

Antioch University

AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive

All Antioch University Dissertations & Theses

Antioch University Dissertations and Theses

2022

From Me to We: A Phenomenological Inquiry Into Group Beingness

Stacey K. Guenther

Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aura.antioch.edu/etds>



Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#), [Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons](#), [Organization Development Commons](#), [Other Religion Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Guenther, S. K. (2022). From Me to We: A Phenomenological Inquiry Into Group Beingness. <https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/757>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Antioch University Dissertations and Theses at AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Antioch University Dissertations & Theses by an authorized administrator of AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive. For more information, please contact hhale@antioch.edu.

FROM ME TO WE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO GROUP BEINGNESS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Graduate School of Leadership & Change
Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Stacey K. Guenther

ORCID Scholar No. 0000-0003-2327-4672

November 2021

FROM ME TO WE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO GROUP BEINGNESS

This dissertation, by Stacey K. Guenther, has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of
Graduate School of Leadership & Change
Antioch University
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dissertation Committee:

Donna Ladkin, PhD, Chairperson

Jon Wergin, PhD

Judi Neal, PhD

Copyright © 2022 by Stacey K. Guenther
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

FROM ME TO WE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO GROUP BEINGNESS

Stacey K. Guenther

Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Yellow Springs, OH

To be human is to be a member of myriad groups. The universality of groups in our lives poses an important area of study for social scientists investigating human flourishing. Additionally, inquiring into the evolutionary potential of groups may begin to inform new ways of addressing the intractable issues we face as a human species. While most empirical studies of groups focus on group performance, or group doingness, this study explored group beingness and the experience of manifesting deep union and oneness, which is an intersubjective phenomenon that has been called coherence. Intersubjective coherence is often written about from a theoretical and conceptual perspective, as well as from a practice perspective, but it has rarely been investigated empirically. This interpretive phenomenological investigation of coherence inquired into the phenomenon through the facilitation of two group coherence treatments immediately followed by group interviews. The study's design enabled the exploration of coherence from the intersubjective perspective, allowing for participants to make meaning of their coherence experiences in community. Findings revealed what it was like for participants to experience coherence, how the groups shifted into coherence, and the antecedents and outcomes associated with coherence. Additionally, five meta-themes, *Direct Experience of Interbeing*, *Constructive Disorientation*, *Co-sensing*, *Metalogue*, and *Best Me, Best We*, were identified revealing a broader context as well as the ways in which the participants made meaning of the experiences.

A key outcome of the study was an empirically-based definition of coherence: coherence is a group-level phenomenon wherein members experience a collective shift into a heightened state of connectedness marked by a quieting, slowing, and calming of the group climate, an activation of an enlivened intersubjective field, and a calling forth for members' best selves resulting in an acceptance and celebration of differences among members. The shift is aided by skillful means, and members are able to process and make sense of the experience through somatic, emotional, spiritual, and creative ways of knowing. Coherence experiences are often accompanied by individual and collective awakenings. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (<https://aura.antioch.edu>) and OhioLINK ETD Center (<https://etd.ohiolink.edu>).

Keywords: coherence, intersubjective, groups, group development, beingness, transpersonal, consciousness, ways of knowing, sensing, co-sensing, facilitation, mindfulness, contemplative practices, meditation, collective, leadership, change, transformation, awakening

Dedication

To the Evolutionaries who came before me—
Pioneering Scholars, Spiritual Sages, and Courageous Practitioners—
whose footprints created the path on which I now walk.

Acknowledgements

It takes a village to write a dissertation, and I wish to thank my village for supporting me through this journey. Without the care, prayers, enthusiasm, and encouragement, it would not have been possible for me to complete the process of writing, researching, analyzing, and writing some more. Thank you and a deep bow of gratitude.

My husband, Dana, has been an amazing partner throughout these four and a half years and has been almost as excited as I have been to be working toward a PhD. He made it possible for me to engage in my work by taking home obligations and commitments off my plate without question. He has listened to my endless sensemaking and simply held space as I talked it out again and again. His encouragement for me to keep going, even through moves, illness, and pandemic, has been the fuel in my tank. His love and caretaking have been astounding, beautiful, and so very appreciated.

My mother, Joy, set the stage for my work by being a strong, working woman who believed in higher education. She has been a supporter, encourager, and enthusiast throughout this process, always interested in what I was working on and learning. She was the first person, outside of my committee, to read my dissertation, and for that alone, I am grateful. I celebrate with her being the first woman in her family to earn a PhD.

My dissertation committee has been a source of inspiration, wisdom, and joy throughout this process. The importance of the relational aspect of this process cannot be underestimated with laughter being an essential ingredient. All three members are brilliant beyond measure and provided a safe and dynamic container that aided my success.

Dr. Donna Ladkin is a beautiful human being in addition to being a brilliant leadership scholar with a philosopher's heart and an enthusiastic, experienced phenomenologist and arts-based methodologist. Her gentle, calm presence, along with copious amounts of laughter and good cheer for the past three years, has been a balm for my soul. She is truly the Yoda of dissertations, always sharing wisdom, encouragement, and criticism exactly where needed. I cannot imagine this process without her and could not have made it through the process without her. She saw something that I did not see in myself, and that is the hallmark of a truly great leader.

Dr. Jon Wergin was a favorite faculty member from day one of my doctoral course of study because his thoughtful, reflective approach to the subject matter always pulled me in. His sense of humor is equal parts intelligent, clever, and wicked, and in my book, there is nothing better. His encouragement of and interest in what I wanted to study came at a crucial time. Our discussions in the past two years, particularly on his prophetic book, *Deep Learning in a Disorienting World* (2020), have been treasured and memorable.

Dr. Judi Neal shared that mine is the last dissertation committee she will sit on, and for that, I am truly honored. As my external committee member, she has been an amazing source of connections, resources, and different ways of seeing my materials. Without her encouragement, I would not have endeavored to do this study in a virtual space. She told me it was possible, and she was so very right. When she encouraged me to cohere with my data, it was just one of the many times she spoke my language and helped me to succeed.

For my coding team, Dr. Greta Creech and Dr. Amy Huntereece, thank you for your time and insights. Without you, it is possible that the meta-themes would not have surfaced. Your input was invaluable.

For the many conversations, ideas, and enthusiasm, I am grateful for James R. Jones, whose knowledge, wisdom, and guru-ship provided me with so much fodder and grist for the mill. Sensemaking with James toward the end of the process resulted in a number of the meta-themes' names and the additional resources that were needed to support my findings

Dr. Olen Gunnlaugson served as my mentor for a brief time before I entered candidacy, and I appreciate the vast list of references and resources he provided. His knowledge in this area propelled me forward.

The Academy of Management's Management, Spirituality, and Religion special interest group selected me as one of the 2021 MSR Fetzer Scholars, providing me with membership and access to a network of scholars interested in similar research areas. Additionally, an award for being named as having one of the top three Promising Dissertation Proposals supported my dissertation process.

Drs. Elizabeth Debold and Thomas Steininger, of One World in Dialogue, taught two trainings in dialogue and cultivating online coherence the practices from which formed the core of the facilitated sessions. They provided the trainings on a donation basis, which I found uncommonly generous.

The Presencing Institute provided numerous trainings, materials, and a research community with which I could interact, all of which helped me to form ideas, organize the facilitated session, and share ideas with other people interested in similar processes. My small

group from the GAIA experience was particularly inspiring. All of these opportunities were provided free-of-charge, also uncommonly generous.

My network of coaches, consultants, and spiritual leaders proved invaluable in securing the two groups for this study. Their interest in participating and efforts to recruit members of their organizations into groups was generous of them and exciting for me.

The 13 participants of my study gave of their time, courageously jumped into the unknown, and eloquently shared their experiences. They are 13 evolved, wise souls who brought more to the experiences than I would have ever thought possible. I was in awe of their sense of knowing and abilities to just be.

Dr. Suzanne Nixon generously served as a stand-by psychotherapist for my two facilitated sessions. I am grateful for her willingness to do this free-of-charge and for her enthusiasm around my area of research.

My spiritual community, Unity of Fairfax, supported my dissertation in very practical, hands-on ways. Members of the community participated as subjects in my practice study (Bowman, James, John, and Kathy), participated in a session to experience my facilitated treatment session before it went live (Bowman, Dave, John, John, Kathy, Lisa, and Ron), and unwittingly served as guinea pigs in my meditation group, Mindful 365, where I experimented with different practices (too many to list, but you know who you are). They were all wonderfully supportive, enthusiastic, and completely willing to step into the unknown with me.

The members of my healing circle (Amy, Dave, Dave, Ina, James, Janice, Lisa, Rebecca, and Ron) as well as my women's circle (Gail, Ina, and Valerie) held beautiful space and a strong,

light-filled field throughout my dissertation period. They are all light bearers who demonstrate we-space skillful means again and again.

My residency roommates and writing partners (Amy, Nicole, and Roz) not only created a space in which this work could happen, but they also became chosen family and the dearest of friends. My love for them is boundless. The only thing I will miss about writing a dissertation is my time with these amazing women. To say they have been good friends does not begin to express their importance in my life.

And speaking of good friends and enduring connections, I am so fortunate and grateful for the close friendships I have formed on this journey with fellow students (Greta, Liz, LaTanya, and lots of others), who I know will continue to be important people in my life.

I feel very fortunate to be part of an amazing AU PhDLC cohort. The members of Cohort 17 have been a source of wisdom, inspiration, motivation, and most importantly, copious amounts of laughter and fun. They are truly an awe-inspiring group of people, all doing such important work in the world. I am grateful to be able to say I am part of this august group.

For all my friends and family who patiently listened to me talk about my research topic, received endless updates on my progress, and offered encouragement, every little bit added up to a huge tidal wave of support and encouragement that fed me for the past year and a half. I am grateful to have such incredible people in my life.

And for my sweet canine companions, Bodhi and Gracie, who were a perpetual presence in my writing space, I am grateful for the peace, comfort, and good juju their presence created.

Table of Contents

Dedication	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
List of Tables	xvi
List of Figures	xvii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction to the Phenomenon of Interest.....	2
Positionality	4
Overview of Literature.....	8
Consciousness, Intersubjectivity, and Coherence	9
Intersubjectivity	9
Coherence	11
Facilitation Models and Practices	12
Related Research Pertaining to Groups	12
Cohesion	12
Synchrony	13
Collective Effervescence	13
Purpose and Methodology	14
Research Question	15
Methodology and Methods	15
Key Terms.....	16
Outline of Chapters	18
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	19
How this Chapter is Organized	19
Groups and Why They Matter	19
Doingness vs. Beingness.....	22
History and Background	22
Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory	23
Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.....	25
The Study of Group Dynamics	30
The Human Potential Movement	34
The Current Conversation.....	35
HPM in Organizations	35
Integral Circles.....	36
Modern-Day Philosophers	38
Empirical Exploration of Groups and Group Dynamics.....	39
Cohesion	40
Synchrony	44
Collective Effervescence	45
Group Dynamics in a Virtual Space	46
Consciousness, Intersubjectivity, and Coherence	48
What is Consciousness?	48
Intersubjectivity	50
Coherence	57

In Summary: A Metaphor	63
Intersubjective Practices and Facilitations	63
Otto Scharmer and Theory U	66
David Bohm and Dialogue.....	67
Parker Palmer and Circle of Trust	67
Consciousness Raising Practices in a Virtual Space.....	68
Implications for this Study.....	71
The Study of Social Coherence.....	72
Jumping-off Studies	72
Facilitating Collective Intelligence	73
Group Magic and Collective Resonance.....	75
Analysis of Jumping-off Studies.....	77
Coherence in the Intersubjective Field	77
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	79
Epistemology, Ontology, and Worldview	80
Chapter Overview	81
Introduction to Phenomenology.....	81
Phenomenology.....	83
Philosophical Roots	83
Interpretive Phenomenology	85
Role of Interpretation.....	85
Role of Context and Lifeworld	86
How Findings are Used.....	86
Rationale	86
Methods.....	87
Individual Interviews	88
Group Interviews/Focus Groups	90
Observations	91
Arts-Based Research Methods.....	91
Methods and Approaches for My Study	94
Approach and Rationale.....	95
Intersubjectivity	95
Hermeneutical Tools in an Interpretive Phenomenology Study	96
Van Manen’s Approach	97
Methodological Fit.....	100
Research Design.....	102
Design	102
Participants and Selection Criteria.....	103
Analysis.....	105
Ethical Considerations	110
Procedures.....	111
Phase 1: Recruitment	111
Phase 2: Investigate the Experience as it is Lived	112
Phase 3: Letting the Data Speak	116

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS	118
Participants.....	119
Findings.....	122
Coherence	124
What It Was Like	127
Connectedness.....	128
Accepting	132
Best Selves	134
Enlivened Field	135
Everyday Ascension.....	138
Activation of Other Ways of Knowing	141
How It Happened	145
Trust	146
Space/Container	147
Transition from Me to We	149
Practices	151
Choice and Courage.....	155
Belief.....	157
Antecedents.....	157
Skillful Means.....	158
Relationships.....	160
Resistance	160
Outcomes	161
Awakening	162
Connectedness.....	164
A Place of Refuge	164
Discussion and Conclusions	166
Defining Coherence Empirically	168
Something of Greater Significance?	169
CHAPTER V: META-THEMES.....	170
Meta-themes.....	172
Direct Experience of Interbeing.....	173
Constructive Disorientation	182
Co-sensing.....	184
Metalogue	188
Best Me, Best We	191
Summary	196
CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION	198
Discussion of Findings.....	200
Meta-themes.....	201
Direct Experience of Interbeing.....	201
Constructive Disorientation	202
Co-sensing.....	202
Metalogue	203

Best Me, Best We	203
What It Was Like	204
How It Happened	205
Antecedents	207
Outcomes	208
This Study's Contribution to the Field.....	209
Uniqueness of Findings.....	209
Relational Ontology	213
Two Levels of Analysis	214
Level of Presence	215
Charting Sensemaking	215
Intersubjectivity	216
Implications.....	216
Recommendations.....	222
For Group Development Practitioners	223
For Change Agents	227
For Leaders and Leadership Development Practitioners	227
Limitations	229
Further Research	232
Conclusions.....	234
References.....	236
Appendix A: Facilitated Treatment Session Agenda.....	252
Appendix B: Art Project	254
Appendix C: Application of Facilitation Considerations and Suggestions from the Literature Listed in Chapter II	255
Appendix D: Group Interview Guide	258
Appendix E: Recruitment Email Communications.....	259
Appendix F: Participant Email Communication	261
Appendix G: About Coherence (Participant Email Attachment)	264
Appendix H: Informed Consent (Participant Email Attachment).....	267
Appendix I: Pre-Session Questionnaire	271
Appendix J: Follow-Up Questionnaires.....	273
Appendix K: Initial Thematic Codes	274
Appendix L: First-Order Coding—Themes (Final).....	275
Appendix M: Second-Order Coding—Thematic Categories.....	276
Appendix N: Permissions	277

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Briskin et al. (2001) Findings	74
Table 2.2: Levi's (2003) Findings	76
Table 3.1: Study Participant Selection Criteria.....	104
Table 3.2: Investigating the Experience as it is Lived	113
Table 3.3: Facilitated Treatment Session Agenda	114
Table 4.1: Participants	119
Table 4.2: What It Was Like	128
Table 4.3: How It Happened	146
Table 4.4: Group 2 Shift Points	152
Table 4.5: Antecedents.....	158
Table 4.6: Outcomes	162
Table 5.1: Group 2 Transcript Excerpt	176
Table 6.1: Comparison of Findings	211

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs	27
Figure 2.2: Wilber’s The Four Quadrants in Humans	38
Figure 2.3: Holman’s The Nature of Emergence.....	59
Figure 2.4: Scharmer’s The Complete U: Six Inflection Points	66
Figure 2.5: The Intersubjective Field.....	72
Figure 3.1: The Hermeneutic Circle	97
Figure 3.2: First-order Themes	108
Figure 3.3: Second-order Coding.....	109
Figure 3.4: Thematic Mind Map.....	109
Figure 4.1: Coherence Subsets and Characteristics	123
Figure 4.2: Alex’s Artwork.....	133
Figure 4.3: Dina’s Artwork.....	134
Figure 4.4: Edie’s Artwork	136
Figure 4.5: Bea Bea’s Art Project.....	139
Figure 4.6: Katie’s Artwork.....	144
Figure 4.7: Ginger’s Artwork	148
Figure 4.8: Katie’s Artwork.....	161
Figure 5.1: Data Analysis	171
Figure 5.2: Themes and Meta-themes.....	173
Figure 5.3: Co-sensing	186
Figure 5.4: Metalogue During Art Project Show and Tell.....	190

Figure 5.5: Monica’s Artwork	195
Figure 5.6: Direct Experience of Interbeing	197
Figure 6.1: The Lived Experience of Coherence in the Intersubjective Field	200
Figure 6.2: Recommended Practices for Individual and Group Development	225

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Human beings are social creatures. We spend most of our lives engaged in some kind of social exchange, and many of those exchanges involve membership in small groups. Groups are in fact pervasive in our lives, occupying much of our time, attention, and energy. Given the omnipresent nature of groups in our lives, they present a crucial area of study for social scientists not only to inquire into ways to live our best lives and to flourish through the groups we belong to but also to leverage the power of groups and collective consciousness in order to find new ways of engaging with the wicked and intractable issues of our time. It is at that intersection of flourishing as individuals within a group and the evolutionary imperative to find new ways to tackle complex issues that my dissertation study is situated.

This dissertation study is focused on the exploration of group beingness and the lived experiences of members of groups who collectively manifest a deep union and oneness. This deep union and oneness, coherence, happens intersubjectively through shifting consciousness. Group beingness inhabits the realms of consciousness, interconnectedness, and most prominently, intersubjectivity. Social coherence, which has been described as group magic (Levi, 2003) and group flow without the association of content or task (Rebel Wisdom, 2019), could be explained as a heightened experience of group beingness where the group-level embodiment of interconnectedness, attunement, and resonance results in everything falling into place (Steininger & Debold, 2016).

In this chapter, I will introduce an overview of the phenomenon I am studying and how its study is relevant to the cultural landscape. Next, I will share my positionality followed by a brief overview of the related literature. An introduction to my study's design and methods

follows, and then I conclude with key terms and an overview of how this dissertation is organized.

Introduction to the Phenomenon of Interest

Our memberships in groups “occupy much of our day-to-day lives. We work in groups, we socialize in groups... Groups largely determine the people we are and the sorts of lives we live” (Hogg, 1992, p. 1). The groups we join, the groups we stay in over time, the groups we work in all play a part in forming who we are in the world. To live is to be part of multiple groups, all of which influence us to varying degrees. Some, including this author, would say that groups make us who we are (de Quincy, 2000; Hogg, 1992). According to Hogg (1992):

Groups pervade every aspect of our lives. They are both the background to our existence and the focus of our day-to-day activities. I have painted a picture in which individual human beings are actually socially constituted by the groups to which they belong, which every group membership, past and present, leaves an indelible mark. (p. 3)

Personhood is intersubjective, with the relationships and groups in our lives playing a formative role in shaping who we are. Relationships leave an impression on our lives whether we are conscious of these relational impacts or not.

The ability of groups to address the increasing complexity of the world and destructive forces at play has never been more important than it is now. As a species, we face a multitude of intractable issues, among them: climate change, scarcity of water, extinction of species, widespread poverty, income disparity, racial oppression and inequality, ethnic and religious hatred, and so many others. As Dossey and Dossey (2020) explained:

Our species has tried to secede from nature, and we have failed. In doing so, we have misconstrued the nature of our own consciousness, our connectedness to one another, and our relationship to all sentient life. Something is missing in modern life. We are starved for vision. We hunger for a culture that transcends the suffocating narrowness and intellectual strangulation caused by prejudice, bigotry, greed, and crass materialism that threaten our future. We yearn for connections. (p. 122)

As Dossey and Dossey said, something is missing. Something needs to change. We cannot figure out what that something is when alone and in isolation. We must find solutions together. We must find ways to join up and come together that bring out our individual and collective best and highest. It may be that we can learn from the future, lean into our highest future possibility (Scharmer, 2016), and bring that best possible future into manifestation.

While we have collectively created our challenging current reality, it is also in that collectivity that we find our greatest joy. That joy can be found in the collective effervescence we experience in crowds when we feel a union, joy, and confidence that is borne out of being in a group (Páez et al., 2015). It can be found in experiences of cohesion and synchrony, when we are glued together (Nelson & Quick, 2007) and literally in sync with each other (Reddish et al., 2013). It is found in social coherence, when we connect as a group in consciousness and are able to drop into a shared field to experience a oneness that feels magical (Briskin et al., 2001; Levi, 2003). Not only does our ability to join together in communion hold promise for enhancing our collective ability to deal with the wicked issues we face, but it is also where we are naturally drawn as human beings. Humans have always sought to be in community from our earliest ancestors, the caveman who found survival in community, to tribal peoples who hunted, gathered, raised children, and cared for the elderly together, to dwellers of early towns and cities that grew up together to protect and support each other. We are social creatures.

As we face collective challenges and wicked issues together, it may be that we are also facing a biological imperative to evolve, so that we can face this complexity and continue our existence in a different way. According to Taylor (2017), we live in a time of crisis, which could be spurring a collective awakening forward. Just as individuals sometimes awaken through the experience of traumatic events, it stands to reason that a collective experience of trauma could

ignite a collective awakening. Taylor (2017) said, “At the moment, we’re collectively encountering mortality, facing our potential demise as a species, so this threat may be serving as a spur to collective transformation” (p. 265). This collective awakening could result in the survival of the human species by moving beyond group identity, materialism, war, and oppression, and into a place of “inner well-being and wholeness, a new all-embracing empathy and common sense of humanity, and a new sense of connection with the natural world and the cosmos” (p. 267).

This study aimed to inquire into the lived experience of this deep union and oneness among members of groups through an investigation of coherence as an intersubjective phenomenon. Through empirical study of this phenomenon, the findings reveal what it is like to be in the experience of coherence and then what may be possible through group beingness. I hope that through this investigation, an empirical understanding of coherence will not only add to the current literature but also enable practitioners working with groups to find their own group magic.

Positionality

I am a leadership coach and an organization development consultant, and I often work with small groups that are forming, taking on a new task, or are struggling in some way. I find small groups intriguing: working with a small group of people is often rich, full of surprises, and poses never-the-same-challenge-twice. I enjoy the energy that is generated by a group of people, perhaps because my happiest times have happened when I have been a member of a group that I truly resonate with. My love for groups also comes with the reality that groups can be challenging. I have had many struggles that came from being a part of, coaching, and leading teams and groups. As a participant, I had a repeating behavior of taking on too much work and

responsibility for the group's success, avoiding conflict and confrontation, and then being resentful for the workload and lack of communication. I watched my own experience replicate with undergraduate workgroups as well as with business teams charged with coming together to solve a problem or to produce a short-term project. In my 25 years of working on and with teams and groups, about half of those groups were functioning well and significantly fewer were groups that genuinely enjoyed each other and were connected on a deep level. Although high-performing teams and groups do exist, they seem to be a mythical creature, a unicorn of sorts, both rare and wonderful.

I have long wondered why it is that groups can be so challenging. If groups are made up of individuals, then individual members form the building blocks of the group and determine how the group will function. As individuals, I believe that many of us are fighting internal battles that no one else can see. Collectively then, when we join together, we often show up as our battles and wounds instead of as our best and full-of-potential selves. We scan for threats when we enter a new group, just as our caveman ancestors did eons ago. This negativity bias (Hanson, 2009) has us operating from a defensive posture, ready to strike. If that is the energy we all bring into groups, it is not surprising that many of us struggle interpersonally. Taken collectively, this negativity bias surely gets in our way of making deep connections easily. As a meditation teacher as well as a leadership coach, I have experienced that as a human species in this current moment, we suffer deeply from an illusion of separation (Eisenstein, 2013). We believe that we are alone and separate from each other. That pain and aloneness significantly impact our abilities to join up with other people. If we knew we were deeply connected, a knowingness that we gain through waking up to a different reality that is of a different tone and texture, would it make joining together with other people easier?

I have always been a seeker, someone who seeks answers to the big questions about myself, humanity, and the nature of being. Part of that seeking has been finding deep communion and connection with others. Before COVID-19, I found this connectedness through group meditation, group discernment, and deep dialogue. The experience of oneness does not tend to last long but long enough to know a different truth: that we are all indeed one, and that anyone can have this kind of experience if they set the intention to do so. Once we entered the pandemic, I began to experience the same kind of oneness virtually, that is, through the use of online platforms such as Zoom. I was part of several different circles through the Presencing Institute, specifically GAIA and Social Field Research. In these circles, I had frequent interactions with people from all over the world with whom I shared a deep connection. I am also a member of a women's spiritual circle as well as a healing circle, and both of these have generated a profound sense of unity among myself and the other members. This kind of connection transcends the difficulties I have experienced with other groups, because a different reality becomes evident in those times of connection. Positive affect supersedes fear and defensive posturing in these experiences. The more I have these experiences, the more I know that these connections are possible for everyone if they want them.

After years of experimenting with various faith communities, personal development experiences, and spiritual practices, I settled into a committed, daily meditation practice, primarily engaging in mindfulness meditation practices. As my meditation practice took hold, I began to have some breakthrough experiences that felt very different. I experienced short periods—perhaps one or two minutes long—when I would feel a great expansiveness or a unity with all of humankind. I began to go on silent meditation retreats, and during the first one, I experienced that same expansive state I had been having in short bursts for 24 uninterrupted

hours. I felt light, buoyant, deeply joyful, and realized a new truth: that my true essence, and that of all beings, was in fact, love. During a seven-day silent retreat only a few months later, I experienced a profound sense of oneness with all of creation, a sense of wonder and beauty so deep and intense that even now, it brings me to tears. I consider these to be awakening experiences: a time when the ground that I was standing on shifted and revealed a different reality. For me, someone who typified (and sometimes still typifies) a classic Type A, hard-charging, driven, impatient, intense person, these experiences have changed what I know to be true. These awakening encounters have changed my life, allowing for a joy and happiness I did not know possible and allowing me a glimpse of a completely different way of being. That glimpse into what can be for myself makes me wonder what could be for all of humanity and the earth. That wondering has led to exploration and experimentation that has become the focus of my work.

The experience of awakening is a very personal one, yet I found that my own experiences opened me to the possibility that others have experienced something similar. I began to hear their stories and even read about awakenings that even wider circles of people had experienced. The stories are remarkably similar. This intensely personal experience is actually one that many do not speak about, because it is hard to put into words. And if one does have the ability to put the experience of awakening into words, it is the kind of experience that may sound unhinged or like a psychological disturbance or breakdown, so many choose not to discuss it. Not knowing that this area of study is what I was moving toward, I became interested in this process of individual awakening as something that could change the world, and then I began to wonder how to bring this intensely personal awakening experience into my work as a leadership coach, mindfulness facilitator, and organization development consultant.

My identities—as scholar, spiritual practitioner, and leader, and leadership coach and consultant—have been three paths that have dissolved into one path and one journey. My work is all focused, in some small way, on the evolution of human beings into a more awakened, mature, “grown-up” way of being. Given my own experience with awakening, I suspect that if we were able to sense our deep connection with each other, it may transform our experiences in groups and with other people. I know this kind of connection is possible and within our collective grasp. I am most definitely not an unbiased, disinterested observer when it comes to coherence, collective consciousness, and interbeing.

Overview of Literature

The study of group beingness and coherence is an emerging field. As such, empirical studies of coherence are limited as they are just beginning to become an area of interest for more than a handful of scholars. While coherence and group beingness are limited in the empirical literature available, they are concepts that are being discussed conceptually, theoretically, and from a practice vantage. While coherence may not be the subject of wide empirical study yet, a number of related areas of group study are available, including cohesion, synchrony, and collective effervescence.

These areas of study trace back to two pivotal groundbreaking theories: Kurt Lewin’s field theory and Abraham Maslow’s theory of motivation, of which his hierarchy of needs is a key part. Lewin’s (1943) field study catalyzed the study of groups and group dynamics and proposed that individual subjects are all the product of their environments, made up of people, situations, and other stimuli. In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow (1943) argued that humans are compelled to move through many levels of physical and psychological needs on a journey toward self-actualization and transcendence. We are compelled to grow and evolve. Together,

these two perspectives have laid the groundwork for studying an evolutionary capability of the social field and will be discussed further in Chapter II.

In the following section, I will provide a brief overview of the literature review found in Chapter II. I will begin with the core focus of my inquiry: consciousness, intersubjectivity, and coherence. Then, I will provide an overview of the related facilitation models followed by the empirical study of groups.

Consciousness, Intersubjectivity, and Coherence

The study of coherence in the intersubjective field could be seen fundamentally as a study of group beingness. Group beingness can be viewed through the lens of consciousness and intersubjectivity with coherence being a heightened state of group beingness when collective consciousness optimally aligns to produce a unified whole from a group of individuals. I will begin this discussion through the lens of consciousness, because as de Quincy (2000) argued, to truly study intersubjectivity, one must enter through the field of consciousness.

What is consciousness? Quite simply, human beings are consciousness (Taylor, 2018). It is “the awareness by the mind of itself and world” (Tsao & Laszlo, 2019, p. 5) experienced moment-to-moment (Knights et al., 2018, p. 153). De Quincy (2000) stipulated that a key element of consciousness, from the philosophical perspective, is awareness, which forms the basis for subjectivity. He explained subjectivity as “critical interiority” relating to the capacity for feeling that is “intrinsic,” or “what-it-feels-like-from-within” (p. 137). In this way, subjectivity is something that can be shared and is derived from intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity, defined by Gunnlaugson and Brabant (2016), is “the shared inner dimension,” which “is represented spatially as between us (2nd person position), in contrast to

inside us (subjective or 1st person position) or outside us (objective or 3rd person position)” (p. 12). Intersubjectivity is “based on the notion of ‘we-ness,’ that we are always selves-in-relation-to-others” (Cunliffe & Hibbert, 2016, p. 54) and is “where the lifeworld is situated in a web of collectively evolving relationships” (Scharmer, 2016, p. 95). The intersubjective is the space between us that is neither just me nor just you. Instead, it is our shared space.

De Quincy (2000) explained that relational experiences are “the most vital manifestations of consciousness” (p. 135) and defined intersubjectivity as:

Mutual co-arising and engagement of interdependent subjects, which creates their respective experience. It is ontological. Strong or ontological intersubjectivity relies on cocreative nonphysical presence and brings distinct subjects into being out of a prior matrix of relationships. (p. 138)

What is de Quincy talking about from an experiential perspective? He is speaking to the socially constructed nature of reality, where I am who I am, because of my experience and relations with other people. It is through you that I see myself, and likewise, you are you, because of my interaction and shared experience of consciousness with you. Not only do we co-create our experience, but I am also a compilation of all previous experiences I have had with others, as are you. We are inextricably connected, making sense of selves, the world, and the cosmos through each other and all of the others we have engaged with throughout our existences.

Our shared experience is not only one of pure consciousness; there is also an embodied element. Siegel (2006) explained that we neurochemically entrain with each other through the mirror neurons system. Our “inner world is constituted through interaction with the interpersonal world, both in the course of early development and in ongoing, real-time contact with others” (Surrey, 2005, p. 95). Personhood originates in the intersubjective space, and we process that intersubjectivity through our subjective faculties. From such a perspective, we are in a constant

state of moving back and forth between the participatory and individuating functions of our psyches (Heron, 1992). Some argue that there exists a profound potential for both individuals and groups setting the intention to coalesce intersubjectively (DiPerna, 2014): “The autonomy of the individual is supercharged rather than surrendered, because now it is plugged into and supported by a larger ‘We’” (p. 173).

Coherence

Coherence is a term that describes the coming together in consciousness of two or more people. Also called social coherence, McCraty (2017) explained it as:

The harmonious alignment between couples, family units, small groups, or larger organizations in which a network of relationships exists among individuals who share common interests and objectives. A high degree of social coherence is reflected by stable and harmonious relationships, which allows for the efficient flow and utilization of energy and communication required for optimal collective cohesion and action. Social coherence requires that group members are attuned and are emotionally connected with each other, and that the group's emotional energy is organized and regulated by the group as a whole. (p. 1)

To enter a state of coherence, a shift has to occur. This shift can be explained by borrowing from quantum physics: “a synchronization (coming into similar phase patterns) of the waves either within our personal fields or among participants in a group” (Guttenstein et al., 2014, p. 179). The shift may be experienced as a “higher level of order that comes into the room. . . a kind of group intuition” (C. Hamilton, 2004, p. 58).

Coherence has been likened to a group flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Salanova et al., 2014), but flow without the association of task, doingness, or content (Rebel Wisdom, 2019). Others have described coherence as a shared sense of support and well-being (Glickman & Boyar, 2016), internal alignment and optimized group energy (Hamilton et al., 2016), shared heart intelligence (Patten, 2016), and a sense that everything settles into place (Steininger &

Debold, 2016). Using spiritual language, coherence is the experience of oneness and non-duality, either through an altered state or through the felt sense of oneness (or both).

Facilitation Models and Practices

My study of coherence in the intersubjective field involved facilitated sessions during which I lead different groups through a series of practices that resulted in their moving into coherence. The practice of facilitating coherence has been discussed in the literature. Among the facilitated models are Scharmer's Theory U (2016), Palmer's Circle of Trust (2004), and Debold and Steininger's work in the virtual space (personal communication, June 10–12, 2020).

Common to most all of the facilitated models is the use of silence, stillness, and mindfulness practices as well as deep, connecting dialogue. Cultivating a safe space and deeper levels of consciousness are frequently discussed, as well as the use of mythopoetic elements to assist the group with moving from cognitive, analytical processing into a more creative, open-minded, flexible experience. All of these elements present important considerations in the study of social coherence, particularly related to any coherence treatment.

Related Research Pertaining to Groups

As previously stated, empirical research on coherence is limited. However, several related areas within group dynamics research have been investigated and provide insights into the study of coherence and intersubjectivity. In this section, I briefly introduce the research areas of cohesion, synchrony, and collective effervescence.

Cohesion

A related concept to coherence is cohesion. Unlike coherence that has had little empirical attention paid to it, cohesion is among the most studied of group-related concepts (Hogg, 1992). Cohesion is “the ‘interpersonal glue’ that makes the members of a group stick together” (Nelson

& Quick, 2007, p. 222). I posit cohesion is a precursor to coherence. Groups who are able to enter a state of coherence are likely closely connected in cohesion. Four primary constructs of cohesion (Forsyth, 1999) include cohesion as a social or binding force; a group unity or sense of we-ness; attraction for the group and mutual attraction among members; and teamwork in pursuit of group goals or completion of tasks. Of these constructs, most germane to the study of coherence is group unity or a sense of we-ness, which points in the direction of deep connectedness or a sense of oneness often discussed with coherence. Counter to my study is the construct of teamwork and movement toward a goal or task, which is rooted in group doingness. Since the study of social coherence is focused on group doingness, this element of cohesion is less applicable to my study.

Synchrony

An antecedent to cohesion is synchrony, which is the matching of rhythmic behaviors between individuals such as that which occurs through dance, music, and group rituals (Reddish et al., 2013). By inviting a group into synchrony through movement, breathing, chanting, and even silence, a group can move into a more cohesive state (Reddish et al., 2013). Similarly, discussions on coherence and how to move into coherence often use contemplative practices such as meditation, which may serve both to calm and focus individual minds but may also invoke synchrony and entrainment. Synchrony, in the form of shared silence and meditation, played a role in the treatment sessions I facilitated as part of the study.

Collective Effervescence

A potential outcome of cohesion, particularly in a large group or crowd, is collective effervescence. Collective effervescence can be explained as “moments in life when being part of a crowd feels intoxicating” (Gabriel et al., 2017, p. 1349). It is the experience of having deep

resonance with a collective. It may be that the positive outcomes of collective effervescence—the sense of union with others, feeling of empowerment, positive affect, and confidence in life (Páez et al., 2015)—may also be related to coherence.

With an overview of the grounding literature related to coherence and intersubjectivity provided, I will next move into details regarding the study itself.

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the group-level phenomenon of coherence. Although the phenomenon has been frequently discussed in literature conceptually and theoretically, it has rarely been studied empirically. This study adds to the limited literature regarding the empirical study of group beingness and the phenomenon of coherence.

The few studies available on collective phenomena like coherence have been performed retrospectively and with individual subjects with separate experiences, leaving a gap in the literature related to studies of coherence from an intersubjective position. The gap in research has created an important opening for exploring coherence as a lived experience as described collectively by multiple members of the same group.

Ultimately, engaging in the study expanded my understanding of what it is to experience coherence from the perspective of multiple people within the same group. The findings indicate that it is indeed an intersubjective phenomenon vis a vis an individual phenomenon that happens within a group setting. Through the investigation of the lived experience of group coherence, I was able to develop an empirically-based definition for the phenomenon.

Research Question

The research question on which this study was based is, What is the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective field? This primary question was the focus of inquiry. Several other supporting questions served to add texture to the primary question:

- Is coherence an individual-level phenomenon, where one member of a group may feel extraordinarily connected to those around them? Or is it indeed a group-level phenomenon experienced by multiple or all members of a group?
- What is it like to experience coherence as an individual?
- What is it like for a group to experience coherence and then to talk about it?
- What is the definition of coherence, from an empirical standpoint?

Methodology and Methods

This study aimed not only to explore the phenomenon of coherence but also to conduct the study from the perspective of intersubjectivity. I conducted an interpretive phenomenological study underpinned by van Manen's (2016) approach. The choice of methodology flowed logically: phenomenology is the study of phenomena (Gill, 2014), with coherence being the phenomenon in question. Additionally, phenomenology is described as the study of consciousness (Smith et al., 2009) and lived experience (Finlay, 2009b), both of which fit this study's aims.

The study involved two phases of data collection. In the first phase, I facilitated coherence treatments with two small groups. The sessions included models and techniques found in the literature, such as elements of Scharmer's Theory U (2016) and Palmer's Circle of Trust (2004). An arts-based method was also part of the sessions, which appeared to help participants verbalize their experiences. The facilitated sessions were immediately followed by group interviews. The

facilitated sessions and group interviews were conducted virtually via the online platform, Zoom. For the second phase, I collected additional data through two follow-up questionnaires sent one week and approximately three weeks after the sessions in order to cultivate a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. The data were analyzed through a process of moving back and forth between the elements of the phenomenon and the wider perspective of the phenomenon as a whole. This analysis resulted in two layers of findings: themes and meta-themes.

Key Terms

A number of terms are used throughout this dissertation that I feel compelled to specify to provide clarity. Below, you will find definitions for some of the key terms: coherence, intersubjectivity, the field, consciousness, spirituality, beingness, and inner journey/development.

Coherence: Coherence is a group-level connection and experience of oneness that has been likened to a group flow state, but flow without the association of task, doingness, or content (Rebel Wisdom, 2019). It is a shared sense of support and well-being (Glickman & Boyar, 2016), internal alignment among a group, optimized group energy (Hamilton et al., 2016), shared heart intelligence (Patten, 2016), and a sense that everything falls into place (Steininger & Debold, 2016).

Intersubjectivity: Intersubjectivity (Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016), is “the shared inner dimension,” which “is represented spatially as between us (2nd person position), in contrast to inside us (subjective or 1st person position) or outside us (objective or 3rd person position)” (p. 12). In relational terms, intersubjectivity is “based on the notion of ‘we-ness,’ that we are always selves-in-relation-to-others” (Cunliffe & Hibbert, 2016, p. 54), and the field of intersubjectivity “is where the lifeworld is situated in a web of collectively evolving relationships” (Scharmer,

2016, p. 95). Simply stated, the intersubjective position is formed by two or more people joined together.

The field: The space where intersubjects co-arise is the field, most often called the intersubjective field (Brabant & DiPerna, 2016; Gunnlaugson, 2011, 2016; Steininger & Debold, 2016), but also referred to as the social field (Scharmer, 2016). The field can be characterized as a “larger tide of living intelligence” (Patten, 2010, para. 3) that arises through us and as “a shared field of attention where the collective can become an entity itself” sharing “awareness of our connectedness, our interweaving” (Baeck, 2016, para. 3). Originally conceptualized by the field of physics and imported into the study of group dynamics by Lewin, it is the energetic and influential field surrounding every person. Deutsch (1954) explained the field as “a part of a totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent” (p. 182).

Consciousness: Consciousness is “awareness of the mind itself...[and] also includes the subjective experience” (Tsao & Laszlo, 2019, p. 5). It is experiential in nature, yet not related to task performance or doingness (Taylor, 2018), so it could be defined as “experiencing in the moment” (Knights et al., 2018, p. 153). There are three aspects of consciousness: the inner experience of thoughts and experiences, the sense of self, and an awareness of things happening outside of the experiencer (Taylor, 2018).

Spirituality: Spirituality has a variety of meanings and connotations. For the purposes of this study, I am working from Benefiel’s (2005) definition of spirituality, which is “the human spirit, fully engaged.” It includes the “intellectual, emotional, and relational depth of human character, as well as the continuing capability and yearning for personal development and evolution” (p. 9). It is an inner, subjective focus in lieu of outer behaviors that can be measured and evaluated, and it is closely connected with values (Astin et al., 2011, p. 4).

Beingness: The ontological nature of being human and alive, and the “quality, state, or condition of having existence” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Beingness involves questions of meaning such as, “What does it mean to be human, how do we want to live, and who will we be to each other” (On Being Project, n.d.)?

Inner journey/development: Inner journey, inner landscape, inner-direction, internal development, and other similar phrases refer to a human developmental process focused on connecting with and managing life from a true, core self, where values, non-negotiables, and life purpose reside. Palmer (2000) explained the inner journey past ego to true self resulting in a return to the world “bearing more gracefully the responsibilities that come with being human” (p. 73). Campbell (1988), who wrote about the hero’s transformative journey, said that when we stop thinking so much about ourselves, we undergo a heroic transformation of consciousness.

Outline of Chapters

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. This introduction serves as the first chapter. Chapter II is a review of literature germane to the field of study related to coherence and intersubjectivity. In Chapter III, I discuss my chosen methodology, phenomenology, and then provide a detail of the methods and procedures I used for my research study. Chapters IV and V are detailed accounts of my findings, with Chapter IV focused on the 18 themes and Chapter V exploring five meta-themes. A discussion of the findings is found in Chapter VI. References and appendices follow Chapter VI.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

My dissertation explored group beingness through the exploration of the lived experiences of groups whose members experience a deep union and oneness. This deep union and oneness, coherence, happens intersubjectively through shifting consciousness. As explained in Chapter I, I investigated the following question: What is the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective field?

How this Chapter is Organized

I will begin this exploration of consciousness, coherence, and intersubjectivity by investigating the origins of group research, interest in individual growth and development, and how those two areas have evolved over the past 70 years. Next, I explicate the group research germane to this study. Following the group research section, I take a deep dive into literature about consciousness, intersubjectivity, and coherence, and then move into facilitation models and practices that cultivate group coherence. Finally, I introduce two jumping-off studies that have revealed a gap in the literature, which makes this study relevant in today's landscape.

By way of introduction, I will first discuss the topic of groups, why they matter, and why they are of interest for study in today's reality.

Groups and Why They Matter

Groups play a significant role in shaping who we are (Hogg, 1992) and are a central aspect of personhood. Our lives are the accumulation of group memberships and relationships, which leave energetic, emotional, and cognitive impressions over the course of our lives. Illustrative of this communal we-ness found through group affiliation is the African philosophy of Ubuntu as well as the Japanese conception of personhood. A Zulu word, Ubuntu is often translated as 'I am, because you are,' and is derived from the phrase, 'Umuntu ngumuntu

ngabantu,' “which literally means that a person is a person through other people” (Ifejika, 2006, para. 2). The Japanese philosophy of personhood is focused on the centrality of social ties in both relationships and interactions and the absence of the individual as separate from and elevated above the collective (De Craemer, 1983). One’s social sphere, “the particular, usually tight and limited ‘human nexus’ to which he or she belongs, from which one derives identity, and to which one is totally committed” (De Craemer, 1983, p. 26) is what makes a person a person in the Japanese culture.

A group is defined as “two or more interdependent individuals who influence one another through social interaction” (Forsyth, 1999, p. 5) in which “each is aware of his or her membership in the group, each aware of the others who belong to the group” (Johnson & Johnson, 2017, p. 7). The following elements make a group a group (Forsyth, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 2017):

- Influence—all members influence each other and are influenced by each other;
- Interaction—all members communicate directly with each other and interact to create a sense of we-ness;
- Interdependence—what affects one member affects all members;
- Membership and identity—members perceive themselves as belonging to the group; and
- Structure—a set of roles and norms is in play.

Given the ubiquity of groups, it seems strange, shocking even, that there is a long-standing question among group scholars as to whether groups exist or not. According to Johnson and Johnson (2017), “Not everyone believes that groups exist” (p. 8). The two sides of this debate either identify as having a group orientation or an individualistic orientation. Those

investigators with a group orientation believe that the group is something more than the individuals who make up the membership and is influenced by a larger social system, such that “when individuals merge into a group, something new is created that must be seen as an entity itself” (Johnson & Johnson, 2017, p. 9). On the other side of the debate are researchers with an individualistic orientation who argue that individual members are the unit of measure, and therefore, group research is really the study of individuals in groups (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). In broad generalizations, sociologists tend to prefer the group orientation while psychologists are more partial to the individualistic orientation. Based on Lewin’s field theory (K. Lewin, 1997), which was introduced in Chapter I as a grounding theory for this study, groups do indeed exist. Forsyth (1999) explained field theory’s application to this debate:

Field theory assumes that the behavior of people in groups is determined by aspects of the person and aspects of the environment. The formula, $B = f(P, E)$ summarizes this assumption. In a group context, this formula implies that the behavior of group members (B) is a function of the interaction of their personal characteristics (P) with environmental factors (E), which include features of the group, the group members, and the situation. (p. 14)

With that context in mind, this study is presented from the group orientation.

If groups not only occupy our time and attention, but they also form who we are, would we not say that groups are of crucial import in human lives and worthy of study? Moreover, in this VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) time, it could be argued that the power of group consciousness to facilitate joining up and coming together is essential in our evolution as human beings. Laloux (2014) discussed the necessary shift from meeting other people in judgment toward meeting each other as fundamentally of equal value and as human beings who have ideas and different ways of seeing the world. Releasing judgment allows us to let go of needing to fix or convince the other and instead creates a shared safe space to help others and

ourselves to find our voices and truths “where we listen each other into selfhood and wholeness” (Laloux, 2014, p. 49).

Doingness vs. Beingness

Long popular in public discourse is Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and the drive toward self-actualization. Could it be that self-actualization can happen in a group setting? It is collective self-actualization if you will. The predominance of research on groups centers around the outcome of group performance, that is, group doingness. What if the interest in groups and research on groups shifted from doingness to beingness as it has in psychology, leadership, and spirituality? Our ideas around groups can be evolutionary, shifting from viewing groups as machines capable of delivering projects and being productive to organisms and spiritual entities capable of shifting consciousness, engaging universal energy, and evolving as entities.

The unitary, nonlocal nature of consciousness implies that it has no fundamental boundaries and therefore cannot be separated into parts. In some dimension, individual minds come together as a unitary, collective One Mind. The idea of a universal, collective consciousness has been around for millennia. (Dossey & Dossey, 2020, p. 123)

This idea of One Mind, collective consciousness, is the essence of beingness. Applied to a group, it is a shift from focusing on the productivity and efficacy of a team to do its work to focusing on the unitive power of coming together as one powerful consciousness.

History and Background

The seeds of this study were planted in the 1940s by two different, renowned scholars. Kurt Lewin, a psychologist by training, who was interested in group behavior, developed field theory, which posited that an individual is highly influenced by their surrounding psychological field (K. Lewin, 1997). According to Lewin, the individual does not act in isolation, but as an outcome of their environment, the psychological field, with which they interact. Lewin began developing the theory in the 1930s and continued to enhance, update, and add to it until he died

in 1947. Abraham Maslow, also a psychologist, presented his well-known hierarchy of needs in 1943 as part of his theory of motivation (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's theory sparked an interest in human development that has continued and perhaps accelerated, over the last 75 years. Both theories captured new thinking that initiated fields of study, social movements, and an ever-increasing interest in what is humanly possible. This study, which enquires into what is possible at the group level, draws from field theory, the hierarchy of needs, and their ensuing evolutions.

In this section, I first explore Lewin's and Maslow's theories and how they relate to the study of group-level coherence, and then I go on to discuss how each theory stimulated a new way of thinking, be it a new field of study in Lewin's case or a social movement in Maslow's case. By viewing the historical trajectory of the two theories, I explore how these two threads, group dynamics and the movement toward human potential, form the basis of this study. Finally, I lay out how the two threads have migrated toward each other, coalescing in interest in the potential of groups, which is where this study is situated.

Kurt Lewin's Field Theory

Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) was a psychologist heavily influenced by the Gestalt focus on wholeness. It is this interest in systemic wholeness, as well as what was then new thinking from the physics community, that provided a foundation for his ideas and formed the basis of field theory. The most fundamental and profound element of the theory is the conception of the life space (Deutsch, 1954), which is how Lewin described the psychological field. A trained Gestalt psychologist, Lewin married the Gestalt view of wholeness with the concept of the life space to take a wide view of the full human experience. Deutsch (1954) described Lewin's life space:

All psychological events (thinking, acting, dreaming, hoping, etc.) are conceived to be a function of the life space which consists of the person and the environment viewed as one constellation of interdependent factors. That is, all psychological events are conceived to be determined, not by isolated properties of the person or his environment, but by the mutual relations among the totality of coexisting factors which comprise the life space, factors which derive from the momentary condition of the individual and the structure of his environment. (p. 185)

In other words, an individual's full experience occurs in relation to their environment, where they are continually influenced, interacted with, and challenged by factors of all different shapes and forms, be they social interactions, physical environment, intellectual endeavors, genetic factors, intuited experiences, and others. We may say in modern parlance that the individual's life space is made up of all those things, both conscious and unconscious, which directly influence them. Key to the life space is the human interaction found within it.

Kurt Lewin and his psychology colleagues in Germany began to develop field theory in the 1930s. Lewin's interest in the concept was prominent in his work up until the time of his death in 1947. During those 15 years, he continued to revise, update, and refine the theory, with his work turning more toward the psychology of groups than the psychology of individuals (Berscheid, 2004). Lewin fled Germany in 1933 as Hitler was elected as chancellor of Germany when he believed he was no longer safe in Germany. From that time forward, he was much more interested in how individuals function within a group and how they are motivated and influenced by the groups of which they are a part (Gold, 1992). In 1939, he conducted a study with colleagues (Lewin et al., 1939), which involved groups of children who were assigned to either a democratic-led group or an authoritarian-led group. "Different leadership styles produced dramatic differences in children's behavior" (Berscheid, 2004, p. 117) with children in the authoritarian groups displaying marked increases in hostility and aggression. The study attracted attention and began a larger interest in the study of groups (Berscheid, 2004).

With the advent of Lewin's theory, a significant shift in the field of psychology occurred (Bargal et al., 1992), moving the focus from purely the study of internal processes to a focus on the individual as a social creature. Reflecting his revolutionary thinking, Lewin is "generally regarded as the father of experimental social psychology" (Berscheid, 2004, p. 111).

Field theory forms an origination point for this study, because it provides the groundwork for viewing an individual as not simply a single entity moving through space and time. A person is a compilation of those people and the environment around him or her. In other words, an individual does not exist in isolation but instead as the sum total of interactions in his or her life space, which is an important element of intersubjective experience. An individual's sole experience is a subjective one. But an individual's experience in relation to others is an intersubjective one. Without self-in-relation-to-other, there is no intersubjectivity. Additionally, a group joins in consciousness through a group's ethereal life space, a life space that is unseen but still felt and perceived. This group-level beingness was a concept not yet considered during Lewin's time, but his work created a space for the field to evolve to a point that this study has become relevant.

Another relevant model, Maslow's theory of human motivation and his hierarchy of needs, forms the other base of this study and is explored in the next section.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

When Maslow published his theory of human motivation in 1943 (Maslow, 1943), it marked the beginning of the "third force" of psychology, humanistic psychology (Pickren & Rutherford, 2010). His theory centered on the positive aspects of personhood instead of psychological dysfunction, which moved the field from a focus on what is wrong with people to a focus on human growth and potential. In addition to mobilizing the third force and a

humanistic focus in psychology, Maslow's theory also formed the grounding theory of the human potential movement (Puttick, 2000).

The central concept within the theory of human motivation is Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs. Central to the hierarchy of needs is the argument that human beings are motivated by the fulfillment of needs, which Maslow ordered into five classifications, each building on the next (Maslow, 1943) (Figure 2.1). As each level of needs is met, according to Maslow, humans seek to fulfill the next set of needs within the hierarchy. First, we are motivated to fulfill basic physiological needs such as food, water, sleep, and sex. Once those needs are met, we focus on the next set of basic needs, which are related to safety and security. With basic needs fulfilled, Maslow's theory posited that humans then move into seeking psychological needs, first in the form of relationships, such as intimate relationships and friends, and through a sense of belongingness. Next comes seeking to fulfill the psychological need of self-esteem, which is experienced by feeling appreciated and being a person of worth and value. At the top of Maslow's hierarchy is the drive toward reaching one's full potential, which he named "self-actualization" (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is often presented as a triangle or pyramid (Figure 2.1) with basic needs at the bottom and self-actualization at the pinnacle. Interestingly, Maslow never used the triangle/pyramid model (Kremer & Hammond, 2013; Rowan, 1998).

Figure 2.1*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

Note: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as first depicted in a pyramid by McDermid (1960). Republished with permission of Elsevier Science & Technology Journals from *How Money Motivates Men*, *Business Horizons* 3(4), McDermid, 1960; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Maslow's theory provided two important points related to this study on group coherence. First, Maslow posited that human beings are driven in an upward trajectory toward meaning and purpose. He described humans as having “the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (Maslow, 1943, p. 382). This desire to reach one's full potential is inbred and innate in each human being. Second is Maslow's conception of self-actualization. Maslow described self-actualization as a conative need, that is, a need that is driven by the desire to know and to understand oneself. The concept of self-actualization was an ongoing focus for Maslow throughout his life. During the 1960s in particular, he began to explore what was beyond self-actualization, a next-stage he called transcendence (Maslow, 1971). According to Maslow, people he termed as transcendent shared all of the characteristics of a self-actualized person. Additionally, transcendents encountered peak experiences, and these peak experiences then became “the most important thing in their lives” (p.

273). Maslow listed 35 characteristics of transcendent people, which Kaufman (2020) distilled into a definition of what transcendence means in terms of Maslow's work: "Healthy transcendence is an emergent phenomenon resulting from the harmonious integration of one's whole self in the service of cultivating the good society" (p. 218).

Three primary elements of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the concept of self-actualization (and later, transcendence), the drive toward self-actualization, and peak experiences, provide a theoretical grounding to my study by demonstrating that we, as human beings, seek to reach our fullest potential through self-actualization and transcendence. This seeking is an ongoing drive in our lives. And one finds transcendence through peak experiences, which may be consciousness-raising, mystical, and ecstatic in nature (Kaufman, 2020). Applied to my study, self-actualization into transcendence and the desire to move toward those states through peak experiences adopts a collective and group level frame. Could it be that the experience of coherence in the social field is a peak experience that Maslow referred to? Coherence in the intersubjective field involves a group's drive to reach their collective potential and to know itself fully as a we-space. My study, then, is an application of Maslow's theory as it may apply to a group.

Despite the popularity of the theory, it is not without criticism and problems. Among the critiques include problems with the original study, unclear criteria for self-actualization, a singular focus on ascent, an incomplete view of esteem, the lack of the interpersonal dimension, and its limitations related to collectivist cultures. Maslow conducted a "regrettably informal" (Smith, 1973, p. 21) study on self-actualizing people (Maslow, 1950), which failed to address the subjective nature of his subject pool. As Smith (1973) explained, "The dice are loaded toward Maslow's own values" (p. 24). The lack of empirical rigor puts into question how valid this

study was. Second, the study lacked specificity on the process of self-actualization. Where Maslow intimated that self-actualization originates from one knowing innately one's full potential, Smith (1973) said "this will hardly do" (p. 25) because of the many potentialities available to any individual. According to Smith (1973), "Generally, I think the doctrine of potentiality is more misleading than helpful" (p. 25). Rowan (1998) argued that human growth is not linear and may involve a more organic experience of fulfilling needs as they emerge, which may or may not be in the same linear progression as Maslow's concept. The pyramid depiction, which Maslow did not generate, does not help to decenter the linearity of the theory and makes it appear that there is an end-point to human development. Rowan (1998) declared that Maslow's conceptualization of self-esteem focused on being affirmed by other people did not address the human need for competence, which Rowan viewed as a separate element of esteem.

According to Hanley and Abell (2002), Maslow treated other people as impersonal others instead of as critical factors in human development. Where the hierarchy of needs is based on an individualistic developmental model, the hierarchy does not apply the same way in collectivist societies, where individual achievement and development are decentered. According to Gambrel and Cianci (2003), "In a collectivist culture, the basic need is belonging; self-esteem is eliminated, and self-actualization is attained in terms of meeting societal developmental needs" (p. 143). Despite the problems with the theory, it remains important and foundational in psychology as well as in Western culture, and even with its drawbacks, the theory is helpful in understanding the evolutionary drive toward human potential.

Lewin's field theory is a seminal study in group dynamics, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs forms a parallel grounding related to human development and growth. I will next briefly discuss the history of both group dynamics and human potential.

The Study of Group Dynamics

Two studies late in the 19th century altered the thinking regarding the social realm of psychology. The first, conceptual writing by Le Bon published in 1895, suggested that people are transformed when they are affiliated with a group. Le Bon's writing was followed by Triplett's 1898 laboratory study focused on competition and confirmed his hypothesis that the mere presence of other people changes an individual (Forsyth, 1999). Le Bon and Triplett's work provided an opening for the emergence of social psychology, social work, and group psychotherapy in the 1930s, which were a time of "uplifting the entire society . . . It was an era of social gospel dedicated to the reformation and salvation of society and not just the individual" (Gottschalk & Pattison, 1969, p. 824).

Lewin emerged during this time, developing field theory and implementing action research "as an approach to social change" (Gottschalk & Pattison, 1969, p. 824). Field theory's introduction into psychology opened the study of group dynamics, a term which Lewin coined (Bargal et al., 1992; Berscheid, 2004). Lewin was particularly interested in how members of the group influenced each other in terms of behavior (Berscheid, 2004). The study of groups at the time was in fact taboo among the psychology establishment, who viewed the individual and the individual mind as the primary focus of psychological study (Berscheid, 2004; Deutsch, 1954).

In 1945, Lewin founded the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he recruited the best minds in the field to further the study of groups (Deutsch, 1999). Just a year later, Lewin, with colleagues Bradford, Lippitt, and Benne, was engaged by The Connecticut Interracial Commission and the Committee on Community Interrelations of the Jewish American Congress to do research related to training community leaders in interracial relations. The research involved studying group dynamics

during the training, and the group of researchers met each evening to debrief what they had seen. Community leaders learned of the debriefings and asked to sit in on the meetings, during which researchers openly discussed group interactions and individual behavior (Forsyth, 1999; Gottschalk & Pattison, 1969). According to Benne (1964), “The open discussion of their own behavior and its observed consequences had an electric effect both on participants and on the training leaders” (p. 82). Participants began to join researchers in interpreting behaviors and analyzing events, and by the end of the training, all participants, leaders, and researchers were attending each debriefing session.

What was intended to be debriefing and processing for researchers became a method that formed the core of t-groups (“t” for training). The electricity experienced during those debriefing sessions took on a life of its own and led to the first official laboratory training featuring t-groups held in 1947 in Bethel, Maine, as a two-week residential training program. Unfortunately, Lewin died unexpectedly before the first laboratory training took place, but the seeds he planted would live on. The laboratory method flourished in the 1950s under the auspices of the National Training Laboratory (NTL) resulting in the expansion of summer labs to year-round labs and into business and industry programs (Forsyth, 1999). The use of t-groups, also called sensitivity training, was at its height during the 1950s and 1960s but began to lose popularity in the 1970s. Today, t-groups continue to be a core offering by NTL and continue to be facilitated in organizations and in graduate programs including Stanford University’s master of business administration program, where a t-group-focused class is affectionately known as “Touchy-Feely” (Batista, 2018; Minahan & Crosby, 2016).

According to Bradford et al. (1964a), the originators of the method, laboratory training, whose key feature is the t-group, is “innovation in the technology of education. It has its roots in

a system of values relative to mature, productive, and right relationships among people. It is grounded in assumptions about human nature, human learning, and human change” (p. 1). The laboratory method was wholly new, shifting individual development from traditional lecture-style training and psychoanalysis. With the advent of t-groups, the learner was put squarely in the middle of the training, learning from live interactions in the moment with no orientation toward past or dysfunction. The individual learner became their own teacher, and the learning came from experiences happening in real time, in the moment, to and with the learner.

T-groups are unstructured with no goals and no focus on a specific task. They are intentionally experimental in nature (Bradford et al., 1964a). With no established goals, the group members establish a means of engaging based on here-and-now dynamics supported by inquiry. Through these interactions, participants learn about themselves, how they are perceived by others, and what it means to be a part of a group. T-groups, over time, formed a basis for personal development and morphed into encounter groups. I will discuss encounter groups further in the next section.

Specific skill-building includes cultivation in the ability to listen effectively and to give feedback. All of these outcomes are associated with high-performing groups and teams and may also be related to the groups who have experienced coherence and emergence, which speaks to how groups have evolved precipitated by the advent of t-groups.

T-groups and laboratory training have not been without controversy. By the 1960s, t-groups were viewed as risky and potentially dangerous for anyone who may fall outside of what the psychological profession may consider normal. Cashdan (1970) suggested that someone with mental imbalance may be in jeopardy during a t-group experience: “Individuals who, while participating in a sensitivity group, have become seriously depressed or have ‘freaked out’” (p.

222). Even for those for whom the process is not dangerous per se, the experience can be difficult. According to Argyris (1964), “The experience is confusing, tension-laden, frustrating” (p. 63) and added that participation in a t-group is not a “panacea” (p. 72), nor is change guaranteed. Even if change and learning do occur, they may not transfer back to the participants’ work and lives (Campbell & Dunnette, 1968; Cashdan, 1970).

As the field developed, an interest in workgroup effectiveness emerged and segued into the study of workgroups and teams. T-groups marked the introduction of the field of organization development (French, 1969), but the method was “less suited to groups of employees with specific assignments, common work goals, and a longstanding understanding of each other” (Dyer, 2014, p. 1) and by the 1970s, deemed to be “too touchy-feely for business use” (Beyerlein, 2000, p. 8). The use of t-groups evolved into team building, which is still a method used today. Lewin’s study of group dynamics followed t-groups into the organizational realm, where the study of group dynamics in organizations was prolific in the 1950s and 1960s. Studies in the 1970s shifted back to the individual within the team, and then in the 1980s and 1990s, the focus was on benchmarking, continuous improvement, and leadership. In the 1990s, a new awareness of the global economy and technology emerged, as well as an interest in linking team research to organizational strategy. Beginning in the late 1990s, studies on virtual teams began to emerge (Beyerlein, 2000). Underlying all organizational studies of teams sits the ultimate goal of inquiring into team effectiveness and productivity, both of which relate to task performance or team doingness. Team studies are less related to the consciousness aspect of a team or team beingness. This study of group coherence is much better situated in the beingness realm, which may mean that team studies have less bearing on this investigation.

The Human Potential Movement

In the United States, the 1960s were a time of change and upheaval as many people, particularly younger generations, began to question the conservative nature of society (Braunstein & Doyle, 2002). The rebellion away from societal norms emerged as the counterculture of the 1960s and from it grew a number of movements to include civil rights, feminist empowerment, and, most important in terms of this study, the human potential movement (Braunstein & Doyle, 2002; Michals, 2002).

Maslow's theory of human motivation, particularly his hierarchy of needs and the conception of self-actualization, provided a theoretical jumping-off point for the human potential movement (Puttick, 2000). Maslow's work planted the seeds for personal development, spiritual liberation, and the generally accepted theory that humans were not living up to their full potential. In a series of articles in *Look* magazine during the mid-1960s in the U.S., writer George Leonard reported that 37 leading experts, including psychologists, neuroscientists, spiritual leaders, and philosophers, agreed that humans were using at most ten percent of brain capacity (Wayne, 2005).

Specific elements of the Human Potential Movement (HPM) have contributed to this evolutionary opportunity for the intersubjective experience. During the HPM, t-groups morphed into encounter groups, which were formed as social support for self-exploration, authentic experience, widening awareness around self in group, and a place to experiment with new ways of being and new behaviors (Johnson & Johnson, 2017; Schutz, 1971). T-groups and then encounter groups were early versions of group developmental circles that are important today, particularly for the exploration of group coherence. These group developmental activities gave rise to a number of organizations forming which were devoted to providing opportunities for

participants to continue their exploration and to widen their experience and understanding of what was possible. The most famous of these is Esalen, which was founded in 1962 in Big Sur, California (Krentzman, 1998; Morris, 1995), and continues to be a leader in the area of personal development with 12,000 visitors a year and 750,000 in the organization's history (Esalen, n.d.).

In the 60 years since the counterculture movement began, there has been increasing participation in individual development that focuses on working toward one's full potential and becoming actualized. With this focus on the individual fully matured, another door has opened to explore what it means for individuals to self-actualize and transcend within a group and for the group itself to transcend. In the next section, I will discuss how the seeds planted by both the study of group dynamics and the human potential movement have intersected and where the current conversation is taking place.

The Current Conversation

In the last 25 years, the potential of humans within groups and the potential of the group itself as an entity has blossomed and grown. Group coherence is one such potentiality. Coherence is not yet a mainstream concept, but there are places in the present moment where conversations about coherence are happening. Those interested in coherence include communities weighing the evolution of organizations, integral circles, and among modern-day philosophers. In this section, I will briefly discuss how the conversation has evolved from Lewin and Maslow to an interest in the evolutionary ability to experience higher states of consciousness as a group.

HPM in Organizations

Peter Senge's (1990) *The Fifth Discipline* opened a door for broadening the appeal of personal development and human potential in organizations. In 2005, Senge and three colleagues

published *Presence* (Senge et al., 2005), which featured organization development (OD) theory and practice sandwiched between stories of the authors' spiritual awakening experiences. The book changed the conversation in the organization development world, now weaving in connective tissue between the consultant's own spiritual awakenings and personal development experiences and translating those experiences into leading change in organizations. One of the *Presence* authors, Otto Scharmer, often quotes Bill O'Brien, former CEO of Hanover Insurance, as once saying, "The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor" (Scharmer, 2018, p. 7). While self as an instrument for change has long been an important "interior condition" within organization development, it was in *Presence* that these revered OD leaders began to discuss what it meant to cultivate their inner lives. Scharmer took that cultivation a step further, linking an entire organizational change model, Theory U, to spiritual practices and personal awareness.

Since *Presence*, Scharmer has launched a non-profit organization called the Presencing Institute, focused on Theory U. Scharmer's Theory U process, now used by more than 150,000 people in 185 countries (Presencing Institute, n.d.), is the best-known model and group facilitation for cultivating coherence in the intersubjective field through a process of cultivating an open mind, an open heart, and an open will (Scharmer, 2016). Theory U provides an important method and facilitated process as well as theoretical underpinnings for this study and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

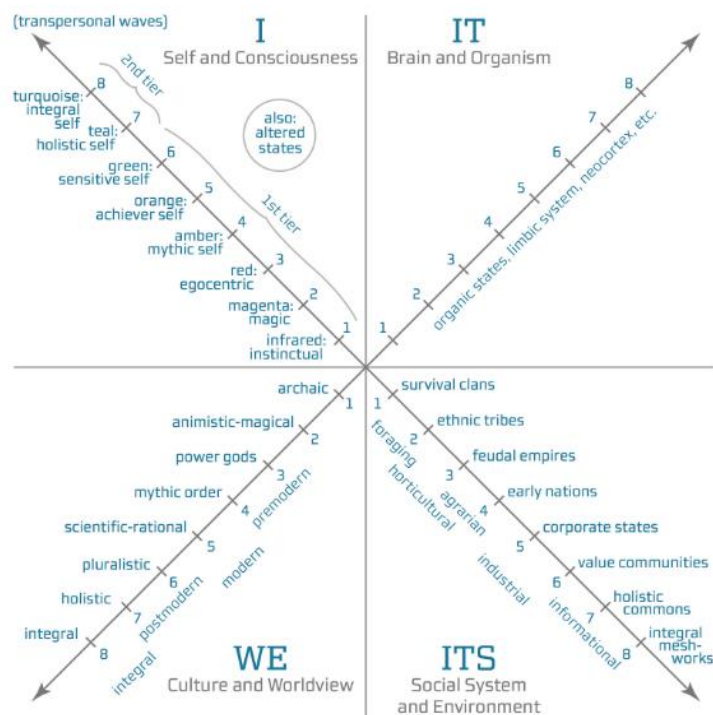
Integral Circles

Another place where coherence is of interest and being discussed is among integral circles, which have evolved from Ken Wilber's integral theory. His theory is an "over-arching model of human and social development that attempts to incorporate as many approaches to

development as possible into its explanatory framework” (Cacioppe & Edwards, 2004, p. 88). and “attempts to integrate all fields of study into one single model or framework of understanding” (Manson, n.d., para. 1). Integral theory has broad application ranging from “the macro-level in organisations and systems” to the “meso-level of group change and teamwork” to the “micro-level of personal development” (Cacioppe & Edwards, 2004, p. 88). His AQAL (All Quadrants, All Levels) model is a well-known chart (Figure 2.2) that lays out four lines of development based on two scales: individual-collective and interior-exterior (Wilber, 2007, p. 180). The four quadrants are I (interior-individual), It (exterior-individual), We (interior-collective), and Its (exterior-collective). Wilber’s model brought the “we” into the development conversation, energizing new interest in “we” development, which is a crucial element of this study. In integral circles, the term “we-space” originated and is now used elsewhere. Wilber’s model is widely critiqued for dubious use of sources and his claim that he is an academic, when he has no attachment to an academic institution and is free from peer review and peer feedback (Smith, 2004). Even with the criticisms, Wilber brought the threads of human potential, spirituality, and psychological development into one theory.

Figure 2.2

Wilber's The Four Quadrants in Humans



Note. Wilber's AQAL (All Quadrants, All Levels) model. From *The integral vision: A very short introduction to the revolutionary integral approach to life, God, the universe, and everything* by Ken Wilber. Copyright © 2007 by Ken Wilber. Reprinted by arrangement with The Permissions Company, LLC on behalf of Shambhala Publications Inc., Boulder, Colorado, www.shambhala.com.

Modern-Day Philosophers

Ken Wilber is one of a cadre of modern-day philosophers exploring and writing about the next stage of human development. Within this community of philosophers, conversations about coherence and the intersubjective field are central as they discuss how and why the evolution of human beings is important in the current landscape. In the past eight years, groups of these philosophers have joined together to discuss cultural on-ramps toward a new society, which they named Game B. The effort fell apart as one faction of philosophers emphasized better

institutions, while another placed a priority on personal change (Future Thinkers, 2019). Following the Game B group, the Intellectual Dark Web (IDW) rose and was touted as a new counterculture movement made up of intellectuals who were challenging the status quo and pushing for better solutions to today's most challenging issues (Weiss, 2018). An additional new force in this philosophical exploration is Rebel Wisdom, a British online platform founded by former BBC filmmaker David Fuller. According to the website (Rebel Wisdom, n.d.), Rebel Wisdom is "centered on the conviction that we are seeing a civilizational-level crisis of ideas, as the old operating system breaks down. The new is struggling to emerge—and the most transformative ideas always show up first as rebellious" (para. 3). The platform has thousands of members from all over the world, many of whom are practicing mindfulness and other "mind hacks," and have labeled this process of evolution as "sensemaking."

In these forums, the conversation on coherence in the intersubjective field is happening in real time. For those integral circles, they are discussing it as the "we-space" and as "we-space development." For Game B and IDW philosophers, and as presented through the Rebel Wisdom platform, there is a prevalent and ongoing conversation about coherence: what it is, how it can be facilitated, and its importance in the landscape of Game B (Rebel Wisdom, n.d.).

In the next section, I will continue to build a foundation for this study by analyzing the extant empirical research focused on groups and group dynamics.

Empirical Exploration of Groups and Group Dynamics

Empirical research inquiring into group-level coherence is almost non-existent, because it is an emerging field. However, the field of research exploring groups and group dynamics offers several related areas that provide insights into social coherence. Those related areas are as follows: cohesion, synchrony, and collective effervescence. In this section, the research topics of

cohesion, synchrony, and collective effervescence are explored as they may relate to coherence in groups. Additionally, because this study was conducted using a virtual, online application, the empirical study of the virtual group experience as it applies to my study is included at the end of the section.

Cohesion

What is the glue that holds a group together? And what is the strength of the group's bond? These are central questions in group research, and questions that the study of cohesion in groups has inquired into. Defining cohesion is something many researchers have attempted (Carron, 1982; Festinger et al., 1950; Hogg & Williams, 2000; Hoyle & Crawford, 1994; K. Lewin, 1943; Lott & Lott, 1965), yet a standard definition has not been agreed upon. Forsyth (1999) defined cohesion as:

Group cohesion is the strength of the bonds linking group members to the group, the unity (or we-ness) of a group, feelings of attraction for specific group members and the group itself, and the degree to which the group members coordinate their efforts to achieve goals. (p. 48)

Festinger et al. (1950) were the first investigators to define cohesion, which they named as “the total field of forces which act upon a member to remain in the group” (p. 164). Festinger et al. based their definition upon Lewin's notion of group cohesion being related to the force field in which a group is situated. Relating to the field of forces, Nelson and Quick (2007) defined cohesion as “the ‘interpersonal glue’ that makes the members of a group stick together” (p. 222), and Cartwright (1968) explained it as “the degree to which members of the group desire to remain in the group” (p. 91). Other scholars described cohesion as a process. Dion (2000) called cohesion “the process of keeping members of a small group or larger social entity. . . together and united to varying degrees” (p. 7), and Carron (1982) added to the process definition that cohesion is related to the pursuit of goals and objectives. The term *cohesion* is used in the group

dynamics field of study, social psychologists most often use *cohesiveness*, and several additional words are used related to cohesion including “solidarity, . . . comradeship, team spirit, group atmosphere, unity, oneness, we-ness, groupness, and belongingness” (Hogg, 1992, p. 1). I prefer Nelson and Quick’s (2007) definition, which is elegant and precise: the glue that holds members of a group together. In its elegance and precision, it is most closely connected to the concept of coherence.

Cohesion is generally considered a positive group attribute. Forsyth (1999) described cohesive groups as “unified. An esprit de corps permeates the group and morale is high. Members enjoy interacting with each other, and they remain in the group for a prolonged period of time” (p. 149). Cohesion has a “calming influence on a group” and is “a characteristic of a mature group” (Nelson & Quick, 2007, pp. 226–227). According to Cartwright (1968), “Cohesiveness contributes to a group’s potency and vitality; it increases the significance of membership for those who belong to the group” (p. 91).

According to Hogg (1992), “group cohesiveness was initially a mainly descriptive term with no consensual or formal definition” (p. 6). It was Festinger et al. (1950) who formally defined cohesion and ignited interest in the study of the group phenomenon as a “key theoretical construct” (Hogg, 1992, p. 6). The study of cohesion evolved the conversation regarding whether in fact groups exist, as findings suggested that groups can be cohesive, but individuals cannot (Hogg, 1992). Cohesion was a major focus of group dynamics and social psychological research beginning with Lewin in the 1940s, reaching new heights with Festinger et al. in 1950, and then continuing through the 1960s. Following the ‘60s, interest in cohesion decreased. In a 1980s small group research literature review, only two pages of 36 were devoted to cohesion, which was a marked change from the ‘50s and ‘60s (Hogg, 1992).

The study of cohesion was initiated as a unidimensional construct. The unidimensional models of cohesion can draw clear boundaries around what cohesion is (and is not), but they are problematic in that they are too narrow and do not incorporate the multiple factors in play with cohesion (Cota et al., 1995). Several multidimensional models of cohesion were published in the 1980s (Cota et al., 1995), and they account for a broader range of factors. But the many factors, the many models, and the lack of cohesion among cohesion scholars has created what may be a kitchen sink concept within the field of group research. Burlingame et al. (2018) listed more than 50 elements of cohesion found in their meta-analysis. Potentially any group that is functioning well may qualify as being cohesive based on a wide range of factors.

Forsyth (1999) summarized the multitude of models into four primary constructs of cohesion. Cohesive teams may demonstrate all of these concepts or only some of them (Forsyth, 1999). The four primary cohesion buckets are:

1. A social or binding force (Festinger et al., 1950)
2. Group unity, sense of belongingness, and we-ness (Hoyle & Crawford, 1994)
3. Attraction and mutual positive regard for the group itself (Lott & Lott, 1965)
4. Teamwork in the pursuit of goals and performance of group tasks (Carron, 1982)

Most closely related to the study of intersubjective coherence is the cohesion construct of group unity or we-ness. It may be that this aspect of cohesion could lead to an experience of oneness among group members, so perhaps cohesion is a precursor for coherence. Cohesion as a social or binding force may also be closely related to coherence, as a group that experiences a force field that binds the members together may represent an intersubjective field that cultivates a sense of being as a unified whole. A key interest among researchers is the link between cohesion and performance, that is, group doingness. Cohesive groups whose norms include

working toward goals consistently outperform teams that are not cohesive (Forsyth, 1999; Nelson & Quick, 2007). If we peel away the link between cohesion and task performance, it may be that some of the other important elements of cohesion—binding force, we-ness, attraction—may also prove to be important elements of coherence.

Forsyth (1999) called cohesion a “purr word, i.e., of course, everyone wants to be part of a cohesive team” (p. 160). In other words, cohesion is connoted with a positive group experience, but in fact, cohesion can be a problem. Nelson and Quick (2007) named goal conflicts, unpleasant experiences, and domination of subgroups as threats to cohesion. Further, the membership of the group can become a difficulty if members become overly attached to the people who make up the group, since membership can change (Forsyth, 1999). Toxic influence and too much pressure to conform to group norms, such as groupthink, can emerge, particularly for groups focused on goals and task performance (Cartwright, 1968). Members who go against the norms can be scapegoated and be on the receiving end of group hostility (Forsyth, 1999). Cohesion can backfire when it comes to group performance if group norms do not include high productivity and instead embrace social loafing (Forsyth, 1999). Counterproductive norms may create conditions favorable for issues around loyalty, participation, and feelings of security (Cartwright, 1968). The experiences of group cohesion and coherence do seem to share the potential for group dysfunction where the power and prominence of the group can suppress the individual. Crucial to success with both cohesive and coherent groups is the invitation and space for individuals to authentically engage, to fully show up. With individual members’ whole selves being accepted, it could be that the individual experiences a heightened sense of self, a best self, in a cohesive or cohered group.

It seems possible to intentionally cultivate cohesion through structured group facilitations. Nussbaum (2018) detailed a facilitative model for cultivating cohesion through the sharing of music. According to Nussbaum (2018), “Contemplating self and other through the frame of music can give to the transformation of consciousness” (p. 556). Her model is centered around the sharing of music by each participant, during which a participant may share a meaningful piece of music from an important part of their life. This personal sharing in the form of both storytelling and music invites the group into a deep process of coming together and understanding. Nussbaum (2018) explained that this mutual discovery “intensifies the intersubjective space” and “the resultant process is potentially generative and transformative” (p. 557). Related to Nussbaum’s model, I aimed to cultivate coherence through facilitated sessions in this study. Nussbaum’s facilitation model affirmed that the intentional cultivation of a dynamic intersubjective space was possible.

Synchrony

Synchrony is a matching of rhythmic behaviors between individuals, which is most obviously observed in music, dance, and group rituals (Reddish et al., 2013), and can also be seen in vocalizations, walking, and in seated pairs (Hove & Risen, 2009). “Interpersonal synchrony is an evolutionary mechanism that facilitates social, bonding, cohesion, and exchange (that is, it is a ‘social glue’),” according to Gordon et al. (2020, p. 1). Because physical and emotional synchrony precedes cohesion, it may be considered a cohesion antecedent. Groups may intentionally attune to each other through synchrony to produce collective action (Reddish et al., 2013).

In a meta-analysis of 42 studies that involved practices and activities to intentionally cultivate synchrony, Mogan et al. (2017) determined that synchrony positively correlates with

pro-social behavior, perceived social bonding, social cognition, and positive affect. Further, Gordon et al. (2020) found that through an intentional synchronous activity (synchronous drumming), behavioral synchrony led to physiological synchrony, which promoted bonding, cohesion, and exchange. Indeed, practices and activities that promote synchrony show promise for engaging attunement and, perhaps, entrainment, which is the process of moving into coherence (more on this is explicated in the next section). In Cotter-Lockard's (2018) exploration of collective virtuosity among musicians, she found that practices intended to cultivate synchrony, such as mirroring, embodied practices, and intentionally tuning in, cultivated awareness, entrainment, and resonance. According to Cotter-Lockard (2018), "Each technique helped musicians to expand and embody awareness, mirror gestures and entrain energies, to enter into a mutual tuning-in process, and to ultimately form a We Presence in which musicians experienced collective virtuosity" (p. 502).

As with cohesion, synchrony may serve as an antecedent to coherence, with groups who intentionally engage in synchronizing physiologically and emotionally having a bridge into a process of entrainment and then coherence itself.

Collective Effervescence

As synchrony is an antecedent of cohesion (and potentially coherence), collective effervescence may be an outcome. Simply stated, collective effervescence can be explained as "moments in life when being part of a crowd feels intoxicating" (Gabriel et al., 2017, p. 1349). It is the experience of having deep resonance with a collective. The associated outcomes interest me in terms of potential benefits and outcomes of coherence. According to Páez et al. (2015),

Collective gatherings bring participants to a stage of collective effervescence in which they experience a sense of union with others and a feeling of empowerment accompanied by positive affect. This would lead them to leave the collective situation with a renewed sense of confidence in life and in social institutions. (p. 711)

Reporting on four studies, the authors confirmed that collective assembly resulted in stronger collective identity, identity fusion, and social integration (Páez et al., 2015). Additionally, positive collective gatherings enhanced “personal and collective self-esteem and efficacy, positive affect, and positive social beliefs among participants” (Páez, 2015, p. 711), all of which were mediated by emotional communion, that is, “perceived emotional synchrony with others” (Páez, 2015, p. 711). In a study of ritual fire walkers, researchers found shared patterns of heart-rate dynamics between participants and some spectators, indicating a socio-emotional bond between those engaged in the ritual and spectators who knew the fire walkers personally (Xygalatas et al., 2011).

Collective gatherings are often associated with negative outcomes such as deindividuation, crowd aggression, and cultism (Gabriel et al., 2017). But in Durkheim’s (1912) conceptualization of collective effervescence, his interest was in the positive outcomes that come from being affiliated with a large group. Collective effervescence is enacted by collective ritual action, such as chanting, singing, dancing, reciting prayer, which serve to attune, synchronize, and entrain. According to Páez et al. (2015), “synchronized behaviors are accompanied by coordinated expressive manifestations in such a way that every participants’ mind, voice, and body becomes attuned to the state shared in the group” (p. 714).

The collective effect of effervescence is usually in the context of a collective assembly or crowd, and it is one that describes a state of beingness. A positive group experience of beingness can result in the net of these positive outcomes and may be associated with coherence.

Group Dynamics in a Virtual Space

Trust is one of the most important aspects of group work in a virtual space (Ford et al., 2017; Gilson et al., 2015; Panteli & Tucker, 2009) because it is associated with virtual team

success (Gilson et al., 2015). Aspects of virtual group life that lead to trust include familiarity with members, goal clarity for the group and among members, appropriate training, and the resolution of relationship and process conflicts (Bierly et al., 2009). In a face-to-face group, trust is partially established through observing each other engaged in the group's tasks, but since that is not possible in the same way with a virtual group, transparency plays an important role in establishing trust for virtual groups (Gilson et al., 2015). How power is managed can also play a role in the level of trust in virtual work. According to Panteli and Tucker (2009), if power is associated with knowledge and shifts to different members of the group as different knowledge is shared, trust will be positively correlated to that use of power. Coercive power usage was associated with low-trust teams and resulted in power battles, misunderstandings, and conflicts of interest being commonplace. Although trust is the most studied factor related to virtual teams (Gilson et al., 2015), a recent study examining the moderating effects of virtuality on the outcome of trust by Bierly et al. (2009) found that trust is not as important as previously deemed for virtual groups and called for hypotheses regarding the importance of trust in a virtual setting to be re-evaluated.

Additional factors contributing to success in a virtual space include entitativity (Blanchard & McBride, 2020), building rapport (Gramling, 2020), and effective facilitation (Dennen & Wieland, 2007; Gramling, 2020; Panteli & Tucker, 2009). Blanchard and McBride (2020) called for meeting design to focus on elements that cultivate entitativity, such as stating shared goals, demonstrating the "groupness" of the group by highlighting similarities, encouraging interaction, and encouraging boundaries around the group. Likewise, Gramling (2020) listed enhanced engagement, time for meaningful discussion, and providing an outlet and path forward for ideas and solutions in order to have a successful virtual meeting.

For the purposes of my study, cultivating swift trust was important, as was designing an engaging session that encouraged interaction, invited a sharing of similarities and like-mindedness, and used effective facilitation.

With the relevant group research introduced, I will now move deeper into the concepts of consciousness, intersubjectivity, and coherence as it is currently being discussed in the literature in the following section.

Consciousness, Intersubjectivity, and Coherence

In this section, I will explore what is found in the literature on the two main concepts on which this study is centered: intersubjectivity and coherence. An additional focus is consciousness, and likewise, I will offer an abridged discussion of consciousness.

What is Consciousness?

Defining consciousness is elusive and difficult (Knights et al., 2018; Taylor, 2018), and yet it is quite simple: human beings are consciousness (Taylor, 2018). Consciousness is experiential in nature, yet not related to task performance or doingness (Taylor, 2018), so it could be defined as “experiencing in the moment” (Knights et al., 2018, p. 153). Tsao and Laszlo (2019) explained:

Consciousness is the awareness by the mind of itself and the world. This awareness is not only of the Cartesian ‘I think, therefore I am’ variety. It also includes subjective experience, the raw feelings and emotions immediately present when we taste chocolate, smell coffee, or feel love for someone. (p. 5)

Taylor (2018) specified three aspects of consciousness. The first aspect is the inner experience of thoughts and experiences. Second, the center of consciousness is “the sense of ‘I’ with which we are aware of our own experience” (p. 56). This “self conscious observer” (p. 56) not only has experiences but is also aware of the experiences. The third aspect of consciousness is an awareness of things happening in the surrounds outside of the experiencer and available through

the senses. With Taylor's context, consciousness explained as "experiencing in the moment" (Knights et al., 2018, p. 153) comes to life, as it connotes the full experience of inner life, outer life, and the awareness of both.

Why is consciousness so hard to define? If we revisit Taylor's assertion that "we are consciousness," we would need to be able to step completely outside of ourselves in order to fully understand our subjective experiences (Taylor, 2018). Additionally, consciousness can only be understood by the person who experiences it, and the subjective nature of consciousness makes explaining it to someone else challenging. According to Knights et al. (2018), "It is very hard to express in words exactly what we are experiencing, and it is impossible to experience someone else's consciousness. However, our own experience may relate to how another person is communicating their experience" (p. 153).

The philosophical perspective on consciousness is most germane to my interest and study and is as follows: "Philosophical consciousness refers to a state of reality characterized by interiority, subjectivity, sentience, feeling, experience, self-agency, meaning, and purpose; philosophically, consciousness is a state or quality of being" (de Quincy, 2000, pp. 136–137). Essential beingness is the experience of consciousness. This study on coherence in the intersubjective field is a study of the consciousness, or beingness, of groups.

To bridge the space between consciousness and intersubjectivity, it is necessary to include subjectivity. De Quincy (2000) stipulated that a key element of consciousness, from the philosophical perspective, is awareness, which forms the basis for subjectivity. He provided two meanings for subjectivity: (1) "critical interiority" relating to the capacity for feeling that is "intrinsic," or "what-it-feels-like-from-within"; and (2) "private, independent, isolated experience" (p. 137). Where the second definition is grounded in the private experience, the first

definition allows for a subjectivity that can be shared. How one views subjectivity is important, according to de Quincy, because it helps to answer the crucial question of whether subjectivity or intersubjectivity comes first. For this study, I posit that intersubjectivity comes first.

To truly study intersubjectivity, one must enter through the field of consciousness (de Quincy, 2000). De Quincy (2000) explained that relational experiences are “the most vital manifestations of consciousness” (p. 135), so I now enter an exploration into intersubjectivity from the entry point of consciousness.

Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity (Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016), is “the shared inner dimension,” which “is represented spatially as between us (2nd person position), in contrast to inside us (subjective or 1st person position) or outside us (objective or 3rd person position)” (p. 12). In relational terms, intersubjectivity is “based on the notion of ‘we-ness,’ that we are always selves-in-relation-to-others” (Cunliffe & Hibbert, 2016, p. 54), and the field of intersubjectivity “is where the lifeworld is situated in a web of collectively evolving relationships” (Scharmer, 2016, p. 95). Simply stated, the intersubjective position is formed by two or more people joined together. With two of us joined together, I am one entity, you are one entity, and together, we form a third entity that is the intersubjective field.

Following the discussions on consciousness and subjectivity, de Quincy (2000) provided three depths of intersubjectivity, each presented as a definition. De Quincy’s first depth was the standard meaning with the two additional descriptions incorporating experiential-focused meanings, one he classified as “weak-experiential” and the other as the “strong-experiential” (p. 138):

Intersubjectivity 1 (standard meaning): consensual validation between independent subjects via exchange of signals, standard intersubjectivity relies on exchange of physical signals.

Intersubjectivity 2a (weak-experiential meaning): mutual engagement and participation between independent subjects, which conditions their respective experience. It is psychological. Weak or psychological intersubjectivity relies on nonphysical presence and affects the contents of pre-existing subjects.

Intersubjectivity 2b (strong-experiential meaning): mutual co-arising and engagement of interdependent subjects, or intersubjects, which creates their respective experience. It is ontological. Strong or ontological intersubjectivity relies on cocreative nonphysical presence and brings distinct subjects into being out of a prior matrix of relationships. (p. 138)

Intersubjectivity 1, in its basic description, does not address the depth and complexity of the intersubjective; and Intersubjective 2a begins to move into a richer definition, but is focused on the “contents, not the context, of consciousness” (p. 139). Neither of these definitions traverses the vastness of consciousness in the way that de Quincy’s third definition, Intersubjectivity 2b, does. The third definition speaks to the socially constructed nature of reality, where I am who I am, because of my experience and relations with other people. It is through you that I see myself, and likewise, you are you, because of my interaction and shared experience of consciousness with you. Not only do we co-create our experience, but I am also a compilation of all of the previous experiences I have had with others, as are you. In this way, subjectivity is secondary to the intersubjective. For the purposes of this study, I use de Quincy’s Intersubjective 2b definition, because it best addresses the depth and breadth of intersubjectivity in a way that most resonates with my thinking and experience.

A well-known demonstration of de Quincy’s (2000) intersubjective 2b definition is the African philosophy of Ubuntu. Nussbaum (2018) explicated Ubuntu:

Ubuntu is the art and quality of being human together and the responsibility that flows from living in community. *Umntu ngumuntu Ngabantu* is the Nguni term, from South Africa, meaning that people become people through people and more of who they are through dynamic relationships with other people. Ubuntu is not only about becoming more human in a social context, through basic compassion and respect for others. It also entails a lived spiritual commitment to the growth of all individuals within the growth. (p. 560)

Nussbaum's explanation of Ubuntu reflects the ongoing, generative aspect of the development of personhood through intersubjectivity.

Siegel (2006) added a neuropsychological element to our intersubjective experience, which he called "interpersonal neurobiology" (p. 248), and explained that we neurochemically entrain with each other through the mirror neurons system. Research has revealed that "the brain is capable of integrating perceptual learning with motor action to create internal representations of intentional states in others" (p. 254). According to Siegel, there is a physical, embodied component to intersubjectivity. Surrey (2005) explained that our "inner world is constituted through interaction with the interpersonal world, both in the course of early development and in on going, real-time contact with others" (p. 95). Plainly stated, our health and well-being are derived from our interaction with other people. "Intersubjective experience is, to varying degrees, an empathic experience in which we consider how others are experiencing the world and attempt to see through their eyes, walk in their shoes," according to Gunnlaugson et al. (2017, p. ix).

The space where intersubjects co-arise is the field, most often called the intersubjective field (Brabant & DiPerna, 2016; Gunnlaugson, 2011, 2016; Gunnlaugson et al., 2017; McCallum et al., 2016; Patten, 2016; T. Steininger & Debold, 2016), but also referred to as the social field (Scharmer, 2016). Scharmer (2016) elucidated the term, "the field," through cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch's explanation: "In a field, intention, body, and mind become

integrated together. You start to be aware of perception happening from the whole field, not from within a separate perceiver” (p. 148). The collective field can be characterized as a “larger tide of living intelligence” (Patten, 2010, para. 3) that arises through us and as “a shared field of attention where the collective can become an entity itself” sharing “awareness of our connectedness, our interweaving” (Baeck, 2016, para. 3). LaChapelle (2003) explained that the “energy of our life force, as it moves through the structure of the body/mind, generates a field” that “encodes the major experiences of a human being” and that when a group of people is together, “field entrainment”, which is the “sum total of all of those present”, is possible (p. 3).

The intersubjective field has been described as a felt sense experience, an embodied recognition of the field as an acknowledgment of its presence (Busby, 2016). Some scholars (Arruda & Gunnlaugson, 2017; Baeck & Titchen Beeth, 2013b) described the field as a separate entity, named the *Circle Being* by the Circle of Seven and borrowed by Baeck and Titchen Beeth. This *Circle Being* was described as something experienced and sensed through the body. Baeck (2016) later retracted her claim of the living *Circle Being* after four years of intersubjective work with groups and said that instead, the felt sense was actually an embodied sense of connectedness enabled through skillful means. LaChapelle (2003) described the embodied felt sense of the intersubjective field as something some humans are able to attune to, while others are not.

Of even more interest than the texture of the intersubjective field itself is the holding space that is necessary for coherence to be possible. Yorks (2005) discussed the importance of creating a “safe space or ‘container’ for engaging in open inquiry” (p. 1220) and attributed Mezirow (1991) with his assertion that trust and security are needed to create conditions to foster transformative learning. The container has also been named a liberating structure intended to

hold increasing awareness (Fisher & Torbert, 1995) or a *ba* as a shared social space (Nonaka et al., 2000). Heifetz and his co-authors (2009) called the space a “holding environment” (p. 155) that was derived from a mother holding an infant and provides “safety and structure for people to surface and discuss the particular values, perspectives, and creative ideas they have on the challenging situation they all face” (p. 155). Yorks (2005) discussed the importance of creating this safe container and acknowledged that “this kind of generative social space intentionally changes the relationship among participants” (p. 1221) as it serves as “holding space of deep listening with unconditional love” (Scharmer, 2016, p. 246). The container is often described as best managed by a facilitator or coach (Busby, 2016; Gunnlaugson, 2016; Gunnlaugson & Walker, 2014; Guttenstein et al., 2014; Hartley, 2014).

Within the intersubjective, there exists a perpetual polarity between individual self and self-in-relation-to-others. Unlike unhealthy group cohesion that suppresses the individual self, the experience of self is heightened in an evolutionary intersubjective field (Brabant & DiPerna, 2016; Briskin et al., 2001; Caspari & Schilling, 2016; Gunnlaugson, 2016; Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016; Heron, 1992; McCallum et al., 2016; Palmer, 2004). Heron (1992) explained that human development occurs most acutely as the individual interacts with others, and during that interaction, the person will find his or herself alternating between the individuating and participatory modes:

Within the psyche as a whole and within each psychological mode there is, I propose, a basic polarity between an individuating function and a participatory one. The former makes for experience of individual distinctness; the latter for experience of unitive interaction with a whole field of being. These two poles do not exclude each other; instead the two functions interact along a continuum in which one is most dominant at one end, and the other at the other end. (p. 15)

In a cohered group, both the individual and the group have a heightened experience. Briskin et al. (2001) shared the story of a group member who experienced this coherence within a group

and explained that “the two (individual and group) seemed to grow hand in hand” (p. 28).

DiPerna (2014) explained a profound potential for both individuals and groups setting the intention to coalesce intersubjectively: “The autonomy of the individual is supercharged rather than surrendered, because now it is plugged into and supported by a larger ‘We’” (p. 173). In this way, intersubjectivity heightens a sense of individual agency, inviting one’s highest and most authentic self to be present. This seems to be in opposition to groupthink and similar group dysfunctions that create an atmosphere of homogeneity in which individual differences may be a threat to the group’s functioning (Cartwright, 1968; Forsyth, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

The intersubjective field holds promise for an enhanced means of confronting complexity through deepened, shared consciousness. As Einstein said (New York Times, 1946), “A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels” (p. 11). Our societal issues have become more complex, becoming wicked and intractable, yet we continue to attempt to solve these problems, such as poverty and the wealth gap, environmental sustainability, and equity and inclusion, in the same ways as we have for a century with “an outdated model of the social organization of meaning” (Pór, 2008, p. 11). When groups come together with the intention of raising consciousness, they can enter resonance and coherence that results in the enhanced ability to engage with complexity in new and novel ways. Evolutionarily speaking, it may be that we, as a species, are only now able to engage with this higher complexity through our ability to engage in self-reflection and conscious awareness (DiPerna, 2014). This shift may be an evolutionary imperative, and we may begin to “see it as a moral obligation to develop our talents to their fullest capacity in hopes that they might serve the larger vision” (DiPerna, 2014, p. 171).

The intersubjective field, with its potential for collective intelligence, wisdom, and groupmind, is only accessible by transcending the ego and engaging adult development intentionally. Coming together, cohering, in the intersubjective field is not always possible, and it cannot be forced (Caspari & Schilling, 2016; Gunnlaugson, 2016). As Montero and Colman (2000) explained, individuality may feel threatened by group processes resulting in an over-reliance on being able to flee any discomfort: “It is not surprising that most groups, faced with our emphasis on collective rather than individual experience, develop, initially at least, strong negative transference responses” (p. 205). Caspari and Schilling (2016) reported that this chaos is a necessary part of moving toward shifting consciousness, and Cox (2014) explained that without awareness, individuals’ egos can interfere with a group experiencing depth and resonance. “These spaces are . . . fragile, subject to disruption by strong personalities and situational forces” (Yorks, 2005, p. 1234). Spiritual development and awakening, or *waking up*, does not provide the necessary mindset to engage with complexity, and instead, a different developmental path, *growing up* that can only happen through intersubjectivity, is needed (Snow, 2015). Waking up remains crucial as the process of awakening can aid one’s ability to grow up, both of which can be enhanced through mindfulness practice. Likewise, mindfulness supports the developmental process while that deep learning is enhanced through engagement with other people (Wergin, 2020).

Cultivating group beingness and intersubjectivity is possible. The term coherence is often used to refer to this cultivation, and in the next section, I explore what coherence is as well as two related terms, entrainment and emergence.

Coherence

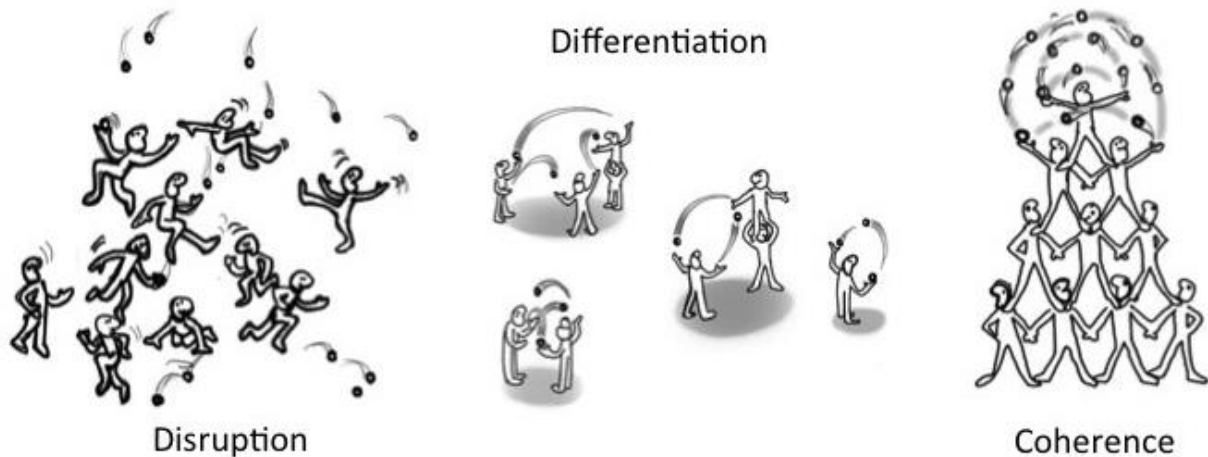
According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), to cohere means “to hold together firmly as parts of the same mass” and “to become united in principles, relationships, or interests.” The term coherence is often connected with discussions about intersubjectivity (Baeck, 2016; Baeck & Titchen Beeth, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b; Briskin et al., 2001; Childre & Cryer, 2000; Gunnlaugson, 2011; Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016; Guttenstein et al., 2014; C. Hamilton, 2004; McTaggart, 2011; Rebel Wisdom, n.d.; Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996) and describes the coming together of two or more people. For the purposes of my study, I am primarily interested in coherence as it pertains to groups. In his article on collective intelligence, Hamilton (2004) quoted organizational consultant Robert Kenny in his description of group coherence:

When the group reaches a certain level of coherence, generally there’s some higher level of order that comes into the room and it’s very noticeable to people. It’s like something has shifted. People stop fighting for airspace and there’s a kind of group intuition that develops. It’s almost like the group as a whole becomes a tuning fork for the inflow of wisdom. (p. 58)

In Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers’ (1996) poetic take on coherence, they explained that “life coheres into selves and systems. It brings together seemingly separate elements to create and discover new meaning. Life moves, creating more of itself in the unlimitable space of wholeness” (p. 90). In the film, *Making sense of sensemaking* (Rebel Wisdom, 2019), Schmachtenberger et al. argued that coherence cannot be defined, because there is no current language that fully conveys the experience of coherence. Greenhall explained that a way of describing it is by looking at collective intelligence that “has a high degree of capacity in the space of novelty and an intrinsic anti-fragility in human and nature complexity” (14:45), but that it can only be understood after the experience. It is akin to flow, but also different from flow in that it is “flow absent content” (14:55). In Gunnlaugson and Brabant’s (2016) book, various

authors described coherence as “felt as enormous support and sense of shared well-being” (Glickman & Boyar, 2016, p. 106), “internal alignment...that energy is optimized” (M. Hamilton et al., 2016, p. 138), a result of attuning to heart intelligence and having trust (Patten, 2016), and a sense that “everything falls into place” (Steininger & Debold, 2016, p. 275) resulting in creativity and new potential.

A challenge with intersubjectivity and coherence is first, the ability for a group to enter, and then, to sustain coherence (Brabant & DiPerna, 2016; Cox, 2014; Guttentstein et al., 2014). In his study, Yorks (2005) found that even when a group is able to “cross the threshold into a collaborative space” (p. 1233), they were not able to sustain that space and experienced movement back and forth. It may be that disruption precedes coherence (Holman, 2010) with differentiation playing a mediating role (Figure 2.3). As the experience of coherence is not always intentional, it can be accidentally engaged through a sort of “stumbling into transient coherence” (Rebel Wisdom, 2019, 43:30) which may be followed by efforts to make sense of the experience with old structures of sensemaking. To understand coherence, we must focus on coherence that has already been achieved, according to Rebel Wisdom’s Greenhall, and then build on those experiences, reasoning that “you get better at it when you go slow and learn along the way” (47:54). This study of coherence in the intersubjective field may have contributed as a building-block experience in that the groups experienced coherence and then explained their experiences in a way that elucidated and educated.

Figure 2.3*Holman's The Nature of Emergence*

Note: Holman's conceptualization of emergence. Republished with permission of Berrett-Koehler Publishers from *Engaging Emergence: Turning Upheaval into Opportunity*, Holman, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

It may be that coherence can be experienced on a large scale. The HeartMath Institute's (HMI) Global Coherence Initiative (GCI) is a "science-based, co-creative project to unite people in heart-focused care and intention" (McCraty et al., 2012, p. 64) and has been gathering data for the better part of a decade. GCI is backed by HMI's research on individual heart-coherence as well as social coherence, the name they give coherence among a group. McCraty and other researchers at HMI have studied heart-coherence, what they refer to as an optimal internal state of well-being involving heart and emotions entraining causing a beneficial cascade of neurochemicals (HeartMath Institute, n.d.). The researchers have reported that the heart's magnetic field can be measured outside of the body and changes in one person's attitudes, emotions, and behaviors can affect those around them. When one is in a state of individual coherence, the heart resonates in the same frequency range as the Earth's magnetic field,

according to McCraty et al. (2012). When a group is in coherence together, which HMI refers to as social coherence, this effect is magnified. Taking their understanding of individual heart-coherence and social coherence, HMI has sought to collect data for collective coherence from all over the globe through the use of 14 magnetic field detectors, the Global Consciousness Project's random number generators, and other instruments installed around the planet measuring fluctuations in the field. Additionally, data is captured through the GCI app, users of which report their heart-coherence, emotions, and attitudes through journaling and recording functionality. HMI's intention is to intentionally shift human consciousness, and they offer the following hypothesis:

When enough individuals and social groups increase their coherence baseline and utilize that increased coherence to intentionally create a more coherent standing reference wave in the global field, it will help increase global consciousness. This can be achieved when an increasing number of people move towards a more balanced and self-regulated emotions and responses. (McCraty et al., 2012, p. 64)

Often used interchangeably, coherence and cohesion are not synonymous. Cohesion is one of the most researched topics within the group dynamics field of study, as discussed in an earlier section. Like coherence, cohesion often describes the glue that holds a group together. Caspari and Schilling (2016) differentiated the two terms as follows:

By coherence cycles, we mean people, matters, ideas, ways of thinking organically and in a self-organized fashion “stick together”; by cohesion, we mean the group practices that keep people within social confines of a group where naturally there is a ‘with us’ and a ‘not part of us’ or even ‘against us.’ (pp. 67–68)

The difference found in the two definitions is the degree to which the group comes together. Cohesion relates to unity within the group where individuals join together harmoniously. Coherence, on the other hand, takes group cohesion further, resulting in oneness and non-duality wherein the individuals within the group actually join energetically and in consciousness with other members, creating one whole. While cohesion is certainly a necessary element of group

and teamwork, particularly in the business environment, coherence is a transformational experience for both the individual and the group. Both happen within the intersubjective field, but only coherence involves a deep shift of self and consciousness toward an exquisite oneness that is difficult to describe until it is experienced. Coherence may in fact have an embodied, neuroscientific element, as described earlier in work from Siegel (2006) and Surrey (2005). According to Hamilton (2004), “Just as we can create order in physical systems, a number of experiments have suggested that two or more people can create synchronization or coherence between their nervous systems” (p. 79).

Two additional phenomena that appear often in discussions regarding coherence are entrainment and emergence. In general terms, entrainment could be considered a mediator of coherence while emergence may be seen as an outcome. According to Sandra and Nandram (2020), “Entrainment is a process of synchronization and interconnectedness within, between, and across rhythmic activities” (p. 317). Entrainment is first and foremost a process. That process is focused on two or more “autonomous rhythmic processes” (p. 318) interacting, so that they begin to synchronize and “eventually lock-in to a common phase and/or periodicity, most often to the rhythm being more powerful or dominant” (p. 317). The authors stated that “applying spiritual leadership at each level of an organization can drive (inter)connectedness in today's organizations through entrainment” (p. 316). Drawing from Fry's (2003) three-component model of spiritual leadership (vision, altruistic love, hope/faith), Sandra and Nandram (2020) argued that all three aspects of spiritual leadership, if present, can influence entrainment within an organization. The outcome of entrainment is coherence. Entrainment, then, serves as a key mediator of coherence. Similar to synchrony discussed earlier, a group must attune to each other and move into entrainment to find a rhythm to which they may drop into.

Another term often found in the literature related to intersubjectivity, frequently in the same conversations in which coherence is discussed, is emergence (Briskin et al., 2001; Gunnlaugson, 2011; Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016; C. Hamilton, 2004; Holman, 2010; Scharmer, 2016; Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996). Caspari and Schilling (2016) explained emergence as “Latin for appearing ‘arising’ or ‘arising out of’[it] is the spontaneous coming into being of new characteristics or structures of a system out of the interplay of its elements” (p. 62) and stated that “one cannot make emergence happen” (p. 70). Holman (2010) provided a stream-lined definition of emergence explaining it as “order arising out of chaos” (p. ix). Her more detailed definition is laid out as “higher order complexity arising out of chaos in which novel, coherent structures coalesce through interactions among the diverse entities of a system” (Holman, 2010, p. 18). Emergence happens when “a system displays qualities that cannot be found in its components” (Peschl & Dundneider, 2014, p. 220).

Although the experiences of coherence and emergence can hardly be distilled down into a linear process, coherence appears to precede emergence. Hamilton et al. (2016) explained that “emergence happens through coherence and resonance” (p. 139) and Arruda and Gunnlaugson’s (2017) exploration of the Circle of Seven found that “the charged container facilitates the emergence of the Collective Presence” (p. 99). Busby (2016) explained the experience of coherence and emergence as follows:

When we allow our attunement and feedback practices to become ever more informed by subtle content then there is a felt intensification of the field, and the impact on us of the information that becomes available is also perceived to increase. Its impact is sometimes referred to as evolutionary in that it awakens people to their next steps in terms of evolutionary unfoldment, facilitating the emergence of higher-level human capacities and sensitivities. (p. 52)

Holman’s (2010) view is different. She explained emergence as a form of change, wherein a system experiences disruption, followed by differentiation, and then coherence. In this view of

emergence, coherence serves as a sub-set of and element within emergence. Holman's view speaks to the non-linear nature of intersubjectivity and coherence. Although this study is not focused on outcomes beyond coherence, emergence may be an interesting phenomenon to watch for to strengthen the relationship between it and coherence.

In Summary: A Metaphor

There is considerable interplay and connection among consciousness, intersubjectivity, entrainment, coherence, and emergence. I draw on the metaphor of sport and the field of play. The space where play is enacted in sport, the playing field, can be considered the intersubjective field. Players involved in the game are individuals who are entering the field. The team begins to attune to each other, moving into a process of entrainment. When the individuals become entrained, moving into the magical experience of a high-performing team, anticipating each other's movement, reading each other's thoughts, and creating seamlessness from one player to the next, the team is cohering and moving into a more advanced state of being. The result of the play in this cohered state of being may seem almost otherworldly. Any revolutionary techniques or patterns that may emerge from this extraordinary play may indicate emergence. This is the possibility within intersubjectivity.

As stated, coherence does not always come easily; therefore, facilitated practices that can encourage the movement into coherence provided important scaffolding for this study. In the next section, I will provide an overview of facilitative elements as well as some facilitation models designed specifically for deep connection.

Intersubjective Practices and Facilitations

My study of coherence in the intersubjective field involved facilitated sessions, during which I led different groups through a series of practices that resulted in them moving into

coherence. The interest in this kind of facilitation seems to be in many group facilitators' areas of interest, and there are a number that appear to be promising. Below, I discuss the commonalities among these practices and facilitations, which appear to show the greatest promise for supporting a group moving through the threshold into coherence. Following these common elements, I explore a few of the facilitations more thoroughly, as they influenced elements of my study.

In relation to the area of social coherence, the most commonly written line of inquiry involves the use of practices and facilitated methods in order to move a group toward the possibility of coherence and emergence, often with the purpose of expanding consciousness (Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016). Among the best-known of these facilitated models are Scharmer's Theory U (2016) and Palmer's Circle of Trust (2004). Theory U incorporates a form of silence, mindfulness, and sensing, called *presencing*, that has opened an area of exploration for scholars and practitioners (Baeck, 2016; Cox, 2014; Gunnlaugson, 2011, 2016; Gunnlaugson & Walker, 2014; Peschl & Fundneider, 2014). Silence, stillness, and mindfulness practices are elements of almost all of the processes and practices, and the use of language, discourse, and dialogue are also key practices (Caspari & Schilling, 2016; Gunnlaugson, 2011, 2016; Gunnlaugson & Moze, 2012; Scharmer, 2016).

In addition to silence/stillness and dialogue, I found a number of other commonalities among the facilitations and practices discussed in the literature. Among them:

- **Safe spaces and containers.** Scharmer (2016) referred to a container as a “holding space of deep listening with unconditional love” (p. 246) and Guttenstein et al. (2014) referred to the container as “an environment that is both visible and invisible” that has a “direct impact on the functioning of a group” (p. 169). For entrainment and

- coherence to be possible, members of the group must feel safe, so the container should support safety.
- **Facilitating deeper levels of consciousness.** Facilitating a shift from a normal waking state into deeper states of consciousness and beingness serves as a focal point to a growing number of facilitation models (Bohm, 1996; Gunnlaugson, 2011; Gunnlaugson & Moze, 2012; Palmer, 2004; Scharmer, 2016) and was the specific area of inquiry of this study. These deepening states of consciousness open the door to coherence and emergence.
 - **Mythopoetic elements.** The models often invoke a mythopoetic element, such as poetry, photography, stories, and storytelling, to shift into more a heart-centered and less analytical way of being. Scharmer (2016) included in his model visual facilitation, the use of imagery, and a form of dramatic arts and interpretation that he called Social Presencing Theater. Palmer (2004) employed the use of poetry and fables as well as storytelling. And Laloux (2014) described the use of storytelling as a practice of wholeness.

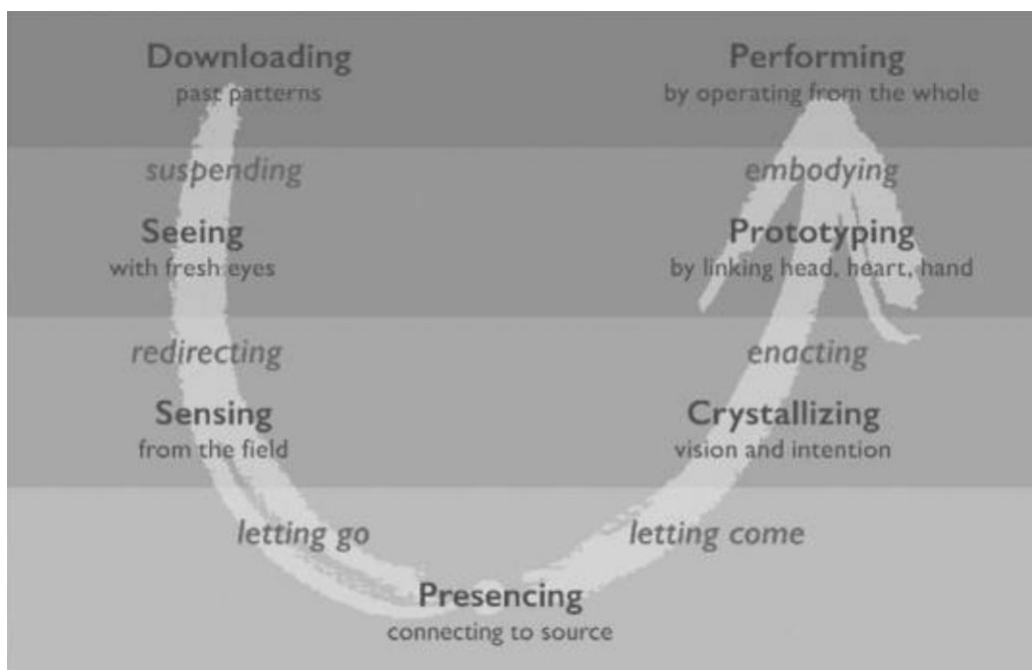
Based on the literature in the area of practices and facilitations aimed at connecting and cohering a group, the following general elements appear to be important to include in a group facilitation when helping the participants to move from individuals to a cohered whole: silence/stillness, attention toward building and maintaining a group container and using mythopoetic elements, all of which were included in this study's facilitated sessions. Next, I move into more detail regarding specific models, practices, and facilitated elements that influenced elements of the facilitated session in my study.

Otto Scharmer and Theory U

Theory U (Scharmer, 2016) is a model (Figure 2.4) designed to harness collective intelligence in order to engage with and solve the intractable issues of our time. Scharmer's U process facilitates groups through a deepening experience beginning with analytical thinking, then moving to heart-centered awareness, and then opening to the field of future possibility through the portals of open mind, open heart, open will, and into deep presencing. The process of moving from open mind to open heart to open will involves the use of all senses as well as different ways of knowing, such as somatic and heart intelligence. Scharmer called this process *sensing*, and when done collectively, *co-sensing*. Co-sensing played an important role in this study, and I will explore co-sensing fully in Chapter V.

Figure 2.4

Scharmer's The Complete U: Six Inflection Points



Note: Scharmer's Theory U model. Republished with permission of Berrett-Koehler Publishers from *Theory U: Turning Upheaval into Opportunity*, Scharmer, 2016; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

David Bohm and Dialogue

Bohm, a physicist, developed dialogue, a group process that “explores an unusually wide range of human experience” and “the manner in which thought—viewed by Bohm as an inherently limited medium, rather than an objective representation of reality—is generated and sustained at the collective level,” according to Nichol (Bohm, 1996, p. vii). Bohm’s focus on mindful dialogue was among the first of its kind to bring together an aspect of a collective meditative presence with heartfelt communication. Others, including Scharmer, followed Bohm’s pioneering work. Key to the process is the practice of suspension, during which individuals’ preconceived notions are suspended and held, allowing for an objective examination of those notions. Bohm posited that thoughts are generated from the collective and adopted at the individual level without the individual’s awareness. Where humans typically view thought as self-generated and factual, Bohm (1996) claimed, “Thought is the problem” (p. 11). The act of group suspension supported my study and allowed participants to not immediately know what the group is experiencing, which seemed to open a space for curiosity and openness.

Parker Palmer and Circle of Trust

Palmer (2004) created a group facilitation model called the Circle of Trust, for which he facilitated groups of all kinds for decades. Palmer’s model, focused on deep dialogue and meditative presence, seems to be closely related to Bohm’s dialogue and Scharmer’s U process. Palmer’s insights for bringing forth the soul focused on creating a holding space for the group to gently invite their souls to emerge. He went into detail concerning how a facilitator creates that space by engaging non-fixing listening among members who are encouraged to pay attention to their interiority instead of trying to change others’ experiences. Finally, Palmer invokes the use of fables, poetry, and storytelling to help members to shift out of the analytical and into a more

creative, emergent experience. Elements of this model that were applied to this study include the importance of non-fixing listening, creating a container or holding space to gently invite the soul, and the use of mythopoetic elements, such as art and video.

Consciousness Raising Practices in a Virtual Space

This study was conducted during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as such, I conducted the group facilitations and focus group meetings virtually via an online platform. Acknowledging that deep connection is usually conceived of as something that happens within close physical proximity, the times we are living in has spurred some experienced facilitators of coherence work to share ways to access the phenomenon while working remotely. They claim it is possible. While this work has not yet been captured through literature, it is being presented in webinars. I have engaged in trainings from a number of these experts, and below, I detail the practices that lent themselves to my study.

Elizabeth Debold and Thomas Steininger, in conjunction with their organization, One World In Dialogue, offered a webinar called Creating Online Aliveness (personal communication, June 10–12, 2020), in which they provided practices for creating a deep connection among participants during a virtual meeting. Debold and Steininger have been honing their craft over a number of years as they have been conducting deeply connected experiences for a global audience using an online platform. By pausing, really noticing each other, and being intentional about taking each other in, a different kind of virtual connection can be achieved (Debold & Steininger, personal communication, June 10–12, 2020). Debold and Steininger stressed that this ability to connect via technology is both exciting and new, and it also requires different skills and awareness. Those skills are evolutionary in nature and require an ability to connect using consciousness and by tuning into each participant in their own private space. This

glimpse into each other's private spaces actually facilitates an intimate connection, allowing us to realize that while it is a virtual gathering, all participants are indeed quite real. This virtual versus real juxtaposition is a phrase Steininger repeated many times, emphasizing the need to develop a new capacity for being present with each other. Among the practices Debold and Steininger provided, three of which were included in the facilitated sessions of this study, was deep eye-gazing, for which participants gaze deep into each other's eyes (providing cultural differences do not preclude this practice). One participant described the deep gazing as being reminiscent of the Zulu greeting, "Sawubona" (I see you), and the response, "Ngikhona" (I am here).

The second practice involved each participant leaning forward to connect with others and to feel into the we-space and then leaning back to fully take in one's own environment, the shifting pattern for which allowed participants to become tuned into the different kinds of attention and awareness they were using. The third practice involved conversations about participants' experiences of each other's and their own consciousness. Debold and Steininger explained that by discussing the experience of connecting in this way could actually enhance and deepen the experience for all. In addition to practices, the facilitators provided a useful list of tips to enhance the virtual experience:

- Minimize use of the chat feature to cut down on distractions,
- Encourage participants to turn off their self-view, so they are not distracted by their own faces staring back at them,
- Start with silence to support participants in tuning in and synchronizing, and

- Invite participants to sit close to the camera, to be mindful of good, full lighting, and to turn off any artificial background, all of which facilitate the potential for increased intimacy.

Debold and Steininger encouraged the abundant use of breaks, and during breaks, they invited us all to go outside to get grounded in our own sensuous experience.

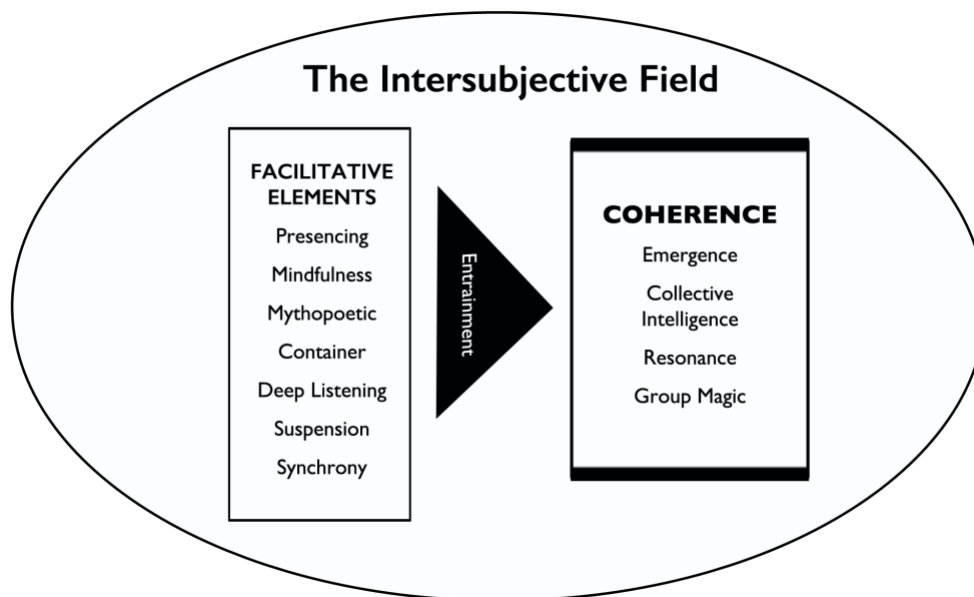
Patricia Albere offered an online course called Mutual Awakening, during which she presented a very direct method of connecting with each other's origination points (personal communication, September 16, 2020). According to Albere (2017), "Each of us has an origination point, a point of light that comes from the source of our existence, which radiates into the world and expresses itself in the form of our particular life" (p. 43). Like Debold and Steininger's practice, the origination point can be found through a form of deep gazing, which Albere stipulated as deeper than gazing (personal communication, September 16, 2020), wherein participants find each other through their spiritual essences. The mutual awakening practice can be done either in the same physical location or via video conferencing media.

Scharmer's Presencing Institute has crafted a list of guiding principles for conducting transformational online meetings. Included in the list of principles are the same commonalities as mentioned earlier in this section. What is different is that the authoring organization has the experience of leading tens of thousands of participants from all over the world in a variety of courses, webinars, and experiences, allowing them to fine-tune the list to practices they have found over time to be valuable and helpful. The principles served as a checklist for my study, helping me to ensure that I included as many support elements as possible to create a space for a group to shift into coherence.

Implications for this Study

Summarizing the areas of intersubjectivity and coherence discussed above, practices and facilitated processes with the purpose of supporting a group's movement into coherence can be effective according to scholars and practitioners, providing they are loosely held. I am a professional facilitator, and as such, I am aware of how important proper facilitation techniques are in order to create the all-important container. Concerning this study on coherence in the intersubjective field, I drew on the practices and facilitation methods from Scharmer and Theory U, Palmer, Debold and Steininger, and the Presencing Institute, all of which assisted in building the container, entering entrainment, and then moving into coherence.

These facilitation elements supported entrainment for the groups I was studying. With entrainment came coherence. Coherence, a shift in both energy and consciousness that transforms a group from individuals to one whole, is a state that holds the possibility for emergence as well as collective intelligence, collective wisdom, groupmind, and interbeing (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5*The Intersubjective Field*

In the next section, I will introduce two additional scholarly pieces that provide the jumping-off point for the study of coherence in the intersubjective field, and then further explore my study question by elucidating the gap the two studies provide.

The Study of Social Coherence

The review of literature contained in this chapter has led me to an interest in the phenomenon of coherence in the intersubjective field, that is, in a group setting. The literature speaks to coherence in a theoretical sense and rarely studies the phenomenon directly. My area of inquiry is an emerging field, which means it is a new area to study empirically. Based on what I have uncovered, it seems most important to explore the experience of coherence further, since it is largely missing in the literature.

Jumping-off Studies

Two qualitative studies (Briskin et al., 2001; Levi, 2003) explore group phenomena: collective intelligence and collective resonance. Although these were the most relevant to my

study, they would not be considered current, both having been authored approximately 20 years ago. Both studies received funding from the Fetzer Institute, one building on the next, and both used a retrospective methodology in which individuals were interviewed about how they remembered separate experiences of coherence.

Facilitating Collective Intelligence

The Fetzer Institute became intrigued by group phenomena when an institutional assessment from 1996–1997 listed groups as the “art form of the future” (Briskin et al., 2001, p. 4) and engaged a team of researchers to explore group phenomena. The team interviewed 61 consultants well-known for their successful and transformative work with teams and groups to answer the following question: How do we come together in order to touch, or be touched by, the intelligence we need? Among those interviewed were well-known names including Parker Palmer, Otto Scharmer, and Adam Kahane.

Briskin et al. (2001) primarily used the term collective intelligence to describe the group phenomenon. But throughout their inquiry, they uncovered a multitude of terms facilitators used to describe what happens in the intersubjective field, including collective intelligence, group synergy, group mind, collective wisdom, spiritual wisdom, collective knowing, group wisdom, magic, “being in the zone,” Kairos, the transpersonal realm, koinonia, and divine intelligence. From the interviews, the authors identified seven themes, 14 principles, and 11 practices related to collective intelligence. The 14 principles of collective intelligence (Table 2.1) were classified into two groups, elements of the experience (the What) and significance of the gathering (the Why).

Table 2.1*Briskin et al. (2001) Findings*

The What (Elements of the Experience)	The Why (Significance of the Gathering)
Quickening – the moment the magic happens	Connectedness
Synchronicity	Remembering
Surprise, mystery, and alchemy	Synergy
Storytelling	Serving wholeness
Movement of the whole	Witnessing
Love	Healing
Facing the darkness	
Silence	

The authors established that *something* can happen that shifts and/or elevates a group process from chaotic and circular to one where the group breaks through a portal into a more cohered, effective, and resonant whole able to effectively solve problems, sense make, and move through difficulty. That *something*, however, remains elusive and anecdotal as the authors do not narrow or name clearly what they uncovered through interviews and data analysis. Additionally, because the study was paid for and published by Fetzer, it was never peer reviewed, and hence, the rigor of the study is in question. Even with the problems stated, Fetzer's study provided important language and conveyed the experience of coherence from the facilitator perspective and therefore provides important groundwork for my study. Briskin et al. (2001) used a retrospective methodology focusing on participants who believed they had had coherence experiences. One-on-one interviews reported 61 different, discrete instances of groups coming together in varying ways, breaking through discord, and arriving in a place where they had breakthrough experiences. Although not named coherence, the experiences described sound very

much like those described by other scholars and writers. But because the 61 experiences were idiosyncratic, I am left wondering if these were indeed group-level phenomena. The individualistic nature of the studies does not allow for an intersubjective investigation of the experiences, which would be needed in order to establish if these were, indeed, all group-level phenomena. This important question about this study provides a significant gap and opening for my own study, which was performed through group experiences and interviews.

Group Magic and Collective Resonance

Taking up the Fetzer Institute's inquiry into group phenomena, Levi (2003) engaged in a partially-funded-by-Fetzer study of the group phenomenon she called *group magic*. The qualitative study involved the author gathering and interpreting experiences of collective resonance, for which 34 subjects were interviewed on the topic of experiences of resonance in a group. Levi (2003) defined collective resonance as "a felt physical and energetic sense of connection that occurs in a group of human beings that positively influences the way they interact toward a common purpose" (p. ii) and opened the inquiry to include experiences that were energetic, physical, intuitive, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual in nature.

Levi (2003) reported her findings into two categories (Table 2.2): what the experience was like, that is, how subjects described what the phenomenon felt like; and how it happened, such as factors that subjects described as facilitators of collective resonance.

Table 2.2*Levi's (2003) Findings*

What It Was Like	How It Happened
Felt in the body	Vulnerability
Rhythm or flow	Silence
Emotion	Story or storytelling
Connection to others	Place or space
Moves individual and collective boundaries	Container contraction
High energy	Shared intent
Touch or close physical proximity	Truth
Shift out of the cognitive domain	Sound and vibration
Felt as a connection to self	Spirit
Calm, grounded, relaxed	
Altered state of consciousness	
An energy field	
Connection to spirit	
Total presence or engagement	

Like the Briskin et al. (2001) study, Levi's was also conducted using a retrospective methodology centered on one-on-one interviews with people recounting purported experiences of collective resonance. There was one exception: Levi did include one group of three people who were interviewed together regarding the same event; however, this was a solitary example within the study. Because this study was conducted with individual subjects in separate groups reporting on uncorroborated intersubjectivity, this study also provided an opening for my study, which asked similar questions but involved multiple subjects from the same groups.

Analysis of Jumping-off Studies

Based on the findings from these two studies, I believe that a phenomenon can happen within groups that allows the group to transform from a disconnected group of individuals into a harmonic, deeply connected single entity able to navigate the human experience in a unified state, and that is what I experienced with the groups I studied. Common to both Levi's (2003) and Briskin et al.'s (2001) studies are the elements of a deep experience of connection to both self and others, the practice of storytelling, a collective experience of silence whether intentional or emergent and an experience of a quickening or contraction of the group container as it passed through the threshold into coherence. Clearly, something significant was happening in these groups that the subjects were describing.

Briskin et al. (2001) and Levi (2003) empirically explored what collective intelligence and resonance are and how they may be experienced. These two studies, which build upon each other, remain the closest connections to my area of inquiry. But both studies lacked an element of corroboration through engaging an entire group or team in a group interview. The benefit of interviewing the entire group is that it provides the group with an opportunity to discuss moments of transition from incoherence to coherence and to determine if there is agreement on what occurred, when it occurred, and how individual members experienced such moments.

Interestingly, the two papers share one crucial gap: the experiential nature of group or social coherence. As a reader, I am left wondering what it is really like to experience coherence intersubjectively.

Coherence in the Intersubjective Field

Based on the literature and the existing gap in my area of inquiry, this study explored the group experience of coherence from both the I and we positions and was guided by the following

research question: What is the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective field? The inquiry directly addressed the opportunity to study this group phenomenon in a way that others have not, which therefore adds to the extant literature and knowledge in the field.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation study aimed to inquire into group or social beingness through an exploration of the phenomenon of coherence. Group beingness is a departure from group research in that the majority of research on groups and group dynamics is focused on group performance and efficacy, that is, group doingness. Group beingness inhabits the realms of consciousness, interconnectedness, and most prominently, intersubjectivity. Social coherence, which has been described as group magic (Levi, 2003) and group flow without the association of task or content (Rebel Wisdom, 2019), could be explained as a heightened experience of group beingness where the group-level embodiment of interconnectedness, attunement, and resonance results in a coming home among members. In spiritual parlance, we may call the coming home an experience of oneness and non-duality.

Although the phenomenon has been frequently discussed in literature conceptually and theoretically, it has rarely been studied empirically. The few studies available have been performed retrospectively and from an individual, idiosyncratic perspective, leaving a gap in the literature related to studies of coherence from an intersubjective position. The gap in research has created an important opening for defining what coherence is. Is coherence an individual-level phenomenon, where one member of a group may feel extraordinarily connected to those around them? Or is it indeed a group-level phenomenon experienced by multiple or all members of a group? Without approaching a study on coherence from the intersubjective position, that question cannot be answered.

This study aimed not only to explore the phenomenon of coherence but also to focus on the phenomenon as it is experienced collectively. Based on what I hoped to learn, the research question that I investigated was: what is the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective

field? The question was investigated through an interpretive phenomenological study. The study's design included a treatment, which was a group coherence session that I facilitated with two small groups. Data were collected through observation during the treatment sessions, group interviews, and follow-up, qualitative questionnaires. The choice of methodology flowed logically: phenomenology is the study of phenomena (Gill, 2014), with coherence being the phenomenon in question. Additionally, phenomenology is described as the study of consciousness (Smith et al., 2009) and lived experience (Finlay, 2009b), both of which are highly appropriate for this study through a phenomenological lens.

Epistemology, Ontology, and Worldview

How one views phenomena has much to do with her worldview and epistemological and ontological stances. My ontological stance is firmly rooted in phenomenology, where I resonate with a focus on a human's beingness, that is, how a person experiences the world, in the quest to understand human consciousness.

I view reality as something that is socially constructed through social interaction and relationships. Further, I believe there is no one truth. Instead, truth is determined by who is experiencing it and how they perceive it. I would therefore be considered a constructivist. The constructivist worldview is borne from that idea: that reality is socially constructed. According to Berger and Luckman (1966):

Human existence is, *ab initio*, an ongoing externalization. As man externalizes himself, he constructs the world into which he externalizes himself. In the process of externalization, he projects his own meanings into reality. Symbolic universes, which proclaim that all reality is humanly meaningful and called upon the entire cosmos to signify validity of human existence, the farthest reaches of this projection. (p. 104)

Human beings seek to understand the world in which they live and work through the subjective construction of varied, dynamic meaning. Social constructivist researchers, then, seek a

complexity of meanings and views in place of seeking one truth or one reality. They glean this complexity of meanings by engaging in their subjects' lifeworlds, most commonly through conversations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of phenomenology as a research methodology in terms of its philosophical roots before undertaking a deeper dive into interpretive phenomenology. With the foundation poured, I will then move into a discussion about the methods employed in this study. Next, I provide approach elements germane to my study, discuss methodological fit, and then move into the design of my study. The research design section includes details including the study's rationale and approach, participants and selection criteria, ethical considerations, and procedures.

Introduction to Phenomenology

Within the constructivist worldview, researchers design studies using qualitative methodologies, one of which is phenomenology. Phenomenology is a methodology that "refers to the study of phenomena" (Gill, 2014) described as the study of consciousness. According to Giorgi (1997):

Phenomenology thematizes the phenomenon of consciousness, and, in its most comprehensive sense, it refers to the totality of lived experiences that belong to a single person. However, within phenomenology, consciousness enjoys a privileged status because it cannot be avoided. That is, either one acknowledges its presence and role or else it silently makes its presence felt anyway. (p. 2)

Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained phenomenological research as "a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experience of individuals about a phenomenon described by participants" (p. 13). Phenomenological researchers "aim for fresh, complex, rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived"

(Finlay, 2009b, p. 6). Further, methods must support the researcher in understanding the phenomenon while also attending to the intersubjective field of researcher and participant. There are many approaches to conducting phenomenological research, so the root of what makes a study phenomenological “involves rich description of the lifeworld or lived experience” (Finlay, 2009b, p. 8).

The term phenomenology has multiple meanings: it is a philosophical movement (Gill, 2014), a general term for qualitative methodologies (J. A. Smith et al., 2009), and a methodology in and of itself. Meaning generation is always social and happens through interpretation, a blink-of-an-eye, ongoing process (Taylor et al., 2016). The phenomenologist engages in an inductive process, open to myriad possibilities and then narrowing to a pattern of meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) using qualitative methods such as in-depth interviewing and participant observation (Taylor et al., 2016).

Phenomenology, according to van Manen (2016), is a “search for what it means to be human” by engaging a “mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to live a life” (p. 12). Because of the complex, expansive nature of the lived life, van Manen invoked phenomenology as a “poetizing activity” (p. 13) wherein the phenomenologist must “engage language in a primal incantation or poetizing which hearkens back to the silence from which the words emanate” (p. 13). In order to effectively communicate the lived experience, the researcher must engage in a creative, iterative process of “writing in the dark” (van Manen, 2002) to make space for the phenomenon to emerge.

The philosophical roots of phenomenology are deep, varied, and rich. I will briefly delve into the philosophy of phenomenology in the next section and then will go on to discuss its evolution as a methodology to include its variations.

Phenomenology

The modern conceptualization and practice of phenomenology have created two primary methodological camps: descriptive (or transcendent) phenomenology, originating from Husserl; and interpretive phenomenology, originating from Heidegger. A third camp, hermeneutical phenomenology, associated with Gadamer, holds many commonalities with interpretive phenomenology. Hermeneutic's origins, as well as intention, differ slightly from the interpretivist approach. I chose to engage in the interpretive form of the methodology for my study, and in this section, I will explain the interpretivist approach. At the end of the section, I will discuss my rationale for choosing interpretive phenomenology.

Philosophical Roots

Phenomenology began in earnest as both a philosophical movement and a discipline with Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) at the turn of the 20th century. While phenomenology was neither created nor coined by Husserl, the German philosopher is considered to have brought phenomenology into Western philosophy (Giorgi, 1997; Groenewald, 2004; Smith et al., 2009; Vagle, 2018). Husserl “rejected the belief that objects in the external world exist independently and that information about objects is reliable” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 4). Therefore, to understand any phenomenon, we must pay attention to immediate experience, and anything outside of that immediate experience is unreliable. According to Husserl, the aim of phenomenology is to return a focus “to the things themselves” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26; Smith et al., 2009, p. 12). “The ‘thing’ [Husserl] was referring to, then is the experiential content of consciousness,” according to Smith et al. (2009, p. 12). By studying a phenomenon through a person’s direct, everyday experience, Husserl’s “natural attitude,” the researcher may come to know the essences or the “essential qualities” (Smith et al., 2009) of a phenomenon. Smith et al. (2009) explained that we

engage in phenomenological inquiry any time we pause, notice every day, mundane things, and then reflect on those things. Husserl named this process of connecting what is happening in consciousness to something that becomes the object of attention as intentionality (Smith et al., 2009). Husserl's phenomenological approach is considered the basis for descriptive phenomenology.

Where Husserl was focused on phenomenology from an epistemological standpoint, his student, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), was more interested in the beingness of entities, and therefore, gravitated toward the ontological perspective of phenomenology, directly challenging Husserl's conception (Gill, 2014). Heidegger rejected the Cartesian notion of a subject-object divide, explaining that the world and the self are one, *Dasein*, and further, *Dasein* exists in communion with others (Zahavi, 2001). He was most interested in the individual in relation to her lifeworld, reflecting the idea that individuals' realities are constructed through their experience in the world and their experience of being-in-the-world, that is, they cannot be extracted from their environments (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Where Husserl was interested in studying consciousness, Heidegger was interested in how the "thing" was brought into being in everyday life and lived (Vagle, 2018).

Essential beingness involves being in relation to others: "The Heideggerian concept of 'worldliness' affords the embodied, intentional actor a range of physically-grounded (what is possible) and intersubjectively-grounded (what is meaningful) options," according to Smith et al. (2009, p. 17). Further, "Dasein is 'always already' thrown into the pre-existing world of people and objects, language and culture, and cannot be meaningfully detached from it" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 17). Self in relation to others, or intersubjectivity, is then the *sine qua non* of existence,

and the self cannot be separated from its worldly context. To study personhood, the experience of being human, we must study the human being in relation to other human beings.

Dasein as beingness requires reflexivity and engagement in a perpetual process of interpreting the world as it is being lived. Interpretation is a key feature of Heideggerian phenomenology, and according to Gill (2014), “interpretation is not a choice but an integral aspect of research” (p. 120). The nature of being human involves every person existing “in a culturally and historically conditioned environment from which they cannot step outside” (Gill, 2014, p. 120). Further, “existence is always set against a background that contextualizes experience” (p. 120) that is interwoven with interpreting, sensemaking, and meaning-making. To exist is to interpret, and interpretation cannot be set aside or put on hold, which is in direct contradiction to Husserl’s emphasis on reduction and bracketing.

Interpretive Phenomenology

Interpretation forms the key differentiator between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology. As discussed, the researcher cannot set aside her natural process of interpreting. In addition to interpretation, interpretive phenomenology varies from descriptive in how it manages context and how it uses findings, all of which I will delve into now.

Role of Interpretation

Interpretivists believe that an essential component of being human is to interpret the world around them, and in this way, interpreting and contextualizing is how human beings make meaning. There is no ingestion of data and information without the requisite interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Best known for his development of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Smith said that analysis always involves interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). According to Benner (1994), the interpretive phenomenologist “seeks to understand the world of

concerns, habits, and skills presented by participants' narratives and situated actions" (p. xiv), which builds upon the description speaking for itself by applying interpretation to form an understanding. Additionally, the interpretive phenomenology researcher uses reflection and reflexivity to become aware of assumptions, so they may avoid overtly applying assumptions to interpreting the data. An interpretive phenomenologist may use a theory or framework through which to view and structure the data (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Role of Context and Lifeworld

Interpretive inquiry is rooted in the lifeworld with a focus on what the participant experiences in everyday life. The interpretivist seeks to understand how the lifeworld is inhabited by the individual, context being central to any lived experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

How Findings are Used

The interpretive approach is highly contextualized and therefore, phenomena are "fluid and open to change, based on world events and time and history" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 730). For the interpretivist, more than one interpretation may exist from a set of data, so the research study's audience and application will determine the findings that are most relevant for any given study.

Rationale

For the purposes of this study, I engaged in an interpretivist phenomenological inquiry most aligned with the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein* with the centrality of beingness forming the emphasis of this study of coherence in the intersubjective field. I chose interpretive phenomenology in place of descriptive for three reasons. First, interpretive phenomenology is better aligned with me as a researcher since I do not believe researchers can truly "bracket," suspend, or reduce interpretation, as descriptivists call for, because interpretation is a natural part

of the sensemaking process. Interpretation is inherent in human beings. Second, a study of coherence in the intersubjective field calls for an inclusion of the lifeworld and context because they are relevant to the intersubjective nature of the subject matter. Third, descriptivists search for essences and then use the essences that they find to stand alone as findings applicable to many contexts (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Interpretivists, however, view findings as contextual and fluid and leave the audience to determine the findings' relevance. I acknowledge that group coherence may be somewhat elusive and fungible, and it may be an experience whose tone and tenor change depending on who is experiencing it. In that light, interpretive phenomenology is better aligned with my study.

In my study, I employed some hermeneutic phenomenology methods, but the study is situated in interpretive phenomenology instead of hermeneutic phenomenology. My objective has been to inquire into my subjects' experiences of coherence. The objective was not to connect those experiences to historical texts or contexts or any other means of sensemaking that is tied to other groups, texts, or historical data, which is the realm of hermeneutic phenomenology (Lavery, 2003).

In the next section, I move into an explanation of the methods involved in my study.

Methods

The phenomenologist's task is to capture the lived experience of a specific research area through the participant's lifeworld—their own language, perspective, and experience. In this way, the phenomenologist seeks to understand a phenomenon through the participant's eyes while also acknowledging their own experiential filter. The phenomenological researcher captures these experiences through a phenomenological interview, either one-on-one or with

groups, and through participant observation, both of which are methods that were employed in this study.

In addition to phenomenological methods, other methods and considerations can serve to enhance a study. In particular, arts-based inquiry methods can be used to assist participants in languaging an experience, because verbalizing experiences at the level of consciousness is challenging (Knights et al., 2018; Taylor, 2018). Arts-based methods allow for a non-rational medium for discussing a non-rational experience.

Individual Interviews

The primary method of data collection in phenomenological inquiry is through interviews (Brinkmann, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Smith et al., 2009; Vagle, 2018; van Manen, 2016). According to Kvale (1996), “An interview is literally an inter view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme or mutual interest” (p. 2). He explained that in a research interview, the researcher has the opportunity to learn about lived experience through discussion on hopes, dreams, views, opinions, and perspectives on specific and general topics. In short, the phenomenological “interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (p. 1). Brinkmann (2012) discussed qualitative interviews in terms of content, *doxa* (pertaining to beliefs, opinions, and attitudes) or *episteme* (related to knowledge), and based on conversational style, ranging from assertive to receptive.

Phenomenological interviewing, according to Brinkmann, is considered epistemic and receptive. While it may start with a focus on the participants’ experiences, *doxa*, its purpose is to arrive at general knowledge. The focus on *episteme*, however, is what happens after the interview as the researcher analyzes the content of the interview.

The phenomenological interview is informed by a research question, with the researcher facilitating the conversation, primarily asking questions and listening while participants talk, tell stories, and discuss the phenomenon in their own words (Smith et al., 2009). According to van Manen (2016), the interview serves two purposes: to “explore and gather experiential narrative material” (p. 66) and to build a “conversational relation” (p. 66) between the researcher and participants. Most crucial in a phenomenological interview is that the researcher be very clear about what she is studying, so she can stay focused on the phenomenon instead of being “ruled by the method” (van Manen, 2016, p. 66). In the absence of clear purpose and focus, van Manen warned of despair and confusion, or simply generating too much data. Indeed, without a clear focus within the interview, the phenomenologist can lose sight of the phenomenon itself.

According to Smith et al. (2009), the phenomenologist will generally construct a semi-structured interview schedule, that is, a selection of potential questions related to the research area, in place of engaging, at one end of the spectrum, a structured interview using an interview script, or at the other end of the spectrum, an unstructured conversation. The interview schedule serves as a roadmap providing the researcher with options to draw from as she moves through the interview with a suggested six to ten potential question areas. Vagle (2018) suggested an interview format that is “dialogic, open, and conversational” (p. 86), which relates to van Manen’s (2016) focus on being very clear prior to the interview to be able to stay focused and present to the conversation as it is unfolding. Van Manen (2016) also suggested that many questions may not be necessary and encouraged the researcher to instead focus on listening and allowing for pauses and silence to cultivate deeper engagement.

Group Interviews/Focus Groups

A group interview provides participants with the opportunity to interact with other participants' comments on the topic, which in turn, helps members of the group to explore and clarify ideas and perspectives that may be less accessible through an individual interview (Kitzinger, 1995). Additionally, difficult to discuss topics may find some benefit from a group discussion as "less inhibited members of the group break the ice for shyer participants" (p. 300).

According to Palmer et al. (2010), few phenomenological studies have used focus groups as their basis, most likely because they create a layer of complexity through group dynamics and, to some extent, the role of language, social cues, and level of disclosure. At the same time, they suggested that group interviews bring the experience of the intersubjective to life resulting in the possibility that members may be more disclosing in a group, particularly if they hear others openly sharing their experiences. Several studies indicated that the use of group interviews allowed the investigator to glean different types of information than through discussions shared in one-on-one interviews, such as social context, which was an important aspect of my study. In contrast, content from individual interviews focused on how participants saw and made sense of themselves (De Visser & Smith, 2007; Flowers et al., 2000, 2001). Group interviews may be particularly effective with heterogeneous groups (Dunne & Quayle, 2001), which had application in one of my treatment groups where some of the participants were more familiar with both experiencing and talking about experiences related to consciousness as well as coherence.

Open-ended questions encourage participants to explore the topics using their own language (Kitzinger, 1995). In order to separate group dynamics from data, Smith (2004) suggested that focus group transcripts be parsed twice—once for group patterns and dynamics, and a second time for idiosyncratic accounts. As I reviewed the transcripts, I marked areas that

were related to group dynamics and that did not include any relevant data. For example, in one of the sessions, a discussion about a group member not feeling well was marked as text to skip in the full analysis.

Observations

Participant observations allow the researcher to gather data by simply observing the behaviors and activities of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A particular form of observation in phenomenology is what van Manen (2016) called “close observation” (p. 68) in that the method allows the researcher to eliminate the separation by engaging in the subjects’ lifeworld through participation. In this way, the researcher is required to be both “participant and observer at the same time” (p. 69). Phenomenological researchers will generally engage in observations with a question or a specific phenomenon in mind, and then capture data through field notes as they relate to the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, I was both participant and observer at the same time, as van Manen (2016) described, when I facilitated the treatment sessions. The proximity allowed me to observe the participants while I was facilitating.

Arts-Based Research Methods

According to van Manen (2016), “Lived human life is always more complex than the result of any singular description, and . . . there is always an element of the ineffable in life. Human life needs knowledge, reflection, and thought to make itself knowable to itself” (pp. 16–17). Studying consciousness poses the challenge of understanding that which is the ineffable, so the researcher must find ways to help participants to put into language their experience of a phenomenon: “One of the greatest challenges of research . . . is effectively describing inner states or experiences” (Higgs, 2008, p. 552). Research methods involving the

creative arts may help to convert participants' internal, personal experiences into languaging that captures all or part of a phenomenon. According to Leavy (2018), "The arts can be highly effective for communicating the emotional aspects of social life" (p. 23). Further, "arts-based practices lend themselves to inductive research designs and the organic emergence of meanings" (p. 27).

Of particular interest among the creative arts is visual imagery, including drawing, photography, film/video, and graphics, which can be employed in a study in several ways: "as a source of data themselves, or as a way of producing data through their use, or a combination of the two" (Warren, 2009, p. 566). Marshall (2010) explained that his method of photography as inquiry has "proven effective in bypassing the distortion and filtering of potentially anxiety-provoking material that are the inevitable consequences of the use of verbal language" (p. 65). Drawing may establish "faster and greater rapport" with participants and may provide a non-rational pathway to emotions, and photo-interviewing facilitates dialogue and interpretation as a shared activity between researcher and participant (Warren, 2009). According to Parker (2006), interviewing groups using visual images has multiple benefits, among them greater involvement by participants in the interpretive process and a potential depersonalizing effect resulting in increased disclosure and openness. Intersubjective experiences can cause participants to question themselves regarding their experiences, because it is difficult to step outside of ourselves and describe something so personal and ineffable. The depersonalizing effect of arts-based methods may assist participants in decentering their experience and moving to a witnessing stance. An arts-based element of my study, the art project (Appendix B), did indeed seem to move members from both groups to a position of witnessing awareness. Additionally, the storytelling that occurred as both groups shared their art had a leaning-in effect among

participants, opening their collective ability to discuss what they had experienced. I will discuss this further in Chapter IV.

For visual methods to be effective within social science, the researcher and the participant must collaborate to contextualize how the image relates to and explains the participant's experience of the phenomenon (Warren, 2009). In other words, the images cannot stand alone but instead serve as a means for discussing the phenomenon. The art project in this study seemed to open the communication pathways for both groups, the tendrils of which are evident in excerpted pieces of the transcript such as:

Ginger: When I was explaining the art I created, I was at a pretty solid loss for words, but being able to get into that creative energy put a different kind of language to it.

Bea Bea: I felt like the art project just helped me to embody [the experience]. Ginger said there was a total loss for words, but there is an embodiment that happened when I was doing the artwork, and it was so intensively joyful.

Grainne: I think it did help me remember things as I found images that helped me remember other feelings and thoughts that didn't come up during the first sharing... I'm totally glad for whatever images I have to evoke some other meaning and fullness to somebody else.

As evidenced by these quotes, an aspect of arts-based inquiry, with particular emphasis on visual methods, can help research participants to language their lived experiences. The use of these methods is done in partnership with the researcher, thereby conveying a depth of comprehension between participant and researcher. Using this particular method within a phenomenological study allows for a non-rational experience to be captured in a way that transcends basic rational language, creating a fuller understanding and the potential for a shared mental model of the phenomenon.

Methods and Approaches for My Study

For my study of coherence in the intersubjective field, my primary method of data collection was through group interviews, which allowed for an in-depth view of the phenomenon from the perspectives of both the individual participants as well as the collective. The group interviews directly followed the facilitated treatment sessions in order to capture the phenomenon while the experience was still fresh in participants' minds. The group interviews were followed by two rounds of follow-up interviews, which were conducted via online questionnaires. One set of questions was presented one week following the facilitated session, and the second set of questions, as well as follow-up questions to specific participants, happened one to two weeks after the first round. The follow-up questionnaires allowed for additional questions to be posed to participants after some time had passed.

Additional methods employed included participant observation and arts-based inquiry, which were elements that were included in the treatment sessions. The art project (Appendix B) invited participants to engage in sensemaking through the artistic medium of their choosing. Some participants chose photos or art that spoke to their experience. Others drew or painted pieces. One participant shared a poem she had written, another played a song that was resonated with her, and still another sang a song. This arts-based method facilitated a more expansive understanding of the phenomenon being studied, because engaging in a creative activity invited participants into deeper reflection and provided an outlet for non-rational expression of their experiences of the phenomenon. Additionally, the storytelling that occurred during the "show and tell" allowed participants to deepen their own sensemaking through others' art and sharing.

Participant observation was also engaged during the treatment sessions as I observed participants' reactions to the facilitated treatment and each other's comments. This observation

was engaged as I acted as a co-participant with the groups and was done informally, that is, without the benefit of notes or an observation log. Instead, I was able to sense participants' experiences through dialogue, storytelling, and body language, and then use those observations to form appropriate questions during the discussions and interviews.

In the next section, I will discuss how these methods were applied to my design and approach.

Approach and Rationale

This section introduces how I approached my dissertation study. For primary consideration is how the intersubjective nature of the study was captured. Additionally, I will outline my overall methodology, which was one of interpretive phenomenology with tools from the hermeneutic tradition. While many modern applications of phenomenology have been written about, I have found resonance with van Manen's (2016) hermeneutic phenomenology model. Van Manen's poetic approach to phenomenology reveals that the methodology is as much art and craft as it is science.

Intersubjectivity

For this particular study, the intersubjective field played a primary role as it was a study of groups and how groups experience heightened states of beingness. In addition to the methods listed above, considerations of how to address the study to truly inquire into the full experience on a group level were crucial. To study intersubjectivity, the researcher must engage in data collection intersubjectively (Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016; Zahavi, 2001). According to Zahavi (2001):

The phenomenologists never conceive of intersubjectivity as an objectively existing structure in the world which can be described and analyzed from a third-person perspective. On the contrary, intersubjectivity is a relation between subjects which must be analyzed from a first-person and a second-person perspective. It is precisely such an analysis that will reveal the fundamental significance of intersubjectivity. Subjectivity and intersubjectivity are in fact complementing and mutually interdependent notions. (p. 166)

Without the second-person perspective, the intersubjective picture is incomplete, so a full study of intersubjectivity must involve the collective perspective of “we,” which is fully germane to my dissertation study. The collective experience was accessed through the use of group interviews, where the phenomenon was discussed as “we” (research participants) experienced it. Finlay (2009a) described the “importance of retaining an open, empathic, embodied presence to another’s personhood” (p. 1) and included embodied intersubjectivity as one of four necessary components for engaging a relational style of phenomenology. These applications to my particular study have all been relevant, and I included these considerations in my design.

Hermeneutical Tools in an Interpretive Phenomenology Study

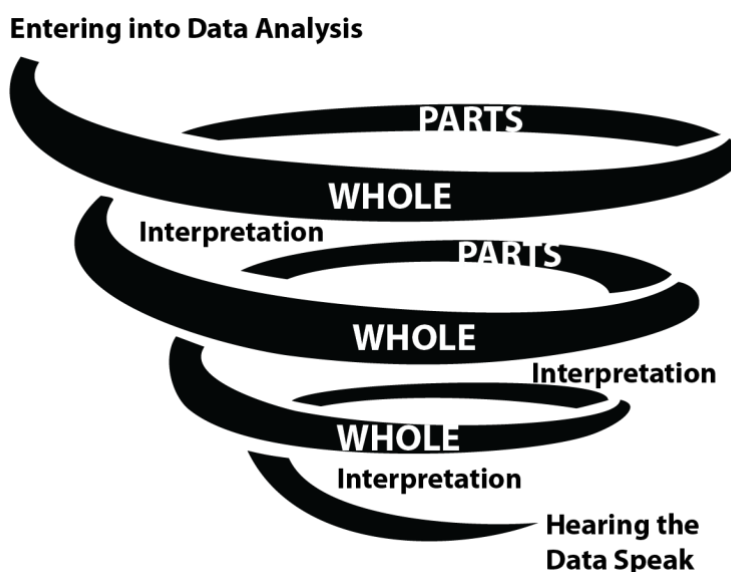
The interpretivist perspective on phenomenology requires an approach that allows for the shifting back and forth between a view of the whole to a view of the smaller elements of the phenomenon. The hermeneutic circle developed by Heidegger and then expanded by Gadamer (2013) allows for on-going development of interpretation and understanding (Vagle, 2018). According to Donaldson and Harter (2019), one must complete the hermeneutic circle (Figure 3.1) “to understand and have a contextual reference of the whole to understand the parts while simultaneously having an understanding and contextual reference to the parts to understand the whole” (p. 10). This moving back and forth afforded me being able to see the meta-themes that are discussed in Chapter V. According to Smith et al. (2009), the circle is “concerned with the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, at a series of levels. To understand any

given part, you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts” (p. 28).

Whereas qualitative analysis tends to be presented and engaged linearly, interpretive phenomenological analysis involves moving back and forth “through a range of different ways of thinking about the data, rather than completing each step, one after the other” (p. 28). This bi-level vantage provided different insights, outcomes, and ways of seeing the phenomenon throughout the process of analyzing data and allows for a “tightening” of understanding throughout the process.

Figure 3.1

The Hermeneutic Circle



Note: An interpretation of Donaldson & Harter’s description of the hermeneutic circle. Republished with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., from Donaldson & Harter’s *Leadership in a Constant Liminal State: How Can I be Authentic When I Don’t Know Who I Am?*, *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 13(3), 2019; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Van Manen’s Approach

Van Manen’s (2016) hermeneutical phenomenological process draws from both the descriptive and interpretive traditions. While his design is most often applied to hermeneutic

phenomenological studies, its structure lends itself well to an interpretive study as well.

Following van Manen's procedure requires the researcher to understand and embrace three methodological commitments: "Our work is something we actively do, is an interpretive act, and is something that is never final" (Vagle, 2018, p. 61). Vagle explained van Manen's technique as "in-ness" phenomenological research that focuses on "how we find ourselves in the world" (p. 62) with an openness, sense of awe and curiosity, and without any rigidity and absolutes. Even with the built-in flexibility and acceptance that the work is never final, van Manen's design still employs structure and rigor.

Van Manen's (2016) framework involves six research activities, all of which are important elements of a phenomenological inquiry design.

- **Choose a phenomenon from life that is of great interest.** Van Manen invited the researcher to find phenomena to study that she can sit with and consider deeply. This sitting with relates back to van Manen's essential component of thoughtfulness. In order to engage with thoughtfulness, the phenomenon must be of great interest and relevance to the researcher.
- **Investigate the experience as it is lived.** Van Manen called for the researcher to research the thing itself, not on a conceptualization of the thing. Phenomena are best examined by direct experience with those who have lived the phenomenon through conversation and observation (Smith et al., 2009; Vagle, 2018; van Manen, 2016). This element from van Manen affirms the inclusion of an experiential treatment session in my study.
- **Reflect on essential themes.** Phenomenology requires the researcher to study that which may seem obvious or may seem to be something she knows about at face value. Through a distilling down, the kernel of the phenomenon can be found through thematic analysis.

In this way, the analysis allows the researcher to see beneath what one might regularly encounter in everyday life.

- **Write and rewrite.** For van Manen, phenomena emerge and come to life through an iterative process of writing and rewriting: “To do research in a phenomenological sense is already and immediately and always a bringing to speech of something” (van Manen, 2016, p. 32). In this way, he allows the phenomenon to emerge through his words.
- **Maintain a strong and oriented relation.** Van Manen was somewhat pedagogical in his approach to phenomenology as he committed to being both student and teacher of the phenomena he studied. Van Manen (2016) acknowledged that “phenomenological human science is a form of qualitative research that is extraordinarily demanding of its practitioners,” because “the researcher cannot afford to adopt an attitude of so-called scientific disinterestedness” (p. 33).
- **Balance the research context by considering parts and the whole.** Throughout a phenomenological study, the researcher shifts focus from the small parts of elements of the study back to whole. The parts provide the necessary understanding of the phenomenon, but without a balancing view on the whole, a researcher can get “stuck in the underbrush and fail to arrive at the clearings that give the text its revealing power” (p. 33).

My van Manen-inspired design allowed for a deep exploration of beingness within the lived experience. It also allowed and invited me to be both artist and scientist, engaging in empirical study while also engaging creativity and interpretation and knowing that the full phenomenon as it was experienced by participants can never be fully known. Interpretive phenomenology as I engaged in it felt like a dance, which involved complex choreography

requiring expression through both body and soul, and it also required the ability to improvise, dance in community, and perform alone all in the same piece, all happening at the same time. It was breathtaking, other-worldly, and magically disorienting. This constructive disorientation (Wergin, 2020) allowed for an opening toward not knowing and inviting different ways of knowing to come forward.

Methodological Fit

According to Edmondson and McManus (2007), methodological fit is “an overarching criterion for ensuring quality field research” (p. 1155) defined as “internal consistency among elements of a research project” (p. 1155), the four key elements of which are research question, prior work, research design, and contribution of literature. These four elements, above all, must be well-integrated and form an alignment. Using Edmondson and McManus’s framework, I will evaluate the methodological fit of phenomenological inquiry for my dissertation study.

- **Research question.** The research question that I explored for this study is: What is the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective field? The inquiry’s focus on lived experience of a phenomenon aligns well with phenomenological inquiry, since it was the study of phenomena through the lived experience of participants. The intersubjective element was best studied, according to Zahavi (2001), from the first and second-person perspectives. Applied to this study, primary data collection was captured through group interviews.
- **Prior work.** Although many studies have been conducted on how groups come together, I have found very few empirical studies directly related to group coherence, an emerging field. Because of the research gap in this area, the opportunity to conduct research to begin to understand the theoretical concept of coherence in an empirical

way presented a significant opportunity. Further, investigating groups who have experienced the phenomenon together provided the opportunity to approach the research area from an intersubjective position, which does not appear to exist widely in the literature.

- **Research design.** To capture the lived experience of coherence, I facilitated group sessions designed to invoke the phenomenon. Immediately following the sessions, I conducted group interviews with session participants. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, which invited participants to talk openly and freely about their experiences while I probed for additional detail and clarity related to the phenomenon. Follow-up interviews were conducted through several rounds of online questionnaires to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. In order to analyze the interview data, I engaged in a two-phase analysis. First, I read the interviews as a whole multiple times until I had a general sense of the information shared in the interview. During this time, I engaged in noting and memoing, capturing rhythms, language, and the sense of the phenomenon as it was emerging. Then, I performed a thematic analysis to determine the themes present. Next, themes were grouped into larger categories. As designed, this process of capturing and analyzing data was congruent with the methodology of phenomenological inquiry.
- **Contribution to literature.** The intention of the study was to contribute basic empirical knowledge to an emerging field in which few empirical studies have been conducted. Although social coherence is often discussed in related literature, to my knowledge, it has rarely been studied empirically. This contribution to the literature has created new knowledge.

Based on Edmondson and McManus's framework, phenomenological inquiry is a good methodological fit for this study and aligns with all four elements of the framework.

Philosophically, phenomenology has also been a good fit with me as a researcher, practitioner, and spiritual journeyer as I deeply resonate with studying consciousness from an ontological perspective. My greatest interest lies in exploring what it means to be a human being, the nature of beingness, and how that beingness is socially constructed and variable from experience to experience. As someone who believes and has experienced the transformative power of awareness, phenomenology has allowed me to carry that awareness into my work as a scholar. According to Rehorick and Bentz (2008), "the deepening of awareness that results from phenomenology is itself a process of transformation" (p. 4) that is filled with "wonderment" (p. 5). It is with that wonderment that I engaged in this study of coherence in the intersubjective field.

Research Design

In this section, I will describe the design of my dissertation study and how I executed that design to include participant selection criteria and recruitment, ethical considerations, and procedures carried out through the course of the study.

Design

This interpretive phenomenological study was conducted with two small groups for whom I facilitated coherence treatment sessions (Appendices A and B) followed by group interviews (Appendix D). Once the facilitated treatments and group interviews were complete, I moved into a second round of interviewing that involved two rounds of online questionnaires for both groups as well as two one-on-one interviews regarding specific comments from the group interviews that occurred one to three weeks after the sessions. The group interviews were

semi-structured and allowed for the subjects to do the majority of the talking, while I, as the researcher, asked clarifying questions and refocused our conversation as necessary given the time allotted. The follow-up questionnaires included open-ended questions that inquired into perspectives on the experience after one to three weeks had passed as well as probing into comments made during the group interviews. Some of the questions had been addressed by one group, and the questionnaires allowed the other group to consider the question as well.

Participants and Selection Criteria

Based on the literature and my experiences with a previous practice study and practice session, I developed three primary selection criteria (Table 3.1) for participants. First, I sought small groups to study. Second, the members of these groups needed to be from the same organization, so they had a shared language and were familiar to each other. Because the members of the two participating groups were familiar with each other, they did not have to go through the process of group formation during the facilitated treatment, which saved time and minimized distraction. Additionally, the ethereal nature of coherence made their shared language an important tool in discussing the phenomenon. Third, a committed, long-term meditation practice for each participant served as a selection criterion. By recruiting participants (Appendix E) with active meditation practices, I anticipated that they would be aware of how a shift in consciousness would feel, because meditation often involves a shifting of brain waves. According to mindfulness and brain researchers from the Center for Healthy Minds, brain waves shifting from alpha to gamma and theta patterns, as happens in meditation, indicates coherence within the brain that leads to an ability to engage in attunement, which is how humans connect with themselves, the universe, and to other people (Smalley & Winston, 2010). Ideally, each

group would also have one or more shared practices that they engaged in together. A “bonus” criterion was participants who had had previous experiences with coherence.

Table 3.1

Study Participant Selection Criteria

Criterion	Description
<i>Primary criteria</i>	
Small group	A group size of five to eight members
Shared language and familiarity	Group members were all part of the same system, for example, organization, community, or other enterprise, and were all familiar with each other, that is, were not strangers
Committed contemplative practice	The group shared a contemplative practice and each member had a solo, committed practice
<i>Bonus criterion</i>	
	Previous coherence experience

Two small groups participated in the study. The first group was made up of six women, five of whom were known to me through previous participation in the organization from which they were recruited as well as through a spiritual community and from a class I taught at a university. All six participants reported a robust, daily contemplative practice with most having a meditation practice. The group was well-versed in group contemplative practices. Five identified as white or Caucasian, and one identified as Latina. One member of the group was under 30, two were in the 45–54 years category, two participants were 55–64, and the remaining member identified as being between 65 and 74 years old. All participants described previous coherence experiences in advance of the facilitated session.

The second group of participants was comprised of six women and one man, and one woman was previously known to me. Five out of seven participants reported a daily

contemplative practice, one had a practice engaged two to three times a week, and one reported having past daily practices. The practices ranged from prayer to affirmations and aromatherapy practices to meditation. One member of the group identified as being in the 30–39-year-old range, three members were between 45 and 54, and three categorized themselves as falling between 55 and 64 years old. One member of the group identified as African American/Creole and of multiracial ethnicity, one as African American, one as South Asian/Indian, and the other four members of the group identified as white or Caucasian. Most of the members described previous coherence experiences, and one of the members thought she had not had a previous coherence experience.

A full description of the groups and their members is detailed in Chapter IV.

Analysis

Within the methodology, the phenomenologist embarks on exploration and discovery of the data by first reading the entirety of the transcripts, to allow for a big-picture, holistic view of the data, and then through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was performed through several steps, beginning with coding the interview text by theming the data (Miles et al., 2020). According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), “Themes are statements qua (in the role of) ideas presented by participants during interviews that summarize what is going on, explain what is happening, or suggest why something is done the way it is” (p. 118). Following the initial coding, a second cycle of coding was conducted to group themes into categories. This process of pattern coding, which results in “smaller numbers of categories, themes, or concepts” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 79), forms more meaningful units of analysis. Second-cycle coding was followed by the development of narrative descriptions and graphic representations of the pattern code themes. With coding completed, I then moved into a process of generating findings.

As explained earlier, engaging in data analysis in an interpretive phenomenological study involves shifting back and forth between the whole of the data and the elemental pieces of the data found in its parts (Smith et al., 2009). A tool for engaging in this dance between whole and parts is the hermeneutic circle, which I enlisted throughout the analysis to create the greatest possibility for the data to emerge and speak.

I began by reviewing the transcripts as I listened to a recording, cleaning the data as I went. I edited out filler words such as um, ah, like, and you know as well as deleted words that were repeated sequentially. I noticed that the data required more cleaning than I normally needed to do, which seemed to indicate that the participants found it challenging to put the phenomenon into language. The resulting data often had incomplete sentences, thoughts that started but did not finish, repeated words as if the participants were trying to find the right word, and the frequent use of filler words. In the example that follows, this participant attempted to make sense of a reaction that she had in real-time:

Well, but there is the other side of the coin and feeling like I... yeah, I don't know... like, I can't... There's something about my capacity or to to like have all of this love or something like it's like I filled up already okay. There's that... it... yeah, I don't know... It sounds like I just have... I really... Like I said, I don't know. I'm kind of exploring this.

Following the cleaning of the data and listening to the recording, I read the entire set of transcripts from both groups, making notes as I read. Smith (Smith et al., 2009), who developed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), listed initial noting as the second step of data analysis. He recommended making copious notes on the transcripts as the researcher is reading through the data, making sense of the data as they go. The noting may include descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments and play an important role in meaning-making. My noting ranged from reactions I had, things I noticed, and questions I had. This read-through of the entire transcript provided my first set of follow-up questions (the first three questions listed in

Appendix I). Additionally, I engaged in memoing, recording my insights and questions beginning with this holistic view of the data and continued throughout the analysis process.

Following my read of and exploration of the whole, I moved to the parts of the phenomenon with a first round of thematic coding. This first round provided me with a set of 42 codes (Appendix K). With my first attempt at coding complete, I invited my coding team, two doctoral colleagues who had completed their dissertation work, to code a section of each of the two transcripts using the set of codes I uncovered during my first pass. I invited the team to use the codes if they chose to and to also feel free to create their own codes if they felt there was a better fit. When I received their work, I initially found that one coder seemed to be following a similar pattern that I had found, and I found her work validated my own. In addition, she added some codes that I had not named but found important, thereby widening my view of what was being discussed in that part of the transcript. The other coder used far fewer codes, and at first blush, I wondered if there was anything there for me to learn. Upon further inspection, I realized that she was seeing a pattern that I had not seen previously. Her codes, which in truth felt more like the noting I had done as I read the entire transcript, provided the beginning of an important break-through and discovery of meta-themes described in Chapter V. While I knew the two coders would each bring something different to the analysis, I had no idea how invaluable their part was in the process. They each allowed me to see the data in a bigger, fuller way. After doing a side-by-side comparison of our three coding schemes, I went back and recoded the entire set of transcripts to reflect the fuller set of codes (Appendix L). Once again dancing back from the parts to the whole, I went back through a second time and began to highlight passages that reflected the meta-themes woven throughout the transcripts. A number of memos were generated

from the interaction with my coding team and through the process of moving from parts to whole and back again.

Next, I transferred all themes onto small, yellow sticky notes and posted them on easel paper (Figure 3.2). This allowed me to see which themes were used most often, which ones were infrequent but still powerful, and which themes appeared to be less important. The themes were then transferred to single sticky notes in one of four areas: what it was like (pink), how it happened (orange), antecedents (yellow), and outcomes (blue) (Figure 3.3). I then engaged in second-order coding (Appendix M), finding categories within each area. With this second order coding in process, I converted the sticky notes to a mind map (Figure 3.4) and began to puzzle the various areas, categories, and themes by moving, grouping, and ungrouping, in a seemingly endless process of sensemaking and of letting the data speak.

Figure 3.2

First-order Themes



Figure 3.3

Second-order Coding

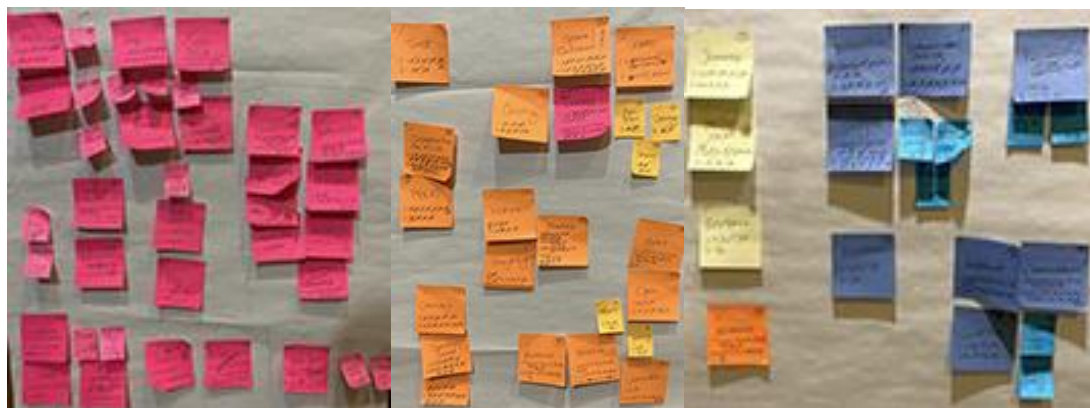
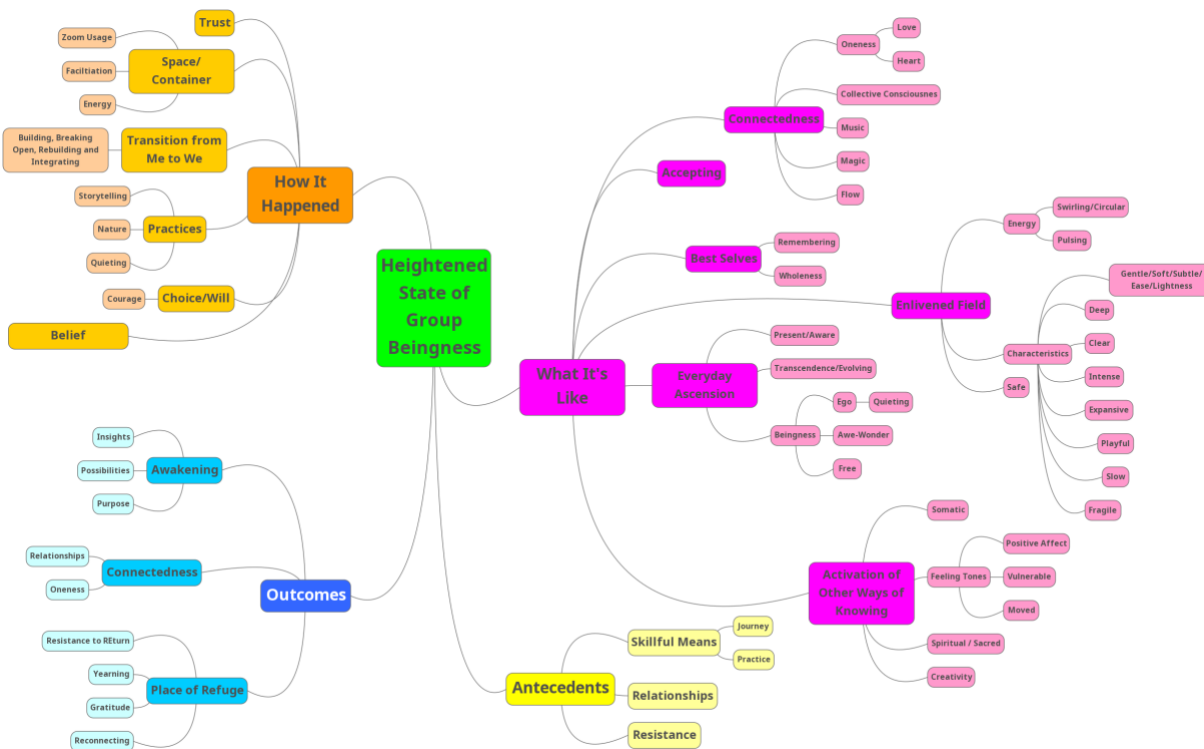


Figure 3.4

Thematic Mind Map



Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, I have been bound by a commitment to conduct my study ethically and to adhere to the rules and guidelines provided by *The Belmont Report* (United States, 1978) and the rules and guidelines laid out by Antioch University's Institutional Review Board. My ethical duty has been to honor the agency of my research subjects when it comes to making decisions concerning their well-being, to maintain focus on maximizing benefits and minimizing harm, and to ensure that selection of my research subjects is equitable. Participants' agency has been honored through an informed consent (Appendix H) process that provided information about the study, so a participant could best determine if participation was appropriate for them. Throughout the facilitated treatment sessions and group interviews, participants were reminded repeatedly that they could end their participation at any time by simply leaving the virtual meeting with no explanation needed. Additional informed consent points were also reiterated multiple times.

Maintaining confidentiality, handling data appropriately, and honoring privacy played key roles in minimizing risk, and as researcher, I emphasized ensuring that research subjects' confidentiality was a top priority. To do this, I kept participants' identities and identifying factors separate from the demographic data and pseudonyms that I used in this dissertation. The organizations from which the groups were recruited are identified only briefly and in the most general terms. No real names for participants, groups, and organizations were ever used in data analysis or any reporting. All records that connect names with identifying codes are maintained in a password-protected digital file. All transcript data that pointed to a participant's, group's, or organization's identification were scrubbed and replaced with general information. Once my dissertation has been published, those identifying records will be destroyed.

Because the groups were populated by participants who know each other, confidentiality regarding what was shared in the group was an important group agreement established at the beginning of each session. Participants were asked what their organizations' agreements were regarding confidentiality, and both groups revealed that they do practice confidentiality by not sharing stories and information that they hear while in sessions. Their organizational agreements regarding confidentiality were proposed as an agreement to carry forward into this facilitated treatment session, which all agreed to via showing a thumbs up.

Although rare, meditation can have adverse effects. In the informed consent document, participants were informed of this possibility and a crisis hotline was included should they have an adverse effect that required immediate care. Additionally, a psychotherapist was standing by for each session, ready to engage with participants who needed psychological help as a result of either session. As of one month following the sessions, no participants contacted the psychotherapist for support.

Procedures

This study was designed in three phases, which I will detail in this section.

Phase 1: Recruitment

With the Institutional Review Board's approval of my study, I moved into recruiting participants by sending emails (Appendix E) to 14 members of my network who are leaders in the areas of personal and spiritual development, nine of whom responded and said they were interested in learning more. Of those nine, four of the leaders moved forward with attempting to recruit a group of their constituents and/or schedule a session. Those leaders were provided with a template letter to send to their organizations (Appendix E). For one organization, the leader provided me with access to the group in order to recruit directly using the same letter. Of the four

interested organizations, two groups with enough participants, both with seven participants each, formed. I worked with those two groups to schedule a mutually agreeable date, losing just one individual participant in the process.

The members of the two scheduled groups were sent information emails two weeks ahead of the sessions (Appendices F), which included an overview of the session, a list of requested pre-work, and suggestions for setting up their virtual meeting platform, Zoom. The pre-work included a short explanation of coherence (Appendix G), a pre-session questionnaire (Appendix I), and informed consent paperwork (Appendix H). The pre-session questionnaire included demographic information as well as a question about whether they thought they had previously experienced coherence, and if they believed they had, what that experience was like. The last question was an invitation to “prime the pump,” that is, to cultivate memories of coherence experiences that would allow participants to enter the session anticipating the possibility of coherence.

During this pre-session period and knowing that trust was an essential component for coherence to be possible, I worked to answer all questions quickly and as clearly as possible, to set a trustworthy tone in my communications, and to be as transparent as possible. I benefited from the trust placed in me by the spiritual and developmental leaders in my network, who participated in recruitment. Their recommendation for their students and clients to participate in my study allowed me to be trustworthy by association. Although completely unintentional, seven of the 13 participants who were recruited knew me previous to the sessions.

Phase 2: Investigate the Experience as it is Lived

Using van Manen’s (2016) approach, phase two involved preparing for and collecting data (Table 3.2). Data collection consisted of facilitated treatments (Appendix A) conducted with

two groups followed by group interviews. Both facilitated treatment sessions and interviews were scheduled on Saturdays in June from 10 am to 5 pm, which included breaks, an art project, and a group interview. Although both groups were offered two three-hour sessions held on back-to-back days, participants from both groups preferred the one-day schedule.

Table 3.2

Investigating the Experience as it is Lived

Process for Data Collection

1. Facilitation of two coherence treatment sessions with group interviews.
 2. Transcription of group interviews.
 3. Follow-up questionnaires and interviews.
 4. Transcription of follow-up questionnaires and interviews.
-

As discussed in Chapter II, many suggestions and considerations are provided concerning creating favorable conditions for a group to entrain and enter a state of coherence. In addition, considerations for virtual groups are also germane to this study, since it was conducted virtually via the online platform, Zoom. The session (Table 3.3) opened with a welcome and overview, discussion on ground rules, and a review of informed consent. Next, I guided a meditation invoking a connection with the earth and with the heart, and then inviting the group to connect via heart energy to each other and to the field. At the end of the meditation, participants were invited to turn on their video feeds and to gaze deeply at each participant, imaging that they were weaving a thread between their own heart and each participant. The collective metaphorical threads were then presented as a tapestry we had woven together. A check-in, activity to shift consciousness, and a discussion in pairs followed. Afterward, the group engaged in creating a shared intention, meditated on the intention, and then shared their experience with each other. The approximate running time at this point of the session was about two-and-a-half hours, at

which time the groups broke for lunch and to do their art projects. Following this break, the rest of the session was used as data collection with transcripts included for all remaining elements. The group shared their art through a “show and tell”. A closing activity officially closed out the experiential portion of the session, and then the groups engaged in group interviews together.

Table 3.3

Facilitated Treatment Session Agenda

<i>Run Time</i>	<i>Element</i>
:15	Welcome and Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of the session • Overview of the session contents and schedule • Review of Zoom usage • Ground rules • Confidentiality • Review of informed consent • Psychotherapist contact information sharing
:15	Opening meditation and gazing practices
:20	Check-in: What does this tapestry that we’ve woven together feel like?
:10	Activity: Consciousness shifting – Leaning in and out
:20	Discussion via liberating structures (McCandless & Lipmanowicz, n.d.), 2-4-all
:10	Break
:60	Shared intention setting, meditation practice, and discussion
:30	Lunch break
:20	Art project
:10	Meditation practice
RECORDING	STARTS
:40	Sharing art and storytelling
:10	Closing and checking out using art cards and storytelling
:10	Break
2:00	Group interview

Many considerations regarding how the session should be conducted and what content should be included came from the literature. In order to ensure that I cataloged those suggestions, I created a list of the suggested elements and grouped them according to what part of the session—planning, pre-session communications, the session itself—the suggestions corresponded. Each element was engaged in some way in the session. This process is discussed in the appendix (Appendix C).

A semi-structured approach was used for the group interviews (Appendix D), during which I focused on the capture of three kinds of data: what the experience was like, when shifts occurred (if they did), and corroboration among the group concerning when shifts and other significant elements occurred. Fewer questions were used in favor of creating a space where more members of the group felt comfortable sharing their experiences. Sharing of perspectives was initiated as much by other members' comments as by my questions. Follow-up questions emerged from the data as well as from explorations from the first group that could be introduced to the second group.

Art project show and tell, the closing activity, and the group interviews were recorded and transcribed using the Zoom platform. Zoom's automated transcription was then cleaned through a process of listening to the recordings and making appropriate edits. As described earlier, the data were also cleaned for filler language and for "false starts," that is, explanations started by the participants that they abandoned and restarted. Follow-up questionnaires, made up primarily of open-ended questions, were developed via Google Forms. Participants were given the option to engage in a one-on-one interview instead of writing their responses, and two participants opted for verbal interviews. Those interviews were recorded and transcribed through Zoom functionality as well.

Phase 3: Letting the Data Speak

Data analysis, as discussed earlier, involved several phases of investigating the parts and the whole of the phenomenon. I have listed van Manen's (2016) approach to data analysis and provided commentary on how I applied his procedures to my study.

Reflect on Essential Themes. The process of analysis involved multiple engagements with the data, allowing for the processing of moving from the whole to the parts and then shifting back and forth. The precise action steps were as follows:

1. Transcripts were reviewed from a holistic, big-picture view, taking in the whole of the material to get a sense of what was shared by participants.
2. Theming of data, or coding, the transcripts in terms of potential elements of coherence that were shared by participants through their stories and experiences. At this point, my coding team engaged in the analysis.
3. Second-order pattern coding, during which codes from transcripts were grouped into larger themes.
4. Sense and meaning-making of the themes through noting and commenting, memoing, and graphic representations. These findings are reported in Chapter IV.

Write and Rewrite. According to van Manen (2016), the data are given space to find voice through writing and rewriting about what is emerging. I engaged in a practice of noting and memo writing throughout the data analysis process to capture different elements that came to light throughout the process. Not only did the memos and notes help me to capture various aspects of the data, but they also helped me in sensemaking and then, ultimately, in reporting my findings.

Maintain a Strong and Oriented Relation. Throughout the study, I endeavored to engage in the study both as a student and as a teacher, as van Manen (2016) invited phenomenologists to do. This was done by maintaining my focus on the phenomenon of coherence itself without getting lost in the process of the study and the many details contained in the study as a project. Ultimately, it was my intention to learn about coherence. With that in mind, coherence and the process of the study were in their own hermeneutical circle as I flipped my focus back and forth between the phenomenon itself, coherence, and the process of completing the study through the steps and procedures.

Balance Parts and the Whole. The entire process of data analysis was a dance back and forth between the whole and the parts, between the whole experience as described by participants and the fine details of coherence reported through their stories. Analysis began with the big picture, then moved to the details, and then moved back and forth multiple times between details and the big picture. The last pass of analysis was focused on the big picture, which ensured the elements identified through themes aligned with the phenomenon itself. In doing so, the meta-themes I report in Chapter V emerged.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This study was intended to investigate the lived experience of individuals experiencing group coherence. As an investigation of lived experience, I was most focused on exploring what it was like for participants to be in a cohered group. Data were collected through two facilitated coherence sessions (Appendix A) that included group interviews. The sessions were followed by two rounds of follow-up questions, the first of which followed one week after each of the events. The facilitated sessions included several meditation practices, activities, and discussions intended to create conditions favorable for each of the groups to enter a heightened state of beingness.

As part of the facilitated sessions, participants created artwork (Appendix B) after the treatment guided by the following prompts:

- What was it like for you to have that experience with this group?
- As a group, what do you imagine your collective experience was like?
- How would you express your group's experience in words or through art?

The artistic medium was not prescribed, and the participants had the freedom to choose the artistic medium that most resonated with them. The objective was to find or create art that communicated their experience and then to share that art back with the group through storytelling. Some drew or painted pictures. Some shared art they had created previously. One played a song that was meaningful; and one participant even sang a song. Many of the participants selected images from doing an internet image search that netted imagery evoking their own experiences. Throughout this chapter, you will see the participants' art woven into the text to support the interpretation of the data. All art was used with the permission of the participants and with the permission of the works' creators if it was not the participant who took the picture or painted the picture.

This chapter begins with an overview of who my participants were, and then I will move into reporting findings. Following findings, I revisit my research question, review how the findings connect to the question, and then define coherence based on my findings.

Participants

When it came time to recruit participants, I turned to my network of spiritual teachers and leaders to help me find groups made up of participants who were familiar to each other, came from the same organization, and had both a shared and personal commitment to contemplative practice. From 14 initial contacts with members of my network, two small groups participated in the study. Group 1 had six members, and Group 2 was made up of seven participants (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Participants

Group 1				Group 2			
<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race/ Ethnicity</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Bea	55–64	White	Female	Alex	30–39	White	Male
Dina	65–74	White	Female	Edie	55–64	White	Female
Ginger	18–29	Latina	Female	Katie	45–54	African American	Female
Grainne	45–54	White	Female	Lauren	55–64	White	Female
Roxanne	55–64	White	Female	Monica	55–64	African American/ Multiracial	Female
Sandy	45–54	White	Female	Priya	45–54	South Asian/Indian	Female
				Willow	45–54	White	Female

The organization from which Group 1 came is focused on personal and spiritual development with frequent offerings designed to engage participants in an awakening journey of the self and toward fulfilling their life's purpose. Coursework is offered at three levels: the

fundamentals, intermediate, and advanced offerings. Meditation and a myriad of other contemplative practices are a mainstay of the curriculum. Participants from this organization have all completed many programs with the organization, including advanced offerings. They all know each other well and are a close-knit group. Participant sketches are offered using pseudonyms to protect their identities.

- **Bea Bea** identified as a white woman whose age falls in the 55-to-64-year-old range. She is a semi-retired information systems specialist who has served as an assistant course instructor for the organization. Bea Bea described her contemplative practice as one focused on gratitude and with a constant connection with and awareness of God.
- **Dina**, whose age is between 65 and 74, is a retired university student affairs assistant vice president. She identified as white and has served as an assistant course instructor. Dina has a committed, daily meditation practice.
- **Ginger** is a yoga teacher and a transaction coordinator for a mortgage brokerage. She identified as a Latina whose age falls between 18 and 29. She engages in a morning shamanic meditation practice each day.
- **Grainne** works as a law school student affairs coordinator whose age is between 45 and 54. She identified as white. Grainne is the former program manager for the organization and served frequently as co-instructor in various courses. She has a daily shamata/vipassana meditation practice and also engages in dream yoga.
- **Roxanne** serves as a chief-of-staff in a Federal government agency. She identified as Caucasian with age falling between 55 and 64 years old. She has served as an

assistant course instructor. Roxanne has a committed, daily mindfulness meditation practice.

- **Sandy** identified as a white woman whose age falls between 45 and 54 years old. She is an orientation and mobility specialist. Her daily meditation practice includes heart-opening and healing practices.

Group 2 was recruited through a leadership coach training program, and participants were either from the first cohort, which had completed the training, or the second cohort, which was in session. The program's central focus areas are consciousness, oneness, systems, and sustainability. Students are encouraged to establish a daily contemplative practice and are invited to explore different practices in the classroom connecting to nature as well as to a variety of wisdom traditions. A new group, some participants knew each other well, and some were just meeting one another. Participant sketches are offered using pseudonyms to protect their identities.

- **Alex** identified as a white male between the ages of 30 and 44. He is a program manager at a university. He engages in a practice of meditation or centering prayer two to three times per week.
- **Edie** is a leadership coach, specifically a life transformation specialist, and an author/writer who identified as Caucasian and as being in the 55 to 64 age range. Edie has a committed, daily meditation practice and said that she meditates twice or more times a day.
- **Katie** is a compensation manager for local government and identified as an African American who is between 45 and 54 years old. Katie has a daily, committed prayer practice.

- **Lauren** identified as being white and between 55 and 64 years old. She is a university faculty member. Lauren said she engages in a daily contemplative practice and embeds it in her life.
- **Monica** described her occupation as multi-faceted and is a life and leadership coach, author-writer, teacher, activist, catalyst, change agent, lightworker and artist, and student of life. She identified as African American/Creole and as being of multiracial ethnicity. She is between 55 and 64 years of age. Monica's daily contemplative practice includes a combination of prayer, meditation, and affirmation.
- **Priya** identified as being between 45 and 54 years old and being of South Asian/Indian descent. She is an instructional designer and trainer with the Federal government. Priya engages in contemplative walks and practices yoga, although not currently as a daily or regular practice.
- **Willow** identified as a Caucasian woman who is in the 45 to 54 age range. She holds a leadership position in corporate sales. Willow has a daily meditation practice, sometimes meditating a second time during the day.

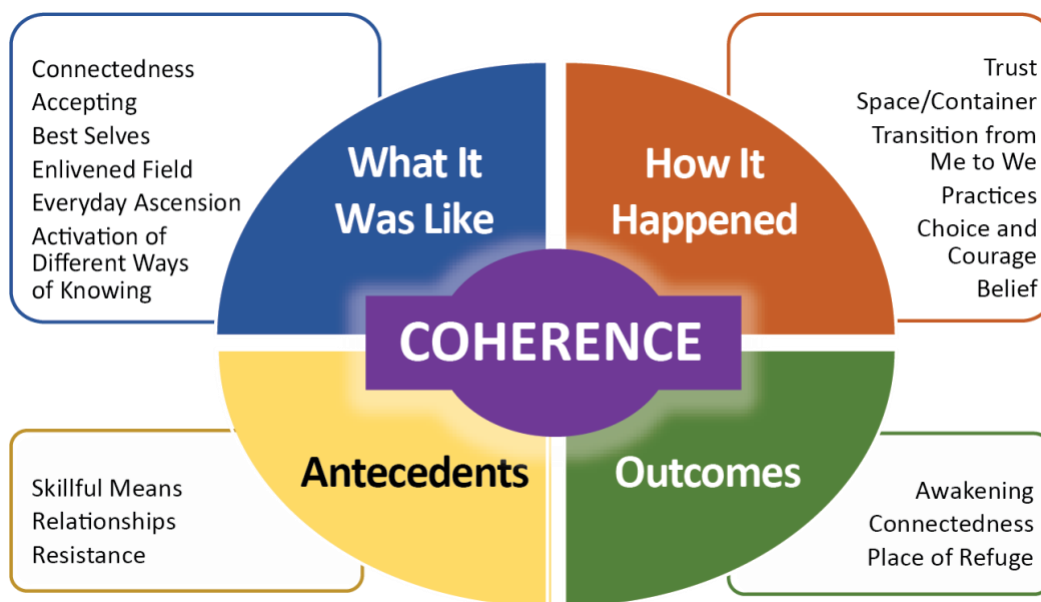
Findings

The findings for the study were generated through the course of an iterative process of data analysis that involved analyzing the data as a whole, the development of pre-emptive themes, and then using those themes to review the data for elements of the phenomenon. This dance between the whole and the parts played an important role in revealing different layers of what the data showed. Noting, memoing, reflecting, and coding all supported the process of making sense of the data.

The first-round coding of the data, the thematic coding, resulted in 79 unique themes (Appendix L). Those 79 themes were then grouped into four categories of coherence: What It Was Like, How It Happened, Antecedents, and Outcomes. In some instances, themes were duplicated and placed within two or more of the four categories. For example, the theme, *Oneness*, fell under the category What It Was Like, but also under Outcomes. Next, second-order coding within the four categories resulted in 18 second-order thematic codes (Figure 4.1). As the first- and second-order coding were taking place, which was focused on the elements or parts of the phenomenon, additional meta-themes emerged from a wider view of the data that indicated some patterns within the transcripts. These meta-themes are discussed in Chapter V.

Figure 4.1

Coherence Subsets and Characteristics



Because coherence is elusive, that is, sometimes it occurs, and sometimes it does not, the facilitated sessions were designed to encourage coherence to take place. Even with perfect execution of the sessions, coherence happening (or not happening) was a huge variable that could not be guaranteed. I begin the results section by asking the question: did coherence occur?

Coherence

The purpose of this study was to learn about the lived experience of coherence. The facilitated sessions were designed to create the possibility of coherence, but coherence was not guaranteed. The space/container, facilitated elements, and the way the participants used the online platform, Zoom, were designed to support social coherence. The first question for consideration was this: did the two groups experience coherence? In my observations as a facilitator and researcher, through being a co-participant, and through my analysis of the data, I do believe both groups shifted into coherence. As stated in Chapter II, coherence is akin to flow, but also different from flow in that it is “flow absent content” (Rebel Wisdom, 2019, 14:55). In Gunnlaugson and Brabant’s (2016) book, various authors described coherence as “felt as enormous support and sense of shared well-being” (Glickman & Boyar, 2016, p. 106), “internal alignment . . . that energy is optimized” (M. Hamilton et al., 2016, p. 138), a result of attuning to heart intelligence and having trust (Patten, 2016), and a sense that “everything falls into place” (Steininger & Debold, 2016, p. 275) resulting in creativity and new potential. As will be shown, the groups did exhibit such qualities.

Both groups achieved coherence, but the two groups’ experiences were not identical. Based on my interactions with this study, I would propose that coherence occurs along a continuum rather than being a binary on or off state. Both groups contacted coherence, but it was most likely at slightly different places within that coherence spectrum. In Chapter II, I presented literature indicating that there is a shift or a transition that occurs into coherence. The shift has a unifying effect, moving the group from a set of individuals in a group to a cohered whole sharing consciousness. As described in the literature, the shift is palpable and is felt as “some kind of higher level of order that comes into the room, and it’s very noticeable to people” (Hamilton,

2004, p. 58). When I asked the groups if a shift had occurred, both groups agreed that they noticed shifting. For Group 1, there was broad agreement about when that shift happened.

Me: Did you feel there was a shift from the beginning to when you got to lunchtime? I see nodding. All of you are agreeing. So a shift occurred. Is there a specific time when that shift happened?

Bea Bea: ...I knew it happened as soon as we started to do the heart linking through the meditation. And it continued to build.

Grainne: Kind of the same for me...

Me: Was that before the gazing and during the meditation?

Grainne: Yes, it was.

Ginger: For me, it was the experience of the gazing...

Dina: Yeah, it was the gazing...

Sandy: Definitely the gazing was very powerful...

In the session, the opening meditation involved a heart-linking element that Bea Bea referred to, during which participants were encouraged to open their hearts and feel into a connection with the other group members' hearts. Immediately following those instructions, participants were invited to turn on their video feeds and to gaze deeply at each member of the group, thereby creating a connection with each person. As participants became aware of these one-on-one connections formed through heart connection and gazing, they were then invited to imagine that each connection was a thread, and collectively, to imagine that they were weaving a tapestry with each thread of connection. Once Group 1 entered coherence, which happened within 30 minutes of the session's start, I observed that they seemed to stay there. I observed this through the following sustained behavior: minimal extraneous chatter, slowing speech and conversation, display of vulnerability and compassion, periods of silence between comments, increased expression of love for each other and positive affect, a sense of clarity expressed

through speech requiring the use of fewer words, and a collective stillness and presence. Another way of describing this is that the entire three-hour session felt like a meditation with this group.

Where Group 1 entered and sustained coherence, Group 2 seemed to go in and out of coherence, which makes sense given Group 1's already formed relationships versus Group 2 just having met. When I asked the group if there was a time during the session when they felt a shift had occurred, Edie replied, "Which one do you want to talk about?" Monica described shifts of a different nature. She noticed a synchronicity of wanting to be paired with Willow for a small group discussion and getting that pairing. "And that was the first awareness shift," she said. She went on to describe a second, emotional shift when Priya engaged in a deeply personal, emotional sharing that several of the members of the group described later as something that drew them in. The shifts were most often related to one of the practices or activities facilitated in the treatment session, including an opening heart-linking meditation, gazing practice, leaning in and out activity, intention meditation, and the art project. Following the intention meditation, Monica said, "I could sense within our collective that we were having similar thoughts and images in some way that we shared . . . that was emerging on the spiritual plane." Both Edie and Willow agreed with Monica's assessment. When I asked a similar question in a follow-up questionnaire several weeks after the experience, one member of the group named the meditation and gazing as the primary point of shift, one named the leaning in and out exercise, two named the intention meditation, and three named the art project show and tell. While they differed on their perspectives regarding a primary time of shift, they agreed that the group spent the session shifting in and out of coherence as Monica described. This may indicate that members of the group felt the profundity of shift at different times, not that they did not shift together at multiple times.

Where the members of Group 1's behavior from activity to activity remained meditative in nature, that is still, quiet, slow, clear, and calm, Group 2's behavior from activity to activity moved into a general chatty clamor full of off-topic conversations, fun and playfulness, and at times, borderline giddiness. It was as if they were experiencing an exhilaration of a different way of being and then were resting from that exhilaration between activities.

Coherence is known to be somewhat elusive, both to enter and to sustain (Brabant & DiPerna, 2016; Cox, 2014; Guttentstein et al., 2014; Yorks, 2005). Movements back and forth into and out of coherence seem to be the norm (Yorks, 2005). Given that sustaining coherence is challenging, it is not at all surprising that Group 2 experienced shifting in and out, especially since they were a new group, that is, they did not all know each other before this session. It is equally noteworthy that Group 1 entered coherence quickly and easily and then sustained coherence for several hours. One may attribute this group's capacity for coherence to their collective deep, long-term connections to one another and their own individual skillful means. I will further discuss skillful means and relationships later in this chapter.

What It Was Like

What was it like to experience coherence as a member of one of these groups? Participants from both groups described an encounter of deep connectedness where each individual's uniqueness and differences were fully accepted and celebrated. The event invited their best selves forward and in some cases resulted in everyday ascension, that is, occurrences of transcendence, growth, and transformation. The intersubjective field, for both groups, came alive with swirling and pulsating energy. Within that enlivened field, participants described feeling quiet, calm, and clear.

How did participants know that a shift had occurred and that coherence had happened? Coherence seems to have activated different ways of knowing for the participants, including somatic, emotional, spiritual, and creative, that they called on to make sense of the incidents. Participants described somatic sensations, emotional resonance, spiritual truth, and creative expression that came alive during the coherence episodes.

In this section, I will explore each of the themes that are organized within *What It Was Like: Connectedness, Accepting, Best Selves, Enlivened Field, Everyday Ascension, and Activation of Different Ways of Knowing*. Each theme is defined and supported by data (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

What It Was Like

Connectedness	Psychospiritual and psychosocial closeness among members of the group; a sense of being interwoven
Accepting	Embracing and celebrating differences among members; a sense of inclusivity and equity
Best Selves	A sense that the best parts of each member were fully present with an absence of worst traits and characteristics; a display of each other's highest relational potentialities
Enlivened Field	An energetic felt sense of the field that was swirling and pulsating felt within group members somatically, spiritually, and emotionally
Everyday Ascension	A temporary transcendence made possible through coherence
Activation of Difference Ways of Knowing	An awareness that "something" happened through non-rational intelligence, including somatic, emotional, spiritual, and creative knowing

Connectedness

Connected was a word participants used repeatedly to describe what it was like to be in coherence. Ginger said, "I felt a level of wholeness and a deep level of connection that felt very

good in my heart.” Monica explained in her art project, “We are souls connected.” Katie was surprised to feel the depth that she felt. She said, “I really wasn’t expecting the connectivity that I felt today, and it was an awesome experience.” Likewise, Alex found the sense of communion unusual. “I’ve never been part of a circle of people I just met where there’s so much connection.”

The characteristics of the connection and sense of connectedness were described as love, heart-connection, and oneness, particularly as described by members of Group 1. As Bea Bea explained, “There was an interconnectedness that happened at the heart level, at all the levels of my being. I just was in this place of oneness, full of love and connectedness.” Grainne expressed a similar connection. “My heart feels open and gentle. I feel connected.” “There was a very consistent, loving connection,” according to Roxanne. Group 2 did not use the words love, heart, and oneness to describe the connection, except for Monica, who explained her perspective two weeks following the session. “That is the very core of deeper connections: an authentic love for the human experience shared by each of us.” As a new group, it is not surprising that Group 2 did not use that languaging to describe their experience, whereas Group 1, who hold close relationships, would be more likely to speak of love and heart connection.

The connection was also described as a collective consciousness, which Priya explained as an encounter with oneness. She said, “We are the universe; the universe is within us.” Lauren explained the connection as a collective phenomenon. “That’s what collective resonance is—to see, to have a sacred reciprocal relationships with each person and to receive their gifts and then in reciprocity, I give my own gift.” Roxanne, writing one week following the session, shared a quote from Lama Anagarika Govinda that captured her experience.

We have to turn from a wayward, chaotic consciousness, from a mind that is agitated or diverted by all kinds of ephemeral objects and illusions, to a directed, i.e., co-ordinated, harmonised consciousness, which is not directed towards any particular point or limited object, but which consists so-to-say in the integration of all directions and points. (Govinda, 2006, pp. 141–142)

This directed, coordinated, harmonized consciousness seems congruent with Priya’s experience of collective consciousness and Lauren’s collective resonance, although the outcome of the connection differs. Lauren explained the shared consciousness as an exchange of gifts, where Priya’s interpretation seems to be shared consciousness serving as the root of the connection. Roxanne seems to be explaining a shift from individual consciousness to focused, shared consciousness.

The connected phenomenon appeared to be easier to explain when using metaphor, and two metaphors both groups seemed to lean into were music and magic. Five of the 13 participants included music in their art projects to describe their perspectives. Sandy sang a song about loving life and feeling free, changing the lyrics from “I” to “we” to reflect the collective experience. Willow played a song that related to all participants being lights in the sky to accompany her artwork, and Roxanne’s artwork depicted harmony which she explained felt to be the core of the experience and as “all of us coming together in harmony.”

Alex described the whole experience as a process of figuring out how to make music together. Through that process of figuring it out, they were creating something powerfully harmonic.

I feel like when we came into the space, we were all gifted with a note, and it was the only note that you had. And we all had a handbell or something. And Stacey, you invited us in, and you encouraged us, and you just banged our notes. And we felt the reverberations of our energy of maybe a note or a song that we forgot we had. And we were just feeling that, and we were like, oh my gosh, I have a note . . . and you have a note. And then we were all describing what we were feeling, and at one point, we made that intention, and it was like we put all our notes together for a brief and powerful time. And there was a beautiful harmony that played in that moment, like one song that only we could have played in this moment together. And it resonated, and it was powerful.

One week following the session, both Grainne and Alex named the event magic.

Grainne said she viewed the session as “magical—I felt very connected to the group.” Alex indicated that there was still an air of mystery surrounding the encounter.

I don’t fully understand all the magic that happened, whether it was biological, spiritual, energy flow, or a combination, but I believe the experience of it opened me up to understanding there are beautiful and deep ways of connecting that I had not experienced quite like before.

In this heightened state of connection and oneness, there was a reported episode of flow among some of the participants. Flow is described as periods of being completely absorbed by a challenging task accompanied by happiness, creativity, and productivity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Willow noticed that “I never felt like anyone had to fight for air space. It was kind of natural who went next, and to me, it felt a lot like flow.” Grainne, Ginger, and Bea Bea all expressed a sense of losing all track of time and concern with usual day-to-day activities. Grainne described increased clarity during a guided imagery practice and decreased concern with biological needs “when I stopped wondering if I needed to pee” and wondering “when am I going to get a break? When I stopped worrying about my bodily functions, I knew I was here.” Ginger continued that she noticed she moved from checking the time to “not giving a shit how much time has gone by, or how much later we’re going to go. That presence was very clear to me.”

One of the most mentioned descriptions participants used in this study was connection. The sense of connectedness was a psychosocial one rooted in a sense of a bond beyond that of physical proximity that engaged heart and love, a sense of oneness and collectivity, and was often expressed through metaphors such as music and magic. From that connectedness, participants enjoyed a flow state and being fully present.

Accepting

A theme of accepting differences and being inclusive was a repeating theme for both Groups 1 and 2. In Group 1, the celebration of difference emerged as an acceptance of each members' best and worst traits. Dina said, "I felt drawn to the field as an equal and valued person." Bea Bea said that coherence was "powerful, uplifting, and a feeling that the connection made was truly from the heart with everyone's best interests in mind—no judgments, just respect and happiness for each other."

In Group 2, the members reported being able to be their full selves and still feel accepted by the group. Monica described an envisioned world where "human skin structure was disappearing and seeking evolution." Katie explained her experience:

This is probably one of the first groups where I felt that everyone in the group was very accepting of all our differences. That's an awesome experience. We were all different. And I wasn't feeling like, for the first time, that one of us doesn't belong, and it's me. I felt like, wow, we're all different, and it's okay. This is my dream world.

To which, Priya responded by saying, "Isn't that what being human should be?"

One of the Group 2 member's artwork was a celebration of the unique attributes each member of the group brought. The art Alex created was a collection of objects that represented each member of the group (Figure 4.2) and were placed in a circle around a candle. As he told the story of this representation, he captured each member's unique essence. Beginning with the bottom left and moving clockwise, he described the towel with the hand as representing Priya's

“centeredness and softness, but strength as well.” The blue vase, for Edie, was something that was passed down from his grandfather and used now to display beauty. The quote, representing me, related to the power of questions. Monica was represented through the glass globe, which was hand-blown and was “big enough to resonate the energy I was feeling from you breathing

Figure 4.2

Alex’s Artwork



into fire.” The handmade cloth rose represented Willow, because it was “tall and beautiful, strong, but also has a nice softness and welcoming to it.” Lauren was represented as a vial of sand because of Lauren’s earlier statement of having an affinity for the ocean. Alex chose basil from his herb garden for Katie to symbolize her energy and abundance, and the stone represented himself as a memory of the first coherence experience he had. The effect of Alex’s art and his description, which displayed each of the circle member’s essences so beautifully, had a breathtaking, leaning-in effect, during which I observed all of the participants enraptured by the descriptions, fully present, and completely still. It was as if we all felt seen and held by Alex’s

art and story. Following the art project presentations, several members of the group referred back to Alex's art as a time when they felt a strong coherence among the group.

Best Selves

With the accepting and connecting aspects of coherence, participants shared that they noticed the best parts of themselves and other members of the group manifesting in the phenomenon. Dina's art project (Figure 4.3), a poem she had previously written about a similarly-connected group, revealed the group as supportive of bringing forth each member's "highest and best" of who they are. Katie talked about the aspect of supporting each other's best selves being part of the encounter. And Roxanne, as part of the art project, talked about "the bounty of . . . diversity, and . . . just allowing everyone to bring their special gifts." Lauren replied when asked what the members thought had happened with the group during the session, "We brought each other's higher selves forward. Our selves, best selves."

Figure 4.3

Dina's Artwork



Experiencing their own and each other's best selves resulted in some of the members reporting that they remembered who they were and that they felt whole. Lauren said that the experience allowed for a "remembering and recognizing the divine in each of us." Monica agreed.

What this space did for me was show me and reconfirm this idea of remembering. When we show up in our wholeness, the coherence allows us to live and breathe and share in all those facets of ourselves in a collective space.

As stated earlier and related to connectedness, Ginger said the event made her feel a "wholeness and a deep level of connection that felt very good in my heart."

Enlivened Field

The intersubjective field created a space for coherence to occur, much like a playing field in sport. And like a playing field, the intersubjective field was experienced by its occupants as having a certain energy and characteristics. Participants frequently commented on the energy of the field, characterizing it as swirling, intense, fragile, expansive, and safe among others. The outcome of being in the field created both shared and individual manifestations of energy and aspects of quieting, calming, flowing, slowing, deepening, and becoming clear.

Participants named the field expressing itself as energy repeatedly. In fact, energy was named 49 times by participants making it one of the most frequently appearing themes in the study. Monica noticed the "shifting energy in the group," and Willow characterized the unique energy to this group as an energy fingerprint: "this individual fingerprint, like . . . energy print that we have." Through the practices and activities, participants noticed shifting energy. Dina said, "The gazing gave me the opportunity to carry a little bit of everybody's energy in me and trust that they carried a little bit of my energy in them, so that started to build us as an energetic group energy." She continued, "The energy was strong—I could feel that network, the weaving,

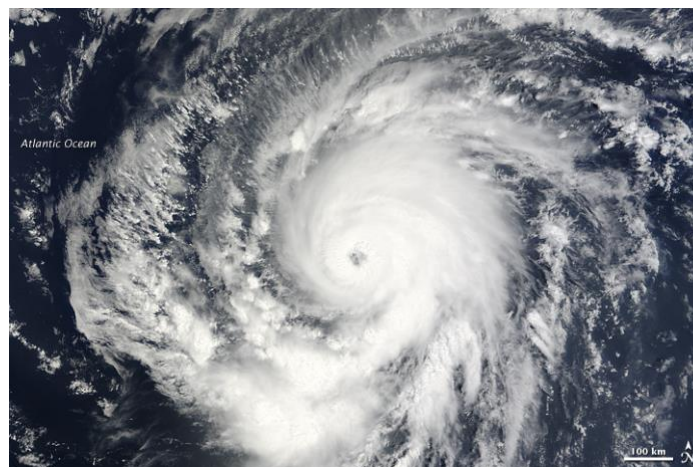
happening.” Ginger felt herself leaning back from the field at one point and then bringing herself forward and into it. She explained, “I didn’t realize the significance of the energy, and I didn’t feel into it as intensely until I wasn’t in it.” The energy was created by the participants being in the field together, according to Alex. “Opening yourself up to the energy is like opening yourself up to a reciprocal dance of sorts. Opening to yourself, to the energy, to others in a reciprocal way is really powerful.”

There was a consensus among Group 2, as well as several members of Group 1, that the energy itself was circular or swirling in nature. Edie’s art project, a photo chosen from the internet of a hurricane that looked similar to a 2021 satellite photo of Hurricane Fred (Figure 4.4), depicted the swirling energy discussed by the group. Edie explained her selection:

It’s very representative of the energy as it was being experienced with you all, and it did go, at one point, it was clockwise. At another point, it gently changed, so it was counterclockwise. Then at another point in time, it was going in a circular fashion, not unlike these types of vortexes as it had an expansiveness that went up and an expansiveness that went down.

Figure 4.4

Edie’s Artwork



Note: Satellite image of Hurricane Fred. NASA image by Jeff Schmalz, MODIS Rapid Response Team, Goddard Space Flight Center. Caption by Michon Scott.

Monica described the swirling as a “mesmerizing vortex of our collective reality.” She continued to explain it as “moving. It is circulating. It is vibrating.” In Group 1, there was also an explanation of the energy as “a pulsing of this common heartbeat” by Grainne, and then Ginger added, “the pulsation of the heart and the energy we shared.”

Ginger named a fragility in the coherent field. She described a “shattering sort of level of intensity that felt very fragile, but as we shared and went through our experiences together, it was more like all those pieces were sort of being picked up and very gently and delicately put back together.” This naming of fragility speaks to the paradox of coherence as something that is both powerful and fragile. The experience itself is powerful, and something participants remember. It is also fragile in that it is elusive, cannot be forced, and can easily fall away.

Amidst the fragility, there was also a flowing ease and a gentleness that provided clarity and quiet. According to Grainne, “We all went into the field and just flowed with it.” Monica shared a similar sentiment. “We could flow very easily together,” she said. This flowing ease had an individual expression. Grainne said, “I feel at ease—not rushed.” “It was a soft flowing,” according to Sandy. “It felt like a gentle inclusion, like gently being held.” Bea Bea thought that “it continued to build in this gentleness.” Monica said it was “peacefully calm and cool to reside within that energetic presence,” and she knew this to be the case because “when someone had to answer, [we were] feeling comfortable enough to take a few extra minutes before responding.” Ginger explained, “It’s like I zoomed in on everything that we were experiencing here, and all of the jumble became really quieted.” Both Katie and Grainne reported seeing clear imagery during a guided meditation, and both participants also explained that they do not typically see clear images while meditating.

Participants shared their personal encounters with the field. Alex said, “As I was feeling so much of y’all’s energy, I was instantly feeling everything around me.” Bea Bea also reported an extension of the energy into her personal experience. “I feel like I’m a part of something really big and beautiful.” Dina reported feeling playful and said she sensed Dakini energy. Dakini, literally meaning “sky dancer” in Sanskrit, is a Buddhist goddess who represents the enlightened, divine feminine (Easton, n.d.). Likewise, Lauren was sensing the feminine energy of the ocean as she experienced the field.

The aspect of feeling safe and being in a safe container was also of note. Willow commented on the “level of safety and openness and aliveness,” while Bea Bea noted, “It’s really beautiful. I feel very comfortable. I feel very safe.”

Everyday Ascension

During Bea Bea’s art project (Figure 4.5), she described the connection made by “slowing down the doing and just being.” She characterized the interrelatedness as something that “gets me connected to my higher self . . . Through love, attention, awareness, and mindfulness.” The experience she had with the group, and others like it, reminded her that, “yeah, I am connected to the whole.” She called this type of connection, *Everyday Ascension*. The aspects of *Everyday Ascension* include being present and aware, transcendence, a felt sense of beingness where the ego quiets and dissolves, and contact with freedom, awe, and wonder.

Figure 4.5

Bea Bea's Art Project



Note: Image, *Wisdom of the Ages* by Autumn Sky, reprinted with permission from the artist.

Monica described entering the session with “pure curiosity” about what would be happening. Once in the coherence practices, however, “it quickly flowed into being, just being present.” Roxanne shared that engaging coherence was all about “being present, being present to whatever is here. Being in the moment.” For Grainne, that meant “staying present and focused on what I was experiencing.” For Katie, being present was “feeling alive,” and Edie felt a connection to the experience of emotions. She said, “I was immediately in that moment with that individual and energetically expressing empathy and energetically holding that individual in the light.” Sandy explained that this state of beingness resulted in being in the moment without a goal. “There doesn’t have to be a reason. There doesn’t have to be a conclusion. There doesn’t have to be an outcome. The experience is the gift,” she said. The idea of process without content and goal is similar to aspects of group beingness found in t-groups as discussed in Chapter II.

T-groups are unstructured with no goals and no focus on a specific task. They are intentionally experimental in nature (Bradford et al., 1964a) just as sessions related to intentional coherence are experimental given the inconsistent nature of entering coherence.

As coherence intensified, participants noticed a change in their regular ways of operating. This regular way of operating they named the ego. Ego can be explained as a means of operating as a human being (Welwood, 2000).

Ego is a control structure we develop for purposes of survival and protection. Ego therefore serves a useful developmental purpose as a kind of business manager or agent that learns and masters the ways of the world. The tragedy of the ego, however, is that we start to believe that this manager – this frontal self that interfaces with the world—is who we are. This is like the manager of a business pretending to be the owner. This pretense creates confusion about who we really are. (p. 37)

Ego plays a necessary role in everyday human functioning. But, Buddhists argue, the ego does not represent our true selves, and like a controlling agent, is often grounded in fear, small thinking, and limiting beliefs. Participants noticed a quieting of the ego in the form of inner dialogue and critic. Katie noticed her regular way of operating had fallen away when “I wasn’t trying to control it, or I wasn’t trying to make it happen. It was just happening.” Sandy said her individual self, “both went away and was heightened. I was so overwhelmed by loving feelings that my mind went quiet.” Ginger described the experience:

I resonate strongly with the dissolving of the ego. I feel like I went from being in my head, being in my personality self, to being in my higher self, and going from being very much in a box and limited by my ego and personality into this much more expansive and fluid beingness.

The loosening of the ego seemed to have an intersubjective element. As Roxanne explained, “No ego, no self . . . there was room for everyone.” Lauren shared with the group that the “me me me me chatter goes quiet,” referring to her inner chatter quieting, and that “each one of you is like this gift, a jewel when I can let go of my ego and be present.”

In the state of beingness, some participants felt a sense of freedom. Roxanne said there was a “freedom to be who I am” in this kind of connected space. Two participants, Dina and Alex, expressed awe and wonder looking back at the experience. “I still am in awe of the experience, honestly,” according to Alex one week after the experience. Dina expressed wonderment related to Group 1’s ability to cohere so quickly and then to stay that way.

This experience of beingness had a transcendent quality as the participants discussed it. Heron (1998) explained transcendence as a consciousness beyond what the mind is conscious of. Transcendent experiences, according to Kaufman (2020), are “experiences of awe, flow, inspiration, and gratitude in daily life” (p. xxvi). Bea Bea described coming “together through spirit,” and Priya reflected on the “evolutionary possibility of being able to connect through one’s highest self.” Lauren discussed the choice to “turn into the light” and Dina related the experience to reaching one’s fullest potential, and Grainne connected the experience of beingness to the “journey of the soul.” Monica described the group as this: “We levitated.” She went on to explain that she was changed by the experience. “That thread of who you are, the light of your thread is now part of my own fabric. And so I take away pieces of you with me.”

Activation of Other Ways of Knowing

Shifting into coherence seemed to activate different ways of knowing for the participants. How they made sense of the phenomenon, how they knew something had happened collectively, and how they translated it into language all seemed to activate more than the intellect. Dina shared that she thought coherence had activated all of her intelligences:

What I noticed was how I was experiencing our activities and the group somatically and analytically; i.e., I was in touch with the feelings, sensations, emotions (my somatic and heart intelligences), as well as with both sides of my mind wisdom—the analytical left brain intelligence and the intuitive, creative wisdom of the right brain.

The different ways of knowing seemed to fall into four categories based on participants' comments: somatic knowing, emotional knowing, spiritual knowing, and creativity. As Ginger explained, "It's more like the language was the feeling, the emotion, the energy, the sense, the felt sense."

Among these other ways of knowing was somatic knowing, which is derived from the body distinct from the mind. One might refer to this knowing as the wisdom of the body. As participants began to describe the coherence experience, how they knew something had changed or shifted, they often referred back to change and sensations in the body. Roxanne explained that "somatic sensing and feeling for me made me very aware of how different this experience was."

Ginger provided a detailed account of her body shifting into a more relaxed state, indicating that something had changed for her within the group phenomenon:

My chest sort of softened. I think my posture opened up. My shoulders softened down my back, and I relaxed all the tension. I've been standing this whole time, and I could feel my legs even softening, my toes uncurling from gripping the floor to death. It was like my body was soothed throughout.

Monica made sense of a variety of shifts in her experience with Group 2 and noticed a "quicken heartbeat, giddiness that it's something new. I'm going between having butterflies and being sweaty. The butterflies are within the tummy, and the sweat is from the vibrations . . . that are coming through this space." As Alex explained, "I was tapping into a part of myself (my lower right side of my gut and flowing energy there) that I don't tap into often." Priya described a full-body somatic experience. "I felt like there was a lightness, that lightness of being, just kind of floating." Priya also reported a shared embodied sense that the group collectively experienced something that was both in her body and in each members' bodies.

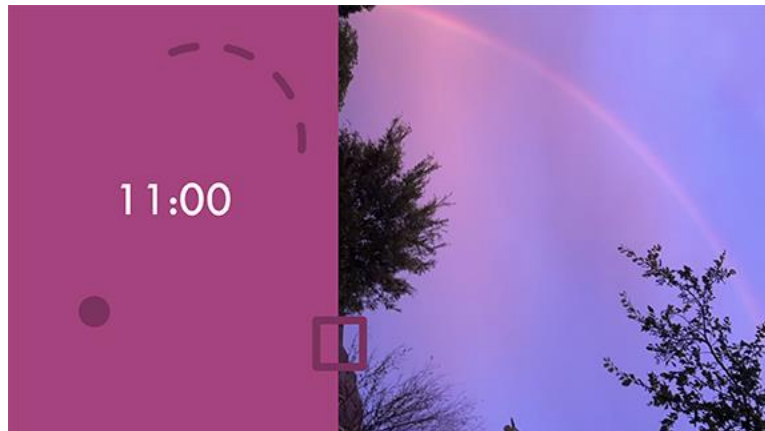
Psychosocial sensing was also present for participants as they described deeply empathetic and sympathetic responses to each other's emotional reactions. Bea Bea said, "I

know that we shared so much feeling.” Grainne agreed and said they were all “sending love and receiving love.” Sandy continued and said, “I feel this very special give and take and equality and supportiveness and love.” And Ginger chimed in, noting that her “heart just got really smacked with all that love.” Willow explained the sensing into the changing landscape of the group as she explained the shift through emotional resonance:

I really felt a shift . . . emotionally when any one of you was sharing something very personal and created emotion. With Priya and Lauren, when you guys got emotional and teary, I felt that emotion well up in my body like I was going to cry. So I was feeling you so completely emotionally in those moments.

Priya agreed that “it shifted, and then I felt compassion . . . There was a sense of compassion, because everybody was doing it for everyone else.” “I felt an intense connection to the emotions and descriptions shared,” according to Monica. Lauren agreed, adding, “The act of vulnerability was in and of itself like art to me.”

Katie described a feeling of positive affect and well-being, explaining, “We caught the rainbow.” She later described what she meant by catching the rainbow. She said, “When I think of a rainbow, I think of unity and harmony. . . I was hoping that all living things could live in unity and harmony.” Her art project (Figure 4.6), a series of photos describing her emotions at various points in the day, included a rainbow photo to describe her sense of “loving it” as the group was deep into coherence.

Figure 4.6*Katie's Artwork*

Another different way of knowing that the participants used to make sense of the experience was through spiritual intelligence and knowing. Dina talked about “fortify[ing] our inner souls” in her poem, while Grainne talked about this kind of phenomenon as “a journey of the soul.” Bea Bea described the opening toward a spiritual connection. “We make the connection with spirit, and we go within. We start weaving ourselves into the all that is, and we . . . connect to the heavens and the earth,” she said and explained, “We’ve come together through spirit.” Lauren had a similar perspective. “It was remembering and recognizing the divine in each of us,” she said. Monica and Lauren used a spiritual lens to make sense of the source of the connection. Monica quoted from her essay, “We are superb Sapient structures infused with spiritually sourced energy.” And Lauren said, “It seems my source is the ocean, a feminine force. Each of us has a different source.” Lauren described participants as being the expression of spirituality. She explained, “I was thinking about the idea of light going into a prism, and then it spreads out into all the colors. All the colors are maybe our individuation, but we’re all from the light. And so the light is all in us.”

The fourth shift in knowing is creativity. A creative element was included in the facilitated sessions in the form of an art project (Appendix B), which was described earlier in this chapter. The art project catalyzed individual sensemaking that became a collective process as each participant shared their art and then explained why they had chosen their art. Willow said the art sharing was a way of “sharing creatively our experiences.” Ginger explained, “When I was explaining the art I created, I was at a pretty solid loss for words, but being able to get into that creative energy put a different kind of language to it.” Bea Bea agreed with Ginger and built upon what she shared:

The art project just helped me to embody it. Ginger said that there was a total loss for words, but there is an embodiment that happened when I was doing the artwork, and it was so intensively joyful that I didn’t even eat. I looked up, and it was time to come back.

I observed that the reactions to seeing each other’s art and hearing each other’s stories had a stilling, quieting effect, rendering the groups thoughtful, moved, and silent. After a long pause following her group sharing their art, Monica said, “Absolutely beautiful. There are no words.” Similarly, Group 1 experienced a resonance and reverence for the art. According to Sandy, “I’m just overwhelmed by the beauty. The visuals, those gorgeous colors, the beautiful images, the poetry, the beautiful words, and intentions that went along with it. It’s stunning.” Bea Bea agreed, “Just wow, overwhelming wow, positive wow.”

How It Happened

What were the conditions, environment, and aspects of agency that allowed the groups to enter a coherent state? Participants described the importance of trust, the space cultivated through facilitation, the shift into coherence, practices that supported the shift, and the roles of choice, courage, and belief.

In this section, I will explore each of the themes within How It Happened, define them, and present the associated data. The themes in this category are *Trust*, *Space/Container*, *Transition from Me to We*, *Practices*, *Choice and Courage*, and *Belief*. Each theme is defined and supported by data (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

How It Happened

Trust	A sense of safety through trusting themselves, each other, the facilitator, and the process
Space/Container	The atmosphere and tone created by how the session was set up through facilitation and the session's contents
Transition from Me to We	Aspects that supported the group shifting into coherence
Practices	Meditation practices and coherence activities included in the session and the effect the practices had
Choice and Courage	The role that each participants' individual choice regarding engagement and the bravery those choices flowed from
Belief	A knowing that a deep experience is possible, and an understanding of why it may be possible

Trust

Trust seemed to be a basic necessity for coherence to occur. Dina said, "First, you have to build trust, because who's going to risk showing up that way in a group if you don't feel you can trust it to stay in that group? If you don't feel you can trust that you aren't being judged?" Sandy explained that "being able to trust the group that you're with and trust yourself" were both needed.

Trust in the people, process, and self enabled participants to fully engage in the session. Dina said, "What bolsters my courage is the trust I have in the group members, facilitator, and process . . . I made an intentional choice to share my feelings and insights and to trust that I could do so without judgment." The trust resulted in an opening for authenticity. "There's no

fear. We could be who we are individually in a collective gathering without fear of judgment,” Bea Bea explained. Alex added, “I think it not only took trust and courage but also practice and humility.”

Members of Group 1, having had a relationship prior to this session, may have experienced higher levels of trust entering the experience. Additionally, many of the participants already knew me, which may have magnified that existing trust level. In Group 2, the members were from two cohorts of a coach training program, so everyone entered the session knowing at least two other participants well. Trust may have been found in the program manager who recommended participation in my study as well as knowing that they were entering the session with at least two other familiar people. Edie shared that she was eager to participate in any experiences the program manager provided. Katie indicated that she knew Willow, Alex, and Monica and was curious about Edie and Lauren. Through the course of the session, she explained that she felt comfortable and connected to both Edie and Lauren. It seemed that the commonality of the program that they shared, as well as Monica who was active with both cohorts, formed a trusting bridge allowing participants to fully engage.

Space/Container

According to participants, the metaphorical, energetic space or container that held the experience played a role in facilitating coherence. There is an imperative for the facilitator to cultivate a safe container, because “this kind of generative social space intentionally changes the relationship among participants” (Yorks, 2005, p. 1221) as it serves as a “holding space of deep listening with unconditional love” (Scharmer, 2016, p. 246). Participants discussed how the space felt to them and named specific aspects of the container, the usage of the online platform, Zoom, and the facilitation, all of which they felt contributed to the experience.

Bea Bea shared her perception of the space during her art project show and tell. “All of us [were] together in our own containers and in a big container as one heart linking to each other in support and respect to the common goal, weaving the tapestry of flow.” Ginger’s art project (Figure 4.7) featured a mandala illustrating the experience of the energy of the container:

The mandala I drew, that’s the ranunculus in the middle. That’s the little flower that I think really portrays all of us being in that huddle together. And then those little yellow stars are all of us, and then one that doesn’t have a little body in it is the eighth being that is all that is. That is the field . . . a visualization that really encompasses all the space, the blue and little stars and twinkles and purple, and even this very kind, gentle smile.

Figure 4.7

Ginger’s Artwork



Sandy explained that the experience felt like “each of us just holding each other in loving space.” Lauren discussed the quiet of the space, which helped her to connect with the other members of her group. “The noise can, for me, drown out the resonance of a group. The silence does help to tone down the noise and amplify the silence.”

While almost all of the participants believed this type of deep connection was possible before the session, three participants specifically named their skepticism. They did not think coherence was possible for a group engaged with each other virtually using an online platform. The online platform, Zoom, was engaged in specific ways for the sessions. Participants were

encouraged to turn off their self-view, leave their audio and video feeds open, avoid using artificial backgrounds, sit in full light so they could easily be seen, and close all other windows on their computers. According to Alex, “Turning off my self-view was huge, and turning off all the browser screens and having my phone away.” In addition to Zoom specifications, some of the participants recognized that the way the session was facilitated was clear and intentional. Willow noticed the intention of “the architecture of the space and the fact that you created it so safely and so clearly, with the ground rules.” Alex discussed how the facilitation invited but did not force participation:

It was beautifully scaffolded and designed. I never felt dropped into it. I didn't feel like, all right, just go there. I really felt guided and then invited. It wasn't like any one thing was the shift. It just helped to create conditions for the shifts. It was creating more room. You're like the proverbial DJ, if you will, of the day.

Transition from Me to We

Coherence is frequently discussed as a shift that occurs when a group is able to “cross the threshold into a collaborative space” (Yorks, 2005, p. 1233). In groups that I am part of, I hear that shift discussed as a transition from me to we. As described earlier, as coherence began to emerge, the energy shifts from the typical, somewhat chaotic group energy made up of individual agendas and needs to one that is quieter, calmer, clearer, and more heartfelt. Participants could easily discuss the concept of shift. In fact, they seemed to be clear about what I was referring to when I suggested that perhaps a shift had occurred. Monica described the multiple shifts that the members of Group 2 reported:

Coming in, . . . it was about the curiosity, and the curiosity is kind of like a palpitation. The embodiment is a quickened heartbeat, this kind of giddiness that it's something new. The shift, for me, is when it switches into my belly, and it feels like butterflies, because there is an energetic and a spiritual shift that begins to happen and emerge, and everything begins to sit within that space, because energy is rising and flowing in a different way. So the palpitations actually stop in terms of quickened heartbeat of the excitement and curiosity of something new. And then there is a fluttering that begins to happen, along with a warmth within that shares that this is an emotional or spiritual shift or change that is happening with the energy in the space.

Bea Bea's art project show and tell included an explanation of the steps toward coherence. She explained that it begins with each individual making a connection to spirit through meditation and practices, and then connecting to each other through heart linking. At that point, they would start to feel like a group. "We take it to the next level through common purpose, and then we dance, we sing, we reflect. It doesn't mean we'll always agree, but that we will always love," said Bea Bea. Alex commented on the mutuality of shifting into coherence. "I think seeing everyone else shift, I have permission to shift as well."

As discussed earlier, members of Group 1 all agreed that the group shifted into coherence during the opening meditation and accompanying gazing activity. Bea Bea shared her certainty of the shift:

I'd have to say 100 trillion percent there was a shift for me. When I logged on, I was just me, but then I left for lunch, I wasn't just me. There was an interconnectedness that occurred at the heart level, at all levels of my being.

Grainne said, "We all just went into the field and flowed with it." Roxanne called the connection a "coming together in harmony" and her art, as she explained it, included "colorfulness, playfulness, open sky possibilities" of connecting, while "allowing everyone to bring their special gift." Sandy agreed and added, "Our energy, our combined energy flowing together independent of space and time, magnified." Dina continued, "I felt my own personal container enlarge as our group container expanded to welcome and hold all of us."

Some participants noticed a building energy of coherence. Dina explained the building she experienced:

There was a building through the meditation and a leaning in. And there's this building of energy throughout the body, and then kind of like a wave of letting it settle. And as it settled, I just felt so much open up, particularly my heart chakra and my third eye chakra.

Ginger discussed a “shattering” and then a building and integration. “Every time I connected with an individual, I softened a little more and a little more and a little more. It was like tiny chips of ice [melting].” Grainne acknowledged that “from the very first exercise, it just built on.” Monica noticed the spectrum of building. “I saw us levitating and continuing to climb in this space of coherence, and the coherence was tightening. It was becoming stronger. It was connective tissue around all of us.”

Practices

Practices were generated from extensive study of and participation in various trainings provided by other facilitators deeply enmeshed in group beingness. The practices were similar in tone and tenor to the meditation practices I have been teaching for almost ten years, but they differed in their focus on the collective instead of the individual. The training sessions that I participated in were all conducted via the online platform, Zoom, which bolstered my confidence that coherence could happen in a virtual space, because I experienced coherence with groups of people I did not know during some of those trainings.

The singular shift into coherence as experienced by Group 1 and the multiple shifts experienced by Group 2 all originated in part from the practices and activities that were built into the facilitated session. As stated earlier, members of Group 1 agreed that they shifted into a degree of coherence following the opening meditation and gazing practice. For Group 2, the

point at which the shifting occurred varied (Table 4.4). The sessions included six practices and activities that were intended to support each group moving into coherence.

Table 4.4

Group 2 Shift Points

When did a shift into coherence occur?	
During the opening meditation	1 participant
Gazing and tapestry weaving	1 participant
Intention activity and practice	2 participants
Art project show and tell	3 participants

Opening Meditation and Heart Linking. Running approximately 15 minutes in length, the opening meditation was intended to transition participants into the session and to orient them toward each other and the intersubjective field. I guided them to focus on the breath, to ground in Mother Earth, connect to the universe, and then to link to each other and the field through their hearts. Bea Bea said, “My heart energy went to everyone else’s heart energy, and I created a web where all of our hearts were connected as one.” Grainne also resonated with the heart linking and experienced that connection as a “web of arteries going in all the directions out of everyone and interconnecting.” “After the initial heart connection activity, it was just a soft flowing,” according to Sandy. In addition to the heart connections made, the grounding in Mother Earth and connecting with the universe were reported to have an impact. Dina said, “So much of what I have experienced with you all these last couple of hours was connecting to Mother Earth, connecting to the universe above, feeling my rootedness.” “The first meditation with the connecting ourselves to Mother Earth” invited participants to step into the experience, according to Alex.

Gazing and Weaving a Tapestry. At the end of the opening meditation, participants were invited to remain in the meditation while opening their eyes and gazing deeply at each of the other participants. They were encouraged to imagine they were weaving threads between themselves and each of the other participants, and through that weaving, to envision a collective process of creating a tapestry as each member of the group wove a set of threads, and to see how those threads were woven together. The eye gazing was reported to have evoked a strong response in some of the participants. Ginger said, “Incrementally, as I went from person to person, it started to like, oh shit, okay, well, that’s really tugging on some tender, tender spots.” Dina explained a deepening as the activity progressed. She explained, “There was really enough time for me to go around twice, and going back a second time with each person, the connection was even stronger. I could feel that network, the weaving, happening.” Sandy’s experience was one of emotional resonance. She described tears running down her cheeks for the duration of the gazing and said, “I was feeling great love going around and looking at each person and just feeling this adoration.”

Leaning In and Out. In order to become aware of the sensations of shifting energy, an activity was facilitated that featured participants leaning back and away from their computers, taking in the whole of their surroundings through their five senses. Then, they leaned forward toward their computer screens, and as they did, they were instructed to reconnect with fellow participants by gazing, re-establishing heart connect, and taking in each other’s presence. They were then invited to continue to shift back and forth at their own pace for five minutes, being aware of the difference between the two postures. Roxanne said, “The point where I think I became way more aware of the shift was the in and out, and feeling the different sense, the different temperature of the energies.” Alex said he “felt heat and energy . . . in my gut.”

The Intention Exercise and Practice. Based on McTaggart's work with intentions (2017), the groups were facilitated through a process to create a collective intention. Dina described the process:

The icing on the cake was coming together and creating an intention for our group. That was just . . . such a lovely process . . . It was like writing a song. We all contributed the lyrics, and... it came out this lovely, beautiful harmony of harmonized intention.

Once the intention was agreed upon, the groups were instructed to sit in silence allowing the intention to hang in their collective awareness and simply listen to the field and the universe. A ten-minute meditation practice followed, which began with reading the intention statement three times and then sitting in silence. At the end of the ten minutes, each member was invited to share what they "saw" during the meditation. "I think once we shared our reflections after the common intention visualization exercise, we were fully connected and in the flow and seemed to be really resonating with each other outside of our own individual power but through our collective power," according to Alex.

Starling Murmuration Meditation. As the group watched a video of a starling murmuration (Valk, 2020), they were instructed to engage with it meditatively, that is, focusing on the senses and sensations the video evoked. Monica said, "It was truly breathtaking for me from the very beginning with the starling swirls through everyone's meditation." "Seeing the formations of those flying beings in the video, I just feel like the Dakini is with us today," Dina explained.

The Art Project. At the end of the facilitated session, participants were invited to do the art project detailed earlier in this chapter (Appendix B). Participants were free to create their own art or to share images, songs, poems that resonated with their experience. As each participant shared their art with the group, they explained why they had chosen what they did in a show and

tell. It is through the storytelling and sharing of the experience that the groups, particularly Group 2, seemed to drop deeper into coherence. Alex explained, “It wasn’t just what you were showing, but the actual art of showing it is putting something difficult to articulate into words.” Priya noticed a sense of interconnection. She said, “I definitely have the feeling of what other people, what the rest of you might be feeling. I’m also getting the feeling that I’m being felt. This happened throughout our exercises, especially after sharing our art.” Members of Group 2 were particularly taken with Alex’s art (Figure 4.3). Edie named Alex’s sharing of his art as one of the points of shift. Monica agreed, “The beauty that was represented in the pictures of the containers that Alex shared so brilliantly just captured the embodiment of our own uniqueness.”

Choice and Courage

These participants literally chose to participate. The choice came when they signed up. It came again before they logged in to the facilitated session, and when they chose how they would participate. Choice also presented itself as the choice to step into the field and to allow themselves to be part of the coherence experience. For some of them, the choice was indicative of a larger, longer choice to be engaged in a path of spiritual and personal development. At whatever point choice entered, participants discussed the courage that was involved in making those choices. On one level, the participants discussed choice from a philosophical perspective, and then they talked about actually making the choices they did to move into coherence.

Philosophically, there was a choice in how one was going to engage in the session. “The will or choice is to submit one’s self to a process that you don’t necessarily understand the purpose of. This is also where courage . . . comes in,” according to Sandy. “I don’t think that connection is possible without the will or choice for us all to step into that space and be vulnerable,” Alex reflected. Grainne added, “It is an act of healthy will to stay awake to what is

happening and not ignore, go to sleep, or minimize my experience. I actively chose to participate fully.” Lauren’s perspective was that “there were micro-moments of choice, like who do I choose to show up as? At every moment, I could choose to fully shine or not. It was effortless. I couldn’t not be me.”

The choice, then, to enter a deep connection involved willing the self to do so. Lauren said, “The first step seems to have to been that people chose to turn into that space.” Edie continued, explaining, “The choice is to experience connecting deeply with each participant.” Alex described the will of connecting as “the power of choosing or desiring or both and tending to walk yourself to an opening.” Monica simplified the issue of choice by saying, “We were all willing to step into it.”

Some participants spoke of this choice being present with them well before the session started. It was a choice to participate, to engage fully, and to be authentic and vulnerable. “The choice was prior to joining and setting the intention to be authentic and fearless. I believe that did contribute to being open to the deep connections,” Roxanne said. Dina agreed, “I made an intentional choice to participate and connect deeply.”

Two participants reported feeling nervous before the session. Even for those who were not anxious, several participants discussed the courage it took to engage in the activity. Alex said, “I was nervous about being vulnerable with a group of people who I don’t know very well.” Dina acknowledged the courage needed to agree to participate in the session. “It always takes courage for me to engage in a session like this one. For me, the courage is tied to being fully present and being fully open and honest about what comes up.” Sandy said it came down to having “the courage to just step into your space.” For some participants, courage was part of a larger choice around engaging in a spiritual development path. Grainne’s perspective was that

the members of Group 1 had all committed to the path. “I think everyone in this group has already been courageously engaged in exploring themselves,” she said.

Belief

It seems that believing this kind of connection is possible may be a factor in determining whether coherence happens. Participants were primed for being open to this type of experience in the pre-session questionnaire (Appendix I) when they were asked to describe a previous coherence event. Twelve out of the 13 participants were able to share a previous experience. It seems that without prompting, some of the participants inherently connected the possibility for this type of connection to consciousness and spirituality. Monica named it as energetic and spiritual. “There is an energetic and spiritual shift that begins to happen and emerge, and everything begins to sit in that space,” she said. Bea Bea linked the experience to a connection with spirit. She said that “we make that connection to spirit and we go within.” And Grainne likened the experience to the journey of the soul. “It just reminds me of the long journey, the difficult journey that we’re all on, that we’ve both separate in it and all moving through it together,” she said. Lauren associated the experience with both consciousness and divinity. “There’s a sustaining nature when I dip into the field of consciousness,” she explained. “It was remembering and recognizing the divine in each of us.”

Antecedents

Through the course of discussions and responding to questions during the interview, a category emerged regarding skills, mindsets, and experiences that participants brought with them into the session. Those antecedents generally provided a benefit to the group and to the experience, allowing the group to go deeper faster. The primary antecedents came in the form of skillful means and existing relationships. A secondary antecedent, resistance to the session itself,

must also be considered, since the groups did not appear to be held back by something that may be considered this potential barrier.

In this section, I will explore each of the themes that are organized within Antecedents: *Skillful Means*, *Relationships*, and *Resistance*. Each theme is defined and supported by data (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Antecedents

Skillful Means	Skills developed through personal and spiritual development work; an ability to attune to self, others, and the experience
Relationships	Pre-existing friendships and relationships formed before the session
Resistance	Reticence to being present the day of the session, losing their Saturday

Skillful Means

Skillful means played an important role in the members of both groups being able to enter coherence. What are skillful means? The Buddhist concept of skillful means refers to the ability of someone who has reached enlightenment to adjust the teachings of the Buddha based on who the audience was, that is, the teacher had the ability to teach to the student in a way that they could best understand or receive the teachings (Mitchell, 2008). In a more modern application, skillful means refer to adjusting behavior based on context with the understanding that one who has committed fully to awakening has gained deep wisdom about self, the path, and is able to bring that knowledge in a way that benefits others (Vu et al., 2018). Here, I am using the term to reflect skills acquired through a dedicated journey of spiritual and personal development, wherein one can stay connected to one's inner state while also being fully aware of the nuanced experiences of others around them and while being able to understand the complexities of the experience itself. It is an application of awareness, wisdom, and compassion.

All participants brought with them into the session a contemplative practice that they engaged in regularly (or had engaged in the past, as was the case with one participant). Practices were primarily meditation and prayer and seemed to range from 10 minutes two or three times a week to an hour-long practice two or more times a day. For example, Bea Bea shared that meditation, chanting, and prayer all connect her to her higher self. Their practices supported participants in building focus and awareness and helped them to cultivate some degree of an inward gaze. The skillful means developed through committed practice as a part of personal development played a role in shifting into coherence, because increased awareness and focus allowed them to sense a shift occurring and then to stay with that experience. Grainne explained how members' skillful means allowed Group 1's seemingly effortless ability to enter and remain in a deeply connected state:

I know we all are committed to our practices. We don't all have necessarily the same practice, but I know this group all has things, practices, that I'm going to say drive you, but that have moved from being disciplines to devotions. So we've all made this a journey, not a destination, but it's a calling of our souls. There's just a level of commitment with the folks in this group to remembering who they are, staying connected to who they are, being committed to staying on the path regardless of whether we're in the poison pill or the ease. That we're just willing to walk through fire and come out the other side, knowing that there's going to be something beautiful on the other side. So I think that perhaps allows this particular group to jump in so quickly and easily. We're not afraid that, oh, my old stuff is going to come up that's going to block me from being able to fully participate. We've all done the window washing. We know we have our shit, and yet we're not afraid if it pops up.

As Grainne explained, individual ego material did not interfere with the deep connection, and a devotion to spiritual development may have aided in their ability to cohere, all of which refers back to skills means.

My own skillful means as a facilitator, meditation teacher, and fellow journeyer most likely supported both groups' shifts into coherence. Although I did not inquire participants about the skill, intuition, or process that I brought to bear, Alex referred to me as the group DJ, inviting

participants to engage in the process, and Priya referred to my role as one of holding space.

Reflecting on the experiences, I do believe I brought the skillful means I have cultivated through at least a decade of dedicated meditation practice as well as awareness cultivated through myriad personal and spiritual developmental experiences.

Relationships

Relationships also formed a grounding for the groups entering the space. The members of Group 1 all knew each other well through multiple courses plunging into deep, personal material as well as through regular meditation circles and the close friendships that they have developed. Sandy and Roxanne as well as others named the deep love and adoration they have for the other members of the circle. In Group 2, members of the group came from two different cohorts of a coach training program, so within the small group were two subsets of existing relationships. Monica was familiar with both groups, as she is training to become an instructor for the program. Katie explained that she knew Monica, Alex, Willow, and Priya, but that she was “curious” about Edie and Lauren who were from the other cohort. The commonality of their experiences formed a quick and easy bridge. Later, Katie said she was easily able to glean an understanding of who Edie was and that she was drawn to Lauren as Lauren shared about healing and “about the ocean, because that’s my center point.” These connections provided a shift for Katie into a deeper connection with the whole.

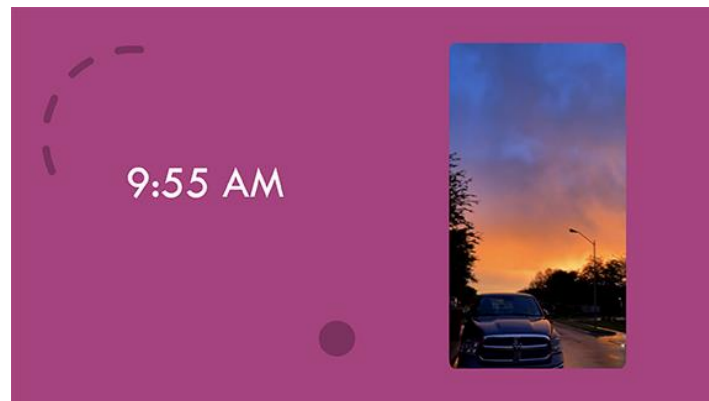
Resistance

Although not a dominant theme, two participants stated that they were resistant to engaging in the session on the day of the event. For Bea Bea, she admitted to feeling resistance in the morning before the session simply because it meant giving up her Saturday. Several other participants nodded and smiled when she said this, indicating they, too, may have regretted

giving up their Saturdays. Katie shared that she was “a little gloomy” at 9:55 am, five minutes before the session started. She used a photo (Figure 4.8) in her artwork to illustrate that feeling.

Figure 4.8

Katie's Artwork



Despite this resistance, the groups were still able to engage fully and experience a deep level of connection and coherence. In other words, slight resistance on the part of some members did not present itself as an obstacle.

Outcomes

When the session came to a close, the participants took some positive aspects of the experience with them. The outcomes came in the form of awakening to new possibilities, a newfound or renewed connectedness, and access to the space as a place of refuge. The presence of outcomes and benefits were not investigated in the session or the group interviews. Instead, the participants naturally began to puzzle over what the experience meant for them outside of the session.

In this section, I will explore each of the themes that are organized within Outcomes: *Awakening*, *Connectedness*, and *Place of Refuge*. Each theme is defined and accompanied by supporting data (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6*Outcomes*

Awakening	“A temporary expansion and intensification of awareness that brings significant perceptual, affective, and conceptual changes” (Taylor, 2018, p. 128)
Connectedness	Deepened relationships as a result of coherence
Place of Refuge	An energetic space to which participants can return using focused attention and clear intention

Awakening

Cohering with their groups had an awakening effect for some of the participants. An awakening experience, according to Taylor (2018), is a “temporary expansion and intensification of awareness that brings significant perceptual, affective, and conceptual changes” (p. 128). The awakening emerged in the form of insights, possibilities for themselves and others around them, and questions regarding their sense of purpose.

From the place of coherence, participants were able to see things about themselves that they may not have gleaned from normal, waking consciousness. These insights came in the form of questions and awareness of personal traits and characteristics. As Priya explained, “When you’re sitting like we did, . . . it does remind you of what you truly believe in your deep-seated beliefs, and they are able to emerge.” Roxanne noticed that “it brought a keen awareness to how important being in those spaces is to me.” Sandy said, “Connection is not always easy for me . . . So the experience of connectedness still feels somewhat unfamiliar, which is what makes these exercises so valuable.” Priya wondered, “I’m very empathetic. Why do I hide those parts of me? Why do I shy away from myself?” Ginger explained how the session widened her view on her needs:

It provided me with a new idea on how I connect with others, and how much I need and benefit from such connections, hence the healing effect. It was especially enlightening, because I experienced methods of connecting I had never before.

The power of the group experience was on participants' minds. Bea Bea shared, "Just make the connection, will it, and it will be." She explained the importance of linking together "where we can do anything as a group." Bringing this type of connection fully into their lives requires intention and effort, according to Roxanne. "There is skillful will to keep this alive and in our everyday lives." Lauren shared the power of suspending the knowledge gained from previous coherence experiences. She said, "Beginner's mind is indeed an awesome place." And Monica shared a knowing as a result of the experience. "Our capacity is far greater than we can imagine."

Some participants experienced an opening to what is possible, which shifted as a result of the session. Sandy said, "I gained a perspective about groups and what is possible." Bea Bea elaborated, and asked, "How do we get group coherence in non-heart-centered groups and maintain it? How do you get this out there in the world?" Dina noticed that "the possibilities open up when you are part of a group like this and when you are part of this container."

With the insights and possibilities came an igniting of some of the participants' sense of purpose in the world. Monica clarified her purpose for the groups with whom she works.

Energy does not die. It continues. If I am authentic . . . , that means that every group that I am part of . . . , the energy is present for them and their energy is present for me. It doesn't remain here. It goes into all the other places and spots and individuals and groups that we touch and that we are part of.

Both Grainne and Priya imagined meaning and purpose on a larger scale. Priya asked, "Isn't that what we're here for? To take it to the next level of evolution? In 200 years, who knows? Will they have this way of thinking, instead of feeling like this is a privilege to be this way?" And

Grainne shared, “We’re Bodhisattvas. I believe we’re all going to be here until the last soul. Eventually, we’ll all meet in this field when everybody can be here.”

Connectedness

Almost all the participants stated that they experienced an increased sense of connectedness, and in some cases, a sense of oneness. “I just was in this place of oneness, full of love and connectedness,” Bea Bea said, and then continued by saying she needed more of this kind of experience and connectedness in her life. While Group 1 already shared a close bond collectively, Group 2 members, in some cases, were just meeting each other for the first time. Willow explained that meeting other people from the previous cohort who “already took the journey” was another benefit of the experience. “It’s really a gift,” she said. Following the sessions, both groups mentioned that there had been an increase in conversations, phone calls, reaching out to each other to share about their individual experiences, and to sense make. This increased activity conveys a connectedness that extended beyond the session.

A Place of Refuge

The coherent space and heightened intersubjective field seemed to hold a special place for participants. It provided a place of refuge with which they are able to reconnect. It was a state they yearned for and one for which they expressed gratitude.

During Group 1’s group interview, Sandy, unprompted, shared with the group toward the end of the session, that she attempted to return to the space of coherence the group had created earlier:

This is more of a left-brain activity here [referring to the interview], but I went back into my intention of connectedness with the group, and I could feel a softening and an opening—just a gentleness and almost a waiting. I just was able to move back into the heart-centered or intuitive space that we just experienced once I decided to do it.

The idea of reconnecting to the space was an intriguing one, and a week following each of the sessions, I queried participants about whether they were able to reconnect with the field that they accessed during the session. All members of Group 1 said they were indeed able to reconnect a week later. Not only were they able to reconnect with the space, but they also indicated that the positive affect and connectedness were available to them through this reconnection. According to Bea Bea, “I can just close my eyes and reconnect to the state.” For Dina, she was carrying the energy of the group with her. She said that she could reconnect in a “deep, powerful, joyful way. I can actually feel the energy of our group as I write this . . . deep in my heart and soul.” Sandy and Grainne said if they focused, they were able to reconnect. Members of Group 2, for the most part, were also able to reconnect, but that they were reconnecting with an aspect of the experience. Alex said it was “slightly faded, but I had a similar feeling in my gut,” and Monica and Willow said they were able to reconnect to that deeper connection when they met days later. Monica said, “The same depth of connective energy and feelings arose from the original session. I remain energetically warm and open toward all the group members.” Given the difference in the two groups’ experiences—Group 1, entering and remaining in coherence, and Group 2, shifting in and out—it seems that any shift into coherence may leave a lasting impression and provide a space to which someone may return.

Some participants expressed a yearning for that type of connected experience. “I have missed and longed for the deep connections with my [organization] friends,” Dina said. Lauren, who shared that she has experienced coherence with other groups, explained that she experiences a yearning for this type of connection and experience. “I think when desire meets desire or yearning meets yearning, then the magic can happen.” Roxanne said she noticed “an increased

awareness of the value of being with like heart/mind/energy people. In planning for retirement, it is these spaces and activities I will fill my time with.”

Similarly, several participants expressed being left with a sense of gratitude for having experienced coherence with their group. Alex said, “It was truly an incredible experience and one I am grateful for each day.” Monica said it was “an authentic love of human experience shared by each of us.” At the closing of Group 1’s session, Roxanne said, “I just want to share my love and gratitude for going through this with me, with us, as one. I just cherish it.”

Taken together, the gratitude they have for the day, the yearning they have to return or to have similar experiences, and the space as something they can reconnect to allows for a place of refuge that is accessible to all of them if they choose. Once they have had an experience of coherence and oneness, they are likely to remember that experience. Similar to Maslow’s (1971) conceptualization of transcendence, it may be that coherence is a peak experience that they yearn to have more of. Maslow explained that transcendence occupied the same characteristics of self-actualization with the addition of encounters with peak experiences. These peak experiences then became “the most important thing in their lives” (p. 273). While this experience being the most important thing in their lives is unknown, it does seem that the experience for most of the participants left an indelible mark.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study was built upon my research question: What is the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective field? My intention was to determine what it was like, from participants’ shared perspective, to experience coherence. The data reported here, particularly in the category, What It Was Like, does just that. The data reported what participants said it was like to be in a heightened state of group beingness with no task to complete and no job to do. The

findings revealed that coherence was both significant and important for these two groups in that both experienced a deep connection that went beyond cohesion and bonding, an acceptance of each other's differences, and a calling forth of their best selves. Where group phenomena that bring out the worst in human nature are often studied, this phenomenon resulted in the opposite: the individual and collective best attributes in two groups. Additionally, there was no indication that the individual self was repressed, which can happen in cohesive groups; in fact, the opposite was reported. Participants reported that they were able to engage authentically with an absence of pressure to conform or act in a certain way. I would imagine, based on what I observed, that two factors may have contributed to participants' ability to be authentic and to not experience pressure to perform any particular way: the mature, fully developed skillful means of several participants within the group who role-modeled acceptance and authenticity; and the role that positive affect and the overall good-feeling that participants experience played in influencing behavior. In short, it seemed to feel good to be authentic. More importantly, participants were left with a heightened sense of connection and we-ness, positive affect and well-being, and an impression that they were part of something magical.

While group phenomena closely related to coherence have been studied, they have generally been studied from a retrospective vantage with participants reporting on their own experiences of heightened collectivity. Whether or not these phenomena were experienced intersubjectively has not been addressed, and addressing the phenomenon from an intersubjective perspective was an important aspect of my study design. For me, these questions were significant: Is coherence an individual-level phenomenon, where one member of a group may feel extraordinarily connected to those around them? Or is it indeed a group-level phenomenon experienced by multiple or all members of a group? Both groups were able to agree to different

points of shift indicating that coherence was indeed a collective phenomenon. Group 1 members agreed on the point at which one major shift occurred, and Group 2 members could agree upon several different shifts they experienced within the session. At no time did one member share a point of shift or significance within the session that at least one other group member did not also experience. In fact, several times during the interview, participants remarked on how they seemed to want to answer a question in the same way as another participant and how they seemed to “see” the same things during the intention exercise. This phenomenon is explored further in Chapter V.

How It Happened, the Antecedents, and the Outcomes were not specifically sought through the design of the study, but through the course of the discussions, interviews, and follow-up questionnaires with the groups, the data naturally emerged. How It Happened and the Antecedents are of note, because they begin to lay out what favorable conditions are needed for a group to move into coherence. Skillful means, different ways of knowing, and trust all played important roles. Additionally, it was not within the scope of the study’s design to evaluate facilitative elements; however, the participants’ comments about the session and their feedback on my facilitation all indicated that the elements I chose and how I executed those elements all contributed to coherence and an overall positive experience. The potential significance of the Outcomes is discussed below.

Defining Coherence Empirically

One of the intended outcomes for this study was to define coherence empirically. Coherence is often discussed conceptually or defined using language from biology or quantum physics. Based on the data from this study, I define coherence in this way:

Coherence is a group-level phenomenon wherein members experience a collective shift into a heightened state of connectedness marked by a quieting, slowing, and calming of the group climate, an activation of an enlivened intersubjective field, and a calling forth for members' best selves resulting in an acceptance and celebration of differences among members. The shift is aided by skillful means, and members can process and make sense of the experience through somatic, emotional, spiritual, and creative ways of knowing.

Coherence experiences are often accompanied by individual and collective awakenings.

Something of Greater Significance?

The findings that fell under the category, What It Was Like, as discussed already, pointed directly to and spoke to the lived experience of coherence. However, the additional findings that I was not searching for but emerged nonetheless indicated that something more than coherence was in play, particularly related to the Outcomes category and the themes of *Awakening*, *Connectedness*, and *A Place of Refuge*, indicating that something happened as a result of the coherence experience. During the data analysis, in the course of moving back and forth between the parts and the whole of the phenomenon, I uncovered a set of meta-themes that speak to something that extends beyond the course of a single coherence experience. Those meta-themes are explored in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V: META-THEMES

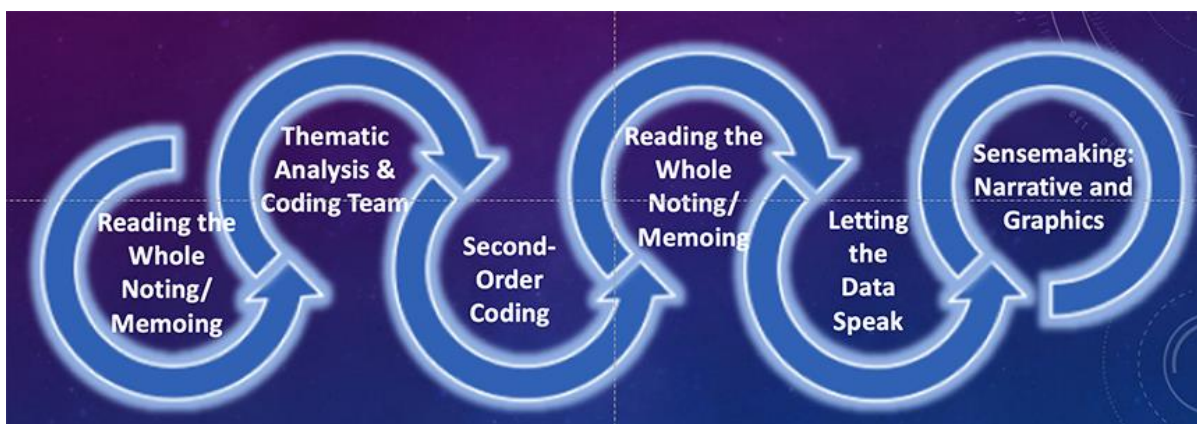
This study was intended to investigate the lived experience of intersubjective coherence. The findings detailed in Chapter IV that emerged from the thematic analysis revealed not only what participants experienced in a cohered state, but the findings also told a story of how coherence happened, antecedents that were present that aided the groups' shifts into coherence, and outcomes from the experiences. The findings also intimated that there may be something larger happening, perhaps a larger context that was holding the coherence experience, as well as some indications of different ways of knowing and dialoguing about the experiences that deepened and expanded them. In this chapter, I move from a place of analyzing the details of coherence to one of identifying the larger themes and meta-themes, which were discerned through a deeper level of analysis.

The themes described in Chapter IV emerged through thematic analysis and first- and second-order coding. While interpretive in nature, those findings follow a more traditional trajectory of qualitative analysis. The meta-themes, however, emerged as I stepped back from the coding and the details of the data and took a wider view of the whole as part of phenomenological analysis (Figure 5.1). The return to the view of the whole was both intentional and also catalyzed by one of my coding team's aleatory use of themes that was quite unlike my own and those of the other coder's. That anomaly invited me to reread the transcripts through a different lens. That lens involved asking the question, "What is going on here?" The analytic process included zooming out, assuming a witnessing awareness, and seeing patterns that were emerging in the way the participants were processing the experience of coherence and how they were making meaning of the event. While present in both Groups 1 and 2, the meta-themes were

more prevalent in Group 2, who spent a greater amount of time discussing and making meaning of what they had experienced. This was the case, perhaps, because of Group 1's deep, long-standing relationships and because of their collective familiarity with coherence-type occurrences. In other words, Group 1 did not seek out the breadth of meaning-making activity that Group 2 did.

Figure 5.1

Data Analysis



The design of this study called for an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, and thus the five meta-themes are highly interpretive. According to Smith et al. (2009), “IPA is always interpretative, but there are different levels of interpretation. Typically, an analysis will move through those levels to a deeper analysis” (p. 36). IPA is always grounded in the data, and it also allows for a more creative, interpretive flow between researcher and text. The meta-themes represent a deeper level of both analysis and interpretation and also present a different take on this type of group-level experience that reveals the complexity at play. By going deeper into interpretation, I was able to see not only the content but also the context and the landscape surrounding the phenomenon, thereby revealing something broader.

Previous research focused largely on capturing descriptions of the lived experience of coherence-like phenomena. Likewise, I was seeking to empirically learn what coherence was like. What was different is that my study was conducted intersubjectively with group sessions followed by group interviews, wherein participants had the opportunity to make meaning of the experience together. Most of the previous studies employed retrospective methods from the vantage of one participant. The richness of the data from an intersubjective standpoint revealed layers of the phenomenon in both what participants experienced and also how they were making meaning out of the experience.

This chapter will explore five meta-themes: *Direct Experience of Interbeing*, *Constructive Disorientation*, *Co-sensing*, *Metalogue*, and *Best Me, Best We*. Each meta-theme will be discussed in the next section and supported by data and relevant resources. Following a thorough discussion of the meta-themes, I will explore their significance and conclude.

Meta-themes

As stated, the five meta-themes emerged from a widened lens during which analysis of the full transcript revealed broader themes from the two sessions not captured in the first- and second-order coding. The broader themes, which were woven throughout the transcripts, brought into focus what Kurt Lewin (1997) might have called the life space surrounding the coherence phenomenon. The five meta-themes (Figure 5.2) are as follows:

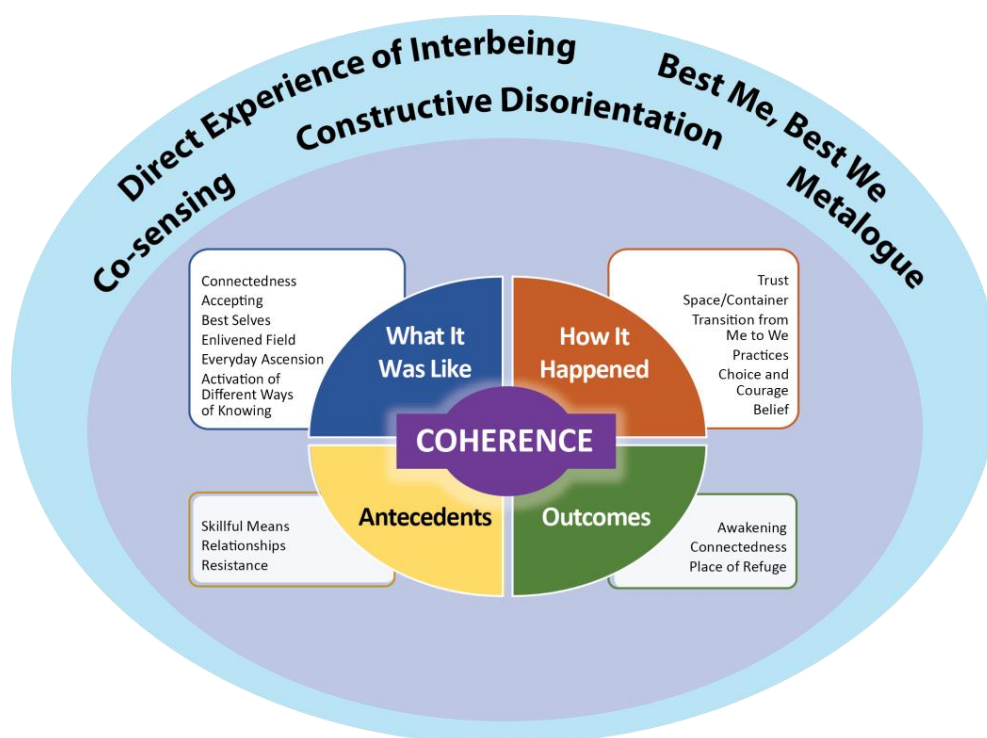
- **Direct Experience of Interbeing**—the context of coherence revealed through lasting effects and significance of the experience;
- **Constructive Disorientation**—a catalyzing, disorienting event engaged in with intention;

- **Co-sensing**—the way in which participants made meaning of the phenomenon using different ways of knowing beyond intellection;
- **Metalogue**—the flow of dialogue, which involved participants experiencing the phenomenon and discussing it at the same time; and
- **Best Me, Best We**—the experience calling forth each participants’ best and highest selves, thereby supporting the group’s higher potential.

In this section, I will discuss each of the five meta-themes in detail.

Figure 5.2

Themes and Meta-themes



Direct Experience of Interbeing

Following the experiential portion of the group sessions, participants in both groups spent the majority of the time discussing and making meaning of what they had just encountered. It was clear that “something” had happened, but what was the “something”? Many of the

participants attempted to name the “something.” Some of the participants invoked mythopoetic methods of naming, which had the effect of drawing the participants in further. Some of the participants named elements of coherence as the “something.” Some spoke of their individual encounters with the phenomenon, which then resonated with other members. All participated in making sense of the “something” that they experienced collectively. But what was the “something”?

I have named the phenomenon *Direct Experience of Interbeing*, and this meta-theme emerged as I uncovered a variety of different consciousness-based phenomena that seemed to have been present. First and foremost, the data indicated that it was a direct experience in which participants made contact with “something.” The phenomenon seems to have been transpersonal in nature and to have coalesced through collective consciousness. Therefore, it seems to be related to a consciousness of connectedness (Tsao & Laszlo, 2019) and unitive consciousness (Maslow, 1971). Through the experience, it may be that participants made contact with an experience of interbeing (Hanh, 2017) that brought about degrees of awakening (Taylor, 2017) on a collective level. According to Taylor (2017), awakening is “fundamentally an experiential state” (p. 158), which formed the basis of the phenomenon—direct experience.

In Group 2, participants discussed the “something” by contributing their different perspectives, languaging, and felt senses. For instance, the transcript (Table 5.1) reveals, when viewed from a wider lens, that the group repeatedly named the “something” in a variety of ways and from different vantages. Alex named a belief that they had experienced something very similar, explaining that as they each, in turn, reported their experience in the intention meditation, he knew that he had visualized and felt the same things as some of the other participants. Edie then entered into meaning-making, connecting through the domain of emotion

and empathy. Monica replied, agreeing with Alex that they were experiencing something similar, with which Edie and Willow concurred. Edie also mentioned the felt sense and depth of the experience. Katie then brought in another aspect of empathy, which she reported as something she did not typically experience. Alex reacted to her aliveness, and then Willow attempted to integrate the comments, tightening the collective understanding. Priya weighed in with an intuitive knowing of both feeling and being felt collectively. Lauren's naming of best selves dropped the group into another level of awareness and again, Willow attempted to integrate the emotional, felt sense, and intuitive aspects of the experience. Finally, Monica integrated the discussion through mythopoetic languaging that produced a surrender and a resonance to what they experienced, after which the group fell silent. When they began talking again some minutes later, it was on a different topic. It should be noted here that both groups had these experiences in virtual environments, so the shared empathic and somatic occurrences were particularly significant. Without the shared physical energetic space, there is an indication that what was shared was shared through collective consciousness. There was indeed an energy, which Alex noted, and that energy was flowing a certain way among them in consciousness.

Table 5.1*Group 2 Transcript Excerpt*

Alex (P1): We all came back and we're talking about the clockwise and counter-clockwise and the colors aspect. I literally thought it was at that point I was like I think what I envisioned was an aspect of what they envisioned.... And it was also like trippy and cool in a way, in a spiritual or mental way if there's some sort of connection there. And it may be. Whether it's between us or between a general feeling or cognition or hope we have or resonance with the intention.

Edie (P2): If you are having an emotional moment, I can connect to the emotion. When Katie was talking about her father, when Priya was talking about her father, somebody else was talking about their father, I am immediately in that moment with that individual and energetically expressing empathy and holding that individual energetically in the light.

Monica (P3): When we actually were in the intention meditation that Alex mentioned, about 10 minutes of what we begin to see and what was emerging in that way, I could sense and feel within our collective that we were having similar thoughts and images in some way that we shared that was a spiritual transcendence for me in terms of feeling energy that was emerging on a spiritual plane.

Edie (P2): Oooh, what she said. I agree with what Monica said beautifully and put a big exclamation point on it.

Willow (P4): Agree. And just put a big exclamation point on it, because you already said it... I really did sense the group coherence went deeper right after the intention meditation... That to me felt like everyone dropped a level deeper.

Edie (P2): That particular exercise was a little difficult for me to come back out of. This all went so deep.

Katie (P5): Lauren, when you started talking about healing, that was the biggest shift for me. I wanted to come and hug you, and I am not that person at all... I'm not a hugger...

Alex (P1): So, seeing Katie shifting, I noticed that Katie is fricking alive right now, and I'm feeling Katie now alive, and that was really cool.

Willow (P4): Everyone describing that level of flow, that level of depth, that level of safety and openness and aliveness. People were talking about it, and it was a very similar description of the experience.

Priya (P6): I definitely feel like I have a feeling of what other people, what the rest of you are feeling, or some element of what you might be feeling. I'm also getting the feeling that I am also being felt... I want to say something, but somebody comes before me, and they say the exact same thing that I want to say.

Lauren (P7): We brought each other's higher selves forward. Our selves, our best selves.

Willow (P4): Everyone here stepped into [the space] and felt comfortable stepping into it, whether it was a chemistry within the group or, again, partly your setup of the group. I'm not sure.

Monica (P3): I agree with Willow. When I saw that every one of us was willing at our vulnerable point or shift point, wherever we were in that. We were all willing to step into it. The vision or the image that I have in stepping out from the group and looking at what happened is that we were rooted and as coherence became stronger, we levitated. We levitated in a graduated form of exchanging and experiencing each other. What I noted very easily was our response in body language, even in the collective of when questions were asked, and we had to respond, the relaxation of some of us, and maybe even the facial expressions when someone had to answer and feeling comfortable enough to take a few extra minutes before responding. That signaled comfort and relaxation. And then the opening of sharing sometimes abstract images. I remember Lauren sharing one where it was like almost catching my breath it was so beautiful in the sense of describing what was happening from an ethereal point of view. I saw us levitating and continuing to climb in this space of coherence and the coherence was tightening. It was becoming stronger, like connective tissue around all of us.

Whatever the “something” was, it was collectively encountered experientially. It was not a theoretical or aspirational event. It was a direct experience. A direct experience is exactly as the name implies: fully experiential in nature, it involves making direct contact with the object of interest resulting in learning about or understanding something as one experienced it instead of learning about it conceptually or theoretically. According to Arai and Niyonzima (2019), “Direct experience is a process for learners to directly interact with a real-world context in which phenomena of interest are happening in real time” (p. 5). What participants engaged in for this study was highly experiential and put them in direct contact with both a phenomenon and with other people experiencing the same phenomenon. Participants had a direct experience with “something” and then spent the rest of the session discussing it and seeking to understand what that “something” was.

The events that the two groups had could be considered direct transpersonal experiences, in that participants gained a depth of understanding about themselves, the other participants, and

the field itself. Arai and Niyonzima (2019) explained the concept of transpersonal as detailed below:

Transpersonal literally means “beyond the masks” as the Greek word *persona* refers to mask or ego. Transpersonal therefore means “beyond the personal.” The concept of transpersonal describes an experience of transcending a self-identified notion of self. It suggests the need to understand the psychological and spiritual essence of self. It recognizes oneness of the body, mind, and spirit. It also recognizes the interconnectedness of oneself to others, to the natural environment, and to the universe at large. (p. 3)

Similar to the transition into coherence, the transfer of one’s attention from personal to transpersonal could be considered a substantive shift (Gunnlaugson & Moze, 2012) essential for collective intelligence or wisdom to emerge. The data excerpted from Group 2’s transcript (Table 5.1) revealed a shift from personal to transpersonal, and the group surrendered into that shift, which was evident as they fell silent after Monica’s share. Transpersonal is a “state of resonant attunement with, and participation in, Being . . . The person is fully expressive in the world, and celebrates distinctness of being within unitive awareness” (Heron, 1998, p. 10).

Unitive consciousness, according to Maslow (Krippner, 1972), allows for both the sacred and ordinary simultaneously and the “extraordinary in the ordinary” (Kaufman, 2020, p. 242). “One can learn to see this unitive way almost at will. It then becomes a witnessing, an appreciating, what one might call a serene, cognitive blissfulness” (Maslow, 1971, p. 336). During Group 2’s conversation, they shifted into a transpersonal focus that is reflective of Maslow’s unitive consciousness. Tsao and Laszlo (2019) explained that this unitive consciousness, applied to the collective, may be a consciousness of connectedness. “A new consciousness is emerging in which we see ourselves as deeply connected to one another physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is a more relational view of who we are” (Tsao & Laszlo, 2019, p. 115). This relational or connectedness aspect of coherence stood out as one of

the prominent themes revealing a yearning for deep connection among participants. In fact, participants in both groups talked about wanting more meaningful connections in their lives and that the sessions helped them to remember how important relationships are to them. Given their yearning for connection, Tsao and Laszlo's consciousness of connectedness is significant for this study because it was both something that participants yearned for and was something that was frequently discussed and emphasized as a key aspect of the experience. In Group 2's conversation (Table 5.1), for example, Alex's comment regarding feeling alive when he sees Katie's aliveness may reveal this consciousness of connectedness.

A consciousness of connectedness seems to be closely related to Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh's conceptualization of interbeing. "Interbeing is the order coined by Thich Nhat Hanh that reveals the interconnectedness of all things, connected through our actions, feelings, thoughts, and basically everything else" (Scult, n.d.). According to Hanh (2017):

About thirty years ago I was looking for an English word to describe our deep interconnection with everything else. The verb "to be" can be misleading, because we cannot be by ourselves, alone. "To be" is always to "inter-be." If we combine the prefix "inter" with the verb "to be," we have a new verb, "inter-be." To inter-be and the action of interbeing reflects reality more accurately. We inter-are with one another and with all life. (para. 2)

Interbeing could also be considered oneness and nonduality, where there is no separation of subject and object. Instead, subject and object reveal themselves as one and the same. "My experience is subjective and mediated because I share it within my context, including my intersubjective social context and my participation in nature and cosmos—the field of interbeing" (Heron, 1998, p. 15). Monica's integrating statement, "We levitated in a graduated form of exchanging and experiencing each other," may reveal an interconnectedness that goes beyond relational interacting and seems to embrace the mystery of interbeing.

This transpersonal awareness of interbeing sparked by the coherence experiences in both Group 1 and 2 may have resulted in a transformation of consciousness. “Transforming consciousness changes us at the deepest level of our self-identity” (Tsao & Laszlo, 2019, p. 5), which in turn, may have culminated in an awakening experience. Taylor (2018) defined an awakening experience as:

a temporary expansion and intensification of awareness that brings significant perceptual, affective, and conceptual changes . . . The three most common characteristics of the experience are: heightened awareness, positive affective states (including a sense of elation or serenity, a lack of fear and anxiety, and a sense of appreciation), and a sense of connection (towards other people, nature, or the whole world in general). The latter characteristic involves a transcendence of separateness. (pp. 128–129)

Participants in both groups reported aspects of all three of Taylor’s awakening markers: increased awareness, positive affect, and heightened connectedness. Those three markers are present in Group 2’s dialogue. For instance, when Monica said, “I could sense and feel within our collective that we were having similar thoughts and images,” it reveals awareness that is tuned into the collective’s experience. Alex’s declaration that he feels alive, because he sees that Katie is feeling alive, indicates a presence of positive affect. Both Monica’s and Alex’s statements make evident that there is also a heightened state of connectedness among group members.

Awakening can in fact occur en masse and is called collective awakening. It was originally derived from the Buddhist wisdom tradition to describe the ultimate goal: for all sentient beings to awaken to oneness and nonduality. In the past 10 to 20 years, the interest in collective awakening has moved beyond meditators and those engaged in Eastern spiritual traditions. In his theoretical piece, Pór (2017) explained collective awakening:

Collective awakening is awakening from a reality distorted by our mind, its conditioning by our fears, avoidances, ego-gratifying tendencies, as well as our cultural givens defined by an educational and political system and other social institutions, aimed at conserving the dominant socio-economic order. Collective awakening is also awakening to our highest potential as human beings, individually and together. As I continue to grow in awareness, I feel my place in a wider whole. I'm awakened to my belonging in humankind and as a planet-wide species with its evolutionary journey, and I grow immersed in its ocean of implications with more and more curiosity. (pp. 15–16)

Individual awakening has an inherent focus on self and the individual, but Pór explained that “collective awakening, divested of the spiritual connotation, which means, simply, a group of any size becoming conscious of and committing to realizing its highest potential” (p. 17). Pór’s discussion of collective awakening required moving from me to we individually through attention to one’s own awakening experience as well as a collective awakening focused on the shared space. Collective awakening, then, is twofold, with individual awakening occurring within a group or community. In Group 2’s conversation (Table 5.1), it seems that members are experiencing an opening to what is possible while at the same time, collective awareness is expanding. This may be an indication that collective awakening may have been emerging.

I am describing the phenomena encountered by both Group 1 and Group 2 as Direct Experiences of Interbeing. These experiences were highly experiential in nature, during which a shared, or unitive, consciousness of connectedness shifted participants into sensing the experience through a transpersonal lens. The experience allowed participants to directly encounter interbeing, which may have resulted in a temporary awakening of what the participants perceived to be the nature of reality. Laughlin (2013) explained this process as the cycle of meaning:

Individual experiences arise as a consequence of social activities that derive their meaning from the society's world view. Activities lead to direct experiences (incubated dreams, visions, drug trips, etc.) that are then interpreted in accordance with the world view. Experience functions to vivify and verify the world view, and instantiate the symbolic materials presented in the social activities. In the case of truly novel experiences, the interpretation may result in an alteration of the world view and the meanings of its constituent symbolism. (p. 44)

The meaning-making was a result of energy moving through the field of the experience, but the container, or the space where the session took place, remained static. The container created a safe and trusting space, where participants were able to loosen their grip on preconceived notions about reality and may have opened to a different, emerging understanding of what is true. This emerging reality was revealed by several participants' comments one week after the sessions, when they commented that they were still unsure about what exactly happened but that it was magical and filled them with awe and wonder.

In this moment of human existence, this fundamental shift in perspective holds promise as we attempt to solve multiple intractable issues. The shift is an essential transformation, which helped participants to remember who they really are: connected, not separate, to each other, nature, and the cosmos. This essence of remembering is corroborated by Tsao and Laszlo (2019) who stated that there is "evidence for a new ontology emerging . . . The emerging narrative is one of connectedness and caring as defining qualities of who we are and of life itself, supplanting the traditional view of separateness and selfishness" (p. 144).

Constructive Disorientation

The sessions both groups engaged in created a constructive disorientation (Wergin, 2020) for participants. It seemed that this constructive disorientation had a catalyzing effect in that it destabilized participants' usual ways that they engage in the world and created an opening for them to shift into a different, collective way of being. According to Wergin (2020), constructive

disorientation is “a feeling of arousal brought about by a perceived disconnect between the current and a desired state, accompanied by a sense of efficacy that one is capable of dealing with that disconnect” (p. 57). Wergin’s constructive disorientation is a willful acceptance of a disorienting experience that is engaged intentionally for the purpose of growth and development. In this study, intentional engagement was evidenced through the participants’ willingness to enter into the unknown, when they chose to engage in the session. The choice to engage also included the choice to go fully into the encounter requiring openness and vulnerability. This naked vulnerability created an opening for participants to be constructively disoriented and to question what they had experienced and what this phenomenon was. As Alex explained one week following Group 2’s session:

I don’t understand fully all the magic happened, whether it was biological, spiritual, energy flow, or a combination, but I believe the experience of it opened me up to understanding there are beautiful and deep ways of connecting that I had not experienced quite like that before.

In this way, the sessions created a potential for resetting what participants knew to be true. That reset in turn expanded what was possible for the individual members of the groups as well as for the collective. The disorientation, followed by a resetting of reality and an opening to possibilities, could be construed as deep learning. As Wergin explained, “Someone who is committed to learning deeply does not simply react to experience but engages fully with experience, knowing that the inevitable disquietude is what leads to efficacy in the world” (p. viii). Through their commitment to being in the experience fully, to making meaning from the experience, and then to carrying what they learned from the sessions back into the world indicated a depth of commitment to being instruments of change. Wergin (2020) suggested that in a world where we are bombarded by information, much of which is false or skewed, being

open and receptive to experiences that may bring about deep learning may support us as we attempt to traverse an increasingly complex world.

Co-sensing

As participants discussed the “something” that they experienced, they seemed to become more and more clear about what that “something” was. Through that process of getting clearer and clearer, it also seemed to deepen the experience. The process itself seemed to have flavors of sensemaking and meaning-making, but participants used ways of knowing that went beyond intellect. It may be that participants were tapping into their inner awareness and also the awareness of each other, the field, and of the experience itself. According to Baeck (2021), “As humans, we also have the capacity to reflect on our experiences and to witness what is happening both inside and outside of us” (p. 25). Scharmer (2016) called this type of processing sensing, and when done with a group, co-sensing.

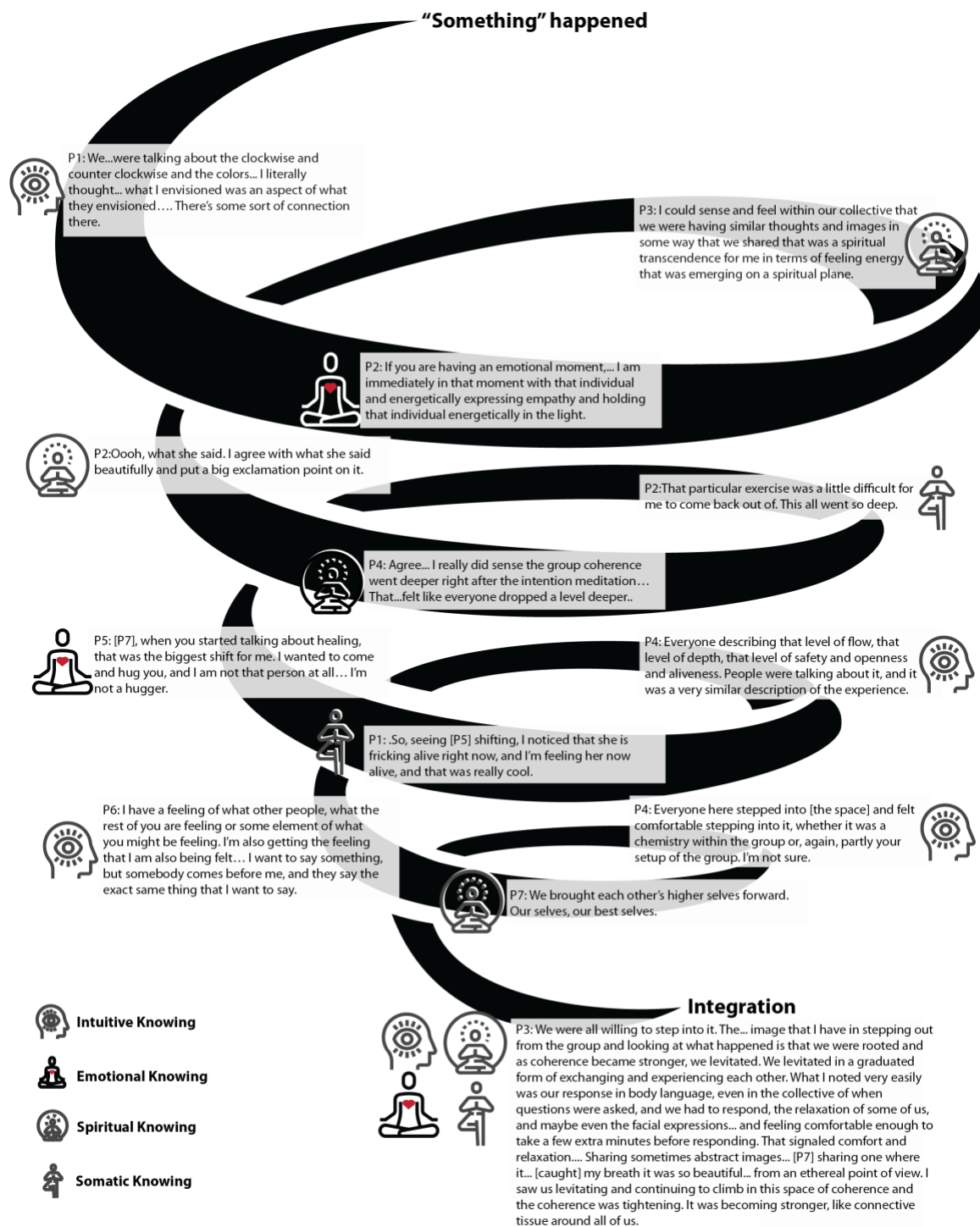
Co-sensing invokes different ways of knowing. According to Hartley (2014),
To sense beyond our habitual ways of relating to the world, and [it] has the potential to transform our perception . . . An emphasis is placed on shifting from customary ways of understanding and listening from both the mind and the heart. The ability to sense more broadly provides a broader scope of information to access for the group as a whole. (p. 185)

To co-sense, the group goes “to the places of most potential and listen[s] with your mind and heart wide open” (Scharmer, 2016, p. 364). This type of listening is Scharmer’s fourth level of listening, what he calls “collective creativity,” which is a “generative, co-creative flow” that involves “speaking from what is moving through” and having a “regenerating” effect (U.lab Team, 2019, p. 16). Members of Group 2 engaged different ways of knowing and deep listening, which had the generative effect of meaning-making (Figure 5.3). They appeared to have a direct experience of interbeing and spoke about it while it was happening.

Figure 5.3 diagrams the transcript (Table 5.1) discussed earlier. As each member of the group participated in meaning-making, they engaged four alternative ways of knowing: intuition, emotions, spirituality, and somatic felt sense. As each group member shared their perspectives in turn, their shared awareness and meaning became clearer and more finely interwoven. The effect was a tightening of their collective understanding of what they were experiencing. As they discussed it, the experience itself seemed to deepen.

Figure 5.3

Co-sensing



Co-sensing played a key role in opening awareness about what the members of each of the groups were experiencing. Co-sensing is built upon different ways of knowing, which either run parallel or tangential to analytical and intellectual knowing. According to Braud and Anderson (1998), there are six facets of human experience: bodily, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, communal, and creatively expressive elements of being human. Each of these facets provides a portal to a way of knowing and work together to aid in data collection and meaning-making. According to Baeck (2021), “Our thinking, our body’s intelligence, our inner knowing, our emotional intelligence . . . let’s be clear. These aren’t separate. They live in a constant dance of mutual influence: from the inner lived experience or from the so-called observer outside, they are one big flow” (p. 29). The bodily and emotional facets are sometimes referred to as the wisdom of the body and the heart, respectively. When Katie expressed that she would like to hug Lauren, she was conveying a connection made through heart wisdom. Edie said that she struggled to come back from the meditation, that was most likely a felt sense, embodied knowing of the depth of the experience. Spiritual knowing may be a connection with a higher universal order or one’s own soul or essential essence that lives beyond the human incarnation. Some may even consider the higher universal order and soul to be one and the same, a demonstration of nonduality. When Monica said she experienced a “spiritual transcendence” with the group, she was demonstrating a spiritual knowing that was helping her to make meaning of what she experienced. Additionally, intuitive intelligence may play a role in making meaning of the “something.” When Alex began this area of the discussion, he was using his intuition to sense into what seemed to be a shared experience. His intuition seemed to invite the other group members into the conversation, taking it deeper. According to Mayer (2007), intuitive

intelligence is “a subjective sensation of oneness characterize[ing] . . . the felt state out of which the state of intuitive knowing appears to emerge, whether anomalous or nonanomalous” (p. 66).

In the conversation diagrammed in Figure 5.3, participants invoked different ways of knowing in order to co-sense and make meaning. Each participant brought in their own way of perceiving, and each of these perceptions contributed to the collective meaning. Together, they were able to co-sense that they experienced something significant collectively. Without this meaning-making through co-sensing, it is possible that the participants may have chalked up their individual experiences as something extraordinary without being aware of the collective effect that was at play.

Metalogue

Discussing the experience resulted in two outcomes for the participants: it helped them to make meaning, and through discussing and making meaning, it brought the experience into clarity thereby deepening the experience. The discussions were not commonplace conversations but instead were in a form of dialogue which has been characterized as metalogue. According to Isaacs (1999), metalogue “describes a unified state of experience, where the meanings and structure mirror one another.” In other words, the object of the dialogue was being discussed as it was occurring, producing a mirroring effect. As the participants dialogued about the phenomenon, the phenomenon grew in their collective experience leading to additional, deeper dialogue that then led to a deeper, tighter experience of coherence. In this way, the metalogue held both the dialogue and the phenomenon creating an amplification of both.

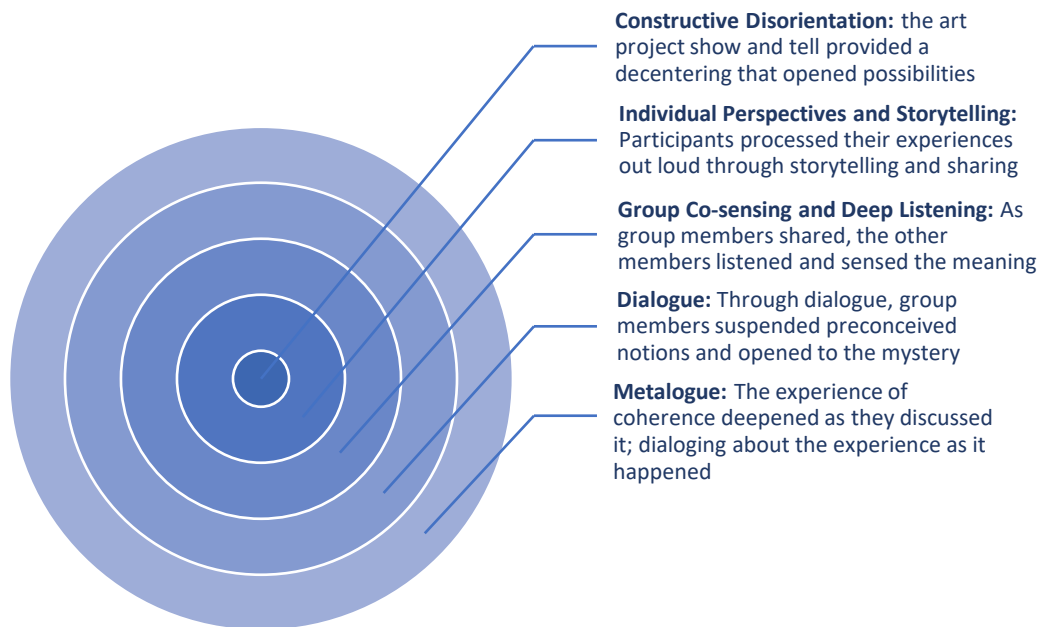
Metalogue originated from Bohm’s (1996) understanding of dialogue, which is a process that allows for typical ways of interacting with others to fall away. This falling away provides participants with the opportunity to experience a deeper, more authentic interaction in a social

field. Key to the process is the practice of suspension, during which individuals' preconceived notions are suspended and held, allowing for an objective examination of those notions.

“Dialogue . . . could serve as a potent vehicle for integration” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 386). Integration seems to be what was occurring in Group 2's metalogue, which is diagrammed in Figure 5.3.

Metalogue goes beyond dialogue, because it is engaged as an experience is occurring that results in a mirroring of the dialogic conversation (Isaacs, 1999).

The presence of metalogue was most evident during each session's art project show and tell. As participants shared their art and through the storytelling that accompanied the art, three things were happening simultaneously (Figure 5.4). First, hearing their fellow participants describe their experiences in the session deepened their own. This deepening is demonstrated by the following exchange. After Group 2 shared their art projects, Willow said, “This exercise is so indicative of our different ways of sharing creatively our experience, yet there's all these commonalities.” She went on to describe the commonalities, which allowed the entire group to see the shared aspects of the encounter. Those commonalities provided a gateway for a deeper collective experience. Second, participants sharing individual experiences so similar to their own brought the experience more to life. And third, the participants were still experiencing the phenomenon as they discussed it, so their conversation about the phenomenon was mirroring their experiencing of the phenomenon. As Bea Bea finished sharing her artwork in Group 1, she said, “There's so much of it that is so ineffable, but I know we shared so much feeling.” She explained that the shared experience actually added to the intention that the group created together during the intention activity, which mirrored the experience of sharing their art and the deepening coherence as a result of that sharing. The observations above are represented in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4*Metalogue During Art Project Show and Tell*

In these ways, the dialogue was unfolding as the group was experiencing the phenomenon, creating the unified state Isaacs (1999) described. The meaning-making was happening experientially and metalogically. Isaacs (1999) elaborates on this by suggesting, “An experience of this sort points to the fact that we have somehow moved out of a state of talking together and toward one where we are being together in a new way . . . Being the meaning while speaking of it. I believe this points to states that lie beyond dialogue. Metalogue captures it well” (p. 401).

Even though there was power in the metalogue, later during the group interview, there was also some resistance to talking about the phenomenon. Roxanne had the most apparent reluctance to discuss the experience. She said, “I preferred the doing more than the talking about it . . . I didn’t want to go back. I didn’t want to talk about it. I wanted to be in it.” Dina agreed. “It is much harder for me to be sitting here talking about what happened a couple of hours ago.” As

a practitioner of dialogue and metalogue, I have seen the same reaction in groups of which I am a part. Engaging these methods of meaning-making—dialogue and metalogue—is not universally embraced, but at the same time, it seems to serve the very important purpose of bringing these experiences to life and into collective awareness. This observation leads to the question: if coherence occurs, but no one talks about it, did it really occur? My study indicates that the role that awareness plays in direct experiences of interbeing is one of shifting the experience from an individual spiritual experience to one of collective resonance and wisdom. Metalogue provided that awareness. It seems that being aware of collective phenomena played an important role in the group members' ability to connect deeply through consciousness. As suggested by DiPerna (2014), it stands to reason that awareness of the phenomenon, then, would play a role in the evolutionary capacity of these types of collective experiences.

Best Me, Best We

One of the concerns related to we-space and intersubjective practices and experiences is that the individuated self within the group can become repressed, or it may be suppressed. Both repression and suppression of self leads to group dysfunctions such as groupthink and scapegoating, and in more extreme cases, tribalism and cultism. In the facilitated sessions for this study, participants did not report any instances of repression or suppression. Instead, they reported feeling fully accepted and authentic and that it was an overwhelmingly positive experience. The intersection of the themes of *Connectedness*, *Best Selves*, *Everyday Ascension*, and *Awakening* revealed that participants felt that they were bringing their best selves to the experience and changed as a result. They reported the freedom that came with not having to censor or modify how they interacted with the group and embraced the acceptance they both gave to and received from their fellow participants. According to DiPerna (2014):

When individuals align wholeheartedly under a single vision, together, the sum total of their collective gifts are liberated in service to this whole; a spontaneous impulse arises to offer one's particular gifts as sacrifice to the greater vision. This type of collective liberation recontextualizes everything: we no longer strive solely to amplify ourselves in worldly success, but because we see it as a moral obligation to develop our talents to their fullest capacity in the hopes that they might serve the larger vision. (p. 171)

This experience of best selves within a group emerged as the group cohered, revealing that it was not just the group itself that brought out the best in the members, but it was related to the shift into coherence and to the direct experience of interbeing. I associate the notion of higher self with the Buddhist concept of no self, wherein the egoic elements of identity fall away as one reaches enlightenment, leaving a beautiful emptiness that lacks attachment, striving, and judgment. Upon enlightenment, one is said to experience an expansiveness, a unity with all of creation, and an emptiness and nothingness where attachment to smaller human concerns falls away. Likewise, coherence is often discussed in much the same way. It is a transcendence of the ego into oneness within a circle or field and a recognition of a connection with the ground of all being and reality itself. In contrast, what emerged from the facilitated sessions and accompanying data was not a leaving behind of self or a falling away of self. Instead, the self as an entity was brought closer to its best and highest level of functioning while experiencing a heightened sense of well-being, happiness, and eudaimonia.

Intersubjective coherence is most often discussed as a shift from individual to collective consciousness without much emphasis placed on individuals' agency and identity within the collective. However, for the two groups in this study, there was great interest in the positive effect the experience had on the participants both as individuals and collectively. The groups' perspectives seemed to reflect a turn in the intersubjective practice arena toward a heightened state of beingness made possible for both the collective as well as the individual group members. DiPerna (2014) recounted spiritual guru Andrew Cohen's perspective on intersubjective practice.

According to Cohen, “intersubjective nonduality” is a practice “in which individuals are able to come together in seamless communion beyond ego while also experiencing no limitations on their own individual autonomy” (DiPerna, 2014, pp. 172–173). There is a balancing of both the individuals’ roles in the experience as well as the heightened state of group beingness that emerges through this “seamless communion.” The realized individual is the unique self (Gafni, 2012), which is the “unique perspective through which the transcendent self shines” (DiPerna, 2011, p. 47). Realization of the true self and emergence of the unique self is limited without some kind of collective action. DiPerna (2011) named this “collective unification” (p. 48) the unique we: “this noble communing of two or more unique selves in mutual understanding and vision” (p. 48). In this way, “the unique we allows each individual to join in communion while preserving complete agency” (p. 49). Steininger and Debold (2021) refer to the coherent, awakened we-space and the “intersubjective aliveness” (p. 3) found there as the “co-conscious we.” According to the authors, the transindividuated self is one that must be intentionally cultivated, the development of which involves moving beyond the habituation of being self-referential, shifting the reference point to one of we-ness. It is more than simply surrendering to one’s place within the collective or witnessing awareness. It is a more finely tuned self grounded in awareness of a larger reality requiring “greater individuation—greater awareness in agency” (p. 20). Like Gafni’s (2012) unique self, the transindividuated self is one that is highly developed and awakened to the reality of interbeing through familiarity with the co-conscious we.

This interplay of *Best Me*, *Best We* emerged from the data. For instance, in a closing activity using photos, Bea Bea chose a photo of tulips. She explained her choice:

I chose the tulips, because I just feel like I'm standing tall and strong, and I just feel so beautiful individually, but as part of this group, even more. So, it's made me feel like something much larger, much more beautiful.

Dina said she felt “present and authentic and felt the presence and authenticity of the others.”

Similarly, Katie explained that “it was my authentic, individual self . . . I was part of something but it wasn't me. I didn't have to submit or fit in. It was like a bag of Skittles.” Alex talked about the experience of sending and receiving the group's energy, which he said felt like “holding hands.” He said he felt like he “was tapping into a part of myself that I don't tap into often.” This transcending of egoic self in communion with others was also beautifully explored through the art project of Monica, who shared an essay and artwork previously created (Figure 5.5). Below is the excerpt from the essay that she shared with her accompanying painting.

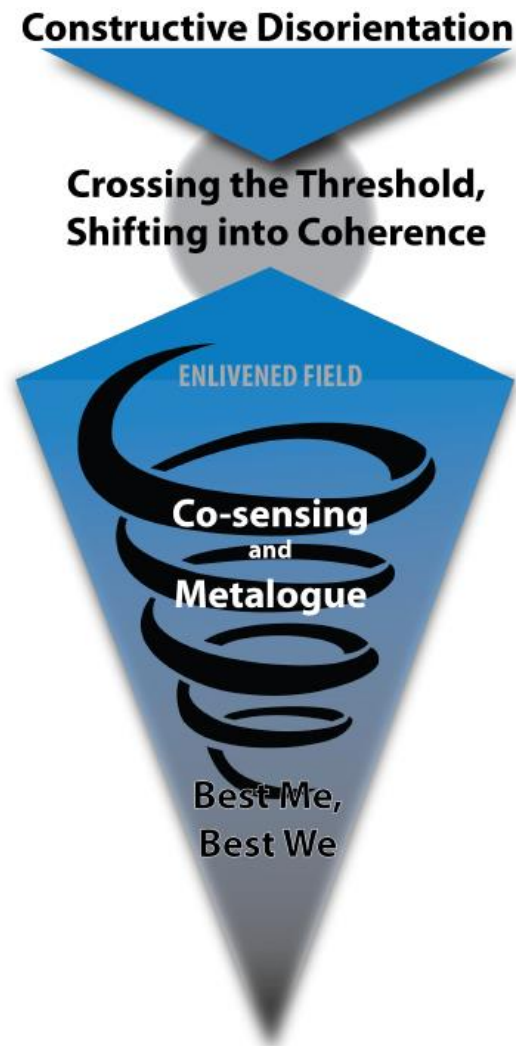
Figure 5.5*Monica's Artwork*

We are here, *present*, alive in this moment, in the warmth of this finite space. Together. We have learned from our agonizing defeats, as deeply as we have conquered and claimed our own victories. Inhaling and exhaling in this collective dimension of *being*, thoughts are free to seek and question; dream and reflect. Or silently find a space of simple sweet nothingness; a place where we can hear the small inner voice speak, while the mind is absent of thought, and void of doing. This is sacred space where we can openly dare to dream “outside the box.” Free to explore, fortify, detox, relax or recover for the next round of whatever life serves at full speed. We are Superb Sapien-Structures infused with Spiritually-Sourced energy. We let go. We release. We choose to let it flow. In this moment is the “surrender and catch” of the next step of each personal journey. We simply and consciously inhale and exhale repeatedly, as we pass through this mesmerizing vortex of our collective reality. For every exhale of good intention, every revealed dream or meditative desire, my wish is for it to rise and permeate through the cosmos as our messenger. The messages are carried up, outward and released freely to the universe seeking answers. Each inhaled breath returned, is as a gift of fresh, new oxygen aligned with infinite possibilities; creating strength to seek victory on another day of a purpose-filled life. With a deeper knowing settling within, we have bonded with each exchanged breath on this journey. Through the altered dimension of time, we become a community of dreamers, coaches, up-lifters, supporters, prayer warriors, to each other and for the world. We are souls connected. I smile with gratitude for each of you, and hold onto my joy of unique and infinite possibility.

Summary

The aim of this study was to inquire into the lived experience of intersubjective coherence. My findings, as reported in Chapter IV, from a thematic analysis resulted in 18 themes in four categories: What It Was Like, How It Happened, Antecedents, and Outcomes. However, I felt that, while important, these findings did not reflect the totality of what happened in two group sessions during which I facilitated various practices and activities intended to move the groups toward coherence. The groups did indeed shift into coherence, and because of the reported outcomes, I could see that something broader than a singular event was catalyzed during those sessions. Upon further analysis of the bigger picture of the data, which I performed by analyzing the whole of the transcripts, I could see five meta-themes woven throughout the transcript. Those themes, as discussed in this chapter, were: *Direct Experience of Interbeing*, *Constructive Disorientation*, *Co-sensing*, *Metalogue*, and *Best Me, Best We*.

The five meta-themes work together. During a *Direct Experience of Interbeing*, a group's highest potentiality emerges as does the greatest potential of all members of the group. *Best Me, Best We* is therefore part of a *Direct Experience of Interbeing*. The experience most likely creates *Constructive Disorientation*, which will encourage a group to move into co-sensing and meaning-making. In order to discern and be aware of an encounter of Interbeing, members of a group employ *Co-sensing* through different ways of knowing. *Metalogue* may emerge as part of co-sensing, as a group speaks about the experience they are currently having, thereby deepening the experience. In short, inside of a direct experience of interbeing arises the best me, best we potentiality that is catalyzed by constructive disorientation, perceived through co-sensing and other ways of knowing, and then deepened through metalogue (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6*Direct Experience of Interbeing*

In Chapter VI, I will discuss the significance of these findings and those in Chapter IV and how they contribute to the literature. Additionally, I will posit the implications of the findings for other scholars, practitioners, and researchers.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective field, and the purpose of the inquiry was to explore heightened states of group beingness. By approaching this study from the vantage of group beingness, it may be that we begin to uncover different ways of approaching the intractable issues that we face as a human species. The solutions required will not be found by a single person, but instead, through the wisdom of the collective. In order to tap collective intelligence, we must find ways of re-engineering how groups function. The groups in which we have membership are central parts of our lives. It is in our social circles that we feel the greatest joy, the most intensely loved, and the most beautifully human. Additionally, it is in groups where we find connection and belongingness, where we do not feel so alone, and where we find support during difficult times. In fact, social support is one of the leading antidotes for stress (McGonigal, 2015). It is also in groups where we may find solutions to our most complex challenges. And yet, it is in groups where we find the most difficulty, because group dynamics can be exceedingly challenging to navigate. Research inquiry related to groups, however, is predominantly focused on group doingness. This study aimed, instead, to view groups from the vantage of beingness, acknowledging the importance that groups hold while also focusing on heightened states where different ways of engaging were thought to be possible.

Through an interpretive phenomenological inquiry, I engaged two small groups in facilitated coherence experiences and then conducted group interviews to investigate the lived experience. The study was conducted virtually, primarily because it was not feasible to conduct the study in person during the COVID-19 pandemic. I found that coherence is a highly connecting experience that results in positive affect and feelings of well-being. In this time of

pandemic, participants seemed particularly grateful for this type of encounter. Additionally, I found a level of acceptance among participants that seemed to make them feel like they were bringing their own and each other's best selves forward. The experiences seemed to stimulate lasting effects of coherence resulting in either new insights around or a remembering of participants' sense of purpose and what is possible in the world. As an outcome of this study, I have defined group coherence as follows:

Coherence is a group-level phenomenon wherein members experience a collective shift into a heightened state of connectedness marked by a quieting, slowing, and calming of the group climate, an activation of an enlivened intersubjective field, and a calling forth of members' best selves resulting in an acceptance and celebration of differences among members. The shift is aided by skillful means, and members are able to process and make sense of the experience through somatic, emotional, spiritual, and creative ways of knowing. Coherence experiences are often accompanied by individual and collective awakenings.

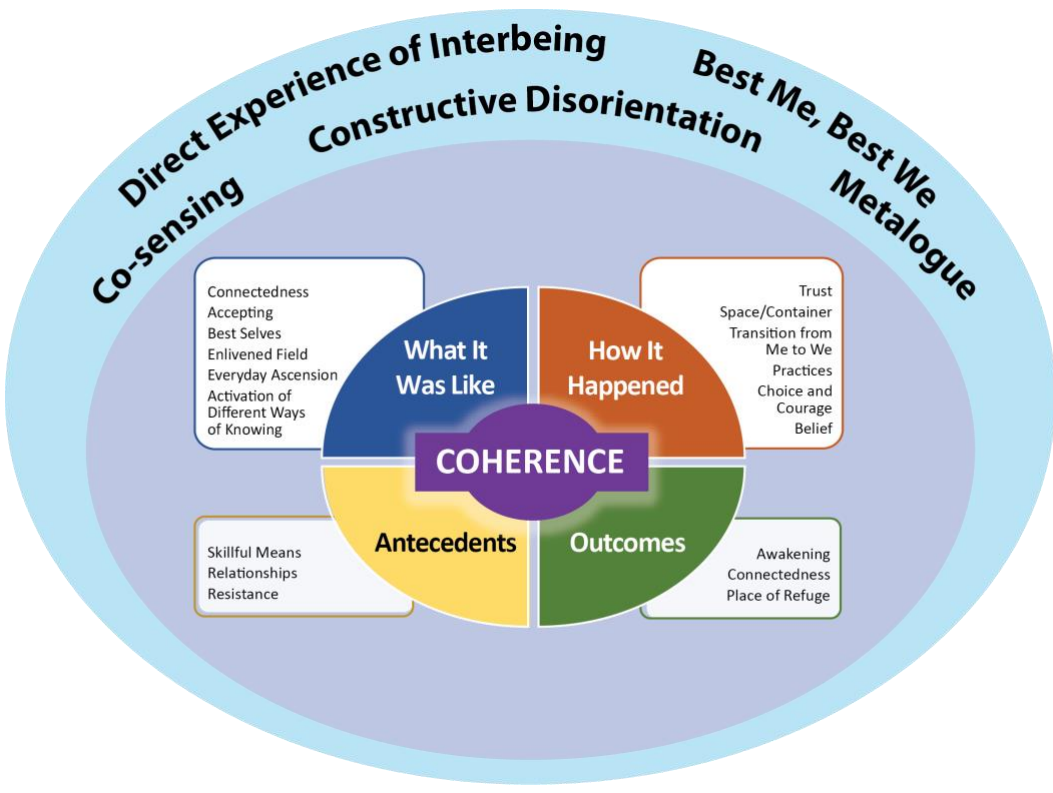
In this chapter, I discuss the findings of this study as well as the implications of those findings and then offer recommendations that emerged in light of what I learned. The chapter begins with a discussion of how my findings relate to existing literature and then moves into a discussion of the unique contribution that this study makes. Next, I explore the implications of this study and then provide recommendations for practitioners. Limitations and future research follow, and then, I conclude.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the data collected as part of this study resulted in two levels of findings (Figure 6.1): themes and meta-themes. The 18 themes were organized into four categories: What It Was Like, How It Happened, Antecedents, and Outcomes. Those themes and categories were the result of phenomenological analysis and a process of first- and second-order coding. The five meta-themes emerged during a second level of analysis and take a broader view of what happened in the facilitated sessions and how the participants made meaning of the experiences. The 18 themes, categories, and meta-themes are represented in Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1

The Lived Experience of Coherence in the Intersubjective Field



In this section, I discuss my findings in relation to the extant literature. I begin with a discussion of the five meta-themes.

Meta-themes

Direct Experience of Interbeing

Throughout the session experiences, the participants endeavored to make sense of what they had experienced. What they had experienced went beyond the findings in the What It Was Like category—“something” happened. This “something” they collectively encountered was difficult to define but seemed to be a direct experience (Arai & Niyonzima, 2019) that was highly connected. In this way, the “something” both groups experienced was transpersonal (Arai & Niyonzima, 2019; Heron, 1998) in nature involving a unitive consciousness (Maslow, 1971) or consciousness of connectedness (Tsao & Laszlo, 2019). The experiences for both groups produced not only a deep level of connection and a reported sense of well-being among participants, but the experiences also seemed to have lasting effects that extended beyond the sessions’ boundaries. The sessions produced insights for some of the participants, engaged their wondering about possibilities for these kinds of experiences elsewhere in their lives, and facilitated an inquiry related to life purposes. Additionally, the sessions formed deep bonds among participants and formed an energetic field that the participants reported being able to return to one week following the session. The energetic field allowed them to re-enter the sense of being connected to a larger field, which they reported as resulting in feeling peace, love, and well-being. Participants seemed to experience something akin to Thich Nhat Hanh’s (2017) interbeing, which was described as “interconnectedness of oneself to others, to the natural environment, and to the universe at large” (p. 3). A direct experience of interbeing can transform consciousness, resulting in growth, development, and the ability to engage with increasing levels

of complexity (DiPerna, 2014). The described transformation of consciousness is most likely an awakening experience (Taylor, 2017) that can happen collectively and may have occurred for the two groups in my study.

Constructive Disorientation

Constructive disorientation (Wergin, 2020) is a willful acceptance of a disorienting experience that is engaged intentionally for the purpose of growth and development. In this study, constructive disorientation may have served as a catalyst for participants shifting into group coherence. Participants reported that they did not know what to expect from the sessions, and this unknowness made some of the participants nervous before the sessions. Yet participants made a choice to engage in the sessions fully. This combination of choice to move toward a desired state of heightened beingness while not knowing what would be required in order to enter that state indicated an allowing of disorientation in order to learn deeply.

Co-sensing

The groups made meaning of their experiences through a collective practice of sensing, which Scharmer (2016) called co-sensing. Co-sensing invokes different ways of knowing (Hartley, 2014; Scharmer, 2016) in order to fully listen and to hear a system. Different ways of knowing, including somatic, emotional, spiritual (Braud & Anderson, 1998), and intuitive (Mayer, 2007) knowing were engaged by the groups in order to make meaning through a variety of lenses. For instance, one participant knew “something” had happened when she felt her body relax, and another, when her mental chatter quieted. Emotional displays by some participants invited others into a closer connection. Other participants described the spiritual realm of the experience. The effect of the co-sensing through different ways of knowing resulted in a spiraling sensemaking process that got tighter and deeper as the conversation progressed.

Metalogue

How the participants discussed and co-sensed could be interpreted as a form of metalogue (Isaacs, 1999), an advanced form of dialogue (Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 1999). Metalogue engages key elements of dialogue—suspension, curiosity, objective examination of preconceived notions, and authentic engagement—while in the midst of an experience. The resulting metalogue mirrors the experience itself. For instance, one participants’ comments about feeling alive were followed by another participant stating that he also felt alive. The participants’ engagement in metalogue about the phenomenon while in the phenomenon allowed for a mirroring of the experience that allowed participants to go deeper into it.

Best Me, Best We

Through coherence, the group experiences seemed to invite forward the members’ best selves while also calling forth a heightened state of group beingness, which could be thought of as the group’s best collective self or *Best Me, Best We*. One participant described the experience’s effect as, “We brought each other’s higher selves forward. Our selves, our best selves.” The best self has been described as the unique self (Gafni, 2012) and the transindividuated self (Steininger & Debold, 2021) and is a self that is intentionally cultivated, finely tuned with greater awareness, and is a “unique perspective through which the transcendent self shines” (DiPerna, 2011, p. 47). Unique self corresponds to unique we: “noble communing of two or more unique selves in mutual understanding and vision” (DiPerna, 2011, p. 48). In the same conversation where one participant talked about participants’ best selves, the group discussed their psychospiritual connection, which some members noticed through somatic energy, mental clarity, and stillness. Transindividuated self can be found in relation to the

co-conscious we, which is the coherent, awakened we-space (Steininger & Debold, 2016). Together, the best me (unique self, transindividuated self) and the best we (unique we, co-conscious we) form the double helix of a direct experience of interbeing's DNA, woven together, mutually essential, and interdependent, which participants acknowledged as they noticed a tightening of coherence as they were discussing it.

With meta-themes discussed, the next sections detail the 18 themes organized within four thematic categories.

What It Was Like

This study aimed to determine what the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective field was like for those engaged in it. The What It Was Like category included themes that addressed the elements of the coherence experience: *Connectedness*, *Accepting*, *Best Selves*, *Enlivened Field*, *Everyday Ascension*, and *Activation of Different Ways of Knowing*. Participants often reported the feeling of connection to other participants and to themselves throughout the experiences. This resonates with Fitch's (2016) description: "Deep states of connection, openness, pleasure, and presence...are possible in we-spaces" (p. 88). Participants reported a collective sense of feeling that their best selves were invited to come forward as part of the experience revealed a blooming and flourishing at play within the experience. This type of rising to the occasion has been discussed as the individual and the group growing together (Briskin et al., 2001). DiPerna (2014) explained a profound potential for both individuals and groups setting the intention to coalesce intersubjectively. "The autonomy of the individual is supercharged rather than surrendered, because now it is plugged into and supported by a larger 'We'" (p. 173). Individual autonomy while plugged into a larger we also speaks to the accepting nature of the groups, wherein members of the groups were accepting of each other's differences

creating a diverse tapestry of perspectives, histories, and ways of viewing the experiences of coherence. The emergence of best self led to an experience of transcendence, which is named *Everyday Ascension*, involving participants' comments related to insights, possibilities, and questions about purpose in life not readily available prior to the sessions. This natural flow toward growth could be likened to Maslow's (1943) self-actualization. He described humans as having "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1943, p. 382).

Energy was the most-mentioned theme in the transcripts, with participants often discussing the aliveness of the field. This *Enlivened Field* theme was discussed by participants as a shared experience in consciousness, notable because the groups were not in the same physical location. Scharmer (2016) elucidated the term, "the field," through cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch's explanation: "In a field, intention, body, and mind become integrated together. You start to be aware of perception happening from the whole field, not from within a separate perceiver" (p. 148). Participants made sense of the experiences through different ways of knowing, such as energy in the gut, the body relaxing, the mind quieting. The intersubjective field has been described as a felt sense experience, an embodied recognition of the intersubjective field as an acknowledgment of its presence (Busby, 2016) enabled through skillful means (Baeck, 2016).

How It Happened

What were the elements that supported the groups' transition into coherence? Within the How It Happened category are the following themes: *Trust, Space/Container, Transition from Me to We, Practices, Choice and Courage*, and *Belief*. Participants reported that they trusted themselves, the other participants, and me, the facilitator, as they entered the space, and that trust

created an opportunity for them to make the choice to engage fully in the facilitated sessions. As participants found trust to be an essential element, McCallum et al. (2016) wrote about trust being needed in an intersubjective space. In this way, trust, choice, and courage worked hand-in-hand in sensing the appropriate conditions for coherence to occur. Further, coherence cannot be forced (Caspari & Schilling, 2016; Gunnlaugson, 2016), so the importance of the perception of trust and safety being present was essential for participants to choose to engage. The space or container that I created to hold both groups' experiences was carefully crafted, informed by the available literature, and required my own presence, awareness, and mindfulness. Participants acknowledged the container as a safe space that was well designed and intentionally created. Creating a safe container is crucial, because "this kind of generative social space intentionally changes the relationship among participants" (Yorks, 2005, p. 1221) as it serves as "holding space of deep listening with unconditional love" (Scharmer, 2016, p. 246). As participants made meaning of the experience, tuning into what they had experienced, participants named and sensed into a collective shift that the groups made as they moved into coherence. This transition from me to we is often discussed in the literature as something that is a palpable shift and change. For instance, Yorks (2005) described the transition as "cross[ing] the threshold into a collaborative space" (p. 1233). Myriad practices and activities have been explored through the literature as aiding a shift or transition into heightened states of group beingness, including synchrony (Reddish et al., 2013), storytelling (Laloux, 2014) and other mythopoetic activities (Palmer, 2004), and silence and meditation (Caspari & Schilling, 2016; Gunnlaugson, 2016; Scharmer, 2016). As found in the literature, participants also named the practices that were part of the session—meditation, eye gazing, shifting in and out of consciousness, the intention activity, and art project—as catalysts for coherence and the deepening connection they felt.

Antecedents

The three themes clustered in Antecedents are *Skillful Means*, *Relationships*, and *Resistance*. The three pre-existing factors aided both groups in moving easily into coherence. Skillful means are derived from a Buddhist concept of knowledge and wisdom related to self, others, and the teachings gained through engagement in one's own spiritual path (Vu et al., 2018). As a recruitment criterion for the study, all participants entered the sessions with broad contemplative practice experience. The participants' experience with these practices equipped them with the skillful means that enabled them to stay connected to their inner states, be aware of the nuanced experiences of others around them, and understand the complexities of the experience itself. The strength of the relationships existing before the sessions began, particularly in Group 1, demonstrated a cohesion already present. In Chapter II, I posited that cohesion could be a precursor to coherence, and based on my experience with Group 1, it seems that is a strong supposition as their relational glue seemed to allow them to fall into an easy rhythm with each other instead of being focused on group dynamics. According to McCraty (2017), "A high degree of social coherence is reflected by stable and harmonious relationships, which allows for the efficient flow and utilization of energy and communication required for optimal collective cohesion and action" (p. 1). Group 1 demonstrated the connection of collective cohesion in their interactions with each other from the beginning of the session.

Resistance is expected within groups hoping to enter into coherence. The resistance that occurred for these groups was resistance to participating, because it meant giving up free time on a Saturday and not to the experience itself. According to Caspari and Schilling (2016), disquietude is a necessary part of moving toward shifting consciousness. The presence of resistance, then, may have been that disquietude necessary for the groups to shift.

Outcomes

Awakening, Connectedness, and Place of Refuge formed the themes within the Outcomes category. The outcomes indicated that something more than a stand-alone experience of coherence occurred. Awakening emerged as a theme as several participants discussed sense of purpose, insights for themselves, and possibilities that may exist beyond their previous thinking as a result of their session experiences in this study. Participants' comments resonated with descriptions of awakening experiences, which are explained as a "temporary expansion and intensification of awareness that brings significant perceptual, affective, and conceptual changes" (Taylor, 2018, p. 128). Following the sessions, many participants reported feeling closer to other members of the group or having old friendships rekindled as a result of the experience. Such reports reflect how the nature of intersubjectivity has been defined as being relational experiences forming a lasting impression that stays with us (de Quincy, 2000), which seemed to be enhanced among participants following the session. Participants reported checking in with each other more frequently following the sessions to discuss their experiences and continue to make meaning. In such ways, the field created through the groups' experiences stayed accessible to the participants following the sessions, forming a place of refuge they could revisit in order to reconnect with the field's and participants' energy. The yearning described by participants to return to the field and the state of coherence is akin to Maslow's peak experiences (1971), which he explained as mystical experiences that transcend and become focused on after experiencing them. According to Taylor (2018), once one experiences this type of heightened sense of beingness and awakening, the field remains available as a place to return to through consciousness.

With this discussion of the findings in mind, I next explore the unique elements of this study and how they may contribute to the larger fields of coherence, intersubjective phenomena, and group beingness.

This Study's Contribution to the Field

Uniqueness of Findings

Two jumping-off studies introduced in Chapter II provide a means to compare findings with other studies investigating a similar phenomenon (Table 1.1). Briskin et al.'s (2001) study investigated experiences of collective intelligence in groups that resulted in harmony and coherence. Briskin and his team of researchers interviewed 61 group consultants and facilitators. Levi (2003) investigated collective resonance in multiple domains. She interviewed 34 people who believed they had experienced group resonance. Methods employed in both studies were for the most part one-on-one interviews that invited participants to remember experiences of coherence and resonance. In contrast, my research question appears to be more open-ended, that is, I was not seeking specific outcomes or domains in which the participants experienced coherence. While I utilized interviewing as my method of data collection, I employed group interviews immediately following a facilitated treatment session whereas both of these studies were done retrospectively. In my study, participants were asked to remember an experience that had just occurred instead of something that may have occurred weeks, months, or years previously. Participants for my study were fewer in number than both Briskin et al.'s and Levi's studies. It should be noted that the Briskin et al. study was larger in scope running ten months and engaging a team of researchers.

Viewing the three studies side by side (Table 6.1) reveals that the studies aimed to investigate similar phenomena, all within the realm of intersubjectivity and group processes.

Multiple commonalities exist among the studies' findings, detailed in Table 6.1, such as the themes of space as well as shift in all three studies. The similarities between the findings from my study in the What It Was Like and How It Happened categories and Levi's findings are particularly similar. Table 6.1 below details the three studies in terms of research questions, methods, number of participants, findings, and similarities.

Table 6.1*Comparison of Findings*

	This Study (Guenther, 2021)	Briskin et al. (2001)	Levi (2003)
Research Question	What is the lived experience of coherence in the intersubjective field?	An inquiry on moments when groups of people experience touching, or being touched by, the intelligence they need, when they begin to function harmonically and fluidly, to experience a palpable sense of clarity and coherence.	How are diverse phenomena of collective resonance described in terms of felt experience, shift awareness, assigned significance, and recurrence of the original felt experience?
Methods	Facilitated treatment sessions immediately followed by group interviews, questionnaires one to three weeks following sessions	One-on-one interviews, retrospective	One-on-one interviews, group interview with three participants, retrospective
Study Participants	13 in 2 small groups	61 consultants who worked with groups and teams	34
Findings	<p>Meta-themes Direct experience of interbeing Co-sensing Constructive disorientation Metalogue Best me, best we</p> <p>What It Was Like Connectedness Accepting Best selves Enlivened field Everyday ascension Activation of different ways of knowing</p> <p>How It Happened Trust</p>	<p>Elements of the Experience (What) Quickening—the moment the magic happens Synchronicity Surprise, mystery, and alchemy Storytelling Movement of the whole Love Facing the darkness Silence</p> <p>Significance of the Gathering (Why) Connectedness Remembering Synergy Serving wholeness</p>	<p>What It Was Like Felt in the body Movement, rhythm, or flow Emotion Connection to others Moves individual and collective boundaries High energy Touch or close physical proximity Shift out of cognitive domain Felt as a connection to self Calm, grounded, relaxed Altered state of consciousness An energy field</p>

	This Study (Guenther, 2021)	Briskin et al. (2001)	Levi (2003)
	Space/container Transition from me to we Practices Choice and courage Belief	Witnessing Healing	Connection to spirit Total presence or engagement
	Antecedents Skillful means Relationships Resistance	Practices for Preparing and Opening (How) Listening deeply Clearing Holding and space Trusting intuition Non-attachment Not knowing Non-judgment	How It Happened Vulnerability Silence Story or storytelling Place or space Container contraction Shared intent Truth
	Outcomes Awakening Connectedness Place of refuge	Art, music, sound, and movement Whole-body sensing Symbolism and metaphor Discernment	Sound and vibration Spirit
Similar and Related Findings among Three Studies	Connectedness Enlivened field Everyday ascension Activation of different ways of knowing Trust Space/container Transition from me to we Practices	Connectedness, Synergy Movement of the whole Surprise, mystery, and alchemy Synchronicity, Love, Whole-body sensing, Discernment Trusting intuition Holding and space Movement of the whole Storytelling, Silence, Art, music, sound, and movement	Connection to others High energy Altered state of consciousness, Connection to spirit Felt in the body, Emotion Vulnerability Place or space Container contraction Silence, Story or storytelling, Sound and vibration

Additionally, my study offers findings that stand apart from these two. Most significant are the meta-themes present in my study. Both previous studies named “something” that happened, but they did not name nor explain that something. Instead, the studies were focused on the lived experience. Like those studies, the findings I uncovered discuss the lived experience,

but they also provided an explanation of the phenomenon itself as well as how participants made meaning of the phenomenon. In this way, the findings for my study add a layer to Briskin et al. and Levi's work. Further, observing how participants made sense of their shared experience was only possible through the design of my study. Without the intersubjective nature of the design and data collection, this layer of how participants worked together to understand what they had experienced would not have been possible. Another difference lies in how Briskin et al. laid out their findings with an additional category, Significance of the Gathering, related to why these experiences happened, which my study and Levi's study do not include. Given that Briskin et al.'s participants were consultants and facilitators, the findings relating to significance and why seem to align with the lens through which the participants viewed the intersubjective experiences.

Relational Ontology

My use of a research design embedded in a relational ontology enabled me to get closer to the phenomenon of interest (Storberg-Walker, 2022) and allowed me to truly see and facilitate different ways of knowing—intuition, somatic knowing, emotions, and spirit. In this way, the study's design helped me to hear the data as it spoke. Likewise, my coding team also got closer and engaged different ways of knowing, facilitating a wider lens through which to view the phenomenon. Taken together, this multi-dimensional way of interacting with the data allowed for richer, multi-layered findings.

Storberg-Walker (2022) explained this act of getting closer to one's phenomenon of interest, relational ontology, as a "deep interdependence and co-creation of reality" (p. 4). She explained relational ontology as a new way of approaching research, particularly management, spirituality, and religion research:

This requires a shift in consciousness—from consciousness of separation to a new way of being in the world that recognizes the interdependence and dependent origination of all of the material world. Rather than intending to be separate, this chapter suggests the future of MSR research should instead get closer. (p. 5)

Oneness and non-separation played an important role in the design of my study and then how I interacted with my data. While many of my contemporaries are using qualitative analysis software, I instead, used an older method of using sticky notes and posting the data all around me, so I could merge with it, and so it could speak to me and through me. In this way, I entered a cohered state with my data.

Two Levels of Analysis

This study involves two levels of analysis. The first level is the traditional thematic analysis frequently used in phenomenological investigations. That analysis involved coding the details of the experience within the transcript and then grouping those codes into themes and categories. The findings that correspond to thematic analysis fall under the categories What It Was Like, How It Happened, Antecedents, and Outcomes. It was in the second level of analysis, which involved shifting my focus from the parts to the whole and viewing the data through a wider lens where the unexpected findings emerged. This big-picture analysis was catalyzed in part by a member of my coding team's different coding technique that opened a door for a second pass through the transcripts to look for something different. These findings, the meta-themes, contribute a more complex perspective to the phenomenon and would not have become evident without that second layer of analysis.

Level of Presence

Where the studies authored by Briskin et al. (2001) and Levi (2003) employed retrospective methods that relied upon participants' memories to collect data, my study centered around two day-long treatment sessions that I facilitated with small groups focused on the intention of entering coherence. Data collection, in the form of group interviews, immediately followed the sessions, which provided an element of presence and temporal closeness not found in the other two studies. The collective experience was encapsulated by a container wherein participants could make meaning of what they were experiencing real-time, bringing about awareness of "something" happening not only to individual participants but also to the collective. The sharing of experience allowed participants to realize that they were experiencing something collectively instead of just experiencing something individually while being in a group. This difference corroborated the supposition that coherence is indeed a collective phenomenon.

Charting Sensemaking

One of the meta-themes, *Co-sensing*, revealed the process of meaning-making that the groups engaged in as part of my study. In Chapter V, I presented one of Group 2's sensemaking conversations as a figure charting the process, which revealed itself as a funnel-like pattern starting broad and then tightening as the dialogue continued. Each member of the group contributed to the process of meaning-making, contributing their own perspectives through different ways of knowing—somatic, emotional, intuitive, and spiritual knowing. The effect of this interaction was a deepening experience and an integration of perspectives into a collective understanding of what they had experienced. This kind of charting of the sensemaking process is unique, made even more so by the ephemeral nature of the subject matter. This sensemaking process provides a unique contribution to how group beingness has been studied and offers a

different way of understanding how groups may make meaning of liminal experiences. Without the sensemaking process, the group may have been left unaware of the collective phenomenon.

Intersubjectivity

Relational ontology was integrated into the design of the study, which centered on facilitated treatment sessions. The sessions allowed for an intersubjective phenomenon to be studied intersubjectively. Participants, then, had the opportunity to engage in coherence and then to discuss their experiences together as they were happening. These discussions, which removed the subject-object divide and the possibility of analyzing the phenomenon from a distance, facilitated an understanding and a knowing among participants that they had indeed had a shared experience. Without the real-time, intersubjective element of the experience as well as the data collection, it is possible that the collective nature of the phenomenon would not have emerged.

Implications

It may be that the findings present implications for other researchers and practitioners both within the areas of consciousness and groups, but also in broader areas. The implications of the acceptance of differences among group members may have implications for those engaged in diversity, equity, inclusivity, and belonging research and practice. The intersection of trust, safety, choice, and courage as well as the engagement of co-sensing are findings that may stand out for anyone working with or studying groups, organizations, and leaders. In this current moment, these findings may inform the connections that are yearned for during this time of COVID-19. For anyone who uses online platforms such as Zoom, the findings may inform how to effectively engage virtual spaces for deeper connections. Those interested in group beingness may realize that these findings indicate that these types of experiences may be more accessible

than previously considered. Finally, the findings may even invite readers to question the nature of reality. These implications will be further elaborated on below.

Participants from the two groups in this study reported a heightened level of acceptance, with group members celebrating differences and engaging with each other without judgment. One of the group members who identified as a woman of color said, “This is probably one of the first groups where I felt everyone in the group was very accepting of all our differences . . . This is my dream world.” At the same time, several participants felt that the experience brought out the best aspects of themselves. One participant said, “We brought each other’s higher selves forward. Our selves, best selves.” These findings may have implications for scholars and practitioners in the area of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in terms of studying DEIB from the vantage of heightened states of group beingness. Beyond DEIB, these findings may indicate that there is much more to the study of groups than their problematic natures and dysfunctions such as groupthink, suppression of individualism, cultism, and tribalism. Groups hold importance and great potential, and these findings make me hopeful that other scholars and practitioners will see the possibilities found in the study of groups. According to DiPerna (2014), these experiences hold great promise in terms of tackling some of our intractable issues:

No matter how awake or developed one individual might be, a single human being on the world stage can easily be ignored. However, if a group of enlightened leaders stand unified together in full trans-dual awakening . . . such an effort could not be ignored. (p. 174)

Trust, Safety, and Choice and Courage represent an interesting colony of themes that are particularly applicable to organizational life. As a coach and consultant, I have observed that trust, or lack of trust, is one of the most common challenges leaders and groups face in systems. Trust is difficult to cultivate and easy to lose. When group members trust one another, they will

“openly express thoughts, feelings, reactions, opinions, information, and ideas,” but when it is low, “group members will be evasive, dishonest, and inconsiderate in their communications” (Johnson & Johnson, 2017, p. 130). Further complicating this essential element of group life is that it is not a stable group trait. Instead, it is “dynamic, increasing or decreasing with every action a group member makes” (p. 130). With trust and a sense of safety, group members are more likely to make the choice to courageously enter into authentic and caring relationships with other group members. This constellation is predicated by the presence of trust. For a space where group members can cultivate collective beingness to be possible, trust must be present.

The presence of co-sensing, the utilization of different ways of knowing, and the importance of dialoguing in ways that we do not usually communicate all point to human potential that we are not yet fully engaging. Through training, study, and practice, we are able to use these tools of perception, but they are not the default settings of how we engage in the world. Co-sensing and other ways of knowing help us to see things that are hard to be seen, to sense things that may not be provable in a traditional sense, and to intuit nuances that may be too subtle to pick up through the intellect. In short, engaging broader ways of knowing allow us to transform our relationship with the world by creating a more expansive, multi-faceted view of it. With that expanded knowing may come the ability to dance with increasing levels of complexity.

This study’s timing amid the COVID-19 global pandemic may have captured and addressed the deep yearning and hunger we have for connection and for being together. Our traditional ways of connecting are more challenging, and we are also collectively facing more depression, anxiety, and the discomfort of an uncertain future. Just four months into the pandemic, a U.S. Census Bureau report found that 34.4% of adults were reporting symptoms of either anxiety or depression (Galvin, 2020). After 19 months of this “work from home culture,”

we are faced as a society with returning as the pandemic continues to rage on. Returning to what? Because the threat of the pandemic has not ebbed, we continue to collectively face an uncertain future, and returning is not the joy-filled exercise we all anticipated over the past year and a half.

This thing we're doing—this returning—is more than recovering from the depression of so much loss, the anxiety of an uncertain return, and physical changes exacerbated by stress, insomnia, or substance use. It is time to discuss how we should all venture out from where we've been. (Antin, 2021, para. 3)

In this time of uncertainty and difficulty, we need social support more than ever while many of us continue to social distance and keep to ourselves. Although this pain of separation (Eisenstein, 2013) is not new, the current moment has amplified how alone and separate we feel. The findings from this study revealed a deep connection that was experienced in both groups. Almost all participants from both groups left the sessions expressing their gratitude for the experience, for the connectedness, for the sense of oneness. Perhaps the hunger and yearning for such a connection heightened the experience itself or allowed participants to trust and make the choice to engage more easily. It may be that this study demonstrates that effective, beautiful interrelating is quite possible from afar. Perhaps we are all closer than we think.

As this is the age of COVID-19, it also seems to be the age of Zoom fatigue. During the spring of 2021, multiple articles were posted on LinkedIn.com regarding the fatigue workers are facing from doing meeting after meeting on virtual platforms. Amidst the Zoom fatigue, my study reported vastly different findings: that a direct experience of interbeing is possible for a group of people through the magic of virtual platforms. Although we collectively hope that the pandemic will soon come to a conclusion, it is possible that our world has changed in some ways. It may be possible that we will continue to need to work from home, travel less frequently, and continue to utilize online meeting platforms. By using virtual platforms to connect in

specific ways, the experience can result in energized connectedness. Some of those specifications include:

- Turning off the self-view (where possible, as the functionality varies by platforms);
- Leaving the audio and video feeds open;
- Attending to good lighting and good sound quality;
- Avoiding the use of artificial backdrops and blurring out backgrounds, thereby making the most of the intimacy available when people enter each other's spaces; and
- Closing all other computer windows and putting phones in a place where they do not cause distraction.

It may be that using Zoom actually changes the experience of coherence in a constructive way. Zoom may feel safer to many people because it is easy to exit from and there remains a distance between participants that may feel comforting to those who are anxious or nervous.

Coherence and phenomena like coherence are often talked about as a “something” that happened but rarely is that “something” named. That “something” is in my view quite significant. I have named the “something” *Direct Experience of Interbeing*. It is at once an ethereal and ineffable phenomenon, and it is also quite often one that is ephemeral, difficult to hold on to, and one that makes those who experience it question whether in fact the experience even occurred. That “something” was apparent during the intention activity, when participants reported hearing other members of the group share their visualizations from within the intention meditation that were the same visualizations they themselves had experienced. Repeatedly, several members reported being ready to share an experience with the group only to have that same sharing come from another member of the group first. While these types of experiences are

sometimes spoken about as psychic and psi phenomena, I believe that naming evokes an anomalous connotation that does not fit.

My research indicates that these types of experiences are actually quite accessible and that you do not need a psychic gift, a special visitation, or any other type of otherworldly capability in order to experience shared consciousness in an intersubjective field. This study may indicate that access may be available to anyone willing to commit to cultivating their awareness, which can be accomplished through a committed daily meditation practice, an openness to that which is unseen, and a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) that allows you to believe that more is possible than can be proven through traditional measures. I also acknowledge that coherence and direct experiences of interbeing are at once incredibly real and at the same time, fragile, challenging to enter, and even more difficult to remain in. “These spaces are . . . fragile, subject to disruption by strong personalities and situational forces” (Yorks, 2005, p. 1234). The field where these phenomena take place feels as if it is its own entity, deciding who it will invite in, remaining available for as long as it wishes, and then disappearing just as quickly as it emerged. It is fleeting, cannot be forced, is not always available to us, and the more we effort to enter the state, the less likely it is that we will enter into a communion with it.

The experiences that I witnessed and was a part of with the groups in this study have led me to wonder what is real. Is the nature of reality what we experienced in these sessions: deeply connected, joyful, safe, fully accepting, peaceful, and heart-centered, where our best selves naturally come forward? Or is reality the space we typically occupy that often involves fear, limitations, and doubt and is heavily cognitive? In the movie, *The Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999), Morpheus discussed how humans determine reality:

What is real? How do you define real? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain.

Our society tends to favor that which can be measured and proven and holds thought as the purveyor of reality and truth. According to Bohm (1996), our thinking is derived from our collective experience, is something that is manufactured, and is not in fact the truth. In the meditation community, we urge each other to not believe everything we think because of the many stories that we have developed over a lifetime may seem true but are in fact subjective and filtered. Our stories should be questioned in terms of what is real. Is it possible that our collective reliance on intellectual and analytical knowing has made our experiences in the world smaller than they actually are? Could reality actually be much more expansive and communal than we know? Could it be as the Buddhist wisdom tradition has suggested, that reality is fuller, richer, and even emptier than we choose to perceive? Based on the findings of this study and my own awakening experiences, I tend to think the answers to those questions are not as clear-cut as our society would lead us to believe.

Recommendations

The findings from this study may inform those who are working with and studying groups, particularly coaches, organization development consultants, facilitators, and training and development professionals. In this section, I provide recommendations to practitioners borne from the findings of this study.

Reflecting on my coaching and facilitation practice, I consider my own experience through this study. To prepare for this inquiry, I engaged in a study of different ways of facilitating deep connections and group beingness while using an online platform. Though I have many years of experience as a facilitator and group coach, this particular type of experience

required that I enter the study with beginner's mind, learning different ways of cultivating an appropriate container for this type of experience. I found myself drawing on my experience as a mindfulness and meditation teacher as well as my own practices of grounding, centering, and being fully present. I spent a great deal of time preparing, and then, for the sessions themselves, I embraced the paradox of completely letting go and letting whatever was going to happen, happen. I could prepare, yes, but I could not make it happen, and I could not control how participants chose to engage. In this way, the cultivation of trust from the very first contact was important, and I did that by being as transparent as possible, answering questions quickly and openly, and presenting myself as friendly, open, and approachable. How I approached the study, because it hinged on these sessions entering coherence, was somewhat risky. I found that I simply had to have faith in myself, my skills, the participants, and the process itself to unfold just as it should. And that is exactly what happened. I prepared, became centered, and then let go and trusted.

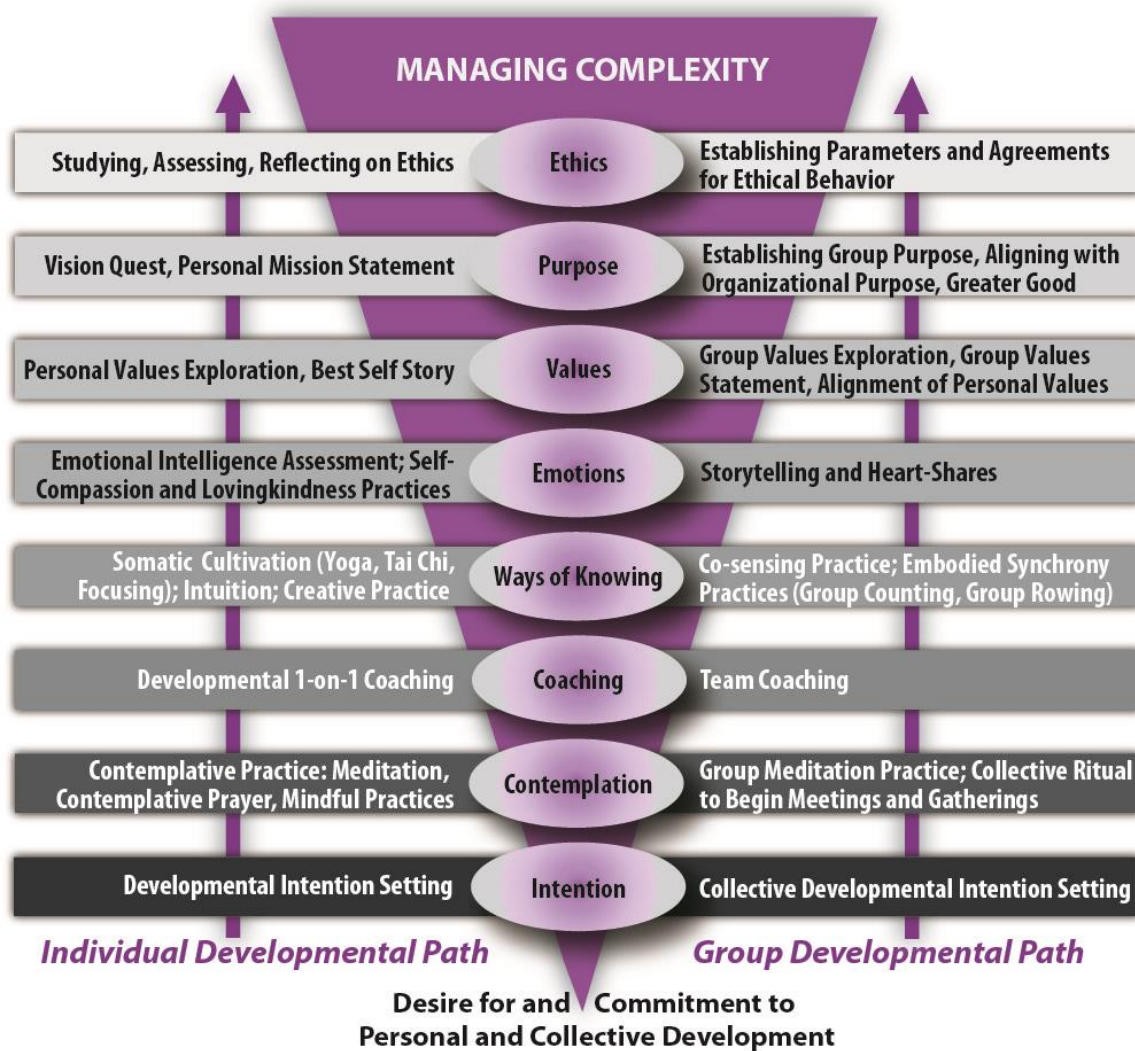
For Group Development Practitioners

Through this study, my coaching and consulting practice has been reignited in terms of my focus on development. I am convinced that more frequently the question should be asked: development for the sake of what? Based on this study's findings, I believe development aimed at managing increasing levels of complexity should take precedence over performance-based development. Developmental activities should support collective evolution from both an individual, personal perspective as well as from the group or collective view. I have created a full list of potential developmental activities for both individuals and groups based on my own practice and informed by this study's findings (Figure 6.2). Personal developmental activities could include developmental coaching, daily contemplative practice, and exploration of values,

strengths, emotions, as well as body wisdom. Group developmental activities could include group or team coaching, group contemplative practice, synchrony practices, heart-shares and storytelling, and dialogue. Additionally, I invite consideration to be given to re-engineering group and team development, focusing more on group beingness, that is, exploring why the group is together, how they relate to one another, and what their shared worldview is, well before any focus on doingness, productivity, and performance enters the conversation. Doingness, ideally, flows from beingness.

Figure 6.2

Recommended Practices for Individual and Group Development



For facilitators and coaches who would like to begin working with groups and teams to cultivate heightened states of group beingness, I recommend that the first step be to engage in one's own path of personal and spiritual development. When I became a meditation teacher, there was a requirement that I have my own committed, daily meditation practice that I had been practicing for at least two years and that I attended a week-long silent meditation retreat at least

every two years. Similarly, anyone who wants to lead or facilitate these kinds of experiences should have a committed personal practice, several years of experience participating in and being a part of these types of phenomena and should also be very clear about their intention regarding cultivating we-spaces. Direct experiences of interbeing are not tools meant to be used for increasing productivity and profitability. Those intentions run counter to what these experiences are about. Instead, these practices help to make the world a better place by reminding people of who they are through deep connection and by widening their views of reality and what is possible. Additionally, I offer the following suggestions:

- **Do not underestimate the importance of trust, safety, and courage.** Without all three present, a focus on beingness will be quite difficult for a group. This is a good place to begin and to end. Participants must trust themselves, each other, and the facilitator, and the space must be safe for them to be vulnerable. In fact, cultivating a brave and safe space would be ideal. Courage is necessary for both the facilitator and participants, who will lean into courage in order to step into the unknown.
- **Attend to the container.** Moving hand-in-hand with the first suggestion, facilitators should intentionally and carefully building a container that is appropriate for this experience, and one that meets the participant group where they are. Tone, pacing, content, and ground rules are just some of the elements to be intentional about. The container must support trust, safety, and courage.
- **Abandon control.** As facilitators, we can be expected to control what happens in a meeting or a training. I encourage facilitators to abandon any hint of trying to control a group whose intention is to move toward coherence. The choice is the group's. Other than creating an appropriate container, a facilitator must let go of leading or directing.

Instead, focus on holding space and attending to the group's energy. The facilitator is partnering with the group and inviting them to relax into an experience.

- **Be flexible.** Every good facilitator knows to be flexible. When a facilitator is immersing themselves in group beingness, flexibility becomes currency. Without it, the group will be unable to make the shift necessary to enter coherence.

For Change Agents

This inquiry was borne out of my doctoral studies in leadership and change, and the phenomenon of coherence, as I have studied it, resides in the area of change. If deep connection and an enlivened field reside in the domain of beingness, how might that inform change agents and the change initiatives that they lead? For change scholars and practitioners, these findings may indicate that focusing on group and organizational beingness, that is, why the organization exists, its purpose, values, mission, and vision, may have a positive influence on change and transformation initiatives. Grounding in beingness prior to entering the work of the change could provide a centering and a focus that allows the change project to move more easily. Doingness should follow beingness, which is admittedly a significant departure from how change is usually engaged. Additionally, the meaning-making that the groups from this study engaged involving co-sensing and different ways of knowing are practices that allow a system to see itself (Scharmer, 2016) and would be helpful in order to get clear on the goals and intention of any change project.

For Leaders and Leadership Development Practitioners

The findings may also inform leadership practice. If it is possible that reality is coherent, whole, and connected, how might leaders cultivate that kind of reality in the systems that they lead? This study is part of a growing tide honoring the rise of the collective. In 1993, Buddhist

Monk Thich Nhat Hanh (1994) told a crowd assembled at Spirit Rock retreat center that the next Buddha may be a sangha, which is a community of practitioners. Likewise, an interest in collective practice, such as those found in this study, has gained momentum in the past 10 to 15 years. The Human Potential Movement, since its beginnings in the 1960s, focused on individual development, but in recent years, an interest in the potential of humans in the context of the collective has gained new ground. These developments are absolutely relevant to and should be of great interest to leaders and their leadership practices. For leaders and leadership development practitioners, cultivating a culture of trust, safety, and courage may aid in activating the power of the collective. A culture focused on the potential of the collective may also include an intentional decentering of the focus on one leader. The rise of the collective corresponds with the fall of the old notions of leadership focused on the white man riding in on a horse to save the day. More progressive notions of leadership, such as collective leadership (Hiller et al., 2006) and self management (Laloux, 2014), supplant the leadership limelight focused on one person.

With the emphasis on development that I have laid out, leaders may consider how they may bring an emphasis on individual and collective development into the culture as well. Some guideposts for cultivating a culture that puts primacy on beingness, collectivity, and development may be found in the literature related to learning organizations (Senge, 1990) from the 1990s. Interest in learning organizations has waned, perhaps because the model was ahead of its time, but it may now be time to revisit the ideas found there.

To navigate toward coherence and a coherent organization, Laloux's (2014) Teal Organization holds promise. His multiple case study inquiry into cutting-edge organizations investigated ten organizations that engaged in evolutionary practices and operated from the teal worldview. That worldview focuses on system-wide individual and collective unfolding, taming

the ego, tuning in to inner rightness as a compass, and a yearning for wholeness. Laloux found that teal organizations share the following three characteristics:

- **Self-management:** Management tasks are accomplished by team members who enjoy or excel at the tasks instead of being held by a single manager. Peer relationships with structures and practices set up for high autonomy make up the management structure.
- **Wholeness:** Employees are invited to bring their whole selves to work, and the organizations he studied all have myriad practices in place to invite the whole person.
- **Evolutionary purpose:** These organizations are focused primarily on a higher purpose that is demonstrated through their organizational mission.

Taken together, teal organizations invite a collective orientation and embrace the evolution of working in a different, more cohered way.

Limitations

Presented here, you will find the descriptions of two overwhelmingly positive events that resulted in extraordinary experiences for the two groups who participated in this study (as well as for me). However, the limitations of this study are many and important. The study captured only a day in the life of two groups of people, both of which have no formal purpose, structure, or future plans. The participants came together as two groups for the purposes of this study. With that context, could this really be a study of a group's beingness? It is possible that they will never come together again with that same membership. This is relevant because group dynamics can become more complicated over time as individual agendas, preferences, and relationships shift and evolve. Without the participant groups having a long-term commitment, how pertinent are these findings to how groups really function?

Because both groups transitioned into coherence resulting in positive experiences, it may be that this study presents coherence and similar direct experiences of interbeing as being relatively easy to engage. At times, coherence indeed can be quite easy, but it is not a simple phenomenon. In truth, coherence is elusive and sometimes happens and sometimes does not. It is complex involving myriad variables. A group who hopes for coherence every time they meet may face additional challenges. A facilitator cannot make coherence happen, and the more a facilitator tries to drive and guide the process, the less likely coherence is to happen (Caspari & Schilling, 2016). Some degree of chaos may be necessary for coherence to arise naturally.

To get to the magnificent phase of sensory clarity and its potential emergences, participants have to stumble through a chaordic process, a process that cannot be prescribed in an orderly program with eight neat steps to follow in order to get there. (Caspari & Schilling, 2016, p. 73)

For members of these groups, how does the experience translate to their “normal” lives? For anyone who engages in and is gifted with a direct experience of interbeing, can the learning gained from an experience translate back to their normal lives, particularly if their work, family, and community interactions do not lend themselves to direct experience of interbeing? Like any awakening-type experience, it is not meant to be transferrable in this way. Instead, it is hoped that the awareness gained from coherence-type experiences would have an effect of expanding consciousness regarding what is possible in the world, what is true, and what is real. This type of experience sows seeds that may be harvested immediately, a week later, a month later, or maybe even decades into the future. At the very least, it is hoped that the seeds planted create an opening, even if the opening is just a tiny sliver, into what is possible and a different way of being. Are these seeds being sown with a great enough impetus to drive interest in the area of group beingness? This is unknown.

The downside of having a direct experience of interbeing and the resulting transformation, either small or large, is that it can shift how one views the world while also creating frustration around how to return to that awakened state as well as why are others not also experiencing an awakened state. The experience can provide a glimpse into an alternative way of being that can stimulate a desire to live life differently. But how to make that shift? As Jack Kornfield (2000) discussed in his book, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry*, a yearning for the cohered state can follow an awakening experience that may be hard to engage again. In truth, the experience and resulting shift in perspective can bring about impatience, particularly with the world in its current state. When the door of possibility opens, it is easy to forget that not everyone has opened the same door. That frustration and impatience may increase as we interact with those who cannot see that another way is possible. Additionally, the desire for coherence can be a misguided attempt to escape from things we do not want to face in the world, which cuts off part of the developmental possibilities. We must learn to live in the world knowing another way is there, waiting, even when it does not feel possible.

Remembering that coherence is not simply available with a bit of effort, it is important to be aware that effort is actually antithetical to the experience. By efforting, we are most likely not able to enter a state of coherence and beingness. That is because efforting is part of our egoic doingness. In order to enter a cohered state of beingness, we must stop efforting and instead, move into a place of willingness and allowing and simply let go into the experience. For those who have not engaged in a committed spiritual practice, this is a nuanced differentiation. Direct experience of interbeing is something we train for through practice, open to through curiosity and what we believe is possible, and then simply allow if we encounter it. For our type A personality world, this is a difficult paradox to accept.

In my own experience with this study and the many months of dancing with the literature, methodology, data, and findings, I have found myself so enmeshed that at times I forgot how complex direct experiences of interbeing are and began to think of them as commonplace. I have just written that coherence and experiences like it are elusive, uncontrollable, something we can only hope for and allow. Which is correct? Are they elusive or commonplace? In truth, I believe these experiences are both. Coherence can be commonplace with the proper preparation and attitude. In the last year, I myself have experienced coherence more times than I can count. But it is also elusive. Some months ago, I was reminded of that. I volunteered to lead a practice from my study with a group of fellow scholars interested in similar types of practices. After the guided practice, I invited the participants to check in with how they perceived the field and our connection to the field. One of the scholars, someone who I respect greatly, said, “I didn’t get it. It didn’t really work for me.” I was taken aback by this response, and I began to wonder. Was the scholar’s reaction a reflection on my facilitation and guidance abilities? Was it feedback on that scholar’s own practice and preparation? I could have easily fallen into an egoic frustration with the comment. Instead, it was a brilliant reminder of how special it is each time I am able to enter the field and deeply connect with other people. It is elusive. It is not something I can control.

Further Research

Because there is little research that has inquired into coherence, group beingness, and direct experiences of interbeing, this study entered a largely uninvestigated area. Opportunities for further research abound. Given what I found through this study, several areas would continue the line of inquiry begun here. First, a study that would follow one group through multiple sessions over multiple months would provide insight into how a group shifts over time and whether a group that is able to enter coherence one time is able to shift consistently over time.

Second, it would be interesting to study groups made up of participants who did not have a contemplative practice to investigate how much bearing skillful means has on a group's ability to shift into coherence. Likewise, studying groups made up of members who do not know each other and do not come from the same context would also allow for an inquiry into whether group members being known to each other prior to a coherence experience holds the importance that it seemed to in this study. Finally, I would be interested in following up with the participants of this study to determine if the experiences they had as a part of the study sessions had long-term effects, how they remember the event, and what, if anything, has changed for them as a result.

Some of the findings may lend themselves to other areas of study providing a different lens with which to view various phenomena. Given the findings related to accepting of differences, this may be an area to explore further, particularly relating to a diversity, equity, inclusivity, and belonging context. The findings in co-sensing and different ways of knowing provided insights related to coherence; however, I am curious to explore further how a group invokes co-sensing, how it cultivates different ways of knowing, and then uses those different ways to make meaning. Additionally, what role does dialogue play in that meaning-making? Earlier in this chapter, I suggested more and specific developmental work for both individuals, particularly leaders, and groups. A study chronicling a developmental program of a group would help to fine-tune that list and inquire into what happens in such a program over time.

This study is an example of one that engaged relational ontology (Storberg-Walker, 2022) with the intent of getting closer to the phenomenon. That approach was a key factor that allowed me to see the layers and complexity present in the phenomenon I was studying. I invite other researchers to engage a relational ontology in their work, particularly in studies related to the transpersonal, spiritual, and to consciousness.

Conclusions

Direct experiences of interbeing like coherence are not set aside for special people who are gifted with abilities the ordinary human does not have. No, instead, these experiences are available to everyone and require no particular intellectual or cognitive abilities. One need only commit to engaging in their own developmental path that involves an intention to both wake up and grow up (Snow, 2015) and have a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006).

Our abilities to connect through coherence and other direct experiences of interbeing may be an indication that human beings are evolving into a species more capable of a consciousness of connectedness (Tsao & Laszlo, 2019), increasing complexity, and attunement to different ways of knowing. According to Taylor (2017), a shift toward complexity by way of evolution is underway:

Wakefulness is already emerging within us collectively, gradually moving the whole human race to a higher-functioning state of being and a more expansive and intensive state of awareness. We are, I believe, on the threshold of an evolutionary leap. (p. 255)

This evolutionary leap may be providing us with capacity that we did not have even in our recent history. According to DiPerna (2014), “We are only now gaining a self-reflective capacity to be self-conscious of the ‘We’” (p. 169). In other words, the current environment is creating an evolutionary imperative for the human species to evolve in order to handle increasing complexity. One of these areas of complexity is found in the intersubjective, and with our shifting awareness and ability to perceive consciousness, it seems that phenomena such as coherence are becoming more possible.

Finally, for me the study raises the important question of, “Where, in fact, does reality reside?” Does reality incorporate a space where we are deeply connected, radically accepting, and fully authentic individuals who are transindividuated (Steininger & Debold, 2021) and

operating from a unique self (Gafni, 2011)? Is reality a space where the egoic self, driven by fear and smallness, is quiet? Or is reality what we are living in the world today on a day-to-day basis, where we feel separate, sometimes small, and where fear is pervasive? Is our day-to-day waking life a story that we are operating within, and that only when we can quiet the ego, we are able to fully engage with reality apart from the story? While I do not know the answer to any of these questions, I do believe that what is real is not something we can access from the intellect and through effort. In fact, those human functions may actually take us farther away from the nature of reality. As a result of this study, I do know that there is another way of being that extends far beyond my own awakening experiences that is connected, intersubjective, and full of potential.

References

- Albere, P. (2017). *Evolutionary relationships: Unleashing the power of mutual awakening*. Oracle Institute Press.
- Antin, L. (2021, September 1). Stumbling into the next stage of your pandemic life. *Greater Good Magazine*.
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/stumbling_into_the_next_stage_of_your_pandemic_life
- Arai, T., & Niyonzima, J. B. (2019). Learning together to heal: Toward an integrated practice of transpersonal psychology, experiential learning, and neuroscience for collective healing. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 26(2). <https://doi.org/10.46743/1082-7307/2019.1490>
- Argyris, C. (1964). T-Groups for organizational effectiveness. *Harvard Business Review*, 42(2), 60–74.
- Arruda, K., & Gunnlaugson, O. (2017). The circle of seven. In O. Sener, F. Sleaf, & P. Weller (Eds.), *Dialogue theories* (Vol. 2). Dialogue Society.
- Astin, A., Astin, H., & Lindholm, J. (2011). *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students' inner lives*. Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.6151/CERQ.2015.2303.05>
- Baeck, R. (2016). Collective presencing: Four years later. *Kosmos Journal*, Spring/summer. <https://www.kosmosjournal.org/article/collective-presencing-four-years-later/>
- Baeck, R. (2021). *Collective presencing: An emerging human capacity*. Author. <https://www.collectivepresencing.org/>
- Baeck, R., & Titchen Beeth, H. (2012a). Collective presencing - part one: A new human capacity. *Kosmos Journal*, Spring/summer. <https://www.kosmosjournal.org/article/collective-presencing-a-new-human-capacity/>
- Baeck, R., & Titchen Beeth, H. (2012b). Collective presencing - part two: The circle of presence: Building the capacity for authentic collective wisdom. *Kosmos Journal*, Fall/winter. <https://www.kosmosjournal.org/article/the-circle-of-presence-building-the-capacity-for-authentic-collective-wisdom/>
- Baeck, R., & Titchen Beeth, H. (2013a). Collective presencing - part three: Embracing a new paradigm. *Kosmos Journal*, Spring/summer. <https://www.kosmosjournal.org/article/collective-presencing-embracing-a-new-paradigm/>
- Baeck, R., & Titchen Beeth, H. (2013b). Collective presencing - part four: The circle of creation: Building for generative collective action in service to life. *Kosmos Journal*, Fall/winter. <https://www.kosmosjournal.org/article/collective-presencing-part-four-the-circle-of-creation-building-capacity-for-generative-collective-action-in-service-of-life/>

- Bargal, D., Gold, M., & Lewin, M. (1992). Introduction: The heritage of Kurt Lewin. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48(2), 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1992.tb00879.x>
- Batista, E. (2018, June 9). *A brief history of t-groups*. Ed Batista executive coaching. <https://www.edbatista.com/2018/06/a-brief-history-of-t-groups.html>
- Benefiel, M. (2005). *Soul at work: Spiritual leadership in organizations*. Church Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766080509518601>
- Benne, K. D. (1964). History of the T group in the laboratory setting. In L. P. Bradford, J. R. Gibb, & K. D. Benne (Eds.), *T-group theory and laboratory method: Innovation and re-education* (pp. 80–135). John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/11.2.121>
- Benner, P. (1994). Introduction. In P. Benner (Ed.), *Interpretive phenomenology: Embodiment, caring, and ethics in health and illness* (pp. xiii-xxvii). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452204727>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor Books. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1968.70.4.02a00870>
- Berscheid, E. (2004). Lessons in “greatness” from Kurt Lewin’s life and works. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *The anatomy of impact: What makes the great works of psychology great* (pp. 109–123). <https://doi.org/10.1037/10563-006>
- Beyerlein, M. M. (2000). Historic roots of team theory and practice. In M. M. Beyerlein (Ed.), *Work teams: Past, present, and future* (pp. 3–24). Kluwer Academic Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9492-9_1
- Bierly, P. E., Stark, E. M., & Kessler, E. H. (2009). The moderating effects of virtuality on the antecedents and outcome of NPD team trust. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 26(5), 551–565. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2009.00680.x>
- Blanchard, A. L., & McBride, A. (2020). Putting the “group” in group meetings: Entitativity in face-to-face and online meetings. In *Managing meetings in organizations* (Vol. 20, pp. 71–92). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/s1534-085620200000020004>
- Bohm, D. (1996). *On dialogue*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203822906>
- Brabant, M., & DiPerna, D. (2016). Initial mapping and the eternal mystery of we-space: Cartography, capacities, and consciousness. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Bradford, L. P., Gibb, J. R., & Benne, K. D. (1964a). *T-group theory and laboratory method: Innovation and re-education*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00005053-196510000-00013>

- Bradford, L. P., Gibb, J. R., & Benne, K. D. (1964b). Two educational innovations. In L. P. Bradford, J. R. Gibb, & K. D. Benne (Eds.), *T-group theory and laboratory method: Innovation and re-education* (pp. 1-14). John Wiley & Sons.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/11.2.121>
- Braud, W., & Anderson, R. (1998). *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.36-1877>
- Braunstein, P., & Doyle, W. M. (2002). Introduction: Historicizing the American counterculture of the 1960s and '70s. In P. Braunstein & W. M. Doyle (Eds.), *Imagine nation: The American counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (pp. 5–13). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203615171-6>
- Brinkmann, S. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in everyday life*. Sage Publications.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473913905>
- Briskin, A., Struff, C., Ott, J., & Potter, D. (2001). *Centered on the edge: Mapping a field of collective intelligence & spiritual wisdom (Study Supported by the Fetzer Institute)*. MorganPress.
- Burlingame, G. M., McClendon, D. T., & Yang, C. (2018). Cohesion in group therapy: A meta-analysis. *Psychotherapy, 55*(4), 384–398.
<https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000173>
- Busby, S. (2016). Embodying higher consciousness: Awakening through we-space to a higher frequency of life. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Cacioppe, R., & Edwards, M. (2004). Seeking the holy grail of organizational development. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 26*(2), 86–105.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730510582536>
- Campbell, J. (1988). *Historical atlas of world mythology*. Perennial Library.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/463290>
- Campbell, J. P., & Dunnette, M. D. (1968). Effectiveness of t-group experiences in managerial training and development. *Psychological Bulletin, 70*(2), 73–104.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0026031>
- Carron, A. V. (1982). Cohesiveness in sports groups: Interpretations and considerations. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 4*, 123–138. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsp.4.2.123>
- Cartwright, D. (1968). The nature of group cohesiveness. In D. Cartwright & A. Zander (Eds.), *Group dynamics* (3rd ed.). Harper & Row.
- Cashdan, S. (1970). Sensitivity groups: Problems and promise. *Professional psychology: Research and Practice, 1*(3), 217–224. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0029599>

- Caspari, A., & Schilling, M. (2016). A we-space process ecology. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Childre, D., & Cryer, B. (2000). *From chaos to coherence*. Planetary. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429475115>
- Cota, A. A., Evans, C. R., Dion, K. L., Kilik, L., & Longman, R. S. (1995). The structure of group cohesion. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21(6), 572–580. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167295216003>
- Cotter-Lockard, D. (2018). Collective virtuosity: Lessons in personal and small group transformation from classical chamber musicians. In J. Neal (Ed.), *Handbook of personal and organizational transformation* (Vol. 1, pp. 501–522). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66893-2_31
- Cox, L. (2014). Presencing our absencing: A collective reflective practice using Scharmer’s “U” model. In O. Gunnlaugson, C. Baron, & M. Cayer (Eds.), *Perspectives on theory U: Insights from the field*. Business Science Reference. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-4793-0>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.12.1.82.s2>
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. Harper & Row. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1991.4279513>
- Cunliffe, A. L., & Hibbert, P. (2016). The philosophical basis of leadership-as-practice from a hermeneutical perspective. In *Leadership-as-practice: Theory and application* (pp. 50–69). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315684123-3>
- De Craemer, W. (1983). A cross-cultural perspective on personhood. *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly: Health and Society*, 61(1), 19–34. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3349814>
- Dennen, V. P., & Wieland, K. (2007). From interaction to intersubjectivity: Facilitating online group discourse processes. *Distance Education*, 28(3), 281–297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587910701611328>
- de Quincy, C. (2000). Intersubjectivity: Exploring consciousness from the second person perspective. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 32(2), 125–155.
- Deutsch, M. (1954). Field theory in social psychology. In G. Lindzey (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 181–222).
- Deutsch, M. (1999). A personal perspective on the development of social psychology. In A. Rodriguez & R. V. Levine (Eds.), *Reflections on 100 years of experimental social psychology* (pp. 1–34). Basic Books. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1990.tb22727.x>

- Dion, K. L. (2000). Group cohesion: From “field of forces” to multidimensional construct. *Group Dynamics*, 4(1), 7–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.4.1.7>
- DiPerna, D. (2011). Rejuvenating religion for an integral age: The emergence of the unique self and the unique we. *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 6(1), 37–56.
- DiPerna, D. (2014). *Streams of wisdom: An advanced guide to integral spiritual development*. Integral Publishing House.
- Donaldson, W., & Harter, N. (2019). Leadership in a constant liminal loop: How can I be authentic when I don't know who I am? *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 13(3), 6–14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21658>
- Dossey, L., & Dossey, B. (2020). Survival, consciousness, and the one mind. In R. Atkinson, K. Johnson, & D. Moldow (Eds.), *Our moment of choice: Evolutionary visions and hope for the future* (pp. 121–127). Atria Books.
- Durkheim, E. (1912). *The elementary forms of religious life*. Alcan. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315775357>
- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.44-2397>
- Dyer, W. G., Jr. (2014). Team building. In C. L. Cooper (Ed.), *Wiley encyclopedia of management*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118785317.weom110270>
- Easton, L. C. (n.d.). *What is a dakini?* Tara Mandala International Buddhist Community. <https://www.taramandala.org/programs/wisdom-rising-mandala-training/what-is-a-dakini/>
- Edmondson, A. C., & Mcmanus, S. E. (2007). Methodological fit in management field research. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1155–1179. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2007.26586086>
- Eisenstein, C. (2013). *The more beautiful world our hearts know is possible*. North Atlantic Books.
- Esalen. (n.d.). *About Esalen*. [Web page]. Esalen website. <https://www.esalen.org/about>
- Festinger, L., Schachter, S., & Back, K. (1950). *Social pressures in informal groups*. Harper & Row. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3707362>
- Finlay, L. (2009a). Ambiguous encounters: A relational approach to phenomenological research. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 9(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20797222.2009.11433983>
- Finlay, L. (2009b). Debating phenomenological research methods. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 3(1), 6–25. <https://doi.org/10.29173/pandpr19818>

- Fisher, D., & Torbert, W. R. (1995). *Personal and organizational transformations: The true challenge of continual quality improvement*. McGraw-Hill.
- Fitch, G. (2016). In, as, and towards the cosmic we. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups* (pp. 79–94). Integral Publishing House.
- Ford, R. C., Piccolo, R. F., & Ford, L. R. (2017). Strategies for building effective virtual teams: Trust is key. *Business Horizons*, *60*(1), 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2016.08.009>
- Forsyth, D. R. (1999). *Group dynamics* (3rd ed.). Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- French, W. (1969). Organization development objectives, assumptions and strategies. *California Management Review*, *12*(2), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41164216>
- Fry, L. W. (2003). Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *14*(6), 693–727. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.001>
- Future Thinkers. (2019, September 9). *What is Game B?* [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL5bcgpprxY>
- Gabriel, S., Valenti, J., Naragon-Gainey, K., & Young, A. F. (2017). The psychological importance of collective assembly: Development and validation of the tendency for effervescent assembly measure (team). *Psychological Assessment*, *29*(11), 1349–1362. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000434>
- Gadamer, H. G. (2013). *Truth and method*. A&C Black.
- Gafni, M. (2011). The unique self and nondual humanism. *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, *6*(1), 114–116.
- Gafni, M. (2012). *Your unique self: The radical path to personal enlightenment*. Integral Publishers.
- Galvin, G. (2020, May 27). Coronavirus survey: One-third of U.S. adults have symptoms of depression or anxiety. *U.S. News & World Report Online*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2020-05-27/one-third-of-us-adults-have-signs-of-depression-anxiety-during-pandemic>
- Gambrel, P. A., & Cianci, R. (2003). Maslow's heirarchy of needs: Does it apply in a collectivist culture. *The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, *8*(2), 143–161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaci.2012.05.050>
- Gill, M. J. (2014). The possibilities of phenomenology for organizational research. *Organizational Research Methods*, *17*(2), 118–137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428113518348>

- Gilson, L. L., Maynard, M. T., Jones Young, N. C., Vartiainen, M., & Hakonen, M. (2015). Virtual teams research: 10 years, 10 themes, and 10 opportunities. *Journal of Management*, *41*(5), 1313–1337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314559946>
- Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, *28*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916297X00103>
- Glickman, S., & Boyar, D. (2016). Trillium awakening. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Gold, M. (1992). Metatheory and field theory in social psychology: Relevance or elegance? *Journal of Social Issues*, *48*(2), 67–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1992.tb00884.x>
- Gordon, I., Gilboa, A., Cohen, S., Milstein, N., Haimovich, N., Pinhasi, S., & Siegman, S. (2020). Physiological and behavioral synchrony predict Group cohesion and performance. *Scientific Reports*, *10*(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-65670-1>
- Gottschalk, L. A., & Pattison, E. M. (1969). Psychiatric perspectives on t-groups and the laboratory movement: An overview. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, *126*(6), 823–839. <https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.126.6.823>
- Govinda, A. (2006). *The way of the white clouds: The classic spiritual travelogue by one of Tibet's best-known explorers*. Rider.
- Gramling, L. (2020). *Virtual meetings 101: A guidebook for creating successful virtual meetings*. Author. <http://ensparkconsulting.com/virtual-meetings/>
- Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *3*(1), 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690400300104>
- Gunnlaugson, O. (2011). A complexity perspective on presencing. *Complicity*, *8*(21), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cmplct9624>
- Gunnlaugson, O. (2016). Uncovering four levels of leadership presence: A dynamic presencing journey. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Gunnlaugson, O., & Brabant, M. (2016). Introduction: Background of we-space in the integral community. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Gunnlaugson, O., & Moze, M. B. G. (2012). Surrendering into witnessing. *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, *7*(3), 105–115.

- Gunnlaugson, O., & Walker, W. (2014). Deep presencing leadership coaching: Building capacity for sensing, enacting, and embodying emerging selves and futures in the face of organizational crisis. In O. Gunnlaugson, J. Lindsay, & M. Cayer (Eds.), *Perspectives on theory U: Insights from the field*. Business Science Reference.
- Gunnlaugson, O., Scott, C., Bai, H., & Sarath, E. W. (2017). Opening the field: Second-person approaches to contemplative learning. In *The intersubjective turn: Theoretical approaches to contemplative learning and inquiry across disciplines* (pp. 7–18). State University of New York Press.
- Guttenstein, S., Lindsay, J., & Baron, C. (2014). Aligning with the emergent future. In O. Gunnlaugson, C. Baron, & M. Cayer (Eds.), *Perspectives on theory U: Insights from the field*. Business Science Reference. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-4793-0>
- Hamilton, C. (2004). Come together: The mystery of collective intelligence. *What Is Enlightenment?*, *May-July* (25), 57–79. <https://www.andrewcohen.com/enlightennext-magazine/>
- Hamilton, M., Douglas, D. C., Beck, C., Aurami, A., Arnott, J., & Shore, L. (2016). We-space, integral city, and the knowing field. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Hanh, T. N. (1994). The next Buddha may be a sangha. *The inquiring mind: Storytelling*, *10*(2), [blog]. https://www.inquiringmind.com/article/1002_41_thich-nhat-hanh/
- Hanh, T. N. (2017). *The insight of interbeing* [blog]. Garrison institute. <https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/blog/insight-of-interbeing/>
- Hanley, S. J., & Abell, S. C. (2002). Maslow and relatedness: Creating an interpersonal model of self-actualization. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *42*(4), 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002216702237123>
- Hanson, R. (2009). *Buddha's brain: The practical neuroscience of happiness, love, and wisdom*. New Harbinger Publications. <https://doi.org/10.5214/ans.0972.7531.1118110>
- Hartley, L. (2014). Opening space through contemplative practices: How facilitators foster a field of collective learning. In O. Gunnlaugson, C. Baron, & M. Cayer (Eds.), *Perspectives on theory U: Insights from the field*. Business Science Reference. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-4793-0>
- HeartMath Institute. (n.d.). *What is the global coherence initiative?* [video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/QFqsY-DT6rg>
- Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Heron, J. (1992). *Feeling and personhood: Psychology in another key*. Sage Publications.

- Heron, J. (1998). *Sacred science: Person-centered inquiry into the spiritual and the subtle*. PCCS Books.
- Higgs, G. E. (2008). Psychology: Knowing the self through arts. In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.), *The handbook of the arts in qualitative research* (pp. 545–556). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226545.n46>
- Hiller, N. J., Day, D. V., & Vance, R. J. (2006). Collective enactment of leadership roles and team effectiveness: A field study. *Leadership Quarterly*, *17*(4), 387–397. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leafqua.2006.04.004>
- Hogg, M. A. (1992). *The social psychology of group cohesiveness: From attraction to social identity*. New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226545.n46>
- Hogg, M. A., & Williams, K. D. (2000). From I to we: Social identity and the collective self. *Group Dynamics*, *4*(1), 81–97. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.4.1.81>
- Holman, P. (2010). *Engaging emergence: Turning upheaval into opportunity*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Hove, M. J., & Risen, J. L. (2009). It's all in the timing: Interpersonal synchrony increases affiliation. *Social Cognition*, *27*(6), 949–960. <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2009.27.6.949>
- Hoyle, R. H., & Crawford, A. M. (1994). Use of individual-level data to investigate group phenomena issues and strategies. *Small Group Research*, *25*(4), 464–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496494254003>
- Ifejika, N. (2006, September 28). What does ubuntu really mean? *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2006/sep/29/features11.g2>
- Isaacs, W. N. (1999). *Dialogue: The art of thinking together*. Doubleday.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, F. P. (2017). *Joining together: Group theory and group skills* (12th ed.). Pearson.
- Kaufman, S. B. (2020). *Transcend: The new science of self-actualization*. Teacher Perigee.
- Knights, J., Grant, D., & Young, G. (2018). *Leading beyond the ego: How to become a transpersonal leader*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315178806>
- Kornfield, J. (2000). *After the ecstasy, the laundry: How the wise heart grows wise on the spiritual path*. Bantam Books.
- Kremer, W., & Hammond, C. (2013, September 1). Abraham Maslow and the pyramid that beguiled business. *BBC News Magazine*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23902918>

- Krentzman, J. (1998). In Murphy's kingdom. *Stanford Magazine*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20060504005908/http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/1998/janfeb/articles/murphy.html>
- Krippner, S. (1972). The plateau experience: A.H. Maslow and others. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 4(2), 107–120.
- LaChapelle, D. (2003). *What supports the emergence of collective wisdom?* Collective Wisdom Initiative. http://www.collectivewisdominitiative.com/papers/lachapelle_emergence.htm
- Laloux, F. (2014). *Reinventing organizations: A guide to creating organizations inspired by the next stage to human consciousness*. Nelson Parker.
<https://doi.org/10.15358/9783800649143>
- Laughlin, C. (2013). The ethno-epistemology of transpersonal experience: The view from transpersonal anthropology. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 32(1), 43–50.
<https://doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2013.32.1.43>
- Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(3), 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200303>
- Levi, R. A. (2003). *Group magic: An inquiry into experiences of collective resonance* (Publication No. 3098829). [Doctoral Dissertation, Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Lewin, K. (1943). Defining the “field at a given time.” *Psychological Review*, 50, 292–310.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0062738>
- Lewin, K. (1997). *Resolving social conflicts and field theory in social science*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10269-000>
- Lewin, K., Lippitt, R., & White, R. (1939). Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created “social climates.” *Journal of Social Psychology*, 10, 271–299.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1939.9713366>
- Lopez, K. A., & Willis, D. G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(5), 726–735.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732304263638>
- Lott, A. J., & Lott, B. E. (1965). Group cohesiveness as interpersonal attraction. *Psychological Bulletin*, 64, 259–309. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0022386>
- Manson, M. (n.d.). *The rise and fall of Ken Wilber [blog post]*. Mark Manson: Life advice that doesn't suck. <https://markmanson.net/ken-wilber>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>

- Maslow, A. H. (1950). Self-actualizing people: A study of psychological health. *Personality Symposia: Symposium no. 1 on values*.
- Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. The Viking Press.
- Mayer, E. L. (2007). *Extraordinary knowing: Science, skepticism, and the inexplicable powers of the human mind*. Bantam Books.
- McCallum, D., Nicolaides, A., & Yorks, L. (2016). Exploring the ego at the boundary of the I and the we. In *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups* (pp. 175–198). Integral Publishing House.
- McCandless, K., & Lipmanowicz, H. (n.d.). 1-2-4-all. *Liberating structures: Including and unleashing everyone*. <https://www.liberatingstructures.com/1-1-2-4-all/>
- McCraty, R. (2017). New frontiers in heart rate variability and social coherence research: Techniques, technologies, and implications for improving group dynamics and outcomes. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 5(October), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2017.00267>
- McCraty, R., Deyhle, A., & Childre, D. (2012). The global coherence initiative: Creating a coherent planetary standing wave. *Global Advances in Health and Medicine*, 1(1), 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.7453/gahmj.2012.1.1.013>
- McGonigal, K. (2015). *The upside of stress: Why stress is good for you and how to get good at it*. Penguin Random House. <https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamericanmind0715-70a>
- McTaggart, L. (2011). *The bond: How to fix your falling-down world*. Free Press.
- McTaggart, L. (2017). *The power of eight: Harnessing the miraculous energies of a small group to heal others, your life, and the world*. Atria Books.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Beingness*. Merriam-Webster.com. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/beingness>
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.
- Michals, D. (2002). From “consciousness expansion” to “consciousness raising”: Feminism and the countercultural politics of the self. In P. Braunstein & M. W. Doyle (Eds.), *Imagine nation: The American counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (pp. 41–68). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203615171-9>
- Minahan, M., & Crosby, R. (2016). The classic t-group. In W. Rothwell, J. Stavros, & R. Sullivan (Eds.), *Practicing organization development* (4th ed.). Wiley & Sons.
- Mitchell, D. W. (2008). *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist experience*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2004.0006>

- Mogan, R., Fischer, R., & Bulbulia, J. A. (2017). To be in synchrony or not? A meta-analysis of synchrony's effects on behavior, perception, cognition and affect. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 72(April), 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2017.03.009>
- Montero, P., & Colman, A. D. (2000). Collective consciousness and the psychology of human interconnectedness. *Group*, 24(2/3), 203–219. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1007540101096>
- Morris, B. (1995, March 2). At home with Michael Murphy: Divine reinvention. *The New York Times*, C1. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1995/03/02/823095.html?pageNumber=57>
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412995658>
- Nelson, D. L., & Quick, J. C. (2007). *Understanding organizational behavior* (3rd ed.). South-Western College Publications. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1981.4287874>
- New York Times. (1946, May 25). Atomic education urged by Einstein: Scientist in plea for \$200,000 to promote new type of essential thinking. *New York Times*, 11. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1946/05/25/100998236.html?pageNumber=11>
- Nonaka, I., Toyama, R., & Norboru, K. (2000). SECI, ba and leadership: A unified model of dynamic knowledge creation. *Long Range Planning*, 33, 5–34. [https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0024-6301\(99\)00115-6](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0024-6301(99)00115-6)
- Nussbaum, B. (2018). Finding US in music(TM): A method for deeper group engagement that integrates MUSIC with ubuntu, contemplation, and reflection. In J. Neal (Ed.), *Handbook of personal and organizational transformation* (Vol. 1, pp. 555–596). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66893-2_56
- On Being Project. (n.d.). *What is the on being project?* Onbeing.org. <https://onbeing.org/our-story/>
- Páez, D., Rimé, B., Basabe, N., Wlodarczyk, A., & Zumeta, L. (2015). Psychosocial effects of perceived emotional synchrony in collective gatherings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 108(5), 711–729. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000014>
- Palmer, P. (2000). *Let your life speak: Listening for the voice of vocation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, P. (2004). *A hidden wholeness: The journey toward an undivided life*. Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, M., Larkin, M., de Visser, R., & Fadden, G. (2010). Developing an interpretative phenomenological approach to focus group data. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 7(2), 99–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880802513194>.
- Panteli, N., & Tucker, R. (2009). Power and trust in global virtual teams. *Communications of the ACM*, 52(12), 113–115. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1610252.1610282>

- Parker, L. (2006). Photo-elicitation: an ethno-historical accounting and management research prospect. *Interdisciplinary perspectives on accounting conference*.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09513570910987402>
- Patten, T. (2010, October 23). *What's emerging from the collective field?* [Blog]. Beyond Awakening Series. <https://www.beyondawakeningseries.com/2010/10/whats-emerging-in-the-collective-field/>
- Patten, T. (2016). Why “we” matters: Transformational potentials of evolutionary subjectivity. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Peschl, M. F., & Fundneider, T. (2014). Theory u and emergent innovation: Presencing as a method of bringing forth profound new knowledge and realities. In *Perspectives on theory U: Insights from the field* (pp. 207–233). Business Science Reference.
<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-4793-0.ch014>
- Pickren, W. E., & Rutherford, A. (2010). *A history of modern psychology in context*. Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.28-6502>
- Pór, G. (2008). Twin paths to beyond chaos collective intelligence and collective leadership: Twin paths to beyond chaos. *University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. Sprouts: Working Papers on Information Systems*, 8(2), 8–2.
- Pór, G. (2017). On the verge of collective awakening. In S. Momo (Ed.), *Collective enlightenment* (pp. 15–30). Spanda Foundation. <https://spanda.org/assets/docs/spanda-journal-VII,1-2017.pdf>
- Presencing Institute. (n.d.). *Our Story*. [Web page]. Presencing Institute website.
<https://www.presencing.org/aboutus/presencing-institute/our-story>
- Puttick, E. (2000). Personal development: The spiritualisation and secularisation of the human potential movement. In *Beyond new age: Exploring alternative spirituality* (pp. 201–219). Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571x0010300536>
- Rebel Wisdom. (2019). *Making sense of sensemaking* [video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Es_WTEgZHE
- Rebel Wisdom. (n.d.). *Our vision*. [Web page]. Rebel Wisdom website.
<https://rebelwisdom.co.uk/about>
- Reddish, P., Fischer, R., & Bulbulia, J. (2013). Let's dance together: Synchrony, shared intentionality and cooperation. *PLoS ONE*, 8(8).
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0071182>
- Rowan, J. (1998). Maslow amended. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 38(1), 81–92.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678980381008>

- Salanova, M., Rodríguez-Sánchez, A. M., Schaufeli, W. B., & Cifre, E. (2014). Flowing together: A longitudinal study of collective efficacy and collective flow among workgroups. *The Journal of Psychology, 148*(4), 435–455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2013.806290>
- Sandra, D., & Nandram, S. (2020). Driving organizational entrainment through spiritual leadership. *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion, 17*(4), 316–332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766086.2019.1585280>
- Scharmer, C. O. (2016). *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges* (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Scharmer, C. O. (2018). *The essentials of theory U: Core principles and applications*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Schutz, W. C. (1971). *Here comes everybody*. Harper & Row. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(21\)00258-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(21)00258-3)
- Scult, J. (n.d.). *Interbeing: The interconnectedness of you to the nature of all things* [blog]. One Golden Thread. <https://onegoldenthread.com/blogs/news/the-greatest-lie-was-the-illusion-of-separation>
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. Penguin Random House. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.45.4.31>
- Senge, P., Scharmer, C. O., Jaworski, J., & Flowers, B. S. (2005). *Presence: An exploration of profound change in people, organizations, and society*. Random House.
- Siegel, D. (2006). An interpersonal neurobiology approach to psychotherapy. *Psychiatric Annals, 36*(4), 248–256. <https://doi.org/10.3928/00485713-20060401-06>
- Smalley, S., & Winston, D. (2010). *Fully present: The science, art, and practice of mindfulness*. Da Capo Press.
- Smith, A. P. (2004, September). Contextualizing Ken. *Integral World*. <https://www.integralworld.net/smith20.html>
- Smith, B. (1973). On self-actualization: A transambivalent examination of a focal theme in Maslow's psychology. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 13*(2), 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002216787301300203>
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretive phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Sage Publications.
- Snow, B. A. (2015). *Waking up and growing up: Two forms of human development*. PhilArchive. <https://philarchive.org/rec/SNOWUA>

- Steininger, T., & Debold, E. (2016). Emerge dialogue process: The intersection of the higher we and dialogue practice. In O. Gunnlaugson & M. Brabant (Eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Steininger, T., & Debold, E. (2021). When meaning shines forth: Emergent dialogue and the co-conscious we. In J. Vervaeke & C. Mastropietro (Eds.), *Inner and outer dialogues* (forthcoming). Perspectiva.
- Storberg-Walker, J. (2022). Relating differently: Exploring how a relational ontology might catalyze transformative, emancipatory, and action-oriented MSR research. In Y. Altman, J. Neal, & W. Mayrhofer (Eds.), *Workplace spirituality: Making a difference* (forthcoming). De Gruyter.
- Surrey, J. L. (2005). Relational psychotherapy, relational mindfulness. In C. Germer, R. D. Siegel, & P. R. Fulton (Eds.), *Mindfulness and psychotherapy*. (2nd ed., pp. 91–110). Guilford Publications.
- Taylor, S. (2017). *The leap: The psychology of spiritual awakening*. New World Library.
- Taylor, S. (2018). *Spiritual science: Why science needs spirituality to make sense of the world*. Watkins.
- Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. L. (2016). *Introduction to qualitative research methods* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526136527.00012>
- Tsao, F., & Laszlo, C. (2019). *Quantum leadership: A new consciousness in business*. Stanford Business Books.
- U.lab Team. (2019). *U.lab 1x: Leading from the emerging future source book*. Presencing Institute. <https://www.edx.org/course/ulab-leading-from-the-emerging-future>
- United States. (1978). *The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects in research*. <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html>
- Vagle, M. D. (2018). *Crafting phenomenological research* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315173474>
- Valk, M. (2020, February 8). *Starling murmuration 2020* [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uV54oa0SyMc>
- van Manen, M. (2002). *Writing in the dark: Phenomenological studies in interpretive inquiry*. The Althouse Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315415574>
- van Manen, M. (2016). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315421056>

- Vu, M. C., Wolfgramm, R., & Spiller, C. (2018). Minding less: Exploring mindfulness and mindlessness in organizations through skillful means. *Management Learning*, 49(5), 578–594. <https://doi.org/0.1177/1350507618794810>
- Wachowski, L., & Wachowski, L. (1999). *The matrix* [film]. Warner Bros.
- Warren, S. (2009). Visual methods in organizational research. In *The SAGE handbook of organizational research methods* (pp. 566–582).
- Wayne, M. (2005). *Quantum-integral medicine: Towards a new science of human potential*. iThink Books.
- Weiss, B. (2018, May 8). Meet the renegades of the intellectual dark web. *New York Times*, Opinon. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/opinion/intellectual-dark-web.html>
- Welwood, J. (2000). *Toward a psychology of awakening: Buddhism, psychotherapy, and the path of personal and spiritual transformation*. Shambhala Publications.
- Wergin, J. F. (2020). *Deep learning in a disorienting world*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108647786>
- Wheatley, M. J., & Kellner-Rogers, M. (1996). *A simpler way*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Wilber, K. (2007). *The integral vision: A very short introduction to the revolutionary integral approach to life, god, the universe, and everything*. Shambhala Publications.
- Xygalatas, D., Konvalinka, I., Bulbulia, J., & Roepstorff, A. (2011). Quantifying collective effervescence: Heart-rate dynamics at a fire-walking ritual. *Communicative & Integrative Biology*, 4(6), 735–738. <https://doi.org/10.4161/cib.17609>
- Yorks, L. (2005). Adult learning and the generation of new knowledge and meaning: Creating liberating spaces for fostering adult learning through practitioner-based collaborative action inquiry. *Teachers College Record*, 107(6), 1217–1244. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2005.00511.x>
- Zahavi, D. (2001). Beyond empathy: Phenomenological approaches to intersubjectivity. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 8(5–7), 151–167. <https://doi.org/10.3846/coactivity.2010.08>

Appendix A: Facilitated Treatment Session Agenda

Run Time	Session Element	Source Materials (if applicable)
20	Welcome and introductions Session purpose Session overview and review of agenda How to use Zoom for this session Ground rules	Steininger & Debold (personal communication, June 10-12, 2020) Palmer (2004)
15	Opening: Connecting meditation – weaving a collective tapestry	Steininger & Debold (personal communication, June 10-12, 2020)
20	Check In – Question: What does this tapestry that we’ve just created together look or feel like? And what is the current state of your experience in the world?	Steininger & Debold (personal communication, June 10-12, 2020)
15	Activity: Consciousness shifting through leaning in and out – becoming aware of our connection and shared consciousness	Steininger & Debold (personal communication, June 10-12, 2020)
20	Discussion via Liberating Structures using breakout rooms: The experience of shared consciousness and what it feels like <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning in pairs • Moving to groups of fours • Whole-group discussion 	Steininger & Debold (personal communication, June 10-12, 2020) McCandless & Lipmanowicz (n.d.)
10	BREAK	
80	Practice: Group intention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective creation of group intention • Meditation on intention • Sharing the experience of the meditation • Discussion 	McTaggart (2017)
30	BREAK	
20	Activity: Creating or choosing art that describes the group’s experience of connection (Appendix B)	Not applicable

10	<p>Practice: Reconnecting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditative viewing of the starling murmuration video (Valk, 2020) • Gazing, weaving practice • One-word check in • Request permission to record from here on • Begin recording 	Steininger & Debold (personal communication, June 10-12, 2020)
40	<p>Activity: Sharing art from art activity (Appendix B)</p> <p>Discussion: Exploring shared themes</p>	Not applicable
10	Closing and check out	Not applicable
10	BREAK	
120	Group interview (Appendix D)	Not applicable
	Conclude	

Appendix B: Art Project

Art Project Activity

With the activities, discussions, and practices that you've engaged in with the group over the past few hours in mind, I invite you to explore the group's experience through art.

Let the following questions serve as prompts for your reflection:

- What was it like for you to have that experience with this group?
- As a group, what do you imagine your collective experience was like?
- How would you express your group's experience in words or through art?

I invite you to further explore the experience's meaning for your group through one of the following activities:

- Draw a picture that expresses your group's experience.
- Draw a mandala about your group's experience.
- Create a graphic image that expresses your group's experience.
- Perhaps a favorite poem captures your group's experience in language. Find that poem and read through it again.
- Or maybe a favorite song captures your group's experience. Play that song for yourself.
- Pick one of your own photos or picture cards that conveys your group's experience.

After you've drawn, created, or picked your art, be prepared to show and tell with the group when we get back together.

You have about 20 minutes for this activity.

**Appendix C: Application of Facilitation Considerations and Suggestions from the
Literature Listed in Chapter II**

In Chapter II, a number of facilitation considerations and suggestions were listed regarding the treatment I will be facilitating with research subjects. Those considerations and suggestions are listed in the table below and are accompanied by an explanation of where and how they will be applied to the treatment session design.

Treatment Elements	Considerations and Suggestions Derived from the Literature	Application of Considerations and Suggestions
Pre-session communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivating swift trust • Transparency 	Being transparent in pre-session communications and responding to any questions or responses quickly helped to establish swift trust. Additionally, trust and transparency helped to lay the groundwork for a safe space and container.
Pre-session facilitator preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual leadership elements of vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith • Grounding before each session • Prepare for session, and be flexible 	All three suggestions were important for my facilitation preparation regarding the kind of presence I wanted to convey, that is, how I wanted to show up. By setting my own intentions for engaging spiritual leadership, grounding myself before each session, and ensuring that I thoroughly prepare and then stay flexible, I created awareness for myself, which in turn helped me to cultivate the presence I intended. My mental preparation also assisted me in creating a safe space and container.

<p>Session elements: Facilitator presence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator as learning coach • Spiritual leadership • Sensitivity to moments of shift • Prepare, and be flexible • Acknowledging contributions • Watch for power imbalances, social divides, and inequality 	<p>Conceptualizing my role as a learning coach vis a vis a facilitator or meditation teacher allowed me to hold an awareness of this process as one we were all learning how to do. Being sensitive to shifts and being prepared yet flexible opened a space for learning to occur. Adopting a presence of spiritual leadership, for which I communicated a vision, in this case of what is possible in a group, as well as created a container made of altruistic love and hope/faith supported the groups in their work and created the opportunity for entrainment. Finally, the important task of watching for power imbalances, social divides, and inequality was an aspect of facilitation that was crucial in creating a safe space and cultivating trust, dignity, and participation.</p>
<p>Session elements: Opening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear on the intention • Transparency 	<p>Both of these considerations were addressed during the session opening, when I explained the purpose of the session and what we would be doing.</p>
<p>Session elements: Ground rules</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe space and container • Zoom-specific ground rules • Engaging non-fixing listening • Gently inviting the soul • Bringing awareness to suspension 	<p>Establishing clear ground rules for the group was an important factor in creating a safe space and container. Ground rules included invitations to engage non-fixing listening, to gently invite each other's souls, and to practice suspension, which is much like the Buddhist concept of beginner's mind and provided a space for not knowing the answers, clearing the slate of preconceived notion, and for allowing whatever was going to emerge to emerge. Additional ground rules specific to working in a virtual space, for example, Zoom tips, were addressed during the session as well as pre-session communications.</p>

<p>Session elements: Selection of practices and activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchrony • Collective ritual action • Engagement, interaction, sharing of similarities • Entrainment – chanting or an OHM, or group rowing • Deeper levels of consciousness • Mythopoetic elements (birds and Bly?) • Case Clinic/highest future possibility • Gazing, leaning forward/back, talking about experience of consciousness • Check-in and check-out • Heart practice • Social arts/mythopoetic • Intentional deep listening • Moments of mindfulness practice 	<p>The list of practices and activities, based on suggestions and considerations from the literature, is long. I chose practices and activities that served multiple purposes. During the treatment, I guided participants through multiple meditation practices, which served the purpose of cultivating synchrony through silence and breathing, engages collective ritual action, opened the door to deeper levels of consciousness, and were moments of mindfulness practice. Several meditative practices occurred, and among those practices were heart practices, which also assisted in entrainment. The nature of the treatment was highly interactive and experiential, which invited participants to share their experiences and do intentional deep listening. Several mythopoetic elements were part of the treatment, including a video that shows a large flock of birds in movement accompanied by music and an art project meant to engage an arts-based method providing an opening to creativity and right-brained processing.</p>
--	--	---

Appendix D: Group Interview Guide

Overview:

- Purpose of the interview
- Review of informed consent
- Ground rules

2-minutes Meditation – centering, grounding

Start RECORDING

Question/Topic Areas

- Review definition of coherence
- Questions related to the group experience and what it was like

Questions, Group 1

- What was it like to go through those three hours for you as an individual?
- How would you characterize the group as a unit at the end of the activities and practices? Was that different than what it was like at the beginning?
- Do you have the sense that others experienced something similar to what you did?
- Was there a moment when things changed for the group? When you perhaps became closer or more cohesive or coherent?
- What do you think happened? What enabled you to have that experience?
- What made the shift possible?
- What do you think you experienced as a group?

Questions, Group 2

Note: Based on group interview data from Group 1, questions were altered.

- What was it like to go through those three hours for you?
- What was it from the standpoint of different realms, i.e. physically? Emotionally? Mentally? Spiritually?
- Do you have the sense that others experienced something similar to what you did?
- How would you characterize the group as a unit at the end of the activities and practices? Was that different than what it was like at the beginning?
- Was there a moment when things changed for the group? When you perhaps became closer or more cohesive or coherent?
- How do you know that shift happened?
- What do you think happened? What enabled you to have that experience?
- What do you think you experienced as a group?
- And thinking about your individuation – your separate self – what happened to that separate self in the cohered state?
- Take a moment – can you go back to that shared heart experience now?

Appendix E: Recruitment Email Communications

Email to Members of My Network

Dear <name>,

I hope this email finds you well and thriving. I am contacting you today to request your help. I am a PhD candidate studying deep interpersonal connection within small groups, and **I am seeking your help to find groups who I may be able to study.**

First, a little bit more about me and what I'm studying. I am a leadership coach (PCC) and consultant, experienced facilitator and trainer, and a certified mindfulness meditation facilitator (CMT-P). I am attending Antioch University, studying leadership and change, and am now in candidacy and working on my dissertation. **My actual area of research is coherence in the intersubjective field**, which probably requires a bit more explanation. Let me provide an explanation of two main elements of my study: coherence and intersubjectivity.

- **Intersubjectivity** is the collective inner landscape that is shared among two or more people. It is the we-ness not related to task performance, but instead the we-ness related to beingness. The intersubjective is the space between us that is neither just me nor just you. Instead, it is our shared space.
- **Coherence** is a phenomenon during which something magical happens within the group and everything clicks into place resulting in a feeling of oneness and non-duality.

For my dissertation study, I will be engaging up to three groups in a virtual day-long (or two half-day) facilitated session, during which I will guide groups into deeper connection through meditation practices, consciousness inquiry activities, and mindful discussion. At the end of the facilitation, I will interview the groups and ask the members about their experiences. It is my hope that groups will benefit from the sessions through learning some techniques for cultivating deeper connections in the virtual space.

I am looking for groups that fulfill the following parameters:

- A group of approximately five to eight people;
- A group whose members are from the same organization, community, or class, and are familiar to each other; and
- A group that shares a common contemplative or meditative practice – one which the group practices together as well as individual members practice on their own.

An in-tact working group or team and/or a group whose members may have experienced coherence in the past would be bonuses but are not required.

If you know of a group that may fit these criteria and may interested in committing the time to participate, would you please let me know by way of reply? I would be grateful for your assistance. Please do feel free to forward this email to others who may be interested.

<Organization> Coaching Community

Invitation to Participate in PhD Research Study on Group Coherence

You are invited to participate in a day-long, free experience focused on the experience of coherence in a virtual space. *Coherence* is a group phenomenon during which something magical happens within the group, transforming the group of individuals into a deep connected unit. Coherence is also referred to as the experience of oneness and non-duality, where a deep connection is forged through conscious connection.

The experience is part of a research study that will serve as the basis of my dissertation. I am Stacey Guenther, a PhD candidate at Antioch University's Graduate School of Leadership and Change. I am a leadership coach (PCC) and consultant, as well as a meditation teacher (CMT-P), who is interested in group beingness, consciousness, coherence, emergence, and intersubjectivity.

The experience itself is a day-long, facilitated session that will take place virtually using Zoom. I am seeking a small group of five to eight people to participate in the session. During the session, the group will engage in meditation practices, connecting practices, dialogue, sensemaking through art, and storytelling. Following the facilitated session, I will conduct an interview with the group to capture participants' experiences. The session will run approximately 7 hours, including breaks, and is outlined below.

Session Agenda (6.75 hours)

- **Opening, introductions, and ground rules/agreements** (15 minutes)
- **Meditation, connecting practices, and dialogue** focused on forming a deep connection among participants (2 hours 45 min)
- **Break** (30 min)
- **Sensemaking** the experience using art and storytelling (60 min)
- **Closing** the experience and taking a break (15 min)
- **A group interview** to continue sensemaking and to collect data on the experience (2 hours)

Privacy and confidentiality. As a researcher, it is important for me to disclose, up front, that I cannot guarantee privacy and confidentiality, because of the nature of a group process. That being said, I will ask all of those who participate to honor confidentiality and privacy by not sharing stories, artwork, or comments shared during the session outside of it. You will be welcome, however, to share practices and activities that we engage in.

Are you interested in participating? I am seeking **committed, regular (ideally daily) meditators** (or regular practitioners of other contemplative practices) who are open to and interested in this kind of connection to participate. If that's you, and you are able to commit to participating in the full day-long session, **please contact <program manager> by Tuesday, June 1.** My goal is to set a date for the session based on the groups' availability by the middle of June.

Appendix F: Participant Email Communication

Dear <participant names>,

I am excited to be working with your group from <organization>. I am grateful to all of you for your willingness to be part of my research study on group coherence, and I hope, in return, that you will take away from the session(s) techniques that you can replicate in future group gatherings.

Our session(s) is scheduled for:

<day, date>

<times>

In this email, I provide the following in preparation for our day(s) together:

- A brief agenda
- Requested pre-session tasks
- Zoom information (at bottom)
- My contact information

And accompanying this email are the following attachments via Dropbox:

- Information about coherence
- Informed consent forms
- Instructions for the art activity during session

DROPBOX LINK

And a pre-session questionnaire, provided as a link below.

Session Flow/Agenda

10am	Welcome and Opening Playing with Coherence (10 minute break mid-way through)
1pm-ish	Lunch Break
1:30-ish	Art Project
1:50	Rejoin Group Discussion
2:50	Break
3:00	Focus Group/Group Interview
5:00	Conclude

A Note on Confidentiality and Privacy

I commit to doing everything in my power to protect your confidentiality and privacy. Due to the nature of group processes, I am unable to control what other participants do or say in or outside of the session. And because you know each other, or are familiar with each other, I want to make clear that cannot guarantee privacy and confidentiality. That being said, I will ask all of you participating to honor confidentiality by not discussing stories, reactions, discussions, and

personal material outside of the group. However, you will be welcome to share the practices and activities themselves.

Preparing for our Session

In order to maximize our time together, I request that you prepare for the session with the following brief activities. I hope you will find them all fairly quick and easy, and please, if you have any questions, simply reply to this email. Thank you in advance for going through this list of preparation activities.

1. **Make space for the session, so you can be fully present.** I request that all of you be present for the entire session without leaving for meetings, appointments, and other commitments.
2. **Prepare your computer/technology,** so you can get the most out of our session. This is best done prior to logging in. Instructions are given in the section below.
3. **Read the attached brief information on coherence,** which may provide you with information on our intended outcome for our session. After reading, if you have any questions, please do get in touch.
4. **Review and then sign and return the informed consent form.** In the Dropbox, you'll find two versions: a signable PDF that you can sign and send back digitally, and Word version you can print and sign manually. For the manual signature version, either scan in and email once it is signed, or you can use your smartphone to take pictures of the documents and message back. This is an important element, so please do complete and return the form prior to our session.
5. **Complete the pre-session questionnaire,** which may prime the pump for coherence and will also provide me with some background information. You can do that by following this link: <link>
6. **Briefly review the Art Project document attached** – you may want to gather art materials (paper, pens, crayons, etc.) and your own photos or photo cards. We will do the described activity after our lunch break.

Consciously Connecting

Most of us have experienced Zoom fatigue to some degree during the past year, so I am inviting you to join this session in a slightly different way than you usually join a video meeting. Here are some things I am asking of you:

1. Follow the Zoom link, and test yourself out to ensure that **your face is in full light**, so that your full expression can be seen by other participants. (I often see people joining whose faces are darkened or are half-darkened, and it really cuts down on our ability to fully connect.)
2. If you share a home with anyone else in the group, **please join separately**, each from your own screen.
3. **Test audio**, both speaking and hearing, so everything is in good order.
4. Prior to joining the call, **please close down all other windows on your computer or device and put your phone on do not disturb** if you are able. It seems that minimizing distractions can assist us all in staying present. That multi-tasking we do is one of the contributors of Zoom fatigue.

5. Take a look around you and see what is in your space behind you. **Please do show your actual space instead of using wallpaper** to cover your space if you are comfortable with doing so. This sharing of spaces increases our intimacy and feeling of connection.
6. **While we are in session together**, I will invite you to turn off your self view and then to keep your audio and video feeds open.

Thank you!

Once again, thank you for your willingness to participate and to give of your time and experiences for the benefit of this research study. Truly, I am grateful.

Best wishes,
Stacey
<contact information>

Zoom Info

<Zoom information>

Appendix G: About Coherence (Participant Email Attachment)

I began to unwittingly turn my interest toward group coherence by first starting at a much wider topic, collective awakening. Simply stated, collective awakening is waking up en masse, i.e. not a focus just on the individual, but instead, a focus on how we can wake up as a species in order to transcend our limitations as humans in our current stage of collective development. As I began to dive into and read about collective awakening, the “how” questions kept emerging for me: how do we awaken? How do collectives awaken together? How do we move developmentally together? These continued questions and process of digging deeper and narrowing my focus led me to (or returned me to) my deep interest in groups and within groups, this elusive thing called coherence. Coherence is often talked about but rarely defined or explained while also being touted as an experience in which something magical happens to a group. That lack of clear definition has led me to explore what exactly coherence is through an empirical investigation. What follows is a very brief overview of how coherence is being talked about in scholarly writing.

According to Merriam-Webster, to cohere means “to hold together firmly as parts of the same mass” and “to become united in principles, relationships, or interests. The term describes the coming together in consciousness of two or more people. One definition, borne from quantum physics, explains coherence as follows:

Characteristic of an expanded positive state of consciousness, it is a synchronization (coming into similar phase patterns) of the waves either within our personal fields or among participants in a group. Having a clear intention or focus, feeling positive affect with or for others and entering a meditative state all contribute to greater coherence. (Guttenstein, Lindsay, & Baron, 2014, p. 179)

In behavior, organizational consultant Robert Kenny described group coherence as:

When the group reaches a certain level of coherence, generally there’s some higher level of order that comes into the room and it’s very noticeable to people. It’s like something

has shifted. People stop fighting for airspace and there's a kind of group intuition that develops. It's almost like the group as a whole becomes a tuning fork for the inflow of wisdom. (Hamilton, 2004, p. 58)

Coherence has been likened to a group flow state, but flow without the association of task, doingness, or content. Others described coherence as a shared sense of support and well-being, internal alignment among a group, optimized group energy, shared heart intelligence, and a sense that everything falls into place resulting in creativity and new potential when a group crosses a threshold into a collaborative space. Using spiritual language, coherence is the experience of oneness and non-duality, either through an altered state or through the felt-sense of oneness (or both).

I draw on the metaphor of sport and the field of play. When the individual athletes come together on (or in) the field, moving into the magical experience of a high-performing team, anticipating each other's movement, reading each other's thoughts, and creating a seamlessness from one player to the next, the team is cohering into a more advanced state of being. They have become one being playing through individual bodies.

References

- Cohere [Def. 1, 2, & 3] (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster Online*. Retrieved December 28, 2019, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cohesion>.
- Glickman, S., & Boyar, D. (2016). Trillium awakening. In Gunnlaugson, O., & Brabant, M. (eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Gunnlaugson, O., & Brabant, M. (2016). Introduction: Background of we-space in the integral community. In Gunnlaugson, O., & Brabant, M. (eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Guttenstein, S., Lindsay, J. & Baron, C. (2014). Aligning with the emergent future. In Gunnlaugson, O., Baron, C., & Cayer, M. (eds.), *Perspectives on theory u: Insights from the field*. Hershey, PA: Business Science Reference.
- Hamilton, C. (2004). Come together: The mystery of collective intelligence. *What is enlightenment?*, 25, p. 57-79.

- Hamilton, M., Douglas, D.C., Beck, C., Aurami, A., Arnott, J., & Shore, L. (2016). We-space, integral city and the knowing field. In Gunnlaugson, O., & Brabant, M. (eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Patten, T. (2016). Why 'we' matters: Transformational potentials of evolutionary subjectivity. In Gunnlaugson, O., & Brabant, M. (eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Schmachtenberger, D., Wheal, J., & Greenhall, J. (2019). *Making sense of sensemaking* [Video file]. Retrieved from Rebel Wisdom website: <https://www.rebelwisdom.co.uk/8-posts/106-jordan-greenhall-jamie-wheal-daniel-schmachtenberger-making-sense-of-sensemaking>
- Steininger, T., & Debold, E. (2016). Emerge dialogue process: The intersection of the higher we and dialogue practice. In Gunnlaugson, O., & Brabant, M. (eds.), *Cohering the integral we space: Engaging collective emergence, wisdom, and healing in groups*. Integral Publishing House.
- Yorks, L. (2005). Adult learning and the generation of new knowledge and meaning: Creating liberating spaces for fostering adult learning through practitioner-based collaborative action inquiry. *Teachers college record*, 107(6), p. 1217-1244.

Appendix H: Informed Consent (Participant Email Attachment)

Stacey Guenther's Consent Form for DISSERTATION STUDY

This informed consent form is for participants who are invited to be part of my project titled, **“The Experience of Coherence” project.**

Name of Principle Investigator: Stacey Guenther

Name of Organization: Antioch University, PhD in Leadership and Change Program

Name of Project: **The Experience of Coherence Study**

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form.

Introduction

I am Stacey Guenther, a PhD candidate enrolled in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch University. As part of this degree, I am conducting a dissertation study, during which I will facilitate group sessions, conduct group interviews, and conduct some one-on-one interviews in order to discuss the experience of coherence. Below, you will find information about the project. I am inviting you to participate as a member of <group name>. In order to determine whether participating in this project is something you would like to do, please feel free to discuss the project with others and take time to reflect on whether you would like to participate or not. You may ask questions at any time.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this dissertation study is to explore group or social beingness through an exploration of the phenomenon of coherence. Group beingness is the opposite of being focused on a task, or doingness, and more associated with the consciousness and energy of a group. Social coherence, which has been described as group magic and group flow without the association of task or content, could be explained as a heightened experience of group beingness where the group-level embodiment of interconnectedness, attunement, and resonance results in a coming home among members. In spiritual parlance, we may call the coming home an experience of oneness and non-duality.

Project Activities

This project will involve three different activities: 1. Group facilitated sessions, during which I will lead the group through guided meditation practices, discussions with the whole group as well one-on-one discussions, and invited to participate in an art project; 2. Group interviews immediately following the facilitated sessions; and 3. One-on-one interviews with a small number of group members. I will conduct group sessions, group interviews, and one-on-one interviews virtually via Zoom, an online meeting platform.

All group and one-on-one interviews will be recorded via the Zoom platform recording function. All participants will be asked to choose pseudonyms for the purposes of Zoom labeling. Parts of the facilitated session may also be recorded. The video recording may be used as part of the reporting of findings, and should I want to use a video clip that you are in, I will ask your permission to do so. The audio recordings will be used for professional transcription services.

Participant Selection

As a member of the <group name>, you are invited to participate with your group. All participants should have a committed, daily contemplative practice, such as meditation. All members of the group should be familiar to each other, and the group should all come from the same program or organization, so you have a shared language and frames of reference.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate. You may withdraw from this project at any time. You will not be penalized for your decision not to participate or for anything of your contributions during the project.

Risks

I do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed as a result of participating in this project. You may stop your participation at any time if you become uncomfortable.

The session will include a number of meditation practices. Meditation is generally contraindicated for those who have experienced recent trauma and for those who have experienced psychotic episodes and/or psychological emergencies in the past and are not currently stable. If meditation is contraindicated for you, it is recommended that you not participate.

Benefits

There may be no direct benefit to you, but your participation will help to contribute to the understanding of group beingness.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any monetary incentive to take part in this research project.

Confidentiality

Due to the nature of a group process, I will not have control over what groups members do or say, both in the session and outside the session. And because you will be in a group with other people you know, you should not have the expectation of privacy and/or confidentiality. With that said, I request that you honor confidentiality and commit to not discussing any stories, discussions, or sharing of art that happens during our session together. You will be welcome to share and discuss the practices themselves, but none of the personal information that may emerge as a result of those practices.

All information will be de-identified, so that it cannot be connected back to you. Your real name will be replaced with a pseudonym in the write-up of this project. I will be the only person with access to the list connecting your name to the pseudonym. Similarly, your organization or group will be named with a pseudonym and de-identified. This list, along with any recordings, if applicable, will be kept in a secure, locked location, until I complete my dissertation, at which time, the notes will be destroyed.

Generally speaking, I can assure you that I will keep everything you tell me or do for the project private. Yet there are times where I cannot keep things private (confidential). I cannot keep things private (confidential) when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else,

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person is at risk for self-harm or are self-harming, harming another or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most states, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to self-harm or harm another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

Future Publication

This project will be published as a doctoral dissertation, and it may also be used for future publication in other media. In the publication, I may include something you say in the sessions, but any direct quotes will be de-identified and associated with your pseudonym only. I may ask your permission to use artwork created during your group's session, and if you agree, artwork would be de-identified and listed only with your pseudonym.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this project if you do not wish to do so, and you may withdraw from the project at any time without any consequences.

Crisis Support

Although I do not anticipate any harm will come from the practices, activities, and discussions we will engage in, meditation practices do pose a risk, albeit quite small. Should you have any adverse reactions to the session, please contact the Mental Health America Crisis Line at 800-273-TALK (8255), or text MHA to 741741 to find a 24-hour crisis center

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later. If you have questions later, you may contact me at <email address>.

If you have any ethical concerns about this study, contact Lisa Kreeger, PhD, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change, Email: <email included in original>.

DO YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT?

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate in this project.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

DO YOU WISH TO BE AUDIOTAPED AS PART OF THIS PROJECT?

I voluntarily agree to let the researcher videotape and audiotape me for this project if appropriate. I agree to allow the use of my recordings.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

To be filled out by the researcher or the person taking consent:

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the project and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent _____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Appendix I: Pre-Session Questionnaire

Questionnaire was provided via Google Forms.

Pre-Session Reflection and Demographic Info

Please complete this questionnaire in the days before your group session on Saturday, June 5. There are no right or wrong answers for these questions and are meant only to open your awareness to coherence.

Coherence is defined as a group-level connection and experience of oneness that has been likened to a group flow state, but flow without the association of task, doingness, or content. It is a shared sense of support and well-being, internal alignment among a group, optimized group energy, shared heart intelligence, and a sense that everything falls into place. It is the harmonious alignment among small groups. When the group reaches a certain level of coherence, a higher level of order comes into the room that is very noticeable and feels like something has shifted. When that happens, people stop fighting for airspace and a kind of group intuition develops. It's almost like the group as a whole becomes a tuning fork for the inflow of wisdom.

*** Required**

Based on this definition, can you recall a time when you have experienced coherence in a group setting? * Yes No I'm not sure

If you answered yes or I'm not sure, please answer the following question: Describe an experience of coherence (or what you think may have been coherence) as you remember it. Please include when (approximately) you had this experience.

Demographic Information

The following questions are demographic in nature and will help me to look at data from this study in different ways.

How do you describe your race and ethnicity?

What is your gender identity?

To what age group do you belong?*

(*Age ranges were later altered to provide a more accurate picture of the participants' age groups.)

18-30 30-45 45-60 60-75 75-90

What is your occupation? If this question feels like it does not perfectly apply to you, answer with whatever it is that most occupies your time outside of your family life. If you are retired, please include your former occupation, if that applies.

Your name

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. I look forward to working with you and your group soon!

Appendix J: Follow-Up Questionnaires

Question	Grp1	Grp2
<i>One week following the experience</i>		
A week after the facilitated session, has the session stuck with you, i.e. are you able to go to that connected state?	x	x
A week after the session, how do you view the experience now?	x	x
When you were in that deeply connected state, how was that for you as an individual? Did your individual self go away, stay the same, or was it heightened in some way? Please explain.	x	x
<i>Two to three weeks following the experience</i>		
Do you recall being nervous or anxious before the session? If yes, what do you think that nervousness or anxiety was about? (If no, please skip and move to the next question.)	x	x
Do you think that it took courage to engage in the session as you did and for the group to go to the deep state of connection that it went to? Please explain.	x	x
Was there one specific time during the session when you believe the group clicked and formed a deep connection? If so, when?		x
Dina stated that she thought Grainne and Bea Bea were leaders within the group, and that they modeled how to engage with the session. How do you react to Dina's statement? If you agree with her, what role did Grainne and Bea Bea play in your group's experience and deep connection during the session?	x	
Who, if anyone, did you identify as the leader or leaders within the group? If you did identify one or more leaders, what were their actions that demonstrated their leadership?		x
What part, if any, did will or choice have in making the deep connection that you experienced possible?	x	x
Prior to the session, do you think you were aware that this type of deep connection was possible?	x	X
Have you noticed any shifts, reflections, or changes that have occurred for you since the session? If so, what have you noticed?	x	X

Appendix K: Initial Thematic Codes

Activity / Practice
 Altered State
 Beingness
 Best Self
 Choice / Will
 Circle
 Collective
 Collective Consciousness
 Communication
 Connectedness
 Courage
 Deep
 Effort
 Ego
 Emotions
 Energy
 Expansive
 Fatigue
 Flow
 Inclusivity
 Insight
 Individual
 Light and Dark
 Magical
 Nature
 Positive Affect
 Possibilities
 Present / Aware
 Purpose
 Relational
 Sacred / Spiritual
 Skillful Means
 Somatic
 Space / Container
 Storytelling
 Strength
 Texture
 Transcendence / Evolving
 Swirling
 Universe
 Vulnerability
 Yearning

Appendix L: First-Order Coding—Themes (Final)

Accepting	Moving
Altered State	Music
Awe/Wonder	Nature
Belief	Oneness
Best Selves	Openness
Building, Breaking Open, Reassembling,	Playful
Integrating	Positive Affect
Calming	Possibilities
Choice/Will	Practices
Clear	Present/Aware
Collective	Purpose
Collective Consciousness	Quieting
Communication	Reconnecting
Connectedness	Rejuvenating
Courage	Relationships
Creativity	Remembering
Deep	Resistance
Ease	Sacred/Spiritual
Effort	Safe
Ego	Skillful Means
Emotions	Slow
Energy	Slowing
Expansive	Soft
Facilitation	Somatic
Flow	Space/Container
Fragile	Storytelling
Free	Strength
Gentle	Subtle
Gratitude	Swirling
Healing	Textures
Heart	Tiring
Heart-Focused	Transcendent/Evolutionary
Individual	Transition from Me to We
Insights	Trust
Intense	Universe
Journey	Vulnerability
Leadership	Wholeness
Lightness	Yearning
Light and Dark	Zoom Usage
Love	
Magic	

Appendix M: Second-Order Coding—Thematic Categories

<p>What It Was Like</p> <p>Connectedness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oneness (Love, Heart) • Collective Consciousness • Magic • Music • Flow <p>Accepting</p> <p>Best Selves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remembering • Wholeness <p>Enlivened Field</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy (Swirling, Pulsing) • Characteristics (Expansive, Deep, Intense, Clear, Slow, Safe, Playful, Gentle, Soft, Ease, Subtle, Light) • Safe <p>Everyday Ascension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present/Aware • Transcendent/Evolutionary • Beingness (Ego (Quieting), Awe/Wonder, Free) <p>Activation of Different Ways of Knowing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somatic • Feeling Tones (Positive Affect, Vulnerability, Moved) • Spiritual/Sacred • Creativity 	<p>How It Happened</p> <p>Trust</p> <p>Space/Container</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy (Quieting, Calming, Slowing) • Facilitation • Zoom Usage <p>Transition from Me to We</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building, Breaking Open, Reassembling, Integrating <p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session Practices • Storytelling • Nature • Quieting <p>Choice and Courage</p> <p>Belief</p>
<p>Antecedents</p> <p>Skillful Means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey • Practices <p>Relationships</p> <p>Resistance</p>	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>Awakening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insights • Possibilities • Purpose <p>Connectedness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Oneness <p>Place of Refuge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearning • Gratitude • Reconnecting • Resistance to Return to Normal

Appendix N: Permissions

Permission for Figure 2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



This is a License Agreement between Stacey Guenther ("User") and Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") on behalf of the Rightsholder identified in the order details below. The license consists of the order details, the CCC Terms and Conditions below, and any Rightsholder Terms and Conditions which are included below. All payments must be made in full to CCC in accordance with the CCC Terms and Conditions below.

Order Date	23-Jul-2021	Type of Use	Republish in a thesis/dissertation
Order License ID	1135514-1	Publisher	ELSEVIER INC.
ISSN	0007-6813	Portion	Chart/graph/table/figure

LICENSED CONTENT

Publication Title	Business horizons	Rightsholder	Elsevier Science & Technology Journals
Article Title	How Money motivates Men	Publication Type	Journal
Author/Editor	INDIANA UNIVERSITY.	Start Page	93
Date	01/01/1957	End Page	100
Language	English	Issue	4
Country	United States of America	Volume	3

REQUEST DETAILS

Portion Type	Chart/graph/table/figure	Distribution	Worldwide
Number of charts / graphs / tables / figures requested	1	Translation	Original language of publication
Format (select all that apply)	Print, Electronic	Copies for the disabled?	No
Who will republish the content?	Academic institution	Minor editing privileges?	Yes
Duration of Use	Life of current edition	Incidental promotional use?	No
Lifetime Unit Quantity	Up to 499	Currency	USD
Rights Requested	Main product		

NEW WORK DETAILS

Title	TBD / A Phenomenological Inquiry into Group Beingness	Institution name	Antioch University
Instructor name	Steve Shaw	Expected presentation date	2021-12-15

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Order reference number	N/A	The requesting person / organization to appear on the license	Stacey Guenther
------------------------	-----	---	-----------------

REUSE CONTENT DETAILS

Title, description or numeric reference of the portion(s)	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid Figure	Title of the article/chapter the portion is from	How Money motivates Men
Editor of portion(s)	McDermid, Charles D., Mr.	Author of portion(s)	McDermid, Charles D., Mr.
Volume of serial or monograph	3	Issue, if republishing an article from a serial	4
Page or page range of portion	94	Publication date of portion	1960-01-01

RIGHTSHOLDER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Elsevier publishes Open Access articles in both its Open Access Journals and via its Open Access articles option in subscription journals, for which an author selects a user license permitting certain types of reuse without permission. Before proceeding please check if the article is Open Access on <http://www.sciencedirect.com> and refer to the user license for the individual article. Any reuse not included in the user license terms will require permission. You must always fully and appropriately credit the author and source. If any part of the material to be used (for example, figures) has appeared in the Elsevier publication for which you are seeking permission, with credit or acknowledgement to another source it is the responsibility of the user to ensure their reuse complies with the terms and conditions determined by the rights holder. Please contact permissions@elsevier.com with any queries.

CCC Terms and Conditions

1. Description of Service; Defined Terms. This Reproduction License enables the User to obtain licenses for republication of one or more copyrighted works as described in detail on the relevant Order Confirmation (the "Work(s)"). Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") grants licenses through the Service on behalf of the rightsholder identified on the Order Confirmation (the "Rightsholder"). "Republication", as used herein, generally means the inclusion of a Work, in whole or in part, in a new work or works, also as described on the Order Confirmation. "User", as used herein, means the person or entity making such republication.
2. The terms set forth in the relevant Order Confirmation, and any terms set by the Rightsholder with respect to a particular Work, govern the terms of use of Works in connection with the Service. By using the Service, the person transacting for a republication license on behalf of the User represents and warrants that he/she/it (a) has been duly authorized by the User to accept, and hereby does accept, all such terms and conditions on behalf of User, and (b) shall inform User of all such terms and conditions. In the event such person is a "freelancer" or other third party independent of User and CCC, such party shall be deemed jointly a "User" for purposes of these terms and conditions. In any event, User shall be deemed to have accepted and agreed to all such terms and conditions if User republishes the Work in any fashion.

3. Scope of License; Limitations and Obligations.

- 3.1. All Works and all rights therein, including copyright rights, remain the sole and exclusive property of the Rightsholder. The license created by the exchange of an Order Confirmation (and/or any invoice) and payment by User of the full amount set forth on that document includes only those rights expressly set forth in the Order Confirmation and in these terms and conditions, and conveys no other rights in the Work(s) to User. All rights not expressly granted are hereby reserved.
 - 3.2. General Payment Terms: You may pay by credit card or through an account with us payable at the end of the month. If you and we agree that you may establish a standing account with CCC, then the following terms apply: Remit Payment to: Copyright Clearance Center, 2918 Network Place, Chicago, IL 60673-1291. Payments Due: Invoices are payable upon their delivery to you (or upon our notice to you that they are available to you for downloading). After 30 days, outstanding amounts will be subject to a service charge of 1-1/2% per month or, if less, the maximum rate allowed by applicable law. Unless otherwise specifically set forth in the Order Confirmation or in a separate written agreement signed by CCC, invoices are due and payable on "net 30" terms. While User may exercise the rights licensed immediately upon issuance of the Order Confirmation, the license is automatically revoked and is null and void, as if it had never been issued, if complete payment for the license is not received on a timely basis either from User directly or through a payment agent, such as a credit card company.
 - 3.3. Unless otherwise provided in the Order Confirmation, any grant of rights to User (i) is "one-time" (including the editions and product family specified in the license), (ii) is non-exclusive and non-transferable and (iii) is subject to any and all limitations and restrictions (such as, but not limited to, limitations on duration of use or circulation) included in the Order Confirmation or invoice and/or in these terms and conditions. Upon completion of the licensed use, User shall either secure a new permission for further use of the Work(s) or immediately cease any new use of the Work(s) and shall render inaccessible (such as by deleting or by removing or severing links or other locators) any further copies of the Work (except for copies printed on paper in accordance with this license and still in User's stock at the end of such period).
 - 3.4. In the event that the material for which a republication license is sought includes third party materials (such as photographs, illustrations, graphs, inserts and similar materials) which are identified in such material as having been used by permission, User is responsible for identifying, and seeking separate licenses (under this Service or otherwise) for, any of such third party materials; without a separate license, such third party materials may not be used.
 - 3.5. Use of proper copyright notice for a Work is required as a condition of any license granted under the Service. Unless otherwise provided in the Order Confirmation, a proper copyright notice will read substantially as follows: "Republished with permission of [Rightsholder's name], from [Work's title, author, volume, edition number and year of copyright]; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. " Such notice must be provided in a reasonably legible font size and must be placed either immediately adjacent to the Work as used (for example, as part of a by-line or footnote but not as a separate electronic link) or in the place where substantially all other credits or notices for the new work containing the republished Work are located. Failure to include the required notice results in loss to the Rightsholder and CCC, and the User shall be liable to pay liquidated damages for each such failure equal to twice the use fee specified in the Order Confirmation, in addition to the use fee itself and any other fees and charges specified.
 - 3.6. User may only make alterations to the Work if and as expressly set forth in the Order Confirmation. No Work may be used in any way that is defamatory, violates the rights of third parties (including such third parties' rights of copyright, privacy, publicity, or other tangible or intangible property), or is otherwise illegal, sexually explicit or obscene. In addition, User may not conjoin a Work with any other material that may result in damage to the reputation of the Rightsholder. User agrees to inform CCC if it becomes aware of any infringement of any rights in a Work and to cooperate with any reasonable request of CCC or the Rightsholder in connection therewith.
4. Indemnity. User hereby indemnifies and agrees to defend the Rightsholder and CCC, and their respective employees and directors, against all claims, liability, damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees and expenses, arising out of any use of a Work beyond the scope of the rights granted herein, or any use of a Work which has been altered in any unauthorized way by User, including claims of defamation or infringement of rights of copyright, publicity, privacy or other tangible or intangible property.
 5. Limitation of Liability. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CCC OR THE RIGHTSHOLDER BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION DAMAGES FOR LOSS OF BUSINESS PROFITS OR INFORMATION, OR FOR BUSINESS INTERRUPTION) ARISING OUT OF THE USE OR INABILITY TO USE A WORK, EVEN IF ONE OF THEM HAS BEEN ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES. In any event, the total liability of the Rightsholder and CCC (including their respective employees and directors) shall not exceed the total amount actually paid by User for this license. User assumes full liability for the actions and omissions of its principals, employees, agents, affiliates, successors and assigns.
 6. Limited Warranties. THE WORK(S) AND RIGHT(S) ARE PROVIDED "AS IS". CCC HAS THE RIGHT TO GRANT TO USER THE RIGHTS GRANTED IN THE ORDER CONFIRMATION DOCUMENT. CCC AND THE RIGHTSHOLDER DISCLAIM ALL OTHER WARRANTIES RELATING TO THE WORK(S) AND RIGHT(S), EITHER EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. ADDITIONAL RIGHTS MAY BE REQUIRED TO USE ILLUSTRATIONS, GRAPHS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ABSTRACTS, INSERTS OR OTHER PORTIONS OF THE WORK (AS OPPOSED TO THE ENTIRE WORK) IN A MANNER CONTEMPLATED BY USER; USER UNDERSTANDS AND AGREES THAT NEITHER CCC NOR THE RIGHTSHOLDER MAY HAVE SUCH ADDITIONAL RIGHTS TO GRANT.
 7. Effect of Breach. Any failure by User to pay any amount when due, or any use by User of a Work beyond the scope of the license set forth in the Order Confirmation and/or these terms and conditions, shall be a material breach of the license created by the Order Confirmation and these terms and conditions. Any breach not cured within 30 days of written notice thereof shall result in immediate termination of such license without further notice. Any unauthorized (but licensable) use of a Work that is terminated immediately upon notice thereof may be liquidated by payment of the Rightsholder's ordinary license price therefor; any unauthorized (and unlicensable) use that is not terminated immediately for any reason (including, for example, because materials containing the Work cannot reasonably be recalled) will be subject to all remedies available at law or in equity, but in no event to a payment of less than three times the Rightsholder's ordinary license price for the most closely analogous licensable use plus Rightsholder's and/or CCC's costs and expenses incurred in collecting such payment.
 8. Miscellaneous.
 - 8.1. User acknowledges that CCC may, from time to time, make changes or additions to the Service or to these terms and conditions, and CCC reserves the right to send notice to the User by electronic mail or otherwise for the purposes of notifying User of such changes or additions; provided that any such changes or additions shall not apply to permissions already secured and paid for.
 - 8.2. Use of User-related information collected through the Service is governed by CCC's privacy policy, available online here: <https://marketplace.copyright.com/rs-ui-web/mp/privacy-policy>
 - 8.3. The licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation is personal to User. Therefore, User may not assign or transfer to any other person (whether a natural person or an organization of any kind) the license created by the Order Confirmation and these terms and conditions or any rights granted hereunder; provided, however, that User may assign such license in its entirety on written notice to CCC in the event of a transfer of all or substantially all of User's rights in the new material which includes the Work(s) licensed under this Service.
 - 8.4. No amendment or waiver of any terms is binding unless set forth in writing and signed by the parties. The Rightsholder and CCC hereby object to any terms contained in any writing prepared by the User or its principals, employees, agents or affiliates and purporting to govern or otherwise relate to the licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation, which terms are in any way inconsistent with any terms set forth in the Order Confirmation and/or in these terms and conditions or CCC's standard operating procedures, whether such writing is prepared prior to, simultaneously with or subsequent to the Order Confirmation, and whether such writing appears on a copy of the Order Confirmation or in a separate instrument.
 - 8.5. The licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation document shall be governed by and construed under the law of the State of New York, USA, without regard to the principles thereof of conflicts of law. Any case, controversy, suit, action, or proceeding arising out of, in connection with, or related to such licensing transaction shall be brought, at CCC's sole discretion, in any federal or state court located in the County of New York, State of New York, USA, or in any federal or state court whose geographical jurisdiction covers the location of the Rightsholder set forth in the Order Confirmation. The parties expressly submit to the personal jurisdiction and venue of each such federal or state court. If you have any comments or questions about the Service or Copyright Clearance Center, please contact us at 978-750-8400 or send an e-mail to support@copyright.com.

Permission for Figure 2.2 Wilber's The Four Quadrants in Humans

The Permissions Company LLC

July 29, 2021

Stacey Guenther

Dear Ms Guenther:

Thank you for your request for permission to reprint Figure 20: "The Four Quadrants in Humans" from Ken Wilber, *The Integral Vision* (Boston: Shambhala, 2008), page 180 in your doctoral dissertation tentatively titled "A Phenomenological Inquiry into Group Beingness" for Antioch University.

This letter will grant you permission to use the material as requested in your dissertation and in all copies to meet university requirements, including ProQuest/University Microfilms edition and other dissertation repositories and archives. You must credit our work as the source of the material, and you must re-apply if your dissertation is later published.

You should use a standard credit for the figure to indicate that it is from our work. Our suggested credit line is below.

Thank you for your interest in Shambhala Publications.

Sincerely,

Frederick T. Courtright, President
The Permissions Company, LLC
Rights Agency for Shambhala Publications, Inc.

Credit: From *The Integral Vision: A Very Short Introduction to the Revolutionary Integral Approach to Life, God, the Universe, and Everything* by Ken Wilber. Copyright © 2007 by Ken Wilber. Reprinted by arrangement with The Permissions Company, LLC on behalf of Shambhala Publications Inc., Boulder, Colorado, www.shambhala.com.

Permission for Figure 2.3 Holman's The Nature of Emergence



This is a License Agreement between Stacey Guenther ("User") and Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") on behalf of the Rightsholder identified in the order details below. The license consists of the order details, the CCC Terms and Conditions below, and any Rightsholder Terms and Conditions which are included below. All payments must be made in full to CCC in accordance with the CCC Terms and Conditions below.

Order Date	24-Jul-2021	Type of Use	Republish in a thesis/dissertation
Order License ID	1135628-1	Publisher	Berrett-Koehler Publishers
ISBN-13	9781605095219	Portion	Chart/graph/table/figure

LICENSED CONTENT

Publication Title	Engaging emergence : turning upheaval into opportunity	Country	United States of America
Author/Editor	Holman, Peggy	Rightsholder	Berrett-Koehler Publishers
Date	01/01/2010	Publication Type	Book
Language	English		

REQUEST DETAILS

Portion Type	Chart/graph/table/figure	Distribution	Worldwide
Number of charts / graphs / tables / figures requested	1	Translation	Original language of publication
Format (select all that apply)	Electronic	Copies for the disabled?	No
Who will republish the content?	Academic institution	Minor editing privileges?	No
Duration of Use	Life of current edition	Incidental promotional use?	No
Lifetime Unit Quantity	Up to 499	Currency	USD
Rights Requested	Main product		

NEW WORK DETAILS

Title	TBD / A Phenomenological Inquiry into Beingness	Institution name	Antioch University
Instructor name	Steve Shaw	Expected presentation date	2021-12-15

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Order reference number	N/A	The requesting person / organization to appear on the license	Stacey Guenther
------------------------	-----	---	-----------------

REUSE CONTENT DETAILS

Title, description or numeric reference of the portion(s)	The Nature of Emergence (figure)	Title of the article/chapter the portion is from	Part II: The Nature of Emergence
Editor of portion(s)	N/A	Author of portion(s)	Holman, Peggy
Volume of serial or monograph	N/A	Issue, if republishing an article from a serial	N/A
Page or page range of portion	15	Publication date of portion	2010-01-01

RIGHTSHOLDER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

When you are seeking permissions to republish a poem, please select image/photo to specify the type of content you would like to use.

CCC Terms and Conditions

1. Description of Service; Defined Terms. This Republication License enables the User to obtain licenses for republication of one or more copyrighted works as described in detail on the relevant Order Confirmation (the "Work(s)"). Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") grants licenses through the Service on behalf of the rightsholder identified on the Order Confirmation (the "Rightsholder"). "Republication", as used herein, generally means the inclusion of a Work, in whole or in part, in a new work or works, also as described on the Order Confirmation. "User", as used herein, means the person or entity making such republication.
2. The terms set forth in the relevant Order Confirmation, and any terms set by the Rightsholder with respect to a particular Work, govern the terms of use of Works in connection with the Service. By using the Service, the person transacting for a republication license on behalf of the User represents and warrants that he/she/it (a) has been duly authorized by the User to accept, and hereby does accept, all such terms and conditions on behalf of User, and (b) shall inform User of all such terms and conditions. In the event such person is a "freelancer" or other third party independent of User and CCC, such party shall be deemed jointly a "User" for purposes of these terms and conditions. In any event, User shall be deemed to have accepted and agreed to all such terms and conditions if User republishes the Work in any fashion.
3. Scope of License; Limitations and Obligations.
 - 3.1. All Works and all rights therein, including copyright rights, remain the sole and exclusive property of the Rightsholder. The license created by the exchange of an Order Confirmation (and/or any invoice) and payment by User of the full amount set forth on that document includes only those rights expressly set forth in the Order Confirmation and in these terms and conditions, and conveys no other rights in the Work(s) to User. All rights not expressly granted are hereby reserved.
 - 3.2. General Payment Terms: You may pay by credit card or through an account with us payable at the end of the month. If you and we agree that you may establish a standing account with CCC, then the following terms apply: Remit Payment to: Copyright Clearance Center, 29118 Network Place, Chicago, IL 60673-1291. Payments Due: Invoices are payable upon their delivery to you (or upon our notice to you that they are available to you for downloading). After 30 days, outstanding amounts will be subject to a service charge of 1-1/2% per month or, if less, the maximum rate allowed by applicable law. Unless otherwise specifically set forth in the Order Confirmation or in a separate written agreement signed by CCC, invoices are due and payable on "net 30" terms. While User may exercise the rights licensed immediately upon issuance of the Order Confirmation, the license is automatically revoked and is null and void, as if it had never been issued, if complete payment for the license is not received on a timely basis either from User directly or through a payment agent, such as a credit card company.

- 3.3. Unless otherwise provided in the Order Confirmation, any grant of rights to User (i) is "one-time" (including the editions and product family specified in the license), (ii) is non-exclusive and non-transferable and (iii) is subject to any and all limitations and restrictions (such as, but not limited to, limitations on duration of use or circulation) included in the Order Confirmation or invoice and/or in these terms and conditions. Upon completion of the licensed use, User shall either secure a new permission for further use of the Work(s) or immediately cease any new use of the Work(s) and shall render inaccessible (such as by deleting or by removing or severing links or other locators) any further copies of the Work (except for copies printed on paper in accordance with this license and still in User's stock at the end of such period).
- 3.4. In the event that the material for which a republication license is sought includes third party materials (such as photographs, illustrations, graphs, inserts and similar materials) which are identified in such material as having been used by permission, User is responsible for identifying, and seeking separate licenses (under this Service or otherwise) for, any of such third party materials; without a separate license, such third party materials may not be used.
- 3.5. Use of proper copyright notice for a Work is required as a condition of any license granted under the Service. Unless otherwise provided in the Order Confirmation, a proper copyright notice will read substantially as follows: "Republished with permission of [Rightsholder's name], from [Work's title, author, volume, edition number and year of copyright]; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc." Such notice must be provided in a reasonably legible font size and must be placed either immediately adjacent to the Work as used (for example, as part of a by-line or footnote but not as a separate electronic link) or in the place where substantially all other credits or notices for the new work containing the republished Work are located. Failure to include the required notice results in loss to the Rightsholder and CCC, and the User shall be liable to pay liquidated damages for each such failure equal to twice the use fee specified in the Order Confirmation, in addition to the use fee itself and any other fees and charges specified.
- 3.6. User may only make alterations to the Work if and as expressly set forth in the Order Confirmation. No Work may be used in any way that is defamatory, violates the rights of third parties (including such third parties' rights of copyright, privacy, publicity, or other tangible or intangible property), or is otherwise illegal, sexually explicit or obscene. In addition, User may not conjoin a Work with any other material that may result in damage to the reputation of the Rightsholder. User agrees to inform CCC if it becomes aware of any infringement of any rights in a Work and to cooperate with any reasonable request of CCC or the Rightsholder in connection therewith.
4. Indemnity. User hereby indemnifies and agrees to defend the Rightsholder and CCC, and their respective employees and directors, against all claims, liability, damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees and expenses, arising out of any use of a Work beyond the scope of the rights granted herein, or any use of a Work which has been altered in any unauthorized way by User, including claims of defamation or infringement of rights of copyright, publicity, privacy or other tangible or intangible property.
5. Limitation of Liability. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CCC OR THE RIGHTSHOLDER BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION DAMAGES FOR LOSS OF BUSINESS PROFITS OR INFORMATION, OR FOR BUSINESS INTERRUPTION) ARISING OUT OF THE USE OR INABILITY TO USE A WORK, EVEN IF ONE OF THEM HAS BEEN ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES. In any event, the total liability of the Rightsholder and CCC (including their respective employees and directors) shall not exceed the total amount actually paid by User for this license. User assumes full liability for the actions and omissions of its principals, employees, agents, affiliates, successors and assigns.
6. Limited Warranties. THE WORK(S) AND RIGHT(S) ARE PROVIDED "AS IS". CCC HAS THE RIGHT TO GRANT TO USER THE RIGHTS GRANTED IN THE ORDER CONFIRMATION DOCUMENT. CCC AND THE RIGHTSHOLDER DISCLAIM ALL OTHER WARRANTIES RELATING TO THE WORK(S) AND RIGHT(S), EITHER EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. ADDITIONAL RIGHTS MAY BE REQUIRED TO USE ILLUSTRATIONS, GRAPHS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ABSTRACTS, INSERTS OR OTHER PORTIONS OF THE WORK (AS OPPOSED TO THE ENTIRE WORK) IN A MANNER CONTEMPLATED BY USER; USER UNDERSTANDS AND AGREES THAT NEITHER CCC NOR THE RIGHTSHOLDER MAY HAVE SUCH ADDITIONAL RIGHTS TO GRANT.
7. Effect of Breach. Any failure by User to pay any amount when due, or any use by User of a Work beyond the scope of the license set forth in the Order Confirmation and/or these terms and conditions, shall be a material breach of the license created by the Order Confirmation and these terms and conditions. Any breach not cured within 30 days of written notice thereof shall result in immediate termination of such license without further notice. Any unauthorized (but licensable) use of a Work that is terminated immediately upon notice thereof may be liquidated by payment of the Rightsholder's ordinary license price therefor; any unauthorized (and unlicensable) use that is not terminated immediately for any reason (including, for example, because materials containing the Work cannot reasonably be recalled) will be subject to all remedies available at law or in equity, but in no event to a payment of less than three times the Rightsholder's ordinary license price for the most closely analogous licensable use plus Rightsholder's and/or CCC's costs and expenses incurred in collecting such payment.
8. Miscellaneous.
- 8.1. User acknowledges that CCC may, from time to time, make changes or additions to the Service or to these terms and conditions, and CCC reserves the right to send notice to the User by electronic mail or otherwise for the purposes of notifying User of such changes or additions; provided that any such changes or additions shall not apply to permissions already secured and paid for.
- 8.2. Use of User-related information collected through the Service is governed by CCC's privacy policy, available online here: <https://marketplace.copyright.com/rs-ui-web/mp/privacy-policy>
- 8.3. The licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation is personal to User. Therefore, User may not assign or transfer to any other person (whether a natural person or an organization of any kind) the license created by the Order Confirmation and these terms and conditions or any rights granted hereunder; provided, however, that User may assign such license in its entirety on written notice to CCC in the event of a transfer of all or substantially all of User's rights in the new material which includes the Work(s) licensed under this Service.
- 8.4. No amendment or waiver of any terms is binding unless set forth in writing and signed by the parties. The Rightsholder and CCC hereby object to any terms contained in any writing prepared by the User or its principals, employees, agents or affiliates and purporting to govern or otherwise relate to the licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation, which terms are in any way inconsistent with any terms set forth in the Order Confirmation and/or in these terms and conditions or CCC's standard operating procedures, whether such writing is prepared prior to, simultaneously with or subsequent to the Order Confirmation, and whether such writing appears on a copy of the Order Confirmation or in a separate instrument.
- 8.5. The licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation document shall be governed by and construed under the law of the State of New York, USA, without regard to the principles thereof of conflicts of law. Any case, controversy, suit, action, or proceeding arising out of, in connection with, or related to such licensing transaction shall be brought, at CCC's sole discretion, in any federal or state court located in the County of New York, State of New York, USA, or in any federal or state court whose geographical jurisdiction covers the location of the Rightsholder set forth in the Order Confirmation. The parties expressly submit to the personal jurisdiction and venue of each such federal or state court. If you have any comments or questions about the Service or Copyright Clearance Center, please contact us at 978-750-8400 or send an e-mail to support@copyright.com.

Permission for Figure 2.4 Scharmer's The Complete U: Six Inflection Points



This is a License Agreement between Stacey K. Guenther ("User") and Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") on behalf of the Rightsholder identified in the order details below. The license consists of the order details, the CCC Terms and Conditions below, and any Rightsholder Terms and Conditions which are included below. All payments must be made in full to CCC in accordance with the CCC Terms and Conditions below.

Order Date	29-Nov-2021	Type of Use	Republish in a thesis/dissertation
Order License ID	1164908-1	Publisher	Berrett-Koehler Publishers
ISBN-13	9781626568006	Portion	Chart/graph/table/figure

LICENSED CONTENT

Publication Title	Theory U : Leading from the Future as It Emerges	Country	United States of America
Author/Editor	Scharmer, Otto	Rightsholder	Berrett-Koehler Publishers
Date	08/15/2016	Publication Type	e-Book
Language	English		

REQUEST DETAILS

Portion Type	Chart/graph/table/figure	Distribution	United States
Number of charts / graphs / tables / figures requested	1	Translation	Original language of publication
Format (select all that apply)	Electronic	Copies for the disabled?	No
Who will republish the content?	Academic institution	Minor editing privileges?	No
Duration of Use	Life of current and all future editions	Incidental promotional use?	No
Lifetime Unit Quantity	Up to 499	Currency	USD
Rights Requested	Main product		

NEW WORK DETAILS

Title	Figure 2.5: The Complete U: Six Inflection Points	Institution name	Antioch University
Instructor name	Stephen Shaw	Expected presentation date	2021-12-31

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Order reference number	N/A	The requesting person / organization to appear on the license	Stacey K. Guenther
------------------------	-----	---	--------------------

REUSE CONTENT DETAILS

Title, description or numeric reference of the portion(s)	Figure 2.5: The Complete U: Six Inflection Points	Title of the article/chapter the portion is from	Chapter 2: The Journey to "U"
Editor of portion(s)	n/a	Author of portion(s)	Scharmer, Otto
Volume of serial or monograph	n/a	Issue, if republishing an article from a serial	N/A
Page or page range of portion	38	Publication date of portion	2016-08-15

RIGHTSHOLDER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

When you are seeking permissions to republish a poem, please select image/photo to specify the type of content you would like to use.

CCC Terms and Conditions

1. Description of Service; Defined Terms. This Republication License enables the User to obtain licenses for republication of one or more copyrighted works as described in detail on the relevant Order Confirmation (the "Work(s)"). Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") grants licenses through the Service on behalf of the rightsholder identified on the Order Confirmation (the "Rightsholder"). "Republication", as used herein, generally means the inclusion of a Work, in whole or in part, in a new work or works, also as described on the Order Confirmation. "User", as used herein, means the person or entity making such republication.
2. The terms set forth in the relevant Order Confirmation, and any terms set by the Rightsholder with respect to a particular Work, govern the terms of use of Works in connection with the Service. By using the Service, the person transacting for a republication license on behalf of the User represents and warrants that he/she/it (a) has been duly authorized by the User to accept, and hereby does accept, all such terms and conditions on behalf of User, and (b) shall inform User of all such terms and conditions. In the event such person is a "freelancer" or other third party independent of User and CCC, such party shall be deemed jointly a "User" for purposes of these terms and conditions. In any event, User shall be deemed to have accepted and agreed to all such terms and conditions if User republishes the Work in any fashion.
3. Scope of License; Limitations and Obligations.
 - 3.1. All Works and all rights therein, including copyright rights, remain the sole and exclusive property of the Rightsholder. The license created by the exchange of an Order Confirmation (and/or any invoice) and payment by User of the full amount set forth on that document includes only those rights expressly set forth in the Order Confirmation and in these terms and conditions, and conveys no other rights in the Work(s) to User. All rights not expressly granted are hereby reserved.

- 3.2. General Payment Terms: You may pay by credit card or through an account with us payable at the end of the month. If you and we agree that you may establish a standing account with CCC, then the following terms apply: Remit Payment to: Copyright Clearance Center, 2918 Network Place, Chicago, IL 60673-1291. Payments Due: Invoices are payable upon their delivery to you (or upon our notice to you that they are available to you for downloading). After 30 days, outstanding amounts will be subject to a service charge of 1-1/2% per month or, if less, the maximum rate allowed by applicable law. Unless otherwise specifically set forth in the Order Confirmation or in a separate written agreement signed by CCC, invoices are due and payable on "net 30" terms. While User may exercise the rights licensed immediately upon issuance of the Order Confirmation, the license is automatically revoked and is null and void, as if it had never been issued, if complete payment for the license is not received on a timely basis either from User directly or through a payment agent, such as a credit card company.
- 3.3. Unless otherwise provided in the Order Confirmation, any grant of rights to User (i) is "one-time" (including the editions and product family specified in the license), (ii) is non-exclusive and non-transferable and (iii) is subject to any and all limitations and restrictions (such as, but not limited to, limitations on duration of use or circulation) included in the Order Confirmation or invoice and/or in these terms and conditions. Upon completion of the licensed use, User shall either secure a new permission for further use of the Work(s) or immediately cease any new use of the Work(s) and shall render inaccessible (such as by deleting or by removing or severing links or other locators) any further copies of the Work (except for copies printed on paper in accordance with this license and still in User's stock at the end of such period).
- 3.4. In the event that the material for which a republication license is sought includes third party materials (such as photographs, illustrations, graphs, inserts and similar materials) which are identified in such material as having been used by permission, User is responsible for identifying, and seeking separate licenses (under this Service or otherwise) for, any of such third party materials; without a separate license, such third party materials may not be used.
- 3.5. Use of proper copyright notice for a Work is required as a condition of any license granted under the Service. Unless otherwise provided in the Order Confirmation, a proper copyright notice will read substantially as follows: "Republished with permission of [Rightsholder's name], from [Work's title, author, volume, edition number and year of copyright]; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc." Such notice must be provided in a reasonably legible font size and must be placed either immediately adjacent to the Work as used (for example, as part of a by-line or footnote but not as a separate electronic link) or in the place where substantially all other credits or notices for the new work containing the republished Work are located. Failure to include the required notice results in loss to the Rightsholder and CCC, and the User shall be liable to pay liquidated damages for each such failure equal to twice the use fee specified in the Order Confirmation, in addition to the use fee itself and any other fees and charges specified.
- 3.6. User may only make alterations to the Work if and as expressly set forth in the Order Confirmation. No Work may be used in any way that is defamatory, violates the rights of third parties (including such third parties' rights of copyright, privacy, publicity, or other tangible or intangible property), or is otherwise illegal, sexually explicit or obscene. In addition, User may not conjoin a Work with any other material that may result in damage to the reputation of the Rightsholder. User agrees to inform CCC if it becomes aware of any infringement of any rights in a Work and to cooperate with any reasonable request of CCC or the Rightsholder in connection therewith.
4. Indemnity. User hereby indemnifies and agrees to defend the Rightsholder and CCC, and their respective employees and directors, against all claims, liability, damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees and expenses, arising out of any use of a Work beyond the scope of the rights granted herein, or any use of a Work which has been altered in any unauthorized way by User, including claims of defamation or infringement of rights of copyright, publicity, privacy or other tangible or intangible property.
5. Limitation of Liability. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CCC OR THE RIGHTSHOLDER BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION DAMAGES FOR LOSS OF BUSINESS PROFITS OR INFORMATION, OR FOR BUSINESS INTERRUPTION) ARISING OUT OF THE USE OR INABILITY TO USE A WORK, EVEN IF ONE OF THEM HAS BEEN ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES. In any event, the total liability of the Rightsholder and CCC (including their respective employees and directors) shall not exceed the total amount actually paid by User for this license. User assumes full liability for the actions and omissions of its principals, employees, agents, affiliates, successors and assigns.
6. Limited Warranties. THE WORK(S) AND RIGHT(S) ARE PROVIDED "AS IS". CCC HAS THE RIGHT TO GRANT TO USER THE RIGHTS GRANTED IN THE ORDER CONFIRMATION DOCUMENT. CCC AND THE RIGHTSHOLDER DISCLAIM ALL OTHER WARRANTIES RELATING TO THE WORK(S) AND RIGHT(S), EITHER EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. ADDITIONAL RIGHTS MAY BE REQUIRED TO USE ILLUSTRATIONS, GRAPHS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ABSTRACTS, INSERTS OR OTHER PORTIONS OF THE WORK (AS OPPOSED TO THE ENTIRE WORK) IN A MANNER CONTEMPLATED BY USER; USER UNDERSTANDS AND AGREES THAT NEITHER CCC NOR THE RIGHTSHOLDER MAY HAVE SUCH ADDITIONAL RIGHTS TO GRANT.
7. Effect of Breach. Any failure by User to pay any amount when due, or any use by User of a Work beyond the scope of the license set forth in the Order Confirmation and/or these terms and conditions, shall be a material breach of the license created by the Order Confirmation and these terms and conditions. Any breach not cured within 30 days of written notice thereof shall result in immediate termination of such license without further notice. Any unauthorized (but licensable) use of a Work that is terminated immediately upon notice thereof may be liquidated by payment of the Rightsholder's ordinary license price therefor; any unauthorized (and unlicensable) use that is not terminated immediately for any reason (including, for example, because materials containing the Work cannot reasonably be recalled) will be subject to all remedies available at law or in equity, but in no event to a payment of less than three times the Rightsholder's ordinary license price for the most closely analogous licensable use plus Rightsholder's and/or CCC's costs and expenses incurred in collecting such payment.
8. Miscellaneous.
- 8.1. User acknowledges that CCC may, from time to time, make changes or additions to the Service or to these terms and conditions, and CCC reserves the right to send notice to the User by electronic mail or otherwise for the purposes of notifying User of such changes or additions; provided that any such changes or additions shall not apply to permissions already secured and paid for.
- 8.2. Use of User-related information collected through the Service is governed by CCC's privacy policy, available online here: <https://marketplace.copyright.com/rs-ui-web/mp/privacy-policy>
- 8.3. The licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation is personal to User. Therefore, User may not assign or transfer to any other person (whether a natural person or an organization of any kind) the license created by the Order Confirmation and these terms and conditions or any rights granted hereunder; provided, however, that User may assign such license in its entirety on written notice to CCC in the event of a transfer of all or substantially all of User's rights in the new material which includes the Work(s) licensed under this Service.
- 8.4. No amendment or waiver of any terms is binding unless set forth in writing and signed by the parties. The Rightsholder and CCC hereby object to any terms contained in any writing prepared by the User or its principals, employees, agents or affiliates and purporting to govern or otherwise relate to the licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation, which terms are in any way inconsistent with any terms set forth in the Order Confirmation and/or in these terms and conditions or CCC's standard operating procedures, whether such writing is prepared prior to, simultaneously with or subsequent to the Order Confirmation, and whether such writing appears on a copy of the Order Confirmation or in a separate instrument.
- 8.5. The licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation document shall be governed by and construed under the law of the State of New York, USA, without regard to the principles thereof of conflicts of law. Any case, controversy, suit, action, or proceeding arising out of, in connection with, or related to such licensing transaction shall be brought, at CCC's sole discretion, in any federal or state court located in the County of New York, State of New York, USA, or in any federal or state court whose geographical jurisdiction covers the location of the Rightsholder set forth in the Order Confirmation. The parties expressly submit to the personal jurisdiction and venue of each such federal or state court. If you have any comments or questions about the Service or Copyright Clearance Center, please contact us at 978-750-8400 or send an e-mail to support@copyright.com.

Permission for Tables 2.1 Briskin et al.'s (2001) Findings and Table 6.1 Comparison of Findings



Gillian Gonda

RE: Permission to Reuse Concepts in Dissertation

To: Stacey Guenther

9:53 AM

Yes, please do, permission granted! Thank you Stacey, would love to see your final dissertation if you might share with us!

Gillian

Gillian K. Gonda ([she/her](#))
 Program Director for Movement Building
 Fetzer Institute
www.fetzer.org

“Love is the one ingredient that holds us all together” – John E. Fetzer

From: Stacey Guenther
Sent: Monday, December 13, 2021 12:10 PM
To: Gillian Gonda
Subject: Permission to Reuse Concepts in Dissertation

Dear Gillian,

I am a student at Antioch University, and I am writing a dissertation that fulfills the requirements of my doctoral studies. I am requesting permission to reuse the following content in my dissertation:

Data from the following publication and study presented as a table two times:

Briskin, A., Struff, C., Ott, J., & Potter, D. (2001). *Centered on the edge: Mapping a field of collective intelligence & spiritual wisdom (Study Supported by the Fetzer Institute)*. MorganPress.

You'll find a copy of the tables I have created and wish to use adapting Briskin et al.'s findings attached.

My dissertation will appear in the following places:

a. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. ProQuest is a Print on Demand Publisher

<http://www.proquest.com/products-services/pqdt.html>

b. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. OhioLINK ETD Center is an open

access archive <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>

c. AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive. AURA is an open access

archive. <https://aura.antioch.edu/>

Further, I request that permission not be time delimited. The dissertation will not be printed and will remain only an electronic document.

Sincerely,
 Stacey Guenther

Permission for Tables 2.2 Levi's (2003) Findings and Table 6.1 Comparison of Findings



Renee Levi

Re: Permission to Reuse Concepts in Dissertation

To: Stacey Guenther

5:06 PM

Very interesting at a glance, Tracy. I'll look at your comparison table more closely, it's a good summary.

You have my permission to use my work on an unlimited basis.

We can set up a time to talk too, whenever it's convenient for you after the first of the year. Just reach out when you're ready, it will be fun to hear more about your research and also how you plan to use your findings.

Happy holidays!

Renee Levi

On Dec 14, 2021, at 3:09 PM, Stacey Guenther

wrote:

<levi adapted tables.docx>

Permission for Figure 3.1 Hermeneutic Circle



This is a License Agreement between Stacey Guenther ("User") and Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") on behalf of the Rightsholder identified in the order details below. The license consists of the order details, the CCC Terms and Conditions below, and any Rightsholder Terms and Conditions which are included below.
All payments must be made in full to CCC in accordance with the CCC Terms and Conditions below.

Order Date	14-Dec-2021	Type of Use	Republish in a thesis/dissertation
Order License ID	1168691-1	Publisher	JOHN WILEY & SONS, INC.
ISSN	1935-262X	Portion	Excerpt (up to 400 words)

LICENSED CONTENT

Publication Title	Journal of leadership studies	Publication Type	e-Journal
Article Title	Leadership in a Constant Liminal Loop: How can i be Authentic when i don't know who i am?	Start Page	6
Author/Editor	University of Phoenix.School of Advanced Studies	End Page	14
Date	01/01/2007	Issue	3
Language	English	Volume	13
Country	United States of America	URL	http://www.interscience.wiley.com
Rightsholder	John Wiley & Sons - Books		

REQUEST DETAILS

Portion Type	Excerpt (up to 400 words)	Distribution	Worldwide
Number of excerpts	1	Translation	Original language of publication
Format (select all that apply)	Electronic	Copies for the disabled?	No
Who will republish the content?	Academic institution	Minor editing privileges?	No
Duration of Use	Life of current and all future editions	Incidental promotional use?	No
Lifetime Unit Quantity	Up to 499	Currency	USD
Rights Requested	Main product		

NEW WORK DETAILS

Title	From Me to We: A Phenomenological Inquiry into Group Beingness	Institution name	Antioch University
Instructor name	Donna Ladkin	Expected presentation date	2021-12-31

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

The requesting person / organization to appear on the license	Stacey Guenther
---	-----------------

REUSE CONTENT DETAILS

Title, description or numeric reference of the portion(s)	p. 10 The Hermeneutic Paradox	Title of the article/chapter the portion is from	Leadership in a Constant Liminal Loop: How can i be Authentic when i don't know who i am?
Editor of portion(s)	Donaldson, William; Harter, Nathan	Author of portion(s)	Donaldson, William; Harter, Nathan
Volume of serial or monograph	13	Publication date of portion	2019-11-14
Page or page range of portion	6-14		

RIGHTSHOLDER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

No right, license or interest in any trademark, trade name, service mark or other branding ("Marks") of WILEY or its licensors is granted hereunder, and you agree that you shall not assert any such right, license or interest with respect thereto. You may not alter, remove or suppress in any manner any copyright, trademark or other notices displayed by the Wiley material. This Agreement will be void if the Type of Use, Format, Circulation, or Requestor Type was misrepresented during the licensing process. In no instance may the total amount of Wiley Materials used in any Main Product, Compilation or Collective work comprise more than 5% (if figures/tables) or 15% (if full articles/chapters) of the (entirety of the) Main Product, Compilation or Collective Work. Some titles may be available under an Open Access license. It is the Licensors' responsibility to identify the type of Open Access license on which the requested material was published, and comply fully with the terms of that license for the type of use specified. Further details can be found on Wiley Online Library <http://olabout.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-410895.html>.

CCC Terms and Conditions

1. Description of Service; Defined Terms. This Reproduction License enables the User to obtain licenses for republication of one or more copyrighted works as described in detail on the relevant Order Confirmation (the "Work(s)"). Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") grants licenses through the Service on behalf of the rightsholder identified on the Order Confirmation (the "Rightsholder"). "Republishing", as used herein, generally means the inclusion of a Work, in whole or in part, in a new work or works, also as described on the Order Confirmation. "User", as used herein, means the person or entity making such republication.
2. The terms set forth in the relevant Order Confirmation, and any terms set by the Rightsholder with respect to a particular Work, govern the terms of use of Works in connection with the Service. By using the Service, the person transacting for a republication license on behalf of the User represents and warrants that he/she/it (a) has been duly authorized by the User to accept, and hereby does accept, all such terms and conditions on behalf of User, and (b) shall inform User of all such terms and conditions. In the event such person is a "freelancer" or other third party independent of User and CCC, such party shall be deemed jointly a "User" for purposes of these terms and conditions. In any event, User shall be deemed to have accepted and agreed to all such terms and conditions if User republishes the Work in any fashion.
3. Scope of License; Limitations and Obligations.
 - 3.1. All Works and all rights therein, including copyright rights, remain the sole and exclusive property of the Rightsholder. The license created by the exchange of an Order Confirmation (and/or any invoice) and payment by User of the full amount set forth on that document includes only those rights expressly set forth in the Order Confirmation and in these terms and conditions, and conveys no other rights in the Work(s) to User. All rights not expressly granted are hereby reserved.

- 3.2. General Payment Terms: You may pay by credit card or through an account with us payable at the end of the month. If you and we agree that you may establish a standing account with CCC, then the following terms apply: Remit Payment to: Copyright Clearance Center, 29118 Network Place, Chicago, IL 60673-1291. Payments Due: Invoices are payable upon their delivery to you (or upon our notice to you that they are available to you for downloading). After 30 days, outstanding amounts will be subject to a service charge of 1-1/2% per month or, if less, the maximum rate allowed by applicable law. Unless otherwise specifically set forth in the Order Confirmation or in a separate written agreement signed by CCC, invoices are due and payable on "net 30" terms. While User may exercise the rights licensed immediately upon issuance of the Order Confirmation, the license is automatically revoked and is null and void, as if it had never been issued, if complete payment for the license is not received on a timely basis either from User directly or through a payment agent, such as a credit card company.
- 3.3. Unless otherwise provided in the Order Confirmation, any grant of rights to User (i) is "one-time" (including the editions and product family specified in the license), (ii) is non-exclusive and non-transferable and (iii) is subject to any and all limitations and restrictions (such as, but not limited to, limitations on duration of use or circulation) included in the Order Confirmation or invoice and/or in these terms and conditions. Upon completion of the licensed use, User shall either secure a new permission for further use of the Work(s) or immediately cease any new use of the Work(s) and shall render inaccessible (such as by deleting or by removing or severing links or other locators) any further copies of the Work (except for copies printed on paper in accordance with this license and still in User's stock at the end of such period).
- 3.4. In the event that the material for which a republication license is sought includes third party materials (such as photographs, illustrations, graphs, inserts and similar materials) which are identified in such material as having been used by permission, User is responsible for identifying, and seeking separate licenses (under this Service or otherwise) for, any of such third party materials; without a separate license, such third party materials may not be used.
- 3.5. Use of proper copyright notice for a Work is required as a condition of any license granted under the Service. Unless otherwise provided in the Order Confirmation, a proper copyright notice will read substantially as follows: "Republished with permission of [Rightsholder's name], from [Work's title, author, volume, edition number and year of copyright]; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc." Such notice must be provided in a reasonably legible font size and must be placed either immediately adjacent to the Work as used (for example, as part of a by-line or footnote but not as a separate electronic link) or in the place where substantially all other credits or notices for the new work containing the republished Work are located. Failure to include the required notice results in loss to the Rightsholder and CCC, and the User shall be liable to pay liquidated damages for each such failure equal to twice the use fee specified in the Order Confirmation, in addition to the use fee itself and any other fees and charges specified.
- 3.6. User may only make alterations to the Work if and as expressly set forth in the Order Confirmation. No Work may be used in any way that is defamatory, violates the rights of third parties (including such third parties' rights of copyright, privacy, publicity, or other tangible or intangible property), or is otherwise illegal, sexually explicit or obscene. In addition, User may not conjoin a Work with any other material that may result in damage to the reputation of the Rightsholder. User agrees to inform CCC if it becomes aware of any infringement of any rights in a Work and to cooperate with any reasonable request of CCC or the Rightsholder in connection therewith.
4. Indemnity. User hereby indemnifies and agrees to defend the Rightsholder and CCC, and their respective employees and directors, against all claims, liability, damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees and expenses, arising out of any use of a Work beyond the scope of the rights granted herein, or any use of a Work which has been altered in any unauthorized way by User, including claims of defamation or infringement of rights of copyright, publicity, privacy or other tangible or intangible property.
5. Limitation of Liability. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CCC OR THE RIGHTSHOLDER BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION DAMAGES FOR LOSS OF BUSINESS PROFITS OR INFORMATION, OR FOR BUSINESS INTERRUPTION) ARISING OUT OF THE USE OR INABILITY TO USE A WORK, EVEN IF ONE OF THEM HAS BEEN ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES. In any event, the total liability of the Rightsholder and CCC (including their respective employees and directors) shall not exceed the total amount actually paid by User for this license. User assumes full liability for the actions and omissions of its principals, employees, agents, affiliates, successors and assigns.
6. Limited Warranties. THE WORK(S) AND RIGHT(S) ARE PROVIDED "AS IS". CCC HAS THE RIGHT TO GRANT TO USER THE RIGHTS GRANTED IN THE ORDER CONFIRMATION DOCUMENT. CCC AND THE RIGHTSHOLDER DISCLAIM ALL OTHER WARRANTIES RELATING TO THE WORK(S) AND RIGHT(S), EITHER EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. ADDITIONAL RIGHTS MAY BE REQUIRED TO USE ILLUSTRATIONS, GRAPHS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ABSTRACTS, INSERTS OR OTHER PORTIONS OF THE WORK (AS OPPOSED TO THE ENTIRE WORK) IN A MANNER CONTEMPLATED BY USER; USER UNDERSTANDS AND AGREES THAT NEITHER CCC NOR THE RIGHTSHOLDER MAY HAVE SUCH ADDITIONAL RIGHTS TO GRANT.
7. Effect of Breach. Any failure by User to pay any amount when due, or any use by User of a Work beyond the scope of the license set forth in the Order Confirmation and/or these terms and conditions, shall be a material breach of the license created by the Order Confirmation and these terms and conditions. Any breach not cured within 30 days of written notice thereof shall result in immediate termination of such license without further notice. Any unauthorized (but licensable) use of a Work that is terminated immediately upon notice thereof may be liquidated by payment of the Rightsholder's ordinary license price therefor; any unauthorized (and unlicensable) use that is not terminated immediately for any reason (including, for example, because materials containing the Work cannot reasonably be recalled) will be subject to all remedies available at law or in equity, but in no event to a payment of less than three times the Rightsholder's ordinary license price for the most closely analogous licensable use plus Rightsholder's and/or CCC's costs and expenses incurred in collecting such payment.
8. Miscellaneous.
- 8.1. User acknowledges that CCC may, from time to time, make changes or additions to the Service or to these terms and conditions, and CCC reserves the right to send notice to the User by electronic mail or otherwise for the purposes of notifying User of such changes or additions; provided that any such changes or additions shall not apply to permissions already secured and paid for.
- 8.2. Use of User-related information collected through the Service is governed by CCC's privacy policy, available online here: <https://marketplace.copyright.com/rs-ui-web/mp/privacy-policy>
- 8.3. The licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation is personal to User. Therefore, User may not assign or transfer to any other person (whether a natural person or an organization of any kind) the license created by the Order Confirmation and these terms and conditions or any rights granted hereunder; provided, however, that User may assign such license in its entirety on written notice to CCC in the event of a transfer of all or substantially all of User's rights in the new material which includes the Work(s) licensed under this Service.
- 8.4. No amendment or waiver of any terms is binding unless set forth in writing and signed by the parties. The Rightsholder and CCC hereby object to any terms contained in any writing prepared by the User or its principals, employees, agents or affiliates and purporting to govern or otherwise relate to the licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation, which terms are in any way inconsistent with any terms set forth in the Order Confirmation and/or in these terms and conditions or CCC's standard operating procedures, whether such writing is prepared prior to, simultaneously with or subsequent to the Order Confirmation, and whether such writing appears on a copy of the Order Confirmation or in a separate instrument.
- 8.5. The licensing transaction described in the Order Confirmation document shall be governed by and construed under the law of the State of New York, USA, without regard to the principles thereof of conflicts of law. Any case, controversy, suit, action, or proceeding arising out of, in connection with, or related to such licensing transaction shall be brought, at CCC's sole discretion, in any federal or state court located in the County of New York, State of New York, USA, or in any federal or state court whose geographical jurisdiction covers the location of the Rightsholder set forth in the Order Confirmation. The parties expressly submit to the personal jurisdiction and venue of each such federal or state court. If you have any comments or questions about the Service or Copyright Clearance Center, please contact us at 978-750-8400 or send an e-mail to support@copyright.com.

**Permission for the Swirl Graphic in Figure 3.1 Hermeneutic Circle and
Figure 5.3 Co-Sensing and for Icon Graphics in Figure 5.3 Co-sensing**

Shutterstock License Agreement(s)

Terms of Service

The current Terms of Service are printed below. To view previous versions of the Terms of Service, [click here](#).

Dear Shutterstock Customer:

The following Terms of Service ("TOS") is a legal agreement between you or the employer or other entity on whose behalf you are entering into this agreement ("you" or "Customer") and Shutterstock (as such term is defined in Part V Section 24 below) and sets forth the rights and obligations with respect to any Content licensed by you.

Please revisit this TOS when you purchase any Content licenses. Shutterstock reserves the right to modify the TOS at any time in its sole discretion. Prior to such changes becoming effective, Shutterstock will use reasonable efforts to notify you of any such change. Such notice may be made by email to the email address on file in your Shutterstock account, an announcement on this page, your login page, and/or by other means. Modifications to this TOS will only apply to prospective purchases (including any automated renewals). By licensing Content following any such modifications, you agree to be bound to the TOS as modified.

THIS IS A SINGLE SEAT LICENSE AUTHORIZING ONE NATURAL PERSON TO LICENSE, DOWNLOAD AND USE CONTENT. UNLESS YOU UPGRADE TO A "TEAM SUBSCRIPTION" OR "PREMIER PLATFORM" ACCOUNT, NO OTHER PERSONS (INCLUDING EMPLOYEES, CO-WORKERS OR INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS) MAY ACCESS YOUR ACCOUNT OR USE CONTENT LICENSED THROUGH YOUR ACCOUNT.

IF YOU PURCHASE A "TEAM SUBSCRIPTION" THE RIGHT TO LICENSE, DOWNLOAD AND USE CONTENT IS LIMITED TO THE NUMBER OF USERS PERMITTED BY THAT TEAM SUBSCRIPTION. SHUTTERSTOCK'S "PREMIER PLATFORM" GRANTS ACCESS AND USAGE RIGHTS TO UNLIMITED USERS AMONG OTHER ADDITIONAL RIGHTS.

If you require access and usage rights for more than one natural person, please contact Customer Service (Phone: Inside US 1-866-663-3954, Outside US 1-646-419-4452 Email: [Customer Support](#) or our [Premier Team](#)). For clarity, if a user is acting in an employment capacity, the employer will be deemed the licensee for the purposes of the license.

- "Content" means all content available for license from the Shutterstock website, including Images, Footage, Editorial, and Music (as defined herein.)
- "Footage" means any moving images, animations, films, videos or other audio/visual representations, video elements, visual effects elements, templates, graphics packs, and motion design projects excluding still images, recorded in any format.
- "Image(s)" means still photographs, vectors, drawings, graphics, and the like.
- "Music" means any musical compositions, master recordings, and any other recordings containing sounds or a series of sounds, in all formats, now known and hereinafter developed.
- "Editorial" means still photographs and footage appearing under the Editorial tab/section.
- "Visual Content" shall refer collectively to Editorial, Images, and Footage.

1. PART I – VISUAL CONTENT LICENSES

1.1 Shutterstock hereby grants you a non-exclusive, non-transferable right to use, modify (except as expressly prohibited herein) and reproduce Visual Content worldwide, in perpetuity, as expressly permitted by the applicable license and subject to the limitations set forth herein:

a. IMAGE LICENSES

- i. A STANDARD IMAGE LICENSE grants you the right to use Images:
 1. As a digital reproduction, including on websites, in online advertising, in social media, in mobile advertising, mobile "apps", software, e-cards, e-publications (e-books, e-magazines, blogs, etc.), email marketing and in online media (including on video-sharing services such as YouTube, Dailymotion, Vimeo, etc., subject to the budget limitations set forth in sub-section I.a.i.4 below);
 2. Printed in physical form as part of product packaging and labeling, letterhead and business cards, point of sale advertising, CD and DVD cover art, or in the advertising and copy of tangible media, including magazines, newspapers, and books provided no Image is reproduced more than 500,000 times in the aggregate;
 3. As part of an "Out-of-Home" advertising campaign, including on billboards, street furniture, etc., provided the intended audience for such campaign is less than 500,000 gross impressions.
 4. Incorporated into film, video, television series, advertisement, or other audio-visual productions for distribution in any medium now known or hereafter devised, without regard to audience size, provided the budget for any such production does not exceed USD \$10,000;
 5. For your own personal, non-commercial use (not for resale, download, distribution, or any commercial use of any kind)
- ii. AN ENHANCED IMAGE LICENSE grants you the right to use Images (which rights are in addition to 1-5 above and exclusive to Enhanced Image Licenses):
 1. In any manner permitted under a Standard Image License, without any limitation on the number of reproductions, impressions, or budget;
 2. Incorporated into merchandise intended for sale or promotional distribution (collectively "Merchandise"), including, without limitation, textiles, artwork, magnets, wall-art, calendars, toys, stationery, greeting cards, and any other physical reproduction for resale or distribution, provided that such Merchandise incorporates material creative or functional elements apart from the Image(s).
 3. In wall art (and without requiring further creative or functional elements) for decorative purposes in a commercial space owned by you or your client, and not for sale.
 4. Incorporated as elements of digital templates for sale or distribution.
- iii. If the Standard or Enhanced Image licenses do not grant the rights you require please contact Customer Service. (Phone: Inside US 1-866-663-3954, Outside US 1-646-419-4452 Email: [Customer Support](#))

b. FOOTAGE LICENSES

- i. A FOOTAGE USE LICENSE grants you the right to use Footage:
 1. in a multi-media production displayed or distributed via the web, on social media, using so-called "Apps", or as otherwise disseminated in accordance herewith (see restrictions for distribution limitations), provided the audience for such production does not exceed 500,000;
 2. in connection with a live performance, provided the audience for all such performances does not exceed 500,000 people;
 3. on websites.

- ii. If the Footage Use License does not grant the rights you require, please contact Customer Service. (Phone: Inside US 1-866-663-3954, Outside US 1-646-419-4452 Email: [Customer Support](#))
 - iii. [A FOOTAGE COMP LICENSE](#) grants you the right to use watermarked, low resolution Footage as a comp (the "Comp Footage") solely in test, sample, comp, or rough cut evaluation materials. Footage Comp Licenses do not permit you to display or distribute to the public or incorporate into any final materials any such Footage. Comp Footage can be edited, but you may not remove or alter the Shutterstock watermark. Comp Footage is available to license under the Footage Use License at the time it is downloaded as Comp Footage, but Shutterstock makes no guarantees and shall have no obligation to ensure that Comp Footage will be available for license at any time thereafter.
- c. EDITORIAL LICENSE
- i. [AN EDITORIAL LICENSE](#) grants you the right to make a single, editorial use of an item of Editorial content, which single use may be distributed worldwide, in perpetuity.
 - ii. A "single use" for the purposes of this license permits the use of Editorial content in a single context (i.e., a news story, blog post, page of a publication) a single time, provided you shall have the right to distribute that use in-context across unlimited mediums and distribution channels. For example, the use of Editorial content to illustrate a printed article, maybe reused on a blog, on social media, etc., provided it is in-context to the original printed article. Any use not in-context to the original printed article would require an additional license.
 - iii. An "editorial use" for the purposes of this license shall be a use made for descriptive purposes in a context that is newsworthy or of human interest and expressly excludes commercial uses such as advertising or merchandising.
 - iv. Any use of Editorial Content licensed hereunder is further subject to those express restrictions set forth in Part I, Section 4 (prohibiting any use distributed via broadcast/cable/OTT, on publication covers, and in print runs in excess of 500,000) as well as any "special restrictions" (e.g., geographical or industry-specific usage restrictions) indicated on the image detail page and/or included in the metadata attached to an item of Editorial Content.
 - v. All Editorial content shall be deemed "Editorial Use Only" for the purposes of this TOS.
 - vi. Not all Editorial content is available for license from the Shutterstock website, nor may it be available from all subscriptions. You understand that the Editorial content available for license can change at any time and you shall have no right to demand to license any particular item of Editorial content. If you want to license any Editorial content not available for license from the website, please contact Customer Service. (Phone: Inside US 1-866-663-3954, Outside US 1-646-419-4452 Email: [Customer Support](#))

1.2 RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF VISUAL CONTENT

YOU MAY NOT:

- a. Use Visual Content other than as expressly provided by the license you purchased with respect to such Visual Content.
- b. Portray any person depicted in Visual Content (a "Model") in a way that a reasonable person would find offensive, including but not limited to depicting a Model: a) in connection with pornography, "adult videos", adult entertainment venues, escort services, dating services, or the like; b) in connection with the advertisement or promotion of tobacco products; c) in a political context, such as the promotion, advertisement or endorsement of any party, candidate, or elected official, or in connection with any political policy or viewpoint; d) as suffering from, or medicating for, a physical or mental ailment; or e) engaging in immoral or criminal activities.
- c. Use any Visual Content in a pornographic, defamatory, or deceptive context, or in a manner that could be considered libelous, obscene, or illegal.
- d. Modify Visual Content designated "Editorial Use Only" in a manner that changes the context of what is depicted.
- e. Use Visual Content designated "Editorial Use Only" (including, but not limited to, Editorial content) for commercial purposes, including for reference, in any advertising, merchandise or other non-editorial contexts.

- f. Resell, redistribute, provide access to, share or transfer any Visual Content except as specifically provided herein. For example and not by way of limitation, the foregoing prohibits displaying Content as, or as part of, a "gallery" of content through which third parties may search and select from such content.
- g. Use Visual Content in a manner that infringes upon any third party's trademark or other intellectual property, or would give rise to a claim of deceptive advertising or unfair competition.
- h. Use any Visual Content (in whole or in part) as a trademark, service mark, logo, or other indication of origin, or as part thereof.
- i. Falsely represent, expressly or by way of reasonable implication, that any Visual Content was created by you or a person other than the copyright holder(s) of that Visual Content.

1.3 RESTRICTIONS SPECIFIC TO FOOTAGE

- a. Use any Footage in a multi-media production distributed via broadcast, cable network, OTT video service (e.g. Netflix, Hulu, Amazon), or in theaters.
- b. Use "stills" derived from Footage except solely in connection with the in-context marketing, promotion, and advertising of your derivative works incorporating Footage.

1.4 RESTRICTIONS SPECIFIC TO EDITORIAL

- a. Use any Editorial content in a multi-media production distributed via broadcast, cable network, OTT video service (e.g. Netflix, Hulu, Amazon), or in theaters, or in related promotional materials.
- b. Use any Editorial content on a publication cover, jacket, or other packaging related to the underlying use.
- c. Use any Editorial content in a publication with a print run in excess of 500,000 copies.

1.5 CREDIT AND COPYRIGHT NOTICES

- a. The use of Images and Footage in connection with news reporting, commentary, publishing, or any other "editorial" context, shall be accompanied by an adjacent credit to the Shutterstock contributor and to Shutterstock in substantially the following form:
"Name of Artist/Shutterstock.com"
- b. Editorial credits shall take the following form:
"Name of Artist / Agency / Shutterstock"
- c. If and where commercially reasonable, the use of Images or Footage in Merchandise or an audio-visual production shall be accompanied by a credit to Shutterstock in substantially the following form:
"Image(s) or Footage (as applicable), used under license from Shutterstock.com"
- d. Credit attributions are not required in connection with any other use of Footage or Images unless another stock content provided is afforded credit in connection with the same use. For clarity, attribution is always required for Editorial content.
- e. In all cases the credit and attribution shall be of such size, color and prominence so as to be clearly and easily readable by the unaided eye.

2. PART II - MUSIC LICENSES

2.1 "Production" means all versions of a single audio-visual project or all versions of a single audio-only project in which Music is synchronized to narration in the context of a podcast episode, radio documentary, radio advertisement, or other similar audio-only production.

2.2 MUSIC LICENSES

Shutterstock grants you a non-exclusive, non-transferable right to synchronize Music in a Production, which Production may be distributed worldwide, in perpetuity, pursuant to the license you purchase (from among the two license types set forth below), and subject to the restrictions set forth in Part II Section 3 hereof:

- a. **STANDARD MUSIC LICENSE:** A Standard Music License grants you the non-exclusive right to synchronize Music in a Production (and in in-context trailers and promotional materials), distributed via web based-viewing platforms or used in non-web based "industrial" contexts, which include trade shows, conferences, corporate Events, internal corporate Use, and point of sale.

- b. **ENHANCED MUSIC LICENSE:** An Enhanced Music License grants you the non-exclusive right to synchronize Music in a Production (and in-context trailers and promotions therefor), solely subject to the restrictions set forth in Part II Section 3 hereof.
- c. **COMP MUSIC LICENSE:** A Comp Music License grants you the right to synchronize watermarked Music solely in test, sample, comp, or rough cut evaluation materials related to a Production. The Comp Music License expressly prohibits distributing Music to the public in any form or incorporating Music into any final materials. You may not remove or alter the Shutterstock watermark from Music under any circumstances

2.3 RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF MUSIC.

YOU MAY NOT:

- a. Sub-license, re-sell, rent, lend, assign, gift or otherwise transfer or distribute to any third-party the Music or the right to use the Music separate and apart from the Production in which (pursuant to your license) it is embodied;
- b. Resell, redistribute, provide access to, share or transfer any Music except as specifically provided herein;
- c. Manufacture, distribute, sell or otherwise exploit "records", CDs, mp3s or any other audio product embodying sound alone which incorporates Music, other than an audio-only Production expressly described in the definition of "Production" above. For the purpose of this sub-section the term "records" means all forms of reproductions, whether now known or hereafter devised, manufacture or distributed primary for home use, school use, or juke box use, embodying sound alone (excluding synchronized material);
- d. Use the Music in connection with other material that is pornographic, defamatory, libelous, obscene, immoral, illegal or that otherwise violates any right(s) of any third party(ies);
- e. Violate export laws, restrictions or regulations, by shipping, transferring or exporting Music into any country in violation of any export laws, restrictions or regulation;
- f. Use, sell, sublicense, reproduce, distribute, display, incorporate into or otherwise make Music, in whole or in part, available as, or as part of, production library content, or downloadable files or include the Music or any derivative work incorporating the Music in any other stock product, library, or collection;
- g. Remix, mashup, or otherwise alter the Music, except that you may engage in basic editing of the Music (e.g., setting start/stop points, determining fade-in/fade-out points, etc.) in connection with the exercise of the license granted under this agreement;
- h. Use Music in an audio-only Production in which music is the primary content.

2.4 Except for that Music designated "PRO-free," in the event any public performance licenses are required in connection with your use of the Music authorized under this TOS, you shall be responsible for obtaining such licenses at your sole expense. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this TOS: (a) in the event the laws of any jurisdiction require that, in order to avoid infringement or the violation of any third party rights, licenses be obtained from collection societies or similar entities for or in connection with activities otherwise authorized under this TOS, you shall be responsible for obtaining and paying for such licenses at your sole expense; and (b) this agreement does not include any so-called "moral rights" or like rights. You will file complete and accurate "cue sheets" with the appropriate Performing Rights Organization(s) and furnish a copy of each such cue sheet to Shutterstock via email to cuesheets@shutterstock.com. This obligation shall apply to all Music except that Music designated "PRO-free."

2.5 You may publish Productions incorporating Music on third party "user-generated" content distribution platforms (e.g., YouTube) (each a "UGC Platform"). You may not claim ownership of the Music or otherwise register any Music with any UGC Platform even as synchronized with your own Production. If you become aware that any third party claims any ownership interests in any Music, you agree to promptly notify Shutterstock of each such claim.

2.6 When incorporating the Music in the type of Production in which copyright attribution is customary, you shall provide credit in substantially the following form:

"[Music Title] performed by [Artist], used under license from Shutterstock"

3. PART III - WARRANTIES AND REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Shutterstock warrants and represents that:

- a. Shutterstock's contributors have granted Shutterstock all necessary rights in and to the Content to grant the rights set forth in Part I or Part II as applicable.
- b. Footage and Images in its original unaltered form and used in full compliance with this TOS and applicable law, will not: i) infringe any copyright, trademark or other intellectual property right; ii) violate any third parties' rights of privacy or publicity; iii) violate any US law, statute, ordinance, or regulation; or iv) be defamatory, libelous, pornographic or obscene.
- c. Editorial content in the original unaltered form and used in full compliance with this TOS and applicable law, will not infringe a third party's copyright, it being understood that the foregoing warranty does not apply to elements depicted in the Editorial content.

3.2 While Shutterstock makes commercially reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy of keywords and descriptions, as well as the integrity of Visual Content designated "Editorial Use Only", SHUTTERSTOCK MAKES NO WARRANTIES AND/OR REPRESENTATIONS REGARDING ANY: I) KEYWORD, TITLES OR DESCRIPTIONS; OR II) AUDIO IN FOOTAGE. For the sake of clarity, Shutterstock will not indemnify or have any liability in respect of any claims arising from inaccurate keyword, titles or descriptions, any audio in Footage.

3.3 SHUTTERSTOCK MAKES NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WHATSOEVER OTHER THAN THOSE EXPRESSLY MADE IN THIS "WARRANTIES AND REPRESENTATIONS" SECTION.

4. PART IV - INDEMNIFICATION AND LIABILITY

4.1 Subject to the terms hereof, and provided that you have not breached the terms of this or any other agreement with Shutterstock, Shutterstock will defend, indemnify, and hold you harmless up to the applicable "Limit of Liability" set forth below. Such indemnification is solely limited to Customer's direct damages arising from a third-party claim directly attributable to Shutterstock's breach of the express warranties and representations made in Part III hereof, together with associated expenses (including reasonable attorneys' fees). Indemnification is conditioned upon you notifying Shutterstock, in writing, of any such claim or threatened claim, no later than five (5) business days from the date you know or reasonably should have known of the claim or threatened claim. Such notification must include all details of the claim then known to you (e.g., the use of Content at issue, the name and contact information of the person and/or entity making the claim, copies of any correspondence received and/or sent in connection with the claim). The notification must be emailed to Shutterstock at legal-notices@shutterstock.com, with a hard copy to Shutterstock, 350 5th Avenue, 21st Floor, New York, New York, 10118, Attention: General Counsel, via certified mail, return receipt requested; or ii) overnight courier, recipient's signature required. Shutterstock shall have the right to assume the handling, settlement or defense of any claim or litigation to which this indemnification applies. You agree to cooperate with Shutterstock in the defense of any such claim and shall have the right to participate in any litigation at your own expense. You agree that Shutterstock is not liable for any legal fees and/or other costs incurred by you or on your behalf prior to Shutterstock having a reasonable opportunity to analyze such claim's validity.

4.2 Shutterstock shall not be liable for any damages, costs or losses arising as a result of modifications made to the Content or due to the context in which you use the Content.

4.3 Limits of Liability: Shutterstock's total maximum aggregate obligation and liability (the "Limit of Liability") arising out of each of Customer's:

1. Standard Image Licenses shall be USD \$10,000.
2. Enhanced Image Licenses shall be USD \$250,000.
3. Footage Use Licenses shall be USD \$10,000.
4. Editorial Licenses shall be USD \$25,000.
5. Standard or Enhanced Music Licenses shall be USD \$10,000.

If you have questions about the foregoing, please contact Customer Service. (Phone: Inside US 1-866-663-3954, Outside US 1-646-419-4452 Email: [Customer Support](#))

4.4 You will indemnify and hold Shutterstock, its officers, employees, shareholders, directors, managers, members and suppliers, harmless against any damages or liability of any kind arising from any use of the Visual Content other than the uses expressly permitted by this TOS. You further agree to indemnify Shutterstock for all costs and expenses that Shutterstock incurs in the event that you breach any of the terms of this or any other agreement with Shutterstock.

5. PART V - ADDITIONAL TERMS

5.1 Except when required by law, Shutterstock shall be under no obligation to issue refunds under any circumstances. All fees are non-refundable, even if your subscription is terminated before its expiration. You authorize Shutterstock to charge you all subscription fees for the duration of the term agreed to at the time of purchase. In the event that Shutterstock determines that you are entitled to a refund of all or part of the fees you paid, such refund shall be made using the payment method originally used by you to make your purchase. If you reside in the European Union and you cancel your account within fourteen (14) days of making payment to Shutterstock, provided that you have not yet downloaded or licensed any Visual Content, Shutterstock, will refund the payment made by you in connection with such cancelled account. To cancel your account, *please contact Customer Service. (Phone: Inside US 1-866-663-3954, Outside US 1-646-419-4452 Email: [Customer Support](#)).*

5.2 Following the expiration of your subscription plan, such plan will automatically renew on the same terms as your original plan purchase. You can disable automatic renewal at any time prior to renewal using your account settings. You expressly grant Shutterstock the right to charge you for each automatic renewal until you timely disable automatic renewal.

5.3 If Shutterstock is required to collect indirect and/or transactional taxes (such as sales tax, value-added tax, goods and services tax, et al) under the laws of your state or country of residence, you shall be liable for payment of any such indirect tax. Where Shutterstock or you are required to collect or remit direct or indirect taxes, you may be required to self-assess said tax under the applicable laws of your country of residence.

5.4 "Non-transferable" as used herein means that except as specifically provided in this TOS, you may not sell, rent, load, give, sublicense, or otherwise transfer to anyone, Content or the right to use Content. You may however, make a one-time transfer of Content to a third party for the sole purpose of causing such third party to print and/or manufacture your goods incorporating Content subject to the terms and conditions herein. If you become aware that any social media website uses any Content in a manner that exceeds your license hereunder, you agree to remove all derivative works incorporating Content from such Social Media Site, and to promptly notify Shutterstock of each such social media website's use. You agree to take all commercially reasonable steps to prevent third parties from duplicating any Content. If you become aware of any unauthorized duplication of any Content please notify us via email at support@shutterstock.com.

5.5 Upon notice from Shutterstock or if you learn that any Content is subject to a threatened or actual claim of infringement, violation of another right, or any other claim for which Shutterstock may be liable, or if Shutterstock removes any Content due to perceived business risk as determined in Shutterstock's reasonable discretion and gives you notice of such removal, you will remove the Content from your computer systems and storage devices (electronic or physical) and, if possible, cease any future use of the removed Content at your own expense. Shutterstock shall provide you with comparable Content (which comparability will be determined by Shutterstock in its reasonable commercial judgment) free of charge, but subject to the terms and conditions of this TOS.

5.6 If you use any Content as part of work product created for or delivered to a client or customer, you will disclose the identities of such clients or customers to Shutterstock, upon Shutterstock's reasonable request.

5.7 Arbitration.

1. Any controversy or claim arising out of or relating to this TOS, or the breach thereof, shall be settled by binding individual (not class) arbitration administered under the Commercial Arbitration Rules of the American Arbitration Association or of the International Centre for Dispute Resolution in effect on the date of the commencement of arbitration, rather than in court, and judgment on the award rendered by the arbitrator(s) may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof or having jurisdiction over the relevant party or its assets. The place of arbitration shall be the state and county of New York. The language of the arbitration shall be English. There shall be one arbitrator to be mutually agreed by the parties. Each party shall bear its own costs in the arbitration. Both parties agree that the following claims are exceptions to the Arbitration Agreement and will be brought in a judicial proceeding in a court of competent jurisdiction: (i) any claim related to actual or threatened infringement, misappropriation or violation of a party's copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, patents, or other intellectual property rights; (ii) any claim seeking emergency injunctive relief based on exigent circumstances (e.g., imminent danger or commission of a crime, hacking, cyber-attack) (iii) any claim arising solely from Customer's alleged failure to pay fees due to Shutterstock. This arbitration provision will survive termination of this TOS.

2. YOU AND SHUTTERSTOCK AGREE THAT EACH MAY BRING CLAIMS AGAINST THE OTHER ONLY IN YOUR OR ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY AND NOT AS A PLAINTIFF OR CLASS MEMBER IN ANY PURPORTED CLASS OR REPRESENTATIVE ACTION. Unless both you and Shutterstock agree, no arbitrator or judge may consolidate more than one person's claims or otherwise preside over any form of a representative or class proceeding. The arbitrator may award injunctive relief only in favor of the individual party seeking relief and only to the extent necessary to provide relief warranted by that party's individual claim. You and Shutterstock acknowledge and agree that we are each waiving the right to a trial by jury as to all arbitrable disputes under this TOS.
3. If a court decides that applicable law precludes enforcement of any of the limitations in this Part V, Section 7 as to a particular claim for relief, then that claim (and only that claim) must be severed from the arbitration and may be brought in court.

5.8 Neither party may assign this agreement, without the prior written approval of the other party, except that Shutterstock may assign this agreement to a subsidiary, an affiliated company within the Shutterstock group, the entity that results from a merger or other corporate reorganization involving Shutterstock, or an entity that acquires all or substantially all of Shutterstock's assets or capital stock.

5.9 This TOS shall be construed neither against nor in favor of any party, but rather in accordance with the fair meaning of the language hereof. This TOS is governed by and shall be construed in accordance with the laws of the applicable jurisdiction set forth in Section 5.24, without respect to its conflict of laws principles.

5.10 If you are entering into this TOS on behalf of your employer or other entity, you warrant and represent that you have the full right and authority to do so. In the event that you do not have such authority, you agree that you will be personally liable to Shutterstock for any breaches of the terms of this TOS. You hereby grant Shutterstock a worldwide, non-exclusive, limited license to use your trademarks in Shutterstock's promotional materials, including a public customer list. Shutterstock's use of your trademarks shall at all times conform to your then-current trademark use policies as made available to Shutterstock and shall at all times inure to your benefit. Shutterstock further agrees that it will use commercially reasonable efforts to terminate any particular use of your trademark no later than thirty (30) days from the date of receipt by Shutterstock of your email request to legal-notices@shutterstock.com.

5.11 The number of Content downloads available to you is determined by the product you purchase. For the purposes of this TOS, a day is defined as the twenty four (24) hour period beginning at the time your product is purchased. A month is defined as a calendar month beginning on and including the date that you purchase your product and ending on that date which is the earlier of (i) the same date as your purchase in the following month or (ii) the last day of the following month. By way of example, if you purchase a monthly subscription on March 5, it will renew on April 5. If you purchase a monthly subscription on August 31, your subscription will renew on September 30.

5.12 Unless otherwise specified in the coupon, any coupon or discount code applied to a purchase hereunder shall apply only to the first payment made in connection with such purchase.

5.13 If any individual term of this TOS is found to be invalid or unenforceable by any legal or regulatory body of competent jurisdiction, such finding will be limited solely to such invalid or unenforceable part, without affecting the remaining parts of such individual term, or any other part of this TOS, so that this TOS shall otherwise remain in full force and effect.

5.14 You expressly agree that any feedback provided to you by Shutterstock or its representatives regarding any questions you may have about this TOS or your use of Content licensed hereunder, is solely for the purpose of interpreting this TOS and is not legal advice. Shutterstock cannot render legal advice to you and expressly disclaims any liability of any kind related to any feedback provided by Shutterstock or its representatives.

5.15 It is expressly understood and agreed that this TOS is entered into solely for the mutual benefit of the parties herein and that no benefits, rights, duties, or obligations are intended by this TOS as to third parties.

5.16 In the event that you breach any of the terms of this or any other agreement with Shutterstock, Shutterstock shall have the right to terminate your account without further notice, in addition to Shutterstock's other rights at law and/or equity. Shutterstock shall be under no obligation to refund any fees paid by you in the event that your account is terminated by reason of a breach.

5.17 Except as expressly set forth in the applicable license and warranties sections herein, Shutterstock grants no rights and makes no further warranties. Shutterstock only has model or property releases where expressly indicated on the Shutterstock website.

5.18 Shutterstock's liability under any individual license purchased hereunder shall not exceed the "Limit of Liability" applicable to the license in effect at the time you know or should have known of the claim, and is without regard to the number of times the subject Content is licensed or used by you.

5.19 Except as specifically provided in Part IV hereof, in no event, will Shutterstock's total aggregate liability to you or any third party claiming through you, arising out of or in connection with your use of or inability to use the Shutterstock websites and/or Content contained thereon (whether in contract, tort or otherwise) exceed the monetary amount actually received by Shutterstock from you for the applicable Content license.

5.20 Neither Shutterstock nor any of its officers, employees, managers, members, shareholders, directors or suppliers shall be liable to you or to any other person or entity for any general, punitive, special, indirect, consequential or incidental damages, or lost profits or any other damages, costs or losses arising out of your use of the Content, Shutterstock's breach of this agreement, or otherwise, unless expressly provided for herein, even if Shutterstock has been advised of the possibility of such damages, costs or losses.

5.21 Except as expressly set forth in Part III, all Content is provided "as is" without warranty of any kind, either express or implied, including, but not limited to the implied warranties of non-infringement, merchantability, or fitness for a particular purpose. Some Content may contain elements that require additional clearance if the Content is modified or used in a particular context. If you make such modification or use Content in such context, you are solely responsible for obtaining any additional clearances thereby required.

5.22 Shutterstock does not warrant that the Content, Shutterstock websites, or other materials will meet your requirements or that use will be uninterrupted or error free. The entire risk as to the quality, performance and use of the Content is solely with you.

5.23 In the event that you use fraudulent credit card information to open an account or otherwise engage in any criminal activity affecting Shutterstock, Shutterstock will promptly file a complaint with www.ic3.gov, the internet crime complaint center, a partnership between the [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#) and the [National White Collar Crime Center](#).

5.24 Shutterstock contracting party and choice of law. Subscriptions and purchases initiated before March 15, 2021 are contracted with Shutterstock, Inc., including all subsequent installment payments and automatic renewals until cancelled. For new subscriptions and purchases initiated from March 15, 2021, your country of residence is the same as your billing address, as same is provided by you to Shutterstock in connection with your account.

Your Country of Residence	Shutterstock contracting party and "Shutterstock" hereunder	Choice of Law	Arbitration Location
United States, Canada, India, Brazil	Shutterstock, Inc. 350 Fifth Avenue, 21st Floor, New York, NY 10118, United States.	New York	New York County, New York
Rest of World	Shutterstock Ireland Ltd. 34-37 Clarendon St, 2nd floor, Dublin 2, D02 DE61, Ireland.	Ireland	Dublin, Ireland

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 15, 2021

Permission for Figure 4.2 Alex's Artwork

July 25, 2021

Stacey Guenther
PhD Candidate
Antioch University
Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Re: Inclusion of Photo in Dissertation

Dear Stacey,

As a participant in your dissertation research study, I hereby give you permission to include the artwork I created during your study in your dissertation. The photo is pasted below. I understand that you will blur out the quote included in the art for copyright purposes.

Because you are protecting my anonymity and confidentiality, I am not including my real name. Instead, I am signing this letter with the pseudonym you're using to refer to me in the dissertation.

Sincerely,

"Alex"



Permission for Figure 4.3 Dina's Artwork

July 22, 2021

Stacey Guenther
PhD Candidate
Antioch University
Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Re: Inclusion of Poem in Dissertation

Dear Stacey,

As a participant in your dissertation research study, I hereby give you permission to include my poem, Our Circle, in your dissertation. The poem is pasted below.

Because you are protecting my anonymity and confidentiality, I am not including my real name. Instead, I am signing this letter with the pseudonym you're using to refer to me in the dissertation.

Sincerely,

"Dina"



Permission for Figure 4.5 Bea Bea's Artwork

December 1, 2021

Stacey Guenther
PhD Candidate
Antioch University
Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Re: Inclusion of Artwork in Dissertation

Dear Stacey,

As a participant in your dissertation research study, I hereby give you permission to include my artwork, a PowerPoint slide that includes Autumn Sky's *Wisdom of the Ages*, in your dissertation. The artwork is pasted below.

Because you are protecting my anonymity and confidentiality, I am not including my real name. Instead, I am signing this letter with the pseudonym you're using to refer to me in the dissertation.

Sincerely,

"Bea Bea"





Autumn Skye ART

Re: Permission to use Art in Dissertation

To: Stacey Guenther

November 29, 2021 at 7:45 PM

Hello Stacey,

Thank you so much for reaching out and asking permission to use this image.

I realize that this response is quite tardy and that I may have missed this opportunity.

It really is an honour to be considered for your dissertation. If you haven't already done so, you would be more than welcome to use it and to please include a credit. And if not, then I do hope that your dissertation went well.

All the best,

Autumn Skye

Subscribe to my ART NEWSLETTER: <https://www.autumnskyeart.com/contact/>

Website: www.autumnskyeart.com

Facebook ART PAGE: www.facebook.com/pages/Autumn-Skye/145084220260

Etsy Shop: www.etsy.com/ca/shop/AutumnSkyeART?ref=shop_sugg

On Thu, Aug 12, 2021 at 10:54 AM Stacey Guenther

wrote:

Hello,

I am following up on the request outlined in the email below. Can you confirm receipt and provide an update on the status of my request?

Thanks,
Stacey

On Sat, Jul 24, 2021 at 1:56 PM Stacey Guenther ·

wrote:

To Whom it May Concern:

I am a student at Antioch University, and I am writing a dissertation that fulfills the requirements of my doctoral studies. I am requesting permission to reuse the following content in my dissertation:
An electronic version of Autumn Skye's piece, Wisdom of the Ages
You'll find a copy of what I am requesting to reuse attached to this email.

My dissertation will appear in the following places:

a. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. ProQuest is a Print on Demand Publisher

<http://www.proquest.com/products-services/pgdt.html>

b. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. OhioLINK ETD Center is an open

access archive <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>

c. AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive. AURA is an open access

archive. <https://aura.antioch.edu/>

I am requesting permission be granted that is not time limited.
Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Stacey Guenther



Permission for Figure 4.6 and 4.8 Katie's Artwork

July 31, 2021

Stacey Guenther
PhD Candidate
Antioch University
Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Re: Inclusion of Pictures in Dissertation

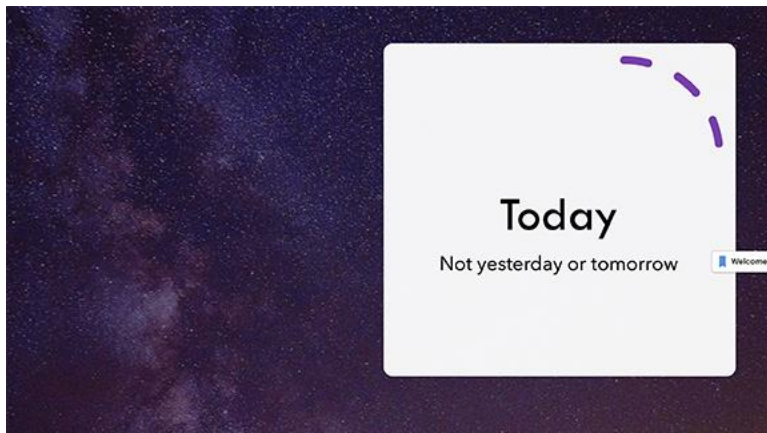
Dear Stacey,

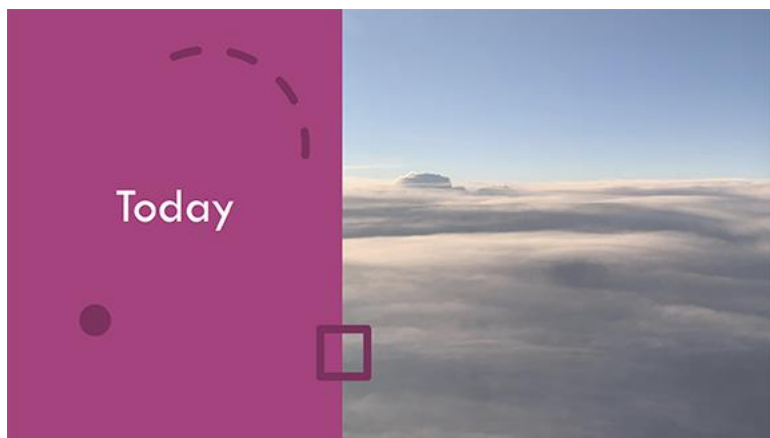
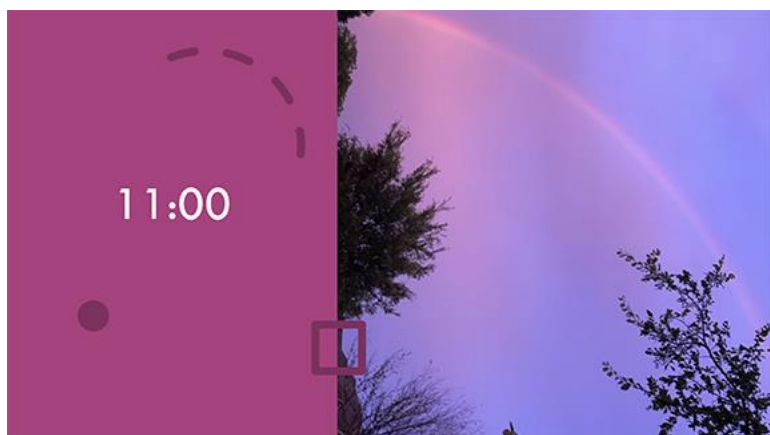
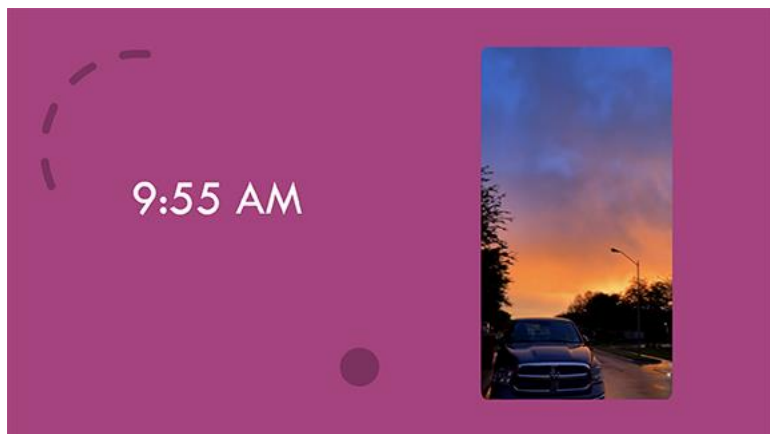
As a participant in your dissertation research study, I hereby give you permission to include my photos in your dissertation. The pictures and PowerPoint slides for which you have permission are pasted in below.

Because you are protecting my anonymity and confidentiality, I am not including my real name. Instead, I am signing this letter with the pseudonym you're using to refer to me in the dissertation.

Sincerely,

"Katie"





Permission for Figure 4.7 Ginger's Artwork

July 23, 2021

Stacey Guenther
PhD Candidate
Antioch University
Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Re: Inclusion of Artwork in Dissertation

Dear Stacey,

As a participant in your dissertation research study, I hereby give you permission to include my artwork, a drawing of a mandala and a screen capture of a flower, in your dissertation. The artwork is pasted below. I understand a screen capture (flower picture below) will be used in lieu of the movie that I shot.

Because you are protecting my anonymity and confidentiality, I am not including my real name. Instead, I am signing this letter with the pseudonym you're using to refer to me in the dissertation.

Sincerely,

"Ginger"



Permission for Figure 5.5 Monica's Artwork

July 22, 2021

Stacey Guenther
PhD Candidate
Antioch University
Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Re: Inclusion of Artwork and Essay in Dissertation

Dear Stacey,

As a participant in your dissertation research study, I hereby give you permission to include my artwork and excerpts from an essay I wrote in your dissertation. The painting for which you have permission is included below.

Because you are protecting my anonymity and confidentiality, I am not including my real name. Instead, I am signing this letter with the pseudonym you're using to refer to me in the dissertation.

Sincerely,

"Monica"

