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Incarnating Dialogic Social Inquiry:
Embodied Engagement, Sensation, and Spontaneous Mutual Response

Jan DeFehr

Humans are tuned for relationship. The eyes, the skin, the tongue, ears, and nostrils—all are gates where our body receives the nourishment of otherness. - David Abram

My hope is that we can learn to live in a way that is less dependent on the automatic. To live more in and through slow method, or vulnerable method, or quiet method. Multiple method. Modest method. Uncertain method. Diverse method. Such are the senses of method that I hope to see grow in and beyond social science. - John Law

The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude towards it.… Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive.… Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits in one form or another.… - Mikhail Bakhtin

… the conversation pronounces itself in me. It summons me and grips me: it envelops and inhabits me to the point that I cannot tell what comes from me and what from it. - Merleau-Ponty

As living organisms we are, like the ant and the butterfly, constantly inquiring into our worlds. As we go about our daily investigations—what to cook for dinner, how to respond to a colleague's invitation, whom to include in Thursday's meeting—we depend, as persons and as relational communities—on our bodily sensorimotor abilities. Constantly tuning and calibrating to the ever-shifting influences of the others and otherness surrounding us, we feel and sense and sometimes stumble our ways forward, living into our curiosities before we come to articulate them with words.

Our more formal, 'funded' inquiries differ from the lived inquiries shaping our daily lives. Rooted in the mind-body dualism characterizing Western Post-Enlightenment thought (Johnson, 2007), social science inquiry is generally construed as cognitive, intellectual achievement (Tesch, 1990), separate from corporeal being, "premised on the assumed, in-principle superiority of social science over its lay equivalents" (Heritage, 1984, p. 6). Privileging analytic rationality and conceptual, propositional, abstract knowledge, traditional social research favours the construction of new systems, frameworks, theories, models. These "research products" (Gergen and Gergen, 2000), "artificial devices" (Garfinkel, 2006c, p. 128), and other dead things, so precise and portable, take precedence over the rich, intricately nuanced, relationally-situated understandings available to us only through sustained embodied engagement with an other or otherness over time.

This workshop invites us to consider the special possibilities available to us when we construct dialogic social inquiry as the relationally responsive work of the whole body, not only the 'mind.' In our exploration together we will characterize the 'researcher's' role as embodied *co-respondent,* a sensuous, participatory, reflective, and intimate way of being, differing from that of *analyst* or *interpreter. Shared authorship* and *responsive writing* practices will figure prominently into our focus as this workshop is oriented to the intricate dialogic process of encountering and interacting with not only the words, but also the textual voice and bodily being of the other (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 144). A particular social inquiry project, recently defended as a dissertation at the University of Tilburg (DeFehr, 2008), will illustrate the constraints and potentials of the 'carnal', collaborative approach to dialogic inquiry put forward in this workshop.

Inquiry Project Example: An Overview

Phronetic research thus benefits from focusing on case studies, precedents, and exemplars (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 135).

Our exemplar inquiry project begins in June, 2005, as fourteen Collaborative therapy practitioners (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Gehart, 2007) from six countries come together at the International Summer Institute with Harlene Anderson and Sylvia London. With this initial group meeting, we launch a *shared inquiry* into *practitioner* experience of practice as generative and transforming. Our topic focus extends my longstanding interest in reciprocity and generative mutual influence in human service work—an interest shared and nurtured through my involvement within the international Collaborative practice community. This inquiry project forms the central requirement for my degree in the Taos-Tilburg Doctoral Program. I am extremely fortunate to have Harlene Anderson as my advising faculty; without her, this learning experience would not be possible.

Project Central Question

The following question is central within the project; practitioners respond to it using both spoken conversation and written journaling: ***How could you describe your practice as generative and transforming for yourself?***

Significant Events and Dates

Three interactive events are critical in shaping this inquiry:
- Face-to-face dialogue in Playa Del Carmen, International Summer Institute, 2005 (often referred to as *The Playa Dialogue* throughout this project).
- Journaling in response to the project's central question, July through August, 2005.
- Primary author uses writing to respond into the project's spoken and written utterances.

The inquiry project is successfully defended at the University of Tilburg, the Netherlands, November, 2008.

Part One: The Playa Dialogue

The project's inaugural conversation (*The Playa Dialogue*) begins with our face-to-face meeting as a collective of Collaborative practitioners, early one warm Tuesday evening at the International Summer Institute in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. Coming together from Australia, Sweden, Norway, Mexico, the Canadian Prairies, and the eastern, western, and southern coasts of the USA, our distinct accents and diverse language preferences add both challenge and aesthetic interest to our interaction. Before we are able to decide exactly how to phrase it, participants begin responding to our central inquiry question: *How can you describe your practice as generative and transforming for you, the practitioner?*

One of our Mexican practitioners, Abelinda, begins, offering a metaphor and a story, a partial description of her experience of practice as liberating and joyous. A fellow participant in our project, Geovonna, translates Abelinda's words during our Playa Dialogue:

> "I think it will be easier to describe what my collaborative approach is—*(pauses)* I can do this contrasting what I *used* to do when I finished my studies at the university. At first I thought I had to plan every session and that I had to know what I would do with each person… but most important I felt I had to have an answer to the questions and the doubts the other person had. When I left the university, I could have described myself as a *Pepila therapist."*

A *Pepila* therapist? None of us have heard of this kind of therapist—perhaps even Abelinda has never spoken these words before. Sharing Abelinda's cultural roots, Geovonna offers some helpful background information:

> "This familiar Pepila person was a character in Mexican history within the war for independence. In order to cross the field where they were having the war, he tied himself a big stone on his shoulders and back in order to cross the field without being hurt."

Abelinda continues,

> "I was a Pepila therapist, because I was carrying this stone. And that stone was everything I had to know in order to be a good therapist. Knowing postmodern ideas and a different way of being a therapist has allowed me to take that stone away from my back so I can feel light, free. And I can be myself—with my style—with my comfortable ways of being in therapy…. The therapy space is a space where we can speak about our lives. Each client that I encounter, each new client, is an opportunity to learn new things about life. Each conversation is an opportunity to look at something in a different way than we did before."

As I involve myself with Abelinda's voice once again, I am drawn to the words, "each" and "new." I am struck by the particularity and novelty in her account: "each client that I encounter," "each new client," "learn new things about life," and "look at something in a different way than we did before." Abelinda reminds us that the Collaborative therapist is primarily oriented to the wisdom and understanding generated 'for the first time' in each therapy conversation, with each client. Rather than orienting to the stores of abstract, general, 'eviscerated' knowledge within the psychotherapy profession, Abelinda listens with her whole being to the very particular, local, practical understandings generated in each relational context, within each interactive moment.

Abelinda's metaphor of the Pepila therapist becomes a touchstone throughout our conversation together. Several participants from other regions of the world narrate their own version of the Pepila account. After we talk together of possibilities and challenges within our newly emerging project, we take time to discern together the details of our next collective steps forward.

Part Two: Journal Writing in Response to the Project's Central Question

The second major interactive event in this project takes place throughout the two months following our first meeting in Playa del Carmen. Oriented to the everyday details of our respective counselling and therapy practices, we begin a two week, near-daily journaling process, writing our responses to our inquiry question from various vantage points in time: *How could you describe your practice as generative and transforming for yourself?* Participants are invited to write in whatever style feels most comfortable. Jot notes, 'unfinished' or beginning thoughts, storytelling, prose, poetry, lists, letters, paragraphs, dated journal entries—all are welcome. Pre-planning, explanation, and editing are not necessary. Each project participant agrees to select portions—or all—of their journal writing to offer for use in this project. Practitioners at the International Summer Institute typically value reflecting processes; each morning begins with time for written reflection, which is then shared with the large group. Many of the practitioners in this project integrate various reflecting practices within their professional work.

I also write response to our central question, however, when I see the substantial volume of journal writing sent by my project colleagues late August, I set aside my own journaling to focus on the texts steadily arriving in my electronic mail. I write to each writer immediately, expressing my gratitude for their contribution. The following three journal excerpts from Mexico, Scandinavia, and the United States, demonstrate something of the diverse 'feel' and focus characterizing the journaling within our project. The first piece, in Spanish, is followed with English translation:

Three Journaling Excerpts from Three Collaborative Therapy Practitioners
From Pasha, Mexico, July 2005.

> *Lo mas hermoso, es que me doy cuenta de que cada vez encuentro mas y más interesantes a las personas, soy capaz de captar su riqueza unica, sus formas de pensar y la manera en la que estructuran sus pensamientos y sus significados. Creo que cuando empiezas a apreciar esto, te das cuenta de lo enriquecedor que resulta para ti este proceso, tan enriquecedor como para lo otra persona, y finalmente… te*

das cuenta de que nunca eres la misma persona, sino que en cada conversación eres diferente y te transformas, por consiguiente, te mueves y cada ves te puedes volver mas curioso acerca de la vida, tanto la personal, como la vida de la persona que este trabajando contigo.

Este es el principio de mis ideas… mas adelante te escribo mas… no quiero cargarte con ideas….

whit love,
Pasha

Translation by project translators, Julio Rivas & Christine Hildebrand:

The most beautiful thing, is that I realize that I find people more and more interesting, I am able to grasp their unique richness, their way of thinking, and the way in which they structure their thoughts and meaning. I believe that when you begin to appreciate this, you realize how enriching the process is for you, equally enriching for you as for the other person, and finally... you realize that you will never again be the same person, rather in each conversation you are different and you are transformed and consequently, you move and each time you can become more inquisitive about life, your own personal life, as well as the life of the person that is working with you.

This is the beginning of my ideas…. I will write more…. I don't want to overload you with ideas….

with love,
Pasha

From Olivia, southern U.S.A., August, 16, 2005.

Yesterday and the day before I have been wondering why I stopped writing—if I am finished, or discouraged, or what? What is "positive" about my work?

On addiction.

Today I met with colleagues to discuss practice issues. The topic of interest was "addiction." Our group struggled with the managed care, or mangled care, approach that once addiction (drugs, alcohol, sex, work, etc.) appears in therapy we are to refer immediately to someone (not me???) who can help. Someone other than one's self, as a therapist. Of course, most clients drop out at this point. What is our moral/ethical/legal obligation to these clients?

I suggested that perhaps we could approach these clients without using the concept of "addiction," or the word "addiction." How might conversations be different? One of my colleagues said immediately, "How can you <u>do</u> that? What do you <u>do</u> with them?" I felt a little stunned and muttered something about developing a new context within which to work. I began to question myself, and my colleague. I was, and still am, acutely aware of the subtle shifts of language going through my brain… OVERLOAD →→→

On this topic—of addiction—I am also aware that I do my best when I go

slow with the client(s) and maintain a connection. What is it about the connection? What makes it so important? The connection seems to be the heart of the work. How does the connection make for change? It seems to me, at this moment, that both the therapist and the client must change through connection. But I cannot seem to explain why or how. It is like a jolt of electricity going from one to the other and back and forth until it dissipates, leaving each different than before.

From Olaf, Scandinavia, August 20, 2005.

"How my participation in the dialogue with Hanna and her family was transforming and generative for me, as a therapist?" I will try to share some moments with you from the "journey" me and my colleague, Cecillie, was invited to work with this family.

1. To have more trust in the relationship that develops.

Sometimes, when I was hesitating, and starting talking to my inner self: "Are we doing the right thing just now?" I didn't get any good answers. But when I "moved" this dialogue from in to outside myself, turned to my colleague, the parents and after some meetings directly to Hanna with this very question: "Are we doing the right thing just now for them/you?" my uncertainty most often disappeared. I could hear my self more clearly, and sometimes my own voice told me what I was uncertain about, sometimes they gave me response that was clarifying. And when there was no answer, just silence—it became possible to be in it together! It became even possible, when silence was there, to ask, "How can we, together find out—what is the best way to go on?"

2. To INVITE/include people who behave openly psychotically to participate, rather then exclude them.

Persons, who at the moment, are in psychotic crises, can participate without talking/saying anything in a conversation among others—as long as it doesn't become a threat against them. If I, as a therapist can cope with them not saying anything!! (Not every therapist can, is my experience—it's hard for some to leave them "alone" for as long as they want to). You, as a therapist can try to "build" a psychologically save enough context in that room, that moment—together with the others.

3. To expect of myself to respect the other/s as unique individuals.

In some moments, the mother was afraid of what might happen, but the father, living with Hanna wasn't so afraid. To accept that the mother "had her doubts" but ask her if she could trust in her ex-husband as a father—or if that was to much to ask of her. To allow Hanna, when she started to participate verbally, to try things out even if I myself was hesitating—but then share that with her and ask her to "lower my anxiety," so that I should not "become a roadblock" in her new way.

By the end of summer, eight participants offer their journal writing for use in this project, and a few months later, an additional participant sends her dated journal entries. Overwhelmed with the generosity and trust shown by my colleagues, I celebrate this fresh volume of writing with gratitude, relief, and excitement. Our recorded face-to-face spoken dialogue in Playa del Carmen combined with our pages of journal writing would constitute the "data" in a traditional inquiry project. For us, these interactive events form

our crucial first movements together; the remainder of our project emerges incrementally from the particularity of our beginnings.

Critical Moment in our Project's Development

As Fall 2005 turns to Winter, 2006, I find myself at an unanticipated, crucial juncture, seemingly unable to sense the next step in our inquiry project. How shall we attempt to understand our project dialogues? Must I now analyze our conversation and journal writing, dissect, codify, and order our interactions, establishing a hierarchy of themes within them? Shall we propose an interpretation of our dialogic process, exposing hidden meanings and component parts? Or are we now to create some form of representation or salient 'reduction' of the speaking and journal writing within this project?

My prolonged search for a methodology or pre-figured strategy ("out there") to apply to our inquiry context results in no selection. The following fragments from my dissertation blog expose my paralysing uncertainty and concern at this juncture in our project. I use the blog writing to address my project colleagues, aware that language and geographic barriers make on-going contact unlikely. Regardless, I write openly of my difficulty with our inquiry process as follows:

Dissertation Blog, November 2005.

> *Fellow researchers and conversational partners! What a delight to make my way, ever so slowly, through the written dialogues sent for use in our project. If you could see what I see... I will in time, share this view. The pressing question I am playing with these days: How best can I understand the spoken and written dialogues created [in our project], and how can your voices be best represented in the form of a written text? [Notice, I assume I must craft a representation of our dialogic process; this assumption will soon change]. As Denzin and Lincoln ask, "Will traditional approaches to dissemination be adequate?*

By the time mid-winter sets in, I can see that we are finding a way to go on, one that fits with the spontaneous responsivity central to our dialogic practices as Collaborative therapists. The following January 2006 blog note excerpt shows something of our movement during this time:

Dissertation Blog, January 2006.

> *Mid-Fall I put a break on, just as someone would who was approaching a fork in the road. I became intensely involved with questions related to analysis. It has been important for me to do 'research' in a way that fits with our ways of therapy practice, and our ways of being in the world. Indeed, I wished the feel of these research dialogues to resemble and 'live up to' the very aspects of practice*

dialogues you have all described so eloquently in your reflections, and in our live conversation in Playa.

This past Fall, I felt I needed to make a choice: to situate our project within an established, pre-determined research tradition, or to continue in a manner intricately congruent with the collaborative inquiry that is central in our everyday lives. I also noticed something like a nesting impulse! Your reflections were arriving in my email, and I still had not chosen a (methodological) place for them, except, I knew I wanted to be in dialogue with each of you. This I knew and never have doubted.

"Analysis" seemed in some ways like an external element, an activity derived from other practice traditions... When Collaborative therapists want to deepen understanding, they do not generally turn to analytical methods. They engage in a process of inquiry that is dialogical. They listen to understand. Their understanding is open-ended, 'hard-won' through the relational 'back and forth' of conversation; they do not want to understand too quickly. Possibilities are inherent in such a mutually influencing process, but they can not be known ahead of time, nor can all the twists and turns of the dialogue be pre-figured.... A 'genuine' conversation has a life of its own...

The following partial blog entry six months later shows additional movement; our inquiry process is developing. Spontaneously responsive engagement within our particular relational context is propelling our work forward, teaching us how to proceed generatively in this project:

Dissertation Blog, June 2006.

Over the last year I have been tacking back and forth between our research dialogue 'data' and various other texts written by philosophers, practitioners, and researchers. By the end of the summer I will have written responsively to each journal entry my colleagues have contributed to this project.

For me, to write in this way is to listen, to position my voice tentatively yet so closely alongside the voice of another. To write responsively is, for me, to begin an entering into... it is a way of getting "in touch."

Writing Responsively: Journal Writing

The start of the following letter to my project colleague, dated July 2006, shows important aspects of the responsive writing process throughout the journaling part of our project: Responsive writing as listening, touching, entering, sensing, feeling, orienting. "The issue here is not an absence of, but a *radical change in, the author's position...* (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 67).

Dear Olivia,

I have had the privilege reading your reflections at various points throughout this past year. If you check in with the project blog, you will see that I have been 'in conversation with' various voices in the last months—the voices present in the reflective writing sent to me by our project colleagues, and published textual voices—researchers, social thinkers, and practitioners. Before too long I will have written in response to each reflection offered in this process of shared inquiry.

The following is an open-ended, first response to your reflecting. Writing in response to is my way of listening to my project colleagues. It is my way of entering their reflecting, taking it up, so to speak, allowing myself to 'touch' and to 'be touched'. Writing responsively helps me to get a beginning 'sense of,' or 'feel for'. It helps me, as Wittgenstein says, "to find my way about…" within the reflecting processes of my project peers.

Before I continue, I want to pause first, to thank you again for the journaling you offered our project conversation. I find it delightful to read. In our first dialogue together in Playa del Carmen I invited you to take me by the hand into your collaborative practices. I invited you and the others to "open a window" that I could never access through textbook discussions of our central question. And I hoped each of you would courageously offer your own unique sound in this polyphonic interchange. As a fellow participant in this project, I aspired to the same achievement.

Towards the end of your reflecting, you note: "… I cannot seem to explain why or how"—and I find too that explanation is impossible, perhaps not even desirable, if we are to follow Wittgenstein's lead. Perhaps you did not "explain," but your reflecting process is so valuable to us, in part, because it creates a multi-faceted, tentative, 'in motion,' detailed description of the everyday mutually "generative and transforming" aspects of your work. I am deeply grateful for your trust, your persistence, and your generosity in this process.

Responsive Writing Samples: To Pasha, Olivia, and Olaf

In the *responsive writing* excerpts that follow, we return to the three journal fragments featured earlier in this paper. I use writing to respond *into* my colleagues' journaling, to 'move about' within these textual landscapes, to orient my being to the formative influences present—including the textual voice of each writer, the ideas and scenes they describe, the words they use. To show the developing movement of our intertwining textual voices, I place my colleague's words within quotation marks, and leave mine unmarked. Diverging from most academic writing practice, my writing addresses a particular person—one of 14 practitioners in our group—forming a fluid and yet situated part of a particular developing relationship. I orient myself to the written utterances of my colleagues as I move about responsively within their journal entries over a sustained period of time. The following brief 'swatches' show some of the fleeting interactive moments within this responsive writing process:

Responding to Pasha's journaling fragment.

In the process of addressing Pasha, a Mexican practitioner, I write,

You continue, extending your description of collaborative postmodern practice: "The most beautiful thing, is that I realize that I find people more and more interesting, I am able to grasp their unique richness, their way of thinking, and the way in which they structure their thoughts and meaning."

Yes, I find this too! In my previous ways of practicing it was important for me to identify patterns, so that I could in turn, respond with well chosen 'ready-to-go' interventions: patterns matching patterns. Over years of 'postmodern, collaborative' practice we have developed a heightened sensitivity for 'deviation' from pattern… for the quirky, novel and aesthetically interesting ways we all speak and live. I find I am not hearing the tedious repetition I used to hear from others as well as from myself. Like you I do not consider my clients to be representatives from various 'mental health' or psychological categories. My orientation is to the particularities I continually encounter, the fine nuances, the seemingly infinite detail present that contributes to 'the feel' and the 'character' of each conversation.

You speak of "structure" as part of the novelty in each conversation. You are interested in the ways "… in which they structure their thoughts and meaning." I imagine the structure you sense in your clients' speaking is a kind of order that emerges in time. I think of structures of "thoughts and meaning" as fluid, collaborative, improvised, open-ended in a living conversation; they can never be repeated in any future conversation.

You write, "I believe that when you begin to appreciate this, you realize how enriching the process is for you.…" Yes! To begin to "grasp their unique richness…" is to begin to take part in this great abundance. I find this portion of your writing responds so directly to our project question: "As a postmodern, collaborative therapist, how could you describe your practice as generative and transforming?" You are suggesting here that the enriching reciprocity of conversation is dependent on the therapist "appreciating" and "realizing" and "grasping" the unique richness of the person they are in conversation with, appreciating "their way of thinking, and the way in which they structure their thoughts and meaning.…" I return to your words, "I believe that when you begin to appreciate this, you realize how enriching the process is for you, equally enriching for you as for the other person.…"

I love your use of the word "grasp." For me, grasping implies touch… touch that is deliberate, sustained and energetic… it implies something worth holding on to, something precious. It implies embodied connection. Grasping something, for me, is not an intellectual "knowing how" or "knowing that" or "knowing about" kind of understanding—although it could include these kinds of knowing. It is more than that, though; it is about the kind of "knowing within" that John Shotter and others speak of… it is a relationally-responsive knowing.…

Your words "never again" speak to the irrevocability of change we find in collaborative dialogical processes. You speak of the difference, the transformation, and the movement that is part of "each conversation." And you so beautifully write, "…each time you can become more inquisitive about life," not only the lives of the people talking with us, but also our own personal lives."

I add my own 'jottings,' some echoes of your words before I move on to your second piece: I am drawn to the "beginning" that seems to be intrinsically a part of

this orientation. Beginning, newness, movement, growing curiosity, "in each conversation…"

"… each time…"

"… each time you can become more inquisitive about life, your own personal life, as well as the life of the person that is working with you."

"… I find people more and more interesting…"

"… the various situations in which we find ourselves in life…"—the element of random chance

"… the unique richness of each person.… I am able to grasp their unique richness…"

"… when you begin to appreciate this, you realize how enriching the process is for you, equally enriching for you as for the other person…"

"… never again.… you will never again be the same person…"

"… in each conversation you are different…"

"… consequently, you move…"

"… and you are transformed…"

> *I must now put your writing aside, although I am reluctant to do so; every time I return to it I find more to learn. You write, "This is the beginning of my ideas," probably meaning that your reflecting is simply a starting point—there is more to follow. However, I think too, that "this is the beginning of your ideas" because your ideas give me a sense the importance of "beginning" in your work and in your philosophy of life.*

> *Your brief reflection ends simply with your words, "whit love, Pasha." I think," How fitting, this closing cadence." Do these words also say something about your way of being in practice and beyond? I think they do.*

Responding to Olivia's (U.S.A) journaling fragment.

Again, in the sample of *responsive writing* that follows, Olivia's words are placed in quotation marks:

Dear Olivia,

> *I am grateful for your reflecting with your practice issues group and your innovative, courageous response to the challenge of "addiction" within "managed care" contexts. You suggested that "… perhaps we could approach these clients without using the concept of "addiction," or the word "addiction"—how might the conversations be different?" This idea seemed to create a small earthquake in the group! "How can you <u>do</u> that?" one of your colleagues questioned!*

> *You return to the importance of connection again within "addictions work." You write: "I am also aware that I do my best when I go slow with the client(s) and maintain a connection. What is it about the connection? What makes it so important? The connection seems to be at the heart of the work. How does the connection make for change? It seems to me, at this moment, that both the therapist and the client must change through connection. But I cannot seem to explain why or how. It is like a jolt of electricity going from one to the other and back and forth until it dissipates, leaving each different than before."*

And in the margin of your page, I have drawn an exclamation mark, and written again a word that seems immense in your writing and way of working: Connection.

Responding to Olaf's (Scandinavia) journaling fragment.

Hello Olaf,

As I mention in my earlier email, I have returned to your writing in my dissertation process. You write in response to my interest in your work with a particular client experiencing what is commonly called a psychotic crisis, a woman you name Hanna. I participated in a workshop where you described the generative and transforming dialogical process between you, Hanna, her friend/university roommate and her family. You begin your journaling by reiterating the question, "How my participation in the dialogue with Hanna and her family was transforming and generative for me, as a therapist?"

You speak first of trust, of your experience of gaining "… more trust in the relationship that develops…" between you and those meeting with you. And you take us into this process a little further, describing your feeling of hesitation and the questioning you begin in your inner dialogue, "are we doing the right thing just now?" And you note that this 'thinking' was often not fruitful in any tangible way. Then you describe your action to "move" your dialogue from "in to outside myself." You turn to your colleague and to the parents of Hanna, and eventually to Hanna in later sessions as you voice the question that persists in your inner dialogue, "Are we doing the right thing just now for them/you?" And you notice that in moving your dialogue from "in" to "outside" yourself, your "… uncertainty most often disappeared." You write that you could "…hear myself more clearly." Sometimes your "… own voice told (you) what (you) were uncertain about," and sometimes others involved in the conversation with you gave you responses that seemed to bring clarity.

You continue, "And when there was no answer, just silence—it became possible to be in it together." Even "… when silence was there," it was possible to ask, "how can we, together find out—what is the best way to go on?" You write it was possible to be in the silence together, and to ask questions of it. Even in the silence the conversation continued.

I can not help but think of a workshop Tapio Malinen and John Pihlaja are facilitating in Finland in December 2006—called The Doing of Being in Psychotherapy—Seeking Balance of Mindfulness, Effectiveness and Well-Being in Psychotherapy. The poster announcing the workshop speaks of letting go and balancing doing and being. It explores "doing" as effortless emergence from "being"—I would love to participate. I mention this because I imagine the extremes in your work must in turn require an exquisite responsivity, not only to sound but also to silence.

I doubt the trust you speak of gaining is a common construction of trust, but I do expect it resonates with practitioners who approach their practices collaboratively and dialogically. We are perhaps familiar with using this word within individualist frameworks—we trust ourselves, or perhaps another person, in a level of skill, in bodies of knowledge. But to gain trust "… in the relationship that develops…" is to trust the ambiguous, mysterious, unpredictable and unfolding

connections between persons, more specifically, between you and the people meeting with you in your practice.

In this first paragraph I have a sense of the inter-dependence you nurture in your work. You describe it as a "journey" and it seems the route is so uncertain, as though you have never walked this way before, and yet, you are an advanced practitioner, with many years of teaching, supervisory and clinical experience. Your questions of "doing the right thing" are not directed to your profession, to your literature, nor to your colleagues; rather, here you are asking yourself and the people who join you in the 'here and now' of your conversation.

In "moving" your inner dialogue "out," the dialogue, now spoken aloud and shared with others, in turn, moves you. You sense signs of 'movement'—the uncertainty you initially felt seems to dissolve as you share it with the others. And you write of a change in hearing—you note it seems more possible to hear your own voice more clearly, and other times, clarification seemed to emerge from the responses of your conversational partners.

I continue in your reflecting as you to speak of your practice of inviting and including "… people who behave openly psychotically to participate, rather than exclude them." As long as participation does not feel too threatening: "… persons, who at the moment, are in psychotic crises, can participate without talking or saying anything in a conversation among others—as long as it doesn't become a threat against them." You write that you can cope with people "… not saying anything…" but that "… not every therapist can…." Some are unable to leave them "alone" for as long as the person wants to be left. You speak about your role as a builder, so to speak; you are building "… a psychologically safe enough context in that room, that moment—together with the others."

Olaf, I have very little experience working with people in psychotic crisis. You are working with such extremes—extreme quiet at times, and conversely, you work with sounds that are perhaps difficult to hear. When we cannot make sense of sound, when it is expressed at high volume, in rhythms, pitches, and tempos that are unusual for us; we usually name such sound as noise. In both scenarios—prolonged silence, and prolonged 'noise'—we find very little space for the linguistic interchange we expect to comprise therapeutic practice. It might be easy for the practitioner, in such a setting of contrasts, to shine as the articulate meta-knower, the stable one, the calm expert…. But you do not occupy such a role. You are with them…in the silences, in the speaking, in the soundings that are not easily understood, and you are hesitating, asking, wondering, feeling anxious… you are helping to build the dialogical space, and you are simultaneously in dialogue with those meeting with you. And as we note earlier—you are gaining trust in the developing relationship in all this.

You write of your expectation of yourself to "… respect the others as unique individuals." You write about differences between family members, and your respect for these differences. You write of accepting their doubts, and you describe your inquiry into the differences in the family member's experiences. When Hanna begins to participate verbally, you write about allowing her to "try things out." And again you write of hesitating and of sharing that uncertainty with her. In fact this sharing is an invitation for her to help you with your own anxiety so that it might not get "… in her new way." "To allow Hanna, when she started to participate verbally, to try things out even if I myself was hesitating—but then share that with her and ask

her to "lower my anxiety," so that it should not "become a roadblock" in her new way." How carefully you ensure you are doing everything to stay with her to ensure that your dialogical space has been cleared of any obstacles.

In the last paragraph of your writing, you speak of how your personal view of psychotic behaviour has changed. You call this a "shift" and you write that this "perhaps happened some years before I met with Hanna, but it was very important to me." You write, "Instead of being afraid of psychotic behaviour I became interested, both intellectually and emotionally." And so your reflecting chronicles something of your movement from feeling fear to interest, while at the same time you understand psychotic behaviour more as "some kind of fear" rather than as illness.

I pause to gather some words and ideas from my reading of your reflection, and I write them below as incomplete jottings, as notes to myself:

- *Hesitation—because collaborative practitioners use an extensive vocabulary to describe uncertainty. Hesitation is "big" in our way of working.*
Related to hesitation, it seems, is the idea of gaining trust—gaining trust in a relationship that is as you say, developing… in motion… unfolding.
Moving your dialogue from an inner conversation, to a spoken dialogue that includes others outside of you… and the difference you notice this seems to make.

- *"Being in" the silence together with your clients—because this seems to say something about the extent of your involvement—not just being with them, but being in with them…. This word "in" is significant for me.*

- *Other "in" words: invite, include….*

- *Interest that is both intellectual and emotional… two more "in" words.*
You come to a pause in your reflecting with these words: "Well, I better stop there, or I will go on for some hours more." And you do not assume—you ask, "Is this understandable?" And I reply in my inner talking, "Yes… and no!" Yes, it is understandable: I find your English articulate and compelling, and the relational processes you write of resonate with my own experience in practice, and also connect in many rich ways with what other practitioners are saying within this project. And no, it is not entirely understandable: It is possibly beyond my understanding. For me, dialogical process is still mysterious, astonishing, beyond explanation. My understanding of it will always be vastly incomplete.

You ask, "Does this answer some of that you had put in your question to me?" Yes, Olaf, it does. I send my deepest thanks to you for allowing us to participate in your reflecting process, in your practice and in your life. I will return to your writing many times throughout my work.

Sincerely,
Janice

Using Project Member's Inquiry Practices and Premises

As I continue to write in response to my colleague's journaling, my search for a ready-made set of social inquiry procedures seems unnecessary and irrelevant; I 'let it go'. Active involvement within the spoken and written utterances of my project colleagues helps me to recognize our unrepeatable inquiry "method" as indistinguishable from the unsystematic, dialogic, 'once-off' methods of the Collaborative therapist,

spontaneously responding within the micro interactive moments comprising everyday practice. The Collaborative therapist does not set out to reform the conversations at the heart of their work—we utilize no tactics for reframing, restorying, or replacing narratives. Participants in Collaborative therapy dialogue spontaneously respond into an emerging conversation, doing and being what the situation seems to call for, "in the manner called for" (Anderson, 2007c, p. 52), without any ready-made, step-ordered directives to guide them. As both client and therapist 'shape' the conversation with their bodily participation within it, as they engage in a process of "becoming present to one another" (Katz & Shotter, 2007, p. 72), the conversation, with all its visible and invisible influences, touches and moves *them*. Transformation and generativity are presumed inherent to dialogic interaction.

Writing Responsively: The Playa Dialogue

Transcript writing as preparation and involvement.

As I respond in written detail to the journalled utterances of my project colleagues, I also begin to write several full transcripts of our recorded face-to-face conversation in Playa del Carmen—the conversation we refer to as *The Playa Dialogue.* I notice the recording of the spoken dialogue in Playa del Carmen translates awkwardly into the "language" of writing, as Olaf anticipates. It looks remarkably inefficient on the page, full of stops and starts, "unreturned serves," to use tennis language. The recording is complete and technically perfect, and yet it seems to be missing the fullness of the conversation. I am convinced more was said than the total of words might suggest. The gaps between utterances are especially complex in a multi-lingual group dialogue; speakers depend heavily on the generosity and active participation of listeners in every moment. With the meaning of words less certain, the movement of the body figures more prominently into the spoken conversation than the written account indicates.

Blake Poland (2003) writes of the challenge of moving spoken conversation into written transcript:

> Verbal interactions follow a logic that is different from that of written prose, and therefore tend to look remarkably disjointed, inarticulate, and even incoherent when committed to the printed page. Inherent differences between the spoken tongue and the written word mean that transcripts of verbal conversations do not measure up well to the standards we hold for well-crafted prose… with the result that participants often come across as incoherent and inarticulate (p. 270).

Poland (2003) suggests the situation can be worsened by insistence on

> … verbatim transcription in which all pauses, broken sentences, interruptions, and other aspects of the messiness of casual conversation are faithfully reproduced, despite what this messiness might lead one to presume about the participants. Speaking from experience, I should add

that interviewers themselves can find their own contributions, committed
to paper, a rude awakening (p. 272).

As Steiner Kvale (1996) proposes, "Transcribed interviews are often vague, repetitious, and have many digressions containing much "noise" (p. 50). The challenge of creating a fair but faithful transcription intensifies with the linguistic diversity within our group and my own linguistic limitations. Several participants choose to use available translation services at various times throughout the project, while others venture to speak in English as an additional language, however translation, even at its highest caliber, cannot level and smooth our conversational table entirely.

Within the week following Playa, I create a hand-written transcript of the conversation, pausing the dialogue to write every few seconds. Some months later I write a second hand-written copy, wanting to notice more of the detail within the dialogue. My decision to produce the transcripts without outside assistance demonstrates my priorization of active involvement in this process. The conversation is not translated from oral to written language from the non-human vantage point of computer technology; neither do I hire a transcriber. I stay fully present in this stage of our inquiry, creating the transcript of the conversation from the vantage point of a human participant within it, a position that is simultaneously personal and relational. My 'alongside' relational stance throughout the entire inquiry contrasts with usual practice in qualitative social inquiry. As Strong (2004) writes, "Much research is undertaken with a sense that we can *de*-relate—to some extent—from our research partners, to go outside our relationship to comment on its products and proceedings like a stranger" (p. 215).

The value in creating transcripts, for me, relates to bodily involvement. Writing each word I hear seems to sharpen my listening and pull me back into the event. I find this work time-consuming, and yet as I handle the details of the task to the very best of my ability and attention, I become acquainted with each utterance, with each unique voice. I gain a sense of the conversation that I believe can only come from active engagement within it. *Writing* the words spoken seems to require a more attentive acknowledgement on my part than listening only. Perhaps this is because writing increases the physical involvement of my body as I listen; it requires the movement of my eyes and hands, not only the act of hearing. Slowing my pace, I notice detail I might otherwise miss as a reader. I am delighted to see creative writing teacher, Natalie Goldberg (2005) express a similar view:

> What people don't realize is that writing is physical. It doesn't have to do
> with thought alone. It has to do with sight, smell, taste, feeling, with
> everything being alive and activated… you are physically engaged with
> the pen, and your hand, connected to your arm, is pouring out the record
> of your senses (p. 86).

In the autumn of 2006, I type a complete and final transcript of the conversation.

Beyond transcript writing: 'Responsive writing' and spoken conversation.
With transcript writing behind me, I return again to the audio recording of the dialogue in Playa del Carmen. Noticing the generativity of writing response to my

colleagues' journaling, I am, at this point, beginning to wonder if *responsive writing* could deepen and extend participation within our recorded *spoken* group conversation in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. It is, by now, November 2006. Pausing my recording of our conversation every few seconds, I begin to 'narrate' this conversation, writing both more and less than what I hear, creating *The Playa Dialogue* first chapter of the dissertation text (DeFehr, 2008, pp. 1-22). *The Playa Dialogue* narration lessens our spoken conversation because I cannot possibly evoke the fullness of live interaction; my written narrating inadvertently diminishes the spoken interchange. At the same time, the *Playa Dialogue* account is *more* than the original dialogue in Playa del Carmen because it is infused with my unplanned response to it as I encounter it and interact with it, moment by moment, for "another first time" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 9). I comment, I raise questions, I take notice, and I listen, as I write from a particular vantage point following the initial event. What follows below is the start of my writing response to our face-to-face conversation in Playa del Carmen, taken from page 1 of my dissertation text (DeFehr, 2008):

The Playa Dialogue

> *Our first face-to-face dialogue begins with the sounds, colors, and sensations of our setting: Cobalt blue Mexican ceramic cappuccino cups clinking their saucers, chairs sliding on clay floor tiles, tropical birds in the tangle of rainforest just outside our meeting place, perspiration and the relief of cooling temperatures. All around me, casual conversation, coughing—is that Geavonna? She has been translating so continuously; her voice sounds strained.*

> *We are in one of the only air-conditioned palapas here that is not a guest room. Does it have a window, I can't remember. It is small, narrow, rectangular with white ceiling and walls inside, like a Mennonite church, plain. I bring in hurricane candles and potted tropical plants ahead of time. The group forms a circle of sorts. It is early evening and the sun is quickly setting outside our room. By 8 o'clock it will be totally dark.*

> *I am remembering a mix of feelings—nervous, so nervous, numb, uncertain. Am I ready? Should I check the recording equipment again? To my left sits Emelie, then Aiden, Abigail, and Olaf; Jillian next, and beside her, Geavonna, then Preciosa, Danica, Seferino, Pasha, Abelinda and Olivia. Anaclaudia cannot be with us this evening but will join us for the journal writing part of the project.*

I continue to narrate this face-to-face conversation in Mexico through to its closing moments. I find the writing process intensely engaging, as though, in some way, I am there, participating once again (Johnson, 2007, pp. 160-162). Writing my response into *The Playa Dialogue* becomes a way of being in dialogue with our dialogue. Returning to the recorded dialogue and interacting with it again seems to soften the distinction between past and present in this study; it keeps the dialogue open and invites our continued involvement within it. I want to think of *The Playa Dialogue* as present-tense, participatory, "withness" writing, rather than the past-tense "aboutness" writing more readily available in the social sciences (Shotter, 1999a). I am narrating the dialogue, telling it, rather than setting out to create "a thing"—a narrative, or third-person retrospective report of what happened (Shotter & Katz, 2004a). Writing responsively

helps me to understand our group dialogue dialogically, with my whole being, not only my intellect.

Responsive writing such as *The Playa Dialogue* is not common practice in social science academia. Bakhtin (1986) notes that the dialogical process of meeting and engaging with the words of others is typically of no interest to social scientists: "The complex act of encountering and interacting with another's word has been almost completely ignored by the corresponding human sciences" (p. 144). In the field of counselling, a similar disinterest in dialogic interaction seems to persist. I join Strong (2007) in speculating, "perhaps the most taken for granted activity in counselling is conversation" (p. 2), and yet we are continually 'in conversation', continually interacting with the embodied expressions of others.

My inaudible 'inner conversation' becomes public as I write. Tom Andersen (1995) used to describe writing as an example of inner talk, noting, "The writing forces us to form longer and more coherent sequences" (p. 33) compared to the dreams and the conversations we have in daily life "when we talk inaudibly with ourselves" (p. 33). I want to suggest that *The Playa Dialogue* responsive writing is similar to both "inner talk" and audible "outer talk." In writing the piece I am aware that readers will also in turn respond to it; the writing process is not a private inner excursion, but rather, is oriented to others—to the participant colleagues in my project, to future readers, and to the community of scholars and practitioners surrounding this inquiry. In this way, responsive writing is not only inner talk; it is also public, social, and relational.

Text in context.

The Playa Dialogue text begins with context (Chenail, 1995). I 'set' the scene, locating our spoken interchange within the specific cultural, geographical, and social place (Abram, 1996) that is benevolent host to our conversation. I using writing to evoke the ordinary sensory detail present in this initial gathering—the sounds of birds, ceramic cups and saucers, the taste of Mexican coffee, the visual simplicity of our windowless 'room', warm sounds of human voices intermingling, the approaching darkness and welcome drop in temperature at the end of the day. I expose sensed feelings within the group as the dialogue moves forward—awkwardness, pleasure, tension, and release. I note changes in my perspective as I engage with the recorded dialogue over time. Chenail (1995) claims, a text begins with a particular context: "… researchers must re-construct the data's setting and allow us to return to the place where the data once lived" (para. 18). Linguistic scholar Deborah Tannen (1989) suggests attention to contextual detail, such as emotion, particularity, and the setting of specific scenes, invites involvement in dialogue (pp. 9-29) and as we propose throughout the dissertation text, embodied involvement is part of understanding dialogue dialogically.

Beyond intention.

Meaning seems to shift unpredictably in the course of my engagement with the recorded dialogue in Playa del Carmen, and as I write, I am aware of my surplus of editorial power. My writing of the words in our conversation, far from innocent, is invasive and alterative in ways I do not intend as my continual response to the sounds I

hear in turn influences what I am hearing, sensing, and writing. As Tannen (1989) asserts, even reported speech within quotation marks is a "misnomer"—as soon as we take an utterance from one context into another, we re-create its meaning (p. 101). We cannot 'move' speech to a new textual setting without transforming it. As careful as I try to be, my textual voice influences the expressions of the others, just as theirs' influences mine. No voice is granted an autonomous moment in the creation of a polyphonic text, for just as we "act jointly" in a living dialogue, we act jointly when we respond spontaneously to the words of another through writing. Authorship is a dialogical, collective practice in this "chiasmic realm" (Shotter, 2006a, pp. 52-64).

Intention.

Much of my response is also intentional as I write *The Playa Dialogue.* As I write what I hear, in the sequential order and the 'way' that I hear it, I allow myself the privilege of pausing to respond further. The importance of pausing is frequently part of Anderson's presentations at the ISI (June 2006, 2007). Following her lead, and the example of her Scandinavian colleagues, I take advantage of the opportunity to "take" time as I write—in this case, time that is not available to me in the live conversation.

My response varies. The simple act of noticing words and phrases we use as I write them constitutes my response to some parts of the dialogue. At other times, I wonder further, I question, grapple, consider an additional perspective, and make connections between the words I hear and my on-going 'silent' conversation with my own "inner voices." Often my written response extends an idea, or moves on from it. I aim to approach this writing without over-working it, maintaining the focused but conversational genre of speaking we utilize within Collaborative therapy practice. Keeping in mind expectations of dissertation writing, I aim also to write in ways resonant with the spirit and style of our collective interaction in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. Most important, in writing *The Playa Dialogue,* I encounter and interact with the responsive expressions of my colleagues, their words, ideas, gestures, laughter, and, at times, their tears.

Not-knowing stance.

In saying my response is intentional I do not mean to suggest it is planned prior to writing. Writing from a collaborative "not-knowing" stance is not writing that "mops up after" inquiry, after 'knowing' (Richardson, 1997, pp. 86-95, 2000; Richardson & Adams-St. Pierre, 2005, p. 971). I am not writing *up* my response, I am *writing it*, and writing my way *into* it. At the outset of this writing, I have only a vague sense of what might follow. Working from a place of 'not-knowing' is familiar to Collaborative, conversational practitioners but not-knowing as an approach to writing is very new to me, particularly within the context of social science writing. Perhaps this intersection of both familiarity and newness accounts for my interest in Laurel Richardson's and Elizabeth Adams-St. Pierre's descriptions of writing "as a method of inquiry" (Richardson, 2000; Richardson & Adams-St. Pierre, 2005). As I see it, Adams-St. Pierre's (2005) articulation of nomadic ethnographic writing fits well with Anderson's articulations of the *not-knowing* stance necessary for Collaborative practice:

I wrote my way into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytic induction. This was rhizomatic work (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987) in which I made accidental and fortuitous connections I could not foresee or control…. *Thought happened in the writing.* As I wrote, I watched word after word appear on the computer screen—ideas, theories, I had not thought before I wrote them (p. 970).

This account reminds me also of author Jonathan Raban's writing process, which in turn, reminds me of my own dissertation writing process: "I write books for the same reason people read them," he claims, "which is to find out what happens next (Yagoda, 2004, p. 144).

The challenge of responsive writing.

Writing responsively as I do in writing *The Playa Dialogue* is not only unplanned and formed 'in the moment'; it is a slow and laborious process for me. How can it be spontaneous and laborious both? In responding to our group dialogue in Playa del Carmen I am not adding an independent "solo" line that I can develop as I wish, "following my bliss" as we say. I do not cloister my writing in a "Findings" or "Discussion" essay, nor in paragraph form at the end of the dialogue, nor as an introduction preceding it. Rather I am responding directly into the "felt flow" (Johnson, 2007, p. 239) of a particular dialogue. My voice must be resonant with the 'melodic' lines already in play; it must neither duplicate nor diminish any other voices. I must work respectfully and attentively within the possibilities and constraints inherent in our conversation, situating my work within the complex and dynamic space between what has been said, and what might still be said. The writing must be responsive, expressive, and anticipatory, and it must unfold in a sequential, orderly way that earns trust (Rawls, 2006, p. 30).

Writing responsively in this way demands my sustained engagement with four "others"—first, with my interlocutors' utterances, including their words, voice, tone— their manner of speaking. Second, the process calls for a high level of involvement in the conversation as a whole. I write into the *tempo* of the interchange, into the conversation's silences, its rhythm and flow, its varying felt intensities (Stern, 2004, pp. 64-70). Through my involvement within the dialogue in Playa, I gain a sense of it as a felt presence with a particular character and agency 'in its own right'. Third, writing responsively also demands I actively give myself to the subject of our inquiry—the question prompting our dialogues, the phenomena we wish to understand more practically, more fully. With our inquiry, we enter and shape the *subject* of our study, just as it in turn, in-forms us (Gehart, Tarragona, & Bava, 2007). Fourth, I must listen to my 'inner' conversation as I hear the recorded dialogue that took place in Playa del Carmen. I must notice, always, what is happening for me as I listen to our recorded conversation. How is it touching me? What does it elicit from me? What is capturing my attention (Katz & Shotter, 2004; Shotter & Katz, 1996)? These questions are more relevant for me as I write, than the question of "what can I *do* with this material?"

Writing to Listen: "Addressive Surplus" and "Live Entering"

Much of the labour of writing responsively is in the activity/event of listening. In writing *the Playa Dialogue,* I am writing to listen*,* using my eyes, hands, and fingers to 'hear'. I exuberantly agree with Goldberg's (2005) claim that writing is "… 90 percent listening. You listen so deeply to the space around you that it fills you, and when you write, it pours out of you" (p. 90). From this perspective, listening is not the work of the ears only; the whole body can become "all ears" as the colloquial expression suggests; the whole body participates in the interaction of listening.

In my efforts to write responsively, I want to achieve what Morson and Emerson (1990) call "addressive surplus" (p. 242)—listening that generously exceeds the pragmatic requirements within a particular dialogue: "The addressive surplus is the surplus of the good listener, one capable of "live entering" (Bakhtin, 1984c, p. 299).

> This surplus is never used as an ambush, as a chance to sneak up and attack from behind. This is an honest and open surplus, dialogically revealed to the other person, a surplus expressed by the addressed and not secondhand word (p. 299).

Bakhtin (1984a) describes such surplus as avoiding mergences of characters—voices must never collapse into one another, and neither should any character be "finalized." Addressive surplus, "the surplus of the good listener," retains the multivoiced, open-ended quality of dialogue, rather than an "objectivized" and finalized image of a dialogue" (p. 63).

Celia Hunt and Fiona Sampson, (2006)—authors and creative writing educators—present the following question: "How can we write from and beyond the group to whom we belong" (p. 167)? My interest is in writing from the group, to the group, but most important, *with and within* the group to whom I belong, the group of Collaborative therapists that join me in this shared effort to articulate the generative influence of our practices for ourselves. I use writing to engage with the dialogues in this project, just as we involve ourselves, as practitioners, in the dialogues comprising Collaborative therapy practice. Like a Collaborative therapist, I respond into the conversational context created by this project, following where it seems to lead (Anderson, 1997; Katz & Shotter, 2004, p. 78). Inviting 'dialogic' understanding (DeFehr, 2008, pp. 23-69), I use writing to listen again to our spoken and written interactions, to enter them, participate, and respond within them. And, just as in Collaborative therapy practice, new practical ways of 'going on' become visible to us as our voices intermingle again "for 'another first time'" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 9).

Diverging from report writing.

Although *The Playa Dialogue* is written as I listen to each moment of the recording of our conversation, I am not attempting to create a third-person report of our first dialogue in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. Joining Bakhtin (1984), I wish to claim, "This is no stenographer's report of a finished dialogue, from which the author has already withdrawn and *over* which he is now located as if in some higher decision-

making position…" (p. 63). To report the dialogue using the "indirect speech" (Tannen, 1989, p. 25) of a single textual voice located outside of it, is, for Bakhtin, "'transcribing away' the 'eventness'" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 236) of the dialogical occasion. "Everything about it that makes it particular, unfinalizable, and open to multiple unforeseen possibilities" (p. 236) can be so easily lost in the writing process. Rather, *The Playa Dialogue* is written with "direct speech" (Tannen, 1989, p. 25) in attempt to present the "plurality" of "unmerged voices" in the original spoken dialogue without closure or reduction. Dialogue, claims Tannen (1989), is not a general report (p. 133), "… it is particular, and the particular enables listeners (or readers) to create their understanding by drawing on their own history of associations. By giving voice to characters, dialogue makes story into drama…" (p. 133).

Diverging from representation of others.

Likewise, in writing *The Playa Dialogue* I do not strive to create a representation of the living dialogue in Playa del Carmen. Dialogue, written or spoken, is unrepeatable; each time we return to engage with the Playa Dialogue text, we encounter it again from a different moment in time, within an extended, developing context.

In the field of qualitative social inquiry, multiple writers speak of "the crisis of representation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b, pp. 18-20; Fine & Weiss, 2002, pp. 267-297; Finley, 2005, pp. 681-694; Gergen, 1994, pp. 30-63; Richardson, 1997, p. 13) questioning the "do-ability" and "should-do-ability" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, pp. 9-10) of representing the 'other' and otherness in social inquiry work (Bava, 2007). In their discussion of the "rights of representation" in qualitative research, Gergen and Gergen (2000a) observe,

> Critical reflection on the empiricist program has provoked a second roiling of the qualitative waters, in this case over issues of representation, its control, responsibilities, and ramifications…. Increasingly painful questions are confronted: To what extent does research convert the commonsense, unscrutinized realities of the culture to disciplinary discourse? In what ways does research empower the discipline as opposed to those under study? When is the researcher exploiting his or her subjects for purposes of personal or institutional prestige? Does research serve agencies of surveillance, increasing their capacities of control over the research subject (pp. 1033-1034)?

In Bakhtin's (1984a) study of the novel, second-hand representation is considered most undesirable, part of the legacy of monological speech. For Bakhtin, characters must have the dignity and the agency *to exist*—to "mean directly" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 238)—to 'announce' themselves, for themselves, on terms negotiated with the author and other characters. They develop in relation to one another, speaking in their 'own' voices; the author of a dialogical text cannot possibly speak "for" a character. Rather, each character, responding within a particular relational context, retains an independence from the author, demonstrating an ability to act in surprising and unpredictable ways. It is not as though the author occupies no position: "The issue here is not an absence of, but a *radical change in, the author's position...* (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 67). As an author of this

dialogical dissertation text I am also bound by the same standard; I must not use my voice to represent the voice of another. "The direct power to mean… belongs to several voices in a polyphonic work" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 239).

A social construction perspective might counter: "To what extent is Bakhtin's (1981, 1984, 1986) dialogic ideal possible?" Meaning is always multi-voiced, always a shared accomplishment; no one enjoys the privilege of meaning directly: "… an other is required to supplement the action and thus give it a function within the relationship" (Gergen, 1994, p. 264). As Bakhtin (1981) himself writes, "The word in language is half someone else's" (p. 293). Perhaps intention is important here. While textual account of the spoken dialogue in Playa cannot be entirely free from re-presentational elements, it is not my intention to represent the living dialogue as it initially happened. I anticipate my best efforts would fail; a reproduction can never be a production, just as representation is not presentation. I find Tyler's (1986) writing helpful at this juncture. He proposes 'evocation' as an alternative to representation, calling for text that

> … is no longer cursed with the task of representation. The key word in understanding this difference is "evoke," for if a discourse can be said to "evoke," then it need not represent what it evokes…. Since evocation is non-representational, it is not to be understood as a sign function, for it is not a "symbol of," nor does it "symbolize" what it evokes (p. 129).

Further, Tyler notes evocative texts do not call into being those things presumed absent. "Evocation" as he sees it, is not a link between past and present, but rather, "evocation is a unity, a single event or process, and we must resist the temptation of grammar that would make us think that the prepositional form "*x* evokes *y*" (p. 130). Drawing on Tyler's idea, we need not think of *The Playa Dialogue* as representing the spoken dialogue, nor does it evoke the living dialogue as though spoken dialogue and written account of it are two entirely independent processes. Rather we can imagine the subsequent written account as continuous with the spoken dialogue in June 2005. I am drawn to the term "evoke" because it seems to resonate with our everyday experience of spoken and silent conversation; we frequently evoke and extend previous interactions through our inner, unspoken conversations, particularly when the utterances initially voiced, arrest our attention in some way.

Diverging from analysis and interpretation.

Just as we generally expect analysis to follow the production of inquiry interviews, we might anticipate our spoken dialogue in Playa would similarly be subjected to an identifiable analytic or interpretive strategy. The dissection of talk and text remains a major, or at least complementary feature of most qualitative research in the social sciences (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; 2005; Tesch, 1990). Sociologists Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont (2004) state, "We want data to be analyzed and not just reproduced and celebrated… (p. 822). Most analytic strategies require the social investigator to shift focus relationally after the data is 'in'. Articulating this commonly held expectation, ethnographers Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw (1995) describe the pivotal moment in inquiry process when the ethnographer

… turns away from local scenes and their participants, from relations formed and personal debts incurred in the field. Now an author working at her desk, she reviews her recordings of members' everyday experiences and reorients to her fieldnotes as texts to be analyzed, interpreted, and selected for inclusion in a document… (p. 169).

"Analysis," they advise, "is less a matter of something emerging from the data…; it is more fundamentally a process of creating what is there by constantly thinking about the import of previously recorded events and meanings" (p. 168). Tom Strong (2005) observes the pervasiveness of this assumption across inquiry traditions with concern: "Much research is undertaken with a sense that we can *de*-relate—to some extent—from our research partners, to go outside our relationship to comment on its products and proceedings like a stranger" (p. 215). This possibility of "turning away from local scenes and their participants, from relations formed and personal debts incurred," in order to produce "texts to be analyzed, interpreted, and selected" concerns me also, a practitioner steeped in "the art of withness" (Hoffman, 2007), the Collaborative *shared inquiry* approach.

The social inquiry project featured in this workshop offers no systematic analysis of the dialogues within it. Collaborative therapy practice is a movement away from analytic traditions in the psychotherapeutic domain (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Gehart, 2007). The practitioners in this project do not function as analysts of people's lives, their words, and their circumstances. We have lost faith that such analysis draws forward the essence of a particular situation; further, we do not think in terms of "essences," nor fixed and hidden-in-the-depths "cores" (Gergen, 1991, pp. 41-47; Hoffman, 1992, p. 18). Inviting a movement away from analysis, Shotter (2006a) writes:

When confronted with a perplexing, disorienting, bewildering, or astonishing (!) circumstance, we take it that our task is to analyze it (i.e., dissect it) into a unique set of separate elements, to find a pattern… and then to try to invent a theoretical schematism… to account for the pattern so observed…. We seek 'the content' supposed to be hidden in the 'forms' before us, by offering 'interpretations' to 'represent' this content. In short, we formulate the circumstance in question as a 'problem' requiring a 'solution' or 'explanation…. But to the extent that this style of thought is based in mental representations *of our own creation*, it leads us into adopting a certain relationship to the phenomena before us: Instead of leading us to look over them or into them more closely, from this way and that way, it (mis)leads us into first turning ourselves away from them, while we cudgel our brains in the attempt to construct an appropriate theoretical schematism into which to fit them (p. 124).

Lynn Hoffman (1988) similarly identifies with a growing movement away from analytic and interpretive practices. Describing a turn towards a more reflective, responsive, vulnerable, and evocative practitioner-response, she describes the astonishing generativity of conversational reflecting processes. "My colleagues and I found ourselves

moving away from analyzing family dynamics or making interpretations. More and more these practices seemed to objectify people and to feel offensive (p. 107). Jaakko Seikkula and Tom Erik Arnkil (2006) articulate a similar disinterest in interpretive practices as they describe commonalities between Open Dialogues and Anticipation Dialogues approaches with persons and networks of persons. "In both… the aim is not to gather information for a correct interpretation of a client's problem" (p. 94). Likewise, Abrahamsen, Haaland, and Michaelsen (2007) describe Tom Andersen's advice to them as follows: "Tom tells us: just look, don't think; just observe, don't interpret; just listen to the words…(p. 215).

How can dialogic practitioners build their *shared inquiry* practices apart from interpretation and analysis? Hoffman (1998) writes, "Instead, we expressed ourselves by using metaphors, legends, poetry, and stories—including our own. It seemed appropriate to share personal experiences that mirrored the difficulties of those who consulted with us. We also felt freer to show feelings…" (p. 107). In their caution against interpreting psychotic comments, Seikkula and Arnkil (2006) also underline the inquiry process comprising practice as feelingful and connective:

> This is not merely a cognitive process but is, instead, an embodied emotional experience. It is not only "seeing" or "understanding," but also becoming touched as a human being. The new understanding is generated in a shared emotional experience, which means that people become connected with each other in a new, active way (p. 92).

George Steiner (1989) notes the analysis of music does not always lead to a deepening experience of it (p. 20). Rather, "knowing" deepens with participation, "subsequent hearings," on-going bodily involvement.

Continual active participation.

In research methods congruent with the shared inquiry process of conversational, Collaborative therapy practice, understanding is generated within the ongoing flow of our interactive engagement within the interactive event. Dialogue yields "not a system" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 93), not a finalized end product, but "a concrete event made up of organized human orientations and voices" (p. 93), a participatory process throughout. Anderson (2007b) underscores the importance of sustaining a participatory stance: "The participatory nature of the conversational partnership is of prime significance" (p. 45). "We cannot be meta to an event or to a therapy conversation. We simply participate in it," she writes (Anderson, 1997, p. 115), remaining embedded in it, rather than standing over or outside the dialogic process (Rawls, 2000, p. 18). We maintain the same ideals and expectations in this present social inquiry project.

Incarnating Dialogic Social Inquiry:
Twelve Inter-related Premises and Practices

Improvising… is not without its terrors. The temptation, when nothing else
seems to be offering itself, [is] to resort to tried and proven procedures, to
flog those parts of the performance which are most palatable to an
audience…
… audience response can be the cause of rituals and formulae being
repeatedly trotted out long after they have lost their musical interest
(Bailey, 2004, p. 260).

I do not see the steps of our inquiry as "manualizable" or replicable in some future setting. Just as every dialogue is an unrepeatable relational event, dialogic methods of inquiry similarly occur once only, emerging calibratively in response to particular relational and historical circumstances. At the same time, I imagine the priorities and practices informing our shared inquiry could be useful within a diverse range of social contexts—relevant also to current discussions of ethics and social inquiry. In what follows, I identify twelve inter-related features of our inquiry process potentially relevant to dialogic action inquiry beyond this project. These features require the full embodied engagement and spontaneous mutual responsivity of inquiry project participants in each phase of inquiry development.

1. Conversation rather than interview.

Open-ended dialogue—mere conversation (Hoffman, 1997)—becomes the starting point and the speech genre of the entire inquiry project, our "data" in this project, just as Collaborative therapy is described as a dialogic, shared inquiry process (Anderson, 1997, pp. 107-131; Anderson & Gehart, 2007; Bakhtin, 1986; Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006, p. 94; Shuy, 2003, Strong, 2004, pp. 214-218; Tyler, 1986). As a project collective, we 'set out' without a step-ordered set of questions, without the predictable tidiness of "question, answer, question, answer." Meeting one another spontaneously in this way, we need more than our intellectual skills to move forward. We must sense what the developing situation is 'calling for', the constraint within our immediate relational context, not only the possibilities. We look, listen, and feel; we sit attentively, we gesture, laugh, cry, and drink together, each responsive bodily movement adding direction and anticipation to our work.

2. Situationally-driven inquiry.

Method emerges responsively and incrementally throughout the inquiry and cannot be pre-figured: Dialogic process is embodied, unsystematic, unrepeatable, sensed collectively (Law, 2004; Shotter, 1993a, p. 45) and infused with risk (Anderson, 1997, pp. 135-136, 2007a, p. 40). Informal, intimate *social poetic methods* shape dialogic inquiry, rather than orderly, systematic methodology and ready-made inquiry tactics (Shotter & Katz, 2004b, p. 71). The mutual responsivity of participants and the unique dialogic situation produced from their interactions directly shapes process in the project

instead of the project author selecting and applying a set of plans formed in advance of the inquiry within a totally different context.

3. Generating understanding through spontaneous response.

"Mutual responsivity" (Katz & Shotter, 2004, pp. 71-74) becomes the primary means to practical dialogical understandings—not scientific nor systematic analysis, not representation, nor interpretation. Instead of harnessing the conversational processes at the heart of the inquiry through the application of strategy planned elsewhere, understanding in Collaborative shared inquiry is produced through the spontaneous embodied engagement of participants within their "most immediate and familiar surroundings," (Wittgenstein, 1980a/1977, p. 50), within each interactive moment, and within the emerging inquiry context. "I try to learn about and understand their story by responding to them: I am curious, I pose questions, I make comments, and I gesture…" (Anderson, 2007, p. 47).

4. Co-respondent as role.

All project participants, including the primary author, function primarily as respondents, responding to each other's utterances, responding to the host of diverse influences present in each interactive moment—tone, feeling, intensity, topic, silence, gesture—and responding *into* a particular conversational context, "furthering talk" (Strong & Pare, 2004a) rather than turning talk into a static inert object for interpretation and analysis. Understanding and active response are simultaneous actions in Bakhtin's (1986) dialogism; each depends on the other and makes the other possible. Similarly, Wittgenstein (1977/1980) writes, "… in so far as people understand it, they 'resonate' in harmony with it, respond to it" (p. 58).

5. Privileging 'striking' moments.

Participants involved in dialogic inquiry find themselves, at times, particularly "moved" or "struck" by the expression or being of others participating. The inquiry process is feelingful, sensual, embodied, and not only cognitive (Anderson & Jensen, 2007, p.166; Katz & Shotter, 2004, p. 76; Lakoff, 2007), resembling the social inquiry process people 'live' informally in their everyday experience. As discussed elsewhere, this attentiveness to arresting moments also characterizes the everyday work of the Collaborative therapist. Andersen (2007) notes,

> … one participates in the shadow of the other's movement and notices that something of what they express, which is also a part of the movement, affects them. It is that we should work with. One is actually working with the movement of another by speaking about what they said (p. 166).

6. Situating inquiry within the present interactive moment.

The entire inquiry process is situated within 'the present moment' (Stern, 2004, pp. 75-111). Meaning-making happens 'on the run' within the bustle, commotion and movement of a living dialogue (Shotter, 2006a, pp. 29-30). Project authors extend the dialogue, keeping it in play, instead of closing it, stepping out of the dialogue, "de-relating" (Strong, 2004, p. 215) and "doing to" the dialogue using research techniques foreign to the conversation. Each time we return to the project to engage with earlier conversations, ideas, voices, or curiosities, we do so from a relational stance within the emerging present moment, as though the event is still evolving and incomplete, fully open to further influence.

7. Particularity instead of generalization.

The inquiry does not attempt to identify a fixed thematic hierarchy (themes, sub-themes, non- themes) nor a classification, categorization, or cataloguing of participants' words or ideas. Participants listen for novelty, surprise, detail, and particularity (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 133; Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 244) rather than pattern and regularities (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 142-143). Dialogic practitioners do not meet people as though they are representatives of categories, but rather "cherish" their uniqueness (Strong & Pare, 2004a, p. 9). They do not allow professional knowledge to lead the process, but rather attune as directly as they can, to the client and the client's story, on the client's terms, within the client's familiar ways of knowing. As the uniqueness of the practitioner intertwines with the unique being of the client in an unrepeatable, mutually influencing interchange, newness emerges, generative and transforming shifts and movements take place unpredictably, and the initial circumstances troubling the client begin to feel 'workable'.

8. Developing event instead of developing system.

Dialogic inquiry yields a developing event, not a system (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 251) or fixed structure: Inquiry becomes a "… collaborative effort <u>with</u> people rather than investigation <u>of</u> them…" (Gustavson, 1996, p. 90). "The important word here is "with": doing with and within, rather than for or to from the outside" (Anderson, 2007, p. 34): Inquiry as the "art of withness" (Hoffman, 1992, p. 9; 2007a, 2007b).

9. Direct, open-ended engagement.

Distilling the 'data' happens intrinsically and spontaneously as certain threads are dropped or picked-up throughout the inquiry process of interaction. The project dialogues are not "winnowed" through systematic procedures of retrospectively 'doing to' the data. Participants, including the primary author, do not attempt to create interpretations of the dialogues, revealing subtexts and latent content "behind" and "beneath" the text, "a shadow world of "meanings" (Sontag, 1966, pp 6-7; Steiner, 1989). Eva Albert (2007), acknowledging Tom Andersen's influence, notes that showing respect for a person's way

of responding to life events is central to her professional ambition, "rather than interpreting what they say and do" (p. 190).

10. Outcomes emerge throughout instead of "research product" outcome.

"Findings" and "outcomes," often ephemeral and 'felt', emerge incrementally and unpredictably throughout the inquiry process. Our participant interactions function as reminders (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001, p. 36) of things "which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001, p. 106) in the background of our practices. Each "reminder" offers a sensory, in-motion glimpse of the collaborative practitioner's experience of practice, one that is always changing, partial, never complete or finalizable. As we noted earlier, Wittgenstein (1980) likens that which is inherently incomplete to "scattered color patches on a screen; if we complete them, he warns, we falsify them" (p. 52). Through our involvement with the collective of practitioners in this project we gain a tangible sense of the collaborative therapist's experience of therapy practice as "generative and transforming;" we gain "withness" rather than "aboutness" understanding (Shotter, 1999a; 2005b), a practical, multi-voiced, dialogic understanding of the dialogues at the center of this project.

Rather than developing representative "research products" (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p. 1039) or artificial devices (Garfinkel, 2006c, p. 128), an embodied dialogic social inquiry inherently invites new possibilities as changes of direction, attitude, and orientation take place; background becomes foreground. Understandings generated are incomplete, fluid, and practical; "… in the process of trying to understand, something different is produced" (Anderson, 1997, p. 116).

11. Shared authorship.

Just as the primary author joins participants fully in dialogue, project participants join the project's primary author in creating a multi-voiced (polyphonic) and multi-textual (poly-textual) text. Instead of placing participant writing in Appendixes, participants' journal writing is placed, in its entirety, in the centre of the dissertation text, reflecting its importance to our inquiry project. Original Spanish journal writing is similarly placed alongside English journaling. In this way, authorship is tangibly multi-voiced. Each journal text responds to the project's central question in unique ways, with a unique voice, from particular 'in-motion' vantage points (Emerson, 1997, pp. 127-161) in time and place.

12. "Capturing" social phenomena?

"Capture" becomes reciprocal; the inquiry process is less about the researcher cognitively capturing social phenomena, like a tourist, and more about *becoming 'captured by',* a transforming possibility available to us as we involve ourselves as whole, living, responsive beings within the focus of our inquiry over a period of time:

> When we understand a text, what is meaningful in it captivates us just as the beautiful captivates us. It has asserted itself and captivated us before

we can come to ourselves and be in a position to test the claim to meaning that it makes (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 484).

Instead of merely acquiring or mastering phenomena in our social inquiry work, we, like the painter eliciting Merleau-Ponty's attention, become 'taken by'; our inquiry process is interpenetrative, rather than interpretive.

Postamble

As heirs of the Enlightenment, we have learned to take direction from static, non-living things: Systematic methodologies, step-ordered procedures, ready-made strategies, interventions, maps, manuals, recipes, "best practices" formulations. "Method *itself* is taken to be at least provisionally secure" (Law, 2004, p. 10). Undoubtedly we have gained an immeasurable repository of scientific knowledge and practical guidance as a result. But our pre-formed plans, however intellectually sophisticated, can become inquiry 'interstates', speeding us through the social landscapes we wish to come to know, pre-determining points of interest, pauses and landmarks, relationships and destinations, dulling our senses to the unique intricacies of the others and otherness surrounding and sustaining us.

How different it is to be guided by a developing, living inquiry context, to feel its impingements and unique requirements, to sense its pulls and possibilities as an active participant within it, without the mediating presence of a legitimized research method. If social inquiry is to become more than a 'doing to' intellectual craft, if it is to contribute respectfully and attentively to the well-being and betterment of persons and communities, if it is to touch us and move us in ways that matter, then we must become fully present—not only as open 'minds' and "information machines" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/2004b, p. 293), but as embodied co-respondents, ready to feel, sense, listen, and follow where we are led (Katz & Shotter, 2007, p. 78).

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