, Marketing, Sales, etc.).

It is important to note that CT, Inc. was still a relatively young company, with a strong R&D focus. Faced with the Internet revolution, CT, Inc. was trying to transition away from its identity as a manufacturer of hardware that ran proprietary software, to an Internet company whose applications could operate across multiple platforms. GEBco, on the other hand, was the most successful division of a larger software company by the name of SiliconIT that has since faded into obsolescence, due only in part to its earlier acquisition by CT, Inc. By their nature, the technical challenges posed by CT, Inc.'s core business, and the networking environment in general, were significantly larger and more complex, with more conceptual moving parts, than those of GEBco. It appeared that CT, Inc. had been a culture of architects and creators; whereas, GEBco had been one of coders and developers. The challenges faced by GEBco, and its parent company, were making adaptive changes to significantly simpler and more discrete software products. A key stumbling block for the parent company had been releasing attractive new versions (upgrades) in a competitively relevant way. The desire to right the wrongs of the previous company was highlighted in earlier excerpts.

Interviewees appeared to be aware of whose list they were on, and almost all addressed the schism between those recognized as architects and those seen as operations and production managers. This schism of perception is a key hint of an accidental adversaries dynamic. Among the architects and those who aspired to be architects, their efforts to explain the differences in a way that showed an understanding of the value and need for both types invariably led to a conversation about negation and loss of affirmation. A subset of engineering managers also described essentially the same dynamic; however, only those who had been at the company prior to the merger gave credence to a theory of intentional or vindictive negation and denial of affirmation. Members of the new management team tended to either (a) express a view that the architects as arrogant, unnecessary, and ineffective, or (b) admit to knowing the architects through hearsay rather than personal contact.

Engineering Culture

Another key factor that likely contributed to negation and loss of agency was what Ken Auletta (2009) aptly calls the “engineering culture.” Auletta describes this as the potential Achilles heel of even a giant like Google, a latter-day success story with poignant hints of what might have been at CT, Inc. In a recent interview on US National Public Radio (Auletta, Nov. 2, 2009), Auletta characterized engineering culture as one that is dominated by “low emotional intelligence.” Auletta discusses the implications of engineering culture even at Google:

I don't think Google and its two co-founders are cold businessmen. I think they're cold engineers. ...The difference is that what an engineer does is just says, “How do we make things more efficient?” They think they're doing wonderful things (Auletta, Nov. 2, 2009).

...Engineers are people who ask why: Why must we do things the way they've always been done? ...They are scientists, always seeking new answers. They seek a construct, a formula, and an algorithm that both graphs and predicts behavior. They naively believe that most mysteries, including the mysteries of human behavior, are unlocked with data...(Auletta, Feb. 16, 2010)

What Auletta describes is a culture of pure logic; one in which the prevailing mode of thinking and decision-making is: If a decision or action makes logical sense, then it *should* have logical and predictable results. Auletta (Nov. 2, 2009) describes efficiency as one of the highest held values of the engineering culture; whereas, discussions about the social, emotional, or relational implications of certain choices either do not compute, or, are dismissed as illogical, and, therefore, “stupid” or irrelevant. This mindset presumes that people and human systems *should* act in logical ways. When people and systems do not act as they should, the reaction is to label the resisters as being inadequate and expendable, and to further favor those who act logically. The Catch-22 is that those who subscribe to this mode of thinking and leading tend to put too much trust in their own logical, intuitively derived hypotheses about how things *should* be. When people and organizations do not work or behave as they should, it may seem logical to conclude that it is because people (a) are not working hard enough, (b) are not smart enough to “get” how things should be, (c) are lazy, (d) have worked there too long and need to move on, or (e) are culturally flawed. The last, in particular, was one of the reasons stated by some to explain why the workforce was rigidly resistant to change and should be moved to an entirely different part of the country: an outcome which eventually happened.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Balancing Logic and Emotion

The engineering mindset that Auletta describes is one that I wore for many years as a well-constructed intellectual exoskeleton, protecting me from emotional hurt and disappointment, and because the rewards of functioning from an engineering mode are privileged in academe. Ironically, the CT, Inc. project threw that logic into question. Ultimately, for the engineering mind, effectiveness of solutions is key. And, in the case of CT, Inc., my taking a purely reasoned, logical approach to organizational learning and change proved to be largely ineffective. At the same time, a purely affective, subjective approach to learning and change also would have been insufficient, given the underlying structural components of the accidental adversaries dynamic.

In the years since the project, I have worked towards embracing affective approaches without negating my cognitive, logical groundings. While I have come to equally value the contributions of architects and managers, logic and emotion, subjective and objective modes of reasoning, light and shadow, it is sometimes challenging to hold these multiple paradigm without judgment in a space of open-mindedness and open-heartedness.

Engineering “Types”

A key sub-theme of Architects and Engineers, and one that ran across most of the stories, is the idea of personality types or preferences; particularly a recognition, by many, of the need for the company to employ a healthy mix of “types” to ensure multiple skill-sets, talents, and perspectives. This is central to work currently being done by Merrill (2008) to define and link diverse “innovation types” to the innovation process cycle. This was discussed implicitly in several of the interviews, and explicitly in two of them with key innovation leaders who were members of the original Waverider team and predated the SiliconIT merger. One of the architects used the MBTI (Briggs Myers & Myers, 1980; Keirsey & Bates, 1984) to make sense of the disconnect between the managers and the architects:

A: ... I don't know the personalities at the top, but in the Myer's Briggs terms, NT's work very well with the champion, not the artisans... It's like NS, the ones that are diplomatic thinking as opposed to strategic thinking. Those two kind of have an affinity for each other and then you have the STJ's and the ones that are technical thinking and they fit well with ones that are logistical thinking, the supervisor type. And I think what happened was we got basically an artisan type. Someone who manages through techniques, tactics, tasks, like a Winston Churchill type leader. But he's more comfortable with people below him that are logistical. So, therefore we suddenly got this whole system where it was also intended for more authoritarian structure...

Q: I don't remember the time frame.

A: ...This would have been exactly two years ago, so, the beginning of '98.

Q: Is that when Bob Zander came in?

A: Yeah, so, this was a fairly gradual thing. Bill took over all the product development thing and Bob is just what I described to you, a Winston Churchill type leader, he's spectacular at what he does. So, he came in and slowly one level at a time they would bring in this entire structure of people who had worked together and had almost identical structure on a different project, the old GEBco project. It's not old, it's still around, but that's what they had done. So, Bob manages through techniques and he has a list, I'm convinced, of management techniques that he applies. It's a very authoritarian structure, a very authoritarian set-up. That might be required for the business right now, we can do that, but I look at high-tech industry and it seems primarily a NT industry in the sense of NTJ kind of stuff. I've heard that Bill Gates is an ENTJ.

Q: What do you think Andrew is?

A: Oh, I think Andrew is definitely strategic thinking, so, he's got to be a NTJ of some sort either E or I. Definitely, from the concepts.

This architect appears to have focused on personality types as a sense-making approach to help him take an appreciative view of the diverse players involved and to "de-personalize" what was for him a frustrating and even demoralizing situation. This approach essentially served as an antidote to the "left-hand column" inner dialog that occasionally bubbled up into the "right-hand column," as it did in one conversation when the interviewee characterized one of the leaders of the "doers" as: "fascist," a "manager by techniques," "totalitarian," practicing "subterfuge," and a person who "uses people as objects." He was not alone in these characterizations. Another simply said, "I scratch my head wondering how they got there."

The Theory of Four Types of Engineers

One of the original engineering managers who had been displaced by the new management team described four types of engineers (discussed below). His interview was especially poignant as he was the only individual cited by both groups (original team members and members of the new management team) as someone I *must* talk with. Rather than leaving the company when he was moved to a different project, he stayed on. While he was viewed with tremendous respect and was a man of magnanimity, he did not have formal power or a reactive personality. Thus, he engendered trust on both sides. Early in the interview, he explained the history of the

project and the integral roles key individuals had played.

I think there are basically four types of engineers and they're all needed to make a product successful. And some people don't have skills that span four categories, some might span one or two, seldom do you find one that spans four. But Trevor had a unique talent and his talent was to be able to structure software in a way that, others...he could put architecture in the code, so others could come along flesh it out and provide all of the features and so forth. If you add too many people to a project too soon you end up with spaghetti. They're all paid to write code, they're all going to write code and you're going to get lots of lines of code and if there isn't a structure in which they flow you end up with a mess that's very difficult to manage. And Waverider is one of the most complicated pieces of software ever written. Its complexity is enormous because it's a distributed system.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

In some ways, this man seemed like a person in the midst of a car crash: he could see things happening, appeared calm, and could do little to change the course of events. I do not know if there was a measure of resignation in his magnanimity.

He later elaborated on the four types of engineers:

Yeah, there's four types and they're very, very important and few people have all the skills, few people want all the skills:

The first are these *architects* that I eluded to and they come in all shapes in sizes and to me the most valuable of these architects are those that can put their architectural concepts into skeletal structures and source code. The ones who draw in the light, talk in avenues, who wave their hands are very interesting are a lot of fun to talk to and engage, but they don't result in products [or] an engineering organization. They create the architectural concept, it doesn't mean they build the whole thing themselves; they're probably not even the best. Which is the next category of people. ...

These are the *builders*; these are the people that do the heavy lifting. These are the people who perhaps don't know how to build good structured source code, but they can appreciate a good one when they see it and they know how to put the flesh on it. And they gravitate towards it--I'm talking about software projects that are fairly large in scope and

they're definitely over 100,000 lines of code and they're fairly complex and so forth. So, the second class of people is people who put the flesh on the bones. And they have, the good ones have lots of tricks in their bag, they know, 'I'm in this situation, I know good tricks that can fix the situation,' and they can code it out. The good ones have more tricks and the not so good ones have less tricks. And knowing which one [trick] to use when makes the good builders very valuable.

The third kind are people who have an incredible talent of *debugging* things. They can get into a situation where bad things have happened and they can quickly come up with why and they come up with a clever little patch that either solves it correctly, in harmony with the architecture or it may not but, yet, it works. In some cases, these people don't care about architectures. ...they just know how to fix it, and these are rare. There's not very many of these and there's few who actually like it and those that do are gems in hand and you should build special organizations around them to motivate them in different ways. Because they can't stand to stay on anything longer than three or four days, they have an attention span of a seven year old, or kindergartner; they just don't do well on those big structure programs. But they're very, very valuable because they know how to solve *this* problem.

But the fourth class are the ones are very good at *quality and testing*. Most of the developers think they can do that, but they think that it's demeaning, it's below them, and as a result they usually don't get the best class of people in the world [doing the] testing. They put people there who they don't value or pay as much. The good testers are gems themselves because they know how to put together a set of test cases that stress and can find all of the hard to find, the things that you can actually see in customer cites. They can find those before they actually get out there.

So, these are kind of the four classes of engineers and you need all of them. You can't successfully produce and succeed in the market place without all four. And people who think that all you need are heavy lifters and the de-buggers miss the architectural step and your constantly playing "whack-a-mole". Meaning a bug shows up and you whack it and all you did was cause something else to pop up over here because you're not in harmony with the architecture. So, these people that can put this architectural skeleton in place, you've got to have that there before you hire any of these builders. If you hire tons of builders, but no architects you're going to end up with just a mess.

That's kind of my evaluation, having been in the industry this long. They're all very different, they're very different people, they solve problems very

differently. ...You want to find out what they're good at so you can help them mature and develop all the talents that they're good at; because you need all four. Some people don't realize that. You need fewer and less depending on which phase of the project you're in.

Identities and Roles of Architects and Managers

One mid-level engineer who aspired to be an architect best described the role:

In my opinion, an architect is the technical guiding force behind the product. When sales comes and says we want this feature, the architect's job isn't to say, 'No, we can't give you that,' but rather to figure out the proper way to incorporate that feature; and then to make sure that everyone on the team is working toward the same goal.

Trevor James was one of my mentors. I couldn't have gotten the kind of education in programming that I have without having him be there to show me proper coding practices and good architecture and design and efficient techniques.

The following discussion about the role of architects occurred in an interview with another mid-level engineer:

Q: In your opinion, how do you best integrate that function [architect] into the organization?

A: Well I think production goals have to be balanced with technical correctness. Otherwise you'll get several years into a project before you even realize the mistakes you made so you can't go on. That's where architects come in because they understand that; they have a broad enough understanding of the system they are developing that they know where design flaws three years from now will put us in a bad spot. I don't believe management has the technical expertise to handle that situation.

Q: Well, what kind of a manager knows how; what kind of management; I mean some of us just don't like to be managed...

A: It may sound like I don't like managers. I think managers have a very important role. They are the driving force behind production schedules. They have to be there in order for us put a product out the door.

Q: ...Well what are the qualities of a manager who works most effectively with architects and makes it possible for architects to architect but also; I mean as you

said; so that it doesn't go to their heads? What are the characteristics of a good manager in terms of managing the work of architects?

A: ...A good manager is somebody who understands the people he's managing to the degree that he knows how to properly motivate them to do what is necessary to accomplish his job; I mean the managers' job, which is to get the products out the door, that's a difficult thing to do; I mean if anything I think a manager requires more skills than the technical positions because you have to be skilled with people. I remember a quote I heard from Zig Ziegler one time, and he said he believed that if you helped enough other people get what they wanted, you'd get what you wanted. I think that is a broad theory because what it implies is that you don't step on people to get what you want but rather you help them to accomplish their goals in order to accomplish your goals. I think too many managers today believe that if you just push people into doing what you want that they'll accomplish everything that is chartered to them. I don't believe that is the case because I think what happens is that you start seeing people leave the company. I get upset; good technically capable engineers have left recently. I don't just mean Trevor; I'm talking about a lot of people who have left not because things are changing; change is inevitable. But the changes that we've seen recently have been, have felt I think to the people that have left, like it doesn't matter whether stock is going up or not, the quality of the products of the company are going down and the reason is we have no more technical say over what goes into it. We're forced to do it a certain way and the way seems to be outlined by people who don't really understand what they are doing. I think I got off the track there for a second. ...

Q: *What do architects want a good manager to help provide?*

A: I think architects want freedom for creativity for one thing. They want to be able to have their ideas; because an architect has a good technical overview or understanding of the product from a mile high view so to speak, and from a low level point of view as well, they feel like they know where; I think they feel like they know where features would best help a product increase in efficiency and performance and provide customers with features that we will be able give them capabilities in the product that customers might not even be aware of yet or a framework for those components to be added in later. I think a lot of times architects promote these ideas to management and management says why do we need that? That's not important to them because they don't understand it and they're not trusting the architect to describe the reasons for it enough to allow them the chance to implement it or do whatever. It's hard to say; it's difficult to describe.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative:

This interview was the ninth of 31, by which point I had let go of the predetermined interview questions. At the beginning of the interview that the excerpt is from, I handed the interviewee the questions and said, “Here...these are some of the kinds of questions I’ve got.” While we started with how long he had been at the company, and how he came to be there—a question I tended to use in all interviews--I quickly let go of the predetermined questions and relaxed into socially constructing the remaining course of inquiry. Had I stuck to the OLH questions, I would not have asked a sequence of questions like: “What does an architect do?” “In your opinion, how do you best integrate that function into the organization?” “What are the characteristics of a good manager?” or “What do architects want a good manager to help provide?”

Architects Under Fire

An engineer described what he viewed as negation of architects at CT, Inc.

I found lately that the position of architect has kind of become a non-position here in this company. I heard a while back that there was a corporate mandate to get rid of all architects, which is a little bit annoying to me. Not because I wanted to become an architect, but because over the last few years I’ve seen the role that architects have played, and I can’t figure out how the company is going to make products the way they intend to without having some guiding force behind each product that understands both the technical and sales point of view. We have a lot of management around that understands the sales points of view but they don’t have a good grasp on the overall technical requirements and capabilities of the systems that they’re working with. So I’m just a little curious to see how this is going to turn out. Where we are going to end up, without architects?

Another interviewee from the original Waverider enterprise group spoke of the limits being imposed on architects by the current management team:

Q: The [GEBco Management Team] is in those positions and they sit over some of the people that you are talking about.

A: When Bill [Keith] says “go build this”, Bob and Yukiko and Josh go “yes sir” and they do that. Now, they don’t necessarily care what it is. Josh probably cares a little more than the others. But they just say “I’ll go build this. I build things. That’s what I do.” But there has to be a path for engineering influence into the product management because there are a lot of creative people over there. They need an outlet, right? They need an outlet. And they have great ideas that would influence [product development]. I mean a lot of people think of engineers as just these geeks who do things. But, there are some amazing thinkers. We’re losing them all. I mean I could list three more people that I won’t list on tape that are probably the most amazing architects in the list of the top ten architects that we have ever had in our company in fifteen years who are about to leave the company because of this exact same reason.

Q: So, please help me understand what you’re saying. Are you suggesting that they need to be in a different place within the organization?

A: Umhmm. They do build software right? But one thing we don’t have is we don’t have, we really don’t have architects. Alright? Trevor was an architect. Sam was an architect. Some of these other people I mentioned are architects, which are creative thinkers that the philosophy is, as I’ve seen it and had it communicated to me by a lot of people, is that your code should be so, your code and your project should be so well documented, etc. etc. etc. that you can transfer it to another team every six months and it could just continue down that path. There shouldn’t be a lot of learning curve in it. Now there’s a lot of truth to that, that you need to have good processes and good, you know, diligence in the way that you build code in consistency when you do that. But the problem is that there’s no emotional attachment that anybody has to their things. And you lose passion. And when the people lose passion for their project, you’re hosed. You’re completely hosed. A good software engineer is an architect. As an artist, more than an architect, right, they have to feel like they’re an artist. They create things. They’re not just bricklayers. But the problem is that we don’t even recognize architects within the company. ...

Innovating Under the Radar

The key Waverider breakthrough appears to have happened at a time when leadership was focused on other things. During that time, the R&D groups and individuals who sparked the technical breakthrough were flying under the radar of leadership, largely because company control systems were lacking. While the company did not have the operations or production systems it needed to get product to the market in a timely way, it did have the creative juices to be on the leading edge of technical change. The Board was able to snag a new CEO who was known for his technical brilliance and creativity. Perhaps because of his own preference for strategic thinking and possible disdain for and boredom with tactical tasks, he gave over authority for tactical decisions to a leadership who perhaps cast a reverse image, disdaining “airy fairy” strategies and strategic marketing, in favor of concrete, tactical, nose to the grindstone, bloodied-sword-in-hand tactical fighting. For a period of time, however, when top leadership was distracted by a major acquisition (subsequently, the source of a large infusion of new, tactical, transactional leadership) R&D functioned much like a series of related “skunk works”, constrained by little external control. The Catch-22 was that while this was a time of great promise in R&D, production, which needed better operational and systems controls was not in place to effectively move innovation from conception to the marketplace.

The Pipeline was intended to create a safe environment for creativity and innovation while tightening management and production controls over engineering. Any employee with a an exciting idea could apply to enter the pipeline, which would allow him or her to be released from other duties and just focus on developing and prototyping the idea. The plan was for the employee to then re-enter the organization in their old position. Here is one engineer’s take on the role and viability of the pipeline:

Q: How about innovation? How would you compare the way the management structure supports innovation now as compared to maybe three or four years ago?

A: I think innovation is really more difficult here right now because the company’s getting large. And I think that a smaller company may support innovation more. The products that we built have what I call lots and lots of moving pieces so there are lots and lots of parts involved so there’s lots of coordination, and in order to coordinate that it becomes more sort of bureaucratic I think. So I don’t believe that, unless you do what is like a stunk-works product, project which turns out to be successful, that you actually would be rewarded for it.

Q: Does the pipeline function in that way?

A: My current understanding of the pipeline is it’s not very functional right now. That what I’ve heard, is that people from the engineering groups

don't want to transfer their people to the pipeline because they lose resource, they lose headcount, first of all they lose their good people and they lose headcount and then they don't get them back. And so, last time I just sort of chitchatted with those guys they weren't able to really attract people to the pipeline. I think it could but because management says well I don't want to lose him because he's my best engineer; I can't let him go, but you can have this person over here, it doesn't really, it hasn't, I don't think it's probably been as successful as they first envisioned.

While waiting for an interviewee one day, I overheard a conversation in the video conferencing room next door. A group of production managers were waiting for a conference with a group of engineers who'd been in the Pipeline. Their informal pre-meeting conversation focused on what an inconvenience the Pipeline is and that the products coming out of it don't fully comply with standard operating procedures.

Two interviewees who are high-level strategists summarized the problems with innovation:

A2: We're at a critical stage, if fact there was an announcement that went out today that to me is an absolute tragic loss. You know what I'm referring to and that's not because . . .

Q: You're speaking about Trevor James.

A2: ...Yes and it's not because of salary, it's not because of bonuses, it's not because any of those, I fundamentally think that Trevor has some very, very insightful visions; I'm not sure I'm using the right terminology; of where things need to go. And where he's at right now those things don't matter and he's very frustrated and he wants to make a difference. And geeks want to make a difference, they want to write codes that changes the world. You just have to provide a good environment for that so those guys can do what they want to do, remove the obstacles. I told Trevor I wanted to be his manager and I said all I would do is that if you had a good idea I would just clear a path. I don't care what the obstacle is, I'm going to just knock it down and let you go along that path. Because so far the projects that he's worked on that have been outstanding. And there's been other engineers that have left, I don't mean to isolate Trevor, but there's other engineer's that have left because of that exact same thing. They're frustrated that they're not making a difference that the code that they're writing doesn't get used or they can't feed those ideas back up through for a number of different reasons.

A1: It's happened slowly over time. What's happened is that we had structure at CT Inc. where there was very poor engineering management and hence we were not shipping products. And a software company

doesn't survive if they're not shipping products. So, a management structure was brought in place and people were virtually replaced over time. They pulled out those managers that were not delivering and put in a structure, almost a managing coding robots, not necessarily, managing to the degree of everybody is interchangeable, every engineer is just an engineer, a tick mark somewhere, not as individuals. So, what happens is that this structure is now in place that can deliver product, but in doing that, when you manage creative individuals like that you tend to loose, some people just can't fit into that mold. Any ways, this change in management has happened such that. ...

Q: ...Can you give me a little bit of a time frame?

A1: ...Sure, it's happened since '96 early '97, a change happened in management where at the time the time the number one problem was not innovation; the problem was not engineers leaving; the number one problem was inability to ship code. So, we placed a management structure that solved that problem and indeed I think we have solved that problem. But now what happened is we have this inability to retain key engineers, an environment where individuals are not allowed to innovate, an environment where going outside of your objectives.

...Today we're failing as a company because we're not giving our engineering groups freedom to innovate and we're not giving our engineering groups an environment to prosper or be creative. The problem is that I hope we can change that structure without changing the management structure. I hope we can change the negatives of our development cycle now without having to go through like the last time, which was rip out the old management and put in the new management structure.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—The Interview Experience

At the time of the project, my line in the sand was my unwillingness to betray the collective story for personal gain—mine, or others' (i.e., by adding grist to the career destruction mill always waiting for a negative tidbit to hang someone's reputation). So, I did what I could at the time to be of greatest service, and waited to tell the story until the "statute of limitations" had run out on potential negative blowback, either to my friend or to others in the company.

A large "elephant" (i.e., an undiscussable) was let into the room when the Senior Executive VP added "his" list of people to the interview project. Irrespective of whether he was acting on pure emotion, shrewd tactical thinking, or both, his action created a chink or peephole in the armor of the manufactured PR story. Not coincidentally, I was expected to reinforce and validate the PR story by adding my voice to the chorus singing the company's and the CEO's praises. The senior executive's action not only challenged the PR story, it may have been his way of sending a message directly to the CEO himself about who he believed was responsible for the turnaround. Of course, this is merely conjecture.

The process of writing this narrative analysis, especially reflecting on the way I handled a new, challenging, and unfamiliar situation, has been healing for me. While I was not there as a paid consultant, but rather as an observer, learner, and scribe, I now know that the act of inquiry itself creates change; there is no neutral stance. Many interviewees noted that having the opportunity to tell their stories and to be listened to helped them make sense of and peace with their personal experiences: something they had not had the opportunity to do before.

I am grateful for the wisdom I was able to muster when it became clear to me that using the preplanned interview protocol was not tenable. The need to let go of the protocol was twofold:

First, I found myself unable to both remember the questions *and* remain fully engaged as a listener, so I opted for presence and engagement.

Second, I quickly discovered that the predetermined questions were helpful for establishing a container and some parameters for the conversations, both for interviewees and me. They helped to illustrate what I meant when I explained that the focus of the project and the interviews was to be on the *organizational* factors of their success, rather than the technology itself.

In most cases, the only instructions needed were: (a) the focus is on the organizational factors that led to or supported the success of a specific new

technology, (b) you were selected to be interviewed because of your involvement in the project, (c) I am not here to study the technology itself, nor as a consultant or evaluator, and (d) your comments will be kept confidential (i.e., I would not attach their names to their comments, I would destroy the tapes after transcription, etc).

Followed rigidly in content or sequence, however, the predetermined questions would have imposed a structure on the stories that did not necessarily jibe with the storyteller's experience. Again, this was especially true because of the timing and nature of the change in the composition of the list of interviewees. It was also true, however, that creating the interview protocol was an integral and necessary part of the process. The questions helped to anchor the interviews to the research topic/purpose, while providing a set of basic chords around which to improvise. In a handful of cases where interviewees appeared uncomfortable, it was helpful to have a written list of approved questions to move the conversation along.

As it turned out, rather than focusing on the organizational success alone, most interviewees shifted the focus to the "elephant" in the middle of it. To focus on the success story being reported in the press— a story concocted as a marketing strategy for both external and internal consumption --felt to me much like walking on a rug set atop a thin layer of dirt. Given the timing of the interviews, it is likely that no matter what questions I asked, the subject discussed would have been the same. Those who had been at the organization long enough to see the evolution of the project's vision and infrastructure knew of its technical complexity and wondered how the organization would grow without the person most capable of translating and guiding the complex technical vision. They wondered if the new cadre of leaders from the acquired company understood the implications of the loss. At the same time, members of the new management team seemed to scratch their heads and wonder what the fuss was about.

A Systemic Picture: The CT, Inc. Accidental Adversaries Model

While the text-focused narrative analysis method is one way of communicating the CT, Inc. story, another is through the visual-spatial lens of the systems thinking toolkit described in the Introduction and later elaborated in Part II. Adding the visual modality to convey the narrative will make it more accessible and meaningful to people whose MPWoB's favor visual-spatial thinking. Illustrating the story in this way may help all readers to:

- a. More deeply appreciate structural components at CT, Inc. That contributed to the accidental nature of noticeable adversarial dynamics;
- b. Understand how those structural factors can at first unintentionally set the stage for adversarial dynamics and later take on an habitual nature that appears to (and may) have intentionality;
- c. Examine, as Weick does, the impact of mismatched projects on systemic outcomes; and
- d. Identify key leverage points for positive change.

Figure 14 reflects the likely hopes of CT, Inc.'s Board of Directors when it made a strategic decision to select a leading technology visionary to lead the company as CEO, and an operations leader who had worked his way up through the ranks to be seen as a hero among operations and production managers. The belief was that R&D would see the CEO as their hero and operations managers would see the operations leader as their hero. Both groups would feel that their importance was being affirmed, and they would work within their own groups and coordinate across groups to bring the company into a period of sustained growth. The hopes represented by the outer reinforcing loop may be read in the following way:

- Strong leadership in operations would get the backlog of unproductized technologies and underdeveloped opportunities to market in a timely, predictable stream.
- Existing customers would be satisfied by the company's consistent release of on-time software upgrades, while market share would be increase by retaining and attracting new customers with new leading edge Waverider-based products, cross-platform solutions to meet the needs of the burgeoning Internet-based economy.

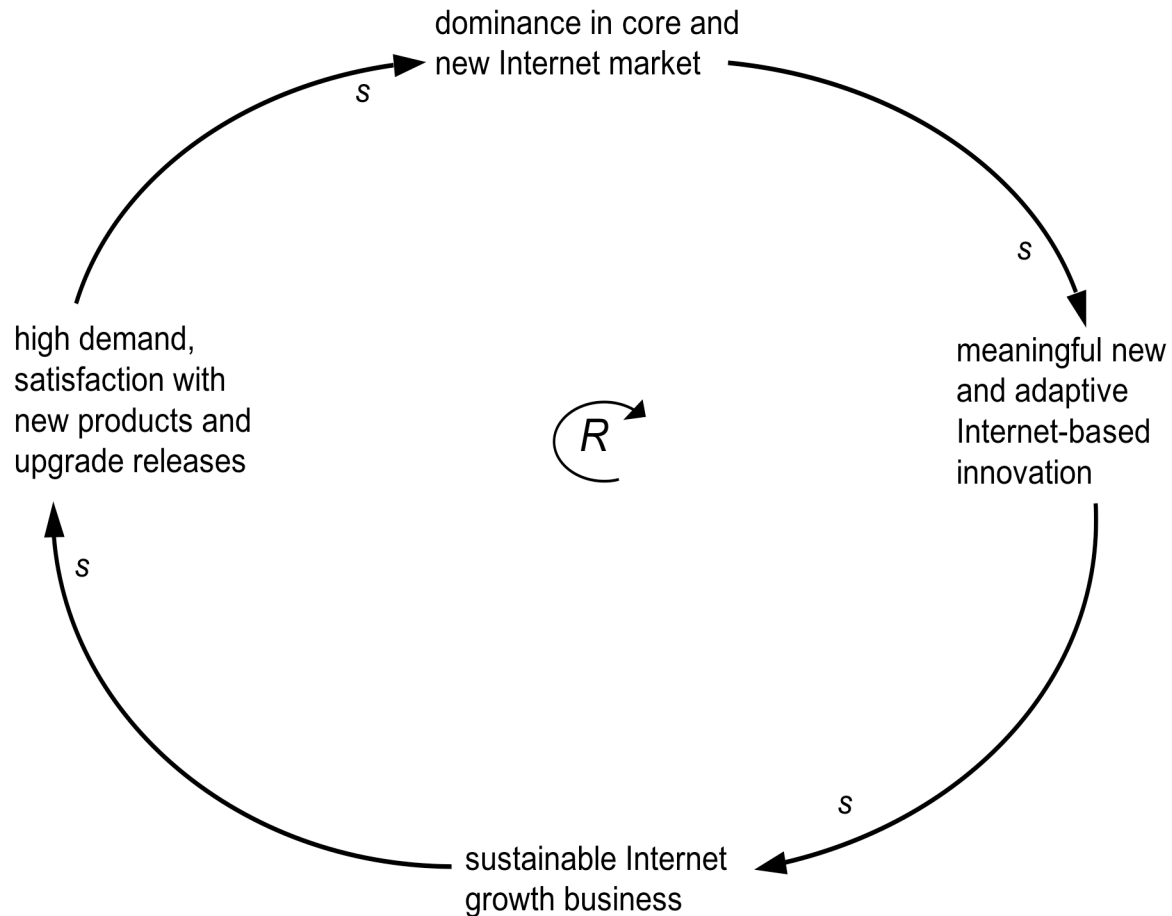


Figure 14. Intended benefits of R&D and operations collaboration at CT, Inc.

- At the same time, R&D would be prototyping new ideas for Internet-based innovation to provide a steady supply of new technologies long after the backlog had been pushed to market. This would support CT, Inc.'s strategic vision of being an Internet-based growth business.
- The steady supply of new technologies, coupled with the new ability to get products to market would sustain CT, Inc. as a growth business.

This positive image of collaboration seemed rational, and it might have led to sustainable growth had it been approached differently from a relational standpoint; or if industry conditions had been less disruptive, had the company's near-term history of acquisitions been different, or had the players involved come in with different relational histories. Living and leading forward, however, require making decisions and acting effectively in the context of ready-to-hand and unexpected (unready-to-hand) conditions.

As things played out, one of Andrew's first acts as CEO was to reduce the workforce by 18 percent to bring an abrupt end to projects that were not considered part of the core mission of growth. As the CEO became increasingly frustrated with the realization that CT, Inc. was not a growth company, and began anticipating posting his first quarter of losses, he gave more power to operations leaders to increase productivity at any cost. During the same period, the CEO spent less time in Houston and more time traveling. Figure 15 illustrates the key contours of the adversarial dynamics that appeared to have emerged between the time when the new CEO and the senior operations executive were brought on board, and the OLH interviews were conducted:

- The CEO came to realize that CT, Inc. was not a growth company; that in fact, it appeared to be stuck in a protracted turnaround or decline. This was reflected in the outcomes (shown as systemic variables shown in Fig. 15) of *inadequate release of Internet-based products* and *unable to dominate core and new market share*.
- Frustrated, and anticipating the inevitability of posting his first quarter of losses, the CEO implored the operations chief to do something to increase the number and rate of product releases, and to do so quickly.
- In response to the CEO's *increased pressure to release new products*, the operations chief imported a former colleague from GEBco to be his commander on the ground with the singular goal of increasing product releases. *This was one of the early fixes applied by one of the groups (operations) to increase their own success*.
- At some point during the process, the operations chief, or a group of senior executives had hired a well-known consulting firm to assess the problem. That project appeared to focus on identifying which individuals and R&D groups associated with Waverider were obstructing progress. The ground commander read the report to get up to speed about who his potential allies might be, who was an obstructionist, and who would likely challenge his authority and the authority of operations leadership in general.
- Many members of the original Waverider team were reassigned, breaking up historic R&D teams, disrupting informal leadership, and reducing mentoring and sharing of ideas within R&D. These actions contributed to the *unintended obstruction of R&D performance as a whole*²⁰, in both the present and future²¹.

²⁰ While obstructing key individuals appeared to be intended, the obstruction of core and overall R&D performance was an unintended outcome.

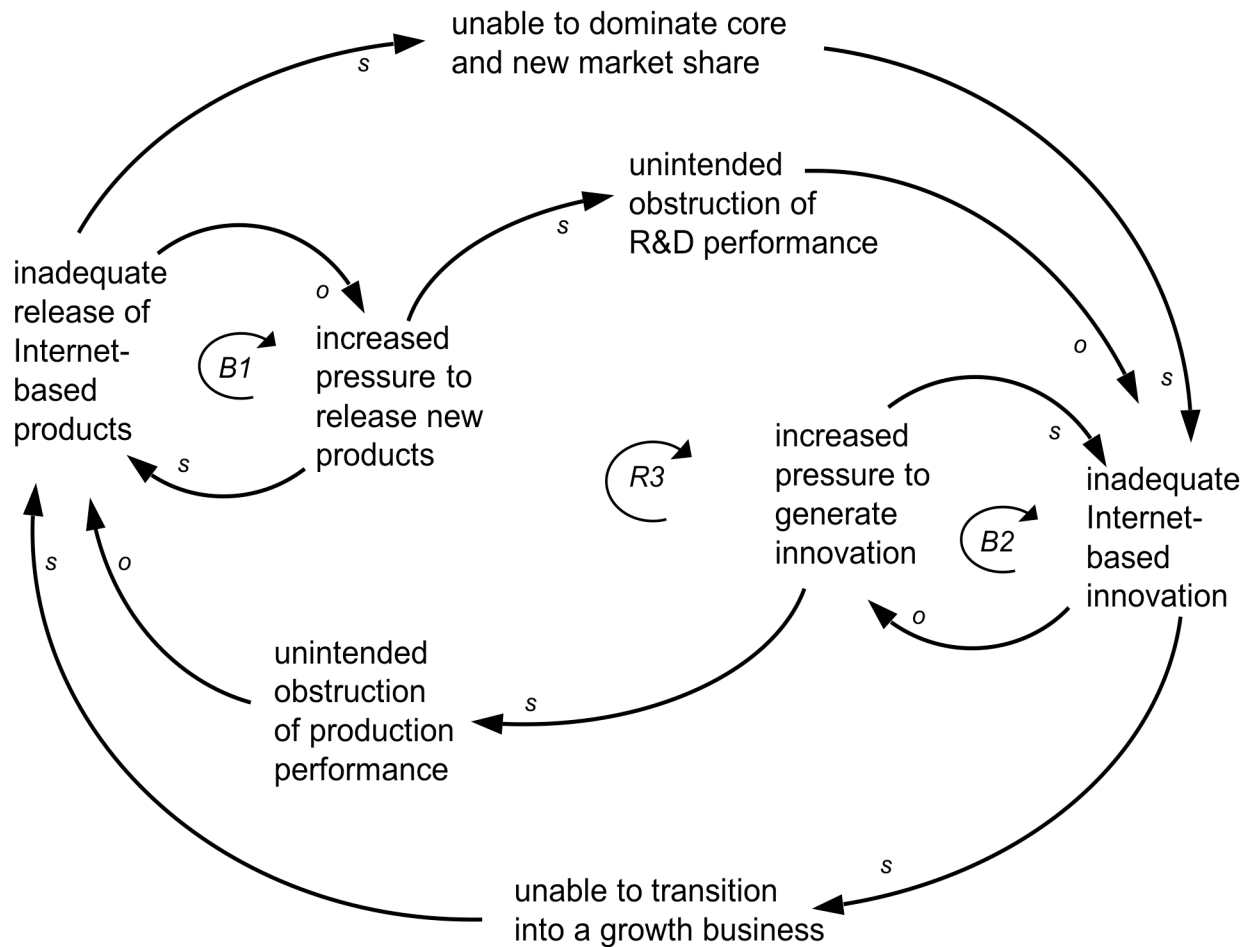


Figure 15. Accidental adversaries dynamic observed at CT, Inc.

- Some of the architects, in particular, were reassigned to concrete coding and testing tasks. Most notable among those was the mastermind of Waverider, who from all indications was the key individual identified as a threat to operations leadership. At the same time, the ground commander imported several former GEBco colleagues who he knew to be fast software coders and inserted them in place of, or above, architects. *These collectively constituted the first critical incident in the formation of an overt adversarial relationship between R&D and operations, and specifically between original members of the Waverider team and the new GEBco group.*

²¹ Given the delays between actions and their long-term systemic consequences.

- R&D was denuded of their visionary core by these actions and by migration of others into the pipeline (an attempt by some in R&D to fix R&D's, or Group B's, success). These factors resulted in *inadequate innovation of new Internet-based products*²².
- The lack of adequate new Internet-based products unintentionally obstructed operation's ability to get new Internet-based products to market. As a result, pressure continued to generate more new product releases and upgrades, regardless of their substance or quality. GEBco coders working in R&D appear to have been used to quickly complete and bring adaptive products to market.
- These cumulative actions and outcomes, and the vicious downward spiral of adversarial relationships and attrition they fueled increasing distanced and disconnected the company from the initial intentions of virtuous collaboration. Rather than moving into a period of sustainable growth, the company was locked into a self-reinforcing cycle in which it was *unable to dominate core and new market share* and was *unable to transition into a growth business*.

²² Production was being driven primarily by adaptive products based on Waverider technology.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Consulting as Both-And

As a consultant, my meaning of consulting is always being socially constructed with and for my clients. The CT, Inc. case represents a significant turning point, or perhaps a tipping point, in my conceptions of consulting practice, how people learn in organizations (organizational learning), how organizational dynamics change, how these work together to impact organizational effectiveness, and the relationship between quantitative and qualitative results. Wisdom gained from the CT, Inc. project is with me whenever I step into a new consulting relationship. That wisdom helps me to hold client systems and my own “not-knowing mind” with greater compassion, and directly impacts and informs:

- My sensitivity to adversarial and other archetypal dynamics.
- My ability to collaborate in sense-making with clients.
- The catalytic role I may play.

While I do not enter consulting relationships looking for accidental adversaries, my awareness of the dynamic and its clues help me to hear when my clients tell me about it and indicate their readiness to commit to transforming it. As a constructionist practitioner I enter into a reflexive relationship with clients in which my expertise and the clients’ expert knowledge of their organization and their needs informs my practice and, in turn, broadens my expertise, both in the context of that client system and as a whole. Ironically, most models of credibility are still based on a bounded expert-based conception.

Searching for Generativity in the Narrative

Meta-themes that emerged from the interviews wove a story of an organization that fell off the big wave of Internet innovation and transformation and couldn't refocus to get back on effectively or in time. This was especially poignant because this company had perhaps not fully realized the meaning and potential of the wave it had been riding almost singularly, for several years. It might have continued the ride had it not been thrown off course and into a "perfect storm;" a "maelstrom," as some described it, by an embedded pattern of counterproductive behavior known within the systems thinking lexicon as accidental adversaries. From a constructionist perspective, the breaking apart of key relationships created an environment of negation, dislocation, and dissociation from each other and the organization that led to an ongoing decline of relational being and organizational effectiveness.

Viewed through a generative lens, however, the narrative analysis and the systemic analysis also reflect the story of people within an organization who were struggling, albeit ineffectively, to create an innovative work culture and climate, and the leadership styles, work processes, and relationships to sustain it. Unfortunately, they lost focus and direction, devolving into a self-reinforcing pattern of counter-productive, adversarial behaviors and negative energy, characteristic of the accidental adversaries dynamic. Once set in motion through the dissolution of historic, new and self-renewing relationships critical for innovation, leaders either did not recognize it soon enough, or did not know how to correct it, or did not recognize the essential role of relational being in organizational effectiveness. At the core of their accidental adversaries dynamic was a breakdown of relationships and relational being.

Key to the CT, Inc. story is that even given the company's "stuck-ness" in a self-destructive adversarial dynamic, as described or alluded to by almost all interviewees, the interviews also revealed a deeply shared aspiration toward being innovative and successful. No one *wanted* to fail. Even those who expressed passionate dislike and distrust of the "other" groups within the company, almost universally had the same hopes, desires, and aspirations as the very people they distrusted or disliked most. Not evident were (a) a coherent shared vision, (b) leadership and management structures and strategies aligned to it, (c) awareness of the degree to which aspirations were shared, or (d) effective means for engaging in purposeful dialog within the organization, across, and among groups.

Making Recommendations--Then and Now

As mentioned in the Methodology section, at the time of the CT, Inc. OLH project, the sponsors wanted the final report to be submitted quickly, while the interview tapes were still with the transcriber. A senior executive who served as a close advisor to Andrew, implored me to submit recommendations for action, ...and to please

incorporate the actions that he wanted Andrew to take. He urged me to not engage in “irrelevant, long-winded academic mumbo jumbo,” and instead to, “be direct and hit Andrew between the eyes.” In March 2000, the report was submitted to Andrew and two other top executives in the form of a project Executive Summary. The following are excerpts from the original project report, which include the recommendations:

Introduction

CT, Inc. has gone through a miraculous turnaround. Within the engineering organization strong top-down leadership and the infusion of tenacious production-oriented management leveraged the company’s innovative technical capacity to snatch the company from the jaws of impending death. The turnaround was basically tactical in nature. CT, Inc.’s immediate concern was winning a number of consecutive tactical victories as much inside the organization as outside in order to regain credibility in the marketplace and particularly with its traditional customer base. Meeting quarterly production goals was both the driving vision and the chief motivating force fueling the turnaround.

One of the most important and most overlooked and under leveraged victories of the turnaround has been the clear sense of shared aspirations among the federation or triad of corporate leaders, developers, and producers. Regardless of their affiliation as managers, engineers, product developers, production managers, etc., all of the CT, Inc. employees with whom I spoke share a profound and deeply held sense of commitment, hopefulness and belief in the company’s mission and its top leaders. All genuinely want the company to prosper and grow.

Focus, Focus, Focus...

My recommendations for organizational change are based on the creation of a federation or triad. I recommend that you focus your efforts around the following three themes and structures:

1. Identify and develop talented production managers, visionary product developers, and unifying broker leaders.
2. Design and re-engineer work groups to enable the brokering of innovative product development and goal-directed production and execution efforts.

3. Review and revise existing processes by which work is planned (Product Plan of Record, roadmaps, etc.), outcomes are measured (performance standards, production goals, etc.), and contributions are recognized/rewarded to reinforce the federation of development and production orientations, and tactical goals with the strategic vision.

Divisive competition should be directed toward external rather than internal competitors. Creative tensions will always exist but these are healthy, albeit sometimes messy. “Robbing Peter to pay Bob” is a set-up for internal hemorrhaging and costly attrition. This is most notable in the current inability of employees to transfer to new initiatives within CT, Inc. without burning bridges and in the way R&D functions are performed.

Shifting Gears

Shifting from turnaround to growth has not been an easy black to white, tactical to strategic, production to innovation proposition at CT, Inc. Creating an organizational culture at CT, Inc. that sustains growth will require striking a balance between numerous opposing forces already discussed (product development and product execution; tactical and strategic thinking; managing and leading; etc.) and leveraging creative tensions for growth and innovation.

Several key changes must occur for this to happen:

- At the level of the individuals who make up the organization, gifted producers, developers, and brokers must be recognized, developed, and valued equitably.
- A federation among current polarized forces (product developers and producers) should be brokered and sustained to create a region of creative tension and growth.
- The dependence on a few technology and production heroes must shift to a sense of self-reliance, leadership, and personal mastery.
- CT, Inc.’s top leaders must articulate and effectively communicate a clear strategic vision to employees at all levels of the organization.

These efforts should build upon and reinforce the strongly shared aspirations and loyalties that already exist in the company.

Additional Recommendations

1. Find the most meaningful labels to attach to the three groups defined in this report. In my interviews the most positive terms I heard were technology and production leaders. Fewer identified the brokers but many groped for some way of describing these individuals and many recognized that they do exist within the organization.
2. Define and articulate the key values these forms of leadership embody. Publicly acknowledge both the critical functions/roles these performed in the turnaround and why each is essential to growth. All definitions should be pronounced from the top.
3. Identify leaders among each of these three broadly defined categories. Although this may be done via personality testing, like the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory (MBTI), I think self-identification would be just as effective if the categories all are clearly valued by the executive leadership. (It is evident from the interviews that employees know who these people are and are comfortable with this type of categorizing as long as equal values and the promise for equitable rewards are attached.)
4. Identify the company's relevant core processes (Product Plan of Record, Roadmaps, rewards/recognition, performance measures, etc.). Review and restructure these as needed to more broadly promote and recognize the federation/triad of leadership styles, work functions, and contributions required for sustainable growth.
5. Review relevant core processes for redundancy and potential elimination of bureaucratic controls that were necessary during the turnaround but slow growth-mode decision-making.
6. Andrew Meyer currently is viewed more as the company's technology hero than as its corporate leader. (Bill Keith was referred to during my interviews as the company's "production hero.") Expectations exist that Andrew will ride into Houston and magically set things straight. He should not do this. At least in the short-term, however, he does need to be a stronger presence in Houston to clearly empower leaders and set behavioral expectations so that employees further down in the organization will become more effective problem solvers and leaders. If he favors one of the identified groups over another, tensions will increase with fears of disenfranchisement. He needs to set clear expectations for cooperation and federation. And business processes and reward/recognition systems need to reinforce his actions.

7. Technology and Production leaders have been identified at the top ranks of the organization. It does not appear to me that top broker leader/s have been identified. Doing so will be key to modeling what this type of person is like. Furthermore, these top leaders should consciously model the growth triad. Bill Keith's promotion to COO was an excellent step in this direction.

8. Institute more bottom-up communications of the corporate vision and values. I did not observe an employee newsletter or any other universally recognized internal organ for communication. If one does not exist it should be created. And if it does, it should be used and promoted as a means for communicating broadly to employees at all levels of the organization.

Although this was well beyond the scope of my study, I am concerned that the pipeline segregates and marginalizes the company's R&D efforts. Operationally, the pipeline appears to take talent out of the mainstream of the organization. Not only does the core problem not change this way (i.e., integrating both innovation and production), but also the R&D function is not addressed effectively.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—From Awareness to Action

When I was asked to submit a *consultant's* report with recommendations, I was faced with three personal awarenesses that sparked my subsequent learning journey, which continues to this day. The process brought me face-to-face with the realizations that:

1. I did not yet have the skills or knowledge to help CT, Inc. *enact* the recommendations (an awareness I kept to myself at the time).
2. To live into my dream of working with organizations as an OD consultant, I would have to be able to inform and partner with clients in the *how* of change and transformation.
3. My graduate education in organizational theory, and earlier in biology, health sciences, and statistics, and even my exposure to systems thinking, had prepared me well to *assess what* to do, but not *how* to do it.

I still believe that the recommendations and thoughts shared in the original report were on target. I knew, however, that to be an effective, confident, high integrity OD consultant would require developing new knowledge and practices to help clients move beyond assessment, to effective, meaningful action.

Today, I would add that while I, as the learning historian, had heard almost to the person that interviewees shared essentially the same aspirations for the company; *they* did not know that and falsely assumed otherwise. Had I been aware of appreciative inquiry, I would have recommended that CT, Inc.'s leaders employ it to get groups and individuals talking directly. Additionally, I would have provided data about when the company had functioned at it's best. For example, when:

1. R&D teams and "enterprise" groups are allowed to work together over time towards a common purpose and set of objectives.
2. Mentoring and peer-to-peer relationships are supported and encouraged within and between individuals, teams, and divisions.
3. Top leaders stay focused on building upon and strengthening the company's core technologies, principles, and mission.
4. Power is shared broadly with fewer layers of management.
5. Managers and directors collaborate across functions to implement strategies.

Postscript...The Rest of the Story

Approximately one year after completion of the OLH project, Andrew became Chairman of the Board and the company hired a new CEO. Within two years after the project, Andrew left CT, Inc. to accept a new post as the CEO of a dynamic young company already in growth mode. During the same general time period, the senior executive responsible for changing the project interview list also was gone. That same year, the architect whose resignation had stimulated such strong emotions was brought back to the company. The company appears to have moved in a new direction, leveraging its core technical strengths to focus on customized consulting services rather than in-house R&D-focused software development and innovation. The company was relocated to a distinctly different geographic area, and appears to have adopted a business model of acquiring small companies and integrating them as enterprise units under the larger parent company.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Shifting Mindsets and Identities

Shifting from primarily focusing on the pattern of dysfunction -- the accidental adversaries dynamic -- toward a more balanced generative focus required asking myself two questions. First, the appreciative question, “What *do I* want to create through this work/dissertation?” And second, the key question used in the Baldrige National Performance Excellence model (NIST, 2001): “So what?” The latter gets to the questions of relevance and potential impacts and results. So, I asked myself the following two questions:

1. If I want to help people in organizations to identify, eliminate, and prevent the accidental adversaries dynamic (the “hook” that sells my work), then what is the generative solution or future that I *DO* want to help my clients create?
2. What’s the “So What?” in focusing this narrative on the evolution of the accidental adversaries dynamic, and the themes that narrated it? How will that serve my learning and that of others? How actionable would those findings be?

These two questions precipitated a significant refocusing for me, away from a deficit-based, problem-focused approach that is more analytical than actionable, toward a more inclusive, generative framework that is forward-thinking and, ultimately, more actionable. As articulated recently by Gervase Bushe (2007), “generativity” is an inclusive construction that creates a container in which to discuss and honor the relevance of the whole of human experience—the good, the bad, and the ugly. In this case, asking the two questions stated above, helped me to realize that both the limiting pattern or dynamic of accidental adversaries and the aspirations of being effective, feeling engaged and affirmed, and innovating are integral parts of the same story, and need to be woven together to honor the story in a way that serves a life-giving purpose.

PART II: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MEANING-MAKING

Part II provides a conceptual framework that draws from diverse paradigms in order to make sense of the CT, Inc. narrative in a way that draws upon insights from social construction and systems thinking, in particular. A review of selected relevant literature is intended to:

1. Develop a deeper understanding of the risk factors for the accidental adversaries dynamic, both at CT, Inc., and in human organizations in general.
2. Increase a sense of curiosity and openness that may reflexively support the positive image of cross-disciplinary collaboration proposed in Figure 1.
3. Introduce the social constructionist community to points of resonance with the systems thinking paradigm, and vice versa.
4. Elaborate on recent constructionist work that explores the nature of relational multi-being and most practiced ways of being (MPWoB) to:
 - a. Establish an understanding of how this may contribute to a deeper understanding of the high probability nature of adversarial dynamics in organizations, and
 - b. Suggest points of resonance between relational multi-being, temperament, and accidental adversaries.
5. Form an eclectic theoretical foundation from which to:
 - a. Revisit the CT, Inc. accidental adversaries dynamic, and
 - b. Begin to move beyond assessing to transforming.
6. Set the stage to present conceptual and practice models, in Part III, for transforming accidental adversaries dynamics.

Some of the foundational concepts surveyed in Part II include:

- Karl Weick's construction of "projects," and the difficulty that arises when external conditions change projects, when the projects are not defined in a way that is convincing to each of the groups involved, or when projects unintentionally conflict;

- John Rijsman’s work on the nature of relationships entered into by the Self, and the critical role these play in adversarial and collaborative relationships;
- The reflexive²³ nature of learning histories, as well as limitations of the OLH methodology as experienced in the CT, Inc. case, and the tension between the living forward demands of fast-paced workplaces and the slow-paced reflecting backward tendency of academic research (as reflected in the OLH method);
- Kenneth and Mary Gergen’s discussions of multi-being and most practiced ways of being and the roles these play in organizational dynamics;
- The role of personality and temperament at CT, Inc., in the accidental adversaries dynamic, and in the innovation process;
- A closer look at systems thinking focused on the “essences” of the discipline, its focus on double loop learning, and its potential for synergies with social construction; and
- Two models for constructing change and transformation, especially in the context of a business turnaround. These include: (a) Watkins & Mohr’s (2001) Continuity-Transition-Novelty model and William Bridges’ (2000 and 2003) distinction between change and transition, and his focus on the importance of holding the neutral, “not knowing” zone between endings and beginnings long enough for new ways of being and acting to emerge;

Defining the “Project” and the Roles of Tools and Identity

In his signature writing about tragic organizational failures that resulted in human fatalities, Karl Weick (Weick, 1999; Weick, 2001, pp. 97-147) uses the term “project” (Weick 1999, p. 137) in a unique way that applies to understanding the CT, Inc. case. His interest in these disasters is in understanding the distinction between theorizing that

²³ Reflexive is a term used in social construction to describe the relational nature of research and consulting. Constructionism suggests that the research and research subject, or consultant and clients, enter into a relationship in which both are changed by their actions and interactions. This is consistent with a relational view of learning, being, and reality, in general. The scientific method of empirical research attempts to control for this reflexive dynamic, often labeling such change as “erroneous,” bad research design, or a component of the “Hawthorne Effect.”

focuses on analyzing past events as a means of theorizing forwards, and the value of “theories that reflect ready-to-hand patterns...” (Weick, 1999). He describes the question he has been wrestling with in this way:

The specific problem I have been wrestling with is this: When a wildland fire explodes and threatens to overrun a crew of firefighters, the crew’s ability to outrun the fire improves if they drop their packs and tools so they can run faster, cover more ground, and escape to a safety zone. Given this relatively clear means to mitigate the risk of being burned, why is it then that, since 1990, 23 firefighters in four separate incidents refused to drop their tools when ordered to do so, were overrun by fire, and died with their tools beside them? They died within sight of safety zones that they could have reached had they been lighter and moved faster... (Weick, 1999, p. 136).

Based on his research on the behavior of firefighters, Weick begins to reconstruct his assumptions and research questions. He begins to address the relationship between *identity* and one’s ability to embrace a definition of the *project* they are being asked to work on:

I worry that in trying to understand these fatalities, I have missed what it means to be actively engaged in and holistically aware of a wall of fire that singles out a different set of relevancies than I imagine. Thus, when I ask why firefighters keep their tools and lose their lives, I may be posing the issue in a way that precludes a meaningful answer...If I want them to drop their tools, then I need to understand what *their* project is and then intervene in a manner that changes the project convincingly. If they are unable to see beyond their project of fire suppression, then perhaps the leader has to stop that project cold, create a defining moment, confirm that they face an exploding fire, and reset the project clearly and firmly as a race (Weick, 1999, p. 136).

Weick’s research on these failures addresses the role of identity in a person’s ability to function adaptively or to survive at all, in crises that require abrupt changes in their understanding of their ready-to-hand (in the moment) *project* that is essential for both their own survival and effectiveness, on the one hand, and the greater good, on the other. Weick begins to understand that asking firefighters to drop their firefighting tools might have been perceived as a nonsensical command, requiring them to (a) become untethered from their *raison d’être* as firefighters, and (b) behave in a way that is incongruent with the “project” of what firefighters do--*fighting* fires, not running away from them. Weick proposes that the chaos of the wildfire, the firefighters’ conception (in systems thinking terms, the “mental model”) of their “project” was aligned with their identities as firefighters. They did not hear or respond to a contradictory command. The

“project” of fleeing fire essentially did not compute, contradicting both their perceived project and their professional and personal identities:

It may seem odd to think that people keep their tools because they don't know how to drop them. However, it is perhaps oddest of all to imagine that the firefighters didn't drop their tools because they didn't think of their tools as separate from themselves. But that's what I think happened....The fusion of tools with identities means that, under conditions of threat, it makes no more sense to drop one's tools than it does to drop one's pride or one's sense of self. Tools and identities form a unity without seams or separable elements (Weick, 2007, p. 8).

Weick's research on organizational failures highlights the role of identity in decision-making, and in actions as basic as how one defines the nature of the project in which they are engaged. His work suggests that:

1. A person's role identity impacts how they define a project and what tools they are most likely to hold onto in a crisis.
2. A critical role of leadership is to effectively define the project, be able to change it as needed, and, in those cases, to communicate the new project convincingly.
3. How leaders define the project can have life or death implications.
4. People who are able to drop their tools quickly *and* adapt to a new project have the greatest chances for survival and success.

This dynamic of incongruous or conflicting projects appeared to be at the heart of the accidental adversaries dynamic witnessed at CT, Inc. Weick's theories about the links between identity, tools, and projects are key to making sense of the CT, Inc. narrative: specifically, the central roles that negated identities and mismatched projects played in the ability of the company's leaders to effectively transition from the project of turning the company around to the desired project of being a growth company. When software architects and R&D leaders were pulled out of the teams they had worked for years to develop and were asked, instead, to write code, they were essentially given a new project that was (a) completely incongruous with their professional identities as architects and as “creators” and “connectors” in the R&D process, and (b) out of alignment with the project they thought they were to be working toward: growing Internet-based innovation to support growth. Their project was a direct mismatch with the perceived project of the cadre of command-and-control operations and production leaders who had latched onto the project of ending the turnaround phase by shipping new products, at any human cost. It appears that in his frustration with the inability to transition into growth, the CEO, whose own identity and most practiced ways of being

were most similar to the R&D leaders, sent a mixed message that his operations leaders about what the project was. Thus, R&D leaders may have believed the PR story that clearly defined the project as growth, a project well aligned to an R&D identity; while operations leaders and managers heard a clear order/project to pursue an end to the turnaround like “heat-seeking missiles” that spare no human cost, a project well aligned to their identities as operations and production leaders. Unfortunately, the ultimate cost was loss of those individuals most needed to ensure growth, the heart of the R&D enterprise.

As was addressed earlier, as CT, Inc.’s new CEO stepped into an organizational structure that was ripe for the accidental adversaries dynamic. In fact, the dynamic had already taken shape at the level of noticeable behaviors prior to his appointment. In an interview I conducted with him on August 20, 2009, he discussed the challenge of leading a business turnaround, and alluded to the issue of what the project was—turnaround, growth, or transition:

“A fundamental problem at CT, Inc. was that the culture was not transparent. For some reason it was hidden. There was the ‘CT nod.’ After meetings people criticized, but did not speak up in meetings...People have one turnaround in their careers that they can get through; it forces you to understand what and where true value is. You need an unreasonable belief that you’ll succeed. John Chambers said that two-thirds of turnarounds do not succeed. I believed I’d win. I learned from everything I did. I was happy to do one turnaround, but not again....My key mistake was assuming that CT, Inc. was a growth business, which it was not.”

At the time of the OLH project, leaders spoke about transitioning from turnaround to growth, and the challenges involved. There was a stated *awareness* that different phases require different forms of leadership, if not different leaders. *Dislodging* the command-and-control cadre of leaders and managers who had been installed to lead the brass knuckles turnaround was another matter.

Meyer, the CEO, indeed learned from his experience with CT, Inc. and went on to enjoy far greater success as an effective CEO in his next venture. Karl Weick (1999) addresses the rich learning field afforded by interruptions and thwarted efforts:

When everyday projects suffer a breakdown of action, theorists and practitioners alike share a common vantage point from which they can glimpse thwarted potentialities embedded in networks of projects. This is not just warmed-over action research. Instead, it is basic research in which the workings of ready-to-hand engagement become equally visible to people with quite different interests. Furthermore, attempts to describe the common referent in a meaningful way encourage continuing dialogue dedicated to getting the account “right” (p. 140).

This statement speaks to the shift in the original OLH research *project* itself. Initially, the OLH project was to be the study of a past success, with the goal of further reinforcing the real story, as well as the constructed PR story: i.e., that the Waverider project was a success of both technology and leadership that had and was continuing to fuel CT, Inc.'s transition from turnaround to growth. That is the project that the sponsors had agreed to. While the present-at-hand OLH methodology is geared to learning from organizational successes, the ready-to-hand interview project quickly shifted to a study of a company's thwarted efforts to shift from turnaround to growth. In this respect, the OLH project and the company faced similar challenges and contradictions between how the project was defined (present-at-hand), and how it was lived (ready-to-hand and unready-to-hand).

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror--Dropping My Tools

Because of the emotionally charged moment of organizational life that I stepped into, the only viable approach was to drop my tools and jump into the river of emergent process. No matter how hard I tried to define the inquiry project as the exploration of a past success story of Waverider, the unfolding narrative focused on the “obstinate obstacle” of accidental adversaries. A *technological* success...yes; an *organizational* success...no. In fact, redirecting questions back to the success story tended to highlight fractures, whereas allowing an authentic story to unfold living forward into the inquiry process, highlighted wishes for success and core values, and acknowledged the importance of the *other* group. Maintaining a forward stance tended to move in the direction of appreciation, forgiveness, and possibility. Reflecting backward tended to lead back to blame and anger.

Prior to conducting the first round of interviews, I'd developed a useful mental image, or metaphor, for the OLH interview questions that made it easier to drop my tools and improvise once in process. The guiding image was to think of the questions as the five spires of a cathedral:

1. The Waverider / e-Rider project,
2. Interviews with people who either had been involved in it since its inception, were directly involved in it at the time of the interviews, or had played key roles but were no longer working on the project.
3. The organizational side of the story, not the technology itself,
4. A successful technology breakthrough (even when the organizational dynamics could not be defined as a “success”), and
5. A final question used in all interviews, “is there anything you think I should know about, or that you want me to know and that I have not asked you about?” A general timeframe,

The five spires made it possible to improvise around a well-defined theme, much like a jazz artist might improvise from five basic notes or chords. In a serendipitous manner, the spires allowed for my reflexive transformation into an “accidental social constructionist.” In the case of the CT, Inc. OLH project, the accident was generative in nature.

Paradoxically, while a goal of the scientific method is to control for extraneous variables, including the impact of being studied (the Hawthorne Effect), in the case of the CT, Inc. OLH study, maintaining the bounded subject-object construction of empirical research would have forced the story to fit the design. By letting go of those constraints, the story shaped the nature of the inquiry.

Identity and Relationships of The Self

For those not familiar with social construction, the concepts in this section may seem confusing. A key to reading them is to be aware that to constructionists meanings are not fixed or universal attributes of a objective reality that exist “out there” to be discovered through objective means. Constructionism instead suggests that we form meanings through socially constructed lenses that exist in each person and in groups. These lenses are shaped and formed in key relationships early in our lives, some of which may remain fixed or frozen and others that continue to emerge. The central point is that constructionists do not suggest that nothing exists, or that nothing means anything; they simply assert that the process that individuals use for determining meanings do not come directly, unfiltered from the object to us. Instead, they suggest that the meanings and identities that we attach to people and things outside of our Self goes through a socially-mediated sorter that helps us make meaning:

Meaning, by definition, is a referential world that emerges from the coordinated activity between subjects. However, human subjects can internalize their social co-ordinations in memory and reproduce them later alone. When they do this (and they do it all the time), it looks as if they “discover” or “read”, as individual subjects, the meaning of the object as if it was “already there”, intrinsically present “in the object”. (Rijsman, 1997, p. 143).

The internalized social “co-ordinators” referred to above as “memories” are known as Alters and will be discussed later in this section.

John Rijsman, a constructionist social psychologist, discusses relationships within and between Self and Other that are integral to understanding the relational nature of the accidental adversaries archetype. Understanding of these basic human dynamics helps make sense of the intrapersonal and relational nature of the accidental adversaries dynamic and of its archetypal nature. Rijsman discusses two components of Self: *Ego* and *Alters*. Ego is defined as the subject who is the “owner” of Self:

...Self by definition, is the person who belongs to the perceiving subject—let us call this perceiving subject Ego—and Other, by definition, is somebody like Self, but not Self (because whatever the particular difference, it is in any case not a person who belongs to Ego, but to some other subject....The word Alter denotes any other subject with whom Ego interacts and which results in the inter-subjective or Ego/Alter construction of meaning...” (Rijsman, 1997, p. 141).

Thus, in constructionist psychology, the meaning-making Self is seen as an internal social coordination between two parts of the Self—Ego and Alter. The word Alter denotes any other subject with whom Ego interacts and which results in the inter-

subjective or Ego/Alter construction of meaning. Alters are reflected in the individual facets of Gergen's (2009) conception of multi-being (the individual lobes, or facets, of the butterfly's wing that are formed and shaped in relationship). Conflicts often occur when one individual's multi-being either conflict internally (in the Self) or do not coordinate well with those of an Other. Alters are socially constructed through foundational relationships--e.g., with mother, father, environment, siblings—and are akin to “my child self,” “my adult self,” “my loving parent self,” “my judgmental parent self,” etc. Alters of the Self “are not the owners, but those who help the owner, [the] Ego, with the social construction of Self” (Rijsman, 2008, p. 1). Individuals employ a process of internal coordination between Ego and Alter to (a) determine the meanings of Self and Other (Rijsman 2008, p. 141), (b) determine who is an Other (i.e., not the Self), and (c) assess whether a particular Other is one who benefits and affirms the Self's (Ego and Alters) existence, or one who is perceived as a threatening Other. Thus, Rijsman suggests that “Others...are the constructed objects of comparison with Self...” (Rijsman, 2008, p. 1).

This social filtering is an ongoing internal dialog between the Ego and Alter, “products which can be sediments in one's memory” (1997, p. 143). *Others* who are deemed to be beneficial to the Self, a member of the Self's in-group, or not a present or future threat are most likely to be viewed as another equal or related *Subject*. This results in a high likelihood for relationships of the following types:

Self-Self

Subject-Subject

I – You

Self/Subject + Self/Subject = Us

Conversely, those Others who are deemed to be threatening or whose facets of multi-being conflict with our own are most likely to be viewed as Others, or Objects, implying a boundary and greater distance from the Self. These may play out in a number of relational configurations that include, but are not limited to:

Self-Other

Subject-Object

I – It

Self/Subject + Other/Object = Us ↔ Them

The book, *Your Boss is Not Your Mother: Creating Autonomy, Respect, and Success at Work* (DesRoches, 1995), addresses workplace relationships that fall into the latter category. He focuses specifically on what happens in the workplace when Alters clash or are incited in some way, especially by employee-boss relationships, but also in relationships with colleagues, supervisees, and others at work. (The book might also have been called, *Your Boss is Not Your Father*, or *Your Boss is Not Your Daughter*, etc.) Affinity groups and in-groups form between the Self and Others who are seen as Subjects or as being like or supportive of the Alters. Individuals use the same processes as those described above to assess which Others are members of their in-group and which are members of out-groups.

These relational dynamics are a compelling reason for helping members of organizations or groups to explore shared aspirations, values, and dreams, and why doing so is of such strategic importance, not just a “feel good” exercise. The result, or sum of exploring and articulating a coherent shared aspiration, or vision, across an organization or within a team may far exceed the sum of individual aspirations, and creates a *pull towards* a positive construction of Us, as opposed to reinforcing the *repelling energy* of Us ↔ Them dynamics. For example, in the CT, Inc. interviews, the fact that I, as the learning historian, knew that interviewees all spoke passionately about essentially the same aspirations, held little meaning when compared to what might have been accomplished if interviewees had interviewed each other instead, as is done in the appreciative inquiry approach. Clarity about shared aspirations moves groups toward a positive Us construction, largely comprised of appreciative Self-Self and Subject-Subject coordination that is not dominated by Self-Other, Self-Object relationships as was the case at CT, Inc., and which are typical of accidental adversaries dynamics, in general.

Identity and Reflexivity in Learning Histories

Reflexivity is a term used liberally throughout this paper. Like two²⁴ other esoteric philosophical terms—*ontology* (what a person, group, religion, etc. believes to be real or to exist), and *epistemology* (how knowledge about what is real is acquired by them)—one is challenged to find a definition of *reflexivity* that does not contain a form of the word *reflexive* in the definition. While there are many potential contextual definitions, the following fits well with the spirit and intention of the meta-narrative of this paper. In this excerpt from *An Invitation to Social Construction* (Gergen, 1999), Kenneth Gergen discusses the German scholar Hans Georg Gadamer’s (1975, p. 238 and 341) conception of a *horizon of understanding as a reflexive process*:

²⁴ *Hermeneutic* is a fourth philosophical term peppered liberally throughout constructionist discourse, and often used without first being defined. Gergen, however, offers an uncharacteristically brief definition, “the study of interpretation,” in Gergen, 1999, p 143. Equally succinct definitions of ontology and epistemology may be found in Gergen (1999) on pages 81 and 9, respectively.

One's horizon can only be expanded, proposes Gadamer, by joining with the text in a dialogic relationship. Through this dialogic relation a fusion of horizons is accomplished. Required in this dialogic effort is first a suspension of one's own forestructure of understanding; one must set the forestructure aside and let the text ask its own questions. As the text begins to present itself in its newness, one places its meaning "in relation with the whole of one's own meanings." The dialogic relationship is one in which one's own meanings and the meanings of the text are engaged in a conversation. In the successful conversation they, "are thus bound to one another in a new community...[it is a] transformation into a communion, in which we do not remain what we were." In effect, the fusion of horizons takes place in the interchange between reader and text. The result is not a correct or accurate reading...but a new creation. The successful interpretation, then, brings forth new worlds (Gergen, 1999, p. 144).

This paper intentionally weaves together the multiple, reflexive learning histories that took place over time: i.e., the initial CT, Inc. OLH project; the education of a learning historian prior to the project, during, and since; the transformation of an OD practitioner and researcher that was sparked by the inquiry process; and that of the reader, whose practice may be impacted by this unfolding story and its grounding in and articulation of theory.

As has been discussed previously, philosophers and others (Heidegger, 1962; Weick 1999; Eisenberg, 2006; James, 1975) have highlighted Kierkegaard's existential observation that "While past experience is understood reflectively, life is lived in a forward direction." Social constructionist research shortens the gap by acknowledging and potentiating reflexivity in research design and practice. This is a key point of departure between OLH and the social constructionist-based AI methodology, and represents a key aspect of the ready-to-hand shift in the CT, Inc. project methodology when the "project" changed (i.e., when the new interview list was added). In the OLH method, the learning historian/s and consultant/s (who may be the same or different players) enter with a prescribed interview protocol. While the same is true of the AI interview process, the key difference is that in AI the interviewer and subject are one in the same.

If one views the OLH approach from the contrasting temporal perspectives of theorizing done by *reflecting backwards* and that done *living forward* (Heidegger 1962; Weick 1995, 1999), the implicit assumption regarding the linearity of learning over time may be seen as problematic. A key point of tension and a potential source of conflict for consultants applying the OLH approach in real time, expressed by Castleberg, above, is that the organizational learning it potentially yields may be obsolete by the time it is available:

- Managers typically want to get things done quickly, in a way that best achieves organizational objectives. They may be driven by a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors ranging from the satisfaction of a job well done and a sense of responsibility and commitment to their group, to earning a bonus for meeting quarterly goals, to earning a promotion.
- Consultants want to help their clients achieve their objectives within the client's necessary timeframe. They also want to obtain strong testimonials from present and former clients, as their livelihoods are inextricably linked to their client's satisfaction.
- Academicians want to advance the quality of knowledge and teaching. Young faculty and researchers, especially, also need to publish work deemed as original and scholarly by the editorial boards of academic journals. Their interests are institutional, and are two steps removed from the client organization, unless they themselves are also the consultants.

Ironically, as was the case with the CT, Inc. OLH upon which this paper is based, the reflexive nature of the interview process by which data are collected, itself begins to create change and new awareness in the interviewees and the historian alike. Chances are that by the time the official OLH report is issued and distributed, and facilitated dialog sessions occur, related changes have already occurred, or conditions have changed.

Appreciative inquiry is an approach that merges the front and back ends of OLH by changing the role of historian to "process maven" and coach, and the role of sponsors, and even interviewees, to historians and facilitators. As a reflexive approach, AI suggests that the act of inquiry itself creates and is change. The OLH method separates inquiry, learning, and change sequentially in time, imposing a false linearity, in the fashion of, and perhaps in service to proper scientific method. This also may be an unintended artifact of attempting to create a single methodology to meet the incongruous goals of assessment / program *valuation* (i.e., the need to measure learning and report to funding organizations on the ROI of the Center's services) and client-based organizational action learning.

Weick suggests that the theories that matter most are developed in the process of living forward. The conundrum for the MIT group, which developed the OLH model, may have been in the inherent objectivist, "reflecting backward," nature of traditional academic research and assessment, and the living forward nature of organizational life and needs of the client systems being studied by the consultants who were called upon to validate the OLH methodology.

Limitations of the Organizational Learning History Approach

By its very nature, using the OLH methodology at CT, Inc. brought me face-to-face with the limits of hands-off approaches to organizations and organizational learning. While the goals of the OLH methodology are similar to social constructionist approaches to learning and change— to stimulate learning and shared meaning-making through inclusive dialog —the methodology itself had its feet in multiple paradigms. The ultimate goal of the OLH process is to facilitate double-loop learning derived through dialog and collective sense-making. While the intent of the process had a forward living feel, it employed research methods that reflected back in order to theorize forward. Weick (1999, p. 134) quotes William James who discusses this conundrum:

We have to live to-day by what truth we can get today, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood....When new experiences lead to retrospective judgments, using the past tense, what these judgments utter was true, even though no past thinker had been led there. We live forwards, a Danish thinker has said, but we understand backwards. The present sheds a backward light on the world's previous processes. They may have been truth-processes for the actors on them. They are not so for one who knows the later revelations of the story (James, 1975, p. 107)

Given that the OLH method was developed at MIT, an institution known for the strength of its quantitative and empirical methods, the method crossed and challenged paradigms. It is interview-based, and employs narrative analysis and facilitated dialog to make sense and learn from past events. As such, it is perhaps a distant cousin to social construction and appreciative inquiry. Where it differs significantly from dialogic, constructionist approaches like appreciative inquiry is in the locus of control of inquiry and reporting. In practice, this refers to who *typically* (a) conducts interviews and (b) interprets, or attaches meaning to data / results. In the OLH approach, the learning historian is the central interviewer, data collectors, and meaning-maker (Kleiner & Roth, 1995).

Another key difference is the assumptions underlying each about how learning happens. OLH is a cognitive model. The focus of an OLH is to study factors (also known as “variables”), especially those high leverage variables that led to a past success, so they can be learned and applied to a future initiative. An underlying assumption is that what led to success in the past will also lead to success in the future. A key purpose of AI process is to create the future state through the process of inquiry itself. It does so reflexively and directly, with the interviewees and process owners themselves, serving as historians, data collectors, and meaning-makers. While the OLH process incorporates dialog, it does so only after the interviews have been conducted, data have been analyzed, and the learning history report has been written and distributed. While it is the intention for interviewees to then continue to construct meaning from the results,

they do so in a *secondary* way, whereas in social construction, they are *primary* meaning makers.

As has been discussed, fundamental differences exist between OLH and social constructionist approaches about how meaning is created, what is knowable, how knowledge can be used, and the proximity of meaning and time. The differences *appear* to reflect intentional lines of ontological distinction. However, another possibility also exists. What if what appears to be the result of studied intentionality and foundational differences of ontology, are artifacts of experimental methods and pragmatics, the “not quite soup yet” blending of theoretical constructs in the theorizing process itself? Raising this sort of question is consistent with the focus of this paper, accidental adversaries.

On October 23, 2010, I spoke via Skype with Marty Castleberg, a member of the original Learning History Pioneers Group, to learn more about why the creators adopted and adapted narrative analysis, and what his experiences had been in applying the methodology. Castleberg, now a writer and musician in San Francisco, enjoyed reminiscing, and also shared some key insights that he had not discussed earlier. The following are key excerpts from our conversation:

MC: “George Roth and Art Kleiner drove the development of the method. What I did at Harley was a bastardization of the OLH process. Harley just wanted help.”

JJ: “What did you add or drop from the process model?”

MC: “The turnaround for the OLH was two years. It was more generalizable to the company as a whole than to the group I was working with. So, I went into meeting and did reflective notes. The thing is that the OLH method didn’t reflect what I knew about action research until the group worked with a facilitator. Daniel Kim and John Shibley need to take the OLH document to redefine the conversation.”

JJ: “In social construction, action science has a specific meaning. What does that term mean to you?”

MC: “It means that you’re working in collaboration with your client to define and solve a problem. The OLH study is like a centrifuge. It gives you a rich core that you’re mining. The OLH can give some generalizability to what’s going on. The direct stuff (i.e., Reflective Notes he wrote and distributed monthly) I was doing in the group I worked with wasn’t meant to be the change stuff. My notes contained (1) two pages of themes, (2) a section of learning questions, and (3) the undiscussables. The OLH

encompassed the whole organizations. Reflective Notes were a microcosm of the OLH level.”

MC: “I actually had a conflict with the OLH people. OLH was cooked up by an academic and a writer... They needed the consultants [to bring awareness and credibility to the approach]. My goal was ‘what would be helpful?’ to my client. That’s what I was getting paid for. Harley didn’t care about generalizable knowledge. Remember, the full OLH process has a two-year turnaround. It doesn’t unless the facilitator is on board. In other words, when you’re handing the interviews around so people can comment on what others have said. That elevates the conversation. My partner, Shibley, said that 99 percent of what we did at Harley was to help them make meaning. It was the collective conversation that was important.”

In an email correspondence, dated October 28, 2010, Castleberg added the additional reflection:

“I had one more thought. I would pool all of the [Reflective Notes] together at the end of each calendar year so that the group we were working with could reflect on their practice. I would try to identify patterns that had emerged over the year. This created a third feedback loop for them to go along with the larger [Learning History] and the monthly [Reflective Notes]. You can see a pattern emerging: I created things at regular intervals so that there was always a feedback loop coming back to them so they could assess their practice—they never became too comfortable. My job was to keep them conscious of their actions.”

This dialog highlighted two key similarities between Castleberg’s and my experiences with OLH. *First*, Castleberg was essentially saying that the process, as prescribed, doesn’t come alive until the interviews are done, the report has been written and distributed, and a facilitator comes on site to engage members of the organization in a dialog about the interviews. With the exception of the internal contact and the initial interviews, inclusive dialog and meaning-making are not scheduled to occur until the last phase of the process. Both of us experienced this as problematic. *Second*, implicit in Castleberg’s comments is the “out-of-sync-ness” of a two-year turnaround with on the ground decision horizons. By the time sense-making dialog occurs, meanings, circumstances, and needs have surely changed. Clients want to know what to do *now*, not weeks, months, or even a year in the future. For this reason, the relevance and helpfulness of learning that can be derived from the OLH process is questionable. Because of the long turnaround, dissemination of interview data for dialogic creation of shared meaning is out-of-sync with timeliness of learning.

Alluded to in the transcript above, key differences exist between the interests and motivations of academic researchers who work in academic institutions, and managers and OD consultants who work in organizational settings. Developing relevant, actionable methodologies in academe for application in organizations raises questions about validity and goodness of fit.

Organizational change research and theory development present some tricky challenges. Whereas academic institutional demands and time horizons tend to be long and knowledge-focused, managers and OD practitioners work within organizational frameworks with significantly shorter timelines and reward systems that reward decision-making, tangible results, and quick response. Thus, a creative tension may exist between the needs and motivations of academic researchers /theorists, OD practitioners (and practitioners who are also academic researchers, as well as researchers who would like to sell consulting and/or training products), and organizational leaders and managers. Each has its own goals and motivations, some of which may overlap or work in synergy, while others create tension and practical challenges. These may have been factors in the development, application, and dissemination of the OLH methodology. While OLH lent itself well to the rigors of academic scholarship, and held potential for publication, the methodology may not fit well with the input-output model of the economics of the firm.

Rather than negating the OLH approach wholesale as being modernist and/or positivist, another possible lens is that of “most practiced ways of being” and the need for certain types and forms of outcomes. MIT researchers needed to publish scholarly theories with quantifiable results. OD practitioners and organizational managers need to produce results that work quickly.

The OLH methodology is based on a core set of assumptions that tend to prevail in both academe and business:

- Learning is primarily a cognitive process
- Action is primarily motivated by cognitive knowledge
- Correct knowledge is highly correlated to right action
- Learning about past successes translates to future actions/successes

Organizations that need to both be innovative— to come up with great ideas— *and* successfully productize and produce things (e.g., hardware, software, dust mops, etc)— simultaneously live in multiple paradigms, requiring seamless integration and navigation. The innovation process itself (Merrill, 2008) calls into question the validity of approaches to change that are either (a) 100 percent post-modern approaches to change or (b) self-consciously “not positivist” and “not modernist” in any way.

In his 1999 article, “That’s Moving: Theories That Matter,” Karl Weick discusses “an important disjunction for theorists—the gap between living forward with flawed foresight and understanding backward with equally flawed but mischievously seductive hindsight” (Weick, 1999, p. 134). Traditional academic research, the form typically deemed worthy of publication in scholarly journals, heavily favors hindsight-based research. Even the analysis component of narrative *analysis* requires hindsight to identify and make sense of themes. The OLH methodology was developed by academics in order to provide practitioners with a sound approach to double-loop learning. Castleberg’s comments on his experience as a member of the Learning History Pioneer’s Group (OD consultants who were asked to conduct OLH interviews and write learning history documents in their client organizations) highlight core problems of usefulness implied in Weick’s statement above: (a) the potential for an accidental adversaries dynamic to occur between OD academicians and OD practitioners around the issue of usefulness, (b) the challenge of developing a methodology in an environment that favors hindsight as a most practiced way of being, for use in an environment that most values foresight.

In his Leadership and Personal Mastery Workshop, Peter Senge asks participants to raise their hands. Then, he asks anyone who had not graduated from high school to put their hands down; of course, all hands remained in the air. Next, he asked those with an undergraduate degree only to lower their hands. Then, he asked those with two years of graduate school to lower theirs. To the rest of us with our hands still in the air, he said, “*You* have the most to unlearn!” While there is truth in this statement, it also highlights the role of most practiced ways of being. The most practiced ways of being that led to creation of the OLH methodology were primarily those of academe.

Three key goals of the OLH method are to: (a) stimulate sense-making dialog among people who participated in the project being studied, and possibly also members of the broader organization, (b) integrate both cognitive and affective sense-making and learning, especially regarding what made the past project a success, and (c) promote ongoing dialog and “double loop” learning. Bradbury and Mainemelis (2001, p. 340) describe it this way:

“The learning history is designed to allow recognition of what is taken for granted, and, based on ensuing conversations from multiple perspectives, to facilitate the dialogical generation of a new future. Conversations are facilitated through dissemination of the text among the primary original audience about whom it’s written, and, as importantly, among those who wish to build on the learnings in a new venture but who may be located in other domains.”

While the approach was innovative for its time, in its use of narrative analysis and facilitated dialog for shared meaning-making, it had three key limitations that were likely responsible, at least in part, for OLH's not gaining broader influence:

- First, and perhaps most compellingly, it was developed by academics for use by practitioners. This creates the potential for most practiced ways of being, and other key cultural and temporal factors to be out-of-sync: a central cause of the accidental adversaries dynamic. The potential for different most practiced ways of being to result in conflict is addressed by the Gergens (Gergen, 2009; Gergen & Gergen, 2009).
- A second limitation, derived from the first, is the time delay embedded in the OLH process between the past event, formal organizational learning, and present action. This structural delay, over time²⁵, can result in data and learning that are not useful or may even be irrelevant to current ready-to-hand projects. A two-year turnaround, which may be required to satisfy institutional paradigm²⁶ standards, may be too long to yield results considered useful or perceived as satisfying return on investment (ROI) requirements in organizational environments. This was the case at CT, Inc., where pressure was applied to write a report virtually the moment the last interview was conducted and before the interview tapes were transcribed. Castleberg experienced similar pressures.
- Third, the OLH methodology is complex, linear, and expert-driven, requiring a highly trained, highly specialized consultant. Castleberg and most others who have been involved in developing, applying, and writing about the method have PhD degrees and have conducted scholarly research. There is a prescribed timing and format for writing an OLH report that is embedded in the middle of the OLH process cycle. The entire process is essentially linear, starting with a series of exploratory interviews to derive a project focus and draft the pre-determined interview protocol. This is most consistent with a linear-sequential, cognitive model of learning and knowledge development characteristic of the academic institutional paradigm, and often at odds with an organizational paradigm.

²⁵ This refers to the delays in systems.

²⁶ Faculty and academic researchers gain credibility through institutional bodies responsible for maintaining disciplinary traditions and standards of scholarship. Once an article is written, it is subjected to peer review and publication deadlines. Businesses, on the other hand, have an organizational mindset, that is more market and survival-driven. Organizational timeframes are significantly shorter and less hierarchical than those in academe.

These limitations are captured in statements made by Karl Weick that address the conundrum of understanding backwards (academe) and living forwards (organizations):

...People believe ahead of the evidence. Things that seemed truthful at the time later, seen retrospectively, seem only relatively true; the truth we live by today may be tomorrow's falsehood, and the earlier "story" keeps changing based on later revelations...

I want to argue that one reason we theorize poorly about what matters most is because we use discourse that makes it hard to capture living forward. Living forward is a blend of thrownness, making do, journeys stitched together by faith, presumptions, expectations, alertness, and actions—all of which may amount to something, although we will know for sure what that something may be only when it is too late to do much about it. Unsettled, emergent, contingent living forward contrasts sharply with our backward-oriented theoretical propositions that depict that living as settled, causally connected, and coherent after the fact. The compact causal structures that epitomize our theories are artifacts of retrospect rather than narratives of prospect. And that is part of the reason those theories fail to move us. Theorists who are able to narrow the gap between understanding and living, or between the present-at-hand stance of the spectator and the ready-to-hand stance of the agent, are more likely to generate work that is judged to be moving.

In many ways, the OLH is akin to a proprietary product in that it requires specific skills and tools primarily in the toolkit of academicians. On the other hand, an approach like appreciative inquiry is less proprietary in that it is more ready-to-hand, accessible, and results-focused. It can be applied effectively with minimal training and does not require the services of a consultant, although it is aided considerably in partnership with a consultant-advisor-coach. While currently popular "Performance Excellence" (a euphemism for Quality Improvement) approaches like LEAN and Six Sigma also require training and a high level of skill, their methods are derived from the training received by most MBAs and even by undergraduate engineering and management students, and are more familiar to most business environments. Key to the wide acceptance of LEAN and Six Sigma may be that certification is practice-based and not academic. In the case of the OLH, learning is filtered through the perspective of the learning historian, and is analyzed prior to dialog. In the CT, Inc. project, I conducted all interviews, and heard similar stories of caring and concern from almost every interviewee. I was the only person who was privy to the immediate experience of sensing that these employees all cared deeply about the success of the organization, regardless of whose list they were on. By contrast, appreciative inquiry essentially collapses the first and second phases of the OLH, with dialog and analysis happening firsthand and simultaneously throughout the four-phase process. With OLH, by the time participants hear (or hear about) each

other's stories, these are secondhand accounts, having been filtered through the historian's perceptions.

Weick (2001, p. 462) identifies "seven properties of sense-making" that are helpful in teasing out some of the subtle challenges presented by the OLH method. Two of the seven—Retrospect and Ongoing Projects--best reflect the limitations that Castleberg and I experienced with the OLH approach:

Retrospect: The perceived world is actually a past world in the sense that things are visualized and seen before they are conceptualized. Even if the delay is measured in microseconds, people know what they have done only after they do it. Thus, sense-making is influenced by what people notice in elapsed events, how far back they look, and how well they remember what they were doing. When people refuse to appreciate the past and instead use it casually, and when they put their faith in anticipation rather than resilience, then their acts of retrospect are shallow, misleading, and halfhearted, and their grasp of what is happening begins to loosen.

Ongoing projects: Experience is a continuous flow, and it becomes an event only when efforts are made to put boundaries around some portion of the flow, or when some interruption occurs. Thus, sense-making is constrained not only by past events, but also by the speed with which events flow into the past and interpretations become outdated. The experience of sense-making is one in which people are thrown into the middle of things and forced to act without the benefit of a stable sense of what is happening. These handicaps are not attributable to personal shortcomings but rather to the stubborn, ongoing character of experience. When people lose their ability to bound ongoing events, to keep pace with them by means of continuous updating of actions and interpretations, or to focus on interrupting conditions, they begin to lose their grasp.

In this case, retrospect is subtle in that the OLH satisfies much of what Weick describes; however, the structure of the process itself imposes a focus on informed anticipation more than resilience. While its creators may have intended the reverse, the long separations in time between the event, interviews, analysis, dialog, and future events, yield data that are historically interesting, but may no longer be relevant to the current business environment or ready-to-hand projects. While two years is a short horizon in most institutional settings, like academe, it is an eternity in most organizational business environments.

The popularity of LEAN, Six Sigma, and other quantitative methods, however, raises the caveat that what feels moving may actually be what fits best with the prevailing most practiced ways of being and thus may be what is most familiar. Like

OLH, narrative analysis has a longer timeline and yields more qualitative results than what is most familiar in most business environments. These characteristics may result in a “this does not compute” reaction, and a knee-jerk assumption that the results are “too academic,” or not actionable or relevant to what has become a zero-to-quarterly call for action. While these OLH limitations are problematic, they are not sufficient conditions for discounting the approach *in toto*. Academic research, especially when conducted in coordination with practitioners and leaders in the field, while not necessarily immediately actionable, plays an essential role in the education and development of students and future practitioners and educators.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Expertise and “Not-knowing”

During the OLH project, I was struck by a realization that if only the people who I'd interviewed had interviewed each other directly they might have discovered that the values and ideals that they shared were so much more important than the ego-based beliefs and assumptions that were dividing them, and keeping the company from growing. My wish for the people I'd interviewed was for them to hear and see in themselves and each other what I'd witnessed in them.

This observation, as well as others regarding the limitations of the OLH method and my empirical, cognitive orientation up to that time, catalyzed a paradigm shift in my thinking about expertise and expert models. I began to find the courage to move away from paradigmatic and methodological purity, instead embracing grounded improvisation and assemblage. This shift involved a shift away from conceiving of the consultant as an objective expert with *the answers*, towards viewing the consultant's role as coach, collaborator, catalyst, and a source of expertise in focusing on the *right questions*.

The sink or swim nature of the CT, Inc. experience cut through my resistance to approaches that I'd previously dismissed as “woo woo,” unscientific, or illogical, opening me to new avenues of thought. I now think of consulting as a form of assemblage around a purpose governed by the needs, conditions, and MPWoB of each individual client systems. The “right” approach for a given situation may draw from any of the many paradigms in my current toolkit. My CT, Inc. experience has served me well as an agent of cognitive dissonance since the project, transforming my thinking about what it means to be an expert. As a result:

- I have come to see that my earlier construction of being an expert consultant was rooted in a bounded conception of learning that left me feeling that I never had enough, or the right tools in my toolkit. Embracing a constructionist mindset has given way to a stronger valuing of expertise as an aspirational way of being that constantly evolves, emerges, and improves with age, like the stones of a river bed that are constantly being shaped and polished by the river's flow.
- I learned that as a consultant with expertise, I am more effective entering a new client system with what Harlene Anderson calls “a position of not knowing” (in McNamee & Gergen, 1992, p. 26) and Buddhists refer to as a “not knowing mind.” That has helped me to reconstruct the meaning of being an expert. The “dance of change” that we enter into is one in which my expertise serves as a catalyst to ignite their learning and leverage their expertise, and vice versa.

The Organizational Learning History Approach and Grounded Theory

Kathy Charmaz (in Hostein & Gubrium, 2008, pp. 397-412) highlights her views on what characterizes a social constructionist approach to grounded theory:

The form of constructionism I advocate includes examining (1) the relativity of the researcher's perspectives, positions, practices, and research situation, (2) the researcher's reflexivity; and (3) depictions of social constructions in the studied world. Consistent with the larger social constructionist literature, I view action as a central focus and see it as arising within socially created situations and social structures (Charmaz, 2008, in Hostein & Gubrium, 2008, p. 398).

The approach in practice at the time of the interviews (in process, not prior to) may best be described as an *objectivist* approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008), specifically grounded in a review of literature and methodology in Systems thinking and the OLH approach. Charmaz (2008) notes that a key difference between objectivist and social constructionist grounded theory has to do with *why* questions. She describes the two approaches to grounded theory in this way:

Constructionist grounded theorists attend to *what* and *how* questions. They emphasize abstract understanding of empirical phenomena and contend that this understanding must be located in the studied specific circumstances of the research process. Objectivist grounded theory...has roots in mid-20th-century positivism. It explicitly aims to answer *why* questions. Objectivist grounded theorists seek explanation and prediction at a general level, separated and abstracted from the specific research site and process. Unlike my version of grounded theory, which I have previously called constructivist grounded theory..., 20th-century constructionism treated research worlds as social constructions, but not research practices (Charmaz, 2008, in Hostein & Gubrium, 2008, p. 398).

The primary points of departure between the OLH method and a social constructionist approach to grounded theory are both subtle and significant:

1. The OLH approach views the learning *historian* as an outside, objective observer, and does not consider the researcher's "perspectives, positions, practices..." or "reflexivity," in the ways suggested by Charmaz in the first of her two quotes, above. This is perhaps the key point that characterized the departure of the original interview project from its roots in objectivist grounded theory, and shifted it to an approach more consistent with the constructionist approach described by Charmaz.

2. The OLH method begins with a specific research question in mind: ‘What can be learned from a previous success that can be applied to a future initiative?’ This question is similar to the form of questions asked in the constructionist approach, appreciative inquiry; however, the goal of OLH is to identify specific actions and behaviors from one situation that can be applied in another. Constructionist appreciative inquiry, on the other hand, explores past successes with the central goals of modeling collaborative dialog and identifying shared values and other qualities that help people know *how to be* in order to be most effective. While these are important values in the OLH method, especially in the dissemination phase, a key focus of learning from the interviews is on *what to do*, and *why to do it* that way.
3. OLH uses a pre-determined interview guide to learn about a specific event. A constructionist approach favors “planning well and getting out of the way” of the question/s that emerge from and through the interviews. An objectivist OLH grounded theory approach focuses more on finding answers through improvisational inquiry, whereas, a constructionist approach favors improvisation and “[living] your way into the questions” (Rilke, 1903, in Rilke, 1984, pp. 34-35) through inquiry.
4. OLH asks *why* the behaviors, choices, and actions worked in the previous initiative or event, with the goal of generalizing those *why’s* to future actions. This is perhaps the most subtle difference, as constructionist grounded theory may also focus on why’s, but the constructionist is less likely to assume that past why’s will generalize well to future situations, as each situation is embedded in its own relational environment, which, by its nature, is constantly changing and emerging.

In retrospect, it is fair to say that had the original interview project been conceived of as using a social constructionist, grounded theory approach, the interview transcripts would have been likely to closely, if not wholly, resemble the actual transcripts from the interviews conducted in 2000, even without prior knowledge of the constructionist approach to ground theory. While it occurred through “not-knowing” improvisation, shifting from an objectivist to a constructionist approach to grounded theory made sense, given what Charmaz describes in point “3,” in the first excerpt quoted above, as reflexively adapting to the “social constructions in the studied world.” Circumstances demanded heeding Weick’s call to “drop your tools” (Weick, 2007, p. 5) while in process, in favor of improvising a method that would meet the dual purposes of (a) saving the project, and (b) being of service to interviewees and the organization as a whole. Ultimately, the method of grounded theory employed at the time, albeit “not-knowingly,” reflected a fourth point made by Charmaz (2008, p. 398): “...a constructionist approach encourages innovation; researchers can develop new understanding and novel theoretical interpretations of studied life. “

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

While it would be admirable to be able to say that motivation “b” preceded “a,” doing so would be disingenuous. The motivation to “fly by the seat of my pants” (fortunately, the modality in which I am at my best) was set in motion by “a.” The higher purpose, represented by “b,” served as a moral compass to guide improvisation in a way that would, ultimately, be of service to the people involved and to their story. Had the methods I’d come up with violated “b,” I would have dropped them.

At the time, however, I experienced the two simultaneously and as inextricably linked; although I was never sure that I was, in fact, accomplishing “b.” At the time, the best affirmative evidence was the number of people who thanked me for listening, reflected after their interviews that they had needed to talk about their feelings for a long time, and how many of the interviews far exceeded 30 minutes.

At the time of the study, listening was an innovative action in that situation. While the proposed method was based on a review of the literature about systems thinking and OLH, as well as on dialogs with active OLH practitioners, in practice the situation demanded a different approach. The predetermined questions, including the research question itself, became irrelevant, either wholly or in part (addressed in the Narrative Analysis section). At the same time, the improvisation was made possible by the preparation that had preceded it, even though the methodological shifts made in process were significant, possibly even profound. These shifts also meant letting go of the outcomes of (a) writing a formal OLH report, and (b) using the data to write journal articles on the predetermined topics. Following a prescribed, predetermined interview protocol simply did not work in the highly charged dynamic situation.

While pure grounded theory is approached without a predetermined theoretical outcome in mind, the focus of this dissertation, and the goal in analyzing the interview data, was (a) to understand conditions that may have potentiated and/or exacerbated the accidental adversaries dynamic in CT. Inc., and systemic opportunities that might have been leveraged in that situation; and (b) to apply this learning to better understand

how to transform the dynamic in ourselves and in the organizations we may be called to serve, or in those in which we work. When the initial interviews were entered into, however, the goal was quite different: to understand and learn from an organizational success. In the case of the original interview project, the research question, which was dropped almost before the interviews commenced, regarded studying an organizational success. The question for the dissertation—transforming the accidental adversaries dynamic--emerged out of the original grounded theory data analysis.

A structural challenge of grounded theory came to light in the act of reading and writing the dissertation itself, a process which resulted, and continues to result in new, emergent insights that were challenging to place within a traditional, contextually bounded dissertation structure. Thus, the structure and form (“the shape of content”) of this paper may itself be seen as an improvisation on a traditional theme. For example, in a traditional dissertation, the Literature Review section does not typically contain discussion of new insights or remarks; these are most often held for the “Conclusions” section. In this dissertation, however, the Literature Review section exemplifies Charmaz’s descriptions of constructionist grounded theory, in that discussion and new insights are embedded within it, and not disjointed from the contexts (Zeitgeist of the dissertation) that gave birth and awareness to them. This is true of the Methodology section as well, albeit to a lesser degree.

Defining the “Project”

In his signature work about tragic organizational failures that resulted in human fatalities, Weick (Weick, 1999; Weick, 2001, pp. 97-147) uses the term “project” (Weick 1999, p. 137) in a unique way that is of critical importance for making sense of the CT, Inc. case, and addresses a key leverage point—how and by whom projects are defined--in the archetype as a whole. His interest in these disasters is in understanding the distinction between theorizing that focuses on analyzing past events as a means of theorizing forwards, and the value of “theories that reflect ready-to-hand patterns...” (Weick, 1999). He describes the question he has been wrestling with in this way:

These conjectures can be illustrated by applying them to the problem of firefighter fatalities. The specific problem I have been wrestling with is this: When a wildland fire explodes and threatens to overrun a crew of firefighters, the crew’s ability to outrun the fire improves if they drop their packs and tools so they can run faster, cover more ground, and escape to a safety zone. Given this relatively clear means to mitigate the risk of being burned, why is it then that, since 1990, 23 firefighters in four separate incidents refused to drop their tools when ordered to do so, were overrun by fire, and died with their tools beside them? They died within sight of safety zones that they could have reached had they been lighter and moved faster... (Weick 1999, p. 136).

As he theorizes in his narrative style, he goes on to propose that the firefighters' conception (in systems thinking terms, the "mental model") of their "project" was defined as fighting fire. Thus, the "project" of fleeing fire essentially did not compute, contradicting both their perceived project and their very professional and personal identities:

I worry that in trying to understand these fatalities, I have missed what it means to be actively engaged in and holistically aware of a wall of fire that singles out a different set of relevancies than I imagine. Thus, when I ask why firefighters keep their tools and lose their lives, I may be posing the issue in a way that precludes a meaningful answer...If I want them to drop their tools, then I need to understand what *their* project is and then intervene in a manner that changes the project convincingly. If they are unable to see beyond their project of fire suppression, then perhaps the leader has to stop that project cold, create a defining moment, confirm that they face an exploding fire, and reset the project clearly and firmly as a race.

The dynamic of incongruous or conflicting projects appeared to be at the heart of the accidental adversaries dynamic witnessed at CT, Inc. In an interview I conducted with Andrew Meyer on August 20, 2009, he discussed the challenge of leading a business turnaround, and alluded to the issue of what the project was—turnaround, growth, or transition:

"A fundamental problem at CT, Inc. was that the culture was not transparent. For some reason it was hidden. There was the 'CT nod.' After meetings people criticized but did not speak up in meetings...People have one turnaround in their careers that they can get through; it forces you to understand what and where true value is. You need an unreasonable belief that you'll succeed. John Chambers said that two-thirds of turnarounds do not succeed. I believed I'd win. I learned from everything I did. I was happy to do one turnaround, but not again....My key mistake was assuming that CT, Inc. was a growth business, which it was not."

At the time of the OLH project, leaders spoke about transitioning from turnaround to growth, and the challenges involved. There was a stated awareness that different phases require different forms of leadership, if not different leaders. Dislodging the command-and-control cadre of leaders and managers who had been installed to lead the brass knuckles turnaround, was another matter.

Andrew Meyer indeed learned from his experience with CT, Inc. and went on to enjoy far greater success as an effective CEO in his next venture. Karl Weick (1999) addresses the rich learning field afforded by interruptions and thwarted efforts:

When everyday projects suffer a breakdown of action, theorists and practitioners alike share a common vantage point from which they can glimpse thwarted potentialities embedded in networks of projects. This is not just warmed-over action research. Instead, it is basic research in which the workings of ready-to-hand engagement become equally visible to people with quite different interests. Furthermore, attempts to describe the common referent in a meaningful way encourage continuing dialogue dedicated to getting the account “right” (p. 140).

This statement speaks to the shift in the original OLH research project, itself. Initially, the OLH *project* was to be the study of a past success, with the goal of further reinforcing the real story, as well as the constructed PR story: i.e., that the Waverider project was a success of both technology and leadership that had and was continuing to fuel CT, Inc.’s transition from turnaround to growth. That is the project that my sponsors had agreed to and that I’d prepared for. While the present-at-hand OLH methodology is geared to learning from organizational successes, the ready-to-hand interview project quickly shifted to a study of a company’s thwarted efforts to shift from turnaround to growth. In this respect, the OLH project and the company faced similar challenges and contradictions between how the project was defined present-at-hand, and how it was experienced ready-to-hand and unready-to-hand.

Multi-being in Social Constructionist Thought

Kenneth and Mary Gergen recently introduced the concepts of *multi-being* and *most practiced ways of being* (Gergen, 2008; Gergen 2009; Gergen & Gergen, 2009) into the social constructionist lexicon. A central premise of multi-being is that an individual’s personality is shaped in and by relationship, past and present, and is not essentialist in nature— even if it may appear to be, given the delay between early relationships and their impacts on adult behaviors and beliefs. This quality of multi-being—i.e., that it contains delays—is relevant to the discussion below, of the role of multi-being in the accidental adversaries dynamic. Each individual may have qualitatively different forms and facets of his or her multi-being: ways of being as parent, child, teacher, partner, etc., formed in and by relationships, woven together like multi-colored facets of a single butterfly’s wing (Figure 16). The visual the Gergens use to portray coordination between multi-beings is of two multi-faceted wings joined to form a butterfly (Figure 17), a complex relational whole. In the picture, each facet of multi-being is shown in a different color, but may also be thought of as being varied in texture, porosity, shape, etc.



Figure 16. Representation of multi-being in an individual (used with permission of Kenneth and Mary Gergen, 2010). (Created by Anne Marie Rijsman-Lecluyse.)



Figure 17. Representation of multi-being in relationship (used with permission of Kenneth and Mary Gergen, 2010). (Created by Anne Marie Rijsman-Lecluyse.)

Perhaps because of the heartfelt nature of their work, coupled with a passionate desire to share it in the most accessible way possible, the Gergens created this simple, yet rich, visual representation of multi-being (Gergen, 2009, p. 150-153 and Gergen, 2008, pp. 339-340). During a 2009 conference presentation, they noted that they have been embracing visual arts as a way of making the complex concept of multi-being more accessible and richer than could be conveyed with words alone. Their choice to use visual metaphor to portray multi-being resonates with American artist Ben Shahn's²⁷ (1898-1969) thoughts regarding the relational nature of meaning and form-- "the shape of content"²⁸:

I would not ordinarily undertake a discussion of form in art, nor would I undertake a discussion of content. To me, they are inseparable. Form is formulation—the turning of content into a material entity, rendering a content accessible to others, giving it permanence, willing it to the race. Form is as varied as are the accidental meetings of nature. Form in art is as varied as idea itself.

It is the visible shape of all man's growth; it is the living picture of his tribe at its most primitive, and of his civilization at its most sophisticated state. Form is the many faces of the legend—bardic, epic, sculptural, musical, pictorial, architectural; it is the infinite images of religion; it is the expression and the remnant of self. Form is the very shape of content (Shahn, 1957, p. 53).

The systems thinking visual lexicon is intended to be of service in a similar way to the Gergens' use of a visual metaphor.

²⁷ Famous Jewish-American contemporary artist, born in Lithuania. He was identified with the social realism movement in art, and his progressive political and social views.

²⁸ Also the name of a book based on a series of lectures he gave at Harvard from 1956-1957 about the role of art in academe, and the impact of academic discourse and criticism on the arts and artists.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

The moment I first saw the Gergens' visual depiction of multi-being and most practiced ways of being, I felt as if I'd been handed the missing puzzle piece for appreciating the accidental adversaries dynamic with compassion and equanimity. While I believe that the concept would hold equal weight had it been explained purely in words, I do not have a good frame of reference for positing the answer. As a person who experiences synaesthesia, I think in multi-dimensional, movable pictures, shapes, and relational webs. Thus, when I first saw the diagrams in Figures 10 and 11, they "blew my mind." Prior to receiving the color copies included above, I'd only seen the pictures drawn on easel pads, or as grayscale reproductions. While academic writing is supposed to maintain an air of appropriate decorum, I find the beauty of the concepts embodied by the full-color depictions to be profound and even overwhelming. I felt a similarly deep sense of the profound when I "got" how to transform "causal web" drawings (part of the Systems Thinking Toolkit) into "webs of interrelationship." These experiences may sound odd to a person whose primary mode of thought is verbal. The challenge for a visual thinker like me is in using words to convey the depth of meaning and possibility that these visuals imply. The Gergens' decision to use a visual representation of a complex concept, illustrates, for me, the best of flight!

Relational Ontology

In his recent book, *Relational Being* (Gergen 2009), Gergen offers²⁹ an in-depth discussion of multi-being as a relational ontology. As described above, he paints conceptual and visual pictures of the development, expression, action, and potentials for emergent being that are layered, relationally crafted, dynamic, and inclusive of shadow and light, past, present, and prepotent. The ontology of multi-being is similar to, if not an embodiment of, Buddhist principles of inter-being and emptiness in its focus on the relational emergence of being: that outside of relationship, there is no self:

Within any relationship, we also become somebody. That is, we come to play a certain part within the relationship itself. With my mother I come into being as a child; with my children I come into being as a parent, and so on. Each relationship will bring me into being as a certain sort of person, and the actions that I acquire will enter the repository of potentials for future use.

...The individualist view of individuals as independent agents is also replaced by a vision of the person as fully embedded in relationship. It is only from one's immersion in relationship that the very semblance of separate identities emerges. The well-ordered and independent mind is no longer the goal of maturity, but a sign of constricted relations. For the multi-being, coherence and integration may be valued, but only within particular relationships. Rather, one may celebrate the myriad potentials for effective relationships (Gergen, 2008, p. 337).

Gergen's central premise is that an individual's personality is continuously being shaped by relationships, past and present; and not essentialist or biologically predetermined. He notes that in moving from an individualist to a relational ontology of being, "we come to see persons as multi-beings, that is, as constituted within multiple relationships from which they emerge with multiple, incoherent, and often conflicting potentials" (Gergen, 2008, p. 335). This view of relational multi-being represents a significant move away from "the traditional conception of the whole and coherent person" (Gergen, 2008, p. 336), toward one that is full of potential contradiction and discord, as well as immense possibilities for growth, healing, transcendence, and peace, both internal and external (Gergen, 2008; Gergen 2009). The goal of mental health, then, is not integration and coherence, but relational presence and peaceful internal and external co-existence and co-emergence. Gergen describes the challenges and promise of multi-being in this way:

²⁹ As one offers a gift of great value. Gergen has said that this particular book is very special to him.

In my view, behind the façade of unity, coherence and wholeness lies an oppositional world of discord. However, it is a world of enormous potential, gaining daily in dimension. Consider its genesis. As we engage in relationships, both significant and superficial, we are continuously absorbing potentials for action. Every relationship provides three points of origin for these potentials. First, others' actions serve as *models* for what is possible. As we observe others in action they fill our consciousness, thus providing a first step towards incorporating their actions into our own repertoire. This process, variously called imitation, modeling or identification by social scientists, is often credited as the fundamental engine of socialization.

...Multi-being is also constituted by a third residue of relationship, the *interactive scenarios* that we perform together. When we learn to dance, we acquire the ability to move our bodies in the prescribed way; we also watch our partners, and possibly could imitate them as well. Of equal importance, however, I learn the coordinated activity of the dance itself, how it goes when I move in this direction, or you move in that. In the same way, I learn what it is to participate in the give and take of an argument, the coordinated action of making love, or scenarios of emotion.

...Our participation in relational process leaves us with potentials to be the other, to be a certain kind of self, and a form of self/other choreography. From these three sources, we emerge with enormous possibilities for being. In sum, all meaning/full relations leave us with another's way of being, a self that we become through the relationship, and a choreography of co-action. From these three sources, we emerge with enormous possibilities for being (Gergen 2008, pp. 336-337; Gergen 2009, pp. 135-137).

Further examination of the challenges of multi-being will help to set the stage for appreciating the immense potentials that the ontology offers for deep change, productive co-action, and peace.

Most Practiced Ways of Being

This includes ways of relating at work that really work. This may be disclosed using an AI approach focused on discovering how people are at work when they are relating best with those who they perceive as most different from themselves. This puts the focus on finding those MPWoB that result in and can be leveraged for appreciation and productivity; rather than focusing on those MPWoB that fuel the accidental adversaries dynamic and other dysfunctional covert processes (Marshak, 2006), as well as overt conflict and escalation. It may also be helpful for exploring which MPWoB to

develop further, and who has greatest personal mastery of those ways. At CT, Inc., it was likely that the “bridgers” held important clues. Also, the handful of individuals suggested as interviewees either by Alan Davis *and* Bill Keith or by interviewees later in the process, may possess MPWoB that sync well with members of both factions. These people were most often found sitting on the sidelines, somewhat conflict-averse, and not (a) seeing opportunities to engage or the benefits of doing so, or (b) being sought out for their equanimity or cross-cutting insights. CT, Inc.’s failure to effectively engage these individuals or to recognize their potential role in a conscious way represented a significant lost opportunity cost (in the language of LEAN, increased waste).

Again, the words of the artist Ben Shahn, speaking to academe about the relationship of content and form in art, resonate with the significance and challenge posed by the contribution of multi-being, and its embodiment in a visual metaphor, to current discourse about the meaning, challenges, and immense possibilities of relational being:

Content, I have said, may be anything. Whatever crosses the human mind may be fit content for art—in the right hands. It is out of the variety of experience that we have derived varieties of form; and it is out of the challenge of great idea that we have gained the great in form—the immense harmonies in music, the meaningful related actions of the drama, a wealth of form and style and shape in painting and poetry.

Content may be and often is trivial. But I do not think that any person may pronounce either upon the weight or upon the triviality of an idea before its execution into a work of art. It is only after its execution that we may note that it was fruitful of greatness or variety or interest.

...Almost every great artist from Cimabue to Picasso has broken down some pre-existing canon of what was proper material for painting. Perhaps it is the fullness of feeling with which the artist addresses himself to his theme that will determine, finally, its stature or its seriousness. But I think that it can be said with certainty that the form which does emerge cannot be greater than the content which went into it. For form is only the manifestation, the shape of content (Shahn, 1957, p. 72).

Reconstructing Strengths as Emergent Multi-being

Multi-being and *most practiced ways of being* have the potential to broaden the dialog between strength-based and problem-focused communities of practices. The

former favor approaches and tools such as appreciative inquiry (Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Watkins, 2002; Cooperrider et al., 2001) the VIA Strengths Indicator (VIA Character Institute, 2006), the Strengths Finder (Rath, 2007), Marcus Buckingham's work (Buckingham, 2001), and others which focus on identifying and building upon strengths. The latter, problem-focused approaches, at least in linguistic structure and usage, in their purest forms tend to focus on identifying and fixing what is not working. In the AI practice community, these approaches are often referred to as the "deficit" model of change. A new voice, however, has recently been introduced into the AI literature. Its proponents suggest that for AI to affect deep change, it should also address, or at least not disallow discussion of the shadow side of organizational behavior (Bushe, 2007), covert processes (Marshak, 2006), and systemic archetypal dynamics. They suggest that failing to do so may unintentionally inhibit deep change, and, thus limit the long-term sustainability of positive AI results.

While the AI philosophy and process model enact the idea of wholeness implicit in unbounded multi-being, as has been mentioned above, AI consulting traditionally focuses only on the positive: the "positive core" of the organization when it is at its best. Multi-being and most practiced ways of being, however, do not distinguish between positive, growth-promoting ways of being and those that are negative or self-limiting. They also acknowledge the potential for intra- and inter-personal conflicts when most practiced ways of being are out-of-sync, embody a conflict of interests, or draw individuals away from ready-to-hand experience. As such, the Gergens' (2009) approach to multi-being, especially most practiced ways of being, opens the constructionist door to approaches that address the "challenge of flight"—the high potential for conflicts between an individual's own multi-being and those between individuals and groups. The accidental adversaries archetype, in particular, may contribute in a significant way to addressing the impacts of multi-being on organizational dynamics. Likewise, for practitioners who apply both strengths-based (e.g. AI) and problem-focused (e.g., systems thinking) models, the concept of multi-being may provide a theoretical and practical bridge. Systemic thinkers and others who favor broadening the dialog in the constructionist appreciative inquiry community to include the totality of human experience, not just the positive (Bushe, 2007), suggest that imposing a "no negatives" rule in AI practice may lead to unintended negative consequences of best intended actions, later down the road³⁰.

An especially exciting contribution of the Gergens' conception of most practiced ways of being is the meaning of strengths and strengths-based practices, as it challenges an essentialist definition of strengths as limited and innate. From the perspective of relational, many-faceted multi-being, an individual's or group's noticeable

³⁰ See the section on Systems Thinking, for a discussion of delays in systems. To summarize, the approach suggests that systems contain delays that separate actions from consequences, so that when the consequence of a non-systemic, non-holistic thinking occurs, it may appear to be unrelated to the earlier action.

strengths that comprise their positive core may, in fact, be those facets their being that have been most reinforced and rewarded. This view, then, suggests an element of choice and selection over time. Thus, it is conceivable that an individual, a group, or the organization's leaders may choose to develop new strengths that may have been overshadowed by strengths that have been more favored, reinforced, and allowed expression. From the perspective of multi-being, the positive core not only provides key data about what core values and facets of being strengths already exist in an individual or organization, it may also yield equally as important information about:

1. New skills and relationships that may need more space and time to grow. (This does not negate the value of the positive core in AI practice. Instead, it simply suggests another way of learning from positive core.)
2. What perspectives, skills, and ways of being are lacking and need to be invited in and/or developed in the organization.

In other words, the positive core may paint a picture of most practiced ways of being at any given time, rather than reflecting an essentialist or finite set of strengths. Follow-up questions worth asking are: "Are the currently expressed most practiced ways of being (strengths; positive core) those that are most needed to achieve the most desired goals and aspirations?;" "What potential synergies may exist between the elements of the positive core?;" "What would it take to expand the set?;" and "What kinds of relationships and collaborations would result in the multi-being of the whole exceeding the sum of its set of core strengths and values?"

The issue of organizational diversity is partly a question about whether the rules, beliefs, culture, and practices of an organization allow diverse members to contribute and a diverse array of most practiced ways of being to be expressed and potentially developed further for the common good. This raises the question of what the organization's positive core is measuring? For example, if segments of the workforce feel that they are being marginalized and their voices either negated or never listened to, they may cease to "show up" or may learn to acculturate to acceptable norms. Otto Scharmer refers to this as the organization's "blind spot" (Scharmer, 2007, p. 22). Shifting from the conception of finite, essentialist strengths to one of most practiced ways of being allows for the possibility that greater potential exists within the organization than those ways of being that have already been developed or allowed to show up as strengths. Important questions may be:

- a. Are there ways of being that are being disallowed?

- b. What other ways of being would the organization benefit from by consciously allowing them (or not hindering them) to be practiced?
- c. What systemic factors may be limiting expression of multiple ways of being?
- d. What would it take to expand the field of ways of being within this organization?

Three brief vignettes exemplify the questions that arise here:

Example One--At the age of 16, my son, Aman, declared that he was a singer-songwriter, even though he'd not yet written a song on his own. Were he to do an appreciative inquiry to explore his positive core, or core strengths, it is unlikely that pursuing songwriting would have appeared to make sense. It did not become a discernable strength until he'd practiced songwriting as a way of being and developed it as a skill. For him, it took choosing to set aside, for a while, other most practiced ways of being long identified as strengths—math, physics, and being a nice guy—to make space for new ways of being to emerge and strengthen. For him, the structure of schooling was a limiting factor, favoring the expression of certain elements of his multi-being over others. As a male student of color who excels in math and science, he felt pressured to leverage those strengths. His choice to take two years after graduating from high school to work and write music was seen by many influential adults as a denial of important strengths in favor of a whim and a gamble on fame. What was not seen, perhaps because of social and experiential filters and biases, was that his choice was in favor of answering a calling—the call to bring previously stifled facets of his multi-being into the light where they could breathe and emerge, no longer crowded out by other more highly sanctioned strengths.

Example Two—If you had asked me at that time of the CT, Inc. project if interviewing was a strength of mine, I would have said, “definitely not.” In fact, one of the reasons I glommed on to the OLH methodology was because it utilized pre-determined interview protocol. Today, however, if you ask me the same question about interviewing being a strength of mine, my answer will be a self-assured “Yes.” What happened to change my positive core strengths to include being a great interviewer? Like Aman, I answered a calling. And, like Aman, I had an unwavering positive image of myself as an excellent interviewer, and focused on developing my craft. Moving from calling to most practiced way of being to strength

required making a conscious choice to draw out that part of myself through learning and practice.

Example Three--There are essentially two schools of thought reflected in the literature on adult attention deficit disorder³¹ (ADD). One is essentialist in its beliefs and assumptions about ADD as a deficit pathology. Its authors focus on the lack of specific neurotransmitters to achieve certain tasks. The other school of thought, also somewhat essentialist, accepts the existence of ADD as a characteristic or pattern of being that requires self-management and development of new, more effective ways of being to live in the highly ordered, concrete-minded mainstream social environments. The latter approach is captured in the Peter Drucker statement about leadership, often quoted by AI practitioners: “The goal of leadership is to build on strengths in a way that makes weaknesses irrelevant.” The largest body of ADD literature falls within the deficit construction. The smaller body of literature suggests that the constellation of ways of being labeled as ADD simply reflect a difference. The latter takes a practical approach, acknowledging that mainstream schooling and most work environments are structured in ways that do not support ADD characteristics or allow peak performance. They focus on helping people with ADD develop strategies for leveraging strengths to gain mastery over weaknesses. In this way, they may transcend obstacles that have masked potential strengths, or interfered with their ability to develop most generative most practiced ways of being.

These stories call into question a fixed and finite concept of strengths. More important, they illustrate a new, constructionist conception of strengths as emergent, potentially limitless, and as being open to choice. Other implications for strength-based change processes like AI, are:

- Must a strength have been expressed to be recognized as a strength in the AI process?
- Are strengths expressions and/or artifacts of *most practiced ways of being*?
- What do a person’s or group’s callings tell us about their strengths and *most practiced ways of being*?

³¹ The term “adult attention deficit disorder” is being used here to represent people who did not receive a diagnosis until adulthood.

Beyond Strengths and Integration

The introduction of the concept of most practiced ways of being in multi-being brings into question the construction of *strengths* as an inherent, essentialist quality. In so doing, the idea “shakes the world” of strength-based approaches to... leadership, strategic planning, organizational and personal change, and any number of other aspects of life and work to which “strengths-based” is attached as a prefix. Rather than viewing strengths as essential, existent, resident, or fixed—just needing to be discovered and leveraged—MPWoB suggests that strengths are artifacts of relational being that may be drawn and redrawn from *emptiness*. This view opens vistas of unlimited possibility to allow new ways of being to emerge and to become most practiced, and/or to allow less functional, or no longer effective ways of being to disintegrate and fall away. This is an exciting possibility, especially for anyone who may mourn lost opportunities due to circumstances of birth or physiology, socio-economic status, education, abuse, learning challenges, etc. MPWoB is a potentially liberating and limitless frame of mind that holds potential for easing the way to letting go of attachments to a fixed, bounded conception of strengths; and that makes way for continuous emergence and boundless possibility.

MPWoB opens the door further and offers a generative frame for “weaknesses,” “threats,” and “negatives,” to be acknowledged and brought out from the shadows. MPWoB are neither inherently good nor bad. They are born of relationship, some deeper and more formative than others. If an organization is stuck, it may be because it reinforces certain ways of being and stifles expression of others. This suggests that organizational culture may be merely the meta-level expression of the collective, most reinforced ways of being. Reinforcements of dysfunctional ways of being in organizations often are covert (Marshak, 2006), unmindful (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2006) and/or structural (Senge, 1990). An organizational culture, like societal cultures, reinforces certain most favored ways of being and discourages others through various means that may be explicit, implicit, or covert.

From the perspective of relational being, multi-being and MPWoB are not bounded or fixed. While formed in relationship, individuals and organizational leaders may become consciously aware of their MPWoB and the obvious and subtle reinforcers that maintain or fuel them. Appreciative inquiry is a constructionist approach that helps members of organizations to become more aware of the shared values and aspirations and to identify those ways of being that are expressed when the person or organization is already being the change they most want to create. Thus, AI offers a way of identifying those ways of being that best align with the collective’s view of its best future self, and to imagine a future when those have become the collective’s MPWoB.

The classic AI case example of Avon Mexico (Morris & Schiller, 2003) exemplifies this especially well. The case reports that in just two years, Avon Mexico transformed itself from one of the worst workplaces in Mexico for women, to one of the

country's best examples of successful working relationships for women, and between men and women. Based on the case write-up, it appears that Avon Mexico transformed from a workplace in which the MPWoB included poor interrelationships across genders, to ones that supported outstanding cross gender relationships. Looking at the case from the constructionist perspective of multi-being may help to address an existential question raised by Gervase Bushe (Bushe, 2007) who questions the construct that AI is just about the positive. Bushe has been lobbying for the term "generative" as a means of expanding the umbrella of life experience acknowledged and allowed into AI discourse. He, like Johnson (2006) and Fitzgerald (2007) suggest that the construction, "generative," allows for the whole of human experience—the good, the bad, and the ugly—to be acknowledged in AI practice. MPWoB encompasses the "full catastrophe" of human experience, as does the construction of generativity that Bushe proposes.

Applying an AI approach in this way--i.e., from the perspective of MPWoB rather than an essentialist or fixed notion of strengths—to explore times when members of an organization experienced and embodied generative ways of being, may open even greater possibilities for generative change than the bounded conception of *strengths*. The constructionist view of strengths, within the context of relational multi-being, is to view strengths as outcomes of being that have been honed as most practiced ways of being. MPWoB suggests a both-and view of *ways of being*: within certain contexts and timeframes some may be experienced as positive and lead to positive outcomes, whereas others may be experienced as negative and support negativity and a deficit mindset. Multi-being and MPWoB do not carry with them the suggestion of polarities or external judgments of the goodness or badness of particular components. MPWoB are simply the products of relational being, in a constant state of ebb and flow.

As with the Avon Mexico case cited above, ways of being that are identified as most generatively aligned with the most desired future, may be seen as most desired ways of being. In this way, most desired ways of being are likely the most salient qualities identified in AI practice as comprising the *positive core*. Because AI practice is highly focused on a defined purpose of inquiry, the positive core is a subset of most desired ways of being that are most relevant to the topic of inquiry. Those most desired ways of being serve as models for future most practiced ways of being that will allow the person or organization to more consistently be the change its leaders and members most want to create. Again, in AI practice the Design and Destiny phases of the change process focus on building the structures and practices (large and small "p") that will transform expressed most desired ways of being into most practiced ways of being, resulting in behaviors that best support the shared vision of the most desired future. This also acknowledges that habitual, counter-productive MPWoB (shadow) may exist. In the case of the accidental adversaries dynamic, awareness of the habitual pattern--a constructed shadow--is a necessary, albeit, not sufficient, condition for deep change. Co-creating a shared vision of the most desired future, alone, is often also not a sufficient condition for change.

Internal Conflict and the “Challenge of Flight”

Gergen suggests that there is a strong potential for the diversity and possible out-of-sync-ness of the components of an individual’s multi-being to result in internal “conflicting potentials, and suffering” (Gergen, 2008, p. 335). Likewise, chances are high for conflict to devolve from the difficulties of choreographing co-action between multi-beings. Thus, Gergen views internal conflict as an essentially “normal” aspect of the emergent, asynchronous nature of relational being, and not something to be pathologized or homogenized. On this he states:

The view of the ideal person as a coherent unity has a long tradition in the West. It is evident in the Christian tradition, with its emphasis on the purity of the soul, and the clear divide between good and evil...George Kelly’s widely acclaimed *Psychology of Personal Constructs* asserts that all people attempt to build conceptual systems that are internally consistent...Mental suffering is equated with blockage of consistency-striving. It is no accident that the profession’s labels for mental illness include schizoid thinking, bipolarity, dissociation and multiple personality disorder (Gergen, 2008, p. 336).

The movement in social constructionist philosophy away from the individual as a coherent *system* of behaviors, seeking integration, and bounded by biological causality, may be at the heart of the apparent conflict between adherents of social construction and those of systems thinking. This is likely an artifact of the local, relational context of language and meaning. This may be an especially great “challenge of flight” in academe where (a) languages are highly specific and finely shaded, and (b) entry into the dialog, itself, requires certification in a highly codified form and content of linguistic discourse.

By the same token, when individuals or groups come together in relationship or coordinated action it follows that the potentials for conflict, as well as synergy are high. Gergen refers to this as “a challenge of flight”:

To appreciate the challenge of coordination, let us return to the butterfly wing. Here we add a second wing, one supplied by a second party. The question we confront is that of flight. Think here of a butterfly. How do we, as human beings who each bring with us an enormous range of potentials, take flight? And how can this flight become a thing of beauty? How can we avoid the degenerative pull to earth, and soar into the generative atmosphere of possibility? What are the resources, what are the impediments? (Gergen, 2009, p. 152)

The question then arises of whether conflict is an inherently bad or negative thing, as it is most often viewed in organizations, or if it is simply part of relational engagement and striving. Kazimierz Dabrowski, a Polish psychiatrist whose works were inspired by acts of human compassion and sacrifice that he observed during the Nazi

occupation of Poland, also held a view of internal conflict that contradicted the prevailing views of mental illness and what constitutes mental health. In *Psychoneurosis Is Not an Illness* (1970), Dabrowski suggests that heightened internal conflict is a natural part of human emergence. He is perhaps best known for his Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD), which suggests that disintegration of bounded, inauthentic integration is necessary for the emergence of human actions of the highest order (e.g., self-sacrifice, peace-making, compassion). Extension of Dabrowski's TPD towards a Theory of Positive Organizational Disintegration will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

A key concept linked to multi-being is that of *most practiced ways of being*, which suggests that actions that emerge from multi-being may become habituated in an individual, or in groups. While this raises intriguing possibilities for therapeutic practices, it also offers much to OD practice, especially systemic change processes and strengths-based approaches. The following sections introduces the concepts, briefly, and then discusses a few of the many implications for change practices.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror--Multi-being and “Perfect” Customers

Without using the terms, Stacey Hall and Jan Brogniez (2001) speak to multi-being and most practiced ways of being in their helpful book, “Attracting Perfect Customers: The Power of Strategic Synchronicity.” They suggest that when practitioners get clear about their own most practiced ways of being, they may become more aware of which clients are their best match, and vice versa. Following their thesis, the best match between the multi-being of practitioners and clients will lead to the greatest success and satisfaction for both. Using myself as an example, my preferred ways of being involve helping individuals and groups to:

1. See, make sense of, get to, and navigate the simplicity that’s on the other side of complexity;
2. Identify potential receptor sites and points of synergy across boundaries of culture, belief, cognition, and collaboration;
3. Demystify systems and rules by recognizing patterns, theorizing, and thinking systemically; and
4. Help them get and stay centered and grounded in the face of change and uncertainty.

I most prefer working at the intersection of people and structures or systems, and especially enjoy working with scientists, engineers, and educators. The wings of our multi-being simply click.

Many of the OD consultants and psychotherapists I know are most practiced at helping people be in dialog with themselves and others more deeply and effectively. I often refer to or call upon them to partner as their ways of being are both different and complementary to my own. And, when they need to develop, implement, or make sense of a process, or see beyond a confusing conceptual impasse, they often call upon me. We have learned to coordinate our flight paths.

The “Challenge of Flight” in Accidental Adversaries Dynamics

The ideas of multi-being and most practiced ways of being are at the heart of the accidental adversaries dynamic in ourselves and the organizations that hire organization development consultants for help solving problems or realizing dreams or objectives. The issue of coordination—the “challenge of flight” when multi-beings are drawn or brought together for coordinated action”—that Gergen introduces is central to understanding the accidental adversaries dynamic and why it is so prevalent in organizations. While the concept of multi-being was primarily developed in the context and language of psychology and psychotherapeutic practices, it holds great promise for

organizational development, in general, and the transformation of accidental adversaries dynamics in particular

Using the language of multi-being, Kenneth Gergen discusses the potential for internal conflicts from the multiplicity of beings that reside in each of us as a result of the many relational vectors from which each of us derives identity and meaning. The potential for conflict that Gergen describes is similar, if not identical to the roots of accidental adversaries in ourselves and the organizations we may serve in our professional lives. In the visual metaphor the Gergens use in their articles and public presentations, the vectors of multi-being appear as pedals of a flower, collectively forming a shape similar to a single wing of a butterfly. In relationship, and, thus, in organization, for a time two or more wings form a single entity that works. They suggest that difficulties in relationships result when the elements of multi-being of two parties are out-of-sync or lack adequate goodness of fit to coordinate well or at all.

The conflict in the CT, Inc. case between the GEBco Management Team and the CT, Inc. architects illustrates the potential for and the nature of conflicts between individuals and groups with core differences in their most practiced, and most preferred, ways of being. After a point, their reactions to each other, or others they perceive as being like this group or that group, appear to take on the quality of a most practiced way of being when faced with an “other” who does not appear to be an “alter.” As discussed in the narrative, one of the chief architects introduced the MBTI (into the sense-making dialog about the conflicts at CT, Inc. (a) because he found that it helped him to “depersonalizing” the conflict he was experiencing. The MBTI gave him a way of holding and reconstructing the meaning of the painful negation he was experiencing. Seeing it related to some core difference in his way of being in the world and that of the new cadre of managers was easier for him than seeing it as a personal affront or vendetta. It is highly likely that the MBTI reflects most practiced ways of being at a given point in time. In the dialog with that architect, and with others who made efforts to categorized types of engineers, the language of “personality” types was constructive.

The birds³² and frogs metaphor discussed earlier, is especially apt when discussing the challenge of flight at CT, Inc. between groups of engineers, where some were abstract-conceptual architects who preferred to soar above concepts and problems, taking a bird’s eye view, and others were operations managers who kept their eyes to the ground looking for best actions and tactics. Unfortunately, the organization tended to swing between privileging and affirming the ways of one group or the other, but not both simultaneously, thus, following a flight pattern that alternated between being skewed to one preference or the other, never effectively coordinating flight.

³² It may be needless to say that the author of this dissertation is a bird.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror: On Being Categorized “Scientist Type”

This paper has taken much time and struggle to write. The writing process was often lonely and sometimes sparked the need for challenging self discovery and learning, spurred in part by the death of a parent, a child leaving home, and my own unresolved challenges regarding the disconnect between my most preferred modes of thinking and writing, and the more linear demands of academe. Weighing on the process too has been the label of “scientist type” that has found its way around my neck. It is in the spirit of reconstructing the label, and the gravitas that appears to accompany it, that I have written and included this Reflection.

For the first two years of the writing process, I experienced the label of “scientist type” as a negation of my identity, and of the work and ideas of many other good people, teachers and cherished authors. I have experienced it as an automatic adversarial discounting as “modernist,” “positivist,” “empiricist,” or worse, all three; a broken wrung in the social constructionist ladder of inference, limiting generativity, multi-being, inclusivity, and wholeness. For a time, my experience of wearing that albatross hijacked my writing in a vain effort to avoid further negation. In so doing, I gave power and gravitas to the albatross and the constructions behind it. I now see that an albatross is only a dead bird if we both agree that it is so.

Attending the Gergen’s Social Construction Workshop and reading Ken Gergen’s book, *Relational Being*, led to renaming a central theme in the narrative analysis from “Loss of Agency” to “Negation and Loss of Affirmation.” That shift in construction from bounded to relational being helped me to embrace a more compassionate view of the act of the “scientist type” label as a social construction. From a relational vantage point, it appears that an adversarial relationship has come to exist between some social constructionist thinkers and those they see or relate to as science/scientists types. It is beyond the focus of this paper, however, to ask why what may itself be an accidental adversarial relationship developed, what perpetuates it, and what lends it gravitas (e.g., is it most intense within the fields of psychology and psychotherapy where a positivist “science” approach has more and more defined and constricted practice, mandated a bounded self, or perhaps put a negative tinge on collegial discourse?).

As a member of the social constructionist community of thought and practice, I hope to play a role in reconstructing the view of “scientist types,” and extend the openness to dialog beyond David Boehm, and other theoretical physicists to biologists, and others who also do not accept the underlying power dynamics facilitated by a “scientific” view of bounded being.

As for the role that the study of science, especially biology, has played in my life: I first began college as a cultural anthropology major with a deep interest in the

universal and diverse nature of humanity. Soon, however, I found myself disheartened by the subject-object orientation of anthropology case analysis of the time. Weary as well of my unwitting tendency to step on sacred cows, thus eliciting either strident appreciation or derision from professors, I switched to human biology, believing it would offer respite from what I viewed as racist, ethnocentric views of “others,” masquerading as social science. Such views harkened back to my youth in New York City and Virginia. When New York City first enforced racial integration through busing, I could see, even as a young child, that it resulted in: (a) heightened lines of distinction between people based on race, religious affiliation, national origin, and socio-economic status, (b) gaming the systems by introducing academic tracking into individual schools, thus moving segregation into the fabric and structure of the schools themselves, (c) fractured communities by forcing inner city children to travel long distances to schools in unfamiliar neighborhoods, just to be placed in ghettoized segregated classrooms, and (d) religious fractures within the white communities as parents transferred children out of public schools into parochial schools. As a Jew, I found myself chased through formerly peaceful neighborhoods by gangs of upper middle class white kids on bicycles calling me names I did not understand. Later, in Northern Virginia, I experienced even more layers of separation with the rise of Christian fundamentalism that separated Jews and blacks, based on religious identity. Social science seemed to me to be mired in drawing lines of distinction, rather than exploring and celebrating the paradox of universality and diversity that first drew me in that direction.

Biology felt like a safe harbor, one level of abstraction above the crazy-making practices of social science that I believed both perpetuated and normalized the “I-It,” subject-object stance I’d seen brewing in my youth. In the biology department, I found a faculty of extraordinary men and women--“scientist types”—who embodied the ideals of “multi-being” (Gergen, 2009). The cell biology professor was a gifted painter, and his partner a master ethno-botanist who dried flowers in order to share the beauty of species he feared would soon face extinction. My work-study supervisor, the department laboratory director, raised and trained parakeets as a way of celebrating and nurturing their aesthetic beauty and relational nature. It was there that I was introduced to Lewis Thomas’s (a physician and medical school dean) book, *The Lives of a Cell*, a poetic treatise on organizational dynamics. It was as a student of biology, as well, that I witnessed the social construction of science that Kuhn had written about in his seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 1962). This occurred when the same cell biology professor learned that the textbook manuscript (a revised edition) he’d just submitted, had been rejected by the publisher because of the controversial nature of the book’s last chapter, “Life After Death.” In it, he described the natural breakdown and recycling of life that occurs after a cell’s organismal host dies. He was faced with the option of deleting the chapter or withdrawing the manuscript. Shortly thereafter, he was replaced as Department Chair.

For me, one of the many gifts of studying science was that it exposed me to intriguing concepts, like movement across gradients, entropy and order, equilibrium and stasis, chaos and complexity, closed and open systems, Newtonian and Quantum Physics, and other ideas that helped me to see communities as eco-systems of relational webs. From that vantage point, I began to see how the bifurcated parts of so many dichotomies share common ancestries rooted in our humanness and use of language. Thus began my interest in human ecological restoration, for which I found the tools of Systems Thinking to be profoundly helpful, albeit not always in the ways they are most commonly practiced.

I choose not to self identify as any bounded type, or carry the burden of labels affixed to me by others. I value and embrace my scientific training for leading me back into the arena of social science, and for teaching me the principles that:

- Nothing is ever *proven*, but only supported for a time as a belief, shared meaning, or theory in progress, until it leads to new emergent inquiry and meaning creation;
- “Problems” may be seen as delicious mysteries and possibilities to be explored;
- Answers are of temporal value, best used to seed and fertilize endless emergent inquiry; and
- The mysteries most worth exploring are those that hold the greatest promise for biological and human ecological restoration and sustainability.
- Many roads lead to Rome... and shared meaning.

Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration

Kazimierz Dabrowski’s³³ Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) (Dabrowski, 1966) addresses the out-of-sync-ness between a person’s emergent ways of being and those that are most practiced. For many individuals and organizational leaders, shifting from (a) trying to find *the right answers*, to (b) asking and living into meaningful *questions* requires a significant leap of faith from MPWoB and beliefs about expert or transactional models of leadership and authority to unfamiliar collaborative stewardship. Leaders often seek help from consultants when fate or circumstance pushes them (or the organization) “over a cliff,” where the only sensible choice is to try

³³ 1902-1980

something new. Many OD consultants have observed that organizational leaders tend to have the strongest will and commitment for embracing deep change when they are new to an organization, when there has been a systemic crisis, especially one that may have had face-saving ethical implications (Den Boer et al., 1989; Bohner et al., 1988), or when they have had a personal life-changing experience (e.g., heart attack or other near-death experience).

Dabrowski, a Polish psychiatrist and neurologist, developed the TPD during the Nazi occupation of Poland. In the zeitgeist of his time, he observed that while some individuals devolved to Nazism, which he considered a low level of human development, there were remarkable others who emerged from despair and neurosis into higher levels of humanity and moral development³⁴ (the movie “Schindler’s List”, the diaries of Ette Hillesum and Anne Frank, and Victor Frankel’s book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* are literary examples of that time). Reflecting on his observations and his work with psychotherapy clients, Dabrowski outlined five non-linear levels³⁵ of human development that resemble *memes and tiers* in spiral dynamics theory (Wilber, 2001), “challenges of multi-being” and diverse MPWoB addressed by Kenneth Gergen (2008), and Weick’s assertion (Eisenberg, 2006) that, “sense-making is ‘triggered by a failure to confirm one’s self’ and that ‘people learn about their identities by projecting them into an environment and observing consequences’.”

Dabrowski proposed that neurosis *may* be a sign of positive disintegration when a person’s persona or ego constructs no longer fit with their current emotions and values or emerging image of a more desired future. In such cases, Dabrowski viewed neurotic behavior as a leading indicator of positive disintegration from which a newer, more integrated, authentic, and positive self might emerge. His mission was to urge psychotherapists and psychoanalysts to help their clients leverage their neuroses for transformation, rather than trying to fix the condition or the client. Dabrowski saw the role of his profession as integral to helping these clients live into their uncomfortable neutral zones of disintegration safely as an integral part of the process of emergent renewal.

In organizations, disintegration may be expressed as fear, distrust, negative assumptions about others’ intentions, functional or departmental “silos,” and

³⁴ The terms “development” and “personality” in Dabrowski’s writings are translations from Polish. Experts on his work suggest that his intended meanings were significantly different than meanings attached to those terms in mainstream psychology. Given the emergent, ready-to-hand nature of Dabrowski’s theories, and TPD in particular, it is likely that his intended meaning was predominantly constructionist.

³⁵ Levels focus on an individual’s (a) degree of awareness of the mismatch between their MPWoB and their aspirations for Self, and (b) the degree to which they have reached their ideal and are able to resolve inner conflicts. Mother Theresa is offered as an exemplar of the fifth and highest level of moral development.

intensification of archetypal patterns of ineffective, self-limiting behaviors, like accidental adversaries dynamics and escalation. While the disintegration can lead to slow decline, or to death of the organization, it can also lead to breakthrough changes, innovation, and transformation. There are choices embedded in disintegration, and it is often the work of internal and external consultants, coaches, and educators to serve client systems (a) as catalysts for this positive reintegration, and (b) as coaches, teachers, and facilitators of generative, emergent renewal.

Personality and Temperament in Accidental Adversaries

Temperament and personality preferences, and their relationships to professional role identities, were key themes touched on in several of the interviews. For this reason, it is important to address them in greater depth. The influx of command-and-control managers at CT, Inc., imported to lead the company through turnaround into growth, acted *as if*³⁶ they either did not understand or value the importance of identity among engineers. During the apex of the crisis at CT, Inc., engineers in R&D who were viewed, or viewed themselves as architects were stripped of their identities. Using the MBTI to aid in making sense of the two factions and one non-faction suggested by the CT, Inc. narrative, was helpful at the time of the OLH project. Some of the engineers were already developing their own personality theories, some of which were directly or loosely based on the MBTI, so the language and basic concepts synced well.

In fact, one of the interviewees discussed how he'd thought about the MBTI preferences as a way of making sense of the basic human dynamics of what was happening and how those were playing out in dysfunctional, covert organization dynamics. A few other interviewees also similarly spoke about personality, one of whom had even devised his own categories and Gestalts to make sense of the behaviors he was observing without defining good guys and bad guys, or suggesting evil intent.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

There is an immense body of literature on the essentialist view of personality. Some examine studies of twins (Saklofske & Zeidner, 1995; Oliver et al., 2008), forensic psychology (Goldstein, 2007) nature versus nurture (McCrae et al., 2000) and the social nature of personality (Shoda et al., 2007). Then, there is literature that focuses on different approaches for dealing with the reality of differences (Briggs Myers & Myers, 1980; Kiersey & Bates, 1984) and their usefulness in efforts to broaden and promote awareness of possibilities for peaceful co-existence, collaboration, and innovation

³⁶ While their words and tone suggested that they may have harbored gritty animosity for architects that was relationally crafted in another time and place, it is also possible that their words and actions were tactical, if not strategic.

(Merrill, 2008). The reader who wishes to focus on the essentialism of the MBTI may choose to examine the former body of literature. The essentialist question regarding the meaning and origins of personality is a valid one within social constructionist discourse. To use an American idiom, entirely negating the practical value of the MBTI, however, because of the essentialist question is like “throwing the baby out with the bath water.” Instead, this discussion accepts the usefulness of the results of the MBTI while remaining agnostic about exactly what it is measuring—fundamental or essential personality, current self-concept, Jungian persona, most practiced ways of being, or something else.

This discussion accepts that:

1. The MBTI measures *something*.
2. Many people find use of the MBTI a helpful means for recognizing and employing the gifts (or multiple most practiced ways of being) that they and others bring to projects.
3. For some, the MBTI provides a constructive language and perspective for shifting discourse about problems and limitations away from blame and accusation toward acceptance, forgiveness, and appreciation for the potential impacts, for bad or good, of different perspectives, ways of being, and preferred modes of action.
4. The Gestalt and language of the MBTI may help groups better understand, forgive, and transform the accidental adversaries dynamic.

As an organization development practitioner and coach, and previously as a university administrator working with a broad array of prospective, undergraduate, and graduate students, my clients and I have found the MBTI to be a useful tool. In this regard, the discussion of the MBTI in the context of this paper is similar to the earlier discussion of systems thinking as a practical discipline that provides a language and a process for making shared meaning. Key preference pairs of the MBTI are:

Introversion and Extraversion—

iNtuition and Sensate—

Feeling and Thinking—

Perceiving and Judging—

The MBTI is a self-administered questionnaire that assesses an individual's preferences on each of these components, resulting in 16 discrete "types," although 32 mixed types (i.e., the individual is split 50/50 on one of the preference pairs, connoted by and "X" for that preference) that constitute the various possible combinations of the four preferences: E.g., INFP, ESTJ, ISFJ, ENTP, INXP, etc. (Briggs Myers & Myers, 1980, pp. 1-16; Keirsey & Bates, 1984, pp. 12-26).

Two of the first MBTI books to gain wide public acceptance stress the diverse nature of personality, focusing on the advantages of engaging diverse perspectives, especially those most opposite of one's own (Briggs Myers & Myers, 1980; Keirsey & Bates, 1984). Isabel Briggs Myers, who developed the MBTI as her life's work, and first introduced it to the academic and lay communities, is clear about her aspirations for developing the MBTI. One of the first pages of the book *Gifts Differing* (Briggs Myers & Myers, 1980), highlights a quote from Romans 12: 4-8:

*"For as we have many members in one body,
and all members have not the same office:
So we, bring many, are one body . . .
And every one member one of another.
Having then gifts differing. . . ."*

These opening constructions resonate in tone and aspiration with Kenneth and Mary Gergen's recent introduction of the ideas of "multi-being" and "most practiced ways of being" into the social constructionist lexicon to discuss different ways of being and perceiving (Gergen, 2009; Gergen and Gergen, 2010) that reside in each of us and between individuals. These concepts will be discussed in greater detail later in the section, "Toward Multi-being and Wholeness." An additional similarity between the MBTI and the Gergens' ideas of multi-being and "most practiced ways of being," and one that highlights the relevance of the MBTI to this discussion of accidental adversaries, may be found in the Publisher's Foreword to *Gifts Differing*:

"The conceptual framework by which Isabel Myers has organized her sensitive and optimistic observations is the typology of Carl Jung, slightly modified and elaborated by Myers and her mother, Katharine C. Briggs...[Katherine] began to develop her own typology, largely through the study of biography, and she then discovered that Jung had evolved a similar system which she quickly accepted and began to explore and elaborate...

The Briggses had one child, Isabel...Isabel Briggs entered Swarthmore College at age 16 and was graduated first in her class in 1919. In her junior year, she married Clarence Myers. Until the outbreak of World

War II, she functioned as a mother and homemaker, though she found time to publish two successful mystery novels...

The suffering and tragedies of [World War II] stirred [Isabel Briggs] Myers's desire to do something that might help peoples understand each other and avoid destructive conflicts. Having long since absorbed her mother's admiration of Jungian typology, she determined to devise a method of making the theory of practical use. Thus was born the idea of a 'type indicator'." (John D. Black in Briggs Myers & Myers, 1980, pp. ix - xi)

These introductory comments frame the MBTI within a socially constructed narrative. In the Preface that Isabel Briggs Myers wrote for *Gifts Differing*, she highlights her aspiration for peace and her wish that people may use the MBTI as a practical tool to aid in more fully appreciating their own and others' gifts:

This book is written in the belief that many problems might be dealt with more successfully if approached in the light of C. G. Jung's theory of psychological types. The first English translation of his *Psychological Types* was published by Harcourt Brace in 1923. My mother, Katherine C. Briggs, introduced it into our family and made it a part of our lives. She and I waited a long time for someone to devise an instrument that would reflect not only one's preference for extraversion or introversion but one's preferred kind of perception and judgment as well. Since then the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has yielded a wide range of information about the practical bearings of type.

The implications of the theory, however, go beyond statistics and can be expressed only in human terms. *Gifts Differing* presents an informal account of type and its consequences as they have appeared to us over the years...It has taken three generations to make this book: the deep insight of my mother's (INFJ) introverted intuition into the meaning of type; my own (INFP) introverted-feeling conviction about the importance of type's practical applications; and my (ENFP) son Peter's invaluable combination of extravert viewpoint, intuitive drive, gift of expression, and sense of priorities—without which these pages might never have been finished (Briggs Myers & Myers, p. xiii).

In their 1984 book, *Please Understand Me*, David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates add to the historical narrative:

A revival of the idea of temperament in the 1950s was accidental. Isabel Myers dusted off Jung's book on psychological types and with her mother [Katherine] Briggs devised the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a tool

for identifying sixteen different patterns of action (Keirsey & Bates, 1984, p. 4).

At the time when *Please Understand Me* was published, Keirsey and Bates were academic Gestalt psychologists at California State University-Fullerton who were “impatient with the maturity theories of Freud, Maslow, Erickson, Sheehey, Levinson, and others. They [insisted] that not everybody goes through the same phases of growth to maturity,” and that people “hear different drummers.” Talking about the practical benefit of appreciating and reframing differences from flaws to gifts, they say:

The payoff of such work is that you can look upon your spouse, for example, as a DIFFERENT person—someone you don’t quite understand, but someone you can, with a sense of puzzlement perhaps, gradually come to appreciate. Similarly, you can gain an appreciation of your offspring, parent, superior, subordinate, colleague and friend. Much to gain, nothing to lose (Keirsey & Bates, 1984, p. 4)

Like the Myers’s in *Gifts Differing*, Keirsey and Bates begin *Please Understand Me* with an implicit message about their aspiration for working with the MBTI:

If I do not want what you want, please try not to tell me that my want is wrong.

Or if I believe other than you, at least pause before you correct my view.

Or if my emotion is less than yours, or more, given the same circumstances, try not to ask me to feel more strongly or weakly.

Or yet if I act, or fail to act, in the manner of your design for action, let me be.

I do not, for the moment at least, ask you to understand me. That will come only when you are willing to give up changing me into a copy of you.

I may be your spouse, your parent, your offspring, your friend, or your colleague. If you will allow me any of my own wants, or emotions, or beliefs, or actions, then you open yourself, so that some day these ways of mine might not seem so wrong, and might finally appear to you as right—for me. To put up with me is the first step to understanding me. Not that you embrace my ways as right for you, but that you are no longer irritated or disappointed with me for my seeming waywardness. And in understanding me you might come to prize my differences from you, and, far from seeking to change me, preserve and even nurture those differences (Keirsey & Bates, 1984, p. 1).

It is in a similar spirit of shared meaning and peace making, as well as its implications for expanded awareness and appreciation for multiple diverse ways of being that the MBTI is relevant to this discussion of the accidental adversaries dynamic. At CT, Inc., the engineer who introduced the MBTI into the interview dialog suggested that one group consisted primarily of N-Intuitive types and the other of S-Sensate types. The divide that this engineer (one of the chief architects) had observed appeared to exist primarily between software and production engineers, and management strategists and tacticians. We agreed that among the engineers, the software architects and those being referred to as “creatives” were most likely N’s, or “iNtuitives”; whereas, the coders and current cadre of production managers were primarily S’s, or Sensing types. The interviewee believed that the CEO was an N (in fact, he is) and that the soon to be COO and then leader of the prevailing management group was an S. These perceived groupings, not coincidentally, also corresponded to a division between those who had been part of the original organization and those brought in through a recent merger.

When they outlined their theories about personality, Trevor and others exhibited appreciation for the importance of the role played by members of the GEBco Management Team, but felt that their own value, both individually and as a group, were either not affirmed, or were being actively negated. Their discussion of the MBTI centered around the possibility that the GEBco managers were limited by their lack of intuition. It was proposed that this might have precluded their ability to recognize the roles played by the architects, given the abstract, conceptual nature of the architects’ work and MPWoB.

Given the stridence, and apparent free reign being given to the GEBco Management Team (Developers and Doers) at the time of the study, the architects and others in R&D appeared to be embracing an essentialist view of type, concluding that those being given the power to stand between R&D and the CEO did not have the capacity to see or do things differently. Thus, one either had to resign one’s self to that reality, or resign from the company. The wholesale loss of talent from R&D eventually interrupted the innovation cycle, a tipping point that the architects and some others had predicted. The golden eggs and pendulums metaphors were emblematic of the prediction that when the backlog of golden eggs had been productized and shipped, the managers, and the CEO (who appeared to be insulating himself from the problem), would become aware of their follies. But by then it would be too late, as the golden egg-laying geese (Trevor, in particular) would have flown the coop for new Internet start-ups, or anyplace that promised to affirm their identities.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror--The MBTI

I was first introduced to the MBTI when I was working as an academic advisor for undergraduate students who were undecided about their college majors. At the time, it was standard operating procedure to send these students to the Counseling Center for a barrage of personality tests and inventories. Before sending students for these assessments, I used myself as a guinea pig and took all of the tests. That helped me discern between instruments and to determine which ones, if any, would offer the most constructive, useful information to each student. Of all the tests offered at that time, I found the MBTI to be most helpful, and least directive and diagnostic. It was also the most publicly available and accessible for self-directed interpretation and continued learning. The Student Life Division of the University also offered a "Type Talk" forum for staff to deepen their awareness of their own types and appreciation for the experiences and meanings of other types.

As an academic advisor I came to believe that the MBTI was more reflective of how an individual was living their life at the time of the test, rather than representing their one essential nature. This was most pronounced in my work with undecided undergraduates. A common pattern I observed among this population was a tension between "dreams" and "ought to's." This became a functional theory around which I developed approaches for helping the student and myself become more consciously aware of their dreams and ought to's, while adding a column of wise to's. One of the most touching and illustrative cases was a young woman who came to my office in a state of confused and conflicted indecision about what to major in. In the process of inquiry, she became aware that she was suffering because of her parents' demand that she major in something practical, like business, rather than attending the Rhode Island School of Design on the full scholarship she was offered to study photography. I do not recall if I sent her to the Counseling Center to take the MBTI; however, my familiarity with the MBTI approach to personality and temperament suggested to me that it might be risky to do so. In many cases, including my own, I'd seen the MBTI reflect the persona the student had created for themselves in order to deny their dreams; an exoskeleton of sorts, especially helpful for protecting a highly sensitive, creative sensibility.

The Evolution of Factions at CT, Inc.

Individuals who were interviewed or observed at other times during the study (e.g. during meetings, informal conversations, or in overheard conversations in hallways and waiting rooms) tended to fall into three general categories, identified in the project Final Project Report (excerpted below) as “Producers,” “Developers,” and “Brokers”³⁷:

Soldiers at the Front, Two Teams and the Bench, and other Relevant Clichés...

Currently at CT, Inc. two groups of players predominate: the producers and the developers. Both appear to be rallied at the front waiting for credible marching orders. Both seem to have a sense of uncertainty about the future, although the producers seem more comfortable with the current status quo. The developers have adopted a wait-and-see attitude. Of these, those who value security and the Texas lifestyle are hoping to stay on. Those without ties to Texas and who are motivated more by creative challenges than by job security are bailing.

The production managers and the product developers seem locked in an historical drama in which they endlessly vie for predominance. Currently, the producers have a distinct and noticeable advantage. A third group, the potential brokers, is in the game but its members are mostly on the bench or, because of their quiet mediating efforts, they tend not to be found in the spotlight. They are the ones who move the ball up the court and gain strategic advantage but don't necessarily score the big dunk, nor do they throw the ball away. They are essential to growth and essentially are being overlooked.

³⁷ The similarity to Peter Merrill's (2008) naming conventions is coincidental. My report was submitted years before publication of Merrill's process model. As it is used here, the term “Developers” corresponds most closely to a composite of Merrill's descriptions of Creators and Connectors; whereas, the “Producers” correspond closely to Merrill's Developer and Doer categories. Merrill's model does not appear to include a group similar to the “Brokers,” identified here. My use of the term in the study may have been influenced by earlier research on the key factors that lead to success in cross-sector partnerships. Having a strong broker who appreciates the cultures of the various sectors involved, and who can help translate and broker effective communications was noted as the most important success factor.

The Current Culture: Two Sub-Cultures and a Group of Outliers

In its history, CT, Inc. has swung from one extreme to the other in terms of favoring these two leadership styles. Before the turnaround, the product research and development culture was predominant. In the last eighteen months to two years, the product execution culture has predominated. Some have described CT, Inc. as a pendulum that swings wildly from one extreme to the other but never seems to find balance.

Thus far, I have alluded to three broad categories of employees who appear most evident at CT, Inc.:

The Producers

The producers have been and are essential for upholding the core values espoused by company leaders and for conserving, maintaining, and managing the logical step-by-step production processes. They have the ability to push prototypes into production and get products shipped. Prescribed road maps and extrinsic rewards motivate them. If a corporate vision is not clearly articulated in a way that makes sense to them, they will uphold the set of values that are most consistent with what they believe to be the highest set of moral values and those that they believe *should* be held by the current leaders.

The Developers

The product developers historically have been and continue to be essential for technical innovation. They have the ability to focus on abstract possibilities and are driven by complex technical visions. Developer/innovators need to be intuiting, creating, and figuring out problems. If a corporate vision is not clearly articulated to them by leaders who they consider credible, they will follow their own complex visions. Currently, they are feeling disenfranchised and uncertain about the viability of their future with CT, Inc.

The Brokers

The brokers, on the other hand, are the diplomats and unifiers of the organization, organizational units, groups, and sub-groups. In the context of cross-functional work teams, they are the team builders and diplomats who communicate and engender trust among all players, regardless of their individual identifications and affiliations. They have the potential to build productive, creative teams. In the absence of a clear corporate vision they tend to do their work quietly and loyally and are woefully underutilized to the great detriment of the organization as a whole.

As essential as product execution is to sustainable growth, so too is a steady and ready flow of market-driven innovation. CT, Inc. must create a culture in which the production and creative capacities of all employees are maximized and constantly re-channeled back into the organization. Gifted product developers and innovators tend not to be the same people who are gifted in product execution and vice versa. In fact, their values, work styles, and all the artifacts of their preferred cultural constructs come close to being polar opposites. *No matter what one group or culture may think of the other, both are essential for growth and neither can function effectively in the long-term without the other. By failing to acknowledge this basic force of nature, CT, Inc. is squandering its potential to lead in the marketplace.*

A Void of Vision

Tactical objectives for meeting quarterly production goals have filled the void of a clearly articulated, universally communicated corporate strategic vision. This worked as a short-term tactic during the crisis mode turnaround, but it is proving ineffective in building and maintaining the balanced human capacity that is needed to sustain growth. Furthermore, the bureaucratic, top-down management style that was necessary to sharply steer the course of the turnaround now is stifling growth and development. The recent attrition of a number of highly innovative and creative employees, difficulty moving products out of the pipeline and into the marketplace, and general difficulty positioning and supporting R&D-related functions and thinking styles that often have unpredictable timelines and don't easily conform to quarterly production goals are evidence of this trend.

The void of unifying leadership and incentives to pull these forces closer together toward creative union are allowing the natural tensions that exist between these groups to push them apart. Growth can be sustained only by maximizing the region of intersection. This will require the constant flow of unifying forces into all work processes. Initially, this will need to be modeled and set in motion from the top. If these efforts are scrupulously linked to strategic efforts and corporate values through a constant mantra of federation, the forces of unity will move further and further down into the organization.

It was true that the organization had successfully leveraged a technological breakthrough in a way that positioned it well for regaining ground in its particular market; however, the story was incomplete. While a hope was stated that the story itself would

construct a more positive internal reality, it appeared to have unintentionally established or reinforced a zone of undiscussables related to the organizational people and relationships side of the enterprise, and the turnaround. It is unlikely that those who crafted the story intended to whitewash the internal organizational reality, just to focus a spotlight on the positives and drive energy toward a future reality. It is possible that the people and relationships side was not considered relevant to the more important business outcomes. Unfortunately, it is also true that in some cases, those who failed to *get with the program* (the project), or who expressed concerns about relational dynamics, were negated as “stupid,” too focused on “security” (this may have been code for “too old”), or too reflective of a particular conservative mindset and practices associated with a segment of the local culture.

Many, who may have felt personally negated by the story’s inherent contradiction, or for whom “getting with the program” required them to work on a project they did not value, left the organization quietly, or with dramatic flare.

Implications of an Engineering Monoculture

On December 23, 2009, Ken Auletta was interviewed on the US Public Broadcast System radio station about his then new book, “Googled: the end of the world as we know it.” I have spoken with the company’s CEO, Andrew Meyer, and had the opportunity to tour Google’s Chicago and Boston offices. Auletta’s thoughts about Google closely resemble many of my observations of “engineering culture” at CT, Inc. during the OLH project, and later at Google.

At the time of the OLH project, CT, Inc., was on the cutting edge of the new media / technology sector. Like Google, CT, Inc.’s core workforce was comprised of engineers. The historical circumstances and degree of intentionality around the emergence of organizational cultures at each, however, were quite different. Like Google, CT, Inc. at one time also dominated market share in its specialized technology. Engineers at CT, Inc. explained to me that because of its advance technologies, and their relevance to the burgeoning Internet marketplace, CT, Inc. might have ridden the edge of the Internet wave to even great dominance had the company’s leaders (prior to Andrew’s appointment) not taken their eyes off the prize at a critical juncture.

Some interesting parallels and key differences exist between the two companies (i.e., CT, Inc. of the late 1990’s and early 2000) that came to mind when listening to Auletta’s interview. While CT, Inc. also dominated its market niche in its heyday, it did so on the cusp of the rise of the Internet and the market’s shift away from proprietary hardware and software (products linked to a single proprietary operating system or platform). By the mid to late 1990’s, CT, Inc. was caught in a Herculean struggle to decouple its technologies and corporate culture from the proprietary environment it had grown up in. Today CT, Inc. is a much different company than it was a decade ago.

Google, a much younger company, is essentially defining the cutting edge of Internet search innovation and global information access and sharing.

There is also another key silent player whose presence can be felt in the shadows of both companies: Bill Gates and Microsoft. The shadow presence of Bill Gates and Microsoft at CT, Inc. was a key factor in one of the worst strategic decisions made by CT, Inc.'s founder. Likewise, it is a key motivating factor in the war Google is currently waging against Microsoft in the form of the computing "cloud," which has the goal of making individual software purchases (and perhaps proprietary operating systems altogether) obsolete.

In the 1980's and 1990's, as workplace computing moved away from mainframes to desktop/laptop computing and the Internet, Microsoft dominated the operating system and Internet search arenas (NT and Netscape, respectively), not to mention NT- and Windows-based software. For a time, it appeared that Microsoft might exist as the sole monopoly of the non-mainframe computing world. As a former database administrator and knowledge system manager, I, like many others, found myself forced to use Microsoft products, even when superior products were available. Given Microsoft's near monopoly control and market saturation, the fear among users of others' software products was that the makers and servicers (i.e., training and repairs) of those alternative products would soon be driven out of the marketplace, and technical support or software upgrades would no longer be available. Especially in the decades of the 1980's and '90's, many in the industry referred to Microsoft and Bill Gates as "evil," terminology echoed at CT, Inc. by the then CEO and others.

The dominance of Gates and Microsoft were key factors in CT, Inc.'s strategic history, especially in veering its leaders off course at a critical juncture. And, today, they are shadowy factors in the strategic vision and language of Google. Google currently is invested in developing the computing "cloud" to make purchase of software, especially Microsoft products, obsolete. Microsoft is still a dominant force in the software and operating systems industry; however, the re-emergence of Apple and Macintosh has helped to level the playing field somewhat. It is no accident that the CEO of Google, also served on the Macintosh Board of Directors, until recently when he was forced to resign.

While the above discussion about Google is helpful for understanding movement and dynamics in the industry overall, Auletta's reflections about Google's culture are even more relevant to some of the challenges faced by CT, Inc.'s leaders at the time of my study, and to the accidental adversaries dynamic more generally. Google's leaders are unapologetically intentional about creating and maintaining what is referred to here as an engineering "monoculture," or close to it. What strikes me most about Google is that it is, in many ways, a monoculture of brilliant young people-- mostly white and male. Google uses a very strict yardstick in their hiring process, typically identifying a handful of colleges and universities as preferred feeder schools. Regardless of whether young

people are being hired into Engineering, Sales, or Marketing, they are measured, at least in theory, by the same yardstick: perfect College Board scores, over 4.0 high school GPAs, 4.0 college GPAs, and a host of other internal interviews and tests. The culture that Andrew Meyer stepped into at CT, Inc. was significantly different, largely influenced by the local culture, older, and more diverse (in terms of personalities, ages, motivations, and the like).

Auletta discussed, at some length, the limitations of what he calls, Google's "engineering culture." He describes the engineering culture as being dominated by low emotional intelligence, where efficiency is one of the highest held values, and discussions about the social and relational implications of certain choices either do not compute or are not well tolerated. While Google's hiring standards are aimed at hiring the most innovative young minds around, a significant benefit, from a management perspective, is that it is simply easier to manage a monoculture where everyone speaks the same disciplinary language and more often than not already shares meanings and perspectives within that language. An equally significant downside, however, is an inbred culture that lacks the emotional intelligence that Auletta alluded to, and is also insulated from the need to engage in socially constructing meaning outside of their insular world. This concern was voiced during my visit to one of the Google offices when an executive expressed the concern that his sales staff needed to be able to talk with clients in the business world who are not digit heads.

While it cannot be documented here, it is possible that savvy executives within Google's corporate structure find ways to "game the system" (Rieley, 2001) so they may hire according to multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983), using different measures of brilliance.

This discussion has relevance to the emergence of accidental adversaries at CT, Inc., and the advantages and disadvantages of creating monocultures in which the risk of their occurring, at least in the short-term is very low. The recent movie, *The Social Network*, based on the story of the creator of Facebook, poignantly illustrates the limitations of low emotional intelligence monocultures, even when they are extraordinarily profitable and successful in financial measures. Assuming that diversity (e.g., creative, social, racial, biological, ethnic, etc), relationships, and broad social and civic good are still held as values, addressing accidental adversaries at work will remain a ubiquitous challenge, and one of critical importance.

Reflecting on Innovation as Relational Multi-being in Action

Innovation emerges from and is built upon relationships that successfully negotiate *the challenge of coordinated flight* between and among people (a) with diverse identities and MPWoB, and (b) whose roles in the innovation process address different, albeit interrelated, components of the over-arching organizational *project*. The narrative

analysis of CT, Inc. suggests that the identities and most practiced ways of being of architects and operations managers differed in significant ways. Rather than leveraging those differences to create collaborative synergies, leaders appeared to have inadvertently fueled the accidental adversaries dynamic.

Many of the engineers within the system attempted to make sense of what was going on by developing theories regarding types of engineering temperaments and personality types. These models helped them to explain the variety of mis-matches they were observing and experiencing. As mentioned in a footnote earlier, some of these systems, as well as the one reflected in the final project report are similar to a model of innovation personal types recently published by Peter Merrill (2008), that will be summarized below. Another common model of innovation, however, that will not be discussed here, represents a bounded, individualistic construction of innovation that focuses on the “care and feeding” of individuals identified as innovators (Cohn et al., 2008). CT, Inc. was clearly full of these sorts of people, especially the initial list of interviewees selected by my internal contact. During the course of the interviews, it appeared that the care and feeding most important to them revolved around affirmation of their professional identities, and “to not be treated like interchangeable parts.” What they appeared to value most was:

- Being affirmed in their identities, rather than being negated.
- Being allowed to be productive, in ways that leveraged their best most practiced ways of being.
- Being part of a team, through which they could develop and nurture future R&D leaders and collaborate on new projects and ideas.
- Working on growth-related *projects*, rather than being pulled into operations.

While the nature of their preferred projects differed from the operations and production managers, coders, testers, and other key players in the CT Inc. innovation process, the same basic conditions appeared to be important to all involved: affirmation of their identity, work on projects that made sense to them, and the opportunity to contribute to the greater good of the company. Thus, the focus here will be on a collaborative, relational model of innovation.

Merrill's Four Stages and Roles of the Innovation Process

Merrill's description of a four-phased innovation process cycle (Figure 18) is especially apt for discussing the CT, Inc. case because it (a) closely mirrors some interviewees' uses of the MBTI and the “four types of engineers” in their sense-making

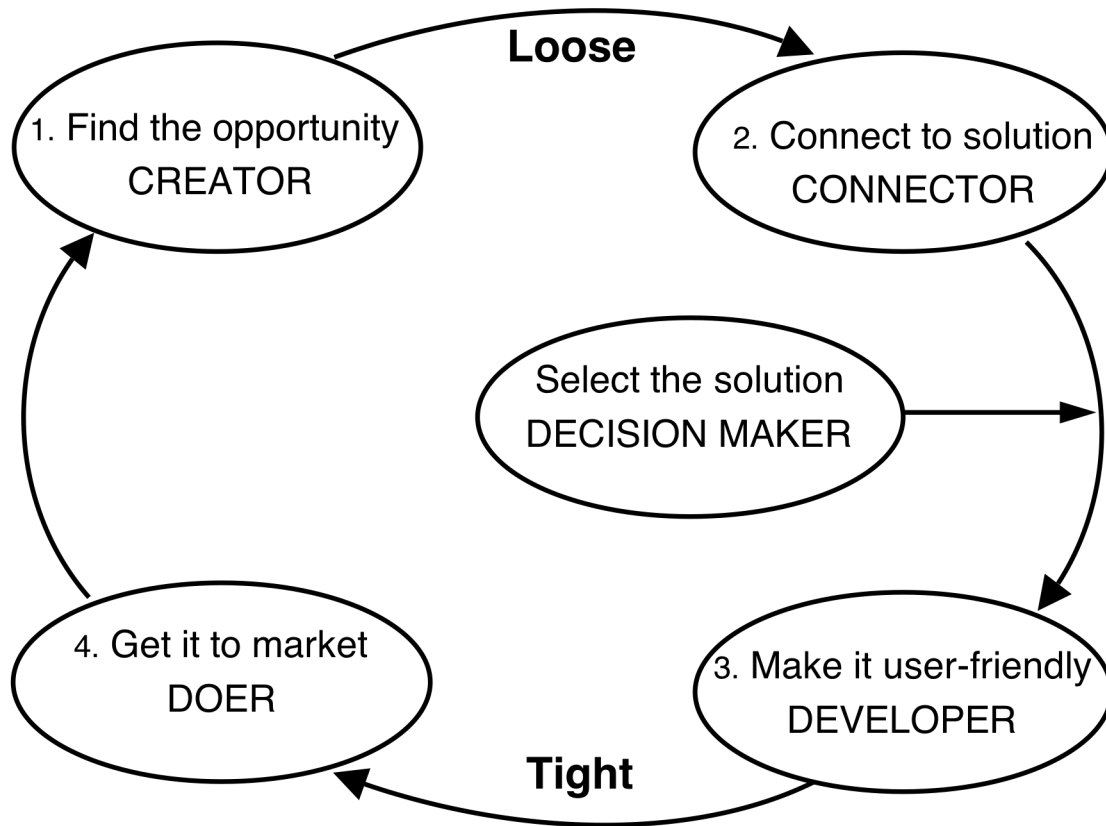


Figure 18. Merrill's model of innovation phases and roles (Merrill, 2008, pp. 39-40)

efforts, (b) links roles to processes, and (c) suggests that certain stages and roles are necessarily looser and more emergent, while others are more tightly controlled and measured. In a manner similar to the contributions of systems thinking tools to social construction, Merrill's model offers a simple visual to describe the innovation process and demonstrates how four general "innovation types" map to it:

1. **Creators find opportunities.** The first step in the innovation process is to identify the opportunity. Importantly for the innovator, neither the customer nor the market may recognize that need or opportunity...Creative thinking is usually required at this first stage, and the creators are the primary influence at this stage. They are 'gold-diggers' who typically dig out the opportunity and open it up. These people operate best in a loose environment.
2. **Connectors connect new ideas to solutions.** Next, you find the idea that solves the problem. Once the customer opportunity has been created, then the solutioning happens. This is where most people

recognize innovation as taking place. Breakthrough innovation comes from finding radical solutions. This is where connecting a product or process from a totally different environment often leads to that ‘Eureka!’ moment...Innovation is the use of new knowledge to create new products and new services. This second stage is the application of that new knowledge. Connectors, like creators, need a loose mode of operation.

The Tipping Point (The decision maker)—After the second stage we only have a concept. We then reach a tipping point where decisions have to be made. We make decisions on which is the best concept to pursue based on factors such as risk and behavior change. We then narrow our focus... We now have to develop a working solution.

3. **Developers put the plan into production.** This is where you make the product functional and user-friendly, and eliminate the glitches. Good project monitoring and control are vital. This is where you move from loose to tight. Speed to market is essential. Discipline becomes vital....Production problems are eliminated during development....The developers make the idea better and make it work. They are engineers, systems developers, and accountants.
4. **Doers get the product to market.** Finally, execution is where the operations and sales people take ownership...Getting the product to market is where far too many stumble...They now have to ‘run for the line’ so a tight mode continues to be vital. Time is their biggest advantage of all. The doers execute and get the job done.

(Merrill, 2008, pp. 39-42)

The issues witnessed at CT, Inc. are clearly reflected in Merrill’s model. The operations and production managers would be described as Developers and/or Doers (“D’s”), whereas the architects and most of their colleagues in R&D would be characterized as Creators and Connectors (“C’s”). In general, the work of the “C’s” involves ideation and design, while the work of the “D’s” involves directing and acting. While the latter can be easily seen and measured, they cannot be accomplished without the work of the “C’s.” An example of what it was like to manage a “C” was cited earlier in the section on the MBTI.

The process Merrill describes is relational, identifying ways of being and thinking that are most essential at and between each of the phases. This view of innovation “types” is consistent with the Gergens’ concept of MPWoB. His model is clear and accessible, especially to people whose work personas and interests are more “thing” and process-oriented than people-oriented. His view of innovation generation (as in the

verb, to generate) is one of high level collaborations and carefully coordinated hand-offs. What is especially relevant in the context of the CT, Inc. narrative is his description of the work of C's as *loose* and the work of D's as *tight*. This difference in MPWoB was a key source of misunderstanding and irritation between groups at CT, Inc. While the company had been weak on the production and execution side, it had been strong on the R&D creation and connection side. Unfortunately, when production and execution (operations) were strengthened, the pendulum was allowed to swing too far to the side of the D's. So much so, that the company lost much of its C core. *This model suggests important leverage points in preventing accidental adversaries, particularly the need to affirm and appreciate roles and identities and to coordinate transitions between phases of the innovation process cycle.*

Systems Thinking

This section revisits systems thinking to explore it from a philosophical perspective. Peter Senge first brought the language of systems thinking into common business parlance with his seminal work, *The Fifth Discipline* (Senge, 1990). In it, he introduced the philosophy and core principles of Systems thinking, which, if one didn't know better, sounds a lot like those of appreciative inquiry:

From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions; we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole. When we then try to “see the big picture,” we try to reassemble the fragments in our minds, to list and organize all the pieces. But, as physicist David Bohm says, the task is futile—similar to trying to reassemble the fragments of a broken mirror to see a true reflection. Thus, after a while we give up trying to see the whole altogether (Senge, 1990, p. 3).

He continues, elucidating the organizational discipline of *systems thinking* in a way that practitioners of appreciative inquiry might recognize as reflective of *systemic* thinking or the principle of *wholism*:

The tools and ideas presented in this book are for destroying the illusion that the world is created of separate, unrelated forces. When we give up this illusion—we can then build ‘learning organizations,’ organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together (p. 3.).

The Essences of Systems Thinking

In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge articulates five core values that comprise the “art and practice of the learning organization.” These represent a philosophy of mind, being, and effective practice (as a co-author and author of many subsequent works, he has introduced additional principles, like presence):

1. Personal Mastery
2. Mental Models
3. Building Shared Vision
4. Team Learning
5. Systems thinking (the fifth discipline)

In practice, the discipline of systems thinking has eclipsed the others; although, all working in concert are seen as synergistic components of a learning organization. Again, perhaps because the small “s” practice of systems thinking is the most concrete and discrete of the principles, it is easiest to teach, learn, and practice. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge suggests three levels at which the disciplines may be thought of:

Practices: What you do

Principles: Guiding ideas and insights

Essences: State of being of those with mastery of the discipline

It is at the level of “essences” that the overlap between social construction and systems thinking is evident. Table 2 below is adapted from *The Fifth Discipline*. It illustrates Senge’s construction of the organizational learning discipline at the level of Essences:

Table 2. Systems thinking disciplines as embodied essences

Discipline	Essences
Systems Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holism • Inter-connectedness
Personal Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being • Generativeness • Connectedness
Mental Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of Truth • Openness
Building Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonality of Purpose • Partnership
Team Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective Intelligence • Alignment

Aligning behaviors and actions to a shared vision is a foundation of systems thinking practice. Senge talks about what in the constructionist-based approach known as appreciative inquiry, is referred to as “positive image, positive action” (Cooperrider et al., 2001):

When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar “vision statement”), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to. But many have personal visions that never get translated into shared visions that galvanize an organization. All too often, a company’s shared vision has revolved around the charisma of a leader, or around a crisis that galvanizes everyone temporarily. But, given a choice, most people opt for pursuing a lofty goal, not only in times of crisis but at all times. What has been lacking is a discipline for translating individual vision into shared vision—not a ‘cookbook’ but a set of principles and guiding practices (p. 9).

Systems Archetypes

*Systems archetypes*³⁸ represent common meta-dynamics that have been observed repeatedly in organizations, and often form the basis for problem-focused interventions that consultants are hired to help resolve. This paper next suggests that the symbolic language of systems thinking may be useful for appreciating the systemic and structural components of the dynamic in a way that helps to identify leverage points and points of sensitivity (i.e. variables that are especially sensitive to changes in other variables). Writing in 1990, Senge describes their etiology and purpose in this way:

One of the most important, and potentially most empowering, insights to come from the young field of systems thinking is that certain patterns of structure recur again and again. These “systems archetypes” or “generic structures” embody the key to learning to see structures in our personal and organizational lives. The system archetypes—of which there are only a relatively small number—suggest that not all management problems are unique, something that experienced managers know intuitively.

If reinforcing and balancing feedback and delays are like the nouns and verbs of systems thinking, then the systems archetypes are analogous to basic sentences or simple stories that get retold again and again. Just as in literature there are common themes and recurring plot lines that get recast with different characters and settings, a relatively

³⁸ In addition to Accidental Adversaries, these include: Drifting Goals, Success to the Successful, Fixes that Fail, Tragedy of the Commons, Growth and Underinvestment, Shifting the Burden, Attractiveness Principle, and Escalation.

small number of these archetypes are common to a very large variety of management situations.

The systems archetypes reveal an elegant simplicity underlying the complexity of management issues. As we learn to recognize more and more of these archetypes, it becomes possible to see more and more places where there is leverage in facing difficult challenges, and to explain these opportunities to others (Senge, 1990, p. 94).

In the systems thinking framework, archetypes are comprised of from two to many small micro systems of balancing and reinforcing processes that tend to act together in ways that ultimately limit organizational effectiveness. The archetypes represent webs of interrelated factors, or variables, that work together relationally to socially construct interlocking reinforcing and/or balancing behaviors.

The archetypes, sometimes referred to as models, are freeze-frame snapshots of dynamic action. They represent the antithesis of dialogic discourse, relational being, and shared meaning-making in organizations. Instead of reflecting the creative leading edge of chaos, these states often are experienced simply as chaos, in the worst sense of the word. As models, they depict common patterns of disintegrative organizational behavior. These patterns of dysfunction are both symptomatic and reinforcing of covert processes described by Marshak (2006):

Because they are subtle, when the archetypes arise in a family, an ecosystem, a news story, or a corporation, you often don't see them so much as feel them. Sometimes they produce a sense of *déjà vu*, a hunch that you've seen this pattern of forces before. "There it is again," you say to yourself. Though experienced managers already know many of these recurring plot lines intuitively, they often don't know how to explain them. The systems archetypes provide that language. They can make explicit much of what otherwise is simply "management judgment" (Senge, 1990, p. 95).

Behaviors and events are the observable surface layer of archetypal dynamics. Not until one looks deeper at patterns of behavior, and underlying structures can one truly understand what they are observing, or see its systemic nature. That is the purpose of the fifth discipline of organizational learning, and the role that the archetypes play in it (Kim, 1992, 1994; Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1994):

The purpose of the systems archetypes is to recondition our perceptions, so as to be more able to see structures at play, and to see the leverage in those structures. Once a systems archetype is identified, it will always suggest areas of high- and low-leverage change....All of the

archetypes are made up of the systems building blocks: reinforcing process, balancing processes, and delays (Senge, 1990, p. 95).

Typical risk factors for the accidental adversaries archetype were addressed earlier. The conceptual overview presented so far in Part II suggests three additional high leverage risk factors:

- Lack of Focus on What Matters Most
- Unclear and/or Mismatched Projects
- Lack of Appreciation for or Coordination of Diverse MPWoB Within and Across Groups

Poorly defined, unconvincing, or conflicting project definitions may result in groups working at cross purposes and at first unintentionally obstructing each other's projects. On the other hand, how projects are defined serves as a critical leverage point for preventing or transforming the dynamic. Appreciation and coordination of diverse MPWoB, likewise, is a key leverage point. When handled poorly or unmindfully, the coordination of diverse MPWoB may obstruct growth. And, when deeply appreciated it may serve as a positive leverage point for transformation. Once precipitated, the patterns of behavior take on a habitual, self-reinforcing nature, much like that the pattern of addiction described in *Brain Lock* (Schwartz & Beyette, 1997). The dynamic is challenging, but not impossible to disintegrate and transcend.

Archetypes are worth a closer look by constructionist practitioners because of their relationship to multi-being. As Gergen (2009) and Gergen & Gergen (2009) suggest, many interpersonal problems arise because of the inherent nature of multi-being to be diverse, and for MPWoB to be out-of-sync within and across individuals; what Gergen (2009) refers to as the "challenge of coordinating flight" between multi-beings. These problems have an archetypal nature that is reflected in the systems thinking archetypes (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1994; Kim, 1992). Given their roots in multi-being, it is consistent with social construction to suggest that these archetypal patterns may represent predictable outcomes of relational multi-being as they appear in organizations, especially in the absence of mindful leadership (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). Another way of viewing the archetypes that is consistent with relational multi-being is to view their expression as the collective embodiment of the shadow side (Bushe, 2007; Fitzgerald et al., 2009; Johnson, 2006) of organizational life.

Some organizations are more predisposed to particular archetypal formations because of the nature of the work they do, the complexity of the roles involved, the historical context in which they evolve, the personalities of their founders and other key stakeholder groups, etc. Organizations in the business of innovation may be especially predisposed to the accidental adversaries dynamic, and related systems archetypes (e.g., "drifting goals," "escalation," "success to the successful,") because of the need for

groups with diverse and divergent MPWoB to collaborate, and to coordinate through a multi-staged process.

The Tendency to Negate Systems Thinking as a Machine Model

Some constructionists are thrown off by the machine-like appearance of the discipline's use of a symbolic language of loops and "causal" webs. The systems thinking language of loops and arrows can be challenging for the untrained eye to follow. It is an inherently visual-spatial language that requires some familiarity and considerable practice to apply. Viewing a systems thinking model (see the Accidental Adversaries Archetype section, below, for an example), requires using one's imagination to flip an imaginary switch that sets the models in motion over time. Gene Bellinger, the publisher of the SystemsWiki, has attempted to aid this process by creating and posting simulations of the systems thinking archetypes, or models (SystemsWiki, April 2010) in the compendium of systems thinking tools that he publishes and maintains on the Internet. As Bellinger notes on the introduction to the site:

Once comfortable with the system concept it's easier to realize that Systems Thinking is a way of looking at the world where one thinks about interactions and relationships rather than isolated elements. This world view means that Systems Thinking is neither a model nor a methodology. The implication being that people are often confused as to how to clearly define Systems Thinking, which has resulted in numerous Systems Thinking Definitions. Because of this ambiguous nature people usually get it as a result of stories or an Aha Moment; a moment where all of a sudden a systems perspective is something that makes sense (SystemsWiki, Jan. 23, 2011).

Again, as Bellinger notes, above, the models are intended to be set in motion, rather than suggesting a static, fixed view of reality; however, they look scientific. A criticism of systems thinking often made by social constructionists is that it is a mechanical model, more consistent with Newtonian than quantum physics. In fact, this is a point often made by Peter Senge and Meg Wheatley in the context of systems thinking--not that the systems theory it employs is Newtonian in nature, but that Newtonian thinking results in the mechanistic forms of organizational behavior represented by the systems thinking archetypes. They are clear in paraphrasing Einstein's often referenced quote that the same type of thinking that created limits to growth are not the ones that will get us out of them. What creates the mechanistic forms of dysfunctional behavior in organizations is positivist, mechanistic thinking. Senge and others (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 2005; Wheatley, 2006) propose a shift to more relational, quantum thinking-- which has been a constant and emergent theme in Senge's work, and the work of his collaborators (e.g., Argyris, Scharmer, Jaworski,

Kleiner, and others) --as the way to transcend the “brain lock” (Schwartz, 1997) or addiction to mechanistic, positivist, modernist, and dichotomous ways of thinking and leading that limit organizational effectiveness and learning.

Many people involved in the early quality improvement arena were engineers, and many still are. How better to reflexively move an engineering mindset toward a constructionist view than by using a familiar language to introduce a new concept that is inherently interactive and relational in nature? Auletta (2009) has noted, albeit stereotypically, that engineers hold effectiveness above all others to be their highest value at work. If one agrees with this characterization, then it follows that quality work relationships, if shown to directly impact effectiveness, may be characterized as key leverage points for increasing effectiveness. Viewed through this value set, any effort to better understand and improve work relationships is a valid, high leverage action, *as long as* it directly serves the goal of increasing effectiveness (e.g., creativity, efficiency of processes, innovation, etc.). Social scientists, especially constructionists, might look at the same “variables” from a somewhat different perspective. As an example, the constructionist approach, appreciative inquiry, suggests that improving the quality of work relationships is at once the highest value, means, and ends of organization. From this vantage point, effectiveness may be seen as a necessary but not sufficient condition for organizational survival. “Cold engineers,” and many others who view effectiveness as a highest order aspiration, might express a similar but reversed view, that the quality of relationships is a necessary (although some might just say, “important”) but not sufficient condition for organizational survival. Depending upon the reader’s constructions of *relationships* and *effectiveness*, the difference may range from blatant to subtle. Ultimately, regardless of where the individuals being discussed here fall along the spectrum of values, all share a common aspiration: organizational survival, thriving, and perhaps even transformation. As Bellinger’s words suggest, the discipline of systems thinking approaches systems change from both perspective simultaneously. Unfortunately, the models are off-putting and hard to learn for some who are new to them, or may be less practiced in their visual-spatial, symbolic means of communicating concepts and extrapolating action living forward. Even for those who have studied systems thinking, developing the ability to both read *and* write in the language of loops and webs may take many years.

Left-hand Column—Internal Narrative

I have come to believe that social construction and appreciative inquiry tend to be approaches favored by people with strong verbal MPWoB and linguistic agility. My experience working with some “science types,” and my awareness of visual-spatial and kinesthetic styles of thinking, suggest that words hold less subjective or emotional meaning for some people than they do for others. The MPWoB of some people favor the visual language of systems thinking and see it as a poetic and emergent form of expression, while those of others favor words. Each group may struggle with the other’s expression of MPWoB. I see this as an important issue is OD practice. I believe that sometimes words *do* create worlds, and sometimes a picture *is* worth a thousand words, and sometimes words and pictures *together* create symphonies of shared meaning.

The archetypes represent pictures of dynamics deciphered in the process of living forward. To discount them as mechanistic cause-and-effect sense making is to confuse their “apparentness” (what they seem to look like on first blush) with their philosophical and linguistic roots and intent. The models are written in a specialized visual-spatial language most familiar in physical science and engineering environments, and understandably less so in social sciences. In many ways, their use in organizational dynamics sense-making is akin to the metaphorical adoption and adaptation of quantum physics to social constructionist OD practice. To physicists, the translation may seem over simplified, stilted, or perhaps too metaphorical so that it distorts accepted meanings within the field of physics itself.

“Systems” or “Systemic” Thinking: An Experiment

While the phrase “*systems* thinking” seems to be rejected roundly by adherents of appreciative inquiry and social construction, “*systemic* thinking, appears to not just be acceptable, but is upheld as an expression of the principle of wholism. Within the systems thinking community, however, the two terms tend to be used interchangeably

as synonyms³⁹. So, the strong negative reaction to the word “system” among many in the constructionist community is confusing. As an experiment, I put the question to the Systems Thinking World Group on LinkedIn, at the time an invitation-only group hosted by Gene Bellinger, similar to the Taos Institute LinkedIn Group and the AI list-serve maintained by Jack Brittain at the University of Utah. An unanticipated and surprising observation from the rich dialog is how quickly it expanded to social constructionist ideas.

Here is the posting that started the discussion:

SystemS Thinking and SystemIC Thinking-- Same or Different?

How do you use the terms, "systems thinking" (lower case), "Systems Thinking" (upper case) and "systemic thinking"? Are they interchangeable? Or, do the terms and forms (noun or verb) have subtle or significantly different meanings? What meanings does each hold for you? My research and writing integrates diverse approaches to organizational consulting practices. One academic community in which I work dismisses "Systems Thinking" as an obsolete mechanistic model, while embracing "systemic thinking." I wonder what your thoughts are about this? Have you thought about the differences in language before? JJ

Group members quickly entered their ideas into the conversation. The entire transcript is included here as a means of introducing voices of other consultants and managers who are practitioners of systems thinking:

Frank Sowa • Systems Thinking and systemic thinking (I believe are synonymous uses). Old school "systems thinking" was perhaps overrun by zealous consultants with a STEM background in the sixties and seventies. They may have made it appear too "mechanistic." (Exploring sixties and seventies models is NOT a bad way to look historically at systems thinking, though. Still, having worked for Apple as an Educational Solutions Consultant and going into hundreds of educational institutions, I have to admit that I am rarely surprised when educators "dismiss" something as "obsolete" when the teaching methods applied at most of our educational institutions is "grossly obsolete itself," and often stuck in the pages out of the sixties and seventies. Today's Systems Thinking is expansionistic. (That also usually stumps much of the educational community who like to work within constraints to better refine ideas. "Systemic Thinking" is reductionistic and refining by nature. Systemic thinking is also of two natures. The first is built around causal modalities

³⁹ This assertion was checked against the systems thinking and related texts cited in this paper.

and can or cannot be measurable. The second is built around the dynamic structures of iterations and how a system varies over time. System dynamics proponents usually promote this latter approach. True Systems thinkers, IMHO, should try to understand all the expansionistic and reductionistic modeling approaches as I believe, they are all extremely useful, and purposeful. I'm sure others will have comments on this.

Gene Bellinger • I've had a number of comments from people indicating that they distanced themselves from discussion on forums such as this as it was too much like dancing around on the head of a pin, and at times I agree with them. I really don't give a rats *** what you call it. The question of relevance would seem to be how do we understand the situation in a meaningful manner that will enable us to move forward with what's really important? Oh, yes, it's after dinner and I may have had one to many margarites.

Frank Sowa • OK Gene. I agree with you -- we NEED to focus on relevance. (The English language screws a lot of people up.)

Alan Meekings • Hello Gene, I strongly agree with you that dancing around pin heads is not a good use of time. However, you may wish to re-consider giving a rats *** to the debate about whether we talk in public (rather than among like-minded consenting adults) about either 'systems thinking' or 'systemic thinking'. Indeed, you've probably spotted that there's a current thread on this topic in the Systems Thinking group. My only interest is in helping people change the way they see things in order to deliver improved outcomes for organisations, societies, individuals, the environment, etc. Sadly, my experience tells me that language can stand in the way of understanding and acceptance. I have found from experience that lots of people respond negatively to the term 'systems thinking' (fearing IT systems projects, something beyond their grasp, or whatever – who knows), whereas no one seems to object to the term 'systemic thinking'. Indeed, the great thing about the term 'systemic thinking' is that it seems to raise no hackles among the general population. Of course, it may raise hackles among 'systems thinkers'. However, like you, I wonder if this merits a rats ***, assuming the over-riding purpose is making a beneficial contribution in the real world. Regards, Alan

Gene Bellinger • Alan, I have been following the discussion in ST discussion you mentioned also. And yes, I have personally witnessed the affect the phrase Systems Thinking has on some people. Is the phrase systemic thinking likely to have less of an affect? At most times when interacting with a group not already comfortable with the perspective is not to put a label on it. We just talk about what influences what and the

implications and never worry about the label. Here's a piece that may provide a chuckle.

Stuart Worsley • So, let me pose a different type of question. Some believe systems are to be comprehended, and then shaped towards purpose. Others say that this is futile because even complexity within "frozen time" is too tough to effectively understand, and that by the time one approaches such understanding, dynamics have shifted everything. So the other view is that complex systems are emergent, and have to be engaged with on the basis of partiality in understanding. And it is such engagement that gives rise to an understanding of patterns within the complexity, that we can work with. I call this latter view Systemic Action Research - a process whereby we deliberately learn through engagement, and work with flows. Here, we seek the sources of patterning, i.e. the enthusiasm that gives rise to initiative; and space (the opportunities that work with enthusiasm to make stuff happen). Does any of this resonate with this group, or would I be on a wrong web page?? Regards to you all

Guido Wolf Reichert • I cannot help it but I may (not yet?) be open enough for the "expansionistic" experiences out there for me to discover. Some of what is said here "resonates" with what I believe has happened in philosophy: e.g. post-modernism vs. analytical philosophy (look up the Sokal affair - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sokal_affair in this respect). I can't help - call it reductionist or not - but to strive for clarity and especially clarity that helps to understand and solve problems in a Popperian sense. If I cannot say something in a clear way - even if it is about systems - there is a good chance that I have not understood it myself. 'Systemic' consulting - at least in Germany - seems 'burned': The term might have a place in medicine and psychology (?) but it gives consulting an esoteric touch I personally do not like. I must admit that 'systems thinking' remains dubious to me as compared to systems science - is there for example 'biological thinking' or 'physical thinking' or 'management thinking' as counterpart to the relevant sciences also? Or should we try to stay out of paradigmatic thinking as long as we can (Donella Meadows highest leverage point for systems interventions, if I remember it correctly). @Stuart: Does it matter whether something 'resonates' in a group? Or is 'resonance' some kind of algedonic signal to help us beware of 'group think'? Can we validate what we believe has 'emerged' from a system we have identified, how? While I value thinking about systems, complexity, emergent behavior, self-regulation, human nature and whatever I am not so sure what kind of clarity enters the discussion with the use of 'systems thinking' or 'systemic thinking'. Is there help for me or is this just like Hegel, Heidegger and Habermas in German philosophy:

deep sentences as proof of deep thinking where true depth should have produced clear ones? Kind regards, Guido

Jim Hart • Jody, I think about the language all the time. As a consultant who is attempting to introduce even the BASIC concepts of "systems thinking," I have learned to simply adapt to the situation at hand (i.e., find what resonates well with the people) and adjust the terminology to fit the culture and organization. I personally could care less (yes, a rat's ***) what term I use because the term is just a label. Unfortunately, labels can carry emotional energy/baggage, and once you encounter those, you might as well walk away because no pick or chisel will get you through THOSE walls. To me it is all about effective communications, and the sooner you find the right term to convey the meaning you want to express, the more likely you are to be successful. Let me give you three examples. I work in the computer/IT area (software development). This means the word "systems" is heavily overloaded. There are "developmental systems," "delivery systems," "manufacturing systems," and "systems being developed," and none of these come close to the "systems thinking" target. It would be impossible to count the number of people who hear the term "systems thinking" (capitalized or not) and think it is about engineering computer systems. "Systemic thinking" or "thinking systemically" has its own landmines. It can easily be interpreted to mean "systematic thinking" which is more about a rigorous/methodical process of defining something completely and comprehensively. Finally, in the very few places in the computer/IT arena I have seen where "systems thinking" is actually applied, some actually scoff at this term, preferring to use what they believe to be a more scientifically-based term "system dynamics" (SD). Why? Because some SD'ers believe "systems THINKING" is just about thinking about systems, and does not cover MODELING them. And of course more than a few (SD'ers) have pointed out that Jay Forrester used to say "If you are working with causal loop structures, you are about 5% of the way there." (paraphrased) I *DO* find it frustrating that the systems thinking (Systems Thinking?) community cannot settle on a set of terms (labels?) that have specific meaning. We have built our own Tower of Babel. What is most unfortunate is that until we reach the point when the dust settles our community will be fraught with misunderstandings and meaningless debate. Yet all of that is an internal matter among the ST community. I am still on the hunt for a better label that gets me past the emotional defenses and resistance to think differently. Until then I will continue to throw everything I have in my arsenal at the target, and hope something strikes home.

Stuart Worsley • Guido; Resonance is critical in engaging complexity.

Simply put, there is too much detail out there to grasp, and it's always changing. It is important to therefore find out where patterns are forming. Resonance testing is one way to do this. In my work, I use narrative and imagery to describe what happened (or what is happening). For example, I work with companies that were formed some 3 to 5 years ago, to manage Kenya's water services in small towns. None of these were able to break even. We took on an increasing number as clients, and found ourselves with 17. Each has a story to tell about what works and what does not. One company's experience about cross subsidising water services for poor areas from higher paying users, resonated strongly with another company's story about improved billing procedures. How? Because in the telling, each story resonated around the idea of customer engagement, particularly in shaping services. Here, we did not identify the resonance ourselves. Rather, by convening periodic platforms where these companies could meet for a facilitated conversation, they identified the idea that public participation in shaping services actually provided quick and publicly acceptable responses to difficult solutions. Why? There were many reasons that were locally embedded and they could sense their own patterns. Resonance testing enables the manifestation of ideas that reinforce. Ideas with high resonance then make for fertile ground to engage in systems. On the basis of this, one can initiate enquiry based action research, and move to deepen systemic understanding by engaging actively to bring improvements at key points. Validation of resonance is strictly an internal affair, and the practitioner merely facilitates connection, action and reflection. We practice "whole systems facilitation" and resonance testing is a key element in this. It delivers high quality results. I can show now a series of sector systems in Kenya where transformation is apparent: Education, Water, Dairy, Livestock, Horticulture.

Stuart Worsley • Gene: I used 5 key principles here: In no particular order; 1) Field of relations: Everything is connected to everything; small changes in one part of the system may have large effects elsewhere 2) Non linearity: Action A does not necessarily lead to outcome B. This may hold true over a short 'range' but the multiple interactions of many short linearities produces a systemic non-linearity. 3) Patterning: There are always underlying patterns. Sometimes these are based on assumptions (by society say). 4) Emergence: One thing leads to another. 5) Unintended consequences: Happen - across system boundaries, as a result of scale, on others as a result of individual acts So - Crucial insight emerges through the interaction of diverse stakeholders - We can design action experiments to understand more about how system relationships work - Outcomes cannot be accurately predicted but a direction of travel can be identified. - We must be constantly looking for possible openings,

opportunities, entry points - Change is likely to occur where there is strong energy. So it is important to identify where there is strong resonance. - All this requires Judgment not a set of rules Does this help?

Drs J.C. (Jan) Lelie CPF • Hmm, this reminds me of the ideas of Peirce, James and Dewey: meaning is in what works. In Dutch - and German - we use the word "werkelijkheid" for reality. Werk = work, reality, in my language, is what works. In the Netherlands and in Germany, many do not use the words Systemic Thinking but Systemic Working. The system is what works, what works is the system. I try to explain the difference like this: we use the word "understand" (Dutch: "verstaan" which also means "to hear", also in German ("verstehen"). It is no coincidence that we use this double meaning, I have no room to explain this here) because it is derived from the word 'to stay'. In systemic work we ask participants to represent elements of the system by taking a position in space and 'stay'; to stay is a word in the present tense. The moment we stay, we perceive the system, we 'understay'. This is 'all at once', hence the confusion most people experience. Then we feel and then we think and we start to understand. Understand is a past tense. The confusion, also in the words, is part of the process of understanding. (I use this as a method in my master classes: the learning is in the confusion, not in the explanation). So Systemic Work is in the present, the here and now and is a kind of analogue communicating (Watzlawick) and Systems Thinking is a reflection (= looking back), is a dialogue and therefore digital. Both are needed for understanding, but you cannot do them at the same time. You cannot have your cake and eat it. @;-)

Gene Bellinger • @Stuart - it seems to hang together well. Might there be more to go with them?

Stuart Worsley • @Gene. I have been most inspired on this by the works of Danny Burns, Professor of Social and Organisational Learning, formerly at University of West of England, now at Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. We have developed a lot of these ideas together and in our practice. Danny published on this a couple of years back in his work "Systemic Action Research".

Drs J.C. (Jan) Lelie CPF • And there is another aspect: words also signify to which community or communities you (want to) belong. My research has this object as its subject: meaning relates to community. The most obvious is that the 'mean' of meaning is the same as the 'mun' in community. In Dutch we call it 'gemeenschap' literally 'communescape'. Other relations are that all communities discern between members and

non-members by the meaning of certain words. Like Humpty-Dumpty implies, when, I quote `When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, `it means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less.' when a community uses certain words, they mean just what they choose it to mean (remember mean and mun?). That, in my opinion, is why we use 'sacred words' and even 'sacred texts'; not because the words are sacred (= special) but because the meaning of the words are chosen by the community and when you adhere to these words, you are a member of that community (= special). That also accounts for HD's tone. And why each and every community in the end starts arguing about the meaning of words (talking about patterns in communities). The paradox, of course, is that you cannot have your meaning and break it (now I'm referring to the egg again).

The After-image of Professional Development Training

As with appreciative inquiry practice, it is common for the predominant after image of a brief training encounter to be the applied process models, both of which are pictorial in nature. In the case of AI, the 4 or 5-D or 4-I process model is typically remembered and applied with lesser understanding of AI's core principles. Likewise, in systems thinking, the language of loops and leverage typically come before understanding of the core principles, that are inherently more intellectual, theoretical, and ephemeral in nature, and, thus, seems to be harder to teach and learn in a short timeframe. Many experienced practitioners suggest that selling ideas and theories to potential clients is much harder (i.e., less effective, if one wants to earn a living) than selling models, methods, applications, assured results, and "shiny objects." (This was acknowledged in the recent "New OD" Conference held in the Washington DC area in March 2010. In urging practitioners to publish theory, it was noted by Bob Marshak and others that articulating theories, in the form of published papers and books only pays indirectly in the form of marketing one's services, and in being considered a person worth being listened to.) Watkins and Mohr (2001, pp. 49-50) have identified three levels of AI practice: AI Facilitator, AI Practitioner, and AI Master Practitioner. AI Facilitators are still learning the principles and practices, and are prepared to work in conjunction with more experienced practitioners. AI Practitioners may work independently (although many prefer to work with a partner) and have a strong understanding of both the principles and practice of AI. Meta or Master Practitioners are masters of practice as well as the theory and philosophy and are involved in training others and advancing the field of practice through writing and speaking.

Awareness of the Archetype: A Hammer in Search of a Nail?

The original project did not set out to find the accidental adversaries dynamic in action. To the contrary, it began with buy-in to a compelling story about a wildly successful business turnaround. In retrospect, that PR story wove a tale that negated the felt experiences of many members of the organization. Observing the bifurcated nature of the CT, Inc. story unfolding and emerging, has heightened my awareness and sensitivity to signs and symptoms of a possible accidental adversaries dynamic, either in the making or full-blown. Systems thinking discourse refers to the "left-hand column," what was thought or felt, but not said, and the "tip of the iceberg," observable events, below which are deeper meanings and patterns of behavior. The OLH interview project disclosed certain left-hand column undiscussables and below the surface beliefs, assumptions, and structural patterns at play. The process of not-knowing, emergent exploration not only shed light on the organizational story, but also on the co-constructed nature of the consultant's learning process itself. Rather than looking for the accidental adversaries dynamic, or any of the other systems archetypes, the process helped me to recognize evidence that deeper meaning may reside below the surface of what is said or observed. When individuals in an organization consistently state negative assumptions about other individuals or groups, or when someone in a group says, "you know, there are some big elephants here," that suggests that there may be an underlying accidental adversaries dynamic, or other shadow or covert processes at play limiting success and happiness.

Revisiting the Accidental Adversaries Dynamic at Play at CT, Inc.

The CT, Inc. narrative highlights a belief held by many systems thinking practitioners that the accidental adversaries dynamic is one of the most prevalent and high leverage limits to organizational growth, even in the presence of a compelling positive image of the future⁴⁰.

In the case of CT, Inc., while the Waverider breakthrough might have propelled the company into a growth trajectory, progress was frustrated by adversarial dynamics initially set in motion by structural factors, or variables that included but were not limited to:

- Leadership Styles and Decision-Making
- Espoused Theories
- Plans: Strategic, Tactical, Transition
- Project Definitions

⁴⁰The PR story, which, like the Waverider breakthrough, was accomplished in spite of the organization, outside of existing leadership structures. It was a strategic vision, but not necessarily shared broadly.

- Accountability Processes (E.G., “Roadmaps”)
- HR/OD Roles And Responsibilities
- Organizational Design (e.g.. Functional, Enterprise Units, Other)

A point of mapping the dynamic is to appreciate the nature of delays between decisions and actions and observable behavioral outcomes. While affective dynamics were easily observed at the time of the OLH interviews, the underlying structural considerations that initially sparked and continued to reinforce them originated much earlier. It is beyond the scope of this paper to assert the exact origins of those structures or to delve more deeply into *why* the structures were set in place. The paper does, however, suggest (a) that the adversarial dynamic observed at CT, Inc. at the time of the study had both affective and structural components, and (b) once set in motion, the dynamic can be transformed only if both aspects are addressed in concert. In the case of CT, Inc., the accidental adversaries dynamic witnessed during the OLH project was socially constructed in a way that suggests the difficulty, if not the validity, or teasing apart relational and structural components. The two are inextricably intertwined.

The Conundrum of the Business Turnaround at CT, Inc.

Leading forward, in the context of a business turnaround, is much like the firefighters’ dilemma described by Karl Weick (2007, 2001), where life or death hinged on (a) the presence of mind and ability of leaders to recognize the need and to issue a convincing command for firefighters to drop their tools and run out of the fire, and (b) the resilient ability of firefighters to instantaneously drop tools that, through training and practice, had become inseparable part of their core identities as firefighters, in order to survive and fight another day, and to embrace a radical new project that penetrated to their identities as *fire-fighters*.

CT, Inc.’s CEO, Andrew Meyer, was faced with similar paradoxical circumstances, choices, and decisions. He took over the lead of a company that no longer had a single, coherent, clear project, seemingly either for leaders or followers. A prior president had attempted to compete head-to-head with an industry Goliath, and in the process lost focus and direction of the company’s core strengths and technologies. The CEO who followed him tried to steer the ship back on course, but by that point, what had been the incoming wave of the Internet had become a tsunami that was washing the company’s market dominance out to sea. Andrew took over to complete the process of sweeping away old projects, regaining focus and control of the company’s direction, and charting its new course through the increasingly deep and shark-infested water of the Internet business environment.

When Andrew was chosen by the Board to take over the reigns, his first actions were to reduce the workforce by 18 percent, stripping the company of the workforce to address no longer viable projects. He allowed a cadre of command-and-control leaders

and managers to force an ending to the turnaround, and what appeared to be a culture of lax deadlines and release dates. Andrew spoke publicly and often about the company's growth trajectory, and appeared to believe that people would let go of old projects and adopt the new story of growth by virtue of the profound respect he garnered as a technology visionary and hero. He assumed that smart people will do the logical thing, and would focus on those projects that aligned with his and the Board's vision for growth. And, if they would not do it because it was the logical thing to do, and because they respected him, then they would do it by the brute force of the leadership he'd installed to make it so. He would lead the company *as if* it were a growth company, no longer stuck in the in-between of transition. In the 2009 interview I conducted with Andrew, I asked what he would do differently knowing what he now knows from his experience leading CT, Inc. and as a seasoned CEO. He reflected that, "My key mistake was assuming that [CT, Inc.] was a growth business, which it was not."

The accidental adversaries dynamic described in the interviews, suggests that the new macro-level project of growth as an Internet-based company was not articulated in a convincing way (Weick, 1999) to key internal stakeholders, or operationalized to (a) better align micro-level projects in service to the over-arching growth project, and (b) promote and support collaboration. In the absence of an inclusive, convincing vision for growth, groups and individuals worked toward achieving projects that best matched their personal and group identities. The strategically constructed PR story may have served as a proxy for a more convincing, authentic, and moving articulation of the project.

Applying the Continuity-Novelty-Transition Model to CT, Inc.

Another perspective on the challenge of transitioning from turnaround to growth faced by CT, Inc. has emerged from appreciative inquiry philosophy, and is depicted by three intersecting circles (Figure 19):

Continuity represents the need for "good organizations to 'preserve the core' of what they do best and...to 'work out' or let go of things that have built up or are no longer needed" (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 99).

Novelty represents "unexpected newness" (Watkins, 2002, p. 52) and answers the question, "If anything were possible, if there were no constraints whatsoever, what would the ideal organization look like...?" (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 99).

Transition represents "planned change" (Watkins 2002, p. 52) and addresses the question, "How do we get from A to B?" (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 99).

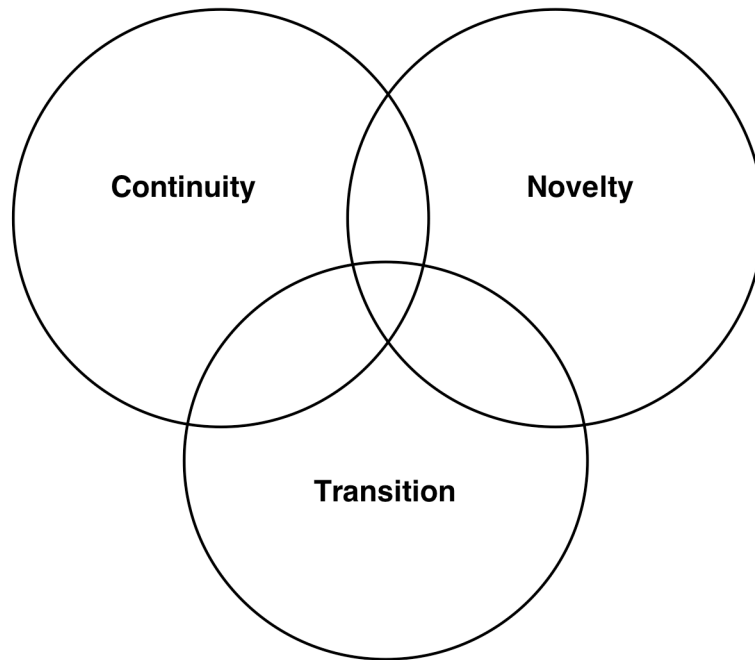


Figure 19. Continuity-Novelty-Transition model of change (Watkins 2002, p. 52)

CT Inc.'s CEO, my chief internal contact, and several other formal and informal leaders within R&D were visionaries who wanted to think and move into the *Novelty* domain, but found themselves being pulled backwards by the vice grip of forces set in motion by decisions made earlier to fuel the turnaround. By the time of the OLH project, they were frustrated by the challenges of *transition* perhaps even angered by its insistence to be recognized. They had a clear vision of what the future could and should be (novelty). Yet, they appeared to be caught in a bind (Figure 20) where the intersecting, interrelated dynamics of the generative changes they desired appeared to have been operating at cross-purposes. Their frustration and annoyance may have resulted in two competing dynamics: First, allowing the command and control leaders to push even harder to end the turnaround, and second, pushing the PR story about current reality and future possibility.

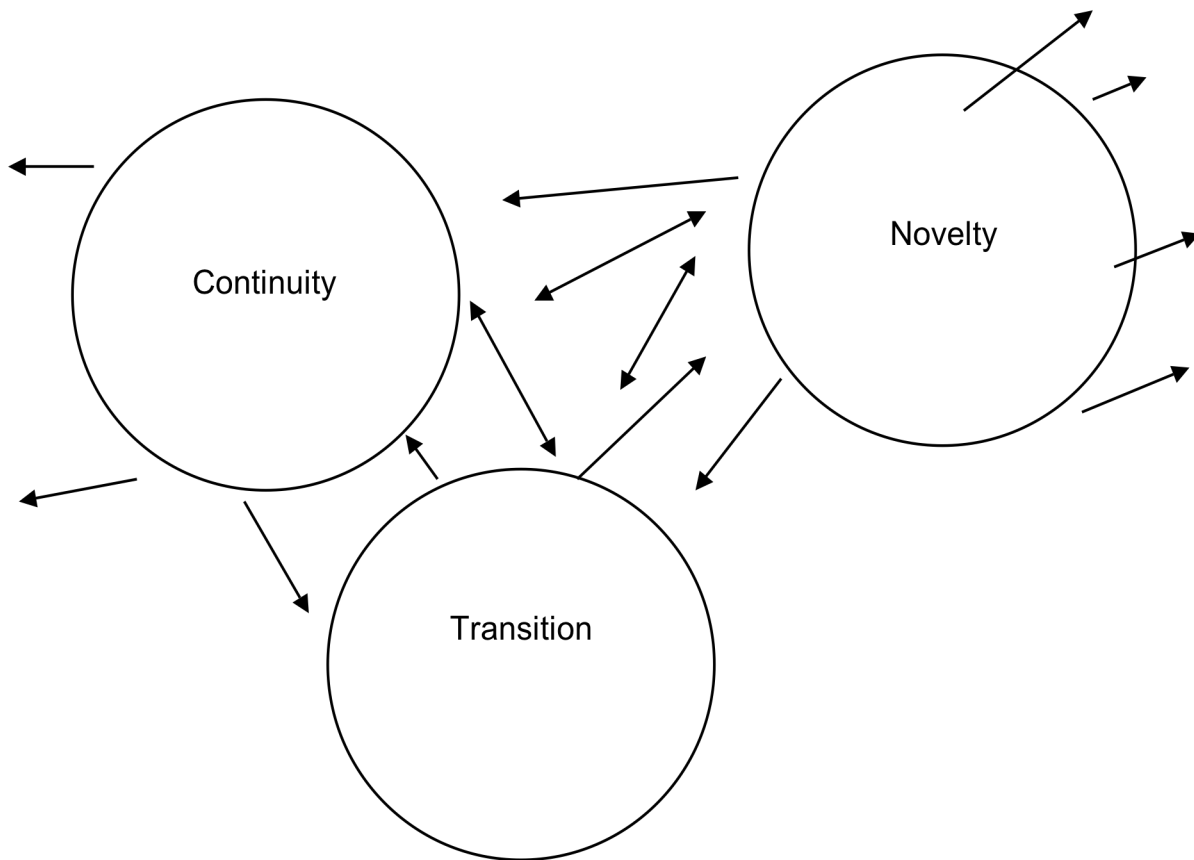


Figure 20. Continuity-Novelty-Transition mismatches observed at CT, Inc. (adapted from Watkins, 2002, p. 52)

The most practiced way of being of the original CT, Inc. employees appeared to be in the Novelty domain. The company had dominated its market niche based on the strength of its R&D efforts. The operations and production managers' sweet spot was primarily managing continuity and stability. Yes, they attempted to force the transition out of the turnaround, however, their efforts held a different meaning and goal than that suggested by the diagram above. Their construction of transition was more *against* missed release dates than it was for Internet-based growth. Their strengths were in tactical operations. A blind spot appeared to be in the *transition* domain--appreciating the nature of and leading transition, essentially how to get from here to there. While managing for continuity appears to be a more concrete, easier project than leading R&D, effectively managing for continuity within the three sphere model requires constant letting go of attachments to "the way we do things here." If all three spheres are operating holistically in systemic relationship, the way things are done is necessarily in a constant state of emergence and relationship with *novelty* and *transition*. The pendulum metaphor noted in the narrative analysis spoke to a degree of entropy and dislocation—a blind spot—in CT, Inc.'s relational system of continuity-novelty-transition.

The potential to devolve to a tyranny of continuity at the expense of novelty, or vice versa, was high at CT, Inc., and is likely so at many, if not most organizations. Leading transition, the interstitial glue of generative change, may be a *prepotent* blind spot; a less practiced way of being that is necessary to bring novelty into fruition and, ultimately, to be effective.

A creative tension—essentially a chaordic relationship--existed at CT, Inc. between Novelty and Continuity. Without mindful, patient, and effective Transition, however, it devolved into conflict (entropy). Viewing and leading transition as a continuous, emergent process in service to systemic coherence, wholism, and relational being moves towards chaordic organizations, whereas, failing to do so heightens conflict (entropy). This appeared to be the case at CT, Inc.

Accidental adversaries at CT, Inc. was not just between types of engineers, but between those still holding firm to an old project and those who had already made an intuitive leap to a new project. (It is also highly likely that some members of the GEBco Management Team were attempting to resolve the failed project of the acquired company in an attempt to save the current project from the same mistakes. Frustration grew when continuity managers needed novelty workers to meet the needs of continuity. Likewise, resentment grew on the part of novelty-focused architects, and those who work with them, when demands of continuity impinged upon the necessary conditions for novelty. The third group of non-aligned “bridgers” were disempowered, or chose to “stay out of it.” Ironically, they were the likely to be most insightful and skillful leaders of transition.

A View from the Bridge: Change, Transition, and Renewal

*What we call the beginning is often the end.
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. –T.S. Eliot*

Another perspective on transition comes from William Bridges who has done pioneering work on change and transition over the last three decades. His ideas are deceptively simple (Bridges, 2000), adding depth and meaning to Weick’s discussion of projects and Watkins and Mohr’s three ring model of the interrelatedness of continuity, novelty, and transition, discussed above. The essential premise of Bridges’ work is that:

1. Change is an event, or series of events, that brings about an *ending*.
2. Endings precipitate a psychological process of transition that is experienced as an in-between state of being in a *neutral zone*.
3. Transitions lead to *new beginnings*.

4. People (an individual or organizational leader) typically try to drive themselves and systems out of the neutral zone into a new beginning as quickly as possible.
5. The generativity of the new beginning—whether it is a positive renewal, or a degenerative regression—depends on the nature of time spent in the neutral zone.
6. Changes, planned or not, happen; transitions can be shepherded, supported, and managed.

In Bridges' words:

Renewal is a natural process that starts with letting go of however things have been. Since that usually involves letting go of whatever got us to this point in our lives, it is difficult. But renewal isn't otherwise possible. The ending clears the space that is necessary for renewal, and it also removes old baggage that we may be carrying. Endings also release energy, as do the breakdowns of any form: ice becoming water, water becoming steam.

But it is important to recognize what it is that constitutes a real ending. It isn't the abandonment of a relationship or leaving the place where you worked. It is, instead, letting go of the hopes, the fears, the dreams, and the assumptions that you attached to the relationship or the job. It is letting go of the old reality and the old self-image, not just to the old arrangements. If it's only the arrangements, you'll just find new arrangements and attach to them the old hopes, fears, dreams, and assumptions...

The need to let go and to dissociate ourselves from what-has-been is in direct opposition to one of our most deeply ingrained habits: to repeat and replicate ourselves. We want to do again what worked before.

...The ending, you see, is a necessary condition for renewal, but it is not a sufficient condition to produce renewal by itself. The second phase of transition, the in-between tie that isn't the old and isn't the new and that we call the neutral zone, is where the heavy lifting of renewal is done (Bridges, 2000, pp. 2-3).

Bridges' thoughts on the affective "physiology" of transition also resonate with Weick's discussions of projects, as well as the intermingled meanings of tools and identity in Weick's discussion of the Mann Gulch fire disaster. Endings get at the heart of projects,

sometimes ripping people away from those projects that most deeply reflect their identities. This appeared to be a dynamic at play at CT, Inc. during the turnaround, when architects were pulled out of the R&D teams and relationships they had developed and nurtured at the organization, to be treated as “interchangeable parts,” even to have the validity of the architect identity called into question altogether. The PR story, of a company already in growth, likely exacerbated the situation and confusion of projects, roles, and phases (i.e., ending, neutral zone, or new beginning). These issues all are embedded in the accidental adversaries dynamic at play at CT, Inc.

Bridges description of change and transition is illustrative of the conundrum for leaders involved in moving a company through a turnaround period (a neutral zone) into growth (a new beginning). CT, Inc.’s Board brought a new technology-focused CEO on board to clear away the remnants of past transgressions and regressions that had distracted the company from the riding the wave of the Internet revolution. What was most frustrating about that lapse was that CT Inc.’s core Waverider technologies and e-Rider products mapped exceptionally well to the new directions and increasing points of intersection between Internet technologies and commerce. Bridges, however, notes that the neutral, in-between zone of transition *both* holds the promise for breakthrough creativity *and* is an unfamiliar place, fraught with uncertainties and risks. Most people and organizations try to flee the neutral zone of transition prematurely, or fail to plan for or manage it effectively. The tendency is to create an ending and try to will a new beginning into being, without planning for or leveraging the opportunities of transition. In CT Inc.’s case, the project defined as “the turnaround,” created abrupt endings. These included, but were not limited to:

- a. An 18 percent reduction in the workforce instituted by Andrew in an attempt to end work on old projects not viewed as relevant or aligned to Internet-related growth, and
- b. An absolute focus on meeting published, new product and upgrade release dates, previously adhered to only impressionistically, causing frustration and dissatisfaction among customers.
- c. Appointment of a new Engineering management team with specialization in meeting deadlines and objectives, and an apparent historical drive to do so regardless of context.

in Andrew Meyer’s words, “a turnaround is something you take on just once in a career.” Leading a turnaround may be so tricky precisely because it involves managing three states of organizational being (endings, neutral zone, and new beginnings) simultaneously. The success of a business turnaround, especially one focused as CT Inc. was on moving from stagnancy into growth, hinges more on managing transition than on endings or even new beginnings. The often quoted wisdom of Albert Einstein states that, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of

thinking we were at when we created them.” The problem with moving into new beginnings too quickly, or for rigidly following plans developed before entering the neutral zone, is that they will reflect the same level of thinking that led to the ending. Bridges suggests that the best answers and plans emerge in the neutral zone. This is not suggesting that companies not plan for new beginnings, just that they do so in a way that allows for plans to be informed, shifted, and inclusively re-imagined along the way.

The *Project* of Turnaround to Growth

At CT, Inc., the command-and-control GEBco Management Team had a strong leader in the Senior Executive over Engineering. As a group, they also were driven by a strong collective definition of their present-at-hand⁴¹ project: *High Quantity, On-Time Product Releases*. It is not clear from the interviews that the context and strategic content of the releases was of equal importance to them. It also was not clear whether they intuitively linked their project to either turnaround or growth. Their focus appeared to be myopic in nature. It was noted by some senior members of the GEBco team that the failure of SiliconIT was similar to CT, Inc.’s difficulties in meeting published new product and upgrade release dates. A distinction made by original members of the Waverider team, however, was that the nature of CT, Inc.’s core technologies and their applications to the Internet presented significantly more complex technical challenges than those at issue in the GEBco core product. A basic understanding of the two products involved suggests that their statement was accurate. Regardless, the history of the GEBco Management Team was clearly a factor in how they defined their project.

At the same time, CT, Inc.’s R&D leaders, of whom some had been involved in crafting the Waverider PR story, appeared to buy into the construction that they were being asked to work on the project of *Internet Innovation for Growth*. During the tumultuous recent history of failed acquisitions and head-to-head competition with Microsoft, some of these engineers found ways to stay focused on the core R&D role that had been the early growth engine of the company by “gaming the system” or finding ways to innovate on the fringes of the organization out of plain view. Thus, their construction of the guiding project also had a reflecting backwards (present-at-hand) nature.

The CEO appears to have had another shifting construction of the “living forward” project, which he initially may have defined as, *Lead the Company into Sustainable Growth*, and seemed to morph over time to *Be a Growth Company Already!*”

⁴¹ The present-at-hand nature of the operations *project* reflected many socially constructed factors, including but not limited to: the social constructions brought to it from their earlier experiences at GEBco, their MPWoB and assumptions about those of the R&D people, and their value system as a group.

The problem of mismatched projects appeared to run high and deep, from the top of the organization down through Operations management and R&D teams. Each group's project definition may have had at least as much to do with CT, Inc.'s situational needs as it did with past stories and backward reflecting rather than living forward conceptions of theories for action. In the case of GEBco, the project may have been relationally linked to righting a perceived wrong (not getting products to market on time as promised) that they had not been empowered to correct in the past at their previous failed company. Compounding matters, Andrew, genuinely believed that he'd taken over the helm of a growth company. As mentioned in the narrative, he appeared to be frustrated by the increasing realization that the company was still mired in transition, an emotionally laden phase that he had little interest in and was tired of dealing with.

In light of the ideas presented in Part II, some of the indications of the socially constructed nature of the dynamic at CT, Inc. were:

- The company's history shaped by its founders and early presidents, ill-timed and mismanaged acquisitions, uncontrollable changes in the technology industry, and the relational histories of its individual leaders and employees.
- The company had matured from an R&D start-up to a more complex company requiring stronger operations and clarification of organizational principles.
- Dynamics were shaped both by events over the then almost 20 years of the company's existence and more recent decisions of the Board of Directors to (a) hire a "technology CEO" with a strong profile as a technology/R&D leader, while also (b) appointing a strong command-and-control operations leader who had worked in one of the acquired companies, thus accidentally setting up the potential for dichotomous groups to form and coalesce.
- Key decisions were made at the height of frustration and fear in an effort to move the company into growth by forcing an end to the turnaround.
- The unstoppable force of progress reshaping the industry as a whole.

These factors, among others, attest to the interplay of structures, multi-being, projects, sense-making, relationships, and more in adversarial adversaries dynamic. Leading innovation by purely rational means or by processes alone simply is not effective, even in a company of engineers and "scientist types" the emotional tone and relational valence of the workplace are key leverage points for success. The CT, Inc. story

illustrates that world-class innovation is, ultimately, a team process, as dependent on the quality of relationships as it is on breakthrough technologies.

Reflections on Part II—Paradoxes of Transformation

Leading transition is a “both-and” project. The accidental adversaries archetype is helpful for seeing the dilemma a CEI faced and holding the players involved in it with greater compassion. Were the command-and-control leaders and managers, and their dedicated followers (who they imported from GEBco) bad, mean, or stupid? The picture of the dynamic suggests that they were doing their best to carry out their project as it had been assigned to them, and as they were able to understand it. Likewise, were the R&D architects and their teams lazy, willfully ignoring release dates, or intentionally obstructing growth? The picture suggests otherwise, that each group was working towards completion of what they thought their project was, *or should be*.

Achieving the initially desired outer ring of collaboration, however, would have required leading transition in a way that more effectively aligned the interests of both groups and projects around a coherent new company-wide project, not just the manufactured PR story of growth. What appeared to happen instead was that operations was engaged in the project, “ending the turnaround by meeting production goals,” while R&D was working on the project, “we are an Internet-based growth company.” In the absence of a convincing coordinated project of “leading turnaround-to-growth,” or a similarly inclusive company-level project, groups worked toward completion of their own competing projects. Paradoxically, both projects were valid. Lack of a convincing, inclusive company project, however, resulted in competition rather than collaboration. Thus, it can be seen that defining projects that matter and are meaningful is a high leverage factor, or variable, for transforming the underlying structural dynamics of the accidental adversaries archetype.

The conceptual overview and meaning-making presented in Part II sheds light on the many prisms through which the CT, Inc. case and accidental adversaries, in general, may be viewed. Three central goals have been to:

- Provide members of the social constructionist community with a closer look at systems thinking by introducing, or, in some cases, re-introducing it through a constructionist lens.
- Add to the scant literature on the Accidental Adversaries Archetype within the systems thinking community, while adding a constructionist voice.

- Reinvigorate⁴² dialog and understanding about one of the most important, but little addressed causes of organizational dysfunction, and stifled growth, by increasing the diversity of thought brought to bear on it.

A fourth global goal, has been to disclose the researcher's own learning journey as an instrument for illustrating and deepening understanding about what it means to shift from a bounded, cognitive model of OD research and consulting practice to one that eclectic, embracing constructionist theory and practice, and, thus, being more holistic and generative. The reader also has been given a picture of (a) the ethical dilemma the OLH methodology posed due to mis-matched "projects," of the researcher various internal stakeholders (groups and individuals), and even the developers of the OLH method, and (b) the contradictions that surfaced in attempting to narrowly apply a single methodology to a complex case.

Several paradoxes have played through the text, including:

- Heidegger and Kierkegaard's discussions of the inherent contradiction of reflecting backwards for meaning and sense-making, while life is lived and led forwards (Heidegger, 1962; Weick, 1999).
- Weick's (1999, 2001, 2007) discussion of projects (Weick, 1999), and his suggestion that resilience in the face of crises (unexpected events) is defined by the ability of people to (a) distinguish their identities from their tools, so they may drop them, when/if their survival depends on it, and (b) quickly embrace new projects, when the current situation strips the old project of relevance.
- Bridges' (2000, 2003) deceptively simple characterization of transition in which (a) change is viewed as an event, or series of events that happen (planned or not), and (b) transition is presented as a complex psychological process. Bridges suggests that change throws people and systems into a *neutral zone* of transition. This neutral zone is a highly creative and fertile space where the boundary waters of an ending, the neutral zone it thrusts individuals and organizations into, and new beginnings meet and mix; however, it also provokes anxiety and is fraught with uncertainty. For this reason, it is often fled prematurely, in favor of familiarity and stability or premature new beginnings, either of which may be regressive in nature.

⁴² From physiology. When a limb is reattached or an organ is transplanted; growth of life-giving new and renewed capillary and neural networks.

- The Gergens' (Gergen, 2008 and 2009; Gergen & Gergen, 2009) discussion of multi-being, in which individuals and groups of individuals are viewed as *multi-beings*. As such, their identities are comprised of multiple, diverse, asynchronous facets, each of which has been shaped and polished in and by relationships. Through the lens of multi-being, adversarial relationships may be seen as a natural, even predictable, challenge in the "coordination of flight" between multi-beings.
- Watkins and Mohr's (Watkins, 2002, p. 52; Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 99) model of Continuity-Novelty-Transition that highlights the push and pulls dynamics inherent in business turnarounds.

An over-arching paradox discussed at the beginning of this paper, and one that pervades organizational life, is the both-and, cognitive and affective nature of organizational challenges and change initiatives. Systems thinking has been suggested as an approach that may offer a conceptual bridge for negotiating these paradoxes, especially the gulf that tends to exist between practitioners (i.e., consultants, researchers, and educators) who (a) favor cognitive approaches and those who favor affective ones, and/or (b) embrace post modern qualitative approaches and those who prefer the ways of empiricism. As witnessed in the dialog among systems thinkers about the distinction between the meanings of "*systems thinking*" and "*systemic thinking*," many noted that they simply place less value in language than in pictures and don't really "get" what all the fuss is about. While they use mechanistic-*looking* models to create shared meaning about the nature of systemic dynamics, they discuss those dynamics in largely constructionist terms, albeit not as eloquently or with as many literary references as many who self-identify as constructionists, and who tend to be more word-centric. The point is that what divides these groups may have more to do with their divergent MPWoB and preferred modes of communication (i.e., visual-spatial or linear-sequential word-based) than with deeper issues of post modernism versus modernism, versus positivism, versus mechanistic.

Systems thinking is a both-and approach. Like AI, at the level of its essences, or core principles, systems thinking is a post-modern philosophy. The dialog among systems thinkers, included above, provides ready-to-hand data suggesting that many of those who are most committed to and knowledgeable in the tools and philosophy of systems thinking are already embracing constructionist thought. The discussions about personality and temperament and MPWoB further assert that it is in our nature as multi-beings to have strong, diverse preferences for particular ways of knowing, learning, teaching, and relating. It is inconsistent with the ideas of multi-being and MPWoB to suggest that one approach to learning—cognitive or affective, picture or word-based, etc.--is more valid than the other, they are simply different. Each is better suited at addressing certain problems, or phases of innovation, than others.

A potential symbiotic relationship that may help both schools better or more easily address practice limitations exists between relational multi-being and the systems thinking archetypes. The archetypes in general and the accidental adversaries archetype in particular, represent models of unmindful relational multi-being. They build upon the visual metaphor of conjoined wings of multi-being in relationship, translating the metaphor into a model that may be used to identify points of leverage for enhancing the coordination of flight across diverse multi-beings. The connection is not a one-way street. Social construction also offers the key insight to systems thinking that individuals, groups, and organizations are comprised of multi-being with diverse, sometimes conflicting MPWoB. This contribution may be especially useful in (a) understanding the prevalence of the accidental adversaries dynamic, (b) highlighting the predictable, systemic impact of relationships on measurable objectives, and (c) making the business case for improving relationships as a high leverage approach for transforming and preventing the dynamic. The value of systems thinking to constructionist practice, however, is not limited to illustrating the relational nature of archetypal dysfunctions. The same tools that are typically used in systems thinking to model the systemic nature of problems and dysfunctions may just as easily and effectively be used to develop a deep appreciation of the systemic nature of positive dreams and ideals and the inter-dependence of the interests of all stakeholders.

These points are central to the thesis of this paper that:

- What systems thinking theory and practice has to offer to social construction, and vice versa, is much greater than the issue of paradigmatic purity and apparent misperceptions that divide them.
- Breakthrough thinking in social construction about multi-being and MPWoB may add depth and meaning to systems thinking discourse.
- Coordinated use of the two paradigms may help clients more easily see and understand the potentials for unintended consequences of best-intended actions when the challenges of multi-being are not managed well or mindfully in organizations.

Reflections In the Rear View Mirror—Spontaneous Reconstruction:

S/he Who Teaches, Teaches;
S/he Who Does, Does;
S/he Who Theorizes, Theorizes
S/he Who Inspires, Inspires...

Because of travel delays, I arrived after the start of an innovative conference designed to encourage OD practitioners to write about their work for publication in scholarly journals. Chairs in the room were arranged in a series of small semi-circles to allow for small group discussions. Having arrived late, I quietly sat with a group on the periphery. As it so happened, two of the invited speakers and their host were sitting in the circle I'd sat in on. They resisted introducing themselves or participating in dialog, explaining that they were really just guests. Aside from their polite detachment, they noted that they'd not worked in organizations for many years [if ever] and were surprised to be hearing about what OD practitioners were interested in, especially how basic their concerns were.

This seemed to me to be a stunning confession, which reverberated in my mind throughout the conference, especially as each gave their talks, which were eloquent, inspiring, and well delivered. Yet, I wondered about the usefulness and validity of their ideas, given their *apparent* lack of familiarity with the current state of the workplace environment (faculty in universities I have worked in as a manager or served as a consultant, have referred to academe as an “educational environment” and have objected to the term *workplace*.) The conflict between my thoughts, observations, and experience created cognitive dissonance. How could their words be of such great impact when both men appeared to lack grounding in current, ready-to-hand and unready-to-hand day-to-day reality outside of the privileged, sheltering walls of academe?

Thinking back on this experience, I am reminded of George Bernard Shaw's statement: “He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.” I wonder where s/he who does research, and s/he who writes fit in? And, where we would be if the only ideas carried forward were those that have met the test of applicability in situations that have already occurred? And, yet, I wonder if the presenters were speaking with a tinge of irony, much like Shaw, and if they are actually more connected to what really matters in the workplace than their off-hand comments would suggest. It is possible that the “left-hand column” of their comments was something like, ‘Sounds like consultants are still being asked to work on the same problems over and over and over again. I am profoundly lucky to get paid to think about new ideas. Maybe sharing some of those ideas with these consultants will inspire, re-inspire, or remind them that they also can think of their work in new ways, and think of new ways to think about their work.’

PART III: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Whether transforming or preventing accidental adversaries dynamics in organizations, our practice communities, or ourselves as consultant, researchers, and individuals, the same qualities of character and will are required: courage, commitment, authenticity, openness, and grounding. The benefits of leading and facilitating this work are proportionate to the prevalence of the dynamic as a leading limiter of individual and organizational growth.

The accidental adversaries dynamic may be so prevalent precisely because of its closely bound relational *and* structural nature. From a constructionist perspective, even the structural components of the archetype have underlying relational dynamics that, at their core, are linked to (a) who defines projects and with what motivations and relationally shaped mindsets, (b) ego needs and power dynamics of leaders and others, and (c) the courage of those around them to act with courage and without ego to “name the elephants” impeding growth and causing unnecessary pain and suffering within the organization. In fact, these two components of the dynamic might more accurately be described as *relational-discursive* and *relational-structural*. For simplicity, however, they will continue to be referred to as *relational* and *structural*.

As stated in the Introduction, practitioners who work with organizations that are rife with adversarial dynamics must be prepared to assert clear leadership in making sense of the dynamic for and with organizational leaders. While this paper proposes approaches to change that are inclusive, holistic, and systemic, it cannot understate the importance of working directly with leaders to increase their understanding of the dynamic, especially regarding:

- Its structural components,
- High leverage factors (variables) for preventing or transforming the dynamic, and
- The strategic role of dialog in leveraging positive, sustainable change.

This paper has been proposing a collaborative practice relationship between social construction and systems thinking (Figure 1) as a constructive means of facilitating more generative, sustainable ends. The discipline of systems thinking offers a useful set of specialized tools that may make the connections between these factors easier to see in a holistic, systemic way. It is hoped that the introduction, or reintroduction, of systems thinking into the constructionist community will serve as a bridge between some of the dichotomies (i.e. between cognitive and affective approaches, engagement of people and improvement of processes, constructionist and positivist, etc.) that exist within and across change research and consulting practices.

Part III proposes an ecological approach to change that that supports organizational effectiveness *and* sustainable relational dynamics. The presentation of this approach:

- a. Explores the impact of dichotomous thinking on organizational entropy and relational valence, and how it may lead to and/or reinforce adversarial dynamics;
- b. Discusses high leverage variables for transforming adversarial dynamics;
- c. Discusses the importance of relational valence for creating environmental conditions conducive to transforming adversarial dynamics, promoting positive disintegration patterns of limiting dynamics, and creating more sustainable organizational ecologies; and
- d. Presents a process model that integrates social construction and systems thinking in service of transforming and preventing accidental adversaries in the workplace.

An Ecological Approach to Organizational Change

Organizations are complex eco-systems with sensitive ecologies that are constructed from the inter-relationships of the whole, of many individual and group ecologies acting in concert, and at times in discord as holistic eco-systems.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this paper, the accidental adversaries dynamic can take hold and take over an organization like an invasive species using up the system's energy resources and quickly crowding out more generative and diverse behaviors of relational multi-being. Building on this metaphor, a social constructionist approach to organizational dysfunction aims at helping the system recreate and sustain an environment that supports relational humanity *and* organizational effectiveness. In the accidental adversaries dynamic, and most other forms of organizational dysfunction, groups and individuals maintain rigidly bounded models of reality and being and act in ways that are divergent, rather than emergent. Thus, constructionist organization development practice is akin to human ecological restoration, focused on creating more effective, humane, and sustainable work environments and organizations in which people may live into and express their greatest potentials.

Protecting the Boundary Waters

One of the most generative and sensitive ecologies in eco-systems is boundary waters. William Bridges, whose work on change and transition was discussed earlier, uses the poetic

metaphor of “boundary waters” to characterize the generative character of the neutral zone between ending and new beginnings:

The boundary between what-is and what-will-be is full of energy and rich with life. Boundary spaces are always that way, regardless of whether they are the boundaries separating ocean currents, where sea life is attracted by the rich supply of food that congregates there; or the boundaries between different populations, where cultures and gene pools mix in novel ways; or the boundaries between the cells of your body, where metabolism takes place; or the boundaries between one chapter of your life and the next, when you find yourself ready to try something that would never have occurred to you at another time (Bridges, 2000, p. 3).

The boundary waters of transition are spaces in which obsolete behaviors and structures may disintegrate, giving way to emergence of new more generative, life-affirming ways of being. The tendency to flee to dry ground is a paradox of transformative organization growth. The compassionate calling of many OD practitioners, especially constructionist practitioners, is to create safe “containers” in which leaders and individuals who comprise organizations may be present to the creativity, cross-fertilization, and vast possibilities for sustainable growth that may be found in the boundary waters. In boundary spaces the tides of change may wash obsolete or dysfunctional ways of being out to sea, while deep waters of possibility mix with new beginnings along the increasingly visible shoreline. This is an exciting proposition for many OD theoreticians and practitioners. Extrapolating from Bridges’ metaphor, the meeting places of multi-being may be seen as the boundary waters between less sustainable MPWoB and generative new emergent possibilities for multi-being.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror— Boundary Waters of “Both-And”

I am a member of multiple learning and practice communities, including some referred to in the social constructionist arena as being on the “new” paradigm side and others that are considered to be on the “old” paradigm side. (“Old” paradigm communities use their own sets of dichotomous labels, like the “hard” and “soft” sides of change.) Over the past 20 years, I have observed that practitioners tend to fall along a spectrum that is highly populated at the poles, and less so in-between:

- Those who seek to predict and control as much uncertainty and wasteful action as possible; and
- Others who seek to leave as much open as possible for as long as possible to allow for creative emergence.

Relational Valence

The term “relational valence” is used in this paper as a metaphor for discussing the balance, or ratio, between forces of repulsion and those of attraction in an organizational work environment. This study has not involved developing an instrument measuring relational valence, nor does it suggest doing so. People in organizations, and consultants as they begin to work with them, know when the relational valence is more strongly repelling than attracting and skewed towards negative affect. Two notable clinical researchers assert negativity to positivity ratios that may inform this discussion.

John Gottman, investigating why some marriages succeed and others fail, has found that there are specific ratios of positive-to-negative emotions that signal whether a marriage is likely to succeed or is at risk of failure:

Across the board we found there was a specific ratio that exists between the amount of positivity and negativity in a stable marriage, whether it is marked by validation, volatility, or conflict avoidance. The magic ratio a 5-to-1....The picture was very different for couples who were heading for a breakup: they showed slightly more negative than positive acts. (Gottman, 1994, p. 57-58).

While the workplace relationships are typically less intimate than marriage, and may draw differently upon facets of multi-being, Gottman’s research does suggest that successful collaborative work relationships likely also require a ratio that favors positivity, or what are being referred to in this paper as forces of attraction (i.e., that draw people towards collaboration).

Barbara Fredrickson, known for her groundbreaking research related to the generative impacts of positive emotions, suggests a that “The 3-to-1 positivity ratio may well be a magic number in human psychology” (Fredrickson, 2009, p. 121). A finding of Fredrickson’s work with special relevance to this discussion of transforming adversarial work dynamics is that across her own research and others’ which she studied, there appears to be a tipping point: “For the few who flourished, positivity ratios stepped up beyond 3-to-1” (p. 131).

Gottman’s and Fredrickson’s research, coupled with the prevalence of adversarial dynamics and the silo mentality in work and academic environments, suggests that regardless of whether one agrees with the paradigm of measurement, generative collaboration is more likely to occur when the forces of attraction are greater than the repelling forces that polarize groups. As will be illustrated later in Part III, there may be a critical tipping point in the ratio of attracting and repelling forces at which groups may move with fluidity, agility, and resilience between us-Us, us-We, my-in-group to your-in-group relationships. Most people and organizations live in multiple paradigms at different times and under varying conditions. Martin Buber (1929) in *I and*

Thou, suggests that for practical reasons life cannot be lived intimate states of I-Thou and I-You at all times. He suggests that meaningful and effective living is also an I-It proposition; however, to engage in I-It relationships alone is to be untethered from shared meaning. Jack Kornfield addresses this aspect of reality in a similar yet more concrete way in the title and content of his book, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry* (2000).

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror--Generativity

As a practitioner in service to my clients, I find that the construction of generativity frees me from the common dichotomy in appreciative inquiry practice that suggests that positivity and positive stories are “good” and the accounting of negative experiences and incremental (not transformative) approaches to change are “bad. Taking a generative approach allows me to tell the full story--one of unknowingly shared aspirations as well as frustrating, counterproductive boundaries that limited success. Both circumstances--being stuck and aspiring to be more effective—were interwoven parts of the same story. The call among my clients and students, to address and help them integrate and transition between both, convinced me of the importance of doing so in the narrative analysis. Approaching the narrative with a generative mindset helped to sharpen the focus on (a) systemic leverage points and (b) points of transition (the elusive bottom of the “U” in “Theory U”) between different learning preferences and ways of knowing and working (e.g., improving processes while effectively engaging and inspiring people, bridging incremental improvement and transformation, or as Jack Kornfield has described it, ‘doing the laundry and then Nirvana,’ or vice versa.) From that has emerged the broader, over-arching focus on being an organization with the capacities to innovate and be innovative. This focus creates a productive framework for understanding and appreciating the accidental adversaries archetype within the context of an even larger, ultimately positive, life-giving effort to be an organization that is both innovative *and* able to innovate.

Organizational Entropy

Energy is a key component of sustainable eco-systems. The concept of organizational entropy is often used as a metaphor for discussing the nature of energy forms and use in organizations. Energy dynamics and entropy in organizations are especially relevant concepts for understanding the accidental adversaries dynamic as a bounded state of relational being, and for transforming it. In physics, the concept of entropy is based on the observation that closed systems move towards decay and that once available energy is used up it cannot be reused. Open systems, however, may import and replace energy. A classic teaching example of entropy in introductory physics classes asks students to imagine a closet filled to capacity with ping pong balls. As long as the closet door is latched shut, a maximum number of balls may be stored, which requires maintaining an ordered, orderly structure. But as soon as the door is opened, the balls spill out, cascading into disorder.

Rijsman (2008, 1997) discusses the introduction of the concept of entropy into social science discourse:

...When Moede published his famous studies on 'coaction' (e.g., the performance of individual psychological tasks in each others presence), he called his publication "Experimentelle Massenpsychologie" (Moede, 1920), and it is clear that he borrowed that term, mass, from the (mainly French) sociology of his days, in which it was often used to refer to the anomic (e.g. unordered) social substance from which ordered (e.g. nomic) social institutions are made, and to which they may return when not taken care of well enough (like the entropic loss of order in thermodynamic systems) (p. 10).

While the law of thermodynamics suggest that closed systems cannot create energy, most systems are not closed, and may choose to import energy. Organizations are open systems. Applied to organizations, entropy suggests that organizations tend to move toward relational and structural breakdown and that generative organizational dynamics require energy to be created and sustained (Quinn, 2004; Quinn, 1996; Quinn, 2010; Moede, 1920; Rijsman, 2008). Without exerting energy to create deep change and sustain generativity, systems tend to be pulled toward the status quo, and what Robert Quinn (1995) refers to as "slow death." Most recently, Quinn (1996, 2004, and 2010) has applied the concept of entropy to organizational life and leadership as a form of slow death, antithetical to the positive energy that may be created by committing to the uncertainty of complex organizational life; the not knowing realm of deep change:

According to the second law of thermodynamics, all systems tend toward entropy. Entropy is a measure of disorder or a measure of the energy in a system that is not available for productive work. In essence, all

closed systems tend to break down. The principle applies not only to physical systems but also to individuals and organizations.

People and organizations tend to progress and then plateau. At first, the plateau provides time for consolidation and recovery. Later, it becomes a zone of comfort. In our comfort zone, we know how to be in control. We know how to manage. We know how to do the things we need to do. They become routine. And as long as nothing changes, we can be successful.

The problem is that the universe is an ever-changing system. From the external world, we receive signals suggesting the need for change—the need to grow beyond our routines and move to a higher level of personal complexity. We all tend to deny these signals. Usually it is not until we are jolted that we are willing to make a significant alteration in who we are and how we do things (Quinn, 2004, p. 18).

At first, Quinn's use of entropy as an analogy for organizational breakdown may seem contradictory. It is common to think of breakdown as disorder; however, Quinn suggests that retrenched forms of order may serve to fix the status quo (comfort zone), resulting in organizational breakdown, or entropy. Building upon the analogy of entropy, Quinn focuses on the impact of entropy on relational energy and the self:

Energy is neither created nor destroyed. At any given moment, it flows toward some points in the universe and away from others. The amount of energy we feel has much to do with the alignment between ourself and our surrounding environment. We can be aligned with our environment in such a way that we feel either strong and empowered or weak and powerless.

...the self is not a thing but an unfolding process. We are energized when we are learning and progressing, and we begin psychologically to die when we allow ourselves to stagnate. That is where we encounter the process of slow death (pp. 41-42).

On a recent blog post, Quinn (Quinn, 2010) poses two states of organizational reality that illustrate the nature of high and low entropy behavioral dynamics that exist at opposite ends of the spectrum. He begins with a table contrasting the two scenarios, followed by a discussion of its meaning:

Reality One	Reality Two
<u>People in organizations:</u> Make utilitarian assumptions Act with self interest Minimize personal costs Engage in conflict Become alienated Fail to learn React to constraints Comply with demands Prefer the status quo Fail to see opportunities Compete for limited resources	<u>People in organizations:</u> Sacrifice for the common good Show compassion, respect Make spontaneous contributions Build social networks Live in high quality connections Experiment, take feedback and learn Expand roles, craft jobs Take charge, express voice Become generative Envision possibilities Expand the resource pool

The first list reflects the assumptions upon which all the social sciences are based. After decades of research we know reality one to be true. People in organizations make utilitarian assumptions, act from self-interest, and seek to minimize personal costs and so on. With the advent of positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship, we know that the second reality is also true. People sacrifice for the common good, show compassion, make spontaneous contributions and so on.

But here is a key point. Both realities are real, but we do not think so. Reality one is normal reality. This is the reality we see when we look at people doing normal things. Reality two is positive reality. This is the reality we see when we look at people doing excellent things.

Just as there are default options in your computer, there are default options in life. The second law of thermodynamics suggests that unless work is done to the contrary, systems will move towards entropy. They will lose energy and begin to disintegrate. The human systems we call organizations are subject to this law. Unless work is done to the contrary, the human network moves towards reality one, collective capacity is lost and external resource flows begin to contract, and the system moves towards slow death.

The second reality is what emerges when work is done to the contrary. This unnatural work, or work to overcome nature, is called leadership. Yet it is not normal leadership because normal leadership is based on the normal assumptions of reality one. In the long run, normal leadership actually produces the slow death of the organizations.

The second reality emerges from positive leadership. This kind of leadership makes the assumptions of reality two and thus produces reality two. Positive leadership attracts people to: sacrifice for the common good; show compassion and respect; make spontaneous contributions; build social networks; live in high quality connections; experiment, take feedback and learn; expand roles, craft jobs; take charge, express voice; become generative; envision possibilities; and expand the resource pool. When these things are happening the organization moves from entropy to growth (Quinn, 2010).

Later in Part III, several high leverage approaches are proposed and discussed for injecting entropy-lowering energy into a negatively-charged organizational ecology.

Dichotomous Thinking: Unsustainable Organizational Energy

This section examines dichotomous thinking: an unsustainable form of relational energy that is antithetical to systemic thinking, generative collaboration, and transformation of adversarial dynamics. Sharon B. Berlin addresses the habits of dichotomous thinking in social work scholarship and practice that are reflective of the post-modern versus (and vice versa) positivist, modernist, objectivist debate in the discipline of social construction:

During the past 5 years there has been a resurgence of criticism aimed at models of empirically based social work practice. The old arguments about the subjective versus objective nature of social work knowledge, the merits of qualitative versus quantitative approaches to knowledge generation, and the artistic versus scientific orientation of clinical practice remind us of our reliance on dichotomies. In extreme form our natural inclination to understand by recognizing contrasts pulls us into the practice of cutting up our worlds into relatively static, mutually exclusive, either-or options. You are either “right-brained” or left-brained”; autonomous or interpersonally connected; “one-up” or “one-down”; insightful or oblivious; a systematic, data-oriented problem solver or a feel-your-way along intuiter. Either you are right or you are wrong (Berlin, 1990, p. 46).

The accidental adversaries dynamic is both stimulated by and an outcome of the sort of dichotomous—Us-Them, “I-It,” Subject-Object, Right-Wrong, Good-Bad—thinking that Berlin describes. While she alludes to an adversarial dynamic within social work practice, her description of the tone and “right or wrong” structure of dichotomous affect and cognition just as readily might be about OD practice and research, healthcare, engineering, or virtually any other academic discipline or professional practice.

Archetypal organization dynamics are rooted in dichotomous, non-relational, non-systemic thinking. Applying a systems thinking approach may help to lower the level of emotional valence attached to negative attributions of blame. This may help to:

- a. View dysfunction as a “dynamic” state of relational being, rather than a fixed reality,
- b. Create shared meaning about dysfunctional patterns of behavior,
- c. Explore the systemic nature of dysfunction,
- d. “De-personalize” the “problem” (i.e., see it as a relational dynamic which is reinforced by and reinforces systemic dynamics), to see the social, systemic context, and
- e. Identify key points of leverage for relational and systemic change.

Figures 21 and 22 illustrate (a) that dichotomous thinking is a high risk, low leverage behavior in organizations, (b) that and how it precipitates and exacerbates the accidental adversaries dynamic, and (c) how dichotomous thinking was reflected in the adversarial dynamic observed at CT, Inc. The relationships of dichotomous thinking, relational multi-being, and the accidental adversaries archetype may be characterized by the following syllogism:

- a. Dichotomous thinking is antithetical to relational being and increases the negative valence and state of relational entropy in organizations.
- b. The accidental adversaries archetype is a reflection of dichotomous thinking played out over time in organizations.
- c. Transforming the archetype supports expression of relational multi-being.
- d. Expression of relational multi-being is a high leverage variable for preventing the accidental adversaries dynamic.

The model addresses the link between dichotomous thinking and accidental adversaries, as well as some of the predictable outcomes once an adversarial dynamic is set in motion or exacerbated.

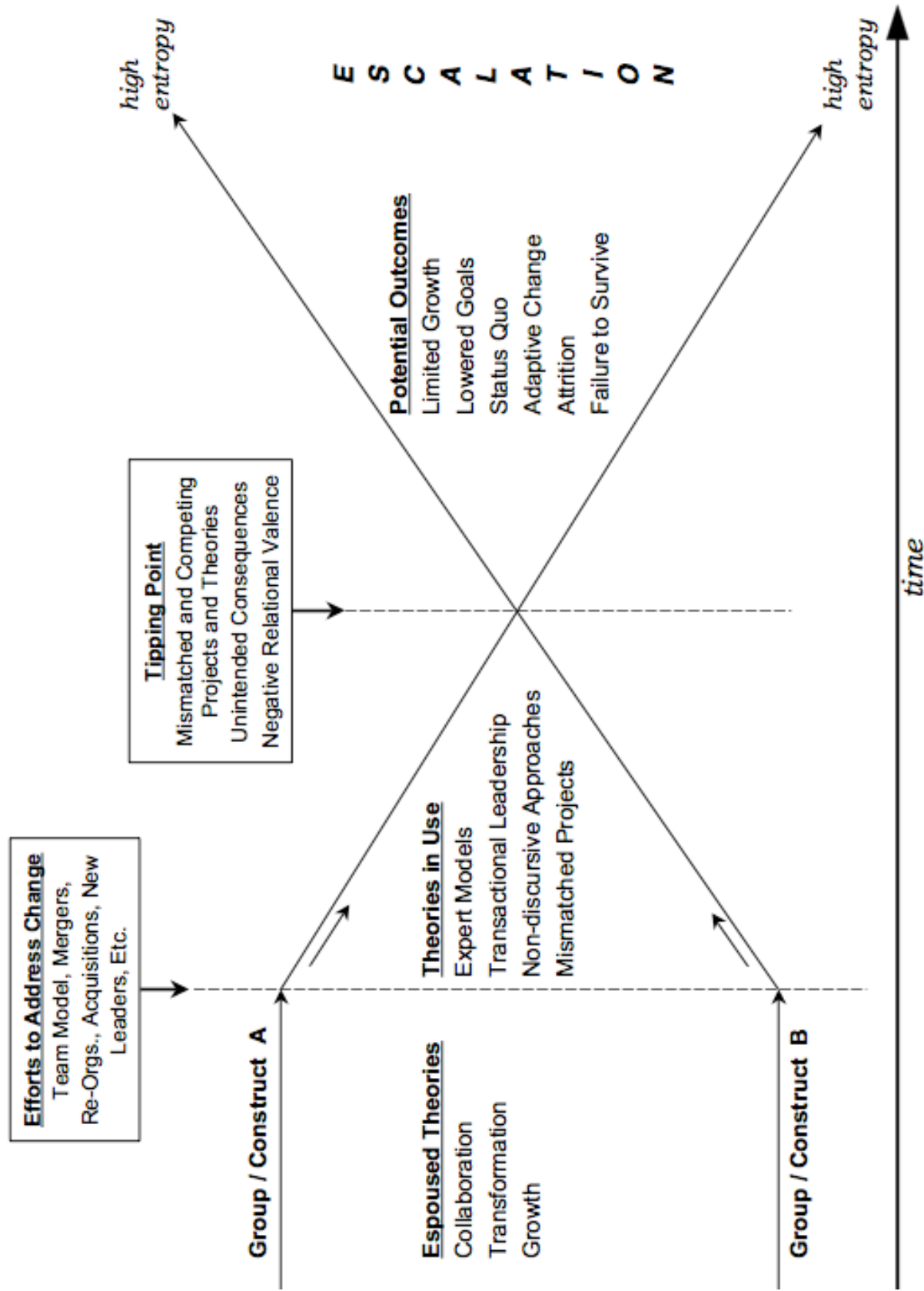


Figure 21 . Impacts of dichotomous thinking in organizations

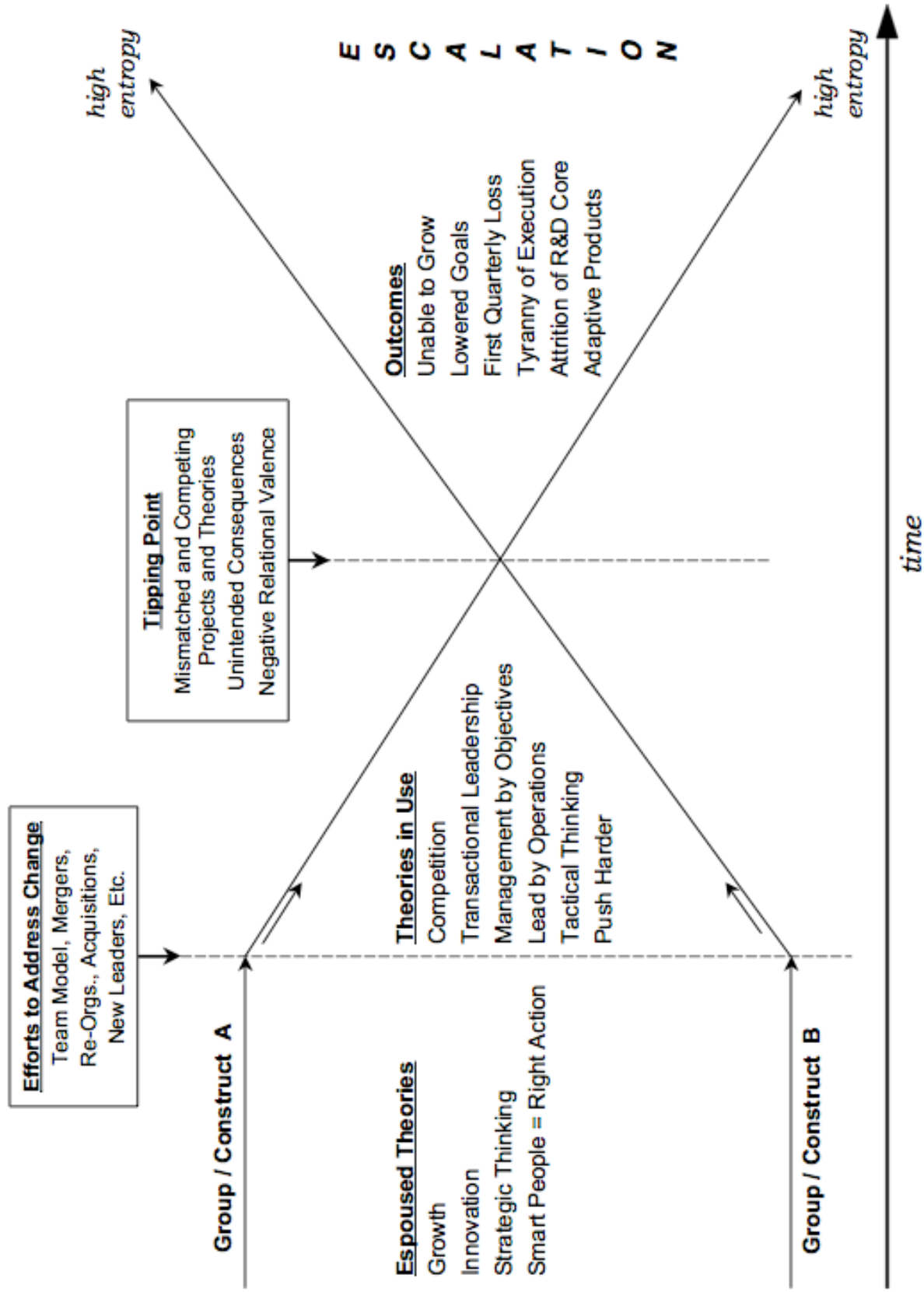


Figure 22. Dichotomous thinking reflected in CT, Inc. adversarial dynamic

In Figures 21 and 22, A and B may be any set of constructs or groups that either are experiencing or have the potential to reinforce dichotomous thinking or oppositional factions. A few possibilities are:

- Cognitive and Affective Approaches to Organizational Change
- Post-Modernism and Modernism
- Appreciative Inquiry Practitioners and Six Sigma Black Belts
- Creators/Connectors and Developers/Doers
- R&D and Operations Teams
- Qualitative and Quantitative Researchers

This model of dichotomous thinking suggests that strong potential exists for a cascade of impacts and outcomes to take shape over time when (a) there is a need or plan for collaboration, interdisciplinary research, or some other coordination of diverse multi-beings with distinctly different MPWoB, and (b) dichotomous thinking (i.e., not systemic or holistic) is the prevailing model in use.

The figures read from left to right, reflecting the general progression and systemic impacts of dichotomous thinking over time⁴³. The discussion addresses both the general case shown in Figure 21 and the specific example of CT, Inc. (Fig. 22):

1. A change occurs that the organization must or chooses to respond to. It may be an unexpected event, a change in the direction of the industry, cumulative poor performance resulting in losses, an ethical crisis, retirement of a CEO, or some other precipitating event. At CT, Inc. a constellation of changes occurred: (a) a technical breakthrough was achieved, in spite of the organization, (b) new leadership was brought in to turn the company around, and (c) an infusion of leadership in operations was brought in to increase productivity. The accidental adversaries dynamic began to take shape once the new leadership took control.

⁴³ Another key concept of the systems thinking toolkit is *behavior over time*. The behaviors of key variables are mapped over time to better understand the patterns of their systemic influence in the short and long term. Non-linearity is suggested by the complex interactions of multiple variables over time, the role of tipping points, and the tendency for some factors to have balancing impacts over time and for others to have reinforcing impacts.

2. At the time of the change, the predominant theories in use (e.g., thinking and leadership styles and structures) reflect a pattern of dichotomous thinking.
3. The organization's leaders respond to the change by making plans to improve the company's effectiveness and chances to survive and thrive. These may include actions like: a corporate order to reorganize the company, bringing in new leadership, instituting a new system of management by objectives, acquiring a company, etc.
4. While the response to the change calls for collaboration, transformation, and growth, theories in use are still rooted in dichotomous thinking, and so are out of sync or in conflict with espoused theories. This was the case at CT, Inc., once the new cadre of leaders were in place and operations (D's) were in charge. In general, dichotomous theories in use tend to be reflected in:
 - a. Expert and transactional models of leadership that are command-and-control, top-down in nature;
 - b. Project definitions that are role- and identity-specific rather than being holistic in nature, and so were mismatched; and
 - c. Lack of dialogic opportunities for shared meaning-making across groups, and limited, closely controlled communications between hierarchical levels.

At CT, Inc. the prevailing theories in use reflected all of those listed above, in addition to:

- d. A belief that smart people take right actions, and that people who don't do the right thing are not very smart.
 - e. Working through the dinner hour late into the evening and on weekends is the best reflection of commitment, and people will feel cared for if you provide dinner for them.
5. For a while things appear to be improving. People try to work together in new ways, but the theories in use, which support dichotomous thinking, are antithetical to the desired behavioral outcomes of collaboration, coordination, and growth:

- a. As suggested by the accidental adversaries archetype, mismatched projects lead to the unintended obstruction of one group's actions on another group.
 - b. At first, groups unintentionally obstruct the other's success, but over time this begins to seem intentional.
 - c. Adversarial dynamics are on the rise, increasing the negative relational valence until it reaches a tipping point.
6. Leaders may not notice that the tipping point (i.e. a point where negative, repelling energy is greater than generative attractive energy) has been passed until the impacts become noticeable in measurable outcomes, like lowered production goals, inability to meet deadlines, stifled growth, and attrition of key individuals and groups. Adversarial dynamics as well may escalate to the point where they are no longer between individuals, but appear to be between factionalized groups.
7. As the relational valence becomes more negatively charged, organizational entropy increases to a point where usable, potential productive energy is dangerously low:
 - a. Groups become more factionalized and closed, retreating to extreme versions of their MPWoB,
 - b. Bridgers find themselves on the margins, and
 - c. Adversarial dynamics become more blatant.

Once an organization passes the tipping point it is often too late to re-engage with the initial virtuous intentions of collaboration, or to assure its survival.

Doing Our Own Work: Bridging Paradigmatic Purity

One of the most perplexing challenges involved in writing about, teaching, or applying social constructionist thinking to organizations is that leading and managing change are paradoxical propositions, fraught with conflicting goals and needs, mismatched projects and identities, and incommensurate demands of people, processes and profitability. Approaches that address the people side of change tend to be undertaken as a last resort, at the point where simply replacing people is not an option or has not worked. While the strength and quality of working relationships is essential to long-run organizational effectiveness, sustainability, and innovation, success is often measured in short-term economic outcomes. CT, Inc.'s CEO and Corporate Affairs Director labored in the shadows of an "800 pound gorilla"—the looming possibility of posting the company's first quarterly loss. Yet, systems tend to contain delays. Tomorrow's first quarterly loss may be a lagging indicator of underlying systemic dynamics that limit growth and live at a low level or are held in remission during less stressed times.

As approaches to organizational change, constructionist-based appreciative inquiry typically focuses on discovering and building on the *positive core* of what currently exists, while systems thinking and quality tools focus on identifying, understanding and correcting dysfunctions. Depending on needs and circumstances, either may help individuals, organizations, or other entities *solve* problems, although they go about it differently, from different mindsets and starting points. The two approaches, however, have *key* qualitative and historical similarities in that both:

- Represent philosophical approaches to change, developed over time;
- Were brought into the mainstream of OD practice by thought leaders who translated the approach into a process model;
- If done "right," engage stakeholders in socially constructing shared meaning; and
- Lost a degree of connection to their philosophical roots⁴⁴ as they gained popularity as tools and techniques.

Adhering exclusively to one school of thought, one approach, or one "toolkit" limits possibilities for a) creative, boundary-crossing ideas and process inventions that

⁴⁴ As noted earlier, AI tends to be remembered as the process cycle. Systems thinking may suffer a double whammy as its toolkit of loops and charts tends to get disembodied from its philosophy and from the fact that it was presented as just one of five disciplines of organizational learning, one of which is "shared vision."

integrate the best for that situation from across ideas and tools, b) conditional, client-based design, and c) what Daniel Pink (2005) describes as “whole mind thinking.”

A challenge of flight between scholarship and practice is transcending our own dichotomous thinking about (a) what falls within a given discipline, and (b) the boundaries, in the form of judgments, that one may impose upon the other in an effort to maintain disciplinary integrity and purity. One way to address the issue of disciplinary or philosophical integrity is to look for ways to embrace new tools using a constructionist mindset, looking for inventive ways to align them in total, or in parts, within a relational ontology of emergent being. OD scholars and practitioners often get bogged down in viewing approaches that (a) focus on process and structural improvements as part of the “old paradigm,” therefore as obsolete thinking and (b) see identifying people-focused dialogic approaches as the “new paradigm.” This dichotomous view of old and new at times may result in constructionists’ “throwing the baby out with the bathwater.” A key value embedded in the thesis of this paper is that of embracing the best of all available tools, and trusting in the constructionist mindset to employ them in ways that are harmonious with relational multi-being.

Finding Receptor Sites for Collaboration

While the art of assemblage is based on viewing tools and objects in the unbounded way being proposed here, a metaphor from human biology highlights the both-and nature of healthy boundaries that protect integrity while also allowing for life-enhancing boundary-crossing. The field of cellular biology suggests that cells have membranes to protect and regulate their integrity by identifying harmful substances and barring their entry, while allowing life-giving ones to enter. The process of entry may involve making adjustments to the structural composition and identify of the entering compound so that it may be used most effectively and quickly. A key attribute of cell membranes is that they contain structures known as “receptor sites.” These sites are uniquely structured to allow the cells to recognize, latch onto, and absorb external life-giving substances, to reject others, or to make beneficial exchanges (i.e., in the process of bringing a substance in, they may release others that benefit the donor or other functions elsewhere in the system).

Disciplinary integrity in academe and in other professions is also protected by similar structures, in the form of editorial boards, tenure review committees, dissertation committees, etc. A goal of this paper is to create an opening, both in social construction and systems thinking communities, to allow for greater life-enhancing exchange of tools and ideas, and for collaboration.

Reflections In the Rear View Mirror—Adversarial Dynamics in Academe

At most American universities, issues concerning the educational canon, philosophies of scholarship or thought, and governance are considered the business of the *institution* of higher education (i.e., tenured faculty) and not in the purview of staff members (regardless of credentials), who labor at an *organizational* level (i.e. in specific colleges and universities). I learned about Barbara Boxer's construction of "loss of agency" in a conversation with her about this phenomenon, which she named while working in an academic staff position. Many academic staffers view their denial of the right to participate in governance (i.e., to vote or serve on committees) as a negation and denial of affirmation. While this structural issue plays out across American academe as a covert dynamic, that is not the topic of this reflections box. It merely serves to highlight that adversarial dynamics in academe are not exclusive to faculty-to-faculty relationships. Staff, however, may opt to construct certain aspects of the negation and denial of inclusion as a benefit. I found the post-modern *mêlée* to provide one such opportunity. The visceral tone of the debate reflects an adversarial dynamic that is incongruous with the ideals of academic freedom.

The rise and fall of "multiculturalism" in American higher education from the mid-1980's to mid-1990's seemed emblematic of the ire engendered by post-modernism. Multiculturalism took aim at the heart of the "educational canon" itself. Its proponents called for deep change in the culture of academe to better reflect and meet the needs of current American society. Proponents claimed that: (a) the educational canon of American academe had not changed from that established by its white male Northern European founders, (b) that the canon was essentially obsolete, and (c) that deep change was necessary if faculties (at all levels) and student bodies were to reflect and effectively serve the increasingly diverse American populace. Multiculturalism's proponents claimed that while Affirmative Action focused on increasing numbers, it did not result in positive retention of students, or reflective representation in faculties at senior levels. The backlash against multiculturalism and affirmative action was intense, the former being argued among faculty senates and the right wing political effete; with the constitutionality of affirmative action eventually being brought to the ballot box by an angry white "majority" populace. By the mid 1990's "Diversity" had replaced multiculturalism in American academe as a more acceptable, albeit qualitatively different goal. Rather than taking aim at the institutional canon of higher education, diversity focused on (a) increasing student diversity (i.e., the numbers of non-white US citizens and Permanent Residents) through focused recruiting, (b) addressing student retention by providing acculturation support and identity group activities, (c) increasing the number of non-white faculty members by offering competitive salary packages, and (d) appearing to give all an equal chance of rising to the top of the meritocracy, regardless of family background, wealth, or life experience. While multiculturalism insisted on structural changes in the core *project* of higher education, diversity has survived primarily as, and likely because it has been defined as, a student life staff function.

Leveraging Positive Organizational Disintegration

Even the most cutting-edge approaches to OD tend not to make the connection that Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) makes between disintegration and the possibility it invites for living forward into a more ideal future. If disintegration holds the promise for generative renewal, then how can organizational change agents recognize, catalyze, and leverage it for positive transformation? There are exciting possibilities for generative synergies between Dabrowski's theoretical work and constructionist approaches to organizational change and transformation. Thus, the question arises: How might the intra-psychic processes suggested by TPD be manifested in and applied to organizational meta-beings? And, of even greater interest to OD practitioners: How can these processes be catalyzed to precipitate deep change?

Addressing the questions raised above is outside of the scope of this paper; however, this discussion and the work reported in the *Reflections* box subtitled "A Theory of Positive *Organizational* Disintegration (TPOD)" suggest important leverage points and qualities to take into consideration in a model for transforming and preventing accidental adversarial dynamics in organizations; these were identified by participants in the AI process described in the next Reflections. These resonate with constructionist and other ideas presented in this paper:

- Focus on what's most important.
- Being reborn—a rebirthing process.
- Shifting the focus from paradigms of individual to shared meanings.
- Movement from individual to collective leadership.
- High engagement, dialog.
- Organizational transformation takes courage and commitment.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Towards A Theory of Positive Organizational Disintegration (TPOD)

In July 2010, I took this proposition of creating a TPOD to the Dabrowski Community, where I facilitated a discursive session at the 2010 International Conference on the Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD), in Chicago, Illinois, USA. The brief 50-minute session was structured as an AI process. The interview questions and session outputs are shown below.

Appreciative Inquiry Interview Questions

1. We're all at this conference to deepen our appreciation for the elegance of the Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) and the possibilities it holds for transformation. What excites *you* most about the TPD and transformation?
2. Imagine that a *miracle* has occurred in organization or group that you would like to see transformed. Entrenched patterns of self-limiting behaviors and beliefs have disintegrated giving way to an organizational reality that exceeds your wildest dreams. Tell me a story about the transformation:
 - a. What one word would you use to describe the energy that you witness?
 - b. What's happening that's new and exciting?
 - c. What forces and factors sparked the transformation?
 - d. What is one key thing that happened to set that miracle in motion?
3. Now, think about your organization, or another organization or group where you'd like to see that miracle begin to happen. What is one thing you can do to set the miracle in motion there?

Co-Created Reflections--Organization Disintegration & Transformation

1. SURPRISES--What surprised or intrigued you most about your partner's story? About the process? About what disintegrated / what emerged in stories? Other?
 - Focus--focused quickly on what was important
 - Led to a crescendo! Got thinking from imagining a miracle to a place of action...quickly.
 - Birthing (an adjective), being reborn
 - Potency of ideas
 - Thinking outside the box
 - Moved disintegration/thinking from individual to group
 - Diverse motivations exist (a good thing)
 - The paradox of miracles-- that they can arise from tragedy, or dire situations
 - Periods of dissonance can result in constructive growth

2. KEY FORCES AND FACTORS OF TRANSFORMATIONS--What key forces and factors made your imagined miracles, disintegrations, and positive transformations possible (see interview question 2, above)?

- Increased curiosity
- Positive things can led to... overwhelm... that created a crossroads to give up or move on
- Reduced toxic conflict--recognized it; desired to move from toxicity to productivity and positivity
- Paradigm shift in collective thinking
- Change of group members
- New leadership
- Changed concept of leadership, from individual to collective
- Transformative choices (e.g., USA elected a multi-cultural/racial man for first time; it's transformative, regardless of what he does as president)
- New motivation
- Stepped into National spotlight heightening sense of collective responsibility

3. GENERATIVE ACTION--What did you imagine doing as an agent of positive organizational transformation (see interview question 3, above)?

- Be the change we most want to create
- Reframe challenges as *opportunities*, rather than burdens
- Never give up on the possibility
- Stay engaged
- Speak honestly, in a straightforward way
- Be transparent in communications and interactions
- Socialize groups outside of the organizational context (to expand thinking, cross-fertilize ideas)
- Be clear about and give (communicate) good reasons for making the change
- Be willing to get out of the way of the process/disintegration/emergence ("get over yourself")
- Stand up for the change
- Be a social change agent / be an agent of the change
- Align and focus on congruency of actions, socially and internally
- Practice acceptance of situations, people, etc.
- Embrace appreciation (of multiple perspectives, voices, contributions, possibilities, strengths, challenges, etc.)
- Purposeful prayer

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Both-And

The CT, Inc. project sparked a transformation in my beliefs about what it means to be a researcher and consultant. The many research methodologies and quantitative analysis courses I'd taken in my career as an avid student taught me to believe that "good" research is analytical, follows a prescribed protocol, clearly defines the research question and variables, and defines the appropriate role of the researcher as hands-off objective observer and communicator of what is. These should not change or evolve during the course of research. The Hawthorn Effect—the impact on individuals and systems by virtue of being studied--was defined as something to be avoided and controlled for. Should the researcher or the protocol have unanticipated impacts on the outcomes being measured, then the impacts are explained away as due to "extraneous" variables. The difficulty becomes, who determines what is meaningful and what is extraneous?

Rather than pursuing the slippery slope of tautology, or negating the validity of my earlier training by labeling it as positivist, modernist, empiricist, rationalist, scientific, etc., it is fair to say that my desire to learn more effective means emerged from the CT, Inc. experience. Thus, the project, and the knowledge and beliefs that brought me to it, set in motion a new chapter in my professional life that opened new vistas of practice. As such, they are just as much a basis of my current practice as the newer approaches I have learned over the past ten years. All still exist as wholes, parts, or pieces in a treasure chest of socially constructed beliefs, tools and approaches that may be used as-is, or to co-create emergent new assemblages and forms of theory and practice. My growth and development as a researcher and consultant has been non-linear and emergent.

Engaging Synaesthetic Learning

The phenomenon of synaesthesia may be described as "sensory both-and." Synaesthetes (people for whom synaesthesia is a part of their daily experience) experience words, ideas, or concepts in a multi-sensory way (Ackerman, 1990). Garden variety examples of synaesthesia are *seeing* a new ideas as a light bulb lighting up in your brain, or experiencing bad news as a cold chill running through your veins. Synaesthesia involves a mixing of senses a phenomenon that, in most people becomes less frequent and more tightly controlled during early childhood. The synaesthete, however, continues to experience sensory mixing to a greater degree throughout life. Temple Grandin, revolutionized livestock handling because of her ability to feel and see as cows do, and to see their experiences as complex systems in her mind's eye. Grandin has described seeing words and conversations as moving pictures constantly playing through her head in full Technicolor. Rather than experiencing words as one- or

two-dimensional collections of letters on a page, some synaesthetes experience them as colors, objects, or smells. Some experience ideas and concepts as shapes that can be touched and rearranged in space.

Given the diverse MPWoB of people who do different types of work that draws upon diverse ways of thinking, employing a variety of communication modalities and methods of engagement makes sense in OD practice. Awareness that synaesthesia exists in most people to some degree, suggests that leveraging it may (a) offer new possibilities for more inclusive engagement in OD-related activities, or (b) may help to connect with a more primitive part of the brain that is less dichotomous and discerning and more holistic (Ackerman, 1990, p. 290). AI practice attempts to do this by asking participants to enact their shared dream statements by translating or enacting them as a skit, sculpture or other work of art, a song, or some other synaesthetic form of communication. This paper suggests that if a central goal of AI and constructionist practices in general is for participants to think holistically and systemically, then there may be considerable benefit in borrowing a method for engaging participants in a process through which they may literally translate their co-created dreams into calliopes of multiple moving parts that form relational systems of meaning.

Many systems thinking practitioners find the act of visually and kinesthetically expressing a behavioral dynamic as a relational system creates a safe container in which to engage in inclusive dialog. A key benefit, especially to people in visually-oriented fields like engineering, is that the systems thinking diagrams suggest dynamic movement toward multiple potential outcomes and, thus, may hold more meaning than words for visually and/or spatially-oriented people. Another benefit often cited is that the systems thinking “language” is symbolic and simple (once learned). Regardless of one’s spoken language or facility with words, the language of systems thinking allows for shared meaning-making. And, for some, using a symbolic language opens the possibility for meaningful dialog by freeing initial exploration from emotion-laden speech, and jumping over “details” to the bottom line, quickly. Paradoxically, using a symbolic language to quickly “see” the systemic nature of an issue may ultimately increase the probability of transformative dialog. (This will be discussed at greater length in Part III.) The language of the Systems Thinking Toolkit is intended to allow members of a system to talk about an emotionally “loaded” topic in a way that helps them to rise above and clarify meanings that may be disciplinary, local, and convention/rule-bound.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—Synaesthesia in AI Practice

The greatest challenge that I have experienced in effective AI design has been in keeping clients connected to the positive image of the future after the fun of performing their skit or sharing their poem, or other creation has worn off. My observation is that there is often a disconnect between Dreaming and Designing, especially when clients do not allow sufficient “soak time” for the positive image of dreaming to sink in and inform action (e.g. when they try to compress the process into one or two days).

To hold the collective socially constructed positive image of the future even in compressed processes, I give participants quiet time for introspection, and then teach them how to translate their dreams into a web of inter-related factors (e.g., people, structures, processes that may build on other methods, like the goose egg or mind mapping) so they may identify systemic leverage and risk factors for action. There is something about drawing a relational web that helps people see and feel the connection that they each have, in more than an intellectual or purely conceptual way. I believe that the act of physically drawing arrows, especially when a whole swarm of colleagues are moving from variable to variable across the map, creates and/or strengthens neural connections that support collaborative action.

Transition and Prevention of the Dynamic

There are many clichés that describe the nature of the courage that the dynamic calls upon in practitioners, including: “facing the dragon,” “naming the elephant,” and “telling the emperor that s/he is not wearing any clothes.” This is likely what the CT, Inc. senior executive was suggesting when he implored me to “hit [Andrew] between the eyes.” His motives were likely mixed, as he was also trying to influence the recommendations in the consultant’s report. The fact, however, that a seasoned senior executive who had worked with Andrew at his previous organization, would seek an “other” to deliver the news to Andrew highlights the degree of courage needed and perceived risks in addressing power.

Observation and study of the accidental adversaries dynamic suggests that the dynamic is hard to transform and transcend without bringing embedded patterns of behavior and dysfunctional structures and constructions into consciousness. At the same time, my experience combining AI and systems thinking practices suggests that awareness of limiting patterns of behavior is most likely to be addressed effectively and openly when it is done so in service of a compelling shared vision or dream, and in a generative emotional environment.

The Introduction to this paper presented a provocative positive image for collaboration between social construction and systems thinking. That vision proposed several actions in the spirit of more effectively serving clients whose organizational life is disrupted and obstructed by accidental adversaries dynamics:

1. Collaborating across disciplinary and paradigmatic divides to engage ourselves and our clients in processes that are holistically inclusive of the best of systemic thinking and constructionist practices.
2. Leading with relational, constructionist approaches, like appreciative inquiry, to increase the quality of dialog in organizations so that the people who lead and work in them may: (a) discover that what unites them is stronger than what has been dividing them, (b) shift the charge, or valence of relational dynamics, from repulsion to attraction.
3. Help leaders take a systemic view of structural factors that may (a) limit growth when ignored, and/or (b) be leveraged in service of deep, sustainable change.

A core benefit of borrowing from the systems thinking toolkit is the ease and simplicity it offers for helping clients co-construct a holistic, systemic view of an emotionally-charged, limiting organizational dynamic. Doing so within a constructionist framework supports systemic thinking that is not disassociated from relational multi-being. In fact, it may serve as a high leverage way to apply a relational framework to

aspects of organization often considered to be about things (i.e., structures and processes), without taking a deficit, “fix-it,” or blaming mindset. Naming the dynamic, describing its risk factors, and demonstrating its systemic moving parts help to create a sense of possibility and a more positive image of what is possible, even in the most adversarial environments.

It should be noted that this suggested borrowing of systems thinking tools, *and shifting of focus from assessing problems to mapping relational possibilities*, does not suggest that behavior is rational or bounded. It *does* propose that certain organizational structures and conditions tend to precipitate negative relational dynamics that are antithetical to the “coordinated flight” of multi-being; and vice versa, that the challenge of coordinated multi-being may lead to decision-making that creates structures that promote adversarial dynamics. This point is central to the thesis of this paper and is captured by Karl Weick in the following statement:

The basic idea is this: When people act in the world, their circumstance may be one of projects, action in context, and concerns that shift as their needs shift. What that world does *not* consist of is a separation between subject and object. Heidegger refers to ‘absorbed coping’ as a ready-to-hand mode of engagement. When people act in this engaged mode, they are aware of the world holistically as a network of interrelated projects rather than as an arrangement of discrete physical objects such as tools. If one of those projects is interrupted, then their experience changes into an unready-to-hand mode. Problematic aspects of the whole situation stand out, but people still do not become aware of context-free objects. Instead, the object remains situated, but people still do not become aware of context-free objects, instead, the object remains situated, but we discover in our dealings that it has become temporarily unusable (e.g., tool is damaged or materials are unsuitable), that something is missing (e.g., set of materials needed is incomplete), or that there is some obstinate obstacle that does not belong and stands in the ways of resumption... (Weick, 1999, p. 135).

Leverage Points for Transforming and Preventing the Dynamic

This research project has had two central goals, one of which draws upon the affective, relational side of the change, and the other from the structural, systemic side:

First, it has asserted a provocative possibility for synchronistic collaboration across theoretical and paradigmatic divides, with a focus on bridging across social construction and systems thinking, and

Second, it has studied the accidental adversaries archetype from many different angles—a case example, relevant literature, and reflexive research and practice-based knowledge—in order to theorize in a grounded way about: (a) *what* the highest leverage factors are for transforming and preventing the archetype and (b) *how* they would work individually and together.

In summary, this paper asserts that there are three core leverage points for transforming and/or preventing the accidental adversaries dynamic. Others may be linked to or emerge from these:

1. **Constructionist Approach to the People Side of Change**—The degree to which the approach to the *people side of change* is relational rather than bounded.
2. **Systemic Thinking Approach to the Structural Side of Change**—The degree to which the approach to the *structural side of change* employs systemic rather than dichotomous thinking.
3. **Holistic Approach to the Project of Transformation**—The degree to which the effort to transform adversarial dynamics coordinates and bridges the best of the MPWoB of multiple paradigms.

Figure 23 theorizes about the individual and combined outcomes of these three high leverage variables. The first two are represented on the horizontal and vertical axes, while the third is represented in the four quadrants as the interactive effects of the combined strengths of the two variables that are along the axes. The first high leverage variable, “1” above (People Approach) is shown along the vertical axis. The most positive or generative approach to the people side of change promotes a *relational* rather than a *bounded* approach to being. This is reflected on the high and low ends of the axis. The second high leverage variable, “2” above (Structural Approach) is shown along the horizontal axis. Systemic thinking is the most desirable approach to structural dynamics, with dichotomous thinking shown on the low end of the scale. The following combined impacts are suggested:

- **Slow Death-Quadrant III: Bounded-Dichotomous.** This approach to change has the highest risk for adversarial dynamics to emerge across groups. Relational valence on balance is significantly more negative than positive. This organization cannot innovate or grow effectively. Waste (entropy) is highest in this quadrant because negative relational valence makes it harder for people to work together to improve processes and the structure itself frustrates those efforts and creates unnecessary waste due to competing and/or mismatched projects. The organization’s survival is at risk. If it survives, it is unlikely to

accomplish more than incremental, adaptive changes. This environment is difficult for both innovation “D’s” and “C’s,” but may be more detrimental for C’s who require looser controls and a more systemic focus to ideas.

- **Stable-Quadrant IV: Bounded-Systemic.** This quadrant represents an efficient organization. While the relational valence is more negative than positive, this organization may enjoy a moderate degree of success largely based on the strength of its systemic thinking. Organizations in this quadrant have a low to moderate risk of developing accidental adversarial dynamics. While structural risk factors are low, and work is likely to be efficient, there may not be a strong sense of collegiality, inspiration, or awareness of shared values and aspirations to inspire collaborations that lead to groundbreaking innovations. Waste is caused primarily by the inability of people to feel free to act without first seeking bureaucratic approval. The industry and the nature of the organization’s work would have a strong influence on the degree to which relational valence is either recognized or is operating as a risk factor. Because projects are defined in a systemic way there will not be the problem of mismatched or competing projects, one of the primary structural factors that precipitate adversarial dynamics. Negative relational valence may take longer or need to be higher to have a negative impact in a technical organization than in a services company. Again, the D innovation type is more likely to be able to work efficiently in this environment where roles may be more narrowly defined than those preferred by C’s.
- **Stable-Quadrant II: Relational-Dichotomous.** This type of organization may have hierarchical controls. Examples might be a hospital clinic or staff office in a university setting. This organization may suffer from negative unintended outcomes of best-intended actions that thwart growth. Valence is neutral rather than positive because of the likelihood of frustrating project mismatches between groups, and wasteful duplicated efforts. This may be a happy workplace, given the relational focus of leadership, which also may offer protection from the frustrations of mismatched projects that might lead to adversarial dynamics. People may have a more relaxed or forgiving attitudes when faced with competing projects. This organization, however, may be at risk of “niceness” that hides covert feelings of annoyance. Both innovation types may find this a workable environment because of the positive relational valence; however, C’s who want to see a cross-cutting vision through to completion may be frustrated here.

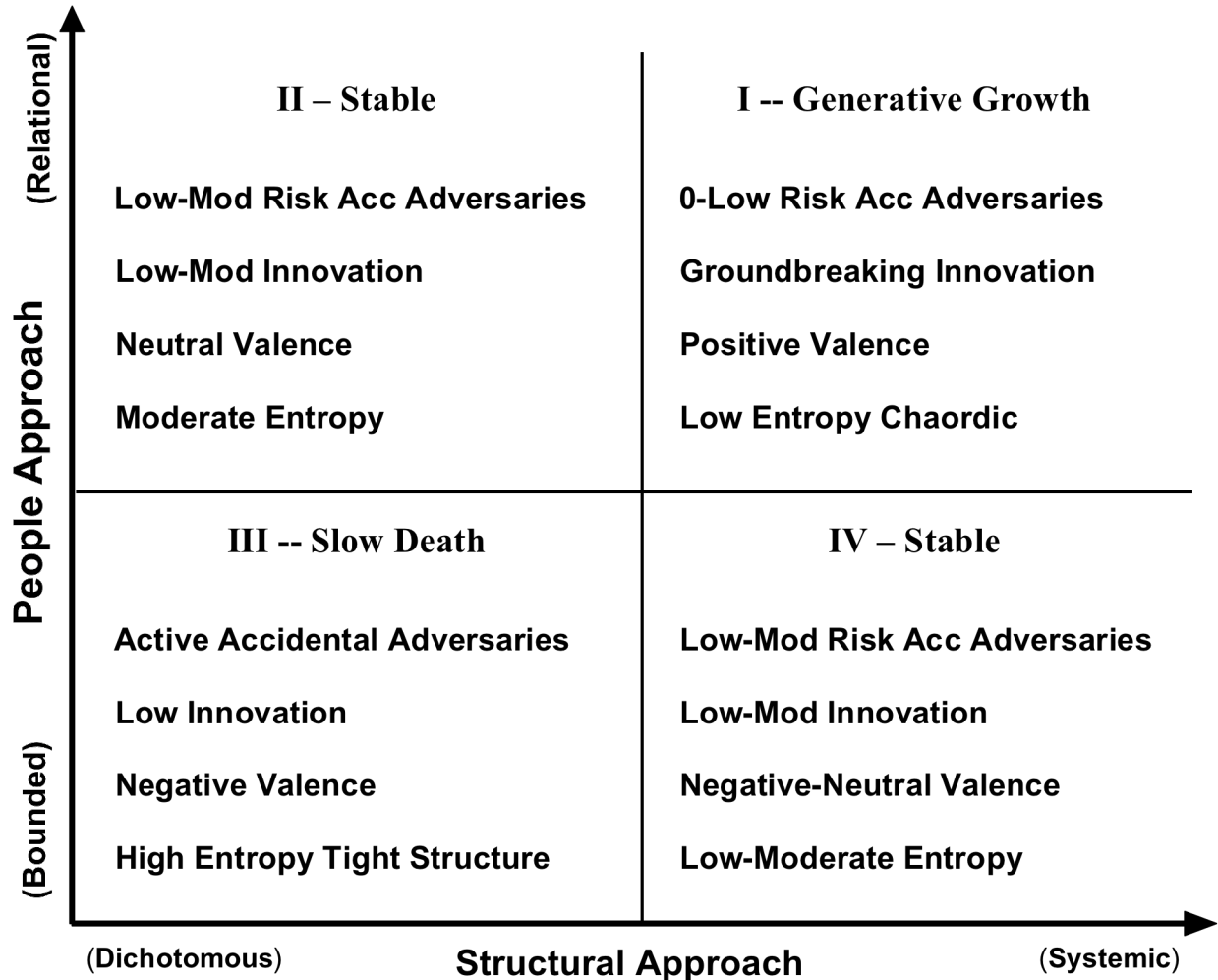


Figure 23. Leverage of a holistic (people and structures) approach to change

- Generative Growth-Quadrant I: Relational-Systemic.** This quadrant represents holism and the highest ideals of relational being and systemic thinking. Organizations in this quadrant have a high potential for achieving groundbreaking innovations and sustainable growth, with the lowest risk for accidental adversaries dynamics. Projects are defined holistically, and all groups understand and appreciate their connections to other groups and to a shared organizational vision. The structures support collaboration, and systemic thinking, and decision-making. People know how to collaborate with each other and find it easy to work across functions in a chaordic way. The organization is resilient in facing unexpected unready-to-hand projects. This is an ideal workplace for C's and D's alike.

The diagram most strongly supports the assertion that Quadrant I represents the ideal organizational ecology that would be most protected from and resistant to accidental adversarial dynamics. It also suggests that an holistic approach to change that consciously and simultaneously supports relational multi-being *and* systemic thinking would have a strong synergistic benefit that is not seen in approaches that focus on one axis or the other, but not both together. It is also possible that those most equipped to provide holistic leadership formally and/or informally are the brokers like those mentioned in the CT, Inc. Report: individuals who understood the accidental nature of the adversarial dynamics and saw the pendulum swinging from one extreme to the other and imagined reaching out to steady it.

Reflections in the Rear View Mirror—On Being a Constructionist Practitioner

When I first knew that I wanted to be an organizational change consultant, I did not have confidence in my skills. The consultants who I'd hired in my management roles universally seemed to possess a large toolkit brimming with techniques, or, in my eyes, were marvelously fluid in the art of spontaneous facilitation. In my then bounded ways of being, I set out to learn more, to equip myself with techniques, to learn tools that would help me “wear my authority” while building the experience and confidence to let go of strict adherence to techniques and outcomes.

Fortunately, I stumbled upon systems thinking, which at the time felt like finding “home.” To this day, I have not fully mastered the Systems Thinking Toolkit, but do not fret about it anymore. As a *bird*, “getting” the Gestalt of it is more important, and I know many talented *frogs* will help me fill in missing pieces along the way just in time. What systems thinking introduced me to was the value of systemic relational thinking: of “seeing” ideas, meanings, people, and roles as part of a dynamic web of inter-relationships, shared roots, and holistic meanings, never set in time, always evolving and emerging. I believe that this is what Peter Senge had in mind when he wrote *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), a view that he has deepened and expanded upon in his subsequent collaborative works (Senge et al., 1994; Senge et al., 1999; Senge et al., 2005). It is a direction towards which he has always moved, and why systems thinking, like social construction, claims to embrace the thinking of quantum physics. In that quantum sense of emergence, on the edge of chaos, systems thinking brought me to appreciative inquiry, which brought me to social construction, which brought me back to systems thinking: all of which brought me to present, mindful, joyful, improvisational practice along the Möbius strip of conceptual and practical emergence.

Slowing down long enough to freeze frame ideas and beliefs for the purpose of capturing them on paper has been one of the most difficult and fulfilling challenges of my life thus far. I am a consummate *bird*, as Dyson describes us. Discovering that

metaphor has been one of the many gifts of this process. Being an effective consultant whose practices are informed by content area knowledge also requires adopting certain frog-like practices, and doing so with enough discipline that they may eventually become strengths and, after a while, most practiced ways of being. Writing this paper has been one such practice for which systems thinking, appreciative inquiry, social construction and, most recently, presencing have been the core knowledge bases. The process of weaving these philosophies and approaches together into a coherent fabric has indeed deepened the meaning, theoretical grounding, and expertise upon which my organizational consulting practice is based. The intellectual and spiritual home that this constellation of theories and practices creates is not always a place of harmony, but is always one of grounding and inspiration, and a table at which I have learned to be a conceptual bridge-builder.

Through the process of researching, compiling, and writing this paper, I have come to be a person who loves the conceptual aesthetics of social construction. At the same time, I do not feel obliged to agree with or feel at ease with all of its beliefs and practices. What has been true for me is that to embrace social construction up to this point has required me to do my own work; to face my own “challenges of flight.” I cannot practice social construction without striving to *be* in alignment with it. For me, social construction provides a process for holding my behaviors and beliefs, and those of others, with deeper compassion. It enables me to be present to the many challenges of flight with greater equanimity.

This constructionist frame of mind is helpful for viewing other approaches with curiosity and appreciation as the products of diverse most practiced ways of being. For some who best “get” the meaning and aesthetics of systemic thinking when understood through a visual-spatial prism, systems thinking offers transcendence from bounded being. For others who love the aesthetics of words and are comfortable with the “feeling” language of relationship-building, AI may seem much closer to social construction and more relational. The constructionist concepts of relational multi-being and most practiced ways of being provide a compassionate lens—one that can hold multiple paradigms and reflect back a kaleidoscope of chaordic meanings, even if as scholars we sometimes cling to the *rightness* of our own ideas and those of *our* bounded disciplines over others’.

The challenge of flight and the out-of-sync-ness between facets of multi-being (the butterfly’s wing) provide a compassionate lens for making peace between, and appreciating the differences of being that have produced and favor systems thinking, and those that favor consciously constructionist approaches to organizational change, like appreciative inquiry. When each approach is defined in a bounded framework, constricted by the categorical nature of linguistics and theoretical purity,

they may be seen as wholly antithetical-- systems thinking negated as mechanistic, positivist, and modernist, and appreciative inquiry and social construction negated as “soft,” devoid of effective means for *doing*, and/or a luxury to be addressed after the *real* work of the organization is done.

For me, this dissertation process, and the process of learning about social construction in general, has presented, or perhaps reflected, an earlier choice for “deep change.” Paraphrasing Robert Quinn (1995), the act of change is ‘a choice between creating a life worth living or accepting slow death.’ By implication, a life worth living means learning to let go into a life of constant emergence, uncertainty, internal dialog, mindful practice, and dialoging between frames of multi-being that otherwise impede flight and limit growth. I believe that the inner life of multi-being—the coordinations and conflicts within each individual wing—are fractals of the larger challenge of flight that the Gergens discuss. Each requires compassionate “holding” and an iterative, ongoing practice of fluid dialog, internally and externally, internally and externally...and on. This is a space that I wish to help my clients create and occupy, especially my *perfect* clients; “scientist types” and academics whose multi-beings have long been reinforced for headiness, analytical thinking, and intellectual discernment; and anyone who either longs for dynamic collaboration or intellectually knows that it is necessary for effective, innovative living and organization. Social construction brings into the light and awareness that we are all just doing the best we know how to do and be at any given moment in time.

Getting to Quadrant I-- The 3-R's Of Transformation

The 3-R's Model™ offers a practical theoretical framework for leveraging social constructionist *and* systems thinking philosophies and practices to be in service to organizations that are ready to or *must* address a systemic adversarial dynamic. The model is intentionally simple and streamlined, rather than being prescriptive or focused on techniques. Experienced OD consultants each have their own MPWoB and experiential comfort levels with particular tools and approaches. The model is intended to share the general “Gestalt” of a practical approach that enacts the theoretical and experiential concepts presented in this paper.

Transforming negative archetypal dynamics involves re-calibrating relational valences (R1), “re-upping” structures to support generative growth (R2), and continuously re-committing to mindful, courageous, and effective leadership (R3). The 3-R's Model™ described below is sequential. Each R creates the conditions for the next R and for the overall process to be consistent with social construction.

R1 – Re-Calibrate relational valence from high negativity to high positivity.

- Organizational dynamics carry a relational charge, or valence that is dynamic, fluid, and emergent.
- Relational valence may range from negative archetypal (e.g. negating adversarial) to generative transformational (e.g. appreciative collaborative).
- When individuals experience an awareness that the aspirations they share are more compelling and attractive than the repelling force of negativity that has been dividing them, problems become less emotionally-charged and people are able to take a fresh, more open and systemic view of obstinate obstacles.

R1 Goals

Shift high negativity-to-positivity ratio of adversarial dynamics, to high positivity-to-negativity ratio for coordination across MPWoB and collaboration:

1. Draw people towards rather than away from each other,
2. Shift from a deficit view of the problems to a generative view of the possibilities for collaboration and great work relationships, and
3. Ratchet down the emotionally charge aura that hampers the ability to see solutions.

R1 High Leverage Actions

- Commitment of leaders to (a) give the process their full support, (b) communicate their commitment, and (c) participate in the process.
- Clearly defined purpose and focus of re-calibration *project*.
- Generative dialog.
- Inclusive of all key stakeholder groups.

High Leverage Holistic Variables Impacted by R1

- Shared Vision
- Productive Collaboration
- Appreciative Attitude
- Engagement of Diverse MPWoB
- Positivity-to-Negativity Ratio

R1 Systemic Results

- Creates a palpable dream of future possibility.
- Shifts the construction from avoiding difficult problems to facing and transforming the obstinate obstacles that stand in the way of the possibilities.
- From Others to Alters; from Subject-Object to Subject-Subject.
- Less in-group / out-group factionalism.
- Greater openness to the possibility of reconnecting with the initial goals of collaboration.
- Builds capacity for generative dialog into the organization.

R2— *Re-Up* from vicious downward spiral to the virtuous upward growth.
(Reconnect with outer virtuous reinforcing loop of initial intentions for collaboration.)

- Systemic thinking allows people to face obstinate obstacles of change with less emotionally-charged affect. Inspired by the vision of possibility, people may step back from Ego and focus on systemic issues.
- Participating in the visual-spatial, kinesthetic act of drawing a web of inter-relationships—an organizational *dream-catcher*—gives people fore-knowledge of a dynamic holistic vision.
- Leaders and others may *see that* and *how* all projects and identity roles are inter-related and inter-dependent in the ideal future.

R2 Goals

Reconnect with the initial intention for virtuous self-reinforcing collaboration. Shift *from* dichotomous thinking that breaks people and projects into bounded delineations *to* systemic thinking that:

1. Provides a positive systemic image of the organizational project,
2. Provides relational data to define group projects holistically and convincingly, and
3. Provides a positive image of holistic, collaborative action.

R2 High Leverage Actions

- Continued commitment and participation of leaders.
- Constructionist approach to systemic thinking.
- Inclusive of all key stakeholder groups.
- Hands-on engagement of stakeholders in creating webs of inter-relationship.

High Leverage Holistic Variables Impacted by R2

- Holistic Project Definitions
- Capacity For Systemic Thinking
- High leverage Decision-making
- Holistic Image of Ideal Future

R2 Systemic Results

- Experiential awareness that “we are all in this together.”
- Shifts parochial attitudes about project boundaries.
- Convincing project definitions and reasons for collaborating.
- Affirms identities of all stakeholders.
- Shifts from Self-us-Other to Self-us-Us.
- Will to reconnect with the initial goals (outer R loop) of collaboration.
- Capacity to apply systemic thinking to other ready-to-hand projects and unexpected events.

R3— *Re-Commit* relational and structural support to create a virtuous reinforcing loop of R1 and R2 as part of the fabric of the organizational most practiced ways of being.

- Organization entropy increases over time unless generative energy is sustained or added back.
- Maintaining active commitment to holism is necessary for deep change.
- Transformational change is synergized by holistic approaches to change, transition, and transformation.

R3 Goals

To innervate new neural networks for holism, generative dialog, and systemic thinking throughout the organization.

1. Develop R1 and R2 behaviors as habits of mind, MPWoB, and new strengths in leaders, individuals, and the organization as a whole.
2. To continue increasing positive relational valence, and
3. To prevent reoccurrence of adversarial dynamics.
4. To live into the habits of mind and being that the ideal future is calling for.

R3 High Leverage Actions

- Commitment of leaders to continuously re-commit to R1 *and* R2.
- Accountability for generativity and sustainability practices.
- New and changed structures to support dialog and systemic thinking.

High Leverage Holistic Variables Impacted by R3

- Growth
- Resilience
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Commitment
- Courage
- Accountability
- Positive Relational Valence

R3 Systemic Results

- Ability to sustain growth and achieve challenging goals.
- Capacity for groundbreaking innovation.
- Workplace of choice.
- Reduced waste from adversarial dynamics, mismatched projects, and inability to coordinate for innovation.
- Ongoing holistic awareness that “we are all in this together.”
- Shared vision, values, and principles.
- Resilience when faced with unexpected events and crises.

Becoming the Change

Key to using the 3-R's Model effectively is employing approaches that help clients live into the most desired and constructive ways of being of their ideal futures. Doing so will help them to (a) become the change they most want to create by *getting the feel for it* in the present and to (b) develop new habits of mind and being, and new strengths that will eventually reshape the collective positive core of the organization. The best approaches for accomplishing R1 (Re-calibrate) and R2 (Re-Up) goals are approaches with process models and tools that embody (a) theoretically grounded philosophies and (b) ways of being that either are rooted in social construction or may be used in a constructionist way. Appreciative inquiry and systems thinking are two such process models. In both cases, the tools and methods enact the principles and wisdom of the philosophies that gave rise to them. A person cannot *do* (engage in) AI or systems thinking without *being* them. Through the processes people develop the "muscle memory" and new "neural networks" for new ways of being, even before they have developed cognitive and/or affective awareness or understanding of the objectives.

AI is a proven approach (Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Watkins, 2002; Cooperrider et al., 2001) for reconstructing the nature of dialog and, thus, the quality of workplace relationships. For this reason, it is an especially effective R1 approach for (a) shifting the valence of relational energy from negative, repelling to positive, attracting, Self-us-Us relational being, (b) creating a positive affective environment conducive to creativity, openness, and forward thinking that are core components of innovation and growth, and (c) addressing the affective dynamics of adversarial workplace dynamics in a way that focuses on appreciation rather than blame. While AI makes use of a variety of tools⁴⁵ for naming structural elements necessary to design and implement the shared vision, or dream, it currently lacks strong systemic thinking tools for (a) identifying the highest leverage systemic factors for action, (b) holistic awareness of potential systemic synergies that might be leveraged at the planning stage, or (c) identifying the potential for negative unintended consequences of best-intended actions over time.

Systems thinking, on the other hand, is an ideal approach for R2 because it provides an holistic visual-spatial means that may be used in a constructionist way to (a) translate a positive image of the future into a web of systemic inter-relationships and (b) identify high leverage systemic factors to guide decision-making and action planning. The proposal to integrate systems thinking into an AI process is a both-and proposition. It does not suggest taking away any part of the AI process; rather it proposes

⁴⁵ Tools commonly used are (a) the goose egg, a simple and effective tool for helping groups identify stakeholder, structures, and processes needed to deliver on the co-created dream, and (b) mind maps, a similar yet more detailed visual tool.

(a) borrowing a tool from another discipline that more easily addresses a challenge in the AI process and (b) applying it in a way that is consistent with the core principles of AI and social construction.

My training and significant experience applying and teaching both paradigms⁴⁶ suggests that:

- AI is a highly effective practice for accomplishing R1 goals;
- Constructionist (rather than objectivist) application of systems thinking is a best practice for accomplishing R2 goals;
- AI and systems thinking applied in concert often lead to outcomes that are greater than the sum of the their individual processes;
- It is essential to embed both within a constructionist framework focused on (a) calling forth most generative most practiced ways of being, and (b) reconstructing unmindful habitual ways of being (entropy).
- *Transforming accidental adversaries dynamics in ourselves and client systems requires an awareness that the dynamic is relational and systemic in nature.*

R-3 is about getting good at practicing R-1 and R-2 holistically, rather than as dichotomous, either-or preferences. *Transforming* the accidental adversaries dynamic requires R-3 behaviors. *Preventing* the dynamic requires embracing and honing new R3 MPWoB and strengths as an integral life-long practice of mindful leadership and being. Accomplishing R3 goals emerges from (a) gaining competence and confidence in appreciative dialog and systemic thinking, (b) learning how to see organizational dreams and actions in a holistic way, and (c) continuously re-committing to be accountable to the shared vision and to follow through. The consultant has considerable leverage and a responsibility to reflexively construct shared meaning about, accountability for, and commitment to deep change as a daily practice.

⁴⁶ As distinct paradigms used alone, or as a blended, eclectic approach like that proposed in the 3-R's Model™

A Generative Image for Transformative Action

Figure 24 uses a now-familiar systems thinking tool to illustrate the generative learning journey of an organization that commits to transforming and preventing accidental adversaries dynamics so that it may live forward into its ideal future of growth resilience, and sustainability. The diagram begins with the same dichotomous groups or constructs as in the two earlier figures (Figures 21 and 22) representing the impacts of dichotomous, bounded thinking. The diagram illustrates some of the noticeable events and conditions that may lead organizations and their leaders to the precipice of deep change. This time, however, the image addresses a series of provocative “What if?” questions about transforming accidental adversaries for generative change:

- What if the leaders of an organization were dissatisfied with their inability to lead the company into growth?
- What if they attributed their inability to meet the challenge, or outright failure as something to do with the quality of their most practiced ways of being...up to that point?
- What if they called upon a constructionist consultant for coaching and help making sense of their dilemma?
- And what if the consultant were effective in helping leaders to appreciate the relational and structural nature of the challenges they were facing?
- And what if the leaders of the organization committed to deep change?

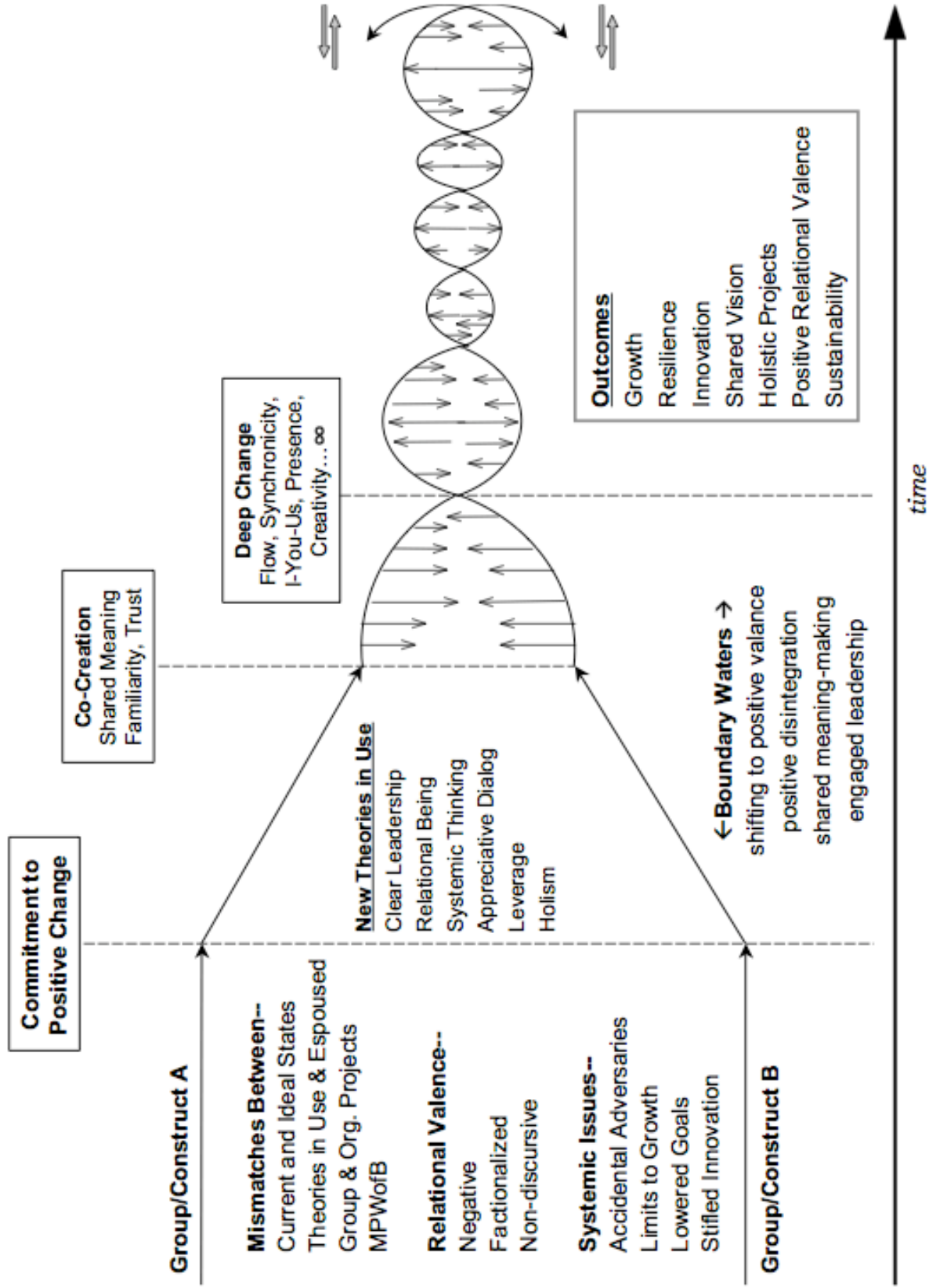


Figure 24. Transformation of accidental adversaries to sustainable collaboration

The image begins with the current state of adversarial dynamics in which there are likely to be (a) noticeable mismatches between group projects and goals, theories in use and espoused theories, and other by-products and outcomes of dichotomous thinking, such as (b) relational states that are negating and generally antithetical to multi-being, and (c) structural issues with systemic outcomes that stifle innovation, lower goals, and limit growth. At this organization, however, a leader or leaders become aware of the truth in Albert Einstein's words, that they "can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking [they] used when [they] created them." The image continues:

1. They recognize, at some level, that (a) the negative, emotionally-charged work relationships are keeping people from collaborating in ways that are needed for innovation, or (b) they may be bumping up against obstinate systemic issues that repeatedly stifle growth efforts, or (c) that both issues exist and seem to be related in some way.
2. The organization's leaders commit to generative change.
3. As part of their commitment, they are led and lead their organization into the boundary waters of transition. They commit to:
 - a. *Doing their own work* so they may be clear leaders who address the people and structural aspects of change holistically.
 - b. Building new capacities for relational multi-being and systemic thinking throughout the organization.
 - c. Engage the entire organization in shared meaning-making so they may define projects that: are holisms of a shared vision, and really matter to diverse groups and individuals in the organization.
4. While remaining present in the boundary waters of change, leaders and people at all levels of the organization begin to live into new, more relational ways of seeing, being, and acting. As they do:
 - a. The relational valence of the workplace ecology that had been propelling people away from collaboration begins to shift from negative to positive.
 - b. People begin to discover their shared values, hopes, and aspirations, and to engage in dialog through which they co-create new meaning.

- c. They begin to experience dissonance and discomfort between their current ways of being and thinking, and their most desired ways of being.
 - d. People begin to find themselves attracted to others as future collaborators and Alters⁴⁷ of the Self (Rijsman, 1997; 2008).
 - e. The increasingly positive relational valence begins to pull individuals, and the organization as a whole, towards each other and a more generative future.
 - f. Obsolete ways of being and MPWoB begin to disintegrate, making way for new ready-to-hand, emergent ways of being, which may eventually become new sources of core strength.
5. As they remain steadfast in their courage and commitment to deep change, the organization reaches a tipping point where:
- a. Collaboration takes on the form of a Möbius strip with periods of intersection where intense idea cross-fertilization occurs across groups, and other periods of divergence where people focus on individual and group projects. The critical point is that they are able to move quickly and in a fluid way between ready-to-hand, present-at-hand, and unready-to-hand situations.
 - b. Systemic thinking and appreciative multi-being have become most preferred and most practiced way of being.

This is a point of *holism* where the synergistic benefits of relational multi-being (represented by positive relational valence) and the practice of systemic thinking are working *together* are synergistically to create generative change. Noticeable results are:

- a. New and more productive collaboration,
- b. More effective innovation processes,
- c. People experiencing being in flow with their work,
- d. Synchronicities of I-You, us-Us, I-You-Us working relationships, and
- e. Growth.

⁴⁷ Discussed in Part II.

6. Leaders re-commit to continuing to practice, learn, and support:
 - a. Approaches to the people side of change that will sustain the high positive relational valence, and
 - b. Systemic thinking that results in clear leadership, the ability to define projects convincingly even when faced with unexpected changes, and projects and actions driven by and coordinated with a shared vision.
 - c. Synergies between “a” and “b.”
7. The organization has transformed the accidental adversaries dynamic that was limiting growth, and now has the capacity to prevent the dynamic from reoccurring, and is enjoying its most desired outcomes.

This dissertation is titled “Transforming Accidental Adversaries Dynamics in Client Systems and Ourselves.” The positive image of possibility presented in this final section has described a process for transforming this dynamic in client systems; however, the same image and process apply to transforming accidental adversaries in ourselves. The process of transformation calls upon us, just as it calls upon organizational leaders, to do our own work, first and always.

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APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A** Original OHL Proposal, Design, and Interview Guide
- APPENDIX B** Appreciative Inquiry Principles and Process Models
- APPENDIX C** Organizational Learning History Backgrounder
- APPENDIX D** Final OLH Project Report
- APPENDIX E** Reflections for CEO Briefing
- APPENDIX F** Statement Of Introduction and Confidentiality Agreement

APPENDIX A—Original Proposal, Design, and Interview Guide

OLH Proposal Cover Letter

November 2, 1999

Mr. Roger G. Smith
Corporate Affairs Officer
CT, Inc.
2211 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95131

Dear Roger,

Greetings from Madison, Wisconsin, where the wind chill temperature this morning was an invigorating 19° F. I trust your temperatures are a few degrees warmer.

Last night I faxed the project proposal, which I've included again with this cover letter. If you would like to discuss the proposal by phone, please feel free to call me at my office (x-xxx-xxx-xxxx) or home (x-xxx-xxx-xxxx). I will be in meetings most of the day today, but would be available to talk by phone after today.

Dr. James B. Rieley of Arthur Anderson and Dr. Robert Ibarra, Associate Vice Chancellor, UW-Madison have expressed their interest in this project and have offered me their substantive support and guidance. Jim has been my systems thinking mentor over the past three years, is the director of Arthur Anderson's Knowledge Development Group, and is on the national editorial review board of the National Productivity Review, one of the journals I will be targeting for publication. Rob has been my professional mentor here at Madison for the past two years. He is a cultural anthropologist with extensive research and consulting experience in organizational culture and change.

While at MIT last week, I broached the topic with several members of the Society for Organizational Learning (SoL), closely associated with MIT. They believe the editors of the new SoL Journal, will be interested in the project outcomes. Having worked with Peter Senge (Executive Director of SoL, Director of MIT's Center for Organizational Learning, preeminent author in the field) over a three-day period last week, I believe he will be especially interested in CT, Inc.'s emerging competitive but ecological (e.g., Andrew's references to Darwin) vision for the Internet market. This is the direction in which he, Edgar Schein (SoL Journal editor), and others are taking the field of systems thinking. They will be interested in an organization that is actually doing it.

I also was connected with other organizational learning researchers at MIT and Harley Davidson, here in Milwaukee, who have vast experience with the methodology I am planning to use. All believe this is an excellent project.

APPENDIX A
(continued)

Again, I am offering to provide my time and expertise for this project at no charge. CT, Inc. would need to cover the project expenses, which are detailed in the proposal. I have left the project timeframe open for discussion. There are a few peak work times here that I will have to avoid in terms of travel. My preference would be to complete the project before June when my organization will undergo a significant change in leadership.

I believe that CT, Inc. has an intriguing story to tell. It is one which I am anxious to delve into further and to introduce to the systems thinking community. From the initial enthusiastic reactions I have received, I believe this will be a mutually beneficial undertaking. I will be happy to send you my vita and writing samples, if you would find those helpful.

I look forward to hearing from you soon and to working with you on this project.

Regards,

Jody Siegel, M.S., M.S.B.A.
Director of Academic Planning and Coordination
School of Medicine and Public Health
University of Wisconsin-Madison

APPENDIX A

(continued)

OLH Project Design Summary

(submitted in August 1999 following July 1999 exploratory visit)

1. Summary of impressions from initial interviews.
2. Proposed deliverables.
 - 2.1. Learning history for CT, Inc. internal distribution (see information pasted below).
 - 2.2. Article/s for publication in academic/professional journals.
3. Learning history focus.
 - 3.1. Historical account of decoupling of Waverider from e-Rider:
 - 3.1.1. Pre-leadership change (unsuccessful attempt).
 - 3.1.2. Early turnaround phase (successful process).
 - 3.1.3. Implications for growth phase.
4. Learning history methodology.
 - 4.1. Phase I: Researching/synthesizing the history.
 - 4.2. *Phase II: Internal dissemination. *I will be delighted to participate, in coordination with [the HR Director] and others within CT, Inc., in this phase of the process, however, this proposal is limited to the work of Phase I.
5. Organizational benefits of a learning history (see information pasted below).
 - 5.1. Internal learning via process history.
 - 5.2. Database for journal articles.
 - 5.3. Academic interest exists in process of conducting learning histories (it's a methodology under development/examination).
6. Tentative focus of journal article/s.
 - 6.1. Systems account of decoupling of Waverider/e-Rider.
 - 6.2. Strategic visioning in a competitive environment (specific to CT, Inc. or generic-- depends on sensitivity of content).
 - 6.3. Leadership (possibly CTO to CEO to scientist-CEO as Roger suggested, we'll have to discuss further).
7. Things to be determined.
 - 7.1. Other items you would like me to include in proposal.
 - 7.2. Project timeframe.
 - 7.3. Possible internal staff involvement.
 - 7.4. Support for interview transcription.

APPENDIX A

(continued)

Scope of the Proposed Project

The project will provide CT, Inc. with objective documentation of a successful organizational change initiative: the decoupling of Waverider from e-Rider. Because of its make or break historical role, the story of the decoupling process will shed light broadly on many aspects of the organization beyond the product decoupling and will provide data-based information for current and future organizational change initiatives.

Second, the internal organizational learning document will provide a database for writing journal articles to submit to publications like the National Productivity Review, The Systems Thinker, and other similar academic and professional journals.

The scope of the proposed project will not include follow-up activities such as assisting with the presentation and dissemination of project results.

Project Benefits:

Understanding the why's and how's of CT, Inc.'s success will benefit the company by:

- More effectively targeting training and other organizational change/development initiatives based on the current reality and gaps.
- More effective training so employees will understand and implement strategies better.
- Providing an objective measure of the gap between the present and desired states on a number of organizational variables like, but not limited to:
 - alignment of vision and culture,
 - current perception of the role and importance of Waverider-related production goals,
 - current operational understanding of the corporate vision,
 - the future role of e-Rider,
 - the sense of urgency or “survival anxiety,”
 - the sense of psychological safety to innovate, etc.
- Help CT, Inc.'s leadership understand and build upon its success:
 - changing the culture, and
 - leveraging existing cultural strengths.
- Identify where and under what conditions change has been easiest and hardest to effect.

APPENDIX A

(continued)

Writing on CT, Inc. as a model of organizational learning will:

- Define CT, Inc. as an organization that models leadership and organizational effectiveness in addition to being profitable.
- Reinforce CT, Inc. as a “statesman” organization in which profits and principles coexist.
- Tangibly reinforce CT, Inc.’s vision for creating a campus environment.
- Expose CT, Inc. to a new academic and professional arena.

Data Collection:

A series of 10-15 interviews will be conducted with employees at all levels of the organization, both in Houston and San Jose, who were involved in and/or are familiar with the decoupling project. Interviews will capture the views of top leaders, project managers, project team members, as well as employees in sales, marketing, and other areas of the organization. The following will be needed from CT, Inc.:

- A list of 10-15 interviewees who reflect a cross-section of the organization in terms of level in the organization and location.
- Access to ½ to 1 hour of each employee’s time to conduct interviews.
- Internal partners to:
 - Identify interviewees,
 - Schedule interviews,
 - Provide historical background reports and other relevant written materials, and
 - Review the compiled decoupling story for accuracy and completeness.

Services and Deliverables:

My role will be to plan and provide the following services:

- Develop an interview protocol based on the learning history methodology developed by MIT’s Center for Organizational Learning.
- Conduct interviews in San Jose and Houston.
- Compile a draft report synthesizing the interview results.
- Coordinate the final synthesis with internal partners to assure completeness and accuracy.
- Revise and produce the final report on the decoupling process.
- Deliver the written report to the designated internal recipient.

APPENDIX A

(continued)

The deliverables of this project will be:

- A written learning history document that will include:
 - The story of the Waverider/e-Rider decoupling.
 - A gap analysis of some of the variables outlined in the third bullet of the above section, “How Will CT, Inc. Benefit from this Project?”.
- Article/s to submit for publication in academic and professional journal/s.

Organizational Support Provided by CT, Inc:

The following organizational involvement will be needed:

- Access to interviewees’ time.
- Commitment of time for internal partner/s to review and add to the compiled story and to review the draft report.
- Internal assistance with scheduling and logistical coordination in San Jose and Houston.

Financial Support Provided by CT, Inc:

My time and expertise for the project outlined above will be provided to CT, Inc. at no charge. CT, Inc. will cover project expenses, including:

- Transportation and lodgings:
 - Airfares.
 - Local travel in San Jose and Houston.
 - Lodgings and meals in San Jose and Houston.
- Project expenses:
 - Transcription of interview tapes.
 - Postage and other delivery costs.

APPENDIX A

(continued)

Schedule:

The timeframe will be determined based on availability and constraints in San Jose, Houston and Madison. Tapes will be delivered for transcription immediately following completion of the interview process. The initial draft report will be presented to CT, Inc. approximately four months after the transcriptions are received. Journal articles will be written following completion and approval of the final learning history report.

Confidentiality:

The final OLH document will be given to Andrew Meyer, CEO, and Mr. Roger Smith, Corporate Affairs Officer.

To protect the anonymity of interviewees, interview tapes will be destroyed following transcription. Employees will not be identified by name in any of the drafts or in the final written report presented to CT, Inc.

Manuscripts of journal articles will be provided to Mr. Smith for review of accuracy and confidentiality prior to submission for publication.

APPENDIX A
(continued)

OLH Interview Guide

1. How long have you been with CT, Inc.?
2. Where you before that?
3. How did you get involved with the decoupling project?
4. What was the most significant aspect of the decoupling for you?
5. Did it meet your expectations?
6. Did you think it would when it started?
7. What was the turning point?
8. I read that there was a production goal of one new Waverider related product release per month. What has that been like?
9. I understand the decoupling was attempted unsuccessfully first and then successfully the second time. Why was it first unsuccessful and then successful?
10. Could it happen now? What would that be like?
11. What is Waverider's strategic role now?
12. Is there a comparable effort going on right now?

APPENDIX B—Appreciative Inquiry Principles and Process Model

Note to Readers: These materials have been adapted over time from various published (all are included in Works Cited) and unpublished resources, as well as my own work.

Core Principles

WHOLENESS—Considered to be an over-arching principle. Wholeness is an antidote to dichotomous thinking and the “silo mentality,” that are antithetical to teamliness, collaboration, sustainability, and growth. By engaging all stakeholders in the AI process (or, if that is not possible, a broad cross-section representing all key stakeholder groups), people begin to see the inter-connectedness of all parts of the organization. Jane Magruder Watkins and Ralph Kelly state: “AI unleashes imagination and provides a process for human beings to join together and experience the idea that ‘Wholes precede parts!’ as articulated in the book *Presence* (Senge et al., 2005). They site a biographer of Albert Einstein who wrote, “He retained the ability to hold two thoughts in his mind simultaneously, to be puzzled when they conflicted and to delight when he saw an underlying unity.”

CONSTRUCTIONIST--This principle is considered the anchor of the others, and of AI process design. Constructionism suggests that meaning and truth in worldly life are not absolutes; they are always being constructed. We create what we can imagine. We negotiate new meaning about reality through the conversations we have; “words create worlds.” Thus, meaning is co-created through a relational process of dialog. Every person, in-group, culture, society... creates shared meanings through experiences and social relationships. Conflicts and adversarial relationships often take root when groups assume that others share the same meanings that they do: that their meanings are universal. When groups co-create shared meanings and visions, people feel appreciated, highly engaged, and invested from the beginning. Often, when groups engage in dialog, they co-create “both-and” meanings that embrace differences. Rather than moving apart towards entrenched dichotomous views, they move towards wholeness and inclusive, systemic thinking.

POSITIVE--Focus on the positive; what pulls individuals and organizations forward rather than what pushes them back, or repels them toward polarities. Energy should flow in a positive direction if what we construct is to be a better place. Positivity (Fredrickson, 2009) is a choice to leverage and build from the half of the glass that is full. This is based on a growing body of research in the burgeoning field of Positive Psychology. In healthcare, it has been shown that placebos can produce positive change when the subject believes that it will benefit them. Early studies in education also showed that if a teacher holds a positive image of what students are capable of, those students are likely to achieve at a higher level than those whose teacher holds a

APPENDIX B (continued)

negative view. (In the early research, the students were randomly assigned to the two classes.) Recently, Barbara Fredrickson has conducted clinical research supporting a strong correlation between positive emotions and generativity, openness, creativity, and other higher brain functions. Likewise, she has found that negative emotions engage lower brain functions (amygdala, “reptilian” brain), resulting in actions and reactions that are defensive, closed, rigid, etc. This is referred to in AI literature as “Positive Image – Positive Action.”

ANTICIPATORY--This is related to the Positive Principle and the impact of the positive image on positive action. If a person, or people in a system search for problems, they are most likely to adopt a deficit mindset and to discover gaps and deficiencies. They develop a negative mental model of the organization and its capabilities. If, on the other hand, they hold a positive image of the possible, and look for strengths and capacities, they are likely to find strengths, capabilities, and possibilities. They develop a positive mental model of the same organization. (See the historic Cleveland Clinic case on the Appreciative Inquiry Commons.) Our imagination about the future is our most important resource in bringing about change.

SIMULTANEITY--Within AI, it is said that “the first question is fateful,” and that “inquiry moves in the direction of the first question asked.” This means that the act of inquiry (asking questions) creates change. When researchers or consultants enter an organization asking about what is broken, they are likely to leave the organization worse off than when they entered it. (This works well for consultants who like to create dependence rather than building capacity.) Likewise, when individuals and organization identify their core strengths and shared values, hopes, and aspirations, they feel empowered, hold a higher opinion of themselves and others, and feel inspired toward positive action. For example, the act of completing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis leaves my clients feeling weighed down by the negative and immobilized. When I help them do a SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results), they feel hopeful and energized, and can see solutions.

POETIC--This principle is about the value of eliciting stories. Storytelling is a way to gather holistic information and engage in shared meaning-making. There is a choice to be made about what kind of stories to look for: facts, feelings, affect—what a person experiences. Stories can be told about any aspect of an organization’s existence: past, present, future. Stories are the storehouses and artifacts of life, relationships, and meaning. Humans naturally store and communicate experiences and meanings through stories. Cultures that lose their stories and storytellers lose their history, positive core, and often their language and their sustainability. Conversely, people in dysfunctional organizations can rebuild strong cultures by co-creating new, generative narratives about what they are, can, and will be.

APPENDIX B

(continued)

Appreciative Inquiry Five Core Processes

1. **DEFINE / INITIATE**

Decide what to learn about and create the inquiry process. Key decisions and actions at this stage are: (a) Top leaders agree on the affirmative topic or strategic purpose and focus of the AI process, (b) train a core group of AI facilitators, (c) determine an internal guidance and support structure for the process, and (d) create a customized interview guide and plan for the inquiry process.

2. **DISCOVER / INQUIRE**

Conduct an inquiry into the topic: (a) Inquire into stories of life giving forces, (b) assemble the stories, and (c) locate themes that appear in the stories.

3. **DREAM / IMAGINE**

Once the themes are identified, the group generalize those discoveries into an image of how the organization would function if what you have discovered were fully alive in the present. The image is put into words that create a “macro provocative proposition” or “possibility statement,” – a verbal description of the whole organization at its best.

4. **DESIGN / INNOVATE**

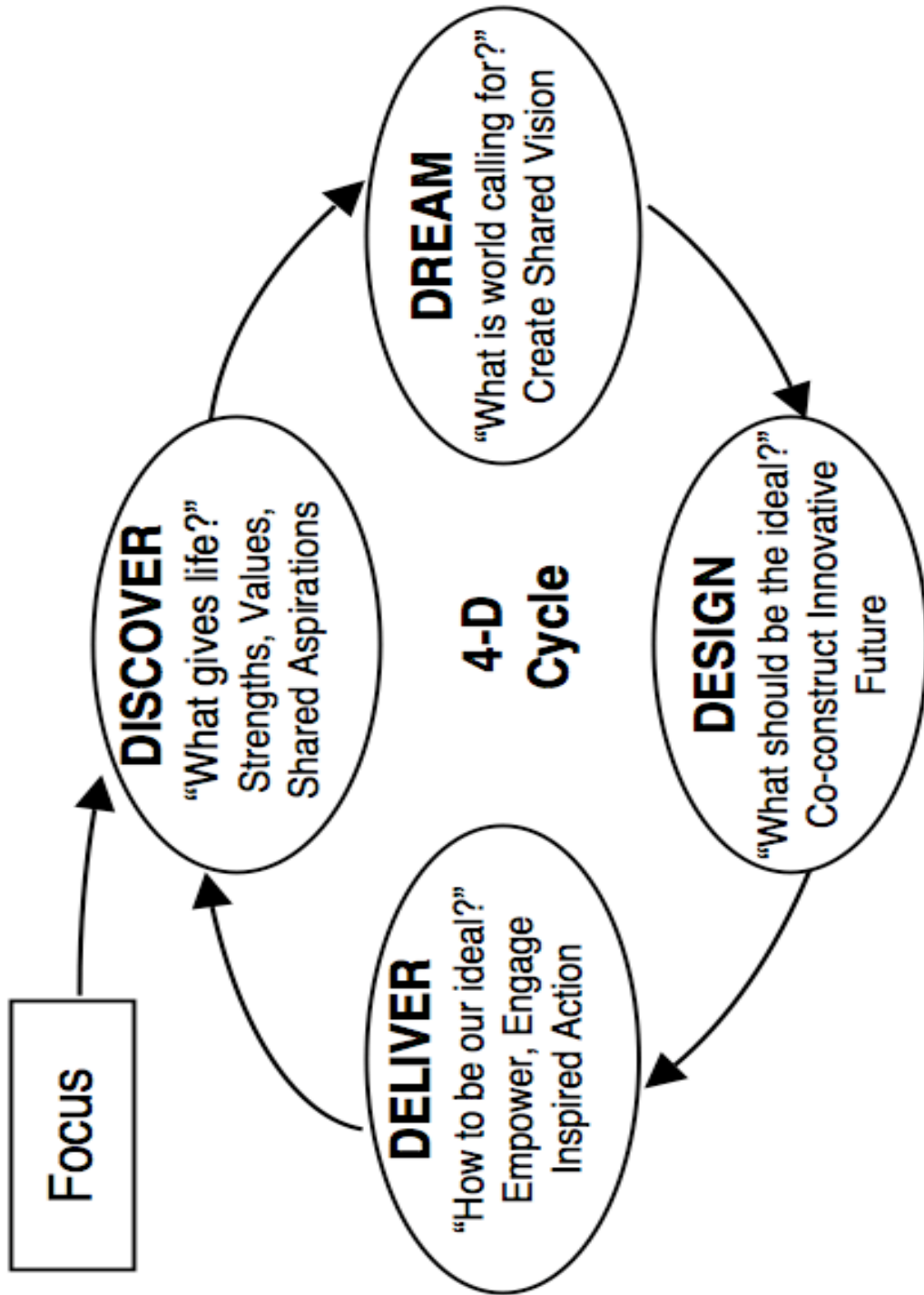
Using the images and possibility statements as a guide, the group develops ideas and images of how the organization could be structured (the organization’s socio-technical architecture) to reflect the best of what has been discovered and created in the previous phases. The group develops ideas about the organization’s socio-technical architecture when infused with what has been discovered.

5. **DESTINY / IMPLEMENT**

To complete the circle, the whole organization begins to innovate to align the organization’s socio-technical architecture (teams, processes, structures, etc.) with the proposed socio-technical structures that came out of the Dream and the Design phases. At the same time, this phase focused on building AI learning competencies into the system so that the AI process is imbedded in the fabric of the organization and becomes “the way we do our work.”

APPENDIX B
(continued)

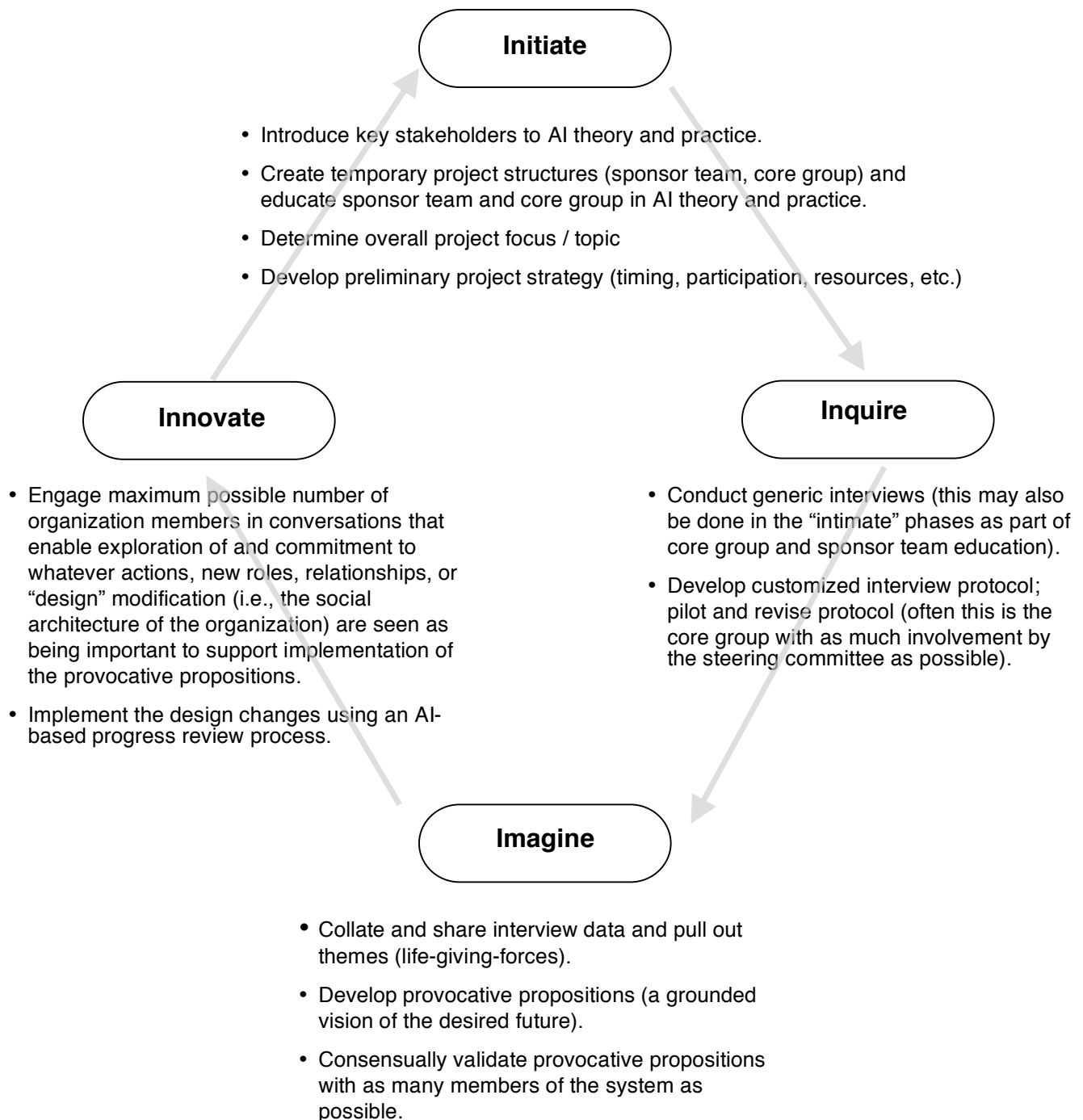
Classic 4-D Appreciative Inquiry Process Model



APPENDIX B (continued)

4-I Alternative to 4/5-DModel

Adapted from Bernard Mohr and Mette Jacobsgaard, www.mdf.nl/index.php/page/235



APPENDIX C—Organizational Learning History Backgrounder

(As it appeared on Society for Organizational Learning website in 1999, <http://www.sol-ne.org/res/wp/18004.html>.)

A learning history process emphasizes capturing and reporting "noticeable results." "Noticeable results" are a connection to the performance implication of learning. When an organization achieves something that meets or exceeds expectations - improving business results, implementing policy changes, altering behavior patterns and so on - that is evidence of important changes.

A Learning History is an approach which: 1) applies the assessment of an organizational change initiative through 2) an effort to develop the capability of the people in the change process to evaluate their program and its progress, in the service of 3) creating materials that will help to diffuse their learning to other interested parties. In combining these three elements of learning history work, we create a feedback cycle at an organizational level. Assessment to capability-development to evaluation and back to assessment becomes a process of organizational reflection that leads to the development of actionable knowledge (Argyris, 1993). Actionable knowledge, in this context, represents both the "know-how" and "know why" that guides people's actions so that they can consistently produce the results they set out to achieve.

Learning histories are a formalized approach for capturing and presenting learning processes in organizations. Over the course of conducting learning histories in business organizations, the following seven stage process has helped create a feedback cycle that encourages reflection on both the change initiative being studied and the specific application of the learning history process in that organization.

First, a planning stage delineates the range and scope of the document as well as the audience which is seeking to learn from the organization's experience. The noticeable results of the improvement effort are specified in the planning stage. Linking noticeable results with an improvement effort becomes an area of inquiry for the subsequent reflective conversation interviews. Including people in the planning process develops a capacity in the organization being studied to plan and conduct descriptive evaluations.

Second, there are a series of retrospective, reflective conversational interviews with participants in a learning effort (along with key outsiders), taking pains to gather perspective from every significant point of view. The interviewing process itself develops the skill for reflective conversations and the benefits that can provide for the organization.

Third, a small group of internal staff members and outsider learning historians "distills" the raw material (from reflective conversation interviews, documents, observations, and

APPENDIX C (continued)

so on) into a coherent set of themes with relevance for those seeking to learn from the effort. This analytic effort, based on techniques of qualitative data analysis and the development of grounded theory, builds capacity for making sense of and evaluating improvement efforts.

Fourth, a document is written based on a thematic orientation, which includes extensive use of and editing of narrative from interviews. These quotes are fact-checked with participants before they are distributed in any written material (even though they will be anonymous in all drafts). The writing and fact-checking process continues to build the capacity of people in the organization to describe and present its improvement process, and in the course of checking facts and themes, provides an additional opportunity for reflection.

Fifth, a small key group of managers, participants in the original effort and others interested in learning from their efforts, attend a validation workshop after reading the learning history prototype. This validation workshop allows those that participated in the improvement effort to reflect on and review for accuracy the material and their presentation in the learning history, as well as observe how others respond to the formal description of their efforts.

Sixth, the learning history document becomes the basis for a series of dissemination workshops. In the dissemination workshops people throughout the company consider the questions: What has the company learned so far from this program? How do we judge its success (or lack of success)? And how do we, and how does the company, build on what can be learned to best move forward in other initiatives?

Seventh, after a series of dissemination workshops, we conduct a review of the learning history effort itself, gathering data on the influence the learning history data gathering, analysis, writing, validation and dissemination process had in other improvement efforts. In this review, the people in the organization develop their abilities to conduct learning history efforts and consider how future efforts can improve upon and adapt a learning history process for their own specific needs.

In the process of creating a learning history, researchers seek to help participants assess and evaluate their efforts. Participants' assessments and evaluations of learning efforts are developed by conducting reflective interview conversations. In individual and group interviews the learning historian asks participants to describe what has been accomplished and consider what role they and others had in those and other achievements. These interviews are recorded so that participants' narrative can be later used as the data for documenting the learning process.

APPENDIX D—Final Project Report

Author's Note

The executive summary and recommendations that follow are based on findings that extend beyond the initial focus of this project. As such, its contents are built on both vague and pronounced impressions developed during the course of the 35 interviews I conducted in February and March in Houston and San Jose and the earlier exploratory visit in July.

My research protocol and the list of interviewees initially focused on the Waverider/e-Rider decoupling. It was to be a narrowly focused historical tale. Fortunately, the focus evolved well beyond that when the original interview list was “augmented.” When that happened I was not given many clues but was set deep into the middle of an organizational mystery that some have also described as a maelstrom.

This report, therefore, is my “fly-by-the-seat-of-the-skirt” effort (without benefit of the interview transcriptions) to quickly and boldly present some nutshell impressions and recommendations on the broader issue of organizational culture.

I feel confident of my basic findings and impressions as well as the general recommendations included here. I am not sure, however, of the implications and full meanings or intricacies of some of the “facts” upon which my findings are based. Please note also that I am not sure if I have used the most effective labels to connote those who manage production (“producers”) and those who engineer and envision new products (“developers”). I was careful to steer away from terms connected to values or related to technical titles that are not mutually exclusive across work styles. I do not know if I was successful in that effort.

I hope you find this report helpful and informative. I hope too that you will respond with suggestions for improving the final draft and for framing the final supporting report.

Jody

APPENDIX D (continued)

Project Findings: Waverider/ e-Rider Decoupling Project Story
Presented by Jody Siegel on March 24, 2000

Introduction

CT, Inc. has gone through a miraculous turnaround. Within the engineering organization strong top-down leadership and the infusion of tenacious production-oriented management leveraged the company's innovative technical capacity to snatch the company from the jaws of impending death. The turnaround was basically tactical in nature. CT, Inc.'s immediate concern was winning a number of consecutive tactical victories as much inside the organization as outside in order to regain credibility in the marketplace and particularly with its traditional customer base. Meeting quarterly production goals was both the driving vision and the chief motivating force fueling the turnaround.

One of the most important and most overlooked and under leveraged victories of the turnaround has been the clear sense of shared aspirations among the federation or triad of corporate leaders, developers, and producers. Regardless of their affiliation as managers, engineers, product developers, production managers, etc., all of the CT, Inc. employees with whom I spoke share a profound and deeply held sense of commitment, hopefulness and belief in the company's mission and its top leaders. All genuinely want the company to prosper and grow.

Focus, Focus, Focus...

My recommendations for organizational change are based on the creation of a federation or triad. I recommend that you focus your efforts around the following three themes and structures:

4. Identifying and developing talented production managers, visionary product developers, and unifying broker leaders.
5. Designing and re-engineering work groups to enable the brokering of innovative product development and goal-directed production and execution efforts.

APPENDIX D (continued)

Reviewing and revising existing processes by which work is planned (Product Plan of Record, roadmaps, etc.), outcomes are measured (performance standards, production goals, etc.), and contributions are recognized/rewarded to reinforce the federation of development and production orientations and tactical goals with the strategic vision.

Divisive competition should be directed toward external rather than internal competitors. Creative tensions will always exist but these are healthy, albeit sometimes messy. “Robbing Peter to pay Bob” is a set-up for internal hemorrhaging and costly attrition. This is most notable in the current inability of employees to transfer to new initiatives within CT, Inc. without burning bridges and in the way R&D functions are performed.

Shifting Gears

Shifting from turnaround to growth has not been an easy black to white, tactical to strategic, production to innovation proposition at CT, Inc. Creating an organizational culture at CT, Inc. that sustains growth will require striking a balance between numerous opposing forces already discussed (product development and product execution; tactical and strategic thinking; managing and leading; etc.) and leveraging creative tensions for growth and innovation.

Several key changes must occur for this to happen:

- At the level of the individuals who make up the organization, gifted producers, developers, and brokers must be recognized, developed, and valued equitably.
- A federation among current polarized forces (product developers and producers) should be brokered and sustained to create a region of creative tension and growth.
- The dependence on a few technology and production heroes must shift to a sense of self-reliance, leadership, and personal mastery.
- CT, Inc.’s top leaders must articulate and effectively communicate a clear strategic vision to employees at all levels of the organization.
- These efforts should build upon and reinforce the strongly shared aspirations and loyalties that already exist in the company.

APPENDIX D (continued)

Soldiers at the Front, Two Teams and the Bench, and other Relevant Clichés...

Currently at CT, Inc. two groups of players predominate: the producers and the developers. Both appear to be rallied at the front waiting for credible marching orders. Both seem to have a sense of uncertainty about the future, although the producers seem more comfortable with the current status quo. The developers have adopted a wait-and-see attitude. Of these, those who value security and the Texas lifestyle are hoping to stay on. Those without ties to Texas and who are motivated more by creative challenges than by job security are bailing.

The production managers and the product developers seem locked in an historical drama in which they endlessly vie for predominance. Currently, the producers have a distinct and noticeable advantage. A third group, the potential brokers, is in the game but its members are mostly on the bench or, because of their quiet mediating efforts, they tend not to be found in the spotlight. They are the ones who move the ball up the court and gain strategic advantage but don't necessarily score the big dunk, nor do they throw the ball away. They are essential to growth and essentially overlooked.

The Current Culture: Two Sub-Cultures and a Group of Outliers

In its history CT, Inc. has swung from one extreme to the other in terms of favoring these two leadership styles. Before the turnaround the product development culture was predominant. In the last eighteen months to two years, the product execution culture has predominated. Some have described CT, Inc. as a pendulum that swings wildly from one extreme to the other but never seems to find balance.

Thus far I have alluded to three broad categories of employees who appear most evident at CT, Inc.:

The Producers

The producers have been and are essential for upholding the core values espoused by company leaders and for conserving, maintaining, and managing the logical step-by-step production processes. They have the ability to move products from premise to conclusion. Prescribed road maps and extrinsic rewards motivate them. If a corporate vision is not clearly articulated in a way that makes sense to them, they will uphold the set of values that are most consistent with what they believe to be the highest set of moral values and those that they believe *should* be held by the current leaders.

APPENDIX D (continued)

The Developers

The product developers historically have been and continue to be essential for technical innovation. They have the ability to focus on abstract possibilities and are driven by complex technical visions. Developer/innovators need to be intuiting, creating, and figuring out problems. If a corporate vision is not clearly articulated to them by leaders they consider credible, they will follow their own complex visions. Currently, they are feeling disenfranchised and uncertain about the viability of their future with CT, Inc.

The Brokers

The brokers, on the other hand, are the diplomats and unifiers of the organization, organizational units, groups, and sub-groups. In the context of cross-functional work teams, they are the team builders and diplomats who communicate and engender trust among all players, regardless of their individual identifications and affiliations. They have the potential to build productive, creative teams. In the absence of a clear corporate vision they tend to do their work quietly and loyally and are woefully underutilized to the great detriment of the organization as a whole.

As essential as product execution is to sustainable growth, so too is a steady and ready flow of market-driven innovation. CT, Inc. must create a culture in which the production and creative capacities of all employees are maximized and constantly re-channeled back into the organization. Gifted product developers and innovators tend not to be the same people who are gifted in product execution and vice versa. In fact, their values, work styles, and all the artifacts of their preferred cultural constructs come close to being polar opposites. *No matter what one group or culture may think of the other, both are essential for growth and neither can function effectively in the long-term without the other. By failing to acknowledge this basic force of nature, CT, Inc. is squandering its potential to lead in the marketplace.*

A Void of Vision

Tactical objectives for meeting quarterly production goals have filled the void of a clearly articulated, universally communicated corporate strategic vision. This worked as a short-term tactic during the crisis mode turnaround, but it is proving ineffective in building and maintaining the balanced human capacity that is needed to sustain growth. Furthermore, the bureaucratic, top-down management style that was necessary to sharply steer the course of the turnaround now is stifling growth and development. The recent attrition of a number of highly innovative and creative employees, difficulty

APPENDIX D (continued)

moving products out of the pipeline and into the marketplace, and general difficulty positioning and supporting R&D-related functions and thinking styles that often have unpredictable timelines and don't easily conform to quarterly production goals are evidence of this trend.

The void of unifying leadership and incentives to pull these forces closer together toward creative union are allowing the natural tensions that exist between these groups to push them apart. Growth can be sustained only by maximizing the region of intersection. This will require the constant flow of unifying forces into all work processes. Initially, this will need to be modeled and set in motion from the top. If these efforts are scrupulously linked to strategic efforts and corporate values through a constant mantra of federation, the forces of unity will move further and further down into the organization.

Additional Recommendations

9. Find the most meaningful labels to attach to the three groups defined in this report. In my interviews the most positive terms I heard were technology and production leaders. Fewer identified the brokers but many groped for some way of describing these individuals and many recognized that they do exist within the organization.
10. Define and articulate the key values these forms of leadership embody. Publicly acknowledge both the critical functions/roles these performed in the turnaround and why each is essential to growth. All definitions should be pronounced from the top.
11. Identify leaders among each of these three broadly defined categories. Although this may be done via personality testing, like the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory, I think self-identification would be just as effective if the categories all are clearly valued by the executive leadership. (It is evident from the interviews that employees know who these people are and are comfortable with this type of categorizing as long as equal values and the promise for equitable rewards are attached.)
12. Identify the company's relevant core processes (Product Plan of Record, Roadmaps, rewards/recognition, performance measures, etc.). Review and restructure these as needed to more broadly promote and recognize the federation/triad of leadership styles, work functions, and contributions required for sustainable growth.

APPENDIX D (continued)

Review relevant core processes for redundancy and potential elimination of bureaucratic controls that were necessary during the turnaround but slow growth-mode decision-making.

13. Andrew Meyer currently is viewed more as the company's technology hero than as its corporate leader. (Bill Keith was referred to during my interviews as the company's "production hero.") Expectations exist that Andrew will ride into Houston and magically set things straight. He should not do this. At least in the short-term, however, he does need to be a stronger presence in Houston to clearly empower leaders and set behavioral expectations so that employees further down in the organization will become more effective problem solvers and leaders. If he favors one of the identified groups over another, tensions will increase with fears of disenfranchisement. He needs to set clear expectations for cooperation and federation. And business processes and reward/recognition systems need to reinforce his actions.
14. Technology and Production leaders have been identified at the top ranks of the organization. It does not appear to me that top broker leader/s have been identified. Doing so will be key to modeling what this type of person is like. Furthermore, these top leaders should consciously model the growth triad. Bill Keith's promotion to COO was an excellent step in this direction.
15. Institute more bottom-up communications of the corporate vision and values. I did not observe an employee newsletter or any other universally recognized internal organ for communication. If one does not exist it should be created. And if it does, it should be used and promoted as a means for communicating broadly to employees at all levels of the organization.

Although this was well beyond the scope of my study, I am concerned that the pipeline segregates and marginalizes the company's R&D efforts. Operationally, the pipeline appears to take talent out of the mainstream of the organization. Not only does the core problem not change this way (i.e., integrating both innovation and production), but the R&D function is not addressed effectively.

APPENDIX E—Reflections of the Learning Historian for CEO Briefing

1. Waverider was a successful project in spite of the organization.
2. Waverider represented the sort of organizational structure that is needed for innovation. It is messy and dynamic. The current structure is static. Innovation cannot occur in the current structure.
3. Bill over reacted by pulling Joe and the GEBco commandants into the process.
4. CT, Inc. suffered from a lack of business processes.
5. The innovators were doing the work of innovating. There wasn't any system for capturing and executing their work.
6. River was a success largely because it was given adequate resources and attention.
7. The organizational structure under Bill's [same executive as above] command has become autocratic, bureaucratic and antithetical to innovation.
8. Bill [same executive as above] does not listen or value the sorts of people who CT, Inc. needs in order to innovate. I agree that his tactics are "fascist" in nature. He will kill the company.
9. Dennis Fine [another executive] is a command and control leader. He cannot function in an innovation-focused organization.
10. You hold back.
 - You are the sort of leader that is needed in an innovative organization.
 - For some reason, you hold back.
 - You are risk averse.
 - You need to follow your intuitions.
 - Your intuitions about people are right on track.
 - You have given over too much control to autocrats like Bill and Dave Shi.
 - Perhaps you are straight-jacketed in the wrong kind of organization and you need to get out.

The Texas [geographic] culture may reinforce all this, but I think it has more to do with personalities. There are as many [redacted] [geographic group] who see these problems as don't.

APPENDIX F—Statement of Introduction and Confidentiality Agreement

Jody Siegel, M.S., M.S.B.A. Reflective Analyst/Learning Historian

In cooperation with Andrew Meyer and CT, Inc., I will be documenting the recent organizational story of the Waverider/e-Rider decoupling project. Harold Moss, Chief of Staff, CT, Inc. Products and Marketing, Alan Davis, Director of Strategic Market Planning, and Lynn Stephens, Director of Organizational Learning, are assisting as project partners.

I am a writer, organizational learning researcher, and administrator with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Mr. Meyer has invited me to interview CT, Inc. employees in Houston and San Jose and pull together the story. Earlier this month I conducted twenty interviews in Houston. In March I will return and will continue conducting interviews both in Houston and San Jose. After completing the interviews, I will write a report called a "Learning History." It is possible that I may publish one or two articles as well in a journal like the National Productivity Review or something else within the organizational learning/systems thinking communities.

Purpose of the Project:

Goals of the project are to provide CT, Inc. with a documented oral history of a successful organizational change effort so that the organizational learning is not lost. Such reports are used to spark internal discussion about how past learning may be integrated into present and future efforts. Evaluation is not a goal of the project; learning is. I will be focusing my research on the human and organizational sides of the story rather than on the technology.

Confidentiality:

All quotes will be completely anonymous and all interviewees will have the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews for accuracy. Interview tapes will be destroyed after transcription and all typed transcripts will be free of any identifying information. The final paper will meticulously protect the confidentiality of the speakers but will tell the history of the project from the participants' voices and points of view. I will simply serve as the outside observer and listener and will document and synthesize the story, identifying underlying themes.

Background of the Learning Historian:

I hold undergraduate and graduate degrees in biological sciences from universities in the Washington, DC, area and a Master's Degree in Business Administration and Organizational Theory from Bucknell University. I have taught and held administrative posts at several universities and have also served as a process and management analyst with public and private organizations.