Art of Hosting Worldview

Proefschrift

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Table of Contents

Abstract

This dissertation develops an Art of Hosting (AoH) worldview and proposed the development of a worldview intelligence training program as the next step in the work. The Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter offers patterns and practices for groups to use when working on issues of importance to the group. The Center Leo Apostel at the V University Brussels has developed a framework for building an integrated worldview based on six philosophical domains – ontology, explanation, futurology, axiology, praxeology, and epistemology. Relational Constructionism is a specific form of social constructionism that focuses on the practical elements of relationships. The process used is to deconstruct the AoH patterns and practices and relational constructionist theory into the six philosophical domains of a worldview offered by the Apostel framework and then recombine both into an Art of Hosting worldview.

A key conclusion of the research is that conversations that begin from the perspective of worldview exploration is a way to invite people into dialogue about issues that are often viewed as unsafe to talk about, filled with blame or guilt, hold past trauma, are adversarial, or are very personal, especially those that are about a person's or culture's values and beliefs. The next step is to take the research and develop worldview intelligence learning/training programs for adults that can be used in either personal or professional contexts, as it applies to life, work and community. This training program could focus on three competencies for worldview intelligence and what learning programs and practices could be developed for them. The first is the individual and collective capacity to think in terms of worldviews. The second is personal worldview awareness. The third is working with differing and multiple worldviews. Additionally, further research on the role of language in developing and defining/explaining worldviews is an area for further research.

Gratitude's

A humble bow of deep appreciation for everyone that supported and encouraged me along this journey, especially my family, my close hosting colleagues, and the Meadowlark Institute Board of Directors.

Deep gratitude to the global Art of Hosting community for all you do to bring better conversations and wiser action into the world and for inviting and welcoming me into the practice. This journey has changed my life in many ways. A very special thank you to Art of Hosting Global Stewards for the counsel you provided me along the way: Kathy Jourdain, Stephen Duns, Tenneson Woolf, Bernadine Joselyn, Dave Ellis, Bob Stilger, Joe Bartmann and Ria Baeck. Kathy Jourdain and Stephen Duns, in particular, spent many hours reading my writing and offering editing suggestions, questions of clarification and reflections on what I offered.

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With love – two hearts are better than one.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Have you ever been working on an idea or challenge and the work just wasn't emerging with the level of clarity that you wanted? Then, someone says something during a conversation or you read a passage in a book or hear someone on the radio talking about a related topic and suddenly the idea gels into a clear picture. As I struggled to bring clarity of intent to this enterprise that is exactly what happened to me. I was stalled out with an attempt to connect Theory U with my rural development work[1]. Yet, as my work in the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter (Art of Hosting or AoH) expanded and as I deepened my exploration into social and relational constructionist theory and practice and the connection to dialogic processes, I realized that what I really wanted was to begin a conversation within the AoH community regarding the philosophical foundation of the Art of Hosting and bridge that foundation with the AoH practice, but I lacked clarity in how to frame the intent and structure.[2]

Then, while attending a workshop in August 2010 at the Institute for Noetic Sciences campus in California on their Worldview Literacy Program, I asked Dr. Marilyn Schlitz, then President of the Institute, a question regarding how the program fit into post-modern thought. During her answer Dr. Schlitz stated that "We are in the intersubjective space between narratives" and bang, clarity emerged immediately for me regarding my intention for this dissertation. The intention is to deepen and expand our understanding of the worldview(s) or narrative(s) underlying the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter training and practice and begin to build a bridge between the social constructionist and the Art of Hosting worldviews and explore what this means for hosting practices. And, yes, I hold here that there is an Art of Hosting worldview and a social (relational) constructionist worldview which will be described in this dissertation.[3] The research question for this writing then became **"What is my interpretation of the**

[1] In 2009 I was still working on rural development projects and had not yet fully made the change to my current work in Art of Hosting training and hosting.

[2] AoH Steward Tenneson Woolf noted here that early in his work life Meg Wheatley and Myron Rogers emphasized that good work must have an underlying theory/world view. Living systems is what they spoke and what he learned with them. He also notes that lately what is evolving further for him is to include more direct reference to consciousness, resonance.

[3] AoH Steward Stephen Duns states here that "I get that there can be a social constructionist world view but I actually disagree that AoH represents a world view. For me world views are at a different level to practice – so I get living/complex adaptive systems as a world view and even the

worldview underlying the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter work, how can social/relational constructionist theory help in framing an Art of Hosting worldview and what does it mean for the practice of hosting?"

In the Art of Hosting we often talk about working with paradox.[4] Here I would suggest that the paradoxes of theory/practice or practice/theory are in play. Art of Hosting sees itself as a practice field for hosting conversations that matter and our learning comes from practicing and living the practices. We spend very little time on theory. Social constructionism can be called a theory, although I am aware that not every constructionist is in agreement with this. Yet, descriptions of constructionist thinking or theory are often explained by giving examples of it in practice. Throughout this writing I will be walking the intersecting path between practice and theory that connects Art of Hosting[5] with social constructionism and both with worldview philosophy.

As described on its website "*The Art of Hosting is a pattern and a practice that allows us to meet our humanity in ourselves and in each other - as opposed to trying to be machines meeting. The Art of Hosting training is an experience for deepening competency and confidence in hosting group processes - circle, world café and open space and other forms. Each of these processes generates connection and releases wisdom within groups of people.[6] They foster synergy and provide ways for people to participate in intention, design, and outcomes/decisions/actions. The experience is hosted by a team of facilitators who are skilled/trained in at least one, if not all of these*

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organizational paradigms and the strengths/AI paradigm, but remain unconvinced that AoH represents a world view. It might require a certain world view, or even set of world views if that's possible, to effectively practice AoH, but to me that's different to being a world view in itself."

[4] Woolf notes his awareness here that some of us are speaking this and wonders what is at the shared root of all AoH offerings these days? Is it dialogic practice?

[5] I would offer here that Art of Hosting is not a 'thing'. In the ways we refer to it, it may seem as if it is some specific, formalized thing, but it is not. I have come to think of it as a metaphor for our growing desire as humans to be in dialogue with each other in different and more relational ways and Art of Hosting offers us choices about how we can be together better through dialogue and practice.

[6] Woolf notes that this sentence is key to him and in particular, the why of this. He connects this to some of living systems theory/self-organization theory. For him, the process creates connection and releases wisdom because it is one of the ways a human system lives.

processes; and the experience is aimed at people who want to serve as conversational hosts in their work, community, and personal lives.[7]

Worldviews

Definitions of what worldviews are vary by discipline, topic or focus. However, at the most basic level, worldviews are common concepts of reality shared by a cultural group. These groups can be quite local – a marketing or engineering department in a company – or they can be quite broad, such as Western civilization. Worldviews are pervasive in every society, but they are not always held or manifested in the same ways within larger cultural groups. Many indigenous cultures believe in interconnectedness with nature, yet how this is expressed can vary significantly.

Worldviews are the beliefs and assumptions by which we as individuals make sense of reality within the language and traditions of the surrounding society. Our worldviews provide us with the answers to life's big questions. They are what we base our predictions about the future on. But, they are more than a matter of the mind alone. They are also a matter of the heart. They are what our hopes and dreams are built upon. (Cook, 2009; Funk, 2001; Spirkin, 1983; Shire, 2009; Naugle, 2002)

We come to our own personal worldview through our life experiences – with our parents, at school or in church, reading books, watching movies or TV and our social interactions with friends and others. It is this latter source that lets us know that worldviews are both an individual choice and a group phenomenon. (Hoffecker, 2007; LeBaron, 2003) And from a social constructionist perspective, as we "communicate with each other we construct the world in which we live." Our worldviews are founded in community. They "embed within ways of life." It is the interactions or relationships we experience within community that become the foundation for our worldviews. (Gergen & Gergen, 2004; K.

[7] The language used by the Art of Hosting global community to describe its work, patterns, processes, models, etc. was developed through the generous contributions of many people. Much of this information exists in common space and cannot be attributed to any single source. It is generally presented within a workbook that is used when Art of Hosting trainings are conducted. When referencing an idea, description or statement that can be attributed to a specific author or person I will make the attribution. When referencing common Art of Hosting language or information I will put it in italics to note the language is not original to me and that I cannot attribute it to a specific source.

Gergen, 1999) One could say that our worldviews represent our (individual or society) philosophy. (Vidal, 2008)

These local structures or contexts of behavioral norms play a big role in the construction of our worldviews. Beginning as children and all through our lives we learn which behaviors are acceptable and which are not, especially if we want to be accepted into our local social system.[8] [9] In other words, our social interactions let us know when it is OK to be different and when we are required to be the same or similar. These shared, cultural worldviews also draw the line that separates insiders from outsiders. Thus the rigidity and flexibility of our local culture is also part of our worldview. And because worldviews are constructed locally, they can vary from society to society. If you have traveled to other countries you have experienced different local constructs for normal, social behaviors. These local constructs influence how we see the world. They become part of each culture's worldview.[10] (Cook, 2009; Shire, 2009; Spirkin, 1983; Hoffecker, 2007)

Social/Relational Constructionism

Social constructionist thought proposes that all constructs are local. (Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Hoskings, 2007) Everything we hold to be true is found in community. It is important to note here that a community is not just a geographic or placed-based clustering of people living together as a village, town, city or nation. A community[11] can be that and it can be a discipline in science, a faith community, a community of practitioners of a type of music, art or sport or a community of practitioners such as the Art of Hosting. In all cases, social constructionists would suggest that these communities are part of a world of "multiple simultaneously existing local realities" (Hosking, 2011). Further, social constructionists would offer that these local constructs or realities are primarily constructed through language based processes such as the written word, art, music,

[8] AoH Steward Ria Baeck noted here that" for children it is not a matter of choice to be accepted and to belong, because it is needed for mere survival."
[9] AoH Steward Dave Ellis noted here that this description is very similar to one used when he and AoH Steward Barbara Simpson Epps talk about the impacts of toxic stress on children. They often quote Harvard University professor Martin Teicher, "Our experiences get hardwired in our brain. It's when our biology collides with social expectations that we run into trouble."
[10] Ellis notes here that this is what impacts children impacted by toxic stress.
[11] Duns notes that he has often heard the phrase "communities of affiliation" to describe the communities referred to here.

dance, speaking, symbols, sign, etc. (Hosking, 2011). It is through language that we represent our worldviews. From my perspective, it is this primary role of language in constructing local realities that is the bridge between the Art of Hosting Conversations that matter and social and relational constructionism and how we host.

Worldviews, however, are not always fixed. Individual and community/cultural worldviews often shift or change. These changes can be quite small and hardly noticed at first, but eventually have a transformative impact. These types of changes often manifest in some form of spiritual experience that impacts a person's view of self in the world (Schlitz, Vieten, & Amorok, 2007). Worldviews can also change quite significantly as evidenced by many changes in the past century resulting from scientific advances (flight, Internet, space travel, atomic energy, etc.). Some shifts can be so transformative (or converting) that people change religions or physical characteristics. So, while worldviews are locally[12] constructed, they can shift based upon changes in local or global constructs as well as individual or collective experiences. We, in effect, have the ability to change our worldviews.[13]

If our worldviews are mainly locally constructed, then one could ask "What consequences do these local, cultural worldviews have for our ability to work together?" One answer is that they can create barriers to understanding and finding common ground for working together. Which raises questions of "What to do about it?" and "How can we avoid collisions of worldviews and instead come together in ways that build understanding and respect and allow each of us to hold on to that which is most important?"[14]

[12] As noted in the first paragraph of this section, locally can mean a geographic locality or a community of practice.

[13] Duns wonders here if we have the ability, in that we consciously change our worldview, or if our worldview changes in response to changes in life conditions? Is it "inside-out" or "outside-in", and does it make a difference?

[14] Woolf offers here that what is really interesting is the "between narratives" place. He asks, are we on the precipice of yet another new world view? If flight and Wi-Fi took us to new places that couldn't be seen before, is there a parallel in human connection that is evolving our species now? He suggests 'yes' in the form of the return of what has been held in some indigenous views of connection, wholism, no-separation.

Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter

For me, the answer lies in the foundational practices of Art of Hosting, practices that have impacted me and many others and how we have come to engage with people.[15] In part it is my intent with this writing to share my learnings and understandings with my scholarly and hosting colleagues and invite us into a conversation. First, as hosts[16], we work to become more self-aware (self-reflexive) so that we are not only able to discern the worldviews of others but are aware of our own – why it is ours and why, with so many options, we think it is true. Second, we work to develop a consciousness of our own way of thought and that of others, so that we can understand and then genuinely be in dialogue with them. Third, as hosts, we try to be constantly curious; to live a life of inquiry so that we seek understanding of the world around us and the cultures in it. Finally, when we come together in groups we engage in practices that invite dialogue, that create places for people to speak from their hearts and spirits as well as their minds and that recognizes that all of us, humans and non-humans, have something to contribute to the well being of each of us. Art of Hosting practices invite us into a place of constructive inclusion rather than more orthodox methods of establishing ways forward. Instead of seeking agreement without understanding, forming coalitions of influence or power, or excommunication (tolerance, exclusion or symbolic exclusion), AoH assumes we have a desire to find a shared solution rather than a forced or power over solution.[17]

As I've explored with my Art of Hosting colleagues what could be core components of an AoH worldview we have identified five to date: be curious – live in inquiry, practice non-judgment, practice generosity, work with emergence and always be in the practice of good conversations.

While not central to the work of this writing, at this point it is important to acknowledge that honoring the sacred is a powerful theme within the Art of Hosting. It has not been written about much within Art of Hosting literature, yet the idea that there is a sacredness or deeper source or

[15] Duns asks: Does the fact that AoH allows people to respectfully share world views necessarily make it a world view in itself?
[16] In the Art of Hosting community the preference is to refer to the work as hosting rather than facilitating. This is very intentional. If the basic definition of facilitating is "to make easy" then hosting is the work of holding the container for people to do their own work, even if it is hard work.
[17] Conversation with Dr. John Rijsman, Tilburg University, January 18, 2012.

immanence that interconnects us to all that is within nature is strongly held by many practitioners of the Art of Hosting, especially within the AoH Stewards community[18]. Some think of sacredness as something beyond us – source, Mother Nature, god, etc. And others think of sacredness as that which is deep within us that is the reason we do the work we do. Tim Merry, an AoH global Steward, speaks of sacredness as that calling that is beyond him but is always at his back, that is somehow at the heart of his/this work, that which he/we are in service to, that which is of life.[19] Tim offers that this idea of the sacred as something beyond him/us is a recurring theme in the Art of Hosting.

There is also an emergent exploration of the sacred within the social constructionist community. In his book *Relational Being* (2009) Ken Gergen includes a chapter on "Approaching the Sacred". Gergen acknowledges that "We have a sense that there is something 'behind' or 'responsible for' the process of generating meaning, but this source cannot be grasped directly. It is at this juncture that we begin to glimpse the possibility of a sacred dimension to relational being." (Gergen, 2009: 373) Gergen offers constructionist perspectives on sacredness in ecology, process philosophy and Buddhism, acknowledging that the idea of interconnectedness that pervades all three can be reflected in constructionist thought. I would offer that a deeper exploration of the links between an Art of Hosting worldview, a relational constructionist worldview, the idea of the sacred, divine, creator or source and/or immanence or interconnectedness among all merits further research and writing within the AoH community as we continue to evolve and refine an Art of Hosting worldview and our hosting practices.[20]

Art of Hosting patterns and practices are founded in the work of inviting people into dialogue[21] to find new ways forward. They were developed as *a response to a world that is becoming increasingly complex and fragmented, where true solutions and innovation lie not in one leader or one viewpoint, but in the bigger picture of our collective intellig*ence

[18] As a self-organizing system the global Art of Hosting community has established a process of holding integrity in the system/community by naming some individuals who embody the AoH patterns and practices in their work and daily lives, and contribute to and steward the whole network, as global Stewards of the AoH community. Stewards are Stewards for whatever timeframe they want to hold/are holding. Stewarding is not a fixed role or appointment. It can be held or let go.
[19] http://vimeo.com/m/33488507
[20] Duns wonders here if the idea of sacred purpose could be part of that exploration?
[21] In the Art of Hosting practice dialogue is considered to take place in many forms, including but not limited to conversation, music, dance, narrative writing, poetry, art, and listening.

and wisdom. Constructionists share a similar objective to "create the kinds of relationships in which we can collaboratively build our future. (Gergen & Gergen, 2004: 21) Art of Hosting Steward Tim Merry refers to this as "igniting engagement."

What is key to the growing success of the Art of Hosting approach to dialogue is that it is both a suite of patterns[22] (chaordic path, divergence-convergence, living systems) and practices or dialogic methods or processes (PeerSpirit Circle Practice[23], Appreciative Inquiry[24], World Café, Open Space, ProAction Café, chaordic stepping stones, powerful questions) for engaging people in meaningful conversations around shared issues of importance. Art of Hosting patterns and practices for dialogue invite people into ways to explore deeper questions about the future for themselves, their organizations and communities and the world; offer the opportunity for people to speak and listen from their hearts; invite the collective intelligence, wisdom and innovation that exists with groups to emerge; and, builds ownership among groups in the outcomes of their work together.

As I became more deeply involved in providing training in the Art of Hosting patterns and practices and using the practices in my own hosting work I began to describe the Art of Hosting as having three main components: a specific worldview, a suite of patterns and practices that set the container for good meetings, and a suite of methods or practices like Circle, World Café, Open Space Technology or Appreciative Inquiry that are based on dialogic approaches to conversations. One of the founders of Art of Hosting, Toke Moeller from Denmark, in hearing my description suggested there is a fourth component – the practice or doing, meaning practicing good dialogue, being in inquiry, and speaking and listening from the heart is a daily practice – it is our work. Toke often says "the practice is the work." In a subsequent conversation about this, Tenneson Woolf, an early adapter of Art of Hosting, offered that working with emergence should be added as a fifth core component of Art of Hosting.[25] [26]

[22] Duns offers here that he'd be curious to know if I see these "patterns" as theory? Reflecting on my comment above about little theory is involved in AoH training (with which he agrees) he wonders if some people see these patterns as theory and is that reasonable?
[23] Duns asks here if there is an argument that Circle is a(n archetypal) pattern?
[24] Duns asks here if the strengths paradigm that supports AI practice is a pattern?
[25] Baeck suggests we also add supporting self-organization.
[26] After seeing this included here, Woolf offered the question; "Can I / we improve our ability to work with encountering each other and noticing what shows up because of that encounter?

In this context, for me what Moeller is referring to is an Art of Hosting worldview. He is describing a way of being in the world, a way of being or worldview that crosses cultures, religions, geographies, contexts or local constructs. The invitation is to be in inquiry, to be curious; to be nonjudgmental; to approach hosting from a stance of not knowing; to practice generosity; to value good conversations and recognize that good conversations can lead to wise action; and finally, to remember that the practice is the work. Our way of being is to continually practice being curious, nonjudgmental, being generous and hosting conversations that matter. The 'practice' then is the worldview or 'life-system' (Kuyper in Shire, 2004) and not just using a set of tools.

As a member of Art of Hosting training teams (we mostly train in teams) I began offering a short teaching on worldviews and the importance for each of us to understand what our own worldview is. I often linked the teaching to elements in the Art of Hosting literature that I felt were an expression of an AoH worldview. Up to this point, the AoH worldview had been presented as seeing the world as a complex living system and not a machine. This natural sciences view comes from the contributions of many of the early developers of the Art of Hosting who were influenced by the work of Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworsky, Fritjof Capra and especially Margaret Wheatley[27].

This living systems worldview[28] is foundational to the Art of Hosting and is intrinsic to many of the Art of Hosting patterns and practices. As I brought my added perspectives to the worldview teachings, I included more teaching on the human/social sciences elements of an AoH worldview. I experimented with adding into the teaching ideas about subject-object/other, feminist perspectives, systems thinking, relational constructionism, and non-dualism worldviews and connected them to some of the dialogue patterns and practices offered in the AoH training, like the Ladder of Inference and the Chaordic Path. I found this exploration to be well accepted during the trainings and so continued to refine the teaching.

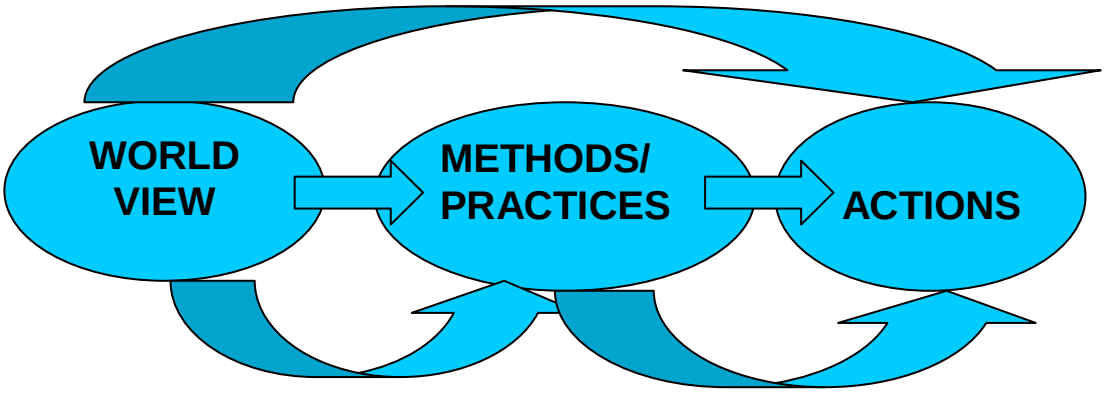
[27] Margaret Wheatley's book *Leadership and the New Science* has greatly influenced the thinking within the Art of Hosting community, especially the belief that nature is a complex living system and not a machine and that this is also so for communities and organizations.

[28] Duns offers that he increasingly wonders if the idea of complex adaptive systems is more relevant than living systems. He offers that we can learn from living systems, but groups of people are complex adaptive systems and there are some features of complex adaptive systems that directly apply to groups of people, and indeed individuals. He wonders if it is a more sophisticated (not complicated) perspective?

The idea of a (world)view can be traced back much further if one looks beyond Western cultures. I have now settled on a simple teaching based on an explanation of worldviews in *The Rules of Victory: How to Transform Chaos and Conflict – Strategies from the "Art of War".* (Gimian & Boyce, 2008) The text known as the Sun Tzu and more popularly as *The Art of War* offers a framework for action that contains three components – View, Practice and Action. And central to view is the idea that the world is an interconnected whole and seeing the world this way informs one's Actions in the world and the Practices used to manifest (act) the View of interconnectedness. In the Sun Tzu this idea is referred to as 'taking whole'. (Gimian & Boyce, 2001)

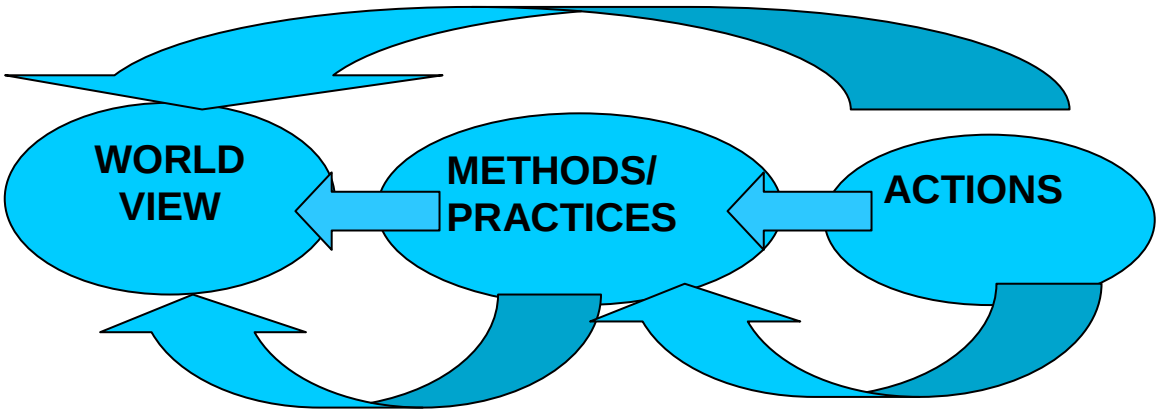
Using the diagrams below I explain what a worldview is and that our worldviews impact the actions we take in the world and, as we act in the world, our worldviews are impacted and potentially changed; that patterns and practices like those offered by Art of Hosting are the tools or methods we use to bring our worldviews to action; and that as we act in the world what we learn impacts the methods we choose to manifest our worldview. I also explain that if the methods we choose to manifest our worldview are not congruent with that worldview, then our actions will not ring true with people. They will see us as not acting in a way that reflects the worldviews we are claiming to hold. I have found that this simple explanation is quite helpful for AoH participants.

Our Worldview Influences the Actions We



Methods are the Bridge Between View and Actions

Our Actions or Experiences Influence our Worldview



Actions Inform Future Methods and Worldviews

As I continued to develop and refine my teachings on worldview at AoH trainings, I recognized that the Art of Hosting patterns and practices are both reflective of and contributing to the emerging relational, non-dualist worldview. It also became clear to me that while the living systems view of the world and its impact on the patterns and practices of good dialogue was explicit within the AoH community and its literature, little was written in the AoH literature about a relational worldview or a connection to social/relational constructionist theory and practice and how it impacts dialogic practices. In fact, this living systems perspective was presented more as a pattern of human behavior reflected within nature than as a worldview. Additionally, participants in the trainings where I was one of the host/trainers regularly offered that what makes the Art of Hosting experience so powerful is that it weaves together the patterns, practices and processes into a collective whole that offers not just a toolbox for hosting good dialogue, but a way of being in the world. They offered that including more training on the philosophical or worldview foundations of the Art of Hosting would deepen the learning experience and strengthen the importance of bringing the practices into the world.

Thus the quest behind this writing has two components. The first is to further develop my own perspectives on what an Art of Hosting worldview is based on, what integrating relational constructionist theory and practice into this worldview would look like, and how this worldview supports the AoH patterns and practices. Second is to share my work with the global Art of Hosting community and invite them into an ongoing global dialogue about an Art of Hosting worldview.

Methodology

I am using four methodologies to produce this writing. The first is autoethnography. I describe my journey story into the Art of Hosting community and my learning journey into an understanding of the social and relational constructionist foundation of dialogic patterns and practices. Second is a literature review. I present a review of the literature on worldviews, a review of the Apostel framework developed at the Center Leo Apostel for interdisciplinary Studies in Belgium, (Aerts, Apostel, De Moor, Hellemans, Maex, Van Belle, & Van der Veken, 1994) and a review of relational constructionist literature through the lens of the Apostel framework specifically related to dialogue and to constructing an Art of Hosting relational dialogic worldview. However, my intent is not to define Art of Hosting as a manifestation of social/relational constructionism. Nor is it to offer constructionism as a form of a global worldview to be shared by all cultures. Here I seek only to share my reflections on the relational nature of Art of Hosting and how it connects to constructionist thought. I believe and have experienced that AoH practitioners can have a Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, naturalist, pagan or other primary worldview and still incorporate into their personal worldview the core relational foundations of an Art of Hosting worldview.

Third are two qualitative surveys of the global Art of Hosting community. The first is a general survey of the AoH community regarding their thinking on whether the Art of Hosting has a worldview. The second survey asks their opinions regarding my interpretations of an AoH worldview based on the Apostle framework.

The fourth is interpretation. I present my interpretation (deconstruction) of current Art of Hosting literature in Chapter 5 into a worldview using the Apostel framework and, with the Literature Review, my interpretation (deconstruction) of relational constructionist theory and practice into a worldview using the Apostel framework. I offer my perspectives on what a worldview might be that includes the core elements of the Art of Hosting and relational constructionist worldviews. I also offer my conclusions or interpretations on what could be missing and where there are opportunities for further research or writing on what an Art of Hosting worldview could be. It is my hope that these writings will spark in the

AoH community more reflection, writing and further development of an Art of Hosting worldview that could be used in AoH literature.

Structure

Chapter One sets the stage for the purpose of the writing, including why I think the work is relevant and important. It offers a brief introduction to worldviews, social relational constructionist theory and practice, the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter, and the flow of what is to come.

Chapter Two is my personal journey story from a practicing economist and rural development specialist to a Steward in the Art of Hosting community and my own struggles with and eventual understanding of social constructionism and my awakening into an ontology of becoming (Hosking & Pluut, 2010) and my recognition that this ontological perspective is a central, but not yet explicit, part of an Art of Hosting worldview. It is a story of my journey from being a 'warrior of the mind' to being a 'warrior of the heart and mind' to being a 'warrior of the whole'. Thus it is a story of letting go (of the focus on the mind) to a letting come (of centering in on the work of the heart and spirit) to stepping into my personal balance (of the mind, heart and spirit, i.e. the host and academic and sacred in me). It is a journey of connections between theory and practice – a journey of praxis – from my readings, experiences, interpretations and integrations. This story is relevant to why I think it is important to more fully develop an Art of Hosting worldview.

I would offer here that the next stage in my personal and hosting journey is to explore more deeply what it means to be in and operate from a place of not knowing, a place before the naming. Next steps include diving more deeply into how to perceive and influence what we call 'the field'; to explore what I need to go beyond the frontier of the known and to work more deeply in the unknown, the invisible and the emergent; to further develop the ability to work with the subtle to help me to sustain more complex processes; and to investigate within myself and with others the deeper aspects of what is it that lives within the silence, within the invisible and within that which has no name or form.

Chapter Three provides a review of the research approach taken for this writing. As noted above, I am using four methodologies to produce this writing: autoethnography, literature search, qualitative surveys, and interpretation.

In Chapter Four I present the results of my literature review on the subject of worldviews[29] – what a worldview is, how we develop one as individuals and communities, and how our worldview impacts the decisions we make. It is interesting to note that there is a limited amount of contemporary scholarly/philosophical writing in English, and much of this has been written from a Christian philosophy and worldview perspective. There has been some work on worldviews from a scientific perspective, but even this is limited. It also includes a description of the work being done at the Centre Leo Apostel at the Free University of Brussels (The Centre) and a literature review of Social and Relational Constructionist philosophies as they apply directly to the role of language and dialogue in constructing worldviews.

The Centre has proposed a structure/framework for worldviews that I use as a foundation for deconstructing and reconstructing an Art of Hosting worldview. The Centre (which is working to develop an integrated worldview with a strong focus on the scientific community) suggests that a worldview has six components: an ontology, explanation (of how we got here), axiology, futurology (prediction), praxeology (methodology) and epistemology. Several authors (Shire, 2004 and 2009; Naugle, 2002; Hoffecker, 2007; Cook 1990) have suggested that worldviews should provide answers to life's big questions. In other words, worldviews should address questions of ontology, epistemology and aesthetics. The six components of the Apostel framework includes the ontological and epistemological elements of a worldview, however it explores them both from a more practical and a philosophical approach, which fits well with the intent of this writing.

I chose to use the Apostel framework for four reasons. First, it offers a simple, yet elegant way to examine what a worldview is. By deconstructing a worldview into six components the reader or researcher has a framework from which to more deeply explore a/any

[29] Worldviews have many forms – religious, philosophical, scientific, cultural and can vary locally within a meta-narrative such as a religious worldview. This writing is not a survey of the many worldviews that exist. Since Art of Hosting emerged primarily in western European and North American cultures and practices, and while it is practiced worldwide, it is an analysis of an Art of Hosting worldview through my western world cultural lens.

worldview or to construct a new worldview regardless of the local context/culture/construction/ontology. Second, the framework was developed with the input from a diverse field of contributors, including noted researchers, thinkers and authors from many disciplines, including (theoretical physics, economics, theology, engineering, sociology, biology, psychiatry). Third, Apostel acknowledged "that some deep seated awareness of being related to a larger all-encompassing Whole is a requirement for a healthy and meaningful life. The way to live this relatedness to All Encompassing Reality could according to his view, not be conceptualized. Therefore he felt closer to Zen-Buddhism than to traditional theism." (Van Belle & Van Der Veken, 1999: xxi) This 'non-theistic religiosity' perspective is similar to mine and offered a kind of kinship with his perspective. And fourth, the Worldviews group has worked to balance theory and practice, holding strongly that "We are involved in the world not only by knowing, valuing or feeling but also by acting." And thus "A global theory of the world can only be built in interaction with a general praxiology. (Van Belle & Van Der Veken, 1999: xxii) In terms of the Art of Hosting, I like to think of it's general praxeology as 'applied dialogue."

Regarding the literature review of Social and Relational Constructionist philosophies, I use the Apostel framework in presenting my results. In using this approach I am affirming my belief that social/relational constructionism is a worldview. It is my perspective that there is much that relational constructionist thinking offers to the development of a fuller Art of Hosting worldview. Again, it is important to note that I am not offering a constructionist contextual analysis of the Art of Hosting. I do believe that AoH, as evidenced by the fact that all of its patterns and practices are based in dialogue, has strong connections to constructionist thought, especially relational constructionism. Thus I have chosen to focus specifically on relational constructionist thinking as part of an Art of Hosting worldview.

In Chapter Five I provide an historical overview and description of the Art of Hosting Meaningful Conversations process and community.[30] I then take the existing Art of Hosting literature on patterns and practices and deconstruct it into the six components of the Apostle framework. I offer my interpretations, using the framework, of where the AoH

[30] Again, it is important to note that much of the AoH literature is treated as in the Commons and thus limited in attribution.

worldview is strong and where further development of the worldview could be attended to based upon the Apostle framework.

Chapter Six provides the results of two surveys of AoH community perspectives on the AoH worldview: The first survey was a set of questions inviting respondents to offer their perspectives on what, if any, elements of the Apostle framework exist in a current AoH worldview. Recognizing that the framing of the questions used in the survey inherently are influenced by my perspective on this work, I did this in as unbiased a way as possible to determine how much people in the AoH community see or think that there is an AoH worldview.

The second survey contained essentially the same questions. However, included with the survey was a summary of my interpretations of the AoH worldview developed in Chapter Five. This second survey offered respondents an opportunity to agree or disagree with my interpretation or further develop their own thinking on the AoH worldview. This second survey contained the bias of my interpretations of the AoH worldview and so potentially influenced answers. Both surveys were done online inviting anyone from the AoH community to respond. There are about 1,000 people from around the world on the AoH listserv. There were 58 responses to the first survey, mainly from AoH stewards or active practitioners and 21 responses to the second survey, again mainly from stewards and active practitioners.

In Chapter Seven I offer a summary statement of what I think could be an Art of Hosting worldview that is shared with relational constructionism. It represents my own interpretations of what a shared worldview could be based on my experiences working in the AoH community, the review of the AoH and relational constructionist literature and input from the surveys. The Chapter does not include the deconstructed relational constructionist worldview in Chapter Four or the deconstructed AoH worldview contained in Chapter Five. Instead, it is a descriptive statement intended to spark conversation and, where appropriate, be used as a way to share with people what an Art of Hosting worldview philosophically is, without going into the detail contained in Chapter Five.

Chapter Eight contains my concluding reflections. I briefly outline the work I intend to continue and offer an invitation to the AoH community and beyond to continue to develop a worldview based on the patterns and practices of good dialogue and relational constructionism. I also suggest that this could become a global adventure as different cultures contribute their own thinking about dialogic practices and how they contextualize experiences into an Art of Hosting worldview.

Intention

At this point, it is important to offer a few qualifiers about my approach to this writing, my intentions for the writing, and the philosophical starting point for the worldview I am offering into the AoH community.

First, it is not my intent to develop a definitive Art of Hosting worldview, although I and many others believe there are core components to the Art of Hosting that are at work in all the contexts where AoH is practiced and that could be considered a worldview. Nor is it my intent to propose that there could be one single Art of Hosting worldview, thus creating a range of power and hierarchy issues. As a global initiative, there are many other perspectives or lenses from which to contribute to or construct an AoH worldview. It is my intent to suggest that an Art of Hosting worldview is actually a family of many worldviews finding points of connection that open up the possibilities of entering into meaningful dialogue and co-acting together on shared issues of importance. It is also my intent to connect the Art of Hosting practice with an/the Art of Hosting worldview and do so throughout this writing.

I also do not intend to suggest that there is a single constructionist worldview as it is clear there are many camps of thought within and outside the constructionist world with differing perspectives, and often strong differences, on what constructionism is. Nor do I intend to suggest that either social or relational constructionism is a single worldview. Both are complex offerings of theory and practice, again with differing interpretations. I find resonance with the work of Dian Marie Hosking, Ken Gergen, Mary Gergen, John Risjman, Edward Sampson, John Shotter, Sheila McNamee and others and they have strongly influenced this writing.

It is also not my intent to suggest that my journey story is unique. In fact it is not. But it is a story that may connect with others starting or making a similar journey into work that invites us to bring forth our hearts, our vulnerabilities, our strengths and challenges and to shift from the expected stance of knowing to working from a stance of not knowing in order to open up space for emergence or what wants to emerge. It is also a story of my struggles with how I came to understand constructionist theory, especially the concepts around self and agency. This was a shift not as easy for me as perhaps for others and so in telling the story it may offer assurance that the journey can be made.

An Invitation

It is my intention with this writing to invite the Art of Hosting community into a conversation about what an AoH worldview is or what the many AoH worldviews are. What I offer here are my interpretations of what an Art of Hosting and a relational constructionist worldview are. They are open to revision, co-learning and co-creation, thus the invitation to conversation. To start the conversation I have asked several Art of Hosting Global Stewards to read this writing and offer comment, criticism, agreement, reflection, enhancement or whatever they are moved to say. I am including many of the comments in footnotes throughout the document.

It is my intention to invite a dialogue between practitioners and theorists regarding, in the case of dialogic practices, the close relationship between the two. I believe that dialogue practice strongly influences theory and theory influences practice, although this is not particularly explicit among dialogue practitioners. What does theory, and especially social and relational constructionist theory, tell us about hosting practice and what have we learned as host practitioners that could further develop theory? Thus the reader will see that I write mainly from a practitioner's lens, but for both theorists and practitioners. A related invitation is to explore the rich possibilities that collaboration between practitioners and theorists could offer to move further forward on the difficult conversations of our time – race, gender, sexual orientation, climate change, power, privilege and so much more.

Finally, the reader will see that there is some repetition between chapters. This is intentional. The chapters have been written in such a way that with a few modest revisions they could stand alone as essays. I ask your indulgence with this.[31]

[31] After reading this chapter Tenneson Woolf offered the following note: " love the call for a new narrative Jerry. It is what makes sense to me. And, ironically, as I'm learning from some of my best teachers, the arrival of a new narrative is preceded by a place of no narrative. Perhaps there is a time of just empty space. Empty essential space so that the new can arrive, land, root. Such has been the journey of humans for some time eh. Fun to read this. I welcome staying in dialogue with you and others about it. Helps me in my writing also, which is a fundamental hunger for me these days."

Chapter 2 – My Journey

Questions. Questions. It seems that when one adopts inquiry as a core part of a way of being in the world there are always questions. Some are simple: How are you today? Some are reflective: Why did I say that? How can I help in this situation? Some challenge us to explore areas of interest more deeply: What is the theory behind…? How can we be intentional about collective transformation? Some are at the core of our worldviews: What is really real? Who am I? Why am I here? And sometimes a question can change our lives. The asking of a simple question can be a transformative experience "…that shakes the foundations of our current way of thinking…" and as a result "….assumptions we've held dear are often proven to be limited or simply untrue." (Schlitz, Vieten & Amorok, 2008: 34)

The Beginning

I remember the day I experienced the transformative[32] question that started me on the journey that would shift my worldview, although I didn't know it at the time. It was July 3rd, 2003. I was part of a small group of people working on agriculture and rural policy issues in the United States that had traveled to Europe to examine how environmental and social values were impacting European agriculture practices. We attended a meeting at the King Baudouin Foundation in Brussels, Belgium where we heard a presentation by Alain Wouters, a former Royal Dutch Shell Oil employee and member of their Group Planning Department. Wouters told us about a project he led to address a longstanding conflict concerning management of animal waste in the Belgium countryside. The design of the project included using scenarios as a way for all of the stakeholders to consider the various possibilities that different actions could have on the future. Our entire group was fascinated by what we heard.

My academic training is in economics with a focus on regional economics. My Masters research centered on the emerging ideas of smaller scale, more localized economic

[32] Here and throughout this document when I refer to transformation, a transformative experience, or transformative change I am describing a shift in worldview. This shift can be small with hardly any personal awareness of the shift, or it could be significant causing an immediate and fully cognizant shift. It can be social, political or spiritual. It is simply a shift in worldview.

systems. In my professional career this manifested as work in the field of rural development with a focus on how local economies – smaller, rural communities – can thrive. This work often took me to Europe where there seemed to be greater emphasis in the 1990s on public policy that supported localized, rural development systems. In 1997 I also completed a short review of federal rural development commissions established during the administrations of Presidents Roosevelt and Eisenhower as a backdrop to work I engaged in as a staff member to a similar federal commission established during President Clinton's administration. In each case the recommendations of the commissions took a traditional approach to rural development, i.e. address the material well-being of individuals and communities by creating jobs through development of natural resources, improving existing or building new infrastructure, or improving or building new housing. The Commissions trusted that the social problems of race, age, and gender discrimination or environmental degradation would then be resolved. It seemed as if rural development as a professional activity was trapped in one strategic approach and that is why we were in Belgium that day, to explore how others were approaching rural development processes.

During dinner that evening a powerful question emerged within the group which influenced our conversations for the rest of the trip. The question was "Have we been asking the same questions [about rural development policies] over and over for so long that we don't even know what the right question is anymore?" This was that first transformative moment that started me on a journey of exploration, learning and self-reflexivity that has led to a shift in my worldview, a change in professional focus and a reconnecting with a curiosity about human behavior that I had explored in my early teens. It also reconnected me to a strongly held belief in human possibility that developed in my late teens and twenties and a deeper awareness of our connections to something greater that, for me, is sensed most during my times in nature. Although I was not making a conscious choice at the time to change, that moment was a small spark of recognition that connected me to something I didn't yet fully recognize.

Petra Kuenkel in her book *Mind and Heart* (2008) offers an explanation of what I experienced. "You don't decide to change. You do not wake up one day and decide to do something different, for whatever reason, and then do it – that's not sufficient. Change

within needs to resonate, there is a need for a spark to come from somewhere that we didn't think about initially, or it might be a piece of information one has completely disregarded and then it comes back. So it comes essentially from the environment. Something resonates with something deep inside me. Once that resonance has been established there is a desire for change. So, it is not myself independent from the environment, and it is not the environment changing without me. They are both integrated and where there is resonance there is impact." (Kuenkel, 2008: 98-99) Kuenkel further suggests that the opening of this doorway to change is more than just "chance." That transformative change "…..is based on a resonance with something that is already inside us."[33] (Kuenkel, 2008: 99) This past and present coming together is a form of a reciprocating process that indicates that our actions echo and can often further develop what we have experienced before. (Hosking, 2007) I would offer here that this is an important concept to hold when we are hosting (facilitating).

After we returned to the US from our study program and to our work responsibilities I didn't give much further thought to the question we explored in Europe and the deeper impact it had on me. Then in October 2003 I heard a presentation by Adam Kahane where he talked about how, while working at Royal Dutch Shell[34], he had been involved in a project that used scenarios to help South Africa transition out of apartheid and another project that helped Guatemala transition from 37 years of civil war. Kahane's stories of his work in South Africa and Guatemala are told in his book *Solving Tough Problems* (2004). Kahane's description in the book of the work in South Africa affirmed what I heard in October, " ….the team built scenarios not only to understand what was happening and might happen in the future, but also to influence and improve the outcome….the team's fundamental orientation…. was that more than one future was possible and that the

[33] AoH Steward Stephen Duns suggest here that this is an interesting point. Is the response "outside-in" or "inside-out"? In Kegan's stages of adult (cognitive) development he suggests that a core indicator of development stage is "self-authorization" when we move to an inside-out motivation. Is it possible that transformative change will differ for each individual based on which stage of development they happen to be at, rather than the sum process for all people? This might even begin to explain why AoH has a different impact on different people. It would be fascinating to do some more work on how we can "scaffold" the learning within an AoH program to enable the experience to be transformative for people at any stage.

[34] Royal Dutch Shell is largely credited with developing scenario planning as a business tool. Pierre Wack and Arie de Geus were early pioneers in bringing scenario planning into Royal Dutch Shell. Eventually several of the people referenced in this study worked in the Group Planning Department at Shell, including Adam Kahane, Alain Wouters and Joseph Jaworski.

actions they and others took would determine which future would unfold. The team did not believe they had to wait passively for events to occur. They believed they could actively shape the future. They understood that one reason the future cannot be predicted is that it can be influenced." (Kahane, 2004: 26-27)

After hearing Kahane that October I was re-energized to further pursue the question from the previous summer. I began conceptualizing a scenarios project similar to what Kahane had done in South Africa and Guatemala and Wouters in Belgium. I read several books and articles about scenarios, explored the work on scenarios developed at and being used by Royal Dutch Shell, and started talking to people familiar with scenarios work. By the summer of 2004 I was ready to take the next step. I tracked down Kahane who, along with Joseph Jaworski, was now working at Generon, a consulting firm in Boston, Massachusetts they co-founded. I sent Adam an email in August 2004 inquiring about whether he might be interested in doing a scenarios project on the Great Plains of North America. Within 24 hours he replied back saying he was in India working, the idea sounded interesting and could I send him a more detailed description of what I had in mind. A few days later I sent an email with a short project description that I had been developing during the summer of 2004 and received a reply suggesting that when he returned to the US in September we could talk on the phone, which we did. At the end of the call we agreed to meet in Boston to further discuss the project.

November 2004 myself and members of the Northern Great Plains Board of Directors (my employer at the time) traveled to Boston to meet with Adam Kahane, Hal Hamilton and Zaid Hassan. Hassan was a Generon employee. Hamilton, Executive Director of the Vermont based Sustainability Institute, was working with Generon on a project called the Sustainable Food Lab. During the meeting Kahane suggested that while he was interested in working with us he was not interested in doing solely a scenarios project. Instead he and his colleagues outlined an approach to rethinking old ways of doing things and developing new solutions to old problems called the Change Laboratory. The Change Laboratory is a social change process based primarily on the work of Otto Scharmer and Theory U[35], which was originally developed by Scharmer, Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski

[35] In my original proposal to the Taos/Tilburg program I proposed writing a study examining how Theory U could be used as a strategy in rural development initiatives. I originally found that this was not the direction I wanted this study to proceed in. I would note that Theory U is one of the

and colleagues from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Leadership Center.[36] It is also important to note here that Scharmer, Senge, Jaworski and Betty Sue Flowers collaborated on *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future* (2008) which had a big influence on development of Theory U.

We left the meeting with a curiosity about the potential of the Change Lab approach to what we hoped to accomplish with our original idea of a Great Plains scenarios project and a recognition that more research and design work would be needed if we were to move forward with Generon and Kahane.

The Meadowlark Project

Following our meeting with Kahane, I began outlining an initiative that would explore how the northern Great Plains region could address deeply complex problems in a way that leads to systemic change by inviting us to let go of long held beliefs and habits. As the idea for the initiative developed, a decision was made to use the Change Lab methodology as the foundation for the work. The Change Lab methodology design for the project included tri-sector dialogue, focused research, directed learning experiences, a wilderness retreat and use of scenario planning techniques. The intent was to design living examples of systemic change that would create a new framework for understanding what the future might offer on the northern Great Plains. The project became known as the Meadowlark Project Leadership Lab or Meadowlark Project in short.

As my work to develop the Meadowlark Project continued, I was invited in March 2005 to become a Donella Meadows Leadership Fellow. Donella Meadows was co-author of the book *Limits To Growth* (1972), which she wrote while a professor at Dartmouth College. Meadows work was instrumental in establishing the global movement toward sustainable use of resources. Following her death, the Sustainability Institute, which she co-founded, established the Donella Meadows Leadership Fellows program. Every two years a select

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practices that are part of Art of Hosting and I continue to use where appropriate in my professional work.

[36] Theory U emerged out of a conversation Otto Scharmer and Joseph Jaworski had with W. Brian Arthur, who among many other distinguished awards, received the Schumpeter Prize in economics and is a distinguished faculty member of the Sante Fe Institute.

group from around the world is invited to become a Donella Meadows Leadership Fellow and participate in a leadership development program. This program gave me the opportunity to explore more deeply my own thinking about leadership and the role that we as humans play in influencing the natural environment and, by extension, each other. This two-year exploration within both a large cohort and smaller team cohorts, and subsequent ongoing dialogues with other Fellows, challenged all of us to open our minds and hearts as we considered what leadership meant to us and how we planned to exercise leadership for change in the world. Participation also helped with my thinking as I began work on the design of the Meadowlark Project.[37]

After several months of design input from colleagues and the Northern Great Plains Board of Directors, selection of participants in the Meadowlark Leadership Lab Team, concerted efforts in fundraising and an invitation to the Sustainability Institute and Generon to provide technical support, the Meadowlark Project was launched in July 2006. It was to be a two-year initiative.

The purpose of the Meadowlark Project Leadership Lab was to build, through demonstrated examples, a vision of the northern Great Plains region as a place of opportunity, whether it be economic, cultural, spiritual, civic or other forms of opportunity. It did this by assembling a Lab Team of 25 committed stakeholders from business, government, education, and NGOs in the region who cared deeply about the economic, social and environmental future of the northern Great Plains and who wanted to work together on complex challenges that none of us could do alone in order to bring about long-term systemic change in the region.

The objectives of the Meadowlark Project were threefold. First, the project was to provide the Leader Lab Team participants with a transformational leadership development and personal growth experience and establish the participants as a social network of diverse leaders who had become agents of change helping the region create the trends that would help determine its future. Second, through the use of civic dialogues around four scenarios about possible futures for the region, the Meadowlark Project was to create in communities throughout the region a new public awareness of the perspectives, policies

[37] At this time I had not yet heard of the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter.

and practices that were impacting what our 21st century region could become. Third, the project was to result in a commitment to implement three to four pilot projects the Lab Team had designed that could address systemic problems in the region and demonstrate how the region could make the kinds of deep changes that really affect the way our economy or society functions and thinks.

The Meadowlark Project was originally conceived as a social change initiative that would meet its three objectives. While the project was working toward all three of its objectives, something else happened that had a deep impact within the Project, the people involved and what was hoped for the future. The Lab Teams members discovered within themselves a strong desire to create the opportunities for others in the region to experience their own transformative personal leadership development similar to what the Lab participants had experienced. The scenarios dialogues exposed a hunger in the region for having open, inclusive and informative conversation in our communities – conversations that lead to actions to help build stronger and more vital communities. Additionally, the pilot projects that were proposed all had elements of supporting this transformational shift. But, it was an inside-out shift. A shift that focused, not on the "busy work of problem-solving", but "creating a place we truly care about" that is a place of opportunity for all. (Senge)[38]

For me, there were two big learnings from the Meadowlark Project. First was a recognition that while we all wanted to have the difficult conversations about the challenging and complex issues the region faced we didn't have the skills to have them. Second was a realization that while addressing the material well-being of a community was important and necessary, it was not sufficient to build a wholly healthy community. To do so both the material and human side[39] of a community's life needs to be addressed. This understanding helped birth the Meadowlark Institute and set a purpose for the Institute to work with others to build the region's capacity to have challenging conversations, especially conversations about complex issues or problems with high complexity. It also set in motion a concentrated effort by the Institute to bring Art of Hosting trainings to the

[38] I have heard Peter Senge speak a number of times, including being in small group discussions with him. These quotes are repeated in notes I've taken during those events.
[39] Duns asks here if this the correct distinction? He notes that to him there are distinctly human elements of the material world, e.g. clothing, and material elements of the human world, e.g. personal practice. He wonders if the distinction is physical and metaphysical?

region and for me to enter my journey of becoming an active Art of Hosting practitioner, and eventually an AoH trainer and Steward.

A More Personal Exploration

As I explored ideas, methods and programs to find the right questions for addressing current rural policy issues during my work within the Meadowlark Project and my participation in the Donella Meadows Leadership Program, I couldn't escape a similar question that was simmering within me "What was my own personal 'right' question?" Having spent my professional and intellectual life working as a research economist on rural development with a worldview that assumed that if we created investments in the material well-being of people and communities (jobs, buildings, roads, etc.) then rural communities would thrive, it came as a surprise to me that when I challenged my professional worldview I was also challenging my own personal worldviews and related sense of self or identity as an economist. With each new idea about how to proceed with addressing current convention regarding rural development issues, I also (re)discovered perspectives about my own views of what should be done. I found myself drawn more and more to actions that connected the work of rural development with one's own or a community's set of values and beliefs, which also connected with the work of my own personal explorations. Why this was happening became clearer to me when I came across a well known quote from William O'Brien (deceased), former CEO of Hanover Insurance, who said "The success of the intervention is dependent upon the inner condition of the intervener."[40]

The notion of attending to my inner condition and the inner condition of a community was quite appealing and connected strongly to current leadership and personal and professional development literature that promoted the idea of an authentic self and attending to one's inner condition (Palmer, 2000; Kuenkel, 2008; Greenleaf, 1977; Heifitz, 1999; Peck, 1997; Jaworski, 1996; Senge, 1990) along with related work on being present or presencing (Jaworski, Senge, Scharmer & Flowers, 2008) and the listening and talking

[40] This quote is regularly attributed to Bill O'Brien and shows up in books and articles without a reference to an article or book where O'Brien published the quote. It is also often quoted/structured in different forms, for example as "The success of an organization is dependent upon the quality of the conditions within the organization."

practices outlined in Theory U (Scharmer, 2007). I liked the idea that there was a separate true or inner self that I could attend to and work with or on. Kuenkel suggests that "The essence of our leadership journey is about growing into our true identity as a leader and, by doing so, accessing an intelligence that is greater than ourselves and encompasses the whole." (Kuenkel, 2008: 20) Parker Palmer in his book *Let Your life Speak* (2000) offered that "We arrive in this world with birthright gifts…." (Palmer, 2000: 12) This appealed to my notion that I had become disconnected from my true self and my unique gifts and only needed to find my way back. Palmer also offered that the responsibility for losing my way was not solely mine, "The difficulty is compounded by the fact that from our first days in school, we are taught to listen to everything and everyone but ourselves, to take all our clues about living from the people and powers around us." (Palmer, 2000: 5) Palmer even offered a way to find my path forward, to connect with my true vocation, "When we lose track of true self, how can we pick up the trail? One way is to see clues in the stories from our younger years, years when we lived closer to our birthright gifts." (Palmer, 2000: 13)

The idea of having my own birthright gifts and having a true life vocation appealed to my need to affirm that a quest to connect with my life journey was not just some existential mid-life crisis, but an awakening to something more, a deeper calling. I found support in a passage from *Demian* by Herman Hesse, a book I had read as a teenager, that Joseph Jaworski quotes in his book *Synchronicity* (1996) where he is discussing his own "most ancient of all quests – the search for self-knowledge." The passage reads:

> *"Each man had only one genuine vocation – to find the way himself….His task was to discover his own destiny – not an arbitrary one – and live it out wholly and resolutely within himself. Everything else was only a would-be existence, an attempt at evasion, a flight back to the ideals of the masses, conformity and fear of one's own inwardness."* (Jaworski, 1996: 73)

Palmer summed up what I was feeling, "Vocation at its deepest level is, 'This is something I can't not do, for reasons I'm unable to explain to anyone else and don't fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling.'" (Palmer, 2000: 25)

And yet, the idea of a separate and unique inner self, a self I was born with, a self with 'birthright gifts', was challenging for me. I wondered if there actually was a unique inner self that existed apart from the 'outer' world. A self that was so essential to me that it existed outside of my life experiences, my connectedness to family, friends, work, the natural environment and, perhaps, something greater. As noted, much of the current leadership literature (Jaworski, 1996; Palmer, 2000; Scharmer, 2007; Senge, 1990; Kuenkel, 2008; Greenleaf, 1977) supported the concept that each individual had an authentic self or the true self which is connected to their specific inner condition. While appealing to my ego, this hero's journey (Campbell, 1949, 1991 and 2003; Heifitz, 1999; Jaworski, 1996) felt somehow not quite right. If there is some unique or essential me, what does that say about my ability to learn and adapt or my relationships with family and friends? Equally troubling was what did this idea say about people in general? Does having an authentic self essentialize people into a role or place they can't escape from? Do they become stuck in their roles? Where does this essential person come from? Who determines it? It seemed a very slippery slope into dangerous places of essentializing people or groups that humanity has stepped into in the past. Yet I also couldn't escape the sense that there existed within me some core identity, some set of values or beliefs or characteristics that felt wholly me. I explored this paradox[41] with my colleagues in the Donella Meadows Leadership Program, but for me, the answers remained elusive.[42]

Little did I know that I would soon encounter another paradox that would add to my consternation and eventual understanding of the strong connection between Art of Hosting and constructionism. Specifically, as I began my learning journey into social constructionism upon entering the Taos/Tilburg PhD program in March 2007 I was immediately confounded by the constructionist view of agency. After all, as someone trained in economics my worldview was deeply embedded in the notion of man as an independent actor making rational choices of pure self-interest. I found myself challenged by the paradox that we humans experience ourselves as separate, unique and free individuals, or what Gergen refers to as "voluntary agency" in a humanist sense (Gergen,

[41] In the Art of Hosting we offer a teaching on paradoxes, noting that there are several we as hosts work with including chaos/order, warrior/midwife, action/reflection, individual/community, interior/exterior, leading/following and many more. Understanding, working with and holding paradox well is essential to good hosting.

[42] Duns offers here that Kegan's Cognitive Development Theory aligns wonderfully with this questioning and might contribute some really interesting ideas for further exploration.

2009) and the constructionist perspective that everything that we are and all that matters actually comes from our relational experiences as humans and that this begins the moment we are born (and possibly before).

These paradoxes troubled me for some time, as I also sensed that exploring them was part of the journey to connecting with what I could only language as my life journey. So, while keeping one foot solidly planted in the work of answering the emergent questions about rural development policy (after all it was my professional work) I also committed to an even more intentional exploration of the deeper questions of "Who am I? What is my nature?" Many books from ancient times to modern have been written about this existential dilemma. One of the most famous such quests is the story of Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gita. At the beginning of the Gita, Arjuna confronts his own existential crisis when he has to consider his identity and purpose in life. He is faced with the questions that confronted me and confront many of us in our lives. "Who am I?" "What should I be doing?" "What is important to me?" (Rosen, 2002: 68) I decided that I would explore the questions both from seeking an answer to them and from the perspective of are they even the right questions to be asking?

As I reflected on the how of discovering who I am my sense of what to do became both more confused and clearer. I became confused as my discomfort grew with the idea that there has always been one, genuine me since birth. And I became clearer as I came to understand that the purpose of my questions was to develop clarity about who I am and that this self awareness meant developing an "understanding of myself in relationship to others." (Kelm, 2005: 130) The challenge it seemed to me in my exploring was to let go of attachments to specific images of myself that would prevent me from not only participating in whatever evolutionary changes this journey might offer, but also prevent me from seeing the whole and my relatedness to it. (Kuenkel, 2008) I was also beginning to understand that my journey was becoming an exploration of the 'range' of me rather than the 'one' of me.[43]

[43] Suggested by Margery Shelton during a conversation with fellow PhD students Marjory Shelton, Ginny Belden-Charles and Lynne Rosen.

As my journey continued I began meeting people who were asking similar questions, but more importantly, were exploring how our world could move beyond this focus on the individual, beyond seeing each person as a self separate from the 'others', beyond a world of binaries and subject-object dualisms and toward ways for people to be together that opened up new possibilities. They believed in dialogue as a process for discovering the best in us collectively and they trusted that living in what Alfred North Whitehead called the 'flow' (Wood 2008) of our interactions and our relationships could help co-create new, more hopeful and positive futures and reach greater personal or collective clarity. These were people that understood that it was through dialogue and conversation that we made meaning together and that if we could learn to come together to access our collective intelligence, we could be wiser together. More than just understanding this, they lived and practiced these principles.

September 2006, at the suggestion of a colleague from the Sustainability Institute, I attended a five-day workshop on Deep Democracy. It was here that I met Sera Thompson, one of the trainers and a Steward in the Art of Hosting community. As we talked about my hopes for the Meadowlark Project, Sera suggested it would be helpful for me to attend an upcoming Art of Hosting training at Gold Lake in Colorado. As I learned more about the practice of Deep Democracy and the importance of carefully crafted dialogue in helping us address challenging or complex issues during this workshop, I decided it was important for me to attend that Art of Hosting training.

In November 2006 I traveled to Gold Lake, a retreat center outside Boulder, Colorado, to attend what I thought was going to be a training in The Art of Hosting Conversations and Harvesting that Matter. Instead, I found myself at a gathering of many practitioners of dialogic methods who had come together to share their learnings with each other and with folks like me interested in using Art of Hosting practices. The discussions included exploring issues around the work and structure of AoH, its relationship to other social change dialogic structures like the Change Lab, and the interpersonal relationships of the many AoH practitioners in attendance. For me, it was a new and intense experience to watch people bring their talents and wisdom, vulnerabilities and strengths, and honesty

and integrity into a container[44] rich with possibilities and pitfalls and work towards shared understandings.

During one of the breaks on the second day of the training I found myself sitting next to Toke Moeller. I had not met Toke before, but it was clear from the previous day that he was a central leader in the Art of Hosting practitioners gathered there. I don't recall how it started, but we entered into a deep conversation about hosting and being hosted. I shared with Toke that I felt that my grandparents, all deceased and who I had been very close to, walked with me everyday and that I felt deeply hosted by them. Toke in turn shared a story about a very close friend of his who, when he was dying, offered to all his friends that they not host him in his passing, but that he host them during this time in conversation and reflection about life, death and what might come next. Our hearts 'cracked open' during our conversation and both of us, essentially two strangers, found ourselves in tears and deeply moved by our sharing. And for me, another profound shift had occurred.

Three important things happened at Gold Lake: I felt a deep resonance with the people I met there as if I had found my 'tribe'[45], I recognized that these were people committed to changing the world by changing how we come together to work on challenging and/or complex problems, and that this was the work I most wanted to do. I left committed to entering the journey of changing from a practicing economist to becoming a host[46] of conversations that had the power to shift how we talked, worked and lived together. When

[44] In Art of Hosting we describe the work we do using a number of terms/words that are newly constructed or used in new ways. It is our perspective that language has a powerful influence in the directions that work takes. The words are used with care and intention to give life to the work and experience.

For example, in AoH we often talk about creating a 'container' for safe dialogue. By this we mean a place where people feel safe enough to speak from their hearts and spirits. Where people listen and speak from a place of curiosity, non-judgment and generosity. To do this we give attention to the physical space, to agreements of how we will treat each other, to the framing of questions and to whatever else needs attending to in order to have a place of safety.

[45] It is quite common to hear this at AoH trainings. Participants often say they have found their tribe or their 'peeps'. I think this is reflective of a strong desire among many of us to be in relationship with others in a much more connected, personal and dialogic way.

[46] People often ask why we use the term 'host' instead of facilitator or convener or similar words. One way I like to explain it is to compare hosting a dialogue, meeting or training to hosting a social gathering in one's home. When we invite people to our homes, as a host we become attentive to everyone there. We make sure the person standing alone is introduced to someone that they could easily talk to. We make sure that if a discussion gets loud that things are OK and maybe it's just an exciting conversation. In other words, we bring our full awareness to the gathering. We host, we don't facilitate.

I arrived home I set a personal intention to explore further the practice of the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter.

Three months later I was accepted into the Taos/Tilburg PhD program and began another phase of my personal journey as I entered into a challenging, rewarding and worldview changing exploration of social and relational constructionism. As noted earlier, when I entered the program my original intention for research and writing was to analyze Otto Scharmer's Theory U as an approach to rural development strategies from a social constructionist lens, even though I basically knew nothing about social or relational constructionist thinking. However, as also noted earlier, as I was learning more about constructionism and becoming actively involved with the Art of Hosting community, my research question shifted to "What is my interpretation of the worldview underlying the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter work, how can social/relational constructionist theory help in framing an Art of Hosting worldview and what does it mean for the practice of hosting?"

The remainder of this chapter is the story of how I came to that research question. I first describe my experience with Art of Hosting, my conclusion that there is an Art of Hosting worldview and my research into worldviews as a philosophical construct, then my struggles with and eventual understanding of social and relational constructionism and finally the connection to an Art of Hosting worldview, both in practice and theory. It is important to note that while the story is written in a linear manner, the experience was not. All of these elements were happening simultaneously and influencing each other.

Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter

The next step in my journey into the Art of Hosting world was to experience a true three-day Art of Hosting training. To do this I worked with colleagues in the northern Great Plains to hold two AoH trainings in the region. Our first was March 2008 in Chamberlain, South Dakota and the second was November 2008 just outside the Twin Cities in Minnesota. At the November training I stepped lightly into the role of an apprentice host and began my journey to become an Art of Hosting trainer (host). During the subsequent four years after my 2006 AoH experience I attended more AoH trainings, apprenticed, and

served as a member of hosting teams. I also participated in intensive trainings in the foundational practices of Art of Hosting, including PeerSpirit Circle Practice, Open Space Technology and Appreciative Inquiry[47]. All the while I was developing my own hosting style and bringing into the trainings elements that I felt contributed to the learnings of the participants, such as a discussion on worldviews. In August 2010 I was invited to become an Art of Hosting Steward.

> For many years Art of Hosting trainings held an upper limit of participants around 40. This offered the opportunity to create more intimate and transformational learning spaces. Recently, many of us have been co-hosting trainings of 80-130 participants. This requires a deep connection among hosting team members, whole new approach to design, and an understanding that while intimacy may be difficult, providing a transformational learning experience is still possible.

What is it about the Art of Hosting that connects so strongly with some people? Is it that AoH offers a new way to see ourselves in the world? For me it is that AoH invites us into a wholeness – a way to connect how we are in the world with practices that support our actions. Here I offer a general overview of the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter and a few stories of my own experiences as a host. Most people come to an Art of Hosting training thinking it will be a three-day training[48] in holding successful meetings or group conversations on important issues using AoH patterns and practices like the Chaordic Stepping Stones, the 6 breaths architecture, harvesting meeting outcomes, PeerSpirit Circle, World Café, Open Space Technology and Appreciative Inquiry. People often attend the trainings with the idea that they will expand their toolbox of facilitation methods. What they often experience is something more – something deeper and more personal than 'just a training'. For me, and I hear this often

[47] I have been hosting World Cafes since 2002 when I first read about the process and subsequently had several conversations with David Isaacs, one of the developers of World Café along with Juanita Brown. Beginning in 2002 my organization, Northern Great Plains Inc., annually hosted Prairie Café.

[48] There are many of us who are AoH trainers that have some difficulty with calling the three-day event a training. It is not a training in the traditional sense that someone goes to it, develops a specific skill and receives a certificate. It is much more of a learning experience, especially the first time, for participants to experience being hosted, explore their own sense of what hosting is, learn about the AoH patterns and experience the dialogic practices. I like to think of an AoH 'training' as having three components: learning, experience and practice. Additionally, we will often say that one AoH training does not a practitioner make. This all said, we have not found a better word to use to describe an AoH learning event other than a training, so I will stay with this description.

from participants, it is that the AoH experience connects the practice to a way of being that resonates deeply within and many hosts embody this practice in a way that is apparent to participants. There is, in effect, a powerful connection made between practice and a participant's philosophy or worldview.

> "As a team, we stay tuned into and aware of each other in subtle and obvious ways. We continue to invite each other's brilliance and to support each other. We work with the ebb and flow of individual and collective energy and know that we have each other's backs. We ask for what we need and offer what we can. We invite each other. We check in at the beginning of each day and we checkout at the end of each day. Openly. Honestly. Speaking what is in our hearts, minds and awareness. Tuning into what is in the space.
>
> A question very much alive every time we step into a team, those we've worked with before and those we are working with for the first time is: what is the humility, generosity, open heartedness and also the brilliance that needs to be present and available in me, in each of us and collectively that supports the environment of co-learning in service of the field we are entering and committed to holding?"
>
> ~ Shape Shift Strategies blog post: *Ingredients for Hosting Team Success – An Inquiry*. (10/8/12)

It is important to note that every Art of Hosting training is provided by a hosting team that takes considerable care to create a supportive environment for co-learning and co-creation. At every Art of Hosting training the hosting team meets the day before (and more and more one and one-half or two days before) – often called prep or design day – to design the flow of the training in such a way as to be of the best service to the participants. During design day(s) we give time to the work of co-creating our own sense of how we will come together as a team so that the experience of the participants is one seamless flow. In other words we sense into ourselves as a team or as a whole. We take time to know who the participants are and develop a shared purpose for the training that will be meaningful for them. We develop a clear purpose statement for the training that is shared with the participants so they have their own clarity about the design of the training. Care is given in the flow and design of the teaching of the patterns and practices so that participants have the opportunity to work on actual problems or issues that are of professional or personal interest to them. In many cases the trainings are themed in

advance around specific larger contexts so that participants can choose to attend based on their interests. For example, AoH trainings have focused on issues related to health care systems, community organizing, social determinants of health, nursing, leadership, young adult social systems and social and racial justice. It is often said that the Art of Hosting training is not for spectators. What this means is that the participants in the training learn by doing and experiencing.

Monica Nissen[49] from Denmark often says that surely any two experienced hosts could design a good flow for an AoH training, but that would not create the sense of a collective wholeness for the team that emerges from the time the hosting team works together during design day(s) for an AoH training. As a result of this deep attention to building a good team of hosts for the training, participants often remark at how seamlessly the training flows and how much they felt attended to. This modeling of good hosting by the team brings an awareness to the participants in the training that this kind of care to building a strong hosting team, designing a good flow for a meeting (or training) and being of service to the participants is important in any hosting situation. What participants observe and experience is what good hosting is so when they return home they can immediately begin using the practices. In Art of Hosting we talk about this as creating a container – a holding of the learning space, the emotional and spiritual safety of the individual participants, and the collective energy of the participants in

> May 2011, I sat in a circle of dialogue that included people from many different countries. We established a center for our circle that included pictures of children and children's toys. At the end of our conversation a woman from the Sudan said "This is how we always talked back in Sudan and I've been longing for this ever since I came to America. But in Sudan, we would put the children in the middle of the circle so they could see us talk to each other with respect and then begin their own learning of how to have meaningful conversations. Imagine if we invited our children to be in dialogic spaces with us, to see us talk to each other with respect and curiosity, to sit in that energetic field of safety and nonjudgment and inquiry as we explored each other's perspectives about the world. Just imagine.

[49] Monica Nissen and her partner Toke Moeller are two of the founders of the Art of Hosting, You can see an interview with them that offers their story of how AoH came into being at http://vimeo.com/36755022

a way that serves their own learning, is sensitive to the experiences that they are participating in, and that invites everyone to bring their full selves into the work.[50]

An important element of the Art of Hosting training is the invitation for each participant to bring their full self into the learning space. This is often characterized as bringing one's heart and spirit into the learning as well as the mind. Activities are intentionally designed to do this. Trainings often begin with an opening circle where participants are invited to place in the center of the circle an artifact, object, picture, memento, etc. that represents to them the journey and work they are entering into as they step into their own practice of hosting meaningful conversations. This often becomes a very powerful experience for participants as they transition and slow down from their busy worlds, listen into what is important to others in the room, make deep connections with other participants and begin experiencing what it is like to be in a very different conversational space.

During the training attention is given to things like check-ins at the start of each day and check-outs at the end so people have the opportunity to share what is going on within themselves, either personally or professionally, as they participate in the training. In other words, to share what is emergent for them as they are in the learning space. Sometimes this sharing is a word, a gesture, a short reflection, a movement or an activity. Sometimes they are done in the whole group and sometimes in small groups – dyads or triads for example. This is part of our work as hosts, to create a safe enough place for participation in conversations, especially around challenging or complex issues. These are practices that participants can bring back to their work and begin using right away.

In addition, the process of 'harvesting' – the collective meaning-making of the group's learnings and experiences from the activities of each day – is often done in ways that invite more than just a report out. Harvesting can be in the form of short reflections, poems, songs, skits, stories, and dance or other ways of expressing through the body the

[50] As the numbers of people in Minnesota that have participated in an Art of Hosting training has grown significantly (nearly 800 by the end of 2012) the practices are being used in more diverse and challenging situations and the trainings are being offered to more diverse populations. As trainers (hosts) we are invited to do everything we can to provide a welcome and safe enough place for people to fully participate. This has included designing around prayer times, attentiveness to food, inclusion of ceremony, awareness of cultural norms such as touching, working with translators, etc. All of this deepens our hosting practices and brings the work of dialogue to a new level of aliveness.

learnings of the day. These kinds of expressions or meaning-making of the learning differ from standard verbal reports that rarely open up the space for people to speak from their hearts and their spirit. AoH Steward and PeerSpirit Circle process founder Christina Baldwin sometimes describes this form of harvest by saying "We are the PowerPoints."

People often talk about their Art of Hosting training experience as deeply transformational. This was my experience at my first Art of Hosting and I have continued to experience transformative moments in the dozens of AoH trainings I've been a part of since. There is attention given to this potential in the training design. The training is inviting participants into the experience of having conversations with people in a much different way than they are generally familiar with. It is inviting people to move away from downloading as conversation, in other words speaking at each other, and into a true dialogic process where we speak with intention and listen with attention. We step into the true space of listening.

There is recognition during the Art of Hosting training that the language that we use is important. This becomes particularly evident as we work with the art and craft of 'powerful' questions[51]. Art of Hosting training recognizes that good questions create more questions and invite more dialogue. We teach that questions

September 2012 and Art of Hosting training was held in the Phillips neighborhood of south Minneapolis, Minnesota. The neighborhood has traditionally been a lower income neighborhood with a large urban Native American and African American populations. In recent years the neighborhood has become home to a growing immigrant population, especially east Africans and Latinos. Tensions have emerged between the immigrant and existing populations, especially among the youth. Local leaders invited an Art of Hosting training to be held in the neighborhood in the hopes that new ways to be in conversation and ideas for projects to share in might emerge. Both things happened. An important contributor to these emergent possibilities was a celebration of the different cultures, which emerged spontaneously. The hosting team invited a member of the team, who grew up on the Rosebud Nation in South Dakota to open the first morning with a sage burning ceremony. An invitation was then made to the participants to bring additional ceremony into the gathering. The result was that during the four days we shared in a Somali coffee ceremony, a Hmong friendship ceremony, an Aztec blessing ceremony, a Native American women's dance, and had a visit by Sojourner Truth. What was interesting to participants was how many aspects of the ceremonies were similar. These celebrations brought the community into a place of greater

[51] See *Art of Powerful Questions* by Juanita Brown, David Isaacs and Eric Vogt

that have yes and no answers are questions that can close off dialogue. If an intention is to bring the collective wisdom of the group into the room in order to find new ways to come together or work together then good questions become an invitation to clarity and good conversation and good conversations can lead to wise action.

Art of Hosting invites us into a stance of not knowing or non-judgment. As hosts we work both to be good teachers and co-learners as we model being in this stance of not-knowing so everyone's learning can be open to what wants to emerge in the room and the dialogues taking place. This stance or perspective opens up possibilities. If we come into the work believing we know what to do then we close off possibilities of finding new ways forward. If we have a stance of non-judgment then we can be opened up to all kinds of possibilities. From a stance of not knowing we can step into a co-creative space of constructing the futures we want rather than accept the futures we are given. I have come to think of this as the place or space before the naming. If words or names have performative characteristics (teacher, doctor, truck driver, cup, spoon, report, etc.) then before we name something we are completely open to what might be possible, to what might want to emerge. In Zen Buddhism this is called the 'beginner's mind'.

Finally, it is important to address the question of why three days.[52] There certainly is a practical aspect to the length of the training. It just isn't possible to deliver all the teaching and learning experiences in less than three days. There are many of us that think the training should be four days or developed into a program of two three-day trainings. There is another, and perhaps more important reason for having the training over three days and that is that the participants experience what it is like to be intensely in a complex living system. They see and experience their learning in a living system made up of participants and the hosting team group. From this experience they gain some insights into what is the experience they carry with them of being hosted that, when they return to their homes, work or communities, they want to begin bringing into those living systems.[53]

[52] It is the perspective of AoH Steward Stephen Duns that the design day plus three training days is all about convenience for trainers, rather than learning outcomes for participants. There is a good reason that structure developed with a small number of people in the world to offer the training, but there might not be any good reason to perpetuate that structure as the community of Stewards grows exponentially and different delivery options can be trialed.

[53] AoH Steward Tenneson Woolf offers here that he thinks of this as a kind of entanglement. Enough time to think about it. Struggle with it. Welcome it. Order itself into the system it is.

The Art of Hosting in essence is a relational activity. It is a recognition that we are not individual beings coming together as independent actors but instead we are people coming together in relationship with each other with the intention of finding the best way forward. AoH believes we have choices about the future we want. We can co-create our futures. We can co-construct how we are together and dialogue is foundational to the work of co-creation. As I have come to truly understand the power of this relational foundation to the Art of Hosting I have become much more aware of how much, even though it is rarely ever mentioned within the AoH community, Art of Hosting connects to relational constructionist thought.

It would be easy to say that it is pure coincidence (or serendipity) that I began my journeys into the Art of Hosting and social/relational constructionism with a few months of each other. And clearly, for the first few years I did not fully understand the strength of the connection. Perhaps this is because I struggled so much with the paradox, for me, of individualism and constructionism. So, it is at this juncture in this story that I turn my attention to my ongoing learning journey into understanding constructionism and my own awareness of its potential role in developing an Art of Hosting worldview.

Taos Institute/Tilburg University PhD Program

March 2007 I was accepted into the Taos Institute-Tilburg University PhD program. This was a big moment for me as it started me on another journey of learning and toward fulfilling a long-term dream of obtaining my PhD. Little did I know at the time how much of a transformational journey it would be.

My original proposal for my PhD research and dissertation was to "contribute to the literature, understanding and use of social change processes by conducting an experiential and academic analysis of the newly emerging U-Process change methodology, including some comparative analysis with other social change methods/processes."[54] When I prepared my proposal and applied for admittance to the Taos/Tilburg program we had just started the Meadowlark Project and I thought I could

[54] This is quoted directly from the original proposal for my dissertation topic that I submitted with my application to the Taos/Tilburg PhD program.

use the story of Meadowlark and the Change Lab approach we were using as the foundation of my PhD work. Over time, as my learning journey into constructionist thought and the Art of Hosting merged, I came to realize this was not the research and writing path that would be of best service to my personal development as a human 'being', my professional work as an AoH host, and to the larger Art of Hosting community.

June 2007 I attended a workshop at the University of New Hampshire sponsored by the Taos/Tilburg program. It was here that I met my primary faculty advisor Dr. John Rijsman from Tilburg University and entered into our ongoing dialogue about my research. It was also my first real exposure to social constructionism. And it was an eye opener to say the least. From my experiences with Theory U, I thought I understood the idea that we had choice in the futures we could live into and that we could step up with others to co-create those futures. However, during the workshop I came to more clearly understand the implications of that thinking and more importantly how truly collective the work is and how much language plays a role in that creation process. During one conversation with Ken Gergen I remarked that I thought social constructionism had a lot in common with current thinking about social behaviors emerging from quantum physics and evolutionary biology. Gergen, in a mild professorial rebuke, said yes and in many ways these thinkers are no different than the Newtonians in that they suggest they have discovered the 'Truth' about the universe.[55] I was at first stunned, but after some reflection and dialogue with others there I realized how central what Gergen had said was to social constructionist thinking and ultimately to the learning journey I was starting.

What Gergen was gently helping me understand is best said by Ken and Mary Gergen in their book *Social Construction: Entering the Dialogue* (2004) "Our troubles begin, however, when local claims to truth (t) are treated as transcendental truth (T) …….Like most claims to knowledge, the humility of the local is replaced by the arrogance of the universal." (Gergen & Gergen, 2004: 20) Gergen offered to me the challenge to begin understanding that what we define as reality or the 'Truth' is embedded in a cultural context or tradition and, as history shows us, the arrogance of assuming one's truth or

[55] Duns offers here that his experience and research would suggest that quantum theory is much more about questions than answers and absolutely does not assume "truth". The whole idea of the researcher finding what they are looking for (the double slit experiment) and the Heisenberg's uncertainty principle seems to me to be deeply constructivist. Perhaps you had every right to be stunned!

worldview as the only Truth has consistently been disastrous not only for those whom one group imposed, or attempted to impose, their 'Truth' or worldview upon, but also in the long-run for those who were the aggressors.[56]

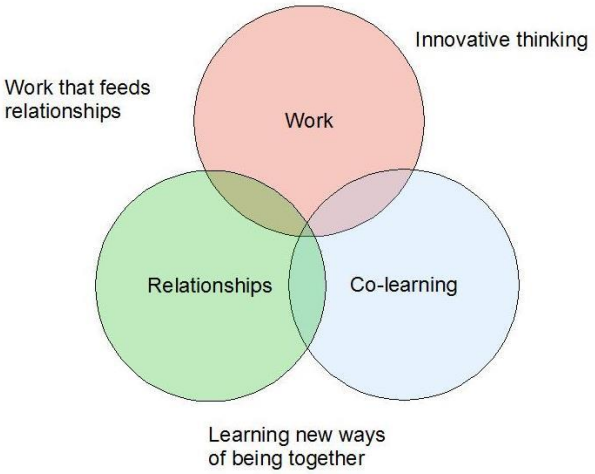
Looking back over my notes from the workshop, I now find several links between social constructionism and Art of Hosting. Something that stands out for me is a plenary session with Harleen Anderson, Sally St. George, Sylvia London and Dan Huff. My notes quote Anderson as saying "Think of yourself as both a host and guest. Invite people into conversations and relationship that are more generative."; St. George saying "Think in terms of hospitality, which creates the conditions for showing people that you want to be with them." And London saying we should "Think about the design of the physical space to be conducive to dialogue." Each of these statements clearly are reflective of the Art of Hosting approach to dialogue.[57]

There are also a few ideas in my notes that warrant further reflection within the AoH community, especially around the role of language in constructing our dialogic contexts. While discussing the role of language Ken Gergen referenced Wittgenstein to point out that our languages get their meanings from their embeddedness in practice, in their everyday use, from how we go on together. For the past 400 years the language of individualism has been our practice. We are now (re)learning the language of relationship and we are doing it by re-contextualizing old words we are comfortable with. In Art of Hosting we use a number of new words or old words in different ways that participants find challenging and want to find 'old' words to describe what the new words are describing. While we are not opposed to this, we try to discourage it. If we are working to be together differently, i.e. in a more dialogic context, then new words help construct these new spaces. These new words are expressing what we are doing and eventually many who start out looking for old words find themselves using the new words because they help with the transformational shift people are being invited into. Old words keep people stuck. The new words shift how we are together

[56] Woolf asks here that if we acknowledge personal truths, then what moves these to more widely shared truths? Attraction? What matters in a world of relative truths?
[57] Presentations at the University of New Hampshire, June 2007

After I left the workshop and returned home, I focused my work on the Meadowlark Project and my research on Theory U. December 2007 I traveled to Tilburg to spend time with my adviser Dr. Rijsman. We had two days of productive conversations and I left quite enthused about my dissertation work. In looking back at my notes from the conversations, two things stand out for me, a discussion about power, conflicts and orthodox solutions to them and that meaning is created through social interaction and is solidified through a community of practice. It is this idea of thinking of our social or relational interactions – our processes of meaning making – as a community of practice that, upon reflection on my notes and subsequent conversations with Dr. Rijsman connects with AoH approaches to dialogue.

In Art of Hosting we often teach a Community of Practice model[58] that looks like this:



We suggest that a successful Community of Practice works to find that sweet spot in the intersections of work, relationships and co-learning. What I/we haven't done is speak to the role of language in meaning making of the work we do, the relationships we build and the learning we step into together. This is another area for further reflection within the Art of Hosting community, especially the choices of language we make when describing community, practice and community of practice. Recently, after observing organizations

[58] AoH Steward Chris Corrigan brought this model to the patterns teachings in AoH and has over time further developed it.

use this model as a structure for designing staff meetings, as an approach to project design or for developing collaborations, I've often referred to this as a model for organizational operating systems.

By spring of 2008 we were moving toward completion of the Meadowlark Project. Things had not gone quite as expected. We were discovering that the challenge we had given ourselves was greater than our or our consultant's capacity to address. We knew we wanted to have the difficult conversations that could invite us into exploring new ways forward to address the many challenging and complex issues the region faced, we just didn't know how. Upon reflection, had we started with a more dialogic approach that invited the entire region into the work based more in Art of Hosting I think we would have made much greater progress toward achieving our goals and we all would have gained a greater understanding of the power of language to influence our work.[59]

May 2008 I attended my second workshop in the Taos/Tilburg program. This one was hosted by Ken and Mary Gergen at the Quaker retreat center Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania and in their home nearby.

I went to this workshop thinking I had a better understanding of social constructionism and enthusiastic to learn more. It was during these discussions that my whole thinking about individual agency was challenged. For the first time the real depth and complexity of constructionism emerged for me. I knew when I left that I would need to shift a greater part of my learning focus to social constructionism if I was going to make progress in my work.

Again, looking back on my notes from this workshop, I see several more linkages between constructionist perspectives and Art of Hosting. One note of particular importance for me is a description of social constructionism as a way of understanding, a way of thinking and a way of practicing. That we can view constructionism more like we might view Buddhism, not as a religion, but as a way of being. Many AoH practitioners describe Art of Hosting in

[59] While we were conducting the Meadowlark project an initiative was underway in Columbus, Ohio to look at how Columbus could create "an affordable and sustainable health care system" using an Art of Hosting approach. This initiative was very successful and has long-lasting impacts in Columbus. Its story is told in Walk Out, Walk On (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011)

a similar way – it is a practice, a way of understanding, and a way of being.[60] Another note describes the social constructionist practice as liberating because it invites the possibility of bringing all voices into the room. But, there is the caveat that there is the potential for this to become a contentious environment as all the voices attempt to be heard. It is here that we need a range of methods for responding to the invitation to all voices entering the dialogue. It is important to recognize that there is not one form of dialogue, but many and choosing wisely can make a difference in what we accomplish. Again, here is where Art of Hosting practices can be of value.

As noted earlier, in March and November of 2008 I participated in my second and third AoH trainings. At the November training I apprenticed for the first time and truly stepped into my journey to become an Art of Hosting practitioner and eventually a trainer and Steward. And, during this time I became much more intentional about my reading in social constructionism, starting with *Social Construction: Entering the Dialogue* (Gergen & Gergen, 2004) then *Invitation to Social Construction* (Gergen, 1999) and at the suggestion of fellow PhD program colleague Maggie Shelton, a few articles by Dian Marie Hosking. It was also during this time that I began to more clearly understand the connection between Appreciative Inquiry and social constructionism. At first my interest in Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was based on it being a core practice in the Art of Hosting. But as I read more extensively about AI, the books[61] all had chapters discussing the links between AI and social constructionism. It was at this point I began to consider changing my PhD work to something that linked Art of Hosting and social constructionism, I just didn't know what.

[60] Duns offers here that he has a different view. He suggests that when AoH becomes more than a practice that some problems can occur. People attempt to use AoH as a silver bullet, applying it to every problem, without discernment. Also the AoH community has often been likened to a cult, with some people so engrossed in it that they lose perspective. It becomes too important in their life and they begin to take anything about AoH personally. I am an active practitioner and Steward of AoH and I absolutely do not believe it is a way of being, or even a way of thinking at basic epistemological and ontological level. I certainly have never had a decent conversation about AoH as ontology or epistemology. I just don't get this leap. The fact that some people describe it this way does not make it so.

[61] My reading included *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (Whitney & Cooperrider, 2005), *Appreciative Living: The Principles of Appreciative Inquiry in Personal Life* (Kelm, 2005), *Dynamic Relationships: Unleashing the Power of Appreciative Inquiry in Daily Life* (Stavros, 2005), and *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change* (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010)

Spring 2009 brought a number of changes to my life. A decision was made to begin closing down the Northern Great Plains organization. I had come to the conclusion that I no longer wanted to continue working in the field of rural development and economics and instead was making the personal and professional transition to doing work as an Art of Hosting practitioner. The Board of Directors of Northern Great Plains supported me in this change and the transition to work focused on civic engagement. They too understood from the learnings of the Meadowlark Project that there is a well established infrastructure in the region to do rural development and there is little infrastructure to work on the human condition of our communities. In April my house suffered significant flooding and in July I retired from the University of Minnesota and moved my office into my house.

To make this shift required clear focus and full attention. March 2009 I decided to take a six month break from the PhD program. By fall 2009 recovery from the flooding was complete and the professional shifts I had stepped into were fully underway. I was ready to reconnect with the PhD program, even though I was no longer sure what my dissertation topic would be. In true Art of Hosting fashion I trusted that the clarity would emerge if I stepped into the work.

I renewed my social and relational constructionist reading and research with earnest and expanded my reading to related topics as part of my exploration to decide what to focus my dissertation on. I read *Relational Being* (Gergen, 2009), *Social Construction* (Burr, 2003), *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirring in Theory and Practice* (Lock & Strong, 2010), *How Postmodernism Serves (MY) Faith: Questioning Truth, Language, Philosophy and Art* (Dowling, 2006) and many of the articles that Dian Marie Hosking has written, which also led me to some of the work she was co-authoring with Sheila McNamee. I engaged more deeply in dialogue with my PhD program colleagues Maggie Shelton and Ginny Belden Charles about my thinking for a dissertation topic and what reading they would suggest, which led me to the work of Susan Hekman and specifically *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism* (Hekman, 1990) and Mary Gergen's work on gender.

I also began to explore writing about personal transformation, specifically what kinds of experiences caused people to shift their perspectives. This led me to the work being done

at the Institute for Noetic Sciences (IONS) and the research they were doing on transformational experiences. I read *Living Deeply: The Art & Science of Transformation in Everyday Life* (Schlitz, Vieten & Amorok, 2007). It was during my exploration of IONS work that I became aware of their Worldview Literacy Project and then attended the workshop in August 2010 at the IONS campus where that moment of clarity about my dissertation topic emerged. Immediately after the IONS Worldview Literacy workshop I traveled to Bowen Island in British Columbia, Canada to participate in a three-day Warrior of the Heart workshop and a three-day Art of Hosting Stewards gathering. The central question we as Stewards were exploring was "What is the DNA of Art of Hosting?" During the six days I was on Bowen Island I invited my colleagues into many conversations about the idea of an Art of Hosting worldview. The conversations were rich and informative and left me with an awareness that my colleagues sensed there was an Art of Hosting worldview, but we all struggled with articulating it clearly and finding a comfortable connection between practice and theory, especially given that AoH is so focused on practice.

So I returned home with three objectives in mind: to develop a clearer understanding of what a worldview is through a deeper exploration of the literature; to begin building a worldview foundation for Art of Hosting based on constructionist thought as I strongly believed in a deep connection between the two; and to revise the research question I was exploring in this dissertation. For me this became an important bridge to build and comparing and integrating what Art of Hosting and constructionist worldviews are became the way for me to do it. I felt that many of my AoH Steward colleagues had a sense of this connection based on their own experiences, reading and research, but it was not well articulated. Subsequently I have had many conversations with fellow AoH Steward Chris Corrigan about constructionist thought and the connections to AoH.

What are the strong connections between Art of Hosting and social constructionism? They are both focused on the relational, believe that we co-create our realities and our futures and that we do this through good dialogue, that language matters and language includes more than the written and spoken word, that there are many local constructs in the world to honor and seek understanding of, a valuing of slowing down, and that we are invited to let go of the taken-for-granted and step into a stance of nonjudgment, not knowing and

openness to emergence. Relational constructionism adds into this shared field a more clearly articulated sense of relational leadership, the idea of local constructs as local ontologies and an affirmation of the stance of not knowing and with it connections to Buddhist thought. And, while constructionist literature does not explicitly describe itself as a worldview, for me, given this definition of a worldview: “At the most basic level, worldviews are common concepts of reality shared by a cultural group. Worldviews are the beliefs and assumptions by which we as individuals make sense of reality within the language and traditions of the surrounding society.” the elements noted here are components of a worldview. Social constructionism offers concepts, beliefs or assumptions of reality that are or can be shared by a cultural group. Just as a worldview is a construction, so is social constructionism a construction.

At their most basic, Art of Hosting and social/relational constructionism are about dialogue. All of the patterns and practices included in the Art of Hosting practice invite us into being in dialogue in new and better ways. AoH is about being in conversations that matter – conversations that make a difference. Social constructionism too is about good dialogue. Constructionism favors the kinds of dialogue that support co-creation and co-learning so that new realities can emerge. Language is seen as a tool for creating, sustaining and transforming the patterns of our social relations. (Shotter 1991 in Hosking, 2011) Through good dialogue we can come together to co-construct new (local) ways of being together, unconstrained by past constructs that were also co-created through dialogue. As participants in the world we inhabit we are not simply here, but active in the construction of our everyday lives and their related elements. (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008 in Hosking, 2010) Constructionism invites us to be curious about taken-for-granted traditions and to explore who might be privileged by them and whose voice might be silenced or suppressed. Social constructionism favors dialogue that creates spaces for every voice to be heard and there is always an invitation for a new voice to enter the conversations. As with Art of Hosting, constructionism views relationships and not individuals as the foundation of our societies. (Gergen & Gergen, 2004); Gergen, 1999). For me it is a very short walk on the bridge of connection between AoH and constructionism.

Dian Marie Hosking and Sheila McNamee's work in relational constructionism adds even greater depth to the connections between Art of Hosting and constructionism. A quick review of a few titles of their work says much "Moving Relationally: Meditations on a Relational Approach to Leadership" (Hosking, 2010), "Not Leaders, Not Followers: A Post-modern Discourse of Leadership Processes" (Hosking, 2006), "Telling Tales of Relations: Appreciating Relational Constructionism" (Hosking, 2011), "Re-Inscribing Organizational Wisdom and Courage: The Relationally Engaged Organization" (McNamee, 1998), "Back to Basics: Appreciating Appreciative Inquiry as Not 'Normal' Science" (Hosking & McNamee, 2007) and also "If You Meet Social Construction Along the Road….A Dialogue with Buddhism" (Gergen & Hosking, 2006).

Relational constructionism can be seen as a particular view on social constructionism; a view that treats all dialogues as relational constructions. (Hosking, 2007). The role of language in constructing local relational realities is a central focus. An important interest of relational constructionism is a recognition that there exists a multiple of local realities, constructs, ontologies or forms of life. One could say many worldviews. Our challenge or relational responsibility is to host a place of 'power to' go on in different but equal relations. (Hosking, 2011) Relational constructionism takes a social science perspective on social constructionism to apply constructionist thinking to leadership and organizational development, which makes it especially relevant to the work of Art of Hosting or, as AoH is sometimes called, the Art of Participatory Leadership.

However, different from other social science perspectives, the relational constructionist perspective, similar to the Art of Hosting, offers practices: that open up multiple self-other relations, i.e. a dialogic rather than monologic view of person; that open up possibilities such as new ways of being in relation or new possible futures rather than trying to make factual statements about how things are; and, that open up to ongoing, emergent and multiple local realities, rather than assuming stable, separate entities and trying to 'fix' these (assumed to be stable and separate) things. Hosking describes these as 'relationally engaged' practices rather than practices that distance, separate and are supposedly 'neutral'. (Hosking, 2011)

Relational constructionism invites us into the work of listening as well as talking. The first fold of the AoH Four Fold Practice[62] is to be fully present as a host or 'being in the now rather than the know'. To be fully present is to be able to listen deeply, openly and compassionately without judgment, to let go of fixed views and be present 'on the spot.' (Chodrum, 1995 in Hosking, 2010) For a relational constructionist, listening becomes heart-felt participation in a relational process. We shift from listening 'for' some-thing or producing 'aboutness knowledge' to sensing and feeling and 'being with' the world. We listen as a participatory process and for participatory knowing. (Hosking, 2010)

Art of Hosting shares with relational, and social, constructionism the understanding that they are a practice. Hosking (2010) describes relational constructionism as "a way of orienting to practice." In AoH we say the practice is the work. It is not something you turn on and off. It is a way of being, a worldview/philosophy. When viewed from a relational constructionist standpoint, inquiry, dialogue, being present, listening, "does not discover 'what is' in order to provide the basis for some subsequent ('evidence based') intervention" but rather offers a view of inquiry, dialogue, being present, and listening as an ongoing process. (Hosking, 2010) For a relational constructionist, practice is intended to have practical effects and have practical wisdom. (Hosking, 2011)

My daily life is taken up with my work in Art of Hosting, whether doing trainings or serving as host/facilitator of organizational, community or collaborative dialogues. It is a life full of practice and great personal learning and reward. It is also a continuing journey, both into deepening my practice and into a deeper understanding of the meta-theoretical foundations of dialogue, meaningful conversations and storytelling. Through this exploration into the connections between social and relational constructionism and Art of Hosting I have gained a deeper appreciation for the complexities and simplicities of hosting. Importantly for this writing I have gained a knowledge that helps me offer an invitation to my Art of Hosting colleagues around the world to co-construct an Art of Hosting worldview founded both in the AoH literature to date and social/relational constructionist theory and practice.

[62] There are four basic individual practices contained in what we call the Four Fold Practice that are truly core to the Art of Hosting praxeology: being fully present, engaging skillfully in conversations, being a good host of conversations and engaging with others in co-creation.

Our Journey

As I expressed earlier, my journey is not unique and yet in some ways it is. It is not the journey of an individual on a quest, but a journey of learning, personal growth and discovery that I have been fortunate to be on with the support and care and wisdom of my colleagues and friends in the Art of Hosting community. It is a journey that we are walking together in co-learning and co-discovery. It is not a journey with an end, but a life-long journey. And possibly a journey that began in previous lives and will continue on in future lives. Those past lives are influencing this journey in unconscious ways and this life's learning will influence future lives – mine and others. With this writing I am offering an invitation to those that would like to share into this journey their own learnings and wisdom to please do so and, perhaps in some modest way, bring some of my own learnings into their journey. We are co-constructing the past, present and future. We are interbeings. We are in the greater journey together. Let's continue on.

Chapter Three – Practices of Inquiry[63]

When I first started my research and writing I began from the perspective of a more traditional approach to writing a dissertation. This was in part due to my training as an economist and the more quantitative approach that perspective has, but mainly because my original intention in writing the dissertation was to do an analysis of the Meadowlark Project, an initiative that I had been involved in for several years that was using the Change Laboratory approach to systems change initiatives based on Theory U. I had intended for my dissertation to analyze that project and its impact on rural development perspectives in the region the Project was conducted in.

However, as I was proceeding with this approach, I delved deeply into social constructionist philosophy – something I knew little about then - and I also began my journey into becoming a practitioner of the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter. The result was that the purpose of my dissertation evolved. My personal interest and professional purpose shifted from writing a report on the story of the Meadowlark Project and an analysis of its impact on rural development thinking, which would be a more traditional dissertation, to one of exploring how I could contribute to the Art of Hosting patterns and practices.

As I reflected on this, while continuing my constructionist and AoH learning journeys, I began to understand that the living systems perspective being offered as a foundation to the Art of Hosting was actually a particular worldview. My dissertation purpose settled into the topic of worldviews and how worldviews and our understanding of them could impact how we approach hosting conversations that matter. So, the dissertation shifted from a review of the story of and an analysis of the Meadowlark Project to an exploration of the topic of worldviews, a deepening of our understanding of how worldviews impact hosting practice, what an Art of Hosting worldview and a relational constructionist worldview is,

[63] As I reflected on naming this chapter, especially after my reading of relational constructionist research and literature, I became uncomfortable with naming this chapter “Research Methods.” I started to call it “Inquiry Approaches,” but then discovered Ken Gergen’s use of “Practices of Inquiry” as an alternative to “Methods of Research” and immediately knew this is how I prefer to name this chapter.

and how all of these might mesh together to become helpful in our work of hosting conversations that matter.

Thus, this dissertation has become an inquiry into worldviews and an invitation to my Art of Hosting colleagues to explore more deeply the role of worldviews and how they impact how we come together as living and non-living entities and, more practically, how worldview intelligence could be a helpful tool when we host conversations. This dissertation is, then, an invitation to further dialogue. It is an opening. A beginning. It is not an ending. It is also a bit of dance between what would be considered a more traditional or academic approach to a dissertation, which includes a literature review and surveys, and a more qualitative/relational constructionist inquiry into worldviews. Again, it is an invitation and as such it is written less from a methods of research approach and more from a practices of inquiry/hosting perspective (Gergen, 2013). It is not meant to offer a specific outcome, a specific conclusion or statement of fact. It is meant to be an invitation to further dialogue and research.

I have approached the writing of this dissertation from a welcoming perspective, which would be similar to how we approach dialogue in Art of Hosting, instead of more traditional writing (Gergen and Gergen, 2012) in order to invite a range of readers into this exploration. As I have worked on this dissertation I have lived it in my professional work. The challenge has been to stop the research and my own personal worldview exploration, which continues to be an amazing journey in itself, and complete this writing. I feel deeply that worldviews, and the exploration of worldviews, offers an incredible doorway into conversations that are challenging in our society today. With each passing week as I was writing this dissertation, more and more information about worldviews and more and more understanding of how they impact hosting practice and more and more practice into hosting differing worldviews continued to emerge. So this dissertation is really a reflection of my living experience.

This dissertation is meant to be an invitation to the Art of Hosting community[64] into further dialogue about how exploration, when hosting, of personal and collective[65] of worldviews

[64] I refer to those that are active Art of Hosting practitioners as a community. AoH Steward Ria Baeck prefers to refer to the group as a network. I would offer that either term, for me, works and I do use them interchangeably depending on context.

can be a doorway into further, often quite difficult, conversations, i.e. how worldview exploration is a tool or practice for hosting. I have tried, from this perspective, to connect this research and reflections in this dissertation to the practice of hosting. As I researched and wrote, I and many of my hosting colleagues began including discussions and conversations and teaches about worldview in our Art of Hosting trainings. We were co-learning as we went and this co-learning impacted my writing and research.

One learning is that we have come to believe that personal and collective worldview intelligence helps us speak to the pressing issues of society today. So the intent here is not so much an offering of new information, but a deeper inquiry into the practical aspects or the practice of what we might already know. Mary Gergen (2010) notes that we often view knowledge from a particular perspective and that this is dependent upon one's specific local context. This is exactly what we are offering in the practical aspects of our teaching of worldview. Worldviews are locally/historically/culturally specific and awareness of this improves our hosting practice.

The approach that I began with and settled on in the first two chapters could be considered a more traditional approach, especially Chapter Two which takes a strong autoethnographic approach. Chapter Two is the story of my personal journey into the Art of Hosting and into worldviews. As I continued my professional work and my research and writing, my approach for this dissertation evolved into one of a relational constructionist perspective. To that end, as I wrote I began to recognize that the entire dissertation is really an invitation to exploration on the part of the larger Art of Hosting community and that it is an invitation into an approach to understanding worldviews and our hosting practice that is relationally engaged (McNamee, 2000).

[65] I refer to personal and collective worldviews in this writing. By personal I mean an individual's worldview. I have used individual and personal interchangeable, but it the core I do mean that each of us as individual's has a 'personal' worldview. In chapter Four I outline the Apostel worldview framework. We are now using it as a structured way for individual's to explore and develop a deeper awareness of their personal worldview. I use the word collective as a general term for the range of 'more-than-one' groups of people that can have a worldview. So, a business, a government, an organization, a community, a department within any of these, or a small or large team of people within any department in any of the listed structure can have a worldview and so the list could go on. Use of 'collective' is a convenience to avoid writing the list.

Every person is connected into a vast network of relationships and communities and thus other ways of talking and acting and making sense (McNamee, 2000). This connection applies directly to this dissertation and it applies to the larger perspective of the use of worldviews in hosting practice. As I wrote I began to realize that if this is an invitation to the Art of Hosting network to further exploration on worldviews, I could begin with sharing my perspectives about worldviews during the writing of this dissertation with the AoH community so there would be a poly-vocality or a multi-voiced nature to this writing. I have invited communal reflection on the larger framework of worldviews. They are included in Chapter Six on survey results. I have also invited several AoH Stewards to read and offer reflections on Chapters One, Two, Four and Five. Their comments are contained in the footnotes in the specific chapters.

It is important for me to say here that I am not writing from an assumption that I represent the perspective of the Art of Hosting community, but instead as a qualitative researcher, I have invited the AoH community/network to share their specific reflections about worldview and this writing. As a qualitative researcher, I am offering my research, writing and reflections to the Art of Hosting community and to any others with mutual interest in dialogic practices to continue to develop or alter the ideas presented here. (Gergen and Gergen, 2003) It is my intent with and hope for this dissertation that the Art of Hosting community will contribute to the work of how worldview intelligence can be a part of hosting practice. Thus, I've approached this research as a relationship with the Art of Hosting community. In doing so I have tried to enter into a more egalitarian relationship with my colleagues in the AoH community and invited their reflections. (Gergen and Gergen, 2003) I am aware that by diving so deeply into the topic of worldview that I have in fact positioned myself as someone with a deep interest in the topic and, as some of my colleagues have said, maybe created for myself a lens of a worldview researcher that impacts how I see hosting practice. (Gergen and Gergen, 2003)

Finally, I want to emphasize again that my intent here is to offer a beginning for me, and I hope for others, into a much deeper exploration of our understanding of individual and collective worldviews. What is my worldview and how can I come to be more deeply aware of it? How can I come to understand how it impacts how I see the world and act in the world? How can I come to understand how it impacts the tools I choose to use to

host? How I can begin to understand another person's worldviews? Where they might come from and what is their story? How, when mutual interest exists, we can work together, even though we may have very different worldviews, to find ways forward on issues that matter to us.

I'm hoping that this beginning into understanding of worldviews as a hosting tool offers a doorway into generating relationships instead of separation or isolation (Gergen and Gergen, 2003). That it offers a way for people to connect on issues that matter. That worldview exploration supports inquiry, curiosity and dialogue and working with emergence and not knowing. As a researcher and writer on worldviews I have held the position of not knowing in order to be open to the discoveries this journey offers (Gergen and Gergen, 2003). That this is truly an exploration into holding the space of dialogue, continuous learning and continuous change.

Purpose

In the Art of Hosting we hold that clarity of purpose is foundational to our work. If we do not have clarity of purpose, than why are we doing whatever activity it is that we are doing? Why are we meeting? Why are we inviting people to an event or activity? Why is this activity worth doing? Clarity of purpose is essential to good hosting practice. This holds true for the writing of this dissertation as well. What is its purpose? Does it offer something to society? Does it offer greater understanding of each other? Whom is it for? From my perspective it is mainly for the hosting practitioner, whether one is a reflective practitioner or an academic that practices. The purpose, then, is to contribute to ways of developing practices for understanding of the many different worldviews or forms of life that we live with on this planet. (Gergen, 2013) So, when I ask myself is this worth doing, my answer, for me and for many of my colleagues I've discussed this with is, yes it is worth doing because it contributes to the future we all are hoping to build. It contributes to the work of being in dialogue. It invites us into an exploration of our values and to new forms of expression or dialogue. (Gergen and Gergen, 2012)

This is why I am so passionate about this writing. I am not unbiased. I have strong feelings about this topic and I hope my writing reflects this (Gergen and Gergen, 2012).

My inviting hosting colleagues to read what I have written and offer comments about what I have written and to share those comments in the footnotes begins to answer, I believe, the questions of whether I am being understood or is this work meaningful or what can we do with this? (Gergen and Gergen, 2012) Recognizing that I have passion about this writing and inquiry and about hosting work, I have tried to hold clarity about myself in relation to it. To that end a key purpose of this dissertation is to provide information that can be useful now in addressing local and practical concerns (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). There is one other purpose here and that is to form a partnership with the Art of Hosting community to further explore additional ways that worldview intelligence and worldview exploration can be a useful tool in hosting practice (Mary Gergen, 2010). So again, this is an invitation into the work and a beginning, not an ending.

Relational Constructionist Research

I have taken a relational constructionist approach to writing this dissertation. As noted earlier, I did not start from this perspective, but it became clear as my research and writing progressed that there was a natural fit between the worldview intelligence exploration, the relational aspects of hosting, and a relational constructionist approach to the research and writing. Thus my research and writing evolved as my learning did.

I have been relationally engaged throughout the writing of it. I have been in conversation with many colleagues about worldviews, teaching about worldviews and in co-exploration about the implications of worldview intelligence for hosting. I have offered worldview teaches[66] during Art of Hosting trainings and engaged in conversations with my colleagues about the value and impact of those teaches. One of the important aspects of this is my letting go of a particular way of teaching about worldviews in AoH trainings. I began teaching about worldviews with a specific approach, but over time as I practiced these teachings I eventually settled into an approach that is less political and more useful to participants and more reflective of the value of worldview intelligence. This letting go has also emerged as my hosting colleagues have developed their own ways of teaching about worldviews, often times in ways that are deeply expressive of their own life

[66] I recognize that this word is a verb, as in “She teaches the students how to cook.” However, in the Art of Hosting we use it all the time in the above form. My understanding is that this comes from people for whom English is a second language.

experiences. In crafting worldview teaches I opened myself up to the multiplicity and changing realities of how worldviews can be discussed, thought about and offered. (McNamee and Hosking, 2012) This relational constructionist approach has invited changes in myself and my own perspectives and positions on the teaching of worldviews. I'm now finding myself drawn to exploring many other ways of offering worldview teaches. Thus, at the center of the relational constructionist approach to this writing is that it has practical implications for the work that I and my colleagues are in and it offers doorways into new possible ways of going on together as hosts, practitioners and collaborators. (McNamee and Hosking, 2012)

In addition, as I've noted previously, I have invited several of my colleagues to review Chapters One, Two, Four and Five and offer reflections and comments on the writing. By offering a stance of shared inquiry, I have opened space for agreement, disagreement or deeper reflection (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). I have offered two surveys to the Art of Hosting community that provided them with an opportunity to share their reflections on the general topic of worldviews and more specifically an Art of Hosting worldview. I did this using the Apostel framework as the structure for my inquiry. This approach built consistency into my overall inquiry and was also a way for me as a researcher or inquirer to make clear to the Art of Hosting community the choices that I made in writing this dissertation (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). So, even before I finalized the deconstruction of the Art of Hosting worldview presented in Chapter Five, I engaged with the community and their thinking about worldviews.

I have also tried to present this writing in a way that balances the academic requirements of a PhD dissertation and the invitation it offers for anyone, even though my main audience at present is practicing hosts, who is interested in worldviews to read and learn from the dissertation. It is my hope and intent that in writing from a relational constructionist perspective the dissertation is inviting and opening. The writing has elements of my personal story and personal reflections about my journey. It offers my interpretations of how worldview intelligence and relational constructionist philosophy can impact hosting practices. It does not lay claim to any specific truth or that my interpretations are the correct interpretations, but only that these are my interpretations and an invitation to a reader’s reflection about them, whether the reader is in agreement

or disagreement (and as we can see in the footnotes not everyone agrees with my interpretations). (McNamee and Hosking, 2012)

This is all very helpful to my work as a host/trainer and to my writing. I also know that this work is having an impact. As I examined worldviews it has changed how I approach hosting and it has changed how others approach hosting (McNamee and Hosking, 2012). Prior to my beginning to offer worldview teaches as part of Art of Hosting trainings there was very little of any worldview teaching other than to compare a mechanistic worldview with a complex living systems worldview (however even in this the term worldview was rarely used). Now many of my colleagues offer worldview teaching in their trainings. So in fact what is happening is there's been a change in what we know about how we might host and what methods we might use to host.

In my approach to this writing I recognize that there is a particular philosophy to this research – a relational constructionist philosophy – and that it also reflects my own personal philosophy. (McNamee and Hosking, 2012) For me, a big influence of relational constructionist philosophy is that this is research deeply embedded in a stance of inquiry about worldviews and that it is an invitation to further inquiry. The research approach holds for me a curiosity that begins with this work, but does not end with it. Thus, I've tried to write this dissertation in a way that orients the reader to further inquiry. (McNamee and Hosking, 2012) In this way I have centered the idea that understanding of worldviews can be a foundation for us as hosts as well as for the readers of this writing to develop a relational orientation to the world. If we come into dialogue with others holding curiosity and inquiry and seeking not to impose our own worldviews on others but instead seek understanding of each other's worldviews with an intention of finding ways to go on together, then we are operating from a perspective of openness to possibilities (McNamee and Hosking, 2012).

A relational constructionist approach to research, then, is an approach of opening up possibilities for further understanding (of worldviews) and not a closing off to one understanding. It is also a recognition that not only are there many different worldviews, but also that there could be many different approaches to understanding what is a worldview, what an individual’s worldview is, and what a collective, group or societal

worldview is. From a relational constructionist perspective it also means that whatever worldview I, as an individual may have, that worldview was constructed socially or relationally. Recognizing that our worldviews are socially/relationally constructed is central to the understanding of where worldviews come from. And in being socially constructed they can change. That change can be an individual or collective choice. The awareness of the possibility of and choices for change comes from our social interactions with others.

I have also worked from the perspective that this inquiry (this writing) makes space for many people to contribute their thoughts about what is offered here. This is done to further our understanding of how we might continue to go forward exploring worldviews, what methods we might use, what purposes we might hold, and how we might express our understanding of worldviews. (McNamee and Hosking, 2012) While this enterprise is mainly in written language form, further exploration of worldviews could take many forms including pictures, drawing, song, dance or other 'language games.' I have approached this writing not as a knowing inquirer or as someone with particular knowledge about worldviews, but as someone on a journey of understanding about worldviews, especially as they relate to hosting practice. I've also approached this as a journey of joint discovery and inquiry with Art of Hosting colleagues and not one of some form of subject-object relationship between me and the Art of Hosting community. (McNamee and Hosking, 2012)

I believe that worldview intelligence offers a doorway into deeper understanding of each other and creates possibilities for shared actions. (McNamee and Hosking, 2012) I know that I am not just writing about worldviews and I am not just teaching about worldviews but that I am, in my hosting work and in this writing, performing the inquiry and understanding of worldviews. I believe this relational constructionist awareness about performing is essential to hosting practice. It is essential to our teaching and training. Everything that we do as co-hosts during a training models or performs all that we are teaching. As hosts then, it is not just enough to talk about it, we must perform it. (McNamee and Hosking, 2012)

Interpretation/reflection/deconstruction

This dissertation has three central components. The first is my journey story into hosting and the importance of worldview intelligence to hosting. This journey is told in Chapters One and Two. This is the autoethnographic part of the dissertation. Telling my story was valuable to me in furthering my own understanding of self and understanding my own worldview. It is my hope that the telling of my story may also be valuable to others as they travel in their own journeys into self and worldview intelligence. Our journeys are not just ours alone, they are shared journeys.

The second important element of this writing is the literature review chapter itself, which became more than just a literature review; it became a journey into my own personal understanding of worldviews and more specifically my understanding of a way to deconstruct worldviews into components that could be helpful for hosting work. It became a way for me to see the possibilities in using worldview explorations as a doorway in to find ways for people with differing views to go on together. The literature review chapter, then, is more than just a review of the literature. It also contains my interpretations of the literature, which reflect my learning journey into understanding worldview intelligence as a hosting tool. While the Apostel framework I used for deconstructing worldviews is not mine, the use of it for deconstructing (interpreting) a relational constructionist and an Art of Hosting worldview is based in my interpretations (deconstruction) of the process as a way to strengthen our understanding of worldviews and of working with worldview intelligence as hosts.

Throughout the first two sections of the literature review chapter the general overall literature review and specifically the Apostel framework I've consistently interpreted the literature from a perspective of what it means for hosting practice. This was a conscious choice on my part in the writing of this dissertation and the qualitative approach to the chapter. (M. Gergen, 2010) I also offered many of my hosting colleagues an opportunity to review several of the dissertation chapters, thus holding myself open to alternative interpretations of what I have offered. (M. Gergen, 2010) I have found that in reading some of these alternative interpretations my own interpretations or understandings of the research have altered. (M. Gergen, 2010)

The third part of the literature review chapter is a deconstruction of relational constructionist philosophy into the Apostel framework. There is considerable risk, I believe, on my part in doing this and I reflected about it for some time. This interpretation (deconstruction) has the risk of finding myself at odds with those that have been instrumental in developing relational constructionist philosophy as they could find considerable disagreement with my approach. Yet I believe the deconstruction into the Apostel framework is helpful for me as a host and will also be so for other practicing hosts. My hosting colleague Dr. Stephen Duns suggests that there was considerable original writing and thinking in this work.

Another important part of the approach I have taken to this writing is that of reflexivity or reflection. Mary Gergen (2010) notes that reflexivity refers to the researchers reflections on their theoretical orientations or personal investment in their work. Much of what is written in this dissertation contains my reflections on the subject matter of worldview intelligence as a hosting tool.

It is clear I am deeply connected to the Art of Hosting community. What is here is my interpretation of the elements of the Art of Hosting practice and worldview. Others in the community could see things through a different lens. This is why I'm offering this writing as an invitation to exploration and a dialogic product. Maybe there is no final agreement, but just a framework for individual interpretation.

Multi-voiced

A core intent of this writing is for it to be an invitation into exploring how worldview intelligence can be a useful tool for hosting conversations that matter. I have practiced this invitation during the writing of this dissertation in two ways. One way is by sending two separate, but related, surveys to those in the Art of Hosting community participating in the AoH listserv to invite their voices into my learning and writing. The AoH listserv has about 1200 members of which about 100 are active contributors. As is the case with many listservs, there are a limited number of active contributors and a large number of readers who often benefit from the online dialogues and information shared.

The intention of the surveys was to bring the voice of the community into the writing of this dissertation. The surveys offer an opportunity to be in conversation (in a more formal way unfortunately) with the AoH community, especially those that hold a strong interest in any research or writing about the Art of Hosting or those that have perspectives on the deepening of hosting practices. (McNamee, 2000) Many of the respondents are hosting friends and so I have a personal connection to them and feel we shared in this writing/exploration in many ways. (McNamee, 2000; Gergen and Gergen, 2012) The results are presented in Chapter Six. But perhaps more importantly, the voices I've heard have influenced my thinking about an Art of Hosting worldview and impacted the conclusion I offer in Chapter Seven. (McNamee, 2000)

Both surveys asked participants to identify their level of Art of Hosting experience at the beginning. The first survey began by asking participants if they thought there is a worldview shared in the AoH community?" The first survey then asked six questions based on the Apostel framework for worldview components. The questions were general and did not name the specific components. In the second survey sent eight months later I again asked questions using the six components, but used their philosophical names (ontology, axiology, epistemology, etc.). I provided a definition of each term and a brief list of the AoH patterns and practices I felt fit into each worldview component. Each survey ended with a space for additional comments. I conducted the survey online using Survey Monkey. Both surveys were sent out to the entire listserv. Details of the results of the surveys are in Chapter Six.

The seven core questions in the first survey were:

- Do you think there is an (Art of Hosting) worldview shared in the AoH community? If yes, for you, what are key elements of that worldview? If no, why not?
- Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a description of how the world functions and how it is structured? If yes, for you, what are key elements of this description? If no, why not?
- Do you think the Art of Hosting offers an explanation of how we got here? Or why the world is the way it is? If yes, for you, what are key elements of that explanation? If no, why not?

- Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a description of the future? Of where we are going or can go? If yes, for you, what are key elements of that description? If no, why not?
- Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a set of values, a morality or set of ethics? If yes, for you, what are some of those key values or ethics? If no, why not?
- Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a set of principles or practices around which we organize our actions? If yes, for you, what are some of those key principles or practices? If no, why not?
- Do you think the Art of Hosting offers an explanation of how we know what we know? Of how we construct our pictures of the present, past and future?

The six core questions in the second survey were:

- I would offer that an Art of Hosting worldview provides a description of how the world functions – an ontology. This description is comprised of a living systems view of the world, that emergence is how local changes become systems of influence, and that there are paradoxes, the chaordic path, the divergence-emergence-convergence process, the four organizational paradigms and fractals at work in the world. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of how the world currently functions? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?
- I would offer that the Art of Hosting does not give great attention to explaining the past or how we got here. That the primary explanation offered is that past in the western world is characterized by a mechanistic view of how the world operates and is outlined in the chart in the workbooks comparing 'Traditional ways of working' with 'Art of Hosting complementing ways'. The Art of Hosting also does not explicitly speak to other non-western cultural views or explanations of the past. How would you describe an Art of Hosting explanation of the past or of how we got here? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?
- I would offer that the Art of Hosting offers a limited perspective on a future – a futurology. What is described is a world where we have participatory leadership, more intergenerational connections, local communities are connecting with each other and the 5th paradigm is emergent. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of the future or what could be ahead of us? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?

- I would offer that the Art of Hosting holds a set of values or ethics – an axiology. They are: conversations matter, meaningful conversations lead to wise action, being curious is essential, working in the place of emergence and taking a stance of non-judgment or not knowing is essential, diverse perspectives open up new possibilities, as practitioners we work toward the common good, we work to co-create friendship and partnership, self-awareness is essential as a host, ceremony con hold an important role in the work, participation by all is central to the work, we show up fully present, and the practice is the work. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of how the world currently functions? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?
- I would offer that the Art of Hosting has a set practices or methodologies around which we organize our actions – a praxeology. This set of methodologies includes the: Four-Fold Practice, Multiple Levels of Focus, Powerful Questions, 7 Breaths of Design, Chaordic Stepping Stones, PeerSpirit Circle Process, Open Space Technology, World Café, Appreciative Inquiry, Theory U, ProAction Café, Harvesting and Storytelling. What would you include in the Art of Hosting set of practices or methodologies – its praxeology? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?
- I would offer that the Art of Hosting literature does not specifically address the matter of a theory of knowledge or explanation of how we know what we know – an epistomology. I would offer that the Art of Hosting's theory of knowledge is practice. That practice drives theory instead of theory driving practice. That in Art of Hosting we explore, test, reflect, learn, test some more and continue this learning cycle until a practice feels true and grounded. That perhaps the closest explanation to an Art of Hosting theory of knowledge can be found in the three steps Theory U – sensing, presencing and realizing. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of how we know what we know? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?

The second core component of bringing multiple voices into this writing is the invitation to several Art of Hosting stewards to read chapters one, two, four and five of this dissertation and offer their reflections. I sought out colleagues from a range of backgrounds, experiences and cultures. (Gergen & Gergen, 2003) Those reflections are shared in footnotes in the individual chapters becoming part of the writing of the dissertation. Often those reflections agreed with something I wrote and amplified the thought. Sometimes

they disagreed with what I'd written and offered other additional perspectives that bring value to the work and thinking. These voices are an important part of this research. They have enriched my perspectives on worldviews and expanded what I have written. (Gergen and Gergen 2012) They have also influenced the perspectives or interpretations I offer in Chapter Seven on an Art of Hosting worldview. (McNamee, 2000)

It is my hope that by engaging in a polyvocal process in this writing that it becomes a beginning to a larger dialogue with in the AoH community, one in which I become a dialogue participant, and that this dialogue be a learning dialogue that each of us can use in our own hosting practices. (Gergen & Gergen, 2003)

Literature Review

As noted earlier, the literature review that I conducted for the writing of this dissertation became a very helpful tool in building a foundation for my understanding of worldview and for building a foundation to share perspectives on worldview to others. The literature review became more than a demonstration that I have read and researched the topic, it became a useful resource for further exploration of worldview. The review is a beginning and an invitation to further exploration.

One important source of information was the Worldview Literacy Project. Their focus is on curriculum for high school students and, from my perspective, it is also an invitation to develop further learning about worldviews and to explore development of specific workshops on worldviews for targeted groups. One such opportunity is using worldview intelligence as a way into exploring topics of race, power and privilege instead of the more traditional diversity training approach that many of my colleagues from communities of color find not very helpful.[67]

I'm hopeful the literature search done here becomes a resource for others as they contribute to worldview intelligence and research. The worldview literature search chapter was written so it can be read independent of the rest of the dissertation. I have shared the

[67] I am working with several colleagues to develop such a learning program/workshop regarding race, power and privilege using worldview intelligence as the foundation for the workshop.

chapter with others who are interested specifically in the topic of worldviews and not necessarily in the Art of Hosting. This has led to conversations regarding a wide range of possible workshops on worldviews (business, law enforcement, community organizers, teachers or all audiences we are looking at right now). Subsequent to the writing of this worldview chapter and the reflections in Chapter One I have published two blog posts on worldview[68]. These posts are part of a program called Growing Hosting Artistry that I have developed with three AoH colleagues. Exploration of personal worldviews and worldview intelligence as a hosting practice are a core part of this program.

As I researched and wrote the literature search chapter, the work became, for me, a deep inquiry into more than the literature. It became not just an inquiry to provide a theoretical underpinning to the research project and the interpretations I've made, but also an inquiry into my own deeper understanding of worldviews, especially my own worldview, and an inquiry into how each of us could develop ways to individually understand worldviews, how we could develop collective understanding of other worldviews, and how worldview intelligence could be a resource for hosting. There is clearly a need for more research and writing and exploration into worldviews and into the possibilities that worldviews could serve for helping us develop understanding of each other as we find ways to go forward on issues that are of importance to us.

Autoethnography

Chapter 2 is my journey story. It is an autoethnographic inquiry or story of my personal journey or experiences in becoming a host. It reflects my role as a participant in this research initiative. It is also a reflection of the lens through which I see all of the writing of this dissertation. As an Art of Hosting steward and practitioner I am deeply influenced by my experiences as a host and this clearly impacts how I see and have conducted the research and writing. It was evident to me throughout all of this that, as I wrote, I was always reflecting on how my experiences impacted the choices I made. I came to understand that I am not separate from this work looking at it as outside observer, but am deeply embedded in this topic. (K. Gergen, 2013; McNamee & Hosking, 2012)

[68] http://growinghostingartistry.wordpress.com/2014/01/06/understanding-world-view-and-how-it-impacts-us-as-hosts/; http://growinghostingartistry.wordpress.com/2014/01/12/worldview-practice-and-action-taking-whole/;

In writing this dissertation, my intent has not been to test a hypothesis[69]. It is instead, to tell my learning journey into the Art of Hosting, worldview intelligence and development of my perspective on what AoH worldview could be so that those who are active hosting practitioners might explore and contribute further to a wider worldview learning journey in the AoH community. (K. Gergen, 2013) It is also my hope that others interested in becoming hosts may find that reading my story will help them in choices about their own hosting journey.

While Chapter Two is mainly my autoethnographic story, this entire dissertation is based upon my personal perspectives and experiences regarding hosting conversations, my learning about social constructionism and how my political and social perspectives have been influenced by social and relational constructionist philosophy, and how I've come to believe that worldview intelligence can be an effective doorway into dialogues on social norms and social structures. (K. Gergen, 2013; M. Gergen, 2010; Gergen and Gergen, 2003)

Finally, throughout the dissertation I have attempted to build connections with the reader. An important element of this writing is that it is an invitation to the reader for their own exploration into worldview intelligence (personal and philosophical) and, importantly, to contribute to a broader understanding of worldview through writing and research. It is my hope that the reader will connect with the perspectives offered about worldviews and specifically about hosting practice and an Art of Hosting worldview. (K. Gergen, 2013)

Action Research

As an Art of Hosting practitioner I am strong motivated by issues of social justice, racial and gender politics/power, equity, and a desire to make change in the world. This is a perspective that exists throughout the global AoH community. Many, if not all of the active AoH practitioners, see themselves as agents of change. I include myself here. I am not value neutral in my life, my work and in the choices made regarding this dissertation. (K. Gergen, 2013)

[69] My AoH colleague Dr. Stephen Duns suggests here that I do have an hypothesis, that there is an Art of Hosting worldview.

After sharing my teachings and writings on worldviews with a close AoH colleague he began using worldviews as a starting point for many of the conversations he was in about race, power and privilege. He found that beginning a conversation about worldviews opens the doorway to deeper conversations about race, power and privilege. He offered that his experience of starting a conversation by saying we are going to talk about race or power these conversations can often become toxic. However, if we begin our conversations with a reflection on worldviews and how each of us sees the world than that opens up a doorway to further conversation. His experience reflects our learnings regarding worldview intelligence as a social change tool.

So, as is the case with an action research based approach, this writing is intended to contribute to the body of knowledge that Art of Hosting practitioners draw from as agents of change. This is, in the broadest sense, the purpose of the research and writing – to strengthen our capacity as hosts to bring about change as we work on issues of social justice et al. (K. Gergen, 2013) It does, then, have elements of Empowerment Action Research since the intention is to share my learnings on this journey with others who will find mutual interest in exploring an Art of Hosting worldview, in worldview intelligence and how it can help open doorways to dialogues on race, power, privilege, etc., and in how we might continue to add to the research on worldviews and understanding of working with differing worldviews (differing social/cultural/historical contexts). (Gergen & Gergen, 2003)

Conclusion

I began this chapter with a footnote stating that I felt naming it Practices of Inquiry was more appropriate to the relational constructionist approach I have taken to my research and writing than naming the chapter Methods of Research. It is possible to view this as simply another way to describe method. But, for me it is more than that. In Art of Hosting we often say the “practice is the work.” Holding to this perspective, I believe that the research, learning and writing of this dissertation is not just a singular event or project, but one part of a journey of (co-)learning about worldviews and the role that worldview intelligence (practice) can serve in furthering the art and practice of dialogue. Sheila McNamee’s (2000) description of people coming together to create meaning as an act of social poetry beautifully describes, for me, the approach (research method/practice of

inquiry) that I have taken throughout the writing of this dissertation. Research, learning, writing, as a practice…as a (poetic) way of life.

Chapter 4 – The Literature Review

A core purpose of this writing is to provide one beginning for a dialogue to co-construct an Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter worldview within the global Art of Hosting community. It is an invitation to those that are practicing each day, through discourse, into the work of co-constructing a new global, relational narrative. To start the dialogue (actually to continue one we have started in a small way) an important step will be to review what a worldview is, how worldviews impact our lives and what a relational (constructionist) based Art of Hosting worldview could begin to look like. It is not the intent of the literature review to provide a comprehensive review of social/relational constructionist literature, but instead to identify those elements of social/relational constructionist theory & practice that speak to what an Art of Hosting worldview could be. It is the intent of this literature review to provide the beginnings of that foundation for an ongoing dialogue. Much of what is here are my interpretations of the worldview literature. They are intended mainly to assist in the dialogue within the AoH community regarding what an Art of Hosting worldview might be.

Why would an Art of Hosting worldview be important? If, as suggested earlier, we are in an intersubjective space between (global, or at least Western civilization) narratives and during this time, we are in fact writing a new narrative, then I believe that one group of people that is actively working to co-construct that new (relational) narrative is the Art of Hosting community[70]. These discourse practitioners are working each day in different social, cultural, and historical contexts to build a different (better) world. They are doing this work using shared patterns and practices that are founded in dialogue or discourse. These discursive practices have proven over time to be workable and adaptable within many different worldviews or cultural (local) contexts (constructs). Thus while these practitioners are working in different contexts, they are working from a shared perspective that dialogue has value and that it is in meaningful dialogue that people can find a way forward to co-constructing a different world, a world in which being in relationship is

[70] AoH Steward Ria Baeck noted here that she prefers to use the word 'network' instead of community.

centered and discourse is at the center of building relationship[71]. The Art of Hosting community does not specifically use the language of relational constructionism, but its work, from my perspective, is clearly relationally centered.

It is the intention of this chapter to provide an overview of the concepts of worldview and social/relational constructionism and set the stage for the deconstruction (my interpretations) of the current AoH literature into a worldview framework and the possibilities for bringing into that worldview relational constructionism. I will begin by offering an explanation of what a worldview is, provide an overview of different worldviews to demonstrate that there is a range of worldviews operating in the world simultaneously (some complementary and some not), offer a summary of different frameworks for understanding worldviews and a more specific explanation of the worldview framework developed at the Leo Apostel Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, Brussels, Belgium and a summary of my interpretation (deconstruction) of a relational constructionist worldview using the Apostel framework. Keeping in mind that throughout this entire writing, including this chapter, that I am continually building theory and practice connections between the Art of Hosting, social/relational constructionism and worldview thinking.

Interestingly, the term worldview is a relatively recent phenomenon in Western culture. Its modern origins can be traced to Immanuel Kant. In his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant, coined the term *weltanschauung.* The term is composed of Welt 'world' and Annschauung 'view' or 'outlook'. The term has been used in philosophy, theology, anthropology, education and elsewhere. (Vidal, 2007; Wolters, 1989). Kant, when coining the phrase, was referring to one's "empirical perception of the world." (Hoffecker, 2007: xi) Over time our perceptions of the world have come, as we will see below, to include much more, including one's sensory experiences in the natural world and moral ideas about what is really real. (Hoffecker, 2007)

In fact, use of the term worldview became very popular among philosophers in the 19th century as they explored the meaning of existence and reality. For some, philosophy came to be seen as a Weltanschauung (worldview) and in the broadest sense talking

[71] Baeck suggests that relationship and dialogue can be seen as two sides of the same coin and that she doesn't' fully agree that conversation or dialogue is at the center of relationship – there is much more to it than just conversation.

about "a philosophy" could be viewed as talking about a worldview. (Vidal, 2007) As use of the term worldview increased, thinkers outside of the field of philosophy also started using it in academic settings including history, music, anthropology, theology, art and the physical sciences. (Hoffecker, 2007) Vidal, however, offers a caution regarding use of the term uncritically. He suggests that it is important to make sure, whatever worldview is being discussed, to be open-minded, i.e. revisable. Meaning that the worldview is open to criticism and discussion, especially if the standard that a worldview is a philosophy is applied. (Vidal, 2007)

As noted earlier, however, the idea of a worldview can be traced back much further if one looks beyond western cultures. The text know as the Sun Tzu and, more popularly, as *The Art of War* offers a framework for action that contains three components – View, Practice and Action. Central to View is the idea that the world is an interconnected whole; and that seeing the world this way informs one's Actions in the world and the Practices used to manifest (Act) the View of interconnectedness. In the Sun Tzu this idea is referred to as 'taking whole'. (Gimian & Boyce, 2001)

What is a Worldview

The Way We Understand and Depict Reality

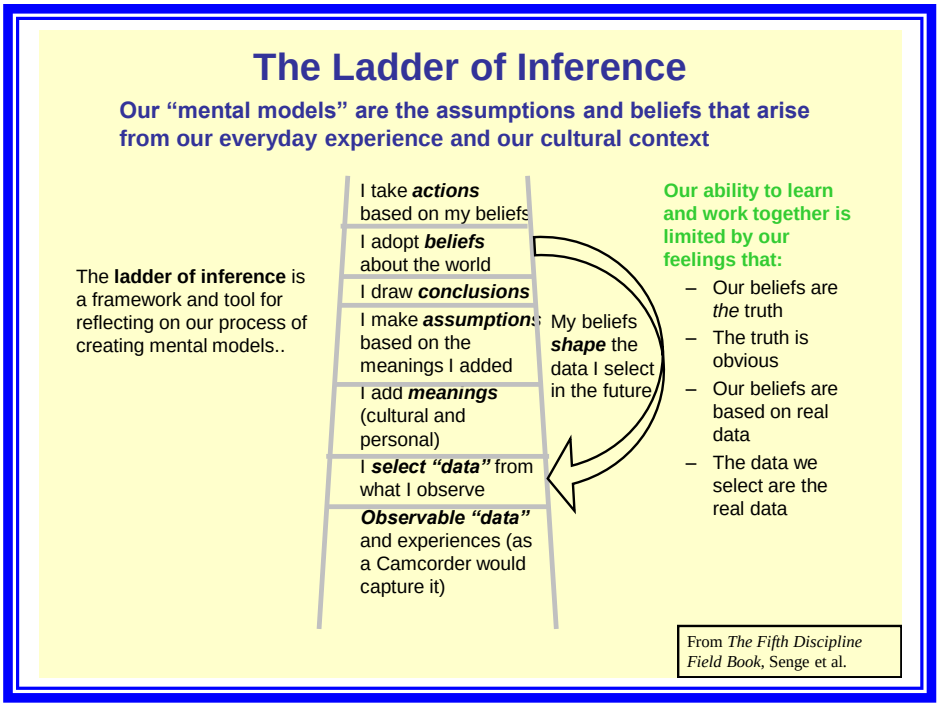
Definitions of what worldviews are vary by discipline, topic or focus. However, at the most basic level, worldviews are common concepts of reality shared by a cultural group. Worldviews are pervasive in every society. Worldviews are the beliefs and assumptions by which we as individuals make sense of reality within the language and traditions of the surrounding society. Our worldviews provide us with the answers to life's big questions. Our worldviews influence our thoughts, perceptions of things and our actions (Cook, 2009; Funk, 2001; Spirkin,1983; Sire, 2009; Naugle, 2002) The Oxford English Dictionary defines worldview as"... [a] particular philosophy of life; a concept of the world held by an individual or a group ..." (Funk, 2001)

Our worldviews influence every aspect of our lives – what we think about, how we act, what assumptions we make about others, what motivates us, what we consider to be the

good, the moral and the true[72]. Our worldview gives coherence to our lives. In fact it has been suggested that it is our worldview that 'allows us to think at all.' (Sire, 2009: Hoffecker, 2007) We can think of our worldview as giving us a way to describe the world in everyday language "that shapes and guides our lives, helping us to understand, explain and explore the world around us and everything in it, and how these are all related to each other". (Gousmett, 1997: 2) AoH Steward Tenneson Woolf added here "the invisible and often unspoken code that tells us not just what is right and wrong, but what is underneath that".

Schlitz, Vieten and Amorok describe a worldview as "the ways in which we make sense and meaning of the world around us." (Schlitz et al. 2011) A worldview then enables us to make sense of the world by providing an understanding of or reference point for what is real and how the world works (from our local contextual perspective) and what we can consider important. A worldview can also limit us, because it could close us off to new knowledge if we only see the world through our existing knowledge and assumptions. (Jenkins, 1999) Importantly for many of us, our worldview offers us a way to understand the world that gives us "a feeling of being home" and that reassures us that our interpretations of reality are right. (Hiebert, 1997)

One tool from systems thinking that helps visualize how easy it is to get trapped in one (world) view and close off the possibility of seeing other perspectives is the Ladder of Inference. The process depicted



[72] Baeck suggests adding what is beautiful or not to make the 3-some complete.

follows a flow from the bottom of the ladder up to the top. We ‘see’ data in the world and go through a process of sense-making that then informs the actions we take. What the Ladder of Inference shows us is that the beliefs (worldviews) we adopt can influence what data we see. The result is that we begin “seeing only what we want to see.”

A worldview is like a map. It helps us orient our lives. Our worldview combines the cultural and personal beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, values, and ideas we hold (or have learned) to form maps or models of reality. In practice, we use our worldviews to construct complex conceptual frameworks in order to organize our beliefs about who we are and about the world we live in. (Schlitz et al. 2011) These maps or models help us explain how we view the world and why we act as we do in it. An important difference between a worldview and a map or model is that our worldview includes everything that is important to us, while a map helps us orient to a specific phenomenon. (Vidal, 2001) Thus, our worldview could contain many maps or models that combine to form a more comprehensive view of our perceived reality.

Each of us has a worldview and a personal story about how we perceive reality. Our experiences within the contexts we live in, be they religious, geographic, or cultural, all contribute to how we interpret reality, i.e. view the world around us and our selves within it. (Schlitz et al. 2010) Our worldview is the framework we use to determine what our future in the world will or could be. (James H. Olthuis “On Worldviews,” in Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science in Sire, 2009) According to Spirkin “A person becomes an individual when he (sic) forms a definite world-view.” And that forming a worldview “indicates the maturity not only of an individual but also of any given social group, social class or its party. “(Spirkin,1983:1)

Often this vision of reality is not fully articulated in our conscious awareness. In fact it could be so deeply internalized that we don’t question where it came from. We might not have developed it into a describable personal philosophy or systemic view of the world. However, it is the channel through which we interpret reality as we see it and it does give direction and meaning to our lives. (James H. Olthuis “On Worldviews,” in Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science in Sire, 2009) Our worldviews give us the framework with

which we make judgments about order and disorder, about right and wrong. (Hiebert,1997)

Our worldviews influence how we act in society. They are the filter through which we choose how we will act in and interact with the world. They set the standards for our behavior. They provide moral guidelines for us. They help us understand which behaviors are acceptable, which are not, and when we can push the boundaries of behavior. Basically, they influence our everyday existence, both consciously and unconsciously. (Spirkin,1983; Schlitz et al. 2010; Hoffecker, 2007)

Worldviews are an individual as well as a group phenomenon. (Jenkins, 2006) They operate at both the individual as well as the collective level. Our worldviews come from our collective experiences in society – from our parents and friends, the books we read and movies we watch, the music we listen to, our schools and churches. We then interpret these experiences into an individual worldview. (Jenkins, 2006; Schlitz et al. 2011) It can be said that we have a culture in our head that can be called our worldview. And, while we each interpret this culture a bit differently, as noted above, this culture informs us about which areas of life we can as an individual be different in and which require us to be the same. The boundaries for our individuality are determined by the flexibility or rigidity of the social cultural context we live within. (Jenkins, 2006)

From a constructionist perspective, we can say that we "are not just individually encapsulated information processors", but that we are "inherently social beings" that experience a quite remarkable process through our lives (from before birth to that time when we walk in the world in different ways[73]) of becoming "enculturated" individuals. (Lock and Strong, 2010) We experience this wonderful world in all its beauty and pain. More and more, the landscape of learning is expanding from local to global and our sense of who our cultural family is has been shifting for many from local geographies to global connections of mutual interest.[74]

[73] Here I suggest, and personally believe, that after our physical body/presence passes on/dies, that we do still 'walk' in the world, only in different ways from a physical presence.
[74] AoH Steward Tenneson Woolf suggests here that when we are plugged in to other humans, we come to know more than we could have alone.

A Framework of Beliefs

Our worldview is much more than a system of general views about the world and how we fit in. It is more than our understanding of our relationships to our cultural milieu, to nature, and to those outside of our local contexts. Our worldviews contain our basic, most fundamental beliefs about the world. Not just any beliefs, but those that are most basic to our understanding of the world. (Spirkin,1983; Gousmett,1997) Our worldview is a *"comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things and their relationships."* (Gousmett, 1997: 1)

We can think of basic beliefs as the ideas, assumptions, convictions, presuppositions, and premises that we hold about the world. (Hoffecker, 2007) They deal with matters of real importance to us. They are the principles by which we know, assess and act on material, personal, emotional or spiritual events. (Spirkin,1983)

Whether directly or indirectly, basic beliefs influence every aspect of our lives. They act as the framework by which we understand reality and the choices we make for living within it. (Hoffecker, 2007) Our basic beliefs strongly influence how we make sense of the world and the events we either observe or are a part of. (Cobern,1993)

If our worldview reflects the basic beliefs we hold, then it is plausible for us to consider our worldview as our philosophy of life, our ideology or faith or formula for life. (Funk, 2001) Thus, our worldview contains our thinking about good and evil, beauty, well-being, ideals, hopes and dreams. Our worldview contains our convictions about the principles, ideas, ideals and views we hold. (Spirkin,1983) Our worldview provides us with a "… belief structure within which to organize perceptions and new experiences within the context of the social and physical environment" where we experience them. (Schlitz et al. 2010:19)

To be sure, much of what each of us would consider to be basic beliefs are constructed in our societal relations and experiences and many of these beliefs are held by cultures throughout the world. Thus, we share many basic beliefs with others, such as seeing murder, theft, rape or lying as negative values and honesty, safety, freedom and friendship as positive ones. (Vidal, 2007) However, different cultures and we, as individuals within cultures, can and do place different hierarchical value on basic beliefs.

We ascribe different value to how good or bad something is. What one considers their highest good is a distinguishing element of that worldview. (Funk, 2001)

A Core Commitment

Our worldviews represent a core commitment on our part to a set of basic beliefs. These are beliefs that for many are nonnegotiable. They are expressed in every part of the holder's life. (Hoffecker, 2007) In work settings where there are differing cultures it is important to understand the importance of core beliefs within worldviews. As we work/host in a space of safety and respect[75] it is important to remember that a person's worldview and the core beliefs they hold are a representation of their humanity. It is what makes them human. In other words, to have a worldview is to be human. (Hoffecker, 2007) This fundamental adherence to a set of core commitments is the foundation through which people live and move and hold themselves as humans. It is what is "really real." (Sire, 2009)

The importance of these core commitments should not be underestimated in hosting work. These commitments can be seen as a fundamental orientation of the heart. And, as a function of the heart, they become central to each person's identity as a human being. (Naugle, 2002) For some, these commitments are even a matter of the soul. (Sire, 2009) So, when we invite people to bring their minds, hearts and spirits to the work of hosting or discourse on matters of importance, it is an invitation not to be taken lightly. We are inviting people to bring what is core to their being. It could be considered an invitation to bring to the work that which they would stake their lives on. (Gousmett, 1997)

For us individually as hosts and as a hosting team it becomes important to not only clearly know what our worldview(s) are, but to understand that within our own contexts and within other contexts there could be greatly different worldviews. (Sire, 2009) In other words, given the depth of invitation to step into discourse that we are asking of people, we should remember that our worldview could be much different than someone else's within our community or local cultural context. And, that people we are working with who are from other local contexts may have differing worldviews within that shared context/construct.

[75] Baeck notes that this in itself, 'safety and respect' might mean quite different things for different worldviews.

It is very difficult to overstate the importance of the impact of our basic beliefs or values in determining our behaviors. Our basic beliefs, our worldview, are the foundation for all our conscious and unconscious judgments and decisions and thus the basis of all purposeful and unconscious actions, assumptions and decisions we make. (Funk, 2001) A helpful practice for each of us as hosts will be to assess our own worldview and its unique characteristics and continually ask ourselves "what personal, life orienting core commitments that we hold are consistent with our worldview?" (Sire, 2009)[76]

Answers to Life's Big Questions

If our worldviews provide us with a comprehensive conception of the world as a whole (our ontology); if our worldviews contain our beliefs and values (our axiology) and hopes and dreams (our futurology), then we can expect that our worldviews provide us with answers to life's big questions. (Cook, 2009: Sire, 2004; Gousmett, 1997) They provide the framework for us to answer one of the primary questions of philosophy according to Kant, "What is Man?", and the two related questions "What is nature?" and "What is the relation of man in nature?"[77] Vidal offers that these questions are just shorter ways of asking for a worldview. (Vidal, 2007) In the context of worldview, different sets of 'life's big questions' have been proposed.

Gousmett suggests that there are four big questions as defined by Walsh and Middleton:[78]

1. Who am I? – What is the nature, task and significance of human beings?
2. Where am I? – What is the origin and nature of the reality in which human beings find themselves?
3. What's wrong? – How can we account for the distortion and brokenness in this reality?

[76] AoH Steward Kathy Jourdain offers here that one of the ways we do that is when we become aware of our reaction when someone offers a differing worldview. For her, one of the places she sees it is on social media when one of her friends challenges something she posts and she finds it disconcerting and unexpected. She offers that it is important to remember that what she posts is reflective of her worldview. She also notes that in some social media contexts – like Facebook – many of her friends share her worldview, whereas in Twitter, there is a much broader field of worldviews at play. In the case of Facebook, there is a mutual agreement to friend. In Twitter, people can just follow you and you don't have to follow them back.

[77] Baeck invites us to notice here the split between men and nature and offers that this is as an example of a certain worldview.

[78] Walsh, Brian and Richard Middleton. *The transforming vision: shaping a Christian worldview*. Downers Grove:IVP, 1984

4. What's the remedy? – How can we alleviate this brokenness, if at all? (Gousmett, 1997: 3)

Whereas Sire suggests there are seven big questions:

1. What is prime reality – the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to persons at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history? (Sire, 2004: 94)

And Funk suggests that the elements of one's worldview are:

1. **epistemology**: beliefs about the nature and sources of knowledge;
2. **metaphysics**: beliefs about the ultimate nature of Reality;
3. **cosmology**: beliefs about the origins and nature of the universe, life, and especially Man;
4. **teleology**: beliefs about the meaning and purpose of the universe, its inanimate elements, and its inhabitants;
5. **theology**: beliefs about the existence and nature of God;
6. **anthropology**: beliefs about the nature and purpose of Man in general and, oneself in particular;
7. **axiology**: beliefs about the nature of value, what is good and bad, what is right and wrong. (Funk, 2001)

The Center Leo Apostel (CLEA) for Interdisciplinary Studies suggests seven big questions:

1. What is the nature of our world?
2. Why is the world the way it is, and not different?
3. Why do we feel the way we feel in this world, and how do we assess global reality, and the role of our species in it?
4. How should we act to create in this world?
5. What future is open to us and our species in this world?

6. How are we to construct our image in this world in such a way that we can come up with answer to (1), (2), and (3)?
7. What are some of the partial answers that we can propose to these questions? (Aerts et al. 2007: 13)

And Vidal in interpreting the CLEA narrows the questions to six:

1. What is?
2. Where does it all come from?
3. Where are we going?
4. What is good and what is evil?
5. How should we act?
6. What is true and what is false? (Vidal, 2008: 4)

By understanding the ways in which cultures answer these questions, we can begin to discern what their worldview is. (Gousmett, 1997) If our goal as discourse practitioners/hosts is to invite people into dialogue that finds a way forward on issues that matter then seeking to understand their worldview is an important element of the discourse process and, as suggested, one way to discern worldviews is by understanding how cultures answer 'life's big questions'.

Looking at the importance of having a worldview from a different perspective, Vidal suggests that if our worldview (our philosophy) does not provide us with answers to the big questions then "…other realms of our culture will take advantage of the situation, and provide answers. These are principally religions, or, much more dangerously, cults, extremist ideologies or fundamentalist interpretations of religion spreading irrational beliefs." (Vidal 2007: 7)

Core Components of a Worldview – Ontology, Axiology, Epistemology[79]

Later in this chapter I will offer a more detailed explanation of the work of the Center Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies and their efforts to construct integrating worldviews. The Center's framework for deconstructing a worldview into six primary components

[79] In Chapter 5 I note that the Art of Hosting is strongest in three of the Apostel components of a worldview: ontology, axiology and praxeology.

provides the basis for my work in deconstructing and reconstructing an Art of Hosting worldview. I would note here that one interpretation of Apostel's work would claim that a worldview is an ontology and that ontology contains six components: an explanation, a futurology, an axiology, a praxeology, an epistemology and an etiology. (Funk, 2001) For this writing we are using Vidal's interpretation of Apostel's work as described above.

Because our worldviews reflect our beliefs and values and our understanding of what is reality, Funk (2001) offers that our worldviews have three core components – an ontology, an axiology and an epistemology. Our worldviews contain our understanding of what the nature of the world is, what is really real – our metaphysics or ontology; a set of beliefs reflecting our understanding of what is good and evil, right and wrong – our axiology; and an understanding of how we know what we know – our epistemology[80]. And, each of these are interrelated and affect each other. (Funk, 2001)

Each of us has our own personal story about the nature of reality. (Schlitz et al. 2010) We may hold and manifest this story or narrative both internally and externally and we hold and manifest it consciously and unconsciously, but we do hold a story – a sense of what our reality is, our notion of being. (Sire, 2009) It is how we understand ourselves at a metaphysical or ontological level. (Schlitz et al. 2010; Cobern,1993)

In seeking to enter into productive discourse with others, an understanding of how they experience their current reality, how they see how the world functions and how it is structured, and how they answer the basic question "Who are we?" will help us as hosts to step into a more relational space and deeper conversation. As Dian Marie Hosking notes, an ontology can be seen as a "form of life" that is constructed in the ongoing practices of a particular culture. (Hosking, 2007) Hosking also invites us to take our understanding of ontology, and from a productive discourse perspective, one step further. She suggests that, when seeking to work in relational space, we assume an "ontology of becoming" rather than the more usual "ontology of being". (Hosking, 2007) For Art of Hosting practitioners this relational constructionist perspective is an invitation to working with

[80] Later in this Chapter we will explore a relational constructionist worldview as I interpret it. Of interest here is to note that relational constructionism blurs the distinction between ontology (what we know) and epistemology (what we can know). What is real (ontology) and good (axiology) is constructed locally and is always ongoing and how we know it (epistemology) is centered within the process of (local) reality construction. (Hosking, 2010)

emergence.[81] To step into a stance of not knowing[82] and assume a metaphysical stance of openness to the not knowing and from that stance what wants 'to become' will emerge.

> February 27-March 3, 2012 I along with Kathy Jourdain, Narjara Thamiz and Gustavo Prudente co-hosted "Hosting from a Deeper Place: The Art of Hosting the Subtle" near Sao Paulo, Brazil. During the five days we and 25 others explored such questions as: "What would happen if you expanded even more your ability to host, investigating what being in a place before the knowing is for you and for other hosts?" "How would it be to go beyond the place of knowing and investigate for ourselves and with each other the deeper aspects of what is it that lives within silence, within the invisible and within what has no name or form?" Our purpose was to prepare us to better host emergent and complex processes.

The second core component of what comprises our worldview is our values; what we believe is good and what is evil; how we think about happiness and suffering, beauty and ugliness (Aerts et al. 2007); and, what purposes we set in life (Vidal, 2008). These make up our axiology.

The term axiology comes from the Greek *axios* or worth. In philosophy, axiology is that field that concerns itself with the study of how we value something, either pro and con. When we think about worldviews, our axiology is made up of how we value things, what is valuable, what is right and wrong or good and bad and the levels of importance or hierarchy we place on these valuations. Our axiology influences all of our thinking about the world. (Funk, 2001)

One cannot overstate the importance of one's axiology in determining behavior. It is the foundation for all our conscious judgments and decisions and thus is the basis for all purposive thought and action. To be sure, some acts are unconscious or reflexive or instinctive and therefore difficult to ascribe to conscious choice about a belief or value. In any case, it is possible to see that our actions have their origins in our standards of what is good or bad, right or wrong. (Funk, 2001)

[81] Baeck suggests that the 'relational constructivist perspective' is not really an invitation, because we do it anyway and already, but it is more like a conscious framework (and she offers that there are others too) for the practice of designing for emergence.

[82] Baeck offers here that there is a distinction between 'not knowing' and the 'not yet known' and that we confuse these all the time. She suggests that most of the time we intent to speak about the latter.

The third core component of our worldviews is our epistemology or “how do we know what we know?” What we believe about knowing or knowledge affects what we accept as valid evidence, as facts, and thus what we believe or accept about the particulars of the world. (Funk, 2001) However, ‘knowing’ is not the same for all of us. It is not a simple process. What one of us considers a fact, empirical evidence, reasonable or acceptable may not be the same for another person or culture. (Jenkins, 1999) For example, in a Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations worldview, reality is both empirical and spiritual. And, importantly, it is assumed that the empirical is completely dependent upon the spiritual dimension for its existence. In other words, what is not seen is more substantial than what is seen (Alteo, 2005) Thus, in practice, the question of “How do we know?” could be considered a highly personal question. (Sire, 2009)

Unfortunately, there are assumptions about how we know what we know, about the ‘knowing’ process that we rarely question. How did we come to believe what we believe or how did we develop our set of values, all of which influence our daily actions? If we are to develop good communication skills and if we are to enter into discourses that create opportunities to find ways forward, then we must continually ask ourselves how we came to know what we know. (Jenkins,1999) This applies whether it is an epistemology of “informal commonsense or more formal scientific thinking.” (Cobern,1993: 2)

So, for practitioners of discourse, of conversations that matter, we can think of communications, dialogue or conversations as a process of “knowing together.” And, that it is in this exchange that we make meaning together, that we enter into the process of shared meaning making. It is in the understanding that we each have our way of meaning making, of knowing, that we can look for shared ground to go on forward together.

Where Our Worldviews Come From

We come by our own personal worldview through our life experiences. In the distant past, they were provided by a combination of real (natural) world experiences and parents, relatives, and tribal/community members, who both interpreted reality for their children and shielded them from it. When the shielding wasn’t very effective, the children (and adults) learned important lessons in the school of hard knocks as people still do today. As civilization progressed, schools, churches, universities, books, libraries, electronic media offerings, and our social interactions with friends and others all became part of how

people came to understand and fit into reality. It is this latter source that lets us know that worldviews are both an individual choice and a group phenomenon. (Hoffecker, 2007; LeBaron, 2003) From a social constructionist perspective, as we "communicate with each other we construct the world in which we live." Our (world)views are founded in community. They "embed within ways of life." It is the interactions or relationships we experience within community that become the foundation for our worldviews. (K. Gergen, 1999; Gergen & Gergen 2004) The last decade of the twentieth century brought construction of a major new arena – one capable of housing a significant part of the social (reality) field, doing so in a way that maximizes the efficiency of learning and understanding: the Internet's World Wide Web. (Cook, 2009)[83]

These local structures or contexts of behavioral norms play a big role in the construction of our worldviews. Beginning as children and all through our lives we learn which behaviors are acceptable and which are not, especially if we want to be accepted into our local social system.[84] In other words, our social interactions let us know when it is okay to be different and when we are required to be the same or similar. These shared, cultural worldviews also draw the line that separates insiders from outsiders. Thus the rigidity and flexibility of our local culture is also part of our worldview. And because worldviews are constructed locally, they can vary from society to society and be different for different groups within a society. If you have traveled to other countries you have experienced different local constructs for normal, social behaviors. These local constructs influence how we see the world. They become part of each culture's worldview. (Cook, 2009; Sire, 2009; Spirkin, 1983; Hoffecker, 2007)[85]

An Expression of the Culture it Came Out of

Jenkins (2006:1) describes a worldview as "the common concept of reality shared by a particular group of people, usually referred to as a culture, or an ethnic group." He goes

[83] Woolf notes here that this has created not only the physical meetings at the edges, but also the imagination of meetings at the edges.
[84] Baeck offers that for children, it is not 'a wanting to be accepted' or not. It is so crucial for them 'to belong' otherwise they can't survive. Only as adults we can choose where we want to be accepted or not.
[85] Woolf wonders here if/what the archetypal aspects are. For example, for men, some sense of warrior might be essential. Yet in varied cultures, this happens deliberately or is sought out through the absence of initiation – military service, business, playing hockey, loss. He wonders how much we are fishing for it in what has become absence.

on to say that each culture's "worldview is self-contained and adequate in the sense that it provides a coherent view of reality as perceived and experienced by the cultural group under consideration." (Jenkins, 2006:2) A culture's worldview is deeply embedded in its history, social groups, classes and parties. It expresses that culture's "relationship to events of social life." (Spirkin,1983)

A culture's worldview is communicated to its members by "origin myths, narrative stories, linguistic metaphors, and cautionary tales", and they "set the ground rules for shared cultural meaning." (LeBaron, 2003:1) In other words this shared worldview within a culture or group are the values and assumptions that make up the "customs, norms and institutions of any particular society." (LeBaron, 2003:1) Thus, as Sire (2009) explains, a worldview is an expression of the culture from which it originates.

A culture's worldview influences every aspect of that culture "from individual reflection to all forms of social and cultural activity – family and marriage, labor and management, economic transitions, scientific investigation, technological development, political and judicial practices, arts and entertainment, and leisure and recreational activities. (Hoffecker, 2007: x) A culture's worldview impacts all of the activities taking place by individuals and groups within that culture.

Schlitz describes this phenomenon as choreographed, i.e. our individual and social actions are choreographed "every moment of every day." (Schlitz et al. 2010) In fact, worldviews are so embedded within a culture or society that it isn't necessary to even speak of them. "Everybody already knows[86] them because they guide most of the society."(Ingram, 2009: 1) Our worldviews are so firmly established at the level of social consciousness that they primarily operate outside of our conscious awareness. (Schlitz et al. 2011)

Thus we can view a culture or society as the sum of its shared experiences, values, beliefs, history, concepts, etc. A culture, society, ethnic group (or organizational or institutional culture) comes into being when there are sufficient experiences in common to create a shared view of the milieu of their lives and relationships – a shared worldview.

[86] Baeck notes here that this knowing is many times implicit, and not explicit and conscious.

(Jenkins, 1999:2) And this worldview is implicit within the culture and influences every aspect of it.

Culture and Individual Identity

Worldviews, as noted earlier, operate at both the individual and the collective levels. (Schlitz et al. 2011) Every person in a group has that culture or worldview "in their head." (Jenkins, 2006:1) Certainly, each of us are different and manifest our culture's influence in different and sometimes highly individual ways. But, we know, because the cultural norms are in our head, which behaviors can be different and how much different they can be and how much we need to be similar. How rigid or flexible our culture is will be part of our worldview and will influence, consciously or unconsciously, how we behave within society. And, we will continue to operate within society's guidelines until "something large enough comes along to create a change." (Schlitz et al. 2011)

Each of us seeks to have an identity.[87] It is part of human life around the world. We also seek to have meaning in our lives and, as LeBaron (2003) suggests, "meaning is generated from our identity" and from the cultural queues or information we receive. He describes identity as addressing who we are, who we seek to be and how we relate to others and meaning as what matters and why. Taken together, our differing senses of individual identity, how we make meaning in our life, and how we connect into our cultural contexts can create or escalate conflict or give us a feeling of being home. (LeBaron, 2003; Hiebert, 1997)[88]

Multiple Worldviews & Society

David Naugle begins his book *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (2002) with eight different chapters discussing thirteen differing worldviews. James Sire's book *The Universe Next Door* (2009) offer descriptions of nine major religious or philosophical worldviews with each of these having subsets of worldviews. *Revolutions in Worldview*, (2007) edited by W. Andrew Hoffecker, offers descriptions of nine distinct periods in Western culture worldviews. Ken Wilber has written several books[89] based on his

[87] Baeck suggests that this might not be true for all worldviews.
[88] Woolf notes here that Margaret Wheatley's earlier work referenced "identity" as one of three key domains in which self-organization occurs. We organize around a self, consciously or not.
[89] See for example *A Brief History of Everything* (1996) or *A Theory of Everything* (2000).

perspective that history can be divided into five distinct epochs – foraging, horticultural, agrarian, industrial, informational – with each epoch having a worldview. From this he has developed a history of everything.

Worldviews reflect a culture or society's history. They are co-constructed by generation after generation, with elements of previous generations being carried forward and contributions from new generations being added to or replacing parts of previous worldviews.[90] Cultures also borrow ideas from other cultures and integrate them into their worldviews. Sometimes views from one culture are imposed on another one through differences in power relationships. And other times these attempts at cultural imposition are rejected or fought against over time. Societies or cultures are not, especially in the 21st century, isolated blocks. They are dynamic systems dancing with other cultural systems. The result is that within worldviews a range of different meanings, ideas, and concepts may coexist. Yet change within cultures, unless some major event occurs, moves slowly and this inertia within worldviews explains why cultures or societies can hold over long periods of time that their beliefs about what is true and good are correct.

Joyce Caldwell, in her article *Construction of Racism* (2006) in a Fielding Graduate University Working Paper Series on Diversity and Social Justice describes how the four different cultures described in J.W. O'Malley's historical analysis of Western culture *Four Cultures of the West* (2004) support "the construction of racism as a whole way of life." (Caldwell, 2006:9) While O'Malley calls these 'cultures', I would offer that from my perspective they could be considered worldviews. Caldwell offers that these four worldviews form the foundation for the Western world and thus the "construction and perpetuation of racism within the national culture of the United States." (Caldwell, 2009:9) While Caldwell's examination of how each worldview (culture) supports the institutionalization of racism in the United States is quite useful, for this writing it is her description of O'Malley's four worldviews that I will focus on in order to demonstrate four differing worldviews that influence Western society. O'Malley offers four worldviews: Prophetic, Academic, Humanistic and Artistic.

[90] Jourdain offered here that it is interesting to her to also ponder about the worldview of families and of groups of families – in a community culture, for instance. Particularly, she is interested in the culture of family secrets so many of have grown up with around birth – mothers, siblings, cousins. And then also how welcoming or not that families are and how that influences individual worldview as well.

The Prophetic worldview is strongly tied to western Christianity. It proclaims "truth, goodness and beauty…and names all else as evil and corrupt." It is idea based. It is a worldview that defines one's relationship with the divine and according to Caldwell positions western Europeans as having a closer connection to God than others. The Academic/Professional worldview is "grounded in a fact-based tradition." (Caldwell, 2006: 14) It is the culture of science and seeks to know the truth. The Academic worldview informs Western norms and standards for ways of thinking. The Humanistic worldview "seeks to define layers of meaning and to seek the good." (Caldwell, 2006: 16) It defines ways of being. This is the world of politics and the worldview of the statesman (or once was anyway). The fourth worldview is the Artistic worldview. This is the world of art and performance. It is the world of "signs and symbols, of performance and drama." (Caldwell, 2006: 18) Each of these different worldviews are elements of Western society. As individuals or local social constructs/cultures we can hold parts of all four views within our own worldview.

In thinking about our world today it is fair to say that, "The presence of a multitude of alternative worldviews is a defining characteristic of contemporary culture. Ours is, indeed, a multicultural, pluralistic age." (Naugle, 2002: xvi) Thus, as we practice dialogue in our world in order to find ways forward, we must develop the capabilities to work in the multi-varied and rich system of many worldviews. To do so, however, requires skill and practice and the capacity to hold paradoxes or multiple truths all at the same time.[91]

First recognizing that worldviews represent a shared perspective of a cultural group, we can then understand that worldviews give identity to that culture and to individuals within it and so worldviews are a way to draw lines "that separates insiders and outsiders." (Jenkins, 2010:1) If our intent as practitioners of conversations that matter (as Art of Hosting practitioners) is to communicate effectively across and within cultures, then as outsiders to that culture we must take steps to gain understanding by sharing in the most important elements or experiences that form the foundation of the worldview we are seeking to work within. In other words, as outsiders, we begin to absorb some of the insider's worldview. (Jenkins, 2010:2)

[91] Baeck suggests we are also implicitly asking participants to do the same.

Learning to effectively communicate (host/facilitate) in a different or new cultural milieu is a deep-level process. It involves connecting at more than an intellectual level with the 'host' culture. It involves connecting at a heart and spiritual level. If, as noted earlier, worldviews are a matter of the heart, than to enter into effective communications within a different or new culture means opening up one's heart as a host/facilitator to a space/place that connects heart to heart. This involves capacities to be vulnerable, to respect difference, to be curious and to sit in the space of the unknown or unknowing (i.e. nonjudgement), and to be self-reflexive regarding one's own thoughts, reactions, and carried in thinking about another culture.[92]

Three Different Worldviews

Cultural or social groups throughout the world have an idea – a worldview – of what are proper social relations between its members and of the reality these relations represent. Here, as examples, I offer three different worldviews regarding the concept of the individual and the society. The core question is "Which is primary, the individual or the society?" And the answer: is it depends on the culture. In Western cultures, individuals exist, thus society is created. A good example of this in Western culture is the concept of the Social Contract, which is purely a Western logical construct. (Jenkins, 1999: 1) Jenkins (1999) asserts that in most African cultures, society exists, thus the individual exists. The same can be said about Native American and First Nations cultures. How this is manifested will vary amongst the Native nations and so it is important not to lay over all of indigenous cultures (or Western or African or any culture) a single worldview regarding the primacy of the individual or society (or any other cultural generalizations). Here is a quick look at three different perspectives or worldviews on this issue.[93]

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[92] AoH Steward Stephen Duns suggests here that other ideas that might be relevant are Jung's idea of collective unconscious and "tribal memory"; also Sheldrakes writing on morphic resonnance. Both of these ideas would suggest that culture is not just dialogic and that culture is passed down through generations and across groups unconsciously, as if by fields of energy. (He would find strong agreement with this position from AoH Steward Kathy Jourdain.) The idea of transmission of ideas and collective understanding as an energetic field can be important to how we host. As PeerSpirit Circle process tells us - silence is also part of the conversation. Is the container anything other than an energetic field?

[93] Woolf suggests here that it would be great to write a piece on worldviews from multiple voices – academic voice, hillbilly voice, artistic, etc; or told from a narrative perspective. "Once upon a time there was a group of people that believed that all of nature was for their domination. Yet, nearby was another group that believed nature was their god."

An American (Western) Worldview

Ingram suggests that American worldviews have been identified by many sociologists and anthropologists as follows: “Our time sense is futuristic; our sense of nature involves mastery; our sense of human nature is that it is basically good or mixed; our social sense is individualistic; and our sense of the proper way of being is to value doing.” (Ingram, 2009) In practice this means that time for us, as Americans, is focused on the future rather than the past; we need to plan; and we value youth more than age. We believe we should be able to control nature; that nature is here for us to use to our benefit (Manifest Destiny) and that we are separate from it. We also believe in the inherent goodness of people; that given a chance, we can count on people to do the right thing; and that we should limit control of people. We believe that the individual’s wishes, needs and aspirations are more important than the group’s and that it is OK for an individual to move away from and function independently of the group. Finally, we believe that what one does or accomplishes is more important than the way one conducts themselves in society (except, perhaps, for most criminal behavior). In other words, one’s relative value in society is mainly determined by one’s job. The core here is that in American society, the individual is more important than the group. (Ingram, 2009)

Relational Worldview in Africa

Orville Jenkins in his booklet *Dealing with Difference: Contrasting the African and European Worldview* (1991) offers a clear picture of the relational view of the world that exists in East African Cultures. Jenkins lived and worked in radio and television and as a linguist in Kenya for 25 years, traveling regularly throughout North and East Africa. He has written extensively on the topic of worldviews, language and culture.

Jenkins asserts that the African view of the world is relational. That events and relationships are seen as the primary components of reality. People and their social relationships and obligations are the principle consideration. People also define their relationship with ‘things’ in the same way that they see themselves in relationship with other human beings. (Jenkins, 1991)

He also asserts that in African culture an individual's identity is based on who they are related to and how they are related.[94] And that the relationships between individuals, and any roles they may have had in events, are more primary than the individuals themselves and the separate identities. (Jenkins, 1991)

Africans see the world as dynamic and active. "Things are alive; things are moving; things are changing. They are not mechanical; they are not set. Even "non-animate" entities are understood in dynamic terms and evaluated for their relational import."[95] (Jenkins 1991: 13-14) Attention is focused not on controlling things (reality), but on adapting, adjusting, or relating to reality. (Jenkins, 1991)

A very important aspect of East African culture is that all of reality is viewed as a unity and all parts of creation are interconnected/interrelated into one whole or "total reality." (Jenkins 1991: 14) Thus East Africans, with everything dynamically interrelated, do not expect the same results under the same circumstances each time they might occur. (Jenkins, 1991)

Jenkins offers that in the African view, the focus is on the event in which we are presently involved. The 'now' or the present is primary, not the future. Additionally, for Africans, the world is basically uncontrollable, because there are many factors and entities in the world which we cannot control. Because of the perspective that everything is interrelated, then everything in the world is involved in cosmic events. Thus "event and relationship are the key factors in African orientation to life." (Jenkins, 1991: 15)

Jenkins suggests that this African worldview could be considered basically religious. If all things are interconnected and everything is a unity of existence, then each of us is part of this unity. And, we are all connected to everything that happens. And, even though God

[94] One could say that this is also a characteristic of American culture, especially rural culture (Baeck suggests perhaps this might be true for every rural culture), where it is common when introducing oneself to a new group to establish geographic, historical and/or family ties as bona fides for acceptance into the group.

[95] The Art of Hosting network includes in many of the workbooks used for trainings a short section describing the world as a complex living system and lists many of the characteristics of a living system. The workbooks often also include a description of a view of the world as a machine and a listing of elements of this mechanistic view.

as the Creator is far away, we are still interconnected. Thus, according to Jenkins, in this worldview "All that exists is 'spiritual', a part of one unified Whole." (Jenkins, 1991: 12)

This relational view of the world that East Africans hold is also held by other cultures throughout the world. In North America, the indigenous populations that have lived here for centuries hold, with some differences at the local or individual society/nation, a view of the world that the Creator and creation (all animate and inanimate objects) are interconnected.

A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview

As noted above, many indigenous cultures have a worldview centered on the interconnectedness of all. For the Ojibway it is *dineamaganik* meaning "I belong to everything" or "All my relations." For Hawaiians it is *aloha* meaning the sharing of breath. And for the Navaho it is *k'e* meaning the concept of being tied together in a weaving of relations. E. Richard Atleo, a member of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations located in British Columbia, Canada, has written extensively about a Nuu-chah-nulth worldview, which he calls Tsawalk. His work has been studied by many others in First Nations and Native American communities.

The Nuu-chah-nulth worldview describes the basic character of creation as a unity which is expressed as *heshook-ish tsawalk,* "meaning everything is one or everything is connected." (Atleo, 2004: 117) A Nuu-chah-nulth ontology or core belief about reality could be stated as "everything is one." (Krebs: 2005) However, for the Nuu-chah-nulth, this unity does not mean that "individuals are denied a separate existence; on the contrary, individualism is a very strong value" (Atleo, 2004: 117). The Nuu-chah-nulth believe that, while in the creation design of the Creator, all things are interconnected, there is also a strong sense of individuality or biodiversity and that these need to be recognized and celebrated. (Atleo, 2004).

Heshook-ish tsawalk also perceives an ontology that is inclusive of both physical and metaphysical reality (Atleo, 2004). Central to this belief is a valuing of realities, objects, situations just as they are or just how they exist. In practice this means letting go of control of situations and leaving them to their own destinies, with each situation's own capabilities of reaching conclusion. (Postnikoff, 2005)

Another central component to the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview of unity is a deep respect for all the earth's inhabitants. Humans are bonded with their ecosystem. There is a belief in the value of qualitative relationships between and among humans and between humans and other life forms, such as plants and animals. These respectful relationships are based on the recognition that all life forms have intrinsic and sacred value. (Alteo, 2005) In fact, in the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview "each animal is like a person."[96] (Alteo, 2005: 3)

The Nuu-chah-nulth worldview of unity carries into community life. The Nuu-chah-nulth see cooperation within community as foundational to the creating and maintaining of relationship. (Postnikoff, 2005) Their belief in interconnectedness is manifested by a spirit of generosity, compassion, and sacredness that is woven into each individual and into their society, community, and relationships. (Postnikoff, 2005)

A core community practice for the Nuu-chah-nulth is one of giving and hospitality. They view giving as "natural to creation, in effect a law of life." (Atleo, 2004: 15) And, based on their view of the interconnectedness and the reciprocal flow of nature, they practice reciprocal hospitality. When the Nuu-chah-nulth look at nature they see a system where the "heavens give rain to the mountains and earth, which give water to the rivers and streams, which fill the oceans, which return the water in the form of vapour to the heavens." (Atleo, 2004: 15) They see a system of interdependence and interrelationships within the natural world that reflect the interdependence and interrelationships of all life forms (Atleo, 2004) Thus, the act of giving is "believed to be necessary to life and consequently its absence was considered to be equivalent to death." (Alteo, 2005: 4)[97]

Finally, the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview assumes that reality is both empirical and spiritual. And, importantly, it is assumed that the empirical is completely dependent upon the

[96] Woolf notes here some play he has had with Indigenous youth. "Why are you stepping on that ant?" Kid responds, "Because." "What if your life were like an ant when viewed from an alien's perspective? How would you feel about being stepped on, just because?" Kid's response, "Oh," with some confusion, but occasionally a cracking open just a bit. Usually this is a seed for cracking open in ages five years or more.

[97] In Art of Hosting we often talk about being in a co-learning space that includes hosts and participants. We hold a perspective that we are all in a 'reciprocal' relationship of learning, sharing knowledge and gifts and allowing for emergence.

spiritual dimension for its existence. In other words, what is not seen is more substantial than what is seen.[98] (Alteo, 2005)

As these descriptions of three different worldviews indicate, how people experience the world and make sense of it is primarily the product of localized socio-cultural processes that are rooted in local history. (Burr, 2003) And as Lock and Strong note, our ways of meaning-making are inherently embedded in socio-cultural processes and are specific to particular times and places. It is natural to expect that differing worldviews would emerge out of differing socio-cultural processes located in different places and historical contexts. Thus, the meanings of particular events, and our ways of understanding them, vary over different situations. (Lock and Strong, 2010) Interestingly, this constructionist perspective connects well with the African worldview belief that because everything is dynamically interrelated, we cannot expect the same results under the same circumstances each time they might occur. (Jenkins, 1991)

I would offer one cautionary note regarding possible constructionist interpretations of worldviews. Burr suggests that the experiences people have in the world and how they make sense of them do not have roots in biology (Burr, 2003); yet, the last two offer worldviews that are deeply rooted in natural (nature) biology or ecosystems. As a constructionist, Burr is correct to challenge the notion that our 'human' biology allows for an essentializing of who we are as individuals. But, as constructionists we must leave open space for the possibilities described in the African and Nuu-chah-nulth worldviews, that we are all interconnected materially (biologically) and spiritually and thus who we are as human cultures and individuals in these cultures could come from more that socio-cultural processes. Holding open these possibilities also allows us to hold open the space for discourse that can work with a range of worldviews to find ways for going on together.[99]

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[98] Woolf suggests that the worldview of mechanism has dominated so much thought in the last 300 year that is has been like loud teenagers drowning out worldviews that require a more quiet kind of listening, like Nuu-chah-nulth.

[99] Wolf offers here that a Buddhist perspective sums it up as, letting go of just a bit of certainty of the way things are. This is a path to open heart, and open mind. He suggests that once you start this, it becomes a kind of habit that can't just be put back in the bottle. Or maybe it can with the numbing effects of our media, addiction, sports, or anything that numbs the conscious mind.

For me, holding open possibility for many perspectives and discourses regarding sacredness, interconnectivity and humanity's place in the whole is affirmed throughout Ken Gergen's book *Relational Being* (2009) and especially in Chapter 12 Approaching the Sacred. Gergen begins with a wonderful quote from Ludwig Wittgenstein "The limits of my language form the limits of my world." (Gergen, 2009: 373) This, in many ways, is very defining for me regarding our thinking about worldviews. The limits of my language form the limits of my ability to understand fully someone else's worldview. Recognizing the limiting role language can play when hosting will help each of us as hosts to hold our own and invite others to hold their opinions about another's worldview much more lightly.[100]

Gergen offers descriptions of several different perspectives on the idea of wholeness or interconnectedness similar to those expressed above in the African and Nuu-chah-nulth worldviews, including Buddhist, Sufi, and pantheist and also philosophical reflections on the works of Alfred North Whitehead and Gregory and Mary Catherine Bateson. These worldviews, and surely many more, invite us into a worldview where we can see that "…the boundaries between human and non-human are also artificial. Human relations cannot be separated from relations with nature." And that "When we speak of the co-active generation of meaning we must include the entirety of nature." (Gergen, 2009: 393) Including, as many of my colleagues suggest, the possibility or actuality of a soul.

Towards the end of this enlightening Chapter, Gergen puts forth a proposal that, for me, has deep implications for hosting work and for understanding and working with differing worldviews. Gergen suggests that in the consciousness of the relational, which for me includes a dialogic consciousness, we can come "to find sacred potential." As Gergen suggests, "The implications for the practices of daily life are substantial." (Gergen, 2009: 392) If, as constructionists believe (as I do) that all of our interactions are relational and that in the relational we create our worlds (worldviews), then it is possible "to view the divine as a process within which we exist and from which we cannot be separated. The

[100] Jourdain offers here that there is language when we all speak the "same" language like English. This is further complicated when there are multiple languages at play – like when we work cross-culturally. People more fully express in their own language. Maybe when people are learning the language of Art of Hosting this is also true in the beginning. She notes that when she was first in the AoH learning field, she wrote copious amounts of notes, wishing she could speak like that – in her own expression and voice of course – and now others also say that to her – they wish they could speak like her.

sacred is not distinct and distant, but immanent in all human affairs." (Gergen, 2009: 393) The implications for hosting are significant. We are not just hosting a conversation among people – a dialogic activity – we are hosting the potential for building a wholeness, for bridging the gap between the sacred and social life, for seeing our actions as hosting an interconnectedness of entities, and as "potential expressions or realizations of the sacred." (Gergen, 2009: 393) AoH Steward Kathy Jourdain often asks the question, "What are we hosting really?" For her, and many of us, we are hosting beauty, joy, energy fields, consciousness and the sacred.

Worldview Intelligence – Self and Others

Our worldviews operate primarily in the background, in our subconscious, and we are pretty much unaware of them. We go about our daily lives seeing the world through the lens of our worldviews behaving in culturally acceptable ways and making assumptions or drawing conclusions about things we see. We don't even think about it. We don't ask ourselves where these views come from. We rarely question why we made the assumptions or drew the conclusions we did or where the knowledge to make those decisions came from. Whether consciously thought about or unconsciously in the background, our worldviews influence everything we do.

Gousmett describes this as 'living out of a worldview perspective" and suggests that we do this regardless of whether we can articulate what our worldview is or not. He further suggests that if we want to understand our or another person's worldview we should look not at individual responses to specific events or situations but at the "overall patterns or character of our lifestyle." (Gousmett, 1997)

He is not the only one to offer that we can hold a worldview without it needing to be fully articulated. Canadian philosopher James Olthuis suggests this and offers that even though our worldview may be our "vision for life" and is our framework for acting, we may not develop a clear philosophy about the world and in fact have so internalized our thinking about the world that we largely do not question why we see the world the way we do. Still, our worldview is the interpretive framework through which reality is managed,

order and disorder are judged, and meaning in life is formed. It is "the set of hinges on which all our everyday thinking and doing turns." (James H. Olthuis in Sire, 2009: 18)

Hiebert offers a more direct, metaphorical description of how worldviews operate implicitly as they shape the way we see the world. "Their worldview is what they think with, not what they think about, or, to shift metaphors, worldviews are the glasses through which people look, not what the people look at." He, like Jenkins, suggests that one way we become aware of our own worldview is when we experience another culture on a deeper level, often by living there or traveling regularly there, and then returning to our own culture and seeing it with outsider eyes. We see our culture from a different belief and value system. (Hiebert, 1997: 85; Jenkins, 2010) [101]

While we may be largely unaware of our worldviews, Schlitz et al. suggests that our worldviews are influenced in large part by factors that lie outside of conscious awareness, including shared beliefs, values, and social attitudes. Our worldviews are formed without our awareness that they are being formed. Our social consciousness is so embedded within us at an unconscious level that our understanding of our relationship to our larger social

> Let me share an experience of mine with making a quick assumption. Three years ago I was doing some work in a rural Minnesota community in the winter. I was driving to a meeting there on a very cold, below zero day, when I turned the corner and saw a person on their hands and knees in the middle of the street. As I looked more closely I saw an older male, poorly dressed and certainly not dressed to be outside in winter, unshaven and very shaky. He would try to get up and, because he was unstable, fall back down. I watched this happen several times. You might imagine the quick assumption I made about his condition. However, I drove up to him and asked if he needed help. He said "I can't get up." As soon as he spoke I knew my assumptions about him were wrong. I asked if I could take him somewhere. He said he was on his way to the bank and could I help. I got out and helped him get into the car and drove him to his bank. It turned out he had three broken ribs and wasn't supposed to be outside, but he decided to go to the bank, fell and couldn't get up. The experience was a good reminder for me to take some care about making quick assumptions about people and to ask myself why did I make these assumptions?

[101] Jourdain noted here that sometimes in the work, we will tell people there are two ways to travel – one as a tourist, the other as a pilgrim. Tourists are sightseers. Pilgrims come back transformed. Baeck offers that AoH Steward Bob Stilger sometimes names this as being the sacred outsider.

system and how we are influenced by it exists primarily outside of our conscious awareness. (Schlitz et al. 2010)[102]

However, our worldview, anyone's worldview, is too important to ignore. (Funk, 2001) We need[103] a worldview, even if unconscious, so we can navigate in the world. Our worldviews meet the very practical need of providing us answers to questions, even if the answers are very naïve. (Vidal, 2007) In fact, this is so important that Funk suggests that "If there is such a thing as obligation, we as knowing, thinking beings have an obligation to examine, articulate, refine, communicate, and consciously and consistently apply our worldviews. To fail to do so is to be something less than human." (Funk, 2001: 17) He references the story of Socrates' response to the accusation that he corrupted the youth of Athens to support his point. During the trial Socrates is quoted as having said "... the unexamined life is not worth living ..." (Plato, Apology). Funk says he was right, "and without complaint he accepted the sentence of death to prove it. There can be no stronger testimony to the validity of these assertions than that." (Funk, 2001: 17)

With each of us having our worldview and our own interpretation of reality, discovering what our worldview is, what its unique features are and how we answer questions about why it is ours, given the many options available to us, and why we think it is right, is a powerful step toward our own self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-understanding. (Sire, 2009)[104]

This depth of self-awareness is essential to hosting/facilitating dialogue. A deep awareness of our worldview informs us about what our core commitments in life are and

[102] Jourdain offers here that this is one good thing about AoH. Because the language is different, the invitation in is different, even when we are not consciously speaking worldview language, we are making visible that it is a different experience, a different set of beliefs and values by which we operate. And, it's even better when we are explicit about world view.

[103] Baeck offers that she is not sure about 'the need' for a worldview. She suggests that all people who hold an unconscious worldview don't necessarily feel a need at all; that maybe when one becomes aware of the existence of worldviews that then there may be a need to have one, but then they already do; and that maybe there is a need then to become more conscious of it, and choose the elements one wants to be in it.

[104] Woolf asks here: What are first steps to opening this or to teasing it out? If conversation, he suggests it could be things like: What makes something funny? What is wrong to speak out loud? Why does talking about money make us uncomfortable?

how we hold them or manifest them whenever we are either hosting or are simply engaged in conversations that matter.

In fact it is when we are unaware of our worldview(s) that we get into trouble[105]. We run into trouble with this matter of worldviews in two areas, when we make assumptions about others without being aware of why and/or when we try to force our worldviews on others. First, this issue of assumptions. As noted earlier, our worldviews operate primarily in the background, in our subconscious and we are pretty much unaware of them. We go about our daily lives seeing the world through the lens of our worldviews behaving in culturally acceptable ways and making assumptions or drawing conclusions about things we see. We don't even think about it. We don't ask ourselves where these views come from. We rarely question why we made the assumptions or drew the conclusions we did or where the knowledge to make those decisions came from.

If we are not fully conscious of what our worldviews are and fail to live by the core commitments or beliefs and values within our worldview, then we open ourselves up to the whims of our impulses, our emotions or reflexes (although this is not always bad); we then are at risk of conforming to "social and cultural norms and patterns of thought and behavior regardless of their merit." (Funk, 2001: 17); or simply to following the crowd. We have seen for millennia that acceptance of social norms can manifest in behaviors that are destructive to other people, cultures, nature and to ourselves. Each time we find ourselves acting on worldviews that prove our assumptions or decisions wrong, it is essential that we take time to reflect on why we thought and acted the way we did. As Sire notes, "If we want clarity about our own worldview….we must reflect and profoundly consider how we actually behave." (Sire, 2009: 22)

Worldview and Conflict – Clash of Civilizations

The second area where we get into trouble is when two or more different worldviews meet and both make uninformed and unaware assumptions about the other without having ever questioned why? As the title of this section suggests, they could clash. If they do clash the results generally have negative consequences for both of these colliding worldviews. Take for instance the case of the European worldview coming to North America, some

[105] Baeck offers that this is not the case when one stays within their own group or culture – which most people do.

centuries ago, and the efforts to force that worldview onto the civilizations that were here. The results have been devastating to many of those nations and the now dominant culture has also paid a price for its actions. And we're seeing similar scenarios being played out around the world today to no less destructive consequences for local cultures.

As LeBaron offers "When worldviews are not in our awareness nor acknowledged, stronger parties in conflict may advertently or inadvertently try to impose their worldviews on others." (LeBaron, 2003) And, profoundly, "the imposition of a worldview can be destructive to a whole way of life." (LeBaron, 2003)

In his 1993 article "*The Clash of Civilizations?"* (Foreign Affairs, Vol. 72, No. 3) Samuel P. Huntington suggests that in our geopolitical world the most important sources of conflict among human beings will no longer be ideological, political, or economic. They, in fact, have become cultural. He suggests that we (people or nations) are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we? We are answering the question in the traditional way, as human beings have always answered it, by reference to the things that matter the most to us. The things that mean the most to most people are their ancestry, language, history, values, customs, institutions, and especially religion. They are cultural. (Huntington, 1993) At the heart, then, of our current cultural wars – whether at a local, national, or international level – is a clash of worldviews. (Naugle, 2002) In fact, Spirkin, suggests that the entire history of philosophical thought has been a struggle between worldviews. And, this struggle has at times been so fierce that people have "preferred to be burnt at the stake, thrown into prison or condemned to penal servitude rather than betray their chosen cause." (Spirkin, 1983)

If our worldviews are a set of beliefs and values that provide us with an understanding of reality, which we hold individually and collectively within our cultural context, then an appeal to facts alone cannot end clashes among worldviews. Even if differing parties agree to some or all of the facts they may, and often do, disagree on the conclusions drawn from the facts because of their different premises or worldviews. If we are to find ways to go forward together, outside of conflict and imposing of worldviews on others, we must enter into a discourse of exploration that opens up the possibility for our own awareness of the existence of other differing worldviews that make sense of the world in

ways different than we do. As part of our awareness, we must develop the capability to see the world through the lens of the other's worldview (LeBaron, 2003). In Otto Scharmer's Theory U, he calls this empathic listening and talking. In AoH this would be good hosting practice.

Worldview Literacy Project

If our worldviews are primarily constructed within our larger social system and local contexts and if they operate largely unconsciously, then one could ask: "What consequences do these local, cultural worldviews have for our ability to work together?" and "What to do about it?" and "How can we avoid collisions of worldviews and instead come together in ways that build understanding and respect, while allowing each of us to hold on to that which is most important and still find ways to go on together?"

One answer to these questions lies in the work of the Worldview Literacy Project at the Institute for Noetic Sciences (IONS). They have created a program that can be used to develop the "ability to consciously acquire the skills and capabilities we need to understand the nature of our own worldviews, and to become more aware and accepting of the worldviews of others - granting them legitimacy, even when they seem quite at odds with our own sense-making - without any need or pressure to adopt their worldview as our own." (Schlitz, Vieten, Miller, Homer, Peterson & Erickson-Freeman, 2011: 1) In other words, to help us to develop the capability to think in term of worldviews, and accept the differences that won't go away.[106]

The Worldview Literacy Project describes worldview literacy as "the capacity to comprehend and communicate an understanding that information about the world around us is perceived and delivered through the filters of our personal and cultural worldviews. It is the understanding that beliefs are embedded within individual and collective frames of reference and that other people hold different worldviews. It is knowing that our worldviews or models of reality are largely unconscious, and that jointly engaging in practices that raise our awareness of the beliefs and assumptions we hold can allow us to better navigate encounters with differing perspectives." (Schlitz et al. 2011: 3)

[106] Baeck offers here that this perspective is/was still a worldview at play that places the thinking 'higher' than what is needed at the level of heart and daily action.

For Sire, this ability to consciously think in terms of worldviews is foundational to our ability to understand our own ways of thinking and that of others and, perhaps most importantly, to understanding and then genuinely communicating with others in a pluralistic society. (Sire, 2009) For the practitioner of dialogue or discourse this capability is essential to our ability to create containers of safety in the many settings and for the many differing worldviews of participants we are asked to host or facilitate their finding ways forward.

The Worldview Literacy Project goes a step further to suggest that developing our capacity for greater cognitive flexibility, being comfortable in unfamiliar settings, appreciating many and diverse perspectives, being able to hold multiples views simultaneously and working at high levels of creative problem solving are essential skills for survival in the future. (Schlitz et al. 2011) I would offer that these are essential skills for good hosting/facilitating in the present or in the future. In other words having the capability (a worldview literacy) to appreciate how worldviews shape our thoughts, conversations and actions is a foundational hosting skill.[107]

Worldview and Language/Story/Tradition

Developing our capacity to host/work in contexts that are different than our own local context, or in situations or cultures we are unfamiliar with or where multiple worldviews (differing local constructs) are in the hosting space, requires a willingness to become open to the role of and the many ways in which language constructs our worldviews. Social constructionists would offer that these local constructs or realities (worldviews) (ontologies) are primarily constructed through language based processes such as the written word, art, music, dance, speaking, symbols, signs, etc. (Hosking, 2011). Specifically, "…the words we use – just like the names we give each other – are used to carry out relationships. They are "practical actions in the world." (Gergen & Gergen: 2004: 14) Language then "is the doing of life itself." (Gergen, 1999: 35) I think understanding this is essential to developing the capacity to work with multiple worldviews – to be worldview literate.

[107] Jourdain suggests here that we see this in action all the time, creating the invitational space for differing opinions and ways of looking at things to co-exist in the same space and welcoming all that shows up. This is where we see shifts happen as people feel seen in ways that they have not felt before. This is part of the "healing" we often witness as people show up fully in a circle or in an AoH training.

Worldviews can be powerful resources for understanding other cultures, especially when there are fundamental differences in views that divide people. The rituals, stories, myths and metaphors that are a deep part of a culture/society/group can tell us much about how members of the group see themselves, their group identities, what matters to them and how they make meaning of what is important. (LeBaron, 2003) When we, as hosts, stand in curiosity and non-judgment, then opportunities for connection and understanding of divergence becomes clearer. This can lead to greater opportunity to find new ways forward on matters of shared interest or concern, resolve conflicts, or step into or host spaces of emergence. Thus the language of a local construct (worldview) is a channel by which we can learn how another's world is organized. (Jenkins, 2006)

Worldviews can also be a starting point from which we can create new, shared meanings. As we develop greater understanding of differing worldviews, we can begin co-creating "new stories, design new rituals, and find inclusive metaphors to contain their meanings. (LeBaron, 2003) As hosts, we can establish conditions for dialogue that can create a "knowing together". Through this interpersonal exchange new meanings can emerge.

It is important to note that this relationship between language and worldview is reciprocal. Language is a mechanism or vehicle for expressing a worldview, similar to how language reflects a society's worldview or philosophy. As Jenkins (2010) notes however "…worldview affects language and language affects worldview." This reciprocal process is similar to the reciprocal relationship of View and Action described by Gimian and Boyce (2001) and discussed in Chapter One. As we practice discourse in multiple contexts and experience language in differing forms our worldviews are impacted. And as our worldviews change we shift the language we use. This can easily be seen in the language of an individualist worldview and a relational worldview.

Cook (2009) suggests that language strongly influences how we think and plays an important role in the mental models or maps we construct that are components of our worldview. He notes "…that even small, seemingly insignificant, differences in meanings and choices of words that different languages provide can affect how you perceive the world, and that impacts your overall worldview, in important ways." (Cook, 2009)

Freedom to Choose

As noted earlier in this chapter, our individual worldviews come from our collective experiences in society – from our parents, our social interactions with friends and others, the books we read and movies we watch, the music we listen to, our schools and churches. (Jenkins, 2006; Schlitz et al. 2011) From a social constructionist perspective, it is the interactions or relationships we experience within community that become the foundation for our worldviews. (K. Gergen, 1999; Gergen & Gergen 2004) Yet, they are both an individual choice and a group phenomenon. (Hoffecker, 2007; LeBaron, 2003)[108]

But that freedom to choose may not be so easy to come by. If our worldviews help us understand which behaviors are acceptable, which are not, and when we can push the boundaries of behavior, thus influencing our everyday existence, both consciously and unconsciously, (Spirkin,1983; Schlitz et al. 2010; Hoffecker, 2007) then it becomes very difficult to step outside of the norms of behavior that include us within our society. And, if our worldviews contain our basic beliefs, our ideas, assumptions, convictions, presuppositions, and premises about the world, then, as also noted earlier, it is plausible for us to consider our worldview as our philosophy of life, our ideology or faith or formula for life. (Funk, 2001) For many, these beliefs are nonnegotiable. (Hoffecker, 2007) From this stance of nonnegotiability it becomes extremely difficult to shift one's worldview.

Yet, worldviews are not always fixed. In fact, individual and community/cultural worldviews often shift or change. Because our worldviews are constructed within a local cultural context, and because local cultures are not monolithic entities, but are always in the process of change, then, in this sense, worldviews are not fixed copies of the world, but do try to integrate, as much as possible or culturally allowable, what is learned from practical dealings with the 'outer' world. (Aerts et al. 2007) Therefore new worldviews often start with the views of small groups or sub-cultures, and prepare, step by step, new

[108] Woolf shared a story here of an experience recently in Brazil while hosting there with his partner Teresa Posakony. He notes that after the event they hosted with local hosts Augusto, Tamara, and Marina they had a conversation about hosting from a deeper place. They each spoke a few things – practices, stillness, silence, etc. – the kinds of things you would expect to hear. When it was Augusto's time to speak he said, "There is not deeper space. There is only the space that is here." Woolf says that he loved what he said, even though it could be disputable. Augusto's reflection did not sit well with everyone else, however. For Woolf, it felt refreshing. There is only what there is. Part of the worldview for him is something about acknowledging that words can reduce the fullness of something. On the one hand, helpful. On the other, highly reductive. The paradox of words!

concepts of reality. They are not just a reflection of “what everybody thinks.” (Aerts et al. 2007: 9) This process of worldview shift has been described by the Berkana Institute as a process of “emergence” rather than one of plans or dictates.[109]

These changes can be quite small and hardly noticed at first, but eventually have a socially transformative impact. (Schlitz, Vieten, & Amorok, 2007). Worldviews can also change quite significantly when new scientific knowledge emerges (flight, Internet, space travel, atomic energy), an individual experiences a tragedy (murder of a child), a local event changes a community (a hurricane – Katrina for example) or global society experiences a major event (WWI & WWII, the Civil Rights and Women’s Rights movements, 9/11). Some shifts can be so transformative (or converting) that people change religions or physical characteristics. So, while worldviews are locally constructed, they can shift based upon changes in local or global constructs as well as individual or collective experiences.

Because they are not fixed, and as we’ve seen, worldviews can change because of significant events, we as (grown up) individuals have the freedom both to choose different actions to manifest our worldview (Vidal, 2007) and to change our worldviews. So we should be very careful about applying worldviews uncritically. A key to doing so is to make sure that we remain open-minded (nonjudgmental) about our and other’s worldviews, knowing that they are revisable. As hosts, we need to hold that there is value in criticism or open discussion and set the container for dialogue that is founded in curiosity, nonjudgment and generosity or grace. From this stance of openness we can offer a container of freedom for people to examine their worldviews and hold the potential for transformation.

It is my belief that as hosts/facilitators having clarity about our own worldview will help us to understand our responses to differing contexts we host in or situations that can emerge while hosting. From this stance of greater self-awareness we will be better hosts. Understanding our individual, collective or contextual worldview can be as simple as taking the time to reflect on the matter. Or, it can be a deeper exploration into the

[109] See “Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale”, Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, Berkana Institute, 2006.

foundations of our worldview: where did it come from, what values guide it/me, what is my reality, what methods/practices do I use to manifest my worldview, how do I see the future, how did I come to know what I know? Exploring our individual worldviews can be a valuable journey into self-awareness and hosting awareness and in AoH is a component of the first of the four fold practices or hosting self.[110]

As noted earlier, our worldviews are a construction based in our life experiences within a local cultural context/construct. One way to journey, then, to worldview self-awareness, is to follow a social constructionist path of deconstructing or taking apart our worldview. By taking apart our worldview we can see how it "present(s) us with a particular vision of the world" (Burr, 2003: 18) and choose to either accept or challenge it. For this writing I have chosen to use the framework developed by the Center Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies to deconstruct Art of Hosting literature into components of an AoH worldview. I have also used the Apostel framework to deconstruct relational constructionism into a worldview. I chose to use the Apostel framework for four reasons: it offers a simple, yet elegant way to examine what a worldview is; the framework was developed with the input from a diverse field of contributors; Apostel acknowledged "that some deep seated awareness of being related to a larger all-encompassing Whole is a requirement for a healthy and meaningful life" (Aerts, Van Belle & Van Der Veken, 1999: xxi) and this 'non-theistic religiosity' perspective is similar to mine and offered a kind of kinship with his perspective; and, the framework balances theory and practice.

[110] Woolf offers here that he both likes this point and finds it confusing too. He wonders if there is some meta level underneath. "...being alive matters...." a bedrock kind of idea that could be disputed too. "...and yet, death is part of living..., or, it is all part of the journey whether alive or not in this form...."

The Center Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies[111]

The Center Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies (CLEA) at the Vrije Universiteir Brussel was founded in 1995 by the philosopher Leo Apostel.[112] He spent much of his life advocating for interdisciplinary research and especially bridging the gap he perceived between the (exact) sciences and the humanities. Apostel and many colleagues proposed that our complex and rapidly evolving world is extremely fragmented in the ideological, social, political, cultural and scientific areas, thus there remains little or no trace of cultural unity. Additionally, in our everyday lives we often have to deal with many cultures, subcultures and cultural fragments (Aerts, Van Belle & Van Der Veken, 1999). Apostel believed that this fragmentation is especially critical in the sciences. He also believed that this fragmentation, the rapid changes we are experiencing, and the formation of large-scale structures of the modern world is leading to increased alienation. The result is "We often have the impression that what remains of the world is a collection of isolated fragments, without any structure and coherence. Our personal "everyday" world seems unable to harmonize itself with the global world of society, history and cosmos." (Aerts, Apostel, De Moor, Hellemans, Maex, Van Belle, & Van der Veken, 2007: 5) In 1990 Apostel created a non–profit organization in Belgium, the "Worldviews group" that brought together people from many disciplines (theoretical physics, economics,

[111] This section is based mainly on six resources: *World Views: From Fragmentation to Integration* (Aerts, Apostel, De Moor, Hellemans, Maex, Van Belle, & Van der Veken, 2007); *What is a Worldview* (Vidal: 2008); *An Enduring Philosophical Agenda: Worldview Construction as a Philosophical Method* (Vidal: 2007); *Reflections about Worldviews, the Western Worldview and Intercultural Polylogue* (Note: 2008); World Views and the Problem of Synthesis (Van Belle & Van der Keken, 1999); and, Principia Cybernetica Web (Heylighen: 2000). Apostel is deceased (1995) Aerts, Heylighen, Note, and Vidal are all associated with the Center Leo Apostel. De Moor and Van der Keken are based at the University of Leuven, Belgium; Hellemans is based at Tilburg University, Netherlands; Maex is based at RIAGG in Breda, Netherlands; and Van Belle works at Bombardier Eurorail, Belgium.

[112] Apostel received his M.A. in philosophy at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in 1948. During 1950-1951 Apostel was a CRB Fellow at the University of Chicago and at Yale University. He received his PhD. in philosophy from the ULB in 1953. In 1955 he studied and worked with Jean Piaget in Geneva, Switzerland. Beginning in 1955 Apostel lectured logic and philosophy of science at the Ghent University and the ULB for three years. In 1958-1959 he was visiting professor at the Pennsylvania State University, and from 1960 to 1979 a professor at the Ghent University. Apostel was awarded the Solvay award for human sciences in 1985 and the Arkprijs van het Vrije Woord in 1986. He used the award funds to help establish the CLEA.

theology, engineering, sociology, biology, psychiatry) to pursue his dream. The CLEA was founded shortly before his death in 1995.

To address this perceived (real) concern Apostel and colleagues in the Worldview group embarked on a research initiative that is still ongoing to construct integrated worldviews. The goal is to provide a framework in which the worldviews that are developing in various fields of culture and science can enter into dialogue with one another and overcome "the situation of fragmentation." (Aerts et al. 2007: 5) This framework would be a basis for understanding society, the world, and our place in it, which could help us make critical decisions that will shape our future. In developing this picture of the whole we will better be able to understand and work with complexity and change. (Heylighen, 2000) In fact, a key driver for the Worldviews group is our inability to address some of the world's most macro-problems and micro-problems, which Apostel believed was related to this global fragmentation of worldviews. (Aerts et al. 2007)

To be sure, the goal is not to develop one single imposed or monolithic worldview, which is neither attainable nor desirable. "But we do not want to restore one single worldview. We simply want to understand what is going on, and to do the best we can to think about the world as coherently as feasible…" (Aerts, Van Belle & Van Der Veken, 1999: xix) There is a clear recognition within the group that naively working to create one unique, single worldview could lead to totalitarianism. Instead the objective is to discern which differing elements of the many worldviews lead to fragmentation that cannot be overcome and which are local constructs that have a global symmetry and connect us in our humanity. (Aerts et al. 2007) The group is clear that the real "task of our time (is) to search for worldviews in which different systems of interpretation and ideals can be incorporated and can converse with each other." That "This task is urgent, not only for the multi-cultural societies now found in all major cities of the world, but also for those countries in which a variety of cultural patterns, with quite different histories, are striving towards a certain symbiosis." (Aerts et al. 2007: 8)

The group notes that "We are experiencing the end of the big dreams and the 'great narratives'. It seems that there are no longer clear and generally accepted views about the nature of reality and about man's task in the world." (Aerts, Van Belle & Van Der Veken,

1999: xv) However, in reading through the work of Apostel and the Worldviews group one detects an optimism that we can construct new worldviews. In effect, the acting subject of the Worldviews group is the whole of humanity, the whole world and the entire universe. And when we understand that our world is “not our land” and when we come to “live and think on a planetary scale, the urgency of a global worldview will become even more obvious.” (Aerts et al. 2007: 24) One could say that there are many maps but only one world. The outcome is to be an integration of worldviews which would help us to find our way in this ever increasing complex reality and to act, especially in the sciences, in a more coherent manner.

Creating an Integrated Worldview

As a philosopher, Apostel proposed that the concepts of ‘philosophy’ and ‘worldview’ are closely related. He believed that “Societies, as well as individuals, have always contemplated deep questions relating to their being and becoming, and to the being and becoming of the world.” (Aerts et al. 2007: 8) He viewed talk about philosophy as, in the broadest sense, talk about worldviews and that, then, constructing a worldview is the highest manifestation of philosophy. (Vidal, 2007, 2008) In other words, the answers to these big questions form our worldview.

To review, The Centre Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies defines a worldview as “…a system of co-ordinates or a frame of reference in which everything presented to us by our diverse experiences can be placed. It is a symbolic system of representation that allows us to integrate everything we know about the world and ourselves into a global picture, one that illuminates reality as it is presented to us within a certain culture.” (Aerts et al. 2007: 9) Our worldviews are “connected to society, history, cosmos and to reality as a whole.” (Aerts et al. 2007:7) Essentially, our worldview(s) are assumptions, beliefs and images about the world that we use to guide us in our everyday lives. Our worldview answers life’s big questions.

Additionally, it is important to recognize that the CLEA works from a concept of the world in the broadest sense. It notes that what we think of as the world can differ depending upon our local context, i.e. the modern world, the Western/Eastern world, the world of the Anasazi or the world of Islam. It offers that “The world” should not be identified with “the earth,” nor with “the cosmos,” nor with “the observable universe,” but with the totality in

which we live and to which we can relate ourselves in a meaningful way. (Aerts et al. 2007:8) This perspective opens up the potential for exploration beyond words for ways to describe and reflect upon what is our world.

Apostel approached the task of constructing an integrated worldview as a philosophical enterprise. (Vidal, 2007) He proposed a philosophical agenda to constructing (deconstructing) worldviews, which would consist of core questions that could define the range of issues or problems addressed by a worldview (by philosophy). It is true that Apostel's own local context/construct originates in the Western world. Yet, as noted above he believed that societies throughout history and throughout the world have sought answers to questions regarding our being and becoming. What Heylighen refers to the "Eternal Philosophical Questions". (Heylighen, 2000)

Apostel and the Worldview group believed that there are six key domains or questions that make up the philosophical agenda and that the answers to these questions comprised the components of a worldview. The questions are: What is?; Where does it all come from?; Where are we going?; What is good and what is evil?; How should we act?; and, How do we know what is true and what is false? [113] In philosophical terms these domains hold questions of ontology, explanation, futurology or prediction, axiology, praxeology and epistemology.[114]

The first three are "is-questions" that help us describe the world. How we ask these questions can change over time as our understanding of the world changes. These questions can often overlap with science. For example, questions about the nature of matter have changed significantly in the past 100 years. Because how we formulate and answer these questions can be influenced by other disciples, they are sometimes referred to as mixed questions as they invite exploring philosophy with other disciplines. (Vidal,

[113] In the Principia Cybernetica Web, Heylighen (2000) offers 18 Eternal Philosophical Questions: What is?; Why is there something rather than nothing?; Why is the world the way it is?; Where does it all come from?; Where do we come from?; Who are we?; Where are we going to?; What is the purpose of it all?; Is there a God?; What is good and what is evil?; What is knowledge?; What is truth?; What is consciousness?; Do we have a "free will"?; How should we act?; How can we be happy?; Why cannot we live forever?; and, What is the meaning of life?

[114] Apostel actually proposed a seventh question, an etiology: Where do we start to answer those questions? However, many subsequent articles about the Apostel's work have dropped this question and focused on the first six. For this writing I have chosen to use the first six questions for developing a worldview framework.

2012) As we saw earlier, the answers to these descriptive is-questions can vary significantly between differing local contexts/ontologies. Something as simple or complex as the nature of life can vary between cultures, for example one culture seeing trees as having life but not sentience and another seeing them as having something more than just life.

The fourth question is more normative and invites exploration of “ought-questions”. This question invites an exploration of what is good and evil. Vidal (2012) summarizes it by asking two additional questions “How do I live a good life?’ and “How can we organize a good society?”. This fourth question can be a seen as a mixed question. On an individual level it mixes with the psychology of wellbeing and on a society level it mixes with political philosophy and sociology. (Vidal, 2012)

The fifth question takes us to the practical and addresses “act-questions”. Once we’ve developed our model of the world – our understanding of reality – and established a values system to guide us, then we can ask “How can we act?” We are now in the domain of methodology or praxeology which can be mixed with fields like operational research, problem-solving methods, management sciences, etc. (Vidal, 2012) It is here that we can think of our philosophy as a way of life.

Finally, question six. If the first five questions invite us to explore directly what our world is and how we choose to interact with it, then question six invites us to explore how we know the answers to the first five questions. It is in this domain that the philosophical worlds of such areas as phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, structuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism manifest. It is here where relational constructionists like Dian Marie Hosking suggest that how we know what we know emerges from (is constructed within) the ongoing activity of constructing our local context or reality (ontology). In essence, there is a blurring of ontology and epistemology.

These six philosophical domains are the framework Apostel used to begin creating an integrated worldview. I have used them to deconstruct the Art of Hosting worldview based on current AoH literature (see Chapter Five) and will use them in this Chapter as a framework for deconstructing a relational constructionist worldview (see below). They will

also serve as the framework I will use to integrate relational constructionism into the Art of Hosting worldview and offer it to the AoH community and invite us into further dialogue about what an Art of Hosting worldview is. So, at this point a review of each of the six domains – ontology, explanation, futurology, axiology, praxeology and epistemology – is warranted.

Six Domains: The Apostel Framework

Ontology

At the philosophical level ontology is the study of what there is. (Hofweber, 2004) Ontology explores questions about our reality: What exists? What is the nature of our world? How is it structured and how does it function? What am I? Why is there something rather than nothing? (Vidal, 2008) An ontology can be considered a formal representation of a perspective. (Smith, 2004) An ontology can exist at a meta-level (we are all inter-beings) and at a local level (for instance, this is the marketing department's reality). An ontology then is, in essence, a model of the world in which we live and work. Societies, organizations and each of us as individual have ontologies.

Hofweber (2004) offers that, philosophically, ontology has two parts: the exploration of what exists and what the stuff of reality is made out of and "what the most general features and relations of these things are." (Hofweber, 2004: 8) Hofweber suggests that answering these ontological questions is more complex than might appear. First, he notes that it isn't clear how to approach these questions and second, it isn't clear what these questions really are. Which, for purposes here in exploring hosting practices, leads to the issue of ontological commitment.

If our ontology gives us a model of reality, then this description or representation of reality has within it a choice made for that model. And, in making choices, certain things are emphasized and others not. Thus, what is described as reality becomes dependent upon the interpretations of the observer, the instruments of observation used by the observer and the purpose one has in describing/constructing reality. (Aerts et al. 2007) Gruber (1992) suggests that, pragmatically, part of an ontological commitment is agreement to use a shared language or vocabulary. Thus the language/vocabulary we use/choose to describe our ontology influences what that description is. As Ken Gergen notes "How

should we answer questions about what is ‘independent of language’ save through language. (Gergen, 2001: 425) In effect, we are active participants in the construction of our reality – our ontology. And, as we will explore later in this chapter, from a constructionist perspective an ontology can be seen as a ‘form of life’.” (Hosking 2007)

As hosts/facilitators it becomes important for us to recognize that we, consciously and unconsciously, have made an ontological commitment. We hold a perspective on reality, a worldview. And, while our ontology may provide answers to some of life’s biggest questions or more immediate questions, it is important to remember that another person or society may have very different perspectives/worldviews on the same questions. Our challenge, when hosting conversations that matter, is to both be aware of the role that language plays, and especially the language we use, in constructing realities and to host ourselves and those with differing ontologies in a way that supports constructive or generative dialogue.

Explanation

If our ontology describes what is real for us in the moment, then an explanation tells us how we got there. In philosophy, an explanation is a set of statements that ‘explains’ the how or why of the existence or occurrence of phenomenon – an object, event and current situation. (Mayes, 2005) Explanation is past focused. Explanation moves us beyond knowing the facts to trying to understand or explain them. It seeks to answer our “why” questions. (Aerts et al. 2007: 14) Why is our world the way it is, and not different? Why are we the way we are, and not different? What kind of global explanatory principles can we put forward? Where does it all come from? It is in essence, a model of the past. It is important to note that an explanation for a phenomenon can vary by culture, sub-region or ontological orientation. So, minimally, an explanation situates phenomena within our/a network of relations.

Explanations are most often offered as causal models describing a chain of events that got us to where we are. This is especially true in the philosophy of science. But, an explanation can also provide the origin of a phenomenon, a description of its most general form, or an understanding of how the specific phenomenon cannot be different than what

it is/they are. (Aerts et al. 2007: 14) An explanation should also help us understand how the phenomena will continue to evolve. (Heylighen, 2000)

It is important to be aware of when an explanation is not a justification. A teacher may explain a student's behavior, which can help understand the student's actions and could gain support for or criticism of the actions. However, this does not mean that in explaining the actions that the teacher is expressing a view on the student or their actions. This is an important distinction because, when actions are harmful in nature, understanding them is different than sympathizing with them. (Mayes, 2005)

Recently, some philosophers have moved away from scientific approaches to explanation and centered on a theory of explanation that is based in the way that people perform explanation. This approach, known as Ordinary Language Philosophy, stresses the communicative or linguistic or performative characteristics of explanation, especially how helpful it is in answering questions or furthering understanding between individuals. In other words, explanation is a communicative relationship or a process of communication between individuals rather than a relationship between the question and the answer. (Mayes, 2005) A primary proponent of this approach is Peter Achinstein.[115]

This perspective is especially relevant to this writing as it moves us from the logic and causal model of explanation to the role that language (performance) plays in building understanding between individuals of phenomena. Achinstein rejected the narrow association of understanding with causation and the focus solely on why-questions. Achinstein proposed there are many different kinds of questions that we ordinarily regard as attempts to gain understanding (for example, who-, what-, when-, and where-questions) and offered that the process of answering any of these could be viewed as an act of explanation. (Mayes, 2005)

Ordinary Language Philosophy can be viewed as deeply pragmatic. It proposes that all explanations exist within local contexts or sets of instructions and the person asking the question(s) determines what these instructions are. From a social constructionist lens a simple question like "How are you today?" could be a question of genuine interest or

[115] See Achinstein, Peter (1983) *The Nature of Explanation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

concern or just a passing politeness with no real interest in communication. The performative nature of the question (tone, warmth, inflection, eye contact, etc.) could set the instructions for an answer. And, depending on how the questions is asked, the answer could vary in many ways.[116] However, an answer like “Pink elephants are taking over the world” would not be relevant to the goal of the question.

As hosts, when hosting a dialogue that seeks to build understanding between individuals, holding both the space for causal (logic) approaches to information sharing and the performative nature of the explanation process can open up opportunities for greater understanding between dialogue participants. Thus, clarity of purpose is essential to good hosting as well as self-awareness of our own performative acts.

Futurology

If explanation focuses on the past, futurology focuses on the future. The two are complementary. Futurology invites us to explore where we are going. Key questions are: What future is open to us and our species in this world? By what criteria are we to select these possible futures? What kind of future is ahead of us? What will be the fate of life in the Universe? And because the future is uncertain with more than one possible outcome, this worldview/philosophical domain should give us possible futures, with more or less probable developments, which then offers us choices to make. (Vidal, 2008) A futurology, then, is a model of possibilities.

An important component of Apostel and the Worldview group’s work is to “clarify the place of humanity in the world and to provide insight into the most significant relations humans have with this world, both theoretically and practically. (Aerts et al. 2007: 17) This leads to many questions about the future. How will cultures interact with each other in the future? Will Western culture become dominant over the whole world? What will be the role of science and economics in the future order? Who will make the decisions that will influence humanity as a whole? In the long term, and hence more speculatively, one can ponder the role of humanity in the universe. Does humanity have a future that reaches beyond the planet earth? Will we ever be able to bring human life to other planets? Does our species have a cosmic function and destiny? (Aerts et al. 2007: 17)

[116] Jourdain notes that when people are familiar with each other in the field of AoH, it often prompts a very different response because we know we are asking a question of depth and not of surface quality. Generally the tone would support that.

As hosts we are often working in a space of emergence, which could be thought of as working to create the future that wants to emerge or come forth. Often times this results in finding a new way forward that none of the participants in the dialogue(s) imagined when they entered into the work/dialogue. Tenneson Woolf often calls this the magic in the middle and Hosking calls it the place in between. However we refer to it when hosting, we are, in essence, working in a place of emergent futures and not a fixed future we are seeking to get to.

Questions about the future of humanity, or any questions we may have about the future, are both descriptive – what awaits us? – and evaluative – what should we do? To answer this question we need values. (Vidal, 2008)

Axiology

As we experience our (local/global) reality, how do we evaluate it? After all, we do not live in a neutral world. We love and hate; we admire and despise; we suffer and enjoy. We determine what is good or evil to us; what is beautiful or not. We have individual and societal value systems. In philosophy, axiology is the field of study concerned with the subject of value – moral, ethical, aesthetic. In the context of worldviews, axiology is our individual and societal beliefs about what is good or evil, what is valuable or not, what is right or wrong. Every aspect of our worldview, from ontology to epistemology is influenced by our beliefs about the value of things, our axiology.

Aerts et al suggests "that that everyone who wants to construct a reasonable view of reality and human existence will have to take into account the following questions:

> 1. What is happiness and suffering for feeling and/or conscious beings? What increases or decreases happiness and suffering?
> 2. What is beauty and ugliness? How can these categories be applied to the physical, biological, social and psychological world? Can they be applied to the world as a whole?
> 3. What is the origin of the distinction between good and evil? Can these concepts be applied to different regions of reality, or are they limited to the human world?

4. How does the process of “evaluation” depend on aspirations and strivings? Is there a hierarchy of values and purposes?
5. On the final value of human existence, opinions differ. Contact with religion is inescapable here. What is the meaning of the difference between the holy and the profane that we find in many cultures? Are certain aspects of the experiences of the holy objective?” (Aerts et al. 2007: 15-16)

Ultimately, we could say that our axiology answers for us two important questions: What is it that gives value to our existence in this world? What is it that makes life worth living? (Aerts et al. 2007)

One cannot overstate the importance of our axiology in determining our worldview. Our axiology, our beliefs about good, evil, beauty, right and wrong, influence all of our conscious decisions and judgments and our unconscious actions that we cannot directly associate with our beliefs about value. As hosts we must always be checking-in with ourselves regarding our thoughts and actions when hosting to determine how our values, our axiology, are influencing us as we host. This is not to say that having values is bad and we must, as host, be neutral (an impossibility), but that, to host well, self-awareness about our worldview is essential.

Praxeology

In the *The Art of War* a framework for action is described that contains three components – view, practice/method and action. (Gimian & Boyce, 2001) Central to this perspective is the idea that our worldviews directly impact the actions we take in the world and that the methods we use to manifest or extend our worldviews into the practical realities of the world must be congruent with that (our) worldview. Our praxeology, then, provides use with our theory or practice of action. It answers the question: How are we to act and to create in this world?

Knowing what our hopes and dreams are and desiring to get there does not mean we know how. As humans, we generally strive to act in meaningful ways and take actions to transform the world in ways that connect to our purposes. Thus, our worldview not only provides an explanation and an axiology (value system), but it also offers us a view on

how we organize our actions to influence life as humans in the world. (Aerts et al. 2007; Heylighen, 2000)

It is important to note here that actions that may be valid in one context (local ontology) may not necessarily be so in another. Additionally, the world is continuously evolving and our worldview(s) with it. As hosts, we must adapt our hosting practices to the contexts we are working in. We may hold a general theory of action such as conversations matter and good conversations lead to wise action, however, what constitutes a good conversation or wise action could vary by local realities. To take effective action, then, we need clarity of our goals and values and good practices/methods for acting on them. And, as we 'practice the work' we seek self and collective reflections on the course of action in order to make adjustments as we go. (Heylighen, 2000)

Praxeology or methodology can take many forms, especially when examined through a research lens. In this arena, methodology usually takes two forms, quantitative methods that offer ways for researchers to evaluate their work in a more controlled environment using numerical data and qualitative research that brings content or meaning to the research act or brings in perspectives of the researcher or individuals participating in the research.

Another consideration when discussing praxeology or methodology is a concern held by some in the scientific community that method has become confused with methodology. In a scientific sense, methodology is the design for conducting research. It is the principles and practices that underlie the research, whereas, methods are the tools used to conduct the research. In the case of this writing it could be fairly argued that methodology and methods are being used interchangeably. However, I prefer to think of methodology in a more Aristotelian sense, meaning we can make a distinction between "theoretical thinking and practical thinking" and that in the case of Art of Hosting we are speaking about "action thinking" which has its own methodology. (Aerts et al. 2007)

Saliha Bava offers a way to think about methodology that fits well with the perspective I am offering for thinking about praxeology/methodology when constructing an Art of Hosting worldview. A methodology provides a framing for knowledge construction, tools to

use in the process of knowledge construction, a process that is itself epistemologically driven, a systematic way of creating choices and trails, a way to make and manage choices and a process narrative of what was created. It also shapes the knowledge that is constructed. (Bava, 2009)

Epistemology

Epistemology or the theory of knowledge is the sixth philosophical domain that constitutes the construction of a worldview in the Apostel framework. The basic questions of epistemology are "What is knowledge?" "How is knowledge acquired?" and "What is true and what is false?" Epistemology is about the process by which we make reality, the process by which we create knowledge. (Debold, 2002)

Heylighen offers that there are six differing theories or models of how we acquire knowledge: empiricism, rationalism, pragmatic epistemology, contructivism[117], evolutionary epistemology and memetics. Empiricism emphasizes the role of experience in acquiring knowledge. Knowledge comes from sensory (all five senses) perceptions or observations. Some exclude logic and mathematics as exceptions to this. Rationalism views knowledge acquisition as a process of rational reflection. That knowledge is acquired by an *a priori* process of reasoning and not from experience. Pragmatic epistemology asserts that knowledge consists of models which offer ways of representing the environment that make it easier to problem solve. (Heylighen, 1993) Constructivism[118] is the perspective that all knowledge is constructed. It assumes that knowledge is a product of social processes of communication. Heylighen expresses concern that constructivism offers that one 'truth' is as good as another and that there isn't any way to distinguish between what is true and what is false. He suggests that this could lead to relativism in knowledge[119]. (Heylighen, 1993) He offers that evolutionary epistemology

[117] Empiricism, rationalism and constructivism are the predominate Western world theories of how we acquire knowledge.

[118] Constructivism, constructionism, social constructivism, and social constructionism are often used interchangeably. Heylighen uses constructivism as the word to mean the social construction of knowledge.

[119] Social constructionism (or constructivism here) is often criticized as being relativistic. This is a clear misunderstanding of what social constructionism is. Social constructionism does not ask us to "abandon all that we take to be real and good. Not at all." But it does invite us to "not be bound by the chains of either history or tradition.' (Gergen & Gergen, 2004: 12) As I've stated earlier, I find this liberating and opens the door for many possibilities of co-discovery of new forms of what is real and good, especially as we work to address what Sampson and Hosking refer to as otherness.

gives a broader perspective on the acquisition of knowledge. In evolutionary epistemology, knowledge is constructed by individuals (subjects) or groups (of subjects) in order to adapt to their (local) environment and that this process of construction is ongoing, whether biological, psychological or social. (Heylighen, 1993) The sixth model is memetics. In memetics, knowledge is transmitted from one person (subject) to another and thus is not dependent on any single individual. A piece of knowledge is a 'meme' and as long as the meme moves between individuals more quickly than the death of any individual holding the knowledge, the knowledge or meme with continue and/or proliferate. (Heylighen,1993). Like constructivism, memetics attends to the role of communications and social processes in the development of knowledge. An important distinguishing difference between memetics and constructivism according to Heylighen is that constructivism see "knowledge as constructed by individuals or society" and memetics sees "society and even individuality as byproducts constructed by an ongoing evolution of independent fragments of knowledge competing for domination." (Heylighen, 1993)

What these six theories of knowledge invite us to consider here is that there is no absolutely true model of reality or way of acquiring knowledge or knowing what is absolutely true or false. Instead we are invited to recognize that construction of knowledge – of our worldviews – must take into consideration which perspective on knowledge acquisition the observer holds. Epistemologies are locally situated. They are local constructs, which means they can be/are influenced by the needs and characteristics of the observer/subject. (Aerts et al. 2007) Thus, we take the way we construct reality to be reality. Our individual and social epistemologies become a personal and, perhaps, passionate matter. (Debold, 2002) As hosts we are invited to learn about our own perspectives on the knowledge we hold by regarding ourselves from different external perspectives.

If knowledge is what people know, then from a social constructionist perspective, it could be argued that knowledge rests not in what we believe as individuals, but in what our community of knowledge believes. This is not to say that we, as individuals don't have ideas but that our ideas gain meaning within their social context and that it is this social context of meaning making that is epistemologically fundamental and not the content of the ideas. (Warmoth, 2000) Critically important for us as hosts is to be aware that

knowledge communities can and do control the flow of knowledge to others, whether through books, movies, music, academic programs or practice (hosting practice). This can result in creating spaces of holders of knowledge (power) and receivers (if lucky) of knowledge. In other words, knowledge has a politics and we, as hosts, must be careful not to bring this into our work. It becomes possible for the holders of knowledge to exploit those without (the) knowledge. The growing field of social epistemology, and especially feminist social epistemology, is calling much needed attention to how knowledge production affects the lives of women and systems of oppression. The work of Mary Gergen, Susan Heckman, Heidi Grasswick and many more have opened doorways for deep exploration into social epistemology and the impacts of knowledge creation on gender, race, class, sexuality and other social categories.

Relational Constructionism

The final section of this literature review focuses on relational (social)[120] constructionism. I propose that relational constructionism is a particular worldview and that it can be held within larger worldviews. So, a person with a Western or Eastern or indigenous worldview could also hold all or parts of a relational constructionist worldview within that larger context. As I propose in Chapter 5, there is an Art of Hosting worldview and, I believe, there is a natural affinity or connection between a relational constructionist and an Art of Hosting worldview.

Here I will explore a relational constructionist worldview through deconstructing relational constructionist literature into the six domains of the Apostel worldview framework. I am relying mainly on the work of Dian Marie Hosking for reference, but also have read extensively in the writings of Ken Gergen, Mary Gergen and Sheila McNamee and, to a lesser degree but with no less impact, the works of John Shotter and Edward Sampson, for my understanding of relational constructionism. Surely there is some danger here in that the primary contributors to relational constructionism theory/practice may wholly disagree with my premise and/or my interpretations. They may disagree that relational

[120] Relational constructionism is a form of social constructionism. I offer that social constructionism has many variants in interpretation and practice. One important characteristic of relational constructionism from my perspective is its focus on the practice of the relational elements of constructionism.

constructionism is a worldview. They may disagree with my deconstruction of relational constructionism into the six philosophical domains of the Apostel framework. However, if we hold to the definition offered at the beginning of this chapter of a worldview as giving us a way to describe the world in everyday language "that shapes and guides our lives, helping us to understand, explain and explore the world around us and everything in it, and how these are all related to each other" (Gousmett, 1997: 2), then I hold that this is what relational constructionism theory/practice does.

Hosking offers a "framework of premises" that describes what relational constructionism is. She suggests that these premises are theoretical formulations similar to ones found in sociology or the philosophy of science (Hosking, 2011). I would offer that these premises are much more than theory; they are a particular set of practices for living or being in the world. They could be centered as a personal philosophy or way of being. They are a worldview. And, they provide a strong foundation for a hosting practice. Hosking identifies these key premises as:

- "Relational processes are centred and not the bounded individual, individual mind operations, and individual knowledge.
- Relational processes are considered to 'go on' in inter-acts[121] that may involve speaking, sounds, hearing and listening, gestures, signs, symbols, seeing, dance…theorised as ongoing performances.
- Inter-acts (re)construct multiple self-other realities as local ontologies or 'forms of life' (person-world making).
- Relational processes and realities are theorised as local-cultural and local-historical.
- Relational processes may close down or open up possibilities. Relating can construct hard, soft or indeed minimal self-other differentiation. Power is ever ongoing as a quality of relational processes including 'power over' and 'power to'." (Hosking, 2011: 12)

What I present now is my interpretations (deconstruction) of relational constructionism theory/practice into the six philosophical domains used in the Apostel worldview

[121] Hosking refers to interacts or " 'inter-action' as (a) to signal a performance (b) that involves a coming together (c) of "whoever and whatever" and in doing so (re)constructs person/world relations as (d) relational realities.' (Hosking , 2007:4)

framework. The differences between the domains are much more distinct, as can be seen in the previous section, when presented definitionally. Here the differences blur considerably. This is due in good part to the nature of relational (and social) constructionism where, as we will see, many of the domains cross paths in theory and practice, in process and description. This will lead to similarities of description, which does not have a clarity of difference between philosophical domains, but from my perspective, does offer a strong wholeness of a relational constructionist (and hosting) worldview.

Six Domains: Relational Constructionism

Ontology

As noted previously, an ontology is, in essence, a description or model of the world, of the reality in which we live and work. Central to a relational constructionist ontology is that in the world there are multiple ontologies that exist at the local or regional level, within specific communities or disciplines (science, religion, psychology, etc.), or at a larger (meta) level (Western culture for example). In other words, the scale of the local-cultural construction can vary. (Hosking, 2007, 2011)

Relational constructionism offers that in our everyday life, there operates many "local-cultural 'relational' realities" (ontologies). What Wittgenstein referred to as "forms of life." (Hosking, 2010) It offers, or in Hosking's words "centers", the assumption (belief) (worldview) that what we hold as knowledge, truth, ethics, science, etc. are local realities constructed relationally. In other words, we agree within our local contexts to what is reality (for us).

This is a different perspective from one that holds that there is a single real reality that we can discover and know objectively through science (or faith). Instead science is viewed as one local-cultural reality and not 'the' reality. (Hosking, 2007, 2010) The perspective that all that we accept as real, whether through science or spiritual consciousness, is relationally constructed, is a stark contrast to the long-standing perspective of Western culture that knowledge/reality is "built up from the individual's observations and rational thought." This perspective holds that "careful observation can inform the individual of "what there is," and "one's thoughts about the world can be tested against reality. In this way we move progressively toward objective truth." However, from a relational constructionist worldview, what is meaningful for us comes "to us primarily as a result of

our relationships with others", whether it be within specific communities, professions, religions, traditions, etc. (Gergen & Hosking, 2006)

These local constructions/realities/ontologies are closely tied to the values of social groups and are communally agreed upon, whether implicitly or explicitly. These agreements hold from one generation to the next until they are challenged or changed. There are no specific foundations for the agreements. (Gergen & Hosking, 2006) Thus, relational constructionism views the process of relating as both a process of holding mostly stable agreements about the local relational reality and an opportunity to open up possibilities for new local ontologies/realities. (Hosking, 2011) This perspective is especially important for us as hosts. If what is held as real at a local level was constructed locally and relationally, then there always exists the possibility for new realities to emerge. The challenge is to host people in ways that are not threatening to their current ontologies, but that invite them into the co-construction of new realities as a participatory (relational) process that builds collective agreement/ownership in the new reality/ontology.[122]

It is important to note here that relational constructionism sees itself as a constructed local ontology. When exploring local forms of life, relational constructionism is one such form. (Hosking, 2011) As its own ontology, relational constructionism then "has the potential to function as an explanatory framework within which we might examine the actual 'nature' of our world rather than just our knowledge of such a world." (Nightingale & Cromby 2002) For me, this is affirmation that relational constructionism is a worldview.

Relational constructionism offers that we construct our ontologies, our local realities, through social processes and that these processes are " 'political' inasmuch as they support particular local-cultural constructions or valuations - and not others." (Hosking, 2010) When working within different contexts as hosts we must be aware of the 'political' nature of local social processes and recognize how open these local constructions are to differing ontologies and, more importantly, to otherness. Additionally, as hosts (working from a relational constructionist perspective) it is important to be aware that as we work in

[122] Woolf notes here that while hosting an AoH training in Brazil in 2013 they gave good attention to two questions: 1) Why talk? 2) What are we really doing here? They got some basic answers and some 'funky' ones. He believes that by asking the questions, they increased attention to them, and thus, activated further energy to the what of this, and to the reifying process.

a local context/reality there are many "simultaneous inter-acts continuously contributing to ongoing (re)constructions of reality" (Hosking, 2011: 15) and not just one clear local reality.

Ontologically, relational constructionists are interested in the "how" of reality construction processes rather than the "what" of construction. (Gergen & Hosking, 2006) (Hosking, 2007: 7) The how here is the "ever-moving construction site in which the relational realities of persons and worlds are continuously (re)produced." (Hosking, 2007: 7) Relational (and social) constructionism moves us away from the worldview that self-other relations are stable and solid and to a worldview in which all of us, entities and non-entities, exist within ongoing processes of becoming. (Gergen & Hosking, 2006) In other words, relational constructionism offers a view of "how" that holds that we are all, person and world, self and other, human and non-human, in a reciprocal relationship of co-construction that is also always in a process of becoming. (Hosking, 2007) We are always, then, hosting in a space of emergence.

This relational constructionist worldview of an "ontology of becoming" of giving "ontology to relational processes" (Hosking, 2007: 8) (Hosking & Pluut, 2010: 5) shifts us away from the view that the 'self' is fixed and is thus situated as an independent, knowing and acting being.[123] It also shifts us away from viewing the 'other' as a fixed entity to study and know. Instead we are offered a worldview that says that we are all works in progress being co-constructed through our (social) relations. Ontologically, the self (and other) is seen as "a relational construction made in relational processes." (Hosking, 2010) The self and other, then, can be viewed as a "relational unity in ongoing construction in relational processes." (Gergen & Hosking 2006) Hosking refers to this as an 'eco-logical' view. What this implies is that we are all multi-beings, with many different selves "*'situated' in particular relations with particular others."* (Hosking, 2010) This opens up the opportunity to hold a dialogical view of the people we encounter instead of a monological view. (Sampson: 2008 referenced in Hosking: 2011)[124] And as hosts, we are always hosting multi-beings. In my

[123] This perspective is central to social constructionist theory/thought and a deeper exploration can be found in the works of Ken and Mary Gergen, John Shotter, Sheila McNamee, Harlene Anderson, and John Rijsman in addition to Dian Marie Hosking and many other social and relational constructionists.

[124] In his book *Celebrating the Other* Edward E. Sampson puts forth his view that Western civilization has been "monological and self-celebratory – focusing more on the leading protagonist

case, I am male and an eldest son, father, grandfather, host and AoH Steward, not too bad a cook, and a lover of jazz, wine, and books in addition to being Caucasian.

Giving ontology to relational processes moves us out of a construct of hard (closed) self/other differentiation and into, as Hosking calls it, a 'soft' (open to otherness) differentiation between self and other, entity and non-entity. Hard differentiations between self and other can now be seen as a construction. With the possibility of soft differentiations we can shift our attention to how differentiation is constructed. (Hosking, 2007) From a soft self/other differentiation we move out of the perspective that there is one 'real' reality and into the (radical) potential of "appreciation and openness to other possible selves and relations to other forms of life" (Hosking, 2007) With this openness we can host/work with relational processes, the "how", that support multiple (local) relational realities or ontologies. (Hosking, 2007)

> At the end of an Art of hosting training in St. Paul, Minnesota a respected local business person stated that he saw it as his task to bring business language to the Art of Hosting. Three months later at another AoH training and after introducing AoH language and practices into his work, the same business person offered that it is his task to bring the language of AoH to the business world. It had been his experience that shifting the language also shifted how businesses operated (for the better).

Relational constructionism also holds that power is constructed in local, ongoing relational processes. Hosking offers that power is then not "inherent in entities and individual acts" but is a product or quality of the inter-acts within a local context. (Hosking, 1995, 2007) For relational constructionists power has two forms: "power over" and "power to" which supports the construction of different but equal forms of life or "power with" which is participative and relational. (Gergen, 1995; Hosking, 1995). Thus multiple and soft differentiation realities can only exist when power over is not allowed to be a dominant form within the local ontology.

At this point it is important to acknowledge the role of language in (re)constructing local realities, whether it is in an ontological construct, or in any of the other five philosophical domains being explored here within a relational constructionist worldview. Social and

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and the supporting cast that *he* has assembled for his performance than on others as viable people in their own right." (Sampson: 2008: ix) I found his book very helpful in furthering my understanding of how deeply the construction of the other or otherness has impacted Western civilization.

relational constructionists see language itself as a construction (Gergen, 1994) (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002). This is evidenced clearly in this section by the word play of Dian Marie Hosking[125]. Language thus does not offer a perfect mirror of our realities, but is itself flawed. As Art of Hosting practitioners we are keenly aware of how the discourse methods we use (especially the 'word' language we use) involve local forms and impacts how individuals or groups 'see' the situation or context they are in. Using words like co-create or co-learn or co-construct, while sounding 'new age' to some, do shift how people interact and how they view the (relational) processes they are engaging in. These language games can create their own facts. (Hosking, 2007) Thus, no matter how flawed a discourse method may be for some, attention to how it creates the local reality is essential to hosting well.

For me, the importance of a relational constructionist ontology to the Art of Hosting community is that it offers a worldview grounded in the realization that "we are *free to create together* new realities and related ways of life." If we hold that "*all claims to knowledge are culturally and historically situated"* then we are not bound by *"*any conception, tradition, or vaunted claim that degrades or destroys the processes by which meanings come into being" (Gergen & Hosking, 2006) and if we hold that "change (in the process sense) is ever present and assumes that inter-acts always have the possibility (however remote) to change the 'content' of some local relational reality" (Hosking 2011: 18), then we have the huge and wonderful opportunity to co-construct the world, the reality, the future we want to live into. I find this immensely liberating.

Explanation

Explanation was previously defined as a set of statements that 'explains' the how or why of the current situation. Explanation then is past focused. In exploring a relational constructionist approach to explanation there are two threads of discussion we can pursue: we can trace the historical/philosophical development of social/relational constructionism and, we can look more closely at what relational constructionist theory/practice offers regarding explanation.

[125] Throughout her writing Hosking often 'plays' with words using such forms as (re)construct, (re)production, con-texts, , inter-acts, or (dis)crediting. This 'shorthand' word use demonstrates how we can work with differing forms of language to communicate ideas.

It is important to point out that a relational constructionist approach to explanation contrasts significantly from a Western approach, which holds that how we describe or explain the world is based in a singular reality or ontology from which we produce "generalizable, trans-historical knowledge". (Hosking, 2007) Whereas a relational constructionist approach holds that there are multiple local realities which are unfolding in processes that are simultaneously holding the past, the present and probable futures. (Hosking, 2010)

Western thought, for the past several hundred years has viewed "knowledge as built up from the individual's observations and rational thought." In this traditional approach (one might say scientific approach) well designed processes of observation "can inform the individual of 'what there is'" and these observations and/or conclusions can be tested against the (assumed) singular ontology (reality). Thus, over time, society moves forward in ways that provide us with the objective truth about things (reality). (Gergen & Hosking 2006) This has become known as the "modernist" approach to knowledge development where a knowing subject (scientist, leader, professor, psychologist, etc.) observes the knowable object (other) (student, client, follower, employee, etc.) and draws conclusions or observations about the current situation (reality), tests them against the ontology/reality held by the knowing subject, and, when appropriate, acts based on them. Social constructionists hold that this subject-object/other approach to reality is itself a construction. (Hosking, 2006)

Given how dominant the subject-object/other form exists within Western culture, it is important for us as hosts to both model/use a more relational, multi-being approach to understanding whichever current situation we are hosting in and to create containers for those who hold a strong subject/object or hard self/other worldview to step outside of this (their) comfort zone of explanation and into a place of working within a soft self/other construct.[126]

There is a rich history to the development of social constructionist theory and practice and the emergent relational constructionist field of theory and practice. Andy Lock and Tom

[126] Woolf asks here: What if there were "no other?" And here that there is only what an individual expresses as one version of what is available to him/her by being in the group.

Strong have written an excellent and comprehensive review of this history, *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirrings in Theory and Practice* (2010). For those that would like a deeper exploration than what is offered here, this book a good place to start. And, I suspect, it will open up even further explorations for those intrigued by the reviews of specific philosophers/social constructionists mentioned. Two other excellent resources for gaining a deeper appreciation of the history of social constructionist thinking are *Social Constructionism* by Vivien Burr (2003) and *The Social Construction of Reality: A treatise on the sociology of knowledge* by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1996).

Key figures in the development of social constructionism include philosophers Giambattista Vico (1668-1774), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), Hans-George Gadamer (1900-2002), Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984); sociologists Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), Harold Garfinkel (1917-2011), Erving Goffman (1922-1982), Thomas Luckmann (1927), Jürgen Habermas (1929), Peter Berger (1929) and Anthony Giddens (1938); anthropologist and cyberneticist Gregory Bateson (1904-1980); psychologists Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), Jean Piaget (1896-1980), Rom Harré (1927), Ken Gergen (1935), Mary Gergen (1938), Edward E. Sampson (circa 1935) and John Shotter (1937). And while usually not directly associated with social constructionism, Alfred North Whitehead's (1861-1947) concepts on the ontological character of process and relatedness, processes of becoming and of being "in flow" connect well to relational constructionism.

As noted above, relational constructionism offers that at any given present moment there can be a multiple of realities in play. Each of these realities has their own historical constructs and ways of explaining how we/they arrived at that particular moment. Additionally, if we are living in the flow (a concept popular with Art of Hosting), then the present both re-produces some previous local-cultural, local-historical constructions and acts in relation to possible and probable futures. Both the past and possible futures, then, are implicated in the ever-ongoing present, 'in the now' so to speak. (Hosking, 2010) As hosts, this approach invites us to work from a place of "nowness" or "presence" and be

open to “other possible selves, to other persons and other possible worlds.” (Hosking, 2010) [127]

A relational (and social) constructionist approach to explanation recognizes that all actions either supplement other actions or are available to be supplemented by other actions. It is when actions and supplements are regularly repeated that the process of making history takes place and in each moment of “nowness” history is constantly being remade. (Hosking 2007: 14)[128] In other words, there are multiple ways that the current situation could have been constructed and how the current ‘reality’ is explained is (can be) dependent upon what the local-cultural, local-historical forms of characterizations of history and reality are (written or verbal narrative, painting, music, metaphor, or combinations thereof). Thus, our understandings of what our explanations are of how we arrived at the present are not “demanded by ‘what there is’” but are the result of a process of construction for some human purpose. (Gergen & Hosking, 2006) As hosts we are liberated to see the possibilities in any present moment and see what has come before as a possible resource or not allow ourselves to be constrained by some historical idea of what is real and good. (Hosking, 2011) (Or some future idea of what is real and good.)

Futurology

Futurology focuses on the future. And because the future is uncertain with more than one possible outcome, this worldview/philosophical domain should give us possible futures, with more or less probable developments, which then offers us with choices to make. (Vidal, 2008)

Relational constructionism does not specifically offer a model of the future or a set of choices to make. But, it does speak to the idea of multiple futures or possibilities and emergence. A relational constructionist perspective offers that there are practices or processes that we can use to *open up possibilities* or new possible futures. (Hosking, 2011) This becomes possible when we make space for multiple equal voices to be heard thus creating the possibilities of “discovering the future that their actions invite.” As hosts, then, we hold space for emergence rather than pre-conceived ideas about what the future

[127] Jourdain offers here that working in this ‘now’ is also what enables us to be present to what wants to emerge and it contributes to being in a generative space or generative flow.
[128] In her article Hosking references here Falzon, Foucault, Hora, and G. Vico.

should be. We hold ourselves open to possibility and a readiness to connect "with what cannot be seen or heard ahead of time." (Hosking, 2010)[129]

Axiology

Relational constructionism holds several core values, but at its center is the powerful recognition that we live in a "world of fundamental relatedness" that is a "world of ultimate fusion" and not separation. (Gergen & Hosking, 2006) And that this world includes "both humans and non-humans as actants" in their/our relational processes. (Hosking, 2007: 10)

As noted before, relational constructionism is both a theory and a practice. Its axiology can be considered a philosophical stance, but more importantly for hosts, this axiology is really a set of values for living a relational practice. A central value and critical practice then of relational hosting/living is "*to explore processes that could enable and support multiple local forms of life rather than imposing one dominant rationality on others."* (Hosking 2011; 29) Thus as hosts we practice values that invite us:

- to live and work from a stance of "opening up (rather than closing down) possibilities" (Hosking, 2011; 29),
- to explore "what can be done (rather than what cannot)" (Hosking, 2010),
- to work from a place of appreciation and not judgment, to bring play and improvisation to imagining new ways to go on together,
- to work with emergence,
- to create and hold space for a multiple of local realities to be in dialogue with each other in different but equal relationship,
- to create space for all the voices from all local forms of life that are in "inter-textual relation with some issue"[130] to be heard, (Hosking, 2007: 27)
- to listen from a place of not knowing so that we "are more open to other(ness), to multiple voices, and to possibilities", (Hosking, 2007: 29)

[129] Jourdain suggests here that this point connects well with the first fold of the 4-Fold Practice of hosting ourselves well that we stay present to what wants to emerge – rather than trying to anticipate five steps ahead.

[130] Hosking using inter-textuality to mean all of the possible forms of inter-acting between entities and not just written and spoken texts.

- to hold the space of collective inquiry, to be relationally responsible to each other (rather than blaming others), and be self-aware that we are holding space for transformative possibilities. (Hosking, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2011)

In effect, the axiology of relational constructionism provides an orientation to our hosting practice that invites us to bring forth the practical wisdom held within local contexts/constructs.

Hosking refers to this relational constructionist perspective (axiology) as deeply eco-logical. By this she means it to be a participative way of relating and connects it with Buddhists, feminists, ecologists and others that are working to be in relational ways of going on together. This eco-logical stance gives actants the opportunity (the power to) speak from the multiple of voices they/we hold/represent (parent, host, employee, employer, teacher, preacher, Buddhist….) and not just a single voice that does not represent the richness of who each of us are. (Hosking, 2010) She offers that this ecological/relational stance is one where each of us (self and other) care for each other and for our (moral) selves. She also offers that when we come from this eco-logical way of relating we are less focused on knowledge and truth and more centered on the ethics of our work and the local (interconnected and extended) pragmatics of our work. (Hosking, 2007)

Dialogue or "dialoging" (the verb used by Hosking to describe being in dialogue) rests both in the domains of praxeology and axiology. As we will see next, dialogue is a core methodology used in relational constructionism. But, dialogue that supports a relational approach holds a set of simple values. It is open-minded, compassionate and not judgmental; it "builds relationships in which followers turn into leaders" (Hosking and Morley, 1991, p.256 quoted in Hosking, 2010); it is "free from selfish attempts to know and control other" (Bateson, 1972; Bateson and Bateson, 1987 quoted in (Hosking, 2010); it brings forward and supports an appreciative stance to conversation; it invites participants to let go of fixed views; it provides participants an opportunity to learn in new ways; and, it invites all participants to be in a place of collective inquiry. (Hosking, 2010)

Finally, relational constructionism speaks to the issue of power. It defines power as a "*quality of all relational processes and realities*." (Hosking 2011: 17) Relational

constructionism supports an approach to power that brings forth 'power to' and/or 'power with' rather than 'power over'. The former opens up possibilities and the later closes them down. An approach that supports power to and with values working through multiple dialogues rather than "top-down leadership edicts and the avoidance of dialogue." It works with the many "different self-other relations, rather than in a single hierarchy of knowledge and expertise." It seeks to bring forth the wisdom and knowledge that exists within the room rather than seeking the outside expert or imposing some construction of the all-knowing leader. And, relational constructionism invites us to explore and support many ways of going forward, of action, rather than "requiring or imposing consensus." (Hosking, 2011: 29)

Praxeology

Our praxeology (or methodology), as noted earlier, provides us with our theory or practice of action. However, for a relational constructionist, "…'theory' is not the point, nor is theory testing, nor is knowing what is or was the case." (Hosking, 2011: 22) For a relational constructionist, practice is central, and specifically the practice of working with/in and being with/in ongoing relational processes and to the ways which they "(re)construct particular relational realities." (Hosking, 2011: 22) What is important here is that the "practice is intended to have practical effects and to develop practical wisdom. " (Toulmin and Gustavsen, 1996 referenced in Hosking, 2011: 23) This perspective on practice connects strongly with the Art of Hosting, where we often say that "the practice is the work."

It is my perspective, as we've seen already, that there are strong connections between the Art of Hosting practice and relational constructionism and this connection is probably strongest between the Art of Hosting practice (or hosting practice in general) and relational constructionist practices. Here I offer a few examples of these 'practice' connections'[131]. I think there is opportunity for a deeper and richer exploration of the connections between relational constructionist praxeology and AoH practices and I hope more will emerge from others in future writing.

[131] All of the practices listed in this section and the many not listed are important and so the order presented here is one of my choice and not an indication of any priority listing. Another writer could readily present the practices in a very different order.

Relational constructionism holds that the practice of being present or, as Hosking and others sometimes say "being in the now" is central to relational processes. For the relational constructionist, being in the present is a letting go of what is already known or the already knowing and stepping into the unknowing. In Chapter 5 I discuss a core practice in Art of Hosting called the Four-Fold Practice. The first fold is being present, i.e. showing up without distraction and being in a good place personally and not in a place of attachment to those things that could distract us from our work. Senge et al (Presencing, 2004) describe being present or presencing (as a verb) as being open beyond one's preconceptions or historical ways of knowing[132]. Each of these definitions or perspectives share a strong connection to each other, especially the invitation to work/host from a stance of not-knowing. They also share another important aspect of being in the present which is being in the flow[133].

Relational constructionist theory offers that relational processes are always in an ever-moving state in which our individual and collective realities are continuously being (re)constructed. Importantly, this understanding opens the door for multiple self-other relations in ongoing co-creation, or always in a process of becoming. (Hosking, 2007, 2010, 2011) We move from the fixed or static to being in the flow or becoming. We can view our work as hosts, then as holding a container for or hosting a space of emergence where we are always in a place of continuous co-creation.

Creating a container for dialogue is a core practice in hosting. According to Hosking it is also an important part of relational processes, where the practice is to provide a light structure – a container – that "invites and supports the gradual emergence of slow, open, coherent, in the present moment performances" (Hosking, 2010) or conversations, dialogues, outcomes, stories, actions, ideas, etc. Hosking offers references to Derrida and Heidegger in describing the work of creating a container for relational processes as an extending of hospitality. In referencing Derrida Hosking notes that for Derrida hospitality means an opening up of one's home, a giving of place, and letting them come and that within this act of hospitality is an attention to language and a recognition that this could

[132] For a deeper exploration of presence (being present) see *Presence* (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, Flowers, 2004) and *Theory U* (Scharmer, 2007).
[133] For an exploration of being in the flow see various works by Alfred North Whitehead, John Shotter, Dian Marie Hosking and Joseph Jaworski.

include both speaking and silence (i.e. suspending language). Importantly in this context, hospitality (hosting) means that everyone is invited – self and other (or that maybe there is no 'other') – so that all are "hosted in different but equal relations." (Hosking, 2010).

Heidegger, in Hosking's description, offers another, but not dissimilar, perspective. Hosking states that Heidegger approaches the idea of creating a container, which he doesn't specifically name, from the idea of listening as the Grek term ' legein' , which includes "gathering", "heading" or "hearkening". She offers that in Heidegger's perspective gathering means something other than amassing things, it means to gather as in "bringing under shelter." Which can then be seen as an act of "safekeeping" (Heidegger,1975 from Corradi Fiumara referenced in Hosking, 2007) Heidegger, also connected gathering to laying in the sense that "Laying brings to lie, in that it lets things lie together before us" and "whatever lies before us involves us and therefore concerns us". (Heidegger,1975 from Corradi Fiumara referenced in Hosking, 2007) This is, for me, a core concept in hosting (in providing hospitality). When we are together, we are always in a relational process (whether in speaking or in silence or some other performative act) and being in relationship (being hosted) means we are each of concern to each other.

Relational constructionism offers a perspective or approach to the practice of dialogue that shares much in common with an Art of Hosting approach. It views dialogue as a special kind of conversation that "goes on in slow, open and curious ways of relating." (Hosking, 2010) The practice of being curious is a core part of AoH Hosting. Dialogue then can be viewed as practicing a 'discipline of collective inquiry'. (Isaacs, 1996 referenced in Hosking, 2010) A relational constructionist approach to inquiry does not seek to discover 'what is" in order to support some evidence based intervention, but instead views "*inquiry as a process of (re)constructing realities and relations."* (Pearce, 1992 referenced in Hosking, 2010) Questions then become part of the process of forming relational realities. They "help to enlarge possible worlds and possible ways of being in relationship." (Hosking, 2007: 28) As hosts then we are more than curious "about' something or some other, we are curious as an act of opening up possibility and new ways forward.

Hosking offers that a relational approach to dialogue has several important characteristics including: being curious, being present, suspending assumptions and certainties (in AoH we say suspending judgment), being reflective about the processes and especially one's part (as host) in the process, and making space for emergence and possibility (another strong aspect of AoH hosting approaches). (Hosking, 2010). Shifting to a possibilities approach to hosting invites us into change work creating opportunities for improvisation and imagining new ways of going on together. (Hosking, 2007)

Dialogue from a relational constructionist approach assumes a relational view of the people within the dialogue and the processes used to engage in dialogic work, or in a verb form that Hosking calls 'dialoging'. This approach to dialoging means we step fully into the processes rather than avoid dialogue, we work with multiple dialogues instead of top-down approaches, we understand there are many different self-other relations at play rather than any single hierarchy of knowledge or expertise, we work with the wisdom that is in the room (a foundational approach in AoH) and support what matters to those present instead of what outside experts promote, and we invite exploration of and support many options for action instead of imposing a single course of action. (Hosking, 2010)

Dialoging includes both talking and listening and, in a relational constructionist approach, listening has several important characteristics that have strong implications for hosting practice. A relational approach to listening is embodied and heart-felt. It can be a step into silence, into a 'lack of occupation' that connects us with the unlimited. (Bohm, 2004: 107 referenced in Hosking, 2010) So, listening need not be always for something or to gain "aboutness knowledge." But instead, listening can be part of the process of moving into participatory knowing. (Hosking, 2010) A relational approach to listening invites us to bring all of our senses into play. In other words, to practice a democracy of the senses. (Berendt, 1992: 28 referenced in Hosking, 2007) When we listen this we way we "let go of sharp distinctions between the senses, between the senses and the mind, between the mind and the body, between inside and outside self, and between self and other." (Hosking, 2007: 23) This form of listening invites us to be fully with (or in) the phenomenal world. By bringing all of our senses to listening we open up the potential for hearing all the sounds, overtones, and multiple voices. This way of listening, as part of dialoging, allows both multiplicity and wholeness to be present. (Hosking, 2010)

A relational approach to dialogue (hosting) creates a container that invites all voices or local forms of life into a space of safety and openness for expression. Multiplicity or polyphony is welcome. Difference is recognized and supported in non-hierarchical ways. In other words, the many multiple local realities that may be in a dialogic process are welcome, included and enabled. (Hosking, 2007) Relational processes support the 'power to' go forward within differing but equal relations. (Hosking, 2011)

In Art of Hosting we often say, as mentioned earlier, that the practice is the work. Meaning that hosting or being in conversations that matter is the work. This perspective holds true for relational constructionism where the relational processes themselves are viewed as the product. For the relational constructionist, "the process is the product" or "conversation is action (rather than about action)." And, conversation involves many (performative) forms, verbal, non-verbal, written, symbolic, etc. (Hosking, 2007) Viewed from this perspective, dialogic processes invite participants to be in relation rather than be "reduced to a (instrumental) means to link inputs and outcomes." (Hosking, 2010) We host from a stance of relational unity where the action is one of ongoing co-construction, co-creation and co-learning.

Epistemology

"How do we know what we know?" is the question that epistemology invites us to explore. This sixth philosophical domain in the Apostel worldview framework is often referred to as the theory of knowledge or, as described by Debold, the process by which we make reality or create knowledge. (Debold, 2002)

For the social constructionist, knowledge comes from community.[134] Knowledge is not what people believe, but what social groups or communities believe. Knowledge comes from what a community of people agrees to be true. This does not mean that people or individuals don't have ideas, but that these ideas gain their meaning through social interaction and within their social context. In this sense "it is the social context of

[134] Woolf offers "…sourced from the experience of being together...for the group???...for the individual. I have this experience often. At an event. I'm thinking about design for one of my events coming up. It is in the background of my brain. In the company of the group, I get what the design is. It feels simple. Easy. Clear. Good. Sourced from the experience. AND, sometimes I don't do anything with it. I think to myself, I'll never forget this. It is too simple. Yet, when the group is done and goes its ways, I can't recall the design that felt so clear."

meanings that is epistemologically fundamental, not their ideational content." (Warmoth, 2000) Additionally, for the constructionist, knowledge is not something that is first created before it is communicated, but "that the process of creating and communicating knowledge are inextricably intertwined." (Warmoth, 2000) Thus, knowledge or knowing or what people/social groups hold to be real or true is fundamentally a social process and can be seen as the common or shared property of a culture. As hosts working in differing local contexts, it is essential that we hold this awareness.

Relational constructionism views knowledge/knowing not as something fixed but as continually being (co-)constructed in ongoing relational processes. And that these (relational) realities are constructed and reconstructed in all kinds of actions. (Hosking, 2010) They are a participative way of knowing. A quick review of the section on relational constructionist ontology, or what we hold to be real or to exist, shows that this relational approach to epistemology, or what we know and how we know it, blurs the (post)positivist distinction between the two. As Hosking states "What is experienced as real or true depends on (usually implicitly) held assumptions about processes of knowing and it is these 'knowing' processes that give existence (ontology) e.g., to individuals, leadership and organization." (Hosking, 2010) Thus a relational constructionist worldview holds that what is real and how we know it is (co)constructed in local cultural/historical processes and contexts. Additionally, these processes may have their own local forms and rules. (Hosking, 2007) As hosts, then, we must bring awareness into our work, as noted in the section on ontology, that there could be differing senses/beliefs of what is real and differing processes of coming to know what is real. And that there could also be many simultaneous related inter-acts contributing to ongoing constructions of reality and our knowing it. (Hosking 2007) Our task becomes one of creating/hosting the space for all perspectives to be safe (enough) in the hosting space, in other words, to offer "equality-through-diversity." (Sampson, 1993: 81)

If epistemology is traditionally about knowing, relational constructionists invite us into being in the not knowing. That perhaps one way into understanding how we know what we know or (co)constructing new knowledge is to first be in the not knowing. And, that we could also seek to find knowledge in the in-between spaces of knowing, the space of emergence. So, the ongoing process of constructing knowledge is not just combining two

or more ‘knowns’ into one new/different reality, but also the possibility that something not known before might emerge during the ongoing processes of knowledge/reality creation. Working with emergence is a core hosting practice and including the possibility of an epistemology of not knowing invites us into thinking about another level of how we approach the work.

Reflections for Action

What to do about it? How can we avoid collisions of worldviews and instead come together in ways that build understanding and respect and allow each of us to hold on to that which is most important? First, we should not only be able to detect the worldviews of others but be aware of our own – why it is ours and why, with so many options, we think it is true. I invite each of us to take time to reflect on what our worldviews are and where they came from. Second, we should develop the capacity to think in terms of worldviews, that is, with a consciousness of not only our own way of thought but also that of other people, so that we can first understand and then genuinely communicate with others. Third, as individuals, I invite each of us to be constantly curious; to live a life of inquiry so that we seek understanding of the world around us and the cultures in it. Finally, when we come together in groups let’s engage in practices that invite dialogue, that create places for people to speak from their hearts and spirits as well as their minds and that recognizes that all of us have something to contribute to the well-being of each of us.

Further Invitation

Reading through this chapter it is easy to find repetition within and between the general sections on worldviews and the section on the Apostel framework. Yet, as I reflect on this I find that the repetition demonstrates the breadth and depth of worldviews in our individual and collective lives. As Apostel says, our worldview is our philosophy of life. Our worldview touches every aspect of our lives. While the purpose of this chapter for this enterprise is to provide a review of the literature regarding worldviews, what it really offers is an invitation to each of us as individuals, participants in a local context and hosts to explore and work to understand what our and other’s worldviews are and how we came to them. I have laid down many avenues for exploration. I invite the reader into the journey.

There is also, for me and for the Art of Hosting community, an invitation into a new journey of a deeper exploration of what a relational constructionist worldview and approach to life is and how relational constructionism and a relational constructionist worldview could contribute to our work as hosts. The deconstruction of a relational constructionist worldview into the Apostel framework offered here is just a beginning. It is possible that many will not agree with my interpretations. I welcome that as it offers further steps on this learning journey. A next step in this exploration is offered in Chapter Five, my deconstruction of Art of Hosting patterns and practices into the Apostel worldview framework. This is also an invitation to the AoH community to enter into a conversation on what our worldview is as AoH practitioners.

Chapter 5 – Art of Hosting Worldview

The basic premise underlying this writing is that there is an Art of Hosting[135] worldview. As Chapter Four outlined, individuals, organizations, communities, societies and nations can have a worldview. It holds then that a self-organized community like the Art of Hosting global community could and, from my perspective, does have a worldview. This is not to say that there is one specific Art of Hosting worldview or that everyone that considers themselves an Art of Hosting practitioner shares the same worldview. In fact, given that the Art of Hosting is practiced across many cultures and in many different countries, it would hold that there are many worldviews within worldviews within worldviews in the Art of Hosting community. This is the fractal nature of AoH. That said, there are some foundational elements to the Art of Hosting that are shared throughout the community and are central to the AoH practice. Again, given the fractal nature of AoH teachings, these foundational patterns and practices can be expressed within local contexts or constructs – worldviews within worldviews within worldviews, or as Toke Moeller is fond of saying, the dojo within the dojo within the dojo.

It is the intent of this writing to explore the questions of "What is the worldview underlying the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter work in the world, how can social/relational constructionist theory help in framing an Art of Hosting worldview and what does it mean for the practice of hosting?" In order to do that in a more disciplined way, I have chosen to use the Centre Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies framework that was described in Chapter Four as a framework for deconstructing the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter patterns and practices into its own worldview framework. I use current literature from within the Art of Hosting community that describes the core dialogic concepts, patterns and practices of the Art of Hosting. The intent is to show that Art of Hosting does, in fact, offer a worldview. That Art of Hosting, as outlined in the Apostel framework, offers a model of our current world, an explanation of the past, a set of values or principles, methodologies, a perspective on our future and sense of how we know what we know. This is not to say that each of these is well developed. Some are

[135] I note again that Art of Hosting is not a 'thing'. In the ways we refer to it, it may seem as if it is some specific, formalized thing, but it is not. I have come to think of it as a metaphor for our growing desire as humans to be in dialogue with each other in different and more relational ways and Art of Hosting offers us choices about how we can be together better through dialogue and in practice and this is, from my perspective, a worldview.

and some not. It is my hope that this inquiry will become an invitation to the AoH global community to engage in a dialogue about worldviews in general and more specifically, the Art of Hosting worldview.

Many of these documents exist in the public domain and can be accessed on the Art of Hosting website www.artofhosting.org or on the Art of Hosting Ning site http://artofhosting.ning.com. As noted earlier, much of the language used in the Art of Hosting community has become common in trainings, conversations and writings, so it is difficult to separate what is my original writing and what is learned language that I now use as I teach and coach in AoH trainings, prepare hand-outs and workbooks, or write in articles, online postings or even here. What is written here is a combination of my original writing and elements from the AoH compendium.

Language is an important part of any social movement, societal shift or research or academic enterprise. From a constructionist perspective, "…the words we use – just like the names we give each other – are used to carry out relationships. They are not pictures of the world, but practical actions in the world." (Gergen & Gergen, 2004: 14) Language then "is the doing of life itself." (Gergen, 1999: 35) I think this is the case with the Art of Hosting. More and more words like co-create, co-learn, container, energetic field, emergence, or generative are becoming part of the lexicon of hosts and facilitators and accurately describe the actions we are taking in the world. I would offer that the more common the language the more likely a shift is taking place.[136]

As words and expressions gain traction, their origin gets more difficult to discern and original authors lose reference to their original phrases, descriptions and concepts. In the case of the Art of Hosting community this is viewed as a positive development as it means shifts are happening.

Many from the Art of Hosting community have generously offered their writing, ideas, graphics, music, dance, poetry and voices into the public sphere with the intention that it

[136] AoH Steward Kathy Jourdain suggests here that the shift in language is an indicator of a possible shift in the individual as they reflect on, incorporate and use the language in service of the shift they are seeking in their world, life or work. This is amplified when the language becomes part of the lexicon of a team, organization, system or community.

be shared and used by many. I want to especially recognize Toke Moeller, Monica Nissén, Chris Corrigan, Maria Scordialos, Teresa Posakony, Helen Titchen-Beeth, Tim Merry, Tenneson Woolf, Ria Baeck, Stephen Duns, Mary-Alice Arthur, Tuesday Ryan-Hart, Kathy Jourdain, Christina Baldwin, Ann Linnea, Phil Cass, Juanita Brown and David Isaacs. To them and all the others who have contributed their gifts to the Art of Hosting literature, I have done my best to give attribution or acknowledgment to authors or key contributors where identifiable.

I offer my deepest gratitude and apologies if you see your work here without attribution. I also know that you are not motivated by any need for credit, but instead by the simple, yet powerful desire to change the world for the better. This is the essence of the Art of Hosting community. That said, let's begin with an introduction to the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Meaningful Conversations.

Introduction to the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter

The Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter is both a training[137] and a practice.[138] It is a training in a set of patterns and practices for hosting (facilitating) group conversations of all sizes, supported by principles that: *maximize collective intelligence; welcome and listen to diverse viewpoints; maximize participation and commitment; and transform conflict into creative cooperation.*[139] It is also the practice of using the patterns and processes to host people in meaningful conversations. And it is a practice for living. Art of Hosting invites us to be present with all that is around us, to be curious and approach life from a stance of non-judgment so that we are open to emergence and

[137] There are many of us who are AoH trainers that have some difficulty with calling the three-day event a training. It is not a training in the traditional sense that someone goes to it, develops a specific skill and receives a certificate. It is much more of a learning experience, especially the first time, for participants to experience being hosted, explore their own sense of what hosting is, learn about the AoH patterns and experience the dialogic practices. I like to think of an AoH 'training' as a learning event/experience with three components: learning, experience and practice. Additionally, we will often say that one AoH training does not a practitioner make. This all said, we have not found a better word to use to describe an AoH learning event other than a training, so I will stay with this description.

[138] Jourdain suggest that it is also a form or approach to consulting.

[139] Text in italics throughout this chapter indicates direct use of language from either the Art of Hosting website or AoH documents in the public domain.

surprise, to participate in the world and practice generosity by contributing to the common good[140], and to be willing to step into the fire when called.

Art of Hosting dialogic patterns and practices are based on the assumption and experience that human beings have enormous untapped knowledge and resilience and that sustainable solutions to the challenges we face lie in the wisdom among us – the wisdom in the group, organization, system, community. Recognizing that tapping into this wisdom can bring about innovation, sustained relations and new ways to act together, hosting conversations becomes an act of inviting everyone to participate with their diverse perspectives and creates the space for each person to release their potential. This is an essential skill and competence in hosting meaningful conversations/dialogue.

The Art of Hosting training and practice focuses on leading by engaging through interactive ways of working with groups and teams with a purpose to serve the real needs of communities and to find new solutions. As stated on the Art of Hosting Web site (www.artofhosting.org): *The Art of Hosting is a pattern and a practice that allows us to meet our humanity in ourselves and in each other - as opposed to trying to be machines meeting. The Art of Hosting training is an experience for deepening competency and confidence in hosting group processes - circle, world café and open space and other forms. Each of these processes generates connection and releases wisdom within groups of people. They foster synergy and provide ways for people to participate in intention, design, and outcomes/decisions/actions. The experience is hosted by a team of facilitators who are skilled/trained in at least one, if not all of these processes; and the experience is aimed at people who want to serve as conversational hosts in their work, community, and personal lives[141].*

[140] AoH Steward Stephen Duns noted that for him "contributing to the common good" goes to the heart of sacred purpose.

[141] The language used by the Art of Hosting global community to describe its work, patterns, processes, models, etc. was developed through the generous contributions of many people. Much of this information exists in common space and cannot be attributed to any single source. It is generally presented within a workbook that is used when Art of Hosting trainings are conducted. When referencing an idea, description or statement that can be attributed to a specific author or person I will make the attribution. When referencing common Art of Hosting language or information I will put it in italics to note the language is not original to me and that it cannot be attributed to a specific source.

Art of Hosting is based on the simple premise that we cannot continue to try to solve adaptive or complex problems with the same methods and from the same perspectives that created them[142]. It recognizes that as the challenges in the world become increasingly complex we are compelled to find new solutions for the common good. Traditionally one person – the leader – was looked to to provide the solutions. The increasing complexity of the world and the challenges we face means this no longer works (if it ever did). Solutions are more comprehensive and more readily found and owned when they are co-created by the people who are impacted by them. This is accomplished through meaningful dialogue. Similarly, for social constructionists, open dialogue where all the voices are invited into the room and more visions and revisions are welcome, not only brings more options for action but also expands the relational field we are working within. (Gergen & Gergen, 2004)

AoH comes from the oral tradition of people sharing their stories about what they've found helpful so that all can learn and work together in common purpose. Christina Baldwin, an AoH Steward and co-founder of PeerSpirit Circle process, often says in trainings that "The shortest distance between two people is a story." Thus in Art of Hosting we often teach from within the circle as part of the circle and from the place of story. This shared understanding of the role of story in helping organize and make sense of things is another bridge between Art of Hosting and social constructionism. We understand that the stories we tell become the "autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives." (Bruner in Kelm, 2005: 137)

Art of Hosting sees bringing people together in dialogue to work on problems and opportunities as simple common sense. Conversation is the way we think and make meaning together. It is the way we build strong relationships that invite real collaboration. Conversations that matter are a special way of being in dialogue that invites us to go slow, be open and curious, be present and listen fully, suspend assumptions and certainties, and be attentive to one's own part in contributing to what is going on. (Hosking, 2010)

[142] This comes from the famous Albert Einstein quote "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used to create them." I have been recently more often referring to a quote by Audre Lorde referenced in Playing with Purpose (Gergen & Gergen, 2012) "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."

AoH practices are also based on the understanding that if we want to innovate or work with emergence or change, we have to be willing to let go of what we know and step into not knowing. It is really an offering and co-creating of space for inquiry. The AoH approach believes that inquiry, being curious, is fundamental to good dialogue. Many of us in the AoH community are in an exploration of working in the place of not knowing or what some of us often refer to as the place before the naming. This idea of not knowing is beautifully exemplified by a twelfth century koan of Tai-hui “If you call this a stick, you affirm; if you call it not a stick, negate. But beyond affirmation and negation what would you call it?” (Gergen & Hosking, 2006)

Art of Hosting explores the basic theory and practices of working in the tension between chaos and order – the chaordic field. It is recognition that in nature all innovation happens at the edge of chaos, or at the intersection of the edge of chaos and order; and an understanding that the way to any major change or transformation is a path through chaos into new order. AoH believes that it is in this chaordic space that innovation takes place and wise and sustainable change can be discovered. (Hock, 1995, 1998, 2000; Wheatley, 1999)

Art of Hosting also shares with systems thinking a perspective that when humans come together to work on matters of importance to them or their communities, they have more in common with a living system than with a machine. AoH patterns are based on the understanding that living systems can be intelligent and are capable of self organizing their own, unique solutions. Art of Hosting sees these patterns in nature operating in ways similar to how humans interact and giving attention to these patterns contributes to good dialogue and sustainable outcomes.

An Art of Hosting training is a highly interactive process. The training is constructed to provide participants with the opportunity to design and lead conversations and meetings so they experience how clear thinking, intelligent solutions, group coherence and results can emerge from the practices. It provides participants with the opportunity to construct powerful questions, host conversations using the questions, and harvest the outcomes, which are core practices and skills in the Art of Hosting. It is important to note that considerable attention is given to the physical space that an AoH training is held in. Every

effort is made to ensure that the space is conducive to dialogue. Every gathering of people/participants is viewed as a living system and what happens within the short life of that system is dependent upon the attention given to all of the elements of good hosting – invitation, space, purpose, hosting team, harvest.

At its core the purpose of Art of Hosting is:

- *To connect and align our inner and outer worlds, remembering what we hold and having the courage to act wisely*
- *To create a container for emergence: practicing leading from the "field"*
- *To be in a safe space, to learn to be together in the best possible way*
- *To appreciate that being afraid is part of the journey and so gain the courage to travel through the fear*
- *To host with consciousness so people will be together in an authentic* way (from the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Meaningful Conversations website, http://www.artofhosting.org).

Finally, the Art of Hosting offers that there are some essential personal and collective practices that help us to have meaningful conversations about the things that we most care about. They are:

- *Live now the future you want to create*
- *Be in the present*
- *Do not host it alone - be a good team of hosts*
- *Focus on questions that matter*
- *Go into conversation about what really matters by listening deeply to each other - beyond the words*
- *Allow all voices to be heard so the collective intelligence can surface*
- *Co-host a good process that allows everyone to learn about themselves, each other and the purpose*
- *Harvest good essences*
- *Do not act before clarity and wisdom have come*
- *Do not fear chaos - it is creative space where the new order can be born*
- *Go through your fear however it manifests* (from the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Meaningful Conversations website, http://www.artofhosting.org).

History of the Art of Hosting[143]

It is difficult to offer a precise history of the Art of Hosting approach to dialogue, training, and working with groups using the practices and the establishment of the AoH community of practice. To date several summary histories have been offered, but no comprehensive history has been written. This may be because there are various creation stories for AoH. It is believed that the first 'named' AoH training took place in 1999 in Santa Cruz, California and during the next few years the idea of a more organized Art of Hosting approach to training emerged. Margaret Wheatley, Juanita Brown, David Isaacs, Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea in the USA and Toke Moeller, Monica Nissen and Jan Hein from Denmark (Moeller, Nissen and Hein conducted that first training in 1999) were early developers. Within a few years a worldwide community began emerging, including Sven Ole Schmidt (Denmark), Marianne Knuth (Zimbabwe), Tim Merry and Chris Corrigan (Canada), Maria Scordialos and Sarah Whiteley (Greece) and Bob Stilger, Tenneson Woolf, Teresa Posakony, and Ann Dosher (USA). Several organizations also supported the development of the Art of Hosting approach to dialogue including the Berkana Institute, the Pioneers of Change, Hara, The World Café, and the Shambhala Institute's Authentic Leadership program (now called ALIA).

A timeline of AoH trainings or related events, both multi-day residential and non-residential, shows a steady increase since 2001 when Art of Hosting was more formally identified and a training program more fully outlined as part of an Open Space Village forum that took place at Borl Castle in Slovenia. Representatives from a number of groups that were doing deep work in social change gathered in Slovenia, including Pioneers of Change, The Four Directions/Berkana Institute, Days Like This, and Engage-Interact to explore how what they were each doing could collectively make a bigger difference.[144]

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[143] As a self-organizing, emergent system the Art of Hosting has many beginnings. Within the AoH community creating a precise history is in fact not important to the story of AoH. What is important is that AoH emerged out of a global collective field/collective consciousness that desired to share an understanding of the patterns of and had the energy for bringing into practice ways for all of nature's creatures to come together in meaningful dialogue that leads to wise and sustainable actions for the common good.

[144] Monica Nissen and her partner Toke Moeller are two of the founders of the Art of Hosting. You can see an interview with them that offers their story of how AoH came into being at http://vimeo.com/36755022. You can also see a version of the origin of the Art of Hosting in a video of another AoH founder Tim Merry at http://vimeo.com/m/33488507

The number of events slowly grew to three or four per year in Europe and Canada during 2002 and 2003. The time between 2004 and 2006 saw a marked increase in training opportunities, with up to fifteen trainings offered in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Canada, and the United States during 2006. Now trainings are offered on a regular basis in Australia and South America and elsewhere around the world. In 2010 Toke Moeller and Monica Nissen participated in 22 AoH trainings. During a twenty-four month period from November 2010 through November 2012 eighteen trainings with over 700 total participants were offered in the state of Minnesota alone.

Art of Hosting continues to evolve and grow. More trainers are being developed, a community of AoH global Stewards from around the world has emerged and a guiding set of principles for holding Art of Hosting trainings has been developed (recognizing the importance of holding on to the core AoH principle of self-organization). There is no formal corporate brand, no certification, no proprietary AoH books or videos, no staff and no head office[145]. The materials used in the trainings have been developed within the AoH community or gifted to the community by those that are committed to working for the common good. All that is asked is acknowledgement of those that have given their creativity and hard work to developing practices for hosting meaningful conversations. The Art of Hosting community is truly a self-organizing system. Moeller is often quoted as saying "If we have an Art of Hosting tea set, we will know we have failed."

Apostel Worldview Framework

Chapter Four provided an extensive literature review of what a worldview is and a detailed description of the Apostel Worldview framework. To quickly review, a worldview is a collection of beliefs about life and the universe or a common concept of reality or a comprehensive framework of basic beliefs held by an individual or a group. (Jenkins, 1999; Gousmett, 1997; Sire, 2004) Our "Worldviews are the filters through which we see the world. Our worldviews operate mostly outside of our awareness." They are "…the ways in which we make sense and meaning of the world around us." (Institute of Noetic Sciences Worldview Literacy Program). "A worldview combines beliefs, assumptions,

[145] Recently I sent an email to the AoH Stewards inquiring about any interest in Trademarking Art of Hosting to protect the name. The answer back was a resounding no. And, if someone did try to Trademark the name for their benefit the sentiment was we would just find a new name.

attitudes, values, and ideas to form a comprehensive model of reality." (Schlitz, Vieten, & Miller, 2010).

The Centre Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies (CLEA) defines a worldview as "…a system of co-ordinates or a frame of reference in which everything presented to us by our diverse experiences can be placed. It is a symbolic system of representation that allows us to integrate everything we know about the world and ourselves into a global picture, one that illuminates reality as it is presented to us within a certain culture." (Aerts, Apostel, De Moor, Maex, Van Belle, & Van der Keken, 2007: 9). Essentially, our worldview(s) are assumptions, beliefs and images about the world that we use to guide us in our everyday lives. A worldview can have differing orientations: scientific, religious, philosophical, social science or others. For this writing I am working from a philosophical and social science orientation towards worldviews.

The CLEA has offered a framework for constructing (deconstructing) a worldview that consist of six philosophical domains with each domain seeking to address/answer worldview questions that correspond to the (presumed) "big" philosophical questions of (western) humankind. (Aerts, Apostel, et al 1994). The goal of the CLEA is to develop an integrated worldview that enables scientists and laymen from different disciplines to exchange ideas and methods.

These questions are:

1) What is? What is the nature of the world? A model of the world as it is, of reality as a whole. An ontology.
2) Where does it all come from? Why is the world the way it is and not different? A model of the past. An explanation.
3) What should we do? What is good and what is evil? A theory of values. An axiology.
4) How should we act? How should we attain our goals? How can we influence and transform? A theory of action. A praxeology (or methodology).
5) Where are we going? What kind of future is ahead of us? What are the criteria that allow us to choose the future? What future is open to us and our species in this world? A model of the future. A prediction (or futurology).

6) How do we acquire knowledge? What is true and what is false? A theory of knowledge. An epistemology. (Vidal, 2008; Aerts, Apostel, De Moor, Maex, Van Belle, & Van der Keken, 2007)

What follows is a construction (deconstruction) of an Art of Hosting worldview based upon existing/current AoH related documents, blog posts, emails, videos and voice recordings, etc. using the six domains of the Apostel worldview framework. When the AoH literature is deconstructed into the six philosophical domains we see that several are well developed within an Art of Hosting worldview and a few are not. This is not surprising as the Art of Hosting community has not sought to develop an integrated worldview that presents a more comprehensive framework or lens through which we can see and act in the world. Instead, the Art of Hosting has focused its literature and training on offering an understanding of the patterns and practices of hosting conversations that make a difference. In the words of AoH Steward and founder Toke Moeller "The practice is the work[146]." It is a way of being. Thus, AoH literature has simply offered a view of the world as a complex living system and not a machine and a set of related patterns in human interaction as its primary 'worldview' perspective. Only recently has the AoH community begun to connect the practices with the idea that this way of being is in fact a worldview.

Ontology

> *This inquiry from within a field has begun to surface the deeper patterns that live beneath the methodologies, as well as the gift of fundamental architecture for collaborative and transformative human meetings.* (Holman, 2007: 57)

Does the Art of Hosting offer a model of current reality, of the world? Does the Art of Hosting offer us a way to understand how the world functions and how it is structured? Does AoH answer the basic question "Who are we?" Does the Art of Hosting offer an ontology? For me the answer is yes. In fact, core to Art of Hosting is a recognition that there are deep, underlying patterns at work. These patterns form an AoH ontology.

[146] For me what Moeller is really describing is a worldview that has as its foundation the patterns and practices of Art of Hosting, which include a way of being in the world.

First a quick review of ontology. At the philosophical level ontology is the study of what there is. (Hofweber, 2004) Ontology has one basic question: “What exists?” In a more practical sense an ontology is a description of what is or, for some, what is really real. (Sire, 2004) However, it is at this point that things become a little dicey as ontology is one of those words that can be used in many different senses. In the world of empirical science, ontology is “a discipline rooted in the representation of universals and particulars in reality.” (Smith, 2004) In other words, an ontology provides us with a set of universals that offer a precise “representation of entities as they exist in reality.” (Smith, 2004) Whereas in the world of Artificial Intelligence “an ontology is a description of the concepts and relationships that can exist for an agent or a community of agents.” (Gruber, 1993) From a constructionist perspective an ontology can be seen as a “form of life” and thus is “Local to the ongoing practices that construct a particular culture or ‘form of life’.” (Hosking, 2007) Going one step further, a relational constructionist approach to ontology would “Give ontology to relational processes and the local realities they make, break and re-construct ……..we assume an “ontology of becoming” rather than the more usual “ontology of being”. (Hosking, 2007)

For the purpose here of constructing an Art of Hosting ontology based upon a deconstruction of current AoH literature, I have used the Artificial Intelligence and Relational Constructionist definitions of ontology as my lenses for selecting and including specific AoH components for an AoH ontology. In other words, what concepts or structures or, in the language of Art of Hosting, ‘patterns’ are presented within the AoH literature that offer a “description of the concepts and relationships” and “forms of life” that can exist for an AoH practitioner or community of practitioners. I have drawn six concepts or patterns from the current AoH literature that we believe are in our hosting spaces all of the time as we are doing the work of hosting and which I think construct an AoH ontology: the world is a complex living system; emergence – systems have life cycles; paradoxes are at work; innovation happens at the intersection of chaos and order – the chaordic path; humans have principally organized in four ways; and, structures operate in fractals.

Living Systems - A Natural Approach to Organizing Life

> *What I saw was {her} evolve beyond the mechanics she knew into an artistry of deeper feeling for the whole.* (Woolf, January 2009 blog post)

Foundational to an AoH ontology is the belief that the world as a whole is a complex living system, that within this larger whole are many living systems that are interconnected and that we, as humans, are one component of this complex, interconnected system. Examples offered in the AoH literature include bacteria forming colonies or ants coming together to form a system that is capable of creating an anthill. These are recognized as not just simple systems, but as highly complex systems with incredible results. Termite nests, for example, have internal 'air conditioning systems' so the temperatures remain constant throughout the nest/hill.

The AoH ontology further offers that many living systems phenomena observed in nature are also observable in human systems or can be applied to human systems with positive (or negative) outcomes. This living systems perspective on human systems is strongly influenced by the work of Margaret Wheatley who was in turn strongly influenced by the writings of physicists Fritjof Capra (*The Turning Point*; *The Web of Life*) and Erich Jantsch (*The Self-Organizing Universe*), Noble Prize winning chemist Ilya Prigognine (*The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos, and the New Laws of Nature*; *Omni*), anthropologist Gregory Bateson (*Mind and Nature*), environmentalist James Lovelock (*Gaia*), and biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (*Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*).

This living systems or natural approach to organizing life is summarized in Art of Hosting workbooks as a set of qualities or patterns to work with when hosting conversations, working with groups or guiding change initiatives[147].

- *A living system accepts only its own solutions — we only support those things we are part of creating.*
- *A living system pays attention only to that which is meaningful to it here and now.*
- *In nature, a living system participates in the development of its neighbor — an isolated system is doomed.*
- *Nature, and all of nature, including ourselves, is in constant change (without "change management").*

[147] This listing can generally be found in every Art of Hosting workbook/journal that is given to participants in an AoH training.

- *Nature seeks diversity. New relations open up to new possibilities. It is not a question of survival of the fittest — but everything that is fit — as many species as possible. Diversity increases our chance of survival.*
- *Experimentation opens up to what is possible here and now. Nature is not intent on finding perfect solutions, but workable solutions. "Life is intent on finding what works, not what is right."*
- *All the answers do not exist "out there" — we must sometimes experiment to find out what works.*
- *A living system cannot be steered or controlled — it can only be teased, nudged, titillated to see things differently.*
- *A system changes when its perception of itself changes.*
- *Who we are together is always different and more than whom we are alone. Our range of creative expression increases as we join with others. New relationships create new capacities.*
- *We (human beings) are capable of self-organizing, given the right conditions.*
- *Self-organization shifts to a higher order.*

Constructionism also holds a living systems view recognizing that "relations among people are alternately inseparable from the relations of people to what we call the natural environment." We are not independent from what surrounds us and that which sustain us – the sun, water, oxygen, soil. But a constructionist also recognizes that our understanding of what surrounds us is dependent upon the language we have constructed together to describe it. (Gergen, 1999: 48)

Emergence: Change Processes in Nature as a Model for how Social Innovation can be taken to Scale[148]

Closely related to the larger theme of complex living systems is the concept that all living systems have life cycles. They have a beginning, middle and end. And, like systems in nature, human systems don't tend to change through plans or dictates, but through emergence.

[148] Duns suggests that there is other work on emergence, particularly the work of Donella Meadows and Janshid Gharajedaghi. He is correct in noting there is other work, however, it is not part of the AoH literature that I am focusing on.

Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze in their article *Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale* (Wheatley & Frieze, 2006) offer that “emergence is the fundamental scientific explanation for how local changes can materialize as global systems of influence.” And that “As a change theory, it offers methods and practices to accomplish system-wide changes so needed at this time.” As a pattern within an AoH ontology this suggests that “No matter what other change strategies we have learned or favored, emergence is the only way change really happens on the planet.” (Wheatley & Frieze, 2006)

Wheatley and Frieze propose that emergent systems have three stages. The first stage they call ‘Networks.’ This is the stage where coalitions, alliances, or collaborations are formed to create societal change. It is during this stage that like-minded people connect with each other, share information, and work to advance their own causes or self-interests. At this stage network members are often described as pioneers and innovators.

In stage two, networks become connected to each other as communities of practice (CoPs). Network members shift from being individual actors to enter into relationship with other network members. They become a community, which means that they begin working in service to each other’s learning and needs, they work together, beyond the needs of the group, to bring what they know to the greater community. At this stage ideas begin to move more quickly among the community of practice and into the greater community and knowledge and understanding of the work at hand deepens.

In stage three, which Wheatley and Frieze suggest can never be predicted, a system of influence emerges with the capacity or power to change the old system. People lose their reluctance to accept the ideas of the emerging system and instead begin to participate in bringing them into the greater community and contribute to the further development of the ideas and knowledge within the emergent system. At this stage, pioneers from the first stage often become leaders in the new or emergent system.

By understanding the process of system cycles, we can work with intervention points to encourage emergence and development of new cycles that contribute to the common good, discourage emergence and development that are harmful to people and nature, and

provide appropriate support to dying systems. This pattern of emergence and the work of fostering and supporting system change is a key component of an Art of Hosting ontology.

Paradoxes are at Work

> *Throughout the universe order exists within disorder and disorder within order. We have always thought that disorder was the absence of the true state of order. But is chaos an irregularity, or is order just a brief moment seized from disorder? Linear thinking demands that we see things as separate states: One needs to be normal, the other exceptional. Yet there is a way to see this ballet of chaos and order, of change and stability, as two complimentary aspects in the process of growth, neither of which is primary.* (Wheatley 1999: 23)

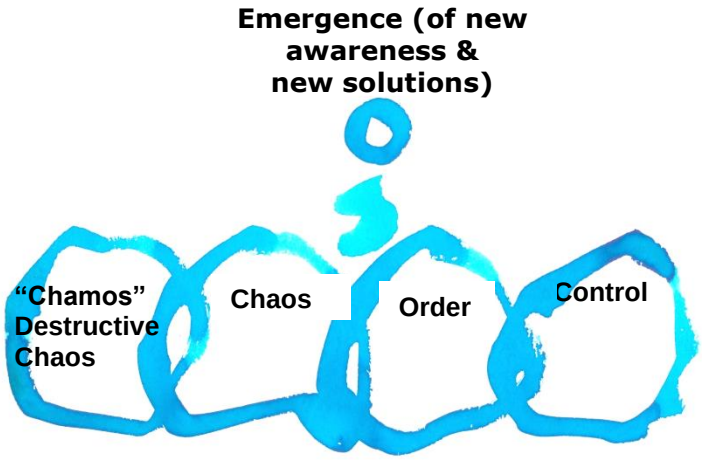
Art of Hosting recognizes that we operate in a world that is not black or white—but rather black and white and all the shades in between. If we are to host conversations that matter, that make a difference, we need to be able to operate in and hold paradoxes. In an Art of Hosting training several paradoxes are identified as often either emergent or existing as a shadow in the room while hosting conversations, including[149]:

- *Chaos and Order*
- *Content and Process*
- *Leading and Following*
- *Warrior and Midwife*
- *Action and Reflection*
- *Hosting and Consulting*
- *Individual and Community*
- *Entitlement and Responsibility*
- *Autonomy and Interdependence*

It is important to note that in Art of Hosting we do not see these paradoxes as binaries for which we would privilege one over the other. Instead we acknowledge that each are part of a whole and at any given time we may be in a stance of one or the other or holding both in the space we are hosting.

[149] Duns challenges the loose definition that AoH uses for paradox. He defines a paradox as two things that are both true and contradictory. I agree with his definition and share the same concern regarding how AoH uses the word paradox.

The Chaordic Path



One the most powerful paradoxes at work in the world is that between chaos and order. Working with this paradox is a core practice of the Art of Hosting. AoH recognizes that chaos and order are simply different states of being and experiencing. As we have come to learn from complexity theory, nature (and us as humans and our organizations) is not a machine. Nature itself is unpredictable, erratic. Nature, in fact, does not run like clockwork. Nature is complexity itself: chaos. (Durrance, 1997) We have also come to learn that at the edges of chaos there is order. This is the paradox – order in chaos, chaos in order.

Most of us tend to feel safest when things are in the state of order. For some, being in control is even better. If we are looking for predictability, being out of control is truly scary. If we have a mechanistic view on organizations, our tendency will be to stay within the realms of order and control, where things are predictable and stable. This is where we keep the status quo or "more of the same", which in some cases is exactly what is needed.

However, the times we live in are increasingly unpredictable and the future unknown. It is during these times that we need greater flexibility. More of the same is not meeting the complex challenges the world faces. We have come to recognize that if we are looking for innovative solutions we will find them at the intersection of chaos and order – the chaordic path.

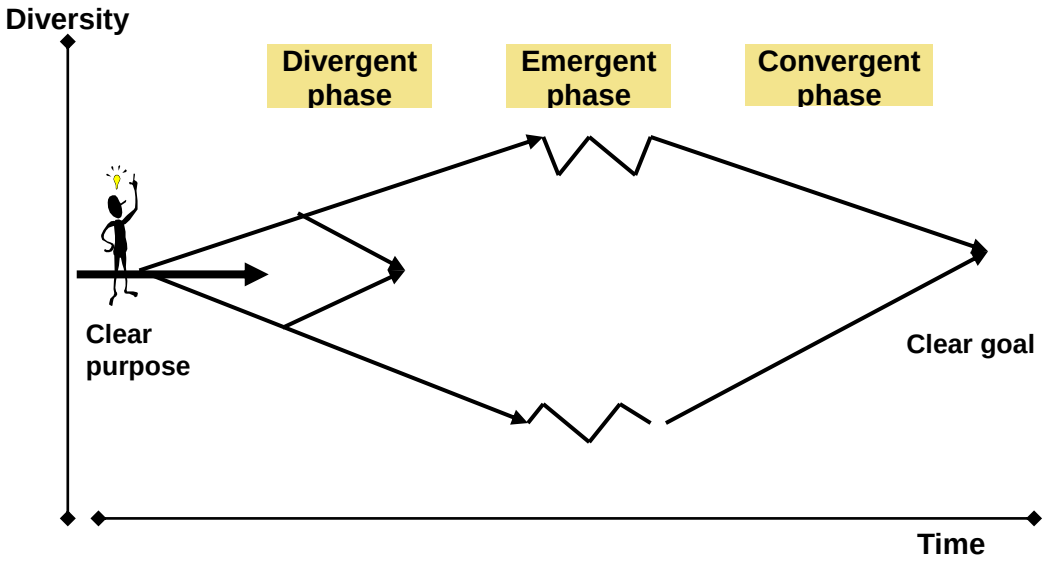
The word ‘chaord’ is the creation of Dee Hock, the founder and former CEO of Visa International. It is a combination of chaos and order. Hock created the term to describe that perfect balance of chaos and order where emergence, evolution and innovation is most at home. (Hoffman, 2002). Hock describes chaord as “any self-organizing, adaptive, non-linear, complex system, whether physical, biological or social, the behavior of which exhibits characteristics of both order and chaos…” (Hock, 1995, 1998, 2000) In an ontological sense, this place of intersection between chaos and order is an elemental part of the world as it is.

Art of Hosting practice invites us to walk the path between chaos and order, individually and collectively and, when we do, we move through confusion and conflict toward clarity. Art of Hosting practice suggests that we are all called to walk this path with open minds and chaordic confidence if we want to reach something wholly new. It is when we are in, or have been in, this space of emergence that we leave our collective encounters with something that not one of us individually brought into the room. This connects well with the constructionist perspective that creativity happens at the margins. That where creativity comes from is where realities interact with each other – in the conjunctions. (notes from Gergen presentation June 25, 2007)

The art of walking the chaordic path is to stay in the fine balance between chaos and order. Straying too far to either side is counter productive. On the far side of chaos is chamos or destructive chaos where everything disintegrates and dies. On the far side of order is stifling control where there is no movement, which also eventually means death. When we move toward either of these extremes, the result is apathy or rebellion, the very opposite of chaordic confidence. Staying on the chaordic path is where the balance is and where life thrives. One could say that at the extremes, the outcomes are similar.

Divergence – Emergence – Convergence

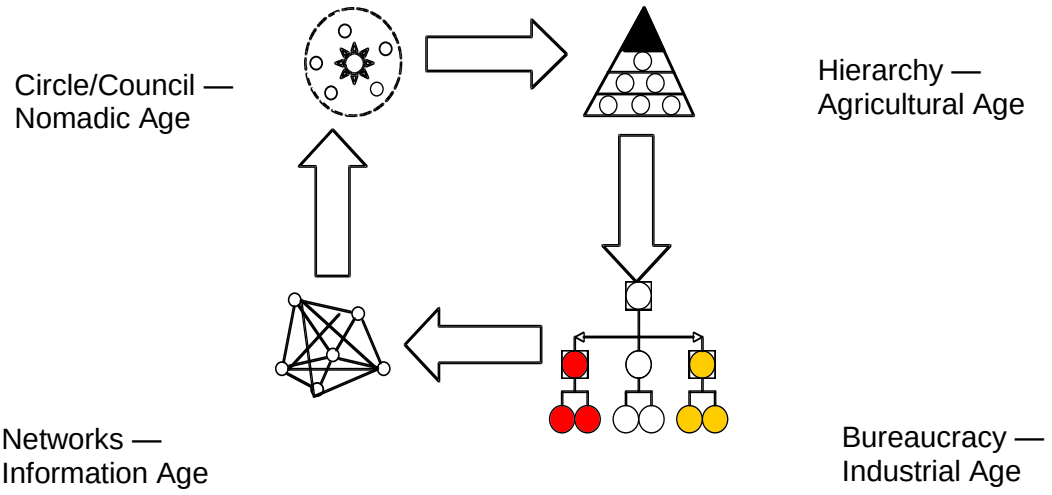
> *We open and diverge so that we can choose how we converge.* (Woolf, January 2009 blog)



This model (Kaner, 2007) is recognized within the Art of Hosting practice as a basic pattern of learning and process design. Individuals and groups who are trying to innovate go through these three phases. In designing a process or collective innovation, AoH recommends planning for the three phases. In the divergent zone, people explore ideas, and become aware of diversity and possibilities. In the emergent or groan zone, new ideas emerge that seem not to be the property of anyone in particular but rather the group as a whole. It is often called the groan zone because being in it can be uncomfortable, stretching people beyond their comfortable views of reality. It is also the place where new ideas, new mental models, or transformations can occur. Because people like to avoid being in the messiness of the groan zone, they will often converge too early, accepting what seems to be a great idea at the time. In converging too early the potential creativity that can come from being in the groan zone does not emerge. The result is an action is found, but it will probably not be the best action that can come from going through the groan zone and into convergence. In the convergent zone, excitement and clarity builds and decisions become clear. (Kaner, 2007)

In February 2013 during an AoH workshop one of the local callers, Mary Lu Larson, offered a teaching on divergence-convergence that opened up for me a whole new perspective. Mary Lu works with homeless families and she described how she works with families using divergence-convergence as the planning approach. A homeless family arrives at her office. She begins working with them to explore options (divergence) for getting to a sustainable solution to their homelessness (convergence). Because they are in crisis they will often want to accept an immediate solution even though it won't lead to a sustainable one. They also find sitting in the groan zone of exploring what can emerge that will become a sustainable solution is very difficult for families in crisis. Yet Mary Lu holds them in a container of safety while they find the right course of action to converge toward. The immediacy of Mary Lu's story touched all of us and brought new life to our thinking about divergence-emergence-convergence.

Organizing Patterns — 4 Organizational Paradigms



Art of Hosting suggests that over the millennia, human beings have developed many different ways of organizing together. Each new age of civilization has its signature form of organization. As new forms emerged the old forms were not abandoned, but instead were brought forward as a practice available for use where it best serves the organizational need. Art of Hosting places no value judgment on one form over another. Each has its value and appropriate use. One of the questions that the Art of Hosting community of

practice is continually asking itself is “What are the organizational concepts that we can develop together that are actually *good* for us and are good for this time?”

Circle

Sitting in circle is our oldest organizational form. In a circle, people come together equally to provide a multiplicity of perspectives on something. Circles are powerful for reflection, for harnessing collective insight and for making decisions. To work, people in circles need to have equal access to information, power and responsibility. Working in circle is the most basic practice within Art of Hosting. In fact, circle is foundational to all of the Art of Hosting practices.

Hierarchy (triangle)

Once humans developed agriculture they stopped wandering. Communities grew bigger, and classes of function emerged. We began to develop hierarchies and organized in “levels,” where one person or group of people had power over others. There are many instances where the triangular form of hierarchy is very useful for action, for getting things done. Purpose is held at the top level. Art of Hosting practices have worked with hierarchical structures to develop practices of rotating leadership that bring forth the talents and wisdom of the group to leadership processes.

Bureaucracy (square)

Simple hierarchies can be extremely unstable in the face of the unexpected. The industrial age brought change and more complexity. Bureaucracy became the predominant organizational model, bringing in the specialization of functions horizontally with each specialized division acting as hierarchies, which are controlled vertically. Together, divisions managed much greater complexity than either could do alone. Bureaucracy is best suited for creating stability, optimizing efficiency and maintaining the status quo, and for managing complex situations to a certain degree. However, as complexity and speed grow, the bureaucracy is not agile enough to respond quickly since this form usually operates as silos that, when needed to interact together, struggle to do so. Bureaucracy typically moves slowly in the face of change. At times, however, this slowness can prevent systems from errors resulting

in too rapid a change. Purpose in the bureaucracy is also held at the top of each division. Art of Hosting practices are being brought into bureaucracies to help them work successfully across silos and with complexity and uncertainty.

> The Meadowlark Institute's business model is based upon a network approach. Instead of building an organization of staff members, the Institute has developed relationships with a network of Art of Hosting Stewards and practitioners. This network allows the Institute to respond to a client request with a team that can best serve the client's needs. The result is lower overhead and higher quality service.

Networks

Networks began emerging in the 1970s during the development of the information or communication age as a response to a need to organize and re-organize quickly and flexibly. Networks are collections of individuals, circles (small groups) or triangles (hierarchies) or nodes that are connected together. Networks can link all types of organizations. We rarely find networked collections of bureaucracies, but networks can and often do spring up *inside* them, especially informally. Networks are great for relationship, flexibility and innovation, and for getting things done fast. Networks resonate with Art of Hosting practices, especially when individual purpose seeks to harmonize with collective purpose. Networks often use the AoH practices as a way to build relationships within the network and as a way to be more collaborative in decision-making. Once the need is no longer there, the network connection will most often lapse. This approach of forming and dissolving, forming and dissolving, can bring great skill to a project or situation without creating an ongoing need for structure or funding.

Fractals

> *In fractals, the same simple pattern is evident at all levels of scale…….There are fractals in the Art of Hosting, simple patterns evident in any part or exercise.* (Woolf, January 2009 blog post)

Within the Art of Hosting there is a recognition that there are patterns within patterns within patterns, or fractals. Fractals are often defined as a rough or fragmented geometric shape that can be split into parts, each of which is (at least approximately) a reduced-

sized copy of the whole. This property is generally referred to as self-similarity. Within an Art of Hosting team this is understood to mean that a hosting team is a fractal of the group being trained which is a fractal of the communities they come from which are fractals of even larger communities. The patterns we see emerge in smaller groups are fractals of patterns we see in larger groups. We can see the chaordic path, divergence-emergence-convergence, warrior-midwife or other patterns of human interactions manifest in small groups, large groups, communities, different cultures, etc. In other words, as fractals. We can see patterns emerge in human-nature interactions in similar fractal ways. The importance of this understanding is that by learning to work with patterns that are fractals in small groups we can scale up our skills and practice to work in larger groups, different cultural or contextual settings or different local constructs. By understanding the fractal nature of human interactions we can build bridges between differing worldviews.

Explanation

Does Art of Hosting offer an explanation of where it all comes from? Does Art of Hosting offer an explanation of why the world today is the way it is and not different? Of why we are the way we are and not different? Does the Art of Hosting offer an explanation – a model of the past? For me, the answer is a partial yes. Art of Hosting presents us with one model for the past – a mechanistic[150] model[151] of the world.

To review, an explanation, at a minimum tells us how we got to where we are. It means placing things/phenomena (life or mind for example) in a network of relations. It can be a construction of a causal model for a chain of events or it can clarify the origin of things/phenomena. (Aerts, Apostel, De Moor, Maex, Van Belle, & Van der Keken, 2007) An explanation should answer the questions of how and why such and such phenomena came to be (Vidal, 2008). An explanation should also help us understand how the phenomena will continue to evolve. (Heylighen, 2000) A constructionist would invite us,

[150] Duns asks isn't the mechanistic model fundamentally a product of the industrial revolution? It was then used for an organizational model early to mid-last century. What about before the machine? Indeed some of the practices, possibly especially Circle, draw on a much earlier period and to him circle is an archetypal form.

[151] Duns suggests it's not really a model of the world – more of organizations. He offers that Ackhoff's and Gharajedaghi's work goes beyond organic to sociocultural – a more sophisticated view of the organizational system; and that Gharajedaghi proposes a more logical causal link and flow for mechanistic, through organic to sociocultural. It is superior to the simplistic and academically limited stuff found in the AoH workbook.

however, to reflect on our forms of understanding of what is the past. From a constructionist perspective "Every tradition closes the door to the new; and every bold creation undermines a tradition." (Gergen, 1999: 49)

The Art of Hosting literature[152] does not give great attention to offering a model of the past – an explanation of how we arrived at the current situation. In the AoH workbook (often called a journal) that is offered to participants at each AoH training the section 'Our Worldview is Important' contains the following paragraphs:

> *"For three hundred years, since Descartes and Newton, our thinking has predominantly been influenced by rationalism. We have been able to figure things out and "be in control." We tend to view our organizations as we view machines — as consisting of clearly defined parts with clearly defined roles and a predictable output.*
>
> *In a complex world, this mechanistic view may not always be adequate to meet the complex problems and challenges we face. What if organizations were also viewed as adaptive or living systems as well?"*

In this way AoH does acknowledge that a mechanistic view of the world has dominated Western civilization since the Enlightenment and is, in many ways, the Western world's primary global worldview. This approach has served Western civilization well for many hundreds of years and brought considerable advancement in science and human understanding[153]. However, there is increasing complexity in the problems the entire world faces and an Art of Hosting worldview suggests that a different response is needed now to these challenges. AoH believes that solutions lie not in the more traditional approach of seeking one leader to guide us or offering a

[152] Here Duns challenges the idea of "AoH literature". He suggests that there are substantial bodies of literature relating to various components of AoH. He sees AoH as a collection and synthesis of ideas, rather than anything new. He offers that an interesting exception might be the 4-fold practice. He notes that Ann Linnea and Christina Baldwin have written about Circle, Juanita Brown and David Isaacs have written about World Café, with Juanita Brown's PhD in that mix, Harrison Owen and others about Open Space and David Cooperrider and many others about Appreciative Inquiry.

[153] Much has been written that would challenge this perspective. A book that I have found especially helpful regarding this matter is *Celebrating the Other* by Edward E. Sampson (2008).

viewpoint through which to see the situation, but true solutions and innovation lie within the bigger picture of our collective intelligence. AoH suggests that these solutions are more comprehensive and more readily found and owned if they are co-created by the stakeholders.

Each Art of Hosting workbook/journal includes the following chart as a way to describe the past, the more traditional ways of working, and offer a contrast to what is possible with an AoH approach to working together. Art of Hosting is careful to offer its approach as a complement to more traditional approaches and not as a specific replacement. One could think of the chart as offering an evolution of ways of working together from what was to what could be.

Traditional ways of working	***Art of Hosting complementing***
Mechanistic	*Organic — if you treat the system like a machine, it responds like a living system*
Management	*Leadership*
Management by control	*Management by trust*
Top-down	*Bottom-up*
Hierarchical lines of management	*Community of practice*
Top-down agenda setting	*Set agenda together*
Silos/hierarchical structures	*More networks*
Executing procedures	*Innovating processes*
Leading by instructions	*Leading by hosting*
Great for maintenance, implementation (doing what we know)	*When innovation is needed — learning what we don't know, to move on — engaging with constantly moving targets*
Analysis	*Intuition*
Individuals responsible for decisions	*Using collective intelligence to inform decision-making*
No single person has the right answer but somebody has to decide	*Together we can reach greater clarity — intelligence through diversity*
Wants to create a fail-safe environment	*Creates a safe-fail environment that promotes learning*

I must speak to be noticed in meetings	*Harvesting what matters, from all sources*
Communication in writing only	*Asking questions*
Organization chart determines work	*Task forces/purpose-oriented work in projects*
People represent their services	*People are invited as human beings, attracted by the quality of the invitation*
One-to-many information meetings	*A participatory process can inform the information*
Information sharing	*When engagement is needed from all, including those who usually don't contribute much*
Consultation through surveys, questionnaires, etc.	*Co-creating solutions together in real time, in presence of the whole system*
Questionnaires	*Engagement processes — collective inquiry with stakeholders*
Top-down orders — often without full information	*Top-down orders informed by consultation*
Resistance to decisions from on high	*Better acceptance of decisions because of involvement*
Tasks dropped on people	*Follow your passion and put it in service of the organization*
Rigid organization	*Flexible self-organization*
Policy design officer disconnected from stakeholders	*Direct consultation instead of via lobby organizations*
People feel unheard/not listened to	*People feel heard*
Working without a clear purpose and jumping to solutions	*Collective clarity of purpose is the invisible leader*
Motivation via carrot & stick	*Motivation through engagement and ownership*
Managing projects, not pre-jects	*Better preparation — going through chaos, open mind, taking account of other ideas*
Result-oriented	*Purpose-oriented — the rest falls into place*
Seeking answers	*Seeking questions*

Broadcasting, boring, painful meetings	*Meetings where every voice is heard, participants leave energized*
Chairing, reporting	*Hosting, harvesting, follow-up*
Event & time-focused	*Good timing, ongoing conversation & adjustment*

Futurology

Does the Art of Hosting offer a picture of where are we heading?[154] Does Art of Hosting offer an answer to the questions "What kind of future is ahead of us? What are the criteria that allow us to choose the future? What future is open to us and our species in this world?" Does the Art of Hosting offer a futurology? The answer for me is a partial yes. AoH offers elements of what the future could look like.

First, a brief review of futurology. A futurology should answer the question "Where are we going?" It should give us some idea of the possibilities the future offers, of probable future events. Because the future is uncertain, there are choices that need to be made. A futurology can be neutral on choices or it can promote certain alternatives and discourage others. For this we need values, which come in the section on Axiology.

Art of Hosting does not offer a description or vision of what our 'material' future might be, although many AoH practitioners do have strong views about this. Because many AoH practitioners hold different perspectives about the future, which are in good part localized, AoH holds, just as with ontology, that within these local contexts the practices of good dialogue can lead to wise action. AoH does offer a vision of the future that includes process elements that connect with the AoH value system of people co-creating the future they want. AoH offers a view of the future that connects to the patterns and practices (process elements) of good dialogue, holding to a perspective of "slowing down to go fast."[155]

[154] Duns suggests that this is a really interesting question. He notes that he sees that AoH offer a process for specific groups of people to co-create a picture of where they are heading, rather than a generic view of where the world is going. Is that a futurology? Indeed I think AoH is one of the most powerful practices around to allow a group of people to tell the story of their collective future and one of its true gifts.

[155] Slowing down is the process/practice of building trust, entering into good dialogue, asking powerful questions, building a strong container of wisdom, inclusion and leadership before moving

Art of Hosting offers that one pattern of dialogue is that we live into the stories we tell. In other words, we co-create our future. How do we prepare people to be part of co-creating with and being part of a new story, especially on this edge of unprecedented change? What if it's really about the practice of letting a story unfold? We know that the stories we tell provide meaning in our lives and they have the transformative power to profoundly influence how we go forward. (Kelm, 2005) Perhaps we need to host the spaces where deep listening can be learned and the transformative power of story is brought into the learning space. What if the questions are: "How are we stewarding spaces and timing for story to come to the center again?" Learning is our finest art, what will help the story to have wings? What if it is the Art of Hosting & Harvesting stories that really matter? And what if the new/old story is already here? (unpublished report "AoH Stewards Retreat Harvest", Arthur & Baeck, 2010)[156]

Participatory Leadership vs. Command /Control

Art of Hosting is often described as a participatory or collaborative approach to leadership[157]. It sees leadership as a process of hosting and harvesting meaningful conversations that activate the collective intelligence in a group to find new solutions to the increasing challenges of the world and work today. AoH believes that the traditional command-and-control type of leadership is no longer appropriate and that to co-create the future we want, and not accept a future that could be given to us, it has become necessary to tap into the wisdom and potential held in each of us and in our organizations and communities. This is a future of inviting everyone to participate with their diverse perspectives in order to release this potential. It is a practice of leadership that understands that true solutions and innovation lie not in one leader or one viewpoint, but in the bigger picture of our collective intelligence.

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to action. And then when action is required it happens swiftly and with clarity. The importance and implications of slowing down in order to host well was a big learning for me.

[156] Jourdain asked what role hosting self plays here around telling a story of the future? She suggests that hosting self is fundamental to being present, to sensing what wants to emerge and to the healing that so many experience as they come to the AoH field. That transformation and healing of the future will be in large part because more and more people are hosting themselves.

[157] Duns suggests that AoH might be often described as a leadership approach but that does not mean it is one. He offers that there are accepted elements of a leadership paradigm that are missing from AoH and that, while this does not diminish AoH, it is simply not a leadership approach.

From a relational constructionist approach, participatory leadership could be seen as opening up 'power to' or 'power with'. It offers working with multiple dialogues, with what is already available – the wisdom in the room, and inviting a diversity of views and options for action. A relational leadership approach facilitates (hosts) from a stance of not-knowing. It also invites multiple communities to participate in collaborative ways of knowing and relating. (Hosking, 2006)

Is it Time for New Questions?

A popular question in the practice of hosting is to ask "What time is it in the world for (you, your organization, your community, etc.)? AoH believes it is a time in the world for all of us to ask new and powerful questions. Examples include: "What is going on in the world that makes hosting meaningful conversations important?" What are the core questions that if given attention would further strengthen our ability to do the work that we know matters and that we care about? What are the questions which, if asked, will unite us? What questions open up the spaces for us to co-create a world of collective consciousness without losing our local histories, cultures, values, beliefs or ontologies?

More Intergenerational Connections

Art of Hosting practices invite a future where we can consciously and continually include all the generations in a collective conversation about how we together co-create the future and how all of us can contribute to the work of co-creating that future. Art of Hosting practices invite us into a flow of learning from sensei to apprentice, from wisdom to wonder, from the library at Alexandria to the Internet and beyond, to a recognition that the real harvest of the work of hosting is not artifacts but each other.

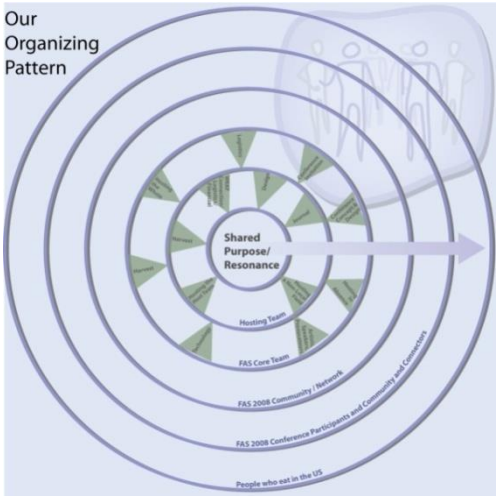
Local Communities are Shifting the way They Operate and are Making Connections with Each Other

Throughout the world, local communities are coming together in new and different ways to address the problems they face. They are inviting in the collective wisdom and energy within the community to find ways forward that serve the community and the world. Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze tell the story of seven of these communities in their book *Walk Out Walk On* (2011). Paul Hawkin has identified hundreds of thousands of local organizations around the world all working to bring about change at the community level. He describes this as "…the largest social movement in history..." (Hawkin, 2007) and writes about it in his book *Blessed Unrest* (2007). These pioneering communities and

organizations are working in their local contexts to make a difference. They are motivated by local need and the ability to make a difference. They are not always motivated to change the world. But, they are building bridges to each other – translocal connections – to share in their learning and sense into the emergent larger whole they are part of, without losing sight of the local focus. A relational constructionist would offer that there are multiple local constructs or 'ontologies' that can open up a range of possibilities. (Hosking, 2011) And, I would offer, this range of local possibilities collectively is shifting our global paradigm.

A 5th Paradigm

Art of Hosting practitioners are connecting with old patterns and practices that call to be brought forth again[158] and new patterns and practices that are emergent from our collective co-learning and co-creating. An emergent pattern being explored in the AoH community is a 5th organizational pattern or paradigm. This is not a deliberately designed model, but a pattern that has emerged naturally and spontaneously throughout the global hosting community as the work of hosting develops collectively in ever-larger and more complex adaptive systems. **[159]**



The 5th paradigm is a combination of the four known organization patterns. It brings together circle or council for collective clarity, the triangle or project team (hierarchy) for action, the square or bureaucracy for accountability, structure and stability and the network for rapid sharing of information, inspiration and linking all the parts together. At the center, always, purpose[160].

What the Future Holds

The global hosting community is always open to what next level of practices and structures are needed to steward the work of hosting meaningful conversations so that it may happen in ways that serve the common good. To this end the future is emergent.

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[158] Jourdain notes that this is sometimes referred to as ancient futurism.
[159] Much of the initial thinking about a 5th paradigm can be attributed to Chris Corrigan and Tenneson Woolf and blog posts they have made.
[160] There is an emerging dialogue within the AoH community of a 6th paradigm.

Axiology

Does Art of Hosting offer a set of values to guide our actions in the world? Does AoH offer an answer to the questions: “What should we do? What is good and what is evil? What is the real, the true and the good? What is meaningful in life? Why do we feel in our world the way we feel in this world, and how do we assess global reality, and the role of our species in it?” Does AoH offer a way to evaluate how we act in the world? Does the Art of Hosting offer an axiology? The answer for me is yes. Art of Hosting is deeply instilled with values that guide the practice and the community. These values form an AoH axiology.

To review, axiology mainly looks at two kinds of values: ethics and aesthetics. Ethics studies the ideas of good and evil in both individual and social behavior. Aesthetics studies the ideas of beauty and harmony. This invites us into explorations of what should we strive for, what gives us direction, and what purposes and sets of goals guide our actions. (Vidal, 2008). Axiology invites us as conscious beings into exploring what is happiness and suffering, what is beauty and ugliness, what is the origin of the distinction between good and evil, are some values more important than others, and how are values expressed in different cultures. (Aerts, Apostel, De Moor, Maex, Van Belle, & Van der Keken, 2007)

The Art of Hosting, from my perspective, has a strong moral base and a set of values that guides the work of those that consider themselves practitioners of the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter. One of the core questions that practitioners hold as they do their work in the world is “Am I/are we holding true to the integrity of the values, patterns and practices that form the foundation of the Art of Hosting?” We often refer to this as the DNA of Art of Hosting. I think attending to this question is a core responsibility of being an AoH Steward.

While great care is taken not to present Art of Hosting as a values system with structured or formal requirements for behavior in order to be accepted in the group (in fact this is antithetical to all that AoH is), there is a recognition that to be truly skilled at hosting meaningful conversation one must step into a way of being that has some foundational

values or principles[161]. These inclusionary principles, this integrity of practice, have been, and can be, adapted to any cultural, faith, political, social, philosophical perspective and most scientific perspectives. Not that this is always easy as Tenneson Woolf expressed in a January 2009 blog post, "….and some are frustrated – to let go of a personal viewpoint amidst a sea of other viewpoints can be a real challenge to individual or shared identity."

Stepping into being an Art of Hosting practitioner is for most a transformational experience. It becomes necessary to let go of many of our accepted notions of how to operate in the world. It, in essence, requires a worldview shift. For many of us living in the Western world, most every institution we have experienced in our lifetimes – schools, churches, governments, businesses – operates to a significant degree from an individualist, mechanistic model of hierarchical structures where plans and decisions come from the top and are distributed down. (Hoffman, 2002) The Art of Hosting offers a set of values or principles that are based in a relational and living systems perspective.

They include:

- Conversations matter. It is common sense to bring people together in conversation. Conversation is the way we think and make meaning together. It is the way we build strong relationships that invite real collaboration. Good conversation is an art.
- Meaningful conversations lead to wise actions. Conversations that surface a shared clarity on issues of importance foster ownership and responsibility when the ideas and solutions are put into action.
- Being curious is essential. Being curious means being willing to step into a place of not knowing. Questions open up exploration and possibilities. Curiosity and judgment do not live well together. If we are judging we cannot be curious[162].

[161] Duns suggests that it is not just about the particular values we hold, it's about being clear about our own values – both noble and other – and understanding how they impact on our behavior, motivation and, indeed, our world view. It's not that every AoH practitioner is a saint, but that there is an expectation, especially in the hosting self part of the 4-fold practice, that we are conscious about our values and how they influence us. A good host will also encourage those being hosted to explore their own values too. All of that is necessary to remain grounded and conscious. It is when we are grounded and conscious that we can be neutral enough to receive the values of others with love and compassion rather than judgment.

[162] Jourdain offers that "Curiosity and judgment cannot exist in the same space."

- Diverse perspectives open up new possibilities. Diversity increases the potential for wise action. All voices are welcome and invited into the conversation without fear. People are invited as human beings, attracted by the quality of the invitation.

> *We do not ostracize topics or people. Through this naming and claiming process we shift covert energy to overt energy: covert/hidden energy or capacity hinders a group; overt/open energy or capacity releases a group to its full potential.* (Arthur & Baeck, 2010)

- As practitioners we work toward the common good. We are committed to making the world as a whole a better place.
- Hosting meaningful conversations opens up the space for finding collective intelligence. We shift from individuals being responsible for decisions to using collective intelligence to inform decisions. Together we can reach greater clarity. We gain intelligence through diversity.

> *Art of Hosting serves the opening and holding of fields of collective intelligence and community consciousness for the common good in any context.* (Holman, 2007: 57)

- We believe in human goodness. We work to support personal aspirations.

> *….we will depend on our diversity. Trust in human goodness. Rely on self-organization.* (Woolf, January 2009 blog post)

- We work to co-create in friendship and partnership. AoH is rooted in a field of friendship and 'mates' showing up for each other and supporting each other in work and learning.
- Humans are capable of self-organizing. Self-organization can shift the work to a higher level.
- We work in the place of emergence without preconceived notions of what must happen, instead allowing what wants to come forth to emerge. We trust in the not knowing. We trust in the generative field of co-creation.

….we will welcome emergence, what wants to live into existence through us, when together. (Woolf, January 2009 blog post)

- Participation by all is central to the work. The Art of Hosting is about becoming a leaderful community where leadership is offered from everywhere. AoH is rooted in the belief that everyone is a host of conversations and that we together can create a rich field of learning, friendship, and work.

  I came for the tension, because we can't do it on email and conference calls. Of course there is tension in this circle of so much creative people! The places that are …between us; where are we standing in and with and …Most of the questions that we have named will elicit tension! It is creative! Put kindling on the fire! The profound donation of +me and the courage to come…reaching out for help to total strangers…could we find ourselves at the real edge of uncertainty; peering over into the not--knowing. What is the help that the young need from us, older ones? We have put seeds here. We are seeds in what is happening now. Are we in the fire house here? How do we do that differently?.... we are standing in a river and any rock is going to be washed away. That is the energy I want to honor here. I do want to have a chance to hear each one's edge. Then I can go back to that, the moment when we touched each other's pulse, because it grounds us and allows us to bless us in our work. (Christine Baldwin in Arthur & Baeck, 2010)

- Self-awareness and self-reflexivity are essential to being a good host. We must be aware of our own prejudices and habits and take time to reflect on our (re)actions as part of our ongoing learning as hosts.
- We practice generosity. We share what we know and invite others into the field of co-learning. Our hope is to grow the field of practice, not to be a small group holding onto something, but a growing community of practitioners working together to make a difference in the world.

- Ceremony can hold an important role in the work. Bringing ceremony into gatherings can honor past work, recognize and honor elders or youth or others that hold important roles within community, provide an element of sacredness when appropriate to the situation, connect us to nature, or offer the opportunity to call into the meeting, gathering or learning space what needs to be honored and recognized to help build bridges between people or cultures and help move the work forward.
- We show up to our work fully present, not distracted, prepared, clear about what is needed and the contributions we have to offer. Being fully present means bring our whole self to the work – our minds, hearts and spirits. We practice the first fold in the Four Fold Practice.

> *AoH works when…it is practiced not just spoken.* (unknown)

- The practice is the work. Art of Hosting is a way of being, not something you turn on and off. AoH practitioners seek to bring the values of the Art of Hosting into their daily lives.

These are the values Art of Hosting practitioners hold dear. This is our axiology.

Praxeology

> *The gift of good process is that it allows people to be in learning together. The gift of content is that it gets work done. When you have these two together, you get good results.* (Toke Paludan Moeller quoted in The Weave, Meisterheim Cretney & Cretney, 2011: 3)

Does the Art of Hosting offer a set of methods or practices for how we can host meaningful conversations? Does AoH offer a way for us to achieve our goals? Does AoH answer the questions: “How we can influence and transform? How can we and do we have to act and create in this world? What are the general principles by which we should organize our actions?” Does the Art of Hosting offer a praxeology? The answer is a clear

yes. One of the strengths of Art of Hosting practices is the dialogic methods contained within the AoH practice. These methods form an AoH praxeology.

First, a brief review of praxeology. In its simplest form praxeology is the method(s) we use to act. A praxeology or theory of action provides a guideline for helping achieve what we strive for. It helps us solve practical problems and implement plans of action. (Heylighen, 2000). A praxeology contains the general principles by which we organize our actions. It helps us implement plans of action according to our values in order to solve problems. (Vidal, 2008)

The Art of Hosting is strongest as an ontology, axiology and praxeology for hosting meaningful conversations. AoH patterns offer a dialogic ontology for hosting conversations that matter. AoH offers an extensive set of practices or methods for hosting conversations. These practices are grounded in the AoH ontological worldview and its axiology or values set described above.

I have divided up the methodologies into three categories: essential individual practices that help us host meaningful conversations, essentials of process design, and essential hosting practices. There are many practices or methodologies contained in an Art of Hosting workbook that I have not included here. Some would argue that everything within the workbook is essential and it would be difficult to disagree. However, it is not my intention here to create a listing of every dialogic practice or method within the Art of Hosting compendium. My intention is to demonstrate that the Art of Hosting does offer a rather comprehensive praxeology for hosting meaningful conversations. I have selected those that I use regularly. To anyone who feels I have missed an important methodology, please accept my apologies.

Essential Individual Practices that help us to Host Meaningful Conversations.

> *Arrival flows into deepening, deepening into working, working into practicing and action.* (Woolf, January 2009 blog post)

How we show up as hosts and how we practice hosting within our daily lives is foundational within the Art of Hosting practice. Hosting meaningful conversations is not a practice one turns on and off. It is a daily practice and a life-long journey. Art of Hosting suggests that as we practice hosting in our lives there are four practices that fold together into being a good host of conversations and that we are operating at multiple levels of focus.

The Four-Fold Practice

There are four basic individual practices contained in what we call the Four Fold Practice that are truly core to the Art of Hosting praxeology: being fully present, engaging skillfully in conversations, being a good host of conversations and engaging with others in co-creation. For many years we in the Art of Hosting community practiced the Four-Fold Practice almost unconsciously because it is so central to our work. We are rediscovering just how foundational the Four Fold Practice is and there is emerging a much deeper exploration into the four folds and into the intersection between the folds and the center that holds them together. One thing we do know is that it takes continuous practice to hone these skills. In essence, we see ourselves as a participant in a methodology that supports a community that co-learns and hosts itself.

In AoH we do not see the four folds as both being separate and as a whole. We can operate in all four folds at the same time. We can focus our attention on one or two folds more than the others, for example when we are hosting. We can invite a group we are working with to center their attention on one fold, for example working to strengthen their community of practice. But, as hosts, we recognize that we are (we strive to be) fully present when hosting, we are practicing and participating in good conversations, we are contributing to (hosting) conversations that matter, and we are always in a space of co-learning and co-creating no matter how experienced at hosting we may be.

In the fall of 2012 I was asked to host a World Café for the immigrant and refugee community in St. Cloud. I arrived in early evening to find a space and organization not prepared for a Café. We quickly rearranged the room and then developed questions for the Café. When it was time to begin the Café it was clear that I was the only non-immigrant in the room and that those that had arrived were sticking pretty close to others from their cultural community. Here was a need to be fully present to what was in the room. I quickly determined that it was essential that my entire being communicate a sense of welcome and safety to the participants, which I then sought to embody. The first round of the Café everyone stuck close together, in the second round groups began to mix up and by the third Café round participants were completely comfortable being the only member from their culture in a group of other immigrants. Participants knew they were in a place different than what they had experienced in the past. The dialogues were rich, friendly and full of sharing and learning.

Hosting Self – Being Present

Hosting self and being present means showing up, without distraction. It means being in a good place personally and not in a place of attachment to those things that could distract us from the work at hand. If something is distracting us, as sometimes happens, it means being aware of it and naming it, which aids in putting it aside to focus on the work. It means entering the work well prepared, with clarity of need, and an understanding of one's own role in the work. It means being aware of the space or environment one is in, the people there and the impact you have on them and they on you. Hosting ourselves means having a personal or presencing practice (meditation, prayer, dance, time in nature, a martial

art, yoga, etc.). It means we practice mindfulness in our everyday lives. We have an outward curiosity and we have an inward curiosity. We are self-reflexive. We work with our own issues to be able to be in the practice field (you serve others best when you serve yourself well). We practice being present and awake in the moment. It is helpful to have a teacher or someone to work with as a guide in the practice so that we can learn what it is like to be guided well in a disciplined practice of self-hosting. Collectively, it is good practice to become present together as a meeting begins, be it through a welcome, a good framing, a process of "checking-in" to the subject matter or task at hand by hearing everyone's voice in the matter or even taking a moment of silence.

Being Hosted – Practice Conversations

Being hosted means practicing conversations – talking and listening, attending trainings, and apprenticing. Conversation is an art, it is not just talk. It demands that we listen carefully to one another and that we offer what we can in the service of the whole. Curiosity and judgment do not live well together in the same space. If we are judging what we are hearing, we cannot be curious about the outcome, and if we have called a meeting because we are uncertain of the way forward, being open to uncertainty is a key skill and capacity. Only by practicing skillful conversation can we find our best practice together. If we practice conversation mindfully, we might slow down meetings so that wisdom and clarity can work quickly. When we talk mindlessly, we neither hear each other nor do we allow space for the clarity to arise. The art of conversation is the art of slowing down to speed up. It also means we are ready to support the hosting field and to keep the field clear for learning and participating. It means we have participated in different Art of Hosting events and have been a participant in a number of different ways. It means we are ready to help others host themselves and each other. We contribute authentically and from experience.

Host Conversations — Contribute

Hosting conversations is an act of leadership and means taking responsibility for creating and holding the "container" in which a group of people can do their best

work together[163]. It means we contribute, step-up, and participate in the work of hosting conversations that matter using AoH practices. Hosting conversations takes courage and it takes a bit of certainty and faith in the people we are hosting as well as the conversational processes we use. We sometimes give short shrift to conversational spaces because of the fear we experience in stepping up to host. It is, however, a gift to host a group, and it is a gift to be hosted well. As hosts, we have become highly skilled in at least one core practice (i.e. Circle, World Café, Open Space or Appreciative Inquiry) and usually more and we practice it in diverse settings and have used the various tools in a variety of contexts and applications, large and small, over the years. We contribute from our experience, we freely contribute what we know and we are ready to encourage collective wisdom. We host for collective learning and wisdom. We host each other to practice the practice and notice and host each other's strengths and connect them. We host so the conversations that need to be had can be held. We encourage each other to host together. What we develop we share with those we have collaborated with. We also honor the contributions of those that have co-created the Art of Hosting learning and hosting field.

Being a Community of Practitioners — Co-creating

We support our local community of practitioners. We are ready to host for collective wisdom and learning. We show up in a conversation without being a spectator, contributing to the collective effort to sustain results. Our commitment is to growing the hosting field and to sharing our experiences, learning and wisdom with others and to the global Art of Hosting community. We encourage each other to keep practicing. We host what's going on with the community and contribute our strengths to the community so synergy happens. We also continue to work with our own issues to be able to be in the practice field. This is a very different form of leadership from most and it's a definite practice. The best conversations arise when we listen for what is in the middle between us — what is arising as a result of our collaboration. It is not about the balancing of individual agendas; it is about finding out what is new, in particular collectively. And when that is discovered, work unfolds

[163] Jourdain often describes this as hosting process as well as hosting conversation so people can see the differentiation between this and participating and also see the scale is often different.

beautifully as everyone is clear about what they can contribute to the work. In a truly co-creative process, it becomes irrelevant who said or contributed what — the gift is in the synergy and inspiration when we build on each other's knowledge and the whole becomes much bigger than the sum of the parts. This is how results become sustainable over time — they fall into the network of relationships that arise from a good conversation, from friends and colleagues working together. The collaborative field can produce unexpected and surprising results, especially in complex situations where multi-layered challenges need to be met simultaneously.

From a Learner to a Community that Hosts Itself

As we become truly present and engage in conversations that really matter, we are also learners. As learners, many doors are open to us. As we begin to host conversation and connect with other hosts or practitioners, we become a community of learners or practitioners. As a community, we own a much bigger capacity than as individual learners. From a community of individual practitioners or learners we can become "a community that learns" — where we truly enter into a collective intelligence, where the community becomes collectively more intelligent — we multiply our capacity and enter the field of emergence. And, as a community that learns we can become a community that hosts itself, working together as individuals and colleagues and as a community to host each other and our community, practice together, learn together and share our learnings with each other.

The fractal nature of the 4-Fold Practice offers that it could be a practice for communities, organizations, institutions, systems, etc. to hold as they do their work in advancing good conversations in the workplace or in civic dialogue. A community, organization, institution or system can host itself by being fully present/aware to what is happening within. It can be hosted by practicing good listening and good dialogue in all aspect of work and civic life. It can host conversations well in meetings, in public, in community or wherever dialogue is happening. It can be a place of practice and co-creation. These are conscious choices that can be made by organizations, institutions, systems and communities.

Multiple Levels of Focus

Art of Hosting invites us to operate at four interconnected levels at once. The learning at each of these levels informs and is present in the subsequent levels, so a natural or nested construct is the result. These four levels operate as characteristics of a whole and not as a linear path. The four levels are:

- The individual level where we connect to our own motivations and reasons for choosing a different way of learning and strengthen our own courage to host.
- The team level where we develop the skills of collective reflection and wise action and practice co-creating and co-hosting.
- The organizational or community level where we experience working in unity with others and look to new organizational forms and practices of co-creating in order to serve the needs of the organization or community.
- The global level where we integrate our learnings and practices into all our actions and become part of a global learning community of practitioners in the field.

Essentials of Process Design

Within the Art of Hosting practicum there are several methods or processes that can be used to design good conversational spaces or hold meetings. These methodologies have emerged from years of practice, reflection and harvesting by AoH practitioners.

Powerful Questions

> *More importantly than what methodologies to use where, is what are the questions you need to ask in each of the stages.* (Toke Paludan Moeller quoted in The Weave, Meisterheim, Cretney & Cretney, 2011: 23)

Foundational to conversations that matter and to the Art of Hosting methodology is the art of crafting powerful questions that invites people into co-creative and co-learning dialogue. One could say that the central challenge of good dialogic processes is creating curiosity. Good questions can invite us into inquiry and, perhaps more importantly, into a deeper exploration and deeper understanding of the matters at hand and of each other. So, when hosting good conversations, AoH sees answers as tending to bring the conversation to closure and questions opening us up to exploration and keeping people engaged in the

work at hand. A high-quality question focuses on what is meaningful for the participants, invites our curiosity and invites us to explore further.

When we practice Art of Hosting methods, questions are central to every process. A question is used to invite people into a check-in or check-out. World Café and ProAction Café are both centered around questions as the basis for dialogue. Questions are often structured from an Appreciative Inquiry approach. In Open Space we often invite people to state their discussion topic in the form of a question. When we explore why people have come together to work on something we often ask “What is the calling question that is bringing us together?” When working with the Chaordic Stepping Stones, we invite people to explore each stepping stone through a series of questions. To practice good hosting is to practice the art of crafting powerful or, we sometimes say, wicked questions.

Good questions have three elements to them: scope, assumptions and construction. Scope is the range of the questions. It is important to match scope to the purpose of the question. If scope is too big it is possible people will feel like they can’t have an impact and if it is too small then the issue at hand might not get addressed. Scope can go up or down. (Vogt, Brown & Isaacs, 2003)

Every question has assumptions embedded with it. We should not pretend questions are neutral nor do they need to be neutral. Assumptions aren’t necessarily bad, but it is important to recognize what assumptions we are holding or making. Doing so helps us to craft good questions. (Vogt, Brown & Isaacs, 2003)

A well-crafted question attracts energy and focuses attention on what matters. Good questions invite inquiry and curiosity. They do not need to promote action or problem solving immediately. Powerful questions are simple and clear, thought provoking, focus inquiry, challenge assumptions, open new possibilities and evoke more questions. (Vogt, Brown & Isaacs, 2003)

Construction of a question begins with the first word. Different first words bring different levels of power to a question. Would, should, who, when, where, what, how, why are all beginning words for questions and each has a different impact. Questions that begin with

would and should lend themselves to yes or no answers, which can end a conversation. These are considered the least powerful questions. (Vogt, Brown & Isaacs, 2003) Unless, of course, you are trying to close a sale, then a yes or no can be of great importance.

Questions that begin with who, when or where can be considered as convergent questions bringing us to some form of decision. Who should be included? Where will we meet? When should I arrive? What and how questions are even more powerful. They are more divergent. What might be possible? How can we go forward together? Many consider why questions the most powerful, but for others why questions come with a warning. Why questions can attribute blame or be accusing. Most why questions can be asked as a what or how question.

If we want to add a little urgency to the question, we can end it with 'now.' What is in my heart now?' Or, 'What is most important to you right now?' Depending on the audience, it is also important to be careful about rooting questions in an appreciative approach. Sometimes appreciative based questions can be rooted in the world we want vs. the world we have and this can lead to some difficult conversations when working in social justice settings.

A slight nuance to a question can evoke a very different response. Here are a few examples of differences in questions:

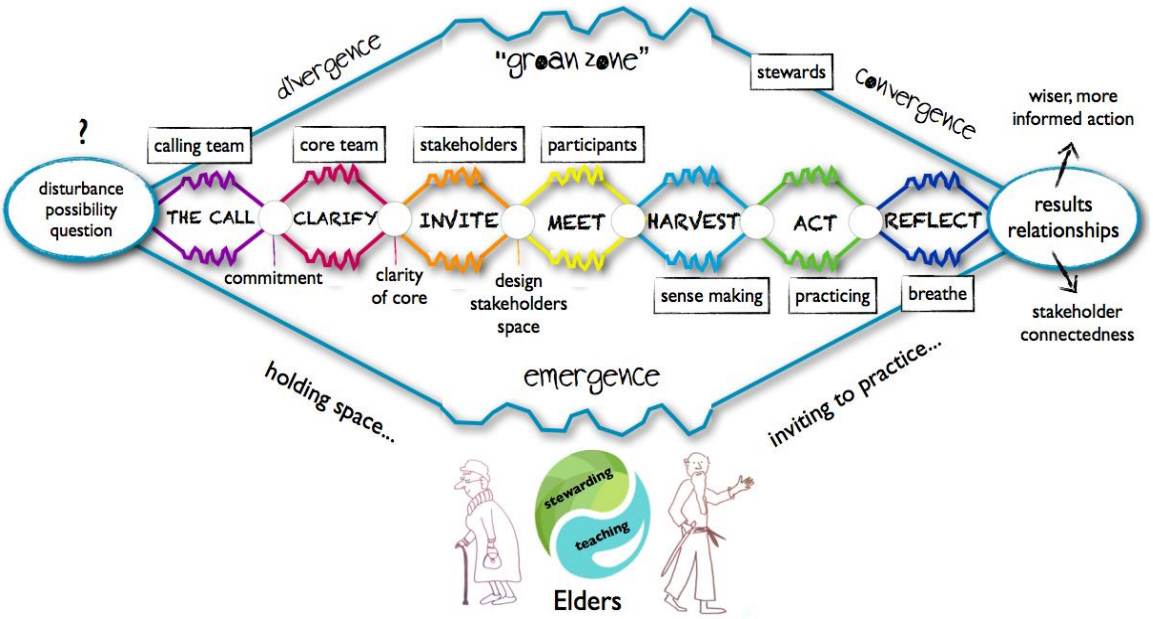
- 'Why did you show up today?' or 'What is the longing that brings you here today?'
- 'Why did we do it this way? or 'What can we learn from our experience?'
- 'How can we be the best in the world?' or 'How can we be the best for the world?'

Eight (8) Breaths of Design

Many of the methodologies used within the Art of Hosting praxeology have been developed by AoH practitioners. The 8 Breaths of Design is a methodology that has emerged from years of hosting and observing different, often larger scale, initiatives and sharing among practitioners their co-learning about process. The 8 Breaths represent an iterative flow of hosting that forms the basis for entire projects. It begins with a call or need. In this breath is the opportunity to get clear about what is at the heart of the work. The call should be strong enough to power the work through all the stuckness that can

and often will show up. If there is clarity of need the project moves forward to form a core team that is responding what is needed and is able to hold deeply the call no matter what happens. In the next breath the ground of principles, process and people is created – the invitation. Here is where the team explores and determines how to invite people into the work and potentially invites new alliances into the work. Inviting is an art form. When we invite well, people feel the genuineness of the invitation, that they are truly welcome and that what they have to offer is of value.

In the fourth breath stakeholders come together and begin to work. This breath might be one meeting or a year(s)-long engagement. In this breath could be many little breaths inside the work. The fifth breath is the harvest or collective meaning-making from the meeting(s). Meetings should be organized in ways that include a harvest. From the harvest flows action – the work to be done to address the calling. The seventh breath is reflection and learning from action. The eighth breath is the breath holding the entirety of the project or work. Finally, as the project becomes a way of life, founders may leave, new leaders emerge or the original project's intent is met. From here, a whole new breath can begin, and the cycle continues. This flow is similar to the divergence-emergence-convergence process, except it recognizes that each breath has its own divergence-convergence process. (Corrigan, undated)



Chaordic Stepping Stones[164]

The Chaordic Stepping Stones process is another methodology used within the Art of Hosting praxeology by AoH practitioners and is foundational to all of the Art of Hosting practices. It brings form and structure to the work of hosting when we don't know where we are going or what the future holds. These steps help to create generative structures that allow us to co-create together, without stifling creativity and the emergence of new ideas and new ways of doing things.

It is important to recognize that a project or person could enter into the stepping stones flow at any point. In fact organizations often start with structure in project design without clarity about need and purpose. When invited into work on a project skilled AoH practitioners will first check in to determine if there is clarity of need and purpose and, if not, recommend that project administrators step back to gain this clarity before moving forward.

The Chaordic Stepping Stones

Walking the Chaordic Stepping Stones begins with **Need**. The need is the compelling reason for doing anything. It is a longing in community to address something of significance. It could be considered an 'itch' that needs to be addressed. Sensing the need is the first step to designing a meeting, project, organizational structure or change initiative that is relevant. The need is outside of our work. It is what is served by the work we are doing. If there isn't clarity about need then it must be asked: "Why proceed?"

From the need flows the **Purpose**. This is the work to do. Purpose is what brings us together and holds us together. It is what will be done to address the need. Clarity of purpose is expressed in purpose or mission statements that are clear and compelling and

[164] The Chaordic Stepping Stones as developed within the Art of Hosting community are based on the work of Dee Hock. Hock originally proposed a Chaordic process tool that started with Purpose and moved to Principles, People, Concept, Structure and Practice. Chris Corrigan, Tim Merry, Toke Moeller, Monica Nissen and others in the AoH community further developed the thinking about the process and added in Need and Harvest as important steps in the chaordic process.

guide us in doing our best possible work. Purpose is the invisible leader. When purpose is clear, should things go off track, purpose is the guide to bring it back.

Principles of cooperation help us to know how we will work together. They set the boundaries or agreements of how we would like to be together. They are the membrane that holds us together. It is very important that these principles be simple, co-owned and well understood. These principles are crisp statements of how we agree to operate so that over the long term we can sustain the relationships that make this work possible.

Once the need and the purpose are in the place and we have agreed on our principles of cooperation, we can begin to identify the **People** who are involved in our work. A first step is to know what is the system we are working with. It is a place to ask both who needs to be here and who wants to be here. This is a place to explore strengths and shadows that we may have as participants in the work.

As we move toward a more concrete idea of what our structures are, we begin to explore the **Concepts** that will be useful. This is a high-level look at the shape of our endeavor. This is the place where we develop ideas for what we can do. It is the opening up of our imagination. The concept is important, because it gives form to different possible structures for doing our work.

We cannot create innovation in the world using old models and approaches. Many of these approaches have become **Beliefs that Limit** creativity. It pays to examine ways in which we assume work gets done in order to discover the new ways that might serve work with new results. Here we can explore what are the beliefs systems – worldviews – in me, the core team, the community or system that could or will get in the way of accomplishing the work so that they don't highjack possibilities. Here is a place to make beliefs visible and allow an awareness of shadow into the dialogue. This is the opportunity to let go.

Once the concept has been chosen and we have explored any limiting beliefs we may hold, it is time to create the **Structure**(s) that will channel our resources. It is in these conversations that we make decisions about the resources of the group: time, money, energy, commitment and attention. Here are the nuts and bolts of the work. The ongoing

practice within the structures we build is important. This is the world of to do lists, conference calls, schedules, budgets and e-mail exchanges.

After all of this it is time to **Act** – to do the work of addressing the need, of fulfilling our purpose.

Finally, there is no point in doing work in the world unless we plan to **Harvest** the fruits of our labors. Harvesting is making meaning of our work, telling the story and feeding forward our results so that they have the desired impacts in the world. We can make meaning (harvest and tell the story of what happened) in many ways: written or oral narrative, poetry, music, dance, drawings, combinations of any of these, and perhaps new ways we are just discovering. It is very important to note that harvesting is an activity that needs to be planned up front, in the spirit of "we are not planning a meeting, we are planning a harvest." (Corrigan, undated) It is important to note here that the reason for using the word "harvest" is to expand our ideas about how information can be captured and the story told beyond the go-to of minutes and reports – although they are also a form of harvest.

The Chaordic Stepping Stones are often thought of as a process planning tool for organizations, projects, events, etc. But, they can also be thought of on a more personal or individual level. One could ask: What does the world need from me? What is my purpose in life? What are the principles by which I will live my life? Who are the people I want to associate with? What concepts are possible for how I will live my life? What limiting beliefs might I hold that prevent me from living the life of purpose and concept I desire? How will I structure my life? Will I live simply, extravagantly, as a farmer, teacher, wanderer or something else? What actions will I take in the world to meet my purpose and address what the world calls for from me? And how will I continually be attentive to what I am learning and how it might affect what my purpose in life is?[165]

[165] This approach to using the Chaordic Stepping for personal inquiry was developed by AoH Steward Stephen Duns.

Essential Hosting Processes

> *It is not so much about the methodologies as it is about the contexts in which we're using them, the harvest, and the implementation that comes after that. When people do not understand the context they can misapply the methodologies and can create hard feelings, bad meetings, or people not really noticing the power of the methodologies. If you get stuck in using these methodologies as 'tools', then you are a mechanic.* (Chris Corrigan quoted in The Weave, Meisterheim, S. Cretney & A. Cretney, 2011: 10)

Art of Hosting practices center on a set of core methodologies that have been developed by people committed to good dialogue and, perhaps more importantly, to making a difference in the world. Many of these practices have been in use for several years and practiced around the world by the AoH community. I have selected several for inclusion here to demonstrate the range of methodologies within the Art of Hosting praxeology. These practices are designed to engage a group of people (large or small) in meaningful conversations where their collective wisdom and intelligence can be engaged in service to finding the best solutions for a common purpose.

There are some basic principles or qualities that are common to all these methodologies:

- *They offer a simple structure that helps to engage small or large groups in conversations that can lead to results.*
- *They each have their special advantages and limitations.*
- *They are usually based on dialogue, with intentional speaking (speaking when you really have something to say) and attentive listening (listening to understand) as basic practices, allowing us to go on an exploration and discovery together, rather than trying to convince each other of our own present truths.*
- *We are asked to suspend assumptions and listen without bias (or with less bias) and to examine our own present truths.*
- *Circle is the basic organizational form, whether used as the only form (Ex. The Circle Way) or used as many smaller conversation circles, woven into a bigger conversation (Ex. World Café, Open Space Technology, ProAction Café).*
- *Meeting in a circle is a meeting of equals. Generally all these methodologies*

inspire peer-to-peer discovery and learning.

- *Inquiry or powerful questions are a driving force.*
- *The purpose of all this is to "think well together," that is to engage the collective intelligence for better solutions.*
- *Facilitating these engagements or conversations is more like stewarding or "hosting," allowing the solutions to emerge from the wisdom in the middle. Hosting well requires a certain proficiency in the four-fold practice.*
- *There are a number of conditions that need to be in place for engagement to work well, especially clarity of need and purpose.*

PeerSpirit Circle Practice

The Circle, or council, is an ancient form of meeting that has gathered human beings into respectful conversations for thousands of years. In some areas of the world this tradition remains intact, but in some societies it has been all but forgotten. The Circle Way is a modern methodology developed by Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea that calls on this tradition and helps people gather in conversations that fulfill their potential for dialogue, replenishment and wisdom-based change.

One of the beautiful things about circle is its adaptability to a variety of groups, issues, and timeframes. Circle can be the process used for the duration of a gathering, particularly if the group is relatively small and time for deep reflection is a primary aim. Circle can also be used as a means for "checking in" and "checking out" or a way of making decisions together, particularly decisions based on consensus. (Baldwin & Linnea, 1998, 2010)

World Café

The World Café is an intentional way to create a living network of conversations around questions that matter. It is a methodology that enables people (from 12 to 1200 to several thousand) to think together and intentionally create new, shared meaning and collective insight. The process of bringing the diverse perspectives and ideas together can really give a group a sense of their own intelligence and insight that is larger than the sum of the parts. One can use the World Café with as little as an hour, or convene a gathering over several days.

The World Café is based on a core assumption that the knowledge and wisdom that we need is already present and accessible. Working with the World Café, we can bring out the collective wisdom of the group - greater than the sum of its individual parts - and channel it towards positive change. (Brown & Isaacs, 2005)

Open Space Technology

Open Space Technology allows groups, large or small, to self-organize to effectively deal with complex issues in a very short time. Participants create and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions around a central theme of strategic importance. An Open Space meeting can last from two hours to several days. When people gather they co-create the agenda of the meeting together, allowing it to be shaped by the passion and interest of the people.

The greater the diversity, the higher the potential for real breakthrough and innovative outcomes. It works particularly well in moving from planning to action, where real action is facilitated by people stepping in and taking responsibility where they care. Open Space is all about handing the responsibility back to people themselves. Two core questions characterizing Open Space are: “What do you really want to do,” and “Why don’t you take care of it?” (Owen, 1997; Corrigan, undated)

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach and process that turns problem-solving on its head. Instead of finding the best ways to solve a pressing problem, it places the focus on identifying the best of what already is in an organization or community, and finding ways of enhancing this to pursue dreams and possibilities of what could be.

Appreciative Inquiry can be used in several ways – as an AI summit where an organization, community or any system comes together for 2-6 days to go through the full AI process with the aim to engage in a large scale change or developmental process. It could be strategic planning, community development, systems change, organizational redesign, vision development, or any other process in which there is a genuine desire for change and growth based on positive inquiry, and for allowing the voice of people at all levels of a system to be heard and included. Appreciative Inquiry can also be done without

an AI summit as an on-going process of interviews and dialogues that take place throughout a system, organization, community, or city. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003; Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Kelm, 2005)

Theory U

The dominant response to problems in modern society is to “fix it”. When faced with current levels of complexity and uncertainty, rushing to solutions is rarely wise. Theory U offers an alternative approach. Based on the work of Otto Scharmer, Theory U encourages taking a detour and acknowledging that we don’t yet know the best way to proceed. It can define a simple pathway to powerful collective discovery. It begins with exploring the system in new and diverse ways to understand the system, creates a space for collective retreat, where insight and commitment can emerge and allows the insights to be tested, experimented and eventually scaled up.

Theory U emerged from conversations with dozens of top innovators around the world as an archetypal path to systemic renewal that can be intentionally stewarded. It has 3 key movements: 1) sensing: a deep immersion to understand the system cognitively, emotionally and intuitively from many angles. 2) presencing: retreating from the chaos to a quiet place where inner knowing and commitment can surface. 3) realizing: bringing new interventions and approaches into being through creating small experiments that can scale up into the new normal for a given system. (Scharmer, 2007) These movements can experienced as an individual and/or as a collective.

As many of us have worked with Theory U in designing and implementing projects, we have come to see Theory U as the journey and Art of Hosting as the operating system. This has been very helpful in integrating these two approaches in an effective process.

ProAction Café

The concept of ProAction Café is a blend of 'World Café' and 'Open Space' technologies. The ProAction Café is a practice that supports creative and action oriented conversation where participants are invited to bring a project, idea or question they are holding and welcome the wisdom of the group to help them manifest it in the world.

As a conversational process, the ProAction Café is a collective, innovative methodology for hosting conversations that link and build on each other as people move between café tables, cross-pollinating ideas, and offering each other new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, organization or community. Participants can call a project idea or offer insight into the project ideas of others. It is not necessary that table participants know anything about the project they are contributing their thoughts to as richness often emerges from the questions people ask that generate new thinking.

As a planning process, the ProAction Café can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people's capacity for effective action in pursuit of good work. ProAction Café can be used with a network of people and/or as a methodology for a group, organization or community to engage in creative and inspirational conversation leading to wiser and more collectively informed actions. (Baeck & von Leoprechting, 2010)

Harvesting[166]

Two key aphorisms within the Art of Hosting practice are "Never meet unless you plan to harvest your learnings." and "You are not planning a meeting; you are instead planning a harvest." In practice this means knowing what is needed and planning the process accordingly. This is not to say that all harvests have to be visible. Sometimes the meeting intention can be just to create learning and, if it is, then it is important to support that personal learning with good questions and to practice personal harvesting. Sometimes the intention of the meeting is to build relationships and, if it is, then it is important to support relationship building through practices that bring people together. And when the intent is to produce or harvest tha a tangible (physical) product like a plan, report, statement, movie, dance, presentation, etc. it is essential to be clear about this at the start and design the work accordingly.

To harvest well, it is important to start thinking about the harvest from the very beginning and not as an afterthought. Thus, planning the harvest starts with and accompanies the

[166] In the AoH community the word harvest is intentional when referring to preparing and presenting the outcomes of a meeting, project, etc. Harvest is seen as a process of making collective sense and meaning and creating a collective memory of what happened and this can take many forms, certainly a typical written report, but it can also be a picture, a narrative story, a poem, a song a dance or anything else that helps us share the meaning making of the work with others.

design process. A clear purpose and some success criteria for the process of the harvest itself will add clarity and direction.

An important question in designing a harvest is “What would be useful and add value and in which form would it serve best? So part of planning the harvest is also knowing *for whom*, *when* and *how* you need to use it. Another part of the planning is asking in which format the harvest will serve best.

Art of Hosting and Harvesting practices offers that to harvest well there are four things to be aware of:

- ***Create an artifact.*** *Harvesting is about making knowledge visible. Make a mind map, draw pictures, take notes, but whatever you choose, create a record of the conversation.*
- ***Have a feedback loop.*** *Artifacts are useless if they sit on the shelf. Know how the harvest will be used before beginning a meeting. Is it going into the system? Will it create questions for a future meeting? Is it to be shared with people as news and learning? Figure it out and make plans to share the harvest.*
- ***Be aware of both intentional and emergent harvest.*** *Harvest answers to the specific questions being asked, but also make sure that attention is paid to the cool stuff that is emerging in good conversations. There is real value in what’s coming up that none could anticipate. Harvest it.*
- ***The more a harvest is co-created, the more it is co-owned.*** *Don’t just appoint a secretary, note taker or a scribe. Invite people to co-create the harvest. Place paper in the middle of the table so that everyone can reach it. Hand out Post-it notes so people can capture ideas and add them to the whole. Bring a creative spirit to finding ways to have the group host their own harvest.* (Corrigan & Nissen, undated)

Other Practices/Methodologies

It is important to note that there are many other practices or methodologies that are often included within an Art of Hosting workbook that are not discussed here. They include 8 little helpers, collective mind mapping, action learning, consensus decision-making,

reflective practices, listening practices, meeting design and methods for working in teams among others.

Epistemology

How do we know what we know? How do we acquire knowledge? What language should we use to acquire knowledge and what are its limitations? Does the Art of Hosting offer an epistemology? When asking active Art of Hosting practitioners these questions, the most common answer is 'we know what we know through practice.' In other words, AoH is all about the practice. To be sure, many of the practices have been written about and even described as models or frameworks as evidenced by much of what is written in this chapter, yet there is very little that did not emerge first out of practice and learning. One could say that the Art of Hosting's theory of knowledge is practice. As Toke Moeller often says "The practice is the work."

Traditionally, an epistemology allows us to distinguish better theories from worse theories. It answers the age-old philosophical question: What is true and what is false? An Art of Hosting theory of knowledge is closer to what we described earlier regarding the nature of living systems. "*Nature is not intent on finding perfect solutions, but workable solutions. 'Life is intent on finding what works, not what is right.'"* In AoH we are interested in what works more than an absolute of true and false. And what works is generally context dependent. In AoH we do not host practices to find what is true or false, but what works to find ways forward. This can vary by issue, culture, context, who is present and even by who is hosting. I offer that we operate from what Dian Marie Hosking would call a "relational epistemology" where "entities, knowledge, power" are "constructions made in ongoing relational processes." (Hosking, 2010)

I would offer then that for Art of Hosting, practice drives theory instead of theory drives practice. In Art of Hosting we explore, act, reflect, learn, act some more and continue this learning cycle until a practice feels true and grounded. As Hosking offers "'theory' is not the point, nor is theory testing" rather "practice is intended to have practical effects and to develop practical wisdom." (Hosking, 2011: 22)

Perhaps the closest application of an Art of Hosting theory of knowledge can be found in the three steps in Theory U – sensing, presencing and realizing. We have a problem to

work on, an idea to develop, or an opportunity to pursue. Theory U offers a path of action or journey and AoH is the operating system.[167]

The first step in acquiring knowledge is to sense, which can be characterized as 'observe, observe, observe.' It is the movement down the left side of the U. As Scharmer describes this movement down the U, we first open our minds to discovering data/information that is disconfirming to what we currently believe or understand. Then we open our hearts to seeing the world through the eyes of others and finally we open our will or spirit up to that something larger that wants to emerge in the world. With this fullness of 'information' we retreat, reflect, let go and become open to what comes.[168] This is the step at the bottom of the U. Scharmer once described this to me as a landing field for the future that wants to emerge. Then once that emergent seed of an idea comes we move up the right hand side of the U, testing, failing, learning, repeating the learning cycle – sometime called fail early, fail often, fail forward – until we have the knowledge or understanding or solution we were seeking.

In a more philosophical or theoretical vein, I would offer that Art of Hosting and social/relational constructionism share a similar approach to epistemology. As noted in Chapter 4, for the social constructionist, knowledge comes from community.[169] This is similar to the AoH perspective that knowledge comes from practice within community. While AoH practices and patterns have a 'universality' about them, they are understood and applied with local contexts. They become real when the context, social groups or community they are applied in agrees that they are true.

For AoH, then, the social context of application and the meanings applied to the patterns and practices becomes epistemologically fundamental. Additionally, as for the

[167] Duns suggests that a better theory of knowledge to offer here would be divergence-emergence-convergence.

[168] Many of us compare this to those moments in the shower in the morning or driving in our car when we have let go of something we've been working on and suddenly the kernel of an idea emerges.

[169] Woolf offers "…sourced from the experience of being together...for the group???...for the individual. I have this experience often. At an event. I'm thinking about design for one of my events coming up. It is in the background of my brain. In the company of the group, I get what the design is. It feels simple. Easy. Clear. Good. Sourced from the experience. AND, sometimes I don't do anything with it. I think to myself, I'll never forget this. It is too simple. Yet, when the group is done and goes its ways, I can't recall the design that felt so clear."

constructionist, in the Art of Hosting knowledge is not something that is first created before it is communicated, but "that the process of creating and communicating knowledge are inextricably intertwined." (Warmoth, 2000)

An Art of Hosting epistemology is one of ongoing co-creation of knowledge which bridges well with a constructionist epistemology. My experience as a host affirms this in two ways. First, as a host I always approach my work, whether it is offering a workshop/training or hosting/facilitating a conversation, with the perspective that there is wisdom in the room that will offer new learning and understanding of the processes I am using or patterns I am explaining.[170] I have had firefighters offer new perspectives on the chaordic path; people working with homeless families offer new understanding of divergence-emergence-convergence; people of other cultures bring new lenses or language to patterns and much more. Second, I have heard many stories of how the patterns and practices offered in AoH have been used in new and creative ways, bringing greater depth to the usefulness and power of them. We often teach that AoH patterns and practices have a melody to them and from there we can improvise or riff on the melody to either apply the patterns or practices in new ways or co-create new ways of contextualizing them. Thus, knowledge or knowing or what people/social groups hold to be real or true is fundamentally a social process and can be seen as the common or shared property of a culture. As hosts working in differing local contexts, it is essential that we hold this awareness.

Perhaps in its purist form, the Art of Hosting's theory of knowledge is based on the simple proposition that human beings have enormous untapped wealth and resilience and that the knowledge to find our way forward lies in the wisdom between us.[171] (AoH website)

[170] This approach is also true for the colleagues I have co-hosted with. But I cannot assume it is universal.

[171] Duns offers that this whole section leaves him a little uncomfortable. He offers that there is a mix of thoughts swimming around in his mind:

- The anti-intellectualism of the AoH community
- The fact that the theoretical base(s) are taken from s range of different ideas rather than being developed for AoH specifically
- The lack of (decent) research into the effectiveness of AoH programs and processes

He suggest it is important to say that various elements of AoH have solid epistemological bases, but AoH itself has not yet developed its own; and that given the solid bases upon which it sits there is a likely sound epistemology, but it is too early to tell.

A Deep Learning

Writing this chapter has been a wonderful learning experience for me. It has deepened my understanding of the Art of Hosting practices and patterns. It has opened up possibilities for thinking about an Art of Hosting worldview and further thinking in general about worldviews. It has brought a practitioners perspective to the many philosophical questions contained in an exploration of ontology, explanation, axiology, futurology, praxeology and epistemology. I would offer that it can be easy to get lost in the mind when thinking about philosophical questions and lose sight of the importance of including the heart and spirit in these explorations. The work here of deconstructing an Art of Hosting worldview was, for me, an invitation to include them. It is my hope that my interpretations here will spark lively conversations within the AoH community that are full of learning, creativity, care, and love and move us forward as dialogue practitioners seeking to make a difference in whatever context we place our work.

Chapter Six – Survey Results and Reflections

Each of us is connected into networks of relationships and communities and thus differing ways of talking and acting and making sense (McNamee, 2000). My connections of relationships are impacting this dissertation and my perspectives on the use of worldviews in hosting practice. As I wrote I began to realize that if this dissertation is, in part, an invitation to the Art of Hosting network to further exploration on worldviews, then I could invite people in the AoH network to share their perspectives about whether there is an AoH worldview and their perspectives on my conclusions about an AoH worldview resulting in a poly-vocality or a multi-voiced nature to this writing.

This chapter presents a summary of two surveys I conducted with members of the Art of Hosting listserv, understanding that the summary reflects my interpretations of what is important to include within it.[172] As is the case with many listservs, there are a limited number of active contributors and a large number of more silent readers who often benefit from the online dialogues and information shared. The AoH listserv has about 1200 members of which about 100 are active contributors. The surveys offered me an opportunity to be in conversation (in a more formal way) with the AoH community, especially those that hold a strong interest in any research or writing about the Art of Hosting or those who have perspectives on the deepening of hosting practices. (McNamee, 2000) Many of the respondents are hosting friends and so I have a personal connection to them and feel we shared in this writing/exploration in many ways. (McNamee, 2000; Gergen and Gergen, 2012) The results are presented here. Importantly, the voices I've heard have influenced my thinking about an Art of Hosting worldview and impacted the conclusion I offer in Chapter Seven. (McNamee, 2000)

Both surveys began with asking participants some basic demographic information and to identify their level of Art of Hosting experience. A summary of this information provided by respondents is provided in Appendix A. I conducted the survey online using Survey Monkey. Both surveys were sent out to the entire listserv. All responses were anonymous.

[172] It may be helpful here to have a sense of timing of writing and surveys. I began working on Chapter 5 in August 2011. After I developed the initial deconstruction of the Art of Hosting into the Apostel framework I developed Survey 1 and sent it to the AoH network in October 2011. I completed my first full draft of Chapter 5 in January 2012. I developed and sent Survey 2 to the AoH network in September 2013. I completed the final draft of Chapter 5 in October 2013.

The first survey began by asking respondents if they thought there was a worldview shared in the AoH community. It then asked six questions based on the Apostel framework for worldview components. The questions were general and did not name the specific components. The survey concluded with space for additional comments. Sixty people responded to survey one.

In the second survey sent eight months later I only asked questions using the six Apostel components and naming them by their philosophical names (ontology, explanation, axiology, epistemology, futurology, praxeology, etc.). I provided a definition of each term and a brief list of the AoH patterns and practices I felt fit into each worldview component. The survey ended with a space for additional comments.

Twenty-two people responded to survey two of which only seven responded to Survey One.

Survey One

What follows are the seven core questions in the first survey and a summary of the responses for each question and a summary of the additional comments.

1) Do you think there is an (Art of Hosting) worldview shared in the AoH community? If yes, for you, what are key elements of that worldview? If no, why not?

Thirty respondents answered yes, two no, fifteen maybe, two don't know and eleven skipped the question. Everyone that answered yes offered a comment or reflection. The two that answered no and the two that answered don't know did not offer any comments. Of the fifteen that answered maybe all but two offered comments.

I identified two major themes offered in the comments or reflections of the respondents to this question regarding an AoH worldview, that the world, groups or organizations are living systems and that cooperation or collaboration works. The idea of a living system

worldview was often characterized as a paradigm, metaphor or way of thinking. Related to this theme were several comments that an AoH worldview included views that systems are self-organizing, we are part of an interdependent, interconnected reality and that there is a connectedness of all living systems.

Collaboration and cooperation were offered as ways to work together better and more successfully and that this was a core part of an Art of Hosting worldview. Related to this theme were suggestions that people are yearning for connection and relationship, that collective wisdom or intelligence is greater than the individual, and that groups are the form of the future. Participatory leadership, co-creation, engage everyone, and leadership is everywhere were also often mentioned and connect well to this theme.

There were a number of other minor themes in an AoH worldview that were mentioned including a recognition of energetic and invisible relational fields, that we operate in a chaotic or chaordic environment, that we are working with emergence, that being present or understanding presence is important, and that meaningful dialogue and conversations matter.

2) Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a description of how the world functions and how it is structured? If yes, for you, what are key elements of this description? If no, why not?

Nineteen respondents answered yes, eight no, seventeen maybe, three don't know and thirteen skipped the question. Everyone that answered yes offered a comment or reflection. Four of the eight that answered no offered comments. None of the three that answered don't know offered any comments. Of the seventeen that answered maybe twelve offered comments.

Many respondents remarked that this question seemed very similar to the previous one. A review of the answers supports this. The major themes were that the world is a living system, that living systems are self-organizing and that there is a chaordic process at work in the world. These three themes were mentioned in a significant majority of the comments of those that answered yes or maybe. A minor theme that came up and similar

to the first question was collaboration. The idea being that collaboration is a better approach to work.

A theme in those that answered maybe was that AoH didn't necessarily offer a specific description of how the world functions, but it did offer an alternative to the mechanistic view of the world. Of those that answered no, the primary comment was that people involved with Art of Hosting hold many differing views and so there is not a specific AoH worldview.

3) Do you think the Art of Hosting offers an explanation of how we got here? Or why the world is the way it is? If yes, for you, what are key elements of that explanation? If no, why not?

Nine respondents answered yes, sixteen no, twenty-one maybe, two don't know and twelve skipped the question. Everyone that answered yes offered a comment or reflection. Five of the sixteen that answered no offered comments. Neither of the two that answered don't know offered any comments. Of the twenty-one that answered maybe eleven offered comments.

There was one major theme to the answers to this question and that was that we got to today through a mechanistic view of the world and specifically a view of humans as machines. A related, but smaller, theme centered on the four organizational paradigms often discussed in AoH trainings. And another related theme was the suggestion that circle (practice) itself was central to how we got here.

The remaining comments were quite varied, although a few suggested that we are in a time of transition. There was also a minor theme around ancient spiritual traditions, God, eastern philosophies, ancient wisdom, as explaining how we got to today. And, as with the previous questions, the ideas of living systems, chaos/order, chaordic field, a roadmap forward, interdependence, and need to include diverse stakeholders in our work were mentioned by a few.

4) Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a description of the future? Of where we are going or can go? If yes, for you, what are key elements of that description? If no, why not?

Twenty-seven respondents answered yes, seven no, thirteen maybe and three skipped the question. All but one that answered yes offered a comment or reflection. Five of the seven that answered no offered comments. Of the thirteen that answered maybe eight offered comments.

This question elicited several longer responses with some being quite direct in their comments. There were two major themes in the comments, one is that AoH does not offer a specific future but a pathway or process to an emergent future and a second that people have the wisdom to find a good way forward. The first major theme was in a majority of the comments made by those that answered yes, no or maybe. There was strong sentiment that AoH does not, should not and must not offer a specific description of the future. Instead, AoH offers a process or pathway into a possible future. It holds the seeds of a potential future. A sub-theme here was that of process and emergence, this allowing what wants to emerge to emerge rather than trying to create a pre-determined future.

The second major theme is strongly related to the first and, like in the first theme, this perspective was offered by those answering yes, no and maybe. People have the wisdom and knowledge to find a way forward, i.e. into the future that wants to emerge. Humans have enormous untapped wisdom to do the right thing. Solutions are not known and we can sit with the not-knowing as we work together to support the future that wants to emerge. Interestingly, there is a strong sense that the future will be a positive one for people and planet. A sub-theme here is that of participatory processes to tap into human wisdom. AoH supports a future where all voices are welcome and heard; where participatory leadership or democracy is in active use; and that through dialogue and conversation we can work across difference to co-create or shape our collective future.

The few more specific descriptions of the future that were offered connected to previous themes. They included: the world is a living system, we are all interconnected, and relationships matter.

5) Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a set of values, a morality or set of ethics? If yes, for you, what are some of those key values or ethics? If no, why not?

Twenty nine respondents answered yes, five no, eight maybe and eighteen skipped the question. All but two that answered yes offered a comment or reflection. None of the five that answered offered comments. Of the eight that answered maybe three offered comments.

Four major themes emerged from the comments regarding this question, with one in particular being predominant. Nearly all of those that offered comments included something about inclusion, acceptance of difference, every voice matters, diversity, and worth of all humans or life forms. This theme of inclusivity and acceptance of all voices is one of the strongest themes in answers to all the questions. This is considered a powerful value within the Art of Hosting. A closely related theme is that of mutual respect for each other, love and respect for everyone and a respect for individual contributions to collective wisdom.[173]

A second major theme is that of doing good or being in service to a common or greater good, which showed up in several comments. No one, however, identified a specific greater good other than the general notion of service to humanity. A related major theme to this is a belief in human goodness. Within this theme is the recognition of the importance of bringing our hearts into the work, being compassionate towards others and a love for all life.

The fourth major theme is that relationship and friendship are important. We are all in relationship with each other. We are interconnected. Attention to our relationships with

[173] AoH Steward Kathy Jourdain noted here that this theme of inclusion and acceptance of all voice is also one of the most significant contributors to shadow in AoH. Not everyone feels included and many of those people take themselves out of the network, feeling their voice is not heard. Saying we want all voices to be heard also often gives the impression of complete equality which has the network generally valuing skill and expertise less than when there is greater clarity about value differentiation in the network.

everyone, whether friends, new acquaintances or strangers is important. For some, relationship also includes all life forms/entities and not just humans.[174]

A number of other values were offered, mostly individually, including honesty, integrity, courage, collaboration, justice, curiosity over judgment and generosity.

6) Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a set of principles or practices around which we organize our actions? If yes, for you, what are some of those key principles or practices? If no, why not?

Thirty-five respondents answered yes, six maybe and nineteen skipped the question. All but two that answered yes offered a comment or reflection. Of the six that answered maybe three offered comments.

Comments made by respondents to this question can be divided into two general areas, practices and principles, which is not a surprise given the structure of the question. There was general agreement that the Art of Hosting offers a set of practices around which we can organize actions. Most practices mentioned are the same ones generally taught during an Art of Hosting workshop: Circle, World Café, Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space Technology, Chaordic Stepping Stones, Harvesting, crafting powerful questions, using a talking piece and listening with attention and talking with intention. One or more of these practices were mentioned by most of the respondents.

There was also a general expression that each of the practices contained principles that inform how we act together. Several mentioned the PeerSpirit Circle Practice, World Café, Open Space and Appreciative Inquiry principles as important to organizing our actions. Additional and related principles that were mentioned including shared purpose matters, being attentive to creating a safe (enough) container, we are working with living systems (showing up here again), we are working in a chaordic space, the knowledge to find the

[174] Jourdain offered that this value of relationship or friendship is another part of shadow as there is not a unilateral sense of friendship – we are not friends with everyone but there are constellations of relationship. The notion of everyone being friends leads to exclusion, confusion and hurt in the network.

way forward is in the room, good questions are essential, deep listening is essential, friendship matters, and hosting self/self-care is important.

7) Do you think the Art of Hosting offers an explanation of how we know what we know? Of how we construct our pictures of the present, past and future? If yes, for you, what are key elements of that explanation? If no, why not?

Seven respondents answered yes, eleven no, sixteen maybe, six don't know and twenty skipped the question. Everyone that answered yes offered a comment or reflection. Three of the eleven that answered no offered comments. One of the six that answered don't know offered a comment. Of the sixteen that answered maybe eight offered comments.

There were not any strong themes that emerged from the answers to this question. Perhaps this is not surprising as I expressed in Chapter 5, this is one of the Apostel worldview components where Art of Hosting is not strong. A few respondents did remark that they did not see how AoH offers an explanation of how we know what we know, including one comment stating that "I don't think we have really moved to the next level of working with epistemologies." The ways that were offered regarding how we know what we know included being in dialogue, relationships or conversations with others, doing individual and collective reflection, intuition or intuitive levels of knowing, connecting and learning through the sharing of stories, and opening our minds and hearts to what wants to emerge.

Additional comments.

Respondents were offered an opportunity to offer any additional comments they may have. While comments were limited, there were a few themes within them. One is the idea that Art of Hosting is a way of life and a second, and related theme, is that we are a web connected through the world and 'we are one people'. I would offer that in looking at the totality of responses for the seven questions, not everyone agrees with this perspective, but it did consistently emerge in one or two comments in all seven questions. Another theme was a general sense that it would be helpful if AoH could describe its worldview and recognize that there is likely a range of views within the AoH network regarding an

AoH worldview. Two comments stand out for me as reflective of the comments shared: “There are a number of different theories and descriptors of worldview ‘taxonomies’. I see AoH as somewhere in the range of worldviews that get described as ‘participatory’, ‘emergent’, and ‘relational theory’.” and “I think there are important, but largely unsurfaced, connections/parallels in terms of worldview between the AoH worldview and Humanism, as well as with quantum science. Also, I think AoH practices would benefit from being discussed through the framework of relational psychology/consciousness studies.” Finally, throughout the answers to the seven questions it was clear that not everyone agrees that AoH has a worldview. This perspective is best reflected in this additional comment “I don't think that the Art of Hosting offers a worldview. I think that it is a set of principles and practices also found in other facilitation methodologies, and which are applied by people with positive intent. Working with these principles and practices can lead to positive outcomes for participants and practitioners.” (Which in itself could be considered a worldview)

Survey Two

What follows are the six core questions in the second survey and a summary of the responses for each question and a summary of the additional comments.

1) I would offer that an Art of Hosting worldview provides a description of how the world functions – an ontology. This description is comprised of a living systems view of the world, that emergence is how local changes become systems of influence, and that there are paradoxes, the chaordic path, the divergence-emergence-convergence process, the four organizational paradigms and fractals at work in the world. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of how the world currently functions? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?

Sixteen respondents offered reflections on the question and six did not.

As was the case with Survey One, several people responded that the concept of self-organization or that self-organizing systems move to a higher level is a core part of an AoH worldview. A second strong theme in the comments is the belief in practice, i.e.

central to an AoH worldview is that we practice. Art of Hosting is about doing the work. It is action or practice. Several respondents simply said that what I offered was a good statement of the AoH worldview or that what was written seemed accurate. There were a few single answers that mentioned the Four-Fold Practice, that there is a commonality to all human beings, that there are social archetypes that span cultures and have evolved over time, that the AoH view is primarily one of relationship, and that the emergence/complexity paradigm is really key.

There were two lengthy answers that I think are worth including here. One offered: "Any community has enough knowledge and resources to begin to create something new. Dialog reveals what is present, and often hidden from view, in any community. When we listen deeply to each other we begin to find the directions we need to move and the next minimum steps. When we begin to move and when we connect our local efforts with others, we begin to create conditions for transformation."

The other offered: “I would not describe Art of Hosting as a worldview. I see it working at different levels for different people and each of them is valid. I like the categories that Kegan and Lahey offer of technical, adaptive and transformational. AoH works at each of these levels. Some people use it in the technical sense as a set of tools. Some people use it in an adaptive sense as an approach to solve problems of all sorts. Some people use it in a transformational sense where it does change the way they are in the world. This last use is the closest to a worldview. The problem I have with AoH as an ontology is that it is incomplete. The most compelling point is your one about living systems. The only problem I have is that people who don't "get" the living systems model can still get an awful lot out of AoH. In terms of emergence and change I fear that too often linear change also becomes systems of influence. Yes there are paradoxes, but AoH does not have any claim to this idea and it is potentially not necessary as part of the technical learning process. The Chaordic Path is only one path, and indeed the path between order and control can be just as useful/necessary for some aspects of work/life. Actually in thinking this through the ontology is about quantum and complexity theories, not AoH. The fact that AoH draws on these theories, possibly only at the adaptive and transformational levels, does not make AoH an ontology. Also if we start to judge the level of learning and say that technical learning is not as good as adaptive or transformational then we are excluding the majority of participants, and maybe even practitioners, from the worldview.”

2) I would offer that the Art of Hosting does not give great attention to explaining the past or how we got here. That the primary explanation offered is that past in the western world is characterized by a mechanistic view of how the world operates and is outlined in the chart in the workbooks comparing 'Traditional ways of working' with 'Art of Hosting complementing ways'. The Art of Hosting also does not explicitly speak to other non-western cultural views or explanations of the past. How would you describe an Art of Hosting explanation of the past or of how we got here? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?

Sixteen respondents offered reflections on the question and six did not.

The most common comment offered for Question Two was one of agreement with what I described. More than half the respondents specifically made a comment of agreement. One respondent agreed with what I offered and also stated that this is a major critique of AoH practice. They noted that "lineage, tradition, ritual, and ancestor connection is an important part of SOME AoH practitioner's worldview and practice." This perspective connects with another similar one shared which offered that "hosting is a protocultural movement: it comes from deep history, predating the mechanistic world view." Two other comments are worth noting when considering Question Two: "Some of the teachings associated with AoH explain the past especially the western past but the practices are what they are because they focus us on the now collectively." and "The past is with us only as we recall it in the present, along with whatever ripples are still present. That means it's mutable and malleable - views of the past can be reconstructed with a narrative perspective to offer new possibilities in the present and future."

3) I would offer that the Art of Hosting offers a limited perspective on a future – a futurology. What is described is a world where we have participatory leadership, more intergenerational connections, local communities are connecting with each other and the 5th paradigm is emergent. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of the future or what could be ahead of us? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?

Sixteen respondents offered reflections on the question and six did not.[175]

Several respondents offered that AoH does not work in what we might think of as the future, but instead works with emergence or the 'now'. Most of these respondents connected working with complexity with working with emergence. Several in fact presented this as 'complexity/emergence'. When writing about working with emergence comments included: "From a complexity/emergence perspective, the future is unknowable but somehow recognizable." "If we are truly working in an emergent way - how can you predict the future? To lay out a path far ahead would be risky and a more linear approach." "AoH for me is working with emergence (& collective intelligence)." and "Working the complexity, emergence, energetic patterns, to see what wants to emerge. I don't think it tries to predict the future other than what you have offered." Somewhat different, but also related to this theme of emergence were comments that we are co-creating the future.

Several respondents disagreed with my inclusion of the 5th Paradigm as part of an AoH futurology. Most weren't sure what it is or even if AoH is sure what it is. One respondent offered that the 5th Paradigm was loose language and preferred the language I used of ""participatory leadership, more intergenerational connections, local communities are connecting with each other."

Finally, I would add that there was a strong element of hope for a future where we interact with each other, working together to bring collective intelligence to the future that wants to emerge. I would also add, although not explicitly offered in the comments for this question, that there is within the AoH network a general perspective that the future will be relational, participatory, connected to nature, sustainable and operating from a living system perspective.

4) I would offer that the Art of Hosting holds a set of values or ethics – an axiology. They are: conversations matter, meaningful conversations lead to wise action, being curious is essential, working in the place of emergence and taking a stance

[175] AoH Steward Stephen Duns inquired if the same six consistently did not offer any reflections. The answer is yes.

of non-judgment or not knowing is essential, diverse perspectives open up new possibilities, as practitioners we work toward the common good, we work to co-create friendship and partnership, self-awareness is essential as a host, ceremony can hold an important role in the work, participation by all is central to the work, we show up fully present, and the practice is the work. How would you describe an Art of Hosting set of values or ethics? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?

Fifteen respondents offered reflections on the question and seven did not.

Different from the previous responses to the questions, respondents here offered suggestions for values/beliefs to be included in the list I offered. These included: put more emphasis on the art of questioning, inviting participation by all is central to the work and whoever shows up are the right people, purpose in the center is the truest leader and motivator of the group, including diversity is a high value, trusting people to make their own best decisions, and include the Community of Practice and intersection of relationships, good work, and practice here. One respondent noted “that self-awareness is essential as a host, but that the hosting of self is a key practice and that each practitioner’s hosting will be unique to their own learning, skills, curiosities, and experience.” One respondent offered that they were not sure how capable they were at holding a stance of "not knowing" as their own knowing (however inadequate) is the basis for making any sense and meaning. They suggested that real curiosity and willingness to change one’s views, have empathy and allow themselves to be influenced are vital.

There were a few expressed differences of opinion. One respondent offered that the statement "we work to co-create friendship and partnership" did not ring fully true for them, suggesting that in some circumstances this is possible, but the more complexity and diversity there is "in the room", the more inclined they were to go for "peaceful co-existence". They stated that “we may not become friends but can we live and let live - and have enough respect for the diversity to co-exist!!”

There were a few expressions of uncertainty regarding the difference between a value and a belief. One respondent offered “I still have difficulty distinguishing what is a value

and what is a belief. I agree with and love all these statements. AND, for me, for whatever reason, they are beliefs, not values."

Finally, I would like to include here the full response from one respondent as it eloquently captures the challenge of differentiating between values, beliefs and assumptions. "I think maybe you are drawing a long-ish bow here. I guess it depends on what is meant by values. If it's just what we think is important (an OK definition) then you are probably pretty close to the mark. To me values are more foundational than that and are more those things we use to determine if we are on track - if the compass is heading due north if that metaphor makes sense. I would therefore draw a distinction between values and assumptions. Some of the things you list seem to be more on the assumptions end, especially conversations matter, meaningful conversations lead to wise action, diverse perspectives open up new possibilities (isn't this just constructivism? back to ontology - and critically important in that space) and maybe a few others. You no doubt get the drift. Other things that are more on the foundational values end with regard to AoH are the common good/humanity, curiosity, clarity of purpose, presence and collective intelligence/wisdom. In relation to non-judgment there is a little bell ringing for me about principles here too. Knowing your center ("Sword in the ground" I can hear Toke saying) and other values allow us to make judgments. Some ideas are bad and a group might need to be called on that. To me that is different to being open to not knowing."

5) I would offer that the Art of Hosting has a set practices or methodologies around which we organize our actions – a praxeology. This set of methodologies includes the: Four-Fold Practice, Multiple Levels of Focus, Powerful Questions, 7 Breaths of Design, Chaordic Stepping Stones, PeerSpirit Circle Process, Open Space Technology, World Café, Appreciative Inquiry, Theory U, ProAction Café, Harvesting and Storytelling. What would you include in the Art of Hosting set of practices or methodologies – its praxeology? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?

Fourteen respondents offered reflections on the question and eight did not.

Several respondents offered that they agreed with this listing of methodologies in the question. Two commented that they would not have included Multiple Levels of Focus if

they were making the list, but agreed that it should be included. Several noted that for them the key word is ‘practice’ when associated with methodology. Another noted that we should not view the set of practices as fixed. Instead, through the creativity and learning of AoH practitioners, new practices are uncovered or developed and then spread throughout the community of practice. One respondent noted that they don’t think of all of them as methodologies and suggested that perhaps the first five on the list are more analytics than methodologies. One respondent noted that in Japan they are turning their emphasis to qualities of inner being given their experience that people learn the methodologies and then try to get the practice right but lack the spirit. Another respondent noted that they felt strongly that there is a difference between patterns and methodologies, suggesting that Circle, Appreciative Inquiry, storytelling and powerful questions are closer to patterns and that the others on the list are methodologies.[176]

One respondent offered that they have never really been convinced of the importance of 'harvesting'. They suggested that “It's much more important that the event lives on in the lives and actions of those involved, rather than as a set of written-up flip charts. These lose their power and potency very quickly. Also, taking an emergent view, why should the harvest from one place be directly applicable in another? Which is not to say that sharing is not vital, more of that 'sharing' implies that the material will be used, whereas 'harvesting' sounds more like it's put in a barn and stored against a rainy day or something.”

Finally, I am including all of one longer, thoughtful reflection as I think it is important to our thinking about this methodology component of an AoH worldview. The respondent offered; “In one sense I feel that there is no limit as long as the methodologies used are in resonance with life. For me the central practice is the Four-Fold Practice because all the rest can fit into that. For me AoH is not about methodologies but about the host, where are we coming from and how are we holding the process. Then we can look at what tools are appropriate. For me the Four-Fold Practice is like a zen-practice, you are never done. You just keep staying in the now. i.e., 0) where are you coming from, worldview if you wish; 1) host yourself means in order to be present be in the now (without judgment, being grounded as much as possible), there are lots of tools and methodologies available here;

[176] Jourdain noted here that instead of these being one or the other, they are perhaps both.

2) be a good participant, engage, all of the Bhomian practices and dialogue practices of attentive listening and intentional speaking, and suspending assumptions are part of this; 3) host others in conversations that matter, all conversational methodologies are here, the more skillfully used the better, context for me determines appropriate choice and use; 5) co-creation, how do you engage with others in co-creating (with or without friends) the blessing of community but also the challenge of diversity and being willing to hang in the groan zone long enough to see the new together. So in terms of methodologies, for me there could be a huge number of others that given a certain context would be useful. I personally try and stay out of dogma (not always easy)."

6) I would offer that the Art of Hosting literature does not specifically address the matter of a theory of knowledge or explanation of how we know what we know – an epistemology. I would offer that the Art of Hosting's theory of knowledge is practice. That practice drives theory instead of theory driving practice. That in Art of Hosting we explore, test, reflect, learn, test some more and continue this learning cycle until a practice feels true and grounded. That perhaps the closest explanation to an Art of Hosting theory of knowledge can be found in the three steps Theory U – sensing, presencing and realizing. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of how we know what we know? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?

Fifteen respondents offered reflections on the question and seven did not.

The majority of respondents expressed agreement with my proposition that in the Art of Hosting practice drives theory rather than theory driving practice and the processes we use to develop knowledge/practices. One respondent noted that this is true in part because the early adaptors/ adopters of AoH are practice oriented and most often are experiential learners and teachers. They also noted, however, that there is a growing body of literature alongside the practices and that reading these books and articles helps ground practitioners in the work, especially since an important part of leadership in such an interactive social field is to provide contextualizing for participants, i.e. to name and frame what is happening so people have a place to stand (or sit) while attending to the flow.

Several respondents either expressed agreement with my suggestion that the closest explanation to an AoH theory of knowledge might be Theory U. Some noted that they hadn't thought of Theory U in this way and found it interesting or added that in addition to Theory U we could include complex adaptive systems as part of the AoH theory of knowledge. One respondent suggested a connection to the Two-loops Model, offering that within the AoH Community of Practice we follow the loop of being individual innovators who connect to form a network who then begin learning together and forming a community of practice, eventually moving into a system of influence. Other related comments included one suggesting that the Four-Fold Practice articulates a theory of how we come to know together and another that reflective practice/action research is a theoretical base.

One respondent offered that from their perspective AoH, perhaps, operates out of Grounded Theory (Glazer and Strauss), or something very close it to. They included in their comment a reflection on the notion of a theory of change, offering that "most times when people spout 'theory of change' they're blowing wind without much depth or rigor" and suggested we could speak of "a few ideas about how change happens."

Finally, one respondent noted Ludwig Wittgenstein's observation that 'mind' is a capability, not a thing. Adding that practice is vital and that this is a know-how rather than a know-what.

Additional comments.

As with Survey One, respondents were offered an opportunity to offer any additional comments they may have.

Only a few respondents offered an additional comment. Each has a uniqueness to them and no specific themes emerged from the comments. I think there is value here in quoting some them directly. "AoH is different practice than we are used to. It is grounded in ancient human wisdom and has a natural familiarity to us, even if the methodologies are new. It may be new, but is not foreign." "The [AoH] worldview does not have an established analysis of power or historical or political understanding of difference in

access to voice. This could be considered a weakness of the practice/worldview or it could be liberating in building the new." "I don't know if this is worldview so much but I am encountering more and more sessions where surfacing pain and grief, discontent and tension is becoming more of a component. Don't know if it's because my own depth as a practitioner is increasing. This leads to healing - AoH as a healing practice. Coming back to relationship human to human. There is something about the relationship piece which feels like it is becoming more prominent." "Personally, I am keen to take a cautious view on some of the more 'esoteric' elements and notice, as a scientist, that the world is quite wonderful enough without needing to invent metaphysical distractions. Beware too much 'energy' talk please!" "I fundamentally question whether AoH is a worldview, or even that there is an AoH worldview. There are intersecting worldviews into which AoH fits. Indeed I wonder if one of the problems of the AoH community is that people attempt to apply it to everything, as a silver bullet, which might have some potentially dangerous consequences."

Survey data summary and analysis

Question Subject	**Survey 1**		**Survey 2**[177]	
Total respondents	60		22	
		% of answers		% of answers
Ontology	47		16	
yes	19	40.4	12	75
no	8	17	2	12.5
maybe	17	36.1	0	
don't know	3	6.4	2	12.5
Explanation	48		16	
yes	9	18.75	7	43.75
no	16	33.33	3	18.75
maybe	21	43.75	5	31.25
don't know	2	4.2	1	6.25
Futurology	47		16	

[177] In Survey 2 I did not ask respondents to offer a yes/no/maybe selection. I asked the to offer a written comment on each question. In order to conduct a comparison between survey one and two I have gone through the comments and assigned a "yes, no, maybe or don't know" to the answers. To assign a yes the answer must be explicit in its "yes" otherwise I either assigned a "maybe" or a "don' know." The no answers were clear. The results of my subjective determination of answers is below.

yes	27	57.4	6	37.5
no	7	14.89	3	18.25
maybe	13	27.66	6	37.5
don't know	0		1	6.25
Axiology	42		15	
yes	29	69	8	53.33
no	5	11.9	1	6.67
maybe	8	19	6	40
don't know	0		0	
Praxeology	41		14	
yes	35	85.36	12	85.71
no	0		0	7.1
maybe	6	14.63	1	7.1
don't know			1	
	0			
Epistemology	40		15	
yes	7	1.75	13	86.67
no	11	27.5	0	
maybe	16	40	1	6.67
don't know	6	15	1	6.67
Shared AoH Worldview	49		NA	
yes	30	61.22		
no	2	4.1		
maybe	15	30.61		
don't know	2	4.1		

Two things stand out for me as I reflect on the comments offered to the surveys, especially given that only seven of the 22 respondents to Survey 2 responded to Survey 1. The first is how similar many of the answers and comments were between the two surveys. Survey 1 was quite general in the questions and Survey 2 quite detailed and yet the same major themes emerged consistently in the answers in both surveys. The second thing that stands out is how lengthy and thoughtful many of the comments were that respondents offered in Survey Two.

An analysis of the summary of the data from the surveys (the yes/no/maybe/don't know) indicate that there is general, albeit not conclusive, sentiment that there is an Art of Hosting worldview. After collecting biographic data, the survey began by asking respondents if the felt there was a shared AoH worldview. 61% of respondents answered

yes. However, in looking at the answers to questions in Survey 1 about the specific Apostel components, which did not include in the questions a description of each component, it is evident that there is stronger agreement that AoH contains (offers) a sense of the future, a set of values and a praxeology. Less firm is an ontology and there is weak support for stating that AoH offers an explanation or an epistemology. I would conclude that the sentiment of respondents to the first survey leans most strongly to affirming that there is an Art of Hosting worldview.

Survey 2, which had fewer respondents, included a description of the components as part of each question. In survey 2 I did not ask respondents if the felt there was a shared AoH worldview. It is worth noting that of the 22 respondents, only 7 responded to the first survey and so the majority of respondents did not carry into their answers some preconceived idea of the domains. Offering a description appears to have influenced respondents. While only 40% of respondents to survey 1 thought AoH offered an ontology, 75% of respondents in survey 2 did. As can be seen from the data, there were increases in 'yes' answers to ontology, explanation, praxeology and epistemology. Only futurology and axiology had decreases.

The data and written answers affirms conclusions I have been making throughout this writing –the AoH patterns and practices offer strong descriptions for some domains and for others not so. In particular I have suggested that in the domains of explanation, futurology and axiology AoH is not very strong within the literature.

My research question is "What is my interpretation of the worldview underlying the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter work, how can social/relational constructionist theory help in framing an Art of Hosting worldview and what does it mean for the practice of hosting?" I would conclude from my analysis of the data and written comments and reflections offered by the respondents that from my perspective there is an Art of Hosting worldview, there some very strong elements of that worldview that I would include in it:

- Individuals, groups, our planet and the universe are living systems and, as such, have the ability to self-organize. Related to this is the perspective that we are also complex adaptive systems. (ontology)
- In the past we have viewed humans and ‘nature’ through a mechanistic lens. (explanation)
- The future is emergent. AoH offers a pathway or process to an emergent future. (fultuology)
- People have the wisdom to find ways forward. (axiology)
- Inclusion, acceptance of difference, diversity and every voice matters is foundational to the work. (axiology)
- We work in service to a common or greater good. (axiology)
- We believe in human goodness. (axiology)
- Relationships and friendships are important. (axiology)
- Cooperation and collaboration work. (praxeology)
- The practice is the work. Practice drives theory. (epistemology)

Conclusion

The next step, in this writing journey is to weave together the perspectives offered from the survey respondents, my learnings from the research and writing done, and the sharing from those that we kind enough to read and offer reflections on my writing into the final chapter, which circles back to offer what I framed as the purpose of this dissertation: My interpretation of the worldview underlying the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter work, how can social/relational constructionist theory help in framing an Art of Hosting worldview and what does it mean for the practice of hosting?”

Chapter 7 – Art of Hosting-Relational Constructionist Shared Worldview

I began this enterprise by proposing to explore "What is my interpretation of the worldview underlying the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter, how can social/relational constructionist theory help in framing an Art of Hosting worldview and what does it mean for the practice of hosting?" I also was clear at the outset that I believed that there is an Art of Hosting worldview and a social (relational) constructionist worldview.

To explore this question, I used the Apostle framework for deconstructing worldviews. I used the framework to deconstruct what I perceived as the central elements of the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter literature and what is offered at Art of Hosting trainings. I also used the framework to deconstruct relational constructionist literature/thought in order to both compare the two and (re)construct a shared worldview.

I also stated that it was my intention to invite the Art of Hosting community into a conversation about what an AoH worldview is or what the many AoH worldviews are. I asked several Art of Hosting Global Stewards to read chapters as I completed the writing of them and offer comments, criticism, agreement, reflections, enhancement or whatever they were moved to say. I included many of the comments in footnotes throughout the manuscript. I also conducted two online surveys sent to the Art of Hosting listserv and included the responses in Chapter Six.

As my journey of exploration regarding my research question developed and my own learning about worldviews and relational constructionism deepened, I came to a belief that Art of Hosting and relational constructionism share much in common in their perspectives on dialogic processes – in their worldviews. This led me to the decision to not focus solely on interpreting what an Art of Hosting worldview is. Instead, I recognized that a more useful contribution this writing could offer to the AoH community (and the relational constructionist community) is a description of a worldview that brings together the relational qualities of both.

What I offer here are my interpretations of what a shared Art of Hosting and a relational constructionist worldview are. Or, in actuality, what a worldview that combines Art of Hosting and relational constructionist perspectives could be. They are open to revision, co-learning and co-creation, thus the invitation remains to be in an ongoing conversation on this matter. In fact, I believe that there is much to learn by continuing the dialogue.

It is worth noting that there was a diversity of views in the Art of Hosting network regarding whether there actually is an Art of Hosting worldview. Some felt that the Art of Hosting is mainly about process or processes that people can use to be in better conversation or good dialogue, and that process is not a worldview.[178] To some degree I agree with this.[179] There were also many respondents to the surveys and reflections by people from the Art of hosting community that I've been in conversations with who see the Art of Hosting as more than just a collection of processes. They view AoH as offering a perspective or choice on a way of being (worldview). Thus, it comes as no surprise that people connect well with processes that they believe build relationship, in other words relational processes. So one could see the relational as process as well as the relational as a way of being.[180] The strongest place of connection between Art of Hosting and relational constructionism is the practice of being in relational space – of being in relationship with others.[181]

A Shared Worldview

Here, then, I offer what is, from my perspective, a shared Art of Hosting and relational constructionist worldview. Both center on the relational, believe that we co-create our realities and our futures and that we do this through good dialogue. Language matters and

[178] AoH Steward Kathy Jourdain suggests here that processes are offered in the context of a worldview and not in isolation. She notes that the worldview diagram presented in Chapter One offers choices of processes, methods come from worldview and influence actions and vice versa.
[179] AoH Steward Tenneson Woolf offered here his favorite Gregory Bateson line: "If you don't know your epistemology, you probably have a bad one." Woolf noted that he is of the ilk that says there is a worldview beneath everything.
[180] AoH Steward Stephen Duns ask here if there is a middle ground here? He offers that AoH as more than a set of processes but perhaps not as much as a way of being. He see it as a practice, in the same sense as meditation, or self-reflection, is a practice.
[181] Duns notes that while he agrees completely with this he wonders if it is a helpful distinction? He ask what is there about human interaction that is not about relational space? And, suggests that maybe this question is his own world view emerging.

language includes more than the written and spoken word. Both value slowing down, letting go of the taken-for-granted and stepping into a stance of nonjudgment, not knowing and openness to emergence. At their most basic, Art of Hosting and relational (and social) constructionism are about dialogue.[182] [183]

The Art of Hosting and relational constructionism use patterns and practices that invite us into being in dialogue in new and better ways.[184] AoH and relational constructionism favor the kinds of dialogue that creates spaces for every voice to be heard and there is always an invitation for a new voice to enter the conversations. Both support co-creation and co-learning so that new realities can emerge. Both use practices that open up multiple self-other relations, i.e. a dialogic rather than a monologic view of people. Art of Hosting and relational constructionism offer that through good dialogue we can come together to co-construct new ways of being together, unconstrained[185] by past constructs, recognizing that they were also co-created through dialogue. Both invite us to be curious about taken-for-granted traditions or limiting beliefs and to explore who might be privileged by them and whose voice might be silenced or suppressed. Both view relationships as the foundation of our societies. Both believe that by being in relationship we open up possibilities for new ways of being together or new possible futures.

Relational constructionism and Art of Hosting invite us into the work of listening as well as talking and to be fully present as a listener by 'being in the now rather than the know'. Both believe that to be fully present is to be able to listen deeply, openly and compassionately without judgment. Listening is heart-felt participation in a relational and participatory process that leads to participatory knowing.

Art of Hosting shares with relational (social) constructionism the understanding that it is a practice. Both can be described as "a way of orienting to practice." The practice is the

[182] AoH Steward Bob Stilger offers here that AoH at its essence is about presence and listening and that perhaps this is just another way of saying dialogue. He asks "Which comes first?"
[183] Duns notes that this this sentence is clear and helps him understand the link.
[184] Stilger offers that this is true and incomplete. He suggest that there are many kinds of "dialogues" and that it is AoH values, principles and beliefs, derived, in large part, from a living systems view held with a spiritual appreciation of mystery and the unknown, which cause this invitation.
[185] Stilger offers that we are always both constrained and informed by past constructs and that perhaps what is important here is an awareness of that influence.

work. It is not something you turn on and off. It is a way of being, a worldview/philosophy.[186] Both view the practice of inquiry, dialogue, being present, and listening as an ongoing process.

What follows is a (re)construction of an Art of Hosting-relational constructionism shared worldview using the Apostle framework. I am using the framework to remain consistent with the previous deconstruction of the Art of Hosting and relational constructionist literature into the Apostle framework. It is my hope that what follows will spark rich conversation in both communities.

Apostle Framework

Ontology

Foundational to an AoH ontology is the belief that the world[187] as a whole is a complex living system[188], that within this larger whole are many living systems (ontologies/local contexts) that are interconnected and that we, as humans, are one component of this complex, interconnected system. Relational constructionism also holds a living systems view recognizing that "relations among people are alternately inseparable from the relations of people to what we call the natural environment." We are not independent from what surrounds us and that which sustains us – the sun, water, oxygen, soil. (Gergen, 2005: 48)

Relational constructionism offers that an ontology can be seen as a "form of life" that is constructed in the ongoing practices of a particular culture. (Hosking, 2007) When seeking to work in relational space, we assume an "ontology of becoming" rather than the more usual "ontology of being". (Hosking, 2007) For Art of Hosting practitioners this relational

[186] Duns notes that he struggles with this idea that a practice is a philosophy. He ask if it isn't the case that philosophy is the theory that underpins a practice? The intellectual driver/rationale of behavior? Here he assumes that practice is behavior and that maybe it can be more than that, which he sees as different to philosophy.

[187] AoH Steward Bernadine Joselyn asks here why I use 'world' instead of 'universe'. She offers that the complex living system worldview applies to the entire universe, not just our puny planet, and as the bounds of human understanding continue to expand out into the universe, it is helpful and provocative to aspire to map our models against the whole universe (or multiverses) rather than just planet Earth.

[188] Stilger notes here, as previously, that the AoH living systems orientation has a spiritual aspect which welcomes in the presence of both material (living as well as what we think of as non-living like mountains) and non-material (Spirit).

constructionist perspective is an invitation to working with emergence. To step into a stance of not knowing[189] [190] and assume a stance of openness to the not knowing and from that stance what wants 'to become' will emerge.

Relational constructionism also brings to a shared ontology the awareness that what surrounds us is dependent upon the language[191] we have constructed together to describe it. (Gergen, 1999: 48) Our challenge, when hosting conversations that matter, is to both be aware of the role that language plays, and especially the language we use, in constructing realities and to host ourselves and those with differing ontologies in a way that supports constructive or generative dialogue.

A relational constructionist perspective holds that when hosting/facilitating we are working in a local context/reality/ontology and that there are many simultaneous ontologies/realities continuously contributing to ongoing constructions of reality and not just one clear local reality. (Hosking, 2011) What this implies is that we, as hosts/facilitators, are all multi-beings with many different selves and as hosts we are always hosting multi-beings.

For me, the importance of a shared Art of Hosting/relational constructionist ontology is that it offers a worldview grounded in the realization that we are free to create together new realities and related ways of life. We are not bound by *"*any conception, tradition, or vaunted claim that degrades or destroys the processes by which meanings come into being" (Gergen & Hosking, 2006); that "change (in the process sense) is ever present and assumes that we have the possibility (however remote) to change the 'content' of some local relational reality" (Hosking 2011: 18); and, that, then, we have the huge and wonderful opportunity to co-construct the world, the reality, the future we want to live into.

[189] Stilger offers that this perhaps an example of what he is calling spiritual.
[190] Duns asks here if we ever really "not know"? Can we un-know something? He suggest that perhaps we can just suspend disbelief and be open to a different view of truth?
[191] Stilger offers that words themselves are frequently a trap, that we make an assumption that we understand the other because we know the meaning of their words, but that frequently we do not know the meaning and understanding present in them.

Explanation

Art of Hosting trainings do not give great attention to offering a model of the past – an explanation of how we arrived at the current situation. Many of the workbooks used in the trainings provide a chart contrasting a mechanistic view with a living systems view of the world. In this way AoH does acknowledge that a mechanistic view of the world has dominated Western civilization since the Enlightenment and is, in many ways, the Western world's primary global worldview. But this is generally the extent of any explanation centered discussion.[192]

Relational constructionism brings an approach to explanation that contrasts significantly from the Western approach, which holds that how we describe or explain the world is based in a singular reality or ontology from which we produce "generalizable, trans-historical knowledge". (Hosking, 2007) A relational constructionist approach to explanation offers that there are multiple local realities which are unfolding in processes that are simultaneously holding the past, the present and probable futures. (Hosking, 2010) An approach to hosting that understands this perspective could open up space for multiple explanations of how we got to where we are to co-exist in the room.[193]

A relational (social) constructionist approach to explanation recognizes that our actions either supplement (add to) other actions or are available to be supplemented (added to) by other actions. It is when actions and supplements are regularly repeated that the process of making history takes place and thus in the present each moment of history is constantly being remade. (Hosking 2007) In other words, there are multiple ways that the current situation could have been constructed and how the current 'reality' is explained is (can be) dependent upon what the local-cultural, local-historical forms of characterizations of history and reality are (written or verbal narrative, painting, music, metaphor, or combinations thereof). Thus, our understandings of what our explanations are of how we arrived at the present are not determined by what there is but are the result of a process of construction for some human purpose. (Gergen & Hosking, 2006) The importance of this for hosts is that we are liberated to see what has come before as a possible resource,

[192] Duns offers that perhaps the description of some of the many paradoxes we face, which is often part of the introduction at an AoH training, is another attempt to at least describe some of the issues that brought us to where we are.

[193] Jourdain offers here that maybe we don't pay too much attention to this because we are less concerned with the past and more concerned with both where we are and where we are going.

to not be constrained by some historical idea of what is real and good, and to see possibilities in any present moment.[194] (Hosking, 2011)

Additionally, if we are living or working in flow as we often suggest in Art of Hosting, then the present both re-produces some previous local-cultural, local-historical constructions and acts in relation to possible and probable futures. Both the past and possible futures, then, are implicated in the ever-ongoing present, 'in the now' so to speak. (Hosking, 2010) As hosts, this relational constructionist approach invites us to work from a place of "now", which enables us to be present to what wants to emerge and it contributes to being in a generative space or generative flow.

Futurology

Neither Art of Hosting nor relational constructionism offer a description, model or vision of what our 'material' future might be or a set of specific choices to make about what the future could be. However, both speak to the idea of multiple futures or possibilities and emergence, which are in good part localized and that within these local contexts the practices of good dialogue can lead to wise action. Both also hold a perspective which offers that there are practices or processes that we can use to open up possibilities or new possible futures. (Hosking, 2011) This becomes possible when we make space for multiple equal voices to be heard thus creating the possibilities of discovering the future that their actions invite.

As hosts we are often working in a space of emergence, which could be thought of as working to create the future that wants to emerge or come forth. Holding space for emergence means letting go of pre-conceived ideas about what the future should be and, instead, holding ourselves open to possibility and a readiness to connect "with what cannot be seen or heard ahead of time." (Hosking, 2010) Often times this results in finding a new way forward that none imagined when they entered into the work/dialogue. When hosting, then, we are, in essence, working in a place of emergent futures and not a fixed future we are seeking to get to.

[194] Duns notes that this point reminds him of the work of Rupert Sheldrake on morphic resonance and also Jung's work on "racial memory" which absolutely will impact on the relational field. He offers that knowing how we got to where we are can be critical to understanding the various perspectives in moving forward.

Axiology

The Art of Hosting and relational constructionism both offer a set of principles and values that, at their center, is a powerful recognition that we live in a "world of fundamental relatedness" that is a "world of ultimate fusion" and not separation. (Gergen & Hosking, 2006) And that this world includes both humans and non-humans as participants in their/our relational processes. (Hosking, 2007) Both offer, from my perspective, an axiology that can be considered a philosophical stance and that this axiology is really a set of principles and values for living a relational practice. Thus, as relational constructionists and/or hosts we practice principles and values that include:

<u>Principles:</u>

- Conversations matter and conversation is the way we think, make meaning together and build strong relationships that invite real collaboration.
- Meaningful conversations lead to wise actions. We seek to explore what can be done rather than what cannot.
- We work from a place of appreciation and not judgment, bringing play and improvisation to imagining new ways to go on together.
- Curiosity and judgment do not live well together. If we are judging we cannot be curious.
- Hosting meaningful conversations opens up the space for collective inquiry and finding collective intelligence. We shift from individuals being responsible for decisions to being relationally responsible to each other.
- We work to co-create in friendship and partnership.
- We listen from a place of not knowing so that we "are more open to other(ness), to multiple voices, and to possibilities". (Hosking, 2007: 29)
- We show up to our work fully present, not distracted, prepared, clear about what is needed and the contributions we have to offer.
- The practice is the work.[195]

[195] Duns suggests this be "The practice is the work and the work is the practice.", which I agree with.

Values:

- Being curious is essential and being curious means being willing to step into a place of not knowing.
- Diverse perspectives open up new possibilities. All the voices from all local forms of life are welcome and invited into the conversation without fear.
- We create and hold space for a multiple of local realities to be in dialogue with each other in different but equal relationship.
- As practitioners we work toward the common good. We are committed to making the world as a whole a better place.
- We believe in human goodness. We work to support personal aspirations.
- We work in the place of emergence without preconceived notions of what must happen, instead allowing what wants to come forth to emerge. We trust in the not knowing.[196] We trust in the generative field of co-creation.
- Participation by all is central to the work.
- We take time to be aware of our own prejudices and habits and take time to reflect on our (re)actions as part of our ongoing learning as hosts.
- We practice generosity. We share what we know and invite others into the field of co-learning.[197] [198] [199]

Dian Marie Hosking refers to this relational constructionist perspective (axiology) as deeply eco-logical. By this she means it to be a participative way of relating that gives entities the opportunity (the power) to speak from the multiple of voices they/we hold/represent (parent, grandparent, host, employee, employer, teacher, preacher, Buddhist….) and not just a single voice that does not represent the richness of who each of us are. (Hosking, 2010) She offers that this ecological/relational stance is one where each of us (self and other) care for each other and for our (moral) selves. She also offers that when we come from this eco-logical way of relating we are less focused on

[196] AoH Steward Ria Baeck offers here that she doesn't think it is right to say that "we trust the not knowing". She suggests that we trust the (intelligence of) people and we trust the process of emergence, where there is a phase of not-yet-knowing.
[197] Woolf suggested that this list should be Included in all future AoH workbooks.
[198] Stilger states that he loves this list and that it is understandable.
[199] AoH Steward Joe Bartmann also offers that he really likes this list and would like to see it included in future AoH workbooks.

knowledge and truth and more centered on the ethics of our work and the local (interconnected and extended) pragmatics of our work. (Hosking, 2007) I would offer that an Art of Hosting axiology shares this eco-logical stance.[200]

Praxeology

Here I approach praxeology as practice instead of a set of specific methodologies. The Art of Hosting and relational constructionism share similar perspectives about qualities of relational/hosting practices. These qualities are what I will focus on.[201]

Art of Hosting practices are designed to engage a group of people (large or small) in meaningful conversations where their collective wisdom and intelligence can be engaged in service to finding the best solutions for a common purpose. Similar to an Art of Hosting practitioner, for a relational constructionist the practice is working with/in and being with/in ongoing relational processes and with/in the ways which they "(re)construct particular relational realities." (Hosking, 2011: 22) What is important here is that the "practice is intended to have practical effects and to develop practical wisdom. " (Toulmin and Gustavsen, 1996 referenced in Hosking, 2011: 23)

Four basic qualities to hosting/relational practice are:

Being Present

Both Art of Hosting and relational constructionism believe that the practice of being present or, as sometimes referred to, as "being in the now" is central to relational/hosting processes. For both, being in the present is a letting go of what is already known or the already knowing and stepping into the unknowing. It is showing up without distraction and being in a good place personally and not in a place of attachment to those things that could distract us from our work. Being present is also often described by both Art of Hosting and relational constructionism as being in the flow.

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[200] Baeck offers here that she thinks both are quite human-centered, and not really woven into the ecology of nature, time, space, animals, the subtle, etc.

[201] There are many approaches to dialogue offered by different organizations/groups that share similar perspectives on qualities of hosting including: PeerSpirit Circle, The World Café, Public Conversations Project, Compassionate Listening project, MNToP, Appreciative Inquiry, Future Search, Wisdom Councils and more. In Chapter Five I offer a detailed listing of specific practices used in the Art of Hosting.

Setting the Container

Creating a container for dialogue that invites all voices or local forms of life into a space of safety and openness for expression[202] [203] is a core practice in Art of Hosting and relational constructionism. Creating a light structure or container for holding conversations, dialogues, outcomes, stories, actions, ideas, etc. invites and supports the gradual emergence of intentional, open, coherent, in the present moment co-creation. This relational approach to dialogue (hosting) creates a container where multiplicity is welcomed and difference is recognized and supported in non-hierarchical ways. In other words, the many multiple local realities that may be present are welcome, included and enabled. Establishing a safe enough container for dialogue is, for me, a core practice in hosting (in providing hospitality). When we are together, we are always in a relational process (whether in speaking or in silence or some other performative act) and being in relationship (being hosted) means we are each of concern to each other.[204]

Practicing Curiosity and Nonjudgment

Both Art of Hosting and relational constructionism share a perspective or approach to the practice of dialogue as a special kind of conversation that goes on in intentional, open and curious ways of relating. (Hosking, 2010) This approach to dialogue can be viewed as the practice of collective inquiry. It does not seek to discover 'what is' in order to support some evidence based intervention, but instead views inquiry as a process of curiosity and openness to co-creating new realities. Questions become an important part of the process of curiosity. Well-crafted questions invite us to enlarge possible worlds and possible ways of being in relationship. As hosts we are more than curious 'about' something or some other, we are curious as an act of opening up possibility and new ways forward.

[202] AoH Steward Dave Ellis suggests that here I should offer that the invitation is to a place that is 'safe enough' and that 'allows participants to express their authentic selves'.
[203] Bartmann also notes here the importance of a space that is 'safe enough' and suggests that this approach is similar to one of suggested by Kathy Jourdain of getting to 'right enough' or 'clear enough'.
[204] Here Baeck builds on her previous note to suggest that we are also in conversation with the wider context, with what went before, with the surroundings, with the place/space, etc.

The relational approach to dialogue that both share also includes suspending assumptions and certainties, suspending judgment, being reflective about the processes and especially one's part in the process, and making space for emergence and possibility. When we suspend judgment we shift to a possibilities approach to hosting that invites us into co-creating opportunities for improvisation and imagining new ways of going on together.

Listening

Art of Hosting and relational constructionism share a perspective that dialogue includes both talking and listening and, in this relational approach, listening has several important characteristics that have strong implications for hosting practice. A relational approach to listening is embodied and heart-felt. It invites us to be fully with (or in) the phenomenal world. It invites us to bring all of our senses into play and by bringing all of our senses to listening we open up the potential for hearing all the sounds, overtones, and multiple voices. This way of listening allows both multiplicity and wholeness to be present. (Hosking, 2010) It is also part of the process of moving into participatory knowing. (Hosking, 2010) When we listen this we way we "let go of sharp distinctions between the senses, between the senses and the mind, between the mind and the body, between inside and outside self, and between self and other." (Hosking, 2007: 23)

For Art of Hosting practitioners 'the practice is the work'. This means we practice all day every day. We don't just practice being present, curiosity and nonjudgment, creating containers for dialogue, and good listening only when professionally called upon. We live (or try our best to) these practices each day. This perspective holds true for relational constructionism where the relational processes themselves are viewed as the product. For the relational constructionist, 'the process is the product'. Viewed from this perspective, being in conversation or dialogue is an invitation to be in (ongoing) relation rather than be "reduced to a (instrumental) means to link inputs and outcomes." (Hosking, 2010) We host from a stance of relational unity where the action is one of ongoing co-construction, co-creation and co-learning.

(Relational) Epistemology

In the Art of Hosting, we do not host practices to find what is true or false, but what works to find ways forward. This can vary by issue, culture, context, who is present and even by who is hosting. I offer that we operate from what Dian Marie Hosking calls a "relational epistemology" where "entities, knowledge, power" are "constructions made in ongoing relational processes". (Hosking, 2010) For practitioners of conversations that matter, dialogue or communicating is a process of 'knowing together'. It is in this exchange that we make meaning together, that we enter into the process of shared meaning making. And, it is through this process of shared meaning making that we 'know what we know'. It is also in the understanding that we each have our way of meaning making, of knowing, that we can look for shared ground to go on forward together.

In Art of Hosting, practice drives theory more than theory drives practice.[205] In Art of Hosting we explore, act, reflect, learn, act some more and continue this learning cycle until a practice feels true and grounded. As Hosking offers "'theory' is not the point, nor is theory testing" rather "practice is intended to have practical effects and to develop practical wisdom." (Hosking, 2011: 22)

Relational constructionism views knowledge/knowing not as something fixed but as continually being (co)constructed in ongoing relational processes. And that these (relational) realities are constructed and reconstructed in all kinds of actions. (Hosking, 2010) They are a participative way of knowing. Relational constructionism also holds that what is real and how we know is (co)constructed in local cultural/historical processes and contexts. Additionally, these processes or ways of knowing may have their own local forms and rules. (Hosking, 2007) As hosts, then, we must bring awareness into our work that there could be differing senses/beliefs of what is real and differing processes of coming to know what is real. Our task becomes one of creating/hosting the space for all ways of knowing to be safe (enough) in the hosting space.

Finally, if epistemology is traditionally about knowing, then perhaps one way into understanding how we know what we know or (co)constructing new knowledge is to first

[205] Duns notes that this is true, but not necessarily always positive. He offers that he has experienced an element of anti-intellectualism in the AoH community that is not always helpful. (I have experienced the same.) Duns suggests that understanding why something works in order to know how to most effectively replicate it is a worthwhile pursuit.

be in the not knowing. And, that we could also seek to find knowledge in the space of emergence. So, the ongoing process of constructing knowledge is not just combining two or more ‘knowns’ into one new/different reality, but also the possibility that something not known before might emerge during the ongoing processes of knowledge/reality creation. Working with emergence is a core hosting practice and including the possibility of an epistemology of not knowing invites us into thinking about another level of how we approach the work.

Conclusion

I hope that this brief overview of what I offer as a shared Art of Hosting-relational constructionism worldview will open up a rich dialogue within the AoH community and the relational (social) constructionist community and between the two communities about worldviews in general and a relational worldview in particular. I believe there is much more to explore in our growing understanding of work in relational fields and how we can invite the many worldviews around the world into a deeper understanding of the power of worldview awareness. I also hope that this will become an invitation to explore the possibilities that collaboration between practitioners and theorists could offer to move further forward on the difficult conversations of our time – race, gender, sexual orientation, climate change, power, privilege and so much more.

Chapter 8 – Concluding Reflections

Preparing this manuscript became more than just an exploration into worldviews and the Art of Hosting. It became, for me, a broader and deeper journey into worldviews and the possibilities they hold as an entry into powerful dialogues on some of the most challenging issues we face in society today.[206] I have come to see conversations that begin from the perspective of worldview exploration as a way to invite people into dialogue about issues that are often viewed as unsafe to talk about, filled with blame or guilt, hold past trauma, are adversarial, or are very personal, especially those that are about a person's or culture's values and beliefs. During the writing of this manuscript, I discovered that entering conversations on important and challenging matters through worldview exploration opened up space for reflection, curiosity and generosity.[207] Here I share a few concluding thoughts about my next steps in this journey into the transformative power of worldview intelligence and offer a few suggestions for further work in this field.[208]

First, a brief review of what I think was accomplished by the writing of this dissertation. It was not intended to be a story of something that happened in the past or some analysis of an experience I had or project I worked on. It was intended to lay a foundation for and be an invitation into further exploration about the Art of Hosting worldview. I believe the dissertation accomplished that goal.[209] Conversations have been sparked among

[206] AoH Steward Stephen Duns asks here if what was an exploration into an AoH worldview became an exploration of relational dialogic processes, of which AoH is an example; is the worldview more about relational constructivism, rather than AoH; and, if it might be important for the AoH community to understand this more clearly? He suggests that there is a tendency for some in the AoH community to put the priority on "doing" AoH, rather than seeing AoH as one pathway into a bigger whole. He notes that Juanita Brown and Kathy Jourdain talk about the "central garden" into which there are many paths and AoH is one of those paths. He asks if worldview intelligence and relational constructivism is a key aspect of the central garden?

[207] AoH Steward Kathy Jourdain offers here that having worked with me on offering worldview intelligence, particularly through AoH trainings and now in a very specific worldview offering, it seems to her that the invitation to be self-reflective first about her own worldview and where it comes from and why worldview intelligence might be important sets a pattern for being curious about someone else's worldview, and for her, it seems to come from a heart space rather than an intellectual inquiry.

[208] AoH Steward Tenneson Woolf notes here that he has heard two references recently that help him understand this depth of thinking. One is, "if the well is obstructed, it does no good to change the faucet." And the second is, "scribbling on a movie screen doesn't change what is projected." He offers that he finds the same for worldview.

[209] Jourdain offers here that it was lovely to be invited into an active an ongoing conversation about worldview particularly through her own AoH experience. She notes that while not many may have thought about worldview before or whether AoH has a worldview(s), that conversation is now more

members of the Art of Hosting network about worldviews, about what an Art of Hosting worldview might be, and to some degree, how worldview exploration can be part of beginning dialogues or conversations that matter. AoH trainers are now bringing worldview exploration into Art of Hosting trainings, both as 'teaches' about worldview and as questions or topics for exploration in World Café and Open Space sessions.[210] It has sparked interest in developing workshops on worldview intelligence[211] and opened doorways for cross-cultural understanding within the AoH network.

I feel deeply and have witnessed that the exploration of worldviews offers a doorway into conversations that are challenging in our society today. With each passing week as I was writing this dissertation, more and more information about worldviews and more and more understanding of how they impact hosting practice continued to emerge. AoH colleagues and I explored using worldview to enter dialogues on race, power and privilege, the possibilities around community visioning, and building bridges across issue divides like resource extraction (jobs) and environmental protection. This work has become, for me and many of my colleagues, a beginning for future exploration into the power of worldview exploration and awareness. It is an opening up of an exploration into how we can use conversations about worldviews as the entry point into deeper and more powerful conversations, particularly in social change work. It also opens up the potential for worldview intelligence as a relational process for building connections across cultures, different political perspectives, different life experiences, and different worldviews. Worldview exploration offers an opportunity for a shift in the language we use to enter into conversations that have traditionally been more difficult or challenging.[212]

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alive for various people. She suggests that I may want to invite some little mastermind group to continue the conversation.

[210] Jourdain notes here that for many AoH trainers and trainings, worldview consists primarily of a comparison between a mechanistic worldview and a living systems worldview, noting that AoH operates from a living systems worldview and for many that is the extent of it. She offers that worldview intelligence that is invited through this body of work is far more dynamic, exploratory and interactive and that it takes the conversation to a whole new place of depth – which is why interest has been sparked in developing specific workshops on worldview intelligence.

[211] As I write this final chapter, I have partnered with AoH colleagues to develop a one-day "Transformative Power of Worldview Awareness" workshop and we will soon begin developing multiple day workshops and are exploring the possibility of multiple module offerings on worldview intelligence that could be in-person and/or online.

[212] AoH Steward Ria Baeck notes here that she doesn't read any 'reason' or explanation why talking about worldview has all these advantages or creates all these opportunities. For her it is because it makes us aware of the box we normally live from. Talking about worldview makes the

In researching and writing about worldviews in general and the Art of Hosting worldview more specifically, I have concluded first, that that there is need for more conversations and writing about and practice or exploration into what an Art of Hosting worldview is. I would offer that it is much more than the Living Systems worldview described in the AoH literature. There was general agreement expressed in the surveys that there is an AoH worldview and that it is broader than just a living systems view and that much of what I inquired about, especially in Survey 2, could be considered part of an AoH worldview. However, there remains much more to explore regarding what is an AoH worldview – contextually, philosophically, practically and across personal views within the AoH network. As I noted earlier, the Art of Hosting network is a self-organizing community with many diverse views on what AoH actually is, how it operates as a system, and what it 'believes'. While there is no explicit leadership in AoH, there are many strong personalities that have considerable influence upon what the network perceives as the Art of Hosting. Just opening up a dialogue on what an AoH worldview might be was challenging for some, especially given the academic approach used here. Thus, there are some in the network that have limited interest in further exploration into the matter, others are quite interested and would welcome further dialogue, still others would like to see greater academic rigor brought to the work, and some that are indifferent to the matter and just want to go about being practitioners within their local contexts.

I am hopeful the conversation will continue. For me, however, the work will center more on how worldview intelligence can help us build greater understanding of each other and the capacity to turn difference into progress. I do hope this work will contribute to the conversations about what is an Art of Hosting worldview. I know I will continue looking for opportunities to do so.

I have also concluded that there is a need for much more research, writing and practice/exploration into the possibilities that worldview dialogues could offer for helping us develop understanding of each other as we find ways to go forward on issues that are of importance to us. This includes a deeper inquiry into the practical aspects or the practice of how personal and collective worldview intelligence can help us speak to the

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box the object of our conversation, implying that we are bigger than the box – that we can see many different boxes at the same time. And they are all valid.

pressing issues of society today. I also believe that through worldview intelligence we can develop a more relational orientation to each other which creates openness to possibilities and emergence, which, then, opens up greater opportunities for finding ways to go on together.[213] [214]

The Institute for Noetic Sciences' (IONS) Worldview Explorations Project is one initiative that is advancing understanding of worldviews. It offers a worldview literacy curriculum for high school age students that includes reading, activities and discussion that can lead to participants developing their understanding of worldviews, becoming aware of their own worldview and becoming more accepting of differing worldviews. IONS has developed workbooks, question cards, videos and other learning materials for the program. IONS work on worldview exploration is a valuable resource for any group considering developing a worldview intelligence initiative.

While broadening the research and writing about societal (cultural) worldviews would be a valuable addition to the literature[215] on worldviews, for me the work that is of greatest interest is developing worldview intelligence learning/training programs for adults that can be used in either personal or professional contexts, as it applies to life, work and community. I am particularly interested in three competencies for worldview intelligence and what learning programs and practices could be developed for them. The first is the individual and collective capacity to think in terms of worldviews. The second is personal worldview awareness. The third is working with differing and multiple worldviews. These are not discreet competencies. Exploring any one leads to exploring the other two.[216]

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[213] Baeck offers that as we become aware that other people see life and the world through other boxes or lenses we get to understand that culture or worldview is something that comes in many colors – and we will never end up with everyone liking the same color. She notes that we realize that this is how life is in the human realm, this diversity of worldviews, of boxes, of colors we like best. She offers that she has learned a lot by understanding the notion that there is incommensurability between cultures/worldviews.

[214] Jourdain notes here that it can become a powerful way to effect or influence social change.

[215] As noted earlier in this manuscript, the majority of the current literature about worldviews centers on religious or scientific worldviews.

[216] Woolf offers here that based on the same experiences referenced in Footnote 2 above, he has heard recently that "the subconscious runs like a tape in the background, influencing what we think and feel, even perceive, yet mostly without our awareness." He offers that this is the same with worldviews. He offers that when talking about worldviews his response has been that sometimes it is important to know the specifics of a worldview and that sometimes it is enough to know that it is there, the concept of a world view, even without fully understanding the details. And, for him, the kicker is that in the awareness that he has a worldview, he is able to meet with compassion the fact

Developing the capacity to consciously think in terms of worldviews is foundational to our ability to understand our own ways of thinking and that of others and, perhaps most importantly, to understanding and then genuinely communicating with others in a pluralistic society. This means thinking with a consciousness of not only our own way of thought but also that of other people, so that we can first understand and then genuinely communicate with others because we are more likely to come from a place of personal reflection, curiosity about self and other and generosity[217] for ourselves and each other. Thinking in terms of worldviews will help us be able to experience and describe how beliefs are embedded within individual and collective frames of reference and that other people and cultures hold different worldviews. We will be able to comprehend and communicate an understanding that information is perceived and delivered through the filters of our personal and cultural worldviews.

Developing a personal practice for worldview awareness is important to not only clearly know what our worldview(s) are, but to understand that within our own contexts and within other contexts there could be greatly different worldviews. Such a practice could help people to assess their own worldview and its unique characteristics and continually ask themselves what personal, life orienting beliefs and values do they hold that are consistent with their worldview. A deep awareness of our worldview can inform us about how we hold or manifest our core commitments whenever we are engaged in conversations that matter.

Developing the capabilities to work in the multi-varied and rich system of many worldviews that is our world today requires skill and practice and the capacity to understand[218] other cultures and perspectives, especially when fundamental differences in views divide people. When we stand in curiosity and nonjudgment, opportunities for connection and understanding of divergence become clearer. This can lead to greater opportunity to find

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that others have one also. This awareness interrupts the pattern of certainty that is so valued in western society, replacing it with perhaps curiosity.

[217] AoH Steward Joe Bartmann asks here “How does thinking in terms of worldview make us more generous?”

[218] Baeck offers that she is not sure that we can always understand other cultures – at least she doesn’t. But we can respect them as cultures though; even if we don’t understand. I think Baeck makes an important point here, although I am not sure ‘respect’ is better than ‘understand’. Baeck notes later that for her it is about fundamental respect for differences. For me, this is an important clarification. I may not actually be able to understand or even respect a culture, but I can respect that there are differences.

new ways forward on matters of shared interest or concern, resolve conflicts, or step into spaces of emergence. Worldview intelligence equips individuals and groups with the capacity to better embrace the perspectives of others. This understanding can generate greater connectedness, compassion, respect and empathy toward others, which can lead to more and better options for discovering and creating mutually desired outcomes whether in the workplace, in community, or within families.

Working with multiple worldviews can also be a starting point from which we can create new, shared meanings. As we develop greater understanding of differing worldviews, we can begin co-creating new stories[219], design new rituals, and find inclusive metaphors to contain their meanings. We can establish conditions for dialogue that can create a 'knowing together'. Through this interpersonal exchange, connectedness can emerge in ways that weren't possible before.

I am now working with colleagues to design worldview intelligence training programs. Explorations that we are developing for the trainings include:

- Introducing the concept of worldview; helping participants understand how their worldview influences how they perceive and, therefore, how they act and react;
- Helping participants become aware of the lenses (worldview) through which they experience the world;
- Including self-reflective practices and project-based group activities where participants explore how beliefs, assumptions, values, and formative experiences influence or are part of their worldviews;
- Cultivating the deeper collective understanding and more effective sense-making required to learn and work together in a world of different cultures, experiences and perspectives;
- Creating opportunities for participants to develop conscious knowledge of reactions that may be associated with positive or negative emotions, and identify how this understanding may motivate their behavior[220];
- Providing experiences that empower participants to examine their own assumptions (worldviews) and increase social connectedness;

[219] Which, Baeck suggests, should embrace all the differences.
[220] Baeck offers that she finds this sentence a bit twisted and suggests a better way would be to say "…and identify how these unconscious emotions may motive their behavior."

- Using different types of narrative to explore the way people make meaning of and communicate their experiences;
- Bringing awareness to thoughts, feelings, and sensations, particularly when presented with conflicting perspectives, thereby allowing them to deal with differing perspectives consciously, rather than reactively.[221]

Finally, I would offer that further research on the role of language in developing and defining/explaining worldviews is an area of interest to me and one I think needs further attention. In his book *The Myth of Race The Reality of Racism: Critical Essays* (2014) Mahmoud El-Kati presents an essay titled "A Working Definition of Culture." Reading the essay it would be relatively easy to substitute the word worldview, as I define it, for culture, as El-Kati is defining it.[222] Others might not come to a similar perspective. Further exploration of the 'cultural' perspective on worldviews could also open up further exploration of the language used to form, define or describe worldviews.[223]

As one journey within the larger journey of life and learning ends another begins. I look forward to the learning and work ahead for myself and to the co-learning and work ahead that I will share with my friends and colleagues and those who join us in workshops, conversations, writing and research into the journey of worldview intelligence.[224] [225] [226]

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[221] Jourdain suggested adding another bullet point here that notes that the first Introduction of the Transformative Power of Worldview Awareness workshop (which was delivered after this chapter was written) has shown us that people who are in the field of social change see the possibility and power of worldview intelligence and people have been engaged in the work of diversity and inclusion, some for decades, are seeing that worldview intelligence could indeed provide a different entry point to the conversation with different questions.

[222] Bartmann offers here that he find himself very curious about this and wanting to hear just a bit about El-Kati's definition of culture here. He suggests that if this perspective puts worldview and culture as synonyms in some way, that could really aid in the work of helping people understand worldview.

[223] Baeck notes that she has always understood worldview as culture and that she wouldn't really know what the difference is. She offers that there is class culture, gender culture and so many more and of course what we understand mainstream as culture.

[224] Duns offers here an appreciation for the inclusive approach taken in writing this dissertation and allowing him to reflect and comment on the work.

[225] Woolf offered here a statement of admiration for my commitment to this work. He also added one caveat, that he feels is important, which is that all attempts to use words and language to represent a worldview are partial. He notes that we are clever humans and yet, the obsession with completeness, in his view, must be supported by views that welcome a psychology of incompleteness. He suggests that it is a fundamental flaw in the western perspective and ambition to understand all. And then concludes by stating "Ah shit, just my partial worldview speaking!"

[226] AoH Steward Bob Stilger offered that as he read this final chapter, one of the things he found himself thinking about is an AoH non-worldview. He offered that there is something about inquiring

APPENDIX A – Art of Hosting Worldview Surveys Summary	
Art of Hosting Worldview Survey - 1	
1. Age	**Response Count**
answered question	58
skipped question	2
	60
2. Gender	**Response Count**
answered question	58
skipped question	2
	60
3. Nationality	**Response Count**
answered question	58
skipped question	2
	60
4. Country of Primary Origin	**Response Count**
answered question	58
skipped question	2
	60
5. Profession	**Response Count**

into our non-world, the invisible and unseen and suggested that at one level, this can be understood just as part of worldview, but that he is also wondering if that is so? He asked "To the extent that worldview is a conceptual construct, how does it intentionally and unintentionally exclude the subtle? How does it include it? What would a worldview which concentrates on the non-material look like?"

answered question	58
skipped question	2
	60
6. Art of Hosting Experience (check all that apply):	**Response Count**
Attend an Art of Hosting training, but not an active practitioner	8
Attended an Art of Hosting training and active AoH practitioner/host/facilitator	30
AoH trainer (host of 3-day AoH trainings)	20
AoH Steward	21
Other	11
	90
answered question	60
skipped question	0
7. If you are using AoH practices, in what context are you using them, i.e. not-for-profit, government, community organization, business (consultant, manager, worker), other?	**Response Count**
answered question	57
skipped question	3
	60
8. Do you think there is an (Art of Hosting) Worldview shared in the AoH community?	**Response Count**
Yes	30
No	2
Maybe	15
Don't Know	2
	49
answered question	49
skipped question	11
9. If yes, for you, what are key elements of that worldview? If no, why not?	**Response Count**
answered question	18
skipped question	42

	60
10. Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a description of how the world functions and how it is structured?	**Response Count**
Yes	19
No	8
Maybe	17
Don't Know	3
	47
answered question	47
skipped question	13
11. If yes, for you, what are key elements of this description? If no, why not?	**Response Count**
answered question	36
skipped question	24
	60
12. Do you think the Art of Hosting offers an explanation of how we got here? Or why the world is the way it is?	**Response Count**
Yes	9
No	16
Maybe	21
Don't Know	2
	48
answered question	48
skipped question	12
13. If yes, for you, what are key elements of that explanation? If no, why not?	**Response Count**
answered question	28
skipped question	32
	60
14. Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a description of the future? Of where we are going or can go?	**Response Count**
Yes	27

No	7
Maybe	13
Don't Know	0
	47
answered question	47
skipped question	3
15. If yes, for you, what are key elements of that description? If no, why not?	**Response Count**
answered question	41
skipped question	19
	60
16. Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a set of values, a morality or set of ethics?	**Response Count**
Yes	29
No	5
Maybe	8
Don't Know	0
	42
answered question	42
skipped question	18
17. If yes, for you, what are some of those key values or ethics? If no, why not?	**Response Count**
answered question	31
skipped question	29
	60
18. Do you think the Art of Hosting offers a set of principles or practices around which we organize our actions?	**Response Count**
Yes	35
No	0
Maybe	6
Don't Know	0
	41
answered question	41

skipped question	19
19. If yes, for you, what are some of those key principles or practices? If no, why not?	**Response Count**
answered question	33
skipped question	27
	60
20. Do you think the Art of Hosting offers an explanation of how we know what we know? Of how we construct our pictures of the present, past and future?	**Response Count**
Yes	7
No	11
Maybe	16
Don't Know	6
	40
answered question	40
skipped question	20
21. If yes, for you. What are key elements of that explanation? If no, why not?	**Response Count**
answered question	19
skipped question	41
	60
22. Additional comments. Are there important components in the Art of Hosting not addressed in this survey? As you now reflect on an Art of Hosting worldview are there additional perspectives you would like to offer?	**Response Count**
answered question	37
skipped question	23
	60

Art of Hosting Worldview Survey - 2	
1. Age	**Response Count**
answered question	22
skipped question	0
	22
2. Gender	**Response Count**
answered question	22
skipped question	0
	22
3. Nationality	**Response Count**
answered question	22
skipped question	0
	0
4. Country of Primary Origin	**Response Count**
answered question	22
skipped question	0
	22
5. Profession	**Response Count**
answered question	22
skipped question	0
	22
6. Art of Hosting Experience (check all that apply):	**Response Count**
Attend an Art of Hosting training, but not an active practitioner	3

Attended an Art of Hosting training and active AoH practitioner/host/facilitator	15
AoH trainer (host of 3-day AoH trainings	11
AoH Steward	11
Other	4
	44
answered question	22
skipped question	0
7. If you are using AoH practices, in what context are you using them, i.e. not-for-profit, government, community organization, business (consultant, manager, worker), other ?	**Response Count**
answered question	21
skipped question	1
	22
8. Did you respond to the survey that was sent out October 2011 to the Art of Hosting community?	**Response Count**
Yes	7
No	15
Maybe	0
Don't Know	0
	22
answered question	22
skipped question	0

In Survey 2 I did not ask respondents to offer a yes/no/maybe selection. I asked the to offer a written comment on each question. In order to conduct a comparison between survey one and two I have gone through the comments and assigned a “yes, no, maybe or don’t know” to the answers. To assign a yes the answer must be explicit in its “yes” otherwise I either assigned a “maybe” or a “don’ know.” The no answers were clear. The results of my subjective determination of answers is below.

9. I would offer that an Art of Hosting worldview provides a description of how the world functions – an ontology. This description is comprised of a living systems view of the world, that emergence is how local changes become systems of influence, and that there are paradoxes, the chaordic path, the divergence-emergence-convergence process, the four organizational paradigms and fractals at work in the world. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of how the world currently functions? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?	**Response Count**

Yes	12
No	2
Maybe	0
Don't Know	2
answered question	16
skipped question	6
10. I would offer that the Art of Hosting does not give great attention to explaining the past or how we got here. That the primary explanation offered is that past in the western world is characterized by a mechanistic view of how the world operates and is outlined in the chart in the workbooks comparing 'Traditional ways of working' with 'Art of Hosting complementing ways'. The Art of Hosting also does not explicitly speak to other non-western cultural views or explanations of the past. How would you describe an Art of Hosting explanation of the past or of how we got here? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?	**Response Count**
Yes	7
No	3
Maybe	5
Don't Know	1
answered question	16
skipped question	6
11. I would offer that the Art of Hosting offers a limited perspective on a future – a futurology. What is described is a world where we have participatory leadership, more intergenerational connections, local communities are connecting with each other and the 5th paradigm is emergent. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of the future or what could be ahead of us? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?	**Response Count**
Yes	6
No	3
Maybe	6
Don't Know	1

answered question	16
skipped question	6
12. I would offer that the Art of Hosting holds a set of values or ethics – an axiology. They are: conversations matter, meaningful conversations lead to wise action, being curious is essential, working in the place of emergence and taking a stance of non-judgment or not knowing is essential, diverse perspectives open up new possibilities, as practitioners we work toward the common good, we work to co-create friendship and partnership, self-awareness is essential as a host, ceremony can hold an important role in the work, participation by all is central to the work, we show up fully present, and the practice is the work. How would you describe an Art of Hosting set of values or ethics? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?	**Response Count**
Yes	8
No	1
Maybe	6
Don't Know	0
answered question	15
skipped question	7
13. I would offer that the Art of Hosting has a set practices or methodologies around which we organize our actions – a praxeology. This set of methodologies includes the: Four-Fold Practice, Multiple Levels of Focus, Powerful Questions, 7 Breaths of Design, Chaordic Stepping Stones, PeerSpirit Circle Process, Open Space Technology, World Café, Appreciative Inquiry, Theory U, ProAction Café, Harvesting and Storytelling. What would you include in the Art of Hosting set of practices or methodologies – its praxeology? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?	**Response Count**
Yes	12
No	0
Maybe	1
Don't Know	1
answered question	14
skipped question	8

14. I would offer that the Art of Hosting literature does not specifically address the matter of a theory of knowledge or explanation of how we know what we know – an epistemology. I would offer that the Art of Hosting's theory of knowledge is practice. That practice drives theory instead of theory driving practice. That in Art of Hosting we explore, test, reflect, learn, test some more and continue this learning cycle until a practice feels true and grounded. That perhaps the closest explanation to an Art of Hosting theory of knowledge can be found in the three steps Theory U – sensing, presencing and realizing. How would you describe an Art of Hosting view of how we know what we know? What might you add to or remove from what is offered above?	**Response Count**
Yes	13
No	0
Maybe	1
Don't Know	1
answered question	15
skipped question	7
22. Additional comments. Are there important components in the Art of Hosting not addressed in this survey? As you now reflect on an Art of Hosting worldview are there additional perspectives you would like to offer?	**Response Count**
answered question	10
skipped question	12

Appendix B – Art of Hosting Worldview Intelligence Promotional Flyers

Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota MARCH 26 & 27, 2015

DEEPENING YOUR HOSTING PRACTICE THROUGH WORLDVIEW INTELLIGENCE(TM)

Building connectedness in a 21st Century world of highly divergent perspectives, experiences and cultures to work and learn together more effectively

Each of us has a worldview. It impacts how we see and interact with the world, events, situations and other people. Our Worldviews influence our communication, decision-making and workplace cultures. Most of this happens unconsciously. Worldview awareness helps us explore individual and collective assumptions, beliefs and value systems with curiosity and non-judgment. This opens the potential for more comprehensive approaches and solutions to emerge on a range of issues and opportunities, including those that might be mildly oppositional to completely divisive to seemingly unsolvable. This rapidly evolving body of work generates a deeper understanding of worldview, how worldviews are developed and why understanding them and growing the skill to work with them creates a fundamentally different environment for some of today's most challenging conversations.

What are Practices and Skills of Worldview Intelligence™ ?

As a hosting practice, Worldview Intelligence equips individuals, organizations and communities with the skills and ability to work with and hold different and multiple worldviews simultaneously. This includes:

- Awareness of your own worldview and learning about, acknowledging and appreciating other perspectives or worldviews in conversations that matter
- Navigation of encounters with differing perspectives to find new ways forward on matters of shared interest or concern or to resolve conflict
- Cultural agility in a range of hosting settings that allows the advancement many interests at the same time
- Practices that raise awareness of beliefs and assumptions we each hold
- A framework or guide for ongoing individual and collective worldview exploration, more creative problem solving

Would you like alternative approaches to any of the following scenarios:

- Debate in meetings or public gatherings so loud nobody is listening for what's really going on?
- Diversity or equity training not delivering the results you expected?
- Silos still existing in your organization despite your efforts to tear them down?

Experiencing and understanding the transformative power of worldview awareness often leads to more creative solutions to the human dynamics challenges we routinely encounter in all kinds of places.It offers a structure approach to deepening your hosting skills.

TWO DAY WORKSHOP

Location: Stub Hall, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN
March 26 and 27, 2015 9:00 am - 4:30 pm each day

1) Worldview Intelligence as a Personal Hosting Practice
2) Organizational/Community Worldview Intelligence: Patterns and Practices for Progress

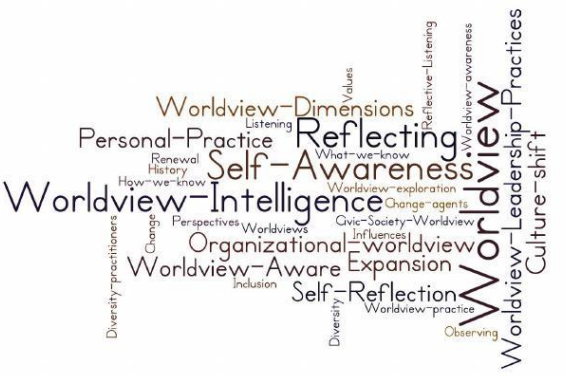
Registration Details
Registration fee: $495.00
(includes a light lunch and any resource materials)
Register through Meadowlark Institute at www.Meadowlark.co

AoH Participant Experiences on Worldview

"Participants in AoH trainings have stated that the Worldview teach has generated such a reflective space that they are invited into deeper sharing and understanding about worldview(s), where it comes from, what their own worldview is and curiosity about others' worldviews. It has created an understanding of how to give voice and visibility to multiple worldviews in any hosted gathering. It creates openings for successfully leading different, more inclusive conversations on issues and challenges that routinely show up in organizations, communities and social systems."

Where Worldview Intelligence Has Been Applied

- Client, public and community engagement where inviting a wide range of perspectives in an atmosphere of mutual respect generates more comprehensive approaches and solutions
- Customer service, particularly if you serve a diverse customer base
- Intergenerationally – in the work force, in educational environments and in our social systems
- Increasing cultural agility – understanding a variety of perspectives originating from different cultural experiences and backgrounds, especially around questions of equity in organizations, government or social systems
- In situations where you, your company, your community are willing to be curious about your own worldview(s) and the worldview(s) of those you interact with to advance organizational objectives or community issues



During these this workshop, you will:

- Learn more about worldview, what it is, how it is shaped and how it influences dynamics at work, in our social systems and relationships
- Become aware of ways to invite and engage other worldviews more fully into conversations, organizations or social systems
- Explore how to draw on the power of worldview awareness in business development, customer service, employee retention and recruitment and addressing divisive or contentious issues across ideological divides

Day 1: Exploration of Worldview Intelligence as a Personal Hosting Leadership Practice

The willingness to bring curiosity and non-judgment to understanding worldviews and how they impact our lives and the lives of people we interact with is a personal hosting practice; in the first of the Four Fold Practices. In this day we will:

- Explore your worldview, how it was formed and how it influences your relationships and communication
- Look at how systems thinking influences the development and perpetuation of our worldviews
- Examine the neuroscience behind our physiological responses, learn to recognize triggers and identify how to use this information in helpful ways to expand or shift worldview(s)
- Understand how storytelling influences our worldviews and use reflective listening practices to expand awareness

Day 2: Exploration of Worldview Intelligence™ Patterns and Practices in Organizations

Organizational Worldview Intelligence is essential when there are differences of opinions, belief or value systems or if your role requires you to work with distinctly different worldviews in client interactions, internally with staff or in policy development. Building on Day 1, we will:

- Use Systems Thinking to uncover organizational breakthrough points made possible through worldview awareness
- Explore how an organization's worldview impacts its internal operations and external relationships
- Identify and explore how to bring in organizational practices that welcome multiple worldview perspectives
- Grow understanding of generative processes that build creativity and innovation in work and community settings

Testimonials

"People's stories here today have influenced my worldview, reinforcing the importance of understanding the other other person and their worldview. Worldview Intelligence is a wonderful doorway through which to initiate the conversation. If you can't get to the conversation, you can't get to the change." Social change agent, Provincial Government

"This day reinforced the need to have people explore their own thoughts and opinions rather than telling them what they need to change. People don't always have the opportunity to be in that exploration." Long term Diversity Practitioner

What if there was a new way into, and through, our most challenging conversations? What if there was a simple guide to learning how?

First Time European Offering
Brussels
A Participatory Exploration
February 23, 2015
13.30-17.50
Location: To Be Announced

WORLDVIEW INTELLIGENCE

Transforming Differences Into Progress

Each of us has a worldview. It impacts how we see and interact with the world, events, situations and other people. Our Worldviews influence our communication, decision-making and workplace cultures. Most of this happens unconsciously. Worldview awareness helps us explore individual and collective assumptions, beliefs and value systems with curiosity and non-judgment. This opens the potential for more comprehensive approaches and solutions to emerge on a range of issues and opportunities, including those that might be mildly oppositional to completely divisive to seemingly unsolvable.

Contact Michaela Sieh for more information or to register.
++32/476/058367 or michaela.sieh@gmail.com

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