Discursive Processes That Foster Dialogic Moments:

Transformation in the Engagement of Social Identity Group Differences in Dialogue

A dissertation submitted by:

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to

THE FIELDING GRADUATE INSTITUTE

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Human and Organizational Systems

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ABSTRACT

Discursive Processes That Foster Dialogic Moments:
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by

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This interpretive case study identifies discursive processes that support the emergence of transformative dialogic moments in the engagement of socially and historically defined group differences. Social construction and communication theory as well as relational theory provide the theoretical grounding for this research. Building on Martin Buber's definition of dialogic moments and more recent writings from Kenneth Cissna and Robert Anderson, dialogic moments are defined when meaning emerges in the context of relationship, and when one acknowledges and engages another with a willingness to alter their own story. McNamee and Gergen describe the transformative process as "first transforming the interlocutors' understanding of the action in question… and second, altering the relations among the interlocutors themselves" (in McNamee & Gergen, 1999 p. 119).

The methodology used to collect the data was an appreciative cooperative inquiry, an integration of the principles of appreciative and cooperative action inquiry. The participants in this study were members of two pre-formed groups whose purposes were to explore their social identity or collective group differences. One group was exploring faith issues and included eighteen women from different denominations of Christianity and Judaism, and from the Muslim and Bahá'i traditions. The other group's members were organizational development consultants exploring issues of race and gender. There

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were eight members of this group including two African American women, two African American men, two white women and two white men. One of the white men was homosexual, the other group members were heterosexual.

The data consisted of the conversations from two consecutive group meetings. During these meetings, I conducted a guided reflection of dialogic moments from prior group meetings. I met with the participants individually before each group to begin their process of recollection. Individual interviews were conducted following each group interview to deepen the reflection.

The Coordinated Management of Meaning Model (CMM) (W. B. Pearce, 1989, 1994, 2001a) and circular questioning (Tomm, 1984a, 1984b) shaped the interviews. CMM also guided data interpretation and analysis. Social identity, empathy, and transformative learning, usually discussed in the literature from an individual, cognitive paradigm were explored from a communication perspective as shared meaning construed in the turns of conversations.

Research takes time to come to fruition. Between the posing of the research question and the collection and interpretation of the data, tensions across the globe seemed to accelerate. The *intifada* in Israel in 2000, the shock and devastation of September 11, 2001 in the United States, and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, were among the most prominent conflicts featured in public discourse in the United States. In the wake of the continuous challenges of bridging different socially and historically defined group identities, the context of this study has only deepened and expanded in meaning.

Research findings contributed to the theorizing of dialogic moments, particularly in the engagement of deeply embedded social group or collective group identities.

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Several discursive processes were found to catalyze dialogic moments and transformative learning. Taking time for intentional reflection using storytelling and circular questions for mutual sense making both identified and created dialogic moments. The opportunity to reflect collectively on encounters where there had been dissonance also created dialogic moments. Storytelling moved the person position of the reflection from the first to the third person such that the participants were at once the subject and the object of their stories. This enhanced emotional connecting and empathy with another's story and objectivity in relationship with one's own story. Consistency of membership and regular attendance were enabling conditions.

Taking a communication perspective in collecting, and analyzing data, on dialogic moments in the engagement of social group identities that have a history deeply embedded differences, provided examples of how social identity, empathy and transformative learning are construed in the process of relating. The study also contributed to theorizing concepts such as social identity, empathy and transformative learning, generally defined from the individual psychological or cognitive perspective, by illuminating the relational perspective. As relational theory is an emergent theory, the language is new, limited and at times, awkward.

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The whole world is a very narrow bridge. And the most important thing is to not be afraid.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

The only thing certain is the future as the past continues to redefine itself.

Carlos Torres, 2003

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Opening

In 1948, by the Balfour declaration, the Jews were granted a homeland in the land we now know as Israel. This historic event happened in the midst of stories that preceded it and stories that have developed since. There are many versions of the stories of the past and the present, and there are certainly different images of the future. Many Israeli Jews feel under daily threat by their Arab and Palestinian neighbors. Many Palestinians consider themselves refugees having had their homes taken from them and having lost any personal and community dignity from decades of discrimination. There is a cycle of violence has spiraled out of control. Each day, the precipice between these stories grows wider.

In a town in the mid-western region of the United States, there is a river that divides a poor African American community, and a wealthy, white community where the leaders of a large, employer live. The African American community is organizing a protest of the corporation. Many in their community have been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer that they believe to be a consequence of the corporation's careless toxic waste disposal. The community is accusing the corporation of racist practices.   The corporation tells a story of how it has contributed to the community by providing employment and supporting community initiatives. The leadership feels betrayed by the accusations of racism when they have, in their minds, only demonstrated the best intentions.

A man of middle-eastern decent arrives at the airport for a business trip. His travel plans were made the previous day. He watches other people in line ahead of him pass through security. He is searched both at security and again at the gate.

Pick up any newspaper on any day and you can find one or more stories like these echoed within its pages. While each of these might resonate with a different audience, they all share a common meta-story. That story is one of polarized opposition, mistrust and conflict. Each carries the familiar pattern that reinforces the commitment to one person's story over another's. We see, all too often, in contexts from world affairs, to business, to intergroup and interpersonal relationships, people do things that violate their own moral and aesthetic codes, because we *have to*, because *they* are *so bad*. It is at these moments that we find ourselves in a place of hopelessness, skeptical that there is

any possible way out of what seems to be vicious cycle. The cycle seems so deeply rooted that there is no apparent way out.

The way we engage in the world is influenced by stories of the past: some we have lived ourselves, some that we have inherited from those who came before us. Sometimes we are in tune with how these stories influence us and sometimes we are not. Some stories are shifting, and some are rigidified, and impermeable. In some ways, accessibility between and among different social worlds seems more available than ever. In other ways, borders and boundaries are strengthening and tightening emotionally as well as physically.

Yet there are stories that give us hope. These stories exist in history and they exist in our current lives, demonstrating that sometimes when we *rise above it*, get *underneath it* or *get around it,* that we can find a path to reconciliation. We may not necessarily change our commitment, but we might find we understand our own story with a new perspective, one that is in relationship with the story of the *other*. It is in the mirror of the eyes of the other that we have the opportunity to reflect on the deepest and most fundamental narratives that we believe to be *true*.

Inspiration for this Study

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the public discourse around diversity and social justice has become increasingly controversial in the United States business community. The civil rights movement and the women's movement in the 1960's called attention to the systemic impact of groups of people who were underrepresented in positions of influence solely due to their social group identity. Those who were denied opportunities were denied experience. Without experience, there were fewer chances of advancement. Without advancement, groups of people were underrepresented in positions of power and influence. Their voices were muffled in

conversations that dictated progress and change. Initiatives such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action sought to make structural changes and increased representation for underrepresented groups. But programmatic interventions did not necessarily guide people to build bridges across differences, particularly when there was deeply embedded hesitancy, fear or lack of trust of the other.

As one who worked with organizations to help them address issues around systemic discrimination and oppression, I participated in the meta-dialogue of why this was important work. Not only was this the right thing to do; it made good business sense. The meta-dialogue had become a habit. We all learned how to talk about diversity and about celebrating differences. Yet, I wondered what we knew about staying engaged with others when their story was one that challenged the story we had of ourselves.

Engaging with those who were different from us took on an entirely new level of meaning once the United States was attacked on its own soil on September 11, 2001. The form of attack was one that was unimaginable. The events of that day were disorienting, shaking up a collective sense of reality, as it had been known.

The United States was challenged to uphold its commitments to the principles of democracy and a free society side by side with a call for *homeland security* and protection from *the enemy*. In the two years since this tragedy, the nation is still trying to find a balance between protecting and defending the safety of its people, and holding true to our civil liberties. In an environment of fear and trepidation, how do we maintain and foster relating with those whom we find most challenging?

The capacity to engage the story of another whose story deeply conflicts with one's own, commands a level of coordination that is quite complex. It requires one to suspend judgment, to suspend a commitment to one's essential truth, and, *to being right*.

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This is challenging enough between any two people. It becomes even more so at increasing levels of complexity of relationship, where stories with long histories are still present. This study enriches our understanding of what occurs when such profound engagements happen, and what we can do to foster transformative dialogic moments.

Personal Inspiration

I was educated and socialized in a Jewish family during what is now referred to as the post-Holocaust generation. The story of the Final Solution and the failed attempt to rid the world of Jews was a story that profoundly influenced the shaping of my identity. The story carried with it strong *shoulds* and *oughts*, terms from deontic logic, and certainly some major responsibilities. The responsibilities that resounded for me were a strong commitment to social justice and to *tikkun olam*, a common expression in the Jewish community, which means repairing the world. We were to assure, *never again*, an expression the Jewish community uses to express the imperative that another Holocaust never happen again. In intimate associations such as social life and family, I was to *keep to my own*. Yet, in my work in the world, I was to help those who were less fortunate: to make the world a better place.

As an adult, the complexity of what it meant to seek justice and pursue it became at once more fuzzy and more focused. The Holocaust that sought to annihilate the Jews identified other victims as well and certainly was not the only attempt at ethnic cleansing. Many other groups and tribes of people suffered major losses solely because of who they were. Yet sometimes those who had been oppressed turned around and became oppressors, either as a response to having been victimized or as an attempt to protect and defend. The position of oppressor and oppressed was not an *either or* status. Sometimes a well-rooted story of having been oppressed could make one myopic; seeing only one's own victimization and having blurred vision for the plight of the other.

As with others, particularly those in my study, I engage in the world in ways that are influenced by stories from my past: some I have lived, some I have inherited from those who came before me. It has been in the meeting of others' stories that my story has and continues to *re*form; my perspective of the world is forever changing.

The narrative of my childhood was one of *good and evil*. The narrative I live with now frames a world where many different stories live among each other in a swirl of fascinating and often confusing complexity. We need ways of being with conflicting and often competing *beliefs* and fostering a meta-process for engaging and making meaning. It is this imperative that inspired me to ask the questions posed by this study

Focus of this Study

This study identifies discursive processes that provide the conditions for people to stay engaged with *the other* such that the engagement is transformative. There are many factors that contribute to sustained engagement and transformative moments in relating across differences. This study specifically focuses on communication processes, the turns and movements in the process of relating.

The context for this study is two groups, engaged in dialogue specifically to deepen their understanding of their differences. I define differences for the groups as having had a history of conflict or a power-over relationship. Using a method I called an *appreciative cooperative inquiry*, participants were invited to reflect on episodes in which they recalled having a particularly meaningful engagement of collective group identities. A meaningful engagement was defined by a dialogic moment, the experience of engaging with *the other*, staying present with the other's story, along with one's own.

Conceptual Framework

This study looks at how meaning is made in the process of relating. Current theories and approaches to dialogue are considered in terms of framing how we talk and

how we engage (Bakhtin, 1986). The phenomenon of expanding one's own story in the process of relating with another is viewed from a social constructionist perspective. A content analysis process informed by the heuristics of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) (Associates, 1999; V. E. Cronen & Johnson, 1982; W. B. Pearce, 2000), along with principles of appreciative inquiry (D. Cooperrider, Frank Barrett and Suresh Srivastva, 1995; Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 1999) was used to structure the research to explore the questions:

- What happens in social identity groups with a history of conflict, when they are engaged in conversations to explore their identity stories?
- What discursive processes help social identity group members stay engaged in the story of the other while being deeply committed to their own story?
- What makes a dialogic moment transformative in the engagement of deeply embedded stories of social group identity?

In some ways, this study borrowed the approach taken in *Rashomon*, a Japanese film of the 1950s in which a crime is seen through the eyes of each of three participants (Kurosawa, 1951). In the Rashomon story, the same tale is filmed three times, each time representing a different person's perspective. In this study, I took episodes that members of groups in dialogue had experienced together, and asked them to reflect on those episodes from their own perspective. I was interested in learning what would happen in the process of bringing different perspectives together, specifically elevating dimensions of group level meaning, in a shared sense making process.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literatures that influenced the conceptual framing of this study. Dialogue and forms of relating provided the framework for looking at different ways of engaging. While the literature on dialogue is prolific, the use of the term in this study is as a form of relating. As a form of relating, dialogue describes

the quality of being present with another that is connecting as well as differentiating, in which one is both understanding and *not* understanding.

Dialogic moments is a central concept in this study. The current theorizing of dialogic moments, and the work emerging out of the conversations between Buber and Rogers on dialogic moments and empathy, were core concepts on which this study was built. A dialogic moment was defined by when "each 'turned toward' the other and both mutually perceived the impact of each other's turning", (Kenneth N. Cissna & Anderson, 1998), of "letting the other happen to me while holding my own ground" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). Building on the work of Buber and Cissna and Anderson, a dialogic moment is considered in the context of an episode, a temporal unit longer than an 'ephemeral and fleeting… moment' and longer shorter than an ongoing state (W. Barnett Pearce & Kimberly A. Pearce, 2000).

The literature on relational theory was particularly useful in locating meaning making in relational processes, rather than within the individual. The literature on collective identity differences was reviewed through the lens of the sociology and social psychology literature on social identity group theory as a perspective on the stories people use in meaning making with others. The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), the theoretical and methodological lens for this study is outlined as a framework for analyzing simultaneous processes that construe meaning in moments of communicating.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology that guided the study and the data analysis process, an appreciative cooperative inquiry. I outline the process I designed to explore group participants' experiences of dialogic moments that were transformative. Building on the practical theory of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), I illustrate the tools I used to guide the analysis.

Each of the two groups and the participants are described in Chapter 4. One group is a group of eighteen women from multiple faith traditions, and the other group is a group of eight organizational development practitioners whose interest is race and gender issues.

An analysis of six episodes is presented in Chapter 5, three from each of the two groups. These episodes were punctuated from the transcripts as examples of where transformative dialogic moments were identified and discussed.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the key findings of this study. The Transforming Stories Model illustrates the major contributions of this study: the discursive processes that support and cultivate transformative dialogic moments across collective social identities with deeply embedded histories of conflict.

Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the implications of this study and raises questions for future research.

…And so when I came in this group and I saw the women the first thing I thought oh my G-d, look at that! You know, they're fighting in Israel…but it's so interesting that they're so understanding of each other. The other day, there I realized that two of them [a Muslim woman and a Jewish woman] hugged. I don't know if it was Reima or Shala. She hugged Anne, I was like wow, good, that's wonderful. So this has changed my thinking… that it's not really individuals.. It's the whole country as a political situation that is making them act this way towards each other. It's like a vicious circle that this group kills that group, and that group wants to take revenge and kill this group and then they go back and forth, back and forth. Then in our little world, our little group here, these women are... they love each other, they're understanding of each other and maybe if this expands it would make a difference.

Sorella (participant), January, 2003

CHAPTER 2
DISCURSIVE PROCESSESS, DIALOGIC MOMENTS, EMPATHY AND
RELATING, SOCIAL IDENTITY AND TRANSFORMING:
RELEVANT LITERATURES

"There can be no single theory or metaphor that gives an all-purpose point of
view, and there can be no simple "correct theory" for structuring everything we
do."(1997p. 186)

Introduction

This review engages literatures related to the subject studied, the context of the
study and the lenses through which data was collected, analyzed and interpreted. The
subject of the study is identifying discursive processes that promote dialogic moments in
the engagement of social identity group differences. The context of the study is two
groups of people meeting on a regular basis to explore social identity group differences.
The theoretical lenses of social construction theory and the Coordinated Management of
Meaning (CMM), locate meaning as occurring in the ongoing processes of relating,
identified through forms of discourse. The methodology, data collection, analysis and
interpretation were designed based on these theoretical approaches.

I begin with the literature on discursive processes and forms of engagement.
Several scholars have written about the distinction between engaging another as an
extension of oneself, or monologically, and relating with another honoring the unique
humanity of the other, or dialogically (Buber, 1958; Freire, 1970; W. B. Pearce, 1989;
Sampson, 1993). The different forms of engagement are described in terms of the quality
of relating, and their consequentiality. Buber named the unique moments when people
are engaged in an I-Thou form of relating, *dialogic moments*.

Dialogic moments, as described by Buber (1959), explored further by Buber and
Rogers (Anderson & Cissna, 1997, Cissna & Anderson, 1998, 2002) and further
theorized by Cissna and Anderson (1998) is a defining concept for this study. The term,

dialogic moment, brings together the notions of *dialogue* and *moments of meeting*, to
describe the "awakening of other-awareness that occurs in, and through, a moment of
meeting" (Kenneth N. Cissna & Anderson, 2002 p. 186), when one acknowledges and
engages another with a willingness to put one's own story at risk, to suspend one's
certainty, and to foster new meaning in the context of relationship. This chapter provides
a review of the emerging literature on dialogic moments.

At first glance, the concepts of dialogic moments and empathy share similar
qualities. The relationship between these concepts was the subject of the Buber-Rogers
dialogue, when the two brought together Roger's theoretical work on moments of
mutuality which related to his work on empathy, with Buber's concept of dialogic
moments. The similarity and distinctness of what constitutes dialogic moments and
empathy is explored, first by reviewing what has emerged from the Buber-Rogers
dialogue (Kenneth N. Cissna & Anderson, 1998; Kenneth N. Cissna & Anderson, 2002;
Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989), and then by reviewing the literature theorizing
empathy (Ickes, 1997; J. Jordan, 1991a, 1991b; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey,
1991; J. V. Jordan, 1991; Josselson, 2000; C. Rogers, 1975).

Empathy has been central to the emerging literature on the meaning of what gets
produced in relating, for the past decade. Scholars such as the feminist scholars from the
Stone Center (Jordan et al., 1991) theorize about relationships as foundational to growth
and development. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) write about dialectics and dialogue in
relating as the source of meaning making. Gergen (1994 and in press) and McNamee
address related concepts such as relational development, relating and relational reality as
the location of meaning and construction of identity. A review of the connections and
distinctions among these scholars helps clarify current theorizing about relationships and
relating as a source of meaning making and transforming.

Social identity group theory and intergroup relations are the source of much of the current discourse about how groups define and relate with one another (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Hoggs, Oakes, Reicher, & Blackwell, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). This literature suggests that relationships across different groups display patterns of relating that influence and are influenced by, deeply held prejudices or reified stories about one another as well as intragroup behavior. The literature on intergroup and intragroup relating is included in this review.

The term transforming shows up in the literature as a modifier to learning and to dialogue; both topics that are germane to this study. Both the literature on transformative learning and transformative dialogue are addressed with regard to the focus of the study.

This study views dialogic moments, empathy, social identity and transformation in the engagement of groups through the theoretical lenses of social construction and communication theory, and the Coordinated Management of Meaning. This view contends that our knowledge of the social world, and our way of knowing are constructed and sustained by social processes rather than prefabricated (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1999). Social constructionists invite us to see our way of knowing as one way of knowing, and to maintain a curious stance to other possibilities of knowing as well as to know *how* we know.

The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) is a practical theory that takes a communication approach to social construction. CMM provides a theory and specific models that describe the complex dynamics of the many ways that meaning continuously emerges in the turns and processes of conversations and speech acts (V. Cronen, 1995; V. E. Cronen & Johnson, 1982; W. B. Pearce, 2001a). This approach stands in sharp contrast to the view that communication consists of the sequential presentation of meaning from one interlocutor to another. The primary question CMM asks is, what kind of identities,

relationships, episodes, and cultures are the patterns of communication *producing* as people interact with each other (W. B. Pearce, 2004). The theory, and relevant research based in the theory or that using a CMM analysis, are described in this review of literature.

The use of stories and narratives as a construction of and purveyor of meaning is also pertinent to this study. Stories provide a scaffold to meaning that both enables and constrains relating. From the social construction perspective, social group identities are inherited and reproduced through stories rather than set in stone. They are continuously evolving and emerging at multiple levels of engagement including the interpersonal, the intergroup, and that of the public discourse. As Carlos Torres said, "the only thing that is certain is the future, as the past continues to reconstruct itself"[1]. Stories are the containers for these interpretations.

This study brings together theoretical conversations that may seem to be in contradiction with one another. For example, empathy, social group identity and transformation traditionally have been attributed to the individual, either as a characteristic or a quality. This study both honors what we have learned from prior theoretical frameworks, and explores these phenomena from the social constructionist and communication perspective. Some might question the possibility of holding seemingly contradictory theoretical traditions in the same analysis. The theoretical scaffold thus parallels the focus of study: discursive processes that bridge incompatible ways of knowing, in the context of the social, cultural and relational realities, to expand our ways of knowing.

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[1] The terms collective identity and social identity both have been used to describe associations or identifications of the self with a group as a whole, using broad categories to describe "who *we* are". I use the term social identity in this dissertation. Others have chosen the terms "we" or "collective level we's". 2 This is a quote from Carlos Torré, Transformational Learning Conference, October, 2003, Columbia University Teacher's College, New York City, New York.

Discursive Processes: Dialogue, and Forms of Engagement

> I know three kinds. There is genuine dialogue – no matter whether spoken or silent – where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. There is technical dialogue, which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding. And there is monologue disguised as dialogue, in which two or more men, meeting in space, speak each with himself in strangely tortuous and circuitous ways and yet imagine they have escaped the torment of being thrown back on their own resources. (Buber, 1959p. 19)

The writings of Martin Buber, a Jewish theologian and philosopher of the 20th century, have had a significant impact on communication studies and the theorizing of dialogue, dialogic moments and forms of engagement. In a profound way, Buber frames the distinction between what he called *genuine dialogue,* a form of relating in which there is "inventive surprise as one turns toward the other and each perceives the impact of the other's turning" (Buber, 1959 ; Kenneth N. Cissna & Anderson, 2002 p. 19), technical dialogue and monologue disguised as dialogue. Buber describes technical dialogue as an exchange of information that is part of the necessity of daily living. Monologue, however, is often disguised as dialogue:

> "… A conversation characterized by the need neither to communicate something, not to learn something, not to influence someone, not to come into connection with someone, but solely by the desire to have one's own self-reliance confirmed p.19."

While Buber recognized that at times one would engage in the world in a utilitarian manner, what he called, I-It relating, he depicts I-Thou relating as essential to becoming fully human.

How we communicate with one another has become increasingly complex given the diversity of cultures and social groups that come together in work and community locally as well as globally. Arnett and Anderson raise the concern that we lack a meta-

narrative agreement in today's culture (1999). We lack a common form of address to build bridges across differences. Rather, he suggests, we engage in a form of cultural narcissism resembling what Buber refers to as monologue disguised as dialogue.

> Interpersonal communication that seeks to confirm the other in diversity and difference works to understand and address the other in the historicality of the communicators and the conversational context. Interpersonal communication that misses the commonsense direction of a given historical moment may be more appropriate to the speaker than to the listener or the communicative moment, resulting in a "confirmation of narcissism" (p. 30).

Tannen (1998) warns that ours is a culture of debate and argumentation, characterized by polarization, the devaluation of diversity and the perpetuation of destructive stereotyping. We perpetuate this culture in how we talk in public and private discourse, the metaphors we use and our forms of engagement.

Given how important it is and the multiple opportunities that exist to join in relationships with others whose historical voices differ from our own, how do we learn to be eloquent in such encounters? Even the terms we use to describe engaging with others who are different from us, such as dialogue and engaging diversity, create ambiguity in their multiple usages.

I begin with a review of the literature on dialogue and locate the use of the term in this study. Others who have written about the special quality of putting oneself at risk and being fully open to the another such as Bakhtin (1986; Murray, 2000), Levinas (1985), Jaspers (Gordon, 2000), Sampson (1993) , and Pearce (1994) will be considered in this review. The emergence of the term dialogic moments in the Buber-Rogers dialogue and the current theorizing of Cissna and Anderson are explored. The connections and distinction between dialogic moments and empathy as they emerge in the Buber-Rogers dialogue and as they are made in this study are addressed.

Dialogue and Forms of Engagement

The term dialogue has been referred to in the literature in many different disciplines: literary criticism (Bakhtin, 1986; Buber, 1958; Gordon, 2000), philosophy, (Buber, 1958 #62;Gordon, 2000 #236), management, (Isaacs, 2000, (Senge, 1990), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 1973) and public engagement, (Anderson, Cissna, & Arnett, 1994; Chasin et al., 1996; B. W. Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; K. Pearce & Pearce, 2001). Most recently[2], the use of the term dialogue has been popularized with reference to a *thing* that people *do*. Dialogue has become so widely used that Stewart and Zediker warn:

> …Like 'communication', 'dialogue' has suffered from the tendency to be defined so generally that it becomes a synonym for almost all human contact. (Stewart & Zediker, 2000 p.224)

Many use dialogue colloquially to describe what they do when they talk. Some use dialogue as a noun to describe an intentional time-bound event that is created by putting certain conditions in place (Issacs, 1994, 1999). Ellinor and Gerard (1998, p. 21) distinguish dialogue from discussion in that dialogue is "seeing the whole rather than breaking it into parts; seeing connections rather than distinctions; inquiring into assumptions rather than justifying or defending them; learning through inquiry and disclosure rather than persuading, selling or telling; and creating shared meanings rather than gaining agreement on one meaning."

David Bohm describes dialogue as a particular form of conversation from which new meaning emerges (Bohm, 1996). Largely based on the work of Bohm, Issacs, and colleagues at the MIT Dialogue Project (1994, 1999), and Gerard and Ellinor, founders of

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[2] The word *recent* is relative. Pearce and Pearce (2000) note that Matson and Montague posed a similar concern in 1967 (p. 164).

The Dialogue Group (1998), have created a process for *doing* dialogue. Dialogue, in practice, consists of an intentional, structured, time-bound experience, guided by specific ground rules, for the purpose of stimulating new meaning. The ground rules instruct people to identify and suspend assumptions and judgments, to listen, to speak when they have something to add to the process, to avoid *cross-talk* by speaking to the center of the circle rather than to each other, and to reflect. (Issacs, 1994, p. 380; Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, p. 60-61).

Some use dialogue as an adjective, (i.e., dialogic) to describe a quality of relating or a form of knowing. (Bakhtin, 1986; Buber, 1958, 1959; W. B. Pearce, 1989, 1993, 2001b; Sampson, 1993). Pearce and Pearce, (2000, p. 162), describe dialogue as a form of communication with specific "rules" that distinguish it from other forms of communication.

> Participating in this form of communication requires a set of abilities, the most important of which is remaining in the tension between holding your own perspective, being profoundly open to others, who are unlike you, and enabling others to act similarly (p.162).

Dialogic virtuosity, suggested by the Pearces as the capability to know something well and perform it skillfully, is "learnable, teachable and contagious". Skillful use includes the abilities to respond to another's invitation to engage in dialogue, to extend an invitation to others, and to construct contexts that enable dialogic engagement.

In an attempt to bring a framework to the use of the term dialogue, scholars of dialogue have identified categorical uses of the term. Two of these scholars, Anderson and Cissna, (1994) identify four dialogue traditions: relational or about human meeting as found in the work of Buber, the intricacies of human conversation such as conversational analysis or ethno-methodology, a form of cultural knowing as articulated by Bakhtin and social construction theorists, and textural understanding and interpretation as described

by Gadamer's hermeneutics. While the boundaries of these distinctions overlap, the literature most relevant to this study is dialogue as a form of cultural knowing, that is relational or is about human meeting.

Dialogue as a Form of Cultural Knowing

Dialogue as a form of cultural knowing locates meaning making in relationships. For Bakhtin, "true thought is not to be found in the isolated minds of individuals, but at that point of dialogic contact between people engaged in discourse" (1986). He viewed both the verbal and written word as sources of a dialogic interaction that starts before an encounter and continues on, indefinitely. Bakhtin saw the utterance as filled with the voices of others and as continuously unfolding in relationship with others' utterances.

Shotter builds on Bakhtin's view: "as living, embodied beings, we have our being within a ceaseless unfolding flow of relationally-responsive activity of one kind or another, spontaneously originating in the active relations between ourselves and the others and otherness in our surroundings (2000p. 120)". From a social constructionist perspective, the utterance itself does not carry meaning. Rather it is what we do with the utterance that is significant: the historical meaning that we attach to it, and how we respond to it becomes part of an ongoing meaning making process.

Bakhtin's theory of dialogue describes all utterances as an enactment of our interconnectedness:

> An utterance is never just a reflection or an expression of something already existing and outside it that is given and final. It always creates something that never existed before, something absolutely new and unrepeatable, and, more over, it always has some relation to value (the true, the good, the beautiful, and so forth), But something created is always created out of something given…[and] what is given is completely transformed in what is created.(1986).

This *chain of speech communication* as Bakhtin calls it, is the source of the *once-occurent event of Being*. In relating, we must attend to both the origins of the utterance and what is produced by what follows.

The process on ongoing meaning making in the chain of speech communication has been described by Pearce as triplets of enactments (1994). The Serpentine Model as described by Pearce depicts meaning making as an continuous process made in the ongoing turns of communicating. This process is described further in the section on the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM).

Dialogue as Relational or About Human Meeting

Buber spoke about dialogue as the place of human meeting; the "in-between". In his book *I and Thou* (1970), he called genuine dialogue a relational achievement; an *I-thou* relationship. In an *I-thou* relationship, you treat the other as if "you were part of a relationship, engaged in joint action with another 'I' whose motives and meanings are part of the conversation in which you live" (Pearce1994).

Buber distinguishes between three basic forms of communication between individuals: technical dialogue, monologue disguised as dialogue, and genuine dialogue. *Technical dialogue* is the conveying of an objective understanding or information. While technical dialogue is an impersonal way to communicate, it is the most frequent form of communication used. *Monologue* is occurring when one is attending more to his or her own voice than to making contact with another. Buber labels this as the *I-it* form of relating; you treat the other as an 'it' while considering yourself "an autonomous individual acting in ways that affect the other" (Pearce1994). The nature of the relationship, according to Buber, makes the people. As Buber said, "The 'I' of 'I-thou' is not the same 'I' as the 'I' of 'I-it'" (1970).

The distinction between the I-Thou and the I-It relationship is poignantly

illustrated by the following story from Buber's life:

> When I was eleven years of age, spending the summer on my grandparent's estate, I used, as often as I could do it unobserved, to steal into the stable and gently stroke the neck of my darling, a broad dapple-grey horse. … What I experienced in touch with the animal was the Other, the immense otherness of the Other, which, however, did not remain strange like the otherness of the ox and the ram, but rather let me draw near and touch it… something that was not I, was certainly not akin to me… and yet it let me approach, confided itself to me… placed itself… in the relation of *Thou* and *Thou* with me ..The horse, even when I had not begun by pouring oats for him into the manger, very gently raised his massive head…But one…it struck me about the stroking, what fun it gave me, and suddenly I became conscious of my hand. … it was no longer the same thing… The next day, after giving him a rich feed, when I stroked my friend's head, he did not raise his head. (Buber, 1959, 1967)

Buber, in attending to his hand, moved his attention away from the source of

relating: the in-between. But even Buber acknowledged that one cannot be continuously

dialogic. "One cannot live in pure present; it would consume us…. Without *It* [the

material world] a human being cannot live. But whoever lives only with that is not

human" (1970). In *genuine dialogue*, according to Buber, each of the participants has in

mind the other(s), and engaged in establishing a living mutual relation.

While Buber is well-known for his writings on the I-Thou relationship, he

acknowledges other philosophers before him such as Ludwig Feurbach, Soren

Kierkegaard, and Franz Rosenzweig, and contemporaries, including Karl Jaspers, and

Gabriel Marcel whose work described this quality of engagement (Buber, 1985p. 209).

Jaspers, in the articulation of his Existenz Theory, describes the sense of risk in this

special quality of relating : "If I want to be manifest, I will risk myself completely in

communication which is my only way of self-realization. I will put 'the way I am'

completely at stake because I know that in it my own Existenz has yet to come to itself

(Jaspers 1932/1970 p. 59 in Gordon, 2000 p. 115)

Others use the term dialogue in contrast to monologue as a form of relating.

Gergen (1999) talks about monologue as an expression of classic notions of identity

where the focus is centered on the individual. Monologue in this sense is an authoritarian

imposition of *truths* or correct interpretations that silence other voices as it declares

meaning. Sampson (1993) writes about self-celebratory monologues carried on by the

dominant groups that render less powerful groups invisible, Self-celebratory monologues

serve to make some the subject of the public discourse, making others servants to their

dominance.

Pearce makes a distinction between monocultural, ethnocentric and cosmopolitan

communication (1989). Each are forms of coordinating meaning in the process of

relating. Monocultural communication literally implies "acting as if there were one

culture (one's own of course)" (p. 93). By treating the other as the same, the unique

qualities of the other are made to be invisible, or are not valued. Ethnocentric

communication means viewing other cultures from the perspective of one's own, and

references one's sense of *we* in relationship to a "*they"* (p.120*)*. Ethnocentric

communication is distinguished by:

> distinctions between 'us' with our stories and practices and 'them' with theirs. There is a mindfulness of the existence of others who differ from us and some way of accounting for the fact that 'our' resources and practices are 'right' (p.119).

Cosmopolitan communication is a quality of relating that demonstrates a commitment to

coordinating meaning with another without denying the unique existence or humanity of

the other, deprecating the other's way. It shifts the attention to a commitment to relating,

a mindfulness about what Pearce calls, social eloquence, rather than imposing oneself on

another (1994).

Pearce and Littlejohn contrast the quality of relationships created by monologue versus dialogue. "In monologue, questions are asked to gain a speaking turn or to make a point; in dialogue, question are asked to invite an answer. In monologue, one speaks to impress or influence others; in dialogue, one speaks to take a turn in an interpersonal process that affects all participants" (B. W. Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

In each of the description of forms of relating, distinctions are made the form of acknowledging others. Oliver, (1996) describes a form of *systemic eloquence*, an ability to take different positions in order to fully honor different perspectives. Building on Pearce's concept of social eloquence, systemic eloquence seeks to elevate the relational commitments of attending to how one contributes to the experience of another, identifying patterns of engagement that may interfere with relating, and doing so with a commitment to collaboration. Storytelling is used as a means to foster coordination.

This study uses the term *dialogic* as an adjective, to describe a form of relating in moments where meaning making emerges in relating. In the next section, I define the use of the term dialogic moments as a way of framing these moments of meeting where "no matter whether spoken or silent – each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular beings and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them" (Buber, 1959, p. 19).

Dialogic Moments

The very meaning of the term, *dialogic moments,* has been emerging in what one might describe as dialogic moments. The Buber-Rogers dialogue deepened the meaning of dialogic moments in content and process. Further, the scholarly work of Cissna and Anderson (1998, 2002) in theorizing dialogic moments has contributed further to the dimensionality of the concept. It is as though these theorists have been involved in a

process of deepening the meaning of what constitutes these very precious moments of meeting.

Cissna and Anderson describe a dialogic moment as not as progressive, nor as constant, but "the result of often surprising and even epiphanous or sporadic insight. (2002, p. 174).

> Dialogue does not demand full understanding, complete mutuality, or pervasive cultural immersion; instead, it depends on sparks of recognition across the gap of strangeness. The dialogic characteristic of strange otherness should not imply that different persons or cultures will be forever alienated from each other as perpetual strangers, but it opens the possibility for momentary epiphanies of recognition from which each side learns in fresh ways what it is like to be "other"(p. 174).

Cissna and Anderson go on to suggest that moments of meeting cannot be forced, but they can be facilitated by how the space of meeting is structured. The experience of connectedness is not constant. Rather there is a dialectic of knowing and not knowing, certainty and uncertainty (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), familiar and strange (Gurevitch, 1989). Again the distinction is made between the individual and relational approach.

> The scholarly agenda for dialogically oriented scholars is to understand how it is that communication functions to produce and re-produce the contingency of the social world. "Certainty" and "uncertainty" are not cognitive tools that help or hinder the monadic individual's communicative choice making. Instead, "certainty" and "uncertainty" are jointly crafted undertakings that give communication the look and feel of improvised jazz; interactants are like jazz musicians who construct an ensemble performance out of a series of musical constraints ("the given") and creativities ("the new") (Pusar, 1994 #808 Berliner, 1994 #807) (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996)

Shotter relates Bakhtin's notion of the *once-occurrent event of Being* to a dialogic moment:

> "Dialogical moments, then… the occurrence of once-occurrent events of Being, are of importance to us in communication in two major ways: they are the moments when we both make a living contact with our actual surroundings… and the moments we create openings or invitations for their updating…"(Shotter, 2000)

This flow suggests both the amplification of and the illusiveness of a dialogic moment. It is in the moment, the dialogic moment that meaning from the past, present and future converge, and yet are *a*temporal.

Cissna and Anderson describe the basic character of a dialogic moment as,

It is the experience of inventive surprise shared by the dialogic partners as each turns toward the other and both mutually perceive the impact of each other's turning. It is a brief interlude of focused awareness and acceptance of otherness and difference that somehow simultaneously transcends the perception of difference itself (1998p. 186).

The definition of a dialogic moment for this study is characterized by a willingness to acknowledge and engage each other, a sensing of each other's uniqueness, an openness to surprise that leads in unanticipated directions or has emergent unanticipated consequences, putting one's story at risk of change, and challenging one's way of knowing.

Empathy as a Form of Relating

When Buber and Rogers met in April 1957, they came together in a conversation about what it means to be in meaningful relating. In some ways, they were bringing together two different loci of relating: the individual and the relational. By the end of their dialogue, each had influenced the other.

The literature on empathy is primarily written from the perspective of a trait that one possesses. Carl Rogers was known for popularizing the term empathy. In 1959, he defined empathy as "sensing the other's inner feelings as if they were his own without losing sight of the 'as if' and falling into identification" (C. Rogers, 1975). His later definition of empathy resonated with the influence of his encounter with Buber:

Rogers noted that ultimately the other's perception still determines the significance of a communicative encounter. The narrative background that we bring into a communicative encounter does make a difference – whether we are propelled by the possibility of gratitude or the expectation of entitlement makes

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all the difference (Arnett & Arneson, 1999 p. 100).

Much of the research on empathy is grounded in the individual, psychological perspective and consists of studies where outcome is determined by measurement: the degree to which one has empathy and the degree to which one perceives empathy (Duan & Hill, 1996). The shift from an individual to relational focus, and the limitations of measurement are reflected in more recent theorizing and research.

Scholars such as the feminist scholars from the Stone Center (Jordan et al., 1991), have looked at empathy from the perspective of self-in-relationship. Now referred to as Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), (Evans, 2002), growth in relationship with others is emphasized over differentiation (Surrey, 1991). Through connection, or *mutual empathy*, people find the ability to be *moved*, to respond and to move the other (J. Surrey, 1991 p. 168).

One of the major controversies in the empathy literature has been over the question of whether empathy is cognitive, affective or both (Kerem, Fishman, & Josselson, 2001). The RCT literature as well as the psychological literature describes empathy as having both an affective and a cognitive element. The affective component consists of a response that indicates emotional resonance, and the cognitive response is evident in an accurate understanding of the person's experience. Jordan describes the empathic process as a brief moment of blurred boundaries, stepping back to assimilate and then determining how to use the information (J. V. Jordan, 1991).

Another question distinction the literature addresses is the feeling of empathy toward another versus the experience of empathy without the emotional involvement with the other. In a recent study of the experience of empathy, findings show that experiences of empathy might be experienced as fuller and more meaningful when, in addition to the ability to see the situation from the other's perspective, there is some emotional

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involvement (Kerem et al., 2001). Yet the elements of affective and cognitive responses are found to be more complex than had been previously portrayed in the literature (p. 727). For example, empathy is experienced by another's challenging one's point of view as well as through caring and acceptance. This suggests a expansion in the definition of empathy both to it moving toward the relational and to the acknowedgement of it being a form of relating that is less about *accuracy* and more about presence.

Jordan's depiction of needing to step back before one can assimilate the presence of another moves the source of empathy from the individual to the boundary of the individual and the relationship. The Kerem study expands notions of how receiving empathy may take on the characteristics of not understanding, or differentiating.

When Rogers and Buber met, they engaged deeply with each other to talk about the complexities of being in an I-Thou relationship. Two years after the dialogue, Buber described empathy:

> Empathy means if anything, to glide with one's own feelings into the dynamic structure of an object, with the perceptions of one's own muscles; it means to "transpose" oneself over there and in there…it means the exclusion of one's own concreteness…its elements are first, a relation, between two personas, second an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and third, the fact that this one person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time, lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other (Buber, 1959).

In later years, Rogers shifted his definition of empathy from a state of *being* empathic to a process:

> entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it… being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or the rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing.. communicating your sensings of his/her world as you look with fresh and unfrightened eyes…(C. Rogers, 1975).

The Buber - Rogers dialogue, as well as the psychological theories of growth in relationship focus on the individual in the relationship. Those who attempt to elevate the

relationship struggle with finding the language to do so. Josselson speaks of the space between (Josselson, 1996), The Stone Center speaks about self-in-relationship Gergen and McNamee write about relational realities. In each case, there is the challenge to describe the world we are living into, without being sufficiently emancipated from the language of the world we have been living (Bernstein, 1986).

In the next section, the complexity of relating is amplified when we look through the lens of collective or social identity groups.

Discourse and Diversity:
Social Identity Groups as a Way of Defining Self

> At earlier historical moments, identity was not so much an issue; when societies were more stable, identity was to a great extent assigned, rather than selected or adopted. In current times, however, the concept of identity carries the full weight of the need for a sense of who one is, together with an often overwhelming pace of change in surrounding social contexts – changes in the groups and networks in which people and their identities are embedded into societal structures and practices in which those networks are themselves embedded. (Howard, 2000)

> Social cognitive approaches to stereotyping looked at the person as an isolated individual politely unconscious of group identity, with a color-blind (group blind) ideal. In contrast, social identity and self-categorization approaches looked at groups in conflict focusing on the struggling minority and the subjective reality of the group. These two approaches are converging. (Fiske, 1998)

This section focuses on the literature, theory and research that address how we construct social identity in relationships and in the process of relating. Of particular relevance to this study are how distinctions are construed, and what factors support the engagement of differences. While social identity group theorists and those who study inter-group relations suggest that group identities are created in social relationships, there remain different ways of thinking about differences.

How We Talk about Intergroup Relations: Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory suggests that people define their identities along the continuum of two dimensions: social, defined by membership in various social groups;

and personal, defined by the attributes that differentiate one person from another. (Deaux, 1993; Howard, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) Some make a clear distinction between personal or individual identity and social identity, (Hoggs & Abrams, 1988). Others, (Deaux 1993), suggest an interaction between the social and personal. Nagel (Nagel, 1996) contends that ethnic identity is a dialectic between internal identification and external ascription.

> Culture is not a shopping cart that comes to us already loaded with a set of historical, cultural goods. Rather we construct culture by picking and choosing items from the shelves of the past and present… In other words, cultures change: They are borrowed, blended, rediscovered, and reinterpreted (Nagel, 1994)

Social identity is multi-layered, with different identities activated at different times through social engagement. People belong to and identify with multiple groups, many of which interact with each other. Our life experiences are influenced by cultural stories and frameworks that we inherit and enact from these groups, (Brewer & Brown, 1998; Gergen, 2002) as well as the cultural and political implications of group identities that are imposed upon us. All of these constitute the complexity of our worldviews.

Ferdman, (2000) distinguishes between cultural identity at the group versus the individual level:

> Cultural identity at the group level is the image shared by group members of the features that are distinctive or emblematic of the group.   Cultural identity at the individual level is the reflection of culture as it is constructed by each of us. (Ferdman, 2000)

At the individual level, we each hold multiple social group affiliations, as defined by the culture: gender, race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, education, sexual orientation, and age, among them. We are continually combining these affiliations in different ways. The way we combine them is in part a product of our personal histories, and in part, as Nagel suggests, a product of the stories we tell about our selves and are told by the

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culture in which we live. At any given moment, we are some of, more than, all of and one of these particular affiliations. We create ourselves into the social context and the relational engagement.

Who we are in relationships is an interweaving of our own association with social identity groups and particular people within those groups, with the way others identify us with those groups and make conclusions. Often these conclusions are tied to stereotypical expectations or stories about how members of such groups behave. Since relationships are a co-joint action, the other's construction of us in relationship influences whether or not we identify with the social identity group(s), and the appropriation of the stereotype, regardless of whether or not the stereotype is accurate.

> To assert that ethnicity is socially constructed is not to deny the historical basis of ethnic conflict and mobilization (the organization of groups along ethnic lines for collective action.) It is to also acknowledge the contemporary demographic, political, social and economic processes that prop up this ethnic boundary, reconstructing it, and producing tension along its borders and within the ethnic groups. (Nagel, 1994 p. 154)

From a social constructionist perspective, we are continuously defining social identity in our social encounters. Howard's suggestion earlier in this chapter that there was a time when society was more stable and identity was less of an issue is, itself, embedded in a current historic conceptualization of *stable identity* is.

Social Categorization Theory

Social categorization theory (SCT), originally conceptualized by Allport, (1954), stated that people organize their world by creating categories in order to deal with the complexity of our social worlds. People organize these categories by in-groups and out-groups (Brewer & Brown, 1998; Hewstone, and, & Willis, 2002). Allport, hypothesized about the nature of prejudice and proposed ways of reducing prejudice and promoting inter-group contact. One way to equalize relationships across categories was through

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contact. He studied groups of people who had little contact with one another and identified four key conditions for positive inter-group contact: equal group status within the situation, common goals, inter-group cooperation and the support of authorities, law or custom. Allport's theory continues to be seen as foundational to how we think about building bridges across different social identity groups (Pettigrew, 1998).

Follow-up studies of inter-group contact built on Allport's original hypothesis. They added other situational factors that would engender optimal contact including a common language, voluntary contact, a prosperous economy, and that the initial views of the other not be too negative (Wagner and Machleit, 1986 cited in Pettigrew, 1998(Ben-Ari & Amir, 1986). These studies focused primarily on cognitive factors, e.g., how one group learned about another group, and conceptualized group identity as salient.

More recent research has focused on the processes by which contact changes attitudes and behaviors, and how changes from contact in one context can be applied to other contexts. Pettigrew, (1998) in a review of the literature, identified other benefits of inter-group contact including behavior change through repeated contact, and the generation of affective ties such as friendship and perspective taking. Both were fostered by proximity, generalization across situations, generalization from the out-group individual member to the out-group (when the in-group member was perceived to be representative), and in-group reappraisal. Given the conundrum that people who are most likely to have intergroup contact are atypical for their groups, Pettigrew questioned whether these results could be generalized. Yet is was possible to suggest that contact effects generalize best when the participants were typical group members (Pettigrew, 1998). Pettigrew's enhancement of Allport's theory identified the valuing of cross-group friendships. Friendships fostered learning about the other group, self-disclosure, and the potential for extensive and repeated contact.

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The expansion of the inter-group contact theory by adding the potential for friendship as a fifth factor to Allport's four conditions: equal group status, common goals, inter-group cooperation, and support of authority, was particularly pertinent to this study. The language used in the interpretation of these findings is individualistic. Yet, what would we learn by elevating the discursive processes in the interpretation?

While some advocate a de-emphasis on group membership in the interest of minimizing bias, research suggests that "ignoring group differences often means that, by default, existing inter-group inequalities are perpetuated." (Brewer & Brown, 1998). While the support of boundaries between different groups can serve to reify the attribution of qualities and characteristics to particular groups, such boundaries could also provide a way of challenging assumptions. The latter raises the question: what conditions and discursive processes best enable people to both recognize and challenge deeply held assumptions?

S.T. Fiske (Brewer & Brown, 1998) suggests that biases can be managed with motivation, information and appropriate mood. Pettigrew (Pettigrew, 1998) identifies strategies that help to challenge the imbalance of positive stereotypes toward one's own group and negative stereotypes toward the other's including increased contact, equal status and the capacity to take the other person's perspective. Again, these concepts, while individual in their intent, have implications for the relational perspective.

Transformative Intergroup Relations
Research and Practice on Dialogue and Intergroup Relations

There have been many attempts to bring together people from different political ideologies as well as seemingly incommensurate social identity groups. I briefly review some examples of the work from organizations that are engaging the public on key political issues, along with relevant studies in this area.

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Lessons Learned from the Field

The most well known projects that deal with public engagement are the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC), the Public Conversations Project (PCP), the National Issues Forum and Study Circles. Pearce and Littlejohn of PDC have conducted ongoing research using the CMM model of the interactions between the New Religious Right in American politics and those they call *secular humanists* (B. W. Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). They identified a category of conflicts as "conflicts between incommensurate social worlds" using a process called *transcendent dialogue*. Transcendent dialogue offers a criterion for satisfactory performance that includes an awareness of one's own cultural resources, a willingness to move beyond them, and the ability to cooperatively find ways of dealing with the conflict that transcend the social worlds of the participants (B. W. Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

PDC is also facilitated public engagement project in a medium sized city north of San Francisco where they helped the community with issues of rapid growth and change addressing many issues including diversity.[3]

The Public Conversations Project (PCP) is probably best known for the sessions it convened between proponents of pro-choice and pro-life positions on the abortion issue. Their approach to public engagement or dialogue is to foster conversations that build trust, increase mutual understanding, improve communication and shift relationships in constructive directions (Anderson, Cissna, & Clune, 2003) They use an approach framed as transformative dialogue (Gergen & McNamee, 2001). They don't necessarily expect people to change their positions; rather they hope to inspire trusting relationships across political commitments. Their dialogues begin with personal stories, which tend to build personal relationships, generate acceptance and shift the conversation. Narrative changes

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[3] A website of the Cupertino project is available at (www.westerncity.com/cupertino/html).

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the affective relationship, and enables a *rehumanized view* of the opposing person and a more complex understanding of the issue (Becker, Chasin, Chasin, Herzig, & Roth, 1995).

The National Issues Forum (Anderson et al., 2003 p. 24) sponsored by the Kettering Foundation guides discussions and deliberations on public issues. Typically, they provide position papers to help inform participants. They begin the deliberation with a video, and guide the discussions with prepared questions. The discussions begin and close with a vote on one of the defined positions.

Study Circles (Anderson et al., 2003 p. 25)brings together small groups of people from diverse backgrounds to talk about an issue over several meetings. Study circles typically have a facilitator to help keep the group focused and maintains adherence to their guidelines for a dialogic conversation. There might be multiple circles that would join together, depending on the issue, to bring their ideas together for action.

This discussion highlighted the structural aspects of inter-group relationships at the level of political issues and public engagement. Each of these public engagement projects shares a value for and a commitment to bringing together diverse perspectives for constructive action. Their processes for doing so attend to how people engage, and what they do when they are creating in dialogue. They use core concepts of building relationships and structuring how people have conversations albeit with somewhat different emphases. They differ in how they frame the engagement, how they address differences, facilitator involvement, and structure of the conversation.

Research on Transformative Dialogue

The historical roots of social identity group encounters run deep (Rothman, 1997). One current and painful example of this is the relationship between Palestinians and Jews in the Middle East. Group encounters between these groups began in the early 1980's as

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an attempt to foster co-existence. There are three main methods that have been used in group process: human relations; collective identity group encounters; and storytelling groups (Steinberg & Bar-On, 2001). Each of these methods has demonstrated advantages and disadvantages. The human relations groups, based primarily on the principles of SCT, focused on fostering interpersonal relationships, however external power relations and the hostile environment dampened the positive effect created by the small group process (Maoz, 2000a, 2000b).

The collective identity encounters emphasized group identities and asymmetric power relations to empower members of minority groups and enhance the dominant group members awareness of the dynamics of power relations, yet lacked the personal relations to enable participants to move beyond their collective perspectives. (Maoz, 2001) The storytelling groups enabled personal relationships and the testing of stereotypic views of the "other" through the sharing of personal and collective histories (Maoz & Bar-On, 2000). "The aim of sharing of personal narratives is to enhance the participants' ability to develop empathy toward the others and to understand their experience" (Steinberg & Bar-On, 2001)

The research described elevated the value of both personal and social identity group engagement. The evaluation of these encounters was based on attitude change. More recently, attention turned to the qualities of the discourse that was evident in these groups. Through the analysis of transcripts of group encounters between Israel Jews and Israeli Palestinians in a college course, researchers classified six categories of discourse: *ethnocentric talk*; *attack*; *opening a window*; *recognition of difference*; *intellectual discussion* and, dialogic moments.

Recognition of differences was identified as a significant juncture:

"It is the point when each side recognizes that there are differences between them that they may not understand. This recognition is a turning point of abandoning the illusion of understanding the other, which is based on a stereotypic perceptions…The participants become conscious of the fact that the only way to reach understanding is by listening and making an effort to see reality from the other's perspective" (Steinberg & Bar-On, 2001)

Once people acknowledged differences as well as the place of *not understanding*,[4] participants were able to move through the intellectual engagement and engage more fully. In this study, a *dialogic moment* was identified as a

…discussion between equals, characterized by sharing feelings with the others, differentiation among individuals, listening, reacting in a non-judgmental way and trying to understand the other's point of view, a kind of empathy to the other that seems to exemplify concepts such as a moment of cognitive and affective understanding, of "real meeting" as defined by Buber and Rogers, participating in the other's experience without loosing the 'self. (Steinberg & Bar-On, 2001)

The review of the Steinberg, Bar-On research is pertinent to this study both on the theoretical and methodological levels. On the theoretical level, this study was unique in that it identified discursive developmental stages in groups with a dialogic moment being one of those stages. This dissertation builds on these studies in that it looks at the discursive processes by involving participants as collaborators in the process of making sense of the data[5].

The next section provides the theoretical foundations for this study.

Social Construction Theory

It is not that social constructionist ideas annihilate self, truth, objectivity, science, and morality. Rather, it is the way in which we have understood and practiced them, that is thrown into question. In the end, social constructionism allows us to reconstitute the past in far more promising ways" (Gergen, 1999).

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[4] Gurevitch, {1989 #154} elaborated on *not understanding* in his article: "The power of not understanding: The meeting of conflicting identities." He sees not understanding as a necessary step toward meeting the other.
[5] Ifrat Maoz noted this distinction in a private conversation and noted that cooperative interpretation was a direction they sought to pursue.

Social construction theory is a worldview about worldviews. The theory contends that we construct our social reality in our relationships rather than in our minds, as had been the tradition of the cognitive sciences. (Gergen, 1999) Meaning is located in the continuous everyday temporal flow of contingent communicative action occurring between people. Shotter calls this flow of responsive and relational activities and practices *joint action* (Shotter, 1995). Given the multiple possibilities of engagement, there are many ways to understand the world. Each perspective both enhances and limits how we know. When we see our way of knowing as *one* way of knowing, rather than *the* way of knowing, we are more inclined to take a more curious stance to other possibilities. The stance of *not knowing* becomes more available to us.

We create meaning in the ongoing narratives and stories we both inherit and construct. We reproduce meaning in relationships mediated by language and discursive processes. (Gergen, 1985, 1999; 1999) Stories are one way of organizing meaning. The stories we inherit both influence and are defined by our enactments. We learn the folklore of our ancestors and they become the story of us, which becomes our shared history. We make meaning of new experiences in coordination with stories in a recursive relationship; stories help shape the meaning of new experiences and our new experiences shape our stories. Memories in this instance are not stories stored in a "bank"; rather they are made, and remade in conversations.

I suggested that we learn the folklore of our ancestors, and they become the story of *us,* which becomes our shared history. This formula becomes ambiguous when our ancestors have histories that are contentious with one another or when even our personal histories conflict with each other.[6] Then, we have a tension, a mystery, or, more simply, an incoherence.

The Communication Approach and the Coordinated Management of Meaning

The communication perspective on social construction theory contends that meaning is continuously emerging in the turns and processes of social interactions and speech acts of persons in conversation. A speech act is a discursive event: a statement, an action, or an intervention, that communicates or does something (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). A speech act is part of a reflexive process: speech acts make the contexts that give them meaning and contexts make the speech acts that occur in them (Wittgenstein, 1968). Our interactions are consequential to social meaning making.

The communication perspective, as a way of knowing, is concerned with how people coordinate meaning in the experience of situated conjoint action (W. B. Pearce, 1994). The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) is an interpretive theory and a practical tool that looks at what people doing when they are communicating and why, rather than what they are *talking about* (V. Cronen, 1995; V. E. Cronen & Johnson, 1982; W. B. Pearce, 2001a, 2004; W. Barnett Pearce & Kimberly A. Pearce, 2000). The question, *why,* has most often been answered within the vocabularies of cognitive states or personality traits of the individual. In this analysis, the communication process is the unit of identifying how people, together, create patterns of thought and action (Pearce, 1994). Since this approach views communicating as performing rather than representing, it utilizes a different vocabulary: a vocabulary of action verbs such as doing and making. As with any new language, the use is sometimes awkward. At the same time, the

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[6] One poignant story was told of an Israeli soldier whose father is Palestinian and whose mother is Jewish. He has two names: one Jewish and one Palestinian. (NYTimes Magazine November 9, 2003).

vocabulary invites the perspective that offers a different view than that of the cognitive tradition.

There are four models that CMM provides that help to elevate the communication process. The concepts described here are embellished in Chapter 3 as they apply to the methodology and data analysis process. The first of these concepts is the Hierarchy Model of Meanings. This model emphasizes the idea that communication acts are always in multiple contexts. The contexts are typically stories of personal and group identity, of relationships among the people involved in the communication event, of the episode itself, and of the institutions, organizations or cultures involved (W. B. Pearce, 2004).

The second model, the Serpentine Model, amplifies what people are making together, (i.e., identities, episodes, relationships, cultures) by their patterns of communicating. The meaning of a communication act or speech act is made by the conjoint action of multiple persons, and is in the context of what preceded it and what follows.

The third model, the Daisy Model, offers a way of depicting the multiple conversations or dialogic influences that are part of the meaning making in conversations.

The fourth model is the LUUUTT Model. LUUUTT is an acronym that spells out stories **L**ived, **U**ntold stories, **U**nheard stories, **U**nknown stories, stories **T**old and story**T**elling. These elements are helpful paths to explore when analyzing what people are doing in communication.

Social construction theory, and the communication perspective have implications for how we understand who we are, and our ideas about our selves and our social relationships. Geertz wrote:

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"The western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe… is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures. (Geertz, 1983)

Just the idea that a concept, that may seem like such a given to us that we don't even notice we have it, may not be shared universally, opens up a curious stance.

One's self is continuously being defined in the context of one's history and one's becoming. In our culture, we carry narratives that are continuously organized in connection with groups. Gergen describes the self as a "narration rendered intelligible within ongoing relationships" (Gergen, 1994). That narration includes a story that we are like some, and not like others. Among those whom we are like, we are like only some of them, and not like others; and so on.

The communication perspective guided the process of defining and interpreting what happens in the engagement of deep differences in conversations. As such, social identities, and empathy were not things we inherently have, or somehow find; rather they were situated achievements co-constructed in ongoing patterns of communication. By shifting the focus from social identities and empathy being things that are *found* to being possibilities that we *make,* the communication perspective was an invitation to exercise a new muscle, to develop a new way of seeing and a new way of knowing. The communication perspective shifted discursive processes, and how we talk about things, from being background music to the foreground. In a sense, *how* we talk about things became content that illuminated how we enable or constrain the coordination of meaning. (Sigman, 1995)

While the invitation to see anew is potentially exciting, it requires a shift of attention, focus and means of expression. I address the shift of attention from *thing* to *process,* and the tension it creates, throughout this study.

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Stories as Creator and Purveyor of Meaning

Stories are recognized as instruments for understanding systems, structure and processes, with conceptual foundations in sociolinguistics, folklore and communications. Stories are recognized as instruments of creating meaning as well as products useful in studying it (Greco, 1996, McCollum 1992). Stories have the capacity to integrate one's "reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future, rendering a life in time sensible in terms of beginnings, middles, and endings" (McAdams, 1997).

Many theorists suggest that people give coherence and purpose to their lives through narrative, (1990; Charme, 1984; Gergen, 1999; Hermans, 2001; McAdams, 1993, 1997). McAdams suggests that although a person constructs a story, it has constitutive meanings within a culture; thus a story is jointly authored by the person and the defining culture (McAdams, 1997). Pasupathi ((2001) takes this a step further in suggesting that we co-construct our stories with others with whom we are in conversations.

What does it take to engage the story of another whose story is different from one's own in a significant way, such that they can hold their story and that of the other, even when they might feel threatened? The engagement of difference or a foundational story that is different from one's own requires one to manage the ambiguity. Buber talks about this as being fully present to the other. While there is no clear evidence that Buber used the term empathy prior to his conversations with Rogers, his language resembles the phenomenon of empathy. The next section provides a review of the literature on transformative learning, which builds on the concept of perspective shifts and perspective transformation.

Herein lies a tension of how we use language. From one perspective, we are who we are: members of different social identity groups. From the social constructionist and communication perspectives, social identity groups are historical patterns that we recreate

in the patterns of conversations. The data analysis process was guided by the Coordinated Management of Meaning, (CMM) (Anderson & Ross, 1998; V. E. Cronen & Johnson, 1982; Littlejohn, 1996; W. B. Pearce, 1994, 2000; Wood, 2001). The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) is both a theory of communication and a research method. As a theory, CMM is a synthesis of many influences including social construction theory, rhetorical studies, and philosophy. Communication and discourse in the CMM model, is not only *about* something or *about representing* something, it *does* or *makes* something as well. Discursive activities are speech acts: they are actions *and* are expressions of a system of rules of enactment (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Speech acts both create meaning and express meaning embedded in cultures, beliefs, and assumptions we live by.

Our history, the stories we have heard and told in the context of our environment, and our culture and the grammar we speak, informs what and how we know (Pearce 2001, Gergen, 2000). The cultural context includes historical, present and anticipated stories. Each of us weaves our unique composite of stories from our experiences and the cultures we have lived to make meaning. Our encounters bring together my story, my story of you, my story of your story of you and my story of your story of me, among others.

Stories of social identity groups, their relationship, their histories with each other dominate narratives in our culture. From a social construction perspective, social identity groups and their relationships with and among each other are always in process of shedding and becoming through new encounters. Yet, in the complexity of our daily lives, it is difficult to be aware of the multiple worldviews that are influencing the coordination of meaning in our relationships at any moment. Thus, we have coherence at times when we are "in sync" and mystery at times when we are not. Reflection provides

the opportunity to step back and look at the story we have told and are telling, and to co-construct new ways of telling and being the story.

The CMM approach introduced some tensions to this research. In contrast to more traditional methods that might see a moment as a something that had an essence to be known, the CMM approach considered a moment as yet another turn in the ongoing weaving of stories. As Pearce (1999) suggests:

> The idea is that research, like anything else humans do, is an act, not just a report. That is, by looking just here and talking with these people and not others, and producing this report written in this language and submitted to these people… all of this is a "turn" in the ongoing, autopoetic process by which we create our social worlds.

The image of an autopoietic process depicts the research as part of an ongoing rhythm of meaning making made from what comes before it, during it and after it. I was particularly mindful of this rhythm. Rhythm existed in the turns and processes of what was said in the meetings, as well as in the turn of a particular meeting in the context of the unfolding research, as well as in the context of what was unfolding in the dynamic social and political landscape during the course of the research.

CMM, as a theory, suggests that in any episode, meaning is coordinated by the complex composite of many forces. The term "episode" refers to set of conversational turns or social exchanges of behavior (things said or things done) bounded in time with a clear beginning and endpoint (Pearce, 1994). The meaning attributed to an episode depends upon the time frame used to establish it's beginning and ending point. As the timeframe expands or contracts, how one makes sense of *what is really going on* or the stories one tells about an episode, also change. An episode could refer to a specific conversation in a group discussion, over coffee, even a phone conversation or e-mail exchange. It could also refer to the entire group experience, a theme or pattern in a

relationship or an inter-ethnic conflict. The use of episodes is a means of identifying discrete events for the purpose of analysis.

Summary

The concept of dialogic moments is key to this study. The literature on what makes a dialogic moment is emergent and unfolding in what itself is a dialogic process. For the most part, the current theorizing on dialogic moments and the discursive processes that create them, addresses individual people in conversations. Yet in today's environment people construct themselves and each other as individuals that represent groups. This study asks what discursive processes can promote dialogic moments that are transformative for individuals at the level of social group identity.

Further, this study looks specifically at how to promote dialogic moments in the context of structured group interactions among individuals of different social identity groups. The group context brings the foreground an added dimension to the way meaning is construed in the complexity of relating. In the next chapter, I describe the methodology I used to collect and analyze the data for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

…It is in the contingent, unbroken responsive flow of language intertwined interaction between people, as they spontaneously cope with each other in different circumstances that, I suggest, we should situate our studies. … It is in the 'momentary relational encounters' occurring between people in their dialogic exchanges that everything of importance … should be seen as happening. And, what occurs there should be seen, not in terms of pictures or representations of what that 'something' truly is, but in terms of the different possible relations it might have, the different roles it might play, in people living out the rest of their lives - a relational rather than a representational understanding. It is in these brief interactive moments between people, in which speakers and listeners must continually react to each other spontaneously and practically, with an active, responsive understanding, that we must focus our studies. (Shotter, 1997)

The previous chapter reviewed the theoretical concepts and research that influenced this study. Much of the literature on empathy and social group identity looks at meaning from a cognitive and individualistic perspective. The design of this study built on and added to that perspective by looking at meaning from a relational perspective. The location of the data that was analyzed was the *in-between*, as Buber described, the processes and flow of people in conversation (Ludema et al., 1999). These concepts brought together different paradigms and perspectives in the literature. These differences, and the creative tension that those differences produced, were addressed conceptually in the previous chapter and are referenced again in the concluding chapter.

The research methods used in this study were based on an interpretive paradigm. Aspects of appreciative inquiry (D. L. Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; P. D. Cooperrider, David L. & Whitney, 1999) were incorporated in the methodology in order to discover what discursive processes *contributed* to a transformative dialogic process. The method was specifically designed to engage participants in a collective reflection and analysis *as it was made* in the turns and processes of persons in conversation.

An appreciative approach to cooperative inquiry (referred to here as an *appreciative cooperative inquiry*) was designed to engage members of two pre-existing dialogue groups in a discovery of which discursive, relational, and structural processes enabled dialogic moments that were transformative.

The specific assumptions and values of this perspective are described in the first section of this chapter. Next, the manner in which participants were chosen, and the data collection and analysis processes, are discussed. The particular heuristics of the CMM model, and how I used them to analyze the data both with and apart from the participants is described in the third section of this chapter. Given the highly relational qualities of this methodology, this chapter includes a section that describes my reflections as a researcher in this process.

Methodological and Design Considerations

The methodological approach for this dissertation research was qualitative, the approach of choice for exploring social and cultural phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). I used an interpretive case study integrating elements of communication theory, reflexivity, and social constructionism with an appreciative orientation. The phenomena I looked at were dialogic moments in the engagement of social identity group differences. The analysis was specifically designed to establish which discursive processes fostered *transformative* dialogic moments.

The assumption was that groups in conversations specifically designed to explore deeply embedded differences would have had some encounters that were particularly meaningful, memorable, and transformative. Any one encounter is both influenced by and creates multiple stories. The design of the research was to pause the conversation to explore some of these moments in the form of storytelling.

The term bricoleur has been used to describe the researcher who fits together a variety of approaches to explore complex situations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 4). Qualitative research methods typically combine multiple methods for the purpose of adding rigor, depth, and richness to the inquiry (Flick, 1998, p. 231). The approach to collecting data for this study was iterative and reflexive (Steier, 1995). It included interviews, reflections and interpretations. Steps in the process were planned, yet included room for improvisation and reshaping based on what emerged.

The bricoleur also works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms (p. 6). While different and competing paradigms, individual and relational, were woven together in the literature review, the process of data collection and analysis highlighted what was produced in the process of storyTelling.

The analysis was grounded in the communication approach to social construction theory. From this perspective, meaning is not fixed; rather it is continuously being produced and shaped in the interaction between and among people (B. W. Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; W. B. Pearce, 1994). Shotter suggests that meaning happens and can be identified in the continuous turns of conversations (Shotter, 1998). Thus the data were the patterns of the turns and the stories embedded in those turns.

The design of the research included pausing to explore dialogic moments. The introduction of the research both affected and was affected by the relationship between the researcher and the group, the stories each brought to the research question, and the stories we made of each other. While the interpretation and analysis of the data collected involved those who were involved in the study (Hertz, 1997), it was not in the search of a truth, nor to arrive at agreed conclusions. Involving participants created the opening for their *perspective* on the research question. The methodology was an invitation to what

Ken Gergen calls *integral connectivity* and the *dialogic consciousness*: the process itself had people thinking, being and reflecting in relationship (Gergen & Gergen, 2000).

Qualitative research invites the emergence of the unexpected. The approach had the feel of a dialogic inquiry (Boogaard, 2000), in that it was "fluid and full of possibility" (p. 67), and "recognized mutuality and reciprocity in the interest of going beyond any one individual's understanding" (p. 67). The inquiry itself invited a willingness to investigate assumptions and be open to the influence of others, appreciatively, through a process of collective reflection.

The Method: Interpretive Case Study Using Appreciative Cooperative Inquiry

The qualitative approach I designed for this study, an *appreciative cooperative inquiry,* integrated aspects of action inquiry research methodologies such as participatory action research (Park, 2000, 1999), cooperative inquiry (Reason, 1999, Baldwin, 1999), action inquiry (Torbert, 1991), and appreciative inquiry (D. Cooperrider, Frank Barrett and Suresh Srivastva, 1995; Ludema et al., 1999). The methodology resembled an appreciative inquiry as we inquired into what was affirming, with particular regard to discursive processes that:

- Fostered dialogic moments in the engagement of social group identities with a history of conflict,
- Enabled people to stay engaged in the story of the other while being aware of their own story, and
- Sparked people's curiosity to understand the other and, consequently, oneself in relationship to one's group, in a new way.

This methodology resembled an action inquiry (Torbert, 1991) and a cooperative inquiry (Bray, Smith, & Yorks, 2000) in that it involved the participants in an iterative, recursive and reflexive process, both individually and as a group, in exploring the

research questions. The analysis and interpretations from the group were incorporated with my own.

The appreciative cooperative inquiry elevated what was constructed in the relationship (McNamee & Gergen, 1999). In so doing, this method looked at how, in the process of reflection, the groups enabled or inhibited certain conversations, expanded upon or lost what others said, and reconstructed the meanings of particular episodes.

Data Collection, Approach and Analysis Process

Participants

I sought groups of people who were engaged in ongoing conversations about social identity group differences. This was based on the assumption that these encounters were situations in which people examined assumptions and prejudices about others who are different at the social identity group level. They also provided the opportunity to explore culturally embedded histories that influence the story one group had in relationship to another's group. The criteria for selecting the groups were:

- The group was engaged in an experience they considered dialogue.
- The membership of the group was diverse on multiple dimensions (e.g., race, gender, age, religion, as well as personal style, etc.).
- The members had a stated commitment to engage their social identity group differences.

Although the participants referred to their groups as dialogue groups, I will be referring to the activities of the groups as conversations to distinguish their activity from the dialogic moments that they made during these conversations.

I identified the groups through word of mouth and personal and professional contacts. (See Appendix A: Overview of the Research). I investigated potential interest

and appropriateness for the research with a group member, founder, and/or facilitator of the group. I then asked that person to explore the potential willingness of members of the group to participate. Once I learned that the group was interested in participating, I contacted each group member and arranged for an individual interview.

Two groups were involved in this study. One, which I refer to as the Women's Multifaith Group (MWD), consisted of eighteen women from different faith groups including Christian (Lutheran, Catholic, Quaker, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Unitarian), Bahá'i, Jewish (Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Orthodox) and Muslim. Although the MWD group began to meet prior to September 11, 2001, the tragic events of that day accelerated their purpose.

The second group I refer to as the Gender and Race (GAR) group. This group had been meeting for nine years. Their formation emerged from an organizational development practitioner's program. Their focus was on exploring *isms,* or forms of prejudice, specifically racism and sexism. There were eight members of this group: two black women, two white women, two black men and two white men. One of the white men was homosexual and the other members of the group were heterosexual. Each of the groups and its members are described in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection and data analysis processes were iterative and recursive. (Appendix B). First, I interviewed each group member individually. Following the individual interview, I met with the group. Another individual interview preceded a second group interview. I offered another individual conversation following the second group interview. I chose to use the CMM model to guide the inquiry process in the group as well as in the analysis of transcripts.

The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM): Heuristics

      The CMM model offers several tools for teasing out the overlapping and ongoing processes that created meaning in conversations. These include the LUUUTT Model, the Hierarchy of Meaning, the Serpentine Model and the Daisy Model. There are also some concepts such as logical forces and meaning making loops that enrich the interpretation of what the model suggests is being made in the conversation. I used these heuristics to analyze episodes. For each episode, I chose which tool(s) were most useful. I briefly describe each of these tools in this section and refer to them again in the description of the episodic analysis.

The LUUUTT Model

      People tell about themselves and their groups in an attempt to create coherence in their lives. In this study, the LUUUTT model (stories **L**ived, stories **U**ntold stories **U**nheard, stories **U**nknown, stories **T**old and story**T**elling) (W. B. Pearce & Pearce, 1998) provides a heuristic device for looking at all kind of stories. There is storytelling about the stories that were *lived* together and the stories *told* or constructed by those involved. There are *untold* stories that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, do not present themselves. Because we can't possibly hear everything, some stories go *unheard* while others are privileged. The stories we choose to tell are the ones that add meaning, and sometimes confusion, to our experiences.

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Untold stories   Unknown stories

Stories lived

StoryTelling

Unheard stories   Stories told
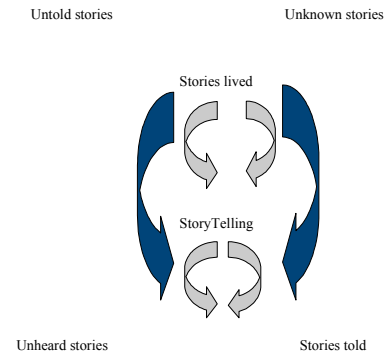
Figure 3-1: The LUUUTT Model, Pearce and Associates 1999

The Serpentine Model

      The serpentine model describes the turns in the conversation as a process. Meaning is constantly unfolding in the context of what came before it and what follows. The sequence of interaction builds from speaker to respondent to speaker again. Any turn is one part of a *conversational triplet*. Rather than looking at the particular words spoken, the serpentine model illuminates what was said in the context of the patterns and the relationships of what came before it and what comes after. Since meaning is not embedded in acts themselves, but construed in relationships, it is never possible to fully control the meaning of what one does or says, nor is it ever complete. The response to a

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statement defines it and is defined by what follows. The meaning of any episode might vary according to the punctuation of a triplet. Thus meaning is always a process of co-construction created by those participating in a conversation and the contexts they bring.

Figure 3-2 illustrates how different ways of punctuating episodes can create different meanings. What one hears is influenced by context, (e.g. the dominant narratives, language and categories one uses to organize and "make sense" out of life experiences,), and how one punctuates the episode, (e.g., whether it began with this particular exchange, or what happened last week, last month or over a longer period of time).
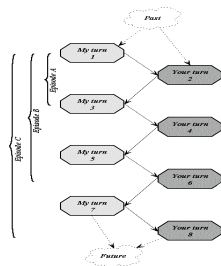
Figure 3-2 The Serpentine Model (W. B. Pearce, 2000)

The Daisy Model

The daisy model is a tool that locates the speech act, which is the focus of the larger conversations. The speech act is the center of the daisy. The petals represent the conversations that have an influence on the meaning of that speech act. In the generic example, the meaning of the speech act is influenced by the simultaneous engagement of the stories of one's group, the story one has of one's own group, the stories about the

implicit or explicit rules of engagement of the particular context, the stories about the right way to approach differences, the relationship of one's group to others' groups, the stories one has of oneself and the stories about culture. In any conversation, multiple daisies come together.

Figure 3-3: The Daisy Model
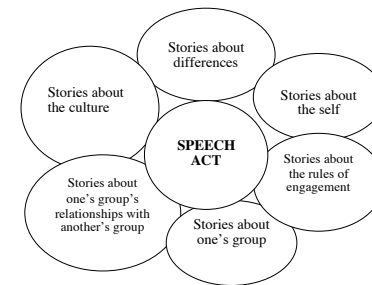
The Hierarchy Model

The hierarchy of meanings model depicts the multiple contexts that are present in a particular utterance, speech act or episode in relationship to one another. For example, any event may be described by one person as a personal story. Another person might tell that same episode as a current event. Yet another may amplify a story of people in relationship. Any story may be all of these, but the meaning takes on a different nuance according to how it is told. The meaning we glean at any one level is incomplete without considering it in relationship with meanings discernable at the other levels. Meaning

changes as different contexts move into the foreground. The coherency of an interaction

will vary based as different levels are foregrounded by those involved.

The contexts include:

- What is said, the *content* or what the content or the speech act does;
- The story we tell about the *self* in relationship with others,
- The *relationship(s)* or the scripts for what might be expected and the latitude

  within which one might act,
- The *episode* or the frame in which the interaction occurred,
- The *context* in which the episode occurred;
- The *culture* and the larger system.

As we make meaning of any social interaction, these multiple levels interact

simultaneously and influence each other.

Logical force

The concept of logical force (V. E. Cronen & Johnson, 1982) describes a pattern

of deontic logic or *shoulds* or *oughts* that people use to inform what they may or may not

do in any specific situation. For example, co*ntextual forc*e refers to the definitions of self

and other that people bring to the group. *Prefigurative force* is the sense of obligation one

should have because of what has happened in the past. *Practical force* is the sense of

obligation one has because of the perceived effect of the present action on future events.

Implicative force is the sense of obligation one has due to the anticipated effect on

oneself or relationships in the future.

The CMM model provides a way of heightening one's attention to how people

make meaning and, further, how relationships coordinate meaning. In instances where

there is coordination, there is coherency. Where there is a lack of coordination, there is

mystery. Having a view of the many ways we shape meaning together enhances our

capability to coordinate the meaning we make in our social worlds.

I offered a very brief overview of the CMM model to the participants in the first

interview as a way of introducing some common language for shared reflection. As I was

new to the model myself, I offered a simple explanation. I focused primarily on its use as

a tool for enabling members of a group to stand on the boundary of their own encounters

the group had, and reflect on them together.

The First Individual Interviews

The initial individual interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to one and one

half hours. I began by explaining the research process and attaining the informed consent

of the participants(Appendix C). The questions I used to guide these initial meetings

(Appendix D) were:

- Tell me about your beginnings with this group. What was it that attracted you to this group? What were your first impressions… your hopes?
- Share a story about a time when you saw those impressions or hopes to be true?
- Think about a time in the group… a memorable or significant *moment* in the *engagement of group level differences* where you came to see yourself or your frame of mind differently in relationship to others. Tell me about it.

These questions invited people to tell the story about themselves in relationship

with the group. Since the membership of each of these groups was based on group level

identifiers such as faith group affiliation, race or gender, group identities were inevitably

very present in these conversations. My intention was to use the questions as guides, and

then build on what group members said, remaining open to the direction they chose to

take. The questions that guided my probes were:

- How did they define themselves? How did they construct their own social group identity?
- What was the meaning of the group for them? What attracted them to the group initially and what attracts them now?

- Regarding the moment or episode, what happened? What was the story that was told about it? Who was involved? What was important to you about that?
- To understand the impact this episode has had on the group: How did you see that having an impact on other people; on the group; on you?

I also presented an overview of the CMM model in the interviews and explained how we would be using it to reflect on a particular *moment* or episode as a group.

In the first interviews, I noticed certain patterns that would influence subsequent iterations of the data collection and analysis. For example, in my initial interviews with the MWD, the first response of most of the participants to the question regarding moments was, "I don't think there have been any". After a brief pause, each would tell a story. I noted these patterns in my field notes and was mindful of them when I probed that question in subsequent interviews. I also noted themes that were emerging and made choices about using them as probes in subsequent interview. I learned early on that the design of the research made protocol adjustments a necessity (W. B. Pearce & Narula, 1990).

Between the first individual interview and the first group meeting, I identified episodes that were mentioned by more than one person. An episode was defined by the participant in response to the question: "Think about a time when you experienced a particularly meaningful exchange between yourself and another, or among others in the group, that had a significant impact on how you saw members of another group and yourself in relationship with them. Tell me about it…"

First Group Interview

Within a month of meeting with the participants individually, I met with both groups during their regularly scheduled meetings. The group interviews were audio and videotaped, and transcribed. The agenda for the group is provided in Appendix E and was as follows:

- An overview of our process;
- What I learned about the groups from the interviews;
- Agreements that would help create an atmosphere conducive to these conversations;
- Selection of an episode shared in the initial interview that would be the focus of the inquiry;
- Reflection on the moment using the CMM model as a guide;
- Review of next steps.

After asking people what norms would help them be able to talk safely and authentically, I invited participants to think back on our individual time together and the moments we discussed. I asked them to identify one moment or episode that they were most curious about exploring with the other members of the group. From the list of identified episodes, I asked the group to select one, using a voting procedure. The selected episode became the subject for the group appreciative cooperative inquiry.

To begin the inquiry, I invited one person, the key character, to tell the story. Others were invited to add what they remembered from that episode. I used circular questions to probe their stories. In the first group, we had just enough time to tell the story with some reflection. I told each of the groups that I would provide them with a transcript of the meeting and that we would reflect on it, at our next meeting.

Adjustments in the Process

I conducted the individual and first group interviews with the MWD group prior to meeting with the GAR group, and, as a result of that experience, made an adjustment to the protocol with the GAR group. based. I had found that asking about their beginnings with the group stimulated their recall of particular group interviews, and of

their emotional relationship with the group. I made sure to extend that question with an emphasis on the storytelling.

Although the approach that I designed for the group meeting went smoothly with the MWD group, the same approach did not flow as well with the GAR group. They had a difficult time focusing as a group on just one story. Further, they seemed to feel constrained by the process of selecting one story. I therefore altered the approach with the GAR group. I facilitated their *process* of choosing, without creating pressure to commit to the telling of just one story. As a consequence, the activity of this group became storytelling.

Reflection on the First Group Interview

I reviewed the transcripts numerous times while listening to the tapes. I went through the same process with the group interviews, reviewing the videotapes while checking the transcripts. In both instances, I made notes of patterns I observed, and identified themes from patterns. Themes were considered repetitive patterns.

I used both a deductive and inductive process, as I did a content analysis of the transcripts. First, I used the criteria I had constructed for dialogic moments as a reference when reviewing the transcripts. Moments for this study were defined as a time when one was aware of holding his or her own perspective while considering the perspective of another, or, in this case, *the* other, and by Carl Roger's (1975) definition of empathy as:

> "Entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. ...being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing... communicating your sensing of his/her world as you look with fresh and unfrightened eyes. (1975)

The criteria I developed were informed by a contemporary analysis of the Buber and Rogers dialogues (Anderson & Cissna, 1997), Bakhtin's work on dialogue (Bakhtin,

1986) Anderson, Cissna and Arnett's description of dialogue (Anderson et al., 1994), and Pearce and Littlejohn's (1997) work on engaging moral conflict, and included:

- Meaning emerging in the context of the relationships.
- A willingness to acknowledge and engage the other.
- Emergent unanticipated consequences in the episode.
- An expression of a willingness to be changed or influenced or "to put one's story at risk of change" (B. W. Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).
- The allusion to another's utterance. (Bakhtin, 1986) suggests that even the slightest allusion to another's utterance creates a dialogic turn.

I made several adjustments during the course of my data collection. As I reviewed the data, I noticed two things that I had not anticipated. First, moments were more noticeable in the conversations that were occurring in the inquiry itself. Second, patterns and themes, other than those I was seeking, were emerging. The data I analyzed consisted of moments or episodes the group members generated when they reflected back on the group experience (stories Told) as well as moments that were identifiable in the process of the cooperative inquiry itself (the storyTelling).

Individual Interviews Between the First and Second Group Interviews

Following the group meeting, I sent the participants a transcript and asked them to review it before we talked. Then I interviewed them individually, on the phone or in person, to reflect on the first group experience. I asked the following questions in this interview (Appendix F):

- As you reflected on our meeting together, was there anything in particular that stood out for you?
- As you looked at the transcript, what did you notice?
- Was there a moment for you in the group, or for others in the group. that was particularly meaningful? What was it about that moment?

I probed for moments in the group when they chose to withhold their responses or were particularly attentive to the responses of others.

Before the second group interviews, I reviewed the transcript of the first group meeting and listened for discursive processes and patterns that were fostering dialogic moments. Discursive processes included the kinds of stories that were being told, the forms of address, the way people said things, how they showed courtesy, who was present and who was not, what enabled people to speak up, and by what means the group culture seemed to be expressed and maintained.

I also looked at how empathy might look as a discursive action and sought examples of this in the data. For example, I looked at how people asked questions and what they asked; how the story one told followed the story another told; how people attended to each other.

Patterns I noticed in the data influenced and guided the circular questions and probes in the second interview. For example, people told stories about disorienting dilemmas or moments when differences were not engaged. The second round of interviews presented an opportunity to probe this phenomenon further. In these interviews, I also explored stories that surfaced in the individual interviews but had not been shared in the first group.

The Second Group Interviews

The purpose of the second group interview was to reflect, as a group, on the first group interview. Given the different cultures of the two groups, I approached the second group interview differently for each. When I met with the MWD, I asked them first, in pairs, to talk about what stood out for them in the transcript. I did this because the group was large and I wanted to give each person a chance to engage. I then invited them to

share, with the whole group, highlights of these conversations. The conversation interview emerged from the reports from each of the pairs.

My first meeting with the GAR group influenced the approach I took with them in the second meeting. The GAR group was accustomed to less structure than the MWD group. We started with their reflections on the previous meeting and the conversation evolved from there. Although it was less structured, the focus was the same: moments in the previous meeting that had been particularly salient. In both groups there was an unanticipated glitch that influenced the content of our reflection. Key members on whom the episodes from the first group discussion centered were not present for the second group.

During the second group interviews, I inquired about any changes group members noticed personally and/or with the group experience associated with the interview we had conducted earlier. The rationale for this question was the construct of affirmative capability that suggests that you create that which you inquire about (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990; Ludema et al.). In both groups, the inquiry was creating the very episodes about which we were inquiring.

After the second group interviews, I read the transcripts from the individual and group interviews. In addition to identifying episodes that fit the criteria for moments, as indicated above, I identified other themes and patterns that were emerging from the data. I punctuated how those themes and patterns manifested in an episode. As suggested in the presentation of the CMM model, episodes vary in duration. I then selected which of the tools from the CMM model that I would use to analyze the episodes. The episodic analyses are presented in Chapter 5.

Both groups invited me to continue to attend their meetings following the data collection process. I had more access to the MWD group than the GAR group due to the

frequency of meetings, (monthly), and proximity. My follow-up observations were not part of the initial protocol. I also offered people an opportunity to reflect on the second group meeting, individually or if desired, as a group. Most people were willing and participated. The GAR group participated as a group; the MWD participated individually. These additional points of contact enhanced my analysis.

CHAPTER 4: THE GROUPS AND THEIR MEMBERS

In this chapter, I introduce the groups and group members who participated in this study. (see Appendix G for a chart summarizing the groups and their participants). I sought out groups of people who were involved in dialogue group that were intentionally diverse by dimensions of social identity group, for the purpose learning more about those differences. Two groups were selected for this study. One group is referred to as the Multifaith Women's Dialogue (MWD) group: eighteen women from different denominations of faith groups including Bahá'i, Christian (Lutheran, Catholic, Quaker, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Unitarian), Jewish (Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Orthodox) and Muslim. The other group is called the Gender and Race, (GAR) group. There are eight members of this group: two African American women (heterosexual), two white women (heterosexual), two African American men (heterosexual) and two white men (one homosexual and one heterosexual).

There were worlds of worlds interacting in these groups. Imagine a field of daisies with the petals of one flower illuminating, elevating and amplifying the petals of others. As with the multiple layers of petals on a daisy, one might have a sense of surprise, even delight at the discovery of how the petals of their flower and thus the flower itself, are transformed when bunched together. Different configurations of people make different bouquets. In the next section, I describe the different flowers and the two bouquets they made.

The MWD Group

The seeds of the MWD group were planted during the summer of 2001. Two women, one Episcopalian, (Jane) and one Bahá'i (Gelana), approached a professional in the Jewish community (Anne) who organized interfaith dialogues to explore the

possibilities of going beyond the usual annual multi-faith Thanksgiving celebration. They wanted to do something to deepen connections across faith groups in the local community. The group took a dramatic turn as a consequence of the events of September 11, 2001. Their mission to create a space for a more meaningful multi-faith dialogue became more urgent.

The group began as a group of men and women to plan programs with different faith groups. Early in the process, they felt that an emphasis on programming missed the connections through relationships they so desired. It was then that the group evolved to a dialogue group. As the group members noticed that women were the ones who were showing up, they decided to be intentional about making the dialogue a women's dialogue. At the time of the study, they had been meeting for two hours, the second Thursday of each month for 18 months.

The MWD group is fairly structured. The women rotate responsibility for facilitation. A topic is chosen in advance and the person who will be facilitating develops discussion question that she e-mails to the group a week in advance. When Anne asked the group if they were interested in being part of this research, they chose to devote two of their regularly scheduled meetings to the inquiry.

The members of the MWD group were: Anne, Elizabeth, Sara, Martha, Ellen, Geila, Joan, Frances, Linda, Mary, Sharon, Reima, Cindy, Sorella, Leah, and Kay. During my first interview with these women, they, by way of introducing themselves, shared their faith stories. Given that the group was a multifaith dialogue, their faith identities were highly contextualized. I introduce each of them briefly below.

Anne

Anne is a Jewish woman affiliated with a Conservative synagogue. She is in her late 40's, married with two teenage sons. Anne works as a professional in the Jewish

community where her responsibilities are to build coalitions with the other faith communities. In this role, she organizes interfaith dialogues.

Her passion about fostering these linkages and her direct involvement with the dialogues has accelerated in the past couple of years. During the course of this study, she resigned from her job to create a multi-faith center in collaboration with members of the Christian and Muslim communities.

Given Anne's role, she is a significant influence to the group. Her style is warm and accepting yet measured and reserved. She plays the role of the glue in the group in a subtle way. Anne has been instrumental in offering structure to the group and fostering the relationships among people beyond the group interviews.

Martha

Martha is a white woman in her early sixties. She was raised Protestant, and having married a Catholic man, considers herself to be in an interfaith relationship. She has two grown children and two grandchildren. Her experience in an interdenominational marriage has influenced her commitment to find ways to bridge conversations between and among faith denominations and groups. She is a member of an alternative Catholic congregation.

Martha is a retired executive director of a social service agency that she founded serving the elderly community. A trained social worker, she has also pursued studies at a seminary.

Martha grew up in the south, and has been involved in social justice issues for a much of her life. She has been active in dialogue groups for over 40 years. She and her husband have been part of other dialogue groups with couples exploring both race and faith issues.

Martha's style in the group is very matter-of-fact and she is often the voice that elicits the stories not being told. She says what needs to be said in a direct yet gentle tone. She is instrumental in moving the group to explore deeper issues.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth was raised in a family that attended a Protestant church, when they did attend church. She suggested that golf was her family's choice of worship. She speaks of always having had a deep sense of spirituality and a longing for a community with which she could connect. There was a lot of loss in her family when she was growing up which challenged her faith. She talked about the local minister's insensitive remarks when her mother lost her fourth child. Consequently, her parents rejected the pursuit of faith. After exploring different denominations, Elizabeth affiliated with the Unitarian Church.

Elizabeth is a white woman in her mid-sixties. She exudes a quiet wisdom yet at the same time seems vulnerable and fragile. In our very first meeting, she shared her poetry and prose that tells the story of the many losses she has experienced in her life. While the minister of her childhood was not a support for her family, she has continued to seek solace in a faith community as an adult. Elizabeth is very committed to dialogue as a vehicle for social action.

Sara

Sara is a member of a Reconstructionist Jewish congregation in her early fifties. She works as a psychotherapist, is married and the mother of two teenage daughters. Sara shares the commitment of many of the others to issues of social justice and global harmony. Once a year she travels to South America as a volunteer teaching family therapy.

Sara was raised in a family that was more ethnically than religiously identified. She spoke of feeling like an outsider in her community because her family was working class and the community where she went to school was upper middle class. She has a strong commitment to pursuing relationships with others who are different on multiple dimensions and was a catalyst for deep engagement.

Geila

Geila was one of the founders of the group. She is a member of the Bahá'i faith. Born in Iran, she has direct family ties to the prophet who started the faith. She came to this country as a medical student and has lived in the local community for over thirty years. She is a pediatrician who offers pro bono medical care in developing countries twice a year. Geila is in her early sixties, married, has three children and two grandchildren.

Geila is very passionate about her faith. In our first meeting, she told me the story about how the Bahá'i community began and its relationship with Abrahamic faith traditions. She also shared the history of the relationship between Islam and the Bahá'i community. The Bahá'is have been tortured and murdered for believing in a prophet that followed Mohammed, as Mohammed claimed to be the last prophet. She claims that Bahá'is, particularly those from Iran, continue to be threatened by leaders of the Islamic community.

Geila is interested in having people share the facts about their religion and readily shares readings from her own. She is a wonderful storyteller and lights up when she talks about her faith.

Ellen

Ellen believes with a passion that the answer to prejudice and stereotypes is to promote personal relationships. Ellen is a white Jewish woman, in her sixties who is affiliated with the Conservative movement. She is a social activist who is very involved in diversity issues and multi-faith and multi-racial dialogues. She lives in a very diverse community and is often called upon to facilitate at multicultural community gatherings.

Ellen is the mother of three grown children who have married people from other cultures and nationalities. She is a professional mediator.

Ellen is very compassionate, and she is often the voice of empathy in the group. She, like others in the group, is interested in deepening the dialogue. She creates a sense of openness and safety for others.

Fanny

Fanny is a Jewish woman in her late sixties. She is a widow with two grown sons and two grandchildren. One of her sons is married to a Christian woman and the other son is gay. Fanny is a retired schoolteacher. When she was an educator, she taught from a curriculum targeting prejudice reduction that she was instrumental in developing. She is very active in interfaith dialogues in the community. In addition to the MWD, Fanny is a member of a Jewish-Quaker, and a Jewish-Jewish women's dialogue.

Fanny shares with great pride that she was raised in a home where Zionism was the religion. Her style is direct, to the point, and she says what she is thinking. Fanny has a strong commitment to Israel and is very involved in the Jewish community. She is a volunteer facilitator of other ad hoc interfaith dialogue groups in the community.

Leah

Leah is an Orthodox Jew in a community that is considered *modern*. She is the mother of five children, two of whom still live at home and works as a social worker in the Jewish

community. This group is her first exposure to people of other faiths; she went to Jewish schools and has worked in the Jewish community all of her life.

Mary

Mary is an Irish Catholic woman and a professional religious educator. She is in her early fifties. Mary believes strongly that we live in a time in history during which we are challenging the notion that Christians in general, and the Pope, specifically, are right and everyone else is wrong. Mary is a very knowledgeable about the tenets of her faith, and has no hesitation in challenging the Church hierarchy when faced with a rule that she believes is extraneous, unjust, or has no grounding in the teachings. She writes the Cardinal and the Pope on a regular basis to voice her opinion, and encourages the children she teaches to do so as well.

Mary is often the voice in the group that elevates the conversation to the level of relationship and culture. She has a gift for both touching where the conversation is and broadening it to a universalistic perspective.

Francis

Francis is a white woman in her late fifties who is a member of an alternative Catholic Congregation. She teaches pre-school and has two teenage sons. Francis is soft-spoken, and prefers to avoid conversations that invoke conflict. She has struggled with her connection to the Catholic Church and is fascinated by Mary's capacity to stay engaged, and, at the same time, to rebel.

Joan

Joan is a white woman in her early sixties. She is single with grown children. Joan was raised as a Catholic, and after challenging times in her spiritual journey she found her way to the Unitarian congregation. She is has a strong commitment to "search

for religious truth" and sees this group as an opportunity for exposure to multiple faith traditions. She is also active with the NAACP.

During my conversations with Joan, she was both wishing for more engagement of differences and worried about doing so. She expressed concern about anger that might come up when engaging differences.

While Joan's voice cautioned the group about going deeper she was most appreciative of the findings of the study. Upon the review of the findings, Joan shared how much she valued the research process and wondered why she had held back.

Linda

Linda is a white woman who turned forty during the period of data collection. She was raised as a Lutheran and is currently very active in her church. She is married to a Muslim man from Turkey and wrestles with her desire to understand others. She has two young children.

Linda is deeply seeking, personally and spiritually. She has a freshness about her that is without guile. She was a dominant voice in the group and was instrumental in keeping the personal voice in conversation.

Sharon

Sharon is a white Episcopalian woman in her early fifties. She has two grown sons and teaches at an Episcopalian Preparatory School. Sharon is married to a Jewish man who chose to affiliate after they had children. While they maintain membership in both the Church and the Synagogue, Sharon feels excluded from the synagogue.

Sharon is one of the less vocal members of the group but when she speaks, she contributes to the movement and depth of the conversation.

Reima

Reima is one of the two Muslim members of the group. She is in her mid-fifties, and is very active both in her own faith community and in the multi-faith community. She works as a physician, and has two grown sons.

Reima has carried a lot of responsibility as the voice of Islam in this group, particularly since she and the other Muslim member were seldom present at the same time. She is both forthcoming and proud of her background. She was born in Pakistan and came to the United States to practice medicine when she was in her early twenties. Her entire family still lives in Pakistan.

The past two years have been challenging for Reima given the position the United States is taking in global politics, and her visible role as a Muslim in the multi-faith community.

Sandy

Sandy is a single white woman in her mid-thirties. She is a Presbyterian minister. She moved to this geographic area in early September 2001 for a position at a large, well established church.

Sandy has lived in other countries and has traveled extensively. She speaks many languages and is actively involved in building bridges across different social and faith communities. Sandy is very bright and articulate and speaks very much to the point. She strives to be a member of the group apart from her role as a minister.

Sorella

Sorella is a member of the Bahá'i community. Like Geila, she was born in Iran and has stories to tell of her family's connections to the early leaders of the faith. Her family was Jewish before they became Bahá'i.

Sorella has a colorful story to tell about her family. Her father became a self-educated pharmacist, and they lived in many Arab/Muslim countries where it was dangerous to be Bahá'i. Her parents conveyed a sense of love and pride for their faith identity while educating them how to protect themselves by keeping their identity private.

Sorella is in her late fifties and has three grown children and two grandchildren.

Kay

Kay is an Episcopalian, and describes herself as the only one in her family who has had an ongoing relationship with religion. She grew up in a rural town and was one of the few to leave. She is a white woman in her late fifties and has two grown children and one grandchild. She works as a psychotherapist and has academic training in religious studies.

Kay was one of the founders of this group. She sees herself as a person who challenges what goes on around her. She challenges others in the group, and is one to encourage deeper exploration and self-disclosure.

Cindy

Cindy was raised Catholic, went to a Catholic school and teaches in a Catholic school. She is currently a member of the Friends (Quaker) Society. Cindy is a white woman in her early thirties and is the mother of two young children. The group convenes at the Quaker meeting where she worships.

Cindy is very open, curious and self-effacing. She uses a lot of humor, sometimes to diminish herself and sometimes to add levity at times of intensity in the group. As with some others, Cindy would like to have deeper conversations, and at the same time worries how those conversations will affect the homeostasis of the group.

The GAR Group

The GAR group emerged out of the membership of an organizational development practitioners program. The people who formed this group wanted a place where they could focus on exploring *isms,* specifically racism and sexism. The GAR group meets quarterly for an evening and a full day over a weekend. They usually begin with an informal dinner. Their agenda has been unstructured, although at the same time that I met with them, they began a new practice of giving one person feedback at each meeting. The membership of this group has been consistent for the past 18 months. Five of the eight members (four African Americans and one white woman) are the original members of the group.

All but one of the members of this group are organizational development practitioners. The other member is a retired manager from a large corporation. They all share a commitment to work on issues of diversity at the organizational level. They share a language and culture of that work.

The eight members of the GAR group are Brett, Marilyn, Jeff, Flora, Leslie, Mitchell, Robin, and Ronald.

Brett

Brett is a white man in his mid-thirties who is married with three young daughters. He has a full time position as an organizational development leader with a health care organization, teaches in a local academic program, and does some freelance consulting. He is also active in his church and work on home renovations.

Brett is very intent about his commitment to look at his role as a white man in perpetuating oppression. He is also a lifelong learner having recently completed his Ph.D. in Organizational Studies. Others see him in the group as serious and committed, as well as conservative.

Marilyn

Marilyn was the catalyst for this group. As an intern in an organizational development practitioners program, she decided to bring together people who were committed to wrestle with issues of different race and genders.

Marilyn is an African American woman in her late forties. She is married and the mother of two teenage sons. She left a corporate position when her second child was born and now works as a consultant in the area of diversity.

Jeff

Jeff is a gay white man in his mid-thirties. He and his partner recently adopted a two year old from Guatemala. He also works as a diversity consultant and often collaborates with Robin.

Flora

Flora is an African American woman in her late forties. She is single and the mother of an adult daughter and teenage son. She is also a breast cancer survivor. Flora works as a consultant in the areas of organizational development and often collaborates with Robin. Flora is a breast cancer survivor. She is deeply religious.

Leslie

Leslie is a white woman in her mid-thirties who is married with a toddler and an infant. She is a nurse in a major hospital system. She was exploring new professional directions when she met the other group members in the organizational development practitioner's program.

Leslie was not able to attend any of the group interviews in person. Her presence in the research is primarily represented through our initial interview and others reference to her.

Mitchell

Mitchell is a single, African American man in his early sixties. He is an organizational development practitioner and well known in the field. The GAR group is one of many that he is associated with that focus on personal and professional growth. He has a strong commitment to support the professional and personal growth of others and learn about himself in the process.

Many of the people in the group had Mitchell as their mentor. He was an instructor in the academic program where many of the people in the group met. They have respect for him and see the value in having a relationship with him as a group member rather than as a teacher. They recognize and value his vulnerabilities as part of the group.

Robin

Robin is a Jewish woman in her early sixties. She is divorced and the mother of two grown children. Robin is a consultant and trainer and works with organizations on issues of leadership and diversity. She considers herself a secular Jew.

Robin has a strong commitment to exploring issues of sexism and racism. Robin is open, giving, and forthright. She is a survivor of breast cancer and was particularly supportive when another member of the group went through a similar experience.

Ronald

Ronald is an African American man in his early fifties. He is married with two teenage children. He is a retired engineer who is exploring going into the field of education. He is a quiet member of the group, yet a powerful influence.

CHAPTER 5
SECOND LEVEL INTERPRETATION: EPISODIC ANALYSIS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the data collection and analysis process. In this chapter, six episodes, selected from the two meetings with each of the two groups, are identified and analyzed using the heuristics of the CMM model. The episodes are punctuated from the storytelling that emerged during the group interviews prompted by the invitation to reflect back on dialogic moments. I bracketed episodes that exemplify the discursive processes of the groups as they related about and with social identity group differences.

After doing some stage setting in the initial group meeting, I invited people to share a story of a time when they experienced a particularly meaningful engagement in the group such that they came to know another's group and their own in a new way. A meaningful engagement was framed by Buber's term, a dialogic moment; an experience of holding one's own perspective while considering the perspective of and engaging with the other.

I reviewed 352 pages of transcripts of audiotapes and videotapes from 34 hours of individual meetings and 10 hours of group interviews. After reviewing the transcripts, I coded for dialogical moments in the group meeting as described in Chapter 3. I selected episodes that framed the story told about the dialogic moment recalled, as well as episodes in which dialogic moments emerged in the inquiry process itself.

Dialogic moments were operationalized and identified when meaning emerged in the context of the relationships, when one was willing to acknowledge and engage the other, and when there were emergent unanticipated consequences. The dialogic moment

was identified as being transformative when there was an apparent willingness to be changed, influenced or "to put one's story at risk of change" (Pearce 1997).

Episodes were constituted by a set of conversational turns or social exchanges of behavior (things said or things done) that were delimited in time with a clear beginning and endpoint (Pearce, 1994). The punctuation of an episode in terms of its beginning point and ending point was consequential to the interpretation; the boundaries selected influenced what contributed to the meaning made. I added to this meaning construction by the episodes I selected and the excerpts I chose to represent them.

A story was *the narrative of a defining event in the group's shared history that was told by participants*. The story was told, in part by a group member in an individual interview, and was enriched by others when told in the group.

The data collection process was both iterative and recursive. I learned things in the initial individual interviews that influenced the first group interviews, which influenced the follow-up individual interviews and so on. I saw patterns emerging that told a story about what the research process itself was doing. One of these was that the very act of inviting the participants to recall a meaningful moment, a dialogic moment as I defined it for them, helped them to construct one that they might not have framed as such prior to the invitation. Second, I noticed that perceptions of my own social identity group affiliations, i.e., white, Jewish, American, woman, as well as roles, i.e., researcher, consultant, influenced how some people told their stories. I describe these patterns and my interpretation of them as findings in Chapter 6.

Patterns in the interviews also emerged that told a story about shared meaning members had about the groups' processes. I noted these patterns as possibilities for the groups' conversations. While these topics or phenomenon may not have been about social group identity engagement per se, they told a story about the processes of relating

in groups organized for the purpose of engaging those issues. Given the opportunity for reflection, these conversations could have been potentially transformative for the group at a meta-level.

Despite my initial intention to focus the research on studying what contributed to the *fostering* of dialogic moments, I altered my approach in response to an unanticipated challenge in the data collection process. I could not identify a dialogic moment from the transcript of the first meeting of the GAR group. Instead, I punctuated particular moments in which members of the group were *choosing* a story that framed processes that inhibited dialogic moments and transformative learning in the turns of the group's conversations. This alteration in my approach, that is learning from something *not* happening rather than something happening, expanded what I saw in the other group, Despite being able to identify enabling factors in the MWD group, they too had inhibiting factors. I may not have noted those, had I not been challenged to move beyond my *plan* by the other group.

The two groups I studied varied considerably in style. While this study was not intended to be a comparative analysis, the distinctions as well as the similarities were noteworthy and informative. The following sections illustrate and explore the three episodes from each of the two groups separately. The next chapter weaves the episodes from each of the groups together in the narrative of the findings.

Episodic Analysis

Episodes from the Women's Multi-faith Group (MWD)

Three main episodes were punctuated. The first two episodes are both stories that framed the theme of a perspective shift of another's group story in relationship to one's own. The titles of each of these episodes resound their respective themes. The first, *September 11' 2001: Life as a Muslim,* is Reima's story about her morning at work as a

Muslim woman on September 11, 2001. The second, prompted by a question raised in a prior group meeting, unleashed the storytelling of *The Complex Relationship between Jews and Israel*. There was another episode, a *defining moment* that was created in the process of the inquiry: *Engaging Differences Within and Between: the Risk of Going Deeper*. Each of these is portrayed below.

Episode I: September 11, 2001: Life as a Muslim

The events of September 11, 2001 were a powerful influence in the formation of the MWD group. During the individual interviews, Mary, one of the organizers of the group, said:

> "September 11th made everything seem critical. It was a point of urgency where we felt we could no longer do something way out there. We had to do something more immediate."

For Mary, and others, September 11th heightened the desire to pursue relationships across cultural and faith boundaries.

In the individual interviews, many people specifically mentioned Reima in relationship to September 11th. Anne commented:

> There was a moment when Reima … was with her colleagues and they were gathered around the table… There was something about that moment where she felt further and further isolated. She is an elegant and gracious person and, in some way, I felt worlds apart from her and yet so close. I haven't felt that way in my life experience, even as a Jew. She told the story so matter-of-factly, that she had to deal with it. She told it of the past but I knew it was still present for her. She had to explain that this is not Islam.

As the group reviewed possible moments that people might want to explore collectively, Cindy suggested the story Reima told about her experience at work as a Pakistani woman on September 11th, the same episode Anne referred to above. I asked Reima to retell the story for those who had not been present the first time, as many people referred to it in their individual interview. Reima's story and the first responses had a notable impact on the group.

It was the day that the Towers fell and I was in the OR [operating room] and someone said a plane hit the World Trade Center and I said, it was a commuter plane that had done that a few weeks ago and they said no no…. So I went into the coffee room and it is a very big room…and it was full of people. And they were showing the Towers coming down and all the people and the confusion and commotion – and for a second… everyone turned around and looked at me as though it was my fault. And standing there in that room and these are the people I had worked with for over 20 years… I was actually for a moment, and I hate to use this word, I was actually scared… I was actually afraid of being there at that moment…because I could almost feel the hostility… And then you know it was either my imagination or it was true... I'm not quite sure but I don't think I could have imagined it all.

I used to always wear the traditional Muslim garment when I [went] out. I only wear this when I'm at work. I wouldn't go to Burger King wearing that outfit because of that. For somebody who has never been in a situation where you have to be somebody else that you are not, this was very uncomfortable. It was very uncomfortable… and I almost didn't want to go out because I had to think about - gee, what am I wearing? Can I go out like that… And my younger son is up at Penn State and he would be on campus and I was concerned. I said Oh my G-d, he's up there and there are Muslim kids up there but all of his friends are either Christians or Jews, they are not Muslims and I was afraid for him. You know we can never really tell what goes on, on campuses and how things can get out of hand. We called him and he said why are you calling me? This doesn't have anything to do with me... Like why are you even concerned? Then you sort of shut yourself up because you don't want to pass on your fears over onto them. And for the longest time, I mean I still don't go out wearing the [garment] unless I'm going to Pakistan or to a function.

The Hierarchy of Meaning Model (Diagram 5-1) depicts the embedded layers of Reima's story of her morning in the hospital on September 11, 2001. Her personal story is the compelling core of this story embedded in the content of the episode in the lunchroom. The shared experience of watching the Towers fall on television that morning shifts Reima's longstanding relationships with her co-workers historic and current. Her multiple social identity group affiliations, being a Pakistani woman who is a Muslim, and the larger cultural context make the meaning of the episode. The events of the day were contextualized in the public discourse of the United States: *We* have been attacked by *them*. This public discourse was in the context of the broader cultural story of how the discourse of the United States culture frames itself in relationship to the enemy. Reima's

storytelling was an invitation to others in the MWD to be in relationship with the story that American Muslims were living, post September 11th in the United States.

Diagram 5-1: Hierarchy Model of Reima's Story

Story of United States culture
Story of news
Story of groups Muslim Pakistani, doctor
Story of relationships
Story of the episode
Story of the self
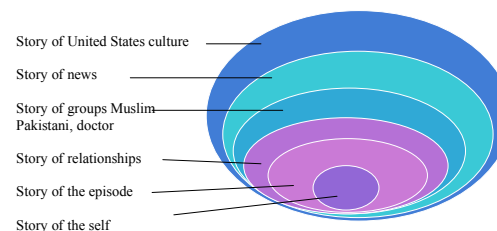
The group was so enthralled by Reima's story that I was tempted to make that the focus of the analysis, as were the women in the group. But that was not the focus of the study. The focus of the study directed the analysis to what the people in the group were doing with the story.

In the next turns in the group's conversation people addressed the personal impact they felt from Reima's story. The Serpentine Model depicts the unfolding of the mutual sense making among group members. The arrows represent the turns in the conversation.

Fanny: I'd like to thank you for sharing that story again because for me that was the most important moment in the entire group. Of all the meetings we've had, it was when you shared that story, because it made me see things from a whole different point of view. I was so wrapped up in myself. I dare say that I never even looked at how you might feel about it. How American Muslims might feel about it. Muslims anyplace in the world might feel about it. And I felt a little bit like Cindy did, that I was very upset about how badly you felt. I felt the fact that you shared it with our group changed the whole complexion of the group. Because after that, people felt free, they felt more trusting because you trusted us with such a significant and important story. Then it gave permission and security to other people to open up and I felt that people opened up a great deal more in the subsequent meetings that we had. And the good thing I felt after you shared

that story was that your son didn't have any of the feelings that you had and I felt that said something good for our country, that he reacted and had friends of all kinds and didn't have any of the fears and his friends didn't respond to him that way. That made me feel good for the world that we live in. That was a very positive thing and it was such an important event for me when you shared that and I'm glad of the opportunity to let you know.

> Fanny responds to the multiple levels of storytelling, i.e., to the story of identity, to the story of relationships, particularly how this storytelling affected the relationships in this group, and to the story of culture. (Diagram 5-2)

Ilene: Can I ask you how it shifted your whole perspective? How did that affect you outside of this group with other people? Muslims…yourself?

Fanny: Well, it gave me a different way of looking at things… After that I knew *somebody*. Muslims weren't just a group *over there*. They weren't *them* anymore. There was one person who I knew, and I knew what happened. And so it made me feel entirely differently and of course it made me speak entirely differently.

> I explored with Fanny whether her new insights influenced her outside the group. She responded by recounting a conversation she had with a friend in Israel in which she found herself explaining why Jews should be more open to get to know them.

Diagram 5-2: Hierarchy/LUUUTT Model of Fanny's Response

Story of United States culture

Story of groups Muslim and Jewish

Story of identity

Story of relationships
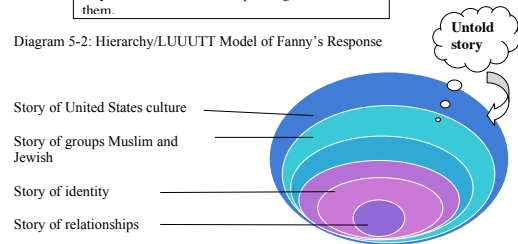
Untold story

Fanny's untold story (see 5-2) was that she had no relationships with Muslims prior to joining this group. She had some personal hesitation, but became inspired to join because she trusted the woman who invited her.

Fanny's response following Reima's story amplified the story of relationships, the relationship between Reima and her, between Reima and the group, and the relationships in the group. Her response also suggested implicit rules the group made in their relating. *Trust begets trust. Trust encourages people to share in more intimate ways.* From a communication perspective, Fanny's statement was a *speech act*. It invited the group to be more open, and to share more of their stories. Whether or not it was a shared truth in the past, her comment encouraged trust as a possibility for the present and the future.

What happened next was a response to this invitation. Each turn in the conversation resonated chords from a prior statement amplifying the complexities of the personal, group, relationship and cultural stories in our encounters. First, people responded directly to Reima, acknowledging her experience, offering her support, and asking her what they could do.

Linda: May I ask Reima a question. Did you feel supported by (this) group after you shared the story?

Reima: Yes, I did, I did… and it sort of did take some away, not all because if I said all, it wouldn't be true. At least it took away a major part of the bitterness. It does create a very bitter feeling to be or to even feel disliked or unwanted or somebody other than part of the larger group that you are with. And if you have never been exposed to it before, the first time is the most painful. But I think it made me understand then that perhaps that was not a conscious thing on the part of people who did it; maybe it was unconscious, maybe it was not but at least that brought that "maybe" into it. And so by the next time I go around, because I deal with those people all the time, perhaps I will be less rigid. I don't know.

Anne: Can I ask another question? If that had happened again, what would you have liked the response to be from your colleagues?

Reima: I'm not sure. I would have like them to ask me "what do you think is going on?" Just don't assume that I did it, that I condone it, and that I was part of it.

The support Reima felt created an opening to imagine what her co-workers might have felt to behave as they did. Empathy was elicited in the conversation. The support from the group was followed by an expressed willingness on Reima's part to hold her

story side by side with the story of others who offended her, and to imagine a different meaning than the one she made in the moment. The reflection on the episode became a transformative dialogic moment.

Next, people shared, one by one, a personal story of exclusion or feeling fear related to an aspect of their social identity group in the presence of a potential or perceived threat.

> Sara: I do remember when you shared that and it makes me think about a lot of other moments where, like you said that feeling that suddenly you didn't feel safe. And you felt scared…I'm Jewish and I've had conversations with friends of mine who are African American about how I have, often times, been afraid and withholding about my Jewish roots or my Judaism because I know there are a lot of people who don't like Jews. I feel very strongly about that and it's very easy for me to hide who I am. You were describing a situation where not only could you not hide who you were but you didn't feel you should hide who you are…. that very personal experience of yours was a very intense global moment. And I think again, it brings up that kind of conversation that I've had with people who cannot hide...feeling very fortunate that I could. It's an odd feeling because there is the bigger question: why should I have to?

Sara told a story about herself and about her group, in relationship to Reima's story about herself and her group. Sara also told about a culture in which group identity is named and constructed, in part by others. She introduced the story of differential power and status and how those who have less power or status sometimes try to hide their identity to avoid discrimination. Even hiding has its privilege as some social group identities are easier to hide or pass than others. Sara posed the rhetorical question: what makes people in some social identity groups internalize the cultural message that, as *other*, one is *less than* and, consequently, want to deny or denounce one's group identity or hide. Sara did not tell the story of her own feeling of isolation growing up in a community where her lower socioeconomic status differentiated her from her own ethnic/religious community.

Sara's response to Reima's story echoed the question, *why am I being blamed for something others did* as she pondered the inclination of people to internalize an insidious cultural message The *speech act* of aggression when airplanes destroyed the World Trade Center's Twin Towers, and a part of the Pentagon on September 11th created a powerful shift in the United States' cultural discourse. How people were defined, categorized, included, or isolated by others changed as an ethnic, national, and religious group affiliation was identified as the enemy of the culture. Reima's story focused the group's attention on the stress of living with the limited story constructed by the cultural discourse about her group.

Geila told a story at the self, relationship and cultural levels about being an Iranian woman during the Iranian Hostage Crisis.

> I'd like to share two experiences. Not necessarily being a Bahá'i but being Iranian, which is very, very similar to this. One experience was very sad, the other experience was unbelievable. When there was hostage crisis, in Iran and the hospital where I worked, I worked there all my professional life so everybody knew me from my internship to my residency to my fellowship. And when the hostage crisis occurred of course I was very upset, very angry, and I just didn't know, but I said in my workplace everybody's my friend. I didn't have to worry about it. I didn't feel one nerve at all. So one day we were sitting in a conference room and it was very cordial, very friendly, and something came up about an upcoming conference. And I said I would really like to go. And this woman who I thought was a wonderful friend of mine for many years, she said something or other related to the hostages. "Geila, you are Iranian and you know there is a hostage situation in Iran", and something like…you don't have the right to go. I felt … betrayed because I knew this woman for so long. She came to our house for dinner. We were out for dinner. She knew my husband. I was very sad. And I just felt betrayed. I just went out to my office and I cried. I was that upset.
>
> The other time I was in my car and this is around the hostage situation. So I'm in my car and as soon as I get to expressway, my car gets stuck. And it's around six o'clock. Of course, I'm upset. I come out and the expressway is very, very quiet. So this tow truck comes, no police or anything, but this tow truck comes and fortunately stops. He comes to me. I'm very worried. Can I trust him or not trust him. He said, "What's wrong?" And I said, "My car is stuck". And there were two men in the tow truck. He said, "Where are you going". I said, "I'm going to V". He said, "I'm going too". He said, "I'm going to tow your car" and I said, "that's wonderful". I'm sitting between these two men. That by itself is very uncomfortable. So as I talk he gets my accent and says, "Where are you from?"

And I can never lie, so I said, "I'm from Iran". Now I'm literally shivering. The hostages are in Iran. These are two men. I said I'm from Iran. And then the driver said, "Don't worry, that's the government of Iran, we love people of Iran." So there are different people and different situations.

Geila told two stories about events not necessarily unfolding how one might have expected. She echoed a theme in Reima's story and then introduced an expanded perspective. Geila was hurt and disappointed by her friend's limited view of her and consequential withdrawal of support, just as the feeling of abandonment by her coworkers disappointed Reima. Conversely, she and others in the group expected truck drivers to be narrow-minded and prejudiced. The truck drivers surprised Geila and the rest of the group with their capacity to separate global politics and nationality from personal identity. Geila's stories both built on the story Reima told of a part of one's identity becoming their whole identity by those they thought they knew, at a time when the group identity was perceived as threatening in the broader cultural discourse. The second story added the logic that you can't assume how others will react.

The stories that followed Geila's were stories of challenging one's assumptions of a group and looking at one's own group from a defining encounter. First, Sharon told a story about being a white person in a numerical minority amidst a group of African Americans.

This reminds me of what you had talked about earlier in terms of those tapes that would go through our head, and the feelings and fears that are passed down to us by probably very well meaning people, even though it doesn't come out that way. I had an experience one time when my son was going for an interview at the zoo, for a summer position, and it turns out that he was called to go on a Sunday afternoon. And he was called to go on I think they call it Greek Day and it's an African American gathering. I took him down and we had a horrible time trying to get there. And on the way back we were literally engulfed in people; our car - we couldn't move. And there were people walking, a couple of people with guns near us and I was truly terrified. But also what struck me was how powerless I felt as a white woman. How powerless I felt and coupled with that was the feeling of "oh my goodness," how these people have felt in similar times. It was this incredible moment for me that just made me aware so much of not wanting to pre-

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judge, or trying not to, or trying to turn off those tapes in my head that had been passed down to me.

Sharon's story is about her seeing herself both as a vulnerable white woman and as a privileged member of the dominant culture depending on which context she elevated (Diagram 5-3). She moved from fear of the other group to empathy. As a speech act in the turns of the group's conversation, Sharon described acknowledging the *other* in an instance of feeling powerless and terrified   This phenomenon of taking a third person perspective, or stepping to the side of one's experience while in the experience, was notable in each of the stories told. The stepping aside was how people reflected and made meaning of a provocative moment. When she stepped aside, she shifted from feeling fear to feeling empathy.

Diagram 5-3: Sharon's Stories of Self in Culture

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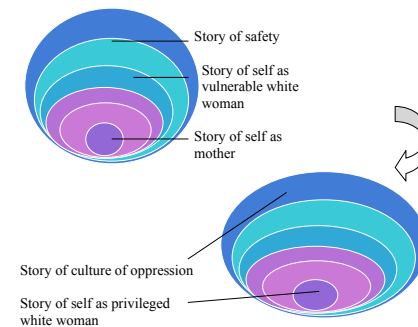
Anne continued the thread of the story about how we enact stories of prejudice. In her story, Anne reflected on how challenging it is to not make a person's whole identity about one characteristic, while not obviously ignoring a very visible description.

> I saw that experience in a different way. Because it made me realize that maybe that's what I would have done too. And also the mixed feeling I guess we all have in those moments about on the one hand, we want to offer support, but why to you? I think we have that reserve like I want to offer support but then it's going to look like I'm going across the road to this person who may look different from me. We've probably all experienced that when we are in a group of mixed company and there are always times…I tell this story…where one time there was a handbag stolen from somebody in our office and everyone was trying to identify who it was. It was like the person in the green jacket or the brown, and finally the only African American person in the room, said, "the black person!" I think we are all really socialized to not really know how to respond and yet we want to be helpful. And that's why I said to you what would have felt right at that time. We don't want to be prepared for such a devastating moment but in these little moments. We want to know how to offer support.

Anne said, " I tell this story". Her story introduced an important question: When you call attention to a defining characteristic of a person, how do you do so without making that *all* of the person? This question poses a bit of a dilemma: to what extent do we define someone only by a characteristic that makes him or her stand out versus blatantly avoid identifying them by that characteristic? What are the rules of fair contextualization, particularly when a social group identity carries a valence in our culture such that people would be more likely to make up a negative story about a person once they are associated with that group? Conversely, do we ignore a part of another's identity in an effort not to *other'ize* that person or perpetuate stereotypes?

The conversation was moving from stories about feeling unsafe as the object of prejudice, particularly having been made to be *strange*, [Gurevitch, 1989 #638] to how we enact prejudice when we are the dominant group. Anne was suggesting that by *not* saying it, the group enacted the prejudice as if they had said it. Anne shifted the person position of the storyteller from victim or one-down position to that of the person in the

place of power, the place of influence. She asked what rule or principle might guide us in such moments in the future.

Mary then spoke about a situation in her family.

> Mary: I heard this story today for the first time. I wasn't present when you told it the first time. What it made me think of is some experiences in my family where support has been withdrawn completely, and it's like all the webs of things that connect you to people is being rolled up and you are there by yourself. And that was based on situations of people struggling for their own survival in the family. And I was perceived as being way more powerful than I really am. So that's what it made me think of. That is, you were looking at fear about survival and some people were looking at you as a possible threat to survival. And then that got rolled out again and the moment passed, but it was a real moment. And you felt the disconnectedness of it, because you weren't disconnecting, other people were disconnecting. And that's very scary.

One analysis of this turn was that Mary brought the conversation to the personal. Another interpretation was that she moved the meaning of this episode at once to the personal and the universal. Mary's story at the personal level paralleled the other stories at the group and cultural levels. Mary responded with a story about a very fundamental need that people have; to stay in connection, in relationship. When they feel that their survival is threatened, or are concerned that someone is more powerful than they are, they disconnect. When you disconnect with another for the sake of your survival, you depersonalize them; you dehumanize them. We do that when we are afraid. This was the story that Reima, Geila, Sharon and Mary told.

Sara then told a story about how fear and not knowing the other at a group level can turn into dehumanizing, perhaps even annihilating the other:

> The next day [after September 11, 2001]… one of my co-workers with whom I had a very close relationship, said, when they were talking about Afghanistan. 'as far as I'm concerned they could drop a bomb and just leave a big crater there'. I remember I looked at her and I was shocked, I said 'I can't believe you just said that'. And she said, 'Why not. Let's just start from scratch'. And I had to stop for a moment…to jump to her world.. What I realized was that she was terrified. She was saying something out of an intense moment of fear. And I asked her, 'Are you really afraid right now?' And she said it wasn't even afraid; she was

Terrified. And when I asked her more about that then I started to understand why she said what she said…

In this episode, the turns and flow of the conversation deepened the group's sense making about how we construe each other. Further how do the ways we construe each other shift how we construe ourselves? Empathy and transformative learning was fostered in the turns of the conversation as demonstrated by the serpentine analysis.

Diagram 5-4: The Serpentine Model: Making Empathy and Transformative Learning in Stories of Encounters as Other and with Others
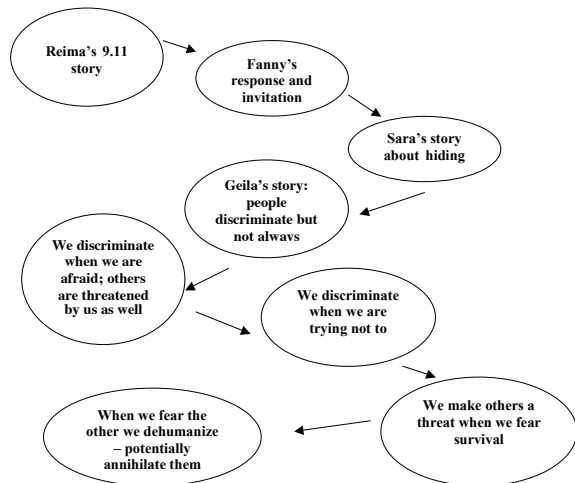
Participant's stories from the past were *present'ed* in the turns of the conversation. The group was making sense of what makes people react to making another *strange* and consequently less than human. They were making a story. By making another strange, acts of violence and aggression become justifiable. Conversely, connecting a face and a name, even a group, made a connection; staying connected mitigated fear. Staying connected was one way of staying human.

This episode was a dialogic moment in the group. While Fanny referred to the impact Reima had when she told the story (past tense), what they learned expanded and deepened in the present, in the process of reflection. Fanny acknowledged how Reima's story shifted not only her own view of things but the group process as well. She also told a story of how knowing Reima's story had changed her story of Muslims and consequently of Muslims and Jews. In follow-up interviews, others in the group talked about the significance of this episode and what made it so:

> Sharon: …I could sit in the group and listen to other people's stories and things they have to say, even other people's spiritual growth and development…because I am in an interfaith marriage we talk about interfaith issues a lot. The significance of what Reima said is that it draws the heart. I guess I also learn through people's individual stories and trying to understand emotionally how people feel. For me it was deep and it was significant. It was a moment that so many people have been wrestling with since September 11th; with how they perceive Muslims and how they relate to Muslims because it is so foreign. It is hard to know what to do and what is appropriate. To listen to her story was so poignant.

> Ilene: … So when you said that Reima brought it to the heart – it was not just the information she shared... It was the relationship...

> Sharon: Yes, it was knowing what it would be like if you were walking in her shoes and standing there listening to the conversation.

Both Sharon and Fanny (as well as others in individual interviews) described this episode as transformative. There was a shift in their perspectives that had an impact on their subsequent behavior. Fanny later shared a story about urging a friend who lived in

Israel to see Muslims in a different light. Sharon talked about how this episode

challenged her to think about how to be more sensitive to Muslims, particularly to what

they must have experienced in the post September 11th culture.

In the wake of September 11th, the dominant discourse in the United States

punctuated the tragedy of that day as the *beginning* of an episode: the day our world

changed. The day *they* attacked *us.* The public story was about culture and polarized

relationships, *us* versus *the enemy*. Reima's personal story expanded the implications of

that day to include the day her sense of being *other* heightened in the public context. In

the group her story shifted how people saw themselves in relationship with other

Muslims, with others who are *other'ed* and, at the same time gave people hope for

different ways of constructing each other.

Episode 2: The Meaning of Israel to Jews

This episode was punctuated by a conversation between Reima and Fanny. At an

earlier meeting, Reima asked the question: "Do you consider Israel and the Jews one and

the same?" Her question was prompted by an informal conversation she overheard

before the commencement of the meeting. Two of the Jewish members of the group were

discussing an upcoming event to raise money for Israel. Reima had always wondered

why people in this country had such a strong commitment to Israel. The group meeting

offered the opportunity to ask.

This episode was short. Yet, in this example, Reima expanded her story of the

Jews and Jewish culture and the relationship between the Jewish people and Israel. She

also shifted her perspective on how Pakistanis who live outside of Pakistan see

themselves in relationship to their country. A dialogic moment happened when Reima

brought a personal insight from a brief interchange to the group conversation.

Reima: …I think we were in somebody's house and you [referring to Fanny] had been somewhere the night before raising money for Israel and I asked you – do you consider Israel and Judaism one and the same and you said yes. In some way, it made me understand the commitment that the Jewish people in this country have for Israel even though they were not born there – nor raised there. I could not understand how come these people who had not been born there, were not raised there, maybe have been there for a month in their lifetime, have such a strong commitment to the welfare of that country.

Linda: That was a moment for me too actually.

Fanny: Can I say something about that? My parents… I was raised by people who were Zionists – they were not religious… they did not go to synagogue – they did not practice much of Judaism; their religion was Zionism and there were lots and lots of people who were like that.

I used the daisy model (Diagram 5-5) to highlight the different stories and

conversations that are part of Reima and Fanny's sense making about each other's

Diagram 5-5 Reima and Fanny: Daisy Models in Relating

Fanny and Reima have a lot in common: their involvement in multi-faith dialogues – yet both felt that the other's group hated their own.
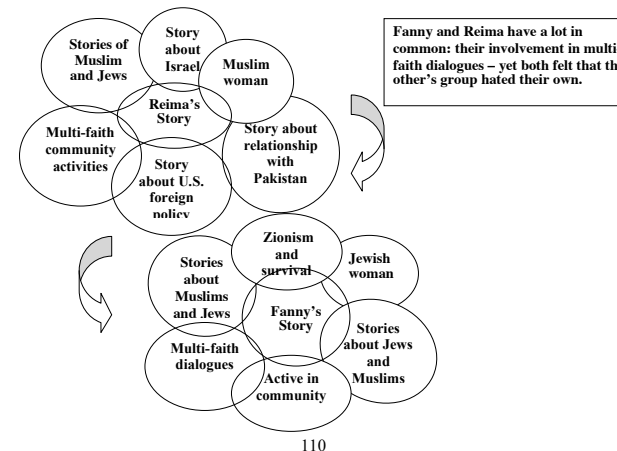
group. Reima noted her observation in a follow-up conversation that Jewish culture was more communal in that people thought about taking care of and supporting each other regardless of whether they were related.

This episode placed the Jewish and Muslim cultures side-by-side and distinguished a defining characteristic: how others perceived members of these groups with regard to their relationship to their group identity and community. I used the Hierarchy Model (Diagram 5-6), to sort out the different stories that were intertwined in the question Reima posed. Reima learned that some Jews tie their survival as a people and as a culture to the continued existence of Israel. The story of a Jew and a Muslim, sitting with each other and exploring the other's perspective was in sharp contrast to the story of Muslims and Jews in conflict that are told on a daily basis in the culture.

The punctuation and analysis of this episode suggests a sense of boundaries that might be misleading. The storytelling was one of two group members having a profound connection, and others resonating with that feeling. Yet, further analysis expanded the meaning that was elevated from the untold stories and how the processes of the conversations, both what came before and what followed, continued to shape the meaning of this episode. Not all the Jewish women in the group agreed with Fanny's description of Jews' unquestioning commitment to Israel. The other Muslim in the group did not necessarily agree with Reima's depiction of Muslim culture as not being communal. A Christian member of the group had her own reaction to supporting a country that she felt was perpetuating violence. These were untold stories that I heard in follow-up interviews.

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Diagram 5-6: The Hierarchy Model: Overlapping Meanings Joining in Contexts

Context/speech act: The context for this episode was generating moments from the group during the first group meeting. The speech act was Reima sharing her story of asking a question to Fanny about the relationship between Jews and Israel.

Story about the Relationships: The group elevated social group identity (in this case the overlay of faith, ethnicity and nationality) so it was proper to inquire with curiosity about another's group.

Story about groups: Reima's story of her group was an untold story in this episode: Muslims are not an organized community; 'we don't get involved with each other in this way. Jews are involved in a country that they may never have seen and is far away. This does not make sense; it is a mystery".

Fanny's story of group is that people are there for each other. Her story of her group, the Jewish people, is that the involvement of Jews in Israel and their commitment to Zionism is like a religion.

The story of culture was told in this episode from several vantage points. Reima's story of culture was: One's tie to a nation is a consequence of where one lives and where one is from, (e.g., Pakistan and United States). Jewish people's connection to Israel does not fit that rule and therefore is a mystery. (Because of the context and relationships, e.g., an interfaith dialogue group, she was able to explore this question.) Once she heard Fanny's story of culture, Reima was able to hold side-by-side a distinction between Jewish culture and her own experience as a Muslim. Reima characterizes the Muslim community as an unorganized community in contrast to the Jewish community, whose actions are communal This story highlights how a fundamental cultural difference may be enacted in how members of each group make assumptions of the other.

Story of Self: The story Reima tells about herself that is particularly meaningful to this group, in relationship to her social identity group: a Muslim woman from Pakistan who lives in a country that gives financial support to a government that is perceived to be an enemy of the Muslims)

Both content and norms were being defined and redefined in the turns and processes of the conversations within each meeting and from one meeting to the next.

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Each time a group member shared a personal story and others responded with questions, the group was determining how deep the conversation would go. The group lived in tension between holding a "safe place" and going deeper.

Cindy spoke from the context of self and interpersonal relationships earlier in the group, suggesting that to preserve relationships, we need to be careful not to talk about politics. Talking about things such as politics might, in her mind, upset relationships. Reima responded.

> Cindy: One of the fears I have is I don't want to have a political conversation. I don't want to hear they did this and we did that…I don't want to hear that anymore – then tell me why you don't like them and they don't like you. Let's move on from there. That is why I do want to go deeper but I don't want to go into a he said she said.

> Reima: Well that is the difference between here and there. Out in the real world you can't get away from the politics of it. We give politics a bad name. But if you really look at it, it's an interaction among groups of people. So it is very difficult to isolate it on an intellectual level and leave it there. That is what we do here, that is why we walk away from it, and we feel like: did I really say what I wanted to say?

Reima, in response, told a different story of relating. Her story was that to really connect with others and learn from others, you have to talk about politics. Yet she monitored her own forms of addressing others in accordance with the rules the group enacted. Reima said, in the follow-up interview to this group meeting, that she chose not to go further with the discussion because it would have gotten into a political realm and the group was not ready for that. "That is not what the group is for." The very quality that, for Cindy, might have threatened the group was the quality that had the potential to enhance the group for Reima. This was an example of *deontic logic* (B. W. Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). While Reima had a different logic for the relationships, she adhered to a norm and boundary that was implicit in the group. The rules of the group that supported some members' rules of relating limited others.

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Choosing not to address something that might be controversial in the group was not limited to intergroup issues. In the individual interviews, many of the Jewish and Christian members of the group described having difficulty when a member of their own group made a statement about their group, (e.g., this is what Christians/Jews think believe, act) that was different from what they believed. In each instance, they did not say anything. Rather, their attention went to internally monitoring their own reaction and trying to determine what to do with it. The decision of when to hold back rather than say something in the group was influenced by the norms that were stated *and* unstated; the discursive processes and the rules of engagement.

The next episode, punctuated by a complex web of snippets that wove in and out of individual interviews and both group interviews, addressed both content and process.

Episode 3: Going deep: Talking about it to do it

The questions: How deep has this group gone? Do we want to go deeper? At what pace? were asked by many in the individual and both group interviews. These questions moved from being talked *about* to being enacted by the group in the second meeting. I analyzed these questions as an episode, punctuated into two parts. The motif in Part I was, *struggling to understand the other*. Various conversations in the group seem distinct until there is a comment that links them. The discursive processes move the conversations from *talking about* to talking *in relationship*. In Part 2, *intra*group relating as content moves to the fore when a group member addresses one of the instances of intragroup tension. The shift in discursive processes to talking *in relationship*, as well as being in reflection, brought the issues of intragroup relating to the fore. This episode is both about the content, intergroup and intragroup understanding, and about the process that enabled it.

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Episode 3, Part 1: Understanding the Other, Inside and Outside the Group

In my first interview with Linda, she told a story of a difficult encounter with

Reima. Linda brought up the story of this encounter again in the first group meeting, in

the individual interview between the first and the second group, and again in the second

group. The meaning of the story shifted and unfolded as the contexts and punctuation of

the story kept expanding.

Linda, a Lutheran woman, is married to a Muslim man from Turkey. Initially her

story seemed to be about her trying to understand her relationship with her mother-in-

law.

> My mother-in-law came to visit about 3 years ago… something did not go well
> and we have not talked since. There is a language barrier. And I wonder. Is this a
> mother-in law-issue, a cultural issue, a personal issue? I wanted to explore a bit
> more about the Muslim faith; …We were talking about community, and I asked,
> "In Islam, how is it you can kick someone out?" Her response was. "If a child
> isn't respectful of his parents, he did not care about them anyway." It was such a
> harsh judgment.

Linda had hoped that Reima would be able to help her understand her relationship

with her mother-in-law. Her question did not include the context of her question: the

story about her relationship with her mother-in-law. Reima heard her question as a

question about group norms and Muslim culture.

Diagram 5-7 depicts a strange loop in the meaning that is being made between

Linda and Reima. A strange loop, (V. E. Cronen & Johnson, 1982) describes when two

different definitions of the context or frame of the discussion are being used making it

difficult to join in meaning making.

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Diagram 5-7: Strange Loop Between Linda and Reima

Linda   Reima

Self in relationship with mother-in-law   Culture in relationship with norm
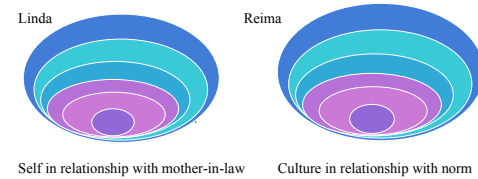
The scrambling of contexts here made what might have been a simple interaction,

considerably more complex.

The story continued to unfold in the first group interview when we were

identifying potential "moments" to explore as a group, First, Linda said,

> I had a moment where I felt like I opened myself up to the group and I left feeling
> exposed and down and since no one is opening up at this time it seems
> appropriate to share my moment. I didn't know it was a moment until you and I
> talked about why I felt so uncomfortable when I left that day. Is that a moment?
> Or more of a session?

> Ilene: The moment I think you are referring to was when you wanted to
> understand or you had some questions about your mother-in-law?

> Linda: Yes. That was the question.

What seemed to be a story about Linda's relationship with her mother-in-law

morphed into a story about her relationship with the group. This confusion of contexts is

noteworthy. In my experience working with groups in conversations that engage social

identity group differences, the levels of meaning at which the conversation is

contextualized, shifts. This shift might be within a monologue or between and among

speakers. Misunderstandings arise when meaning is not coordinated across context. Linda

began her story as a desire to learn about how to relate better with a Muslim woman from

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India: *self* in *relationship* to *social identity group*. Then she shifted the story to the relationships in the group and group norms.

Linda's reference to being *proper* alludes to class identity. The origins of the group were tied to a geographic area that is seen to be upper class. Linda experiences herself as being on the margins in the group as she if from a neighboring community that is middle and working class. She is enacting the deontic logic of suggesting there is a right way to behave in the group, defined by *being proper*. She broke this norm by telling a story about a time she was uncomfortable in the group. She addressed issues in the group itself, as well as a subtle, implicit group norm. When she perceived herself as doing something outside the norm, she made a joke about it.

In the second group meeting, she shared her sense of herself as "different" in this way:

> One of my most uncomfortable moments, which was phrased as "my mother in law" which was not really just about my mother-in-law. Actually after talking to Ilene twice about this, a lot of it had to do with me trying to get comfortable around something that was brought up by another faith group, and trying to rephrase it. And *then* feeling like I did a bad job and I could have possibly offended a bunch of people in the room who I respected greatly. And so I think I just felt really bad about it. And it may have been my own insecurities, my own personal struggles with trying to learn to be more polite. You know, being *here* [references the local community], when I am *here* [references the local community] I feel like I have to be more polite than I have to be [other town].

In her storytelling, Linda introduced what she wanted with the group: a relationship where people expressed being vulnerable, a place to share respect for each other, and a place where it was okay to loosen up; not always have to worry about being polite. However, what Linda wanted was still a mystery to the group. Linda shared a story that seemed to be about an episode; yet her desire was to be heard at the personal level. Her question was heard at the group and cultural levels. Furthermore, connecting

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the story of her mother-in-law with something brought up by another faith group that she was uncomfortable with, added to the complexity of joint sense making.

Linda expanded the content and context for this episode in our follow-up conversation. At the time that she asked Reima the question, Linda was taking her turn facilitating the group.

> The first week went fairly well. Then we talked about why are we in our faith communities. A Jewish woman said she stays because of a sense of obligation. The next meeting was the one I felt very uncomfortable – muddled up a lot. There was the sense that Judaism is very different from Christianity; that we really are not all the same.

Self-in-relationships and the desire to stay connected came to the foreground in the pattern Linda wove in each of these examples. She felt uncomfortable and unsettled thinking about the differences between Jews and Christians and tried to make sense of it in this conversation she had with herself:

> The ahaa for me was that you don't have to be spiritual to be a Jew. There is something really beautiful in that. What I appreciate is the sense of community you can never NOT be a Jew. One thing we have in our world today is a lack of community. The woman from XX Synagogue shared stories about how people walk together and have lunch together. My mother's family is in Germany and my husband's family is in Turkey, my sister is in California. The sense of brokenness is very hard.
>
> That is why I felt uncomfortable. [What was the discomfort about?] Well look at how nice the Jewish community is… and you never quit being a Jew. And the pain was that I didn't have it.
>
> The other thing I learned in the dialogue and I don't know if it related to the group, is the perspective of the Christians to save the world and how that plays out in my own life. There is this idea that we have to step in and help their spirits to grow. I think that is uniquely Christian.

At first, Linda had difficulty with what a Jewish woman said about obligation. Obligation was a rule that she did not have for herself as a Christian. Then, in reframing it as a beautiful sense of belonging, she felt pain for what she did not have and her sense of "brokenness". She struggles to make both *okay*. And yet, she still was puzzled by the

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word *obligation* and its meaning. Her rules for her own behavior and her expectations of others prevented her from exploring that further.

> When they asked me to facilitate again, I wanted to work on that. Maybe it was difficult because I had a negative association with the word *obligation*. I feel like it should be non-biased. I wanted to become non-biased…There is this rule about being non-biased which implies not taking it personally which is then not bringing the full person…I am feeling frustrated because it is such a large number of people. I think the leaders of the group – they don't share personal things. I have tried to be personal – no one is kicking in. I facilitate groups at my church. Often when someone shares, I share [and then] others follow. In this group when I shared, it went flat. I think I put myself on the line that day and did not feel comfortable.

Linda was making and responding to a number of rules and assumptions, and hopes she had for good group behavior, e.g., being non-biased, not taking things personally, personal sharing, and appreciating another's and one's own group. She struggled with her disappointment in the group relationships and strived hard to show appreciation.

There were two stories intertwined here that elevated the confusion created by the stories Told and storyTelling. Linda's storyTelling was a move within the context of the research, to shift the way people talked in the group; to elevate the personal and relationship contexts. She spoke from a more personal and vulnerable voice when she shared the feelings she had *in the group*, in contrast to telling the group a story *about* feelings in other relationships. The story she told about herself was that she works very hard to accept another's views that might differ from her own, (i.e., her discomfort with a Jewish woman describing a sense of obligation in relationship to her faith; her story about her personal relationship with her mother-in-law; her efforts to be non-biased). She used her conversation with me to step back and make sense of feeling out of sorts with the group.

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Exploring *Obligation*: Intergroup, Intra-group and In-group Relating

In the next meeting, Linda took the episode to another level. First, Linda told a story of herself embedded in a story of the episode.

> The trust level is so high in the group right now.
>
> It was the second of the two groups I facilitated. The first one that I facilitated there was this weird obligation that came out. And I was really just unsettled about that word…obligation was very foreign to me and also I was concerned about the world involvement at that moment in Israel. And one of the women in the group related Israel to obligation and I really felt uncomfortable about it. Then Anne called me and said, "You did such a great job of facilitating that meeting why don't you do the next one." So, I worked really hard …about how I was going to word the questions. But when I got there – to the next meeting…and I even brought a Jewish reading, I really felt very moved by Leah's [an orthodox Jewish woman] experience. And I brought together this idea of obligation into my life where I come from a very – people in my family have left where they were from. My mother left Germany… she left her whole family there… My husband left Turkey…. He left his whole family there.
>
> I asked Reima in that meeting what might that mean. I don't know if I worded it as being my own personal life. I worded the question as a generic question. But her response was, well if someone leaves their faith, then they really don't care about their family. So that was very hard for me plus I felt like I may have offended the Jewish women that were there because I tried to put my arms around this idea of obligation, and maybe in doing that I did something wrong.

The meaning of this story shifts in the context of what came before it and what followed. Out of context it was a generic question seeking to understand something about the other group. Linda is trying to assuage a judgment about Jews and well as Muslims *out there* through her relating in the group. At the time, the story of her family was so much a part of what she was saying yet it was an untold story. People continued to respond to the content of what she was saying in an effort to understand.

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Sara: I think that when there is curiosity and it is coming in good faith, that if an insult was perceived, that is really of the other person. People have to understand that you are going to ask questions, take risks, and say things from a healthy curiosity and interest and if people take offense from that, that is something that needs to be explored… I am listening to you and thinking that it sounded like you were very earnestly trying to explore something that was very important to you…

Sara's response moved the conversation from the first-person position (personal

perspective) to the third-person position (observer/evaluator). She made a move to

comfort Linda and connect with her, the very thing Linda said she wanted from members

of the group. Sara's comments were an attempt to make an empathic connection. Linda's

response turned the meaning back to a story about herself.

Linda: Nobody seemed offended… nobody seemed offended. But nobody seemed to be perceptive of how much it meant to me either. And there was just kind of a banal feeling… I walked away feeling exposed.

Fanny: About both issues.. about the one?

Linda: I have two thoughts about that. I grew a lot. I took something from somebody else's faith even though I am not sure that the women in that group at that moment expressed to me. But somehow through my research of preparing for the group, I learned and I grew in my own faith journey so the journey of having to research it and come up with the questions, I really put myself out there and I spent a lot of time on it. and I think I have a better understanding of this idea of obligation which was a new idea for me and, uh

Although Linda said she wanted to connect with members of the group, she kept telling a

story of what she was doing to understand things herself.

Ilene: Having talked to you about this a couple of times, you've talked about a couple of things, one being that you were afraid of offending. Two being that you learned a lot in the process of preparing. The other thing that you talked about that you did not experience yourself in the group the way you wanted to. So, I am wondering, how might the group have been present to your self-disclosure, such that you would have felt more closely connected?

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Linda: I do not know how much I shared…it related to what we are talking about. I am satisfied to some extent– I think that when a person goes through growth there is some pain and that was painful growth but there was also growth. So I don't look at the group as having failed me… I think that it was good for me and… but then this piece…this piece about. putting myself on the line…and sharing a Jewish spiritual piece. I think they liked it. I don't know…

Ellen: I just wanted to say a two-pronged comment. I think and I may be wrong but I think that it is really hard, not impossible, but hard, to offend people when you are presenting. Whether any of us are prepared or not but we are presenting from such a place of shared, respect, curiosity and honest asking; asking for honest interpreting. There is very little not no, risk because of everyone understanding where this is all coming from. And the second part of that is, I don't think you offended but I think the group disappointed you… not knowingly. But you are feeling that you may have offended when what really happened is that some of us offended you. And I just wanted to make that point not just to you but to all of us that. That is where I think we are… that it is not easy to offend.

Ellen's comment gave Linda reassurance, and added a story that until that point

was an *unknown*. Linda was disappointed with the group. Ellen's turn became an

invitation to Linda to say, very directly, what it was that she wanted.

Linda: I guess what I would have wanted the group to do was to say, ahhh yes you really did work hard on that and you are right you did grow on that this month and you are right, I really see Linda where you are coming from and I can see where Christianity doesn't really say that and I see where Judaism does. And there was no response like that, and I was disappointed.

Ellen: So that is a learning for us.

The next turn was significant for the group. In her response to Linda, Sandy

created the very quality the group had at once wanted and not wanted, was excited to

create, and was concerned to create. Sandy turned the conversation from how and why

Linda pulled back, to how and why *she* pulled back.

Sandy: It is amazing for me to hear that you wanted to hear that because I had an interaction actually with you before that where we had been speaking and where I had said something and your response was I am really tired of hearing the Christian perspectives on this I know about the Christian perspective; I don't want to hear about them. So from then on in, I did not really talk about it in the group…

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Linda: I am sorry.

Sandy: No. Had I known that about you I would have been happy to sort of come and be supportive… but my feeling was that you really don't want to know from my perspective because you know my perspective, not necessarily my Christian perspective. So it is good for me to hear that you wanted that and I am going to be more likely in this group to step up more and be more affirming.

Linda: I am sorry about that.

Sandy: Well no. Part of that is me, that is my sensitive zone that in my work, in fact in my work I don't… in fact in my work I am supposed to speak up but I almost never speak up because I facilitate groups. So I ventured into here thinking that this is the place where I could speak… That is my issue not yours…I appreciate you being courageous enough to sort of bring it up again in the group, because it gives us the opportunity …me the opportunity to grow too. It takes tremendous amount of courage. And I am grateful to you for that because actually you had more courage than I had because..

Ilene: This was kind of your courageous moment too, Sandy.

Linda: Can I respond to what I think I might have been saying though that…. when I said, if I blurted out in some way, you know for a lot of Christian perspectives. I think that addresses that idea that when Ellen…mentioned when one person of one faith says something and another person of that same faith may say, well wait a minute that is not what I believe in my faith…

This episode illuminated the discursive processes and practices that created an empathic performance and a moment of meeting. Linda interrupted the group's habituated model of engaging with differences in a way that was curious yet not controversial. She moved the discussion from outside the room to within and among the relationships. The iterative and recursive reflection opportunities that the individual interviews and group interviews afforded, uncovered these threads such that they could be seen in a pattern.

The turn this episode took was most unexpected. In such a group where the focus or task was the engagement of differences, unsettling moments within the group were expected. Unsettling moments within one's identified group were not. The process of following the turns in the conversation, the context from which people spoke and the

stories they brought to the encounter about themselves, their families, their groups, their roles, their positions, all influenced the meaning that was made at each turn of the conversation. The reflection enabled the discursive processes and practices of the group to become the subject.

In the next section, three episodes from the GAR group are identified and analyzed. Like the MWD group, these episodes address analyses of content and process that emerged as people were in conversation.

Episodes from the Gender and Race Group (GAR)

In the nine years that the GAR group has been meeting five of the current eight members have remained constant. Only the two white men and one of the white women are not original members. As their purpose has been to explore *isms* the stories they told in the individual interviews and in the group inquiry, for the most part, elevated the cultural and group level stories over individual stories of self. Groups were usually defined by race and gender.

My intent in both my methodological design and analysis, was not to compare the MWD and GAR groups. However, there were such clear differences in their discursive processes that it was difficult to ignore all comparison. The GAR group had looser boundaries. Since they gather for an evening and a day once a quarter, they begin with a casual dinner and informally move into the group conversation. They also structure their agenda as they go along. I discovered as I started the inquiry that the structure I introduced was different from their rhythm. I made adjustments to the approach I used with the MWD group to accommodate the rhythm of the GAR group.

There were many examples of struggling to coordinate meaning. As with the MWD, I punctuated episodes of the GAR group, within the meta-episode, to explore what happens in groups that meet for the purpose of exploring social identity group

differences, and what discursive processes promoted dialogic moments. The task of guiding the GAR group to focus on a particular episode *was* a defining episode in and of itself. Paradoxically, the discursive processes evident in the process of framing an episode, defined the culture and the implicit rules of the group.

The GAR group spent a lot of time talking about what story they wanted to talk about. The common motif in the stories they considered was *how social identity groups were defined or characterized* and *who was privileged to define them*. Three episodes echoed this motif. Tom was a white man whom the group had asked to leave. Robin was a non-observant, ethnically identified Jewish woman who told a story about a time when two other group members suggested she was not Jewish as she was not observant. The inquiry prompted a conversation about Jeff, and what it meant to him to be a white man *and* a gay man. The story of Tom and what constitutes a white man, Robin's story and what constitutes a Jew and the conversation with Jeff regarding how he, as a gay man, identifies as a white man, were framed as an episode for analysis.

The LUUUTT model heuristically applied to the individual and group interviews helped to distinguish the group's story**T**elling, the story **L**ived, the story **T**old, the story that was **U**ntold, the story that was **U**nheard, and the story that was **U**nknown as a way of making meaning. The Serpentine model provided the framework for how these episodes unfolded, particularly in relationship to one another. The Hierarchy model highlighted what context was being elevated in each turn of the conversation. The Daisy model depicted what conversations were contributing to the meaning that the group was making in the episode.

The analysis illuminated as much about what constrains a dialogic moment as what enables it. These episodes were:

- What do we do as a group?

- How do we define social group identity and who defines it?
- What does it mean to do the work of the group: who names it and where does it happen?

Episode 4: What We Do as a Group: Uncovering *isms*

The group used a metaphor to describe their task: uncovering what is hiding or what lurks underneath. What lurked underneath were the *isms*. The task of the group was to have conversations that uncovered *isms*. Robin began by talking about a moment that was meaningful for her. She shared this moment during the first group meeting.

> Robin: One of the most meaningful moments for me was when Marilyn and I went for my racism. It was started by Leslie who told her story… about the comment she made to the woman at Hopkins about Medicaid and she started crying about how ashamed she was and all this shit came up for me around my own racism and my story around, "I'm not like those other white folks you know, I've got a better track record" and Marilyn kept just pushing it, and pushing it, and pushing it, until I cried. And then Mitchell said why are you so emotional about this and I said because…I can't think of anything worse to be than a racist. I felt like I'd taken off this cloak, this mask is what I've always called it, but tonight it feels like a cloak, a very heavy cloak, and looked at, well yes, of course, in some ways I am racist and then the other is also true. I think that for me was extremely freeing. Not to have… wear the "I'm not like those other people, you know, …I've done better." Then thinking back of my own elitism, and my own classism, and my own racism within my own group, which is probably where I hold this the most. That's what comes up for me.

Robin used the words "taking off her cloak", and taking off her "mask" to describe one of her most meaningful moments in the group. The story she brings to the foreground is her story of herself. She is one who looks at her self and is willing to face her *isms*. She also defined the group discourse as one of "getting underneath" and the culture to be about helping each other see something they might not see themselves. This metaphor both represented and created what this group sought to do: dig deep to better see things.

A recitation of moments by each member of the group followed Robin's story.

Each story, like Robin's, brought a story image of the speaker to the foreground. I

summarize each sequential turn below:

Mitchell shared a story about a time when the group addressed "why Black men date white women". During that conversation, one of the Black women asked him about his collection of white female dolls. In the telling of this story there was an *untold story* of culture. In the African American community there is a tension about interracial relationships with regard to loyalty and identity. A Black man who has a relationship with a white women is abandoning his group.

Jeff told the story about the time when he brought a video about social class to the group. The video stimulated Jeff's feeling of shame toward his social class of origin, and his shame for not wanting to be connected to it. The story about the relationships in the group was that the group was a place for people to make meaning of *the shadows* of one's identity.

Flora shared a story about a time when she received feedback about how she hides her power and intelligence. This was a story of self and identity group. The untold story was a story about culture. African American women not being able to be powerful and intelligent without risking being rejected by the majority culture.

Ronald reflected on a time the group gave him feedback about talking to his teenage daughter about sex. The content of Ronald's reflection told a story about the parameters of discussions in the group.

Brett talked about a series of issues in relationship to faith life specifically with regard to lived versus espoused values, and individual versus collective needs. This comment moved the conversation from the personal intimate to a more intellectual and ideological place. Brett's story was more about themes the group has touched on, than a specific dialogic moment or engagement of intergroup relations.

Mitchell responded after Brett and said, "That triggered another one for me; you helped me understand white male dynamics. My flat side has been for a long time not even being curious about white men, just writing them off. With the group I decided to get curious about it and then you talked about the loyalty tests that you guys get… we can't exclude white men. Being curious about gay folks, that's one thing. But it's different being curious about a white man." Mitchell refers to white men as something to be studied, and Brett as one who has been helpful in explaining them.

These turns in the conversation were at once storytelling and making an episode.

Each person's memory triggered another's memory of what was important and defining

for the group. Robin told a story of one who is committed to *looking at herself* and also

committed to confronting ways in which she enacts prejudice toward other groups. She

referred to something we discussed in our individual interview, stories she had about

other Jews who came from another social class. "I grew up thinking that I was better than

Orthodox Jews and certainly different from Hassidic Jews…. We were German Jews."

She was telling a story about the complexities and connections of intergroup and intra-

group issues.

Others followed with examples of the group inviting them to look at a part of their

story about themselves particularly where it involved a difficult or challenging subject.

The turns were about defining oneself in the group and making oneself vulnerable in the

group with regard to social identity group issues and relationships. They privileged issues

related to group-level power. Brett's comment moved away from that when he addressed

something at a more philosophical level. Mitchell's response turned the conversation

back to the group-level power issues by acknowledging Brett and expressing his

appreciation for learning about the world of white men from Brett's stories.

Robin connected both the discourse on social group power dimensions and Brett's reference to his faith identity in the next episode. She posed the question: How do we define social group identity and who gets to do it? This question moved the analysis to the next episode.

Episode 5: How do we define social group identity and who defines it?

This episode began when Robin told a story about a time when two of the white men in the group talked about whether she was really Jewish given that she did not observe the ritualistic aspects of Judaism. Robin introduced the theme of who defines one's social group identity, a theme that was manifested in a three-part episode in the first group meeting. Part 1 is Robin's story, Part 2 is Tom's story, and Part 3 is Jeff's story.

Episode 5 Part 1: What is a Jew? Robin's story

> Robin: I have another one. Mine are all pretty personal. It was when Brett and Steve decided that I wasn't really Jewish, because I don't practice the religious part of it. [Lots of acknowledging. I remember that…laughter]. And, Flora said [to the two white men in the group] how come you get to vote, how come you get to decide about that. For me, it was such a turning point in my identity and clarifying for me how culturally Jewish I am, even though I don't ascribe to the religious or the ritual part of it. It's everything about who I am. And I remember saying to Steve, I think if Hitler came back he wouldn't care if you go to church and I go to Synagogue. I think he'd think we were both Jewish, anyway... [the untold story was that Steve converted from Judaism to Christianity.]

> And I remember when Ronald said to me, you just look like a plain old white woman to me. [Laughter]. Whereas that is not my identity, my identity is an ethnic identity.

> Mitchell: That's your personal identity.

> Robin: Not my personal identity. I accept that maybe that's what others see.

> Brett: Mistakenly.

> Robin: Of course. Anyway, it was very clarifying. It was neat that you all in some way had the guts to think you had a vote about it. [There was a lot of laughter here].

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Robin introduced her story as being personal. It was also a story about being Jewish. She indicated, with a tone of sarcasm, that the group privileged itself to define her. In so doing, she was telling a story about the group and relationships in the group. Laughter lightened up the intensity when the conversation became serious, personal or challenging. Bursts of laughter were frequent in the group.

The question of *who defines whom* is particularly meaningful in the context of this group's focus: identifying and uncovering places where those with culturally ascribed privilege yield power over others who are in a lesser position. There is a lot of literature about culturally oppressed groups claiming their power by naming or defining themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In the next turn of the episode, the theme of defining another by their social group identity was constituted in reference to white men.

Episode 5 Part 2: What is a White Man? Tom's Story

In part 2 of Episode 5, white men were the focus. This topic was provoked by the story of Tom. Tom was the only person the group asked to leave. In the act of asking Tom to leave, the group defined what the group was about, what it meant to be a member of the group and what it meant to be a white man. Some suggested that they asked Tom to leave because he had different needs and expectations from the group than the group was willing to embrace. Others said that he did not represent a typical white man. The explanations ranged from the personal to group level identity to the culture of the group, without a unified explanation. In this episode, the group makes many attempts to find coherency in the meaning of Tom's story.

Leslie was one of the people who talked about Tom in the initial individual interview.

> Leslie: I'm sure you heard Tom's story. The Tom experience happened in the first couple of meetings I attended. I hadn't quite got the group norms yet, I was trying to lean back, kind of, I think typically, that's how I work in a group, I kind

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of sit back in the group and then I establish my role as opposed to just jumping in and assuming that this is how I'm going to function in the group and do it. I kind of sat back and, well then, within a couple of meetings they kicked Tom out. This group is serious. That actually was, it was a significant event in the evolution of this group, I think. It established some norms around how one should use the group and therapy was not one of the uses of the group. It also was, I'm going to say it was scary. Scary in that I always felt for a few meetings, maybe even a couple of years after that, a little like Oh my G-d, if I don't do it right they are going to kick me out.

I think Tom pushed some buttons in people that by asking him to leave, it allowed them not to deal with. Terry was very much a feminine man. He's married, he might be gay, I don't know. He's married so you have to assume he's heterosexual, but he was a social worker. He was in what was typically seen as a woman's profession. He had a feminine way about him and I think he pushed some people's homophobia buttons without being homosexual that we know of.

This story was a defining event in the evolution of the group. The serpentine

model helped to map the process of telling the story and identified many of the *shoulds*

and *oughts* of the group. These rules became the standards that Leslie used to make

sense of the group's norms. Some of the rules or norms made in the episode of asking

Tom to leave were explicit, e.g., this is not a therapy group, and some were implicit.

Leslie expressed her feeling that, "Oh my G-d, if I don't do it right they are going to kick

me out" as being a question about "doing it right" that she carried into the group.

The hierarchy model was used at each turn to note the how the meaning of this

episode was being contextualized. Robin introduced the story of Tom being asked to

leave elevating the context of the *self in* relationship with the group. She used this as an

example of the group making its *rules* about the parameters of *relating*.

Diagram 5-8: Hierarchy Model - Robin re: Tom

Relationships

Episode

Self
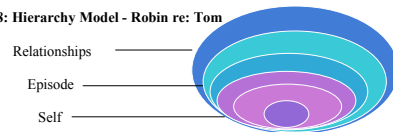
Brett was the first to introduce Tom's story into the group as a defining moment.

His comment followed Robin's story. Meaning, in the story that unfolded in the turns of

the conversation, and was contextualized at the group level. That is, the task of

uncovering isms elevated the contexts of culture and social identity group for sense

making. This episode also illuminated the unknown story: what Tom's being asked to

leave, meant for the group. Brett introduced it, and others followed to tell the story as

they remembered it.

> Brett: Another moment for me, and I am aware of when you entered Jeff so I regret this piece. One of the riveting moments was the evening of making a choice around, I'm trying to remember his name, the white guy that was here, Tom around do we have a boundary and what does it mean to be inclusive and accepting of different people's lives. Things get in the way of events like evenings together and at what point do you say that this learning community has some boundary around what it means to be in a learning posture and open to receiving influence from others and disclosure from self, different from projection and all sorts of other things. So I remember that conversation as quite rich in the journey and I think it has for me colored this group. This group is a privilege to be a member, it's no where near a right that we made that crystal clear that there is something to be ponied up in terms of accountability and responsibility to be available for each other's learning, and so that was for me a moment.

Diagram 5-9: Hierarchy Model - Brett re: Tom

Culture of the group

Rules relationships in the group

Episode
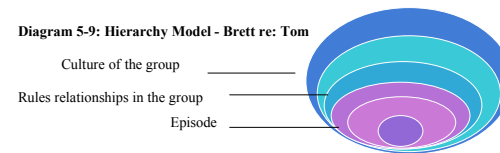
Brett told the story of Tom as a story about an individual who happened to be a

white guy. The story was about the obligations and privileges that went with being a

member of this group. Marilyn in the next turn elevated the context of social identity

group; Tom was one of *those* white guys.

> Marilyn: For me the thing that has occurred to me since we interviewed was… when I checked in around having an ahaa, an awareness around about my issues

with white guys, particularly what affluent white guys represent. My story had been up until this time actually that one of the collegial relationships that I tend to have tended to be with white guys, that if you can, connect and make that work… That might be a throw back to my days at XXX in the patriarchal organization. But the realization that I had recently …is the notion of the privilege that white men have in this country just, you know, eats me at a gut level…Recently I was with a client who was saying, "yes it may be true that if you look at the power base in the country, it is predominantly a white male power base. But then you have white guys like us who are just ordinary white guys and we have no power. We're just like everyone else. So I'm not sure why it is that people have issues with us?" and I remember a response in my gut being, "because you know what, if you're a white guy in this country and you haven't been able to be successful it's your fucking fault." I'm owning it now. Because it's part of my spiritual walk, I'm part of a Christian congregation that is a multicultural congregation and I don't know how I can authentically be there or do the work that I have to do without looking that monster in the eye. So….

Diagram 5-10: Hierarchy Model - Marilyn re: Tom

Relationships

Social Identity Group
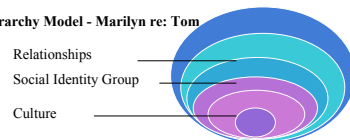
Culture

The meaning of this episode moved from a story about an episode to a story about white men and our culture: white men are entitled and privileged. Mitchell then raised the question: "Given what was said about white guys, what did it mean that we told Tom he could no longer be a member of this group?"

Mitchell: …You helped me reframe that whole thing. Certainly it was an enormously significant event for this group to say to anyone that you can no longer be a member of this group. I mean that is a big bridge for any group to cross for whatever reason and I'm enormously proud of this group because we did that, and I really hadn't thought about it clearly until you spoke, that we did that with a white male. There's no way, now that I'm thinking about it in this frame, that that is not significant. But my unconsciousness about it, one, is also significant…

Brett: Yeah, that particular aspect of this stands out to me.

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Mitchell reinforced the need to look at the meaning of Tom's departure from the context of social group identity. Brett supported Mitchell's comment, but Marilyn followed with a qualifier: "If we are going to look at this episode in terms of what this group does with white men, did Tom qualify as a representative member?"

Marilyn: I'm just going to say, you know, ditto what you said around the thing with Tom. The ahaa that you just had around it being a white male that we made a decision about and then, right, part and parcel with that comes in "but it wasn't really a white male", not in my typical historical, it really wasn't for me so it wasn't like taking on you know, the big bad wolf.

The way the story was told raised a question about whether it was a story about a man who did not fit in the group or a white man who did not qualify for his slot. The story telling is enacting the privilege of defining another's group identity. In this conversation, the white men were conspicuously absent.

Mitchell: That sounds like denial to me… but something to talk about.

Marilyn: That's my trip…it wasn't like that for me. For me it was like…

Mitchell: Here's a white male that we could sink down to…

Marilyn: Yeah. easy… [Laughter]

Robin: What I remember quite vividly about that was that Ronald and Brett didn't see Tom as a real guy, a real man. And part of his neediness and his emotionality and his, what we saw was, a need that this group couldn't fill, fit into that somehow. And it turned out, Tom is actually quite a wealthy white male who, you know, probably has a lot of power in his own way, who wasn't powerful in our group. I think power issues, that's my ahaa just this moment, is that it's about powerfulness and that's saying Tom is powerless.

Ilene: I know that we have this list here and it seems like we are starting a conversation about Tom. I want to wait until Flora comes back into the room and then decide whether you want to continue on this track and talk about this Tom situation. Brett when you said when you acknowledged that Jeff wasn't part of this group, I think this is part of the history of the group that you, Jeff are now are part of… I'm noticing how defining this story was for the group.

Group: All talking about who brought it up in the interviews. [Laughter]

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The discursive processes of the group were to look back and analyze a story in terms of what it meant. The communication approach, added another perspective by asking the question: what meaning was being made with the telling of the story of Tom's departure?

Marilyn and Mitchell began to move toward the question: *what were we saying about white men*? In so doing, they defined the content and elevated white men, rather than just Tom, as the focus of the conversation. Brett moved the process back to relationship, with his comment to Jeff. In this exchange, there was a back and forth about content, (e.g., what *are* we talking about?) about relationship (e.g., how are we attending to each other; who are we including in the conversation?) with turns back and forth about what was figure and what was ground. The different alignments regarding how the meaning of this story was contextualized for the *group* made *strange loops* and a challenging process of coordinating meaning. Diagram 5-11 depicts the shifts in context as the group was negotiating this storytelling.

Figure 5-11: Finding Coherency in Shifting Contexts

Marilyn: What I just said is, for me, he wasn't really a white boy. That if he were, maybe he would still be here.

Mitchell: I think that says a lot about how we understand white

Marilyn: Yes and I'm really curious about that. And if I had to vote on one of the places I'd go, I would want to go there, because I really want to do my own work where that is concerned because I know that issue. One of the issues, you know, and I'll say it in a New York second, is having found and believe that not all white guys are the same and I'm also very aware that I haven't spent time in recent years getting connected to the differences white guys represent.

Brett: I would like a check in too, I'm curious where you are Jeff, I'm wondering if it makes sense to grab a topic where you were

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physically present, whether that's going to not hold so much attention for you or will it.
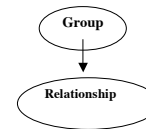
Marilyn: Let me say something… I do want to say one thing about that because I don't have it be the topic of Tom. I have it be the topic of white men…[Lots of chatter…]

Brett: I am clear about that for you. I am actually interested in Jeff.

The episode vacillated from telling a story of Tom who was asked to leave, talking about Tom, who did not fit the description of a white man, talking about white men in our culture and talking about what the group was going to talk about. Coordination of meaning was difficult as the level of meaning that was in the foreground kept shifting in the turns of the conversation.

When Brett asked Jeff how he would feel if the group discussed an episode that occurred before his time with the group, Marilyn redefined the topic. Marilyn was elevating content. Brett was elevating relationship. Brett's response to Marilyn was a statement about relationship: "I am interested in Jeff." Jeff responded to both: he expressed appreciation to Brett, mirroring the relationship level of meaning and responded to the content that Marilyn raised, thereby coordinating with both.

Jeff: Well… it's interesting…Thank you for asking, as long as it's not about the specifics of what happened there and dissecting that but it's about understanding [Mitchell: "What we did"] then I'm really cool with that because I'm also hoping that with this knowledge, it's what we want to talk about. I think there is a connection. Just doing that piece of it gives me another perspective on my kaleidoscope that I haven't looked through in a while.

The telling of the Tom story was a significant turn for the group in that it identified a story that lived in the group, yet whose meaning has not been coordinated among the members. The meaning attributed to this story was different for some and was a mystery to others. In the turns that followed, the group both gravitated toward talking

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about Tom and white men (e.g., content) and struggled with the form of analysis that I proposed (e.g., process). Part of this struggle related to another untold story: what *were* the rules of this group? What *did* it mean to fit?

In this analysis, I looked at what the storytelling was doing in the group. As the researcher, I noticed the movement pulsating between desiring to engage in a cooperative inquiry using the Tom story as the content, and a turning away from doing the analysis. The punctuation of this episode framed the prelude to the focal story of the inquiry as well as provided a segment for analyzing the GAR group's discursive processes and process.

Robin proposed the story of Tom as the focus, using the research as a catalyst for defining the group. She was making the inquiry relevant for the group.

It strikes me before we choose, that the Tom story is about who we are and that it's about who we're not. And it may have been clarifying in those ways and that this moment for us to do a little reflection and be learning organization, which we espouse all the time, is the bigger issue. And that Ilene is showing up right on time when it's really time for us to do some reflection and inquiry around who we are and who we're not, and what this stirs for us. And that's what's coming up for me in the Tom story in clarifying with him what we're not.

Brett shifted the focus to other people's stories as the focus and shifted the context of storytelling from the group to the individuals in the group:

Actually, your words make me actually think of a lot of the stories. With Ronald and his daughter, it is going to be who he is, and who he is not. The story of Flora, who she is, who she is not, the story of Mitchell and the dating who are they, who are they not, actually this is an interesting set of words that…

Mitchell moved Brett's comment back to the context to that of the group.

From the way I see it was that, when we dealt with it before, it was about Tom. But to have the conversation be about us, not about Tom and that is where Jeff is easily part of that conversation, because it really wouldn't be about Tom anymore. [Laughter] It wouldn't really be about Tom. [Laughter and joking]

When I asked the group to choose an episode, they laughed and moved around a lot. I asked someone to begin by telling the story, and invited others to join in. In this

instance, Mitchell 's response was the middle of a triplet. He linked their process, their pattern of relating, to the task.

Just to be clear that what you are asking us to do is different from our natural much more organic process and that's okay. Actually, I am speaking to us.

Mitchell's statement was in a triplet between the comment I made preceding it and the comment that followed it. He intended to orient the group to do something different, building on the direction of the inquiry. The hierarchy of meaning was shifting during these turns in the conversation. I elevated the task: the content, and Mitchell elevated the relationships. The conversation flowed in such a way that the process, e.g., deciding what direction to take the conversation, became the task. The process of deciding became the episode.

I used the Serpentine Model to depict the turns in the conversation. Where useful, I added a dialogue box to describe what happened in each turn.

Marilyn: It's okay and at the same time it might require an occasion that we suspend the process so we can do what it is that we need to do… I hear you. Now just to try to net the process out, I'm sensing that there is a fair amount of energy just as I listen to the conversation that started to ensue around the topic that Tom's departure was a catalyst for, but might encompass more. It's more than just that particular incident. And so, because I can see us doing this multi-voting thing and I am just like is there a low hanging fruit that we can kind of jump on to.

Marilyn elevated the group's relationships over the task.

Ilene: I'd to suggest that if we select Tom that we begin by talking about what's the story that is told in this group about …

Mitchell: I'm just saying lets not call it Tom because it's about us.

Flora: Around boundaries.

Flora defined the content… boundaries.

Mitchell: Yes, Yes.

Flora: It's about boundaries and really communicating those boundaries and getting clear ourselves around what we would tolerate and would not tolerate around acceptable norms and behaviors.

Jeff: Why don't we just do that because I think that's where the energy is?

Brett continued to move the context from a group form of address to an individual, interpersonal one

Brett: I am open to any of the above. They all interest me a lot. Your hiding actually intrigues me I'd like to dig into The father thing intrigues me just because it's been some time and those relationships are in different places, the relationships in a lot of our lives are in different places, curious about that. Didn't see the video, don't know what that's about. I'm interested in supporting Marilyn and doing some more work around white male stuff. So I am open to a lot of the stuff in the room I think. I would love to dig back in to how do we define ourselves.

Ilene: ….If you were going to pick one to start... which one would it be?

Brett: All of them would be intriguing to me and… you really don't have one that really stands out for me as being particularly worthy for any reason.

Robin: My feeling is we're going to be a problem to you on this. And that's who we are. [Laughter] So, I think it's around again, for me it's "who we are" because I keep resonating with Tom's departure, because it clarifies to some degree who we are, and some of what went on around that. It's not just the Tom incident it's the identity incident. It's the identity of this group, from the Gustavo (a visitor) coming and people questioning whether or not that was okay.

Robin was telling a story about the group, its identity, its boundaries and how it

deals with outsiders while making a move to support the research process. One member

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of the group, in the individual follow-up interview reflected that Brett was the only one

who did not do any personal sharing. In this turn, Brett notes that *you,* rather than *we*

don't have anything that stands out as particularly worthy of conversation.

Ilene: I hear that there's a theme about people coming and going with the group… and if we had that conversation I would still want to acknowledge the episode because that's important. So, what I'd like to do is see if there's something else that people would put their vote to, or should we just go with this?

Mitchell: It all goes back to the word you used, "hiding". We could carry on. We judge that the use of hiding. We touch lightly on how we hide, but we don't deal with that real well at all.

Mitchell elevated the group task of identifying what was hidden; what was underneath.

Ilene: And that may be where we go with that conversation about this.

There were 18 brief (one line) turns in the conversation that followed, many of

which were overlapping. The content was a review of the topics that were possibilities for

discussion. The group was hiding in their process at the same time as they were talking

about hiding.

Ilene: I noticed there was lot of energy around *who are we as a group* and that had a kind of genesis in a couple of people's comings and goings. The topic shifted, when I asked for someone to begin with a story.

Marilyn: I want to go back there just for a minute because when you frame it like that: *who are we as a group*, I can have some energy around that because one of the things that I talked to you about as we were going through our conversation was, where are we as a group and where we are as a group still revving my jets if you will.   For me,

Marilyn elevated the task of doing the research.

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that can be a part of this same conversation, so I can vote for that.

Ilene: I have a suggestion. I know boundaries are difficult and our time is limited… [Laughter]

Mitchell: Focus focus….

Flora: I think it's hard for us as a group to handle that level of structure, because that's not who we are.

> Flora made a claim about the group's identity.

> Mitchell distinguished who the group is from what the group has done. This created a choice to do something different.

Mitchell: That certainly is not what we've done.

As the researcher, I was trying to conduct the inquiry with the group while not wanting to impose. I was wondering whether to proceed with the research. I was not sure whether the whole group was interested, despite having agreed upfront.

> Flora linked the story with the current process and elevated a discursive process: people in this group don't like rigidity, particularly imposed from an outsider.

Flora: For sure… If we were to recall the issue around the boundaries with the person who is no longer here, [It] was around him wanting it to be a certain way, you know, adding a level of rigidity to the flow of process that folks weren't buying.

> Marilyn moved from discursive process to task and gave authority to Robin as the group historian.

Marilyn: I vote we start the process with a story that you spoke of; I don't know anyone who recalls stories as well as missy-poo over there

At one level, these turns constructed a story about choosing a focus for the research task. The discursive process of the inquiry was different from what the group was accustomed. In the conversation, the group was doing what they were talking about:

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defining who they were, who they were not. In the process, they struggled to make a place for me, an outsider, and to convey the group's rules for how I should fit in. The task of doing an appreciative cooperative inquiry seemed to elevate the group identity of the common in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). While Marilyn, Robin and Mitchell attempted to find a way to incorporate the task of doing the inquiry with their group agenda, Flora and Brett were conveying and holding the group boundaries and rules.

Schutz's model for group process suggests that inclusion, control and affection are processes that are moving through groups at different intensities at different times among different people (Schutz, 1979). As an outsider to the group, I noticed how some people were doing inclusion, inviting the research and me. Affection was expressed for each other and me as well. Others were doing control, maintaining the group's way. There was some surrendering of control as people moved into telling the story of Tom.

The story of Tom's departure continued to be a mystery. In each turn of the storyTelling, the group sought to make sense of the story. The hierarchy of how the story was contextualized kept shifting. In some turns, the story was about the group's standards and norms. This included acceptable personal styles and differences, what the group was looking for in a white man; and about acceptable degrees of latitude for a group member's behavior. Robin started the story.

Robin: Ok – I'll tell it. Tom began to tell us that he wasn't going to attend because he was going to a concert, or was having guests in from out of town, or something like that. (Many chime in….Who is telling the story?) I think we all should tell the story because we all have different pieces of the story. Then he shared with us the details of having been held up at gunpoint and he cried and cried.

> As Robin told the story that was lived, she also told a story of the *shoulds and oughts* of commitment (what was an acceptable absence) and behavior (what was acceptable to discuss) in the group.

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Marilyn: That was my button.

Robin: Right, it was Ronald's button, big time. It was Brett's button but I don't remember it being quite as big at the time.

Robin amplified the *we* or the group voice. Her turns in the conversation echoed connection.

Group: talking all together here

Ilene: Could we pause for a second… you said it was a button for you.

Marilyn: Just simply, my issue was not around boundaries and his ability to maintain his commitment. He was too needy for me and for me that story sort of pushed forward some of that neediness. I can get hooked by people who are too needy. So, that is what it was for me….

Robin: and you ain't the only one with that story.

Ilene: (at the same time as Robin) And what about that communicated neediness…

Marilyn: I don't remember the specifics of that time and space. I remember that wasn't the first indication of something about him that was very needy and I was not prepared to be there with him.

Marilyn contextualized the meaning of the Tom story at the level of self and relationship.

Jeff: who said that – you all said that to him?

Jeff brought the conversation back to the episode.

Robin: We just said we're not sure that we can meet that need. It wasn't that we didn't have empathy for what happened to him, it was a terrible thing,

Robin moved the conversation back to the personal level.

Marilyn: It wasn't about that specific thing, That was just one of several things that for me flashed to

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the core that there were needs that he had that he really needed to seek professional help on.

There were a few more turns in the conversation that addressed how Tom's behavior, generally speaking, did not conform to the norms and expectations of the group. I asked what story does this tell about the group? Jeff was the first to respond.

Jeff confirmed that the rules of what constituted commitment to the group were clear. Jeff expressed what he heard as the standards for inclusion.

Jeff: I don't know. Ironically, I think it was communicated to me after the fact. But not directly… I remember very clearly getting your voice mail about an invitation to the group, and I don't know if you said exactly to make a commitment to be here every quarter, or something like that, but anyway, I'm just noting that I sort of knew, even with my son in my life, that I had a commitment and I had to honor it. I manage things so I can be here and be respectful. Somehow, from that process, I think, that message came through. [Group: laughter]

Jeff's response seems to be elevating the context of self as group member. Yet in my analysis, I wondered what place Jeff as white man had in his response. As an outsider to the group, I noticed the implicative force of Jeff affirming his respect and commitment to the group's norms to his affirming his place in the group. The pattern in the storyTelling continued to be moving between the individual or personal level and the story of Tom, to the group level, the story of Tom as a white man.

Mitchell: I'm certainly with the issue of being committed to this group, but for me that wasn't the driving issue around Tom. Leslie's not being here is pretty routine, and we don't make a big deal about that. The driving issue in my mind around Tom was that he was using… a therapeutic model that didn't fit this group. He wanted, no alcohol, which makes sense in certain kinds of groups that were not what this group is. That's why I said yes, lets support Tom in moving on. … I would have loved if he could have stayed in the group but use a more action-learning model… I didn't get Tom willing to learn from our model, so I saw this kind of power struggle, where I wasn't willing to go to

Mitchell affirmed the group's norm for a discursive process: action learning. Mitchell's historic place as mentor to the group brought a measure of authority, a *contextual force*, to what he said.

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engage in. His issues around his being held up by a black man, I think that would have been great grist for the mill if we could have used action learning model rather than his therapeutic model.

The storyTelling established that Tom did not abide by the group norms, didn't demonstrate commitment, had a different level of needs than the group was willing to meet, and operated in a different model e.g., therapeutic rather than action learning. The story was at the level of the individual. Yet, since social group identity defined membership, the group level story, that of Tom being a white man was elevated. The untold story was what others in the group, particularly the white men, were making of this conversation.

Brett responded by linking the personal attributions made about Tom earlier in the conversation to the group context. He questioned whether Tom fit the group's desires for a white male.

There's a piece of Tom that was needy in a sense that he was kind of crucifying himself and looking to be injured. At that time, it was very early in my tenure in this group, I was looking for something different in terms of a white male colleague to actually learn from and wanting something more stereotypical as a white male, which I had gotten each time in terms of what that person has been so I, too, can learn about what it means to be white male. Not that he wasn't a white male, but he felt so foreign to me that it wasn't the learning I was looking for. I'm sure I could have learned things, but I wasn't all that interested, actually.

Mitchell: You said something that, I think is absolutely fabulous, that is the idea of the stereotypical white male, and I don't know that I've ever met one.

[Much loud laughter]

Brett: Well, when you get to a personal level

The story of Tom was alternating from Tom as a person to Tom as a representative of his group, creating a strange loop (see Diagram 5-12). In the literature

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about inter-group relations, often the out-group member is seen as representative of the group when they do something that fits the stereotype of that group, and as an exception

Diagram 5-12: Tom as an individual; Tom as a white man

Tom is a white man   *Real* white men are not emotional and needy

We are a group that confronts stereotypes

Tom is emotional.   Tom did not fit the norms of the group
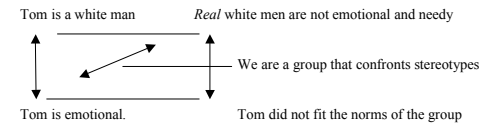
to the rule, when they behave in a way that does not fit the stereotype. As stereotypes tend to be negative, the exception to the rule is typically seen as more socially acceptable. For example, given the stereotype that African Americans are lazy, one who is industrious would be seen as an exception to the rule. Given that the stereotype is that women are emotional, one who keeps her logic when in a crisis would be seen as an exception to the rule. In this instance, Tom was seen in ways that made him an exception to the rule. The discursive process in this group was paradoxical in that the social group identity that a person represented dominated the expectations for his or her behavior.

The turns of the conversation then moved from the individual, personal and group contexts to the group and cultural levels of meaning.

Mitchell: I relate with George W. Bush...because coming from a black male perspective I see him as the enemy, but yet, with all of the work I've done ...I've worked with tons of white males CEO's, and what I get most is the white male as imposter, who is scared to death that they're going to be found out that they don't know what the fuck they're doing. When often they do know something, so if we can begin to explore this idea of the stereotypical ideal it would help me understand why when I deal with white males what I get most is fear, which isn't your stereotypical white male who is all-powerful, all knowing.

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Flora: You know what comes to mind around traditional males, white males in particular, whether it be an organization or other social settings is this real need to be taken care of and as a black woman that just really gets my gourd up. It's like you got all the fucking power and you still want somebody to take care of your ass. That just burns the shit out of me.

> The energy was very high in the group with people overlapping in conversation. Flora was elevating the intergroup story and her story of self.

> Marilyn questioned whether the group held a different standard for white men than for the other identity groups.

Marilyn: One of the things I want us to pay attention to is the direction in which we're taking, which is a little bit different than the direction we began talking about, boundaries as a group. And I'm not suggesting we don't go there, but do we go there on the context of, I mean you say… you're talking about the stereotypical white male. I mean… when we were putting this group together or having this group exist did we have a model of how it is that each category of person should show up in the chair? Did we have a model black female, white male, black male, and white female or did we only have a model with the white male and then if that's the case, we got some other stuff to talk about. [Laughter].

The conversation continued by talking about who had come and gone in the group. People recalled that the only consistent members had been the black men and women and the Jewish woman. They talked about white men who had come and gone.

Flora: What I was thinking about was maybe that the very nature of our group does not allow white men to wear the cloak and the mask around pretending that they know, because we make them disrobe and be who we really are and call you on the kinds of behavior that don't allow you to really hide.

Mitchell: Well, we ask them to.

Flora: Right, and then they exit.

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Mitchell: Right, then they say I don't want to be here. It's not safe enough.

The languag'ing of the relationships here was *we* the group and *they* the white men. I pointed out that there were two white men in the group. My comment was followed by a long pause.

The turns in the conversation showed many conflicting meanings, incoherencies and mysteries. There was the story about Tom who had needs from the group that did not fit with what the group offered. There was the story about white men, as a group, who hide their vulnerabilities and their fear about being "found out". Yet, Tom was *too* vulnerable. There was an expectation for white men in the group to conform to a cultural image. Yet, there was no parallel description for other categories of group membership. The conversation was about white men without involving the white men in the group.

After the long pause, the conversation moved to whether any two people in the group could be the voice for their group. This question marked the transition to the Jeff story.

Episode 5, Part 3: What is a White Gay Man? Jeff's Story

Jeff broke the silence with a very personal query. He reflected, out loud, whether he was hiding being white behind being gay. What came before this question and what came after influenced the meaning of this episode. Jeff spoke just after I called attention to the white men in the group. His was the first mention of "gayness", since Mitchell introduced it at the beginning of this episode ("being curious about gay folks, that is one thing. But it is different if you are curious about a white man."). Flora just made a connection between the nature of the group and the capacity for white men to "disrobe" or take off the mask. Jeff's response was a motion to take off his mask.

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Jeff: You know it was interesting Mitchell. When you were talking about, when you asked what are we hiding and what might we be hiding and I was thinking am I hiding being white... hiding behind being gay? I am clear. But what really came to me is... I think in some ways I hide…what it is to be gay, I'm really emotional about it, the amount of discrimination that I feel, on a fucking daily basis, especially now as a parent….

Marilyn: And that's part of the piece that I was talking about, Jeff, when I mentioned earlier that.... you made a comment, or one of the two of you made a comment about getting that perspective. That's the perspective that I don't sense that I've gotten with you being in the group. And I haven't pressed for it because I didn't want you to be the spokesperson, and, that being part of my issue being a black woman and being the spokesperson, tell us how black women think or tell us how blacks think.

Flora: Or why do black people do so and so…

Mitchell: I also, while acknowledging your gayness; I want to know what it's like for you to be a white man.

Jeff's comment was a personal reflection about being gay. His self-disclosure follows the description of white men as hiding behind a cloak. To the contrary, Jeff is making a move to come out of hiding. Further, his disclosure about how he has been feeling, particularly since becoming a parent, was an invitation and perhaps an expressed desire to share his sense of vulnerability with the group. Marilyn's response to Jeff's invitation was to reflect on why she had not asked him what it was like to be gay. Neither she nor others acknowledged or explored what Jeff did share.

Mitchell turned the conversation back to the privileged part of Jeff's identity, as a white man. Again, the cultural story of white men having privilege in the culture overshadowed the story Jeff was sharing about being vulnerable. The story that was

privileged *about* Jeff was being defined *for* Jeff. The unknown story was the extent to which this paralleled the Tom story.

The dominant discursive process of the group, *uncovering the power relations in our culture as enacted in social group identity* conflicted with the complexity that is created by considering multiple sources of one's identity (Gergen, 1991). As any one person has multiple group affiliations, any may be at once, dominant, subordinated or oppressed in the culture, in this case, gay and white male. The discursive process favored the telling and the hearing of one story over another.

The LUUUT model helped to illuminate some of the different stories that were living in this episode:

- *Story Lived*: Social group identities are clear and defined. The position of power of particular social identity group is established by the culture.
- *StoryTelling*: As a gay white man I feel the pain of being gay. Is that preventing me from seeing my privilege of being a white man? I don't feel like one of them.
- *Story Told*: What it is like to be gay.
- *Story Unheard*: It is painful to be gay. I don't feel the privilege of being a white man.
- *Story Untold*: What is it like to be a white man in this group?
- *Story Unknown*: Who determines the identity of another? What are people learning in relationship to each other?

As the conversation continued, Jeff addressed the complexity of defining one's identity. Who one is, is a co-construction of both how one sees oneself and how others see you. Yet, with some identities, particularly those that are visibly identifiable, one's construction by another dominates the story. Mitchell illustrated this with his example of how personal values and experience intersect with those of the culture. Regardless of

one's own story, the story told by the discourse of the dominant culture will prevail. In telling this story, he turned the conversation back to the dominant discourse of the group and the group task: identifying enactments of culturally defined power relationships, *isms* and own one's privilege.

Jeff: It's complicated because there's an experience and then I am a white man, obviously, and it's just, I can't explain it. It's complicated because in some respects gender is kind of an issue. I'm confused about my gender, I mean growing up with seven women, having seven women raise me with no man in the house, I sometimes really question, what's my thought process here. In some ways, I feel I have more of a female thought process, and yet I know externally that, the world sees me as a white man, so there's an incongruence.

Mitchell: And you touched an important issue that makes the issue very complicated. In my own personal experiences as a black boy…with females being dominant in my world… there is still this socialization that I got that says that men are better then women that causes tremendous dissonance and it doesn't work…for me to deny my sexist part even though I was raised in a female dominated world. But the larger world was not…there are all of the subcultures that we were raised in plus our own families… but that doesn't change what the dominant culture is. So, if you really want to begin to look at that, I have had black women challenge me around that, but… if you push it hard enough… maybe … I would push you a long way before I would be willing to accept that there is not discrimination.

Jeff: Oh… You don't have to push me to admit that.

Mitchell: Sexism too?

Jeff: Sure.

Mitchell: Well if you have sexism and racism… you have a white male!

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Mitchell framed the storyTelling. Privileged identity was elevated over the oppressed identity. Jeff acquiesced to Mitchell's version of his story. These turns in the conversations demonstrates how one is a co-construction of how one sees oneself and how others see one. Yet, with some aspects of identity such as race and gender, one's construction by another dominates the story. Regardless of one's own story, the story told by the discourse of the dominant culture prevails. In this group, the discursive practice is to elevate privileged identity over oppressed identity. Jeff's story was not explored further. By pursuing Mitchell's version of Jeff's story, an opportunity for broadening the relationship, and deepening the complexity of identity stories was lost.

The energy of the group shifted in this exchange. Jeff said he was getting lost, but was willing to explore his confusion. I delved further into this with the group.

Ilene: I felt the energy shift when we were talking about the currency to be in this group and what is it that sustains membership...

Mitchell: It does have to do with what it means to be a member of this group. And what we are doing is using our process to get at that. For me, we have reaffirmed that we are here to look at these issues of diversity and that we are here to challenge ourselves around this stuff. That we show up in behavior… because the truth is that is how anyone shows up. And you have pushed us to look at our behavior and I guess…The question is who are we really about, are we still willing to go there and given the time we have been together it's about going deeper. We got to hear the question… Are we willing to go for whatever is next… or is this a vacation from personal growth… So I appreciate the process

Robin: And I still have that we're very resistant.

Mitchell: Without a doubt…

Mitchell's statement conveyed the implicative force for the group: that the purpose of the group is to challenge each other. The challenge was a style of engaging

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with each other. They sought to *uncover* how members enacted embedded social inequalities. Mitchell had a strong influence over keeping the group on track.

In the next turn of the conversation, Brett explored the question of who is privileged to define another. The conversation moved to who sets the standard for *how* someone does his or her work in the group. I punctuated this conversation in the next episode.

Episode 6: What It Means to Do the Work of the Group: Who names it; Where Does it Happen.

The shift from one episode to another is an arbitrary punctuation for the purpose of analysis. Here, I identified Brett's comment as a segue from the content of who gets to name or identify another's group to who judges or names the standards for how people "do the work of the group". Brett opened with an inquiry to Mitchell:

Brett: I still have a question coming up for me… Mitchell when you were dealing with Jeff "do you see your white-maleness… what is your experience of that..." "Well... that's not quite how I identify myself but I know that people identify me that way" and trying to get a handle on that and my perspective is this is how you see Jeff. When I was doing the exchange with Robin, around this is how I see Robin, but when Ronald says "I just see you as another white person", what is different about that, that had it's ascribed as… well you get to name anything white man. But for you as a white male in the group... Well yeah, you are a white man.

Mitchell: And, we don't push that as hard as we might do some of the rest of us… Well Robin says. I don't do my work here and the rest of us just accept that. And we kind of accept that, and I've often thought of that as semi-bullshit, you know. The rest of us do our work here, but you won't but we never called her.

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Brett acted with both deference and challenge when he asked Mitchell to distinguish the time he told Robin how he saw her as a Jewish woman, from the time when Ronald said to Robin that he saw her as just another white woman. He wanted to understand why it was acceptable for Ronald to have an opinion and not him. Why it was acceptable for Mitchell to define Jeff as a white male when Jeff defines himself as a gay man. Again, the question was: who has the privilege of naming another's group identity and under what circumstances. In the literature on intergroup relations, it is the dominant culture that defines the subordinate one. (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)

This time, the conversation went beyond the content of who defines whose identity. Marilyn responded with a story about a time that she gave Robin some feedback. That example surfaced as a moment in the research. Marilyn felt criticized by that. Robin clarified that it was a positive, a catalyst. Mitchell's response was to value the challenging voices over the voices that privileged one to define one self.

Mitchell: And, we don't push that as hard as we might do some of the rest of us… Robin says. I don't do my work here and the rest of us just accept that. And I've often thought of that as semi-bullshit, you know. The rest of us do our work here, but we never called her on it.

He amplified the content of the encounter Robin described rather than the forms of relating that Brett questioned. This shifted the conversation to what it meant to do *the work of the group*.

Marilyn: For the group? The group didn't sound like they were missing a damn thing until I said something. I felt like… I didn't sense that the group was missing anything.

Mitchell: and you are a member of the group. You were missing something... and you found a way to make it okay for yourself but there was still a hole in your group. We're kind of putting out holes in the group.

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Robin: Ok, I'm just not aware of it. So if we didn't finish something, then...

Marilyn: Do you mean you and I?

Robin: If that is what you're saying, Mitchell...?

Marilyn: Well he can't say that for you and I, only you and I can say that for you and I and for me, and I sense from you, the work, it's been finished. I'm just saying the process of getting there to this point of finishing wasn't didn't happen all in that room, the day that we had that conversation but it's happened over time and other spaces outside of that room and that's what Mitchell's speaking to.

Marilyn's response turns Mitchell's comment from a voice of authority to a perspective of another group member. Just as Flora pointed out that Brett and Steve did not have the authority to define Robin, Marilyn was punctuating the work as being her relationship with Robin. Mitchell was punctuating the work as being in the relationship of the group. There were multiple levels of context and meaning making that were happening simultaneously: the story of group identities, the story of who defines how someone works and yet another, who defines the rules for defining.

The conversation wove the questions that were being made and addressed by the group in their process of reflecting: what is the purpose of the group, who defines whom, and who defines the rules for defining. I connected this conversation with the question Brett raised at the segue of this episode.

Ilene: I want to go back even a step further... Brett you were asking about Mitchell being able to say to Jeff, and pushing around an identity that Mitchell gave to him and is that seen or was it seen different from when you were doing the same thing with Robin, is that what you were saying?

Brett: Yes. Who defines whom? Can only I define me? Do others define me?

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Ilene: And you felt that you were judged differently when you did that with Robin.

Brett: Yes, there is an arrogance that I think is ascribed to white men having an opinion or perspective on things... and that being arrogance. I took that from black males and if you are a white male... it is obvious... And it was okay in the group... of course Jeff is a white man so what if it didn't quite hold himself that way and so I said, isn't that interesting... I hold him that way too, but I don't' hear the push back around it, so I was just wondering about, I'm wondering if there is... was it the way it was done? I was looking for a little feedback on what was different about that moment and I can't remember all of the particulars of you Robin, but I had that it was not okay for me to have a perspective about you.

Mitchell: That's what triggered it. There is a lot of shit that we let Robin get away with ...

Ilene: There's a question about feedback for you especially about how you did it with Robin. I also hear you asking a question, is there a different rule that applies?

Brett: The white male thing as well as a personal thing.

This was Brett's second attempt to raise the question, *who is privileged to name the group identity of another*. Mitchell, again, made identity something that is defined in a particular way and that if one is not accepting that definition for oneself, it is the work of the group to define it *for* that person.

Once again, the conversation in the group was moving back and forth between privileging personal, individual identity, and the patterns of inter-group engagement. My comment moved the group back to Brett's question that elevated the inter-group relationships. Marilyn and Mitchell moved it back to the personal level and a story about Robin. Robin responded, in concert with the group's discursive process, with the statement that she reflects both within and outside the group.

Robin: I experience myself as getting it later not figuring out how it fits until later until I have done some reflection on it.

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Mitchell: That's exactly what I am saying… that you cannot do your reflection in the group and you need to do it later. And everyone else seems to be willing to do his or her reflection here. Certainly not perfectly.

Marilyn: I don't get that… I get it that I do some reflection here and I do some reflection later. That it doesn't necessarily all happen here… but I get the key in doing it in the two spaces is to bring the closure back to this space...There is some of it that happens here. There is something for me that is very real about having something happen here... sitting with going down to the gut level, here in the moment when something's thrown at you and seeing what comes up too. … I do some of it here and I do some of it over there. So...it was that question. Do you do some of it here, can you be with some of it in the moment and really be with the vulnerability of being in the moment of the question as well as far and away in your private shower or car ride and bringing it back. Because for me, one is more cerebral and one is more gut wrenching.

Robin: What happens for me in the group is that when I feel the visceral response I feel like that is really worth paying attention to. When somebody gets somewhere really deep, that I don't want to trivialize that and come back with something that is not… that is surfacey that hasn't really let it in. So in the group. you get to define your experience of me certainly, that's yours. But your judgment about how I do myself in the group is a choice that all of us make and I have chosen many times to put myself way out there and I choose at times not to and I see everyone of us choosing the same thing...

This conversation was about how people do their reflection with the group. On one level, the group is discussing what its standards are for doing the *real work of the group*. On another level, they are talking about the process of emotional engagement, and learning. The level that is pertinent to this research is, what enables people to engage across differences in such a way that they can learn the story of the other, and hold it lightly with their own, such that both have a new perspective.

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Summary

In this chapter, episodes punctuated from the group interviews were analyzed using tools from the CMM model. The styles of the two groups were very different as was reflected in the episodic analysis. In the MWD group, the episodic analysis focused on a discrete story told of a shared group encounter. Other episodes were punctuated from the conversations that emerged. The episodes for the analysis from the GAR group were punctuated primarily from the emergent discussion of the first group meeting. Despite the different approaches, discursive processes were identified that enabled as well as inhibited dialogic moments that were transformative. These episodes formed the basis of the discussion of the findings in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 6
KEY FINDINGS

Dialogue relies on the capacity of being surprised, of finding yourself open to change, and perhaps finding yourself persuaded, even in public, of that with which you've never agreed before. The power of recognizing otherness relies on granting to different positions the full depth and nuance of genuine personal experience that each of us assumes for ourselves. p.223

Dialogue is not a distant hope, but an immediate-if fleeting-potential in all relations…Dialogue is possible, but it is hard-won in the moment, actually achieved in moments of surprise made possible by open listening and contingent speaking. It does not spark just anywhere, but where the soil of communication has been cleared and cultivated, without guarantees, for it.

Introduction

In the last chapter six episodes selected from the transcripts of the group meetings were described and analyzed. In this chapter, I build on the interpretations and implications of the analysis made in the group cooperative inquiry. I discuss how these findings contribute both to the literature on dialogue and dialogic moments, and to the practice of engaging seemingly inconsonant social groups.

The *Transforming Stories Model* (Figure 3) graphically represents the key findings of this study.   This model provides a dynamic depiction of the conditions and discursive processes that can transform our social worlds, as our social worlds transform our identities and our stories.

Overview of Findings

There is a saying: *a picture is worth a thousand words*. The use of the term dialogic moment provided a frame for a story to be told. The stories became linguistic snapshots. Stories told, like pictures, take what might have been fleeting moments, and canonize them, enabling them to be held, explored, and interpreted.

There were five key findings:

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Finding One: Reflection is a catalyst for storying and restoring dialogic moments.

Finding Two: Storytelling shifts the person position of participants, transforming the process of relating.

Finding Three: Dialogic moments are produced in waves of resonance and dissonance, in understanding and in not understanding.

Finding Four: There are meta-rules for engagement that groups follow to maintain resonance. These rules help to both inhibit and promote transformative learning.

Finding Five: The relational and communication perspective adds a new perspective to empathy, social identity and transformative learning.

In the following sections, I elaborate on these findings and posit implications for research and practice.

Finding One
Reflection was a Catalyst for Storying and Restoring Dialogic Moments

The only way that we can know something is by naming it after the fact
(V. Cronen, 1995).

Martin Buber describes dialogic moments as fleeting, as disappearing in the moment of their appearance, and as nonverbal (Buber, 1959; Kenneth N. Cissna & Anderson, 2002). How often does one have a moment that seems so magical, certain it is one they will never forget? Without reflection, some moments that seem significant at the time, might slip away in the flow of living. Further, if dialogue occurs in moments, how can we be receptive to their potential? The research demonstrated that meaning making and sustained learning that is potentially transformative are fostered through intentional reflection on dialogic moments.

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Dialogic moments were not only recalled in the reflection process, they also emerged. Storytelling as a prompt to group reflecting enabled people to *disengage* with what might have been their own emotionally charged story. At the same time, storytelling was a catalyst for the listener to *engage* emotionally in a discovery through the story of another.

When I asked people to tell me about a dialogic moment in the first individual interview, their first response was: "I don't think there has been one". Within seconds, they began to tell me a story. The very invitation to reflect on dialogic moments called forth a dialogic moment. A dialogic moment was not experienced as such until I asked the question. The question I asked, as well as the context in which it was asked, provided the logical force to construct, both individually and collectively, the dialogic moment.

The form of the question posed in the appreciative collaborative inquiry, e.g., asking for a particularly memorable time and what made it so, invited the respondent to formulate a story of something that happened in the past. This form of question stands in contrast to the kind of question that would elicit pre-formed information, such as "When did the group start?"

CMM assumes that meaning takes the form of stories. The stories we tell are fateful in guiding and directing how we feel and act. They define intentions and motivations. The beginning and end, or the punctuation of stories told is key to the formulation of shared meaning. This was evident in the stories of each of the episodes described in Chapter 5.

The inquiry asked for storytelling. What stories were told and how they were punctuated created a narrative. Bruner talks about how the light from the narrative of the past alters the meaning of the present, just as the meaning of the past is altered in the light of the present (1990). The process of reflection loosened otherwise reified meanings.

Stories told were revisited and reconsidered upon reflection. This was evident for stories told from the group's experience as well as stories told in the group *about* other experiences. Reima reconsidered her co-worker's responses on September 11, 2001. Fanny reconsidered the experiences of Muslims in the United States after that tragic day. Linda and Cindy gained a new perspective on how stories they brought to the group influenced how they responded to each other and, together, created a story with each other.

Gergen suggests that if the meaning of our words relies on their placement within forms of human interaction, then we cannot know the repercussions of what we do (1994). The more diverse the cultural stories we bring, the more likely it is that our stories will have different punctuations, beginning and ending in different places. Reflection invites the articulation of those differences, and expanded meaning making.

Reflective inquiry both creates and determines forms of knowledge available to persons in conversation (Shotter, 2003). In the current study, the process of the inquiry, both individual and group, provided the context for relational knowledge (Park 1999, Richards, 2000). The invitation to discovery released the relationships from instrumental knowledge, reporting information or finding a correct answer that exists out there, and turned the focus to the in-between; the relationship(Josselson, 1996). Sandy from the MWD group described this in the second group interview as the group was exploring who and how they were:

> Some of the questions I can get out of a book…some of the basic structure of traditions…But a book doesn't tell me very much about what it means to move in the world inside the potentials of that tradition; the joys of those traditions, how you bump up against things in the world, because that is a part of your identity…

Park (1999) describes relational knowledge as a sense of knowing and acceptance, and affection for another, along with respect and caring. "In its most sublime form,

relational knowledge expresses itself as love, in which people become one with each other in a union, which transcends and transforms the individuals involved" (Park, 2000). The shared experience of reflecting in the inquiry nourished relational knowledge. Relational knowledge was the fertilizer for and was fertilized by dialogic moments: an I-Thou relationship.

In addition to sharing stories and restorying, participants reflected at a meta-level on what their stories told about their process, their purpose, what they were doing and what they wanted to do more and differently. In so doing, they were creating their purpose, what they were doing and what they wanted to do more and differently. This process of reflection wove through the recursive process of the subsequent group and individual interviews with different consequences for each group.

Finding Two
Storytelling Shifted the Person Position of Participants, Transforming Their Process

The invitation to reflect in relationship, first individually with me, and then with the whole group, shifted the participants from *being* their experience to *being in relationship with* their experience. People were third person to the story they were telling as a group, and first person in the process of telling and reflecting.

The iterative process of being in relationship and reflecting in relating was, in effect, exercising a muscle for systems eloquence, for doing and being. Shotter (1984) described what different positions in conversations such as first person (speaker), second person (respondent), third person (onlooker), do for people in conversations. Each of these positions has different rights and obligations associated with them. Further, Dewey (1916/66) noted the way in which Western culture created a duality of thought and action, giving a privileged place to thought, the third person objective position. The

opportunity for reflection, one on one, and then in the group space, enabled the first *and* third person perspectives.

The shared experience of holding the first and third person perspectives, side-by-side in the process of the group's relating makes it transparent that the stories we live do not *happen to us*; nor are they events that we use our minds to understand. Rather we are continually making stories together in the process of relating. We enter into patterns of activity and create shared meaning based on our embodied actions in coordination with each other, and with intention, we can create new ones.

Finding Three
Dialogic Moments Are Produced in Waves Of Resonance and Dissonance, Understanding and Not Understanding

> I take the stories from the groups with me as I go about my work, as I read the news, as I interact in the world. It is something about the quality of the connections we make, the relationships we make in dialogue…(Anne; personal conversation)

Martin Buber describes dialogic moments as fleeting, as disappearing in the moment of their appearance, and as nonverbal (Buber, 1959; Kenneth N. Cissna & Anderson, 2002). The recursive and reflective process of interviewing and reflection expanded the frame of a dialogic moment from fleeting to pulsating. The stories told in the individual and group interviews were of moments of resonance for some and dissonance for others. The opportunity for shared storytelling from different perspectives formed more of a pulsating wave with moments of harmonic resonance of new meaning that, in turn, deepened meaning for what happened next.

The reflection also provoked stories of dissonance or moments when there was a sense of incompletion, or confusion. Just as a musical piece left with an incomplete chord leaves one with a need to find the resolving note, moments of dissonance leave people

with a need to resolve, to create closure to a story. In the absence of closure, people will find a way to create it. In the reflection, people were able to return to those moments as if the past was present. Moments of potential coordination of meaning between and among participants that may have been lost, became dialogic moments in the turns and processes of the collective reflection.

The dialogic field of multiple narratives fostered coordination of meaning. Bakhtin refers to the enabling of the dialogic relationship in the joining of the inner dialogue of one, of polyphony, with another, in an utterance [Bakhtin, 1973 #680; Hermans, 2001 #679]. As Anne suggested, the stories of the other become part of one's own narrative that in turn reproduces in future utterances.

Moments of dissonance were *pregnant* with dialogic moments yet to be birthed, hampered by *conversational dissonance*. Conversational dissonance is a play on cognitive dissonance theory, which describes what people do when they experience incompatible beliefs and actions. When people experience an incompatibility of beliefs and actions, they will take actions to mitigate a discrepancy. Conversational dissonance shifts the locus of activity from what people do in their minds, to what they do in action, as seen in what shows up in the turns of conversations. People who experienced an incompatible turn in the conversation, a response to an interlocutor that did not make sense to them, were in conversational dissonance. In those moments they moved out of relationship, to an inner dialogue, in an attempt to find the resolving chord.

The recursive reflective process both enabled and created the coordinating of meaning. Initially, conversational dissonance showed up as stories that seemed to be distinct. Yet, the iterative process of reflection revealed connections between and among them. There was a point at which one story took a turn toward collective meaning, and exploded into a dialogic moment bringing together the sounds of the seemingly disparate

stories. This was what systems theorists would call a bifurcation point,(Dubinskas, 1994; Laszlo, 1996) or a *tipping point (Gladwell, 2002)*. A tipping point was made when an episode was vibrant with different stories on the daisy model that burst into a bouquet of meaning.

Episode 3 of the last chapter was a clear example of seemingly distinct stories exploding with meaning when woven together. This episode began with Linda's story of an unpleasant encounter with Reima. Linda, in the first interview, told a story about her struggle to understand her relationship with her Muslim mother-in-law. She asked a Reima a question and felt shunned by Reima's response. This story was listed as a potential moment to explore in the first group interview. In Chapter 3, I focused on the different levels of meaning. In this chapter, I take a step back and describe the overall seeding and growing of a dialogic moment. Diagram 6-1 illustrates the conversations in the initial speech act.

Diagram 6-1: Linda's Query
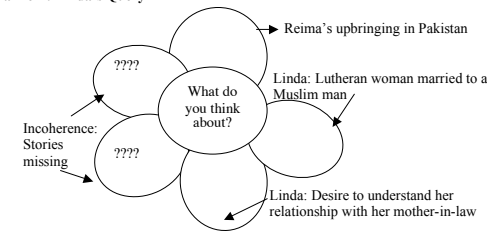
In the second individual meeting, Linda brought this story up again. This time she introduced it in a very different way:

They didn't seem to be catching the fact that I was moving towards more personal explanation of what's happening in my life… and I wasn't sure whether that was because of how I had approached the topic. See because there were two things happening in that time, one was that I was trying not to be judgmental of the Jewish tradition, I was disappointed at what they had said about their tradition and I wanted to be accepting of what they had shared with me at the session before and in my attempt to do that I was wondering if I offended them.

 As Linda continued, I realized there was more to the story.

Ok… this moment happened it was the second meeting that I was facilitating. The meeting before that I had facilitated we were talking about what makes our faith, what our religions had in common. I was supposed to focus on why do we stay in our traditions. I was surprised by the women of the Jewish faith whose response was 'obligation'. I felt surprised by that and then one of the Jewish women at that meeting had brought up that she couldn't separate her being Jewish with supporting Israel.

There was this movement back and forth for Linda of seeking to understand

others, yet being limited in doing so by her own frame of reference. First there was the

attempt to connect with Reima. Then it was the around the Jewish sense of obligation,

and the relationship Jews have with Israel.

Linda: In the meeting when all the women said *obligation* I was feeling like... there's a strong, let me really think about this strong lobbying effort to support Israel, and frankly I don't really agree with that and that disturbs me and yet I really like these women and I…[didn't] think it appropriate to go there with them at this point.

Ilene: So, it disturbs you that they're supporting Israel at this point. I want to make sure I understand.

Linda: Yes, because I think there's a very strong lobbying effort and I think that there's maybe not as strong counter lobbying effort... maybe there is with the Quakers… I was feeling disturbed about what was going on in Israel right now and that I never really paid attention to it and maybe I need to pay attention to it.

So when the women said obligation, as being Jewish, I had to really think about that because in my faith journey, I think that my obligation is to peacefulness and to spiritual growth and what I was hearing the Jewish women saying was that it was more important to remain Jewish and support our Jewishness and that the spiritual part is negotiable. So, when I had to go from one meeting to facilitating the next meeting and feeling already uncomfortable about what the Jewish women were saying, I started reading, I started finding some text about Judaism and the spiritual part of Judaism. I found a way to work through that issue, in my mind at

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this point was put Israel to the side, let me work on researching on how I feel about Israel on my own self and … just focus on well, what are the positives of Jewish.

One of the things I found was this idea of obligation, what we talked about in the next meeting was the idea of that in Judaism you cannot ever not be Jewish. You cannot be abandoned in your Judaism…once you're Jewish, you're Jewish, that's it. I said well, that's really great, I mean, that's when I brought into it, well you don't have that in Christianity and I guess that would give you some sense of security and comfort in knowing that you always belong… then in verbalizing some of this in the meeting, I was wondering if I offended some of the Jewish participants… I don't know that I said that I had felt negative about this word obligation… I might have said that, I might have said I didn't feel comfortable with it. Then I put on the line how difficult it is to have family separated all over the world *and* of different faiths *and* of different traditions, different cultures and how difficult that is and that in some ways my life has been scattered because of that. In that I asked Reima something…

This issue was so complex for Linda, particularly because it brought together so

many different levels at once. She took her role as facilitator very seriously. At the same

time, she was wrestling with many personal feelings about how to make sense of the

Jewish people in the room who were talking about their commitment to Israel. Diagram

6-2 puts the episode in the center of the daisy model.

And I brought together this idea of obligation into my life where I come from … people in my family have left where they were from. My mother left Germany… she left her whole family there… My husband left Turkey…. He left his whole family there. I asked Reima in that meeting what might that mean. I don't know if I worded it as being my own personal life. I worded the question as a generic question. But her response was, well if someone leaves their faith, then they really don't care about their family.   So that is very hard for me plus it was hard ... and I felt like I may have offended ...the Jewish women that were there because. I tried to put my arms around this idea of obligation, and maybe in doing that I did something wrong.

Diagram 6-2: Emergent dialogic moment: Linda and Sandy

The complexity of this example of pulsating dialogic moment illuminates the complexity of relating in groups that are wrestling with deeply embedded historic and current differences. The multiple levels of stories, one's personal stories, (e.g. what my family was like and what I wish it has been), one's group stories, (e.g., Christians believe this, Jews believe that), one's story of the norms of relating in the particular context, (e.g., we do not offend, we are polite), one's hopes and desires, (e.g., for peace, for belonging) are just some of the swirls of complex relating. Add to that complexity, different punctuations of the story and different deontic logic, and the situation is challenging to say the least.

This example began with Linda's story about her exchange with Reima and feeling cut off. The thread of the story weaves through Linda's desire to understand, first her mother-in-law and Muslim culture, then Jews. She tries to make sense of this in relationship to her own experience and traditions.

Others were part of this story as well. As I shared this emergent web in an individual interview with Sandy, she asked herself, out loud, why she did not comment. "I would usually intervene with something like that". Reflecting back, she remembered an exchange that was consequential in what she called her *silencing herself* in the group. Someone asked a question. As one of the Christian participants began to respond, Linda asked the Christians not to talk so much; she said she wanted to hear from the others. Sandy is a minister who, in that role, adheres to an implicit rule that she is supposed to listen and facilitate rather than share or respond as a member of a group. Although she had

herself out of role in this group, Linda's comment triggered her deontic logic that she *should* not talk.

Diagram 6-3 illustrates how deontic logic that Sandy was holding for herself in the group emerged in the reflection.

Diagram 6-3: Sandy's Deontic Logic and Linda's Rules
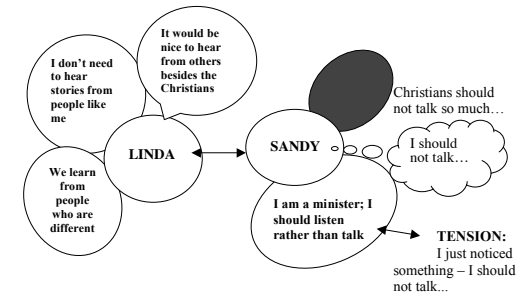
The initial story that Linda told expanded in the iterative process of individual and group reflection. This exchange between Linda and Sandy that emerged in the group was a profound moment.

Speech act theorists suggest that tacit rules of relational commitments are being made all the time. In the example of Sandy and Linda, months passed before the operative tacit rule was made explicit, yet it was being followed by Sandy and perhaps others in the group. Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1981)described the process by which meaning is mediated as intermental, which suggests something happening between minds. From the communication perspective, this process was, what Barrett might call a relational accomplishment [Barrett, 1999 #750].

The rhythm of the episode described above is similar to the emergent quality of jazz. Jeddeloh (2003) described a phenomenon, the *magic moment experience,* through the example of musicians making jazz. The notes weave around at times seeming to be a cacophony. Then, in an emergent process, the music moves. "The entire musical concept with all the harmonic changes is grasped at once making the improvisation seem similar to flowing waves and textures rather than just being a series of notes." (2003, p.) Similarly, in a dialogic moment, the flow of relating is elevated over the words spoken. Yet, it takes some "warming up" to make music. Perhaps it is in the space of expectancy, in shared meaning-seeking, that habituated patterns and sequences of notes can be suspended, yielding to the rhythm of what comes next. Dialogic moments come alive in that flow**.**

Finding Four
Meta-Rules for Engagement Help Groups Maintain Resonance

There were certain rules of discourse that fostered transformative dialogic moments and others that inhibited it. While I first intended to focus only on those that made transformative dialogic moments possible, I learned, early in the process of listening with the participants, that it was helpful to identify both.

People in conversations are operating according to a set of rules. Sometimes these are explicit. More often they are not explicit. Sometimes they are shared principles of engagement. Often they are not. When rules or principles are shared, people are more likely to feel in rhythm with each other, or, *on the same wavelength*. When the rules of engagement are different, some rules are authorized over others. The process by which that happens is outside the parameters of this study. The focus here is, what rules showed up and in what ways did they foster or inhibit transformative dialogic moments.

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The rules and processes in each of the two groups were very different. This study was not intended to be a comparative analysis. Short of comparing, the two groups, and the form of analysis tell us something about rules that foster and inhibit transformative dialogic moments.

Rules of Engagement in the MWD group

The rules of the MWD group began to emerge during my initial individual interviews. In response to the question, *tell me about a time when*…referring to a transformative dialogic moment, many of the women responded, *I don't think it has happened yet.* That response was an opening. I continued to listen and probe their experience in the group.

The MWD group follows a clear set of rules. The group meets monthly for 2 hours. People rotate responsibility to facilitate the group. The facilitator is responsible for convening the group, posting questions and readings in advance by e-mail, as well as providing refreshments. I had the opportunity to sit in on a couple of group meetings before conducting the inquiry. I could not help but notice how constrained and formal the conversations were.

> Linda: (first follow-up interview) My gut reaction was culturally the group comes from (geographic area), and they are a group of women that have been taught to be very polite and so you know feeling like I live a little bit off (geographic area), I'm not sure the people right here in (other geographic area) are quite as polite. That was my first reaction of the group way back when I first joined; I thought it was a little formal. Now, I'm also just thinking that maybe it just means so much to people that they don't want to offend anybody.

The guidelines for what constituted the appropriate tenor, ways of engaging and kinds of questions were constituted in how people talked and engaged with one another. While the rules were not explicit, the principles were addressed in many of my individual conversations. They referred to principles as *polite* and *nicey-nice* and spoke about

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avoiding political conversations. Martha was one who addressed these norms and their

consequences for the group

> Sometimes I think we're so careful about being respectful that we don't say what
> we're thinking when things happen. That's not being honest.

Ilene: It's not fully engaging, or engaging as fully as you can?

Martha: What it's saying is "I accept you" but not making the effort to find out
who you are.

I shared the theme of *polite* and *nicey-nice* in the first group interview:

> Polite came up a lot… It came up in connection with the way we are talking

about the different faiths here where everything seems nice, as somebody said nicey-nice.

> Martha: So that is a kind of non-moment

Mary: It could have been the avoidance of a moment.

Geila: Just before September 11th. We had that general conference; a Christian
with a Jew a Baha'i and a Muslim. And someone... during the question and
answer period [asked] "where is the meat…everybody is talking about love and
unity but if you really want this to continue you have to talk about your
disagreements. If you talk about disagreements, you can come to some
agreement." I never forgot that question because it was a very profound question.
I truly think if this group was men and women, the course that we would have
taken would have been different. I think we are too nice, too gentle, with each
other that we don't want to bring those disagreements.

Geila's comment was an invitation to different rules. She invited the group to

look at that which they didn't understand [Gurevitch, 1989 #638]. She echoed the

sentiments made by Martha and Mary. Yet, the group had a strong commitment to how

they should engage to preserve relationships. Geila challenged the rules the group

followed as undesirably norms of women wanting to be agreeable. Implicit was her

distinction that these are characteristics of a culture of white women *in the United States*.

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A significant force would be required for the group to shift this discursive habit. Martha,

Mary and Geila's comments were mollified by Joan's response:

> Joan: I think it's possible that the reason each one of you is in this room is that
> we are all basically like-minded, open, respect each other's faith want to hear
> about each other's faith but meanwhile we are like-minded people, we are sisters,
> we are basically alike.

Subsequent turns in the conversation amplified the fears that people had about

risking certain kinds of conversations notably, those about differences. The paradox was

that talking about the concerns was a moment. People were building meaning for the

group regarding how they could stay engaged in a meaningful way, perhaps deepening

meaning, while protecting the relationships they had. For some, sustaining the

relationship required continued growth and deepening of what they made together. For

others, that path threatened the viability of the group.

> Sam: One of the fears I have is I don't want to have a political conversation. I
> don't want to hear they did this and we did that… That is why I do want to go
> deeper but I don't want to go into a he said she said

> Reima: Well that is the difference between here and there – out in the real world
> you can't get away from the politics of it… We give politics a bad name but if
> you really look at it, it's an interaction among groups of people. So it is very
> difficult to isolate it on an intellectual level and leave it there. That is what we do
> here and that is why we walk away from it and we feel like: did I really say what I
> wanted to say?

This was a turning point. People expressed their trepidation to talk about

differences. There was the sense that to preserve the relationships in the group, people

had to be careful not to offend. Certain rules of engagement were being negotiated in the

turns of the conversation. One was whether the group could go to the next level without a

facilitator to assure a safe holding environment. Another was whether they could engage

in political conversations where people might have divergent points of view. In the flow

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of conversation, the discourse was clearly not about whether or not to talk about

differences, but rather *how* to talk about them.

Ellen introduced a developmental perspective and a direction for the next stage:

I see the dynamic a little differently – I think .. We took all this time to build the trust and affection for each other and what we are talking about right now; about how nice we have been with each other is really a result of the kinds of questions we asked. Now that we are going through this process, I could imagine a different set of questions that would not be political per se but would be looking at the stereotypes we have of each other's religions…and it sounds like people do want to move and begin taking a risk.

Ellen suggested that there were certain experiences they needed to have together

to build a foundation to go to the next level. Having trust and affection provided a

foundation. She made an invitation with a cushion, by suggesting that the group had

done the homework it needed to do and was ready. Yet, the culture of the group still

carried a logical force for how people were to engage.

After the second group inquiry, Mary echoed Geila's observation of the group

operating within the implicit rules of what it meant to be a "nice woman" and of the

tension between following those rules and the desire to go deeper:

The one thing that struck me is that there seemed to be… a noticeable feeling about not wanting to offend people. And I think what that tells me, this is just guessing, but some people come into a group and their first task is to find a way to like everybody in the group. When there's a fear of offending people it may be a signal that people are starting to experience their dislike of people in the group and not knowing what to do about that…that's not an issue for me and that's an issue for a lot of people. They're struggling with that. Part of that is a real women's issue and partly it has to do with how women define themselves by relationships. They are much more socially constituted in their consciousness then men are, I believe. Part of America is to be a nice woman, you like everybody. The nice women in the group are really struggling. Then there are people who are genuinely curious about why the hell people are there if it's just an exercise of being nice. There are people who are experiencing this obstacle that they keep feeling that they come up against. They're commenting on that.

I do believe that the sharing of faith journeys is a great vehicle right now, because it's giving people more data and people need more data about each other. There

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was a lot of anonymity when stories weren't being shared and the anonymity is falling away. People might listen to somebody's faith story and say I had no idea what occurred and this is just like more reason why I know... and that's ok because it makes them anxious if they haven't processed stuff like this before and they just feel these vibes and I think that gets experienced if something's wrong with me because I don't like this person, and then you get the anxiety.

Mary's comment suggests how deeply embedded the rules of politeness and

nicey-nice are transcend multiple levels of the hierarchy of meaning. Individuals have

their own struggles to overcome their inner rules of engagement that inhibit them from

exploring, taking risks, and engaging their curiosity about another. These rules, Mary

suggests, are embedded in the acculturation of women. (Linda added on another occasion

in the group that they are even more pronounced in women from the (geographic

location). Living in the United States adds another layer of emphasis to this rule. Yet,

there are members of the group who want to go beyond. Stories, Mary intimates, are a

way of opening the door by expanding how you know another. Stories are a way of

elevating the strange, and giving permission to be with and explore the mystery of that

which we do not understand.

The mere process of talking about how they talked shifted how they talked. In so

doing, the women created a dialogic moment in the group. Following this, the style of

conversation shifted; the women found a way to start down the path of asking different

kinds of questions, challenging each other, *and* remaining respectful.

Rules of Engagement in the GAR group

When I met with the GAR group, I tried to encourage the meta-level conversation

about *how* they were having their conversation. For some reason, the meta-level

conversation did not evolve, and I felt like I would be forcing an agenda to pursue that

any further. Instead, I analyzed what did emerge from their conversation, with regard to

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the research question. The consequence for the methodology I chose was that this analysis was less cooperative and dialogic. Rather than exploring and analyzing their style of engagement together, I used transcript and the heuristics of the CMM model to identify what I saw to be the rules the group made in the turns of their conversation.

The GAR group meets quarterly for a weekend evening and full day, usually Friday night and Saturday. They begin with an informal dinner and come together with a check-in. Sometimes they have a topic, and sometimes their topic emerges from the check-in.

The level of meaning that was privileged in this group was social group identity and power relationships. The discursive norms were fuzzy in some ways and clear in others. Being playful was important, but so was being serious. Self-disclosing was important, but not in a way that appeared needy. Asking challenging questions was important but the questions seemed to have an anticipated *correct* answer.

The discursive style of the GAR group was to talk about race and gender and group process to increase self-awareness and personal growth. In the following excerpt, one of the group members, Jeff, began to share the pain he feels being gay. The flow of the conversation elevated the content of being gay and the complexity of overlapping privileged and oppressed, social group identities: white man and gay.

> You know it was interesting Mitchell. When you were talking about, when you asked what are we hiding...and I was thinking am I hiding being white? I am clear… I think in some ways... I hide what it is to be gay; I'm real emotional about it, the amount of discrimination that I feel, on a… daily basis, especially now as a parent, and I think actually I hide some of that here...

> Marilyn: And that's part of the piece that I was talking about. One of the two of you made a comment about getting that perspective. That's the perspective that I don't sense that I've gotten with you being in the group. And I haven't pressed for it because I didn't want you to be the "spokesperson", and, that being part of my issue being a black woman and being the spokesperson…

> Mitchell: I also, while acknowledging your gayness, I want to know what it's like for you to be a white man.

> Jeff: I can see how that could be a problem for you.

> Marilyn: Ok baby, inquiring minds want to know …

> Jeff: What it's like to be a white man. Is that the question?

People created the rules and the priorities of the group in their engagement with one another. One of these was that people represented their identity group. This rule was in tension with a shared belief that people are more than their group identity *and* that people are not *all* (e.g., don't speak for all) of their social identity group.

Bakhtin (1986) speaks of speech genres or ways of engaging that are shared by people of a common culture. The GAR group shared a discursive style familiar to consultants who work in organizations particularly in the area of diversity. That is, privileging the social identity group level of meaning. The social identity group level is the reference point for self and culture. This approach to discourse has played an important role in bringing voice to those who had been silenced.

Yet, it is the engagement of mystery and the privileging of *not knowing* that invites a dialogic moment. The GAR group wrestled with how they engage mystery within the individual. The focus of their conversation was about being vulnerable:

> Marilyn [to Robin]: … So my point is that there is some reflection that goes on here, for me, and there is some reflection that goes on outside of here, but you all can't possible know what goes on outside of here unless I tell you. And so I wonder if part of what is missing as far as Robin is concerned is the coming back and sharing an ahaa or that you considered, reflected about or thought about what was said and it resonated or didn't resonate for you. Can you be with some of it in the moment and really be with the vulnerability of being in the moment of the question as well as far and away in your private shower or car ride and bringing it back. Because for me, one is more cerebral and one is more gut wrenching.

> Robin: What happens for me in the group is that when I feel the visceral response I feel like that is really worth paying attention to. When somebody gets somewhere really deep, that I don't want to trivialize that and come back with

something that is not… that is surfacey that hasn't really let it in. That is what happens to me when you get to me… that I pay attention to ohhh that stuff sounds very real. I have to pay attention to that. That is not surface.

The focus of the conversation is on individual reflection within the group about one's group and another's. The "how" or attention to the process is about how group members engage in reflection, personal challenge and growth around their awareness of self, group and inter-group relations.

Discursive processes Vital to the Transformative Learning Process

When communicating dialogically, one can listen, ask direct questions, present one's ideas, argue, debate, etc. (Pearce, 1995). The defining characteristic of dialogic communication is that all of these speech acts are done in ways that hold one's own position but allow others space to hold theirs, and are profoundly open to hearing others' positions without needing to oppose or assimilate them. When communicating dialogically, participants often have important agendas and purposes, but make them inseparable from their relationship in the moment with others who have equally strong but perhaps conflicting agendas and purposes(W. B. Pearce, 2001b).

The question Pearce's comment raises is: what do we do with differences in the space of dialogue. One approach, to continue with the musical metaphor, is to move beyond the cacophony of incommensurate meanings and find a resolving note or chord. Another is to approach differences with a new way of making music. The MWD group wrestled the ramifications of addressing differences: would going deeper put relationship at risk? What forms of relating did the GAR group's grammar for engaging differences promote?

I identified five factors that enabled and constrained dialogic moments. The very factors that enabled dialogic moments were inversely, those that constrained them. The characteristics were: *continuity* in both the space of meeting and in member's commitment and motivation, *curiosity and openness* to engage and stay engaged, *emotional engagement* through storytelling, and *reflection and mutual sense making*.

While listed as discrete items, each and all of these conditions are interrelated and overlapping.

Continuity in Space of Meeting, Commitment and Motivation

The first condition that fostered a dialogic moment was the group's commitment and motivation. Participants joined the group with a common motivation: to meet people who were different from them in some defining aspect of their identity. The group provided a container or holding space. The container or space of meeting was a catalyst for an encounter between and among people who might not otherwise have met. The shared commitment and motivation in a consistent space nurtured a sense of expectancy to learn from mystery, and a stance of curiosity and openness to difference. Absent consistency, there is an untold story.[7]

One notable example of mystery was when the person representing what seemed to be the major focus of the first group's appreciative collaborative inquiry was absent for the follow-up reflection. In the first GAR group, the qualities of white men and what constituted their identity was a dominant theme. Both white men in the group were not present for the follow-up discussion.[8] Reima's story was the primary focus for the first group and she was not present for the second group. In both instances, the second group meeting created new episodes based on other strands of members' stories.

Groups, particularly volunteer groups face the challenge of uncertain attendance. In both these instances, the reasons for being absent for the second meeting made sense: family obligations, work obligations, etc. Nonetheless, the absence of the white men from the GAR group and Reima from the MWD group not only meant that their voices were missing, it also meant that the potentiality of what would have been made in relationship

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[7] This statement in part, builds on my 20 years of experience leading groups, integrated with what we are learning about relational theory.
[8] I met with this group a third time in part to reflect on this. I address this later in this section.

with them, was missing. Yet, given the description of the life of a dialogic moment, the untold stories are still alive in the process and poised to become figural.

Curiosity and Openness

The second condition of fostering a dialogic moment is a stance of curiosity and openness to the other. Judgment and certainty has to be suspended in order for people to be present to the process. These are necessary conditions for mutual learning. Group members need to be prepared to discover something new in the other, as well as for them. Inquiry, staying in the question[9], creates an invitation to the other's perspective.

Some questions, however, are taken as an opening and some are made into judgments. The grammar of the content, the conversations that group members bring to the speech act, the speech genres people bring and develop together, the discursive habits of the group all contribute to the turns of meaning.

After Reima told the story of her day at work on September 11th, some people wondered whether her perception of the situation was accurate.[10] Despite their doubts about 'the facts', follow-up questions in the group created an empathic performance[11]. Rogers describes empathy as "being sensitive moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person," "sensing the meanings of which he or she is scarcely aware," and "communicating your sensings of the person's world" while "frequently checking with the person as to the accuracy of your sensings (C. R. Rogers, 1980). The discursive style of this group was to respond to each other in such a way as to create empathy in relating. There were five sequential responses to Reima's story. Each respondent affirmed her experience, shared some compassion and inquired into what they could have done differently had they been there. While the group could not change what

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[9] Marilee Goldberg author of the <u>Art of the Question</u> elaborates on the power of inquiry.
[10] The source of this was follow-up interviews with participants.
[11] The use of the term "performance" is intended as an action rather than a contrived or insincere response.

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Reima had experienced at work that day, they were able to create a new episode, by introducing new meaning at the personal and relationship levels.

Fanny shared a story at the level of self *in relationship with* Reima.

… it [your story] made me see things from a whole different point of view that I was so wrapped up in myself I dare say that I never even looked at how you might feel about it.. how American Muslims might feel about it… Muslims anywhere in the world might feel about it…

Similarly, Elizabeth asked the question: "how would I have responded if I had been in that room at that time? And I think my head would have turned right to you and thought: 'oh my G-d, this must be hard for this friend of mine". The mere question offered support and presence in relationship. Elizabeth affirmed that this was a situation that we, as a culture, are awkward about and have difficulty knowing how to handle.

Conversely, attribution and certainty are discursive processes that constrain the emergence of a dialogic moment. In some of the individual interviews, people questioned whether Reima's version of the story was true. Yet, after the group discussed it, what they made figural was how she experienced it, rather than an accounting of some truth. Had the conversation moved to an inquiry into whether Reima's interpretations of people's behavior at work that day was accurate, the group meaning making and their relationships would have been limited to suppositions, and further meaning making would have been thwarted.

The conversations about what constitutes social identity were an example of this inhibition. In one example, in the GAR group, the question of what constituted social identity was posed in two stories and one episode in the group. One instance was a story about a group member, a white man, who had been asked to leave. The story told went through different iterations as the group sought to come to some coherency of shared meaning. The story told was that of a person, who happened to be a white man, who was

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inappropriate for the group and asked to leave. The storytelling was of a man who did not fit the group's requirements for a real white man. Meaning was sought in sequential turns and possible hypotheses that were posed. Still, after the third reflection on this story from the group's history, the meaning of what happened and how it continues to live in the group has yet to be coordinated.

Curiosity and openness are not only influenced by the narratives people bring to the group, but by cultural factors and meaning systems that group members enact. Sampson (1993) asserts that we construct dichotomies in our relationships with regard to social groupings. We polarize characteristics associated with dichotomies such as male and female, young and old, black and white etc. Whether we are supporting or contesting such polarizations, such dichotomizing constrains meaning. In this example, the logical force of social group identities in our culture resounded in the GAR group's exploration of what makes a real white man.

Curiosity and openness require us to move beyond what Schutz called "thinking as usual". Gurevitch (1989) suggests that it is the demarcation of what is familiar both in terms of what, and how, we think about things that limit our exploration. The unfamiliar is relegated to a familiar category of "the strange" or "the stranger" so that "strangeness" is reserved for someone or something that belongs (if at all) elsewhere. As such, a stranger in fact serves to demarcate, by his or her strangeness, the boundaries of the familiar and (in that sense) the real.

Our inclination is to move to what is certain. Yet, it is in the position of the strange or of not understanding that we discover meaning making structures, the assumptions that guide us. Gurevitch warns that to assume that our fellow human beings inhabit the same reality as we do characterizes the strange, negative, and thus, "must be constantly 'assumed away' by participants." (1989 p.) Curiosity and openness suspend

our meaning making structures rendering them open to continuous renewal in the turns of relating.

Emotional Engagement through Storytelling

The third factor that enabled or constrained a dialogic moment was emotional engagement. Storytelling played a key role in creating emotional engagement. A good story has a setting, characters, episodes, and some sense of resolution. (Mandler, 1984; McAdams, 1993). A good story links context and events with relationships in such as way as to create meaning and movement.

McAdams uses the term, "nuclear episodes" for subjective memories of particular times, events, and places that are elevated to define who we are. "They might be high points, low pointes, and turning points in our narrative accounts of the past." (McAdams, 1993) We choose the stories we tell to support a personal myth about who we want to be. The themes of our stories, or, as the CMM model would suggest, the pattern of what contexts we elevate to make meaning, also construct a story about what we value, and privilege.

In our every day moments, however, meaning is continuously being shaped and reshaped by what comes next. Stories are a way of satisfying our desire for resolution: from *Once upon a time* to *The end*. When I invited people to reflect back on moments, they constructed a story about an episode in the group. Each member had her own story to tell and each had her own unique way of punctuating it. The research methodology was an invitation to open the story up to new meaning as people brought together the petals of the daisy and the hierarchies of meaning in conversational turns.

Reima captured the hearts of many of the participants when she told the story of her day at work on September 11th. September 11th is by now a culturally-embedded story, or a *life-history benchmark*. (Neisser, 1983). A *life-history benchmark* is an event

that becomes embedded in the culture in such a way that it is one of "the places where we line up our lives with the course of history itself and say, 'I was there'". (Neisser, 1983). The people in the group each had their own story to tell of that day.[12] Reima's story linked with other's memories of that day as well as with their stories, personal or vicarious, of exclusion, rejection or injustice.

Connection is not merely in the sharing of the story. Connection is made by what is done with the story once it is shared. Sharon made a distinction between a comment that provided information or a conversation "as usual" and a comment that touched the heart.

> The significance of what Reima said is that it engages the heart. I guess I also learn through people's individual stories and trying to understand emotionally how people feel. For me it was deep, it was significant, it was a moment that so many people have been wrestling since 9.11: how they perceive Muslims and … how to relate to Muslims because it is so foreign… it is hard to know what to do and what is appropriate To listen to her story was so poignant
> Some questions invited a story that created a dialogic moment.

Mitchell asked a question about white men and loyalty. In response, Brett shared a story about a time when he was asked to return to work immediately after attending his mother-in-law's funeral. While he was told that it was critical that he return to work, it was, in Brett's judgment, a loyalty test: how far would he go to demonstrate loyalty when faced with a conflict between his employer's desires and family values. He chose to honor his commitment to his family, and, in the process, recognized that this was not place for him to continue his career. Brett shared how this story was a poignant example of the price that some white men (and perhaps others) pay to stay "in the club". Coined as "the loyalty test", this story lives with members of the GAR group as one that shifted how others looked at and perhaps judged, "privileged white men".

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[12] People's respective stories of their day, September 11, 2001 was the topic of a subsequent MWD,

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Anne, a Jewish woman, described coming to understand the Christian concept of grace through a story shared by Sherri, a Presbyterian minister. In that particular story, the group was guided by the question: how do you understand "grace"?

> Anne: We lead a discussion about grace. It was a word that I couldn't get. It seemed Christian. In the course of it, Sherri told a story. Her father was a minister. She got in trouble with some friends…. Trembling, one by one, each was getting crushed by their parents; having to admit what they did. When she called him [her father] he said, "Sheri, I love you and I wish I could be with you now". And that was "grace". And then I got it and it has come up a bunch of times since…just understanding "grace". It stayed with me. It didn't mean anything until she told a story.

The story, as such, became something people took with them as a new experience, a new way of seeing and knowing. The way Anne referred to how the story *stayed with her*, indicated that she embraced the story. The story of an-other is now a story of her own.

Similarly, Lori told a story about inviting neighborhood boys to her yard to play when they were new to the neighborhood. The story Lori told conveyed how her heart went out to these children who just wanted to play. She was attuned to how other people, white people in particular, might be afraid of the boys just because they were African American. Marilyn, as the mother of two African American males could imagine herself as the mother of these young boys. The emotional engagement conveyed by the story lived and the story told created a resonance, a place of emotional connection for the others in the group. The deep feelings of rage, sadness, and perhaps futility, which this story evokes for any parent or caretaker make this story very accessible and transportable.

The logic structure of a story facilitates the appropriation of another's story as if it were one's own, particularly when it resonates with one's story. Anne could connect with the experience of being a parent or "judge" that was merciful and forgiving. Brett and others could connect with a story of being judged or evaluated by standards that are

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extraneous to how one contributes to the organization. Robin could imagine being one to have judged; to dismiss another by making them strange.

Reflection and Mutual Sense Making

Reflection provided supplemental action to the stories. The reflection *in the group* provided a new episode for the group; a turn of shared social meaning. It expanded the narratives that were made by the engagement and made new ones. Each of the groups had their unique style of reflection and mutual sense making that was made by their habituated rules of engagement. The rules that both enabled and inhibited the potential of a dialogic moment were clear and consistent.

The inquiry was a catalyst for the groups to think about their norms and process. The inquiry provided the opportunity for the participants to take a third person perspective on their own experience. The factors that enabled this were the questions asked, the iterative process of reflection and the commitment to engage at a meta-level. Each group had an opportunity to see their own transcripts from one meeting to the next. Some of the participants made note not only of what they talked about, but their rules of engagement.

The process of reflecting on how one does or thinks about something is referred to as double loop learning [Argyris, 1999 #296]. Double loop learning is a process that turns a question back on itself, asking questions about how one asks questions and challenging assumptions. The questions asked and the iterative process of analysis moved the group's attention to what they were making from a meta-perspective, thus creating the potential to choose how they act with each other in the future.

In the next section social identity, empathy and transformative learning are explored from a communication perspective.

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The Relational and Communication Perspective Adds a New Perspective to Social Identity, Empathy and Transformative Learning

Things that e*xist* or are *things* from a cognitive paradigm, take on a different perspective within the social constructionist and the communication perspective. Rather than being finished entities, they are still in the process of construction. That is, they are both partially constructed and are open to further construction. This is a very different focus of attention, and consequently, conversation, than we are accustomed to having. Further, conversations create and are consequential rather than presentational.

The focus in this study was on the turns and processes of the conversations, how content was contextualized, rather than the specific content. Focusing on the process and context in this inquiry shifts the perspective on what constitutes empathy as well as social group identity to being constituted in relating. In the following discussion, I apply the communication lens to social identity groups' empathy and transformative learning.

A Communication Perspective: Multiplicity and Social Group Identity

Since participants were recruited based on their membership in groups that were exploring group level identity, they had an agreed upon pattern of discourse: to address their defined differences. One group defined these differences in terms of gender and race, specifically, African American and white, and the other, in terms of faith affiliation. While these social identities were in the foreground for the construction of the groups, people were clearly more than merely a member of one group. In both groups complexity and multiplicity of persons in conversations were limited by categorization.

Ferdman defines cultural identity at the group level as "the image shared by group members of the features that are distinctive or emblematic of the group" [Ferdman, 1990 #747]. He defines cultural identity at the individual level as one's individual image of the

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behaviors, beliefs, values and norms that characterize one's group(s), together with one's feelings about those features and one's understanding of how they are or are not reflected in oneself [Ferdman, 1990 #747].

The definition Ferdman ascribes to social identity does not assume within-group homogeneity. Yet, he references that group-level identity, both that of others and of our own is a discursive habit. People from both groups in this study generalized about characteristics of group-level identities. This is consistent with what Portes describes in his review of research on ethnicity and culture. Portes claims that most research regards ethnicity and culture as fossilized in mutually exclusive categories that one either has or does not have.

Clearly, social identity is a complex and dynamic construction. One's identity is just that: socially constructed. Identity is constructed in the dynamic flow of the overlapping space of how a culture perpetuates social narratives, the social narrative one chooses to privilege, and the narratives one encounters. For example, as you are reading this you may imagine the voice of a white woman; yet privilege the voice of doctoral student. I, on the other hand may be speaking the voice of my ethnic ancestry. My presentation of self is modified as I see myself in relationship to you as you see yourself in relationship to me. Identity is an ongoing coordination of meaning and mystery, in social relationships.

The United States is primarily an immigrant culture. As such, social group identity and differences have been a dominant part of our discourse. The conversation about differences shifted significantly during the 1960's and 1970's from one of not talking about differences and assuming equal opportunities, to elevating differences and structural inequalities. Now, more than thirty years later, diversity has become an overused term and the discourse on diversity ranges regarding whether to talk about

differences, to whether to transcend the conversation about differences and seek common ground, versus finding creative ways of engaging differences.

Gergen addresses these distinctions:

In the main, Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) are concerned with means of exploring differences in an appreciative way, while we tend to favor means of moving toward mutuality. In many situations, the former project may be a necessary antecedent to the later. Yet, while we do favor self-expression (a key to exploring differences), we have been more reticent to endorse the intensive exploration of differences. In part, this is because we believe that talk of contrasts and comparisons may often function to reify difference and distance. In this sense, our approach tends to restrict discussions of difference in favor of conjoining parties in the construction of new alternatives. (Gergen & McNamee, 2001)

People who work with differences, at the personal, group, political and global level wrestle with the very tension Gergen addresses here. While talking about differences affirms and validates people, it might also reify distance. Focusing on common desires and new alternatives might unify people, yet, with certain protracted deeply rooted differences, moving the conversation toward possibilities might be premature. Moving to a discussion of possibilities without addressing the stories people bring from the past that are very present for them, might feed the antipathy of those who want their story known. This question of balance, and how one considers the question, has serious implications for fostering dialogic moments.

The desire and commitment that the MWD had to the rule of politeness was in service of the feeling of closeness, connection and intimacy in the group. They did this sometimes by not addressing differences that might have felt threatening.

Martha: I think it's very frightening when you first realize people really are different from you. It took me aback. I think that we... do a disservice to each other if we don't face the fact that we are different.

People tend to be most aware of those defining aspects of their social identity that makes them different from the dominant narrative of the culture. Some would say that people are differently privileged to choose whether to acknowledge ways in which they

are different from the dominant culture. Some differences are not easily discernable. Others are reminded of their differences daily whether or not they so desire. Sara addressed this aspect of difference in response to Reima's story:

> I'm Jewish, and I've had conversations with friends of mine who are African American, about how I have often times been afraid and withholding about my Jewish roots or my Judaism because I know there are a lot of people who don't like Jews…it's very easy for me to hide who I am. You were describing a situation where not only could you not hide who you were but you didn't feel you should hide who you are. And with my African American friends, we joke about how I can hide who I am, …as a Jew, there have been many times... when I have not wanted to reveal myself because I'm afraid to. And then I feel angry, I'm not sure if it's totally at myself, or at just the state of the world that I should feel that kind of intimidation. So I think it gets back to that very personal experience of yours, in a very intense global moment. . It brings up that kind of conversation that I've had with people who cannot hide their identity and sometimes feeling very fortunate that I could…There is the bigger question: why should I have to?

The communication perspective toward differences suggests that differences are made in the turns of conversation and are defined by what comes before and what follows. Persona in conversation, (Harre, 1984) are at once weaving history and the present in the turns of their conversations. Social identity groups are not static; they are continuously defined, and valued, and devalued in the turns of conversation, and the turns of history. Sara can hide being Jewish now but did not have that option sixty years ago in Eastern Europe. Geila can be an Iranian Baha'i in the United States yet feels her life would be threatened if she returned to Iran.

Difference at the hierarchical level of group identity was a consistent distinction made in the GAR group. The attribution of qualities and qualifications to groups was a reference point to which individuals in the group were compared. The meanings of individuals' stories were held in relationship to whether it informed or exemplified group level identity. Stories that elevated oppression were privileged. The purpose of the group was to elevate one's awareness of one's own privilege and one's enactments of privilege.

There were many examples of people defining the qualifications of another's social identity group without considering the perspective of a member of that group who was present in the discussion. During one of the first individual interviews, a Jewish woman I interviewed told a story about being defined:

> Robin: Brett brought on a young guy who he knew from a church, but I didn't know that at the time. I heard his name and I thought oh, another Jewish person in the group. I should also tell you that it took me until a few years ago to identify as being a white person. Because that is not how I identify. I identify as an ethnic. So I was thinking oh good… this is going to be great – a Jewish guy in the group. As he started to talk, I realized that he and Brett knew each other from a Presbyterian Church. So, he started to talk about his church and how coming to know Jesus has been so wonderful in his life. He started to say he was Jewish and he was on a search for G-d and saw this church and finally found home. [She noticed that she was angry that Steve did not understand why his parents did not come to his baptism]…I realized at that moment how much I culturally identified with being Jewish. That was a defining moment for me – realizing how closely I identified even though I don't have organized ties.

> Brett and Steve came in later and said, you are not really Jewish because you don't practice the rituals and therefore how could you say you are Jewish. And I said, I wonder if Hitler came back around here if he would even care that I go to synagogue and Steve and Brett go to Church – he would still see me and Steve as Jewish. And Flora said, and how do you get to define that for her? So that was a real turning point for me in how I see myself and how I see myself in the group.

While Robin may not consider being Jewish a defining aspect to her identity, she was clear to claim her membership when she felt that identity was threatened. When two men in the group defined being Jewish primarily from the religious and ritualistic perspective, Robin expanded that frame to reflect what being Jewish was for her: culturally and historically defined.

Flora elevated the conversation to the meta-question of "who gets to define whom." Yet, the logical force of the discourse in the group was to elevate talking about group identity rather than talking about how group identity was talked about.

The theme of *who gets to define whom* continued to pulse in the GAR group in the exchange between Mitchell and Jeff about what it means to be a white man *and* be gay, and in Brett's subsequent comment. The dominant story during the first meeting of the group was that of a group member who had been asked to leave. This story elevated many contexts such as, what does it mean to be in this group; what are the rules of engagement; and what does it mean to qualify as a member of a particular social identity group, in this case, white males.

Two white men were present for the conversation that was addressing, *what is a real white man*, yet did not talk very much. In both instances when each of the white men spoke, the trope was one of inquiry and the response was a statement of certainty. In the first example Jeff enters a question of how being a white man and being gay overlap and influence one another.

> I mean it's complicated because there's an experience...I am a white man, obviously,.. It's complicated because in some respects... I'm confused about my gender, I mean growing …having seven women raise me with no man in the house, I sometimes really question like, what's my thought process here. In some ways I feel I have more of a female thought process and yet I know externally that, the world sees me as a white man, so there's an incongruence.

> Mitchell: And you touched an important issue that makes the issue very complicated. In my own personal experiences as a black boy have to do with females being dominant in my world, just as you say. AND there is still this socialization that I got that says that men are better then women that causes tremendous dissonance and it doesn't work in order for me to deny my sexist part even though I was raised in a female dominated world… but the larger world was not…there are all of the subcultures that we were raised in plus our own families… but that doesn't change what the dominant culture is so if you really want to begin to look at that … I would push you a long way before I would be willing to accept that there is not discrimination..

> Jeff: Oh you don't have to push me to admit that!

> Mitchell: Sexism too?

> Jeff: Sure.

Mitchell: Well if you have sexism and racism you have a white male!

Jeff started out with a self-reflective question addressing the complexity of being defined by multiple identities, including ones that are dominant and subordinate in our culture. Mitchell's response to Jeff supported the rules of the group: to elevate social dominance, racism and sexism. Jeff, by his response, shifted the quality of his engagement. The sense of emotional vulnerability he shared at the beginning of this episode, morphed into a more intellectual discussion. He yielded to the momentum of the group's grammar of engagement.

As Jeff shifted from self-exploration to discussion, the rules of engagement got fuzzy for Brett. In Robin's story, he had been reproved for defining her. How was what Mitchell was doing with Jeff, different?

> Brett: I still have a question… Mitchell when you were dealing with [saying to] Jeff, "do you see your white-maleness… what is your experience of that..." [and Jeff responded]"Well.. that's not quite how I identify myself but I know that people identify me that way" my perspective is, that is how you see Jeff. When I was doing the exchange with Robin, around this is how I see Robin [as not being a real Jew], but when Ron says [to Robin] "I just see you as another white person", what is different about that?

Brett posed a question about the rules the group has for labeling differences. Brett's question was not addressed. The conversation went in a different direction. The potential for recognizing what the group does with framing each other's identities, and what rules it creates in so doing, was lost.

Social identity, from the communication perspective, is continuously being defined at the micro level, with persons in conversation, and at the macro level, with many persons in many conversations, building in the momentum of cultural discourse. Monological or I-It relating without regard to the polyvocality of relating across social identity group differences, maintains the very patterns of relating that we seek to change.

The Communication Perspective and Empathy

Linda: May I ask Reima a question? Did you feel supported by the group after you shared the story?

Reima: Yes, I did, I did… and it sort of did take some away, not all because if I said all, it wouldn't be true, at least it took away a major part of the bitterness. It does create a very bitter feeling to be or to even feel disliked or unwanted or somebody other than part of the larger group that you are with. And if you have never been exposed to it before, the first time is the most painful. But I think it made me understand then that perhaps that was not a conscious thing on the part of people who did it; maybe it was unconscious, maybe it was not but at least that brought that "maybe" into it. And so by the next time I go around, because I deal with those people all the time, perhaps I will be less rigid. I don't know.

Anne: Can I ask another question. If that would have happened again, what would you have liked the response to be from your colleagues?

The conversation segment above, taken from the September 11th episode, is called a triplet. In a triplet, each turn is analyzed in the context of what comes before and what follows. This triplet is an example of empathy from a communication perspective. Empathy from the communication perspective is something that is created in the process of relating. In this triplet, Linda asks a curious question in which she asks Reima how she felt after sharing her story with the group. Anne takes it further to ask what she would like from others regarding a response.

Empathy was also evident earlier in the episode when Reima told her story. In response to her story, others in the group told a story of commiseration with Reima. What made this empathy was Reima's response. She felt understood.

This finding adds a new dimension to the theorizing of empathy, particularly at the level of group identity. The definition of empathy in the literature has been shifting from something that one *has,* to something that is defined in relationships. Roger's early definition of empathy was:

The state of empathy…or being empathic… is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever loosing the 'as if' condition…If this 'as if ' quality is lost than the state is one of identification. (C. Rogers, 1975)

This definition expresses the rich experience of empathy that Rogers was able to articulate and model. While Rogers emphasizes the relational aspect of empathy, that many said he so clearly embodied, he describes it in cognitive terms, e.g., a state.

He later updated his definition shifting empathy to a more relational emphasis[13] and changing the term from a "state" to a "process". The way Rogers described the *process* of empathy was:

Entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. …being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing… communicating your sensings of his/her world as you look with fresh and unfrightened eyes .. To be with another in this way (means) that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another's world without prejudice. In some sense it means that you lay aside your self and this can only be done by a person who is secure enough in himself that he knows he will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange or bizarre world of the other and can comfortably return to his own world when he wishes. (Rogers, 1975).

This definition of empathy begins to more closely resemble the experience of an I-Thou moment. This similarity was the focus of the Buber-Rogers dialogue, and perhaps resonates the influence of that encounter.

Judith Jordan along with her colleagues at the Stone Center has also been developing of a relational definition of empathy. In collaborative study and reflection with her colleagues, Jordan's definitions of empathy paralleled the shift from something that resides in the self to something that is produced in relationships. In 1984, Jordan defined empathy as a dynamic, cognitive-affective process of joining with, and understanding another's subjective experience (J. V. Jordan, 1991).

In 1991, the relational aspects of empathy began to emerge in the definition as Jordan defined the capacity of empathy as requiring both connection and individuation. She suggested that in order to exhibit empathy, one must have a "well differentiated sense of self in addition to an appreciation of and sensitivity to the different-ness as well as sameness of the other".

> …Beginning with the basic capacity and motivation for human relatedness that allows perception of the other's affective arousal in oneself-as if the perceived affective cues were one's own – thus producing a temporary identification with the other's emotional state. Finally there occurs a resolution period in which one regains a sense of separate self that understands what has just happened. For empathy to be effective, there must be a balance of the affective and cognitive, the subjective and objective. (J. Jordan, 1991a)

The concept of mutual empathy shifts the focus of the definition of empathy from something that happens in the mind of an individual to the process of the interaction and the growth that emerges from it. Jordan defined mutual empathy as the "dynamic cognitive-affective process of joining with and understanding another's subjective experience" (J. Jordan, 1991a). Jordan later stated, "each individual allows and assists the other in coming more fully into clarity, reality and relatedness; each shapes the other" (J. Jordan, 1991a). As one engages in the process of listening and understanding the other's experience as true for them, one better connects with and distinguishes one's own experience thereby understanding one's own meaning in a new way. As the other makes him or herself understood, he or she understands him or herself in another way. Growth occurs in relationship. This is a reciprocal process. Jordan also said of mutual empathy:

> "While some mutual empathy involves an acknowledgement of sameness in the other, an appreciation of the differentness of the other's experience is also vital. The movement towards the other's differentness is actually central to growth in relationship and also can provide a powerful sense of validation for both people. Growth occurs because as I stretch to match or understand your experience, something new is acknowledged or grows in me. (J. Jordan, 1991b)

Surrey, a collaborator with Jordan describes mutual empathy as: "Not so much a matter of reciprocity but rather a quality of relationality, a movement or dynamic of relationship" (J. Surrey, Alexandra G. Kaplan, Judith V. Jordan, 1990)…a way of being 'present' or joining together in which each person is emotionally available, attentive, and responsive to the other(s) and to the relationship (J. Surrey, 1997). The development of empathy is both fostered by relationships and fosters relationships.

At first glance Surrey's definition may be seem paradoxical to the more traditional theories of human development that focus on the sense of self as being fostered in separation and individuation. To the contrary, Surrey states:

> The notion of the self-in-relation involves an important shift in emphasis from separation to relationship as the basis for self-experience and development. Further, relationship is seen as the basic goal of development; that is, the deepening capacity for relationship and relational competence. The self-in-relation model assumes that other aspects of the self (e.g., creativity, autonomy, assertiveness) develop within this primary context. (J. Surrey, Alexandra G. Kaplan, Judith V. Jordan, 1990)

Each of these definitions describes empathy as taking in the experience of the other. Janet Surrey (J. Surrey, 1987, 1991) differentiates mutual empathy from empathy. Mutual empathy is an experience of being with and being seen by another while seeing the other and sensing the other feeling seen. Mutual empathy implies something in the relationship; a participation in each other's experience. (1987,1991)

While these definitions of empathy describe a relational component, they still locate empathy as a cognitive event. Empathy from a communication perspective shifts the evidence of empathy from the person to the relationship. It is defined by what manifests in the turns and processes of conversation.

The empathy that was made in the September 11th episode was evident in how the group responded to Reima. This was a *moment of meeting*. The women in the group

suspended their judgment of the accuracy of what Reima was describing and elevated their presence to her hurt, pain and her experience of isolation and alienation. As the conversation continued in the group, there were many other examples of empathy in the form of sharing stories commiserated with the complexity of emotions told by Reima's story. The focus of the group was on how you stay present to another when you feel threatened and when you are in the presence of the response of others who feel threatened.

> Sara: It's interesting the next day or the day after, one of my co-workers with whom I had a very close relationship, said, when they were talking about Afghanistan at that point. She said, as far as I'm concerned they could drop a bomb and just leave a big crater there. I remember I looked at her and I was shocked, I said I can't believe you just said that. And she said, why not? Let's just start from scratch. And I had to stop for a moment, because I wanted to jump to her world for a minute but what I realized was that she was terrified. She was saying something out of an intense moment of fear. And I asked her - are you really afraid right now? And she said it wasn't even afraid - she was terrified.

The evidence of empathy, from the communication perspective, is in the turns of the conversation; what comes next. The empathy that was made in this episode was followed by Reima taking a renewed perspective toward the responses of her co-workers. Empathy was considered as being with the other, acknowledging and participating in their experience.

Conversely, a response that seems empathic may not be so when considered in the turns of the conversation. This was evident in the episode when Jeff shared his experience of being gay.

> You know it was interesting Mitchell. When you were talking about, when you asked what are we hiding and what might we be hiding and I was thinking am I hiding being white…hiding behind being gay? I am clear. But what really came to me is .. I think in some ways I hide…what it is to be gay, I'm really emotional about it, the amount of discrimination that I feel, on a fucking daily basis, especially now as a parent….

> Marilyn: And that's part of the piece that I was talking about, Jeff, when I mentioned earlier that.... you made a comment, or one of the two of you made a comment about getting that perspective. That's the perspective that I don't sense that I've gotten with you being in the group. And I haven't pressed for it because I didn't want you to be the "spokesperson", and, that being part of my issue being a black woman and being the spokesperson.

Marilyn's response to Jeff *looks like* empathy in the form of acknowledgment. Yet there is no further inquiry, no exploration of his experience. Marilyn's response could be an opening, if it were to be followed by a question. Instead, it was followed by Mitchell's comment:

> While acknowledging your gayness; I want to know what it's like for you to be a white man.

What happened next was what I would call, pseudo-engagement. Jeff had opened up to and was not acknowledged in, what Buber would describe as *thou*. His response is to succumb to how he was construed by Mitchell and, in so doing, lost himself.

> I am confused. I'm sort of enjoying the question because there's some blind spot here that I'm not getting. I am getting confused by it, but I appreciate it.

Empathy, from a communication perspective, happens in the turns and processes of the conversation and what we are making in forms of relating. We may identify a moment of mutual empathy, but it is not empathy, from a relational perspective, unless it is acknowledged in a supplemental act. If we are seeking to create a dialogic presence with others whose differences are based in deeply- embedded stories, it is important to attend to the meta-level habits of relating. Suspending certainty and acknowledging complexity and multiplicity in relating with another, is critical to building bridges.

The Communication Perspective and Transformative Learning

> Francis: There was a comment about Catholics… I was surprised by it so I don't even remember what it was in response to. It wasn't an attack; it was an accusation not about Catholics. I can't remember. But I felt defensive and started having a conversation with myself. At that point, I stopped listening.

Ellen: We were discussing something about Judaism around the High Holidays. A person made a specific mis-statement of fact – 'most Jewish do it'. My whole attention went to not changing my external face.

Anne: I know that some of my troubling moments happened within my own faith group. A women [in the group] said, well Judaism is not a religion. You don't even have to believe in G-d to be Jewish. So part of it rubbed me wrong. We were trying to bring together people of different faiths so we didn't have to struggle about whether or not we believed in G-d.... I felt – oh no! – I hope we aren't going to have to struggle among ourselves. I felt selfish… I didn't want to deal with it. It really irked me; and I tuned out. I could feel it in my gut and can't remember it. I simmered. I was conscious of asking myself, 'Why did this bother me?' I spent time being distracted from the group because it bothered me so.

These three comments are examples of comments made during the individual interviews related to dissonance. I used the term *conversational dissonance* to refer to moments in the turns of the conversation where the meaning one brought to the encounter did not coordinate with that of another. In these moments people talked about shifting their focus from others to themselves. People were taking a moment to reflect within the group, but not at that moment, *with* the group. The internal dialogue was a time-out for meaning making.

Theorists of transformative learning and transformational discourse pose the phenomena described by the participants above as the first step in a transformative process.[14] Mezirow (1991, 2000) talks about a *disorienting dilemma* as the first stage of transformative learning. Brookfield (1987) identified a *trigger event* that is perplexing or discomforting as the first of five stages of transformational change process. Taylor (1987) described *disconfirmation* as an awareness of a discrepancy between the learner's expectations and his or her experience followed by disorientation and discomfort. Cranton, (1992) identifies confusion and withdrawal as stages in the transformational learning process.

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[14] The literature uses the terms transformative and transformational interchangeably. I use the term transformative unless the theorist unless the theorist is quoted.

The incoherence that was described by the participants is a first stage in a potentially transformative process. Each of the above models describes a subsequent phase of exploration and reflection (Cranton, 1992), self-exploration, (Brookfield, 1987), critical self reflection (Mezirow, 1991; 2000;) as a necessary step in the process of transformation. Kurt Lewin, (1947) in his change theory describes the process *unfreezing* as disconfirming a person's former belief system.

Transformative learning is described as a cognitive event. Beginning with a triggering event that challenges one's habits of mind or usually way of making meaning, a persona is challenged to make sense of a situation by challenging the way meaning is constructed. Mezirow describes this process:

> Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to reassess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight. (2000),

Gergen suggests that it is supplemental action that is essential to ignite the possibilities of the moment. (1994) There needs to be an integrative or sense-making opportunity for dissonance to spark a transformative learning process.

Moments of dissonance were pregnant with transformative learning opportunities. People were taking a moment to reflect within the group, but not wit*h* the group. The internal dialogue was a time-out for sense making. The opportunity to reflect on those encounters with others in the group enabled the meaning-making process to expand with the perspectives of the others.

In most of the examples, people disengaged from the group as a response to something said by a member of their own faith group. In the following excerpts, Anne

shared her reaction when a Jewish woman suggested that Judaism was not a religion. Anne had expectations that the group members shared a belief in G-d and that as a group, would share thoughts and feelings about their religion and their relationship with G-d. While she might have had a similar reaction to a person of another faith group who did not believe in G-d, She was particularly disturbed by this comment as it came from a member of her own group. Furthermore, she had difficulty with her own reaction. Her attempt to reconcile this dissonance was a distraction from the group.

Anne was describing a conversation she had with herself. The discursive style of this group was non-confrontational. People inquired of others with curiosity and openness. When people had a judgment, they disengaged to manage it with an inner dialogue.

Ellen, also a Jewish woman, had a similar reaction to another Jewish woman who said something she felt misrepresented the group. Like Anne, Ellen shifted her attention away from the group to a conversation with herself. Her self-consciousness that her reaction would show on her facial expression was a distraction from the group. Similar to Buber's story of petting the horse, when one becomes self-conscious of what one is doing, attention is directed to an internal monologue rather than to the relationship or the dialogical space.

Some of the Christian women had a similar moment. While the affiliations of the Christian women in the group were diverse, many of the Christian women were raised Catholic. I was privy to people reflecting in the individual interviews, on interactions in the group either about Catholicism or Catholics. Francis' comment suggested the very same movement away from the group that Anne and Ellen described. "There was a comment about Catholics… I was surprised by it so I don't even remember what it was in

response to… I can't remember. But I felt defensive and started having a conversation with myself. At that point, I stopped listening."

Francis had to pause, take a time out and turn to herself and ask, "Who am I?" A sense of disorientation might also come from one being defined primarily by qualities of an identity group with which one does not resonate. Brett expressed to the group and to me in a later conversation that he felt that the group was out of focus. While he did not connect his concern to his feelings about the conversation about white men, I wondered how that had affected him.

As I dove more deeply into the data analysis, I found myself asking whether the conversation in the first group about white men was a disorienting dilemma for Brett. He sees himself as a white man who is open and curious to engage with and learn about others. Yet, not many white men have the opportunity to be a part of the kind of conversation that constituted the episode of the first interview.

The broader question, particularly for groups engaging with each other around social identity issues is what happens when social identity is being constructed, or the story being told about one's group or oneself is very different from the story one has of oneself.

Dissonance or a disorienting dilemma has a cognitive and an affective component. In more recent versions of Mezirow's transformative learning theory, discourse is made central to the process. Discourse is described as "the specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief" (2000). Discourse is inherently a relational collaborative process that results in a kind of "connected knowing" that recognizes the crucial role of supportive relationships and environment to the learning experience. The opportunity to create transformation learning is made when one stands at the boundary that Kegan

would call the subject-object (1996) relationship, and holds what is happening in both the external dialogue and the internal dialogue, side-by-side in conversation. This is a very complex process.

### The Transforming Stories Model

Stories are a way of constructing memories. Individuals construct stories, social groups construct stories and cultures embed stories in their mythology and in their traditions. The reverse is also true: stories construct individuals, groups and cultures. Traditions and rituals embed the stories. These stories include stories lived and stories told. Certain aspects of a story are privileged and other aspects omitted merely in the telling. Social groups such as ethnic, cultural, geopolitical and tribal groups, inherit stories about their group and about the relationship their group has with other groups. One's commitment to one's story tends to be stronger when it is a story of being an out-group than when it is a story about being an in-group.

Social construction theory and the communication approach see these stories as ongoing constructions rather than stories that are fixed. The mere act of bringing stories of different social groups together in conversation creates a moment that is pregnant with possibilities of the co-construction of new stories. The birthing process is in the reflective communication. The data from this study illuminated how processes can both constrain and enable the co-creation of new stories.

Dialogic moments happen when time, and a sense of knowing is suspended, thus enabling the possibility of linking a story from the past, to one framed in the present, opening future possibilities. The invitation for reflection brings the story forward. Once time and knowing are suspended, people can identify the level of meaning that is privileged, the stories or conversations that inform how meaning was construed, and how meaning is influenced by what came before and what followed. They can also look at

how they talked about the story, and agree to be together in new ways. The processes and flows of relating are elevated over the atomic units of talk.

The model that emerged from the data depicts discursive processes that enable transforming stories:
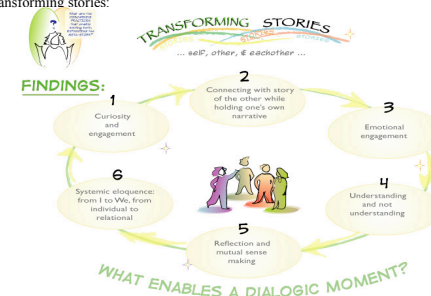
First, it is important to *create the space that inspires the commitment for curiosity and engagement*. Commitment and continuity of membership is an important factor fostering the conditions for engaging. The discursive processes include *openness and curiosity* to the many stories that are present in the space.

Second it is important to engage with the story of the other while holding one's own narrative. Storytelling includes exploring stories that are being told, stories that are untold, stories that are unheard, and stories that are unknown. The inquiry raises the question, how do different people punctuate the story? What preceded it and what followed? What levels of meaning are being elevated? Is this a story that was being told primarily about the self, the group, the relationship, and the culture? What is happening

in the storytelling? The inquiry provides an invitation to look at how people who are in the same story are constructing it differently thereby constraining their potential and capacity for relating. What other conversations, such as conversations about other group identities, other affiliations, or other perspectives, contributed to the meaning the storyteller was making?

Third, it is important to support storytelling. The process of storytelling enables one to take a third person perspective on one's own experience. At the same time, storytelling brings a first person perspective to the listener. Stories also have limitless potential for co-creating new meaning. Pasupathi, in her study of storytelling found that stories are co-created by the teller and the listener (2001). Stories are constructed, even enriched, by the ongoing process of sharing one's story and having it heard in a way that resonates and deepens one's story of oneself. Emotional engagement builds in the telling, the listening and the shared meaning making.

The most salient example of this was evident in two episodes. One was the conversation turns when Reima told her story about September 11th. After she spoke, people resonated with her:

> Fanny: I'd like to thank you for sharing that story again because for me that was the most important moment in the entire group, of all the meetings we've had, was when you shared that story, because it made me see things from a whole different point of view that I was so wrapped up in myself I dare say that I never even looked at how you might feel about it.
> (Oliver, 1996)

Reima felt acknowledged by Fanny's comment. She was able to appreciate her own story through Fanny's eyes, and through the eyes of the group. Fanny made an emotional connection with Reima's story while, paradoxically, Reima was able to become more detached. Consequently, Reima and Fanny created an emotional

connection. Further, as described earlier, Reima was able to make an emotional connection with the very co-workers she felt alienated from in the story she told.

Fourth, it is important to make a ritual of reflection. Time for reflection in the group creates the space for people to share their personal experience with others. Engaging with others involves resonance and dissonance; understanding and not understanding. As the stories unfolded in the iterative and recursive process of reflecting, the opportunities to engage dissonance were very meaningful and in some instances, transformative. In moments of resonance, dialogic moments were elevated. In moments of dissonance, reflection offers some distance from the story being told to find meta-meaning. Reflection makes the space of *the in-between,* the subject.

Dialogic eloquence is a form of relating to aspire to. While Buber recognized that there are times when we are not relating dialogically, he warns about a culture that is dominated by instrumental and I-It relating.

In any culture, certain group's stories are privileged over others. Dominance manifests in the content, or the *story told*, *when* and *how meaning* is elevated, (e.g., is it about the person or the group), *who* is part of the story and the *ways* of storytelling. In the joining of cultures, the particular discursive habits of each culture need to be elevated to bring the stories together. If not, there is the risk of perpetuating old habits of relating.

Pearce, (1989) describes social eloquence as an ability to co-construct cosmopolitan communication; to exploring and attempting to make sense of descriptions without denying difference; acknowledging the other's logic, comparing and translating stories; working to distinguish between what is meant, said and heard; stressing collaboration rather than competition; we-ness rather than I-ness. This is contextualized in relationship to rhetorical eloquence, which privileges the first person in the interests of persuading, i.e., *my way is better.*

Oliver, {(1996), offers the term, systemic eloquence, as a term to describe the process of making intentional choices to contextualize different ways of communicating depending on what best services "relational ethical commitments of humility, discernment, responsibility, courage and generosity (p.250)."

Dialogic eloquence is a way of elevating dialogic communicating, of what Buber called the *I-Thou* of living into a *presence* and being *with another* in the space of *we-ness* and the space of *each other*, attending to what we make together, and what more is possible.

Summary

We come to the space of meeting, or any interaction for that matter with the complexity of stories, and narratives that guide sense making. The conversation, or the speech act, calls forth or elevates certain combinations of the communication. Sometimes the communication will be making social identity, sometimes the conversations are foregrounding connections and relationships and sometimes they are not. Whether communication creates connection and relationship or differentiation and contention or even something else, will play a significant role in how we shape meaning in the space of meeting.

In any encounter, there is the story we tell; there is the story we don't tell; there is the way we tell the story (the discursive style or habit) and there is mystery. Dialogic moments happen in the engagement of the story we tell, in the engagement of our hearts.

A dialogic moment is not something we choose to create although we can foster the conditions to do so. It is a bifurcation point; the meeting of meanings to create new meanings. It is a moment when time and judgment are suspended.

Transformative learning is potentiated from dialogic moments. Certain encounters or discursive processes seed a transformative learning experience. Sense

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making is necessary for transformative learning. While it may not happen in a particular encounter, or it may happen for one and not the other, there is continuous potential for transformative learning. Transformative learning can be triggered by the smallest of events that activate what came before, and reformulate it in a new way, forever changing how one sees what comes next.

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CHAPTER 7
SUMMARY IMPLICATIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Summary

What makes a moment? What sustains a moment? Buber describes a moment as something that almost sneaks up on us, and catches us by surprise. The moment slips away as ephemerally as it materialized. What we do with one moment shapes how we bring ourselves to future encounters.   Like photographs sustain our memories, reflection and inquiry help us imprint a moment, the senses of the moment, how that moment links with moments past and will coordinate with moments in the future. Reflection *with* others expands the scope of the picture. As if a moment were a piece of art, shared reflection enables us to look within a frame, and together enrich the depth of shared meaning.

There is a saying that every picture tells a story. In this study, the stories make a picture. The pictures at once fix a story, punctuate a story and provide a beginning of new directions. In a similar way, the findings of this study punctuate its boundary and offer new directions.

Collective identity stories are more rarified than individual identity stories (Giddens, 1984). These stories stabilize social systems and become *truths*. It takes a zone of safety and shifts in our conversational habits to create new perspectives on old narratives. The same relationship in a different context be it historic, cultural, organizational, or other, can shift one's position from oppressor to oppressed. Elevating the conversation to address these *ways of meaning making* in reflection moves the subjects of the conversation to the boundaries, enabling reflection and reframing.

Knowledge of diversity of persons, philosophies, races, religions, and ideas may evoke unreflective cynical calls for *our* or *my* power over *them*, or such knowledge can evoke respectful impulses toward difference. Meeting diversity calls us to choose

between the narcissism of *my kind* or the tougher task of learning to work with one another in the task of co-constituting a "global community" (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

Arnett and Anderson assert that to confirm the other, we need to attend to the historic moment of the other's formation as well as our own (p.33). This study took a dialogic view of how we construct each other in group of groups: social identity groups. The research question that I hoped would elicit a dialogic moment that had been transformative provoked transformative dialogic moments, as well as disorienting dilemmas. The collaborative inquiry provided the opportunity for reflection and collective sense making.

There is great complexity of meaning enacted in every moment. People often assume or hope for shared meaning at the level of the content of what we say. One member of the MWD group said to me, at one point in the process, "It's amazing that we ever make meaning at all given all that is going on!" Yet we lack a ritual to elevate meaning that we are creating in the relationship space. The relational story shows up in how we talk, and the rules of engagement to which we abide. The relational story is made from poly-vocal histories that are brought together. Polyvocal histories are timeless. They are also discursive habits that are not challenged until we make the habits the subject. Once we make the process or the discursive habit the subject, we can continue in the storytelling together.

When one shares one's story with another, with the time and process to make meaning co-jointly, it becomes a shared story. Arnett and Anderson contend that a "dialogic view of a narrative takes one's previous narrative formation and brings it into dialogue with a given historical moment" (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). This is what shifts a *truth* to a *perspective,* thus opening up other possibilities.

Reflections of the Researcher

I came to this study with over twenty years of experience as a practitioner. I believed that there were certain conditions that enabled people to sustain and I-Thou presence, in deeply challenging moments: when engaging deeply embedded collective identity stories that carry a history of feeling oppressed. Putting myself in the role of researcher meant being more precise about what I was doing, how I was doing it, what claims I was making and how that was evidenced in the data.

New perspectives and meaning of the data emerged when I released myself from my prior ways of knowing and remained open to surprise. At moments of greatest challenge, sustained engagement and remaining open to different ways of knowing, particularly at a meta-level, produced the most profound learning. For example, I struggled to find a way to understand the group that did not follow the original design. It was not until I asked myself, what was I learning about what *thwarts* a transformative dialogic moment, that I was able to deeply appreciate our process.

In a sense, my own experience was a mirror of my findings. I experienced challenges and difficulties at multiple levels of engagement. The opportunity for the mutual sense making is not always made. While sustained engagement and storytelling enable mutual sense making and transformative dialogic moments, the opportunity and the environment, the rhythm to do so, is not always present.

Perhaps the greatest surprise was seeing what happens when one succumbs to another and rather than staying engaged fully and authentic, shifts to what I called pseudo-engagement. Pseudo-engagement was the term I used to describe when one looks like they are engaged, but are leaving out a story that would, potentially form a bridge between different social worlds. Once I recognized this in my study, I began to see it in my own life. I noticed when and how I made choices not to engage in a more meaningful

way where there might have been an opportunity to do so. I wondered when that might be happening with others in relationship to me. Pseudo engagement showed up in the data as one making a choice to get along, rather than to risk not being understood.

Reflections on the Method, Its Use and the Limitations of the Study

As a novice researcher, I was learning a new way of engaging and making that more figural than my familiar ways of engaging as a practitioner. I was mindful of wanting to make the process transparent and collaborative. For this reason, I chose to share the CMM model with participants at the outset. In retrospect, I would first facilitate the reflection on their experience, and would use the CMM model as a guide for the questions asked during the meta-reflection.

I had two very different experiences with the groups. One seemed very excited and appreciative of participating in the research. They were ready to put themselves and their experiences at risk and to be available both to new ways of understanding each other and new ways of understanding how to engage with each other. Some members of the other group seemed to find the process cumbersome, thus influencing the group process. When offered the option of not participating in the research, the group continued to claim their commitment. At first, I found engaging with this group to be more of an effort. Paradoxically, the data from the group made a significant contribution to the study when I shifted my attention to how I was doing the research to what we were *doing* in the process of *studying*. Shifting from the noun to the verb position, in a sense ***doing*** the lens I was using to do the studying elevated what I was learning.

There are limitations to this study that, in turn, provide opportunities for further research. The study involved two groups. Each group operated under different conditions with different membership and rule structures. While the findings open up new avenues

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for further study, they are not exhaustive. Further as a qualitative study, the findings are descriptive not conclusive.

What we already know about dialogue; what we already know about diversity; what we know from the cognitive developmental model does one need to have come to a certain level of development to be able to engage in dialogue in such a way as to have transformative learning?

Implications of this Study

The research was an opportunity to slow down the ongoing conversation, in order to elevate and sustain a particular moment. By slowing down and focusing on a moment, the participants were able to incorporate the stories each of the other people in the group made of the episode. In addition to looking at the underlying assumptions or the stories of the stories, people had the opportunity to reflect on how they talked and the unarticulated rules by which they engaged, or in some instances, avoided engagement. New stories were created through their shared reflection.

The study expanded the theorizing of certain concepts such as social identity empathy and transformative learning from a psychological or intrapersonal construct to a relational construct, as evidenced by how they are construed in the turns and processes of relating evidenced in conversations. While the capacity for empathy might be different for different people, there are clearly conditions that need to be present to foster an empathic performance. This study demonstrated how we continuously define and redefine groups, what constitutes group membership and power relationships, and what we do to reify stories about groups.

The theorizing of dialogue and the practice of dialogue has been the attention of many theorists, practitioners and scholar-practitioners, particularly in the past decade. Pearce and Pearce, (2000) in a special journal devoted to this topic at the turn of the

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century articulated a key question for which there was yet to be consensus: was dialogue something that was unpredictable and therefore not controllable, or could dialogue be created under particular conditions. Further, they noted that there were "some important and yet-to-be articulated differences within this consensus" (p. 166).

> For example, in our perception, practitioners are generally more confident of their ability to call dialogue into being and in specific situations than theorists. (Of course they are! How else could practitioners do their work?) In addition, those who believer that dialogue is episodic or ongoing are generally more attentive to specific aspects of skillful performance than those who see dialogue as occurring in fleeting moments or as a culture-wide ideal (p. 166).

This study joined the conversation in the literature addressing approaches that engage social identity groups having a history of conflict, with a specific focus on discursive processes. If identities are socially produced, and category definitions are a matter of debate, then we need to focus on people's talk. Moreover, if identities are constructed through comparisons with others, then it seems likely that they will be manifested in the language through which speakers account for the relationship between themselves and others. Therefore, we should focus on social comparison processes in talk and the way these define identities. This assertion is the foundational assumption of discourse analysis. (Verkuyten, 1997)

This study elevated new insights into what enables dialogic moments and transformative learning in the engagement of different social worlds, using the lens of the communication approach to relational theory and social construction theory. The communication approach shifted the focus from what is *said* to what is *done* in relationships mediated through conversations.

This study clearly demonstrated the value of the opportunity for reflection. Both groups found the reflection, in the group setting, to be very enriching. The opportunity to first reflect in a paired conversation enhanced the group reflections. The MWD group had

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two opportunities to do this. The first opportunity was in the individual meeting with me. The second was during the second group meeting. I asked them to talk in pairs first because of the size of the group.

One of the reflections that was most enlightening emerged from the reflection on *how* they talked with each other, *how* they engaged and *how* they chose *not* to engage, the discursive processes and rules. This meta-level reflection was very helpful to the group. There was a great variation between the groups. There are many variables that the differences could be attributed to, not the least of which was that one group was all women and the other was mixed gender. One was all white and the other was white and African American. One group has been meeting for 9 years and the other for 18 months. One group shared a professional speech genre and members of the other were of mixed professional backgrounds.

CMM is a valuable tool for consulting and facilitating issues of diversity. My experience as a consultant working with these issues is that often conversations seeking coherence are misaligned as people are contextualizing meaning at different levels. For example, the dominant group typically contextualizes the experience of one who is feeling subjugated at the individual level, while the he or she is contextualizing the experience at the group level. A common example at the workplace is a woman or person of color speaking up at a meeting and not being heard. That person may interpret that as something that happens repeatedly to them and other members of their group. A

The Common In-group Identity Model (Gaertner, Rust, Dovido, Bachman, & Anastasio, 1993) suggests that a shared group identity brings people who are not part of the same group together though shared beliefs. Shared beliefs increase interpersonal attraction, facilitates empathic arousal, motivates people to attend to the needs of the others, and enhances memory for positive information about others. The shared

commitment to engage in a deep dialogue with others who are different in a significant way was a powerful connector for members of both groups. Anecdotally, I have found there to be this magnet for people who were interested in and hungry for these encounters.

Questions that Emerged from this Study: What is the Next Turn?

This study illuminated many new avenues for deeper understanding of dialogic communication. One was how stories and narrative construction could be used in creative ways to encourage curiosity, motivation and commitment to engage with others who are different in a significant way. While there are some studies that address this, (Bar-On, 1993, 1995; Steinberg & Bar-On, 2001), further research is needed to explore what logical force is necessary to shift the narrative that lives in any given culture.

Another question the research highlighted was, what is the relationship between the enabling conditions of relating across differently social worlds and the capacity for inclusive thinking and complexity. In other words, does one need to have the capacity for what is described in the literature as a certain level of thinking, (Kegan, 1982, 1994) to be able to hold, side-by-side, seemingly incommensurate stories. This question ironically does what it asks. The languag'ing of the question bridges seemingly different paradigms, the communication approach to social construction theory and cognitive constructivism.

The MWD group raised an issue that would be valuable to explore further. Some people in the group noted that they would want to have a facilitator to support them going to a deeper level of conversation. They questioned whether they could handle the "next level" or whether they had the expertise to deal with whatever would emerge. This question addressed the role of a facilitator in groups that are engaging group level differences, be they political or social identity-based. There are different approaches to

this question in the praxis of dialogue across differences. Further research might look at distinctions among facilitated groups, self-led groups, self-led groups with clear guidelines, and a mixed model: self-facilitated groups with periodic reflections with a trained facilitator. A key question is what aspect of facilitation is needed for constructive engagement in such dialogues and how might we foster self-led groups. This type of exploration would have significant implications in both community and organizational contexts.

A question that emerges from this study and continues to pervade the literature is what the definition of social identity groups and collective identities do in social engagement and meaning making. What meta-narrative can we create for naming processes that both provide a sense of *place* or identity in the world, yet do so in a way that honors the place of others.

Closing Comments

I opened this dissertation with a call from Arnett and Anderson for a meta-narrative in our culture. In the last decade of the 20th century the culture of the United States was referred to as the culture of narcissism. The philosophers of dialogue whose voices were heard in this dissertation each came from difficult life situation and the particular political challenges of their time. They call to us to see the other – to see that the line and boundary between oppressed and oppressor, between evil' do-er and good'do-er, between you and me is a narrow bridge as Buber would say. It is imperative that we seek opportunities to be on that bridge – and notice the company we are with.

Hope is present in the reminder that the story is never complete. What seems intractable today is merely a point in the story where it is difficult to see the next turn; the turn in which we get above it, get underneath it, or beyond it. The continuously unfolding possibilities of making social worlds are what we humans hold in a precious balance.

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I close with a quote from one of the women from the MWD:

Through the relationships and learning that has resulted from open, respectful interfaith dialogue, I have gained a deeper connection with all of humanity. The interfaith dialogue provided healthy and sustained forums to ask difficulty questions of one another and to grapple with the complexities of these violent world events together, in relationship, with people of all faiths. While so many in our communities were responding to these events with fear, suspicion, disengagement and antagonism, those of us in dialogue had alternate experiences rooted in our relationships with people of other faiths, who were increasingly becoming trusted dialogue partners and friends. Our instinct was to band together to seek the peace and wholeness that our faith traditions command of us. Together we could find solace, if not answers in this fractured world. (Anne, 2003 private conversation)

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<u>**APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT MEMO**</u>

<u>**EXPLORING DIVERSITY IN DIALOGUE**</u>

Thank you for considering the possibility of participating in my doctoral research study. To provide further clarification, I have attached a summary of what the study entails and a brief description of what you might expect.

I am studying "moments of engagement" in groups that are engaged in dialogue for the purpose of deepening understanding of differences that have some historical conflict.

DESCRIPTION OF GROUP SOUGHT:

I am seeking a group that meets the following criteria:

- Is diverse on multiple dimensions
- Meets on a regular basis
- Is intentional about engaging its differences
- Is interested in some action as a function of its meetings
- Has some shared operating norms

APPROACH:
The approach I plan to take is a cooperative inquiry. A cooperative inquiry is an approach to research in which the participants and the researcher, together, explore the topic and come to some common meaning regarding what is being explored.

I would like to meet with at least 6 members of the group (the presence of the entire group is not required but is welcome), and together, reflect on particular moments of understanding the story of the other group(s) in some way that was not understood previously.

I would also like, if possible, to observe the group prior to our cooperative inquiry and follow up with some individuals afterwards.

Once I have formulated some preliminary results, I would like to meet with the group again to review and calibrate my findings.

WHAT YOU MIGHT EXPECT FROM OUR TIME TOGETHER….
We will meet on two separate occasions: 3 hours the first meeting and 2 hours the second. The first time I will be interviewing the group about your experience together in dialogue. The interview questions will build on one another. While I have a few areas I will want to discuss, I will be asking you questions that explore what you say rather than ones that I have specifically scripted.

My hope is that my questions will trigger your memories of being in the group together. I will explore such areas as:

- How you came together as a group… What you remember about how you heard about the group…. What initially attracted you….What your early hopes and expectations were… etc.
- Moments of your dialogue that were particularly significant. It could be about times when you were drawn to the way in which you were different… and could be about a time when you found the nature of the difference difficult or challenging. It could be that you discovered the connections you shared despite your differences. NOTE that the difference could be across OR within your group membership. NOTE that the encounter could be one that was enticing AND/OR challenging/difficult. NOTE that it could have been a time that you expressed yourself about it OR did not.
- I would also like to explore how the group discussions have influenced your life outside the group, particularly in terms of how you know yourself and in relationship to others.

During our second meeting, I will share what I heard as themes that emerged from our interview. I would then like to hear your reactions….

- Did I hear something in a way that was not true for you?
- Did I miss something that you thought was particularly significant for you?
- AND how did the interview we had affect the group going forward?

Should you decide you are interested, we would then have a conversation about next steps. I am exploring possible participation with other groups as well.

FURTHER QUESTIONS
If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (610) 667-5305 or e-mail me at iwasserman@icwconsulting.com.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

APPROACH TO DATA COLLECTION

1. Individual interviews:
   - Informed Consent
   - Explore what brought participant to the group.
   - Identify moments…
   - Share an overview of the models and approach to research

2. Analysis:
   - Identify criteria for moments from the literature
   - Analyze notes (texts) for moments defined from criteria from literature and notice other patterns.
   - Summarize with criteria and moments

3. First Group Meeting (audio and videotaped)
   - Set the stage: what will we be doing; how will we be with each other in order to feel safe to do so
   - Solicit narratives of moments that resonated for participants from our individual interviews and that they would be interested in exploring as a group. (Add moments that were talked about in individual interviews by more than a couple of people).
   - Engage the group in a cooperative reflection – what was going on for you during that moment?
   - As researcher, I will move in a dance with the participants from observer to intervener.

3. Review video and audiotapes (transcription) for how dialogue is lived, including what is said, body language, rhythms and pauses. Use the heuristics from the CMM model to understand what is happening in the group at multiple levels.

4. Second Individual Interviews:
   - Reflect on the first meeting
   - Identify emerging themes

3. Second Group Meeting
   - Set the stage for the group meeting
   - Ask them what they have noticed since the last meeting
   - Ask group to engage in a cooperative reflection
   - Inquire about how this experience has had an impact on them

3. Second Individual and/or Group Interview (optional)
   - Review research process thus far
   - Identify preliminary findings
   - Solicit perspectives of group members

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT

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REFLECTING ON DIALOGUE WITH THOSE WITH WHOM WE DIFFER IN SIGNIFICANT WAYS

INFORMED CONSENT

You have been asked to participate in a dissertation research study conducted by Ilene Wasserman, a doctoral student in the Human and Organizational Development Program at Fielding Graduate Institute, Santa Barbara, CA. This research involves the study of a group of people who are involved in a dialogue experience seeking to deepen their understanding with those who are different in significant ways. You have been selected for this study because you are involved in such an experience.

The study involves the following time commitments:
   - 2-3 hour group interviews, the focus of which will be a cooperative inquiry regarding your experience of your group.
   - Two individual interviews (optional)
   - A group meeting (approximately 1.5-2 hours) to reflect on findings from the above.

The study will be a cooperative inquiry. Data collected will be based on the reflections of members on the group experience and processed as a group. The sessions will be audiotape and videotaped. All participants will be contacted at the conclusion of the research to determine if they would like to receive a summary report of the research findings.

The Research Ethics Committee of Fielding Graduate Institute retains access to all signed informed consent forms. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The researcher and possibly the Faculty Supervisor will review the interviews.

You will be asked to provide a different name for any quotes that might be included in the final research report. You will also be involved in developing findings and conclusions of this study given that it is a cooperative inquiry. In addition, the tapes and all related research materials will be kept in a secure file cabinet and destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

There are some benefits and minimal risks you may encounter as a participant in this study. There is a small chance that you may experience some emotional discomfort during the reflecting inquiry. You may develop greater personal awareness that can be inspiring and/or discomforting. As a result of completing the SCT and receiving feedback

on the assessment, as well as the group process, you may develop greater self-awareness of how you make meaning out of your experiences. Should you experience any discomfort, please contact the researcher at the phone number listed above. If appropriate, you may be referred for a consultation with a professional counselor or facilitator. The researcher would qualify as one of the referrals if you so choose.

You may withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after the interview, without negative consequences.

There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study. If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please tell the researcher before signing this form. Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating you have read, understood, and agreed to participate in this research. Return one to the researcher and keep the other for your files.

If you have any questions, I can be reached either by phone at (610) 667-5305 or by e-mail at iwasserman@icwconsulting.com. My mailing address is also included at the end of this consent form.

_____
NAME OF PARTICIPANT (please print)

_____
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

_____
DATE

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- Review research process and informed consent.

- Tell me about your beginnings with this group. What was it that attracted you to this group? What were your first impressions… your hopes?

- Share a story about at time when you saw that to be true.

- Think about a time in the group… a memorable or significant *moment* in the *engagement of group level differences* where you came to see yourself or your frame of mind differently in relationship to others. Tell me about it. (Probes)

AGENDA FOR THE FIRST GROUP INTERVIEW

- Presented an overview of our process;
- Summarized of what I learned about the groups from the interviews;
- Explored what agreements we needed to make to create the atmosphere for their conversations;
- Determined which of the "moments" that were shared in the initial interview would be the focus of our inquiry;
- Reflected on the moment using the CMM model as a guide;
- Discussed next steps.

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONS FOR THE SECOND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

As you reflected on our meeting together, was there anything in particular that stood out for you?

As you looked at the transcript, what did you notice?

Was there a moment for you in the group, or for others in the group that was particularly meaningful? What was it about that moment (probes)?

MULTIFAITH WOMEN'S DIALOGUE

NAME	FAITH GROUP	APPROXIMATE AGE
Anne	Conservative Jew	Late forties
Cindy	Quaker	Late thirties
Elizabeth	Protestant	Early sixties
Ellen	Conservative Jew	Early sixties
Fanny	Conservative Jew	Early seventies
Francis	Catholic	Late fifties
Geila	Bahá'i	Early sixties
Joan	Unitarian	Early sixties
Kay	Episcopalian	Late fifties
Leah	Orthodox Jew	Early fifties
Linda	Lutheran	Forty
Martha	Protestant	Sixties
Mary	Irish Catholic	Early fifties
Reima	Muslim	Mid-fifties
Sandy	Presbyterian	Mid-thirties
Sara	Reconstructionist Jew	Early fifties
Sharon	Episcopalian	Early fifties
Sorella	Bahá'i	Late fifties

GENDER AND RACE GROUP

NAME	RACE AND GENDER	APPROXIMATE AGE
Brett	White man	Late thirties
Flora	African American woman	Mid-forties
Jeff	White gay man	Late thirties
Leslie	White woman	Early thirties
Marilyn	African American woman	Late forties
Mitchell	African American man	Early sixties
Robin	White Jewish woman	Early sixties
Ronald	African American man	Early fifties

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