DIALOGUE AND PROCESS CONSULTING

by

Lynne Patricia Brenegan

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Adult Education, Community Development & Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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0-612-53313-1
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Abstract

This thesis documents the use of "Dialogue" among ten Process Consultants in organizational contexts in Canada, the United States, South America, and South Africa. While these Process Consultants cited vivid examples and benefits of its use in client organizations to build capacity for change, reconnect to purpose, reframe conflict, and sustain learning communities, dialogic discourse was perceived as anachronistic to elements of western information age organizational culture. As such, it was perceived to face some significant barriers to diffusion. Beliefs about the optimal organizational contexts for dialogic conversation were linked to how these individuals perceived or positioned themselves as Process Consultants in relation to their self defined niche or contribution to organizations.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is a tribute to the mentoring capability of Dr. Marilyn Laiken. I am ever grateful for the opportunity to have first experienced dialogue in her courses at OISE, for her infinite curiosity in the subject area, and for her ability to navigate the thesis development process to its completion through a combination of encouragement, compassion, insightful feedback, and dedication to research.

To Dr. Harvey Kolodny of the Rotman School of Management, I am indebted for his willingness to work on a thesis outside his faculty, and to do so in a way that gave me a vastly enhanced perspective on this subject area.

In my life, there is also no greater thrill than to bring an idea or a creation into being, and have people that I respect and care for respond to the work itself, or to the effort in ways which engender shared and deepened meaning. In this regard, I thank Dr. Laiken and Dr. Kolodny, and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to a network of people who have supported this work. They are, Debbie Ackley and the WIL 2000 to 2001 dialogue group, Esther Ewing, Elizabeth Fadell, Len Foster, Larry Ginsberg, Mhairi Goodwin, Dana Kelso, Jo Nelson, Dale Reeson, Maria Margarida Salvador, Cal Sutliff, Carrol Suzuki, and Myrna Wajsman.

To each of the research participants, I extend my sincere thanks for being willing to reflect on your work and the meaning that you derive from incorporating dialogic discourse into your repertoire.

I owe my well being prior to, and throughout this process to the constancy and the love of Roelf Woldring, Georgia Brenegan, Stanley Brenegan, Alan Brenegan, Gloria McGillivray, Craig McGillivray, and our family.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to focus on the dialogic conversation experiences of ten external Process Consultants practicing in public and private sector organizations in 1998, 1999 and 2000. The study was intended to explore the Process Consultants' perceptions of these experiences.

This study was not intended to:

1. examine participant aptitude for process consulting, facilitation, or knowledge transfer of dialogic principles
2. assess the status of the Process Consultants' business ventures
3. generalize their experiences to a broader population of Process Consultants

Relevance

This study was considered relevant by the researcher for two reasons. First, Process Consultants' experiences using dialogic conversation in client organizations was not widely documented. Second, while the study was not intended to generalize its findings beyond the participant base, it was intended to bring dialogic conversation further into the purview of Process Consulting research.
“Dialogic conversation”

Though “dialogue” is explored in greater detail in the Literature Review in Chapter 2, it is defined here to provide clarity and context (the terms Process, Consulting, and Process Consulting are defined in Appendix B). In this thesis, dialogic conversation occurs between Process Consultants (as a mode of intraconsulting team communication and functioning); or between Process Consultants and their clients, to:

1. Explore thinking and talking together, with the intent to transform, or to re-create the collective metaphor, or shared frame of reference that is the genesis of the team or organization’s identity. This is an act of conscious, willful creation. It is distinct from conscious and willful adaptation through problem solving. It occurs independent of, or in synchronous relationship to, a community of stakeholders.

2. Explore thinking and talking together, with the intent to improve the effectiveness with which team or organizational members function. This occurs in service to a prevailing identity and vision for the organization which the team or the organizational members perceive as valid and worthy.

In practice, when people are engaged in dialogue, they seek to balance enquiry with advocacy, to surface previously unexpressed or tacit assumptions (their own, or their dialogue partners’), to perceive differences as sources of insight, and to “let go” of the need to work from a meeting agenda, or to achieve a stated outcome. Dialogue is intended to focus participants on the deep structure (the meaning level) of conversation. Through the exploration of assumptions and tacit beliefs, it is intended to generate awareness among participants that “reality” is individually constructed upon assumptions, and that unexplored or unspoken assumptions impede coherent thought and communication. It does not
recognize the conventions of hierarchy or authority. It is intended to be a conversation among equals. It has the potential to produce an experience of deep emotional and spiritual connection, renewal, and shared meaning for participants.

Why research the topic of dialogue in an organizational context?

In the year 2000, issues of global economic turbulence, social and political unrest, technological change, and environmental degradation are numbingly complex. The following paragraphs, presented without any preconceptions about sequence or cause and effect, explore some of the factors contributing to this complexity.

Peter Drucker (1999) has said that the current "Information Era" surpasses the Second Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the Second World War as an era of "profound" transition (Drucker, 1999; Bridges, 1991 and 1996). At this point in time more information is available to more people, via a wider array of transmission vehicles than at any other time in recorded history. Information flows locally, regionally, nationally, globally and into the universe faster and more frequently than ever before. A transformation in the economic and political infrastructures of Europe, Asia, and South Africa affords unparalleled access to global markets, while information technology provides speed and mobility.

While information transactions are burgeoning, birthrates in the "developed" nations are in decline, and aging "baby-boomers" in these nations are devoting resources to plans for long term financial viability. Pension funds now own 40% of all American publicly-listed corporations, and potentially up to 60% of the largest American organizations, with a similar trend emerging in the developed nations of Europe and Asia (Drucker, 1999). This brings the
issue of governance into vivid focus, and fuels stakeholder debates about "...for whose benefit businesses should be run" (Drucker, 1999).

Organizational designers are now challenged to find an optimal balance between horizontal end-to-end process orientation, and vertical-hierarchical orientation. This is sparking a concomitant shift in organizational roles, authorities, conventions, and cultures. Virtual project and task teams have become the convention for addressing time-specific organizational issues or delivery requirements. Communities of practice are the new frontier, where people within and across organizations converse to generate and exchange knowledge (Wenger, & Snyder, 2000). The implicit contract between organizations and their workforces has altered with the advent of the portfolio worker, and the increasing ratio of consultants, contractors, and part-timers, to full-time employees in organizations (Handy, 1989).

Knowledge, the new means of production, now resides within the members of the labour force. Members of the labour force are re-aligning their assumptions about how the world economy now operates, what "work" is, and what it means to be part of an organization. Inter-relational patterns of communication are shifting. The rules are changing about who talks to whom, when, and how. The content of discourse is shifting to focus on governance issues, and terms of engagement for joint ventures, as continental and global trade alliances emerge. Discourse process is altering as well: the scope of management now spans entire process chains, which require multi-stakeholder conversations aided by fibre optic cables, remote access, and satellite feeds that traverse political borders, ethnicities, and time zones.

In short, our organizational scope is simultaneously local, regional, national and global. Information is the world currency. The means of production reside within the
knowledge worker. Learning, career, and post-career strategies are self-managed.

Organizations are ever-more fluid in their deployment of human resources. End to end processes which span political and ethnic boundaries are managed as well as vertical organizational structures. Demographic, economic, and environmental trends are prompting multi-stakeholder conversations about ownership, stewardship, and the sustained viability of our ecosystem. Members of organizations in this era are required to think within parameters and dimensions that are easily perceived as "complex".

While we are daily mastering the technical aspects of information transmission, we are also challenged to examine the thinking and discourse processes that account for our current reality. The problems embedded in our current reality continue to elude resolutions which meet the needs of all constituents, because resolution strategies have employed the same thought processes and mental models that generated these problems in the first place.

Human beings everywhere are being forced to develop their capacity to think together – to develop collaborative thought and coordinated action. This capacity is also rapidly becoming acknowledged as central to management effectiveness. According to Alan Webber, former editor of the Harvard Business Review, conversation is the means by which people share and often develop what they know (Isaacs, 1993; Quinn, 1996).

Management Professor and Researcher Mario Cayer (1997) is a critic of conversation in "business" today. One of the central themes in his works (1996, 1997) is that conversation within organizations will continue to lead to economic, social, and political fragmentation, as long as individuals within organizations are working from mental models and a worldview rooted in the Scientific Revolution (Cayer, 1997; Berman, 1984; Harman and Hormann, 1990). Cayer's concern as it relates to dialogue, is that it will be used in organizations in a
diluted form, as a strategy for organizational learning (which does not inherently challenge the underlying assumptions that sustain “current state” organizations and society). The goal of organizational learning is to improve organizational effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness, if it continues to sustain organizations in their present form, is not in the best interests of society, humanity, or the planet (Cayer, 1997). Cayer believes in the selective use of dialogue within organizations (Cayer, 1997). It has a place as a means to engage organizations in a redefinition of their purpose (or “raison d’être”) (Cayer, 1997, p. 64), their role in society, and the nature of their interactions with the environment (Cayer, 1997).

This would seem to be somewhat at odds with Bohm’s assertions about the permutations and redemptive potential of dialogue. In the tract entitled “On Dialogue”, David Bohm emerged as a supporter of the notion of dialogue in an organizational context:

As we have said, you can also have a dialogue in a more limited way – perhaps with a purpose or a goal in mind... if people are not ready to be completely open in their communication, they should do what they can. (Bohm, 1990, pp.36-37)

In concluding an anecdote about an academic colleague facilitating dialogue with the senior executives of a corporation Bohm states: “Naturally, that sort of dialogue would be limited – but even so, it has considerable value” (Bohm, 1990, p. 36). Finally on this same theme, Bohm states “I think that if you can get this notion across in whatever situation – the germ of the notion of dialogue – if you can get people to look at it, it’s a step” (Bohm, 1990, p.39).

In the recently published book on dialogue authored by Linda Ellinor and Gienna Gerard (1998), eight luminaries in the field of leadership, organizational change, and dialogue consider the issue of dialogue in organizations. Without exception, each of the contributors to the dialogue that forms the foreword to this work adheres to the view that
dialogue has immense potential in organizations entering the new millennium (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998).

If the potential is real, so are the challenges associated with integrating dialogue into western organizational cultures. The challenges noted in this dialogue included:

1. Changing the belief systems of individuals within organizations to expand their notion of meaning beyond systems, measurement, and numbers, (see M. Wheatley’s comment in Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, p. xx).

2. Earning the trust of employees who have become cynical about organizational change, Process Consultants, and the churn that management fads have produced in their working lives, (see D. Markova’s comment about “vision pimps for the company” in Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, p.xxi).


4. Reconciling dialogue and “control issues”, i.e. creating “dangerously safe” environments within organizations where people can move out of roles that demand them to be “in control”, (see R. Patrick’s comment in Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, p. xxix).

5. Cultivating the skill set that dialogue demands, i.e. suspension of judgment, surfacing of assumptions, balancing inquiry and advocacy, slowing down the process of discourse to allow for silence and reflection, (see M. Wheatley’s commentary about people “telling their stories” in Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, p. xxxii, and pages 65–163).
6. Seeding a nonviolent revolution (a revolution in thinking) by reframing dialogue as a form of ritual remembering, versus a set of effectiveness techniques, intended to transform the concept and the practices of leadership within organizations, (see the interplay between M. Wheatley, D. Martin, J. Brown, J. Jaworski, R. Patrick, and P. Senge, in Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, pp.xxxii-xlii).

Ellinor and Gerard’s vision for the organization design of the future does acknowledge a need for a transformation of the paradigms that are the legacy of the Scientific Revolution, e.g. the “machine model of organization” (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, pp. 43-56).

The ramifications of moving from mechanistic or hierarchical organizational paradigms to the model of “self-organizing holograms” that Ellinor and Gerard advocate are revolutionary in scope. The process of transformation that these authors envision is clearly evolutionary, in that it builds on, rather than rejects, previous worldviews (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, pp. 43-54). See also Ellinor and Gerard (1993).

The self-organizing hologram model of organization is revolutionary because it will alter the processes that organizations use to make major decisions; conjointly, it will alter the pace at which “change” will be assimilated into organizational culture and functioning (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998, p. 54). It might also be considered a revolution of consciousness, in that the consciousness of the later (holographic) model of organization directs scrutiny toward the earlier (mechanistic) model of organization, which could provoke reevaluation, re-definition, or transformation in individual, organizational, or societal contexts.

Some compelling questions arise at this juncture, namely: What would motivate an organization to adapt to the self-organizing holographic model? What preconditions
precipitate such a shift in organizational identity? Will dialogue facilitate this adaptation? Have any organizations used dialogue to begin such a transformation? Did they use dialogue intending to transform to a new model of organization, or did they use dialogue to improve the effectiveness and sustain the viability of the existing organizational model? What were the intentions of the Process Consultants who introduced or facilitated dialogue in organizations? Were any cognizant of their intentions related to the use of dialogue as a transformative vehicle for organizational culture and design? Or conversely, were any cognizant of their intentions related to increasing organizational effectiveness and sustaining the existing organizational model? These are questions worthy of research. Given the motives and intentions stated in subsequent sections of this thesis, my primary focus will remain with the questions associated with Process Consultants.

Assumptions

This study was influenced by the following assumptions of the researcher:

1. Organizational cultures (the values, beliefs, mental models, the patterns of behaviour within which organizational members operate) are being challenged to transform at a rate of speed and to a degree of complexity that is outpacing known adaptive routines.

2. Organizational culture is transmitted and transformed in language. Discourse in organizations in the 1990s has been focused on tasks, solutions, and selling / advocating / influencing others.

3. Some organizations are exploring a form of discourse known as dialogue or dialogic conversation as a means to transform strategy and culture (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998; Jaworski, 1996; Senge, 1990).
4. External Process Consultants utilize language, and specifically discourse, as their primary means of contributing to sustainable change within client organizations.

5. External Process Consultants are capable of distinguishing dialogic conversations and their attributes from other process interventions within their repertoire (for example: problem solving, or decision making interventions).

6. External Process Consultants are cognizant of their intentions when they utilize dialogic conversation in client organizations.

7. There is a values base associated with Process Consulting. Dialogic conversation is congruent with these values. This is not meant to presume that other forms of consulting, or other intervention approaches are devoid of values.

8. Research into this realm will provide the researcher and the participants with reflective opportunities that may enhance learning in this area.

9. The views of “non-experts” are relevant to, and worthy of, research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

One purpose of the Literature Review in an academic paper is to locate the research in the body of work, or the academic writing most closely associated with the topic area. The Literature Review ought to define where the present work fits in relation to other works in the same genre.

I do not have a precise notion of where this work fits in the context of the published and non-published works that I have read, aside from my awareness that this thesis proposes neither new theory, nor a new methodological approach. Many of the works of the writers noted in the following pages have done either, or both. The unique feature or offering of this work, is that it is a study of the perceptions of Process Consultants’ non-expert use of dialogic conversation in organizational contexts.

I would not place this work in the genre of diffusion studies, which seek to ascertain the degree to which a concept has been integrated into the language and practice of a critical mass of individuals within a target population. The focus of this work is not about the concept of dialogic conversation, as much as it is about ten Process Consultant’s perceptions of its applicability in the context of their work and their repertoire of discourse based intervention techniques at a specific point in time. It is a study of how reality is socially constructed through thought and language. While the findings cannot be used to predict the outcomes of future Process Consultants’ experiences with dialogic conversation, this work is intended to provide a vivid and authentic representation of the thoughts and experiences of these participants. As such it is intended to provoke thought, further research, and learning-focused activity.
While this study is unique in its design, it is by no means unique in its reference to dialogic conversation, as an overview of the contents of this chapter reveals:

I. Theorists Who Have Distinguished Dialogue From Other Forms of Discourse

II. Theorists Who Have Written About Thought and Discourse Patterns In Organizations
   (i) Data Collection And Feedback Category
   (ii) Whole System Interactive Events

III. Authors Who Have Published To Broaden Awareness / Skilled Application Of Dialogue In Organizational Contexts

IV. Authors Who Have Sought To Employ Dialogic Discourse As One Of A Suite Of Interventions Intended To Renew Organizations Through Learning

V. Authors Who Perceive Dialogue As One Of A Suite Of Disciplines Relevant To Information Age Leaders / Consultants

This frame of reference has facilitated analysis of the data collected, and provided a means to recognize the contributions of each author studied.

I. Theorists who have distinguished dialogue from other forms of discourse

Though social anthropologists and historians trace the roots of dialogue as far back as 7000 B.C., or to indigenous populations in the Americas, the concept of dialogue has re-emerged in the works of theoreticians in the twentieth century (Eisler, 1990; Ellinor and Gerard, 1998; Isaacs, 1993).

Philosopher Martin Buber (1958, 1965) inferred that dialogue was a mode of exchange between individuals that cultivated a distinction between the individual, and the legacy of mental constructs acquired during enculturation in the individual’s social environment. Dialogue required a full appreciation of another’s perceptions of reality, while

In 1972, Bernard Lonergan brought new light to the works of John Woolman (1774), a textile merchant and ethical activist of the eighteenth century. Woolman developed a five step discourse method based on the precept of entering into discourse with a prior “I Am We” consciousness (Woolman, 1774; Lonergan, 1972; Nielsen, 1991). Lonergan credits Woolman’s usage of “I Am We consciousness in dialog” with ameliorating the relationship between eighteenth century money lenders and family farmers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and to reducing the prevalence of slavery from these regions long prior to its legislative abolishment (Lonergan, 1972; Nielsen, 1991). Woolman’s method subsequently emerged in the efforts of the American Quakers to enter into dialogue with the Gestapo during the escalation of the Second World War, and later in the works of AT & T Corporate Vice President Robert Greenleaf, who used the method in an organizational context to address discriminatory hiring practices (Nielsen, 1990; 1991).

Buber’s 1958 & 1965 I And Thou consciousness is distinguished from Woolman’s 1774 I Am We consciousness, in that the Woolman conceptualizes a “We”, which “...precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion...” (Lonergan, 1972, pp. 57-59). On the level of individual interaction this has the potential to involve a “...retreat from personal differentiation to vital unity...” (Lonergan, 1972, pp.57-59).

In other words, prior to “I” or to “Thou”, there is “We”. For example, during our mutual engagement in discourse, in an interactive sport, in the act of spiritual devotion, or physical love, we have the potential to disengage from our “I” or “Thou” ness, and regain our “Prior We”. In so doing, we “...undergo a suspension of individuality and fall back into a single stream of life...” (Lonergan, 1972, pp.57-59).
I Am We consciousness, when brought to discourse, is distinguished from collaborative or “win-win” approaches, in that collaboration or win-win presupposes the mutual focus of fundamentally separate individuals on a commonly desired outcome. The outcome has sufficient meaning or value to the individuals to motivate them to leverage their individual competencies and resources towards the pursuit of an outcome that they could not achieve as individuals. The outcome has meaning and value that is separately and individually defined. The outcome will mean one thing to me, and another to you, by virtue of our individuality and the uniqueness of the pattern of memory based experiences that make up our subjective reality. Thus for a moment in time we collaborate in a win-win approach which yields a mutually satisfactory outcome, which we subsequently each knit into the fabric of our separate lives.

I Am We consciousness yields an approach which avers that We preceded each of us, and our separate needs, and that an outcome that is sought from the Prior We will not only require “seeing” the issue from each other’s vantage point (empathy) i.e. what is best for you and what is best for me; it will require re-framing of the issue, as in: what can we invent for the “us”, that is good for the “us” beyond either you or I individually? This is clearly an approach that seeks to engage a meta-consciousness, as in: if I approach an issue from a Prior We, then what is not good for you in this issue is not good for me. This is so not because it is not good for you, and I am being mindful of your needs because I am committed to working with you to resolve this issue. It is this way because prior to each of us being individuals, there is “We”, a meta-consciousness. Therefore, you are me. Therefore what is not good for you, cannot be good for me either.

Woolman’s ontology is manifest in a five step discourse process which involves first: demonstrating respect for the world view of the others engaged in the issue. Second: exploring mutual concerns. Third: requesting help from the others in exploring the systemic elements of the issues (articulated by Woolman as “entanglements”). Fourth: exploring the others’ ideas for ameliorating the systemically entangled symptoms and issues. Fifth: gently
articulating the I's (in this case Woolman's) perceptions and potentially ameliorative approaches, and waiting for experimental results to emerge without pressing for a decisive next step (Neilson, 1991; Woolman, 1774).

In the 1980s, social psychologist Patrick de Mare envisioned a healing process for societal issues such as racism, alienation, and violence, which he termed "Socio Therapy". He brought large groups of people together in sustained conversation, with the intention of engaging them in an exploration of the dynamics within the group, and the dysfunctional family or cultural norms which engender social disease and dysfunction. His vision was that such a process would, through diffusion, result in "...altering the cultural meanings present within society" (Isaacs, 1993, p. 30; Ellinor & Gerard, 1998 p. 40).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, physicist David Bohm published and conducted seminars on dialogue (Bohm, 1990; Bohm, Factor, Garrett, 1991; Bohm, 1992). He has been credited with integrating the principles of quantum physics with Krishnamurti's (Holroyd, 1991) concepts on metacognition (the potential of thought to transform the human psyche), and the elements of collective reflection and shared meaning that emerged from the work of Patrick de Mare (Ellinor & Gerard, 1998).

Bohm (1980, 1990, 1992) made three important distinctions about human thought. First, our perceptual processes select and de-select elements from complex reality. We do not absorb the totality of a context or situation. We select and attend to an incomplete version of physical or temporal reality. In doing so, we lose the original context, and the relationships between the original elements in the context. We abstract from the original, and become attached to our own abstractions, tacitly assuming that these are the reality, rather than an approximation of the reality (Isaacs, 1993).

Second, we do not acknowledge that there is another intermediary between complex reality and our thoughts. This intermediary is memory. Each fragment of reality that we select is distilled through the filter of past experiences and accumulated beliefs (Cayer, 1996; Hayward, 1987). Our perceptions and our memory-based beliefs "...form a tightly
interlocking system of mutual feedback and interlocking support…” (Hayward, 1987, p.10)

If it happens that disconfirming evidence or experience indicates that our beliefs are not accurate, we experience fear. Rather than staying in the fear and uncertainty to glean its wisdom, we adopt replacement beliefs, often in such a short space of time that we limit ourselves from expanding our awareness of what is possible (Hayward, 1984). Third, many assumptions and beliefs are culturally installed and reinforced. We are en-culturated to resist explicitly examining these assumptions and beliefs, for doing so challenges our collective identity.

Bohm’s contribution to the theory and practice of dialogue is summarized as follows: “... bringing to the surface, and altering the “tacit infrastructure” of thought” (Isaacs, 1993, p. 30). Bohm suggested that as groups of people learned to watch and articulate the assumptions and pressures inherent in individual and collective thought, they might catch and alter their self defeating and self deceptive processes.

Though chronologically separated, the theoretical frameworks of Woolman and Bohm are congruent in several ways. First, both state the possibility of a meta-consciousness. Second, both seek to establish an exploratory tone to the discourse. This does not infer tentativeness. It makes explicit the principle that the discourse is generative, intended to be creative, intended to move individuals beyond individual memory and identity based positions. Third, both value slowing down the dialogic process. Neither approach would press for instant decisions and actions as outcomes from the discourse.

While both aver to a meta-consciousness, each theorist articulates their concepts uniquely. Woolman (1774) speaks of a “Prior We” which is eclipsed by individuation and has the potential to be re-experienced through the discourse method previously described. Bohm (1990; 1992) suggests that we explore how we think and speak together. He speaks of the possibility of moving beyond fragmented, memory based cognition, to achieving “coherent thought” or “meta-cognition” through the integrative and generative medium of dialogic discourse.
Several questions emerge at this point. First, does meta-cognition encompass or pre-suppose a “Prior We”? Would Woolman and Bohm as time travelers, cognizant of the cultural and linguistic norms of the twenty-first century, be echoing each other if engaged in an exploration of their previously articulated concepts? More importantly in relation to this thesis, what terms, what approaches, what advice would they have for Process Consultants whose belief systems pre-disposed them to contemplate the use of dialogic discourse in contemporary organizations?

II. Theorists who have written about thought and discourse patterns in organizations

The study of dialogic discourse in organizations easily broadens into a survey of those who have studied patterns of thought and discourse in organizational contexts. An effort to bring focus to this review limited its scope to works that my research indicated were anticipatory of, or congruent with, the principles of Bohmian dialogue. This prompted the elimination of the extensive body of linguistic-based studies of discourse. As a result, the selectivity of this Literature Review is ever more apparent.

Following Bunker and Alban's lead, (1997), I have used a framework that sorts organizational research and intervention methods into two categories: data collection & feedback methods, AND, whole system interactive events. Both categories emerge from the conceptual framework of “Organizational Development” (French, Bell, Zawacki, 1989; Sikes, Drexler, Gant, 1989; Bazigos & Burke, 1997).
1. Data Collection and Feedback Category

The works of Janis, (1972, 1982), Janis and Mann, (1977), and Whyte, (1989) offer analyses of the thinking, discourse, and group decision-making processes extant in several high-profile organizational contexts, (e.g. Office of the Prime Minister of Great Britain; NASA; Office of the President of the United States).

Janis (1972) cited three contributing factors for a phenomenon he labeled “Groupthink”. Factor one: group cohesion reigned as the predominant element considered in decision making. Factor two: the decision making group was insulated from the feedback of qualified “outsiders”. Factor three: the leader of the group actively lobbied for a particular course of action. When these factors combined, the group was likely to manifest the eight symptoms of Groupthink, and was equally likely to produce sub-optimal decisions (Janis, 1972, 1982). The thinking and discourse processes prevalent in Groupthink situations are in many ways, the “antithesis of dialogue” (Participant 9), and as such are included in this review for the purposes of contrast.

The first symptom of Groupthink is “Mindguards” (Janis, 1972, pp.197-198). Mindguards perform a self-censoring function. They occur as “self-talk” within the minds of individuals engaged in group problem solving or decision-making. Data and opinions that may have a bearing on the problem or decision that is the focus of the discourse are consciously kept out of the group discussion (Timmons, 1991). This is done under the guise of a variety of justifiable intentions. First, the time factor, as in: Oh I can’t bring this up right now, it will just get us off on a tangent that we don’t have time for. Second, the relevance factor, as in: I’m not really sure if this is relevant to what’s being talked about right now, so
I'd better just hold off. Third, the closure factor, as in: Well, now I can't bring this up because it looks like the group members have really made up their minds.

The second symptom of Groupthink is "The Illusion of Invulnerability" (Janis, 1972, pp.197-198; Timmons, 1991, p.3). This occurs when cohesion focused, conceptually insulated, leader-dependent groups develop an inflated degree of confidence and sense of competence about solving problems and making decisions on issues that are the focus of group discourse. If their sense of competence grows to the point where group members begin to believe that any decision reached will be successful, they have fallen prey to the Illusion of Invulnerability. Ironically, this illusion can increase the vulnerability of the group. (Timmons, 1991).

The third symptom of Groupthink is "The Belief in the Inherent Morality of the Group" (Janis, 1972, pp.197-198; Timmons, 1991, p.3). It has been argued that beliefs are the foundation of our identity, and the genesis of our behaviours. In order to sustain our sense of who we are as individuals and as group members, we need to believe in the viability, and at times the "rightness" of our beliefs. When moved to the extreme, we speak of the righteousness of our beliefs, as in: "...God is on our side..." (Timmons, 1991, p.3). Beliefs of this potency relieve individuals of the responsibility for justifying or validating decisions according to rational processes. We are moved into the realm of morality, away from having to produce evidence for our assertions.

The fourth symptom of Groupthink is "Rationalization" (Janis, 1972, pp.197-198). This occurs when individuals in discourse overlook legitimate objections to a proposed solution or course of action, because a more compelling need exists. This need is not explicitly defined as "more compelling". It tacitly becomes the pre-eminent decision-making
criteria. In a video re-enactment of the decision making process which led to the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster (Timmons, 1991), Dr. Janis theorized that the engineering team implicated in the launch decision withdrew their previously strenuous objections to the launch not because the data pointing to problematic O-rings changed, but because the risk of ostracism for continuing to advocate for a delay of the launch became ever more certain.

Groupthink symptom five is referred to as “Stereotypes of Out-Groups” (Janis, 1972, pp.197-198; Timmons, 1991, p.4). In this context group cohesiveness creates a “we / them” perception which occurs when the “we” group uses language which objectifies the “out groups”, and distinguishes themselves favourably from “them”. Under these circumstances receptiveness to even the most valid feedback from out groups reduces, and the thought and discourse processes of the we group become ever more isolated.

Symptom six of Groupthink is “Self Censorship” (Janis, 1972, pp.197-198). This occurs when group members minimize the importance of self-held thoughts and arguments because they run counter to their perception of group opinion. Again, the irony is potent. In democratized nations and work places, examples such as the decisions which led to the Bay of Pigs, the American involvement in Vietnam, the Watergate scandal, the Challenger disaster, the Iran-Contra affair, are cited as those in which individuals with legitimate concerns self-censored their thought and discourse processes (Whyte, 1989).

Symptom seven of Groupthink is “Direct Pressure” (Janis, 1972, pp.197-198; Timmons, p.4). Direct pressure is used to signal that it is against the group’s interest to raise questions or to make statements that are counter to the perceived agreement taking shape within the group. This may manifest as sarcasm, ridicule, or an exaggerated projection of what it could mean if the dissenting views were taken seriously. The focus shifts from
exploring the wisdom in the dissenting view, to agreeing on the unwanted outcomes.

Groupthink symptom eight is referred to as the “Illusion of Unanimity” (Janis, 1972, pp. 197-198). At this point, the cumulative effects of the prior symptoms result in the group converging on a decision. The “inevitability” of the decision is articulated and reinforced by group members. Those who have experienced doubts about the decision may begin to experience a sense of relief. This may have more to do with welcoming the end of an internal moral struggle, and less to do with a burgeoning sense of confidence about the validity or integrity of the group decision (Timmons, 1991). Janis (1972) indicates that the Illusion of Unanimity is created and sustained by people continuing to self-censor, while choosing to accept that silence at this juncture of the discourse, means consent.

Groupthink can create a series of problematic group process dynamics (Janis, 1972). First, discourse becomes limited to a narrow range of alternatives before an exploration of the full array of options has occurred. Second, the “non-obvious” risks of the chosen course of action remain below the surface. Third, the group neglects to investigate how some of the courses of action that have been rejected could be reframed, altered, or made potentially viable. Fourth, little or no effort is made to obtain the counsel or perspective of individuals who are not part of the group. Fifth, a selective bias evolves toward “outsider” information that reaches the group. The bias serves to diminish or devalue the merit of the information. Sixth, little or no time is spent exploring obstacles to implementation that may jeopardize the preferred course of action.

Actions to mitigate the occurrence of Groupthink are advised at several stages of group development (Janis, 1972). A pre-emptive step would be to provide several groups (with different leaders) with the same questions or issues to resolve. At the launching stage, Janis
(1972) is explicit about the importance of the leader framing the issue(s) in neutral terms, without demonstrating any bias towards a particular resolution strategy. During the life-cycle of a group or an issue, moving the group into smaller sub-groups to stimulate divergent thinking is advised. Other preventative measures include normalizing the role of critical evaluator. This is intended to result in the role being imparted to each member of the group, or assigned to one group member per meeting on a rotating basis. Janis (1972) extends this notion by recommending the involvement of outsiders to challenge assumptions and provide reality checks, either within group meetings, or by requiring group members to share the content of their discussions with outsiders to gauge reaction and gain feedback.

Perhaps his most innovative advice on the theme of prevention is the suggestion that an additional meeting be held after the group has converged on a decision, to re-evaluate the entire issue. Is this “sober second thought” or, structured reflection? It would be interesting to know if and how this is put into practice in organizational contexts, where “time constraints” are so often the conveniently named nemeses of process oriented interventions.

Whyte (1989) extended the work of Janis by analysing the interplay between individual frames of reference, and group dynamics in decision-making. He avers that a more comprehensive explanation of sub-optimal thought and discourse patterns that correlate to excessively risky group decisions, must include mention of the “dominant points of view” present at the onset of the discourse, as well as the concept of “Group Polarization” (Whyte, 1989). Like Janis (1972), Whyte (1989) perceives the framing of choices relevant to an issue as critical to the group’s perception of its range of options. Whyte (1989) moves beyond this initial premise to state that “decision fiascoes” are the outcome of group process where options are subjectively represented or framed “…in the domain of losses” (Whyte, 1989, p.42).
Whyte (1989) concludes that Janis' (1972) focus on "cohesion" provides an insightful yet incomplete analysis of the dynamics of sub-optimal thinking, discourse, and decision-making. From Whyte's perspective, the conceptual framework must be broadened to acknowledge that at the outset of group discourse focused on resolving an organizational or public policy issue, there will exist within members of the group, subjective versions of reality which project a preferred outcome. This factor, coupled with "pressures for uniformity" which are consistent with the "cohesion" pre-disposition cited by Janis (1972), move groups to weigh decision choices that are "...consistent with the initial risky preferences of the majority of [group] members" (Whyte, 1989, p.42).

At this point, "Polarization" occurs. Polarization is described as discourse that "amplifies" the degree to which the risky option(s) that were represented by the majority views, are preferred. If these options, these subjective versions of reality, are then framed and perceived by group members as a choice between losses, the group's appetite for risk will rise beyond that of its average member i.e. *if we stand by while "X" group does "Y" we may lose 50% of our "Z"*. Alternatively *if we initiate action "W", we know we'll have some loss of "Q", but we'll probably lose less than 20% of our "Z"*. Thus errors in the judgements made by groups are not singly the result of cohesion-focused group dynamics. They are the result of a dynamic interplay between group dynamics and individuals' selective perceptions of reality that generate the discourse, and frame the choices available to the group.

Argyris, Putnam, and McLain (1985) in the development of "Action Science", made apparent the links between thinking, talking, learning, and organizational effectiveness. This body of work provided many distinctions pertinent to the study of dialogic discourse. Among them are the ladder of inferential thinking, the strategies, and consequences of single and
double loop learning, the mapping of the relationship between the tacit and the explicit in organizational communication, and placing emphasis on reflecting out loud as a behaviour conducive to learning-focused conversations (Argyris & Schón, 1974; Argyris, Putnam, McLain, 1985; Argyris, 1990; Argyris, 1992).

Within the construct of the "ladder of inference" is embedded the admonition to make the unconscious steps in cognitive processing conscious, by deliberately slowing down and becoming aware of the transitions that occur in our thinking as data is selected from the environment, given meaning in relation to personal experience and enculturation, and then related to causal theories which create and construct our realities (Argyris, Putnam, McLain, 1985). Argyris speaks of an inferential ladder where Bohm speaks of abstraction, distortion, and fragmentation of thought.

“Single loop learning” (Argyris, 1990) is defined as learning which is provoked by the emergence of a “problem”, or problematic symptoms within a specific context. Learning occurs when an ameliorative strategy has been designed and implemented to eradicate the symptoms, and restore the contextually specific system to the parameters that existed prior to the emergence of the “problem”. Argyris (1990) uses the example of a furnace thermostat to elucidate this distinction. When the ambient temperature in a building falls below the temperature set in the thermostat, the thermostat signals the building’s heating system to restore the temperature to the setting programmed into the thermostat.

When this concept is related to organizational contexts, it is conceived as learning which occurs to solve the symptoms of an organizational problem, without surfacing the root causes or issues which are the genesis of the symptoms (Argyris, 1990). Argyris, in Overcoming Organizational Defenses, (1990) pointed to the experience of a CEO and
Executive Team in a decentralized organization as an example of single loop learning. The CEO was informed by the Team that relations between divisional and corporate groups were problematic. Four symptoms of the systemic issues were advanced. The CEO struck a task force, and the four problematic areas were addressed with action plans to eradicate the immediate symptoms. None of the action plans addressed the genesis of the symptoms. Thus, Argyris (1990) forecast that while the immediate symptoms were addressed, the unresolved issues between these two elements of the organization would re-emerge in another guise. Thus the “solutions” were flawed. Argyris (1990) also theorized that the flaws were “designed” (i.e. unstated choices of the Executive Team) rather than the result of ignorance.

“Double loop learning” (Argyris, 1990) was proposed as a process intervention which would provide the Executive Team with the means to surface unstated problematic organizational issues constructively, without long-term dependence on “expertise” beyond the team. The process was intended to recognize the symptoms of an issue, and to seek to come to a common understanding of the thinking processes that sustained their “root causes”. It revolved around an exploration of the reasoning, or theories that the Executive Team members used, to explain their actions.

Thus symptoms of problematic organizational functioning cannot be satisfied in the long term, if the process for identifying and implementing solutions consists of describing the incidence of the immediate symptoms, discarding existing actions, and designing replacement actions, while consciously avoiding thought or discourse which poses questions about the underlying genesis of the symptoms. The reasoning that underlies the system’s existing parameters and dynamics must be examined in a way that reduces defensiveness, enhances interpersonal competence, and promotes future application of “double loop”
inquiry in the interests of organizational effectiveness.

Where Argyris made the profound distinction between single and double loop learning, Bohm anticipated an extension to this construct, and to the work of Krishnamurti (Holroyd, 1991) when he spoke of dialogic discourse as a potential vehicle for achieving coherence in multi-stakeholder thinking and talking. This is a process which consciously deconstructs thinking patterns to illuminate the selectivity, distortion, and fragmentation in such thinking patterns, and which then seeks to engage participants in reflecting, and consciously rebuilding their mental constructs, or cognitive maps. It is in the deliberate slowing down of the inferential cognitive processing, in the acknowledgment of the incoherence, and in the holding of the tension between what we have known and what we do not know, that an opportunity emerges for meta-cognition - a conscious, coherent, collective thinking. This has been referred to as “pro-prioperception”, a state of collective or simultaneous meta-consciousness, or meta-cognition (Isaacs, 1993).

Bohm’s conceptualization extends Argyris’ distinction of double loop learning, in that it provokes thought beyond the goal of interpersonal effectiveness which is the focus of Argyris’ work (Edmonson, 1996). Effectiveness, as perceived by Argyris, connotes an adaptive stance or paradigm, as in we are seeking to become ever more effective at adapting to the global economic environment that surrounds us.

The Bohmian construct of pro-prioperception moves beyond the adaptive stance, to the generative stance, as in we can create the reality that emerges around us. We have the potential to move from adapting, to recreating ourselves and our society, when we think and talk together coherently. Dialogue is thus a vehicle for transformative learning. Learning in this sense refers to a heightened consciousness or awareness that encompasses adaptation,
and strives for invention.

Like Chris Argyris, Gareth Morgan (1986), brought meaning-making processes in organizations into the foreground of research and theory development. Morgan proposed the study of metaphor as a route to connecting with the tacit cognitive models which shape the decisions and actions of organizational members; the inference being that such analysis would enhance management and organizational design interventions:

Our images or metaphors are theories or conceptual frameworks. Practice is never theory free, for it is always guided by an image of what one is trying to do. The real issue is whether or not we are aware of the theory guiding our actions. (Morgan, 1986, p.336)

Morgan envisioned a two-step process to improving the coherence of thinking and acting in an organizational context. Step one required reading or interpreting the organization’s history and current issues through a series of metaphoric lenses.

The metaphors are elicited from members of the organization. They are fortified with a set of archetypal metaphors (mechanistic, organismic, holographic, cultural, political, psychic prisons, flux, domination) derived from organizational theory, philosophy, and economics (Morgan, 1986). The discipline of perceiving the organization through multiple perspectives becomes a conscious and essential act that counters the human tendency to prematurely fix on a fragmented and personal version of reality.

Step two advocates an approach that parallels the constant comparative method utilized in “Grounded Theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). An iterative process of critical evaluation takes place that involves comparing, contrasting, and integrating the explanations generated from each of the metaphors noted above. As in Grounded Theory, this process requires each researcher or analyzer of organizational functioning to acknowledge that their own epistemology will predispose them to weight the perspective of
one of these metaphors as preeminent (Morgan, 1986).

What emerges from this endeavour is the "most effective story-line", (Morgan, 1986), an interpretative analysis of events or issues within a defined organizational context. The story-line is not positioned as objective reality. It is positioned as an opinion, or as a subjective construction of reality, with a corresponding set of recommended actions to enhance organizational design or effectiveness (Morgan, 1986). Thus the process moves from diagnostic description, to evaluation, opinion, and recommended interventions; similar to the approaches outlined in the contemporary literature on consultation (Schein, 1999; Block, 1981; Bellman, 1990; Kilmann, 1989; Lippitt & Lippitt, 1986). It is the insistence on experiencing the organizational reality from diverse vantage points distilled through metaphor, the acknowledgment of epistemological bias, and the parallel to constant comparative method in Grounded Theory which distinguishes Morgan’s approach from that of the authors noted previously.

A motivating factor behind Morgan’s work on Images of Organization (1986), was an intention “…to develop a way of thinking that can cope with ambiguity and paradox…” in organizational contexts (Morgan, 1986, p. 342). This is not far from Bohm’s intention to develop dialogue as a way of exploring and bringing coherence to multi-stakeholder reflective thinking and talking, so that we may approach complex issues with the ability to re-create our social, political, economic, and environmental realities (Bohm, 1990).

Of interest, yet far beyond the scope of this research, are these questions: what concepts have diffused from the works of these theorists into the thoughts, discourse patterns, and choices of Information Age process consultants, and organizational leaders? What predisposes adoption and application of these concepts? If the opportunity were available to
review their works in retrospect, would these theorists seek a broader audience, wider implementation of their ideas – and if so – what, if anything, would they alter to generate such an outcome?

The next segment of this chapter examines theorists who intentionally engage entire organizational systems in change-focused discourse. The questions posed above are equally compelling in this context.

2. Whole System Interactive Events

Large group interventions draw from the intellectual traditions of Social Psychology, Psychoanalytic Theory, and Systems Theory (Bunker & Alban, 1997). They are intended to engage the entire system in simultaneous change, by drawing from the wisdom, and upon the commitment-making capability of all organizational stakeholders, including constituent groups outside the organization. Distinctly present as well, is the inference that whole system work is inherently more collaborative, less hierarchically selective or exclusionary, and therefore more democratic than data gathering and feedback methods (Emery, 1969; Emery & Trist, 1973; Emery & Thorsrud, 1976; Emery, 1977; Gustavsen, 1992; Mindell, 1992; Oshry, 1995; Bunker & Alban, 1997; Owen, 1997).

Most significant in the development of this thesis, were the works of Emery and Trist on Social Ecology (1973), the works of Bjorn Gustavsen on the role of language in systemic change (1992), the work of Arnold Mindell on Deep Democracy (1992), and the works of Oshry (1995) and Owen (1997) as exemplars of large system interventions.

In Towards a Social Ecology (1973), Emery and Trist speak of an ever-increasing incursion of turbulence into the lives of humans living in post-industrial societies. Turbulence and complexity are a reflection of the degree to which our economies,
technologies, political, and social systems are becoming intertwined on a global scale.

Three maladaptive defenses were cited as responses towards social and environmental turbulence. The first of these was the depth dimension, in which people were coping with complexity and turbulence by attending to the superficial and exclusionary, and in so doing, were denying the depth of their own psyche, and its connections to the “deeper roots of humanity” (Emery & Trist, 1973).

The second maladaptive defense, the means-end dimension, is manifest in the fragmentation of the social field into a set of component fields that were internally integrated, yet increasingly alienated or from each other. Organizational “silos” are one such example. The final maladaptive defense was cited as the transverse dimension, and was characterized by dissociation, indifference, cynicism and a reduction in individuals’ willingness or intention to coordinate their behaviour with others (Emery & Trist, 1973).

In a particularly sobering passage, the authors raise their concerns about the evolutionary implications of these phenomena:

Of particular concern are the effects on man’s perception of himself and his world. As Arendt and Kuhn have argued, these types of changes are fundamental to the evolution of society and of science. It is assumptions about these things that tend to determine the way men use and develop their technological apparatus. (Emery & Trist, 1973, p.78)

The authors envisioned a process and a set of principles that would enable people to engage in discourse about common values, and to use those values to design adaptive, self-regulating social systems and organizations (Emery & Trist, 1973, pp. 72-79). These ideas launched the development of participative organizational design methodology, which draws on sociotechnical design principles, and engages consultants or researchers, and a diagonal slice of organizational stakeholders, in change initiatives (Gustavsen, 1992).
Bjorn Gustavsen's *Dialogue and Development* (1992) brought many of these concepts into focus in a specific context, and made a tangible connection between systemic change and discourse. His work is an overview of a five year tri-partite workplace development scheme in Sweden, known as the LOM. This initiative brought together union and management representatives from 150 public and private institutions, as well as sixty researchers. Its purpose was to design and develop new forms of enterprise, co-determined by labour and management, which were supportive and representative of the social, economic, and political context. Equally important was the intention to link research to working life in a concrete way (Gustavsen, 1992).

Gustavsen's thesis, informed by the works of Habermas (1984, 1987) and Wittgenstein (1953), is interpreted as: research demands the generation of new knowledge or insight. This infers a restructuring of thought, language, and discourse. Such discourse must include and engage those for whom the knowledge is to have significance, and will require the need to reconstruct practice. What was unique about Gustavsen's research design, was that it focused on research, language, and practice. The project produced more than written words, more than a report with recommended changes: it engaged three stakeholder groups, it exposed these groups to a discourse process known as "democratic dialogue", and it created new forums and processes for stakeholder interaction.

Gustavsen distinguished democratic dialogue using the following thirteen criteria:

1. The dialogue is a process of exchange: ideas and arguments move to and fro between the participants.
2. It must be possible for all concerned to participate.
3. This possibility for participation is, however, not enough. Everybody should also be active. Consequently each participant has an obligation not only to put forth his or her own ideas but also to help others to contribute their ideas.
4. All participants are equal.
5. Work experience is the basis for participation. This is the only type of experience which, by definition, all participants have.
6. At least some of the experience which each participant has when entering the dialogue must be considered legitimate.
7. It must be possible for everybody to develop an understanding of the issues at stake.
8. All arguments which pertain to the issues under discussion are legitimate. No argument should be rejected on the ground that it emerges from an illegitimate source.
9. The points, arguments, etc., which are to enter the dialogue must be made by a participating actor. Nobody can participate "on paper" only.
10. Each participant must accept that other participants can have better arguments.
11. The workrole, authority, etc., of all the participants can be made subject to discussion – no participant is exempt in this respect.
12. The participants should be able to tolerate an increasing degree of difference of opinion.
13. The dialogue must continuously produce agreements which can provide platforms for action. Note that there is no contradiction between this criterion and the previous one. The major strength of a democratic system compared to all other ones is that it has the benefit of drawing upon a broad range of opinions and ideas which inform practice, while at the same time being able to make decisions which can gain the support of all participants. (Gustavsen, 1992, pp. 3 - 4)

Although Gustavsen expected these criteria to operate as points of departure, I have not been able to find subsequent reference to any evolutionary shifts in their architecture or use over the five year period.

There are both similarities and departures from Bohmian dialogue in Gustavsen's criteria. Though no reference was made to Bohm in this work, there are parallels on several fundamental principles. There is an emphasis on equality, on questioning and examining all that is within the context of the discourse, and an inference that if "understanding" of the issues at stake by all participants is the goal, then having one's ideas examined is a likely expectation. Finally, there is a requirement for tolerating difference.
Aside from the obvious bias for work experience as the basis for discourse in Gustavsen’s criteria, the areas of divergence from Bohmian dialogue include an absence of emphasis on reflection; either reflecting inwardly, or reflecting on what has been said by another. There is an absence of reference to surfacing assumptions, or to making the tacit explicit. There are several references to argument or persuasion-based discourse. There is also a bias for the production of agreements that serve as the basis for future action.

These contrasts are noted for the purpose of clarification, and are in no way intended to diminish either discourse model. Several elements of Gustavsen’s work are significant to this thesis. First, is the principle that advocates for multi-stakeholder active participation in organizational design research. This runs in parallel to Bohm’s principles of creating a microcosm of the societal system in the dialogue, and, of engaging in a conversation among equals. Second, is Gustavsen’s emphasis on the need to restructure language, (i.e. for participants to learn, and to engage in “democratic dialogue”), as a prerequisite to achieving innovative, community sustaining, organizational design. Third, is the recognition that in order to move beyond design, to successful and sustainable implementation which has organizational and social impact, all stakeholders need to perceive the relevance and the value of the research. These second and third elements parallel Argyris’ (1990) contention that an examination and re-structuring of language has the potential to alter entrenched patterns of ineffective or defensive behaviour in organizational contexts. Gustavsen (1992) does not, in contrast to Argyris (1990), focus on the concomitant need to re-examine or revise the entrenched societal values that frame perception, and manifest in language.
Gustavsen's approach was compared to other community participation studies in a cross-cultural survey by Payne (1998). While Payne chides Gustavsen for providing few details from the many tri-partite initiatives which emerged from the LOM project to support his thesis, Payne does concur that participative designs, participative language, and the capacity of all participants to use such language, are crucial to the generation of shared identity and commitment (Payne, 1998).

Payne also presents a paradox. The generation of shared identity and commitment produces a parallel sector of society or the community, which includes all those who did not participate. It is Payne's assertion that this factor alone has a political charge which cannot be ignored. Perhaps the corollary to this insight is that large group interventionists would not expect one event, or even one five year tri-partite project, to complete the process of engaging all stakeholders in the generation of a preferred future.

Arnold Mindell's "Process-Oriented Psychology" (1992), developed on the foundation principle of Deep Democracy, has much to contribute to whole system interactive event theory. His body of work draws from Taoist and Zen Buddhist philosophy, and the theoretical frameworks of Einstein (the theories of non-locality, and the fluidity of reality), Feynman (theory of anti-matter), Maxwell (the reversal of destructive entropic processes), Jung (synchronicity / the interplay of the unconscious and conscious which transcends individuality), Gestalt (emphasis on process), Rogers (unconditional positive regard for the individual), and systems theory in physics, economics, and politics (Mindell, 1992). For the purpose of this thesis, the unique contributions provided by Mindell include the principles of "Deep Democracy", an explanation of the impact of "Field Theory" on human thought and discourse, and the distinction of "Awareness" as an alternative to ego development.
Deep democracy is based on two epistemological beliefs. The first belief posits that individuals and the world are engaged in a reciprocal and ever-changing process. The world assists us in becoming "our entire selves", while we assist the world "in becoming whole" (Mindell, 1992, p. 5). The second belief requires us to value all parts of ourselves, as well as all viewpoints beyond ourselves.

In practice, this requires a full expression and explication of all points of view and all feelings associated with an issue or event. Most importantly, it requires participants to tune into incongruent communication and behaviour, and to surface disavowed, repressed, minority opinions. These are the horizons for awareness, learning, and creative social and organizational design.

Equally intriguing is Mindell's analogy that the world exists like a "field" in modern physics theory. "Fields are natural phenomena that include everyone, are omnipresent, and exert forces upon things in their midst" (Mindell, 1992, p.15). We experience fields on many levels and through a variety of sensory stimuli. Fields are ever-evolving. All fields interrelate. All events, from the cellular to the cosmic, are inter-connected.

Psychophysical fields exist, as do physical (magnetic) fields. They perform an organizing function. Mindell (1992) suggests that fields exist in dynamic relationship to "roles". Roles can be expressed through individuals, yet are greater than, and independent of one individual. Conversely, individuals are more complex and have an identity beyond the roles that they manifest. Thus, a role is greater than an individual, and an individual is greater than a role (Mindell, 1992; Lewis, Wajsman, 1999):
...roles, and the relationships between them create a field, within which we exist and move as apparent individuals. This field has the ability to affect the individual and the group both causally and non-causally. The field contains matter, space, time, but also emotions, awareness, etc. Roles, then, are expressions of fundamental patterns, or ways of being, waiting for people to bring them to life. These fundamental roles and patterns are accessible to us through our unconscious processes, the same unconscious processes which manifest themselves as non-rational problems, and conflicts. (Lewis & Wajsman, 1999. p.7)

Organizations are physical and metaphysical entities, represented by buildings, work designs, processes, beliefs, espoused values, actual behaviour, and human emotions. The field elements of an organization are invisible and omnipresent. They manifest in the thoughts, the dreams, of individuals; in the stories that individuals tell and repeat about their groups; and in the shared beliefs that define the ethos of the organization and distinguish it from others.

Mindell's work on fields indicates that they inherently contain the potential to manifest opposing energy, or polarization. Thus where one pole of a field is present (i.e. clarity of mandate or purpose in an organizational context), the opposite will also exist, (i.e. uncertainty about future direction), and will manifest in a physical, cognitive, emotional, or spiritual event for one or more members of the organization. The principle is, where one element, or role, within a field exists, its opposite will also exist.

If censored, the roles will polarize, and the opposite or minority role will covertly block the work of the members of the organization. When roles within a field become acutely polarized, particularly into majority, minority stances, the roles often become fixed or integrated into individual members' identities. When this occurs, participants are likely to project the least acknowledged, least appreciated elements of their own persona onto the individuals who represent the opposite polarity or view. The potential for integrative and generative learning is lost.
Alternatively, if the disavowed viewpoint is valued, explored, and owned in some way by each member of the organization, the process triggered by the initially disavowed viewpoint can become the source of generative learning for the organization. In the process, the initially polarized and personalized “roles”, are shared by all members of the organization. The polarity loses its charge and its ability to control the unconscious process of the organization’s members. The issue, the field, and its actors are transformed.

Developing ever more sensitive levels of consciousness, or “awareness” enables individuals to move beyond their ego-bound identities: Awareness is an:

...objective alertness that notices inner experiences and outer events but can also lead to emptiness [absence of ego] and free creative action. It means openness to ourselves and others and also the capacity to temporarily enter any one of the streams of life. It means remembering our whole selves in the midst of chaos, listening to the voices of those we like, and also experimenting with becoming our seemingly impossible opponents. Above all, awareness will not be limited to individual life but will characterize the group mind as well. (Mindell, 1992, p.152)

Awareness “...is the power that gives us ongoing access to new states of consciousness and as yet unborn parts of ourselves and the world” (Mindell, 1992, p.73).

Both Mindell (1992) and Johnson (1992) have made outstanding contributions to the research on thought and discourse by broadening problem-solving and conflict resolution theoretical frameworks to encompass the concept of “polarity management”. Both perceive the importance of bringing all elements of polarities (i.e. symptoms, roles, outcomes) into conscious discourse, with the intention of surfacing and valuing their inherent wisdom. The unique contribution of Mindell (1992) in this regard, is his linkage of “polarities” with field theory, role theory, and conflict theory, in an integrated methodological approach.

Barry Oshry (1995) has developed an experiential learning simulation that enables participants to experience systems, or fields, at work in an organizational context. In his book
Seeing Systems (1995), Oshry describes the outcome of observing for over twenty-five years, the pattern of dynamics that emerge when hypothetical, layered organizational systems are brought to life. Participants seeking to learn experientially about power, powerlessness, and leadership, are assigned staff positions within the organization(s). The settings for the simulations vary from hotels for shorter programs, to a secluded residential conference facility for longer sessions where power and resource based echelons of the “system” are reflected in the facilities and options available to the stratified group of participants.

The simulations and the book share the same purpose, which is to enable those who encounter either, to overcome “system blindness” (Oshry, 1995). In Mindell’s (1992) terms, this would translate into bringing to the participants’ awareness, the previously unconscious or disavowed processes that frame thought, discourse, and action.

Oshry’s simulation methodology creates an organization or system, assigns positions, and structures interaction, by assigning position based tasks, and inserting debriefing sessions into the group process. During the “Time Out Of Time” or debriefing sessions, participants are asked to step out of role and activity, and engage in reflective discourse about the dynamics emerging in the system. Oshry’s intention is that participants become aware of their “…part in the context of the whole…”, and their “…present in the context of the past…” (Oshry, 1995, p. xiv).

In Argyris’ (1990) terms, this would mean becoming aware of how our assessment, or “framing” of a situation, influences the range of options we perceive available to us, and how this influences our design of subsequent actions. It would mean becoming aware of the role of memory-based cognitive processing in our framing of situations. It would mean acknowledging the subjective nature and therefore the diverse array of meanings and
inferences derived from the "same" event.

In Mindell's (1992) terms, Oshry's (1995) design creates an organizational field, which provokes the manifestation of archetypal roles. The works of Mindell (1992) and Johnson (1992) would influence participants in Oshry's simulations to focus their reflective discourse on the wisdom inherent in the "polarities", or polarized roles emerging in the group.

Congruence between Mindell, Oshry, and Bohm's work is evident in the intent to raise awareness of our tendency to fragment and distort reality, and to identify with our thoughts. Each are proponents of thought and discourse processes that seek to discern connectivity and inter-relationship as an alternative to cause and effect logic. Bohmian dialogue, Mindell's deep democracy, and Oshry's seeing systems require the development of reflective acuity, as well as a heightened ability to discern and experience dissonance or incongruity in internal as well as external reality, and to explore the incongruity for the wisdom awaiting discovery.

Despite revealing our limitations, both Bohm and Mindell wrote from an abiding belief in our capacity to transcend our own ego states, to achieve meta-consciousness, or in Woolman's terms, to speak and listen from a "prior we" so that we may co-create, rather than adapt to our realities (Lonergan, 1972).

In relating the works of "data collection and feedback theorists" to those of "whole system interventionists", the theme of fragmentation of thought and discourse persists. Janis and Mann spoke of groupthink; Argyris of the ladder of inference; Morgan of our lack of awareness of the metaphors which shape our perceptions. Emery and Trist spoke of the defensive cognitive routines of people coping with complexity and turbulence. Gustavsen spoke of the challenges
inherent in endeavouring to create integrating mechanisms and new discourse patterns among unions, management, and researchers in Sweden. Mindell, and Bohm spoke of the planetary implications of replacing *without awareness* one belief system for another. Each of these is a call to action.

What follows below is an overview of authors who have published to broaden awareness, or provoke the skilled application of dialogic discourse in organizational settings.

### III. Authors who have published to broaden awareness / skilled application of dialogue in organizational contexts

Ellinor and Gerard (1998) have created what could easily be interpreted as a textbook on dialogue, complete with history, theory, distinguishing characteristics, current context, competency requirements, and guidelines for integrating dialogue into workplace discourse. Flick (1998) has published a more abbreviated and less theory-oriented primer than the Ellinor and Gerard work. Flick’s 1998 volume on the **Understanding Process**, a self-coined term for dialogue, is both practical, and with the exception of brief mentions of the works of Buber, is virtually silent on the contributions of prior theorists and authors in this genre.

Isaacs (1993), a diligent and articulate interpreter of Bohm, has published extensively in journals and mainstream periodicals in what is perceived in this thesis as an attempt to raise awareness, normalize or legitimize dialogic discourse in organizational contexts, and engender interest in his research at MIT. Laiken (1997), writing for an audience of OD practitioners, has integrated case studies from her own consulting practice with the works of Bohm (1990) on dialogue; Johnson (1992) on polarity management; and Argyris (1990) on mental models, with an intention to increase readers’ awareness of when, why, and how to incorporate dialogic discourse into an OD intervention strategy. With similar intent, yet less
analytical rigour, The Bay Area OD Network devoted an entire journal issue to the applied usage of dialogue in organizational contexts (Vol. 13, No. 2. Summer, 1994). Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts, & Kleiner (1994) contributed a “fieldbook” for readers interested in applying the concepts introduced in Senge’s earlier interpretive work, entitled The Fifth Discipline (1990). Dialogue is extensively referred to in both volumes in the chapters on “Team Learning in Organizations”.

IV. Authors who have sought to employ dialogic discourse as one of a suite of interventions intended to renew organizations through learning

Crossan, Lane, and White (1999) state that language both preserves what has been learned in organizational contexts, and facilitates additional learning. Learning in organizational contexts has been conceptualized as a four phase social and psychological process: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing. Dialogue is positioned as a discourse strategy relevant to the integrative phase, which entails “… the development of shared understanding… [via the integration of work group member’s cognitive maps] and “… taking coordinated action through mutual adjustment” (Crossan, Lane, White, 1999, p.525).

These authors are not alone in their conceptualization of dialogue as a prior and efficacious step towards coordinated action. The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook provides a variant of dialogue, known as “skillful discussion”, which shares this action bias (Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts & Kleiner, 1994). Jaworski (1996) spoke of dialogic discourse as a preparatory phase to scenario planning in his days at Royal Dutch Shell. The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) authored works such as The Art of Focused Conversation (Stanfield, 1997), an instructional text which delineates a reflective discourse phase
congruent with dialogic discourse, prior to converging upon a decision. Schein (1999) has added a segment on dialogue to his "revisited" work on Process Consultation. In this work, dialogue is perceived as a precursor to problem-solving or conversation intended to converge upon a course of action (Schein, 1999).

V. Authors who perceive dialogue as one of a suite of disciplines relevant to information age leaders / consultants

Previously referenced authors for whom this theme was common include: Senge, (1990); Isaacs, (1993); Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts, & Kleiner, (1994); Jaworski, (1996); Laiken, (1997); Ellinor and Gerard, (1998); Schein, (1999).

While Peter Drucker (1999) advocated the revision of the assumptions that are the foundation of "Information Age Management", his work was silent on the issue of discerning the discourse models which had the potential to achieve this outcome. Without revision of language and discourse patterns, Argyris' (1990) and Gustavsen's (1992) works would infer that Drucker's (1999) call to action is a good intention that further requires a broader theoretical framework and a methodological approach.

Nielsen (1990), drawing once again on the theoretical works of Lonergan and Woolman, concludes that dialogic leadership has the potential to contribute to organizational ethics action praxis, to extend Argyris' conception of double-loop learning, to generate ethical organizational culture, produce integrative results, and to result in ethical belief conversion.

In retrospect, what is apparent in this review is that we have been enriched in the post-industrial and information ages by theoretical frameworks that have illuminated the value inherent in seeking to see ourselves in the ways that others see us, in seeking to see
others the way that they see themselves, in seeking to see the prior We before seeing the exclusivity of ourselves or others, in seeking to use ourselves as a vehicle for an exploration of the roles that are present in our social and organizational field, and in seeking to be conscious of the thought processes that generate our reality and our identity.
Chapter 3: Methodology And Design

Methodological Approach

This thesis used a qualitative orientation to data gathering and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The intention in this approach was to involve research participants during the data gathering and analysis stages of the project for the purpose of enriching the development of hypotheses (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

The decision to use this approach was more a statement of personal belief and worldview, than it was the outcome of a deliberation about matching the optimal set of techniques to the research question (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Symon & Cassel, eds. 1998).

There are at least two dynamics in play when a decision about methodology is taken. One dynamic is the epistemology that resides within the thought processes of the researcher, i.e. the paradigms or mental models that the researcher uses to design and conduct the research. Another dynamic is the procedural or technical approach used to serve the paradigms of the researcher (Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

I share the views of those who state that one dynamic does not automatically predict or produce its corollary; and who further state that to be explicit about both dynamics in the course of setting the context for a research project would be a useful convention. The intent in doing so would be to interpret the polarization in rhetoric between qualitative and quantitative research designs, as evidence of divergent beliefs and assumptions, and to extend an invitation to engage in an enquiry about their origins. Doing so has the potential to transcend individual conceptions of how “truth” or “reality” or “knowledge” are made manifest (Morgan & Smircich, 1980).
The challenge in such an endeavour is to be lucid about one's worldview, and to have some energy in reserve to conduct the research.

To this end, these next paragraphs provide a profile of my interests and intentions, followed by a discussion of the methodology.

**Locating Myself in the Research**

I am a forty year old Caucasian, Protestant, female. This is the twenty-sixth year that I have been employed full, or part-time, as a member of the Canadian workforce. I began full-time employment as a researcher in the Social Sciences Division of York University, where I worked on a labour history project that was focused on Canada’s first large industrial entity: the Canadian Railways.

The last twelve years of my career have been focused on Adult Learning and Organizational Development. Prior to joining as a partner in a consulting firm that served client organizations on change projects, I worked as an internal learning and O.D. consultant for a Canadian firm that employed over 26,000 people.

My interest in organizational change work was amplified by a series of assignments within this large organization from 1990 to 1995. During this time, the organization was transformed to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by U.S. based competitors, demographics which were indicating shifts in customer behaviour, and the emergence of global supply chain networks.

As an external Process Consultant, I have been primarily engaged by private sector organizations that are restructuring and reexamining their approaches to learning. When asked to describe my work in one sentence by prospective clients or consultants in a networking context, my response is typically: “I work with clients to co-design and co-
implement "infrastructure" in organizations that are changing size, shape, or strategic direction."

I use the word infrastructure to connote the processes that are established to sustain organizational functioning, for example: reward processes, performance management processes, communication processes, structural review processes, role definition processes, learning and development processes, dispute resolution processes.

Edgar Schein (1988) uses the term "Process Consultant" to distinguish this type of work from consultants who provide architectural, technical, engineering, financial, or other forms of specialized consulting services (Schein, 1988).

I do this work because I find it intellectually and emotionally challenging. It provides me with the opportunity to structure and direct the use of my time. Being an "external" enables me to focus on multi-stakeholder change interventions, and to view the political aspect of work from a detached perspective. It pays at least as well as what I earned as a full-time internal organizational development consultant. It enables me to participate in change-oriented projects at all levels of organizations, and it draws on a set of values and competencies that I have evolved over the course of my career.

More than these criteria combined, it offers me an opportunity to further a personal mission. It is very important to me that my actions directly and indirectly improve the quality of people's lives at work. At this time in my life, this is the primary way for me to contribute to this purpose.

The fundamental medium of my work is conversation. These conversations occur in face to face interviews, small or large group facilitations, focus groups, training, or coaching sessions. I am often gathering data in interviews, reporting on process redesigns to project
sponsors, focusing decision-making groups on emerging issues, reflecting on issues of "organizational readiness" with line managers and internal process consultants in organizations, or debriefing "lessons learned" with project teams and fellow training participants (Block, 1981).

It has become abundantly clear to me that the quality of the conversation that occurs with my clients is a representation of the quality of the thinking that we generate during our discourse. The quality of the thinking that we generate through our discourse governs the nature and the quality of our interventions in the organizational system.

**Personal Beliefs**

I perceive my life as an experience in learning. I believe that I am capable of transforming my identity (my sense of self), the values which sustain my identity, and the beliefs which manifest my identity in action, as I learn.

I experience my identity in my pre-literate and conscious thoughts. I am aware that as I perceive, I construct meaning for myself. I construct my reality.

I project my construction of reality into my every interaction. It is a very subjective experience. I project my belief in this capacity beyond myself to other sentient humans.

I am experiencing something paradoxical at this time in my life. My belief system is one which supports the "social construction of reality", yet I work within the paradigms of Organizational Development and Process Consulting, which are constructed on the ontological assumption that human adaptive processes exist in a "concrete and objective" reality (Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

My interest in Dialogic Conversation and Process Consulting in organizational contexts represents this paradox. In asking consultants who share the values of, if not the
moniker of Process Consulting if “it is possible” to achieve dialogue, a paradoxical form of discourse, in organizational contexts, I am also exploring the paradox of my own life at this time.

It is summarized in this question:

“If I have a belief system which says “x”, and I work in a profession, in contexts, that espouse “y”, then what exactly can I contribute that will be mutually perceived as valuable?”

**Intentions in this Thesis**

Beyond this effort being a purely personal exploration, my intent in this research is three-fold:

1. My consulting and improving quality of working-life orientation leads to the intention that this thesis contributes to the exploration of dialogue as a conversational mode in organizational settings. I believe that the change mandate that organizations are currently facing requires thinking to occur at a transformative rather than innovative level. Dialogue produces coherent thinking through multiple stakeholder, non-power based, reflective conversation. It connects people at a level that is cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually conducive to transformative learning and change.

2. This thesis is also intended to encourage further research into external Process Consultants' usage of dialogic conversation. While its findings are not generalizable, they are intended to offer an incentive for further theorizing in this substantive area. The epistemology involved here does not hold that the findings thus obtained would be universally generalizable, but it does regard them as providing nonetheless
insightful and significant knowledge about the nature of the social world. Such knowledge is inevitably seen as being relative and specific to the immediate context and situation from which it is generated, building what Glazer and Strauss call "substantive theory" (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; citing Glazer & Strauss, 1973).

3. The findings are also intended to generate further exploration of dialogue by individuals studying the social construction of reality in organizational contexts. Participant 8 characterizes this as "...the intrinsic study of how reality is being created through language."

Reflecting on Participant 8's prior quotation, if organizations are to be the primary driver of economic, social, and political change, and if dialogue can serve to surface the ...metaphors and images... that reside within each member of the organization, what kinds of meaning, what kinds of organization, what kinds of reality will this produce?

In summary, a qualitative approach was selected because it was congruent with my evolving worldview. I believed that it was an approach that lent itself to the exploration of such subjective experiences as thoughts, perceptions, and emotions, which I believed to be problematic to a singularly quantitative methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I believed that more personal research experience and learning in both qualitative and quantitative realms would need to occur before I could produce a credible integration of these methodologies.
Methodology

“... a way of thinking about and studying social reality” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 3).

This project utilized Grounded Theory as the model for research design, and manual (versus computerized) Thematic Analysis as a tool for conceptual ordering and theory development (Glazer & Strauss, 1973; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Boyatzis, 1998).

Both Grounded Theory and Thematic Analysis utilize coding as a primary means of organizing and making meaning from raw data.

In using the term “raw data” I am mindful of an admonition that the term raw data is illusory for either qualitative or quantitative analysis:

Always there is a transformation or recoding of the raw event... always and inevitably, there is a selection of data because the total universe, past and present, is not subject to observation from any given observer’s position. In a strict sense, therefore, no data are truly ‘raw’, and every record has been somehow subjected to editing and transformation either by man or by his instruments. (Bateson, 1972, p. xviii)

Boyatzis (1998) distinguishes four approaches to developing codes in qualitative research: those that are theory driven, those that are prior research driven, those that are data driven, and those that are hybrids of the prior three approaches (Boyatzis, 1998).

The “theory driven” approach begins when a researcher devises a theory that is subsequently “tested” against data that have been coded and analysed in relation to the theory. “Prior research” coding utilizes codes created for prior research projects by the same, or prior researchers. “Data driven” theory works from the research question without prior conceptions about what meaning will emerge from the data (Boyatzis, 1998).
Grounded Theory is a data driven approach which is further distinguished by an emphasis on coding and theory construction developed through iterations of the following tasks: asking questions, gathering data, sorting or coding and assigning properties, conducting intra and inter code comparisons, reflecting on relationships among data elements, and validating the contextually relevant findings with participants (Glazer & Strauss, 1973; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded Theory was selected as an approach because it was congruent with my values, beliefs, and learning style:

1. It requires listening and incorporating participant feedback into the research; it is respectful of the contribution which research participants make to the development of theory;
2. The research and documentation are intended to be relevant to academics and to those working in non-academic environments;
3. It is an inductive approach (moving from data to theory) which acknowledges the social construction of reality;
4. My current learning style is “divergent”, which uses a reflective cognitive process to move from the concrete, to the abstract (Boyatzis, 1998; Kolb, 1984).

Finally, a coding process based on Thematic Analysis was used to conceptually order the data. Thematic Analysis is a term that formalizes three phases of research enquiry. The first phase is perceiving (which assumes the intervention of socially constructed filters). The second phase is naming (or coding and distinguishing). The third phase is interpreting or reflecting (Boyatzis, 1998).
This approach was selected for a host of reasons. First, it is a methodology modeled on Grounded Theory. Second, it provided me with an opportunity to present participants with “themes” to react to; to re-engage them in the collaborative meaning-making process that we had begun in the initial interviews. Third, it was a technique that I have used many times in the course of the work that I perform with executives (see Boyatzis, 1998, p. 3, for a case study in which a CEO analyses themes related to organizational culture, as a precursor to developing strategy and structure). Last, it is a tool that serves those of us whose psychological preferences are attuned to going beyond elements that are directly observable or “manifest”, to those that look “… at the underlying aspects of the phenomenon under observation” (Boyatzis, 1998; Briggs-Myers, 1995 and Briggs-Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 1998).

Overall, it was my aspiration that the design and methodology of this study replicate the critical thinking and reflective questioning practices of dialogue as advocated by Bohm (1990), Isaacs (1993, 1994), Bohm, Factor, and Garrett (1991) and Ellinor and Gerard (1998).

Research Design - Size and Composition of the Participant Group

The scope of this project was limited to the experiences of ten external Process Consultants working in both public and private sector organizations in 1998, 1999, and 2000, who had prior knowledge, experience with and interest in the concept of “dialogue” as conceived by David Bohm (1990), or its variants in organizational settings. Time, money, and access to technology limited the size of the participant group.

A decision was made subsequent to the submission of the proposal for this thesis to exclude internal Process Consultants from the scope of this study. Two factors influenced
this decision. The first consideration was focus. I was keenly interested in this study having a specific and tangible focus. This relates again, to completing a thorough study utilizing a finite set of resources.

The second consideration was conflict of interest. It made sense to stay clear of the complexity associated with interviewing internal Process Consultants who are current or prospective clients.

Locating Participants

Participants were located through a process which drew from my professional development network, from the networks of individuals who agreed to participate in this research (i.e. referrals), and from the networks of several consulting organizations in Ontario, Canada.

The primary criteria exercised in the location of participants were:

2. Experience in the use of dialogic conversation in a consulting context.
3. Availability to participate in one interview with the option of providing written feedback on the themes which emerged from the data.

A related intention also existed to widen the base of participation as far as possible across organizational contexts. This served as much to satisfy my innate curiosity as it did to allow “...for maximum variability within the raw information” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 149).
Representation by Gender

I did seek to represent both genders in this participant group, although gender issues as they relate to dialogic conversation in organizations were beyond the scope of this thesis. The research participants located were predominantly female (7 of 10). This reflected the outcome of my search for Process Consultants utilizing dialogic conversation in client organizations, in contrast to female or male Process Consultants in this realm.

I do not ascribe theoretical significance to the location of seven female participants, and three male participants. These were the people who met my primary criteria in the time frame that I designated for locating participants.

My research has not identified any articles, books, or theses which specifically address the topic of dialogue and gender, with the exception of Deborah Tannen’s The Argument Culture, (1998). Gender issues related to interpersonal communication are recurrent themes in her previous works (1990, 1993). They are not in the forefront of the themes explored in this recent book.

In the course of analysing the data collected during the participant interviews for this thesis, gender and dialogic conversation did emerge as a theme. The tenor of the discourse on this issue was primarily psychological (see Themes section in this thesis).
Providing Context for the Participants

Prospective participants were initially contacted by phone or by e-mail. The purpose, scope, and methodology of the study were outlined, as were the estimated time contributions to be requested of participants.

If prospective participants indicated an interest in knowing more about the study, a letter was sent to their office or home which described the details of the M.A. thesis requirements, a reiteration of the scope of the thesis and its research design, and the list of research questions that this project was conceived to explore. The letter also requested their permission to audiotape, transcribe, code, and quote from the interviews (see appendices for sample letter of consent).

Each person who was solicited did agree to participate in the one-to-one interview. Some were uncertain of their availability to provide feedback on the project themes. This had to do with my uncertainty about when the themes would be available, which engendered a corresponding uncertainty about further participation, due to client-related travel and projects. Ultimately seven out of the ten participants were able to provide feedback on the themes within the time frames required for the completion of this work.
Research Questions

The meta question which provided the focus for this research was:

How do Process Consultants and their clients create “shared meaning” through the use of dialogic conversation, and how does this shared meaning translate into actions that benefit stakeholders (e.g. employees, the consulting community, local communities, families, organizations)?

Supporting questions were:

1. Is it possible to achieve dialogue in conversation between Process Consultants and their clients?
2. Are Process Consultants conscious of their intent when they introduce or facilitate dialogue in their client organizations? If so, what is their intent?
3. What value(s) do Process Consultants ascribe to dialogue that are not achievable using other modes of conversation?
4. What variants or elements of dialogue have been achieved between Process Consultants and their clients in organizational settings?
5. What are the barriers and gateways to achieving dialogue or variants of dialogue between Process Consultants and their clients in organizational settings?
6. What competencies are requisite to achieving and sustaining dialogue or variants of dialogue for Process Consultants, and for their clients in organizational settings?
The interview questions that emanated from these research questions are described below. Although they appear in ascending numeric sequence, there was no attempt to guide or orient the conversation with the participants in such a way as to adhere to this sequence.

The pace and the order in which questions were introduced into the conversation was intended to be as much the participants’ choice as it was my own. Participants were given a copy of the research and interview questions prior to our face to face meeting, and again, as we spoke while I was setting up the audio equipment for the interview.

At this time, I indicated an interest in covering the topic areas identified in the questions, and communicated my interest in the interview being experienced as an exploration of a mutually intriguing topic. I also spoke about the design methodology for the research being qualitative, rather than quantitative, and suggested that in this context, it would mean listening for and valuing participants’ perceptions, rather than contrasting their reported experiences against an objective standard of practice.

I requested at the outset of the audiotaped portion of the interview, that participants describe their consulting background and the nature of their current work in organizations. This information was assumed to be relevant to setting the context for the ensuing conversation. The information turned out to be very useful in the analysis stage of this project, when it became apparent that two approaches to using dialogic conversation were being utilized by the participants, and that participants usually indicated a preference for one of the two approaches (see the “Beliefs” segment of this thesis).
Interview Questions and Their Intent

Question 1: How and when did you first come upon the concept of dialogue?

This question was intended to open several avenues of enquiry. It was intended to indicate to the participant that I was interested in their stories, and the meaning that they ascribed to their experiences.

It was intended to ascertain tangential information about how they learned (reading, watching others, experimenting without constraints, experiencing dialogue with the support of an experienced facilitator or trainer) which I thought might be useful when compared to how the participants framed or introduced dialogic conversation in client settings (Kolb, 1984).

This question was also intended to gather information about the theorists or role models whose work had inspired the participants to pursue further learning opportunities in the realm of dialogue. Though this project is by no means designed to study patterns of diffusion, I was interested in finding out if there were any specific authors or models that repeatedly surfaced across interviews. I was also looking for sources on the topic area that I had yet to discover.

Question 2: What value(s) do you ascribe to dialogue that are not achievable using other modes of conversation?

This question was intended to probe for participants’ beliefs about the relevance of dialogic conversation in organizations at the turn of the Millennium. It was seeking the answer to: Why this approach?; Why is it different from any other form of conversation?;
Why is it relevant in organizations now?, without asking numerous "WHY" questions. I was concerned that a focus on WHY might move people out of reflection, and into a more defensive posture which would trigger a need to explain rather than honour the intent to explore (Foddy, 1993; Evans, Hearn, Uhlemann, Ivey, 1989).

Question Two was also intended to add dimension to my own conception of dialogic conversation, both for use in this document, and in future research.

*Question 3: What have been your experiences with dialogue?*

Once again, this question was intended to signal an interest in narrative. It was intended to convey an interest in the conversation moving into a context or in a direction set by the respondent. In contrast to the conceptually-oriented Question Two, it was intended to ground conversation in the realm of experience.

*Question 4: What impact has knowing about or experiencing dialogue had upon your work in organizations?*

It was assumed that information about the impact of utilizing dialogic conversation in process interventions in organizations would answer the question "why is this a relevant field of enquiry worthy of further work?" for researchers and practitioners in Adult Learning, Organization Development, and Workplace Change (which includes the participants in this study).
**Question 5:** Are you aware of your intent when you introduce or facilitate dialogue in your client organizations? If so, what is your intent?

Question five was designed to test a personal assumption. The assumption was that the participants would be cognizant that a decision to utilize dialogic conversation in client organizations was preceded by a personal intention. A further assumption was that the intention was generated from a personal values system that permeated their work as Process Consultants. In short, values precede intention. Intention precedes action. The values that are intrinsic to dialogic conversation are congruent with those of Process Consulting, as it is defined in this thesis. This topic is addressed in the themes segment of this document.

**Question 6:** What barriers, if any, do you perceive to achieving dialogue in organizations?

Please provide any examples from your experience.

This question was designed to convey to participants that there was not an inherent assumption that participants would or would not perceive barriers to achieving dialogic conversation in client organizations. Were they to exist, an exploration of perceived barriers was considered as essential as that which focused on impact. It was assumed that both were linked to “relevance” for the reader(s) of this work. The question was also designed to signal that I would be interested in hearing about both theory and experience from participants.
Question 7: *What gateways or opportunities do you perceive, if any, to achieving dialogue in organizations? Please provide examples from your own experience.*

This question did assume that participants perceived some predisposing factors in the organizational contexts in which they had chosen to engage in dialogic conversation. The issues of relevance, theory, and experience, which were discussed in question six, also apply in question seven. It was also intended to present an avenue for discussion of what participants did to set the context and prepare clients for dialogic conversation.

**Questions 8 & 9:** *What behaviours (yours or others) are important to achieving and sustaining dialogic conversation in client organizations? What behaviours (yours or others) do you perceive as limiting or negating dialogic conversation in client organizations?*

These questions were included in the interviews to ascertain whether or not participants perceived a discrete set of competencies or demonstrated behaviours, to be requisite to dialogic conversation (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). If these were perceived to exist, describing them would further help to create awareness about the distinguishing characteristics of dialogic conversation.
Research Design: Process Steps

This final section on methodology outlines the ten step process followed during the development of this thesis.

1. Interviews

One-to-one interviews occurred at the participants’ offices or homes. They averaged sixty to ninety minutes in duration. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed. Copies of the transcripts were forwarded to participants. There were no expectations that participants would edit, react, or respond to the interview transcripts. Several participants expected their transcripts to further writing and research projects which they were engaged in, independently of this study.

2. Reflection

Reflection occurred during and after the interview process. It involved comparing and contrasting the views of the research participants; reflecting on the data being collected in the interviews in relation to my ongoing literature review; and writing memos to myself for future reference in the analysis stage(s).

3. Coding 1

Preliminary codes were created, based on my reflections after the completion of the interview process (with the expectation that these would change once the next steps were underway).
4. Transcript Analysis 1

Each transcript was read vertically (each interview, all the way through, without comparing it to any of the other transcripts). Notes were taken, original memos were re-read, and further memos were created.

5. Coding 2

Preliminary codes were revised. An initial set of properties was created.

6. Transcript Analysis 2

A horizontal reading and coding of the transcripts occurred (each transcript was read and divided into coded segments; a two hundred and seventy two page inventory of transcript segments was created that was code specific, meaning that the segments derived their content from multiple participants).

7. Data Analysis 1

The coding inventory was re-read, notes and memos were created, codes were collapsed. An initial set of themes was created for review by the participants.

8. Data Analysis 2

The themes were revisited and enriched with feedback from the participants, and from my commentary on the themes in relation to the literature.

9. Conclusions

A summary set of conclusions was formed in relation to the research questions. The final draft of the manuscript was distributed to the participants.
Limitations of the Study

The limitations that I am aware of related to this study are twofold:

(i) **Subjective Stance.**

Any qualitative research design requires direct interaction among the researcher, the participants, and the data. The Researcher's subjective stance will certainly influence the design of the research question(s), the design of the interview questions, the sequencing and delivery of questions during the interviews (verbal delivery and nonverbal behaviour), and the subsequent coding, analysis, feedback inclusion and writing process.

(ii) **Scope.**

This study reflects perceptions of experience at a specific point in time - perceptions which began with the ten participants, and perceptions which I used to distill categories, properties, and themes from the collated data. Generalizations to Process Consulting Methodologies, Process Consultants outside this research group, Managers, or those interested in exploring dialogic conversation in organization were not intended in this research.

The research design did not achieve the variation in data gathering techniques referred to as "triangulation" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, in this thesis, triangulation would have been achieved if video or audiotaping of dialogue sessions involving the participants and their clients had occurred, or if studies of the transcripts of such sessions had been incorporated into the data gathering process. Concerns about client confidentiality and timing, posed challenges beyond my resourcefulness in this regard. Although I was invited to South Africa to observe Participant 3 in action with her clients, I
was unable to incorporate this experience into the timeframes available for the completion of this thesis.

This document was the product of an individual researcher. This is not an ideal configuration for a methodology modeled upon Grounded Theory, which hinges upon the interplay of ideas from multiple sources over time. Though this study is anticipated to be relevant to its stated audience, the themes and categories deserve the amplified dimensionality that is characteristic of the analyses of a research team.
The next four chapters review the results of the interviews and feedback conversations with the research participants. The chapters are arrayed into four streams. Chapter four reviews "application" themes, the wisdom from the participants that focuses on the "when" and "how to" initiate dialogic discourse in client or professional development contexts. The themes in this stream cover the research questions on "intent", "barriers and gateways", and "competencies". Chapter five reviews the themes that focus on "what happened" to the research participants and their clients when engaged in dialogic discourse. Although dialogic conversation by design does not promote an "outcome" frame of mind or focus, this chapter is referred to as outcomes. It describes the meaning that the research participants derived from their experiences with dialogic discourse in client or professional development contexts. Chapter six explores the array of beliefs that participants correlate to dialogic discourse. Chapter seven reviews the "meta" themes. During the outlining stage of this thesis, it became apparent that in addition to the many themes emerging from the codes, there were meta themes that spanned all the data combined.

These chapters follow the intention of dialogic conversation, which is fundamentally integrative. The reader can expect to encounter a joining of research findings, analysis, and reflection. This thesis is about a different, often challengingly different way of thinking and speaking. It is not my intention to alienate. It is my intention to be congruent in research design, methodology, and reporting process.

Readers will also encounter frequent quotes from the participants. This follows from an intention to give these individuals voice and presence in this work, and to pay homage to the diversity that is represented in their experience. The coding structure has been made apparent in sections with many themes or lengthy text, to provide continuity, and to orient the reader. It will also be apparent that chapters four through six move in an increasingly reflective direction, from the concrete "how to", to the more abstract realm of "beliefs".
Chapter 4: Application Themes Which Emerged From The Coded Properties

Sub Heading 1: Intent

Two themes emerged when the data on intentions was studied. The first theme surrounded the intention to create conditions for individuals to obtain the skills requisite to dialogic conversation. The second theme pertained to the intent to use dialogic conversation as a tool to effect culture change in client organizations.

Intent: Property A: Individual Skill-Building and Development

The research participants were conscious of several intentions that distilled into a theme of skill-building on an individual level. These included intentions that were broad, or abstract, and those that were contextually specific, or concrete.

The broader, abstract intentions coalesced around taking clients to a place of deeper communication, connection, and shared meaning (Participant 1). The concept of connection included enabling people to experience "holistic" conversation; a conversational mode which engaged the whole person: body, mind, emotions, spirit, masculine energy, and feminine energy (Participant 8).

The more concrete intentions focused on specific skill sets. Dialogic conversation was cited as a vehicle for learning how to break through all the psychological / cultural baggage that narrows the range of cognitive functioning. On an individual level, this translated into finding a way to speak about the unspeakable, or to move beyond polarizing around issues by engaging in reflection, surfacing assumptions, and getting everything out on the table.
(Participants 3, 7, & 9). As an assumptions-surfacing and reflective thinking vehicle, dialogue was perceived as attuning individuals toward subsequent collaboratively-focused discourse (Participant 5). Additionally, it was viewed as a vehicle for enriching individuals' cognitive capacity, in that it moved people beyond single loop (cause and effect) learning (Participant 2).

Intent: Property B: Sustainable Culture Change and Community Building

Research participants cited four intentions for utilizing dialogic discourse at the organizational culture or community building level. These appear in random order.

The first intention: to create discourse patterns that built organizational capacity versus dependency on external expertise, was as much a values statement for the research participants as it was a characteristic of dialogic discourse (Participant 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, & 10). The second intention was closely related to the first: to broaden the field of enquiry to enable the emergence of new ideas (Participant 4). The third intention was directed at enabling organizational stakeholders to function more effectively in an ever-more complex and turbulent environment, where issues were global versus local or national. This intention belongs most specifically to the participants who are advocates or facilitators of large system interventions, and is consistent with the stance articulated by Emery and Trist (1973). The fourth intention was healing focused. It derived from research participants who have experienced intense rifts in national, ethnic, or organizational cultures (Participants 3, 5, & 8). The ontological perspective inferred by the actions and reflections of these participants is reminiscent of the work of Woolman, described by Lonergan as seeking through dialogue, a connection to the “prior we” (Lonergan, 1972). Dialogic discourse was used to move people beyond the “us” and “them” stances, even beyond the “we’re in this together” stance, to a
conception that the issues were larger than individual, ethnic, organizational, or national identity, and as such, connected all stakeholders at a fundamental and unifying level.

In general, participants had less to say about their intentions than they did about the remaining research questions. This does not mean to imply that the participants were unaware of their intentions, nor is it meant as a critique of any kind. It simply raises my curiosity, and confirms both participants’ and theorists’ views on the challenge inherent in reflecting, rather than describing from memory. It also underlines the challenge associated with speaking about that which is often implicit, or that which emerges from our subjectively held values.

When I look back at the summarized statements of intent, it is evident that these intentions are profound in their implications. There is an intention to create new levels of consciousness in individuals. There is an intention to alter the patterns and the content of communication within organizations. There is an intention to contribute to the healing and renaissance of national culture and identity.

Sub Heading 2: How

The “HOW” category encompasses all the wisdom gathered from the research participants on the theme of application (when and “how” to integrate dialogic discourse into process consulting contexts). Six properties were explored in this category:
Property A: Used to accomplish...

1. Dialogic Conversation Was Used to Accomplish...
   i. building capacity for change within organizations
   ii. reinventing the organization
   iii. reconnecting to purpose
   iv. leveraging the redemptive elements of conflict
   v. providing a communication framework for task-focused interventions
   vi. client professional development
   vii. sustaining a learning community

Property B: Variations

Property C: How to set the context for dialogic conversation

Property D: Critical Success Factors

Property E: Barriers to dialogic conversation in organizations

Property F: Facilitating dialogic conversation

Research participants reflect on some of the outcomes of these interventions in Chapter 6 (please see "Salient Features Perceived as Valuable").
How: Property A: Used to Accomplish

(i) Building Capacity for Change Within Organizations

Participant 3 from South Africa cited four “building capacity”-related applications for dialogic conversation in her practice. Each was grounded in, and integrated with the methodologies of process-oriented psychology and deep democracy pioneered by Arnold Mindell (1992).

Participant 3 has been engaged by privately and publicly funded organizations in South Africa as a “Ghost Buster”, that is as a facilitator of cultural and economic change. The removal of the apartheid regime, and the lifting of economic sanctions worldwide have created significant incentives for strategic planning and organizational design.

Within this environment, Participant 3 has used dialogic discourse to facilitate a shift in the cognitive maps of internal auditors and information systems professionals in the financial services sector from the paradigm of “control”, to one of “customer service”:

The most important ones were the bank and the auditors, because what they were trying to do, was they were trying to shift their focus to become customer oriented. They had to become customer focussed. So it was a sense of how to help them understand the deep subtleties of interpersonal skills in becoming customer focussed. [They recognized that they were stuck in a paradigm, wanted to move beyond it, but needed the ‘how’] Absolutely, absolutely. The IT people particularly. In fact this bank did an incredibly crazy thing. It changed platforms. It changed programs and systems at once. You don’t ever do that. And they had to function as a bank. And they had to gain mortgage shares. It was crazy – entrepreneurial for a bank. I then was responsible for helping them build the skill base where instead of them going out as ‘tellers’, and telling them [the system users within the bank] telling them that this is the way you should do it, they changed their methodology and went into being architects [facilitating joint application design sessions] and helping the client design the IT. So they needed themselves, as computer people, to transform and become different animals. And computer people are not the most ‘people’ people. (Participant 3)
With the same emerging global market incentive as the driver, Participant 3 was subsequently engaged to facilitate the shift in the cognitive maps that would need to occur as the nation’s largest utility de-layered, and adopted a self-managing, team-focused organization design. This involved moving from highly stratified functional silos, to ethnically diverse, cross-functional process teams whose members were accountable to each other, to the end customer, and to the organization:

So for us [South Africa] to be able to go into the race [to provide electricity to global markets] we had to become more service orientated, particularly in the transmission of electricity. So they decided that the only way to do this was to basically make the people more service orientated. So they decided to take this division of 2,000 people...[and] literally make this a service orientated organization. And the way we are going to do it is we are going to [remove the existing hierarchy and] put people into [flattened, cross functional] process teams, and basically make them responsible within themselves, to be service orientated. Now that sounds great in a country that’s kind of western, and driven, and post-industrial world. I think anywhere it would be difficult. But with Africa, hidden behind the hierarchy, the cultural hierarchy, was the really major social, political issues...So, you were not only taking away the hierarchy, but you were also looking at the sickness in the society and trying to help people literally overcome things very quickly, like, overnight overcome the racial prejudices. How are you going to do that overnight? Empower people, who at the age of 50, had never had a say and now had to, not only have a say, they have to communicate and decision make as part of a team, and take responsibility and accountability...I see dialogue as, it’s not only ‘Well how do we get on with one another and get this task done?’ But more specifically that in the [teaching of the methodology and in the] talking you will be able to get to the deeper issues. For example, racism and all the lack of empowerment, or the difficulties around affirmative action, and the painful things. You’ll be able to take them to those. (Participant 3)

Participant 4 was engaged by a multi-national telecommunications company to facilitate a cultural change that was being triggered by an acquisition. One company situated on one continent and fluent in one language, was acquiring an established company situated on another continent, whose members spoke another language. Participant 4 engaged participants in a dialogic discourse utilizing simultaneous translation, as a precursor to
sessions focused on the design of business processes and principles that would definitively signal a change in organizational culture and operations.

Dialogic discourse was used by research participants in multi-stakeholder, whole system interventions in both Canada and the United States. Participant 4 engaged the stakeholders implicated in a disaster recovery system for an American hospital in a dialogue which explored the assumptions and meanings attached to the concepts of "disaster", "communication", "existing policies", prior to engaging in tactical planning. Participant 5 coached a team of facilitators in the design of a whole system dialogic conversation process in the public sector. It was intended to surface assumptions and generate tolerance for divergent values and belief systems during a development phase of a socially and politically contentious public policy.

(ii) Re-inventing the organization

Participants 2, 5, and 8 spoke of dialogic discourse as a precursor to strategic planning. Participant 2 used dialogic discourse with an executive team in a high technology organization during a strategic planning session to surface participants' mental models about the organization's purpose, focus, and direction. The process turned out to be a breakthrough experience for the team. Participant 5 engaged participants in dialogic discourse prior to focusing a group that had been through a series of leadership crises, on establishing a mission.

Participant 8 spoke of framing the dialogic discourse as a learning process, and framing the content as an unfolding story. This included using Morgan's conceptual framework of metaphor to surface and reflect upon primary images of the organization (Morgan, 1986).
(iii) Reconnecting to purpose

Participant 8 utilized dialogic discourse in a university faculty setting with an integrative intention. The faculty had been affected by what it perceived as an arbitrary structural change. Faculty members were disillusioned, angry at not having had more influence in the new structural design, and mistrustful of the dynamics that the new cross-functional faculty would present. During the dialogue, participants found a reason to come together, and professional boundaries, or silos, came down:

[They] were given this structure and none of them were happy about it. So through dialogue, and through the actual process of making meaning collectively of the data, this group came together in a way they never had before. And it was amazing. So these highly rational human beings moved completely. I read nine of these strategic plans [put forward by faculty members]. Each of which was like this thick, and I thought that we were being mired in data up the wazoo. We moved, by the time we got into the process and they were in a circle telling me the reason that they were educators in the first place, we got to throw all that hooey away and get to the core work. And they did. They found a reason to come together. A legitimate reason themselves, and then the commitment was held intrinsically. (Participant 8)

Participant 5 spoke of witnessing the use of dialogic discourse in a First Nations setting in Northern Canada. Participants who had known primarily the tradition of majority-rules voting had seen the polarizing impact of this tradition on the community. They were endeavouring to re-acquaint themselves with prior ways of connecting and speaking about issues that were relevant to the viability of the community.

(iv) Leveraging the redemptive elements of conflict

Participants 4, 7, and 9 spoke of using dialogic discourse to move groups that were “stuck” in protracted conflict beyond the inevitable polarizing and personal identification with issues that so often occurs. In one instance, members of a non-profit organization in the United States were deadlocked in a crisis of confidence in their future leadership. The
facilitator (Participant 7) requested that each person spend some time in reflection, surfacing their assumptions about the issue, then writing them down on a card. Each person then read their own card and the others listened. This step was a point of departure for dialogue. After the dialogue (which did move the group beyond its stuck state), the facilitator de-briefed the experience with the group, in an effort to make the process conscious and replicable for the team, without “expert” facilitator intervention.

Participant 4 spoke of a large system intervention in a municipality that was polarized by individual agendas related to what was perceived as the diminishing quality of local health care. Employers and unions in the area were indicating that they were being adversely affected by this situation in their efforts to attract and retain skilled labour. Health care facilities were claiming rising overhead, as were local government agencies. This group had been engaged in multi-stakeholder planning for five years, and had yet to move beyond stances that lobbied for individual agendas.

Sensing that the group was stuck, and considering this as an opportunity to introduce the dialogic method facilitated by Participant 4, a member of the multi-stakeholder group suggested a change in process. The group was introduced to the principles and fundamental skills of dialogue, and then engaged in a two-hour session. The listening altered; people were able to tell their stories without advocacy as the primary focus of expression. Though consensus was not a stated outcome or aim of the dialogue, a great deal of common ground was experienced at levels beyond the conceptual. The group did achieve consensus on a vision and ways of operating together in subsequent working sessions.

Both Participant 4 and Participant 7 have vivid experiences with dialogue in protracted union and management conflict situations, some of which had previously erupted
in verbal abuse and physical violence. In both these individuals' experiences, success has been measured by the degree to which listening occurred, as did an emerging tolerance for alternative conceptions of reality. In Participant 4's words:

Conversation, or communication had completely broken down, and there was no shared understanding about anything. So that was high conflict ... So what we proposed to then do is we do thirteen weeks, once a week. Two hour dialogues with a group of about forty which included all the senior managers, all the managers which is about twenty people and twenty, and all the union leadership and then stewards people, and people involved, and just regular folks. So like a horizontal cross, a horizontal and vertical cross section of the organization, maybe thirty five people, and we did these dialogues. And these were very challenging. And I don’t even know if you’d assess them as being a success, cause it’s very interesting. How would you define success in that situation? Because they still were very contentious at the end of it. They still didn’t trust each other. They were still union and management. But we had people say things like: ‘That’s the first time I ever saw those two people talk to each other without throwing chairs.’ I mean there was physical violence in this situation in the past. We had people say, you know, things like: ‘I have never heard so and so actually say he understood what so and so said.’ I mean we would have a manager and an employee actually tell each other stories and actually listen to each other’s stories, and actually acknowledge understanding of each other’s stories... So I would say that there were a lot of breakthroughs. But, I mean, thirteen weeks, you know, there wasn’t a miracle. But that was so in a highly charged conflict driven situation. I feel like we made a lot of progress. (Participant 4)

(v) Providing a communication framework for task-focused interventions

Participants 3 and 4 spoke of using dialogue as a discourse framework for completing tasks. Participant 3 continued to use dialogic principles and the deep democracy methodology in the South African utility after the transition to cross-functional teams had occurred. It was used as a vehicle for surfacing assumptions and sorting through the diversity of views associated with creating internal marketing plans. Participant 4 used dialogic discourse with client groups as a framework for such tasks as product development, creating customer profiles, and process improvement. These applications clearly contained a bias for
action, and as such would more closely parallel the conception of dialogic discourse offered by Gustavsen (1992), or Ross (Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts, & Kleiner, 1994).

(vi) Client professional development

Participant 1 is unique in this study, in that it is in her one-to-one coaching practice that dialogic discourse is perceived most valuable. Dialogue requires the slowing down of the pace of discourse, conscious reflection, and a letting go of the need for immediate outcomes that are conducive to coaching situations where individuals are predisposed to learning, to process, and to self-examination.

Participant 4 also offered a professional development application for dialogue that was unique to this research. It involved the facilitation of dialogues after keynote sessions and on the final morning of a conference, intended to enable delegates to reflect upon, and integrate the concepts presented in the prior working sessions. These have been highly successful interventions, eagerly engaged in by participants seeking opportunities to process the often overwhelming amounts of data present in the conference environment.

(vii) Sustaining a learning community

Participants 1, 6, and 7 practiced dialogic conversation within their own professional firm or network of consultant colleagues, with the expectation that it would enrich their working relationships, and increase their capacity to bring dialogic interventions to their work with clients. Participant 2 indicated that dialogue was the discourse method utilized within his consulting firm to explore issues relevant to their growing practice in North America. Participants 7 and 8 utilized dialogic discourse as the framework for evolving the
design of their consulting organizations, for co-facilitated program design and delivery, as well as for co-authored writing projects.

**How: Property B: Variations**

The Process Consultants who participated in this research were conceptual synthesizers who were influenced by, and utilized methodologies that they perceived to be congruent with dialogic conversation. Participants 1 and 3 utilized the principles and methods of Process-Oriented Psychology and Deep Democracy (see Literature Review: Mindell, 1992). Participant 4 cited a parallel between the principles of the Medicine Wheel, a First Nations construct, and those of Bohmian dialogue. The southern orientation of the Medicine Wheel is the way of the healer. The principle associated with this orientation is: pay attention to what has heart and meaning. In Bohmian terms, this relates to attending internally and externally to the diverse meanings that issues present. In Mindell’s framework, this relates to tuning into the minority view, and mining it for its inherent wisdom (Mindell, 1992). In Woolman’s frame of reference, this relates to fully exploring all perspectives with respect, without individualizing ownership or engaging in advocacy (Lonergan, 1972). The western orientation of the wheel is the way of the Teacher. The principle is: release the need for fixed outcomes. Like Bohmian dialogue, the way of the teacher encourages us to learn from the unfolding process, while releasing the need to control content or outcome.

The northern orientation on the wheel is the way of the Warrior. The principle is: show up and be present. The parallel to dialogue is the invitation to develop a heightened awareness of your own cognitive processing, to be fully conscious of what you are doing, and why you are doing it within the dialogue; to bring your full range of experience and expression to the process. Mindell states that it is only through heightened awareness, that
entropic thinking and discourse processes will be reversed (Mindell, 1992). The eastern orientation is the way of the Visionary. The principle is: speak your truth without blame or judgement. Bohm challenges us to engage ourselves and others in dialogue to explore and clarify our truths, and in so doing, to balance advocacy and enquiry. Mindell offers us the possibility of being a vehicle for the expression and exploration of views, truths and roles that are at times individual, and at times, an inherent part of the social field (see Mindell, 1992, on Field and Role Theory).

Participant 4 also integrated dialogue into client work focused on quality issues. To do so, dialogue was added as a process intervention in each of the four phases of a standard methodology used in quality-related interventions:

So I really integrate dialogue into, in my terminology, PDCA. Plan, Do, Check, Act, which comes from the quality field. It’s critical for Planning. It’s critical for implementation. It’s certainly critical for Check, that’s the reflective piece in the cycle. And then acting on what you’ve learned. So to me it’s really important at all those stages of any learning cycle or improvement cycle. (Participant 4)

Participant 5 perceived a strong parallel between Bohmian dialogue, and the Institute for Cultural Affairs’ four step Focused Conversation methodology. The ICA’s steps two and three focus on reflection and the interpretation of meaning, which parallel the Bohmian principles of slowing down discourse to reflect, surface assumptions, and explore multiple interpretations or meanings (Stanfield, [ed.], 1997).

Participant 8 drew upon Morgan’s conceptual framework of metaphor, and the paradigm of community-building when incorporating dialogic discourse into process designs (Morgan, 1986; Gozdz, [ed.], 1995). Participant 9 integrated the works of Argyris (1990), Johnson (1992), and Bohm (1990) to produce a diagnostic framework and an intervention map for her work, which she subsequently published for an audience of OD practitioners.
Participant 10 drew extensively from the conceptual frameworks of whole system design, specifically, Open Space Technology (Owen, 1997). His perception of the parallels between Open Space and Bohmian dialogue include the belief that both processes resemble ancient, and in some parts of the world, lasting forms of human communication. Common as well is the belief in the principle of a conversation among equals, and the principle that the wisdom required to move the group forward resides inherently within the group.

The examining of assumptions is common to both processes, though in Open Space events the focus is likely to be on examining the strategic assumptions of the organization. Another parallel is the expectation that individuals will be “present”, or will bring their whole being to the discourse. Common as well is letting go of the need for immediate outcomes and the related memory-based mental models associated with organizational “meetings”. Vivid experiences with chaos and confusion are intentions of both, as is the belief that generative learning happens at the edge of chaos: “If you know exactly what is going to happen next, then I don’t think it’s going to be dialogue. You’re just planning” (Participant 10).

How: Property C: How To Set The Context For Dialogic Conversation

Setting context was perceived as vital to the success of dialogic conversations. Even if the context setting was as brief as a suggested “time out”, it was clear that it was important to signal that a different type of conversation, with a different purpose and a different process, was about to occur. This was understood to enable participants to put the facilitator’s interventions in context.
Four sub-themes emerged from an analysis of this data.

(i). Do not use the word “dialogue”.

(ii). Associate the process intervention with expected task success.

(iii). Make it seamless.

(iv). Separate dialogic discourse from decision making in the process sequence.

(i). Most intriguing was the consistency with which the research participants did not use the term “dialogue” with clients. This relates to a theme further along in this document which reveals an aversion to the jargon that can be associated with dialogic conversation: “Oftentimes I don’t use the word dialogue. It’s to create a space where there can be reflection. I think it’s characterized primarily by reflection and inquiry, and characterized by curiosity and exploration.” (Participant 4)

(ii). A second theme underlined the importance of positioning dialogic conversation within a business or task context, in organizations, as in:

We want to explore our business and our views of it” (Participant 2), or “Through the course, what happens is that people then start processing and we start at a task level. You don’t ever go away from the task. It’s not like, Well now we are going to talk about racism. (Participant 3)

A third theme posited that the research participants operated on a continuum related to setting context for dialogue within their client organizations. In some cases, time was formally spent skill-building and preparing the group for dialogue. This occurred when the resources were available, and when the Process Consultant had specified skill-building or preparation as a condition during contracting, or when there was a tradition of competing, arguing, or low trust within the culture.
(iii). On the other end of the continuum were situations where dialogic discourse was seamlessly integrated into the tasks that the group was performing: "...many groups are allergic to process, so [I] don't tell them. Cause it blocks their participation. And if it's well done, it's so subtle that it's not visible anyway" (Participant 5).

(iv). A fourth theme in the realm of setting context involved the facilitator signalling an opportunity to separate dialogic conversation from having to make a decision or take action. It was described as a "time out", or an opportunity to let some new ideas about the issues emerge. It included acknowledgment that an agenda did exist, a promise that the group would spend a bounded amount of time in this realm, and then return to complete the items on the agenda within the specified time-frames. "So sometimes I'll introduce it, I'll just say, "OK, I know we have an agenda, I know we have to get X, Y, and Z done. Why don't we take the time out and just spend an hour and explore the issues" (Participant 4).

This approach was perceived to relieve people of the dissonance, frustration, and panic they experienced when it became apparent that group members were cycling or polarizing around issues. It enabled them to relax into the conversation: "And very often when they do that, then they in fact do come to such a clear understanding of where each other stands that they are able to move forward" (Participant 9).

How: Property D: Critical Success Factors

Twenty-seven discrete critical success factors were identified in the data on dialogic conversation, from which four sub-themes emerged. These include:

(i) Locating a compelling reason to engage at a deeper level for organizational or cultural transformation.
(ii) Contracting with sponsors and participants at the outset.
(iii) Working at a behavioral level to change attitudes and beliefs.

(iv) Determining at the outset that there is an infrastructure to sustain dialogic conversation in the organization.

(i) Locating a Compelling Reason to engage a Deep level for Organizational or Cultural Transformation.

To produce transformative results within organizations or cultures, participants must willingly engage in the dialogue – often in successive sessions, often going beyond the edge of their experience questioning their assumptions, beliefs, and constructions of reality. When people commit to the process, extraordinary changes can occur, as the research participants will describe further on in this document. The conditions under which people willingly engage in this transformative process within organizations are usually those of imminent perceived loss: "They have to see it as life threatening. Like either I’m going to do this or I’m going to have to get another job after this [in a very tight job market in South Africa]" (Participant 3),

And:

We are not going to be able to remain viable in the market if we don’t start doing things differently. And a recognition that our downfall, a large contributor to our downfall will be our lack of interpersonal skills and communication. (Participant 8)

And:

If there isn’t a serious problem, that is causing a certain amount of pain, people are not going to be willing to take some risks and do some of this stuff. So there needs to be a point of pain. (Participant 7)
And:

"...if there's not a sense that people really need to do this, but it's kind of a nice idea, then I encourage them not to... (Participant 10),

And:

Death ground is a good catalyst...some people used to say that in the art of war, if you got the army on death ground it would win. It would be more likely to win because it would fight to the death. So creating death ground is a good way to make dialogue work and to make ground real fast. (Participant 5)

(ii) Contracting with Sponsors and Participants at the Outset

Research participants indicated that it is advisable to facilitate a small group conversation about the scope of an intervention, with two or three of the stakeholders, prior to contracting, for the purpose of gathering data about readiness or openness to dialogic discourse. There is certainty around the contention that contracting related to the usage of dialogic discourse would wisely occur with the sponsors at the outset of the intervention. Equally important is the contracting that needs to occur with the participants when the sessions begin, although as previously indicated, the term dialogue is not likely to be used in contracting conversations with sponsors or participants.

When contracting, the Research Participants recommended obtaining a commitment to: timeframes for dialogues (preferably over multiple sessions), access to stakeholders, prior skill-building segments, and an agreement to convene the sessions at off-site facilities. In the ideal world, the scope of the engagement would include coaching for the Senior Managers of the organization(s) in the intervening time between dialogues, since conscious or unconscious signals sent by such individuals provide influential behavioural models.
One Research Participant recommended gaining clarification from the sponsors on the boundaries of the dialogue, and communicating these to all who would be attending. This was described as being "bounded" and "grounded" in reality (Participant 5).

Under ideal circumstances, all stakeholders affected by the issues in the conversation would wisely be engaged in the dialogue(s). This is anticipated to parallel the intent behind Gustavsen’s democratic dialogue rules two, three, and nine, which specify that all concerned must participate, and that issues must be introduced into the conversation by participants who are physically and psychologically "present" (Gustavsen, 1992).

Physical presence was less of a concern for Research Participants 1 and 3. Both individuals worked from Mindell’s 1992 conceptual framework of Deep Democracy. Both were concerned with a complete explication of the issues extant within a group or “field”. Neither were as concerned about which individuals raised which issues (Mindell, 1992).

Item (iii) Working at a Behavioural Level to Change attitudes and Beliefs

This thematic area is about creating an environment that is oriented to dialogic discourse. Four strategies were recommended. First, integrate dialogic conversation into the tasks the clients want and need to be doing, (i.e. visioning, strategic planning, organizational design). Second, model behaviours and skills congruent with dialogue, and look for the teachable moments. Third, when such moments occur, set out the distinguishing characteristics of this type of discourse, and explain why it may be valuable at this point in the group’s process (Participants 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9). Fourth, create the conditions where people can feel psychologically safe; or if that isn’t a realistic aim, create the conditions where people can make room for each other (Participants 2, 7, and 8).
Where executive or intact teams were the client groups, it was suggested that it would be wise to establish a one-to-one facilitator to participant relationship before engaging the group in dialogic discourse. The reasoning was, that if the group had unspoken or unresolved issues, they would need to establish a measure of rapport and trust with the facilitator. The group needed to trust that the facilitator would make room for all perspectives, before moving into deeper discourse with the group. Part of establishing trust and rapport with the dialogue participants involved clarifying the role and behaviours that could be expected from the facilitator (Participant 2, and 7).

Beyond merely describing the distinguishing characteristics of dialogue, which provides a conceptual awareness of this form of discourse, it was widely advised to engage in skill-building (see “Competencies Required” in a subsequent section of this chapter; see also Ellinor & Gerard, 1998; and Flick, 1998). Participant 4 explained:

In my experience, the vast majority of people have never learned how to think in the way dialogue asks you to think. For example, they have not developed a witness or a meta level perspective. They have never thought about the idea that they even have assumptions, let alone the ability to recognize them. (Participant 4)

A critical aspect of skill development was described as placing the learning process into perspective, and creating realistic expectations for learners:

I say to people a lot of times, let’s say you wanted to know how to play tennis. So you go to a two-day tennis workshop. You’ve never touched a racquet in your life. O.K. are you a tennis player after that? Like where are we with tennis? Now let’s shave that back to two hours. So where are you with this tennis ability?... O.K., dialogue is harder than tennis. (Participant 4)
Item (iv) Determining at the Outset that there is an Infrastructure to Sustain Dialogic Conversation in the Organization

This critical success factor is the equivalent of a congruency check, or a scanning of the environment to discern the level of resonance or dissonance between dialogic process, and organizational leadership practices, structure, culture, policies, and learning resources. Research Participants were aware of assessing four elements of client organizations in their congruency checks, prior to engaging client groups in dialogue. These are described in random order below.

First, Senior Management’s willingness or readiness to consistently model the behaviours and skills congruent to dialogic discourse were analysed. These would include behaviours such as a willingness to foster alternatives to the “there is only one truth, and it’s mine” paradigm, a demonstrated respect for both diversity in perspective and expression, and living by conventions which prevent negative repercussions from effecting people who have spoken their truth in dialogue sessions. Participant 4 spoke of an experience of being parachuted into an ongoing Organizational Development intervention to facilitate a series of dialogues in an organization with an executive team that was initially sending conflicting messages to the larger organization:

To really make that work, the senior executive team would have needed to be coached by me. Especially the CEO. Because the reason the problems were there [in the organization were] because of his leadership style, and values, and beliefs. It was not a dialogic culture [that he was embedding in the organization]. You know, he had the answers. He wanted people to do what he said. But to his credit, I mean, this is a huge learning experience for him, to sit in the completely foreign and different environment. So he made tremendous strides. But, you know, one of the barriers to this was that the senior people, the people in power, aren’t really open to having any outcomes happen. They don’t really want to hear the issues or the problems. They still want to use command and control, even if it’s sugar coated, even if it’s carrot not
stick. You know, and it really changes that. So a lot of times, with organizations, I say, 'If you aren't really open to change, if you are not open to anything happening, if you're really not open to new things coming in, this [dialogue] might not be the technology. Or what we might do is we might approach it slowly. We use some of the dialogic principles. But we integrate them into more of a discussion, you know like a skillful discussion oriented situation, or we use them to help us create a vision for the company. But it's bounded in these specific contexts. (Participant 4)

Second, internal communication processes were assessed for their level of congruence with dialogic principles, specifically, those that engaged organizational members in communicating at a level of deep structure, i.e. peer review; 360 degree feedback.

Third, the physical environment and the design of work spaces that enabled or discouraged dialogue were considered:

I think a quiet place and an uninterrupted environment is important. Not having people running in and out, people interrupting with messages. Because it gets very intense sometimes when you really get into something and you want to know that you’ll be able to continue it, not have the attention broken. So sometimes I find getting out of the workplace to have a dialogue is better. So that there aren't those kinds of interactions. It’s not compulsory, but I think it helps. (Participant 9)

Fourth, willingness to commit to ongoing learning and skill development in dialogic process was reviewed in relationship to the proposed intervention. Where incongruence was subjectively determined to be present, particularly in relation to leadership practices, processes, or culture, dialogic discourse was not considered a viable process intervention.

**How: Property E: Barriers to Dialogic Conversation in Organizations**

Twenty-nine barriers to dialogic conversation in organizations were identified, many of which were the opposite of the critical success factors. Those which were distinct from the previously cited critical success factors divided into the following sub-themes:
(i) Cultural incongruence

(ii) Low perceived value within the organization

(iii) Need for control

(iv) Barriers to Learning

(i) Cultural incongruence barrier

Several examples exist where research participants identified an inability to translate their processes into the existing indigenous cultures as a barrier. In South Africa this emerged in situations where tribal chiefs were recognized as having the right to speak first, and where rights to speak or to challenge were gender specific.

It pertained to finding voice for people who had been in disadvantaged roles for so long. Participant 3 characterized this as: “Have I the right and the worth to actually rise? Can I begin to talk?” Once this barrier had been surmounted, the issue of language and expression persisted. The use of English divorced many participants from their own highly metaphoric indigenous languages. Participant 5, working with a First Nations community in Northern Canada, learned to use statements rather than questions when clarifying. Asking questions was culturally-defined as rude.

When reflecting on barriers to dialogue in organizational contexts, Participant 8 focused on the prevalence of metaphors within western business cultures that were not analogous to dialogic principles. For example, the lone hero, crusader, horseman riding off into the sunset was a vivid icon of “loneness”, of fragmentation, which I likened to the maladaptive responses to turbulence cited by Emery and Trist, i.e., the dissociation and reduction in willingness or intention to coordinate behaviour with others (Emery & Trist,
Participant 8’s perception was that fragmented conversation had become the norm in western information age organizations. Emotions had been selected out of the argument-based discourse that prevailed in current organizational contexts. The current norm was a decision versus reflection orientation, an orientation that acknowledged the objective, versus subjective, view of reality.

(ii) Low perceived value within the organization.

Research Participants' perceptions about the perceived low level of acceptance of dialogic discourse in current organizational contexts included the thought that western information age organizations were not reflective (Participant 4). Similarly, organizations had a low tolerance for the complexity of group process, i.e. being “in the mush” (Participant 9). Organizations were characterized by the “just do it” mantra (Participant 9). They were unwelcoming of time-consuming, confronting, ambiguous, “woosie” interventions (Participant 2), particularly those which condoned “unprofessional” behaviour in the workplace (Participant 1). Participant 7 provided the insight that low perceived value may be a result of people feeling threatened by a process that could potentially expose their defenses to a toxic organizational environment:

Boy, you’re vulnerable. If you are in toxic environment you know, you have learned to defend yourself and you are not about to let those guards down and say what’s really going on behind those guards. I think also there’s corporate belief systems which label this soft stuff, actually they have worse labels than that. Whenever anything is threatening to you, one of the defenses that people use is they call it ‘touchy-feely’, cause that’s a put down and they don’t have to really deal with it. (Participant 7)
(iii) Need for Control

Organizations which operated within the command and control paradigm, and organizations which operated with senior management that did not want to get to the root cause of emotionally-anchored issues were identified as "low potential" sites for dialogic conversation. Participant 4 summarizes this issue: "I think one of the hugest barriers is it really challenges people's need for control. Huge. One should never underestimate the power of dialogue to create chaos and to create things that were unknown and unexplored before."

Item (iv) Barriers to Learning

Participant 4 likened learning to be in dialogue, to learning a new language. The challenge became more acute when the language was not embedded in the belief structures or the culture of either the individuals learning it, or the surrounding organization. Participant 4 added further complexity to the learning issue with the perception that learning styles and learning processes in western organizational contexts were concrete and experiential. Similarly, Participant 8 noted that dialogue seemed incongruent because it used abstract concepts that made it hard to make a connection to the here and now (Participant 8).

Dialogue requires reflection – which again, was not perceived as valued or practiced in western organizational contexts. Even when the value of reflection was accepted by one sector or team within an organization, the other constituent elements of the organization, encultured with a bias towards action, made practicing reflective conversation a considerable challenge (Participant 4). This clearly relates to Gustavsen's thesis of large system intervention and its attendant need to reconstruct language and practice (Gustavsen, 1992).
Participant 6 indicated that the jargon, or even the distinctions between such terms as (argument-based) discussion and dialogue, can alienate learners: “What they’ll say is “You’re just putting a word to something I do all the time anyway, so why do you have to throw it out, throw out this jargon for me?” And that puts people off.” (Participant 6)

The inherent challenge for Participant 5 was communicating that dialogue had both a structure and a discipline to learners who were not necessarily reflective about, or aware of the patterns and structures of their habitual conversational forms: “You need to have a discipline, a way to guide the clear thinking for it to work” (Participant 5). Once this awareness was generated, a need emerged to dissuade people from projecting a bias towards dialogue which hailed from their previous experiences with “organic process”, and was characterized as “…talk forever until something happened” (Participant 5).

For Participant 4, as mentioned previously (dialogue is harder than tennis), this involved creating realistic expectations for learners. I interpret this as reframing the concept of “outcomes”, and instilling the idea that skill development requires iterative practice, and time. In Participant 8’s terms “…it’s not a one-off deal”.

For Participants 4, 7, and 9, framing or positioning dialogue for learners had the potential to trigger fear of surfacing deep structure issues and repressed conflict. Organizational cultures tended to default in the direction of suppressing conflict. People had learned to fear conflict, even if there was a possibility that learning could emerge from such experiences.
How: Property F: Facilitating Dialogic Conversation

The over-arching theme associated with facilitating dialogic conversation was that there were no absolutes. The perspectives were contextually situated. Two contexts where facilitated dialogue was recommended were skill – building, where it was observed by one research participant that “...probably seventy-five percent of how they learn this is by watching me do it.” (Participant 4), and, dialogic discourse in environments where conflict was present and had the potential to be non-constructive.

As previously noted, for process consultants working with intact teams where contentious issues were blocking performance, the facilitator’s credibility with the team was perceived as a prerequisite to the team’s willingness to engage in dialogue. Dialogic conversation followed a set of preparation activities which included one-to-one interviews with each participant during which the facilitator’s objective was to develop rapport, engender trust and establish a relationship. Interventions during the dialogic conversation with the team were characterized as concise: “...to the point and out again” (Participant 2), “deliberately neutral, and at times – designed to impose structure when listening has broken down in the circle” (Participant 7).

Two facilitator interventions were cited as relevant to dialogic discourse, independent of organizational context. These were: signaling to the group if the facilitator intended to move from process into content, or from the facilitator role into the role of participant to add to the subject matter in dialogue, and debriefing the dialogue with participants for lessons learned relative to the content or the process.
The final comment in this area is that each research participant acknowledged that there was a facilitative role to be played at some point in dialogic conversation, though it may not necessarily be assigned or overt. At the time of this research, these consultants were more likely to be consciously facilitating dialogic conversation and building capacity within their client groups:

So maybe this is a system of learning in a system of service delivery. And I play a role and the ten or fifteen subject matter experts play a role and the content experts play a role. You know what I mean. So really looking at this in a bigger way. (Participant 4)

Sub-Heading 3: Competencies

Both Ellinor and Gerard (1998), and Flick (1998), provide detailed descriptions of the competencies individuals require to engage in dialogue. This segment of the thesis is not intended to revisit ground so aptly covered by these authors. It is intended to reflect the experience of non-expert practitioners. When the term “competencies” is used in this thesis, it is intended to mean demonstrated behaviours, and to be contrasted to knowledge that is resident and not leveraged in day-to-day behaviour (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). My interest in asking questions related to required competencies was not to test respondents’ answers against the body of published work on dialogue. It was to ascertain respondents’ experience-based perceptions about what really had to be demonstrated in conversation for dialogue to work.
Competencies: Property A: Competencies that would benefit each person engaged in a dialogue, including any person in a facilitative role.

(i) Listening

Listening was cited as a critical competency to demonstrate in dialogue. The elements drawn from this research, which fortify what Ellinor and Gerard (1998) and Flick (1998) have said about active listening in dialogue, pertain to willfully disengaging from the internal dialogue of rebuttal while attending to discourse that diverges from your own map of reality, or truth (Participant 1). It means enquiring into others’ ideas in ways which clarify, or even challenge, in the spirit of curiosity and exploration (Participant 4). It challenges people to adopt a meta perspective, to listen for the larger patterns emerging in the dialogue (Participant 8).

(ii) Being

Dialogue requires a different way of “being” in conversation. It requires being present, or opening one’s self up to fully attending to what is being experienced physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually (Participant 4). It requires individuals to slow down the discourse, and to be in a state of not-knowing or of non-definition at times, which can be very disorienting (Participant 4). Moreover, it requires all people involved to adopt the stance of the learner; to let go of the stance of expert, and the need to look good (Participant 8). It requires allowing ideas to flow into the metaphoric “container” at the center of the circle of participants, which amounts to letting go of the need to attach ideas to individuals (Participant 4).
(iii) Speaking

Speaking has some specific characteristics in dialogue. Expressing difference or divergence requires the ability to heighten awareness about the areas of divergence that are currently in play in the "container" at the center of the circle. For some of the Research Participants, this excludes argument (Participant 5, 6, 8, 9). For other Research Participants (1, 3, 4), being "present" also requires expressing the full range of what is being experienced, as in:

I don't want people to feel that they've got to pussy foot around and be nice, you know, that dialogue means we never raise our voice, we never argue. And frankly, I think there's also room for people to say, 'I really don't like what you're saying. And I'm willing to own that it's my judgement that's speaking right now.' I want them to feel the emotion of anger. I want them to feel the dislike. (Participant 4)

Dialogue also requires that people speak of the larger patterns that they perceive emerging in the container, and that they speak for themselves, or use "I" statements when they do so, to signal the subjectivity of their experience (Participant 5).

(iv) Sensory Acuity and Intuition

Building sensory acuity and intuitive competence is a requirement of dialogue. Participants 1 and 3 alluded to the importance of discerning incongruities in verbal delivery and body language. Incongruity in speech pattern or delivery was evidence of a field or a polarity to be explored for deeper levels of meaning. Participant 5 made a similar reference to the need to develop an ability to discern when people were in specific modes of thought, i.e. reflection, interpretation. This included the need to develop an awareness of one's self, in relation to the group dynamic, which amounts to a "...kind of double loop reflection that allows you to examine your behaviour and not just be in it" (Participant 5).
Competencies: Property B: Competencies that were identified specifically for those who facilitate dialogic conversation.

(i) Discerning Openness for Dialogic Discourse

Of particular significance to these process consultants, was developing the ability to discern the client contexts in which there was an opening for dialogue. This recalls one of the meta-themes cited at the outset of this chapter, which correlated an attitudinal difference among Research Participants towards dialogic process interventions on the basis of the geopolitical location of the consulting practice. In short, this was clearly less an issue for the South African Research Participant than for the other nine process consultants who contributed time to this study.

(ii) Creating an Environment Conducive to Dialogic Discourse

Also, as previously stated, creating an environment conducive to dialogic discourse was of pre-eminent importance to the Research Participants. I suspect this relates to a values stance about the integrity of group process as much as it relates specifically to dialogic discourse. It may also relate to the desire to demonstrate and diffuse these principles to a wider audience.

(iii) Modelling “Letting Go”

On a more pragmatic note, a theme of letting go emerged from the data. This included letting go of the content-outcome focus that is so much a part of facilitating process in organizational contexts. It meant modeling the letting go of ownership of ideas, letting go of the expert persona, as well as the letting go of the need for an answer, an objective truth (Participants 5, 8, 10). It required the ability to be descriptive of process dynamics without being attached to, or the owner of, what happened next (Participants 5, and 10).
(iv) Amplification

For Research Participants 1 and 3, facilitating dialogic discourse required an ability to discern opportunities to deepen the communication within the group through the techniques of reflective listening and amplification:

Amplification means that you have been ...kissed over the edge into acknowledging the real emotion that is going on underneath...that relieves one of the responsibility of first of all hiding it or tamping it down or suppressing it and secondly of having to say it yourself. So I might stand beside you, physically stand beside you and say, let’s say you’re having a disagreement with George and I’m the facilitator. I might stand beside you and say ‘So it sounds like what Lynne is saying’ and I would look at George, ‘is that she is really terrified that you are going to screw things up.’ Now that is not what you said. You said ‘I have a concern that if you don’t do this it won’t work maybe.’ You see? And I might add, ‘And Lynne maybe it sounds like that makes you angry cause you think he’s taking an unnecessary risk and you’re not.’ Right? ‘George do you have a response to this’ I’d listen to him [and move beside him]. ‘OK, so Lynne, it sounds like George is saying...’ And I would amplify that. So rather than what is known sometimes as being ‘professional’ in a meeting, where you suppress the emotion and you just talk maybe with conviction, but you talk about stuff in a very sterile way...you actually get the emotion out...the more you can bring to the surface...then you’re dealing with what is real. (Participant 1)

Not having experienced this process prior to interviewing Participants 1 and 3, I was unaware of the profound degree to which it could generate awareness of what had moments, even seconds prior, been at an unconscious level in the dialogue. In recent months, I have had the opportunity to participate in discourse using the principles of deep democracy and dialogue. We moved from a level of socially or organizationally appropriate discourse (surface structure), to a level of deep structure with intense resonance for all participants, with alacrity and integrity. I concur with these participants’ perception of the difference that these interventions can produce. I also concur with their bias for first modeling, then transferring this competency to all participants in the dialogue.
Chapter 5: Outcome Themes

Salient Features Perceived as Valuable

There are five thematic areas associated with the perceived value of dialogic conversation. These aver that Dialogic Conversation,

Property A: Deepens communication
Property B: Rebuilds community or culture
Property C: Facilitates learning
Property D: Facilitates organizational transformation
Property E: Reframes conflict

Outcome Themes: Property A: Deepens Communication

Dialogic conversation moved people beyond the surface structure of conversation (where there is a tendency to self-censor), to deeper structure communication, and in so doing created a connection that renewed the spirit of an organization’s culture (Participants 1, 3, 4, and 8). It elicited and clarified multiple perspectives related to complex issues. In the course of eliciting and clarifying multiple perspectives, creativity was stimulated and people discovered new ways of perceiving issues, and built new approaches that had not previously been part of their consciousness (Participants 3 and 10).
Outcomes Themes: Property B: Re-builds Community or Culture

During and after dialogic conversation people experienced common ground, and often felt connected to a deeper sense of collective purpose. For one of the research participants who contributed to this study, Deep Democracy and dialogic conversation defined a vocation:

Because for me it’s been seeing people, first of all as a South African, it’s hell mired, awful guilt about racism because I have been actively involved in trying to resolve or heal some of those wounds which will never be healed, but at least do something. So I’ve been doing what for me is my most important life work. (Participant 3)

For another research participant it has the potential to connect us at a level that transcends humanity: “And so those finest moments as a human being, where we feel that interconnectedness with everything. Dialogue will bring us to that point” (Participant 8).

Outcomes Themes: Property C: Facilitates Learning

Participating in dialogic conversation created a deeper level of self-awareness, or learning about the self. Practice and skill-building provided the tools for further deepening self and other-awareness (Participants 3 and 4). Dialogue provided a nonjudgmental, exploratory environment for learning on individual and organizational levels (Participant 9; also see Crossan, Lane, and White, 1999).

Outcomes Themes: Property D: Facilitates Organizational Transformation

Participant 2 spoke of a process intervention where dialogue generated a breakthrough with a client’s executive team during a strategic planning session that in retrospect, was considered the highlight of his consulting career. It provided the depth of
communication that enabled the team to completely redefine and sustain its renewed organizational direction.

For the Process Consultant using dialogic conversation in a South African organization undergoing radical redesign, the results are profound. Women who would defer to, or not even speak in the presence of men were...

…confronting men. First of all about their view and secondly if there is any issue about ‘isms’. They would say that was sexist. You’ve got racism being checked. Saying that’s a racist statement. No longer are these things under the surface. They are being addressed. (Participant 3)

People within this organization who were illiterate before the redesign and cultural transformation process, have found a renewed sense of power and confidence. Some are now operating computers. Some are now teaching others how to operate computers. People who, prior to this process, had no business acumen, are now working in self-managing, ethnically diverse teams to create marketing plans, budgets, and team-based salary and performance reviews. People who would not even acknowledge that people of colour were human, are working side by side in the most extreme circumstances:

…by the end of the three days we had with them, the second group we did more work with them, we had them actually turning the black guys and saying, ‘Hey, you know, we’ve never really gotten along with one another. And we’ve had our things, but we’ve now got to work together as a team. So tell me about who you are. And you can’t keep too quiet now. You’ve got to tell me what you think’ in exactly that kind of way. And the black guy turning around and beginning to get involved. O.K. the beauty at the end, the kind of kernel, they go up in the live wire on harnesses [to clean and repair live electrical wires working from a helicopter] and they take the black guys and whoop them down [lower each other in the harness’ over the live wires, where they previously would not cross-train the black workers, or take them into the helicopter] and they are now cooperating in a life and death situation. (Participant 3)
Outcome Themes: Property E: Reframes Conflict

Working with dialogic discourse in contentious situations enables individuals to move beyond defensive postures, to focus on the larger patterns of meaning that are emerging: “They had a larger picture articulated that they had never been able to articulate in years of arguing” (Participant 5).

Bohmian dialogue promotes listening beyond the “that which occurs” in Socratic conceptions of discourse. Once again, this does not presume that one form of discourse is inherently more worthy than another. It does infer that discourse structure will have an impact on the interpersonal communication and dynamics of a conflict situation. Neilsen (1991), drawing on the works of Gadamer (1975) and Lawrence (1984), characterizes the first step in Socratic discourse as consciously choosing to maintain an open mind. Step two requires amplifying the structure of the opinions or premises expressed by one’s discourse partner(s), and considering the disadvantages associated with each. Next, the “other(s)” are invited to follow suit in relation to one’s own opinions or premises, with an intention to fully explicate all perspectives. In the final step, participants mutually seek to converge on the most contextually appropriate decision or action (Neilson, 1991).

There are distinct parallels to Bohmian dialogue. There is an inferred intention to fully attend to others’ conceptions, and to extend one’s self fully to the task of mutual, exploratory discourse. There are also divergences between the approaches that, in my opinion, are likely to manifest in the dynamics of conflict situations. Where Socratic discourse specifies an open mind, Bohmian dialogue specifies mindfulness, or awareness of one’s states of mind, be they open, partisan, or detached.
Socratic discourse requires enquiry, listening, and the exploring of the structure and the boundaries of other’s ideas, with an intention to assess or to critically evaluate. Bohmian dialogue requires both conscious introverting, or directing energy at internal experience, referred to by Participant 9 as the “…dialogue between the unconscious and the conscious…” as well as conscious extraverting, or attending to the thoughts and actions of others, with an intention to explore thinking and meaning-making.

The aim of Socratic discourse is to isolate the resolution or decision that is most contextually refined or appropriate, even if it runs counter to one’s own views (Neilsen, 1991). The intent of dialogue is to explore thinking and talking together (Bohm, 1990). The aim is to achieve coherent, multi-stakeholder thought that is inherently generative in quality. Generative, in this sense, refers to thought that is more than a by-product of memory-based experience. It is inventive. It is integrative, in that it is beyond what any one individual could conceive. It is by no means expected to produce convergence on a course of action, though the experience of the participants in this research indicates that it does often produce common ground:

The intention is to give them an opportunity to talk with each other in a completely different way. …I do not assume for one minute that dialogue leads to consensus. The purpose of dialogue is not agreement at all. But of course, the miracle is that ofentimes, a lot of common ground is experienced. Not just intellectually recognized, but I think actually experienced. So there is a physical as well as an intellectual and emotional kind of sense. (Participant 4)

The process of Socratic discourse begins and ends with ideas that are attached to individual participants. Bohmian dialogue, and the variants of it practiced by the Research Participants in this thesis, offers a process which acknowledges up front that humans have a tendency to fragment, distort, and become attached to their conceptions of reality. Bohmian dialogic processes not only ask for people to temporarily give up the need for concrete
decisions and actions, they ask that people acknowledge and let go of the need to identify
with their thoughts:

I guess another behavior would be the willingness to separate ideas from personalities
and really take advantage of the center of the circle and the concept of the container
[the field of inquiry]. Let's put this idea in the center and everybody explore it.
(Participant 4)

This distinction appears even more acutely in the process work of Participants 1 and
3, whose dialogic discourse interventions are integrated with their work with process-
oriented psychology and deep democracy (Mindell, 1992). This work draws upon Mindell’s
conception of role theory, which uses concepts from Einsteinian physics, and conceives the
world as both a physical and a metaphysical entity.

In the metaphysical realm, the world is comprised of fields (Mindell, 1992). “Fields”
are omnipresent phenomena. As in the discipline of physics, fields exert forces in their
interactions with physical entities. In Mindell’s conception, fields and humans interact.
Humans are often unconscious, or unaware of the interplay between themselves, and the
fields that are present. Fields, like humans, are ever-evolving. In this regard, we can draw a
parallel between Mindell’s Field Theory (1992), and Carl Jung, who conceived of human
cognition as being both conscious and unconscious on an individual level, and interacting
with a meta, or collective unconscious (Jung, 1978).

When humans and fields interact, humans are influenced by the forces in the field. A
human being is both a vehicle for the expression of their own identity, and is often an
unconscious vehicle for forces or roles that are present in a field; for instance a social field or
an organizational field. Fields manifest opposing energy, or polarities. Where one role is
present within a field, its opposite will also exist (Mindell, 1992).
Humans are greater than the roles that they manifest, in that humans are sentient, and are capable of developing and expressing an individual identity. Roles are greater than the humans with whom they interact, in that they are part of a larger, encompassing set of forces within a field (Lewis and Wasjman, 1999).

Conflict resolution that leverages the principles of dialogic discourse, Deep Democracy, and Field Theory results in participants becoming aware of their own and others’ identity-based assumptions and mental models related to the conflict, as well as the polarities and roles that are presently influencing the dynamics of the conflict. Thus conflict is reframed as a precursor to insight, and to discovering the wisdom resident within the group:

In Deep Democracy they would say the ‘No’ has some wisdom. You may not agree with everything that person is saying, but they are carrying a ‘No’ for the group. Right now, say if there were six people around the table and one of them is saying ‘No, I don’t want to talk about this. I think we should talk about this [another topic] first.’ There is a wisdom in what they are saying. You may not agree with everything but you need to surface the wisdom. So if they are carrying the ‘No’, and they are the only one, one out of six, they have 100% of the burden for that ‘No.’ So you get them really clear, you get really clear about what that ‘No’ is about. What it is they are really saying and why they are saying it. And then you ask if anyone around the room shares even a part of what it is they are saying. You share the concern. You don’t have to buy into the whole statement, but you share some of their concern. And somebody might say, ‘Well I think I agree that that is really an important thing to talk about, and, I’m concerned about order. And maybe we could talk about that second, cause I think if we don’t decide this first then we can’t really do as good a job deciding about second.’ But that person is already sharing some of the ‘No.’ So the first person’s responsibility for carrying the ‘No’ is no longer 100%. It’s maybe 50%. And what you do is spread the ‘No’ around the room. So you want that person [originally carrying 100% of the ‘No’] not to be isolated and scapegoated. That person should be respected, and the wisdom harvested from what it is they are saying... (Participant 1)

Laiken (1997) has proposed a similarly integrated approach to managing conflict that entails examining mental models for unsurfaced assumptions, engaging in dialogue to explore all perspectives without judgement, and distilling the elements of the conflict, which
are considered polarities to be managed rather than problems to be solved (Laiken, 1997; Johnson, 1992).

In both approaches, dialogic discourse is the vehicle through which individuals in conflict are able to gain a heightened awareness of the dynamics at play. Dialogic discourse offers people an opportunity for a “time out”. It is a nonjudgmental, reflective, non-outcome based process, and as such, can detach people from their needs to defend, or to be right.
Chapter 6: Belief Themes

Though there were many individually held beliefs articulated by participants in the course of the research, five sub themes emerged as a recurring pattern across the interviews.

Belief Themes: Property A:

Organizational issues are becoming increasingly complex. Dialogic conversation enables people within organizations to confront complex issues. As organizational issues increase in volume and complexity, the need to utilize dialogic conversation will increase.

Belief Themes: Property B:

While the need is perceived as significant and growing, and while these Process Consultants can cite examples and benefits of its use in client organizations, dialogic conversation is perceived as anachronistic to elements of western information age organizational culture, and as such, is perceived to face some significant barriers to diffusion.

Belief Themes: Property C:

Beliefs about the optimal organizational contexts for dialogic conversation were linked to how these individuals perceived or positioned themselves as Process Consultants in terms of their mission, their niche, their contribution to organizations.

Belief Themes: Property D:

A subtle discipline and structure underlie dialogic conversation.

Belief Themes: Property E:

Participants associate belief systems and symbolism with dialogic conversation.
Belief Themes: Property A: Organizational Complexity and Dialogic Conversation

The topic of complexity in organizational functioning was not explored at length in the interviews with the research participants. The participants were not asked to define what they meant by complexity, nor were they asked to provide examples of the complexity that they were dealing with in client organizations. I accepted at face value any statements about increasingly complex issues extant in organizations for two reasons. First, I am in the same line of work as these individuals and experience the increasing complexity of organizational life on a daily basis, as my clients work through the human implications of restructuring, retraining, and redefining the processes for transacting business on a global scale. Secondly, this project is designed to gather and analyze perceptions and to value them in their own right, in contrast to evaluating them against an objective standard of validity.

On the theme of “complexity”, dialogic conversation was perceived as a critical skill that slowed the pace of discourse, and enabled people to explore and value differences:

Now I believe, in my heart of hearts, I believe that this is an absolutely critical skill for people to learn, and, for us to learn to engage more and more as things become chaotic and crazy. The ability to stop the action and slow things down and also pay attention to the differences. I mean, I think there are more and more differences. You know, that we are having to pay attention to. More cultural differences. More world view differences. More everything, which has the potential to make things so rich, but we really need to practice learning to live with differences. (Participant 9)

Within this same thematic line, Participant 4 spoke of the conceptual link that evolves when people engage in dialogic conversation. The link evolves from exploring differences in assumptions and perceptions, to recognizing that “…all the differences are really elements of a larger entity,…the integrative and interactive nature of the world…” or in this context, the
organization. Dialogic conversation was linked to organizational effectiveness in the ’90s and beyond:

I think organizations to compete successfully have to get there more and more... and I think that’s happening too. I think there’s conversations taking place in organizations now that never would have taken place half a dozen years ago. The breaking down of the bureaucratic sickness and the silos and that kind of stuff and the ‘who can say what to who’. I think it’s shifted a lot. (Participant 7)

There was a perceived urgency for broader dissemination of dialogic conversation in organizations:

It’s not just something we do once a year for an epiphany event, on top of a mountain. It becomes how we’re going to have to function more and more all the time, if we’re going to be able to deal with the world that we are in. And I think we’re at the edge of learning how this can become an ongoing way of functioning. (Participant 10)

Belief Themes: Property B: Dialogic Conversation Anachronistic to Western Information Age Organizational Culture

This theme emerged out of the data from the “barriers to dialogic conversation in organizations” questions in the participant interviews. The identification of these barriers appears in a prior segment of this document. These next paragraphs focus on the beliefs that shape perceptions of the barriers, that is, the beliefs that the participants used to explain why these barriers currently exist.

(i) Western Information Age Organizational Cultures Fragment Elements of the Human Personae

In this context, fragmentation connotes the practice of suppressing elements of ourselves, while manifesting only those aspects that are deemed appropriate to conversation in organizational contexts. One participant spoke of this as conforming to the “professional”
personae (Participant 1). Participant 2 echoed this sentiment, and drew a vivid analogy contrasting conventional (argument-based) conversation to dialogic conversation among senior executives, by saying the latter was like "...driving a Mack truck right up to their door of intimacy." Participants 7 and 4 spoke of this as the separation of head and heart in organizational conversation. Three participants spoke of the fragmentation of masculine and feminine energy. One of these three participants requested no quotations on this issue.

Participant 8 has done extensive reading for personal and professional development on valuing the integration of feminine and masculine energy. The following quote speaks compellingly about the challenge of introducing a holistic conversational form such as dialogue into organizational cultures operating on a tacit principle that values predominantly masculine energy:

I would define it very specifically within Jungian terms. That each of us as a human being has both feminine and masculine energy. And we value the, that masculine side in our society, in western society. So, the stillness and reflective aspect in dialogue falls on that feminine side to begin with. We’re a society that pushes that right out of the equation of business. It’s go, go, act, do quickly. And decide. So we’ve essentially split that whole piece off. So it was like hostile ground. And not only just hostile. When something’s repressed, when it’s unconscious, it’s the equivalent of it being dead. And when it’s the equivalent of it being dead, you can’t raise it in conversation without raising a huge amount of fear in people. So death and the feminine are held within the same place – the unspeakable. So it’s incredibly difficult to do anything more than lip service to, to, you know, the latest fad [Senge]. But anybody who really seriously wants to engage in the practice [of dialogic conversation in organizations], to actually try it, there are huge barriers to overcome. (Participant 8)

One participant spoke of the ethics of reintegrating these elements of the human personae – and then sending people back into an environment or system that did not value such an integration:

A lot of the meta skills, which is the attitude that you bring to the skill, is based on compassion, caring. And business men are not necessarily hard because they have to be, because they are hard persons. But they are hard because it’s business. Business is business and it’s about making money. And that’s fine. And in a way you’re tackling
it. How are you going to bring in compassion? So we were concerned with this group of how we were going to be able to translate this inclination into the workplace... and so for me, was this morally right? Was it ethically right? Were we not upsetting them more? (Participant 3)

(ii) Dialogic conversation challenges the archetype of dualism in western cultures

Related to the issue of fragmentation (feminine or masculine; reflection or action), is the conception that western cultures are rooted in a dualistic belief system. Dialogic conversation cultivates the perception of a reality that ventures beyond dualism:

A great deal of our culture is, I mean western civilization is based on dualities. And that’s its gift. You know, us and them. Government, Opposition. Right, wrong. Black, White. Heaven, Hell. You know, and to cut across dualism is very difficult for western – the more educated [acculturated] we are in western civilization – the harder it is to understand dialogue. Because dialogue is like a diamond with many facets. And the more facets, the more valuable the diamond... western culture finds this a struggle and something new. (Participant 5)

Each of the previous quotes infers that the barriers to dialogic conversation can be explained by phenomena that are connected to, yet located in large measure outside of, the participants. The barriers are explained as manifestations of our societal archetypes and myths; as behavioural artifacts of our western cultures. When Participant 7 reflected on a career in Process Consulting, the possibility was introduced that a personal belief system (beliefs about the self in relation to those about an over-arching society) provided some measure of explanation for the perceived barriers to using dialogic conversation in client organizations:

Well when you have a whole lot of clients though you can use [dialogue], you can afford to, you can afford to lose some clients. I think we self-censor. I think I self-censor probably more than I need to. And increasingly I am doing the work that I want to do rather than the pot-boiler things that keep the money flowing. And as I look back, I wish I had done more of that ten years ago. You need to take risks. Dialogue is a risk. (Participant 7)
This raises the possibility that some of the beliefs about "readiness" related to dialogic conversation in organizations are self-sustained, and correlated to one's orientation to risk. Though this is beyond the scope of this work, I wonder as well if tolerance for this type of risk varies according to the nature of one's own organization. For instance, would independent consultants who have built a viable client base have a greater risk tolerance for bringing dialogic conversation into their client's organizations than those who were partners or founders of multi-person consulting firms where a larger system of dependencies exist?

Belief Themes: Property C: Process Consultants linked their perception of the optimal contexts for dialogic conversation to the organizational contexts that are prevalent in their client work

Participants spoke both about their experiences with dialogic conversation, and the pre-disposing factors for success or failure (also noted earlier in this document). In the course of these conversations we spoke also about the organizational contexts most conducive to dialogic conversation. The responses divided into two categories. Category one pertains to the "niche" contexts for dialogic conversation, i.e. one-to-one coaching for personal and professional development, intact consulting team dialogue used for professional or team development, executive team dialogue in the context of visioning and strategic planning, conflict management within the senior management team of a not-for-profit association, debriefing the design team of a three hundred and sixty-five degree feedback process. These Process Consultants spoke of optimal group size ranging from two people, to eight people, to twenty people. Beyond these numbers, a concern was expressed about access to air time, and the dynamics of trust, as in the willingness to share or "go deep". Six of the ten Process
Consultants spoke of the niche contexts as being optimally conducive to dialogic conversation (1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9).

Each of these individuals also described personal preferences for working with intact teams, leadership / executive teams, or in executive coaching. Most often these were situations where group numbers did not exceed the maximums noted above, and where not all stakeholder groups were present, which again, could mean larger numbers and a diffused rather than a defined focus.

A series of rhetorical questions come to mind at this point. Is there a tacit preference here for depth rather than breadth; for “seeding” culture change one person or one element of the system at a time; for generating a “healing” process via the same approach; for dealing “at the top of the house” to yield the greatest possibility of generating sustainable organizational change? Is there an experience base that indicates to these individuals that these or other niche strategies are most effective (for them)? If so, are they effective in an objective sense, or are they effective because these approaches match the values, beliefs, perceptual preferences, and / or competencies of these Process Consultants?

One might also pose these latter questions to the second category of consultants that emerged in this analysis. Participants 3, 4, 5, and 10 described large system interventions as contexts conducive for dialogic conversation, these being contexts where all stakeholders within the organizational, political, economic or social system, are present.

Participant 3 brings all members of the client’s internal organizational system together – to live, eat, share accommodation and workshop time together in a series of three and five day sessions. The intent is to totally realign the culture of the organizational system, to make the organization viable in a global rather than a national context. The consulting firm
has been dubbed the “Ghost Busters” by client organizations for their large-scale intervention effectiveness.

Participant 4 works with communities on issues such as land use, or infrastructure planning. Participant 4 also works with organizations that are in the process of merging and leveraging resources across continents, or with medical communities (administration, emergency medical teams, local government) to dialogue about disaster recovery, or with unions, industry, local and state government, on community planning. Group sizes of forty to eighty are well within the realm of the possible. Ideally, according to Participant 4, groups are engaged in dialogic conversation in several sessions, spanning several weeks.

Participant 5 has a thirty-year affiliation with an international organization whose members seek to create positive change on a global scale, by developing geographically dispersed client capability in participatory, discourse-based processes. She speaks of the importance of maximizing stakeholder participation in dialogic conversation, or at minimum, of finding a process solution that brings absent stakeholders into the conversation. Participant 5 also advocates speaking to a number of the stakeholders (rather than the hiring contact exclusively) before agreeing to take on the engagement, in the interests of determining if there is “an opening” in the meta system for dialogic conversation, and ultimately, for change. Broad stakeholder representation “...cuts down on the “them and us” stuff...” even though it may make the human or group dynamics more complex in the short term (Participant 5). Participant 5 also indicated that she noted an increasing interest in dialogic conversation in multi-stakeholder contexts. She made reference to a consulting team that she was coaching in the use of dialogic conversation, with 130 stakeholders, representing a provincial government, provincial entrepreneurs, community-based advocate groups, and
religious organizations. Participant 10 is an Open Space Technology facilitator and trainer. As previously noted, he perceives dialogic conversation to be an intrinsic element of Open Space events. His work characteristically engages him in two-day process sessions with several hundred participants.

The point that I am endeavouring to make at this juncture is that these Process Consultants defined optimally effective organizational contexts for dialogic conversation, and the contexts in which they themselves are most effective at their work, as one and the same. Participants whose work is largely in groups of 2 to 20; often in intact teams (functional or cross functional), indicated that although there were no absolutes per se, that these were the contexts that they perceived most conducive to dialogic conversation in their practices. Participants whose work is largely, or preferably, in groups of 20+, including representation from all possible members of the meta organizational or community system, indicated that although they saw no absolutes in terms of appropriate contexts, large system interventions were very much enriched through dialogic conversation.

In short, participants working in smaller niche interventions indicated that their intent was not to cascade dialogue throughout the organization. It was used for very specific purposes, under very specific conditions, with a limited number of participants (2 to 20 people). Participants whose work occurred on a larger scale, the Ghost Busters, the community-in-action, the Open Space Technology participants, saw no barriers or limitation of scale relative to the use of dialogic conversation in their whole-system interventions. In contrast to the niche interventionists, group size was of no consequence for the large system interventionists, and further, large groups (80 people or more) posed no barriers to dialogic conversation.
Belief Themes: Property D: A subtle discipline and structure underlie dialogic conversation

Each of the participants did speak about setting some level of context or parameters, or about preparing client groups to engage in dialogic conversation by first setting out the principles, or providing skill-building sessions prior to engaging in dialogic conversation.

Each, however, was wary of treating dialogic conversation as a technology, with all the attendant rules, standards, and measures. More often, the intent during the initiation of a dialogue was to acknowledge that there was a structural difference in conversational modes between argument-based and dialogic discourse, and to acknowledge the contextually relevant value of both. This could be an overt acknowledgment, intended to heighten the listening and the awareness level of client groups, or it could be non-overt, delivered as a set of questions or statements made by the facilitator as process interventions:

I think dialogue has a structure. It's a subtle structure. I mean when I use this conversation method [Focused Conversation – a dialogic form of discourse which creates reflection and suspension of judgment] you don't, you wouldn't necessarily know that I was using it. Because you are just opening up the questions, and you are following the flow and yet you are also bringing people back if they’ve jumped to a decision...there is a discipline but it is a subtle discipline. (Participant 5)

Participant 4 spoke of the integrity that is brought to the process by staying present to your own thoughts while you reflect on the expressed thoughts or nonverbal reactions of others; in short, being “in the container”, and trusting in the integrity of being in the container with your dialogue partners. It allows for a full expression of the self, unlike any other form of discourse. As such, it would be unwise to try to “normalize” group behaviours:

...what I like about dialogue is no matter where I go, it’s always going to bring me back. And that’s what I trust about it. So I can totally be me. I can be defensive. I can be angry. I can be judgmental. I can be narrow-minded. I can desire control if I need to. But if I’m in the container [the field of inquiry], I know I’ll be brought back to something else. And maybe that's really the value. We can allow ourselves to be
totally who we are because it's the container that helps to bring us back or bring us to a different place. You know, one minute I'll feel defensive and the next minute I'll be defensive about someone else being defensive. You know, that's the beauty. I'm always being brought back. So the mistake that we could make is to create a set of rules for dialogue and try to capture it there. Like Oh, you can't yell at someone. Or you can't, you can't just be...like we're just setting up another set of guidelines that you feel like you're in or you're out. Everything needs to be there. (Participant 4)

The process and the structure of the conversation are subtle and minimal. This is perhaps because dialogue relies as much on the conversation that participants are having internally as it does on the conversation that participants are engaged in with the group. In this context, consciousness can not be controlled, and pro-prioperception can not be mandated:

I don't think you can force people to dialogue. I think you can create the conditions for it. But people have to choose to interact at that level. And when you can create the conditions for those who want to work on a thing they've got a passion for together, and they find each other in the room and they start talking to each other, and all of a sudden lights light up. (Participant 10)

Belief Themes: Property E: Participants Associate Belief Systems and Symbolism with Dialogic Conversation.

(i) Relinquishing Control

Dialogic conversation requires the suspension of judgment. Judgment occurs in relation to a perceptual map of reality, a subjective map of meaning and order that is used to sort and navigate through day-to-day experience. Dialogic conversation challenges individuals to acknowledge that their behaviour can be, and to a large measure is, controlled by their tacit assumptions. It challenges individuals to be aware of their own perceptions and to be prepared to discover or bring to consciousness the map of reality that they have evolved in the course of their lives; the map that currently sorts their perceptions and tacitly controls
their reactions and actions. Dialogic conversation requires participants to acknowledge the need, and then to relinquish the need, to align others’ perceptions with their own. In other words, it requires the relinquishment of the need to control others’ perceptions during the dialogue.

Dialogic conversation requires the group to agree that its purpose excludes the need to attain defined outcomes, (to seek convergence or to control “next steps”, or what happens after the dialogue). Dialogic conversation does not acknowledge power or position-based control. It requires the acknowledgment that all participants are equal in their need to understand and to be understood in the context of the dialogue. It is a process that deconstructs the concept of control. Participant 3 likened the essence of dialogic conversation to Taoism: “And Taoism has a very clear thing of “what will be will be”. Now how do you fit that ideology into a money focused business organization?” Participant 7 reflected on the “surrendering” of control by drawing on concepts from Buddhism and Freudian psychology:

There’s a Buddhist nun called Pema Chodron who says we have so much fear of not being in control, of not being able to hold onto things, yet the true nature of things is that you are never in control. You are never in control. You can never hold onto anything. It’s a myth...[in dialogue we surrender our ego needs]...letting go of the need to have your solution be the solution or even knowing what the solution is. It’s like when you really surrender, you just kind of go to the space and you are open to whatever is going to happen. And so ego is not driving the ship then. (Participant 7)

(ii) Connection and Integration

Participant 4 likened the reflective elements of dialogic conversation to Zen philosophy. Additionally, she drew a parallel between the North American Aboriginal conception of the Medicine Wheel to the integrative elements of dialogue, which connect our
mind, body, and emotions to our spirit, a part of us that we rarely give voice to in organizational settings:

I think we are definitely taking people to a place that is, that has unknown elements for them and for us and we, it takes courage and it takes flexibility and it takes commitment and it takes trust. That's why, I mean, I think, I don't know if anyone has talked to you about this, but to me, dialogue is ultimately, is ultimately a spiritual practice. (Participant 4)

Participant 10 referenced the seminal work on group dynamics research generated at the Tavistock Institute, and a hallmark concept of Jungian psychology, when addressing the meta level of consciousness achieved in dialogic conversation:

I mean you can go back to Tavistock and you can go back to the collective unconscious that Jung talked about, you can talk about somehow we generate this stuff by ourselves through our minds, it all connects, given my background [B.Sc. Engineering, Doctor of Religion]. I tend to assume that there are some levels of reality that we connect to in dialogue or in Open Space that are beyond our current comprehension. (Participant 10)

The theme of connectivity and integration was pursued by Participant 1, who spoke of the potential strategic advantage of encouraging people to bring their whole being, (their heads, hearts, hands, and spirit) to organizational life. Participant 1 referenced Margaret Wheatley’s usage of the term “fractals” in an organizational context in Leadership and the New Science (1992). A fractal, a term borrowed from quantum physics, is an element of a system that has within it a representation of the larger system, analogous to a hologram:

...each individual is a fractal of the team, is a fractal of the organization, and it goes down the other way...we're relating this to dialogue, or to meaning, or to democracy. The more of themselves that they can bring to a process, the richer the process, the more wisdom....and the wiser organizations are working, and this ties in with diversity, they are working to allow the full range of people, and their full range of expression to be harnessed and to be used in the workplace. (Participant 1)
(iii) Transformation: the imagery of death and re-emergence

When looked at in light of the previous quote, there is more “opportunity” within this conversational form than there is “threat”. Yet we have been exploring participants’ beliefs, that also explain the existence of barriers to broader diffusion of dialogic conversation in western Information Age organizations.

Thus far, dialogic conversation is perceived to challenge conventions of fragmented, rational, argument-based discourse embedded in organizational cultures. It is perceived to require the suspension of the control, or decision or action orientation that poses an acute challenge to time and money-focused organizations. It is perceived to challenge the cognitive model of dualism that orients and informs our judgment. It is perceived to pose ethical and moral dilemmas for consultants concerned with providing awareness and skills to people who will belong to systems outside the client organization, which may not recognize or value these skills, thus setting people up for conflict and potential disillusionment. It is perceived to challenge consultants’ tolerance for risk. Participant 8 raises the prospect that the transformative nature of dialogic conversation triggers an internal experience of loss that few people are prepared for:

I don’t think until you’ve faced death you can deal with dialogue. Because something in you dies. If you take on someone’s reality, if you make room for their reality, you have to deconstruct yourself at a very fundamental spiritual and psychological level. And you may not want to do that. And you may not even have the health to do that… [and] True dialogue splits you apart…it’s not violent in the sense that it’s not, it isn't colluding in power over, but what it’s doing is suggesting that you go through a transformational process…[and]…in transformation, that giving up is a death with all the feeling and stuff that we humans attach to all of that. (Participant 8)
In organizational contexts, while it is believed that dialogic conversation will enable people to manage complexity, it will require a transformation of the concept, and the act, of “managing”. This has significant implications for individual and organizational learning:

We’ve got a lot to learn. And managers have to learn how to function differently. At a different level of depth to be able to, of character, whatever you want to call it, to be clear about focussing [the] team and then creating the openness for real dialogue and inner connection and passion that gets sent up. And it’s scary to managers. Cause they really don’t know what their role is, if they are not in there telling people exactly what to do. But it no longer works, if it ever did. (Participant 10)

When I reflect on the previous participant quotes, I wonder if, during dialogic conversation, in relinquishing the illusion of control, we are also, on some level, coming to terms with our ultimate limitation: our inability to alter our mortality. A challenge then presents itself, which is: if we accept our mortality, how far can we expand our consciousness, and to what larger purpose? On a more pragmatic plane: how much can we, as Process Consultants, influence the expansion of consciousness within our client organizations, and to what larger purpose? The answer from these participants can be summarized as:

(i) we have achieved, and we will continue to achieve results, which clients recognize as valuable, through the use of interventions that engage people in dialogic conversation;

(ii) we will continue to use this form of discourse in the organizational contexts where we perceive ourselves to be most effective;

(iii) our purpose in doing so is to foster learning on both individual and organizational levels;

(iv) it is in the learning process that we see both our limitations, and our potential.
Chapter 7: Meta Themes

Meta Theme 1: Dialogue is a Methodology for Holding Dynamic Tension.

This theme captures the perspective of the research participants and the researcher. In the course of analyzing this data, two contexts for holding dynamic tension became evident: those which are present for people engaged in dialogic conversation, which would include process consultants or facilitators (Property A); and, those which are present specifically for the process consultants or facilitators (Property B).

Meta Theme 1: Property A: All Stakeholders

Item (I) Do and Not Do

Dialogic conversation challenges individuals to do and not to do something at the same time, i.e. to deepen communication, to create shared meaning and, not be attached to the need for outcomes.

Item (II) Heighten Internal and External Awareness

Dialogic conversation challenges individuals to develop a heightened awareness of internal subjective experience (be aware of your own thoughts – explore the assumptions behind your thoughts) and to develop a heightened perception of the larger pattern of meaning that is emerging in the field of inquiry.
Item (III) Diversity and Unity

Dialogic conversation challenges individuals to gain acute clarity about the different perspectives in “the container” (the field of inquiry), and, stay open to perceiving a state of shared meaning with the group.

Item (IV) “Be” in Ambiguity or Chaos, to Discern Coherence

Dialogic conversation challenges participants to let go of control; to shed preconceptions of meaning and order. While doing so, participants are challenged to perceive the “self-organizing” system emerging in the container.

Item (V) Construct / Deconstruct Identity

Dialogic conversation challenges individuals to advocate and inquire. Participants must state their perspectives and question their perspectives. They must specify or clarify who they are in their assumptions and beliefs, and transform who they are by altering their assumptions and beliefs. They must construct and deconstruct.

Meta Theme 1: Property B: Process Consultants

Item (I) Short and Long Term

Process Consultants who bring dialogic conversation into client organizations are challenged by the dynamic tension of working both short term and long term. “Short term” refers to facilitating dialogic conversations in organizations that do not have the time, the resident experience, or the resources to “train” all stakeholders. “Long term”
refers to working from a capacity-developing paradigm to generate stakeholder awareness and behaviour change that sustains beyond the dialogic conversation facilitated by the Process Consultant.

**Item (II) Engage the Known and the Unknown**

Process Consultants who bring dialogic conversation into client organizations are also challenged to prepare participants (set the context, set expectations) for dialogic conversation while being aware that dialogic conversation takes people to the edge, and potentially beyond the edge of their experience, to a place that they cannot fully anticipate:

By definition dialogue pushes the edges and the boundaries. That’s something you never anticipate or prepare for. By definition that is what an edge is. ...I think we have to admit as practitioners that we are going into this with people knowing full well that they don’t know completely what they are going into. (Participant 4)

The challenge is to prepare people for something and acknowledge to them that it cannot be fully prepared for – while sustaining trust within the group. The challenge is to create an environment of “psychological safety” or, if that is not possible, to create an environment where people can make room for each other and, facilitate dialogic conversation that takes everyone, including the facilitator, beyond the edge of their experience. (Participant 8)
Item (III) Working in Hierarchical Settings with Non-Hierarchical Discourse

Perhaps the most acute element of dynamic tension pertains to Process Consultants consciously bringing dialogic conversation into hierarchical organizations, when dialogic conversation (by definition a conversation among equals) does not acknowledge hierarchy or role authority.

Meta Theme 2: Dialogic Discourse and Process Consulting Have a Common Values Base

These include, but are not limited to, valuing the wisdom that exists within the group or organization, valuing systemic process, which requires the recognition that sustainable culture change does not occur in singular events, valuing multiple perspectives of reality, valuing reflection as a legitimate use of group time, valuing listening, questions, silence, and subjectivity.

We value emotion. We think there is a whole being that should be invited in, and that whole being is made up of intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical...That's sort of the nature of human beings, and it's good to have all those things present. It's less good not to have them present. (Participant 4)

Meta Theme 3: Dialogic Conversation is Transformative

Where the preconditions for dialogic conversation exist, it has the potential to engender a shift in individual identity, beliefs, and/or behaviour, and a sustainable shift in organizational culture:
I sound like I’m contradicting myself, because it’s not violent in the sense that it’s not colluding in power over, but what it’s doing is suggesting that you go through a transformational process...Dialogue will bring us to that point...if an organization values it, not many really do, I don’t think, but that has been the impact, in bringing a sense of holism to myself and to the groups that I am working with. And the spirit comes totally alive in the group. And they’re committed to their intentions...

(Participant 8)

**Meta Theme 4: The Ten Research Participants Perceived Interventions using Principles of Dialogic Conversation to be “Mainstream” or “Non-Mainstream”**

This distinction occurred on the basis of the geographic location of the Process Consulting practice. The research participant from South Africa perceived dialogic conversation to be widely used in organizational contexts by Process Consultants practicing in that nation. Dialogic conversation was perceived as non-mainstream by the research participants whose Process Consulting practices were based in North America. South Africa is transforming politically, economically, socially. Is this the environment best served by this form of discourse? This question is worthy of further conversation and research. Participants in this study who commented on the draft themes chose not to respond to this question. Worthy as the conversation is, it does take us well beyond the scope of the data gathered in this project.
In this final chapter, the research participants' experiences with dialogic discourse in organizational contexts are joined with reflections about my own experiences in an attempt to invite further thought, active exploration, and research in this subject area. In the introduction to this thesis, and throughout its subsequent chapters, I have expressed an interest in providing an authentic representation of the subjective experiences of the process consultants who generously donated time to this research. The thesis was not designed to generalize, or to present the findings as objective. While I do not expect our experiences with dialogue in organizational contexts to serve as predictors of what others who explore this discourse process will encounter, I do perceive this thesis to be relevant to both the field of process consulting, and to the practice of dialogue in organizational contexts. Its relevance draws from its relative uniqueness in the realm of academic and process consulting research, from its focus on the non-expert usage of dialogic discourse, and from its representation of ten people's vivid experiences with dialogue, in contrast, or in complementary relationship to the existing body of excellent texts on dialogue, or on process consulting.

I have also derived meaning from capturing these participants' experiences and reflecting upon them in relation to my own work. I seek in this chapter, to engage in a process of subjectively constructing meaning, and to project this meaning onto the client stakeholder groups that I work with on a regular basis. My intentions for readers are to invite them to explore the findings, analyses, and implications in relation to their own experience and to heighten awareness, clarify assumptions, and develop a further appetite for learning in this realm.
Chapter 8: Implications

Implications for Senior Executives

Senior Executives are defined in this work as people who are accountable for articulating the organization’s vision, values, and strategy to internal and external stakeholders. In private enterprise, this would include officers of an organization; those who are accountable to a Board of Directors. It infers that people within these organizational strata have the requisite accountability and authority to establish the organization’s vision, values, strategy, and structure, and to authorize the alignment of operational processes accordingly. How these organizational elements are “established” is not defined. These are very much the hallmarks of the belief systems and the mental models of Senior Executives.

This research implies that dialogic conversation has much to offer people occupying these organizational strata. First, Senior Executives, by definition, are looking outward beyond the confines of the organization’s physical borders, beyond the confines of the organization’s current state. They are accountable for redefining the organization in relation to a desired future. This translates into assessing the organization in relation to demographic, technological, political, economic, social, and environmental trends and phenomena.

This is often the purview of the Senior Team in the organization, informed by interdisciplinary strategy groups from within the organization and facilitated by internal or external strategic planning facilitators. Much time is spent in the stance of “us” looking out at “them”. The them is any entity that does not display any of the organization’s logos, or report into the organization’s general ledger.
Dialogic Discourse and Strategic or Scenario Planning

Beginning in the 1970s, Royal Dutch Shell used Scenario Planning to extend the concept of strategy (Jaworski, 1996). It began with the understanding that planning was merely an extension of the mental models of the planners; in this case, Shell’s Senior Executives. Thus developing plans based solely on the input of Shell-based analysts and Senior Managers was understood to lead to narrowly defined conceptions of the organization, and its place in the global economy.

An early step in the Scenario Planning process involved engaging Shell’s Senior Executives in conversations to elicit a profile of their individual mental models. Multi-disciplinary Scenario Planning teams that drew from Royal Dutch Shell and many sources outside the organization were established globally. Their mandate was to research trends in their geo-political region, to meet regularly as a global team to distill the themes relevant to the emerging world political economy, and to develop “story lines” that would both acknowledge and challenge the mental models residing within the current organization’s Senior Executive. The intention was to provide Senior Executives and Managers at Royal Dutch Shell with timely and richly developed “what if” scenarios about emerging global issues, to be used as the basis for strategic decision-making that would enhance the organization’s viability.

Clearly, at its outset, the paradigm was adaptive rather than generative (i.e. if this or this happens, and it is likely to do so, then we as an organization have the following options...). It was designed to provide emergent, predictive information to provoke decision-making that would deliver competitive advantage. While it may have looked like trend setting, it was actually extremely fine-tuned trend following.
It worked. In 1970 the organization was described by *Forbes* as the weakest of the big seven oil companies, however...

By 1979, Shell and Exxon were seen as operating in a class by themselves, and by 1994, *Forbes* listed the Royal Dutch Shell Group of companies at the very top of their foreign Super Fifty – the largest companies outside the United States ranked by revenues, net income, assets, and market value. (Jaworski, 1996, p.181)

From 1990 to 1994, Joe Jaworski headed the global Scenario Planning Team for Royal Dutch Shell. In *Synchronicity*, he described his vision to evolve scenario planning beyond the adaptive, to the generative (Jaworski, 1996). He established a set of global interdisciplinary research teams, of whom 20% were external to the Shell Group. The research teams were deployed to gather and assimilate information from internal and external stakeholders world-wide. It took twelve months to gather the data, and an additional twelve months to distill the data into themes, and to write the two most likely scenarios perceived for the world economy from 1992 to 2030 (Jaworski, 1996).

The Scenario Planning team hit a wall in 1992 as they were writing the scenarios. It became evident that there was an epistemological rift or polarity within the team around Scenario A. Part of the team’s mental models were based on the Newtonian conceptions of reality; those rooted in cause and effect chains of logic, scientific method, and determinism. This group was not convinced that scenario planning could or should evolve beyond the responsive / adaptive paradigm:

...the whole proposal [to move from an adaptive stance, and advocate for a generative stance in Scenario A] seemed to them to lack business credibility. It was a naïve approach and smacked of ‘do-goodism’ and, even worse, of the theological. (Jaworski, 1996, p.161)
The other team members’ mental models were rooted in field theory, and Bohmian conceptions of reality:

All matter is constantly in motion and is insubstantial. The picture of a rock or a board or a human being as solid matter does not comport with reality. The notion that the world and our universe are made up of separate ‘things’ is an illusion and leads to endless confusion. [and further] Once you appreciate the nature of our world, our universe, is non-substantial, yet exists, then you immediately open up to the possibility of change. It’s almost a truism. There is an enormous opening for possibilities - possibilities to create and to change. (Cognitive Scientist Francisco Varela paraphrasing Bohm in Jaworski, 1996, pp. 176–177)

These team members, Jaworski among them, supported the use of Scenario Planning to move beyond its use as a tool to adapt to an emerging reality. They sought to use it as a means to provoke a broader dialogue about the increasing interdependence of the world’s communities, and the role that corporations could play in an interdependent world. In short they sought to use Scenario Planning and dialogic process as a springboard to envisioning, choosing, and creating a desired world community.

Although my bias as a researcher and consultant supports Jaworski’s stance, it is not the intention of these prior paragraphs to characterize those who took an adaptive stance in this instance as wrong or inferior in any way. Though not present at the conversations that centered upon this issue at Shell, I have been part of organizational strategy initiatives where divergent views about the work group’s mandate emerged. In one vivid experience, this evolved into work group members struggling to articulate the fundamentally divergent mental models of “adapt” or “generate” without effective resolution. The result to this day is a fragmented and internally competitive organization. If any flaw is inferred, it is borne of the frustration of our human inability to find the language, or to sustain the dialogue to move beyond polarization.
At Royal Dutch Shell, two events assisted in creating alignment around the generative stance. One member of Jaworski’s team was seconded to contribute to a scenario development project in South Africa. The multi-stakeholder, inter-ethnic process was initiated by South African political leaders, and was intended to generate a desired future for the Nation (Jaworski, 1996). The group came up with four scenarios, each given a metaphorical name. The report was published and presented to the public and a broad spectrum of the Nation’s political, economic, and social leadership as the basis for dialogue and subsequent policy development (Jaworski, 1996). The second event that facilitated alignment around the generative stance for the Scenario Planning team, was exposure to the ideas of four internationally diverse business and public administration leaders whose vision(s) coalesced thematically with the concept of an inter-dependent world community, and signaled a call to engage in dialogue about “…how we can collectively shape our destiny” (Jaworski, 1996).

The scenarios were published internally in September of 1992, and communicated in workshop format throughout the fifty plus organizations that comprise the Royal Dutch Shell Group. During this time, the team was invited to share their findings with government, and non-government organizations, and policy leaders at the World Bank, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Community, Britain’s Foreign Office, and a summit of American policy makers and business leaders (Jaworski, 1996).

The first implication for Senior Executives is to consider these propositions. First, the future is malleable. It can still be created (Drucker, 1999). Second, organizations’ destiny and the planet’s destiny are interdependent. Third, organizations are manifestations of subjective,
often tacit, memory based cognitive functions, or mental models. Fourth, mental models
govern our perceptions. Fifth, mental models construct and deconstruct in our use of
language. Sixth, to alter our reality, or to choose rather than react to our future, we must alter
our habituated patterns of cognitive functioning and language. Seventh, organizations are
operating in an era of unprecedented complexity:

We face long years of profound changes. The changes are not primarily economic
changes. They are not even primarily technological changes. They are changes in
demographics, politics, in society, in philosophy and, above all, in world-view.
Economic theory and economic policy are unlikely to be effective by themselves in
such a period. (Drucker, 1999, p. 92)

Eighth, creating a future in this era of complexity requires cognitive functioning and
discourse processes that are integrative, and move beyond the scope of cause and effect logic.
Ninth, “trying to create the future is highly risky. On balance, it is only less risky than not
trying to create it” (Drucker, 1999, p. 93).

Application of These Implications for Senior Executives

On the basis of the research conducted for this thesis, it is recommended that Senior
Executives sponsor and engage in multi-stakeholder resource planning for the communities
in which they are invested. This is occurring to some extent in the practices of the people
who participated in this research. Participant 4 has utilized dialogic conversation as a process
intervention which facilitated community resource planning with a multi-stakeholder group
comprised of health-care representatives, state and municipal government, a large
manufacturing firm, and union representatives. Along the same thematic line of co-
developing a future, Participant 5 spoke of dialogic process interventions among provincial
government and community stakeholders as pre-cursor to the establishment of public policy.
These are considered to be the types of interventions that Gustavsen envisioned in the LOM Project referred to in Chapter Two of this thesis (Gustavsen, 1992).

With or without initiating forays into their communities, Senior Executives can expect interested stakeholders to be initiating conversations with them, likely in their own boardrooms. Executive Teams would be wise to employ dialogic discourse models to bridge the divergent views and agendas in governance-based conversations, as large pension funds continue to acquire stakes in corporations in North America, Europe, and Japan (Drucker, 1999). A local example of the "governance" phenomenon emerged on March 17th, 2000. The Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan acquired Cadillac Fairview Corporation. Within two working days, the Teacher's Pension Fund announced that the former chair of their fund would take over as the new board chair for Cadillac Fairview. This causes me to muse about the process side of the ensuing conversations. Through what forms of discourse will such diverse entities create an integrated vision for the future?

Participant 4 has worked with Senior Executive sponsors to design interventions based on dialogic discourse for this very purpose. One telecommunications firm on one continent was acquiring a telecommunications firm on another continent. Dialogic interventions were used to engage the two diverse cultures in discourse about their shared destiny; their desired future. In a similar vein, Participant 3 was engaged by a Senior Executive at a South African utility to facilitate a radical restructuring of the organization. Both groups of Senior Executives recognized the need for transformative culture change. They needed to be up and running in the new organizational model in the shortest possible time frame. The organization's future depended upon it.
Thus another recommended first step for Senior Executives would be to learn to distinguish or demarcate those situations which require adaptive (organizational effectiveness) interventions from those which require generative or transformational interventions. Or, to articulate their "visions" with such clarity that the adaptive or transformational conversations would be provoked at the Senior Executive or Sponsor level. The implication is that the interventions which followed would have design principles established that were congruent with the vision.

For organizations still engaging in Strategic Planning, the process would wisely begin with dialogic discourse to explore the core assumptions present in the conversation about the organization's purpose, identity, and desired future. Participant 2 engaged the CEO and Executive Team of a high technology firm in dialogic conversation as a pre-cursor to strategic planning. It was the first time that the group had aired their core assumptions about the organization and its place in the global marketplace. The outcome transformed the identity of the organization, and its subsequent strategic plan.

Conversations with each research participant in the development of this thesis have caused me to muse about the wisdom of involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders in such conversations with the Executive Team, rather than limiting the intervention to the Executive Team itself. If multi-stakeholder discourse was beyond the readiness of a given Executive Team, then the people accountable for the strategic planning intervention would be wise to prompt the participants to represent or reflect the views of the stakeholders not physically present at the strategic planning event(s). Exposure to role theory and the intervention strategies of Arnold Mindell (1992) would provide valuable context and a rationale for
encouraging Senior Executives to seek to understand the divergent views resident in the stakeholder roles.

Senior Executives are encouraged to recognize the integrative quality of dialogic conversation; to use it as a counterbalance to the fragmented and internally competitive thinking and discourse patterns that breed in organizational silos. Beyond strategic planning, opportunities exist for incorporating dialogic conversation into large group or whole system interventions, where Senior Executives could act on an intention to provoke coherent multi-stakeholder conversation around a given organizational issue; for instance, how do we participate in the global marketplace while respecting and servicing regionally specific client needs?

Peter Drucker (1999) states that 21st century global business growth and expansion will not be based on the merger and acquisition, nor on the transnational start-up formulae prevalent in the final decades of the 20th century. His vision of growth in this century is based on alliances, partnerships, joint ventures, and relationships with organizations “grounded” in other political jurisdictions (Drucker, 1999). In the era of the virtual team and the virtual firm, we now anticipate the evolution of the virtual multi-national organization.

This will require Senior Executives to operate from a different set of mental models; most notably, a transformation from controller or owner, to integrated stakeholder. In this regard, the need is apparent to extend Senior Executives’ behavioural repertoire to include dialogic discourse processes which surface assumptions, and which seek to derive the wisdom from minority views, be they internally or externally represented. Moreover such processes would enquire into memory or culturally-based beliefs and projections, and
acknowledge the complexity of the current reality by seeking to create meaning which does not reside exclusively within the chain of cause and effect logic.

Last, for those in new business development, or for entrepreneurs seeking to form strategic alliances, dialogic conversation would serve to elucidate the raison d'être for the business ventures, and to surface the mental models of the originators at the outset, before significant resource and emotional investments have been made. I took part in one such session during the planning stages of this thesis. On the basis of the dialogue, the group of entrepreneurs ultimately decided not to pursue an alliance because we could see that the divergence in our mental models and world views would forestall our ability to create a time sensitive product within the perceived window of opportunity available in the marketplace. This gave each of us the freedom to pursue other endeavours and alliances.

Implications for Managers

Managers are distinguished from Senior Executives in this thesis, as people who are accountable for implementing rather than setting strategic direction on an organization-wide scale. This is not meant to infer that information and influence flow exclusively from the top level down in organizations. It is meant to reflect the reality that Managers are those whose time is most likely to be engaged in planning, resource allocation, and tactical execution within the strategic parameters for the organization, set or validated by its Executive Team. On the basis of this research, four contexts emerge where dialogic discourse is recommended for use by individuals in a Managerial role. These are discussed in random order in the following paragraphs.

First, dialogic discourse has application potential as a vehicle for debriefing project teams in organizations. Of particular value in this context would be the use of dialogue to
surface assumptions and the tacit mental models which influenced decisions and actions during the life cycle of a project. This would offer learning for future organizational endeavours, and personal or professional development opportunities for the project team members. Participant 9 referred to the use of dialogic discourse in this context with a project team that was trying to derive learning points from a 360 degree feedback implementation. The exploratory and non judgmental nature of the conversation opened people up to the possibility that they had indeed been operating from a set of tacit mental models, which they could choose to alter in subsequent organizational interventions.

Second, on the basis of personal experience as a process consultant, and on the basis of research for this thesis, I believe that dialogic discourse has profound potential for use in conflict resolution, particularly in organizations using ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) processes such as mediation (Stitt, 1988; Kolb, 1994). In one client organization perceived as having met the readiness criteria for dialogic conversation outlined by the research participants for this thesis, I used dialogic discourse while in the role of change process manager and facilitator. A multi-stakeholder team had reached an impasse while creating the design elements of an innovative organizational dispute resolution process. They had been working on this process design as a group in a series of (approximately twenty) meetings that had occurred over the prior fourteen months.

The twenty-six person team representing six stakeholder groups engaged in an Open Space (Owen, 1997) process to flesh out the perspectives of the six stakeholder groups, and to map out the needs and concerns of each group. This was intended to graphically illustrate the complexity and inter-relatedness of the issues that we would be confronting in the course of our mandate as a task group. While this did produce a shared and a substantially larger
context or frame of reference for us as a group, we were still locked into role based positions. We were still walking around with individual conceptions of what pieces of the new system would need to look like, because those pieces had been a personal source of contention or frustration for each stakeholder for years. One group wanted to redesign the job posting policy. One group wanted to abolish a layer of the organizational hierarchy. One group wanted to redesign the shift and compensation structures. One group wanted to benchmark other organizations' dispute resolution processes. One group wanted more authority and more time to resolve issues at their point of origin. We were still trapped in our tacit assumptions. We lacked coherent thinking.

We decided to take a “time out” to review the key messages coming through to us from the work we had done in Open Space (Owen, 1997). We decided that we needed a conversation dedicated to designing a desired future for this division of the organization. We decided that in order to get there, we had to delay or “park” our tendency to put forward fragmented solutions until we had a broader common conception of what our vision for the new process would be.

The concepts of surfacing assumptions, balancing enquiry with advocacy, “parking” the need for instant outcome, conversing as stakeholders or equals rather than representatives of specific organizational issues or strata, listening for the wisdom in the minority view, and dis-engaging issues from personal identity were introduced informally as opportunities arose during the dialogue. Within two hours of working in this process, group members were self-managing their dialogic conversation. My role shifted from process facilitator, to scribe. I focused on capturing and posting verbatim comments from the group.
We moved out of dialogic discourse to “theme” the verbatim commentary. We converged on a vision of a desired future for this division as it related to dispute resolution. In a subsequent session, we created a set of design principles or criteria that were congruent with the vision. We then set upon the task of designing integrated components of the system that coalesced with both the design criteria and the vision.

From this experience, two personal beliefs were generated. First, I believe none of the generative design work of this cross-functional task group would have been possible without the dialogic conversation that was imported into the Open Space process. Therefore dialogic conversation is congruent with Open Space – as Participant 10 noted in our conversations prior to the experience described above. This did not “prove” Participant 10’s premise to me in the scientific sense, rather it made it part of my subjective reality.

Second, I believe that dialogic discourse models need to be part of the behavioural repertoire of any individual engaged in change initiatives in organizational settings. These are often, though not exclusively, managed by internal Organizational Development Consultants, Human Resources Consultants, Project Managers, and Line Managers.

William Bridges’ work on Managing Transitions (Bridges, 1991) speaks vividly about the need for three phases of transition: Endings, The Neutral Zone, New Beginnings, to be explicit for people experiencing self or other initiated change. In his later works and course offerings, Bridges validates these concepts in organizational contexts (Bridges, 1999). While Bridges’ work is diligent in its efforts to distinguish each of these phases in terms of psychological state, manifested behaviour, individual needs, and the correspondingly appropriate organizational change facilitators’ interventions, it is silent on the issue of the discourse modes which are congruent with this theoretical framework. His Managing
**Organizational Transitions** (Bridges, 1999) course materials engage participants in journal writing, introspection, and the surfacing of mental models about the transition being experienced.

My experience in frequent work with these materials and concepts in organizational contexts is that it slows down the pace of subsequent discourse about the organizational change and the individuals' experience of transition that is its corollary. It generates a degree of reflective thinking and introspective feeling that has resulted in my clients being at a loss for words, uncertain how to participate in the session. The process is asking them to think in ways that are unlike the thinking patterns resident in their organizational culture(s).

Competency development in dialogic discourse would enable individuals managing organizational transitions, and potentially leading transition-focused conversations to set expectations or to normalize this type of reflective conversation for participants. Dialogic discourse is an apt vehicle for activating the theoretical framework of transition. It is the means by which organizational members deconstruct and reconstruct the organizational reality through language. Not only is it perceived as an apt tool for the process facilitator, it is perceived as a resource, a way of making the theory real through language and subsequent action, for those experiencing the transition.

Finally, as inferred from the research participants (3, 5, 7, 9) and the literature (Schein, 1999) dialogic discourse adds depth and dimension to problem solving processes, either as a context setting element prior to engaging in a problem solving cycle, or as a "time out of time" (Oshry, 1995) during a problem solving process, where it serves an exploratory purpose to consciously enquire into mental models, reduce the tendency to become attached
to or identify with ideas, reduce defensiveness, or reduce the tendency to prematurely leap to solutions or actions.

Implications for Process Consultants

The intention in this section of the thesis is not to restate the implications for Process Consultants inherent in the Application segment (Chapter Four). It is intended to address the “now what” issues that exposure to this research suggests.

The reflective nature of dialogic discourse invites participants to explore their belief systems. It is recommended that Process Consultants intending to incorporate dialogic discourse into their professional development work, or work in client settings, engage in an exploration of their own epistemology as a precursor to such work. This is not intended to set Process Consultants up as “experts” or as more “evolved” in relation to colleagues or clients. It is intended to engage Process Consultants in personally challenging exploratory experiences, with the hope that such prior experiences create a pre-disposition for empathy, patience, and creating an environment which tolerates and constructively processes the range of emotions present during “edge” experiences.

It would afford consultants the opportunity to be conscious of the chosen context in which dialogic discourse was to be utilized, that is, the adaptive context, the generative context. This would influence or shape expectations set at the outset, as well as any facilitative interventions undertaken during the discourse. An additional assumption is that the awareness yielded from prior personal reflection would inform pragmatic decisions about readiness, timing, and integration with other professional development activities or client interventions. A recommended first step would be to read the Morgan and Smircich (1980)
article cited in the references, as a springboard to reflection and personal belief deconstruction.

An exploration of the theoretical framework of dialogue is also advised. The intention would be to become aware of the theorists who have contributed to the evolution of its core concepts, and the methodologists whose process designs are intended to extend theory into practice. Once again this is not intended for the exclusive enlightenment of the enquiring consultant. It is intended for each of the reasons cited in the prior paragraphs, and most emphatically, to provide conceptual links between dialogue and variants of discourse processes. This is intended to both broaden the intervention repertoire available to Process Consultants, and to increase the likelihood that the chosen intervention will be respectful of, if not congruent with, the colleague’s or client’s current subjective reality. A recommended first step would be to review the graphics created in the literature review of this thesis for the authors cited and for exposure to one (my own) subjective representation of the conceptual links between their works. While this thesis does not claim to prescribe or generalize its findings for all Process Consultants, it does challenge those so employed to be subjectively aware of why, when, and how they choose to engage in dialogic discourse.

This thesis challenges Process Consultants to articulate why this (dialogic discourse) intervention, at this time? In doing so, it follows Mindell’s (1992) intention to enhance our ability to interact with our unconscious and to broaden our awareness or to increase our tendency to choose with consciousness, rather than “slide” into a process without first exploring why. It follows Morgan’s (1986) intention to link our perceptions to our epistemology. It follows Argyris’ (1990) intention to make the tacit explicit. It follows Bohm’s (1990, 1992) intention to increase coherence in thinking and in discourse.
A third recommendation is to challenge Process Consultants to survey their repertoire of dialogically congruent competencies. A first step would be to consult the texts noted in the bibliography of this thesis; specifically the texts of Ellinor and Gerard (1998), Flick (1998), and Senge et al (1994). For a subjective view of the competencies that extend beyond those noted in the above texts, see the Competencies section of this thesis. Of those mentioned in this thesis, the competency areas that I have found to be profoundly effective in professional development or client settings are reflective listening, and amplification (Mindell, 1992; Lewis and Wajsman, 1999). Setting and sustaining the context for dialogic discourse, which includes generating awareness of its distinguishing characteristics, and encouraging the use of the associated competencies are also areas that I have found immensely valuable to colleagues’ or clients’ willingness to engage with me in the moment, and in subsequent conversations.

I would also concur with a finding from this research which indicated that while the Research Participants valued context setting and dialogic competency development per se, they assessed the parameters of each situation to determine whether to engage in competency development before or during the dialogue, and to determine whether or not to use the term dialogue or its associated terminology.

A further implication derived thus far from my belief system, from experience engaging in dialogic discourse in professional development and client contexts, from this qualitative research, and from exposure to the range of ideas cited by authors in the bibliography, is that if participants are to participate as equals, they must have access to the theoretical or methodological base from which the Process Consultant is working. Access
may occur prior to, or during the discourse, and occurs by using terms that are culturally relevant to the colleagues or clients.

A related implication pertains to “readiness”. The themes related to readiness cited in this thesis, while not prescriptive, are certainly in the forefront of my mind as I assess readiness in my collegial conversations and client environments. I would add to the themes that emerged in the readiness segment of the thesis, the requirement for the consultant to assess his or her own level of psychological readiness to facilitate a conversation that has the potential to move all those engaged, to the edge of their experience.

The second psychological challenge that it poses for facilitators is the challenge of being invisible as a facilitator once the process is underway, similar to the experience of those facilitating Open Space events (Owen, 1997). These types of discourse genuinely test a facilitator’s need to be perceived as fulfilling a unique, high profile, and much needed role in the group. They also test a facilitator’s need for control. The questions we might ask ourselves in this regard are: how ready are we from an identity and professional role standpoint to confront our own need to be needed, and our own need for control? How ready are we to be confronted on this level by a group member during the discourse, if our own needs are perceived as getting in the way of the process?

Opportunities for Future Research

This section is included primarily out of a personal belief that the “Story-Line”, to borrow Gareth Morgan's (1986) turn of phrase, is incomplete without reference to the implications of this study for front-line employees, or knowledge workers. Front-line employees are interpreted as individual contributors who are included in an organization’s payroll. There is no inference towards a cognitive or physical labour orientation in this term.
Knowledge workers are interpreted as those who may, or may not be employed by one organization, full-time, contract, freelance. Knowledge workers' skills are cognitively, rather than physically oriented. There is little to draw directly from the research for this thesis that relates uniquely to these members of the labour force. Nonetheless, the following reflections were considered relevant.

If, as previously stated, knowledge is becoming the Information Age's means of production (Drucker, 1999), then it stands to reason that knowledge acquiring, sharing, and transferring will be prime activities of knowledge workers, and will feature eminently in the roles of front-line employees.

If how knowledge is accessed, processed, and utilized defines a worker's value to those who employ or seek to contract for the worker's services, then it also seems reasonable to expect that front-line employees and knowledge workers will need to invest time and energy taking stock of their inventory of accessible knowledge.

This is assumed to be particularly relevant to knowledge workers who generate revenue on a contract or freelance basis. The inference is that the optimally marketable knowledge worker will be cognizant of, and ready to leverage knowledge of at least three types: technical or content knowledge, operational or implementation knowledge derived from experience; and human process knowledge. Human process knowledge is perceived to include, while not being limited to models and techniques in such areas as organizational culture, organizational change and transition, team development, group dynamics, problem solving, decision making, and influencing without authority.

Facility in dialogic discourse would be an asset to knowledge workers in each of these three realms. In the technical realm, dialogic discourse would be advantageous in
conversations between information systems architects and user groups. What better way to surface assumptions about application functionality requirements? What better way to mutually explore the cognitive maps of often dramatically divergent stakeholder groups such as operationally focused warehouse equipment operators, and information systems focused computer software designers? One example of a research opportunity would be to compare software design user acceptance ratios between those that utilized dialogic discourse during application design and testing, and those which did not. Ideally, this would be both a qualitative and quantitative study, to broaden its relevance within and across business and academic disciplines.

A related application opportunity exists for conversations between service provider and service receiver groups in the context of establishing service level agreements for technical interventions. Such a dialogue could start with the question: *what kind of technical service relationship do we want to create?*

Operational and implementation knowledge is assumed to be the accumulated wisdom that each of us acquires in the course of a career, via the iterative process of experience and reflection. Dialogic discourse is an effective tool for debriefing projects, and for providing people with the opportunity to create conceptual links or make meaning from previously disparate and abundant fragments of data (Participants 4, 8, & 9).

In relation to human process knowledge, this thesis advocates for further research into, and application of dialogic discourse in whole system interventions, change and transition management, conflict management, team learning, and problem solving. The recommended questions that front-line employees and knowledge workers need to be asking in this regard are: *how dependent am I in relation to others vis-a-vis initiating or facilitating*
these processes – and why is this so? Am I participating at the peak of my capabilities? What do I have to learn, to be able to achieve an equal or more valuable outcome for myself and other stakeholders?

To conclude, language is the vehicle of knowledge generation and transmission. If knowledge, or intellectual capital is to be considered an asset, either to individual workers or to organizations, it does not seem beyond reason to project that facility in a range of discourse forms will be valued tacitly or explicitly, and will be requisite to functioning as a front-line employee or a knowledge worker in this century, much as functional and computer literacy evolved as priorities in workplaces in the “developed” nations in the post industrial era.
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Appendix A: Samples

Sample Interview Questions

How and when did you first come upon the concept of dialogue?

What value(s) do you ascribe to ‘dialogue’ that are not achievable using other modes of conversation?

What have been your experiences with dialogue?

What impact has knowing about or experiencing dialogue had upon your work in organizations?

Are you aware of your intent when you introduce or facilitate ‘dialogue’ in your client organization(s)? If so, what is your intent?

What barriers, if any, do you perceive to achieving dialogue in organizations? Please provide any examples from your own experience.

What gateways – or opportunities do you perceive – if any – to achieving dialogue in organizations? Please provide any examples from your own experience.

What behaviors (yours or others) are important to achieving and sustaining dialogue – like conversations in your client organizations?

What behaviors (yours or others) do you perceive as limiting or negating dialogue – like conversations in your client organizations?
Sample Letter Of Consent

Dear __________________; Date ________________

This letter is a follow-up to our recent conversation about my M.A. Thesis for The Ontario Institute For Studies In Education (OISE) / University of Toronto.

The research topic is: Dialogue and Process Consulting. The key research questions are:

Is it possible to achieve ‘dialogue’ in conversation between process consultants and their clients?

What variants or elements of dialogue have been achieved between process consultants and their clients in organizational settings?

Are Process Consultants conscious of their intent when they introduce or facilitate ‘dialogue’ in their client organizations? If so, what is their intent?

What value(s) do Process Consultants ascribe to ‘dialogue’ that are not achievable using other modes of conversation?

How do process consultants and their clients create ‘shared meaning’ in their conversations, and how does this shared meaning translate into actions that benefit stakeholders (e.g. employees, the consulting community, local communities, families, organizations)?

What are the barriers and gateways to achieving dialogue or variants of dialogue between process consultants and their clients in organizational settings?
What competencies are requisite to achieving and sustaining dialogue or variants of dialogue for process consultants, and for their clients in organizational settings?

I am writing to you to obtain your consent to be included as a participant in this research. The approach that I will be taking is qualitatively based research, which in this case means that I will be interested in meeting with you face to face to interview you on this topic. If you like, I can forward a copy of the questions that I’m interested in exploring with you, prior to our conversation.

With your permission, I will be audio-taping this interview. The audio-tape will be transcribed, and I will then be analyzing the content of each interview to generate themes and findings. These findings will be provided to you; and you will be invited to comment on them. Your comments will be included in the thesis.

Commenting on the themes and findings of the research is by no means an obligation on your part. Indeed, you are free at any and at all times to discontinue your participation, as you see fit.

Confidentiality:

The ethical guidelines set out by the University of Toronto will be followed at all times. This means that your name will never appear on transcripts, or in the thesis. It also means that transcripts and audio-tapes will be archived in a locked cabinet in my offices in Hillsburgh, Ontario.
Quotations:
In providing your consent to participate in this research project, you are consenting to the use of quotations from you, in either the thesis, or in works that are published as an adjunct to this thesis. Once again – these quotes will not name you, nor your organization.

Time Commitment:
The initial interview will last between sixty and ninety minutes. Following the interview, you determine what, if any, further time you have to devote to this project. Your comments on the findings will be of value to the research, but will not be obligatory.

Thank you for taking the time to consider your participation.

I _______________________________ (please print your name) have read this letter and consent to participating in this research project.

________________________ (your signature)

________________________ (please print the date, and your location)

Please return to:
Lynne Brenegan
5903 Third Line Erin
R.R. 1, Hillsburgh, Ontario.
NOB 1Z0
Telephone: 1-888-928-0230  Fax: 519 – 855 – 6808  e-mail: ibren@ibm.net
Appendix B: Terminology

Process

In this thesis I suggest that the medium of Process Consulting work in organizations is *conversation*; conversation intended to influence the behavior of individuals working within, or on behalf of client organizations. These conversations are inherently associated with “change”, and are inherently intended to improve the operating capabilities of individuals, their organizations, and their constellation of stakeholders.

As a Process Consultant, most of the conversations that I have with clients are process centered; meaning that they focus on the “how”, rather than on the “what”. For example, I do not influence the selection of strategic targets. These would be considered the “content”, or the “what” outcomes of a strategic planning conversation. When contracted for strategic planning work, I am involved in the design, facilitation, and the evaluation or debriefing of strategic planning meetings. The tools utilized in this work include visioning, group dynamics, problem solving, and decision-making processes that result in the attendees articulating these strategic targets. I am less concerned with “what” strategic targets are produced, and more concerned with ensuring that processes exist for attendees to identify, evaluate, and select targets which each attendee believes are worthy and viable. This approach is modelled on the principles and the writings of Edgar Schein (Schein, 1987, 1988).

It would be an unjust simplification to imply that “process” is the sole focus for the Process Consultant. “Content” must also be closely attended to; for it is often the content and its relationship to the task at hand (the what) that clients are most keenly aware of during conversation. Thus content and task are often used as reference points, and points of departure for engaging participants in self-reflective conversation about the relationship between behavioral events, and the outcomes achieved (Schein, 1987, 1988). Contributions to the content, task and process distinctions are also lucidly explained in the writings of Heron (1989), and Reddy (1994).
Consultation

Block defines consultants as people who:

1. do not have the role authority to direct or control others to take prescribed action,
2. do have the potential to affect others' behavior through the cultivation and utilization of influence (Block, 1981).


Contrary to Block's assertion that anyone who gives advice is a consultant (1981), the perspective adopted for this research aligns with Edgar Schein's notion of consulting, which cites three compelling reasons for consultants to refrain from giving advice:

1. it is not listened to because clients' defense mechanisms resist "hearing" and accepting the advice; a parallel concept to Argyris and Schön's theories in use (1974),
2. many clients prefer to generate their own solutions,
3. being "given" solutions can be perceived by clients as being placed in a disadvantageous power position, or having to admit to having "a problem", (Schein, 1987).
Internal Consultants

In organizational settings, employees in staff, versus line or operating functions, are considered to be “internal consultants”, in that they do not have decision-making authority over operational issues (Block, 1981 and Kilmann, 1989).

Internal Consultants and Authority

Jaques’ taxonomy of authority in management hierarchies implies that internal consultants providing staff services to peers in line or operational roles, would typically operate from Advisory, Collateral, Coordinating, Service Providing, or Monitoring levels of authority (Jaques 1988, 1996).

Each of these types of authority requires the use of specialized knowledge. None of the above imply that internal consultants have decision making or controlling authority that supercedes that of their clients, in their client’s business unit. Exceptions occur in situations where the internal consultants are required by statutes (e.g. Employment Standards Act, Health and Safety legislation), to prescribe a course of action to internal clients.

Jaques’ taxonomy of authority in management hierarchies emerges in this overview because it is the conceptual framework used by some of my clients to distinguish the staff/consultative functions from those of the line. I have vivid memories of staff and line executives in strongly charged conversation, working together to establish a common frame of reference that codified role and decision making authority across staff and line functions in a large Canadian corporation.

These were very potent issues for this organization. The experience underlined the importance of suspending judgment, listening, raising and sharing assumptions about decision making boundaries between staff and line positions; particularly during times of acute organizational change. Moreover, it emphasized the unique qualities that internal and external consultants bring to organizational effectiveness work.
The internal consultants in this instance had a depth of knowledge about the organizational culture and the personalities and history of the executives working on this initiative. They shared this information with me and gave me a perspective that would have been impossible to achieve in the limited exposure that I had to the senior executives prior to these meetings.

These internal consultants were also personally and professionally invested in the process. The outcome of these meetings would determine the decisions that they could make, the resources that they could mobilize, and the impact that they would have on organizational functioning. Accordingly, these people were intently focused on content (the what) during these meetings, while my focus as the “external”, was on process (the how).

External Consultants

External consultants are not employees of the enterprise, and hold no position of authority relative to the organization. They are sourced from independent practices, consulting firms, or academic institutions (Kilmann, 1989). Their engagement with the organization is based on a formal or informal contract that sets out the:

- scope of their role
- resources that they will have access to
- deliverables that they are expected to produce
- time frames or milestones that they are expect to meet
- terms of remuneration, and termination of the contract
Process Consultation

This thesis is intended to align with the conceptual framework for Process Consultation established by Edgar Schein (1987, 1988). The working definition appears below:

PC is a set of activities on the part of the consultant that help the client to perceive, understand, and act upon the process events that occur in the client's environment in order to improve the situation as defined by the client. (Schein, 1988, p. 11)

The unique characteristic of Process Consultation (PC) is the nature of the relationship that the consultant structures with the client (Schein, 1987).

The central assumptions and premises of Process Consultation are as follows: the client owns the problem and continues to own the problem throughout the course of the relationship. This common understanding is to be achieved by the consultant in direct and purposeful behavioral contracting with the client. Unless the client learns to perceive the problem through joint investigation and joint problem solving with the process consultant, a low level of readiness will exist for owning the problem, implementing remedial actions, and generalizing the learning throughout the organization (Schein, 1987). Clients do not always know what the problem is, and may need help diagnosing the problem and its root causes (Schein, 1988). Clients are not always aware of the kinds of help that consultants can provide; they often need help in determining what kind of help to seek (Schein, 1988). Most clients intend to improve organizational functioning; they often need help clarifying what to improve and how to achieve these improvements (Schein, 1988). All organizations are imperfect in form and function. Organizations can learn to be more effective. Part of the learning includes developing diagnostic, problem solving, and change management competencies internally. Process Consultants engage in knowledge transfer and competency development with internal consultants and managers with the intent to reduce their dependency on the Process Consultant (Schein, 1988). An external Process Consultant is not usually accorded the time to develop
extensive relationships or the access to the organizations’ members to accurately reveal all the facets of the organization’s culture. As such, it is unlikely that the Process Consultant working in conceptual isolation will be able to produce reliable and actionable recommendations for the clients. Reliable and actionable courses of action can only be arrived at through joint enquiry with the clients in the organization. Ultimately it is clients who know their organizational culture and its readiness level best. It is clients who know best what type of intervention will be effective in their environment at any given point in time (Schein 1987, 1988).

In Schein’s words:

But the core of this model is that the client must be helped to remain “pro-active,” in the sense of retaining both diagnostic and remedial initiative. Allowing the client to become dependent on the consultant, as comfortable as that may be for both parties, is a prescription for failure in the helping process if complex human systems processes are involved. (Schein, 1988, p. 11)

These last few words bring to mind the admonition of consultant and writer Gerald Weinberg, who says no matter how it looks at first, “It’s always a people problem.” He qualifies this by reasoning that any organizational problem can be traced back to human thought, action or inaction (Weinberg, 1985, p. 6 ).

Schein contrasts the Process Consulting model to two alternative models. These are the Purchase of Information or Expert model, and the Doctor-Patient model (Schein, 1987). In addition to being misaligned with the assumptions ascribed to Process Consultation, the operational success of these models rests on some very specific criteria.
The Expert Model

Successful implementation of the Expert Model requires that the following minimum criteria be met:

the client has correctly diagnosed the problem that they are seeking expertise to resolve (Schein, 1987)

the client has accurately evaluated the Expert's capability to provide expertise to this type of organization, in this economic environment (Schein, 1987)

the client has accurately communicated the problem and the nature of the expertise that will be required (Schein, 1987)

the client is prepared and has prepared the organization to accept the potential consequences of receiving the information or expertise (Schein, 1987)

Schein finds considerable irony in the Expert model: "...the expertise is attributed to the consultant, but in fact a tremendous load falls on the client to do things correctly if the problem is to be solved" (Schein, 1987, p. 24).
The Doctor-Patient Model

Successful implementation of the Doctor-Patient Model requires that the following minimum criteria be met:

- the client or organization will perceive the diagnostic process as being constructive (Schein, 1987)
- the client has accurately interpreted the events in the organization as symptomatic of pathology, and has located the genesis of the pathology (Schein, 1987)
- people in the “sick” area in the organization will not exaggerate, distort, or withhold pertinent information during the diagnosis (Schein, 1987)
- the client and the organization will accept the diagnosis offered by the consultant, and will implement the solution as prescribed (Schein, 1987)

Client organizations may prosper by working with this model in the short term. The difficulty is that there is little or no knowledge transfer into the organization. In essence, the organization will still be vulnerable to the original “dis-ease”, and any others that require similar preventative or remedial competencies. Bringing a “Doctor” into the organization may also exacerbate power based tactics and polarization among members of the organization (Schein, 1987).
Process Consultation – Methods of Work

Schein recommends that consultants be aware of the applicability of each model, and be clear with themselves and their clients about when and why they are shifting from one model or role, to another as the situation demands. Schein speaks personally about the shift between Process Consultant and Expert. I have yet to locate a personal reference to Schein taking on the role of “Doctor”. I am curious about whether or not this has some basis in his philosophical stance or value system (Schein, 1987).

Process Consultants’ work methods are intended to: present opportunities for two-way communication between consultants and clients; validate the perception that the consultant has an open mind; validate the perception that the consultant has a need to collaborate with clients to identify issues and possible courses of action (Schein, 1988).

The methods that follow from these values include observation, informal interviewing, and group discussions (Schein, 1988). The latter two methods would seem to offer some opportunities for the evolution of dialogue between Process Consultants and their clients.

Schein has classified Process Consulting interventions into four levels. They appear in descending order, relative to frequency of use. Schein’s own career serves as the point of reference for this classification. Additionally, the conceptual framework created for Process Consulting by Schein would place these terms in the same configuration. This hierarchy is the outcome of the values and assumptions that underlie this framework:

i. Agenda-managing interventions

ii. Feedback of observation or other data

iii. Coaching or counselling of individuals or groups

iv. Structural suggestions

(Schein, 1988)
In a related work, Schein’s hierarchy includes ten types of intervention, which are organized in a descending order related to a continuum that starts with client centered interventions at the top and proceeds to consultant centered interventions at the bottom:

i. Active, Interested, Listening (Client centered)

ii. Forcing Historical Reconstruction (Client centered)

iii. Forcing Concretization (Client centered)

iv. Forcing Process Emphasis (Client centered)

v. Diagnostic Questions and Probes (Client centered)

vi. Process Management and Agenda Setting (Interactive – client and consultant)

vii. Feedback (Interactive – client and consultant)

viii. Content Suggestions and Recommendations (Consultant centered)

ix. Structure Management (Consultant centered)

x. Conceptual Inputs (Consultant centered)

Once again, the emphasis is on interventions that help clients to help themselves. Thus the more consultant centered interventions are considered both rare, and risky (Schein, 1987, pp. 164-168).
Appendix C: Graphics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Years As Process Consultant</th>
<th>Exposure to Dialogic Conversation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Senge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Senge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Copra, Mindell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ellinor &amp; Gerard; Bot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Graduate (Teacher)</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>ICA Research &amp; Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>9+</td>
<td>Ellinor &amp; Gerard, Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ackley, Jaworski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pepperdine Graduate O.D., Program; Bohn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Senge, Buber, Bohm, Isaacs, Ellinor &amp; Gera Emery &amp; Trist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Owen, Bohm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web to Dialogic Integration</th>
<th>Incorporated Dialogue into Other Models / Frameworks</th>
<th>Client Base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deep Democracy (Mindell)</td>
<td>Volunteers, Auditors, Finance Teams, Financial Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Planning Organizational Renewal</td>
<td>Private Sector, Retail, Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindell</td>
<td>Deep Democracy (Mindell)</td>
<td>Public &amp; Private Sector, Utilities, Financial Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerard; Bohm</td>
<td>Quality / Demming Cross Cultural OD Community Building</td>
<td>Public &amp; Private US / S. America, Financial Services, Health, Municipal Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search &amp; Developmental Development</td>
<td>ICA, Focused Conversation Methodology</td>
<td>Public &amp; Private Sectors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gerard, Senge,</td>
<td>Emery’s Socio Technical &amp; Systems Design</td>
<td>Public Sector – Health Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowalski</td>
<td>Conflict Models Resilience Models Spirituality Models</td>
<td>Public Sector, Non-Profit, Private Sector, International Unions, Management Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Graduate Program; Bohm</td>
<td>Metaphor (Gareth Morgan) Organizational Identity / Renewal</td>
<td>Public &amp; Private, Health Care, Post Secondary Education. Institutional &amp; Community Development</td>
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<td>Trubner, Bohm, Minor &amp; Gerard, Trist</td>
<td>Polarity Mgt. (Johnson) Conflict Models Mental Models (Argyris)</td>
<td>Public &amp; Private Sectors (All Sectors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bohm</td>
<td>Open Space Technology (Owen)</td>
<td>Public &amp; Private Sectors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Organizational Sector</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Predisposing Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private (Canada)</td>
<td>Professional Development for a Group of Auditors</td>
<td>Will, Commitment, Skill Development built into process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Private: Hi Tech</td>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Senior Executive Participation, Trusted the Facilitator, 1 to 1 briefing / interviews prior to dialogue / strategic planning session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Public Utility (South Africa)</td>
<td>Organizational change from vertical hierarchy to horizontal process teams; re-structuring to capture emerging markets in Europe, Organization changing I.T. platforms</td>
<td>Urgency. Acute need for breakthrough learning, &quot;Do or Die&quot;, Acute change driven by business need to gain mortgage market share</td>
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<td>Private Sector, Financial Institution (South Africa)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Private Telecommunications (South America)</td>
<td>Acquisition: Merging Cultures, Community Building / Planning between Manufacturing Industry, Hospitals, Municipal Govt., Union / Management process improvements and conflict resolution</td>
<td>Urgency, Complexity of Change, Need to improve citizen service, Already invested significant resources</td>
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<td>Public &amp; Private Sector</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Private Telecommunications (South America)</td>
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<td>Urgency, Complexity of Change</td>
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<td>Public &amp; Private Sector</td>
<td>Community Building / Planning between Manufacturing Industry, Hospitals, Municipal Govt.</td>
<td>Need to improve citizen service</td>
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<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>Union / Management process improvements and conflict resolution</td>
<td>Already invested significant resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Public Hospital (US)</td>
<td>Disaster Scenario planning</td>
<td>Committed stakeholders</td>
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<td>Private &amp; Public</td>
<td>Conference Attendees: Reflecting / Processing &quot;Learnings&quot; from Conference</td>
<td>Needed to create a common language</td>
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<td>Self selected</td>
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<td>&quot;Learning&quot; / Process Orientation</td>
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<td>Time for this purpose</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Public (Canada)</td>
<td>Policy Review</td>
<td>Contentious Issue</td>
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<td>Politically Sensitive Issue</td>
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<td>Needed a way to get beyond Advocacy, Entrenchment</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Private (Canada)</td>
<td>Professional Development for Process Consultants seeking to develop as a Service Delivery Team working in Health Care</td>
<td>&quot;Invested&quot; Participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Valued &quot;Process&quot;, Learning, no need for instant outcome</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Non-Profit (USA)</td>
<td>Leadership Team in crisis re unsurfaced conflict</td>
<td>Trust in Facilitator (previous interventions)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Private Sector (USA)</td>
<td>Conflict resolution within Union Executive Team</td>
<td>&quot;Stuck&quot; &amp; knew it</td>
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<td>Polarized</td>
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<td>Committed Stakeholders</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Public Hospital (Canada)</td>
<td>Community Building between Critical Care Unit Managers, Nurses, Doctors, Hospital Administration (Visioning)</td>
<td>Strong internal partner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public: University (U.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Stuck&quot; limited options, Burning Platform</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Private (Canada) (All Sectors)</td>
<td>Debriefing / Learning around 360 feedback process – used to diffuse defensiveness about &quot;mistakes&quot;</td>
<td>Invested participants (Architects of current system)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Public (University)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Potentially Contentious Issue</td>
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<td>Sr. Mgr. Support (Modelling)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust in Facilitator (previous interventions)</td>
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| 5  | Public (Canada) | Policy Review | - Contentious Issue  
|    |                |              | - Politically Sensitive Issue  
|    |                |              | - Needed a way to get beyond Advocacy, Entrenchment  
| 6  | Private (Canada) | Professional Development for Process Consultants seeking to develop as a Service Delivery Team working in Health Care | - "Invested" Participants  
|    |                |              | - Valued "Process", Learning, no need for instant outcome  
| 7  | Non-Profit (USA) | Leadership Team in crisis re unsurfaced conflict  
|    | Private Sector (USA) | Conflict resolution within Union Executive Team | - Trust in Facilitator (previous interventions)  
|    |                |              | - "Stuck" & knew it  
|    |                |              | - Polarized  
|    |                |              | - Committed Stakeholders  
| 8  | Public Hospital (Canada) | Community Building between Critical Care Unit Managers, Nurses, Doctors, Hospital Administration (Visioning) | - Strong internal partner  
|    | Public: University (U.S.) | - "Stuck" limited options, Burning Platform  
| 9  | Private (Canada) (All Sectors)  
|    | Public (University) | Debriefing / Learning around 360 feedback process – used to diffuse defensiveness about "mistakes" made | - Invested participants (Architects of current system)  
|    |                |              | - Potentially Contentious Issue  
|    |                |              | - Sr. Mgr. Support (Modelling)  
|    |                |              | - Trusted the PC – done prior work in environment  
| 10 | Private & Public | Developing self organizational groups focused on critical org. issues | - Compelling Issues  
|    |                |              | - Time (2 days minimum)  
|    |                |              | - Leadership Commitment  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argyris (1990)</td>
<td>Improving interpersonal effectiveness in organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bohm (1990;1991)</td>
<td>Achieving coherent multi-stakeholder thinking through</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buber (1958;1965)</td>
<td>Achieving dialogue through the 'I And Thou' stance; models</td>
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<tr>
<td>de Mare (1991)</td>
<td>Bringing large groups of people together in sustained</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drucker (1999)</td>
<td>Re-formulating the assumptions which are the found</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emery &amp; Thorsrud (1976)</td>
<td>Establishing the paradigm of 'democracy' in the wor Search, and Participative Design</td>
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<td>Gustavsen (1992)</td>
<td>Altering the pattern of multi-stakeholder, inter-organ renewal</td>
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<td>Johnson (1992)</td>
<td>Re-framing perceived 'problems to be solved' as: 'po</td>
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<td>Mindell (1992)</td>
<td>Utilizing a discourse method known as Deep Democi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan (1986)</td>
<td>Utilizing metaphor as a vehicle for locating /surfacing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oshry (1995)</td>
<td>Gaining awareness of the tacit systems which operate in context of the past', 'ourselves in relation to others'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owen (1997)</td>
<td>Utilizing a low structure, all stakeholder meeting forms</td>
</tr>
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<td>Schein (1987; 1988; 1999)</td>
<td>Analysing organizational culture; participating in a new dialogue prior to 1) group problem solving, 2) converge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wheatley (1992)</td>
<td>Attending to the emerging paradigm of wholism; co</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woolman / Lonergan (1774, 1972)</td>
<td>Perceiving the prior 'I am We' in discourse &quot;...as if 'w</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
in organizations by making the tacit elements of discourse explicit

through dialogue

Thou’ stance; a full appreciation of another’s mental models while maintaining consciousness

ther in sustained conversation to alter cultural meanings present in society (Socio-Therapy)

are the foundations of ‘management’, ‘organization’, and ‘business’, to reflect the realities of

‘reality’ in the work place via Social Technical Systems Design, and large system, non-expert interv


er, inter-organizational discourse (via Democratic Dialogue) for the purpose of achieving syste

solved’ as: ‘polarities to be managed’

as Deep Democracy, to achieve levels of awareness which reverse entropic thinking

ating /surfacing that which is tacit in the language patterns within organizations

which operate in our lives and influence our behaviour i.e. ‘the parts in context of the whole’ i.e.

on to others’

meeting format known as Open Space Technology, to cultivate a collective consciousness fo

icipating in a non-expert role as a co-designer of change oriented processes which are culturally

olving, 2) conversations intended to produce convergence on a decision / course of action.

of wholism; conceiving of the elements, actors, and events of the natural world as interconnec

beyond cause and effect

urse “…as if ‘we’ were members of one another prior to our distinctions of each from others...
Dialogue 180

In order to alter cultural meanings present in society (Socio-Therapy), the tacit elements of discourse explicit tion of another’s mental models while maintaining consciousness of one’s own mental processes and organization of ‘management’, ‘organization’, and ‘business’, to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. technical systems design, and large system, non-expert interventions known as future course (via democratic dialogue) for the purpose of achieving system-wide learning / managed’ levels of awareness which reverse entropic thinking.

Tact in the language patterns within organizations and influence our behaviour i.e. ‘the parts in context of the whole’, the ‘present in the open space technology, to cultivate a collective consciousness focused on issues relevant to us as a co-designer of change oriented processes which are culturally congruent. Utilizing elements, actors, and events of the natural world as interconnected ‘fractals’, rather than...” (Lonergan, 1972)
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<td>Fisher, Ury &amp; Patton (‘Interest Based Conversation’, 1991)</td>
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<td>Johnson (‘Polarity Management’, 1992)</td>
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<td>Ross (‘Skillful Discussion’, 1994)</td>
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<td>March &amp; Simon (‘Organizational Behaviour’, 1993)</td>
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## Thought & Discourse

### Orientations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole System:</th>
<th>Whole System Issue Exploration</th>
<th>Learning Orientation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Whole System:</td>
<td>Participative Work Design</td>
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#### Whole System: Orientations

- Woolman ('I Am We' Dialogue, 1774)
- Rcbuberman ('And Thou', 1958, 1965)
- Emery & Trist ('Social Ecology', 1973)
- Emery & Thorsrud ('Participative Design', 1976)
- Lonergan ('I Am We' Dialogue, 1972)
- Judson ('Making', 1977)
- Gustavsen ('Democratic Dialogue', 1992)
- Oshry ('Seeing Systems', 1995)
- Owen ('Open Space', 1997)
- Laiken ('Collaborative Processes', 1997)
- ICA ('Focused Conversation', 1997)
- Stone, Heen, Patton ('Learning Conversation', 1999)
- Capra ('Newtonian/Einsteinian Perspectivalism', 1992)
- Morgan ('Metaphor Analysis Intuition', 1992)
- de Malsembre ('Deep Learning', 1994)
- Argyris ('Mental Models', 1990)
- Nielsen ('Dialogic Leadership', 1991)
- Senge ('Fifth Discipline', 1990; 1992)
- Wheatley ('Holism', 1992)
- Isaacs ('Dialogue', 1993)
- Dibella & Nevis ('How Organizations Learn', 1991)
- Flick ('Understanding Process', 1995)
- Ellinor & Gerard ('Dialogue', 1991)
- Crossan, Lane, White ('Intuition', 1992)
- Drucker ('Management Assumptions', 1962)
- Custavsen ('Democratic Dialogue', 1992)
- Oshry ('Seeing Systems', 1995)
- Owen ('Open Space', 1997)
- Laiken ('Collaborative Processes', 1997)
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- Flick ('Understanding Process', 1995)
- Ellinor & Gerard ('Dialogue', 1991)
- Crossan, Lane, White ('Intuition', 1992)
- Drucker ('Management Assumptions', 1962)
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<tr>
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<th>Therapy Orientation</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lernergan ('I Am We' Dialogue, 1972)</td>
<td>Jung ('Collective Unconscious', 1978)</td>
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<td>n ('Open Space', 1997)</td>
<td>de Mare ('Socio Therapy', 1991)</td>
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<td>Wheatley ('Holism', 1992)</td>
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<td>Dibella &amp; Nevis ('How Organizations Learn', 1998)</td>
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<td>Ellinor &amp; Gerard ('Dialogue', 1998)</td>
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<td>Crossan, Lane, White ('Intuition – Institutionalization', 1999)</td>
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<td>Drucker ('Management Assumptions for 21st Century', 1999)</td>
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</table>
### Themes which emerge from the reading of the Theorists, Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>AUTHORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Thought creates our reality</td>
<td>Argyris (1990, 1992)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Thought is generated in the interplay of the unconscious and the conscious</td>
<td>Bohm (1980, 1990, 1992)</td>
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<td>3. Making the <em>tacit</em> explicit is requisite to coherent thought and discourse</td>
<td>Buber (1958, 1965)</td>
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<td>4. Wisdom resides inherently in the individual / group; conversation among equals; dependency upon expert intervention is not a viable dynamic for individual / group transformative learning</td>
<td>Carver (1996, 1997)</td>
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<td>5. Groups have a psyche</td>
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<td>6. Dialogic discourse has a discernable structure</td>
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<td>7. Dialogic discourse strives to engage all stakeholder perspectives</td>
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<td>8. No content is excluded (distinguish between parked and forbidden)</td>
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<td>9. Leadership is Issue dependent vs. Role / Title dependent</td>
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<td>10. Expect to trigger / surface / confront: emotions, conflict, and “edge” experiences</td>
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<td>11. This type of discourse is transformative of individual / group identity</td>
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<td>Argyris (1990, 1992)</td>
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Model 1 Theory-In-Use
(Ontology)

Master Program

ACHIEVE THE PURPOSE AS THE ACTION DEFINES IT

WIN, DO NOT loose

EMPHASIZE

CONTROL THE ENVIRONMENT & TASKS

SINGLE LOOP LEARNING

GOVERNING VARS

= Values People Seek

= Learned Through Experience

= We Are Unaware

= Frame Our Approach

SUPPRESS NEGATIVE FEELINGS

RATIONALITY

ACTION STRATEGIES

PROTECT ONESELF & OTHERS

NON-COMPLEX PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGY
Model 11 Theory-In-Use (Ontology)

Master Program

- FREE & INFORMED CHOICE
- VALID
- Governing Variables
- CONSTANT MONITORING OF INFORMATION

ACTION STRATEGIES

- ENCOURAGE THE USE OF PRODUCTIVE REASONING
  - Explicit Premises
  - Explicit Inferences
  - Publicly Testable Conclusions
  - Use of 'Hard' Objective Data

GOVERNING VARIABLES
- Values People Seek To Satisfy
- Learned Through Socialization & Enculturation
- We Are Unaware That We Are Unaware Of Them
- Frame Our Appreciation And Our Perception Of Reality

Interpreted From: Argyris, Putnam, McLain Smith, 1985; Argyris, 1990; C
Dialogue

Program

Theory-In-Use (methodology)

- FORMED CHOICE
- VALID
- Learning Variables
- INFORMATION
- MONITORING FORMATION

- ACTION STRATEGIES
- Encourage the use of productive reasoning
  - Explicit Premises
  - Explicit Inferences
  - Publicly Testable Conclusions

- Use of 'Hard' Objective Data

- Adaptive
- Organizational Effectiveness
- Achieve intended consequences
- Complex Problem Solving Strategy

Interpreted From: Argyris, Putnam, McLain Smith, 1985; Argyris, 1990; Cayer, 1997

Enculturation & Enculturation

Unaware Of Them

Our Perception Of Reality
Action Science
Argyris

PURPOSE:
• Increase system or organizational effectiveness

DEVELOPMENT
FOCUS:
• Learn to reason productively by internalizing and activating Model II Theory-in-Use (Double Loop Learning) when solving complex problems

INTERVENTION
APPROACH
• Requires ‘Expert’ observation, facilitation, coaching, feedback for as long as it would take an average person to learn to play a ‘Middling’ (moderate) game of tennis (Argyris, 1990)

PERCEPTUAL
FRAME:
• Dualist: Single Loop Theory-in-Use, or Double Loop Theory-in-Use

Interpreted From: Argyris, Putnam, McLain Smith, 1985; Argyris, 1990; Bol...


**SCIENCE CONTRASTED TO DIALOGUE**

**Dialogue**

- **Bohm**

**PURPOSE:**
- No purpose other than to explore thinking and thought
- Move beyond memory-based thinking

**DEVELOPMENT**

- Develop an awareness that "... is subtle enough thought is working..." (Bohm, Edwards, 1991, p.

**FOCUS:** Change in Consciousness

**INTERVENTION**

- Requires a ‘Facilitator’ to set the context for the 
- Requires Facilitator to let go of the need to contr 
- Intervene minimally, to reinforce or clarify a poir 
- Predominantly non-expert

**APPROACH:**

- Predominantly non-expert

**PERCEPTUAL FRAME:**

- Potential to transcend Dualism

---

Dialogue
Bohm

- No purpose other than to explore thinking and talking together
- Move beyond memory-based thinking

- Develop an awareness that "...is subtle enough to see how thought is working..." (Bohm, Edwards, 1991, p. 141)
  = Change in Consciousness

- Requires a 'Facilitator' to set the context for the discourse, then requires Facilitator to let go of the need to control
- Intervene minimally, to reinforce or clarify a point of learning about dialogue
- Predominantly non-expert

- Potential to transcend Dualism

### Aligned Action Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Approach</th>
<th>Participative Design</th>
<th>Action Science</th>
<th>Democratic Dialogue</th>
<th>Polarity Management</th>
<th>Open Space</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theorists</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emery Thorsgud</td>
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<td>Argyris Schon</td>
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# Theory Based Discourse INTERVENTIONS

## Learning Orientation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polarity Management</th>
<th>Open Space</th>
<th>Focused Conversation</th>
<th>Skilled Discussion</th>
<th>Learning Conversation</th>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>Owen</td>
<td>ICA</td>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>Heen, Patton, Stone</td>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td>Bohm, Buber, Woolman</td>
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<td>Nelson</td>
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<td>Ackley, Casson, Ellinor &amp; Gerard, Flick, Isaacs, Laiken, Lonergan, Nielson, Schein, Senge</td>
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## Use INTERVENTIONS

### Therapeutic Orientation

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<th>Learning Conversation</th>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>Deep Democracy</th>
<th>Socio Therapy</th>
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<td>Bohm Buber Woolman</td>
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<td>Lewis &amp; Wajsman</td>
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