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Meeting the Client Halfway: A Relational Revision to Account for Intra-Actions in Psychotherapeutic Space

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MEETING THE CLIENT HALFWAY:
A RELATIONAL REVISION TO ACCOUNT FOR INTRA-ACTIONS IN
PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC SPACE

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This dissertation, by Lara Pirro Jancetic, has
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ABSTRACT

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This post-qualitative study branching from new-materialist, post-humanist epistemology and ontology examines relationality through the lens of three different theories: agential realism, John Shotter's communication theory, and relational mindfulness. These theories each describe the dynamics involved in relationships, how they each make sense of these dynamics, and what they entail for human relations. Using a post-qualitative diffractive methodology, this study examines these theories and how they intersect to bring about new insights in our understanding of relationships and how this information can support therapy practice. The results are a series of nine principles of orientation, which were applied to marriage and family therapy and the therapeutic encounter. I conclude with a discussion on historical and current work in the field of MFT that connects to these ideas and the possibilities for future directions. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

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Thank you to God for the inspiration. That said, first and foremost, I would like to thank my parents for supporting me throughout my educational career. It's been a long journey that has culminated to this point. Academic paths that started in Rhode Island, then California, Mexico City, and finally here in New Hampshire. During my PhD, I met my spouse, got married, and had one child with the coming arrival of a second. I would like to thank my sister for supporting my journey, throughout these years, as well. This dissertation stems from a seed that was planted in my mind and heart many years ago. It evolved over the years as my own knowledge grew in various areas of life and as I grew. I am thankful for the authors I connected with and referenced in this work, and the words that came through me to explain, express, and create new meaning with these ideas. Thank you, Anthony, my husband whose help was invaluable, who not only understood these concepts, but supported me and the family as I worked hard to complete this step in my academic journey. Thank you to my son, Enzo, who inspires me each day to live out these visions I have for a compassionate new world. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Sheila McNamee, who wasn't just the voice for John Shotter, but whose own journey and work in human communication and at the Taos Institute leads the way in social constructionism and the movement for social change. Dr. Jonathan Wyatt, who joined this committee from Scotland, whose work is on the leading edge of new materialism; writing, teaching, counseling, and supervising from the 'posts' (i.e., post-humanist, post-structural, post-qualitative) perspectives, a leader in this new era. And, finally, Dr. Kevin Lyness, my dissertation chair, professor, and advisor, who supported me as I took him onto new territory with this work, and whose gentle and professional guidance brought me to this moment. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

The clinical practice of Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) is guided by one's philosophical assumptions. Theories into the nature of knowledge—epistemology, and theories on the nature of being—ontology, dictate our understanding of identity, subjectivity, relationality, and ethics, and these ideas direct our therapeutic encounters. As therapists, we position ourselves within practices that most reflect our defined principles of reality (Dickerson, 2010). Likewise, in our research, our particular paradigm or philosophy "shapes how we formulate our problem and research questions to study and how we seek information to answer the questions" (Creswell, 2013, p. 18); most often, these assumptions are enforced through the academic community. Dickerson (2010) identified three levels of epistemological theoretical assumptions within the field of MFT: individualizing, systems, and poststructural/social constructionist. Individualizing theories began with an essentialist, fixed structural view of reality; systems theories adopted a broad biopsychosocial systemic approach attending to sociocultural issues and intergenerational family patterns; and the poststructural/social constructionist theories moved from a fixed reality to a historically and culturally defined reality that is socially negotiated, emphasizing a collaborative meaning-making perspective (Dickerson, 2010). As the prevailing philosophies shifted from modern to postmodern, we have seen a movement in therapeutic practice to accompany that shift.

New Directions

This research study aims to expand the current MFT theoretical base through the addition of the emerging philosophical assumptions held by *new materialists*. Considered the *material turn*, this attention to matter and materiality (i.e., the quality of being material) is in recognition

to contemporary physics and biology, which has revealed that matter is not inert, but is a productive and contingent part of reality (Barad, 2007; Coole & Frost, 2010; Sencindiver, 2017). Matter understood in this way sheds light on the intricate and complex dynamics of *materialization* (i.e., the becoming of an event within physical reality) of everyday life; as *material* individuals in a *material* world, a revision of our understanding of agency and causality is required (Coole & Frost, 2010).

First thought of as something belonging to the human, associated with intentionality and will, agency is now understood as an *enactment* expressed by both humans and non-humans through the dynamics of materialization (Barad, 2007). Although this marks a shift from the postmodern *linguistic turn*, new materialists use insights from social constructionism within an ontology that recognizes a relational and emergent materiality to critically reevaluate boundary-making practices beyond human-centric cultural and historical representation (Coole & Frost, 2010). This renewed perspective takes a *performative, post-humanist* approach to knowing as practices of engagement *with* the world and in recognition of matter's dynamic and ontological inseparability (Barad, 2007).

Both ontologically and epistemologically different than prior philosophical assumptions, for this dissertation I draw on the work of new materialist, feminist physicist Karen Barad, who developed the theoretical framework *agential realism* using insights from quantum physics. Agential realism "introduces an altogether different understanding of dynamics. It is not merely that the form of the causal relations has been changed, but the very notions of causality, as well as agency, space, time, and matter, are all reworked" (Barad, 2007, p. 179). Barad's analysis of quantum physics concepts reveals a renewed perspective on our current grasp of reality with ethical implications.

Considered an 'onto-epistem-ology' Barad (2007) emphasizes the inseparability of *knowing-in-being* and further expands it toward an '*ethico*-onto-epistem-ology' that accounts for the new understanding of agency and the corresponding ethics it entails. Barad (2007) explains:

…ethico-onto-epistem-ology—an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being—since each intra-action [i.e., interaction] matters, since the possibilities for what the world may become call out in the pause that precedes each breath before a moment comes into being and the world is remade again, because the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter. (p. 185)

Barad, like other new materialists, calls for a critical reevaluation of accountability in our social practices and material engagements through a vital revision of humans as neither pure cause nor pure effect, but part of the world's materiality in its open-ended becoming.

Summary of Research Methodology

The purpose of this research is to reconceptualize the therapeutic encounter to create room for a new understanding that can offer insights into the possibility of a different level of engagement with our clients that aligns with the epistemic and ontological turn of new materialism. In respect to these new philosophical assumptions, the research approach I use does not separate epistemology and ontology, it is a performative method of *becoming-with* one's research and the research process. This study takes a 'post-qualitative' (St. Pierre, 2013) research approach using Barad's (2007) diffractive methodology, which consists of thinking insights through one another, a weaving of theory, self, and data to produce new knowledge.

A diffractive analysis "is to place the understandings that are generated from different (inter)disciplinary practices in conversation with one another…to engage aspects of each in *dynamic* relationality [i.e., relation or relationship] to the other" (Barad, 2007, p. 93) using a new

materialist lens that acknowledges researcher accountability in the process and outcome of research. Barad (2007) makes clear that it is unlike normative practices attempting to use one theory in order to make sense of another. Instead, a diffractive methodology takes caution toward the analysis of each important detail "without uncritically endorsing or unconditionally prioritizing one (inter)disciplinary approach over another" (Barad, 2007, p. 93).

The focus of this study is on the relational dynamics within a therapeutic encounter. This post-qualitative research approach presents a method of reading and transforming data in line with the new materialist turn. Using a diffractive method of analysis, I read and transformed data using the insights derived from three different areas of interest that address relationality as a condition or experience of being. The insights drawn were used to create a set of 9 principles of orientation that were then applied to MFT and the therapeutic encounter. The literature I chose for analysis is: agential realism, John Shotter's communication theory, and relational mindfulness.

<center>**Rationale for the Literature**</center>

Using a post-qualitative method, in line with the new materialist turn, I wish to diffract insights from Barad's agential realism with the insights derived from the writings of communications professor and philosopher John Shotter. His work focused on social responsibility in our human practices, leading him to develop a theory of communication, a radically focused moment-to-moment approach (Shotter, 2005b). His theory is an embodied dialogical stance focused on "people's ways or practices of connecting and linking themselves both to each other, and to the rest of their surroundings and circumstances" in order to engage a new meaning-making process (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 919). His interest was in studying how people come to have *performative understandings* of each other and also how to study the

dynamics that take place in this occasion (Shotter, 2010). Shotter (2010) believes it is in these occasions that we guide others toward a particular orientation of communication.

Barad and Shotter prescribe an ontological and epistemological orientation of being and knowing within and as part of life's materialization. Agential realism takes all matter, human, and non-human to be agents in the mattering of the world (Barad, 2007). Shotter (2016) believed in the dynamic force of language to create or re-create our world. He claimed that through our relations, we engage individually pre-defined *before-the-fact* selves to integrate with others, and by utilizing a shared-*sense* of understanding based on pre-defined concepts that we continue to reinforce our shared knowledge or disciplines (Shotter, 2016). Shotter (2016) went on to incorporate Barad's theory in his later work, suggesting that we engage with the *phenomena* of our experience, paying particular attention to the coming of internal movements signaling a response based on the *here-and-now* momentary interaction. It is here where we are free of *pre-grounded meanings* and attune instead to *foreground experience* enabling greater depth and connection in our interactions and thus expanding on shared knowledge to create new ideas (Shotter, 2016). Both Barad's and Shotter's theories take on the assumption of constituent agencies in the mattering of the world, thereby identifying oneself as an integral part of *becoming*—integrally bound to one's surroundings with the capacity, or ethical imperative as they would suggest, to engage in a socially responsible manner.

The social and ethical implications presented by these authors awaken our sense of responsibility in every moment-to-moment interaction. In fact, Barad (2007) uses the term *intra-action* rather than 'interaction' to account for the simultaneous dynamic *between* agents (both human and non-human) rather than an individualized understanding that one act on another and vice versa. In Shotter's (2005b) communication theory, he also stresses an orientation to our

world in which we pay close attention to the simultaneous feedback that is generated during our relations with others. Both theorists emphasize a stance of conscious, social (and spatial) accountability.

An increasingly popular term applied today to convey a state of conscientious presence is *mindfulness*, which takes me to the third major component of this study. Mindfulness is known as an intentional state of being that has had enormous scientific attention in the areas of neuroscience (Young et al., 2018), psychology (Rodrigues et al., 2017), medicine, and psychotherapy (Germer et al., 2013; Lomas et al., 2018) over the last decade for its consistently significant results of improved physiological, emotional, and mental health (Escuriex & Labbé, 2011; Hoge et al., 2020; Kraemer et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Pei et al., 2021). It has been explained as an increase in self-regulated attention and awareness of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations as they are being experienced in the present moment (Gambrel & Keeling, 2010). In addition, the sense of self who experiences widens toward a more comprehensive form of subjectivity that is said to develop into a deeper sense of responsibility and connection to all humans and nonhumans (Carvalho, 2014). This is an experience of relationality that appears to be in line with Shotter and Barad's proposed orientation.

Relational mindfulness is an emerging concept in mindfulness literature. Surrey et al. (2013) describe it as "the practice and cultivation of mindfulness in an engaged, person-to-person relational context" (p. 94) to make room for a deeper experiential knowing. This area of mindfulness is focused on the relationship of the self, the self with others, and the self with the environment (Tull, 2018). This focus within mindfulness research and its application to therapeutic practice will be the third and final topic of this study.

Statement of Purpose

In diffractively reading Barad's agential realism, Shotter's communication theory, and relational mindfulness through one another utilizing a new materialist, posthumanist lens, I explore how these areas of discipline can lead us to understand our position as therapists within and as part of our psychotherapeutic practice in a profoundly new way and how we may orient ourselves to attend to the dynamic, relational context opening possibilities toward greater depth in our relationship with ourselves, our clients, and our world.

CHAPTER II.

AGENTIAL REALISM

Karen Barad is an American feminist physicist and current professor of feminist studies, philosophy, and the history of consciousness at the University of Santa Cruz. She developed the theory of agential realism after completing a doctorate in theoretical physics. Her theory is inspired by the work of the quantum physicist Neils Bohr and the writings of post-structuralists Michael Foucault, Judith Butler, and others. Her work is connected to new materialism in its claims for a posthumanist understanding of reality; one that recognizes the dynamic force of all matter, human and non-human, with no ontological distinction between them (Barad, 2007). A revision from standard humanist centered ideology, her analysis presents a fundamental shift in common knowledge about the workings of reality, bringing forth new ethical considerations in regards to questions of accountability in our human practices.

Barad (2007) devised her theory using insights from several critical theorists, chiefly Butler and Foucault. Both these theorists argued for a shift in our understanding of human bodies and a recognition of the practices that produce its meaning and its boundaries. Barad found both Butler and Foucault to be limited in their construction and analysis of only *human* bodies and *human* social practices, considering these "anthropocentric assumptions" (p. 145). Their take on *agency* as a human attribute and remaining in favor of the nature/culture binary led to only a partial account of what Barad believes to be a much wider landscape. Much of their work, however, influenced Barad in the development of her theory.

In Barad's (2007) analysis she discusses the parallels and the differences of Foucault and Butler's theories. Foucault had argued against Newtonian classical physics' notion of preexisting meanings in objects, suggesting instead that meaning is produced through regulatory power and

knowledge practices. He named these *discursive practices*, which he considered to be enforced through human social behaviors. Butler extends Foucault's insights in her theory suggesting that human bodies become identified through their *performance*; the body performs gender, rather than it being predetermined. These theories justly address the problematic nature of determinism through a critique of the effects of culture on materiality. However, Barad makes clear that a binary occurs; culture appears to dominate nature and these analyses do not go beyond the human body, excluding the effects of non-human bodies in meaning-making practices. Barad works through these significant insights together with her knowledge of quantum physics principles to unfold a critical theory that breaks this limited lens and widens our insight toward a more intricate—and perhaps more intimate—reality that requires a new approach to our analyses of human and non-human life.

> In its reformulation of agency and its analysis of the productive, constraining, and exclusionary nature of naturalcultural practices, including their crucial role in the materialization of all bodies, agential realism goes beyond performativity theories that focus exclusively on the human/social realm. Agential realism takes into account the fact that the forces at work in the materialization of bodies are not only social and the bodies produced are not all human. It also provides a way to incorporate material constraints and conditions and the material dimensions of agency into poststructuralist analyses. In these and other important ways, agential realism diverges from feminist postmodern and poststructuralist theories that acknowledge materiality solely as an effect or consequence of discursive practices. These latter approaches lack an account of materiality as an agentive and productive factor in its own right, thereby reinstituting the equation between

matter and passivity that some of these approaches proposed to unsettle. (Barad, 2007, p.

225)

Bohrian Framework – Philosophy Physics

…quantum mechanics is the most successful and accurate theory in the history of

physics, accounting for phenomena over a range of twenty-five orders of magnitude,

from the smallest particles of matter to large-scale objects. Quantum physics does not

simply supplement Newtonian physics—it supersedes it. (Barad, 2007, p. 110)

Barad (2007) discusses the issues with Newtonian physics and the precision that quantum

physics brought to the field. The assumptions held in classical Newtonian physics maintain the

individualist, representationalist perspective of a world made up of a mass of independent objects

separated by boundaries that can be measured without interaction. The study and development of

quantum physics showed this assumption to be problematic. In physics, Barad explains, the

initial conditions of an object are measured by its position and momentum. Quantum physicist

Neils Bohr found that the process of measuring interacts with those variables rendering a

measurement *indeterminable*. In Bohr's *principle of indeterminacy,* he states that position and

momentum are complementary variables, and these types of variables cannot be determined

simultaneously due to the uncertainties within each measure. He found that a measurement effect

occurs between the object and the chosen *measurement apparatus*. For that reason, it was

understood that there is no determinate measure of an object separate from its measuring

device—they are inseparable. Barad indicates that this finding was the beginning of a shift in

physics that defied common philosophical assumptions.

Due to his findings, Bohr proposed that the definition of a *theoretical concept* must also

be understood by its measure (Barad, 2007). For Bohr "measurement and description (the

physical and the conceptual) entail each other (not in the weak sense of operationalism but in the sense of their mutual epistemological implication)" (Barad, 2007, p. 109). Barad (2007) points out that this understanding had semantic and ontological implications. What this meant was that a description and its physical measurement is understood to be entangled—they are not independent of each other[1]. Through this research, Bohr came to recognize that "things do not have inherently determinate boundaries or properties, and words do not have inherently determinate meanings" (Barad, 2007, p. 138). Bohr's finding ultimately "rejects the presupposition that language and measurement perform mediating functions. Language does not represent states of affairs, and measurements do not represent measurement-independent states of being" (Barad, 2007, p. 138).

Utilizing her grasp of these principles among others in quantum physics, Barad's (2007) agential realism presents a revision to the understanding of reality and the process that underlies it. In this theory, humans are understood to be *phenomena* along with all matter, producing and produced by the phenomena making up the constitution of the world. Agential realism destabilizes the fixed foundations we stand on giving agency to all matter within the dynamic performance of the world. A revision that is nothing less than an ethical reorientation to our presence in the world and toward the actions we take. To understand these and other implications it is necessary to unfold Barad's theory by defining the terms she uses to explain the mechanics of reality.

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[1] The specific usage of the word entanglement used throughout this paper is to denote a quantum physical phenomena of particle behavior, as well as a general meaning of being intertwined.

Terminology

Part I: The Framework of Agential Realism

Posthumanism

A posthumanist acknowledges ontological inseparability of all things, human and non-human, and views the emergence of the "human" and "things" as specifically differentiated phenomena, that is, as specific configurations of the world (Barad, 2007). Barad (2007) asserts that "posthumanism is about taking issue with human exceptionalism while being accountable for the role we play" (p. 136). Although the human is seen as neither pure cause nor pure effect, Barad explains that posthumanism takes account for the inherent influence of the human as an active and influential part of the composition of the world. Furthermore, unlike humanist and structuralist perspectives, posthumanism recognizes no inherent division of the internal and external body—there are no inherent separations. Posthumanism also denies the belief that all change is primarily a source of culture or nature and that a division exists between them; instead, it is concerned with the current and historical human practices that work to construct these boundaries. In short, posthumanism is about recognizing the constitutive role of humans in reality and seeking to understand its effects among all other physical systems.

Phenomena

In his writings, Bohr advocated for the usage of the word *phenomenon* "to refer to the observations obtained under specified circumstances, including an account of the whole experimental arrangement" (as cited in Barad, 2007, p.119). Barad (2007) explains that his use of this term is to more accurately describe a "wholeness" among the entangled parts of a measurement. This is to understand that the observer or measurement apparatus is thus a part of what is observed or measured. For this reason, the object or subject being referred to "is not an

observation-independent object but a phenomenon" (Barad, 2007, p.120). Explained through the principle of indeterminacy—there are no separately determinate entities, a measurement is not an interaction between an object and measuring apparatus, they are ontologically and therefore epistemically inseparable. Determinate entities *emerge* through the measurement—nevertheless, objects are first (and always will be) phenomena.

Intra-action

The word "interaction" stems from a belief that entities are separate. Quantum physics has revealed matter to be entangled, therefore Barad (2007) uses the word *intra*-action in order for this notion to be implied. She explains intra-action as the "*mutual constitution of entangled agencies*" (p. 33). Furthermore, Barad notes that intra-active dynamics do not occur within a parameter of time, or of space, in fact, it is through intra-actions that temporality and spatiality are produced. "Time, like space and matter, is phenomenal" (p. 316), they are a part of the phenomena in intra-activity.

Agency

Unlike the common understanding of agency as a human attribute of enacting power, for Barad (2007), agency is a continuous unending enactment of phenomena. The dynamics of intra-activity is the enactment of agency. In other words, the world shapes and reshapes itself through its ongoing *agentic* human and non-human intra-activity.

Performativity

Barad (2007) proposes a performative understanding of reality using insights from Butler's work among other authors of performativity theories. Performativity theorists challenge representationalism suggesting instead that materiality be understood as a performance rather than something fixed and given meaning. Matter is understood to be materialized in time through

"practices and performances of representing" (Barad, 2007, p. 49). Therefore, matter is not something static, but rather understood through its activity in time. Performativity takes into account that knowledge through scientific practice comes from "a direct material engagement with the world" (Barad, 2007, p. 49). That is to say, that knowledge is an engagement with the world rather than something to acquire that is separate from us. Barad explains:

> …ideas that make a difference in the world don't fly about free of the weightiness of their material instantiation. To theorize is not to leave the material world behind and enter the domain of pure ideas where the lofty space of the mind makes objective reflection possible. Theorizing, like experimenting, is a material practice. (Barad, 2007, p. 55).

Material-discursive practice

Utilizing insights from Foucault, Barad (2007) uses the term *discursive practice* and joins it with the word *material* to give sense to a *mutually entailed practice* in the configuring and reconfiguring of the world understood by agential realism. Discursive practice is not about linguistics, "discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said" (Barad, 2007, p. 146). What this means is that the materialization of matter entails the emergence of some aspects of reality and the exclusion of others and these orient our lifestyles. That is to say that the world is both enacted and limited by our actions, words, knowledge practices, and disciplines. Barad (2007) explains that "statements are not the mere utterances of the originating consciousness of a unified subject; rather, statements and subjects emerge from a field of possibilities" (pp. 146-147). Reality is understood to be configured and reconfigured through human and non-human material-discursive practices evolving from and with the constitution of the world.

Matter

Matter is not "an inherent, fixed property of abstract, independent existing objects" (Barad, 2007, p. 151). There are no "things" everything is indeterminate, there is only phenomena, bounded and propertied *through* the agential intra-activity of phenomena (Barad, 2007). Matter does not sit still, as Barad (2007) explains, and so materialization is not an event that has a beginning or end, it is dynamic and flexible, and it is moving from and to, and through material-discursive practices.

Materiality

Barad (2007) emphasizes an understanding of matter that goes beyond critical theorists like Butler and Foucault's interpretations that remain focused on the "surface effect of human bodies, or the end product of linguistic or discursive acts" (p. 151) staying within a humanist centered paradigm. Barad strips the humanist interpretations of matter as fixed or purely social constructions and suggests instead that materiality—the essence of the material, is a productive part in the constitution of reality. Materialization is understood as an intra-active process of material-discursive practices which entails the material as an agentic and 'mutable' force of phenomena. Barad (2007) explains:

> …materialization is not the end product or simply a succession of intermediary effects of purely discursive practices. Materiality itself is a factor in materialization. The dynamics of mattering are nonlinear: the specific nature of the material configurations of the apparatuses of bodily production, which are themselves phenomena in the process of materializing, matters to the materialization of the world in its intra-active becoming, which makes a difference in subsequent patterns of mattering, and so on; that is, matter is enfolded into itself in its ongoing materialization…Matter is the sedimenting historiality

of practices/agencies and an agentive force in the world's differential becoming. Becoming is not an unfolding in time but the inexhaustible dynamism of the enfolding of mattering. (p. 180)

Part II: The Dynamics of Materialization

Agential separability

Reality is understood through agential realism as an enfolding process of matter, where matter forms and reforms itself in an unending dynamic (Barad, 2007). Through this understanding, Barad (2007) disputes the common dichotomous view of an absolute exterior and interior and instead defines the impression of boundaries in our landscape as agential separability. Barad (2007) explains agential separability as the material condition that allows for "exteriority-within-phenomena" (p. 175). Although phenomena are ontologically inseparable, agential separability is used to understand objectivity. An intra-action causes an *agential cut* among phenomena leading to boundaries and properties of objects or subjects to emerge. This process enables a determinate value to be made upon specific phenomena intra-acting with other phenomena. The agential cut is enacted by the apparatus (i.e., measure); each cut can produce different phenomena and delineate future possibilities.

Of particular importance is the concept of agency among phenomena. Barad (2007) explains that when a particular agential cut occurs and boundaries and properties are produced, what becomes excluded also has agency. The exclusions, Barad adds, leave space for reconfigurings—and this dynamic is unending. What becomes evident is that this process allows an infinite opening for renaming, reevaluating, and reconsidering current and historic practices and their implicated meanings.

Apparatus

Barad's (2007) explanation of an apparatus begins with a discussion of Bohr's measurement analyses. In his work, Bohr argued that in an experimental arrangement "concepts", that give meaning to the determined subject or object, are embodied within the measuring apparatus and they become meaningful through human observation or communication. In Bohr's description, the apparatus is discussed within a laboratory setting. Barad provides an analysis that extends beyond Bohr's limited and otherwise humanistic account to one that encompasses all measures in reality.

Apparatuses can be understood through the following characteristics:

Apparatuses are boundary-drawing practices. According to Barad (2007), the apparatus is what specifies the agential cut within intra-acting components of phenomena. This cut enacts agential separability which gives concepts and things determinate boundaries, properties, and meanings. As stated before, Bohr makes clear that the meanings produced are in a direct relation with the apparatus. In other words, the apparatus has rule over how and what is conceptualized by utilizing certain knowledge practices (i.e., ways of knowing) and excluding others. In this way, it is understood that apparatuses are boundary-drawing practices.

Apparatuses are material-discursive practices. Barad (2007) explains that according to Bohr apparatuses are measuring devices that are the physical conditions within every measurement that give meaning to particular phenomena. Barad also brings in Foucault's work on *discursive practices* to further develop her account of an apparatus. She writes that according to Foucault, "discursive practices are the local sociohistorical material conditions that enable and constrain disciplinary knowledge practices such as speaking, writing, thinking, calculating, measuring, filtering, and concentrating" (Barad, 2007, p. 147). In the same way that Bohr described the

productive role of an apparatus, Barad found Foucault's explanation of discursive practices to equally attend to the process and production of knowledge. Considering the productive nature of matter, Barad merges Bohr and Foucault's insights for a comprehensive view of an apparatus as a *material-discursive* practice.

Apparatuses are productive of and part of phenomena—not in the world but of the world. The apparatus *produces* and is a part *of* phenomena, it is not separate—it is entangled ontologically with phenomena (Barad, 2007). The apparatus, Barad (2007) explains, is only distinguished from phenomena when it is in a causal intra-action that produces (agentially separable) boundaries and properties within phenomena. As mentioned earlier, there are no determinate 'things' only phenomena, boundaries and properties of subjects and objects become determinate through intra-action. Apparatuses are not something located *in* the world, rather they are the "material configurations or reconfigurings *of* the world [emphasis added]" (p. 146). Barad's use of the word reconfigure is to attest to the dynamic nature of reality to be in a constant process of enfolding and becoming.

Apparatuses are open-ended practices. Apparatuses have no intrinsic boundaries, they are not a bounded object or a structure, instead they are open-ended specific material-discursive practices that produce objects and subjects (Barad, 2007). Barad (2007) explains that apparatuses "are perpetually open to rearrangements, rearticulations, and other reworkings" (p. 170). There are no determinate static objects or subjects, hence an apparatus can be "refined and reconfigured" (p. 167) in time and space among different agentially intra-acting components within phenomena.

Apparatuses are material configurations/reconfigurations of the world. Barad (2007) explains that apparatuses are "material (re)configurings of the world—which come to matter" (pp. 140). The world is not a set of fixed objects, rather it is understood as phenomena that *comes to matter,*

in every sense of the word. History is composed of subjects and objects which are given meanings; these subjects and objects are phenomena being configured and reconfigured through different apparatuses throughout time and space. Furthermore, it is important to understand that every boundary and property that is enacted through an apparatus entails inclusions and exclusions of phenomena leaving room for endless materialization and reconfiguration.

> Possibilities aren't narrowed in their realization; new possibilities open up as others that might have been possible are now excluded: possibilities are reconfigured and reconfiguring…The world's effervescence, its exuberant creativeness, can never be contained or suspended. Agency never ends; it can never "run out." (Barad, 2007, p. 177).

Apparatuses involve the intra-actions of humans and nonhumans. The human body is not a bounded static part of an intra-action, rather, the human like non-humans are considered phenomena (Barad, 2007). These components of phenomena intra-act among other phenomena in realty, producing objects and subjects. Barad (2007) explains:

> Apparatuses…are open-ended practices involving specific intra-actions of humans and nonhumans, where the differential constitutions of human and nonhuman designate particular phenomena that are themselves implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity, including their folding and reconstitution in the reconfiguring of apparatuses. That is, human bodies, like all other bodies, are not entities that acquire specific boundaries and properties through the open-ended dynamics of intra-activity. Humans are part of the world-body space in its dynamic structuration. (Barad, 2007, p. 172)

Bodies

Barad (2007) uses the term *body* to describe *material embodiment*, specifically, "different material configurations of ontological bodies and boundaries" (p. 155). That is to say that bodies are ontologically inseparable material forms. Boundaries are not static, and so bodies, human and non-human are not static forms either. Boundaries and properties are enacted through intra-actions among phenomena which are given meaning through an apparatus.

Although one may argue the apparent nature of human or non-human bodily boundaries, this concept has been challenged through increasing empirical evidence (Barad, 2007). Research across disciplines has shown the inaccuracies of human vision and questioned the practices used to validate it (Barad, 2007). Furthermore, Butler, Foucault, and performativity theorists have argued that the current understanding of human bodily boundaries is in direct relationship to the "repetition of (culturally and historically) specific bodily performance" (Barad, 2007, p. 155). In other words, boundaries are determined through repeated culturally and historically appropriated ways of engaging with the world (Barad, 2007).

Barad (2007) notes that over the past century, challenges against mechanistic conceptions of bodies have come from "neurophysiologists, phenomenologists, anthropologists, physicists, postcolonial, feminist, queer, science and disability scholars, and psychoanalytic theorists...[as well as] cyborg theorists" (p. 155). For instance, studies in physical optics challenge the notion of ontological or visually determinate boundaries (Barad, 2007). When looking closely at an edge of an object using physical optics photography (*Figure 1)* there isn't a clear boundary, instead what can be seen is a diffraction pattern of light as "a series of light and dark bands" (Barad, 2007, p. 156).
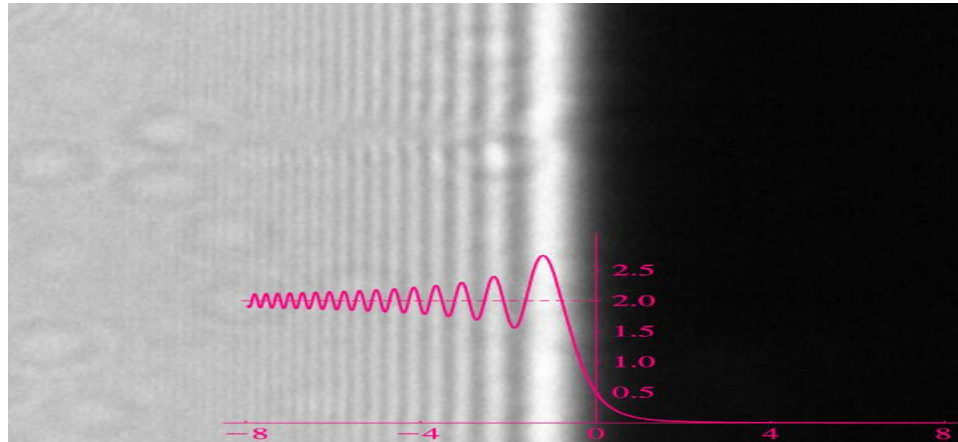
Figure 1. Diffraction from a straightedge. This photograph of a straight edge shows a diffraction pattern of light. The circle diffraction patterns are due to the imperfect edge. Reprinted from US Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology. *Digital Library of Mathematical Functions*, by C. Clark, n. d. Retrieved from https://dlmf.nist.gov/7.SB1. Release 1.0.20 of 2018-09-15. F. W. J. Olver, A. B. Olde Daalhuis, D. W. Lozier, B. I. Schneider, R. F. Boisvert, C. W. Clark, B. R. Miller, and B. V. Saunders, eds.

Boundaries are not predetermined, Barad (2007) argues; bodies *emerge* through specific agential intra-actions and they are a part *of* the world, not *in* the world.

> Bodies do not simply take their places in the world. They are not simply situated in, or located in, particular environments. Rather, "environments" and "bodies" are intra-actively co-constituted. Bodies ("human," "environmental," or otherwise) are integral "parts" of, or dynamic reconfigurings of, what is. (Barad, 2007, p. 170)

Knowing

Knowing is not understood as a process involving the human intellect as it is thought of within a humanist viewpoint (Barad, 2007). In a posthumanist sense, it is a material practice of engaging, or rather, intra-acting that is responsive to the worlds dynamic becoming and in

recognition of being a part of this process (Barad, 2007). Barad (2007) explains that "in contrast to the spectator theory of knowledge, what is being stressed is not knowledge *of* the world from above or outside, but *knowing as part of being*" (p. 341). Both humans and non-humans engage in practices of knowing as "part of a network of performance" (Barad, 2007, p. 149).

Even in direct challenges to Western philosophy's traditional conceptions of epistemology, there is a tendency to continue to think of knowers as human subjects, albeit appropriately hooked into our favorite technological prostheses. In the absence of a vigorous examination of the ontological issues, the locus of knowledge is presumed to be never too far removed from the human, and so the democratizing move is to invite nonhuman entities into our sociality. But the nature-culture dualism is not undermined by inviting everything into one category (man's yet again). The point of challenging traditional epistemologies is not merely to welcome females, slaves, children, animals, and other dispossessed Others (exiled from the land of knowers by Aristotle more than two millennia ago) into the fold of knowers but to better account for the ontology of knowing. (Barad, 2007, p. 378)

Knowing, Barad (2007) explains, is "a specific engagement of the world where part of the world becomes differentially intelligible to another part of the world in its differential accountability to or for that of which it is a part" (p. 342). It is understood as a performance of the world in which it becomes *intelligible* to itself. The world is an ongoing performance of intra-activity of which we are a part. As part of the world, we are entangled in the material practices of knowing through intra-action, dynamically configuring and reconfiguring the world.

Meaning

Meaning is…an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility. In its causal intra-activity, part of the world becomes determinately bounded and propertied in its emergent intelligibility to another part of the world, while lively matterings, possibilities, and impossibilities are reconfigured. (Barad, 2007, p. 149)

It is as if the world is constantly explaining itself to *itself*, and redefining itself in an open-ended ongoing performance. In Barad's (2007) posthumanist account meaning is understood as the world's intelligibility *to what matters*. Barad explains that through material-discursive practices meanings are produced—constituted from the specific apparatus in the intra-action. Meaning is to be understood within the dynamics of intra-actions. Meanings are material-discursive practices that are implicated in the configuring of the world, however, it is relevant to understand that they are not static determinations, as nothing remains static and nothing is determinate. Meanings are always open to reconfigurations.

Ethics

Barad's examination of quantum physics principles on the dynamics of matter combined with critical social theories of meaning making led her to develop a theory that inscribes a deeper fundamental understanding of ethics. Her post-humanist theory takes ethics beyond human centric ideas of social responsibility, to an accountability toward the very *mattering* of the world (Barad, 2007). She explains that "since different agential cuts materialize different phenomena…our intra-actions do not merely effect what we know and therefore demand an ethics of knowing; rather, our intra-actions contribute to the differential mattering of the world" (Barad, 2007, p. 178). She argues that it is not simply about recognizing the effect of intra-

actions on what we come to know, it is a recognition that our intra-actions have an effect toward

the becoming of the world (Barad, 2007). It is to say that what we make of something through

our language and actions has a ripple effect (i.e., diffraction).

> We are responsible for the cuts that we help enact not because we do the choosing
>
> (neither do we escape responsibility because "we" are "chosen" by them), but because we
>
> are an agential part of the material becoming of the universe. (Barad, 2007, p. 178)

Barad (2007) emphasizes that participation in specific intra-activity is not the key point;

what she is trying to convey is that every human is a part of the overall materiality of the world

affecting and effected by the world phenomena. Barad makes clear that we take part in our intra-

actions *with* phenomena and are equally a part *of* phenomena— we help enact boundaries and

properties among the phenomena of which we are a part. Therefore, she explains:

> Indeed, ethics cannot be about responding to the other as if the other is the radical outside
>
> to the self. Ethics is not a geometrical calculation; "others" are never very far from "us";
>
> "they" and "we" are co-constructed and entangled through the very cuts "we" help to
>
> enact. Intra-actions cut "things" together and apart. Cuts are not enacted from the outside,
>
> nor are they ever enacted once and for all. (Barad, 2007, pp. 178-179)

"…Possibilities for (intra-)acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities

entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsibly in the world's becoming, to contest and

rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering" (Barad, 2007, p. 235). As understood,

intra-actions include and exclude phenomena. Therefore, Barad (2007) emphasizes

accountability not only in what matters through intra-actions we take part in, but also what

doesn't come to matter as a result. From an agential realist perspective, ethics entails a

recognition of these aspects of reality for "the entanglements we are a part of reconfigure our

beings, our psyches, our imaginations, our institutions, our societies" (p. 383). The impressions of our experiences reverberate in our minds and create our future. Knowledge entails thinking about how our intra-actions not only affect us but the world at large.

Barad (2007) points out that "…the knower does not stand in a relation of absolute externality to the natural world—there is no such exterior observational point" (p. 184). The inseparability inherent within the dynamics occurring in each moment that we intra-act with an "other" presents a deeper layer of accountability in our relationships. Moving toward new material-discursive realities depends on the possibilities open for agential intra-activity at a particular time through acts such as "subversion, resistance, opposition, and revolution" (Barad, 2007, pp. 218).

This requires responsible intra-activity by "thinking critically about the boundaries, constraints, and exclusions operating through particular material-discursive apparatuses intra-acting with other important apparatuses" (Barad, 2007, p. 219). To do this, Barad (2007) suggests that we can start by asking questions, such as: how is the phenomena of matter of a specific time and space *affecting* and *effected by* what someone said or did; what is being omitted by the specific apparatus/s of measure; and, how is my current intra-action reconfiguring this matter? "What is required is a joint effort that relies on multiple forms of literacy to make explicit the different apparatuses that are a part of the phenomenon being investigated" (Barad, 2007, p. 361). Integrating different disciplines in our analysis or thinking about how these viewpoints could inform or transform the meanings that are ascribed to a particular situation could help increase our insight of our relative awareness of our intra-actions in our everyday practices.

Conclusion

"Reality is not a fixed essence. *Reality is an ongoing dynamic of intra-activity*" (Barad, 2007, p. 206). To understand reality, from an agential realist perspective, one has to be clear that objects and subjects are not pre-determinate, they are phenomena among intra-active agentic forces (Barad, 2007). Furthermore, according to quantum physics, *everything is entangled*; matter is ontologically inseparable phenomena engaging in a constant plethora of agential intra-actions (Barad, 2007). As Barad (2007) makes clear, the intra-actions among phenomena include humans as an intra-active part, that is, not merely observing and describing, but intra-actively entangled with the phenomena of the world. Material-discursive practices among human and non-humans engage in intra-actions that lead to agential separability—the observable objective distinctions among matter. The agentic intra-actions are among elements of phenomena and produce the boundaries and properties of the world space. These material expressions are "part of the ongoing differential performance of the world" (Barad, 2007, p. 335). A computer code, the geographic landscape, the taxonomy of every living entity, the classification of human feelings, and the historical and cultural narratives we create are among the phenomena once produced and part of the production of new phenomena.

> …*phenomena are differential patterns of mattering* ("diffraction patterns") produced through complex agential intra-actions of multiple material-discursive practices or apparatuses of bodily production, where *apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices—specific material (re)configurings of the world—which come to matter*. These causal intra-actions need not involve humans. Indeed, it is through such practices that the differential boundaries between humans and nonhumans, culture and nature, science and the social, are constituted. (Barad, 2007, p. 140)

In our investigations of human intra-action, an agential realist makes an effort to be aware of the intra-activity of space and time. This would include the cultural and historical dynamics influencing both the human and non-human phenomena. Furthermore, the intra-action of the measuring apparatus of the account, such as a human observer, a camera, or an audio recording is to be considered. In the psychotherapeutic profession, these devices may be used in practice to train or better assess client sessions. Supplementary apparatuses of measurement may be also used such as an assessment form or a biofeedback monitor. In addition to this, the material-discursive production of a diagnostic classification manual, therapeutic models, and the historical and cultural systems of moral behavior all take part in the composition of a therapeutic intra-action.

As an example, when a therapist-in-training describes a family interaction that is being viewed on a recording by the supervisor, the therapist is understood to be a part of this dynamic occurring among phenomena at the time of recording and now as they describe the event. The supervisor is also now integrating with the phenomena of investigation. Even further, the constitution of the current environment, the objective view of the camera, and the playback device is all considered a part of the phenomena. How do these intra-actions effect meaning? What material-discursive practices frame the language being used to discuss this intra-action? Responsible intra-action does not necessitate a thorough grasp of all agentic intra-activity in a given moment, nor can we ever expect to achieve this, rather, it is about an ethical presence or orientation toward our intra-actions that is being argued here. This means an understanding of our human accountability toward the becoming of a shared world space. In this scenario, the therapist and supervisor recognize their inherent accountability in the current intra-action and

how the configurations of phenomena that take place reconfigure future phenomena in their

lives, their clients' lives and the future.

CHAPTER III.

JOHN SHOTTER'S COMMUNICATION THEORY

History

John Shotter had most recently been an Emeritus Professor of Communication in the Department of Communication at the University of New Hampshire. Shotter (2005b) was particularly concerned with social troubles and injustice and chose to investigate this area further within the social and behavioral sciences. He wrote on accountability and a shared intentionality that he found to occur in conversation between participants and their surroundings and termed it *joint action* (Shotter, 1995). He understood conversations to be unique events in a shared context and which provided an inherent responsiveness felt by those involved (Shotter, 1995). He recognized an embodied communal experience in communications moving social constructionism from what he saw as stuck within the mechanistic Cartesian walls of science, toward what he called "a social ecological approach" (Shotter, 2005b, p. 151). His aim was to incorporate this background shared experience into the conversational analysis implemented in the social sciences.

In the self-narrative chapter "Moving on by backing away," Shotter (2005a) tells of his past working as an engineering apprentice at age 16, where he had a sensation of *feeling into* the inner structure of the materials he came in contact with through the use of tools, and sensing an equally hidden inner structure of a social world "*through* the use of words-as-prosthetic-devices" (p. 154). His work in communications led him toward further developing this perspective. In 1996, Shotter worked with Arlene Katz to develop a communication method that could demonstrate *feeling into* the dialogical moment with others calling it *social poetics*. Shotter later adopted Barad's (2007) agential realism which he found aligned with his communication style

that he later described as an orientation of *Being* (Shotter, 2014; Shotter, 2016). An orientation

he found to be a natural part of human activity, where one is immersed, present oriented, and

open to the subjective movement of feeling that guides the participants in the conversation

(Shotter, 2016). An explanation of these terms and ideas seen through the history and

development of Shotter's theory of communication are given below.

Joint Action

Shotter (2005b) was interested in social behavior and action, and the agency involved. He

moved from an individually *cognitive* interpretive approach to interpretations of *action*, what he

considered *joint action* (Shotter, 2005b). He believed social activity was a result of the combined

human actions of those involved who were being guided by the unique exchange and given

context (Shotter, 1995; Shotter, 2005b). He began to discuss joint action in his earlier writings

(Shotter, 1984; Shotter, 1995) presenting a third conversational entity or otherness that exists

within and part of the dynamic occurring between people in conversation. This "third-person

Other", (Shotter, 1995, p. 54) is the background nature he believes to be a force acting upon the

conversation. As Shotter (1995) describes, when people engage in dialogue they take on a shared

activity that includes the embracing of the otherness background. Shotter (2005b) describes joint

action as:

> …a form of spontaneous social activity (i.e., activity that cannot be accounted as either
>
> individual action done for a reason, or as behavior with an outside cause), activity that
>
> cannot be attributed to any of the individuals involved in it, but which is itself productive
>
> not only of the "situation" that they are in, but also provides them with resources for their
>
> continued action within it. (p. 162)

Shotter (1995) believed that in conversation people felt linked toward each other and the context around them and that it felt different to others "outside" (p. 54) it. The conversational partners, he argues, feel a connection that is both restrained and accountable to the background of their experience, the social situation, and to the people themselves in the dialogue. Shotter describes it as if the context pre-existed and the conversational partners are in the context, accountable to it, not belonging to each of them individually, but instead a shared belonging, to the extent that one can sense this feeling or rather feel excluded by it. This background, being a resolution of a shared socially constructed reality may carry political implications of exclusion for one or more participants. Point being, that in conversation, joint action, is to be responsive and accountable to both the others in dialogue and the otherness of the surroundings (Shotter, 1995). Joint action implies an understanding of the dialogical nature that surrounds us as "living, embodied beings, surrounded by other living, embodied beings to whom we must be responsive" (Shotter, 1995, p. 55).

Shotter (2005b) considered joint action to be part of social development and tried to introduce it as a discipline in psychology while also investigating the influence of disciplinary writing on the conditions of human life and of those who get marginalized. He later began his directorship in the General Social Sciences program in the Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, The Netherlands and turned his attention to citizenship and development, moving away from academic psychology and toward the field of communications. Shotter's work led to new questions regarding personhood, identity and belonging; how they emerge within interpersonal relations within a larger political narrative. This led him to investigate what he considers a third kind of knowledge, not technical or theoretical, but rather about conduct within life, a "cultural-participatory" (Shotter, 2005b, p. 164) knowledge.

Shotter's (2005b) work brought light to the sequential dynamics involved within human activity and its equally viable connections to their surroundings. After meeting Ken Gergen, Shotter began working on the Sage Series Inquiries in Social Constructionism and later moved to the United States and joined Sheila McNamee and Jack Lannamann to work in the Department of Communication at the University of New Hampshire and served as developmental chair from 1999 until 2001. Here he continued his scholarly work investigating dialogue spaces including his work with Dr. Arlene M. Katz on social poetics within the physician's clinical environment and with Dr. Ann L. Cunliffe, demonstrating its application in business management, as well.

<div align="center">**Social Poetics**</div>

Social Poetics is an embodied dialogical stance, focused on "people's ways or practices of connecting and linking themselves both to each other, and to the rest of their surroundings and circumstances" (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 919). Katz and Shotter (1996) describe the unique particularities of this practice that they used for a study in a primary care setting. Katz played the role of a third party who mediates dialogue between a patient and the resident medical staff during an initial diagnostic interview. The idea is to move away from a cognitive representational understanding of dialogues and instead to be with the momentary movements within a single event. Katz and Shotter explain that it is to take particular notice of another's embodied speech where one reveals "themselves and their 'world'" (p. 920). "Not only must it draw our attention to events that might otherwise escape our notice, but it must also provide us with an understanding of their possible relations and connections to the particular circumstances of their occurrence" (Katz & Shotter, 1996, pp. 919-920).

This method, Katz and Shotter (1996) explain, requires one to attend to the movements within oneself and another, the moments when one is "moved, arrested, or struck" (p. 920). In

this study, Katz located herself within cultures; the medical culture, the culture of the patient, the larger cultural context, and the local one that occurs between participants. In noticing the patient's movements, gestures, and tone of voice, Katz was also moved toward certain inquiry and shared her questions with the resident doctor during the preceptor visit before returning to the patient. When they both returned to the patient, the dialogue shifted and attended to the earlier felt movements that led Katz to a certain line of inquiry; in this transaction, the patient was visibly and audibly enlivened while sharing relevant parts of their world that aided in the understanding of the symptoms that were being diagnosed and led to an opening for the patient to reveal other concerns. The authors were able to demonstrate a dialogical stance that attended to and engaged with communicated prompts offered by the patient. In this study, Shotter took the role of third-party observer within the clinical context.

What is necessary for this stance to be taken?

Katz and Shotter (1996) point out two different approaches that can be taken when in dialogue with someone who is speaking about themselves. The first, said to be the most adopted, is a representational stance joined with another to articulate what they recognize their mental or physical states to represent. The second is considered a relational stance; it is an embodied responsible approach, where the living nature of each individual is recognized as an embedded process within the conversation, molding the movements through gesture, facial expression, and tone into the dialogical activity. Highlighted in this secondary mode is a lived experience where the words themselves are just a part of the entwining relationship that occurs within the living present moment that leads to each following moment.

It is our local or situated use of our words that is important: in producing *in those who experience them* [emphasis added] certain embodied reactions and responses, they work

to make, momentary, practical differences, to create certain embodied, momentary

relations and connections between interlocutors (Katz & Shotter,1996, p. 925).

In academia, Katz and Shotter (1996) note how authors often speak of their subjects from

a distanced position looking back at a completed event, the subject and the unique context

becomes lost through language. They explain that a context is embodied within the people and

surroundings related to it and within this moment are movements that call out to each participant

within it. "The actual use of words, their practical, concrete meaning, is their unique use in the

context of their occurrence" (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 926). People's words elicit a response and

these moments, referred to as the social poetic nature of interactions, are the felt movements that

"come prior to knowledge, and as such do not provoke judgments of truth or falsity" (Katz &

Shotter, 1996, p. 927). They describe it as a resonance that is felt through the relationship, be it

with a poem, a painting or a person. They are like "fleeting moments…bodied forth out into the

communal spaces…because of this fractal-like inner richness, even brief, fleeting utterances, or a

single, sudden, novel gesture in a certain setting, can invite a whole new shared form of life"

(Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 928). They argue that the practice, indeed, is a dialogical one.

> Our work is not over in simply being momentarily responsive to the "poetic gestures" in
>
> a patient's words; we must also invite their further articulation in our further dialogic
>
> relations with the patient. The seeds sown in the space between us must be further
>
> cultivated (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 928).

It as an ongoing process to be embedded in conversation in a responsive and provocative

manner so to continue to elicit and respond in a way that feels mutually satisfying like being seen

and heard (Katz & Shotter, 1996). It is to be led into the unique lives of another by responding

"not in terms of a system of pre-established meanings, and especially not in terms of a set of

disciplinary or professionalized meanings, but in singular, short-lived, poetic moments" (Katz &

Shotter, 1996, p. 928).

How does our professional culture affect our ability to enter into a social poetic stance?

Professional cultures socialize people toward relational orientations that sustain the

disciplines in which they are embedded, limiting the creativity through the connectedness

espoused by a social poetic stance (Katz & Shotter, 1996). In quoting Bakhtin (1986), Katz and

Shotter (1996) bring attention to the necessity of a mutually engaged dialogue as an encounter of

two outsiders, rather than for a productive means to remain within professional boundaries; "it is

only through the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly"

(as cited in Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 928). As a metaphor, the relational process seems similar to

the perception of color, wavelengths equal to various frequencies are perceived as colors, the

color we see is equal to the perception of some wavelengths and the absence of all others. As

described above, it is only through difference that meanings are perceived, each subtle difference

in frequency carries a new meaning. We often miss the subtle nuances that allow us to perceive

new meaning as our professional disciplines work to shade our perceptions toward particular

understandings.

Words, speech, stance, and character

Katz and Shotter (1996) call this form of listening "'outsider/insider' stance" (p. 928) that

entails attending to *words*, *stance*, and *character*. Attention is to be placed on language of self

and other, and the position of the people involved within the context. For *words*, they write that

special emphasis is on the:

> …difference between talking in the first person and talking in the third person, the
>
> difference between talking as a participant agent able to affect events and as a mere

spectator or observer[2]…a shift from "talking about", to "talking of" and to "talking with",

re-positions one as talking more from within a particular, still ongoing and open, dialogic

moment, than retrospectively, looking back on something already completed; and…using

special, non-technical but 'poetic' terms, helps us 'see' the extraordinary (the 'magical'?)

embedded in the ordinary. (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 929)

Katz and Shotter (1996) explain that we are to engage in a particular type of *speech*:

…speech that is responsive, that is involving, arresting, moving, that oscillates or

navigates between different worlds of possibility rather than in a single fixed realm, that

leaves gaps or spaces not to be bridged or filled by already determined theoretical

meanings, that makes room for others to voice their responses… (p. 929)

They describe it as communication that is open to explore new territories rather than to validate

and maintain what came before. It requires a *stance* that has flexibility to shift positions through

languages, cultures, and meanings. Katz and Shotter (1996) explain:

…different languages or registers, e.g. medical, professional discourse and ordinary

language, i.e. the voice of the patient as person and the rhetoric of medical nomenclature,

the use of medical diagnostic language that narrows the focus, compared with use of

poetic relational language that expands possibilities; (ii) the cultural context and cultural

issues including local moral worlds in which what is at stake for each participant is heard

or understood, or translated into another domain of discourse; (iii) worlds of meanings so

local that they change moment by moment. It is a collaborative stance that seeks to create

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[2] Here, it is believed that a position as a "mere observer" (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 929) would be absent of

agency; a position that Shotter changes in his later writings, especially those that reference Barad (2007).

a "level playing field", where the voice of the patient is recognized as an equal

participant. (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 929)

For the *character* of this method, Katz and Shotter (1996) suggest allowing yourself to be

moved by "arresting moments" (p. 929) when something has been felt through tone, language or

behavior of the speaker, and in so doing it calls in you a moment to attend to it. They explain that

it is not descriptive or theoretical talk; it is "metamethodological" (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 930)

because it emphasizes articulating what would otherwise be implied within particular practices.

Furthermore, it is considered a "dialogically iterative practice" (Katz & Shotter, 1996, p. 930)

that invites us to attend to our dialoging through commentary as if to *metadialogue*.

A social poetic orientation

We are always in one or another kind of living, bodily relation to our circumstances, and

such relations constitute the source of all our later, more deliberate activities…In other

words, what we do later, individually, deliberately, and cognitively, originates in what we

do earlier, responsively, unthinkingly, and bodily. (Shotter, 1998, p. 33)

Social poetics is a way of relating to others and the world around us (Shotter, 1998).

Although it is continuous, spontaneous, and always present, Shotter (1998) argues that this social

poetic aspect of communication remains an unnoticed background among professional practices

in human and behavioral sciences. Shotter uses the term *poetic*, to explain the novelty and

creativity involved "… (*poiesis* = creation), with 'first time' makings and with 'first time'

understandings" (Shotter, 1998, p. 34). He argues that in developing psychology as a discipline,

we turned towards objectivism to validate and provide reliable results, moving us further away

from "our embodied agency and the special nature of our social embedding" (Shotter, 1998, p.

35) within the moment-to-moment experience in ourselves and in others.

The self-induced invisibility of our own disciplinary procedures prevents us from noticing that our embodied sense of them, as being applied to certain "objects", has been "developed" not by such "objects" imposing themselves on us but by us creating a "sense of their objective reality" within our own disciplinary discourses. Hence, we talk "about" those others we study as being, somehow, distinct and quite separate from ourselves, utterly unrelated in fact. (Shotter, 1998, p. 37)

Taking an objective stance keeps us at a distance collecting data rather than *being* with others (Shotter, 1998). Shotter (1998) argues that "we are uninterested in interacting with the people themselves, and unconcerned with their concrete circumstances; we are only interested in collecting what they say 'about' themselves, their self-talk, as 'data'," (p. 37) what he calls a *retrospective-objective stance*, "looking back on what they did or said as a now completed process" (p. 37). Shotter references Bakhtin in saying that our disciplinary approaches tune us into ourselves and away from another as if we are reciting a monologue requiring no feedback.

If, however, we are to live as social constructionists, then, instead of a dialogically unresponsive, Cartesian, monological stance, we must acknowledge and become sensitive to a whole new range of not-before-noticed dialogical and relational phenomena in our speech intertwined relations with others. (Shotter, 1998, p. 38)

In this way, in our communications we take a "prospective-relational stance toward it [speech], seeing it as providing, not information, but different possible relational possibilities or opportunities of a 'poetic' kind" (Shotter, 1998, p. 38). A social poetic orientation is to allow oneself to attune to one's surroundings and the others they engage in in a way that they are embedded in the context (Shotter, 1998). Shotter (1998) explains that this is to be responsive to the first-person reactions:

…it is in the way that people's responsive utterances connect, link, or relate them with their (not always immediate) surroundings, that they "point" or "gesture" beyond themselves, toward their "world": For people "show" what their "world" is for them, in their fleeting reactions to, and understandings of, what is occurring around them, in practice. And, in being irresistibly "moved" or "arrested" by their reactions, in finding ourselves spontaneously responding to their responses, that we are dialogically provided with an initial, crucial grasp of their unique world. (Shotter, 1998, p. 38)

Social poetics involves a first-person account and the use of "as if" (p. 45) statements to enable others to cognize the experience (Shotter, 1996). It is about connecting to utterings, gestures, to other aspects of people's lives, in the moment (Shotter, 1998). It is a (social) practice of orienting towards each other and toward something new instead of classifying words and behaviors to fulfill schemas (Shotter, 1998).

Like a poem that elicits a feeling, Shotter (1998) describes this stance as a sense of being moved in some way, something unexpected, unplanned, by means of coming together with another or otherness. It is a "two-way" (Shotter, 1998, p. 47) flow of activity where we call out responses from our surroundings and our surroundings call out a response from us.

Such methods, then, do the opposite of what we might expect of scientists, logicians, or philosophers: they first create an indeterminacy where before there were determinate meanings, and direct our attention to new possibilities that can at first only be "sensed", vaguely. (Shotter, 1998, p. 46).

Moving away from Cartesian methods and Social Construction

Shotter's (2005b) research had two areas of focus. The first was to move away from Cartesian mechanistic modes of thinking which he believed led to "the undermining of our

intrinsic human relatedness, both to each other as well as to our surroundings" (Shotter, 2005b, p. 157). The second, through the work of Vygotsky and Vico, Wittgenstein, Voloshinov, Bakhtin, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty he explored the "philosophical, empirical, and methodological consequences of the (essentially Vicoian and Vygotskian) assumption that, as living embodied beings, we cannot help but be spontaneously responsive to both the others and othernesses in our surroundings" (Shotter, 2005b, p. 157).

Shotter (2005b) found that social constructionism still follows a Cartesian frame of reference, and this way makes it bounded within a dualistic understanding of reality. He suggests moving from social constructionism toward a social ecological approach. He writes:

…what strikes me as wrong with many current social constructionist approaches is their still Cartesian, (post) structuralist, dualistic approach to language and to our surroundings – as if we have only an *external* relationship to them both, rather than having our very being *within them*. They still take the referential-representational function of language as central, and, so to speak, merely reverse its representational direction – i.e., instead of being of reality, they are taken as being constitutive of our realities. Instead, I have taken the central function of language to be of a relationally responsive kind. It is in being directly responsive to the bodily expressions of others that we enter into one or another kind of living relationship with them (Shotter, 2005b, p. 158-159).

Social constructionism, like Cartesian approaches still takes the world to be an outside objective reality that we construct through language (Shotter, 2005b). Instead, Shotter (2005b) argues that there is no outside world separate from our being.

In 2002, as Shotter (2005b) explains it, his work turned to consciousness and the exploration of "spontaneous responsive bodily activity" (p. 167) that works to communicate an

orientation within a given context. Shotter believed that others can give their understanding of themselves and their context through their language in dialogue:

> They can at least try to tell us of the nature of their world (according to their own degree of eloquence) in their own terms. The question now is what kind of stance – ethical and otherwise – is required if we are to open ourselves to them as they tell us of themselves, and allow their otherness to enter us and to make us other than we already are. (Shotter, 2005b, p. 168)

Shotter (2006) believes that in the same way that we understand physics we can come to understand the ongoing movements that take place as a sequence of interacting events that are unfolding within the space of our relations. "Everything we need—at least, in understanding how to 'go on' with the others and othernesses around us in our practical affairs—is available to us out in the activities occurring between us and them" (Shotter, 2006, p. 587). Shotter emphasizes a relational stance, as described in social poetics, that tunes into the other and our surroundings so that it can reveal to us how to suitably relate to it. He argues that if we orient ourselves in a context to be open to the unfolding events, we will know what steps to take.

The Relations In-Between

Within a shared gaze we engage ethics and politics (Shotter, 2005a). Expectations arise and we anticipate an engagement based on what we lived before. Within a mutual-shared dynamism "another form of life" (Shotter, 2005a, p.104) occurs—a shared world. Furthermore, this shared space has a culture to it, with values, that defines a character and stance (Shotter, 2005a). Shotter (2005a) is making a move from a monological approach where the other is an object, to a dialogical approach where the other is another consciousness and this dialogue is unique to the surroundings.

Shotter (2005a) explains that we can speak within each moment with such radical shared experience as if we recognize we are speaking a common foreign language or mother tongue; however, when we fall out of attunement as we are dialoguing with another or we lose our way, it is as if we have forgotten the language. Communication, then, has expectations of presence and attunement.

> Ethically, we must allow other people both to be specifically vague, that is, to be only partially clear, in what they say, while also allowing them to entertain the expectation that we will either assist them in further making their meaning clear, or allow them whatever further opportunities are required for them to do so. (Shotter, 2005a, p. 119)

Shotter (2005a) brings an example of a clinical case involving Harry Goolishian dialoguing with a client in a way that honored his client's expertise in his own life (Anderson & Goolishian, 1993, as cited in Shotter, 2005a). Recognizing that when we orient ourselves in a way that demonstrates an attunement and responsiveness, through our voice, tone, and posture, we elicit in another a responsiveness back. He makes clear that it is not a given that we can interact in these responsive attuned ways:

> It cannot just be taken for granted that because we are intelligent and rational, well trained in scientific or other academic modes of investigation, and have all the appropriate sense organs at the ready, that we all must have such an ability. For this ability is intimately and intricately interwoven in with the richness of our emotional lives, and with our willingness—or lack thereof—to acknowledge others, to open ourselves to being moved by another's expressions. (Shotter, 2005a, p. 125).

It is something that "comes in degrees" (Shotter, 2005a, p. 119). Shotter (2005a) explains that we already assume certain levels of interacting such as a recognition of expressions coming

from a speaker. This relies on people being engaged in a responsive receptive manner to the other and otherness around us as living beings and being-ness rather than relating to a dead unresponsive world (Shotter, 2006).

From patterns to singularities

Moving away from social construction meant moving from patterns toward unique singular moments (Shotter, 2012). Shotter (2012) explains that the social constructionist move to the performative has us still taking a *retrospective* look at meaning in the outcome of the language used, and it misses the uniqueness of the moment, the:

> …living, bodily presence of those who are speaking, their gestures, their sensings of each other's movements, their anticipations of each other's attempts at expression, and their continual improvisation of alternatives when first attempts fail—the necessary unity of the already existing dynamic, spatio-temporal relations, both within what we have picked out for study, as well as in its relations to its surroundings. (p. 137)

As we try to explain these interactions, we lose the inter-connected nature of the process and instead treat them as "mechanical relationships between heterogeneous processes" (Shotter, 2012, p. 136) and this way they lack their original relationality.

> It [interpreting interactions in this way] has led to a focus on the meanings to [be] found in already said patterns of recorded words, rather than on what speakers may have being [*sic*] trying to mean at the time in saying them—an approach to research inquiries that, yet again, puts the power of sense-making into the hands of academic experts and takes it out of the hands of ordinary people. (Shotter, 2012, p. 137)

He argues that for the sake of these research methods we have instituted practices that separate words and actions from the people and their surroundings (Shotter, 2012). The idea that

the motive/intention of an action and the performance output of the action are two separate

things— "actions have no meaning in and of themselves" (Shotter, 2012, p. 139) they need to be

understood within the context.

These research methods continue to present a future that is representative of the past

(Shotter, 2016). In our relations, Shotter (2016) explains, we are in a process of becoming, or

"going on" (p. 93) together and that always embodies something new in each singular shared

experience. It is the "movements of feeling" (Shotter, 2016, p. 93) aroused within us that propel

us with the next steps forward of our interaction. These are the subtle mechanics that underlie

each encounter. In his most recent work, Karen Barad's (2007) agential realism had verified for

Shotter an understanding of the singular movements within an interaction that he found

coincided with his theory of communication.

Agential realism

Shotter read Barad's (2007) work and through this felt a resonating dynamic that was

parallel to his own work. Shotter (2014) suggests the importance for us to recognize the ceaseless

agential dynamics of reality (anti-Cartesian) within our studies as well as to disturb a

representational paradigm within our use of language. He believes that it is from this vantage

point that we can engage with others in more practical and effective ways. He suggests a re-

orientation to our world and the relationships we have with others:

> It is to do with re-situating ourselves—as spontaneously responsive, moving, embodied
>
> living beings— within a reality of continuously intermingling, flowing lines or strands of
>
> unfolding, agential activity, in which nothing (no thing) exists in separation from
>
> anything else, a reality within which we are immersed both as participant agencies and to
>
> which we also owe significant aspects of our own natures. (Shotter, 2014, p. 2)

Instead, we have lived in a Cartesian world with subject/object cut and we are at the center of that objectivity "able to *do* things by our own self-instigated, or I-directed, movements, while acting on the basis of our thoughts, ideas, beliefs, or theories (Shotter, 2014, p. 3). Shotter (2014) says our questions in psychology have therefore been directed toward planning activities for desired results.

> But if the world in which we live *is* a world in which the "things" of importance to us are not fixed and finalized for all time, but are dynamically sustained stabilities within a larger realm of continuing, flowing movement; and further, if *we are not the only agencies at work in such a world*, then it becomes difficult, as we shall see, to differentiate within an occurring phenomenon what aspects of it should be accounted objective—as existing independently of us—and what subjective—dependent upon our attitudes, moods, or other influences on how we are *related* to our circumstances.
> (Shotter, 2014. pp. 3-4)

Moving toward performative understandings

Shotter (2014) questions how we can work out certain mental movements in order to attend to our surroundings, subjectively open to the objective aspects we act on. This calls for an attention toward the present moment and the specific direction we are attending toward. He gives an example of this process occurring within speech as we attend to specific parts of the phenomena we are engaged in, "we can *choose* to pick out what counts for us as *physical* or *physiological* from what is *psychological*, what is *orderly* and often repeated from what is *unique* and quite singular, and so on" (Shotter, 2014, p. 5). The idea is to move from an objective focus to a subjective one. Just as Wundt and Freud had studied word associations from noticing people's reactive responses to certain words, Shotter suggests that the quality of such an internal

event as described earlier can in fact be studied, as it has been shown in work with conversational analysis.

> …expressive variations occurring as we body forth our utterances—in such things as choice of words, emphases, intonations, pausing, pacing, repeating, etc.—are of crucial importance in providing listeners, not simply with further factual information, but with orientation, with ways of relating themselves both to what is said, as well as inter-relating events within what is said. For often, it is not at all obvious what the overall situation is within which an utterance should be placed, if its sense is to be understood. (Shotter, 2014, pp. 4-5)

Through communicated actions such as our tone of voice, Shotter (2014) explains that we guide conversation or demonstrate an anticipated directionality. For example, a child who is addressing their parent, looking down, muttering "I love you" may be showing a sense of guilt or shame, whereas a child smiling at their parents and stating clearly "I love you" may be showing appreciation and love for them. The words are the same but they direct conversation in two distinct ways by giving the receiver lots of information through their gesture, tone, and articulation.

Shotter (2014) calls these *performative understandings* the subjective background of our communications that tend to be less articulated though they are easily distinguished. He was interested in studying how people come to have performative understandings of each other, which he believed is how conversations are guided. In recognition of the difficulty involved in attending to these subtle features of communication, Shotter suggests that we attend to the indeterminate—the inexplicit nature of expressions. This is not through scientific explanations, but rather through the resolution of what he calls "difficulties of orientation" (p. 18) where we

seek for clarity in ambiguous events in the same way that we focus on an object at a distance to see it more clearly. It is to be open to more information, incorporating the subtle nuances, rather than to immediately apply theory or objective thought.

 In addition, *performative utterances*, Shotter (2014) explains from his readings of John Austin, are statements that describe the performance of an action. For example, in the statement "I apologize" there is no description of the doing of the action or to state that there is a doing, the performance statement *is* the doing (Austin, 1970, as cited in Shotter, 2014). However, the statement describes a doing that takes into account other actions that must be taken by the speaker and the applicable surrounding circumstances, including to infer a commitment, or expectation among the recipients. Furthermore, Austin (1970) adds that when a statement instead refers to something that can, could, or could have been done, it explains action that is still in question, thus relieving the speaker of any duties (as cited in Shotter, 2014).

What we say is tied to a foreshadowing of performance agreements or the shadow of performances past (Shotter, 2014). Shotter explains:

> …our speech and other performances do not involve a simple "one- shot" implementation of an intention or desire; they involve an unfolding sequence of particular tryings, a movement this way and that, guided by an inner sensing of a specific situation's 'requirements' at each stage of our acting within it. (p. 7)

This is why it is difficult to theorize objectively about these *individual* performances, as if they can be observed as a singular statement, representing a single moment, they are instead part of a dynamic entrenchment of sayings and actions (Shotter, 2014). The thinking involved in performative understandings cannot be only of a cognitive kind or understood objectively prior to the moment we act into the unique situation. Shotter (2014) explains that performative

understandings have to do with the context requiring a response appropriate to the surroundings and the opportunities that are brought forth. For this reason, they "involve a particular kind of knowing that shows up in our *readiness to respond* in certain ways, spontaneously, according to the anticipations embodied in our *approach*, *attitude*, or *stance* towards the particular circumstances we happen to find ourselves in" (Shotter, 2014, p. 7). An attunement occurs that directs our engagement. Therefore, Shotter suggests that in order to reorient ourselves in research we need to ask questions not about our expectations based on previously understood theories, but on the presenting moments of spontaneous activity observed within a given circumstance.

We would be lost at any moment if we did not have access to an awareness of these contextual influences; the quality of this seemingly "background" awareness is different to what we see as "things" in our environment, but it is this knowing that guides our actions within a field of possibilities (Shotter, 2014).

> …but without this multi-stranded, embodied "background" (perceptual) understanding of the specific field of possibilities within which, in each changing moment, we are embedded, we would not only lack all orientation, but in not knowing "where we are," we would also, literally "not know what to do next." (Shotter, 2014, p. 8)

Our thoughts move us in distinct, yet unnoticed, transitions that underlie our speech movements and selections of words (Shotter, 2014). Shotter (2014) indicates, thus, that others around us "can *notice* inappropriate aspects of our tryings unavailable to us" (p. 9), these are the movements that we are not paying attention to. Others around us, knowing our desired movements can help us just as a singing coach can guide a singer, or the football coach can notice the players grip on the ball while the player remains focused on throwing the ball. Another

example is when people finish each other's sentences based on a spontaneous sense of knowing what words will come next.

There is a challenge in seeing these movements during the act since we are usually attending to the meanings and their outcomes with others involved so these intra-acting dynamics are missed (Shotter, 2014). Shotter (2014) explains that when we make an objective cut between speaker and the words spoken and study the meaning and outcome of those words, we have taken a Cartesian cut, separating the subjective side of the speaking process, and are therefore constantly in a process of reorienting ourselves with our surroundings as we choose the words we speak. This is when communication breaks down, we lose the open fluidity, and are left searching for schemas and theories to attach each to the objective moment.

It is as if we possess a "prosthetic-tool-text ambiguity" (Shotter, 2014, p. 10) in our relating to linguistic signs and the process of speaking: an agreement is made in the selection of a word to express a meaning and the word chosen is to have some effect on the other and otherness around us.

In our relations to linguistic signs, then, we can see them, I think, as possessing what might be called a "prosthetic-tool-text ambiguity," the three different aspects each becoming visible according to the different "directions" of our view: acting towards the future, prospectively, in our saying of an utterance, we attempt to use it both prosthetically, as a device "through" which to express our meanings, but also as a tool-like means to "move" other people—in Austin's terms, to both constate a fact of some kind, and to do something within the being of another person. Indeed, in this prosthetic-tool function of speech, our words in their speaking, work on the others and othernesses in our surroundings to specify them further. Retrospectively, however, the pattern of

already spoken words remains "on hand," so to speak, as like a "text," constituting a

given aspect of the situation between ourselves and our interlocutors, into which they (as

well as we) must direct their/our speech. (Shotter, 2014, p. 10).

Shotter (2014) goes on to say that the moment this dynamic is interrupted and what was

the "tool" playing a functional performative role becomes observed and objectified, we now take

on an interpretive lens based on theory to give it meaning and it becomes a standardized object

cut off from its varied performative functions taken on at different moments. This is to take the

Cartesian cut approach between the subjective semantic process and the "objective" words.

Shotter instead, considers Barad's (2007) theory in that the flow of life is a constant intra-active

and entangled process of becoming which redefines these familiar Cartesian "cuts" with an

agential cut which enacts a resolution within an inherently *indeterminate* reality.

To show this, Shotter (2014) provides a short transcript of a child playing with a set of

figures in a puppet theater. As the child speaks the voices of the characters, he questions himself

if one of the characters is really a pirate; what can be seen as conventional play is also

understood as a child acting within "rapidly shifting *orientations*…as he makes his way towards

the resolution of it he seeks" (Shotter, 2014, p. 12) each giving him performative understandings

and action guiding anticipations as to how to orient himself next. His questioning, therefore, is

answered spontaneously through the conversational movements. As it can be understood here, an

agential cut takes place that creates a boundary *within* phenomena for continuous interacting and

re-orientation *within* the context. This is different than a Cartesian cut that divides the subject

and object and makes it separate from the context.

Early versions of social constructionism were heavily focused on language, with research

aimed at "the social construction of linguistic *representations* (portrayals, explanations,

descriptions), as well as a search for the *social conventions* or their *rules* of use" (Shotter, 2014, p. 12). Although attention to a performative expression within psychology (i.e., dance, poetry, drama) was brought forth through Gergen's (2009) work, social constructionism continued to follow a Cartesian ontology, an inherently separate subject and object, focused on representation, and the objective nature of entities (as cited in Shotter, 2014). In *Relational being: Beyond self and community* (Gergen, 2009), Shotter (2014) points out Gergen's attention to all performances as relational doings, including our emotions, and adds:

> …to the extent that we can become aware of the inner movements of feeling involved, and their intra-relations to the unfolding circumstances of their expression, we can enter into their doing, to control our doing of them in different ways…in the unfolding emergence of all of our expressions, we can come to use the *acute discriminative awareness* available to us to "shape" the form of their expression…in acting on the subjective side of the subject/object cut, we can resolve on a way or ways of *relating ourselves to our surroundings* and taking them into account in our expressions that are more conducive in the long term to better relations with those around us—and in so doing, changing ourselves, not just in our knowledge, but in our very ways of being-in-the-world. (p. 14).

If we can see communication as performative movements, we can understand the logic of attending to the performance and continuously relating to it as it goes on rather than staying at an objective distance from it.

When attending to differences of agential realism and social constructionism we can see how we can question if a distinct separate relationship exists, but as Shotter (2014) puts it:

…the very posing of this question can very easily lead us, yet again, to assume that "agential realism," "social constructionism," and the "relation" between them, all *exist* as separate, identifiable, and nameable "things," unless we have strenuously taught ourselves to avoid such continual reifications." (p. 19)

Shotter (2014) uses agential realism as a deconstructive tool that is able to explain the intra-acting dynamics that occur in performative understandings. These are said to be within the subjective side of the Cartesian subject/object split and have a direct relationship to the material "*outside world* of separate nameable things" (Shotter, 2014, p. 15). He thus believes agential realism and social constructionism to be two sides of the same coin. Shotter goes on to add:

But better, much better, is to hear what is said or written (in the course of our trying to articulate what will show up in our attempts to implement them) as two different embodied voices in a continuous, unending dialogical and thus continually creative intra-relation with each other. Within such a dialogue, one voice would be expressing the unfolding dynamical course of our experiences in performing our actions, in intra-relation to the other voice expressing the nature and importance of the outcomes they together achieve—that is, their properties: how they can be used instrumentally; how they can also possess their own inner "workings"; how they can act back on how we relate to each other and to our surroundings thus to change who we are to ourselves, and so on, and so on. Work of this kind, then, involves our paying attention to dynamical, fleeting, and transitory experiences, and then trying linguistically to articulate their nature." (p. 15)

It can be disorienting to unlearn a practice we take to be *common sense*. It requires a change in orienting ourselves in such a way that we are open to different ways of seeing a moment transpire (Shotter, 2014).

…learning to "see" in both *this* way and *that*, involves our learning *to do* something, not simply acquiring a new piece of information. It requires our, to an extent, displacing already existing, deeply embodied practices and exploring new ways of orienting ourselves to our circumstances. (Shotter, 2014, pp. 15-16).

An attitude, Shotter (2014) explains, that requires practice to orient ourselves on the subjective side of the Cartesian subject/object cut:

…towards the *performative* (doing) functioning of our own and other people's words (and other expressions), rather than towards supposing them to have a representational (standing for) use—we will need continually to be asking ourselves, as a person speaks or writes: *What* is that person *doing* in saying that? How are they *using* that word, in *this* situation, *here* and *now*? What are we *feeling* as we experience them speaking?" (p. 16).

Being-Moved

Shotter's (2016) work over years in communication leads to a discussion of the difference between *being* and *Being*. According to Shotter, the very essence of movement indicates contact between people and their environment where all involved are 'moved' by the contact. He argues that this movement between people and the context is felt and can be responded to in a naturally spontaneous way. But he makes clear that we become too customized toward rationalizing and constructing our responses in ways we seem fit that in turn is unnatural.

In failing to attend to what we already share with all those around–in particular, our spontaneously responsive *uses* of language–we ignore our direct 'in-touch-ness' with our circumstances, and as a consequence, rather than acting in direct relation to what we *sense* 'as required by' our circumstances, we act instead as 'we think fit', in accord with a

whole set of *theoretical frameworks* of our own devising, aimed at satisfying our *wants* and *desires*, rather than our *real needs*. (Shotter, 2016, p. 34)

We can acquire *practical wisdom* through our relational interactions with others which is different from achieving knowledge (Shotter, 2016). There is something unique that transpires within our relations that can be grasped with a different orientation towards our surroundings; a re-orientation from "being 'masters' to being merely 'participants'" (Shotter, 2016, p. 35). Shotter (2016) makes distinct 'big B' Being and 'little b' being, suggesting that we start from a Being vantage point, returning to a more primal orientation with our world. He claims that we have lost the original openness to the becoming of the world around us, and instead are living as if every*thing* has been already determined.

Table 1 makes clear the differences of Being and being as a place of reference.

Table 1

The difference between Being and being as a place of reference

Being	being
"think" the practicality of "doing justice" to one's actions	Practicality based on "needs, wants"
Creatures of our environment	Reality based on "I think, I am" creators of reality
Human primal activity	Primarily mechanistic bodies animated by our thinking minds
Thick truths = prospective truths	Thin truths = objective truths
Utterances, expressions – "called out" to us	Reflections
Subjective movement of feeling, anticipations	Leaves us blind to unexpected happening
It can be learned (instructive experiences)	Scientific thinking - hypothesis

Orient ourselves	Ready ourselves to particular circumstances, feel a *thisness* not *thatness*, rational schematism corresponds with objective features of the world out there
Withness thinking, thinking from within	About-ness thinking – referential – representational when talking philosophically or theoretically
Immersed in big B background, taken-for-granted thinking and talking	Tendency to fragment holistic grasp of cosmos
Unfinished, openness of the world, before-the-fact, already instituted, intra-woven form of objectivity	Rational inquiries - reflections of current after-the-fact, already realized reality
Situated time-bound	Retrospective
Relationally responsive, spontaneous	Problem solving, theories
Process marked by gaps, discontinuous, unpredictable, qualitative changes	Cause and effect, quantitative process of development
World of dynamic stabilities, living forms	Objective "dead forms"
Wild, open, fluid world, unforeseeable, unclassifiable, participative thinking, shared sense of the circumstances, novel outcomes	Deliberate learned action from deliberation of cultural and social ways of doing, speaking, acting
Holistic common sense	The truth, formal truth
Accounts	Theories
Landscape of possibilities to think-with, hermeneutical unity provide sense of anticipated consequences	Ignore "background" influences at work directing and guiding what we attend to, how we act

Living from the Being perspective is not about reflection but instead a returning to a natural vantage point (Shotter, 2016). You can access Being:

…from within the ongoing, unfolding dynamics of the dialogically-structured relations within which we are inescapably immersed in our everyday lives together – the 'background' from which our sense of all the 'little b' beings we come to be aware of can be drawn. (Shotter, 2016, p. 38)

This is to understand each moment through its temporal and special surroundings as a unique moment that is being experienced rather than from a distance (Shotter, 2016). From this place, Shotter (2016) argues, we are closer to the truth and to the practical. The ethical aim is to shift away from the general which he describes as 'thin' practicality based on our wants and desires and instead toward the 'thicker' practicality and this way to do justice to the demands of the current circumstance. This entails a thinking from within, Shotter explains, it is a natural attunement to the surroundings, "a holistic common-sense that provides to all participants within it, a shared *sense of the circumstances* they are currently occupying" (p. 40).

Conclusion

Shotter's study of the dynamics of communication led him to develop a deep understanding of what appears to be an embodied human experience. Shotter's work presents us with a fine-tuned perspective on communication and our active relationship in it. He understood a natural accountability to the active forces within a conversation, between both the people involved and their surroundings (Shotter, 1995). This behavior, which he titled joint action, is to behave in reaction to the shared dynamics and context (Shotter, 1995). From his work on social poetics he began to tap into the embedded culture from each participant that becomes shared in dialogue, and how we can come to connect to another and hear more deeply what they intend to share in their language (Katz & Shotter, 1996). Katz and Shotter (1996) described an open stance in which one senses and feels their next move of verbal and/or nonverbal speech, given from the

movements shared within the space with another. That is, allowing each moment to move your dialogue—to be moved by an other and otherness (Katz & Shotter, 1996). Shotter (2005b) believed that we come to sense action guiding anticipations that are felt before after-the-fact and interpretation affects our reaction, these are the felt movements that indicate a direct response. Shotter (2012) differentiated from social constructionist patterns to singular moments, a move away from meanings and instead toward performative understandings. These understandings involve an open and tuned-in stance that allows for the subtle movements to be felt and engages within us a readiness to respond in each moment (Shotter, 2014).

In sum, Shotter (2016) redefines what it means to be in a given moment with others. The big 'B' Being state he describes is a deeper intentional space that reflects a more innate state of mind. At this state we are coming into our relationships and communications with a mental openness that is more relationally and contextually responsive than our theoretical and conditioned thinking (Shotter, 2016). This Being orientation to our surroundings describes an enhanced form of communication that could benefit therapists for more improved conversation. It can be a disciplined practice we can take in our lives and with our clients which may prove to benefit the therapeutic process overall.

CHAPTER IV.

RELATIONAL MINDFULNESS

Relational mindfulness (RM) is a branch of mindfulness focusing on the relationship of the self; the self with others; and, of the self with the environment (Tull, 2018). Mindfulness is about directing our attention and awareness in the present moment, thus to increase our capacity to listen and recognize our own internal mental and emotional state (Surrey et al., 2013). When we are in the present moment we aware of the coming stimuli, thus enabling a greater capacity to observe one's experience, assist decision making, and experience greater well-being (Germer et al., 2013). Psychotherapy is about alleviating emotional suffering, for this reason mindfulness can enable clients to turn toward their emotions with a capacity to observe and understand them (Germer et al., 2013). Germer et al. (2013) explain that this gives clients the ability to self-regulate their own emotions and by decreasing emotional reactivity clients gain more control over their life experience.

In recent psychotherapy research, RM has been described as the practice of increasing attention to and awareness of the therapist's own internal state, the state of the client, and of the therapeutic relationship (Surrey et al., 2013). Surrey et al. (2013) explain that "these domains of experience co-arise and co-influence each other in an ongoing, ever-changing flow of experience" (p. 97). A therapist makes an effort to be present in the engaged moment-to-moment experience with their clients; aware of themselves, their clients, and the relational dynamic between them (Surrey et al., 2013).

Research has shown a positive correlation between therapist mindfulness and therapeutic alliance (Padilla, 2011; Bisseling et al., 2019; Leonard et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2012; Wexler, 2006) along with therapy outcome (Escuriex & Labbé, 2011; Padilla, 2011; Ryan et al., 2012;

Zeifman et al., 2020). However, Falb and Pargament (2012) point out that even when therapists

practice traditional mindfulness techniques such as meditation there can still be a struggle with

interpersonal relationships. Traits, such as calmness and clarity, developed through these

practices, are often not sustained when in relationship.

RM is not about the techniques, it's about the practice of mindfulness *in relationships*; in

the ebb and flow of verbal and nonverbal communications (Falb & Pargament, 2012). It is an

emphasis on the "interactions between two or more people who take a deliberate stance of

awareness and attention to their emotional and bodily states as influenced by their dealings with

one another" (Falb & Pargament, 2012, p. 352). RM can deepen the therapeutic relationship and

"make such experiential knowing more accessible, as well as guide therapeutic inquiry in a more

aligned and penetrating direction" (Surrey et al., 2013, p. 99). Surrey et al. (2013) explain that it

enables a therapist to attune to the subtle shifts in the therapeutic conversations through increased

clarity of mind and attention. The therapist, attentive to their inner state, communicates with

congruence and genuineness while encouraging client openness and self-understanding through

compassionate presence.

Relational Mindfulness in the Clinical Environment

RM is a practice that focuses on both internal and external states of awareness (Surrey, et

al., 2013). In therapy, Surrey explains:

> I (J. L. S.) try to begin each session with the intention to anchor awareness in my breath
>
> and body (including contact points with the chair and the floor), and remind myself to
>
> sustain this form of embodied presence. Then I begin to enlarge my awareness to the
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> physical experience of the patient in the room and to the flow of our relationship, the
>
> moment-to-moment, unfolding experience of connecting and disconnecting during the

therapy hour. Again and again, I return to the felt experience of the patient, to the

patient's experience of him- or herself and others in his or her life, to our relationship,

and to the changing qualities of these co-emergent dimensions. Often I pause to interrupt

timeworn habits from my role as a therapist (e.g., seeing something in a patient that I may

have seen in past sessions and then assuming that this is what is happening right now)

and anchor my awareness in the breath or sensations in my body. Over time, the field of

relational mindfulness expands and becomes the larger "container" of all these internal,

external, and relational experiences. (Surrey et al., 2013, p. 98)

Parnas and Isobel (2019) note that in the clinical environment it is important to transmit

safety, and this can be done through one's facial expression, eye contact, tone of voice, and body

posture. They explain that relational mindfulness is to be in the present moment within a shared

space, tuning into self and other "while attending to the flow of the relationship and the ongoing

dance of interpersonal connection, disconnection and reconnection" (p. 597). A clinician tunes

into self to be in touch with their body as it may provide information about their own feelings or

the feelings of their patients. This attunement can help them to notice the behaviors of their

patients through verbal and nonverbal information as they may become triggered or have

feelings of discomfort during the session. Parnas and Isobel report that this feedback can enhance

the relationship of the clinician to the patient, supporting them by "creating bio-behavioural

conditions that allow the patient to relax their defensive reactions and connect with the clinician"

(p. 597). Furthermore, RM allows the clinician to engage with the patient based on this

information, adjusting to the needs of the patient to "identify relational ruptures and become

aware of transference and countertransference reactions" (Parnas & Isobel, 2019, p. 597).

According to Parnas and Isobel (2019) there are three main areas that support the development of RM: self-awareness, self-care, and practice. *Self-awareness* is the enhanced self-knowledge we can have about our body, thoughts, and feelings. This awareness can help clinicians to have better attention to and management of their "anxieties, expectations, judgements or defensive responses in order to remain open to the experiences of the patient" (p. 597). They explain that in this way, RM can help to manage a therapist's own reactivity and this way stay attentive during a patients' defensive reactions. By enhancing self-awareness, a therapist also makes an effort to stay attentive to compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma, and burnout.

Self-care is attuning to one's own physical and emotional needs, exercise, nutrition, and personal relationships, all of which can interfere with relational presence and mindfulness (Parnas & Isobel, 2019). Parnas and Isobel (2019) indicate that this includes the capacity for self-compassion when overwhelmed with fatigue or symptoms of burnout to reduce feelings of inadequacy and shame. They note that in addition to self-care, *practice* is essential. Practice is the development of mindfulness through attention exercises of the mind and body. The practice will help a clinician become more attuned to themselves and this way have the capacity to attune to others.

Parnas and Isobel (2019) explain:

The intention is to be immersed in the here and now with a non-judging awareness of the other person, oneself and the interpersonal space while attending to the flow of the relationship and the ongoing dance of interpersonal connection, disconnection and reconnection. With relational mindfulness, the clinician uses interoceptive awareness of their body to stay grounded in the present moment and noticing bodily states that might

provide information about their feelings or those of the patient. Present moment awareness helps the clinician attune to the patient and recognize when their own defensive responses are triggered, while creating biobehavioural conditions that allow the patient to relax their defensive reactions and connect with the clinician. (p. 597)

Relational Mindfulness Training (RMT) Research

A RMT program developed by Vich and Lukeš (2018) for management students showed an increase in mindfulness, authentic leadership, and self-compassion. The RMT focused on using mindfulness within social interaction to increase awareness of self and other, to be present with one another, and for increased kindness within interactions (Vich et al., 2020). Training was done in dyads and groups focused on developing mindfulness within self while in an interaction (self-in-relationship), and mindfulness of others (mindfulness of other-in-relationship), and compassion of other during the interaction (Vich et al., 2020). Outcomes include mindfulness in social situations and increased mindfulness traits for the participants (Vich et al., 2020). An additional RMT study was done for psychiatry residents to help with interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness and attunement (Bentley et al., 2018). The study showed an increase in empathy, cognitive and emotional experiences, self-care, patients care and their families (Bentley et al., 2018).

Relational Mindfulness: Self, Other, and the Planet

Zen monk Deborah Tull wrote a book on relational mindfulness after a life-long journey of self-awareness and awakening, which included a seven-and-a-half year retreat at a silent Zen Buddhist monastery. Tull (2018) describes three important relationships for increased mindfulness: relationship to self, others, and to the planet. Through the practice of cultivating these relationships she believes we can enhance our quality and experience of our lives.

Although the monastery provided a simple life, after moving to the metropolis of Los Angeles, California, she understood that simplicity was an internal state that she needed to maintain and harness. She explains that meditation is not just a sitting practice but rather a way of life, an attitude we bring to our lives. Tull writes that "it begins on the cushion, and we then bring it into movement, into our interactions and communication, into our work life, into how we relate with the earth, with politics, and all aspects of our life" (p. xii).

The path of relational mindfulness enriches lives through deeper human interconnections in a shared world experience (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) believes that the current mentality of separation from others and our environment is what leads us toward depression and suffering. According to Tull, the illusion of separation is what guides one away from connection and cooperation leading one instead toward competition and power over others and the planet. One can see this through planetary abuse, and the abuse of people through prejudice, racism, and bullying, among other forms.

Relationship with self

Tull (2018) begins by addressing human sensitivity and vulnerability. One starts in life being dependent on parents for nutrition, safety and a nurturing environment. Then, one grows to continue to have environmental needs of fertile ground and safe surroundings. Tull explains that people are raised to learn self-sufficiency and survival through messages telling one to be strong, independent, and tough, all of which are meant to hide one's sensitivity and vulnerability. These messages lead to attitudes that push people to be driven by success, concealing feelings of vulnerability under a guise of independence and strength. This all stems from an "'I'-versus-'you' rather than a 'We' world…'power over,' rather than seeking the 'power with'" (Tull, 2018, p. 18).

Cutting off from one's sensitivity begins to numb one from one's environment; attempts are made to disconnect from feelings of fear and this way one also is disconnected from feelings of joy (Tull, 2018). Sensitivity to the world is a reflection of the deep interconnected nature of life, and without this one lives an illusion of isolation (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) points out that in order to turn away from feelings people have adopted to turn toward over-thinking and habits of over-consumption through internet, tv, shopping, substance use, and so forth.

RM is an invitation to turn toward sensitivity and to feel feelings (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) explains that through opening the heart and being vulnerable people open themselves to pain but also to the capacity to recognize what is needed to heal the pain. Using a sitting mediation, for example, people can open themselves to thoughts and feelings that show up in the practice, and in these moments they are called to sit with what arises and through this learn to reconnect to their life experience. This is when they can begin to deepen their capacity for loving kindness and flexibility whenever feelings of discomfort and stress are encountered.

Relationship with one another

The way people can engage with others can be limited by ego, schemas, and expectations (Tull, 2018). These get in the way of authentic interaction and it becomes divisive by forcing an *I* agenda versus a *we* agenda. Tull (2018) suggests noticing one's agenda in interactions by questioning if there is a desired motive or outcome that one may be attached to. She stresses that if one can become self-aware in these moments, they can make room for growth and healing. This way, they can reorient the need ego wants to meet to a deeper need instead and become available for an authentic and fulfilling connection. Tull argues that stepping back and taking responsibility in conversations enables a *we* space within social situations. When one is present in conversation there is less energy toll on the body and mind, they are not coming from a place

of worry and defensiveness but are instead freed up to meet the other willingly and openly. Conversations like these are more satisfying because one can feel seen and heard, and able to give back the same level of deep listening as they receive while also attending to their feelings. This allows one insight and receptivity to the conditioning one or another may bring in conflicting conversation. Tull suggests owning one's thoughts of concern or disagreement by acknowledging that they are thinking them and therefore releasing themselves from the obligation to hold that thought present in their mind. She explains that the thoughts are draining one's energy and when one can acknowledge them one is freer to be present in the moment.

Connecting with others opens one to intimacy and shared vulnerability (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) points out several habits one can adopt to raise one's capacity for *we* conscious connection. These include maintaining eye contact with others; willingness to be present and free from distractions; ability to receive feedback; willingness to resolve conflict; willingness to distill information from nonessential to essential; willingness to let go needing to feel perfect and special; ability to sit in silence with another; and strengthening self-care so one can be centered when triggered (Tull, 2018).

Relationship with the planet

Tull (2018) writes about cultivating a relationship with the planet starting with the environment. RM is not only about relationships with people, but also one's relationship with the planet. She explains that it is about holding one's self responsible for their lifestyle choices and having the humility to acknowledge them and their effect on the planet. It is to recognize that one's personal sphere as not only a human sphere as the modern world may reinforce, but rather to understand that one lives surrounded by a natural world that they are dependent on (Tull, 2018).

Tull (2018) suggests spending time with nature to reconnect and enrich one's life with sights, smells, and sounds. In present times one is connected to technological devices on a daily basis and can grow farther and farther apart from nature. She argues that reconnecting to earth through the senses nourishes the body and mind bringing one to the present moment (Tull, 2018). It can be through intentional practice a few minutes a day or just taking the time to pause while walking to the car, looking out a window, or eating (Tull, 2018). Tull invites one to disentangle themselves from the conditioning of the dominant trend of beauty that dictates their ability to connect with their own aesthetic sense. When one connects with nature they are called to break from an inner duality and instead connect to deeper sense of wholeness that exits in the relationship. It is this sense, Tull explains, that motivates one to protect and nurture the beauty and life of our environment and the planet at large.

Principles of relational mindfulness

RM is an opportunity to reconnect to the world through relationships (Tull, 2018). According to Tull (2018), the act of intentionally attending toward self or other is a subtle form of love that forms the basis of relational mindfulness. It is "a visceral experience of non-separation" (Tull, 2018, p. 33) that engages the mind and heart. RM has several principles that can become a part of one's formal and informal life practice. These principles are: intention; the mindful pause; deep listening; mindful inquiry; turning toward rather than away; not taking personally; taking responsibility; transparency; and, compassionate action.

Sitting meditation and formal practices can help to cultivate the principles of RM (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) suggests taking time within as a method of connecting with one's thoughts and emotions. This can be done in several ways, some examples are: putting attention in the direction of your activities; sitting in silence; being in touch with your body; releasing toxic

relationships; disconnecting from media and gossip for a time; and, eating mindfully (Tull, 2018). Tull adds that cultivating presence within one's self will increase one's self-awareness in daily life. This shouldn't be a forceful act but a "compassionate self-discipline" (Tull, 2018, p. 64). She asserts that it takes self-discipline to remind one's self to engage mindfully and take time for themselves, and it takes compassion to embrace human nature and the tendency to disconnect. Compassion is also important when dealing with trauma that may arise as a result of meditations and mindful practices that increase conscious awareness of thoughts and feelings that may have been kept hidden from one's self. This is when the support of a therapist in conjunction to the mindfulness practice can be helpful.

The following are brief descriptions of Tull's (2018) principles of RM:

Intention and the mindful pause

Intention is an important key that helps one to remain anchored in their dedication for mindfulness with another (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) explains that "by committing to consciousness in the relational field and using our interactions to deepen awareness, we set the intention to pay attention" (p. 122). She believes the mindful pause is a further step that helps one to maintain that open state of awareness. It can happen, before, during or after dialogue with others, by simply taking a deep breath to gather oneself and feel into one's body (Tull, 2018). This act invites one to regain the connection to themselves in the present moment and away from mental distraction.

Deep listening

When in conversation, relational mindfulness it to assume a stance of deep listening as "an act of love" (Tull, 2018, p. 123). When one listens deeply, one honors another by giving their attention fully without an agenda (Tull, 2018). It is "to listen beyond the words to the subtext, the

energy behind someone's words, and the actual feelings of the person we are listening to" (Tull, 2018, p. 124). According to Tull (2018), the practice itself helps one to keep their focus in the moment rather than in the mind. Similar to meditation, it is a practice that requires attention and awareness and this way one is anchored to the conversation. This a mutually satisfying experience because when one listens deeply, one's conversational partner is more likely to do the same.

Mindful inquiry and clear seeing

Being guided through deep listening allows one to access more information than what is normally received through the senses (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) writes that deep listening opens one to mindful inquiry as a natural process of the open heart and mind that is experiencing. "Questions arise as we open doorways to greater insight" (Tull, 2018, p. 124). One naturally is seeing more clearly.

> From authentic seeing, we can have insights into another person that are incredibly valuable. If nothing else, insight helps us to be with that person and feel compassion for whatever they are caught up in. The person has an experience of actually being seen as they are. (Tull, 2018, p. 124)

Turning toward rather than away

Turning toward is seeing a person from beyond one's personality and beyond their personality too, to their true nature (Tull, 2018). This requires a space of compassion for one's self and for others as one works through the layers of personality that can arise and take away from authentic relating (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) explains that we all have habitual escape patterns, so another form of RM is our effort to turn toward rather than away. She suggests being in the place of discomfort in these times, bringing awareness toward the moment instead of

shutting it down, and learning from the information. These moments are opportunities to heal

triggers that have been created by past traumas.

Not taking personally

Tull (2018) suggests remaining grounded throughout interactions and to lean toward self-

awareness to keep from falling into a trap of taking things personally. "Everything that arises

simply becomes an opportunity for deepening practice, rather than something to react to" (Tull,

2018, p. 126). It is a move away from reactions and habitual responses and instead toward

curiosity and openness to see more clearly. It is to focus on the process, rather than the content

and witness the elevation in interest that comes from that. According to Tull (2018)

conversations are far more liberating this way.

Taking responsibility

Taking responsibility means to meet each person with respect and compassion even when

others are not doing the same (Tull, 2018). It is to accept someone as they are and to feel

compassion for what they are going through or have gone through that may have led to the way

they are acting in the present moment. Tull (2018) explains that self-care is important here as one

may feel triggered in these relational dynamics with another. Furthermore, she adds, that this

equally means to know one's limits and take responsibility to maintain boundaries when needed.

Transparency

Transparency is difficult when one is conditioned to be careful, shielded, and to act in

ways that are considered acceptable to society even when the definition of acceptable keeps

changing (Tull, 2018). According to Tull (2018), moments when one steps away from these

limits that are imposed, and allows oneself to be seen, they can realize that judgement is not

present, and instead they are found lovable and more interesting than the image one hoped to

project. "Transparency asks us to stop role-playing in relationships" (Tull, 2018, p. 127). True self in relationship invites others to be vulnerable and desire themselves to be seen. Transparency is a practice that we can take on wherever one is and whomever one is with.

Compassionate action

When one feels hurt one brings that to an interaction whereas if one feels peace, they bring peace (Tull, 2018). "By remaining open, engaged, and connected with ourselves in an interaction, we have the chance to affirm honest, clear, satisfying, and well-intentioned communication" (Tull, 2018, p. 128). When one is present in this way they are open to hear and feel an insight into what someone may need to hear, or a gesture or action being called from us in the moment by another (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) argues that one may be forcing a "fix" or think they know what someone needs and this blocks the pathway to true insight. One needs to let go and trust that the words needed will come through one's authenticity. It takes time to cultivate a space for compassionate action, but Tull believes it to be the most powerful impact we can provide in our relationships.

Accountability for relational mindfulness

Commitment to RM demonstrates compassion for one's self and others and the desire to end suffering in relationships (Tull, 2018). Tull (2018) suggests practicing the main principles with a partner with or in groups (Tull, 2018). Every time one practices they encourage authenticity in one's self and others. By doing so, one also commits to seeing themselves through another, their ego patterns and habits, deepening their authenticity and capacity for freedom in relations.

Conclusion

In summary, RM is a lifestyle that entails attention toward one's self, relationships with others, and with the planet (Tull, 2018). According to Tull (2018), mindfulness practices such as meditation, can help sustain these relationships through constant reconnection to self, others, and the planet as a daily intentional practice. RM extends beyond formal individual practice and reinforces practice with others and with nature (Falb & Pargament, 2012; Tull, 2018). These practices and Tull's (2018) principles of RM can benefit one's life and relationships. RM has been shown to enhance a therapist's ability to connect with their clients (Falb & Pargament, 2012; Parnas & Isobel, 2019; Surrey et al., 2013; Vich et al., 2020). Overall, it can be understood that strengthening one's self and one's relationships through RM can be of benefit to one's clinical practice.

The last three chapters I laid out the framework for three theories of relationality: agential realism; Shotter's communication theory; and relational mindfulness. In the next chapter I will explain how I plan to intersect these ideas with each other with the goal to bring forth principles based on these theories that outline a suggested orientation or way of being in the world, and more specifically with clients in a therapeutic practice.

CHAPTER V.

METHODOLOGY

Post-Qualitative Inquiry: New Grounds in Research

During the time when positivist empirically-based research had been the standard, a movement in academia began with the aim to decenter humanist methodologies at the core of all research (Lather, 2013; St. Pierre, 2014). The logic of positivism draws on deterministic laws of cause-and-effect and the belief that all knowledge is based on empirical evidence—derived through the human senses (Creswell, 2013). Early research methods relied on quantitative data and statistical analysis from surveys and experiments; eventually the advent of social constructionist ideas on the subjective nature of meaning expanded the scientific focus from numbers to language, turning attention toward the interpretations of people and their experiences (Creswell, 2013; St. Pierre, 2013, 2014;). The postmodern turn (also known as the linguistic, cultural, or social turn) reflected a social movement that encouraged multiculturalism and diversity in research, followed by issues of class, race, gender, and privilege; research became targeted at the "everyday lived experiences of the oppressed, the silenced, and the lost and forgotten in the service of social justice" (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 648).

At first, scholars pushing for anti-humanist methodologies advocated for these qualitative research approaches only to find that they remained human-centered, keeping up with the representationalist epistemology rooted in empiricism (Lather, 2013; St. Pierre, 2014). These methods still followed deterministic laws and representational logic, which assumes an observable reality that can be accurately represented through language (St. Pierre, 2013). Indeed, these philosophical assumptions place the human at the center of all knowledge. St. Pierre (2014) describes her experience of these times:

Instead of reading statistical data collected in surveys and experiments in which people

and what they thought and felt and did were disappeared in numbers in charts and graphs,

we retrieved the lived body—we wanted people *live*, in person, present. We wanted to

talk with them face-to-face; to see, first-hand, what their faces and bodies looked like

when they described their everyday lived experiences. We wanted to see their pain. We

wanted to witness their oppression first hand. We wanted to laugh and weep with them

when they told us their stories. We wanted to hear their voices which came from the

depths, the core of their inner beings. We wanted to watch them in their natural settings

as they *really* were. We wanted to get to the ground of truth, to the reality of their

everyday lives. We longed for our *own* experiences of "being there" with them in the

field, being present, being witnesses in the moment with them. Then, if we'd carefully

and systematically captured and recorded that authentic reality, we could reproduce it,

represent it in words, in thick description, so that others could read our texts and be there

too. Even after the crisis of representation, we continued to present our participants to our

readers on a silver platter for the sake of knowledge. (p. 7)

Qualitative methods of engaging with participants had presented a new transmission of

data that appeared to have moved away from prior empirically based practices. The validation of

these methods had been essential, but scholars soon learned that outmoded ideologies were still

in play and moving beyond the limitations of these ideologies was required.

Although the postmodern turn paved the way toward this agenda with post structural

theorists such as Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari who critiqued humanist ways of knowing and

being, qualitative methodologies have continued to imply a human subject with interpretative

abilities who stands apart from the research (Lather, 2013; St. Pierre, 2014). Micciche (2014) called attention to the challenge:

> If recent critical scholarship is any indication, the 'social turn' has hardened into repressive orthodoxy and failed to keep pace with a changing world. In its policing of essentialism, refusal to engage nature or biology, and reliance on culture and language as exclusive routes to meaningful analysis, the social turn, at least dominant forms of it, seems to have plateaued. (p. 487)

In defense of the methodology, scholars began to deconstruct the central humanist concepts embedded in qualitative inquiry such as voice, meaning, language, and reflexivity, demanding a re-turn to the early postmodern and post structural theorists (Lather, 2013; St. Pierre, 2014). Along with that, a renewed attention to physical matter developed, questioning the privilege of language in postmodern thought but without a regression to earlier materialist-centered views (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Scholarship began to emerge across disciplinary fields as a part of the *ontological turn*, the *new empiricism*, and *new materialism* (St. Pierre, 2014). This new understanding demanded a new way to research in academia.

Post-qualitative inquiry aligned with the new turn, takes a non-representationalist stance and a new form of scholarship. St. Pierre (2019) argues that post-qualitative inquiry is not considered a methodology that has a standardized design or a formalized process that is to be followed. Even traditional research language such as "data collection" (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 6) suggests a representationalist philosophy that sees data as separate from the human who is the collector. Instead, post-qualitative research is always something original; St Pierre (2019) remarks:

It must be invented, created differently each time, and one study called post qualitative will not look like another. The goal of post qualitative inquiry is not to systematically repeat a preexisting research process to reproduce a recognizable result but to experiment and create something new and different that might not be recognizable in existing structures of intelligibility. (p. 6)

New materialists are ascribing a revision to current ontologies and epistemologies that have become outdated and invalid. It's not a movement to reject postmodern, social constructionist ideas, but rather a validation of material reality as an equal force upon society. As Coole and Frost (2010) make clear "for critical materialists, society is simultaneously materially real and socially constructed: our material lives are always culturally mediated, but they are not only cultural" (p. 27). Social constructionist ideas of cultural and historical influence on human life are still a significant part of this new perspective, but new materialists urge the inclusion of the material in our discourses.

A New Materialism

Scientific and technological advancement led to the culture clash becoming more evident between the humanities and the sciences; the former focused on lived experience and complexity, and the latter quantification—or "universalistic pretentions of standing outside space and time on the one hand, and narrow empiricism on the other" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 157). Joined with increasing evidence of matter's dynamic nature from the fields of quantum physics and the life sciences, there was a demand for a reappraisal of matter (Braidotti, 2013). These findings suggested that agency is no longer something that is reserved for the human, it is evidenced in all things, both natural and artificial (Coole & Frost, 2010).

New materialism challenges traditional assumptions of human agency and stresses a need to reassess our invested relationship with nature in our daily lives (Coole & Frost, 2010). Coole and Frost (2010) explain that the practice of *critical materialism* "means practical, politically engaged social theory, devoted to the critical analysis of actual conditions of existence and their inherent inequality" (pp. 24-25). Furthermore, critical materialists focus on the people themselves, their concepts, and values within a material world that produces and reinforces their existence. New materialism is challenging agentic practices in research by raising attention to the interconnectivity of material factors.

New materialist thought has been thriving through diverse disciplines such as education (Duoblienė et al., 2023; Ginsberg & Lennon, 2023), literature (Rosiek & Adkins-Cartee, 2023; Sauri, 2023), physics (Marshall, 2021), political science (Ejsing, 2023), philosophy (Landgraf, 2023), and sociology (Fox & Powell, 2021). In the field of physics, Barad's (2007) analyses of quantum physics concepts has been pivotal. Her work was a clear retraction of representationalist ideas in theory and research. Barad's agential realism presents us with a new way to do and think with research.

Diffractive Research: Non-Representationalist Research

…objectivity cannot be about producing undistorted representations from afar; rather, objectivity is about being accountable to the specific materializations of which we are a part. And this requires a methodology that is attentive to, and responsive/responsible to, the specificity of material entanglements in their agential becoming. The physical phenomenon of diffraction makes manifest the extraordinary liveliness of the world. (Barad, 2007, p.92)

Barad's (2007) diffractive method of research, rooted in her new materialist framework of agential realism, turns the lens back toward materiality through a radically different ontology and epistemology, an "onto-epistem-ology" (Barad, 2007, p. 185). *Ontoepistemology* is to acknowledge that we cannot separate knowing from being and that should transpire in our actions and through our research.

Barad (2007) begins her work with a thorough grasp and development of the ideas brought forth by the physicist Neils Bohr, through which she dismantles classical Newtonian epistemological and ontological assumptions rooted in the seventeenth century. Newtonian physics assumes that objects exist independently of our experimental investigations of them; objects "possess individually determinate attributes, and it is the job of the scientist to cleverly discern these inherent characteristics by obtaining the values of the corresponding observation-independent variables through some benignly invasive measurement procedure" (Barad, 2007, p. 107). This led to the objectivist claim that through reproducibility of experimentations we can define inherent properties of objects of an observation-independent reality. These assumptions enabled the representationalist thinking we still have today.

Barad (2007) defines representationalism and comments on the advantages it has for research:

> …representationalism—the belief that words, concepts, ideas, and the like accurately reflect or mirror the things to which they refer—makes a finely polished surface of this whole affair. And it has encouraged the belief that it is possible to turn the mirror back on oneself, as it were, thus spawning various candidates for "reflexive" methodologies. (p. 86)

With insights from her study of Bohr's work, along with the readings of poststructuralist theorists Foucault and Butler, among others, who also questioned representationalist ideas, Barad (2007) developed her theoretical framework. Agential realism is a "non-representationalist form of realism based on an ontology that does not take for granted the existence of 'words' and 'things' and an epistemology that does not subscribe to a notion of truth based on their correct correspondence" (p. 56). Through an elaboration of the work of feminist scientist Donna Haraway, Barad introduces diffraction as an apt form of research in line with her agential realist theory.

Diffraction, in physics, is a pattern that occurs when any kind of wave (e.g., water, sound, light) has encountered an obstruction or it has interfered with another wave resulting in a new wave pattern as a consequence of the combined effect of the individual waves (Barad, 2007). Barad (2007) uses diffraction as a metaphor to describe a process that results in differences rather than to focus on similarities as representationalist methodologies do, aiming to represent the object of an investigation or an idea. Instead, a diffractive approach to data moves "away from the familiar habits and seductions of representationalism (reflecting on the world from outside) to a way of understanding the world from within and as part of it" (p. 88). As a diffractive pattern implies, in diffractive research, the differences are seen as entangled states rather than reflections made at a distance. Where reflection assumes a preexisting determinate boundary between subject and object, diffraction recognizes relations as entangled phenomena. As van der Tuin (2014) puts it, diffraction "is a tool that makes explicit the destabilization of the dis-embodied and dis-embedded subject position of the scientist and critical student of science alike" (p. 238).

This move from reflexive representationalist approaches to methodologies that accurately align with contemporary theories has produced an array of new research studies across disciplinary fields. Studies have emerged across the world, including Australia (Davies, 2014; Dilkes-Frayne et al., 2017; Wolfe, 2016), Austria (Höppner, 2017), Canada (Doucet, 2013; Norman & Moola, 2019), Denmark (Juelskjaer, 2013; Søndergaard, 2016), South Africa (Leibowitz, 2016; Mitchell, 2016), Sweden (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013; Sjöberg, 2017), New Zealand (Allen, 2015; Kotzé et al., 2016), the United Kingdom (Alexander & Wyatt, 2018; Kazimierczak, 2018; Mackenzie & Roberts, 2017), and the United States (Jackson, 2013; Kuby et al., 2015; Marn & Wolgemuth, 2017).

This study is guided by the new materialist, post-humanist turn engaging in post-qualitative research aimed at breaking through current epistemological routines and humanistic representationalist modes of producing knowledge. It entails a performative understanding of *data and researcher* within a relational ontology, which not only presents a new way of seeing and thinking with data, but also a new way of encountering data through a critical lens that recognizes agency as an enactment and the mutual productivity of these enactments (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Thinking diffraction

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) use French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *plugging in* to reference the idea or process of assembling to allow connections to emerge between data and theory. As they explain in their book *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research*, it is a process of plugging in, folding, and flattening of agencies and binaries to allow a new account to emerge. These new research methods require a practice of merging insights, data, research and researcher, into the research 'assemblage' entailing the process of diffraction.

Plugging in is to read data attentive to theoretical and methodological perspectives on voice, truth, and meaning (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) explain that the overall process involves (a) decentering the theory and practice to show how they constitute one another; (b) being deliberate and transparent, concerned with the theoretical concepts behind questions as they arise; (c) and to work and rework the data repeatedly, re-forming and de-centering concepts to allow a multiplicity of meanings as new knowledge emerges. It is within these spaces where the researcher finds themselves in a constant state of a 'threshold' where transformations can occur, new thoughts can emerge and be folded into the data and theory—a folding and flattening of the field of subjectivities, researcher selves being remade and *part of* the assemblage process. Jackson and Mazzei explain:

> The move away from the macro of coding and into the threshold is what happens when we seek to move away from patterns for the purpose of changing our relationship to theory and data. To plug data and theory into one another in the threshold is to position ourselves as researchers otherwise than merely always-already subject ready to capture and code the experiences of our participants and their material conditions as always-already object. Such a practice of reading diffractively means that we try to fold these texts into one another in a move that flattens our relationship to the participants, the theory, and the data (p. 12).

In this move away from coding, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) suggest a method of *mapping* as a means of "deterritorializing" (p.12) data, theory, and ourselves "to resist the route that is known in the form of tracing – to data, theory, meaning, representation" (p. 12). To trace is to code, whereas to map, Jackson and Mazzei explain:

…results in a flattening and closeness that intervenes to prompt previously unthought

questions: What is blocked? What attempts to take root? Which lines survive? To

deterritorialize and reterritorialize is to leave the trace, to flatten the hierarchies, and to

reterritorialize ways of thinking about data, method, and meaning-making. (p. 12-13)

This research process entails a plugging in of text through one another, thereby reading

authors, their theories, and concepts, and plugging them into each other, or rather, allowing these

insights to move and transform the text, making room for analytical questions to arise (Jackson

& Mazzei, 2012). In addition, it is a plugging in of ourselves as the researcher, Jackson and

Mazzei (2012) note:

…not an insertion into the context in an autoethnographic sense, nor is it a reflection that

takes our own researcher subjectivity into account, but it is an installing of ourselves that

attempts to make sense of the blurring and viscous interactions. (p. 131).

As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) point out, it is to eliminate the subject and object

positioning of researcher and data, changing how we ask questions. That is, to attend to the

active and entangled relations of researcher and researched, removing hierarchy for a posthuman

understanding of scholarship and of the world (van der Tuin, 2014).

This post-qualitative research study is an exploration of self as researcher and data. This

is a diffractive textual analysis of agential realism, Shotter's communication theory, and

relational mindfulness that asks the question: what meanings are given regarding relationality

and how do these insights inform a new understanding of the therapeutic encounter?

Structure of the Study

A diffraction of theoretical insights drawn from all three sections follows. I diffract

agential realism, with Shotter's communication theory, and with relational mindfulness. Steps

have been taken to compare and contrast terms with each other and notice how they come together or accent one another. The process involved a movement with the material, asking questions and allowing the questions and answers to guide me toward new understandings and repeating this process until a felt sense of exhaustion of information was achieved. As new meanings and insights occurred through the process of plugging in each theory with one another, the mapping process allowed further analytical questions to arise and take shape to re-territorialize the data. The insights drawn formed the new territory I created. The new territory developed through this process is an accumulation of principle points that delineates a suggested mode of orienting ourselves to our environment and interacting with others. Based on these principles, I created an additional set of principles that is specified for therapists related to the therapy process. To conclude, I addressed any related current and historical work in the field of MFT, along with the application and future directions of these results for the practice of marriage and family therapy.

CHAPTER VI.

RESULTS

The following principles have been created through the diffractive research process which entailed enfolding Barad's agential realism with John Shotter's theory of communication, and with relational mindfulness. As I immersed myself with these three theories, insights emerged that resulted in several principles. I continued the process of enfolding each theory through each principle, allowing questions to arise and thresholds to be reached, only to begin the process again. I finally reached a point of saturation of the information and felt the words chosen were adequate to express each point. There are nine principles of orientation followed by an appraisal and application of each principle for the field of marriage and family therapy.

Part I

Table 2

Principles of Orientation Overview

General Category	Principles
Basics: Background of orientation	1. Cognitive acceptance and understanding of our ontological state with all matter. Through this we recognize our being immersed in a material world and the implicit effect of both internal and external bodies of matter, mattering around us.
	2. 'Words' do not have predetermined meanings. Words emerge through material-discursive practice.

	3. A state of compassion—a sensitivity to equal state of being with all others. Sensitivity to the vulnerability that is a shared experience. We understand that all humans, animals, and sentient beings are sharing an ontological existence with each other and all non-human matter. We understand the vulnerability this implies and the felt sense of compassion it offers. We understand the codependency that exists among all humans and the world.
	4. Ethical intra-action, as a recognition of agency of all matter, therefore prompting socially responsible action. We move in the world with action that is supportive of self and otherness.
	5. Accountability of our actions and in-actions. We recognize our ontological state, that entails direct interconnection to the becoming of the world. We take account of our actions or in-actions in the material-discursive practices we engage with. We are responsible in conversation.
Communication – Intra-action	6. Attending to 'others' and 'otherness' in relationship.
	7. Listen wide open. Open to new territories. Not awaiting retrospective dialogue, but rather, open to discovery of something new.

8. Be in the performance. Being-called-in-activity. Allow yourself to feel the call from within as each moment engages you and invites something from you.

9. Build your relationship with the non-human otherness. Enhance our dependent dynamic relationship to the natural world around us.

Principles of Orientation

Basics: Background of orientation

1. Cognitive acceptance and understanding of our ontological state with all matter. Through this we recognize our being immersed in a material world and the implicit effect of both internal and external bodies of matter, mattering around us.

There is an understanding of a primal state of Being that is shared among all humans and non-humans. This framework of reality in which we move in is a shared field of possibilities to which we are ontologically connected. The possibilities are shaped by our intra-actions of the past, and can be reshaped in the future. Reality is in a constant state of configuration and reconfiguration. We are phenomena. 'Things' are not predetermined objects in a static state. They are dynamic phenomena intra-acting with all other phenomena including our material bodies.

Our ontology is connected, not separate. This recognition is to be post-humanist. Causality is understood differently. We emerge as phenomena through our intra-actions rather than preceding our intra-action. There is a fundamental inseparability of all matter. Phenomena emerges from intra-actions; that is, an agential cut creates the distinction of measuring agencies

and 'object.' This is to understand the ontological nature of 'beings,' 'objects,' and, 'words';

their intra-connected nature—the intra-connected nature of all matter, of all reality. It is to

understand this intra-active connected, dynamic reality in our everyday life. In every moment. It

is the background of our foreground reality.

2. 'Words' do not have predetermined meanings. Words emerge through material-discursive

practice.

Meaning comes through agentic intra-actions involving material-discursive practices.

Non-representationalism is to understand that words are not representing things, but contingent

phenomena intra-acting in a time and space. To think with our minds, observe with our bodies,

and speak with our mouths all denote intra-acting phenomena emerging through material-

discursive practices. There are no static boundaries, bodies emerge, as do words. The material-

discursive practices, the apparatuses engaged in the intra-activity, matter.

There is no inherent meaning that words 'have.' We engage in material-discursive

practices; our discourse inhibits or enables what is said, based on other intra-acting phenomena.

Speech matters through the multiplicity of intra-acting relationships. Our speech is contained

within a field of possibilities based on the agentic material-discursive practices that enabled or

restrained what was said. In other words, there is history to words, but it is not static and

determinate. Words are part of the dynamic becoming of the world in constant state of

configuration and reconfiguration through agentic material-discursive practices.

This is a move from what is known as linguistic practice, to material-discursive practice

that enacts ontic and semantic meaning through the intra-actions. Meanings are derived through

the material-discursive practices that are engaged in the moment. What you think and what you

say matters, and comes to matter through the material-discursive intra-actions that entail its

existence. Intelligibility is a performance of mutually entangled agencies intra-acting through material-discursive practices, including time and space.

We do not need to spend time in the interpretation of words, either, but rather allow the utterance to guide the next material-discursive practice. If we stay in the interpretation, as if the words and their meanings are what guides us, rather than the agentic moment, we are then lost in the Cartesian objective reality of representationalism. We must stay within the performance, not the 'things' and 'words' as static reality, but rather the meaning ascribed through material-discursive practice in the doing and movement of Being.

3. A state of compassion—a sensitivity to equal state of being with all others. Sensitivity to the vulnerability that is a shared experience. We understand all humans, animals, and sentient beings are sharing an ontological existence with each other and all non-human matter. We understand the vulnerability this implies and the felt sense of compassion it offers. We understand the codependency that exists among all humans and the world.

When we feel vulnerable we are naturally in a sensitive state. We experience heightened sensitivity to our exposed being. Before the fear and defensiveness steps into our mind, there is an opening to the freedom this state brings about. The freedom from control—the fear based, closed off control we grip onto when we feel exposed and in danger. Before we clench onto the blanket of our comfortable, devised form of protection, we are in a naturally wide-open state. This is Being-in-the-present, and here we can listen to our primal voice and hear the subjective movements of feeling as we orient ourselves in the world. This is how we feel insights into what an other may need. It is to reach for an other in their primal state. When we respond to their primal needs, they feel heard.

Compassion is to understand that this state is shared among all beings. That is, the vulnerability and sensitivity—and the fear that comes with it. Mindfulness enables a greater sense of self and connection to the present moment. It is in the present where we can feel joy, as well as pain. We are engaged in each moment more fully and through this we gain wisdom. And through this attention and awareness of our experience, our compassion expands, for ourselves and for others. We feel compassion for ourselves as humans on an uncharted territory, learning and growing together. We develop insight not only into our lives, but life as a platform of our experience, that we share with all other humans and non-humans. Compassion will deepen the greater understanding we have of all reality, with the knowingness of our codependency not only on other humans, but on all life, all materiality.

4. Ethical intra-action, as a recognition of agency of all matter, therefore prompting socially responsible action. We move in the world with action that is supportive of self and otherness.

Ethical intra-action is the difference of thinking social justice versus acting spontaneously from a Being state. This is a matter of knowing; the practice of intra-acting in response to the worlds becoming. The knowing is the implied awareness within our action. Intra-acting ethically requires a state of knowing—the direct attention and awareness of the present moment which is the guide for our movements forward. It is Being moved—in the practicality of the moment, doing justice to the demands of the current circumstance. When we are in the *withness* of the moment our actions are called out to us. Here is where we feel the 'instinct' toward speaking out on something that feels right or wrong, or the act of resisting or stepping back if that is what is called for rather than words.

5. Accountability of our actions and in-actions. We recognize our ontological state, that entails direct interconnection to the becoming of the world. We take account of our actions or in-actions in the material-discursive practices we engage with. We are responsible in conversation.

We coherently accept the nature of material-discursive practices and their direct influence in matter. That is to say, we unequivocally cognize our relationship to material-discursive practices we choose to engage in or are a part of. We understand that our participation is not needed to be affected by these practices in the world. To acknowledge our intra-activity as matteriality, part of the world's becoming, is a deep recognition of an inherent accountability to the world. How we choose to respond and act is up to us.

Our actions entail boundary making practices of which we are a part and thus accountable for. Including the recognition that we are a part of the world phenomena, which means that we are accountable in the very mattering of the overall world. Accountability, in this way, is understood as a state of acknowledgment of our being in the material world, and thus accountable for what matters and what does not come to matter. How do our intra-actions affect us, and how do they affect others and the world? This is the deeper knowing we can come to have through the acknowledgment of our entangled accountability.

What does it mean to be accountable to the material-discursive practices? It is an accountability to the 'facts' being presented, to the arguments being made. It is not about truth; it is about giving and taking responsibility for the material-discursive boundary drawing and meaning making processes. We need to engage in material-discursive practices that don't reflect representations of the past. We need to stop representing a future representative of the past. But

rather, be in the becoming world together, connecting to movements of feeling to bring out newness through the subtle mechanics that underlie each encounter.

Communication - Intra-action

6. Attending to 'others' and 'otherness' in relationship.

This principle is a recognition of the shared communal space where intra-actions are taking place. This is to recognize the responsibility of all matter involved, human and non-human. It is to re-mind ourselves that the 'other' is an ontological part of the shared world space. It is a spontaneous activity, a natural reflex, to speak the words or communicate the action called out to us from an other and, or, otherness. We allow an other/ness to enter us, and transform us. It is to allow such vulnerability of Being-in-relationship.

As with living beings, all matter, both human and nonhuman, exist among their surroundings, shaped by it and in turn shape their surroundings. In this way, we can see the natural intra-action that occurs in life, as so to, in communications with others. This principle emphasizes attending to the space around you as a part of the overall context in each movement. Be moved by the other and the otherness as it moves around you. It may be a sound, a moving object or anything that may catch your attention. How did it affect you? How could it be affecting others in the space with you?

7. Listen wide open. Open to new territories. Not awaiting retrospective dialogue, but rather, open to the discovery of something new.

We are a part of the world's unfolding and becoming and for this reason every conversation is seen as something new being created. Thus we allow a form of social poetics—in other words, conversational art, where new beginnings are spontaneously created. Responses are called out to us within conversation. We are open to the context of something new; the dynamics

of the conversation, the sequential moments that unfold. We allow vague conversation in order to unfold it together. It is Being-with the moment—being with the richness of the movement in each moment rather than in a static world, to be in the invigorating action of what can transpire.

We understand our part in the manifesting shared reality and have respect to all that is occurring, with self, others and the otherness. It is to honor the moment. We practice mindful deep listening as an act of love. Fear can rise up in conversation, pushing us into the mind and away from the relational moment. In Beingness, we move beyond our small being personality into big Being primal activity, situated time-bound, oriented through the immersion with the big Being background. In this way, we 'lose ourselves in the moment,' in other words, we dis-identify with our personality and are just present, in the here and now. This presence opens us to a wider landscape of possibilities to think-with our surrounding; a hermeneutical unity providing a sense of the anticipated consequences, thus sensing through our intra-activity, the utterances, the expressions called out to us. We attend to the performative understanding; the tone, gestures, the intonation, the sounds and movements that call out to us and move us to communicate.

8. Be in the performance. Being-called-in-activity. Allow yourself to feel the call from within as each moment engages you and invites something from you.

The performance is what matters. Life is an ongoing performance of the world of which you are a part. Being-IN-the world-OF-the world; thus, continuously relating to the dynamic world, knowing your emergent part within it. It is to orient ourselves again and again in each moment, entering into a constant threshold of experience. Mindful inquiry and clear seeing come as a natural response to deep listening. Felt sense unfolds naturally as we see authentically. Be authentic, that is to be transparent, allowing yourself to be seen, fully as you are, in all your complexity and history shared within the performance of your self intra-acting with an other and

otherness. Be exposed, and thus allow the other to sense that authenticity and transparency and mirror that stance, naturally. This communicates bravery and courage and models it for others. The vulnerability and sensitivity you demonstrate has a natural attraction and gives the sense of safety. This in turn invites others to be transparent and authentic with you. Authenticity allows for clarity and insight into our needs.

If we feel discomfort, we lean into it through our awareness, it is not to ignore our thoughts and feelings but to let them take part in the rhythm of the moment—still oriented in a relationally responsive way. We attend to the communication of the internal body, part of the intra-action, and allow the vulnerability of incorporating these feelings and thoughts within the conversational dynamic. There is freedom here from the restraint that may have otherwise taken place, instead we intra-act with authenticity and wholeness. This way our intra-action can heal and resolve discomforts as we remain connected to the moment. Self-awareness is what helps us from emotional or mental reactivity—the representational response to our thoughts and feelings. Instead we move toward curiosity, openness, and clarity and invite others to do the same.

We are called by 'arresting moments,' the felt sense we experience through one's tone, gesture, or movement. This is the utterance called out to us versus the reflected thought. To stay within the landscape of possibility, rather than the microscope of certainty, led by background thinking made up of schemas, trauma, and scientific theory. We push through the fear that can arise, and choose to stay sensitive to the moment, vulnerable and open. We choose a mindful pause to re-orient ourselves if we are distracted and reactive in conversation, we allow breath to destabilize and re-stabilize us.

We are called to perform; performative expressions that are in response to the felt sense we experience through our intra-actions. In our response we offer others performative

understandings—the action calling guide for their response. As we expand our knowingness of each moment, we naturally engage in each moment as if *it all matters*, we therefore attune with more wisdom and attention.

9. Build your relationship with the non-human otherness. Enhance our dependent dynamic relationship to the natural world around us.

Ontologically connected, we share our life with the world; living, sentient beings, non-sentient life, and all materiality. This takes us a step further from the care we can feel for a human, plant, or animal. It is to see all things, as they come to matter, to have an ontological intra-active relationship with us. We understand our dependent relationship to all things. This opens us to greater respect, appreciation, and gratitude to existence itself.

We care for and nurture our planet in a compassionate way. We reconnect with the earth, animals, and nature on a daily basis, or as often as possible, re-minding ourselves of our intra-dependent connection. These moments can be meditative and peaceful reminders for us to tune into our surroundings at all times, not just in these mindfully focused moments. This is a meditative intentional practice that enhances our attention and awareness in everyday life. It is a natural enhancement that raises and expands your attention to all your surroundings. Through this we can have greater attunement, not just toward nature but toward the overall material world.

It is a well-known mindfulness practice to taste and feel a raisin on your tongue, letting it sit there for a few minutes before chewing and swallowing. The intention is to experience the sensation slowly, enhancing our attention to our senses. Similarly, I'd like to suggest the mindful attention to an object, such as a shoe, a pencil, or your computer. To be present with the object, touch it, feel it's texture, and then to focus your mind on the course if its life, how it came to

matter, not just in your life but its life. The construction, the location of the construction, the people or machines involved in the process to create it. How it came to be invented. What it does, what it gives to you, specifically. Allow yourself a feeling of gratitude for the object if it arises.

This is how we can practice mindful attunement to objects, and re-mind ourselves of our intra-dependent relationship with non-human, non-sentient life. These practices will enhance your attention and awareness of your space. Critical new materialists, post-humanists take an extra step in analyses to incorporate the non-human matter around us. It all matters. It is intra-acting with us in our local space and how it intra-acts, matters.

Part II

MFT Principles of Orientation

Basics: Background of orientation

1. Cognitive acceptance and understanding of our ontological state with all matter. Through this we recognize our being immersed in a material world and the implicit effect of both internal and external bodies of matter, mattering around us.

An MFT takes into account a fundamental understanding of the interconnectivity of all life. This understanding elevates the relationship one has with their surroundings, recognizing the intricate nature of the connections. This would also entail an understanding of intra-action. Central to this is that causality is not linear, the therapist does not cause an effect nor do the clients, but that all people, including the materiality surrounding them, are in relationship and in a constant process of configuring and reconfiguring their reality. When you remove linear causal structures and apply this knowledge, there is a liberating feeling of resignation of control and hierarchy that comes with heightened responsibility.

The result is a renaming of roles within the therapeutic encounter. Psychotherapy began with a modern view of the therapist as the 'expert' to a postmodern view where the clients are the 'expert' (Becvar & Becvar, 2014). This requires once again, a revision; to claim that there is no literal hierarchy, but rather Beings-in-relationship, with an equivalent value to the interaction. This is not to suggest that previous roles did not view each person's value and the inherent therapist-client power dynamic within the encounter, it is only to lay down a clear framework from which we can move toward with this new materialist understanding. The understanding of power in the role of a therapist is still to be maintained but within a framework that recognizes simultaneous productive agency in the intra-action. Furthermore, this shift in perspective recognizes all matter to be an equal part of intra-activity. How does the layout of one's office intra-act with the people; the computer, notebook, cell phone, or the books on the shelf? It is to recognize all the matter around us and how it could affect the dynamics. More on this in principle 6.

2. 'Words' do not have predetermined meanings. Words emerge through material-discursive practice.

This is another fundamental principle of the overall framework we are discussing. It is to recognize the intra-dependence of words among phenomena, and their indeterminate and temporal existence. It is to recognize this intra-dependency that exists among the texts that have been studied. It is to have a fundamental understanding that words are shaped by time and space, that being, intra-acting phenomena. An MFT may be curious of a client's interpretation on a particular word or use of words. It is the client and therapist together who give meaning in the moment to the words. The MFT recognizes the words themselves as not determinate, but dependent on intra-active agentic relationships, and in this case strengthens an understanding by

questioning the clients use and meaning of the words. This can be explored together in dialogue, if the felt sense to question arises.

In addition to a background understanding of words, it is to acknowledge the material-discursive practices that are taking place within the dialogue. This is to have an awareness that words are not final, nor are they determinate. The process that takes place in conversation is an unfolding dynamic between material-discursive practices. This unfolds together with mutual influence. How do we recognize this understanding when words are necessarily given great attention when working with clients? It is to encompass all potential factors when making an assessment. This is to attend to the intonation, gestures, and the affect the client is displaying when speaking. The assessment is to go beyond the words to the felt experience.

3. A state of compassion—a sensitivity to equal state of being with all others. Sensitivity to the vulnerability that is a shared experience. We understand all humans, animals, and sentient beings are sharing an ontological existence with each other and all non-human matter. We understand the vulnerability this implies and the felt sense of compassion it offers. We understand the codependency that exists among all humans and the world.

This principle places emphasis on compassion as an overall state of Being. It allows for greater sensitivity and vulnerability in conversation. It is to be humble within our therapeutic dynamic and connect with a client on the very similarity we share on Being-in-the-world. The similarity of vulnerability in our codependence in a time where separation and independence is the model that is believed. It is to allow vulnerability to be a part of the intra-action, without fear of lacking one's professionalism. It is to be in recognition of the journey we share on this earth as humans.

Compassion, in this sense, encompasses all beings. This would enable that compassion to be spread out toward all humans. It is still possible to feel compassion for a victim as well as the assailant. It would not take away from one's experience of being hurt, nor would it eliminate anger that can arise and be a part of the felt experience of a story being shared. It is a background understanding that can allow for a deeper healing to take place of current or old wounds. This is something that an MFT may bring attention to when working with a client. It would be essential for the MFT to adopt this understanding themselves. However, it may or may not be explored in the relationship. Essential to this overall process is Being-in-the-moment, with the other and otherness, not with an agenda that overrides the felt sense experience within the dynamic. From the felt sense space or performance, we make choices based on our education and model we work with. It is to feel in the moment the direction of dialogue and move in the performance together. It is not necessary for the therapist to have healed from their own traumas, it is with compassion that we acknowledge our vulnerability and sensitivity and recognize it an other.

As MFTs we need both wisdom and compassion to connect with clients. Wisdom comes through insight through Being-in-conversation and compassion enables a felt sense in the intra-action. An MFT would allow feelings to be felt in session, by themselves and their clients. Be vulnerable and trust the felt sense will guide you. Be comfortable with a mindful pause. Allow silence and the wisdom of self-discovery to arise for yourself and your client. Compassionate presence is something you can enact and model for your client. Be compassionate with yourself when feeling burnout and secondary trauma through your clients. Self-compassion is important to reduce feelings of shame and the need for perfection.

4. Ethical intra-action, as a recognition of agency of all matter, therefore prompting socially responsible action. We move in the world with action that is supportive of self and otherness.

MFT education is saturated with information on ethical action from working with clients, to doing research (Cottone & Tarvydas, 2016). We also come to learn a great deal on historical and current forms of injustice. This allows us to acknowledge and be aware of social, cultural and other forms of discrimination a client is facing or has faced. It may even be suggested to explore these areas in a client's life to raise their own awareness of these factors that may be contributing to the current difficulties they are facing (McDowell, 2015).

Ethical intra-action is about knowing from Being. It is the acknowledgement of the ontological status of Being shared with the other and otherness. In full awareness of this inherent background shared experience, we connect to an other. In this state of Being-with an other and the otherness, we emerge fully, with our senses enhanced, contributing to the emerging time-space with authentic connectivity. It is from here that we are provoked by the felt sense, giving and receiving performative understandings within each moment, attending to what matters. It is to trust the instinct of the moment to orient our direction. It is therefore to trust that our education on social justice emerges as part of the material-discursive practices that we engage in.

5. Accountability of our actions and in-actions. We recognize our ontological state, that entails direct interconnection to the becoming of the world. We take account of our actions or in-actions in the material-discursive practices we engage with. Responsible in conversation.

An MFT is accountable to the words, movements, and dynamics that take place within a therapeutic encounter. This is to say that we acknowledge our presence and participation in the

material-discursive boundary drawing practices we engage in with another. An MFT recognizes their direct intra-active influence within the exchange. As we know, therapeutic alliance is the greatest factor of successful outcomes in therapy (Sprenkle et al., 2013). We understand this and make every effort to Be in the movements of the relational exchange with the intelligibility of knowing in intra-acting. We are accountable to what was said, and how it unfolds in the dialogical exchange.

In therapy, this could mean an increased form of transparency within dialogue. This could be in sharing the thoughts that arise if it feels right to do so. For example, sharing thoughts on the process of therapy; questions that may arise; and, emotions that may be felt. It is to bring into the dialogue the direct acknowledgement of accountability in the direction and shift in conversation. Clinical intra-actions are unique and dependent on all agencies involved, this principle is about an acknowledgement, attention, transparency and a way of Being that is engaged with each client.

Communication - Intra-action

6. Attending to 'others' and 'otherness' in relationship.

This is to take into account the overall dynamic of intra-acting agencies involved in every moment. Specifically, in a therapeutic intra-action there is a joint space involving therapist, clients and the surrounding materiality that surrounds them. An MFT is to acknowledge the intra-acting dynamics and attends to the landscape as part of the overall therapy session. How does the seating arrangement, the objects in the room, the objects the client may have brought with them, intra-act with the dynamic? Be transparent about the overall phenomenon. Attend to it before a client arrives, attend to it during session if it arises. Connect with the landscape as an

equal part of the therapeutic session. How does the landscape affect you? How could it be affecting others?

This is the difference of relating to a 'dead,' static, predetermined world, and instead to a living form, with its own set of intra-activity that brought it/them to being-ness in the moment. It is the shift from theory based, schematic based thinking within intra-activity with others and otherness to a felt sense through specific bodily movements.

7. Listen wide open. Open to new territories. Not awaiting retrospective dialogue, but rather, open to the discovery of something new.

This principle is in recognition to the understanding of new phenomena being created in every moment. Thus, it reinforces the idea of Being in the present moment. As MFTs we are educated in a plethora of models and this principle is to remind us to stay focused in the intra-action taking part in each movement in the room with your client and not distracted by particular agendas. It is to stay engaged with your felt sense and with the intra-acting agencies around you. Being-in-the-moment is listening to words in their speaking, their utterances, rather than their meanings. This is moving away from patterns of words and structures—to instances; spontaneous-responsive instead of representational-referential.

There are cultures (i.e., local, subcultures, race, age, gender) in the shared dynamics between others. It can be suggested that we mentally critically think about the cultures involved in the present moment, yet what we are saying is the opposite. It is to allow these cultures to speak within the context of the moment, to trust in the openness that comes from a *withness* intra-action. It is Beingness intra-acting with vulnerability—to feel and hear and sense that the action guiding calls will have the knowingness within so we can move forth in that space oriented appropriately. Beingness—attention and awareness involved in deep listening as loving

action, focused in the moment, not the mind. This is 'loving' mindful attention, it is to be in the felt experience within relationships.

8. Be in the performance. Being-called-in-activity. Allow yourself to feel the call from within as each moment engages you and invites something from you.

Attention and awareness are anchored in conversation. Agendas may or may not be explored in the relationship. Essential to this overall process is Being-in-the-moment, with the other and otherness, not with the agenda that overrides the felt sense experience within the dynamic. From the felt sense space or performance, we make choices based on our education and model we work with. It is to feel in the moment the direction of dialogue and move in the performance together. An MFT may feel compelled to ask a particular question that may result in some preconceived direction. Allow the moment to take you off course. Don't cling to a fixed movement in the conversation.

Be present with the unknown within the performance. MFTs are educated in so many models and methods of assessment that give us direction and steps and choices based on the accurate application with our client. To attend to the performance, is to stay curious, to allow uncertainty, to question our assessments and agendas. It is not required to dismiss these methods or guides that have been well researched and offered great advancement in the overall field of psychotherapy. It is not about rejecting our unique educational path where we learned and adopted particular ways of working with clients. The focus here, is to be humble, vulnerable, and allow flexibility. Allow the intelligence to arise in each moment, allow yourself to be moved, don't stick to a predetermined path. If you feel yourself moving in a different direction as your felt sense guides you, allow the mental pause to check in with any resistance, ask yourself why you may want to stay in a particular direction. Move through any feelings of pride. Success is in

the intra-actions and outcomes for your client, it is not based on accuracy in predefined

directions.

The vulnerability you express in therapy models authenticity. Trust that the openness you

express and the connection to the performance you maintain will guide the conversation for

success. Be transparent in sharing your doubts or questions that may arise about a particular

direction or process that is unfolding that is contrary to path you thought you were taking. Do not

fear being unprofessional. Remind yourself of our ethical values to work for the clients' best

interest.

9. Build your relationship with the non-human otherness. Enhance our dependent dynamic

    relationship to the natural world around us.

An MFT can take the steps to practice mindful attention and appreciation of the otherness

in their space. It is an intentional practice to maintain a state of presence with your space.

Acknowledge the objects, the computer software, the cell phone, and all the surrounding

elements that take part in your work and intra-actions with clients. How do these affect your

relationship to your clients? How do they matter, in a given moment? Recognize their use in

your life, your dependence on them, and how they serve to enhance your relationships.

Conclusion

I have described here several ways MFTs can adopt the principles of orientation to their

work, specifically their intra-actions with their clients. These accommodations to their practice

can be regarded as a shift in perspective that takes on a different philosophical understanding of

reality. Applying these principles may take some time and instruction to fully integrate into one's

way of life. It is my belief that through an understanding of materiality, our existence as part of

and among all matter, that we can allow a transformation to occur in our worldview. This would

change the way we perceive our daily intra-actions, past and present. It could allow for an increase in our compassion for ourselves and others who live in this entangled world of ethico-onto-epistemological accountability. Our observations, interpretations, our actions or in-actions matter. It is up to us to decide how we want to move in the world with all others and otherness in a way that takes account of our intra-connection.

CHAPTER VII.

DISCUSSION

Write in the *n*th power, the *n* - 1 power, write with slogans: Make rhizomes, not roots,
never plant! Don't sow, grow offshoots! Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run
lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line! Be quick, even when standing
still! Line of chance, line of hips, line of flight. Don't bring out the General in you! Don't
have just ideas, just have an idea (Godard). Have short term ideas. Make maps, not
photos or drawings…A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle,
between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance,
uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the
conjunction, "and…and…and…" This conjunction carries enough force to shake and
uproot the verb "to be." Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are
you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or
beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation—all imply a false
conception of voyage and movement (a conception that is methodical, pedagogical,
initiatory, symbolic…). But Kleist, Lenz, and Buchner have another way of traveling and
moving: proceeding from the middle, coming and going rather than starting and
finishing…the middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick
up speed. *Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing
to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that
sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its
banks and picks up speed in the middle. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, pp. 24-25)

The rhizome is the vision Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) give for the concept of movement, in writing, reading, speech, and in general thought. It isn't arboreal, departing from a root system, they claim, it's the multiplicity in directionality that comes from a rhizome. These ideas are central to post qualitative work and the message of irregularity, messiness, and continued back and forth movement. I placed myself in this work, in the assemblage, and maneuvered through the data immersing myself with it over and over. It felt akin to a meditative movement of coming together with something that appears to be external but is instead a material thing; research data, books, and a computer—all intra-acting with me.

How do I reflect on this work I created? Serra Undurraga (2021) suggests a diffractive process of reflection, in recognition of the entanglement of agencies in the moment; we think in the entanglement about how we affect the entanglement. She called this a *performative meta-reflexivity* as a way to question our reflective process through questions such as "how am I relating to myself/this writing/others/the world/and so on in this moment? What is this way of relating producing?" (Serra Undurraga, 2021, p. 7).

In the research process I began by asking myself: What does it mean to create principles of orienting ourselves to our surroundings? There are suggestions that have been given in each theory I addressed in this paper. How do they intersect or give meaning to each other? What is the meaning, I, as the researcher, engaged in, intra-acting as a material-discursive apparatus of this work, give meaning to the assemblage I am working with? How am I moved by this experience and in return a new me, engages, yet again, and reworks through the data for continued insight.

This post qualitative study using a diffractive method ensured a process of enfolding myself with the research data multiple times and unfolding several principles of orientation. These

principles set the framework for what I was able to propose as MFT principles of orientation. There are commonalities among these principles with current methodologies within the field of MFT that I will mention here along with the applications and future directions of this work.

Current MFT Applications

The ideas I am presenting here take from the three theories I have discussed in this paper. The most familiar of these, is mindfulness. Diane Gehart (2012) has been influential in bringing mindfulness into MFT literature. She discusses the importance of mindful therapeutic presence and compassion, as being the central aspect of therapy. She touches on concepts such as humility, and attunement, and the power of resonance. These are all foundational to the understanding of mindfulness and how we can apply it to therapeutic encounter.

Collaborative therapy, a postmodern therapeutic method, shares some of the aspects of the principles of orientation. There is a stance, Anderson (2007) discusses, that is a way of life where we engage with others in a non-dualistic form that is present oriented "…without prior judgment of past, present, or future; and that you do not hold a secret agenda such as investigative, tactic, directional, or otherwise" (p. 44). She refers to Shotter's writings on *withness* in relationship; engaging in a participatory way that attends to the richness of the interaction. Furthermore, a collaborative therapy stance takes knowledge as information to be shared, as an invitation to discuss meaning together. The focus is on participating in the therapy moment together without agenda. Another significant concept Anderson discusses is the idea of transparency, or "being public," (p. 50) that is, sharing our private thoughts with our clients to stay within a dialogue versus a monologue space when in a conversation. Similarly, another form of therapy, the reflecting team, discussed by Andersen and Katz (1991), also uses the concept of being public, in this method a therapist sits with other therapists who share a conversation about

a client with the client sitting separately and listening. The understanding here is how helpful transparency can be for therapy.

Other postmodern therapies such as solution-focused and narrative previewed the post-structuralist, anti-Cartesian ideas of language that is seen in agential realism and Shotter's work. De Shazer (1994) discusses how language doesn't represent reality and it is here where we can establish goals and create change. Taking from Bandler and Grinder (1976) there is a *surface structure* and a *deep structure* to words and sentences, and therapists work to create change in the deep structure where transformation can occur. De Shazer (1994) takes it a step further by connecting with the emotional appeal of words when they are in the form of solutions versus problems. In narrative therapy, White (2007), teaches the use of metaphors and other externalizing techniques to distance a client from the attachment to the problem and the words they use to describe it. These methods incorporate the fundamental shift in our understanding of language addressed in agential realism and Shotter's work, moving away from representation to the instance and the meaning made through the intra-action.

The introduction of second order cybernetics or cybernetics of cybernetics was a fundamental shift in family therapy epistemology. As Keeney (2017) explains, in the engineering world, a reconceptualization occurred that placed the human being operating a particular machine as a part of the overall engineering system concept. This application was then applied to family therapy and their views on the family system. The shift was to incorporate the therapist as part of the overall system. This was to assist in the description and formulation of interventions and was to allow for a greater perspective of the dynamics of change within the system (Keeney, 2017). This change in family therapy, Keeney explains, took on an understanding that objectivity was flawed if the observer is not taken into account. This understanding is the foundation for

postmodern views on the therapy system. The difference here is that agential realism takes this epistemology further by recognizing the intra-acting dynamics beyond people and observations to all material human and non-human activity in the world.

The focus here is a new take on our relationality. How do we relate ourselves to our world, and more specifically, how do we relate ourselves as a therapist to our clients within our clinical environment? Relational mindfulness applies an expanded awareness to our relationships with others and the otherness. In their book, *Relational Mindfulness*, editors Aristegui et al. (2021) bring forth ideas for the clinical application of mindfulness in relationships, moving away from standardized individualistic methods to relational methods. In fact, a further move is taken in the language and presentation of mindfulness through the idea of *radical presence*, a concept presented by McNamee (2021) that shifts the emphasis on the mind, as in *mind*fulness, and its focus on the individual, toward a more relational focus. It is to divert our attention away from the mental, emotional, and behavioral patterns of an individual and instead toward the social relational experience, with the others and otherness. McNamee discusses the need to reassess our views on individual pathology and the need to cope with social, political, and environmental issues rather than their application to the overall problem. In this way, radical presence promotes a relational orientation in our lives versus an isolated view of self.

Concluding Intersections

Shotter (2016) describes Being as an instinctual way of life that guides just action, akin to the description Tull (2018) gives when we live through 'mindful inquiry' which occurs through deep listening, being open, mind and heart to the experience to allow questions to arise. Barad (2007), however, proposes critical thinking as a way to do justice in our actions. It is to apply critical thought about boundaries being created and thus exclusions being made, and to question

through what intra-action of material discursive apparatuses are involved (Barad, 2007). It is by asking the questions: who, and, or what is at play in this moment, in this time and space? Who and what is being affected by these boundaries and exclusions, and how do I intra-act with this? How do different disciplines give meaning to these moments? These considerations generate great attention to the current social inequalities and environmental concerns that we live in today. There is a rise in scholarship and research in these areas to more accurately attend to these issues (Coole & Frost, 2010). In Being, we are not in critical thought, but rather connecting to our surroundings, it is suggested that with a clear mind these thoughts can emerge naturally.

What I am pointing out is that in both Shotter's work and writings on mindfulness and the overall ideas of presence, there is an understanding that we connect in ways that are naturally just and beneficial to those that are involved. Critical materialism is a philosophy based on a fundamental relationship of all things being ontologically and epistemologically connected. Therefore, addressing reality with this recognition is the movement we are seeing in post-humanism and post-qualitative work. The immersion and intersection of these theories I have selected here in my research has led me to believe that the greatest shift we can take is our orientation to our world. That is, in Being with presence and understanding of this radically different philosophical view and how it demands a revision to our connection with each other and all things. The principles I have presented are an attempt to guide our intra-activity in this world to embrace these concepts.

As I have discussed, there are components of the principles I created, derived from the work of Barad, Shotter, and the overall understanding of relational mindfulness, especially the work from Tull, that are already fundamental in several areas in MFT. The reason I chose these three forms of relational understanding was to intersect them, diffract them, read them through each

other, to access new meaning. How do we move forward with the knowledge these authors have shared? My grasp on these ideas has led me to create these principles that together establish a foundation for our work as therapists. The work I have done is to validate and incorporate not one of these areas, but all that I have come to understand from the three together. There is a paradigm shift that needs to take place to fully grasp what is being said here. What I am presenting is not a simple addendum to our everyday practice, or a new technique to incorporate. These principles describe a shift in our consciousness about our everyday life. They present a reframing of our intra-connectivity to our world and a deeper ethical demand in our actions. As therapists, we are called in service to others to help people through challenging times. A re-orientation that connects ourselves with them, our surroundings, and thus deepens our relationships may prove itself to be transformative in our lives and in our work.

This matters. I have been driven to do this work for almost two decades. It has been my experience throughout my educational academic career that I have felt there has been a gap in our understanding of reality and its application in our work with others in the psychological and counseling fields. As I have written, there have been volumes of texts and therapeutic models that already apply various aspects of the principles I have created. However, even in their application, I have recognized an incoherence. Whether it be a misunderstanding of mindfulness or how to make sense of the collaborative therapy model. There are plenty of books and workshops available to students to learn postmodern models, but even with the knowledge available, I have noticed a disconnection, even to the point of repulsion in some cases. I have seen students determined to dismiss these models that have seemed simplistic and unclear. On the other hand, I have seen students uncertain of what model they are using and claim it to be 'collaborative' based merely on the definition of the word; to collaborate with another. The same

can be said about the application of mindfulness. It is more than a way of relaxing the body by slowing down breath, it is more than the techniques that it offers.

This has been my experience and motivation to bring forth, again, these ideas, through the new materialist movement. In our current polarized cultural climate, the need feels even greater. To come to a deeper understanding of our intra-connectivity, vulnerability, and responsibility, I believe a natural compassionate response to our lives can be taken. The framework of these principles is meant to demonstrate the inherent codependence we have with each other and our materiality and therefore instill an increased respect and support. My hope is that through the new materialist understanding, we take these principles seriously, question our current belief systems, and how we live our lives through them. How could these principles transform the way we relate with others and our world? How could the understanding of this philosophically different way of life transform our work as therapists?

Future Directions

It is my belief that with guidance and understanding of these ideas we can apply these principles to our work as therapists. These principles of orientation are meant to be a stance we take in our work. They encourage Being-in-the-performance; with ourselves and others, with our education, our models and methods that we have learned. These may be seen as metaprinciples that underlie the way a therapist moves internally and externally in the room with their client. They indicate a deeper connection and understanding of our intra-connectivity and through this knowledge a therapist reorients oneself in their work.

Further intra-action of this work with virtual therapy, supervision, and a teaching curriculum would need to be addressed. How do we intra-act with our clients through other communication media, such as a computer or phone? How do they matter in the intra-action? We

would need to take account of these material forms that take part in our relationships with our clients. Research and data in virtual therapy would be assessed through the lens of these principles. We would address the accountability of these mediums in our intra-actions, as how we can remain oriented through-them/with-them in the ways I have described. Also, the application of these principles in MFT supervision would need to be considered. Intra-actions in supervision designate several layered relationships, including any non-human material forms such as video and other methods of recording clinical sessions that may be used. Critical new materialists, post-humanists take an extra step in analyses to incorporate the non-human matter around us. How does our surrounding impact us, impact our relationship with others who share our space? We would take into account the material-discursive practices that entail and surround our intra-actions. How do the non-human aspects of our surroundings intra-act with us? How do we intra-act with them? How do other humans who share our space intra-act with them? We may or may not use a Diagnostic Statistical Manual (American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2022) and implement assessments, all of which came through material-discursive production. How do these productions matter? What was included and what is being excluded through the agential cuts that were made? Kelley (2022) points out that in the DSM-5 exclusions are made in the diagnosis of trauma so that some forms of intergenerational transmission of trauma may not have a clear diagnosis. The cuts that are made and by whom among the phenomena we intra-act with in our practice matters.

These areas, along with a teaching curriculum would be the next steps moving forward. Currently there are new materialist applications in the therapy field, specifically through Wyatt's (2018) work in counseling; in family therapy Émilie Ellis (2022) has written on material-discursive therapy (MDT), merging agential realism with dialectical behavior therapy and

narrative therapy; Kotzé et al. (2016) apply material-discursive thought to a counseling meeting; and Kelley (2022) incorporates agential realism understanding with trauma work. These pioneers take this new epistemological and ontological framework of life and demonstrate its application in our field and how we might shift into a new way of thinking and being with our clients. I believe that in the coming years new materialist, post-humanist scholarship will continue to increase and its application in diverse disciplines will be become more common in the same way that mindfulness, an ancient Buddhist practice (Gehart, 2012) is now a well-known practice incorporated in therapy. The principles I created are the result of a dynamic intra-action of three foundational areas in the knowledge of relationships; quantum physics, communication, and the ancient art of presence. It is my hope that through these lenses, including myself, we have a new means to apply this knowledge in our lives for a deeper reintegration and connection with our world and the practices we take part in.

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